



# THE SECULAR CITIZEN

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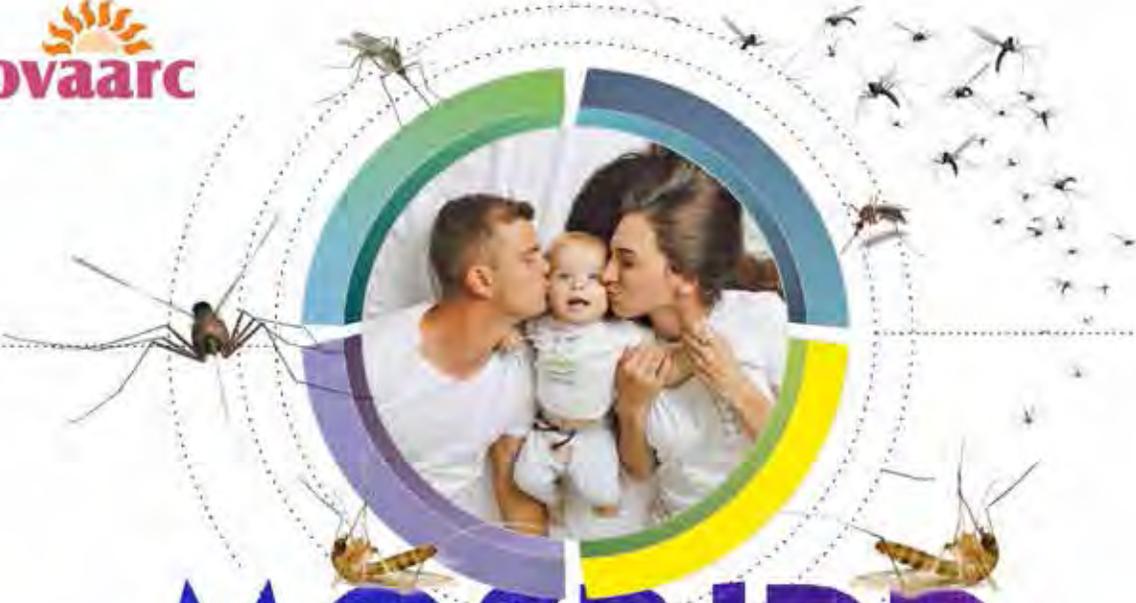


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Contributors and Advertisers****Merry Christmas****&****A Peace Filled Happy  
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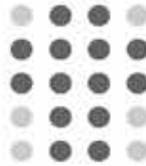
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# Long Time ago in Bethlehem!

*“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. .... And you shall find the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger”. Gospel of Saint Luke.2: 7---12*



Not much more is disclosed in the Bible about the birthplace of Jesus, except that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. So at Christmas time, we take several liberties while building our cribs to make them appealing and relevant to our times! Cribs recreate the Nativity scene and have become an integral part of our celebrations. The Christmas story that we know has Mary, Joseph and Jesus in a cave or a wooden barn-like stable filled with straw and surrounded by the obligatory sheep, donkeys and cows. The shepherds are there, so also the wise men, the star and normally a couple of angels. Do we ever have reason to believe that the presence of all these, especially the shepherds with their lambs convey a profound message to the human flock of Christ?



by Vera Alvares

Bethlehem, (Arabic Bayt Laqīm, meaning House of meat), (Hebrew Bet Leqīm meaning House of Bread), is perched on a hill in Judea about 5 Miles South-West of Jerusalem. The story of our salvation unfolds against the backdrop of these five miles of outlying pastures between Bethlehem and Jerusalem!

At the time of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, this same region linking Jerusalem to Bethlehem was used to raise sacrificial sheep meant to be offered at the temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish *Talmud* specified that the lambs sacrificed in the daily sacrifices as well as at Passover had to be born and raised within five miles of Jerusalem. Lambs destined for sacred use, were to be born here, in the pasture known as ‘the Shepherd’s Field’. Out of these, only one year old male sheep without blemish or injury and raised in the open for

the whole year, were chosen for the sacrifice.

The shepherds who watched over these flocks were not ordinary shepherds. Trained and employed in Levitical regulations by the temple priests of Jerusalem, these shepherds kept watch over the sacrificial flock, day and night, from the upper-story of the agricultural watchtower known as *Midgel Edar* or the ‘Tower of the flock’. Some of them were out in the open that holy night when the angel appeared with the glad tidings of the Saviour’s birth. The angel’s message did not include the exact location of the manger. So how did the shepherds know where to go to worship the Lord? Where in Bethlehem was the manger which cradled the divine baby and kept him warm and cosy?

*“And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come*

to the daughter of Jerusalem." -Micah 4:8. Scholars interpret this as a prophecy that indicates that the Messiah would be revealed from the "tower of the flock", Migdal Eder which is also mentioned in the biblical book of Genesis (35:21), in the context of the death of Jacob's wife, Rachel. The biblical record locates it near the present-day city of Bethlehem, validating the statement of these scholars.

This assumption seems to have been derived from painstaking analysis of the Geographical and social conditions of that time. In the absence of any mention of a specific location of the manger in the Gospels, the search for it led them to the tower. The 'manger' in the tower was likely the stone trough for feeding and watering the lambs and the swaddling clothes were probably the ones meant for the use of new-born lambs and hanging readily on the posts!

In those days, Migdal Eder, a rustic structure built of stones, stood like a sentinel in the Shepherds field, providing warmth and safety to the new-born lambs and protection during perilous times. Into this sheltered structure, the shepherds would bring in the ewes which were about to bring forth their lambs, to ensure that the newly born lambs were not injured at birth. The shepherds knew that wrapping them in swaddling clothes was the only way to keep the lambs warm, calm and safe. For the sacred little lambs with a holy role to play, this manger had to be kept ceremonially clean.

The shepherds could have been well acquainted with prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah and were also familiar with the lay of the

land. That night, out on the pasture, the only clue they received from the angels was that the new-born babe could be found in a *phatne*, or manger! But they knew exactly in which manger they would find the divine Babe! There was no hesitation in, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." (Luke 2:15). How did they know it was their own manger and not one of the others in that area?

This speculation infers that Jesus the Messiah was born as a sacrificial lamb in the same place where all other spotless and unblemished lambs were born and then consecrated for sacrifice. Perhaps, God intended for there to be no room in the guest room in home or inn and He wanted His Son to be born in a stone manger in a very special place as the Paschal lamb, to be sacrificed for our sins! Do the scriptures, history, and setting fit together to tell us that Jesus was to be born in Migdal Eder, and then placed in the stone manger used only for the birth of sacrificial lambs?

**Whatever the location, this holy manger was chosen by God the Father as the first resting place for his beloved Son on earth. With the replicas we construct, we welcome him once again into our world- a world that needs loving and caring hands to heal and survive. Let our cribs be the ceremoniously clean mangers and our hearts full of warmth to cradle and swathe the little babe, born as the Lamb of God. May each one of us partake deeply of him this Christmas season! Good wishes for a happy and blessed Christmas!**

## Vatican Christmas Cook book!

A new 'Vatican Christmas Cookbook' written by chef David Geisser and Thomas Kelly, offers recipes, some more than 1,000 years old, that have been dished at the Advent and Christmas seasons! Geisser at the age of 18 had also written a cookbook, 'Around the World in 80 Plates'!

The Authors declare: "This Christmas Cookbook specially caters to the 110 members of the Pontifical Swiss Guards, the smallest military force that has protected over 50 Popes for more than five centuries. It is dedicated to them for their gratitude and appreciation for their loyal services; whose motto is 'Courage and Loyalty'!"

"It is only with the cooperation and assistance of the Swiss Guards that we are able to present this compilation of many new and classic recipes, enhanced with their stories and imagery! Thus, we have welcomed the opportunity to infuse it with the Christmas joy and spirit, and hope that it brings taste and comfort to all!"

"The Christmas Cookbook presents recipes like Veal Chanterelle, Egg William Souffle, Venison in Fig Sauce and delectable Deserts like Cheesecake David, Gingerbread Plum Parfait, and Maple Cream Cake. The Book also has recitations of traditional Advent and Christmas Prayers, to give it the spiritual touch! May this Cookbook, 'Be like the ships of the merchants that bring delicious foods from afar'!" (Proverbs 31:14).

—Dr. Hazel Colaso,  
Memphis TN. USA.

# The Lowly Babe at Christmas - J E S U S

**D**o you feel threatened by the birth of a child, whether it is in your own family circle or in your neighborhood or in society, or anywhere for that matter? The birth of a child is certainly a happy moment for all. So much of good wishes and gifts are showered upon that little baby.

More than 2000 years ago, a child was born in the little town of Bethlehem. There was no place for that child to be born, no rooms available in any of the inns. And so, he was born in a lowly stable, the saviour of the world, born in a manger - a lowly child. **That child was JESUS!**

So, did anyone feel threatened by the birth of Jesus? Yes, it did! It was King Herod, the king of Judea which was under the influence of Roman Empire at that time. He felt threatened by the birth of that Lowly child, Jesus. Why? Was Jesus coming to take over his Kingdom? The threat seemed so real that he ordered the killing of all the first born male, in the land, in order to get rid of the baby Jesus, whom he saw as a threat. An unsensational birth managed to create a sensation in the world. Alas, Jesus did come into the world to set up his Kingdom but it was not to be a physical Kingdom, he did not come to threaten the Kings of His time. His Kingdom was not of this world. Still, the nations bowed down before that lowly child. Wise men paid humble tributes to Jesus. Does it seem a little intriguing to know that a lowly child could humble the world? An



**Melville X. D'Souza**  
- Orlem, Malad West

American author, Christopher (Criss) Jami says, "Sometimes it takes a lowly, title-less man to humble the world. Kings, rulers, CEOs, judges, doctors, pastors, they are already expected to be greater and wiser." Yes, Jesus came into this world as a lowly child to humble the world. **That lowly baby Jesus had come to rule our hearts.**

If a lowly babe shook the Roman Empire more than 2000 years ago, today, a tiny little virus entered this world, threatening the very survival of mankind. That tiny virus, called the CORONAVIRUS, has created a sensation in this world. It has shut down almost the entire world. Just like king Herod ordered the killing of the innocents, this tiny virus has been killing humans since the past few months. **The whole world is battling this tiny virus but getting nowhere close to conquering it.**

Today, it seems like **the world has also been affected by virus called 'sin'**. We had got so caught up in this fast paced, mad, frantic world where everybody was trying to get the better of others, trying to outdo each other. **And so, this coronavirus is seen as some kind of a 'pause' button. Suddenly, the mad rush has stopped. Everybody is wondering what hit them. Everything else has taken a backseat. It is now a matter of survival.**

We are under 'Lockdown' mode and



unable to celebrate Christmas in the usual, traditional manner. Rather, it seems so awkward to celebrate this great feast in such a manner. However, while we celebrate Christmas in whatever manner this year, we need to think of all those new-born infants who have been abandoned by their parents, maybe, because they are prepared for the responsibility. Those small children who have been left stranded by their parents because they are unable to feed them. Those little babes who have lost their mother at child birth. Those small children who have lost their parents for whatever other reason. **Those are the 'lowly' children. Can we see Jesus in those abandoned children - the lowly ones?**

Jesus may have come into this world as a lowly babe at Bethlehem. **Are we going to let Him remain the 'lowly' child in the crib? Jesus comes to us as a saviour to give us new life, a new hope, in the face of this pandemic, COVID-19. With faith in Jesus, we can overcome this deadly virus. We can still celebrate Christmas if we can see 'CHRIST' in Christ-mas!**

# A Pandemic Christmas

The Year 2020 shall forever be remembered as the year of the COVID-19 Pandemic for obvious reasons! The gigantic proportions attained by the invisibly tiny virus has clearly overpowered the high and mighty and the lowly alike, abrasively submerging plans and programmes, virtually shoving education under the carpet, largely diminishing human contact and tossing celebrations of any and every kind into the dustbin, even as religion found itself pushed on to the backburner, all but forgotten! In the course of the last nine lockdown months a joke concerning a dialogue between God and Satan has been doing the rounds. Satan teases God saying, "Did you see? I've succeeded in closing down your churches!" Not to be outdone, God is said to have replied: "Aha! I've opened a church in every home!" And a church in the home is where the practice of the faith now seems to end with not many desirous of returning to Worship in church. There are also some who say, "One of the casualties of COVID-19 is Santa Claus!" The truth is grossly different and that truth is what we are celebrating at Christmas 2020!

## GIVING, the ultimate meaning of Christmas

Santa Claus, a corruption of the name of Saint Nicholas of Bari. This third century bishop is known to have put his faith into practice by way of demonstrating very actively and effectively his deep-seated concern for the poor and the marginalized. Moving about under the cover of darkness, he would drop goods and goodies at their doorsteps or through the chimneys of their houses at Christmas time. The custom of giving gifts at Christmas, the feast that commemorates the ultimate



self-gift of our Creator God to His human creation in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, both among the poor and the rich and that owes its origin to Nicholas' "secret service" practice,



by Ladislaus Louis D'Souza

made itself both seen and felt during the pandemic when the Church opened her heart so to say to play Santa the world over like never before. In India particularly the political slogan *roti, kapda aur makaan* (food, clothing and shelter) took on a truly human or Christian hue in the hands of the Church. While in the Archdiocese of Bombay Bishop Barthol Barretto's injunction to the SCC movement to ensure "that nobody shall be in want" steadily emerged as a battle cry of sorts, literally ensuring that nobody but nobody went to bed on an empty stomach or without a roof over his/her head, those in ecclesiastical positions in church very graciously and generously gave of their time in voluntary service in government offices connected with pandemic relief. Silently, yet conscientiously, every organ of the Church, it's parishes and NGOs across every diocese in the country, pulsated with life anew as food packs from religious houses and private homes alike satiated the hunger and thirst of the numerous individuals who had overnight lost their very means of livelihood as a result of the sudden lockdown that caused hasty migration never known since the migrations linked to the partition of India at the time of Independence – one can write tomes on this! Yet, suffice it to say that even as the

Church's doors remained closed to her children at the most significant period in the Church's Liturgical calendar (Holy Week), Santa Claus made his presence felt all through the lockdown! Now who is that fool touting such nonsense as "Santa Claus is dead", please?! Which brings us to the question: Does God Himself exist at all! Hey! Now do I hear someone say God is dead???

## God is NOT dead!

A hymn titled "God is not dead", popularized by the Late Indian Jesuit priest, JB Fernandes [of Eucharistic Congress Choir (1964) fame], the then conductor of the Newman Choir and the Saint Peter's Parish Choir [Bandra] in the eighties and listed at # 126 in the Parish Hymnal of Saint Peter's in Bandra to this day, brings out the truth of God's existence very vividly –

*Chorus: God is not dead! I know He lives today!*

*God is not dead – I meet Him when I pray.*

*I sense His presence with me night and day.*

*Within my heart I know that God is not dead!*

*v.2:*

*Though some may say that God is dead*

*I know this cannot be!*

*I'll tell you why I know He lives*

*I look behind at years gone by*

*'Tis here for all to see.*

*I look behind at years gone by*

*The hand of God to see.*

*A tender, loving, all-wise God*

*Has made a way for me.*

*I look at men with lives transformed*

*And slaves of sin set free*

*And know this living miracle*

*The work of God to be!*

The truth remains that God is not only alive but never changes, leaving

all change to His human creation—change from faithlessness to faith, from unfaithfulness to fidelity, from unbelief to belief and from doubt to trust, thereby experiencing the grace to share in His perfection.

### The curse and effect of Corona

COVID-19 has claimed the lives of innumerable churchmen and women. Yet, it has spared so many of us, leaving us to mull over the vicissitudes of nature in relation to human health and to thank God for the joy of simply being alive. Put differently, Christmas is about the depth of our trust in God reaching unshakeable proportions. As such, Christmas celebrates the most profound truth, viz 'God-with-us'. Thus, amid the gloom and restrictions of the pandemic, Christmas this year is either about Emmanuel, God-with-us, or nothing. Santa Claus is about putting this understanding of Christmas into action for the love of God and of His human creation.

While we ardently hope and desire that this our first ever COVID Christmas will be the last ever, whom are we going to let win in what is turning out to be a clash between the holy Advent-Christmas Season and the terror let loose by that nasty teeny-weeny virus called Corona that has caused so much havoc amongst us or the voice of sanity: "Behold! I make all things new" (Rev 21:5)? Amazingly, the virus has even enabled the devil to ride roughshod over the voice and needs of a citizenry that is fighting for survival as is evident in the senseless glee with which projects like the construction of a grand mandir and an even grander house of parliament are being swung into action by the very government that has so brazenly taken our country's farmers in particular and the poor in general for granted. Worse, the wicked virus seems to have even enabled Satan to gain a foothold in the Church as is clearly evident in the ugly, filthy Nativity scene on display at the Vatican this Christmas! Yet, whether we can repeat with Australian singer Sia Kate Isobelle Furler, "Every day is Christmas!" would largely depend on

## Bishop Sebastian succeeds as Patna Archbishop

Bangalore 9 December, 2020 (CCBI): Most Rev. Sebastian Kallupura (67), currently the Coadjutor Archbishop of Patna succeeds as the Metropolitan Archbishop as His Holiness Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Most Rev. William D'Souza S.J., (74) from the pastoral governance of Patna Archdiocese. This ecclesiastical provision was made public on Wednesday, 9 December, 2020 at 4.30pm.

Archbishop Sebastian Kallupura, was born on 14 July, 1952 at Teekoy, in the Diocese of Palai, Kerala. In 1971 he joined the minor seminary in Palai for Patna diocese, and was ordained priest on 14 May, 1984. He holds a bachelor of education from Bombay University. He served the Archdiocese of Patna as parish priest in various parishes, as assistant treasurer, director of the Archdiocesan social apostolate and director of the Bihar Social Forum.

He was elected Bishop of Buxar on 7 April, 2009 and ordained on 21 June, 2009. Pope Francis appointed him as the Coadjutor Archbishop of Patna on 29 June 2018. He is currently the Chairman of the CCBI Commission for Family and the Caritas India.

### Archbishop William of Patna Retired

Bangalore 9 December, 2020 (CCBI): His Holiness Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Most Rev. William D'Souza S.J., (74) from the pastoral governance of Patna Archdiocese. This ecclesiastical provision was made public on Wednesday, 9 December, 2020 at 4.30pm.

Archbishop William was born on 5

March 1946 at Madanthyar, Karnataka. He joined the Jesuit congregation and ordained priest on 3 May 1976. He did his philosophical studies in Shembaganur in Tamilnadu and theology at Jnana Deepa Vidyapeet in Pune. He was superior of Jesuit communities in various places. He served as rector of the minor seminary in Muzaffarpur, parish priests in different parishes, secretary to the bishop of Muzaffarpur and provincial of the Patna Jesuit province from 1995 to 2001.

He was appointed as the first Bishop newly created of Buxar on 12 December 2005 and ordained Bishop on 25 March 2006 on the feast day of annunciation at Mary Mother of Perpetual Help Cathedral Buxar. He was also the Administrator of Muzaffarpur diocese for a year. He was the parish priest of Itarhi in the district of Buxar at the time of his appointment as Bishop. Pope Benedict XVI appointed him as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Patna on 1 October, 2007. He is a priest for 44 years and a Bishop for 14 years.

Archbishop William was also known for his ecological ministries since 1996, especially when he set apart ten acres of prime land in the metropolis to build the first ever Bio-reserve. He was the Archbishop who wrote to all churches and communities not to indulge in electric illumination for Christmas since 52 kilograms of coal produces one unit of electricity. He always urged his people to stand up and take action especially on the conservation of electricity and water.

—Fr. Stephen Alathara  
Deputy Secretary General, CCBI

how firmly and seriously we are going to take our faith in God and the Constitution of the country in the year ahead.

As we greet each other with a cheery "Happy Christmas" in celebration of

the birth of our Redeemer who plainly urged us to conscientiously give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God [cf Mk 12:17], what is our response to the challenge?

# A Christmas Spiritual Bouquet On The Bl. Virgin Mary



**F**or those among us who desire to see the faith in action should be aware how Mary was attentive to the Word of God, listened to the Angel Gabriel and with full consent accepted her mission courageously.

“Totus tuus” (I am all thine).

Mary is often referred to as the Woman of Faith. She was open to the Word of God, “Hearing the Word of God and keeping it.” (Lk.11:27-28). She had fully surrendered to God’s love. Mary became the first and most perfect of Christ’s disciples. (Marialis Cultus).

The Virgin Mary is a living catechism, an expression I am always fascinated by, reminding me of how the Church has become incarnate in her. People who turn to Mary find her to be the best example of how to acquire knowledge and understanding of the Word.

In the declaration of Pope Saint John Paul II, Mary” is the Star of evangelization ever renewed within the Church.” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 82). As a ‘Star’ she is represented as a guide in the field of catechetical work. Mary is the Mother of the Church.



BY MELVYN BROWN

Through the Holy Spirit Mary helps to show the young of the world the image of Jesus. She is aware of this maternal and mysterious influence on youth in every new generation. Her intercession

on our behalf is proclaimed by the doctors and saints of the faith to be a powerful role for us to ask for her intercession, prayers and protection.

In the popular book *Lumen Gentium* it is written that Mary “devotes herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the Person and work of her Son” (65). She works for Jesus to spread his ministry of love, faithfulness, forgiveness and compassion. *Lumen Gentium* goes on to state that Mary unites in her person and re-echoes the most important doctrines of the faith.” (65).

Mary’s divine maternity helps us to be close to her. From the Cross, Jesus bestowed his Mother to be our Mother and Mother to the world. ‘To Jesus through Mary’ is a prayer both meaningful and powerful. Mary lives God’s love and message to humankind. Her Immaculate Conception is proof of God’s redemptive touchstone to the faith.

The Virgin Mary is sinless. Her Assumption is the invaluable hope for us to be strong in, so that it makes the teachings of the Church on eschatology clear, by giving us a purpose and

a vision for the eventual understanding of the triumph of Christ as the Lord God of the universe and all living things.

Mary is the compendium for catechizing. She is as I had said earlier a ‘living catechism’ for the faith.

Mother Mary at the foot of the Cross at Calvary shows us the compassion in human suffering and sorrow. Praise God for the fiat Mary gives us to believe in her Son and eternal life he promises. Let us give our lives totally to Mary as she proclaims the Word of God.

The planned spiritual bouquet on the Blessed Virgin Mary has just begun, there are many more fruits to enrich her bouquet of trust, love and faith in Jesus.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the maternal Ark of the New Covenant. She is the chosen and sinless woman who said ‘Yes’ to God’s Word.

## BJP's 'Civic' Sense

Encouraged by the success in the by-election not too long ago, the BJP sensed that it stood some chance of making an impact in the State of Telangana. The best way of doing so, the party felt, was to begin from the grass root level by going all out in the Hyderabad municipal elections. This Corporation has a big cosmopolitan segment and that worked to its advantage. In 2016 the party had just four seats in 150 GHMC while the TRS had a lion's share with 99. No doubt it was a daunting task but having decided to go for it, the party had to put all its resources on the block. It must be admitted that the BJP has an excellent party machinery to organize things and they did it with meticulous planning.

The BJP brought the top brass to Hyderabad and that included who is who of the highly charged outfit. The poster boy of Hindutva, Yogji - UP CM, gave the campaign a communal colour by promising that the old city will be renamed as Bhagyanagar and doing away with its old linkage to the Nizam of Hyderabad. Sardar Patel single handedly annexed the Hyderabad State to the Indian Union but the BJP had to enlist the services of all the big guns barring the PM to descend on this old city to 'capture' the GHMC.

The results must have surprised the BJP as well. While they spoke of renaming the city to Bhayanagar and changing the Nizam culture [Muslim culture?] they knew that it was a Herculean task to make a real impact. The result was really impressive. To increase its tally from 4 to 48 is no mean achievement. While the AIMIM and Congress maintained their tally of 44 and 2 respectively, the BJP grabbed seats from the TRS leaving it poorer by 47. That still makes the TRS the largest single party in the GHMC but far short of a majority. That makes things tricky for it to woo the friends-turned-foe to keep the BJP at bay but knows that if there is one party that has a huge problem with the BJP it is the AIMIM. The former has always needed the AIMIM boss Oweisi insinuating that he is anti-national.

The TRS will have to enlist the support of AIMIM and the latter will extract its pound of flesh before it agrees to lend a helping hand to elect a mayor. The AIMIM will put forth multiple conditions and the TRS will have to be generous if

## VIEWS on NEWS

the deal has to fructify. Oweisi has nothing to lose and being a shrewd negotiator that he is, he will extract maximum benefit – sharing mayoral chair on rotational basis being not ruled out. Of course the many committees that a Corporation has will also offer other benefits to the AIMIM which has a strong hold on its Muslim constituency. He had fielded some non-Muslims and four of them were elected. On the other hand the BJP, as usual avoided fielding any Muslim candidate showing its aversion towards the minorities. In fact they have no elected Muslim MP in Parliament.

**This success has elated the BJP leadership which has also put all its efforts into the Kerala Panchayat and Municipal contest. While dominating the North, the BJP has been struggling to make an impact in the South even with the huge popularity of the Prime Minister. Deviating from its policy of keeping the minorities at bay, the BJP has fielded sizeable candidates from the Muslim and the Christian communities knowing well that without them the party cannot succeed. The party knows well that this experiment can be trailer for the next assembly elections which are not too far away. To that extent, winning a good number of seats in these elections will galvanize its cadre to go for the kill in the next round of elections which will set the agenda for all the southern states. In Tamil Nadu the party is hoping that the mega star Rajinikant [DMK calls him 'instant Neta'] deciding to plunge into politics will help to split the votes. He has also indicated that he will not be supporting the Dravidian parties. Could the BJP be in a real fix since it has already decided to align with AIDMK?**

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## Islamic Unity

For Imran Khan, like any other past PMs/Presidents, Kashmir is one issue that has kept them going. With each regime trying to be more aggressive than the earlier dispensation, the unrest in the Valley continues albeit with added ferocity. Even with lacs of soldiers in J & K it is no deterrent for the terrorists who have been resorting to innovative ways to sneak in; the latest being underground tunnels.



by Marshall Sequeira

With the army apprehending some and eliminating others, the problem sees no end. For Pakistan, it is a matter of survival with internal problems not to speak of the massive anti Imran front of the opposition parties which have rallied together to unseat the selected and not the elected Prime Minister. The challenge to the beleaguered PM despite the army support is massive and only Kashmir can help him survive.

It is in this context that despite the Kashmir did not figuring in the agenda of the Organization of Islamic Countries [OIC] at the behest of the Saudi Kingdom, Imran had to bring the matter up on the opening day of the IOC meet. What is surprising is that some 50 odd countries including our 'friends' the Saudi Arabia and UAE or Bangladesh and even Maldives supported the resolution on Kashmir and Pakistan got it passed unanimously much to the discomfiture of the Indian establishment. Mind you, there were no abstentions either giving a clear message to New Delhi that "Hum {IOC} sub ek hai".

**If Narendra Modi thinks he has befriended the Arabs he is grossly mistaken. Bangladesh is upset with the Citizen Amendment Bill [CAA] fearing reverse migration into that country. The Arabs are interested only in trade and technology to some extent. For them their religion and ideology are paramount just as RSS ideology is sacrosanct for the BJP. If you cannot dilute your own mindset [in-built hatred to non-Hindus] how on earth you can expect the Muslim countries to do so. The blatant actions of the Modi government covertly directed against the largest minority in India is not lost on the Muslim countries – something that Modi will not realize or will he be able to publicly acknowledge by offending the RSS. If he thinks that he can befriend the Muslim countries by ignoring Pakistan, he is grossly mistaken. Sending Army Chiefs to Arab countries won't change equations.**

# An Unforgettable Christmas Reunion

by *Don Aguiar.*

**A**ny reflection of Christmas will be incomplete without taking into account the Covid-19 pandemic this year and its consequences on our lives. The increasing loss of jobs, economic difficulties, the swelling number of people getting affected by this disease, and deaths of near and dear ones cause depression, anxiety and fear. In this context our Christian foundational belief on the Birth of Christ is the sign of joy, hope and spreading peace on earth and goodwill to all men. This helps all of us to bring positivity, joy and hope for others.

Christmas is a celebration that the community re-experiences, re-lives, re-creates, re-tells, re-constructs and re-fashions its culture as told through this story which brings positivity, joy and hope for others leading to an unforgettable reunion on Christmas Eve.

Marcel Miranda was a methodical man of nearly 50, with bushy white hair, guileless brown eyes, and the bouncing enthusiasm of a folk dancer of his native Mumbai village.

He always took the 9:09 V.T train from his suburban home to Dadar, where he changed to Western railway into Churchgate.

On Christmas Eve morning of December 1987, Marcel boarded the 9:09 as usual. En route, he suddenly decided to visit Richard Lobo, a friend who lived in Jacob Circle and was ill.

Accordingly, at Dadar, Marcel changed to Western Railway for Mahalaxmi (Jacob Circle) went to his friend's house, and stayed until mid-afternoon. He then boarded a Churchgate-bound train for his Churchgate office.



The coach was crowded, and there seemed to be no chance of a seat. But just as he entered, a man sitting by the door suddenly jumped up to leave, and he slipped into the empty place.

Marcel's been living in Bombay long enough not to start conversations with strangers. But being a photographer, he had the peculiar habit of analysing people's faces, and he was struck by the features of the passenger on his left. He was probably in his late 40s, and when he glanced up, his eyes seemed to have a hurt expression in them. He was reading a Marathi-language newspaper, and something prompted Marcel to say in Marathi, "I hope you don't mind if I glance at your paper."

The man seemed surprised to be addressed in his native language. But he answered politely, "You may read it now. I'll have time later on."

During the ride to Churchgate, they had quite a conversation. He said his name was Ben Gigool. When the China India War started in 1962, he was posted in Itanagar, a city in eastern India bordering China where he was

taken prisoner and put into a Chinese labour battalion and sent to Tibet. After the war, he escaped and covered hundreds of miles on foot until he reached his home in Itanagar.

Marcel inquired about knew Itanagar, and they talked about it for a while. Then Ben told Marcel the rest of his story. When Ben went to the house once occupied by his landlords' father, mother, brothers and sisters, he found strangers living there. Then he went upstairs to the house that he and his wife once had. It also was occupied by strangers. None of them had ever heard of his family.

As he was leaving, full of sadness, a boy ran after him, calling "Ben uncle! Ben uncle!" The child was the son of some old neighbours of his. He went to the boy's home and talked to his parents. "They all may be dead or," they told him. "The Chinese took them as prisoners."

Ben gave up all hope. A few days later, too heartsick to remain any longer in Itanagar, he set out again on foot, stealing across state border after state border until he reached Calcutta. He managed to reach his native Bombay

in October 1987, just three months before Marcel met him.

All the time he had been talking, Marcel kept thinking that somehow his story seemed familiar. A young woman whom Marcel had met recently at the home of friends had also been from Itanagar; she had been taken prisoner by the Chinese; from there she had been transferred to work in a Chinese munitions factory. Later she was liberated and was brought to Bombay in the first boatload of displaced persons in 1986.

Her story had moved Marcel so much that he had written down her address and phone number, intending to invite her to meet his family and thus help relieve the terrible emptiness in her life.

It seemed impossible that there could be any connection between these two people, but as Marcel neared his station, he fumbled anxiously in his address book. Marcel asked in what he hoped was a casual voice, "Was your wife's name Maria?"

He turned pale. "Yes!" he answered. "How did you know?"

He looked as if he were about to faint.

Marcel said, "Let's get off the train quickly." Marcel took him by the arm and led him to a phone booth. He stood there like a man in a trance while Marcel dialled her phone number.

It seemed hours before Maria Gigool answered. (Later Marcel learned her room was alongside the telephone, but she was in the habit of never answering it because she had so few friends and the calls were always for someone else. This time, however, there was no one else at home and, after letting it ring for a while, she responded).

When Marcel heard her voice at last, Marcel told her who he was and asked her to describe her husband. She seemed surprised at the question, but gave him a description. Then Marcel

asked her where she had lived in Itanagar, and she told him the address.

Asking her to hold the line, Marcel turned to Ben and said, "Did you and your wife live on such-and-such a street?"

Yes!" Ben exclaimed. He was white as a sheet and trembling.

**"Try to be calm," Marcel urged him. "Something unforgettable and miraculous is about to happen to you this Christmas Eve. Here, take this telephone and talk to your wife!"**

He nodded his head in mute bewilderment, his eyes bright with tears. He took the receiver, listened a moment to his wife's voice, then suddenly cried, "This is Ben! This is Ben!" and he began to mumble hysterically. Seeing that the poor fellow was so excited he couldn't talk coherently, Marcel took the receiver from his shaking hands.

"Stay where you are," Marcel told Maria, who also sounded hysterical. "I am sending your husband to you. We will be there in a few minutes."

Ben was crying like a baby and saying over and over again. "It is my wife. I go to my wife!"

At first Marcel thought he had better accompany Ben, lest the man should faint from excitement, but he decided that this was a moment in which no strangers should intrude. Putting Ben into a taxicab, he directed the driver to take Ben to Maria's address, paid the fare, and said goodbye.

**Ben's Christmas Eve reunion with his wife was a moment so poignant, so electric with suddenly released emotion, that afterward neither he nor Maria could recall much about it.**

**Maria remembers only that when she left the phone, she walked to the mirror like in a dream to see if maybe her hair had turned grey. She**

**said later "The next thing I know, a taxi stops in front of the house, and it is my husband who comes toward me. Details I cannot remember; only this I know—that I was happy for the first time in many years....." A precious unexpected Christmas gift that brought them joy, hope and positivity.**

Maria says, "Even now it is difficult to believe that it happened. We have both suffered so much; I have almost lost the capability to not be afraid. Each time my husband goes from the house, I say to myself, "Will anything happen to take him from me again?"

Her husband is confident that no horrible misfortune will ever again befall them. **"Providence has brought us together, unexpectedly this Christmas" Ben says simply. "It was meant to be."**

**Skeptical persons will no doubt attribute the events of that memorable afternoon to mere chance.**

**But was it chance that made Marcel Miranda suddenly decide to visit his sick friend and hence take a train to his friends place?**

**Was it chance that caused the man sitting by the door of the car to rush out just as Marcel Miranda came in?**

**Was it chance that caused Ben Gigool to be sitting beside Marcel Miranda, reading a Marathi newspaper?**

**Was it God's Christmas gift to make Maria happy for the first time in many years?**

**Was it chance - or did God ride the Karjat Local that Christmas Eve morning for this unforgettable Christmas reunion?**

Wishing you a Merry Christmas for however long you plan to celebrate it this year.

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# The Christmas Tree

Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ and is a time of fun and cheer. It is a holy festival of the Christians. Every year on December 25, Christmas is celebrated as the birthday of Jesus Christ. All the Christians from every part of the world celebrate this festival with great devotion and loyalty. One of the major attractions of Christmas is the Christmas Tree.

The Christmas Tree has a very special significance. It is a decorated tree, usually an evergreen conifer such as spruce, pine or fir, traditionally associated with the celebration of Christmas. The decoration of the Christmas Tree is one of the most important preparations before December 25th.

The Christmas Tree in ancient times was considered as a symbol of the continuity of life. A Christmas without the Christmas Tree is incomplete. The Christmas Tree evolution is believed to have begun in Germany in the first half of the 700s. Later on, various additions were made and the Christmas Tree custom became popular in other parts of world too.

Christmas Trees were first decorated with food stuffs such as apples, grapes, dates and nuts.

The Christmas Tree symbolizes the expression of joy and happiness. They play an essential role in the culture and festivities of Christmas.



— Sweta D'Cruz

# Delhi's 'Morning Star Church'!



on 25 November 2020, the Archdiocese of Delhi was awarded the 'unique design' for the 'Morning Star Church' in Najafgarh near Delhi. It was accepted by Archbishop Anil Couto of New Delhi. It was presented by the Best of India Records (BIR), a repository of authentic records in the fields of business, environment, transport, communication, education, science, nature, agriculture, arts, entertainment, and sports. BIR brings to limelight extraordinary achievements of people, stories of their perseverance, and their passion to win!

Situated at Ish Vatika - Lord's Garden, this distinctive concept of this 'star-spangled pentagon' Church was executed by Abraham Matthew of Ark Infra tech and Joseph & John of JJ Infratech. It was built at a cost of 1.30 crore.

The author of this appreciative letter sincerely hopes that it will shape and mould the lives of Christians into Christ-stars! (Matthew 25:31-46). Also, St. Peter advises, "Take heed as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the 'morning star' arises in your hearts" (2-1:19). Jesus also revealed, I AM the Root and the Descendant of David. I AM the 'bright Morning Star'!" (Revelation 22:16).

So have a brilliant and a prosperous New Year, my dear brothers and sisters; and may the 'Light of Christ' illuminate your minds and souls, so as to dispel the darkness of sin and Satan!

—*Dr. Trevor Colaso,*  
*Memphis, TN. USA.*

# Air Pollution: towards an Ethical Way Out

by **Dr M. D. Thomas**

We are passing through difficult and trying times of the human history. There has already been a lot of suffering due to climate change and environmental pollution. Now, there is a respiratory virus 'corona', covid 19, around that has put the entire world almost upside down. The world in general and India in particular is feeling the terrible pinch of the same, in diverse ways. It is true that several laudable attempts across the globe are on for evolving an effective vaccine against it. But, all possible curative and preventive measures have to keep going on war footing till this menace, along with other connected ones, come under a clear control, obviously so.



Well, the creator has given us a beautiful creation to live in. This very same creation is the environment for us to have our being. As rational beings, we humans are supposed to be taking good care of the nature around us. But, by and large, we have not been rational enough in our behavior towards the environment. May be, we are too intelligent for ourselves and foolish for others, the country and the society as well as for the nature and the environment. No wonder, we are paying a heavy price for the same, to the point of being helpless victims of the environment, tragically so.

We know too well that air is one of the basic components of life. We are also

aware that without air life is not possible and without clean air a healthy life is next to impossible, too. All the same, we are too much in the habit of polluting the environment and the air,

by throwing dirty, harmful and poisonous things in to the open. We seem to feel so much at ease in spitting and doing away with other types of waste in the public space, anywhere and everywhere, very much like animals. We celebrate our festivals in such a way that we leave our neighbourhoods, roads, market places and parks filthy and stinking.

If this is the way we humans behave, it is not surprising that we find air quality in India much above the danger level, as Air Quality Index indicates. As a result, polluted air is the fifth major killer in India. The capital city Delhi has become the 'capital of foul air' and appears to be bent on breaking its own

records as well as of the entire world. According to the survey, living in Delhi is understood to be reducing the span of life by 10 years, if not more, too. I think, it is high time we humans realized that many of our habits are not sustainable, at all. A lot of our behaviour and tendencies do not really suit human beings in any way either.

The logic is simple that 'if we pollute the air, the air will pollute us' in return, will make us sick and suffer very badly and even kill us. Therefore, as good caretakers of the environment, we have to 'handle the air with care'. But, unfortunately, as of now, it does not seem that

this good sense is coming to us very easily, just like common sense is not very common. Obviously, such a sorry state of affairs is not only idiotic but is an insult to the dignity of the human life as well as of the creator, who is the owner of that life.

We Indians are never tired of boasting that India is a religious country. It is true that almost all the major and minor religious traditions of the world are present in India. All these traditions put together, we have at our disposal a very high volume of beliefs. The amount of time and money we spend in pious instructions, devotions, observances and pilgrimages are really beyond measure, too. But, all these

ceremonies and performances do not seem to produce much result for life. It appears that religion in India is more part of the problem than of the solution. To say the least, religion and religions in India do not seem to have equipped us with the basic good sense required for keeping the atmosphere clean and healthy. I think, this is a major setback for our country and is a matter of serious concern. No doubt, it requires being attended to, on a priority basis.

I think, the way we have understood religion and the way we engage with it require being revised, from the angle of the concerns of our collective living. Religion is not a mere passport to go to heaven. Religion has to produce a vibrant faith that is capable of making 'good human and social beings'. Faith has to motivate the humans towards behaving in an ethical and responsible manner, in the public space in special. Faith has to be understood on realistic terms. It has to necessarily contribute to the quality of life and its surroundings. In other words, faith has to build up in human beings good values that have the power of sustaining the health, wellbeing and wellness of human and other forms of life on earth.

A 'good, enlightened and responsible conscience' is the need of the hour. Faith is not all about heaven and life after death. Faith has to be situated 'here and now', in life on earth, in the creation, in the environment and in the good air. Faith has to be in oneself, in others, in the country, in the society and in the creator, too. Such an applied and reasonable faith would develop positive thinking and awaken a sense of duty towards life. Manifestly, only clean thoughts can make a clean environment with good air possible. 'Spiritual awakening' is the most substantial measure in combating the menace of environmental pollution. Only self-motivated persons are capable of behaving in a responsible manner. Only accountable behavior can contribute to sustainable living. A strong 'ethical

fibre' is required for mending the unclean habits that have become part of our lives.

'Cleanliness is next to Godliness'. The sacred is not compatible with anything that is unclean. Our search for God will never reach its intended destination in unclean premises and surroundings. We have to live our faith here on earth, in the given environment, in such a manner that we are able to spontaneously think for the good health and wellbeing of others, of the country, of the larger society and of the entire creation. We have also to learn to collaborate with people of good faith in all communities, in view of making the social living clean, healthy, harmonious and happy. Well, polluted air is the wakeup call for the leaders and believers of all faiths in India, religious and not religious, to stand up on their feet and act in favour of the wellbeing of one and all.

Only such a larger and down-to-earth faith can keep us 'ethically, spiritually and humanly fit' and make it possible for the environment and the air around us to be clean and dignifying. Only a religion, a faith and a spiritual awakening that is grounded in an empowered conscience, along with its ethical fibre, can ensure the sustainable living of the humans in the creation and in the environment. Good air and environment has to take the shape of a major campaign with the application of all possible means for arriving at the intended effect. That would amount to state that we humans are called upon to commit ourselves to building a better tomorrow for our country and beyond, by mending our foul ways today, in terms of the environmental and air pollution that is the burning the lives of the humans as well as is the burning concern of our times.

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## Kerala Elections

The news is that The Bharatiya Janata Party has fielded 500 Christian and 112 Muslim candidates for the local body elections in Kerala. If the BJP manages to win at least municipal corporations in these elections, it would brighten the party's chances in the Kerala assembly elections scheduled to be held in 2021. Kerala will elect its local bodies on in December. Should Christians contest on BJP tickets? Some simpletons seem to say, "What is wrong in Kerala going BJP? After all, BJP has been ruling India since the last 6.5 years and all the Catholics places of worship, Schools, Colleges and Hospitals are still there". Is that all we expect of the government? The nation under BJP rule has lost all democratic institutions -even the Supreme court; the constitution of India is violated, at the moment nearly a crore farmers are agitating at the border of Delhi. Is that O.K.? Provided your churches remain open? What a narrow understanding of the spirit of Christ the reformer? I won't be surprised to know later that such Christian candidates received large election funds! Notabandi has impoverished the opposition parties and enriched BJP! "Be the light of the world and the salt of the earth!"

—Fr. Michael G. Vasai.

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# The Word Becomes Flesh

‘And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father: fulness of truth and loving kindness”

## Christmas Meditation:

John 1:14

Because of the Virgin Mary the incarnation of the Word was made possible.

New life begins from new birth, and every child born makes parents experience the mystery of inner growth through the Holy Spirit, just as Mary had known. Saint Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (12:27), wrote: “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it.”

The incarnation is the central belief of Christianity

We believe that God came in the flesh to work with humanity, the people of his creation, and the most important prerequisite was to be like us in the flesh. God in the very state of his divinity and essence has become flesh as man. The meaning of incarnation is Jesus as the Word of God, and the Word is God. “Jesus is the image of the invisible God” (Colos.1:15).

C. S. Lewis, the English writer said, “The Son of God became man to make men to become the sons of God.”

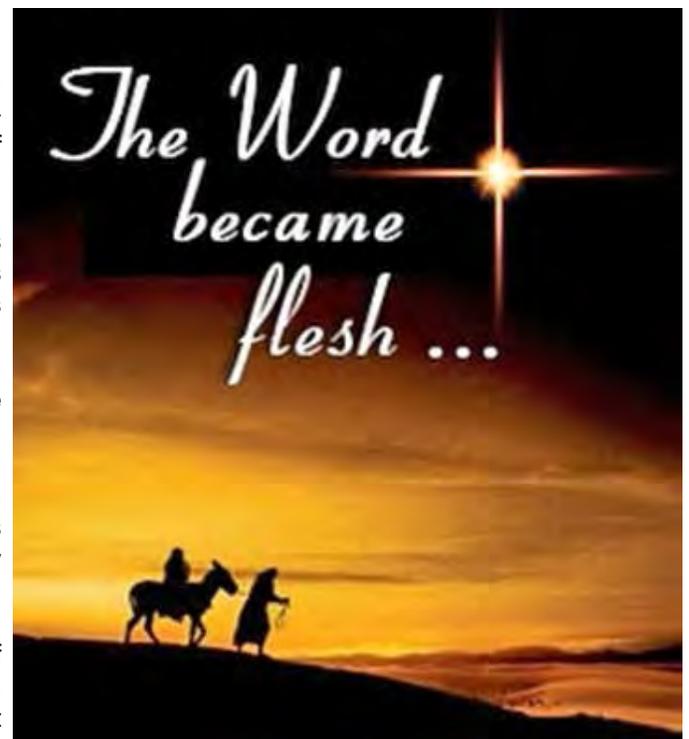
God became what we are that He might make us what He is. Saint Augustine said, “Mary was more blessed in

accepting the faith of Christ than in conceiving the flesh of Christ...”

In his book, ‘Unless you become like this child’, Hans Urs von Balthasar stated: “Mary’s son first had to be the Child of the Father in order then to become man and be capable of taking up on his shoulders the burden of a guilty world.”

The Good News of what the prophet John spoke about and what the prophets had preached for over 500 years was coming true, not the news of a man who would come to save us, but God himself would come, the Word to become flesh that was the Good News.

God came and will keep coming always in the service of Holy Mass for he is our Father, friend and companion on this journey. Humanity must believe in Jesus, his



promise and never abandon his love and trust for us. God forgives and in return seeks your love for Him and compassion.

Trust in Jesus and you will be protected by God. He will help you to overcome the trials and sorrows of this earth, for He is the Word become flesh and by His divine miracle of death He is one of us. Jesus defeated death, rose from the tomb and proved for all time that He was God. We who believe



BY MELVYN BROWN

in Him will surely receive the promise of His love in everlasting life.

The message of Advent is given in the Gospel of John. 3: 16: "Yes, God so loved the world He gave His only Son that whoever believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life."

Jesus came to us in a poor and humble state, born in a manger and died in the flesh as a common criminal. It was the fulfillment of the divine path to victory. When you accept Jesus as your savior you will meet with pain and suffering for you too will be rewarded in the kingdom of heaven.

Christmas is the mystery which will never be understood. The internal Word is the spiritual and divine nature of God. He is the alpha and Omega, the beginning and end. He is Lord over all the universe, an exclusive Act of God. The Word became flesh to redeem us from the evil ravages of sin, hate and violence. The glad tidings of God, is in the message and promise of His Kingdom.

The words of the Old Testament prophets have been fulfilled. There are times when we find it difficult to accept the fact that God is truly with us, for most of us live in the darkness of sin, sorrow and death, our flesh is weak.

We live in a dark night, often not wanting to see the light, not wanting to be shocked or disturbed by the flagrant horror of crime, insane attitudes, lust and violence, because we live and have grown up with untruths and wrongs.

Review this Christmas meditation to discover your place in God's plan for your mission, your faith in His trust and your final reward. Jesus loves you, his Mother cares for your human needs, the Holy Spirit is with you always and your heavenly Father helps to protect your spirit when you believe in His only Son. Ask God in the name of His

## Christmas is...

If you are sad, rejoice!

Christmas is JOY.

If you have enemies, reconcile!

Christmas is PEACE.

If you have friends, call them!

Christmas is ENCOUNTER.

If you have poor people next to you, help them!

Christmas is GIVING.

If you have pride, get rid of it!

Christmas is HUMILITY.

If you have debts, pay them off!

Christmas is JUSTICE.

If you are in sin, repent and change yourself!

Christmas is CONVERSION AND GRACE.

If you are in darkness, light your candle!

Christmas is LIGHT.

If you have resentments, let go of them!

Christmas is FORGIVENESS.

If you are in error, reflect!

Christmas is TRUTH.

If you harbour hatred, destroy it,

Christmas is LOVE.

If you are in despair, turn to Christ,

Christmas is HOPE.

Christmas is LOVE and the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts.



by Jubel D'Cruz

Son Jesus and you will receive. God's greatest gift to humanity is when he Word became flesh.

Once again we will stand before the manger to witness the scene of the Absolute, the display of the crib with the child Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the three kings, the Star above the stable and the farm animals. All

this was present in the scene that happened two thousand years ago in the town of Bethlehem. It will be remembered for all the ages to come

Today, we give witness and testimony to the power and the glory of our God when the Word became flesh and stayed with us. Praise be God !

# A Christmas Lesson

**W**e all know that Christmas is a time of happiness, love, peace and Joy as our Saviour Jesus Christ was born on this day. But how do we celebrate this joyful festival during such a crises situation of the corona virus. Let me tell you through a story.

There was a lady who was over 90 years old, she had a great flair towards dressing up well, applying makeup and arranging her hair in beautiful patterns.

She and her husband had been married to each other for 70 years.

After the departure of her beloved husband, having no children and no one in the family to care for her, and not to be lonely during Christmas, she decided on Christmas Eve to move to a nursing home. Even on the day when she vacated her home for good, she dressed up elegantly and looked gorgeous.

After arriving at the nursing home, she had to wait patiently in the lobby for hours before the room was ready.

When an attendant helped her make her way to the room, she gave the lady a visual description of the tiny space that she was meant to occupy and the joy she will experience spending this Christmas together with the inmates of the nursing home.

"I love it" The lady expressed with the enthusiasm of an eight year old who had just been presented with a new puppy.

"Mrs Martin, you haven't even seen the



by **Deanne Aguiar - Pereira**

room yet or met any of the inmates... Just wait. "The attendant remarked.

"Well, my joy has nothing to do with the room or the inmates," The lady replied.

"Whether I like my room or not or how I get along with the inmates, doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged or how the inmates respond, it depends on how I arrange my mind, happiness is something you can decide ahead of time. And I have already decided to love my room, to

love the people around me, to love my life. It is a decision that I make every morning when I wake up. You know what, the greatest asset we all have is the power to choose how we feel. "

The lady continued speaking, as the attendant listened attentively with her mouth wide open.

"I can spend my entire day in bed thinking of the pain I am in, focusing on the parts of my body that no longer work or spend a lonely Christmas in gloom

or I can get out of bed and be thankful for those parts that do work and spend Christmas in happy company. Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes can still open, I will continue to focus on today and all the happy memories I have stored in my mind, just for this time in my life."

The attendant was astounded by the positive attitude and the Christmas spirit of joy, and hope of the elderly lady, whose life from an external point of view, was only full of problems and hopelessness. The attendant made up her mind at that very moment like the old lady to spread that joy, cheer and positivity to all the other inmates.

During these hard times let us all make it a choice to have a positive attitude towards Life and thank God for the many graces, blessings and mercy which he showers on us and all our love ones for keeping us safe and healthy during this time of crisis. Like the old lady let us also spread the Christmas joy, cheer and positivity to one and all around us.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas.

# Spreading the Christmas Cheer!!

*-Deanne Aguiar*

Ten weeks to Christmas and the atmosphere is inching towards the Christmas spirit. At this time in order to spread the Christmas spirit a couple use to invite parishioners who had no one and who looked forward to a decent warm meal and company. Before the meal the couple always had a little chit chat inquiring about the wellbeing of the parishioner and when even required extended a helping hand. It always ended up with the couple telling the parishioner that they would be invited again as they enjoyed their company. Except on one such occasion when the couple invited a parishioner of their parish for dinner in their home. After the parishioner left, the woman said to her husband; "I think the parishioner has stolen the 500 RUPEES that I kept on the table of which I had the intention to give him". Angrily her husband exclaimed; "if they are not paedophile, they are thieves. There is no need to invite him again".

Two months later, the woman met the parishioner in the street and was courageous enough to face him and said: "Good morning, you have surely realised that we no longer invite you to our house. This is because we're very angry with you. The day you ate in our house, there was a 500 RUPEE note on the table. It disappeared while we were eating. You were the only person who visited our house at that time". The parishioner said to her, "yes, I took the money. I put it in the Bible to avoid spilling the sauce on it". The woman got so confused and asked the parishioner to forgive her.

Back in her house, she took up the Bible and found the 500 RUPEE note which had been there for two months.

For two months, she had not opened her Bible to reflect on the word of God,



For two months she had her husband falsely accused the parishioner,

For two months, the incident had tortured them.

If you are reading this story now, and you are not at peace with yourself, for any reason whatsoever, ask yourself whether it's because you have not opened your Bible for a long time to appreciate and acknowledge God's greatest gift to mankind – His SON Jesus Christ born on Christmas day in a manger and in the presence of mother nature. In fact it is the best gift that God has given us.

God's Gift to Mankind was to have his son Jesus Christ save us from sin. God lives in us and speaks to us through his son Jesus and the Bible and we speak with him through prayers. So we should spend some time each day with the BIBLE for He is waiting to give us his love.

Christmas reminds us that our Saviour was born on this day to save us all from Satan's power when we had gone astray. So let nothing dismay us as we remember Christ our Saviour was born on Christmas Day.

Wishing you a blessed day, a fruitful last quarter of the year AND a MERRY CHRISTMAS.



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# The Six Mystical Gifts Of Christmas

## The celebration of Christmas is a mystical gift from our Heavenly Father.

For thousands of generations, prophets, saints and sages had been proclaiming the promise of Yahweh that he would send his Son, as the Messiah for man's salvation. He would be the Lamb of God, the Savior who would take away the sins of the world.

Christmas is the promise of God fulfilled. Christmas is the Mother of all spiritual gifts wrapped with the awesome glow of six comforting graces, to serve us with strength and courage on our journey through life, to eternal life.

### JOY

The Lord our God who first spoke to the Jewish people, grants us the Season of Advent, four weeks of joyful preparation in the Church and in our lives for the birth of His Son Jesus. **JOY** is the first gift we receive to celebrate, spread the Word and to understand the fullness of redemption through Christ Jesus.

St. Luke, in his gospel said: "He will bring joy and gladness to you, and many will rejoice at his birth". (Lk.1:14). Let us strive to ask the Holy Spirit to make us brave witnesses like the apostles and the early Christians in mutual love.

The apostle John wrote: "I have told you all this, that my own joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete" (Jn.15:11).

**LOVE** is the second gift of Christmas from Jesus himself who made a promise that "whoever comes to me I shall not turn away" (Jn.6:37). This truth of our Lord's love is completely evident in all his pastoral ministry, and in the

sacrifice of his self without limitation: "There is no greater love than this, to give one's life for one's friends," (Jn.15:13).

We are taught in the gospels to love our neighbor, to love our enemies, to love with no limit, to love those who love you and, above all to love the Lord your God. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans clearly mentioned, "But see how God manifested his love for us: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us; and we have become just, through his blood." (Rom. 5:8-9).



BY MELVYN BROWN

### HOPE

The Virgin Mary, Mother of God who brings Jesus to us each Christmas, and all the year round is our mother and intercessor, ever available to speak to her Son on our behalf, giving us Hope, the

first manifestation of "inner calm" from fear, tension and grief. There is a popular saying: Through Mary to Jesus. In a letter, St. Paul wrote, "and hope does not disappoint us" (Rom.5:5). With Mary hope flows abundantly to us, her children.

The word "Hebrew" was the name given to Jews living in Palestine. In his gospel to the Hebrews, Saint Paul urged the Christian people living in Palestine to have hope. "Faith is the assurance of what we hope for, being certain of what we cannot see" (Heb.11:1). The Virgin Mary is our hope through her intercession and the prayers of the Rosary.

### HAPPINESS

Saint Joseph is the patron of workers. Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, who was prepared to accept Mary as his wife regardless of the odds, was a man of strong character, a pious carpenter who believed the angel Gabriel and was willing to be part of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

Among the early Christians it was believed that Joseph was a man most happy to be the father of our Lord. He is the gift of happiness given to us as a father and intercessor.

When Mary was six months with child "the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth to a Virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph of the house of David and the Virgin's name was Mary." (Lk.1:26-27). At Christmas St. Joseph is shown as the symbol of faith, trust and happiness. St. Joseph is the bearer of the fourth gift at Yuletide, happiness.

### WISDOM

The Holy Spirit is with us as one in the Father and the Son. Christ gave us the Spirit of God to guide, teach and comfort his followers. Christ sent down the Spirit to help holy mother the Church and to work with the people of God. All Christians who have been reborn in baptism receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to be strong and transformed to do God's holy work. The Holy Spirit is the consoler. At Christmas His gift is to enrich us with wisdom, patience, peace and faith.

### BLESSINGS

The sixth gift at Christmas is to expect blessings, in our apostolate, domestic life, work and in contribution to the Church and Society. Do not let evil tempt you away from Jesus Christ – especially when we celebrate the entry of our Divine Lord into our sinful humanity. The promise and Blessings of Christ fulfill the history of the Old Testament. May the Blessings of the Infant Child be upon you and your loved ones.

In the words of Christ Jesus: "I have told you all this, that my own joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete." (Jn.15:11).

**Happy Christmas!**

# Unlock God 24X 7 = Emmanuel 24X7

## Pandemic Vocabulary:

During the Epidemic times we communicate with pandemic parlance with the profuse usage of words: lock-down, shutdown, unlock, off-line, on-line, Sanitize the hands, wear the mask, keep physical distance etc. With the total lock down for nearly hundred days world-wide phenomena –Even the Places of Worship of different Religions were under the spell of lock-down –consequently our God of Worship and ceremonies was a Lock-down for nearly 100 days. Earlier days we had the Hollywood movies Gods must be crazy now it is a virtual movie of my wild imagination: Devotees must be crazy Part One and Part two.

## Paradigm Shift for the Pandemic times:

Love thy Neighbors is the global maxim of all World Religions, during the pandemic times to Wear the Mask is the sign of love to our neighbors. Wear the Mask is a break to transmit what we exhale which could harm our neighbors. Wear the mask and pray for our neighbors is the new way of practice of our religion. Social gatherings in big number makes our celebrations far from simple and meaningful. Social crowd is not necessarily a sign of authenticity and mark of rationality. Social gatherings during the pandemic times spells disaster of illness of contagious nature which could be harmful for great number of people those gathered in one place. Physical distancing the numbered social gathering need not lessen the spirit of universal brotherhood and care and concern. Social solidarity of Show of Mercy and Compassion need not go for a long holiday. Mercy and Compassion is the true face of God, God does not have face but we do have face to exhibit –face of mercy and



**Fr. George  
Olivera OFM  
Cap, Mysore**

compassion to the poor around us.

## Emmanuel 24X7

Emmanuel God with Us is the name that is in circulation during the Christmas Season. There are three Greek terms that puts us on par with God because of God's generous supreme gift of all times –Jesus the Emmanuel God-with-Us.

The Greek terms are Theosis, Kenosis, Entheosis. Theosis means the nature of God; Kenosis –God voluntarily empties his Godly nature; Entheosis we participate in the nature of God. All these terms are God-centered terms.

2 Theosis speaks about the nature of God which fullness of existence, fullness of consciousness and fullness of bliss (Saccidananda). Kenosis is the downward mobility of God –God takes the form a child during the Christmas night to give us the Christmas gift of Peace and Joy –that is our total Salvation, by becoming man he gave the gift to the humanity to become divine. Kenosis is the total God-emptying to become man –one like us but without sin so that the humanity could be grace-filled and God-centered. Christmas heralds the doxology of the Christmas people: We are the Christmas people and the Emmanuel –God-with Us is our song.



The is antiphon has two parts: first part is God-with-Us and the second part as follows: We become one with God. This is complete Story of Christmas. God-With-Us just one part of the story and We becoming one-with-God is the complete story of Christmas.

## What is your Christmas Age?

For Seniors it could be fifty or sixty times, celebration of Christmas and for the Children and young it could be ten to twenty or more times celebrating the Christmas –because Christmas comes every year. As we adore the Babe Jesus during the Christmas season, we also customarily celebrate the presence of the Santa Claus. Accordingly someone stated the three ages of Christmas Season. First stage belongs to the children who believe in real presence of the Santa Claus who visits our homes and churches to give Christmas gifts to each one. The Second stage is the age of the grown-up kids and the young who doubt the story of Santa Claus as real and consider he is a hero of a fictional story. And the third age belongs to the seniors who play the real role of Santa Claus to keep the juniors in good humor during the Christmas Season and give them surprising gifts. It is nice to celebrate the Christmas age in our person so that our Christmas celebration becomes meaningful and creative.

Wishing you all a Blessed Christmas and Hope filled New Year.

# A Pandemic Christmas with a renewed hope

**C**hristmas this year will not be the same as it used to be in earlier years. We are living in unprecedented times at the mercy of the killer Corona virus that has claimed millions of lives , rendered millions jobless , hungry and homeless and many more languishing in hospitals with little or no hope of recovery. In short , there is a pall of gloom and an air of uncertainty about what is in store for us this Christmas and the new year 2021.

However, in the midst of these trials and tribulations , it is our Christian faith that keeps our hopes alive by reminding us every Christmas that God is in our midst (Emmanuel) and has come to proclaim and establish God's kingdom of peace , love, hope and joy . Advent is the season when the church prepares us for the coming of the Messiah and also reminds us of the centuries-old preparation of God for the coming of his son Jesus Christ. The four lighted candles of the Advent wreath are symbols of hope to keep our hearts aflame and to spread the light of Christ to others.

Jesus lived his life by bringing hope to the poor , the sick, the crippled, the lame, the deaf and dumb, sinners, the homeless and outcasts of society. It was the hope in God's love and compassion that kept the faith of the Israelites exiled in Babylon alive. The book of Revelations was written to bring hope to the thousands of Christians who were undergoing suffering and persecution under the Roman emperors.



BY A. F. NAZARETH



The present pandemic has likewise proved disastrous and ruined the lives of millions worldwide. Let us not lose hope or let hope abandon us, especially at times when we feel helpless and keep asking "Where is God in such times of need"? Nevertheless, the pandemic has also taught us many lessons to realise our follies and sinfulness, even as it brought about a conversion in the lives of many, making them more spiritual and God-fear-

ing. By trusting in God's mercy and compassion we can now be hopeful of better days to come and an early end to the pandemic.

Let not our spirits be dampened this Christmas as we celebrate this festival with hope in our heart , grounded in God's love and mercy and the realization that Jesus never fails, and the day never ends without the triumph of good over evil.

**A Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year to all.**

# Carry On And Create The Best Christmas Crib

**C**hristmas celebrations are never complete without a Christmas crib and a beautifully decorated Christmas tree. Also referred to as Nativity Scene or Manger Scene, Christmas crib represents how Jesus was born. Christmas crib exhibits figures that represent infant Jesus, his mother, Mary, and her husband, Joseph. There are various other characters that are part of the Christmas crib. These characters include shepherds, sheep and angels. As described in the 'Gospel of Luke', all these characters are displayed near the manger in a barn (or cave) which is projected to accommodate farm animals. A donkey and an ox are also a part of this scene and Magi and their camels are also included. These characters are described in the 'Gospel of Matthew'. However, there are various cultures which add characters that may or may not be Biblical.

The celebration for Christmas is on and as a Mumbaikar enjoy the cosmopolitan atmosphere here. In the past, I was able to make my presence felt on the eve of Christmas by making an extensive coverage of the events before and after the festival. I was very much impressed by crib set up in Sanpada Jubilee Church here and I was able to get a close look and take a snap for posting in FB and for sending it to some news dailies across the country. One of the newspaper in Pune selected my photo of the crib as one of the best and I feel proud to be an Indian. I always believe and work for unity in diversity of the country and made good about the memorable



C.K. Subramaniam



events of last year's Christmas and working for doing an exclusive coverage this year also in a big way.

Putting up the crib is the most exciting aspect of Christmas. As children we would use all our creativity and imagination to depict Christ's birth. Even today 12 days before the festival we sow grains like ragi and wheat which would grow into tiny crops that are then used to decorate the crib. To make mountains we would like to use brown paper and dry hay to make the set look like a stable. Once the crib is set we light 'kuthu vilakku' instead of candles on Christmas Day. Our parents always made sure that we used less paper to decorate the crib and encouraged us

to use fresh flowers instead.

It's a family tradition to put up the crib together. Each year I used to bring down the box that has all the decorations and my grandson takes keen interest to decorate and bring out the best in Christmas tree and this year he plan to make a crib. The tree is where we try and experiment more and use newer ornaments and serial light and complete with most attractive decorations collected and purchased for the very purpose. The crib building is a creativity and you can keep in mind the history and bring out the best with your imagination.

**How to Make John's Invitation to Repentance Real and Not Just an Annual Ritual? What Sins Shall We Repent For? Please! Not The Usual Ones: "I Told Lies, I Disobeyed My Parents, I Had Bad Thoughts ... Etc." But The Greed That Exploits the Earth and Releases the Viruses from Their Sanctuaries!**

## Make The Advent Real Not A Ritual!

**T**hese days as we dial a number on the mobile, Amitabh Bachchan warns us, "Corona days are not over yet. We have to be alert. जब तक दवाई नहीं तब तक डिलाई नहीं!" You never know how corona-virus will enter into your body and kill you. Therefore we have to be alert, *Jagruth*, lest we be caught unawares! John the Baptist is alerting us (Mk 1.1-8) during these days of advent, "Be watchful; He is coming!" You don't know how he will present himself, which moment he will come, in what form he will appear. Be awake lest you miss the opportunity of welcoming him in your life. John tells us to prepare ourselves for the great coming of Christ by repenting for our sins and cleaning our hearts to receive the Lord.

How to make John's invitation to repentance real and not pass it as a yearly ritual? What sins are we going to repent for? Please! Not the usual ones: "I told lies, I disobeyed my parents, I had bad thoughts etc." That will make the confession a ritual not real. What bonanza do we expect at Christmas from Jesus? The end of Corona days! Then our repentance must be connected with the same! The sin which we should really reflect upon is the cause of Corona. How do viruses make appearance and become active? We realise that in the last few years different novel bacteria are coming into action. The mankind is battling with viruses like AIDS, dengue, influenza, leptospirosis and now Covid 19! Where were these 'devils'? Descended from heaven/hell? Not at all! They are very much on the earth, living in their own sanctuaries given to them by their



**Fr. Michael G. Vasai**

creator himself! They had no need to disturb the human environment and life. It is the human beings who have encroached upon their dwelling place and invited the present day pandemics! Not they but rather we intruded into their territory and invited *Mahaamaari* for us. Imagine a beehive. The bees are very active generating honey inside the hive. They have their own life and business. When we disturb their nests, they come out and attack us -in self defence! History tells us that the viruses have come out to attack us only when mankind has threatened their existence.

### THE EUROPEAN COLONISATION IS AT THE ROOT.

One very clear example is of AIDS. We came to know of it in our lifetime, in the second half of the last century. The virus enters through human blood and semen. It destroys immunization power and kills human beings slowly

but definitely. One theory of HIV origin prevalent suggested in 2008 HIV link to the Belgian Congo city of Léopoldville (modern Kinshasa). The HIV epidemic is linked with the emergence of colonialism in Africa and the growth of large colonial African cities. Colonisation led to social changes, including a higher degree of non-monogamous sexual activity, the spread of prostitution, and the concomitant high frequency of genital ulcer diseases (such as syphilis) in nascent colonial cities. In 2014, a study conducted by scientists from the University of Oxford and the University of Leuven in Belgium confirm the above theory. Approximately one million people every year would flow through the prominent city of Kinshasa. The passengers riding on the region's Belgian railway trains were able to spread the virus to larger areas. The study also identified a roaring sex trade, rapid population growth and unsterilized needles used in health clinics. They were the other factors which contributed to the emergence of the Africa HIV epidemic.

*Ebola*, also known as Ebola virus disease (EVD) or Ebola hemorrhagic fever (EHF), is another example. The Ebola disease was first identified in 1976, in two simultaneous outbreaks: one in Nzara, a town in South Sudan and the other in Yambuku, Democratic Republic of the Congo, a village relatively near the Ebola river from which the disease takes its name. In 1970. A big Highway was built for the continent of Africa. The highway was going to divide the whole continent into two parts from South to North. The continent is blessed with thick jungles and sanctuaries of magnificent animals, birds, flowers, fruits and other creatures! Human Raakshas intruded into the mirac-

ulous jungles, cutting trees, changing waterways, flattening mountains, filling up valleys. The animals, viruses and bacteria living for thousands of years were displaced and they caused epidemics. This highway is called "Aids Highway" today. In the district of Kinshasa there is a river called Ebola. When the highway construction work reached that river the virus called Ebola was released!

EVD outbreaks occur intermittently in tropical regions of sub-Saharan Africa. From 1976 to 2012, the World Health Organization reports 24 such outbreaks. The largest outbreak to date was the epidemic in West Africa in December 2013 with 11,323 deaths. In July 2019, the World Health Organization declared the Congo Ebola outbreak a world health emergency! Imagine, Belgium is such a tiny country in Europe, played havoc in Africa and spread the epidemic in the whole world! It is territorial expansionism and human greed that is at root!

### HUMAN GREED IS THE CAUSE

*The latest discovery of the American scientists is that China has stored many viruses more deadly than Corona in the Tibetan glaciers on the Chinese side to be used as war weapons!* The man is in search of more and more natural wealth to satisfy his luxurious needs. He exploits natural wealth like water, minerals and jungles. Man has increased his needs by leaps and bounds. Luxuries have become 'basic' needs of even a villager! There is enough and more natural wealth for everybody's need; but not to satisfy the greed! The clear message of Advent for us is: We must limit our needs. John the Baptist warns, "Repent for your sins!" We repent specially the greed and the exploitation of the earth. We are hoping Jesus will come at Christmas with the good news that the corona-days are over! That's possible only if we would contribute to the eradication of Corona by our penance: Reduce our needs!

# Select A Secret Santa Celebration

## JOIN THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

**C**hristmas is about celebration and it is about family. This spirit of giving and taking is a phenomenal one. And Christmas is also about food. Christmas is not Christmas without a great meal that ends with loosening belts and many sighs of contentment. That is why Christmas wishes are elaborate affairs, requiring much planning.

The tree is up, Carollers are doing the rounds, the city is decked in red and green, and the air is soaked with the enchanting aroma of Christmas baking. While on the home front, we're scurrying around doing last-minute Christmas shopping, at work, the season's cheer is reaching an all-time high, thanks to the innumerable games that keep us in good spirits during the Holiday season.

Secret Santa (a game in which each participant picks the name of another and gifts them little treats, remaining anonymous till the final day) is among the oldest and most popular games city folk are playing. We used

to play Secret Santa in college and it's gotten even more exciting in office because even the bosses join in the fun. Also, I think over time, we have come to be better at gifting as well as at keeping secrets



Jayanthy Subramaniam

One of the highlights of games played around Christmas is that many of them are revised and adapted versions of existing games, Pictionary being one of them. "For the past two years, Christmas Pictionary has been a hit among my employees. There's a dinner party we organise before we break off for a short vacation. We start the evening playing all kinds of Christmas games and since most of us are either writers or designers, our version of Pictionary involves drawing out and guessing Christmas carols, and of course once the guess is made, we all sing along together.

This year's edition of Secret Santa is even more special because while we exchange gifts with colleagues, we also have a box for gifts that we will be taking to an orphanage on Christmas Eve. On that note, there are innumerable activities that can keep you pre-occupied and countless games you can play to usher in the right spirit but it is good to think of others too. After all, Christmas is about spreading love, joy, and peace.

**Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year to all the readers.**

A man said to me. "You know Father, last January my wife told me, 'your both bed sheets are grown old; there are some holes in them. Take new ones.' And I said, 'It's only two holes; I will repair them and use the sheets at least for one more year!' I did it for the year 2020." It's not a big sacrifice. He

has spared just two new sheets for a year. But if every one of us do the exercise, millions and millions of people in the world can 'save the earth' to a large extent to safeguard the next generation from further pandemic days!

**HAPPY CHRISTMAS!**

# Conventions & Conscience, Speak Up

by *Don Aguiar.*

## ***There are three stages of BJP political pusillanimity.***

The first is feral cowardice — captured in the wild-eyed, hunted expression of BJP ministers asked to comment on the prime minister's latest insane or destructive tweet. This is pure "fight or flight," minus the fight part.

— a silence that rings out across the Himalayas and down the hollows as approval and permission.

Prime Minister Modi is now claiming that the farmers protest are backed by Khalistani forces, terrorists, spreading fake news about his governments motive and the like and they are "under coordinated assault and siege" by "corrupt forces." By Modi calling on the people of India to "overrule" and invalidate the farmers just and democratic reasons for their protest, we are well

an eye on the massive food grain market of India, and have a few problems, regarding —

States having different rules & regulations to buy food grains from farmers. It was difficult for corporates to handle so many states with so many different regulations & taxes. Modi Solution: Took control from states and made 1 act for whole country. Corporates happy now.

The other one was that Corporates



The second is calculating cowardice — in which an elected BJP minister hopes he or she (but mainly he) can refuse comment in the several days after a prime ministerial outrage. This reflects the undignified but understandable desire to blend into the scenery and avoid the attention of primary predators.

The third is complicit cowardice. This is silence in the face of prime ministerial attacks on the constitutional order

into stage three of BJP gutlessness.

By claiming the plot against his newly enacted farm and labour laws to uplift the farmers, Modi is not merely claiming instances of being a nationalists and a patriot. He is alleging that the Indian system of democratic government has failed, which implies a right to change.

By hastily using unethical methods to get these unjust farm and labour laws enacted immediately, is to encourage major business corporates, who have

will buy crops and store them. But Essential Commodity act will stop them for storing crops for long time, as it increase prices in market. Modi Solution: Food crops will not come under Essential Commodity act and can be stored for longer period. Corporates again happy.

Another one was that it was hard to determine what type of crop will be grown by farmers. Modi Solution: Contract farming for farmers where they will be told by corporates to grow what kind of crop. Corporates again happy.

And yet another one was how Corporates will handle court cases if anything goes wrong against farmers. Modi Solution: Farmers cannot go to courts. They will go to SDM and DC. Corporates are again happy as they can bribe them.

Modi is urging authoritarian solutions to his political problems. And BJP say bills are in favour of farmers.

This coup of one country, one leader, one party, one election, one businessman had already occurred in the prime minister's mind. This is what India will have if the rest of the population does not wake up and follows the farmers in the country.

The government is already on the job - The government increased the MSP of Dal from Rs28/- to Rs41/- Farmers were thrilled. Next thing you know, Adani imports 400 million tonnes of pulses and cereals (including dal) at Rs17/- and sells it at Rs28/- . No buyers at the APMC yards. The farmers had to sell it at half cost. Adani did that with pepper. The market price was Rs600/- Adani imports at Rs58/- and killed the local produce. This year the cardamom crop has failed. And he is selling at Rs3000 a kilo.

Do you see the Devil in Modi? And why he is not ready to protect MSP and set it as the floor price in an open auction?

Can there be any doubt he would keep to these newly hastily enacted unjust farm and labour laws by refusing to overturn them? Can there be any question he would snuff out the democratic voice of the nation?

This is the interpretive key to Modi: He is instinctually un-Indian. He has no respect for the country's institutions or values. He is ignorant of the nation's story, dismissive of its conventions and unmoved by its romance. He sees politics the way a Machiavellian would in

any country — as the pursuit of power, not the stewardship of certain truths.

As Simone de Beauvoir puts it - The oppressor wouldn't be so strong if he did not have accomplices among the oppressed.

Loyalty to Modi now leads well beyond democratic boundaries. Loyalty to the country and its government — being shown primarily by BJP state officials — brings down prime ministerial wrath and abuse by RSS forces. With even the morally malleable Attorney General now rejecting ridiculous, dangerous libels against the electoral system, the continuing silence from many elected BJP ministers are — how to say this politely? — sickening. Craven. Dishonourable.

It is sobering that India in 2020 seems to have an audience for autocracy, a constituency for authoritarianism. But we are right to hold public officials to a higher standard. Elected BJP ministers have accepted the votes of Indians, accepted the honours of public service, but refused the duties of responsible governance. By trying to hide from responsibilities this large, this basic of constitutional self-government, they have placed themselves in the hot, unflattering spotlight of history.

A government "comfortable" in its majority does not fear asking others for their input. It doesn't pass ordinances in the dark of night. It doesn't silence Opposition microphones in Parliament. This is a deeply insecure regime. Give all the power to a coward. He will still act like one.

It is revealing BJP hypocrisy at its foulest. People who complain of judicial overreach seem happy with executive overreach. People who talk of law and order excuse a lawless attack on the constitutional order. People who speak of nationalism & patriotism can't be bothered to speak up for the Indian tra-

ditions, beliefs and institutions.

The exceptional nature of Indian politics involves one vulnerability: Our democracy must re-create itself in every generation by reaffirming the ideals that created it. Our institutions are not machines that automatically produce the common good. They depend for their survival and success on democratic values — on the constraint of power, not only by law but by convention and conscience.

By expecting such integrity in elected BJP ministers, we are not asking all that much. The fear of being targeted in a prime ministerial tweet and gaining a primary opponent is real enough. But it is hardly the risk of a young soldier on D-Day, or a protester at a segregated lunch counter. Honouring the oath of office is the minimal commitment of responsible representation.

BJP members of Parliament who sacrifice their ideals to the ambitions and insecurities of a single corrupt ruler have ceased to serve the country. Their failure to defend democracy at this moment of testing cannot be excused and will not be forgiven.

That judgment is harsh. But the nation is upset with elected BJP ministers precisely because they believed in many of them. Because they still know they can be better. Losing a public office is ultimately a small matter in the soul's long adventure. And losing a public office in a just cause is one of history's great honours.

Our plea to elected BJP ministers: Remember who you are. Remember the oath that binds you. Remember the idealism and love of country that brought you to service. In a world of chance and change, the great things are eternal: courage, judgment, honesty, honour, moral integrity and a sense of the sacred. It is never too late to do the right thing.

*Christmas Meditation:*

# The Word Becomes Flesh

'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father: fulness of truth and loving kindness"

John 1:14

Because of the Virgin Mary the incarnation of the Word was made possible.

New life begins from new birth, and every child born makes parents experience the mystery of inner growth through the Holy Spirit, just as Mary had known. Saint Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (12:27), wrote: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it."

The incarnation is the central belief of Christianity

We believe that God came in the flesh to work with humanity, the people of his creation, and the most important prerequisite was to be like us in the flesh. God in the very state of his divinity and essence has become flesh as man. The meaning of incarnation is Jesus as the Word of God, and the Word is God. "Jesus is the image of the invisible God" (Colos.1:15).

C. S. Lewis, the English writer said, "The Son of God became man to make men to become the sons of God."

God became what we are that He might make us what He is. Saint Augustine said, "Mary was more blessed in accepting the faith of Christ than in conceiving the flesh of Christ..."

In his book, 'Unless you become like this child', Hans Urs von Balthasar

stated: "Mary's son first had to be the Child of the Father in order then to become man and be capable of taking up on his shoulders the burden of a guilty world."

The Good News of what the prophet John spoke about and what the prophets had preached for over 500 years was coming true, not the news of a man who would come to save us, but God himself would come, the Word to become flesh that was the Good News.

God came and will keep coming always in the service of Holy Mass for he is our Father, friend and companion on this journey. Humanity must believe in Jesus, his promise and never abandon his love and trust for us. God forgives and in return seeks your love for Him and compassion.



BY MELVYN BROWN

Trust in Jesus and you will be protected by God. He will help you to overcome the trials and sorrows of this earth, for He is the Word become flesh and by His divine miracle of death He is one of us. Jesus defeated death, rose from the tomb and proved for all time that He was God.

We who believe in Him will surely receive the promise of His love in everlasting life.

The message of Advent is given in the Gospel of John. 3: 16: "Yes, God so loved the world He gave His only Son that whoever believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life."

Jesus came to us in a poor and humble state, born in a manger and died in the flesh as a common criminal. It was the fulfillment of the divine path to victory. When you accept Jesus as your savior you will meet with pain and suffering for you too will be rewarded in

the kingdom of heaven.

Christmas is the mystery which will never be understood. The internal Word is the spiritual and divine nature of God. He is the alpha and Omega, the beginning and end. He is Lord over all the universe, an exclusive Act of God. The Word became flesh to redeem us from the evil ravages of sin, hate and violence. The glad tidings of God, is in the message and promise of His Kingdom.

The words of the Old Testament prophets have been fulfilled. There are times when we find it difficult to accept the fact that God is truly with us, for most of us live in the darkness of sin, sorrow and death, our flesh is weak.

We live in a dark night, often not wanting to see the light, not wanting to be shocked or disturbed by the flagrant horror of crime, insane attitudes, lust and violence, because we live and have grown up with untruths and wrongs.

Review this Christmas meditation to discover your place in God's plan for your mission, your faith in His trust and your final reward. Jesus loves you, his Mother cares for your human needs, the Holy Spirit is with you always and your heavenly Father helps to protect your spirit when you believe in His only Son. Ask God in the name of His Son Jesus and you will receive. God's greatest gift to humanity is when he Word became flesh.

Once again we will stand before the manger to witness the scene of the Absolute, the display of the crib with the child Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the three kings, the Star above the stable and the farm animals. All this was present in the scene that happened two thousand years ago in the town of Bethlehem. It will be remembered for all the ages to come

Today, we give witness and testimony to the power and the glory of our God when the Word became flesh and stayed with us. Praise be God !

# Christmas is a time of joy and generosity



Is Christmas only about Santa Claus? If you ask any child, he/she will only remember Santa Claus and gifts offered by him to little children. If you enter any mall or shopping centre, you are welcomed by the red-coated Santa, with no mention of Jesus Christ at all. But Christmas is not all about Santa Claus and the wonderful gifts that he brings for children year after year. Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ. The children innocently associate their gifts with Santa Claus but we forget that the greatest gift that we all received on Christmas Day was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who was born of simple parents, Joseph and Mary. Yes, Jesus is the reason for this Christmas season. "For God so loved the world that He gave us His one and only begotten Son Jesus Christ, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

Again in the gospel of St. John, Chapter 1, verse 14, we read "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." The Word here refers to the Son of God, Jesus Christ. As we celebrate this great festival of Christmas, we cannot but lift up our hearts to the Christ Child and thank Him for all the caring, sharing and giving of your generous hearts during the year gone by. As so we cherish these memories with gratitude during this holy season. May the Child Jesus who is love incarnate, enfold you in His arms. May the gentle peace that He brings, touch you softly from above and fill your hearts and home with peace and love. Christmas

is a time of fun and cheer. The activities of Christmas-tide like parties, visits and hopefully even the sacraments, fills us with joy and contribute to making the season joyful and exciting. Christmas is the celebration of the ultimate love of God abandoning the glory of heaven to make His will dwelling with us. Besides buntings, decorations and lavish dinners, Christmas should be a time for new perspectives, inspiration, will and grace in the family. A family is not just a nucleus of a father, mother and children. A family is not merely a nucleus of a family, its uncles, aunties, cousins and grandparents. A family is what was produced when God decided to bring man and woman together, and not only that, when He decided His only Son and His Spirit should dwell among us.

Christmas is Emmanuel, God-with-us and a foretaste of Pentecost, where differences do not engender enmity but foster and encourage bonds, human bonds. Hence, Christmas is a time to wonder and sing over the fact that God, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, want to be among us.

Christmas is a time to enact God becoming bread and wine for us and making ours His Spirit of Shalom. Christmas is a time when the Son of God shared His cup with us. In fact, Christmas reveals the vocation of every family where two or three are gathered in His name. Christmas is a time when loyalty will spring up from the earth and justice will lean down from heaven.

— Jubel D'Cruz

## Jesus, you're My Friend

I love you, Jesus,  
More than anyone in this world,  
because your love for me is the  
greatest of all.  
I love you, Jesus,  
for you are my protector,  
when the world is against me.  
I love you, Jesus,  
because you are the only one,  
who gives me strength and hope.  
I love you, Jesus,  
because you alone,  
Can understand me.  
I love you, Jesus,  
because you love me,  
more than I love you.  
I love you, Jesus,  
For helping my family members,  
Relatives, and friends.  
I love you, Jesus,  
because you are my guiding light,  
when my life is full of darkness.  
O Lord Jesus, I have so many rea-  
sons to love you,  
but even without these reasons,  
I still love you.



— Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

# Let Us Have Mass Movements Against Social Ills Too



**Q**uite unlike the farmers' protest where the fear that they would be at the receiving end of the changes proposed by the government coupled with apprehensions that if they were to lose the fight they would be marginalized forever propels the need for a show of strength by the farmers; the slew of agitations that the state is witnessing now is one that aims to save Goa for posterity.

In both the cases, the sentiments involved are more than obvious!

Yet, one's heart goes out to the motley crowd of crusaders in Goa who have taken it upon themselves to save and

protect what is left of the paradise that it once was.

The air, the rivers, the sea and the land; nothing retains the pristine forms that they were known for earlier. After decades of proscribed activities have denuded the state of its natural bounties, pollution is the bane of modern day Goa.



*by Pachu Menon*

The three controversial infrastructural projects in the state besides having raised the hackles of conservationists, have invited public ire over the insensitivity and indifference shown by the government towards their concerns.

If a Delhi-like situation is to be avoided in Goa, corrective steps are to be taken immediately to improve the air-quality in the state.

While the environmental impacts of coal transportation is well-known, why is the government adamant on going ahead with the rail double tracking!

Moreover, if it is a development project that the government has undertaken, why is it veiled in so much of secrecy that the laying of tracks by the railway authorities have to be necessarily carried out late in the nights!

While it is right to claim that a region constantly denied development will recede an eon into the past, how appropriate is to have developments being carried out in the state which come at

the cost of the decimation of its natural resources and ecological devastation!

Goans are accused of being politically influenced while resisting any progress in the region and protesting whenever developmental projects are announced. The manner in which political leaders have been kept out of prominence in the ongoing stir should make one think so otherwise.

Goans are not against development, especially the nation-building ones. It is a genuine concern for their state that motivates them.

With the locals taking up the cudgels against any and everything which seem to go against the interests of Goa and Goans, it is equally necessary that enough public support is mustered against attempts to turn the state into a den of vices.

Ingenious methods in flesh-trade operations continue to stump authorities in Goa!

With the sort of patronage, political or otherwise, that casinos in Goa have been receiving, it is apparent that they are here to stay. Casinos have assumed that integral position in the state's tourism promotional policy which allows the state exchequer to rake in sufficient moolah – or so it seems!

Presumably, seen as a way to bolster its sagging economy, the state has enough reasons to justify the 'high end' gambling it permits on its soil – nay, waters.

Are casinos, drugs and prostitution turning the picturesque coastal state into a 'Sin City'!

The claims to the contrary notwithstanding, the state continues to remain in the headlines for the huge haul of drugs by the anti-narcotic cell of Goa Police on a regular basis these days which only confirms one's worst ap-

prehensions of Goa turning into a haven for drug peddlers.

If media disclosures about the state playing host to a number of rave-parties involving celebrities from Bollywood have not made the authorities sit up and take stock of the situation, the latest enquires into the alleged suicide of a popular tinsel-town star which had the sleuths from the Narcotics Control Bureau probing the drugs angle in the death case revealed a Mumbai-Goa-Bollywood connection to the whole sordid drama, should have galvanized them into action.

It is indeed shocking to have the state turning into a 'Nirvana center' for merrymakers who arrive in Goa from different corners of the country assured of an easy availability of psychotropic substances to keep them in a state of euphoric happiness.

Moreover, terms like 'party drugs' and 'designer drugs' gives an inkling of the types of concocted mixture of drugs which are accessible to varied sections of 'consumers'.

Goes to show how well the drug market in Goa has evolved!

Besides, drug-related deaths are so common in the state that the multitude of EDM festivals being hosted in Goa need not unnecessarily be haunted for the enigmatic aura they create around themselves.

As that time of the year when doing drugs and slipping into an 'enlightened mode' is the in-thing for many revelers, it is necessary that the cops in the ANC up their ante against those plying the narcotics trade in the state.

The seizure of drugs worth lakhs of rupees in three simultaneous raids conducted by the Goa Police's Anti-Narcotics Cell in the beach village of Arambol in North Goa last week is sufficient indication of the fact that the drug trafficking is a harsh reality that

the state needs to come to terms with.

The proliferation of foreign drug cartels operating along the coastal belts in the state further lends credence to the belief that the local markets are only conduits for the bigger operators from outside the state to channel their 'stuffs' through.

The Goa police cannot afford to be complacent on this matter.

As social malaises, prostitution, gambling and drugs have a debilitating effect on the society. However there are yet to be sustained campaigns to eradicate these social evils in the state. Not to say that activists have remained mum on these issues, but somehow these 'crusades' have never been taken to their logical ends.

Hence, not only environmental degradation, elimination of all avenues that could take the locals on a self-destructive path should also feature as priorities when talking of saving Goa for posterity.

### **Why do we celebrate Christmas on December 25?**

There are several reasons why Christmas is celebrated on December 25. The date is nine months after March 25, a day recognised by Christians as Annunciation is. It was the day Mary was told by God through the angel Gabriel that she would have a baby. The nine months that follow are an approximation of Jesus' birth. December 25 also coincides with pagan Winter Solstice celebrations like Saturnalia and Dies Natalis Solis Invicti. Since they were historically celebrated around that time of the year, there was precedent for holiday festivities during this time of year.

— Jubel D'Cruz,  
Dombivili, Mumbai

# A Christmas Spiritual Bouquet On The Bl. Virgin Mary

**F**or those among us who desire to see the faith in action should be aware how Mary was attentive to the Word of God, listened to the Angel Gabriel and with full consent accepted her mission courageously.

“Totus tuus” (I am all thine).

Mary is often referred to as the Woman of Faith. She was open to the Word of God, “Hearing the Word of God and keeping it.” (Lk.11:27-28). She had fully surrendered to God’s love. Mary became the first and most perfect of Christ’s disciples. (Marialis Cultus).

The Virgin Mary is a living catechism, an expression I am always fascinated by, reminding me of how the Church has become incarnate in her. People who turn to Mary find her to be the best example of how to acquire knowledge and understanding of the Word.

In the declaration of Pope Saint John Paul II, Mary” is the Star of evangelization ever renewed within the Church.” (Evangeli Nuntiandi, 82). As a ‘Star’ she is represented as a guide in the field of catechetical work. Mary is the Mother of the Church.

Through the Holy Spirit Mary helps to show the young of the world the image of Jesus. She is aware of this maternal and mysterious influence on youth in every new generation. Her intercession on our behalf is proclaimed by the doctors and saints of the faith to be a powerful role for us to ask for her intercession, prayers and protection.

In the popular book *Lumen Gentium*



it is written that Mary “devotes herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the Person and work of her Son” (65). She works for Jesus to spread his ministry of love, faithfulness, forgiveness and compassion. *Lumen Gentium* goes on to state that Mary unites in her person and re-echoes the most important doctrines of the faith.” (65).



BY MELVYN BROWN

Mary’s divine maternity helps us to be close to her. From the Cross, Jesus bestowed his Mother to be our

Mother and Mother to the world. ‘To Jesus through Mary’ is a prayer both meaningful and powerful. Mary lives God’s love and message to humankind. Her Immaculate Conception is proof of God’s redemptive touchstone to the faith.

The Virgin Mary is sinless. Her Assumption is the invaluable hope for us to be strong in, so that it makes the teachings of the Church on eschatol-

ogy clear, by giving us a purpose and a vision for the eventual understanding of the triumph of Christ as the Lord God of the universe and all living things.

Mary is the compendium for catechizing. She is as I had said earlier a ‘living catechism’ for the faith.

Mother Mary at the foot of the Cross at Calvary shows us the compassion in human suffering and sorrow. Praise God for the fiat Mary gives us to believe in her Son and eternal life he promises. Let us give our lives totally to Mary as she proclaims the Word of God.

The planned spiritual bouquet on the Blessed Virgin Mary has just begun, there are many more fruits to enrich her bouquet of trust, love and faith in Jesus.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the maternal Ark of the New Covenant. She is the chosen and sinless woman who said ‘Yes’ to God’s Word.

# The twelve days of Christmas

**T**he birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem 2020 years ago ushered in an era of salvation. Only when every individual experiences this salvation, Christmas becomes a meaningful celebration. The love of God manifested in the coming of the Messiah is to make sure that no one is abandoned to the curse of death. The two important figures in the manger, Mary and Joseph, reveal to us the true meaning of Christmas.

Christmas will be a celebration for us only when we are able to look back into our past and take count of every bit of pain that we endure as an investment for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is in such moments of hardship that our commitment to Christ manifests the power of love. As Mother Mary spread the pieces of cloth she managed to save up in order to wrap her baby in comfort, so shall we weave together our experiences of brokenness and offer it for Christ Jesus to be born into our lives. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus this month, let us not forget to show mercy to the poor and the abandoned, the helpless and the orphans. Let us celebrate Christmas fully within our financial limits, and at the same time, we must remember to give thanks to God for the goodness and mercy He has shown in our lives. And at the end of the year, we must spend some time in prayer for the New Year's blessings and for God's guidance. The New Year will then be a blessing for us.



by Jubel D'Cruz

December 25 is not the actual birth date of Jesus Christ. The date was selected as the day of Christmas because it was around the time of various Pagan festivals, such as the Roman

Saturnalia.

Most people know that Christians celebrate Christmas as the birthday of Jesus Christ, but it also means much more. It means having fun with your family and friends, spending time with them, seeing all the decorative Christmas items, decorating the Christmas tree, singing carols, spending time in prayer and eating all the delicious food and homemade sweets.

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

Another feature of the festival is the installing of Christmas trees. Little fir trees or replicas of them are decorated and gifts are placed on them. Little children believe that the gifts placed on the Christmas trees have been placed by Santa.

Christmas is a celebration of love, peace and joy. But however, this season of spiritual happiness has over the years been overtaken by superficial celebration, be it

with fancy greeting cards, decorations, gifts, decking up, feasting, in a phrase an occasion for the rich and fashionable.

Christmas is celebrated for twelve days --- from December 25th till January 6th and there is a song based on the twelve days of Christmas which is sung during the Christmas season by both children and adults.



# From Paradise At Christmas

## Short Story

The sharp invisible waves of winter breeze seemed to cut into the skin. The street was deserted as far as the eye could see, even the stray dogs huddled in corners or under the old staircases of English designed buildings. With bright open eyes the overhead street lights peered into the emptiness all around the neighborhood.

Starina Bond, 27, lived alone in the world. For two years she bore the pain of her parents death, both having died in a tragic accident at Darjeeling when the bus they were travelling in fell into a ditch, all the passengers lost their lives.

She did not have the heart to prepare for the festival of Christmas, and today was the 23rd of December. A single tear rolled down her cheek.

The cold sharp wind was circling around the room. Starina decided to close the windows. It would be a cold night she mused, taking out a warm blanket from the cupboard.

The phone rang. Starina reached out for the mobile when a woman's voice asked: "Miss Starina Bond?"

"Yes. Starina speaking."

"Good. I have told to inform you to meet the bank manager tomorrow at ten sharp in the morning, at the United Bank of Paradise, just across your house". The phone clicked off abruptly.

For the first time in many months Starina laughed. She could not stop laughing, and told herself it was a prankster. The wall clock chimed the hour,

eleven times. The young woman was amused, made a cup of Horlicks and got into bed, it would be a long night.

The next morning was a beautiful day: the sun rose in all its majesty, commanding blue skies to keep clear as snow white rolls of cloud sailed across the heavens. A bright flock of birds flew in formation, creating a perfect picture postcard.

Starina went about her morning routine, bath, cleaned her teeth and glided out of the bathroom. On her way to the dining hall curiosity made her move towards the closed window which looked out at the street. She threw open the window.

"My Lord!" She exclaimed on seeing the signboard, United Bank of Paradise, it had never been there before.

Was it an illusion? She pinched herself and looked again. The bank was still there, across the house.

Starina controlled her bubbling emotions and took in her breath. It was ten o'clock when she stepped out of the house, walked

across the street and stepped into the bank. A tall, well-dressed man came up to her with a smile and said: "The manager will see you now."

The manager sat in a white swivel chair with her back to the front door. "Come in, Sabrina," said the woman turning around facing her daughter.

"Mother!" blurted the girl, adding, "It can't be, you're dead."

"I am, my child. I took special permission to see you before I went into



God's kingdom. Everyone understood and allowed me to meet you".

"Mother, where is dad?"

"As usual, playing with little angels."

Starina smiled.

Her mother went on to say, "I will not see you again for a long time darling. Now, go back home." And, at that moment everything vanished.

The next day would be Christmas. Starina went to bed early with the intention of going for the early morning church service. She over slept, when the voices of carol singers woke her. Rushing to the front door, she threw the door open and was shocked to see the carol singers conducted by her smiling mother.

"This is for you, my child, to keep you safe for a lifetime. Happy Christmas, Starina." Then, she added: "This gift is real, it will not vanish." Before her eyes the choir and her mother were gone; in her hand was the big colorful box tied with gold and silver ribbons.

Starina opened the box and it was full of money, thousands and thousands of Indian rupees. She gasped and shouted: "Merry Christmas, mum and dad. I love you."

The flock of birds flew into the clouds as the sun came up with a broad sunshine smile.



BY MELVYN BROWN





# It's a Silent Night....

Oh, don't you see, O don't you see ...

It's time now to feel christmassy ...

With baubles and with glee ...

We deck the Christmas tree ☐☐

The Star of David, will now glow ...

We'll stand beneath the Mistletoe ...

The Reindeers, sure are on the go ...

And Santa, with his, HO !, HO !, HO ! ...

We'll sing the joyful carols ...

With so much of delight ...

We'll wait, we'll wait, O yes we'll wait ...

For the blessed, Silent Night ...



—*Tanya Martin.*  
*Navi Mumbai.*



## St. Jerome's feast at Kashimira



If Kolkata is known for Anglo Indians and Goa for Goans, Mumbai is known for East Indians (the original inhabitants of Mumbai), a lovely community spread all over Mumbai who are very much like the Goans and the Anglo Indians.

Many centuries ago, many Maharashtra farmers and fishermen living on the coast of Mumbai (Bombay, then), converted to Christianity and because of their Christian surnames, many of them got the best jobs in the docks and the East India Company, so much so that the Englishmen started to call them East Indians.....and the name stuck!

The day after Christmas is a lovely festival celebrated in Kashimira at Mira Road. It is called the Kashimira feast. It is celebrated at the St. Jerome's Church. After mass, people start enjoying themselves by going for horse rides, camel rides, giant wheel and other rides available.

There are also stalls just like the Erangal feast at Madh Island for different kinds of games like throwing rings, shooting and football. Some people even do live cooking in the wadis in the open air, while others prepare their food at home and bring it along with them. For enjoyment, East Indian

Marathi songs are played throughout the day. People visit each other and the day is spent eating, drinking and merry-making.

In the evening, the fisherwomen in their traditional sarees of the same colour, dance to East Indian Marathi and koli songs.

St. Jerome's Church built in the year 1595, stands on a hillock at the northern point of Salsette island alongside the Western Express Highway. There were the two old villages of Kashi (Cassi) and Mira (Mirem) and this church stood in between the two villages as a dividing boundary line.



by Jubel D'Cruz

It was the Portuguese Franciscan Fathers who selected this site between two villages and built their first church in 1595. This was a beautifully worked upon wooden structure by the local carpenters under the directions of the Franciscan Fathers. This building lasted for just 23 years for it was destroyed in a cyclone that hit the western coast in October 1618. It was not until 1628 that the new church was built alongside the ruins of the old. By 1630, the parish flourished and today it consists of villages like Kashi, Mira, Sanbojapal, Chena, Bandonli, Baroli and Tantoli. This church flourished for the next 109 years and it was destroyed in

1739 during the Maratha invasion.

The statue of St. Jerome was preserved and was placed on the main altar of the new church that was finally built 187 years later in 1926. The rear arch of the old church is now the sanctuary of the new church and the sanctuary of the old church is now the sacristy of the new church. In front of the old ruined church is a cross about 386 years old and in 1926 a new cross was erected in front of the new church. Each year on December 26 on the feast day, a fair is held and is attended by more than 3000 people from all over Mumbai and its suburbs.

As per the tradition, the church celebrates masses in multi-lingual languages right from 6 am till 1 pm on this day. The stalls selling ghumats (a drumming musical instrument made of earthenware) are most popular among the visiting devotees who throng in large numbers.

Irrespective of caste, creed or religion, people of all faiths seek blessings of St. Jerome at this church.

Several years ago, a severe epidemic plague gripped this region and people of all religions sought refuge in the church seeking divine intervention and were saved. And it is because of this, the church celebrates the feast of this saint every year.

# Blessed Carlo Acutis: A Saint in the Making

**C**arlo Acutis (1991-2006) was a teenager of our time, similar to many others. Interested in school, surrounded by friends and a great lover of personal computers. At the same time, he was a great friend of Jesus Christ. He participated daily in the Holy Eucharist and placed his trust in the Blessed Virgin Mary. He died at the age of 15 from a fulminant leukaemia and offered his life for the Pope and for the Church. His story has aroused deep admiration of those who knew him.

Carlo was full of life and faith, a sudden and malignant illness quickly took him away.

From the day Carlo received his First Holy Communion at the age of 7, he never missed going to church for the morning Mass. He always tried, either before or after the Holy Mass to pause before the Tabernacle to adore the Lord, always truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. Our Blessed Mother was his great confidant and he never failed to honour her by reciting the Holy Rosary every day. Carlo's modern and up-to-date ways combined perfectly with his profound Eucharistic life and Marian devotion, which helped to make him that very special boy who everyone admires and loves.

To quote Carlo's own words: "Our goal must be the infinite and not the finite. The Infinity is our homeland. We are always expected in Heaven". Another phrase of his was: "All people are born as originals, but many die as photocopies". To move towards this goal and not "die as photocopies", Carlo said that our compass must be the Word of God, that we have to measure up to constantly. But to reach such a lofty goal very special measures are necessary --- the sacraments and prayer. In particular, Carlo placed the Sacrament of the Eucharist at the centre of his life and he called it "my highway to Heaven".

Carlo was very gifted with everything related to the world of computers so that both his friends and adults with computer engineering degrees considered him a genius. Everyone was amazed at his ability to understand the secrets of computers that are normally only accessible to those who have specialized university degrees. Carlo's interests involved computer programming, film editing, website creation, editing and laying out small publications to helping those most in need, especially children and the elderly.

Carlo lived a life of grace and shared his overwhelming experience of God with his peers.

He received the Eucharist every day, he attended Holy Mass devoutly daily and would pause for hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. His experience and Christian maturity testify to the truth of Pope Benedict XVI's words in the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*: the sacrifice of the Mass and Eucharistic Adoration strengthen, support, develop love of Jesus and the availability to ecclesial service.

Carlo also nourished a special devotion to Our Blessed Moth-

er to whom he faithfully recited the rosary, and feeling her motherly love, he offered her acts of mortification.

This young boy sociologically similar to his school mates, was an authentic witness that the Gospel can be lived fully even by a teenager.

In his short life, oriented to that encounter with Jesus, was like a light not only to shine on the path of those who knew him, but also of those who will come to know his story.

Carlo Acutis was born in London on May 3, 1991 to a wealthy Italian family with Irish and Polish roots. He was beatified by Cardinal Agostino Vallini on behalf of Pope Francis at the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Assisi, Italy on October 10, 2020. Very soon he will be canonised, and the church will declare him as a saint. His body till today is still incorrupt and is kept for veneration for the public from time to time.

— Jubel D'Cruz



# Cyber safety essential



**Mumbai Police** is working 24X7 to make sure about the reasons for cyber security crimes and the ways and means to curb such happenings in the Metro. The cipher is any method of encrypting text (concealing its readability and meaning). It is also sometimes used to refer to the encrypted text message itself although here the term cipher text is preferred. Its origin is the Arabic sifr, meaning empty or zero. In addition to the cryptographic meaning, cipher also means (1) someone insignificant, and (2) a combination of symbolic letters as in an entwined weaving of letters for a monogram. Some cyphers work by simply realigning the alphabet or otherwise manipulating the text in some consistent pattern. However, almost all serious ciphers use both a key (a variable that is combined in some way with the unencrypted text) and an algorithm (a formula for combining the key with the text). A block cipher is one that breaks a message up into chunks



C.K. Subramaniam

and combines a key with each chunk (for example, 64-bits of text). A stream cipher is one that applies a key to each bit, one at a time. Most modern ciphers are block ciphers. Poly alphabetic ciphers are inherently fast, in most cases require little storage, and are easy to implement in hardware or software. The hard part is designing one that is secure. Cyber crimes are on the increase and the Police Commissioner is trying all the ways and means to bring out the truth in such crimes so that more and more awareness will be created for the future.

Life without the Internet, an innovative technology, seems almost unimaginable for most people in India. Today the Internet is intrinsic to media and communications, entertainment, politics, defence, business, banking, education and also administrative systems as well as to social interaction. The Internet disentangles this extraordinarily complex

information and communication technology from its place in our daily lives, allowing it to be examined anew. Technology has historically been shaped by governmental, military and commercial requirements, but the development of the Internet is increasingly driven by its users. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and many other emerging applications are shifting the way we express ourselves, communicate with our friends, and even engage with global politics. At the same time three-quarters of the world's population remain effectively excluded from the Internet. Packed with case studies drawn from around the world, the Internet presents a clear and up-to-date introduction to the social, cultural, technological and political worlds this new media form is creating.

In the high competitive world students are striving hard for success. As the stakes are very high the younger generation vie for top honors and social media is playing a pivotal role in making their dreams come true. So, blam-

ing the youngsters for their inclination to operate the Internet, but at the same time they should not cross the limit and break the online laws. Whatever you mention in social media is passing through to people faster than light and one should take proper care before posting messages in respect of sensitive matters. There is no question of doing it knowingly or unknowingly but make sure before you do controversial postings in social media. Misuse of Password and hacking are part and parcel of the present day working. And a number of cases are referred to the Economic Offence Wing to get clarity and justice of such financial frauds taking place in the Banking Industry. In this context, the young generation should mind it not to enter into such cyber crimes and lose their credentials in the society just to make a few thousand rupees. The greed may land them behind bars. As a regular and active on FB I take all the precautions to protect my decorum and not to be too controversial on subjects relating to sports, cinema or even politics. As a senior citizen I take this opportunity to give proper feedback to my pals and train them how to go about the task of becoming a respected citizen of this country without any adverse record and to keep away from the ill effects of social media as well as cyber crimes and lead a troubled life. It is a matter of convenience and that should not come in the way of cropping up fresh problems in a technology based society.

Increasing interest in the Internet is very much intruding and the youngsters fall prey to the web world. Even advertisements are screened showing a youngster sitting and operating his mobile and hear phone on to frustrate the head of the family. To add to the woes even political parties are offering free Wifi to appease young voters to pin their faith on select parties so as to win coming Assembly elections with this favour. So the online culture is groping the children to darkness. The young generation sit late hours

to browse through the net and gather good as well as bad information through their search and thus losing valuable sleep in the late night hours. At times the evil mind turns to cyber crimes and the number of offences is on the increase as per the Crime Records Bureau. This is a very bad precedence as we expect that the young generation is the future of our country. By just gluing to the laptop or mobile, the youngsters spoil their eyesight as well and make their life miserable with black circles forming around the eyes. It is indeed a matter of great concern and thus we as parents should desist the youngsters from falling prey to this habit and this just turns them to addicts. While driving or even travelling through trains and walking as pedestrians young boys and girls use the hear phone and in the deaf years they could not expect impending danger through the sound of the vehicle/train. Thus the writing is on the wall. It is better from overdoing anything to spell doom in the end. By applying technology one should not fall victim to a cyber crime and see that such evil minds will not catch their minds as well. One should remember that breaking the law online is an offence and punishable.

The major flaw in the present system is the way youngsters are given free-hand to move in isolation or in a group thereby developing a bad character and that leads to all the troubles. The minds of the youngsters become corrupt and they look for money to lead a high five living. They are not able to mingle with a group with a good background and fall into the trap of bad elements. The Hindi cine world makes them more aggressive and that mind is well and truly developed from a very young age. Teenagers waylaid are not scared to commit rape in open as they are shameless in their acts and did not foresee the impending repercussions. Stabbing a classmate happened due to enmity or at the request of the gang leader or at time for achieving monetary benefit. Even present children even kidnap for ransom and in-

clude kidnapping their own brothers to achieve their aim of making easy money. Teachers are friends, philosophers and guides for the children. But if they behave in an indecent way, then what we can expect from the children, who follow him to the core. Preventing the youngsters from the follies of social life is not an easy thing. The mind should be developed in such a way to face any eventuality and the will to go on the right path. By doing so one can get a clean mind and that will again lead to happiness. The hurdle of passing through a youngster's life has many obstacles but it is up to the person to make a decent living rather entering into unwanted offences and thereby bringing insult to the family and the institution you study or work. Parental care is of utmost importance to guide them to achieve a religious mind and that gives the additional protection when one encounters such a ticklish situation. All are not born criminals. So the right approach and the right mix of friendship prevent you from becoming perpetrators of such heinous crimes. One should not be carried away by infatuation. The Internet is really interesting if it is made use of for worthwhile purposes.

It is easy to apply for Internet banking. All the new generation banks, major nationalized banks, and some private banks provide online banking. The registration process might differ slightly between banks, but overall it is quite the same. You can go through the terms and conditions by visiting the websites of these banks. New generation banks provide online registration for net banking for their account holders. For others, you can download the registration form from their websites. You have to fill the forms correctly and hand it over to the bank along with the required documents. The banks will send you the required details and password to start online banking. You can download the registration forms for online banking of popular banks. In an innovative Internet world life without the Internet is a thing of the past.

# Denying Us Our Human Rights



**A**s 10 December approaches – one cannot but help think of Human Rights! Another anniversary, when post World War II the world gave itself this pathbreaking and much needed Magna Carta. Sadly, for many (particularly for India) this past year has been a bad one: the pandemic COVID-19 has played havoc with lives and livelihoods of millions everywhere. It has been a particularly bad year for human rights in India: in a systematic but brutal manner, the legitimate rights of people are not only denied but are crushed. The victims as usual are the poor and the marginalised; the Adivasis and the Dalits; women and children; the excluded and other vulnerable workers. To add to it, human rights defenders, and others who take a visible and vocal stand against a regime which day by day prove to be anti-people, anti-Democracy and anti-



BY FR. CEDRIC PRAKASH  
SJ

Constitutional are at the receiving end of a system which reeks of vendetta. On 26 November (the Constitution Day in India) it was estimated that more than 250 million people in India went on strike protesting against the anti-farmer and anti-labour policies of the Government. On 8 December, the call given by the farmers unions and the labour unions for a Nation-wide strike are expected to bring out many more!

The farmers are being denied their rights: today thousands of them are literally on the warpath, converging in Delhi, ensuring a massive blockade. Their message is clear: it is they who provide the nation with sustenance through their toil and sweat; they no longer wish to be taken for granted; as a group that can just be treated with disdain: as a vote-bank. Their protest is apolitical yet members of the ruling class have calling them

names like 'Khalistanis', terrorists etc. They demand that their legitimate rights are respected: they want an immediate roll back of three bills recently passed by the Government; they are convinced that these bills will have a negative impact on their livelihood and are blatantly designed to help the cronny capitalists to profit. In a statement the farmer groups said that in their talks with the government they have asked for the withdrawal of the three laws that they say will leave them at the mercy of large corporations and override safeguards against being cheated. Support for the farmers rights is pouring in from all over the country but also from abroad.

The migrants are being denied their rights: the nation witnessed their plight from the night of 24/25 March when the lockdown was first announced. Millions of migrants were stranded overnight without food, cash, and shelter. What the Government did not visualize was that they would have the grit

and determination to walk back home. There are the terrible pictures and footage of them walking miles back to their native places. They were subjected to violation of their fundamental rights under Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21 and often to severe police harassment on interstate borders. Many reportedly died as a result of the lockdown, due to exhaustion en route home, starvation, suicides, police excesses, illnesses, and rail and road accidents. There is a Supreme Court order demanding that the plight of these migrants is not only looked into but their suffering is also alleviated; but who cares?

The workers are being denied their rights: the working class has suffered tremendously during this pandemic. Besides, the Government denying them public transportation for almost two months to return home, they were also denied wages when their establishments were closed during the lockdown. The Government seemed to desperately have wanted to keep them back at their 'workplace' so that they could be available as soon as the lockdown to work once again at the mercy of their employer; many of them are back for long hours of work but with reduced wages. To add salt to their wounds, on 23 September Parliament passed three labour code Bills when the opposition was boycotting the monsoon session on the issue of the farm Bills. The three Bills, the Industrial Relations (IR) Code, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code, and the Social Security Code, along with the Code on Wages, 2019, amalgamate 44 labour laws. All these Codes deal with wages, industrial relations, social security, safety, and welfare conditions. There are several features of the Codes which are problematic and go against the rights of workers; besides, the process by which they were pushed through was hardly transparent. For one, all central trade unions were opposed to the amalgamation of the hard-won labour laws and had submitted their objec-

tions on several occasions. The Government however, does not relent.

The Adivasis are being denied their rights: one experiences this, the way the jal-jungle-jameen is being taken away from them. The areas which they have inhabited for centuries is being for industrialisation, for mining, for so called 'development' works and other mega-projects. More than two million of them and other forest-dwellers remain at risk of forced displaced and loss of livelihoods after their claims to stay on in their habitats under the Forest Rights Act were rejected. Many Adivasis from the Kevadia area (which is around India's latest white elephant – a gross statue in the name of Sardar Patel) were made to leave their homes overnight. PESA is the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 -a law enacted by the Government of India for ensuring self-governance through traditional Gram Sabhas for people living in the Scheduled Areas of India. The sad part is that the Adivasis are also being denied their rights under PESA.

Human rights defenders and NGOs are being denied their rights: this Government brooks no dissent. What is happening to this essential dimension of democracy has come in from no less a person than the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet who on 20 October appealed to the Government of India to safeguard the rights of human rights defenders and NGOs, and their ability to carry out their crucial work on behalf of the many groups they represent. Bachelet expressed regret at the tightening of space for human rights NGOs in particular, including by the application of vaguely worded laws that constrain NGOs' activities and restrict foreign funding. In a strongly worded statement Bachelet said,

*"India has long had a strong civil society, which has been at the forefront of groundbreaking human rights advoca-*

*cy within the country and globally, but I am concerned that vaguely defined laws are increasingly being used to stifle these voices." Adding, "I am concerned that such actions based on the grounds of vaguely defined 'public interest' leave this law open to abuse, and that it is indeed actually being used to deter or punish NGOs for human rights reporting and advocacy that the authorities perceive as critical in nature. Constructive criticism is the lifeblood of democracy. Even if the authorities find it uncomfortable, it should never be criminalized or outlawed in this way."* What is happening to Fr Stan Swamy and the fifteen others arrested (and now languishing in prison) under the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for involvement in the Bhima-Koregaon violence, is a case in point. Many others are detained for no reason.

The minorities are being denied their rights: it keeps happening at a frightening regularity. Muslims and Christians are at the receiving end of venomous hate speeches, constant denigration and even attacks. The Babri Masjid – Ram Mandir issue had two Supreme Court verdicts with communal overtones favouring the majoritarian community. Come 6 December one is reminded of that infamous day in the annals of the country when the Sangh Parivar destroyed the Babri Masjid in 1992- of course no one was declared guilty of this heinous crime! The abrogation of Articles 370 and 35 A in Kashmir has enhanced the communal divide. The 'Love Jihad' law of UP is clearly focussed on a Muslim boy marrying a Hindu girl. Besides it is expected to lead to a spate of anti-conversion laws in the country. A real bogey and which certainly violates the fundamental rights of a citizen. The recently concluded Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections had very strong communal messages delivered which has polarised the communities there very sharply. The Government conveniently forgets that India is a secular

country

Ordinary citizens are being destroyed their rights with the destruction of our common home! Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has given a green signal to more than forty projects without the mandatory environmental clearances. Most of these projects favour their rich crony capitalist friends literally giving them a license to loot, plunder and rape the environment and much more! The felling of thousands of trees and the destruction of a natural sanctuary in Mollem, Goa – has brought thousands of Goans out on the streets. The aim of this project is to build a double track railway line for the shipping of coal for the Corporation of one of the country's henchmen. Our precious biodiversity and our fragile ecosystems are being destroyed. The Government today just does not care and has clearly gone on a downward spiral: doing everything they can to destroy the environment: The Western Ghats and the Aravalli Hills; the building of a dam in Dibang; the selling of coal mines to private companies and much more

The environment is destroyed with the growth of polluting industries without the necessary environmental safeguards because of callousness and corruption. On 7 May, a gas leak that occurred at the LG Polymers chemical plant near Visakhapatnam killed eleven persons and affecting more than a thousand others. December 3 marked 36 years since the highly toxic chemical methyl isocyanate (MIC) leaked from a storage tank in Bhopal's Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) plant killed around 25,000 people and injured nearly 550,000 people in 1984. Three and a half decades later, the latter continues to demand justice from India's judiciary and governance with the help of some civil rights groups; in a joint press release recently they said, "*The year 2020 has been an extremely traumatic period for Bhopal gas*

*victims. The struggle for justice, which gas-victims had been relentlessly waging for the previous 35 years, was itself a testimony to the failure of the Indian State to mete out justice in all these years."* The main culprits have however got away with murder and in connivance with ruling regimes.

The rights of women and children, the rights of Dalits, of the excluded and other vulnerable groups are being denied in a calculated manner. The right to freedom of speech and expression and of religion, the right to dissent is all being denied by a fascist regime, a spineless judiciary, a pliant executive, a godfied media and corrupt vested interest groups.

Human Rights Day 2020 is therefore a call to wake-up from our slumber, shake off the apathy and to rise together: demanding and ensuring- HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL!

*\*(Fr. Cedric Prakash SJ is a human rights & peace activist/writer Contact: cedricprakash@gmail.com )*

## New Year: A time for new beginnings

New Year to me is a time for new beginnings. It means fresh starts, the beginning of something new and being able to change something with yourself. This New Year, I would like to spend more time with my family and devote more time in prayer. I would also like to glorify my God much more than the previous years and give more tithes to the Church as a part of my offerings. I would also like to help the poor and the needy just like Mother Teresa did when she was living on this earth.

— Jubel D'Cruz,  
Mumbai

## The story of Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer

Once upon a time, there lived at the North Pole a young reindeer named Rudolph. He was a lively, happy reindeer and loved playing in the snow. But one day, the other reindeer noticed that he had a very large, bright red nose, and they teased him about it without mercy.

Rudolph became sad because it was Christmas Eve and he was afraid that because of his shiny nose, he would never be chosen to pull Santa's sleigh. He went to visit Santa and the Elf, who were getting all their presents ready. They were always kind to Rudolph and never mentioned his funny nose.

At last, Santa boomed, "Elf, I must go now. Let's load up the presents."

When all was ready, Santa asked, "Where are my eight reindeer? I need their strength to pull my sleigh."

Then Santa looked around him and noticed how foggy the night had become. He was worried because he would never be able to see his way. Suddenly, he spied Rudolph with his bright red nose, and he had a very bright idea!

"Rudolph," he cried, "I want you with your shiny nose to light up the way for my sleigh tonight!"

The tiny reindeer made way for Rudolph. Now everybody loved him and said what a very special reindeer he was. From then on, Rudolph was Santa's first choice every Christmas Eve.

— Jubel D'Cruz

# The Pohutukawa Christmas Tree

by Peter Castellino

The Pohutukawa tree / *Metrosideros excelsa* an iconic Kiwi tree is an established part of the New Zealand Christmas tradition has crimson flowers and is used in greeting cards , poems and songs is an important symbol for New Zealanders at home and abroad .

In 1883 missionary Henry Williams described holding a service under a wide spreading Pohutukawa tree and in 1857 a published reference to the tree was made when the scarlet flowers of the tree were part of decorations at a feast hosted by Ngapuhi leader Eruera Patuone and several years later Austrian geologist Ferdinand von Hochseter noted the settlers reference to it.

The Pohutukawa he observed , 'about Christmas .. are full of charming ...blossoms,' the settler decorates his church and dwellings with its lovely branches.

Other 19th-century references term the Pohutukawa tree as the ' Settlers Christmas tree ' and Antipodean holly. In 1941 army chaplain Ted Forsman composed a Pohutukawa Carol making reference to your red tufts our snow.

He served in the Libyan Desert at the time not surroundings associated with a fiery red Pohutukawa tree but many of his fellow New Zealanders would associate with that image.

Pohutukawa and its cousin Rata are prominent in Moari traditions and legends tell of Tawhaki a young Moari warrior who tried to find heaven toto avenge the death of his father and he fell to Earth and the crimson flowers represent his blood .



A gnarled twisted Pohutukawa on the windswept cliff top at Cape Reingathe northern tip of New Zealand is important for New Zealanders and for the Maori this small venerated Pohutukawa is known as ' the place of leaping ' - from here the spirits of the dead begin their traditional journey to their traditional homeland of Hawaki and from this spirit the spirits leap off the headland and climb down the roots of the 800-year -old tree descending into the underworld on their return journey. Edible nectar is obtained from the pollen Pohutukawa flowers is used to make a thin white honey with a distinct flavor and Queen Elizabeth orders a batch of the Rangitoto honey and the inner bark when cut out when the rising sun strikes the tree is used to treat sore throats and it is medicinally used as an astringent in the form of an infusion to treat dysentery , diarrhoea and venereal diseases and the Maoris use the juice of the inner bark to allay inflammation and heal gunshot and gangrenous wounds.

**The bark astringent is valuable for tanning**

The wood of the tree is hard and red is called iron wood by the Europeans

and is found along with Rata on Tuhua Mayor Island is used for ship building and uses as timbers and gunwales for boats being very pliant when green and will bend to any shape and the Maoris use the wood to make paddles and mauls is long heavy headed hammer used to drive stakes or wedges and the Europeans make cabinets from it .

Wallace in 1989 found a spinning top made from the *Metrosideros* species among the museum artefacts he tested along with 6 fernroot beaters 6 mauls , 2 paddles, a weapon , an eel club, 2 ketu , 1 teka, 1 wakahula .

Thus we see the importance of the Pohutukawa Christmas Tree- an established New Zealand tradition.

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# New Year Resolutions- 20-Twenty One Dreams And Aspirations

**1. Nothing is impossible"** We can achieve something different from others. If you are a sportsman then you can take defeat and victory in the same spirit. Happiness happens to those who seek it. Winning is a habit as far as sports is concerned. Yes; you go for a winning mode, then only you can finish as a hard fought loser.

**2. Don't think of today-** Think about tomorrow and the day after. Stitch in time saves nine. Try to plug the loopholes and feel success in life. Saving is a very good habit and cultivate the same for rainy days. Small drops make an ocean true. Nationalised Banks are there to keep your small savings and that sum grow and double to help you at the time of need.

**3. Don't be Selfish:** Live and let others also live. Metro city Mumbai is helping so many people to start their career and become rich in record time. Thus so many people are coming to the Business capital to make their living more comfortable.

**4. Learn to leave bad habits-**The year 2021 is the best opportune moment to leave bad habits. Cigarette smoking is injurious to health as per the statutory warning message. However, so many people taste smoking and spoil their health in the process. Chewing Gutka and Tobacco and drinking habits can also be done away with grit and determination in the New Year.

**5. Teaching is a good hobby-**Inculcate the knowledge available with you to others Teachers play a very crucial role in imparting knowledge. We forget the teachers once we get a good living. Cricketers are helped by coaches; but once they become superstars they for-



get the role of the coaches in bringing their career to limelight. Music teachers bring melody in the voice of the wards.

**6. Respect Elders:** Express gratitude to your parents, teachers and the patients. At one time or other we may also lie down with an ailment and we need the help of others.

**7. Try fast methods:** be a sport and try to finish your work as early as possible and accept more work and help others and the institution. If your Institution grow, then you will also grow simultaneously.



*Jayanthy Subramaniam*

der additional responsibilities.

**9. Patient Listening;** Listen to what others say. Improvise their views and make a successful suggestion. Give credit to the team members also instead of poking your nose alone.

**10. Have Concern for others:** Instead of thinking about you always give some attention towards poor, downtrodden people. After all you live to help others and that attitude is a great virtue.

**11. Control your anger.** People may

irritate you with unwanted comments; but try to maintain composure and do a world of good to your institution and give attention to family values and traditions. After all anger will come and go but the name and fame you attained will also go with your anger.

**12. Try to be a fitness freak-** The retirement age of Government employees was increased from 58 to 60 and hence, try to fit with healthy habits.

**13. Develop good Character"** Our life span is short. During our time try to develop good character and try to adopt them in day to day life as well. After all, your character reflects your mind. Apply patience and perseverance to achieve your objectives and don't take hasty decisions and never look for short cuts to success.

**14. Compliment People:** Give respect and take respect. Appreciate a good song. Compliment a good knock by a batsman and encourage him. Stop talking discouraging words.

**15. Aim of your life:** In the best interest of your family you wish to have loving parents and loving children. After all, you will become old one day and your sons will have to look after you, the same way you looked after your parents. The love and affection is passed on from forefathers to our father, father to son etc.

If you are able to get what is required for your life with the above good thinking you can lead a peaceful living for which, you maintain robust health, work with honesty and sincerity, have faith in God and that will give you peace of mind and try to instill confidence in your children because the future of India is in the hands of present children. We wish You A Happy New Year 2021.

## Bethany Centenary Books Launched in M'lore.

**B**ethany Generalate, Bendur, Mangalore, on December 3, 2020, released two books- "Bethany in Frontier Mission", Edited by Sr Shanthi Priya BS, General Councillor and the doctoral thesis- "Academic Performance of Adolescents in Relation to their Self-Esteem and Social Support" by Sr. Dr Jessy Maria BS, Assistant Provincial Superior, Eastern Province. Most Rev Gerald Isaac Lobo, Bishop of Udupi Diocese and Rev Sr Rose Celine BS, Superior General of the Bethany Congregation did the honours.

In addition, the launching programme was graced by several dignitaries too - Rev Fr Vincent Monteiro, Parish Priest of St Sebastian Church Bendur, Mr Harold D'Souza, Co-founder of Eyes Open International, and member of United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, Fr Gomes, CODP, Mr Naveen D'Souza and Mrs Kavya Nataraj ( City Corporators). Also participating were General Councillors, Procurator General, Provincial Superiors and Asst Provincial Superiors, the members of the Enlarged Council, Heads and Representatives of the NGOs and Government Departments in Mangalore and the Bethany sisters were special invitees.

Sr Lillis the Assistant Superior General cordially welcomed the dignitaries and guests. The Book, 'Bethany in Frontier Mission' is edited by Sr Shanthi Priya BS. It was introduced by Sr Lilitta BS. The book upholds the spiritual legacy of the Founder 'Servant of God' Mgr Raymond F C Mascarenhas and founding members. It documents the commendable works of the Sisters, in India and Abroad. It is in response to the clarion call of the Church and the Congregation, to embark on the relevant mission of combating human trafficking, and promoting safe migra-



tion. It chronicles the bold and daring efforts put in by 56 Development Centres bringing hope and solace to the trafficked and exploited migrants. The scientific reflection enlists the impact of its intervention, importance of national and international network and collaboration, to combat the malady, the profit making crime in the world. It also provides insights into the challenges encountered by those on the frontlines. Sisters who have made a lifelong, untiring, and passionate commitment to reach out to those on the fringes of the society and portray their experience and motivational facts for the readers. It is meant to pave the way forward for Bethany into the Centenary and beyond.

The Doctoral thesis of Sr. Jessy Maria titled "Academic Performance of Adolescents in relation to their Self- Esteem and Social Support" was introduced by Sr Christine BS. This thesis makes a significant contribution in the field of Social Work and Education specially to Parents, Teachers, School counselors and Adolescents. She speaks as a woman religious to the parents and teachers how they could contribute in building up the Self Esteem of today's adolescents under their care. She also makes aware the teachers and parents how important it is to support children under their care and journey with the adolescents in their academics, extra-

curricular activities and in their adventures.

Addressing the gathering Bishop Gerald Isaac Lobo, spoke the mind of Pope Francis who shares the concern for the refugees and migrants and appealing the whole world to welcome, accept and treat them as brothers and sisters. He also appreciated Sr Shanthi Priya for launching the book on the frontier mission of the Bethany sisters on the occasion of the centenary of the congregation.

Sr Rose Celine, Superior General, in her felicitation recalled with gratitude the vision of the Founder, pioneers and the sisters which took Bethany to the margins bringing hope and new life to the marginalized. She commended the works of the sisters even beyond boundaries of the country. She felicitated profusely Sr Shanthi Priya and Sr Dr Jessy Maria for their commendable work of writings and compiling the daring efforts of the sisters. The launching and felicitation program was compared by Sr Lilitta BS, General Councillor and Sr Judy Varghese BS. Sr Mariette, General Councillor proposed the vote of thanks recognizing everyone who graced the occasion which will remain in memory for long.

**- Compiled :  
Ivan Saldanha-Shet.**

# Royal Christian Family MATRIMONIALS - GROOMS

**7172. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in August 1992) Ht. 6' 1", Wt. 90 kgs, Fair, Edn. Graduate, Diploma in Social Communications in Sophia and then done a Fellowship with Piramal House of Leadership. Working with an NGO - sports foundation. Contact email : florencemendonca@rediffmail.com

**7097. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in October 1991), Ht. 5' 11", Wt. 97 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., working as Sr. Account Recievable in private company. Contact email : dsouzadonald11@gmail.com

**7175. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in July 1989) Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 74 kgs, Wheatish, Edn. B.Sc (H.C.M.) Hotel and Catering Management, 2nd Photographer / Merchandise Sales Dept., Contact email : osbertagneloalmeida@gmail.com

**7135. U.S.A. :** Mangalorean RC Bachelor, (Born in June 1990) Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.E. in Electronics & Telecommunication (EXTC), working as a Senior Software Engineer. Contact email : ryandcunha01@gmail.com

**7157. PUNE:** Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in September 1990) Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 75 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBA (Marketing) & M.Com., working as a Senior Executive, Sales and Development. Contact email : amlahenry11@gmail.com

**7155. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in March 1980) Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 67 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. 12th std., having own business asm well settled. Contact email : mendoncajeson@gmail.com

**7101. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in April 1988), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 68 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Masters in Logestics doing part time MBA. Working as an Asst. Manager. Contact email :

gracian.moras@gmail.com

**7110. MUMBAI :** Goan + East Indian Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in December 1984), Ht. 5' 10", Wt.85 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Sc. IT, working as a Server Engineer. Contact email : fernandes.raymond@gmail.com

**7100. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in March 1987), Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 52 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. H.S.C., working as a Event Coordinator. Contact email :

celeseinepereira@gmail.com

**7157. PUNE :** Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in September 1990) Ht. 5' 6", Wt. 75 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. MBA (Marketing) & M.Com., working as a Senior Executive, Sales and Development. Contact email :

amlahenry11@gmail.com

**7099. USA :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in March 1988), Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 82 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.Sc.,working as a Computer Engineer in USA. Contact email : willatauro@gmail.com

**7083. MUMBAI :** East Indian Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in November 1985), Ht. 6', Wt. 68 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.Com., PGDLM, PGDSM, working as PPM & Data Engineer in Shipping Company. Contact email : ryan.intermilan@yahoo.co.in

**7084. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in May 1956), Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 70 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. 9th std., working as a Machine Operator. Contact email : fern.gilbert54@gmail.com

**7151. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in May 1990) Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Masters in Marketing, Working as a Asst. Marketing Executive. Contact email : emanuefindz90@gmail.com

**7025. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in May 1992), Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 56 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.E. (IT), working as a Software Developer. Contact email : kevin92ster@gmail.com

**7040. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in October 1991), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 65 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.C.A., MBA Pursuing, working as a GIS Analyst in MNC. Contact email :

ronaldpereira1210@gmail.com

**6986. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in March 1990), Ht. 160 cms, Wt. 66 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. Graduate, working for MNC. Contact email : alwyn90lewis@yahoo.com

**6996. MUMBAI :** Tamilian Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in September 1990), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 75 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. BMS., M.Com., MBA in Marketing, working for L & T Infotech. Contact email : rodnidavid@gmail.com

**6862. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Bachelor, (Born in February 1983), Ht. 5' 11", Wt. 72 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Com., well settled working in Mumbai. Contact email : keith\_peter1983@yahoo.co.in

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# Royal Christian Family MATRIMONIALS - BRIDES

**7182 MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in October 1992), Ht. 5'4", Wt. 72 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., CA, working as Asst. Manager in TATA Company. Contact email : matrimonialp27@gmail.com

**7162 MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in September 1993), Ht. 5'5", Wt. 58 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.A., working as a Secretary. Contact email : t.banze@rediffmail.com

**6860. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in October 1991), Ht. 5'4", Wt. 55 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.M.M. (Mass Media), working for IT in MNC. Contact email : lgp1891@gmail.com

**7160. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in September 1988), Ht. 5'7", Fair Complexion, Edn. BMS, working as a Senior Merchandiser in a Global Retail Company in Dubai. Contact email : prislobo10@gmail.com

**6642 MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Divorcee, issueless (Born in September 1979), Ht. 5'3", Wt. 65 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Com., working as a Customer Service Professional. Seeks a suitable match. Contact email :

rowmonteiro@yahoo.com OR 9820792115

**7158 MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in August 1986), Ht. 5'1", Wt. 64 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.A., working as a Patient Care Manager. Contact email :

ceciliacookie@gmail.com

**7131. DUBAI :** Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in September 1990), Ht. 5'5", Wt. 60 kgs, Tan Complexion, Edn. T.Y. B.Com., working as a Manager. Contact email :

rebecca.raj06@gmail.com

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**7125. CANADA :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in February 1983), Ht. 5'8", Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.A., working as a Consultant. Contact email : llmendonca@shaw.ca

**7120. CANADA :** Goan Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in April 1986), Ht. 5'2", Wt. 51 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., University of Toronto, working as a Customer Support for Canada Government. Contact email : joafaria@yahoo.ca

**6741. MANGALORE :** Mangalorean RC spinster, 26 years, 5'3", Doctor, Qualification : MD. Very fair and beautiful. Belongings to an affluent business family. Email : sona68500@gmail.com

**7117. MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in May 1991), Ht. 5'7", Wt. 65 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. M.A. in English Literature, Teacher by profession. Contact email :

examiner2019@gmail.com

**7126. U.S.A. :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in January 1992) from Mumbai, Ht. 5'7", Wt. 60 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.E. (Computers) from Mumbai, M.S. (Information Systems) from US. Possesses H1B visa and is working as a Technical Analyst with an MNC in USA. Contact email : wilfyjoy1315@gmail.com or call +91 98603 02527 / + 91 9970172527

**7115. MUMBAI :** Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in October 1989), Ht. 5', Wt. 50 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, smart and good looking, Edn. VIth Std., Non working, homely. Contact Mob: 7021135272

**7066. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in June 1987), Ht. 5'4", Wt. 78 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.E., (EXTC) M.S. (International Business Management), working as a

Consulting Manager. Contact email : l2018anselm@yahoo.com

**7128. MUMBAI :** Affluent business family R.C. East Indian Spinster, (Born in 12-04-1988), Ht. 5'2", very beautiful and pretty. Edn. MS General Surgeon, Doctor by profession. Contact email : drvd2019@gmail.com

**7124. CANADA :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in October 1993), Ht. 5'3", Wt. 60 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.M.S., M.B.A. Operation, working as a Co-ordinator in Shipping Company. Contact email :

carrel.dsouza@gmail.com

**7108. MUMBAI :** East Indian Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in December 1990), Ht. 5'3", Wt. 58 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. B.Sc. (Aviation), Ae SI (Part), AME (Aircraft Maintenance Engineer), working as a Aircraft Maintenance Engineer. Contact email :

lucyann.alvares@yahoo.com

**7111. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in November 1993), Ht. 5', Wt. 47 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. BMS., working with an MNC. Contact email :

owena.dsouza@gmail.com

**7107. MUMBAI :** Tamilian Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in September 1990), Ht. 5'2", Wt. 50 kgs, Wheatish Brown Complexion, Edn. M.Com., working as a Commercial Executive. Contact No. 8108216595 email : jkanth74@gmail.com

**7106. AHMEDNAGAR :** Goan Roman Catholic Divorcee, (Born in January 1986), Ht. 5'3", Fair Complexion, Edn. High School, Contact email : anthonyfernandes9850@gmail.com

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# Have A Healthy Habits To Avoid Herpes

**H**erpes is a common infection that the herpes simplex virus (HSV) causes. One of the main symptoms is a rash of blisters that doctors sometimes refer to as a herpes rash. A herpes rash usually develops on the genitals or around the mouth, but it can occur nearly anywhere on the body. A herpes rash looks like a cluster of small, fluid-filled blisters near the mouth or genitals. The location of the rash depends on which type of herpes virus you have. The rashes might develop repeatedly, but you can take medications to help prevent or shorten outbreaks.

During the first outbreak (called primary herpes), you may experience flu-like symptoms. These include body aches, fever, and headache. Many people who have a herpes infection will have outbreaks of sores and symptoms from time to time. Symptoms are usually less severe than the primary outbreak. The frequency of outbreaks also tends to decrease over time. Once you have been infected with the virus, you'll go through different stages of infection.

If you think you have herpes, see your doctor as soon as possible. It's easier to diagnose when there are sores. You can start treatment sooner and perhaps have less pain with the infection. There's no cure for herpes. But medi-

cines can help. They may be provided as a pill, cream or a shot. Medicines such as acyclovir and valacyclovir fight the herpes virus. They can speed up healing and lessen the pain of herpes for many people. They can be used to treat a primary outbreak or a recurrent one. If the medicines are being used to treat a recurrence, they should be started as soon as you feel tingling, burning, or itching. They can also be taken every day to prevent recurrences.



C.K. Subramaniam

Genital herpes is a common sexually transmitted infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). Sexual contact is the primary way that the virus spreads. After the initial infection, the virus lies dormant in your body and can reactivate several times a year. If a person has oral herpes and a weakened immune system, they may have a higher risk of developing keratitis, a type of eye inflammation, or encephalitis, inflammation of the brain. If a person has a weakened immune system and genital herpes, there is, rarely, a higher risk of developing inflammation of the brain, eyes, esophagus, lungs, or liver, as well as widespread infection.

No drug can get rid of the herpes virus. However, a doctor may prescribe an antiviral medication, such as acyclovir, to prevent the virus from multiplying. Meanwhile, over-



the-counter herpes treatments, which are often creams, can help manage tingling, itching, and pain. To significantly lessen the duration of an outbreak, start treatment within 24 hours of initial symptoms, for example, as soon as the tingling begins. If a person uses antiviral medication, symptoms may resolve 1–2 days more quickly than if they had used no treatment.

Medication may also reduce the severity of symptoms. If a person has fewer than six recurrences of genital herpes per year, a doctor may prescribe an antiviral medication at each recurrence. If a person experiences recurrences more frequently, a doctor may recommend taking an antiviral for 6–12 months at a time. Taking these medications every day for longer periods can significantly reduce the risk of passing herpes to a partner, though it remains a possibility.

The process of curing herpes is rather slow. Both t-bact and silverex ointment can come handy and applied on the herpes affected two times a day can reduce the intensity and reduce the infection quickly. And once cured and the surface has become smooth, one can apply Tyroblok cream and if it is not available use Demelan Lite Lotion for getting rid of the marks. Avoid scratching at any stage and use a soft soap like Dove for getting a better feel. If you take all the precautions, you can get rid of this virus also over a period of time.



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Misquita Eng. Ltd	27.00	4.10.19	65.00	65.00
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# Wish you a Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year 2021



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Approved by AICTE / PCI / DTE / University of Mumbai / MSBTE

## Management

MMS ( MBA )

Marketing, Finance, H.R.,  
I.T., Operations

## Engineering ( Degree )

Civil, Mechanical,  
EXTC, Computer, I.T.

## Engineering ( Diploma )

Civil, Mechanical, EXTC

## Pharmacy

M.Pharm., B. Pharm., D.Pharm.

## Humanities & Sciences

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