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Even a month ago, none of us would have ever imagined that the so-called mighty humanity across the globe would get itself infected with this threatening and terrifying obsession of Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19). All have woken up, and that too, all of a sudden. Even those that does include me, who earlier pooh-poohed this apprehension cum anxiety, stand now much challenged.

Consequently, we are called upon, in a demanding way, to accept our utter frailty and acknowledge our sheer minimality. We have to confess our limitedness and littleness. Down the decades, we have begun to applaud ourselves that we have all the solutions for all the problems. Now, we know we are indeed small, both individually and collectively. Somewhere sub-consciously, we have begun assessing ourselves ‘big’ with all our academic and analytical advancements, scientific and technological promotions.

Suddenly, we find ourselves knocked out...!

This Lenten Season of 2020 will be remembered, for years to come, for its peculiar uniqueness: getting its obligatory Eucharists and Sacraments cancelled; getting its Lenten schedules and services dismissed; getting all engagements and appointments postponed. Vatican has already announced the negation of the Holy Week ceremonies in public. So too, in many other Churches, communities and countries.

Who would have thought of this sort of scenario even on the Ash Wednesday when we stepped into this season? We all are caught. No escape now. In other words, the Good Friday has come to be ahead of time, this year.

As widely reported in the media, hundreds of millions worldwide are learning to adjust themselves to once-in-a-generation measures to battle this COVID-19 pandemic that is not only killing the vulnerable but also threatening prolonged economic misery. The poor villagers and the daily workers in the informal sector would be terribly hit. Life is changing, as of now, in 164 nations while coping this crisis. This sickening and saddening situation is going to be the case for over six months, as per some conservative estimate.

The God of history will certainly have ‘something’ to convey through all this phenomenon. We have to listen to it carefully and learn it convincingly and also, live it courageously. What follows here below is just an attempt to decipher what could be his challenging message:

01. DEPENDENCE ON THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE:

Going by some available informations, over half a dozen experiments are being pursued to discover an anti-virus drug for COVID-19. In course of time, one or other will produce it which will progressively halt the disease. This precarious occurrence itself carries a message for us all: We cannot, and we should not take God for granted. We should teach ourselves emphatically that we are not comprehensively independent and certainly, in no way, omnipotent. First and foremost, we have to be very much dependent on the Lord of Life who is our source and summit. The following statement, attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola, puts it pointedly and also practically:

“Do as if everything depends on you and then, pray as if everything depends on God.”

02. DEDICATION TO OUR LIVING CONTEXTS:

While inviting us to focus on God our Common Parent, this occurrence also highlights our inter-dependence among ourselves which we tend to overlook in our current modernized times. ‘Corona brings families closer’, headlines a newspaper: Working from home, many families are being beckoned to spend quality time, So far, meals have been a hurried affair but now, a leisurely one, Strengthening bonds among spouses, Catching up with some unused skills, Picking up some new skills, Parents offering tips to their children to ‘school away from school’, Showing concern for the grand parents at next room, Allotting time to connect telephonically with some unforgotten friends living far and near...!

The media is packed with details how, around the world, the crisis has also created a wave of solidarity in some countries, with neighbours and colleagues coming together to look after the neediest, including dropping supplies at the doors of those forced to stay inside.

Moreover, some well-to-do nations are unleashing billions of euros and dollars in stimulus to economics, and to health services, loans to tottering businesses, and supports for individuals fearful for mortgages. All these are not just some ‘mundane’ acts. Rather, substantial acts of Conversion. We know, the Lent calls for meaningful changes in our being and behaviour, our attitudes and approaches, our relationships and outings.

By the way, we determine that these changes have to be carried ongoingly even beyond the corona-time, though triggered off by the crisis.

03. DIRECTION TO ONE’S EASTERED LIFE:

Lenten weeks are not just for their sake. But, for ‘eastering our personal lives too’. An unknown author’s words of wisdom come handy here: “Easter is a day to fan the ashes of dead hope, a day to banish doubts and to seek the slopes where the sun is rising from east, and to revel in the faith which transports us out of ourselves and the dead past into the vast and inviting unknown.”

Inspite and despite of all that are happening around which envelope not only the COVID-19 but also the CAA and NRIC, each of us has to arise with the Lord from the EAST as an effective embodiment of HOPE FOR A HEALTHY, HAPPY AND HOLY HUMANITY THAT HAS TO BE RESURRECTED sooner or later...!

Contact: jerrysj1@gmail.com

The New Leader, April 1-15, 2020
The sun rises to dispel the darkness of the world. Darkness can never stand before light. We are an Easter-people. We shall overcome all evils including COVID-19.

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Woman’s Power

Congratulations on your fine editorial poem on “Woman”, where you have brought out fourteen aspects of women (NL, March 1-15, ’20). May men, accept and respect every woman, cooperating as partners in building up family, nation and the world.

- Rex Pai, SJ
Dindigul, TN

COVID -19

The write-up on Covid -19 by Dr. A. Anthuvan Aklan Xavier was very timely and informative (NL, March 1-15, ’20). Instead of being too panicky about it, let us take the necessary precautions and keep praying that God controls it.

- F. M. Britto
Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Searching Questions

This is in reference to the article, “Searching questions at Christmas,” by Hedwig Lewis, SJ, (NL, Dec 16-31, ’19). It has brought a lot of questions and stories and it gives a succinct message about Christmas. I was touched by two stories of a widow and a boy. God helped in their needs. God became the centre of their life. It makes my life to be Christ-centred and helps me find Jesus among all my companions.

- Rohit Wagh, SJ
Trivandrum, Kerala

Powerful Christmas Message

The editorial poem, “A Child is Born,” conveys a powerful message to the readers. It depicts the untold sufferings of the different sections of the society in general, and children, women and farmers in particular. The last two verses of the poem, however, strike a note of optimism to the people who live in utter helplessness and hopelessness:

“Yet a star is seen, a chorus is heard and hope is born;
Messiah is here, a sound is echoed from distant horn.”

“A Child is Born”, indeed, a powerful Christmas message.

- Dr Victor A. Singarayar, OFS
Chennai, T.N.

The Cosmic Christ

This is in reference to the article “The Cosmic Christ,” by Fr. Michael Amaladoss, SJ (NL, Dec 16-31, ’19). I was glad to read this article. God is present in the whole universe. The beauty of cosmic Christ is that God took human form in order to show the model of life to all his fellow men and women. Let us all proclaim the cosmic Christ in the Babe of Bethlehem and praise and glorify and thank him for all the blessing that he has showed upon all of us.

- Kiran Joseph, SJ
Trivandrum, Kerala

ZZZ

I am always inspired by the writing of Fr Joe Mannath, SDB. The article ZZZ was indeed commendable (NL, Dec 16-31, ’19). This is the

Shakespeare Pearls

‘The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves that we are underlings.’

(From the tragedy of ‘Julius Caesar’)

Brutus and other conspirators plotted the murder of Julius Caesar as they believed he was ambitious to become their king. Some believed that it was their fate to be servants to Julius Caesar but Cassius attempted to change this perception. If they had become slaves to Caesar it was not the fault of their ruling stars but it was of their own making. It was their resignation, inaction and passivity that was making them underdogs.

The nature of destiny has always been a matter of debate. Some hold that our destiny is fixed by our birth and circumstances while others hold that each man’s destiny is in his own hands. Many believe in their horoscopes and the influence of the stars and planets in their lives. They believe their destiny is fixed by these external factors and that it is futile to resist the forces of destiny that is fixed and ordained from above. But others believe the opposite. They hold that we make or mar our own destinies. By our actions and inactions we bring about our destiny of good fortune or bad fortune. External forces have no say in our destiny. If we have successes and achievements to our credit it is the result of our own initiatives. If we fail in our undertakings the cause is also ourselves. Passing the buck to our stars will not help. We can rewrite our own life scripts.

- Fr Matthew Adukanil, SDB
right article which everyone must read. The writer has brought out in a humorous way how we become lethargic. Many times we do not realize how precious our life is. We spend lot of time pondering on the negative side of things, unnecessary gossips and endless complaints. When we become self-centered our life too becomes monotonous and boring. That passion will not come from money or things but from true love.” - Maria Rekha, FSP Trichy, T.N.

**Bible Sunday**

Bishop Peter Abir, in his article, “Bible Sunday,” highlights the importance of the Bible (NL, Nov 1-15, ’19). Sadly, most people, including priests in their homilies tend to focus on specific morality. One reason could be that they use only Philosophy and Theology as their analytical tools. St. John Paul II did introduce personalistic philosophy that borders on using sociology admitting the validity of human emotions as a reliable tool.

The introduction of behavioural science terminology widens the scope of interpretation for the layperson. It encourages one to move from looking for inspiration from words and phrases in a passage to the whole passage or a group of passages. One also is encouraged to consider the mundane actions of daily life as a solution, to look to practice Holiness in the mundane actions of daily life becomes intelligible.

The Bible then helps to develop a Christian rather than a sinless culture. It is only recently that the Father in the Prodigal son is seen as merciful rather than loving. A deeper look will reveal a more important element of fidelity in parenthesis. The attitude of the young man who fell among thieves and was rescued by the Good Samaritan is seen too similar to the modern day Catholic who glibly rejects the apparent hollow piety of Liturgical celebrations for his own private prayers. The widow who gifts her mite could encourage the talented student to coach his slower friends or even coach poor children.

- R.P. Coelho
Bangalore, Karnataka

**Discipline**

The article, “Who is the Killer?” by Metti Amirtham, SCC, explains the attitude of our people towards the maintenance of public places (NL, Nov 16-30, ’19). We need to be disciplined otherwise we make innocent people victimized. - Hrudaya Mary A. JMJ
Bangalore, Karnataka

**In the 17th century in France, Muretus, a humanist scholar was an ailing fugitive. As he was dressed in rags the doctors discussed his case in Latin, thinking he would not be able to understand them. In Latin they said, “Let us try an experiment with this worthless creature!” Imagine their shock when this pauper said in Latin, “Will you call worthless one for whom Christ did not disdain to die?” “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn:3:16).

What an unspeakable satisfaction it is to every human being to know that however neglected by people, cast off and forsaken, however down-trodden, oppressed and despised, every one is loved by the Creator whose masterpieces they are! - Percy

125. Reflections

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**Readers:** Letters to the editor and questions for the Health, Psychology and Bible columns, and articles on spirituality, self-help, family and social concerns are welcome. For renewal of subscription, use the renewal form that is sent to you. - Manager
3. Are Most People Nice or Nasty?  
The Answer Reveals Much

Are you healthy? Can you eat most foods that others eat? Or do you need special food much of the time? If you can eat most of the foods everyone around eats, good. You are normal. But if you seek exceptions in food much of the time, there must be something wrong with your digestive system. It cannot be that most foods are bad.

Something similar happens with your reactions to people. Suppose you spend a week or a month or a year in the company of some people, and someone asks you about your experience, what comments do you tend to make about the people you were with?

“Wonderful! I met really nice people. I learnt much from them. So-and-so is a gem.” You have truly nice things to say about many people.

“OK. Nothing special to say.” You are in a world of your own. You do not seem to notice the good others do.

“I hated the place. So-and-so was a real headache.” (And you go on to speak ill of that one person, and nothing about the others who were nice and helpful.) You tend to see the bad rather than the good.

In most groups I have lived with, are there more people I like (and who like me) or more people I do not like (who may not also like me)?

Do I see right?

What I see and tell about others says much—about ME.

The world is made up of a mixture of good and bad, beauty and ugliness, pleasure and pain. I can look out of my window and notice the fresh green leaves and flowers, or focus on the spot of dirt on the wall. Which is these do I tend to speak about? Our eyes do not see as a camera sees. Our ears do not hear as a tape recorder hears. Our mind does not grasp or recall events as a computer does.

No. All perception—and most memories—are conditioned and subjective.

We tend to notice and remember what we look for. We remember best what we are most interested in.

Thus, after the floods in Kerala and Coorg last year, the Church (priests, religious, lay people) did a fabulous job helping the affected people. The help offered was extraordinary and even heroic. Enemies of the Church did not like the good image this created for the Church. So, they were happy when some scandal came up. Some TV channels repeatedly played the scandals.

Are you keen on spreading the good news or eager to publish the scandals?

Mother Teresa and a greedy business man would see a slum very, very differently. She sees Jesus in the poor, and looks for ways of helping them. He is trying to calculate the value of the land, and how to get the people out, so that he can make money. They see, and seek, very different things.

One sees the poor as God’s precious children to love and care for; the other sees them as a nuisance. She seeks to serve, not judge. He looks for ways to chase them away.

Youth: Criminals or Thirsty for Love?

Young people in Don Bosco’s time were extremely poor. They flocked to cities, looking for jobs. They worked sixteen hours a day in factories. No laws protected them. If they stole or fought, they were imprisoned.

Don Bosco saw in these boys not criminals and the scum of society, but young people without a home and a friend. He believed that they could do great things—even become saints. He never thought that boys are evil. He believed that the young are thoughtless and needed a loving friend to be with them and guide them.

This is a different way of looking at youth—very different from seeing them as scoundrels and criminals. Condemnation is easier than compassion. But what does it achieve? If you are an older person, what is your opinion of younger people? If you are a superior or senior priest or religious, what are your normal comments about younger religious and seminarians? Are these comments mostly positive or mostly negative? Do you see them as full of promise, with great potential and a few weaknesses, or as a hopeless bunch, much worse than how you were when you were young?

When you look back on the last twenty-four hours, what comes to your mind? What do you tend to remember and re-live? Good experiences to thank God for, or bad experiences to complain about? Good people to learn from (and speak about) or someone you did not like (whose faults you are going to talk about)?

The simple truth is that we experience much more kindness than unkindness, meet many more good and kind people than cruel or crooked ones. Where my attention goes, and what I recall and speak about (and which example I choose to follow) shows much about ME, not about them.

If I am a good person, I will recall much goodness and learn from many good people. If my mind and heart are corrupt, I will recall the bad with relish, tend to publish it, and even justify my evil deeds, saying, “Everyone is doing it.”

Want a simple test to see what kind of a person you are? Check: Will most people you worked with or worked for be happy to meet you, and happy to have you back?

So, too, be careful with people who mostly highlight the negative or put down others. You are likely to be their next victim.

(Your feedback is most welcome: jmannath@gmail.com)
Pope’s Easter liturgies closed to public

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis’ liturgies for Holy Week and Easter, which usually include the presence of thousands of people, will be held without public attendance this year. According to an online notice from the Prefecture of the Papal Household, “because of the current global public health emergency, all the Liturgical Celebrations of Holy Week will take place without the physical presence of the faithful.” Italian police also closed St. Peter’s Square to the public on 10 March. - CNA

“I Asked the Lord to Stop the Epidemic; I Said, Lord, Stop It With Your Hand.” : Pope

“I asked the Lord to stop the epidemic: Lord, stop it with your hand.” This is what Pope Francis responded when asked what he prayed for two days ago, when he ventured to Rome’s Center, making a pilgrimage on foot from Rome’s Marian Basilica, Santa Maria Maggiore, to the Church of San Marcello al Corso, where there is a miraculous cross.

“This is what I prayed for,” Francis told Paolo Rodari. “During these difficult days,” the Holy Father reflected in the interview, “we can find small, concrete gestures expressing closeness and concreteness towards the people closest to us.” These include, he underscored, “a caress for our grandparents, a kiss for our children, for the people we love,” and are “important, decisive gestures.” “If we live these days like this,” the Holy Father said, “they won’t be wasted.”

In the Vatican, Pope Francis is following closely the news on the coronavirus emergency, and this interview with La Repubblica focused on what these days, in the midst of a locked down Italy over contagion concerns, are teaching the Pope himself. Asked how can one live these days so that they are not wasted, the Pope underscored: “We must rediscover the concreteness of little things, small gestures of attention we can offer those close to us, our family, our friends. We must understand that in small things lies our treasure.

“These gestures of tenderness, affection, compassion, are minimal and tend to be lost in the anonymity of everyday life, but they are nonetheless decisive, important.” - Zenit

Prayer: Coronavirus pandemic

Here is the prayer Pope Francis recited by video on 11 March asking Mary to protect Italy and the world during of the coronavirus pandemic:

O Mary, you always shine on our path / as a sign of salvation and of hope. / We entrust ourselves to you. Health of the Sick, / who at the cross took part in Jesus’ pain, keeping our faith firm. / You, Salvation of the Roman People, / know what we need, / and we are sure you will provide so that, as in Cana of Galilee, / we may return to joy and to feasting / after this time of trial. / Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father / and to do as we are told by Jesus, / who has taken upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the cross, / to the joy of the resurrection. Amen. Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God. Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin. - CNS

Pope donates 100 thousand Euros to Italian Caritas

Pope Francis contributes 100,000 Euros to Italian Caritas in a gesture of encouragement to those suffering from the Covid-19 Coronavirus in Italy. Italy continues to be the country with the highest number of confirmed cases of Coronavirus in Europe. On 11 March, the Italian government further tightened restrictions by ordering the closure of all shops, except pharmacies and food stores. - www.en.radiovaticana.va

Museums: just a click away!

The Vatican Museums are offering art lovers the possibility of visiting its amazing collection from the comfort and the safety of their own home. Perhaps it’s something you always wanted to do but never had the opportunity, today you can go on-line and immerse yourself in the beauty and wonder of the Vatican Museums thanks to seven virtual tours offered on the Museum’s website. - www.en.radiovaticana.va

Pope Francis’ Malta trip postponed

The Vatican stated on 23 March that Pope Francis’ trip to the islands of Malta and Gozo 31 May has been postponed to a yet to be decided future date. The decision was made “due to the current world situation and in agreement with the authorities and the local Church.” - www.en.radiovaticana.va

Pope prays for coronavirus victims, workers who died serving others

Pope Francis asked people to pray for all victims of COVID-19, including the health care workers who sacrificed their lives caring for others. “Let us pray today for the dead, for those who, because of the virus, have lost their lives. In a particular way, let us pray for the health care workers who have died in these days, who gave their lives in the service of the sick,” he said at the beginning of his morning Mass on 18 March. - CNS

The New Leader, April 1-15, 2020
Behold Your Mother!

By Michael Amaladoss, SJ

Jesus is hanging on the cross. All of his disciples have run away. Only John is around. He must have been there accompanying Mary, supporting her in some way. Mary was there too in the company of some other women like Mary Magdalene (John 19:25-27). They must have kept their distance till Jesus was crucified. After the crucifixion much of the crowd disappears, except for a small group, still abusing him and challenging him to come down from the cross, if he were the Son of God. There were a couple of soldiers, busy casting lots to decide who should have the seamless robe of Jesus. They do not disturb Mary, John and the small group with them. In spite of all his pain, Jesus does not ignore their presence. They are the only ones who are standing with him till the end. He notices his mother and feels responsible for her. He entrusts her to the care of John. At the same time, he also entrusts John to his mother. Christians have always felt that John represented all of them, so that Mary is not only John’s mother, but the mother of all the Christians.

Contemplating this scene, I sometimes feel that we look at it in an one-sided way. We see it as Jesus entrusting Mary to the care of John, now that he himself is dying. Obviously, as a loving son, he does not want to leave his mother alone, especially at such a time of trial when the whole community around Jesus may be breaking up. But, as a matter of fact, Jesus probably feels that his own mother will be able to withstand the trial, whereas it is the disciples who need some support. So Jesus entrusts his disciples to his mother: “Here is your mother” (Jn 19:27). She has been with Jesus discreetly all through his short life, feeling herself called to be a part of God’s plan. Her role was one of quiet support from behind, so to speak. Jesus is now asking her to play the same role in the life of the early Church. It is not a directive role, but a supportive one. Mary is not going to tell them what to do. It is the task of the Spirit of God to inspire them and to show them the way. The way indicated by the Spirit may be challenging. But, Mary is there to support, encourage and advise them to go ahead boldly, trusting in the Lord. She must have been a point of reference as long as she lived.

When she was young and betrothed to Joseph, an angel visits her and tells her that she will conceive a son. From the words used by the angel, she, who must have been familiar with the Scriptures, must have guessed that he must be the Messiah. Her song of thanksgiving at the home of Elizabeth gives us an indication that she had some idea of what Jesus will do. But she does not know how. Most probably she may not have foreseen a scene like this one on Calvary. A series of events follow: the journey to Bethlehem, the hints of Simeon when Jesus is offered in the temple, their running away to Egypt, the response of Jesus, at the age of twelve, when Mary and Joseph search for him and find him in the temple, his rejection by the people of Nazareth when he comes to preach there, her experience of the miracle at Cana, her seeming uncertainty when she goes with some of the family looking for him, etc. She must have been following him in some way, perhaps with the women disciples. Since the Last Supper was a family paschal meal, I think that Mary must have been there, though the Gospels do not speak about it. But some artists have pictured her there! Then the passion! She must have been following him at a distance in the company of other women disciples, perhaps accompanied by John, though the other disciples had run away, except Peter who came close enough during the trial, but denied any knowledge of him. Then the scene on Calvary.

St. Ignatius of Loyola is certain that Mary must have been the first person to whom the risen Jesus appeared. She is there in the upper room with the eleven apostles and other men and women disciples, numbering 120 (Acts 1:20) to receive the Holy Spirit. Tradition suggests that she lived with John at Ephesus until her death. The Apostles may have visited her to confirm their own faith as they went around preaching the good news. Luke may have heard from her the stories of the annunciation, etc.

How does she help us – her sons and daughters? Her role in the life of Jesus was a supportive one. As it happened at the annunciation and at Bethlehem, God tells her what needs to happen. Her role is one of obedience. “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). Sometimes, the significance of what is happening is not too clear to her. After the event of Mary discovering Jesus in the temple at the age of twelve, we are told: “His mother treasured all these things in her heart” (Lk 2:51). At other times, she takes the initiative. At Cana, when she notices that the wine is running out, she informs Jesus: “They have no wine” (Jn 2:3). Jesus seems to give a non-committal answer. But she seems to force his hand. She tells the servants: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). Jesus turns the water into wine and with this first miracle his public ministry is launched! Her motherly role, therefore, is not to tell us what to do, but to encourage and support us to do what Jesus – and the Spirit - tells us to do!
The two greatest feasts in the Christian calendar are Christmas and Easter. Of the two, there’s no doubt at all that Christmas - with its crib, angels, magi and Santa Claus - is far more popular. But Easter?

Easter is more mysterious.

Easter, our life in the Spirit

A ‘mystery’ as Christians understand the term, is something grasped not by the head alone, but by the heart as well – that is, experientially, through our feelings.

Whenever we touch a truth too intense for words, we use symbols. We cry, we dance. We sing and chant. We paint and sculpt. Colours, sounds, touch, smells, movement ... convey our deepest feelings more powerfully than words do. The place of art and religious ritual.

Life and death are our deepest experiences, and Holy Week has been all about them. About Jesus, who was betrayed, falsely indicted, tortured and killed – a “judicial murder” by the establishment of his day.

But death is not the final word, life is. Life – being born, reborn, renewed, healed, made whole, given insight, given power in abundance. This is what life in the Spirit is all about, what Easter is about. It surpasses our ability to express it entirely in words.

Amazingly, the dead Jesus “comes back to life” – to a different life, not just physically, but different in every sense. The risen Lord is Spirit, says St Paul. To those who kept faith with him, who sorrowed and wept at his death, Jesus brings comfort, peace, forgiveness, courage, steadfast confidence - and the irrepressible urge to proclaim to the four winds, “We have seen the Lord!”

Easter is the power of God’s Spirit in Jesus, now shared with us, his disciples – and recognized, exercised and enjoyed in all abundance. Easter is the conviction that this divine life, this life in the Spirit is ours for the asking, for the taking.

Once given us in baptism, this Spirit is not taken back, even if it lies dormant for years on end – like the ugly duckling who did not know it was a swan, or the barnyard chicken unaware it was really an eagle, or the caterpillar who dreamed of becoming a butterfly – once given, it is always there! – and can be actualized whenever, transforming life out of all expectation.

This is the empowerment and sense of abundance that Easter brings.

But to grasp the meaning of Easter one must have passed, as Jesus did, through the crucible of suffering and death, and been transformed into a “new person”.

This why Easter is preceded by Good Friday. This is why the Way of the Cross comes before the Resurrection. As Christians we believe that suffering has transformative value, but only if joined to that of Christ. Even more, we believe, as the Prophet Isaiah said, that the sufferings of the innocent, of the righteous person, can become the means of salvation for the world.
And how is this? The death of the righteous person – Gandhi, Romero, Rani Maria, Dorothy Day – brings us new life, “the life in the Spirit”, the flood of compassion, of mercy, of forgiveness which bring healing and reconciliation. It is this which transforms society.

Easter then is the empowering of each one of us “in the Spirit”.

But not just us as individuals, it is also an empowering of the larger community, for as we know, the same Spirit which raised Jesus from the tomb, also burned the disciples with tongues of fire and transformed their world.

Easter and Pentecost are but two aspects of the same reality.

The Spirit at work today

Which brings me to my next question: does the Spirit empower people today, such as we read of in those early days of the ‘Jesus community’ in Acts of the Apostles?

Indeed the Spirit is alive and at work, and as an example I take the recent agitations besetting this country. They may well be seen as a parable, a metaphor for the “new life” of this nation.

The last weeks of 2019 and the first weeks of the current year 2020 have been times of fear, tension and anguish for thousands of our countrymen – a veritable “way of the cross”, a Calvary. This because of the infamous National Register of Citizenship (NRC) and its accompanying Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

This was widely and correctly seen as a vicious strategy to disenfranchise the minorities in this country – Muslims, mainly, but also Christians, specially those who are dalits and tribals – to disempower them of their rights, and to place them in concentration camps (now called “detention centres”).

The opposition to this unconstitutional law has been nationwide. It’s been led by college students and ordinary women, who have challenged the government and chosen to resist.

The resistance has been mainly non-violent, in spite of provocation from goondas and the police, and has taken the form of gheraos and protest marches, with posters, songs and slogans, rallies and speeches and – most original of all – recitations from the preamble of the Constitution.

So paradoxically, this time of distress has also been a time of hope and confidence for millions. Brutal repression has been met with peace, courage and steadfast resolve, for non-violence is a spiritual mantra.

The establishment for its part has hit back with fury, framing charges of treason and sedition, and inciting physical violence upon the protesters. In spite of legal authorities asserting that the right to dissent is vital in a democracy, the government in power refuses to countenance any opposition to its will.

For how long will the protests continue? This is the anxious question being asked today.

How the Protests have transformed us

As the human rights activist Harsh Mander has pointed out, the movement has already succeeded in numerous ways.

Its most significant success is that it is the first national movement for Hindu-Muslim unity since the death of Mahatma Gandhi.

Indeed, it has brought together people of various castes and religions – poor Sikh farmers braving the cold nights at Shaheen Bagh to prepare langar for their protesting Muslim sisters, Catholic bishops from Tamilnadu and Kerala marching in silent solidarity on the streets of Bengaluru – a public sign of all that is finest in our civilization: acceptance of diversity.

A second success is that students in our universities are teaching their elders not to hate, but instead to become a more caring and equal country.

For the last decades, most of our universities have grown sterile, and unable to point to a hopeful future for our young. Instead they have become hotbeds of political factions. No longer. The youth have shown us another way.

A third accomplishment is the reassurance it has given India’s Muslims.

For much too long, because of the cowardice of one political party and the bigotry of another, life for all minorities in the country has been fearful and oppressive. Hate speech and lynching have become part of everyday life. And the threat of being seen as “anti-national” and seditious hangs ominously over every public speech.

But in the protests led by Muslim women – of all people! – the mood is festive and welcoming, as Muslim men and women mix with Indians of
other faiths, and joyfully wave the national flag, and read out the preamble to our Constitution. There is a fearlessness here we have never seen before.

A fourth achievement is the reclaiming of the idea of nationalism by those Indians who include and unite, rather than divide.

The term ‘anti-national’ so often bandied about, is actually pseudo-nationalism, based as it is on a majoritarian, not an inclusivist ethos. Love of country is shown by loving and respecting all its people, no matter what their religious background or social class.

A fifth victory lies in making the Constitution the soul of the people’s movement. How appropriate that “we, the people of India” have come together to defend the Constitution and protect it from an ignoble government.

I have used the recent example of the NRC-CAA agitation as one of the best examples of a renewal which we Christians may rightly term “Paschal” or “Easter-like”. (Naturally, those of other faith traditions may have other words to describe it.)

It has been the “passing over” from fear and oppression to courage and confidence, a transformative passage indeed.

As an entirely spontaneous and collaborative movement, it is also in a way, leaderless. But it still engendered a phenomenal support across the country – not just from almost every college campus, but also from ordinary men and women, from the film world, from literary circles and even, cautiously, from politicians of all stripes.

Tales of courage and heroism abound. Everywhere solidarity and friendship have encouraged and supported the agitation.

The ‘mysteries’ of Easter

Our Scriptures tell us that the first gift of the Spirit is the absence of fear. The spirit of the Risen Jesus is not a spirit of timidity, anxiety and nervousness, but of confidence and self-assertion. It is wonderful to see ordinary women not cowed down by the might of the state.

The second gift of the Spirit is the abundance of the charisms. As we know, a charism is given to build up the community, and we may also add, to build up the nation.

So far, Christians in this country are known for their works of service – of education and of charity: our schools, our hospitals, orphanages and centres of social welfare. Good, but not enough.

One gift of the spirit sorely needed today is prophecy – “speaking truth to power”, with boldness and confidence, demanding justice for all, a fearlessness in confronting evil. The words of Jesus bear repeating here: “In the world you will have persecution. But take courage, I have overcome the world.”

The steadfast courage of ordinary people has brought life and salvation to everyone else. It is the Spirit at work, call it what you will. As mentioned earlier, non-violent protest is a spiritual mantra.

We began by stating that Easter is a mysterious feast. Its mystery lies in our confronting the evil in ourselves and in this world, and resisting it with the power of the Spirit. This struggle transforms us. The struggle will also give us a new society.

Often we give in to agony and despair because the powerful and the corrupt seem to get away with crime all the time. It was so in the life of Jesus. But as his example has also shown, the just person, the righteous person through his death becomes the source of life and salvation to many.

The protestors at Shaheen Bagh and elsewhere, ordinary people all of them, through their ahimsa, their loyalty to the flag and their tenacity have transformed this nation. Their struggle is a parable to us all.

Parables are stories which present divine truths in human form. Like symbols and metaphors, they are meant to lead us to deeper realities.

Each year we celebrate the feast of Easter, and get absorbed in its many rituals. This year, let us look anew at the socio-political struggles taking place in this present time and space, and see how the Spirit is guiding our nation.

Perhaps through all the confusion we will glimpse a healing and a reconciliation which satisfies the deepest longings of our hearts.

For as we said before, Easter as a feast is truly mysterious.

Fr Myron J. Pereira, SJ, lives at Campion Residence, Mumbai, and is a writer of fiction. [pereira.myron@yahoo.in]
“Even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8)! This is the expression used by Paul to indicate the melancholy state of Jesus dying on the cross. Paul’s primary intention is to underline the humility of Jesus, accepting the kenotic state of a death of a slave or of a criminal. However, the affliction involved in shameful death on the cross cannot be set aside. Jesus was mocked (Lk 22:63), flogged (Mk 15:15) and struck with a reed (Mk 15:19).

That is why Paul would speak about the ‘scandal of the cross’ (1 Cor 1:13). Nevertheless, the physical torture which Jesus experienced during Passion Week is only a symbol of the crosses he carried all through his three years of public life and continues to carry even today until the end of time.

Cross of Ignorance!

The hungry crowd in the desert had to be fed. But only negative reactions came from the disciples (Mt 14:17; Mk 6:37; Lk 9:13; Jn 6:5-6). Jesus had to contend with his own disciples arguing among themselves who is greater among them (Lk 9:46), the mother of James and John wanting to see her sons in the primary place (Mt 20:22) and his own disciples, when seeing Jesus walking on water, exclaiming: “it is a ghost” (Mt 14:26).

All the disciples, like the Emmaus disciples, were ignorant of who Jesus was (Lk 24:45). The same ignorance prevailed also among the common people: after experiencing the feeding they wanted to make him king (Jn 6:15) but the same crowd, ignoring all his greatness, shouted: “crucify him” (Mk 15:13). The painful response of Jesus to this ignorance would be: “You, faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you” (Mk 9:19)?

Ignorance, in itself, is not sinful. However, Dr. J.C. Wandenbem convincingly argues: “ignorance coupled with religion causes fundamentalism; coupled with freedom brings chaos; coupled with money begets corruption and coupled with poverty produces crime.” Moreover, ignorance is the source of indifference which, according to Pope Francis, “leads to self-absorption and a lack of commitment” (Peace Message, 1 Jan 2016). When we ignore what we are supposed to know, this causes evil. Is this not a cross we place on the shoulders of Jesus?

Cross of Rejection!

John says about the birth of Jesus: “He came to his own, and his own did not accept him” (1:11). “His own” (idia) in the first case, being a neuter, indicates ‘the heritage of Israel, the Promised Land: Jerusalem. And in the second case, being a masculine (idos), refers to the people of Israel (Exod 19:5) who do not accept him. This is very well brought out by Luke during the Nazareth Manifesto of Jesus: “All in the Synagogue, filled with rage, drove him out of the town” (Lk 4:28-29; Jn 4:44). Jesus was amazed at their unbelief (Mk 6:6). The same story of rejection by his own (Jewish) people is noted in several places in the Gospels (e.g. Jn 3:11, 19; 5:45; 14:7; 16:3; 1 Jn 3:11.).

The pain of the cross is that Jesus was primarily sent to the lost sheep of Israel (Mt 15:24), but “no one accepted his testimony” (Jn 3:32). They were all waiting for this Messiah and when he did come they had no faith to accept him. This is in tune with what Paul said at the end of his mission to the Israelites: “For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing” (Act 28:27). This rejection, finally, brought the cross of death to Jesus. Many a time, because of our human weakness we reject the light of the Gospel and continue to walk in darkness of selfish motives. Is this not a cross we place on the shoulders of Jesus?

Cross of Arrogance!

The ‘learned’ leaders of Jerusalem vehemently opposed Jesus. Mark notes that the Pharisees conspired with the Herodians against Jesus regarding how to destroy him (Mk 3:6). In fact, the Pharisees and the Jewish Sanhedrin opposed Jesus as a Teacher and Messiah. Jesus preached mercy and love; opposed corruption and insincerity; rejected the rabbinic conception of holiness. He represented himself as a new lawgiver, when in the Sermon on the Mount he superseded doctrines of Moses by his own (“You have heard that it was said to the ancients ... but I tell you”).

The arrogant mind and heart of these ‘leaders,’ knowing the truth in Jesus, could not accept him being unable to cast off their worn-out traditions (cf. Mt 23).

Jesus’ Galilean villages, like Capernaum, Bethsaida and Corazón, out of prejudice and familiarity rejected his gospel for which he had to curse them for their arrogance (cf. Lk 11:13,15). The instigations of Caiaphas (Jn 11:50-51) and the Sanhedrin (Mt 26:57-68) are vivid examples of this ‘cross’ of arrogance. Our arrogant act with self-interest causes harm. Is this not a cross we place on the shoulders of Jesus?

Replace crosses with Holy Cross!

When I am alive to my faith in Jesus, I can say with Paul, “I shall know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil 3:10-11). Then, I shall do away with all selfish crosses, and embrace the Holy Cross that leads me to the Resurrection! ♦

By Bp A. Peter Abir

Even Death on a Cross!
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- Spiritual Journey in Formation
- Mary of Nazareth an ideal Formator
- Biblical Perspectives in Formation
- Spiritual Direction and Counselling skills
- Formation in Church Documents
- Emotional and Spiritual Quotient
- Discovering the Divine Child within
- Mood Mapping and Inner Journey
- Psycho-Sexual Integration
- Discernment and Vocational Psycho - diagnosis and Assessment

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With the coronavirus spreading rapidly throughout the world and in India too, the issue of safety and health at the workplace has begun taking centre stage. It poses different questions for the Christian worker in his or her office as well as for local church services as Christianity is fundamentally a congregational religion and the Sunday worship service. The pandemic forces the Church as an institution to consider its role during a time of crisis, and also brought to the front an often neglected factor – the Church is the workplace for the pastor and other staff the Church may employ and the pastor, if he has to discharge his duties well can neither work from home or practice social distancing (more on social distancing later). Many religious communities are suspending their typical operations. The Catholic Church in Rome shuttered its doors temporarily. What should we think about this? Are Christians abandoning their responsibility to the sick and suffering?

Some Christians may be tempted to look back on their history of remaining physically present during times of distress. Starting around 250 A.D., A.D., a plague that at its height was said to kill 5,000 people a day ravaged the Roman empire. The Christians stood out in their service to the infirm. Because they believed that God was sovereign over death, they were willing to minister to the sick even at the cost of their own lives. This witness won many to the Christian cause. Should we follow their example or be guided by modern public health advisories advising a raft of precautions? Of course, a comparison with the plague cannot be strictly be made as in the situation of the Corona virus, the precautions being advised are not just for the individual’s own wellbeing but also to ensure that it does not spread more rapidly than it is already doing. After all, the WHO has already declared this to be a pandemic.

In India, COVID-19 is an infection coming from the rich and infecting the poor, and yet, the poor are having to bear a large part of the burden and risk social distancing solution is both impractical and discriminatory for the poor. Most public health advisories that have been released in the past few weeks are highly urban upper and middle class centric and may not work for those in the unorganized sector who must get out there to work in order to make a livelihood, cannot work from home, and cannot isolate or quarantine themselves. They have to decide whether to save their jobs or their lives. This is more so because of limited job security and the lack of safeguards like paid sick leave. Lockdowns and restrictions will severely impact the marginalised, who run the risk of losing their jobs. One of the ways we can show God’s love is by participating in publicly endorsed strategies of containment, including social distancing. That’s why we’re not gathering together in person – because this is one of the best ways we can love others right now. At the same time, we don’t want to isolate people who are in need all around us. As a church together and as individual Christians, we want to care for others in any way that we can according to all the health and safety guidelines and recommendations made by government leaders and health professionals.

Christians have a responsibility beyond practicing personal hygiene. We also have a public responsibility to support civic programs to protect the vulnerable and care for the sick. In the short term, that means supporting health care workers who put themselves at risk caring for those who have fallen ill. It means scrupulously following the instructions of public health officials.

It means supporting programs to help those without health insurance, without sick leave, without day care and without pay checks because their employers have laid them off during the health crisis. Beyond these short-term responses, Christians also must demand that our governments be better prepared for such epidemics. Cutting budgets for research and preparedness is not only short-sighted but dangerous. In a globalized world, pandemics must be expected and planned for. When this crisis is over, we cannot go back to sleep and ignore the best advice from scientists and experts.

Coming back to the church, the shutting down of congregations temporarily; its literal emptying, can function as a symbol of its trust in God’s ability to use experts. Coming back to the church, the shutting down of congregations temporarily; its literal emptying, can function as a symbol of its trust in God’s ability to use experts. Coming back to the church, the shutting down of congregations temporarily; its literal emptying, can function as a symbol of its trust in God’s ability to use experts. Coming back to the church, the shutting down of congregations temporarily; its literal emptying, can function as a symbol of its trust in God’s ability to use experts. Coming back to the church, the shutting down of congregations temporarily; its literal emptying, can function as a symbol of its trust in God’s ability to use experts.
At least 28 priests in northern Italy have died from COVID-19

Avvenire, the Italian newspaper owned by the Italian bishops conference, attributes at least 28 of these priests’ deaths to COVID-19, and also notes two additional cases: that of Fr Guido Mortari, who died of pneumonia before he could get tested, and Fr Giorgio Bosini, who had a serious underlying medical condition. All but three of the priests were over the age of 70, and more than half were over 80 years old.

The youngest priest to die from coronavirus, Fr Andrea Avanzini of the Diocese of Parma, was 54 years old. Eleven of the deceased priests come from the Diocese of Bergamo, where at least 15 other priests have been hospitalized, according to the local bishop. Pope Francis called the bishop of Bergamo on 18 March to express his closeness to the many who are suffering in the diocese. - CNA

Krakow archbishop opens beatification causes of St John Paul II’s parents

Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski of Krakow announced on 11 March that having obtained the approval of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the archdiocese has opened beatification processes for the parents of Saint John Paul II.

The Archdiocese of Krakow publicly made the announcement on 11 March, setting in motion the beatification causes of John Paul II’s father, Karol Wojtyla, and mother, Emilia nee Kaczorowska. - CNA

Masses on TV, social media provide alternatives

In pandemic-unnerved America, we’re all shut-ins now. In another time, just about any city of a certain size had television station that offered a Sunday morning “Mass for Shut-Ins.” With the advent of digital communication, there are many ways to watch Mass in communities where public Masses have been halted in response to the coronavirus pandemic. In New Jersey, as Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark celebrated Mass that was livestreamed on the archdiocese’s website. The Mass was livestreamed with an estimated 3,000 watching. - CNS

Confession by phone, Skype, or emoji?

As much of the world faces quarantines, social distancing, and “shelter in place” orders amid the coronavirus pandemic, Catholics have faced unexpected challenges in accessing - and offering - the sacraments of the Church. Catholics in some places impacted by the pandemic have learned that the sacrament of confession - the remedy for sin and a conduit of God's mercy - has become rather difficult to find. But as the pandemic continues, and social prohibitions grow stricter, some Catholics are wondering why they can’t confess their sins virtually - over the phone, via text, or on Skype. Fr James Bradley, assistant professor of canon law at The Catholic University of America, told CNA that the coronavirus epidemic had created a new kind of pastoral urgency which many bishops and priests are trying to meet. - CNA

System launched for reporting abuse by Bishops

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting (CBAR) is up and running. A person who has an allegation of abuse involving a bishop can go to the CBAR website or call 1-800-276-1562. The creation of the system was approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USBCC) at the group’s spring, 2019, general assembly. - Zenit

Coronavirus: Lourdes shrine closes temporarily

For the first time since it opened, the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France will temporarily close its gates from midday, 17 March. This closure is in adherence to the measures taken by the French government to curtail the spread of coronavirus in the country. France presently has over 6500 confirmed cases of coronavirus infection. - www.en.radiovaticana.va

Nun dies in the flames after rescuing students

Sr Henrietta Alokha lost her life in the explosion which occurred on 15 March. While Holy Mass was being celebrated in the school, a strong explosion occurred, and a violent fire broke out which seriously damaged homes and buildings in the surroundings. Sr Henrietta rescued all the children under her care from the explosion and could not make it herself. - Fides News

Center to house homeless with COVID-19

The Archdiocese of Sao Paulo has offered the city a community center, House of Prayer, to lodge homeless who get the coronavirus. Homeless communities throughout the country are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19, church officials said. The House of Prayer “is already used for activities with the city’s homeless population” said, Fr Julio Renato, coordinator of the Episcopal Vicariate for the homeless. - CNS

The New Leader, April 1-15, 2020
Why should we give so many names to Mother Mary, and with different faces? It almost sounds like idolatry.

- S. Selvaraj, Villupuram, TN

Mother Mary is addressed by hundreds of different names and titles. She is also depicted with a variety of faces. Well, at the basis of all such attitude towards Mary is a well founded love and devotion to her as Mother of Jesus, Mother of God and our own mother. A mother who loves her child immensely calls the child with all sorts of loving names. It is quite justifiable considering her emotional love towards the child. Similarly the various names and titles given to Mary are based on the feelings of affection and love which people have for Mary. These names and titles are also in response to the favours which they would have received through her loving intercession. Human simplicity and an emotional candour can explain such an extravagant attitude to Mary.

As for the different faces attributed to Mary they depend on a particular title given to her. Sometimes the culture of a particular society prompts them to see Mary's face according to their own tradition. Thus we have Mary with an Indian face, an European face, a Japanese face or an African face. And her external attire too is kept according to the culture of the people. Over the years Mary had also given apparitions in various places like Vailankanni in Tamilnadu, Lourdes in France or Fatima in Portugal to various children and adults. The recipients of such apparitions had their own description of Mary.

Devotion to Saints

There is hardly any idolatry involved in the various depictions of Mary. The Catholic Church would never permit such an excessive measure of devotion to Mary. She continues to be a woman specially chosen by God for a mission in which she cooperated with God, and she continues to be a mother of humanity who invoke her intercession.

When we observe some of our Catholic faithful praying before the statues in our churches, they give an impression that they have more faith in the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints than in Jesus Christ himself. How can we explain such a conduct of our Catholics? Are they perhaps afraid of Jesus?

- S. Selvaraj, Villupuram, TN

Well, the long Catholic tradition has been one of love, and sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary often consisting of prayerful intercessions addressed to her. Such an attitude to Mary is quite understandable considering her role as the mother of Jesus. In fact the very first miracle of Jesus, the changing of water into wine to help a wedding celebration was accomplished by Mary's intercession with Jesus. The history of the Catholic Church abounds in miracles through Mary's intercession with Jesus. Similarly the saints have been known for their exceptionally holy lives in close union with Jesus during their life time. And now that they are in heaven they are in a better position to intercede for us in our needs.

The sincere and loving devotion manifested by the Catholics towards Mary or the saints does not mean that they are afraid of Jesus or give a secondary place to him. We do have our reverence for the Cross, believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, celebrate Holy Mass daily, and also solemnly commemorate Jesus' birth, death and resurrection year after year.

Many a Catholic feels closer to Mary and saints rather than to Jesus for the following reasons: The number of attractive statues of Mary and the saints displayed in many of our churches draw us towards them rather than to Jesus. The doctrine of the “communion of saints” by which we understand that we have a close affinity with the saints may also be silently urging us to have a close relationship with them and hence seek them in our needs. The several Catholic shrines spread out in every diocese are mostly in honour of Mary or the saints. People who visit these shrines willingly spend much time before Mary or the saints honoured there.

Is Jesus God Incarnate? Or is he simply a man born in this world?

- S. Selvaraj, Villupuram, TN

There is a difference between these two titles about Jesus. When we say that Jesus in God Incarnate, we mean that Jesus the Son of God took human flesh and was born in this world in the womb of a Virgin Mother and performed his mission. But when I say that Jesus was a man just born in the world, we reduce him to any ordinary human being. And this totally contradicts his nature the God Incarnate.
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R.02: “Profound Openness to God in Prayer, a Contemplative retreat”  
May 10- 16, 2020

Dhyana Sadhana is committed to offer space and context for those seeking inner growth and is open throughout the year for those who want to make their personal guided retreat. Even the individuals can apply any time for personal retreats. There is a special program for those who prepare for their final commitment or for their profession Silver/Golden jubilees.

For further details, please contact: THE DIRECTOR, DHYANA SADHANA  
Bogadi Ring Road Circle, Bogadi, Mysuru - 570 026  
Tel: 0821-2598 444;  Mob: 087624 23129 / 094492 54199  
Preferably, please use: E-mail: dhyanasadhana@gmail.com; dhyanasadhana@rediffmail.com  
Website: www.dhyanasadhana.com
Sunday Reflections

Channel of Mercy

Divine Mercy Sunday - Cycle A - 19 April 2020

Acts 2: 42-47; 1 Pet 1: 3-9; Jn 20: 19-31

One day a father found his five-year-old son, Johnny, speaking in the telephone. When he saw his father, he quickly hung up.

The father said, “Johnny, I told you a hundred times not to do this. Now, what were you doing?”

Johnny said, “I was calling uncle Martin.”

The father said, “How could you have called uncle Martin? You don’t even know her number.”

Johnny said, “Oh Yes, I do. I spoke to him just now.”

The father was by now very exasperated. He said, “Ok Jonny, if it is true that you spoke to uncle Martin, tell me what he said.”

Johnny said, “He told me that I had the wrong number.”

All of us are trying to reach out to God, our dear Uncle Martin. But often time the mistake we do is to try to reach him through wrong numbers, wrong means - very much like little Johnny did in the story. The easiest and the surest way to reach God is the way of mercy. The channel of mercy.

The second Sunday of Easter is universally celebrated as the Divine Mercy Sunday. On this day we thank God for choosing to deal with us in his mercy and not justice. In Psalm 116: 1, the Psalmist says: “I will love the LORD all my life, because he heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.” The church expresses the same sentiments on this day.

The Divine Mercy Sunday has an interesting history. This feast was instituted by Pope Saint John Paul II in the year 2000. But the devotion to Divine Mercy began a lot earlier, inspired by the apparitions of Jesus to Sr Faustina, a Polish nun who lived in the first part of the twentieth century. According to her diary, Jesus appeared many times to Sr Faustina. In all the apparitions, Jesus gave this single message: “You will not find peace until you return to my mercy.”

Mercy is the gift the Church receives from the risen Lord and gives to the world. Announcing the institution of the Divine Mercy Sunday during the canonization ceremony of Sr Faustina, Pope John Paul II said, “This is the happiest day of my life.” No wonder, he is called the “pope of mercy.”

The message of this universal feast is that Divine Mercy is that God loves us - all of us - no matter how grave our sins are. He wants us to recognize that his mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive his mercy, and let it flow through us to others. This feast reminds us of the many parables in the gospels in which Jesus emphasizes God’s mercy. We especially remember the three beautiful parables of Luke 15. God is like a shepherd who leaves the ninety nine sheep in wilderness and goes in search of the one lost sheep. God is like a woman who searches the entire house to find the one coin she lost. Upon finding it, what joy she experiences! God is like a father who comes out of the house to welcome his prodigal son and who comes out of the house a second time to entice the elder son to come in and join the party. Today God does the same: he throws a party and invites of all of us to feast on his abundant mercy. On this day, we are exhorted by the Church that even as we celebrate the abundant mercy we receive from the Lord, we are also called to dispense it to others as freely and generously.

Pope Francis beautifully said in a homily, “A little bit of mercy makes this world less cold and more just.”

One day, a man was visiting a home for the retarded. For an hour he talked with a young woman named Mary whose body was covered with tumors. When it was time to leave, he put his arm around her and said, “You really are a beautiful person.”

“Thank you,” she replied. “No one has ever gotten close enough to notice.”

That is what mercy does to us. It makes us get close to people and see how beautiful they are, despite their weaknesses and foibles. On this Sunday of Divine Mercy, may we resolve to receive and give the mercy of God to others, for, as St John of the Cross clearly said, “in the evening of life, we will be judged on mercy alone!”

The New Leader, April 1-15, 2020
HISTORY:

Our founder Cardinal Herbert Vaughan started the society at a village called Mill Hill in London in the year 1865 with the Motto "To Love and To Serve" (Amare et Servire). Since he founded the society at Mill Hill so later the Society is named after Mill Hill.

OUR WORK PLACES:

Mill Hill is an international community of Priests, brothers and laity and working in more than 20 countries around the Globe. Now we are working in countries mentioned below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASIA</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Hydrabad, Pargi, Vikarabad, Warangal, Pune, Kashmir, Varanasi and Ambikapur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia, China, Pakistan, Philippines and Cambodia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFRICA</td>
<td>Cameroons, Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICA</td>
<td>New York, Brazil and Ecuador</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUROPE</td>
<td>London, Ireland, Netherlands, Austria, Scotland, Rome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VOCATION CAMP DATES:

28th, 29th & 30th April, 2020 at St. Joseph’s House, Ramanthapur, Hyderbad.

Do you have desire to be a missionary? Do you have courage to travel around the world to preach the Good News? Then come to our Vocation Camp and know more about us....

Qualification: 10th Class, Intermediate and Degree

For Further details Contact: Fr. J. Arul Nirmal Raj MHM, Vocation Director,
H.No.: 3-4-97/FQ/2, St. Joseph’s House, Ramanthapur, Amberpet (P.C.), Hyderbad - 500013, T.S.
Email: mhhmindiavocationdirector@gmail.com
Ph: +91 9494301653, +91 9182688051
A young boy turned 18 and decided that it was time to leave home and go explore the world.

Packing his things in a suitcase, he called his parents and told them solemnly, “Mom and dad, thank you very much for all that you have done for me all these years. Now that I am 18 and officially an adult, I do not want to stay home any longer. I want to go out into the world and experience all it offers – joys and sorrows, challenges and opportunities. Do not try to stop me. I have made up my mind.”

The mother started crying. The boy put his suitcase down and said in a firm voice, “Dad, I told you. My mind is set. You can’t change it. Please don’t try to stop me.”

The father said, “My dear son, who said that I am going to stop you? I am not. But, I am also going to go with you. I will follow you like a shadow wherever you go. For, in your journey of adventure, if there should come a time when you need a little help, accompaniment, some comfort or a few words of consolation, I want to be there close by to offer it to you.”

On the third Sunday of the Easter season, the Church invites us to reflect on the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, as beautifully narrated by Luke in 24: 13-35. The God we see in Luke 24 is very similar to the father in the story. He accompanies us all our life, wherever we go.


Emmaus narrative is a Lukan special, not found in the other synoptics. It is reminiscent of an Old Testament story in Gen 18: 1-15, where Abraham and Sarah treat three divine visitors with a wonderful meal. It is also typically Lukan in the sense that the story is narrated in the framework of a journey. Who are those two disciples? We know the name of one of the two - Cleopas. He is clearly not a member of the twelve. Hence, scholars assume, both of them must have belonged to the larger group of Jesus’ disciples. We do not know much about Emmaus either, except that it was a small town, located about 7 miles (11 kms) from Jerusalem. This is the only time Emmaus is mentioned in the whole of the Bible. The story does not tell us why the travelers were going to Emmaus. But, from their conversation, we can understand that they both were very dejected over the recent events. They say to the fellow traveler, Jesus incognito: “But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel” (Lk 24: 21). The two were convinced that Jesus was a story of failure. A biblical scholar beautifully says, “The reason the two disciples went to Emmaus is to try to forget about Jesus and the great failure of his life.” They were literally running away from Jerusalem. They wanted to leave behind everything they had hoped for in the last three years, go some place different and do something different. It was a time of great disillusionment. Jesus did not stop them from leaving. But he would not let them travel alone.

Jesus accompanies the Emmaus disciples, and through a long process of breaking both the word and the bread, he brings them clarity and restores their hope.

The scholars point to the Eucharistic nature of the Emmaus event. On the way, Jesus breaks the word to the disciples, explaining to them the meaning of the scriptures and how they were fulfilled in the happenings of Jerusalem. Later at home, Jesus breaks the bread, at which point, the disciples recognize that the fellow traveller was no other than Jesus himself.

Jesus is our constant companion. From our wanderings, it is he who leads us home. From our darkness and despair, it is he who returns us to light and hope.

May we join Albust Camus in praying to Jesus: “Don’t walk in front of me; I may not follow you. Don’t walk behind me; I cannot lead you. Walk beside me and be my companion forever.”

♣
1. Summer Courses: May 04 – May 23, 2020

Our Summer Programme consists of three-week-long courses:

**RESOURCE PERSONS:** Fr. Thomas Varkey SDB, Ph.D., Sr. Molly Varghese SDP, DMRT; Fr. David Mariaselvam SDB, Vis.Com. Fr. Selvaraj SDB, M.Phil (Psy) and Fr. Mani Lazar SDB, M.Sc. (Psy)

a) **Skills in Youth Ministry:** May 04 – May 09, 2020
Youth ministry, group building and teamwork skills, decision-making, problem-solving, creativity skills, planning skills, conflict-management skills, spiritual skills, communication skills, leisure time activities.

b) **Skills in Counselling:** May 11 – May 16, 2020
This course helps you to know the basics of counselling skills such as attending, observing, listening, responding to feelings. This course will prepare you to do counselling in schools, parishes, villages, formation houses, orphanages, etc.

c) **Psycho-emotional Healing:** May 18 – May 23, 2020
This programme aims at healing negative emotions, negative thoughts, and dysfunctional behaviour caused by painful events of life from childhood up to the present. Through an innovative and simple process, each participant is individually helped to arrive at greater integration and wholeness.

2. Diploma in Formation of Faith Educators and Youth Ministers:

Equipping one to respond to the challenges posed by the pluralistic context of India

**Duration:** From June 06, 2020 to March 19, 2021

The Target Group: Priests and Religious (men and women) and the committed Laity

The course is meant for those who work or would like to work in educational institutions, parish and mission settings, religious communities, family settings, youth animation centres, pastoral centres, and anyone who would like to equip himself/herself with scientific knowledge and professional skills in faith formation and youth ministry. The programme also accommodates the demands especially of the religious sisters under formation.

**The Structure of this course includes 3 phases:**

**Phase I- Basic Theology for Faith Formators:** June 06, 2020 - August 31, 2020
Sacred Scripture, Faith & Revelation, Christology, Trinity, Mariology, Ecclesiology, Sacraments in General, Theological Anthropology, Fundamental Moral Theology, Church History, Canon Law, etc.

**Phase II- Faith Formation and Youth Ministry:** September 02, 2020 - February 18, 2021

**Phase III- Audiovisuals in Pastoral Ministry:** February 19 - March 19, 2021
Basics of Communication, Media Education, Workshops on Street Theatre, Sound Recording, Radio Programmes, Digital Photography (theory and practice), Digital Videography (theory and practice), Use of the Internet, Use of PowerPoint Presentation for Classes, Seminars, Prayers, Meditation, etc.
Easter

By Joe Eruppakkatt, SSP

St Sebastian’s Church, Negombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka, was one of the targets of a series of bomb blasts on Easter Sunday 2019. The writer Fr Joe Eruppakkatt SSP, together with a team of Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), recently visited the Church and met with the parish team. He recounts his experiences on the occasion of the 1st anniversary of the tragic attack.

The people of St Sebastian’s parish, Negombo, Katuwapiya, Sri Lanka, recall this Easter, not the joy and peace of the risen Christ, but the smell of blood and shattered pieces of human flesh. Like Christians in other parts of the world, the parishioners of St Sebastian’s too had gathered in the Church on 21 April 2019 with their best outfits and exultant spirits to celebrate Easter – the victory of Christ over death and sin. But what they encountered that day was exactly the opposite of the joy, peace and victory of the risen Lord. All of a sudden there were loud cries, shattered concrete pieces, broken furniture and blood and body parts tossing all over. A dreadful suicide bomber exploded himself during the Holy Mass, at 8.47 am and killed 115 Easter Sunday worshippers. The attacker was identified as Achchi Mohammad belonging to the Islamic State that planned and executed the attack. On that fateful Easter Sunday, three churches and four luxury hotels were targeted in a series of terrorist suicide bombings in the island country. The other churches attacked were St Anthony’s Shrine, Colombo, and Evangelical Zion Church, Batticaloa. Later that day, there were smaller explosions at other places too. In all, 259 were killed, making it one of the deadliest terrorist atrocities ever anywhere. Over 500 people were injured, many of them losing their limbs and rendering them handicapped or paralysed for life. There was a terrible sense of shock in Sri Lanka and around the world.

“My past is buried, my future is buried, my only hope is God,” said a middle-aged woman survivor of the blast at St Sebastian’s who lost all her family members in the blast. Another woman survivor expressed a ray of hope even in the midst of such dreadful tragedy, “If it were not for my faith, I would have committed suicide by now.” She said she had thought of committing suicide a thousand times, but the Word of God is holding her and giving her hope in the midst of disaster.

St Sebastian’s Church today has a new look with renovated walls, fresh painting and a vibrant Christian community attending Holy Mass, thanks to the support of the Sri Lankan government and the resilient spirit of the parishioners. Within three months the damaged Church was fully renovated by the Sri Lankan military and funded fully by the national government. Its vast compound and colorful interiors do not look damaged and desolate anymore; the smell of human flesh and blood gave way to the fragrance of fresh flowers and burning incense. The Church was re-consecrated by Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo, on 21 July 2019, exactly 3 months after the bomb attack. A Facebook page on the re-dedication of the Church has these words: “A Sunday like this three months ago we lost 115 beloved sisters and brothers of our parish. And we pray that their names be glorified as the martyrs of Sri Lanka. Our beloved church was in a bloodbath three months ago. But now we have a church blessed with the blood of our heroes. We praise you Lord and we glorify your name. Let these angels protect our church and the Parish.”

As you enter the church compound, guarded by Sri Lankan military, you notice a sober spirit prevailing all over. An aura of radiating grace and a spiritual energy grip you, as you move around the compound and the interior of the church. What strikes the visitor at first is the elegantly erected memorial by the left side of the entrance. The monument, with the statue of the risen Lord and a circular granite which displays the names of all 115 martyrs of that fateful Easter Sunday, portrays an evocative headline: “THEY LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR GOD! Rejoice that your names are written in Heaven”. And the epitaph at the bottom of the list brings home the meaning of death most profoundly, “Safely Home!!! I am home in heaven, dear ones; Oh, so happy and so bright! There is perfect joy and beauty in this everlasting light. And the pain and grief is over. Every restless tossing passed; I am now at peace forever. Safely Home in Heaven at last!”

The most significant testimony of that day’s incident is the surviving statue of the Risen Jesus with blast marks and human blood and flesh splashed over it after the Easter attack. The Parish has decided to carefully preserve it inside a glass case, perhaps to remind the visitors and worshippers that the flesh broken and blood shed that day by 115 innocent victims were not in vain, but they were mingled with Christ’s own flesh and blood broken, shed and shared with us. Rev. Fr Sachitha, the Assistant parish priest of St Sebastian’s, echoed the courage and confidence of his parishioners who suffered the tragedy, as he explained, “Ninety per cent of those directly affected survivors have come out stronger. Only 10 per cent are still struggling. They need our constant help by way of counselling, accompaniment and encouragement.” He narrated the story of a woman who called him at 11 pm on the night of December 24th, just before the Christmas midnight Mass. She called to tell him that she was unable to participate in the Christmas Mass as she is all alone now and is partially paralyzed. Two of her daughters, who were sitting by her side in the church, became pieces of shattered flesh on Easter Sunday morning. She asked Father Sachitha, “How can I celebrate Christmas in this condition?” Fr Sachitha said he has no answer to such queries: “It’s hard to listen, console and comfort them.” But he said the entire parish team is encouraged by their enormous faith and abiding hope. This Easter will, no doubt, be a challenging experience for the survivors and the parishioners of St Sebastian’s. But their faith in the risen Lord has defeated the power of evil, rekindled their hope and enabled them to overcome every fear. His peace, his joy and his love have made them stronger and Spirit-filled.

The Blood Stained Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka

The New Leader, April 1-15, 2020
**Amid coronavirus, public Masses suspended in most Japanese dioceses**

More dioceses in Japan have shut down Mass for the coming weeks in response to the ongoing outbreak of the coronavirus nationwide.

The majority of Japanese dioceses have now suspended all public worship. 10 dioceses of 16 have now suspended public Masses, according to Satoh Takaharu, a spokesman for the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan.

This comes after reports and pronouncements from various individual bishops across the nation regarding temporary church closures. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan says that the bishops have not made any sweeping or mandatory prescriptions on the virus outbreak, and the matter is left to the discretion of individual diocesan bishops. - CNA

**Vietnam dioceses cancel Masses and catechism over Covid-19**

Two dioceses in southern Vietnam have livestreamed public Masses and cancelled catechism classes while government officials take strong measures to prevent growing coronavirus cases.

Phan Thiet Diocese asked all parishes in Phan Thiet city, the coastal capital of Binh Thuan province, to temporarily cancel public Masses, catechism classes, meetings, studies and other activities at churches to ensure people’s health. The diocese said Catholics should attend online daily Masses. People should wear face masks and wash their hands with disinfectants while they attend Masses and go to confession at churches. They are urged to pray fervently for the deadly pandemic to end soon. - http://www.ucanews.com

**Bethlehem under quarantine**

In the face of the Coronavirus pandemic that threatens all humanity, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem call on peoples and communities to respect “the provisions and instructions of the civil authorities of the countries in which we live”.

In a joint communiqué, released on 16 March, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem call upon Almighty God “to look on our situation and be gracious to our suffering world. We are all called to live this time continuing to trust in our heavenly Father who takes care of all His creatures. It is therefore good that we intensify personal prayer, fasting and alms-giving and to walk in the light of God’s love”. The alarm caused by the Coronavirus touches Bethlehem with particular vehemence. The city where Jesus was born has been placed under quarantine since last week, after the first 16 cases of people infected by Covid-19 had been diagnosed in the area. - Fides News

**Philippines responds to Coronavirus crisis**

A Catholic diocese in Metro Manila has offered its churches and schools as temporary ‘field of hospitals’ for Coronavirus patients if the need arises, according to CBCP News. Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan said the diocese is willing to open its facilities in the event that public health facilities become insufficient. "If we need to open our Churches, chapels, and schools and turn them into temporary field hospitals for the sick, we should do so in the name of Christian compassion and charity,” David said.

“Let us make ourselves ready to volunteer and mobilize other volunteers to assist the public sector in attending to the victims,” he said. The bishop made the statement in a circular released on 14 March, as the government placed Metro Manila under lockdown due to the spread of Coronavirus. - Zenit

**Chinese diocese donates masks to Vatican**

A Catholic diocese in China’s Shaanxi province has donated thousands of face masks to communities in the Vatican and Italy to help them fight the coronavirus. "When mainland China experienced the epidemic, the Holy See and the Italian church group helped by sending medical masks. We have now effectively contained the virus, but Italy is now suffering. It is our turn to help them,” said Fr Chen Ruixue of Xi’an. - CNS

**‘Transparent investigation on the Easter attacks needed’**

A serious and transparent investigation on the instigators and perpetrators of the “Easter massacre,” the terrorist attack that in 2019 killed more than 250 people in Sri Lanka: this is what the Catholic Church asks through Cardinal Malcom Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo. - Fides News

**Indigenous Catholics in Bangladesh face eviction**

Five families of ethnic indigenous Catholics are in a frustrating and helpless situation over an attempted eviction by a church’s officials in northern Bangladesh. Officials of St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Musroll village of Rajshahi district have been pressuring the families to leave the land and property they have been living on for years. - http://www.ucanews.com

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**Pope’s visit to Indonesia off, Vatican insider says**

Indonesian Catholics have called on the Vatican to reschedule Pope Francis’ visit to Indonesia after it was canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the Vatican never confirmed the pope would be visiting Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea this September, diplomatic sources had said the visit was planned. - http://www.ucanews.com
2. Right to Religion

By Jessy Kurian, SAP

Forty second Amendment of the Constitution of India, enacted in 1976, the term “Secular” is inserted in the Preamble of the Constitution. The concept of secularism is implicit in the Preamble of the Constitution which declares the resolve of the people to secure to all its citizens “liberty to thought, belief, faith and worship.” In Vasudev vs. Vamanji, (ILR 1881 Bom.80), the Supreme Court held, “There is no mysticism in the secular character of the State”. In St.Xavier’s College vs. State of Gujarat, (AIR 1974 SC 1389 at 1414,) the Supreme Court stated that “Secularism is the basic feature of the Constitution.” The State can have no religion of its own. It should treat all religions equally. The State must extend similar treatment to the Church, the Mosque and the Temple. In a Secular State, the State is only concerned with the relation between man and man. Religion is left to the conscience of the individuals. Every man should be allowed to go to heaven in his own way.

Articles 25 to 28 of the Constitution, guarantee to every citizen the Right to religion.

Article 25(1) of the Constitution guarantees to every person the freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practise and propagate religion.

The term “religion” is not defined in the Constitution and indeed it is a term which is hardly susceptible to any rigid definition. In S.P. Mittal vs. Union of India (AIR 1983 SC 1), Supreme Court said that religion is essentially a matter of personal faith and belief. Every person has right not only to entertain such religious belief and ideas as may be approved by his judgement or conscience but also to exhibit his belief and ideas by such overt acts. The ‘freedom of conscience’ is, absolute inner freedom of the citizen to mould his/her own relation with God in whatever manner he/she likes. When this freedom becomes articulate and expressed in outward form it is ‘to profess and practise religion.’ To ‘profess’ a religion means to declare freely and openly one’s faith and belief. He/she has the right to practise his/her belief by practical expression in any manner he/she likes. To ‘practise’ religion means to perform the prescribed religious duties, rites, and rituals, and to exhibit his religious beliefs and ideas by such acts as prescribed by religious order in which he believes. To ‘propagate’ means to spread and publicize his religious view for the edification of others. But the word ‘propagation’ only indicates persuasion and exposition without any element of coercion. In this regard, in Rev.Stainsielaus Vs. State of M.P (AIR 1977 SC 908), Supreme Court held that Article 25(1) guarantees not the right to convert another person to one’s own religion, but to transmit or spread one’s religion by an exposition of its tenets.

In a significant judgment in Church of God, in India vs.K.K.R.M.C Welfare Association, the Court has held that in the exercise of the right to religious freedom under Article 25 and 26, no person can be allowed to create noise pollution or disturb the peace of others. However Right to freedom of Religion can be restricted as any other fundamental Rights in the interest of public order, morality and health of the public.

Article 26 guarantees freedom to manage religious affairs. It means (1) freedom to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, (2) freedom to manage its own affairs in matters of religion, (3) freedom to own and acquire movable and immovable property, (4) freedom to administer such property in accordance with law.

Right to manage matters of Religion means, every religious denomination or organisation can enjoy complete freedom in the matters of deciding what rites and ceremonies are essential according to the tenets of the religion they hold. (Mohd.Hanif Quareshi v.State of Bishar, [AIR 1958 SC 731]). Every denomination has the Right to administer property owned by them. But this right is regulated by law.

Article 27 guarantees freedom from axes for promotion of any particular religion. No person shall be compelled to pay any tax for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination. This Article emphasizes the secular character of the State. The public money collected by way of tax cannot be spent by the state for the promotion of any particular religion.

Article 28 prohibits Religious instruction in State-aided Institution. No religious instruction shall be imparted in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds. This Article includes four type of institutions. (a) Institutions wholly maintained by the State: Here no religious instruction can be imparted. (b) Institutions recognised by the State (c) institutions that are receiving aid out of the State fund: In these institutions religious instructions can be imparted with the consent of the individuals and if the individual is a minor with the consent of the parent or guardian. (d) Institutions that are administered by the State but are established under any trust or endowment: Here there is no restriction for religious instruction. However no one can be compelled to attend any religious instructions. [D.A.V.Colleg, Jullundhar v.State of Punjab (AIR 1971 SC 1737)].

Sr Jessy Kurian, SAP, Advocate, Supreme Court. Contact: lawyering5@gmail.com
Information regarding
Admission in nursing programs for the year - 2020

The admission of students to all Nursing programs (B.Sc., Post Basic B.Sc. and M.Sc. Nursing) in Government and private Nursing colleges in the state of Chhattisgarh will be done by C.G Vyapam Selection Committee of the state, admission will be based on entrance test to be conducted on the following dates:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>S.no</th>
<th>Name of the Exam</th>
<th>Online starting date</th>
<th>Online finishing date</th>
<th>Date of Exam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>B.Sc. Nursing</td>
<td>17th April 2020</td>
<td>10th May 2020</td>
<td>21st June 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing</td>
<td>1st April 2020</td>
<td>17th May 2020</td>
<td>28th June 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M.Sc. Nursing</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Before the entrance test the candidates have to fill on-line admission registration form. No candidate will be admitted without going through the entrance test therefore check regularly website - www.cgvyapam.choice.gov.in. If you belong to minority community, please tick (√) the minority column while filling the registration form so that you get minority benefits. (Christian any denomination)

<table>
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<th>S.no</th>
<th>Courses offered</th>
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<td>Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing  (2years)</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M.Sc. Nursing (2 years)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is to inform you that Holy Cross College of Nursing in Ambikapur is the only Minority College in the state offering 70% of seats for Minority students in B.Sc. nursing and minority students of any states can avail this chance. You can also get admission in Government colleges if you get higher rank in the entrance test (residents of Chhattisgarh only).

Our college has very good infrastructure for clinical and hostel facilities in the campus, we offer English course prior to admission, for more information contact us on the following mobile nos: 94062 25035, 91317 40195 and 76975 41228.

Dr. Sr. Anna Philomina Tppo
Principal
Holy Cross College of Nursing, Ambikapur
I want but what you want.” So we need to understand that prayer is not forcing or coaxing God to give what we want, but growing in a relationship with a Father who deeply loves and cares for us. At some point we have to let go our plans and trust God. Only He can convert our short-sighted, self-centred requests into something more beautiful for ourselves, for our loved ones and for his kingdom.

Waiting on God

Apostle St. Paul’s struggle with unresolved prayer is even more puzzling and makes us realize that God’s wisdom and timing exceed human calculations. After Paul had explained his visions and revelations to the believers at Corinth (2 Cor 12:1-6), he told them about “the thorn in the flesh” that was given to him. The apparent purpose of this thorn was therapeutic, educative – to keep Paul from conceit and boasting. There have been many suggestions as to what exactly this thorn was. Whether it was his past guilt feeling of persecuting and killing so many believers, or carnal temptations, or physical ailments, we really do not know. What we do know is that he pleaded three times for a miraculous healing from this suffering. The only answer he got was an indirect denial and a direct reminder that his strength came from the Lord - “My grace is sufficient for you.”

When God takes His time in answering some of our prayers, it is not always easy to understand or accept. Yet it is worth putting our confidence in His providence. No one understood well this quality of prayer as much as the priest Zachariah and his wife Elizabeth (Lk 1:5-25). Zachariah had prayed for a child for many years and waited patiently for God to act. After so many years of waiting, God gave him not merely a son, but son John who would grow up to be the prophet and forerunner of the Messiah. Such is the mysterious way God acts. God’s timing is rarely our own, but it is always worth waiting for.

The most striking unanswered prayer, however, happened at the Garden of Gethsemane. Thinking of his passion and death he would soon face, Jesus was “deeply grieved.” As he threw himself to the ground, his sweat falling like drops of blood, he pleaded in prayer, not just once, but three times, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.” Jesus did not get what he asked for. He was not spared from the cross, nor was he saved from death. But God answered his prayers in another way, in a bigger way: God gave him the salvation of the world through his suffering and death. He also sent his angel to comfort him and strengthen him (Lk 22:43).

God would not be God if He gives all that we want and behaves only according to our expectations. God can answer our prayers in three ways: yes, not yet, and I will give you something bigger. Do you have the heart to trust Him? As a loving and caring father or mother, He knows what to give, when and how to give. We need to trust and abandon ourselves to his will. His wisdom and love is beyond any human comparison: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matt 7:11).

This is why Jesus who pleaded that “this cup pass from me,” also immediately prayed “yet not what I want but what you want.” So we need to understand that prayer is not forcing or coaxing God to give what we want, but growing in a relationship with a Father who deeply loves and cares for us. At some point we have to let go our plans and trust God. Only He can convert our short-sighted, self-centred requests into something more beautiful for ourselves, for our loved ones and for his kingdom.

“ Heavenly Father, make me understand that when You say “no” to my prayer, it is not a rejection, but a redirection.”

By John Alexander, SDB
Church curbs programs in virus-hit states

Catholic dioceses in India’s most coronavirus-affected states have imposed curbs on liturgical services after the state governments imposed measures for social distancing to check further spread of Covid-19.

Bombay Archdiocese, based in Maharashtra state’s capital Mumbai, India’s business hub, has suspended Sunday Masses until April 4, the eve of Palm Sunday. Cardinal Oswald Gracias, archbishop of Bombay, in a video message on 19 March said he has decided to cancel all public Masses in the archdiocese from 20 March to 4 April.

One of the four Covid-19 deaths reported in India came under the jurisdiction of Bombay Archdiocese. Maharashtra has reported 48 cases, the highest figure among India’s 29 states. India had reported 173 cases as of March 20.

Bombay Archdiocese’s neighboring Poona Diocese has also canceled all Masses and worship services, including Way of Cross, until the threat of coronavirus recedes, Bishop Thomas Dabre of Poona told UCA News. The diocese comprises 39 parishes with over 80,000 faithful spread across the western state of Maharashtra.

To contain the outbreak, the Maharashtra government has decided to keep government offices functional but reduced attendance to 50 percent. It chose to operate the railway, private buses and public transport system at 50 percent passenger capacity. In the national capital, Delhi Archdiocese has also canceled Masses until 31 March. Archbishop Anil Couto of Delhi tweeted on 18 March that he was suspending Masses following the “instructions of our government” to avoid mass gatherings.

In Poona, the government has imposed prohibitory orders against the assembly of four or more people in an area. Violators can be arrested and charged. - http://www.ucanews.com

Bishop Soundararaju Periyanayagam, SDB of Vellore Passes away

Most Rev. Soundararaju Periyanayagam, SDB, (70) passed away on 21 March 2020 at 12.15am at St. Thomas Hospital, Chetpet, Vellore, Tamilnadu. He was a cardiac patient and was under treatment.

Bishop Soundararaju Periyanayagam was born on 6 June 1949 at Kolappalur, Tiruvannamalai, Tamilnadu.

After his school studies he joined the Congregation of Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB) and made his first profession on 24 May 1970. He was ordained priest on 25 June 1983 at Manchester, England. He was appointed as the sixth Bishop of Vellore diocese, Tamilnadu on 11 July 2006 and ordained Bishop on 24 August 2006.

He holds BA in economics from Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, MA in economics from Loyola College, Chennai, MA in theology from Ushaw College, Durham University, UK and Doctorate in Economics St. Joseph College, Bharadhidassan University, Tirchy.


Robots in Kerala distribute masks and sanitisers.

An unconventional battle has been waged by the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) against the spread of the novel coronavirus by using two robots. Of the pair of computer-programmed machines developed by Asimov Robotics which is a startup incubated at KSUM in Kochi, one distributes masks, sanitiser and napkins in a bid to check Covid-19 while the other screens details about the World Health Organisation’s campaign to contain the disease.

Church looted in Odisha

Unidentified miscreants looted a church in the Kandhamal district of Odisha, eastern India. Moses Digal, a Christian leader in Budamaha village under Raikia police station, told Matters India on 14 March that thieves broke the iron grill and two locks of a place of worship of the Believers Church India and carried away things worth more than 150,000 rupees.
63. Dealing with opinions about us

By Hedwig Lewis, SJ

As social beings we all crave relationships and love. So, from early on in life, what others think and feel about us becomes one of our major preoccupations. And, it affects us. An encouraging word raises our spirits while even a single nasty remark ruins our mood.

We have no control over what people say, do and think about us, just as they do not control the way we respond to them. Moreover, as humans, it is impossible to be fairly judged. Nobody will ever understand us perfectly. We will continually be both underestimated and overestimated, short-changed and given undue credit.

Not everyone’s opinion of us has equal value or should be allotted the same weightage. We may give serious thought to the opinions of our immediate family: a spouse, children, and parents. We must reflect on the feedback we receive from our mentors, superiors, teachers, and of close friends. On principal, the options about us must be placed in context, looked at compassionately, given due consideration or rejected right away if necessary, and never allowed to undermine our own values and convictions. When we disagree with or reject someone’s opinion it does not mean we do not care about that person.

In order to develop your own personality and character, you must never sacrifice who you are, or who you aspire to be, because someone else has a problem with it. Not everyone will see you in your true light, or look beyond your mistakes. There is no objective rating scale that allows another person to judge you. They do not know what you have been through. They do not know your story, your trials, your tribulations, or all your struggles and successes.

Jake Ducey, in his book, *The Purpose Principles*, (2015) makes a very important observation. “Anytime anyone says anything, whether it is positive or negative, it is a direct reflection of their inner world – a reflection and expression of their beliefs, conditioning, and programming.... When you grasp that, if somebody comes at you with anger, with negativity, with fear, with doubt, with worry, you know they are spewing how they feel and when you grasp that, then you can like silently say a prayer for them.”

Observe this real-case scenario. I could stand in front of twenty strangers and speak on any topic. Some of them will hate what I’m wearing, some will love it. Some will think I’m a fool, and others will love what I have to say. Some will forget me as soon as they leave, others will remember me for years. Some will hate me because I remind them of their annoying sister-in-law. Others will feel compassionate toward me because I remind them of their son or daughter. Some will completely understand what I have to say, and others will misinterpret my words. Each of them will get the exact same me. I will do my best and be the best I can be in that moment. But their opinions of me will vary. And that has nothing to do with me and everything to do with them. No matter what I do some people will never like me, and some people will always like me. Either way, it has nothing to do with me.

Are you too sensitive? Do you get triggered when people say things about you that you know are not even true? Sensitive people tend to blow things out of proportion. You need to develop a thick skin!

Obsessing about others’ opinions of us stunts our growth. It makes us judge ourselves more harshly. It makes us uncomfortable in our own bodies. It makes us feel apologetic for being ourselves and to live according to our perception of other people’s standards. It makes us feel inauthentic: Anxious. Judgmental. Not good or smart or likable or pretty enough. It can become a self-fulfilling prophecy because it begins to impact the way we behave. Caring about other’s opinion in a balanced way (not annulling the own self) is a signal of good mental health.

Most people do not realize that they judge others and themselves on a daily basis while being hypersensitive to the criticism and judgement by others. Caring what others think becomes a problem when we hyper-focus on their opinions – and let them override our own. Besides, as a columnist once put it: “At age 20, we worry about what others think of us. At age 40, we don’t care what they think of us. At age 60, we discover they haven’t been thinking of us at all.”

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Hedwig Lewis SJ is the author of over 40 psycho-spiritual and professional books. Contact: hedwiglewis@gmail.com.
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02. **2 - 29 August**: Integral Transformative Program (ITP - Mini)  
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03. **6 - 11 September**: Holotropic Breathwork - International Training

04. **14 - 19 September**: Holotropic Breathwork - International Training

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**“Where there is no guidance the people fall”**  
*Proverbs 11:14*

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What country citizen are you really?
Have you here permanent residency rights?
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   Trains curtailed and restaurants shut
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   Aren’t you advised to stay put at home?

But what if you happen to be stranded
   On foreign soil far from sweet home
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   Nor permitted to reenter your native land?

Even churches closed to Sunday assemblies
   Barred from holy mass in God’s own house
   Unable to travel to work for daily bread
   And denied even the consecrated bread.

   Misery piled on misery in this century:
   Shocking tsunami, floods and deluges
   Dengue, chikungunya, ebola, nipah
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Hasn’t the stark truth still dawned on you,
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The remark was open and crude. It came from a wife about her husband. That too about her man who fathered their two children. She just could not stand his body odour anymore. Hence the apparently insensitive and sharp remark, ‘I hate his smell ... I do not allow him to enter the bedroom until he takes a bath.’

Matters came to a head, when the husband preferred to sleep outside the bedroom on a sofa without a bath instead of adjusting to his wife’s demand. It is not as though they are two uneducated and poor people who could not afford a comfortable bath. It is just that he comes home after work and prefers to just sleep off after a quick meal and some television.

Was there any serious psychological issues behind his refusal to be clean. There did not seem to be. Was a he a lazy man? He wasn’t. On the contrary, he was known as one of the most competent and devoted employees in the company. Was it that he lost interest in physical relations with his wife. It didn’t seem true either.

What turned out to be the real reason was a lack of awareness of the power of body odour and physical attractiveness in building and maintaining a long-term relationship. Youth do recognize the power of being attractive in presenting oneself and smelling good (how else would all these sweet smelling, expensive sprays and deodorants sell) especially as they woo friends and mates. But somewhere along the way, after marriage and children one can lose the awareness of the same.

Some research findings will educate couples better. According to one research, “there appears to be a link between a relationship breakdown and women who report finding their partner’s body odour disgusting ... The perception of one’s partner’s body odour as disgusting is predicted to result in the reduction of intimacy, and may ultimately contribute to the dissolution of the relationship ... Perceptions of a partner’s smell may change from a source of comfort and safety to being ‘repulsive’ as a relationship breaks down.”

The moral of the story: Mind your responses to the smell of the partner. It may mean that you need to work on the relationship.

“Trust your olfactory instincts, as they are often correct.”

- Dr Mahmut

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- Manager
Int. Women’s Day Celebration by Women’s Commission, Archdiocese of Bangalore

A packed hall of 400 ladies from various parishes of Bangalore participated in a programme to celebrate International Women’s Day at PaalannaBhavana on 8 March ’20. The chief guest was Faye D’Souza, a charismatic, outspoken journalist and TV anchor, special guests were Mrs. Elaine Menezes, a senior member of the Women’s Commission and the head of the Organizing Committee.

Fr Jayanathan, the Vicar General addressed the audience and appreciated the role of women in church and society. Fr. Cyril Victor, the Coordinator for the Women’s Commission spoke on the theme for International Women’s Year, #EACHFOREQUAL Mrs. Lorna Lobo, spoke on the Vision, Mission and Objectives of the Women’s Commission in the Archdiocese of Bangalore. Faye D’Souza touched upon many pertinent subjects, Gender inequality at work, home and in society. Mrs. Donna Fernandez, the founder of Vimochana, spoke of how women assert themselves when they see an unjust law being promulgated. Brinda Adige spoke on the need for women to be given a chance to make independent decisions. Priya Francis, the Joint Secretary of Women’s Commission hosted Faye’s talk session and moderated the panel discussion. After the Eucharistic celebration, His Grace commended the organizers of the women’s day event.

- Lorna Lobo

India hangs four men for horrific rape-murder

A Catholic bishop in southern India noted for his simplicity has resigned and is now assisting a village parish in a “shocking” development for local priests and Catholics. Bp Sebastianappan Singaroyan resigned as bishop of Salem Diocese in Tamil Nadu state. He now lives in a parish in the same diocese, helping out its main priest.

“It is a shocking development that our bishop has resigned,” said Swamy Dass, a Catholic leader and teacher in a diocesan school, on 12 March.

Bishop resigns to serve village parish

The “Chitrabani” (sight and sound), a Jesuit-run media centre, organized the 16th Kolkata Short Film Festival (KSFF) on 1-5 March at Nandan, West Bengal Film Centre, Kolkata. The festival showcased some of the best short form pictures from India and abroad. As many as 72 films selected from 130 films were screened during the 16th KSFF.

Former Christ University vice chancellor elected Carmelite chief

Fr Thomas Chathamparampil, former vice-chancellor of Christ University in Bengaluru, was on 13 March elected the prior general of the Carmelite of Mary Immaculate (CMI), a Kerala-based congregation. He succeeds Fr Paul Achandy, the current prior general. Fr Chathamparampil will hold the office for six years.

UCF’s women’s department marks 25 years

The Department of Women’s Studies of the United Theological College (UTC) celebrated 25 years of its existence along with the celebration of the International Day of Women on 8 March. The department has played a big role in the lives of generations. The UTC is a Protestant seminary founded in 1910 situated in Bengaluru.

Bangalore parish observes “Differently Abled Day”

Don Bosco Church at Lingarajapuram has organized a program for the disabled persons of Bengaluru. Don Bosco Church at Lingarajapuram named the program ‘Differently Abled Day’ and chose ‘We care so we share’ as the theme. The program focused on the empowerment of persons with disabilities for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

Film Festival showcases best pictures from India, abroad

The “Chitrabani” (sight and sound), a Jesuit-run media center, organized the 16th Kolkata Short Film Festival (KSFF) on 1-5 March at Nandan, West Bengal Film Centre, Kolkata. The festival showcased some of the best short form pictures from India and abroad. As many as 72 films selected from 130 films were screened during the 16th KSFF.
The feast of Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Jesus was willing to go to his passion and death despite being very afraid, only because he believed it was the will of his Father. This does not mean that God wanted his son Jesus to die on the Cross. It means that if Jesus could save the world ONLY by dying on the Cross the Father would allow it. This was because God loved the world unconditionally (Jn 3:16) and wanted it to be saved.

The courage and faith of Jesus at this time of trial is evident and we can draw lessons from it in the present situations in which we find ourselves.

We can follow Jesus at his time of trial and learn from him and his response, how we can respond at this time of our trial and as our world struggles with the pandemic of COVID-19.

1. A. Jesus’ Fear: There is nothing wrong with being afraid. Often, fear arises because we are faced with what might seem like insurmountable and overwhelming odds. In the case of Jesus, the fear of arrest leading to his crucifixion and death arose because as a Jew he would have believed that death meant total annihilation. According to the Jewish world-view, the human person was a composite whole. There was no separation or dichotomy of body and soul like there was in the Greek world-view. Also at the time of Jesus, there was no clear understanding of what happened to a person after death. There was no theology of the Resurrection. Thus for Jesus, death was an enemy that had to be overcome and not a friend to be welcomed like it may have been for Greeks. This is clear when Paul (a Jew) writing to the Corinthian community even after the resurrection of Jesus can still refer to death as an enemy that had to be destroyed (1 Cor 15:26 - The last enemy to be destroyed is death).

The Synoptic Gospels are deliberate when they narrate the fear of Jesus in Gethsemane before his arrest. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus says to his disciples before he goes to pray “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake” (Mk 14:34; Mt 26:37). The Gospel of Luke shows the fear of Jesus even more vividly when it narrates that “In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground” (Lk 22:44). No community would have written about its Lord in such a manner if there was no historical core to these incidents. The point being made by the Evangelists is that Jesus was truly afraid. However, it is important to note that DESPITE his fear, Jesus does not cave it. He does not let fear overcome him. He does – what is clearer in retrospect – the best thing he could do in the given situation: he prays (Mk 14:32; Mt 26:36).

B. Our Fear: The fear that many of us may feel in the present situation of COVID-19 is similar to that which Jesus felt. We too are faced with what seem at this moment seem like insuperable and undefeatable odds. We are struggling to contain and find a cure for infection due to the Corona virus, but it does not seem to be working as we would like. We wonder what exactly the cause for this pandemic is. Is it because we have opted for advancement even at the cost of humanity? Is it because money and riches have become the new ‘gods’ that we worship and consequently we cannot see anyone and anything else? Is it because we have neglected our health and the health of others in our striving to accumulate more? Is it because we have been so caught up with gathering for ourselves and ourselves alone, that we have forgotten that others also live in our world?

Like Jesus, despite our fear and anxiety, we too will do an introspection. Like Jesus we too will not cave in. We will not give up or give in, we will not despair or lose hope.

Easter in the time of COVID-19

By Errol Fernandes, SJ

Even in our fear, we must do what seems best under the circumstances namely, we must turn to God.

2. A. Jesus’ dependence on God: Even before he can begin praying, Jesus threw himself on the ground (Mk 14:35). At the time of Jesus, people prayed in one of two ways: standing (Lk 18:11,13) or kneeling (Mk 1:40; Acts 9:40). Prostration on the part of Jesus was unusual possibly because it was an unusual situation. This act of prostration communicated three things:

a. It acknowledged the Almighty, all powerful nature of God.
b. It acknowledged the nothingness of Jesus and his total dependence on God and,
c. It acknowledged that Jesus was available to do God's will.

Through the act of prostration Jesus was saying to God that because he BELIEVED that God was Almighty and all powerful he was willing to cede the initiative to God. He communicated through this action, his disposition: his frame of mind and heart.

8. Our dependence on God: Like Jesus we need to acknowledge that God is Almighty and all-powerful. Even if we do not physically prostrate before God, we must prostrate before God in our hearts and minds. We must acknowledge that even though there have been many and great advancements in science and technology, when it comes to finding a cure for a tiny virus we are incapable and powerless. It is only the higher power who can come to our aid. Even as we do this we also need to acknowledge that, “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy” (Hamlet 1.5). In other words, in the present situation in which we find ourselves, we acknowledge our nothingness before God and God’s power and might. Difficult as it may be to do this, we must be able to say emphatically that we are willing - as a world community - to do God’s will. God’s will is stated very succinctly by St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians where he says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Cor 5:19). It is therefore a reconciliation or a cease-fire of all our differences that we will work toward with one heart and one mind. Now is the time for unity even in our diversity.

3. A. Jesus’ prayer: The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane can be divided into three parts as follows:

a. Addressing God.

b. An acknowledgement of the Almighty nature of God in words (in keeping with the action of throwing himself on the ground).

c. A petition (asking for what he wants).

d. Ceding the initiative to God in words (in keeping with his action of being available to do God’s will).

3a. Jesus addressed God in his native Aramaic (Abba) and Greek (Pater) (Mk 14:36). Calling God “Father” (Jesus lived in a patriarchal society and possibly had a good equation with his foster father Joseph) indicates intimacy on the one hand and trust on the other. At the time of Jesus children were considered non-entities (Mk 10:13; Mt 19:12; Lk 18:15 – All the synoptic gospels narrate how the disciples were stern with those who were bringing children to Jesus). One of the traits of a child at the time of Jesus (besides spontaneity, innocence and curiosity) was DEPENDENCE. The child was wholly dependent on its parents for everything. Thus when Jesus calls God “Father” he is acknowledging that he is God’s child. In other words, he is acknowledging that he is totally and wholly dependent on God. He also acknowledges that he trusts that God (because God is father) will do what is best for him.

3b. Through the words “for you all things are possible” (Mk 14:36), Jesus acknowledges that nothing is outside the scope of God’s power. This fits in with his disposition (throwing himself on the ground) before he began his prayer. Jesus believes that God can not only write straight on crooked lines but can also write crooked on straight lines. God is all powerful and can do all things. Nothing is impossible for God (Lk 1:37)

3c. In his petition, Jesus asks unashamedly for what he wants namely: “remove this cup from me (Mk 14:36). The cup here refers to the cross and the ordeal that Jesus knows he must soon undergo. He asks for his heart’s desire. He asks for what he thinks is best for him. Though he had challenged his disciples to be unafraid to carry their crosses and to carry them courageously (Mk 8:34-38), now because of his fear (Mk 14:33-34) he wants to relent.

3d. By the addition of the words, “yet, not what I want, but what you want.” (Mk 14:36), Jesus shows that he has not relented. In fact he shows that DESPITE his fear and despite what he thinks is best for him, he is willing to drink the cup (no matter how bitter it might be) BECAUSE it is the Father’s will. We notice here a synchrony in the whole prayer of Jesus. Beginning with his disposition before prayer (throwing himself on the ground), his preparation for prayer (that the hour might pass him by and that the cup be removed from him) and the act of praying (addressing God intimately, acknowledging the all-powerful nature of God, placing his petition before God and YET willing to cede the initiative to God), Jesus showed that there was a unity in his mind, heart and in his words.

B. Our prayer: We pray like Jesus by addressing God in the most endearing of terms. We use that symbol/name/term which for us brings to mind that which we hold most dear. We use that which we know will be by our side in time of need. Since God is bigger than any and all names or titles, it does not matter what name or title we use. What is important is to believe that God cares for us and our world and wants all of us to be saved and live in peace and harmony.

We must pray with confidence, faith and trust in God who WILL listen to our prayer. If we firmly believe that God is all-powerful and wants what is best for us, we can ask with confidence. There is no doubt that the content of our prayer will be that the Corona virus be contained and that those who have been infected be cured as soon
as possible. We can ask for this gift and like Jesus we ask unashamedly. However, even as we do so, we must remember to add at the end of our prayer like Jesus did, “yet, not what I {we} want, but what you want.” This addition must be made not only in imitation of the words of Jesus but also in imitation of his confidence and trust in God. Like Jesus, we also must know that God’s will for us is infinitely better than what we will want for ourselves. Thus, though it might seem better to us that the virus be contained and all those infected be cured, we must know that if this is not God’s will then what God wants is better than what we want.

4. **A. Jesus’ Perseverance in prayer and action:** At the time of Jesus it was usual for a pious person to pray three times and Jesus does just that (Mk 1:11). This is an indication that he does not merely mouth or recite prayers, but that he brings into his prayer his whole person. It is noteworthy that at time in his life when he needed to hear God’s voice, there was apparently no response from God at all. The same God who addressed him as “Beloved Son” at his baptism (Mk 1:11) and who revealed him as “Beloved Son” at the transfiguration (Mk 9:7) was now silent. Jesus, however, interprets the silence of God to mean that he must do what God wills which here is the **opposite** of what he wanted. He gets up from his prayer fortified and strengthened. This fortification is not the result of his having received an answer to his prayer, but because he **HAS PRAYED.** It is because he has prayed that he draws strength to face what life might now throw at him.

This fortification is seen in the scene that follows immediately after the prayer of Jesus, which is his Arrest (Mk 14:44-52). Unlike in the other Gospels, Jesus does not respond in the Gospel of Mark to Judas who kisses (and through the kiss betrays) him (Mk 14:45-46 see however Mt 26:49-50; Lk 22:47-48; Jn 18:3-4) or even to the fight that breaks out after his arrest (Mk 14:47 see however Mt 26:51-54; Lk 22:49-51; Jn 18:10-11). The final words that Jesus says to his captors are “…But let the scriptures be fulfilled.” (Mk 14:47) which here mean “Let God’s will be done”. This response of Jesus is in keeping with his prayer in which he had ceded the initiative to God. Here he shows it even at his darkest hour. No matter how difficult it may be, Jesus responds that God’s will must be done.

**B. Our perseverance in prayer and action:** It is fairly easy to begin well, but not as easy to persevere. Though Jesus did not receive an answer from God or a response to his prayer, he did not let that fact stop him from persevering in prayer. We must follow suit. It is likely that to find a cure may take time. It is likely that many may still be infected. It is also likely that many may succumb to the ailment. It is likely that things may get worse before they begin to get better. However, this must not stop us from continuing to petition God and asking for God’s help in our hour of need. Like Jesus we may not hear God’s voice or receive a response, but like Jesus we must persevere.

5. **A. Jesus’ Arrest, Mocking, Scourging and Crucifixion:** The Marcan Jesus is portrayed as one whom everyone has abandoned. His **disciples desert him and flee** (Mk 14:50). Mark is the only evangelist who has the scene of a young man who came out into the garden to see what the commotion was all about. However, his fear was so great that he left even the loin cloth that covered his waist and ran away naked (Mk 14:51-52). Through this scene Mark brings into sharp relief the total abandonment of Jesus by those who were considered closest to him and those whom he had trained to take over after him. This rejection continues when Mark tells us that after the mock trial before the Sanhedrin (where nothing was proved – Mk 14:59) the whole Sanhedrin condemned him as deserving death (Mk 14:63). The trial before the Romans was also and equally a sham trial. Here too, though nothing could be proved of the charges made against Jesus, in order to ‘satisfy the crowd’ Pilate had Jesus scourged and handed over to be crucified (Mk 15:15). After he was crucified, Mark narrates three instances when Jesus was ridiculed even on the cross. The first was when those who passed by challenged him to come down from the cross (Mk 15:30), the second was when the chief priests challenged him with the same dare (Mk 15:31-32) and the third was when even those crucified with him derided him (Mk 15:32).

Not only does Jesus have no human support; at this hour he apparently receives no support even from God whom he addressed and knew as father. This is evident in the cry that he makes from the cross, “Eloi, Eloi, lemasabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34).

**B. Our Crosses:** At this moment there are many (especially those who have been infected, the families of these and the families of those who have succumbed to the ailment) who will feel as abandoned as Jesus felt. There seems to be no support from any side. Those who are ailing will possibly feel like they are merely being tolerated. Others will have been shunned (even possibly by family members) because of the fear of being infected. Still others will be condemned and told that they have contracted the
ailment because they have sinned. The psychological trauma will possibly be harder to bear than the physical. They too like Jesus will not only feel abandoned by humans (including family members) but also by God.

The fallout of this pandemic will not only be on the ones who are infected but many others as well. Daily wage earners will not be paid, the poor who live in slums and ghettos will be more vulnerable than many others, and the aged who live alone will be at a loss of how they must respond. The cry of all of these will be like the cry of Jesus “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34).

6. A. Jesus’ Vindication: Immediately at the death of Jesus there are two striking incidents which point to the vindication of Jesus. The first is that “the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” (Mk 15:38). On the surface level it means that God has abandoned the Temple (Because the curtain of the Temple separated the holy place from the “holy of holies”) or that now there is no curtain separating the people from God and that everyone can go to God on any day of the year (the High Priest went behind the Temple on only one day in the year which was the Day of Atonement). In all probability however, it means that now true worship is not in the Temple but on the Cross.

That this is so is confirmed by the second incident in which the Centurion (representative of Gentiles and so unbelievers) acclaims Jesus as God’s Son through the words, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” (Mk 15:39)

B. Our Vindication: In the case of those of us who are ailing or those whom God calls (because God knows what is best) we will not be able to see the signs (Jesus did not see these signs because he had given up his spirit), but the fact is that like Jesus we will be vindicated. In order for this to happen we must act like Jesus acted. This means that on our part we must do at every moment all that we have to do. We must not leave undone that which we have to do. We must leave no stone unturned. We must take all the precautions that we have been advised to take and not test God. This is a time when strict discipline is required not only for one’s own health’s sake but also the sake of the health of others. It is possible that the foolishness or foolhardiness of some can cause great harm to many. This is why we need to be prudent and judicious. This does not mean however, that we must give in to fear. This can never be the response of one who has prayed. Fearlessness is called for, but fearlessness does not mean recklessness. This must be kept in mind.

7. Jesus’ Absolute Vindication: More than the vindication that was evident on the natural level (the curtain of the Temple being torn the Centurion’s confession) it was the Resurrection of Jesus through which he and God were completely vindicated. In Mark this is portrayed through the Empty Tomb (Mk 16:1-8). When the women who saw where Jesus was buried (Mk 15:47) came to the tomb on Sunday morning, they found that the stone which had been rolled to cover the door of the tomb (Mk 15:46) had been rolled back (Mk 16:4) and Jesus was not in the tomb.

Instead there was a young man at the tomb who confirmed that Jesus who had been laid in the tomb after his death had risen. They were to be the messengers of this good news. Because of the resurrection of Jesus we can say with confidence that death is not the end. Because of the resurrection of Jesus we can say with confidence that death is not the end. There is the hope of a new and better life. We can also say that even when we carry a heavy cross and see no light at the end of the tunnel or the rainbow on the horizon, we need only the eyes of faith to see that God walks with us every step of the way. We need to believe like Jesus did, that our cross is indeed God’s will, which even if we cannot comprehend at a particular moment, is definitely true.

To do the will of God, like Jesus, is infinitely better than to want to do our will. The resurrection of Jesus challenges us to see that after we have done all that is required of us, we need only to believe that God will complete what remains incomplete. It challenges us to be those witnesses whom Jesus sends out like he sent his disciples to proclaim that God is in control. We are called to show through word and deed that God will never let anything happen to any of us that God is not in control of.

Thus the risen Jesus charges his disciples to spread the hope of his resurrection to the whole world and to invite all who have lost hope to continue to believe. Through their words and actions, the disciples are to reveal to the whole world that hope must spur them on. They are to proclaim to the world that no one must give up or give in even when there is no concrete or tangible proof. Like Jesus they must keep on ’keeping on.’

In the light of our celebration of Easter even as we grapple with the pandemic of COVID-19, we will keep the hope that the God of the Resurrection visible in Jesus will continue to be our hope.

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Those Hands Are So Strong

By M.A. Joe Antony, SJ

A global pandemic like Covid-19 brings to the fore all kinds of people. They belong to different categories. Some advise us on what we should do and what we should avoid. Some increase our fear and anxiety. Some make us laugh. Some confuse us. Some teach us. They tell us things we need to keep in mind. Some are optimists, who want to cheer us up. They point out the good news in the midst of bad, sad news. They give us hope.

There are archeologists who dig into old and not-so-old books and bring up something, declaring, “Look here, everyone! He has predicted this so many years ago. She has said clearly that such a thing will happen!” There were claims that said Nostradamus, the 16th century French astrologer and seer, has predicted this. The trouble with Nostradamus is his language is so abstract that you can never understand that something is going to happen, before it happens. After the event happens if you read what he said it will look as if he had predicted it.

What came as a huge surprise to many is what an American psychic called Sylvia Browne, who died in 2013, has said in her book called End of Days – Predictions and Prophecies about the End of the World, published in 2008. She mentions the year and the nature of the disease quite accurately. “In around 2020 a severe pneumonia-like illness will spread throughout the globe, attacking the lungs and the bronchial tubes and resisting all known treatments.” But the second part of her prophecy is yet to happen. She says, “Almost more baffling than the illness itself will be the fact that it will suddenly vanish as quickly as it has arrived, attack again 10 years later, and then disappear completely.” The damper here is Browne’s many critics who point out that most of her predictions never came true.

The biggest group is that of the self-appointed doctors. They come up with remedies which they assert will cure this. They are mostly good people, who sincerely want to help. The only drawback is there is no research to back up what they say. A few excellent, experienced doctors have used videos to convey important things in a simple, clear language. I recall two – one by Dr George Chandy, former Director of CMC Hospital, Vellore and Dr Devi Shetty, Cardiologist and Head of Narayana Hrudalaya, Bengaluru.

Another group consists of scaremongers. Like producers of horror movies they just want to frighten you. They tell you about millions who have been just allowed to die, crematoriums that function day and night etc.

You’d surely have seen jokes and memes created by people, who may want to laugh their fears away. They provide you some comic relief before someone else comes to scare you with some more statistics. A cartoon shows all the three of them - the bride and the groom and the priest - with face masks. After the couple pronounce their marriage vows, instead of telling the groom, “You may now kiss the bride” the priest says, “You may now wink at the bride.” I came across a witty sentence which you may use to summarize Covid-19 as well as globalization. ‘To sum up: someone ate something in China and the entire world is washing their hands.’

Those who confuse us are called ‘conspiracy theorists.’ They are dangerous, because they could stymie efforts to find out what is true. These are the guys who conjure up a sinister conspiracy behind every event. They allege the virus is a plot hatched by the ‘illuminati’ or the governments that want to reduce their population.

Beset by fear and worry, we may not see certain things and there are wise people who point them out. Optimists make us see the brighter side. Quite a few have drawn our attention to this global crisis arriving during the Lenten season – both forcing us to stop wandering, come home, ponder what a virus that has brought the entire world to its knees has to teach us and pray.

Thank God for those who give us hope by reminding us of things we know but may forget. A friend sent the song, ‘One pair of hands’ written by Carroll Roberson and sung by Elvis Presley: “One pair of hands formed the mountains. One pair of hands formed the sea... One pair of hands healed the sick. One pair of hands raised the dead. Those hands are so strong, so when life goes wrong, put your faith in the one pair of hands.”

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Mothers have to bear the brunt of life, they may be at the receiving end of the stick - with an uncaring husband, in-laws or children. They are unexpected mute witnesses to the pitfalls of life all borne with forbearance and love. As we travel with Christ uphill to Calvary we see Veronica's compassion and her boldness in pushing her way through the crowd to wipe His Holy Face covered with blood.

We also come across Jesus telling the women of Jerusalem: “Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me, but weep for yourself and for your children...”

This sets us thinking – Did Christ want to tell Women down the ages that they also have a role to play on this vast stage of life. Was Jesus our Saviour implying that women should come out from behind closed doors and join with him in the story of the Salvation? Did He want women to realize that they have an equal role to play in this drama called life. That, they have to make a mark on this huge canvas and not leave it blank and untouched.

“Woman, behold, your Son” was one of the last utterances of Jesus on the Cross, as He gives the whole of mankind to His Mother. He is also telling other mothers that suffering is not the end – there is always joy to follow. If, His own Mother, the Mother of the Messiah, the Mother of God, had to undergo so much of pain and suffering in spite of being forewarned, how much more will an ordinary woman have to go through? Yet with, Mary the Mother of God, as her support and model, every mother will be able to rise above this pain and suffering.

Women in households also keeps the traditions of Easter alive, both spiritually and domestically. Easter involves a lot of traditional meals, all with associated meanings. In remembrance of the Feast of the Passover on Maundy Thursday, we have different customs in different parts of the world. Unleavened bread is cooked in several households, some baked and eaten with mutton and bitter herbs or just plain hot cross buns, in others steamed and accompanied by sweetened coconut milk. Though Good Friday begins by fasting, some households have a sumptuous lunch with something bitter included, to symbolize the vinegar that was given to Jesus. This is because they believe that through the death of Christ we are redeemed, and thereby we celebrate our salvation. It is usually the women who get involved in this passing down of tradition from generation to generation.

Easter Sunday starts off with the Vigil service. The resurrection of Jesus is celebrated with Easter eggs and more often than not there is a huge spread at the traditional Easter lunch. The festival of Easter perhaps, more than any other feast emphasizes the role of woman especially mothers. Apart from the cooking and the church services which are to be attended.

Consequently Easter can also be termed a woman’s story. The strength of women through all the pitfalls of life, with the hope of resurrection and joy in front of her, like Mary, the Mother of Jesus.  

The New Leader, April 1-15, 2020
Laughtonic

“Say Ah.”

“I just came to pay my bill, not for an examination, Doctor.”

“Ahhhhh!”

MRS & MR SYLVESTER

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