

FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

March 2026



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF



*International
Women's Day*

Empowering women for a brighter tomorrow!

MARCH 2026

CONTENTS

Message from the Regional Superior	3
Editorial	4
An Instrument of Yahweh	6
Joy of Giving	7
Indian Catholic Farmer Mala Sherpa: Putting "Laudato Si" into Practice	8
The Mystery of the Cross	10
Agnel Happenings	12
Lent 2026's Sainthood Forever	15
Walking with Jesus through Lent	18
The Agony of Untold Stories	20
Just for Fun	21
Fr. Agnel's Blessings	24
Out of Their Bounty	25
Bob's Banter	26

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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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We also accept your Easter Gifts for the Balbhavan boys in kind.

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.

Name & Address _____

Pin _____ Phone _____ PAN No. _____

Email I.D. _____ Our Ref. No. _____



MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



March signals the arrival of the spring season. We celebrate Holi, one of the most colourful festivals in the world.

As we celebrate the Hindu New Year of Gudi Padwa, Cheti Chand and Ugadi, we wish our brethren, peace, happiness and prosperity in the year ahead. We also celebrate Eid-Ul-Fitr, Ram Navami and Mahavir Jayanti this month.

Continuing the 40-day Lenten season, it is the springtime of reconciliation, a season of Repentance, Reflection and Spiritual Renewal.

The word "Lent" is derived from the Old English word *lencten*, which means "spring" or "springtime." This term is directly related to the German word *lenz* (or *lenzin*), which is an older or poetic term for springtime. Symbolizing renewal and growth, it is a period of spiritual preparations and reflecting on Christ's journey through his passion, death and resurrection.

The Lenten season is a time to reflect deeply on our lives, to repent and renew our hearts. Through our prayers, fasting and charity, we participate in Christ's sacrifice and prepare for His resurrection.

As we celebrate 115 years of the International Women's Day on 8th March, we take pride in women making progress in all fields of activities. From commanding troops to flying fighter jets, conquering space, and breaking global records, Indian women have consistently redefined excellence.

We celebrate the trailblazing Indian women, from the first Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the the Hon'ble Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman and the Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee. The achievements of Women Army and CRPF leaders to sports icons, scientists and global firsts have made the nation proud.

On 27th March, we celebrate the 114th Birth Anniversary of visionary late Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues, the founder of Fr. Agnel Ashram and Balbhavan, Bandra, Mumbai, in 1957. From there, it has branched out into various centres and educational institutions across India, at Vashi (Navi Mumbai), Verna and Assagao in Goa, Pune, Ambernath, Delhi, Noida, Greater Noida and Vaishali in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues continues to be our inspiration with his philosophy, "My Land and My People! It is all that matters."

Be at your best. Have a great month ahead!

- Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho
Regional Superior

Children of a Lesser God!

Guest Editorial

- Fr. Peter Fernandes, SFX

Why does society always look down with disdain on poor people? Are deprived people really children of a lesser god? Without an iota of a doubt, life is the most precious gift of God, and it is blessed with endless possibilities for the growth and well-being of human society here and hereafter. In fact, God created the whole universe for humans to live happily with plenty. Therefore, a question begs to be asked: 'Why am I poor?'

The history of humankind is a painful, unjust, immoral odyssey, which explains the agonizing cry. And the existential explanation is that the existence of the other is perceived with suspicion and fear to be subjugated and dominated rather than accepted as equal partners in building an egalitarian society. Unless humanity learns to accept the other as an equal partner with the same rights and responsibilities, the agonizing cry will continue to echo until the end of time. Hence, it calls upon the wise people to govern and be just arbitrators to diffuse the hostility and create a just and equitable environment for all to live and thrive.

Consequently, a question comes to mind: why are millions suffering and dying of want in a world with plenty? Can humanity blame God as we tag the run-down people with a title, children of a lesser god? Remember, politics is a beautiful thing, part of human nature, endowed by the Creator for the common good, but when politics is corrupted, society gets divided, and those vulnerable become children of a lesser god. Look at the dollar bill, "In god we trust", the dollar god is the pride of a nation, and Americans proudly acclaim, "winner takes it all," determining the value of gods in modern times to categorize the people by which god they belong to. In the name of promoting democracy and human rights, wars are fought to strengthen the dollar god, regimes are replaced in favour of the dollar, and the children of the lesser god wander in amazement.

The dollar syndicate is a vicious shadow government that controls world politics. During the

colonial era, the British Empire exploited the nations and their resources to benefit their own citizens by reducing the colonized people into children of a lesser god. The fear of the other and undue pleasure of subjugating the vulnerable have divided humanity with deep wounds of hatred. American imperialism is the continuation of the colonial mindset.

The abduction of Nicolás Maduro Moros, the president of Venezuela, is an indictment on the free world and on the international institutions' protection of human rights. Besides, a childish demand to take over Greenland exposes that primeval fear of the other...if we don't take it, Russia and China will take it, which is no justification given the history of the United States, rightly so that Barack Hussein Obama and Bill Clinton are taking political shots at President Trump. But no modern presidents of the United States have the moral authority to speak on this subject.

During Obama's tenure, the world witnessed the biggest refugee crisis, and the ill effects of the aftermath are still felt. At the behest of the United States, prosperous nations like Libya fell into ruins, and yet, Obama had no qualms about receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, and Hillary Clinton sarcastically laughed, "We came, we saw, and he died." The US foreign policy is very utilitarian. The world needs to understand that the United States has no concern about the global peace and prosperity; their only focus is acquiring the resources of every country to benefit them—it's their playbook. The military budget exceeds the combined budgets of many nations. The fear of the other is the cause for the existence of the children of a lesser god. A ruthless, mindless, and heartless tariff war is for the same purpose: to make dollars great again. How long will this mindset persist? Unless humanity changes its course, the world is on the brink of nuclear annihilation.

Look at this: the President of the United States frequently and publicly belittles the Prime Minister of the largest democracy and fourth-largest

economy without being challenged. What could be the reason? During Dr. Manmohan Singh's tenure, it was not the case; in fact, President Obama would consult Manmohan and take his advice.

It's a tragicomedy that this government, which rose to power on the promise of zero tolerance for corruption, has been tagged the most corrupt government post-independence. In 2011, the Anna Andolan, or the India Against Corruption Movement, systematically brought down a fairly stable and less corrupt government. Anna Hazare had no qualms about crying foul about anything and everything about the previous government as a scam. Ironically, Anna turned out to be the greatest scamster, because not a single scam was proved nor any person prosecuted. In hindsight, it is crystal clear that Anna Andolan was sponsored by a dishonest system, and his silence today speaks loud and clear about the dark system and systematic corruption for which he and his core group are responsible. It is also on record that some honest people who were part of this core movement have asked for forgiveness.

How could the nation misjudge when the trajectory of the nation under Manmohan Singh was headed towards a prosperous nation, which was the envy of our neighbours and others? Eventually, the Anna Andolan led to the formation of the Aam Aadmi Party, which has significantly altered Indian politics for the worse. Consequences are enormous; since 2014, India has incurred unsustainable national debt, which is pushing millions below the poverty line, yet the corrupt government continues to bluff the nation without an iota of pain or consciousness.

The rupee has hit a new low against the dollar. The high level of corruption and pollution has made India a laughing stock on the global stage. Yet, Anna and his gang are silent, even as the agonizing cry of the children of a lesser god is getting louder. Who is responsible?

The fear of the other has led to election rigging, the highest form of corruption in a democratic country, and the present dispensation has left no stone unturned to ensure its electoral victory. The fear of losing power to the opposition has undermined democracy, freedom of expression, and the nation's well-being. The 2023 CEC Act, which grants

immunity to the Election Commission of India, has sparked significant legal and political controversy, with critics describing it as a "lifetime washing machine" or "impunity." The impunity given to the Election Commission is reaping benefits for the present dispensation, and now through the SIR exercise conducted by the Election Commission, the winning machine is unstoppable.

Although the aim of SIR is good, the process is inadequate, with wrong timing and solely aimed at benefiting one party. In the process, the national treasures are mostly sold to two powerful business tycoons, and the BJP has accumulated unexplained, ill-gotten, enormous wealth to lubricate the election machinery. Should anyone be surprised by the VB GRAM G Act? It is a direct attack on the children of the lesser god. Under MGNREGA, the worker's family had a legal guarantee of a minimum of 100 days of work per year. Under the new act, the workers no longer have any legal guarantee to work. They work when the Modi government decides. Therefore, no one should be surprised that the Prime Minister's Relief Fund and the CARES Fund lack traditional government accountability, as neither is audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. Instead, both funds are audited by independent chartered accountants appointed by trustees, as they are not considered public authorities under the Right of Information Act. The present dispensation has a huge pile-up of dirty laundry to hide, and they fear facing the truth and justice, as they are willing to subvert anything and everything, even political assassinations, to cover their ill-gotten goods. Ruthlessly, the voice of the children of the lesser god is muzzled with muscle power and, when needed, supplemented with a few more dollars. **Know this: it is righter and juster to fear God than to fear the other.**



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

AN INSTRUMENT OF YAHWEH

— Nnette D'Souza

When the Israelites forgot their uniqueness, and insisted on conformity with other tribes, God raised Judges (Shofetim in Hebrew), to rule over them. The term 'Judges' points to charismatic, divinely appointed 'local heroes', whose authority was neither hereditary nor permanent. Israel's 12 Judges, each different in ability, would intervene in local disputes during peace times, and stand as military leaders during war, to deliver their people. When Israel was oppressed, silenced, paralysed with fear, by the Canaanites for 20 years, God awakened a woman, 'Deborah' who was willing to listen, obey and speak His Word, without compromise. Here was a woman who judged Israel, at a time in history, when women were not to be found in any kind of leadership role. Instead, they were pushed down and seen as second class citizens. Even in Jesus' time, women were in no position to witness to anything, not even to a murder they had seen with their own eyes, because it was unacceptable, it counted for nothing. Women were considered insignificant, with no position, forget about power, in society. As the 'Anawim of Yahweh', they remained faithful to God, and depended entirely on Him, for deliverance. Despite this, biblical history finds women important enough, to be recorded.

Deborah is one of those women the Bible is very clear about. Neither was she filling a post because a man wouldn't step up, nor was she leading under any human authority. **God had put a WOMAN in charge of an entire nation's governance. As a judge for Israel, Deborah spoke for God.** People came to her for decisions, rulings, wisdom and leadership. She didn't just advise but issued orders! Deborah was chosen, empowered and elevated not by a human movement but by God's anointing.

The Bible never said women are weak, culture did. Deborah's story proves that God always intended leadership, courage, prophecy, wisdom, authority and strength to be as much the attributes of women as of men. **Salvation history is replete with proof**

that God's kingdom has advanced through women of fire, faith and fearless obedience. Deborah didn't fight patriarchy – she fought the enemy and won.

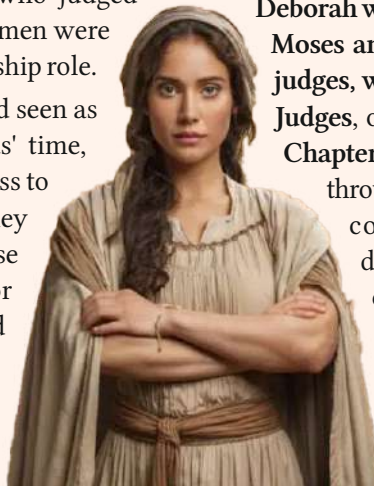
Deborah did not rise because she was fearless but because she was available. Her authority did not come from status, it flowed from intimacy with God. Before Deborah ever led an army, she sat in God's Presence. She discerned His voice, carried His burden and realised His will. Deborah's strength was not in her might but in her fear of the Lord. Not much is said about her, so one might be tempted to consider her insignificant, but Deborah was special.

Deborah was the only female judge. Along with Moses and Samuel, she was one of the three judges, who was also a prophet. In the Book of Judges, only two chapters are dedicated to her.

Chapter 4 tells us how God works wonders through two women; Deborah and Jael, considered weaklings, in a male dominated society. Deborah writes one of most powerful victory songs where Yahweh is presented as a mighty warrior who used her to deliver Israel, and Jael is called "blessed among women" (**Judges 5**).

Deborah considers the saving act of God, as a cause of celebration, for breaking into song, which reveals how she is a simple mother, but if God is for you, who can be against you? God put a dream in Deborah's heart, which was to free her people from the Cannanites, a herculean task indeed, especially for a woman! Deborah understood one important fact, which was, that she was not on her own. The 'Living God' of the Israelites would make her powerful and she stepped out in FAITH.

Even Barrack, commander of Deborah's army, played a minor role in the victory she won for her people. He acknowledges that God is with her, hence he says he will go to battle, only if she accompanies him, for he knew God would be with her, and victory for the Israelites was assured. While prophesying that the victory of the battle, will go to a woman (**Judges 4:9**), Deborah wasn't referring to



herself, but to Jael who killed the general Sisera of the Canaanite forces, with a tent peg and a hammer. God made things fall into place, and turned things around for Israel.

Sometimes God will also ask us, as WOMEN, to do things that are way over our heads, things that we seem ill-prepared for. That is the time for women to realise, that we may have discounted ourselves, just because a male dominated society says so. It is time to change our thinking. We must believe in who we are – Children of God, with royal blood flowing through us. We have a Father, who sits on a throne. He made us powerful to do anything, we put our mind to. It is we and others of our ilk, who see ourselves as limited.

This International Women's Day, let us take the time to see, what are the addictions that weigh us down, that are breaking us? What are the barriers we can overcome, to achieve our goals? What are the hidden dreams that are waiting, to materialize into wonderful realities? Let's begin

by seeing ourselves as God made us – His Own, in His image and likeness.

Not just today, but everyday let us thank God for breathing life into our direction, for taking us to places, we never thought we would get to, on our own, for calling us to do things, way out of our league. He is always by our side, as we step out in faith, saying like Deborah - "I am victorious because I am your daughter."

God works in subtle ways and human history is dotted with examples of this.



Ninette D'Souza is a prolific writer and retired teacher of Math and Science at Canossa High School, Mahim. She is also the author of Lamplighter and Lamplighter 2.0.



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Paul Aloysius D'Silva, Bangalore

I am pleased to donate an amount of Rs. 50,000 via NEFT for covering the educational, medical and various other expenses of the Balbhavan children under your care.

Lynette Lillian D'Cruz, Andheri, Mumbai

I have donated an amount of Rs. 2000 via NEFT as a small gift for the Balbhavan children.

Sudha Titus, Malad, Mumbai

I am happy to donate an amount of Rs. 5,000 via UPI for fulfilling the various needs of the Balbhavan children.

Ashley C.B. De Souza, Bandra, Mumbai

We have sent a cheque of Rs. 3,000 for the welfare of the Balbhavan boys. Fr. Agnel Ashram is doing yeoman service of ensuring a bright future for the underprivileged sections of society by providing the best education and imparting the right skills.

Dorothy Patrao, Mangalore

In thanksgiving for the favours received, I have sent a Money Order of Rs.2000 as donation for the needs of the Balbhavan children.

Daniel & Elina Shiung, Bandra, Mumbai

We have made a love offering of Rs. 2000 towards the educational expense of a Balbhavan boy. Education is the foundation of success in life and the Pilar Fathers are ensuring just that.

Ranjan Macwan, Anand, Gujarat

I am pleased to donate an amount of Rs.1000 for the Balbhavan boys. They are being well cared for by the Fathers of Fr. Agnel Ashram.

Anosh Rukdikar, Pune

It gives me great joy to remit an amount of Rs. 2,000 as a gift for the Balbhavan boys.

Indian Catholic Farmer Mala Sherpa: Putting “Laudato Si” into Practice



In the close-knit mountain community of Bul in South Sikkim, India - home to 285 farming families - Mala Sherpa, a Catholic woman farmer, stands out as a symbol of ecological stewardship.

Widely recognized as “a model farmer,” she has developed an exemplary Integrated Organic Farming System that demonstrates how traditional wisdom, scientific training, and deep spirituality can work together to sustain both land and people. Her work beautifully reflects Sikkim's global distinction as the world's first 100% organic state, a historic transition that has improved the lives of more than 66,000 farming families.

But for Mala, organic farming is not merely a profession. “It is my way of protecting God's creation,” she says. “Organic farming is not only to protect myself - it is to protect our nature, our community, and the generations to come.”

Rooted in the Soil

Three generations live and work on Mala's farm - her mother-in-law, uncle, aunt, husband, children, and extended family members. “We are nine in total,” she explains.

Like many Sikkimese households, the family shares responsibilities naturally and harmoniously. Her husband manages ploughing and livestock; elders sort vegetables, store seeds, and guide younger workers; the children help tend flower beds, poultry units, and seedling trays. Farming is not just shared labour but a way of life that binds the family together.

“Because farming here has a future, our youth stay in the countryside,” she says, her voice warm with pride. “They want to be farmers too.”



Mala Sherpa shares both technical guidance and practical demonstrations as she leads a hands-on training session with calm confidence and expertise.

Formed by Education and Love for the Earth

Mala's passion for organic farming began early. During her college years, she volunteered with an NGO called ATREE, working on biodiversity conservation. The experience awakened in her a deep commitment to protecting the environment - something that would shape the rest of her life.

After graduation, she worked for many years with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, helping manage their organic farm. This exposed her to growers, experts, and scientists from around the world.

As a recognised Organic Farming Trainer, she commits herself to continuous study so that she can effectively teach others.

Integrated Organic Farming System

Her farm is a fully integrated organic ecosystem, combining a wide range of complementary agricultural activities. It includes cattle, goats, and rabbits; seasonal and off-season vegetable cultivation; fish ponds; backyard poultry; and bee-keeping. She also maintains kiwi orchards, bright flower fields, and forest patches that support local biodiversity. Alongside nursery management, she produces compost and vermicompost, ensuring that every component of the farm reduces waste and strengthens sustainability.

“Organic agriculture has given us a secure future,” Mala says. “It should be practiced not only in Sikkim but throughout India and the world.”



A Living Classroom.

More than a farm, Mala's land has become a year-round learning centre for South Sikkim. Students from elementary to college level, PhD scholars, women farmers, and rural youth - including school dropouts - visit regularly for hands-on training.

Inspiration from 'Laudato Si'

Her spirituality deepened further after reading 'Laudato Si,' Pope Francis' encyclical on caring for our common home.

“It is my favourite church document,” she says with conviction. “Pope Francis reminds us that the earth is God's gift. We must protect its resources so future generations can live with dignity.”

She sees every seed, every bud, every harvest as a sign of God's love. “Farmers are co-creators with God,” she reflects. “Our work protects life - human life, animal life, plant life. Every day, I see God's miracles in the fields.”

Courtesy: Radio Veritas Asia

The Mystery of the Cross

-Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

Jesus' method of "salvation" is a *mystery of faith*. According to our merely human logic or reason, the Cross is "weakness and foolishness," but according to the scriptures inspired by God's Holy Spirit (the New Testament), it is the "wisdom and power of God" (ICor.1:23f). Hence, the only way we can personally benefit from this truth is by reflecting prayerfully, and daily, on the word of God.

For most people, a cross is whatever brings us **pain** (physical, mental) *and* **shame** or humiliation (the forfeiting of one's dignity and personal rights). But in the Scriptures, *humiliation* (rather than only physical pain) is emphasized whenever the Cross of Jesus is referred to: "For the sake of the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured **the shame of the cross**" (Heb. 12:2).

The main purpose of crucifixion as a method of punishment (as invented by the Persians and then taken over by the Romans) was to expose the criminal as a public object of scorn and contempt. Their main interest was not to inflict physical pain, though the pain of crucifixion was *terrible*, but to shame the criminal, humiliate him, empty

him of his dignity, to such an extent that he could hardly be called human anymore. Ps. 22:6 describes such a person as "**a worm, and no man; scorned by men and despised by the people.**" Isaiah used similar words: "The crowds were appalled on seeing him, so disfigured did he look that **he seemed no longer human...**" (52:14).

Ask yourself the question: "What is *more difficult* for me to bear, a headache or an insult?" Most people will answer, "An insult," confirming that the main ingredient of the cross is humiliation, *kenosis*, self-emptying, denial of our basic human rights and dignity: "Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but **emptied himself**, taking on the form of a servant ... and he became obedient even

unto death, death on a cross" (Phil.2:5-11).

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" (Lk. 23:34). With these words, *out of love for humanity*, Jesus emptied himself of what is deepest within each human being: the cry for justice, the consolation and hope that 'someday God will vindicate me.' The prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament had prayed: "O Lord, let those be put to shame who persecute me... Bring upon them the day of evil; destroy them with double destruction!" (17:18), but Jesus, in the New Testament, chose *his* special interpretation of the cross, the Way of self-emptying, of unconditional love and complete

forgiveness. Jesus emptied himself also of his *divinity* when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mk.15:34)! At that moment on the cross, because he was so intimately and completely identified with sinful humanity, he felt estranged from his own beloved Father!

Later, St. Paul helps explain this desolation of Jesus with this shocking statement: "For our sake he made him **to be sin** who

knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2Cor.5:21).

The Cross was God's invitation to Jesus to love us to the highest degree possible, by spiritually identifying himself with all the sins of humanity, vicariously (= *as though he were personally guilty of them all*). By accepting God's will, Jesus became on the Cross, "*the Lamb of God*" (Jn.1:29) or "the juridical personification of sin" (Jerome Biblical Commentary), so while in that state Jesus also gave up his habitual unity with God. *Not counting his divine privilege* (union with the Father) *as something to cling to, he emptied himself* (Phil.2:6,7). This also explains why earlier, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he felt "*greatly distressed and troubled*" (Mk.14:33). The prospect that "*for our sake*" God would allow him who had "*no personal knowledge of sin* (Gk.'gnonta') **to be sin**" distressed



him so much that “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground” (Lk. 22:44), and three times he begged his Father to “remove this cup from me.” But his final words on the Cross, “Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit” (Lk. 23:46) show that having “emptied himself” out of love for human beings, thus accomplishing God’s will fully (“It is finished” – Jn. 19:30), Jesus once again entered into his usual intimate union with his beloved Father.

A UNIVERSAL AND PERSONAL SAVIOUR:

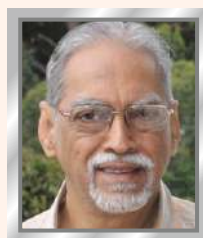
Jesus' overwhelming sufferings were worth it! The high price that Jesus paid for our salvation is proportionate to the incredible blessings that humanity receives from his passion, death and resurrection: “Through Jesus, it has pleased God to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col.1:20). Jesus is now able to draw all men and women to himself, because He has been “lifted up” on the Cross: “Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...” (Phil.2:9-11). Jesus can also now give to all who believe in him “the power to become the children of God” (Jn.1:12), thus enabling us to live the new life of Easter!

Moreover, the Second Vatican Council tells us that truly *all of humanity* is the beneficiary of Jesus' death and resurrection: “All of this applies **not to Christians only** but to all men and women of goodwill in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and all men and women are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” (GS, n.22).

AN INVITATION TO LOVE: As each disciple receives unlimited blessings from the Cross, Jesus also calls each one of us to share personally in the

mystery of the cross. This does not mean just avoiding chocolates in Lent, and such things, but loving our “neighbour” *with a self-denying and self-giving love*. His call to “carry the cross daily” in our following of him is linked with his call to us to “love one another.” Both commandments involve a self-emptying (*kenosis*). “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another... even as I have loved you” (Jn. 13:34). To fulfil this *new* commandment in daily life, disciples will have to continually *die to themselves*, that is, to their ego, their self-love, their pride. The commandment to “pick up your cross daily” (Lk. 9:23) is therefore, *in practice*, the same as the commandment “to love.” In imitation of *Jesus* (rather than the world), we too must be ready, out of love, to be “taken advantage of” (most especially *to forgive each other 70x7*, etc.). Jesus' Spirit, given to us from the Cross (see Jn.7:38), empowers us for this!

To conclude, the mystery of the Cross is really an invitation to Love! It was so for Jesus, our eldest Brother (Rm. 8:29), it is so for us too. Its emphasis is no longer on frightening pain (something negative), but on self-giving love (something positive) under the power of the Holy Spirit. It is an invitation to true discipleship. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...” (see 1Cor. 1:18-25).



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

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

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Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune, hosts Inter-School Singing Competition in Commemoration of Patron's Day

Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune, resonated with melody and enthusiasm as it hosted *SYMPHONY*, an inter-school singing competition organized to commemorate the 157th Birth Anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza. The event was a vibrant celebration of music, talent, and shared values, bringing together young voices from nine participating schools.

The competition showcased an impressive array of performances centred on the theme of patriotism and value education. Students captivated the audience with soulful renditions spanning classical and contemporary genres, reflecting both technical finesse and emotional depth. The performances were evaluated by a distinguished panel of judges on parameters such as vocal quality, synchronization, stage presence and creativity.



Winners of Symphony 2026 - Vibgyor High School, Yerwada, posing with the trophy.

After a keenly contested and musically enriching competition, Vibgyor High School, Yerwada, emerged as the winners. St. Arnold's Central School secured the runners-up position, while Army Public School, Dighi, claimed the second runners-up spot. The winning teams were felicitated with trophies, certificates and cash prizes of ₹5,000, ₹3,000 and ₹2,000 respectively.

Addressing the gathering, esteemed judge **Mr. Arin Dubey**, a renowned musician and singer from the Ujjan Band, emphasized the significance of identifying and nurturing individual talents. He highlighted the transformative power of music and advocated for its meaningful integration into the academic curriculum.



Performance by the Host School.

Speaking on the occasion, **Rev. Fr. Aleixo Luis, SFX**, Director of Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, expressed heartfelt appreciation to all the participating schools and organizers for their enthusiastic involvement. He remarked that *SYMPHONY* was not merely a competition, but a platform to foster harmony, joy and the spirit of togetherness through music. The commemoration truly honoured the patron's vision and charisma to spread values in educational activities.

AITD Shines at Young Innovator's Challenge (YIC) under Converge 3.0

Students of Agnel Institute of Technology and Design (AITD), Assagao emerged as winners at the Young Innovator's Challenge (YIC) organised under Converge 3.0 by the Directorate of Higher Education, Goa. The winning teams proudly displayed their award-winning prototypes and posters at the Valedictory Function held at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium, Taleigao, Goa. Their innovative projects showcased technical excellence, creativity, and alignment with societal needs and Sustainable Development Goals.

The presentations received appreciation from dignitaries, academicians and industry leaders present at the event. This achievement brought immense pride to AITD and highlighted the institution's commitment to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.



AITD students being felicitated at Converge 3.0 for their outstanding achievement at the Young Innovators Challenge (YIC), held at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium, Taleigao, Goa.



A proud moment as Nathan Cordeiro (second from left) and his BEComp co-founders (from left to right) Craig Da Gama, Jason Rodrigues and Elhrea Pinto are honoured with the Young Entrepreneur Award at Converge 3.0 in Goa.

Fr. Agnel Schools in Greater Noida and Noida secure Gold Medals at the 22nd Kofukan Karate National Championship in Chennai

Students of Fr. Agnel Schools in Greater Noida and Noida have won Gold Medals in the Team Kumite (9–10 years) category at the 22nd Kofukan Karate National Championship held in Chennai.

The team, led by Yuvraj Kasana (Gold), along with Sarthak Chahar (Gold) from Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida and Siddharth Nath Pathak (Gold) from Fr. Agnel School, Noida, has brought great pride and honour to the schools. The team coached by Prakash Sir secured this outstanding national-level achievement.



(From left) The gold medal winners Sarthak Chahar, Siddharth Nath Pathak and Yuvraj Kasana at the 22nd Kofukan Karate National Championship held in Chennai.

Also seen (sitting) in the picture are Keiji Tomiyama, President, Kofukan International Shito Ryu Karate Do, England (right) and M. Kanaharaj, President & Chief Technical Director, Kofukan India (left).



Coach Prakash who coached and guided the students.

Lent 2026's Sainthood Forever

- Leon Bent

Jesus prepared himself for 40 days in arid land for his public ministry. The number 40 in the Bible signifies a period of testing, trial, purification, or probation, appears 159 times and marks significant transitions. It often represents a full generation and covers periods of waiting, before God fulfils a promise (not all of them positive) or initiates a new, major spiritual era - significant periods of transformation before a new phase, such as the Noah's Flood or Israel's (Moses') wilderness-wandering in the desert. *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that, the "servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16).

The hermit yearns for an indwelling Jesus-presence in him, as his reason for withdrawing into the desert. For you and I, it is to flash Jesus-likeness, by a solemn Christian religious observance (Lent), according to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, before beginning Jesus' public ministry.

In essence, the fast was Jesus' intentional, spirit-led preparation, a time of testing and purification, that solidified His identity and power. Yes, Jesus' fast in the wasteland at the start of His ministry was a symbolic act of **intense spiritual preparation, purification, and reliance on God**, mirroring Old Testament figures like Moses and Elijah, and setting the stage for His public mission by **overcoming temptation and demonstrating total dependence on His Father**.

In its deepest form, Catholic theology views Lent as a profound journey of an intensely spiritual ascetical mode, focused on its temptations, radical conversion (metanoia) through deepened prayer life, to detach from sin and worldly distractions, preparing believers to fully enter the life-giving celebration of the glorious and solemn Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday.

The Three Sources of Jesus' Temptation have been described as:

1. **The World** - "indifference and opposition to God's design", "empty, passing values";

2. **The Flesh** - "gluttony and sexual immorality, ... our corrupt inclinations, disordered passions";

3. **The Devil** - "a real, personal enemy, a fallen angel, Father of Lies, who ... labours in relentless malice to twist us away from salvation"; and viewed in opposition to the Three Persons of God, that is, the Trinity.

The 21st Century is an extremely turbulent and tempestuous place to live in. Materialism, Globalization, Greed, unhealthy Competition, living life at lightning-speed, the often-misleading influence of the Digital and Print Media, the craving for status, fame, dignity, wealth, the craze to live "King-Size," relativism and their ilk: If you believe in subjectivism, then you think different people can have different views about what's moral and immoral, and everyone is right. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI was very vocal about this decadence, and erroneous attitude to life, why, even a habitual, almost perennial sinful way of thinking.

What is the solution? 'Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so, we 'earthly creatures,' who long to praise you - carry our mortality with us; the evidence of our sin and with it, the proof that you thwart the proud. You arouse us, so that, praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and draw us to yourself,' and "our heart is restless until it rests in you." This is the famous quotation from St. Augustine's "Confessions," in which the Saint states "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

The desert spirituality of Lent has three Classical points: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. (1) Prayer is raising the mind and heart to God. We must strive to enter into communion with God as much as possible. We can begin the day with a Holy Hour of Adoration:



Chant the Jesus Prayer or the Name of Jesus 1000 times, plus Holy Mass daily or as often as possible, importantly, go the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) during Lent, add to this the Way (Stations) of the Cross on Wednesdays and Fridays or whenever possible, alternatively a Half Hour of Prayer. The 'Word of God' must necessarily be listened to! What is worthwhile is sitting in 'silence on fire,' and attempting to go deep within oneself and get in touch with one's inner core and also with one's God.

(2) Fasting is detachment. It makes us keenly aware what we should hunger for. One's soul must yearn for God. Our longing for God must be intense, like red hot iron or steel. We must strive hard to keep sensual desire from overpowering us. We need to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstain on Fridays in Lent. Fasting from detrimental words is the pinnacle: Condemnation, criticism, insult, tearing a foe apart, one's partner in moment-by-moment conversation, and destroying someone mentally in envy, refraining from conceited language or tainting with **pride, the capital sin**, slander and gossip.

Pope Francis' recommendation: **"Fast from hurting words and say kind words;** fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude; fast from anger and be filled with patience; fast from pessimism and be filled with hope; fast from worries and be filled with hope; fast from worries and have trust in God; fast from complaints; contemplate simplicity; fast from pressures and be prayerful; fast from bitterness and be filled with joy; fast from selfishness and be compassionate; **fast from grudges and be reconciled; fast from words, be silent and listen."**

It's important to be aware that fasting keeps the devil out of our life. Self-denial from our favourite pastimes, like watching videos, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and other Digital indulgencies, drinking liquor, eating sweets and cooking delicacies have no place in our Recipe Book for the personal transformative time. Maybe even fasting from sexual intimacy in marriage can be recommended, besides other unique forms of self-restraint.

(3) Almsgiving has a direct connection to the spiritual life. Be generous, reach out to the poor, donate sums to charitable institutions, give donations, grants and endowments, for largesse is the love of God. You've hit the bull's eye, Yes! Give off your time and energy. There is no doubt that

solidarity with the poor, the have nots, the marginalized, and the victimized. **The 'Call' of the scum of society must be listened to with our hearts, not platitudes. To stand shoulder to shoulder with the Mystical Body of Christ is a key point, says Bishop Robert Barron. Pope Leo XIV insists that the practices of Lent must not be undertaken solo and in isolation. Sharing in community is all-important. Shared 'Springtime' is its peak and culmination.** A transcendent or divine individual, like holy mother the Church speaks in different languages or hues. All must be heeded.

In today's modern age, the season of Lent is, when one flees to the hermitage within, where there is ferocity and tenacity and dazzle in everything: 'Far away would I fly, and make a new home in the wilds:' (Psalm 55:7). 'He turns her desert into an Eden, her wasteland into the garden of Yahweh...' (Isaiah 51: 3). "Living in the desert does not only mean, living without people, but living with God and for God" (Serge Bougakov).

As the contemplatives' memorandum to the First Episcopal Synod admirably puts it, 'if the hermit withdraws from the world, he is not deserting either it or his fellowmen; he is still entirely rooted on earth where he was born to the resources, which he is the heir of and the preoccupations and aspirations, which he does his best to make his own. No, indeed, **he withdraws, the better to contemplate that divine source. The desert, in fact, is where the soul often finds its deepest inspiration. There it was, that God fashioned his people, "to lure them away and speak to their hearts"** (Hosea 2:16).

The People of God must be reborn and renewed through Lent by a similar experience, generation by generation, of having the 'love-life of God inside each one of them.'

The nameless author of "The Hermitage Within" warns us, not everyone can and should live within monastery walls. But no Christian can do without an inner haven and a nourishing harbor. Eremitism (Derived from the Greek *erēmos* [desert], represents a withdrawal from the world to focus on inner peace, self-awareness, and divine devotion). The practice of living in solitude, which involves withdrawal from society to focus on prayer, meditation, and inner reflection, historically prominent in Christianity with figures like St. Anthony the Great, the founder of Christian

monasticism and the "Saint of Desert Spirituality," and Thomas Merton, a renowned American Trappist monk, and Bede Griffiths, another towering monk.

The desert is pitiless; it invariably and necessarily rejects all self-seekers. However, it is, both, fascinating and terrifying. It is also pure and cleanses. **The whole spirituality of the wasteland is summed up in the words of St. John of the Cross: "An eternity of silence!"** When the ascetic renounces everything he will be face to face with the living God forever. Lent is a time to inch closer to this privileged, 'heavenly' state. **Humble and detached, go into the desert. God is waiting for you there without your earthly, human trappings. You must be content to lose yourself entirely in Him.**

Mount Carmel – the name means vineyard or orchard – has become the symbol of spiritual accents, the culmination of which, on the mountain peak, is repose with God in the delight of absolute union. The spiritual opulence and magnificence of Carmel represents the soul enjoying the full joy of contemplation. Prayer is eternal questioning: 'Do you really love me?' – asks God.

Transcendental prayer represents a spiritual, often solitary, plea for guidance, sustenance, and endurance during times of profound emptiness, desolation, or testing (the "desert experience"). **It focuses on trusting in divine provision, finding strength in silence, and clinging to faith when, one is metaphorically or physically, in dry land.**

The 'strict friar or the Lenten 2026-transformed Christian,' may rightly consider himself as already taking part in the glorious liturgy of eternity. Heaven, in Revelation, is described as the New Jerusalem: A radiant city with gold streets, pearl gates, and walls of precious stones, where God's glory provides light, eliminating the need for sun or moon, and where there is no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, featuring a river of life from God's throne and the Tree of Life. It's a place of perfect joy, eternal worship, and unhindered presence in God's and the Lamb's sacred aura, a restored paradise free of mundane earthiness.

May the lovely acclamations of the 'Glory to God in the highest' at the Easter Vigil Night Service/Sunday Mass, and The Exultet or Easter Proclamation, which is a lyrically-exquisite, joyful

ancient hymn, sung at the beginning of the Easter Vigil in the Roman Catholic Church, as well as in Anglican and Lutheran traditions, **ring out increasingly in the temple of your soul, where the love of God in you, can 'Go, Grow and Glow.'**

Ultimately, Lent is a, "sacred invitation" that, **leads one away from the "cold silence" of sin into the vibrant, active, and renewed life of the resurrection,** as Mary did, after Jesus called out "Mary," in the "Garden," in the Garden. "Rabboni," was her brilliant shout of startled-ecstasy, in response! The exclamation was famously used by Mary Magdalene to address the resurrected Jesus (John 20:16). It signifies passionate-devotion and devoted-passion (true love), and a personal connection to a spiritual guide. Certainly, the only reason why you, too, come to the hermitage is to receive the crown of glory from the Lord.

And, finally, this gold nugget! Lent is **'not fasting' but feasting on the love of Jesus, forever and a day!**

Now, this stirring, revolutionary discovery! Lent 2026 lived to the hilt does this: A breast-feeding baby gazes and peers into its mother's loving eyes and subconsciously sees itself in its mother, filled with the milk of human kindness. Two ecstatic lovers in a sparkingly-great marriage, totally oblivious to the world, frozen in sheer sexual intimacy, are transfigured in the image and likeness of Jesus – the Third Partner! **Both, the baby and its mother, glued imperceptibly, and the nuptial pair, love one another – with dripping divine love.** The *eureka* moment comes to light! Indeed, it is akin to Lenten sanctity!



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.

Walking with Jesus through Lent

- Jubel D'Cruz

Lent is a time of spiritual preparation, reflection, repentance and renewal leading up to Easter, focusing on prayer, fasting and almsgiving (charity) to draw closer to God and commemorate Jesus' time in the wilderness. It is also a time for self-examination, giving up luxuries, and deepening faith through spiritual disciplines, often called "bright sadness" or "penance" in Eastern traditions. It is a 40-day period of fasting and penitential preparation for Easter, which imitates Jesus Christ's fast in the wilderness.

The importance of Lent in the Church is to observe and commemorate the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour and our Redeemer.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, a day in which we go to Church and receive ashes to signify "we are dust and to dust we shall return" (Genesis 3:19). Especially during Lent, the Church teaches us to observe a period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Prayer waters the Holy Ground on which our lives are planted. Fasting connects us with this Holy Ground, helping us not to take it for granted or abuse it. Charitable works tills the Holy Ground and makes it fruitful in its produce.

This is what the Church wants us to do during Lent: To discover anew the meaning of the gift of life and the difference that can be made when we recognize who accompanies us on the Holy Ground on which we walk.

The word "Lent" comes from the old English word "lencten," meaning "spring." It refers to the time of lengthening days as spring approaches.

The season of Lent is also an important time in the Church's calendar when we prepare to welcome those who have begun the journey to be received into the Church at the Easter Vigil service. It is at this sacred celebration that the priest blesses the Easter water and welcome people to our family of faith through the waters of baptism. They enter the journey born again with a new flame of faith, hope and love.

This year's theme reminds each one of us of the importance of embracing our own journey with the Lord with each new day and with each new dawn of spring.

The three pillars of Lent -- Prayer, fasting and almsgiving -- serve as guideposts on this 40-day journey. Prayer, in particular, holds a special place in this season of repentance and renewal. Whether we are new to praying or seeking a deeper prayer life, Lent offers a perfect invitation to begin wherever you are.

Fasting is often seen as changes to eating habits. Another way to look at fasting is curbing our bad habits. Seen this way, fasting is a way of examining our conscience, looking into our soul, and giving up what is not pleasing to God. The prophet Isaiah insisted that fasting without changing our behaviour is not pleasing to God.

Almsgiving is an act of justice that pleases the heart of God. We should show an act of kindness to someone who is in need, live simply by choosing not to buy things we don't need, and strive to be more generous and dependent on God who provides.

Lastly, we should set aside a time for prayer when we can be alone with God. Attending Mass, praying the Stations of the Cross, praying the Rosary, reading the Bible, and meditating on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are some of the ways that we can develop habits of prayer.

Catholics in India participate in the Stations of the Cross on every Wednesdays or/and Fridays.

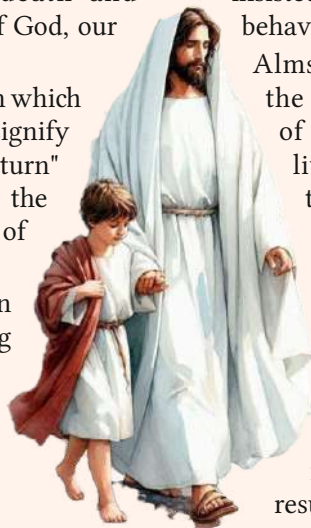
During the Holy Week, many Catholics attend a Lenten retreat or go on a pilgrimage visiting 14 churches, using each stop as part of the Stations of the Cross.

On Good Friday, people re-enact the Stations of the Cross in the streets. On this day, not only Catholics, but people of all faiths like to watch the passion scenes.

History of the Stations of the Cross:

Throughout the centuries, one of the most popular devotions that has stood the test of time has been the Stations of the Cross. It consists of a number of "stations" along which an individual can retrace the footsteps of Jesus Christ during His Passion and death.

According to an ancient tradition, the Blessed Virgin Mary visited the sites of Jesus' suffering,



death and resurrection on a daily basis after His ascension into heaven. Many other traditions also claim that Mary followed Jesus along the road to Calvary.

However, in performing this practice, the Blessed Mother did not create a popular devotion with prayers and specific “stations” to follow. She was simply trying to relive the powerful events of Jesus' passion and hold them “in her heart”, contemplating the great sacrifice He made.

It wasn't until a few centuries later, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, that “a group of connected chapels were constructed as early as the fifth century by St. Petronius, Bishop of Bologna, which were intended to represent the more important shrines of Jerusalem. These may perhaps be regarded as the germ from which the Stations afterwards developed, though it is tolerably certain that nothing that we have before about the fifteenth century can strictly be called a 'Way of the Cross' in the modern sense.”

By the Middle Ages, the Holy Land became a volatile area and pilgrims were not given easy access to the shrines of Jesus' passion. As a result, the Franciscans and others throughout Europe began building chapels and shrines that replicated these sites in Jerusalem. In particular, the Dominican priest Blessed Álvaro of Córdoba spread the devotion in Europe, beginning in Cordoba, where he erected small oratories similar in style to modern day stations.

According to Fr. William Saunders, “William Wey, an English pilgrim, visited the Holy Land in 1462, and is credited with the term 'stations'. He described the manner in which a pilgrim followed the steps of Christ.” The term became popular in the English language and eventually was applied to those scenes that were set up in churches.

By the 17th century, the Franciscans wanted to begin erecting these “stations” within the church walls and asked the Holy Father for permission. Additionally, they wanted the faithful to be granted the same indulgences that would have been given to those who travelled to Jerusalem. Pope Innocent XI recognized the need and granted their request, paving the way for the Stations of the Cross, as we know them today.

As a result, historians can't say there was only one person in particular who was responsible for introducing the Stations of the Cross. Various individuals throughout the centuries, beginning with the Blessed Virgin Mary walked in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, contemplating His passion and death. It is a beautiful tradition, one that has grown organically over the years.



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.

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THE AGONY OF UNTOLD STORIES

- Fr. M.K. George, SJ

Maya Angelou, the acclaimed American poet, once said, ***“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”***

Her words awaken in me memories of the millions of untold stories across the world — and even around me.

I have a community member from Myanmar who worked in the interior parishes of the country. He shares stories of terrible bombings by the military on innocent villagers. He remembers, with gratitude, how he narrowly escaped one such bombing, mere metres away. Recently, he shared this with us:

“Dear Friends, early this morning, a military jet fighter dropped a 500-pound bomb in a village. It completely shattered seven members of a family and injured several of their neighbours. It happened in a village about 100 miles from my parents. Such bombings occur every single day in most Christian villages.”

The untold stories of Myanmar are waiting to be heard.

Gaza: Official numbers report 72,000 killed, including women and children. Who knows the real truth? Their stories demand to be heard as well.

“Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children.” - António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

“My brother was trapped between the walls of our house, bleeding out and calling for help, but there was no one who could answer him... No one survived except me.” - Mohammad Abu Nasser, describing the massacre of his entire family during a bombardment in central Gaza.

Do we have ears for the Gazans?

Have we forgotten Manipur?

Since 2023, the state of Manipur has been under siege. Government reports indicate at least 258 people killed, thousands injured, and around 67,000 displaced. Thousands of houses, churches, temples, and community infrastructures were destroyed or damaged. Tens of thousands still live in relief camps or with relatives and friends, even across other states. Women have been brutally abused.

“It is shameful that it takes a searing video of two Kuki women being paraded naked and raped to shake the conscience of the world and make people believe what we have been saying...” shared, Golan Nulak, Kuki activist, on sexual violence against women in Manipur.

What scorching stories do these Manipuri women carry in their hearts?

Africa may seem far away to many of us, but their suffering, their stories of horror, demand to be heard

too. In Sudan, since 2023, tens of thousands have been killed and millions displaced. In South Sudan, mass killings, famine, and widespread displacement continue. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has endured decades of conflict. Somalia suffers from 30 years of instability, insurgency, and terrorism. The Central African Republic has faced recurrent civil wars, armed militias, and severe violence against civilians. Ethiopia has yet to recover from the Tigray conflict of 2020–22. Mali and Burkina Faso face escalating jihadist insurgencies, military coups, and rising violence against civilians.

The African story may seem distant - but do we not need to hear it?

Latin America and the Americas are no different. Venezuela is under siege, its citizens suffering enormously. Around 7.9 million inside the country require aid, and nearly eight million have fled, creating the largest displacement crisis in Latin America's recent history. Haiti struggles with violent gang control, economic collapse, and extreme insecurity. More than 1.4 million people are internally displaced, and thousands of civilians have been killed or kidnapped in ongoing violence. Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador - the list goes on. The cries are louder than ever.

Even in the richest nations, in the oldest democracy, the cries of immigrants tear at our hearts:

“I felt devastated when we got to the jail. They take you in handcuffs... and it felt like everything I risked my life for was ripped away.” - Ana, an asylum seeker described her detention by U.S. border authorities, where she was chained and imprisoned despite fleeing violence.

The earth shrieks with the pain of untold stories of suffering.

Yet, if you think you cannot reach far, look closer. Open your eyes: your next-door neighbour - or even someone within your own home - may carry an unheard story.

Listen. Understand. Empathise.



Fr. M.K. George, formerly Principal of Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum, is currently General Counsellor to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. He can be contacted at gmtholil@gmail.com

The month of March is significant for it has an important day that is dedicated to women all over the world. 8th March is celebrated as International Women's Day and it is a special day to honour and celebrate the achievements, and the multi-faceted role that women today play in our society.
So let's start ...

Inspirational Answer



During the Miss World contest of 2017, Manushi Chhillar, a contestant from India was asked, "Which profession deserves the highest respect and why?"

She said, "Since I am very close to my mother, the mother deserves the highest respect. And when you talk

about salary, it is not just about cash. It is the love and respect that you give to someone. My mom has always been the biggest inspiration in my life and all mothers, they just sacrifice so much for their kids. And so the profession that deserves the highest salary and the highest respect and love should be of a mother."

She won the Miss World 2017 contest not just for her beauty, charm and poise but also because of this winning answer.

Quiz

Women Poetess



1. She wrote *Hope is the thing with feathers*.
2. She wrote love sonnets from *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.
3. She wrote *The Bell Jar* and a poetry volume titled *The Colossus* and later committed suicide.
4. An Indian poetess who wrote *The Sirens* and *Summer in Calcutta* as one of her famous works.
5. An Indian poetess who wrote amongst others *In the Bazaars of Hyderabad* and *Indian Weavers*.

Riddle Me

Fruits



1. I have a peel but I am not a fruit.
2. I am brown, hairy and I wear sunglasses.
3. I come in bunches and can be red,

green or purple.

4. I am an apple with a short temper.

5. I am striped in green, my red juicy sweetness is refreshing in summer.

Life Is Like This



Ratan Tata started his career in the ailing electronics company, NELCO, where he had an assignment as a steward.

He was the chief person behind an assignment and was much regarded.

A team of senior managers from NELCO were driving to Nashik along with Ratan Tata who was heading a project.

Half way into the journey, the car had a flat tyre and the driver stopped the car. Everyone got out and they began to enjoy the break. They stretched, smiled, told jokes and some went to have a cup of tea from the nearby stall.

But suddenly one of the senior officials could not find Tata and he was puzzled. They searched here and there and suddenly found him busy helping the driver to change the tyres.

Sleeves rolled down, he worked expertly with the jack and the spanner, bouncing the spare tyre to check if it was ok. There were droplets of sweat on his brow and a smile on his face.

One of the members of the team asked, "Ratan, what are you doing? The driver will change the tyre. It is his job."

Ratan Tata said humbly, "Sir, if we do not let help him to fix the problem, we will lose precious time and a loss of time, is a loss of money."

Ratan Tata demonstrated both humility, a desire to lend a helping hand and proved he was a leader whatever the situation. He did not believe in letting others do all the dirty work if he could pitch in and get it done well.

Did You Know?



Indira Gandhi was quite a fashionable lady. Every Sunday, she wore the costumes of different states of India, helping in this fashion to illustrate the story of the immense diversity of India and its culture. She once said, "I like to see men and

women well-dressed. I feel they should look their best. Always wear things that are suitable, not anything that is the whim of fashion. As for me I dislike ostentation. I will usually wear a sari until I simply cannot do so anymore - much to the despair of my family.”

Smile Please



1. Four ladies who had been high school friends met after a number of years at a high school reunion. They were talking and discussing their sons. The first boasted that her son studied economics, became a banker and gifted his best friend a Ferrari. The second lady said that her son became a pilot started his own airline and is so wealthy now, he gifted his friend a jet. The third lady said her son became an architect, started his own development company and became so rich, he gifted his friend a small castle. The fourth lady had been at the buffet table. She returned and asked what the buzz was about. As she sat to eat, they told her about their successful sons. Then they asked her about her son. She said modestly that he was a gay stripper and worked in a strip club. All the others were shocked and told her how very disappointed she must be that her son was not successful.

The lady smiled and said cheerfully, “Oh no! He is doing extremely well. Last week on his birthday, he got a Ferrari, a jet and a castle from three of his nice boyfriends.”

2. What is Marriage? It is an agreement wherein a man loses his bachelor degree and a woman gains her masters.

3. Definition of a conference room. A place where everybody talks, nobody listens and everybody disagrees in the end.

Inspirational Quotes of Indira Gandhi



Indira Gandhi, India's iron lady left a legacy of strong leadership. Here are some of her pearls of wisdom.

1. *There are two kinds of people, those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group, there is less competition there.*

2. *To become capable one must have faith in oneself.*

3. *Whenever you take a step forward, you are bound to disturb something.*

4. *You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.*

5. *I am not afraid of anything. I do not mind if my life goes in the service of the nation.*

6. *To be liberated, a woman must feel free to be herself, not in rivalry to man but in the context of her own capacity and her personality.*

Naturopathy - The Science of Nature for Healing



1. To cure cracked heels, petroleum jelly, a by-product of the crude oil refining process is very effective. Just smooth it on and wear socks before going to bed. Do this for a few days, and miraculously all the cracks will vanish and the soles of your feet smooth again.

2. If your eyes feel tired, try placing cucumber slices that are chilled over them for fifteen minutes or so. Your eyes feel refreshed.

3. A simple cure for insomnia that might occur sometimes is to take two teaspoons of honey in a cup of water before going to bed, it has a rather hypnotic action in making one fall asleep.

4. To improve one's vision, Vitamin A is very beneficial. Cod liver oil, spinach, egg yolks, carrots and dates as well as milk are beneficial for Vitamin A. Try to include salads and fresh fruits in your diet to improve your eyesight.

5. Vitamin C in fruits and vegetables is a powerful preventive medicine for hypertension (high blood pressure) and according to research, high blood pressure and stroke fatalities are highest amongst people who eat the least vitamin C. Consuming lemon juice everyday besides fruits and vegetables is an effective means of preventing hypertension.

Brain Teasers



1. A detective brought a ladder to the crime scene. Why? 2. What is often found in the beginning of a mystery but disappears at the end? 3. Jimmy's father had three kids.

The first was Brad, the second Tom. What was the name of the last? 4. Alexa was born on 31st December but always celebrates her birthday in the summer? Why? 5. If $a = 54$, $b = 45$ and when a multiplied by $c = 216$, then when b is added to $c = ?$

World News



1. On March 8 of this year, rallies are planned worldwide under the theme 'Rights, justice, action for all women and girls' to fight against systemic disadvantages and to promote gender equality.

2. UN reported that by the age of 14, girls dropped out of sports twice the rate of boys leading to initiatives to break down these barriers on Women's Day.

What Do Women Really Want In 2026?



According to the BBC world news, when interviewed, women gave their replies as to what they really wanted to see in terms of progress.

According to this, here is a summary of what they said.

They want equal work for equal pay. There should be no gender bias in the workforce in this matter.

They want to make inroads politically and there should be more women politicians who serve the country since even till today politics is largely male dominated. They want the right to education for women that still is not encouraged in certain parts of the world, especially rural areas.

Also to keep women safe during war. Assaults like rape, domestic violence in India and around the world against women should be taken more seriously by police and women should feel safe to move around after dark.

In a nutshell, the world still has many steps of progress to climb before women are treated with equality and fairness.

Wisdom Message of the Month

Poverty of Life

Poor man begs outside the temple for alms whereas the rich man begs inside the temple.



We as human beings like to classify people in varied categories. Rich and poor, beautiful and ugly, intelligent and dumb etc.

But In God's eyes we are all made by his loving hands and he sees us with eyes of equality. He is too far above petty man made categories for He judges a man's heart, not just the outward appearance, material trappings or even a man's intelligence or lack of it. In this God is not biased but looks lovingly on his creation from above.

The wealthy people like to look down on the poor who beg or have little and spend most of their lives begging for work or for alms. Yet these same wealthy people visit temples, churches, mosques and other places of worship and they act poor too. They kneel or stand in front of a benevolent God and beg for favours. "Give me this, give me that. Help me get more money, more fame, more social standing, climb up the ladder of success, more material goods." Man's wants are endless. One want is fulfilled, then the next takes its place.

So God has watched for millions of years the same drama being played again and again almost like a broken record stuck in the same groove. Yet God

never tires of man. He just remains patient and steadfast in his love and understanding like a father dealing with a truant, undisciplined child.

The above analogy makes us aware that in our lives we are all beggars in some way or the other. We beg God to help us and this reveals our hidden poverty.

This is by no means a bad thing, yet it ought to make us humble and realise that all of us on this earth are dependent on others in some way or the other. A farmer is dependent on the rain, on his crops for a good harvest, then to make money he is dependent on the sale of his crops. We in our turn are dependent on the farmer to grow crops for our food. So in a way we all are like beggars although the analogy may not be pleasing.

We learn that being humble is important and not to look down on the poor because of their poverty. Yes we can correct a lazy poor man who only begs and refuses to work if he is capable of doing so, but we must never criticise a person who is incapable of working, of getting a job or down and out because of bad circumstances. We have to be compassionate and just. Only then when we beg God for favours will he turn a listening ear to us with a benevolent gaze.

That's all for this month. Take care, till next month ...

Answers

Quiz

1.Emily Dickinson. 2. Elizabeth Barrett Browning. 3. Sylvia Plath. 4. Kamala Das. 5. Sarojini Naidu.

Riddles

1.Potato. 2. Coconut. 3. Grapes. 4. Crab apple. 5. Watermelon.

Brain Teasers

1.Because he wanted to solve a high profile crime. 2. A question. 3. Jimmy. 4. Because she lived in Australia and it is the middle of summer there. 5.c= 4 and b + c = 49.



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

VIRAR: Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel for interceding for me. I am happy that my prayers have been answered.

- *Smiley Smith*

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

NAIGAON: I would like to offer a thanksgiving mass for all the blessings received, through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel.

- *Gracy D'Souza*

THANKSGIVING FOR GIFT OF GRANDSON

BHARUCH, GUJARAT: As a staunch devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I thank the Venerable for all his blessings and for the gift of my grandson Hanosh.

- *Jasmine Karina*

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH OF FAMILY

BANDRA: My family has been blessed with good health, thanks to the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel.

- *Francis D'Souza*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

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

- *Joe D'Souza*

THANKSGIVING FOR EVERYTHING

TUTICORIN: We are thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing us always.

- *Kingsly Fernando*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VASAI: I would like to give thanks to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession and for all the blessings received.

- *Diana George Almeida*

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

PUNE: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing me and my family with good health.

- *Alfosna Anthony Dass*

THANKSGIVING FOR SECURING A GOOD JOB

KURLA, MUMBAI: Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping me find a good job, through your powerful intercession.

- *Lissy Chacko*

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

BORIVALI, MUMBAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we have been blessed abundantly

- *Priyam Pandya*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VIRAR: As a staunch devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I always seek his intercession for divine intervention.

- *Lynette Gonsalves*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

GUJARAT: Many of my prayers have been answered through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. The devotion to the Venerable has spread all across India and the world.

- *Mary Varghese*

THANKSGIVING FOR INTERCESSIONS

VIRAR: Everything is possible through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. You can see the deep faith of the devotees flocking to the shrine containing the relics of Fr. Agnel in Bandra or his tomb, in Pilar, Goa.

- *John Tuscano*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

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

- *Jacqueline Kelly*

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Paul Aloysius D'Silva	Bangalore	50000	Edwina D'Souza	Mumbai	2000	Jinal Patel	Mumbai	1000
Praveen M. Srivastava	Mumbai	48500	Anthony Rumao	Palghar	2000	Dr. Leena Christ	Maharashtra	1000
Sosamma Saji	U.A.E.	40000	Climus Rumao	Palghar	2000	Peter Christ	Maharashtra	1000
Agnel Robin	Mumbai	30000	Caroline Rumao	Palghar	2000	Mavil Noronha	Mumbai	1000
Sagaya Anita Nadar	Mumbai	24500	Snowia Almeida	Palghar	2000	N.C. Babu	Kerala	1000
Edmund Fernandes	Mumbai	15300	Estrella Rumao	Palghar	2000	Molly K. M.	Kerala	1000
Manoharan D. Fernando	Tamil Nadu	15000	Ismal Tuscano	Palghar	2000	Monica D'Souza	Pune	1000
Joseph Kumar	Mumbai	12000	Jitendra Panchal	New Zealand	2000	John Thomas	Kerala	1000
Johnny Edwin	Mumbai	12000	Manjula N. Patel	United Kingdom	2000	A. Rose Mary	Tamil Nadu	1000
Beena Dattatzaya	Mumbai	10001	Mary Rajan	Kerala	2000	Maria S. Arputharaj	Tamil Nadu	1000
Haresh Fifadara	Mumbai	10001	Anna Raje	Kerala	2000	Flemy Thekketh	Kerala	1000
Sangeeta V. D'Abreo	Palghar	10000	Hema R. Soni	Gujarat	1700	Pushpan Panchal	New Zealand	1000
Vanessa T. D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	Arun C. Shah	Mumbai	1503	Melvin Joseph	Mysore	1000
Hutoxi Z. Bharucha	Palghar	10000	Gavin P. Fonseca	Mumbai	1500	Maria F. Romel	Pune	1000
Agnelo Lobo	Mumbai	8000	Rita Johnson	Kerala	1200	Ranjan Macwan	Gujarat	1000
Warren Fernandes	Mumbai	6000	Prajakta Ferreira	Palghar	1111	Raj C. Pachickara	Kerala	800
Dinesh Parmar	Gujarat	5500	Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	1020	Sabas J. Rodrigues	Mumbai	700
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5250	Kimaya Subramaniam	Mumbai	1001	Dipali Pandya	Mumbai	600
Xavier D'Mello	Mumbai	5000	Ajitkumar Makwan	Gujarat	1001	Lume Savarimuthu	Tamil Nadu	600
Sagaya Sara Ethel	Tamil Nadu	5000	Suraj Pai	Singapore	1001	Canute D'Souza	Tamil Nadu	600
Rosy Louis	Mumbai	5000	Pragna Manjunath Pai	Mumbai	1001	Mathew Kurian	Bangalore	501
Sunaine Goraksh	Thane	5000	N.G. Asher	Mumbai	1000	Dennis Dass	Pune	500
Rajendra Parikh	Mumbai	5000	Haridas C.P.	Mumbai	1000	Dean M. Gonsalves	Palghar	500
Vinod John	Mumbai	5000	Vinayak J. Gaikwad	Nashik	1000	Priya Sebastian	Kerala	500
Jan Thomas	Mumbai	5000	Diana Sylvester	Pune	1000	Silviya Fernandes	Mumbai	500
Shreya Saksena	Mumbai	5000	Mojes Khavari	Mumbai	1000	Anthony V. Xavier	Mumbai	500
Stf Charities	Kerala	5000	P.B. Blaise	Kerala	1000	Amrith Raj	Tamil Nadu	500
Falguni Solanki	Palghar	8300	Agnel C. Vanjare	Maharashtra	1000	Shila F. Kasbe	Pune	500
Isabel Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	4000	Harsh R. Shukla	Mumbai	1000	Dinesh M. Gandhi	Gujarat	500
Sania S. D'Mello	Palghar	3000	Georgie K. George	Kerala	1000	Francis D'Souza	Mumbai	500
Techno Products	Tamil Nadu	3000	Jobi George	Kerala	1000	Niranjan M. Amolik	Maharashtra	500
Louis D'Souza	Mumbai	3000	Hyacinth Kenny	Mumbai	1000	Ranjana Kunzru	Thane	500
Ashley C.B.	Mumbai	3000	Mary Antony	Kerala	1000	R. Victor	Tamil Nadu	500
Fransquinha Fernandes	Mumbai	2500	Anthony Thomson	Kerala	1000	Anto Paul	Kerala	500
Pious Manjaly	Kerala	2500	Saira Mascarenhas	Palghar	1000	Machado & Sons Pvt. Ltd.	Tamil Nadu	500
S. Selvaraj	Tamil Nadu	2200	Edna Chesterfield	Kerala	1000	Benedict D'Cruz	Kerala	500
Joshua Michael	Mumbai	2026	Rita D'Souza	Mumbai	1000	Ancy Benny	Kerala	500
Kimaya Subramaniam	Mumbai	2001	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1000	John A. Thevareth	Kerala	500
A. R. Elavia	Mumbai	2000	Arun Jadhav	Kolhapur	1000	Josephine Pandit	Pune	500
Agnel Selvan	Mumbai	2000	Rockhenry A. Chettiar	Thane	1000	Jiya D'Cunha	Palghar	500
Sujata S. Matla	Mumbai	2000	M.D. Mathai	Kerala	1000	Shital Gandhi	Mumbai	500
Elvira Potla	Mumbai	2000	Shinde Sachin	Ahmednagar	1000	Ranju Ashar	Mumbai	500
Attely Anto Kuttikadan	Thane	2000	Jihaan Gandhi	Mumbai	1000	Maria Lopes	Gujarat	500
Lynette D'Cruz	Mumbai	2000	Jhon Dharmai	Mumbai	1000	Geet Pujara	Mumbai	500
Dorothy Dharmai	Mumbai	2000	Christine Pereira	Mumbai	1000	Mehul Parmar	Gujarat	500
Manhar S. Parmar	Gujarat	2000	Marissa Manuel	Thane	1000	Malcolm Anjaria	Mumbai	500
Helen Johnson	Thane	2000	Fittech Industries	Mumbai	1000	Pooja Shah	Bangalore	500
Johnson Manuel	Thane	2000	Ankit G. Patel	Mumbai	1000	Jeena Pauly	Kerala	500
Mabel Coutinho	Thane	2000	Ghanshyan K. Patel	Mumbai	1000	John Baptist	Tamil Nadu	500
Manuel Noronha	Mumbai	2000	Sangita G. Patel	Mumbai	1000	Karolinmery	Tamil Nadu	500

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

A Duet Between Two Birds..!

As I write this, I am at a little resort in Saphale, two and a half hours from Mumbai, and for once the alarm clock has competition. At six thirty in the morning, before the tea kettle has even considered whistling, the birds have begun their choir practice.

Not one bird. Two.

And then I hear others joining in.

An entire feathered orchestra. Sopranos on the treetops, baritones in the bushes, and one enthusiastic fellow who clearly believes he is Pavarotti reincarnated.

They seem to be lifting their tiny chests in praise to their Maker, and I, not to be outdone by creatures weighing less than my spectacles, lift my own mind in silent thanksgiving.

Mine is less melodious and more like an old scooter starting up, but I am sure God understands accents.

slapping against tiles, someone loudly debating whether the buffet opens at seven or seven fifteen as though the fate of the nation depends on it.

A gentleman is already on his phone discussing shares. A daughter is explaining her blood pressure to her old mother who clearly did not ask.

The birds pause.

It is almost comical. The very creatures who were singing as though auditioning for heaven fall silent at the arrival of our species. We, who claim to be the most intelligent beings on the planet, manage to frighten away sparrows chirping to the divine, with our commentary on the mundane.

I feel like leaning over the balcony and announcing, 'Be still, ladies and gentlemen. God is whispering!' But they are busy searching for the Divine in motivational podcasts and forwarded messages, while the Creator is attempting a quiet conversation between two




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There is something about those early hours. The air is cool, the sky undecided between night and day, and for a brief sacred moment, nobody is checking their phone. In that hush, through leaves and light and birdsong, I sense something else. A whisper. Not dramatic. Not thunder and lightning. Just a gentle nudge.

'Be still, Bob.'

Now being still is not my natural talent. I am better at being loud, opinionated and hungry. But in that moment I try. I sit. I breathe. I listen. And in that stillness there is peace, the kind that does not need WiFi.

Then humanity wakes up.

From below rises the sound of doors banging, slippers

gulmohar trees.

Perhaps that is our problem. We expect God to arrive with a microphone. We want announcements. We want trending hashtags. Meanwhile He prefers the soft background music of wind and wing.

As I sip my coffee and the sun stretches lazily into the sky, I make a small resolution. Before I add to the noise of the world, I will try to listen. Because sometimes the holiest sound is not a sermon, not a speech, not even a song.

Sometimes it is a duet between the birds...!

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. Ubaldo Fernandes, SFX

Gifted to Us: 11-11-1940 | Ordained: 19-12-1965 | Returned to the Lord: 14-02-2026

An Obituary

Rev. Fr. Ubaldo Fernandes was drawn into our matrimonial relationship like ink into blotting paper. God had a hand in this design for our lives. Surely it was divine intervention and divine inspiration when we first met – it was love at first sight – for the ever-lovable and loving shepherd of Pilar. In fact, Ubaldo, as we dearly called him, began to enrich our marriage some thirty-five years ago – when we met on the road, close to Siridao, not far from Pilar (Goa-Velha), where he was born, and, soon took Jesus' place, as the Third Partner in our 'nuptiality,' Worldwide Marriage Encounter style. The priesthood is dramatically enriched and vice versa, when the two Sacraments are proverbially intertwined! This phenomenon blazed our Catholic wedlock. Ubaldo and both of us gelled beautifully. This new entrant's inclusion worked like magic on us. Ubaldo was a good communicator, one who would phone us and a vast host of others, just to say 'hello', or to inquire about their health, on every occasion, or about a project undertaken. He was a gentle and tender soul. His laughter was contagious. He shared his friends selflessly. We came to know this genteel soul through Lorraine's cousin in Goa, Judith. Ubaldo had the uncanny knack of making friends and keeping them too. His vast array of contacts, hundreds by the number, extended to all quarters of Goa, far more lay people than priests. We were all linked together like a thousand bees to a hive – buzzing around merrily.

If any of his contacts needed assistance, he would move heaven and earth, to satisfy the individual's needs. His Greeting/Appreciation Cards, for any occasion, would arrive promptly and would often surprise us, through which he invariably comforted, encouraged, cried with the sorrowful, was happy to toast success, and congratulated those who made a mark in life.

He penned some great, extremely pithy, succinct, 'notes' to encourage each of his friends – personal and warm to the core! Ubaldo's affection for, whomever he was drawn to, was poured out in expensive gifts for any and every occasion, and no reason whatsoever. He was famous for his welcome and hospitality, too. Now, the other way around, Ubaldo stayed at our place, we shared meals, ideas, feelings, ourselves and our children and prayed together devoutly.

Ubaldo excelled and was well-known composer of *Goan Mandos*, for any occasion, written in the blink of an eye – birthday greetings, congratulatory messages, on a fellow priest, for a concert, for a friend, for a memorable event – he created all this appealing wit to bring out the best in his friends and the occasion. His chuckle was contagious. His Konkani was the talk of Mumbai, so was his Portuguese and a few other European languages. His Hindi, his Bastar-dialect, of long ago, was wholesome.

Most beloved Ubaldo introduced me to collecting current and ancient art, in general, not necessarily, Portuguese/Goan finesse! I collected plenty of *drift wood* from *Barvi Dam's bed*, in Badlapur, close to where he was Parish Priest of St. Fatima Church, Ambernath, in *May/June* of the mid-1970s. He took our family and extended family members to *Daman* for two days, where we looked closely at great *Portuguese Churches and their Altars* and varied *antiques statues*, in *delightful, soothing colour*, to Daman architecture and its broken-Portuguese-speaking citizens with quaint bazaars and tiny cottages – still looking fondly and nostalgically for their Mediterranean ancestors to return.

In fact, it was Ubaldo uncanny ability for scouting talent that drew us, like a moth to a flame, to *Fr. Agnel Ashram News* magazine, perhaps, more than twenty-two years ago. It was truly a baptism by free artistic touch.

He was later transferred to the Pilar Monastery Infirmary, and then, Bhopal for several years, and again to the Monastery, where he breathed his last on 14th February 2026. The gentle, breezy and delicate voice and pen were silenced forever.

Ubaldo's many-splendored life cannot be condensed and squeezed into an obituary, for us, his close family, his Superiors and colleagues, priests, innumerable adoring friends and those who knew this soft-hearted priest.

- LORRAINE & LEON BENT

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A salute to a visionary!

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On his 114th Birth Anniversary***



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