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 Magdelene 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)
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 conurred with a global rights group report that relief camps in Manipur in India need “the need of support” after allegations were made that 50,000 people, mostly Christians, have been killed or killed around 200 people, mostly 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 Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Manipur, bordering civil war-hit Myanmar, of ignoring the plight of people living in relief camps 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.

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 other essential services “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 March 5, 2023, over concerning tribal status on the majority Hindu Meitei community to avail benefits under India’s affirmative 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-Zeme community have fled their homes and sought shelter in relief camps.

The sectarian stitch has killed 220 persons, destroyed over 7,000 residential places, and forced 360 churches and Church-run institutions set on fire.

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

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 pilgrimage season.

“India’s 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 Hindus 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 Shrawan, 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.

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 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 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 Sikhs’ top leader after church leaders object to being called crusaders by Christian pastors.

Church leaders have met the top leader of Sikhs object to being called “crusaders” by unidentified pastors in a northern Indian Punjab state.

The pastors allegedly called Sikh community members “crusaders” following a spat 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. Sikhs is unfortunate but, Bishop Agnelo Rufino Gracias, apostolic administrator of Jullundur diocese in Punjab state, told UCA News.

The prelate added that they had had a “good rapport with the Sikhs” for years and hardly faced issues.

“Crusader” was meant to ‘normalize the boycott of Muslims’

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, had earlier written a letter titled “Masih Moba Sabha” (Christian General Assembly), which 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 they “have no control over them.”

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

Gacias said that “we have made our stand clear on religious conversion” — a bone of contention between Christians and Sikhs in Punjab.

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 “hijack” the ‘soul’ of the state. “Punjab is a peaceful state where people greatly regard each other’s faith. Of late, there have been misinformation and misunderstandings between the Sikhs and the Christian communities,” said Punjab-based Pastor Hacoon Bhatti.

Some people presume that we are converting Sikhs 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 kirpan (knife).

Sikhs, along with Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians, are classified as India’s minority communities.
By Ken Oliver-Méndez

Acknowledgement of the supernatural is off the charts at this year’s Republican National Convention in the wake of former President Donald Trump’s harrowingly narrow escape from an assassination attempt.

Trump’s presence and blessing of the Author of Life, at both the Democratic and Republican parties’ presidential nominating conventions, is likely to continue during 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 hitting 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 the 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 Dev. 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 accused 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 Brooks rhetorically asked, “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.

By Hannah Brockhaus

The Vatican has granted a plenary indulgence for all people, including those who are not Catholic, for visiting the elderly during the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly, initiated by Pope Francis in 2015.

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By a devotee

The World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is a day to celebrate and remember the importance of grandparents and elderly members of society.

The Vatican announced the theme in February, saying it was Pope Francis’ desire to call attention to the unique and important role that grandparents and elderly members of society play in society.

The theme of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is “The elderly are a precious gift to humanity.”

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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 in 2021 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 occurred while Trump was at a rally in Pennsylvania, a public event during a rally in Pennsylvania. As the assassin’s bullet sped its way to strike him dead, at the decisive millisecond, Trump managed to dodge it. The bullet grazed his scalp, causing a head wound. However, Trump did not lose consciousness or show any sign of distress. Instead, he appeared calm and collected, even joking with his staff and security personnel. The incident was captured on camera, making the incident a defining moment in Trump’s presidency.

In the wake of the assassination attempt, the incident served as a reminder of the fragility of life. For some, these experiences can lead to a deeper connection to others and the world around them, a sense of peace and renewed and strengthened belief in God or a higher power, a greater spiritual awakening. These experiences can lead to a deeper understanding of mortality and the impact of faith.

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 grace. 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. 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.

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, individuals tend to delved into the relationship between near-death experiences and religious beliefs. Studies suggest that when faced with mortality, individuals tend to have a greater sense of purpose and meaning. In a study published in the Journal of Near-Death Studies, researchers found that individuals who had near-death experiences were more likely to report a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life. These experiences were often accompanied by a sense of communication with the divine, often referred to as “the divine experience.”

In this context, 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 the 1984 anti-Sikh riots? How are they using the fee hike in violation of the Madhya Pradesh Niji Vidyalaya (Fees Tatha Sambandhit Vishayon Ka Vidyalaya) Act of 2010? If any fee hike in violation of the Madhya Pradesh Niji Vidyalaya (Fees Tatha Sambandhit Vishayon Ka Vidyalaya) Act by the concerned private school. Whether the fee hike in violation of the Madhya Pradesh Niji Vidyalaya (Fees Tatha Sambandhit Vishayon Ka Vidyalaya) Act by the concerned private school.

The law doesn’t mention arrest of errant officials. Arrests could have been held due to FRR filed being categorized as Cognizable Offence. The legal team representing church officials will have more clarity on this. In this context, 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).

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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 grace. 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. 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.

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 else to do on earth. They can renew our desire 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 see 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.
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 the Spiritual Exercises. He finally achieved his purpose of going to the Holy Land, but could not remain, as he planned, at the latter became the only choice. Four years later Ignatius made the association permanent. 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 the Spiritual Exercises. He finally achieved his purpose of going to the Holy Land, but could not remain, as he planned, at

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In 1534, at the age of 43, he and six others

universities, studying with great difficulty, spent the next 11 years in various European Holy Land, but could not remain, as he planned,

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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 Mystician titles: “The prophet” and

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

The hand of the Lord feeds us; He answers all our needs. — Fr. Anthony Kadavil

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 portions and went out with one bundle to give it to her Moslem neighbor. When she returned, Mother Theresa 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

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 the priority of giving and how we can satisfy the deeper hungers 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:

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 community members who lived 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 Mystician 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 and the fish and the poor 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 living 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.

Humble 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 Theresa visited them and brought a big parcel of rice to the mother. She was surprised to see how the mother divided the rice into portions and went out with one bundle to give it to her Moslem neighbor. When she returned, Mother Theresa 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
Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope

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 order in society. 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. 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.

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 Archbishop Thomas D’Souza Team, led by His Grace Archbishop Thomas D’Souza, Chair, ably supported by Mr. Dilip Rozario, Coordinator, and Fr. Michael Biswas, Co-Cordinator, 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 Chaudhuri 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 solidarity and common Mission and bear fruit in the many plans that will emerge for preparation and Jubilee celebration.
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-prevailing 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’, ‘Pedal lagao, desh bachao’, ‘Save water, save life’ ‘Save nature, save humanity’, ‘Go green, live green’, ‘Keep our earth green and clean’, ‘Use durtin’, ‘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 Goba Road, SP Mukherjee Road, Barwari Tala, PK Goba Road, Debantar Pukur, SBP 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 Bhattacharyya, 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 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.

By John Lambert

Fr. Upendra Nayak was installed as the New Parish Priest of St. Francis Xavier’s Church Guma on Sunday, 14 July 2024. The Installation ceremony was presided over by His Grace Archbishop Thomas D’Souza and cocelebrated by Fr. Proful Nayak & Fr. Pratab Nayak from Orissa, and Fr. Ramen Palan administra- tor of Moring Star Regional Semi- nary.

The Installation ceremony commenced with the Holy Mass at 8.00 am with an entrance dance and traditional welcome to the Archbishop and the con-celebrants. Immediately after the homily, The Archbishop introduced the Rite of Installation and exhorted all to kneel in the presence of the new Parish Priest and to make 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 oratory process. 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, Samfil 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 Jeewan- 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 neighbour- hood. Sr. Christin, HC, National Service Team member of BEC from Calcutta elaborated how the animators could work in various ministries to extend services to the people of other faiths in the neighbourhood. Bishop Fulgence Tiggia of Raiganj, Bishop Stephen Lepcha of Darjeeling, Emeritus Bishop Salvatore Lobo of Baruipur and Bishop Nirmal Gomes, SDB of Krishnagar and Fr. Edward Keretta, 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 Kuribivly, SI Director of Jeewan 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 the 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 Tiggia, 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 Keretta of Raiganj and Sr. Rajni, SM and 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 Tiggia 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 Linglalamo 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 Sialko from Jalpaiguri moderated the sessions.
Language and power

By Myron J Pereira

'Réform 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 the religious identity. Language comes a close second.

As societies break up and get fragmented in our post-modern world, language conveys an irreplaceable sense of belonging. To speak a significant language well, you must understand it, and to understand 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.

The message is to imitate a saint or a refugee is not to have a place of one's own because one doesn't have a language that matters. They were made fun of because they look funny and smell awful, and one can't make head or tail of what they are saying. The only part of the world that can change for them, language is politicized. Going through the papers recently I was struck by how similar they 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 the language of television are the French and their ladies, Spanish to his courtiers, and German to his vaasals. 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 languages have many of the time — slang, argot, jargon and technicalalese. For language is not just about communication. It is also about power and control.

"How language can be a tool of political power. If the limits of language are the limits of one's world, why then to control another's language is the limits of one's world, why then to control another's language?"

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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 archaisco might be forgotten unless we remember some of them today in their true glory as humble sons of Blessed Edmund Rice. They can feel their liminality since the role of the Shakti Sadhaka is similarly liminal within Hinduism. And truth be told, I first got to know Brother Maurice Baptist Finn from his Calcutta in 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.

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 any theological principles.

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 equality and ignore the voice of the ‘sensus fidelis’ 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 anachronistic. There is a worldwide support for women to be ordained.

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’.

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.
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 his workshop at the edge of town.

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 his 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 terrors, 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.

By Francis S simil 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 is the thrust of the book, “Let us learn from history, particularly the darkest pages of last-days, so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past.” Pope Francis has made this appeal several times in recent years, during his public lectures.

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 out 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 on a journey from his memories, alternates in each chapter, with the pontiff’s 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.

In an opening chapter ‘The outbreak of World War II’, the era of Hitler and Mussolini. In Chapter 2, ‘The Extermination of the Jews’, on Atoms bomb blast and its effect (Ch. 3). The book runs through the Cold War and McCarthyism (Ch. 4); ‘Landings on Moon’ (Ch. 5); ‘The Videla Coup in Argentina’ (Ch. 6); seeing the Holocaust in every Event (Ch. 7); ‘The Fall of the Berlin Wall’ (Ch. 8) and his personal experience recorded in the book. ‘Belief 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 ‘Praedicate 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 of his everyday life of the future Pope Francis, adding a few details suggestive of the period to set the 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. Its printed and bound in India by Thomson Press India Ltd.
**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 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 families in the parish, comprising 10 villages, have a Bible in their homes today. The next parish the campaign visited was Vsakula Matha Parish, Penugonda, over 80 kms away from our Centre, where more than 240 families received the Bible and a large Divine Liturgy, 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 (Amaulapuram and Raonle) hoping to complete the mission, before moving to the neighbouring diocese of Khammam, in the month of September.

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

Aesop"
Situation Vacant

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