

# The Herald

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**Pope Francis to consecrate Russia and Ukraine to Immaculate Heart of Mary.**  
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**"#Lent is a journey of healing, to live each day with a renewed spirit, a different "style". Prayer, charity and fasting are aids to this: they restore us to a living relationship with God, our brothers and sisters, and ourselves.**  
– Pope Francis

**Bandel Parish celebrates... pg 07**

**Ms. Christina D'Silva**



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A Tribute to Mr. Sinha, a Pioneer for the Church in Picnic Garden. pg. 8

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## Sr. Mary Joseph, MC, A True Servant of God Elected the New Superior General of Missionaries of Charity

FRANCIS SUNIL ROSARIO

Kolkata: The Missionaries of Charity congregation elected their new Superior General on March 12 during their Chapter, over a month since February 2022. Sr. M. Joseph, MC is their fourth Superior General, after St. Teresa of Calcutta, fondly called Mother Teresa. The Chapter ended on the feast day of St. Joseph, March 19.

When her name was announced to take over as leader, she was nervous and said, "Why me?" It was the similar experience of the prophets of Old, Prophet Jeremiah, Elijah, Amos and many others. She was not able to sleep that night and she was very anxious. A series of thoughts and challenges came to her mind. She had fear. However, she felt peace at heart, when the Lord gave her assurance that He will be with her in all her responsibilities, challenges and mission. For her it was a decisive night, her dark night of soul to say "Yes" to God, and she prayed, "Make me a channel of your peace, O Lord!"

**Her Life**

Sr. Mary Joseph, MC hails from the Southern state of Kerala and a small interior village Poyya. It is a Village in Mala Block in Thrissur District of Kerala State, India. It is located 40 KM towards South from District headquarters Thrissur. 4 KM from Mala. 241 KM from State capital Thiruvananthapuram. She was born in the year 1953. Her family kept the cultural traditions, was simple, very ordinary and was deeply rooted in Gospel values and in Jesus Christ. She lost her parents. They are three sisters



and a brother, Mr. Papachan. They have their families and are well settled in life.

**Her Vocation**

Since her school days, Sr. Joseph wanted to dedicate her life to God. The simplicity and spirit of poverty attracted her to join the Missionaries of Charity congregation. Her inspiration to join the MC was to serve the poorest of the poor whole-heartedly. She was deeply attracted by Jesus, his suffering for the suffering humanity and the poverty. After completing her matriculation, at the age of 17, she ran to the Trissur Vocation Centre and met an MC sister Sr. Anand, from Germany. She invited her to join

Missionaries of Charity. This way, Sr. Joseph found her 'Sacred ground' to serve Jesus in life. The words of Jesus, "I came to serve and not to be served" motivated her to join the missionaries of Charity. It was easier to say than to put that into practice this life of poverty and simplicity. "Through the years living the charism of MC, I had to purify my intention to serve Jesus in the poor. In reality, we have to discover the cross of Christ daily", she said in an interview. Her Life in the Missionaries of Charity In 1970 she joined the congregation and after her 'come and see' program and novitiate she was professed in 1974. She was sent to Australia,

Melbourne in Bourke, South Wales as a young sister. She did ministry among the aboriginals of Australia. After a year of service, she was given formation mistress responsibilities in Melbourne for 5 years. After completing her term as Formation mistress, she was sent to Papua Guinea for eight months, before she did her tertian-ship in Kolkata. She had her Final profession in May, 1980, under Late Sr. Joseph Michael, the Tertian Mistress. Soon after her Tertian-ship, she continued in formation at Premdan, (Gift of Love) Kolkata for 6 months and for three years in Mother House, 54/A, A J C Bose Road, as Novice Mistress. Thereafter, she was sent to

(continued on pg 04)

## Church in India

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-- Editor

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All material may be edited for the sake of space, clarity or editorial policy. features, articles should not exceed 600 words, while reports should be within 300 words.

All submission should be made through email. Reports should accompany appropriate photographs. Deadline to submit articles is Sunday, for reports Monday evening, and for advertisements Tuesday 12 noon.

- Editor

## Kerala Catholic teachers fight communist govt's discrimination

Catholic bishops have asked the communist-led government in the southern Indian state of Kerala to end discrimination against teachers in church-run schools in appointments, salaries and other benefits.

The government has not yet fulfilled its promise to appoint teachers in church-managed schools leaving hundreds of eligible Catholic teachers jobless, said Father Charles Leon, secretary of Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council's education commission.

The government, which returned to power in 2021 after completing a five-year term, promised to meet the demands of Catholic-run schools ahead of the past elections. But it failed in its promise, the priest said.

The government has to approve the appointment of teachers in church-run schools that receive financial aid from the state. But the government "has been dilly-dallying when it comes to the appointment of

Varghese, the guild's general secretary.

The teachers also accused the government of creating hurdles in paying legitimate salaries, pensions and other benefits to teachers in church-run schools.

Christian leaders in October 2020 staged a 14-day hunger strike demanding an end to discrimination in church-run schools, especially in the appointment of teachers.

The government then, ahead of the 2021 state elections, agreed to concede their demands. "But the government has not done anything other than make mere promises," said Varghese.

The government blocked appointments in Catholic schools on the pretext that it has a pool of qualified teachers who will need to be appointed in vacant posts. "But our studies based on government data proved that no such pool exists," he said.

The government again delayed appointments on



teachers in Catholic schools since 2016," Father Leon told UCA News.

Church managements in dioceses have selected hundreds of teachers but are unable to appoint them as the government has not been approving appointments for over six years now.

"It has deprived jobs to hundreds of qualified young Catholics. But a more serious issue is that of thousands of children who are denied quality education," the priest said.

Teachers in church-run schools in all 32 dioceses across Kerala protested on March 10 under the Catholic Teachers Guild.

"We will continue with other protest programs if the government fails to fulfill its promise and accord us our constitutional rights," said C.T.

grounds that it wanted to give priority to qualified people with physical limitations. "Now that excuse is also over as our schools too have recruited qualified handicapped people," said Varghese.

The teachers' guild has also vowed to intensify its protest until the government fulfills its promises.

The Church, Father Leon said, is "solidly behind the teachers in their struggle for justice."

"We stand for providing good quality education to students in our schools," he said, appealing to the government to support the Church's education efforts for the poor. Kerala has 12,644 schools, of which 4,504 are government schools. The state funds 7,277 of them while 863 are privately managed.

UCAN

## Indian Catholic in the Unesco task force for indigenous languages



New Delhi (AsiaNews) - Catholic educational institutions are also doing more to promote education in their native language among tribal children. To launch the appeal is dr. Benjamin Bara, an Indian Catholic activist whom UNESCO has called to be part of the Global Task Force of the decade of action in favor of indigenous languages, which the UN educational institution is launching for the period 2022-2032.

Bara is an educator from the East Indian state of Jharkhand. He works on the issue of tribal rights with the Indian Social Institute, run by the Jesuits in New Delhi, and also teaches at the University of Delhi. He is also an executive member of several Indian national bodies such as Adivasi Ekta Parishad, Adivasi Samanway Manch Bharat and India Indigenous Peoples.

He tells AsiaNews: "I belong to the Kurukh tribal community of the village of Pandrani in the district of Gumla, in Jharkhand. As a member of the Global Task Force for Delivering the Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages and head of its Steering Committee for Asia at UNESCO, my job is to help raise awareness of the importance of tribal languages and create sensitivity to the protection, promotion and revitalization of indigenous languages in Asia. We do this by offering training on transcriptions of oral traditions or on the creation of digital

archives on indigenous languages".

The enhancement of indigenous languages is a very important issue for India. "Most Asian countries do not recognize indigenous peoples: this is why their languages face an identity crisis and this leads to linguistic assimilation. With the New Education Policy 2020, the Government of India has taken a very good step to promote the teaching of students in their regional or local native language up to the fifth grade. I hope this step will lead to a new change to revitalize Adivasi languages in different countries".

Bara grew up in Catholic educational institutions, attending St. Francis' College in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh and then pursuing his PhD at the Xavier School of Management in Jamshedpur in Jharkhand. "I noticed - he comments - that the values taught in missionary institutions, such as love, care, generosity, coexistence, compassion, forgiveness, are values that are also part of the experiences in tribal communities. However, it worries me that so many missionary institutions do not give tribal children education in their own language. This produces alienation from their roots, identity, knowledge and culture. Changing school curricula could bring about change and become a milestone for protecting, preserving and revitalizing Adivasi languages, their knowledge.

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## Church in the World

### Akash Bashir's beatification process opened. Parents: 'Thankful for this child'



Lahore (AsiaNews) - On March 15 in Lahore, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, the Catholic Church of Pakistan officially opened the process for the beatification and canonization of Akash Bashir. Seven years earlier, the young man had lost his life to courageously stop a suicide bomber, thus saving hundreds of people. Fr Amajd Yousuf, episcopal delegate, Fr. Refan Fiaz, promoter of justice and

Fr. Patrick Samuel, notary, attended the opening session and was sworn in. On March 15, 2015, then 20-year-old Bashir was the volunteer security guard at St John's Catholic Church in Youhanabad. While the faithful gathered for Sunday Lent mass, two bombers were about to blow themselves up. One of them was at the entrance to the church when he was stopped by Bashir. "I will die but I will

not let you in" were the last words of the boy, before being killed by the bomb of the attacker.

Akash was a young lay person from Lahore and - with the authorization of the Holy See to open the beatification process - he became the first Pakistani Catholic to be recognized as a "servant of God". For this, his father Emmanuel Bashir told AsiaNews that he is very grateful to God for all the blessings he has given to his family, especially for this son of him. "To save others - he comments - he did not deny his faith in him, but he renounced the world. He makes Me proud to be Pakistani". A thought also shared by the young martyr's mother who adds thanks to "Pope Francis, to the archbishop of Lahore, Sebastian Shaw, "We are celebrating Akash's faith, hope and trust in God," Archbishop Sebastian Shaw concluded the celebration.

### Religious leaders bless Indonesia's new capital project



A Catholic priest was among a group representing Indonesia's main religions and several traditional beliefs who took part in a symbolic ceremony to bless the construction of Nusantara, the country's new capital to be built in Borneo. President Joko Widodo presided over the event on March 14 at the intended capital's city center called Kilometer Zero Point (IKN) in East Kalimantan's North Penajam Paser district. The governors from all 34 provinces took turns in adding soil and water to a gold-plated container as part of the ceremony. Widodo said this symbolized "the collaboration between the central government, regional administrations, the Indone-

sian military, the Indonesian police, private sector, and society in supporting the development of the city." The ceremony included an interfaith prayer session during which 13 religious leaders, including Oblate Father Agustinus Adeodatus Wiyono from the only parish church in the district, prayed and gave the project their blessings. "I prayed for all national leaders and for the project to run smoothly," he told UCA News on March 16.

He said the government must have thought long and hard with regard to the relocation of the national capital from Jakarta to his locality. "They must have thought about it thoroughly. The

leaders of traditional faiths know all about it because they were involved in the discussions," he said.

"If you ask me whether or not I support the project, it is what I should do as a Catholic. Catholics are part of this nation. It is time for us to work together with the government on this project."

Moving the capital has sparked controversy, with some saying many people's lives, both those of the local population and those forced to relocate, would be thrown into turmoil. During talks with Widodo after the event, the traditional and religious leaders urged the president to ensure the needs of people are not overlooked during the relocation.

"We hope the government will not merely focus on infrastructure and facilities. We want attention also to be paid to people's development," said Helena, chairwoman of the district's Dayak Tribe Council. She said the move provided an opportunity for the government to further aid the development of people in the Kalimantan region by providing training facilities and universities so that local people could play key roles without the need to rely on bringing in tens of thousands of outsiders, she said.

### Pope Francis to consecrate Russia and Ukraine to Immaculate Heart of Mary

Vatican City: The Holy See press office said on March 15: "On Friday, March 25, during the Celebration of Penance at which he will preside at 5 p.m. in St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis will consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary." "The same act, on the same day, will be carried out in Fatima by His Eminence Cardinal Krajewski, Apostolic Almoner, as envoy of the Holy Father."

tion of Russia on March 13.

Ukraine and Russia, the two largest countries in Europe by area, are both predominantly Eastern Orthodox countries with deep traditions of Marian devotion.

Yaroslav the Wise, the grand prince of Kyiv, dedicated his lands to Mary in 1037 and she has been known since then as "Queen of Ukraine." Pope Francis used the title in his Angelus address on March 6, saying: "Let us pray together, as



March 25 was the day in 1984 that Pope John Paul II consecrated Russia and the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is also the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. Ukraine's Latin Rite Catholic bishops asked Pope Francis earlier this month to consecrate Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In a letter to the pope, the Ukrainian bishops said that they were writing "in these hours of immeasurable pain and terrible ordeal for our people" in response to many requests for the consecration. "Responding to this prayer, we humbly ask Your Holiness to publicly perform the act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Ukraine and Russia, as requested by the Blessed Virgin in Fatima," said the letter, published on the bishops' website on Ash Wednesday, March 2. Following the bishops' call, Our Lady of Fatima shrines worldwide were invited to unite in prayer for the conversion of Russia. The appeal was made by Father Andrzej Draws, rector of the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima in Krisovychi, western Ukraine. He encouraged all shrines in honor of Our Lady of Fatima to unite in prayer for the conver-

brothers and sisters, to Our Lady, Queen of Ukraine."

Before the revolutions of 1917 that overthrew the Russian Empire and led to the creation of the Soviet Union, Russia was colloquially known as the "house of Mary" because there were more shrines and churches dedicated to Our Lady than in any other country at the time. During the Fatima apparitions in 1917, the Blessed Virgin Mary revealed three secrets.

The second secret was a statement that World War I would end, and a prediction of another war that would start during the reign of Pius XI if people continued to offend God and Russia was not consecrated to Mary's Immaculate Heart. Sister Lucia, one of the three Fatima visionaries, recalled in her memoirs that Our Lady asked for "the Consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays" to prevent a second world war. She said that Mary told her: "If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated."



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**SPIRITUALITY AND SPIRITUALITIES**

What is spirituality and what makes for different spiritualities? The word spirituality is relatively new within the English-speaking world, at least in terms of how it is being used today. Prior to the 1960s you would have found very few books in English with the word "spirituality" in their title, though that wasn't true for the French-speaking world. A half-century ago spiritual writers within Roman Catholicism wrote about spirituality but mostly under titles such as "The Spiritual Life" and "Ascetical Theology", or under the guise of devotional treatises. Protestants and Evangelicals, for the most part, identified spirituality with Roman Catholic devotions and steered clear of the word.

What is spirituality, as generally understood within church circles today? Definitions abound within spiritual writings of every sort, each of which defines spirituality with a particular end-goal in mind. Many of these definitions are helpful within academic discussions but are less so outside those circles. So, let me risk simplifying things with a definition that's wide, interreligious, ecumenical, and hopefully simple enough to be helpful.

Spirituality is the attempt by an individual or a group to meet and undergo the presence of God, other persons, and the cosmic world so as to come into a community of life and celebration with them. The generic and specific disciplines and habits that develop from this become the basis for various spiritualities. Stripped to its root, spirituality can be spoken of as a "discipline" to which someone submits. For example, in Christianity we call ourselves "disciples" of Jesus Christ. The word "discipleship" takes its root in the word "discipline". A disciple is someone who puts herself under a discipline. Hinduism and Buddhism call this a "yoga". To be a practicing Hindu or Buddhist you need to be practicing a certain spiritual "discipline", which they term a yoga. And that's what constitutes any religious practice.

All religious practice is a question of putting oneself under a certain "discipline" (which makes you a "disciple"). But we can distinguish among various religious "disciplines". Aristotle gave us a distinction which can be helpful here. He distinguished between a "genus" and a "species"; e.g., bird is a genus, robin is a species. Thus looking at various spiritualities we can distinguish between "generic" disciplines and "specific" disciplines: Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, and various Native Religions are "generic" spiritualities. But within each of these you will then find a wide range of "specific" spiritualities. For example within the wide category of Christianity you will find Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Protestants, Evangelicals, Mormons, and Congregationalists. Each of these is a species.

Then we can distinguish still further: Within each of those you will find a wide range of "sub-species", that is, particular Christian "disciplines". For instance, within Roman Catholicism, we can speak of persons who have Charismatic spirituality or a Jesuit, Franciscan, Carmelite, or Salesian spirituality, to offer just a few examples. Notice the pattern here—from genus to species to sub-species. As a spirituality, Christianity is a genus, Roman Catholicism is a species, and being a Jesuit or a Franciscan (or, in my case, being an Oblate of Mary Immaculate) is a sub-species.

I apologize if this seems a bit irreverent, that is, to speak so clinically of genus, species, and sub-species in reference to cherished faith traditions wherein martyrs blood has been shed. But the hope is that this can help us understand more clearly a complex issue and its roots. No one serves one's God fully, just as no one lives out one's God-given dignity fully. We need guidance. We need trusted, God-blessed patterns of behavior and disciplines that ultimately come from divine revelation itself. We call these religions. Then, inside of these religions, we can be further helped by models of behavior lived out by certain saints and wisdom figures. Thus, inside of Christianity, we have the time-tested example and wisdom of 2000 years of faithful women and men who have carved out various "disciplines" which can be helpful for us to better live out our own discipleship. Jesuit, Franciscan, Carmelite, Salesian, Mazenodian, Charismatic, Opus Dei, Focolare, Catholic Worker, Sant'Egidio, Cursillo, Acts-Missions, and Catholic Christian Outreach, among others, are spiritualities, and just as the exercise and diet regiments of health experts can help us keep our bodies more healthy, so too can the discipleship practices of particular saints, spiritual giants, and wisdom figures help make our following of Jesus more faithful and generative.

Which one of these spiritualities is best for you? That depends upon your individual temperament, your particular vocation and call, and your circumstance within life. One size doesn't fit all. Just as each snowflake is different from every other snowflake, so too with us. God gives us different gifts and different callings and life puts us in different situations. They say the book you need to read finds you and finds you at the exact time that you need to read it. That's true too for spiritualities. The one you need will find you, and will find you at the exact time when you need it.

—RONROLHEISER, OMI

**Sr. Mary Joseph, MC...**

(continued from pg 1)

Philippines in 1984 as Novice Mistress, the Formator and House superior until 1990 for six years.

**Her Ministry Overseas**

Sr. Joseph was sent to Czech Republic in Praha (Prague) in 1990. This region consisted of Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Czech Republic. From 1990 – 2000, Sr. Joseph was sent to Poland as Superior. She was appointed the Regional Superior from 2000-2004 and she remained in the post for four and a half years.

In the year 2009, when Sr. Prema M.C. took over as Superior General from Late Sr. Nirmala, Sr. Joseph was elected as the first councilor. For six years until 2015, she served the Missionaries of Charity in this post.

After finishing her term, in 2015, she was appointed Superior of the Motijheel community. This is the place, where Mother Teresa began

her mission among the poorest of the poor. For Sr. Joseph it was returning to the roots of M C Charism, emerging out of the heart of the poorest of the poor, the most marginalized and deprived of the society. For three years until 2018, following the footsteps of Mother Teresa, Sr. Joseph served this community.

In 2019, she was appointed the Regional superior in Kerala region. It was for her a homecoming, with a difference. Bringing a rich experience living the reality of poverty and simplicity, that has been her hallmark throughout her journey as Religious, to live the charism of Missionaries of Charity all those years.

In her experience as a religious, she finds meaning in the suffering and cross of Christ. Therefore, any depth of suffering, tragedies, sickness, diseases, she finds meaning in loving and embracing the cross

of Christ. Her vocation has been a response to the poor, their life of poverty and many deprivations. She finds fulfillment in living the reality of the poor, their struggles in life, the uncertainties and insecurity they face in life.

**My Experience as MC Sister**

"My experience as MC is to feel so privileged to have the gift of this charism, God's mercy to me, I have experienced and I am deeply grateful to God who gave me the Gospel charism. My life is to share the joy of giving and to put into practice charity among the poor and the most deprived."

Jesus Christ, the 'corner stone' as St. Paul would say in Eph2:20, Sr. Joseph also as a corner stone, will carry on with the mantle received to serve Jesus Christ, satiating the thirst of Jesus in the poorest of the poor and facing those challenges boldly that may come on the way, with the strength of God.

**SXUK conducts workshop at Santiniketan**

■ SOMAK SEN

St. Xavier's University, Kolkata (SXUK) organised a two-day vibrant workshop on 'Transformative Leadership Styles' for the Deans, Heads of all departments and other senior officers of the University on March 13 and 14, 2022 at Parasmani, Santiniketan. The first ever outdoor workshop was eventful with talks, activities, group-works and presentations.

Fr. Felix Raj, S.J., Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, SXUK delivered the inaugural address on the first day. Father asked all the participants to 'give their total self into the workshop to be transformed as leaders to shoulder the responsibility of administering the University.' The resource person for the workshop was Prof. S. Peppin from XIM University, Bhubaneswar. The workshop emphasised on five broad segregations as five 'Ds' in the light of transformative leadership styles and approaches which include 'Define, Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny'.

Adaptation to change is necessary to groom, hone and sharpen transformative leadership style within oneself. As individuals vary from each other in their personalities and perceptions; change, therefore, needs to be responsive, receptive and reactive. The workshop helped the participants to discover key strengths and opportunities of the University and appreciate the same. They also exchanged their views of what they thought of their peers and colleagues in terms of their personalities, skills and abilities.



Participants also unveiled their dreams and expectations for the University, as Vision 2032. The workshop included active participation of every attendee in the form of pictorial presentation, discussion, decision making, logical reasoning, etc. They also discussed about future programmes to be held

at Parasmani for the faculty members, officers and staff of the University. Short and long term goals for the development of the University were also discussed. Each session was followed by feedback and brainstorming sessions.

The participants found the workshop enriching, elevating and inspiring. Under the banner of 'transformative leadership', the key takeaways were knowledge and acquaintance on how the best leaders can be great teachers and how leaders can personalize instructions to help their employees soar high in profession.

Parasmani, a unit of SXUK, is the Centre for Research and Social Outreach and is located at Ratan Pally, Santiniketan, West Bengal.

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## Liturgy

MY FAVOURITE  
SAINT



St. Turibius of Mogrojevo

St. Turibius of Mogrojevo  
Feast Day: 23 March  
St. Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo (16 November 1538 – 23 March 1606) was a Spanish prelate of the Catholic Church who served as the Archbishop of Lima. Prominent in the history of the Catholic Church in Peru, Saint Turibius of Mogrovejo supported the rights of the native people.

St. Turibius of Mogrovejo was born in Spain in 1538, into a noble family. As a child, Turibius had a daily habit of

praying the Rosary and the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and prayed and fasted often.

A member of a wealthy Spanish family in the 16th century, he was a brilliant professor of law at Salamanca University. He was ordained when he was age 40 in 1578 and became archbishop of Lima, Peru, in 1579. St. Turibius founded the first seminary in the Western Hemisphere.

St. Turibius died in 1606 and

was canonized in 1726. He is honoured as the patron saint of Peru and a special patron of those who work for the rights of indigenous and native peoples.

He is a model for bishops for all ages, as well as an exemplar for all priests and laity. He is remembered for his zeal, discipline and clear doctrine which St. Turibius helped hand on not just in South America, but throughout the universal Church.

—By JUBILEE CARDOZO

## Picking the Day Lent Begins

Q: What determines what day Lent begins? P.R., Fresno, California

A: The short answer to your question is that the beginning of Lent depends on the date of Easter.

Easter follows a lunar, rather than a solar, calendar and is celebrated on the Sunday that follows the first full moon after March 21, the vernal (spring) equinox. Therefore Easter cannot fall earlier than March 22 or later than April 25.

All the other movable celebrations in the Church calendar ultimately depend on the date of Easter.

Most of the Eastern Churches follow the same basic principles but often celebrate Easter on a date different from Catholics and other Western Christians because they continue to follow the calendar of Julius Caesar without the corrections incorporated by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

Julius Caesar's calendar calculated the year as 365 days and 6 hours and thus was about 11 minutes and 9 seconds more than the sun's actual course. Although tiny, this excess puts the calendar off by a day, more or less, every 128 years. Thus, the Council of Nicaea already found it necessary to regress the date of the spring equinox to March 21 instead of the original date of March 25.

By the time of Pope Gregory XIII the difference had grown so much that the spring equinox occurred on March 11. In 1581 with the bull "Inter Gravissimas" Pope Gregory promulgated a widespread reform which, among other things, re-established the spring equinox on March 21 by eliminating 10 days from October 1582. Coincidence would have it that St. Teresa of



Avila died on that very night of Oct. 4-15.

The error of Julius Caesar's calendar was corrected by deciding that the turn of the century—always a leap year in the Julian calendar—would be so only when the year could be divided by 400, that is 1600, 2000 2400 2800, etc., whereas there would be no leap year in the others.

Most Catholic countries, and even some Protestant ones, accepted the reform almost immediately. Some countries, such as England, held off accepting the papal reform until 1752 while Russia did not adopt it until after the Communist takeover in 1918.

The calculation is still not perfect as there is still a difference of 24 seconds between the legal and the solar calendar. However, 3,500 years will have to pass before another day is added.

Getting back to Lent. This season comprises 40 days before Easter without counting

Sundays which, even though they are called "Sundays of Lent," are not days of penance. Church tradition has always excluded fasting and penance on a Sunday.

The tradition of a fast in preparation for Easter goes back to the late third century but it varied in duration. The tradition of a 40-day fast was established in Rome between 354 and 384, although it began after the first Sunday.

As this period was also deemed suitable for the final preparation of candidates for baptism, the baptismal scrutinies were incorporated with the rites of this season. Scrutinies are communal prayers celebrated around the elect to strengthen them to overcome the power of sin in their lives and to grow in virtue. Later, at the start of the sixth century, the beginning of Lent was moved up to Ash Wednesday in order to guarantee 40 days of effective fasting.

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Sunday  
Reflections

LENT III (March 20, 2022)

Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15; I Cor 10:1-6, 10-12; Lk 13:1-9

Central theme All three of today's readings speak of God's mercy and compassion in disciplining His children by occasional punishment while giving them another chance despite their repeated sins. Although God's love for us is constant and consistent, He will not save us without our co-operation. That is why He invites us during Lent to repent of our sins and to renew our lives by producing fruits of love, compassion, forgiveness, and faithful service.

Scripture lessons: The first reading tells us how God shows His mercy to His chosen people by giving them Moses as their leader and liberator. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v 6) reveals Himself to Moses from the burning bush and assures Moses of His Divine presence with His people and of His awareness of their sufferings in Egypt. He declares His intention to use Moses as the leader who will rescue His enslaved people. Then God reveals His name as Yahweh ("I AM Who AM") and renews His promise to the patriarchs (v 8), to give them a "land flowing with milk and honey." Our Responsorial Psalm, (Ps 103) reminds us of God's unfailing mercy: "Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness." The second reading warns us that our merciful God is also a disciplining God. Paul reminds the Christians of Corinth that they must learn from the sad experience of the Israelites who were punished for their sins by a merciful but just God. The merciful and gracious God is also just and demanding; hence, they must be free from sexual sins and idolatry. Today's Gospel explains how God disciplines His people and invites them to repent of their sins, to renew their lives, and to produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Citing two tragic events, Jesus exhorts the Jews to repent and reform their lives. With the parable of the barren fig tree, Jesus also warns them that the merciful God will not put up with them indefinitely. Although God patiently waits for sinners to repent, giving them grace to do so, He will not wait forever. Time may run out; therefore, timely repentance is necessary. Hence, one can say, "A Lent missed is a year lost from the spiritual life."

Life Messages: 1) We need to live lives of repentance, because (a) we never know when we will meet a tragedy of our own. Let us turn to Christ, acknowledge our faults and failings, and receive from him mercy, forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. There is no better way to take these words of Jesus to heart than to go to sacramental confession, and there is no better time to go to confession than during Lent. (b) repentance helps us in life and in death. It helps us to live as forgiven people and helps us to face death without fear. 2) We need to be fruitful trees in God's orchard. Lent is an ideal time "to dig around and manure" the tree of our life so that it may bring forth fruits of repentance, reconciliation, forgiveness, and sensitivity to the feelings of others.

3) We need to make the best use of the "second chances" God gives us. Our merciful Father always gives us second chances. During Lent, too, we are given another chance to repent and return to our Heavenly Father's love.

Anecdote: Joy of being forgiven: In his memoirs, Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, humbly and frankly acknowledges that, when he was fifteen, he stole a little piece of gold from his brother. A few days later, he felt very guilty and decided to come clean by confessing to his father. So, he took a paper, wrote down his fault, sincerely asked his father for forgiveness and promised never to repeat the offence. Taking that note to the bedroom of his father, the young Gandhi found him ill in bed. Very timidly he handed the note to his father without saying a word. His father sat up in bed and began reading the note. As he read it, the senior Gandhi was so deeply moved by the honesty, sincerity and courage of his son that tears began to stream from his eyes. This so touched the son that he burst into tears as well. Instinctively both father and son wrapped their arms around each other and wordlessly shared their mutual admiration and joy. This notable experience made such an impact on Gandhi that years later he would say, "Only the person who has experienced this kind of forgiving love can know what it is." -- This precisely is what happened when the repentant prodigal son returned home. Such is God's merciful forgiveness and benevolent love for all who resolutely turn over a new leaf, especially during this Lenten season.

— Fr. Anthony Kadavil

# Archdiocese

## SCC Zonal Training for 5 Parishes of 24 Parganas Deanery

SR. PRATITI



On 13th March 2022, SCC Zonal Level Training program for Animators of 5 Parishes: Our Lady of Lourdes, Barasat; St. Patrick's Church, Dum Dum; Holy Family Church, Kestopur; Rupanor Community Centre, Barrackpore; and Sacred Heart Church, Kawgachi; was organized at Proggaloy, Barasat. The program began at 9:00 AM with the Holy Eucharistic celebration concelebrated by Fr. Henry Saldanha, the Dean of North 24 Parganas Deanery, Fr. Dominic Gomes, Vicar General and Diocesan SCC Coordinator of Kolkata, and Fr. Shyam Charan Mandi, Director of Proggaloy. Fr. Henry in his homily drew the attention of the Gospel Reading of the day- Lk. 9:28-36 - Jesus on Mount Tabor where "a voice said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him." He challenged the participants and invited all saying that we too are the sons and daughters, do we hear the voice - 'I am the beloved son/ daughter of the Father.'

At the closing of the Eucharistic celebration, Fr. Dominic thanked Fr. Henry, the main celebrant for presiding over the Eucharist and for his vibrant homily, Fr. Sham Charan for his generous contribution and loving services to all at Proggaloy, Mr. Dominic D'Silva and the choir for the melodious singing during Holy Mass. After a photo session, all proceeded for breakfast.

After breakfast, the SCC animators of St. Patrick's Church, Dum Dum took the responsibility of the Bible Procession and the Bible Enthronement. The Bible Enthronement was done by Fr. Shyam Charan. The celebration of the Word of God from Mt. 5:14-16 was done in Bengali, Hindi and English followed by a short reflection - just fitting for the day. After the Enthronement, Fr. Dominic Gomes welcomed the Diocesan Resource Team and all the participants. There were 44 participants from the 5 Parishes.

The Diocesan Team of 4 Resource persons: Sr. Rajni, SMI, Mrs. Manju Linda, Mr. Ravi Sampang and Mr. J.C. Lakra conducted an effective session on: 1. God's Plan for Marriage, and 2. Family - Forgiveness and Handling Conflict with Love in the Family along with sub-topics - from 10.00 am to 4.00pm, using the methodology of stories with pictures, group discussions based on Scripture texts; questions-answers followed by group reports. Handouts, for ready reference, were a big help for discussions, inter-action, questions-answers and group reporting. After each reporting session, a short input was supplemented by the resource person of the session highlighting the important outputs of the discussions.

The first session highlighted the beautiful creation of God -

man and woman in His own image and likeness and His divine plan. The pictures and stories depicted the deeper understanding of the mystery of God's plan for marriage and family. The Scripture texts and Church Teaching further helped the participants to understand the love of Christ, in the building of the domestic church.

In the session on Forgiveness and Handling Conflict with Love in the Family, the participants discussed several points of conflicts and how forgiveness can be the best instrumental factor for handling conflicts despite difficult tasks when done with love and humility. At the end of second session, the groups were directed to read the supplements given and suggest ways and means for our SCC to promote peace and reconciliation for the families and the neighborhood. The planning session for our individual parishes was done before closing the day's program. Each Parish submitted its Action Plan to the DRT.

At the close of the day, Father Dominic Gomes gave big thanks, words of appreciation and applause to each one. In gratitude, all sang the hymn 'Dhanyabad Prabhu Ko', took the blessings from the Holy Bible and departed. Thanks to Fr. Dominic Gomes and the Diocesan GRT for organizing a successful training program for the SCC Animators.

## Women's Day celebration at Kolkata



Gender Equality today for a sustainable tomorrow, highlighting with the theme the Holy Eucharist started with the candle light procession by the women of Kolkata deanery at 10am at Sacred Heart church, Dharamtala, celebrated by His Grace Archbishop Rev. Thomas D Souza and concelebrated by Fr. Peppin in the presence of 170 women from the city parishes.

The women gathered with great enthusiasm at the church premises in the new normal life after two years. It was a joyful moment for the women of Kolkata deanery as they gathered after two long years. Immediately after the trilingual Mass there was a break for tea and snacks followed by the day's program which started with the welcome address by the president of Council of Catholic Women of India, Kolkata unit.

Thereafter the Chief Guest Archbishop Rev. Thomas D Souza mentioned in his speech that Equal dignity according to God's plan. There was no discrimination when God created man and woman. Every parent should treat the children equally at home, without any discrimination between boy and girl child. They should teach the children relationship and sharing with each other in the family and in society. Gender equality is gaining ground today but still has a long way to go.

Every girl child in our society should be well educated and should be given an opportunity to stand on their own. His Grace also mentioned in his speech that the women are doing a great work in all the parishes. Holy Father Pope Francis also gave the recognition and uplifted the women in our church.

Fr. Michael Biswas who was the special invitee of the program shared in his speech that the Caritas President of Ukraine Ms. Thiyana who said that the Women are the Peace in the world, they are giving the humanitarian work in the country. He mentioned about a Lebanese woman Ms. Rita, the woman of frontline warrior during the Covid 19 Pandemic. He also shared about another woman from Venezuela Ms. Suzanna who says the women have three E's they are Education, Empowerment and End of war. We need to change the mind set of the society that women also have the same dignity as well as the men.

Fr. Michael Biswas, who is the Diocesan contact person for Synod, was invited and requested to speak on Synod as we are on the process of Synod journey. His joyful way of speaking and narrating the parable in between his explanation he won the full attention of the women crowd. It was nice to see the women were also enjoyed to listen to him as well as responding him time to time.

After that the women had consultation on the Synod questionnaire in groups. It was an overwhelming involvement in discussion and reporting for forty five minutes. Thereafter, there was a short cultural program which was followed by fellowship lunch before dispersing.

— By Ms. Sandhya Vincent

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## Youth

### Barasat Girl Awarded the Rivaah Brides of Bengal Award



Kolkata - Ms. Christina D'Silva, daughter of Dominic and Meeta D'Silva of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Barasat was selected to be one of the 10 winners of the Rivaah Brides of Bengal, an initiative by Tanishq, which celebrates real brides of Bengal - adorned in the traditional Bengali bridal trousseau. As a part of this endeavor, Tanishq conducted the first phase of Rivaah Brides' in-store activity, across all its stores between 21 November 2021 and 2 December 2021.

Brides-to-be and already married women, between 20-40 years of age, were invited by Tanishq to participate in this first phase. They experienced being a Rivaah Bride adorned in all their wedding finery and jewelry from Rivaah by Tanishq.

Adorned in the traditional jewelry like Sitahaar, Rani Haar, Chur, Bala, Churi, Kaanbali, Jhumko, and Shankha Pola, each of the women looked like a dream. After this audition phase, 100 finalists from Serampore, Berhampore, Midnapore, Asansol, Malda, Cooch Behar, Siliguri and Kolkata were shortlisted by the jury for the Grand Finale.

Tanishq organised the

Grand Finale for 'The Brides of Bengal' on 12 December 2021 with 10 finalists, in an extravaganza graced by actress - M P Mimi Chakraborty. After rigorous rounds of ramp walks, an exclusive bridal photo shoot, followed by a Question-and-Answer round, the winners for 'The Rivaah Brides of Bengal' were announced.

The 10 winners will become the face of Tanishq in the state and their images will be used across social media, outdoor and banners for a year.

As young Christian woman winning such a prestigious contest, Christina now has the opportunity to be a powerful influencer, inspiring thousands of young catholic girls to aspire for the pinnacle of success they desire; to dare to dream, and, to work to achieve. With the entire archdiocesan family, I congratulate Christina for her grand achievement! It was not an easy task but she was more than equal to it with her beauty, intelligence and charisma. We can only wish her the best going forward, and pray that this is the start of many, many, more achievements to come.

**Reported by  
Fr. Dominic Gomes VG**

### Bandel Parish Celebrates International Women's Day

JOHNY NEDUNGATT SDB

As the world keeps international Women's Day on every 8th of March, Bandel Parish too celebrated the day with over 60 women from the parish present for the day's programme.

The day began with solemn Holy Mass presided over by the Prior at 10.00 am. The celebrant invited the congregation to pray particularly for women who are victims of violence and injustice.

Srs. Rashmi Soreng MSMHC, Kanti Aind MSMHC and Mary Gangte MSMHC who have their ministry in the parish assisted the mothers to get the entire programme of the day organized well.

After the Holy Mass the mothers gathered in the hall to have a short cultural programme and some competitive games. Addressing the gathering the Prior reminded them of the need to discover the resource within themselves to develop and become women capable of contributing to the church and society.



One of the groups presented very creatively some of the problems that can happen in a family and how they can be resolved by women.

Commenting on the day's programme, Mrs. Jolly Hembrom, the President of the Mothers' Sodality said, "When we are empowered through similar programmes as we had today, we begin to realize the potential God has given to us".

An essay competition organized for the women of the parish on the subject, "The Role of Mothers in building up good Christian families" was in place to prepare the women for the day. The cash prize of Rs. 1000/- was a big incentive for some of the women to participate in the competition.

The day's programme came to a grand finale with fellow ship meal.

### Make Peace Not War is the only Prayer recited by the Bengal Christian Council

Kolkata (Gandhi Statue) 16th March 2022: A fervent prayer for Peace to end violence in Ukraine was held under the able guidance of Rt. Revd. Dr. Paritosh Canning, the Bishop of Calcutta, CNI and the President of the Bengal Christian Council. The Catholic Association of Bengal and All Faith Forum had humbly consented to be a part of this prayer for Peace. Bible readings, hymns and powerful prayers by the different Christian denominations were the major part of the Prayer service. Rt. Revd. Dr. Paritosh Canning, in his opening speech spoke about the effects and repercussions of the war taking place in Ukraine and Russia, that will soon be felt all over the world. War not only brings destruction to property and economy, but also death and misery to Humanity. So he urged the people to pray earnestly and that soon Russia will announce a cease



fire which is only possible with the powerful intervention of God.

The Service ended with a Bible reading and an earnest prayer to the Almighty and a hymn by Our Vicar General Fr. Dominic Gomes who along Fr Peppin represented the Roman Catholic Church. Mrs Angelina Mantosh Jasnani, the President of the CAB and Mr. Sushil Jasnani, gave their full support and valuable time to the organising committee, along with her team James Lingam and Ricky Felix.

The President of the CAB

expresses her deep gratitude to Bishop Paritosh Canning for this thoughtful, prayerful and beautiful initiative - standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine to restore peace and normalcy through powerful prayers. Her Message to all: It's time to storm heaven in great numbers to prevent more grief, horror, pain and suffering. The Lord gives Strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace. Psalm 29:11 Let us be instruments of prayer, in order to bring peace to the world and to mankind.

— Reported by Sylvia Mayne

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## Miscellaneous

### Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Mary Help of Christians, Ranabondu



On 12th March 2022 was a memorable and meaningful Spiritual renewal day for the people of God of Maliapota Parish. More than 300 faithful from our Parish and substations made a Walking pilgrimage starting from Chapra Parish Church to Ranabondu Parish Pilgrimage centre part of Lenten Spiritual exercises to renew oneself to meaningfully celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus. We began with a short prayer by Fr. Swapan Mondal, the Parish Priest, invoking God's Choicest blessings upon all those participating in the pilgrimage. The people of God 'journeying together' by praying the Rosary and thanking and glorifying the Lord by singing devotional hymns. What a joyful journey it was, I must admit.

As we reached the Calvary we partook in the passion and suffering of our Lord Jesus by praying the Way of the Cross. It was an enriching experience for all.

As our beloved Pope Francis invites the universal Church for Spiritual renewal by journeying together and listening to each other we had a talk on Synod on Synodality in the Parish Church by Fr. Ongshu Gayen and his team. He explained the importance of walking together, as followers of Christ, in a more meaningful way. He too emphasized the origin and goal of this whole exercise. He enumerated with a lot of lively examples and apt Christian hymns. He kept the people alive and active with his engaging conversations. The faithful have benefitted a lot from his talk.

Then we had the exposition of the blessed Sacrament and side by side sacrament of Reconciliation. The priests

from both Maliapota as well as Ranabondu Parish administered the sacrament of Penance. How enriching the experience it was both for the people of God and the pastors. We could all feel and experience the divine so vividly. What a wonderful way to prepare to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord.

After preparing ourselves spiritually Fr. Antony Albert Suresh SJ along with other priests celebrated the holy Eucharist in a more meaningful Way. In his homily he invited the people of God to count the blessings of the divine at every moment of our lives. Also take initiative to reconcile and reconnect with the family and friends from whom we have gone far away. This is the apt and appropriate time the mother Church has given to each of us to renew, relish, reconnect, reform, refocus and thus will be more able to visibly experience the Risen Lord Jesus. He invited the people of God to reflect over another important Christian virtue: 'to forgive our enemies'. He provoked them to ask the right questions. Who is my enemy? Are there real enemies in our lives? Was that person my good/ best friend until such time, not anymore? How can someone who was so close a friend suddenly become a terrible enemy? How could we feel so uncomfortable even to look at the face of the other who was so close a few days ago? Where lies the actual problem? The problem is out there or within? Do we have the audacity and courage to go deeper within ourselves spiritually and receive the blessings God is ready and willing to offer? The choice is in front of us: to choose life or death.

—by Fr. Antony A. Suresh SJ

### Mr. Sinha a Pioneer for the Church in Picnic Garden

Our Lady of Dolours in Boitokhana and St. Teresa's Church in Moulali have been the bed of Churches growing in South & North 24 Parganas. We had already a Sydonal Church that LISTENED and reached out to places like Guma and Bamandanga in the North and Picnic Garden in the South. Our dear Fr. Segels, S.J who was instrumental in spreading the Good news in the Sealdah area to all religions nurtured many Catholics one among who was Mr. Asish Sinha.

Mr. Sinha or Sinha Babu as he was referred to moved to Naskarhat in South Parganas to a place called Picnic Garden. The inspiration and Missionary zeal of Fr. Segels, SJ. Imbibed by Mr. Sinha made him every evening go about on bicycle looking for Catholics and getting them together for prayer and for HOLY MASS. He only needed two things a willing Priest and a place for mass. The first Mass in a "Dorma", thatched hut at Bondel gate and a priest from Boitokhana. Then a Priest from Moulali and then Fr Bronkers SJ a priest from St Lawrence Ballygunge. Jurisdiction was the next problem; Diocese of Baruiপুর or Diocese of Calcutta; parish of



Sonarpur or Parish of park circus.

The place changed according to the growth in Numbers thus the Mass Centre moved from place to place as Mr. Sinha managed. Sometimes we were taken to the Garage of a building, sometimes to a Hindu roof the local Club Amravathi, Marian Education Centre and finally to our present place.

Mr. Sinha never spared us priests. He pestered Fr. Stephen Fernandez to save money and buy land; Fr. Rudolph had to put the boundary wall, Fr. Elias had to start the building work.

The great problem was MONEY, that also could not stop Mr Sinha. We had to put a special collection box of his style on which is still written "For the Construction of Our Lady of Vailankanni Church" the title he selected I too was not spared as very Monday he came to Park Circus to see the collection which our people generously gave, and ran into twenty five thousand and fifty thousand every week. We talk about a LISTENING Church we listened and have Our Lady of Vailankanni Church today at Picnic Garden.

At The age of 73 we all begin to falter though he was busy as ever with Pastoral Support, Mass Intentions, visit to the sick, House blessings etc. On Sunday 6th he took bad and the lord took him on the 13th of this month.

We thank God for such pastoral lay people. They knew a lot from experience but bowed down to us in obedience and thus they grew and Pastoral Growth took place. Our Lady of Vailankanni at Picnic Garden will always remember and be grateful to Jesus and Mama Mary for such a good soul; and we shall always pray for our dear Mr. Sinha to have eternal rest.

—By Fr. Orson Wells

### Odisha nun bags Bombay Catholic Sabha Award

A nun who is a social worker and advocate from Odisha, eastern India, received "the 7th Father Salvadore Rodrigues Memorial Award" given by the Bombay Catholic Sabha (BCS) for working for the poor and marginalized. Sister Sujata Jena, a journalist-activist belonging to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, received the award in absentia on Feb 19.

The event took place at St. Andrew's auditorium, Bandra, Mumbai-West.

The award is named after Father Salvadore (1948-2013) who was a concerned soul for the poor, needy and downtrodden. He was an ecclesiastical advisor for the BCS, a laity association in the Archdiocese of Bombay, for about 17 years. In a message, Advocate Raphael D'Souza, the president of BCS, said Sujata received the award for her significant contribution in the field of social work.

"We appreciate Sister Sujata's work much among the poorest," D'Souza added. In her acceptance speech,



Sujata thanked BCS for considering her worthy of the award named after Father Salvador.

"I am humbled and I resolve with a renewed vigour to continue the mission of Christ, received through the baptism, and my religious vocation to stand with the poor, Dalits, Adivasis, migrants and marginalized if needed even at the risk of my life," the nun said.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, Sujata helped in the safe return of the migrants. She continues to work for their rights through advocacy and lobbying through networking

with government administrations and civil society groups.

She said she felt compelled to help the migrant laborers as many fell on prey to a road accident, sickness, starvation and death.

She "braved coronavirus pandemic and official apathy to reach out to hundreds of stranded migrant laborers during lockdowns." For that work, she had won an award from the Indian Catholic Press Association, a national body of Catholic journalists.

The Bhubaneswar-based nun was selected "authentically and consistently being the voice of people's rights, especially the poor Dalits who are more susceptible to exploitation and injustice."

At present, she is working as the deputy director of the Excellent IAS Academy in Bhubaneswar, the capital of the eastern Indian state of Odisha.

She is passionately engaged in preparing the religious minority youth for civil service examinations and being part of nation-building efforts.

Dalit Christian Digest



## Relevant Concerns in our Pastoral Ministry in Series - 51

Prophetic Voices from the Periphery – Poets of Bengal – 42  
Nabarun Bhattacharya (1948 - 2014)

FRANCIS SUNIL ROSARIO

Nabarun Bhattacharya (23 June 1948 – 31 July 2014) was born at Baharampur (Berhampur), Murshidabad Dist. West Bengal. He was the only child of actor and playwright Bijon Bhattacharya and writer and activist Mahashweta Devi. Thus, born into a family of writers, filmmakers, artists and academics—besides his parents, his maternal grandfather, well-known Kallol-era writer, Manish Ghatak. Visionary filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak was his great uncle.

Educated at Ballygunge Government School, Bhattacharya went on to study Geology at Asutosh College and then English literature at City College. Nabarun married Pranati Bhattacharya, who was a professor of political science. Mr. Bhattacharya flowered as a writer in Kolkata, where he relentlessly wrote about those marginalized sections living on the city streets, in slums and dark alleys, using satire, dark humor, and fantasy to telling effect to highlight oppression and exploitation.

His writings very often brought him in conflict with the powers that be, but till the end he remained a fearless voice against power and its misuse. Mr. Bhattacharya was a keen political observer and a staunch supporter of Marxism and a vocal supporter of various radical Leftist movements across the world. “He was a comrade all along and all I can say is ‘Red Salute’ to my comrade,” said musician Kabir Suman, who was a close friend of Mr. Bhattacharya.

### His Major works

A journalist from 1973 to 1991 at a foreign news agency, he gave up that career in order to become a full-time writer. Herbert was published in 1992 and won the Bankim and Sahitya Akademi awards in 1997. It was adapted into a film of the same name in 2005, by Suman Mukhopadhyay. Some of his best-known works are *Kangal Malshat* (2003) (The War Cry of Beggars), which made the censors see red when made into a film by Mr. Mukhopadhyay in 2012. The novel has sold over 13,000 copies, one of the biggest successes in contemporary Bengali literature.

Among his other novels are *Lubdhak*, *Halaljhanda*



*O Onyanyo*, *Mahajaaner Aayna*, *Raater Circus*, as also the book of poems ‘*Ei Mrityu Upotyoka Aamaar Desh Na*’ (This valley of death is not my country) (2004) and *Phyataroor Bombachak* (2004).

Novelist and short-story writer, he was also a prolific poet and, from 2003 until his death, editor of the *Bhashabandhan* journal. He was secretary of *Ganasanskriti Parisad*. Mr. Bhattacharya was greatly inspired by his father, writer of the legendary play *Nabanna* on the Bengal famine.

In 2019, a new English translation of *Harbart* was published by *New Directions*, reviewed for *Words Without Borders* by *Arka Chattopadhyay*. In 2020, *Sourit Bhattacharya*, *Arka Chattopadhyay* and *Samrat Sengupta* co-edited a *Bloomsbury* volume of Nabarun's short stories, poems, interviews and a set of critical articles on his works: *Nabarun Bhattacharya: Aesthetics and Politics in a World after Ethics*

He was often described a ‘magic realist’ and compared with Russian anti-establishment writer of 20th century, *Mikhail Bulgakov*.

*Kangal Malshat* (Hooghly: *Saptarshi Prakashan*, 2003), *Herbert* (Kolkata: *Deys*, 1994), *Lubdhak* (Barasat: *Abhijan Publishers*, 2006), *Ei Mrityu Upotyoka Aamaar Desh Na* (Hooghly: *Saptarshi*, 2004), *Halaljhanda o Onyanyo* (Hooghly: *Saptarshi*, 2009), *Mahajaaner Aayna* (Kolkata: *Bhashabandhan*, 2010), *Fyaturur Kumbhipak* (Kolkata: *Bhashabandhan*), *Raater Circus* (Kolkata: *Bhashabandhan*), *Anarir Naarigyan* (Kolkata: *Bhashabandhan*), *Joratali* (Kolkata: *Bhashabandhan*,

*Posthumous*), *Mablage Novel* (Kolkata: *Bhashabandhan*, *Posthumous*), *Andho Biral*

### Death

Nabarun Bhattacharya died of intestinal cancer at *Thakurpukur* cancer hospital, Kolkata on 31 July 2014.

### A Critique

Through *Herbert* and many of other colourful characters, Bhattacharya talks about the different facets of death. At times, it's a metaphor for decay, as is evident when he talks about the city “trundling to *Nimtala* (the biggest crematorium in Kolkata), cellphone held in a tight grip”. At times, he sees it as a form of liberation. But that's where the similarity ends between them, for Bhattacharya was not *Herbert*. If anything, Bhattacharya was the antithesis of his most celebrated fictional creation. The 66-year-old was one of Bengal's most subversive voices, radical in his politics, forever anti-establishment and outspoken in his views. “*Nabarunda* is not *Herbert*. He is one of the most respected writers of our times, unlike his fictional creation *Herbert* who is little more than a local sensation,” says *Arunava Sinha*, who translated *Herbert* as *Harbert* in English.

Bhattacharya, who won the *Sahitya Akademi* award in 1997 for *Herbert*, occupies an uneasy place in the pantheon of Bengali greats. The writer detested the Bengali trait of deifying authors and poets. His works challenged the genteel core of his readers, leading them through the city's underbelly, speaking to them in a language that mocked their middle-class sensibilities and comfort in the status quo. His characters — termites, gnats, cockroaches, talking crows and flying humans called *Fyatarus* — who create mayhem to deflect evil machinations and political schemings, mingled effortlessly over their human counterparts. “It was difficult not to be swept into his world. Even his poetry was deeply entrenched in the word of occult. Readers found his prose seductive and sharp, yet he was relentlessly political. It's difficult to resist such a combination,” says Bengali poet and writer *Mandakranta Sen*.

## Tribal Christians demand clarity on Indian state's domicile policy



Indigenous people including tribal Christians in eastern India's Jharkhand state have demanded the immediate declaration of the state's domicile policy.

Domiciles of a state are entitled to certain privileges that are denied to outsiders, such as reservations in education and government jobs.

This is a sensitive issue, especially in a state like Jharkhand where distrust between tribal people and outsiders due to historic socioeconomic disparities continues to exist. To highlight their long-pending demand, some 5,000 tribal people in traditional attire staged a protest outside the Jharkhand Assembly in Ranchi on March 14.

They want the government to adopt a domicile policy on the basis of the state's 1932 khatiyan (land records) at the ongoing session of the state assembly.

“The whole idea of creating the new state of Jharkhand in the year 2000 was to ensure the socioeconomic progress of tribal people. But the government is yet to decide who are the original inhabitants of this state,” said *Ratan Tirkey*, a former member of the Jharkhand government's tribes' advisory committee.

*Tirkey* told *UCA News* that various Christian and *Sarna* (a tribal religion) organizations have been demanding that the 1932 land records be treated as a cut-off for granting domicile but all governments including the present one run by the *Jharkhand Mukti Morcha* (JMM) have failed to meet their expectation.

“The 1932 cut-off will ensure greater benefits for tribal people but political parties fear it would impact their vote banks among the outsiders in the state,” *Tirkey* said, blaming this “political confusion” for the continued suffering of local

people.

The previous government of the pro-Hindu *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) had announced in 2016 that people living in Jharkhand since or before 1985 would be considered local inhabitants. But this was seen as an attempt to snatch away the rights and benefits of the state's indigenous people.

The JMM government headed by Chief Minister *Hemant Soren* has set up a cabinet subcommittee to redefine the domicile policy. “The deliberations are still on but the land records of the year 1932 cannot be the ‘only basis’ as many districts were left out of it,” said Rural Development Minister *Alamgir Alam*.

He said the government will be studying all details and nuances before arriving at a final policy.

But *Lobin Hembram*, a JMM leader who is also an elected member of the legislative assembly, said they will not go home until a fresh policy is announced in the ongoing session.

*Mukti Prakash Tirkey*, editor of a weekly newspaper on tribal affairs published from New Delhi, said several leading industrial houses have set up automobile and iron processing factories in mineral-rich Jharkhand state, hiring mostly people from outside since the 2016 policy announced by the BJP government.

It was a similar discontent against outsiders in the region that had led to the formation of the state, say experts.

“Jharkhand holds a significant part of India's mineral wealth and has always had tribal and non-tribal indigenous people in the majority. Though the number of *Adivasis* (tribal people) has fallen — from two-thirds of the population in the 1950s to one-fourth, as per *Census 2011* — the combined population of tribal and non-tribal natives is still around 70 percent of Jharkhand's 31.9 million residents,”

## Documents

## Pope to Russian Patriarch: 'Church uses language of Jesus, not of politics'



In a statement released on Wednesday, the Director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, confirmed that a conversation took place in the early afternoon between Pope Francis and Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Mr. Bruni noted that Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Head of the External Relations Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, also attended the meeting.

War in Ukraine

The statement said their conversation focused "on the war in Ukraine and on the role of Christians and their pastors in doing everything to ensure that peace prevails."

Pope Francis thanked the Patriarch for the meeting, motivated by the desire to point out, as shepherds of their people, a path to peace, to pray for the gift of peace and for a ceasefire.

The Pope said, in agreement with the Patriarch, that "The Church must not use the language of politics, but the language of Jesus."

Pope Francis added that "we are shepherds of the same Holy People who believe in God, in the Holy Trinity, in the Holy Mother of God: that is why we must unite in the effort to aid peace, to help those who suffer, to seek ways of peace, and to stop the fire."

Mr. Bruni also said the Pope and the Patriarch stressed the exceptional importance of the ongoing negotiation process, because, according to the Pope, "those who pay the price for war are the people; it is Russian soldiers and common people who are bombed and die."

Duty to aid suffering people  
The statement continued quoting Pope Francis as saying

that "as pastors we have the duty to be close to and help all people who are suffering from the war."

"There was a time, even in our Churches, when people spoke of a holy war or a just war. Today we cannot speak in this manner. A Christian awareness of the importance of peace has developed."

Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill agreed that "the Churches are called to contribute to strengthening peace and justice."

Pope Francis concluded the video call, lamenting the cost of war.

"Wars are always unjust, since it is the people of God who pay. Our hearts cannot but weep before the children and women killed, along with all the victims of war. War is never the way. The Spirit that unites us asks us as shepherds to help the peoples who suffer from war."

Pope Francis' and Patriarch Kirill's 2016 Statement

The Pope and the Patriarch met in person in Cuba in 2016, signing a joint statement lamenting the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

"We deplore the hostility in Ukraine that has already caused many victims, inflicted innumerable wounds on peaceful inhabitants and thrown society into a deep economic and humanitarian crisis," they wrote. "We invite all the parts involved in the conflict to prudence, to social solidarity and to action aimed at constructing peace. We invite our Churches in Ukraine to work towards social harmony, to refrain from taking part in the confrontation, and to not support any further development of the conflict."

The 2016 joint statement went on to call on Christians to pray for an end to war.

## ST. JOSEPH - PATRON OF GOOD DEATH

Feast of St. Joseph is on 19th March. What a blessing! What a privilege for the Church to make St. Joseph, the patron saint of a good death! And was it not a blessing for St. Joseph to have the assistance of Jesus and Mary when he was dying as like some Jews he too believed in the resurrection? Hence the Church encourages Christians to face death with faith in the resurrection. According to Pope Francis, the Christian faith is not a way of exorcising the fear of death, but rather to help us to face it. And what better example can we have than that of St. Joseph who knowing before his death who Jesus and Mary were, died in their presence?

Two young ladies (sisters) who spread the Divine Mercy devotion when it was first started in eastern India, lost their mother some years back. They are in my Parish, but I could not go for their mother's funeral. So, one day, after Sunday Mass, I approached them and said: "I was sad to know about your mother passing away. My heartfelt sympathy ...!" They thanked and said: "there was nothing to be sad about because our mother believed in the resurrection and so we will meet her again for eternity in heaven." What a thought!

Yes indeed! Through faith in the resurrection, the Church advises that we can face the abyss of death without being overwhelmed by fear because the true light that illuminates the mystery of death comes from the resurrection of Christ. In a sense, thinking about death enlightened by the mystery of Christ, helps us to look at all life through fresh eyes. Therefore, the Church advises us against the empty accumulation of possessions as one day we will die. Rather, what we must accumulate is charity, the ability to share, not to remain indifferent to the needs of others, keeping in mind, all the time "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" - 1 Thessalonians 5:2. DEATH remains an event we must reckon with, and before death, we must make choices. "What is the point of arguing with a brother, with a sister...?" "Before death, many issues are brought down to size. It is good to die reconciled, without grudges and without regrets!" More so now for the so-called "feel-good" culture tries to remove the reality of death, but the coronavirus pandemic that



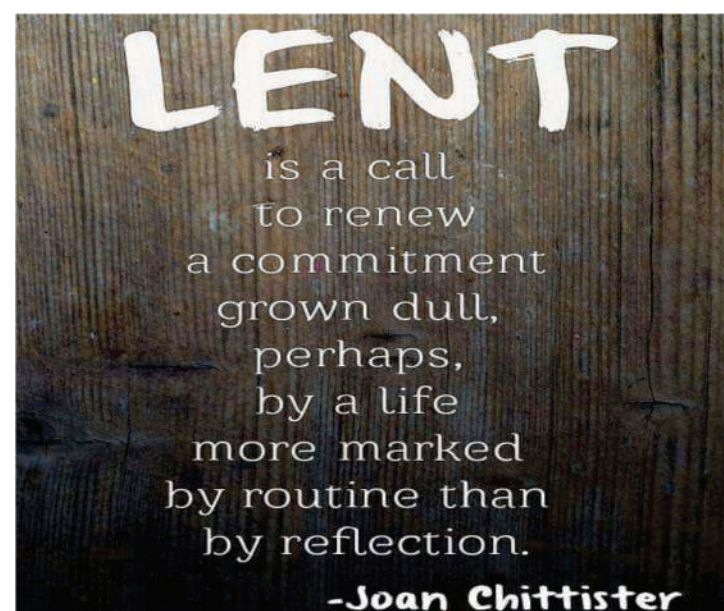
has brought it into focus in a dramatic way with many people dying without loved ones being able to be near them, made death "harder to accept and process."

In Matthew 24:35-39, Jesus tells us: "Sky and Earth will pass away but my words will never pass away. But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." And in John 14:1-3 Jesus assures us: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, Pope Benedict XV, a century ago, wrote that "through

Joseph we go directly to Mary, and through Mary to the origin of all holiness, Jesus." In this regard, Benedict XV encouraged pious practices in honour of the Saint, recommending that since he is considered as the most effective protector of the dying, it is the concern of the Pastors to encourage the pious associations that have been established to implore St. Joseph on behalf of the dying such as those of the 'Good Death', of the 'Transit of Saint Joseph' and 'for the Dying'.

Pope Francis in a talk at a general audience told to implore the intercession of St. Joseph to help us live the mystery of death in the best possible way, because, for a Christian, "the good death is an experience of the mercy of God, who comes close to us even in the last moment of our life." In the ends of his catechesis, the Holy Father invited all present to pray a "Hail Mary" for the dying and those experiencing bereavement, because in that same prayer, we pray for Our Lady to be close to us "at the hour of our death."

—By DOMINIC J. AZAVEDO



## STORY BANK

## Some Recommendations to Implement and Improve On the Ministry of Migration

New Delhi: Rev. Fr. Jaison Vadassery, Executive Secretary, Commission for Migrants (CCBI) organized a webinar on Saturday, March 5, from 10 A.M. – 12.00 Noon. The participants were the regional secretaries from Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. Sr. Leema, (Bihar Region), Fr. Anil Kujur (Jharkhand region), Fr. Pramode Kumar (Orissa Region) and Fr. F. Sunil Rosario (West Bengal region) participated in this webinar. Besides Sr. Rani, who works for the cause in CBI office also reflected on this major concern of the Church.

Fr. Jaison spoke on the purpose of this webinar at the outset. It was to focus on these regions mainly, who supply labor force to various cities in India. Either as domestic workers or in the constructions works in South and in the cities of India. The Migrant workers face difficulties and life for them are uncertain and in many cases insecure. The domestic workers are exploited and discriminated. Their human rights are not protected. It's a matter of justice and the Church has enormous role in this area of concern.

Holy Father, Pope Francis is very keen on this particular concern and mission. He wants that a strategy to help the Migrants and refugees be worked out in every diocese and within the region. He gave the basic objectives towards building the strategy, to welcome, to protect, promote and integrate the migrants into mainstream society and parishes.

The common thread into the discussion was to highlight on the plight of migrants due to discriminatory policies and unjust work conditions.

Some of the Recommendations that emerged in the discussion:

- In India, the major concern is of the internal migrants, who move away from their home of origin in search of jobs, education of children and settlement.

- Training and motivation is necessary to gear up this challenging mission.

- Study the Labor Law of the Migrants and connecting issues

- In Seminaries and houses of formation, to emphasize on the importance of this special ministry, this concern should

be taken up with the support of Bishops, Seminary and formation houses faculties. The concern of Migrants, refugees, misplaced and the domestic workers be integrated into Pastoral theology, Missiological Studies and Social Teachings of the Church.

- Fighting against the atrocities by the Agents/ Contractors who recruit labour and distribute them to cities and homes as domestic labour etc. (Hijacking women and children who are vulnerable) – Their just wages, Working hours, health care, Security, Weekly holiday, any harassment (Sexual, physical, emotional, psychological) etc...

- Contractors/agents work under pressure by the 'mafia wings' For them it is Labour for profit. Trafficking of women and children is rampant in such transactions of human labor – Contractors are multi-dimensional and at multi-level transaction business in human trafficking.

- Building a team of those to fight against such ill treatment and injustices done to the migrant labourers.

- The Bishops and clergy of each diocese, the commission should organize programs to conscientize them towards taking interest and to motivate all in the diocese towards this important ministry of the Church

- Jharkhand – Bihar - Orissa – Bengal are very vulnerable. The migrant workers are recruited from these regions to send them to the South Indian cities, Chennai, Kerala, Bangalore and other cities, i.e. Delhi, Mumbai... Some follow-up system to be created.

- Have Transit points for the Migrants in the dioceses

- Printing posters/Flex at Diocesan levels – Parish and Regional level to conscientise faithful towards the concern. Print state wage cards to be distributed

- Build a theology of Migration in Indian context – Missiological and Pastoral perspective

- The Exodus Series, A Resource Guide for the Migrant Ministry in Asia, a compendium of eleven teaching units designed as a reference or training guide for pastoral workers in the migrant ministry.

- The program invites resource persons who provide input on migration as a phenomenon, migration in the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church, Church-inspired programs and services for migrants and their families, such as counseling, program assessment, advocacy and drafting plans of action. The program also provides a venue for pastoral workers to share experiences and to foster networking and cooperation.

- Information on Ukraine from the Vatican is circulated to all on their situation and present condition. The foreign workers and students coming out of Ukraine – 3,30,000 Indian students in Ukraine – Church is aware of this acute problem. Also many African students – This has been raised at the level of the European Parliament as well, from March 2 – European Union countries admit all the foreign citizens possessing resident in Ukraine to cross the border even without a passport.

- Commission will form a Catholic organization Group to respond to the Ukraine emergency – ICMC will be present in this group.

- The model of Exodus series could be implemented in India. Each year, some 30-40 participants coming from different Asian countries and some others working with Asian migrants in other continents, gather in Tagaytay City, Philippines for a week of formation, reflection, dialogue, networking, and planning for future action. Similar program in India will enhance the ministry to Migrants and domestic workers. This itself will be a huge challenging task for the Commission for Migrants, (CCBI).

— By Francis Sunil Rosario

"The kingdom of God ought to reshape our vision of what matters."

— RUSSELL D. MOORE

### Story 143: Moinuddin Chisti, Benefactor of the Poor

FR. FELIX RAJ SJ



On October 11, 2007, an explosion occurred in the courtyard (Dargah) of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti at Ajmer in Rajasthan, India. The blasts took place just before 'Iftar' at the shrine, popularly known as Ajmer Sharif. It was the holy fasting period of Ramadan (Ramzan) and evening prayers had just ended.

A special NIA court in Jaipur had convicted Devendra Gupta, Sunil Joshi and Bhavesh Bhai Patel and acquitted several others accused in the case that included controversial former Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) activist Swami Aseemanand who was earlier accused in other cases like Mecca Masjid blast, Malegaon blast in 2006 and Samjhauta Express blast in 2007.

Chishtī Mu'īn al-Dīn Ḥasan Sijzī, known more commonly as Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī by Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, was a Persian Sunni Muslim preacher and Sayyid, ascetic religious Moinuddin Chishtī was also popularly known as Ghareeb Nawaz (benefactor of the poor). One of the most significant saints of the Indian subcontinent, he introduced and established the Chishtī order in South Asia and significantly contributed to the spreading of Islamic Sufi mystic order.

His main beliefs were achieving oneness with God, devotion to the Divine, leading a pure life, showing compassion and charity for the helpless and poor. Ajmer Sharif Dargah is a Sufi tomb of the Moinuddin Chishtī.

Chishtī arrived in Delhi from Iran in 1236 and moved to Ajmer shortly thereafter. He became increasingly influenced by the writings of the famous Sunni Hanbali scholar and mystic Abdallāh Anṣārī, whose famous works played a role in shaping Mu'īn al-Dīn's worldview. It was during this time in Ajmer that Mu'īn al-Dīn acquired the reputation of being a charismatic and compassionate spiritual preacher and teacher.

Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī's legacy rests primarily on his having been "one of the most outstanding figures in the annals of Islamic mysticism". He was one of the first major Islamic mystics to formally allow his followers to incorporate the "use of music" in their devotions, liturgies, and hymns to God.

People offer 'Chadars' at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah on the occasion of Urs. It is an annual festival held at Ajmer which commemorates the death anniversary of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishtī.

Sufism is a mystical form of Islam, a school of practice that focuses on the spiritual search for God and shuns materialism. It is a form of Islamic mysticism which stresses on asceticism. There is a lot of emphasis on devotion towards God. Self-discipline is considered an essential condition to gain knowledge of God by sense of perception. Unlike orthodox Muslims who emphasise on external conduct, the Sufis lay stress on inner purity. Sufis believe service to humanity is tantamount to service to God.

Moinuddin Chishtī was born in Sijistan (modern-day Sistan) in Iran in 1141-42 CE. After Mu'izz ad-Din Muhammad bin Sam of Ghor had already defeated Prithviraj Chauhan in the Second Battle of Tarain (1192) and established his rule in Delhi, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishtī started living and preaching in Ajmer.

His instructive discourses, full of spiritual insights, soon drew the local populace as well as kings, nobles, peasants and the poor from far and wide. His shrine in Ajmer was visited by rulers like Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Sher Shah Suri, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb.

Moinuddin Chishtī founded the Chishtī Order in India. It emphasised the doctrine of the unity of being with God (Waḥdat al-wujūd) and members of the order were also pacifists. They rejected all material goods as distractions from the contemplation of God. They abstained from connection with the secular state.

Recitation of the names of God, both aloud and silently (dhikr jahri, dhikr khafi), formed the cornerstone of Chishtī practice. The Chishtī teachings were carried forward and popularized by disciples of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishtī like Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i-Shakar (Baba Farid), Muhammad Nizamuddin Auliya and Nasiruddin Mahmud Chirag-Dehlavi.

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### Miraculous Novena Prayer to St. Jude

O Holy St. Jude, Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles, near kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor of all who invoke your special patronage in time of need to you. I have recourse from the depth of my heart, and humbly beg to whom God has given such great power, to come to my assistance.

Help me in my present urgent petition (mention your urgent need). In return I promise to make your name known and cause you to be invoked.

(Say 3 Our Fathers, 3 Hail Marys, & 3 Glory Be)

St. Jude, pray for us and all who honour you and invoke your aid.

Amen.

## St. Xavier's College NSS celebrates International Women's Day

International Women's Day was celebrated on 13th March 2022, for the women of six villages in South 24 Parganas, adopted by St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, at the Raghbapur campus. More than 150 women, who belong to the various SHGs under NRLM, joined the celebration, the theme being "Ei Akashe Aamar Mukti"

The Chief Guest for the programme was Mrs. Leena Gangopadhyay, Chairperson of the West Bengal Commission for Women. The Principal of the College, Rev. Dr. Dominic Savio, SJ, in his keynote address, mentioned the efforts and initiatives undertaken by the College NSS to uphold the dignity of women, especially in the rural community. He reiterated the fact that St. Xavier's College was committed to bring about overall development of the villages and that the Raghbapur campus was an example of that commitment. He said, "More than 70% of students studying were females and that this rural campus was established with the objective of providing opportunities for higher education to the rural students especially girls." He assured the women present that there were several development projects which the college will begin soon, and which will help the village around this campus and in South 24 Parganas. "Our aim is to upskill our women so that they can earn and support their family as well as have an identity of their own", expressed the Principal.

Mrs. Leena Gangopadhyay, the Chief Guest, in her address, compared the Commission to an umbrella under which women from all walks of life were welcomed and nurtured. She said, "Each and every woman should be



aware of their rights, and entitlements so that they can contribute towards building a strong and empowered society. She cited examples of how the Commission helped women in distress and she expressed her desire to work closely with the college to conduct awareness sessions for the women of the rural areas. She gave examples of how women survivors of violence and other forms of atrocities were even absorbed as Commission members. Her presence and her sharing were a reassurance to all the women present, who were happy to know that there was a Commission whom they could approach in case of any atrocity or violence committed against women.

Ms. Jayati Nath from Nurshikdar chowk village expressed- "Leena ma'am er kotha shune khub bhalo laglo, shotti tohamra shobai khub khomota prapto khali nijer upor bharosa rakhina" (I was happy listening to Leena ma'am. Really, we all are empowered but it just that we don't believe in ourselves). Similarly, Mallika Panja from Raghbapur village said, "...Father Principal je bollen ekhantheke amader onek kichu shekhano hobe, taari apkekhai thaakbo

amra." (Father Principal said that there will be trainings conducted for us, we will wait for it). The women were happy to know about the research and gender studies cell which Fr. Principal announced would begin at the rural campus.

Rev. Fr. Johnson Padiyara, SJ, the Vice Principal of Raghbapur campus concluded the programme by thanking the Chief Guest, Fr. Principal, faculty members present and all the women for joining the celebration. He appreciated the efforts of NSS and the team and thanked everyone who was involved to organise this programme. Ms. Cheryl Francis, the NSS Director thanked Fr. Johnson for providing all the logistical support. She further thanked Prof. Sujata Pakrashi Lahiri, Director of Performing Arts and a member of the Commission for her association with NSS in organising the programme. Ms. Francis reassured the women that the College is with them and would act as a link between village women and the Commission. As a follow up of today's programme, the NSS plans to conduct capacity building exercises and awareness sessions in each of these villages.

— Reported by Cheryl Francis

