



GOOD LUCK

2022

LOVE Happiness  
Peace  
Satisfaction

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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VOLUME 13, ISSUE 12

# INDIAN PROVINCE NEWSLETTER

*Dear Brothers and friends of Edmund,*

Greetings from Goa where the weather has turned a little cooler.

Christmas Greetings and the best for 2022 – a year that may hold a lot of surprises considering that things are so uncertain at present.

The season of Christmas provides us with the opportunity to reflect on what the incarnation means for us. Jesus' life was all about ushering in the Kingdom of God. And 2000 years later it is still a work in progress. Each one of us is called in a unique way to do our bit for the Kingdom.

The last of the Congregation Zoom meetings prior to Part 2 of the Congregation chapter was held on the 18th of December and one hopes that the outcomes of these meetings will bear fruit at the chapter. We pray for the gift of Wisdom for our delegates that they may be able to discern the key issues that our congregation faces and then actualise their recommendations.

An issue that should be causing some concern for the church in India is the number of suicides among religious sisters in the state of Kerala. This newsletter has an extract from a letter written by a team of sisters to the CRI. The church hierarchy is always slow to respond to such issues.

We were very sad hear about the sudden passing of the elder brother of John Xavier. We pray for John and all the members of his family.

A World Icon passed away on the 27th of December. Desmond Tutu who was one of the most effective leaders of the Anti-apartheid movement passed on at the age of 90. He had been suffering from Cancer for a number of years but continued to engage with the major issues confronting our planet.

Let us pray for all our Brothers in the Province who are not well that God may heal them of their infirmities.

On the 30th of December, the Brothers in Goa celebrated the 75th birthday of Martin Fernandes. Besides the community, Larry Miranda, Joel Tavares and David Ryan Silva also took part in the celebration. We now have 7 Brothers who are on the last lap to reaching a century.

Yours fraternally

*Mark*



## THE RICH MEANING OF CHRISTMAS



Christmas is like a perfectly cut diamond twirling in the sun, giving off an array of sparkles. Here are just some of its meanings:

Every year of life waxes and wanes. Every stage of life comes and goes. Every facet of life is born and then dies. Every good moment is doomed to become only a memory.

Every perfect period of living slips through our fingers and disappears. Every hope dims and every possibility turns eventually to dry clay. Until Christmas comes again. Then we are called at the deepest, most subconscious, least cognizant level to begin to live again. Christmas brings us all back to the crib of life to start over again: aware of what has gone before, conscious that nothing can last, but full of hope that this time, finally, we can learn what it takes to live well, grow to full stature of soul and spirit, and get it right. *Joan Chittister*

At Christmas, through his grace-filled birth, God says to the world: "I am there. I am with you. I am your life. ... Do not be afraid to be happy. For ever since I wept, joy is the standard of living that is really more suitable than the anxiety and grief of those who think they have no hope. ... This reality, this incomparable wonder of my almighty love, I have sheltered safely in the cold stable of your world. I am there. I no longer go away from this world. Even if you do not see me. I am there. It is Christmas. Light the candles! They have more right to exist than all the darkness. It is Christmas. Christmas lasts forever." *Karl Rahner*

THE MYSTERY WE CALL GOD IS THE  
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The incarnation does not mean that God saves us from the pains of this life. It means that God-is-with-us. For the Christian, just as for everyone else, there will be cold, lonely seasons, seasons of sickness, seasons of frustration, and a season within which we will die. Christmas does not give us a ladder to climb out of the human condition. It gives us a drill that lets us burrow into heart of everything that is and, there, find it shimmering with divinity. *Avery Dulles*

## A WORRYING ISSUE

Sr. Mary Mercy's untimely death is the latest of nearly 20 reported suicides since 1987 involving novices and sisters mostly serving in Catholic communities in Kerala. An alarming figure indeed! We are deeply concerned as to why some women who join religious life with so much joy and eagerness to serve God and people end up taking their own lives.

Suicide is traumatic for any congregation. Therefore, when the first few suicides were reported, immediately questions could have been raised and corrections made in the way sisters who are troubled for any reason are handled. A troubled sister does display some signs of a disturbed mind, the authorities need to be alert and pick up these signs.

Media coverage often reflects hesitation of congregations and Church leaders to report the news and this leads to delay in investigations besides suspicion on the cause and circumstances leading to suicide. This only serves to add more pain and anguish to loved ones and unnecessary speculations.

This situation calls for exploring the systemic and personal reasons leading to it and find ways of resolving the related issues. It appears that despite living in the 21st century, religious life appears to be still archaic in the way it is lived in some communities.

It is a blot on the Catholic Church when suicides by religious women are frequent but more important, young lives which could be saved are snuffed out!

## A REPORT FROM THE VOCATION PROMOTER

On 2 September 2021, I visited the Edmund Rice House in Bajpe. At the Edmund Rice House I met all the young men and the brothers, namely, John, Frank and Samuel. It was great interacting with the young men who are studying as well as trying to discover God in their life journey. I visited the local Parish priest and the assistant Parish Priest of St. Joseph's Church Bajpe. I had an interesting conversation with them on Vocations in general. I also visited the Bethany Sisters and the Maids of the Poor sisters in Bajpe.





With the help of a few Priests and Nuns friends, I visited a few Parishes in both Udupi as well as Mangalore Diocese. Parishes that I visited were Udupi, Manipal, Karkala, Udyavara, Honnavar, Moodbidri, Sastan, and Arva. I met the Parish Priest of all these parishes and an initial conversation with regard to vocation promotion was made with them. Most of these priests knew the Christian Brothers' in Bajpe, so introducing me to them became much easier. I found Arva a good place for vocations. I am glad that I made a visit to all these places and made the initial conversation with people concerned for further vocation work.



With the novices in Mt. St. Joseph's, Bangalore

With the Hostel boys run by the Jesuits in Gaunaha



Just before leaving for Bangalore from Bajpe on 10 September, I had a fall in the Edmund Rice House. The wet tiles went unnoticed and I slipped and banged my left shoulder against the wall. First aid was done and I went to Bangalore by train. As I reached Mount Saint Joseph, my cousin priest, told me to go and see the doctor. An X-ray was taken, a hairline fracture was noticed; Ice pack, ointment and tablets were recommended by the doctor. All my vocation promotion work in Bangalore was cancelled. The nurse at Mount Saint Joseph took care of me. In their novitiate, I took classes for the novices on Scripture and Prayer.

My next visit was to the De La Salle Brothers (FSC) at Boys' Town in Madurai. Plans were made well in advance to visit all their schools as well as their houses of formation. Now that I was a wounded soldier, I had to cancel all my plans and I stayed at Boys' Town with the Brothers and their Postulants. Here, too I took classes for the Postulants but most of my time was spent resting and recuperating. During my time here with the Brothers, I learned a lot about their Formation Program and their work

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with the poor and the marginalized.

In the last week of September, I returned to St. Mary's Dum Dum. In Kolkata, I met an ex student of St. Patrick's Asansol, who is a famous Orthopedic Doctor in Salt Lake. I was his patient for the next one and half months. I had to follow rigorous exercise and yoga for that duration. While resting, reading, reflecting and recuperating at SMO, I made my plans for my next vocation promotion work.

On 14 November 2021, I went to Patna by train. My next few days were spent with my Jesuit friend, Fr. Rajesh Jacob, who was with us in our Juvenate in Shillong. He is the present Rector of Atmadarshan and Xavier Bhawan in

Digha Ghat, Kurji. With his help, I was able to visit a number of villages in Bihar. I visited Kurji, Bettiah, Gaunaha and Chuhadi villages; met the Parish priests of these villages and started my initial conversation of vocation promotion with them. The priests here were very welcoming and have extended their support for vocation work in their parishes in the near future.

In the New Year 2022, I will visit our own Schools for Vocation work. In the first three months of the year, I will visit St. Columba's School, New Delhi, Edmund Rice Mangkara School, Wahrinong, and St. Joseph's College, Nainital. I want to thank all the people who supported me in the ministry of Vocation Promotion.

*William D' Souza*

## Reflective Writing/ Poetry Section

### A BRAINFEVER CALLS

#### Advent of a Monsoon

A winter of the soul was done,  
the first dancing rays of a spring sun  
thawed a frozen heart, dismantled layers of accumulated grime,  
ensconced, controlled .....

#### Protected

Oh foolish One, why did you let go, allow  
for the gentle rays of light, soon turned a scorching heat,  
burning, hurting, blistering, scaring, a heart that was exposed



With the De La Salle Brothers in Madurai





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layers, a layer of shields, too late adopted, the heart was.....

### **Burnt**

Left, wondering why it risked in the spring  
knowing that the heat of the summer was yet to come,  
scarce resources: moisture, colour, nectar, love  
to splash in full bloom, on an arid earth that was still brittle.....

### **Fool**

Lying in a bed, soaked in a summer sweat,  
rumpled sheets translucent, with meagre moisture, draining  
drying, dying a heart barely beating  
lying with your stillness, prone ...

### **Waiting**

For the intuitive sense, to pick up the first sign of change  
nares flaring, at the first gentle caress of its stirring,  
seeking the subtle fragrance of your moisture, for the promise it brings  
fevered, ripped off the shields to once again lie.....

### **Exposed**

Waiting for the soothing, moisture that must come,  
for the cool caress, the musky scent riveting the brain  
said so, but passed you by, repelled by the forces that stir around  
and I walk, heady, naked, alone waiting, to be washed in your drenching ....

### **Balm**

I will wait for, for a frozen winter heart  
a heart that does not feel, burn, hurt, blister, scar is not Heart at all,  
meagre resource I will splurge, moisture, colour, nectar, love;  
for flowers are the seeds of eternity, so .....

### **Risk**

Winter has not yet come,  
the wind still blows from the immensity  
of the Southern Ocean, frolicking white heads  
swirling deep blue; unfathomable.....

### **Depths**

Move, the heart's Ice age is still to come  
it must wait; wait till the last breath of air is done  
and death does come, till then  
risk; moisture, colour, nectar, love; sign of an unencumbered ....

### **Heart**

Risk not, Seedless then, will stand a true fool,  
when you do come  
As come you will.....



*Life*21<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2010*Noah's Arc***ROOM**

Hungry, cold, numb, his splintered hoofs  
 Slipped on the steep sloped stone,  
 His spine a dull pain, all that was  
 Was tiredness emptiness meaninglessness

And she on his back clutching herself close,  
 The waters already broken, and her baby  
 Bumping on the weary donkey's bones,  
 Longing for somewhere, anywhere, to deliver.

Tough young man, striding purposefully on,  
 A cave they'd told him. His own kin, go, go,  
 His child-wife swollen, longing for a place  
 To end the exhaustion. There, there was the cave.



Quickly crib. Quickly clean straw from a corner.  
 Quickly his shawl, stained, threadbare, but all,  
 And the birthing and the biting of the cord  
 And the howl heaven rewarded them both: a child.

O God. Scarcely had the little one sucked,  
 Parents staring, pain forgotten, all huddled,  
 Joy irradiating donkey, mother, baby, dad,  
 From that moment all was warming love.

*Brendan December 2021*



During the month of December, the Christian churches in Chandigarh come together and present a number of Christmas carols. Louis Lopes and his wife Barisha are a part of the St. Steven's School choir. Given below are the lyrics from a very meaningful hymn sung by Barisha with Louis on the key board.



Before I lay me down to rest  
 I ask the Lord one small request  
 I know I have all I could need  
 But this prayer is not for me  
 Too many people on this day  
 Don't have a peaceful place to stay  
 Let all fighting cease that your children may see peace  
 Wipe their tears of sorrow away  
 To believe in a day  
 When hunger and war will pass away  
 To have the hope amidst despair  
 That every sparrow's counted  
 That you hear each cry and listen to each prayer  
 Let me try always to believe  
 That we can hear the hearts that grieve  
 Please help us not ignore  
 The anguished cries of the poor  
 Or their pain will never leave  
 To believe in a day

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When hunger and war will pass away  
 To have the hope amidst despair  
 That every sparrow's counted  
 That you hear their cries and listen to each prayer  
 Father, as you see, I'm just a child  
 And there's so much to understand  
 But if Your Grace should surround me  
 Then I'll do the best I can  
 I promise, I'll do the very best I can  
 To believe in a day  
 When hunger and war will pass away  
 To have the hope amidst despair  
 That every sparrow's counted  
 That you hear each cry and listen to each  
 Prayer {Hear each cry and listen to each prayer}  
 Help us do Your will oh Father  
 In the name of all that's true  
 And we'll see in one another  
 The loving image of You

## A poem sent by Bap Finn

His face  
 pressed against  
 her breast.

So this  
 is what he looks like.  
 The one the prophets spoke of.  
 The one the angel offered.

Her eyes catch Joseph's gaze.  
 Mary whispers,  
 'He looks like us!'





'YHWH looks like us.'

His turned-up nose  
now hunting for milk.  
With trembling fingers  
she does her best  
to flick open the mouth of God.  
Pulling his head in  
closer to her chest.  
Closer to her heart.

In this way,  
God receives his first meal.  
In a stranger's home.  
From the body  
of a teenage Galilean.  
Swallowing and slurping  
like a hungry lamb.

The memory of every event  
leading up to this moment  
courses through her body.  
Tears of relief  
cross her olive cheeks  
and fall upon her newborn.

As Joseph now  
strokes her brow,  
she closes her eyes,  
looks up to the heavens,  
and catches herself  
giving thanks to God  
...who now lays in her arms.

Immanuel:  
God  
with  
us.



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