

THE SECULAR CITIZEN

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Christmas Special 2017



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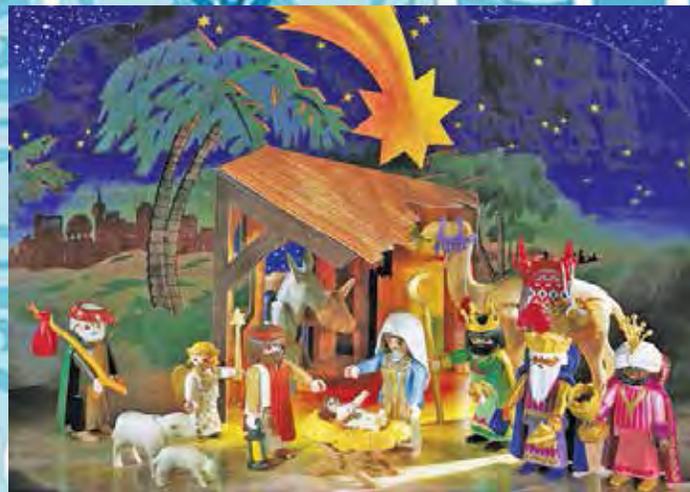
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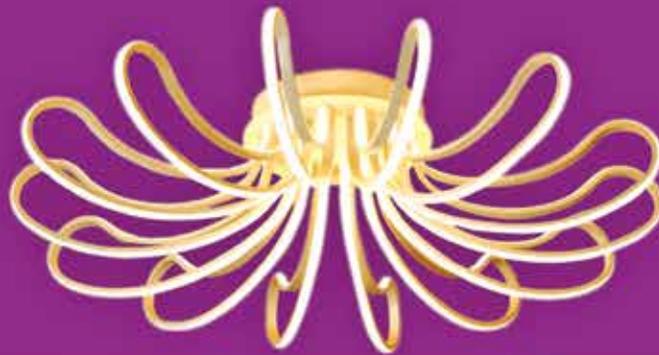
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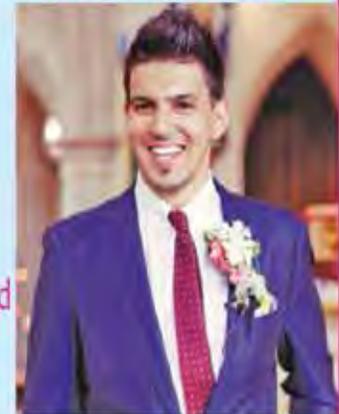
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by Ladislaus L
D'Souza

“There is something about Christmas that requires a rug rat. Little kids make Christmas fun. I wonder if I could rent one.....” says Laurie Halse Anderson in her 1999 novel, *Speak*. “When I was tiny,” she goes on, “we would buy a real tree and stay up late drinking hot chocolate and finding just the right place for the special decorations. It seems like my parents gave up the magic when I figured out the Santa lie. Maybe I shouldn't have told them that I knew where the presents really came from. It broke their hearts.”

From ignorance to enlightenment

“The smells of Christmas are the smells of childhood,” says Richard Paul Evans [*The Christmas Box*]. From *rug rat* to *adult*, the change is formidable, bringing with it as it

does an enlightenment that is, at once, both salubrious and tragic—salubrious in the benefits that it brings whereby one becomes the wiser in terms of understanding reality, and tragic in that it takes away from the magic of an occasion, most specifically the occasion of occasions, Christmas. And yet, we would miss the delight of the magic of Christmas if we were to overlook the fact that the essence of that very magic is enlightenment - “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). It is only when due enlightenment concerning the beauty and wonder of this single most important truth sinks into the very consciousness and sub-consciousness of the believer that everything else about Christmas falls into place.

The Santa phenomenon

“Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful,” exults Norman Vincent Peale. Enlightenment thus lies not in knowing the Santa lie but in living its significance to the hilt just so that life never ceases to be meaningful, the magic of Christmas holding sway! Doing away with Santa on account of the commercialization now associated with the legend is like throwing away the baby with the bathwater. Celandra (name changed) is all of 22 years of age and her career star is already on the ascent, whereby it won't be long before she is in a position to play Santa to all and sundry. But the child in her, nurtured with the delight of Santa's gifts, refuses to grow out of her! She has known the magic of Christmas from babyhood when she'd blabber, “Dada! Give money to put in Baby-Jesus' piggy-bank”! Could anything be more delightful!

The Father—the first to play Santa so to say!—“sent His son, born of a woman” (Gal 4:4a). He could have sent him as a dashing, strapping youth, out of the blue, plonk amidst luxury! But He chose the long human route – by the power of the Holy Spirit, He had him conceived in a virgin's womb that He had prepared from all eternity, put his mother through privations that would have made any modest woman blush, gave his foster father the jitters no sane man worth his salt would be willing to go through.... But then again, as goes that popular gospel song, “Great things happen when God mixes with us!” Mary had already expressed this aptly when she said “He that is mighty has done great

things for me! Holy is His name!” (Lk 1:49) God chose to mix His own magic with the mundaneness of His human creation in order to give us the rarest of all treasures: our Saviour—the rest is history!

Key to the wonder of Christmas

Where lies the key, then, to unlocking that treasure, one may ask. Benjamin Franklin puts it rather succinctly when he says, “How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, his precepts!” Does that ring a bell? “The precepts of the Lord are right; they gladden the heart. The commandments of the Lord are clear; they enlighten the eyes,” says the Psalmist (119:8). As for the Lord's command, Jesus himself spells it out thus: “Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers/sisters, you do it to me” (Mt 25:40). Leo Tolstoy's story on Martin the Cobbler makes for a perfect recall of the significance of the overwhelming love aspect of Christmas.

One Christmas Eve, Martin, deeply desirous of giving Jesus something special but knowing not what, felt particularly depressed. And, even as he dozed off, lonesome as ever, he heard a voice say, “Hey Martin! You wanna give me something special for my birthday, eh? Well I'm gonna drop by at your house tomorrow to be at table with you!” Suddenly seized by a new sense of purpose, Martin promptly rose and lost no time in sprucing up his little dwelling to receive the august visitor, who, he instinctively knew, was Jesus! As dusk fell, he lit a candle by the window and waited, with something simmering hot on the fire to share with Jesus; but Jesus did not come – or so he thought. Who did come by was some old

guy struggling against the cold wintry wind, some orphans who had neither anything to eat nor anything to keep themselves warm, a group of noisy carolers, a widow with a child both of whom could do with a bite or a glass of warm milk, and such like. All these he fed, clothed, cleansed and warmed to his heart's content. And as he slumbered, weary in wait of Jesus, and teary-eyed in disappointment, he heard the same voice say, “Martin! You waited for me and then waited on me with such patience! How I did savour the delightful warmth of your heart! For I was hungry, thirsty, weary, naked, roofless and dejected, and you fed me, quenched my thirst, clothed me, sheltered and comforted me.... Remember the old man? The orphans? The carolers, the widow with her infant? Martin! O Martin! Whatsoever you did to the least of those sisters and brothers of mine—and YOURS!—you did it to ME!”

And so, to unlock the wondrous treasure of Christmas in one's heart, we'd do well to follow the advice of Steve Maraboli [*Unapologetically You: Reflections on Life and the Human Experience*]: “Want to keep Christ in Christmas? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” And then we can jolly well sing with conviction and verve the carol written by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane and first sung by Judy Garland in 1944: “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas!” Indeed! A merry li'l Christmas to all!!



JESUS - Saviour for a Troubled World !



BY MELVILLE X.
D'SOUZA

It was Christmas eve and an old woman was at a chemist to purchase some very important drugs for her ailing husband. The man at the counter got out all the items listed in the doctors's prescription. When the list was complete, the bill was presented to this woman she found that she did not have sufficient money. She had limited resources and had not expected such a high bill. She was in a disturbed state of mind not knowing what to think and how to make up the

money. The man at the counter pleaded helplessness and the woman was left wondering, now what next. **She was looking for some way out, for someone to save her in this situation, some saviour.** She had made up her mind to leave the chemist stores without the medicines. As she was about to leave, another customer who was standing by her side, seeing her plight, said to the old woman, 'may I help you mam ? and he offered to pay the entire bill.

The woman protested, "No sir, I cannot take so much money from you." The man said, "Listen to what I have to say and then you may decide what you would like to do." He proceeded to explain, "My mother is in the hospital with a serious illness. I visit her every day with flowers. This morning too, I went to the hospital with flowers, and she was very angry with me for spending so much money on flowers. She demanded that I should put that money to better use. So, here I am. I understand these medicines are more important than these flowers. Please accept this money as my mother's flowers." The man paid the bill and instantly disappeared. The woman could not even have the opportunity to thank him. **On the eve of Christmas, that old woman had met her saviour. She did not have to go far to look for a saviour. It was Jesus who had come to her aid, in the form of that customer.**

More than 2000 years ago, **three wise men from the east set out, looking for Jesus.** They had heard that a King would be born and that he was to save the world from sin. **They came looking for this king, the saviour of the world.**

They said they saw his star in the east and come to worship him, to do him homage. They travelled miles in order to meet the king. A little baby lying in a manger, out there in a stable, in the open. **As they knelt before the baby, they all seemed to be in awe and the little baby Jesus seemed to be saying, 'You are looking for the king, a saviour who is to bring salvation to the world. I am Jesus, the Saviour !' The Three wise men found the king they were looking for.**

Today, the world is in chaos. Countries torn by war, internal strife, some rocked by terror attacks. Many have been killed, maimed, displaced. They have moved out of their country, looking for safety in neighbouring countries. **They are looking for a saviour, for a king to lift them out of their misery and bring them some peace.** Are they looking for you ?

Look at our own country, torn apart by communal disharmony, hatred, religious discord, rocked by riots, rapes, murders, terror attacks, natural disasters. Some are languishing in jails, in inhuman conditions, seeking to be reformed. **Our brethren are looking for a Saviour, they are looking for a King.** Are they looking for you ?

What about our neighbourhood, our own community, our very own families - torn apart. Some suffering emotionally, physically. **They are all looking for a Saviour.** Can we help them ? Are they looking for you ?

This Christmas, can we pray that all those who are in misery, ill-health, depression, etc., may find in Jesus,

a Saviour ? Can we pray for peace in this troubled world ? Pope Francis says, "I ask him, the **Saviour** of the world, to look upon our brothers and sisters in Iraq and Syria, who for too long now have suffered the effects of ongoing conflict, and who, together with those belonging to other ethnic and religious groups, are suffering a brutal persecution, may Christmas bring them hope, as indeed also to the many displaced persons, exiles and refugees, children, adults and elderly, from this region and from the whole world."

Many years ago, I had heard about the Bethlehem flower, the **Bethlehem LILY**, the inside of which looks like a cradle on which lies the baby Jesus, and a little star in the forefront. I was eager to have these flowers bloom at my place. And so, I managed to get a stem and tended to it regularly. Weeks passed by, months turned into years. The plant multiplied, several more stems, leaves began to grow, but there was no sign of the bud. **Around seven years later, a tiny bud began to shoot out of one of the leaves. Excitement for sure ! From that moment onwards I was looking for the baby Jesus & the star. And one night, it began to bloom. It was indeed a beautiful sight. I stood there, looking, as the flower opened up fully, and deep inside I could see the baby Jesus with the little star in the forefront; I couldn't stop looking !**

Scripture says, from Little Bethlehem will come a Ruler in Israel. A saviour will be born, a king who would bring peace in the world. People were looking forward to the birth of that saviour. Are we also looking for that saviour, for that king ? The Three wise men had to follow the star in the sky in order to reach the site of Jesus' birth. There is no need for us to travel miles to find the saviour. Jesus our King is right here with us - it's Christmas.

The Bethlehem Lily stays open just for one night - it folds up before sunrise. But, Jesus will be with us, not just on that Christmas night, not just for a day, or through the Christmas season. He remains with us all the time. He comes to calm this troubled world. There is only one SAVIOUR - JESUS CHRIST !

CHRISTMAS with MARY

*In ages past, in the little town of Nazereth.
There lived a young devout girl, named Mary.
Full of God's grace, without the stain of sin.
God's chosen temple, where Christ made his earthly
abode.*

*Unwedded virgin engaged to Joseph was she.
When angle brought the good tidings to her.
To be God's mother was the divine plan.
Which would happen with the Spirit's decent.*

*Daring yet Humble was her attitude,
She sang magnificat to God in gratitude.
To carry out this divine plan, She made no compromise.
But with loving heart bore all sacrifice.*

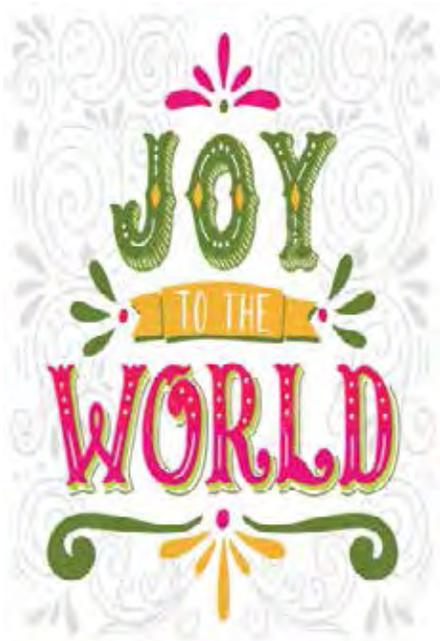
*Oh what great agony did she bear.
Oh what painful troubles she shared.
By her obedient yes she made this possible.
To show men, that for God nothing is impossible.*

*Angles song of glory brought her peace.
Shepherd's dance of rejoice brought her joy.
The three kings visit gladdened her heart.
Above all God's grace beautified her life.*

*This experience of Mary, will be ours too.
If like her, we bow down to God's will.
What we need at Christmas is not material gifts.
But spiritual gifts of joy love and peace.*

*At first Christmas, Jesus needed Mary's womb.
This Christmas, He needs our purified hearts.
Let us like Mary, open ourselves to God's grace.
To bear Christ's light to the sinful human race.*

by Olivia Fernandes
St .Joseph Church
Lower Kasarkod Honnavar
Karwar



Joy to the world

Christmas day is the day on which Christians all over the world celebrate the birth of Lord Jesus Christ in the manger at Bethlehem over 2000 years ago. There was no place for Him at the inn, and so the promised Messiah was destined to be born in the manger ----the last place that one would have looked for divinity. The angels announced it to the shepherds who were watching over their flocks with words: “ to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is the Messiah, the Lord .This will be your sign: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in the manger” (Lk. 2:11-12). It was the greatest event in history because the “ Word became flesh” and the son of God took human form and entered the world without being subjected to the evil in it. It was the divine nature , pure and holy , prepared by the Father, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary and assumed by the son. Bethlehem thus became the link between heaven and earth with the heavenly choir of angels praising God saying” Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours” (Lk. 2: 13-14).



BY A. F. NAZARETH

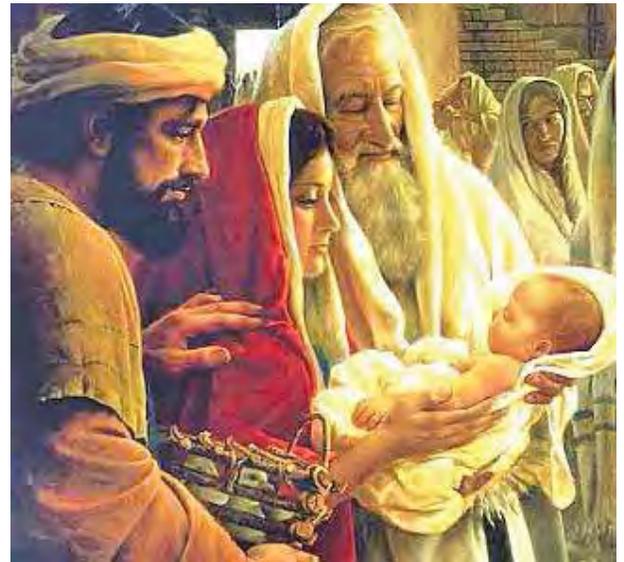
The child was named Jesus in accordance with what the angel told Joseph and Mary (Mat.1:21) He was also given another name of ‘Emanuel’ (Mat. 1: 23) fulfilling the prophecy of prophet Isaiah (Isa. 7: 14) , which, along with the name of Jesus, meant God in our midst and the one who delivers and saves. There is a beautiful carol inviting us to the manger with the following words “ Come, Come , come to the manger, Children come to children’s king,----. Jesus however never proclaimed himself king, even though the

angel announced to Mary that Jesus will be great and be called the son of the Most High and the Lord God would give him the throne of his ancestor David ----and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32-33). Archbishop Fulton Sheen beautifully sums up the two extremities of Jesus’ life in his book titled ‘Life of Christ’ in the following words “He accepted the manger because there was no room in the inn. He accepted the cross because men said “ we will not have this man for our king” An ox and ass surrounded his manger in Bethlehem, and 2 thieves flanked his cross in Calvary. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger and had to rest in swaddling clothes in his tomb. Disowned on entering the world and rejected while leaving”.

For Jesus, the ‘kingdom of God’ was the central theme of his ministry. It was not a kingdom of this world, but one that is centered round the poor, the oppressed, the despised and the down-trodden (Lk 4: 16-21). Through his teaching and works of healing , compassion and love, Jesus taught us to grow in the spirit of tolerance and understanding. Jesus gave us the golden rule of life in the form of beatitudes which invite us to experience God’s peace in our hearts by living and working for peace in the world.

So, the message of Christmas is simply the message of universal love, peace and goodwill which Jesus the Prince of peace gave us. As we look at the crib, we are invited to realise the ‘kingdom of God’ in the recess of our heart and to experience our oneness with the new -born babe Jesus, and spread the peace and joy for which He lived to one and all . A Merry Christmas to all.

Rejoice, Rejoice, The Lord Is Near



As it enters its third week, the season of Advent is drawing us closer to the path to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice indeed, the Lord is near" (Phil.4:4-5).

The mystical allure of turning our attention to the coming celebration of Christ's birth through the liturgy makes us marvel at the Old Testament prophecies of the Anointed One, his place of birth and the way he would die.

The Collect this week states, "O God, who sees how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing."



BY MELVYN BROWN

The Messianic expectations of ancient Israel had many prophets who spoke of God with a single concept of a coming savior, who would be born in Bethlehem, preaching a new covenant, and would suffer and die of crucifixion, Rise again in glory and defeat Satan.

The Messiah would establish a spiritual kingdom on earth, the Catholic Church, and a kingdom in Heaven. All this had been predicted in the Old Testament, the way God would help rescue humankind from sin. The predictions of God were sent in a fragmentary manner: from Abraham leaving his kinsmen to follow God (Gen.12) into the proph-

ecy of Malachi, St. John the Baptist (Malachi 3).

King David of Israel associated himself with the prophecies of the coming Anointed One. Many Messianic themes were tied to the person of the Messiah; and the promises of God became the covenant with Abraham, establishing the prophet as the father of the chosen people, the Jews.

In the Gospel this week we read St. John's (1:6-8, 19-28). John the Baptist bears testimony to Jesus. The prophet plays his part by preparing the people for welcoming the Messiah.

The first reading is from the Book of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings..." (Is.61:1-2a)

The Old Testament prophets spoke of the "Messiah's Divinity", (Is.9:5-6), the Virginity of His Mother (Is.7:14), God's place of birth (Micah 5) and the way he would die (Psalm 22). The Covenant of God with David was spoken of (2 Samuel 7:24-29). John the Baptist and the coming Messiah was foretold (St. John 1:6-8, 19-28).

In Hebrew, the name of Jesus is the Anointed One, the Messiah; in Greek, he is called the Christ. The Anointed

One is God's Son (Psalm 2).

Rejoice, the prophecies of the Old Testament have all combined to complete the Messianic puzzle; the birth of Jesus Christ making human history. St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil." (Thes. 5:16-24)

Prophecies bear witness to God.

In the second reading we are reminded, "that Christians have an obligation to pray and make their lives joyful." The Old Testament prophets told us of the Messianic deliverance, not forgetting the voices of the New Covenant apostles and their Gospels. We have much to rejoice in God's promise and blessing. The Lord is near.

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Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ



by Jubel D'Cruz

Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, is the best-known female figure in the Holy Bible. We are first introduced to her when her name appears in the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew where she is referred to as the wife of Joseph. Though her first mention is in this context, she soon became known as a godly young woman who God chose to carry His Son to term.

Historically, very little is known about this gentle woman. It is told to us that Mary was a peasant woman from the tribe of Judah, and in the line of King David. She became the wife of Joseph, son of Heli (Luke 2:7). It is never mentioned who Mary's parents were, but based on the knowledge of Mary's character found in the Holy Scriptures, it is believed that she came from a godly home of devout Jews. In the time period that Mary lived, girls were not always trained in the Holy Scriptures, but were trained mainly to run the home. But Mary evi-

dently had been trained in the Scriptures.

As seen by her praise of God in her "Magnificent" in Luke 1:47 to 55, Mary was well-versed in the Scriptures and had hidden portions of it in her heart.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and in that era, the engagement or betrothal was binding and could only be dissolved by a legal divorce. This engagement was signed by an official and came at least a year before the marriage took place. It is believed that Mary was quite young when she got married. Most Israelite boys at that time got married in their late teens, but women wed even much earlier. According to the book 'The Handbook of Life in Bible Times', by J.A. Thompson, rabbis had set the minimum age for marriage at 12 for girls. Mary was likely a young adolescent then when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that she would give birth to a son and she was to name Him Jesus.

Though Mary was young, and probably poor, she had something priceless inside her. She was a woman of faith who loved God deeply.

After the birth of Jesus, many curious events occurred. The shepherds who were out in the fields tending their sheep, had seen angels who told them that their Saviour had just been born and that they should go find the Child in Bethlehem. They found Him and they worshiped. Later, wise men from the east came to Bethlehem to honour the Child, whose "star was seen in the east" (Matthew 2:2). "They found Him, and

they worshiped. Mary just took it all in and she pondered these things in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Mary's service to God did not end that first Christmas when Jesus was born. Mary mothered Jesus for the thirty years that He lived with her in their poor Nazareth home. From childhood to adulthood, Mary loved and nurtured Jesus as He grew into manhood. She did all the things a devoted mother did for her son because she very well knew that Jesus was no ordinary man.

Mary could not surround Jesus with wealth. The family was so poor that when she went to the temple to present Him to the Lord, she could only offer a pair pigeons. She could not introduce Jesus to the culture of the day. Being poor and enduring a forced exile in Egypt (Matthew 2:13 to 15), Mary and Joseph had little education to pass on to their young Son. But Mary had so much to give Jesus. She gave him gifts of infinite more value than secular and material advantages. She gave Him birth; she along with her husband Joseph, also gave Him a home. She cultivated in the home a purity of heart, obedience and love.

Mary was a woman who was blessed by God. Though she seemingly had nothing to offer, she was chosen by God Himself to be a part of His plan of redemption of mankind. She was young, poor, and unknown. She had never been a mother, she possessed no wealth or family inheritance, and she boasted no fame or social status. Yet, she has been honored throughout all history for her faithful obedience to God.

Making the sign of the cross



The sign of the cross is a beautiful gesture which reminds the faithful of the cross of salvation while invoking the Holy Trinity. Technically, the sign of the cross is a sacramental --- a sacred sign instituted by the Catholic Church which prepares a person to receive grace and which sanctifies a moment or circumstance. Along this thought, this gesture has been used since the earliest times of the Church to begin and to conclude prayer and the Mass.

The early Church Fathers attested to the use of the sign of the cross. Tertullian described the commonness of the sign of the cross: "In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting on our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupies us, we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross"

St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his Catechetical Lectures stated, "Let us then not be ashamed to confess the crucified. Be the cross our seal, made with boldness by our fingers on our brow and in everything; over the bread we eat and the cup we drink, in our coming in, and in our going out; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we awake; when we are travelling, and when we are at rest".

Gradually, about the ninth century A.D., the sign of the cross was incorporated in different acts of the Mass, such as the three-fold signing of the forehead, lips, and heart, at the reading of the gospel or the blessing and

signing of the bread and wine to be offered.

The earliest formalized way of making the sign of the cross appeared during the Monophysite heresy which denied the two natures in the divine person of Christ and thereby the unity of the Holy Trinity. The sign of the cross was made from the forehead to the chest, and then from the right shoulder to the left shoulder with the right hand. The thumb, forefinger, and middle fingers were held together to symbolize the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these fingers were held in such a way that they represented the Greek abbreviation I X C (Iesus Christus Soter, Jesus Christ Saviour): the straight forefinger representing the I; the middle finger crossed with the thumb, the X; and the bent middle finger, the C. The ring finger and the 'pinky' finger were bent downward against the palm, and symbolize the unity of the human nature and divine nature, and the human will and divine will in the person of Christ. This practice was universal for the whole Church until about the twelfth century A.D., but continues to be the practice for the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches.

An instruction of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) evidences the traditional

practice but also indicates a shift in the Latin Rite practice of the Catholic Church: "The sign of the cross is made with three fingers, because the signing is done together with the invocation of the Trinity. This is how it is done: from above to below, and from the right to the left, because Jesus Christ descended from the heavens to the earth, and from the Jews (right) He passed to the Gentiles (left)." While noting the custom of making the sign of the cross from the right shoulder to the left shoulder was for both the western and eastern Churches.

No matter how one technically makes the sign of the cross, the gesture should be made consciously and devoutly. The individual must be mindful of the Holy Trinity, that central dogma that makes Christians 'Christians'. Also, the individual must remember that the cross is the sign of our salvation: Jesus Christ, true God who became true man, offered the perfect sacrifice for our redemption from sin on the altar of the cross. This simple yet profound act makes each person mindful of the great love of God for us, a love that is stronger than death and promises everlasting life. The sign of the cross should be made with a purpose and precision, not hastily or carelessly.

by Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

ONCE UPON A CHRISTMAS

by **Bernie Tellis**

Waiting for something or someone we long for, increases the delight when our wish is fulfilled. The Old Testament is the time of waiting for the Messiah, the Christ to come, about 2000 years from the time of Abraham to the time of Jesus. The Jews had to wait all this time to prepare to receive the Messiah.

The word 'messiah' means 'anointed one', the ceremony of anointing being the ancient way of crowning or consecrating the prophet. David, the greatest king in the history of Israel, was called the Messiah because he was anointed King by the prophet Nathan. God had promised David that his son would be King in Israel. Thus in their time of trouble, the Jews began to look for a Messiah, the son of David, who would once more rule them in justice and peace

Just before the birth of Christ, there were many Jews waiting for the Messiah, even a community of monks on the Dead Sea, at a place called Qumran. But the most well-known person who waited was Simeon, who upon holding the Child of Mary in his arms at the Temple, exclaimed: "Now Thy servant can go in peace for mine eyes have seen the Salvation which Thou hast prepared for all nations – a Light to enlighten pagans, and the Glory of Thy people Israel!"

The birth of a child is unarguably the happiest of all human experiences. According to Rabindranath Tagore, "every child comes with the message that God has not lost faith in Man." The Gospel of John underscores this in 3:16 – "For God so loved the World that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, should



not perish but have everlasting life." The Son of God came not to condemn but to forgive, not to dominate but to motivate, not to oppress but to liberate, not to compel but to teach the lesson of love. So that humankind could live in hope instead of despair, faith instead of fear and harmony instead of hate. And so in Christian belief, God became Man, that Man might become God!

Jesus, which means 'Saviour', was born of woman to save humankind from the slavery of sin and to restore its fractured link of friendship with God. This message so stark in its simplicity, was first heeded by the simple shepherds tending their flock in the nearby fields and Wise Men in the east. This message does not need to be gift-wrapped at Christmas time or at any other time of the year. Over 20 centuries later, it resonates and the truly wise still follow this (Super) Star! The whole world rejoices each year as it commemorates the birth of the Prince of Peace in Bethlehem, the cradle of Christianity and prays for enduring peace in that region of perennial conflict.

Christmas presents the portrait of the Christ Child, God and Man, truly hu-

man and uniquely divine, who was not a prophet but the Messiah, not a political liberator but the Saviour, not an Empire founder – as Herod feared – but the Builder of the Kingdom of God on earth. He was born in the obscure town of Bethlehem and grew up in another obscure town of Nazareth ("what good can come of Nazareth?") where He worked in his foster-father's carpentry shop until age 30. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher, travelling less than 200 miles from his birthplace.

He never went to college, never held office, never wrote a line, had no money or possessions. He had no credentials but himself. He was 33 when the popular tide turned against Him, moved by the men whose masks He stripped. His chosen friends betrayed, denied, deserted and doubted Him (all except John). He went through the mockery of a trial and was unjustly condemned to a cruel death on the Cross between two hardened criminals, on a hill far away overlooking the town dump. His executioners drew lots for the tunic his Mother had woven for Him and the only thing He possessed. He was crucified and buried in a borrowed tomb.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, which have witnessed the rise and fall of Empires, the march of mighty armies, the reign of powerful Rulers, the rule of people's Parliaments. None have affected the life of Humankind as much or as profoundly as Jesus Christ has. He is the central figure with a following of over one billion of the world's population !

They called Him `Master`, though he had no servants; he was addressed as `Teacher` though he had no degrees ; he was reputed as a Healer , even though he was not a medic; he was feared by kings like Herod and Pilate, though he led no army . Jesus won no military battles unlike Caesar and Alexander and yet he conquered the world ! He committed no crime (" I find no guilt in Him ") and yet they crucified him and placed a stone sealing the entrance to his tomb so he would stay dead and buried as his enemies feared his power they had witnessed in his lifetime. He rose from the dead ,as he had promised, and lives among us today as once he did in Bethlehem, Nazareth and Judea.

The old familiar carols play and church bells peal celebrating once more the birth of the infant King a long time ago in Bethlehem, once upon a Christmas. He is the Good News of great joy, love and hope that "Man will live forever more because of Christmas day " !

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The transfer of the Magi's relics from Iran/ Persia to the Cologne Cathedral, Cologne , Germany

—by Peter Castellino

Marco Polo claims he was shown the magi's three tombs at Saveh/ Savah south of Tehran/Iran in the 1270's -they set out from Saba - in three very beautiful monuments side by side above which is a beautiful square building and that their bodies were still fresh with their hair and beards remaining in his book titled : Milicone but it is not an established fact or particularly likely by secular history.

Saveh had the Middle East's greatest libraries until the Mongol's destroyed it and another legend says it was the Lake of Saveh near the city and Persian historical legend says it dried out on the night of Muhammad's birth and a recent investigation in the Zaraid area between Tehran and Saveh showed evidence of the lake in the Zarad Plain.

Paul William Roberts in his book : Journey of the Magi says Emperor Constantine's mother in her famous pilgrimage of Palestine, the Holy Lands and India accompanied by many attendants put the magi's relics in a chest ornamented with great riches and took them to the Hagia Sophia Church/ St Sophia Church in Constantinople which were later removed to Milan till the 12th century and when the city rebelled against the Holy Roman emperor Frederick Barbossa and the city's bishop Eastorgues I and Emperor Mauricius before being sent to their current resting place by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I in 1164 and the Milanese celebrate this past tradition with a medieval costume parade.

Needing assistance against the Milanese, Frederick appealed to the Cologne archbishop who recaptured



Shrine of the Magi

Milan for but according to John of Hildesheim's *Trum Regem* or *The History of the Three Kings* the magi were from India, Persia/ Iran and Chaldea-present day Iran and Iraq and set off separately and met at Jerusalem and went to Jesus's birthplace Bethlehem and after worshipping Jesus returned to India where they built a church and another version of the legend says that when they died they were buried in an Indian church.

A 15th century golden case containing the magi's gift housed in St Paul's monastery in Mount Athos was donated to the monastery in the 15th century by Mara Brankovic daughter of the Serbian King Durad Brankovic wife of Ottoman Sultan Muratt II and godmother to Mehemer II the Conquerer of Constantinople were relics of the Holy Palace of Constantinople displayed there in the 4th century and after the Athens earthquake of September 9,1999 they were displayed temporarily to strengthen the faith and raise money for earthquake victims and they were also displayed in Ukraine and Belarus in Christmas of 2014 and also in Greece in the 15th century.

Today the magi's middle ages largest reliquary holding their bones is a large

gilded and decorated triple sarcophagus above the Cologne Cathedral's high altar and is considered the highest point of Mosan Art and the shrine is basilica shaped with 2 sarcophagi near each other and the 3rd sarcophagus rests on the roof's edges and is 43 inches wide 60 inches high and 87 inches long with a filigree and enamel decoration of over 1000 jewels and feaces and the basic structure is of wood with gold and silver overlay depicting decorations of prophets,apostles and evangelists and one end has the Magi's adoration images and Mary enthroned with the infant Jesus and the baptism of Christ and above him is the Last Judgement and the other end shows Passion scenes and Rainald of Dassil's bust in the centre.

The shrine was opened in 1864 and Philip I Archbishop of Cologne's bones and coins were found and the shrine rises above the medieval high altar making it the main focus of the Cologne Cathedral built as a stone reliquary to the shrine and the magi's bones were wrapped in silk and kept in the shrine.

Thus we see how the magi's relics were taken /translated/transferred to the Cologne Cathedral in Germany from Persia/ Iran and the importance of keeping them safe there.

THE CRIB IN MY HEART

During World War 2, a certain Christian gentleman wanted to communicate to the soldiers at a base camp the message of God's great love for them. According to army regulations, he was not to 'proclaim Religion' at the camp. But he was strongly determined to carry out his mission, so he devised a unique way of doing it. He brought several 1000 hand mirrors and had them delivered to the soldiers, through the army Chaplains. On the back of each mirror he had printed from the gospel of John "For God so loved the world He gave his Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life." Below this text he inscribed, "If you wish to see whom God loves, turn to the other side."

We have begun the season of Advent which feels like the right time to find a reason, to reflect on the mystery of God's love, as embodied in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, on the mystery of, the goodness and largesse of God in embracing our humanity, so that He can be present in us as He was in a human way, in his Son Jesus, on the mystery of God using us as effective instruments, in His saving mission in the world today, by letting Himself take flesh in us, on the mystery that believing that through His birth, Jesus Christ has made an impact on our planet for the better, on the mystery.... list is endless.

Into a world oppressed and torn, Of boundless hate and forces wild, Where men were hungry, lost, forlorn, God sent a child.

Into a world maimed and dead, Of nation each with selfish plan, Where men were leaderless, or mislead, God sent a man.

And when an age has lost its way, And power is valued more than men, In lives where He has voice and sway, God will come again. – John Morrison. Truly one tiny child, one gigantic revolution for human kind!!!!



Advent offer us the chance to do a little introspection, a little contemplation on the events, the atmosphere and the people involved in the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth. This in turn will allow us to grow in our enthusiasm for Jesus Himself. We will grow in our eagerness to not just know about Him, but to know Him better, with a knowledge that springs from love and leads to love, to love Him more so as to follow Him more closely.

The students of my Religion Class in School (Std 10) were asked to maintain a notebook in which they recorded personal views, after some soul searching reflection, to hard hitting questions that are so relevant today. For e.g should Abortion and Same Sex marriages be made legal? What is the validity of Live-in relationships and Inter-faith marriages? amongst others. One of the reflections was also to be on someone whom they felt brought out the aspect of Mercy in day to day life. I had carried the books home to read at leisure through the Diwali vacations, with the intention of trying to get to know the mind-set of these young adults, who would soon be taking on the big bad world. While many different examples of persons embodying Mercy came forth, ranging from Saints of yore to present day Social Activists, one of the students stood out, for this is what she wrote. "A few people came to mind including St. Teresa. Then it occurred to me that I had second hand knowledge of these people, and did not know what they were really like. The one person who was a missionary and a symbol of mercy and a good one too was my own mother.

My mum had made it her life's mission to be a housewife, and a mother to me and my family. My mum has never been selfish and never put herself first before her family. I have never been starved or been without her endless love. Like other famous missionaries who served the world my mother too needed a lot of courage. She could easily have gone off to parties but she didn't. She made the supreme sacrifice of thinking about me before thinking about herself. I am very lucky to have a missionary mother my very own, 'Angel of Mercy.'

When I read what this child had to say, I was immediately reminded of the instinctive feeling of nurturing that arose in Mary, making her rush to her aged cousins aid, sharing in her pregnancy with care and concern, rather than basking in her own glory. Most of us face a struggle, most of the time in understanding Gods' will for us and even if we do, accepting it unconditionally. And then Advent comes along, providing us the reason to reflect on someone like Mary, to whom God communicated His desire that she become the Mother of our Saviour. This season offers us the opportunity to ask the Blessed Mother to intercede for us, that like her we too we may experience deep faith and trust in God.

"We must not see the child Jesus only in the pretty figures in our Christmas cribs and children's plays. We must seek him in the under nourished who have gone to bed tonight without eating" – Archbishop Oscar Romero. I've often wondered why God chose a life of Poverty for His Son. I believe this Advent I am called to pray, for a heart that reaches out in sensitivity to the least of our Brothers and Sisters. While we work hard to secure our own fragile, messy lives, let us pray that we understand the challenges the less fortunate face, and the courage they need to stay faithful to Christ. I also believe that during this season it is imperative, that I find the grace and courage to follow 'The Star'... the Star being the inner light in me, till I find Christ, because when I find Christ in me, the Crib in my heart is complete, and the voila ! it's Christmas in my life.

Whether india will benefit, if as was done in USA recently, indian corporate income tax is brought down and the dividend payment tax on companies is removed?

by *Eric D'Sa*

First, let's understand what a dividend is. When a corporation makes a profit, it pays income tax on that profit, similar to the way individuals pay income tax on their wages and other income. What's left after the corporation pays income tax is known as "profit after tax" (PAT). A corporation with PAT can do two things with their PAT: (1) It can retain it in the business and either hold it as a reserve or invest it in new plant, equipment, R&D, etc.; and/or (2) It can distribute it to its shareholders. Such distributions are called "dividends." (Note: corporations with a history of profitability may choose to pay dividends from its reserves even when the company is temporarily not earning profits.)

Now let see what happens in USA with an actual example. Apple Inc. earns huge PAT. The company has about 5.39 billion shares outstanding and currently pays \$2.28 per share, per year in dividends to its shareholders. That amounts to about \$12.3 billion in annual dividends paid, or roughly one-quarter of its PAT. The rest it keeps as reserves for further development. An American shareholder of, say, 100 shares of Apple (symbol: AAPL), receives \$228 in dividends a year. He or she must report those dividends as income in their income tax return. Depending on the individuals tax bracket, he or she may pay tax on the dividends of as much as 20% of the \$228, as federal tax as well as state income tax, if applicable.

Because Apple paid tax on its profits, and then the said American paid tax on the dividends, some refer to this as double taxation of dividends. In fact, it is double taxation of corporate profits; the dividend itself is only taxed once, that is if the recipient is in the income tax paying bracket. In order to avoid double taxation, some companies (for example, Berkshire Hathaway) choose not to pay a dividend. But many investors especially those on the lower income bracket desire the steady income that dividends can provide. However in case of shareholders of Berkshire, because the profits are not

YOU THE CITIZENS DECIDE:

distributed the share prices keep rising. Any one who requires money can sell the higher priced shares and book profit. The long term capital gain tax in USA depending on ones income tax bracket varies from 0 to 20%. So the rich Americans in the high 30 to 40% income tax bracket pay much lower tax on additional income generated as capital gains from sale of shares.

Now the government in USA are trying to bring down the corporate income tax from around 35% to as low as 20%. President Trump believes the money saved by the companies will go towards building the reserves which will be used to invest in additional business which will create jobs. The lowering of tax would bring in more money as tax revenue, even more than those when the rates were high, due to increase in business and good tax paying jobs.

The President also expects that many of the large American companies and the super rich people would repatriate their wealth that is stocked in tax free heavens such a Bahamas. Many economists believe this will increase the fiscal deficit of the country and over a period time the government debt which is already high will reach unsustainable values. Time will tell what will happen..

We in India are charged a dividend payment tax plus surcharge and cess of 17% which the company paying dividend has to pay to the government, before paying the money to the shareholder. This is irrespective whether the recipient is in the income tax paying bracket or not. However this dividend when received by the shareholder need not be clubbed to the actual earning of the dividend recipient, irrespective of his or her income tax bracket. So the low income person whose income is much below the tax limit looses out, but the rich tax payer gains a lot. To balance this anomaly last year, GOI increased the dividend tax by 10% in case of persons earning more than 10 lakhs per year, which adds up to with surcharges to around 28.32%. The reason given by GOI for asking the companies to deduct and pay this dividend taxes is the alleged claim that most equity share holders were not paying taxes on dividends by not showing them in their tax returns. This reasoning does not hold good these days of KYC with Pan cards and Aadhar cards of share holders is in records of the tax authorities.

Now coming back to the profits after tax retained in the company itself and used in the business, the share prices

of the company keeps growing. The equity holder in India after holding the equity for just a year or more, can sell the equity and pocket the capital gain without paying any tax. In case of all other assets the period of holding is 3 years. This also works to the advantage of the rich and one of the reasons the rich are growing richer, while the poor remain poorer in India. The people who inherit large financial assets need not work hard to increase their wealth due to these income tax breaks. Something has to be done to get the young Indians coming into the tax bracket to invest in equity and get into businesses of their own.

So can the GOI rectify this situation and encourage the new young generation of Indians to save their surplus incomes and invest the same in financial assets? This can be done by reducing the income tax on Indian companies from around 33% to 20% flat without any surcharges. At the same time a number of tax deductions that are giv-

en to businesses should be abolished. It should then allow the good profit making companies to pay dividends to its equity share holders without any deduction of dividend tax. The recipient will have to club the dividend with the other income and then if required pay the appropriate income tax. The income from dividends will be very attractive to the young person with limited savings than in keeping it bank fixed deposits.

Besides this, again the long term capital gains from the sale of equity shares should not be tax free in the hands of the recipient and needs to be clubbed with the other incomes before it is taxed. No respectable country that is not a financial tax heaven provides this exemption. Capital gains are taxed every where. A democratically elected government in a predominately poor country has no real reason of giving the rich capital tax exemption. It should be subjected to as in the case of real estate to long term capital gain

tax after a period of 3 years with the benefit of published inflation index. In case GOI wants to nudge the investors towards investing in long term equity, than say investments in gold and commodities, then income tax on long term capital gains on equity shares could be 10% percent lower than the tax on the recipients income slabs as long as they have retained the equity shares for more than 5 years. The same rules would apply to payments received by individuals from equity invested in mutual funds.

The maximum individual income tax rate in India is 30% plus surcharges. To simplify the tax structure for incomes above Rs. 20,00,000/- per year, this could be raised to 35% and all surcharges and cess be removed. Since the rich will be paying tax after their income is clubbed to the additional earnings from dividends and long term capital gains, the taxation will be more equitable. Companies will be able to attract a lot of fresh equity from new wealth creators and their lower taxation will help them to grow and create more high income jobs. People will also start investing more in company equity than in gold and real estate. Stock markets will not be considered as gambling dens but as long term wealth creators for the young. We need young bright entrepreneurs to float new companies, grow and quickly take their businesses around the world. These are not the regular crony capitalists who depended on politicians to provide them the required crutches.

So you the Citizens will have to decide whether the GOI should encourage genuine long term Indian house hold investors with limited income savings, to invest in equity shares by ensuring dividend they receive is not taxed, while at the same time making sure that the rich pay their share of tax on the dividend income they receive by clubbing them with their other incomes.

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Christmas: **Heralding a new beginning**



What does a child love most about Christmas? It loves the fun, joy, laughter, happiness, togetherness and of course, the gifts that are exchanged, the mystery of Santa Claus and the beauty all around. This is the magic of the Christmas spirit --- goodness and abundance overflowing from every corner of life. What does Christmas mean for an adult --- for you and me? We renew our hope for blessings, we remember the promise that God made to all His children to give us a redeemer and we look to the gift of eternal life that is made possible through Jesus Christ, whose birth we commemorate. We celebrate the fact that we are among the chosen ones to receive these wonderful gifts, sure of the fact that we are the most loved and cherished of God's people.

Both as children and adults, Christmas is a time for receiving, a time in which we expect great joy to enter our lives. It is a time for hope; it is a time for all things that signify happiness. And, as Christians, our primary duty is to share with others the same things that we receive. It is a time to give just as God gave to us.

Love is the cheapest but most powerful gift of all. Start by giving love to your family --- unconditional and all-embracing love. Forget and forgive all the arguments you have had with them, the differences and the words of anger you have exchanged. Reach

out and tell them how much you love them, how much you value their presence in your lives and re-assure them that you will always love them through all the ups and downs that you will see in the future. In doing this, you will be taking the first step towards the kind of love that God shows to you.



by Jubel D'Cruz

The Crucifix

The cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified is known as a 'crucifix'. The cross by itself is just a 'cross', though different branches of Christianity use different variations of the cross (Latin cross, Greek cross, Georgian cross, etc.).

The crucifix has been a symbol of Christianity since around the fifth century A.D. Before that, the fish was the most common symbol. At that time, the Catholic Church was largely unified, and so the crucifix was the symbol of all Christianity. It still is for the Catholic Church, as well as the Orthodox Church.

Look around you. In your community and beyond, there are always people who are in need. Some are in need of love, some need prayers, and some long for somebody to share their problems with and others need support to fulfil their basic needs. Over the season of advent leading up to Christmas, make that special effort to connect with those who are underprivileged in many ways. Be aware of those around you. Show compassion and kindness to those who have become hard and cynical and try to make a difference in the lives of a few people. This will be your gift to baby Jesus. We, as mortals, cannot match the divine offering that God has given us in the form of His only son; we can only give thanks for it and pass it on by sharing the message that Jesus Christ brought us, through our actions.

Give yourself a gift. Take one thing that you do not like about yourself and promise to change that over the next year. If one is depressed and anxious, promise yourself that you will walk towards positivity and light. If you think you are being caught in the web of materialism, make the conscious effort to turn direction and involve yourself in activities that are altruistic and selfless. If you have taken on a habit that you know is not right, be brave and put a stop to it. Make a change. Your awareness about yourself and your weakness will make you a better person and a better Christian. What better way to commemorate the birth of Christ than trying to be like Him?

This Advent.....

*Be alert, watchful....for you know not when the Master comes!
The message is for the season of expectation, a season of waiting
We have no knowledge of the moment we'll be called to judgment
For the time of His second coming has not been revealed to us.
So this Advent, be vigilant, watch, wait and pray!*

*A call goes out to us all, a call heard in the wilderness of our lives,
In the desert of our barren existence, strong and clear comes the plea
Repent, change your lives, renew your Faith, clear the road
For he who comes is the king of kings, the promised Messiah.
"Prepare the way of the Lord"! Straighten your path, turn away from sin
This Advent, prepare your heart to receive the Saviour, yours and mine.*

*Do you hear the cry in the wilderness from a solitary messenger?
From the one who comes as a fore-runner, to pave the path of His Coming?
Clad in animal skin and camel's hair he wanders to the waters of the Jordan
"Come be baptized and your sins will be forgiven.
I baptize you with water, HE with the Holy Spirit", he cries
This Advent, come and be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*

*Level the hills and mountains- trim that pride, ego, ambition
Fill up the valleys of lack of generosity, humility and honesty
Smoothen the rough ground of anger, grudge and hatred
Discard those stubborn boulders of gossip, of stone pelting at other's fair name
Straighten the path with truth, simplicity and forgiveness withheld for long
This Advent, build a road for the Lord who comes!*

*If there is no room in the inn of your heart, you turn the Lord away
With a life choked with worldly desires, you have no place for him in your life?
Life is clogged with your dreams- wealth, name, fame, position and power
"Come into my heart" you say, is there space in your life for the Lord?
So this Advent, empty your heart and make room for the King!*

*Sweep away the cobwebs of apathy that distort the divine light
Shop for warmth and trust; choose them with a heart filled with gratitude
Adorn your life with zeal and fervor of reaching out to another
The family tree, hung with the baubles of sacrifices and penance
This Advent decorate your life with the Lord's favourite things.*

*Bring out the best you have, drape your doors and windows with silk,
Prepare a soft, warm manger in your home- a manger not of brick and stones
Line it with the swaddling clothes of hospitality, charity and generosity
To protect Him from the cold in the hearts of men, from the winds of sin,
This Advent shape your life into a welcoming cradle worthy of a king.*

*Let your evergreen wreath of firm Faith be lit with candles of kind deeds
Lovingly weave the gold of hope, joy, love and peace into the green
That the eyes of your soul may see, your senses may hear the Lord's knock
Open the door of your heart to receive the Messiah when he comes
Make this Advent a season of expectation and longing for Jesus!*

*Open wide the door of your heart, guard the entrance with vigilance
Lest you miss the Lord passing by, as a hungry, naked and needy
Listen for every footsteps, each groan and moan of the downtrodden
For the Lord comes to us this Christmas in the form of the last and the least
This Advent check out the Word of God, the list of preparations to welcome him!*



BY VERA ALVARES

Jesus or Santa: Who gives the Better Christmas?

by Don Aguiar

Christmas is often a time for families to gather together. Emotions often run high, from everything from joyous love to stressed annoyance!

Christmas has become many things to many people. For some, it is a time for family, giving, and fun traditions such as putting up a Christmas tree, hanging stockings on the fireplace, and looking at Christmas lights. For others, it is a stressful holiday where they feel compelled to spend more money than they should on gifts, food, cards, and events in order to fulfill what is "expected."

Whether you celebrate Christmas or not, it may interest you to know the story behind CHRISTMAS. There are various theories about the accuracy of the date, where some traditions come from, and whether certain practices

actually celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. But many would agree that Christmas is due to the birth of Jesus Christ.

The story of the birth of Christ is found in the Bible. In the book of Luke, chapter two, there are several details given. Jesus was born on Earth to Mary and Joseph and that God sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, where Mary and Joseph had gone to participate in a census. When they got to the crowded city, they had a hard time finding a room. At one inn, the owner offered shelter in the barn with the animals. Jesus was born that night, and Mary laid him in a manger, which is a feeding trough for animals.

They were not "kings" from the east and there weren't three of them. And when they arrived in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary and Baby Jesus were not still in the stable, but in a house, contrary to half the Christmas cards that will be arriving at your house. And there's no indication there were cattle in that stable or anywhere nearby. In fact, the only thing that leads us to believe Jesus was born in a stable is that Luke 2:7 tell us Mary laid the Baby in a manger, a

feeding trough

If you understand everything from the beginning you get a great story. If you make no effort you will probably only see and hear variant Santa stories this Christmas like this one - Hundreds of years ago in Lapland, a little boy named Nikolas loses his family in an accident. The villagers decide to look after the orphaned boy together. Once a year - at Christmas - Nikolas moves to a new home. To show his gratitude, Nikolas decides to make toys for the children of the families as good-bye presents. Over the years, Nikolas's former adoptive families become many, and soon almost every house has presents on its doorstep on Christmas morning. At thirteen, Nikolas is sent to live and work with Lisakki, a grumpy old carpenter, who forbids Nikolas to continue making presents for Christmas. Gradually, however, Nikolas wins Lisakki's trust. Together they begin to look after the Christmas tradition that Nikolas has begun. When the aged Lisakki has to leave Nikolas and move away, the tradition of Christmas presents is once again at risk. Thankfully, Nikolas comes up with a solution that brings children joy every Christmas, even continuing to today.

Christmas has traditionally been about celebrating the birth of Jesus. The Gospel accounts of a virgin birth, angels appearing to shepherds, and wise men traveling from afar to see the baby Jesus in a manger. Our great-grandparents generation added symbols such as manger scenes, Christmas trees, lights, music and drama (ex. Dickens' Christmas Carol) to give Christmas the festive foundation so it would become the juggernaut of celebrations that it is



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today.

In Mathew 2:3, all Jerusalem was abuzz with talk about the foreign visitors who had arrived in town, naively inquiring at every service station and convenience store, "Well? Where is He? Where is the One born King of the Jews?"

They figured that this wonderful news would be the talk of the city. Instead, no one else seemed to know anything about it. Then, when Herod called the religious leaders to ask where the Messiah was to be born (Mathew 2:4), these doctors of theology informed him that the Old Testament prophet Micah had said Bethlehem was the place.

What we wonder is why they didn't go to Bethlehem. It's not like it was in the next hemisphere. Bethlehem lies some 5 miles south of Jerusalem, an easy walk for a healthy person. The clear conclusion is that these religious leaders had the Bible knowledge but no real interest in God or the promise of Scripture.

People knew that all of this was predicted through the centuries by God's prophets. We particularly treasure the promises of Isaiah 7:14 ("Behold a virgin shall conceive...") and 9:6-7 ("For unto us a child is born..."), as well as Micah 5:2 ("Bethlehem...out of you shall come forth One to be Ruler over Israel..."). And people knew that, contrary to the Christmas hymn "The First Noel," the shepherds in Bethlehem's fields did not "looked up and saw a star shining in the East beyond them far" (modern hymnals have revised that line to read "For all to see there was a star...").

Notice the crossing of human lines and barriers in the story of the birth of Jesus. We have the young and the old (Mary, Joseph, the Baby, and Simeon and Anna in the temple. Luke 2). We have the rich and the poor (the Magi and the young family. Matthew 2). We have the Jews and the Gentiles (the

Magi were the non-Jews). We have the highest (angels) and the lowest (shepherds). This wonderful story of the birth of Jesus is clearly for "whosoever" and "the entire world," as John 3:16 inform us.

But since then, perhaps because of our increasing secularization and modern doubt over the story of the birth of Jesus, we have culturally swapped that story for Santa and his mission to give gifts to boys and girls who have managed to stay off the naughty list. It is a great story for kids, and it can safely be discarded when we get older since it never claims to be true – just safely fun. It seems a better story in our modern world when we can take a needed break from the harsh realities of real life and experience, with our kids, a fun story. So Santa dominates our radio and television and 'Happy Holidays' is becoming the Christmas greeting of choice. It is safer for a modern world steeped in doubt, anxious to avoid offending, and happy to have a season to pretend.

It was when I looked again; to before the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth that I started to see that it was a great story, with a plot and a depth that rival all classics. Even taken purely as story, it beats the Santa replacement story just about any way you look at it. But to see this, you need to grasp this great story as it was meant to be understood – as one chapter in a long epic, spanning the entire universe and enveloping the entire human race.

There is plenty of evidence that this is a facts-on-the-ground true story. Unlike Santa Claus, for whom we do not even try to seek verification in the North Pole, or on his sleigh in the sky, or find witnesses who have seen him stuck in a chimney, there is historical Corroboration for Jesus – even the virgin birth part of the story. Roman and Jewish historians outside of the Bible refer to him. The places where all the

riddles were spelled out and where Jesus walked are terra firma real. There is a Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Mount Moriah. Since we have the story written out for us before it happened we have evidence that there is one Author in this story. The fact that Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel and the others could specify hundreds of years beforehand the events of Jesus' birth, life and death is evidence that the Creator – who alone knows the future – has authored this Story, as an invitation for you and me to join Him in it.

The story of Jesus birth is such a poignant message to humanity of our freedom to choose a personal path – beyond the seeming 'power' of external circumstances. That outer 'power' is a lie / maya / projection. Love is the all-encompassing nature of human reality / consciousness and its source lies within each divine human presence. Look to the children – baby Jesus - for its pure example – no past no future – simply an innocent openness to each and every moment. Bless the child within and all is well with us in this wondrous life.

I wish you a joyous Christmas celebration – we are all one family when we make that choice. I pray we choose compassionately and wisely as well as experience a magical Christmas time and joy and fulfillment this season, blessings to you and your loved ones. And A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2018!!!!

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Merry Christmas and Happy Christmas

We wish people a 'Happy Birthday', and if you're in the USA in November and December you might say 'Happy Holidays', so why do we say 'Merry Christmas' more often than 'Happy Christmas'?!

Saying 'Merry Christmas' rather than 'Happy Christmas' seems to go back several hundred years. It's first recorded in 1534 when John Fisher (an English Catholic Bishop in the 1500s) wrote it in a Christmas letter to Thomas Cromwell in 1534 "And this our Lord God send you a merry Christmas, and a comfortable, to your heart's desire."

There's also the carol "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" which dates back to the 16th century in England. It comes from the West Country in England and it was first published in the form we know it today in 1760.

In the English language of the time, the phrase 'Rest You Merry' didn't mean simply to be happy; 'rest' meant "to keep, cause to continue to remain" and 'merry' could mean "pleasant, bountiful, prosperous". So you could write the first line as "[May] God keep you and continue to make you successful and prosperous, Gentlemen" but that would be hard to sing!

The comma in the phrase should be AFTER the 'merry' not BEFORE it! But it's often put after the merry which changes the meaning to make 'merry Gentleman' and so a 'Merry Christmas'!

The term 'Merry Christmas' might well have been made very popular in 1843

from two different sources.

The first Christmas Card, sent in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole, had this wording on it: "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You".



The First Christmas Card

"Firstchristmascard". Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens was also published in 1843 and the phrase 'Merry Christmas' appears 21 times in the book! Charles Dickens also quoted "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" in A Christmas Carol, but changed it to: "God bless you, merry gentleman! May nothing you dismay!" moving the comma to before the merry!

The Carol "We Wish You a Merry Christmas [and a Happy New Year]" is another old carol from the 'West Country' (South West England) but was only first published in 1935 and this probably confirmed the use of 'Merry Christmas' over 'Happy Christmas'.

Why 'Merry Christmas'?

Merry Christmas and Happy Christmas. ... It's first recorded in 1534 when John Fisher (an English Catholic Bishop in the 1500s) wrote it in a Christmas letter to Thomas Cromwell in 1534 "And this our Lord God send you a merry Christmas, and a comfortable, to your heart's desire."

Why it is said Merry Christmas?

Scholars also note the phrase was used in the 16th century English carol "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." Merry Christmas certainly picked up steam in 1843 with the publication of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. That same year the phrase also appeared on the first commercially-sold Christmas card.

Is it happy or Merry Christmas?

"Happy" is an emotional condition, while "merry" is a behavior. Furthermore, happy, which came from the word "hap," meaning luck or chance implies good-fortune. ... Meanwhile, "Merry Christmas" took on sentimental meaning in the U.S. —even hearing "merry" on its own now makes us think of December 25th.

Dec 24, 2016

How did Merry Christmas come about?

The origin of this practice is a little obscure. However, it's believed that an English admiral first used the term Merry Christmas in an informal letter, way back in 1699. ... In 1843, Charles Dickens used the same phrase in "A Christmas Carol."

What does it mean to say Merry Christmas?

Christians believe that the 25th of December is the birthdate of Jesus Christ, hence Christmas day, etc. There is an expression, 'To make Merry', which means to be joyful, celebrate, and be in general good cheer. Merry Christmas implies that people should Make Merry and enjoy in the celebration of his birth.

Jesus Is The Prince Of Peace

by Leon Bent

"For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Is.9:6), called by many "the Fifth Gospel," because his prophecies predict many aspects of the life of Jesus. Additionally, Isaiah's name means "Yahweh is Salvation."

Unfortunately, the very place where Jesus lived and taught, Palestine, is in total shambles, with heinous, barbarous, diabolical and cold-blooded acts of the Israeli police and army. Even little children are sometimes shot dead! The Palestinians are considered humanity's dregs by Zionists. A reign of terror began with "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," after Israel became an independent nation in 1948, out of nowhere, when the world overlooked Palestinian blood-and-soil nativism. Truly, the "Word of God-made-flesh" will transform this "cauldron of complexities!" There is consolation in the theme of the Book of Revelation—the time of the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ, will establish God's Kingdom of peace and goodwill on earth.

On the other hand, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movements have not disappeared from Europe after the liberation of Auschwitz. The Evil One's fingerprints and footfalls are still felt in some Eastern European countries and other fascist places in the world. Again, we take recourse to Isaiah 11:6: "The wolf will live

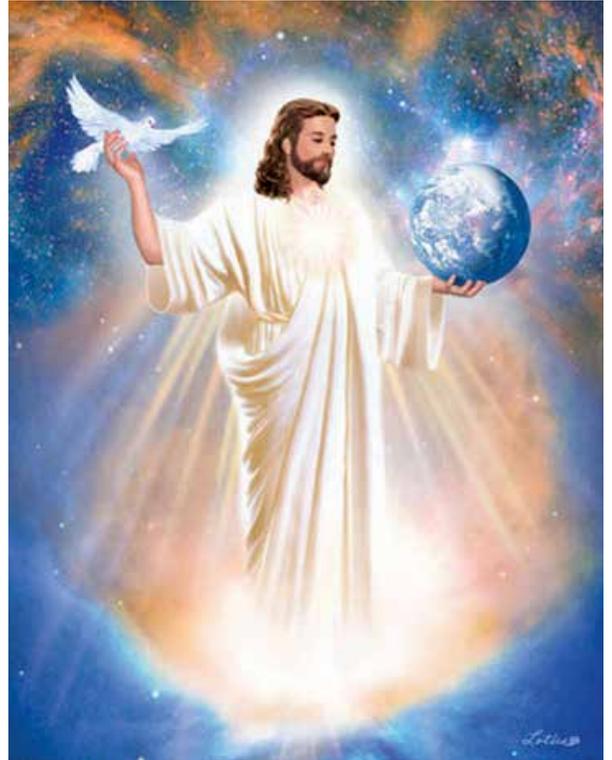
with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion feed together; and a little child will lead them". Innocence and peace will rule the world one day. However, take note that Mark 1:15 reports Jesus saying: "The Kingdom of God has already come."

How will Jesus justify his being called the Prince of Peace? What does it mean? Paul describes how Christ actually goes about it.

The word peace is mentioned thrice in Ephesians 2:13-18: "He is our peace," Paul says, speaking of Christ, and He has made peace (Verse 15: "so making peace"), and, "He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near." In those three occurrences of the word peace, you have the apostle's outline of how Christ makes peace possible. He is our peace -- that is the origin of peace! Then, there is the process of peace, how it is actually brought about -- he came and made peace. Finally, there is the means of laying hold or possessing that peace -- he preached peace.

The apostle discloses the secret of peace: Oneness is a Person: "He is our peace" -- between individuals or between nations.

Now, this gold nugget: Christmas is not only a sparkling remem-



brance of the promises and prophecies of salvation and eternal bliss, which began at the Incarnation. Each Christmas also anticipates the challenging Second Coming, when Jesus Christ will return to earth, to defeat evil and establish His eternal reign of justice, mercy, harmony, love and peace.

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The final flourish! Celebrate with gay abandon and cheer these two realities this Christmas!

**God is inside you.
You are the I am of all times.**

You are authority over your shadow.

by Rtn. Calwyn D'Abreo

Somebody somewhere made an announcement to the world that the Source of all Energy and the presence of the Infinite Intelligence we all call God is outside the periphery and the geography of our human body. We are so much aware of our conscious mind and the un conscious mind and the supra conscious mind , each having their own definition in order for us to identify the stances of our involvement with our superior meanderings inside the labyrinth of our existence. We assemble our thoughts to cater to our needs and wants and to prescribe a future pattern for our present lineage of disposed actions so much that we fail to see the avalanche of great power ready to engulf us in the process of thinking, our birth right and magna carta.

Many believe that, that which and who and what we call God is outside the presence of the human form which is the body, that is the framework for the purpose of harvesting a continuous involvement of energies and emotions that operate in concert. Many believe that you are entirely separate from the Source of all Energies and that you cy-

cle alone upon the broad and narrow paths of life's tenure on earth.

We also believe that the Energy we call God is continually testing us and we have even super imposed on our feeble minds the connotation as if in suspicion that 'from a distance God is watching us.' When the Sceptre of all that is and the I Am of our existence is without a delirious moment of doubt outside the ambit of policing our personality we are to collaborate and thus consume the oneness of things as you walk in the shadow of the Almighty. 'The Master psychologist said 'I am in Him and He is in Me...I and the Father are One'. No better or more simpler expression from the hero of the greatest story ever told could justify your singularity amongst your kind and your footprints would be ample proof of that which is, the I am in You ...for all times to come within a world without end.

It is up to you to cause a separation from the Source of all Energies and the Infinite Intelligence we call God. Only you, yourself , can feel the separation from God. The God of all Hosts is never separating the patriarchal Himself from you . God is always focused upon you. Day and Night. The Father, who we call His name, in the opus grande relationship curve of our the 'I am' that we are and so much a part of the Divine relationship and the shadow of comfort that we have has His focus on us at every given moment.

We are surrounded with His awareness and understanding and unspeakable love no man can deliver but the Father. This document and proof is inside you and not in another place on earth or in the bright lit oblivion of heaven.

Balance Sheet Of Life

Birth is your
Opening Stock.

What comes to you is
Credit.

What goes from you is
Debit.

Death is your
Closing Stock.

Your ideas are your
Assets.

Your bad habits are your
Liabilities.

Your happiness is your
Profit.

Your sorrow is your
Loss.

Your soul is your
Goodwill.

Your heart is your
**fixed
Assets**

Your character is
**your
Capital.**

Your knowledge is
**your
Investment**

Your age is your
Depreciation.

And finally :

**ALWAYS REMEMBER, GOD IS
YOUR AUDITOR**

***Have a perfect
balance sheet...***

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What if all animals were as smart as us?

If every species on the planet were suddenly equally intelligent, would we cooperate or fight? Just a hypothetical survival of the fittest scenario

In planet of the apes a man finds himself in a world governed by hyper intelligent primates that lord over enslaved human underlings. which story fell under the genre of 'social fantasy'.

What if that fantasy was expanded, however, to include not only apes with human-like intelligence, but all species on Earth? What if every animal on the planet has suddenly woken up a rational, self-aware being? Would one creature come to rule all others, much as we humans have done, or would our varied kind arrive

at some sort of peaceful, enlightened coexistence? It might seem like an absurd thought experiment – it's certainly not possible – however, exploring the question can reveal intriguing (and depressing) truths about human nature, and our place as the planet's dominant species. Unfortunately, the hypothetical answer isn't pretty: "Chaos would be the simple word for what would happen," says Innes Cuthill, a behavioural ecologist at the University of Bristol. "We should definitely not assume that intelligence is a good thing. We'd all kill each other."

Given that, who would win? Many species, of course, would not stand a

chance. Herbivores, for example, need to spend most of their time eating grass in order to acquire enough energy to function. This limits

the time they could invest in communication, tool making, culture-building or engaging in combat. Protein-eaters would thus have an edge. Sharks, dolphins and killer whales would be out, since they are confined to the ocean – although oceanic creatures may engage in their own underwater struggles for power. Likewise, animals that cannot survive outside of their particular niche – the swamp, the rainforest canopy, the desert – would not be able to conquer the world, tethered as they are to their environments. Given that, who would



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In the short term, large predators would likely pose the biggest threat to our dominion

Large predators like lions, tigers, bears, wolves and even non-predators like elephants and rhinos, however, could have a go at it, á la Jurassic Park. In the short term, they would likely pose the biggest threat to our dominion. Should we be stripped naked and thrown into the savannah or forest, they would most definitely beat us. But given our possession of modern weapons and the fact that humans are far more numerous than other large predators, those creatures' newfound smarts would likely only allow them to outmanoeuvre us for a brief time before we obliterated them which, incidentally, we are currently already in the process of doing for many

But with the most formidable carnivores out of the picture, a new competitor would emerge: our closest primate relatives.

Chimpanzees, orangatans and gorillas could wield our guns while also enjoying the benefits of stronger and more agile bodies than the human form. They could also quickly set about creating unique technologies by coopting human tools for their own use.

MATRIMONIAL

MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster (Born in April 1973), 5' 5" tall, looks much younger to her age, good looking, fair complexion with qualifications, B.Com. (Mumbai), M.B.A. Finance (Canada), M.B.A., (H.R.) and Diplomas in I.T. (NIIT), Comp. (APTEC), and Cert.Ind Acct. (I.C.A.), working in good position. Graduate / Post Graduate unmarried R.C. Bachelors upto 47 years, employed in good position and well settled in Mumbai or abroad. Contact email.: bellwether77@yahoo.com OR Mob.: 9892700617

The Sky's the Limit – Even for the Dead

With large scale concerns such as global warming people are starting to realize that we must conserve our natural resources and do what we can to maintain nature in order to ensure there is a livable planet left for future generations. With these concerns in mind, there have been hundreds of scientists, meteorologists, designers and environmentalists working to develop new concepts that will solve the futures problems of keeping the earth sustainable.

For some urban cities, the population has become so dense that they barely have room enough for the living let alone their non-living residents. The acres of valuable land that are currently occupied by traditional cemeteries is land that will never be recovered, essentially limiting the living space of a growing population.

Architectural Designers Yalin Fu and Ihsuan Lin have submitted plans to the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitats and are proposing to build the Moksha Tower, a large tower that would function as a vertical cemetery. If you can't go down there is nowhere to go but up.

The building will be split up into different sections that will allow the accommodation of the four main re-



The Memorial Necropole Ecumenica in Brazil is currently the world's tallest cemetery.

ligions practiced in Mumbai, India. For Muslims the tower will provide space for funerals and garden burials and if requested, there are areas for Christian funerals and burials as well. There are facilities for crema-

tion for those of Hindu faith and a river in which to immerse the remains. And for the Parsis faith there will be a tower of silence on the roof of the tower.

In addition to creating more ground space the tower is equipped with new technologies to not only make it a green building but a building that also cleans the surrounding air which will reduce Mumbai's carbon footprint. The outer facade of the tower will be lined with a multi-layered skin consisting of an exterior skin, followed by glazing, plants, woven materials and a steel frame that will absorb heat and CO2. This will allow vegetation to grow out of the walls of the tower.

Although the Moksha Tower is still in the design and development stage there is a functioning 13 story vertical cemetery located in Santos Brazil. The Memorial Necropole Ecumenica was built in 1983 and is the highest cemetery in the world according to the Guinness Book of World Records. The Memorial has the capacity to hold 14,000 burial spaces spread over 14 floors with plans to create another 25,00 niches underway. The Memorial Necropole Ecumenica has accommodations for all religions just as the Moksha Tower however, the cemetery tower in Brazil is also equipped with a first class restaurant, a concert hall, luxuriously furnished rooms, a lake with waterfalls



The Moksha Tower is still in the planning stages but once constructed will be the largest vertical cemetery in the world.

and a conservation garden area filled with exotic animals. With such an extravagant setting this building could be easily mistaken for a high

class condominium. It has become a huge tourist attraction in Brazil and has been voted best necropolis in Brazil.



**Great Lakes National Cemetery,
Michigan, USA**

With the success of the Brazilian vertical cemetery other densely populated countries and cities are looking into building their own. Both Bogota, Columbia and South Korea currently have architectural designers looking into the practicalities of creating a similar complex in their communities. The development of these towers is affirmation that funeral rituals are changing and will continue to change in order to comply with the social changes we have experienced in the past few decades.

'Aloyseum'

Museum for Christmas

by Ivan Saldanha-Shet.

Glimpsing bygone vintage times in Mangalore are a pleasure beyond know - at Christmas season, many with roots in this garden of Eden, return home from all corners of the world to be with their elders at home and enjoy the nostalgia with their kids who find this land of their ascendants curious. The language, the food and the sights.....but one place that is a must visit filled with natural charms fast disappearing is St Aloysius College in pristine surroundings. The 'museum' named "Aloyseum" is sure to give folks - the young and old a great opportunity to see and know. It subtly affords a platform to grow and preserve the future.

At a time when the old world charm of Mangalore is being rapidly imploded and the twenty first century is burying nostalgia of the city; a pleasant surprise is this "ALOYSEUM". This is a composite museum of the famous college on the historic hill - St Aloysius, born January 1880; century old 'Aloyseum' of Mangalore is indeed a great treat for all.

The story of this exhibition winds back to 1912 when Italian Jesuit, M Chiappi S J, had valuable natural treasures donated by 'College Vida, Italy', plus ancient Roman coins medals and various paraphernalia which he kept in cases on the veranda of the college Science rooms. In 1913, the growing specimens and curios were moved to the foyer of new 'Red Building' where it is rooted and expanded today. It seems it would move to a new building soon. Lots of valued articles were donated by local residents. After 80 years in 1995 the name 'Aloyseum' was coined in house. In the last decades it along with the



heritage art treasures from the brushes of Bro. Moscheni S J, 'the College Chapel' next door, proved a great magnet to many visitors and tourists including those from far off countries - it is a Christmas attraction. The plan is to make Aloyseum, a "Mangalore Museum" giving the future visitor a complete picture of Mangalore's culture.

Attractions for you :

Among the most noted look at these two items: (1). In October 1926, a rare Whale 'Balaenoptera Indica' (of which

only three skeletal remains exist world wide) estimated to have been 48 feet, was found beached near Cananore (now in Kerala) in an advanced state of decomposition. The remains were in three pieces (two smaller pieces of the tail end were kept in the museum) the large piece the rib cage and head was hung from the ceiling in the old Science block and now in the main hall of the 'Aloyseum'. This is most seen and remembered by generations these 'Whale' bones are etched in the minds of young admirers who are now grand



parents and great grand parents. (2). The other: In 1956 a descendant of P F X Saldanha-Shet, of Highland fame who acquired Mangalore's first 'Motor Car' in 1906, donated the remains of the "De Dion" to this Museum. which is a prized exhibit now. This contraption was used by British Governor of Madras Presidency, Sir Arthur Lawley in 1907 when he came to open the Railway at Mangalore. The record 'break neck' speed of this 'car' which made pedestrians run helter skelter was 19.6 Mph!

An over view: The skeleton of an Elephant and other smaller creatures can be very fascinating. Pieces of the demolished Berlin wall collected in 1990 by a Mangalorean Jesuit scientist, who was at the spot. Many skulls, horns, Conches and corals, skins, snakes, copies of paintings by old European masters and sketch books of Bro.Moscheni SJ the painter of the College Chapel about 1896 exists. The now extinct valve Radios of many makes, H M V gramophones and vinyl records, Grundig German Tape Recorders of the first gen, Box Cameras with chemical plates and roll film, telegraphic equipment, antique telephone sets, a collection of oil/ kerosene lamps of yesteryear, manuscripts on palm leaves, guns, canon parts, swords, daggers and other weapons, postal stamps, coins and medals are great in number which can generate lively interest. Mangalore's first electric generator dating back to 1930. Solid heavy wooden furniture like tables stools and the like from rough tree trunks are very attractive. A gun belonging to Tipu Sultan from Tellichery and a canon ball. Life like statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, A 1934 granite Ganesh figure from Calicut.

Portuguese statues from older churches, including one that is said to be the original one that adorned the Rosario Cathedral before Tipu's siege in 1784. A wooden statue of Mother Mary from an early Ullal church, home alters, an ornamental old pulpit from Cordel Church, Red priestly vestments dating back to 1878 from Jep-pu, souvenirs, and lot more.

Most of the curios are presented by individuals, clergy, and institutions connected with Mangalore; Started in 1913, this museum has seen several refurbishments chiefly in 1927,1944,1955,1995,1999 and 2013.....Without doubt it is possible to dwell on the individual countless pieces. There is no doubt that for every one with Mangalorean roots and affections a leisurely visit to this sanctuary of the old world is indispensable - it is a joy to see people visiting for Christmas taking a nostalgic break which will remain for long in the memory. Enjoy your Christmas season 2017.

- Ivan Saldanha-Shet.



Headlines, Herrings & HMV

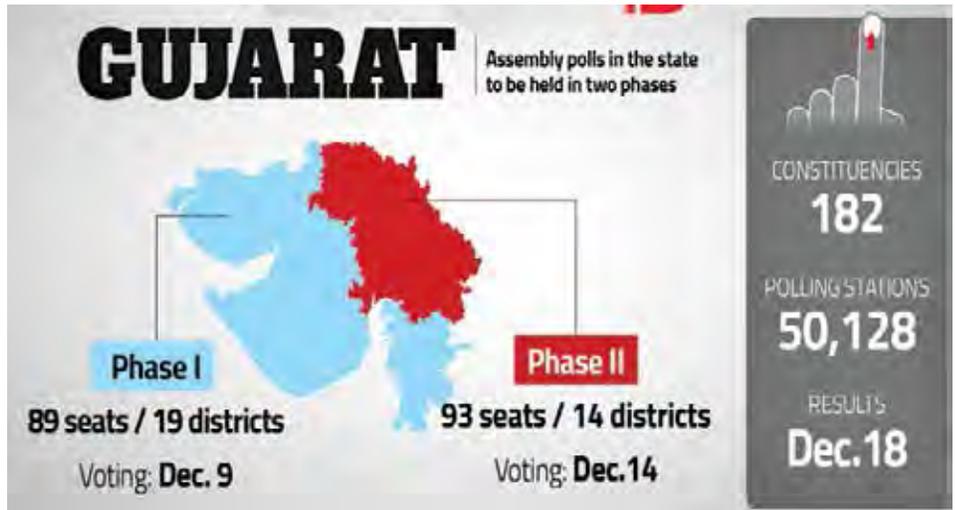
The 1st of December was a cold morning, with temperatures the previous night plummeting to 6°C, heralding the onset of winter in Kanpur, where I live. But what really sent a chill down my spine was the election results of the U.P. civic polls to 16 Municipal Corporations (Nagar Nigams), 198 Nagar Palikas (Municipalities) and 438 Nagar Panchayats (Town Areas). Municipal Corporations are those that have more than 60 wards, while Municipalities have more than 25 wards and a population of 1,00,000, and Town Areas need to have a population of 20,000, with 75% of land being non-agricultural.

I was trying to get some vitamin D by sitting out in the sun. I had actively canvassed for my friend who was standing for corporator from our municipal ward. He had been elected three times before, but could not contest the previous polls in 2012 because the seat had been reserved for women. This time it was a general category seat, so he was again in the fray. With an honest reputation and an unenviable record of social service, he was expected to win, hands down. He was considered the most knowledgeable member of the house. But he lost, and badly. The sun seemed to have set before noon, when I heard the news.



by *chhotebhai* *

He lost to the BJP candidate, who has cases of alleged murder and rape pending against him. In the previous term this person's illiterate wife was the corporator, by virtue of being a woman. She had never been seen in public life in her 5 year tenure. Her husband, who now won, was a parshad pati (a modern term coined to explain the phenomenon of husbands' of corporators, village heads etc). More on women's



reservations later.

By late afternoon the TV news started trickling in, claiming that it was a sweeping victory for the BJP; and contrary to the nay sayers who had prophesised that demonetisation and GST had hit the common man. We were told that the BJP won the posts of 14 of the 16 mayors in the Nagar Nigams, and the remaining two were won by Mayawati's BSP (which had been written off after the last Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections). I was shocked

and couldn't make sense of what I was seeing.

Here in Kanpur, the Congress candidate (again a seat reserved for women) was widely perceived as being the front runner. She was runner up, despite garnering 2,91,591 votes. The

seat was won by the BJP, whose candidate got 3,96,725 votes. This lady roams around sporting a pistol, and rides a scooter without a helmet. So what can we expect? Is this what the people voted for – power flowing from the barrel of a gun (a la Mao) and scant regard for the rule of law?

I will continue with my analysis of the Kanpur results because I believe that such are often microcosms of the whole. The BJP candidate who was first past the post, got 3,96,725 votes of the 9,42,389 cast, from a voters' list of 21,35,072 (probably more than the population of Goa State). So in effect the BJP got 18.6% of the total voters, followed by the Congress with 13.7% and the SP with 5.8%. The votes of the latter two total up to more than that of the BJP. So how was the media projecting this as a BJP sweep? Of the 110 Corporators the BJP got 58, independents came second with 18, and

Party	Lok Sabha 2014	Vidhan Sabha 2017	Civic 2017	Gain/ Loss over 2014
BJP	42.3	40.0	30.8	- 11.5
SP	22.0	22.0	18.4	- 3.6
BSP	19.6	22.2	14.3	- 5.3
Congress	7.5	6.2	10.0	+ 2.5
Independents	-	-	20.4	-

the Congress with 17 was the second largest party. So again, how can this be portrayed as a wash out of the Congress?

Is the media deliberately misleading the public? Are the headlines red herrings strewn across our path, so that we may listen only to His Master's Voice (HMV)? Alert citizens need to read between the lines and scan the fine print.

Let alone a sweep, the BJP has actually lost ground – 11.5 percentage points since the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 or 9.2 percentage points since the Vidhan Sabha elections held just 8 months earlier. If anything, this is a danger signal for the BJP. Table I below clearly illustrates the point. The only gainer in the civic polls has actually been the Congress, other than the major gains of independents, that picked up a staggering 1,77,65,721 votes!

(See TABLE I – PERCENTAGE OF VOTES POLLED)

In 2014 the BJP won 71 of 80 Lok Sabha seats (89%), but slipped 12 percentage points in the Vidhan Sabha elections, winning 312 of 403 seats (77%). Barring the mayoral victories, the BJP has slid badly on all other fronts in the percentage of seats won. See Table II.

(See TABLE II – PERCENTAGE OF SEATS WON)

The termites are slowly emerging from the woodwork. A delayed report in the Times of India states that the BJP actually lost its deposit in 3656 (45%) seats

that it contested, while winning just 2366 (30%). So where is the sweep?

This civic election also saw defeats in the home constituencies of several political stalwarts. The media of course would like us to begin with Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha constituency, Amethi, where the Congress was whitewashed. But the same media does not highlight that the BJP also lost the six seats in Kaushambi, the home turf of Keshav Chandra Maurya, the Dy CM of U.P., or in Chakiyanagar Panchayat, the home town of Home Minister Rajnath Singh. Similarly the SP lost all the seats in Kanauj, the parliamentary constituency of Dimple Yadav, the wife of Akhilesh. The BJP lost the ward in Gorakhpur where CM Yogi cast his vote. It was won by a Muslim. This affirms the Hindi saying "Deepak tale andhera" (darkness surrounds the lamp).

Despite the "saffron wave" and Yogi's saffron garb, 16 Muslims in Gorakhpur won from among the 70 wards, not restricted to Muslim dominated areas. Muslim independent candidates won across the State. Another interesting titbit is that though the BJP dominated the cities, closely followed by the Congress; in the mofussil towns the SP and BSP both fared much better. EVMs were used only in the cities, and ballot papers in the outer areas, again lending credence to the growing crescendo that the EVMs are tampered with to favour the BJP.

I have two more juicy bits from my hometown. Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM got one Corporator, but he was not a

Muslim. To the contrary he is a Sonkar, traditionally pig rearers, who are anathema to the Muslims. Wonders never cease! The other titbit is about a Corporator whose seat was declared a woman's seat. In his desperation to retain it he scouted for a bride, found one a week before the nominations were to close, got married and also got her elected! If this isn't Hindustani jugaad, what is?

This brings me to my last point of reservation by rotation, where seats are allocated to different categories like women, SC, ST, OBC etc on the whims of the Govt. This results in shadow leaders, especially for the women. Most of them remain hidden while the pati parshads call the shots. This defeats the very purpose of women's empowerment. It is also an injustice to a serving member who cannot seek re-election because of the change in gender or caste in that particular constituency. This anomaly in civic elections needs to be seriously addressed.

For now the urban populace has voted. The BJP has undoubtedly won the maximum number of seats against a fractured opposition. But it is anything but a sweep as sought to be projected by the HMV media. Like Padmavati, it is just another red herring thrown in our path to make headlines, and distract us from the ground realities.

** The writer is the Convenor of the Kanpur Nagrik Manch*

TABLE II – PERCENTAGE OF SEATS WON

Party	Nagar Nigam Mayors (16)	Nagar Nigam Corporators (1300)	Nagar Palika Chairpersons (198)	Nagar Palika Members (5261)	Nagar Panchayat Chairpersons (438)	Nagar Panchayat Members (5434)
BJP	87.5	45.84	34.84	17.4	22.83	12.2
SP	Nil	15.54	22.73	9.0	18.95	8.3
BSP	12.5	11.31	14.65	4.9	10.27	4.0
Congress	Nil	8.46	4.55	2.9	3.88	2.3

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Highway Grotto Beckons Travelers



Krishnagar – A Marian grotto depicting popular Marian apparitions over centuries has come up in Krishnagar Nadia district on National High Way.

Some 400 devotees gathered for the blessing of the grotto constructed adjacent to the four lane highway at Muktinagar Holy Sacrament Parish for the blessing by Salesian Bishop Joseph Suren Gomes of Krishnagar, 7th December 2015.



The grotto construction was the fruit of a joint effort by the parishioners.

Bishop Gomes also released a new songbook containing new song compositions by singer-composer Mr. Apurba Kr. Halder.

Complimenting their efforts to honour

Mother Mary Bishop Gomes said, “Today we are witnessing the inauguration of a unique and modern grotto which is just beside the national highway, in view of thousands of travelers who

cross this path daily. Unlike the traditional grottos, this one bears a unique symbol of major Marian apparitions in different parts of the world, during the past centuries. May our heavenly mother be a guide and consolation to us and all who trust her.”

The grotto is made in the structure of a small chapel front with smooth wall, soothing acrylic paints, marble floor, and with design-iron grill-gate, viewable from a distance all day and night, with a large inscription below the roof cross: Ma – Amar, Tomar, Shobar Ma (Mother – mine, yours and every-

one’s).

Immediately after the blessing of the new grotto, an animated rosary prayer of joyful mystery followed during which children depicted the mystery-scenes. After each decade of the rosary, the choir and people sang the newly composed Marian songs.

The uniqueness of the Muktinagar is that all the major apparitions of Mary, from Guadalupe to Vailankani, from Lourdes to Fatima and Bandel – all these popular devotions and traditions have found a place inside this grotto.

Commenting on the concept and art work parish priest Salesian Fr Peter Gomes said, “My idea of setting up this grotto in modern creative design and concept was to make it more relevant to the historical apparitions that are approved by the Catholic Church.”

Fr. Gomes, himself an artist sated, “Today, people should not so much rush and pray to Mary because some miracles might happen, but to realize more the fact that Mary still plays a vital role in the life of the Church and families in order to bring people to God and appreciate her intervention in the welfare of the world.”

Muktinagar parish was erected in 2007, when it was bifurcated from the cathedral parish of Krishnagar diocese.

The area of the parish expands 15 km to the south and 10 km to the north, running in parallel to the National Highway 34, Kolkata-Siliguri-Gauhati express way.

The highway has now four lane corridor with a divider, to be able to accommodate more and more traffic flow in future. With this development the Holy Sacrament Parish Church of Muktinagar happens to be in the midst of busy thoroughfare being more exposed to visitors to the Church compound by and by.

Courtesy: Matters India



The Gift of Forgiveness

The Christmas of 1949 we didn't have a tree.

My dad had as much pride as anybody, I suppose, so he wouldn't just say that we couldn't afford one.

When I mentioned it, my mother said that we weren't going to have one this year, that we couldn't afford one, and even if we could – it was stupid to clutter up your house with a dead tree.

I wanted a tree badly though, and I thought – in my naïve way – that if we had one, everybody would feel better.

Taking Matters into my Own Hands
About three days before Christmas, I was out collecting for my paper route.

It was fairly late – long after dark – it was snowing and very cold.

I went to the apartment building to try to catch a customer who hadn't paid me for nearly two months – she owed me seven dollars.

Much to my surprise, she was home.

She invited me in and not only did she pay me, she gave me a dollar tip!

It was a windfall for me – I now had

eight whole dollars.

What happened next was totally unplanned.

On the way home, I walked past a Christmas tree lot and the idea hit me.

The selection wasn't very good because it was so close to the holiday, but there was this one real nice tree.

It had been a very expensive tree and no one had bought it; now it was so close to Christmas that the man was afraid no one would.

He wanted ten dollars for it, but when I – in my gullible innocence – told him I only had eight, he said he might sell it for that.

I really didn't want to spend the whole eight dollars on the tree, but it was so pretty that I finally agreed.

I dragged it all the way home – about a mile, I think – and I tried hard not to damage it or break off any limbs.

The snow helped to cushion it, and it was still in pretty good shape when I got home.

You can't imagine how proud and excited I was.

I propped it up against the railing on our front porch and went in.

My heart was bursting as I announced that I had a surprise.

I got Mom and Dad to come to the front door and then I switched on the porch light.

Surprise!!

"Where did you get that tree?" my mother exclaimed.

But it wasn't the kind of exclamation that indicates pleasure.

"I bought it up on Main Street. Isn't it just the most perfect tree you ever saw?" I said, trying to maintain my enthusiasm.

"Where did you get the money?" Her tone was accusing and it began to dawn on me that this wasn't going to turn out as I had planned.

"From my paper route." I explained about the customer who had paid me.

"And you spent the whole eight dollars on this tree?" she exclaimed.

She went into a tirade about how stupid it was to spend my money on a dumb tree that would be thrown out and burned in a few days.

She told me how irresponsible I was and how I was just like my dad with all those foolish, romantic, noble notions about fairy tales and happy endings and that it was about time I grew up and learned some sense about the realities of life and how to take care of money and spend it on things that were needed and not on silly things.

She said that I was going to end up in the poorhouse because I believe in stupid things like Christmas trees, things that didn't amount to anything.

I Just Stood There

My mother had never talked to me like that before and I couldn't believe what

I was hearing.

I felt awful and I began to cry.

Finally, she reached out and snapped off the porch light.

"Leave it there," she said. "Leave that tree there till it rots, so every time we see it, we'll all be reminded of how stupid the men in this family are."

Then she stormed up the stairs to her bedroom and we didn't see her until the next day.

Dad and I brought the tree in and we made a stand for it.

He got out the box of ornaments and we decorated it as best as we could; but men aren't too good at things like that, and besides, it wasn't the same without mom.

There were a few presents under it by Christmas day – although I can't remember a single one of them – but Mom wouldn't have anything to do with it.

It was the worst Christmas I ever had.

Fast Forward to Today

Judi and I married in August of 1963, and dad died on October 10 of that year. Over the next eight years, we lived in many places. Mom sort of divided up the year – either living with my sister Jary or with us.

In 1971 we were living in Wichita, Kansas – Lincoln was about seven, Brendan was three and Kristen was a baby. Mom was staying with us during the holidays. On Christmas Eve I stayed up very late. I was totally alone with my thoughts, alternating between joy and melancholy, and I got to thinking about my paper route, that tree, what my mother had said to me and how Dad had tried to make things better.

I heard a noise in the kitchen and discovered that it was mom. She couldn't

sleep either and had gotten up to make herself a cup of hot tea – which was her remedy for just about everything. As she waited for the water to boil, she walked into the living room and discovered me there. She saw my open Bible and asked me what I was reading. When I told her, she asked if I would read it to her and I did.

The Truth Comes Out

When the kettle began to whistle, she went and made her tea. She came back, and we started to visit. I told her how happy I was that she was with us for Christmas and how I wished that Dad could have lived to see his grandchildren and to enjoy this time because he always loved Christmas so. It got very quiet for a moment and then she said, "Do you remember that time on Twelve Mile Road when you bought that tree with your paper route money?"

"Yes," I said, "I've just been thinking about it you know."

She hesitated for a long moment, as though she were on the verge of something that was bottled up so deeply inside her soul that it might take surgery to get it out. Finally, great tears started down her face and she cried, "Oh, son, please forgive me."

"That time and that Christmas have been a burden on my heart for twenty-five years. I wish your dad were here so I could tell him how sorry I am for what I said. Your dad was a good man and it hurts me to know that he went to his grave without ever hearing me say that I was sorry for that night. Nothing will ever make what I said right, but you need to know that your dad never did have any money sense (which was all too true).

We were fighting all the time – though not in front of you – we were two months behind in our house payments, we had no money for groceries, your dad was talking about going back to Arkansas and that tree was

the last straw. I took it all out on you. It doesn't make what I did right, but I hoped that someday, when you were older, you would understand. I've wanted to say something for ever so long and I'm so glad it's finally out."

Well, we both cried a little and held each other and I forgave her – it wasn't hard, you know.

Then we talked for a long time, and I did understand; I saw what I had never seen and the bitterness and sadness that had gathered up in me for all those years gradually washed away.

It was marvelously simple.

The great gifts of this season – or any season – can't be put under the tree; you can't wear them or eat them or drive them or play with them. We spend so much time on the lesser gifts – toys, sweaters, jewelry, the mint, anise and dill of Christmas – and so little on the great gifts – understanding, grace, peace and forgiveness. It's no wonder that the holiday leaves us empty, because when it's over, the only reminders we have are the dirty dishes and the January bills.

The Great Gift

The great gifts are like the one gift – the gift that began it all back there in Bethlehem of Judea. You can't buy them, and they're not on anybody's shopping list. They come as He came – quietly, freely, unexpectedly – and if you're not careful, you'll miss them entirely.

by John William Smith

The Secular Citizen

Mail your articles, news, and
other creations to:
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Youth for nation-building

The vision of our country lies in the hands of our youths. Youth are not only the leaders of tomorrow but also the partners of today. Young people are social actors of change and progress

Youth represent the most dynamic segment of the population and are the future of the Nation. India is one of the youngest nations in the world. About 65% of India's population is under 35 years of age.

The focus of the Government is on youth-led development. The Youth should be "active drivers" and not merely the "passive recipients" of development. The Department of Youth Affairs has been implementing various programmes with the objective of developing the personality and leadership qualities of the youth and inculcating qualities of good citizenship and volunteerism among the youth. So how can the youth help revolutionise the way an entire generation functions? In what ways can the youth bring about the much required change?

Read on

Youth & Education

The foundation of an entire nation, its economy and consequently its future

depends on how well the youth is educated. In terms of educational infrastructure, India has been witnessing a massive growth, but it is not enough. The constitution of India guarantees compulsory and free education to every child till the age of 14. But, it is hardly a reality owing to practical hurdles like economic inequality and rising population. The youth of India needs to be multifaceted with education remaining at the core of everything. Education empowers you with the ability to think, to tell the right from the wrong and good from the bad. In a country like India where "traditions and customs" is sometimes bigger than humanity itself; education is not an option, it is a necessity.

Youth & Politics

The young generation is no longer turning a blind eye to politics and government. More and more people from the younger generation are expressing interests in politics and how the country governed. According to Census 2011, 229 million of the India's entire population is the youth. It is, therefore, imperative that their say in who will run the country and who won't will make more than just a small difference. If the 229 million and counting join hands and decide to free the country of cor-

ruption, it is not a task that cannot be achieved.

Youth & Social media

Social media has managed to give the "shy Indian youth" the power to speak their mind. Voicing ones opinion is no longer a luxury of the rich and the elite. Anyone and everyone can be heard. You do not need to have access to the best academic grooming to be able to come out and talk about what you feel about any pertinent issue. The youth is asking questions. The youth is coming out on the streets and protesting when they have to. The youth is joining hands in solidarity when that is the need of the hour. A platform this powerful needs to be utilized at its fullest and the onus lies on the youth of the country.

Every country must see that its youth power is properly utilized. The youth must not be led astray by politicians and criminals, -Most university campuses have become politicized.

Elections to student leaderships are fought with a great vengeance. Student leaders hold enormous clout. They may be utilized by rival groups of teachers to disturb the academic environment.



Christmas – Celebrating Good Governance!

By Ladislaus Louis D'Souza

When the Narendra Modi Government declared 25 December, the birthday of the first BJP Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, as GOOD GOVERNANCE DAY, there rightfully was a hue and a cry denouncing the move as being anti-Christian in that it was an obvious ploy to put Christ and Christianity in the shade, a clear start to decimating the importance of the role played by the Christian minority in nation-building. The writing on the wall was clear: in India, neither Christ nor his followers, of whatever nationality, matter in any way whatsoever! Needless to say, this applies to all minorities. And so, minority sentiments be damned, the sentiments of the majority considered sacrosanct!

Good governance and peace

Well, what is 'governance' if not the way human beings are 'managed' by those in power, both in our own country and the world over! Seen in this light, how can we as Christians not consider looking at Christmas as a celebration promoting good governance per se! The Holy Bible says: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and **the government shall be upon his shoulder**. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. His authority will extend continually, and there will be boundless peace" (Isa 9:6-7). **Christmas can thus be rightly considered a celebration of the dawn of good governance!**

Few, however, are the nations on earth where one can say peace prevails in relation to good governance, while a good many have at the helm of affairs



men whose reign can be said to be anything but peaceful. The USA has its Donald Trump, the Philippines, which once had its Ferdinand Marcos, now has its Rodrigo Duterte, Zimbabwe until recently had its Robert Mugabe, Pakistan has its army generals and India has its Narendra Modi!

The gospels clearly indicate that for Jesus, the other, i.e. the human person, was as a matter of fact, of paramount importance, not the self, and certainly not rules and regulations that served to oppress the marginalized and suppress their voices. Jesus' whole life on earth, short though it was, was one of opposition to all that was inhuman or sub-human in the Jewish society of his time, whereby rules were made and either observed or flouted by precisely those making them, according to their own convenience and advantage.

Common sense v/s Nose-in-the-air attitude

Look at the reaction of the high and the mighty towards Jesus' efforts at

bringing peace into the lives of people through acts of compassion, whatever form these took. They had objections to him healing on the Sabbath, they objected to his disciples picking grains on the Sabbath when hungry and eating them... Jesus doesn't bat an eyelid when he bluntly rebuffs them by saying: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27). Poor thinking, those nerds in high positions!

Through observation, Jesus knew his objectors so well that in response to the silliness of their query "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (Mt 12:10) he needled them with counter queries like "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" (Mk 3:4) "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" (Lk 14:5) "If one of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?" (Mt 12:11) "You hypocrites!" he once riled them, "Does not each of you

on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it to water?" (Lk 13:15) What sort of religious leaders were the Scribes and Pharisees who dared to lord it over their fellow Jews in such a despicable manner! Whither humaneness, whither good governance!

If Jesus was constantly at loggerheads with this powerful lobby it was precisely because of their hypocritical attitude towards people in general. Well, well! How can hypocrisy make for peace ever! Christmas is a reminder to every believer to shed all pretence and hypocrisy per se. Indeed, one of the finest yardsticks Jesus utilized to drive home the point not only of human relationships but also of good human management is his statement "Do unto others what you would have others do unto you" (Lk 6:31), an assertion that leaves no scope for hypocrisy. In fact, of all of his utterances, this is the one that best applies to good governance. Frankly, we precisely need to follow Jesus' example – "If I have said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I have spoken the truth, why do you strike me?" (Jn 18:23) That is the criterion Jesus expects us to adopt when dealing with the powers-that-be. Turning the other cheek (Mt 5:39) is fine, even essential; but letting someone walk all over us believers is certainly not the done thing, Jesus seems to caution us at Christmas.

Christians – sticklers for rules

If we are to prove ourselves equal to none in terms of loyalty to the country and its constitution, we as a minority community need to gear ourselves towards striving to stand out as people on whom the country can depend for showing the way to being sticklers for the rule of law, observing the country's norms in word and in spirit. That is where Jesus' injunction "Give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Mk 12:17) comes in. **With a little push from the Pulpit, the flock could be systematically helped to consider being conscientious** of the timely and regular

payment of taxes as a bounden duty of every believer, coaxed to vote at election time (and vote wisely) rather than play truant, promote the cause of deserving candidates from the community in elections, get involved in social activities, maintain sociability in our workplaces, adopt green environment strategies in our housing societies – anything that makes life purposefully liveable for all.

On the other hand, we need to stop being overly generous and foolhardy, adopting railway stations for their upkeep, wasting time, energy and money transforming railway premises into nurseries and playpens. We need, instead, to work towards prevailing upon the railways to return to its practice of having all railway stations regularly painted in classic aluminium silver and white which makes for neutrality. We must understand our responsibility as citizens lawfully paying for our travel whereby it is both our right and our duty to ensure that we get our money's worth. The same applies to municipal parks and the like. Such alertness on our part will alone go a long way in promoting clean governance in our daily lives as well as in the life of the country both at the state and national levels. After all, Christ did not come at Christmas to promote spoon-feeding among the masses but to create in every human person, particularly in the mind of the believer, a sense of responsibility that is in no way exclusive but essentially inclusive! **We need to seize every opportunity to show the government what good governance really is** so that at the Parousia we shall be able to welcome him into a state of orderliness in every respect for which he gave himself up on Good Friday!

Nationalists or Anti-nationalists?

Could we as believers, starting this Christmas, think out of the box and come up with our own objections and opposition to what is happening in the country today, to the way in which the country is being governed despite setting aside a day as 'good governance

day'? We need to take cognizance of all that is irregular in governmental administrative structures in our country and dare to stick our necks out and speak up in favour of all that is humanly good and against all that is inhuman, irrespective of the rank and position of the perpetrator/s of violence in the name of nationalism. If truth be told, why should we even call such unruly elements 'nationalists'? It would have been in the fitness of things if Archbishop Macwan of Ahmedabad had refrained from referring to the perpetrators of violence by this term. In what way can they be considered 'nationalists' as such? They can at best be termed 'anti-nationals'. Whether they object to anybody eating crow or cow or propagating the Faith, their words and actions can hardly be considered 'nationalist' and in tune with 'good governance'.

On the side of the truth...

We need to return to Jesus' own words in his dialogue with Pilate: 'You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me' (Jn 18:37). **Truth concerns good governance whose principles cannot but be based on righteousness.** Jesus asserts that he has a specific purpose in coming to birth on earth. Thus Christmas has a purpose: to make us conscious of our own individual and collective mission as believers to ensure good governance – in our individual lives, in our SCCs, our parishes and dioceses, in the Church Universal, and above all in our country and in the world at large! Can Jesus certify that we are 'on the side of truth' and 'listen' to him?

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Stand Up For Human Rights Today!

It is December 10th: 'Human Rights Day' once again! This year the day is extra-special as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein puts it, "Next year – on 10 December 2018 – we will celebrate **the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, and this year's Human Rights Day on Sunday marks the beginning of a year-long 70th anniversary commemoration. It will also, I hope, be a year of intense and profound reflection on the continuing and vital importance of each and every one of the 30 articles contained in this extraordinary document."

The UDHR certainly needs to be celebrated; most countries in the world have acknowledged its intrinsic value and are signatories of this path-breaking document, which has been translated into five hundred languages. Sadly, the bitter truth is that in several countries of the world 'human rights' continue to remain on paper today, just empty platitudes. The poor and the marginalized, the vulnerable and the minorities, the differently-abled and those of different sexual orientation, the refugees and the displaced- are deprived and denied of their legitimate rights.

Zeid in his statement for Human Rights Day emphatically states "*values enshrined in Universal Declaration of Human Rights under assault, must be defended*" He goes on to elaborate, "*the universality of rights is being contested across much of the world. It is under broad assault from terrorists, authoritarian leaders and populists who seem only too willing to sacrifice, in varying degrees, the rights of others, for the*

sake of power. Their combined influence has grown at the expense of liberal democratic order, peace and justice. We see mounting cruelties and crimes being perpetrated in conflicts across the world; an antagonistic nationalism on the rise, with surging levels of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination taking root, even in countries which had grown complacent in the belief these were problems of the past, rather than ones that could all too easily re-emerge and reassert themselves."

Even a cursory survey of some of the major countries of the world will make one realise how bad the situation is with regard to human rights. 'Populism' seems to thrive in several countries: the rhetoric of the so-called 'leaders' is highly discriminatory and divisive. They thrive on a language which is filled with venom and hate. These panders to a kind of a pseudo 'nationalism'-have no qualms of conscience to incite mob violence and killing. At the receiving end most often are ordinary citizens: most often poor and innocent. Political one-upmanship has become the order of the day. The sole aim of powerful vested interests is to control the lives and destinies of others- at any cost, particularly by violating the rights of others.

Many of the world's leaders blatantly deny the fundamental truth of Article 1 of the UDHR which states that '*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; they defy their forbears' promise 'to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and obser-*

vance." Some of them like Maduro in Venezuela, Duterte in the Philippines, Modi in India, and Trump in the US- are some textbook examples. There are several more all over Asia, Africa, Americas and even in Europe that care two hoots for the legitimate rights of their people. Death penalty still exists in several countries. The profiteering military-industrial complex with total support from unscrupulous politicians will do anything to keep wars and conflicts on – in several parts of the world.

The rights of women and children are systematically denigrated everywhere. Millions of them across the globe are ensnared by human traffickers. Children are made to work for long hours in hazardous occupations in the sweatshops of Turkey, China and many other countries. Those who publicly profess a different sexual orientation are in some countries hounded and even killed. Freedom of Religion is another major casualty: majoritarianism seems to be an 'in' thing and those who belong to minority religions are at the receiving end of a brutal society: the Ahmadis in Pakistan, the Yazidis in Iraq are some glaring examples of people being persecuted for their religious beliefs. Christians and Muslims continue to be at the receiving end with regular attacks from right-wing Hindu outfits with an apparent support from the ruling political dispensation.

Refugees, migrants and the displaced are not granted their legitimate rights – as the world continues to come to grips with the biggest humanitarian crises in recent times. Millions have fled parts of Africa, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen in recent times due to war and persecution. Growing xenophobia, jingoism, exclusiveness on the part of the host communities has made it very



BY FR. CEDRIC PRAKASH SJ

difficult for them. The Rohingya people of Myanmar have faced immense suffering in recent months. More than 620,000 of them have today sought refuge in Bangladesh. The Indian Government in a highly unacceptable act is not prepared to take in the Rohingya refugees.

Pope Francis was recently in Myanmar. In a major address to the authorities and diplomatic corps there on 28 November he said, "Indeed, the arduous process of peacebuilding and national reconciliation can only advance through a commitment to justice and respect for human rights. The wisdom of the ancients defined justice precisely as a steadfast will to give each person his due, while the prophets of old saw justice as the basis of all true and lasting peace. These insights, confirmed by the tragic experience of two world wars, led to the establishment of the United Nations and the universal dec-

laration of human rights as the basis for the international community's efforts to promote justice, peace and human development worldwide, and to resolve conflicts through dialogue, not the use of force...The future of Myanmar must be peace, a peace based on respect for the dignity and rights of each member of society, respect for each ethnic group and its identity, respect for the rule of law, and respect for a democratic order that enables each individual and every group – none excluded – to offer its legitimate contribution to the common good". Important points worth reflecting and acting upon- by all, very especially those in power and authority

In the run-up to the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on 30 November launched a new, contextual and interactive website

www.standup4humanrights.org. Zeid makes a passionate plea to all "Ultimately it is up to us, to 'we the people,' for whom this Declaration was written. It is up to me; to you; to everyone in every city, province and country where there is still space to express thoughts, participate in decisions, raise one's voice. We need to act to promote peace, fight back against discrimination, and to uphold justice. We must organize and mobilise in defence of human decency, in defence of a better common future. We must not stand by, bewildered, as the post-World War II system of values unravels around us. We must take a robust and determined stand: by resolutely supporting the human rights of others, we also stand up for our own rights and those of generations to come."

An unequivocal call to stand up for human rights today!

* (Fr Cedric Prakash sj is a human rights activist. Contact cedricprakash@gmail.com)

Advent is...

Advent is a time of reflection; let us reflect.

While we think of Jesus Christ this Christmas, let us think about having:

Love instead of hatred.

Joy instead of misery.

Peace instead of strife.

Patience instead of intolerance.

Kindness instead of brutality.

Goodness instead of wickedness.

Faithfulness instead of an illusion of faith.

Gentleness instead of harshness.

Self-control instead of self-indulgence.

Fellowship instead of divergence.

Accord instead of dissension.

All these characteristics of a Christian must be to bring Christ's light into the world. The good we bring into the world will show.

"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." (Romans 14:19)

— Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

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When Heaven Decides

A Christmas Short Story

By *Melvyn Brown*

Maria Pinto had a window-seat on the flight to tour the Holy Land. She spoke fluent Konkani and English; was known to be a pious, God-fearing spinster having refused many proposals. She was a dedicated teacher.

Sitting by her side on the plane was Diago D'Souza, an auditor of a well-known law firm in Panjim. He had made a vow to visit Bethlehem, return to Goa and get married only if he fell in love.

Maria and Diago were strangers to each other.

Tourists are generally friendly folk and find no problem in making polite conversation with each other. Everyone in the group were Catholics and spoke of the unique timing of the trip to coincide with the birth of Christ.

"It had been my dream for many years to attend Holy Mass at the site of our Lord's birth, especially at the Christmas-eve Midnight Mass," Smiled Diago, after having introduced himself to Maria.

"Mine too," She said pushing back a strand of her dark brown hair. "I'm Maria. I teach school children".

A moment of silence fell between them.

Maria pulled out a booklet from the pouch of the backseat in front of her. It was a small book on the story of the site where Christ was born.

"After you read it would you mind letting me have it?" blurted Diago feeling a bit uncomfortable.

"Please, take it," said Maria, adding "I have read many books on the subject."

He reached out for the booklet and their hands touched. It was true, the things you hear about that sudden sensation of shock, the moment the heart knows before the mind registers the emotion. Maria Pinto was a beautiful young woman. Her radiant glow was natural, without make-up. She was simple in looks and humble as a human being.

It was Christmas-Eve, and they stood together in front of the large crib while Holy Mass was being concelebrated. Many people flooded into the open space around them. At the stroke of twelve midnight the bells started to ring inside, outside and everywhere it seemed.

Maria and Diago stared at the figures in the manger: the angels, the shepherds, the women, and the child Jesus, Mary and Joseph. All the figures were large-as-life.

Suddenly, Maria grabbed Diago's arm and gasped, "O my God!"

"What?" whispered Diago as he held her firmly, in case she fell.

"It can't be." He cried in amazement, his whole body ran cold.

Mass was over. Greetings were shared by the group as they sang in joy, burst crackers and when they retired to the hotel, exchanged gifts in general. For all of them it was a wonderful Christmas, a grand experience just to be

there at the birthplace of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

The next morning the group of tourists met at the decorated breakfast lounge. They were thrilled with excitement at the success of the Holy Land trip. Soon they boarded the waiting plane and happily took to their respected seats, babbling, laughing, taking up photographs and being one in spirit.

"Maria, there is something I wish to tell you..." she stopped him in mid-sentence.

"I also have something to..."

"You saw it?" Diago asked in surprise.

"Yes. It was in a flash, wasn't it?" said Maria.

"Yes. Yes. I saw your face on Mother Mary's and my face on Joseph's."

Maria nodded.

"Maria, it was surely a divine sign. Will you marry me?" Diago blushed.

"Yes, I will," said the school teacher shyly.

The Goan auditor stood on the seat of the plane and shouted to the surprised tourists. "We are going to get married!"

Everyone cheered, including the staff of the airlines.



Christmas Quotes

The Son of God became a man to enable men to become the sons of God.

-C.S.Lewis
(*Mere Christianity*)

This is Christmas: not the tinsel, not the giving and receiving, not even the carols, but the humble heart that receives anew the wondrous gift, the Christ.

- Frank McKibben

Love has a name. JESUS
Love has a place. Our hearts.
Love has a story.
And it's not finished yet.

God's gifts
put man's best dreams
to shame.

-Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How many observe
Christ's birthday!
How few, his precepts!
O! 'tis easier to keep
Holidays than
Commandments.

-Benjamin Franklin

Best of all, Christmas means a spirit of love, a time when the love of God and love of our fellow men should prevail over all hatred and bitterness, a time when our thoughts and deeds and the spirit of our lives manifest the presence of God.

-George F. McDougall

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love divine;
Love was born at Christmas;
Star and angels gave the sign.

-Christina Rossetti

JOY

Somehow, not only for Christmas, but all the long year through, The joy that you give to others, Is the joy that comes back to you.

-John Greenleaf Whittier

God sent a star to light the night for The Way, The Truth, The Life—His Son.

He sent the Light of Life to prove His heart so we would invite His Son into our own.

God has given us all the light we'll ever need to find peace on earth, goodwill to men.

-Pamela F.Dowd

PEACE IS . . .

~ gazing at the stars with the knowledge that you know their Creator.

~ closing your eyes in sleep without fear of tomorrow.

~ the stillness in your heart when trouble swirls around you.

~ a quiet mind in a raging world.

- unknown

Where there is faith, there is love;
Where there is love, there is peace;
Where there is peace, there is God;
And where there is God; there is no need.

-Leo Tolstoy

The flow of blessings in our life is directly



related to our passing blessings along to someone else.

-Thomas Kinkaid

The giving of gifts is not something man invented. God started the giving spree when he gave a gift beyond words, the unspeakable gift of His Son.

- Robert Flatt

Blessed is The season which Engages the whole World in a Conspiracy of love.

-Hamilton Wright Mabie

GIVE THE FOLLOWING GIFTS:

To your enemy . . . forgiveness,
To your opponent . . . tolerance.
To a friend . . . your heart.
To a customer . . . service.
To all men . . . charity.
To every child . . . a good example
To yourself . . . respect

-Author Unknown

keep the kitchen sink sparkling



Are all those dirty dishes beginning to take a toll on your kitchen sink? With leftover food, sauces and drinks being washed around them, kitchen sinks can soon start looking grimy and dull.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could get your kitchen sink looking brand new again? Well, with our kitchen sink cleaning hacks, you really can. Try them today and be amazed at how shiny your sink can be.

How to make a natural sink cleaner

For a multi-purpose, stainless steel cleaner that won't break the bank and really works, we'd recommend making your own.

It's amazing because..... our DIY sink cleaner requires just three things:

- Baking soda
- Table salt
- A sugar shaker

It is amazing at removing limescale, tannin stains from tea and coffee and will leave your sink shining.

Use a toothbrush when cleaning your sink

It's always worth saving your old toothbrushes. There's nothing that will get your tap clean quite like the power of toothbrush bristles.

Use them to get into even the tiniest of gaps and ridges on and around your tap. They'll scrub away grime, limescale and any other disgustingness which may be hiding in your sink.

When it comes to dense limescale, particularly around the spout of your kitchen sink tap, a quick fix may not be enough.

Sounds like a lot of effort, right? Well, we have a solution that works its magic over a few hours without requiring any involvement from you – lemon.

The acidic properties of lemon make it an ideal, natural limescale remover. To try it for yourself:

Cut a lemon in half.

Scrub the flesh over the tap, paying extra attention to limescale-heavy areas.

Leave for 2 hours.

Rinse and dry.

You'll be astonished at just how powerful this natural solution can be.

Wipe your sink after every use

Our best kitchen cleaning hack is perhaps the simplest and most obvious one of all – never let it get too bad in the first place.

If you've gone to the effort of washing all those dishes, you might as well go the extra mile and give your sink a swill too.

Use your kitchen brush and sponge to give the sink a quick but thorough clean after every use, and it will really help prevent limescale and grime buildup.

Try not to soak greasy dishes soaking dirty dishes

Get the washing up done quickly to keep your sink clean.

Another great preventative method (plus motivation to get your washing

up done sooner) is to avoid soaking things in the sink for too long.

Although soaking dishes is sometimes handy, all the grease and food on them will be transferred into the water. This will leave a grimy coating around your sink which won't rinse clean easily.

If you really do have to leave your pots, pans and plates soaking, be sure to add a few drops of fairy liquid to help break down grease.

Clear your kitchen sink drains:

Out of sight, out of mind? Not where the kitchen sinks concerned, that's for sure.

Kitchen sink pipes have to deal with a lot – help them keep up by flushing them out every month or so.

There are many drain cleaners available in supermarkets, however, these are full of chemicals which can be extremely harmful to the environment.

Our solution? Baking soda, vinegar and boiling water.

How to make a homemade drain cleaner:

Ensure the sink is relatively dry, then pour 1 cup of baking soda down the drain.

Flush this with 2 cups of boiling water, and leave for 2 minutes.

Add another cup of baking soda, flush with a cup of white vinegar, and put the plug in.

Leave for 5 minutes, then flush with more boiling water.

Imagine Life Sans Technology

Life without technology has become unimaginable for the youth here are some reasons for it.

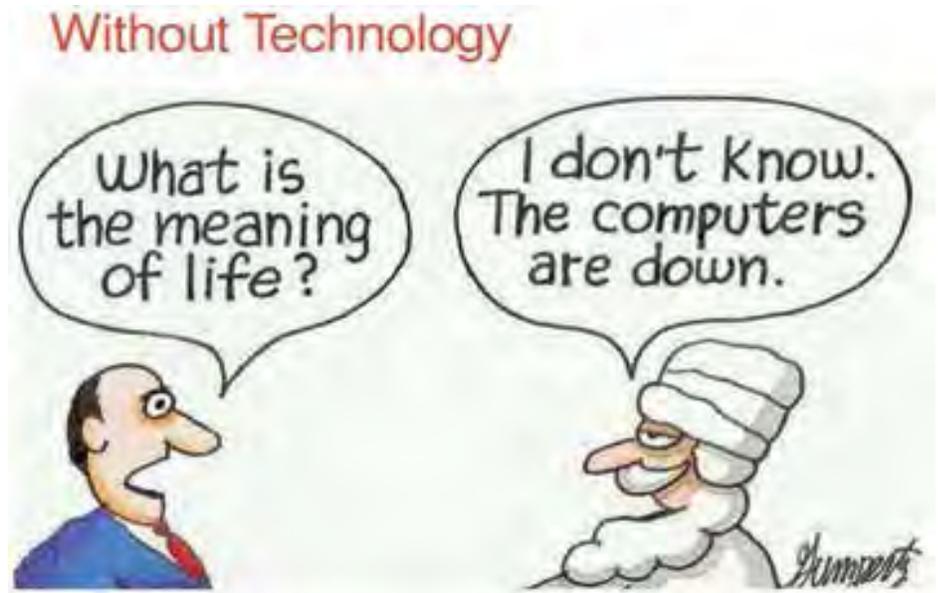
The importance of technology in the modern world can hardly be overstated. One way or the other, technology affects almost everything we do today and it also influences most of our plans for the future. In our everyday life, we owe mass media and technology for our modern way of life. When we use a cellular phone to call our friend, watch a DVD on television, listen to songs recorded on a CD, listen to radio, surf the internet for news, read newspapers to get knowledge about the world or the magazines for entertainment or fashion, we enjoy the benefits of information communications technology.

The everyday lives of people have changed a great deal due to the advent of technology. They have become easier, faster, more comfortable and dynamic. But, at the same time, our lives have become lethargic, preposterous and anti-social just like the computers that have become a part and parcel of our lives. The technology has enriched our lives and enlightened our minds, but in pursuit of its cozy comforts, people tend to be over-reliant on it, so much that they can't even imagine living without it. This pointless obsession and abuse of technology in our lives has left us vulnerable and weak. No doubt, the advancements brought us unprecedented physical, medical and other benefits, but this over-reliance will prove costly for the survival of the human race.

We are living in an Information Age where technology and knowledge bases are advancing at an explosive rate. According to Schilling, at an average,

What would we be without technology?

Without it, knowledge would not have been disseminated as efficiently throughout the world. The message would have been hard to deliver to the right audience at the right time at the right place. Without mass communication, our technological growth would most certainly have been stunted from lack of information.



the magnitude human knowledge is now doubling every 13 months at the current rate. The over-whelming effects of this knowledge are all around us as cutting edge technology is rendered obsolete in the blink of an eye due to further advancements. It would be illogical to believe that we should abandon technology, because in many cases, it will be the difference for a better tomorrow. As a result of the pursuit of better quality of life, some dependence on technology is unavoidable because we would all like to have clean running water, healthy diet, and protection from terrible diseases, provision of power and different electronic tools for our businesses as well as other material comforts and amenities in our lives. Technology especially in the face of rapidly increasing population helps us in utilizing the Earth's resources more efficiently. It is due to technology that human race is surviving the unprec-

edented population expansion and without it, the human race would have died out long ago in a global hunger Armageddon. But on the other hand there are negative effects of technology lingering in our lives. By neglecting basic human and mammalian instincts like socializing, family life and physical exertion, we have become artificial and hollow. Although we are reaping benefits, we are losing the little of the precious humanity left in our lives due to over-indulgence.

In conclusion, technology has affected our lives deeply. We simply cannot imagine living without it. It has increased our lifespan and quality of living. It has brought us closer to each other in certain ways and drifted away in others. Without it, our lives would have been simpler, harder, poorer, isolated, unimaginative, disconnected and dangerous.

The Christmas Story



“About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David’s hometown, for the census. As a descendant of David he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped Him in a blanket and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the hostel.

There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God’s angel stood among them and God’s glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid. I’m here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David’s town, a Savior who is Messiah and

Master. This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.”

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God’s praises: “Glory to God in the heavenly heights; Peace to all men and women on earth who please Him.”

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. “Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.” They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherds returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they’d been told!” (Luke 2:1-20).

From the book of Luke, in the Holy Bible

Christmas

Poet: M. Nora Boylan

C is for the Christ who came
To this lowly earth.

H is for the harps that rang
At our Saviour's birth.

R is for the ringing bells,
Telling Christmas-tide.

I is for the crystal ice
Where we go to slide.

S is for the schoolboy's sled
When he coasting goes.

T is for poor Tommy Jones
Jack Frost bit his nose.

M is for the merry part
Of this Christmas day,

A is for the apple pies
Grandma put away.

S is for old Santa Claus,
Coming here to-night.

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Christmas

by Rose Terry Cooke

*Here comes old Father Christmas,
With sound of fife and drums;
With mistletoe about his brows,
So merrily he comes!
His arms are full of all good cheer,
His face with laughter glows,
He shines like any household fire
Amid the cruel snows.
He is the old folks' Christmas;
He warms their hearts like wine;
He thaws their winter into spring,
And makes their faces shine.
Hurrah for Father Christmas!
Ring all the merry bells!
And bring the grandsires all around
To hear the tale he tells.*

*Here comes the Christmas angel,
So gentle and so calm;
As softly as the falling flakes
He comes with flute and psalm.
All in a cloud of glory,
As once upon the plain
To shepherd-boys in Jewry,
He brings good news again.
He is the young folks' Christmas;
He makes their eyes grow bright
With words of hope and tender thought,
And visions of delight.
Hail to the Christmas angel!
All peace on earth he brings;
He gathers all the youths and maids
Beneath his shining wings.*

*Here comes the little Christ-child,
All innocence and joy,
And bearing gifts in either hand
For every girl and boy.
He tells the tender story
About the Holy Maid,
And Jesus in the manger*



*Before the oxen laid.
Like any little winter bird
He sings his sweetest song,
Till all the cherubs in the sky
To hear his carol throng.
He is the children's Christmas;
They come without a call,
To gather round the gracious Child,
Who bringeth joy to all.*

*But who shall bring their Christmas
Who wrestle still with life?
Not grandsires, youths, or little folks,
But they who wage the strife
The fathers and the mothers
Who fight for homes and bread,
Who watch and ward the living,
And bury all the dead?
Ah! by their side at Christmas-tide
The Lord of Christmas stands:
He smooths the furrows from their brow
With strong and tender hands.
"I take my Christmas gift," He saith,
"From thee, tired soul, and he
Who giveth to My little ones
Gives also unto Me."*



Grooms



MATRIMONIALS

6805 ABUDHABI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in February 1984), Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 80 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. 12th std., studied in Mumbai, working in Bank as Recovery Officer. Contact email : pawan.sana@gmail.com

6803 MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in November 1980), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 82 kgs, Wheatish Complexion Edn. B.Com., Advertising Professional. Contact email : barretto.john@gmail.com

6786 MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in May 1981), Ht. 5' 11", Wt. 65 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. BA working as a Sales Associate. Contact email : saviatorres56@gmail.com

6777 MUMBAI : Wanted Bride (Spinster, widow or Divorcee) Mangalorean or Keralite christian for a Bachelor Mangalorean R.C., Ht. 5' 9", Age 49 years (Born in April 1968), Own Business, own house in Mumbai & Mangalore. Girl should be min. HSC, Ht. above 5' 5". Contact email : patberin@yahoo.com OR Mob: 09322156322

6773 MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in April 1989), Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 76 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Sc. (I.T.), working as a Information Security Analyst, Contact email : conyderic.andrade@gmail.com

6771 CANADA : Bombay born, broughtup and educated Keralite Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in October 1987), Ht. 180 cms, Wt. 75 kgs, Fair Complexion, Handsome, Edn. B. Tech Computer Engineering, working as a Software Engineer. Permanent Resident Canada. Seeks a well educated girl from Canada, U.S.

Or Mumbai. Good looking, ready to settle in Canada. Keralite / Mangalorean / South Indian. Contact email : anthony99ignatius@gmail.com.

6768 MANGALORE : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Divorcee, (Born in August 1975), Ht. 174 cms, Wt. 70 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. HSC + 2 years Mechanical, working on Cruise Line. Contact email : roshanpilar@gmail.com

6766 MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in August 1973), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 68 kgs, Tan Complexion, Edn. SSC, working as a Mech. Fitter in Private Limited Company. Having own accommodation. Contact email : maxielobo1973@gmail.com

6764 MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in November 1977), Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 76 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. MBA PGDM, working as an Asst. Vice President. Contact email : shamlcoutinho@gmail.com

6751 MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in December 1990), Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 70 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Sc. (Hospitality), working in UK Cruise Line. Contact email : asharcfernandes@gmail.com

6750 AUSTRALIA : Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in October 1985), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 70 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Bachelor in Communication, working as a Media Analyst. Contact email : artemiamaria@gmail.com

6746 MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in April 1987), Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 78 kgs, Fair Complexion,

Edn. MBA / BE, Working as a Asst. Manager. Contact email : nestortauro@rediffmail.com.

6745 MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in November 1978), Ht. 5' 9", Wt. 90 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.Com., working as a Material Controller in **DOHA QATAR**. Contact email : cyrus_0679@yahoo.co.in OR 9819938837

6740 MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in December 1986), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 62 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.E. / B. Tech. Worked abroad present having own business. Contact email : noelmezezes02@gmail.com

6735 MUMBAI : Born and broughtup in Mumbai, Tamilian RC Bachelor, (Born in August 1977), Ht. 6', Wt. 89 kgs, Tan Complexion, Edn. FYJC. having own Transportation Business. Contact email : michaelenterprises07@gmail.com OR 9222008111

6731 MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC Bachelor, (Born in September 1978), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 60 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. 12th, working as a Office boy in Bank, having own house. Contact email : dsouzamaximmcb@gmail.com

6729 MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC Bachelor, (Born in November 1988), Ht. 6', Wt. 72 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. SSC, Diploma in A.C., working as a A.C. Technician. Contact email : johnmacoib@gmail.com

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6726 MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC Bachelor, (Born in January 1984), Ht. 5' 9", Wt. 72 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., MBA, LL.B., working as a Manager in reputed Company. Contact email : francoroyal@rediffmail.com

6723 MUMBAI : RC Bachelor (42) (Born in October 1974), Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 76 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. HSC., own business. Seeking single and simple orphan girl below 35 yrs. Preferably pet lover. Contact email : henriques.nigel@gmail.com OR 9821812507

6722 MUMBAI : East Indian RC Bachelor, (Born in September 1989), Ht. 5' 11", Wt. 64 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. M.Com., C.A., working in Audit firm. Contact email : eltn89@yahoo.co.in

6718 MUMBAI : Goan RC Bachelor, (Born in April 1980), Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 85 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., working as a Marketing Executive. Contact email : mumbaischool@yahoo.co.in

6717 MUMBAI : Born and brought-up in Mumbai, Keralite RC Bachelor, (Born in June 1986), Ht. 5' 9", Wt. 75 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Sc., (Computer Science), PGDM MBA, m working as a Software Consultant in reputed IT firm. Only Child., Contact email : donald.arakel@gmail.com OR 9004608504

6713 MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC Bachelor, (Born in September 1989), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 67 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.E. (Extc) working as a Sales Engineer. Contact email : coelho.helen@yahoo.co.in

6711 MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC Bachelor, (Born in September 1985), Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 67 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., IATA, working as Investment Banking Analyst. Contact email : tristan.fernandes85@gmail.com

6709 MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC Bachelor, (Born in May 1985), Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 72 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn.

MBA, working as a Logistics Operations. Contact email ; rosd2505@gmail.com

6708. USA : Mangalorean Handsome RC bachelor, (Born in October 1984), Ht. 5' 9", Wt. 72 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. M.S., working as a Software Engineer. Seeks a good looking, fair Mangalorean girl, working in America. Contact email : rodrigues.gracy61@gmail.com.

6705. MUMBAI : Anglo Indian RC bachelor, (Born in November 1979), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 45 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. H.S.C., Dip. Hotel Mgt., working for Groups of Hotels in Dubai. Contact email : dnfernz@gmail.com OR 9975878894

6704. MUMBAI : Goan RC bachelor, (Born in September 1987), Ht. 5' 9", Wt. 75 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. 10th std., working as a Mech/Supervisor in Gulf. Contact email : josephdsouza12@gmail.com OR 8691913335 / 9029273230

6695. MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC bachelor, (Born in August 1972), Ht. 5' 9", Wt. 77 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. F.Y. B.Com., + IATA, working as a C.S. Associate in MNC., Contact email : binatone55@gmail.com OR Phone : 25441116 / 9619742315 / 9619032564

6693. MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC bachelor, (Born in September 1988), Ht. 6', Wt. 85 kgs, Edn. Graduate Degree, Merchant Navy Captain in U.K., working as a Merchant Navy Officer. Contact email : kenneth-lazrado@yahoo.com.

6684. MUMBAI : Goan RC bachelor, (Born in January 1969), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 60 kgs, Edn. High School, working as at Airport as Counter Staff. Contact email : danrox009@gmail.com.

6682. MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC bachelor, (Born in September 1986), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 56 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. ITI, working as a HVAC & BMS Supervisor. Contact email : vincent.serra1@gmail.com.

6681. MUMBAI : Goan RC bachelor, (Born in July 1977), Ht. 5' 10", Graduate Master of a reputed school seeks a suitable match. Contact email : noron-

haneil@yahoo.in OR 9920460551 / 23820314.

6677. BANGALORE : R.C. Parents invite alliance : son Engineer B.E., (Mechanical), Divorcee working in the Gulf, having good job, well off, (Born in June 1967), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 63 kgs. Girl should be educated, good family background, kind, loving & caring : caste denomination no bar! Contact Mob.: 07795101265

6675. MUMBAI : RC Bachelor born and brought up in Mumbai (Born in October 1984), Ht. 6', slim athletic build, fair complexion, only child. Education BE Electronics, having family business (Electronic Component Manufacturing) from decent family having sober habits. Looking for slim, well educated Roman Catholic girl from decent family with sober habits, having height above 5' 2". If interested kindly send biodata with photograph to snad2450@gmail.com OR contact 9223219634

6669 MUMBAI : Goan R.C. Bachelor, M.Sc., in Telecom, MBA, (Born in February 1978) Ht. 5' 5", Fair, good natured. Working as a Financial Analyst in New York. Contact email: zennon.fernandes@gmail.com OR 8698375997.

6666 MUMBAI : Mangalorean R.C. Bachelor (Born in February 1988) Ht. 6', Wt. 72 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. BMS/PGDM, working as a Customer Executive. Contact email: lilydsouza50@gmail.com OR 9869158197

6664 MUMBAI : Mangalorean R.C. Bachelor (Born in December 1982) Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 68 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Com., A.C.A., LLB., C.A. by Profession. Contact email: saldanha_ryan@yahoo.com OR 9820670158.

6663 MUMBAI : Goan R.C. Bachelor (Born in January 1979) Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com, Working as a Manager in MNC. Contact email: francis_fernandes20@yahoo.com

Brides



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6807. U.S.A. : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in January 1988), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 54 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.E. Computer Engineering, working as a Software Engineer in California. Preferred someone working in U.S.A. Contact email : celinefrancisdcunha@gmail.com

6806. MANGALORE : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Divocee, (Born in March 1984), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 65 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. M.Sc. Nurse by profession. Contact email : lailasweety143@gmail.com

6804. COIMBATORE : Anglo Indian Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in October 1983), Ht. 5', Wt. 68 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Sc IT, MIB, MBA., working as an Export backend operations and customer support operations. Contact email : patricia_melisa@yahoo.co.in

6792. MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in September 1990), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 60 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBBS., pursuing MBA., Doctor by profession. Contact email : dr.criss25@gmail.com

6791. MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in September 1987), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 67 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. C.A., Working as a Senior Specialist, Seeks a suitable match. Contact Email : jolie_rosetta@yahoo.co.in

6790. MUMBAI : Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in October 1987), Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 58 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.A., LL.B., (M.A - I), working as a Legal Executive. Contact email : robertalbuquerque10@gmail.com

6785 MUMBAI : Alliance invited for 1985 born RC East Indian Spinster, 5' 6", B.Com., LLB., LL.M., Manager in

an MNC, from Mumbai, Maharashtra for suitably educated RC bachelor, 32-35 years from Mumbai/abroad preferably Engineers/Doctors/Lawyers/CA/MBA. Kindly reply with details to : faith_forever_2017@yahoo.com

6779 MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in September 1988), Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 50 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.A. in Literature, Teacher by profession. Contact email : angelagurjao1@gmail.com

6776. MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in September 1992), Ht. 5' 1", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBA, working as an Executive. Contact email : neilcarvalho1234@gmail.com

6775 AUSTRALIA: Australian citizens of Indian Christian origin residing in Sydney seek matrimonial alliance for their daughter: Age: 43yrs Ht.: 5'4", Wheatish complexion, Beautiful with black hair Understanding, trust worthy, physically active, having a pleasant & affable disposition with strong family values and social networking skills. Marital Status: Divorcee/Female living in New South Wales Australia (has no children) Annulment in progress. Well educated employed in the Australian Financial Sector in a responsible position.

Expressions of interest are solicited from eligible male suitors meeting the following criteria: Must be Christian settled either in Australia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, North America, Canada Age: under 47yrs Marital Status: Bachelor or Divorce (with no children) Personality traits: Suitor must be healthy with a

pleasing personality & strong family values. Height :minimum 5'8" Suitors with strong financial resources pursuing either a Professional/Corporate/Business career will be highly favoured. Interested suitors are requested to send profiles to the following email: sme94227@bigpond.net.au

6774. U.S.A. : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in June 1979), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 58 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.E. (Civil), M.S., working as a I.T. Engineer (Team Leader) . Contact email : alicedsouza722@gmail.com

6772. MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in August 1984), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 59 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Com., working as an Accountant. Contact email : josephpiadepereira@yahoo.in

6770. MANGALORE : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in October 1987), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 52 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBBS, Senior Residential Doctor. Contact email: myname2487@gmail.com

6769. MUMBAI : East Indian Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in December 1986), Ht. 5' 1", Wt. 70 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBA in Finance, Deputy Manager in Bank. Contact email: dianafrnds62@gmail.com

6767. MANGALORE : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in August 1991), Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 80 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.A. (English), Teacher by profession. Contact email : predita1989@gmail.com

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6765. MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in March 1986), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 42 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. C.A., working as a Chartered Accountant. Contact email : marilyn.dcosta22@gmail.com

6761. MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in April 1990), Ht. 5' 1", Wt. 54 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Com., Teacher by profession. Contact Mob: 9892316638

6760. KUWAIT : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in November 1987), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 70 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Com., MBA Finance, working as a Administration in IT firm. Contact email : astridmathias@gmail.com

6759. MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in April 1991), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 45 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.A. (Economics), M. Communication, working as a Account Manager. Contact email : anlobo21@gmail.com / avi03lobo@gmail.com.

6758. MANGALORE : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in December 1987), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 48 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. MBA in Finance, working for Bank in Bangalore. Contact email : cyrilv27@gmail.com

6757. MANGALORE : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in May 1990), Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 51 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. MBA (IS), working as a HR in Dubai. Contact email : proposalmlore25@gmail.com

6754. MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in July 1991), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 48 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.E. Mechanical, working as a Officer in PSU. Contact email : mel.6513@yahoo.com

6753. MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC Parents seeks alliance for spinster daughter aged 26, Ht. 5' 1", CA (Chartered Account), presently working in Mumbai in an MNC. Looking for a professionally qualified well settled Mangalorean RC boy with good family background age upto 29 years, BE/CA

working in India or abroad (Not from middle East). Contact email : stanley_ds118@yahoo.com

6752. MUMBAI : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in February 1982), Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 60 kgs, Fair Complexion, Good looking, Edn. MBA (HR), working as a Chief Manager in Insurance Company. Contact email : genesisia_17@yahoo.com

6749. AUSTRALIA : Goan Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in October 1985), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 57 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) working as a Psychologist. Contact email : artemiamaria@yahoo.com

6748. MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in March 1987), Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 65 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Sc., with Dip. in Software Testing, working as a Test Engineering Specialist at a MNC. Contact email : thomasdsouza18@gmail.com

6747. MUMBAI : Goan Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in August 1988), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 53 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.A. B.Ed., Teacher by profession. Contact email : idalina1888@gmail.com

6742. AUSTRALIA : Goan Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in December 1989), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 57 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.A. working as a Project Manager. Contact email : mark.alvares16@gmail.com

6741. MANGALORE : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in March 1993), Belonging to a very affluent business family. Edn. MBBS, intends to pursue M.D. Very fair, very beautiful seeks suitable groom Contact email : sona68500@gmail.com

6739. MUMBAI : Anglo Indian Keralite Spinter (Born in February 1995), Ht. 5' 1", Wt. 62 kgs, Fair, goodlooking, Edn. 5th Std., slow learner, handicap, able to do house work, very much interested in handicraft. Seeks a suitable match. Contact email : mercyserroa@gmail.com

6738. MANGALORE : Mangalorean Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in No-

vember 1986), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 58 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. MBA, PGDM., working as a Finance Executive. Contact email : vinishaleena@gmail.com

6736. BANGALORE : Goan Roman Catholic spinster, (Born in February 1987), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 55 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Masters in Library & Information Science, working as a Librarian, seeks a suitable match. Contact email : gracefreitas@rediffmail.com

6733. MUMBAI : East Indian RC Spinster, (Born in October 1989), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 60 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.A. (Hons), & CS (Company Secretary) working as a Company Secretary in Financial Company. Contact email : cslibra89@outlook.com

6732. MUMBAI : Tamilian RC Spinster, (Born in June 1990), Ht. 5' 1", Wt. 52 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.Com., B.Ed., Teacher by profession. Contact email : adnadar@gmail.com

6730. MUMBAI : Mangalorean RC Spinster, (Born in June 1989), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 68 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. M.Com., MBA Finance, doing B.Ed., Teacher by profession. Contact email : jgkelshikar@gmail.com

6502 MUMBAI : Mangalorean R.C. Spinster, Date of Birth 14-5-1983, Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.Sc. Nursing, working as a ICU Head in Abudhabi - UAE. Military Hospital, Shortly visiting Mumbai. Seeks a well educated having a good job. Contact immediately email : janydz_1484@yahoo.com OR Tel.: 0971 557463484 / 9930076741.

6528. DUBAI : Mangalorean RC Spinster, (Born in April 1985) Ht. 5' 7", Beautiful and Fair Complexion, Edn. Masters in Health, Care (MHA), Employed as a Manager in MNC Dubai, is looking for a suitable alliance between the ages of 32 to 36 with a height 5' 10" and above. Kindly respond directly to the party by email : aara8185@gmail.com with your photograph.

People's ratings are important

It is nice to be rated by acclaimed agencies like the Moody's which moved the country one notch up and there was euphoria all over in the government and the ruling party. They were all praise for the rating agency which a year back or two downgraded India. It was then that all those who matter were quick to tell the country that such agencies are biased towards the western world and therefore cannot be relied upon. Besides they said such agencies do not understand the realities of this part of the world and therefore any opinion by them cannot reflect the real situation. They mocked the opposition for relying too much on such agencies. The same biased agency upgrades the nation and suddenly it becomes highly reliable and accurate.

A few weeks later another such agency Standard and Poor [S & P] did not upgrade the country but maintained status quo. Understandably, the government did not offer any comment on the decision of S & P and preferred to ignore that assessment. This gave the opposition a handle to take on the government. They maintained that not everything is hunky dory with the economic health of the nation. Here again the opposition was targeted for not being 'patriotic' to celebrate Moody's rating. What is there to be patriotic about such issues? Don't exploit patriotism.

What is important for the country is how the general public perceives the performance of the government. What rating agencies give matters little to them. In this exercise, the views of the poor and the middle class matter because it is this segment that is badly affected by inflation particularly the prices of day to day items. The rich hardly experience the pain of rising prices. A few hundred rupees do not make any difference to them. But to an ordinary man who lives on his meager income feels the pinch with each rupee that he needs to spend extra. The prices of vegetables, pulses, eggs, onions and a host of other things have shot up very sharply in the last few months. Each month adds a few more items to the list where prices go northwards. Petrol and diesel prices are increasing all the time. Diesel prices affect the prices of all items.

The overall progress of a country is definitely important. The world around is

IEWS on NEWS

influenced by the good progress made by a country especially the positive aspect of such development. Naturally other countries want to emulate you and see if they can achieve likewise. Space Science is important. Similarly progress in various other fields like engineering, agricultural, science, all add to the stature of a nation and the country has done well in these areas.

The Prime Minister is happy that the country is showing signs of revival but he fails to feel the pain and anguish of his people which is very important for a leader. The Opposition parties [BJP was one such not long ago] are bound to downplay the perceived economic growth. They want the fruits of such development to be enjoyed by the people. They rightly feel that the country is not really ready for a bullet train though it is desirable in the long run. For the Prime Minister to say that those opposing the bullet train should travel by bullock cart is an insult to the poor animal – the bull. [Thank God it is not a cow]. It appears the PM was confused by the famous words of the French queen – Marie Antoinette. He should have said 'If people cannot afford to travel by bullock cart, let them travel by bullet train'. That would have reflected the reality obtaining in the country.

Polluted Cricket

India came out trumps in the just concluded test series against the lowly Lankans who managed however to salvage part of their pride by putting up a determined fight in the last encounter. The first test was saved by bad light while the second test was decisively won by India. With nine cricket series won in a row under the leadership of Virat Kohli, India has emulated Australia which has done it before more than once. The country with a well balanced team, is ruling the cricket world literally. It makes the country feel proud that this team is able to deliver and deliver decisively. ODI is a different ball game and the Lankans have started well.

The people of Delhi have been facing the pollution problem for quite some time and the intensity increases during this part of the year. We all know it. Yet we decide to have a 5 day test match in December in Delhi when there are so



by Marshall Sequeira

many other venues to choose from. Was BCCI not aware that the quality of air deteriorates in December and for players to bear this for five long days was nothing but sheer idiocy? Are we only concerned with the financial gains? Was the team not aware of this problem? Surprisingly, the Lankans also did not question the wisdom of the cricket authorities in India to hold a test match in Delhi when the issue has been hitting headlines for months together – thanks to the politics of the BJP and AAP. When you have dual governance, you come to a situation when one blames the other. The general public suffers.

When the Lankans donned masks there were murmurs that they are doing so to hide their incompetence on the field. Our own team refrained from wearing the protective masks, perhaps to show that 'all is well'. There was also a protest from the Sri Lankan team and they wanted to stop the game mid-way as their boys were really uncomfortable. Soon the Indian team members faced discomfort. There is nothing in the rule book to stop the game for pollution problems.

Members from both sides even vomited on the field and this reflected poorly on the administrators of the game of cricket and the governments of Delhi and the Centre. Remember this is the capital of the country when there is a stream of foreign dignitaries, day in and day out. What sort of impression are we giving to the outside world? While nature has its own ways, there are issues, which are man-made. That is a matter of concern. Surely, the Prime Minister can find a solution to the unnecessary issue between the Centre and the Delhi administration. Perhaps he has no time for such trivial issues. Ram Mandir and what religions others follow concern him more. It is a shame that the ICC has stepped in and will discuss this issue at its next meeting. Nothing could be worse. – Here's wishing all readers of Secular Citizen Family a very Merry Xmas and a Prosperous New Year – 2018.

*Wish you a Merry Christmas &
A Happy New Year 2018*



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Christmas and The Menace of Terrorism

On the 4th day of our Christmas celebrations and festivities, the Church reminds us that not everyone in our world is joyful, that there exists among us people who do not accept glad tidings of goodwill and global peace.

In the feast of the holy innocents the Church recalls and honours those baby boys whose lives were taken in a murderous way by Herod who was frightened by the coming of the infant Jesus. This feast is not to take away our joy and tranquility but to prepare us for this life as pilgrims in an increasing dangerous and inhospitable world. It forces us to contemplate the darkness into which this child is born.

In a culture like ours influenced by socio-economic, political, ideological and other reasons life is cheap, violence is entertainment, people revel in meanness and cynicism and the inherent value of a human being is diminished and trivialized.

From overt wars to covert "dirty wars" lives are destroyed, families torn apart and innocent people disappear. Every second of every minute, governments and organizations addictions to oil, natural gas and nuclear power is the cause of environmental contamination that is threatening global devastation. And always the proliferation of nuclear weapons puts all life in utter peril. Our beautiful world into which Christ was born faces many problems, like overpopulation, global warming, recession, illiteracy, unemployment. Terrorism that pervades the globe is the cruelest crisis of all. Christmas is also a time to hold a magnifying glass to these and

other horrors for all to see.

The menace of terrorism

Terrorism implies the use of violence to intimidate a population or government for political, religious or ideological purposes. The threat of terror has become a worldwide concern with several parts of the world reeling under frequent strikes. With little attention to human rights, terrorists continue to strike with impunity leaving a trail of death and destruction wherever and whenever they choose to inflict their blows.



Fr. Pravin Fernandes

The causes of this scary predicament are wide and varied. Unemployment has been one of the major causes due to which terrorist groups lure the younger generation easily by providing them with hoards of money. In return susceptible youth have to spread hatred and indulge in bloodbath and killing on the streets. The absence of land reforms, exploitation of landless labourers by landowners, economic grievances and perceptions of gross social injustices have given rise to ideological terrorists groups, waging wars against state governments. In our country States like Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Tripura, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur are some of the affected areas.

Terrorist activities have extremely adverse implications for any country, ours being no exception.. It poses a deadly threat to the unity and integrity of the nation. Society at large, the media and political parties must make it a common cause to fight the menace of terrorism in a cohesive and united spirit. Efforts by the intelligence bureau, the research and analysis wing, the defence establishment and the in-



telligence directorate generals of the armed forces are on track to deal with this burgeoning threat.

International efforts could include the following measures:

Stop supporting terrorist groups in all countries, no matter the reasons used by them in support of their activities. Cut all flow of weapons, munitions, resources and people to all terrorist groups by all countries. Declare the support of terrorist activities by a person a criminal activity by all countries. Close all schools and training camps and institutions that are used to teach terrorism in all countries. Close all internet home pages associated in any way with terrorist groups. Other imaginative and effective means could be considered.

Terror and senseless destruction of life and property is not a pogrom indulged in by a murderous Herod in the distant past. It has raised its ugly head in our own day and age. However Christmas is also a festival of hope. We have to take courage in the fact that God will take care of us nevertheless as he took care of his Son. No matter what the world does we must trust in Him, surrender to Him, strive to live according to his commandments and take refuge in his care.

**A Happy and safe
Christmas to us all.**

*Father Pravin Fernandes
(Former Director of the Catholic Communication Centre)*



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)



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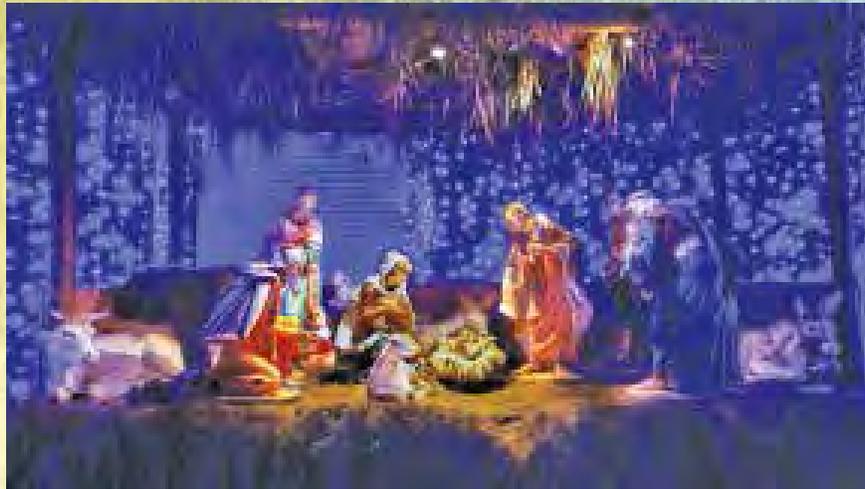
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