



INDIAN PROVINCE NEWSLETTER

Dear Brothers and friends of Edmund,

Greetings from Goa as we move towards the hot summer months.

Quite a few Brothers are moving their luggage to their new missions. All the best to them in their new assignments.

On the 13th of this month, Tommy Samuel celebrated his Golden Jubilee. It was a heart-warming sight to see so many of his family members attend the occasion. Tommy will be using his Jubilee year to go on a well-deserved Sabbatical. We wish him all the very best

Sunil Britto was selected to attend an international *program in Rome entitled, "Pilgrims of Hope on the Path of Peace."* He was one of four participants selected from India. Do read his take-aways from his reflections.



The above is a photograph taken in Gaza, But it could be a photo taken in Sudan or Myanmar or Yemen or Any place where innocent civilians, mostly women and children, are being killed and their belongings pillaged. Can we do anything about the situation? Easter is a season of hope. Can we lend our support to activist organisations like Avaaz whose signature campaigns are trying to move political leaders to show some humanity and compassion?

Yours fraternally

Mark



TO LIVE IN THE LIGHT

Several years ago, I was approached by a man who asked me to be his spiritual director. He was in his mid-forties and almost everything about him radiated a certain health. As we sat down to talk, I mentioned that he seemed to be in a very good space. He smiled and replied that, yes, this was so, but it hadn't always been so. His happiness had its own history ... and its own pre-history. Here's how he told his story:

"I haven't always been in a good space in my life; in fact, it's been a long struggle to get where I am today. For more than 20 years, from the time I left high school until three years ago, I struggled with two addictions: alcohol and sex. I had them enough under control that I could essentially hide them from my family, my friends, and my colleagues. As well I never acted out in very dangerous ways. I was addicted, but still had good control in my life. The problem was that I was living a double life – showing one life to my family and friends and living another life secretly (alcohol, pornography, and pick-up bars) on the side. I never once missed a day of work and was always able to function at a high level professionally, but my life slowly began to fixate around my addictions – hiding them, lying about my activities, fiercely protecting my privacy, resentment towards anything or anybody who stood between me and my addictions, and daily anxiety, scheming about where I would go at night. I functioned decently within my work and my relationships, but my mind, heart, and real attention were focused on something else, my addictions, my next hit.

I'm not sure what the exact trigger was since there were a number of things that hit me at a point (my father's death, a couple of near escapes in terms of being discovered, some real shame, some graced moments of clarity when I sensed both my hypocrisy and the dead-end road I was on), but three years ago I went on a retreat to a monastery and had the courage to have a long talk with the Abbott. He suggested that I go into two recovery programs, one to deal with alcohol and the other to deal with sex. I took his advice and all I can say is that it has completely turned my life around. I've been "sober" now for three years and the best way that I can describe it is that now "I see color again". Nothing feels as great as honesty! I have never been this happy! I'm now living in the light!"

We're called to live in the light, but we tend to have an overly romantic idea of what that should mean. We tend to think that to live in the light means that there should be a kind of special sunshine inside of us, a divine glow in our conscience, a sunny joy inside us that makes us constantly want to praise God, an ambience of sacredness surrounding our attitude. But that's unreal. What does it mean to live in the light?



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To live in the light means to live in honesty, pure and simple, to be transparent, to not have part of us hidden as a dark secret.

All conversion and recovery programs worthy of the name are based on bringing us to this type of honesty. We move towards spiritual health precisely by flushing out our sickest secrets and bringing them into the light. Sobriety is more about living in honesty and transparency than it is about living without a certain chemical, gambling, or sexual habit. It's the hiding of something, the lying, the dishonesty, the deception, the resentment we harbor towards those who stand between us and our addiction, that does the real damage to us and to those we love.

Spiritual health lies in honesty and transparency and so we live in the light when we are willing to lay every part of our lives open to examination by those who need to trust us.

- To live in the light is to be able always to tell our loves ones where we are and what we are doing.
- To live in the light is not have to worry if someone traces what websites we have visited.
- To live in the light is to not be anxious if someone in the family finds our files unlocked.
- To live in the light is to be able to let those we live with listen to what's inside our cell-phones, see what's inside our emails, and know who's on our speed-dial.
- To live in the light is to have a confessor and to be able to tell that person what we struggle with, without having to hide anything.

To live in the light is to live in such a way that, for those who know us, our lives are an open book.

Ronald Rolheiser

GOLDEN JUBILEE

OF TOMMY SAMUEL IN MT. ABU

On this special occasion of celebrating Brother Tommy Samuel's Golden Jubilee as a Christian Brother, we gather to honour and pay tribute to a life dedicated to faith, service and love. For fifty years this remarkable individual has walked the path of selflessness, compassion and unwavering commitment to God and community in the spirit of our Founder, Blessed Edmund Rice.

In order to prepare a worthy appreciation of Tommy Samuel, his family, various friends and





colleagues were requested to submit their perception of the jubiliarian. What emerged was a portrait of a neo-Moses, minus the tablets of stone, with no rod in his hand nor horns of light emanating from his face! There were lots of statistics about places he was missioned, positions of responsibility he held, courses he attended and studies he undertook. But he is not an easy person to know except for a few intimate friends. Let us probe a little deeper and try to discover Tommy Samuel, the person that he is.

Tommy was born on 18th February 1960, the eldest of 4 siblings, having 2 brothers, Samson and George, and sister Bina. The siblings' childhood memories of their big brother are of a boy who was compassionate towards the poor and aged. Once while travelling in a rickshaw with his parents, he enquired why they couldn't walk as the rickshaw puller was covered in sweat. His sister Bina maintains that Tommy is holding the family together since their parents' death. He is always available to advise and listen. He makes sure the nephews and nieces have plenty of outings, ensuring first that they attend to their studies. It was through Tommy's initiative that his brothers celebrated the Silver Jubilees of their marriages. His Dad used to frequently recall how the 9 year old Tommy maintained that he was going to be Pope. It came as no surprise to the Dad when some years later Brother Tony Keane approached him to announce Tommy's desire to join the Christian Brothers. Mr. Samuel always believed his eldest son would be gifted with a religious vocation. It was obvious that Tommy was greatly loved and respected by his family. This gave him great support and encouragement in the years ahead and made him weather the many storms which life inevitably offered.

Tommy attended St. Columba's High School, New Delhi, up to Class 7. On Republic Day 1974 he entered Mount Carmel, Kurseong, as a candidate and spent the next three years studying in Goethals Memorial School from where he completed his Senior



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Cambridge. along with Simon and Jerome. His contemporaries maintain he was a very good student however he was not blessed with athletic ability. "He kicked the football in which ever directions in which he was standing!" However he enjoyed long country walks, particularly an unforgettable three day trek to Sandakphu at - 7 degrees Celsius. The word "intense" is something that one generally associate with the personality of Tommy. He seems to have so much to offer but can't explicitate it quickly enough. Hence the stammer which, like Moses' impediment, never prevented him from proclaiming the Word of God. Very early Tommy developed a great love of Scripture which he passionately follows to this day. One of his pet goals in his Jubilee year is to study the scriptures even more deeply that what he already knows and believes. His great devotion to the daily rosary has been his hallmark of his spirituality along with his tremendous devotion to the Eucharist

In February 1977 he was admitted to the Novitiate in Shillong, along 5 others, where he formally became a novice on the Feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help the same year. He pronounced his First Vows on Christmas Day 1978 and then undertook a year of mission experience in St. Augustine's Vasai before returning to Shillong to graduate with a BA (Hons) in English. His Mum's death in 1982 was a very heavy cross for him. The next four years saw him totally immersed in the demanding work of our boarding school, GMS. It was here that he honed his skills as an excellent teacher, each lesson being prepared meticulously, earning the appreciation of pupils and staff alike. He pronounced his Final Vows on Christmas Day 1985. The next year he was sent to Bajpe where he was tremendously challenged. He had to teach both in Kannada and English and accomplished the task admirably. Added to that he had both boys and girls in class - a first for him. The story goes - probably fictitious - that he asked the Provincial how he should handle the girls. Quick came the retort: "Brother, you will **not** handle the girls!" He spent two years in SMO before returning to Shillong to teach in the school while doing his B.Ed and then he was sent to Bajpe for three years as Headmaster.

His linguistic skills were further challenged when, after a short course in Gujarati, he was sent to Jagruti HS Mandal as CL and teacher. In 1994 he was also appointed Principal for the next five years. Where Tommy taught there was an appreciative improvement in academics. His life took a new turn in 1998 when he was put in charge of some candidates in Diamond Park, Vasai. Unfortunately there was a drowning tragedy. The young Brother who was with the boys at the time of the disaster cannot praise Tommy enough for his empathy, emotional support and deep understanding. For the next three years Tommy served as a member of the Regional Leadership Team. He circulated a weekly scriptural study which was very well received. Perhaps not enough appreciation was expressed and the sensitive Tommy discontinued the practice. His Dad died while Tommy was attending a 5 month Atma Darshan course in Patna. In 2000 he was appointed Vocation Promoter, a post he held for seven years. He kept the Province well informed of his itineraries and of the programmes he was conducting. At first he ran retreats for Christians but was requested to include boys of other faiths and to stress spirituality. He worked hard, as is his style, but was quite





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philosophical when the expected fruit was not forthcoming. "The Lord gives, the Lord takes away." He attended courses in Ferdinand, USA, spent a year in Ireland on the Loreto Programme and was to partake in seminars in Australia, Zambia and Canada. In between times he acquired a Master's degree and several post-graduate diplomas. Ever the habitual student, he held very strong views which he defended vociferously. On his return from Ireland he was put in charge of the pre-novices in SPS Asansol. He spent two years as Novice Master in Bhopal - 2011 and 2012. After that he spent five years in Shillong running the Higher Secondary. His teachers, pupils and domestic staff had great regard for him as he took a personal interest in all. He didn't always agree with management and has been known to take to his pen (proverbially mightier than the sword!) to defend his corner. From Shillong he was appointed Principal of GMS in which capacity he served for five years.

Tommy had been working on his PhD thesis *Women in Scripture*. We hope he finishes it as I'm sure he will handle it very well! At present he is on Sabbatical.

The Golden Jubilee not only marks a milestone in time but is testament to a lifetime of service and sacrifice. Brother Tommy Samuel has exemplified the teachings of Christ

through his actions. His presence has been a source of strength and inspiration to those around him, guiding and uplifting others with his wisdom, compassion and unswerving faith. His Golden Jubilee is a celebration of a life



well-lived, a life dedicated to serving others and spreading the message of love and hope.

AD MULTOS ANNOS

Sabino D'Souza





ARE YOU WILLING TO BE A PILGRIM OF HOPE?

Ten takeaways from the recently held Conference for Consecrated Life.

From February 1st to 4th, 2024, the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (DICALSAL) convened a conference for consecrated men and women under the theme "Pilgrims of Hope on the Path of Peace."

From every country up to 4 representatives were invited - one male religious and one woman religious, one member of the Ordo Virginum and one member of a secular institute. Among the delegates from India were Elsa Muttathu, Alice Joseph, Sarita Nazareth, and myself.

The purpose of the meeting was centered around the preparation for the Jubilee year 2025. The participants would return to their own countries and prepare other consecrated persons to live and participate in the Jubilee year.

DIVERSITY: There were around 300 consecrated men and women attending the gathering. Participants came from more than 60 countries, indicating a diverse and international representation. This included five language groups and at times, it was a challenge to communicate with delegates from other language groups.

Fortunately, the English language group was among the largest, and so it was possible to have profound conversations for me with numerous delegates. One conversation, in particular, left a lasting impression. It was with a young Ukrainian sister named Natasha, who vividly described the uncertainty, devastation, and suffering that she and her fellow Ukrainians have endured over the last two years.

THIRST FOR RECONCILIATION : The following text 2 Cor 5:16-20 was the central text during the conference:

"Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer. So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

- *How does this text of 2 Cor 5:16-20 resonate with you?*
- *What are areas where the need for reconciliation is greatest and what are small steps or seeds of*





reconciliation that already exist?

ROUND TABLES: Upon entering the meeting hall, we were delighted to see the seating arranged in round tables, reminiscent of the setup at the Synod of Synodality. This arrangement symbolized a shift away from the top-down approach, embracing a new paradigm of profound conversations and group discernment. In this setting, everyone possessed a voice and equal authority, emphasizing the significance of collective participation and shared decision-making.

FEMININE TOUCH: I anticipated that the Vatican program would be led and moderated by cardinals and priests. However, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the entire program was organized and facilitated mainly by women religious. This aligns well with the Church's recent push to involve more women in administrative roles within the Vatican.

The Prefect of the Dicastery, Card. João Braz de Aviz, was exceptionally at ease with responsibilities delegated to others, allowing him to be pastorally available to all the delegates. Moreover, the success of the conference could be partly attributed to women religious assuming key roles in facilitation and organisation.

RIGHT BRAIN PROCESS: Usually, most church programs adhere to a conventional procedure: a lecture, followed by group analysis, and finally the formulation of resolutions. However, this conference introduced an intriguing twist by integrating art, movement, and music into the core process of the program. Throughout the proceedings, a graphic recorder named Romay Marta skillfully captured the essence of our discussions in a brilliant and accurate artwork. On the final day, one of the participants Agnès Pernet harvested our experiences of the conference in particular our emotional journey, through movement and dance.

METHOD OF CONVERSATIONS IN THE SPIRIT: During one of the introductory sessions, Fr. Giacomo SJ, Consultor of the Synod, elucidated the process of 'Conversations in the Spirit' which we would practice throughout the conference. This is the key process used for all discussions at the Synodality synod. This process consists of three steps:

- a. Listening to each other: Each individual takes turns sharing their own experiences and reflections, while others attentively listen.
- b. Noting resonances: Participants reflect on what resonated most with them from what others shared, or what stirred the strongest resistance within them, asking themselves, "When did my heart burn within me as I listened?"



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- c. Seeking common threads: Together, the group synthesizes the conversation's insights asking, "To what steps is the Holy Spirit calling us together?" The group seeks to recognise shared intuitions and convergences, identify discordances, obstacles, new questions, and allow prophetic voices to emerge.

CONNECTING WITH OUR JOY AND PAIN: For our "Conversations in the Spirit" sharings, participants were invited in table groups to share the joys and sufferings most prevalent in their lived contexts across three dimensions: personal, ecclesial, and socio-political.

Among the deeply felt joys surfaced themes of communion, synodality, cross-cultural enrichment, enthusiastic responses to the call of mission, dedication to justice and peace, and a readiness to discern the signs of the times.

However, significant challenges lie within the ethical and socioeconomic realms, notably the issue of abuse. Other challenges shared were perceived resistance to change, the struggle to rediscover the positive essence of consecrated life, and the imperative for an actively engaged Church in addressing multifaceted and pressing concerns.



PILGRIMS OF HOPE


On the path of peace

Consecrated life on the road to the jubilee

- ▷ Listening to the cry of the poor
- ▷ The care and custody of creation
- ▷ In solidarity with all brothers and sisters


Thirsting for reconciliation

July - December 2023



In one's own country

ROME




1-4 February 2024

The mandate
"signs of reconciliation among the people"


Jubilee Celebration

2 February 2025



In one's own country

ROME



8-12 October 2025

Jubilee of Consecrated Life





JOURNEYING WITH CHRIST AND THE MARTYRS:

On the 3rd of Feb morning and afternoon, we were out on pilgrimage visiting the Basilica of Maria Maggiore, the Basilica of St. Prassede, the Basilica of Holy Cross of Jerusalem, the Sanctuary of the Scala Santa, the catacombs of San Sebastiano and the church of Quo Vadis. Each stage concluded with the testimony of a consecrated man or woman on the joy of giving one's life to the Lord, on the suffering of the cross experienced as a reason for hope and on perseverance in faith on every occasion and service.

At the Basilica of Holy Cross in Jerusalem, I gave a testimony concerning the challenges faced in India and our world, focusing on the theme of the cry of the marginalised and the cry of the earth. I particularly focused on the state-sponsored unrest in Manipur when I shared on the cry of the marginalised.

ON A PILGRIMAGE: During the pilgrimage, I found myself pondering whether I was merely a tourist, like many others in Rome, or truly a pilgrim. When does a tourist transition into a pilgrim? One answer that seems to make sense is: "When he or she loses their luggage!"

As tourists, we embark on an outward journey, returning home burdened with more stuff than we initially carried. Conversely, the pilgrim embarks on an inward journey, where less baggage proves a blessing.

What unnecessary "baggage" do I still lug around? What emotional or spiritual clutter could be impeding my progress toward wholeness and healing on the pilgrim's path?

HOPE: The pivotal moment of the conference was the Eucharistic celebration held in St. Peter's Basilica, with Pope Francis presiding. During the celebration, the Holy Father emphasized the significance of waiting, drawing inspiration from the examples of Simeon and Anna. "Their hearts," says Pope Francis "have remained awake, like an ever-burning torch... They have youth in their hearts... They have not sent their hope into retirement."

I would like to conclude with a poem on hope by the French writer Charles Péguy, who depicts faith, hope, and charity as three sisters journeying side by side.

"Hope, the little one, walks beside her two older sisters, practically unseen.

Yet she, the little one, drags everything along.

Because Faith only sees what exists.

And Charity only loves what exists.



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But Hope loves what will be.

She is the one who makes the others keep walking;

She is the one who leads them on,

and makes them all walk together”

Sunil Britto

GENERAL ANNUAL RESIDENTIAL TRAINING OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ANIMATORS

25 SJAs (Social Justice & Advocacy Animators) from 12 schools in India participated in a 3-day training workshop which was held at St. Columba's School, New Delhi from the 20th to the 22nd of April. The SJAs are teachers who are nominated by their school principals to be part of the Social Justice Team of their schools. The SJA Team is primarily responsible for planning and implementing the Social Justice Education program in a school. At present, the Indian Province has 69 Animators from 13 schools.





The Core Team for Social Justice Education of the Province was the main facilitation and resource team for the training. Other resource persons were Mrs. Neha Pradhan Arora, Mr. Steve Rocha, Br. Cedric Andrade and Br. Constantine D'Abreu. The 12 participating schools were: St. Columba's School (New Delhi), St. John's High School (Chandigarh), St. Mary's High School (Mount Abu), St. Joseph's College (Nainital), St. Edmund's High School (Shillong), St. Edmund's Higher Secondary School (Shillong), St. Patrick's Higher Secondary School (Asansol), St. Vincent High & Technical School (Asansol), St. Joseph's College (Bowbazar, Kolkata), St. Mary's Orphanage & Day School (Dum, Dum, Kolkata), Goethal's Memorial School (Kurseong) and St. Augustine's High School (Vasai)



The training program covered various modules: understanding inequality, marginalization, and privilege; embedding elements of social justice in the curriculum; advocacy and

skills for student advocacy in schools; planning and collaboration. Self-development and care through the practice of Tai Chi & meditation, ecological spirituality, and an introduction to the encyclical of Pope Francis, and *Laudato Si* were also part of the learning modules. Two curated immersive experiences to develop a lens of justice were a walk to Connaught Place (a busy and high-end marketplace in Delhi) and a visit

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to the Parliament House.

Overall as per the feedback of the participants, the experience was engaging, inspiring, and enriching and equipped them to undertake their role and move forward with the required skills, creativity, and confidence.

Grace David



Pre University examination results

Congratulations to our candidates who have successfully passed the PU examinations in Bajpe.

(L to R) Ennocent Lugun 74%, Amrit Horo 70%. Mathew Topno 91%, Rosan Barjo 84.5%.)



A REPORT ON THE DIOCESAN VOCATION CAMP, BERHAMPUR 2024

The Diocese of Berhampur, organized the General Vocation Camp for the boys from 13th April evening to 16th April noon. About 275 boys who had appeared for their Metric as well as Higher Secondary Board Examination were present at Anugraha Peetho, Mohana. The Recruitment day was on 16th April, 10am to 12 noon. About 36 Religious Congregations as well as Diocesan priests were present at the venue.

Each Vocation Promoter was given three minutes to speak on their congregation and charism. At 12 noon, the boys were given an opportunity to meet the Vocation Promoters for





further questions and clarifications. The boys were told to choose only two congregations of their choice. About half a dozen of them gave their names and contact numbers. This lasted for an hour. Then lunch was served to all gathered at the Camp. Since I stayed at the Parish in Mohana, I was able to phone the concerned boys and further confirm their choice and desire to join our Congregation. A WhatsApp group of these six boys was made and further contact has been established.



Thank you Brothers and others for your constant prayerful support. It is your prayerful support makes me give my best and hope for the best!!

Willie D' Souza

Poetry Section

Happy Easter to all who celebrate.

My poem is from my memories of Mussoorie and the beautiful staff Sunrise Breakfasts we used to have at Oakville, when I was teaching at WS. Watching the sun come up over the Himalaya mountains was a spectacular experience.

Breakfast at Sunrise

At the top of the mountain
The sun has a natural birth
The clouds have easy labor
To bring it forth,
To tip with golden tints
The distant snow-capped Himalayas
A joyous re-birth to celebrate
Easter.

Those days we were sure-footed
As mountain goats,
Leaping from stone to stone.
No matter how steep the trek
Uphill.

Spurred on by the enticing smells
Of breakfast cooking

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By skilled hands,
But more eager to pay
Our homage to the Easter sun
We made our climb of joy
To praise the Creator.

Stopping in stillness
To see a pair of pine martens
One solicitously waiting with concerned peering,
Looking down the path
To watch that the other was within sight
Not moving forward till the comforting
Brown-gold fur of his partner was visible,
Lessons for us humans.

We made the yearly trek
A little slower, as our bodies slowed.
Man is a creature of rituals and rhythms,
Of devotion to the familiar,
The comfortable, the natural.

Now, though with different mountains
The smells of breakfast
Memories of crisp shivering
In the mountain air
And the sun through dappled leaves
Is resurrected in present moments
Whenever Easter rolls around.

Kavita Ezekiel Mendonca

The Congregation Chapter called us...

...to continue processes engaging all Brothers in co-creating the future of our religious Brotherhood, using the following lens:

- ◆ The Spirit is calling us to journey together through contemplative experiences leading us to ongoing transformation.
- ◆ The Spirit is calling us to acknowledge our fears and embrace our diversity in order to release energy for life and mission.
- ◆ Led by the Spirit, we embrace diversity as the gift of life.
- ◆ God is love – in love there is no fear.
- ◆ You are called to rebirth your brotherhood by personal transformation.
- ◆ You are called to recognise God at work through feminine energy allowing you to see your brokenness and diversity.

...into a deeper love for Mother Earth, leading to a fundamental conversion of heart, and expressed in our daily life choices.

