



INDIAN PROVINCE NEWSLETTER

Dear Brothers and friends of Edmund,

*The Work of Christmas Begins
When the carols have been stilled,
When the star-topped tree is taken down,
When family and friends are gone home,
When we are back to our schedules*

The work of Christmas begins:

*To welcome the refugee,
To heal a broken planet,
To feed the hungry,
To build bridges of trust,
not walls of fear,
To share our gifts,*

*To seek justice and peace for all people,
To bring Christ's light to the world.*

- by Michael Dougherty, a variation on Howard Thurman's 'When the Song of the Angels is Stilled'

During this sacred season, one cannot help but reflect on what the Gospels tell us about the birth of Jesus. Obviously it is not just a historical narrative but a spiritual message that is relevant for today also.

We live in a world torn by conflict, social injustices and economic turmoil similar to the time when Jesus lived. And yet the Gospels emphasise peace and joy. What can we as individuals and members of a congregation do to alleviate pain and suffering in our world?

Yours fraternally.

Mark





NO ROOM IN THE INN

Some scholars suggest that there is a deeper lesson in Jesus having to be born in a stable because there was no room for him in the inn.

What is being stressed is not so much lack of hospitality by an innkeeper, rather it is the fact that Jesus was born outside of a city, outside of what is comfortable, outside of glamour and fame, outside of being recognized by the rich and the powerful, and beyond notice by the everyday world. Jesus was born in anonymity, poor, outside of all notice, except for family and God.

Being rejected by the city also foreshadowed his death. Jesus' earthly life will end as it began. He will be a stranger, an outsider, crucified outside the city just as he was born outside the city.

Thomas Merton once gave a wonderful commentary on this: *Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because He cannot be at home in it, because He is out of place in it, and yet must be in it, His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied status as persons, who are tortured, bombed, and exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in the world. He is mysteriously present in those for whom there seems to be nothing but the world at its worst.*

Mary gave birth to the Christ in a stable because there was no room for them in the inn. It is a comment upon what, in fact, lies deepest within human life. In essence, what it says is that it is not those who sit at the center of things, the powerful, the rich, the famous, the government leaders, the entertainment celebrities, the corporate heads, the scholars and academics, who ultimately sit at the center of life. What deepest and most meaningful inside of life lies in anonymity, unnoticed by the powerful, tenderly swaddled in faith, outside the city.

Ronald Rolheiser

IS THERE ROOM
FOR
Christ
AT YOUR INN?



OUR GREATEST STRENGTH LIES IN THE
GENTLENESS AND TENDERNESS OF OUR HEART.
RUMI





ERI NOVEMBER TRAINING AT GENEVA

Edmund Rice International hosted a diverse group of members of the Edmund Rice network from across the world. The group comprised nine participants from ministries in Argentina, Australia, Canada, India, Italy, Philippines, South Africa and Tanzania. The participants brought diverse perspectives to the training program held in Geneva from 6-21 November, 2022. Throughout the training, the participants explored the evolution of SDGs, Advocacy, Human Rights and how the United Nations mechanisms and Human Rights mechanism are designed to protect Human Rights globally. They realised that there was a thin line between charity and advocacy.

The opportunity to actively engage in the United Nations 75th Universal Periodic Review and 45th Treaty Body Committee was an amazing and inspiring experience for almost all the participants.

I had the privilege of witnessing the review of my own country and it was an eye opener for me to realise how important this process is for holding our government accountable when it comes to Human Rights. It was one of a kind of experience.



There was great sharing among the participants which provided opportunities to learn from colleagues serving in different ministries around the world.

Participants grew in community and gained the tools to use a rights-based approach to develop an Advocacy Plan that could be used in their own community.

The sessions were very thought provoking. We were asked to reflect and see issues in our own community through the lens of advocacy.

The training session was enriching, inspiring, thought provoking and empowering for all participants.

I am very grateful to the Christian Brothers and ERI for giving me this opportunity of being a part of this training in Geneva.

I look forward to inspire others with what I have learned and to implement the rights based approach in my advocacy programmes.

Daljit Yadav, St. Patrick's School, Asansol





Participants at the Geneva training.

(Back left to right) Matias Barboza (Argentina); Br Terry Dowling cfc (ERI); Br Amos Kutwa cfc (Tanzania); Br Kevin Mullen cfc (ERI); Br Brian Bond cfc (ERI); Br Tino D'Abreu cfc (ERI); Br David Silva cfc (CLT)

(Front left to right) Violet Mary Pratyek (India); Daljit Yadav (India); Rebecca Nalwanga (Australia/Uganda); Sr Josephine Mata FAS (Philippines); Misqah Appollis (South Africa); Michelle Rapiet (Canada)

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Golden Wedding Anniversary of Pius and June Alphonso

Pius taught in St. Edmund's and St.
Columba's for many years





ST. JOHN'S IS AN EXTENDED FAMILY!

GIRL INDIA PROJECT...BEST PRACTICES

St. John's High School and Govt. High School, Bapu Dham

Girls from Govt. High School Bapu Dham have been on a beautiful journey of learning with the students of St. John's. The relationship between the schools has grown into a concrete bond of love, respect and kindness. All the important days, festivals were celebrated together to spread happiness and cheer around.

Girls from GHS Bapu Dham visited the Blood Bank along with our boys as part of the Community Service programme (Outreach Activity). Children learnt about blood donation, the various machinery involved in the blood bank etc. The Apheresis room projected the need for platelets in today's world. The Serology lab was about mitochondria in a cell, which acted as a storehouse of blood, and the physician in the TTD (Transfusion Transmitted Infection) lab created awareness about the blood screening process which took place in the Hematology Analyzer. It was an enlightening experience.



The girls also visited Vatika, Institute for the Hearing and Speech Impaired...along with our boys. They learnt many symbols and words in sign language. They came back excited and enriched, having learnt the letters of their names in sign language.





On the occasion of Deepawali, a special assembly was organized in St. John's. Girls from GHS Bapu Dham performed an energetic Ganesh Vandana, marking the auspicious beginning of the programme. The girls were dressed in serene white and red ethnic costume and performed a soulful dance dedicated to Lord Ganesha.



ATHLETIC MEET & DRILL DISPLAY, 2022

ST. PATRICK'S H.S.SCHOOL, ASANSOL

St. Patrick's H S.School, Asansol, summed up the academic year with the Inter House Athletic Meet and Drill Display for the Middle and Senior Schools on 16th December, 2022. Fr. I.P. Sarto, Secretary of the Bengal Regional SCC Council and Co-ordinator for the Asansol Diocese Commission graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The august gathering comprised our Community Leader, Br. Walter Vaz, the Deputy Mayor of Asansol, various school heads of Asansol, members of the religious community, Coordinators, former teachers, ex-students and enthusiastic parents.



The Athletic Meet which was held after a hiatus of 3 years following the pandemic and the unprecedented closure of schools was a euphoric celebration of the indomitable spirit of our students and was witness to their cravings, struggles and success, as they spread their wings and burst forth into the open blue sky with joyous ecstasy, leaving behind feelings of self-realisation and achievement, thereby fulfilling the true Patrician

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spirit that stretches across the pages of history and upholding the rich heritage and ancestry of this hallowed institution. In addition to the Inter House March Past and a series of athletic events, the programme was witness to a historical beginning - the inclusion of girls in the School Band comprising 110 members which enthralled the audience with a brilliant solo performance. The other bright spots of the day were an inspiring presentation by the students of our outreach school, Nai Disha, and the ex-students race and separate events for the teachers and support staff. The most spectacular part of the day's programme was the vibrant and exuberant drill display by the students of classes 5,6,7,8,9 and 11. The programme was concluded with the final prize distribution and the soulful flute recital of the National Anthem by a student.



This momentous annual event was the culmination of the untiring efforts of a group of motivated and dedicated people, who had a vision, a dream if we may call it so and, who worked against all odds to make it a successful reality. Most importantly, it was a pledge by the entire school community to move forward, carrying with us, all the achievements of the past, towards the creation of another glorious era, in the years to come.

Ms. Rina Dutta

St. Augustine's Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Vasai



Annual Day Function





Saving the Trees,



Mourning the cutting of trees



Depict our nation breaking free from the bonds of destitution



Edmund Rice play



Carols from Scrooge



Ex-Teachers being felicitated



Melroy and Solly

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POETRY SECTION

CAUGHT BY SURPRISE

That morning,
 you caught me by surprise
 when I was in the woods and not expecting company nor wanting it.
 Were you shocked that I
 should bow before a rock,
 or hug a tree,
 or touch its leaves with reverence?
 Perhaps you thought such rituals
 belong in big Cathedrals
 and not in wild woods.
 But my wild woods are holy,
 and fitter far for worship
 than any Gothic arch or Hammond organ can ever be.
 My choirs of birds out-echo
 your ponderous polyphony and all
 one hears from Handel
 and the Masters.
 Wild flowers woo me
 deeply into worship wordlessly.
 They teach me how to speak
 God's language
 which is silence.
 You caught me standing still
 And called it a waste of time.
 I call it prayer.

Fr. Kevin Ward

"My Soul Is In A Hurry."

- A beautiful poem by the Brazilian poet: *Mário de Andrade*

I counted my years and realized that I have less time to live than the time I have lived so far.





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I have more past than future.

I feel like that boy who had a bowl of cherries. At first, he gobbled them, but when he realized there were only few left, he began to taste them intensely.

I no longer have time to deal with mediocrity.

I do not want to be in meetings where flamed egos parade.

I am bothered by the envious, who seek to discredit the most able, to usurp their places, coveting their seats, talent, achievements and luck.

I do not have time for endless conversations,
useless discussions about the lives of others who are not part of mine.

I no longer have the time to handle or manage the sensitivities of people who, despite their chronological age, are immature.

I hate to confront those who struggle for power, and those who do not debate the content, just the labels.

My time has become scarce to debate labels. I want the inner essence.

My soul is in a hurry.

Not many cherries in my bowl.

I want to live close to people who are "human" - humans who laugh at their own weaknesses; and away from those who became smug and overconfident with their triumphs, and

away from those filled with self-importance.

The essentials are what make life worthwhile. And for me, the essentials are more than enough!

Yes, I'm in a hurry. I'm in a hurry to live with the intensity that only maturity can give.

I do not intend to waste any of the remaining cherries.

I am sure they will be exquisite, much more than those eaten so far.

My goal is to reach the end satisfied and at peace with my loved ones, and my conscience.

As said by Confucius: "We have two lives.

The second begins when you realize you only have one."

AXE THE FACTS!

Facts, I notice, can dehumanise the truth. Keep the legends.

Of course it wasn't thus. Emotion stuff.

Maybe twas cold - but these were grimly tough.

Rooms refusal, angel choirs, a star,

And clever kings who followed from afar -

Poetry, goodbye. Twas just another birth -





But I admit, it did transform the earth.
So do we all, that's true – but this new child –
The universe itself went wild!

Our books must use -- like me – hyperbole
To capture what began that sacred day.
So Herods, prophets, whispers, folks onstage,
And kings must demonstrate a ruthless rage.
The heroes must escape and Joseph dream,
Male babies slain and things not as they seem.
Later, kings die, the three come back again –
Towards a finale in Jerusalem.

But facts are clinical, reality a lie
The stars and kings and shepherds can disguise:
We feel the terror of this family,
Who may not yet foresee calamity.
Events climax as boy turns man, and wins
The love of people humbled by their sins.
He speaks forgiveness, and life to be fulfilled,
Welcomes the odd, and cures those who are ill.

And thus the tale of Bethlehem's cold cave
Evokes the heart's response to all he gave.
The angel choirs and foreign clever kings
Evoke the child's delight in wondrous things.
The tale, with all we're thinking of,
Compel us to reshape our life to love.
Christmas as love enfleshed presents this boy
To model love, and fill our world with joy.

Brendan December 2022

A Prayer for our Earth by Pope Francis

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,





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that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this Earth,
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the Earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize
that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.
Amen.



JTI CLUSTER BULLETIN
JANUARY 2023

After the wise men,

WISE WOMEN ALSO CAME

Wise women also came.
The fire burned in their guts
long before they saw the flaming star.
Wise women also came,
seeking no directions, no permission from any king.
They came by their own authority,



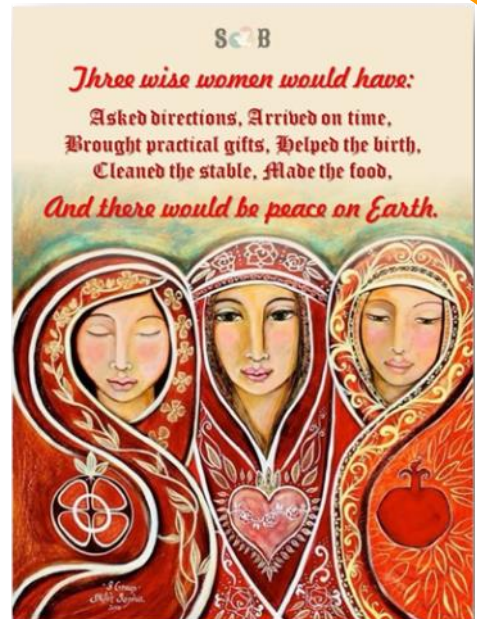


their own desire, their own longing.
They came in quiet,
spreading no rumors, sparking no fears.

Wise women also came, and they brought useful gifts:
water for labor's washing,
fire for warm illumination,
a blanket for swaddling.

Wise women also came,
at least three of them,
And more keep coming.

Jan Richardson



The feminine voice has been either deliberately silenced, or preferably unheard.

How would our society and the Church be different if we heard the voice of women or the feminine (which is in all of us)?

PATHARLYNDAN

The Paddy harvesting work picked up in November and early December. The school children were soon busy with their examinations. And after the school results, all began preparing for Christmas.

A new Field Worker Balawansuk Mawlong was interviewed to work with the Brothers. She teaches in the Nursery school and comes from a Presbyterian locality. Kong Balawansuk will complement the work that our first field worker Tobias Jana is doing. She is very interested and capable to assist the work of the Brothers.

All the Brothers here participated in an online international training on Afforestation of Indigenous trees. The workshop was conducted by Afforest, a NGO involved in creating many forests around the country and outside. A plan is made with a vision of creating an indigenous forest on Lum Laudato Si'.

An awareness programme on Laudato Si' was held for the Iatreilang Edmund Rice Youth Action in the Brothers residence. The youth who came were encouraged to pass on the message that they received and also to encourage the other youth of the village to join.

Two cooperative societies have been set up in Patharlyndan, one is for Dairy and the other is Multipurpose. The office bearers of the two cooperative societies met with the Brothers to discuss about plans for the new year and the need for training and regular meetings





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A Govt sponsored Bee Keeping project initiated in Patharlyndan



The Brothers have a Vocation Promotion session in St. John's, Jyntru.

ERPAKON

Hugo Caceres, our CLT member visited Patharlyndan and Erpakon to meet the Brothers and see the work going on. Due to time constraints, he could not visit Umyrkhong and the Brothers came to there to Erpakon to meet him.

Rashal, Ranjeet, Jerry and Ajay joined the Junior professed Brothers Retreat held in the Hub from 10th to 17th December. Sunil led the Retreat based on the Dublin Chapter's Spirit Statements. Vinod had exams and will do his Retreat in the last week of January.

Bipin is teaching in St John's Secondary School and his presence is well appreciated by the Headmistress and the students. Earlier last month Sunil was invited to be the main presenter for the three-day Regional CRI-Bishops Assembly for West Bengal Region. The theme was Ecological Conversion.

The next Monthly Recollection is based on the fourth Spirit statement from the Dublin Chapter and will be on Saturday 11th February. Francis Hall is happy to give a 45-minute input at 9 am.

We will use Google Meet and the link is <https://bit.ly/saturdayrecollection>.

UMTYRKHANG

In the first half of November, the brothers focused on preparing the children of the 3 villages for the final exams scheduled later in the month. One of the highlights of the month was Ajay singing a song in Khasi translated by him for the Children's Day celebration.





While the children were busy writing exams the people have been busy harvesting the paddy during this month that will probably continue till the second week of December.

Edwin used the time during exams to join Theo in the hub for the annual retreat that was directed by Tony Hemenstal from Brisbane.

For the last two months, Brothers were also involved in a number of meetings with the stakeholders of the village of Umyrkhang with regards to training a supplementary teacher for the primary school for the upcoming academic year. Three youths have been shortlisted for the training. While the Brothers will look after the training, the parents are willing to take responsibility for the remuneration of the teacher.

Bro Paistar and the English course candidates visited Umyrkhang. They engaged with the children of the 3 villages Mawlaho, Pamlatar and Umyrkhang through singing, dancing, skit and some games. They also played a friendly football match with the youth of Umyrkhang. Hopefully their visit and interactions will result in some boys wanting to join us.



Our Junior Brothers sparkling with life after their Retreat in the Hub

Children enthusiastically involved in the Pre-Christmas celebrations in Umyrkhang

