

Advent
The Season of Hope and Expectation

PEACE

JOY

LOVE

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 11

Dear Brothers and friends of Edmund,

Greetings from Goa.

At the beginning of this month we remembered and prayed for all our Brothers, family members and friends who are no longer with us.

One person whom I remembered very specially on the 1st was Br. Colm Keating. I always admired Colm for his commitment to "that man from Nazareth" and his love for the poor. He spent the last few years of his life with the poor. For me he is a saint who is not canonised. An article by a Journalist appreciating Colm Keating and the Brothers of his time is reproduced in the Newsletter.

The Pope is canonising India's first lay person-Devasahayam Pillai- a Christian lay man who was martyred for his faith by the then Travancore rulers. He will be officially canonised in May 2022.

From the 31st of October to the 12th of November, the 26th summit conference on climate change was held in Glasgow. From all accounts the meeting was a failure with the developed countries not willing to invest in climate change infrastructure for the developing countries. A lot of talk was generated but very little concrete commitments were made.

The 14th of November had been declared a few years ago by Pope Francis as World Day of the poor. It went hardly noticed by the church but a group of lay people in Vasco distributed food hampers to the poor on that day.

The 21st of November was the feast of the Presentation. It is the feast day of the Presentation sisters and the Presentation Brothers. The Presentation Sisters had a very well prepared novena for the occasion and the Presentation Brothers had prepared a Video.

An appreciation of the Christian Brothers by the citizens of Quilon (now Kollam) has been found by Noel de Sa in the Bow. It was presented to the Brothers over 50 years ago. Martin Fernandes was able to convert it into a Word file and it is reproduced in the Newsletter.

Yours fraternally

Mark

INDIAN PROVINCE
NEWSLETTER



FAITH AND DYING

The common notion among us as Christians is that if someone has a genuine faith, they should be able to face death without fear or doubt.

The implication then of course is that being afraid and doubt when one is dying is an indication of a weak faith.

While it's true that many people with a strong faith do face death calmly and without fear, that's not always the case, nor necessarily the norm.

The night before he died, Jesus accepted his death, clearly. But that acceptance was not yet full resignation. That only took place the next day on the cross in a final surrender when, as the Gospels put it, he bowed his head and gave over his spirit. And, just before that, he experienced an awful fear that what he had always believed in and taught about God was perhaps not so.

Maybe the heavens were empty and maybe what we deem as God's promises amount only to wishful thinking. But, as we know, he didn't give into that doubt, but rather, inside of its darkness, gave himself over in trust. Jesus died in faith – though not in what we often naively believe faith to be. To die in faith does not always mean that we die calmly, without fear and doubt.

Sometimes people with a deep faith face death in calm and peace. But sometimes they don't and the fear and doubt that threatens them then is not necessarily a sign of a weak or faltering faith. It can be the opposite, as we see in Jesus.

Inside a person of faith, fear, and doubt in the face of death is what the mystics call 'the dark night of the spirit' ... and this is what's going on inside that experience: The raw fear and doubt we are experiencing at that time make it impossible for us to mistake our own selves and our own life-force for God.

When we have to accept to die in trust inside of what seems like absolute negation and can only cry out in anguish to an apparent emptiness then it is no longer possible to confuse God with our own feelings and ego. In that, we experience the ultimate purification of soul. We can have a deep faith and still find ourselves with doubt and fear in the face of death. Just look at Jesus.

Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

**THE MYSTERY WE CALL GOD IS THE
GRACE OF OUR EXISTENCE**

KARL RAHNER



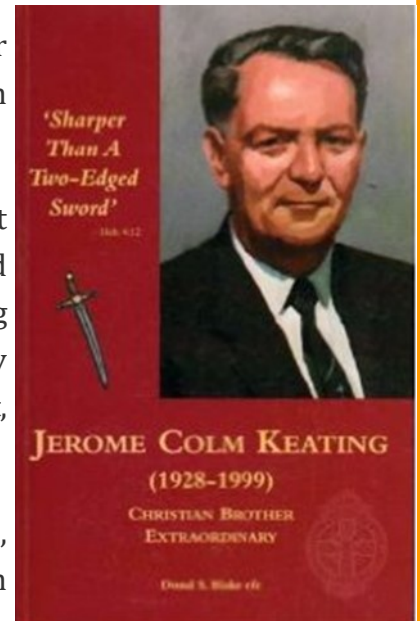


Men of God who were much maligned

Sometimes, especially at this time of the year, it is good to look back over the recent past, and perhaps to add a corrective note to what had been written and perhaps widely accepted.

I have been reading lately a book that was given to me as a present, but which was published way back in 2004. This is by Donal S. Blake cfc, and is entitled 'Sharper Than a Two-Edged Sword': Jerome Colm Keating (1928 - 1999), Christian Brother Extraordinary, privately published by the Christian Brothers themselves in 2004. (Though now out of print, copies may be available on the internet second hand from time to time.)

Donal Blake, who is the author of a biography of Mother Mary Aikenhead, is the Postulator of the cause of Edmund Ignatius Rice, that patriotic man of God.



So what follows here is not so much a review of a book, as an appreciation of both a gallant man, and of the author who wrote about him. It takes courage to go against the sweep of the tide that is public opinion in Ireland, but both of them did.

This book tells a tale of altruism and idealism symbolised in the life of Brother Jerome Colm Keating, and it also provides the inside story of the Christian Brothers during the last two generations, here in Ireland and abroad.

Jerome Keating was born on a small holding near Cahirsiveen in Co Kerry on October 18, 1928.

He and his brother Michael (who also joined the Brothers) were says the author "typical of a number of local boys who joined the Christian Brothers in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Keatings came from a small farm of some 30/40 acres at Knockeens just outside Cahersiveen. Like most families in the area fishing supplemented the family income. He joined the Christian Brothers aged fourteen."

After graduating as a teacher, he was a member of the staff in a number of the Congregation's primary and secondary schools specifically established to make education available to the sons of poor and working-class families.

But Jerome Keating was recognised as a man of substance. Following attendance at UCD and the Lateran University in Rome, he lectured at third level Institutions.

Brother Keating was a strong supporter of the Second Vatican Council and enthused about its deliberations and the reforms it proposed. Commanding respect among his peers, he was elected to a





number of positions of responsibility before becoming the 13th superior general in 1990.

Leadership in time of rapid change is often difficult. For him and other superiors the period following the Second Vatican Council was particularly challenging as they implemented the reforms of the Council and sought to update the Congregation.

As the author indicates the last decades in the 20th Century were even more challenging for Brother Keating and his colleagues.

There was a catastrophic decline in vocations and many departures. Worst of all, there were the clerical sex abuse scandals and a vindictive campaign by some media outlets whereby, by implication, the whole Congregation of the Christian Brothers and not just a few individuals were involved in abuse or its cover-up.

But the author is also able to describe how the Congregation continues to flourish in Africa and India. Its members remain committed to its missionary purpose and charism. Thus Brother Keating, despite his fragile health, typically spent his final years as a missionary in the harsh conditions of the South Sudan before he died on October 4, 1999.

The author records that “at Br. Jerome Colm Keating’s funeral mass on the October 8, 1999 Brother Edmund Garvey said ‘As Superior General, he was honoured many times and in many places throughout the world. He was not always at home in these situations, but when such honours and hospitality came from poor people of this world, he truly enjoyed himself.’”

He was a good man, well worth recalling. But sad to say there is today no Christian Brothers present in his native Cahirsciveen, beyond the ashes of their dead in the graveyard near the old entrance to the primary school off the church.

J. Anthony Gaughan

ADDRESS

**Presented to the Irish Christian Brothers
On the eve of their departure from Quilon**

Revered Brothers,

We the public of Quilon, comprising the parents, guardians, former pupils and well-





wishers of St. Aloysius High School, have assembled here in meeting, to honour you, to pay our tributes of gratitude to you and to record our appreciation and approbation of the meritorious service you have done for us.

This School has been under the management of the Diocese of Quilon from 1896. However on an invitation from the Diocese 32 years ago, your Superiors took up with cheerful readiness the management of the School. Evidently it was in accordance with the loftiest ideals of the Congregation and the spirit of dedicated service of its devoted members to the cause of education. Thus from 1935 the growth and development, the activities and achievements of St. Aloysius High School formed the saga of selfless service and sacrifice on the part of the Irish Christian Brothers. The services of some of them like Br. J.G. Pakenham, the first Manager, Br. T.A. Browne, the first Headmaster under the new Management, Br. J.J. Crease, Headmaster and Manager, Br. M.B. Maher, an excellent teacher of English, Brs. P.J. O'Keeffe and Br. F.T. Ittikunnath, the departing Headmaster and Manager will be remembered with gratitude and recorded in the Annals of the School. Br. Pakenham launched a scheme to provide scholarships of the value of half the fee to help poor and promising students. In recent years mid-day meals have also been provided for a few very poor students. Special mention must be made of Br. Ittikunnath, who having become Headmaster at the early age of 26, guided the destinies of the institution for well over two decades in cordial collaboration with the experienced and erudite teachers who were already on the staff.



You started with 400 students on the rolls and 12 teachers on the staff and now when you leave us the strength of the students and of teachers has trebled. Again, you started with English medium, later switched on to Malayalam medium and now you run in both media. All this meant more buildings and more equipment, but your superiors were generous enough to take pains and bestow care or willing enough to spend more money on new buildings, more equipment, better laboratories and better amenities for the students and teachers. Knowing full well that the success of an educational institution depend on a contented staff, you, as Christian Brothers, treated them with Christian charity and justice in the matter of promotion, enhancement of salary and similar other pressing issues. Students were also encouraged in their studies and extra-curricular activities.

It is with great sorrow and anxiety that we, the beneficiaries of St. Aloysius school, bid farewell to you both, our benign benefactors. While recording our sincere appreciation of your efforts tending to the progress of this town and according to our honest praises to you we request you to convey to your Provincial Superior in India and the Superior General, whom we had received in public and honoured last year, our deep sense of gratitude and sentiments of fealty and loyalty.





Once again thank you and pray to God to keep you both , and all other dear Brothers who were connected with the School, in health, vigour and cheer and impart His Benediction on your Congregation.. Let us cherish and nourish mutually sweet memories of our association.

Farewell ! God be with you !!

JAI HIND !!!

12-11-1967

We remain

The Public of Zuilon

CHILDRENS' DAY PROGRAM

St. Vincent's High and Technical school celebrated this year's Children's' Day with a different vibe. The teachers put in their very best on the virtual platform to make this day memorable for the children.

The celebration commenced with a meaningful speech given by Brother Walter Vaz to uplift the spirit of the children. The classical prayer dance performed by the staff gave a befitting start to the program. The mellifluous songs portrayed the love the teachers have for their students. Several dance performances too were put up by the teachers. The musical drama, 'Beyond the Mask' was based on the pre and post effects of the pandemic and the interim period when we were trying to adjust, adapt and acclimatize ourselves to the new normal.

The dance on the remake of the popular and trending song " Manike Mage Hite" performed by the teachers around the school campus was phenomenal and went viral. It has garnered almost 1.6 million views on the social media at the time of writing this article. The idea behind the dance performance by the staff was that if the children can't come to school, we can take the school to the children albeit the online mode. The teachers felt that there was a lot of negativity and depression



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pervading the pandemic. Children have had to stay out of school for nearly 20 months without socializing with their friends and interacting with the teachers except on the online platform. The words of the song were rewritten to send a message to them that their teachers are waiting for them in school and hoping that they will unite soon. What came as a surprise for the teachers was the appreciation that they received not only from the school students and parents but also from viewers across the globe. The teachers are thrilled with the overwhelming acknowledgement received.

Overall, the students enjoyed the program and it showed that nothing could deter the spirit of the SVS staff from expressing their love and care for their students even in the midst of a pandemic.

Ravi Victor

Our Novices spend 2 weeks with the Chambery Sisters

Personal and community life's experience

"We can't put off living, until we are ready".

Life always has something to offer, and we refuse to acknowledge that fact because of our ignorance and ego. But whoever accepts the gifts from life will cherish them forever.

I, Sanjoy, personally had a remarkable two weeks in TANMAYA, an institution run by the Sisters of St Josephs of Chambery. We novices went there to attend a two week course on the Sacraments and Pauline's letters.

Along with the classes, I also had some wonderful experiences. There were also 19 sisters, from various congregations, who attended the course. For a couple of days, I was like a fish out of water. But as the days passed, I began to feel at home. The Sisters were generous and loving, and I became their *chotu* (the little one). I remember the day, when I could not join them for a short walk after dinner; all were concerned about me the next day. It revealed their sense of care for others. I also, became quite intimate with some of the Sisters, who had been through some experiences similar to mine. At times I cried while they were sharing their vocation stories.

They integrated us in their household activities such as games, manuals, prayers, and so on. They had a schedule which they observed with conviction. I was inspired to introspect on my own lifestyle. They were extremely devout and spent a qualitative amount of time in prayer and adoration. They were responsible and cooperative in all the work assigned to them. I saw them quite serious about their study and preparations for their vocation to live in Christ.

I was completely engrossed in all that I did, because of the enlightening atmosphere around the place and some exemplary Sisters. The two weeks course has taught me some brilliant lessons on religious





life and encouraged me to persevere in my own vocation to consecrated life.

I will always cherish this splendid piece of memory in my life.

Thank you!

Sanjoy

My Experience in Tanmaya

The last week of October on the 24th I went to the TANMAYA community for the sessions on SACRAMENT AND ST. PAUL'S LETTERS. I was there for two weeks with the sisters and since it was a new setting for me, I took three days to settle down with them.

What did I learn on the Sacrament and St. Paul?

Sacraments are outward signs of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ by grace given to all souls. During the session on the Sacraments, I was helped to reflect on my daily life and deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ. On other hand, knowing St. Paul's missionary journeys, I discovered parts of my journey. By further reflection on the sacraments and Letters, I hope to get to know my God better.

Regarding the community living, I felt out of place in that large community of about twenty Sisters. I was shy, and disappointed with the community time table, which was packed. The Sisters challenged me by their ways of praying. I basically felt trapped but I faced the challenges thrown at me.

I took part in all the activities whether it was classes, games, prayers, gardening, singing practice, recreation, and preparation for birthday celebrations. I really enjoyed getting involved in these moments, because involvement gave me courage, letting go all my discomfort and shyness.

A week into the programme, I shared my vocation story and from that day my nickname was *LADLA BETA*. Some sisters began to share their own story with me, and a certain bond of trust grew among us. So, the two weeks were not only for the sessions on Sacraments and St. Paul's Letters, but also a good experience for my life journey and friendly relationships with Sisters from different communities.

Dilip

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Two weeks experienced in Tanmaya

Before going to Tanmaya, Br. Parag had informed us about the programme. I gave the impression that I was not interested in it, but in reality, I was because I wanted to let go of my nervousness and shyness. Having arrived there, I experienced a lot of nervousness, shyness and fear because I had never lived with so many Sisters.

The first two days were crucial for me. I found it difficult to relate with the Sisters, and so, when we were told that we could go out for walks or join the games with the sisters, I immediately chose the former.

However, whilst out on the walk, I suddenly realised that it would be better for my emotional growth to join the rest for games, and so, I changed my mind, and played with the Sisters.

I found the food palatable only on Day 1, but the rest of the time, the meals were pure vegetarian, and I was tired of it by the end of the fortnight.

The first Monday we started our classes on the Sacraments. The first day I was not fully present in the classes, It seemed my body was there but my mind was somewhere else. The second day I missed one point. I asked a sister who was sitting next to me to show her notes. She hesitated, but later on she showed me. That was the turning point for us, and we became good friends thereafter, and I enjoyed teasing her.

On Tuesday I had to share my vocation story with the group. I had prepared what I wanted to say but when I went on the stage I panicked, and my throat went dry. Thankfully, I overcame the fear, and went on with my story.

I was placed in a particular group, and on one occasion, we had to conduct a recreation program for 45 minutes. The Sisters asked me to conduct a game. I did, and I was happy that it went on particularly well.

The following week, the Sisters changed their places and I had to sit with another sister for that week. My banter continued with the new Sister too, and she asked me to let her focus on what is going on.

The two weeks, I found had passed quickly. I enjoyed myself interacting with the women, and my nervousness seemed to fade. My spiritual interest rose, as I found myself spending time in personal prayer. My everyday prayer was let me know my God within me as well as in others.

Thus the two weeks was a time where lots of growth took place within me. I had a great time there with the Sisters. I enjoyed their company not only during classes but also the games, at meals, during





manuals and after supper, going for walks. That was a time for deeper sharing, before we retired for the night.

Ranjeet

Poetry Section

DEATH

The tiger is on the prowl – it has been wounded,

It hurts and bleeds, it does not eat.

It has lost its mind and reason.

It ambles in desperation.

The pain-excruciating.

It limps and wanders.

It has to make a kill.

It has to wound and hurt.

It searches for anything to strike at- a tree or a vulnerable prey.

There is no balm to touch its wounds,

It wanders!

The forest scuttles and scatters,

Silently watching from tree tops – no screeching or chatter,

Death lurks in the shadows.

It has no strength. It has lost its power.

It's trapped as it saunters.

The trapper becomes the trapped.

It lays itself in the shade,

While the sun turns its head-

Beating nastily!

It cannot move.

Night falls with its eerie sounds,



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Darkness closes in – it lays its head.

Helpless and proud – comes death.

Ceddy Andrade

(Between 2010- 2011 I went through a phase of my life where things were meaningless and I had lost interest in life. During that time, I had two dreams of a lethargic tiger rambling and chasing anything, but was unable to make a kill. After the second dream I woke up with some of the above lines which I wrote on an old envelope. I was in the train from Guwahati that morning. On reflection realising that I was the tiger rambling and lost. It was a wake-up call for me.)

UNFOLDING THE ROSE

It is only a tiny rosebud,
A flower of God's design;
But I cannot unfold the petals
With these clumsy hands of mine.

The secret of unfolding flowers
is not known to such as I.
GOD opens this flower so sweetly,
When in my hands they fade and die.

If I cannot unfold a rosebud,
This flower of God's design,
Then how can I think I have wisdom
To unfold this life of mine?

So I'll trust in Him for His leading
Each moment of every day.
I will look to Him for His guidance
Each step of the pilgrim way.

The pathway that lies before me,
Only my Heavenly Father knows.
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments,
Just as He unfolds the rose.



~ Rumi

(Sent by a classmate of mine, Ravi)





JTI CLUSTER BULLETIN December 2021

There is a heaviness permeating our globe,
and we, it seems, are stumbling in this dark place,
blinded by its shadows and longing for a spark of light.

Even Mother Earth senses imminent rape from
threats of fracking, mining, digging,
pipe lines, pollution and more.

Grieved, I ran to the woods to hide.
Where are You, merciful God?
Where is Your mercy now for a broken people
and a hurting world?

And from the very soil, the trees, the air and every living
creeping, crawling, flying, walking, swimming creature
rose the whisper, thunder: Here.

Here I am - hiding with you... Hush. Here I am .
We must cuddle together, to share our pain
and we will plot together to birth new life...

Edwina Gateley

PATHARLYNDAN

Here in Patharlyndan the people have been happy to see their six months of hard work of nurturing the paddy has now been paid off with a good crop, a fruit of their labour.

The school examinations were conducted successfully, and the students have got their results and most have performed in flying colours. After the exams, the teachers and the Brothers celebrated Children's day by conducting a sports day. The children participated with great passion and enthusiasm.

Spoken English and Hindi classes are in progress but the attendance for the classes have been poor since the exams are on as well rice harvesting is in progress. In the

The extraordinary thing that is about to happen is matched only by the extraordinary moment just before it happens.

Advent is the name of that moment.

FREDERICK BUECHNER



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meanwhile, Brothers prepared an under 14 football team to participate in an Edmund Rice football tournament in Mawjrong. The boys had a wonderful exposure and learning experience.

The Brothers and our Field worker Tobias Jana met the key persons of the village, to share with them the Government scheme on Meghalaya Piggery Mission. The headman has taken up the responsibility to call for a meeting with village community to discuss this matter for their participation and ownership.

On 13th November the first meeting of the youth was held at the Brothers residence to form a youth group to support village development so that they become an asset as well as leaders who take up responsibility in every single way. There were 22 members attended the meeting and the name chosen for the group is ERYA (Edmund Rice Youth Action).

On the 22nd Jockey arrived for visit from the Hub. He spent a valuable time with us by participating in the activities of the community.



Our junior football team during the Edmund Rice tournament in Mawjrong.



Visiting Mydron village to study what makes Cooperatives successful

UMTYRKHANG

The month of November is a very busy month for the village people with harvesting, threshing and stocking the rice grains, which will continue till early next month; and we have been busy with our regular involvement in the schools of the three villages. Besides the regular classes, the brothers also gathered information regarding the schools through an Educational survey template sent by the Hub, to look at possible ways of improving our impact in the field of education. A number of meetings followed afterward regarding the same, along with the review of the ministry activities.





We continue to learn many things interacting with the SHG and working along with them about the piggery farm. With all the hardships there is lot of positive energy to keep moving forward. Another heartwarming event was about thirty people turning up for the casting of the beam for the Edmund Rice Community Hall being constructed.

Early in the month Bipin spent a week in retreat at the Hub, directed by Con. The bi-monthly check-ins add to the spiritual search and an understanding towards each other. Towards the end of the month, we got an opportunity to meet the Edmund Rice Family, Bengaluru, through zoom. We shared our life here with them and it made us realize the amount of time and energy the Brothers have given to this place. There is a lot more to offer, learn and grow into as we give our lives to this place.

Ceddy made a visit to the community in the second week and his presence was much appreciated, helping us with cooking, sharing his reflections and taking classes in Edwin's absence.



Bipin in classroom action with some very enthu students in Pamlatar



On Ceddy's birthday along with our support staff Juliana and Davis

ERPAKON

We initiated the recruitment for the Project Coordinator with the advertisement for it published in Shillong Times and Mawphor. We were pleased with number and quality of applicants that we received this time. Some selected candidates were interviewed online by a panel of three Brothers. These were further shortlisted and interviewed online by another panel of three.

The Brothers in the Cluster have been enthusiastically engaging in the Congregation Scenario Building process. The small group conversations were hugely insightful as we cocreatively went about building our group Scenario. We are looking forward to the last zoom on the 18th which will bring closure to what has been a deeply spiritual experience.

The Brothers in the Cluster had a monthly recollection on the first Saturday in November. Con Dsouza gave us an online input on Synodality process in the Church and its meaning for us. The Recollection was organised by the Brothers from the Umtyrkhang community.

Sunil Britto

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