

JIVAN

News and Views of Jesuits in India

March 2015



TRANSFORMATION towards GC 36

Kidnapped Jesuit

freed after 8 months

Ghar Wapsi

this Lent

Peter Balleis

interview

People's Convention

in Ahmedabad

Transformation

in Formation

Jivan Awards

go to...

St. Joseph the Merciful

BY EDWIN DALY, SJ

(Affectionately dedicated to St Joseph, Patron of the Society of Jesus)

With age and careful study of his parent young Jesus began to see God
In Joseph, his Foster-Father. Then slowly a wonderful fact
Became clear that Yahweh is his Heavenly Abba, his Daddy, his Papa,
More steady than a rock, more tender than a mother nursing her tiny babe.
Joseph loved his wife Mary and admired her no end. How merciful
He was towards her when she was accused of infidelity
This same medicine of mercy Jesus learned and showed it to the much-married lady
At the Well, the woman taken in adultery and every woman he ever met.
Joseph enjoyed his work. He teaches us today it's not money nor the work
That gives us dignity and promotes self-esteem. It's the way the work is done.
Joseph the Worker by his example still fosters love of working with our hands.
Are we listening as he promises us rich rewards for humble, manual labor?



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MARCH 2015

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As a service of information for the South Asian Jesuit Assistency, *Jivan* is sent to Jesuits and their colleagues, collaborators and friends. Articles appearing in *Jivan* express the views of the authors and not of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia. The Editor regrets he is unable to return articles and photographs. So please keep a copy of whatever you send for publication. All material sent for publication may be edited for reasons of space, clarity or policy. Readers are requested to donate generously towards Jesuit ministries.

Until about a week ago I had thought that what I should comment on this time was the miracle that happened in February in the Delhi elections. But another miracle happened on 22 Feb '15 and pushed the Delhi miracle back.

On 22 Feb a brother who had been lost was found. A brother who almost died rose to life and appeared to all who knew him. Alexis Premkumar, SJ, the 47-year old Jesuit of MDU province in India, who was working for JRS in Afghanistan, was abducted by a group of militants on 02 June last year. In spite of the persistent efforts of an international team of Jesuits and the JRS, days passed and hopes receded without any clue to his whereabouts.

Then on 22 Feb Indian TV channels flashed the twitter message of Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi that said that the Indian government has secured the release of Fr Premkumar and that he was on his way back to India. That evening Premkumar landed in Delhi.

Three days later on 25 Feb he flew to Mumbai and met all the Jesuit Provincials gathered for the JCSA meeting. In the evening Stan Fernandes, JRS Director in India, Francis Jayapathy, Rector, Loyola, Chennai, Albert William, Secretary, Loyola and I went to the Chennai airport along with most of his family to receive him. Later presiding over a community Mass at Loyola, he described through a song all that he went through during his captivity and shared freely about how he coped. Everyone there will remember what he said about the value of prayer.

To my questions he came up with ready and clear responses that showed that the eight months with the Talibans have not taken away anything that the Society of Jesus had given him in 27 years. To read my questions and his answers please turn to p. 13-15.

Now to the other Indian miracle.

In the last issue I had written about the completely unexpected defeat of former Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapaksa in Jan '15 elections and what it meant for the people of that beautiful country.

God gave us another miracle very soon - in February. When the BJP claimed

it will win a majority of seats in the Delhi assembly elections, all pollsters predicted it will win over 30 seats. The people of Delhi thought otherwise. The BJP got 3 seats and the Congress that ruled Delhi for 15 years got 0 seats and Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) got 67 seats out of the total 70!

Of all the numerous commentaries on this spectacular victory of a new party that was born of an anti-corruption movement and stands for 'alternative politics' what I liked the most was Vinita Dawra Nangia's. In her column in *Times of India* she called it 'a triumph of values' (22 Feb '15).

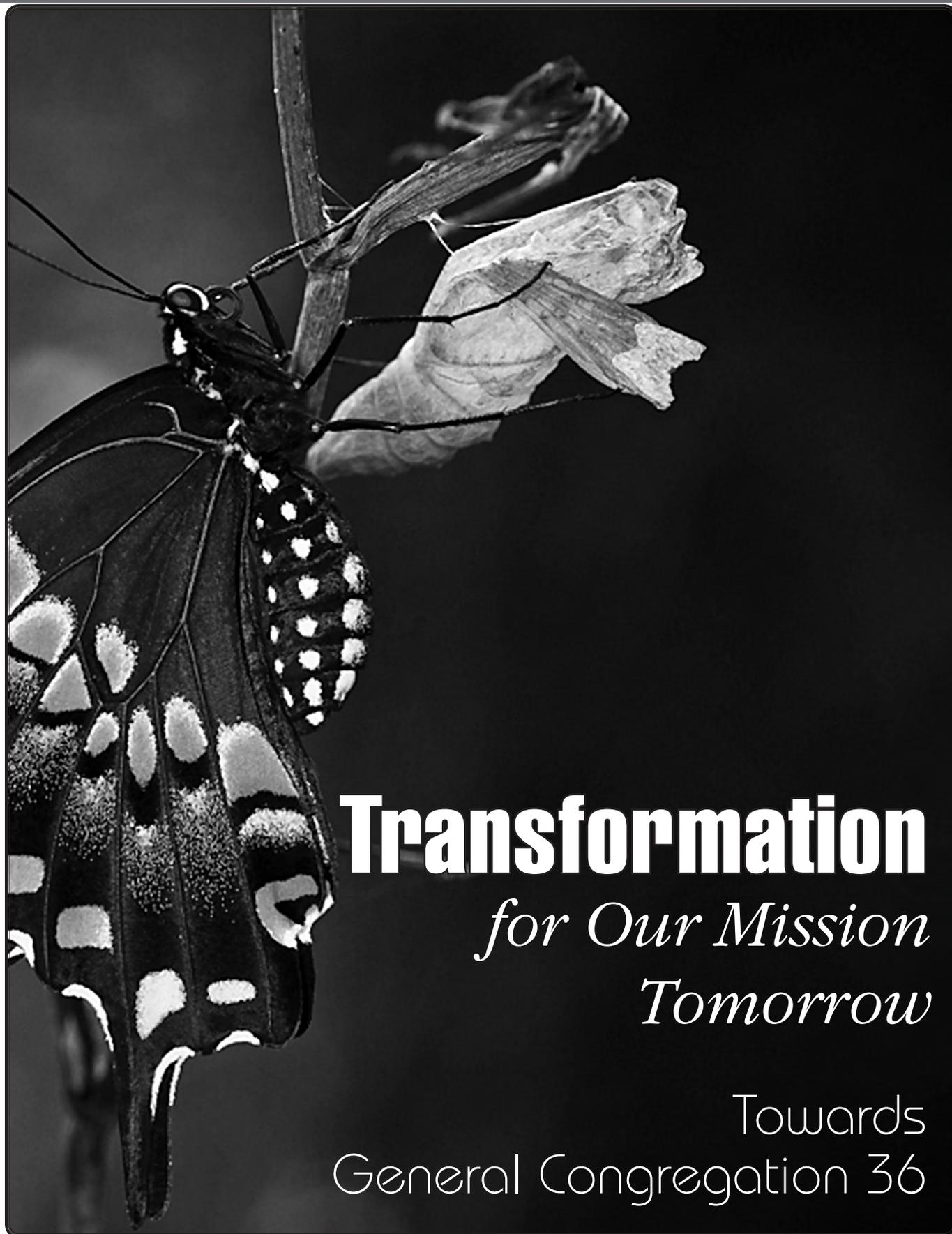
What values? "The Delhi election results to me are a triumph of values. The value of seeking forgiveness, and the value of being forgiven. The value of upholding honesty, and rejecting corruption! The value of modesty over arrogance. The value of consistency and delivering what you promise, and the value of holding politicians accountable!"

"The election results also uphold the value of sticking to your principles and agenda, rather than trying to attack opponents. It is a literate, evolved and very responsible electorate that participated in the democratic process in Delhi. An electorate that was neither swayed by any wave or passion, nor by Hindu-Muslim polarization. The Delhi electorate has proved itself to be amazingly sensitive, evolved, and morally mature."

Wonderful as it is for the people of Delhi, it will not amount to much, if the entire nation does not gain anything from this muffler-clad David's momentous victory over a complacent Goliath.

What do you think India has gained? Now everyone knows that voters cannot be bought or cheated every time - that waves can be stopped - that a clean, honest broom can sweep away complacency and cockiness - that the rulers cannot imagine that they can say or do anything with nobody to stop them - that they cannot be smugly silent all the time but have the moral obligation to speak up - that the corrupt politicians will be punished by people themselves if not by courts...

So... thank the Lord of miracles and ask for more miracles! - M.A.J.A.



Transformation
for Our Mission
Tomorrow

Towards
General Congregation 36

BY RUDOLF C. HEREDIA, SJ

I. Immediate Contexts

Most recently two events have opened a new horizon of possibilities for renewal and reform for both the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus: the election of Pope Francis on 13 March 2013, who has brought a tsunami of change in the Church: and the convocation of the 36th General Congregation to be held on 02 Oct 2016 and the expectation of a new General. Both events have significant relevance for this largest assistancy of the Society.

II. Contemporary Scenario

The Church in South Asia is a very small minority in a very large and enormously complex, and now increasingly problematic social situation. It has still not shaken off its colonial past. Unlike Sikhs and Buddhists, Christians are still considered foreign. With the ominous rise of saffron neo-liberalism in India, along with Muslims, they are being painted as threatening outsiders.

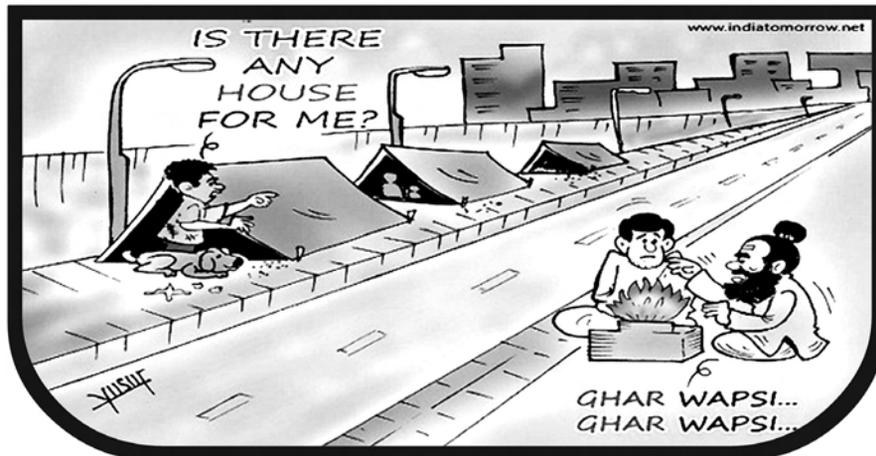
In South Asia the transition from tradition to modernity, rural to urban, agriculture to industrialisation has been uneven and inequitable. It has failed to deliver on its promise of a better world for all. Now collective discontents of such a failed development scapegoat on vulnerable poor and minority communities.

The Nehruvian idea of a democratic, secular, socialist India is being displaced by an agenda for a Hindu rastra; Gandhian socialism is replaced by an unsustainable market-driven capitalism. Hindutva, in both its soft and hard avatars, inspires a majoritarian religious fundamentalism, while defensive religious minorities react with their own fundamentalism. A spiral of accelerating communal polarisation results. Growing social inequality and religious polarisation inevitably lead to increasing violence and the loss of India's rich cultural diversity and once tolerant religious pluralism.

III. The Post Vatican II Society

The aggiornamento of Vatican II (1962-1965) opened a window in the Church to the modern world, and a new refreshing wind swept away the post Reformation "fortress Catholicism", so entrenched after Vatican I. The Council required a sensitivity to discern the signs of the times and the daring to respond to them. This was a "hermeneutic moment". It needed a "new language" that was both "subversive and generative"; it had to be seized with "creative fidelity". (Hanvey, James, 2001, "Refounding: Living in the middle time", *The Way*, Supplement, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp.30 – 41) This was a paradigm shift that demanded an interrogation of the old and an empowerment of the new, a prophetic witness to new ways of being Church.

Growing social inequality and religious polarisation inevitably lead to increasing violence and the loss of India's rich cultural diversity and once tolerant religious pluralism.



Vatican II in its "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life" called for a "return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time." (*Perfectae Charitatis*, no.2) The Society began this with GC 31 in 1966, which elected Fr Pedro Arrupe its General. The defining moment came with GC 32, (1974-75) Dec. 4, "Our Mission today", which defines our mission anew for our world. From "the defence and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls", in the Formula of the Institute to: "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. ...". (GC 32, Dec. 4 No. 2)

GC 34 (1995) reconfirms this, and in Dec 2, No 47 integrates the service of faith and the promotion of justice with inculturation and dialogue. GC 35 intertwined three themes: identity, mission, community, and challenges us to a prophetic witness: "our lives must provoke the question: 'who are you, that you do these things ... and that you do them in this way?'" (GC 35, Dec.2.No. 10) As we prepare for the GC 36 in 2016, we would do well to take stock of where we are and how we got here, and where God is now calling us. How will we respond

as we are “sent to new frontiers” (GC 35, Dec 3) of our multiple and plural worlds? What does our *magis* challenge us to? How do we interrogate ‘terms of the prevailing discourse’?

content and methods in an academic community, to institutional prestige, too easily measured in quantitative terms of scale, of academic prestige based on performance in examinations,

a way that we are able to effectively witness to the kingdom. Settling in to a comfort zone is the death knell of any prophetic witness which disturbs the status quo and pays the price for it.

Our schools and colleges have moved from witnessing to the kingdom with creative content and methods to institutional prestige, too easily measured by demand for admissions and performance in examinations.



IV. Prophetic Witness and the Service of Faith

Given our institutional overload and our declining numbers, there is an inevitable crisis looming on the horizon waiting to crash in on us. We need prophetic institutions which will witness to the kingdom, where people can encounter and be challenged by the gospel and its values. We need to learn for it and build on it. But there is no blue print for such institutions.

Our way of proceeding is to discern and dare together.

Already there is an increasing displacement of goals in many of our institutional commitments, at times for reasons beyond our control. In our schools and colleges, which is by far the major commitment of the Society, certainly in India, we have moved from witnessing to the kingdom with creative

and being sought after by an upwardly mobile clientele; in our parishes, unable to build counter-cultural communities of solidarity around the church, we have settled for the status quo and minister to a popular religiosity that is devout and petitionary rather than humanly liberating and other-oriented.

Further, Jesuit directors of works are not actually accountable to their governing bodies. These have become formalities. Hence institutional policies and administrative accountability lack continuity that corporate governance is meant to provide. We need effective institutional structures that articulate a viable agenda in an action-reflection-action praxis, and pursue it with prudence and courage. Given our limited resources and the enormous challenges we face we need to strategically position ourselves and our institutions in such

V. Reconciliation and the Promotion of Justice

In empowering the powerless and oppressed, we have focused rather exclusively on enabling them to claim their rights and seek justice. But GC 35 calls us to “A Mission of Reconciliation” (Dec. 3, Nos. 12-): to “promote reconciliation and peace”, (No. 18) with God (No. 18), with one another (No. 25), with creation (No. 31-) “and to witness to the reconciliation in solidarity of all the children of God” (No. 43). This inclusive reconciliation was affirmed as part of our mission of faith and justice: “for the reconciliation of men and women among themselves, which is the reconciliation God demands, must be based on justice” (GC 32, Dec. 4 No. 2). This has been neglected. Our social analysis and action have been contestational and even confrontational.

In South Asia we have had an uncritical application of Latin American liberation theology, premised on this conflict model and a confrontational praxis. We have not sufficiently considered Aloysius Pieris’s *Asian Liberation Theology* (Orbis, NY, 1998), premised on a critique of our Asian situation. Here in marked contrast to Europe and the Americas, popular culture is characterised by an enormous religiosity; society by religious pluralism; its social ethic by renunciation and voluntary poverty. A liberation theology based on these would be able to integrate Gandhi’s dharma-inspired ahimsa and Ambedkar’s inclusive, egalitarian republicanism. In our context it is this which would be hugely convincing and enormously effective in the promotion of justice and the service of faith.

We need to reaffirm and live the integration of all these six: a faith that does justice, which brings peace,

which is sustained by reconciliation, which reaches out in forgiveness, which culminates in harmony. They are all part of our mission today and will be our mission tomorrow as well.

For the justice of the kingdom must include reconciliation and forgiveness, a faith that reaches out to other faiths in inter-religious dialogue, a mission that expresses itself in solidarity with the cultures of the people it serves. Thus the service of faith and the promotion of justice extends into a ministry of reconciliation and beyond:

no harmonious peace without justice,

no sustainable justice without reconciliation,

no credible reconciliation without true forgiveness.

Surely, such forgiveness and reconciliation is a Christian ministry and should be a Jesuit priority in our divided and violent world. Our concern has been to support the victims of injustice and violence by seeking justice and rehabilitation for them. But we have not included the perpetrators of the violence in our concerns. Thus there is no lasting peace between the protagonists in the conflict. Scars and bitterness remain, ready to boil over into violence.

Any resolution of collective conflicts must be premised on justice. Lasting reconciliation is based on mutual forgiveness and trust. This needs a long gestation, especially when the hostility is mutual. We need to build relationships that bridge the divides between communities, contain and defuse tensions before they spill over into collective violence. This requires committed and sustained effort at the various levels to create this mutual trust, bring reconciliation and healing peace and harmony within and between the communities.

The promotion of justice based exclusively on confrontational approaches and an ideology of conflict precludes this. Conflict resolution must

be integral to our promotion of justice, and go beyond. Numerous strategies and techniques are available but not used enough in our social centres. Our focus has been on the promotion of justice, not on reconciliation and healing; on social work and action, not on dialogue.

VI. Inculturation and dialogue and Mission

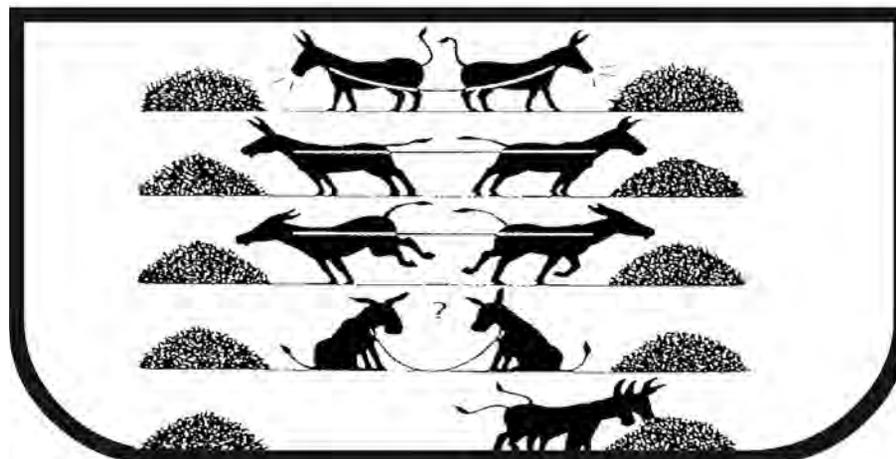
Inculturation implies making accessible the faith of the Church universal to local churches. This demands a cultural kenosis, so that this faith is incarnated in the local idiom. In other words, pastoral experience is the faith-foundation for both, the local and the global Church.

freedom and harmony, of peace and joy, with all men and women of goodwill.

Thus dialogue with the poor must be premised on solidarity with them; dialogue with cultures must be sensitive to popular religiosity and transform it into a liberating faith; dialogue with religions must bring an appreciation of religious pluralism and a respectful secularism, respecting all religious traditions, seeking common ground for collective action.

Dialoguing with others from other situations and different contexts, about their varied experiences and diverse exigencies is a most effective way of enriching one's own understanding of inculturation nearer home, freeing

Forgiveness and reconciliation is a Christian ministry and should be a Jesuit priority in our divided and violent world. Conflict resolution must be integral to our promotion of justice.



Reconciling the local and the universal must be a two way process: to make the Universal Church intelligible in a particular cultural context, and to enrich the universal with local traditions. This inculturated and dialogic Church enriches a multifaceted Church with 'many mansions', where diverse peoples find a home. This is the kingdom we work for: a kingdom of faith and justice,

hidden potentialities and opening up new possibilities. A bottom-up inculturation concerns itself more with a liberating folklore. In India, inculturation has been too top-down, tilted towards Sanskritisation and upper caste Hindu traditions, neglecting other subaltern and minority communities.

Centres for dialogue meant to promote inter-cultural and inter-

We have neglected the inclusive reconciliation, which was affirmed as part of our mission of faith and justice by GC 32. Our social analysis and action have been contestational and even confrontational.



religious harmony are most effective as a down-up process beginning with local communities, creating positive interactions and relationships between communities in a second track process among people outside formal party politics. Healing and reconciliation at this level is most needed but most neglected, often simply by default more than deliberation. These processes must be facilitated by initiatives that complement each other: local ventures up-scaled to the more universal, and abstract understandings more grounded at the grassroots.

We need to reach out to the 'other' with deeds that make our words credible and so we can accept each other and be healed and reconciled, live together and even celebrate our diversity as mutually enriching.

With a reluctant or hostile partner we can only begin with a dialogue of life relating to each other in everyday living as neighbours. Through the ages this has been the dialogue in our local communities and villages. This prepares the ground with a dialogue

of action, working together for the common good. But now when people are getting polarised and overtaken by communal conflict and violence, our schools, community centres, and other institutions can provide a platform for an outreach across community-divides. They can serve effectively for dialogue at other levels too: community life, collective action, sharing beliefs, and praying together.

Dialogue with Muslims and Islam is crucial in our assistancy and still unconscionably neglected. This could be a significant contribution to the Church and beyond. As a neutral party to Hindu-Muslim antagonism, Christians in India are better placed to build mutual trust, address communal polarisation and be peace makers for all the children of God. But we are losing that space in the present imbroglio. We do need to proceed with caution but also with discerning daring.

Stretching across many boarders in space and time, the Church and the Society is well positioned to initiate and majorly contribute to such a dialogue of

cultures and religions, beginning with a dialogue of life and experience, and facilitated by a dialogue of action and articulation. Can we open our windows to the winds of all the cultures of the world without fear of being blown of our feet?

Silence and suspicion are neighbours. A 'culture of suspicion' is the very contradiction of a 'culture of dialogue'. If we grant that dialogue is essential to the human condition then it must be a dialogue that breaks the silence and opens communication, discredits suspicion and creates trust. But we must first experience a *metanoia* in our hearts that will free us from the *paranoia* we have of the 'other'.

VIII. Lay Collaboration and Mission

The present models of lay collaboration in our assistancy tend towards coopting lay collaborators in an unequal partnership: "You collaborate with us. We'll be grateful for your cooperation; you be happy for the privilege." This unequal exchange stymies genuine partnership, and entrenches clerical control. It is a top-down model of command and control, based on old-style bureaucratic hierarchies. The accompanying mindset can be expressed thus: we own the works; you work for us and we will tell you where, when and how.

Effective collaboration requires an equal partnership with a shared vision for a shared venture in a corporate team, differentiated by functional roles, not hierarchical status, focused on concern for the mission, not preoccupied with self-centred interest, not driven by competition, but who cooperate in supportive roles.

The imperative to share our mission with others is not a pragmatic necessity we cannot escape, but an integral part of our mission we must share with like-minded persons, to reach out and create an extended Ignatian family. General Congregations have repeatedly called us to such lay partnerships. Such Jesuit parivars

are vibrant in many other parts of the Society.

Modern management systems have developed models for corporate governance and collaborative execution. These demand a culture of teamwork among all the players as a necessary condition. The magis here would demand that Jesuits be positioned strategically in our institutions more as prophetic witnesses to our mission, not just efficient professionals. We cannot escape the dilemma of professional efficiency and prophetic effectiveness,

From its founding, the intellectual apostolate has always been a typical Jesuit contribution to the Church. Creating a counter-culture for communities of solidarity demands an engagement with our world, that will interrogate the terms of discourse for a meeting of minds on common ground, from which to move together to higher ground. This must be done at all four levels of dialogue: life, action, experience and articulation. The last requires an intellectual expression that has a crucial positive impact on the other levels.

**Our mission today and tomorrow
demands at all our levels of governance
a transformative leadership inspired by a
transformative spirituality.**



but efficiency must serve effectiveness not vice versa.

We must think out of the box and develop new organisational models suitable to equal partnerships for a democratic and egalitarian, a secular and liberal society. The transition will demand a change in mind-set or it will fail. But the writing is on the wall: if we do not walk this path willingly now, sooner rather than later we will be forced to take it with fewer choices at hand.

IX. Intellectual Apostolates and Mission

As the largest assistancy in the Society our intellectual contribution is a serious concern. This is a long haul investment that subjects and superiors seem unwilling to make, preferring more immediate returns. The neglect has now reached critical levels. Why are there are so few Jesuit public intellectuals in our assistancy.? To once again commit our assistancy to the urgency of this apostolate, we need to understand and internalise the Ignatian insight so critical to our Society from its

foundation: the more universal a good the more divine!

X. Governance and leadership

To effectively implement in our many ministries, our mission today and tomorrow, demands at all our levels of governance a transformative leadership inspired by a transformative spirituality. The lack of good superiors is now a telling crisis of leadership in our assistancy. This affects community life, which then impacts individual morale. Good individuals are a necessary condition for good governance but it cannot be a sufficient one. For good governance has to be structured into institutions and made functional. This means effective structures for planning and policy, for accountability and affirmation, for information-exchange and feedback. Without these in place mission policies and apostolic plans, intra-province coordination and inter-provincial collaboration cannot be effective.

In the enormous diversity among the provinces in our assistancy, we are blessed with many young men full of goodwill and openness. This is our hope for future challenges in our mission, which will surely be different from the ones we have known; just as the world we lived in today will be from the one they will in tomorrow. In today's world of rapid change, the future arrives either as promise or shock, depending on whether we reach out to anticipate it or wait for it to crash in on us. For the pain of changing maybe great, but then the cost of not changing maybe far more forbidding. We need transformative governance for this transition, and a transformative spirituality to carry us along, towards GC 36 and beyond.

(NB This article is based on an input given at the JCSA meeting in Phesama, Kohima Province on 27 Oct 2014) ■

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Protest against the Land Acquisition Ordinance

On 02 Jan '15, at Burhatalab-Raipur, more than 100 representatives from a number of people's movements and organizations under the banner of Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan, held a dharna against the Land Acquisition Ordinance (LAO) 2014. (The actual name of the new Ordinance is itself misleading. It is called the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in



Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014. The protesters demanded that the central government should withdraw the Ordinance (LAO) immediately. They also asked the government to stop making laws and provisions that benefit corporates, and are detrimental to farmers and tribals. They asked the government to ensure the implementation of PESA and FRA, to safeguard Constitutional rights, especially freedom of religion. They burnt a copy of the Ordinance and spoke to the media explaining why they oppose the Ordinance. A memorandum to the President was received by an administrative officer.

Participants explained that people are opposing the Land Acquisition Ordinance (LAO) because it does not safeguard the interests of the farmers and tribals. It aims at protecting the interests of big corporates. The new law that the present BJP government wants to enact seeks to replace the Land Acquisition Act, 2013 (LAA) brought in by the previous UPA government. The LAA made it mandatory to get the consent of 70% the Gram Sabha members for Government projects and 80% for Public Private Partnership projects. Government projects in public interest do not need the consent of the people. It's very important to define what public interest is, said one of the participants. How can destroying the livelihood of our own farmers and tribals be in the public interest, he asked. The LAA made social impact assessment necessary before clearing any project.

But LAO does not have any such provision for farmers. While LAA assured food security, LAO completely ignores it. The LAA had elaborate provisions to ensure compensation, relief and rehabilitation, whereas the LAO reduces the scope of these provisions. This will promote collusion of officials with vested interests without any fear. Under the LAA unused land after five years must be returned to the original land owner or the Land Bank but the LAO extends the period. Therefore it is clear that

LAO that the present government tries to pass is anti farmer and anti tribal. This new law, without any of the safeguards provided by the LAA passed by the previous UPA government in 2013. This has been brought in to benefit the corporate world as indicated in Vibrant Gujarat Summit by the BJP Ministers, making India the "easiest" place for business.

Farmers who are already suffering in many ways feel that this new law will take away the only thing they still have - their land.

The LAO is in line with the other new laws that the Modi government has brought in - Coal Blocks and Insurance Ordinances. All these threaten the very existence of farmers and tribals.

- Yacub Kujur, SJ

Formators of the college-going scholastics meet

In addition to the number of fora that the Assistency has for vocation promoters, pre-novitiate directors, novice masters, Juniorate staff, PCFs, spiritual directors and Tertian Instructors, a new and long-awaited forum for the formators of college-going scholastics finally saw the light of day with 12 superiors



and animators from various houses of the Assistency met at ISI, Bangalore on 6-7 February under the leadership of our persistent ADF, Fr Raj Irudaya. They represented 255 college going scholastics of the Assistency, spread over in Bangalore (18), Chennai (50), Dharwad (17), Ranchi (38), Mangalore (36), Trichy (23), Palayamkottai (10), Vijaywada (35), and Ahmedabad (25).

Fr Raj Irudaya gave a holistic perspective on specific formation at the stage of college studies citing documents from the General Congregations and the letters of Generals Frs Kolvenbach and Adolfo Nicholas. The impetus given by the ADF was followed by the sharing of the consolations, desolations and concerns of those in-charge. The next day was spent on culling out the most common concerns, prioritizing and discussing. All felt that it was more than worthwhile to have come together sharing the lights and shadows of a crucial and sometimes delicate stage of formation. We parted refreshed, recharged and rejuvenated to carry forward the mission of accompaniment entrusted to us by the Society and resolved to meet again a year later on 6-7 February, 2016 in Chennai.

- Vinayak Jadav, SJ

The awards go to...

Jivan awards for Creative Writing - 2014



Prof Mary Vidya Porselvi

Here are the results of the Jivan Creative Writing Contest - 2014. The contest elicited short stories from 30 young writers, from all the different regions of India.

Jivan thanks all the Rectors and Principals of our Formation Houses, and Colleges who helped by encouraging their wards to participate.

The short stories had to be set in today's India, highlighting people, events or trends that offer us hope for the future of India.

One of the two-member Jury this year was **Dr P. Mary Vidya Porselvi**. She is an Assistant Professor of English at Loyola College, Chennai. She has presented papers in National and International Conferences, peer-reviewed journals on eco-feminism and folklore which is her area of specialization. The other member of the jury, **Prof Arul Francis**, works as Assistant Professor of English at Loyola College, Chennai. His areas of interest are Multiple Intelligences Theory, Creative Writing, Short Stories and



Prof Arul Francis

Phonetics. He is currently involved in teaching English for the less fortunate students at Loyola College as well as Loyola College Hostel.

The first prize of Rs 5,000 goes to **Jomon Jose Kanniattukunnel, SJ**, of the Nepal province who just completed his tertianship in Pedro Arrupe Institute, Goa. His story appears on p.23

The second prize (Rs 2,000) goes to **Sch W.K. Pradeep, SJ** (KHM) is a second year Regent who teaches at Kolkata Juniorate.

Ms Ragavijaya Govindasamy wins the third prize (Rs 1,000). She is a first year student of M.A. English Literature at Stella Maris College, Chennai.

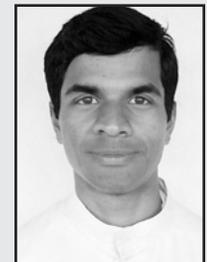
Other stories judged 'meritorious' will be published in *Jivan*.

We recall with gratitude what makes these awards possible every year - the thoughtful grant made by the Mascarenhas brothers - Fio and Frazer, SJ - in memory of their dear parents, Francis and Flora Mascarenhas.

- Editor



Fr Jomon Jose, SJ



Sch Pradeep, SJ



Ms Ragavijaya

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I, Jerry Sequeira, SJ, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and behalf.

(sd)

Jerry Sequeira, SJ



The Indian Jesuit who was kidnapped on 02 June 2014 in Afghanistan was freed on 22 Feb 2015. He landed in Delhi that evening, grateful to be alive, safe and back home after an ordeal that lasted more than 8 months (*see his interview on p. 13 - 15*).

Fr Alexis Premkumar was taken by a group of unidentified men in western Afghanistan while on a visit to a JRS-supported school for returnee refugees in a settlement 34 km from the city of Herat. The 47-year old Jesuit, from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, was JRS's country director.

While the JRS and other Jesuits did their best, it was the Indian government and its NSA (National Security Agency) that played an important role in securing his release. "JRS is immensely grateful to the Indian government for its role in

Indian Jesuit released after eight months in captivity in Afghanistan

achieving his release," said Fr Peter Balleis SJ, JRS International Director. "The last eight months have been a long and difficult period of uncertainty for Fr Prem's family, friends and colleagues. You cannot imagine our relief that he is now home, safe and sound. We are aware of the tireless efforts at many levels to achieve his release," he said (*see his interview on p. 23*).

JRS has worked in Afghanistan since 2005. Even during the difficult months of Fr Prem's captivity JRS continued to run its programmes in the country in order to ensure that Afghan students had continued access to quality education.

The Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr General Adolfo Nicolas, has extended his gratitude to the governments of India and Afghanistan for the efforts made in securing the release of Fr Alexis Prem Kumar from captivity in Afghanistan. Responding to the news of Father Kumar's release, Fr Nicolas said, "We are grateful to the Indian and Afghan governments for their efforts in securing the release of Fr Prem Kumar. We are grateful too to many other persons and organizations that continue to work tirelessly for the release of many other humanitarian and aid workers who remain in captivity in Afghanistan and in other places." ■

After he landed in Delhi in the evening of 22 Feb '14, he had several meetings with various government officials. On 25 Feb '14 Alexis Premkumar, SJ, flew to Mumbai to meet all the Provincials of South Asia, who had gathered there for their regular JCSA Meet. He spent some time with his own Provincial, Fr Sebastien L. Raj. From Mumbai he spoke to me over the phone and answered my questions. Later after he landed at the Chennai airport and came to Loyola, he offered more answers and clarifications. His answers were clear and spontaneous. His endearing smile and frequent laughter assured me he was quite alright.

- MAJA

You may not be aware of what happened here in the Assistancy as soon as we received the news of your abduction – the shock, the sorrow and the anxiety experienced by the Jesuits. Therefore now everyone is rejoicing and thanking God. When did you know that there was a realistic chance of your being freed from captivity?

Right from the beginning they were saying they will free me soon. In January the leader of the group that kidnapped me assured me that I will be set free soon.

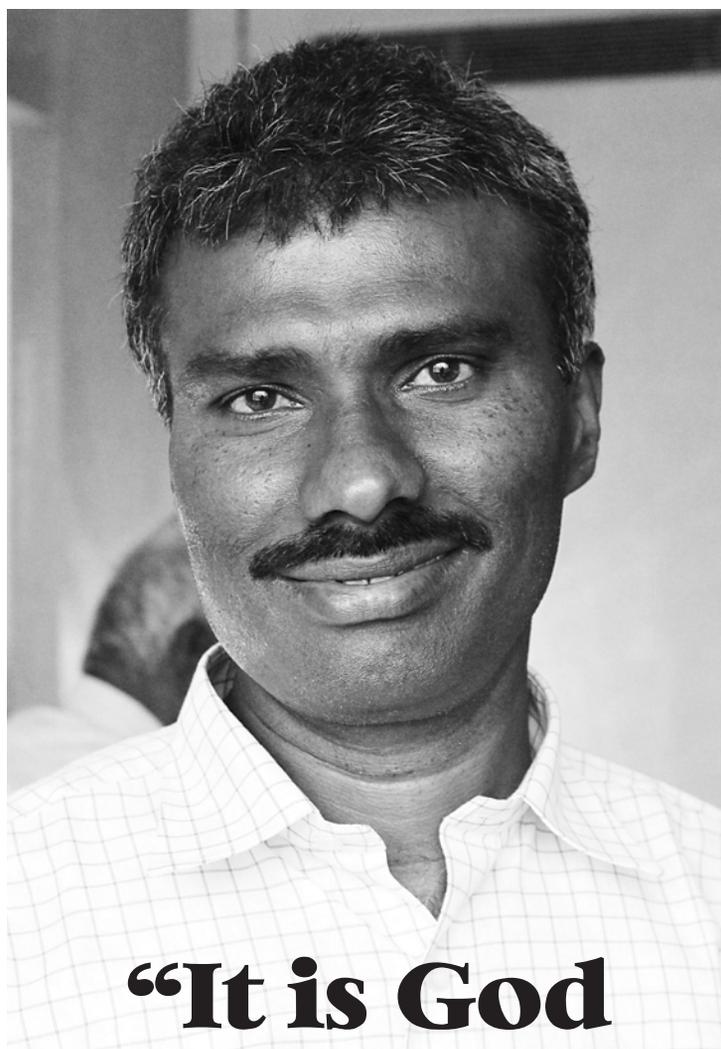
Of course, there were moments when I felt depressed. I even prayed that I should be allowed to die. But these were rare moments. My faith kept me going.

But they kept on saying that negotiations were still on and so postponing the day of my release. Last week after travelling for two days we reached Kandahar. On the way someone fired at our vehicle. No one knows who they are. So I had to run for a while. In Kandahar officials from the Indian embassy took charge, did whatever was necessary and put me in a flight to Kabul. In Kabul, our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi spoke to me over the phone and assured me that I will be back home soon.

What exactly did the Prime Minister say?

First he said 'Vanakkam' (greetings) in Tamil. Then he said, "You will be back home soon. Your people will be very happy to see you." I told him, "Thank you, Sir, for saving my life." And he said, "It is God who has saved you."

So apart from God who else will you thank for your freedom from captivity?



“It is God who has saved you!”

interview with **Alexis Premkumar, SJ**

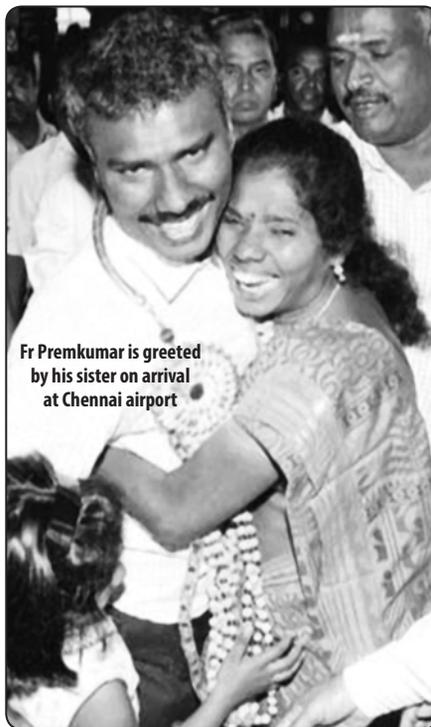
First of all the Indian government, specially, our Prime Minister. He made all arrangements to bring my father, sister and brother to Delhi to receive me at the airport and for us all to stay together at Ashoka Hotel in Delhi. I also want to thank Mrs Sushma Swaraj, our External Affairs Minister and the Home Ministry. My special thanks to Mr Ajit Doval, our National Security Advisor. Of course I should thank our General, Fr Adolfo Nicolas and the JRS International Director, Fr Peter Balleis and his team and Fr Stan Fernandes, JRS - South Asia Director and his team, which operated from Indian Social Institute (ISI), Delhi. Fr Joe Xavier, Executive

Director of ISI, is an important member of this team. Ever since I landed in Delhi, he has been with me all the time and helping me in every way. My thanks also to Fr Sebastia L. Raj, my Provincial and his team.

I want to thank all my Jesuit friends and communities that kept on praying for me. I have come to know that a lot of Religious, specially Sisters, have been praying for me.

What do you think led to your freedom?

I can only guess. I don't know for sure. But what is clear is that it is the efforts of the two governments - of India and Afghanistan - that must have played an important role in my release. I think sustained interest and efforts of the Indian government must be the major factor. But I knew that the Society of Jesus will not forget me. How can a mother forget her child? I knew that this great Jesuit organization I worked for - the JRS - would not abandon me, that it would do everything it can to see me released. I hear that both at the international level and the national level, the JRS worked very hard for my freedom.



Fr Premkumar is greeted by his sister on arrival at Chennai airport

Schools whose office was nearby and then around 12.30 pm I reached the JRS school at Sohadat, about 34 kms away from Herat city. Within 3 or 4 minutes this group of armed men barged in, shooting to frighten the teachers who were with me. They told them not to interfere. Then they took me and pushed

Could it be the Taliban's opposition to educating girls?

I don't think so. Nor did it have anything to do with the fact that I am a Catholic priest. There I was just a social worker. The motives are not clear. You must be aware of the attack on the Indian embassy in Herat city in March '14 on the day the NDA government assumed power. Thereafter there was a perception that all Indians were possible targets of attacks.

My abduction became possible obviously because of an act of betrayal. Someone who knew our activities and our work in the school had been watching our movements and informing the militants.

How did they treat you?

They treated me well. They allowed me to pray in the morning. I went along with them to fetch water. For breakfast they gave me 3 cups of tea and a piece of *naan* (wheat bread). For lunch and supper they gave me rice or *naan*. Occasionally they gave me meat. Three armed men were with me all the time. While one guarded me, the other two did other works like cooking and washing. They kept me chained.



Fr Premkumar with Mrs Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister, his father Mr Antonysammy (right), his sister Sr Elizabeth Rani (second from left), and brother John Joseph (extreme left)

What happened on 2 June '14 when you were kidnapped?

Early that morning I left our residence at Herat city and went to a village and then to the Director of

me inside their car and took me to a far-away place.

What do you think could be the motives of those who kidnapped you?

Chained?

Yes. Both my hands and feet were shackled. It was a thick, heavy iron chain. The guards were changed every 15 days. Most of them were kind to me. Only one

particular guard in the last two months was hostile and rough, but I think it was because of the fact that he was wounded in a military action and probably also psychologically affected.

Where were you kept?

In 9 different places. Different kinds of places. Sometimes it was a shed. Another time it was a cave. The structures were make-shift. So whenever it rained I was drenched. Many times I slept in the open, staring at the sky and the stars.

Did you fall sick anytime?

I had a big wound or boil in my leg. They tried to heal it in all possible ways. Once for a few days I had pain in my chest. I told them about it and they went all over the place and brought me tablets which turned out to be just painkillers.

How did you cope mentally?

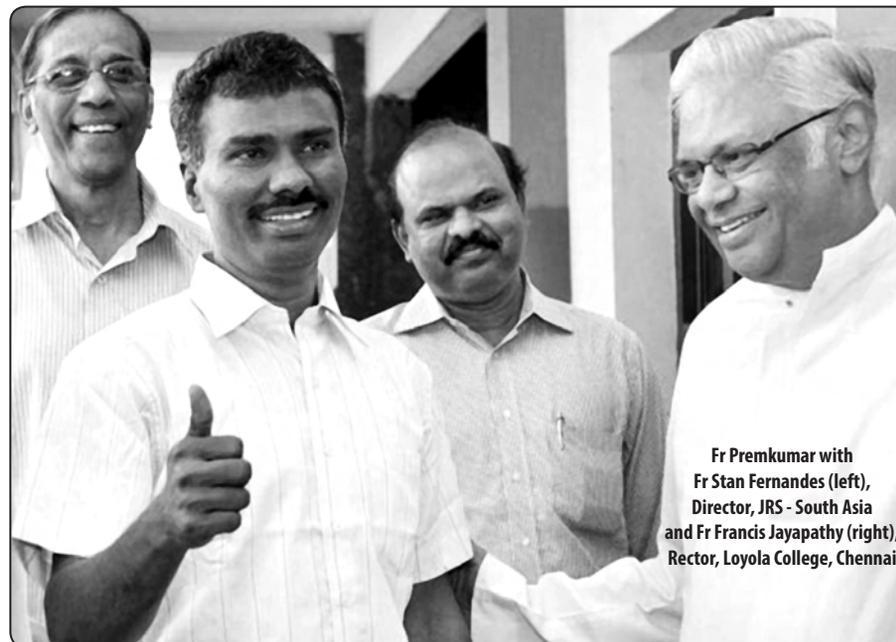
In the first few weeks I thought even Jesus did not have to suffer this much. That must have been spiritual arrogance. Soon I realized that no one could suffer as much as He did. I tried to unite my sufferings with His. I offered them for people who suffer all over the world in so many ways.

I prayed all the time. I must have made three long retreats (*laughs*). I celebrated the Eucharist mentally. I prayed a lot to the Blessed Mother. Strangely I saw my own mother, whom I loved much and who died in 2013, often standing with Our Lady. To celebrate the Eucharist and to pray Vatican Radio was a big help.

You listened to Vatican Radio during those days?

Yes. Only radio was available. No newspapers, no TV. They gave me a small radio and I tuned to the Chinese channel for news and the Vatican Radio for their programmes. Once I listened to Fr Arul Sivan's talk on prayer in the Vatican Radio. He spoke about *namajepa* (praying the name of God repeatedly). He asked the listeners to keep saying 'Yesuve, En

Nesare' (Jesus, my love). Because of my situation I needed Jesus to be my Saviour. So I kept saying 'Yesuve, En Meetpare' (Jesus, my Saviour). And the first two lines of your hymn...



Fr Premkumar with Fr Stan Fernandes (left), Director, JRS - South Asia and Fr Francis Jayapathy (right), Rector, Loyola College, Chennai

My hymn?

Yes. You may not remember but I clearly remember the first two lines of your composition, "Yesuve Enniraiva". You sang that for us in 1988 when I was a novice. I kept singing those two lines during those days.

Thank God! Is there anything you did not to lose hope, not to lose your faith and trust in God's providence?

Of course, there were moments when I felt depressed. I even prayed that I should be allowed to die. But these were rare moments. My faith kept me going. I discovered that through prayer you could address not merely God, but also others. So I sent prayer vibrations to our Prime Minister, to our External Affairs Minister, to the members of my family. These must have obviously worked.

Did you worry about your family?

Yes, a lot. Especially about my father. Our family was always a happy

family. We didn't have many sufferings or setbacks. The first major upset was my mother's death in 2013. I thought my father must have been affected a lot by it. And then in the very next year to hear that his son has been kidnapped

must have been too much for him. But I sent him and all in my family my prayer vibrations. They must have given them hope.

Given the situation in Afghanistan do you think the JRS work there should continue?

Surely. Because the Afghan people need us. They need education to prosper in life. But I don't want anyone to be kidnapped. Now I know what it means. So all our people and all aid workers in Afghanistan should live and work with extreme caution and care.

How do the people of Afghanistan look at India and the Indian people?

They love us. They love India. They are fond of Hindi films. At the Kandahar airport when a soldier learnt I was an Indian he hugged me spontaneously.

Is there a future for Afghanistan?

If there is peace in Afghanistan it has a future. Otherwise no. ■



BY JOMON KANNIATTUKUNNEL, SJ

It was a languorous winter Saturday morning in Kathmandu. Reluctant to leave a cozy bed and determined to take advantage of the holiday, I was tenaciously snuggling the soft blanket over my head when my mobile beeped. Irrked, I unfurled my arm from the blanket, felt for the mobile on the window sill beside my bed and dragged it inside. The screen flashed the only phone number from Tipling.

"Hello...hello...Father...?" I recognized Lal's shouting voice. Lal was my Tamang language teacher when I was

in the wooden roofs of the stone houses. Then night fell with a suddenness that startled me. I still had another hour of walking to do.

When I arrived at the inn, the innkeeper had retired. I knew him from my earlier sojourns to the place. He graciously invited me in. I was exhausted but sleep evaded me. My mind wandered to Tipling and the life there...

Tipling was an enchanting place to behold. Directly north of Kathmandu, it nestled at an altitude of 7000 feet. The village itself had the shape of a cupped hand with the eastern end creating a natural abyss. Below it the nascent Ankhu river danced down. Above it, rising to majestic heights the Ganesh Himal range glistened lustrously. The immaculate fresh air, the effervescent clean water and the lush verdant forests with rhododendrons in full bloom gave one an experience of the paradise.

she carried it effortlessly. Lifting the cloth tied around her waist to knee length, she rested her bundle on a raised stone platform near to where I was sitting, took off her head scarf and sponged her face. Then she went over to a natural spout on the side of the hill from where cold water trickled. There she quenched her thirst and splashed some on her face.

"Namaste," I said. She smiled and peered down the pass below. There was a single file of girls snaking up the narrow path carrying similar bundles. Prem showed no interest in talking to me. My teaching career had taught me a valuable lesson. Language is the window to a soul. I decided to try the little Tamang that I had picked up on the way.

"*Khen chachuva?*" I asked her (Have you eaten?). It is an odd question to ask someone coming back to her home from work in the evening. But that is the Tamang way of asking 'how are you?'

The one who made a difference

in Tipling. His voice cracked and croaked in bits and pieces. "Prem...dying...she wants to see you. Come soon..." The phone line went dead and my repeated hellos did not bring it back to life.

My foggy mind started to clear. Prem was dying. How could that be? I spoke with her only last week. Should I go to see her? My mind vacillated. I had other commitments for the weekend. But Prem had a very special place in my heart. I had to go to the village.

It took me four hours by a micro bus from Kathmandu to arrive in Dadhing Besi where the black-topped road ended. There I grabbed a quick lunch and immediately boarded a jeep that brought me through a steep and bumpy mountain path to Tharkha Phedi. There was no road beyond this point. Under normal circumstances, it was a two day walk from here to Tipling.

I started without delay and unencumbered by baggage soon settled into a fast rhythm. As I approached Jharlang, my destination for the night, the last rays of the west-bound sun disappeared. The winter chill bit into my face. The shepherds had tethered their sheep under tarpaulin tents. One or two stray bulls still grazed on the brown fields. Thick white smoke oozed out of the cracks

But it was an extremely hostile terrain to live in. Besides the inaccessibility, there was nothing to eat there. Potato, the only crop that grew in such a harsh climate, was the staple food. With no newspapers, mobiles and television, contact with outside world was completely cut off. The only satellite phone in the village worked according to the whim and fancy of the weather. The village was in a time warp. It was as if you entered a world of primitive instincts and sensations...I drifted off to sleep.

Long before the break of dawn, I said good bye to the innkeeper. By ten I was at the Ankhu river. From there it was an hour of steep climb to Tipling. On my first trip to Tipling two years ago, I had baptized this climb as 'the green mile.' After two days of walk my legs had crawled there. The high altitude had made me pant for oxygen. The dizzying heights had given me a lightness of mind causing me to want to sit and sleep after every step.

It was on this trail that I first met Prem. Half way up the green mile, unable to go further I was sitting on a *chuatara* – a resting place made of stones - when I saw a little girl with a heavy bundle of grass climbing up the same trail. Even though the load seemed a mountain on her back,

This time she smiled and said, "*Khen chachi.*" (I am fine.)

I was happy to break the ice and talking in Nepali I introduced myself to her. When I told her that I was the new English teacher in the school and I was going to teach Class X students, she looked very sad. She told me that she was not going to school anymore. I asked her why. She did not give me an answer.

By then the other girls had caught up with us. Chirpy and sprightly, their apple cheeks blushed red from the effort of carrying the load. They paid little attention to me and walked on. Hauling her heap on her back, Prem followed them.

As I watched the girls walk up with Prem bringing up the rear, I was infused with an enthusiasm which was ineffable. They carried their burden easily and joyfully. Why couldn't I be like them? It was an awakening. I knew interiorly that I had a mission there.

Later that day, I saw Prem again. It so happened that I was invited to her home for dinner by her father. Prem had a brother and a sister. All of us huddled around a small fire in a single room hut. The dancing flames of the fire created a shadow play of chewing faces and moving hands. It was fascinating to watch the lissome fingers of Prem peeling

away the boiled potatoes with amazing dexterity. Again I asked her why she was not attending school. She refused to answer.

The next day was the first day of the new academic year. I was appalled at the conditions of the school. It consisted

days in a far away *goth* and on the fourth day return to the village. Now they are formally considered husband and wife.

Prem was impregnated at the age of fourteen. The boy whom she named refused to take responsibility. He would not elope with her. Prem's parents offered

at her friend's house. Prem's younger sister and two other girls were with her. At around midnight, three boys forced open the door of the house and entered their room. Prem protested. One of the boys attacked her with his kukri knife. The other girls yelled and screamed. The boys

*A weak smile appeared on her lips. Her eyes motioned me to go nearer.
I knelt down and put my head close to hers.*



of a long single storey building made of corrugated stones. The grey Chinese tin roofs were perforated with many holes that let light, sun, rain and snow into the classrooms. The only furniture in the classrooms were a couple of long planks of wood suspended on logs on both ends, in no order or shape. White boards were hung from threadbare ropes that creaked with every gush of wind. Only five students turned up for class that day.

In an effort to bring as many children as possible to school, I started visiting the houses in the village that week. In one of my visits, I entered the house of Lal Dai who later became my constant companion. He told me why Prem did not go to school anymore.

There is a strange culture in the village. When the girls reach puberty, they do not sleep in their parents' homes at night. Three or four girls of the same age come together and sleep in one of their houses while parents are away in *goths* (cattle folds high up in the mountains). Boys do the same in their group. When the whole village is asleep, the boys sneak into the girls' chamber and have sex with them, sometimes with consent but most of the time forcefully. It goes on until a girl finds herself pregnant. She then names one of the boys she likes – since there are several of them she will not know who impregnated her – as the father of the child. Their friends help the boy and girl to elope from the village. They spend three

a pitcher of distilled *raksi* (liquor) to the boy's parents, begging them to accept her as their daughter-in-law. His parents did not relent. Prem left school and started working in the field with her parents. She had a miscarriage and lost the baby and her future.

I persuaded Prem to come to school to start life anew. I convinced her that at the age of fifteen life had not ended for her and that she had a mission in the village to protect the younger ones from this terrible and abusive culture. After much persistent counseling, she returned to school. At the end of my two years, she was the school captain of the girls. She earned the first rank in Class IX and was looking forward to starting Class X when I was transferred from the village school to Kathmandu...

I trudged to the top of the green mile. The sight of the village quickened my pace. An eerie silence hovered over the place. Clusters of people huddled together and spoke in hushed voices. "Father *khaji*...father *khaji*..." (father has come...father has come...) whispered some. Lal was waiting for me at his house. Resting my knapsack I asked him where Prem was. "She is at the health post," he replied with a stubborn sadness. It was another thirty minutes walk up the village.

I ran up there in ten minutes. Lal came along. On the way he told me what happened to Prem. Prem was sleeping

filed. Prem had several deep slashes on her forearms and shoulders and one fatal gash on the left side of her head.

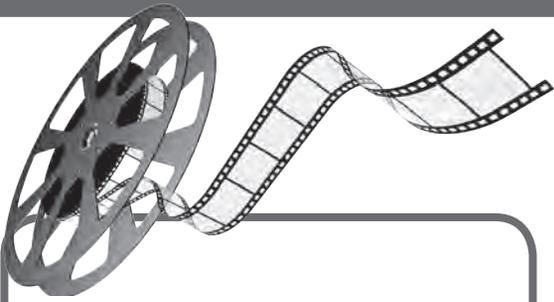
As I arrived at the health post, I saw Prem's brother and father standing outside of the only sick room. A large crowd had gathered on the lawn. I dashed into the room. Prem was draped in a black blanket. Only her face smeared and oozing with blood was visible.

Prem must have sensed my presence. She opened her eyes. I saw a glint of recognition. A weak smile appeared on her lips. Her eyes motioned me to go nearer. I knelt down and put my head close to hers. With the greatest struggle she whispered, "Father, you taught me to be a good girl...you told me that my life has a purpose...you told me I could make a difference...See Father...I saved my sisters... I am good, no, Father?"

Tears trickled down from my eyes. "God, save this brave girl," I cried.

Prem shut her eyes but was still breathing. There was still time. I sprinted down to the village. The phone was miraculously working. I called my friend who owned a helicopter company. He agreed to make the trip to Tipling free of charge. The helicopter landed in half an hour. I watched her take off with her parents into the clear sky, leaving only a thin white smoke behind. ■

Fr Jomon Jose Kannattukunnel, SJ, of Nepal has just completed his tertianship at Pedro Arrupe Institute, Goa.

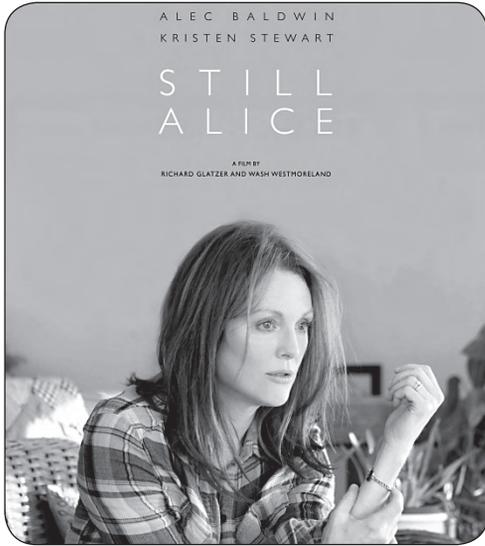


Fills the void

Still Alice

A film by Richard Glatzer, Wash Westmoreland

Starring Julianne Moore, Alec Baldwin, Kristen Stewart



The theme of disease affecting mental and psychological well-being, is not one preferred by many movie-makers.

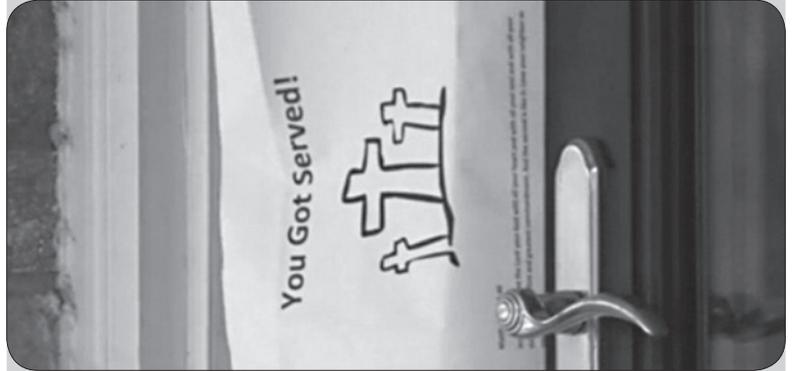
Such a task is not only challenging but definitely contains a risk involving its reception among audiences. Even the few movies, narrating a story of an individual afflicted with a disease -mental or physical - or a terminal illness, are often projected from a perspective of a loved one, a family member or a close friend.

We hardly get to see the fragile and crumbling world of the one afflicted with the disease and subsequently fail to gain a glimpse of their struggles and hopes for a meaningful life. *Still Alice*, a phenomenal adaptation of the book by Lisa Genova, fills this void in the film industry.

The story of Alice Howland is definitely an intense narrative loaded with human struggle, helplessness and longing for connectedness and meaning. It's a very realistic story and one that touches the deepest core of our selves.

- Thiranjala Weerasinghe

"You've been served"



When homeowners on South Olive Way, Centennial, Colorado, U.S., woke up in the morning to find their driveways and walkways already shoveled, many didn't know what to think. One resident called it a "surprise." Another homeowner said, "It was something you just don't see anymore. My daughter came and woke us up and said, 'Look outside. I mean, I can't believe it. I cannot believe it.'"

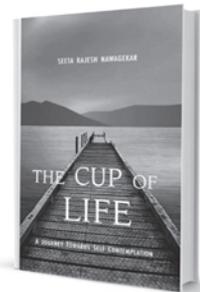
They all had a flyer attached to their front doors that simply read, "You got served!" (*See pic.*) "You just don't see that in this day and age," said Jeff Mostellar. More than 50 homes in the area had definitely been served by six teenagers who chose to wake up early - around 6:30 a.m. - and shovel away. The high schoolers said they just wanted to pay it forward. "We wanted to get out before anyone woke up," said Nick Mirabella. "We just felt it was a really good idea to serve the whole neighborhood."

When offered money, the teens refused. When offered hot chocolate, they couldn't resist. "It's just kind of the best way I think we could spend a Sunday," Mirabella said.

- www.9news.com

Cup of Life

The Cup of Life is an absorbing, thought-provoking book which is the outcome of a deep involvement of the author with the challenges in her life. Equipped with a questioning mind, she is guided in her journey through life by qualities of head and heart that are disarming. Taking her experiences in life as examples she provides readers with ready to accept ways of handling tough issues, relationships, both familial and other, and problems in dealing with one's own passion and involvement. She advocates a close look at life and all its aspects with a view to improving and enriching it. She feels strongly that we must try and alter our perspectives, think deeper and engage in an appropriate dialogue with our own selves to produce better results.



The Cup of Life

By Seeta Rajesh Nawagekar

Published by Good Times Books

Pages: 176, Rs. 175

"God loves women and passionately desires their flourishing"



BY JAMIE L. MANSON

Widely considered one of the architects of Catholic feminist theology, the 72-year-old nun and professor, Sr Elizabeth Johnson, has often clashed with institutional leaders — including the future pope — in her fight for equality in the clergy.

"You say Mary is too passive. Isn't obedience the greatest virtue?"

This was one of 40 questions sent to Elizabeth Johnson by a cardinal when she was up for a tenure-track position at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., in September 1987. A respected scholar for decades, Johnson found her application rubber-stamped by every committee within the school, yet still needed approval from the Vatican's powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Given that she had written an article questioning the traditional view of Mary as humble and obedient, further rubber-stamping was not guaranteed.

The cardinal interrogating her was Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI.

Though Johnson dutifully answered each query, Ratzinger was still not satisfied. He proceeded to take the extraordinary measure of calling every cardinal in the United States to come to Washington to interrogate her on the content of the article. Johnson was the first female faculty member to come up for tenure at CUA, and the first

to be subjected to an examination by the cardinals.

At the initial meeting, the hall was filled with men in black garb, gold chains across their chests, and priests at each of their sides. Johnson was the only woman in the room. "There were these men and they had all the power. I was vulnerable and at their mercy," Johnson remembers. "There was patriarchy using its power against me, to deprive me of what, in fairness, I should have been given." Twenty-five years later, the recollection still brings waves of sadness and anger across her face.

For most eminent scholars in their early seventies, teaching freshmen is an obligation they long ago relinquished to junior faculty and adjunct lecturers. But watching Elizabeth Johnson, distinguished professor of theology at Fordham University, eagerly enter a classroom of two dozen students, most of whom still qualify as teenagers, one immediately gets the sense that there are few places she'd rather be.

Johnson, 72, is teaching an introductory class in religious studies, which she leads not from the provided podium, but from the same chair-bolted-to-desk contraption used by the students. Like other sisters of her order, St. Joseph, she doesn't wear a habit. Sitting among them in a circle at the Bronx campus, she opens the mid-morning session with a lesson on the Rev. Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

A nun of Irish descent with a discernible Brooklyn accent, Johnson explains that many African-Americans have historically understood God through the story of the Exodus. God is the breaker of chains, the one who liberates people from captivity, Johnson tells her students, but God is also united with their suffering. "King loves the church, but he believes that when it hides behind a stained glass window, avoiding what is hurting human lives, it is morally wrong."

In a world where women suffer disproportionately from poverty, violence, and discrimination, having a global institution like the Catholic Church affirm women's total equality would allow the church to be, in King's words, a headlight to the world's cultures where rigid patriarchal structures continue to oppress and devalue the dignity of women. Johnson, widely considered one of the architects of Catholic feminist theology, has devoted three decades of her scholarship to raising the voices of women in the church and integrating women's experience into Christian theology, often in conflict with institutional leaders who, she worries, are functioning more as taillights.

"The church shouldn't be a taillight behind progress," she adds, paraphrasing King, "but a headlight leading civilization to higher levels of understanding." It is a metaphor that could aptly apply to the struggle for feminist reform in the Roman Catholic Church.

Her most recent clash with the church hierarchy played itself out quite publicly in March 2011, after the publication of her book *The Quest for the Living God*, in which she argues for a broader and deeper language for God, particularly language that reflects the reality that “God loves women and passionately desires their flourishing.” “All-male images of God are hierarchical images rooted in the unequal relation between women and men,” she writes. “Once women no longer relate to men as patriarchal fathers, lords, and kings in society, these images become religiously inadequate. Instead of evoking the reality of God, they block it.”

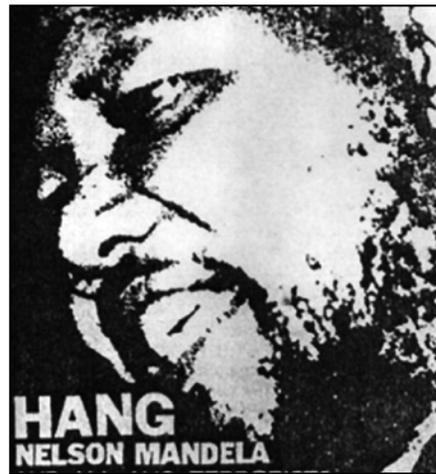
Though it met with high accolades from both the academy and laypeople, the Committee on Doctrine of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a condemnation of the book. To this day they have not responded to her requests for a meeting. Johnson’s many colleagues at the 1,300-member Catholic Theological Society of America issued a statement of unequivocal support for her, and Fordham’s president, Jesuit Father Joseph McShane, supported her right to academic freedom. Though Johnson says the experience left her “vastly depleted and discouraged,” she remains grateful for that academic freedom, and that the bishops never attempted to bar her from teaching in a Catholic setting.

“I love this!” Johnson beams. “I feel so privileged to do this every day, to present this material to undergraduates and help them think and form their own beliefs.” She takes her seat to lead another seminar, without notes, on the topic for which she is known best, women and theology. The vast majority of Fordham’s students were raised Catholic, and while Johnson believes that almost all of her students believe in women’s equality, they struggle to reconcile those convictions with a religious tradition that excludes them.

That Catholicism was male-dominated didn’t perturb Johnson, at first. Early in her scholarly career, Johnson distinguished herself as a “woman of firsts” within the academy of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1981, she became one of the first women to receive

her doctorate in theology at CUA. Her studies centered on the ways in which we talk about God through analogy, or “God talk” as she prefers to describe it.

Unofficially known as “the bishop’s university,” CUA bears the unique distinction of being the only university in the country founded and sponsored by the bishops of the United States. Not surprisingly, Johnson’s experience there, though rich, respectful, and collegial, was significantly lacking in female presence. She began her studies in the mid-1970s,



but Johnson says, “I never had a woman professor, I never read one woman author. There were none to be had. It was a totally male education.” It was a situation that CUA attempted to remedy when the school asked Johnson to be the first woman to join its theology faculty. She was hired in a tenure-track position to teach Christology, a branch of theology that studies the idea of Jesus as Messiah.

Feminism may not have penetrated the walls of CUA, but it had permeated U.S. culture, and it was influencing the conversations of female Catholic theologians who were a few years ahead of Johnson. Some of them, like pioneering feminist theologians Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Sandra Schneiders, would meet in Washington, D.C., giving informal talks on topics like using feminine images for God.

“It blew my mind,” Johnson says. Eventually she and several graduate students formed a “Women in Theology” group, which they called WITS. They even printed T-shirts with their acronym. “I got the sense that I should make a

contribution to what was brewing between feminist and theological thinking,” Johnson says. She eventually wrote that fateful article critiquing the church’s traditional understanding of Mary, arguing that the gospels depict Mary as courageous, risk-taking, and even prophetic. Of Johnson’s many other writings at that point, it was her only article in feminist theology, but it was enough to put her tenure application in serious jeopardy.

Her book, *She Who Is*, published in 1992, won several awards in religious publishing, but more importantly it became one of the most used texts for teaching Catholic feminist theology. Though her years of scholarship have yet to influence the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, it continues to impact new generations of her students and she remains as devoted to them as to the church. “If you feel deeply enough, you stay,” she says. “Not because you’re a masochist, but because it’s worth it. You’re struggling for the soul of something.” After 30 years of advocating for reforms in the church’s teachings on women, how does Johnson remain patient with the hierarchy? “Partly by blocking it out! You’ll go crazy if you don’t.”

She picks up a small picture frame from her desk, and shows me a photo she took while teaching in South Africa in the late 1980s. Apartheid was still the law of the land, Nelson Mandela sat in prison, and army tanks were positioned on every street corner. Walking by a pastel-colored building in Cape Town, Johnson noticed that it had been defaced with very thick, black paint. “Hang Mandela,” the wall read. Johnson invites me to look closer at the photo. Someone had used a pencil to add a small, but mighty preposition, transforming the graffiti to read “Hang On Mandela.”

“Someone took and turned that message in the darkest of days,” Johnson says, tearing up at the memory. She saw this sign just before returning to the United States to be interrogated by the cardinals. “That picture has become my answer to why I stay in the church.”

Courtesy: (excerpted from an article originally titled, ‘Feminism in Faith’) www.buzzfeed.com

BY LLOYD SAMBRYA, SJ

Ghar Wapsi this Lent

You can't escape from this phrase these days, It is everywhere in the Indian media. It is '*Ghar Wapsi*' ('home coming' or 'coming back home'). It is used by the aggressive Hindutva groups to refer to their efforts to 'reconvert' Muslims and Christians in India. We can use it to describe something that should happen in us during the Lenten season.

In the New Testament we have that classical example of a *Ghar Wapsi* in Lk 15:11-32 - the story of the prodigal son. The son who squandered the property of his father finds his way back home after he comes to his senses and realizes how much his father loves him and how much he has at home even for his servants. Thus he makes the decision to go and beg forgiveness from the father. Whether it was really love that brought him back is doubtful. But throughout the parable, the image of the father is that of someone who is unconditionally forgiving, generous and loving. The father accepts his son without any further investigation or clarification. He eventually orders a feast and celebrates his son's home coming. We in our day-to-day lives do go away from our home i.e. oneself, others, nature and finally God. Can we make a *ghar wapsi* this lent?

Ghar Wapsi to Oneself: We live in a digital world. Technology has made us slaves and so we have no time for ourselves in this world full of allurements. We are not at home with ourselves. Our inordinate attachments, irrational fears and suppressed emotions take us away from our authentic self. Lent is a good time to come home to oneself, accepting oneself as one is. Taking some time out by keeping gadgets away, and spending some quality



time in silence may help us toward a transforming home coming.

Ghar Wapsi to our fellow humans: In Jn 13: 34 we have a new commandment that sums up the life of Jesus- "Love one another as I have loved you". Loving others would mean loving every single person we are in contact with; be it our family, neighbors, friends, colleagues and even those whom we encounter while traveling, working, etc. The jealousy between two brothers ended up in one killing the other (Gen 4:8). Jealousy, hunt for power, money, honour and privileges lead to rivalry, gossip, hostility and hatred. Lent is a time to be reconciled with others.

Ghar Wapsi to Nature: God appointed humans to be stewards of the earth, to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1: 26). God never restricted the use of anything in nature. But humans

have over used and abused nature for selfish gains. Let this Lent be a time to come home to nature, to appreciate it and preserve it. Let us not blame others or the authorities for not doing enough but examine ourselves as to how much we contribute towards protection of nature.

Ghar Wapsi to God's Love: Everyone needs the deep experience of being loved and cared for by God unconditionally. We go away from God every time, and often we fail to remember to come home to oneself, others and nature. Yet God awaits our return and once we reach him he says, "let us have a feast and celebrate (Lk 15:23) because this child of mine has come back to me." The Church gives us these forty days make a *Ghar Wapsi*, to come home to God's love. ■

Lloyd Sambrya, SJ is a student of theology at JDV, Pune.

Transformation of our men in formation

How could we succeed in transforming our young men in formation? The annual meeting of the Assistency Commission for Formation, attended by the PCFs and superiors of formation houses, grappled with this important question. It was held at Loyola High School, Pune on 30 Sept - 04 Oct '14. Fr Jose Cecilio Magadia, General Assistant for Formation, Fr George Pattery, POSA, Fr Raj Irudaya, Assistency Delegate for Formation, Fr Bhausahb Sansare, Provincial of Pune, Dr Ajoy Fernandes SDB, and Dr Ivan S. Netto, M.D., served as resource persons. We discussed mainly the topics of Psycho-Sexual Spiritual Integration, Intellectual Formation, Need for Accompaniment and Creative Structures in Formation.

On 01 Oct Fr Ajoy Fernandes, SDB said since candidates to the priesthood need great human maturity in view of their ministry, Vocation Directors and Formators are required to select candidates who display a sufficient degree of human maturity to measure up to the demands of the ministry. Such a task calls for adequate knowledge of human characteristics of the candidates which can be favourable or detrimental to ministerial obligations. The characteristics detrimental to ministry - 'Contra-indicative Characteristics' - include mental illness, narcissism, extreme perfectionism/dependence/avoidance, masochism and deviant sexual behaviour. In order to ensure human maturity, he said that assessment of the candidates should be done by competent and trained professionals.

Dr Ivan S. Netto, M.D., Consultant Psychiatrist, who spoke on screening of candidates, said they should be checked for any disorder like psychotic disorder, mood disorders, mania/depression etc. Compassionate help must be given to those who may have such disorders. Quoting Fr Kolvenbach, he said that due care must be exercised in the admission of candidates with homosexual orientation.

Fr Jose Cecilio Magadia referred to the document on Chastity, prepared by Fr General two years ago in the context of rising sexual abuses, which says sexual abuse is a heinous violation of trust. In

response to these sessions the members felt the need for evolving Psycho-Sexual-Spiritual Integration programmes in forming the Scholastics. Another suggestion was psychological screening of candidates by lay or priest professionals at the Zonal level.

Fr. Raj Irudaya referred to the two letters of Fr General on Intellectual Formation and explained the four Cs (four steps) - understanding the Charism of the Society, knowing the Context of the mission, developing Competencies for mission and knowing the Content of faith. Fr Jose Magadia and Fr George Pattery

Quoting Pope Francis he said that Jesuits experienced the Death and Resurrection of the Lord within themselves. In order to bring about effective transformation in Formation the members suggested availability of the formators for accompaniment, regular feedback and fraternal correction, encouragement, regular meetings with Spiritual Directors and Superiors creating an atmosphere of openness. More men could be sent by each Province for training in Spiritual Direction at institutes like Sadhana.

Fr Jose Magadia, in his address on 03 Oct, said restructuring in Formation



too spoke on the importance of 'learned ministry'.

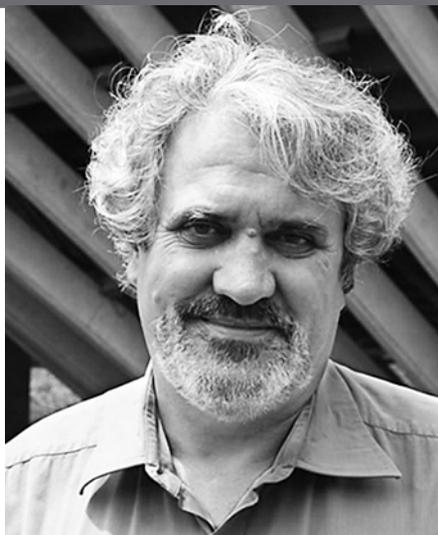
Responding to these presentations the members spoke of a serious concern - the decline of the reading habit, because of internet and mobile phone. The suggestions that came up were: introducing reading circles in Common Houses, interactions with professionals, encouraging the Scholastics to take up seminars during Philosophy and Theology, forming a writers' forum and publishing, teaching Time Management and Study Skills. They felt that implementation of the graded syllabus for various stages would improve the level of intellectual formation. The ADF presented the graded syllabus for the stages of Pre-novitiate, Novitiate and Juniorate and said that after consultations he would send a final draft to be implemented from June 2015.

Fr POSA, in his address on 02 Oct, emphasised that the formation of our young men should be one of transformation.

Sector should be strategic, keeping the mission as focus. To address declining numbers he called for mutual cooperation in the form of common houses, shared formation programmes, inter-cultural novitiates etc.

The members agreed to form a commission under the leadership of the ADF which would present the findings and recommendations on re-structuring Formation to the POSA.

Fr James Selvaraj was applauded for the excellent planning and execution of the meeting. Visits to different communities and opportunities to interact with Pune Jesuits were highly appreciated. The warm hospitality, sumptuous meals and the excellent cultural programme were rejuvenating. Fr Gratian, the former ADF, joined the PCFs for dinner at Sanjeevan Ashram and Fr Raj Irudaya, his successor, thanked and honoured him with a memento. - Britto Vincent, SJ



“Nourishing Hope and making God’s Love present”

Interview with **Peter Balleis, SJ**,
International Director of JRS

Courage and Compassion are words that spring to mind when we think of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). This worldwide organization reaches out to more than 900,000 displaced persons and refugees in over 50 countries. Peter Balleis, SJ (from the province of Germany) has been its International Director for the past eight years. In this interview, which was done before the release of Fr Premkumar, he shares with Luke Rodrigues, SJ, Jivan correspondent in Rome, the dreams and challenges that are part of this courageous apostolate that addresses a dire need in today’s world.

Peter, you have been with JRS for many years. What inspired you to take up this apostolate?

It was a combination of my own calling and a mission received from Superiors. I joined the Society in 1981 just when Fr Arrupe gave his last address to JRS (shortly before his stroke). My desire was to work in the so-called mission countries. Therefore, I was sent to work in Zimbabwe and then did studies in Kenya and Brazil. Upon returning to Zimbabwe, I was assigned to work with JRS in Mozambique and later on in other African countries. What a steep learning curve that was! During this time, I also functioned as Regional Director of JRS Southern Africa. In 1999, I returned to Germany as Mission Procurator. This new role enabled me to support JRS through fundraising and support for projects. Towards the end of 2007, I was asked to

take up this present role and am now in my eighth and last year. Working with JRS gives me a sense of deep fulfilment. It puts me in direct contact with the poor, trying to do something good in difficult situations. I have always felt called to this type of work and my happiness lies in answering that call.

This work would have brought you many moments of joy and sorrow.



Surely. There is a beautiful moment in Angola that remains etched in my memory. We had just started out and there was nobody to turn to for guidance. I was sitting on our doorsteps feeling frustrated and confused. In front of me was an empty school, filled with displaced families. Children were playing in the courtyard. Acting on an impulse (perhaps very naively), I asked

the children what they would wish for. In one voice, they replied that they wanted to get back to school. This was a moment of great clarity and consolation. What needed to be done became clear in a flash, and from there we moved on to setting up schools for the refugees.

It is important to realize that the answer always comes from the victims. They know what they want, what they need. Our job is to listen to them. There

certainly are many moments of despair especially when a country falls back into war (as happened with Angola). At such times, you feel like giving up, but what keeps you going is the ongoing contact with the people.

On the other hand, there were a couple of Regional Directors who soon left JRS. They had buried themselves in administration and had no time for

direct contact with the refugees. They worked hard, very hard indeed, but had lost this vital aspect of personal encounter with the people.

What is the inner motivation that inspires all of you to move ahead in such difficult situations?

At this point, my mind turns to Fr. Prem and the work in Afghanistan (See p. 11-14) Our closeness with the people is what keeps us going. Many young people we have worked with have now themselves become educators. It encourages us when our work generates hope and life. This is what Prem loves - and this is what we will keep on doing. We will not give up because some group has been hostile to us. In JRS we are not working with the winners. We are

Cross. Our inner motivation finally comes from Christ who calls us to be persons of goodness, integrity and hope.

What does JRS do or try to do?

JRS works with forcibly displaced persons; accompanying them, serving them and advocating for their rights. We strive to overcome divisions and engage with peoples of all faiths and cultures, promoting hope and reconciliation. We dream of a world free from frontiers and forcible displacement. JRS started with East Asia and this region was the focus in the 1980s and early 90s. With the Rwanda crisis in the mid 90s, the focus turned to Africa, and we have put in a lot of work in that region. Since 2008, our attention turned to the Middle East,

case, education. The support received from the Xavier's Colleges in Mumbai and Kolkata, and St. Joseph's College, Bangalore, has been invaluable. In the changing political circumstances, it is now difficult even for Indians to work in Afghanistan. Fortunately, we have won many friends among the Afghans. We owe it to Prem and others on the ground to keep hope going.

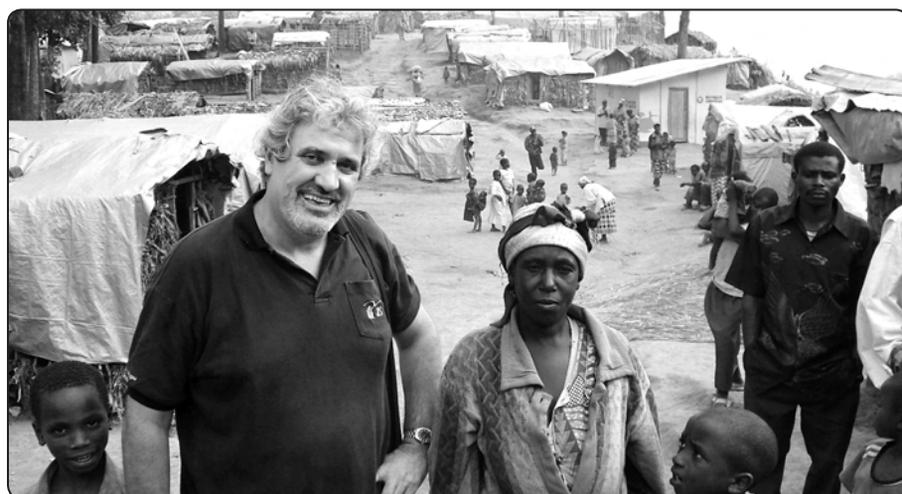
Are there other countries in South Asia where JRS is involved?

Certainly. We have had a long presence in Nepal, working in collaboration with Caritas. After twenty years, it appears that our mission there is at an end and we are handing over completely to local organizations. Nepal has been one of the most successful educational projects of JRS. Hats off to people like Varkey, P.S. Amal and many others!

Sri Lanka has seen a lot of suffering and JRS has been present there in the worst moments of conflict. Things are still not good for the victims, but our focus has now shifted from immediate relief to long-term goals. In collaboration with the Jesuit Province, we are investing in educational projects to help people take control of their lives and decide their future. South Asia will always remain a challenging region because there are many conflict lines that could explode at any moment.

Is there anything else you would like to say to the readers of *Jivan*?

My first word is that of gratitude to the Assistancy for providing brave and enthusiastic Jesuits. I am glad that we will soon receive two scholastics to work in Central Africa. It is important that South Asia (with 23% of all Jesuits) continue to send men to work in other parts of the world. This is a great international experience which will benefit JRS and the Assistancy as well. Please continue to support us wholeheartedly. JRS is an important part of our mission as Jesuits. Our endeavour is to nourish hope and make God's love present in the most tragic moments of history. ■



with the losers of history. Somehow, the kidnapping of Fr. Prem has drawn us closer to the reality of Afghanistan where people go through much anxiety and uncertainty. When you work with the losers, you must be ready to share their reality. Meanwhile, our team on the ground continues doing all it can for Prem.

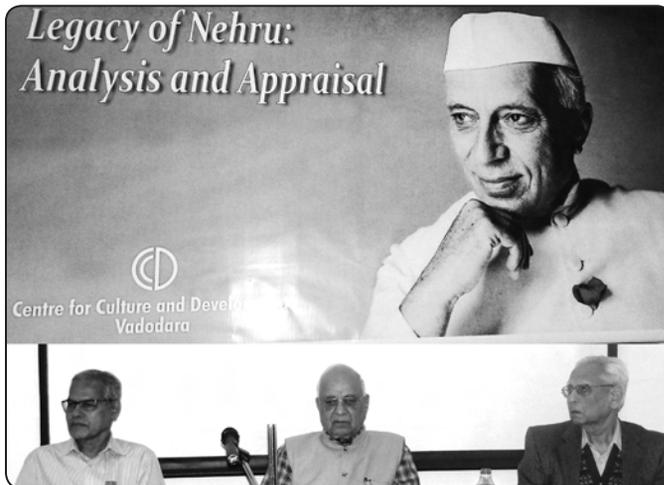
This kidnapping poses a deep spiritual challenge. It is something bad and evil. How do we deal with this without becoming bitter or hateful? How do we confront evil? Our way is not that of force and violence because that is not the way of the powerless. The only way to overcome evil is the way of Jesus Christ - the way of the

a region which unfortunately seems to be falling to pieces. In collaboration with the Jesuit Province, we are actively involved in Jordan, Syria and Turkey. This humanitarian crisis has forced JRS to expand its outreach and programmes. These conflict zones are in Islamic countries and a number of our collaborators are Muslims. I always say that we do not do interreligious dialogue but interreligious praxis. This gives a witness that we can live and work together, as opposed to the dominant paradigm of conflict.

In Afghanistan, as in other places, we work hand in hand with the Jesuits of the Assistancy. Together, we try to give the people what they want - in this

The Legacy of Nehru: National Seminar at Vadodara

Two months ago on 14 Nov '14 we celebrated the 125th birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister and an enlightened founder of the Indian democracy. Since there have been attempts recently to question or discredit Nehru's legacy, Fr Lancy Lobo, SJ, Director, Centre for Culture and Development (CCD), Vadodara, crafted a platform for scholars, professors, writers, young researchers and students from all over



India to attempt an objective assessment of a man whose "trust with destiny" laid the foundations of the India that we see today. The National seminar titled "the Legacy of Nehru: Analysis and Appraisal" commenced on 29 Jan '15 at CCD, Vadodara, Gujarat. Students from M.S University, Gujarat Vidya Deep and about 50 research scholars participated. Padma Bhushan Lord Bhikhu Parekhaptly, in his inaugural address, lauded Nehru for his vision based on national unity, parliamentary democracy, socialism, secularism, scientific temper, leadership and non-alignment.

There has been a steady paradigm shift in India since the 2014 elections. How do the mainstream intellectuals view this shift between Nehruvism and Modism and their contribution to the nation's progress and peace? There were 25 papers presented followed by serious, critical and thought-provoking discussions at regular intervals. The seminar paper presenters assessed the successes and failures Nehru's policies in fields such as politics, foreign policy, science, Technology, Education, economic ideology, socialism, society, culture and religion.

The papers offered clarity on how Nehru ensured freedom at all spheres, propagated peaceful co-existence with other nations, respected inclusive politics, toiled tirelessly to eliminate the inequalities through development and education and safeguarded the liberty of all. Professor Thomas Pantham pointed out that we could only build a nation with a harmonious balance between state and religion. Padma Bhushan awardee Dr. Subhas Kashyap in his valedictory address on 31 Jan thanked Fr Lancy Lobo, SJ for bringing the mainstream thinkers together and generating knowledge and lessons for the journey ahead.

CCD has in the past organised nationally relevant seminars on India's middle classes and Democracy in India.

- Amalan Thainase, SJ

People's Convention in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad witnessed a unique event on 07-08 Feb '15. A two-day State Level People's Convention brought together more than 500 women and men from all over Gujarat. They were local leaders - mainly adivasis, dalits and other backward communities (OBCs). They had come together to highlight their many grievances, to increase their bonding and to say to those who attempt to control their lives and destinies, that they can no longer be taken for granted.

The theme of the Convention was "Chaalo Lokshahi Melaviye" (Come, let us ensure People's Rule: Democracy)

In his inaugural address to the Convention, Fr Francis Parmar, the Provincial of the Gujarat Jesuits, emphasised that the four pillars of justice, liberty, fraternity and equality should never be compromised. He called upon the people to be united and have the commitment to struggle to the very end.

The highlight of the programme was a Public Hearing presided over by Mr Girish Patel, Senior Counsel of the Gujarat High Court and the doyen of the human rights movement of Gujarat. The other jury members were Dr Sudarshan Iyengar, former Vice-Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapith and Mr Rohit Prajapati, environmental activist.



Several local leaders representing various communities from across Gujarat spoke about their pathetic conditions like issues related to 'jal-jungle-jameen' (water, forest and land), their right to shelter, their right to livelihood and work, atrocities on dalits and on women; the way their land acquired by the big corporations and mega-projects like that of Ukai and issues related to PESA and Panchayati Raj.

Mr. Girish Patel exhorted the gathering to get together to demand their legitimate rights. "The rights belong to the people and the Government must realise this", he said. "The judiciary has consistently failed the poor, the marginalised and the other sub-altern groups of the country." Several other eminent personalities and activists addressed the Convention; these included Mr. Hemant Shah, Mr. Anand Mazgaonkar, Mr. Mahesh Pandya and Ms. Trupti Shah. The Convention concluded with a resolution that listed the issues which afflict the people and called upon the Government and their institutions "to act promptly to ensure that we get our legitimate rights and the justice due to us."

This Peoples' Convention was an initiative of JESA-Gujarat. - Cedric Prakash, SJ

Emeritus Bishop of Nashik Bishop Thomas Bhalerao breathed his last at 2.30pm at St. Luke's Hospital, Shrirampur on 13 Feb 2015. He died due to illnesses related to old age.

On 01 Feb 1933 Bishop Thomas was born in a large Catholic family. He was privileged to have a father, zealous in promoting the faith in his family and community. Despite their poverty, his father spurned offers for advancement in salaried employment, and chose to accept the call to be the first Catechist in the Jesuit missions of the Ahmednagar District. From his aged, exemplary, and experienced father, Thomas gained many valuable insights for his future pastoral and episcopal ministry.

When he reached 16 years of age, he was credited with several 'firsts'. He was among the first pupils of Dnyanamata Jesuit School, Sangamner; he became the first pupil to become its Principal, and as a son of the soil, was the first to serve as Bishop of the newly erected Nashik Diocese. His Episcopal Ordination was on 23 Aug 1987. He served his flock as Bishop with love and dedication for twenty memorable years 1987 to 2007.

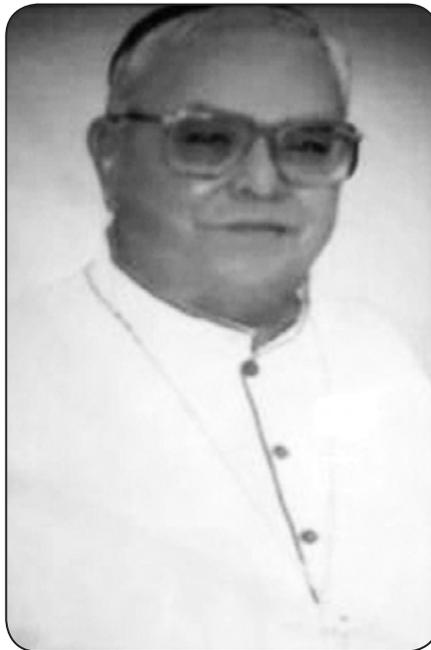
He entered the Society of Jesus on 20 June 1953 and during his formation he travelled all over the country. He was ordained a priest on 27 March 1965 and so the year 2015 was the year of his Golden Jubilee of his Priesthood. Preparations for his Jubilee Celebration were on. His autobiography will be published soon.

After his priestly ordination, he worked studiously and obtained his Master's Degree in Marathi and Linguistics from Karnataka University. Besides Hindi, Latin and Greek, he was also conversant with Sanskrit. Loved and respected as a good teacher, his classes in Marathi were always very lively. He is fondly remembered by his students in the Belgaum Juniorate, at the Sadhanalaya Novitiate in Nashik, and at Dnyanamata High School, Sangamner. Prior to his appointment as Bishop, he served with dedication in a variety of assignments, as House Minister, Socius to the Novice Master, Teacher and School Principal. During his tenure as Principal, he took a break to complete his M.Ed. at Loyola University, Chicago, in 1984-85.

He was much sought after for preaching, especially in Marathi, for retreats, missions and festive occasions.

Shepherd true and tireless

**Bishop Thomas Bhalerao, SJ
1933 - 2015**



With single-minded dedication, he went about building up the diocesan and religious clergy, training the catechists, encouraging increased lay participation, and advocating an active role for women in the Church and society.

He was precise and incisive in expounding matters of faith, with a penchant for narrating the lives of Saints, and giving apt illustrations to drive home a vital point. Both children and adults listened to his sermons and speeches with rapt attention. His command over Marathi was extraordinary, both as a speaker and writer. As editor, he raised the literary and religious standard of *Niroppya*, our Pune Jesuit magazine.

Both as a Priest and Bishop, he commanded respect as a prayerful person, leading a simple and fervent religious life,

with generous pastoral concern for people. He built up the Nashik Diocese, grooming his clergy to take responsibility and serve in the pastoral, educational, social ministries. He invited new religious Congregations of men and women to promote integral development of the new Nashik Diocese, to set up and build Diocesan institutions, and to promote the growth of much needed ministries. With zeal and foresight, he established a new Diocesan Pastoral Centre to encourage youth programmes, promote Small Christian Communities, conduct regular pre-marriage courses in four Districts, and nurture the vernacular singing apostolate. To foster local vocations for the young Diocese, he set up a Minor Seminary. To ensure the pastoral care of his flock, he opened new parishes, and to help the youth access a good education, he started English medium schools in Rahata and Kopergaon.

As shepherd of his faithful, he worked tirelessly to build a vibrant community, strong in the faith, well-educated, informed, and trained to serve the Indian Church of the day. No doubt, as Bishop, he often had to struggle to guide the new Diocese, and empower his people. But, with single-minded dedication, he went about building up the diocesan and religious clergy, training the catechists, encouraging increased lay participation, and advocating an active role for women in the Church and society. As a faithful steward and able administrator, he raised and set aside funds for the establishment and development of the Diocesan institutions, and the wide array of ministries and activities to stabilize the new Diocese. His love for community life, unflinching cheerfulness, and sense of humour have been his faithful companions throughout his life, even when he was hospitalized and in pain.

Due to health concerns, he retired as a Bishop. Living in the Jesuit community of Loyola Sadan in Shrirampur, his health improved, but he remained bed-ridden. On 13 Feb '15, at 2.35pm at St. Luke's Hospital Shrirampur he breathed his last and surrendered all his sufferings and pains to his Heavenly Father.

All the good works and deeds that he did to the least of his brothers and sisters will assure him of eternal rest. He will continue to remain in the hearts of the people whom he lovingly served and cared for. May his soul rest in peace!

- Francis D'Souza, SJ

CHELSTON DIAS, SJ

(GUJ) 1946 - 2015



Almost everyday these past few years, either Charlie would call me up on his mobile or I would ring him up on his famous mobile number known to thousands of folks in Ahmedabad and Surat,

which had a fantastic ringtone - "Have a little patience.."- Patient, gentle and understanding Charlie would call or answer a call with his characteristic "YES", in his baritone voice. And that voice is 'still' today after a few months of agony with multiple health problems caused by cancer. That voice which started off with "YES" immediately connected one to the warm-hearted and sensitive Charlie.

Charlie was the 9th of 12 siblings and we have 7 of them here with us to celebrate Charlie's birth to eternal life. They had been there in 1964 during the Eucharistic Congress, when Charlie joined the Society of Jesus. Imagine at that time Charlie was as slim as a beanstalk, running and creating records in the 100, 200 and 400 metres races. Today some of his friends would affectionately call him "Chelston" - implying that he weighed a ton. But I am sure his heart weighed more because it could reach out to countless people unmindful of their backgrounds or their caste or creed. Charlie used his talents, his whole self to the full for the work of God's kingdom. This "over-giving" of himself took its toll. He suffered from diabetes and other complications.

His initial vocation camps were done with a passion and that is why you have people like Lancy DCruz, Francis Gonsalves and me in the Society. Many of his students, well-placed all over the globe, will vouch for the contribution Charlie has made to their lives.

Twenty-one long years in one institution, Loyola Hall made Charlie a prominent figure in Ahmedabad. On hearing of his death the social network was flooded with messages where folks expressed their grief at having lost a mentor, a teacher and a friend.

Keep communicating and pleading with God and his saints for those of us you have left behind Charlie.

- Hector Pinto, SJ

JOHNA KARAIBA, SJ

(KHM) 1990 - 2015



Johna was a smart young man of 25 years, only six years a Jesuit, blossoming in life, shining well in studies and games at St Aloysius College, Mangalore, Karnatka, a much loved confrere in his Community, Asha

Kiran.

He had great dreams. So did the Society of Jesus for Johna. But God seems to have had other dreams for him. Cancer in his liver and lungs - diagnosed in May 2014 - started consuming him from within. A liver-transplant was his only last hope. And that was done in June 2014, with his brother, Andrew, donating a part of his liver. The operation was reported successful and Johna seemed to have got a new lease of life. With three months of rest and recuperation in Bangalore, Johna seemed to gradually regain his energies. He was back in the Jesuit House in Guwahati, and felt happy to gain some weight. He had a slight nagging cough, though, that seemed to get worse day by day, and by mid-December he was in distress trying to breathe. The scan done showed cancer had spread to his lungs. He was flown back to Bangalore to the doctors who had operated on him earlier. Seeing the biopsy-results they concluded they could do nothing more to save Johna. He was brought back to Guwahati and was looked after here at the Jesuit House. On 24 Jan he experienced severe breathlessness and was rushed to the hospital. Having met all his family members and Jesuit confreres, Johna surrendered his life spirit back to his Lord on 09 Feb '15.

Johna was born on 22 Feb 1990 in Manipur. He responded to God's call and joined the Society in Kohima Region in June 2009. In the short six years he lived as a Jesuit, he grew in faith, love and service of God and fellow human beings. As a sportsman he excelled in Basket Ball and Volley Ball. Beyond winning trophies, he won the hearts of many. We, the Jesuits of Kohima Region and his dear family will miss him.

It is very painful to lose such a young, promising Jesuit. May he rest in the arms of God in peace for ever.

- Tom Quadros, SJ

PAUL MACWAN, SJ

(GUJ) 1938 - 2015



Br. Paul Macwan was inspired to join the Society while he was doing his primary school at Nadiad, by observing the saintly life of Br. Augustine Lobo. He joined the novitiate at Vinayalaya, Mumbai,

in 1961. After spending four years in Vinayalaya, for his novitiate and juniorate, he was sent to De Nobili College, Pune. That was his home for 15 years till 1980. He became the first Brother Minister of De Nobili College. He was the founding member of De Nobili College Trust.

In 1980, he was sent to the Thailand Border to serve the refugees of Cambodia and Vietnam, at the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees. He received a letter of merit from the UN High Commission and a congratulation letter from the then General Fr. Arrupe.

From 1981, Paul worked at Dediapada and worked there for seven years as Treasurer, Farm Manager, In Charge of Social Work. He collaborated with Fr. Berechi in starting the first educational project in South Gujarat, opening three Primary schools, a High school and later on a Higher Secondary school. At the same time He was asked by Fr. Berechi to improve the management of the milk cooperative society. So he went to NDDB, Anand for a course in the relevant skills.

From Dediapada he was sent to Africa (Ethiopia). It was one of his dreams fulfilled. He was given charge as Field Director of JRS, and had to oversee a huge project: establishing 70,000 displaced people of that country. There too Paul was given a letter of appreciation by the Ministry of Health. After his tertianship at Bangalore in 1989 he was sent to Khambhat mission in 1990 where he worked for eight years. For the last 20 years he was assisting a centre for the handicapped children. His last appointment was at Nanisingaloti as Treasurer, Building Incharge and Farm Incharge.

An unfortunate road accident on Christmas Day, 25 Dec 2014, ended his life and took him away from us.

- Lawrence Dharmaraj, SJ

Enriching devotions

You had something very interesting in the Feb '15 issue of *Jivan*. It talked about Pope Francis revealing to the journalists during his flight back from the Philippines that he had a devotion to St Therese of Child Jesus (Little Flower) for many years and that he had prayed to her for his trip to Asia. "I asked that ...she would send me a rose. But instead of a rose she came herself to greet me."

It is interesting to see the kind of saints this wonderful Pope is devoted to. The former Jesuit Provincial chose the name of the great Francis of Assisi. He revealed he had a tender devotion to Peter Faber, one of the earliest companions of St Ignatius, and went on to canonize him. He prays often in front of the tomb of St John XXIII, the former Pope who resembles him in simplicity, humility and warmth toward people.

Do we choose our patrons and guides or do they choose us? Whom we are fond of and whom we frequently talk to affect us in many ways. No wonder that Pope Francis has such a rich personality that touches thousands across the globe.



- Rosaline Anand
Hyderabad - 500 003

How many will be our students?

Kudos to AAP and its leader Kejriwal for gaining landslide victory in Delhi Assembly elections! As he has repeatedly confessed the victory is the fruit of the strenuous labour put in by thousands of committed volunteers who, out of love for the motherland, wished to clean up the Indian politics and give the nation a government that is secular, pro-poor and efficient. They all deserve our heartfelt gratitude and hearty congratulations. AAP has initiated in the country a new trend of educating the voters so that they cast their vote responsibly in order to elect as their representatives only those who are worthy. This trend will certainly have healthy repercussions in other States of India when they

go for elections. This is a great achievement in our democracy and its protection too. AAP thus has begun the much-needed election reforms without waiting for other politicians to bring in any law in the parliament.

I am curious and in fact very much interested in knowing how many of these committed volunteers who laboured to win the Delhi elections, were old students (products) of our Catholic and particularly Jesuit schools, colleges and other educational institutions? Our educational institutions are supposed to form "men & women-for-others". This information can throw much light on this and will also make us reflect on the aims and objectives of our education ministry. Such self-introspection will be a great help for evaluating the services that the Church and Jesuits render in the country, through our educational institutions. - William Macwan, SJ
Vidyanagar, Gujarat - 388 120

Creation Retreat

'Creation (Eco Spirituality) Retreat' is an attempt to experience and relish God's presence in His Creation – always and everywhere. Gujarat Jesuit Ecology Mission (GJEM) is organizing a 'Creation Retreat' (in English) for all Christians at the cool, green and beautiful BEL-AIR, Panchgani, for six days.

Retreat Guides: Fr LancyD'Cruz, SJ, & Fr Rappai Poothokaren, SJ. *Dates:* April 30 PM to May 7 AM, 2015 (six days). *Place:* BEL-AIR, Panchgani, Satara Dt. Maharashtra – 412 805

Register as soon as possible (first come first served!). Enquiries and Registration by email (rappaisj@gmail.com) or letter to: Fr Rappai Poothokaren, SJ/ Xavier Technical Institute/ Sevasi/ Vadodara 391 101/ Gujarat. Mobile: 09426304943.

- Rappai Poothokaren, SJ
Vadodara - 391 101

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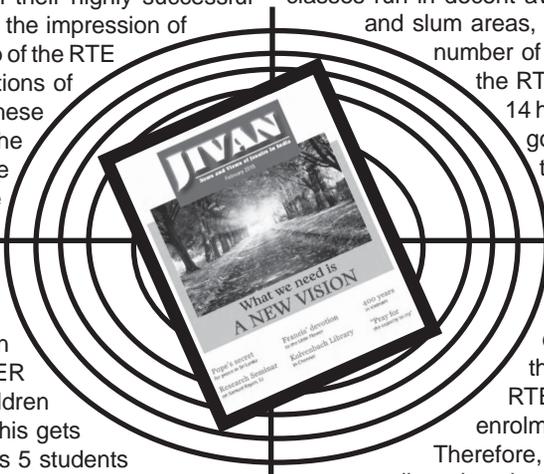
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RTE and CCE: what have they done?

In "SJ Education Goal 2025" (*Jivan*, Jan '15), Trevor Miranda has presented a very relevant and pressing challenge to Jesuits in the field of education in India, viz., of working, in future, in the field of advocacy and empowerment of the poor, women and the weaker sections of society through their highly successful network of schools. However, he gives the impression of placing too much faith in seeking the help of the RTE Act of 2010 and the educational institutions of the Government of India in achieving these praiseworthy goals. In the course of the article, he himself admits that both these key instruments of the government have failed miserably in providing quality education, when he says, quoting from *the Times of India*, "Across the country there is a simmering unease with the education our 315 million children are getting now. According to the ASER 2013 survey report, 60% of class 3 children surveyed couldn't read a class 1 text. This gets worse with higher classes. 53% of class 5 students couldn't read a class 2 text. A higher proportion was unable to deal with subtraction and division." (*TOI*, 15 Sept 2014) These findings have been corroborated more recently by 2 highly qualified educationists from the U.S, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Directors of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, a research centre at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In a lengthy interview titled, "Learning's not about enrolment, latrines in school... We're failing children on a massive scale", they speak about their experiments with social sector schemes in India, why NREGA does a poor job and how RTE has contributed to worsening levels in schools (*The Sunday Express*, 01 Feb 2015).

They say, "There is a big stumbling block in acknowledging that you cannot go anywhere unless you try to address the problem of learning first. The RTE Act did a wonderful job of making this problem worse because the Act replaced testing with this bizarre Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) which is neither comprehensive nor continuous... The system puts no emphasis on assessments. That is the problem. The RTE removed that. Children aren't tested at all. Teachers are too busy doing CCE, which is so complicated that they have completely abandoned the idea and just mark everyone present... The Right to Education is a right which should be measured by whether the children are learning. Why is it a right if it cannot be monitored by anybody except by the potentially guilty party – the teacher? Any right needs some externalization, and by not having any evaluation we have removed that one piece of externalization". They go on to add, "Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh did the PSA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and India was ranked second from the last. So if we are really that far behind, there has to be a problem. One can't imagine that this has no consequences for our employability. We do not think people are fully aware of the extent to which the children are being cheated. If and when they become aware, there could be a backlash, even a political backlash. Scores and scores of young people will get out after 10 years of education and think, 'I got nothing out of 10 years of education. Give me a job that corresponds to my 10 years of education'. And then, it could take the form of a pretty nasty political resentment." The RTE Act



has contributed much to the fall in educational standards of all public and government-aided Jesuit and Christian institutions by curbing their freedom and creativity, in different ways, and bringing in more and more government control over their managements.

Several NGOs too, like Trevor's own REAP, which were providing excellent education up to class 6 and beyond, through classes run in decent available spaces in very remote villages and slum areas, were compelled to close down a large number of these classes in 2010 because, under the RTE Act, all children between ages 6 and 14 had to be compulsorily enrolled in regular, government-recognized schools (where they learn very little and which they were reluctant to attend). The excellent REAP Programme of education for the poor was thus reduced, from a "footpath university" to a "balwadi university". Many NGOs devoted to education for the poor in Maharashtra, therefore, felt that the only purpose of the RTE Act was to boost the rapidly decreasing enrolment of students in government schools!

Therefore, if Jesuits are serious about providing quality education to the poor and marginalized children in India, they will have to devise a strategy of their own and start schools which are independent of government control and quite different from the present schools they run.

Joseph M. Dias, SJ
Andheri (E), Mumbai - 400 093

Peace in Sri Lanka

My sincere thanks go to Fr Milroy Fernando, SJ for beautifully presenting the Pope's visit to Sri Lanka in Feb '15 issue of *Jivan*. I was touched by the Pope's love and concern for peace and unity in Sri Lanka. It touched my heart deeply and I am sure the hearts of many others as well. As I went through it, I felt what the Pope has advised is not something abstract but very practical. In fact the Pope doesn't ask us to merely look back but to look to the future - to look for the truth that will set us free.

- Arockia Amalan, SJ
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 586

Ecology Summit

St. Xavier's College, Kolkota is organizing 4th SXC Global Earth Summit on "Global Climate Change and Water Disasters" on 27-29 March 2015. We are inviting Jesuits, especially climate warriors, academicians, policy-makers, researchers and environmental educators. This is an initiative of the Global Ignatian Advocacy Network (GIAN) for ecology in South Asia.

Dates: 27- 29 March 2015. *Venue:* Dhyana Ashram, Kolkota. Those who are interested please contact me for all details at sxavi2005@me.com

- Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ
Convener

Lessons for Life

I've learned from Guyana & Eastern Africa

BY LOURDURAJ AROKIASAMY, SJ

See the character

Whether in Canada, Guyana, India, or East Africa I have learnt to see God's image in all people, to look beyond the colour of the skin, race, religion or caste. All of us are God's children created in His image. Content of one's character is more important than the color of the skin or caste or tribe or faith or nationality of the person.

Greet people

Greeting is very important in African culture. In East Africa the way you greet a person may enhance or distort relationships. If someone greets you, he means he respects you and he is ready to begin a conversation. If you don't greet your neighbors, it means you are not in good terms with them and if you are in a problem they won't help you. Even strangers on the streets are greeted by people. Youngsters greet elders, saying "Shikamoo" (Respectful greetings!) to which the response is "Marahaba" (I accept and return your respect.)

Feel at home

Too late in life have I become a missionary. Of course one can be a missionary in one's own land. Yet we, as Jesuits, are called to be ready "to reach the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach." I firmly believe that I have joined the Society of Jesus and not a Province. I have learnt to feel at home everywhere and so to find good people everywhere.

Serve the poor with love

Our service to people at school, parishes or anywhere, must be accompanied by an immense love for them. Only service born of love bears much fruit. And it is most satisfying if those whom we serve are the really poor. Guyana in South America and Tanzania in Africa, where I was sent to work, are very poor countries and so working here is satisfying.

Care for your health but rely on His mercy

Medical facilities may not be available everywhere as one would wish them to be and, if available, may be very expensive. I am much edified to see sick people here so calm and patient, waiting at times for hours to see a doctor. A reasonable care of

Lourduraj Arokiasamy, SJ (MDU) is a teacher and spiritual guide at the Jesuit Novitiate, Arusha, Tanzania.



health is enjoined upon us. But we shouldn't be overly anxious about our health or wilfully neglect of it. When sick, after doing what is necessary, I rely on God's mercy, ready to accept His will.

Practise what you preach

Familiarity with the Scriptures is familiarity with God. People welcome and appreciate God's Word when it is broken meaningfully for them. Now internet helps us to prepare well and deliver well. Also, my preaching will be fruitful only when I myself practise what I preach. Otherwise I am 'no more than a 'noisy gong or a clanging bell'. People observe us.

Be grateful

St Paul knew how to live in humble circumstances and how to live with abundance. (Phil 4:12). In SJ no one suffers due to lack of basic material facilities, wherever he may be placed. Our Society is very generous and our superiors are caring. So we must be grateful and make use of all we have for His glory.

Remain in Him

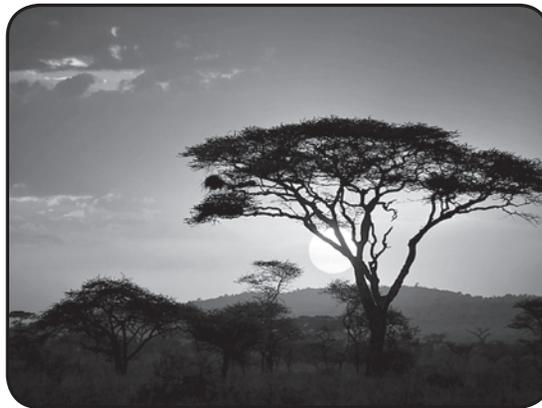
Wherever I am, whatever I do, will make sense as long as I am united with Christ as a branch in the vine. 'Apart from Me you can do nothing.' A certain regularity in our spiritual life and actively engaging oneself in the apostolate help us to 'remain in Him' always. The prayer of the priest before Communion 'let me never be separated from You' constantly rings in my ears.

Protect Creation

The forces of destruction are very active today everywhere destroying God's creation in the name of progress and development. Eastern Africa has some of the world famous National Parks and Game Reserves. I feel sad at the decline of natural resources and wild life here in Africa.

Trust in God always

Ten years ago, on Christmas day in 2004 in Guyana I celebrated Mass at 8 am. at the beautiful Sacred Heart Church, where I was the Parish Priest. During the final hymn around 9 am a fire that started at the crib, owing to short circuit, destroyed the church, the presbytery, and two school blocks in two hours. I lost literally everything including my passport. I escaped being burnt alive. The Lord gave me enough strength to say to my parishioners, "The Lord gave, and now he has taken away. May His name be praised". (Job 1:21). A new church will be consecrated this Christmas at the same site. Praise be to God! ■



O St Joseph,

*Life partner of Mary, our mother,
You are a model to all life partners of this world.
Your gentleness and generosity
enabled Mary to perform the will of God.
Touch the hearts of all men and women,
Let them be united in minds and hearts
to perform God's will.
As a father, you reared your son, Jesus,
in piety, wisdom and obedience.
Help all parents to bring their children up
in the same way.
As the head of your holy family,
you were responsible for your family.
Help us all embrace the world as our family
and be responsible for it.
St. Joseph, the epitome of hard work
and righteousness,
Help us work for God
laboriously and righteously.
Be with us and intercede for us
with your son, Jesus Christ.
Amen.*

by Y. John Richard, SJ



MOMENTS



John Mezzia SJ (Jesuit Refugee Service)

*“I raise up my voice - not so I can shout but so that those without a voice
can be heard... we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.”*

- Malala Yousafzai