

FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

April 2026



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF

Happy Easter!



May the risen Christ bring you new joy and hope!

APRIL 2026**CONTENTS**

Message from the Regional Superior	3
Editorial	4
Easter - The Story of Hope, Renewal and New Life	6
Joy of Giving	8
Land of the Rising Sun	9
The Mystic of Divine Mercy	10
Agnel Happenings	12
Called to See the Glory of God	16
God is My Judge: The Courageous Faith of Daniel	18
When Mary Wept	20
Just for Fun	21
Fr. Agnel's Blessings	24
Out of Their Bounty	25
Bob's Banter	26

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agnelashramnews@gmail.comwebsite : www.agnelashram.org**HAPPY EASTER****FR. AGNEL ASHRAM**

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AN EASTER APPEAL 2026**Dear Friends and Well-Wishers,**

We, the Fr. Agnel Ashram Community, together with the children of our Balbhavan, wish you all a Happy Easter. May the spirit of Easter fill your heart with happiness, hope and renewal.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the victory of life over death, reiterating the promise of eternal life. May this season bring you new beginnings and is as cheerful and colourful as a basket full of Easter eggs!

You can share in the joys of Easter with the Balbhavan children either with a contribution or in kind. Let's together make it an Easter to remember!

May God's abundant blessings be upon you and your family.

With the deepest gratitude,

Yours Sincerely in the Lord,

Fr. Valerian D'Souza, sfx
(Superior)

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Please detach the Form and return it with your generous offering.

MY EASTER GIFT 2026

To,

Fr. Superior,**Fr. Agnel Ashram, P.B. No. 6656, Bandstand, Bandra (W), Mumbai – 400 050.**

Dear Fr. Superior,

I am sending my Cheque/Draft/M.O. for _____ as my EASTER GIFT for the children under your care.

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MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



This Easter season, I send you blessings of peace and joy. May the light of the love of Lord Jesus shine upon you always. Easter is a reminder that hope never dies.

We begin the month of April with the Prevention of Blindness Week in the very first week. Let us ensure that we go for regular eye check-ups. Care should be taken to work or study in proper lighting to maintain good eyesight.

Ah! We have happy memories of our childhood. As children, we may have grown up reading Harry Potter, Enid Blyton, Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew or comics such as Superman, Phantom, Asterix, Richie Rich, Amar Chitra Katha and were transported into a world of fantasy. Or perhaps we may have read the fairy tales of Hans Christian Anderson whose birthday on 2nd April is celebrated as International Children's Book Day.

Moreover, as we celebrate World Book and Copyright Day on 23rd March, we cherish the timeless books that we have read over the years and the insights we have gained. Make reading a daily good habit!

The traditional New Year celebrations continue in different parts of India. We celebrate Puthandu in Tamil Nadu and Vishu in Kerala, on 14th April. On 15th April, we celebrate Poila Baisakh, the Bengali New Year and Bohag Bihu in Assam.

As the adage goes, Health is Wealth. World Health Day 2026, observed on 7th April, calls on people everywhere to stand with science. This year's observance launches a year-long campaign celebrating the power of scientific collaboration to protect the health of people, animals, plants and the planet.

Since the examinations are over, it's time for children to enjoy a good break. Besides going for a vacation with your parents or friends, you can utilize your free time effectively and join a Summer Camp in your neighbourhood.

Make the most of this time to learn a new skill or enjoy sports like swimming, cycling, pickle ball and more. Do visit orphanages and old age homes. Make new friends along the way. If you are 18 and above, go for driving lessons and get yourself a driving license.

Happy holidays!

- Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho
Regional Superior

TRUE EASTER SPIRITUALITY

Guest Editorial

- Fr Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

The Bible exhorts us to praise God *at all times*. Even *when it costs us* to do so, the interior attitude of a disciple is expected to be one of praise, worship and trust in a loving God. For example, the apostles were beaten by the Sanhedrin and forbidden to preach the name of Jesus, yet they found themselves rejoicing at the privilege of suffering for his name (see Acts 5:41). "*The joy of the Lord is my strength*" (Neh.8:10) must become the stable, ongoing Easter experience of every Christian!

Praise is directly linked with faith, it is an index of faith in the Trinity. The stronger one's faith, the better a person's ability to praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! This came home to me very strongly one day when I was at a University Chaplains' meeting. During Mass, an old French priest shared a personal experience:

"One day I was walking through a village in Tamil Nadu, South India, which had been afflicted for a long time by drought and famine. I encountered an old man, and got into conversation with him. The man exclaimed, 'Father, everything (including this terrible time of suffering) is grace; praise God!'"

At this, a young student who was present (he had been invited because he was doing good social work in those villages), interrupted the priest's sharing and shouted in a voice filled with anger, "If I were that old man, I would curse God (for allowing so much suffering)!"

These remarks at once illustrated the meaning of faith. The old villager was like the prophet Habbakuk, who said: "*Though the fig tree does not blossom, nor fruit grow on the vine, even though the olive crop fail and fields produce no harvest, even though flocks*

vanish from the folds and stalls stand empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord and exult in God my saviour!" (3:17f). In similar vein, the old villager had declared, with faith, "Father, everything is grace!" But

the young man, though he was doing humanitarian work for the poor in the villages, seemed lacking in a faith-vision. Finding no *rational reason* for praise, he blamed *God* for the suffering caused by famine, and he became embittered.

Exactly a week later I was at a funeral of a young man who died of leukemia. All the time

he was in the cancer-hospital suffering terribly, he kept whispering, "*Praise you, Jesus!*" over and over again, with a light in his eyes. Several of the non-Christian nurses attending him asked the family, "Who is *Jesus*, whom he is praising?" When he finally died, the witness of his parents was even more striking. He was their only child, and so tears were streaming down their cheeks at this bereavement, yet with their hands raised, they were singing, "*Jesus is Lord*," "*Thank you Jesus!*" and other hymns of faith like "*The redeemed of the Lord shall return...*" and "*Lift Jesus higher...*" As the funeral procession went down a main street of the city towards the cemetery, in the evening, it was witnessed by many of the office-goers returning home from work, several of whom afterwards asked their Christian friends, "What is it about your religion that *gives you such strength in your time of suffering?*"

Praise, then, is an "index" of faith in a loving God. The two aged parents mentioned above were saying: "*Jesus, you are the Lord! We don't understand your ways, but we accept that you are the Lord! We trust that you have done the best thing in taking away our son. He always belonged to you. The Father gave him to us as a gift, and now, in the*



power of the Spirit, we return him to you as our gift!" Their songs of praise were *expressing their approval and acceptance of God as the Lord!* Thus they were entering whole-heartedly into the mystery of the Cross and the Resurrection.

What is "praise"? The dictionary informs us that *to praise* means "to express approval, appreciation, admiration, of a person or his/her deeds." Two things are required for true praise: one, positive inner sentiments of appreciation, etc; two, that these sentiments be outwardly *expressed*. To praise *silently* is a contradiction in terms!

On the other hand, "worship" is the opposite *in style* of praise, for "to worship" means "to *interiorize* one's reverence and appreciation of God," to "be still, and know that I am God" (Ps.46:10). Hence, the deeper the silence, the more profound the worship!

Praise, and worship, are different kinds of prayer, but like the two sides of a coin, they complement each other, and are both necessary if we wish to learn to pray "in spirit and in truth" (Jn.4:23). This is because the grace of baptism has made us both a "priestly" (worshipping) and a "prophetic" (praising) people. St. Peter teaches that our very vocation is to praise God: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, *in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*" (1Pt.2:9).

On the other hand, Jesus once cautioned, "These people praise me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Mt.15:8). From this we must understand the importance of founding our *praise* on the reality of *worship*, if we wish to authentically praise God. Praise runs the danger of becoming hypocritical, and our words insincere and empty, if our hearts do not truly belong to the Lord.

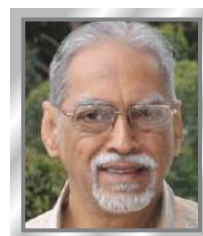
The lives of the Saints are full of both, praise and worship. Praise was *their way of life*, their stable spirituality, not just something emotional and temporary. The Blessed Virgin Mary herself was outstanding in this spirituality, and her *Magnificat* is today the Church's classic prayer of praise, used daily in its evening liturgy by millions of consecrated disciples: "***My soul magnifies the***

Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour ...for he who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his Name!" (Lk.1:46ff).

Ps.33:1 puts it well, "*Praise is fitting for loyal hearts!*" Disciples must be *loyal* to their Master, and express their conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ, who has loved them first, is worthy to be praised at all times! Disciples who praise God only when the going is good but grumble when the cross comes, show that their faith is weak; whereas disciples who praise God in all circumstances, knowing that "all things work for good with those who love the Lord" (Rom.8:28), are those whose Easter spirituality is strong!

The Scriptures exhort Christians: "Through Jesus, then, let us *continually* offer up a *sacrifice* of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name" (Heb.13:15). At times, the prayer of praise can be offered with ease, and be a joyful experience, but at other times it can also cost a lot, and be a real sacrifice – still, in every circumstance, *God is worthy to be praised and must be praised!* This form of prayer is an objective form of prayer rather than something subjective – prescinding from *our* circumstances and emotions, and focusing on Father, Son and Spirit rather than on ourselves, we attempt to lift up our hearts and voices to God. (Whereas, in thanksgiving and petition, the focus is on *our* blessings received or on *our* needs not yet met).

Praise is God-oriented; we praise God for *himself*, and for his mighty deeds. Our relationship of love with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, thereby gets expressed, and deepened. For "***we are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song***" (St. Augustine).



Dr. Fr. Fiorello Mascarenhas, SJ participated as a "peritus" (expert) in the 2008 Synod of Bishops in Rome, and has authored 30 books on Catholic biblical spirituality. His contact: frfiomas@gmail.com

Easter: The Story of Hope, Renewal and New Life

- Jubel D'Cruz

Easter is more than chocolate eggs and family brunches - it is one of the oldest and most meaningful celebrations in the Christian calendar, a season rooted in faith, hope, and renewal. At its heart, Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a moment that has inspired believers for centuries and continues to symbolise new life and fresh beginnings.

Unlike fixed holidays, Easter is a movable feast, celebrated on a Sunday between March 22 and April 25 in most Western churches, while Eastern Orthodox communities observe it slightly later.

Alongside Christmas, Easter stands as one of the most significant Christian celebrations worldwide, blending deep spiritual meaning with joyful traditions.

The Heart of Easter:

The story of Easter begins at dawn, when Mary Magdalene discovered that Jesus' tomb was empty. This powerful moment is remembered in sunrise services held in churches across the world - a tradition that dates back to 18th-century Germany and later spread to the United States. The message is simple, yet profound: light overcomes darkness and life triumphs over death.

The Journey Through Holy Week

At the heart of Easter lies a deeply meaningful journey. The week leading up to Easter, known as the Holy Week, retraces the final days of Jesus' life.

Palm Sunday marks its beginning, with worshipers waving palm branches and singing "Hosanna" to recall Jesus' peaceful entry into Jerusalem. The palm branches symbolise victory and eternal life, while the donkey He rode represents humility - a reminder that true leadership is gentle, not forceful.

Good Friday, which marks Jesus' crucifixion, is a solemn day of reflection. Yet, it is called "good" because it leads to the hope and promise of resurrection.

The season of Lent, the 40 days preceding Easter, encourages reflection, sacrifice, and spiritual preparation - inviting believers to pause, reflect, and renew their faith.

Symbols of New Life

Easter is rich with symbols that reflect themes of rebirth and renewal.

One of the most meaningful is the Paschal Candle, lit during Easter vigils. It represents the light of Christ overcoming darkness, and its flame continues to shine during baptisms and funerals, symbolising life, hope, and continuity.

Even the name "Easter" is thought to be linked to Eostre, an Anglo-Saxon goddess associated with spring and new beginnings, though its origins remain a subject of debate.

Traditions Around the World

Across cultures, Easter is celebrated in unique and colourful ways.

From festive meals to sunrise services, communities gather to celebrate joy and renewal.

In Australia, the Easter Bilby replaces the traditional bunny to raise awareness about native wildlife.

In Sweden, children dress as "Easter witches" and exchange cards.

In many European countries, families decorate real eggs, turning them into vibrant works of art.

These traditions, while varied, all reflect a shared theme: the celebration of life and fresh beginnings.

The Story behind the Easter Eggs

Chocolate. Colourful. Hidden in gardens.

But why are eggs such an important part of Easter?

Eggs have long been symbols of new life. Just as a chick breaks free from its shell, Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus - emerging from the sealed tomb into new life. The shell becomes a powerful symbol of the tomb, and its breaking represents resurrection.

Interestingly, the Bible does not mention Easter eggs. Their connection to Easter developed over time, influenced by ancient customs. Long before Christianity, eggs were used in spring festivals to celebrate renewal. Ancient Egyptians even decorated ostrich eggs with gold and silver, placing them in tombs as symbols of life.



Early Christians adopted the egg as a meaningful symbol. Some eggs were dyed red to represent the blood of Christ and decorated with crosses. The tradition gradually evolved, blending faith with cultural practices.

From Tradition to Treat

And then came a sweeter tradition.

In 1725, at the court of King Louis XIV in France, a confectioner known as the Widow Giambone is said to have created the first chocolate Easter egg by pouring melted chocolate into empty shells. From that moment, Easter eggs became not only symbolic but also delicious.

There was also a practical reason for their popularity. During Lent, many people gave up foods such as eggs and dairy. When Lent ended, there was an abundance of eggs, which were then shared, decorated, and eventually transformed into treats. Over time, chocolate eggs became a much-loved Easter gift.

Did You Know?

1. People have been decorating eggs for thousands of years - some dating back nearly 60,000 years.
2. The first chocolate eggs were made using real eggshells.
3. Eggs have been symbols of spring and new beginnings across many cultures.
4. Sunrise services began in 1732 in Germany before spreading internationally.
5. Easter eggs were once painted in bright colours to celebrate spring and new life.
6. The Easter Bunny became popular in the 1700s, and no one knows exactly why a bunny delivers eggs!
7. The world's largest Easter egg was taller than a giraffe - over 25 feet high!
8. Egg rolling is a traditional Easter game where children roll eggs down hills to see which goes the farthest.
9. More chocolate is sold at Easter than at any other time of the year - second only to Halloween.
10. Chicks and lambs are Easter symbols because they represent new beginnings.
11. Long ago, people used onion skins, flowers, and berries to colour Easter eggs naturally.
12. In some countries, children make nests instead of baskets for the Easter Bunny to fill.
13. Carrots became linked to the Easter Bunny because people believed rabbits loved them most.

14. The name "Easter" may come from an ancient word for spring and sunshine.

Egg-cellent Easter Jokes

1. Why did the Easter egg hide?
A. Because it was a little chicken
2. What kind of stories do Easter eggs like?
A. Egg-citing ones!
3. What did one Easter egg say to the other?
A. Heard any good yolks lately?
4. Why don't eggs tell jokes?
A. Because they'd crack each other up!
5. How does an Easter chick dress for Easter Sunday Mass?
A. Im-peck-ably.
6. What do you call an egg from outer space?
A. An egg-straterrestrial!
7. How does the Easter Bunny stay in shape?
A. By doing eggs-ercises!
8. What kind of jewellery does the Easter Bunny wear?
A. 14-carrot gold

Easter Quiz

1. What type of buns do people eat on Easter Sunday?
A. Hot Cross Buns.
1. What does an Easter egg symbolise for Christians?
a) Breakfast
b) New life
c) Treasure
2. Which colour were the early Easter eggs often dyed?
a) Blue
b) Green
c) Red
3. Where was the first chocolate Easter egg made?
a) Italy
b) France
c) England

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-b

A Celebration of Hope

From sunrise services to festive meals, from sacred candles to hidden eggs, Easter is a celebration of

life, light, and renewal. It reminds us that after darkness comes joy, and after every ending, a new beginning quietly unfolds.

What Easter Means to Me

For me, Easter is the promise of a new beginning. It is the grace of a cleansed heart and the quiet joy of sins forgiven. It is the assurance of a love that does not fade, a holy embrace that draws us face to face with the Risen Lord. In Christ, our peace is restored forevermore. His love reaches far and wide, gathering His people as His Bride, united to our Divine Saviour.

What Easter Teaches Us

Easter reminds us that salvation is not something we can achieve by our own efforts; it is a gift we humbly receive through faith in Jesus Christ. His Resurrection proclaims that sin and death no longer have the final word. As Sacred Scripture tells us in the First Epistle of Peter 1:3: "In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The Resurrection is God's definitive affirmation that Christ's sacrifice has fully paid the debt of sin. It stands as the radiant proof that humanity has been reconciled to the Father and that our relationship with Him has been restored.

More than a historical event, the Resurrection of Christ reveals the transformative grace available to every soul. Just as He rose to new life, we too are invited to rise — to leave behind sin, despair, and fear, and to walk in the light of renewed faith, hope, and charity.



Jubel D'Cruz is a freelance writer and the author of several books for children. He also writes letters to the editor for newspapers and magazines all across India on various social, national and environmental issues. He lives in Dombivili, Mumbai.



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Lionel Remedios, UAE

The Balbhavan boys need our support. So I am pleased to donate an amount of Rs.12,000 via NEFT for meeting their expenses.

Jefferson Saldanha, Malad, Mumbai

The Pilar Fathers are well-known for their service to the marginalized sections of society and ensuring a brighter future for the Balbhavan boys. It fills my heart with joy to remit Rs.2,000 via NEFT, as part of my monthly contribution for the children.

Boney Anthony, Jamnagar

I am happy to donate an amount of Rs. 2500 via NEFT for the mini sponsorship of two Balbhavan boys.

Sylvia Gomes, Bandra, Mumbai

It gives me great joy to make a love offering of Rs.5,000 via UPI for the welfare of the Balbhavan boys.

Jigna Dharajia, Malad, Mumbai

Easter is the time of sharing. I have offered a donation of Rs. 30,000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram for fulfilling the daily requirements of the Balbhavan boys. Indeed, there is joy in giving to the less fortunate.

Cyril Crasta, Karnakata

I have remitted an amount of Rs. 2,000 as my Easter gift to the Balbhavan boys.

Sanjay Lopes, Vasai

This Easter, I have sent an amount of Rs.10,000 towards the educational expenses of a Balbhavan boy.

Shegaonkar Kalawati Ajay, Aurangabad

I would like to make a small Easter contribution of Rs.1000 for the Balbhavan boys.

The Land of the Rising Sun

- Fr. Peter Fernandes, SFX

Arunachal Pradesh is called the "Land of the Rising Sun" because it is the easternmost state in India, making it the first region in the country to experience sunrise. Ironically, this state was one of the last to receive the good news of the "Rising Sun - Jesus Christ." The psalmist called on the people to worship, "From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised" Ps 113/3. What is this name by which we are to praise and worship God? This name was not revealed until the coming of Jesus Christ.

In fact, Moses wanted to know and asked God, "And what is your name?" Ex 3/13-14. The people of the Old Testament feared to call God by his proper name. Yet, it was first revealed to the three 'Wise Men' from the east, the people from the land of the rising sun. And now, St. Peter, with courage and audacity, announces to everyone in Acts 4/10, "then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed."

The prophet Malachi prophesied that God's name will be great among the nations and worshipped from "sunrise to sunset," indicating a universal, continuous, and sincere adoration that transcends the formal, tainted rituals at the temple - Mal 1/11. And in Mal 4/2, he says, a "sun of righteousness" that will rise with "healing in its wings," a reference understood as Jesus bringing salvation and light to the ends of the earth.

St. Luke, 1/78-79, reminds us of the fulfilment of God's promise, "Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." In Jesus, God has fulfilled the deepest desire of humankind to know the truth that sets the imprisoned soul free from the darkness and brings it into the wonderful light of the rising sun, the Risen Lord. St. Peter with courage makes a bold assertion of faith and truth: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" Act 4/12.

In fact, St. Peter reiterates the declaration of his master Jesus, who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" Jh 14/6. The Jews whom St. Peter addressed should have understood that it is the fulfilment of the scriptures. The prophet Isaiah provides the most

detailed prophecy, stating that the Messiah would be despised and rejected, pierced and crushed for humanity's transgressions, like a silent lamb led to slaughter and buried in a rich man's grave - Is 53/3-9.

Consequently, for a missionary, it would be wishful thinking to suggest that there's some other way or name God will save those not won by the gospel. Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Therefore, the challenge God lays before every generation is to spread the powerful gospel message with joy and faith without any doubt.

In the land of the Rising Sun, the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh have finally accepted Jesus as the true Rising Sun - the Lord of glory. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you." The resurrection of Jesus is the earth-shaking event that happened once and for all to behold and to adore. There are no parallel truths, and plurality should not be our concern.

Jesus said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mk 16/16). Faith in Jesus saves. Without faith in Jesus, people stand to be condemned. It is an eternal echo that reverberates throughout the history, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" - Jh 3/16.

The apostles preached the gospel with profound joy, faith, and courage and willingly laid down their lives for the sake of the gospel. Therefore, we can sing with joy, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" Ps 118/24. It is incumbent on every missionary, therefore, like St. Paul, to hold to that same mantra, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" I Cor 9/16. And so, we look towards the rising sun ... the people of Arunachal Pradesh now look towards the rising sun with a renewed vision of faith, hope, and love, praising God. The Lord is risen, and He is risen indeed, and we say Alleluia!



Fr. Peter Fernandes is Incharge of the Bursar's Desk at Pilar, Goa. He is a regular contributor of articles to various publications. His contact: petfern85@gmail.com

The Mystique of Divine Mercy

- Leon Bent

Divine Mercy Sunday is celebrated on 12th April 2026, which is the Sunday immediately following Easter Sunday.

Mercy in the Gospels is central to Jesus' ministry, emphasizing God's compassionate, forgiving love over rigid judgement, and calling believers to act with similar compassion. Jesus embodies divine mercy through healing the sick, raising the dead, and forgiving sins, notably stating, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Mt. 9:13; 12:7, cfr. Hosea 6:6).

The three most famous parables of mercy, often called the "trilogy of redemption," are found in Luke 15: the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son (or Merciful Father). These stories highlight God's relentless pursuit of sinners, the joy of repentance and the lavish forgiveness extended to the lost.

The Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena as 'Dictated' to Faustina, in "Jesus' Own Words," together with Divine Mercy Sunday, is a peculiar, dramatic and powerful aspect of Christian and, more particularly, Lenten spirituality. As feast days go, Divine Mercy Sunday is relatively new, being established in 2000 by Pope St. John Paul II. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion, shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment due to sin.

Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, in his book "Divine Mercy Explained," calls the Divine Mercy message and devotion, the **greatest grassroots movement in the history of the Catholic Church**. He notes that this movement, based on revelations to St. Faustina, has transformed millions of lives.

This new allegiance is a core Christian concept, especially central to Catholicism, representing God's infinite and compassionate love for humanity, particularly sinners, as revealed through Jesus Christ. It is also a specific spiritual commitment, based on visions of Jesus by St. Faustina Kowalska in the 1930s, emphasizing trust, forgiveness and showing mercy to a world in need of love. **It is God's love, reaching out to meet human brokenness, sin and suffering, offering forgiveness and restoration.**



Divine Mercy gets to the heart of Sacred Scripture. In fact, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "The Gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners" (no.1849). That summarizes it. Divine Mercy is the Gospel. It's the good news. And so, it is the very centre of our faith. Moreover, in the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "Divine Mercy is not a secondary devotion, but an integral dimension of Christian faith and prayer." Pope Benedict even goes so far as to say, "Mercy is the central nucleus of the Gospel message."

According to Mt. 25: 31-46, **mercy will be the quality on which the Christian will ultimately be judged**. Traditionally, these instructions of the Gospel have been handed down to us as the **corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which should characterize the lives Christians lead**. The corporal works of mercy are, to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the sick, visit those imprisoned, and bury the dead. The spiritual works of mercy mean to admonish sinners, instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the

sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, to forgive injuries and to pray for the living and the dead. Mercy, through to merciful service to neighbours, is an important criterion of striving for Christian holiness.

To the basic forms of worship taught by Sister Faustina, we add: **Veneration of the image of Divine Mercy, celebration of the feast of Divine Mercy, different prayers to the Divine Mercy, especially the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy, the Novena and ejaculatory prayers said particularly at 3 p.m.** Additionally, it must be mentioned that, the **reading of the Diary can be a valuable source of meditation.** In number 754, the Lord promises: "The souls that say this chaplet will be embraced by My mercy during their lifetime, and especially at the hour of their death."

Many saints have experienced a special spiritual bond with the mystery of Divine Mercy. Among them, worth mentioning, is **Saint Faustina Kowalska, Jesus' "secretary" of Divine Mercy.**

Pope Francis said, "I ask you: have you ever thought that **every time we go to the confessional, there is joy and celebration in heaven?** Have you ever thought about that? It is beautiful ... and fills us with great hope, because there is no sin to which we have stooped from which, by the grace of God, we cannot rise up again. Because **God never ceases to want what is good for us, even when we sin!**"

Mercy renews and accomplishes redemption, since it is the encounter between two hearts: **The heart of God which goes out to meet the heart of man,** changing humanity's heart from a stony one to that of flesh. Mercy, thus, brings forth joy and hope for a new life.

In Christian tradition, these two substances (blood and water) are viewed as "signs" representing the core of the faith and the foundation of the Church:

The Blood (Redemption): Represents Jesus' sacrificial death to pay for human sins. It is traditionally linked to the **Eucharist (Holy Communion)**, where believers share in the "blood of the New Covenant" - the red water.

The Water (Life-Imparting): Symbolizes spiritual cleansing, the gift of the **Holy Spirit**, and the sacrament of **Baptism**. It represents the "living water" that provides eternal life - white water.

The Feast of Divine Mercy, is also known as Divine Mercy Sunday. It is on the eighth day of Easter, the climax of the entire Easter celebration. In a sense, it's the most important day of the most important feast in the Catholic Calendar!

On that day [Divine Mercy Sunday], the very depths of My tender mercy is opened. I will pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy - (Diary of St. Faustina, 699).

Pope St. John Paul II issued a plenary indulgence for the faithful who attend Confession and Divine Mercy Sunday Mass, and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

"Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world!"



Leon Bent writes because, with the rise of the web and its quick dispatches, people are hungry for profound thought, for depth, for insight, for sustained description and the touch of the Divine.

READER'S FEEDBACK

We have increased the number of pages of *Fr. Agnel Ashram News*, from 20 to 28, to bring you more interesting articles. We would love to hear from you. Share your views at **agnelashramnews@gmail.com**

This magazine is available online.

Visit us at **www.agnelashram.org**

A memorable day for students at the Degree Distribution Ceremony 2026 of Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering, Bandra

The Degree Distribution Ceremony 2026 of Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering was held with great enthusiasm and pride on 7th March 2026 at the Rang Sharda Auditorium, Bandra. The occasion marked a significant milestone in the academic journey of graduating students of the year 2024-25, celebrating years of dedication, perseverance and achievement.

The atmosphere was filled with excitement as students, parents and faculty gathered to witness this memorable occasion. The formal proceedings began with the convocation procession, setting a dignified tone for the event. This was followed by the lighting of the ceremonial lamp and prayer, symbolizing the pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment.

The dais was graced by esteemed dignitaries and the audience was warmly welcomed with an introduction of the Chief Guest, Dr. Udayan Ganguly. While addressing the gathering, Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza, Director of the college, reflected on the institution's values and vision. This was followed by an address by Dr. Sapna Prabhu, Principal, who encouraged the graduates to uphold integrity and excellence in their future endeavours.

The highlight of the ceremony was the inspiring address delivered by Dr. Udayan Ganguly, a distinguished academician and researcher in semiconductor technologies. An alumnus of IIT Madras and Cornell University, Dr. Ganguly has made remarkable contributions in the field of semiconductor device physics and neuromorphic computing. His illustrious career includes industry experience at Applied Materials in California and currently leads the Center for Semiconductor Technologies (SemiX) at IIT Bombay.

Following the address, the graduating students solemnly took the Convocation Oath, reaffirming their commitment to professional ethics and societal responsibility.

The most awaited segment of the ceremony - the distribution of degrees - was conducted department-wise:

- **Computer Engineering:** 132 graduates
- **Electronics and Computer Science:** 64 graduates
- **Artificial Intelligence and Data Science:** 64 graduates
- **Mechanical Engineering:** 58 graduates

Each student walked onto the stage with pride, marking the culmination of their academic journey and the beginning of new aspirations. Dignitaries, including Rev. Fr. Trevor Pereira and various Heads of Departments, Dr. Jagruti Save, Dr. Sujata Deshmukh, Dr. Vasim Shaikh, Dr. Hemant Khanolkar and Dr. Swapnali Makade joined in distributing the certificates and congratulating the graduating students.

The ceremony concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks by Prof. Merly Thomas (COE), expressing gratitude to the management, dignitaries, faculty, parents and students for their contribution to the success of the event and celebrating this memorable milestone together.



Chief Guest, Dr. Udayan Ganguly (centre), at the Degree Distribution Ceremony 2026 of Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering, Bandra. To his left are Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza, Director of the college, Rev. Fr. Trevor Pereira, Dr. Swapnali Makade and Dr. Hemant Khanolkar. To his right are Dr. Sapna Prabhu, Principal of CRCE, Dr. Sujata Deshmukh, Dr. Jagruti Save and Dr. Vasim Shaikh.



Felicitation of the Chief Guest, Dr. Udayan Ganguly (right), by Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza.



CRCE students are all smiles on receiving their Graduation certificates from the dignitaries.

Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering hosts TEDxCRCE Annual Conference under the theme 'Waves of Change'

During the academic year 2025–2026, the TEDxCRCE team at Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering organised several activities aimed at encouraging student engagement, professional development and knowledge sharing. These included a Resume Building Workshop, the CRCE E-Sports Tournament, the Internship Expo and the flagship TEDxCRCE Annual Conference.

The Resume Building Workshop, held on **6th October 2025**, helped students understand how to create professional resumes for internships and job opportunities. It was conducted by **Ms. Mareena Fernandes**, an alumna of the IT Department currently working at Morgan Stanley, and was attended by over **100 students**.

The CRCE E-Sports Tournament, conducted from **9th to 11th October 2025** in collaboration with the Student Council, featured competitions in Valorant and BGMI and saw enthusiastic participation from multiple teams across colleges. **The Internship Expo** held on **18th October 2025** connected students with companies and startups offering internship opportunities across domains such as software development, finance, marketing and analytics, with participation from **31 organisations** and over **280 students**.

The highlight of the year was the **TEDxCRCE Annual Conference** held on **27th February 2026** at **Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering** under the theme **'Waves of Change.'** The event brought together students, faculty members, and professionals for an evening of inspiring talks and meaningful discussions. The conference featured five distinguished speakers: **Neeraj Pandey, Vishal Gabale, Malvi Malhotra, Rajesh Desai, and Pawan Wagh**, who shared insights on innovation, perseverance, leadership, and personal growth.

Their talks encouraged students to think differently, embrace challenges, and pursue their goals with determination. The event also provided opportunities for networking and interaction with speakers, creating an engaging environment for idea exchange. Overall, the conference successfully conveyed the theme **'Waves of Change,'** inspiring the audience to reflect on the power of ideas and their ability to create positive transformation.



A token of appreciation being presented to the speaker, Ms. Malvi Malhotra, by Rev. Fr. Trevor Pereira, Assistant Director of CRCE.



The organising team, speakers and guests at the TEDxCRCE Annual Conference 2026.

Students of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School, Vashi, Shine in YC Spark 2026 Scholarship Exam

Students of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School, Vashi, have brought pride to the institution by securing excellent ranks in the YC Spark 2026 National Level Scholarship Online Test conducted by Youth Central.

The examination aims to identify and encourage academic excellence among school students while nurturing analytical thinking and a healthy competitive spirit.

The exam was held on January 27, 2026, with more than 1000 students from various schools participating. YC Spark provides students a platform to test their knowledge beyond classroom learning while recognizing meritorious students through scholarships and academic recognition.

Continuing its tradition of academic excellence, several students from Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School, Vashi secured impressive State-Level Ranks.

Saachi Edate (Grade 6) achieved 3rd Rank, earning a cash prize of ₹21,000.

Other achievers include Anmay Godse (Grade 6) who secured 5th Rank, Shivani Rajesh (Grade 6) and Arlene Manacherry (Grade 6) who both secured 7th Rank, Niyam Amarutia (Grade 9) who secured 7th Rank, and Avnish Gavas (Grade 9) who secured 8th Rank. Each of these students received a cash prize of ₹5,000.

The management and teachers of the school expressed immense pride in the students' achievements and congratulated them for their dedication and hard work. The accomplishment reflects the school's commitment to academic excellence and holistic development.



The meritorious students with Rev. Fr. Saturnino Almeida, sfx.

CALLED TO SEE THE GLORY OF GOD

- Norma Kamath

In the Old Testament, God commanded Prophet Ezekiel to prophesy in the power of the Spirit, to the dry bones in the valley, to hear the Word of God. As he obeyed, God's Word became flesh. New life came, sinews, flesh and then skin covered them. Then he prophesied to the breath from the four winds, and the bodies received life and stood up on their feet, an exceedingly great host. These dry bones are the whole house of Israel who had lost hope.

God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to them, that he would open their graves, and raise them, put his spirit on them, give them new life and bring them back to their own land (Ezek 37: 1-14).

God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, through whom he also created the world. Jesus reflects the glory of God and bears his nature, upholding the universe with his Word of power (Heb 1:1-3). God is always faithful to his promises. He sent forth his Word and healed them. He rescued them from the grave (Ps 107: 20).

GLORY OF GOD

Jesus was greatly moved by Lazarus' death and came to the grave and said to Martha, "Take away the stone, and you will see the glory of God." Then he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus come out" (Jn 11: 38-40).

Jesus is also greatly moved when he sees man living in sin, and he calls each of us by name, to come out of our graves. The Lenten Season is a time of repentance. Jesus is calling us to a conversion of heart.

SIN

St. Augustine of Hippo (354- 430 A.D.) enumerates four stages of sin - suggestion in the heart, delight in thought, consent of the will, action/habit, which leads to the tomb. Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. Then desire when it is conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full grown brings forth death (Jas 1: 14-15).

SPIRITUAL DEATH

St. Augustine interprets the four days Lazarus spent in the grave as spiritual death. He enumerates four areas where we need to repent and be liberated.

- 1) Original Sin.
- 2) Transgression of the Natural Order.
- 3) Transgression of the Law of Moses.
- 4) Contempt of the Gospel of Grace.

ORIGINAL SIN

St. Augustine developed the foundational doctrine of original sin. Adam and Eve's fall through pride and disobedience was transmitted to the

human race through sexual reproduction. Concupiscence or sensual desire is the result of original sin. Man lost his immortality, and death entered the human race, rendering man weak, with a natural inclination to sin. Man is incapable of saving himself and needs to be cleansed through God's saving grace, which makes Baptism essential. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but will have the light of life' (Jn.3:16). Through Baptism, we are

immersed in the death of Christ, die to sin, and rise with him as a new creation and are born to eternal life (2 Cor 5:17). We receive the charisms and the gifts of the Holy Spirit and are prepared for Mission.

While Christ calls the sinner, the church plays a role in unbinding the sinner, through the proclamation of the Word and ministering of the Sacraments, especially the healing Sacraments of Penance, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Healing.

2. TRANSGRESSION OF THE NATURAL ORDER

St. Augustine viewed natural law as a reflection of God's eternal law, the divine unchanging natural order of the universe, imprinted in human hearts and accessible through reason. It dictates true justice. It serves as a moral standard against which



human positive laws must be judged. If a human law contradicts natural law it is unjust and invalid. It is a moral code that humans can naturally grasp.

St. Augustine defines the natural order as a hierarchal, divinely instituted arrangement where all creation is ordered by measure, by number and weight aiming for peace through well ordered love. Sin disrupts this order while love, virtue and grace help to establish a proper relationship, between the body, soul and God, loving God above all things, and other things in relation to him. Living according to the divine will bring order and a deep tranquility in the human soul. Since human nature is corrupted by sin, St. Augustine argued that humans cannot follow the natural law without God's grace.

God's promise to Israel in Jer: 31:33 is fulfilled in Heb 8:10 when the Lord declares, 'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days. I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be my people.'

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW OF MOSES

The Law of Moses comprised the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, and Deuteronomy 5, the Ceremonial Law to teach the people about atonement and forgiveness, and the Civil Law which included regulations that govern the social and the judicial.

St. Augustine argues that the Mosiac Law was a holy and a good law that was given to serve a temporary purpose.

It commanded what is good but without providing the grace to do it. Its purpose was to convict the people that righteousness cannot be achieved on their own but only by faith in Christ (Gal 3:24). The Law exposed the sinner, making the offence abound, so that humanity would realise it needed a Saviour (Rom 5:20).

It made the sinner feel guilty, keeping him out of sin through fear of punishment rather than love or righteousness. It failed to justify him (2 Cor 3:6). Harsh passages in the Old Testament which might encourage legalism or vengeance should be interpreted figuratively or as symbols of spiritual mysteries.

When Jesus came he said he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it (Mt 5: 17-20).

CONTEMPT OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

Grace is a godly gift, not earned through work, rituals or personal striving, which enables man to live a godly life, and gain salvation. It is centred on faith in the finished work of the cross (Eph 2: 8-10).

St. Augustine, known as the doctor of grace, defined contempt of the gospel of grace, as a belief that human beings can achieve righteousness and salvation through their own will and natural abilities, rather than through divine assistance. Pride is the root cause of such a belief and brings enslavement to sin and separation from God (spiritual death). It is an unpardonable sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, whereby the hardened heart is impenitent, relies on itself and refuses to accept God's grace and mercy.

St. Augustine highlights the difficulty of raising someone, 'bowed down with the weight of evil habit.' He warns us of the sin of presumption. Sinners deeply entrenched in sinful habits and carnal sins are like a rotting corpse full of stench and would have difficulty being raised from the grave and experience the power of Christ's Resurrection. At the same time, he encourages believers not to despair. 'God is rich in mercy, and love that even when we were dead through our trespasses, he made us alive in Christ. By grace we have been saved and raised us up with him and made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ' (Eph 2: 4-6).

Lent is a time of grace given by the church, with a call to repentance. Let us not justify our sin, but in humility, acknowledge and confess our sin, like the good thief on the cross. His immediate reward - the bliss of Paradise. Jesus calls us by name to 'lift up the stone.' As we atone and confess our sins through the sacrament of Confession we will experience the warmth and love of the Good Shepherd, carrying us close to his heart, leading us home to our Father's House to see the Glory of the Father.



Norma Kamath lives in Bangalore. She experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1983 and was called to serve in the intercessory, counselling and healing ministry.

(God Is My Judge: The Courageous Faith of Daniel)

- Fr. Trevor D'Souza, OFM (Franciscan)

Daniel: A Man of Faith in Exile and a Messenger of God's Everlasting Kingdom

The story of Daniel is the story of a man who remained faithful when everything familiar was taken away. Surrounded by political power, cultural pressure, and real danger, he chose trust in God over comfort and compromise. Though he lived far from home, Daniel stayed deeply rooted in faith. His life continues to inspire believers today, reminding us that no earthly power is greater than God's kingdom.

The Meaning of Daniel's Name

The name **Daniel** comes from the Hebrew *Daniyyel*, which means “**God is my judge.**” It expresses a deep conviction that true justice and authority belong to God alone. In Greek, the name appears as “Daniel,” carrying the same meaning. This truth shaped Daniel's entire life. Though he lived under powerful rulers and empires, he never forgot that his ultimate loyalty was to God.

Who Was Daniel?

Daniel was a young Jewish noble taken into exile in Babylon after Jerusalem was conquered around **587/586 BC** (cf. 2 Kings 24–25). Torn from his homeland, he grew up serving foreign kings, including Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus (Dan 1:1–6; 6:28).

Yet exile did not weaken his faith, it strengthened it. Daniel gained respect in royal courts because of his wisdom, integrity, and God-given gift for interpreting dreams and visions. He is remembered both as a **prophet** and a **wise servant of God**, whose message spoke not only to his own time but also to generations yet to come.

Living Faithfully During the Babylonian Exile

Daniel lived during one of the most painful periods in Israel's history, the **Babylonian exile**. Jerusalem had been destroyed. The Temple lay in ruins. Many people wondered if God had abandoned them.

Daniel's life gave a powerful answer: **God had not abandoned His people**. Even in a foreign land, God was present, guiding events and revealing His plan. Through Daniel, the Lord showed that His power reaches far beyond national borders. Empires may seem unstoppable, but God alone directs history.

The Mission God Gave Daniel

Daniel's life had a clear purpose.

First, he was called to witness to God's authority among the nations.

Through his wisdom and courage, Daniel showed that God rules over kings and kingdoms (Dan 2:20–21).

Second, he was entrusted with revealing God's plan for the future.

Through dreams and visions, he proclaimed that

earthly empires will pass away, but God's kingdom will last forever (Dan 2:44).

Simply by living faithfully, Daniel showed that loyalty to God must never be abandoned - even in unfamiliar or hostile environments.

Defining Moments in Daniel's Life

Faithfulness in Small Things

Daniel refused to compromise his beliefs, even in matters like food and daily practice (Dan 1:8). His quiet obedience became the foundation of his strength.

Interpreter of Dreams

He explained King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue representing rising and falling empires, ending with God's eternal kingdom (Dan 2:31–45).

Courage Under Threat

His friends were saved from the fiery furnace (Dan 3), and Daniel himself survived the lions' den because he would not stop praying (Dan 6). These moments show that trust in God is never misplaced.

The Writing on the Wall

Daniel interpreted the mysterious message announcing Babylon's downfall (Dan 5), reminding rulers that no power escapes God's judgement.

Visions of God's Future

He received profound visions, including the coming of the “**Son of Man**” who receives everlasting dominion (Dan 7:13–14) and prophetic insights into God's saving plan (Dan 9:24–27).

Daniel in Christian Faith

Daniel's visions strongly shape Christian understanding of salvation. Jesus Himself used the title “**Son of Man**”, drawn from Daniel's vision of the heavenly ruler (Dan 7:13–14; cf. Mark 14:62). Daniel's message prepares the way for the Gospel: God's kingdom is eternal and ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

His life also speaks powerfully to Christians living in diverse and complex societies, something many believers in India understand well. Daniel shows how to remain faithful, prayerful, and courageous while living respectfully among people of different beliefs and cultures.

Why Daniel Still Matters

Daniel teaches us that holiness is possible anywhere - even in exile, uncertainty, or pressure. His story encourages us to trust God when life feels unstable or confusing. He reminds us that history is not controlled by power or chance, but by God's loving providence.

A Prophet of Hope for All Times

Daniel's life is ultimately a message of hope. Kingdoms rise and fall, but God's reign never ends. Through faith, courage, and constant prayer, Daniel shows what it means to belong completely to God.

His witness calls us to live with confidence and trust. Like Daniel, we too can remain firm, knowing that God is our judge, our protector, and the eternal king whose kingdom will never pass away.

WELL- KNOWN WORDS SPOKEN BY DANIEL

1. Daniel praises God's sovereignty over history

Daniel 2:20–21

“Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.”

2. Daniel declares that God reveals hidden mysteries

Daniel 2:28

“But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days.

Bible Quiz on the Life of Daniel

1. What does the name “Daniel” mean in Hebrew?

- A. God is my strength
- B. God is my judge
- C. God is my shepherd
- D. God is my light

2. Daniel was taken into exile after the fall of which city?

- A. Samaria
- B. Nineveh
- C. Jerusalem
- D. Antioch

3. In which empire did Daniel live as an exile?

- A. Roman Empire
- B. Persian Empire
- C. Babylonian Empire
- D. Egyptian Empire

4. Why did Daniel gain favour in the royal court?

- A. He was a military commander
- B. He was a skilled artist
- C. He had wisdom and could interpret dreams
- D. He was a priest in the temple

5. What did Daniel refuse to do at the beginning of his time in Babylon?

- A. Learn a foreign language
- B. Serve the king
- C. Eat the royal food that would defile him
- D. Live in the palace

6. Which king had a dream of a great statue that Daniel interpreted?

- A. Saul
- B. Nebuchadnezzar
- C. Herod
- D. Solomon

7. Who were Daniel's three friends who were thrown into the fiery furnace?

- A. Peter, James, and John
- B. Moses, Aaron, and Joshua
- C. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
- D. Elijah, Elisha, and Samuel

8. Why was Daniel thrown into the lions' den?

- A. He refused to obey the king in battle
- B. He refused to worship idols
- C. He continued praying to God despite a royal decree
- D. He refused to interpret a dream

9. What mysterious message did Daniel interpret for King Belshazzar?

- A. A voice from heaven
- B. A burning bush
- C. Writing on the wall
- D. A scroll from the temple

10. In Daniel's vision, who receives everlasting dominion from God?

- A. The High Priest
- B. The Son of Man
- C. The King of Babylon
- D. The Angel Gabriel

11. What major theme runs through Daniel's prophecies?

- A. The power of human wisdom
- B. The greatness of Babylon
- C. The eternal kingdom of God
- D. The rebuilding of the temple only

12. Which quality best describes Daniel's life?

- A. Ambition for power
- B. Political rebellion
- C. Faithfulness to God in exile
- D. Isolation from society

13. Daniel served under rulers of which two major empires?

- A. Egyptian and Roman
- B. Babylonian and Persian
- C. Greek and Roman
- D. Assyrian and Egyptian

14. Which title used by Jesus in the Gospels comes from Daniel's vision?

- A. Prince of Peace
- B. Lamb of God
- C. Son of Man
- D. Good Shepherd

15. What central message does Daniel's life teach believers today?

- A. Avoid all contact with non-believers
- B. Earthly kingdoms last forever
- C. Faithfulness to God is possible in any situation
- D. Wisdom comes only from education

Answer Key

1B, 2C, 3C, 4C, 5C, 6B, 7C, 8C, 9C, 10B, 11C, 12C, 13B, 14C, 15C



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When Mary Wept

- Severina Peres

The message of Our Lady of La Salette carries a powerful and timely reminder for Christians today.

On September 19, 1846, in the remote French Alps near the village of La Salette, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to two shepherd children: Maximin Giraud, aged eleven, and Mélanie Calvat, aged fourteen. The children were tending their cows on the mountain slopes when they saw a radiant lady seated on a rock, weeping. After some time, she stood up and spoke to them at length - first in French and then in their local dialect, her voice filled with sorrow and compassion.

The apparition was later investigated by the Church and formally approved in 1851 as authentic.

The statue of Our Lady in the Basilica of La Salette captures the mysterious beauty of the apparition. Mary is portrayed in radiant light, with a crucifix on her breast surrounded by a hammer and pincers, symbols recalling Christ's Passion. Chains and roses also adorn her figure, reflecting both human sin and the hope of redemption. The image reminds the faithful that the sorrow of Mary is inseparable from the suffering of her Son and the salvation he brings.



At La Salette, Mary appeared as a mother deeply concerned for her children. She invited the world to reconciliation, with God and with one another. She called people to repentance, prayer, and a renewed commitment to faith.

According to the children's testimony, one of Mary's chief concerns was the neglect of Sunday as a day dedicated to God. She lamented that many people had abandoned worship and treated the Lord's Day as an ordinary time. Her words echo the heart of Christian faith: Sunday is not merely a religious obligation but an encounter with Christ in the Eucharist and in the community of believers.

Even today, the temptation remains to reduce faith to convenience. It is easy to replace communal worship with private devotion or online participation when circumstances do not require it. Yet the Christian life is fundamentally communal. Gathering as the Body of Christ allows believers to share faith, strengthen one another, and encounter the living presence of the Lord in Word and Sacrament.

Mary also called the people to repentance and compassion. She urged them to replace harsh words and selfish attitudes with kindness and grace. Faith, she reminded them, cannot be limited to outward practices. True conversion requires a transformation of the heart.

Her message remains strikingly relevant today. Many people profess belief in God, yet hesitate to change their lives or confront injustice and selfishness. Lent challenges such as complacency. It invites believers to move beyond routine religion and embrace authentic discipleship.

The apparition also highlighted the importance of prayer in daily life. When Mary asked the children if they prayed regularly, they replied that they hardly prayed at all. The Lady gently urged them to at least say the Our Father and Hail Mary every morning and evening.

Her simple request reveals a profound truth: prayer anchors human life in God. In a world filled with distractions, prayer becomes the space where hearts are renewed and strengthened.

The message of La Salette also touches families and communities. Parents and elders carry the responsibility of passing on the faith to the next generation. In many societies today, children grow up surrounded by competing priorities, education, entertainment, and consumer culture. Without guidance and example, faith can easily fade from daily life.

Yet the story of Maximin's father offers a hopeful reminder. At first, he dismissed his son's account of the apparition. But when Maximin told him that the Lady had spoken about his struggles and worries, he was deeply moved. In that moment, he realized that God knew his burdens and cared for his family. The experience led him to rediscover faith.

This small episode illustrates a larger truth: God never abandons his people. Even when faith weakens, divine mercy continues to call humanity back to conversion.

The message of La Salette reminds us that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, continues to accompany the Church on this path. As a mother who weeps for her children, she calls them back to faith, prayer, and reconciliation.

Mary, Reconciler of sinners and Virgin of converts, pray for us and lead us closer to your Son.

Abridged from Radio Veritas Asia.



Severina Peres enjoys writing articles focussed on Catholic faith and doctrine. She also reaches out to senior citizens.

Everyone loves Easter and its happy significance for us Christians. 5th April is Easter Sunday this year. It is a day to celebrate Christ's resurrection and of course enjoy all the Easter goodies that mark this important feast.

So with that very happy thought, let's begin...

Inspirational Story



"Excuse me," said the young man. "I am here to pick up an Easter basket for my daughter."

Ann was in charge and she explained, "Well, we have only Easter food baskets, not baskets for kids."

These baskets were for the needy poorer members of the church and contained a full Easter dinner of ham, potatoes, bread, vegetables and also enough staples to feed a family for a week.

Ann asked him to come in but he was disappointed, "I cannot... my daughter is waiting in the car. I thought there would be Easter baskets for children. I promised my daughter one. I left her in the car because I wanted to surprise her." He looked a bit disappointed.

Ann felt bad but there was nothing she could do as a volunteer. She told him to wait before she fetched his food basket with his number on it.

Suddenly as she was trying to find his food basket, she saw a basket with a bulge in it. She wondered what it was. She looked closer and found it was unmistakably an Easter basket filled with an assortment of Easter candy and Easter eggs, wrapped with ribbons and tucked inside with the food.

She was surprised to find it had the man's number on it. It seemed almost miraculous.

Ann went to the man and handed him the food basket with the Easter basket tucked in, "I think someone knew just what you needed."

It was an Easter miracle and it made a little girl waiting in the car very happy.

Quiz

All about Easter Eggs



1. From which country does painting Easter eggs come from? 2 What do the people of Ukraine call their decorated eggs? 3. Which country invented the first Easter egg? 4.

Which country made the world's biggest chocolate Easter egg? 5. How many Easter eggs are sold in the U.K each year? 6. How many Easter eggs does the average child eat in the U.K.?

Lunar Eclipse

A total lunar eclipse known as the blood moon occurred on 3rd March of this year. This event was viewed from eastern Asia, Australia and North Central America.

The moon turned a dark red colour as it passed through the Earth's shadow. It was the first of a series of lunar eclipses for 2026.

The next eclipse will be seen on 28th August, 2026 but it will be a partial lunar eclipse.

The effect of the blood red occurs when the moon slowly moves into the Earth's deepest shadow and glows in intense shades of red and copper.

Smile Please



1. Why does a gossip like jam better than butter?

Because jam is easier to spread around.

2. Why did the police arrest the chicken on the basketball court?

Because it was Fowl's play.

3. The Mafia was looking for a new man to make weekly collections from some of the private businesses they were protecting.

Feeling the heat from the police, they decided to hire a deaf man. If he got caught, he could not communicate well to the police.

The deaf collector in the first week picked up 50,000 dollars. But he got greedy and decided to keep the money for himself. The Mafia catches him and asks a deaf interpreter to help out to question him. They

threaten him with torture first and when he refuses to talk, they threaten him with a gun pointed at his head.

The deaf collector feeling frightened says in deaf language to them that he hid the money in the third tree stump in Central Park after they threaten him with a gun. The Mafia asks the interpreter to tell them what he said.

The interpreter says "He does not know what you are talking about and does not think that you have the guts to pull the trigger."

Riddle Me



1. How does a tree get on the internet?
2. What do you get when you cross a snowman and a shark?
3. What do you call a tree that can fit into your hand?
4. What music genre are balloons afraid of?
5. What did one leaf say romantically to another leaf in the Fall?

Brain Teasers



1. What is a detective's favourite exercise?
2. I am edible, I can be a stick yet I am not got from trees. What am I?
3. Why did the skeleton not go to the party?
4. Why did the army general bring a ladder to the chest tournament?
5. If $y=63$ and $z=36$. x is the only divisor of both but greater than 7. Then what is the value of x ?

Inspirational Quotes

Robert Louis Stevenson - Author of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde



1. *Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.*
2. *I travel not to go anywhere but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move.*
3. *I always keep two books in my pocket, one to read and one to write in.*
4. *You think those dogs will not be in heaven! I tell you they will be there long before any of us.*
5. *In each of us, two natures are at war - the good and*

the evil. All our lives the fight goes on between them and one of them we must conquer. But in our own hands lies the power to choose - what we want most to be, we are.

Inspirational Lady



Nita Ambani, the wife of Mukesh Ambani is very much in the news. She was a school teacher who became a global philanthropist and businesswomen.

She is known for her discipline, her background in Bharatanatyam and a never say never attitude.

Nita and Mukesh Ambani met in 1984 after his father Dhirubhai Ambani saw Nita, a school teacher and trained Bharatnatyam dancer perform at a cultural event. He was enthralled by her performance. He called her home with a marriage proposal and she hung up twice, thinking it was a prank saying, "If you are Dhirubhai Ambani, I am Elizabeth Taylor."

The couple tied the knot on 8th March, 1985.

Their courtship included romantic drives and famously a marriage proposal in a car amidst the Mumbai traffic.

She is responsible for establishing the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, part of The Jio World Centre Complex in the Bandra-Kurla Complex of Mumbai.

I have seen many of these shows ranging from the *Life of Pi*, *The Phantom of the Opera* to ice-skating in *The Nutcracker* in the beautiful auditorium built for this purpose. I have to commend her on this innovative attempt to expose us Indians to world-class performances that if possible one should not miss. So the next time you get a chance to see one of these shows, please do so. It is a delightful experience.

World News



1. Oil prices jump.
2. Rising global temperatures are causing intense heatwaves, floods, wildfires and storms.
3. The new supreme leader of Iran is Mojtaba Khamenei who is 56 years old and currently serving as the third supreme leader of Iran.

Naturopathy - The Science of Nature for Healing



1. If you get a sudden headache here is a quick fix. Just place a pinch of salt under your tongue and drink a glass of water. In most cases, the headache disappears.

2. If your hair feels dry, here is a simple solution. Add a tablespoon or two of curd to your hair and then shampoo. This makes hair soft.

3. Having a little ginger in your tea or water everyday helps to reduce inflammation in the body.

4. A quick way to tone your face and keep wrinkles at bay is splashing your face with ice cold water every morning. It tightens the skin effectively. Or you can dunk our face in icy cold water if you can but do not overdo it, just once a day.

Wisdom Message of the Month



The poor are to be treated fairly. They must receive just wages for the work they do.

A man who was wealthy was very stingy about money. He believed poor people should never be paid their due wages but only minimum wages for the work they did. Once in his society he engaged a poor worker and paid the worker a minimum wage for more than two hours of labour. He justified his behaviour saying to himself that without education and status they deserve nothing better but the bare minimum.

We are called to reflect on this in our own lives. Often enough maids are hired to do work. Do we pay them justly? Do we pay the market price or try to get the work for as minimum cost as possible? Or do we try to extract maximum work from them and pay them little justifying in our mind that the work is not dignified work and so they deserve little? Every work deserves decent pay.

Let us be fair and just.

Sometimes certain institutions even religious ones or those engaged in social service give their employees minimum wage because they feel it is God's wish not to seek money. But we are called to be fair to all and must realise God never makes distinctions. He wants us to be fair with everyone. He sees our actions and judges us according to our kindness and generosity of spirit

Trying to bully the poor or not giving people their due pay is not pleasing in God's sight.

A rich man kept a male servant to help him after a leg operation. A guest visiting was shocked at his behaviour towards the man in his thirties. He complained, "Just look at him, he cannot understand, he has no brains." And this was all because the man brought out the wrong sweets for the visitor for the man had not specified to the servant which sweets to serve. Yet he was rude and treated him like dirt. This is a man who went for Mass regularly and observed every feast day zealously.

So more than going to church and acting pious, we are called to reflect on our dealings with those poorer than us. Do we treat them badly because of their poverty? Do we feel scornful towards them?

What do we learn?

This season of Easter we have time to reflect and as Easter is a season of rebirth, God gives us every opportunity to redeem ourselves and become more pleasing in His eyes.

That's all for this month. Take care ...

Answers

Quiz

1. Ukraine.
2. Pysanka which means to write.
3. U.K.
4. Italy.
5. 80 million.
6. Eight Chocolate Easter eggs.

Riddle Me

1. It logs on.
2. Frostbite.
3. Palm tree.
4. Pop.
5. I am falling for you.

Brain Teasers

1. Cross examination.
 2. Butter.
 3. Because he has nobody to go with.
 4. To elevate his strategy.
 5. $x=9$
-



Christine DSylva has just published her 40th book, available on Kindle and in paperback on Amazon. She is currently writing another book. She enjoys playing the piano and has a YouTube channel, Christine DSylva Fusion Kitchen.



FR. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VASAI: Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel for accepting my prayer requests and interceding for me.

- *Helen Carvalho*

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

GHATKOPAR, MUMBAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, my prayers have been answered.

- *Stanley Vaz*

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

BANDRA, MUMBAI: Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra has been my favourite go-to place for years. I am happy that my prayers have been answered.

- *Chitra Fernandes*

THANKSGIVING FOR GIFT OF A CHILD

VIKHROLI, MUMBAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we have got our heart's desires of the gift of a child, our new bundle of joy.

- *Agnel & Azellic Sequeira*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VILE PARLE: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for all the favours received through his intercession.

- *Carmelina D'Souza*

THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL WEDDING

VIRAR: We are thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for the success of the wedding of Neville and Cynthia. The nuptials and the reception went off smoothly.

- *Hilda Simon Lopes*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

AHMEDABAD: I would like to thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession and for all the blessings received by our family over the years.

- *Vijay Pravasi*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

SANTA CRUZ, MUMBAI: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing me and my family abundantly.

- *Richard Fernandes*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VAKOLA, MUMBAI: Through your powerful intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received several favours.

- *Antonio Rebello*

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD JOB

MUMBAI: My anxiety of searching for a job is over. Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed with a good job.

- *Lenisha Livinson*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

ANDHERI: It is such a joy to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra, Mumbai. I can feel the power of the divine presence there.

- *Mangesh Jadhav*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS GRANTED

MAHIM, MUMBAI: As a staunch devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel, many of my prayers have been answered through his intercession.

- *Basilica D'Souza*

THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL OPERATION

BANDRA: Before going in for the operation, I sought the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. I am thankful to the Venerable that the operation was successful. I am praying that he should be canonised a Saint soon.

- *Milagen Dominic Lopes*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

BORIVALI, MUMBAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, my prayers have been answered. I am thankful to the Venerable for interceding for me.

- *Dr. Mathew Rodrigues*

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Praveen M. Srivastava	Mumbai	135000	Lawson D'Souza	Palghar	2000	Sajan T.S.	Mumbai	1000
Jigna Dharajia	Mumbai	30000	Saili Michael Dabre	Palghar	2000	Raj Chacko Pachikkara	Kerala	800
Diedra D'Mello	Mumbai	20000	Francisca Rodrigues	Mumbai	1500	Canute D'Souza	Tamil Nadu	600
Nunes Mark Anthony	Mumbai	20000	Tanya Almeida	Palghar	1500	Bakhtaver F. Sigantor	Gujarat	501
Cynthia D'Souza	Mangalore	15000	Rose Almeida	Palghar	1500	Mahrugh Mistry	Nashik	501
Thomas George	Navi Mumbai	15000	Saina Almeida	Palghar	1500	Dhruati Parikh	Mumbai	501
Lionel Remedios	Dubai	12000	Antony M. O.	Kerala	1500	Mathew Kurian	Bangalore	501
Daxaben Makwana	Gujarat	11000	Gavin Fonseca	Mumbai	1500	Abhilash & Neha Kadam	Thane	501
Thomson Rodrigues	Palghar	10000	K.G. Rao	Andhra Pradesh	1500	Dhruati Parikh	Mumbai	501
Zenia Machado	Mumbai	10000	Flavia Kinny	Mumbai	1500	Sunil J. D'Silva	Palghar	500
Charles D'Costa	Mumbai	10000	Rubina Michael Dabre	Palghar	1500	Rita Fonseca	Palghar	500
Melini D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	Mahima Asari	Gujarat	1500	Aloysius E. Daniel	Mumbai	500
Sanjay Lopes	Palghar	10000	Hiren Gala	Mumbai	1400	Geet Pujara	Thane	500
Irene Pinto	Mumbai	10000	Siju Thengil	Mumbai	1313	Jaya Prajapati	Thane	500
Falguni Solanki	Palghar	8000	Alice S. D'Souza	Mumbai	1250	Hemanshu Ariwala	Mumbai	500
Sohan C. Mehta	Mumbai	7500	Suzanne D'Souza	Mumbai	1250	Ashok Jaerom Solanki	Gujarat	500
Stuart Mutch	Mumbai	6501	Sharon D'Souza	Mumbai	1250	Jasmine M. Kavina	Gujarat	500
Warren J. Fernandes	Mumbai	6000	Monica D'Souza	Pune	1200	R.S. Raju	Tamil Nadu	500
Subramaniam R. Huf	Mumbai	5250	Rita Johnson	Kerala	1200	Simon A. Macwan	Gujarat	500
Chrisel A. D'Costa	Palghar	5000	Neville Dandiwalla	Mumbai	1001	Rosy Rodrigues	Palghar	500
Jacob Puthur	Kerala	5000	Ivana Dabre	Palghar	1000	Rajkumar Almeida	Palghar	500
George Yohannan	Kerala	5000	Tushar R. Desai	Mumbai	1000	Shivam Panchal	Mumbai	500
Dr. Niket Shastri	Gujarat	5000	Irani Shirin Namdar	Mumbai	1000	Priyam Pandit	Mumbai	500
Leslie Ivan D'Souza	Mumbai	5000	Jobi George	Kerala	1000	George Joseph Parakal	Kerala	500
Margaret Cardoz	Mumbai	5000	Leena G. Fernandes	Gujarat	1000	Rani Sebastian / Priya S.	Kerala	500
Sylvia Gomes	Mumbai	5000	T.P. Simon	Kerala	1000	Nikitha Antony	Mumbai	500
Rukshana A. Natalwall	Mumbai	5000	Mary Antony	Kerala	1000	Machado & Sons Pvt. Ltd.	Tamil Nadu	500
Kersi P. Kapadia	Bengaluru	5000	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1000	Kochala K.I.	Kerala	500
Mary Muckaden	Mumbai	5000	Maxi D'Cruz	Kerala	1000	R. Victor	Tamil Nadu	500
T.G. George	Mumbai	4000	Andrew S. Fozz	Mumbai	1000	Niranjan M. Amolik	Maharashtra	500
Jain Mary T.	Kerala	3000	Olivia D'Souza	Mumbai	1000	Agnella Abraham	Mumbai	500
Brian & Ninette Lobo	Mumbai	3000	Mathew P. Mathew	Kerala	1000	Arun Jadhav	Kolhapur	500
S. John Kiruba Valan	Tamil Nadu	3000	Flemy Thekketh	Kerala	1000	Salvador D'Souza	Mumbai	500
Burk D'Couto	Kerala	3000	P.B. Blaise	Kerala	1000	Arokia Mary	Mysore	500
Cleophas Rodrigues	Pune	3000	John Thomas	Kerala	1000	Melvin Joseph	Mysore	500
Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	2541	Joseph Lorange	Kerala	1000	Deevya Vithal	South Africa	500
Fransquinha Fernandes	Mumbai	2500	Udaykumar & Geeta Dumasia	Mumbai	1000	Fatima D. D'Souza	Mumbai	500
Hilda C. Mendonca	Mumbai	2500	Bhaven & Shanaya Dumasia	Mumbai	1000	Philomena Fernandes	Mumbai	500
Jahangir & Farida Gilder	Mumbai	2001	Thomas Varghese	Kerala	1000	Geet Pujara	Mumbai	500
Kimaya Subramaniam	Mumbai	2001	M.D. Mathai	Kerala	1000	Sheetal Bansode	Panvel	500
A. R. Elavia	Mumbai	2000	Aruna Fernando	Tamil Nadu	1000	Earnest Aruja	Kerala	500
Mervyn Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Rebecca Zaman	West Bengal	1000	Toms Joseph	Kerala	500
Christine Pereira	Mumbai	2000	Maria S. Arputharaj	Tamil Nadu	1000	John Baptist	Tamil Nadu	500
Solly Thomas	Kerala	2000	Varsha R. Shukla	Mumbai	1000	Agnes Fernandes	Mumbai	500
Attely A. Kuttikadan	Thane	2000	Rita D'Souza	Mumbai	1000	Victor Bhosle	Mumbai	500
Jaison Chackochen	Kerala	2000	K.J. Jose (Darragh Smail Co.)	Kerala	1000	Santosh Mohite	Pune	500
Allwyn R. Dias	Mumbai	2000	Peter Valentine Rebello	Palghar	1000	Anthony M. Dabre	Palghar	500
Lynette L. D'Cruz	Mumbai	2000	Margaret D'Souza	Palghar	1000	Lilly Kutty Philip	Bhopal	500
John L. D'Souza	Mangalore	2000	Neelima G. Amin	Mumbai	1000	Martin Yacub	Gujarat	500
Neethu	Kerala	2000	Catherine Joe Fernandes	Mumbai	1000	Antony Fernando	Tamil Nadu	500

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

Be A Worthy Product..!

The Anti Conversion Bill has been tabled in Maharashtra and suddenly the air is full of panic, discussion and the kind of serious expressions usually seen only when somebody realises the tea has no sugar.

People are worried. People are debating. People are forwarding long messages on WhatsApp written by experts who until yesterday were specialists in cricket selection and geopolitics.

But as I listen to the protests and fears, I find myself thinking of something completely different. Advertising.

Suppose tomorrow the government suddenly announced that no company in India could advertise its products anymore. No television ads. No newspaper spreads. No giant hoardings showing smiling people drinking fizzy liquids while pretending their life has suddenly become meaningful.

Imagine the horror.

Companies would panic. Marketing departments would collapse. Advertising agencies would begin

like a badly trained bulldozer in society, nobody is going to stand outside his house asking for the secret of his faith.

But if someone quietly lives with grace, generosity, humour, forgiveness, and dignity, people become curious. They begin asking questions.

What makes you so calm? Why are you so generous? How do you stay so hopeful?

Why aren't you corrupt like the others?

And suddenly the advertising has already begun.

Not with loudspeakers. Not with drums and bands. Not with giant declarations.

But with your life.

The beauty of integrity, honesty, goodness and love is that it cannot be banned.

No law can stop kindness. No bill can prevent compassion. No regulation can silence a generous heart.

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selling samosas on the roadside.

But here is the interesting part. If advertising disappeared, companies would have only one option left. Their 'product' would have to be so good that people recommended it to others.

In other words, the product would have to advertise itself.

And that is where religion becomes very interesting.

Because when people say religion is their product, they are actually mistaken. The real product is not the religion. The real product is the life produced by that religion.

Your patience is the product. Your kindness is the product. Your honesty is the product.

Your compassion is the product.

You are the product, and your life becomes the showroom.

If a person claims deep spiritual belief but behaves

People will always notice God in you. They will always be drawn to that holiness.

So perhaps instead of reacting in fear, every believer of every religion could simply focus on becoming a very impressive product.

Because in the end, when a life shines, nobody needs an advertisement.

People will come to the showroom to buy, on their own!

So from this Easter and beyond, become a worthy product who will guide others to our God above...!

Robert Clements is a newspaper columnist, whose column has graced over 80 newspapers and on certain days has a readership of over 6 million. He can be contacted at bobsbanter@gmail.com

Rev. Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho awarded for over 50 years of service as an educationist and working for the marginalised

- Sunil D'Cruz

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) honoured Rev. Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho for transformative leadership in education and 18 other individuals with its **National-Level Awards 2026**, recognising outstanding contributions to the Church, society and the nation. The awards celebrate lives that reflect Gospel values and advance human dignity, justice, education, leadership, innovation, and nation-building.

The ceremony was held on February 9 at **St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru**, in the presence of senior Church leaders, civil authorities, and invited dignitaries from across the country.

The gathering brought together the heads of the three rites of the Catholic Church in India – **Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão**, president of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI); **Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil** of the Syro-Malabar Church; and **Major Archbishop-Catholicos Baselios Cardinal Cleemis** of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, along with bishops, clergy, religious, and lay representatives.



The awardees were felicitated with shawls by **Cardinal Poola Anthony**, **Cardinal Ferrão**, **Major Archbishop Thattil**, and **Cardinal Cleemis**. Outgoing CBCI president **Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath** presented the award certificates, while **Cardinal Koovakad** handed over the mementos.

Archbishop Anil Couto, CBCI secretary general, welcomed the gathering, and **Archbishop Thazhath** explained the vision behind the first-ever CBCI National

Awards. **Rev. Dr. Mathew Koyickal** proposed the vote of thanks.

The event was attended by Karnataka minister **K. J. George**, **Cardinal Koovakad**, outgoing CBCI office bearers, and the newly elected leadership of the conference, including president **Cardinal Poola Anthony**.

After his ordination over five decades back, among several other activities, **Rev. Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho**, worked with the Oraon tribals in Madhya Pradesh and then with the Khadia and Munda tribals in Bihar.

He later travelled to Delhi and went on to build four **Fr. Agnel Schools** in the **National Capital Region (NCR)**, namely at **Delhi, Noida, Greater Noida and Vaishali**, Ghaziabad. As the Director of the Fr. Agnel Schools in the NCR, his schools have the reputation of providing quality education with access to the latest technology.

Known for his work for the upliftment of the poor and the marginalised, **Rev. Fr. Alarico** started NGOs to upskill displaced people in Molarbhand, Delhi. He also started the **Agnel Jan Kalyan Kendra** in the Khodda Colony, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, bordering Noida and Delhi.

The four storey facility has 36 Multipurpose Classroom Units, Educational and Skill Training equipment and Sanitation Facilities. 200 children and adults from the poorest sectors of rag pickers who stay in the garbage dumps (Bal Mandal) avail of washing and personal cleaning facilities. They are also exposed to education and skill training. 150 women are trained regularly in Self-help programs.

In May 2023, **Rev. Fr. Alarico Carvalho** and his two siblings marked a milestone as they celebrated 50 years of their consecration and ordination at a religious ceremony held at St. Michael's Church in Orlim, Goa.

His sister, **Mariazinha Carvalho** was consecrated as a nun over five decades ago while his brother, **Rev. Fr. Anil Kumar**, was ordained as a priest at around the same time.



Rev. Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho, Director of AJKK, reaches out to rag pickers at Khodda, Ghaziabad



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Heartiest congratulations to our Regional Superior and Editor of *Fr. Agnel Ashram News*, **Rev. Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho**, on receiving the inaugural National Award from the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), for his exemplary service to the Church, the Society and the Nation.



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