

THE SECULAR CITIZEN

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A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

Too Much of Religion, Too Little of Ethics!

by Dr M. D. Thomas

India is a 'religious country'. That is what Indians strongly claim to be. This is exactly what Indians want the whole world to blindly believe, too. Observably, a considerable number of people in other countries do acclaim India so. And without a doubt, the claim deserves to be granted, from various angles.

But, in point of fact, does the way Indians behave in their day-today lives really reflect the 'ethical fibre' that befits having a religion? In other words, does religion and religions in India match up 'ethics and values' in life? Still further, does the outcome of religion justify its outsized volume in India? This is the pointed question around us right now.

The India of today homes almost all the major and minor religious traditions of the world. Believers of all religions are seen profusely indulging in a great deal of dogmatic professions, rituals, fasts, pilgrimages and other observances, very ceremoniously and scrupulously, too.

Places of worship of all religions have filled India with a powerful 'religious aura'. Temples, mazjids, churches, gurudwaras, vihars, ashrams and shrines have occupied the chunk of the country, even illegally, and they have a lot of riches, much more than what they really require.

The places of worship are the mighty seats of the wardens of the respective religions, who seem to be more influential than gods and goddesses, even God almighty. The ceremonial rituals being performed over there make them relevant and powerful, in terms of incalculable money and power.

The contribution to the gods and goddesses Indians make in gold, silver, cash and kind put together would be more than enough to purchase perhaps another country. The amount of time Indians spend in the name of religion is beyond calculation, even at the cost of work.



For all the religious engagement with the gods and goddesses Indians are accustomed to indulge in, they deserve to be entered in to the 'Guinness book of world records', breaking the records of the entire world, may be for all times.

In a deeper analysis still, India is a unique country that brims forth with an inescapable 'religious air'. Even the original inhabitants of India, the pre-Dravidian people, called the Adivasis or Scheduled Tribes, had their primordial belief systems, like animism, totemic perception and nature worship.

The Vedic tradition, along with its derivative traditions of Jain, Buddhist and Sikh, has a heap of ritual content, highly tedious and bothersome, that has made the respective followers heavy-laden. The religious traditions that have come in from other countries entertain lots of theories and observances, too.

The high propensity for religious engagement in Indians make them indulge in pooja, ibaadat, arz, argya, prayer, saadhna, fast and sacrifices, both at worship places and at home. Public places, even roadsides, also are not spared of religious idols and devotions.

The calendar of the year is highly scheduled with religious festivals, so much so that India has the highest number of holidays in the world, along with their corresponding religious observances. Almost all public functions are sandwiched with invocations and rituals on either end, too.

Further, markets thrive with religious statues, pictures and other materials. The religious industry immensely contributes to the economy of the people. Most rivers are considered holy and they accumulate the periodic refuse of statues of the gods and goddesses, including dead bodies, along with toilet waste.

The places of worship and the markets are extra-ordi-

(Contd.. on p. 3)

Crafting Wealth From Waste!

-: Sensible Recycling, the need of the hour :-

*"When you put the whole picture together, recycling is the right thing to do."
- Pam Shoemaker*

Three *jigari dosto*, Jace, Trishul and Rakes, were sitting by the window of the cafe one evening after work, whiling away their time when the topic of the problem

of wastage cropped up. The trigger: a clear view of much recyclable rejects being dumped at the common dump just some distance away. Their casual discussion led to a mutual agreement to have something done about much useful waste being unduly wasted. They felt the need to offer society ideas and options by way of personal tried-and-tested examples of recycling waste on the home front to viable and productive use. And this with not the faintest inkling of the kind of discoveries they were to make among themselves in terms of recycling and thus minimizing garbage per se in the public domain! Being committed and successful executives in their own individual fields of expertise, they resolved to enlist the cooperation of their own families. As a result, when they met a fortnight later along with their respective wives, they each had something exciting to share, this time at the home of one of the trio.



by Ladislaus
Louis D'Souza

Appropriately, the exchange of pleasantries took place over *Upma* made from remnants of *chivda*, *farsan* and steamed rice accompanied by *elaichi chai*, the *elaichi* flavour emanating from the peals of the cardamom used in the *upma*! Chatter over the recycling of eatables over, Trishul was the first to comment: "Hey, Jace, your Tie looks very classy - where did you get it, yaar?" "My wife, Brunita, made it from an old skirt of hers!" replied Jace. "Wow! That's very creative!" exclaimed Trishul. "What a coincidence!" retorted Rakes, "I happened to be clearing the loft when my wife, Ginelle, spotted a box of old ties I had just finished browsing through. She appeared horrified when I said that I was discarding the stuff, though she didn't say anything. The next morning before leaving home for office I had all the discarded stuff bundled outside the house for disposal. The same evening we had a dinner appointment with a cousin's family. And as we were getting ready to leave, wifey said, "Rakes, I have a surprise for you!" "What is it honey?" "You are already looking at it!" Can you believe - she had made herself a lovely skirt out of some of the old ties I had discarded! And she's worn it to come here too!" Peals of delight followed as the women particularly closely examined the skirt to further appreciate Brunita's creativity.

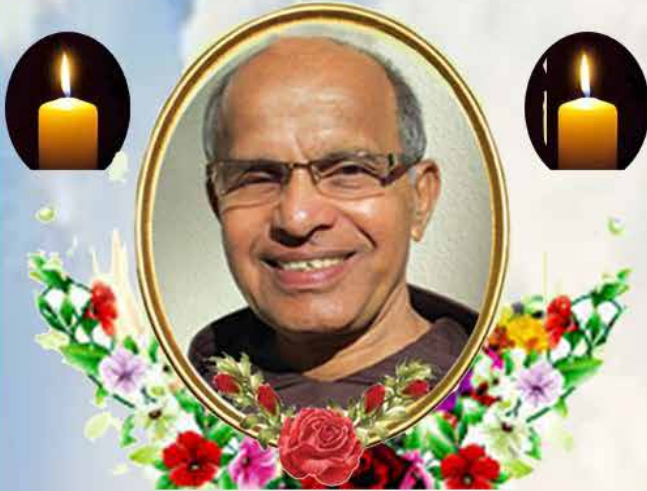
It was now Trishul's turn and he said: "Now don't laugh at what I'm going to tell you - take a good look at my shirt" - it was a smart casual half-sleeved bush shirt. But neither Jace nor Rakes, nor even their respective spouses could tell what was special about his shirt other than notice that it had an interesting pattern in green and khaki. "Hmm... - can't make out" said one; "Imported, kya?" asked an-

(Contd.. on p. 4)

In Loving Memory

First Death Anniversary

Blessed are those who die in the Lord



Rev. Fr. V.J. Menezes, OFM CAP

Born : 18-04-1940

Ordinated : 06-10-1968

Died : 20-11-2020

**A Holy Mass will be offered
at Holy Cross Church,
Hosabettu, Moodbidri
on Thursday, 25th November 2021
at 11.00 a.m. for the
repose of departed soul.**

**A loving tribute from
Menezes Family, Hosabettu**

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(Contd.. from p. 1)

narly crowded up with people, religious music and noise, especially at festivals, so much so that senior citizens and students in special are profusely disturbed for nothing. The auspicious time of marriage processions often match with sleeping hours, no matter legal prohibitions. To say the least, religion in India is a vibrant reality, right or wrong and useful or harmful.

But, on the other hand, there is a very high 'deficit of ethics and values', in both private and public life. While there is a lot of 'parrot-like' repetition of top ideals and doctrines, most of it does not seem to come to the ground as a day-to-day reality. There seems to be little commitment to living what is preached or professed. The 'contradiction between theory and practice' puts on show a high degree of 'hypocrisy'.

'Satyamev jayate' is the supreme motto of the nation. But, 'half truths and even full lies' seem to have hijacked the motto of the nation. It has been tragic that the commons are innocently inclined to mostly swallow up the lies, both religious and political, not knowing what is what. 'Scientific temper and rational thinking' is a rare commodity, both in the religious and political sectors.

'Corruption' is rampant in all areas of life, both private and public. Human

lives have been very much reduced to a 'game of money and power', which explains the all-round infliction of dishonesty in life. Corruption is not just a matter of money. It is basically a 'per- version of thinking', which affects the entire gamut of life. When salt loses its flavour, it is just useless. That is vastly true about religion.

In spite of the sublime ideal of 'nish-kaam karm', a 'culture of work' is significantly weak, along with a sense of uprightness. 'Need or greed and fear of punishment' seem to run the show, all the way through. If the boss or police is not around, most of the people have hardly any hesitation to take law into their hands.

Due to the firm grip of a Himalayan heap of 'superstitions', an appallingly large number of Indians are 'blind' as regards faith, while faith, in fact, is supposed to open the minds. No wonder, around 60-80 percent of the people seem to be communal, fanatic and intolerant as regards religious matters. Moreover, they are ignorant, disinclined or indifferent to people of other communities, of faith or whatsoever.

'Discrimination and division' seem to have been in the main stream tradition of India, from time immemorial. Caste, class, creed, culture, gender, language, ideology, social mores, food habits, dress pattern, and the like, have been

the basis of 'bias' against the other. The fact that the discriminative policies and practices have been mostly considered normal and justified is the worst part of the story.

In sum, even the scrupulous, fanatic, extreme, exclusive and communal engagement with religion, along with all rigid religious attitudes, behaviours and beliefs, do not seem to contribute very much to the quality of day-to-day life. This is the irony of the reality of the religious country, unfortunately so. It appears that 'India is suffering from religion', if we could say so.

'Too much of religion, but too little of ethics' seems to be the tragic reality of the religious country. No doubt, this irony has to be decisively addressed. A little less of religious observances could very well be accepted. But, 'there has to be a much higher level of ethos and ethical values'. Only ethics can make real sense out of the religions and the religious engagement in India. Only ethics can make India a better place for its citizens to have their being with 'delight and dignity'. An attitudinal change is called for.

The author is Director of Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies, New Delhi, and has been committed to cross-cultural perspectives, interfaith relations, social ethics, constitutional values, communal harmony, national integration and social wellbeing, for the past over 40 years.

Filler Words, and How Do You Cut Them?

In speech, filler words are short, meaningless words (or sounds) we use to fill the little pauses that occur while we decide what we're going to say next. They're the ums and uhs and ers that litter our conversations whether we like it or not. But although these little words don't add any meaning to your statements, they do perform a function in speech. They allow you to take a second and think about what you're going to say next. They let others know that you're not quite finished speaking yet, even if you have paused for a moment.

Filler words take a different form in writing. Few of us actually write out "uh" or "um" when we're composing an email. Instead, those little pauses manifest as unnecessary adverbs and empty phrases that add length but not substance to what you're trying to say. Fortunately, written communication gives us the opportunity to edit ourselves before we send our message out to the world (or our boss). Read on for some of the most common filler words that might be weighing your writing down. We tend to fall back on this phrase when we want to make a point but we're not sure if others will be happy about it. Leave it out and your sentence will be more concise and sound more confident. If it's an opinion that's coming from you, we know it's your opinion. And calling it humble doesn't make it so.

Welcome to the world of fillers. When a person talks fast and the brain sends commands at a slower pace, you have fillers. The flip side of this is when the brain goes super-fast and the mouth can't keep pace, it ends up with a stutter. Professors play a pivotal role in developing your career. MBA professor, who taught me to slow down my thought process to overcome this problem. Thereafter I started to slow down. And now a tortoise would

be faster than me. Anyways, let me come back to the fillers. There are so many fillers, starting with you know. Here is my take and my response to some of the fillers. When someone says, "you know", after a while, every time the person says, you know, I start saying, no I don't. This can be quite hilarious. The guy is flummoxed and does not understand what I am doing. But it's fun.

Another filler is the brilliant, what am I saying at the beginning of every sentence. For god's sake, am I a soothsayer or an astrologer who will know what you are saying? No, I do not know what you are saying, unless you say it. Last week, one of my closest friends was on a "what am I saying" binge and I with a straight face told him, no I do not unless you say it. He didn't know what hit him and kept looking at me to see if I was pulling his leg.

And I without any expression told him, no my friend – please tell me what I am intending to, without asking me to predict. He still wasn't sure if I was serious or pulling his leg.



Jayanthi Subramaniam

One of the most interesting fillers I have come across is "be that as it may". This from a very senior finance professional. And the speed with which he says, "be that as it may" is the same as the TV ads which go "mutual funds are subject to market risk". During my initial meetings with him, discussing serious tax related issues, I just could not understand what he was saying. One day, I chose to record the first couple of minutes of our conversation, surreptitiously and then had to listen to it several times before "be that as it may" became clear. Unfortunately, this person was a senior professional, who is more of a business contact, and "be that as it may" I couldn't come back with an opposite response.

(Contd.. from p. 2)

other.

"Nah rey baba!" said Trishul. "Anyway, I'll give you a clue – THINK *I-a-u-n-d-r-y!!*" There was a collective gasp of disbelief as they all in union exclaimed "You mean *laundry tags?*" "That's right!" replied Trishul. "Marvellous, man! But how did you get so many laundry tags to make yourself a shirt in barely two weeks?" asked Jace. "Moreover," added Rakes, "today's laundry tags are plain white discs cut from starched, white canvas." Thereupon Trishul explained, "These are very old tags. In fact, there was a time when only khaki tags were used and then for a while green ones, both of which I had been collecting for a very long time until the stiff white discs came into use. I didn't quite know what I was going to do with those though I definitely wanted to put them to good use some day! So when I broached the subject of creating something useful from waste at home, my mother said, "What about all those laundry tags that you had been collecting? There's a small carton packed with those on the loft!"

Instantly retrieving the carton and opening it, Trishul looked at the contents and said to himself, "Now, what on Earth am I to do with these I wonder..." His wife Helen was quick to retort, "How about a trendy bush shirt for you!" The rest is a concrete part of recycling history! What next – vests and boxers from socks!?! Well, why not! Think big – think out of the box and surprise the world!

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Coalition of opposition parties can transform Goa

The forthcoming 2022 Assembly elections in Goa is proving to be a pot-pourri of several parties, vying fiercely to change the face of Goa and free the state of the incumbent BJP govt, with freebies, and promises of fulfilling each and every need of Goans, if elected to power. While it is almost certain that no political party can achieve their goal single-handedly, a pre-poll alliance of like-minded parties is a must. However, it remains to be seen how much of party ego will be swallowed or compromised to achieve this goal. Secondly, a coalition of opposition parties along with an agreed Common Minimum Programme to fulfill all election promises, is bound to succeed and transform the political landscape and future of the people of Goa. Goa as a result, may soon turn out to be another biblical promised land of the erstwhile beleaguered and distraught Israelites, overflowing with milk and honey.

—A. F. Nazareth,
Alto Porvorim, Goa

A 100 crore celebration?

About a fortnight ago, the prime minister proudly announced to the nation that 100 crore vaccines have been administered to the people, free of cost. Whether it is free, there is no point in debating, because nothing comes free, it is always paid out of the Tax payer's pockets, our own pockets. Congratulatory messages

have been floating around all across the media. The entire country seems to be celebrating that a 100 crore people have been vaccinated, at least the first dose. The media has gone gaga over this so-called achievement.

Reaching the 100 crore mark for vaccinations may be a milestone for our country of 1.3 billion population. However, according to a leader from the opposition party, 100 crore is a fancy figure, the devil is in the details. Be that we it may, does this all call for a celebration? It seems, the government has planned massive celebrations across the country to mark the milestone. A newspaper carried a picture of a Motor-bike rally held at Agartala, Tripura, to celebrate this milestone. We would do well to ask ourselves, what are we celebrating by the way? Are we celebrating the thousands of Covid deaths of our near and dear ones, our loved ones, which could have been prevented? Are we celebrating the dead bodies floating over the rivers in the North? Are we celebrating the suffering our fellowmen went through during that horrible period? What exactly are we celebrating?

This achievement could now perhaps be used for the election campaign in the upcoming Assembly elections in several states. Rather, shouldn't we be concentrating on eradicating this pandemic altogether? Something to about, but, are we inclined to do so? The public have been going about their business, flouting all Covid guidelines, as if the coronavirus has just disappeared. Incidentally, the picture of the Motor-bike rally referred to above, shows all the participants were without their masks! Has COVID-19 gone away already?

— Melville X. D'Souza,
Orlem, Malad West

Life Certificate is an avoidable harassment

Life Certificate, to prove that a pensioner is alive, is an unnecessary harassment every November, for senior citizens. With age, the thumb impression gets obliterated and cannot be captured by the reading machine.

This harassment is avoidable.

For getting monthly pension Aadhaar Card is a requisite. If the Death Certificate is linked to Aadhaar card, pension will automatically cease as soon as the Death Certificate is generated. As the Death certificate is mandatory for all cremations/burials there should be no necessity of submitting a Life Certificate every year.

—Prof Robert Castellino,
Malad

' Modi's hug - is a fake hug '

The apt caption titled : *Dear PM Modi when will you and your BJP hug Indian Christians like this ?* in The Secular Citizen dated 8 November 2021 the letters BJP stand for Bogus Janata Party and apart from Modi's hugging of the pope being a meaningless and two- faced gesture it is totally wrong of him to hug the pope who is a revered religious figure and head of the Roman Catholic Church but he should have knelt down and kissed the ring on the pope's finger and given a written undertaking that he and his party will stop persecuting the minorities and fully and unconditionally withdraw the obnoxious laws passed by his party in the form of the anti-conversion laws and love - jihad laws and never again pass them in the future thereby throwing his and his party's heavy baggage overboard.

Hence Modi's hug -is a fake hug .

—Peter Castellino,
Mumbai



not harm her. To the amazement of all Cecilia did not even sweat.

When Almachius heard this, he sent an executioner to cut off her head in the baths. The executioner struck her three times but was unable to decapitate her so he left her bleeding and she lived for three days in that pathetic state. Crowds came to her and collected her blood while she preached to or prayed with them. On the third day, Cecilia died in Sicily, and was buried by Pope Urban and his deacons. Cecilia was buried in the catacomb of St. Callistus, near Rome.

Then at the beginning of the 9th century, Pope Paschall discovered her incorrupt relics in the catacomb of St. Praetextatus. They may have been transported thither from the Catacomb of Callistus to save them from the depredations of the Lombards, a Germanic tribe known for establishing a kingdom in North Italy. He had them removed to Rome, to a basilica in Trastevere, and placed under the high altar that now bears her name. Officials exhumed her body in 1599 and found her to be incorrupt, the first of all incorrupt saints. She was draped in a silk veil and wore a gold embroidered dress. Officials only looked through the veil in an act of holy reverence and made no further examinations. They also reported a "mysterious and delightful flowerlike odor which proceeded from the coffin."

Saint Cecilia is a Roman martyr venerated in Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and some Lutheran churches, such as the church of Sweden. She became the patroness of music and musicians; it being written that, when the musicians played at her wedding, Cecilia "sang in her heart to the Lord." She is often represented in art as playing the organ, or organ pipes in her hand. In 1599 Cardinal Pacio Emilio Sfondrati, nephew of Pope Gregory XIV rebuilt the church of Saint Cecilia. Her feast is celebrated in the Latin and the Greek Church on 22 November, so let's sing praises to Saint Cecilia on her special day.

Cecilia is a beautiful name, sounds very melodious to the ear, and rightly so Saint Cecilia is the patron saint of music and musicians. She is one of the most famous virgin martyrs of the early Church and historically one of the most discussed having lived a very colourful life. This extraordinary woman dared to bring gender equality and other issues to the forefront at a time such things were unheard of.

The original meaning of the Greek word Martyrs was "witness", in this sense it is often used in the New Testament. The most striking witness that Christians could bear to their faith, was to die rather than deny God. It was not only a witness but specifically a witness unto death. The first Christian martyrs were St. Stephen and St. James. How was Cecilia a witness to the faith.?

According to a 5th century legend, in the city of Rome there was a virgin named Cecilia who hailed from an extremely rich family. As a growing young woman, she had vowed her virginity to God. Unfortunately, she was against her will given in marriage to a youth named Valerian, who was a pagan. She wore sack cloth next to her skin, fasted and invoked the saints, angels and virgins, beseeching them to guard her virginity. Before the consummation of her nuptials, she told her husband that an angel of God wished her to remain a virgin.

Valerian asked to see the angel as proof, and Cecilia told him he would have eyes to see the angel, once he travelled to the third milestone on the Via Appia (Appian Way) and was baptized by Pope Urban. He promised to respect this wish if he were allowed to see the angel. She replied that he would if he were baptized. Following his Baptism Valerian returned to his wife and he found Cecilia talking to the angel. The angel then crowned Cecilia with a chaplet of rose and lily and when Valerian's brother Tiburtius heard and also saw the angel, he too like his brother was baptized. So great was the grace they received, that the two brothers dedicated their lives to burying the saints who were murdered each day by the prefect of the city, by name Turcius Almachius.

This act greatly angered the prefect who now wanted to destroy the brothers. Both of them were eventually arrested and brought before the prefect where they were executed after they refused to offer a sacrifice to the pagan gods. St. Cecilia was totally devastated. She lived her faith by spending her time preaching and in her lifetime was able to convert over four hundred people, most of whom were baptized by Pope Urban. She also began distributing her possessions to the poor. All this enraged the prefect who condemned her to be suffocated in her own baths. She was shut in for one night and one day, as fires were heaped up and stoked to a terrifying heat temperature, but the flames did



by:
**Dr Jeanette
Pinto**

Almighty Supreme - Not Earthly Powers

The situation of Christians generally is a bit worrying. In Karnataka the actions of the Govt at present is a shock to church people and authorities; there is a lot of fear and nervous debate at many levels. Even though it is well known that down the years Christians contributed in a big way in Education, Medical care, social work and so on. The conversion bill, the survey of Christian churches, Christian institutions and personnel manning these seems a source of great irritation. Is it essential, necessary? A Govt politically, feels the need within certain parameters to examine the pulse and doings of various entities within its boundaries in a legal and cordial manner as best as possible for the general good and of the nation. Opposing and negative action and feelings are only detrimental. Definitely there is only good that can be found and nothing really bad really exists in the maze of the churches and institutions. Let there be no unwanted protest and negativity - there are no skeletons in the targeted entities. In fact some church authorities had done a survey of parish families/members some time back, was that a bad omen? Overreacting can only rub the authority in the wrong way.

Some insights : Baruch de Spinoza a Dutch philosopher considered one of the three great rationalists of 17th-century philosophy, along with René Descartes in France, and Gottfried Leibniz in Germany. Here's some of his wisdom:

God would have said: Stop praying and punching yourself in the chest! What I want you to do is go out into the world and enjoy your life. I want you to enjoy, sing, have fun and enjoy everything I've made for you. Stop going to those dark, cold temples that you built yourself and say they are my house! My house is in the mountains, in the woods, rivers, lakes, beaches, that's where I live. Stop reading alleged sa-

cred scriptures that have nothing to do with me. If you can't read me in a sunrise, in a landscape, in the look of your friends, in your son's eyes... you will find me in no book! Trust me and stop asking me. Would you tell me how to do my job? Stop being so scared of me. I do not judge you or criticize you, nor get angry, or seek to punish you. I am pure love.

Stop asking for forgiveness, there's nothing to forgive. If I made you... I filled you with passions, limitations, pleasures, feelings, needs, inconsistencies... free will. How can I blame you



by Ivan Saldanha-Shet

if you respond to something I put in you? How can I punish you for being the way you are, if I'm the one who made you? Do you think I could create a place to burn all my children who behave badly for the rest of eternity? What kind of God would do that? Forget any kind of commandments, any kind of laws; those are wiles to manipulate you, to control you, that only create guilt in you. Respect your peers and don't do what you don't want for yourself. All I ask is that you pay attention in your life, that your consciousness is your guide. My beloved, this life is not a test, not a step, not a rehearsal, nor a prelude to paradise. This life is the only thing that exists here and now, and it is all you need.

I have set you absolutely free, no prizes or punishments, no sins or virtues... no one carries a marker, no one keeps a record. You are absolutely free to create in your life heaven or hell. I could tell you if there's anything after this life, but I won't... but I can give you a tip. Live as if there is nothing after... as if this is your only chance to enjoy, to love, to exist. So, if there's nothing,



then you will have enjoyed the opportunity I gave you. And if there is, rest assured that I won't ask if you behaved right or wrong, I'll ask. Did you like it? Did you have fun? What did you enjoy the most? What did you learn?...

Stop believing in me; believing is assuming, guessing, imagining. I don't want you to believe in me... I want you to feel me in you when you kiss your beloved, when you tuck in your little girl, when you caress your dog, when you bathe in the sea. I'm bored being praised, I'm tired of being thanked. Feeling grateful? Prove it by taking care of yourself, your health, your relationships, the world. Express your joy!... that's the way to praise me. Stop complicating things and repeating as a parakeet what you've been taught about me. The only thing for sure is that you are here, that you are alive, and that this world is full of wonders. What do you need more miracles for? Why so many explanations? Look for me outside... you won't find me. Find me inside... there I am.

All the ceremonies and rituals demanded by God or Christ or scriptures? If one takes a look it is all only prescribed over time to control and make a profit and sustain luxury lifestyles and illegal control by subtle psychological pressures and blackmailing and immorality. A good person can honour a GOD with his own words and actions and be holy and win the blessings of GOD.



Home Maker?

age work and home without giving a reason for complaint. After marriage I was again with two ladies, my mother-in-law and sister-in-law who despite being married and in good positions at work managed work and household meticulously. Somewhere in my mind I had made a decision that it's better to be a working woman then to stay at home.

But life they say has a different way of throwing things at your feet and at times you are forced to step on it without any option. The same happened to me, after 6 long years of successful career as a Lecturer and then as a HR there came a point where I had to quit and stay at home for a few months due to a personal issue. I was not sure; I was in a dilemma. The fear of being financially dependent scared me, the boredom and the anxiety of losing my identity filled my mind. I had no option half-heartedly I decided to quit my job and stay at home.

There were a lot of raised eyebrows, many people suggested that I could juggle work and home and I had taken a coward decision. Some went on to say that I was lazy and I did not want to work and so stayed at home to lead a luxurious life. All that said and done when I stayed at home that is when I realized how much work a housewife does. From cooking, cleaning, laundry, doing dishes to grocery shopping everything is expected from a home maker. She is expected to do everything and ask nothing for in return. This phase of my life answered all the questions in my mind and I began to understand a home maker also uses her skills like any working professional, the only difference being that working women may extensively use one skill whereas a home maker uses numerous skills. The most important aspect is appreciation and recognition, most of the cases a working woman at least receives recognition in form of monetary return but in all the cases a homemaker's work is neither recognised nor monetarily rewarded.

A few years ago, the Women and Child

Recently when I was browsing through, I came across a wonderful article discussing about the study that was conducted by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2011 which said that the average Indian woman spent nearly six hours a day doing unpaid house work. Economists believed that though it is unpaid, the household work done by homemakers constitutes economic activity and should be included in the national income. By ignoring it, we were underestimating women's contribution to the economy.



by Sonal Lobo

stones that they need to fight in order to be employed. Even today some of the families are not willing to accept a working women and simple term it to be a man's job and for women it is considered to be a hobby which needs to be pursued at one's convenience.

My topic for today is slightly different and I want to focus on those ladies who whole heartedly choose to stay at home and become a home maker despite of having competent degrees and educational qualification. Our society is shifting paradigm and there was a time when working women were considered taboo but today, we have come to the state where when a woman chooses to stay at home, she is considered to be lazy and one without a goal.

My thoughts regarding this entire concept were not very clear and I was constantly baffled by innumerable contradicting arguments. Having been brought up in a family where my mother was a working woman, I realized how wonderfully a woman can man-

Having completed college my very next thought was to get into a job, unlike others I did not want any break and my only goal was to be employed. Looking back, I realize probably my urgency to get into work was not for the joy of working but to avoid being labelled Unemployed by the society.

I am sure most of us have gone through this phase and for women it's a bigger challenge since they have many mile-

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(Contd.. from p. 8)

Development minister Krishna Tirath had suggested that the invisible labour performed by homemakers should be quantified and that they should be paid the amount by their husbands. This was the value suggested by him. Cooking Rs 6,000, Housekeeping Rs 3,000, Accounting Rs 4,000, taking care of kids Rs 12,000 etc. Though this bill was never passed but it clearly gives an insight that the work done by women is so valuable and staying at home never makes a woman less competitive or lazy. In fact, a woman who stays at home works from morning and ends her working only at night.

I started realizing how much sacrifice a woman who stays at home makes. Most of the women who stay at home may not like to do so, but the situation and realities of life force them to do so and yet they accept their role so lovingly without cribbing and complaining. In recent studies it's been suggested that many women who stay at home suffer from insecurity and depression not because they are not occupied but because they are made to feel low by the people around failing to understand the true value of their work. Most of the Indian houses still follow the stereotypical approach that

anything happens in the family then it is women's responsibility to stay at home and take care whereas a man will continue his career. In such a scenario probably, we must definitely salute all those ladies who do not think twice and give up their career, dreams and passions just for the betterment of their spouses and family.

It is revealed in studies that even though house work may seem routine but it involves a lot of mental and emotional stress and women tend to spend considerable amounts of time not just working but planning and executing like any professional working for an organization. After staying at home, I started realizing no job was easy and every state of living a woman chooses to follow involves lot of hard work.

Having played both the roles I equally look up to those working ladies who work in double shift. Every working lady finishes one shift at her work place and then returns home to continue her second shift at home without a moment of rest. If staying at home

and taking care of the house is a tedious job well then working and taking care is also equally challenging and a big salute to all those women who play this dual role with perfection and ease.

On an ending note, I realised that staying at home was not a crime. The misconception and prejudice in my mind vanished and I realized that whether I am working or chose to continue to stay at home and take care of the family my value will never be defined by it. My value will be based on the work I do, the happiness I spread and the value I add to the society.

Today after a break of few months I have returned back to my work but with a difference. If tomorrow there arises a need for me to quit my job and stay at home for any reason I would do so boldly and proudly without fearing my value or worth. May be its time to let the women around us take their decisions, if a woman chooses to stay at home and dedicate her time for family and kids then appreciate her and if another woman chooses to work and take care of the family then support her but never judge her actions and tag her where she does not belong.

Let us as a society learn to respect the decisions taken by those around us, irrespective of the gender. Maybe it is time for us to break the prejudice and dive deep and retrospect the reason behind decisions those around us take and appreciate them for the little sacrifices they do without the knowledge of many.

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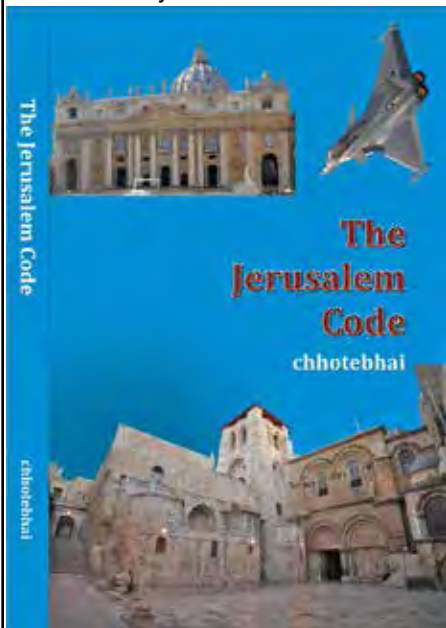
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By Peter Castellino

Several flowers are associated with All Soul's Day as floral offerings for the dead and include the following :-

Marigold are called flowers of the dead cempaseichi or flor de muerto are bright orange and yellow flowers whose fragrance attracts souls to the altar and believed to lure souls back from the dead to the land of the living with their vibrant colours and powerful scents and their bright colours of fiery orange and red hue represents the sun's warmth joy optimism and good luck and dark emotions like jealousy grief and mourning celebrates life instead of death and are linked to the sun's powerful strength and represents the person's inner power strength and lives and a feeling of despaired love of a loved person who dies or a broken relationship and are Mexico's native flower first used by the Aztecs and is used on the Mexican holiday Dea de los muertos or day of the dead and in western culture represent positive emotion and energy and the flowers fiery orange and red hue represent the sun's warmth joy optimism and good luck .

White Carnations were Renaissance era and wedding flowers exchanged by couples and symbolize faithfulness and are popular Mother's Day flowers for people who guided you when young and have more meaning when placed on the grave of someone close

to your heart and its petals and elegant shape symbolize remembrance.

Pink Carnations are a mother' image and her love for her children and these flowers sprouted when Mary shed tears at Jesus's crucifixion and are a great thank you gift for someone leaving a lasting impact on one's life and their long- lasting blooms show gratitude and resemblance.

Statice / Sea Lavender fills bouquet blooms beautifully due to its thick violet cluster flowers and compliments large peonies and roses in a bouquet are placed on a memorable person's grave and symbolize remembrance like white carnations.

Gladiolus or sword lily is not the bouquet's star but has striking flower spikes and colours for a departed person's favourite hues and it means remembrance and are very memorable for an unforgettable beloved and its name comes from the Latin word gladius meaning sword because of the flower's shape which ancient Roman gladiators wore around their necks to help them win and protect them from death but they also represent remembrance, sincerity and integration.

Red Roses are favourite Valentine's Day given with chocolates and other presents and represent passionate love and respect in a stunning bouquet for someone who has passed away and white roses mean humility and reverence whilst pink represents appreciation of an individual.

Peony flowers are flowers are for relative who asked a relative to celebrate life instead of death and this round and fluffy flower brings smiles instead of sorrow on a grave and its brightly coloured petals and sweet fragrance match its meaning in flower language ie healing.

Alstroemeria is a dainty flower in white , red yellow and pink etc that symbolizes friendship for a close friend and tributes to the long and colourful life you had with your friend .

Cyclamen is interesting with its up-swept petals and patterned leaves and is good for those who have recently come to terms with their loved one's passing and those who did not have a chance to say goodbye and symbolize resignation and farewell.

Forget -Me - Not 's name means something to do with memory especially positive memories and its tiny blue flowers grow closely together in a spiraling curve making them a light hearted to a lush bouquet.

Daisies come in different colours and white daisies on All Soul's Day symbolize innocence and purity and positivity and cheerfulness and remind people of their loved departed person's personality.

Chrysanthemums worldwide symbolize death and are popular offerings for the dead and in Asia represent longevity , fidelity , joy and optimism and its colours have important meanings with red meaning love and deep passion, yellow neglected love or sorrow and white for loyalty and honesty .

Anthuriums are a flower to show love for those who have passed away and with their distinct open heart-shaped structure represent hospitality.

Orchids are exotic flowers that represent undying love and the most common orchids used on All Soul's Day is pink or white.

Thus we see the importance of flowers on All Soul's Day .

School Jokes:

Q: Why did the student throw his watch out of the school window?

A: He wanted to see time fly.

Q: Why do they never serve beer at a math party?

A: Because you can't drink and derive...

Q: What do you say when you are comforting a grammar nazi?

A: There, Their, They're

Q: What's another name for Santa's elves?

A: Subordinate Clauses.

Q: Why did the student take a ladder to school?

A: Because he/she was going to high school!

Algebra Jokes:

Q: Why was the student afraid of the y-intercept?

A: She thought she'd be stung by the b.

Q: Who invented algebra? A: A Clever X-pert.

Q: What do you call friends who love math?

A: algebros

Q: What does Algebra and my dick have in common?

A: They're both hard for you.

Q: Why wont Goldilocks drink a glass of water with 8 pieces of ice in it?

A: It's too cubed.

Q: What is the hidden math term? BOLA BOLA

A: Parabolas (pair of bolas)

Q: What do you get when you cross an algebra class with the prom?

A: The quadratic formal.

Q: What do you get when you cross a mountain climber and a mosquito? A: Nothing! You know you can't cross a scalar and a vector.



Q: Why is an algebra book always unhappy?

A: Because it always has lots of problems.

JFK New York (CNN):

At John F. Kennedy International Airport today, a Caucasian male (later discovered to be a high school mathematics teacher) was arrested trying to board a flight while in possession of a compass, a protractor, and a graphical calculator.

According law enforcement officials, he is believed to have ties to the Al-Gebra network. He will be charged with carrying weapons of math instruction.

History vs Math

Once a math teacher and a history teacher had a fight wheather maths is better or history..... History teacher: I will call all of Stalins army and kill you.

Math teacher: Then I will put all the army in the bracket and multiply it by zero.

Q: What is the difference between a mathematician and a philosopher?

A: The mathematician only needs paper, pencil, and a trash bin for his work - the philosopher can do without the trash bin.

Catholic School

A father who is very much concerned about his son's bad grades in math decides to register him at a catholic school.

After his first term there, the son brings home his report card: He's getting "A"s in math.

The father is, of course, pleased, but wants to know: "Why are your math grades suddenly so good?"

"You know", the son explains, "when I walked into the classroom the first day, and I saw that guy on the wall nailed to a plus sign, I knew one thing: This place means business!"

Human Body

The teacher asks, "Flora, what part of the human body increases ten times when excited?"

Flora blushes and says, "That's disgusting, I won't even answer that question."

The teacher calls on Johnny: "What part of the human body increases ten times when excited?"

"That's easy," says Johnny. "It's the pupil of the eye."

"Very good, Johnny," responds the teacher. "That's correct."

She then turns to Flora and says, "First, you didn't do your homework. Second, you have a dirty mind. And third, you're in for a BIG disappointment."

Bad Student

One day I went into school all puzzled and said to my teacher "Miss will i get into trouble for something i havent done ?"

She said "No why"

I said " Because I havent done my homework.

Mom: What did you learn in school?
Son: Not enough I have to go back again tomorrow.

Q: What gets white as it gets dirty?
A: Chalkboard



Love And Protect Your Marriage

Love is a personal commitment. It is to be taken seriously. Love does not mean that a couple may 'fall out of love'. Know the meaning of true love, and that is, "Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance." (1Cor.13:7).

Love leads to marriage. And the sacrament of marriage is to be defended and protected, for better or worse.

The fundamental truth on the nature of marriage is that the sacramental character of matrimony is a sacrament of the New Law. The core essence of a Christian nuptial has always been a profound conviction that it confers an interior divine blessing



BY MELVYN BROWN

"Marriage is primarily a matter of mutual destiny", said Herman Alexander von Keyserling.

2022 by God's grace will bring a year of fresh hope, trust and promise; according to the Christian tradition of faith and belief in the One True God who forgives, waiting to embrace the sinner and those seeking the truth.

Every month throughout the coming year is to welcome Christian couples in a spiritual blessing, to change the world for a better vision, by their love. Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook and his wife prepared an open letter to their newborn daughter: "We want you to grow up in a world better than ours today".

According to the British writer, Gerald Brenan, "In a happy marriage it is the wife who provides the climate, the husband the landscape".

The institution of marriage started with our first parents, Adam and Eve, and was later affirmed by the

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We discover in the study of the gospels that elaboration on the subject was made with firm resolve by the Apostle Paul.

A Christian marriage is always between baptized persons; and by verdict of the New Law is a sacrament for all Christians, an indubitable fact. It was from the 13th century that the sacramental character of marriage became a dogma.

Marriage is a contract of religious consecration for those who receive it at the altar.

Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical "Arcanum" (1880), stated: "To the teachings of the Apostles, indeed, are to be

referred the doctrines which our holy fathers, the councils, and the tradition of the Universal Church have always taught, namely that Christ Our Lord raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. "

Truly, a Christian marriage is modeled on the spiritual tapestry of the union between Christ and the Church. Marriage on the mundane plain is blessed with being a mysterious symbol of God's love; signifying the supernatural and the divine plan coming together in a bond of true faith. In Saint Paul's letter to the Hebrews, he writes, "Let marriage be held in honor by all ..." (Heb.13:4).

To honor the union of a Christian couple is a sign of grace which enters their life; an efficacious power of a great sacrament. There have been, at times,

negative attitudes and expressions on conjugal and wedded unions, which ignore the truth, the essence of God's gift to humankind at the moment of their creation.

Let us now glance at what the Bible says about matrimony: Surprisingly, not many followers are aware of the practical uses of marriage as shown in the Bible. It is said that love must take priority in a marriage, often, intimately and seriously. In 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, "The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife".

It is a common human and Christian right for a man and a woman to show respect and love for each other. There are times when the hardest moments in a marriage arrives when love is given by one spouse and the other is unlovable with no show of respect. "So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." (Eph. 5:33.)

A couple should be together in everything. The argument of 'his' and 'hers' is not tolerable, calling for emotional pain and struggle. Marriage is to share. And do not keep secrets or allow your loved one to "handle it all". In the Book of Genesis 2:24 it is written: "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." (Gen. 2:24.)

Above all, love God. The more you love God in your life and in your marriage He will help you as a couple to love each other. After all, God is always within your relationship through your times of stress, pain and transparency. He is also there for your joy, victory and happiness. "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid: do not be discouraged" (Deut.31:8.)

Defend. Protect. And be there for each other. Marriage makes a couple one in the flesh.

Synodality A Strange Word....

by Don Aguiar.

We as a Church – worldwide – are preparing for a "synod on synodality" in 2023. Pope Francis is asking us to become "a synodal Church". And in various places Catholics are preparing for 'synods' of various kinds. But if everyone in the big room is shouting, "Let's have synodality!" over in the corner there is a voice saying, "But I do not even know what that means!" If you sense you do not know what synodality means, that is a good place to be because no one knows exactly what it means.

This is a Synod on synodality, we were told. My first reaction was: what is synodality? The word is real churchy e.g. synodality. What do they translate as in everyday language? Do we mean to make the church "democratic"? Or the top heavy hierarchical structure to remain with some condescension to other members of the baptised? Do we mean all have equal rights in the church? Do we mean that the clerics will have their role assisting in liturgy but the church will be organised by committed and competent hands be they women or laypersons, religious or diocesan?

"Synodality means walking together," we were then told. But this had to be explained several times, and not only to those less educated. Synodality is a strange word, even for the more literate. So, I have a problem with the word used to describe the theme of the Synod because talking about a synodal Church does not attract much attention. It does not make people want to participate in the discussions.

I think this is the case for many lay people. Therefore, we should start by translating this somewhat "learned" word into something that is immediately understandable, even into a slogan that will excite people.

For Pope Francis, convening a Synod assembly on the synodality of the Church is to make Christians aware of the very nature of the Church: to make a real body by giving importance to all the members.

This Synod invites all Christians to no longer remain in the situation of passive consumers, but to resolutely commit themselves to the joint action of proclaiming the Good News of Christ.

The stakes are set by its very theme: to journey together in communion and with the participation of all.

The Synod of Bishops' secretariat in Rome has put extensive emphasis on listening -- to God in the Holy Spirit and to one another. But in the Christian tradition, the act of listening is always connected to reading: not just Scripture, but also whatever is conducive to listening to the revelation of God in history and our lives in order to discern the ways God speaks to us today. **The problem is that there are new forms of illiteracy and ignorance today that affect the Church, and this is a key element in understanding why a number of Catholics seem indifferent to or uninterested in the "synodal process". Some of the reticence is rooted in an opposition to Pope Francis or the Second Vatican Council. But the problem is actually much deeper.**

Sexual abuse is rooted in abuse of power, which is very often the first step. While abuse of power can take many forms, many abusers rely on the excessive and, let's say it, cleri-

calist use of secrecy. For decades many Church bodies, including the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, have repeatedly called for removing the pontifical secret. On December 17, 2019, Pope Francis finally lifted it for cases of sexual violence and abuse of minors committed by members of the clergy. Nevertheless, this is just one step. A culture of secrecy still exists in the Church, for reasons not always justified and or even healthy. This culture continues to contribute to authoritarianism, clericalism and patriarchalism – all attitudes deeply disrespectful of equality among the baptized.

The Indian Catholic Church is presently engaged in a synodal process. Through this process, all in the Church are invited to grow into a deeper sense of what it means to be Catholic — of growing into deeper Communion, of participating in the life of the Church and of reaching out to the world in Mission.

At Jnana Deepa Pontifical Athenaeum, Pune, they are seeking to understand how people are involved in the life of the Church at present. Hence, they are conducting a PILOT SURVEY, to get an initial glimpse of how we see ourselves as 'journeying together' as Church and how they could improve Church functioning.

The response is based on a vast slew of experience of participation in communities and their governance.

Some of it is relevant and some of it is completely irrelevant to today's challenges and opportunities to set the course and manage the conduct of life in the Church. For example, today we can assume greater managerial responsibilities commensurate with qualifications and experience in particular areas of missionary or apostolic

(Contd.. on p. 15)

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activity, whether or not we also hold or have ecclesiastical status as, for example, a cleric may enjoy.

And then there are those tasks and responsibilities that require the munus or office authorized by the clerical state. And that is exactly where the trouble starts for the exercise of governance in the Catholic Church. Despite all manner of exhortations to share in and participate in governance of the Church, it is simply and practically impossible without the munus that comes with orders.

Away from the strict boundaries of those ten themes, circulated as an objective pilot survey:

- Where would the laity fit in the compulsory setting up of catholic associations in every single parish with a lay woman or man as president? This to be different and separate from parish councils with parish priest as chairman?

- What would be the takeaway for the laity? What do we want the Holy Father to hear from and of the Indian lay faithful?

- If the Laity at the grass root level are not being looked at, bothered about and consulted by the powers in charge, how are they expected to put forth their desires, demands, opinions through a process of discernment and dialogue?

- If the consultation can be among various groups of laity, as made out, and there is no hard and fast rule, then will the results be collated to find a place in the final document of the Synode?

In less than a decade "synod" has shifted from being a technical word used by lawyers and Church bureaucrats to being a buzz word – and, apparently, it points to a magic formula that can solve the really deep problems that afflict us in the Church today.

Synods are very different because only people of a certain status in the Church get to participate and not all those participating get to have an effective say in what is decided. Sometimes, the best that many in a synod without a deliberative or decisive voice or vote can hope for is consultative status. So, synods are not democratic.

The word 'synodality' continues to recur regularly in Catholic circles. It is a word that didn't even exist a mere few years ago. It was coined by Pope Francis, to express... what? That question is the focus of much commentary.

Of course no dictionary will help us. The word is too new. As yet, synodality has no definition. We have to use linguistic clues to tease out just what Francis is trying to communicate by coining it. Definition will have to await an experience of this new kind of reality. We will only learn what possibilities it contains, as well as its limits, by actual participation in it.

As made known although it is called the Synod of Bishops, in order for this synodal assembly to be an event for the whole Church and

not only a matter for "clerics", it is important to ensure -- and this is the objective of the general secretariat of the Synod -- the real and effective involvement of the laity in its preparatory phase and its implementation – political scientist opined and asserted that the influence and importance of religion in world politics will grow considerably, and that it will fill the vacuum created by the loss of political ideology – holding the opinion and assertion of the political scientists, will the real and effective involvement of the laity be achieved? Or will it continue as king and subjects?

The Church is not the private property of the hierarchy, even if it is the hierarchy that is responsible for its proper functioning. We must all be aware of this!

Clearly, Catholics have a long way to go as Catholics have put ever more trust in doing it all from Rome over the centuries. But Catholics can't stay where they are. They will just get bogged down in their own frequent failures to meet the challenges of the times.

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The Habit of Reading

There was an interesting Editorial in a newspaper sometime last week (Herald 8 November 2021) entitled, Reading should always be in vogue. I think it was apt, against the backdrop of the situation prevailing in the world today. There is no doubt that the pandemic has affected our lifestyle in many respects. Education for instance, with school & office have gone online, children and adults seem to have forgotten how to read from a book. It is now the mobile or the Laptop. The Editorial included a nice quote which says, "A book is a gift one can open again and again". Those of us who are adults, especially senior citizens, would definitely vouch for this.

The habit of reading has been inculcated in us from a very young age and we would have patience to read magazines, newspapers, even fat volumes of novels, etc. Today, in view of the pandemic, one shudders to think of the future of those children who have lost their very foundation in education. Leave alone the question of reading, it is believed that these children do not even know how to handle a pencil or pen. Recently, a WhatsApp message has been in circulation - a cartoon portraying a mother and a child with a book in hand, and the mother is telling him, "It's called reading. It's how people install new software in their brains!". Today's younger generation may be reading on mobiles or tablets but it's doubtful if they have the patience to read large content. The media today is offering snippets on the electronic media to cater to the needs of today's generation. At the end of the day, there is no doubt that the joy of reading knows no bounds. It is a joy to hold a book or a newspaper or a magazine in hand, and read. I like the statement in the Editorial which says, 'reading is an investment that pays rich dividends in life!'

—Melville X. D'Souza
Orlem, Malad West, Mumbai

The Gentleness of Kiss

Hai Kiss, hai kiss, where are you from
Tell us dear, what is your provenance ?

Has all human Civilization disappeared
Has the love of mothers not recognized ?
My provenance is unrecorded history
As old as mother's feeding, wrapped in kiss

O, it was even in ancient Civilization
It was the loving mothers of all beings
Who cared to feed the young ones
The nature divised it's own ways

There was no food processor or mixie
Only the beaks and the teeth did the job
They chewed up the food for their babies
And spat into their tiny mouths

Their beaks, their lips ,their tongues
How they smoothed off in motherly love
The human mother gave her bosom
And her babe drank with a kiss of mouth

It was sheer pleasure for mum and babe
The feeding through the touch of lips
Progress came and culture evolved
Parents displayed love by a kiss

The first recorded kiss was from Jacob to Isaac
Isaac called Jacob and gestured to come close
And said "give me a kiss, my son"
Jacob came close and planted a kiss on papa

Isaac said " Behold the smell of my son
Is the smell of field , the Lord blessed"
How earthly, how human
Our ancestors valued this simple act !

Kiss is a romantic sign between lovers
And electricity flows to and fro
For this graceful loving act
Husband and wife are richly blessed

It is also loving,religious and divine.
The priest kisses the Altar many a time
We kiss the hand of the priest.
The ring of bishops, the faithful kiss

We kiss siblings, parents and grandparents
We kiss the spouse without count

So what is in a kiss so thrilling?
Yes it is exchange of message of love
It is communication of love and closeness
From the overflow of heart ,the mouth speaks

This is why kiss became history of humans
And it is merged into human culture
Kiss blazes romance and love
It is also filial and religiously divine

—K. C. Thomas



GREEN DIWALI DHAMAKA



Green Diwali Dhamaka at Auxilium Skills Academy (ASA), Wadala, Mumbai, from 30th October 2021 to 5th November 2021 had 60 students, 10 staff and 10 Salesian sisters present. Sr Rosaline Pereira FMA (CEO of ASA) inaugurated the event by lighting each wick of the oil lamp with values of Hope, Love, Peace, Joy, Respect and Honesty. This was followed by a Prayer Dance by the Information Technology Enabled Service (ITES) students, a speech on the importance and significance of Diwali, culminating in a mesmerizing melody presented by the Beautician Course students. All the students grooved the floordancing, after which Sr Rosaline addressed the students with a motivational message on the importance of Education and Skills in Life.



Dr (Sr) Mudita Menona Sodder RSCJ, a gold medalist from the Mumbai University and a specialist in Integral Ecology was invited by Sr Rosaline to train staff and conduct Ecological Sessions, Games and Fun Activities for all. She began with a very meaningful Prayer Session, *Love the Essence of Life and an Earth Meditation* for all. She also gave a session on Eco-Spirituality for the Salesian sisters and a Green *Diwali Dhamaka Day* for the ASA students.



This began with a song entitled, *Who is Responsible?* Then followed a short Eco-Prayer Service. With the *Go Green, Breathe Green and Live Green* Model, she shared her own touching experiences with nature, and explained how trees communicate with, and help each other. Sai Paranjpe's 90-minute film *Chaka Chak*, an Eco-film with dollops of humour, and a clever mix of fact and fantasy, regaled the young minds. Sr Sodder is convinced that children and youth are the best changemakers. The film had a lesson for all -i.e. stop using plastic bags, segregate waste, opt for tanks for Ganapati immersion etc.

Explaining the importance and diversity of insects, she invited the group to an Art from Waste Eco-Game, *Be an Insect Detective and Invent your own imaginary insect*. Insect *Plastica* who gobbled down tons of plastic and easily digested it, was crowned the King Insect, while Insect *Happy-Go-Lucky* who went around spreading happiness and good luck was garlanded the *Queen Insect*.



Sr Magdalene Sequeira FMA, the Superior of the Auxilium Convent and the sisters pitched in with a super *Diwali Fest* for the 12 Support Staff of Auxilium School. A short Prayer Service in Marathi was organized in the community chapel by Sr Kalyani FMA and team. The dressed-to-kill support staff of the school then enthusiastically participated in the Diwali Competitions in pairs. The fresh Rangoli, Diya Competitions, interspersed by innovative Games was organized by Sr Betty Menezes FMA. The 7-Day Dhamaka culminated with a grand lunch for the support staff prepared by the sisters, prize and gift giving and much more! All in all, it was an impressive, nostalgic, eye-opening and memorable week for all.



Reported by Lenzil Fernandes and Kenneth Colaco,
Staff of ASA, Wadala
6th November 2021

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