

Cathedral of the Most Holy Rosary

The Herald

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St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata

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120 chaplains offer spiritual support to athletes during Paris Olympics



“Every morning there will be a moment of lectio divina, of reading and sharing the Gospel, a moment that will be ecumenical,” he stated. “And every day we will celebrate the Eucharist, not in the multi-religious center but in the church next to the village.” At the nearby Cathedral of Saint-Denis, a vigil Mass took place in which prayers for a blessing of the athletes and a distribution of Miraculous Medals took place July 25, the night before the opening ceremony.

Washington, D.C: With the Paris Olympic Games underway, 120 chaplains from five different religions are present in the Multi-faith Center tent located in the athletes village to address the spiritual needs of the thousands of athletes set to compete.

The center, which will remain open until the end of the Paralympic Games on Sept. 8, includes a reception area and five rooms pertaining to each of the represented religions — Christianity (Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants), Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam — in accordance with the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Here, athletes have the opportunity to pray, attend religious services, and speak with chaplains daily on a variety of topics, including concerns over mental health, losing competitions, and ongoing global conflicts. According to the Associated Press, organizers found that requests for Olympic chaplains exceeded 8,000 during the pre-pandemic games.

Father Jason Nioka, a former judo champion turned priest in charge of the 40 Catholic priests, nuns, and laypeople participating in this group, shared with the AP that these chaplains “need to bring the athlete back to earth, because it can feel like the end of the world after working on this goal for four of five years.”

Echoing this sentiment was Father Xavier Ernst, the parish priest of the Church of St. John Bosco in the 20th arrondissement of Paris. In an ANS article, Ernst shared that the chaplains’ “service is to be present. Athletes know that in the Olympic Village there is this space, a place for listening, sharing, and relationship. Our environment is furnished with icons, symbolic furnishings, and the Bible.”

Similarly, the downtown Paris church La Madeleine provides participants and athletes a place of prayer and contemplation throughout the Olympic Games with its special chapel dedicated to “Our Lady of Athletes.” Inaugurated in September 2023, this space allows for visitors to light candles, submit prayer intentions, and seek spiritual support.

La Madeleine was also the location for a solemn Mass celebrated July 19 to commence the Olympic Truce, a period of peace that traditionally calls for the end of conflicts between world countries during the Olympics. Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris, a special representative of the Holy See for the 2024 Paris Olympics, emphasized during his homily that “ongoing wars do not cease during the games, but the desire for peace spreads through the encounters they make possible in these sporting events.”

Amid these various events and the presence of Catholic chaplains within the Multifaith Center is the Vatican’s Holy Games, an ongoing initiative intended to call people toward holiness through sport. Following the recitation of the Angelus on July 21, Pope Francis spoke of sports having a “great social power” and the ability to “peacefully unite people from different cultures.”

“I hope that this event may be a beacon of the inclusive world we want to build and that athletes, with their sporting testimony, may be messengers of peace and authentic models for young people,” the Holy Father said. “In particular, as is the custom of this ancient tradition, may the Olympic Games be an occasion to call for a cease-fire in wars, demonstrating a sincere desire for peace.” CNA



Indian bishops slam Last Supper parody at Olympics

By Bijay Kumar Minj

Its disrespect can never be perceived as a celebration of community tolerance as claimed by the Olympics organizers, they said

Indian bishops and laity groups have joined Catholics around the globe to deplore the parody of Leonardo da Vinci’s iconic painting of the Last Supper at the Paris Olympics opening ceremony.

“The Last Supper is not merely a piece of art but a profound symbol of the Holy Eucharist, established by Jesus Christ himself,” said a press statement from the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI).

The July 29 statement signed by CBCI’s public relations officer Father Robinson Rodrigues said the Olympic games which symbolize unity and respect among diverse cultures and faiths, should uphold the highest standards of sensitivity towards all religious beliefs.

“Christ’s Last Supper event unites Christians worldwide, and its disrespect can never be perceived as a celebration of community tolerance as mentioned by the Olympics organizers,” it added.

The apex body of the Catholic Church in India urged all concerned to reflect on the importance of mutual respect and understanding in fostering true global harmony.

The CBCI also called upon the International Olympic Committee “to ensure that such instances of

disrespect towards religious sentiments are not repeated.”

A drag performance during the July 26 opening ceremony in Paris depicted a scene based on a parody of Leonardo da Vinci’s iconic wall painting in Milan’s Dominican convent, causing outrage among Christians across the world.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay said, “The Last Supper is a sacred event, which commemorates Jesus Christ’s final meal with his disciples, and is of immense significance to Christianity.”

“The parody of this profound moment watched by millions is not only deeply offensive but also a blatant display of insensitivity towards the religious sentiments of believers worldwide,” he said in a statement.

The cardinal stressed the need for respect towards religious beliefs in artistic expressions, particularly at globally significant events like the Olympics.

“The organizers of the Olympics need to address this grave incident with the seriousness it warrants, the current apology issued by the Olympic committee is extremely condescending and a poor attempt to appease everyone,” he said.

The Association of Concerned Christians and Watchdog Foundation in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), the state capital of Maharashtra, also condemned the drag performance.

Pope's August prayer intention

We pray that political leaders be at the service of their own people, working for integral human development and for the common good, especially caring for the poor and those who have lost their jobs.



ST. JOHN MARY VIANNESY August 4th

The Herald Wishes all Priests A Very Happy Feast of St. John Mary Vianney, the Patron Saint of all Priests (4th August 2024)

Church in India



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-- Editor

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be within 300 words.

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Tuesday 12 noon.

- Editor

**CCBI Releases 4 Volumes of the 8
Volume Series:**

**“Guidance of Prayer for the Holy
Year 2025”**

Dr. Stephen Alathara

Panjim: Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão, President of the CCBI, released the 4 volumes titled "Guidance of Prayer for the Holy Year 2025" on July 29, 2024, at the Archbishop's House in Panjim, Goa. This series is a response to Pope Francis's call for the Year of Prayer leading up to the Jubilee 2025.

The release ceremony was attended by dignitaries, including Bishop Simiao Purificação Fernandes, Rev. Dr. Stephen Alathara, Deputy Secretary General, Fr. Duming Gonsalves, Mr. Nelson Fernandes and Ms. Annie Fernandes.

The series is a comprehensive exploration of prayer in its various forms, serving as an introduction and reflection on the power of prayer to encounter and experience God's love.

Through historical anecdotes and wisdom from celebrated saints, the book sheds light on the significance of prayer in today's Church. It delves into the writings of renowned saints, offering guidance on prayerful conversations with God.

This masterpiece is an invaluable resource for personal and community prayer, particularly for bishops, priests, deacons, catechists, and the faithful on their spiritual journey.

As the Catholic community prepares for the Jubilee 2025, "Guidance of Prayer" emerges as a beacon of spiritual guidance. Internationally acclaimed authorship brings depth and insight, making these 4 volumes an indispensable companion for those seeking to deepen their prayer life. For Copies contact: Email: ccbipublications@gmail.com; Mob No: 9886730224.

**CCBI Launches Matrimony Portal
for Indian Catholics**

Panaji: The Family Commission of the CCBI unveiled a revolutionary Matrimony Portal on July 26, 2024, at the Archbishop's House in Panjim, Goa. This innovative platform is designed to help Indian Catholics find their perfect match, fostering stable and happy family life. As the sun shone brightly on the feast day of Saints Anne and Joachim, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His Eminence Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão, President of the CCBI and Archbishop of Goa and Daman, inaugurated the portal with a blessing.

The launch was attended by dignitaries, including Bishop Simiao Purificação Fernandes, Rev. Dr. Stephen Alathara, Fr Arul Raj Gali, Fr. Duming Gonsalves, Karl Fernandes and Vinita Fernandes of Missionary Families of Christ and Marlon D'Cruz and Diana D'Cruz of Crusader for Jesus with Mary.

The Matrimony Portal, integrated with the Catholic Connect App, promises a unique experience with its feature-rich platform. Users can enjoy stringent profile verification, faith-based matchmaking, advanced privacy and security measures, a user-friendly interface, and free registration. Accessible via the Catholic Connect mobile app and website catholicconnectmatrimony.com, this platform is poised to transform the way Indian Catholics find their life partners.

Fr Arul Raj Gali, Secretary of the CCBI Family Commission, emphasized that the portal is more than just a matchmaking platform. "We aim to help couples build happy and stable families," he said. "To support this, we are providing counselling services to help resolve problems early on."

Fr Stephen Alathara, Deputy Secretary General of the CCBI, expressed the portal's potential. "This will be a very useful platform for Indian Catholics," he said. "Our Catholic Connect platform, launched in January 2024, has already seen tremendous success. We are excited to expand our services with the upcoming Migrant Portal and Job Portal." Catholic Connect, an initiative of the CCBI, has been providing specialized online services for the Indian Catholic community. From daily mass readings and prayers to news and information, this platform has become a beacon of faith and connection.

As the CCBI Matrimony Portal embarks on its journey, it's clear that this is more than just a platform – It is a bridge connecting hearts and souls. Matrimony portal is freely available in Catholic Connect App or on the website: catholicconnectmatrimony.com.

For more information, contact 87922 50836 or 89046 55851.

**Arunachal chief minister
acknowledges Christian
contribution to society**



Itanagar: Chief Minister of right wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party ruling northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh had words of appreciation and praise for a group of Catholic Church leaders' recent visit to him..

In his official Facebook post Chief Minister Pema Khandu said, "blessed to receive a call-on from Bishop Benny Edathittayel of Itanagar, Bishop George Palliparambil of Miao and the members of the Arunachal Pradesh Catholic Association, led by President Shri TawTebin Ji."

"Their tireless efforts in promoting peace, education, and social welfare in our state are truly commendable," he wrote.

Serving a second term as Chief Minister Khandu did not hesitate to place on record the contribution of the Church stating, "I deeply appreciate the Catholic community's dedication to raising awareness on critical issues like corruption, drug abuse, and the money culture in elections, contributing to a more informed and responsible society."

In concluding the post the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh state which introduced the anti-Christian legislation – Freedom of Religion Act in 1978 – did not hesitate to say, "Thank you for your selfless service and commitment to the betterment of Arunachal Pradesh."

Pema Khandu born on August 21, 1979 is the son of former Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh late Shri Dorjee Khandu.

Several states in India, including Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, and Odisha, have implemented anti-conversion laws.

Anti-conversion laws are legislative measures aimed at preventing or prohibiting religious conversions. These laws can be used to discourage individuals from leaving a particular faith or to restrict religious groups from actively seeking new members from other religious backgrounds.

The specific provisions and enforcement of anti-conversion laws differ across jurisdictions, and they may involve both criminal and civil penalties.

Christian leaders contend that the implementation of these laws have the potential to favour dominant religions or suppress minority faiths. **By Matters India Reporter**

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Church in the World

French Dominican friar created the motto for the Olympic Games

By Nicolás de Cárdenas

The motto of the modern Olympic Games, "Faster, Higher, Stronger," was coined by French Dominican friar Louis Henri Didon, who became friends with the founder of the

modern Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, five years before the 1896 Athens Games.

The motto, originally formulated in Latin as "Citius, Altius, Fortius," was used before the modern Olympic movement at St. Albert the Great School in Paris,

where the Dominican friar was the principal.

Born in 1840, Didon entered the Rondeau Minor Seminary in Grenoble, France, beginning at the age of nine, and during his youth, he stood out for his ability as an athlete. After visiting the Carthusian monastery in Grenoble, he decided to follow a religious vocation and took the habit of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) at the age of 16. Six years later, after a period of formation in Rome, he was ordained a priest at age 22.

Military chaplain, prisoner, and refugee Didon soon gained fame as a preacher. During the brief Franco-Prussian War, which broke out in July 1870, he was a



CITIUS · ALTIUS · FORTIUS

military chaplain and for a time was held as a prisoner. When he fell ill, he ended up as a refugee in Geneva, Switzerland. From there he was sent to Marseille, where he resumed his sometimes controversial preaching activity, which led to his being

sent to Corsica in 1880.

A decade later he was appointed principal of St. Albert the Great School in Paris where he established sports as part of the school educational program and promoted sports competition. This decision was the result of belief in the value of sports and the contact he had had with Pierre de Coubertin since 1891.

In the first race they organized, the Dominican decided to embroider on the school flag the famous motto, which would become an Olympic motto in 1894, during the first Olympic Congress held in Paris in 1894.

Two years later, Athens hosted the first Olympic Games, which have since been held every four years, interrupted only three times due to World Wars I and II (1916, 1940, and 1944) and postponed from 2020 to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the brief Franco-Prussian War, which broke out in July 1870, he was a

Muslim leaders condemn 'disgraceful' Olympics scene: It 'offended us as much as them'

By Kate Quiñones

Top government officials in Iran and Turkey, along with other Muslim religious figures, are speaking out against the drag-queen-led parody of the Last Supper at the Paris Olympics opening ceremony that shocked Christians and others across the world.

The supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, condemned the "insults" against Jesus Christ, noting that Jesus is a respected figure in Islam.

"Respect for #JesusChrist ... is an indisputable, definite matter for Muslims," Khamenei said in a post on X.

"We condemn these insults directed at the holy figures of divine religions, including Jesus Christ," added the supreme leader of Iran since 1989.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also spoke out against the ceremony, saying he intended to call Pope Francis at the earliest opportunity to discuss the "immorality committed against the Christian world."

The "disgraceful scene in Paris offended not only the Catholic world, not only the Christian world, but also us as much as them," Erdoğan said during an address in the country's capital of Ankara.

"Immorality displayed at the opening of the Paris Olympics once again highlighted the scale of the threat we face," he added. Muslims do not recognize the divinity of Jesus but do reverence him as a prophet. The top institution of the Sunni branch of Islam in Egypt also issued a

statement condemning the Olympic ceremony portrayal.

"The scenes portray Jesus Christ," the Al-Azhar statement read, "in an offensive image that involves disrespect to his person."

"Al-Azhar, and nearly 2 billion Muslims behind it, believe that Jesus ... is the Messenger of Allah. The Quran reads, Jesus is Allah's 'Word through Mary and a spirit from him.'"

The Muslim Council of Elders, under the chairmanship of Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, also issued a denunciation of the opening ceremony.

"This disgraceful act showed a complete lack of respect for the beliefs of religious people and the high moral values they hold dear," the statement read. "The council unequivocally rejects all attempts to demean religious symbols, beliefs, and sacred figures."

Christian as well as other leaders worldwide have spoken out against Friday's opening ceremonies of the 2024 Paris Olympics. The world's wealthiest individual, Elon Musk, called the scene "extremely disrespectful to Christians."

The controversial show, part of the 1.5-billion-euro (about \$1.62 billion) spectacle to kick off the Olympic Games, featured drag queens portraying the apostles and an overweight DJ as Jesus in what appeared to be part of a fashion show apparently mocking Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting of the Last Supper.



Pope Francis and Holy See sports association to Olympic athletes: 'Win the medal of fraternity'

By Kristina Millare

Pope Francis and Athletica Vaticana, the official Holy See sports association, have invited all athletes participating in the 2024 Olympic Games to harness the "great social power of sport" to unite people and be witnesses of peace, particularly during these times of international tensions and conflict.

Around 300,000 spectators welcomed thousands of athletes representing 206 countries at the opening ceremony of this year's summer games in Paris today.

The ceremony to open the two-week international festival took place at 7:30 p.m. in Paris (1:30 p.m. ET). The Olympic Games, which take place between July 26 and Aug. 11 this year, are expected to draw approximately 800,000 tourists to France and an additional one billion viewers who wish to watch the sports events on TV or other digital channels.

During his Sunday Angelus address on July 21, Pope Francis expressed his hope that this year's Olympics will bring athletes and spectators together and "peacefully unite people from different cultures."

"I hope that this event may be a beacon of

the inclusive world we want to build and that athletes, with their sporting testimony, may be messengers of peace and authentic models for young people," the Holy Father said.

Over 10,000 athletes from around the world will compete in 32 different sports in this year's summer games. This year's Olympics will debut surfing, sport climbing, skateboarding, and also breakdancing.

The Paralympic Games will also take place in Paris this year from Aug. 28 - Sept. 8. Approximately 4,400 athletes will participate in 22 sports — including sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball — in venues across the city such as at the Eiffel Tower, the Château de Versailles, and the Grand Palais.

Athletica Vaticana sent an open letter addressed to Olympians and Paralympians yesterday on the vigil of the opening ceremony and encouraged all athletes to "win the medal of fraternity" this summer.

"The Olympics and Paralympics can be strategies for peace and antidotes to war games," reads the letter. "The Games can be opportunities for hope."

Cardinal Hollerich: Altar serving is 'a service to God and others'

By Joseph Tulloch and Marie Duhamel

This week, around 50,000 altar servers are descending on Rome, as part of a pilgrimage organised by the International Association for altar boys and girls.

The pilgrimage — which is taking place from July 29 to the August 3 — will see the participants visit Rome's four papal Basilicas, and meet with Pope Francis in a special audience in St Peter's Square.

The majority of the altar servers attending — around 35,000 — come from Germany, but there will also be participants from other European countries, including Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

Serving God, serving others

The Cardinal began by noting that the theme of the pilgrimage is "With you" (Isa 41:10).

"This 'you'," Cardinal Hollerich said, is first of all God: "Christ, who we are serving in the liturgy."

However, it also extends to the "group of friends" making the pilgrimage together.

"This 'you' must have a broader meaning," the Cardinal said, "because we cannot serve Christ without serving our sisters and brothers."

Combatting bullying

In this regard, a particularly important subject for altar servers to focus on — given that they are mostly teenagers — Cardinal Hollerich said, is bullying. The prelate stressed that the internet has transformed bullying into "something awful."

Altar servers, he said, "should never bully, but always be on the side of the weakest in their class or place of work."

The Cardinal said the pilgrims upcoming meeting with Pope Francis, which will see all 50,000 gather in St Peter's Square. This encounter, Cardinal Hollerich said, would be a moment to "listen to the Pope's testimony, and to be encouraged by him to live this service to the altar, this service to our sisters and brothers throughout the world."



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Nurturing Life: World Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August)

The inaugural World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) was in August of 1992 with the focus of Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative. World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is the organization behind WBW and was formed in 1991. WABA collaborates with WHO and UNICEF, agreeing that breastfeeding is a human right of mothers and children. WABA recognizes that breastfeeding is a critical element of holistic wellness for mothers and children, protecting their physical health and promoting their mental health. Breastfeeding provides ideal nutrition for children in the first two years of life, and it also is foundational in long-term health and wellness into adulthood.

World Breastfeeding Week is an annual celebration which is held every year from 1 to 7 August in more than 120 countries. According to the data of World Breastfeeding Week website, more than 540 events have been held worldwide by more than 79 countries with 488 organizations and 406,620 participants for the World Breastfeeding Week every year. This initiative is supported by WHO, UNICEF and many Ministries of Health and civil society partners.

In 2018, a World Health Assembly resolution endorsed World Breastfeeding Week as an important health promotion strategy. With a different theme each year, it aims to promote the enabling environments that help women to breastfeed – including support in the community and the workplace, with adequate protections in government policies and laws – as well as sharing information on breastfeeding benefits and strategies.

World Breastfeeding Week is more than just a celebration; it's a global campaign for change. The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) coordinates this event, bringing together governments, organizations, and individuals worldwide.

Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival and yet currently, fewer than half of infants under 6 months old are exclusively breastfed.

The benefits of breastfeeding are nothing short of miraculous. For infants, breast milk is a living fluid, constantly adapting to meet their changing needs. It's packed with antibodies that boost the immune system, reducing the risk of infections, allergies, and even certain childhood cancers. Rich in antibodies, breastmilk fortifies a baby's developing immune system. It contains the ideal balance of nutrients for infant growth and development. Breastfed babies have lower risks of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and certain childhood cancers.

But the benefits don't stop at the baby. Mothers who breastfeed have a lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and postpartum depression. It's nature's way of protecting both the giver and the receiver.

According to Dr. Jane Goodall breastfeeding is not just about nutrition; it's about connection, protection, and love.

"In the quiet hours of dawn, a mother cradles her new-born," their bond strengthened through the age-old act of breastfeeding. This intimate moment, replicated countless times across the globe, is at the heart of World Breastfeeding Week.

The impact of global breastfeeding initiatives has been profound. The World Health Organization's (WHO) Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, for instance, has transformed maternity practices in over 20,000 hospitals across 156 countries. These efforts have led to increased breastfeeding rates and improved health outcomes for millions of infants worldwide.

Despite its benefits, breastfeeding in the modern world comes with its own set of challenges. From lack of workplace support to societal pressures, many mothers struggle to breastfeed as long as they'd like. Breastfeeding practices vary widely across cultures. In some societies, it's seen as a sacred duty, while in others, it's a topic of controversy. Understanding these diverse perspectives is crucial for creating inclusive support systems for all mothers.

In a fast changing world where breast feeding is going out of fashion, especially among the young mothers in cities and urban areas, it is imperative for all the responsible citizens to commit themselves to protect and support breastfeeding by spreading awareness, addressing social norms, and providing adequate education for mothers.

Letters to the Editor

Writeup on Christian Brothers

Sir, The write-up "The Christian Brothers in Calcutta in the early 1990s: The Unsung Heroes" by Dr. Subhasis Chattopadhyay published in the Herald, July 26-Aug 1, 2024, I found very interesting and inspiring. A Hindu by birth but moulded himself in Christian faith, in the line of great thinkers of Bengal, Keshav Chandra Sen, Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore and many others of Bengal Renaissance. His Hindu faith was nurtured and developed along with Christian thoughts and spirituality. The Christian brothers played a huge role in his educational upbringing.

In our post-modern times, Dr. Chattopadhyay is playing a great role to give witness to his Christian belief, along with his Hindu philosophy of Shakti. Rightly, he has given his appreciation and tribute to Christian brothers who shaped his life principles to contribute to the changing mind set of our present society. His experiential knowledge in dialogue can help develop a sound and healthy dialogical encounter through panel discussions and seminars. That's the need of the hour today to build bridges in dialogue and be inclusive in our way of thinking and life.

Further to his write up, I feel it is essential to highlight the beginning of the presence of the Christian brothers in India. "The Christian Brothers came to India in January 1890. Four Brothers (Vincent Casey, Fabian Kenneally, Edward Aherne and Ambrose Flynn) arrived in Kolkata from Ireland at the request of Pope Leo XII. From Kolkata the Brothers moved to St. Patrick's, Asansol the very next year. In March 1892, the Brothers took over St Joseph's School, Nainital, which was constructed 3 years earlier

as a Capuchin Seminary. In 1894, a new building, the present red-brick structure, was erected in Bow bazaar and is now St. Joseph's College, Kolkata. This became the Head Office of the Christian Brothers till it was moved to St. Columba's New, Delhi in 1980.

The work that the Brothers were doing received considerable recognition and requests came from several Catholic Bishops for the Brothers to open schools in their respective dioceses. At the turn of the century there were nearly fifty Brothers in India, both Irish and Anglo-Indian. Over the years, the Brothers opened St Michael's School, Kurji, near Patna (1894-1974); Goethals School, Kurseong (1907); St. Edmund's School, Shillong (1916) and College (1936); St Edward's, Simla (1925 - 1983); St. Vincent's Asansol (1927); St. Aloysius' School in Quilon, Kerala (1931 - 1967); St. Mary's High School, Mt. Abu (1929); St. Columba's School, New Delhi (1941) and St Mary's Orphanage, Dum Dum (1947)."

In most recent times, Brother Brendan Mc Carthy continued his great mission among the poor and the marginalised in the city of Joy, Kolkata. He also tread his path into most challenging dark streets of Kolkata, where red-lights thrived and established in the vicinity of Bow Bazar. He was the barefoot teacher of excellence to give future to the children of prostitutes. Many children benefitted from his initiative and with the help of Late Sr. Cyril, IBVM. Kudos to Christian Brothers who brought transformation in our society. Today they might be unsung heroes, however their legacy in education and uplifting the marginalised will remain a testimony in shaping history.

By Francis Sunil Rosario

United Christian Forum (UCF) Meets Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju

Sir, This letter has reference to a front-page report in the Herald 26 July-01 August 2024, where a delegation from the United Christian Forum (UCF) met Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju and urged him to get all the anti-conversion laws repealed.

Following India's independence, Parliament introduced a number of anti-conversion bills, but none were enacted. First, the Indian Conversion (Regulation and Registration) Bill was introduced in 1954, to enforce "licensing of missionaries and the registration of conversion with government officials". This bill failed to gather majority support in the Lok Sabha.

This was followed by the introduction of the Backward Communities (Religious Protection) Bill in 1960, "which aimed at checking conversion of Hindus to 'non-Indian religions' which included Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism".

PRESENT SCENARIO

The following 11 states have enacted anti-conversion laws to stop change of religion (from Hinduism to Christianity or Islam) by individuals or groups through inducement, force, coercion or any other fraudulent means:

(1) Odisha (1967), (2) Madhya Pradesh (1968), (3) Arunachal Pradesh (1978), (4) Chhattisgarh (2000 and 2006), (5) Gujarat (2003), (6) Himachal Pradesh (2006 and 2019), (7) Jharkhand (2017), (8) Uttarakhand (2018), (9) Uttar Pradesh (2020), (10) Karnataka (2022) and (11) Haryana (2022).

The basic premises of anti-conversion laws are conversion is done through inducement, force or fraud. Therefore, the states have fixed the onus on the accused to prove that he/she has not violated the laws where "Inducement or

allurement" means the offer of any gift or gratification, either in cash or in kind and also includes the grant of any benefit, either monetary or otherwise. In Haryana Act "Allurement" also means education in a school run by any religious body, divine pleasure and better lifestyle.

EXISTING LAWS:

In 2015, the Union Law Ministry stated that Parliament does not have the legislative authority to enact laws prohibiting conversion. Yet, the above eleven states have enacted "Freedom of Religion" laws to prohibit forced, fraudulent, or coerced conversions.

Anti-conversion laws in India require individuals seeking to convert to another religion to obtain prior permission (in prescribed formats) from the government authorities. Some states have more stringent anti-conversion laws than others, and impose both jail term and heavy fine. In U.P. this Act is not applicable to one who reconverts to his/her immediate previous religion. This is to facilitate Gharwapsi, a re-conversion of Christians and Muslims into the Hindu fold.

§ Anti-conversion laws passed in the above states have been challenged in courts.

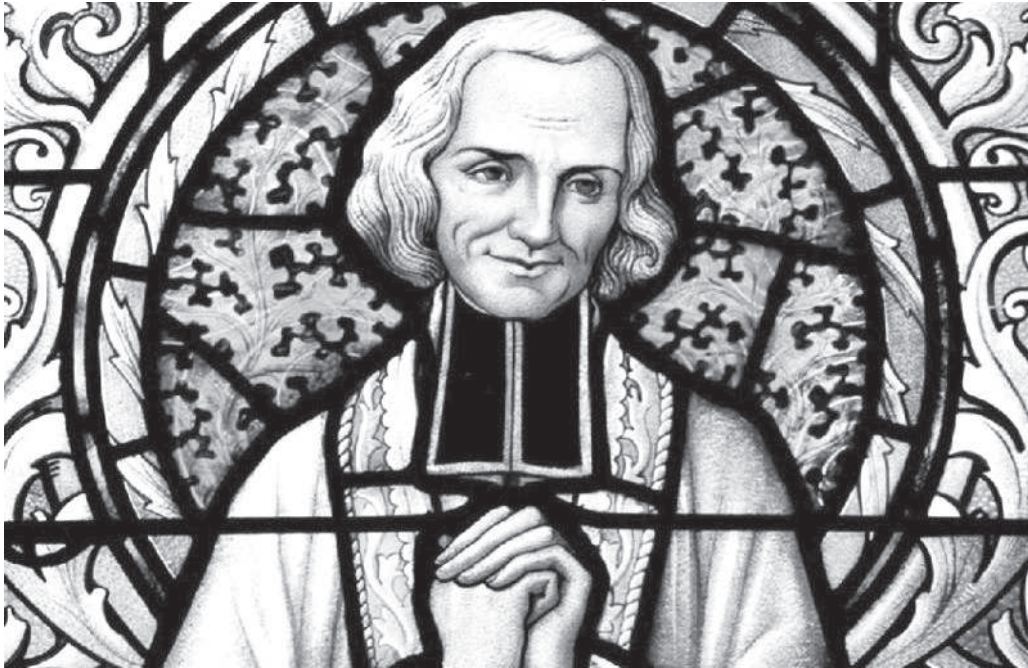
§ 21 petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court of India over anti-conversion law cases pending in Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Karnataka high courts. The petitioners wanted anti-conversion laws in the above states to be declared unconstitutional for trampling on the Right to Freedom of Religion and appealed that all the High Court cases on these laws be transferred to the Supreme Court.

§ Attorney General R. Venkataramani raised strong objections to these petitions being transferred to the Supreme Court. (cond. on P5)

Liturgy

MY FAVOURITE
SAIN† Saint of the Day for August 4

Saint John Mary Vianney



A man with vision overcomes obstacles and performs deeds that seem impossible. John Vianney was a man with vision: He wanted to become a priest. But he had to overcome his meager formal schooling, which inadequately prepared him for seminary studies. His failure to comprehend Latin lectures forced him to discontinue. But his vision of being a priest urged him to seek private tutoring. After a lengthy battle with the books, John was ordained. Situations calling for “impossible” deeds followed him everywhere. As pastor of the parish at Ars, John encountered people who were indifferent and quite comfortable with their style of living. His vision led him through severe fasts and short nights of sleep. With Catherine Lassagne and Benedicta Lardet, he established La Providence, a home for girls. Only a man of vision could have such trust that God would provide for the spiritual and material needs of all those who came to make La Providence their home. His work as a confessor is John Vianney's most remarkable accomplishment. In the winter months he was to spend 11 to 12 hours daily reconciling people with God. In the summer

months this time was increased to 16 hours. Unless a man was dedicated to his vision of a priestly vocation, he could not have endured this giving of self day after day. Many people look forward to retirement and taking it easy, doing the things they always wanted to do but never had the time. But John Vianney had no thoughts of retirement. As his fame spread, more hours were consumed in serving God's people. Even the few hours he would allow himself for sleep were disturbed frequently by the devil. Who, but a man with vision, could keep going with ever-increasing strength? In 1929, Pope Pius XI named him the patron of parish priests worldwide. Indifference toward religion, coupled with a love for material comfort, seem to be common signs of our times. A person from another planet observing us would not likely judge us to be pilgrim people, on our way to somewhere else. John Vianney on the other hand, was a man on a journey, with his goal before him at all times. Saint John Vianney is the Patron Saint of all Priests

(Continued from pg 4)

United Christian Forum (UCF) Meets Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju

§ On 3rd February 2023, the CJ-led bench sought responses from the above-mentioned state governments on petitions challenging the validity of Religious Freedoms Act. It fixed 17 March 2023 as the next date for composite hearing (Times of India, 04 February 2023).
 § The Supreme Court on March 24, 2023 protected members of Christian community from coercive action by the Uttar Pradesh Police on the basis of an FIR registered under the State's anti-religious conversion law (The Hindu 24.03.2023).
 The 2001 & 2011 Censuses show Christian population has remained static at 2.3%. In view of this, the allegations of conversion fall flat. Anti-conversion laws contravene the Fundamental Rights namely (1) Articles 12-17; 19-22, and 25-

28 on Right to Freedom of Religion. According to Article 25(1) “Every person has the freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practise and propagate religion”. This right is subject to public order, peace, morality, and health. However, the Right to Freedom of Religion does not mean a fundamental right to convert any person to one's own religion (Supreme Court of India - Rev. Stanislaus vs State of Madhya Pradesh & Others, 1977).
 In view of the Supreme Court of India being seized of the composite hearing of anti-conversion cases, one wonders at the move of the UCF leaders. Are they contemplating shelving the Supreme Court matter?

ISAAC HAROLD GOMES

Sunday Reflections

Eighteenth Ordinary Sunday [B]- Sunday August 4
 (Ex 16:2-4, 12-15; Ps 78: Eph 4:17, 20-24; Jn 6:24-35)

Introduction: Today's readings challenge us to be more concerned with spiritual hunger than with physical food and to get our spiritual food regularly from the word of God and from the Holy Eucharist – the Heavenly Bread— because only God can satisfy the various forms of our spiritual hunger.

Scripture lessons: The first reading shows us how God satisfied the physical hunger of His chosen people in the desert by giving them manna and quail. The restrictions imposed by God for the collecting of manna remind us to acknowledge humbly our total dependence on God and to trust that He will always provide for what we need. **Today's Responsorial Psalm** (Ps 78) refers to manna as “Heavenly bread” and the “bread of angels” which God provided for Israel and provides for us today. **In the second reading**, St. Paul advises the Ephesians to satisfy their spiritual hunger by turning away from their former evil ways and by leading renewed lives of love, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Paul reminds us that our acceptance of Jesus as the real source of our life and the nourishment of our souls, produces a total transformation in us. Having been nourished by the Bread from Heaven and the word of God, we need to bear witness to Christ by living lives renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Today's Gospel passage is taken from the “Bread of Life Discourse” in John's Gospel. Here, Jesus makes the unique, bold claim, “I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me will never hunger, and whoever believes in Me will never thirst.” Jesus is offering the crowd Bread from Heaven, Bread that will nourish them for eternal life, the Bread available to people who have Faith in Jesus Christ — the presence and indwelling of God in their hearts. When Jesus instructed those who had sought after him for earthly food that they should be fed by the Bread that Jesus would give them, some accepted this teaching. But others turned away disappointed, because Jesus' challenge required a commitment that they were unwilling to make.

Life messages: 1) We need to receive our spiritual nourishment from the word of God. In the Holy Mass, the Church offers us two types of bread: a) the Bread of Life, contained in God's Word and b) the Bread of Life, contained in the Holy Eucharist. a) The powerful word of God gives us strength and inspiration to fight and conquer our temptations and to practice Christian love by serving others sacrificially and helping others by sharing our blessings with them. b) This word of God convinces us of our missionary duty of witnessing to Jesus by our ideal Christian life and convicts us of our sins.

2) We need to appreciate and gain the benefits of our Holy Communion with Jesus. Just as our normal food nourishes and strengthens our body, enables us to work, promotes physical growth, and dispels fatigue, our spiritual food in the word of God and in the Holy Eucharist do these things and much more in our soul. Holy Communion (1) Unites us most closely to Jesus Himself, (“He that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood, abides in Me, and I in him” Jn 6:57); (2) Unites each of us individually to each individual member of the human race through Jesus; (3), Imparts actual graces, including strength, the power to withstand temptation, and the desire to practice virtue, while maintaining, deepening, and increasing Sanctifying Grace in the soul; (4) Lessens the force of concupiscence of the eyes, concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life (5) Gives us more self-control, freeing us from repented venial sins of anger, envy, evil thoughts and desires, and other evil propensities; and (7) Cancels the temporal penalties of sin according to the measure of our devotion.

Homily starter anecdotes: The Great Depression Breadlines. In the depression years of the 1930's, millions of Americans were out of work and many thousands were hungry. In a number of cities, religious groups set up breadlines to feed the hungry. One of these was the Franciscan monastery in Cincinnati, Ohio. Every evening, the Friars, Brothers, and lay volunteers prepared and gave a nourishing sandwich of bread and meat to hundreds of hungry men and women. It was interesting to note the reactions of the recipients. Many accepted the well-prepared and well-wrapped food with a smile and a thank you. Others, with heads hanging, snatched the food package and shuffled off. Some tore the bag at once and started eating as they hurried away. Most of them ate every last crumb after a silent prayer and put the wrapping into a nearby container, though some would eat only the meat and discard the bread on the roadside. A few discontented ones just opened the package and then threw the entire contents away in protest. — The way those hungry unfortunates reacted to that little lunch is a lot like the way his listeners received the words of Jesus in today's Gospel.

(<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

— Fr. Anthony Kadavil

Archdiocese

BEC Orientation Program At Behala Parish



Pilgrims of Hope - Zone II held on 20th July, 2024 at Infant Jesus Church Behala (comprising of St Ignatius, Ekbalpore, Stella Maris BNR & Infant Jesus Church Behala).

Approximately 90-95 members were present. The Resource person Brother Ravi Samping, BEC Coordinator, Kolkata Deanery. The programme started with the Bible Procession and Enthronement.

It was followed by Gospel reading by Rev. Fr. Raja, Asst. PP, IJC, reciting prayers emphasizing the growth of BEC and the fruit of the Orientation programs.

Rev. Fr Shyam, PP IJC with an introduction further highlighted Pope Francis' message in preparation for the forthcoming Jubilee Year 2025, explaining the four main features of the doctrine.

The presentation set pace connecting the previous Orientation subject "Tent" shedding a light on the progress of BEC activities of Zone II. He further highlighted how we BEC need to meditate on the WOG, making ourselves worthy of the Lord - equip & prepare ourselves,

Pray, learn, understand, seek, taking to heart receive God's grace, abiding in Him which leads us to the FATHER GOD. Testify sincerely

to lead others to God in Truth and righteousness.

He quoted verses both from old and new Testament as well as parables in relation to the Theme: HOPE and also explained biblical term of Hope beautifully.

The pathway of GOD's desire of dwelling (Ex.25:8-9) with HIS chosen people, Biblical History from Genesis to Revelation.

He also touched upon themes like the Covenants (GOD's Promises), the prophecy and fulfillment, Glimpses of the Revelation of the Second Coming and the Kingdom Come - Our daily prayer (Mathew 6:10)

Finally, the Role of BEC Animators, with some tips on Evangelism - What is Evangelism? Why do we Evangelise? How do we Evangelise?

The session concluded with thanksgiving by Fr. Raja.

The Final Prayers and Blessings was given by Fr. Shyam.

Vote of Thanks by Kenneth Salvadore, Animator, IJC. Light refreshment was served to All.

**Report by Animator,
Infant Jesus Church, Behala**

PRESS RELEASE

DISGUSTING OLYMPICS OPENING CEREMONY

The Indian Catholic Forum expresses its disgust, dismay and outrage at the sexually perverted and historically distorted opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics 2024. It had more to do with uninhibited sex than the Olympics motto of Faster, Higher, Stronger.

The almost nude depictions, emphasis on different forms of sexual orientation, watched by millions, including impressionable young children, was in exceedingly poor taste, and reflective of the total collapse of sexual ethics in French society.

What exceeded all bounds of decency and artistic expression was the distorted, sexually explicit depiction of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" that the Lord Jesus shared with his disciples before his crucifixion, death and resurrection.

By doing so France has literally guillotined the Lord Jesus himself.

France seems to have regressed three centuries to the hatred and antagonism of the French Revolution. It should learn from Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Rev Martin Luther King Jr that naked aggression and violence are not the solution to any problem or perceived grievance/ discrimination. While condemning these disgusting and distorted depictions we appeal to the French government and the International Olympic Committee to issue an unconditional apology for hurting the religious values of billions of Christians and even those of other faiths who hold the Lord Jesus in the highest esteem.

**chhotebhai
CONVENOR
INDIAN CATHOLIC FORUM**



CAB Organises Grandparents Day at St. Teresa's Parish

By Dominic Panja

On 28th July, 2024, St. Teresa's Church in Moulali, Kolkata, was abuzz with joy and warmth as the Catholic Association of Bengal (CAB) St. Teresa's Parish unit celebrated Grandparents Day 2024. This special event honored the invaluable role grandparents play in families and the community.

The day's festivities began with a solemn Eucharistic mass celebration dedicated to grandparents, the mass was celebrated by Rev Fr. Sunil Rozario and Our Parish Priest Rev Fr. George Anthony. The church was filled with families, young and old, coming together to show their appreciation for the elder members of their families. In the sermon of Fr. Sunil Rozario he highlighted the wisdom, love, and guidance that grandparents impart, emphasizing their role in keeping faith and traditions alive across generations.

Following the mass from 10 a.m. onwards, a special program was organized by the CAB community in the Parish hall where more than 100 Grandparents took active participation in the program. The cultural

program begins with a short opening prayer by our Parish Priest followed by a adorable and beautiful Bengali tradition, and with the timeless grace of the lighting of lamp ceremony. Our dignitaries Rev Fr. Sunil Rozario, our Parish Priest Rev Fr. George Anthony, Fr. Naveen Tauro, Mrs. Angela Mantosh, Aunty Margret Coilo (from Central Committee of CAB), President Mr. Ignatius Subhas Gomes our CAB President Parish Unit, James Lingam CAB secretary Parish Unit and Mrs. Sharmila Gomes were invited on stage to light up the lamp. Simon Gomes and Evan Gomes from the St. Teresa's Youth committee performed a duo singing with their melodious voice and brought excitement to the Grandparents. Children from the Parish, Valentina Gomes, Christina Rozan from Sunday school performed a series of western dance, Albin, Christopher, Vincent Steve, Augustine Roy, Charles James from Altar service performed a Western songs and atlast Vincencia Gomes and Samantha Dias performed a

energetic classical dance which brought a thrilling excitement and smiles to their faces. Small children from our Parish performed Poems and Rhymes in Bengali and English which brought a smiles and tears of joy to the faces of the attendees. Each of the participants were awarded after their performance. And got the appreciation from the entire people present in the hall that day.

A highlight of the celebration was that time when some of the Grandparents from our Parish came forward to perform a dance, song and shared jokes to those attendees not only that their grandsons presented a touching gesture which symbolized the gratitude and love that the younger generation holds for their elders. Many grandparents were visibly moved by the outpouring of affection and respect.

To make the program more enjoyable the event also included a game lucky dip game where their luck helped them to win some exciting prizes. While the program was going on, dignitaries were invited on stage to take a flower pot from us as the token of love.

As the day was going to end the celebration concluded with a communal meal, where all the families of Grandparents were gathered to have lunch together, which shows the reinforcing the sense of community and togetherness. The joyous occasion left everyone with a renewed sense of appreciation for their grandparents and the blessings they bring into their lives. After the lunch members of C.A.B. Parish Unit gifted a First box to Grandparents Grandparents Day 2024 at St. Teresa's Church was a heartwarming celebration that not only honored the elder members of our Parish community but also strengthened the bonds of love and respect among all generations after us. The day concluded with a memorable group photograph with the organising committee of CAB and thanking everyone those who came forward to make that day a memorable for our Parish Community, and brought smile to our beloved Grandparents.

Special feature

Jesuits and the intellectual life

By Myron J Pereira

The Society of Jesus celebrates the feast of St Ignatius Loyola on July 31, but is it still faithful to its founder's charism of innovation and critical enquiry

For four centuries at least, from the Council of Trent (1565) to Vatican II (1965), the Society of Jesus — better known as the Jesuits — dominated the spiritual and intellectual life of the Church.

Their contribution was two-fold: in the field of doctrinal theology, and in the area of popular religiosity. In the latter, for example, we may cite the phenomenal spread of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the Sodality movement.

This should not distract us from the intellectual contributions of the Jesuits to the secular sciences, as in the work of Christopher Clavius (1538-1612), and Athanasius Kirchner (1602-1680).

The seminary system

A major contribution of the Council of Trent was the seminary system, whereby young men were trained to become priests through specialized courses in public speaking, philosophy, and theology. (Before this innovation, a young man "apprenticed" himself to his local parish priest).

The Jesuits had invented this system, parallel to the schools they also ran, and soon each diocese in Europe clamored for a seminary, run by the Jesuits.

The 15th century also saw the birth of an invention that revolutionized communication: Gutenberg's printing press.

Under Jesuit inspiration, the press also gave rise to the textbook, for use in Jesuit schools; and the catechism, widely disseminated in Jesuit parishes. These innovations are still in use today.

The early Society had a thriving intellectual life, not just in its colleges (actually "high schools"), but also among ordinary Catholics, who flocked to hear its sermons, begged to "make a retreat," and eagerly read its tracts and pamphlets.

In India and China

And all this was carried out not just in Europe, but wherever the Jesuit sense of mission led them — to North and South America, and to the lands of Asia as well. China and India were their particular fields.

Spurred on by their motto, "for God's greater glory," the Society of Jesus left a definite imprint on the intellectual history of the modern world, and on this country.

However, this article is not just an account of the Jesuits' glorious past, but also a look at the present. Does the Society of Jesus live up to its name with regard to its intellectual contributions, or has it changed?

For this, we need to take a good look at contemporary India and the Jesuit's place in it.

To the newcomer, the first impression in India is the overwhelming success of Jesuit schools and colleges, nay, their very varied educational institutions. In almost every region of the country, they are the most prestigious, and thus the most imitated.

All of us have experienced the transfor-



ming effects of education, but it has taken the genius of a Paolo Freire to remind us that schools and colleges also stand for ways in which a society accultu-rates us to its values, stifling criticism and promoting acquiescence.

Is this also the case for Jesuit education in India today? India is one of the most oppressively unequal societies in the world. Do Jesuit schools perpetuate this inequality?

Is there space for the Jesuit intellectual who will question, criticize, research and offer new insights to transform society, as his founder once did 400 years ago?

This in brief is the question before us as we enquire into the intellectual life of Jesuits in India.

Who is an intellectual?

At the outset, let's understand just who an intellectual is, and here's a helpful description:

An intellectual is a person who engages in critical thinking, research, and reflection about the reality of society, and who proposes solutions for its normative problems.

Coming from the world of culture, the intellectual participates in the public life of society, either to defend a concrete proposition, to denounce an injustice, or to uphold a system of values.

This is an adequate definition of an intellectual. Does it apply to most Jesuits? The answer is no, it does not.

Pastoral motivation

The average Jesuit is pastorally motivated, and not academically or scholastically inclined. Much less is he disposed "to reflect about the reality of society, and propose solutions for its normative problems," desirable as we may think this to be.

What is this "pastoral motivation" we refer to? We refer to "the helping professions" (teaching, counseling, family guidance) so much part of the priest's ministry, and within the context of liturgical devotions, all within the objective of making people better.

Here in fact is where we find the largest investment of the Society, and here is where most of the early companions of Ignatius — men like Francis Xavier, Peter Faber and Peter Canisius distinguished themselves. Pastors transform society from within, through persuasion, not by confrontation or argument.

Ignatius Loyola himself set great store by

the "art of conversation," whereby one led another to deeper levels of spirituality by the inspired use of words.

But valuable as the pastoral life is, what concerns us in this article is the intellectual life in the Society, and how seriously it takes critical reflection, scholarly research and transformative vision.

And it's here that we meet our first stumbling block.

An ideology of obedience, not of dissent. The Society of Jesus has been largely a force for the Establishment, and not for the poor and subaltern classes in society. This is not to say that Jesuits have not worked with the poor and the marginalized — they have, and they have done sterling work.

Consider for example Peter Claver's (d. 1654) work with the slaves and Jesuit mission to the indigenous peoples — from the Paraguay reductions (1609-1767) to the Canadian missions to the Huron (1634-55) to Fathers Lievens and Hoffmann in (what is today) Jharkhand (19th c.).

The reason why our ideology is pro-Establishment is because of our unswerving — should that be "unthinking"? — loyalty to the pope and the Vatican ("You have to be a pope to realize the value of the Jesuits" — Pius XI).

Ours is an ideology of obedience, not of dissent. No matter how free-thinking they may appear to be, Jesuits are not Protestants.

Why do I say "unthinking" loyalty? Because we have never subjected the Vatican and its structures to a critique of accountability. But how could we demand accountability, considering that in essence, our juridical structures are feudal, not modern and democratic? When I say "feudal," I mean that our governance is based on the "divine right" of superiors to dictate what must be done, and if accountability is sought, it is demanded of the subject to the superior — not vice versa.

No superior, no provincial, no bishop is ever held accountable to his subjects, whether individually or to the community. But the whole structure of modern democratic society is based on criteria of freedom, equality and accountability. Wherever Jesuits appropriate these values, it makes for tensions.

Thus, it is often asked: is perhaps Jesuit obedience in actuality a form of

conformism, without anyone having the courage to dissent?

Reviewing Jesuit formation

For example: in the 1980s, the Society in South Asia engaged in a long and thorough discussion on Jesuit formation. It was agreed that formation was meant for mission, that is, geared to training for various forms of ministry.

One of the decisions taken was to have one's theological formation in the local language, and in a local setting, not in a big house of formation. In other words, in a "regional theologate." A change of place meant interaction with the lives of the poor, and dialogue with several local groups, something quite new.

The teaching staff in the big houses of formation felt nervous that an emancipatory agenda would be changing too much, too soon. They were unsure whether young Jesuits would measure up. The new plan was quietly sabotaged.

True, for some years, this new system was put into effect, but the misgivings kept growing. Today, 20 years later, there is no "regional theologate" in existence, save one in Tamil Nadu.

The intellectual life and ideology

Jesuit formation has not been geared for critical thinking, research and reflection on the actual state of the country. This is because educators in formation houses, colleges and schools have been forming their students (and Jesuits among them) by segregating them from real life.

As a result, what takes place is indoctrination and not education (Indoctrination takes place when one is forbidden to question the "status quo"). Jesuit institutions prepare people to take their place in the establishment, instead of critically questioning its structures, and resisting them, if necessary.

Have we been taken in by power privilege and prestige, and failed to be gripped by issues of marginalization, impoverishment and exclusion? This is the question.

Transformation does not take place in a culture of conformity but in a culture of questioning, disagreement and dissent. This is the real task of the intellectual.

The intellectual class on the whole, both within and outside the Jesuit society in the country, has not been able to tie up with the aspirations of the marginalized in Indian society.

Not even with groups who have the interests of the marginalized at heart, because our formation does not take place in dialogue with them.

Can one speak of the intellectual life in India without the ideological dimension? Ideologies are related to building consciousness and providing power, so all ideologies tend to be political. An ideology raises questions about who has power, why one group has so much power as to control the majority, and how the powerless are to be empowered.

If our mission is to empower the poor, and so transform them, we cannot do that without an ideological dimension. Why do Jesuits shy away from these vital questions? And if Jesuits do not do this, then who will?

Wars, violence challenge Religious: Head of Assumption Congregation



By Michael Gonsalves

Sister Rekha Chennattu is the first Asian to head the Religious of Assumption, an international Catholic women's congregation founded in 1839 in Paris primarily to educate young girls.

The congregation re-elected the 60-year-old Indian nun as its superior general on July 16 for a six-year term. The biblical theology professor was first elected to the office in 2018 to spearhead her congregation worldwide.

In the following interview with UCA News, Chennattu speaks about her priorities and the challenges facing her congregation.

Did you expect to be re-elected? What was your first reaction when elected a second time?

When I got an opportunity (to address the electoral body of leaders), I expressed my desire to return to India and resume my biblical ministry, teaching, research and writing. I had also packed my bags and prepared my office to welcome the new superior general.

But when I was re-elected, my first reaction was a feeling of not being ready. I felt strongly that I needed to be reborn. I could not repeat what I did in the first term! There should be continuity and discontinuity.

What are your priorities for your second term?

We are called to appropriate the synodal way of life as the core identity as Religious of the Assumption.

Our dream is to become a synodal international congregation. And so, our priorities include personal metanoia, promoting a culture of caring and quality relationships in our communities, practising synodal leadership styles, and strengthening our commitment to the people on the margins, migrants, and ecology concerns. We want to journey with youth and create decentralized, synodal animation structures. Revisit our partnership with our lay mission partners and explore with them a synodal collaboration in our mission in education, justice, peace, integrity of creation, and solidarity.

What are the challenges before your nuns?

There are demographic changes within the congregation. There is a shift from Europe and North America to the global south. We also see aging sisters in Europe and blooming vocations in some African and Asian countries.

There are no vocations in some provinces and many in others. The critical questions are: How do we prepare for this gradual shift? What are its implications for our internationality, Formation, mission, and governance?

The challenges from outside are even more numerous. Wars and violence caused by domination, racism, competition over land, religious conflict, drugs, etc. Our communities are affected by the suffering of our people. We ask ourselves, who benefits from these wars? When will we choose peace and forgiveness? The

disparity between the rich and the poor has worsened over the past years. We are in touch with the victims of injustices and inequalities all over the world, and we experience the suffering of the people living on the margins, especially migrants in Europe and in the USA.

We are also experiencing the impacts of secularisation in our communities, homes, and workplaces. The social media and digital world have also penetrated different aspects of our Religious Life with positive and negative impacts. The painful realities of the abuses, like sexual abuse and abuses of power, in the Church and Religious life are other significant concerns.

Do your nuns carry out conversions?

No, we mainly work in social development and education, aiming to transform communities, focusing on women, children, youth, etc. For example, in India, we have boarding for school girls in Tilloli village. It is the only Catholic boarding for tribal girls in Nashik district (of Maharashtra state). It accommodates students between the ages of five to 17 years. Our sisters in India work among the poorest people in the villages and cities of Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Assam, and Kerala and work for their betterment.

How big is your congregation?

We have 156 communities in 34 countries and around 1,300 sisters and novices. Our sisters work in the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Europe. The congregation has 86 novices and postulants and around 150 junior sisters. The age of those joining us varies from 18 to 45 years old. The motivations of those joining us are also different in each case. What attracts them, I think, is our simple lifestyle, hospitality, friendly and open relationships, coupled with our social commitments. The laypeople feel very much at home in our communities; they join us for prayer, meals, etc.

How free are your sisters to disagree with superiors before reaching a consensus?

Our sisters are very daring to ask questions ... challenge superiors, etc.

As superior general, I received letters from everybody everywhere ... from novices to 98-year-old sisters. Yes, sisters in some provinces are freer than others. It also depends on their history. Diversity is the identity mark of our congregation. Although we share the same charism, we are so different.

What are the new forms of Religious life in the globalized world?

We live in an era marked by the complexity of the scientific revolution, vulnerability, and uncertainty... The numerical strengths of religious life are descending. I also talked about the changing demography.

The new forms of religious life involve three steps: one is to become truly a synodal congregation, two is to collaborate with the laity and other congregations, and three is to harness the power of new technologies as they constantly interact with our spirituality, way of life, and mission.

What are some of your most important achievements?

The principles of continuity, discontinuity, adaptability, and novelty guided my leadership. I focused on seven areas: 1. Returning to our roots, such as the charism and traditions of the congregation, by reinterpreting them for our times. 2. Formation of members, particularly biblical and theological formation. 3. Creating a culture of communication. 4. Going to the peripheries to serve and being transformed by those on the margins. 5. Restructuring in the congregation. 6. Promoting synodal and participative leadership and animation... More than 400 sisters helped me animate the congregation through different commissions and teams. 7. Making the collaboration between the religious and the laity an integral aspect of our identity and mission. Our collaboration is rooted in the understanding that all the baptized, regardless of their vocation or role, contribute to the life and mission of the Catholic Church.

You were the first Indian woman to teach theology in Catholic universities.

How do you look at current developments in theology?

As superior general, I continued my biblical reflections and writing research papers. I also continued being a member of the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC). There seems to be a genuine and serious search to become a synodal Church that is more open and inclusive. However, in some universities, we tend to go backward. For example, some biblical exegesis tends to return to historical/critical methods as the only legitimate way of interpreting scriptures. This is very dangerous.

What was your biggest disappointment in your first term?

I was totally new, having never lived in France and never been a general councillor. I had to begin to animate the congregation without knowing the sisters and their realities. It took almost four years to visit provinces ... plus COVID-19 ... which may be one of the reasons for this second term.

Although I understand all three languages of the congregation — French, English, and Spanish — I have not mastered them. I can understand and speak Italian, but sometimes, I need translators with me. After studying French for two months, it was a bit ambitious for me to expect to have fluent conversations in French.

IF

A Poem By Rudyard Kipling

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;*

*If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same:
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,
And never breathe a word about your loss:
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them:
"Hold on!"*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much:
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!*

Analysis

Book Review

Local Churches in South Asia and Evangelization

Book Review by Francis Sunil Rosario

The book, "Local Churches in South Asia and Evangelization" edited jointly by world-renowned theologian, Dr. Felix Wilfred, Founder-Director of Asian Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies (ACCS) & Dr. D. John Romus, Former Dean of Theology, Morning Star Regional Seminary, is a milestone document for all concerned leaders of the Church in the context of South Asian socio-political-economic, cultural and pastoral situation of our societies. This book can be a 'Handbook' and a contextual tool in the evangelizing mission in South Asian countries.

The book gives pertinent insights to the processes and initiatives by the Local Church of South Asia. "South Asian Churches and their cultural and religious contexts unveil dimensions, signs of the times and methods that can lead us all into a more robust and unswerving commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ and the evangelizing ministry of the Church."

In the Introduction of the book, the joint editors, Dr. Felix Wilfred and Dr. D. John Romus, write, "To commemorate the event of the historic encyclical Maximum Illud of Pope Benedict XV, giving the modern vision of Church's missionary activity Pope Francis declared Oct. 2019 as an "Extraordinary Missionary Month" (EMM) with the aim of fostering awareness of Church's evangelizing mission in our time." The symposium organized in Morning Star Regional Seminary was to this effect and dream.

The book has six pertinent sections under which the experts in their respective fields spoke convincingly on the topic of symposium 'Local Churches in South Asia and Evangelization'. The inputs are divided under the headings as 1. Evangelization in South Asia—Theology and History; 2. Evangelization and Dialogue; 3. Evangelization and Indigenous Christian Movements; 4. Participation of the Laity in Evangelization; 5. Evangelization and Subaltern Movements; 6. Evangelization, Mission and Advocacy.

Those who contributed to this symposium are, Dr. Elias Frank, Archbishop Thomas

D'Souza, and Keynote address by Dr. Felix Wilfred.

The other speakers were, Dr. D. John Romus spoke on magisterial documents on Evangelization since Maximum Illud – Application and reception in South Asia. On theology and history, the speakers were Dr. Leonard Fernando, SJ, Vimal Tirimanna, CSSR. Dr. Jacob Parappally, MSFS, Dr. Sagaya John Antony Jesu, D.Min (Chicago) Director, NBCLC and Archbishop Anil Joseph T. Couto.

On the section of 'Evangelization and Dialogue' the speakers were Rev. P.R. John S. J., Rev. (Dr.) M. D. Thomas, Bishop Bejoy Nicephorus D'Cruze and Mr. Marshal Fernando, Director (EISD), Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Others who contributed to the discussion were, Abbot Jerome Naduvathaniyil, OSB, Dr. Jerome Sylvester, IMS and Rev. George Thirumalachalil, SDB. S.A. Stanislaus Devotta, Mr. Chitto Francis Rebeiro, Dhaka, Journalist, Mr. Eugene Gonsalves, former AICU president, Bishop Sarat Chandra Nayak, Dr. Louis Prakash, S.J., Dr. Sudhir Kumar Kujur, S. J. Dr. Shalini Mulackal, PBVM, Martina Josephine SJC, Lalit P. Turkey, S.J., Ms. Christin Mary, ICM, B.Sc. L.L.B & MSW, and Mr. Leo Jalais.

At the end of the book, pg. 518 ff, a detailed CV with email ID of each contributor to this symposium is presented. This book contains 527 pages. This is the most valuable book in pastoral and practical theology, to be kept in all the libraries of Seminaries, Colleges and Pastoral Institutes as reference for Pastoral and Human Resource development.

The book is designed and published by Claretian Communications, Chennai with copyright to Morning Star Regional Seminary, Barrackpore. The cover page design was done by Rev. Dr. J. Arockiasamy.

The Symposium was sponsored by the PMS across the Universal Church. The PMU General Secretary, CIAM and Fides Director, Fr. Fabrizio Meroni, PIME, Vatican City gave his wholehearted support to this symposium to promote the needs of the local Churches.

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Interreligious Dialogue and the contemplative Life

Dr. Subhasis Chattopadhyay

It is often forgotten that both Roman Catholicism and Hinduism stress the same scala mysticism that Guigo II experienced in his Carthusian cell hundreds of years ago. The Yoga Sutras too speak of this scala mysticism. It is absurd to think that Guigo II had ever read the Yoga Sutras and since the Yoga Sutras predate St. Bruno, the founder of the Carthusians, it is impossible that the composer of the Yoga Sutras had encountered any form of Christianity in India. The Yoga Sutras were written down much later after their original composition. The point here is not to raise a storm in a teacup over dates of either Guigo II's writings or about Sage Patanjali's composition of the Yoga Sutras which are extrapolations of the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. The point here is that both the ancient Hindu sage and the cloistered Guigo, came to the same conclusions. What did they conclude? Contrary to popular notions of Yoga, as Georg Feuerstein tellingly pointed out: Yoga is not a union with anyone but rather Yoga is a disunion with everyone else to be finally united with the Supreme Godhead, who is signified by Aum in Hinduism and YHWH in both Judaism and Roman Catholicism.

This Samkhya approach to experiencing the dazzling beauty of God in the here and now is Yoga. The Bhagavad Gita teaches us that children alone consider Samkhya and Yoga to be different. The Carthusian, the Camaldoli and the cloistered Carmelite disassociate themselves from the world not because they want to flee the world; they do so precisely to participate in the world in the best possible manner --- the way of silent Adoration. Similarly, Shakti sadhaks practice Yoga, not Hatha Yoga or body postures, at charnel grounds to dissociate themselves from others in an effort at disunion with other innumerable beings (dasein) to unite with God configured as Mother within the Shakta charism. The Christian hermit Juliana of Norwich saw God as Mother. The idea of God as Mother, therefore, is not alien to Christianity. Roman Catholic cloistered Religious and an initiated Shakti upasak like I can begin a dialogue on the transformative power of silence, meditation and tapasya. As Qoheleth points out, all and everything under the sun is just vanity. Thus we need to push with all our might towards the Omega Point of Teilhard de Chardin.

As faith communities we need to have in India more online spaces for silent reflection. These spaces should respect the non-negotiables

of each of our own Faiths and it is in these silent sessions online that we should practice our unique forms of recollection, Adoration, and meditation. Otherwise, interreligious dialogues will lead nowhere since

the aim of dialogue is not bragging about our knowledge of comparative religions, or, our fluency in languages or spaces where we cherry pick from each other's religions whatever suits our purposes in crowd-pulling which

inevitably leads to crowd-funding akasimony.

It is my firm belief that we need to slow down and respectfully practice 'swadhyaya' or lectio divina. We need to reflect deeply on what we read slowly. Our combined aim is to find God behind the written word. Our aim is to speak to each other through silence. It is imperative that we defeat samsara through silent love. In this we need to study slowly spiritual classics online, like The Cloud of Unknowing and read respectfully the sacred texts of each other. It is very urgent that this reading is done keeping in mind the traditional readings of texts from within both our traditions. This is a non-negotiable of interreligious dialogue --- each should read the other's sacred texts as an insider would and never as an outsider. If this is not done, the entire dialogue will break down in acrimony. One cannot approach the person of Jesus without the tropes of the Suffering Servant and of the weakness of a powerful God. One cannot approach one of the Mahavidyas without the trope of God's being absolute power and not power being an attribute of God. These distinctions need to be carefully maintained in an interreligious milieu.

We need to be weary of imposing non-Indian models of theological praxes on our own scenario here in India and particularly, to West Bengal. I have the highest regard for the greatest Roman Catholic theologian of the last century --- Karl Rahner SJ. But when Rahner spoke of the anonymous Christian, he opened up the Pandora's box of the anonymous Hindu. It is not his fault. Rahner's participation as a conciliar Vatican II German-Jesuit theologian shaped his worldview. Rather, our focus should be on the ideologically balanced, Raimundo Panikkar. The late Panikkar knew more about Hinduism and its worldview than many Hindus. Our swadhyaya and lectio divina can both begin by reading the Christian that India forgot. I on my part, am preparing an essay on ESanskriti on the late Panikkar; the Catholic priest that Roman Catholics forgot.



A Little Help from God

After a shipwreck, a man who was the lone survivor managed to reach the shore.

He asked God for help. After waiting too long for God to answer his prayers, he built himself a hut for his protection with sabotaged pieces of a shipwreck.

Few days passed by, each day he spent plenty of time looking for food and gazing at the horizon for God's help.

One day, when he returned from his food search, he found his little hut burnt to ashes.



Losing all hope, he felt helpless and screamed in anger, "Why God? Why do you never answer my prayers?"

After a few hours, a ship reached the shore for his rescue. The man asked the captain, "How did you find me?" The captain replied,

"We saw your smoke signal for help."

The man's faith in God's will was restored.

Moral of the Story: Don't lose hope because bad things are happening to you. God has his own way of working.

News & Views

Jesuit heads Tamil Nadu's Minorities Commission



By Santhanam Arokiasamy

Chennai: The southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu has appointed Jesuit Father Joe Arun as the chairperson of its 10-member Minorities Commission.

A government notification on July 23 said the appointment is for three years.

The commission vice chairperson is M M Abdul Khaddus.

Other members in the commission are Hamilton Welson, A Sornaraj, Nagore A H Najimudeen, Praveen Kumar Tatia, Rajendra Prasad, M Rameet Kapoor, J Mohammed Rafi and S Vasanth.

Father Arun, a member of the Jesuit Chennai province, succeeds Peter Alphonse, a former Member of Parliament, a lawyer and a renowned Congressman.

The 59-year-old Jesuit is the secretary for the higher education secretariat of Jesuit Conference of South Asia and Director of the Chennai-based LIBA (Loyola Institute of Business Administration), a 45-year-old business management institute.

In his 23 years of robust experience

in academic and industry, Father Arun has done extensive research in the areas of consumer behaviour, cross-cultural management, conflict and identity construction and other related areas. He has published books and scientific papers on personal growth, globalization, leadership and strategy. He holds an MBA from IIBM and Madras University and a doctorate from Oxford University UK. Earlier, he directed St. Joseph's Institute of Management, Trichy. During his tenure the institute became one of the top B-Schools in India. He has also served as the director of Goa Institute of Management and as the secretary and correspondent of Loyola College, director of Xavier Institute of Business Administration, Palayamkottai.

In August 2010, Tamil Nadu became the 12th state to set up the Minorities Commission as a statutory body to protect the rights and interest of minorities. It visits various parts of the state to study the problems of the minorities and recommends suitable remedial measures to the departments concerned.

Can religions afford not to know what causes non-heterosexuality?

By Bryan Shen

The difference between people who identify as LGBTQ and those who do not but have non-heterosexuality is vital for religions to know.

The non-acceptance of homosexuality is as old as many religions. Homosexuality also exists in animals. Canadian biologist and linguist Bruce Bagemihl (1962-), in his book *Biological Exuberance* (1999) describes about some 450 species exhibiting homosexuality. He also observed that animals all around are not bothered about homosexuality and mused that perhaps humans should not be too.

However, although humans come under the genus of animals, classical definitions differentiate humans from animals with their capacity for conscious reasoning, which leads them to establish moral codes and religion.

Almost all animal species have sexual dimorphism, which is the difference between males and females in size, shape, color, mobility, metabolism, strength, etc. The differences enable a strategy that improves the survivability of the next generation.

Some female species are larger than males because producing more eggs is a strategy. Female birds that lay eggs may be dull in color and camouflaged to avoid threats. Male mammals are typically bigger and more robust, as protecting and defending are crucial. Good strategies improve reproductive success, which if poor, leads the species to extinction.

How does non-heterosexuality develop?

A large-scale GWAS (Genome-wide association study) by Andrea Ganna et al. (2019) confirms that genes contributing to same-sex sexual behavior make up only 8 percent to 25 percent of predictability. If genes are significant determinants, predictability should be closer to 100 percent.

So, if it's not genes or 'hardware,' how does non-heterosexuality develop?

Brains have memories or 'software.' Humans have a few types, including semantic memory, episodic memory, and conditioned emotional memory. The first two are known as declarative memories, as they are conscious and can be described via language.

Animals don't have declarative memories. They have conditioned emotional memories that are not consciously remembered and have no logic, just like a one-year-old human child can be conditioned to prefer or fear something without conscious reasoning, which can last throughout life.

Imagine a nurse robot with software called Alexa designed to tend to patients and a maintenance robot with software called Siri designed to fix doors and windows in a hospital. What if their software was accidentally swapped? The nurse robot would only respond if you called it Siri and preferred to fix doors and windows. The maintenance robot would only respond if you called it Alexa and preferred to tend to patients.

Some family and social factors can adversely affect 'appropriate emotional conditioning' below consciousness in humans.

For a boy, common factors include being bullied by boys, not liking boys, not playing sports, a bad relationship with his father/brothers, having more female family members, having more female friends, being close to a mother, having a domineering mother/female, or concentrating a lot on studies, etc. For a girl, common factors include a poor

relationship with her mother/sisters; witnessing her father maltreating her mother, continually being criticized at home, and being bullied by classmates. Other reasons could be witnessing women being mistreated by men, seeing the disadvantages of being female, seeing boys being favored, having poor relationships with fathers/brothers, toxic males around, not feeling safe with men, etc.

When feelings of sex incongruities arise, it is not chosen, just like attraction to the opposite sex is not. However, what determines choices after that depends on familial/social mores or LGBTQ narratives the boy or girl is exposed to.

Does religion exacerbate quandaries?

Any response, supportive or against LGBTQ, that is devoid of education (of underlying causes of non-heterosexuality) can be detrimental.

Religions that are prejudiced, condemning, admonishing, and punishing will drive children with unwanted non-heterosexuality further into hidden silence and heightened fear.

However, perfectionism, fear-based good behavior, susceptibility to vain glory, fraught relationships, and poor mental health are just some problems that will continue because underlying deficits and needs are not known.

Religions that are compassionate, accepting, and supportive will also have the same underlying problems. Gains such as no LGBTQ expressions or LGBTQ relief and freedom, respectively, are just veneers.

What can religions do to improve the situation?

As there is much misinformation and darkness, knowing these four points may evoke an impetus for pertinent learning and response:

* There are many more people with non-heterosexuality who do not identify as LGBTQ. They can have opposite yearnings and visibility. A study by Pachankis & Bränström (2019) shows that 86.5 percent of all people with non-heterosexuality in Asia are hidden. This goes up to 94.7 percent in Muslim/African nations, and the global total is 75.5 percent.

* The emergence of people with non-heterosexuality is a sign of the neglect of spiritual morality in families and communities (see common factors earlier) through preoccupation, striving, imposing, or liberating children according to what is considered good or not good, with "opened eyes" that makes humans feel like Gods §Gen 2:17, Gen 3:4-5.

* Morally sensitive children are more affected by immorality around them, and many choose to enter religious life. When religious formators refuse to look deeper into the issue because of fears, they are preventing the emergence of wounded healers among themselves, who can bring healing and dignity to many more who are suffering in silence. They also obscure the gravity of spiritual and moral decline in societies and families.

* Current common ways of showing compassion, acceptance, and support of LGBTQ only increase the good looks of veneers while underlying problems exacerbate. Religious authorities who prioritize the preservation of their good looks spiritually endanger themselves and their followers through the sin of omission.

Seoul holds launch event for World Youth Day 2027

By LiCAS News

The Catholic Church in South Korea has officially set the stage for World Youth Day (WYD) 2027 with a grand launch event at the Myeongdong Cathedral, in Seoul.

Under the theme "Hope Ignites in Seoul. Success for WYD Seoul 2027," the ceremony, held on July 28, marked the beginning of preparations for the highly anticipated international gathering. The event drew a diverse crowd of over 1,000 young attendees, including North Korean defectors, youth with disabilities, and military personnel.

The launch event kicked off with a colorful flag parade, where young Koreans and international participants carried 193 flags into the cathedral. This parade symbolized the universal call and enthusiasm for WYD, highlighting Seoul's role as a global hub for young Catholics.

A highlight of the ceremony was the Kick-off Declaration, led by Arch-

bishop Peter Soon-taick Chung, Chair of the Local Organizing Committee for WYD Seoul 2027, alongside two young Korean delegates.

This declaration marked the official commencement of preparations for WYD 2027, emphasizing the Church's dedication to youth engagement.

The event also showcased the anticipated economic impact of WYD Seoul 2027. The research team conducted by Prof. Taejun Lee from the KDI School of Public Policy and Management presented an analysis forecasting KRW 11.3698 trillion in production impacts, KRW 1.5908 trillion in value-added effects, and the creation of 24,725 jobs, demonstrating the potential benefits for Seoul and the broader region.

The ceremony concluded with a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Chung, joined by Cardinal Andrew Soo-jung Yeom, Bishop Job Yo-bi Koo, Bishop Paul Kyung-sang Lee, and Bishop Titus Sang-Bum Seo.

Miscellaneous

Protests as Indian Catholic college denies space for Muslim prayers

Muslim girl students at Nirmala College in southern Kerala want space inside campus as local mosque does not have facility. A Catholic college in southern Indian Kerala state has denied space for its women Muslim students to offer Friday prayers on the college premises, kicking off a controversy with Church officials terming the demand as part of a sectarian move to target the college.



Nirmala College, managed by the Kothamangalam diocese, began witnessing protests on July 26, when staff prevented a few Muslim girl students from offering their prayers (namaz) inside a room in the college.

Muslim girls wanted the space inside the campus to offer their mandatory Friday prayers as the local mosque does not have a facility for them.

Vice-principal A. J. Emmanuel told UCA News that the 72-year-old college "has no provision for allowing space for offering namaz." The college has no plan to change its policy, he said.

Church officials said the sudden demand and the controversy are part of an organized attempt to tarnish Christian institutions across the state, where Muslims now count 26 percent of the state's 33 million people.

"There has been a concerted and planned move in recent times against Christian minority institutions," said Bishop Thomas Tharayil, convener of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) of the Syro-Malabar Church. Christians form only 18 percent of Kerala's population. Both Christians and Muslims are religious minorities, as Hindus form 54 percent of the state's population. The Eastern rite Syro-Malabar Church, under

which the diocese functions, has urged the state government to protect the college and managers, fearing the students' protest could turn violent.

The demand has "no legal or moral standing," Bishop Tharayil said in a statement on July 28. The pressure was part of a plan for a "religious-communal invasion of Christian institutions" and asserted that "any efforts to destabilize Christian minority institutions will be dealt with strongly."

Nirmala College has maintained high academic standards. However, the recent developments will upset its educational activities, added the prelate.

The Catholic Congress, a lay association associated with the Church, condemned the protest and asked if it was the college's responsibility to offer space for prayer.

The demand cannot be accepted "just because the mosque does not allow women inside it," the organization said in a statement on July 28.

"When the Muslim community does not make space for women to offer namaz, how can they ask a Christian management," said a Church leader who did not want to be named.

The area has gruesome memories of fanatic violence inside a college campus.

Church comes to aid disaster-hit in Wayanad

By Thomas Scaria

Waynad: More than 250 people died and 190 went missing in the "worst ever" landslide that devastated Kerala's hilly Wayanad district on July 30.

The victims included 9 Catholic families from the St. Sebastian's Syro-Malabar Church, Chooranmala, the affected region. Only one body was retrieved and buried, said parish priest Father Jibin Vattukulathil.

The priest told Matters India that he got into rescue operations immediately after the disaster. Since the parish church is not damaged, it is being used by the government machinery for rescue operations.

"Right now, we are fully cooperating with the rescue teams and providing food and drinking water to the teams," said the priest, who is left alone with a few parishioners to help the victims as outsiders are not allowed.

Father Mathew Periyapuram, the vicar of the St. Xavier's Forane Church in Kalpetta, another town in the district, told matters India that the Church in Wayanad has extended all possible support and assistance to the government rescue operators such as providing the team food, accommodation and other coordination facilities.

He said the bishop of Mananthavady has visited the affected region along with the vicar general to assess the situation. He has instructed his priests to provide full support

at this time of crisis.

Father Periyapuram said the Church in Wayanad has arranged volunteers from the Jesus Youth Movement as helpers for those under treatment in hospitals. It has also arranged a medical team with doctors and nurses to assist those in the shelter camps.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told a press conference that his government appreciated the rescue teams for their swift action that has saved 1,592 people. He said some 8,017 people are housed in 82 camps as the area is expecting further rains and landslides.

Father Periyapuram said the Church has started collecting household articles for the victims as they begin to shift to temporary or rented houses eventually. "There is no shortage of food or medicine items currently and we are collecting articles like kitchen utensils, vessels, gas stoves, cloths etc which are needed for their early settlement."

According to him, many of the affected were estate workers, mostly Muslims, and some were migrant workers from northern India. Christians were a small minority in the region and the Chooranmala parish has only some 35 families.

The worst-affected areas include Churalpara, Velarimala, Mundakai and Pothukalu and the locals from these areas managed to escape death but are deeply shattered as hundreds of homes have been destroyed. (MattersIndia)

COMMON QUESTIONS ON LITURGICAL NORMS

Bells at the Consecration

Answered by Father Edward Mc Namara, professor of liturgy at the Regina Apostolorum University

Q: The ringing of bells at the elevation is now omitted during the consecration; the reason given is that since the Mass is now said in the language of the parishioners, they should be aware of what is happening and are not in need of bells to tell them. Does not the ringing of bells at the elevation draw attention to the great event that has occurred on the altar? — E.H., Williamsford, Ontario

A: The General Instruction of the Roman Missal refers to bell ringing in No. 150: "A little before the consecration, when appropriate, a server rings a bell as a signal to the faithful. According to local custom, the server also rings the bell as the priest shows the host and then the chalice."

The text makes it clear that ringing a bell at the consecration is an option, not an obligation.

Since the GIRM's presumption is that Mass is celebrated in the local tongue, the use of the vernacular, in itself, cannot be used as a reason for the abolition of the bell ringing. There may be other good reasons, but they should be weighed carefully. A long-standing custom should not just be swept away unless more is to be gained by dropping it than retaining it.

The birth of the custom of a signal bell at the consecration, probably during the 13th century, had more to do with the recitation of the canon in a low voice than to the language of the Mass as such.

It may also have been inspired by changes in church architecture in which the people were more physically separated from the altar by the choir — and in some cases a significant number of faithful were impeded from seeing the altar during Mass. Thus the use of the bell became necessary.

Some centuries later the bell was also rung at other moments such as the Sanctus and before Communion.

Certainly the practical reasons for ringing the bell have all but disappeared. Yet, it can still serve a purpose as an extra aid to call attention to the moment of the consecration, as a jolt to reawaken wandering minds and a useful catechetical tool for children and adults alike.

In an age when people are ever more in thrall to audiovisual means of communication, and less attentive to abstract discourse, it seem strange that we set about removing those very means that, as well as forming part of our tradition, could prove most effective in transmitting a message of faith. A similar argument could also be made regarding the decline in practices such as the use of incense during Mass. The Holy See has maintained the practice of ringing the bell at the consecration in St. Peter's Basilica, although it has an excellent sound system. I also had the experience of a parish that restored the use of the signal bell after many years without it. Not only were there no complaints but the general reaction was very positive from all age groups.

Follow-up: Bells at the Consecration §09-06-2005

A reader from Crawfordsville, Indiana, has added some very informative comments to our piece on the use of bells during Mass.

He writes: "Apropos your fine response to the question of ringing bells at the consecration, it may interest you to know that the issue is perhaps a bit more complicated than you suggest. Father Adrian Fortescue, so much lionized by liturgical traditionalists for his rubrical manual of the old rite, §... was not a fan of bells, and points out in his 'History of the Roman Mass' that there was much variation in Europe about when they were rung. He says that traditionally bells were never rung at St. Peter's in Rome at the consecration, where the papal liturgy continued right through the reforms to be an odd combination of extreme Baroque elaboration and pre-medieval archaism. I suspect that after the papal liturgy was essentially abolished by Paul VI, and replaced with the ordinary Mass the Pope now celebrates, bells were later restored on the false assumption that they had been used, and there were not enough clerics left in the papal household who remembered the old tradition to set people straight."

Certainly Dr. Fortescue (1874-1923) was no fan of liturgical fastidiousness in spite of having penned what he termed his "dreadful ceremonies book."

Tapan Mangol



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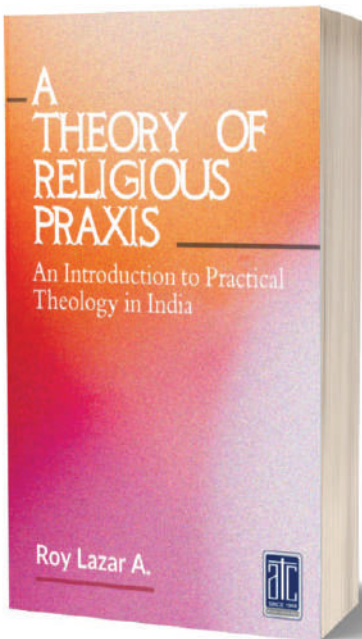
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Thanksgiving to St. Anthony of Padua, the wonder worker, for miraculous favours received

Miraculous Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit, you who makes me see everything and shows me the way to reach my ideal, you who gives me the divine gift to forgive and forget all the wrong that is done to me and you. who are in all instances of my life with me.

I, in this short dialogue, I want to thank you for everything, and affirm once more that I never want to be separated from you, no matter how great the material desires may be.

I want to be with you and my loved ones in your perpetual glory. To that end and submitting to God's holy will, I ask from you... (Mention your request here...)

Say I: Our Father... Say I: Hail Mary... Say I: Glory Be...

Thank you Holy Spirit for answering my Prayers.

By a Devotee



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Construction of the new building, Renovation of the building, All kind of interior, All kind of painting and repairing work, Garden renovation / pound renovation, Roof/shed work CCTV camera work, Electrical work Flooring work, False Ceiling work, Any kind of Construction work Light, Decoration work on all occasion, Plumbing work, Sliding Door & Window Grill work, Earthing Work, Solar Panel, Pest Control, Damp Proof Treatment, Maintenance Work, statue painting with repairing and Telecom Services.

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Service all over West Bengal

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