

# JIVAN

News and Views of Jesuits in India

November - December 2014

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

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O Come All Ye  
Jesuits!

# Heaven on Earth

BY JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

*Somehow, not only for Christmas,  
But all the long year through,  
The joy that you give to others,  
Is the joy that comes back to you.  
And the more you spend in blessing  
The poor and lonely and sad,  
The more of your heart's possessing  
Returns to you glad.*



Courtesy: [www.christmas-time.com](http://www.christmas-time.com)

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**Editor:**

M.A. Joe Antony, SJ

**Editorial office administration,  
typing & layout:**

Udaya Prabhu  
Visuvasam

**Correspondents:**

Benedict Santosh, John Rose,  
Shailendra Boora, Victor Edwin

**Advisory Board:**

Agapit Tirkey, Benny S.,  
Jerry Rosario, John Joseph,  
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Michael Amaladoss, Rex A. Pai

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email: jivaneditor@gmail.com

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I believe that every year God gives me a special gift for Christmas. And you know few gifts rival the worth of a good story. Some years it is a story imagined by someone, while at other times it happens to be a real life story - something someone goes through.

This year the gift belongs to the second category. It is about something that happened to a poet, Sally Read, who happened to be a nurse. It happened when she was pregnant. Let her say what exactly happened:

"My favourite theory of pain, as a nurse, was the Gate Theory first expounded in 1965 by Ronald Melzack and Patrick Wall. They said that thicker nerve fibres carrying sensory messages of touch to the brain can block messages of pain carried by thinner fibres. Crudely put, when we hurt ourselves it really can help if we rub it better.

"Back in the early 1990s, as a hands-on, hand-holding nurse, I was seen as unambitious, even slightly odd. But despite knowing that touch can bring down blood pressure, despite seeing the joy on the face of elderly patients when their hand was taken, even I did not understand its full power until I gave birth.

"My pregnancy was normal until, near the end of its term, I bled late one evening and went straight into advanced labour. We bolted through the first set of hospital gates we got to. When the on-call anaesthetist arrived, he soon gave me an epidural. But the pain did not diminish. More medicine was injected into my spine. The pain was still so huge, it seemed to lift my whole being into the air.

"I heard the anaesthetist saying to my husband: "Your wife doesn't respond normally to pain relief." More medicine was injected. The pain was so great sitting down that I had to get off the bed. I did and my legs folded underneath me: I went down with a thump and threw up copiously. The anaesthetist made his exit.

"The bucketfuls of drugs he had given me had slowed my contractions, so they pumped me with oxytocin - a hormone that is released during sex and breastfeeding, but also induces the most

excruciating labour. I had what a mystic would call visions - I saw black horses thudding tirelessly through a landscape that never ended, there were buildings with windows punched out and doors kicked down. It could not end: the baby was in no position to get out.

"There were voices - my husband demanding I had a C-section; someone talking about European Union regulations. Women with clipboards, who I assume were midwives, came and went. When I finally got into theatre, I was lifted on to the table naked, and even that was agony - a body grotesquely twisted by pain and the weight of a baby cannot lie flat. In response, I heard exasperated tuts and sighs. And then a woman's voice from somewhere near my feet said, "What beautiful legs," and stroked them, long and slowly.

"It was such a strange remark that it reached my brain with new clarity. The effect of this woman's hands on my breathing, my fear, even my perception of the pain, was tremendous. I suffered, but I was more pliable. I knew I would not break. Finally, the anaesthetic took me beyond touch, and in time there was the sound of a baby screaming." (*The Tablet*, 12 April 2014)

That is what happens at Christmas - isn't it? For centuries humans supplicate, and then on a silent, holy night a baby screams - and the angels sing and we shout in joy. But for a baby to arrive you need a mother to touch, hold and caress.

Sally Read says her own experience showed her "how the most basic act of kindness (which often, instinctively, involves touch) has its own immense weight in the face of any kind of pain." She refers also to Pope Francis' remark about God's "science of caresses." "As Catholics, we have the most tactile of faiths - God comes to us and touches us with his physical presence." This is what we celebrate at and as Christmas.

This Christmas Special Issue has a lot of things that will touch you (p.3-10), - and also things that normally we don't want to touch, like cruelty (p. 14-16), and the problems in marriage and family (p.21). May you be touched this Christmas!  
- M.A.J.A.



# **O Come All Ye Jesuits!** **Restore Joy to the World!**

BY FRANCIS GONSALVES, SJ

Christmas is a *kairos*: a 'special' time to celebrate annually. But, there are other *kairoi* that appear along our *jivan-yatra* (life-journey) once in a blue moon, once in a lifetime, or even once in a whole Society's lifeline. Think of this: would Ignatius have ever dreamt that one day - almost 500 years after his times - a Spanish-speaking, Latin-American Jesuit who wished to walk the ways of Francis of Assisi would prophetically steer the Barque of Peter through stormy seas? Or, would he have ever imagined that the 'least' Society that God had founded through him would be suppressed and restored some 250 years after his time? Furthermore, would Inigo have ever dreamt that in the year 2013 an Argentinean Jesuit-Pope Francis-Bergoglio - like Assisi's Francesco Bernardone in 1210 who publicly divested himself of his family's silken robes - would have the courage to divest himself of all papal

underway in Rome. So, allow me to steer you through a 'Franciscan' Christmas. Seeking inspiration from our beloved Founder-Father Ignatius and quoting from our prophetic Jesuit-pope Francis, I suggest a 'composition of place-and-time' to move back-and-forth within, without, and around these *kairoi* so as to draw spiritual strength and societal sustenance. Pope Francis wants Church and Society to "go forth" - get incarnated and *be* Jesus to the poor. So, "come all ye Jesuits, joyful and triumphant....Come, and behold Him....Christ, the Lord." Onward to Bethlehem!



**Long before Inigo was lost in contemplation of the Incarnation and the Babe of Bethlehem, in December 1223 Assisi's Francesco was inspired to re-enact Bethlehem's Nativity.**

trimmings, to distance himself from the lofty Apostolic Palace to reside in the lowly Domus Sanctae Marthae, to downsize bulky Vatican bureaucracies, to deinstitutionalize ecclesial structures, to consult cardinals and send questionnaires worldwide to seek the views of Christian families on how the Church ought to be governed and guided? You bet he wouldn't!

The election of Jesuit-pope Francis, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Restoration of the Society of Jesus, the unprecedented consultation of lay faithful and the convening of a 'Synod of Family' this year - if each of these is not a *kairos*, what is? Coupled with Christmas we have a confluence of *kairoi* worth commemorating and celebrating with that unbridled joy, undying hope and undaunted courage that have become hallmarks of Papa Francesco's style of living and loving.

It's the middle of October, when there's nothing Christmassy in the air at all. But I'm right at the midway mark of the 'Synod of Family'

**Enter Bethlehem:** Long before Inigo was lost in contemplation of the Incarnation and the Babe of Bethlehem, in December 1223 Assisi's Francesco was inspired to reenact Bethlehem's Nativity. He excitedly told his friend, John, to prepare a 'living crib', which he did at Greccio in Italy's Rieti valley. Francis's first biographer Celano writes: "The ox and the ass were led in. There, simplicity was honoured, poverty was exalted, humility was commended, and Greccio was made, as it were, a new Bethlehem! The night was lighted up

like the day, and it delighted men and beasts. The people came and were filled with new joy over the new mystery. The woods rang with the voices of the crowd and the rocks made answer to their jubilation. The brothers sang, paying their debt of praise to the Lord, and the whole night resounded with their rejoicing. The saint of God stood before the

their little babe: 'Emmanuel', God with us; 'Jesus', Yahweh saves! He will not only *give* bread to the hungry but will suffuse their souls with his words since He *is* the 'Bread of Life' (Jn 6:35).

Celebrating Mass on 25 May this year in the Manger Square at Bethlehem, Pope Francis preached: "The child Jesus, born in Bethlehem,

turn would make "known what had been revealed to them ... glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Lk 2:20).

'Swaddling clothes' strikingly symbolizes God's emptying and Christ's poverty. Ignatius wanted 'ours' to be the '*least* society' and Francis of Assisi wanted his brothers



**Is the time ripe for more and more Jesuit-Magi, wise men of the East, to move out on marginal missions to spread out our gifts: the gold of culture, the frankincense of spirituality and the myrrh of prophetism?**

manger, uttering sighs, overcome with love, and filled with a wonderful happiness."

**Fast forward some 300 years:** *Inigo* advises: "Look at the place or cave of the Nativity, how large, how small, how low, how high, and how it was prepared" (Sp. Ex. 112)

"O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!" goes the carol. Prophet Micah once highlighted the littleness of Bethlehem: "little among the clans of Judah" (5:2). Bethlehem, meaning 'house of bread' - where, above Rachel's buried body (Gen 48:7), fecund fields flourished. It is the same fields where widowed Ruth later laboured to pick leftover grains of barley and ate "bread dipped in sour wine" (Ruth 2:14). Upon the littleness of Bethlehem, in a seemingly forlorn, lowly stable, Joseph and Mary behold and hold close to their hearts

every child who is born and grows up in every part of our world, is a diagnostic sign indicating the state of health of our families, our communities, our nation," He continued: "And we have to ask ourselves: who are we, as we stand before the child Jesus? Who are we, standing as we stand before today's children?"

Standing before the Babe Jesus I'm often appalled by God's gift of Godself coming wrapped in "swaddling clothes" (Lk 2:7). How strange! Most mothers we know certainly wouldn't be saying: "I've wrapped my babe in swaddling clothes," would they? Much as these wrappings cloud divinity for those trapped in the trappings of power and property, they will clearly reveal to poor Bethlehemian pastors who "smell of sheep" that some christophany unfolds before their eyes. They in

to be '*fratres minores*': religious 'little ones' to love the "last and the least of Jesus' sisters and brothers" and to labour to combat their hunger-thirst-nakedness-loneliness-homelessness-imprisonment (Mt 25:31ff). Besides bespeaking God's emptiness, swaddling clothes portray my plight; perhaps our plight. Before many a Christmas crib I stand before Him with *my swaddling clothes*: tepid heart, tired mind, dragging feet, broken vows, unfinished works, distracted prayers, and I say, "Lord, I'd like to do better and offer you '*more*' than these rags. But, for now, that's all I can give you. I know you will accept it and love me as I am." He does.

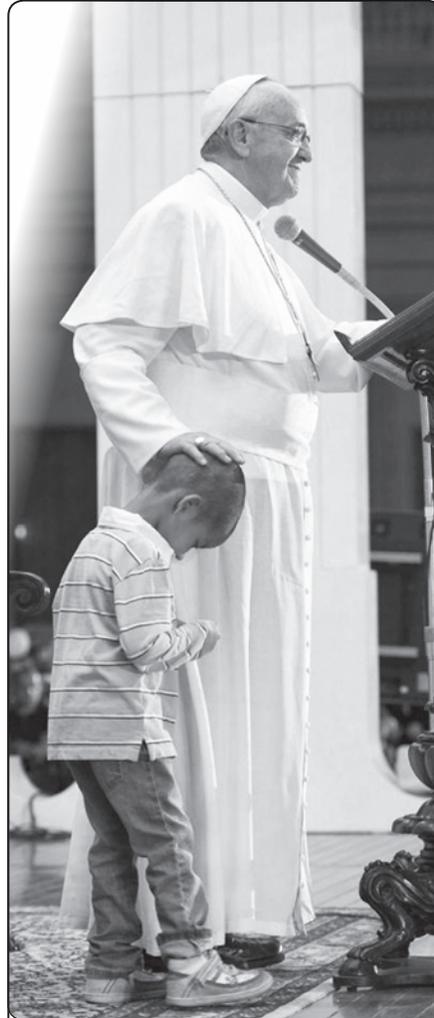
Bethlehem awakens an assortment of associations: bread, birth, littleness, homelessness, closed doors, open hearts, angels, poverty, simplicity, shepherds, Magi, donkeys,

sheep, oxen and asses. Tongue-in-cheek someone said: “On a winter’s day in Bethlehem after Jesus was born, he lay asleep in the manger. Awaking from his nap, baby Jesus opened his eyes, saw the donkey, ox and ass standing beside him, and thought to himself: ‘So, *this* is the Society of Jesus!’” What would Jesus think were he to look at us—members of His *least* Society, today? Far too overgrown? Much too underused? Shepherds with the ‘smell of sheep’? Magi moved by the *Magis*? Sheepish shepherds who fleece the flock? Or worse, asses burdening themselves with backbreaking individual and institutional assets - begging for ‘minority rights’ without bearing major responsibilities in Indian Church and society, at large?

We Jesuits mould the minds of millions of children and youth in our schools and colleges. What is our attitude towards them? At Bethlehem Pope Francis asked: “Are we indifferent to children? Are we perhaps people who use fine and pious words, yet exploit pictures of poor children in order to make money?” In *Evangelii Gaudium (EG)* n.105, Pope Francis says: “Youth ministry, as traditionally organized, has suffered the impact of social changes. Young people often fail to find responses to their concerns, needs, problems and hurts in the usual structures. As adults, we find it hard to listen patiently to them, to appreciate their concerns and demands, and to speak to them in a language they can understand.” Do we Jesuits listen to our youth, encourage them, heal their hurts, touch their hearts, appreciate their concerns and speak to them in a language they can understand?

**Contemplate the Holy Family:** Ignatius loved suggesting an ‘application of senses’ for the recommended contemplations of the Nativity: “It is helpful to see-hear-taste-smell-touch the places/persons

with the sight of the imagination, meditating and contemplating in particular the details about them and drawing some profit from the sight” (Sp. Ex. 121-125). In the light of



**Pope Francis wants the Church and the Society to “go forth” - get incarnated and be Jesus to the poor.**

the ‘Synod of Family’ let’s look at this Wholly Holy Family: totally absorbed in doing God’s will and wholly sensitive to the needs of the Incarnate Son of God gift-wrapped in ‘swaddling clothes’ and gifted to us to behold and to hold.

What do swaddling clothes reveal about Mary and Joseph? Little strips of cloth that a poor carpenter and his wife could hurriedly carry on an unforeseen donkey-trip to Bethlehem, far away from hometown Nazareth. Knowing that this was God’s son, Mary must’ve been awfully sad to see that she had only little rags to cover her boy-child’s body, while carpenter Joseph - silent and trustful, as always - would’ve felt equally sad to lay him down upon hay. “If only I had some wood, the saw, my hammer and some nails...” If ...? Joseph realized that those were illusory ideas that he and his betrothed must shed. Silently, in sad surrender they whisper, “Amen!” Jesus, I think, felt comfortable in those rags.

In the messiness of Bethlehem’s manger, Mary and Joseph give their all in living and loving. In Bethlehem Pope Francis queried: “Are we like Mary and Joseph, who welcomed Jesus and cared for him with the love of a father and mother? Or are we like Herod, who wanted to eliminate him?” Francis concluded by saying: “Our Lady is the one who, more than any other person, contemplated God in the human face of Jesus.” He then entrusted the Holy Land, its residents, and pilgrims, to Mary, asking for her intercession in watching over “our families, our young people and our elderly.” .... “Watch over the Church’s pastors and the entire community of believers,” prayed the Holy Father.

At the Family Synod, Australian couple Ron and Mavis Pirola described the “messiness” that exists in family life. Bethlehem’s manger was marked by messiness; but, the Holy Family made the stable pure and holy by their edifying example and their selfless love. Messiness is part and parcel of our Jesuit family, too. We accept it as indicative of our limitations and sinfulness; but, could we not also respond to it in the spirit of the *‘Magis’* desiring the ‘more’ in

everything we say and do? Let's seek inspiration from the Magi

**Magi for the Magis:** The Magi leave the familiar, follow the star and worship the Babe Jesus. Likewise, Ignatius was a star-gazer who often looked up to the starry skies at night to seek God's will and to ask for an aerial view of things - placing himself with the Triune God to gaze upon

the *Magis*? Is the time ripe for more and more Jesuit-Magi, wise men of the East, to move out on marginal missions to spread out our gifts: the gold of culture, the frankincense of spirituality and the myrrh of prophetism at the feet of our Lord and at the service of the world, at large?

Pope Francis's call to go forth and to reach all is loud and clear:

is the 'flight into Egypt' undertaken by the Holy Family. The Incarnate God has to experience the whole spectrum of human suffering in order to redeem the world. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are poor refugees: uprooted aliens in a land of slavery: Egypt. This reminds me of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) doing commendable work in being friends and brothers to innumerable



**As members of the Jesuit family called to love and serve all families, worldwide, and also care for Mother Earth and Sister Water, how do we renew, restore, redeem all of creation?**

the world in order to help redeem it. Have we compromised our Jesuit identity and mission by sticking to our comfort zones - the tried and the familiar - instead of burning our boats and launching out into the Deep? Without even the slightest idea of air travel, Ignatius could dream of transporting his men to unknown lands; and, amidst the darkness of the Suppression of the Society (1773), Joseph Pignatelli could see the light of its Restoration.

How, where, why is the Society seemingly headed towards self-induced suppression; and how, where, why is the same Society being Spirit-stirred towards a resuscitation, resurrection, 2014-restoration? Today, there are fewer and fewer wise men joining the Society in the West; and perhaps more joining in the East. But, are we all wise men - Magi motivated by

"The Church-Society's closeness to Jesus is part of a common journey; *'communion and mission are profoundly interconnected'*. In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for The Church-Society today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear. The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded. That is what the angel proclaimed to the shepherds in Bethlehem: 'Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people' (Lk 2:10). ... The Society which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice" (EG 23,24).

**Flights and Fights in Egypt:** One last scene that calls for attention

people and communities all over the world. Symbolic and solid among them is a former student of Vidya Jyoti, Fr Alexis Prem Kumar (MDU), who on a mission in Afghanistan to educate poor children was abducted by militants and till date is still untraceable. Despite threats to stop their missionary work, men like these have stayed rooted to serve God's people.

Pope Francis sees the incarnation as wellspring for mission among migrants: "True faith in *the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving*, from membership in the community, from service and reconciliation with others. By becoming flesh, the Son of God summoned us to the *revolution of tenderness*" (EG 88). This *tenderness* is not of the timid and weak, but a bold invitation "to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which

we are called to recognize the suffering Christ... I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned. Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church [Society] without frontiers, a Church [Society] which considers herself mother to all" (EG 210).

As pointed out by Pope Francis, Herod is prototype of the coward who unleashes violence upon the weak to preserve his power and position. Herod did not only maim and murder in the Palestine of Jesus' time but is root-cause of violence, bloodshed and genocide in his various avatars: at the time of the Suppression of the Society in the guise of Portugal's Marquis of Pombal, in the 1940s as Hitler in Germany, in the 1970s as Idi Amin in Uganda, and now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in bloodthirsty groups like the ISIS of Iraq, aggressive fundamentalist Christian groups and the affiliates of the Sangh Parivar in India, which cause divisions among citizens and death to society's little ones.

Since the time of the Founding, and the time of the Suppression and Restoration, Jesuits have been at the frontiers to fight forces of hatred and evil. Pope Francis wants Church/Society to be strong in our *dharma*, our faith, and promote popular religiosity; for: "Genuine forms of popular religiosity are incarnate, since they are born of the incarnation of Christian faith in popular culture. For this reason they entail a personal relationship, not with vague spiritual energies or powers, but with God, with Christ, with Mary, with the saints. These devotions are fleshy, they have a face" (EG 90). Our religion truly needs an inculturated face of God in Jesus Christ.

**A Kairos for Restoration:** Our world is in turmoil. "Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world; and so it is a

duty for Christians as well as other religious communities" (EG 250). Another world *is* possible. Whether in Bethlehem or Brazil, Jerusalem



**Herod is prototype of the coward who unleashes violence upon the weak to preserve his power and position.**

or Jordan, Albania or south Korea, Rio or Rome, Pope Francis's words are like WMDs (weapons of mass destruction) dealing deadly blows to Mammon and striking hard at human hearts for conversion, compassion, collaboration and commitment. How do I/we fare as individuals/Society with regard to simplicity, poverty, missionary zeal, evangelical joy, pastoral productivity, prophetic passion, delegation of authority,

supporting the weak/women/tribals/dalits/children, promoting the laity, defending the vulnerable, caring for our earth and daring to undergo drastic deinstitutionalization?

Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola and Pope Francis are all faces of the Incarnate Christ in our history. Francis of Assisi could see the whole of creation as proceeding from the heart of a God of Love and everyone/everything as sister-brother-mother. Ignatius had that *divya darshan* (divine vision) that embraced crib and cross and helped him see God in all things and all things in God. Joseph Pignatelli was blessed with an extraordinary resilience and dogged devotion to the spirit of 'Magis' with no money, not many men and no major institutions. He could fan the suppressed flames of Inigo's fire to breathe new life and pass on the flaming torch to an Ignatian-Francis-can Pope with farsighted vision, nerves of steel, heart of gold and charm that can disarm kings, queens, presidents, tycoons - and, yes, even those pompous princes of the Church seated on cathedras scarce symbolizing their Crucified King.

As members of the Jesuit family called to love and serve all families, worldwide, and also care for Mother Earth and Sister Water, how do we renew, restore, redeem all of creation? Trust Papa Francesco to have an answer: "*I am a mission* on this earth; that's the reason why I am here in this world" (EG 273). This Christmas, may we come wrapped in our swaddling clothes, "bruised, hurting and dirty" as Pope Francis desires us to be. Let us pray, "May your emptiness, O Babe of Bethlehem, fill us." Like Pope Francis may we be filled with *evangelii gaudium* caroling: "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!" ■

*Fr Francis Gonsalves, SJ (GUJ) is currently the Professor of Theology at the Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi. He can be contacted at: fragons@gmail.com*

## Novice Masters meet in Kurseong

Thirteen novice masters of South Asian Assistency met for their annual meet 2014 on 31 Aug '14 at Woodcot Jesuit House, Kurseong. The theme for this year's meet was 'Mission of the Novice Master - Then and Now.' The meeting began with the inaugural Mass celebrated by Fr Kinley Tshering, Provincial of Darjeeling. He warmly welcomed us and encouraged us, saying "Novice masters are important because the future of the Society is in your hands". Already in the month of May Fr Aelred Gomes, our resource person, had sent out questionnaires to scholastics, with questions based on the letter of former General, Fr Kolvanbach, 'Spiritual formation in the novitiate' and complementary norms. Questionnaire for the novice masters and Socii had questions on their liking for the job, the number and merits of novices guided. Each novice master contacted more than ten scholastics who took their first vows between the years 2009 – 2013. The resource



person had collated all the answers he received from scholastics, novice masters and their socii and he began his session by presenting the collated report. We had individual and group study on the report for two days animated by Fr Aelred. We identified five areas that we need to focus on: Motivation, Faith Formation, Family Background, Psychosexual Integration and Pre-novitiate Formation prior to the entry into novitiate. We immensely thank Fr Aelred, our resource person for having done such a wide and deep study through the survey in order to present to us the current trend in the formation of novices.

On 02 September we visited what was for many years St Mary's theologate, Kurseong. Most of us regretted that it is now in the hands of the forest department, but were consoled to see people coming to the grotto of Our Lady and to the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to pray. On 03, 04 Sept we had an in-depth sharing. Each one of us shared our joys and challenges of being a novice master. Through our sharing we gained many insights, skills, help and support to carry out our mission effectively. Feeling strengthened and enriched, we felt this sharing was the most important part of our meeting. Later we evaluated our meeting and planned for the next meeting.

On 04 Sept Fr I.Raj, our new ADF, celebrated the Eucharist at which he encouraged us saying, 'Novice masters are mothers who give birth to new babies to the Society of Jesus.' In the afternoon he spoke on Fr General's letter on Intellectual Apostolate and Formation. His talk helped us see how Formation, should be carried out intellectually, innovatively and creatively.

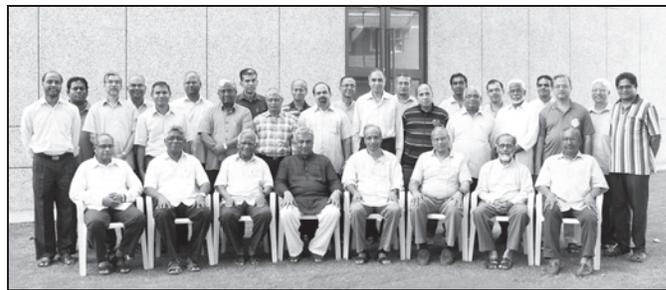
After our meeting we visited a few Jesuit Centres and the Darjeeling Jesuit novitiate, Kalimpong. We thank Fr Kinley, Fr Aelred, Br Gabriel Gurung and Fr Patrick Pradhan, for organizing our meeting so well and making us feel at home.

- R. Antony Raj, SJ

## Formed: South Asian Jesuit Theologians' Forum

South Asian Jesuit Theologians' colloquium, convened by Fr Michael Amaladoss, Secretary of Jesuits in Religious Studies (JERES), was held on 19-21, Oct '14 at Nav Jivan Center, Delhi. Thirty two theologians who attended the conference deliberated upon the challenges of building a theologically thinking and feeling community in the South Asian region that is sensitive to 'glocal' concerns.

The participants felt that their journey as a Jesuit theologian was in fact their quest to facilitate Christians as well as people of other faiths and traditions to cherish their faith. Each theologian responds to this quest in different ways: bringing in human rights, Dalit perspectives, exploring the divine mystery without relativizing Christ, by investigating the relationship between Christ and other symbols, looking at the riches of the Bible from the context of the marginalized and studying interfaith relations etc. Building bridges between peoples, their cultures and religions was another key element that emerged in their sharing. On the second day the participants noted that Asian Jesuit theological discourse needs to emphasize subalterns' perspectives, the mystical dimension of Asian religions and cultures, dialogue with religions and perspectives of the poor.



The members of the colloquium expressed their concerns, which paved the way for the birth of the South Asian Jesuit Theologians' Forum - a network of Jesuit theologians in South Asia interacting together on common themes of interest concerning our mission in South Asia and the world. It will be coordinated by the Secretary of Jesuits in Religious Studies (JERES) with a core team. It was suggested that in the coming three years, this Forum focuses on: Indian Christology, Hindutva, and Empowering the Subalterns. Over the next year we could also support the ongoing process of the Synod on Family. Indian Jesuit Theologians' Forum could have a website with information on all the theologians and their publications and links to their blogs.

On the third day Fr Lisbert D'Souza, the general assistant, Fr Edward, the outgoing POSA and Fr Noel Sheth from Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth stressed that Indian Jesuit theologians should show how one could be faithful to the Gospel and at the same time open to the Spirit of God at work in other religions and cultures - and that any serious theological writings should link the fundamentals with the frontiers. The participants did not fail to point out that now it is two theologians who are at the helm of South Asian Jesuit affairs: Fr George Pattery (POSA) and Fr Raj Irudaya (ADF). This gives sufficient hope for advancing the theological spring in South Asian Jesuit family. Thanks to Fr Edward, the out-going POSA, and Fr Amal whose initiative and careful planning with the assistance of P.R. John, Vidyajyoti was appreciated and gratefully acknowledged by all.

- Victor Edwin, SJ

BY JEEVAN MENDONSA, SJ

Once, at a Sunday school, as Christmas was approaching, I asked the children what Christmas meant for them. It was heartening to see that for most of them, Christmas wasn't just about Santa Claus, the three Kings, sweets and gifts. The children's response could be summed up in the words of what a little girl said, "At Christmas we celebrate the birthday of Jesus. He was born in a manger and brought joy and peace for everyone." How simply and beautifully expressed! However, those words triggered a train of thoughts within me. Is Christmas only about the birth of Christ? Or is there something more?

If the significance of Christmas is to be expressed in a single word, then I think it is 'Emmanuel' – God-with-us. A universe of meaning is embedded in that one word – Emmanuel. The gospel of John expresses it in these words: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). The celebration of Christmas is the celebration of this unique event- the Incarnation which encompasses the whole of human reality. Thus, Christmas is much more than the birth of Christ. When we say that Jesus Christ was born, we probably miss the significance of the event. But if we say that God became flesh and blood in and through Jesus, we cannot but be struck with wonder. In other words, God had a body like me. He had



hands and legs and eyes and ears like me. Most of the activity I am engaged in – walking, talking, working, eating and the like – God has participated in them, fully and completely in and through Jesus. Isn't this incredible?

The human being is an enormous mine of emotions. The gamut of emotions human beings experience is remarkable. God too, in and through Jesus, would have experienced human emotions in all their richness. Jesus would have felt tired at the end of day, having worked hard, whether as a carpenter or a teacher and healer. Probably, as a carpenter, he would have felt bored at times due to the monotony of working day in and day out. He would have felt disappointed when he failed at something in his work or when he was rejected by his own



people. So God knows what I go through when I feel exhausted or bored or discouraged due to failure.

Jesus would have felt satisfied, happy and grateful when as a young carpenter he made something beautiful or later healed a sick person. Now he understands what I will feel when I have a similar experience.

From the gospels, we know that Jesus experienced the two commonest human emotions, namely joy and sorrow, in their deepest intensity. We see this in Lk 10: 21 where Jesus rejoices in the Holy Spirit. And in John's gospel, we see Him weeping at the death of his friend Lazarus. Thus, having experienced pain from within, he understands me fully when I experience profound pain at the death of a loved one.

Another very common human experience is that of feeling tempted. And this experience manifests itself in a myriad ways. The human struggle with temptation is never-ending. From the gospels, we know that Jesus too was tempted. So God in and through Jesus knows intimately our inner struggle with temptations. Though Jesus was able to resist temptation, he fully understands us when we at times give in to our temptations. As is rightly expressed in the letter to the Hebrews, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin." (Heb 4:15) Moreover, in and through Jesus, God not only understands but also strengthens us in our struggle, "Because he (Jesus) himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested." (Heb 2:18) The more we allow this truth to sink deeper into our being, the more it would help us to make our lives more and more centred in God, one who is with us, one who is 'Emmanuel'.

The truth that the Son of God became a human being – to experience our human nature and express his love for us to the greatest possible extent – will continue to remain an incomprehensible wonder. Though incomprehensible, it's a wonder that strikes at the depth of our being, one that transforms our life. For it proclaims that God is indeed with us – in our ups and downs, joys and pain, achievements and failures, sickness and health, life and death. When we even try to understand the implications of this momentous mystery, our celebration of Christmas will truly become joyful and meaningful. ■

*Jeevan Mendonsa, SJ (BOM) is Coordinator, Village Classes at St Xavier's Social Centre at Nandurbar, Maharashtra.*

# Rivers of misery in Western Nepal

## - Jesuits contribute to relief work

BY BOBY JOSEPH, SJ

The horror unfolded on 15 Aug '14 morning. In Bardiya district of Western Nepal, people were waking up from their sleep or busy with their morning routines. It had been raining continuously for 3 days. The village Mukhiya beat his drum early in the morning to warn the people about possible danger, but hardly anybody took him seriously. No one expected that the river Bhada, the source of their sustenance, will turn out to be the destroyer that morning.

Because of flash floods, the gushing waters, rising up to 6 feet, carried away everything in its path - people and their possessions. The landslides that followed buried many people and livestock. Those who were trapped in their houses climbed onto their makeshift bamboo-attics with their meagre possessions. Since the water level continued to remain high, they were stuck there for 2 whole days and nights.

Floods wreaked havoc across Western Nepal – especially in Banke, Surukhet, Dang and Bardiya districts. The *Himalayan Times* reported that 8488 houses were damaged completely and 23,248 partially. The financial loss was estimated to be at Rs 7.79 billion. At least 150 people were believed to be dead. More than 200 were reported missing.

Since the Nepal government is strict about allowing NGOs to provide relief work, the Jesuits in Kathmandu had difficulty getting permission to start relief work. After completing the laborious paper work needed for government's permission, the Jesuit team could reach Bardiya district only on 25 Aug - 10 days after the flood.

Heartbreaking scenes greeted the team. Even after 10 days, there were many whom the relief had not reached. The destruction was much, the area to be covered vast and inaccessible, the people worst hit were nameless, faceless villagers who had no idea where to go for help. When we went, they had only finished burying their dead.

Thousands of hungry villagers were

sleeping in the open under plastic sheets. Most of the houses had been damaged beyond repair. Other houses were filled with mud. People who had escaped death were left with little or no money or possessions and so nothing for their livelihood. They wanted to get back to their homes, but they were starving and sick.

The Jesuit relief team centered their work in Sano Bikree and Tulo Bikree villages in Bardiya district. These villages were home to about 40 and 85 families respectively, all of whom had been hit by the floods. They had lost their dear ones, possessions, crops and livestock. The



houses were under water for two days, and the landslide had filled up their homes with a huge amount of loose mud. Some of the households had managed to store some food items on the bamboo poles under the roof. Some of the villagers were slowly repairing the damaged houses on their own, but a few houses were damaged beyond repair. Many, still in shock, were in no mood to do anything.

The government primary school in Thulo Bikree, where about 120 students study from kindergarten to class V, was submerged in water for nearly 2 days. The library books were damaged beyond repair.

The Jesuit team from St. Xavier's College, Kathmandu surveyed the situation, distributed food and essential items in the two villages. The school students were provided with books, pens, school bags and uniforms. Two medical camps were organized in the 2 villages. Over 600 people attended the camps. Apart from stress and shock, they were suffering from a number of communicable illnesses. Medicines were

distributed. The team painted the school building and donated a public address system and a water tank.

Most people in the flood-affected areas belong to the ethnic group called Tharu, one of the indigenous groups of Nepal, who have never enjoyed the fruits of education. Now there are Government schools, but the standard of education is very poor. The school drop-out rate is high, as the parents prefer that their children stay at home and help them with the work in and around the house and on the fields.

The floods revealed that the official machinery - not merely in Nepal, but also in most of the developing countries in South Asia - are totally unprepared for such large scale natural disasters. As a result, chaos and distress that follow last much longer than in developed countries. It will be months before things get back to normal. The Government is now trying to set up a monitoring committee to ensure that the relief materials reach the victims safely.

The most difficult challenge for an organization like ours is to work freely with the support of the government. It is a great challenge

to get the paper work done on time, braving the red tape and other phenomena characteristic of the official machinery. Another major hurdle is what even some of the educated people suspect - that we go to the villages to influence them and convert them to Christianity. The irony is our educational institutions have trained and nurtured thousands of students in Nepal regardless of their religion, over the past 60 years. Yet there are people who are skeptical of our motives. Changing this mindset is a big challenge. Other challenges are going to regions where there are no transport facilities, no electricity and no healthcare infrastructure.

In spite of these, I feel that what we were able to do as Jesuits in these two villages gave the poor villagers peace and comfort at a time when they needed them acutely. They saw for themselves that we had no prejudice and so there was no discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, gender, financial or educational status. This inspired trust and confidence in the affected villagers. ■

BY RON ROLHEISER, OMI

# Christmas with crooked lines...

If someone who had never heard the story of Jesus were to ask any of us about his origins, we would, I suspect, begin with the story of his annunciation and birth and end with the story of his resurrection and ascension. While that does capture his life, that's not how the Gospels either begin or end his story. The story of Jesus and the meaning of Christmas can only really be understood by looking at where Jesus came from, his family tree, and by looking at how his story has continued in history. Indeed, that's how the Gospels tell his story.

The Gospel of John begins his story by pointing out his eternal origins inside of God before his birth. For John, Jesus' family tree has just three members, the Trinity: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Mark's Gospel gives no family tree, begins his story with his public ministry, and then has no ending to his story. For Mark, Jesus' story is still ongoing. Matthew and Luke, however, include inside Jesus' story a long family tree, a genealogy, that shows his origins. Too often we tend to ignore these genealogies with their long list of difficult-to-pronounce names, most of which mean little to us. But, as the renowned biblical scholar, Raymond Brown, emphasizes again and again, we cannot really understand the story of Jesus without understanding why his family tree, this long list of names, is judged to be important.

What's to be learned from looking at Jesus' family tree, that curious list of ancient names? Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah...and so on. Among other things, these genealogies trace out Jesus' origins in a way that tells us that his real story will not be grasped by anyone who wants to believe that Jesus' human origins were totally immaculate and pure, containing no sin or weakness. Jesus wasn't born of all saintly ancestors. Rather, as the genealogies show, his family tree contains as many sinners as saints. Among his



ancestors were liars, adulterers, murderers, power-grabbing men, scheming women, wicked kings, corrupt church officials, and sinners of every sort. The same holds true for the religious institutions that figured in his birth. The religious history of Judaism out of which Jesus was born was too a mélange grace and sin, of religious institutions serving both God and their own human interests.

And what's the moral in all this? The lesson is this: Both the persons and the institutions that gave birth to Jesus were mixture of grace and sin, a mixture that mediated God's favor and also rationalized it for its own benefit. But, out of that mélange, Jesus was born. It can be a scandal to the piety within us to accept that not everything that gave birth to Christmas was immaculately conceived. The same holds true of what followed after Jesus' birth. His earthly ministry was also partially shaped and furthered by the self-interest of the religious authorities of his time, the resistance of secular powers of his time, and the fear and infidelity of his own disciples. And this has continued through the two thousand years of history since. Jesus has continued to have earthly incarnation throughout the centuries thanks not only to saintly individuals and virtuous churches. No, Jesus' family tree subsequent to his birth is also a long list of saints and sinners, of selfless martyrs and selfish schemers, of virtue and betrayal.

And recognizing and accepting this should not lead us to a cynicism where

we begin to doubt the truth of Jesus or the legitimacy of the church because of the lies, sin, infidelity, and not-infrequent stupidity of those human persons and religious institutions who originally made up Jesus' family-tree and who have constituted his family since. Faith can accommodate the recognition of sin and infidelity. So can Christmas.

Christmas has a checkered origin and a checkered sequence: Jacob did steal his brother's birthright; Judah did sleep with his daughter-in-law; David did commit adultery and did commit murder to cover it up; the church did set up the Inquisition and kill more of its own than were martyred in the early church; the church did give us popes who sold ecclesial favors and were sexually licentious; the churches, despite their catholicity and holiness, have perennially been narrow and elitist and never been fully free of self-interest; and the sexual abuse scandal did happen.

But the pure mystery of Jesus, of Christ, and of the Church somehow shine through in spite of all of this and, ironically, because of all of this. Like a hidden seed, God's grace works, even through people like us and churches like ours, revealing divinity despite everything. And the God who wrote the original Christmas with crooked lines also writes the sequence with crooked lines, and some of those lines are our own lives. ■

*Courtesy: [www.ronrolheiser.org](http://www.ronrolheiser.org)*



## Reasons for the rampage

- WHY ARE THE ISIS JIHADISTS SO CRUEL?  
DO THEY REPRESENT ISLAM?  
WILL THEY SUCCEED?  
WHAT CAN BE DONE?...

**Fr Samir Khalil Samir, SJ**, is a leading scholar of Islam and the Arab world. An Egyptian, he is a former student of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. These comments of Fr Samir have been excerpted from an extensive telephone interview he gave from Beirut on 30 Aug '14 to the Register. Fr Samir explains the reasons for the murderous rampage of the jihadists of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

### ISIS and Islam:

We hear, very often, Muslims say: "This has nothing to do with Islam." This is a spontaneous reaction of Muslims on the street. But, in fact, it's a false reaction. This too is a part of Islam. From the beginning there has been some tolerance towards Jews and Christians, but other non-Muslims (unbelievers) had to convert or die.

So these fanatics are following this line, with one difference: They call "unbeliever" (*kāfir*) anyone who is not

like them, even the Shia, the Yaz̄di or the Christian. In this case, the fanatics are not following the Quran and the sunnah (a Muslim way of life based on the teachings of Prophet Mohammed and the Quran). But when they say, "We have to kill unbelievers, unless they become Muslims," this is part of the teaching of Islam.

The main thing to note is that violence is an element of Islam. Violence is not an element of Christianity. When Christians were using violence they were not following the Gospel, nor the life of Christ. When Muslims are using it, they are following the Quran and the sunnah. This is a very important point.

Muslims have to rethink Islam for today's world. We have a similar problem in Christianity, Judaism and in all religions. In the Old Testament, we have a lot of violence: When Jews entered the so-called Holy Land, they used violence - not because they were fanatics, but because they believed God

ordered it. They had to use it, and when they refused, they were sinners.

This is the Bible, and the Bible is the word of God. But the question is, "How do I understand it for today?" And this is the main question for every religion and the main problem for Islam. They are not doing any kind of interpretation. In the past, they did it. There's a principle well known in Islam that we have to look at, the so-called *maqāsid al shari'ah*, i.e. "the intention of the sharia" (Islamic law).

Let us take an example: When the Quran says we have to cut the hand off of a thief, those who say, "We have to follow the *maqāsid*," they ask: "Why?" And they answer: "It means: to stop him from doing this again." So now, the aim (the *maqāsid*) of the instruction is the intention is not to cut off the hand, but to forbid him from doing the same thing again. If today we have other means, then we use them, and we should look at the intention of the Quran's order.

This is what Christ did with adultery, when he said, "Whoever is without sin, start stoning the woman caught in adultery." By so doing, he saved the heart of this woman, so that she could convert to another way of life; and he saved the hearts of the men who wanted to kill her, inviting them to examine first their own consciences: Are they so perfect? This is the true way of interpreting God's word.

#### Role of the West:

This is a very important point, and people are not aware of it in the West. If we go back a little bit, the West was, for a long time, associated with modernity and technical innovation. Egypt, for example, entered its modernistic period in the middle of the 19th century up until, more or less, the middle of the 20th century. The Egyptians were trying to adapt themselves to Western culture. They viewed it as modernity because everything they used and wanted to have came from the West, which was seen as Christian.

But in recent times, the West has given a very bad image of itself, mainly regarding the questions on sexual liberation. Homosexuality, for example, is considered normal today in the West. It's considered as a variant of heterosexuality, and sexual relations between men and women are no longer sacred.

When I used to go back to Egypt, I was asked: "Is it true that men and women are having sex in public?" I said: "No, this is not true." But this was the image they had.

Then came the Gulf and Iraq wars, which were seen as anti-Islamic.

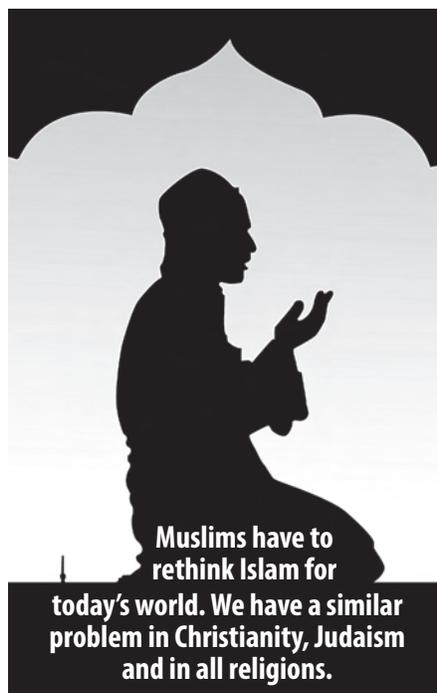
#### Gulf and Iraq wars:

They have been seen as the West imposing its superiority; and the wars, whether just or not, are always seen as coming from the hands of the United States and Israel. But the reaction to the immorality of the West is clearer. Everything about modernity is seen as wrong by the Islamists.

#### The image of the West:

The image of the West is combined in the minds of the Islamic extremists

with sin and the wrong things and the wrong power. But at the same time, everyone is using Western products, especially technology. You have a kind of aggression because the West is seen as dominating the world, which could be a force for good, but they see it as domination and not progress. So the tendency is to regress to the seventh century, which they feel must be the best thing, because that was the time of the Prophet Mohammed.



I was looking at some YouTube videos of ISIS, and it's incredible. They do everything saying, "Allahu Akbar" (God is great) before doing it, putting everything under God and the call of Islam. Even when killing an innocent, they scream, "Allahu Akbar." These Islamists are going back to the seventh century, especially in a radical, violent way.

One video I saw said the caliphate is the only solution and will be achieved by the sword. So it's a rejection of the West's moral values and its domination. The absurdity is that they are using violence against themselves, because Islamists call *kāfir* (infidel) anyone who disagrees with them and are then allowed to kill him.

#### Clarity that extremism provides vs moral relativism and agnosticism

These groups are radicals; that means they pretend to know exactly what is right and wrong, and they define it. It includes even the smallest things, ways of behaving and also a lot of sexual promises for those who go to paradise. It's incredible! I've seen this morning a YouTube clip showing hundreds of people listening to a preacher in a mosque, who was describing how heaven will be. Every good Muslim will have his wife there for 70 years, but he will also have 72 girls of the highest quality, and each girl will have 72 slave girls that he could use, and so on. The preacher was smiling and saying, "This is our heaven." It's incredible to hear. ...

Everything is very clear to them: "You do it this way." Anybody who is a little bit outside of this vision is a *kāfir*.

Some years ago, seven years ago, there was a meeting in Saudi Arabia organized by the King to reform Islam. The main point was, first of all, to stop the *takfir* - that is, saying the other is a *kāfir*, an infidel. The *takfir* is used every day for everything. Anybody who is not doing exactly as these people want to do is a *kāfir*, and they say, "We have the right to kill him."

#### Secularism and Islam: Two different worlds and languages

Secularism or secularity (civil society, religious freedom and liberty of conscience) has been around for nearly two centuries in the West. To understand it, you need to have experienced a little bit of Western culture where religion, state, ethics and politics are distinct from one another.

But Islam is the amalgam of these. This is the weakness and the force of Islam. Everything is, and can be, Islam. You eat Islamic, you dress Islamic, so that it gives you a strength, an incredible strength, but also puts up barriers. You cannot understand another approach, and this is the problem.

Secularity, as Pope Benedict underlined in his famous speech in

Regensburg, is something universal, where there is room for everyone and for other faiths or absence of faith. It includes liberty of thinking and freedom of conscience, liberty of changing your faith, etc. This is unknown in Islamic culture and unacceptable. But it is fundamental for living together in a civilized society.

People don't understand it. The Muslim extremists say: "We respect and defend freedom of religion," but then they oblige a Muslim to remain Muslim, and he cannot convert to other religions. So I say: "Where is the freedom of conscience?" And they say: "Yes, but not the freedom to do something wrong." So we are speaking two different languages and living in two different worlds. Also, within Islam, you have liberal Muslims, whom the extremists laugh at or react violently towards. The liberal Muslims are only intellectuals and could be about 1 million, but that is nothing in comparison with the world's 1.5 billion Muslims.

**Lack of education:**

The other important thing to note is the lack of education. In Egypt, we have 40% who are illiterate, which means around 35 million Egyptians. They cannot write their names. It's the same in Morocco, and it's 50% in Yemen. So their only guide is religion, as explained by the preachers who are able to quote the Quran and hadith (Mohammad's sentences), which is regarded as the authentic Islam.

The majority of Muslims are shocked by the actions of these terrorists, but many see them as authentic Muslims, and so few speak clearly against them.

**Islamic intolerance of freedom of conscience and intolerance of religion in the West:**

Both positions are becoming more radical. In France, for instance, the smallest sign of Islamism on the street is seen as a provocation, and they treat it juridically. And this makes these Muslims become more radical. The question of the veil, for example, is used on both sides as a symbol of the

true Islam for radical Muslims and as an aggression of Islamism for the French people. So the clash of civilization that has been predicted by Samuel Huntington is growing because those who are reasonable, or moderate, are not reacting.

There's also something that's internal to them - that radicals are ready to do anything: fight on the street, go to prison; they do whatever their conscience tells them to do. Moderates say they're stupid people and that one cannot discuss anything with them. So moderates are not speaking; they're not writing; a few are reacting in private journals. The radicals, who are few, much fewer, are more aggressive.

**The way to counter ISIS and Islamic extremism:**

They cannot change the text of the Quran, as we cannot change the text of the Bible. The problem is that they consider the Quran not as inspired by God, but as the literal word of God. That's the theological problem.

I speak with them very often about this problem, and I tell them: "We have had the same problem." The word of God, when we read it in church, we say: "This is the word of God." But what does it mean? Does it mean that God wrote it literally with his hand? The Bible also says the Ten Commandments were written with the finger of God. It's a way of speaking, to say that this is divine.

Muslims did this in the Middle Ages: Avicenna, for instance, has a philosophical treatise on the so-called pleasures in heaven to explain that it cannot be physical pleasure. So they reinterpreted the Quran's words on heaven's pleasures a millennium ago, but, today, they developed with plenty of details all the so-called physical pleasures the mujahid [a Muslim engaged in the struggle to follow the path of Allah] will enjoy in heaven. It means that, now, they have regressed.

To overcome this problem, the Islamic world needs to overhaul its education system. Islamic education is very, very poor. It's based on memorizing

everything: the Quran, the sunnah, thousands of sentences of Prophet Mohammed, and you have to memorize them again and again. It's wonderful when you hear a good teacher quoting the Quran and sunnah every second sentence. People admire this. They say this is the true Islam, but, in fact, this preacher is choosing only one aspect of the Quran, and the people don't know it.

So a rethinking of the Quran and its rules, as well as a theological or philosophical or spiritual interpretation, is needed. The present interpretation is nothing more than a simple repetition, without any reflection. Learning to interpret a text should start at school - should start already with small children, as well as at home and in the family.

**The future of ISIS:**

They will have success for a while, but I hope for not too long. It's unthinkable what they are doing. It is so inhuman that people don't know how to react. It could last for some years. They are operating exactly as what happened at the beginning - with war and conquest. Once you conquer a country, you do what you want with it. This is very, very dangerous, especially if these terrorists still receive money and weapons - then they won't fear anything. In each case, they are "winners": If they kill, they win; if they are killed, they win, because they believe they have won paradise. So they are "winning" in both cases, whatever happens. They have no other principles or values or standards, other than to literally apply sharia.

The astonishing thing is that they are fighting the immorality of the West and Western hedonism, but they are doing many more immoral things in the name of Islam.

What they are doing is something the world has never seen in its history. We've seen a lot of cruelty, but this is a planned cruelty. This is why I think there's no future for them in the long term. But in the short term they will win more and more, and we have to stop them now. ■

*Courtesy: www.ncregister.com*

# Longing for more

BY KEITH MACZKIEWICZ, SJ

Many of the faces were familiar and, slowed by age and speckled with grey, they reminded me of the past. As I sat through Mass, I had great memories of Christmas celebrations in that church, my home parish. I recalled the various priests that had served there and the rich music that had once filled the standing-room only building. I was an altar server for almost ten years as a kid and it's where I first discovered God. That hangar-like building with its wood-paneled sanctuary and questionable orange carpet was where I realized that the gospels were more than just words on a page, where I realized that they were both a call and challenge. Even if the building itself wasn't beautiful, I could always count on the beauty of those celebrations, seen in the common prayerful experiences of the people gathered together.

But the experience this year was not so memorable; it was hardly even prayerful. It seemed like everyone 'up there'—the priests, the musicians, the other ministers—wanted to be somewhere else. There was no word of welcome to those who may have ventured back into the building after some time away, no invitation to consider God coming into the world at present, no sense that this gathering was something different from any ordinary Sunday. After Mass on Christmas Eve this year I wasn't totally sure Jesus had been born.

On that cold night, my parents and I drove to our parish to attend the Midnight Mass—scheduled for 10:30pm—and took our familiar seats in the easternmost section of pews, near the simple statue of St. Joseph. We knelt and prayed, then sat and read the week's parish bulletin and waited, a common ritual in our lives as Catholics.

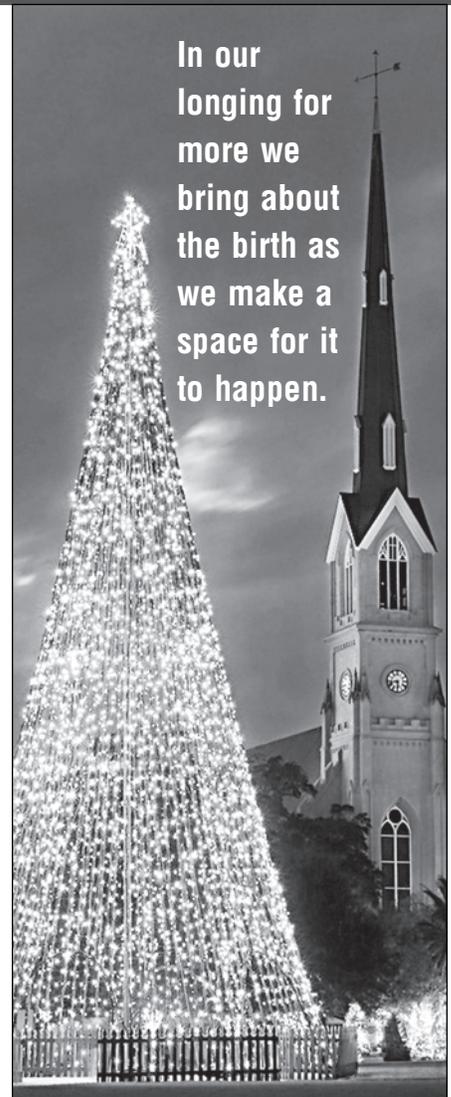
As we waited, we listened to the earnest choir squeak out Silent Night and then Mass began.

From the outset, things went awry. The choir and the clergy may have been earnest but they seemed unprepared. I watched the young, newly-ordained priest wave his arms frantically as he tried to interrupt the warbling choir so he could lay the Jesus figurine in the manger in front of the altar and offer a prayer. With the porcelain baby safe in his faux straw-filled hovel, the music squirmed back to life as the choir wheezed out a verse of O Come All Ye Faithful, beckoning us to join them. I looked around and noticed that few did.

As the liturgy came to a close, after some pro-forma thanks to the choir and to the young priest for a "wonderful homily" (in which he had simply read to us a passage from a letter from some Pope long-dead) the pastor wished us a Merry Christmas on behalf of the whole parish staff, reciting their names as if calling out Bingo numbers. And so, a mere forty-five minutes after we sat down in our pew, we were back in our car. Where was the joy?, I wondered. "Why do you go back there?", I asked my parents. They shrugged and laughed nervously, as if my question confused them.

It's hard to come home. I miss seeing the church full and singing loudly with others. I miss the beauty of the celebrations of my childhood parish, the gatherings that revealed to me who God was and how God was active. Mostly I miss the joy that was evident on the faces of those 'up there' - priests, musicians, ministers - that was contagious for those of us 'down here' in the pews. I know it's not nostalgia for old times gone past. In fact, I don't think the good old days were all that good. It's just that I desire more for my home parish than what I encountered there on Christmas Eve, more for the

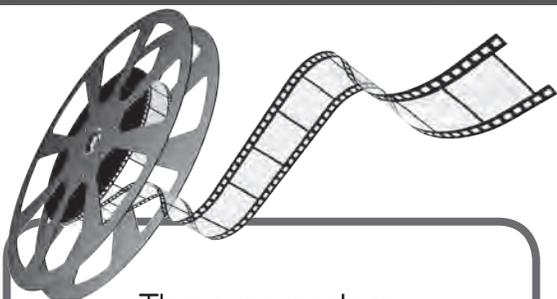
In our  
longing for  
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space for it  
to happen.



priests, musicians, my parents and their fellow parishioners, both old and new. I want more for them because I found more there myself at one time: call, challenge, beauty, joy. I'm sure of it.

I'm also pretty sure I'm not alone in longing. I think my parents (and people like them) keep going back to that church because they want more of what they already have: faith in the God who has faith in them, no matter the setting. Jesus was born. And in a pretty bleak place at that. In our longing for more we bring about the birth as we make a space for it to happen. In a dusty old manger or a dreary experience at church, God is born again in our time and in our place. That's worth remembering. ■

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



## Three crusaders

### *Elemental*

A film by Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee & Gayatri Roshan  
Starring Sue Deranger, Francesca Bertone, Mata Bhakti Priyananda



*Elemental* tells the story of three individuals united by their deep connection with nature and driven to confront some of the most pressing ecological challenges of our time.

The film follows Rajendra Singh, a former Indian government official, on a 40-day pilgrimage down India's once pristine Ganges river, now polluted and dying. Facing community opposition and personal doubts, Singh works to shut down factories, halt construction of dams, and rouse the Indian public to treat their sacred "Mother Ganga" with respect. Across the globe in northern Canada, Eriel Deranger mounts her own "David and Goliath" struggle against the world's largest industrial development, the Tar Sands, an oil deposit larger than the state of Florida. Deranger, being a young mother, struggles with family challenges while campaigning tirelessly against what is destroying Indigenous communities and threatening an entire continent. And in Australia, inventor and entrepreneur Jay Harman searches for investors willing to risk millions on his conviction that nature's own systems hold the key to our world's ecological problems. Harman finds his inspiration in the natural world's profound architecture and creates a revolutionary device that he believes can slow down global warming.

## Focus on family

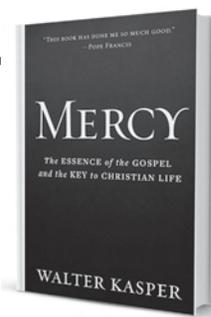


Realizing the need to look at the problems the modern family faces and to review the Church's response to these, Pope Francis convened an 'extra-ordinary Synod of Bishops.' To prepare for the Synod the bishops all over the world were asked to do something that was unprecedented - to gather the views of Catholics on important issues related to marriage and family through a public questionnaire. Individual Catholics were invited to send their responses directly to the Vatican. The preparatory document, called *lineamenta*, insisted on the urgency of tackling the widespread "social and spiritual crisis" that is affecting the family.

About 190 Catholic bishops and 14 married couples from around the world gathered at the Vatican from 05 to 19 October for a closed door meeting that discussed frankly a variety of issues related to the family. The discussions started by the Synod will continue for a whole year and will conclude with a larger meeting in 2015.

## Mercy

"This book has done me so much good," said Pope Francis. It has been called the most important book to be written by the well-known German theologian, Cardinal Walter Kasper. The book examines God's mercy and tries to respond to questions such as: What does it mean to believe in a merciful God? How are divine mercy and divine justice related? How can we speak of a compassionate God in a world of suffering and evil? Can undeserved woe and divine mercy be brought into harmony with each other? Kasper seeks to address also the ethical questions that the topic brings up: How can we measure up to the standard of divine mercy in our own actions? What does the message of mercy mean for the practice of the Church and how can we cause the central message of God's mercy to shine in the life of Christians and the Church? What does this message mean for a new culture of mercy in our society?



*Mercy*  
*The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*  
By Walter Cardinal Kasper  
Paulist Press, 2014, pp. 270



## A whole new series of challenges faced by JESA



Jesuits in Social Action (JESA) of the South Asia Assistency met in Bhopal from 10 Oct to 12, '14 for their 19th JESA Convention. About 95 Jesuits reflected and deliberated on the theme '40 years of GC 32 D 4: Challenges and Responses, Achievements and Failures, Hopes and Opportunities.' Excerpts from the statement they came up with at the end of the meeting:

### **We are inspired**

Reviewing the last 40 years we were inspired by the lives of many Jesuits and their engagements. Presentations of the forty-year journeys in Provinces/Regions and zonal and national institutions in social ministry amply demonstrated the great variety of interventions Jesuits are engaged in. The presence of many young Jesuits added value to our deliberations and sharing by seniors was edifying and inspiring. The participants were touched by several of our senior brothers present who shared with us in a very profound way the struggles which they face to assimilate and live the mandate of GC 32 - 'Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice'.

We realize and applaud the initiatives by individual Jesuits (some who have given their life) and institutions in some parts of the Assistency which were inspired by GC 32; these include the political empowerment of the socially excluded communities such as dalits, the accompaniment of Adivasis/tribals by strengthening gram sabhas and challenging displacement projects, promotion of human rights and free legal aid, justice and peace initiatives, expanding environmental awareness, and a few others which have provided greater identity to women, children and others.

### **We acknowledge**

On the other hand the convention acknowledged, with honesty and in humility that we have failed collectively to live up to the mandate of GC 32. From our sharing and deliberations, we realize that there has been an institutional failure to realize our mission of 'faith that does justice' due to structural causes, lack

of motivation that comes from a deep justice-centric spirituality, fear of risk-taking as justice-centric works have huge implications at many levels, lack of visionary leadership and also due to a paucity of appropriate planning and strategies. While the participants acknowledged that the justice dimension has percolated in many provinces in educational, pastoral and other ministries giving preference to the priority communities, it was also strongly felt that the initial vigour and daring spirit has slowly dwindled down, especially after 1991 when neo-liberal ideology became the order of the day.

The JCSA document in 2000, 'Walking with the Poor', the outcome of JESA evaluation 1999, invited all provinces to progressively transform charitable, developmental and social works into social action and strengthening people's movements in order to expand citizenship rights based on rights-based perspective. However, it was felt that this document was neither seriously considered nor implemented.

### **We are challenged**

We are greatly challenged with the reality of today in which neo-liberalism, religious fundamentalism, communalism, ethnic conflicts, identity-based exclusions, state-sponsored terrorism and emerging majoritarianism hold sway and which cause increasing marginalization and violence against our priority groups. Indeed, we are confronted today by a whole new series of challenges.

### **We pledge**

We, therefore, pledge to do all we can to assimilate, live and mainstream both in letter and in spirit 'Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice' which is unequivocally spelt out in Decree 4 of GC 32 and further expanded in the subsequent General Congregation documents. To further our mission and to be prophetic witnesses of the Gospel we have drawn up a plan of action for us and recommendations for the deliberation of the Provincials and JCSA and to initiate

time-bound action at the province and assistency levels.

### **Plan of Action**

*a. For ourselves:-* that we assimilate and live the spirit and letter of GC 32 D 4 in every possible way - that we focus our engagements on Social Action which is people-centred responding to the cries of the poor and marginalized of our times and accompanying them for a more just, equitable and human society - that we ensure that we do not fall prey or cater to an 'economy of exclusion', the new 'idolatry of money', 'to a financial system that rules rather than serves' and 'to the inequality which spawns violence'.

*b. For Provinces and South Asia Assistency:-* that we bring together the best of ours from the fields of management, communication, education and social action towards the possibility of putting together an Alternative Media which will be able to highlight the realities of South Asia - that we work out a re-education programme for the Assistency in collaboration with socially concerned academicians, intellectuals, activists of South Asia and Jesuits specialized in Ignatian spirituality and which could be coordinated by our two national Social Centres together with some of the Province Centres - that we undertake an assessment of social interventions and institutions at the assistency in order to re-orient and re-focus, and if need be even to close down, clearly setting priorities to maximize our resources according to the signs of the times.- that a specific proportion of personnel and financial resources be allocated for social ministry (JESA evaluation report of 1999 recommended 25 per cent) - that we promote collective action at the zonal, national and South Asia level in partnership with like-minded organizations working towards greater impact and policy changes. - that a comprehensive plan be worked out for every stage of formation which would motivate the formees for more meaningful insertion in our world today. ■

## Kerala Province clarifies its Vision and Mission

In what is considered to be yet another mile stone in its history, the Kerala Province has come out with a document, sent to all the members of the province. Its contents are the Vision and Mission statements of the Province and all its apostolates and institutions.

Realizing that a Vision Statement is necessary for strategic planning, as it clarifies our goals and a Mission Statement that clarifies the means or the measures to attain them, for some years now the Kerala Jesuits have been making efforts to formulate a Vision statement and a Mission statement. Only now we have been able to get the different Institutions, communities and the various apostolates to articulate a vision statement as well as a mission statement. And the Province as a whole has formulated a vision statement and a mission statement for itself. It is great that we could publish it in the year 2014 when we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Restoration of the Society:

*Vision:* A new society in Kerala which is rooted in God, characterized by equality, freedom, love, justice, peace and joy and which lives in communion with the cosmos.

*Mission:* Drawing inspiration from Jesus Christ and led by the Ignatian legacy, we, Kerala Jesuits, commit ourselves to building such a society through our involvements in the spiritual, intellectual, social, pastoral, educational, psychological, ecological and cultural dimensions of human existence.

St Ignatius, our founder, described us as “friends in the Lord”, GC 32 described us as “sinners yet called to be companions of Jesus” and GC 35 described our identity as “a fire that kindles other fires”. We need to enthuse ourselves with the zeal and the spirit of the first companions to enkindle other fires in our Province. The vision and mission statements are the fruit of our prayer, study, discussion, discernment at the level of community, commission and the Province. Therefore they have to be received, owned and implemented in the same spirit. Based on this all the apostolates have to formulate proper action plans, implement them and evaluate them periodically. We have begun a process, a process which has tremendous potential to bear much fruit, trusting in the infinite goodness and mercy of the Lord. Let us generously rededicate our lives in response to the call of the Lord to labour with him.

We are sent to the frontiers. Our mission is not limited to our work. To be missioned to this work at the new frontiers of our times always requires that we be rooted in Christ. Jesuits know who they are by looking at Jesus. The new context in which we live our mission today is marked by profound changes, acute conflicts and new opportunities. Though we are few and the plans are many, we can still devote our resources and toil to make them a reality. As all the members of the Province have actively participated in formulating the plan, the participation of all is also required to implement it. Nothing should curtail our spirit and enthusiasm. We are called to set all things alight with the love of God and be dedicated to Christ’s mission.

Fr Joseph Kallepallil, the former provincial, initiated the process and Fr M K George, the new provincial, is following it up with great earnestness and commitment.

We have miles to go before we sleep...

- Salvin Augustine, SJ

## Jesuit educators assess strengths and weaknesses

Jesuit Education Association (JEA) of South Asia had a 3-day meeting at Nav Jeevan Renewal Centre, Delhi. The meeting began on the evening on 22 Oct with Holy Eucharist. This Annual meeting of 2014 was significant in many ways. First, Fr. Norbert Menezes SJ (PAT), the veteran educationist, stepped down from the office after offering a decade-long selfless and dynamic leadership to JEA. Second, Fr. Sunny Jacob SJ (JAM) took the leadership from Norbert in a solemn Eucharist presided over by the Provincial of South Asia (POSA), Fr George Pattery. Thirdly, the meeting brainstormed on the issues affecting Jesuit education. All the province co-ordinators presented their reports with statistics, initiatives and concerns elaborated through the SWOT analysis. They had an in-depth look at a range of issues, particularly how a Jesuit school’s stakeholders imbibe the Jesuit legacy. For a Jesuit, education is a means of bringing socio-economic, political and cultural transformation in a society. At the governmental level various measures are being taken to enhance the quality of education, which is the foundation of the progress of any country. For Jesuits education is perhaps the most important ministry. And therefore, rooted in the Jesuit tradition and understanding the spirit of government rules, standing for our Constitutional rights we need to work towards a better education in our Jesuit schools.



The new Provincial of South Asia, Fr George Pattery appreciated the JEA for their contribution to the Assistancy and urged them to be one unified body in their approach. He encouraged the educationists to nurture openness, critical thinking, collaboration at all levels, accountability and innovative approach. We need to work for Zonal centers with full time co-coordinators with long term goals. He urged the JEA to contribute wholeheartedly to the forthcoming GC 36. Fr Norbert explained the thrust of the JEA during the last ten years. It was a scholarly presentation with apt clippings and handouts.

Fr Sunny placed before the PCEs the challenges and opportunities of Jesuit education today, and made everyone reflect and come out with suitable solutions to the challenges, and consider every challenge as an opportunity for us to better ourselves as educational leaders. The meeting took up some of the common issues that affect the South Asian education scenario and discussed them elaborately. There were two experts dealing with two relevant topics. One was Fr John Ravi, who presented a paper on ‘Guidelines for providing a secure environment to safeguard children and adults in our institution’. Fr George Peter conducted a session on Integrated Education model in our campuses with vocational and non-formal education. Fr Sunny asked the group to suggest an action plan for next year and important and relevant steps were suggested. JEA will prioritize them and work out a plan to be carried out at the province, Zonal, and JEA level.

- Sunny Jacob SJ

*At the conclusion of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family that took place at the Vatican on 05 -19 Oct '14 Pope Francis addressed the participants. Excerpts from his frank, insightful and eloquent speech:*

"I can happily say that – with a spirit of collegiality and of synodality

name of a *deceptive mercy* binds the wounds without first curing them and treating them; *that treats the symptoms and not the causes and the roots.* It is the *temptation of the "do-gooders," of the fearful, and also of the so-called "progressives and liberals."*

"Dear brothers and sisters, the temptations must not frighten or disconcert us, or even discourage us, because no disciple is greater than his master; so if Jesus Himself was tempted – and even called Beelzebul (cf. Mt



## **"Tensions and temptations"**

- Pope Francis's frank speech at the conclusion of the Synod

– we have truly lived the experience of "Synod," a path of solidarity, a "journey together."

"...And since it is a journey of human beings, with the consolations there were also moments of desolation, of tensions and temptations, of which a few could be mentioned:

– One, a *temptation to hostile inflexibility*, that is, wanting to close oneself within the written word, (the letter) and not allowing oneself to be surprised by God, by the God of surprises; within the law, within the certitude of what we know and not of what we still need to learn and to achieve. From the time of Christ, it is *the temptation of the zealous, of the scrupulous, of the solicitous and of the so-called "traditionalists" and also of the intellectuals.*

– The *temptation to* a destructive tendency born of goodness that in the

– The *temptation to transform stones into bread to break the long, heavy, and painful fast* (cf. Lk 4:1-4); *and also to transform the bread into a stone and cast it at the sinners*, the weak, and the sick (cf. Jn 8:7), that is, to transform it into unbearable burdens (Lk 11:46).

– The *temptation to come down from the Cross, to please the people*, and not stay there, in order to fulfil the will of the Father; to bow down to a worldly spirit instead of purifying it and bending it to the Spirit of God.

– The *temptation to neglect the depositum fidei* (the deposit of faith), not thinking of themselves as guardians but as its owners or masters; or, on the other hand, *the temptation to neglect reality, making use of a meticulous, smooth language* by which one can say so many things and say nothing! They call them "byzantinisms,"

12:24) – His disciples should not expect better treatment.

"Personally I would be very worried and saddened if it were not for these temptations and these animated discussions; this movement of the spirits, as St Ignatius called it (Spiritual Exercises, 6), if all were in a state of agreement, or silent in a false and quietist peace. Instead, I have seen and I have heard – with joy and appreciation – speeches and interventions full of faith, of pastoral and doctrinal zeal, of wisdom, of frankness and of courage: and of *parresia*. And I have felt that what was set before our eyes was the good of the Church, of families, and the "supreme law," the "good of souls" (cf. Can. 1752).

"And this is the Church, the vineyard of the Lord, the fertile Mother and the caring Teacher, who is not afraid

to roll up her sleeves to pour oil and wine on people's wounds; who doesn't see humanity as a house of glass to judge or categorize people. This is the Church, One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and composed of sinners, needful of God's mercy. This is the Church, the true bride of Christ, who seeks to be faithful to her spouse and to her doctrine. It is the Church that is not afraid to eat and drink with prostitutes and publicans. The Church that has the doors wide open to receive the needy, the penitent, and not only the just or those who believe they are perfect! The Church that is not ashamed of the fallen brother and pretends not to see him, but on the contrary feels involved and

Peter and under Peter), and the presence of the Pope is the guarantee of it all.

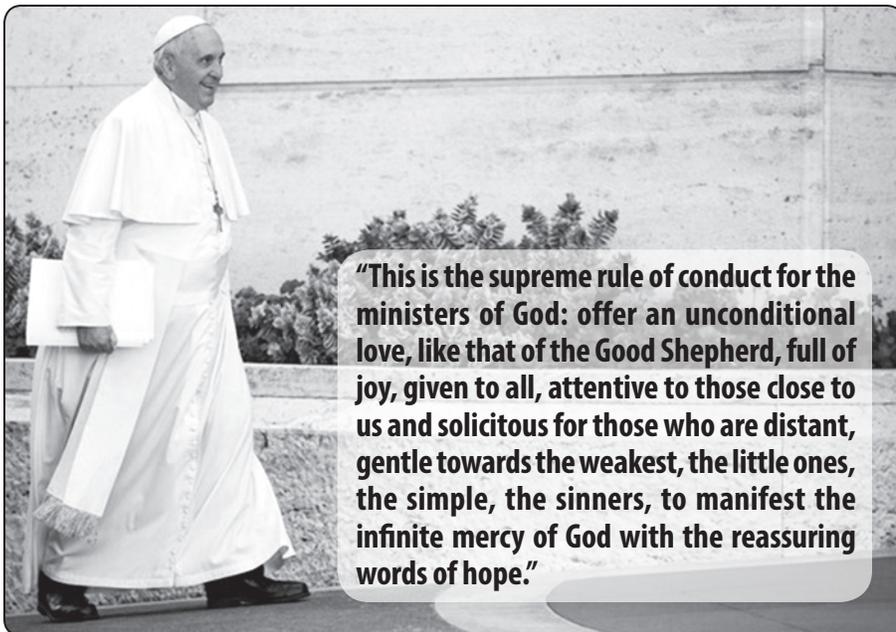
"We will speak a little bit about the Pope, now, in relation to the Bishops [*laughing*]. So, the duty of the Pope is that of guaranteeing the unity of the Church; it is that of reminding the faithful of their duty to faithfully follow the Gospel of Christ; it is that of reminding the pastors that their first duty is to nourish the flock – to nourish the flock – that the Lord has entrusted to them, and to seek and welcome the lost sheep – with fatherly care and mercy, and without false fears. I made a mistake here. I said 'welcome', that is a mistake. It should be to go out and find the lost sheep.

Commentary on the Gospel of St John, says: 'let it therefore be a commitment of love to feed the flock of the Lord' (cf. 123, 5); this is the supreme rule of conduct for the ministers of God, an unconditional love, like that of the Good Shepherd, full of joy, given to all, attentive to those close to us and solicitous for those who are distant (cf. St Augustine, *Discourse 340, 1; Discourse 46, 15*), gentle towards the weakest, the little ones, the simple, the sinners, to manifest the infinite mercy of God with the reassuring words of hope (cf. *ibid.*, Epistle, 95, 1)."

So, the Church is Christ's – she is His bride – and all the bishops, in communion with the Successor of Peter, have the task and the duty of guarding her and serving her, not as masters but as servants. The Pope, in this context, is not the supreme lord but rather the supreme servant – the "servant of the servants of God"; the guarantor of the obedience and the conformity of the Church to the will of God, to the Gospel of Christ, and to the Tradition of the Church, putting aside every personal whim, despite being – by the will of Christ Himself – the "supreme Pastor and Teacher of all the faithful" (Can. 749) and despite enjoying "supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church" (cf. Cann. 331-334).

"Dear brothers and sisters, now we still have one year to ponder, with true spiritual discernment, the proposed ideas and to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families - one year to work on the "Synodal Relatio" which is the faithful and clear summary of everything that has been said and discussed in this hall and in the small groups. It is presented to the Episcopal Conferences as *lineamenta* [guidelines].

"May the Lord accompany us, and guide us in this journey for the glory of His Name, with the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of St Joseph. And please, do not forget to pray for me! Thank you!"



**"This is the supreme rule of conduct for the ministers of God: offer an unconditional love, like that of the Good Shepherd, full of joy, given to all, attentive to those close to us and solicitous for those who are distant, gentle towards the weakest, the little ones, the simple, the sinners, to manifest the infinite mercy of God with the reassuring words of hope."**

almost obliged to lift him up and to encourage him to take up the journey again and accompany him toward a definitive encounter with her Spouse, in the heavenly Jerusalem.

"This is the Church, our Mother! And when the Church, in the variety of her charisms, expresses herself in communion, she cannot err: it is the beauty and the strength of the *sensus fidei*.

"...And, as I have dared to tell you, as I told you from the beginning of the Synod, it was necessary to live through all this with tranquillity, and with interior peace, so that the Synod would take place *cum Petro and sub Petro* (with

"The Pope's duty is to remind everyone that authority in the Church is a service, as Pope Benedict XVI clearly explained, with words I cite verbatim: "The Church is called and commits herself to exercise this kind of authority which is service and exercises it not in her own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ... through the Pastors of the Church, in fact: it is he who guides, protects and corrects them, because he loves them deeply..." (cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6)... "and it is through us," Pope Benedict continues, "that the Lord reaches souls, instructs, guards and guides them. St Augustine, in his

BY HEDWIG LEWIS, SJ

The entrance to the house in Torre del Melangolo in Rome had no signboard above it that said “Social Service Centre”, but thousands of impoverished and hungry people rushed there in the weeks before and after Christmas 1538 to receive help from the “companions of Jesus” who were reaching out to the needy in every possible way. “The cry of the poor was heard by Ignatius and the first companions in an entirely natural and, of course, entirely spiritual way. They could not have imagined introducing themselves as companions of Jesus without assuming his preferential love for the poor” (Kolvenbach 1997).

#### Large-scale enterprise

Since first settling in Rome in November 1537 with Peter Faber and James Laynez, Ignatius changed several residences, getting closer and closer to the nerve centre of the city the better to exercise their spiritual and social ministries. When they were joined by the other companions, they shifted to the house of Antonio Frangipani, near the Torre del Melangolo and the Piazza Margana (today I6 Via Delfin) in November 1538. This was the first time the companions lived together as one community. From there they went out each day to preach in the churches and the public squares. It was this house that would become the first “Social Service Centre” of the future Society of Jesus.

For several months in the winter of 1538-1539, Rome experienced an unusual series of natural disasters. Owing to failed crops, rising prices and scarcity of food, thousands of impoverished and hungry people fled from the countryside into the city, but found little relief. They were forced to sleep in the streets and squares. Many died from starvation and exposure to the cold.

Ignatius and his companions responded to this emergency with creativity, compassion, and courage, giving generously from their limited resources. They spent their days begging



### The first ‘Social Service Centre’ of the Society of Jesus

for bread, vegetables and firewood. At nightfall, though weary with their labours of the day, they would go out scouting for the needy. They brought them home, washed their feet, fed them with the alms they had begged for themselves, lit fires. They also collected enough straw to prepare beds. When the people were all together in a large room, one of the companions taught them Christian doctrine, to ensure that they were given spiritual nourishment as well.

It is recorded that they fed and cared for 400 people at a time. As the winter progressed, the catastrophe grew as well, forcing Ignatius to ask for more support and find another house to accommodate the increasing refugees. It is estimated that the companions gave assistance to about 3000 persons in a city of 40,000 inhabitants.

#### Primary charism

We must recall that the early Jesuits did not focus on the traditional ministries offered by other Religious. Instead, they ventured out to the marginalized in the society. Ignatius recounts in his *Autobiography* how on arriving in a city he would beg and live on alms, putting himself on the same level as the poor whom he was reaching out to.

Peter Faber and Diego Laynez, who founded the first Jesuit Confraternity in 1539 in Parma, had the members commit themselves to works of charity, especially

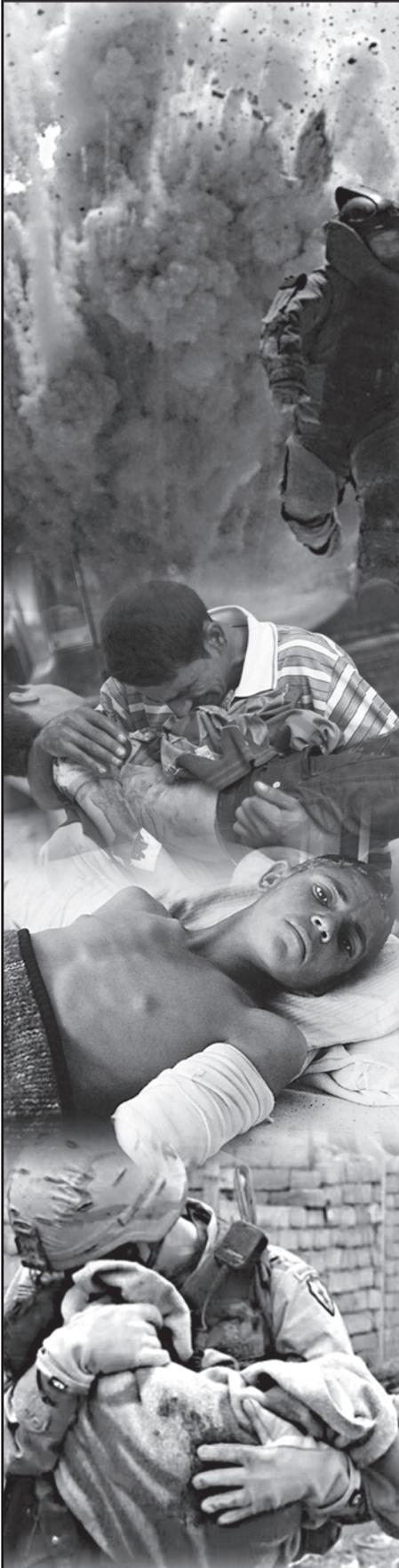
care of the poor. In the 1540’s, Ignatius started in Rome a Confraternity of twelve pious gentlemen, to take care of the alms collected at the sermons of the Jesuits in the Church of Our Lady of the Wayside and to distribute these among the poor. Ignatius’ instruction to Laynez and Salmeron upon their departure to the ecumenical Council of Trent was that they were to spend their out-of-session time in preaching and ministry of all kinds, each visiting the poor “at least once every four days”.

#### Fight for rights

Ignatius and his first companions coupled material charity with their efforts to seek social justice for the marginalized, the oppressed and the exploited groups. They sought collaborators and set up organizations and networks to continue the services. They offered themselves as spiritual directors to women as well, even at the risk of potential scandal. Ignatius made serious efforts to check prostitution, which was ravaging the city of Rome. He raised funds and founded what is probably the first institution of the infant Society, the “House of Santa Maria” for ‘reforming’ prostitutes in Rome in 1539, and also the house of St Martha and for Endangered Young Women, managed by lay-people.

The law banned beggary in Rome, partly because swindlers passed off as beggars. Ignatius used his influence to obtain from the Pope the Brief *Dudum per Nos* (1542), which moderated the ban. He established the Society of the Orphans, which took care of the sick or crippled.

It is significant that the Spiritual Exercises includes rules for the ministry of distributing alms (Ex 337). “The Exercises... give to ‘philanthropy’, to the preferential love for the poor, for all the poor, its true Christian dimension: the free response to the love for the poor which God from on high reveals in the poor Christ, who is rich in the Spirit” (Kolvenbach). The Formula of the Institute demands a readiness to “reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist those who are in prisons or hospitals and indeed to perform any other works of charity.”



## With the sound of cannons the carols drowned

BY HENRY W. LONGFELLOW

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along  
The unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime,  
A chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound  
The Carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
'There is no peace on earth,' I said;  
'For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!'

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
'God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men!'

Courtesy: <http://www.carols.org.uk/>



## Spiritual accompaniment

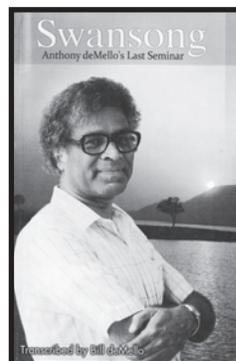
- Spiritual Accompaniment in the Gospel
- Franz Jalics, SJ
- Trans. by M. Altrichter, SJ
- Gujarat Shaitya Prakash  
Anand - 388 001, Gujarat
- Pages: 131; Price: Rs.120

The author of the book is a Hungarian Jesuit, who taught theology before becoming a retreat guide in Argentina, then the U.S. and now in Germany. The book, originally written in German, has been translated by Matthias Altrichter, a German Jesuit who has made India his home. "In this book I wish to show you how Jesus accompanied people on their spiritual journey," says Fr Jalics in his introduction. The book also points out what anyone who wants to be a spiritual companion should be and know.



## Last Seminar

- Swansong -  
Anthony deMello's Last Seminar
- Transcribed by Bill deMello
- Gujarat Shaitya Prakash  
Anand - 388 001, Gujarat
- Pages: 203; Price: Rs.150

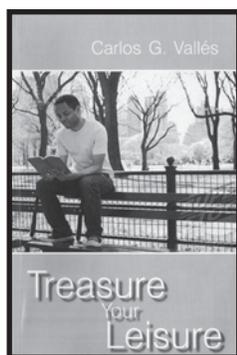


The book is a transcript of the last seminar offered by the well-known spiritual guru, Anthony deMello, SJ in Pune on 20-25 May 1987 - just a few days before he left for the U.S. for another seminar. He died the night before he was to start the seminar. Two participants - a priest and a Sister - gave the notes they had taken at this seminar to Bill, Anthony deMello's brother, so that he will publish them. The seminar talks deal with deMello's favourite themes - awareness, love and freedom.

## Our Leisure

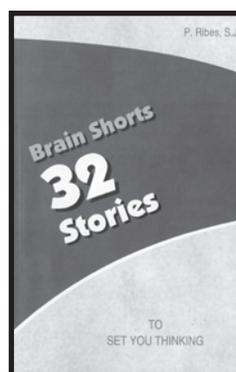
- Treasure Your Leisure
- Carlos G. Valles
- Gujarat Shaitya Prakash  
Anand - 388 001, Gujarat
- Pages: 172; Price: Rs.150

The veteran writer well-known to Indian Catholic readers comes up with yet another book - this time on cherishing and using our leisure. The book starts with the visiting card of Valles's Finnish friend. The card didn't mention his profession, his qualifications, his business etc. It had just a three-word quotation in Latin: *Otium Cum Dignitate*, which means 'Leisure with Dignity.' It happened to be the title Valles himself had given his doctoral thesis on Cicero when Valles was a student at Salamanca University. This is what the book is about. In his simple, readable style, Valles goes on to talk about leisure, sabbath, sabbatical, rest, peace and what are opposed to them. He illustrates what he says with his experiences and quotations from the Bible and other sources. Like all his books, this is certainly worth a read - in your leisure.



## To set you thinking

- Brain Shorts - 32 Stories to Set You Thinking
- Pedro Ribes, SJ
- Gujarat Shaitya Prakash  
Anand - 388 001, Gujarat
- Pages: 108; Price: Rs.100



The book is the latest from the tireless Spanish Jesuit, Pedro Ribes, SJ, who came to India in 1951 and has served as an educator, pastor, counsellor, spiritual guide, vocation promoter and retreat director. He has specialized in writing books with parables, stories and fables that are meant to help animators who deal with groups. This book is the last of his five books that aim at imparting moral and spiritual values. While his first book was for group animators and second, third and fourth for the general reading public, this one is for "a more mature and critical minded group of readers," he says, as it deals with socio-political and ecological problems our world faces today.



All of us at the Jivan Editorial office in Chennai, and Anand Press - GSP, in Anand, wish all the readers of Jivan a joy-filled Christmas!  
This Christmas Special Issue is dated Nov-Dec '14.  
The next issue of Jivan will appear in Jan '15.

## Please note!

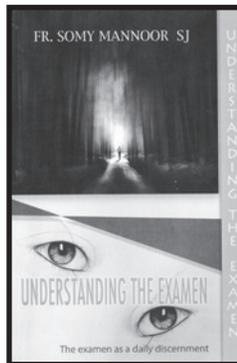
Jivan thanks Fr Hedwig Lewis, SJ, whose column, 'Roots' - on what is important to Jesuit identity and history - appeared in the past 30 issues of Jivan.



## Examen's value

- Understanding the Examen
- Somy Mannoor, SJ
- Gujarat Sahitya Prakash  
Anand - 388 001, Gujarat
- Pages: 72; Price: Rs.80

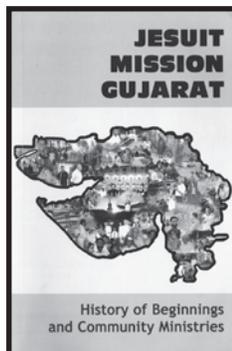
This is a booklet written by a young Jesuit who is specializing on Ignatian spirituality. It is about something very important to St Ignatius and, therefore, to the Jesuits and countless others who follow the Ignatian path. Examen, as any Scholastic will know, is examination of conscience. But, for Ignatius, it was not an examination - "not a self-corrective exercise, nor was it once-a-while warm-up step for approaching the Sacrament of Reconciliation." Somy Mannoor, SJ shows how the practice of examen can become a daily discernment.



## Gujarat Mission

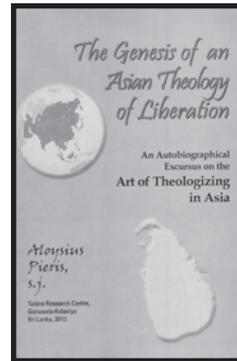
- Jesuit Mission Gujarat
- Ed. by Hedwig Lewis, SJ
- Gujarat Sahitya Prakash  
Anand - 388 001, Gujarat
- Pages: 113; Price: Rs.100

This book, a compilation of articles written by several individuals on the various missionary initiatives in Gujarat, has been edited by the well-known writer, Hedwig Lewis, SJ. It "recaptures the journey of Gujarat Jesuits, past and present, united by a single vision and mission: MAGIS-AMDG." A revised edition of an earlier book, this has been published during the year when Jesuits everywhere celebrate the 200th anniversary of their Society's Restoration.



## Asian Theology

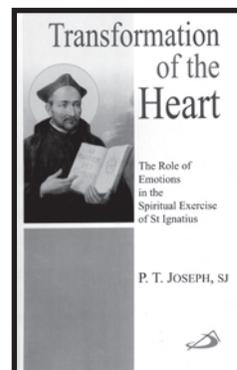
- The Genesis of an Asian Theology of Liberation
- Aloysius Pieris, SJ
- Tulana Jubilee Publications,  
Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
- Pages:220 ; Price: Not mentioned



This is a very important book for anyone who is interested in Asian theology, written by a renowned Asian theologian - Aloysius Pieris, SJ. Why do we need an Asian theology? Because "Rome and the West have been accomplices in five centuries of missionary praxis, which our non-Christian fellow Asians interpret, quite justifiably, as 'Euro-Ecclesiastical Expansionism'." So an Asian theology is "a historical necessity - not an expression of any antipathy towards the West," says Pieris.

## SE and EQ

- Transformation of the Heart
- P.T. Joseph, SJ
- St Paul's, 58/23rd Road, TPS III,  
Bandra, Mumbai - 400 050.
- Pages: 330; Price: Rs.250



P.T. Joseph, SJ, whose interests and specialization, range from management to spirituality, brings one of these - Emotional Intelligence - to his Jesuit legacy - Spiritual Exercises. Since a 'heart response' is the cornerstone of the Spiritual Exercises, Emotional Intelligence Studies have a lot to offer, as emotions play a main role in our spiritual journey, he affirms.

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P.B. 70, Anand - 388 001, Gujarat

**AMALRAJ SEBASTIAN, SJ**

(GUJ) 1946 - 2014



The news that Fr. Amal had passed away at 3 a.m. that night, was on the community notice board when I got to the dining room for breakfast on 13 Sept. Curiously he was born on 13 too but in the month of December, 1946. Three months before he could turn 68 he was gone.

Amal landed in Ahmedabad from Kalladithidal in Ramnad district of Tamil Nadu, after completing his pre-university studies, and joined St. Xavier's College as an economics student in June 1968. He would return 35 years later to the Xavier Residence on campus as Rector. When he joined the novitiate in 1969, I was a junior at Premal Jyoti, and I remember vividly the unfortunate accident and its aftermath that forced him to interrupt his noviceship. The response to rally around was characteristically remarkable, more so because the recovery was prolonged and made him endure much. He went on to take his first vows after returning to the novitiate in 1972, completed his formation, got ordained, studied law and did special studies to equip himself for the social action apostolate.

His years at the Xavier Residence Community were spent in leading us, as Rector of the community. One aspect of his leadership is reflected in the three edifices on the college campus that came up during his tenure. Getting these buildings going meant cutting through bureaucratic red tape and straddling administrative hurdles. By the time the buildings were nearing completion he was asked to move back to Vidyanagar, to Ashadeep. Amal left without rancour. Where better-endowed Jesuits chose to block with a "why", Amal, preferred to circumvent and overcome with a 'why not'. His basic calling as a Jesuit drew him to the social action apostolate. He worked at the BSC and earlier at Ashadeep and at the social center in Surat. With the smile and beyond the laugh, lived a Jesuit who knew suffering and pain in their stark reality. The trauma of the accident that occurred in the novitiate when he was on his cycle for his weekly catechism apostolate at the Sabarmati power house never left him. But Amal lived an important rule of our way of proceeding: a Jesuit must be ever prepared to be on the move.

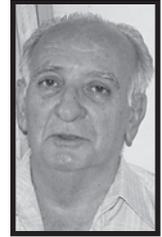
An unforgettable image of him for me will always be of him tucked in, sitting in the front seat of his vehicle, with his driver next to him, ready to hit the road. So comfortable was he on the move that he could be sound asleep in that vehicle. His handicap never stopped him. His Jesuit outlook on his apostolic calling took him to the West Indies, Columbia and Ireland, while the rehabilitation of his limbs took him to Spain. He was unstoppable.

In fact in the last couple of years before his transfer he experienced a heart problem requiring the insertion of a stent. When it was suggested that his travelling should be curtailed, he pleaded with the provincial saying "if you stop me from moving I will die. It is the thing that brings me life, and energy." The provincial relented. I guess he knew that this was one Jesuit who was not afraid to go.

- Vincent Braganza, SJ

**JOSE A. CORRAL, SJ**

(GUJ) 1939 - 2014



Jose Corral was probably the most complete Catholic missionary from Spain that worked in South Gujarat in the second half of the 20th century. He slipped through shortly before Pandit Nehru repented for his generosity in allowing missionaries from the West to freely enter India and closed the doors to them. Spain had reserved the best for the last.

Corral came to Adivasi Pragati Kendra, Vyara, in 1971, as a man in a hurry, delivered to the mission personally by the Provincial, José Arana. He didn't need to be told what to do, what his mission was. He had already charted his course long before he arrived in Vyara. He had worked as a regent in Bharuch where he first came into contact with the adivasis of South Gujarat. During his years as a scholastic he had studied the virtues of cooperatives in Spain and brought along his enthusiasm for them with the rest of his baggage.

He first chose to work in Mandal, unknown to him, the best choice he could have made for the future that awaited him. He used his experience in running a cooperative society to begin a milk cooperative society under the auspices of Sumul Dairy in Surat.

The Board officials of the Dairy strongly doubted that the adivasis could ever run milk societies like the ones in Anand and succeed. They hadn't yet met the likes of Fr Corral who liked nothing better than a challenge. Fighting all odds he had two Milk Cooperative Societies running successfully within two years in Mandal and Amji to the surprise and admiration of the Board of Sumul. It was a miracle that brought dignity and prosperity to the adivasis.

In 1975 he was sent to run the difficult mission of Umarpada. His great ambition there was to open a High School for adivasis, an attempt that ended in failure. In 1984, Fr. Corral returned to Vyara as Parish Priest. But he did not limit himself to social activities. He had to come to know the adivasis at a deeper level, to know the soul of the adivasi. For this purpose he read the available literature, learnt and spoke the local languages but more appropriately spent hours in the villages listening to stories of their ancestors and gods, which he later published.

In 1996 he returned to Spain for a year to be finally correctly diagnosed for a thyroid condition. On his return he spent the next years in Shamgahan, in the Dangs, and in Bardipada reading and writing his tales of the adivasis to be published in Spanish and English, finally returning to his parish in Vyara in 2004. He spent the years until his death in regular parish activities in the villages where he had always felt at home.

An apt tribute to him will be to say that he died having known at the deepest level what it means to be and live as an adivasi. He will be remembered primarily for the prosperity and dignity he brought to adivasis of South Gujarat through the Milk Cooperatives he began in Mandal and Amji - a trend which soon spread through the length and breadth of South Gujarat.

- Vally de Souza, SJ

## SHAILENDRA BARA, SJ

(RNC) 1953 - 2014



Fr Shailendra Bara was entrusted with the task of coordinating at the Province level 200th Jubilee celebration of the restoration of the Society, a responsibility which he carried out diligently till the time of his departure. While waiting for all the members of the committee for the meeting at XISS on 30 June '14 he suffered a massive stroke. Fr Shailendra was rushed to the I.C.U.

of Guru Nanak hospital where he died of a cardiac arrest on 06 July. After the funeral Mass held in the Cathedral on 07 July attended by a large number of priests, Religious and lay faithful, his remains were laid to eternal rest at the Kantatoli cemetery.

During his 61 years of a short span of life, Fr Shailendra had fought the good fight. He had finished the race, he had kept the faith. He was a fervent Christian and a zealous Jesuit priest. Born in a traditional and orthodox Catholic family of 12 children to Mr. Elias and Mrs. Ignatia, at Fatimanagar, Ranchi on 25 June 1953, Shailendra was initiated into the Catholic faith from his early days, which, in the course of time, inspired him to join the Society, and serve the Lord and his people as a Jesuit priest.

After his initial school education at St Aloysius, Ranchi, and later at St John's, Ranchi as an apostolic boy, young Shailendra proved to be a good candidate to the Society of Jesus. He entered the Novitiate at St Stanislaus' College, Sitagarha in 1972, and took his first vows in 1974. Thereafter he did his studies and underwent the usual Jesuit formation: Bachelor's degree at St Xavier's College, Ranchi, Regency in the Apostolic School, Ranchi, Philosophy at Shembaganur and Theology at De Nobili College, Pune. Shailendra was ordained a priest at St. Mary's Cathedral, Ranchi on 04 May 1985.

And barely after a month, Shailendra enrolled himself at the Biblicum, Rome for the licentiate programme, and obtained the degree in Scripture in 1989; and the same year he joined the staff at Regional Theologate, Arsanday, as a Scripture professor. He served the young Scholastics and Seminarians in various capacities as a professor, dean of studies, and Province Coordinator for formation. Fr Shailendra edited *Tarang Bharati*, a diocesan newspaper, for a couple of years, and then became the chief editor of *Nishkalanka*, a regional Hindi monthly, a post which he held till his death.

His faith and spirituality and a human approach made him a person who was greatly sought after by many religious congregations in and around Ranchi for spiritual direction, seminars and retreats. He was soft spoken, a man of a few words, but action-oriented. He meant business and demanded a great deal from himself, but towards others he was gentle, kind and loving. And as such, he enjoyed the company and friendship of many good people, both old and young from every walk of life. No wonder a large number of people from all religions flocked to the Cathedral for the funeral Mass on 07 July '14.

- Sudhir Kumar Minj, SJ

## STEPHEN KULANDAISAMY, SJ

(MDU) 1958 - 2014



The sudden death of Fr Stephen Kulandaisamy came as a huge shock to everyone. From ISI, Bangalore he had gone to DNC, Pune to teach a course on Social Analysis. On 16 Sept after supper he went for a walk with a few Madurai Scholastics. When they were near the grotto of the Papal Seminary he suddenly collapsed. He was rushed to the hospital where the doctors, after trying in vain to revive him, declared him dead due to a massive cardiac arrest. His body was brought to the DNC Chapel, where all in the campus and nearby areas came to pray, and later flown to Chennai. The casket was received by his younger brother, Inigo, and family and friends on the night of 17 and was taken home to his family in Palavakkam. Early in the morning of 18, his last remains were brought to Loyola and were laid in state at Sauliere Hall. A stream of visitors including some noted public figures from political parties, Sisters, priests and religious, paid their last respects.

Stephen Kulandaisamy was born in 1958 in Trichy where his father worked in our College Laboratory and served as a committed Catechist in our parish church. Stephen joined the Society in 1980 and was ordained in 1993. He made his final commitment in 2006. Having studied law he became an expert in dealing with knotty legal issues related to land and property. He made a significant contribution to the Province by visiting our institutions and putting in order their land and property documents. He stayed for some time at the Province curia at St Mary's, Dindigul and helped Br Kulandairaj who was the Province Treasurer. An effective teacher, Stephen conducted courses on financial management to Sisters of several Congregations and helped them in dealing with legal problems. For three years from 2005 - 2008 he served as the Rector of St Mary's, Madurai. He worked at LAAS, our Legal Action Centre, for two years. From 2010 he was at ISI, Bangalore as staff, Acting Superior, and then in charge of Human Rights cell.

On 18 Sept Fr Francis Jayapathy, Rector, Loyola, said the prayers at 3.00 pm to begin the procession to the college church. Fr Jebamalai Raja gave a short bio-sketch of Fr Stephen. The funeral Mass was presided over by former Archbishop Chinnappa of Madras-Mylapore and Bishop Soundararaju of Vellore along with Fr Provincial, Chennai Mission Superior and about 50 priests. Fr Provincial offered the condolences of the entire Jesuit family to the brother and sisters and relatives of Fr Stephen. Fr Joseph Antony Samy, who preached the homily, spoke with great unction on Fr Stephen's daring spirit, evident from his young days, which characterized his whole life and ministry. The eulogies were given by Fr Selva from ISI, Sr Stella, Superior General of the Gonzaga Sisters, Br Irudayam, cousin of Fr Stephen and by Inigo, Stephen's brother. After the final prayers said by Archbishop Chinnappa and Fr Jebamalai Raja, amidst the highly emotional farewells from over a thousand people, the mortal remains of Fr Stephen Kulandaisamy were laid to rest at the Loyola cemetery.

- Francis Jayapathy, SJ

## Voluntary retirement

Recently a telephone lineman, after speaking to me casually for a while, switched to something serious. 'A problem, sir,' he said. 'I am forced to take voluntary retirement. I do not know what I would do after I take a voluntary retirement', he said. I could see he was worried.

Getting rid of employees after inducing them to a 'voluntary' retirement is a trend quite common in the corporate world. When a company is unable to cope with unionization of its workers, it is often unable to compete with its rivals and make a profit. Soon the company starts losing a lot of money and faces a crisis, when it is unable to maintain the company and pay the workers. So VRS comes as a unique and attractive tool to cope with the crisis, as the direct retrenchment of the workers is hazardous and costly.

Come to think of it, Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) does look very attractive for the gullible worker. One supposedly gets a huge amount and this is what motivates the poor worker to voluntarily resign his job. But the worst part of the VRS happens when a person is out of work and the money is spent. He is completely at a loss. He does not know what to do - what he can do. This trend of VRS may be knocking at the doors of our religious life. Or has it already made inroads into Religious congregations?

Just basking in the yesteryear's limelight, refusing to lift a finger for any work in the present, and yet being ever ready to offer negative comments and hasty judgements on what is done by the present provincial, the principal, superior, director and every one else... Not ready to do anything, they will be eager to suggest what others must or must not do.

I am frightened to think of such a situation for myself - being forced into a situation when I will not be able to utilize any of my talents and unable to contribute anything to the community or the Society. It is indeed a terrible prospect.

- Anil Chakranarayan, SJ  
Pune - 411 030

## Right from the beginning

The cover stories you are publishing in Jivan on our suppression and Restoration can serve a very useful purpose, if they are read by all Jesuits, as they remind us forcefully of our identity and our mission. Right from the beginning St Ignatius believed our mission was universal, that Jesuits have to be 'friends in the Lord' and that we can never ignore the intellectual dimension of our ministries. He writes, "My nine friends in the Lord arrived here from Paris in mid-January. All are Masters of Arts and well-versed in theology. Four are from Spain, two from Savoy, and one from Portugal." (from Venice, 24 July 1537).

- Felix Joseph, SJ  
Villupuram, T.N. - 605 102

## In El Salvador

The initiatives to mark 25 years since the martyrdom of the Jesuits in El Salvador remind me of my visit to the country exactly a year ago - a visit that made a great impression on me. When talking about Romero, Ellacuria and others, it is necessary to remember also the Jesuit priest, Rutilio Grande. We sometimes tend to forget him, but he was the proto-martyr in that country, assassinated in 1977 due to his stand for Gospel values.

When I was there I attended a lecture by Jon Sobrino. Although my sketchy knowledge of Spanish did not enable me to fully grasp all that Sobrino was saying, I could understand that the relationship between Romero and Ellacuria was not always smooth at the start. However, they later grew in mutual appreciation of each other. There is a museum which contains the relics of the martyrs including the clothes they were wearing when assassinated.

My room in the community was next to the spot where our six brothers were killed. Somehow I could feel a strong, supernatural presence there all along. I also spent many moments in prayer in the room of Elba and Celina, and at the tomb of the martyrs. A beautiful poem, inscribed on this tomb, left me in tears.

I could feel that the spirit of Romero and the Martyrs is very much alive in El Salvador. This came across strongly in my conversations with the CLC members there. So this was a visit that made a mark on me. On the one hand, there was this impact of these martyrs' heroic witness to faith and justice. On the other hand there were the uncomfortable questions about my own commitment to justice and to the poor.

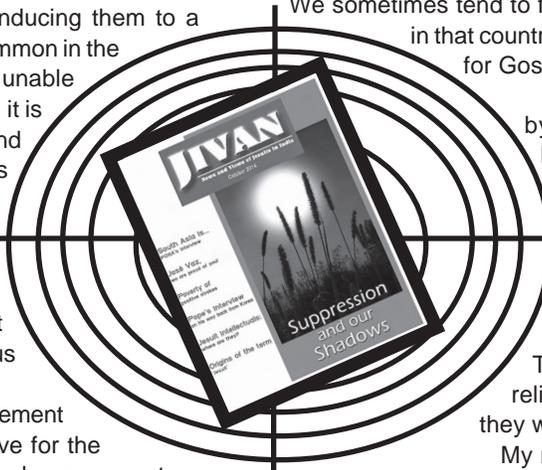
- Luke Rodrigues, SJ  
Rome

## What will we do?

The whole world is witnessing the atrocities committed against Christians in Iraq and Syria for quite some time now. We hear of appalling, gruesome massacres - even of innocent children. Women are raped, children's heads are chopped off and men are crucified - for simply remaining Christians and refusing to convert to Islam.

The ISIS militants are said to be killing every Christian they meet, if they are not ready to convert to Islam. How many of us are pained to see our fellow brothers and sisters being tortured and butchered like animals, just because of their faith? Some of us feel indifferent, because they are not our relations and are in far off lands. Will we be able to say yes to Jesus just like these Christians in Iraq and Syria did, even when the sword is on our neck ready to strike? Or will we just give up our faith when this sort of situation comes our way? If that is the case, then our faith has not really taken deep roots in our lives.

- Darimioo Susngi, SJ  
Bangalore - 560 027



# Lessons for Life

## I've learned from Cambodia

BY AMALAN THAINESE, SJ

### We are not alone

I carried my luggage and entered the Jesuit Service, Sisophon property alone, with no fellow Jesuits to welcome me. Ha ha ha! Later at noon, I managed to find a packet of noodles, prepared my lunch, stood to say grace and realized, with a 'goose-bump' experience, that I was standing alone. A strange foreboding crept up within me. After having always lived in larger Jesuit communities, it was a challenge to live alone and manage everything myself. The beautiful garden, however, the chirping of lovely birds around the house, the work and the amiable staff never let me feel lonesome and made me feel safe and secure at the end of each day. I learnt that our Lord never leaves us alone.

### We need to trust

My work director advised me to meet the commune and village leaders before meeting the families in the villages in order to assess the needs of the disabled and poor of Banteay Meanchey Province. Initially, I hesitated to go alone, since Indians have the notorious reputation of being drug dealers and are derogatorily known in the villages as "mosquito-net sellers." I first met Mr. Tem Meun, the commune leader of Tuol Pongro, who warmly welcomed me, discussed the needs of the people and later gave me a letter signed by him which read, "I am sending Mr. Amalan. Please treat him well." I was touched by his trust. Later in the villages I never ever felt unwelcome. The people were always warm and kind, without my ever having even showed the letter. I learnt to walk with trust and hope.

### Genuine appreciation motivates people

Cambodians have a natural flair for appreciating and cheering others up. They valued my desire to be of help to them. Once in our Jesuit-run Light of Mercy home for children with disabilities a blind boy told me, "Bongbroh, saat nah!" (You are handsome, brother!) A deaf and dumb girl articulated, "Bongbroh neeyay pheasa Khmer laor nah!" (Brother, you speak Khmer very well) I burst out laughing. I thought they must be joshing me. But, no, they really want

Sch Amalan Thainase, SJ (G.U.J) did his regency in Cambodia from 2012 to 2014. He worked in Jesuit Service, Sisophon, Cambodia where worked with the disabled and the poor.



to show their appreciation to anyone who tries to help them and encourage them. Genuine appreciation does help.

### A smile makes you more handsome

Smiles! Smiles! Smiles! In villages or towns, in the market or on a journey, everywhere every Cambodian warmly smiles, greets and engages you in conversation gracefully. I wondered how their faces could brighten up just by seeing people. Buddhism has it that a smile is a sign of harmony and spirituality. Interestingly enough, I found such warm and infectious smiles are typical only of Cambodians and not of Buddhists of neighboring countries. I learnt that a smile does indeed light up my face.

### Equality is a true sign of progress

In all social, political and economic realms men enjoy power and freedom while women are condemned to poverty, illiteracy and gender discrimination. Girls in rural areas discontinue their education to take care of their younger siblings. But Cambodians are beginning to understand that some of their traditional social norms bring about such gender imbalances and want to eliminate them. Equality is a true sign of progress.

### Future is what matters

Walking through the killing fields and genocide museums of Cambodia, one can hear the cries and feel the cruel tortures of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. The elders share their stories of how

they saw their near and dear ones being brutally murdered and how they managed to survive the nightmare. Landmines are still a threat to people in the villages. But such a terrible history and calamities haven't prevented them from gathering their resources and building their lives anew. We must learn from Cambodian people never to be overwhelmed by feelings of resentment, anger or revenge.

### True religion teaches compassion

Most Cambodians begin and finish their lives in Pagodas (Buddhist temples). Children live in Pagodas for some years as monks, study and get initiated into the religious teachings of love, peace, justice and harmony. In their old age, too, they go back to the pagodas with gratitude and service. They are keen to do good deeds and avoid evil. This is the most important lesson: nothing gives us peace and joy as true religion.



# Father of light,

*A child is born for us  
and a son is given to us.*

*Your eternal Word leaped down from heaven  
in the silent watches of the night,  
and now your Church is filled with wonder  
at the nearness of her God.*

*Open our hearts to receive his life  
and increase our vision with the rising of dawn,  
that our lives may be filled with his glory and his peace,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*

Source: <http://www.catholicdoors.com>



# MOMENTS



*“I will honor Christmas in my heart,  
and try to keep it all the year.”*

*- Charles Dickens*