

THE SECULAR CITIZEN

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A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

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Robots in Kerala distribute masks and sanitisers

Kochi, March 18, 2020: An unconventional battle has been waged by the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) against the spread of the novel coronavirus by using two robots.

Of the pair of computer-programmed machines developed by Asimov Robotics which is a startup incubated at KSUM in Kochi, one distributes masks, sanitiser and napkins in a bid to check Covid-19 while the other screens details about the World Health Organisations campaign to contain the disease, a press release said, news agency PTI reports.

Asimov CEO Jayakrishnan T said a general public apathy towards preventive measures against the novel coronavirus has prompted the solutions-provider company to go for such a drive.

The use of robots in the campaign has invited public attention, also considering the propensity of the novel coronavirus to spread through human contact.

KSUM Chief Executive Officer Saji Gopinath said the institution was



mulling over installing such robots in public places such as airports.

All startups being incubated at KSUM too were being given health guidelines in the context of coronavirus, he added.

The 2006-founded KSUM is a nodal agency of the Kerala government for entrepreneurship development and incubation activities in the state.

Coronavirus: Bombay Catholics exempted from Sunday obligation

Mumbai, March 18, 2020: Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, has exempted Catholics in the archdiocese from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until March 31 in the wake of social distancing measures to help contain the spread of COVID-19.

Cardinal Gracias, in an official communication on March 17, also urged all those sick or having a weakened medical condition not to come to church for Mass. In addition, anyone with fever or cough or over the age of 60 and vulnerable to contracting coronavirus has been urged to stay away from Mass.

The cardinal also issued a video on YouTube on this.

The cardinal also said that since the period of Lent was on, the faithful should, particularly on Sundays, pray together at the family rosary, make the way of the cross or have a meditative reading of the Bible for 15 minutes.

Cardinal Gracias also informed that he was asking the Liturgical Commission to prepare a liturgy of the Word which parishioners can use at home. He also urged that for all those convenient, he would be offering Sunday Mass that would be streamed on the Eucharist on YouTube.

“These norms will be revised in early April and further directions will be given. In the meantime, you are advised to reduce socializing and stay at home as much as possible. Do use this opportunity to bond with the family and listen to the lord in silence and prayer,” Cardinal Gracias said in his official communication.

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Covid19.... 'Never let a good crisis go waste'

By Don Aguiar

A question for the doctors here. Isn't the incidence of flu as prevalent in India (a relatively warm country) as in colder countries and since coronavirus is a new strain in that family of viruses, why would Indians end up ultimately experiencing a lesser incidence than most other countries?

There is a possibility that cases are being missed. At present people coming into the country are mainly monitored, especially from areas where the coronavirus is very prevalent. There's no mechanism to test others who have flu like symptoms. And at present, there's a very high prevalence of such patients. But they are not tested for coronavirus as there is only one centre (at Kasturba hospital, near Nair hospital) in Mumbai where the PCR test is done.

At the same time, have not seen any reported outbreak of patients having severe viral pneumonia or ARDS from any of the hospitals. Therefore the actual picture is really not known. But it's better to be on the safe side and follow guidelines.

The infectivity is indeed alarming. A family from Pune returned to MUMBAI after a Middle East tour with 40 others from Veena World travels. They took a cab from Mumbai airport to Pune. They all tested positive along with the cab driver! So even if it's a very mild infection with only 1% mortality, if it's going to spread alarmingly, the number of infected persons will grow exponentially. In a country with 2.2 billion, and with so much overcrowding in the urban areas, we might soon have a few million infected till it plateaus. Even 1% of a few million means several thousand deaths and an equal number seriously affected. Our already overloaded hospitals could get flooded. Then what? The possibilities are indeed alarming.

Nobody has been "immune", for lack of a better word, to the news about what has been happening in China over the last couple of weeks and now spread worldwide the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) which, after

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SARS a few years ago, seems to have overwhelmed the system in China, in both the rate of spread and number of infected. What angers most of us about this is that there seems to have been no lessons learned from the 2003 SARS outbreak, which was caused by the transmission of a virus from animal to human at a market where wild animals were sold for food. To top it all off, this new epidemic got going around the time of the world's largest human migration, Chinese New Year.

We trust that the Chinese government is doing all it can to contain the outbreak, but equally important is to learn lessons from this outbreak and implement measures and education to try to prevent another cross-species contagion.

I don't wish to be a Pete Repeat, but it does seem that the corona virus is on everyone's agenda at the moment. Events are being postponed or cancelled, flights have never been as cheap as they are now, and tickets have never had as few restrictions to change as now is the case.

The latest report from China tells us that things are improving, so now it is a question of whether the information from China can be trusted or not. Given the size of China, which sometimes is overlooked by foreigners, it does mean that there could be doubt about what we are being told by the authorities.

It does seem that greater parts of Asia are safer places to be right now than Europe where Italy is standing out as the hardest hit and, as a country, virtually in a lock down mode.

It is impossible even to begin imagining the costs to the world, each country, people's businesses and livelihood of this virus as travel (and thereby travel-related businesses such as hotels, travel agencies, airlines, etc.) and people's movements grind to a halt. Let us all hope, and pray, that this virus will be eradicated

as soon as possible.

We are all most certainly in the same boat, and in this boat, there is no first, business, or economy class I think. Whether the virus will trigger a collapse of the world economy (or "correction" as they say in the financial industry) remains to be seen, but the fact remains that the world is in debt more than ever before and the easy printing of money, to keep on fuelling and inflating the value of assets, must sooner or later be rectified.

It seems, the more there is written about the causes of the Coronavirus – the more the written analyses are overshadowed by a propaganda and fear-mongering hype. Questions for the truth and arguments for where to look for the origins and how the virus may have spread and how to combat it, are lost in the noise of wanton chaos. But isn't that what the "Black Men" behind this intended pandemic want – chaos, panic, hopelessness, leading to human vulnerability – a people becoming easy prey for manipulation?

Many around the world are worried about how the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) will affect their lives, as we are seeing unprecedented travel bans and closures to public buildings and large gatherings.

Also, in some areas of the world, many are quarantined because the outbreak is now in their community or someone was infected in their school or place of employment. In these locations, schools are closed, or people are unable to get to work or grocery stores.

This ambiance of panic and fear – outstrips any sense of reality, when the truth doesn't matter. People can't even think any more about the causes and what may be behind it. Nobody believes you (anymore), when you refer to Event 201, the coronavirus simulation, the Wuhan Military Games, the closing last August 7, of the high-security biological war lab at Fort Detrick, Maryland.... what could have at one point been an eye opener for many, today is sheer conspiracy theory. The

power of propaganda. A destabilizing power – destabilizing countries and people, destroying economies, creating hardship for people who may lose their jobs, usually the ones who least can afford it.

Also, at this time it becomes increasingly important to remind people that the outbreak in China was targeting the Chinese genome. Did it later mutate to transgress the 'borders' of Chinese DNA? When did that happen, if it happened? Because at the beginning it was clear that even the infected victims in other parts of the world, were to 99.9% of Chinese descent.

What happened later, when the virus spread to Italy and Iran, is another issue, and opens the way to a number of speculations?

China has been purposely targeted for "economic destruction", because of her rapidly advancing economy, an economy soon to overtake that of the now hegemon, the US of A, and because of China's strong currency, the Yuan, also potentially overtaking the dollar as the world's main reserve currency.

Both occurrences would mean the end of US dominance over the world. The coronavirus disease, now in more than 80 countries, has crashed the stock markets, a decline of at least 20% over the last few weeks – and rising; the feared consequences from the virus of an economic slow-down, if not recession, has slashed petrol prices within about two weeks almost in half. However, without China's central bank interference, the Yuan's value vis-à-vis the dollar has been rather stable, at around 7 Yuan to the dollar. That means, the Chinese economy, despite COVID-19, is receiving still much trust around the globe.

With a stable Yuan the Chinese may buy all the US and European corporate shares they can at current rock-bottom prices from the stock markets that collapsed by a fifth or more, plus buy lots of oil futures. When the prices recover, they have not only made

(Contd.. on p. 7)



Spiritual Communion Unites

Speaking at the end of his Sunday Angelus address on 15 March 2020, Pope Francis recalled the Church's spiritual communion! (Some Highlights):

"In this pandemic situation (coronavirus), in which we find ourselves living more or less isolated lives, we are invited to rediscover and deepen the value of a communion which unites all members of the Church!"

"United with Christ we are never alone, but we form a single Body of which Christ is the Head! (cf. Ephesians 4:15). It is a union that is nourished with prayer, but especially with 'spiritual communion in the Eucharist'! It is a highly recommended practice when it is not possible to receive the Sacrament!"

"The Samaritan woman had the courage to proclaim the Good News of the Messiah to others" (John 4:39). So, if our searching and our thirst find their full fulfillment in Christ, we will be able to show that salvation does not lie in 'things' of this world, but in the One Who loved us and always loves us: Jesus Christ Our Savior! (cf. John 3:16).

"I pray that Mary Most Holy helps us to cultivate the desire for Christ, the Source of living water! He is the only One Who satisfies the thirst for life and love that we carry in our hearts."

—*Dr. Hazel Colaso,
Bandra (W), Mumbai.*

Closure of religious places due to

Corona-virus outbreak

It is for the first time in the history of mankind that all religious places of all major religions of the world are closed due to the fear of Corona-virus, as it may spread more because of large gatherings of the people. Pope Francis left the Vatican City unannounced and visited two churches, where he prayed in front of a crucifix that was used in a procession when the plague hit Rome in 1522. He prayed for an end to the pandemic and also for the sick, their families and health providers and workers keeping pharmacies and food stores open amid a national lockdown. It is really very sad for all of us and it is time for us to stay in prayer and confess our sins to God. I request everyone to please pray for the entire world. May God protect us and save us from this epidemic and help our scientists to develop a vaccine for the treatment of this monster disease. Please pray for the doctors and medical professionals too who are working day and night in helping us. May God protect them and bless their families with good health and prosperity.

—*Jubel D'Cruz,
Mumbai*

Social distancing: A National imperative

Prime Minister Modi's national broadcast exhorting the people to exercise self-restraint and to observe a 14-hour 'Janata curfew' on Sunday March 22 from 7.A. M to 9 P M., has come not a day too soon, when the entire world is up in arms combating

the virulent Corona virus (Covid-19) on a war footing. India being at stage 2 of the viral spread, 'social distancing' is the need of the hour to contain the spread of the virus before it enters stage 3, which is the penultimate stage of the spread of the killer virus, which becomes unstoppable and undetected. Italy is one country that is paying the price today for its negligence and timely action that is responsible for the increase in the number of daily infections and deaths that makes Italy today the epicentre of the virus, in place of China, where the virus is presumably on its way out, after sustained efforts by the Chinese govt. So, while commending prime minister Modi for his 'Janata curfew', the experiment could be further extended to every Sunday for a period of 4 weeks, in view of the severity of the infection.

—*A. F. Nazareth,
Alto Porvorim*

Time to deliver

Clapping and clanging done, it's time for a financial package for daily wage earners and those employed in the unorganised sector. It's time for ramping up capacities. Daily updates on new coronavirus cases and deaths is fine, but what we need is daily updates on number of new beds added, the number of tests done, and the number of new testing labs.

—*Prof Robert Castellino*

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DKK students sparkle at Annual Day at Prathnalaya

The Annual cultural day is a very important day for all schools, even a music school, says Verus Ferreira



The 4th Annual Day of the Divya Kala Kendra – Fine Arts centre for Education was held on Saturday 14th March at Prathnalaya began with the auspicious lighting of the ceremonial lamp

and Violinist) and the daughters of the Chief Guest.

This was followed by the cultural programme starting with the Lamp Dance, which exemplifies the importance of the lamp that leads us from

ents and teachers. She quoted the late Dr. Abdul Kalam “All of us do not have equal talent. But, all of us have an equal opportunity to develop our talents.”



darkness towards light. The perennial existence of Music and its spiritual essence was felt in the song *I'd like to build a world a home* that symbolizes ‘Harmony’ was truly exhibited in the scintillating performance by the tiny tots of DKK. All this in keeping in tune with this year’s theme – ‘Living in Perfect Harmony’.

At the event, 40 music students who appeared for the Trinity Grade Examination and 14 dance students who appeared for Bharatnatyam grade exam under Akhil Bhartiya, Gandharva University, Meerut were presented Certificates of Excellence. It was a joy to see parents and friends cheering each student as they climbed the dais to receive their certificates from the distinguished guests. This year the award for the Best Student of the Year 2019 was awarded to Ms. Denelle D’souza, while the Certificate of Excellence 2019 was awarded to Mr. Krish Paliwal. For the first time since DKK began, the teaching staff instituted a Best Teacher award 2019, with the first award presented to Sr Amita Mascarenhas.

by distinguished assembly of guests Chief Guest film actress Ms. Vaishali Irani, Guest of Honour bass guitarist Mr. Sheldon D’Silva and Special Invitees Bollywood music composer Ms Merlin D’souza and Dr. Paschol Carvalho (Doctorate in Microbiology

The Provincial Superior Sr Rose Mary, who could not be present, gave a very inspirational message which was read out by Sr Amita Mascarenhas. In her message she emphasised that everything comes to us from above with grace and blessings from God and the support and care of par-

The evening had more in store, from a Fusion Dance, a combination of

Bharat Natyam, Kathak and Western dance performed by the dance students of DKK to the well orchestrated Yoga Dance. The students of DKK also gave their own interpretation of *Ebony & Ivory* to the accompaniment of the keyboard and guitar. Talking about unity, you had the song *Sagar Ke Lehere* that gave the message that there is only one nature and one God, and we're just different people, having different paths to follow it and the end we all reached to one destination.

Chief Guest Ms. Vaishali Irani was visibly impressed by the impeccable performances showcased by the students across different grades. In her speech she appreciated the choice of theme and its immense impact on the minds of youth. She appreciated the efforts of the teaching staff at imbuing a strong value system in the young aspiring students and urged parents to lay emphasis on inculcating the same.

In his address to the students Guest of Honour Sheldon D'Silva, pointed out that if one wanted to take up music as a profession, it's a way difficult world out there. *"We can develop an environment that's very good by just involving professionals and what they do. Parents need to keep pushing their kids letting them come out and perform, let them enjoy whatever they want to do"*. He also explained the nuances of the bass guitar and its importance in a band.

Ms Zenia Parmar a teacher for English vocal presented the Annual Report accentuating the progress of the school

since its inception and also highlighting the milestones achieved during the last academic year.

The audience was taken by surprise when the woman behind 'You are my Sonia' the spirited, feisty, and teeming with joie de vivre Merlin D'souza played keyboard with a few students and charmed the audience with the song, fusing it with a Gospel melody. Merlin who has represented the country globally got the audience on their feet.

As the evening drew to a close, students of the age group of 10 to 60 years came together to perform *Heal the World*, while the dance students took the audience all the way to Tamil Nadu with an enchanting performance of a Tamil Folk Dance with the students dressed in traditional Tamil finery.

Sr Valencia part of the teaching faculty, gave a vote of thanks. The DKK Annual Day wouldn't be a super success without the contribution and hard work from each parent who contributed in their own way to make it happen. On that note, we cannot forget Ashwin D'souza a parent who compeered the show along with students Cassandra and Andre.

Finally, the National Anthem was sung concluding an evening of grandeur.

By Verus Ferreira

Photos by Mario Almeida.

(Contd.. from p. 4)

billions, probably trillions from the west, but they also may own or hold significant and influence-yielding amounts of shares in most of the largest US and European corporations – and will be able to help call the shots of their future endeavours.

There is however, one little silver lining oscillating at the horizon full of dark clouds. It could miraculously be an awakening of consciousness of a critical mass that could put an end to it all. Although, we seem to be far from such a miracle, somewhere in a hidden corner of our brain, we all have a spark of consciousness left. We have the spiritual capacity to abandon the disaster path of western neoliberal capitalism, and instead espouse solidarity, compassion and love for each other and for our society. That may be the only way to break the gridlock and doom of western egocentric greed.-

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WHETHER THE IMPACT OF HIGH INCOME INEQUALITY ON THE EVOLVING BRAIN, MAKES IT NECESSARY FOR GOVERNMENTS TO CONTROL IT BY ENSURING THE POOREST FAMILIES GET A MINIMUM WAGE?

by Eric D'Sa

In recent years science has enabled us to map the activities occurring within the brain. The results state that the human brain keeps evolving over one's life, its very structure shaped by a wide variety of stimuli encountered over the years. Modern life has vastly expanded the scope of varied experiences. Income inequality is an undeniable reality in India and in most other parts of the world. The effects of poverty on health, education and other dimensions have been well documented. However only recent research studies are seeking to understand how income levels may be correlated with differences in the structure of the human brain and its development.

The brain's primary function is to enable cognition—the action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience and the senses. Unlike all other organs, which look and behave more or less the same from birth to death, we are now aware that the brain evolves constantly over a person's lifespan. This happens as a response to the brain's external environment—which is the totality of all stimuli which have historically been transmitted to the brain via all of the human senses. In other words, everything we ever saw, heard, smelt, tasted or touched has shaped our brain.

Unlike in a computer, where hardware and software are two disparate aspects, in the brain, form and function are deeply interwoven. Learning results in a change in the connectivity and structure of the brain, and therefore the type of activity it is able to produce, and the subsequent nature of learning it is capable of. It is an intricate feedback loop. The physical structure of the brain and its processing capacity are two sides of the same coin but are inter connected.

Science has shown us that the structure of the brain is shaped by the complex-

ity of the stimulus environment one encounters. Studies done on rodents, for example, show that placing the animal in a more complex or enriched environment with greater stimuli has far reaching impact on gene expression in the brain, the growth of new neurons and the number of connections between them, and how the animal learns better in time. This translates to changes in terms of brain volume and surface area. This is similar to human beings. The more things you see, hear, touch, taste or smell, the bigger and more complex your brain becomes.

YOU THE CITIZENS DECIDE:

Now if the above is true, it is also true that modern life presents a far more complex environment than ever before. Scientific progress over the past century has been accompanied by dramatic expansions in the rate and scope of the landscape of human stimulus experience. For example, motorized transport profoundly altered the scope of exploration of our environment and the speed of changes in our visual experience. In urban environments, the complexity of visual and physical encounters is further amplified by the greater variability of stimulus. Similarly, cell phones and the internet profoundly change the rate of access to information and formal education, which expands the scope of knowledge.

Therefore, one might expect that modern brains must be evolving and altering their capability and potential at a much faster rate. Indeed, the Scientific research has found that the electrical activity of brains living in "pre-modern" environments produce substantially less complex patterns compared to brains living in "modern" circumstances, in addition to a whole range of other differences. Yet, in India, more than almost any country on earth,

vast populations with little or no access to these elements of modernisation, sit alongside fast paced digitally connected urban ones. This will partly create social strife.

Access to modern complexity is largely determined by a person's income. By spending on things like technology, transport and education, one essentially buys a more complex and faster pace of stimulus to the brain. In the US, studies have shown that income, particularly childhood poverty, has a dramatic negative effect on brain volume and surface area, as well as the complexity of patterns of electrical activity produced by the brain. Conversely, years of education have been shown to bear a positive correlation with these aspects. In India too, research has shown a dramatic relationship between the complexity of brain activity and income.

When governments draw poverty lines, they typically go by what funds are sufficient to fuel the human body and thereby keep away hunger, but not what the mind needs. The cost of fuelling the mind is far higher.

Initial local research work on the development of the brain has found that there is little change in brain activity for those under ₹20,000 per month of income, after which there is a sharp increase, as income increases to around ₹60,000 per month. It is in this range that a person begins to go beyond the basics of food, clothing and shelter to afford fuel for the mind—better education, internet access and transport which provides better stimulus to the brain for himself and his family.

We have a long way to go to realize the cognitive potential of the country by providing the poor families higher basic income not only to meet their basic living needs but also those of their minds. We the Citizens should be aware that there are serious consequences of not doing so.

A Servant for the people

Would you like to be a “Bridesmaid”? Surely, so many young girls would jump to such a proposal. Why not? A Bridesmaid at a wedding, oh such a lovely feeling, a member of the bridal troupe! Along with the bride & the bridegroom, the spotlight, the cameras, the attention of the guests would be also on the bridesmaid. Perhaps, the bridesmaid would feel like she herself is the bride! Now let's come to another question, **Would you like to be a “handmaid”, a “maid servant”?** What happened, why the silence? Not interested, understandably so. Why a servant, like, who would want to be a servant? A servant does not have any status in society.

A servant in short, is a nobody! Many of us would like to have people at our beck and call.

What is the role of a bridesmaid? To assist the bride in her wedding preparations. To help her in choosing a pattern for her wedding dress, dresses for the page girls, etc., etc. To be at her side, not as a servant but a friend, a helpmate. But a servant is someone who is supposed to be doing all the menial work, generally looked down upon. An ordinary person, without any looks, a lowly person.

When the angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her about the child in her womb, she was terrified. Of course, her fears were justified. How could that sort of a thing happen to her, an unmarried woman? Mary was a lowly peasant woman, a nondescript would you like to call her? But the Lord chose her to bear the child, Jesus. Recall the words Mary uttered when her fears were calmed

by the angel, she said, **“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word”**. Mary accepted the role of a servant. She was going to be the mother of God. Mary must have been under stress, imagine shouldering the responsibility of giving birth and bringing up the son of God. But with faith in God, Mary lived her life as a servant of the Lord. She understood the needs of Jesus, she understood the needs of the people around her. The wedding feast at Cana is a fine example of Mary's concern for others.

Today we are living in a world which tells us to grow higher, faster, to chart out our own future, to be the boss not to be servant or a slave. And so we see people running after their goals, competing against one another, pulling down the others in order to reach the top before all the others. Go, go, go, the world is telling us. Everybody wants to be the boss. Everybody wants to be king.

When James and John told Jesus their wish, that they may sit 'one at your right and the other at your left', Jesus told them that they did not understand what they are saying. Jesus told them, **whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.**

So, where do we stand in today's fast paced world? In a world where people want to be one up on the

other? We need to understand what greatness is all about. On the one hand, the world is telling us to be the boss, to be the king, and we all seem to be ready to do that. Nobody has the time or the interest in helping somebody who is struggling in life. Nobody is interested in standing beside somebody who is in trouble, not even offering moral support. **When Jesus was on the way to Calvary. we see Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, walk along the way with Jesus. Mary the handmaid, was there at the foot of the cross, when Jesus' dead body was brought down from the cross. Jesus' body was laid on the laps of Mary, the handmaid of the Lord. Jesus, as he hangs on the cross is calling us to be the “handmaid, a servant” of the people. Does anybody want to be a servant? Any takers? What is our response?**



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UFS nun gets kidney from elder mentor....

-Ivan Saldanha-Shet

Secular Citizen readers are familiar with the 140 year old Fr Muller Hospital at Kankanady in Mangalore and the 130 year old indigenous Ursuline Franciscan Sisters (UFS) of Mangalore, from articles that have appeared in the weekly recently. Both these two great institutions are constantly in the limelight; now a rare heart touching case of humane generosity and compassion when an elderly nun decided to donate her kidney to a young nun. The whole complicated process was done at Fr.Muller's and documented. All are convinced it is the spiritual inspiration of Rev Sr. Aurea and God's hand.

The donor, Sr Aurea D'Souza UFS,



from a God fearing simple Konkani Catholic family of Suratkal, near the main sea port here, joined the UFS order on completion of her tertiary education in June 1969 deeply motivated by the goodness surrounding her. Asked about her magnanimous gesture, she smilingly said, "I feel happy to be an active participant of Mangalore Diocesan spirit of fostering, preserving and respecting human life. It is god's blessing and privilege!" The recipient is Sr Irene Laldinmawii, UFS serving in the congregation of Ursuline Sisters, was diagnosed with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). Sr Aurea, her 'Formator' at Holy Rosary Convent in



Seated left to right: Dr Manjunath J, Dr Manjunath Shetty, Sr Irene (recipient), Fr Rudolph D'Sa, Fr Richard Coelho, Sr Aurea (donor), Dr Uday Kumar and Dr Radesh Hegde at Father Muller Medical College Hospital.

Jeppu was moved on learning about her student Sr Irene's plight and dialysis ordeals. Without hesitation, Sr Aurea decided to donate her kidney to Sr Irene a native of Serchhip, Mizoram; She joined the Ursuline Franciscan Congregation in 1994. Sr.Aurea's close contact with her was during the year of her tertianship in preparation for the Final Profession in 2002. Interaction and encounters during this year built a spiritual bond that is everlasting. The fact that parameters were compatible,

facilitating the transplant is it self a wonder from God.

Fr Muller's Medical College Hospital, extended support and cooperation to the expert medical team to facilitate clean and honest transplant protocol. The Fr Muller Medical College Hospital has time and again tried to spread awareness of organ donation. The teaching Hospital has its transplant coordinators working with the District Organ Transplant Commission; Dr Kelvin Peter Pais and Reshma Carol D'Sa.

The Father Muller Charitable Insti-

tutions has been at the forefront of health innovations with the latest technology. The mission and vision encompassed in its motto of 'heal and comfort' have been exemplary in this part of the country for many patients. Fr Muller's Institutions requests people to come forward to donate organs or the organs of the brain dead cases for the suffering. The Father Muller Medical College Hospital puts on record its thanks and heartfelt appreciation to the coordinated efforts of Dr Manjunath Shetty (urologist), Dr Manjunath J (nephrologist) and a team of anesthetists, technicians and transplant coordinators, nurses all with selfless dedication. This is the fifth kidney transplant done in the Father Muller Medical College Hospital.

The allograft procedure for the kidney transplant required tireless efforts by the team of doctors, precise documentation and verification. The Karnataka state-level Human Organ Transplantation Committee in Bengaluru praised the act of one nun donating a kidney to another nun as the first such act. The transplant took place on February 16 and both nuns were discharged on March 6, 2020. All necessary procedures and protocols were followed as per the government's directives for Kidney transplant. Father Muller Charitable Institutions Director Fr Richard A Coelho announced this with great joy recently.

Maharaja's Royal Switch

It is said that in 64 AD, when Rome was burning, Nero was merrily playing his fiddle. In the process, all the wooden structures of the city turned into ashes. Perhaps, this applies to the Congress leadership as it watched helplessly one of their tallest and youngest leaders, Jyotiraditya Scindia switch sides at a time when the once mighty Congress structure has been systematically crumbling into pieces. Not that the utter discomfiture of the young Scindia scion was unknown to the leadership and mind you he was Rahul Gandhi's buddy. While the power struggle started when it came to the claim to M.P. Chief Minister-ship, the situation became worse after the last general elections when Scindia lost his seat. Not long ago, he threatened to lead mass protests against the Kamal Nath government for its failure to deliver. The Chief Minister brushed aside the threat instead of addressing the issue. With no intervention from the High Command, this possibly aggravated the situation, to a point of no return.

Did Scindia take his grievance to his dear friend Rahul? But who is Rahul by the way? Having relinquished the president-ship of the party, he has lost his clout and the former may have realized that a powerless friend could do nothing to alleviate the grievance. This is because, Kamal Nath obviously belongs to the old guard headed by another old guard Sonia Gandhi – the Pro tem President as someone called her. When there is no stability and cohesion at the top, it is impossible to inspire any confidence down the line. Obviously, there are sharp differences between the old and the new crop. In a situation like this, the ambitious Maharaja saw no future – at least for now. An impatient young man was obviously poached [with his in-laws playing some role] by the BJP. Not that he was promised paradise, surely he must have bargained hard. If after getting the RS seat he is made a cabinet minister, I think that is a good deal considering that there are many stalwarts in the BJP waiting to be inducted in the cabinet. The purpose of getting him to Delhi is to pre-empt any power struggle in an already faction ridden M.P. BJP. With his mass base in part of M.P. he will be an asset for the party he has embraced.

VIEWS on NEWS

That Kamal Nath had lost his majority. With the Court ordering floor test, the CM blinked and resigned - one Kamal giving way for another 'Kamal' which was waiting to bloom again in M.P. The fault lies with the Congress for failing to manage the State with three tall leaders vying for supremacy. With Digvijaya Singh going with Kamal Nath, Scindia realized that he could not dislodge the duo and thought the best way was to get out. If there was a 'strong' leader at the top, s/he could have found an amicable solution. With no such possibility in sight, he did what he thought was best for him – not party.

Jyotiraditya, being articulate and measured in his public discourses, in and out of Parliament, he made a huge impact on those who heard him. He had a big future in the Congress only if the Congress itself had any. As things pan out today, the Congress has no future as it is neither a regional force nor a national force. With the Gandhis not willing to make way for a new leadership the party is doomed. If there was one young, dynamic and forceful leader who could don the mantle of the party's leadership it was Scindia. His distracters, the septuagenarians / octogenarians / nonagenarians made sure that the younger lot does not grab power forcing the reluctant Sonia to hold fort. Jyotiraditya's millions of fans are disappointed with his sudden switch for the sake of power. To what extent he will have a prominent role to play in the new party, only time will tell. If he thinks he can be number one or two, he could be day-dreaming. But one thing is sure. Congress has lost a very dynamic and capable leader. Others will follow leaving only very senior citizens in the Congress, with no vision, to hold on.

The Karo-Na syndrome

This deadly virus across the globe has created havoc across nations and the people. There is genuine fear amongst the people not knowing when the deadly virus will engulf them. The fear is genuine and the chances of their fears turning into reality are equally real. Governments have decided to tackle the problem on a war footing. The situation today is akin to a world war but in



by Marshall Sequeira

the earlier global conflicts only a few countries were involved. Today almost every country is conquered by the unseen foe. When you have a 'ghost' enemy, war has to be fought on all fronts through collective efforts and sacrifices.

The world economy has suffered the most with half the people not being able to go to work and it is feared that the consequences could be catastrophic with hospitality and tourism sectors facing the major brunt. Not that the other sectors would be spared, the impact may be marginally lower. Everybody seems to be worried. The share markets globally have crashed to unprecedented levels at a pace hitherto unseen in history. The Indian government saw the problem coming and started taking preventive measures very early and that perhaps has slowed the spread. But we are vulnerable.

The Government issued series of advisories – 'Karo' [Do's] and 'Karo-Na' [Don'ts]. Most citizens have taken the directives seriously and cooperating with the authorities. Only Kaenataka CM Yeddiyurappa [BSY], Congress Chief in Karnataka, Shivakumar, AP CM Jaganmohan Reddy among others, have flouted the rules. When BSY attends a wedding with some 2000 guests what message did he give? Mind you, it wis CM's own government's directive. Surprisingly, the BJP spokesperson says the leader did not possibly 'understand' it properly. Either the spokesperson was trying to take the people of India for a ride or she was simply speaking the truth. In contrast, the Israeli Knesset's [Parliament] newly elected lawmakers were administered the oath of office in groups of three over 40 staggered rounds. Finally, when Delhi CM has banned assembly of more than five, was it right for Scindia to take 22 rebel MLAs to BJP Chief's home to be inducted as BJP members? There were many others too. Did the PM who is exhorting people to cooperate notice this tamasha or looked the other way.

Surprised by the Surprise

Every girl dreams of a man in white chariot who sweeps her off her feet to a fairy-tale land, where everything is perfect and beautiful. Well my dream man came driving in a Maruti K10 and drove me out of my mind.

Well I really don't understand what it is with us ladies that we are so fascinated about the special days, be it birthday or Valentine's Day or Anniversaries, we definitely expect something special and different. Unfortunately for me my first wedding Anniversary was something I could not celebrate due to the wedding of my sister in law, her wedding was scheduled to be held just 2 days after our wedding date and hence my plans of holiday or so called a second Honey-moon was cancelled. I was completely disappointed, but anyways after that my husband compensated it by taking me to a quiet memorable dinner, where we spoke our heart out, tried resolving the differences and made a promise to each other to grow more deeply in love and make our bonds strong.

Second year of our marriage passed on smoothly. True to the promise we made, we grew in love became closer and committed. After a disappointing first anniversary I had decided that our second anniversary would be very memorable and I secretly wished that no one would interfere this time.

Our anniversary day was just around the corner when suddenly we got a call from native saying that his cousins would come to visit us and they would

stay with us at least for 10 days. I was sad that again my dream of celebrating anniversary with my husband was shattered and again we would be surrounded by people on the other hand I was happy to have cousins around who were very loving and I knew celebrating our special day with them would make it even more special. My husband knew I was disappointed and he promised to take me to candle light dinner after all had gone back.

I must say this my man is not very romantic, like most of the men he does not understand the mechanisms of vowing a woman. I remember on our very first Valentine's day before marriage I was very excited and expected loads of flowers and chocolates whereas my dream



by Sonal Lobo

man arrived at my house with a chocolate in hand and took me out for dinner and when I questioned him where were the roses, he politely offered me money and asked me to take how much ever roses I wanted. Well that day I understood my man was definitely not the romantic kinds and I should not be expecting anything mushy from him.

Well after few days of our anniversary when all the cousins had gone back, we decided to go to a nice quiet restaurant and as every time I had to seek out the best restaurant. After a lot of research and reading a lot of reviews I narrowed down the best place and made my bookings and informed my husband about the time and place. Evening we both got ready and drove to the restaurant. Like always I was excited and happy. The restaurant was artistically built carrying the theme of caves, it was one of the costliest places around and I was visiting it for the first time, my expectations were high.

When we stepped inside, the elegantly dressed lady at the reception offered me a big bouquet of beautiful roses. I was astonished when she wished me and my husband a very happy second wedding anniversary. I knew not how to react, I was surprised and taken back.

The surprise did not end there she escorted us to the seat where a huge cake was kept and all the stewards and stewardess of the restaurant surrounded us sang for us and made us cut the cake. After clicking pics and eating the cake we settled down to place an order. I was very happy more than being surprised I was taken back by the gesture of my husband. All along I had blamed him and thought he was not romantic and did not give me any surprises. I was in tears thinking about the efforts he had taken for me for choosing the flowers and cake and planning this whole act for me. I thought I had to thank him for this gesture and when I opened my mouth to thank him, I hear a thank you from is end.

Well I did not understand why he was thanking me and I asked him why he was thanking me because I had to thank him for planning the whole act. When he heard this, he was surprised and asked me if I had not planned this. I promptly told him to stop kidding and accept that he had done it, to which he completely denied and told me that he had not planned this and all the while he was thinking that I had planned it for him. After introspecting for a long time, we realized that both of us had not done it and no one else could because no one knew about our plan.

We were in a shock, as to who had planned it? This was the first time we were stepping into that restaurant and we had never shared our details with them. Our friends and family had no idea that we were visiting this place. When we were breaking our head my eyes suddenly fell on the cake which was already half eaten, I could read half of anniversary and some word ending with letter K, that is when we realized this was planned by another couple and the restaurant had misunderstood us to be that couple.

Feeling ashamed and sad we called the receptionist and told her that we had come to celebrate our second anniversary but had not asked for cake and flowers. She quickly went inside

(Contd.. on p. 17)

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Insight Into The Seven Sorrows Of Our Lady

The Virgin Mary's place in salvation history needs greater study to battle the more recent textual criticism, deserving meditation and contemplation. The Mother of God, suffered with her Son. She bore his wounds and insults which he endured for the redemption of man; she felt his thirst on the cross; and in his agony she heard his cry, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46). Mary was there at the foot of the Cross. She placed his body on her lap, and then she watched as they laid Jesus in the tomb.

The Sorrows of the Virgin Mary are shown in the reflection of her life which pierced her soul. Our Lady's Seven Sorrows began as a devotion in the 14th century and has been chronicled as the Seven Dolours (sorrows) of the divine Mother of God. Jesus was both human and Divine, the Mystery of The Word turned flesh and lived among us. John the evangelist was one of the first devotees of the Mother of Sorrows, he recorded it in his Gospel that Mary was there at the Crucifixion of her Son on Calvary (Jn. 19:25).

It is a true statement that the Sorrows of the Virgin Mary in contemplation, gives us the compunction to love Our Lord with greater zeal and fidelity.

Contemplation is not only for people who are privileged to be in convents and monasteries. God does not always pick his chosen persons who are kept in restricted places – they can be found anywhere.

Catholics across the world devotedly celebrate the memory of Our Lady's spiritual, mental and emotional sorrows which she shared with her Son Jesus. Our Lady did not suffer physical martyrdom, yet she is known as the Queen of Martyrs having stood at the foot of the Cross. When we con-

template on her sorrows we enrich our love for Christ.

The First of the Seven Sorrows of Mary was told to her by a man named Simeon at the temple in Jerusalem



where the child Jesus was presented to God, according to the law of Moses. "Behold, this child is a sign of contradiction, and a sword will pierce your own soul..." This was Simeon's prophecy to Mary. "(Lk. 2:34-35).

The Second Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary took place when an angel of God appeared to Joseph and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon be looking for the child in order to kill him." (Mt. 2:13)



BY MELVYN BROWN

The Third Sorrow of Mary was when the boy Jesus was "lost for three days". Mary and Joseph had taken Jesus who was twelve years old to the annual celebration of the Passover at Jerusalem, the holy city. Unknown to his parents, Jesus stayed in the temple with the elders and spoke to them about the Faith. The Doctors of the law were spell-bound to hear the answers in the wisdom of Christ Jesus. On missing Jesus, his parents rushed back to Jerusalem and after three days they found him in the temple. Mother Mary said to Jesus, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your Father and I were very worried while

searching for you". The boy Jesus said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk. 2:48-49)

The Fourth Sorrow for the Mother of God occurred when she met Jesus on the way to Calvary. We know of this meeting when it is mentioned in the fourth station of the cross. Mother Mary's sorrow was deep and surpassed by her great love for her son.

The fifth Sorrow of our Holy Mother had been experienced by her when she witnessed the Crucifixion and death of Jesus. (Mt. 27:35-50)

The Sixth Sorrow of the Virgin Mary was in the taking down of Jesus from the Cross and being placed on her lap. (Jn. 19:38-42)

The Seventh Sorrow is when the body of Christ is laid in the tomb. (Lk. 23:50-53). It is the thirteenth station of the cross which reminds us of this event. (Jn. 19:38-42)

Let us accept in reflection Our Lord's suffering and anguish. And in our life of humiliation, fear and sadness we should share a faint participation in His passion, with the true understanding that as a follower of Christ we, too, should take up our cross, as Mary had accepted the absolute mystery of Jesus in her human life. This is the Christological and scriptural foundation of the Seven Sorrows of our Divine Mother.

The beautiful medieval hymn 'Stabat Mater' tells us of the sorrowing Virgin Mary at Calvary. Mary was near to Jesus till he expired. She is seen in traditional art depicted with Seven Swords in her heart. Devotion to the sorrows of Mary inspired the Christian art in marble of the Pieta, the Sorrowful Mother, created by the Italian sculptor Michelangelo.

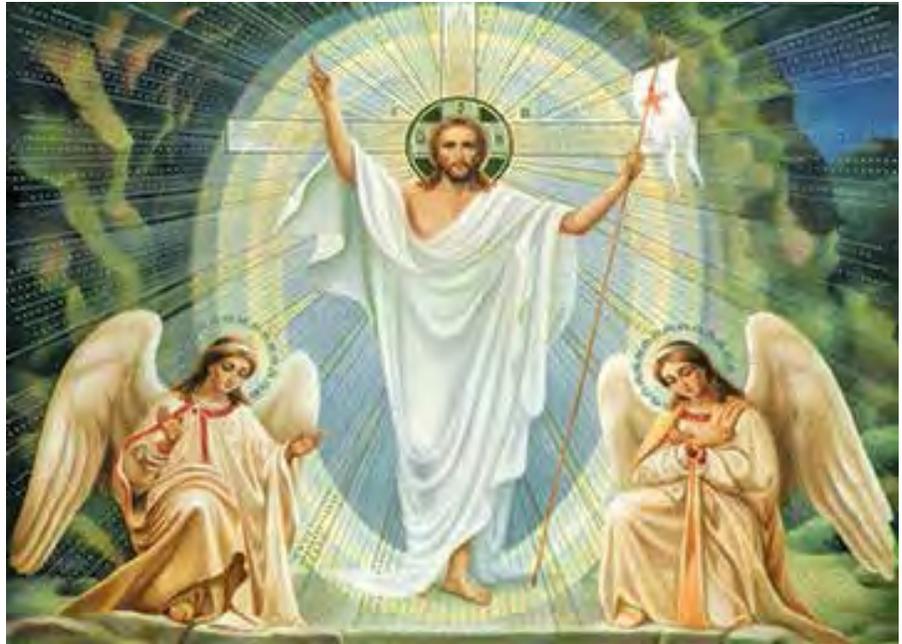
Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead?

Resurrection or Anastasi is the coming back to life after death. The title of this article arouses a doubt not only in the mind of sceptics, and non-believers but seems to be a pervasive pattern of thought among some people. Did Jesus really rise from the dead? The question is genuine and I was wondering how best one can answer it, so I read, researched, discussed, browsed the internet and delved into scripture. Here I'm sharing some on how best a Christian can answer that question.

According to various eyewitnesses, a man named **Jesus Christ** demonstrated his power over death. Accounts tell that after a horrendous scourging by the Roman soldiers, battered and bruised Jesus died crucified on a cross. When officially declared dead by the soldier's lance thrust in his side, Jesus was then buried in a grave where the entrance stone door was sealed by the Roman Guards. The next thing we know is at that following the Sabbath, the grave was empty. There was no Jesus in there. What happened? Was the body robbed? If not where did it go?

Let's consider **the evidence of the empty tomb** and the precautions taken. Firstly Jesus' body was placed in a new, solid rock tomb (John 19:41-42) The entrance must have been about four or five feet tall, hence Peter had to stoop, lean over to look in.(John 20:5) There was no other exit for the body to get out. Secondly the body was prepared according to the burial practices, wrapped from head to toe with aromatic spices and myrrh. The corpse was fully encased in linen cloths.

Thirdly a large stone was rolled in front of the tomb—(Mark16:4) One manuscript of Mark states, "a stone which cannot be moved by 20 men." Professors at Georgia Tech estimated it to be a near two ton stone and needed much manpower to roll it in place. Fourthly a



guard contingency was placed around the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66) The Roman guards were highly trained and disciplined. No person had the nerve to go near them so there is no way that the disciples or anybody could have stolen the body. Finally a Roman seal was put on the grave(Matthew 27:66). Nobody dare challenge Roman authority and power by even going near the grave.



by:
**Dr Jeanette
Pinto**

Scholars like Morrison, and Tom Anderson had wondered if the accounts that Jesus had risen was fake news, or was his body stolen. The hard fact is that the body was nowhere to be found, it had somehow disappeared and the tomb was convincingly empty.

Later **Jesus suddenly appeared alive to people and his followers.** How is this possible? This news spread like wild fire. So, is this true, or is it merely some frivolous gossip or a 2000 year old legend? What historical evidence is there to prove this event?

Josh McDowell an atheist and historian spent more than seven hundred hours researching the evidence for the resurrection. His pains taking research led him to finally conclude that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is

'the most fantastic fact of history.'

Still not all were convinced by the evidence so Historians, biblical scholars and others all sought for other proofs.

The Old Testament reveals 700 years before Christ, that prophet Isaiah(53:3-7) had prophesied of a future Messiah who would suffer and die for the sins of mankind and would be later restored to life. In Mark (10:33-34) we learn that all of Jesus' talks and works depended on his resurrection from the dead. On the cross Jesus forgave his enemies and his promise of paradise to the thief on his right are testimony of Jesus' message of forgiveness and hope for eternity. Who would declare such a profound message?

Morrison's original assumption was that the Resurrection account was mythical or legendary; it didn't coincide with the facts. He wondered whether the emotionally distraught disciples imagined or simply had hallucinations of Jesus' resurrection. The legend theory does not explain the empty tomb. The conviction of the apostles was that Jesus was alive. Also the Gospels were written within three decades of the resurrection. The hallucination theory is impossible as by their very nature 'hallucinations are individual occurrences' according

to psychologist Gary Collins, former president of the American Association of Christian Counsellors. Jesus was seen alive by groups of people; they even talked, walked and ate with him. (1Corinthians 15:3-8) testifies it.

Morison also wondered at the multiple eyewitnesses who saw Jesus, he showed them his hands and feet, and told them to touch him. Then he mentally argued as to why the conspirators would make women central, to the plot of being the first to witness the empty tomb. In the first century, women had neither rights nor status, yet they were the ones who touched him, and spoke to him.

Then his investigation focussed on the disciples. The transformation of the disciples was a psychological phenomenon. He was baffled by their strange behaviour. The former eleven cowards were suddenly willing to suffer humiliation, torture and death, so something extraordinary must have happened. What was it that changed them? All but one of Jesus' disciples was slain as a profound fact that the crucified and dead Jesus had risen from the grave. Something difficult to comprehend!

Finally Morison could not fathom how this movement could have impacted the cunning Jewish conspirators or establishment. How within twenty years did the simple Galilean peasants disrupt the Jewish church? Also how within fifty years did the powerful Roman Empire gradually disintegrate? Christianity should have disappeared with the disciples fleeing away from the cross. But the apostles established a growing Christian movement, and **that is the winner!** None could explain what and how Jesus' death impacted the world. Historian H. G. Wells was asked who has left the greatest legacy on history, the non-Christian scholar replied, "By this test Jesus stands first." So what is that legacy?

Everybody wondered who moved the stone of the grave which was locked. There is no evidence to be found hence scholars and sceptics alike became convinced and accepted it as the most astounding fact of human history. C. S.

Lewis an Oxford professor wrote that something perfectly new in the history of the Universe had happened- **Christ had defeated death.**

Evidence of Sceptics. Dr Simon Green leaf from Harvard school wrote three volumes on the laws of legal evidence and mocked Christians in his law classes. The Christian students challenged him to apply his book to the resurrection of Jesus. He concluded his study, found the evidence convincing and became a believer. He later wrote, "The resurrection of Jesus is one of the best established facts of history."

Dr Benjamin Gilbert-West and Lord Littleton were from Cambridge. Disgusted with Christianity and with a desire to destroy it they wanted to write a book refuting the resurrection and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. They ended becoming ardent believers and wrote, "Reject not until you have examined the evidence."

Dr Frank Morrison a lawyer and engineer liked Jesus but thought the resurrection was a myth. He too wanted to write a book to refute it but in the process of writing, committed his life to Christ. His findings are in the book "Who moved the Stone?" What is it that changed their thinking and lifestyle?

Lastly let's review the **Impact of the Resurrection**

- 1 Time is marked by Jesus' birth...BC before Christ and AD Anno Domino
- 2 Jesus' teaching that all people are created equal laid the bedrock for human rights and democracy in more than 100 countries
- 3 Jesus placed high value and dignity on each person regardless of sex, colour or race...this led his followers to promote the rights of women and abolish slavery.
- 4 More books are written about Jesus than about any other person
- 5 Over 100 universities were established to spread his teaching – including Harvard, Yale, Princeton,

Dartmouth, Columbia and Oxford.

6 Humanitarian works such as Red Cross, World vision, Samaritan Purse, Mercy Ships and the Salvation Army were founded by his followers.

All this research was so satisfying, fulfilling and clear that anyone reading this will agree that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

(Contd.. from p. 12)

and came out telling us it was a mistake and that another couple were celebrating their anniversary and apologized to us. We asked her to take back the flowers, because we knew that those flowers were selected by some other man for his wife and it would not be good to keep it. The receptionist denied to take back and told they would bring new bouquet but we choose to give it back and also asked to bill the cake but the restaurant manager denied and told us to consider it as a small gift for us from their end. Well after the confusion we sat back to enjoy the meal and laughed our heart out. Both of us discussed as to how we thought that each of us had planned this and had been very happy. Well we knew there was a misunderstanding but this confusion was wonderful, it had given us and memory to cherish for years to come.

Even to this day any special occasion we still remember cutting cake which belonged to someone else and posing with the flowers which were meant for someone else. Every time we visit a restaurant, we make sure to tell the receptionist that we have not made any pre plans just to be on safer side.

I still thank God for that day, though it was for few minutes yet it was beautiful and memorable. Well God makes any ordinary moment extraordinary, even if had celebrated the anniversary going to different places, I would not have cherished the memory as much as I cherish this memory. Every time we think about that day my husband bursts out laughing and I simply thank God for that day and wish that couple whoever celebrated their wedding anniversary that day a very beautiful and long married life.

Some Christian Humor ...

There was a very gracious lady who was mailing an old family Bible to her brother in another part of the country. "Is there anything breakable in here?" asked the postal clerk. "Only the Ten Commandments." Answered the lady.

Somebody has said there are only two kinds of people in the world. There are those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good morning, Lord," and there are those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good Lord, it's morning."

A minister parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space with a meter. Then he put a note under the windshield wiper that read: "I have circled the block 10 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses."

When he returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note "I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket I'll lose my job. "Lead us not into temptation."

Five wonders of the world

- 1) Two girl sitting quite.
- 2) Wife not asking for money.
- 3) Girlfriend going out without make-up.
- 4) Girlfriend paying the bill.
- 5) Boys saying I love only one girl.

Teacher : How many letters are there in the English language?

Johnny : Without GST 23 With GST 26. Student rocks
Teacher shocked

Rahul to Richard : I asked my girlfriend what sort of books she's interested in.

She said : Cheque books.



Q: Is Google male or female?

A: Female, because it doesn't let you finish a sentence before making a suggestion.

- Funny puns to make your day
- My best mates and I played a game of hide and seek. It went on for hours, Well, good friends are hard to find.
- I broke my finger last week. On the other hand, I'm okay.
- Someone stole my Microsoft Office and they're gonna pay.
- eBay is so useless. I tried to look up lighters and all they had was 13,749 matches.
- What is the best thing about living in Switzerland? Well, the flag is big plus.
- How did I escape Iraq? Iran.
- My math teacher called me average. How mean!

Lunchtime humour

Advertisement of a new restaurant, named "Topless Beauty"! 1,000 men visited on the very first day. They were shocked to see that the restaurant had no roof!
Men will be men!
Marketing is all about presentation!

Marriage tip

Every time you talk to your wife, your mind should remember that, "This conversation will be recorded for training and quality purposes."

Woman's shopping logic

I went to buy a dress. But I saw a beautiful pair of shoes. So I bought this handbag home.

Woman : At least invite me out to dinner.

Man : I don't go out with married women, sorry.

Woman : But I'm your wife.

Man : I make no exceptions.

I'm known as a stickler for good spelling. So when an associate e-mailed technical documents and asked me to 'decipher' them, I had to set him straight.

"Decipher is spelled with a ph, not an f," I wrote. "In case you've forgotten, spell checker comes free with your Microsoft program." A minute later came his reply: "Must be defective."

Mom, the baby sitter

My mom once told me, "I hope your children turn out twice as bad as you." She didn't realise one day she would be baby sitting them.

A man goes to a job interview and the interviewer begins with the question, "What do you think is your biggest weakness?" The man thinks for a moment, then says, "I think my biggest weakness is my brutal honesty." The interviewer says, "I don't think that's a weakness." The man then says, "I don't give a #%^ & what you think!"

Papa sees my gift given by my girlfriend

Papa : Beta tumhe ye sab cheeze Shobha deti hai?

Me: Nahi papa Priya deti hai

• **Q:** What do you call it when two rock guitars accidentally crash into each other?

A : A Fender bender.

Diamonds for the birthday girl

It's my wife's birthday tomorrow. Last week, I asked her what she wanted as a present.

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "Just give me something with diamonds."

That's why I'm giving her a pack of playing cards.

Corona Virus Can Cultivate Reading Habit Among Children

by C.K. Subramaniam

While travelling in a train I saw a lady was sitting opposite to me with a 6 year old kid. They both were reading books seriously. Astonished by seeing them, I curiously asked the lady; mam now a days even smaller kids are playing with smart phones but this kid is reading. How did you make him do that? The Lady calmly replied that most of the kids are not listening parents, they only copy us. And this is what I adopted. A small sentence... but a deep meaning. We all parents must think and try to follow.

Reading is one of the most fundamental skills children need to learn to be successful. Not only do good reading skills benefit students academically, they are also a skill required for lifelong success. Reading develops vocabulary, increases attention span, and promotes stronger analytical thinking. The key to encouraging reading habits in kids is reading with them at home from a young age. By reading together often, your child will learn first hand the joys reading can bring, helping him or her develop a motivation to read. However, every student learns and processes information differently. This means that some children may have a natural love of reading, and some may not. If your child falls into the second category, don't fret. As parents, there are many different strategies you can use to motivate your child to read. First, it's important to figure out why your child doesn't like reading.

Whether you love books, magazines or blogs, let your child see you reading. Kids learn from what they observe. If he sees that you're excited about reading, your child is likely to catch your enthusiasm, too. The library is a great place to explore new books and authors for free. Many libraries

also have story hours or other literacy programs for kids. These give your child a chance to develop good reading habits and to see other kids doing the same thing. You may get tired of reading the same story over and over again. But it can help your child become a reader. Kids like to spot things they may have missed the first time in the story or pictures of their favorite books. Rereading also gives them a chance to connect the words they see on the page with the words they hear. Eventually, your child may start reading the book to you.

Children of any age can appreciate works of fiction, and even if they aren't ready to recognize the written word, they may still be able to improve their language skills as they listen to books that are read to them. There are a number of ways that parents and teachers can help foster children's love of learning. There are a variety of books on the market that are tailored to different age ranges. Choose pop-up books or other creatively published texts and if you are reading to your children you can vary your tone of voice to maintain their interest. Setting up a reading tent or mini-library in your child's bedroom may also encourage them to read more frequently.

Reading is more than a mere hobby. Books fuel the reader's imagination, keep their brain active and make them more creative. Books have the power to transport the reader into a world of fantasy. There is no right age to pick up the first book, but the sooner we begin the better it is. It has a comprehensive affect on the personality and intelligence of the reader.

A teacher has a crucial role to play in helping a child develop a reading habit. Not every child will have a natural interest in reading and the only thing that will catch their attention is how the story is presented to them. When

a story is presented with a little bit of animation the story becomes more real in their head and they are able to retain it for a longer period of time. It is time to cultivate reading habit.

Teachers have to be gentle with kids. If you observe the child is not too keen on picking up reading as a hobby, it is important not to push them but give them time and space. If you push them, they may stall like a wild horse! For such kids, technology comes in handy. Introducing them to audio books and even reading cricket books from teenage will provide good knowledge of the game. The idea is to keep the approach fun, educational and innovative. Reading newspaper is yet another good hobby in the early morning hours. Some schools make the children to read daily news before their assembly session thus bringing them to make a good beginning. Children spend most of their time at home and school. Hence both the parents and school have to work in unison for successfully developing a young child into not only a reader but a better human. While the parents can sow the seed of reading into a child, it is a schools responsibility to nurture it with constant love and encouragement. There lies the real success in bringing children to the reading mode from their school days.

This reading habit will slowly and steadily encourages them to write an article in their school annual magazine. Some stories and poems can be written to bring out the latent talent available in young children. Again, by writing a piece of letter in a newspaper or a children's magazine will encourage the children to make their names published for their work. Further, they will develop the habit of creating a scrapbook of all their writings and achievements to bring out the best among them.

Is Religion Dead?

“**G**od has fled from Mecca and the Vatican... Why donate to religious places when they have closed their doors to us in our time of need?... At last my dream is realised, of spirituality without religion”. Provocative statements in the light of the Corona Virus (CV). Should we then conclude that “Religion is Dead?”

Masters of spiritual discernment teach us that we should never make a decision in a time of heightened emotions – be they positive or negative. Such decisions would inevitably be wrong. Hence one needs to objectively assess and address the challenge to religion posed by the CV pandemic; that has disturbed the equilibrium of the political world order, health systems, the economy and the very livelihood of the most marginalised sections of society.



by chhotebhai *

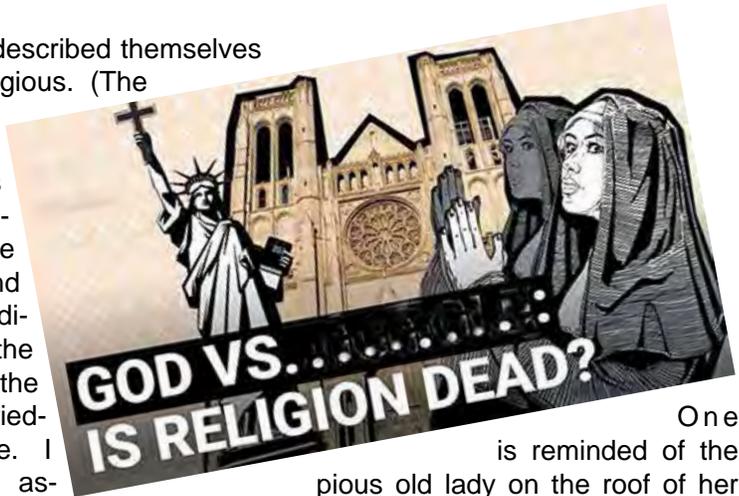
This takes me back to Good Friday 54 years ago. It was on 8th April 1966. On that day Time magazine carried the shocking cover page “Is God Dead?” in bold red letters against a black background. It was the first time that the magazine had a cover without a picture. How would anyone truly depict God anyway? This cover page was described as one of the 12 magazine covers that shook the world. It elicited 3500 letters to the editor; that too in the days of typing on paper and posting it. In today’s world of instant electronic communication, the response may have broken the internet.

This explosive query was published at a time (pun intended) when 27%

of Americans described themselves as deeply religious. (The number could be far less today). It was largely influenced by the political and intellectual radicalisation of the 1960s, and the philosophy Friedrich Nietzsche. I would further ascribe it to the faltering Vietnam War, the Beatles and hippie culture, the Sorbonne students apprising in Paris, and the Red Brigade in Italy. As a teenager, I was then experiencing my own critical awareness of life, and questioning fixed assumptions.

At the same time, the magazine also acknowledged the far-reaching changes wrought by Vatican II and the impact of the evangelist Rev. Billy Graham. Ironically, its lead story for Christmas 3 years later was “Is God Coming Back To Life?” (24/12/1969). Had things turned full circle?

Now to the present day. CV has shaken the world to its religious foundations. Religion and popular religious practices are not just seen as ineffective, but actually a threat to the people. Churches, temples, mosques and places of pilgrimage have been shut, questioning their efficacy in effecting miraculous cures. I have already touched on this in my previous piece “Touch Me Not”. Cynics and believers have both jumped to hasty conclusions, just as the Tempter challenged Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the Temple.



One is reminded of the pious old lady on the roof of her house midst rising flood waters. A rescue team came in an inflatable raft to save her. She shouted back, “God will save me”. Then a helicopter with a commando on a rope came down to her roof. Again she declined help. Later, when drowning, she shouted angrily at God, “Where were you, when I was calling out?” God replied, “I sent you rescuers in a boat and then a helicopter, but you did not follow the norms”. So true today, if we are blaming God for what is probably a manmade disaster, and then blaming religion for its inability to stem the spread.

Such over-simplistic arguments are because we fail to understand the essence of religion, or science for that matter. It should be elementary to understand that human intelligence, that finds expression in science, is also God’s gift to human kind. Is it not obvious that the rescue workers at the drowning woman’s home were indeed God’s messengers?

Can we not understand that medical science, the medical fraternity and even government agencies are also the work of God who has given us the freedom and intelligence to act? It is another matter altogether, if some of us do not use those talents

properly, or test nature unnecessarily. I can't jump in front of a train or into a well and then say, "In God I trust". This is the sin of presumption that I had referred to in my previous article.

Even in the present pandemic we have seen how people, motivated by their religious beliefs have made heroic sacrifices to save others. There is the case of the elderly Catholic priest in Italy who voluntarily gave his personal respirator to save a needy stranger, though he himself died because of that act of self-giving. One is reminded of the Franciscan priest Maximilian Kolbe in the Second World War. In the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, he volunteered to go into the starvation cell to save a stranger, a Jew with a family, Franeiszek Gajowiczek. He survived starvation so was put to death with a lethal injection.

Another such "religious" is Fr. Damien De Veuster of Belgium who served the incurable leprosy patients on Molokoi Island in Hawaii for 12 years until he himself finally succumbed to the disease. In Kerala we have a priest Rev. Davis Chiramel, who donated one of his kidneys to a stranger of another faith. He has since inspired several others to do likewise through his Kidney Foundation. So to write off all religion because of the present pandemic would be to arrive at a very harsh conclusion.

Religion maybe dying in the West, but it seems to be flourishing in the East. The Catholic Church is the most rigidly structured, yet is suffering an erosion of both numbers and credibility. Hinduism has no structure, no universal head, no credo, no moral code, yet it is flourishing. I once compared it to a submarine organism, Placozoa, several million years old, that is just a collection of cells without any organs. Take Islam. It too has no universal

head. Nor does it have any ordained clergy. But it does have its five basic tenets: Shahadah (creed), Salah (ritual prayers), Zatak (charity), Sawn (fasting, including sexual abstinence in the month of Ramzan) and Hajj (religious pilgrimage). It is expanding faster than Christianity today.

Sikhism, besides its religious expressions and texts, is perhaps the most democratically structured religion. Its religious places are governed by the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) that has its rules and regulations in the Gurudwara Act of 1925, enacted by the British with the concurrence of Sikh leaders. For two terms the SGPC had a woman president. The Act was amended in 1953 to reserve 20 out of 140 seats in the SGPC for Scheduled Caste Sikhs. Sikhism too is flourishing.

Perhaps Christianity, and the Catholic Church in particular, needs to learn some lessons from the organised structure (or lack of it) in other religions. Vatican II is now 55 years old. Had its teachings been implemented in both letter and spirit, the Church today would have been far more vibrant. Instead it has chosen to fall back on a plethora of pious devotions. They don't cut ice in a developed world.

Why does the modern person find organised religion like the Catholic Church redundant or irrelevant? Let me point out some of the reasons: 1. Industrial Revolution, 2. Knowledge Explosion, 3. Gender Parity, 4. Sexual Revolution, 5. Human Rights. This list is obviously not exhaustive. I shall briefly expand on them. Earlier, if there was a drought, devotees would flock to their favourite saint for help. After the Industrial Revolution they merely switch on their tubewell. If a person had fits, he would be taken to a priest to remove the "evil spirits". Now he goes to a neurologist for treatment.

The knowledge explosion began with print technology and now has information technology. Instead of seeking answers from God, we turn to Google. The "sheep" are no longer willing to be led by the "shepherds". They have found other sources of information, and the answers to the mysteries of life. The church's earlier opposition to Darwin and Galileo only hurt its own credibility. Even today, there are many Christians who believe that the Cosmos was created in 6 days, much to the ridicule of the scientific fraternity.

Then came gender parity and the sexual revolution. The church was inadequate to the task. It was not enough to raise an accusing finger and say, "Thou Shalt Not...". When it came to human rights and dignity the faithful were only reminded about their "duties". As people became more and more successful and accomplished in secular affairs, the less was their dependency on organised religion. Unfortunately, even now, there are some religious preachers, not limited to Christianity, who are trying to exploit the CV pandemic to their advantage, calling it God's curse or nature's revenge. Such a "holier than thou" approach could well boomerang on its proponents.

The CV is infinitely small; it is a constant reminder that small is powerful. At this time then, let us bow before both nature and science and humbly follow what we are advised to do. Yes, we must simultaneously trust in God and pray for the well-being of all. For greater things are wrought by prayer than the world can dream of.

Religion is not dead, but some of its over-exaggerated tenets, or fundamentalist believers, are.

**The writer has been commenting on religious matters for the last 51 years.*

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Embrace of Cross of Jesus in Lenten Silence

Women of Silence:

From the Gospels, it is evident that there were women present all throughout the Passion. Silent – thank God! – yet present.

Luke mentions a group of women who lament Jesus as he is taken to Calvary. He tells them not weep for him, but to weep instead for themselves and for their children. (Luke 23:27-28)

There are women present in Calvary as well. In spite of their silence, the four evangelists record their presence: Luke explains they came with Jesus from Galilee. Matthew calls out Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Mark adds Salome. John completes the list with Mary, the wife of Clopas, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the Virgin's sister.

Women of silence, bearers of fragrances, first eyewitnesses of the resurrection and apostles of the apostles. All men must learn from them to speak less and listen more. All women must learn from the myrrh-bearers to be companions and consolers of Jesus amidst the continuous assaults against him. And being rewarded with the presence of the risen Christ, who dwells in their hearts, women must run throughout the world becoming apostles of the apostles, bearing the good news of hope, that the tomb is empty! Silence of the Saints

Saint – Mother Teresa stated, “The fruit of silence is prayer. The fruit of prayer is faith. The fruit of faith is love. The fruit of love is service. The fruit of service is peace.”

She added, “I always begin my prayer in silence, for it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. God is the friend of silence — we need to listen

to God because it's not what we say but what he says to us and through us that matters.”

St. John of the Cross - the great Carmelite mystic of the 16th century added, “What we need most in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God, with our appetite and with our tongue, for the language he best hears is silent love.”

Spirituality of Communion – a Narrative

Two old men, friends of many years standing, would meet in each other's house every day. They would sit in perfect silence for a couple of hours, then the visitor would get up and leave, without a word of farewell.

The inevitable happened and, in the natural course of things, one of the old men died. “You must miss him a lot,” said a condoler to the survivor. “I do,” replied the bereaved friend. “What I particularly miss are the long conversations we used to enjoy with each other.”

The story suggests that there are forms of communication which don't need the use of words. But more than that, it conveys a suitably wordless message that silence has its own subtle yet resonant vocabulary, if only we choose to learn its language.

Silence the language of the Heart

John O'Donohue gives guidelines how to return to the Silent zone of our Person: To return back into ourselves, there are three things needed, for which you don't require a computer, television or radio: the first is a bit of stillness. Nothing can happen without a certain stillness. We also need silence. There is nothing so vocal and articulate as silence; all good language, all great words, are born of it.



And the third thing we need is solitude. We need to acknowledge that solitude is an invitation to the soul to come alive. Solitude is utterly luminous if we lose our fears and begin to enter it more deeply (from "Earth's Inner Light,").

Human and Divine Perspective of Embrace the Holy Cross

Sister Nancy Usselmann gives us the dual perspective of human and divine glimpses of the Holy Cross of Jesus. How we see and understand the cross is determined by who we believe holds the cross.

- In human hands the cross is imposed.*
- In God's hands it is chosen.*
- In human hands the cross takes life.*
- In God's hands it gives life.*
- In human hands the cross is the means of execution.*
- In God's hands it is the means of reconciliation.*
- In human hands the cross is for punishment.*
- In God's hands it is for salvation.*
- In human hands the cross is a tragedy.*
- In God's hands it is a triumph.*
- In human hands the cross is an instrument of death.*
- In God's hands it is the sword of life plunged into the heart of death.*
- In human hands the cross raises a question of what we believe about God.*
- In God's hands it makes a statement of what God believes about us.*
- In human hands the cross tells a story of destruction.*
- In God's hands it tells a story of love.*
- We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

(selected and edited from Internet Sources)

Future is here: Now, grow plants without soil!

THIS SMART GARDEN is easy enough to use even for a five-year-old child to grow herbs at home. Delhi startup powers 'smart' hydroponic garden with Artificial Intelligence. Let us check out the innovative method to grow a plant without using the soil

In the past decade, particularly in ur-

multiple types of plants and across numerous crop cycles. Users need to choose what type of plant they want to grow and plug it in the pre-seeded pods (there's a variety of herbs, veggies, greens or ornamental plants on offer). There is a slot for a nutrient cartridge which needs to be inserted. Once the system is up and running, all that needs to be done is top up water

After nearly five years of intensive research. Yash incorporated Agro2o in March 2018. Helping his startup along the way are two primary incubators - Union Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology. A lot of the research and development in plant science was done in collaboration with the Department of Plant Molecular Biology at



ban centres across India, we have witnessed the steady evolution of hydroponics a farming technique where, instead of soil, plants are grown in mineral nutrient solutions in water, which helps them to grow faster and garner a better yield.

This technique uses up to 90 percent less water than conventional soil-based farming and allows people to grow vegetables and herbs organically at home. However, Agro2o, a Delhi-based startup, has developed a proprietary smart garden which uses a completely automated indoor hydroponics system.

Once a user purchases the smart garden device, they can grow

at regular intervals - users will be notified of this through a mobile application or touch panel on the system.

Yash was working for a multinational company in Dubai when he first read about hydroponics in a newspaper article sometime in 2013. Nonetheless, the transition from basic hydroponics to what Yash calls 'automated hydroponics' was triggered by something closer to home. His mother wanted to set up a kitchen garden inside the vicinity of her home. So, he imported some conventional hydroponic kits from China and helped his mother set up her kitchen garden.

the University of Delhi. For a person who doesn't know gardening at all, this device developed by Agro2o is straightforward to use. Along with the device, there are pre-seeded pods. When they want to change the crop cycle from lettuce to green veggies, users can select pods of their choice. There will be a package of pods and nutrients together. It's an easy plug and play type of system. Thus far, the startup claims to have received 300+ pre-orders. The tentative price for Savor is Rs 7,999 inclusive of GST, while the Renaissance stands at Rs 17,999. Yash believes that actual sales will commence sometime in the third quarter of the next financial year.

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