

November - December, 2024

# JIVAN


NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA

**Eyes raised,**

**Hands joined,**

**Feet bare**

 The Magic of Christmas

 Life is like a river





## Sleep in peace!

Held in your mother's tender arms  
You slept so deep, without a care  
She crooned over you many a lullaby  
She loved you with all her heart

Held in your mother's loving arms  
Then you slept the sleep of death  
She swooned and cried with her heart pierced  
She loved you then into eternity

Held in the cold arms of Mother Earth  
A profound sleep you deserve, but  
Good Mother Earth cannot hold you back  
You were born of the Father's love.

*Fr. Kinley Tshering, SJ (DAR) is the Episcopal Vicar in-charge of Bhutan Jesuit Mission. He can be contacted at [kinleysj@yahoo.com](mailto:kinleysj@yahoo.com).*



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As a service of information for the South Asian Jesuit Conference, 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. All material sent for publication may be edited for reasons of space, clarity or policy. Readers are requested to donate generously towards Jesuit ministries.



## My spiritual weapon

While reading the October '24 issue of *Jivan*, I was captivated by the image of the rosary. The article by Fr Fiorello Mascarenhas SJ, contained a wealth of information about its significance. Speaking from personal experience, I can confidently say that the rosary is my ultimate weapon against adversity. To me, the rosary holds more beauty and value than diamonds, gold, or platinum when worn around the neck. When fashioned into a bracelet, it surpasses the allure of even the most precious gemstone. Worn as a ring, it holds more power than any other ring. Those who regularly pray the rosary can confront life's challenges with unwavering strength.

| Aaron Colaco, NSJ | Bengaluru

## The ultimate victory

The article titled "Should we win at any cost?" by Alex Mascarenhas SJ in the September '24 issue of *Jivan* raised several relevant questions. It made me ponder when one truly wins or deserves a medal. Deserving a medal or trophy comes from passion, determination, hard work and dedication, not from taking shortcuts. Regardless of the outcome, when one has poured their heart and soul into their efforts, they have already won the admiration and respect of the people. I realized that being true to my conscience is the ultimate victory, and by doing so, I can achieve any accolade. The article underscored the crucial need for individuals to stay true to their conscience.

| Anish, NSJ | Bengaluru

## Three pathways

I felt inspired by Fr Stany D'Souza's article titled 'Three pathways' (part of his speech at the JCAP meet) in the September '24 issue of *Jivan*. I think all Jesuit communities should practice what he suggests as three pathways of interreligious dialogue: 'Friendship, hospitality, learning.' We need to build friendships by sharing not merely our talents and skills but also our feelings. Hospitality begins at home and it should be offered to all. Let us have the humility to learn from one another. We should build trust and empathy among us so that we are able to foster peace and harmony in our society. Hats off to the author and the editor who brought it to our attention!

| Noha Veigas, NSJ | Bengaluru

## Weapon of my soul

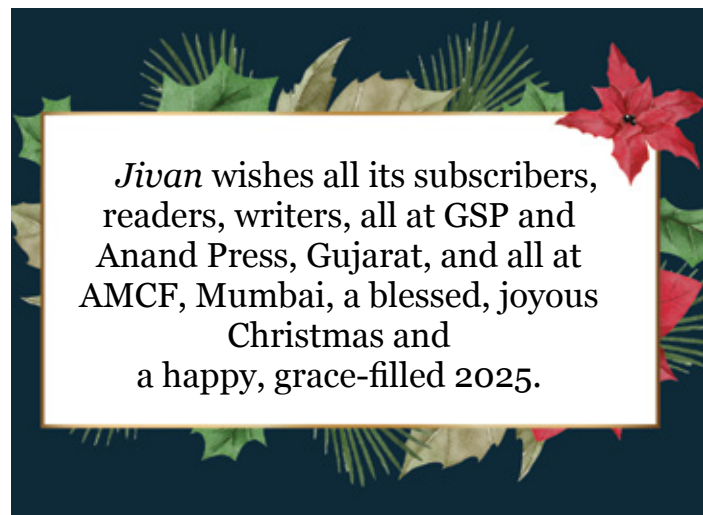
I am deeply grateful for the article "How can we pray the rosary fruitfully?" by Fiorello Mascarenhas, SJ in the October issue of *Jivan*. It has reignited my love for the rosary and inspired me to incorporate it into my daily routine. The rosary holds a profound significance for us as it strengthens our bond with Mother Mary and provides us with spiritual solace during times of distress or ill health. It is a holistic practice that unites my body, mind, and spirit with my heavenly Mother. The rosary is undeniably the weapon of my soul.

| Savio Fernandes, NSJ | Bengaluru

## Winning and losing

In his article titled "Should We Win at Any Cost?" in the September '24 issue of *Jivan*, Fr. Alex Mascarenhas, SJ raises the question, "Is it morally acceptable for an individual with an average weight of 57 kg to compete in the under-50 category by artificially reducing their weight?" Initially, my answer was 'yes.' As an Indian, I felt a natural inclination to support Vinesh Phogat. However, after reading the article and reflecting on it, I learned the importance of analysing situations with a critical and ethical eye. It is far more commendable to lose a match and gain the respect of people than to win and lose our hard-earned reputation.

| Sch. Avin Fernandes, SJ | Thiruvananthapuram





## WHAT DO YOU SAY?

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ  
President, JCSA

### Going Beyond

Although Christmas is a feast of joy, still, each year Christmas blooms amidst many challenges. As I was reflecting on the significance of Christmas, a unique intervention of God, I bumped upon the following short story. It is said that Hercules, the Greek mythical hero, constructed two pillars near the Straits of Gibraltar..... with a warning inscribed on them: "*Ne plus ultra*" – 'No More Beyond.' This mythical idea was so ingrained in people that it restricted adventurous expeditions. Nobody dared to go beyond.

However, the world changed with the arrival of Christopher Columbus. He explored unknown waters and discovered unfamiliar lands. It seems after the death of Columbus, people erected a memorial for him, a lion destroying one of the words, 'Ne' found in 'Ne plus ultra', signifying that after Columbus there is not 'No More beyond', but, 'plus ultra' meaning 'More Beyond', limitless horizons to be explored.

In fact, this is the significance of Christmas. In the birth of Jesus, God revealed to us infinite possibilities, and showed us a path to achieve them. Faced with sin and its consequences on humanity and cosmos, God did what only God could do. God became a human being and showed the depth and the breadth of God's love. And Jesus, God who became a human being, did what only God would do. He waded through all sorts of challenges and explored infinite possibilities of love, his central message.

Just look around the world. It is plagued with multiple internal and external challenges, which are complex and confusing. There is distrust, discord and destruction; hate, violence and ruin. The issues are so intricate that it becomes impossible to diagnose and address them. What is the way out? Get desperate and destroy oneself and others? No. The answer is more love and greater hope. That is what Christmas all about.

They say, 'in the company of wind even dust rises to great heights.' Christmas is the time to choose the company of God as Jesus did and, like Him, to be Godly. It is to contemplate and demonstrate the audacity of the impossible as Fr General invited us, Jesuits to be and to do. Shall we walk with Jesus and rewrite the caption, "*Ne plus ultra*" – 'No More Beyond' as "*plus ultra*" – 'More beyond'? What do you say?



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

M.A. JOE ANTONY, SJ  
Editor

### Can we celebrate Christmas without...?

Can we really celebrate Christmas without thinking of what is happening in the land where Christ was born? Is it possible? A brutal, bloody conflict is raging in the region for more than a year. On 7 October 2023 the Iran-backed terrorist group, Hamas, which controls Gaza, waged what the Israelis call "the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust." Hamas killed 1,200 Israelis, and took 240 civilians hostage.

Israel's retaliatory attacks that still continue have killed more than 40,000 Palestinians and displaced nearly 2,000,000 in Gaza. Israel is fighting also Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Shiite militia in Lebanon that has attacked Israel by firing rockets. As if all these were not enough, Iran and Israel have begun accusing and attacking each other. After a while it becomes impossible to pinpoint which was the provocation and which was the reaction.

The plight of innocent Palestinian civilians, caught between Hamas and Israel, triggered intense global pressure to stop the violence and work out a ceasefire. It has also led to a campaign in several Western countries to end Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. But nothing has managed to stop the violence and deaths of innocent civilians.

What is the tragic result of all this? Since this is a century-long struggle between Jews and Palestinians for the same small parcel of land, many today have come to believe that there is absolutely no chance for peace in this region. Atef Safadi says in *the Conversation*, "The prospects for a ceasefire in Gaza – and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine – seem dimmer than ever." He quotes Eyal Mayroz who said, "Both sides have lost any capacity they had for trusting or empathising with the other."

Should all this make us abandon our hope for peace in the region where Jesus was born? Read the reflections of the renowned spiritual writer, Ronald Rolheiser, on what Christmas lights signify. (See p.9) If you read his article carefully you'd see him quoting a Jesuit, the late Fr Michael Buckley, a highly respected U.S. theologian. Buckley said, "Prayer is most needed, just when it is deemed most useless."

All through the Christmas season we should pray for peace in the Middle East and Ukraine, for peace everywhere, in our hearts, homes and nations. But since it is justice that ensures peace, we should echo the prophet's words everywhere: "Return to your God; maintain love and justice." (Hosea 12: 6)





## Write and get them to write!

The deadline for the Jivan Short Story Contest for 2024 has been extended to **31 December 2024**. As informed earlier, the contest is open to all - Jesuits and non-Jesuits, men and women, young and not-so-young. All these years you could come up with your own story – your own plot, your own characters, dialogue etc.

This year it is a different kind of short story contest. The beginning of the story was on page 17 in the October '24 issue of *Jivan*. You need to develop the story and bring it to its logical conclusion. The protagonist (the hero) is Shyam, a student, who, after, hearing what his teacher tells him about his conduct in the past year, storms into the principal's room, with tears flowing down his cheeks and shaking all over. From that instant, you can develop the story anyway you want and conclude it appropriately.

Your contribution should be original and inspiring, giving us hope for the future. The beginning of the story on the next page has about 360 words. Your contribution can have **about 600 – 650 words**.

There are three prizes: The first prize: Rs 4,000. The second prize: Rs 2,500. The third prize: Rs 1,000. Send soft copies of entries, with a forwarding letter with your full name and address and a brief description of your background to: [jivanmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:jivanmagazine@gmail.com). The subject title should be 'Jivan story contest 2024.' The entries should reach us before 31 December 2024. The results will be announced in the March 2025 issue of *Jivan*. All entries become the property of *Jivan*. A person can send only one short story. The decision of a two-member Jury will be final. ❖

- Editor

### READERS WRITE

## TN AICUF animator attends IMCS summit

On 11 - 22 September 2024 Mr Ranjith Roy, the Animator of TN AICUF participated in the IMCS (International Movement of Catholic Students) annual summit at La Roche, France. He was the only representative sent from AICUF, India. At the IMCS annual summit, they discussed Ecology, Democracy, Justice, and Peace in the World. He presented the socio-political reality of India and AICUF activities among the youth, especially emphasizing the four Tamil Nadu AICUF Centenary Projects: 100 libraries in rural and tribal villages, drudging 100 water bodies, forming 100 young leaders to work for social transformation and enacting in 100 places street plays on drug abuse, ecology, and the Indian Constitution.

Mr. Ranjith had also the chance to participate in the deliberations on human rights at the United Nations Office, Geneva. He had a personal audience with Pope Francis, and visited the Jesuit Curia in Rome. We express our gratitude to the Jesuit Chennai Province administration for the support, Fr Vernon D'Cunha SJ, the General Assistant for his guidance, and to Fr Benjamin SJ, the AICUF National Advisor.

| Parthasarathi, SJ | State Advisor, TN AICUF

## Towards a bright future

The words of Jesus, "Let the little children come to me", resonate deeply with me as I reflect on Fr. Vinod Fernandes's article, "What do today's children want from their teachers?" Children seek guidance and support, and it is important for us to embody this principle. On 14 November we celebrate Children's Day and also honour the legacy of St. Joseph Pignatelli, whose dedication played a pivotal role during the time of suppression and reestablishment of the Society of Jesus. Whether it is through our unique approach to education or our counseling ministry, we have the opportunity to nurture the potential of every child, guiding them towards a bright future.

| Adrian George Saju, NSJ | Bengaluru

## Unconditional

The article "What I Have Learned as a Formator" by Fr. Anush D'Cunha, SJ in the September 2024 issue of *Jivan* led me to reflect on life in the pre-novitiate. Our Formators were indeed 'facilitators – those who accompany others to facilitate their growth. Guiding vocations through formation is challenging, yet the loving guidance I have received from my Formators is truly unconditional.

| Akshay, NSJ | Bengaluru





# Christmas is an invitation to keep our Eyes Raised, Hands Joined, Feet Bare

On 6 October '24, Pope Francis wrote a short yet pointed letter to the bishops and priests whom he chose to be raised to the Cardinalate on 7 December 2024. In the letter the Pope is wishing them well, but also reminding them that they are called to be servants, not Lords. And he makes his point emphatically, in one phrase, by telling the Cardinals-elect that they are called to embody three attitudes that characterized St John of the Cross: "eyes raised, hands joined, feet bare."

What he meant was amply clear. He urged the Cardinals-elect to lengthen their gaze, love broadly, bring disparate persons into our sphere of ministry, whilst at the same time staying closely intimate with the Lord in prayerful discernment, and staying firmly grounded and connected to the lives of those who suffer from the harsh realities of our time.

The first nativity scene must have reflected what the Pope said. I am thinking of the Wise men who travelled from the East to see the new born babe (Mt 2:1-12). They had their eyes raised, quite literally, to the star that guided them. They saw beyond what other ordinary people could see. And this was not just a distant dream, but a sign of hope and redemption. On encountering the baby Jesus they fell to their knees, with hands joined in worship (Mt 2:11). A true sign of their inner conversion was their openness to listen to the voice of the spirit (dream) and to return to their country by another route (Mt 2:12). They were grounded (feet bare) in the message that the birth of Christ brought to them and to the world.

Each of us is probably called to take these three attitudes to heart. How, in practical ways, are we to



Pic courtesy: mymovingforward.com

understand these attitudes Pope Francis is urging us to take on?

**Eyes raised:** This is an invitation to lengthen our gaze and to let our hearts engage with the deepest part of our being. In our Jesuit circles, we are in a period of apostolic imagination, pray-dreaming who and what we are called to be in 2024. This global Jesuit process has meant searching the depths. The global and local context also urges us to reach for new depths, in order that our response be a depth-response.

For instance, the Assembly elections held in November 2024 in Maharashtra and Jharkhand continue to make us ponder our role in the democratic processes in our country. After all, without democratic values being upheld, our ministries could face serious roadblocks. Our education work would be severely subverted if the NEP 2020 provision of a government-appointed school management committee is made operational in Aided schools. Questions also remain about the fair and just implementation of the recently proposed Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill 2024. Even our efforts in caring for creation (the third UAP)

would amount to little if the government continues to favour commercial corporate interests to the detriment of ecology. Much conscientization and far-sightedness is the need of the hour.

**Hands joined:** The phrase 'hands joined' in a way reminds me of the various moments of life lived before the Lord. It represents hands raised in worship, hands that reach out to a neighbour in need, hands thrown up in desperation when life seems unfair, even hands that lead us towards sinful ways. Our hands somehow represent the orientation and goals of our body and spirit.

Hence today more than ever before, with lives getting busier and more crammed, we're called to let our hands, hearts, and minds rest sufficiently with the Lord. And that calls for dedicated time and space. Fr Walter Burghardt S.J. famously described prayer as 'a long, loving look at the real.' Christmas can seem to help us do this: to look for long, and lovingly, at the Child born for us as well as to look with gratitude at the graces and blessings that constantly flow into our lives.

**Feet bare:** Finally, the faith we profess urges us to live out a practical spirituality, something like what Aristotle would call 'phronesis,' wherein great emphasis is placed on practical action. And to truly act and engage with the distressed peoples of our times we need to feel their breath and listen to them sigh. And so, to tread the earth with our feet bare would amount to being connected to those most vulnerable and lost.



Pic courtesy: freepik.com

The ones who were invited to come and worship the "child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger" were some of those who were the lost and the least at that time. The angel asks them not to be afraid as they would hear "good news of great joy."

In the suburbs of Andheri where I currently work, I am always moved by the ministry of the Canossian Sisters, in particular, their social centre called Jivan Vikas Kendra, from where they reach out to the LGBTQIA+. Their bi-monthly sessions with the transgender persons in particular is really path-breaking. They empower them to pick up livelihood skills, get jobs, and also get into mainstream education. This helps wean them away from a life of begging and commercial sex work. The transgender persons are also helped to legalize their personal documents and thus feel legitimately part of community. The invitation to tread the earth with our feet bare might just be a call to carefully listen, notice and respond.



Pic courtesy: flickr.com

These three attitudes are not mutually exclusive entities. They point to a singular manner of being and are to be looked at holistically. Hence, when we fall in love with the new born babe at Christmas, we cannot but live in this manner – with our gaze lengthened, with our hands joined in worship before the God-Child in the manger, and with our feet firmly planted on the floor of a world that cries out for help. ❖

*Fr Learoy Rodrigues, SJ is presently Socius to the Bombay Jesuit Provincial. He resides at Vinayalaya, Andheri, Mumbai.*





# Defying darkness with Christmas lights

In the days of apartheid in South Africa, one of the ways people expressed their opposition and their belief that someday it would be overcome, was to light a candle and put it in a window where it could be seen by anyone passing by. A lit candle, publicly displayed, made a prophetic statement. It didn't take long for the government to react. Placing a lit candle in your window became a criminal offense, equivalent to carrying an illegal firearm. The irony wasn't lost on children. They joked, "Our government is afraid of lit candles!"

And well they should be! To light a candle for a moral or religious reason (be it for protest, for Hanukkah, for Advent, or for Christmas) is to make a prophetic statement of faith and, in essence, make a public prayer.

Admittedly, this can be hard to read inside the glow of the millions of Christmas tree lights that we see everywhere. Why do we put up all these lights at Christmas? Why do we light our homes and our streets with colorful lights at this time of year?

No doubt, we do it for color, for celebration, and for commercial reasons; but we also do it because, more deeply, it expresses a faith, however inchoately this might still be felt, that in Christ a final victory has been won and light has forever conquered darkness. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it."

Our Christmas lights are, in the end, an expression of faith and in essence a public prayer. Nevertheless, we might still ask, "What difference can this possibly make?" Putting up lights as a symbol of faith can seem like a very insignificant and naïve thing to do in the face of the seeming overwhelming darkness of our world. We look at our world and we see millions suffering from the war, millions of refugees on borders around the world, and hundreds of millions suffering from food shortages. As well, when we know that thousands of people every day are dying from domestic violence, drug violence, and gang violence, and when we see tension everywhere within our governments, our churches, our neighborhoods, and our families, we might ask ourselves, what difference do our little string of lights, or indeed all the Christmas lights in the world, make?



Picture courtesy: newageights.com

Well, in the words of the late Jesuit Michael Buckley, *prayer is most needed, just when it is deemed most useless*. These are words to hang onto. Given the magnitude of our world's problems, given the magnitude of the darkness that threatens us, now more than ever, it is imperative that we express our faith publicly, as a prayer. Now, more than ever, we need to show publicly that we still believe faith works, that we still believe in the power of prayer, and that we still believe that, in Christ, the power of darkness has been forever overcome.

This is expressed wonderfully in a poem John Shea inscribed inside his Christmas card this year: *Our Christmas trees want to talk to us/ The greater darkness of December can take its toll and strengthen what afflicts us./ Our Christmas trees beg to differ. Their branches are full, leafy, strung with lights./ The brightness is defiant./ We want a perfect world./ But that is not always what we get./ We may experience catastrophic weather; a pandemic; threatened health; overstressed work, dipping finances, struggling relationships, and society and world either slightly or wildly insane./ Our Christmas trees glow. Their lights whisper; "Give all the things that afflict you their due, but do not give them your soul./ You are more than the surrounding darkness.*

Karl Rahner once wrote that, at Christmas, God gives us sacred permission to be happy. Christmas also assures us that we have more than sufficient grounds to be happy, regardless of what might still be happening in our lives and in our world. We can be defiant in the face of everything that demands we be downcast. Our Christmas lights express that defiance. ❖

(courtesy: [www.rolheiser.com](http://www.rolheiser.com))

## Communicators meet in Kolkata

JESCOM's annual meeting 2024 was held on 14-16 September 2024 at Dhyan Ashram, Kolkata. The theme for this year's meeting was "Re-Imagining and Re-Structuring of Communication Apostolate in South Asia Conference of the Society of Jesus."

The inaugural Eucharist was celebrated by Fr. Sunny George Kunnel, SJ, Socius of the Calcutta Province, who emphasized the need to communicate the message of hope and invited JESCOM Coordinators to spread God's message with fervor. The first day's sessions, led by Fr. Brian Pereira, SJ (KAR), focused on "Re-Imagining & Re-Structuring Communication Apostolate in the South Asian Conference in the Society of Jesus." He guided delegates through a reflective process on the need for a compelling vision for JESCOM to be apostolically effective.

In the second session, delegates discussed the challenges faced in JESCOM ministries and how they have responded. A standout moment was a video message from the Jesuit Curia in Rome, featuring Fr. John Dardis, SJ and Fr. Chukwuyenum, SJ, encouraging collaboration, storytelling, and youth training.

The final session saw delegates reimagining a vision for JESCOM through Ignatian Imagination, working in pairs to draft and present their vision. A video message from Fr. Cedric Prakash urged leveraging communication ministry for social action and change.

Reflecting on the way forward for JESCOM, the delegates felt that each Province/Region should evolve a



clear Communication Policy for planning programs and activities. They urged action plans to include programs helpful to other ministries like education, social action, formation, spirituality, and pastoral work.

The delegates shared that they faced these challenges: Individualism, finance, lack of collective approach, policy-focussed approach, too many tasks for single individuals, frequent change of responsibilities, and the need for collaboration and networking. They resolved to focus on animation versus administration, bringing in laypersons for administration, investing in human and financial resources, and changing attitudes from "my mission" to "our mission" and "God's mission."

Fr. Vernard Antony guided the planning exercise, outlining steps for the future, including forming various JESCOM teams, media training for scholastics, contributing to newsletters, and collaborating with the local Church and the secular media. He expressed gratitude to the Calcutta Jesuits for their hospitality. ❖

Vernard Antony, SJ (DUM)

## Novice directors meet in Sri Lanka

On 21 - 27 August 2024, ten novice directors gathered in Kandy, Sri Lanka, for their annual meeting. This time it was hosted by the Sri Lankan Province. The warm hospitality, generosity, and care we received deeply touched and inspired us. Fr. Angelo Sujeewa Pathirana, the Provincial, welcomed us with a Mass and delivered a homily highlighting a key challenge for formators—the temptation of favoritism, which can undermine effective formation.

Fr. Anthony Pillai led a two-day course on Non-Violent Communication (NVC). We visited Batticaloa and several mission centers, gaining firsthand experience of the Jesuit mission in Sri Lanka.

All the Novice Directors are grateful to Fr. Mariyathas, the novice director of Sri Lanka, and our CDF, Fr. Somy Mannoor.

We propose: - to establish cross-cultural, inter-provincial novitiates to enhance resource sharing and universality, similar to the Juniorate, with each novitiate accommodating at least 20 novices - to form a dedicated team to promote quality vocations across the provinces - to appoint young/senior Jesuits with a strong interest in early formation as Socii to the Novice Directors. ❖

Rachans Lukose, SJ (KER)



# JCSA meet in Delhi

The Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) meeting at Navjivan Renewal Centre, Sahayog, Delhi began on 20 October 2024 evening. In addition to the usual reading and passing the minutes, the President presented the action taken report and informed the participants about the activities, conducted after the last JCSA. Fr Soosai Mani, provincial of Delhi, presented a brief history of the province.

The main agenda of the meeting was to finalize the roadmap for the Re-imagining and Restructuring (RR) of the Society of Jesus in South Asia with a pre-process, actual process and post process.

The animators of this topic, Frs. Dion Vaz, John Dardis and Wendel D' Cruz, guided the Major Superiors through five sessions interspersed with inputs, prayer, spiritual conversation, and the plenary. At the end of the process, there was indeed a 'Eureka moment' as the Major Superiors discovered the pathway to initiate the process of RR with certain clarity and conviction.

The other topics discussed were the following: the feasibility of Jnana Deepa Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Pune, becoming a university; the ecological crisis; the life-mission in Chinese Jesuit Province; the response to Fr General's letter on school education in South Asia; the role of women in Jesuit ministries and the JCI audit report. As usual, the inputs by the Regional Assistants, Fr Vernon D'Cunha and Fr MK George, were greatly appreciated for their timely assistance in governance.

The Major Superiors were unanimous in affirming that these seven days were stress free as the schedule was flexible, facilities comfortable, and the Delhi delicacies delightful. The novelty of the Delhi JCSA was the presence of Frs. Pedro Rodrigues, Vimal Kishore and Valerian Castelino, who were



appointed Major Superiors after the last JCSA. They, along with the Major Superiors who were appointed after December 2022, were introduced to the revised JCSA Statutes, the major decisions taken, and the best practices of governance of a few senior Major superiors. The new Major Superiors found this very helpful.

The important takeaway was certainly the growing solidarity and co-responsibility among the Major Superiors of JCSA, who are slowly doffing provincialism and donning the universal dimension of our vocation and mission, by slowly growing as a community of discernment, collaboration and networking within and beyond the Conference.

There was much to thank God for the success of this memorable meeting. In addition to the organization, inputs, resource persons and animators, the person who touched our hearts the most was Fr Tony Andrade, the director of NRC, who, through his simple and thoughtful ways, took care of all our needs with a meticulous mind and a maternal heart. ❖

Thomas Perumalil, SJ (PAT)

## Her article is a wake-up call

I was delighted to read the article ‘The Jesuit Tryst with Women,’ by Astrid Gajiwala in the October 2024 issue of *Jivan*. The article, based on Decree 14 of GC 34, of 1995, challenges the Jesuits to do more (magis), in the area of women’s rights and participation in decision-making in the Society of Jesus. While some laudable steps have been taken in the 25 year span, many major challenges still await the Jesuits, in the eyes of Ms. Gajiwala.

The observation of Ms. Gajiwala “that it is not so much a women’s problem as much as it is a Jesuit problem” is a wake-up call to Jesuits and women alike



to initiate a meaningful dialogue on the subject. Jesuit consciousness both as male religious as well as men in relationships with women collaborators is in need of a fresh analysis and fresh strategizing. The quality of the relationships needs an upgrade with due sensitivity to gender psychology as well as theology.

Gajiwala’s ‘The Jesuit Box,’ explored in her article, is a great starting point for reflection for us, Jesuits. The four issues she highlights are right on: Obedience, Power and Control, Competition, Inability to listen (with empathy, my addition). Her remark that feminist consciousness is seriously deficient among the SJs, is remarkably telling. Or, it may be present, like many other characteristics, but mostly “intellectually” and not affectively. Since we, Jesuits, are masters of intellectual camouflage games, we tend to brush aside emotional responses rather easily. Unfortunately, in such a process women tend to get a raw deal in collaborative ministry. One of the repeated failures of Jesuit collaborative projects in India is our inability to holistically integrate women partners in our apostolic work or even into our spirituality. These issues need serious prayerful reflection and analysis.

Thank you, Ms. Gajiwala, for your very insightful article and no-holds-barred approach to such a sensitive topic as gender collaboration. It has received inadequate attention in Jesuit circles in India and decree 14 of 1995 may now provide a fresh impetus for change, 25 years later! ❖

| Anthony da Silva, SJ | Porvorim, Goa

## We can’t downplay justice

I felt happy over your cover story in the September ’24 issue of *Jivan*. The thought-provoking article by our theologian, Fr Jossie Lobo SJ, “Where has justice gone?” raises seminal, critical and pertinent questions about justice. In my view, these warrant immediate and meaningful discussions at the province and at the Conference levels. Failing to do so would result in us being complicit in the dilution and decline of the Justice Ministry so central to our Faith. Fr Lobo has clearly tracked this disturbing trend which we cannot allow to persist if we want to be relevant, credible and prophetic today.



It appears that several devices are being invented to avoid facing the justice issues. The prominence accorded to ‘peace and reconciliation’, which Lobo specifically refers to, without mentioning ‘justice’ that ought to be its foundation, is a case in point. Recently the importance given to ‘spiritual conversation,’ seems another distracting device. Without adhering to its genuine original inspiration and technique, we tend to spiritualize and trivialize matters that are serious. Another distracting device seems to be the massive ongoing exercises concerning ‘reimagination and restructuring’ which are stretching the resources of the provinces. This exercise had unfortunately come in the middle of the 2024 general elections. We badly needed Jesuit resources to combat authoritarianism and fascism by vigorously promoting democracy. Many of us have missed the opportunity of joining hands with our secular friends in the common struggle to reclaim our Republic.

The general election has no doubt given a voice to the opposition but the minorities, including Christians, continue to be harassed and oppressed. The third term in power secured by the rightist party has emboldened it to follow its majoritarian agenda with ruthless efficiency. A divided and timid Church has often reacted in ways that expose its confusion, fear and vulnerability.

Justice ought to be an integral part of all our ministries. The trend to downplay justice, I guess, began in 2014, when the right-wing party assumed power. We Jesuits are also deeply affected by the fear psychosis. Hence, along with a deeper analysis, attempts have to be made to build the capacities of our leaders – principals, provincials, directors of institutions, rectors and superiors – to cope and to resist. The ‘trap’ that Fr Lobo is talking about is real and happening. It calls for immediate action. ❖

| Anthony Dias, SJ | Nasik city, Maharashtra





# The Rebirth of a Nation: Sri Lanka's New Dawn

Sri Lanka, a land of stunning beauty, rich culture, and resilience, now stands on the edge of a new dawn. The presidential election of 21 September 2024 was not just another democratic exercise - it was a defining chapter in the nation's journey. In a thrilling contest, Anura Kumara Disanayake - AKD as he is affectionately known - the charismatic leader of the National People's Power (NPP), triumphed over Sajith Premadasa, signaling a powerful shift in the country's political landscape.

AKD's victory is a resounding call for renewal, hope, and a bold break from the grip of the past. After decades of corruption, mismanagement, and politics tainted by division, the people of Sri Lanka have spoken with clarity. The old guard, with its web of unfulfilled promises and privileges, has been swept aside by a wave of desire for change. This moment marks the end of an era of stagnation and the rise of a future fueled by justice, integrity, and the dream of equal prosperity for every Sri Lankan—not just the fortunate few.

**Anura Kumara Disanayake's Journey:** Born on 24 November 1968, in the quiet village of Thambuttegama in the Anuradhapura district, AKD's journey is one of resilience, shaped by humble beginnings. The son of a laborer and a housewife, AKD's early life was steeped in the struggles of rural Sri Lanka, grounding him in the realities of the common people. His political awakening came early, as a fiery student activist with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) during the turbulent second Marxist insurrection from 1987 to 1989, a time fraught with JVP's violent protests and harsh government crackdowns. Despite the dangers, his passion for youth activism and systemic change never dimmed.

Though his education was disrupted by the chaos of the time, AKD persevered and earned a bachelor's degree in physics from the University of Kelaniya in 1995, a testament to his determination. His entry

into Parliament in 2000 marked the beginning of a relentless crusade for governance reform. AKD quickly built a reputation as a fearless advocate, unafraid to challenge the rampant corruption and broken systems that had plagued the nation.

Under his leadership, the JVP evolved into the NPP, a vibrant movement dedicated to tackling Sri Lanka's most pressing issues: crippling economic inequality, unchecked corruption, and the stranglehold of political dynasties. In a powerful July 2024 campaign speech, AKD declared, "If we cannot hold ourselves accountable to the people, we have no right to govern them," a rallying cry that resonated with a public yearning for change.

**The People's Revolution:** AKD's victory is far more than a triumph for the NPP; it is the crowning moment of a people's revolution that ignited with the historic protests of 2022. These uprisings went beyond economic grievances – they became a rallying cry for dignity, justice, and an end to the deep-seated corruption that had suffocated the country for decades. The protests were extraordinary in their reach, uniting Sri Lankans from all walks of life—farmers, students, teachers, and laborers—who came together with a shared dream of a better tomorrow.

The NPP's success in the 2024 election is the embodiment of that collective will. It demonstrates the unstoppable strength of unity, proving that when a nation rises as one, even the most entrenched systems of power can be toppled. AKD's win is not just political; it's a testament to the power of hope, resilience, and the belief that true democratic power lies not with a privileged few, but in the hands of the people. This victory sends a powerful message: when a nation demands change, it cannot be ignored.

**Healing the Wounds of the Past:** AKD's victory, while a triumph for the people, also ushers in a profound challenge: healing the deep and painful



Picture courtesy: globalvoices.org



Pic courtesy: indianexpress.com

scars left by decades of conflict and systemic injustice. Sri Lanka's past is marred by ethnic strife, a brutal civil war, and entrenched inequality—wounds that cannot be easily or quickly mended. The NPP has made it clear that true reconciliation must sit at the heart of their governance, demanding a courageous reckoning with the legacy of Sinhala nationalism, including the shadows that still linger from the JVP's past.

To forge a future of unity, the NPP must extend a hand to Sri Lanka's marginalized communities -Tamils, Muslims, and others who have borne the brunt of suffering and exclusion. Their pain must be acknowledged, and their voices heard, if the dream of a truly inclusive nation is to be realized. In regions where support for NPP remains fragile and ethnic tensions simmer just beneath the surface, this healing process will be critical. Only by confronting these fractures can Sri Lanka lay the foundation for a future when every citizen, regardless of background, feels a part of the nation's journey forward. It is a bold and daunting task, but one that is essential for lasting peace and harmony.

**A Time of Rebirth:** As Sri Lanka steps into this promising new chapter, AKD's victory aligns

beautifully with the Christmas season—a sacred time of hope, rebirth, and renewal. Christmas, the joyous celebration of Christ's birth, brings with it a powerful message: a light shines in the darkness, illuminating the path of transformation now unfolding in this beautiful nation. In a recent heartfelt address, AKD captured this profound sentiment, declaring, "This is the time for solidarity, to rebuild our broken systems and heal our broken communities."

As we gather to celebrate Christmas, we are reminded that the birth of Christ was a divine call to embrace the marginalized, the forgotten, and the oppressed. In this spirit of compassion and unity, our new leaders must wholeheartedly prioritize the needs of every Sri Lankan, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or social class. The journey ahead will demand the same courage, humility, and spirit of service that Jesus exemplified - a commitment to lift one another and create a society rooted in love and justice.

This moment transcends the victory of AKD and the NPP. It signifies the rebirth of a nation - our nation, a renaissance filled with promise. ❖

*Fr. Milroy Fernando, SJ (SRI) is a writer, and Socius to the Provincial of Sri Lanka Province.*





Pic courtesy: st-peters-basilica

## On regular walks through St. Peter's Square...

**Fr. David McCallum SJ**, Executive Director of the Discerning Leadership Program, talks to our Roman Correspondent on his work and recent visit to India.

### Tell us about yourself.

While I've lived and worked in Rome for the past four years, I'm originally from Upstate New York, and now I belong to the UEA Province in the USA. Prior to my assignment as Executive Director of the Discerning Leadership Program, I served as an educator and senior administrator for twelve years at Le Moyne College, in Syracuse, NY. My areas of specialization and really, my passion, include the intersections of adult development, spiritual maturation, and leadership. I'm very interested in the various ways in which we can foster people's capacities for matching and overcoming the challenges of contemporary life, for enhancing the integration of the Jesuit mission in our institutions, and for promoting more collaborative approaches to leadership.

### Have you ever had a "what am I doing here moment"?

Oh yes, constantly. I don't think that I'm a person who tends to take anything for granted, and in truth, I am often amazed by the mysterious ways in which I experience God at work. For instance, I never could

have imagined as a young person that my life would take me in the direction of a religious calling. And in fact, it still amazes me, even after thirty-four years, that I'm a Jesuit priest. But as I consider the paths I might have taken, it is also clear to me that I cannot but live this way. I find such meaning and motivation in the purpose of my mission, and even more profoundly, through my relationship with Christ, my brother Jesuits and colleagues, and the people whom we serve.

I have to say as well that I never could have anticipated the move to live and work in Rome as I received the mission for my current post as the Director of the Discerning Leadership Program. The transition happened during COVID and I found the unexpected end of my prior assignment as Vice President for Mission Integration at Le Moyne College very hard. Not only did this mean that I didn't have the chance to bring my work to completion or say good bye to colleagues and people in the community, but it also meant developing a "start up" organization in a new country, culture, and language. On regular walks through St. Peter's Square, I asked myself what I was





doing here and had moments of self-doubt about my capacity to fulfill the mission.

But after two years and with lots of support from Jesuits here in the Curia, as well as members of my team and friends, I gradually got my bearings. Now, four years into my assignment, I still pinch myself that I'm serving a mission like this, forming senior Church leaders for a more synodal way of proceeding, but now I at least feel more steady on my feet and in fact, very grateful.

**What are the small joys in Jesuit life that bring a smile to your face?**

In my examen, I frequently give thanks for the conversations that we have here at table in the Curia. Of course, it is not always the case, but often enough, we have conversations that are not only stimulating and informative, but funny and down to earth. It is especially satisfying when I'm able to hold a real conversation in Italian, after feeling for two years like Ignatius with the school boys, struggling with his Latin. The men who are assigned here to work in the Curia are good, generous, mature and discrete. They also are warm, wise, full of stories and good humor, and are so broadly informed about many things, including the international scope of our contemporary life in the Society of Jesus. I am grateful for the privilege of living with these men, especially because my mission in the Discerning Leadership Program is actually outside the scope of the Curia's work. I really feel thankful for their friendly support personally and apostolically.

**You visited India recently. Tell us about your experiences there.**

Our team was privileged to be invited to offer a condensed version of the Discerning Leadership Program for regional major superiors in the Society



of Jesus, superiors general of religious congregations of women who share the Ignatian spirituality and charism, and bishops, archbishops, and diocesan vicars. In 2022, we delivered our program for 75 participants from around South Asia who gathered in Bangalore at Prerana, the Jesuit Retreat Center at Mount St. Joseph. And in 2023, we delivered the program to similar groups, but in Ranchi. In both cases, it was my first time visiting a country that is primarily Hindu, and I found this fascinating.

I enjoyed the opportunities to meet and interact with people from all over the subcontinent, especially the way in which I was exposed to the tremendous diversity that is India. While we enjoyed the weekend visits to local places of interest, including Mysore, and then on our way to Ranchi, the Taj Mahal, it was the encounters with people which I enjoyed the most. Personally, I appreciated the pride that people take in their cultures, and the interest that our participants expressed in continuing to integrate Ignatian spirituality into their ways of proceeding. ❖







# The magic of Christmas

A Jain friend of mine recently asked me, “How do Christians abroad celebrate Christmas?” I quickly prepared myself to share from ‘general to specific’, from the biblical story of the Holy Family having no place to stay in Bethlehem to the modern-day commercialized and glamourized event.

She interrupted my thoughts with another question, “Do the non-practicing Christians still celebrate this festival?” I replied to her that all people look forward to celebrating it. Generally, Christmas makes them look forward to the New Year to be born shortly; makes people swing from reality to a dreamy world; images of a cold climate and white snow make them romantic and cozy; tradition and myths around Christmas make them give gifts, decorate their churches and houses with cribs, Christmas trees, colorful lights and attractively lit-up stars.”

Then, she asked me pointedly, “How do you personally look at it?” “Birth of Christ is, to me, not a bygone event etched in the history books of yore; not a mere hazy memory of a reality that happened 2025 years ago; not a ritual recall to mark a season of a liturgical year; nor a festival to enhance the happiness

of a vacation. Though a historical fact, it’s also a mystery.”

She asked me, “What do you mean by mystery?” “A mystery is, normally, something that you cannot understand or explain. However, Christmas, though a deep mystery, makes our cognitive understanding superfluous. It is strange, but true. The child of Bethlehem becomes tangible to our mind’s eye. The unfathomable secret of God’s love is revealed in the smile of a child in swaddling clothes surrounded by curious animals. In what we call ‘incarnation’, God disappears in a human being, the Omnipotent takes the form of a defenseless human child. The powerful burning sun shrinks into a little guiding lamp. Eternity dissolves in a moment, a huge ocean empties itself into a small hand-made pit.”

“You are becoming poetic and eloquent,” she said smiling.

“That is the magic of Christmas. It makes you become like a child in a wonderland, everything looks so new, mesmerizingly beautiful, and sensually attractive as to make you feel euphoric. Christmas invites us to contemplate, to feel, to be filled with emotions on the

affective level; to experience the 'Flow' that transports us to Bethlehem; to enter the stable with the shepherds who are floating in joy. It helps us transcend time and space while being totally absorbed in looking at the beautiful Child in the manger, and makes us sing along with the angels in the sky."

"What is contemplation? How do you contemplate?" she asked.

and see Heaven camping in the universe, hovering over the earth, God meeting wo/man."

"If I am able to contemplate the birth of Jesus, what do I do in his presence?" she asked. "Well, you can give your experiential knowledge to Mary, the beautiful young mom, about how to take care of her child. You can sing to the Child 'Silent Night' and coax him to sleep. You can ask the simple shepherds about

**"You can ask the simple shepherds about the details of their fantastic experience. You can visit the Baby along with the wise men from the East."**



Pic courtesy: sunsetsdesertadventure.com

"Contemplation is seeing an event that took place long ago as if it was taking place right in front of you. It is the ability to imagine an event so realistically that you feel you are there, watching it, participating in it. Contemplation is the gateway to ecstasy – the opposite of suffering and trauma – and to a feeling of safety and security – the opposite of fear and anxiety. But, unless you change and become like little children, contemplation will not be within your reach. Only childlike persons can do it and experience the pure joy of Christmas. Through a reckless abandon of your mind, you will go beyond limits and boundaries,

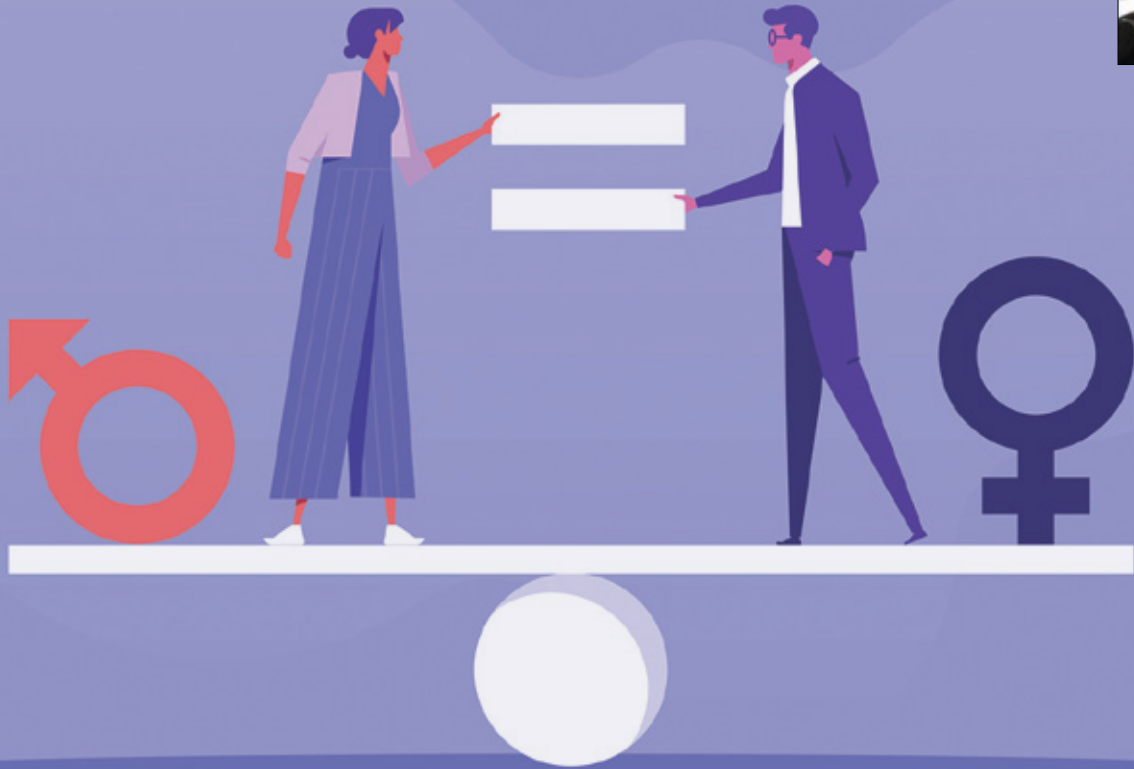
the details of their fantastic experience during the most extraordinary night of their lives. You can visit the Baby along with the wise men from the East."

"Do I need to give him gifts?" she asked. "What can you or I give him!? Mary's God-Child is sure to send you back home with rare gifts of Joy, Peace and Hope so that the whole New Year of 2025 will be Christmas time for you!" ❖

*M.A. Emmanuel Arockiam, SJ, who did his Ph.D. in Counselling Psychology at Marquette University, Milwaukee, U.S., teaches now at the Department of Counselling Psychology, St. Joseph's College, Trichy. He can be reached at emma.aro10@gmail.com*







## Only if we act together...

It was September 1995. The United Nations was celebrating the fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, which led to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. The resolution that was adopted unanimously by the 189 countries participants, recognized “...that the status of women has advanced in some important respects in the past decade, but that progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people.” (Para. 5).

One of the critical areas of concern was the recognition of human rights of women. The Declaration and Platform of Action stated that “...the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is a priority for Governments and the United Nations and is essential for the advancement of women.” (Para. 213)

Months before the Beijing Conference, a crucial event took place in Rome: The General Congregation 34. One of the decrees adopted pursued a related objective as the Conference: to reflect on the situation of women within the Society of Jesus and express full commitment towards equal treatment within.

When I read Decree 14, I always find something new and remain in awe of its clarity. At the same time, I am astonished by its current content. With the same spirit of the Beijing Declaration, Decree 14 acknowledges that “the dominance of men in their relationship with women has found expression in many ways”, that prejudice against women “assumes different forms in different cultures” and that this situation “has begun to change”.

Most importantly, Decree 14 “invites all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women” as well as “to align themselves in solidarity with women.”

Next year will be the 30th anniversary of that document. The Commission on the Role and

Responsibilities of Women in the Society of Jesus (Women's Commission) will submit a report addressing specific issues mandated by Fr. General Arturo Sosa, SJ. Some of them include recommendations to strengthen the active participation of women in the Mission as well as the effective promotion of practices in the apostolic works, "that embody mutual respect, care and solidarity between men and women as an integral dimension of our way of proceeding".

The task is colossal, especially because the creation of the Women's Commission is an unprecedented event. As happens with new experiences, everything was made from scratch and diversity has always been present: people from different regions, different languages, and different backgrounds.

been of great support. Likewise, women commissions have been created at the provincial level in Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Central America. Venezuela and Brazil will soon join them.

I have learned from each one of my colleagues at the Women's Commission. We are committed to producing a report that can be helpful for all contexts; one that can embrace the diversity in the different Conferences (regions) and identify challenges from the different apostolates - a report that can be culturally sensitive but globally acceptable.

We always start our monthly meetings praying the Spirit for guidance and wisdom. I also pray that this process (not only the report) will be an invitation for openness and willingness from Jesuits and all

**“ We are committed to producing a report that can embrace the diversity in the different Conferences and identify challenges from the different apostolates. ”**



Pic courtesy: iexcaresiaff.com

I am one of the last members who were integrated into the Commission. I replaced Carmenza Muñoz, a Colombian activist whose energy and dedication are inspiring. In the Women's Commission, I met people with humility, solidarity, commitment and genuine interest to make useful contributions, knowing that our input cannot be the only effort within the Society of Jesus, but one of many towards substantive equality.

I'm hopeful that similar efforts have taken place with CPAL's gender and equality group, a cluster of Latin-American people, mainly women, seeking for equality within the Society of Jesus and that have

collaborators in the Mission to discern our attitudes, behaviours, and practices.

Only if we act together, will we be able to identify the progress made and where we need to move forward, bearing in mind the prophetic words of Decree 14: "In this context, we ask Jesuits to live, as always, with the tension involved in being faithful to the teachings of the Church and at the same time trying to read accurately the signs of the times." ❖

*Alejandra Nuño is human rights lawyer and an academic researcher at ITESO, the Jesuit university in Guadalajara, Mexico. She is a member of CPAL's Gender and Equality group and a member of the Gender Commission of the Jesuit Province of Mexico.*





## Brothers meet to reimagine



The South Asian Jesuit Brothers' Meet 2024, on 'Reimagining and Restructuring Our Life Mission as a Brother,' took place on 11-14 October '24 at the Xavier Institute of Social Action (XISA), Jabalpur. This gathering brought together 42 Jesuit Brothers from various provinces. The meeting began with a Holy Mass led by Fr. Ranjit Tigga, who emphasized grounding our identity in Jesus Christ and highlighted the mission of the MAP province. Fr. Stany D'Souza focused on the essential role of Brothers in the Jesuit mission. He stressed the need for equitable representation of Brothers in mission institutions.

The annual reports presented by Brothers from various provinces outlined their activities, achievements, and challenges over the past year. A session focused on the POCSO Act, led by Br. Rajesh, who provided an overview of the law's implications for safeguarding minors, emphasizing individual responsibilities and the importance of timely reporting. Fr. Ranjit Tigga led a session on life mission restructuring, encouraging participants to reflect on strategies and reorient their missions.

Thematic sharing by Brothers underscored unity in diversity and the unique calling of Brothers. They discussed the vital role of senior Brothers as mentors and the importance of community engagement, fostering a deeper understanding of their multifaceted roles. In spiritual conversations, Brothers expressed a desire for integrated formation rooted in Ignatian spirituality. They proposed initiatives such as dedicated vocation outreach and restructured novitiate programs to support future growth.

The group decided to hold the next annual gathering in Kohima. The hospitality of the XISA community was greatly appreciated. ❖

Br. Telesphore Horo, SJ (RAN)

## South Zone Educators Meet in Bengaluru

The South Zone Triennial 2024 - Jesuit Educators Meet was held on 14-15 September '24 in Bengaluru. 135 Jesuits and lay collaborators from Karnataka, Kerala, Madurai, Chennai, and Andhra Pradesh provinces participated in the meet. The event, organized by the Conference Secretariat for School Education (CSSE), New Delhi, and hosted by the Karnataka Province, centered on the theme: Reimagining and Restructuring Jesuit Education in Today's South Asian Context: Review-Reinvent-Renew.

The meet, under the guidance of Fr. John Ravi SJ, Conference Secretary for Secondary Education, provided a platform to the participants to engage in a meaningful discussions on the reimagining and restructuring of Jesuit education in South Asia.



In his inaugural address Fr. Dionysius Vaz, SJ, Provincial of Karnataka, outlined key challenges facing Jesuit education. Fr. Daniel Fernandes SJ read the letter from Fr Stan D'Souza SJ, President, JCSA. The sessions on the first day were on 'Contextualizing Our Education Apostolate in South Asia'.

The theme for the second day was 'Reimagining and Restructuring Jesuit Education.' The panel discussion with experienced lay collaborators of various Provinces, Province-wise group discussions and planning and the well-coordinated Plenary Session helped us to discern the way forward. Fr. Daniel Fernandes, SJ and Fr V M Thomas, SDB gave their observations and reflections on 'way forward' at the end of the day. Way Forward: skilling, evaluation of all our urban and rural institutions, developing a self-directed pedagogy, incorporating culture of scientific research, focus on social sciences, language and literature, teaching in IPP mode, appointing discerning leaders, regular refresher courses to sensitize teachers etc. ❖

Renuka Zachariah



## Peace Week at Vidyajyoti

From 16 to 21 September, Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi hosted a spiritually enriching Peace Week, organized by the Peace Ministry and Eco Peace Wing. This special initiative brought together the Jesuit community for a week of prayer, reflection, and action, fostering peace within the person and the community.

The week opened with a symbolic lighting of the peace lamp during the Eucharistic celebration, setting a reflective tone for the days ahead. On the second day, the participants embarked on a Peace Cycle Rally to Rajghat, offering prayers at Gandhiji's memorial that non-violence and unity may thrive in the Indian society. Evening prayers throughout the week focused on cultivating inner peace as a foundation for world peace.

A key highlight of Peace Week was Sch. Ashish Digal's moving testimony on the Kandhamal violence, which shed light on the ongoing struggles for justice and reconciliation. His reflections on forgiveness had

a profound impact, reminding everyone of the need for healing in the pursuit of peace. The day concluded with a contemplative Taizé Prayer, creating a serene space for communitarian introspection.

The final moments of the week were marked by adoration and a concluding rosary at the grotto of Our Lady, invoking her intercession as the Queen of Peace. In collaboration with various Jesuit organizations, posters promoting a culture of peace were circulated on social media throughout the week. These posters, widely shared across the assistancy, helped create a positive atmosphere in anticipation of World Peace Day. The event proved once again that theological education can actively contribute to peace-building. Through initiatives like this, the college hopes to shape peacemakers—individuals rooted in faith, committed to justice, and equipped with theological insight to engage in meaningful dialogue and peace-building. ❖

Allwin Macwan, SJ (GUJ)

### Prayer Intentions for December '24

#### FOR PILGRIMS OF HOPE

We pray that this Jubilee Year strengthen our faith, helping us to recognise the Risen Christ in our daily lives, and that it may transform us into pilgrims of Christian hope.



Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network







# He couldn't study, but he worked wonders

**Film:** *Wizard of Heaven - Life of St. John Vianney* (1949)

**Director:** Marcel Blistène

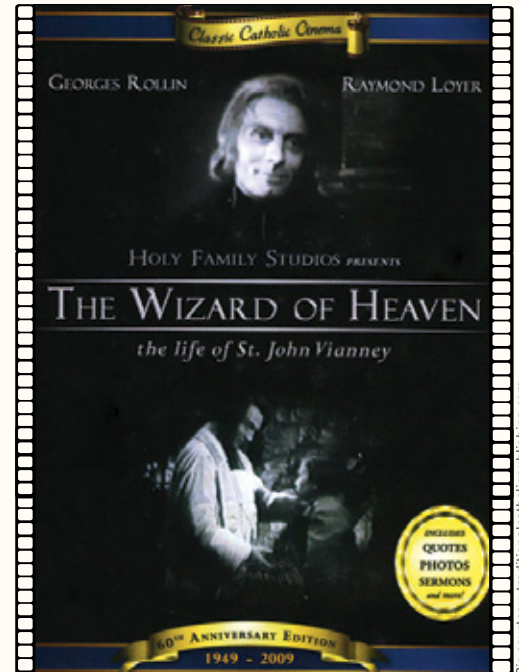
**Run time:** 100 minutes

**J**ohn Vianney (1786 -1859) renowned as The Curé of Ars is one of the most celebrated saints of the Church. He is the patron saint of parish priests. He was canonized in 1925 and the village church where he served is a centre of pilgrimage today.

Born in 1786 in Dardilly, France, John Marie Baptist Vianney aspired to become a priest, but he was poor in studies. With the help of an influential friend in Lyons he continued his formation in the seminary. He was ordained at a time when France was experiencing its bloodiest period in history, following the Revolution of 1789 when the Church faced violent persecution. Like an exile Vianney is sent to the remote Ars, where the leaders as well as the people hated the Church and the clergy.

At his arrival in a horse cart in the parish in February 1818 with meagre personal belongings, he is scandalized by the disdain and apathy of his parishioners. He is invited to join a boisterous wedding party celebration by the drunken revelers who even mock him. His presbytery is a derelict residence attached to the church near the local market. From then on the humble, prayerful pastor, with his love for the poor and the suffering, struggles to win them over. Vianney has to face the disdain, ridicule, indifference and opposition from the local anticlerical leaders. He is also troubled by the visitations of the Devil in his church at night, bent on discouraging the saint from his mission to restore the parish to Christ. Vianney prayerfully and determinedly endures it all.

Once he has to confront a black magician posing as a doctor in the locality. With the intention of implicating Vianney of murder, the unscrupulous magician poisons a child whom Vianney was nursing. Vianney patiently takes care of the invalid little boy and heals him with his prayer. His innocence is proved. Gradually Vianney earns reputation as a miracle healer. During confessions, his insightful treatment of his penitents provides consolation and motivation to change. He even helps them recall the sins they might have forgotten. At the same time he



Pic. courtesy: traditionalcatholicpublicising.com

does not hesitate to condemn their attitudes from the pulpit. The Devil boasts that Vianney's miracles are performed by his power and not God's. At one point the devil sets the presbytery on fire, which forces him to leave his parish and adopt a monastic life.

But his parishioners go after him and bring him back. His services are eventually honoured with the Legion of Honour by the King. His chief enemy, the Mayor of Ars, resigns in humiliation. ❖

*Prof. Gigy Joseph Koottummel, former Head of the Department of English, SB College, Changanacherry is a sought-after writer, translator, columnist and actor-director of Shakespeare productions.*

## Service of Faith Co-ordinators meet in Mumbai

The Service of Faith Secretariat held its annual meeting of the province coordinators at Vinayalaya, Mumbai, on 20-22 September. This year, the Bombay Province hosted the event. There were around 22 participants, mostly Service of Faith province coordinators. Fr. Stanislaus D'Souza, the POSA, was the main celebrant for the inaugural Eucharist, and Fr. Anil Pereira, the provincial of the Bombay Province, warmly welcomed everyone.

During the brief inaugural session, Fr. Stany delivered the opening address, which set the tone for the 3-day meeting. The theme of this year's gathering was Reimagining and Restructuring. Fr. Peter Thumma of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore, one of the four priests who participated in the consultation on synodality in Rome, gave an inspiring session on what it means to be a synodal parish, via an online platform. The core message was: to be a synodal parish priest means to collaborate with everyone.

The group also visited senior Jesuits in the infirmary and spent time interacting with these stalwarts. Fr. Learoy Rodrigues, the Socius to the Provincial and the superior of Vinayalaya, shared the history and growth of the Bombay Province. Fr. Prakash Louis of Patna Province, via an online platform, emphasized the need for a family apostolate. With the rising challenges faced by families today, pastoral care for families has become a pressing need in our parishes.

Sr. Neeta brought members of the LGBT community she guides, who shared their aspirations, struggles, and success stories, along with their views about the pastoral care they need. This was an eye-opener for the group, offering a new perspective on how to compassionately reach out to this community. The sharing sessions among the participants in the evenings deepened our understanding of pastoral ministry in Jesuit parishes, highlighting both its opportunities and challenges.

Fr. Wendell D'Cruz led the second day's session, addressing concerns in the current scenario and underscoring the need for reimagining and restructuring for greater apostolic effectiveness.



The group discussions, spiritual conversations, and plenary sessions were lively and fruitful. Mr. Adrian Rosario's session on effective lay collaboration was highly appreciated.

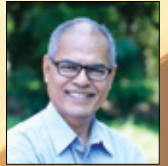
Visits to the Engineering Institute, the Holy Family Parish community, and Sneha Sadan - home for destitute children - further enriched our experience. The third day was dedicated to visits, including Mount Mary Shrine. We concelebrated Mass at St. Peter's, Bandra, during the Sunday Liturgy and had a heartwarming interaction with the parish council, learning about the parish's outreach work. We visited also St. Xavier's Engineering College, St. Xavier's College, the Cathedral, and the Gateway of India. The 3-day program concluded with plenty of fruitful learning and a strong sense of fellowship among the Service of Faith coordinators.

Our action plan for the coming year focuses on propagating various prayer methods, as this is the Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2025. Additionally, we aim to make pastoral care in our parishes more consistent and vibrant.

We thank Fr. Wesley D'Costa, the province coordinator of Service of Faith, Bombay, for ensuring that every detail of the program was meticulously planned and executed. Many thanks to the Bombay Province and the Vinayalaya community for their warm and generous hospitality. The pre-novices at Vinayalaya, under the guidance of Fr. Wesley, did a commendable job. We are also grateful to all the communities that welcomed us. We left Mumbai with renewed zeal and commitment to providing effective pastoral care. ❖

Leo Anand, SJ (MDU)





# Life is like a river

Pic courtesy: wallpaperflare.com

Three of us, Frs Jerry Sequeira, Felix Gonsalves, and I had been together since the 8th standard and joined the Gujarat province. Just before COVID-19, Felix had a heart attack while driving a jeep in the bazaar and died on the spot. Jerry passed away during COVID-19. Fellow Jesuits who knew we were companions began asking me jovially, “When is your turn?”

About six months ago, I visited a Jesuit infirmary where senior Jesuits who needed assisted living care were housed. Seeing their situation, my immediate feeling was, “Lord, please cut away the last five years of my life and take me away and do not delay!”

Many Jesuit companions of my age (76) from other provinces have passed away and become underground activists, enjoying eternal peace. I may get a call sooner or later. The Society has been kind enough to let me pursue research and scholarship as my primary ministry. I feel I am completing my mission with knowledge production at the service of the poor through 35 books published by international and national publishers and, of course, scores of articles. Now is the time to turn my attention to preparing for folding up.

I was looking for a workshop that could help me on this journey. When Fr. Joe Mathias visited our community, I asked him if there was a course that would help me. He said a course on “ageing gracefully” is given to golden jubilarians, both men and women, at Prerana in Mount St. Joseph, Bengaluru. Joe said it was mostly women religious who attended it. Since I did not want to be the only man among women, I mobilized Frs. Aubrey D’Souza and Robert Mascarenhas for this course.

This course, held on 15-30 September, ’24 had 16 Sisters of different congregations and four Jesuits, the fourth being Fr. Patrick Ravichandran (MDU). The entire package consisted of a four-day workshop followed by an eight-day retreat. Fr. Prashant D’Souza conducted the workshop for two days, Fr. Joe Mathias for another two days, followed by the retreat guided by Fr. Tom Quadros.

To help us locate ourselves, Fr. Prashant showed us a video of the river: its trickly beginning, its meandering flow, its twists and turns, its stagnancy, its changing shape and size, and eventually, its merging with the sea. It helped me review the different stages of my life’s journey. From a big family of many siblings, moving

from rural to urban for secondary schooling, to moving to another state, Gujarat, encountering a new cultural setting, to joining the Jesuits and after that, undergoing formation at different stages and phases, doing secular studies in a prestigious university, working in a secular research institution, founding a new institution, living with Jesuits but not working with them, and finally going from regional to national institute and then feeling a sense of completing the mission.

Joe Mathias caught our attention with this significant sentence: “God is to be trusted and not tested.” When we trust God, it is easy to journey, trusting that He will give us the divine light to see in faith, the finger of God in everything. Joe made a valuable distinction between our core identity and role identity. Role identity is the kind of activities, positions, and designations we have held.

The core identity comes from our call and mission, which often gets drowned by role identity. This results in all kinds of problems and distortions in our religious lives. In the gospel, Martha represents role identity and Mary core identity. Jesus was hinting at his preference for core identity. How can I integrate both at this stage in my life?

In the retreat, Tom Quadros encouraged us to sit at the feet of the Lord to acknowledge God’s bountiful mercy and love. I remembered Moni Shil Kim when she said, “River never goes reverse. So, try to live like a river. Forget your past, focus on your future. Always be positive”. “Never, ever give up on life.”

The insights I have gained in the workshop and retreat are of great help in aging gracefully. ❖

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## NEWS - CONFERENCE

# Pre-Novitiate Directors and Vocation Promoters meet in Chennai

The Jesuit Pre-Novitiate Directors and vocation promoters meet 2024 was held on 16-17 October at Loyola College, Chennai. There were 25 Jesuits from various Provinces of the South Asian Assistency. The meeting began with the Eucharist by Fr. Robinson Antony, SJ (CEN), Rector, Loyola College. Fr. Somy Mannoor SJ, CSIF, highlighted the significance and dynamics of the meeting. Fr. Pavulraj Michael, SJ (MDU) addressed us online about the importance of reimagining in the history of the Society.

The focus of the afternoon session was the restructuring our culture of vocation promotion. Everyone one shared their strategies for the promotion of vocations and the process of recruitment. In the evening there was sharing on the same topic in zonal groups. The shrinking pool of potential vocations in some regions is forcing some to rethink recruitment strategies.

The second day commenced with the Eucharist by Fr. Valenson Gomes, the new priest from Goa and Fr. Somy emphasized the importance of openness

and generosity of formators. Fr. Jebamalai Raja SJ, the Provincial of Chennai Province shared about the inception and growth of Chennai Province. He said, “Every Jesuit is a vocation promoter. All Jesuits shoulder the responsibility of promoting vocations.” Then the sharing of practices by the Pre-Novitiate directors in zonal groups took place. They felt that the changed scenario calls for a re-imagined approach that would make formation more contextual and holistic.

The final segment of the meeting, moderated by Fr. Somy Mannoor, allowed for an open exchange among the directors. Discussion on concerns, action plans, evaluation and plan for the next meeting brought the curtain down. The next meet would be held in two places combining two or three zones. All expressed their thanks to the Chennai Province, especially Fr. Robinson Antony, Rector, Loyola, for their generosity and to Fr Prabhu Francis and Fr. Jeyaseelan, the local organizers for their meticulous planning and managerial skills. ❖

John Kamilas, SJ (MDU)





## An admired theologian who was brilliant and humble

In all his obituaries, in addition to the well-known initials – SJ - that appeared after his name, I was intrigued to find another two initials – AC. Eventually I found that they referred to the award the Australian government had honoured him with – Companion of the Order of Australia – which is the highest civilian award an Australian can aspire for. He was awarded also several honorary doctorates.

Celebrated all over the world as a brilliant theologian and a prolific writer, Fr Gerald O’Collins, SJ, died on 22 August 2024 at Melbourne, Australia at the age of 93.

Gerald, or ‘Gerry’ as he was often referred to, was born in 1931. His father, Patrick Francis O’Collins, who was called simply ‘Frank’ by family and friends, was an army officer. During the First World War he served for some time in England, and, after the war, returned to Australia, studied law and built a lucrative career as an advocate in Melbourne. Since Gerry’s parents were hospitable and generous, they had many guests at home. His father, Frank, used to tell his children, “Don’t just go and greet the visitors. Engage them in conversation.” Michael Walsh, in an article in *the Tablet*, says this could have been “the foundation of Gerry’s lifelong capacity for friendship, his openness to people and ideas, his hospitality of mind and heart.”

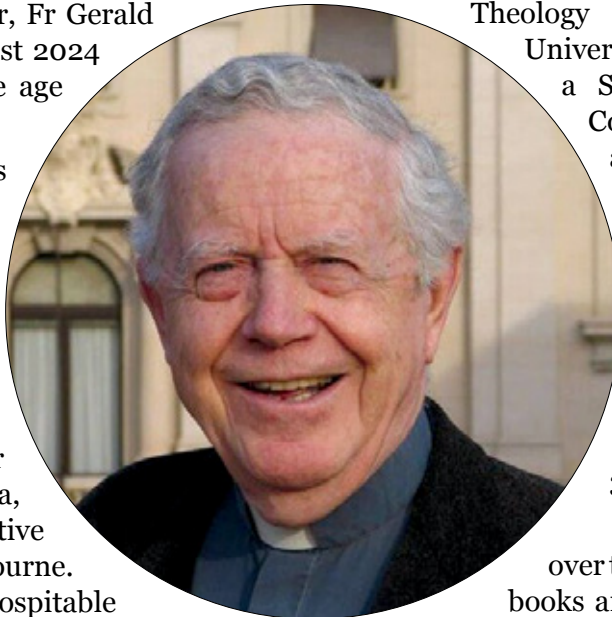
Gerry studied at the Jesuit-run Xavier College, Kew, and resided at Newman College at the University of Melbourne. As there had been quite a few vocations in the family, nobody was surprised when he revealed he wanted to become a Jesuit. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1950. After his Jesuit formation, he completed

a B.A. and then an M.A. at the University of Melbourne. He was ordained a priest on 2 January 1963 by his uncle, Bishop James O’Collins. In September 1964 he began his tertianship in Munster, Germany. Apart from learning German, Gerry came to know many leading theologians in Germany. One of them, Jurgen Moltmann, became a lifelong friend.

After completing his tertianship, he travelled to England to do his doctorate in Fundamental Theology at Pembroke College at the University of Cambridge and then a Sacred Licentiate at Heythrop College. From 1969 he became a full-fledged professor of theology who taught at the Jesuit theological college in Parkville, near Melbourne as well as the Boston College in the U.S. In 1973 he was invited to teach at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he served with distinction for 33 years.

His books made him known all over the world. He wrote more than 75 books and hundreds of articles. Known for his progressive views, he boldly stood up to ask for ordination of women. Walsh quotes what Gerry wrote way back in 1974: “By allowing women the freedom to serve in the ordained ministry Church leaders would make it easier for people to believe what they say when they talk about women’s dignity and worth. By recognizing God’s freedom to call whom he wills, they would cease to give the impression of substituting their authority for that of God.”

Several generations of Indian Jesuits would remember Fr Jacques Dupuis, SJ, the learned professor of theology from Belgium, who taught for several years at Vidya Jyoti, the Jesuit theologate in



Delhi. Later he was asked to teach at the Gregorian University, Rome. In 1998 the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, then led by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, informed Fr Dupuis that his book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, contained “serious errors.” Gerry spoke up to defend Dupuis, who was shaken by the unexpected attack.



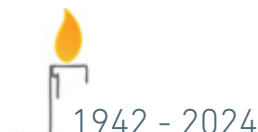
**“ Gerry spoke up to defend Dupuis, who was shaken by the unexpected attack. ”**

After leaving the Gregorian in 2006, Fr Gerry taught at St. Mary’s College, University of Surrey, London for three years and returned to Australia in 2009 and continued to teach at Australian Catholic University. His students, several of whom became bishops later, remember him as a caring, concerned professor who guided them and encouraged them. As a person, he was friendly, generous, humble, humorous, open, kind, hospitable, hard-working, and prayerful.

The obituary at the website of Australian Jesuits said, “He will be greatly missed by many around the world, especially his large extended family and Jesuit brothers, to whom he was such a good companion.” ❖

*(adapted from his column in the Magnet)*

## Bertram Rozario, SJ (PUN)



Fr. Bertram (Bertie) Rozario was born on 19 June 1942, and entered the Society of Jesus on 20 June 1960, at Vinayalaya, Mumbai. Right from the day he entered the Society, his motto was: ‘We are called by God, chosen to bring His message of love, peace and happiness to those to whom we are sent, with whom we live.’

Fr. Bertie was a polyglot, with mastery in Marathi, English, Sanskrit, Hindi and Konkani. His linguistic skills helped him connect to people from all walks of life and faith traditions. He ably shouldered a wide range of ministries and responsibilities in the Goa-Pune and Pune Provinces. As a Jesuit, he was priest, prophet, preacher, teacher, leader, formator and a very jovial and warm companion. In December 2005, he was appointed Provincial of the Pune Province. As Provincial, he always kept in mind emerging needs and emphasized the guiding principles for good governance in the Society: Companionship, Communication, Collaboration and Coordination.

Being rooted in Ignatian Spirituality, he was open to the teachings and spirituality of Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram, Maharashtrian saints from Pune. While proclaiming the gospel, he connected the gospel passages to the abhangas and couplets from these saints. He was a great speaker and was frequently invited by Catholics, Protestants and Hindus for auspicious occasions and celebrations.

Fr. Bertie returned to the Lord on 24 September 2024. A large congregation gathered for his funeral service. He has fought the good fight and has finished the race. May the soul of Fr. Bertie rest in peace!

| Bhausaheb Sansare, SJ







## Josephraj Savarimuthu, SJ (CEN)

Fr. Josephraj Savarimuthu was a humble Jesuit who had minimal needs but abundant joy. Since his birth on 07 May 1943, he had the indelible imprint of the spiritual legacy of the saintly pioneer French Jesuit missionary, Fr. Trincal who worked for several years in his native parish of Watrap Pudupatti in Tamil Nadu. Having received his formation and training in India, Italy and USA, he cherished the universal nature of the Society and was ordained by St. Pope Paul VI.

After teaching Mathematics for four years, he served as a pastor in rural parishes of Palliagaram, Somasipadi and Mandapam Camp. His creative pastoral engagement for 13 years empowered the poor Dalits and migrants. He preached long retreats and conducted animation programmes. While serving as the counsellor in Spirituality Centres in Dindigul

and Kanyakumari for 15 years, and the Superior in formation houses at Chennai and Vilangudi for 11 years, he empowered many spiritual children to grow in loving service. He constantly challenged them to grow in the culture of Ignatian discernment.

After a few age-related ailments, he died on 11 September 2024 at Beschi, Dindigul. At his funeral Mass, concelebrated by the Provincials of Chennai and Madurai, his parishioners, relatives, and Jesuit companions movingly expressed the following virtues lived out by Fr. Joseph Raj: cheerful simplicity, inner freedom, genuine joy, apostolic availability, love for the poor, audacious loyalty, resilient courage and pastoral creativity. May the Lord of Resurrection embrace him with eternal bliss! -

| Maria Arul Raj A., SJ



## Polycarp Tirkey, SJ (MAP)

Fr. Polycarp Tirkey, S.J. was a humble and loving Jesuit, known for his simplicity. His conversations were characterized by brotherly charity, allowing him to assess situations and individuals without being judgmental. Another quality was his profound holiness, manifested in his thoughts and actions. His sense of duty was exceptional, as he conscientiously fulfilled his responsibilities and had a unique talent for persuading others to embrace his ideas.

Kunkuri, located at the periphery of Madhya Pradesh Province, benefited from Fr. Polycarp's many years of service as a teacher, hostel prefect, Director of the Apostolic School, and Rector. He also stepped in as acting principal during the absence of the principal. His administrative capabilities led to

his selection as Acting Regional Superior in 1986 and again in 1996 as Acting Provincial, demonstrating the trust placed in him by the authorities, particularly following significant transitions in leadership in Ambikapur Diocese.

People loved to go to him for confession. Fr. Polycarp's life was marked by humility, holiness, and a deep sense of duty, leaving a lasting impact on the community he served as a servant leader. His legacy is one of kindness and dedication, as he sought to guide and uplift those around him through his actions and words.

| Ignatius Bara, SJ



## Tharigopula Balaswamy, SJ (AND)

Fr Balaswamy was born on 16 October 1947. He entered the Society on 02 June 1969 and was ordained on 18 April 1979. He made his final commitment on 02 February 1986. He passed away on 08 August 2024.

Born in Mulasur, a village about 40 kilometers from Chennai, in a traditional Catholic Telugu family, Balaswamy lost his mother when he was only three days old, and his aunt lovingly took on the role of his mother. His desire to join the Society of Jesus took him to the Novitiate in Dindigul. He continued his studies in philosophy at Sacred Heart College, Schembaganur, and later pursued a Master's degree in Sociology at Pune University, where he graduated with distinction, securing a gold medal.

challenges. He had served as parish priest in almost all the parishes in Andhra Province. He would visit all the families in his parishes regularly. Even during the Corona pandemic, he did not hesitate to visit families that invited him to pray over the sick or to bring Holy Communion. He dared to wear a protective suit and buried parishioners who died of Corona.

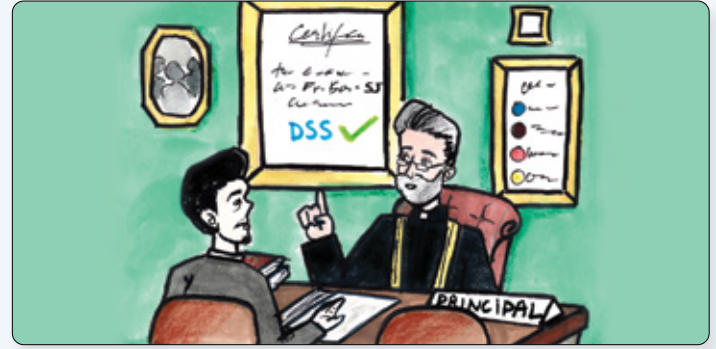
He bore his personal trials with remarkable patience and cheerfulness, never showing his pain to others. At his Funeral Mass, we fondly recalled his admirable qualities: his kindness, gentleness, compassion, friendliness, unassuming and ever smiling nature, devotion to work, sense of poverty, charity, and simplicity. Rest in Jesus, dear Bala!

| D. Showraiah, SJ





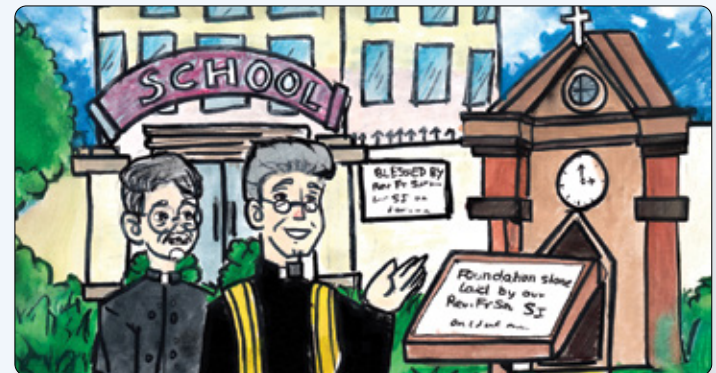
"Yes, I know what you are going to say. If you were the first to eat, in all humility, you would have taken the smaller piece of chicken. I knew that, and I took the big piece first."



"Everybody is asking me if I have attended the RR session. I am tired of answering them, so I made this sign."



"Yes Sister, I am ready to come for the morning Mass. Please send the car by 6.15 a.m. And for breakfast, I will have bacon and eggs, and pancakes with maple syrup."



"You ask me what I did as Provincial. During my term, I built 3 churches and started 3 new schools. My name is there on the foundation stone."

Melwyn Pinto, SJ / Pradeep Sequeira, SJ

JESUIT HUMOUR

## The last shall be first

Fr. Nicholas was a much-loved community man and, for that reason perhaps, held the portfolio of the house minister for several years in a large city institution. It came as a bolt from the blue when he received a letter from the Provincial asking him to go to a rather out-of-the-way mission station to be a companion to Fr. Cyprian. Fr. Cyprian, however, who had spent long years zealously and singlehandedly nurturing a little flock of the faithful, firmly believed that he could do very well without a companion. Unsurprisingly, the two men fell out in less than a week, but maintained a charitable silence - one setting out each morning after breakfast to instruct his catechumens in faraway hamlets, and the other holding the fort and maintaining the house. It happened one day soon after breakfast that Fr. Cyprian was kick-starting his old Jawa motorbike which refused to start. The rider's frustration, kick after kick, was by no means diminished by his fellow missionary mutely witnessing the proceedings. Luckily for the rider, the umpteenth kick got the bike roaring into life. But seconds before pushing off, he heard Fr. Nicholas shouting aloud above the bike's rattle: "If you had a higher IQ, Cyprian, you would have given that last kick first."







## To see a world in a grain of sand

Notre Dame University Theologian, the late John S. Dunne once remarked, “My way of seeking ‘the marriage of true minds’ has been that of ‘passing over,’ as I have called it, passing over from my own life to that of others and coming back again with new insight to my own. Passing over has been for me a way of words and also a way of spiritual friendship.” In the spirit of these words, serious Zen practitioners can pass over into the realm of zen and Zen Buddhism, from their culture, way of life, and religion to another. It is a radical shift of one’s standpoint, which leads to a return, a ‘coming back,’ to one’s own culture, or religion, with new insights, and with the self transformed and converted.

Zen practitioners pass over into the world and vision of chants, symbols, rituals and transmission, etc. In fact one ‘dies’ to one’s own world, and learns to think, feel, imagine and act in terms of the Zen world. Many experience passing over as, having come to the limits of one’s own life-world or religion, or to facing an impasse in life, an abyss of darkness and night. When lost and alienated, one surrenders to the abyss. It is in the falling, one is redeemed; one is baptised into a new birth and a new world of meaning and language.

However, some will lose their way in embracing the new-found Zen practice. In the first blush of conversion some see it as the final and absolute truth. Some get stuck in cynicism and hyper-criticalness towards Christianity, or Zen. The well-intentioned new-comer stands the risk of not growing beyond literalism of language and truth-as-representation; they’ve not yet fully come to awakening, they are not liberated. New-comers to Zen who ‘pass over’ and return to their original home-ground and world discover they are the same and not the same. They are transformed. Through openness and creative fidelity to their own religion they discover new depths and heights that have always been there.

The practice of Zen among Christians has done a great service, it has opened to the Christians their own riches. It has helped them experience the contemplative dimension of Christianity and



Pic courtesy: verywellmind.com

spirituality, it has freed them from the stifling dogmas and the impact of institutionalisation of Christianity. Many have come back to their Christian roots through zen. It has also taught them to be open to other religions. Zen has helped them to live in the now, to see a world in a grain of sand, to see their life as graced and grounded in mystery. Christians seriously investigating the depth and riches of Zen will discover them to the extent they pass over into its heart and awaken to the Buddha heart-mind. Then they can return to their Christianity liberated in joy and gratitude.

Zen also receives the gift of Christ’s grace and light. The Zen practicing Christian comes to realize that Christianity is being transformed by Zen and Zen is being transformed by Christianity. They come to discover that the heart of Christianity is discovered as boundless openness to the other.

Teachers should teach zen through Christian terms or any other terms that may be helpful. When doing Christian service, be Christian through and through, though of course zen stories and insights for illumination will be helpful. For people who will not be ready for Zen as Zen, teachers can of course impart some ‘half-way-zen’!



*Ama Samy, SJ (MDU) is the Founder-Director of Bodhi Zendo, the Zen Meditation Centre in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu. He founded the Bodhi Sangha, the international community of his disciples in 1986. He can be contacted at amasamy@googlemail.com.*



WELL SAID

**“Blessed is the season  
which engages the whole world  
in a conspiracy of love.”**

**- Hamilton Wright Mabie**



Pic Courtesy: thecontentpanel.com