



INDIAN PROVINCE NEWSLETTER

Dear Brothers and friends of Edmund,

All God's blessings for this Holy Season. May it be a time of renewed commitment to the building of the Kingdom.

Greetings from Goa where it has become increasingly warm and humid. No signs of much rain but the power cuts continue.

During this month, Pope Francis showed remarkable bravery and stamina in making a 4 day visit to Iraq. As he was walking down the steps of the Alitalia plane at Baghdad, one was afraid that some terrorist would make a suicidal attempt on his life. His visit to this war torn nation showed the world that it is indeed still possible to talk brotherhood and international peace in the world today. He showed that "Fratelli Tutti" is not just a papal document to be read and reflected on but must be put into practice.

Congratulations to our new Province Leadership Team-Steve Fernandes (Province Leader), Joe Johnson (Deputy Province Leader), Simon Coelho (Councillor) and David Ryan Silva (Councillor). And a Big Thank You to the outgoing members: Gussy Jairaj, Lenny Lobo and Ralph Sequeira.

Steve Rocha, after a period of discernment had decided to ask for a dispensation. This has been approved and he left St. Columba's, his community for many years on the 31st. of March. During his years in the Brothers, Steve made a unique and outstanding contribution to the mission of the Brothers in various roles. Ralph Sequeira has shared a tribute to him for the Newsletter. We wish him the very best as he commences a new phase in his life.

This Newsletter also contains extracts of the eulogy for Br. Tony Parton and an appreciation of the great man Tony was from the former Head Mistress of St. Columba's- Ms. Anita Ghai.

The Covid virus, that seemed to be on the wane, has again sown a spurt. The new variant is said to be more contagious but less lethal. Many of our Brothers have taken at least one jab of the vaccine.

I was happy to do an online Lenten retreat of the Holy Land. The reflections were good and I learnt a lot about the various places where Jesus performed his ministries.

Yours fraternally

Mark



To be happy

You can have flaws, be anxious, and even be angry, but do not forget that your life is the greatest enterprise in the world. Only you can stop it from going bust. Many appreciate you, admire you and love you.

Remember that to be happy is not to have a sky without a storm, a road without accidents, work without fatigue, relationships without disappointments.

To be happy is to find strength in forgiveness, hope in battles, security in the stage of fear, love in discord. It is not only to enjoy the smile, but also to reflect on the sadness. It is not only to celebrate the successes, but to learn lessons from the failures. It is not only to feel happy with the applause, but to be happy in anonymity.

Being happy is not a fatality of destiny, but an achievement for those who can travel within themselves. To be happy is to stop feeling like a victim and become your destiny's author. It is to cross deserts, yet to be able to find an oasis in the depths of our soul. It is to thank God for every morning, for the miracle of life.

Being happy is not being afraid of your own feelings. It's to be able to talk about you. It is having the courage to hear a "no". It is confidence in the face of criticism, even when unjustified. It is to kiss your children, pamper your parents, to live poetic moments with friends, even when they hurt us.

To be happy is to let live the creature that lives in each of us, free, joyful and simple. It is to have maturity to be able to say: "I made mistakes". It is to have the courage to say "I am sorry". It is to have the sensitivity to say, "I need you". It is to have the ability to say "I love you".

May your life become a garden of opportunities for happiness ...
That in spring may it be a lover of joy. In winter a lover of wisdom.
And when you make a mistake, start all over again.

For only then will you be in love with life. You will find that to be happy is not to have a perfect life. But use the tears to irrigate tolerance.

Use your losses to train patience.
Use your mistakes to sculptor serenity.
Use pain to plaster pleasure.

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Use obstacles to open windows of intelligence.

Never give up Never give up on people who love you. Never give up on happiness, for life is an incredible show.

Pope Francis

Adieu Steve Rocha & PRATYeK

As a young Brother during his years in formation and later during his early teaching years in Abu and St George's, Steve was noticeably attracted to the underdog, which eventually led him to be the first CB in India to get a Masters in Social Work from Mumbai University (1997-9). He later taught in Sangram and Delhi, was CL in Dumdum and Chhattisgarh and a Formator in Bhopal; and the social worker skills he had learnt in his MSW were evident in all that he did. Like a prophet, Steve was attracted to live luminally and to speak up fearlessly. His prayer services during those years were very creative and engaging, reflecting his own deep rhythm.



Steve drew much inspiration from the Munnar Chapter (2008). From 2010 onwards, while in Delhi and Chandigarh, Steve was engaged in child rights work which got formalised in the formation of PRATYeK in 2012 and registration as a Society the following year. Being prophetic, has its costs and Steve bore his fair share of those. Steve's style of operating and his passionate stances often caused misunderstandings with Leadership, Brothers in Community and Ministry and the CCBI Principals he interacted with. He also had a few ardent Brother admirers for his commitment and lifestyle and several more among the staff and students, in India and abroad. He has also had a few Brothers work with him in PRATYeK over the years and has been Edmund Rice International's absolute mascot in many ways.



PRATYeK's logo 'e' borrows symbolism from the Congregational cross and 'Edmund' who Steve owes his inspiration to. In Hindi, PRATYeK means 'everyone', as in 'every last one'. PRATYeK's vision has been 'every right for every child for everyone'. PRATYeK convenes the 'NINEISMINE' campaign, which is a national advocacy initiative of, for and led by children. It is a participatory children's initiative, launched in 2006 to keep the Government accountable to fulfil





the MDGs especially Goal 2, 3 and 4. The initiative seeks 6% for Education and 3% for Health (now 5%) of the GDP's public spending as promised by the Indian Government in 2004 and hence gets the name "9 is mine". Eventually the campaign grew bigger incorporating a strong focus on the last child while seeking 'all rights for all children' with more than 1000 schools and NGOs as partners across 29 States and 7 Union Territories (UTs) that work collectively towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Indian National Policy for Children.



The children associated with NINEISMINE initiative have been able to reach and impact the decision-making process by engaging in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reporting and UN sessions with world leaders. The initiative is facilitating an inclusive environment for all children regardless of their gender, caste, race, creed, disabilities by bringing them together and providing them the space towards achieving the UN SDGs. As a convening organization of NINEISMINE, PRATYeK brings in innovation through 'Circus Art focussing on SDGs and social issues', 'Immersion programs with international schools and colleges and 'Inclusive National Children's



Parliaments', to have an interface between the children and the Nationally Elected Parliamentarians in Parliament. Each child is assigned a ministry based on the SDGs'. The initiative imparts information and understanding about the SDGs through the medium of Flash Mobs, Circus Art, Mime, Puppetry, Street Plays, Fetes and Carnivals.

When Steve, after his discernment, chose to seek for dispensation, the PLT thought it best to allow PRATYeK go with him as the Province didn't have the Brothers who were either passionate or interested in taking responsibility for managing an organisation

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that has grown as big, in scope and reach. Steve has chosen to live in the neighbourhood of St Columba's and PRATYeK's Office has shifted to a rented premises across the campus. There will continue to be opportunities to engage in ministry and tap into the resourcefulness of PRATYeK in the area of child-led advocacy as well as to allow Steve be a non-vowed brother to us in the future. We wish Steve and PRATYeK growth and fulfilment on their new journey.

Ralph Sequeira

A Tribute to Tony Parton from Ms. Anita Ghai, Former Headmistress of St. Columba's, New Delhi

On the morning of 15th February, I woke up to the terrible news that my benefactor and mentor Br. Tony Parton, who had hugely shaped my view on life, work, and many other things, had passed away.

Feels like the end of an era.

Br. Parton suffered through a lengthy decline in health that sapped parts of his mind and his ability to express himself. I usually saw him every time I visited Melbourne, and it was really hard to see someone whose life and career had been built on dissemination and communication; slowly go into a shell of his own.

I recall him showing me around the community while he was in Geelong (Australia), his shed where he practiced his carpentry skills, the little creek behind his residence, etc – he took great pride in the community and life he was leading in Australia.

Br. Parton was the headmaster of the junior school SCS when I joined it. I was totally raw and didn't know much when I walked through the doors of his office. But he guided me and taught me. Before taking over from Br. Parton, I spent a few years learning the skills needed to do justice to that role. The philosophy, dare I say the nobility of the craft was there, but to Tony, none of that mattered if you were not doing your job right. I was trained as much as taught, and for much of it I have Tony to thank.

Whenever I thought I couldn't do it, he told me that I could. For that, I am ever so grateful.

Great mentors, I realized, do not tell you what to do, but always find ways to bring out the best in you.



Tony in St. Vincent's, Asansol





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Tony taught me not to hover and micromanage, but to offer thought-provoking perspective. It's less important that others do things our way than that we together shape the values and principles of our institution. If, in that process, they find how their personal passion connects to the purpose of the institution, you have mentored well.

I hope I have instinctively done that for my colleagues over the years.

Br. Parton's leadership was less about directives and more about exploring ageless themes. He would seek leadership clarity on the other side of the complexity: How, despite all the noise around you, do you help people bring the best out in themselves? How do we build strong teams from strong individuals?

His leadership and example have helped me grow into my potential.

As I reflect on the relationship that we built over the years, how can I not mention his passion for cricket, especially whenever there was an Australia-India match. Although he loved India, but Tony's face would only light up if Australia were to win the match. In due course, we all learnt to steer clear of his office for a few hours if Australia happened to lose a match!

Br. Parton touched so many lives, helped so many people and made them walk in the right path - the path of wisdom. Whilst we were originally brought together for a boss and employee purpose, I soon began to learn from his views and perspectives, and his wealth of knowledge. That will always be fundamental for my understanding of the world.

From planting the first tree, to learning about dyslexia; from learning to recycle paper to pulling weeds from the field; his strong belief in the universe and earth; and from Delhi to Australia - these priceless memories will always be engraved in my heart. I noticed even though he had moved to Australia for good, his heart was in India. The good thing was that he was with his brother Trevor, with whom he shared a close bond.

He definitely lived an amazing life, and I am ever so grateful to have been a part of it.

Having spent 29+ years in SCS, everything I learnt there is a part of me and Tony's contribution in my learning graph is huge. I found guidance, friendship, discipline and love, everything in one person.

He's not with us anymore, but maybe we don't ever say goodbye to a great and gentle





person like him - the important conversations and memories slip into our heads and never leave.

Rest in Peace, Tony Parton.

Ms. Anita Ghai

Eulogy for Br. (Rod) Tony Parton (extracts)

Rod attended St Paul's Bentleigh before he won a scholarship to St Joseph's Technical School in South Melbourne that put him on his future course in the technical area.

His mother, Ellen, was a strong Catholic while his father, Horace, a member of the Air Force only became a Catholic when he was close to death. With his dying father's blessing and that of his recently widowed mother Rod, who was only fourteen, went to the juniorate in Strathfield in January 1944.

When a request was made for brothers to go to India Rod volunteered, more in a spirit of adventure than for any higher motives at the time, and he was overjoyed to be chosen perhaps for his youth, enthusiasm and his technical experience.

He was farewelled at the wharf by his young cousins, Maureen and Christine, as he set off on the P&O Liner 'Strathmore'. Maureen and Christine are here now for this final farewell.

Rod was met at the wharf in Bombay and the next day he set out on a three days train journey to Asansol in West Bengal on the other side of India. This trip was an eye-opener to the extraordinary country that was India and St Vincent's Campus that was set in 120 acres. The company of the community, including two other Aussies, helped so Rod settled in easily and got on very well with the boys when they discovered that he liked to play and coach cricket and other games..

At the end of 1963 he left the Indian mission with a heavy heart returning home to Australia. Back in Melbourne three years were spent in technical teaching in St Mary's, Geelong.

Rod returned to Asansol in 1967. During Rod's times in Asansol, his mother helped to arrange sponsorship for a family to travel to Australia. The Thomas family stayed with Mrs Parton when they first arrived and they then became an integral part of the Parton family and Tony Thomas is with us today.

In 1977 Rod received news that his mother was unwell and deteriorating very quickly so he asked to come home. His mother lapsed into a coma the day after he arrived but they had recognised each





other. Sadly she died a few days later and her large funeral was packed with Brothers, relatives and many of her friends.

When his brother Barry was dying of cancer Rod had to make another sad trip home in 1988 and his plane fare was paid for by the St Vincent's Old Boys Association. This was another indicator of the respect with which the Partons were held

Rod's first heart attack came in 1988 so his stay in Australia helped his recovery. Instead of returning to Asansol, Rod was transferred to St Columba's, New Delhi, where he would be closer to better medical attention but his heart condition gradually worsened. When he was next back in Melbourne, he had by-pass heart surgery.

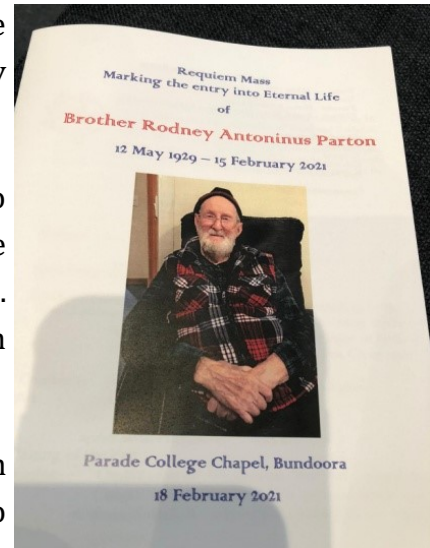
After ten years as headmaster and three as community leader in New Delhi a change was in order.

Rod wanted to return to Australia and he left India early in 2001 with the boys and staff of St Mary's giving him a great send off.

Late in 2017 Rod had a stint of ill-health and he moved to St Catherine's Aged Care Facility in Balwyn. At this time Rod's short term memory had deteriorated he could still tell lots of stories about India. He coped well in the care at St Catherine's and the company of his fellow juniorate entrants Hugh Sharpe and Dermot Shortill. Rod involved himself in helping when he could especially an old Scottish priest, Fr Charles, with whom he had many deep and meaningful discussions. I also have a vivid memory of Rod at one of the parties dressed as Professor Finkenstein complete with a wild white wig.

The positive influence of Rod and the other Australian brothers was shown when a young groundsman at Asansol invited them to his wedding. He was obviously fearful of asking as it was 'not done' to invite a foreign sahib to a low caste function even as important as a wedding. Rod and the others accepted because friendship overrode some social norms.

Br. Terry Burke



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NOVITIATE TALES

Greetings from Bhopal. We are all keeping well and I hope you are also keeping well. The weather in Bhopal is getting warm and the temperature is soaring. The state is in a critical situation at present because of the cases of Covid-19. The Government has imposed curfew at night and on Sundays. All restaurants, places of worship, shops and market places are closed on Sundays. This lock-down started during the 2nd week of this month.

Our classes are going well. Brother Parag took us for Church history. It was informative and opened my mind. I had very little knowledge about the history of the church.

Our boundary wall will be painted. The works has started.

The postulants have been going for their ministry from the 9 to the 24th of this month at the MC Sisters institution in Nehrunagar.

My experiences in Jeevodaya (Itarsi)

Last month I had gone for a ministry and I would like to share about my ministry experience in Jeevodaya.

Jeevodaya in Sanskrit means "Rising Life". It means that even in the most difficult of circumstances, and grim situations, every life has the right to prosper and blossom to its highest potential. With this mission and vision, Jeevodaya works for the upliftment of every child who is disadvantaged because of social bias and injustice that they face in their everyday lives. This institution was founded by Sr. Clara. In 1999, Sr. Clara brought together all the children and improved their living conditions and imparted them with hard and soft skills.

It was a wonderful experience. I was in the boys home for 39 days. I loved to work with the children. I was super excited in the beginning but when the day come to go I felt lost. Many negative thoughts ran through me in the form of questions like...

Q. How will the children behave?

Q. How will I spend a month there?





Q. What will happen if the children do not listen to me?

Q. Why do I have to do this ministry ?

Q. Is ministry necessary in formation?

Q. Is there any other option rather than going for ministry?

I was disturbed by these questions and feeling pessimistic about myself. I had these negative emotions and thoughts because I was moving from my comfort zone, which is the novitiate house. In the Novitiate everything is provided and there is a timetable but now I would have to make my own. I realized that I was running away from reality, which was ahead of me. I thought, I would have a difficult time but it turned into a grace filled experience. I also had some challenging moments but I took them as growing steps and I struggled and overcame them. I started to look at the situation from a different angle and positively. I spent time with them as a friend and as a brother.

Q. How did I connect my prayer life been with the children in SPARC?

I had a wonderful time with the children. At the beginning it was challenging but as the days past everything became comfortable. I started mixing with the children, learning their names and asking them where they were from. I took the initiative and I started to take part in every activity. I was touched by the stories that the children shared with me.

I was longing for this kind of experience and I had this beautiful experience in Sparc. I became so busy that I start to postpone my personal prayer. I also became so flexible that I lost my spiritual discipline. After a few days I found myself losing interest in prayer and keeping myself busy planning for the next day. This led me to confusion, irritation, selfishness, anger, frustration and a totally miserable condition. I started dividing work as others and mine. I was not relating with the children well and I used do get angry whenever they were mischievous. I found myself in a most critical situation and I didn't find anyone to talk to. I came to an awareness that if I continued this way it would not lead anywhere in life and I started asking myself these questions...

Q. What's my quality of life as a novice?

Q. Am I living a spiritual life or am I acting it out?

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Q. Do I pray so that others may notice or do I really need prayer in my life?

Q. Do I pray only when a brother or someone is around?

I used to take an hour for personal prayer(silent time) and daily reading. Also I restarted my journaling. My contemplation and action worked out very well in my ministry. Whenever I met the children I used to share gospel values. Being with the children I saw God in them. There was a day when I was finding it difficult to pray and I was focusing only on my actions. But the next day I said to myself that I will sit for prayer and I prayed. My prayer life is going well. I have got back my balance of both contemplation and action.

Rashal Barla

MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

(Postulants)

From the 8th to the 17th of March, we, postulants went for a ministry to Nirmala Shishu Bhavan, an ashram run by The Missionaries of Charity sisters, located in Nehru Nagar, Bhopal.

We planned out some classes, entertainment and other activities before going. When we reached there, unfortunately, we couldn't do much for the children, since the children were of different categories :mild, moderate and severe disability. We didn't know what to start with and how to start. So, we thought of doing something different.

We came up with some interesting ideas like teaching them origami, taking classes (English, Hindi, Mathematics) , drawing, numbers, colouring, dancing, action songs and games. We were also asked to give a haircut to some of the children. Most of what we did was impromptu.

The children really enjoyed all the activities that we came up with. We too enjoyed ourselves. At the same time there were also some challenging moments for us; teaching them, making them involved in different activities, some of us were also challenged by the language, which became an impediment to interacting with the children and also whatever we taught them, they kept on forgetting. We had to do the same things again and again.



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However, it was really a great experience to be with the children. We were inspired by their lifestyle. They may be disabled in some way, but they had an eagerness to learn. Their presence enhanced the





beauty of the surroundings. They were also well versed in singing, knowledge of basic affairs and most importantly, they were self-sufficient and happy.

Last but not the least, I would say that it was worth going for the ministry, since it brought lot of awareness and knowledge about differently abled children.



Postulants

Cluster Report

APRIL 2021



Hans Kung, the renowned Catholic theologian who the Vatican had barred from teaching, passed away on April 6th. He had once said, "God's love does not protect us from suffering. God's love protects us in the midst of suffering." That rings very true when we are engulfed in the second wave of C19. The liturgies of Holy Week had the same message: God weeps with us so that one day we will laugh with Him.

ERPAKON

Edwin joined the Umtyrkhang community and Jockey joined us mid-month. Vinod, Ajay and Jerry were in the Hub for a Three-day retreat focusing on Religious Life and the Vows. We looked at the three vows through a contemporary understanding described by Diarmuid O'Murchu: Vow for Mutual Sustainability (Vow of Poverty), Vow for Relatedness (Vow of Chastity) and Vow for Mutual Collaboration (Vow of Obedience).

Mahendra did a similar retreat when he returned from his home holiday. All the Annually Professed are preparing their self-appraisals. Their communities will be

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writing an appraisal too and sharing with them and the PLT. They will be renewing vows on May 5th.



Sunil with the new-born calf in Patharlyndan.



David washing a man's wounds in potassium permanganate solution.

PATHARLYNDAN

22nd was a day of joy as one of our cows named Nepli gave birth to a male calf. The calf was born with his hind legs first and the Brothers named him Reverse. With that, the two cows are supplying upto 15 litres of milk. Literally now a land flowing with milk.

Khasis in general consume milk sparingly and thus to distribute the surplus milk is a challenge. The Brothers are in the process of reviewing the Cow Project started a little over a year back. This review will consider the feasibility of setting up a milk cooperative, meeting various Govt officials in the Dairy Departments for their inputs and considering other livelihood projects.

The Brothers are regularly visited by the people bringing the sick for prayers and for first aid. David consults his brother-in-law Alwyn - who is a doctor - on basic first aid that can be offered to the people. The people are extremely grateful as the nearest Health centre is 5 kms away.

Sunil visited Patharlyndan in the last week of the March. Gambhir is at home for a month. Vinod and Ajay take classes in the RCLP school. David is very involved in working with the local SHGs. Community life remains a blessing and David will be missed in the place.

UMTYRKHANG

The Education department had announced that schools were to reopen from the 1st of April. So much of March was devoted in meeting with the School Headmasters and teachers of the local primary schools to review and plan the Brothers' involvement there.





The Brothers also joined the Village Organisation meetings. The Village organisation is an association of the all the Self-Help Groups working in the village. At the meetings, the prospect of launching Piggery livelihood project in the village was agreed and one of the SHGs -Mait Shaphrang - was chosen to implement this. The Brothers have been asked to work closely with Mait Shaphrang in the training and setting up of the project. Meghalaya government had earlier launched the country's biggest piggery project with an investment of Rs 200 crore and set a target to employ 25,000 rural households.

As it was time to bid adieu to Willie and Jockey, there was a farewell function organised in the village. Willie and Jockey will be fondly remembered by the people for the gentle and brotherly ways they connected with people and walked with them through their joys and concerns.

Edwin's joining the Umtyrkhang community has brought in energy and newness. They have been spending a lot of time in reviewing and discussing aspects of community and ministry. The brothers continue to find the common spiritual practices life-giving. The after-dinner Ludo is turning out to be a great form of recreation.



The village felicitate Willie and Jockey in Umtyrkhang.



The Brothers engaging with the people about livelihood projects.

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Sunil Britto





POETRY SECTION

WOW!

Boats did return the horizons had always swallowed;
From hospitals too, people fare-welled to die.
Empty heavens disclosed a wandering star
And barren wombs begot a first-time child.

And what of sights revealed only to some:
What of true prophecies only a few could tell us?
What of the ghosts too many report to de-create
And mysteries resolved by ignorant fortune-tellers?

Acorns breed oaks, and no one gasps in wonder.
Sea-shores offer shining shells and shapes.
Babies grow to changers of society.
Night replaces day, but then dawn breaks.

Come let's count our daily miracles.
Let's celebrate the spring, the goose, the ear.
Then add a million more, and then ten million –
And our additions: hate, and war, and fear.

Brendan March 2021

