

THE SECULAR CITIZEN

A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

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New Year 2015

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CHRISTMAS: Giving Made Easy!

It's Christmas! The great feast of God-with-us! In the Church's Liturgical scheme of things, it is Easter that holds pride of place. And rightly so! For as Paul succinctly points out, had Christ not risen from the dead, our faith would be in vain (*1 Cor 15:17*) and, if one may add, our celebration of Christmas per se would be meaningless, too. Yet, there's so much about Christmas that can lead us to a Spirit-filled celebration of our Faith itself! Strangely, amidst the glitter of tinsel and stars and the cacophony of carols and drumbeats, we tend to miss out on a tremendously significant aspect of this holy season, viz. GIVING.

God created the world and placed it in the safe-keeping of Man, His very own representation as it were. But man botched up the divine trust and did exactly what he was commanded not to do, in the process, sullyng the Creator's representation. Unable to bear the ensuing separation, He set in motion a saving plan that commenced with the *fiat* of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, leading to the Incarnation, and culminating in the Passion-Death-Resurrection of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. **Christmas, therefore is a celebration of life.**

What man, asks Jesus, would give his child a snake when asked for some fish, or a stone when asked for bread (*Lk 11:11*)? When man was deprived of the comforts of Eden, he did not ask God for anything as such—he dared not, you'd say! But God knew what he needed. After all, doesn't Genesis indicate that man was a spitting image of the Creator (*Gen 1:27*)? God knew man's need of a saving gift. Not just any gift would do given the vastness of the chasm between Creator and creature, between goodness and evil, between Eden and earth. The timeless wait ended with God finally giving His *all* for the redemption of His fallen creature – He GAVE his one



and only Son, Jesus who alone could mend fences and restore sonship to God's human creation. **Christmas, thus, is a celebration of giving.**



by Ladislaus L
D'Souza

It wouldn't be too far-fetched to say that no one but no one seems to have understood better the significance of the *giving* aspect of this epoch-making event that Christmas is than the ubiquitous Saint Francis d'Assisi after whom are named the largest number of religious congregations in the world and from whom the present Holy Father takes his Papal name. "Rub the walls with meat - for it's the birth of the Saviour!" the little Poverello is known to have told his followers. Of course, that one wouldn't dare dream of doing that in BJP-run India is another matter altogether! But the fact remains that the immensity of the Jesus-gift to humankind was far too unparalleled to be taken lightly. It was essentially the gift of LOVE, the enormity of whose significance is what lends itself to the gift-giving so intrinsic to Christmas celebrations, even affording the legendary Santa his due! **Christmas thus is a celebration of love.**

"Life is a gift from God. To live it according to His will is a choice that each one has to make with the recognition of it as a given gift," says Father P Anthony Das. Indeed! Of what use is a life that shies away from expressing

God's will in our life? God making Himself a gift to a broken world, cannot but challenge a believer to give without ceasing, without murmur, not counting the cost. Jesus says, "In the measure that you give, you shall receive" (*Lk 6:38*). What bears pondering here is *what* and *how* our giving at Christmas must be. Blessed James Alberione, the initiator of the Pauline Apostolate of the Media of Social Communications has the answer. "LIVE & GIVE TO THE WORLD JESUS, MASTER, THE WAY, THE TRUTH & THE LIFE!" If doing the will of God in our individual situation involves giving to the hilt and thus living the Christian life, the challenge is the greater: **Christmas is a celebration of living out the giver of life.**

The truth is, if we do not *live* Christ, how can we *give* Christ? Our giving, in the context of Christmas, takes on a multifaceted hue. To a family, living and giving Jesus means honesty and genuine care among its members; to a housing society it could mean a willingness to adjust by way of being cooperative in one's attitude. To a Small Christian Community living and giving Jesus could mean avoiding gossip; to the parish body it could mean a give-and-take spirit, a deep desire on the part of both parishioners and clergy to listen to the other's point of view, a willingness and openness that sidetracks the pre-Vatican II *pray-pay-obey* mentality. No trying to

(Contd.. on p. 15)

Mysterious Star Of Bethlehem And Unknown Wise Men From The East

The mysterious star of Bethlehem has posed a challenge to modern-day scientists even after 2000 years of its appearance to the wise men of the East. Mathew's gospel mentions 2 sightings of the star—one before the wise men from the East set out on their journey, and the other, when nearing their journey's end, when the star they had seen earlier in the east appeared once again and went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where baby Jesus was born. (Mat.2: 9-10). Many stories have been woven round the mystery which surrounds this celestial phenomenon of unique occurrence, over which scientists have been



BY A. F. NAZARETH



(Contd.. from p. 14)

escape a question by asking a counter-question, or even challenging the other with utterances like "I know better than you!" "Who are you to ask me?" "You don't tell me, understand?" In the giving that Christmas implies there is no room for imagining that the dignity of one's status in life precludes the dignity of another's status, least of all the dignity of the Eucharist, the ultimate expression of the reality of God-become-man. *Christmas giving* perforce involves leading the flock by way of offering prudent clarifications of doubts and queries. **Christmas thus comes through as a sign and celebration of mutual understanding.**

It is only when our preparation for the feast of the infant king's birth has given us a clear perspective of Christmas that our GIVING at Christmas on every front and in every respect reflects the significance of the Creator gift to us all, enabling the Spirit to fill our hearts with the desire to share with all and sundry the joy of a truly blessed Christmas!

battling to offer a satisfactory explanation. While some have attributed it to a natural astronomical event, a few others have evolved their own theories, only to be disproved later. Haley's comet is one such theory. Today, the symbolic star continues to adorn Christian churches and cribs the world over, and is prominently displayed in most Christian homes, public avenues and street corners to celebrate the great miracle God worked to herald the birth of the true Messiah Jesus Christ and the good news of salvation. The star has become a symbol of enlightenment and joy to all Christians year after year during the Christmas festivities, culminating with the feast of the Epiphany on January 6. Just as a crib in every home reminds us of the birth of Jesus, the star too should remind us that Jesus is the true light and guide of the world.

While the star of Bethlehem continues to baffle astronomers even today, the identity of the wise men from the east also remains unknown and a question mark. Whether these men mentioned in Mathew's gospel were

three in number, whether they were kings whose names were Casper, Melchior and Balthazar is still uncertain except for the scriptures that states that they were wise men from the East who travelled to Bethlehem, worshipped the child Jesus, and brought their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh and presented them to the child Jesus. (Mat.2:11) The tradition of celebrating the feast of the three kings on Jan 6, probably stems from the Psalm 72:10-11 which states that 'the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring him offerings, and all kings will bow down before him and all nations will serve him'. Over the years many traditions have also evolved connected with these wise men from the East. In some countries, collections are made for poor children on the feast of the Epiphany which has come to be celebrated as the feast of the three kings. And even more surprising is the famous shrine of the Holy Magi in Cologne, revered in memory of these wise men and which supposedly houses their bones.

Joy Born At Bethlehem

The birth of a baby generally radiates joy around the place and that feeling of joy and excitement is not limited just to those around the mother, but it spreads to miles around them, to the relatives and friends, maybe grandparents or great grandparents residing in another continent. Everybody's faces glow with Joy !

More than 2000 years ago, Jesus was born in that little town of Bethlehem, in a lonely stable away from the hustle and bustle of the city – indeed, **Joy was born at Bethlehem that night.** And who was around there to share that Joy ? Not the relatives or friends of Mary & Joseph, but it was the simple farm folk, the shepherds. They must have been filled with Joy and excited to find a baby born in their midst. We are told, **the angels with their heavenly choirs, sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of goodwill."** But, one who would ask, what was so special about that bay born at Bethlehem, inconsequential one who say. Why would anybody be afraid of a small baby ? But, we are told that Herod the **king of Judea** at that time, was troubled rather shaken when he heard of the birth of Jesus. While the Joy born at Bethlehem radiated all around, here was one man who was afraid. He saw Jesus as a threat to his kingdom – it was foretold, "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd people Israel." **Jesus' birth had taken away the Joy out of King Herod.** Jesus the baby, went on to become the most important figure in history; in fact, he has rewritten History. Today, that Joy has spread across the whole world. We celebrate that Joy year after year, at Christmas time. That Joy is reflected in the decoration we put up in our homes, that Joy is reflected in the Crib, Christmas Star & the Christmas Tree set up in our homes and in our localities; in the new clothes that we wear, parties, gifts, etc., etc. it's all a



celebration of Joy !

We are living in a troubled world today. If we have lost our peace of mind today, it is because we have killed that Joy Born at Bethlehem. More than 2000 years ago, King Herod tried to kill that Joy born at Bethlehem when he ordered the killing of all two year old male children in and around Bethlehem, after he found that he had been outwitted by the three wise men. Today, we have killed that Joy with our behaviour - jealousy, greed in our relations with others in society, in our own families, bitterness, anger, resentment, cheating, theft, harassment, etc. **Many a time, Love for money and property takes precedence over everything else. Jesus comes to soothe this troubled world; he invites us to be part of that Joy !**

So great was the magnetic pull of Jesus' birth at Bethlehem, that three wise men from the east undertook that journey, to visit the baby Jesus in that lowly stable, bringing along with them expensive gifts. They decided to partake of the Joy that was born at Bethlehem. We do not need to go to far off places to experience that Joy of Jesus' birth - **Jesus offers us His Love right where we are, in our hearts.**

While we continue partaking of that Joy, born at Bethlehem more 2000 years ago, we need to ask ourselves whether the only way we should be celebrating that Joy is by decorating our homes, putting up decorative stars, Christmas trees, innovative cribs, etc., etc. All that is fine, yes, **but we need to understand**



BY MELVILLE X.
D'SOUZA

the true meaning of Christmas, and that is, LOVE. In fact, that is a Free Gift God gave to us. What would be our gift to Jesus on His birthday ? He came to give us His Love and show us what Love is all about. **We need to reciprocate that Love - in our everyday life, in our dealings with others in society, with members of our own family. If we cannot love one another, then we shall never really experience that Joy, we are not worthy of celebrating Christmas. Our Christmas celebrations would be meaningless. Let's partake of that Joy born at Bethlehem in the right manner and make Christmas truly meaningful !**

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CHRISTMAS – God In The Ordinary

A writer for the 'Washington Post' once conducted an experiment to test people's awareness and realization of a truth. He requested Joshua Bell, a famous violinist, to play his 3.5 million dollar Stradivarius at a train station one cold January morning. Thousands of people walked past, with only a few who stopped to listen. After about an hour, this violinist collected only \$34 in his open violin case. Two days earlier, people had paid \$100 a seat to hear Joshua Bell perform at a sold out concert.

Nobody realized or recognized Joshua's greatness as a violinist because people did not expect such a musician to play at a railway station. JESUS too was not recognized 2000 yrs ago by the people of His time, when He was born in Bethlehem in a manger. Though the Jews were expecting a Messiah, it was not in the capital of the empire or in the palaces of a king that Christ was born. But in an impoverished dwelling in a small town, to identify Himself with EVERY PERSON. To teach us to find God, not in the exceptional, but in the unexceptional, not only at sacred heights but also in lowly

Fr. Anil Rego,
Parish Priest, Nativity of
our Lord Church, Kandivli.

dwelling - not only in temples, mosques, churches, and gurudwaras, but in every human being and in every-day human life.

He came not to a throne, but to a manger

He lived not as a king, but as a servant

He chose not an earthly kingdom, but a cross

He gave not a little, but everything
....Holley Gerth

The good news to be shared by all is that in Christ, God is here. It is the mystery of God becoming Man of God now with us. No one however poor or forsaken, destitute or homeless, sorrowing or burdened is excluded from God's infinite love and compassion. Because our God Himself experience a wretched poverty and a cold rejection at His birth in Bethlehem. By doing this, He broke all barriers between heaven and earth and between man and man. The Lord's birth brought God to man.



And the Lord's death on the cross brought man to God.

As we light up stars, our Christmas trees and our houses this Christmas, may we also seek to light up the hearts of the troubled and forsaken, the less fortunate and the dejected. May we become channels of peace, bringing love where there is hatred and consolation where there is injury, so that this Christmas, we may not merely be sharers of peace, but architects of peace in this troubled world.

When the song of the angels is stilled. When the star in the sky is gone. When shepherds are back with their flocks. The work of Christmas begins ... To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner... In the hearts Christ is born today, and there he lives & dies... Let everyday be Christmas in your life..

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Christmas Hospitality

Hospitality Business Style

I came across a list of service commandment – somewhat business type manner but aptly summarises the business style hospitality today. These are the ten service commandments in star-styled Hotel Industry: Top Ten Service Commandments are: 1) Sincerely greet guests within 2 minutes of seating; 2) Determine if the guest is visiting for the first time; 3) Deliver good food... fast... and right; 4) Follow the “Today I’m featuring” table sales method ; 5) Always suggest a beverage complement; 6) Hot food hot, and cold food cold; 7) Check back within 2 bites, 2 sips, or 2 minutes; 8) If you receive a complaint, you own it; 9) Personally hand write a “Thank you” on the guest check; 10) Always invite guests to return.

As per the graded hotels the hospitality is bartered with Cash with taxes and conditions apply note. It is an exclusive welcome for the exclusive group. Entry restricted with Formal Wear! Empty Pockets make poor hospitality care! Plastic Currency is always welcome for five-star to seven-star treat Hospitality!

Hospitality Christian Style

Hospitality is an in-word in contemporary Society. Hotel Business Management flourishes on Hospitality Concept. Every service is charged and priced highly. Everything is taxed and levied as per the Three Star, Five Star and Seven Star Brand mode of Hospitality. But in the Economy of Salvation, God’s Hospitality is absolutely free and unlimited. It is addressed to the whole Humanity. It is an all-inclusive concept based on Divine Agape. All are Welcome.



Hospitality as Christian Praxis is the lifestyle of every Christian. St. John Chrysostom exhorts us: Lift up and stretch out your hands, not to heaven but to the poor; for if you stretch out your hands to the poor, you have reached the summit of heaven. But if you lift up your hands in prayer without sharing with the poor, it is worth nothing ... Every family should have a room where Christ is welcomed in the person of the hungry and thirsty stranger. The poor are a greater temple than the sanctuary;



Fr. George Olivera,
OFM Cap., Mysore

this altar the poor, you can raise up anywhere, on any street, and offer the liturgy at any hour.”

The following is an illustration from Desert Spirituality which is closer to the Gospel times and relevant for our times because it represents the heart of Christian Hospitality: When Abba Agathon went down to the city to sell some of his baskets and to procure a little bread, he found near the market place an old,

poor cripple.

“For the love of God, Abba,” the cripple began to plead on seeing the Saint, “don’t you, too, leave this poor wretch unaided. Bring me near to you.”

Abba Agathon picked the man up and sat him next to him in the place where he had set up his baskets to sell them.

‘How much money did you make, Abba?’ the cripple would ask each time that the Elder sold a basket.

“Such and such,” the Elder would tell him.

“That’s good enough,” the cripple finally said. “Won’t you buy me a little pie, Abba? That would be good of you, since I have not eaten since last evening.”

“With pleasure,” the Saint told him, immediately fulfilling the cripple’s request.

Shortly thereafter, the cripple requested some fruit. And then some sweet. Thus, for each basket that was sold, the Saint spent the proceeds, until, thanks to his patronage, all of the baskets and money were gone, without his having kept even two pennies for himself. More importantly, he did this all

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with great eagerness, even though he knew that he would thus go perhaps two weeks without any bread for himself.

Since he had sold his last basket, the Saint got ready to leave the marketplace.

"So you're going?" the cripple asked him.

"Yes, I have completed all of my work."

"Uh, do me the favor of taking me as far as the crossroads, and you can leave for the desert from there," the strange old man again pleadingly said.

The good Agathon took the cripple on his back and carried him to the place where he wanted to go, though with great difficulty, since he was exhausted from his day's work.

As soon as he reached the crossroads and started to put down his living burden, he heard a sweet voice say to him:

"May you be blessed, Agathon, by God, both on earth and in Heaven."

The Saint raised up his eyes to see who it was who had spoken with him. The would-be old man had completely disappeared, since he was an Angel sent by God to test the Saint's love.

According to Joan D. Chittister: Hospitality means we take people into the space that is our lives and our minds and our hearts and our work and our efforts. Hospitality is the way we come out of ourselves. It is the first step towards dismantling the barriers of the world. Hospitality is the way we turn a prejudiced world around, one heart at a time.

For Henri Nouwen, The German word for hospitality is *Gastfreundschaft* which means friendship for the guest.... It means the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy.

In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbors, friends, and family, from their deepest self and their God, we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found.

Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them a space where change can take place.

Hospitality is the virtue which allows us to break through the narrowness of our own fears and to open our houses to the stranger, with the intuition that salvation comes to us in the form of a tired traveler. Hospitality makes anxious disciples into powerful witnesses, makes suspicious owners into generous givers, and makes close-minded sectarians into interested recipients of new ideas and insights.

Hospitality Christmas Style

Christmas is a festival of Divine Hospitality. During Christmas God becomes Human so that we could fully share his Divinity. According to St. Nikolai of the Orthodox Saint: With the God-man Christ, all that is God's has become man's, human, ours, so that each of us individually and all of us assembled together in the Divine-human body of Christ, the Church, might become god-men, having attained to the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph 4:12-13). Therefore Christmas, the day of the birth of the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the greatest and most important day in the history of all the worlds in which man moves and lives. (St. Nikolai Velimirovich).

In one Parish Fr. Joe Andrew left a list of Ten Commandments to the Congregation to celebrate Christmas. They are truly inspiration for our Celebration of Christmas for this year and for every year. These are following commandments to make Hospitality Christmas Style: 1. You shall not leave 'Christ' out of Christmas, making it 'Xmas'. Christ is the reason for the season; 2. You shall prepare your soul for Christmas. Spend not so much on gifts that your soul is

forgotten (a good confession is a nice way to prepare your hear for Christmas); 3. You shall not let Santa Claus replace Christ, thus robbing the day of its spiritual reality. (Prepare yourself with prayer and the Word of God); 4. You shall not neglect your church. Its services highlight the true meaning of the season; 5. You shall not neglect the needy. Share they blessings with the many who will go hungry and cold unless you are generous; 6. You shall not neglect thy family during this season. You shall not forget the elderly and those who are lonely at Christmas time; 7. You shall not value gifts received by their cost. Even the least expensive may signify love, and that is more priceless than silver and gold. You shall give yourself with your gift. This will increase its value a hundred fold, and he who receives it shall treasure it forever; 8. You shall prepare your home with Christmas symbols (the crib, Christmas carols, the Advent wreath, the star, the angels, the Christmas tree, etc.); 9. You shall be as a little child. Not until you have become in spirit as a little one are you ready to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. 10. You shall give your heart to Christ. Let Him be at the top of your Christmas list.

Hospitality Parish Style

In his Book *Reaching Out*, he describes our life is a process of reaching out from Illusions to Prayer; reaching out from Loneliness to Solitude and reaching out from hostility to hospitality.

Our Parish community and fellowship at times could be a reaching out from hostility to hospitality. One description of the parish church's movement between hostility and hospitality looks like this.

HOSTILITY: Characteristics of a parish in, or set up for, hostility.

Parish life could be impatient, frustrated, busy, rushed, fearful, aggressive, passive. Parish life is crowded with things to do, events, expectations, pressure

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Parish life could be struggle from pain and death, stillness and silence. In the Parish new people as a danger to the way we are; or to be used for parish needs (pledges, volunteers). Also there is little ability to manage disagreements and conflict etc.

HOSPITALITY: Characteristics of a parish living in hospitality

It would be receptive, safe boundaries, question and experiment without fear; It invites openness while honoring uniqueness and it touches pain and death with compassion; Hospitality sees the parish as a space in which people might be changed. In ministry of Hospitality, the Parish Community welcomes

everyone with open arms and celebrates Christian Fellowship.

The movement into increased hospitality is a decision made by individuals and parish communities that takes form in rituals and habits of hospitality, a stance of kindness and welcome, and spontaneous acts rising out of the Spirit's movement within us.

These are another motivational inspiration celebrate Hospitality during this Christmas Season: Sandy Coughlin's Ten Commandments of Hospitality; 1. Hospitality is not about you. It's about making others feel warm and welcome; 2. Plan ahead, be organized, and know your recipe. Learn to delegate; 3. Set the mood. Keep ambience and the five senses in mind; 4. Avoid perfectionism. Put fear aside — it's a robber of anything good; 5. Share conversation. Foster friendships by keeping things real; 6. Demonstrate thriftiness. Buying things at cost or learning to pinch pennies makes entertaining attainable on a budget. 7. Don't apolo-

gize. It's OK to make mistakes. Learn to not bring them to light in front of your guests; it robs your guests of relaxation; 8. Be creative. Use what you have. Keep things simple; 9. Learn from others. Find mentors and learn to find a healthy balance and keep things real; 10. Life impact is everything. Experience intimacy and meaning in sharing a meal and gleaning from others' lives.

Celebrate Christmas with Hospitality in a Christian Style. Wishing you a Blessed Christmas 2014 and Grace-filled New Year 2015.



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Joy to the World

▲ Leon Bent

It is in silence that we begin to go deeper and deeper into that inner storehouse of joy. It is in silence that we go to the place where sound originates. Silence is stronger than words. Silence is a powerful environment for transformation.

Joy has the ability to open our hearts, remove fear, instil hope and foster healing. Joy helps us to dance lightly with the difficult dramas of life. As our joy expands we feel deeply connected to ourselves, others, and something or “Someone” infinitely bigger than ourselves.

Jesus was born on a “Silent Night, Holy Night.” Silence and holiness poured out like a fountain which cradled the infant Jesus. The four lyrics are a form of confession of faith, prophecy, praise and a shout of “hallelujah.”

The first song was chanted by six winged seraphs before the heavenly throne: “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts, the whole earth is full of your glory” (Isa. 6:3). There is another version quoted in Luke 2:14: “Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of goodwill,” which were an invitation for the Shepherds, as they listened in the stillness of the night. Abraham Heshel says, “No words more magnificent have ever been uttered.” These songs are charged with Spirit-power and contain the joyful celebration of belief in the event of salvation, and contain the Christmas Liturgy in embryonic form.

Then follows “*The Magnificat*,” (Lk. 1:46-55) Mary’s bitter-sweet canticle! **She points to a new way of seeing God and a fresh way of looking at the world and history. It signifies *kairos*: the new epoch of the Kingdom of God that is still unfolding. Mary experi-**



ences God in His very depths; she had a vision like Isaiah of the Almighty’s majesty and glory. Mary is “full of grace” and from this truth spring joy and exultation. “My spirit rejoices...” The joy of divine work, a joy of pure and gratuitous praise. Her song is full of fire, inspired by the Spirit. It is the Virgin’s hymn of perfect purity. The latter half of the “*The Magnificat*” expresses in sharp forthrightness, Mary was so filled with God that, it led to the greatest rapture and incredible abandonment.

From verse 51 onwards, Mary describes a pulling down of the high and mighty, and a radical reversal of humankind’s positions. God will reject the proud, powerful and rich, and welcome the humble, the poor and the hungry. The Incarnation came from Mary’s humility, meekness, weakness and poverty.

Thirdly, at Jesus’ *Presentation in the Temple* (2: 29-32), Simeon, moved by the Holy Spirit cried out in delight that, Christ would be “a Light for the Gentiles and glory to his People, Israel.” **The “Gloria” and the “Nunc Dimittis” contemplates the Saviour himself. The Presentation is truly the Meeting Feast. Not only is it so between Simeon and Christ, but through them, between the Law and the Gospel, and between**

the Old and New Testaments. Christ is the “Light of the Nations:” Salvation is universal in its destination, but it “comes from the Jews” (cf. Jn.4:22).

The fourth song, the canticle of Zechariah (Lk.67-79), is also known as “*Benedictus*.” Zechariah filled with the Spirit, sang a thanksgiving chant to God because He has been faithful to His promises (Jn.3:16), to send His Son to redeem man from the snares of sin and death.

Christmas celebrates God’s love and forgiveness for humanity. This Christmas, let us share more than cards, gifts, carols, sweets and festivity. As we greet people, “Merry Christmas” we can share with them God’s joy and forgiveness. The love for us in Jesus is fantastic: forgiving, merciful, redeeming and mind-blowing mercy. It is a call to holiness for God loves us with tender passion.

To experience Jesus we must take the “*Child*” into our arms, and hold him close to our hearts. Christmas is not just the festivity of the joy of humans. It is also the exuberance of God’s scintillating joy.

And, this flourish – G.K.Chesterton said: “When man gives God a Holy day, God gives man a Holiday!”

Christmas: A Time To Love

What a wonderful gift God has given us -- His only Son Jesus Christ! This is the ultimate proof of His love. As the Christmas season dawns near and brings us hope, I would like to share with the readers of 'The Secular Citizen', a moving story called 'The Gold Wrapping Paper'.



BY JUBEL D'CRUZ

Once upon a time, there was a man who worked very hard just to keep food on the table for his family. This particular year a few days before Christmas, he punished his little five-year-old daughter after learning that she had used up the family's only roll of expensive gold wrapping paper.

As money was tight, he became even more upset when on Christmas Eve he saw that the child had used up all of the expensive gold paper to decorate one shoe box she had put under the Christmas tree. He also was concerned about where she had gotten money to buy what was in the shoe box.

Nevertheless, the next morning the little girl, filled with excitement, brought the gift box to her father and said, "This is for you, daddy!" As he opened the box, the father was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction, now regretting how he had punished her.

But when he opened the shoe box, he found it was empty and again his anger flared. "Don't you know, young lady," he said harshly, "when you give someone a gift, there's supposed to be something inside the package!"

The little girl looked up at him with sad tears rolling from her eyes and whispered, "Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into it until it was all full.." The father was crushed on hearing this. He fell down on his knees and put his arms around his precious little daughter. He begged her to forgive him for his



unnecessary anger.

Only a short time later an accident took the life of the child and she died. It is told that the father kept this little gold box by his bedside for all the years of his life. Whenever he was discouraged or faced difficult problems, he would open the box, take out an imaginary kiss, and remember the love of this beautiful child who had put it there.

In a very real sense, each of us has been given an invisible golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from God. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold than the

belief that God sent His Only Son Jesus Christ into this world for our salvation. As we get ready to celebrate this glorious day, on Christmas let us absorb and share the real spirit of the festival. This is a time to share unconditional love, joy and sharing. This is a time to reflect on our values that govern our actions. This is an occasion to promise that Christmas does not remain merely a festival that we celebrate once in a year, but that it becomes a state of mind where we reiterate and manifest God's love within our hearts and spread it all around us.

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The Year of New Beginnings

**Return to God's House
The Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit
waiting for us with open arms.**

LORD, we thank You for the years gone by,
But we have not lived them to the full,
Now for 2015,
Please give us NEW BEGINNINGS

In all our weaknesses, we often fell into sin,
Even though we did not want to,
Now from 2015, Please LORD,
Lift us with A NEW BEGINNING.

How lavishly we have spent on clothes!
How lavishly on parties!
Without a thought for the suffering.
From 2015, change our hearts, LOVING LORD,
With A NEW BEGINNING.

We have grown crazy
Following a mad, mad world,
In 2015, send enlightenment,
We need to step into - A NEW BEGINNING.

Often we think ourselves too busy,
No time for Personal Prayer,
But if You send us Healing,
One tenth of daily time for You,
A BLESSED NEW BEGINNING, LORD.

A wrong example in Church,
Seeking attention by dress,
Pardon LORD, open our eyes,

Change our thinking,
With NEW BEGINNINGS, LORD.

Party wear for parties
And church wear for Church,
Parents can't get this right,
The House of God, no house of fashion
Create change of minds, LORD,
Opening door of NEW BEGINNINGS.

There are those receiving the Eucharist
Like chewing their cud,
Ashamed to fold hands in reverence,
Please give them NEW BEGINNINGS, LORD.

Why display of bossy attitude towards Priests?
Criticism must be constructive
Without arrogance or pride,
But with respect due.
Bless them LORD with patience,
For A NEW BEGINNING

Why only time for selfgratification,
No time for those in pain,
Letting ourselves be defeated,
In more than a thousand ways?
LORD, take us once again into Your

embracing LOVE
With NEW BEGINNINGS in 2015

—Ella Almeida

Environment Friendly World

“There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed.” This quote by Mohandas K. Gandhi explains the reason why the environment we live in has been becoming a foe to us rather than a friend. It is because we, for our selfish and greedy requirements have exploited the nature and the environment and did not care to restore it.

With the goal of environmental protection; UN started in 1972 celebrating World Environment Day on 5th June every year. This has grown to become one of the main vehicles through which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action.

Environmental protection is a practice of protecting the environment, on indi-

Faith Basit

vidual, organizational or governmental level, for the benefit of the natural environment and (or) humans. Due to the ever increasing population especially in the third world countries and technology, both in the developing and the developed countries, the biophysical environment is being degraded, sometimes permanently. This has been recognized and governments have begun placing restraints on activities that caused environmental degradation. The activities performed on WED are focussed to this end.

One of the primary causes of environmental degradation could be attributed to the rapid growth of population, which adversely affects the natural resources and environment. In some regions the rise of the population is very high com-

pared to the resources available while in some regions the resources are in excess and plenty. The existence or the absence of favourable natural resources can facilitate or retard the process of socio-economic development.

Population growth and economic development are contributing to many serious environmental calamities in the world and India is no exception to this. These include heavy pressure on land degradation, forests, habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity. Changing consumption pattern has led to rising demand for energy. The final outcomes of this are air pollution, global warming, climate change, water scarcity and water pollution, soil exhaustion and erosion, deforestation, and air pollution afflicts many areas.

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Air pollution is caused from the emissions from vehicles and industries. Land pollution can be due to pesticides and fertilizers as well as corrosion. The recent calamities in the world i.e. unprecedented rains and floods, melting of ice glaciers, snow and hurricanes can be attributed to the effects of global warming. The indiscriminate use of wood as a source for energy and the rapidly disappearing forests due to construction activities have also been responsible for environmental degradation.

The harmful effect of environmental degradation can be seen on the animal kingdom as well. Zoos are becoming facsimiles, or perhaps caricatures, of how animals once were in their natural habitat. If the right policies toward nature were pursued, we would need no zoos at all. Migration of birds has also been affected. Now is this not man's responsibility to undo the wrong that he has done to mother earth. To put in the



words of John Drinkwater, "When you defile the pleasant streams; and the wild bird's abiding place; you massacre a million dreams; and cast your spittle in God's face."

To preserve the face of mother earth, due to the constant efforts of the governments and people worldwide, attention has now been brought toward the preservation of nature and the environment around us. Understanding the gravity of the environmental issues as in the words of Albert Einstein, "We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive," academic institutions now offer courses such as environmental studies, environmental management and environmental engineering that study the history and methods of environmental protection. Protection of the environment is needed from various human activities. Waste, pollution, loss of biodiversity, introduction of invasive species, release of genetically modified organisms and toxics are some of the issues relating to environmental protection.

Through WED, the UN Environment Programme is able to personalize environmental issues and enable everyone to realize not only their responsibility, but also their power to become agents

for change in support of sustainable and equitable development.

On this day a call for action needs to be given. People can organize neighbourhood clean-up programmes, and get their community to do the same, walk to work, start a recycling drive, spread the importance of solar energy, the possibilities are endless. Many villages have taken to the use of solar energy, thereby saving other energy resources and containing pollution. In fact Indian solar loan programme has helped many rural household for their energy needs. One can become a part in the celebrations on this day by organising activities like 1) Arts and crafts exhibitions/film festivals 2) Organising Ceremonies with Celebrities 3) Organising Competitions, concerts and demonstrations to involve the children and the youth 3) Distribution of Information kits and conducting online and Social media activities 4) Using Media to create awareness.

Let's commit ourselves to the preservation of the nature and environment on this World Environment Day and believe, as in the words of Brooke Medicine Eagle, "There is hope if people will begin to awaken that spiritual part of themselves, that heartfelt knowledge that we are caretakers of this planet."

IMAGINE

I - Involvement
M - Motivation
A - Attitude
G - Growth
E - Excellence

The king can make you a
 KNIGHT
 He cannot make you
 GENTLEMAN



by Docval Lawman

Let Us Choose This Christmas

An advertisement in honor of the Christmas season, titled "He is the gift," features a video about the birth of Jesus. The commercialization of Christmas tends to have much of the Christian world focusing on the 'business & happiness' of the holiday season. This time of year can bring stress, worry, and loneliness.

Happiness in the present is not the criterion of the Christmas season. The right criterion is whether a person is able to maintain his happiness and sense of satisfaction right to the end of life. The right formula of life is that which can give a person satisfaction till the end of life by accepting and sharing this first Christmas gift of a father to all his children, to us and not just for a temporary period.

Don Aguiar

The first gift of Christmas was a simple gift given by a father to all his children, to us. He gave us His son, the Christ He is the gift. This Christmas season, how will you share the gift?

Christmas is a time of reflection on what we can become because of God's sacred gift. As we discover the gift, we learn of the immeasurable love of God and our absolute need for a Savior. As we embrace the gift, we strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ and our desire to become more like Him. As we share the gift, we follow in the Master's footsteps, who invited all to hear His message.

Now that the father has given us this gift, how do we embrace and share this gift?

How can we help to bring some relief to those who are suffering?

Pain, suffering and hardships are normal ingredients of life. What we mix them with—fear or faith— makes all the difference. Jesus did not come to make us escapists but over-comers. How?

It isn't necessarily our pain that causes us to suffer so acutely but our



Let us choose this Christmas that our community bonds as a united front by accepting and sharing the first Christmas gift from a father to his children, to us, to give us the courage to fearlessly speak out and defend our community members who are under threat from...

tendency to put ourselves down, to view pain or tragedy as punishment, failure, or proof of our inherent worthlessness. I've seen people get stuck in a painful experience that happened sixty years ago. They talk about it as if it happened last week.

Your life is so often, spoilt due to your differences with others. Differences with others need not end up with hatred. Differences are just differences, but the moment the mind gives them a nametag of hatred, mind and heart get polluted. For the limited time the gift – Jesus Christ – was with us on earth he shunned hatred in favor of forgiveness and compassion that brought Him happiness and a sense of satisfaction till the end.

No one can avoid differences, but one has to be alert not to give the nametag and wrap those differences with dislike and hatred. This requires psychological alertness. But to not ex-

pect one to have differences at work and home is truly being foolish. One should drop this foolishness by wise thinking and take practical steps to overcome the negative attitude, just like the gift - Jesus Christ - did.

We are so often a product of society, human beings are social beings. We are impacted by social expectation. You have to be alert not to be a slave to society and at the same time respect society. You have to relate intelligently to society, least you become a social slave. When you become a slave to society, you are afraid of society. Such fears will make your life ineffective.

Our community does experience such ineffectiveness. The last few issues of the Secular Citizen came out with two community related issues – Let Children Choose AND Let the Spark Choose – and requested for your feed-

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back, views, response. Most said that these articles were very good and someone needs to bell the cat and nothing else. Very few choose to respond to these articles fearlessly speaking out and sharing their views because they were able to discern the facts and had a clear perception for the betterment of the community.

With fear, you will not be able to discern facts of life. With fear your perception will be distorted. Then instead of the actuality of life only the illusion of life will be experienced. This very illusion is experienced by many in our community as well. You have to drop fear. Then you will comprehend facts are facts, otherwise fear will distort facts to fit into its manipulations which we see happening all around us, in our community.

In management one talks of "out of the box thinking" So you can free yourself from conclusion and beliefs and operate from openness. All this needs psychological alertness, but most of us are psychologically lazy. We don't want to change. It is easy to follow what has been decided. You need strength to think differently and not to allow fear to guide your life. You will do business better and live a better life rather than a bitter life if you follow Him and share the father's first Christmas gift fearlessly and effectively.

There is an English proverb: 'the end justifies the means'. Perhaps, there is another more relevant principle which may be expressed thus; 'The end justifies the beginning'. It is the end result that proves whether the beginning was right or wrong. Many people begin their lives with great enthusiasm. But the latter period of their life has proved that their beginning was not the right one

The better way to decide one's goal is to understand the realities of life, and then act in accordance with them. Failure to do so is the main reason for people dying of frustration after having set out full of enthusiasm, when they set themselves goals, it was under the influence of emotions, without due consideration. Such a plan does not work for

long. It is like a sand castle which is destined in the long run to fall apart.

The NDA government promised 'Acha Din' when voted to power. They set this goal under the influence of emotion with the intention of making India a Hindu state without due consideration and now most of us are looking at "Acha Din" as promised by this NDA government being voted to power. Within months of the NDA taking over, incidents of 'ghar wapsi' have increased, especially in UP and the Christians even in the national capital are unsafe, with a Church burnt, another stoned and yet another attacked. Christians being a peace loving community have their religious sentiments hurt with such statements and actions coming from prominent BJP politicians.

Christmas was chosen as the day for conversion 'ghar wapsi' from Christianity to Hinduism because the event is a "shakti pariksha" (test of strength) for both religions. If these Christians can keep their faith and find the strength in the father's first Christmas gift to us, they can stop their conversion to Hinduism. It is a test for both religions. May He give them the strength and the faith to withstand this conversion and temporary financial and other enticement offered to them in order to convert to Hinduism?

The timing and frequency of such provocations makes it suspect that the government is only for Hindus, of Hindus and by Hindus, with not even lip service being paid to minorities. Such governance is bound to draw the ire of the developed nations, who presently have a good opinion of the establish-

ment, but are also committed to human and minority rights. It is well documented fact that Indian Christians, individually and as a community have contributed immensely towards the progress of the nation and should not be treated as second-class citizens.

Let us choose this Christmas that our community bonds as a united front by accepting and sharing the first Christmas gift from a father to his children, to us, to give us the courage to fearlessly speak out and defend our community members who are under threat from the Hindu nationalist to convert as well as to respond fearlessly to the community articles appearing in the Secular Citizen so that solutions could be found for the betterment of our community.

This Christmas may the gift of the strength that the father has given to all of us to think differently and not allow fear to guide our life. May He be the guide to our faith and give us the courage to share His gift that proclaims "Peace on earth and goodwill to all" – while we greet each other - Merry Christmas.

If the interest of the community is your concern, we welcome your views on this important issue in our previous issues – Let Children Speak & Let the Spark Speak:

email it to: secular@vsnl.com / secular@sezariworld.com

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Away for Christmas

Irwin Almeida

As is commonly known, we get into the Christmas spirit with the observance of the best yuletide traditions around the world; everything from the Christmas Crib to the Carols, the Christmas Tree, the Greetingcards, and of course Santa Claus. For most of us Christmas is the most important celebration of the year, treasured for time spent with friends and family,

We have chosen to adapt this message as my reason for the season, and to put it into practice have chosen to bring in this period of love, peace and goodwill far away from the comfort of home yet in homely coziness so we – wife Irene and myself - accepted the invitation of our son, Kestrel his wife Simone and their son, Keiren, to spend this Christmas with them in the Festival State which they have opted for as their residence in Australia..

Christmas is a fact of history celebrated universally with family gatherings, gift- giving and responsible feasting. Our daughters, Ingrid Athaide and Jennifer Pereira with their families – Edwin, Diane and Denise; Alan and Jeremy - in Mumbai, made this holiday possible by looking after our Bandra home, in our absence.

Whatever the reason the season was ushered in in this Festival State with its first traditional pageant on November 8, 2014 on the main streets of the city centre, the length covering 3.3km. For



us it was an unimaginable experience to be among the multitude gathered there from early morning to secure vantage points from where to get a good view, and literally equipped with bed and breakfast.

As the pageant rolled by it was certainly worth waiting the hours. Leading the long parade was a musical ensemble and several more in between the floats, representing the armed services as also other organisations rendering sweet and seasonal music flowing from various instruments including the rarely heard bag pipes. The floats themselves came alive with nursery folklore and present reality and finally the reason for this fantasy – the Nativity scene.

This Christmas Pageant, sponsored by the Credit Union financial institution, holds the proud distinction of being the largest event of its kind in the world. This year's pageant is reckoned to have had 147 moving sets, 63 floats. 17 bands, 10 dance groups, nine groups of walking performers, one DJ and three choirs.

All this was just a chance that came our way, not the reason. The real reason was to catch the season of goodwill right from its advent and spread the joy of living with family and relatives otherwise far away. The opportunity to translate the special message into action came our way with the warm welcome we received on arrival and later when we went to visit a cousin we had not seen for more than 25 years – Raynah Valladares, who a few months earlier gracefully reached 98 years, a privilege enjoyed by very few.

Raynah is an Almeida from Kurla, settled in Australia for well over 30 years, along with her family who know she is gifted with 'a prolific memory that continues to be remarkably lucid and amazingly accurate, and therefore it is imperative to record her experiences, which can serve as a treasure trove to the next and succeeding generations, relatives and friends,'

While visiting her at the Retirement Home, we also met her children who visit her daily. One of them is Fr. James Valladares, well known to us as also to several in Mumbai where, as a diocesan priest, he was involved in Pastoral ministry in four suburban parishes.. A graduate in Psychology, he went on to do a Master's in Education and Counselling Psychology and then a Doctorate in Marriage Counselling and has authored several books dealing with these topics. He also served as a Lecturer in Psychology in St. Andrew's College, Bandra, for ten years.

Being with family gives a sense of belonging representing as it does the first and vital cell of society thus making it a kind of sanctuary through the mutual affections of its members. One vital Reason for the Season could be the feeling of warmth when reaching out to people to feel the joy of living. Christmas is not merely Jingle Bells and Tinsel, it creates a warmth that makes giving and receiving an enduring experience.

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That Time Of The Year Again

An old Arabian proverb goes thus, 'Whenever God creates a person, He whispers to the infant, "You are my favourite. I have never made such a wonderful person before. I'm not going to make another so beautiful again. You are simply unique". Every time we gaze at the infant Jesus, we are reminded once again of the fact that, we are indeed precious to God and that it is He, who not only gives us the gift of life, but also the freedom to choose what to do with it. The involvement of God is total, because Jesus as a babe visits the home of saint and sinner alike, inviting both to be His friends, overlooking limitations, imperfections, failures. This innocent babe continues challenging us, out of darkness and selfishness, out of slavery to unhealthy habits and unproductive attachments into.....light, love and freedom. All this for the simple reason that, through and in each one of us, God is bringing about His kingdom on Earth, to the extent that we co-operate by remaining open and generous to His love.

Each Christmas is a sign that our individual lives are continually sustained by God and the sooner we understand this the sooner will we allow Him to become the focal point of reference for everything in our lives. All things will now take on a new meaning. Our responses and behaviour, our attitudes and actions too are affected. We will become more and more God centred and say with conviction, 'In him we live and move and have our being". Immanuel- a name synonymous with Christmas means 'God is with us'. It simply says God is present in flesh through His Son Jesus. As Yehuda Halevit- the Jewish poet and religious philosopher prayed, "I have sought your nearness, with all my heart have I called You, and going out to meet You, I have found You coming toward me". The open arms of baby Jesus call us to be open minded in our quest for God so as to find Him in the most unexpected

Ninette D'Souza

places, circumstances and events. All that we are and have are gifts of God intended for the service of others. Be it our body, character, talents and abilities, our professions and material benefits, familial and other responsibilities. When these are used in His service, we begin to enjoy a life of freedom- one with healthy ambitions and attitudes. Then lifting our hearts to God we'll be able to sing, like St. Ignatius of Loyola, "My one desire is to know you more".

Day in and day out all of us are presented with myriad opportunities, big and small to show kindness, and at Christmas time these somehow become manifold. Giving simple gifts to needy children in the area, feeding a couple of urchins/ beggars daily with a nutritious snack, sponsoring a Christmas hamper for a family beset with problems, cleaning the home and running errands for the elderly couple next door, displaying kindness towards pets and strays with pats and biscuits. Simple acts like biting back the angry retort when someone jumps the queue, allowing a Sr. citizen

to get ahead of you in the line, smiling and exchanging pleasantries with the milkman, watchman and others who make life easy. Making do without new curtains and sofa covers and sending the amount to a charity, giving an extra tip to the gas delivery guy for climbing up and down 3 floors, giving the maid a bonus in spite of having increased the salary a couple of months earlier, the list can go on. Some of these are personal acts, some I have observed. Just add your own to the list and share. Christmas time somehow puts us in the mood to be extra giving or maybe it's the time that we become more aware of family, friends, and community. More than 2000 years ago the Earth received the most perfect gift of all, helping us understand true kindness and unfathomable love. Whatever the reason let this Christmas not pass by without showing kindness to someone because it truly is more blessed to give than to receive. I say, this Christmas let us begin to weave the tapestry of our lives, thread by thread; out of deeds too small to notice. I leave you this meaningful poem someone shared with me a long time ago.

*Let's celebrate in this day we're sharing,
Let's send the world a gift, the gift of caring.
To those who ail, those sick and infirmed,
To them the gift of health reaffirmed.
In troubled lands- north, south, west and east,
To them let's send the gift of peace.
And to those suffering in the yoke of tyranny,
To them the gift of joy and liberty.
To those who suffer disasters,
To them the gift of safety; now and ever after.
To the millions who fall from lack of food,
To them the gift of nourishment renewed.
To lonely people and those in poverty,
To them companionship and prosperity.
And to men of power who rule this earthly kingdom,
To them in abundance the gifts of justice and wisdom.
Together You and I let's send the world a gift; of hope not despair,
Yes our gift would be— to spread the spirit of Christmas everywhere.*

Have a Blessed and Joyful Christmas dear friends!!!!!!!!!!!!

—Ninette D'souza

Falling Standards in Catholic Schools

by Joseph M. Dias, S.J.
Andheri (E), Mumbai

It is not surprising that many people today are asking why Catholic schools, colleges and technical institutes, which were once pioneers in the field of education, are now losing their appeal due to falling standards in teaching-learning and discipline. Though there are many reasons for this decline, the main reasons seem to be excessive government interference and acute shortage of funds to run quality educational institutions in today's highly competitive world. For a number of years, after these institutions were set up, they enjoyed a large measure of freedom and had enough money to attract the best teachers, provide the best facilities and set high standards in education, sports and cultural activities, which were the envy of other institutions. Today, the scenario has changed drastically regarding these two vital factors: government control and funds. In recent times, the government has been interfering more and more in the field of education, especially in aided schools and colleges. A number of educationally unsound rules and regulations have been imposed by departments of education, which make it virtually impossible to maintain any decent standards in schools and colleges. For example, over the years, aided schools have been compelled to admit more than 60-70 students per class. With so many students to face in hopelessly overcrowded classrooms, for 6-7 hours on each working day, how can a teacher teach effectively and maintain good discipline? In such a



situation, what personal attention can teachers give to their students?

There are also several restrictions on appointments of teachers, which prevent managements from being able to select the best candidates for the job they are expected to do. Many applicants come well-armed with the official qualifications laid down by the government, but with little ability, interest or aptitude to teach well; yet schools are compelled to appoint them, while excluding others who would have been much more capable and efficient. Often, they are obliged to appoint teachers who have been rendered surplus in government schools, even though these teachers may be quite incompetent to teach in the new environment. The number of hours that teachers have to teach has also been progressively increased over the years, making it virtually impossible for them to cope with their routine work of teaching and evalua-

tion, promoting co-curricular activities, and at the same time, travelling long distances in packed trains and buses every day! An additional factor adding to the woes of teachers, is the proliferation of tuition and coaching classes which systematically promote rote-learning and undermine original thinking and all-round formation. They have led to large segments of the student population losing interest in attending regular classes in schools and colleges and in participating in extra-curricular activities. These students show no interest in learning anything beyond what will help them to secure better marks in examinations, thus discouraging enterprising and creative teachers with their negative attitudes.

The recent RTE Act of 2010 has made matters worse by compelling schools to admit 25% students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, without even con-

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sidering their educational standard or aptitude for learning. How will schools be able to bring these students up to the level expected in the class to which they are mandated to admit them? The Act makes no provision for this, leaving the schools to solve this herculean problem by themselves. Moreover, the Act says that no student can be detained up to class 8! Thus, there is no motivation for students to study, for teachers to teach well, or for parents to push their children to study. The various provisions of this Act show that the government's only concern is to provide admissions to as many children as possible, without any regard for the quality of education they imbibe. In such a situation, how can one expect any school to achieve excellence? No wonder educational standards in most educational institutions in the country are falling at an alarming rate, even below those found in many so-called backward countries!

Private institutions, which have begun proliferating of late, do not suffer from all the above handicaps. They are not bound by most government regulations in the field of education because they do not depend upon government grants. They can charge high fees and appoint the teachers they choose. They have enough funds to be able to attract the best teachers, employ the latest educational technology and provide the best facilities available. They also have fewer students in their classes and can reduce the work assigned to their teachers to secure maximum efficiency. Naturally, they are in a position to achieve much higher standards of education and discipline, and attract the best students. It is also true that private schools which charge handsome capitation fees for admissions have quickly achieved remarkable standards in the field of education and made a name for themselves. Unless Catholic schools can find a way of getting out of the present grant-in-aid system of dependence upon government grants, of raising adequate funds to attract good teach-

ers and provide better facilities, and of reducing the student-teacher ratio in each class, they will continue to fall behind modern private and international schools.

At present, the fees charged by aided schools are abysmally low. As one of my Catholic friends, who sent his children to high-class private schools says, "What can schools do with such low fees? What can they get for a few hundred rupees today?" A few aided Catholic schools may try, occasionally, to acquire much-needed finance, strictly forbidden by the government, to be able to cover their expenses and improve standards by charging fees on various items like admission forms, special computer classes, hiring out their halls and grounds, etc. These comparatively insignificant collections for the good of the school, are promptly labelled as 'capitation fees' and the public is quick to cry 'horror!' as if they have committed some unpardonable crime! Government too is ever ready to impose heavy penalties on these helpless schools. At the same time, parents simply refuse to respond to honest appeals made by schools for funds they badly need to update themselves, and are quick to complain about schools collecting any small extra fee. At the same time, these very parents have no qualms at all about spending exorbitant amounts on private tuitions and coaching classes! Often, touts fraudulently collect large sums of money from gullible parents at the time of admissions

by posing as agents appointed by the school authorities, without their knowledge. There is pressure too from political parties and public servants for seats in our schools in exchange for any little cooperation they are actually duty-bound to extend to the schools. These officials too could be secretly collecting money from desperate parents begging for those seats. The public is often ignorant of the fact that, for a long time, the government has stopped giving aided-schools the 'non-salary grant' due to them every year, which is meant to cover the day-to-day costs of maintenance of these institutions. How then are schools and colleges expected to survive and provide for the comfort, safety and security of their students? Salaries of teachers in aided-schools are also pathetically low as compared to the earnings of people in other professions.

All these factors need to be considered seriously when we examine the present state of our schools, colleges and technical institutes and speculate about their future. It is high time the entire Catholic Community, especially the parishes, rallied around our educational institutions, which have rendered yeoman service to the Community and the nation in the past, and assisted them in new creative ways, to be able to surmount the formidable challenges they face in order to come up to the high expectations of our people today.

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Christmas :

Incredible And True Birth Of The Messiah



BY MELVYN BROWN

THE core belief of the Roman Catholic faith is centered on the birth of Christ. Christ's coming was the key concept throughout the Old Testament as generations after generations awaited the Messiah. Prophets spoke of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. It was a theological grounding in more respects than one. It would all be focused essentially on the birth of the redeemer, on Christmas being Chapter One in the greatest story of an eternal divine truth being fulfilled.

At Christmas, the birth of Christ laid the foundation rules of the New Law.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Jn.3:16). Christmas has a simple message from God, to believe in Jesus Christ and to trust him, it is the liberating truth of the Gospel, and the most magnificent gift to all humankind.

Christmas is a straightforward declaration of faith and will never need encrypted e-mail and code words to teach worship and how to celebrate this incredible festival.

Christmas is the overture to the Great Mission given by Jesus to all Christians, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," (Mat.28:19). Christmas is the profound answer to the message of the New Testament: the Promise of the Messiah has come. The answer to one of St. Augustine's arguments that human beings were so flawed they needed "something transcendent" to shake them up. Christmas was the Lord's divine scheme for man's redemption.

Christ went on to create the Sacraments for the Catholic Church. The Seven Sacraments for Baptism, Penance, Confir-



mation, the Eucharist, Holy Orders, Marriage and Anointing of the sick. Christmas has become the bulwark etched in the tapestry of the Christian faith and belief. During Christmas, the liturgy, the sermons, the hymns and praises speak of a world dominated by 'ordo', God's all-inclusive order, as it was said by St. Bonaventure and St. Augustine. The Catholic Church is the enforcer of the faith, and stands firmly on the promised birth of the Saviour.

The first lesson of intrinsic value in our belief is the Declaration of Faith. The Creed "I believe". In this prayer you will come across a passage: "He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary."

The Catholic faith has an "identity" which is received, and therefore, cannot be changed. Pope Benedict XVI said, "faith

is a gift, not an acquisition". We trust life in Jesus Christ and the Magisterium of the Church. We, the faithful, pray to the saints to intercede for us to the angels to guide and protect us and to the Virgin Mary, our Mother who was responsible for the Word made flesh. Christian prayers are for Blessing and Adoration, for Petition, for Intercession, prayers of Praise. The people of God believe in the power of prayer. We start our journey of faith in prayer, our quest for the Almighty. His mercy and forgiveness is through prayer, rituals, sacrifice and meditation. God shows and presents Himself to us through the human heart. Christmas starts the Journey.

Christmas gives us the interior strength to be fruitful and to spread the Word to all mankind. The Church is our home and Christmas is our prerogative. For Christmas is the incredible and true story of the birth of the Messiah.

The Art of Keeping Christmas



How can we best keep Christmas? How can we best defeat the little bit of Scrooge in all of us and experience the glory of the Great Day?

By sinking the shafts of our spirits deep beneath the sparkling tinsel of the surface of Christmas and renewing within us the radiance of the inner meaning of the season.

By following the Star on an inward journey to Bethlehem to stand again in awe and wonder before the Babe in a Manger.

By rediscovering the faith and simplicity of a little child, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

By being still and listening to the angels sing within our hearts.

By quietly evaluating our lives according to the Master's standards as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount.

By reaffirming the supremacy of the spirit in our conquest of ourselves.

By rededicating ourselves to the Master's ideals of Peace, Brotherhood, and Good Will.

By resolving to give ourselves away to others in love, joy and devotion.

By using the light of Christmas to guide us through the darkness of the coming year, refusing to go back to the dim kerosene lamps of the spirit when the brilliant electricity of Christmas is available to show us the way.

The Idea Of Christmas

The whole idea of Christmas is the birth of Christ.

It symbolizes for each of us, whether Christian or not, the possibility of rebirth, the winter before the spring. **We are reminded how we can add more quality to our lives. We are told to be more tolerant, to be more compassionate, to be more generous, to give to our family, our friends, our community, to draw our family close around us.**

Now, it's hard to find all these messages under all the presents and the decorations and all the food, but they're there. . . There are an infinite number of acts of kindness that are possible within your family and friends.

Let the kids make a few more mistakes; be less critical; put your arms around someone from whom you may be a little estranged.

Make peace within your family. There are many possibilities for those acts of kindness.

That's what Christmas is all about--acts of kindness that will stay with us all year long.

Santa's Gifts

Santa's Dilemma.....

Santa Claus woke up one Advent Sunday morning filled with nostalgia for the days when PCs, Ipods, Note Books et al and electronic gizmos had not put in an appearance in kiddiedom. To keep up with the IT literate kids he had to renew his education and work all the more harder to continue the mission started by his erstwhile forefathers. But now that he had already amassed a mountain of gifts for the kids round the world, his thoughts drifted to the days of yore when kids asked for nothing more than dolls and tricycles. He was running short of ideas to make the small people happy and thought longingly of those days when kids wrote sweet little notes secreted into the most unlikely places, begging for a gift from Santa.

The past flashed before his mind leaving him with a distinct desire to look into the lives of his beneficiaries of decades before, children he presumed, were no more young and innocent! Why not visit the past to discover how his old patrons had fared down the line.....Why not fulfill the desires of the grown up kids for a change? What a wonderful idea!

A Rose by any other name.....

Little scraps of paper with scribbled pleas for a doll that he discovered year after year in the donation box at the foot of St. Anthony's statue in the church had moved him to tears. The writer was a little imp, all of 6 years with rosy cheeks and a dimpled chin and eyes that held an ocean of pain within. Christmas after Christmas she watched mutely as her class mates in Sunday school held the class spell bound with their tales of the Christmas trees, gifts piled high underneath, the sweets she could only guess the taste of and the lovely parties where people drank wine and swayed gracefully to melodious notes. Yet she joined



BY VERA ALVARES

in their gay laughter and shared their joy though she knew it was an alien world that she was viewing. All the while she did not cease to write her little notes to Santa, the messenger from the silvery snows, God's own gift giver!

Though her young heart yearned for more, all she ever received at Christmas were a couple of hand-me-down dresses and a rare meal of roast chicken and potatoes, prepared lovingly by her mother using the ingredients generously doled out by the Vincent De Paul Society in the parish. As for Christmas gifts, she learnt to be happy with the community Christmas tree in the church where she received lifeless plastic dolls she could not love and treasure. So, with firm faith in Santa she had written year after year pleading for a huge doll that could blink, sing and move and close her eyes to share her bed and her fears when darkness fell- a friend and a companion she could confide in!

Santa received a specific description of the gift- her doll would have golden hair, the colour of ripe corn, and blue eyes as blue as the depths of the ocean.....She told Santa to find her the doll of her dreams and dropped her letter in the church boxes, lest he forgot that she too existed. She hugged this secret close to her chest- for she knew that her widowed mother and older sister working hard to clean and cook in other people's

homes would be pained by her silly dreams. How could one dream of reaching for the stars when one lived on the brink of denial and despair? After all, they did their best to feed her and educate her, though they themselves had no knowledge of letters. She had no right or desire to tax her family further.

The tentacles of poverty had not marked her delicate beauty; there was colour in her cheeks, a sparkle in her eyes and a spring in her step as she ran around cherishing the little treasures and pleasures in her small bare world. Her countenance shone with the hope of a better tomorrow- a cozy spacious home, pretty clothes and a warm bed in a room of her own! 'Work hard and trust in the Lord' is what her teacher had told her. So she toiled side by side with her family, running errands, fetching groceries, helping the old folk walk to church. Her belief in God and Santa (he belonged to God's coterie, didn't he?), was so deep that she believed that if she pushed herself into the front ranks of God's subjects, she might get noticed. So little Rose was everywhere- in the children's choir, at the lectern reading the Scriptures and in the band of little helpers of the Lord! As an altar server, she placed herself on Calvary at the very spot that Jesus died. Would he notice her now that she was

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standing at the foot of His cross? In the Christmas plays, she played an angel, trilling 'Glory to God in the highest' the loudest of all. Without leaving anything to chance, she made it a point to attend daily mass, receive communion and carry Jesus in her heart everywhere. Would he not look into her heart's desires now that he resided there?

Santa's Mission.....

Shaking himself out of his reverie, Santa decided to look up the Rose of yester years and reward her for her unshaken faith in him. He had tried year after year to find a human conduit through which the coveted doll could reach Rose. But alas, the little family living in total obscurity and utter isolation was bereft of any benefactors except the church organizations to whom Rose was just another poor orphan child. Santa's efforts had been in vain and as years slipped into eternity, other kids had come on the scene and Rose had slipped into oblivion.

On this wintry morning, as he looked out at the snowy scene, with the reindeer raring to set off on their benevolent mission, Santa could not assuage the guilt that he felt for excluding Rose from the ambit of his operations. All those children waiting under the bloated stockings and the tilting Christmas trees could wait just a moment longer- for hasn't Rose waited for many long years for her precious doll?

One look into the distant void and he saw her! How she had grown! There was more salt than pepper in her lustrous hair, her rosy cheeks had sagged just a little, the dimple on the chin has deepened some more but her impish eyes still twinkled with the same innocent glee he had seen decades ago... He was happy to note that there was no more pain in them. In the joy of spotting her he totally forgot the purpose of his visit- what gift would she ask now?

Rose's Mission.....

He halted in his tracks, Rose did not look

as though she wanted anything from anyone- on the contrary she had transformed herself into a Santa, the giver of gifts. She was engrossed in distributing gifts to kids who surrounded her, kids of all ages, sizes, communities and creeds! Though she herself was modestly attired, the place was aglitter with a huge Christmas tree decorated with colourful baubles, streamers and lights. The strains of gay music filled the air and the sounds of happy laughter resounded throughout the huge mansion! In this institution for abandoned babies there was no room for disappointment and distress. She had indeed heeded the words of her teacher "Work hard and leave the rest in God's hands" to become the Santa she had never met. Meticulously, she was distributing to every kid huge dolls with hair the colour of ripe corn and with eyes the deep blue of an ocean, dolls that could blink, sing, move and close their eyes in sleep, so that many kids that night would contentedly hug themselves to sleep even in their poverty and loneliness!

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Indians The Innovators A Blueprint For Development

Francis Lobo

The Make in India directive is a message to the affluent countries to invest in India and get what they need made here. In my opinion this is anti-development. We will be back to the colonial period working for those with capital and technology. It may create a few jobs but not in the millions required to absorb those joining the laborforce each year. What is the uniqueness we are projecting of Making in India? Let us look at how industrialization and manufacturing developed in other countries. In U.K. it was with the introduction of the steam engine that generated the power required for mass production. In U.S.A. Henry Ford introduced the assembly line which produced automobiles fast and at a fraction of the cost. Then Taylor brought about the Productivity Revolution with Industrial Engineering. Germany and Switzerland excelled in engineering and precision. Japan had a Mission for Quality. After WWII they brought in the Quality

Gurus, Deming and Juran, to achieve 6-sigma quality perfection. Now China has captured the world market with low costs. What is the foundation for "Make in India"? F.D.Is. from N.R.Is.?

For Make in India to be a success we are being told by the captains of industry, the politicians and bureaucrats that what is needed is infra-structural development. This is because it involves huge inflow of funds, capture of natural resources like land, coal, other minerals and oil and tremendous scope for corruption. For development India needs to break away from this mechanistic approach — depending on out-

side capital and technology for progress. Why don't we tap the genius available in the Indian sub-continent. We have the example of the micro-financing miracle brought about by Mohamed Yunus of Bangla Desh — exploding the myth that banks and bank accounts are essential for progress. We have the White Revolution where millions of farmers have been brought together to make India the biggest milk producer in the world. Unfortunately we have allowed our cooperatives to become centers of power and exploitation. Democracy is working in India and the voice of the people is heard. We may not get desirable people elected but election after election has shown that performance is necessary to remain in power.

A directive has been given for each elected representative to create a model village in his / her constituency. A model village is self-sufficient and sustainable. This means that the produce and products of the village sustain the population in good times and bad. This involves adding value to what is being done today. For example, the agricultural produce must be processed and upgraded to items of higher value. The waste can be used to generate energy. Along with solar energy this could meet the energy requirements and reduce the need for mega plants. Like the milk and sugar cooperatives networks can be created for transport minimizing transportation



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costs. All this requires innovation and grass-root working not highly paid executives sitting in glitzy five star hotels and determining how India will move forward.

Today the raw materials move to the town to be made into finished product which moves back to the large consumer market in the rural areas. This flow has to be reversed with the products of the village in finished, semi-finished form moving from the village to the town and the needs of the village in terms of high tech goods coming to the village from the urban manufacturing centers.

A model village must have first rate schools, community and functioning health centers, entertainment facilities, transport and communication, housing, effective water and electricity supply, sanitation, security and safety and above all employment for all which can be achieved through small scale industries and business which are the backbone of Indian industry today.

The scope for innovation comes

from Ground Zero — identification and utilization of resources be it land, air, water, sunshine, vegetation to managing waste, packaging and transport of goods. The trained and educated should engineer products and services to meet the needs of the masses with innovations to provide cheap and easy to maintain housing with optimum land utilization, food preservation, water conservation and recycling, waste management, health and sanitation, mass education. The genius of the Indian people should be tapped to eradicate poverty, exploitation and create productive employment for All.

Technology has progressed to such a level that small batches can be produced in small industries as cheaply as mass produced items. The optimum batch size need not be in the thousands. It can be just ONE piece. Devices have been invented that can convert small quantities of waste to usable products e.g. plastic waste to petrol. The proposed reforms will only help big business. A paradigm shift is required to use technology and IT to make the small

business competitive with minimum of investment. We are at an inflexion point when India can lead a new Manufacturing Revolution to make India the Manufacturing Centre of the World

Ratan Tata, chairman emeritus of Tata Sons, speaking at the launch of the India Chapter of XPrize, said Indians must not only solve the problems given to them but must also develop the entrepreneurial ability to identify new problems to solve. XPrize is a US based, non-profit body that creates incentivized prizes that encourage high impact innovation in some of the world's most pressing areas. XPrizeIndia will focus on water, nutrition, waste, energy and learning. Peter Diamandis, founder of XPrize, said that XPrize is being offered for the first time outside US in India. Small groups of people today can do what could be done earlier only by large companies. Crazy ideas can become break-throughs. India can be the launch pad for solving the problems of emerging economies. Extreme poverty can be massively reduced in a very short time through innovations.

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How Christmas Developed

 Jubel D'Cruz

All of us are gearing towards Christmas, celebrating the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The very mention of Christmas evokes the emotions of joy and celebration within us. Whether young or old, we cannot think of Christmas without Santa Claus, cribs, stars, a neatly decorated Christmas tree, homemade sweets and loads of fun. But has it ever occurred to you when and where all this began? Let us take a glance into this through history to see how the season of Christmas and its festivities developed.

Why is Christmas celebrated on December 25th?

Have you ever wondered whether Jesus Christ was really born on December 25th? The answer is No! Because no one knows the exact date of the Messiah's birth. The Holy Bible too does not provide us with any date. So why do we Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25th?

The early Christians certainly had many arguments regarding this. The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336 A.D. during the time of the Roman Emperor, Constantine. A few years later Pope Julius I officially declared that the birth of Jesus Christ would be celebrated on December 25th.

Among the many different traditions and theories, a very early Christian tradition says that the day when Mary was told that she would have a very special baby, was on March 25th, and it is still being celebrated today on the 25th of March. Nine months after March 25th is December 25th. December 25th might also have been chosen because the birthday of the Pagan Sun God, Mithra was celebrated on this day. The early Christians might have given this festival a new meaning --- to celebrate the birth of the Son of God, 'the unconquered Son'!

The Star of Bethlehem:

What was the Star of Bethlehem and what did the three wise men actually see? Well, to be honest no one really knows. But there are many theories including comets, super novas, a conjunction of planets or something entirely supernatural! There are only 12 verses in the Holy Bible about the wise men and the star (Matthew, Chapter 2, Verses 1 to 12). They're often called the 'Three Kings', but the Holy Bible does not mention how many men were there, or that they were kings. They became three because of the gifts they brought with them. They had seen an unusual new star in the sky and knew that it told of the birth of the Messiah, as foretold in Isaiah, Chapter 7, Verse 14. The Holy Bible tells us that they first saw the star in the east and then again when they were in Jerusalem, it went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the Christ child was born. The stars that we see lit up during Christmas are associated with this 'Star of Bethlehem'.

Nativity plays, Cribs & Carols:

Christmas would certainly be boring without nativity plays and carols being sung which breathe life into the season. The first Nativity play was performed by the monks in a cave in Italy. St. Francis of Assisi and his followers acted in the first play in 1223 A.D. to remind the local people of the region that Jesus Christ was born for them, as He was born into a poor family like theirs. St. Francis of Assisi told the part of each character in the story himself using wooden figures in the play. A few years later, the play had become very popular that real people played the parts of the characters in the story. Songs were sung by the people taking part in the play and they soon became what we call as Christmas carols today.

St. Nicholas, Santa Claus &



Father Christmas:

A Christmas party is definitely not complete without the appearance of Santa Claus and the gifts and sweets distributed by him. Now from where did Santa Claus appear? The idea of Santa Claus began with St. Nicholas, a patron saint of children, who was a Bishop who lived in the 4th century A.D. in a place called Myra in Asia Minor (now called Turkey). Nicholas was a rich and kind person and had a reputation for helping the poor and giving secret gifts to the people who needed them. There are several legends about St. Nicholas which portrays him distributing gifts to people. From this, the idea of Santa Claus took shape.

So friends, as we celebrate Christmas this year, let us focus on the real meaning behind this jingly season and its traditions. Christmas is a time to celebrate the incarnation of the Son who was a generous and gratuitous gift from God. It is a time of great happiness for God left the confines of His divinity to enter into humanity forever. It also invites us to spread this joy to the people around us, to do for them something that shows your love and appreciation. Following the examples of the three wise men from the east and St. Nicholas, let us learn to be generous towards others, a generosity that is not just limited to material gifts, but also with our time.

Christmas Tree - "The Tree of Life"

Introduction

Early Romans marked the winter solstice with a feast called Saturnalia in honour of Saturn their god of agriculture. To observe the occasion they adorned their homes and temples with evergreen boughs.

In India the Bodhi tree or Peepal is considered sacred as Buddha attained Nirvana or enlightenment. In the *Bhagwad Gita*, Krishna declares, "I am the Peepal (Asvattha) tree (10:26); and also unravels a parable of its upwards roots and downward branches (15:1-3)

Germany is credited with the modern Christmas Tree(s) - CT tradition in the 16th century when devout Christians cut evergreens to decorate their houses and front-yards. Nowadays, artificial CT are made from PVC plastics; and 10.9 million were purchased in the USA in 2012.

Christmas Tree Farms

Natural CTs are derived from Scotch, Virginia and White pines, or from Douglas, noble and Balsam firs. There are more than 15,000 CT forms, 350 million CT are grown on these USA farms. About 2000 CT are planted per acre and cultivated in over 3,50,000 acres. At 6-8 feet the CT are ready for harvest in about 6-8 years.

24.5 million farm-grown CT were acquired in 2012 with a market value of \$ 1.01 billion, or roughly \$ 41.30 per CT. An estimated 175,000 real CT were also sold via e-commerce. 93% of CT consumers recycle their CT in over 4,000 recycling programmes.

Ecological Value of CT:

Nearly one lakh persons are employed full or part-time in the CT industry. CT provide a habitat for wildlife. Recycled CT have been used to construct and soil erosion barriers. CT absorb CO2 and

Dr. Trevor Colaso



release oxygen. They precipitate dust and neutralize allergic pollen. According to the community Forest Guidebook, an acre of CT supplies the daily oxygen requirement of 18 people. 100 CT eliminate five tons of CO2 and 1,000 lbs of other pollutants in their lifetime. Around urban areas they reduce the ambient temperature by 5-8 degrees. Truly, the CT are 'trees of life'!

OT - "Tree of Life"

In the Garden of Eden there stood the "tree of life" (Genesis 2.9); the fruit of which Adam was forbidden to eat, lest he dies. But in later Jewish thought the "tree of life" came to embody - "the fruit of righteousness, hope fulfilled, wisdom and a gentle tongue" (Proverbs, 11.30; 3:12, 18; 15:4). And, its future optimism guaranteed that "they who do the things that please God shall receive the fruit of the tree of immortality" (Sirach, 19:19+)

Cross - The "tree of life"!

Paul contrasts: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a 'tree' "(Galatians, 3:13)

Peter reminisces: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the 'cross', so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24)

Yes, dying Jesus destroyed our death; by rising Jesus restored our life!

Symbolism of the CT

Pope John Paul II called the CT a symbol of Christ, This ancient custom exalts the value of life; for as in winter what is evergreen becomes a sign of undying life, and reminds Christians of the "tree of life"! With its loftiness, its green colour and the light in its branches the CT is a symbol of life that points to the mystery of Christmas love says Pope Benedict XVI.

Its triangular configuration mirrors The Most Blessed Trinity! The star above and its lights signify Christ the "bright morning star" (Rev. 22:16), and the "light of the world" (John, 10:10).

CT Reward - Heavenly Jerusalem!

In the Book of Revelation, the "tree of life" with its 12 kinds of fruits and its leaves are for the healing of the nations (22:2). Jesus reveals to the Apostles John who represents us: "Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches - 'To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the 'tree of life' that is in the paradise of God ... Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the 'tree of life' and may enter the city by the gates" (27... 22:14).

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The Truth Behind Misleading Phone Charging Myths

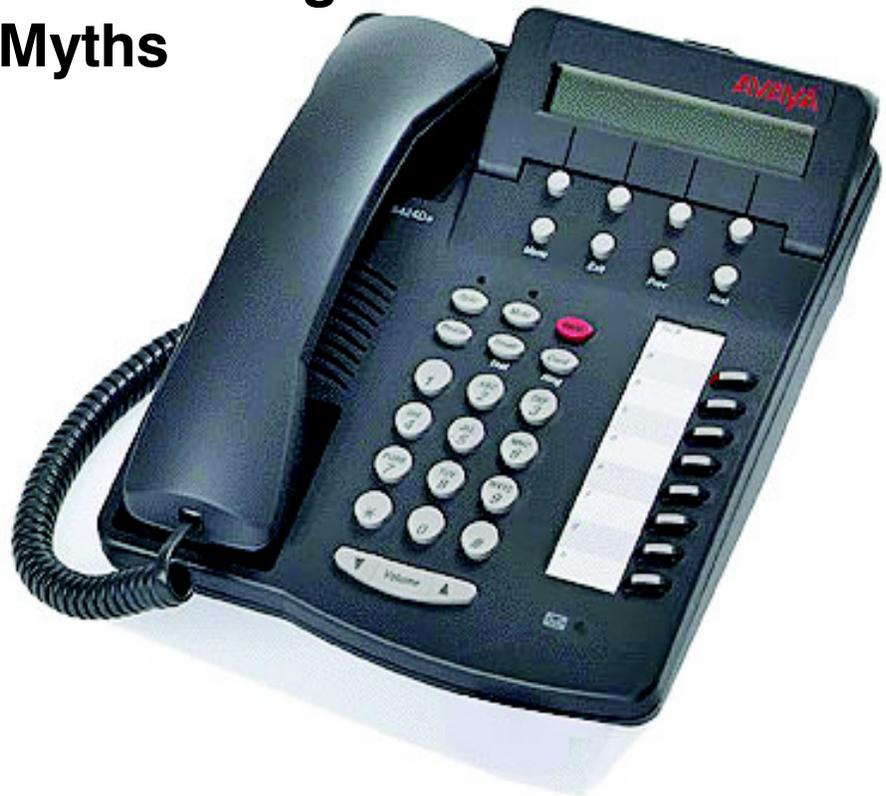
**Agnelo Rodrigues,
Wadala E**

I think it's a pretty good guess that the two scariest words for any cell phone user are "low battery". Apart from getting it wet, getting a low power warning is the worst thing that can happen to your smartphone, and most of us are constantly aware of how our battery is doing and if it needs to be charged.

There are many misleading myths that evolved over time about charging your phone, most of them are completely wrong. These myths are not only false but can actually do more harm than good, and reduce the total life span of your battery. So for those of us who want to keep our phone battery charged as long as possible, these are the myths you should avoid.

Myth: Off-brand chargers destroy batteries.

Truth: While not optimal, off-brand chargers are still fine for recharging your phone and will not have a significant influence on your battery's life span. What you *should* be avoiding are brand knockoffs. Charging your phone with



one of these will barely get the job done, reduce your battery's maximum charge and endanger its ability to function.

Myth: Don't use your phone while it charges.

Truth: Using the phone while it's plugged in to the charger will *not* decrease the efficacy of the charge. The reasons behind this myth are linked to cases in which people used low quality knockoffs. When using a sketchy charger all sorts of bad things can happen to your phone, but as mentioned before you don't want to be using them anyway. If you're using the manufacturer approved charger and battery, you should be fine using it anytime you want.

Myth: Charging your phone overnight damages the battery.

Truth: Our phones today are smarter than they used to be, when in full capacity they automatically know they should

stop charging. However, that doesn't mean you should have your phone plugged in to the charger all the time. The optimal time to charge your phone in order to keep the battery going long as possible is between 40% and 80%.

Myth: Never turn off your phone.

Truth: This myth is a total lie, just because your phone is a machine doesn't mean it's bad for it to take a few breaks. In fact, apple experts recommend turning off your phone once in a while in order to maximize battery life. At the very least it's recommend to turn off your phone once a week for a few hours.

Myth: Don't charge your battery until it's completely empty.

Truth: This myth was true in past generations of smartphones and rechargeable electronic devices, but today it's completely wrong. Most modern phones

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use lithium-ion batteries and if you constantly let them drain to 0%, they become unstable. It is much better to charge your phone every day when it's between 40% and 80% power.

Myth: Always charge a new phone before using it.

Truth: Almost every new phone comes with instructions to fully charge it before you start using it but it's mostly unnecessary. Since most modern batteries are best stored at about 40%, almost every manufacturer sends their phones out with at least half a charge. This means that if you buy a new phone and it does not have a 40% charge when you turn it on, it's most likely because the battery is very old. If this is the case, you

should ask for a different one as it will surely last you longer than one that has either been used before, or has been sitting idle for a really long time with no use.

Myth: You can always use rechargeable batteries.

Truth: This one is a bit more misleading than false, but it's still important to know that most batteries do have a limited life span of full discharge cycles. Each cycle starts when your device has used 100% of its capacity. This means that if you charge your phone today from 50% to full and do the same tomorrow, that's a full discharge cycle. Once you go above the amount of full cycles your battery is capable of it will start to lose capacity to store power.

So yes, you can keep on using

your battery for a very long time, but once the official "life span" is over, you'll have to be very mindful of how you use it. Hopefully it will only happen once, when you want to upgrade your device.

Bonus fact: Heat will ruin your battery.

As a general rule heat and technology don't go hand-in-hand. Lithium-ion batteries get hotter when they are being charged. Now while it's also a really bad idea to put your phone in the fridge, you should always be mindful of where you place your phone, especially when charging it. Never charge it under direct sunlight or next to other hot electronics like a laptop or a working oven. This may not only damage your battery but also the phone itself.



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'The Christmas Candle'

The word candle - *candela* from *candeo* to burn was an eight century ecclesiastical term put into the English language included any taper with a wick from a papyrus strip in wax or animal fat and like incense and lustral water were used for pagan worship and death rites which the church adopted for enhancing religious ceremonies.

Lights, perfumes ablutions, floral decorations, canopies fans, screens, bells, vestments etc. were common to all cults and are part of mystical expression, secular celebration and religion and a gun salute - a tribute of a warship to a foreign flag cannot be called superstitious the number of candles for high Mass.

Carrying tapers was respect for the Roman Empires highest dignitaries in 'Notitia Dignitatum Imperii' influenced candles borne before a pope or bishop in procession to the sanctuary or the transport of the Gospels to the ambo or

Peter Castellino

pulpit.

Candles were associated with Christmas for various reasons but the year is uncertain and they were used for ancient winter solstice celebrations -to remember spring's arrival.

Many years ago there was an old and very poor shoemaker in Austria's border who were ever ready to help the needy and every evening they put a lit candle in the window to welcome anyone passing by.

War came and also famine but the candle burned brightly and the villagers could not understand why the shoemaker and his wife were always peaceful.

The shoemaker sad it was due to the candle and when the villagers asked how peace could come from a candle the shoemaker sad that peace and light are one.



In December the war raged and people wanted peace so they put a candle in their windows as a peace prayer and on Christmas Eve every window had candles.

When day came a messenger rode to the village with news of peace and the grateful people thanked God and vowed to keep a candle lit on every Christmas Eve and from then this lovely custom has spread world wide as assign of hope and friendship-the lighted candle symbolising peace and love - a precursor of the Christmas Star in our window or doorway.

The earliest records of the Christmas candle use is from the middle ages where a large candle represented the Star of Bethlehem.

Big use of candles and lamps were in the Easter vigil celebration from Apostolic times-Eusebius -Vita Constant IV, xxii speaks of pillars of wax with which Constantine transformed night into day and Prudential and other authors describe brilliance inside churches.

Candles were used when artificial light was necessary and the Spanish council at Elvira-c 300 decree condemned as an abuse superstitious burn-

ing of candles in the day in cemeteries-the heretic Vigilantius reproached orthodox that when the sun shone they lit many candles - *moles cereorum accendi faciunt* and St. Jerome said that candles were lit when the Gospel was read not to put darkness to flight but as a sign of joy-Migne P L X X III,345 and this remark and the close association of lit candles with the baptismal ceremony on Easter Eve made the sacrament photismos-illumination showing the early presence of Christian symbolism of blessed candles which is confirmed by the Exultet on Holy Saturday for paschal candle blessing- St. Jerome composed the peritomeum paschal-Morin in Revue Benedictine, Jan, 1891 where the virginity of bees is insisted, the wax representing Jesus Christ's flesh from a virgin mother, the wick symbolises his soul and the flame Divinity which absorbs and dominates both -so paschal candles represents Christ the true light and the smaller candles Christians who strive to represent Christ in their lives.

Apart from use at baptism and funerals -St. Cyprian was buried *praelucentibus creis* at the Fourth Coun-

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cil of Carthage - a synod in Southern Gaul-c 514 on conferring the minor order of acolyte the candidate was given a candlestick with a candle-observed today-such candles according to the Gregorian Sacramentary and Ordines Romani were used in the Roman Ceremonial prior to the seventh century and the candles were placed on the sanctuary pavement and later on the altars in the twelfth century.

The Ordines say that the pope was preceded by seven acolytes with candles -the candles placed on the pavement and later on the altar -thus six altar candlesticks for an Ordinary High Mass and seven when a bishop of a diocese pontificates -thus the identification with the acolytes' candlesticks of the Roman Ordines.

According to Edmund Bishop in the Downside Review, 1906 every High Mass has six candles, four for every Missa Cantata or private Mass of festivals and two for other Masses but on more solemn occasions more candles can be lit, for Vespers and Lauds when the office is sung on big feasts six candles are lit but two or four for less solemn occasions.

Rubrics say two acolytes with candles should head the procession to the sanctuary and the candles honour the gospel chanting at High Mass, the singing of the little chapter and the collects at Vespers etc -and a bishop entering a church is received and escorted by candle holding acolytes and when he takes part in any ecclesiastical function in the sanctuary he has his own candlestick called bugiaheld besides him by a chaplain or cleric.

Candles are used in excommunications, reconciling penitents and other exceptional functions and play an important part in a church dedication, cemetery blessing and candle offerings made at the Offertory of an ordination mass by newly ordained.

For conferring all sacraments except penance a candle must be lit and at baptism a lit candle is put into the catechumen or godfather's hand representing the infant.

A Mass must have its candles and if in danger of being blown out by wind they must be protected by lanterns and the Roman Missal's rubrics say at the Sanctus of even a private Mass an additional candle must be lit and burn after Communion of a priest but this is neglected even in Rome Liturgical candles must be of beeswax because of the symbolic reference to Christ's flesh and for the paschal candle and two obligatory candles at Mass a recent decree of the Congregation of Rites-14 Dec, 1904 decided that they must be of beeswax in maxima parte meaning not less than 75 per cent and candles at Benediction etc must be of wax in great part - twelve candles for public exposition of the Blessed Sacrament but six for a poor church or private exposition.

Candles must be white but gilded and painted candles are sometimes permitted, in Masses for the dead and Holy Week yellow or unbleached wax is used and liturgical candles can be blessed.

An elaborate candle blessing occurs on the feast of the Purification or Candlemas Day on 2 Feb this function was performed by the pope where he resided and some of the candles blessed were scattered among the crowd and others sent to noted persons and a less elaborate form of blessing of candles on ordinary occasions is given in the Missal and Ritual.

The Christian Candlemas processions on February 2 honour the Virgin but actually date back to pre-Christian worship.

Jesus is sometimes called the Light of the World by Christians which resulted in the Advent Crown/Advent Wreath and Advent Candles.

Candles are also used during Hanukkah - the Jewish Festival of Lights also celebrated during winter for eight nights and a candle is lit in a special menorah/candelabra called a 'hannukkeyah' which symbolizes the Tree of Life and its seven branches represent light, justice, peace, truth, benevolence, brotherly love and harmony and the seven days of creation is one of the great symbols of Judaism.

A monumental menorah with carvings depicting scenes from Jesus history was given as a gift from the British government to the state of Israel at its foundation.

Candles are also used in the modern winter festival Kwanzaa where a special candle holder called a kinara that holds seven candles is used.

The most famous use of candles at Christmas are Carols by Candlelight Services when the church is lit only by candles.

Candles were used to decorate Christmas Trees until safer electric lights were invented.

In some parts of Ireland it was traditional to have a Yule candle instead of a Yule Log.

In Southern India, Christians put oil burning lamps on flat roofs of homes to celebrate Christmas.

Chinese Christians use paper lanterns to decorate their Christmas trees.

In Sweden candles are used as part of St Lucia's or St Lucy day celebrations.

Wax lights had to be used in church as it was a tradition that came from Palestine.

Candles were burnt at shrines to show special devotion and a candle burning out before a statue symbolised prayer and sacrifice.

Measuring to such or such a saint was a medieval practice where a candle or a number of candles equalling in measurement the height of the persons for whom the favour was asked is from St Radegund-d 587 till the Middle Ages was practised in England and the North of France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Figurative and symbolic thought are connected with candle usage in Church.

Among folk candles and their wax are ominous they predict a happy or unhappy marriage in the way they burn, a family death is forecast if they gutter.

Candles are used for divination and charms by girls to determine their future husbands and other customs and beliefs today and in the past in the British Isles and parts of the continent.

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If a candle burns blue or dim then there is a ghost in the house and if it burns blue then there will be frost. A candle burns irregularly melts plenty of tallow and burns too fast indicates a thief in the candle and when it gives a spark in the air it means a letter is coming to the one sitting nearest it.

A general European folk belief is that it is unlucky to burn three canles in the same room at once.

A candlewick that divides and burns with two flames indicates death in Germany but a letter in Austria.

Dreaming of a brightly burning candle means receiving a letter from your love.

In Arkansas a lighted candle under a person's house aids a conjurer and a lit candle protects one from spells.

In Ireland twelve candles are kept around a dead body before burial to keep away evil spirits who cannot enter a circle of fire from carrying away a dead man's soul. Candle dance is a dance where performers hold lit candles.

The ball del ceri of Catalonia and the baile de la candela of the Venezuelan Guayuncomo tribe have men and women-in the former the group performs in couples a consecratory Christian ceremony and in the latter in separate groups orgiastic jumping and circling.

Candles are shrunken great beeswax candles and torches of pagan and contemporary torch processions used for torchlight circling of fields when the flames vitality was cimmunicated to crops, in candle bearing processions like the flame bearing Eros and in honorific processions.-and the Catalan ball de la teya exemplifies the first function and the Hungarian gyertyas tanc the second.

The Philippine candle dance is a selection dance where a girl chooses a mate while waltzing and manipulating a candle.

“Be Glad, Rejoice, Radiate Joy!” -The Joy of ‘Consecrated Life’!

There is a mistaken impression even among Catholics, that the vocation to a religious life is drab, dull and dreary. However, it is otherwise.

Pope Francis' letter of 13 articles – REJOICE –(R), presented on 2nd Feb. 2014, on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, to all Consecrated men and women for the ‘Year of Consecrated Life – 2005’ was made public here only on Oct. 2014, courtesy, Carmel International Publishing House.

“The ‘joy’ of the Gospel fills the heart and lives of all who encounter Jesus. With Jesus Christ ‘joy’ is continually born anew” (R, 1:1). In article 12:6 he concludes: “I won’t to say one word to you and this is JOY! Wherever there are consecrated people, seminarians, men and women religious, young people, there is joy, there is always joy! It is the joy of freshness, the joy of following Jesus; the joy that the Holy Spirit gives us, not the joy of the world. There is joy! But – where is joy born? This joy was literally conceived at the Annunciation! – ‘Rejoice full of grace’ (Luke, 1:28)”.

St Paul lists ‘joy’ as one of the nine fruits of the Spirit, only after love



(Galatians, 5:22). Such is the priority given to this delightful fruit!

However, recent attacks on Christians in particular have caused pain, harm and distress, turning joy into grief and sorrow. But we need not despair, for Jesus in the ‘joys’ of the Blessedness of persecution, promises the raptures and ecstasy of paradise! “When people hate, exclude, revile and defame you on account of the Son of Man, ‘rejoice’ in that day and ‘leap for joy’ for surely your reward is great in heaven” (Luke, 6:22-23a). Yes, this joy is the Messianic gift of Jesus par excellence to all: “That My ‘joy’ may be in you, and that your ‘joy’ may be complete” (John, 15:11).

—Dr Trevor Colaso,



Grenville D'Souza, Godwin H. Mendess
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Christmas Saga

The Christ Child prophesied long ago,
Was born in a little manger we know.
Wrapped in swaddling clothes He Lay,
As Way, Truth and Life to show us the Way.

As Emmanuel - God with us - He came,
An we as Belivers bear His name.
In Salvation story, God became Man,
That we might become like Him in His Plan.

God's only son, Messenger of Love,
Came down to Earth from Heaven above.
Glad tidings and rejoicing all around,
Brings us true Joy, and Peace profound.

His coming for everyone, big and small,
That we might hear His Loving Call.
May you be Blessed all through the year,
For all our needs, He's always near.

—*S. Gaikwad, Bokaro Thermal*

What is Christmas?

In the Christian religion, Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ by the virgin Mary, which is observed on December 25 by Roman Catholics and Protestants. Many in the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity observe the Christmas holiday, Epiphany.

Many people today, including Christians, celebrate Christmas with traditions such as Christmas trees and the figure of Santa Claus (Saint Nicholas).

The English word "Christmas" derives from the old English Christes maesse, meaning "Christ's mass." Christians have been celebrating Jesus' birth on December 25 since at least the early fourth century. The first evidence of its observance is in Rome in 336 AD. The earliest Christians do not appear to have commemorated the nativity, but only the baptism and resurrection of Christ and the deaths of the martyrs. In fact, some early Christians, most notably Origen of Alexandria, strongly opposed the celebration of Christ's birth. Pointing out that only Pharaoh and Herod celebrate their birthdays in the Bible, Origen argued that birthdays were for pagans, not Christians. Jehovah's Witnesses follow the same reasoning today in rejecting both Christmas and celebration of birthdays.

How to talk with God?

Praying brings divine help and guidance in our lives. Here are the basics of how to talk with God.

Whether we are seeking answers to problems, are in need of divine comfort or need to find strength and faith, we can speak to God and obtain his help. Simply put, we can pray. But, how do we pray? How can we understand his answers?

In the Bible, we are taught how to pray. Jesus Christ taught his disciples using an example of how to pray to God when he shared what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." Matthew 6:9-13 states:

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Address God and praise him

When you call someone on the phone, you generally ask to speak to them by name. It's the same with prayer. Address your Father in Heaven and praise him; thank him for the blessings in your life. We have much to be grateful for in our lives: family, friends, homes, our gifts and talents or answers to prayers. Showing gratitude and respect to God helps us be humble and willing to submit to his will for us rather than focusing on our own wants.

Seek forgiveness and strength to overcome temptations

Part of praying requires being

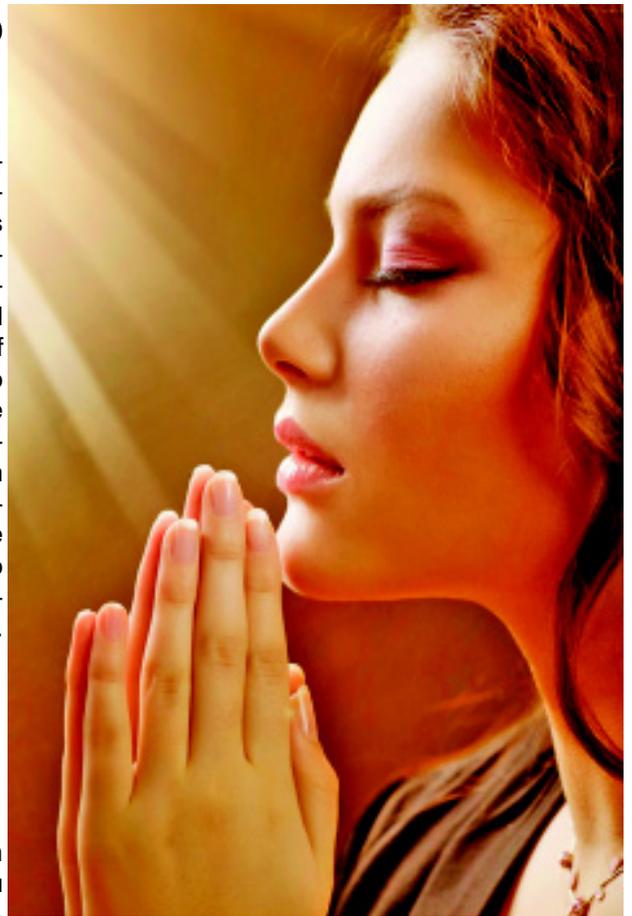
humble; often by recognizing our wrongs and receiving forgiveness. God wants us to learn from our mistakes and become a master over ourselves. We will make mistakes. It's part of life. Read Why it's OK to make mistakes. As we make amends, it is important to ask God for strength to overcome and avoid possible future temptations. We can also pray for help to overcome our own weaknesses and shortcomings.

Humbly ask God for specific blessings or help that you need

Discuss with him struggles or worries you have. These can be personal pleas for help or in behalf of loved ones. Let him cry with you. He cares about the smallest matters--even a lost item like a shoe or car keys. Personally, I have prayed and taught my kids to pray for help in finding something. Frequently, after we pray, the item is located within minutes. We can ask for help in our jobs, our problems with children, prayers for healing or simply for peace. Since he truly knows each of us as individuals, he knows how best to help, comfort and strengthen us. Often, as we are prayerful in our heart and minds--not just while praying--we will receive impressions of things that we can do.

Have patience and Listen for answers

When you're chatting with a friend, you don't pour out your soul and then take off just as they were getting ready to respond, right? You wait and listen to what they have to say. It is the same for prayer. God won't answer in a big boom-



ing voice from the heavens like TV might suggest. More likely, it will be a thought, feeling or impression that comes to your mind and heart. God usually speaks through the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit to convey his message. With practice, anyone can learn to recognize to and respond to these subtle answers. Sometimes the answer is "no" or "not yet," and we need to be willing to accept those answers as well.

Each of us can talk to God regardless of how religious or non-religious we are, our level of faith or what we have or have not done. He will be there on the weekends, in the middle of the night and in the middle of our deepest sorrows or our greatest joys. We just need to call upon him to be heard. He is waiting, with his arms extended, to help each of us. He just wants us to "call" him frequently - as many times a day (or night) we desire. There is strength and power in prayer.

Santa vs Jesus: What do your kids believe?

Let's face it. Christmas can be a confusing time for kids. When children are little, they believe in Santa, the North Pole and the elves. They also believe in the Christ Child, the manger, the shepherds and the star.

As children grow older, they begin to understand that some Christmas stories are myths. How can we keep our children from connecting or confusing the reality of Christmas with the magical fantasies of Christmas — from thinking that, perhaps, Christ might also be a myth?

We want our kids to be excited about making their Christmas lists, writing to Santa and receiving their gifts, but we also want them to understand the true meaning of Christmas and feel the spirit of giving. How can we help our children get excited about giving to others?

The best way to solve these conundrums is to clearly separate the myth of Santa and the reality of Christ — to separate the getting part of Christmas from the giving part — in the minds of our children. Here's how:

When kids begin to ask about whether or not Santa is real, tell them Santa is "real-imaginary." In other words, he is a real and wonderful myth or story that helps us feel the magic and mystery of Christmas. Santa represents happiness, goodness and



sharing, and he helps us develop our imaginations and feel good and deserving of gifts. Like tales of the Tooth Fairy or the Easter Bunny, it is fun to have those North Pole stories and to enjoy those Santa myths.

Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is very, very different from Santa because He is "real-real." He actually was born on earth to Mary and Joseph, giving us the greatest gift of all. His story, with the innkeeper, the manger, the star and the wise men, is the truest and most important story of all time.

Make sure your kids know that it is OK to think of both Santa and Jesus at Christmastime but that the two are not the same. One is a fun story in our imaginations, and the other is the greatest true story of all time.

Since it is so hard to integrate the very different Christmas joys of getting and of giving in the same Christmas morning ritual, separate them! On Christmas Eve, put all of the focus on giving and on Christ's story. Have a "Bethlehem Supper" and dress as shepherds, wise men, Mary and Joseph. Serve only fish, flatbread and figs — things Mary's family might have eaten on the night before she and Joseph left

on their journey to Bethlehem.

Try turning off the lights and use only candles. Sit around the table and role-play as you eat together. With "Joseph" there as a guest, talk about the long journey ahead. Will the donkey make it? Do they have reservations at a hotel or inn? How long will they be gone? Why do they have to go so far to pay taxes anyway? After dinner, act out the manger scene, complete with angels, shepherds and wise men.

Gather around the Christmas tree and open only the gifts from the children. Focus entirely on the gift giver. "Oh, just what I wanted! How did you know? Wow, did you make this? You found such perfect gifts." Let each child have a turn giving his gifts, and let each child revel in the joy of giving.

Having focused Christmas Eve entirely on Jesus and the joy of giving, you can then shift to Santa, stockings and the joy of getting on Christmas morning! There is indeed room for both Jesus and Santa at Christmastime, but parents have to be careful to separate the two in the minds of their children!

Christmas and the Eucharist

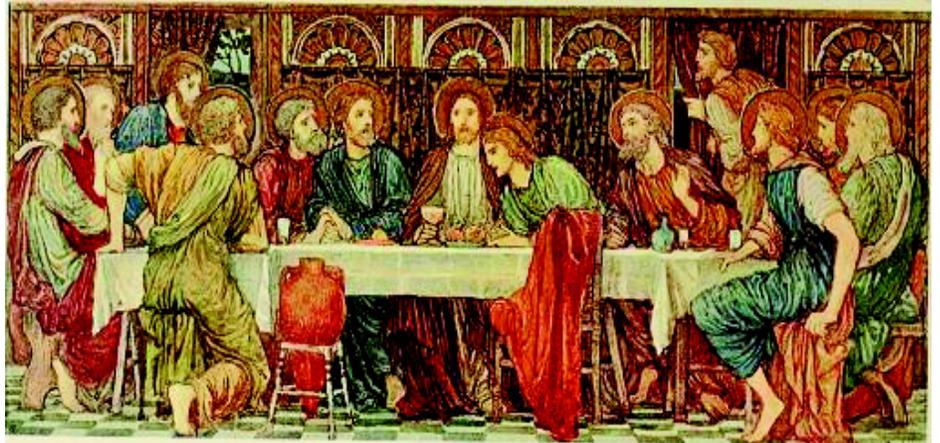
 **Capt. Mervin John Lobo**

Of the many subjects that we could talk about on Christmas day, I thought the most appropriate would be to speak on Christmas and the Eucharist. There are many aspects to their relationship, but there are mainly three: (1) both Christmas and the Eucharist are facts; (2) both reveal a mystery; and (3) both are meant to teach us a profound and not easily learned lesson.

Christmas, first of all, is a fact of history. In a point of time and at a definable place the God of heaven and earth was born of a woman, and came to live among us as man. It is a fact that the infinite God became, unexplainably, a finite creature. It is a fact to which historians attest but which we know is no mere statistic of history; it is, rather, a fact planned by God from all eternity. This is the fact of Christmas: the Word actually became Flesh.

What is the fact of the Eucharist? It is that the same Jesus Who was born on earth not only became man but remains man. He not only came into the world, He is in the world. In a word, He came to stay. The Eucharist is Christmas prolonged, because faith tells us that once God became man, He decided to remain man. From all the reaches of past eternity, God had only been God. But having once taken on human flesh, into now the future reaches of eternity, God will always remain man. And this God-Man is here; Bethlehem is wherever there is a Catholic Church or chapel in which Christ is present. These are the two facts that we commemorate on Christmas day.

But Christmas and the Eucharist are not only facts, they are also mysteries. What is the mystery of Christmas? The mystery is the humanly incredible reality of why God became man. He did not have to. God did not even have to make the world, and within the world,



He did not have to make us. Except for the love of God, we are all empty unoccupied spaces on earth. But, having decided to make the world and to make us, God also decided that once man had sinned, He would redeem man. God might have redeemed man by an act of His divine Will; He chose not to do so. He chose, rather, to become man, so that as man He might not only, by some fiat of His human freedom redeem us, but might have a mortal flesh and a soul capable of suffering. In a word, the mystery of Christmas is the mystery of God's love that chose to take on our human form in order to show His love for us by suffering.

The only ultimate reason for Bethlehem is Jerusalem; the only reason in God's mind for becoming a Child was so that He might, as man, die on the Cross. In a word, the mystery of Christmas is the mystery of God's unfathomable love that wants to suffer. God took on human flesh so that He might be able to endure pain. That is the mystery of Christmas, the mystery of God's love, in order that loving, He might endure the Cross.

What is the mystery of the Eucharist? It is the same. You would think that God's love would have been satisfied

with His becoming man and as man living, suffering and dying for our sins. And having once died, rising from the dead and returning as man to the Father from whom He came. But no, the mystery of God's love is that He invented a way of showing His love for us not only by being with us and near us but God even invented a way of being inside of us. All of this tells us a lot about what love means.

Love wants to show that it loves. It is not satisfied with sentiments or words. Love wants to prove its love in deeds; better, it wants to show its love in pain. Love wants to be near the one it loves, to be united with the one it loves. All of this is hidden behind the mystery of the Eucharist, made possible by the mystery of Christmas, because these two mysteries are really one. The Eucharist is merely an extension, a continuation, of what happened 2000 years ago in Bethlehem. Because Mary gave birth to the Son of God, we now have the Flesh of the Son of God near us, with us, and when we receive Him in Communion, within us.

Finally, what is the lesson? The lesson of Christmas and the Eucharist must be obvious by now. God does

(Contd.. on p. 49)

(Contd.. from p. 48)

nothing in vain. He did not choose to become man nor does He remain man in our midst except that He wants to evoke from us something of the same kind of love that He showed during His life on earth and still shows us in His life in the Eucharist. Jesus Christ gives us His Flesh and Blood to adore, worship and nourish our souls on, so that we might live with His life. What He wants us to do therefore, and this is the lesson, is to love Him as He has been loving us.

How has He been loving us? First of all, He loves us in simplicity. Is there anything more simple than a child, or anything more simple than the round wafer of the Eucharist? God wants us to love Him in simplicity. Above all, we must have no duplicity with God. He wants our whole heart, not just part of it. We are to love Him, therefore, simply, unqualifyingly, totally.

God wants us to love Him humbly. Is there anything more lowly than a baby? They are speechless, helpless; they must be fed and carried from place to place. And is there anything more unpretentious than what seems to be a piece of bread and a sip of wine? Yet as we know, real humility is always greatness hiding itself out of love. What a hard lesson for us to learn, to love this God of ours humbly.

We are to love God and, allowing Him to do with us as He pleases, we are to love God obediently. When God came into the world, He came as Scripture tells us, obedient first of all to His Father's Will; then, as a Child and through His growing manhood, He was obedient to His mother Mary and to Joseph. In the Eucharist, too, He is totally submissive. The moment a duly ordained priest pronounces the words of Consecration, Jesus Christ comes down on the altar, He obeys. This is our faith. And perhaps this is the hardest lesson to learn, to love God obediently. It means, as we know, obeying God not only interiorly or according to our own understanding or interpretation of God's Will, it means obeying God as that divine Will is explained and interpreted for us by His very fallible and weak human creatures.

These are the lessons that God wants us to learn from Christmas as a historical event and from Christmas as a perennial reality because, as you see, the Eucharist is Christmas. Believing in Christ's Real Presence, we have the grave responsibility of invoking, in faith, this Jesus, begging Him, pleading with Him that He might grant those graces—if need be, miraculous graces—that the sinful world He came to redeem so desperately needs. Jesus redeemed the world, but it is not redeemed unless we cooperate with His grace. And we must cooperate with His grace not only for ourselves, but for the whole world, so that Jesus' coming into the world will not, for any soul, have been in vain.

Christmas --- A festival of Joy

Christmas is just around the corner and once again the curtain rises for the birthday celebration of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world and the founder of Christianity. The One who came into this world 2014 years ago is the reason for jubilation even today. This is simply because in Him we get the feeling that God is with us. It was for Him that humankind anxiously, almost impatiently waited for centuries.

One of the greatest excitements during the Christmas season is the preparation of the crib. History tells us that it was St. Francis of Assisi who pioneered the making of cribs. In a crib we have Baby Jesus, Mother Mary, St. Joseph, angels, the three wise men (Magi), shepherds and domestic animals. There is a calm and serene atmosphere.

This Christmas, let us like angels spread the good news among all those who do not know about Jesus.

Christmas is the story of a little babe born to poor parents, Mary and Joseph in a little town in Bethlehem some 2014 years ago.

Christmas is not only a gift-giving time but also a time to be recipient of God's love and care. It is an attitude – an event of the heart, not a season of the year. It is an event that should touch a little of our life for an entire year. It is an occasion for joy to ring throughout the chambers of the heart.

Christmas to Christians is a time for reflection and a time to share one's joys and sorrows. It is the time to reach out and touch the life of another person with love and warmth. It is the time to share love and friendship, care and concern.

Christmas reminds us of so many things like the crib, Santa Claus and the singing of carols.

Among the various celebrations connected with Christmas, the sending of cards to friends and relatives has become a ritual.

Another feature of this festival is the installing of Christmas trees. Little fir trees or replicas of them are decorated and gifts are placed on them.

The tradition of Santa Claus originated in Belgium where San Nicholas became the patron saint of children. Today, Santa Claus is known by various names in different parts of the world like Joulupukki, Sinster Klass, Grandfather Frost, Papa Noel, Julemanden, San Niklaw and Shengdan Laoren.



—Jubel D'Cruz, Dombivili

' The Christmas Holly'

by Peter Castellino

Holly is connected to Christmas and associated festivals for centuries is a common name of shrub groups and small trees-two best known are American and English holly evergreen trees with glossy green leaves and red berries for making attractive Christmas wreaths.

Holly is the common name of Aquifoliaceae member trees and shrubs in Central and South America.

Evergreen English Holly -Ilex Aquifolium-common European holly grown in North America has a close association with Christmas and several varieties with variegated leaves and red, yellow, white and black berries besides 300 species worldwide exist.-and 15 species are from North America-ie Family Aquifolaceae and the American Holly I Opaca too is similar.

The Christmas berry - Hetermeles arbutifolia is a rose family member - an evergreen shrub or tree twenty feet or 6 metres native to southern California's low mountains has erect branches from a short trunk, sharply toothed shiny leaves, white flower clusters and persistent red fruits ripening in November and December-thus an excellent ornamental in mild climates-its branches have red berries are sold for Christmas decoration is tollon, toyon or Christmas holly. The US and Canada or American species -15 in number are 40 to 50 feet-12 to 15 metres tall with dark green leathery leaves and spines on edges and red fruit not red berries but drupes-fruits with stones on the pistillate or female trees are poisonous.

UK's favourite ornamental tree is English holly of hedges with white flowers bloom in May when the hawthorn makes the English countryside white with blossoms and Hollywood is a very hard and close grain used in musical instruments, furniture and interior decoration-the inner bark has a sticky mate-



rial called birdlime.

Leaves of American species are made into a tea like drink called mate.

The American Holly popular for its decorative and spiny leaves and red berries have become scarce as a result and their hard white wood is used for cabinet making and related purposes is closely grained and polishes easily.

Yerba Mate or Paraguay Tea-I Paraguarienses ios an important tea like beverage in South America and tea and other medicinal preparations are produced from some family members like Yaupon and Winterberry or Feverish of E North America.

Wild or mountain holly-nemopanthus mucronota is a deciduous E North American shrub and many species of this family are used as ornaments.

Holly is classified in the division of Maynaliophyta class Maynioporida Order Celastralis Family Aquifolia icia.

Holly was used in houses and churches at Christmas tide and named holy tree thus the name holly.

Like the songs, Christmas and festivals and trees associated with holly its origins are in Northern Europe where it was a plant important to the pagans-its green leaves with slightly jagged edges is why the Druids used it as a ceremonial head-wear when they went into the forests and the name of the Druid priests of ancient Britain is derived from the oak tree they venerated.

Holly's uses of the IbeX tree leaves are from the Druid's pre-Christian practice of decorating altars with it in winter and holly was offered to God - Saturn during the Roman festival Saturnalia-the sacred plant of Saturn was highly valued by Romans-all Saturn's images are shown with him and holly besides being a special gift interchanged with a high regard for its symbolism.

Holly gained importance when Christians put it in decorations on doors

(Contd.. on p. 51)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



from

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(Contd.. from p. 50)

to avoid persecution.

Holly's power to prevent unforeseeable trouble was not only for problems early creatures could inflict but also demonic forces so hanging holly on home doors could stall the entry of terrifying spectres likely to attack on holy days.

Gaining more acceptance as an essential Christmas festival symbol holly's purpose was less recognized by Christians in yearly celebrations and its symbolism is to Christ's crucifixion where he wore a crown of thorns causing him to bleed from his head and thus holly resembles Christ's makeshift crown and the berries symbolised the blood that oozed forth from him during his darkest hours and so it is more of a religious symbol with metaphorical description of the popular plant.

It is of two types the She Holly and the He Holly distinguishable by leaf properties- the she holly with a smoother surface making it more feminine while the he holly is more prickly and rougher making it more masculine.

Holly is viewed as a decorative piece in homes and festivals but its history is more significant in grand religious traditions and pagan belief systems.

Thus we see the importance of the Christmas Holly.

Trees were worshipped as gods and dwellings of good and evil spirits and still revered in some parts of the world and sacred trees and groves existed and still exist.

The Bible makes early reference to the tree of knowledge-the pomegranate was revered by Jews and Persians as the forbidden fruit.

The asoka or sorrow-less tree - Saraca indica and bo tree -Ficus religiosa is sacred to the Buddhists-the first tree under which Gautama Buddha was born and the other under which he meditated and attained enlightenment.

The Hindu divinity Vishnu -Visnu was born under the bo tree and the banyan tree -Ficus benghalensis is sacred to Hindus who believe Brahma was made into a banyan.

Just-A-Pause : The Presen(ts)ce @ Christmas

by Arlene Clarence

With Christmas upon us, I could not let this season go by without penning my thoughts on how life cheers up at this time of the year, or rather, it is supposed to!



It is thought to be a time to put all our troubles and worries

on hold. But is it practically possible? For that to happen, we might as well cease to live then. Oh Com'on!! Who are we kidding?! However, with shopping-takes-the-blues-away concept, we'd rather be mauled at the Malls, than queue up for confessions. And although this is supposedly the time to forgive and forget, mend fences and build bridges, call up or write to long forgotten friends; so clichéd one might say, we'd rather doll up, embrace and throw kisses in the air – all in the name of Christmas wishes or the more secular "Seasons Greetings" or "Happy Holidays" as it's called today. Besides, everything is so commercialized now that even sanctity has become a commodity.

In a cynical view, Christmas has become so divorced from religion that there is little conflict over indulging in its celebration. "Lets all Celebrate" culture has penetrated our society in terms of Santa Claus, ritual of gifting, the Christmas dance and general festivity; not forgetting the Christmas rum cake!

Interestingly, on our social networks this season some folks are busy analyzing who is actually driving the social sleigh – Santa or Rudolph?! Unfortunately, the reason for this season features nowhere.

I would like to wish everyone in their Celebration for Christmas to have a sense of preparation, expectation, security and love. Let us thank God for the gift of His Son and welcome Christ back into Christmas today.

Let His presence take precedence over our presents.

The Many Meanings of Christmas

Capt. Mervin John Lobo

Has the birth of the Child Jesus truly changed the history of humanity? Is it true that the powerful understood immediately the importance of that birth? Why do we measure time based on that event in Bethlehem?

What is the significance in history of the figure of the Child Jesus and, specifically, of the crib made by St. Francis?

We know that the early Christians, all of them being of the Jewish religion, observed the Sabbath, but on the following day, that is the present Sunday, they gathered to commemorate the Resurrection. Hence, the first celebration held par excellence was Easter. Subsequently, other events of Jesus' life began to be celebrated, such as the birth fixed on Dec. 25, namely, on the same day in which previously the Sol invictus was celebrated, that is, the celebration of



not being overcome by darkness, given that the winter solstice had passed, the days began to be longer and light imposed itself on the darkness of the night. From celebration they passed to representation and from there to pilgrimages to Bethlehem, the city of David, from whose descent Jesus was born.

The pilgrimages -- at once an expression and incentive of the relationship with the places of Jesus' life -- were the engine for the narration and representation of Jesus' humanity. It is in this context that Brother Francis of Assisi's desire is situated, expressed to the people of Greccio, Italy, in 1223, in order to see "with human eyes," how the Child Jesus was laid to rest in a crib between the donkey and the ox. And thus, on Christmas Eve, on the crib where the two animals of tradition were, the Eucharist was celebrated in such a way that one could see "with the eyes

of the body" the bread and wine consecrated and believe, thanks to the Holy Spirit, in the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ.

ZENIT: In a secularized world such as today's, the birth of the Child Jesus is trivialized and inserted in the context of a "myth," in which children alone can believe. According to Christians, why has this birth changed the world?

Father Messa: It could be that the worst demystification of Christmas is not that of believing that it is a myth, but its reduction to a celebration of kindness, altruism, of helping the needy. It's not that these things are unimportant, or that they are not present in the Gospel, but what is key is that Jesus came to us because he has opted for our poverty. He gives us his hand to the end, when his arm will be stretched on the cross. As the Poor Clare Sister Chiara Tarcisia, of the St.

(Contd.. on p. 53)

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Clare pro-monastery of Assisi, said in the last months of her life: "What is important in life is to love, but especially to allow oneself to be loved!" And Christmas is a propitious time to allow oneself to be loved. This doesn't lead us to passivity because Jesus loves us as we are, but he doesn't leave us as we are. His presence transforms and initiates a new humanity.

Why do Christians speak of Jesus as Savior?

Jesus of Nazareth -- a village from which, according to some, nothing good could come -- walked on the roads of Palestine and, as happens with other persons, they also wondered who He was. The answers to such questions were the most diverse, but one who is not enclosed in his own schemes realizes that every answer is inadequate or, better said, not very exhaustive. And thus his reality as Messiah was increasingly recognized, that is, the anointed by the Most High and, hence, the Savior.

However, the person of Jesus, even when arriving at some definitive certainties in the dogmas, opens constant questions and, as the saints show us, there is always something more to astonish us; that is, something to pause to contemplate with wonder.

The date, the star, the Wise Men, are these the elements to remember Christmas as an event that happened in history?

The account of Jesus has been given within the coordinates of history, that is, in a place and time: the place is that of Palestine and the time is -- as we say in the Creed -- "under Pontius Pilate." However, this isn't enough because many saw his humanity, listened to his word, admired also the miracles he wrought, but only some believed in his divinity. As St. Francis of Assisi says in his first Admonition, the disciples saw his humanity "with human eyes," but they believed in his divinity. Hence, in Jesus there is a real history but also something that surpasses history; that is why it is important, that there should be a

reason open to the mystery and a reasoned faith. Otherwise, we will fall into rationalism or fideism.

Jesus is a rational event, but which surpasses reason and when reason wishes to understand everything, that is, when it has the pretension of understanding it all, one falls into rationalism. Likewise, when faith excludes history and the discoveries of reason, it becomes a fideism that appears deviant, even violent.

In addition to Christians, are there others who have given importance to the birth that occurred more than 2,000 years ago?

Why does the greater part of humanity mark time from that birth?

In 313 the Edict of Milan was issued which in a certain sense marked the end of the persecutions; subsequently Christianity became the official religion. Thus, the computation of time began to be marked from his birth, recognizing in it the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies and promises, as well as the beginning of a new era.

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Did you know that?

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In Victorian times the postmen wore a red tunic as part of their uniform. They were nicknamed Robin Redbreasts after the birds. Each postman was a servant of the Crown whose regal colour also contained red. Postal workers often worked over the Christmas holiday and even delivered presents and cards on Christmas Day. This association earned the Robin with his red breast a place on an early Christmas card and started a popular Christmas image.

**Compiled by:
Jubel D'Cruz, Dombivili**

After 'A Christmas Carol', Charles Dickens wrote several other Christmas stories. But none of them were as successful as the first.

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12 Little Known Laws Of Karma That Will Change Your Life

What is Karma?

Karma is the Sanskrit word for action. It is equivalent to Newton's law of 'every action must have a reaction'. When we think, speak or act we initiate a force that will react accordingly. This returning force maybe modified, changed or suspended, but most people will not be able eradicate it. This law of cause and effect is not punishment, but is wholly for the sake of education or learning. A person may not escape the consequences of his actions, but he will suffer only if he himself has made the conditions ripe for his suffering.

Ignorance of the law is no excuse whether the laws are man-made or universal. To stop being afraid and to start being empowered in the worlds of karma and reincarnation, here is what you need to know about karmic laws.

1. THE GREAT LAW

- "As you sow, so shall you reap". This is also known as the "Law of Cause and Effect".
- Whatever we put out in the Universe is what comes back to us.
- If what we want is Happiness, Peace, Love, Friendship... Then we should BE Happy, Peaceful, Loving and a True Friend.

2. CREATION

- Life doesn't just HAPPEN, it requires our participation.
- We are one with the Universe, both inside and out.



- Whatever surrounds us gives us clues to our inner state.

- BE yourself, and surround yourself with what you want to have present in your Life.

3. HUMILITY

- What you refuse to accept, will continue for you.
- If what we see is an enemy, or someone with a character trait that we find to be negative, then we ourselves are not focused on a higher level of existence.

4. GROWTH

- "Wherever you go, there you are".
- For us to GROW in Spirit, it is we who must change – and not the people, places or things around us.
- The only given we have in our lives is

OURSELVES and that is the only factor we have control over.

- When we change who and what we are within our heart our life follows suit and changes too.

5. RESPONSIBILITY

- Whenever there is something wrong in my life, there is something wrong in me.
- We mirror what surrounds us – and what surrounds us mirrors us; this is a Universal Truth.
- We must take responsibility what is in our life.

6. CONNECTION

- Even if something we do seems inconsequential, it is very important that it gets done as everything in the Universe is connected.
- Each step leads to the next step, and

(Contd.. on p. 57)

(Contd.. from p. 56)

- so forth and so on.
- Someone must do the initial work to get a job done.
- Neither the first step nor the last are of greater significance,
- As they were both needed to accomplish the task.
- Past-Present-Future they are all connected...

7. THE LAW OF FOCUS

- You can't think of two things at the same time.
- When our focus is on Spiritual Values, it is impossible for us to have lower thoughts such as greed or anger.

8. THE LAW OF GIVING AND HOSPITALITY

- If you believe something to be true, then sometime in your life you will be called upon to demonstrate that particular truth.

- Here is where we put what we CLAIM that we have learned, into actual

9. PRACTICE. THE LAW OF HERE AND NOW

- Looking backward to examine what was, prevents us from being totally in the HERE AND NOW.

- Old thoughts, old patterns of behaviour, old dreams...
- Prevent us from having new ones.

10. THE LAW OF CHANGE

- History repeats itself until we learn the lessons that we need to change our path.

11. PATIENCE AND REWARD

- All Rewards require initial toil.
- Rewards of lasting value require

patient and persistent toil.

- True joy follows doing what we're suppose to be doing, and waiting for the reward to come in on its own time.

12. SIGNIFICANCE AND INSPIRATION

- You get back from something whatever YOU have put into it.
- The true value of something is a direct result of the energy and intent that is put into it.
- Every personal contribution is also a contribution to the Whole.
- Lack lustre contributions have no impact on the Whole, nor do they work to diminish it.
- Loving contributions bring life to, and inspire, the Whole.

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The Computer Won't Turn On?

**Agnelo Rodrigues,
Wadala E**

The other day, I came home from work and wanted to check my Facebook and E-mail. I made myself a cup of coffee and sat down at my computer, pushed the power button and nothing happened...

I tried a couple more times, then checked if it's plugged into the wall – nothing. I later discovered that it was relatively easy to fix, but I had to ask a bunch of people until I managed to come up with a solution. The whole ordeal got me thinking that, if this happened to me, it must happen to many people. This is why I've created a simple guide to saving one's computer.



The computer won't turn on

First, you have to ascertain whether it is the computer that isn't turning on, or just the screen. Most computers today have cooling fans that make a "fwoosh" noise when they're working. If your computer is making that noise, but the screen is still dark, click [here](#) for the screen section.

Now that we know that the computer isn't turning on, follow these steps:

Desktop

Check to see if the computer is plugged into the power socket. *(Make sure you check both the outlet, and the computer itself, to see that the power cord is indeed connected on both ends)*

Unplug the computer from the wall and leave it unplugged.

Check the cord for damages.

Press the power button twice – this is done to discharge any static electricity that might be interfering with the computer.

Plug the computer back into the power socket and turn it on.

If the computer still won't turn on, unplug it again, and check another socket – one you know is working. *(It's possible that the power outlet you've been using isn't working)*

Laptop

Check that the power adapter is plugged into the wall and to the computer.

Inspect the cord for damage.

Try a different power socket.

If possible, unplug the laptop, remove the battery and check it for visible damage, and then plug the battery back into the laptop, plug the power adapter and try again.

If during these steps you see or hear sparks or electrical flashes, or happen to smell smoke, unplug the computer and get a technician.

The computer turns on, then powers off

(either instantly or within a couple of minutes)

In a laptop, this usually indicates that the battery is either drained or faulty. To be sure, plug the laptop into the wall and see if the issue persists. If it works, it means that the battery was drained, and if the problem repeats whenever you unplug the laptop, it means that the

(Contd.. on p. 59)

(Contd.. from p. 58)

battery is faulty, and you may need to replace it.

In a desktop,

it can mean that the computer is overheating and powering down to avoid hardware damage, or that one or more hardware pieces are not working properly. Usually, overheating occurs when an internal cooling fan isn't working, or that the computer might be full of dust, which prevents the proper dissipation of heat. If you do not know how to clean your computer or change the fan, or if the issue persists - contact a technician.

The computer turns on, but the screen won't

In a desktop, check that the screen is on. Most screens have a "sleep" function, which switches them off when you power down your computer to save power. The best way to know if your screen is turned off, or stuck in "sleep" mode, is to look for the power indicator. If the little light (usually at the bottom of the screen) is off, try the following:

Push the 'ON' button, on the screen.
(Repeat after each step)

Check that the screen's power cord is connected to the screen and the power socket.

Like
(The 3 most common display cables and connectors)

Unplug the cord and inspect for damages.

Unplug the cord from the wall and test another power outlet.

If the problem persists – it may indicate that the screen is faulty and may need to be replaced.

If the power indicator is on or flash-

ing, that means that the screen is receiving power, but did not get the "wake up" signal from the computer.

Check that the cord connecting the screen to the computer is plugged on both ends.

Unplug the cord and inspect for damages.

If the problem persists, it may indicate that either the cord is not working, the screen is faulty or that your computer's graphics card is not working properly – so contact a technician.

In a laptop

Turn the laptop off.

Unplug from the power outlet.

Remove the battery for 30 seconds, and then put it back in

Plug it into the wall and power it on again.

If the screen doesn't switch on, or the issue repeats itself, it indicates a hardware problem, and you should contact a technician.

Check any newly installed hardware:

Many operating systems, especially Windows, can conflict with new drivers. The driver may be badly written, or it may conflict with another process. Windows will usually notify you about devices that are causing a problem, or have a problem. To check this use the Device Manager, this can be accessed by entering the Control Panel, clicking the System icon, clicking the Hardware tab, and clicking on Device Manager. Use this to check and arrange the properties of hardware.

Run a virus and malware scan:

Performance problems can be caused by malware on the computer. Running a virus scan can unearth any problems. Use a commonly updated virus scanner (such as Norton Antivirus or Avast! Antivirus) and a commonly updated malware scanner (such as Spybot Search & Destroy).

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Christmas – Songs in the Night

 Denis Khan

The Islamic Militant (IM) juggernaut was advancing menacingly towards the Syrian town of Kobani.

Teenager Perwin Mustafa joined the Resistance Movement to defend her city along with three of her friends.

Two months later, Perwin was mortally wounded and died on November 5.

All her friends were also killed by the IM. The town was plunged into mourning.

In a stark study covering 162 countries, by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), a global think tank for World Peace, only 11 were conflict free at present.

Among the eleven countries was Costa Rica, which abolished its army in 1948.

Yet small arms possession has increased everywhere.

Apart from the macro level tragedy, we are intimately familiar with our personal and communitarian grief at the loss of our dear ones or personal and family tragedies in health, finance, and relational intimacy hurts.

As the world celebrates Christmas amidst glittering Malls, Homes, and Festive accoutrements, we wonder about the Real meaning of Christmas.

Christmas is a season of joy. Yet it is also a season of sadness and sorrow.



The Savior was born in a borrowed stable. He Went about Facing Rejection and Humiliation. The Last Supper was held in a borrowed room. He was crucified as a Criminal outside the gates (Hebrews13:5) to avoid pollution of the city He Chose to Live in.

Mother Mary held the Dead Body of her Crucified Son.

Thousands of innocent babes were slaughtered by Herod.

The massacre continues by our acceptance of X-Spam-Subject: YES X-Spam-Subject: YES Abortion and our preference for Recreational Sex over Pro Creational Generational continuity.

In his darkness, Job praised “God, my maker, who giveth songs in the night.” - (Job 35:10).

It was a divine song, which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and

there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” (Habakkuk 3:17 -18).

In the darkness surrounding our lives, let us remember the Love and Mercy of our Divine Savior. ‘He Who Did Not Spare His Own Son but handed Him over for us all, how will He not also Give us everything else along with Him?’ (Romans8:32).

St. Paul mentioned that the human ear is not allowed to hear heavenly music. (2Corinthians12:4). The human hearing is limited to about 20db – 200db. Yet the shepherds heard Angelic music.

Since our Maker gives songs in the night, amidst the celebrations let us remember the Angelic message: “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God n the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2: 12-13).

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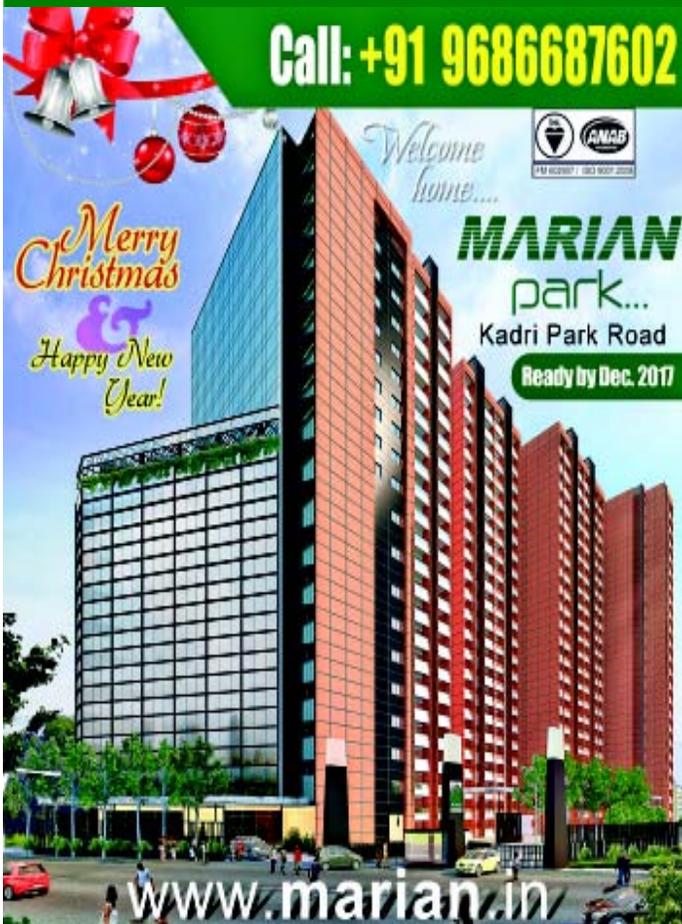
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A song was heard at Christmas. To wake the midnight sky.
A Saviour's birth, and peace on earth and praise to God on high.

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