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St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata

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Women's exclusion from ordination discriminatory, Pope Francis told



By Jose Kavi

New Delhi: Christian reform groups from across the world observed the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene July 22 by urging Pope Francis to ensure women's full equality in the Church, including their ordination to priesthood.

In an open letter addressed to "Dear Brother Francis," the Catholic Women's Council and We Are Church International termed women's exclusion from ordination and preaching homily as "discriminatory" and against Christ's teachings.

The letter, endorsed by 35 Christian women groups spread across the world, also urges the Pope to include women's full equality in the Synod on Synodality scheduled for October this year.

"The exclusion of women from Church ordination (canon 1024); Church governance (cc.129 and 274§1), and from preaching the homily (c.767§1) are discriminatory, contrary to Jesus' inclusion of all, and deprive the Church of the benefits of gender diversity and balance in leadership," asserts the letter.

The letter also points out that the exclusion of women hurts women's dignity and unacceptable in the 21st century since all have received the same baptism, the same Spirit and the same calling.

"We place our request before you, Pope Francis as it is you who has set out a synodal church that "walks together", listens, and dialogues; and therefore, invites everyone to "speak with courage and candor" (preparatory document p. 20). It is in this spirit that we place our appeal for due

consideration of women's position of full equality in the Church to be kept on the table for the Synod of 2024," the letter concludes.

According to the Gospels, Mary Magdalene travelled with Jesus as one of his followers. She was a witness to his crucifixion and resurrection.

The Catholic Church has made her the patron of contemplative life, converts, penitents, and women. She has been designated as the patron of hairstylists and perfume makers due to the Gospel story of her anointing Jesus' feet.

Open Letter to Pope Francis by Reform Groups

Include Women's full equality in the Synod on Synodality, October 2024. Dear Brother Francis, The exclusion of women from Church ordination (canon 1024); Church governance (cc.129 and 274§1), and from preaching the homily (c.767§1) are discriminatory, contrary to Jesus' inclusion of all, and deprive the Church of the benefits of gender diversity and balance in leadership. All have received the same Baptism, the Same Spirit, and the Same Calling. The exclusion of women to respond to that Calling is hurtful to women's dignity and unacceptable in the 21st century.

You have rightly called the Church to Walk together in Communion, Participation and Mission.

However, if women continue to be kept in an infantile position, then women can never hope to be part of a synodal Church where they are in communion, participating equally in mission. A synodal Church requires a change in the structures where women participate equally in decision taking, not just in decision-making processes. (continued on pg 09)



Christian leaders ask India to repeal anti-conversion laws

A delegation of Christian leaders has urged India's federal government to ask 11 states to repeal the sweeping anti-conversion laws, which they say target Christians.

"The anti-conversion law has been weaponized to target religious minorities," an eight-member delegation from the United Christian Forum (UCF) told federal minority affairs minister Kiren Rijju.

The delegation met the minister in his office on July 20 and asked him to "issue an advisory to the state governments to repeal the anti-conversion law."

Stringent laws that criminalize conversion have been enacted in 11 states, most of them ruled by the Hindu right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Christian forum monitors anti-Christian violence in the country and its delegation presented a memorandum to the minister highlighting the rising persecution against Christians.

"The minister agreed to look into our grievances," said A C Michael, a delegation member.

Michael told UCA News on July 22 that they would discuss the issue further with the federal government and the provincial states concerned.

The memorandum has the details of persecution, including murder, false cases, social boycotts, and denial of burial grounds.

There were 727 incidents of violence against Christians in 2023, the memorandum said, and termed them "as a disturbing trend."

In the current year till June-end, "a staggering 361 incidents of targeted attacks" against Christians were reported, it said.

The central Indian state of Chhattisgarh tops the list with 96 incidents, followed by northern Uttar Pradesh, which has 92 cases. Both the states are ruled by the BJP and have the anti-conversion law in force, which bans religious conversion by using force or allurements.

"The primary reason for these attacks" was the false allegations of fraudulent religious conversions," the memorandum noted.

The memorandum said that "police collude with the right-wing groups" to target Christians, who make up a mere 2.3 percent of India's 1.4 billion people.

The delegation also told the minister that Christians were mercilessly beaten to death for their faith even when the Indian constitution guarantees religious freedom.

On July 12, a four-member delegation led by Archbishop Andrews Thazhath of Trichur, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, called on Modi and expressed concerns over the increasing hostility Christians face. (ucanews)

Indian Church leaders back Amnesty's Manipur relief camp call P2	World Day of Grandparents: Plenary indulgence for visiting the elderly P3	Setting the world on fire: Ignatius of Loyola For the Greater Glory of God P8	Book Review: Pope Francis LIFE – My Story Through History P10
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Church in India

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-- Editor

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for reports Monday evening,
and for advertisements
Tuesday 12 noon.

- Editor

Indian Church leaders back Amnesty's Manipur relief camp call

Thousands of people in relief camps in Manipur are in dire need of support, rights group says. Church leaders have concurred with a global rights group report that relief camps in Manipur in 'Indias northeast are "in dire need of support" after sectarian strife uprooted more than 50,000 and killed over 220 people, most of them Christians.

"There is no doubt, Amnesty International has come out with the reality existing in Manipur" in northern India, said A.C. Michael, based in the national capital New Delhi.

"Both the federal and state governments failed to restore peace even after a year," he told UCA News on July 19.

In a report released on July 16, Amnesty accused Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Manipur, bordering civil war-hit Myanmar, of ignoring the plight of people living in relief campus in the state.

They are "in dire need of support" even after the promise of a financial aid package by Modi in April this year, the London-based rights group said in the report.

Amnesty said its findings revealed "a picture of a state missing-in-action" despite the claims of "timely intervention" and promise of financial aid.

The camps lack adequate relief and rehabilitation measures, including adequate shelter, sanitation, food, water, medical care, and access to education opportunities "in violation of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," the report said.

Unprecedented violence broke out between Hindus and minority tribal Christians in the state on May 3, 2023, over conferring tribal status on the majority Hindu Meitei community to avail benefits under India's affirmation action policy.

Tribal Christians make up 41 percent of the state's 3.2 million population, while Meitei Hindus form more than 53 percent.

More than 50,000 people from the minority Kuki-Zo communities have fled their homes and sought shelter in relief camps. The sectarian strife has killed 220 persons, destroyed over 7,000 residential places, and over 360 churches and Church-run institutions were set on fire.

The Catholic Church has a diocese in the troubled state, based in the state capital Imphal, and headed by Archbishop Linus Neli.

Life is miserable at the relief camps. The displaced people are weak mentally and physically and do not know what is in store for them as the governments state and federal are not doing enough, said a Church leader based in the troubled state.

"This will continue as long as you remain in relief camps," noted the Church leader who did not want to be named.

A tiny group of Meitei Christians suffer the most, he noted.

Indian court blocks rule to divide eateries by religion

Detractors of the move, including allies of the ruling BJP, alleged it was meant to 'normalize the boycott of Muslims'

Activists have joined political leaders in condemning police in two states for demanding eateries display the names of their owners amid criticism that it creates a religious divide, particularly during the ongoing Hindu pilgrim season.

'Indias Supreme Court on July 22 temporarily suspended the rules imposed last week by police in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand — both ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Thousands of Hindu pilgrims walk on a pilgrimage known as "Kanwar Yatra" to collect holy water from the Ganges river. They pass through the two neighboring states during the holy month of Shravan, the fifth month of the Hindu calendar, which begins on July 22. They ritually carry the water in containers suspended on either side of a pole, a contraption known as "Kanwar." The water is then offered at a Shiva temple in their villages.

The Supreme Court's interim order said eateries need not specify their owners' names outside, but should display the food items on offer. The court has asked for the responses of both the states and will take the matter up again on July 26.

The Uttar Pradesh government, the first to impose the rule, said it was meant to maintain the purity of the pilgrims, who follow dietary restrictions and are vegetarians.

Also, many devout Hindus refrain from eating meat and fish during the holy month.

But detractors of the move, including allies of the BJP, said the rule was meant to stop the pilgrims from patronizing eateries owned by Muslims.

Both Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have witnessed simmering sectarian tensions in the recent past, with critics accusing the two states' BJP governments of targeting minority Muslims.

"We condemn the move as it may have caused tension among different religions, especially Hindus and Muslims," said Minakshi Singh, a Christian activist based in Uttar Pradesh.

Singh, general secretary of the charity, Unity in Compassion, said such directives should not have been issued in the first place.

Muhammad Arif, chairman of the Centre for Harmony and Peace, said the directives are "a part of the BJP's hidden agenda to divide people" and "treat Muslims as second-class citizens."

"The rules are unconstitutional, and the state governments should immediately take them back," he added.

Arif said such decisions by state governments damage India's international reputation.

Indian Church leaders scramble to defuse 'crusader' row

Churchmen meet Sikhism's top leader after Sikhs object to being called crusaders by Christian pastors

Church leaders have met the top leader of Sikhism after Sikhs objected to being called "crusaders" by unidentified pastors in a northern Indian Punjab state.

The pastors allegedly called Sikh community members "crusaders" following a spate of attacks on the state's Christians, who were accused of forced conversions.

Christians account for 10 percent of Punjab's population.

"Some unknown pastors have allegedly used the word 'crusaders' for them sSikhst. It is painful and unfortunate," Bishop Agnelo Rufino Gracias, apostolic administrator of Jullundur diocese in Punjab state, told UCA News.

The prelate added that they have had a "good rapport with the Sikhs" for years and hardly "faced any issues."

A delegation from Jullundur ((Jalandhar)) diocese in northern Punjab met Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh of the Akal Takht (the seat of power of the Sikh religion) on July 15.

The Sikhs form the majority of Punjab's 28 million population the Jathedar is the head of the Sikh religion. The meeting took place in Amritsar, where the Jathedar is based.

The delegation, led by Father John Grewal, the diocese's director of interreligious dialogue, handed Singh a letter titled "Masih Maha Sabha" (Christian General Assembly) and promised cooperation to address the contentious issue of religious conversion.

"The Catholic Church is totally against conversion by force," the letter said.

Regarding the pastors' comments, Gracias said there are many of them in Punjab and "we have no control over them."

"Due to the mistake of a few pastors, we cannot make our relations complicated," the prelate said.

Gracias said that "we have made our stand clear on religious conversion" — a bone of contention between Christians and Sikhs in the state.

The Sikhs allegedly started attacking Christians over allegations of rampant conversions. Some top Sikh leaders also asked the community to fight against

Christian conversion.

The pastors in the sermons, mainly in the local Punjabi language, called them "crusaders" to imply the Sikhs were trying to save their religion from Christianity.

"Punjab is a peaceful state where people greatly regard each other's faith. Of late, there have been misunderstandings between the Sikh and the Christian communities," said Punjab-based Pastor Hanook Bhatti.

Some people presume that we are converting Sikh people to Christianity. It is an allegation, the Christian leader said.

"The Christian population in India has decreased in the past ten years," the pastor said.

On Aug. 31, 2023, a church was attacked over allegations of conversion, and in June last year, a Sikh head priest demanded Christians stop religious conversions.

Sikh leader Giani Harpreet Singh has issued a statement against "forced conversions," Pastor Bhatti said.

The Nihang Sikhs (armed Sikh warriors) had also protested against religious conversion, he noted. Under Indian law, Sikhs are permitted to carry a kripa (knife).

Sikhs, along with Christians, Muslims, Jains, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians, are classified as India's minority communities.

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Church in the World

Spiritual tone at RNC heightened in wake of Trump assassination attempt



By Ken Oliver-Méndez

Acknowledgement of the supernatural is off the charts at this year's Republican National Convention in the wake of former U.S. president Donald Trump's harrowing narrow escape from an assassination attempt.

Invoking the presence and blessing of the Author of Life, at both the Democratic and Republican parties' presidential nominating conventions, is usually limited to just the opening and closing prayers of convention sessions or a closing phrase in a speech.

This year, however, former president Trump and his supporters have frequently invoked God's role in human affairs. The day before the convention began, which was the day after a just-in-time turn of Trump's head prevented a bullet from killing him, the former president himself credited "God alone" for saving his life. His supporters have frequently echoed that sentiment, both in conversations and in speeches from the convention podium.

"God was with me," Trump said on Wednesday while speaking to a group of convention delegates, adding that the close call "in many ways changes your attitude, your viewpoint on life. I think, honestly, you appreciate God even more." Pauline Shultz, a Catholic attending the convention from Minnesota, said she thinks Trump's new lease on life marks the beginning of a new chapter not only for him but also for the nation as a whole.

Pauline Shultz, a Catholic attending the convention from Minnesota, said she thinks Trump's new lease on life marks the beginning of a new chapter not only for him but also for the nation as a whole.

"I believe that when President Trump gets back in, he's going to be a changed man. He will be led by the Holy Spirit, and I think he'll be softer in his spirit, but lead in strength," Schultz said. "I believe that we as a nation are moving into a reawakening, or awakening," she added.

"I'm a Christian, too, and I believe in divine intervention. I think that's what we saw that day," Morgan told CNA. "If he had not turned his head to look at that chart, we would be going to a funeral." "If you didn't believe in miracles before Saturday, you better be believing right now," U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-South Carolina, declared. U.S. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina also drove the point home in his speech to the convention. "If you didn't believe in miracles before Saturday, you better be believing right now," Scott said. "Thank God Almighty that we live in a country that

still believes in the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the Alpha and the Omega. Our God, our God, still saves, he still delivers, and he still sets free."

"On Saturday, the devil came to Pennsylvania holding a rifle," Scott added, "but an American lion got back up on his feet, and he roared."

In his speech to the convention, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio also squarely addressed the matter. "The last few days remind us that the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind is in the hands of God," Rubio said.

"We were brought to the precipice of the abyss, and by the hand of God, reminded of what truly matters in our lives and in our country," the Catholic senator noted, while also pointing to Trump's remarkable feat that "although wounded and facing danger, he stood up and raised his fist and reminded us that our people and our country are always worth fighting for."

In his own deeply spiritual remarks to convention delegates, renowned neurosurgeon and former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Dr. Ben Carson told Americans on Tuesday that "these events have brought unusual clarity to the times we are living in."

"I have no doubt that God lowered a shield of protection over President Trump," Carson said. "And I join millions of Americans in thanksgiving for President Trump's safety. And I encourage you to join me in praying each day for his continued protection."

Meanwhile Bob Unanue, a Catholic who is CEO of Goya Foods, America's largest Hispanic-owned food company, recalled to the delegates how "four years ago, I dared to say that we were blessed by Donald J. Trump" and how he "got into trouble for that" as the statement sparked furious calls from Democrats to boycott the company's products.

Lambasting the Biden administration for going after "traditional Catholics," Unanue called Trump "a courageous leader, and he will bring this nation closer to God."

Even the invocations and benedictions were more spirited than usual, with pastor Corey Brooks of Chicago's New Beginnings Church using the opportunity to lead the delegates in a prolonged, loud shout of praise. "Why?" Brooks rhetorically asked and then immediately answered: "Because this week we could be having a week of mourning, but because God did not let any of those things be, this is a week of celebration and a week of life."



World Day of Grandparents: Vatican grants plenary indulgence for visiting the elderly

By Hannah Brockhaus

The Vatican has granted a plenary indulgence to anyone who visits a sick, lonely, or disabled elderly person on the fourth annual World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly on July 28.

Those who are grandparents or elderly themselves can also receive a plenary indulgence, as well as anyone who participates in religious functions connected to the celebration, as long as the usual conditions are fulfilled.

The usual conditions to obtain a plenary indulgence are to be detached from all sin, to receive sacramental confession and holy Communion, and to pray for the pope's intentions.

An indulgence is a grace granted by the Catholic Church through the merits of Jesus Christ to remove the temporal punishment due to sin. It applies to sins already forgiven and cleanses the soul as if just baptized.

Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, the head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, sent a decree July 18 granting the plenary indulgences.

A person who cannot leave his or her home due to sickness, infirmity, or another serious reason can also obtain the plenary indulgence if they "unite themselves spiritually to the sacred functions" of the day, "offering to the merciful God their prayers, pains, or sufferings of their lives, especially during the various

The major penitentiary also asked priests to make themselves available to hear confessions "in a ready and generous spirit" so that Catholics may more easily have "the opportunity to attain divine grace through the power of the keys of the Church."

World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly

The World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly, initiated by Pope Francis in 2021, is held on the fourth Sunday of July, which falls near the July 26 feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus.

In 2024, the day will be celebrated on July 28 with the theme: "Do Not Cast Me Off in My Old Age" taken from Psalm 71. The Vatican announced the theme in February, saying it was Pope Francis' desire "to call attention to the fact that, sadly, loneliness is the bitter lot in life of many elderly people, so often the

victims of the throwaway culture."

In 2023, Pope Francis marked the day with 'an intergenerational Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, affirming in his homily that old age is a "blessed time."

"How much we need a new bond between young and old," the pope said on July 23 last year, "so that the sap of those who have a long experience of life behind them will nourish the shoots of hope of those who are growing. In this fruitful exchange we can learn the beauty of life, build a fraternal society, and in the Church, be enabled to encounter one another and dialogue between tradition and the newness of the Spirit."

Conditions to obtain a plenary indulgence:

In order to obtain a plenary indulgence, the following conditions must be fulfilled:

1. Detachment from all sin, even venial.
2. Sacramental confession, holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the pope. These three conditions can be fulfilled a few days before or after performing the works to gain the indulgence, but it is appropriate that Communion and the prayer take place on the same day that the work is completed.

A single sacramental confession is sufficient for several plenary indulgences, but frequent sacramental confession is encouraged in order to obtain the grace of deeper conversion and purity of heart.

For each plenary indulgence that is sought, however, a separate holy Communion and a separate prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father are required.

The prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father is left up to the choice of the individual, but an Our Father and Hail Mary are suggested.



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



The Herald

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A Brush with Death and its impact on faith in God

In the blink of an eye, life can hang by a thread. For some, these heart-stopping moments become pivotal turning points, reshaping their worldview and spiritual beliefs. Such was the case for former U.S. President Donald Trump, whose brush with death not only made headlines but also sparked a conversation about faith in the face of mortality. For some, a brush with death provides a glimpse into the divine, forever transforming their spiritual journey.

On a seemingly ordinary day, the unthinkable happened. An assassination attempt on Donald Trump took place, sending shockwaves through the world. The incident reportedly occurred in a public event during a rally in Pennsylvania. As the assassin's bullet was speeding its way to strike him dead, at the decisive millisecond Trump turned his head to look at a projected chart and escaped from the jaws of death although the bullet nicked Trump's right ear and bloodied it.

In the wake of the assassination attempt on the former US president Donald Trump, the American nation's consciousness has awakened to a new spiritual reality. Prior to this incident, Trump's public persona was largely defined by his business acumen and political ambitions. His religious beliefs, while occasionally mentioned, were not a central focus of his public image. However, in the aftermath of the assassination attempt, a noticeable shift occurred in Trump's rhetoric and demeanour.

In public statements following the incident, Trump began to speak more openly about faith and divine interventions. He was quoted as saying, "I've always believed in God, but this experience... it showed me His presence in a way I've never felt before." This newfound spiritual fervour was evident in his increased references to prayer and providence in speeches and social media posts.

For Trump, this manifested in a more public embrace of his Christian faith. He began attending church services more regularly and speaking about the role of prayer in his life and decision-making process. Trump's experience sparked a national conversation about faith, mortality, and the role of spirituality in public life. Supporters saw his renewed faith as a sign of humility and growth.

Regardless of one's political leanings, the incident served as a reminder of our shared humanity and vulnerability. It highlighted how, in moments of crisis, many turn to a higher power for solace and understanding.

While personal accounts are compelling, researchers have also delved into the relationship between near-death experiences and religious beliefs. Studies suggest that when faced with mortality, many individuals turn to faith as a source of comfort and meaning. Trump's story is not unique. Throughout history, individuals who have faced death and lived to tell the tale often report profound spiritual awakenings. These experiences can lead to a deeper appreciation for life, increased empathy and compassion, a shift in priorities and values, stronger connection to faith or spirituality, a renewed and strengthened belief in God or a higher power, a greater connection to others and the world around them, a sense of peace about mortality and what lies beyond.

These close calls leave us with a clear sense that we are on this earth for a reason. Escapes from the jaws of death serve to jolt us, reminding us we have something left to do on earth. They can move us to use our time and resources wisely and to discover and live out our callings. Whether or not we have had a brush with death, we can be sure that we are not here by accident. God has a plan and a purpose for all of us. He wants us to count each day as a gift from His hand and to use the balance of our time sensibly to bring him glory, help usher others into His Kingdom, and be transformed into His likeness.

Letters to the Editor

Sir, Readers must have seen a report in the Herald Kolkata (July 19-25, 2024) on the arrest of several church-run officials (both CNI and Catholic Church) in connection with arbitrary fee hike in violation of the Madhya Pradesh Niji Vidyalaya (Fees Tatha Sambandhit Vishayon Ka Viniyaman) Adhiniyam, 2017 which regulates school fee increase in Madhya Pradesh. The news is very worrisome, considering Rajya Sabha MP Jose K Mani's July 2 letter to George Kurian - Union Minister of State for Minority Affairs, to get the Christians released immediately, cut no ice. The report also stated that two Catholic schools have been ordered to refund Rs 18 crore for collecting excess fees from students.

In this connection the Hindu (11.07.2024) reported that the authorities in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district directed ten private schools to refund about ₹65 crore charged extra as tuition fees from more than 81,000 students. The schools had hiked tuition fees in violation of the law, said Jabalpur District Education Officer (DEO) Ghanshyam Soni. He said that the District Committee (DC) for Regulating Fee and Related Issues had examined the accounts of these schools and found them to have charged extra fees of ₹64.58 crore from 81,117 students between 2018-19 and 2024-25. Mr. Soni told PTI that he had issued notices to the schools on July 9 directing them to refund the illegally collected fees.

According to District Collector Deepak Saxena, on May 27, the Jabalpur district administration had got 11 FIRs registered against school functionaries and a few bookshop owners for illegally raising fees and textbook prices respectively and action was taken against them after discrepancies linked to them were uncovered.

The Free Press Journal of 15.07.2024 reported: A list of 79 schools that have been arbitrarily increasing their fees has been prepared by Narmadapuram district administration. Based on complaints from parents of students, the administration found that the fees had been increased by approximately 10% to 20%. Consequently, the department has summoned the management of these listed schools to appear on July 15, 16, and 18 for a hearing.

As per the Madhya Pradesh school fee hike law, (given in the Link:

<https://indiankanoon.org/doc/95740962/>), it is mandatory for a school to get prior approval of the District Committee (DC) for Regulating Fee and Related Issues if it intends to raise the fees by more than 10%. If the proposed fee increment is more than 15% of the fee of preceding year, the DC shall send the same along with its comments to the State Committee for Regulating Fee and Related Issues (SC) which is authorized to decide the quantum of the fee increment. Prima facie it appears the concerned 79 schools didn't adhere to this stipulation.

The law further states:

·The DC shall not fix the fee but shall regulate the increase in fee.

·The Management of a private school shall not receive any donation or capitation fee under any name whatsoever, from any student, parent or guardian.

·The management of a private school shall not collect fee in excess of the fee decided under the provisions of this Act.

·The DC shall enquire into a complaint made by a parent/guardian of a student, or a student regarding violation of any provision of this Act by the Management of the school in which the student is studying. It is authorized to take suo moto cognizance of the violation.

·The DC may appoint a chartered accountant to examine the audited accounts and records of private schools.

·The DC shall for the purpose of making any enquiry, have the powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, while trying a suit in this respect.

·No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding shall lie against the Chairperson or member of the DC or the SC, for any order made by it or in respect of anything done in good faith or intended to be done under this Act and the rules made thereunder.

·On completion of the inquiry on fee increase, if the DC finds that fee in excess of that permitted has been collected, it shall direct the management of the said private school to refund it to the students/their parent or guardians.

·The DC shall in addition to the order of refund, impose a penalty up to rupees two lakh on the management of the private school on whom the refund order has been served for the first time; penalty up to rupees four lakh where order of refund is issued for second time and up to rupees six lakh for subsequent orders of refund.

·In addition to imposition of above-mentioned penalty, the DC may also recommend to the competent authority to suspend or cancel the recognition of the said private school.

·The SC shall decide the appeal within such time and in such a manner as may be prescribed. It may reduce or increase the penalty imposed by the DC.

The law doesn't mention arrest of errant officials. Arrests could have happened due to the FIRs filed being categorized as Cognizable Offence. The legal team representing church officials will have more clarity on this.

In this connection it may be noted that National Lawyers Forum of Priests and Religious (NLFRP) is a body of 900 lawyer priests, brothers, and nuns in India (Radio Veritas Asia 05.10.2022). How many are practising lawyers? How effective was their role in Fr Stan Swamy's UAPA case? How are they gearing up for the MP school fee case? Today when our Christian institutions are having a torrid time, we badly need on CBCI/CCBI board a crack team of practising paid Christian lawyers.

In this context, it must be mentioned several bright priest and nuns are being denied the opportunity to shine in their legal profession. For example Sr Jessy Kurian, a member of the St Ann of Providence and a senior advocate in the Supreme Court of India. She was denied permission by her superior to contest in the Supreme Court Bar Association elections. (mattersindia.com 11.05.2024 report: Supreme Court Bar Association: Nun lawyer barred from contesting). NLFRP national convener Father Santhanam Arockiasamy, in a statement to Matters India, said, "Despite her dedication and qualifications, she has unfortunately been restricted from pursuing an opportunity to serve in the executive committee of the Bar Association, an act which would not only enhance her professional standing but also contribute significantly to the broader legal fraternity."

In Kolkata one priest obtained his Bar Council Licence in 2012. But he hasn't been granted permission to practise in court. In nutritional terms this is called 'stunting.' He lamented his professors looked upon him as "a future judge whom we are fortunate to teach." In December 2023, a young nun came to Kolkata with high hopes of practising in Calcutta High Court. But her under the garb of "obedience" deputed her as a nursery class teacher! Fortunately she managed a transfer to Siliguri and is breathing freely with the legal fraternity there. The regressive outlook of several heads (includes bishops) is stymieing talented priests and nuns. Despite their pontifications, they refuse to see His Light!

ISAAC HAROLD GOMES

Liturgy

MY FAVOURITE
SAIN Saint of the Day for July 31

Saint Ignatius of Loyola



The founder of the Jesuits was on his way to military fame and fortune when a cannon ball shattered his leg. Because there were no books of romance on hand during his convalescence, Ignatius whiled away the time reading a life of Christ and lives of the saints. His conscience was deeply touched, and a long, painful turning to Christ began. Having seen the Mother of God in a vision, he made a pilgrimage to her shrine at Montserrat near Barcelona. He remained for almost a year at nearby Manresa, sometimes with the Dominicans, sometimes in a pauper's hospice, often in a cave in the hills praying. After a period of great peace of mind, he went through a harrowing trial of scruples. There was no comfort in anything—prayer, fasting, sacraments, penance. At length, his peace of mind returned. It was during this year of conversion that Ignatius began to write down material that later became his greatest work, the *Spiritual Exercises*.

He finally achieved his purpose of going to the Holy Land, but could not remain, as he planned, because of the hostility of the Turks. Ignatius spent the next 11 years in various European universities, studying with great difficulty, beginning almost as a child. Like many others, his orthodoxy was questioned; Ignatius was twice jailed for brief periods.

In 1534, at the age of 43, he and six others—one of whom was Saint Francis Xavier—vowed to live in poverty and chastity and to go to the Holy Land. If this became impossible, they vowed to offer themselves to the apostolic service of the pope. The latter became the only choice. Four years later Ignatius made the association permanent. The new Society of Jesus was approved by Pope Paul III, and Ignatius was elected to serve as the

first general.

When companions were sent on various missions by the pope, Ignatius remained in Rome, consolidating the new venture, but still finding time to found homes for orphans, catechumens, and penitents. He founded the Roman College, intended to be the model of all other colleges of the Society.

Ignatius was a true mystic. He centered his spiritual life on the essential foundations of Christianity—the Trinity, Christ, the Eucharist. His spirituality is expressed in the Jesuit motto, *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*—"for the greater glory of God." In his concept, obedience was to be the prominent virtue, to assure the effectiveness and mobility of his men. All activity was to be guided by a true love of the Church and unconditional obedience to the Holy Father, for which reason all professed members took a fourth vow to go wherever the pope should send them for the salvation of souls.

Luther nailed his theses to the church door at Wittenberg in 1517. Seventeen years later, Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society that was to play so prominent a part in the Catholic Reformation. He was an implacable foe of Protestantism. Yet the seeds of ecumenism may be found in his words: "Great care must be taken to show forth orthodox truth in such a way that if any heretics happen to be present they may have an example of charity and Christian moderation. No hard words should be used nor any sort of contempt for their errors be shown." One of the greatest ecumenists was the 20th-century German Jesuit, Cardinal Augustin Bea.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola is the Patron Saint of Retreats



Sunday Reflections

Seventeenth Ordinary Sunday [B]- Sunday July 28
 (2Kgs 4:42-44; Ps 145; Eph 4:1-6; John 6:1-15)

Introduction: Today's readings invite us to become humble instruments in God's hands by sharing our blessings with our needy brothers and sisters. They focus on hunger and food and how we can satisfy the deeper hunger of our life. They remind us that if we and our country are blessed with an abundant food supply, we need to share it with the hungry people and poor countries. Once physical hungers are satisfied, then we are challenged to satisfy the deeper hungers, for love, mercy, forgiveness, companionship, peace, and fulfillment.

Scripture lessons summarized:

The first reading tells us how the prophet Elisha, by invoking God's power, fed one hundred men with twenty barley loaves. Elisha relied not on what he had but on what God would do with what the Prophet had received as a gift. This miracle foreshadows the Gospel account of Jesus' miraculous feeding of the pursuing crowd seeking the Master. The Refrain for today's **Responsorial Psalm** has us sing, "The hand of the Lord feeds us; He answers all our needs."

In the second reading, St. Paul gives us the theology behind sharing. Jesus united the Jews and the Gentiles by bringing them together as Christians in one Faith by means of one Baptism, enabling them to become communities of sharing Christians living together and helping each other by sharing their blessings.

In today's Gospel, Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand people, using five barley loaves and two fish offered by a boy in the crowd through the apostles, is associated with the Holy Eucharist early in the Church's tradition. That is why it is described in all four gospels and the second century Christians used this miracle in their catacomb wall drawings. The people who had been fed immediately gave Jesus two Messianic titles: "The prophet" and "the one who is to come." This miracle teaches us that God works marvels through ordinary people. Elisha's servant and Jesus' disciples distributed the bread provided by God through generous people who were willing to share their food with the hungry. Thus, God meets the needs of people through the good will and services provided by members of His community. The Gospel story also teaches that Jesus meets the most basic human need, namely hunger, with generosity and compassion, tells us that God really cares about His people, and shows us that He provides more than enough for everybody. Studies indicate that the world today produces enough food grains to provide every human being on the planet with 3,600 calories a day, not counting such foods as tuber crops, vegetables, beans, nuts, fruits, meats, and fish! Hence, let us pray and work for better social justice in all communities and countries. Life messages: A challenge to generous sharing: As Christians we need to commit ourselves to share and to work with God in communicating His compassion to all, as the early Christians did. God always blesses those who share their blessings, time, and talents with loving commitment. We can begin our own humble efforts at "sharing" right in our parish by participating in the works of charity done by organizations like St. Vincent DePaul Society, the Knights of Columbus etc. Once physical hungers are satisfied, then we are challenged to satisfy the deeper hungers, for love, mercy, forgiveness, companionship, peace, and fulfillment.

Homily starter anecdotes:

A bag of rice to share: From her personal experience, Mother Teresa relates a story demonstrating the generosity of the poor, rising from their personal experience of hunger and poverty, as contrasted with the rich who have had no such experience to teach them. Learning of a poor Hindu family in Calcutta who had been starving for many days, Mother Teresa visited them and brought a big parcel of rice to the mother. She was surprised to see how the mother divided the rice into two equal portions and went out with one bundle to give it to her Moslem neighbor. When she returned, Mother Teresa asked her why she had done such a generous deed. The woman replied: "My family can manage with half the rice in this bag. My neighbor's family has several children and they are also starving." — Today's Gospel tells the story of a small boy who showed this same kind of generosity. By sharing his small lunch (which consisted of five barley loaves and two dried fish), he became the instrument in Jesus' working of a miracle that fed thousands. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>)

— Fr. Anthony Kadavil

Archdiocese

PREPARING FOR JUBILEE 2025: PILGRIMS OF HOPE



By Mrs. Julie Chaudhury - DCT Jubilee 2025, Archdiocese of Calcutta

In Luke 4:18-19, our Lord Jesus Christ, at a synagogue in Nazareth, announced the year of favour "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord", and closed the book and with every eye fixed on Him He sat down and said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing". Even at that time His listeners mistakenly thought He was promising them freedom from the political domination of the Romans. Jesus had read Isaiah's oracle (Is 61: 1-2 & 58: 6) that picks up the language of Leviticus 25 regarding the Jubilee year. For the Jews, the Jubilee year was to be marked every 50 years and was intended as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation, and involved forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields. "Jubilee" comes from the word "yobel" which means ram's horn, the instrument used to proclaim the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) when an unblemished lamb was sacrificed for the sin of the nation. Pope Boniface VIII declared the first Jubilee in the Catholic Church in 1300. A Jubilee is also known as a "Holy Year," since it is a time in which God's holiness transforms us. The frequency of Holy Years has changed over time: at first, they were meant to be celebrated every 100 years; later, in 1343 Pope Clement VI reduced the gap between Jubilees to every 50 years, and in 1470 Pope Paul II made it every 25 years. There have also been "extraordinary" Holy Years, the last one was in 2015-16 when Pope Francis proclaimed the Year of Mercy as an extraordinary jubilee. The Jubilee is a time of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is a special time to meditate and act on

the importance of inner conversion to receive the great gift of divine mercy. It is important to realize that we should be able to live out the spiritual gifts lavished on pilgrims during the Holy Year. This "Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope" will commence in Calcutta Archdiocese from 29th December 2024 and conclude on 6th January 2026. However, in Rome, the year will open on December 24, 2024 and close on January 6, 2026, the Feast of Epiphany. Pope Francis declared that the two years of Preparation before the Jubilee (2023-2024) was to be observed as years for learning and prayer. The 'Learning' refers particularly to the study of the four Constitution documents of the Second Vatican Council. About the second preparatory year the Holy Father Pope Francis wrote: "From now on I am happy to think that the year preceding the Jubilee event, 2024, will be dedicated to a great 'symphony' of prayer." In preparation for the Jubilee, therefore, the individual dioceses are invited to promote the centrality of individual and community prayer during this year. In preparation for this Jubilee jatra, a Regional workshop was organized by CCBI from May 5-13, 2024 at Raigunj led by Rev. Prof. Dr. Yesu Karunanidhi, National Coordinator Jubilee 2025. Archbishop Thomas D'Souza along with several members of Diocesan Core Team (DCT) for Jubilee participated in this workshop and the members of the Team have since then been preparing appropriate animation packages from the rich repository of Vatican documents, workshop material and other information available on Jubilee website of the Vatican. In June-July 2024, the Diocesan Core Team, led by His Grace Archbishop Thomas D'Souza, Chair, ably supported by Mr. Dilip Rozario, Coordinator, and Fr. Michael Biswas, Co-Coordinator, and their Resource Team, have already conducted a series of Orientations for the Heads of Commissions and the Priests and Religious of the four Deaneries in the

Calcutta Archdiocese.

The workshops reflected on the insights and guidance on being Church gathered from the Synodal process; information on the meaning, purpose and celebration of the Jubilee, its origins and present form. Also, each of the four Vatican II Constitutions on the Sacred Liturgy – "Sacrosanctum Concilium; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation – "Dei Verbum;" Dogmatic Constitution on the Church – "Lumen Gentium,;" and Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World - "Gaudium et Spes" were unpacked, with the help of PPT presentations and videos, to highlight the key teachings.

These sessions were conducted by the DCT members:

Archbishop Thomas D'Souza, Fr. Michael Biswas, Fr. Christopher Mandi, Fr. Kamal Soren and Mr. Dilip Rozario,. The purpose being to re-discover /deepen understanding and provide practical pastoral direction and guidance for following the teachings. Archbishop pointed out that these Documents contain beautiful insights and ways of reaching our goal of evangelization and emphasized the need to be a praying church making the Year of Jubilee one of renewal and reconciliation. He encouraged Priests, Religious and each Commission to plan and prepare for the Jubilee to rekindle the flame in our families, communities and Church. He shared that by the virtue of baptism we are all People of God, all called to holiness.



An outline of the proposed Diocesan plan for the preparatory years of Learning and Praying, as well as Jubilee Celebrations, including suggestions that Parishes could incorporate into their plans for preparation and celebration, was shared by DCT members, Mrs. Julie Chaudhury and Ms. Carin Minz. This was followed by enthusiastic group discussions and their plenary reports suggested steps that could be taken by the parish community to foster more inclusive and participatory ways of celebrating Jubilee 2025 to deepen faith and engage more actively with each other and the wider community. The DCT will continue to disseminate relevant information through other Deanery level workshops from August for lay leaders of Parishes. We believe that these processes will deepen the spirit of synodality and common Mission and bear fruit in the many plans that will emerge for preparation and Jubilee celebration.

Date	Participant Group & Numbers	No. of Participants	Venue
22 June 2024	Diocesan Commission Heads & Members	55	Archbishop's House
02 July 2024	Priests & Religious of Kolkata Deanery	60	Seva Kendra, Kolkata
05 July 2024	Priests & Religious of Howrah Hooghly Deanery	34	Bandel Basilica
10 July 2024	Priests & Religious of North 24 Parganas	85	Praggaloy, Barasat
13 July 2024	Priests and Religious of Midnapur Deanery	77	St Agnes School, Kharagpur



Youth

Auxilium Convent School, Dum Dum launches AUXI GREEN Awareness



Auxilium Convent School, Dum Dum organised a Cleanliness Awareness Drive, on 19 July 2024 focusing on the 'Laudato Si' Action Plan 'Save the Nature Save Humanity'. It was organized by the sisters, teachers and students of the school, and also the members of the Salesian family joined in this venture (Past pupils, co-operators, and ADMA). The venture received full support and cooperation from the parents, the North Dum Dum Municipality Chairperson, Shri Harendra Singh and the Officer in charge of the police of North Dum Dum Police Station for the safe and successful completion of this drive.

750 students from classes VI to XII walked through the locality to speak out against the ever-prevalent indifference meted out towards our environment. The large group proceeded in four different directions to raise awareness and spread the message of the drive. The awareness walk commenced at 8:30 am and went on until around 10:00 am. The students marched with the slogans 'Save water, save Earth', 'Go Green Live Green', 'Keep the area clean', 'Pedh lagao, desh bachao', 'Save water, save life' 'Save nature, save humanity', 'Go green, live green', 'Keep our earth green and clean', 'Use dustbin', 'Keep the city clean'.

They trooped the markets, streets and roads of Kumar Para, Modern Park, Kamalapur tank, Digla Road, Gorabazar, NC Mitra Road, PK Guha Road, SP Mukherjee Road, Barwari Tala, PK Guha Road, Debonair restaurant, SBI bank Post Office Road, Jessop Gate finally arrived at 'Dhobiya Pukur Park', where inspiring speeches were delivered by the president of the Past Pupil Association, Ms. Sangamitra Bhattacharya, the teachers and the students, spreading awareness about the entire initiative.

During the campaign, the students asked the locals regarding their contributions to the environment, gave a speech on how to reduce the use of the plastic and protect the environment, instead of exploiting it and motivated to foster social responsibility. Walking through the residential colonies and marketplace not only helped the students to spread awareness among the residents and pedestrians but also made them realize their goal, of keeping their localities clean and green. The campaign was concluded as everyone joined in to sing the National Anthem. The students were enthusiastic throughout this walk. The pedestrians and local population were encouraged and motivated by this social motive.



INSTALLATION OF FR. UPENDRA NAYAK AT ST. FRANCIS CHURCH- GUMA

By John Lambert

Fr. Upendra Nayak was installed as the New Parish Priest of St. Francis Xavier's Church Guma, on Sunday, 14th July 2024. The Installation ceremony was presided over by His Grace Archbishop Thomas D'Souza and cocelerated by Fr. Proful Nayak & Fr. Pratap Nayak from Orissa, and Fr Ramen Pailan administrator of Morning Star Regional Seminary.

The installation ceremony commenced with the Holy Mass at 8.00 am with an entrance dance and traditional welcome to the Archbishop and the concelebrants.

Immediately after the homily, The Archbishop introduced the Rite of Installation and exhorted all to kneel while the hymn to the Holy Spirit was sung in Bengali. The Appointment letter of Fr. Upendra Nayak was read out by Fr Proful Nayak Brother of Fr Upendra, followed by the congregation made the profession of faith. Then Archbishop officially declared Fr Upendra Nayak as the new Parish Priest and entrusted the

keys of the Church, and the Tabernacle.

The certificate of the installation was signed by the Archbishop and two witnesses from the Parish Council. Archbishop exhorted the people to come forward and give a helping hand to the new Parish Priest and to make the Parish a vibrant community. Holy Mass proceeded with the prayers of the faithful and offertory procession.

Before the Final Blessing a vote of thanks was proposed by our New Parish Priest, thanking Archbishop Thomas D'Souza for taking his valuable time to come all the way from Calcutta to Celebrate the Mass for the people of Guma and for installing him as the New Parish Priest..

After the mass there was a small Cultural program to felicitate the Archbishop on his 27 years of Episcopal Ordination & 47 years of Priestly Ordination. Samll children put up a dance and the vote of thanks was given by Ashis Das . A big Thanks to M.C Mrs Shulekha Sarkar and all who took part to make this program a grand success.

BEC to take up ministries for vibrant Christian life

By Mr. Michael Jyotirmoy Shah

Regional Council Meeting of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) planned to take up ministries in the parishes during their annual meeting held in Jeevan-dhara, Raiganj. About 70 participants from eight dioceses of the Bengal & Sikkim region attended the meeting from 17th July 2024 to 19th July, 2024

Fr. George Jacob, Secretary of BEC commission of CCBI from Nagpur spoke to the participants on how various ministries could be taken up in the BEC in neighbourhood. Sr. Christin, HC, National Service Team member of BEC from Calcutta elaborated how the animators could work in various ministries to extend our services to the people of other faiths in the neighbourhood.

Bishop Fulgence Tigga of Raiganj, Bishop Stephen Lepcha of Darjeeling, Emeritus Bishop Salvatore Lobo of Baruipur and Bishop Nirmal Gomes, SDB of Krishnagar and Fr. Edward Kerketta, Administrator of Bagdogra diocese were present during the meeting to encourage the participants.

The Regional BEC Secretary Fr. I.P. Sarto welcomed all the participants, the Bishops and the Resource persons and briefed about the Regional programs conducted



during the year.

Fr. George Jacob elaborated the strategic plans of CCBI and asked all the dioceses to make both short term plan and long term plans for strengthening BECs in the region.

Fr. Thomas Kuzhively, SJ Director of Jeevan Dhara left no stone unturned to make the program successful and meaningful.

The programmes of each day started with solemn Bible procession organised by the BEC animators. Sr. Christin, HC explained the history of the growth of BEC in the region recalling the contribution of various lay

persons and priests.

Each diocese also presented reports of their dioceses from November 2023 to July 2024. Fr. Nilu Murmu presented the report of Asansol diocese, Fr. John Tigga, SJ presented the report of Bagdogra, Sr. Rasmi Soreng, MSMHC the report of Calcutta, Fr. Ignatius Topno of Jalpaiguri, Sr. Veronica Ranger, SJC of Darjeeling, Fr. Bimal Kerketta of Raiganj and Sr. Rajni, SMI & Fr. Daniel Mardi of Krishnagar.

On the 19th of July all the participants made plans for their own parishes and for the dioceses to regenerate BEC movement to reach out to all corners of every Diocese.

Bishop Fulgence Tigga welcomed all for the meeting and briefed about Raiganj diocese. Bishop Stephen Lepcha, chairperson of the BEC in Bengal & Sikkim region appreciated all for their active presence and their zeal. Fr. Peter Lingdamo from Morning Star Seminary spoke on the importance of Proclamation. Fr. Sarto thanked all the animators for their committed works in their dioceses. Mrs. Mala Sherpa & Mr. Mahendra Gurung from Darjeeling and Mr. Suman Xalxo from Jalpaiguri moderated the sessions.

Setting the world on fire: Ignatius of Loyola

(1491-1556)



By Rev Fr Dr Dominic Savio SJ,
Principal, St Xavier's College
(Autonomous)

'If St Dominic can do so much for Jesus, I will do not only that but even more', thought Inigo, as he was convalescing after he was wounded in the battle of Pamplona. In Pamplona, Spain, a battle took place between the French and the Spanish troops on 20th May 1521. Inigo was leading the charge. A cannonball of the French shattered his right leg and made a gaping flesh wound in his left. Later the doctors set his leg wrongly. To walk straight again to be able to fight, Inigo had his leg broken and set again! Five hundred years ago, such an operation without proper medicine and anaesthesia caused excruciating pain and suffering. He endured it all just to be able to walk straight and fight in battles to seek his own fame! But the original leg he never got back and he had to limp all his life.

While convalescing, he longed to read books of chivalric romances. But to his utter dislike he was given the 'Life of Christ' and 'Lives of Saints'. Gradually he was touched deeply by what the saints did for Jesus. He desired to imitate them and do even more. He thought that IF he could do much more than these saints, only then Jesus will love him! With this, started the transformation in his life.

Slowly his deep realisation was that Jesus does love him totally, without any condition or achievement or any IF. His spontaneous response to this unconditional love was his unconditional surrender to God and to serve no more the earthly kings but only the Heavenly King Jesus. He acquired a new vision, he saw everything in the light of God, to love and serve Him in all persons and things. This was his real transformation, "...Do Thou direct and govern all and sway, do what Thou will, command and I obey."

Now Ignatius started sharing this experience with others, to change their vision and see everything in the light of God. Feeling the need to be educated for this mission, as an elderly person, he spent eleven years in studies with younger students in Spain and in Paris (1528-1535). At this University of Paris, God blessed him with six committed companions, foremost being Francis

Xavier. He inspired them all to deeply find and serve God in all.

With these six companions, Ignatius founded the 'The Society of Jesus' (SJ or Jesuits) in Rome in 1540. The first from this group to take up the mission and reach India was Francis Xavier. Travelling in a sailing ship for more than a year, Xavier landed in Goa in 1542. He set India and Asia on fire with his message that God is concerned about each person and loves all unconditionally and so we need

to love and serve others similarly. In the next ten years he carried this message with great courage and zeal but amidst great difficulties and danger he travelled to the countries of South East Asia and Japan.

In 1542 in Goa, he opened St Paul's, the first Jesuit college. It was followed by many schools and colleges in India, by Xavier and by later Jesuits, as education is the real instrument of transformation.

To set the world on fire and transform the world, it is mainly through education that the Jesuits are working. But there are other areas as well, like intellectual, spiritual, pastoral and social service; counseling and guidance; formation of youth; social communication; social service, service for migrants and refugees; for ecology and Creation and many such other areas that the Jesuits are involved in, to spread the message of God's love and concern for each person.

Ignatius and the Jesuits made education comprehensive and easily available to all, forming them for life with character and compassion for others, which was lacking at that time. Jesuits are the first religious group to operate universities, colleges and schools as a principal and distinct service. When Ignatius died in 1556, aged sixty five, the Jesuits were already operating 74 schools and colleges on three continents of Europe, Asia, Africa.

Presently in India, the Jesuits run 839 Schools and 61 Higher Education Institutions including Universities, Autonomous and Non-Autonomous Colleges, Research Centres, Management Institutes, B. Ed. Colleges, Engineering and Law Colleges and Colleges of Theology and Philosophy. Jesuit education aims to develop the whole person who will seek God's will, be persons for and with others, especially the needy, will aim at human excellence, all for God's glory and happiness to all.

To achieve this we seek guidance and strength from God, through the intercession of St Ignatius, as we pray in his words "...give me only your love and your grace, and I am rich enough and will ask for nothing more."

Language and power

By Myron J Pereira

'Reform the language,' replied Confucius when asked what is the first thing he would do if he were to rule a country

One of the most sensitive issues in the world today is religious identity. Language comes a close second.

As societies break up and get fragmented in our post-modern world, language confers an irreplaceable sense of belonging. To speak a significant language well, to understand it, and to write it gracefully gives us a sense of our place in the world. Perhaps this accounts for the unique role of English in the world today, and why everyone wants to learn it as a second language.

Conversely, to be a migrant or a refugee is not to have a place of one's own because one doesn't have a language that matters. Migrants are made fun of because "they look funny and smell awful, and one can't make head or tail of what they are saying." In many parts of the world, therefore, language is politicized. Going through the papers recently I was struck by how similar reactions are everywhere.

For example: speaking on TV recently, the French Minister of Culture feared that within fifty years, France would have a "tribal" linguistic culture: executives would speak English, immigrants Arabic, and ordinary people the American language of television.

In between, the only people speaking French — a shrinking island, I guess — would be teachers, professors and intellectuals.

This reminds one of the historical anecdote attributed to the 16th-century Holy Roman Emperor Charles V: He spoke, so it was said, "Latin to God, French to his ladies, Spanish to his courtiers, and German to his vassals."

A friend once expressed this picturesquely to me when he said, "I speak many half-languages. It depends which half of me is speaking to which half of you!"

Actually, all of us use many languages and sub-languages most of the time — slang, argot, jargon and technicalese. For language is not just about communication. It is also about power and control.

How language controls:

What is the first thing you would do if you were to rule a country? Confucius was asked. The sage replied: Reform the language.

For language is a tool of political power. If the limits of language are the limits of one's world, why then to control another's world all one needs to do is sabotage the language. Or impede access to its learning. In ancient India, for instance, women and Dalits dared not learn Sanskrit. Even to attempt to breach this literary bar — to "read the Vedas" — was to invite horrible torture and even death. This makes the achievement of a woman like Indian Christian social reformer and Bible translator Pandita Ramabai even more astonishing.

And until a few years ago white South Africa prohibited the "Bantu" from learning English. Afrikaans was enough for them.

Thus, throughout the ages, Sanskrit was the language of court and culture (Sanskrit, the very word means "culture"), a male enclave, and the Prakrits (once again, the word means "natural"), restricted to women, children, slaves and barbarians.

In the medieval period, it was Farsi (Persian) which was the channel of literature, poetry and government records, while Urdu (Hindavi, Hindustani) was the pidgin of the military camp, the bazaar and the countryside.

In time, it's English that has become the imperial international language today, while the regional languages — scholars call them the bhashas (languages) — have subaltern status.

But even the bhashas lord it over the tribal and local languages, often denying them an independent script. Marathi overrules Warli, Bhili, and Kokani; Gujarati does the same for Gamit, Vasava, and Garasiya, etc.; and a heavily Sanskritized Hindi (assisted by the state media) dominates Maithili, Magahi, Braj and Bhojpuri.

This is the two-tier system in operation: one, the imperial language, the medium of cultured and official discourse, spoken and written by men in public places; and the other, the domestic language, usually an unscripted vernacular (lit. "of the slaves"), spoken by women, children and illiterates, a dialect to be used in the kitchen, the bazaar and the brothel.

The missionary contribution

The very significant contribution of the Christian missionaries in India was precisely this. They classified, categorized, and imprinted the regional languages through their dictionaries, grammars and translations, and most definitely through the typographic form in their printing presses.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Jesuits who brought the first printing press to Goa in 1556, and to the Serampore Baptists who cast the first Indian types, Bengali, in 1800.

Until this "reformation," language learning was only the privilege of a few propertied males.

Today television and the computer complete the reformation.

Through the last seven decades of independent India, it never really suited the interests of the feudal elite who run this country to invest in regional languages and develop them as channels of scientific and popular communication.

This is one reason for the failure of public education almost everywhere.

But where the government has been slow to reform the language, television has been swift. It has opened vistas of imagination for the deprived and given us more "practical democracy" than a thousand blackboard lectures.

Television is the invader of our private space, the new immigrant, the barbarian within the city walls, and few can resist its linguistic allure.

So, when we grumble about what TV is doing to our language and our morals, what we're really nervous about is that we're losing control.

Perspective

The Christian Brothers in Calcutta in the early 1990s: The Unsung Heroes

By Dr. Subhasis Chattopadhyay

The position of the Christian Brothers have become liminal in today's world and their contribution to this archdiocese might be forgotten unless we remember some of them today in their true glory as humble sons of Blessed Edmund Rice. I can feel their liminality since the role of the Shakti Sadhaka is similarly liminal within Hinduism. And truth be told, my first Guru, which is distinct from being a spiritual director is an Australian Christian Brother. If someone has benefitted immensely from the Christian Brothers, then it is this servant of the Servants of the Holy Mother of the Universe. By the Mother of the Universe, I do not mean Mother Mary, but my path's/marga's understanding of the Supreme Godhead as Mother or, Shakti. I am absolutely certain that I lived with not mere holy men as a child, but with Saints. They may not be canonised, but neither are Carthusians.

Without Brother, (Cal) Cataldus Whiting cfc, Br. Jus Harrison cfc, Br. Jerome Kelley where would I be today? I do not know whether the lively Br. Maurice Baptist Finn cfc is alive today or not; but Br. Finn wherever you are, you made my day. About Brother Whiting who is my Guru, I wrote at length in Indian Catholic Matters

Brothers within the Catholic Church can very well become priests if they want to do so. But they are like Brahmacharins within Hinduism. Many men opt to not become sannyasins or monks within Hinduism. The Christian Brothers are men who choose not to take on sacerdotal roles due to their humility. In fact, neither Roman Catholics, nor Hindus can choose to be anything which has to do with God qua Shakti. Christ calls by name a man to be a Brother as the Holy Mother calls by name those who are to follow Her in becoming Her devotees. Not much choice is given to the concerned person except that of the free rejection of their respective anthropomorphic calls. Be that as it may, to understand their lives let us remember a few of them through very brief vignettes.

Brothers Whiting and Harrison; Brothers Kelley and Finn cfc formed a very lively community and sort of, balanced each other out. Frankly, they were not very aware of non-Christians. Nor were they out converting anyone. Their world appears to me now in 2024 to be very closed and their voices echoed within their own community. But this is the mistake we make: we forget that these four men of whom I am writing here, I met during 1990-94. I was then a middle-class boy with no knowledge about Christianity at all. I encountered Christianity through these four brothers and Brothers Lenny Lobo cfc and a few others. Br. Lobo cfc used to carry a Jerusalem Bible wherever he travelled and in those days, he travelled a lot as their Vocation Promoter. Today in my research I only use the Jerusalem Bible. Nobody including my Bible Professors, all Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, could convince me to use other versions. Neither do I use the Catholic Pastoral Version. So, in learned gatherings they ask me why I use only the Jerusalem Version? I come up with some scholarly abracadabra. The reality is that Bro. Lobo's devotion to that version has stuck with me and his advice to a schoolboy to examine one's conscience every night has firmly imprinted itself on me. I got to know Br. Lobo through these other Brothers. Br. Whiting, I testify before the world was a Saint. He won me over with unconditional love. He never judged me and used to tell me that we are all imperfect and none has the right to judge another. Every Saturday and Sunday he taught me English, mathematics and French. This in spite of his progressing rheumatoid arthritis and unimaginable pain. Whenever he went to Australia for his operations I missed him terribly and he wrote to me letters which one day will prove to the world he is, not was, a Saint. This is not because he told me three days before his death that he will die. And I bear witness to the world, here and in Indian Catholic Matters, that when I asked to borrow a Bible from him, he refused and said, get a written permission from your parents. He prevented the other Brothers from giving me one unless I had a letter from my parents stating clearly that they understand that their son was interested in a religion which was not ours. So, no Christian Brother lent me a Bible ever or Catholic reading material. What Brother

Whiting did was to insist that I use the library of the Brothers with novels and bestsellers and the school library to a greater extent to become a scholar. It was because of him and these Brothers I excelled and performed extremely well in my ICSE. When Brother Whiting was absent, Brothers Harrison and Finn taught me on weekends. These four Brothers lent me Aussie and Irish country cassettes. Imagine the Kolkata of the early 1990s. A little boy pampered by four holy men who lent me everything from Beethoven to 'The Seekers'. I still listen to 'The Dubliners'. And this is only what they did for me. Think of what they did for others throughout India and the world. And yet they are anonymous today. Br. Whiting taught at Morning Star Major Seminary, much before I was even born. I cannot recollect which priest told me that. Brother did not tell me. He told me nothing about his life or achievements. Neither did any of the other Brothers. This is the heart of being Brother. Yet they shine as stars in the sky for those who teach others righteousness are always dear to God. Through their sanctity they have become the patrimony of all religions. They did that by following their charism within their religion. From them I learnt to follow my charism in my own religion. And the value of unconditional love. Everywhere else I went they asked me who my parents were to gauge my socio-economic standing. A boy like me would and could receive no unconditional help from others because my parents were poor.

In their personal lives they were happy men. Brother Whiting had studied theology at Rome, the other Brothers including him had built schools and yet, they never bragged about anything. They sang songs in their Chapel said the Hours regularly. They never missed Holy Mass and they never forgot to debar me from that. Since that letter was not ever given for the simple reason that my parents were in their world and I in my world like all teenagers. To be very honest, these Brothers had no idea about Hinduism and at least, Brother Whiting was not interested. Not because he was indifferent. He was devoted to his chosen path. He told me that when he took his first vows in Australia, he told God that those are his permanent vows. From these Brothers, I experienced a joy which I have not found in any Religious community to date, either Hindu or Christian. I have periodically lived with Catholic and Hindu male Religious all my life; even after marriage. I miss these Brothers. Truth be told they were mystics. There was another Brother there; Br. McPhilemy cfc. I nearly forgot him. He was a very kind man. They tried their very best to help boys irrespective of their religious and financial backgrounds and they shunned wealth. They pretty much kept to themselves in the Archdiocese, for in hindsight I understand; they had little in common with the charism of the other Religious then. They were focussed in their calling -- they wanted to make men out of us boys at great personal cost. They could have been big shots in the world and in the Church. But they chose to remain in their monasteries and to faithfully teach us trivial subjects which for them must have been boring. All of them held multiple degrees and all of them suffered the intolerable heat here but they never forsook their duties. Their greatest plus point was their absolute commitment to teach students like me who could not afford so-called better English medium schools. I studied later at a Jesuit school and a Jesuit higher educational institution. But I felt out of place there. The reality is that the Brothers truly preferentially opted for the poor without talking aloud about liberation theology. They certainly knew about it. But they did not burden us with it. Nor did they care for the great of this earth. Brother Kelley went blind later and died in Ireland. Brother Jus Harrison died at Goa perhaps. I met him at Goethals's, Darjeeling later. Brother Finn I never met again, neither did I meet Brother Lobo and another very nice Brother, Brother Ralph Sequeira. Another Brother, Br. Joel went to Africa. Had I not met these men radiating God and intoxicated with God; I would not have bothered to write anything in this paper here or elsewhere. I would not have given my time to any religion other than mine. Where have all the Brothers gone? Gone to God, everyone...this is the fit lyric for them.

From Page 1

Women's exclusion from ordination discriminatory ...

We understand that the topic 'women deacons' has been assigned to one of the 10 study groups reporting in 2025. We call for trans-parency about the synod working groups, their members, and their mandates.

We are aware of the abundance of study, research, history, etc., that supports the restoration of women deacons, and therefore wonder why you continue to stall on this issue.

The role of women is key to the synodal process and should be discussed as a whole and not portioned out into women deacons, women in decision-making, women needing care, etc.

To ignore the question of women's equality which means their access to ordination to the priesthood, is to exclude women from synodality and ignore the voice of the 'sensus fidei' of the people of God.

Why do we ask this?

Jesus treated women as equals and had many women disciples

The "natural inferiority" of women is today completely unacceptable. There is worldwide support for women to be ordained.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission (1976) found nothing in scripture preventing the ordination of women.

The blunt "No" in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994) is based on power and not on scripture.

We place our request before you, Pope Francis as it is you who has set out a synodal church that "walks together", listens, and dialogues; and therefore, invites everyone to "speak with courage and candor" (preparatory document p. 20).

It is in this spirit that we place our appeal for due consideration of women's position of full equality in the Church to be kept on the table for the Synod of 2024.

A Christian reveals true humility by showing the gentleness of Christ, by being always ready to help others, by speaking kind words and performing unselfish acts, which elevate and ennoble the most sacred message that has come to our world.

– Ellen G. White

THE SECRET LOVE

In a small, picturesque town nestled between rolling hills and whispering forests, a secret love story unfolded, hidden from the eyes of the world but burning brightly in the hearts of two souls.

The First Glance

Amelia and James lived parallel lives in the same quaint town, their paths crossing only in the soft glow of twilight. Amelia worked at the town's beloved bookstore, her days filled with the scent of old pages and the rustling of book spines. James, a skilled carpenter, spent his hours crafting beautiful furniture in his workshop at the edge of town.

Their first encounter was almost serendipitous. Amelia had stayed late at the bookstore, lost in a captivating novel, when James walked in, looking for a gift. Their eyes met, and in that brief moment, something magical sparked. Though they exchanged only a few words, the connection between them was undeniable.

A Growing Bond

From that day on, James found excuses to visit the bookstore, each time lingering a bit longer, sharing small conversations with Amelia. They talked about books, dreams, and the little things that brought them joy. Amelia, who had always been shy and reserved, found herself opening up to James in ways she never had with anyone else.

They began leaving secret notes for each other, hidden within the pages of books or under the counter of the bookstore. These notes were filled with words of admiration, shared dreams, and playful banter. Their bond grew stronger with each passing day, but they kept it hidden, cherishing the intimacy of their secret connection.

The Secret Meetings

As their feelings deepened, Amelia and James started meeting in the forest, away from prying eyes. They would walk along the trails, hand in hand, talking about their future and the life they envisioned together. Under the canopy of trees, they shared stolen kisses and whispered promises.

Despite the secrecy, their love flourished. The forest became their sanctuary, a place where they could be themselves without fear of judgment or misunderstanding. They dreamed of a day when they could openly express their love, but for now, they reveled in the beauty of their hidden romance.

A Moment of Revelation

One evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a golden glow over the town, James decided it was time to reveal their love. He had crafted a beautiful wooden box, intricately carved with symbols of their secret moments. Inside, he placed all the notes they had exchanged and a letter expressing his deepest feelings.

He brought the box to the bookstore and handed it to Amelia with a hopeful smile. As she opened it, tears welled up in her eyes, and she read the letter. In it, James professed his love and his desire to build a future together, no longer in secret but in the open, where their love could shine brightly.

The New Beginning

Amelia, touched by James's heartfelt gesture, agreed it was time to share their love with the world. They knew it wouldn't be easy, but their bond was strong enough to withstand any challenge. Together, they faced the townsfolk, explaining their secret love story and the depth of their connection.

To their surprise, the town embraced their love, celebrating the beautiful story that had unfolded in their midst. Amelia and James no longer had to hide their feelings, and their love story, once a secret, became a source of inspiration for everyone around them.

Conclusion

Amelia and James's secret love story reminds us that true love can thrive even in the shadows. It teaches us that love, no matter how hidden, is a powerful force that can bring light and joy to the lives it touches. Their journey from secrecy to openness is a testament to the strength of their bond and the beauty of a love that endures against all odds.

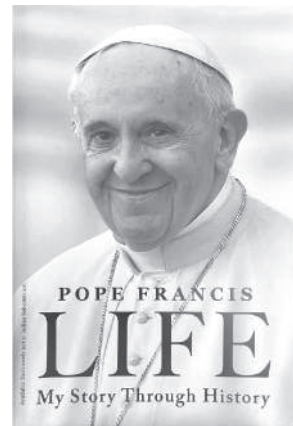


Book Review

Pope Francis LIFE – My Story Through History

By Francis Sunil Rosario

In order to understand the mind, the vision and mission of Pope Francis, through history, the most recent book, LIFE – My Story through History, reviews through the events that have made their mark on humanity over the past eighty years. They are revealing testimonies, based on life experiences of our post-modern 'Servant Leader' of the 21st century. The introduction of the book gives the thrust of the book,



“Let us learn from history, particularly the darkest pages of his-tory, so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past”; Pope Francis has made this appeal several times in recent years, during his pontificate.

In this autobiographical book, Pope Francis shares the origins of the ideas, that have shaped and characterised his papacy: from brave pronouncements against poverty and the destruction of the environment to direct appeals to world leaders to follow a different course on matters such as dialogue between peoples, the arms race, the fight against inequality. His claims are daringly pathbreaking, based on gospel values and the social teachings of the Church, to protect the rights of the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed. Over these turbulent decades, his convictions have grown deeper, 'to be a leader according to the heart of Jesus Christ', to be rooted in the world, however not of the world.

From the outbreak of World War II in 1939 – when the future pontiff was not quite three years old to the present day, Jorge Mario Bergoglio takes his readers by the hand and, with his reminiscences, leads them on a remarkable journey through the decades.

In the pontiffs' own words, “Life came to light so that young people in particular might listen to the voice of an old man and reflect on what our planet has lived through, so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Let us think, for example, about the wars that have afflicted and continue to afflict the world. Let us think about the genocides, the oppression, the hatred between brothers and sisters of different faiths. What suffering! Having reached a certain age, I know it is important that we too reopen the book of memory and make remembrance: in order to learn by looking back in time, to rediscover the things we have experienced that are not good, that are toxic, as well as the sins we have committed, but also to relive everything the Good Lord has sent us. It is an exercise in discernment that we should all carry out before it is too late.”

The revelation of the heart and mind of Pope Francis runs through fifteen chapters, highlighting most challenging

events of his life from childhood until the present.

Its opening chapter 'The outbreak of World War II', the era of Hitler and Mussolini. In Chapter 2, 'The Extermination of the Jews'; on Atom bomb blast and its effect (Ch. 3). The book runs through the Cold War and Mc Carthyism (Ch. 4); 'Landing on the Moon' (Ch. 5); 'The Videla Coup in Argentina'

(Ch. 6); seeing the Hand of God in every Event (Ch. 7); 'The Fall of the Berlin Wall' (Ch. 8) and his personal experience recorded in the book. “History was happening before our eyes that afternoon in 1989. The amazing scenes we were watching on our screens were such as I personally had never expected to witness. Young people were dancing, drinking toasts; strangers were hugging one another; whole families were in tears. These were genuinely moving movements, because those people were experiencing the end of oppression and violence. They were rediscovering their freedom.”

'The Birth of the European Union' (Ch. 9); 'The Terrorist Attacks on Sept. 11 (Ch. 10); 'The Great Economic Crisis (Ch. 11); 'The Resignation of Benedict XVI' (Ch. 12); 'The Covid-19 Pandemic' (Ch. 13); 'A History yet to be written' (Ch. 14) are the chapters to enlighten our minds and reawaken our soul.

The encyclical Fratelli Tutti calls the Church to “reawaken the spiritual energy' that can contribute to the betterment of society.” (no. 270).

The Apostolic Constitution Predicate Evangelium (2022) too speaks of the primary service of the Church to every individual and all humanity “to awaken in all peoples the hearing of faith” (March 19, 2022, No. 1) and bring the “supernatural gift of faith... as a light for our way, guiding our journey through time.” (No. 2) 'Awakening the faith', 'reawakening the spiritual energy', and 'reawakening the religious awareness' are the phrases used by the Pope to emphasize the validity and the need of faith for our generation.

In this book, “the Pontiff's own voice, in his memories, alternates in each chapter with that of a narrator, who reconstructs selected moments in the everyday life of the future Pope Francis, adding a few details suggestive of the period to set the historical scene and put the latter's words into context.”

Pope Francis with Fabio Marchese Ragona, is translated from the Italian by Aubrey Botsford and published by Harper Collins Italia, Milano (C) 2024. Its ISBN is 978-0-06-339935-8.

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Miscellaneous

“A BIBLE FOR EVERY HOME” REACHES OVER 3000 FAMILIES!



By Fr Alfonso Elengikal, SSP

“A Bible for Every Home” campaign takes its origin from the noble dream Blessed James Alberione, the Founder of the Society of St Paul and other Sister Congregations (together known as the Pauline Family), kept very close to his heart all his life. “A Bible for Every Home, A New Testament for Everyone,” was the dream for the realisation of which he was prepared to go to any length, even fully setting aside a printing machine for printing different editions of the full Bible, and the New Testament. He insisted that publishing and distribution of the Bible should take precedence over any other activity the Paulines may take up anywhere in the world.

Keeping this in mind, Subodha Nilayam, Eluru, launched the above campaign, “A Bible for Every Home” on November 26, 2022, the liturgical Feast of Blessed James Alberione, with a target of reaching 1500 families with a copy of the Telugu Catholic Bible in 10 Parishes of the diocese during the year.

However, in less than 20 months, the campaign has reached 27 Parishes in the very remote areas of the diocese, touching over 3000 families, providing each family a Telugu Catholic Bible at half its selling price (@ Rs 150/- instead of Rs 300/-) or even free of cost to really deserving families. Though the price of the new edition, since February this year, has gone to Rs 550/-, the campaign continues to provide the Catholic Bible to the families in the parishes it visits, at Rs 300/.

Lourdu Matha Shrine Parish, Thadikalapudi, nearly 35 kms away from Eluru, was the first beneficiary of the campaign, where more than 550 families received the Bible, as a result of which all the families in the parish, comprising 10 villages, have a Bible in their homes today. The next parish the campaign visited was Vyakula Matha Parish, Penugonda, over 80 kms away from our Centre, where more than 240 families received the Bible and a large Divine Mercy picture.

In February 2023, a Central Office for the Campaign in Andhra Pradesh was inaugurated at the Subodha Nilayam premises by Rev. Fr Domenico Soliman, the Superior General of the Society of St Paul, during his visit to Eluru. The office now coordinates the distribution of the Bible in the diocese of Eluru, and hopefully in other dioceses of the State, too, while making Bible-related literature, as well, available at very affordable prices (BIBLE QUIZ: Rs 120/- The Holy Bible in the Catholic Church: Rs 25).

Since January 2024, the campaign is visiting the different parishes of the two vicariates in East Godavari Dt. in the diocese (Amalapuram and Razole) hoping to complete the mission, before moving to the neighbouring diocese of Khammam, in the month of September.



The Battle of Inigo Today

By Oscar Daniel Raj, SJ

St. Ignatius of Loyola is also fondly called Inigo, which means 'Flame' in Spanish. The flame which was kindled in the year 1540 continues to burn and spread across the world as a symbol of peace, hope, joy and justice. The battle against the French army opened up a new horizon in his life. The battle resulted in befriending himself with Christ at the hospital. All his life was always a battle against the army and all the evil spirits in the world. The battle is not over.

Today as Devdutt Pattanaik, a journalist expresses in the Times of India Newspaper, 'Hatred has become a powerful tool to unite people. Hatred can be justified easily

as one sees oneself as a victim.' There is a constant and consistent war and violent situation occurring all over the world. Deep within ourselves whom are we listening to and who is leading us? Crisis and conflicts are on the rise. In this given context, how do we understand the spirit of Ignatius in our lives today? Is it relevant for us today?

If Ignatius were to be here today, he would invite all people of goodwill to fight collectively against the prevalent evils such as lack of faith or loss of faith among millions, violence, exploitation, injustice of all kinds, etc. The world needs people of goodwill who are willing to work in the frontiers to bring about a humane social order, where there is peace, harmony and joy.

Ignatius was fond of some important virtues: agere contra (go against your personal desires and urges), magis (desiring for the higher, the better or the bigger), ad majorem dei gloriam (doing all things for the greater glory of God).

In other words, he would advocate the need to always go against one's own personal desires and aspirations and try to render the best and the highest possible service, always for the greater glory of God. Are not these virtues highly relevant in today's context? Are we not suffering from the cancerous disease, wherein people want to satisfy their needs, aspirations and ambitions even at the cost of the legitimate rights and privileges of others? There are millions of people today waiting to be assisted and supported, physically, emotionally and financially. Millions of others have the means and the time to render such services but are not willing to take the plunge. On the contrary, Ignatius would definitely be at the forefront of such services. He will not just do what he should do, but he will always try to do as much as he can. He will not be satisfied with the minimum amount of service. He will look for ways and means to do more, the greatest possible good. He will not be satisfied with being good but will try to be the best. We are called upon not just to do good but to do the greatest possible good to oneself and to others.

Ignatius did not have his own personal agenda but constantly searched for the Will of God and hence he insisted on discernment in making decisions. When we seek only God's plan and God's will in our life or in our work, we are peaceful while carrying out these, even when we happen to “fail” in our mission. On the other hand, when we have our own personal agenda, we are afraid of failure and we become highly self-centered and calculative. As a result, we forget the impact of what we do on others and often we don't care what



happens to the people around us.

It is not only the politicians and those holding secular positions or those owning economic power centres that indulge in such self-centered approaches. Even the religious leaders and those in positions of power within the religious hierarchy are victims of pursuing their own personal agenda, even at the cost of the benefits for the people whom they are supposed to serve or the institutions which they are expected to build and promote. Ignatius will definitely deplore all such practices among the priests and religious of today, which is causing enormous damage to the reputation and credibility of the Church and

blocking its growth.

Ignatius was a soldier and so he wanted every believer to behave like a highly committed soldier of Christ who will not count the cost, fear any pain or suffering and will be prepared to carry out His mission even to the extent of sacrificing one's own life.

What the Church needs today is the availability of men and women who are ready to go to any extent to carry out the mission of Christ. The biggest danger to religious as well as secular life today is the sense of security and comfort they enjoy in their life. 'Comfort zone is a nice place where nothing grows.' Everything is taken care of and they have nothing to worry about – food, clothing, shelter, health care, etc. The only thing that is expected from them is their total commitment and total availability for any mission that may be entrusted to them by their legitimate superiors and society. Service is not at the top of the agenda. Ignatius will definitely be totally against such disposition and he will do all that he can to fight against such a self-centred approach to one's ministry and one's availability.

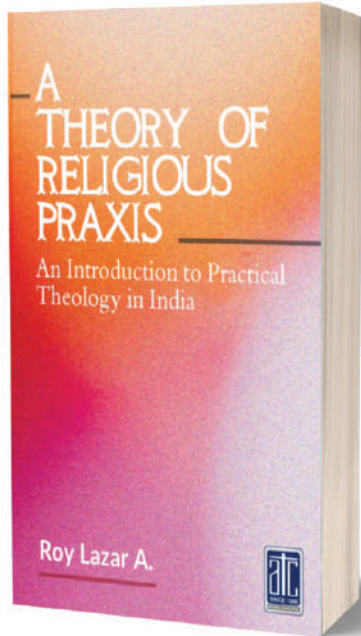
Ignatius was a man who dared to think, dared to give up anything irrelevant or harmful and dared to take up new things, however, difficult or risky that may be. For God, he would do anything. For the Church, he would sacrifice any amount of his personal needs and comforts. Such a daring spirit was possible because he had total faith and trust in God. Hence, he advises us to do things, as if everything depended on us totally. At the same time, he reminds us that we should be fully conscious that we can do nothing without God's grace. This total trust in God coupled with his commitment to sacrifice himself for God and the Church was the biggest strength in his life. He will surely expect the same in today's leaders of the Church.

In other words, Ignatius would like to see the following in the leaders of the Church at all levels: ever dependent on God, ever seeking God's will and discerning his plans, ever ready to make any sacrifice for God's Kingdom, ever transparent in all financial transactions and dealings, never becoming a slave to one's own agenda in the service to the Church, never seeking power, positions and status, etc. When our leaders cherish such values and are disposed to function in this spirit, the Church in India will be highly effective and the Kingdom of God will be widely visible not only to the Christian community but also to the entire nation and the world at large.

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