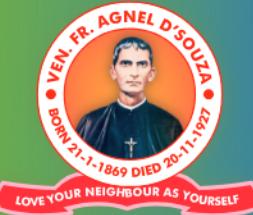


FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

JANUARY 2024



*“New hopes
come with
New beginnings”*

New Year ! New Beginnings !! New Hope !!!

ASHRAM NEWS

JANUARY 2024

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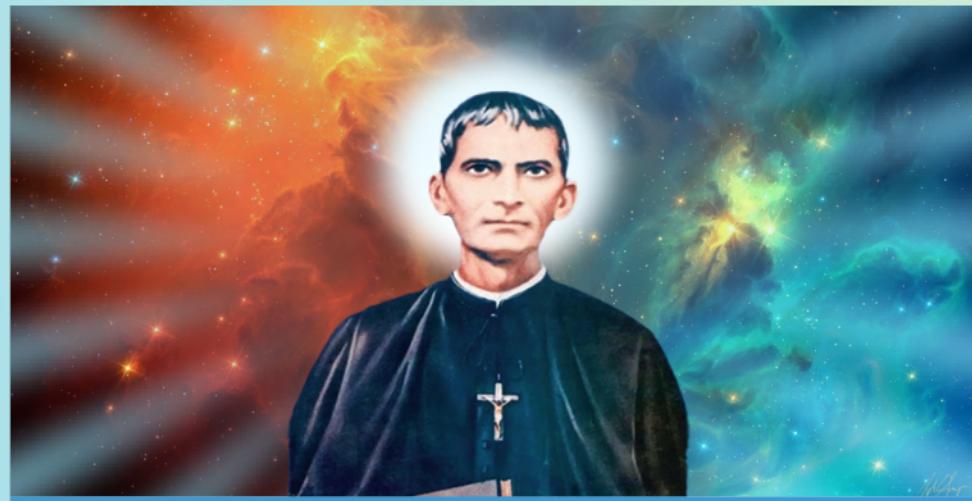
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VEN. FR. AGNELO'S 155th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY Sunday, 21st January 2024

PROGRAMME

SPECIAL NOVENA SERVICES | 12th to 20th January 2024

Every day

Morning : 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m.: Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.

Evening : 6.00 p.m. : Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.

N.B.

On Sunday, 14th January, all Masses and Novena Services will be held as on normal Sundays.

On Sunday, 14th January, Novena Services will be in Gujarati at 3.00 p.m.

21st January (Sunday) : 155th Birth Anniversary of Venerable Fr. Agnelo

Morning : Mass followed by Novena Prayers at 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m. (English)

Evening : A Solemn Concelebrated Mass will be held at 6.00 p.m. (English) in the
Ashram Compound, followed by Novena Prayers.



Most Rev. Deepak Tauro, Auxiliary Bishop of Delhi, will be the Main Celebrant on 21st January, 2024.

Thousands of devotees will participate in this Annual Novena and celebration. Over one lakh of favours, some of them truly miraculous such as cure of cancer, T.B., Paralysis etc. have been received through the powerful intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo.

Favours obtained and petitions to be placed at the Shrine of Ven. Fr. Agnelo may be sent to the following address:

Rev. Fr. Superior

FR. AGNEL ASHRAM

Bandstand, Bandra (West),
Mumbai - 400 050, India.

Bus No. 211 : Special Bus Service to Ply from Bandra Railway Station to Fr. Agnel Ashram Gate.

THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

- Fr. M.K. George, SJ

A personal story

Let me begin with a personal story. Back when I had just joined the Jesuit novitiate and was being initiated into prayer, I had a problem. The moment I sat for prayer, I dozed off. Several days of trial and I finally got desperate. I went to my Novice Master and told him about my sleepy prayer sessions. I was almost sure, I would be asked to leave the novitiate. How can a Jesuit novice grow in prayer if he is sleeping all the time?

I had a surprise. Instead of scolding me or even advising, my novice master taught me a new form of prayer: the Jesus Prayer. All I had to do was to say aloud or silently repeatedly, 'Lord Jesus, son of

God, have mercy on me a poor sinner.' That indeed changed my prayer life. Even after many decades, using the Jesus prayer continues to be a big solace for me. Later, having read the book, '*The Way of a Pilgrim*', my convictions and practice became deeper. This indeed was my first ever deep connect with the Holy Name of Jesus.

The Church celebrates the Most Holy Name

The Church officially celebrates the feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus on 3rd January, every year. History records that the feast was formally introduced in 1530. However, the veneration of Jesus' name began right from the early Church. St. Bernardine of Sienna (1380-144) and his student St. John of Capistrano (1386-1456), both promoted the devotion. **The monogram IHS, which is an abbreviation of the name Jesus in Greek, became popular.** Various Popes have promoted the devotion.

The name of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of Jesuits is associated with the feast in a singularly popular way. "In the sixteenth century, Saint Ignatius of Loyola had such a strong devotion to the Most Holy Name of Jesus that he adopted it as

his seal as the General of his newly founded order of the Jesuits; that monogram remains the Jesuits' official seal today" (Cf. My Catholic Life).

Scriptural Bases of the Devotion

In Luke 1, 31, the Archangel Gabriel spoke to Mary: 'Behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.' The name Jesus takes on a new meaning and value because God himself through his messenger gave it.

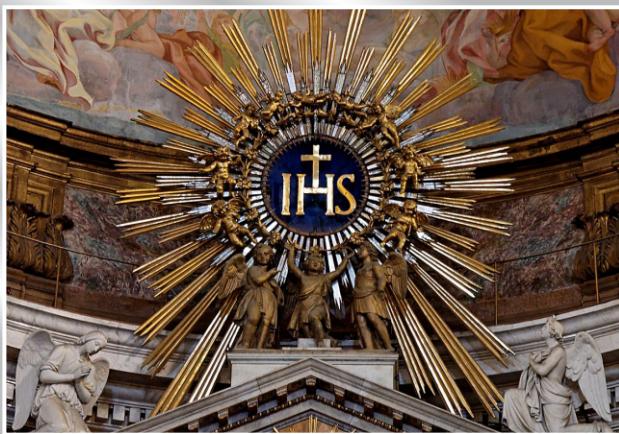
The most powerful expression of the authority of the name of Jesus came from St. Peter, when he healed a crippled man. He said, 'I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus rise and walk' (Acts 3, 6).

Saint Paul added to the depth of this faith. In Philippians 2, 9-10, he says, "... at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'. Paul witnessed to the power of the name of Jesus so much that some itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to imitate Paul by commanding demons, 'I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches' (Acts 19,13).

Rewards in invoking the Holy Name

An old spiritual manual cited **four special rewards** of invoking the Holy Name. First, the name of Jesus, help in body needs. In Mark 16, 17-19, Jesus himself assured, "...in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover! Invoking the name of Jesus, Peter cured the crippled man (Acts 3, 10) and Aeneas (Acts 9,32ff).

Second, the name of Jesus helps in spiritual trials. 'Then shall everyone be saved who calls on the



name of the Lord (Acts 2, 21). As St. Stephen, the first martyr was being stoned, he called upon the name of the Lord and prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' (Acts 7, 59).

Third, the name of Jesus protects the person against Satan and his temptations (Mt. 8, 28-34).

Fourth, we receive every grace and blessing through the Holy Name of Jesus. In John 16, 23-24 Jesus said, 'I give you an assurance, whatever you ask the Father in my name, and He will give it to you' (Cf. Catholic Straight Answers).

Testimonies from the World today

The world today is not Christian-friendly. In fact, records show that on an average, every day, two Christians are attacked in India, and one of every seven Christians in the world is a persecuted Christian. 'Globally, more than 360 million Christians suffer at least "high" levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. In 1993, Christians faced high to extreme levels of persecution in 40 countries. This number has nearly doubled to 76 countries in 2023.'(Open Doors World Watch list 2023).

While one can debate what the real reasons of these persecutions are, some of which may be church and believer made, the relevant question is, how these large number of persecuted Christians survive. Obvious answer: By calling on Jesus, by repeating the Most Holy Name of Jesus.

Kandhamal Story

No human being, especially an Indian can forget 2008. That year, the Christians of Kandhamal District in Odisha state experienced the most severe anti-Christian violence in the country's history. The attacks claimed 'over 100 lives, forced 56,000 people to flee their homes, and saw the destruction of 5,600 homes and 300 churches.' Some of the experiences of brutality like the one of Abhimanyu Nayak, 44, who was hanged and burnt alive by a mob of Hindu extremists, still gives the shivers. Such horror stories and how they survived and continue to believe is a clear manifestation of the power of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. Ask any of those survivors of violence, they will say the strength came from calling on Jesus.

Further Testimonies

All around us are real stories of how powerful the

name of Jesus is. I liked particularly this narrative from one Ms. Judith. She narrated how she went through a panic attack after a party and how she survived the panic by calling on the name of Jesus. In her own words, 'At some point, I realised that this was not narcotics but something much deeper. I found myself shouting: "JESUS!" and then I screamed for about five seconds ... A few weeks ago, during a nightmare, the Lord had told me to call on the name of Jesus and this experience reminded me of his infinite power. I hope this helps someone else too. It might sound scary but in 2 Timothy 1:7, it says: "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" and there is nothing more powerful than the name of Jesus.'(<https://www.womanalive.co.uk/the-power-of-the-name-of-jesus-and-other-testimonies/14541.article>)

Deepening the experience of the power of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

Down the history of Christianity, it is no surprise that the name of Jesus has worked miracles and continues to work miracles. Every believer has a story of her or his own. How do then we deepen this experience of the power of the name of Jesus. Obviously, by praying the name of JESUS more often. Secondly, by sharing your experiences of the power of the name of Jesus with others. Some people can be shy thinking, 'Is it right for me to claim such experiences? Will I lose the experience if I talk about it?' etc. However, the fact is that faith sharing, strengthens one's faith and that of the listeners.

The Most Holy Name of Jesus is powerful, if only we dare to call on His Name and witness to our gifts.



Fr. M.K. George, formerly Principal of Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum, is currently General Counsellor to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. This is his first exclusive Guest Editorial for Fr. Agnel Ashram News. He can be contacted at gmutholil@gmail.com

AMAZING GRACE!

- Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

The New Year 2024 is the run-up to the 2025 Jubilee Year! So it is a fitting “*kairos*” moment for all Catholic Christians (currently numbering 1.4 billion) to join in spirit with their “sisters and brothers in Christ” (Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal Christians, currently numbering another 1.3 billion) in remembering and relishing the truth that **salvation in Christ** is both a **gift** and a **challenge**!

In November 1999, on the eve of the Great Jubilee 2000, the Cardinal in-charge of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity (representing Pope St. John Paul II), and the Secretary General of the World Federation of Lutheran Churches, signed a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, agreeing that:

“By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work, and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts, while equipping and calling us to good works.”

This summary is a wonderful synthesis of the Apostle Paul's teachings, and of the apostles Peter's and James' teachings, and indeed, of the whole New Testament's teaching, that **“By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any person should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”** (Eph.2:8-10).

From this we can conclude that Christianity is not so much about what **we must do for God** but first of all (and most importantly) about **what God has done for us!** Mary's *Magnificat* is therefore the best and most characteristic prayer that every Christian should constantly be singing: **“My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He who is mighty has done great things for me, holy be his name!”** (Lk.1:47.49). The Joint

Declaration quoted above rightly stresses the essence of Christianity, that is, the primacy of grace.

An e-mail I once received, “Heaven's entrance exam,” humorously illustrates this important truth about our relationship with God: A man died and went to meet his Maker. St Peter met him at the Pearly Gates, saying, “Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it to heaven. Tell me why your name should be in the Book of Life, and I'll give you points.” The man replied quite cockily, “I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, not even in my heart.” St Peter replied, “Wonderful! *Three* points!” Somewhat deflated, the man continued, “I attended church every single Sunday and regularly supported its ministry with my tithe and service.” Peter replied, “Good, *Two* points.” Quite uncomfortable now, the man spoke up: “I started a soup kitchen for the poor and fed many people every Friday.” Peter replied, “*Two more* points.” Now desperate, the man burst out, “At this rate, the only way I'll get into heaven is *by the grace of God!*” And Peter replied, “Bingo, *100 points*, come on in!”

That all is due to **“the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (2 Cor.13:13) is a very important truth to remember, to relish, to proclaim, and to be newly convinced about throughout this New Year. Jesus himself said, **“After having done all things well, say 'we are but unworthy servants'!”** (Lk.17:10b). So the popular hymn, “Amazing Grace,” sung with devotion by

millions of believers, expresses well what Paul called **“the mystery hidden for all ages and now made known to the saints”** (about salvation and our love-relationship with God). Such hymns are what I like to call, **“popular contemplation at its best!”**

But the Joint Declaration goes on to insist that the justified person is *responsible* for all graces received as a gift from the Triune God! That is also why the parable about the Last Judgement in Mathew 25 (“*I was hungry, etc., and you did not...*”) is very severe about those who take life too *lightly*,



and live very individualistic, selfish and egocentric lives. The Letter of James too strongly underlines the truth that “*faith without works is dead*” (2:14-26). Hence the grace of **contemplation** (about God’s amazing grace) must be authenticated by the graces of **compassion** and **courage**, which then become the wellsprings of numerous initiatives of loving service.

Perhaps, another internet story can help us here: There was a long line at the Pearly Gates, and someone was taking a long time inside St Peter’s cabin. When she eventually emerged to walk into heaven, the others in the queue gasped to see that it was *Mother Teresa!* And they overheard Peter’s parting words to her, “Well done! You have lived a heroic life of discipleship, *but you could have done much more!*” (Today’s psychologists confirm that most people are actually living just 10% of their potential!)

The Holy Spirit, to make us more “perfect in Christ” in this Third Millennium, wants to fill us with new power to evangelize, both by word and by deed in our daily behaviour. Our daily, ongoing experience and celebration of “*the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Spirit*” (2 Cor 13:13) must lead us to show the world that the Good News is not just theory or an impossible dream but is eminently practical and ‘livable’. St. Pope Paul VI wisely prayed:

“*May the world of our time which is searching, now in anguish, now in hope, receive the Gospel not from evangelizers who are dejected or dispirited, or from those who are impatient or anxious. Let them hear it from ministers of the Gospel whose lives are aglow with fervour, from those who have received the joy of Christ into their lives...*” (EN, 80).

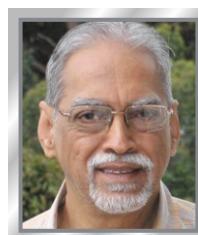
St. John Paul II too reminded us, “*The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission. The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the family, of the parish community, which reveal a new way of living.*

Every one in the Church can and must bear this kind of witness! ...The Gospel witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity towards the poor, the weak, and those who suffer...” (RM, 42).

There it is then, loud and clear. If we are looking for an authentic personal Christian spirituality, it must include, **on a daily basis**, these two foci or emphases: **joy**, manifested visibly, in the salvation we have received freely through Jesus; **and charity** or concern for the poor and needy, expressed visibly in our actions. “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2:10).

There are too many “good” Christians who are only focused on *receiving* the blessings of salvation (in their sacramental or personal prayer life, and in charismatic healings and blessings – the “prosperity gospel”) but are not at all *practically* concerned about sharing their blessings with their “neighbour” (at least, no evidence is manifest of such sharing in their daily lives).

As a result, **Christianity gets emptied of its power**, for the Spirit cannot keep filling us if we don’t share that infilling with others – we will only become stagnant pools instead of bubbling fountains, and the world will see nothing to be impressed about. This New Year let us, in keeping with Rom.12:2, not be conformed to this world but be transformed by *our new way of thinking*, by a mindset fashioned by the Full Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose **amazing grace** is available to all who are thirsty.



Dr. Fiorello Mascarenhas S.J
DMin recently celebrated his Diamond Jubilee in the Society of Jesus, and writes and teaches biblical spirituality. His contact: friomas@gmail.com

READER'S FEEDBACK

We have increased the number of pages of *Fr. Agnel Ashram News*, from 20 to 28, to bring you more interesting articles. We would love to hear from you. Share your views at agnelashramnews@gmail.com

This magazine is available online.

Visit us at www.agnelashram.org

VEN. FR. AGNELO: A BEACON OF HOPE

- Fr. Jovito Neville Vaz, SFX

In commemorating the 155th birth anniversary of our saintly member, Ven. Fr. Agnelo, we delve into the life of a man whose journey from childhood to sainthood has left an indelible mark on those fortunate enough to have crossed his path. As we reflect on his life, we find inspiration in the profound simplicity of his words and actions - a simplicity that carried deep value and purpose. In a world coping with despair, Fr. Agnelo emerges as a ray of hope, challenging us to reflect on the purpose for which we are created and how we, too, can become beacons of hope in troubled times.

Fr. Agnelo's Inspirational Childhood

From his earliest years, Fr. Agnelo stood out as an inspiration to all who encountered him. His childhood was not marked by lavish gestures but by a quiet determination to live a life of purpose, for which God had created him. In every interaction, he sowed seeds of kindness, compassion and unwavering faith. Fr. Agnelo's method of comforting the disturbed was as unassuming as it was powerful. Unlike grand gestures that seek attention, he would silently and discreetly approach those in need. His quiet footsteps and gentle presence conveyed a sense of understanding, creating a space where individuals felt safe to share their burdens. In a world often clamoring for attention, Fr. Agnelo's silent approach becomes a poignant reminder of the impact of understated compassion in the present context. Today, through Fr. Agnelo's life, we are encouraged to consider how our own lives can similarly reflect the purpose for which we are created.

The Power of Few Words

A unique aspect of Fr. Agnelo's communication style was his ability to convey profound meaning with very few words. Fr. Agnelo's communication style was characterized by a remarkable ability to distil profound insights into concise expressions. Whether through a thoughtful phrase or a few carefully chosen words, he conveyed rich layers of meaning, prompting deep reflection and resonating with those who listened. Overall, his very life reflected the thoughts that he spoke. In a world often dominated by noise, his silence spoke volumes. This challenges us to reflect on the quality of our own communication - do our words carry depth and value? Fr. Agnelo's example encourages us to choose our words wisely,

ensuring that they contribute positively to the lives of others.

Becoming a Ray of Hope

Fr. Agnelo emerged as a ray of hope for the hopeless, offering solace and support to those in need. In the contemporary world, marked by wars and destruction, there is an increasing need for individuals who can embody hope. How can we, inspired by Fr. Agnelo's legacy, become sources of hope for those facing despair? It begins with cultivating empathy, actively listening to others, and extending a helping hand to those in need. Small acts of kindness can have a profound impact on someone's life, and in doing so, we carry forward the legacy of hope that Fr. Agnelo exemplified.

Navigating the Challenges of Today

In the face of today's global challenges, where despair seems to be pervasive,

because of wars and hatred, the teachings of Fr. Agnelo become especially relevant. His life challenges us to confront the darkness with the light of purpose and hope. We can contribute by fostering a sense of community, promoting understanding and tolerance, and actively participating in efforts that alleviate the suffering of others. In doing so, we become living embodiments of hope, echoing the spirit of Fr. Agnelo in a world yearning for positivity.

As we celebrate the 155th birth anniversary of Fr. Agnelo, let us not merely remember a historical figure but actively strive to incorporate the lessons from his life into our own. May we draw inspiration from his purposeful living, choose our words with care, and become beacons of hope for those in despair. In a world yearning for meaning, Fr. Agnelo's legacy challenges us to live with meaning, adding value to the lives of others and, in turn, finding fulfilment in the purpose for which we are created by God.



Fr. Jovito Neville Vaz, SFX, is working in the Delhi community of Agnel region at Greater Noida. He is the Asst. Manager of Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida and the administrator of Balbhavan.

THE BLESSING OF AARON: A TIMELESS GIFT FOR YOUR FAMILY

- Fr. Trevor D'Souza, OFM (Franciscan)

The priceless verses of Numbers 6:24-26 capture the profound and enduring blessing bestowed by Aaron, the high priest of Israel on the People of God. This sacred benediction is known as the "Aaronic Blessing" or the "Priestly Blessing." It holds the power to foster love, unity, and prosperity within a family. Let us explore the significance of this blessing, delve into its spiritual depth, and discuss practical ways it can be used within a family setting.

The Aaronic Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26)

It is an invocation found in the book of Numbers, and contains three parts. It reads as follows: **"The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."**

This poetic blessing conveys a profound sense of divine favour, protection, grace, and peace. It is an everlasting expression of God's benevolence and a source of comfort for those who seek His guidance and presence.

Moses was commanded by God to instruct Aaron and his sons to impart this blessing upon the sons and daughters of Israel and to bless them in His name.

The Spiritual Depth of the Blessing

The first lines of the blessing, "The Lord bless you and keep you," reflect God's favour and protection. In a family context, this part of the blessing can be a source of assurance and confidence, as it invokes God's watchful eye over each family member. It indicates a desire for well-being, prosperity, and divine safeguarding.

The second line, "The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you," speaks about God's grace and mercy. Applying this aspect of the blessing within a family involves fostering an atmosphere of forgiveness, understanding, and kindness. It encourages family members to extend grace to one another, recognizing that we are all in need of divine mercy.

The final part of the blessing, "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace," signifies the desire for God's presence and the ultimate gift of peace. Within a family it involves cultivating an environment of harmony, where conflicts are resolved through love and understanding. It encourages family members to seek God's face in times of trouble and find solace in His peace.

Practical Application in a Family Setting

Include the Aaronic Blessing into daily family prayer, in the morning and/or evening. Gather as a family, hold hands, and recite the blessing together. This practice not only sets a positive tone for the day or night but also reinforces a sense of unity and shared spirituality.



During significant family events, such as birthdays, anniversaries, outings, and such events, offer the Aaronic Blessing as a prayer from the heart. Make it your family tradition and commitment to seek God's blessings and guidance during significant moments.

Write a personalized version of the Aaronic Blessing for each family member. Frame these blessings and place them in visible areas within your home. The physical presence of these blessings serves as a constant reminder of the family's commitment to love, grace, and peace. When each member of the family knows that he/she is loved and blessed, it brings an attitudinal change in one's life.

When facing challenges or conflicts within the family, such as unforgiveness, sickness and even death, gather together and recite the Aaronic Blessing. Use it as a moment of reflection and a prayer for divine intervention. This

practice can bring a sense of calm and change of perspective, fostering goodness through the lens of God's grace and peace.

The head of the household can invoke the Aaronic Blessing, found in Numbers 6:24-26, to bless every member and possession within the family. By repeating the same words and formula, the family head can faithfully carry on the tradition of Aaron, bestowing God's blessings upon their household.

Encourage your parish priest to use his rightful authority to impart the Aaronic Blessing in carrying out his priestly duty of blessing your family. This ritual ensures the continuation of a sacred legacy, nurturing a profound sense of divine favour and unity.

In conclusion, the Church deliberately includes the Aaronic Blessing in the Eucharistic Readings on the first day of each year for a meaningful purpose. The Blessing is a sacred gift that surpasses the boundaries of time and culture. Its eloquence and depth make it a powerful means for nurturing family relationships. By integrating this blessing into daily life, every family can cultivate an environment of divine favour, grace, and peace. In doing so, we embark on a journey of shared spirituality, fostering love and unity that withstand the tests of time.



Fr. Trevor D'Souza, OFM, is a Franciscan Priest, Retreat Preacher and a Writer. He can be contacted at jc4me2000@gmail.com

RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR 2024

- Jubel D'Cruz

We all look forward to begin the New Year with great fun and enjoyment and wish that the year ahead brings us good luck.

Two or three days before the New Year could begin, we start our preparations. We clean our houses, get things in order, and buy crackers to burst them at the dot of midnight.

On New Year's Eve, we enjoy the maximum. From morning till late night, we are busy packing up gifts and planning pranks that could be played with our family members, neighbours and friends when the clock strikes 12.00.

Although different cultures have different calendars, the English calendar's New Year is what is celebrated all around the world. Different cultures also have their own New Year. For example, the Chinese celebrate their New Year in February, while many Hindus in India celebrate it towards the end of March or the beginning of April. The dates may vary across different cultures, but the theme of New Year remains the same, which is renewal.

Nothing is impossible: We can achieve something different from others. If you are a sportsman, you can take defeat and victory in the same spirit. Happiness happens to those who seek it. Winning is a habit as far as sports is concerned. Yes, you go for a winning mode, then only you can finish as a hard fought loser.

Don't think of today: Think about tomorrow and the day after.

Stitch in time saves nine: Try to plug the loopholes and feel success in life. Saving is a very good habit and cultivates the same for rainy days.

Small drops make an ocean true: Nationalised banks are there to keep your small savings and that sum grows and doubles to help you at the time of need.

Don't be selfish: Live and let others also live. Metro city Mumbai is helping so many people to start their career and become rich in record time. Thus, so many people are coming to the business capital to make their living more comfortable.

Learn to leave bad habits: The year 2024 is the best opportune moment to leave bad habits.



Cigarette smoking is injurious to health, as per the statutory warning message. However, many people taste smoking and spoil their health in the process. Chewing gutka and other tobacco products can also be done away with grit and determination in the coming New Year.

Teaching is a good hobby: Inculcate the knowledge available with you to others. Teachers

play a very crucial role in imparting knowledge to students. We forget our teachers once we get a good living. Cricketers are helped by coaches. But once they become superstars, they forget the role of the coaches in bringing their career to limelight. Music teachers bring melody in the voice

of the wards. But people forget their music teachers, once they become good singers.

Respect elders: Express gratitude to your parents, teachers, nurses and the doctors. At one time or the other, we may also lie down with an ailment and we need the help of others.

Try fast methods: Be a sport and try to finish your work as early as possible and accept more work and help others and the institution. If your institution grows, then you will also grow simultaneously.

Work is worship: Play a key role in your sphere of work. If you are in retail banking, introduce new products in the New Year. You must think that you are the backbone and shoulder additional responsibilities. You need not go to a temple, church or mosque, if you treat the work as your worship.

Patient listening: Listen to what others say. Improvise their views and make a successful suggestion. Give credit to the team members also instead of poking your nose alone.

Have concern for others: Instead of thinking about yourself, always give some attention towards the poor and downtrodden people. After all, you live to help others and that attitude is a great virtue.

Control your anger: People may irritate you with unwanted comments. But try to maintain composure and do a world of good to your institution and give attention to family values and

traditions. After all, anger will come and go but the name and fame you gained will also go with your anger.

Try to be a fitness freak: The retirement age for Government employees was increased from 58 to 60 years and a recent notification says it that it may be again be increased to 62. Hence, try to fit with healthy eating habits.

Develop good character: Our life span is short. During our time, try to develop good character and try to adopt them in day-to-day life as well. After all, your character reflects your mind. Apply patience and perseverance to achieve your objectives and don't take hasty decisions and never look for short cuts to success.

Compliment people: Give respect and take respect. Appreciate a good song. Compliment a good knock by a batsman and encourage him. Stop talking discouraging words.

Aim of your life: In the best interest of your family, you wish to have loving parents and loving

children. After all, you will become old one day and your sons/daughters will have to look after you in the same way you looked after your parents. The love and affection is passed on from forefathers to our father, father to son, etc.

If you are able to get what is required for your life with the above good thinking, then you can lead a peaceful living for which, you maintain robust health, work with honesty and sincerity, have faith in God and that will give you peace of mind and try to instil confidence in your children because the future of India is in the hands of the present day children.



Jubel D'Cruz is a freelance writer and the author of several books for children. He lives in Mumbai.



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Dylan & Lancy Rebello, Kadri, Mangalore

I have made a contribution of Rs. 40,000 vide NEFT, towards the charitable activities of the Institution - for the maintenance and education of the boys in your Balbhavan orphanage and towards Fr. Agnel Ashram.

Mary Antony Muckaden, Bandra (West), Mumbai

I have made an online donation of Rs. 5,000 through NEFT bank transfer, towards Fr. Agnel Ashram and the upkeep and well-being of the Balbhavan orphanage children. We wish you all a Happy New Year.

Jacob Puthur, Thrissur, Kerala

I have transferred Rs. 5,000 to your bank account. I am a regular monthly contributor for the past several years. Please continue the good work in the New Year, as always.

Nilesh Parmar, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

As a token of thanksgiving and for the needs of the

boys in your Ashram, I have transferred Rs. 80,000 via debit card payment to your bank. Wish you all and the Balbhavan boys a peaceful New Year.

Sosamma Saji, Al Ain, U.A.E.

Please accept my Christmas Gift to the Balbhavan orphanage children i.e. a cheque of Rs. 40,000 which I have been donating on a regular basis for several years. Please pray for the good health and well-being of each of my family members and their intentions. We are ever grateful to Fr. Agnelo for the numerous favours received through his intercession.

K. J. Jose, M/s. Darragh Smail Logistics Pvt. Ltd., Kadavanthra, Kerala

We would like to inform you that from now on, the monthly contributions will be made from the name of our new establishment, as mentioned above. A payment of Rs.1000 has been transferred via NEFT, towards our contribution for the month of December 2023.

One more feather in Fr. CRCE's cap

Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering, Bandra, Mumbai, has received a record four AICTE teaching and learning (ATAL) sponsored Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) in a technical category with Rs. 3.5 lakh funding for each. Under the directorship of Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza, the organising committee led by the Principal Dr. S. S. Rathod, Dr. D. V. Bhoir, Dr. Ashok Kanthe, Prof. Swapnali Makdey, Prof. Monali Shetty, Prof. Ashwini Pansare and Prof. Sangeeta Parshionokar, successfully organised four ATAL FDPs of one-week duration each, from 20th November to 16th December, 2023. 150 participants from 50 institutes had registered for the FDPs and were enriched in the field. They provided excellent feedback for both the contents (including renowned and eminent resource faculties) and the efforts of the organising team.

The four FDPs went through rigorous scrutiny by AICTE and got approved.

Sr. No.	Title	Coordinators	Dates
1.	Institutional Restructuring and Strengthening Autonomy through NEP	Dr. S. S. Rathod Prof. Ashwini P.	20th - 25th November, 2023
2.	Applied Machine Learning for VLSI Design	Dr. D. V. Bhoir Prof. Swapnali M.	4th - 9th December, 2023
3.	Blockchain Technology: Architecture and Its Application	Dr. Ashok Kanthe Prof. Monali S.	4th - 9th December, 2023
4.	Semiconductor Digital System Design and Verification	Dr. S. S. Rathod Prof. Sangeeta P.	11th - 16th December, 2023

Eminent speakers for the theory session from various reputed institutes and industrial houses were invited. The article discussion on two papers, spread over four days, generated a lot of interest among the participants, due to its interactive nature. The hands-on presentation during the FDP was very effective, due to its application aspect.

The **Industrial Visit** was one of the key events in these FDPs and participants were fortunate enough to get permission to visit prime institutions for the same. For the first FDP, a visit was organised to the **City Institute of Disaster Management (CIDM)**, Parel, which is the disaster management facility of BMC Mumbai. For the second FDP, the participants visited **IITB Fab Lab** which has helped the participants in getting clarity in different steps during fabrication of the chip. A visit to the **Cyber Crime Cell, Crime Branch, Police Commissioner's Office**, Navi Mumbai, was organised for Blockchain. **TBI centre of SPIT**, Andheri, was the place where participants got the flavour of recording, laser cutting, 3D printing facilities and other aspects of the product design.

All in all, it was a great experience for organising back-to-back FDPs and hosting faculty members from various institutes. The progress of Fr. CRCE really took a wonderful turn with **NAAC and NBA accreditation for the Computer branch, besides Autonomy status for ten years**. The Institute will certainly achieve many more milestones and will prove its uniqueness and stand tall in the field of technical education.



Indian Educational System: historical perspective by Dr. S.S. Mantha (right), former AICTE Chairman.



A visit to the City Institute of Disaster Management (CIDM), BMC, Parel, Mumbai.

School children of Fr. Agnel School, New Delhi, present a choir performance on Christmas Day



The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi with the students and teachers of Fr. Agnel School, New Delhi. Also seen in the picture is Rev. Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho (extreme left), the Director of Agnel Schools and the Editor of Fr. Agnel Ashram News.

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi interacted with the Christian community on the occasion of Christmas at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, New Delhi, his official residence. He also addressed the programme marking Christmas celebrations. School children of Fr. Agnel School, New Delhi, presented a choir performance, in front of the Prime Minister, leaders of the Christian community and other special invitees.

Wishing everyone, especially people of the Christian community a Merry Christmas, the Prime Minister thanked everyone present for joining him on the very special and sacred occasion. He expressed delight in accepting the Indian Minority Foundation's proposal to celebrate Christmas together and thanked them for the initiative.

Throwing light on his close and very warm relations with the Christian community for a long

time, the Prime Minister recalled holding frequent meetings with the Christian community and their leaders as Gujarat Chief Minister. Calling his interaction with His Holiness Pope Francis in October 2021, as a very memorable moment, the Prime Minister highlighted the discussions on issues such as social harmony, global brotherhood, climate change and inclusive development, to make earth a better place.

Noting that Christmas is not just the day to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ but also to remember his life, message and values, the Prime Minister underlined the values of compassion and service that Jesus lived by. He said that Lord Jesus worked to create an inclusive society where justice prevails for all and it is these values that are illuminating the way like a guiding light in the development journey of India.

Team Thestral of FCRIT, Vashi wins AIR-1 in SAEINDIA - Autonomous Drone Design Challenge 2023

"Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for." Team Thestral of FCRIT, Vashi exhibited exceptional prowess, securing the coveted AIR-1 in SAEINDIA - Autonomous Drone Design Challenge 2023 held in Chennai on 25th and 26th August, 2023. The team which consisted of 13 students from Mechanical Engineering and Electrical Engineering, had **Saurabh Kaduskar** and **Dhiraj Chaudhari**, as Captain and Vice-Captain, respectively.

The team demonstrated remarkable talent and dedication throughout the competition with great support and guidance from the **Managing Director, Rev. Fr. Saturnino Almeida**;

Principal, Dr. S. M. Khot; H.O.D. Dr. Nilaj Deshmukh and Faculty Advisors, Prof. Afzal Ansari, Dr. Sushil Thale and Dr. Aqleem Siddiqui. Their impressive performance showcased the result of rigorous training and endless passion for the technology.

It is truly a matter of extreme joy, as FCRIT has bagged this title where 85 teams from different colleges of India participated. It is from 45 qualified Drones that team Thestral has added another golden feather in FCRIT's cap. The honour has surely motivated the next generation of FCRIT to continue the journey for excellence in education and reach the pinnacle of success.



The winning team Thestral of FCRIT, Vashi.

COME, COME, COME TO THE MANGER

- Norma Kamath

Jesus was born in a Manger in Bethlehem of Judea. The word 'manger' in Latin, 'mandere' means 'to chew.' A manger is a trough from which farm animals eat their food.

Jesus was born to be eaten in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. He said, 'I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever, and the bread that I shall give is my flesh' (Jn. 6:51). Bethlehem means 'House of Bread.'

BABY JESUS IN THE MANGER - A SIGN

The shepherds were out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night, when an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and they were filled with fear. The angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold I bring you good news of a great joy that will come to all the people, for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger (Lk. 2:8-14).



The shepherds were given a sign, 'a babe in a manger wrapped in swaddling cloths.' The word 'sign' is mentioned often in the Bible. A Christian sign is something that gives direction, by pointing beyond itself, to a spiritual reality, that we are not able to fully attain, perceive or understand.

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem, and recognised the sign, 'the babe lying in a manger' with Mary, his mother and Joseph. They were filled with awe as they gazed on their Saviour and Lord, and returned, glorifying and praising God, for all they had heard and seen. Like the shepherds, we too are filled with awe and wonder, as we adore and worship Jesus in the Eucharist or take part in the Eucharistic Adoration.

THE SIGN IN THE SKY - A STAR

The gospel of Mt. 2:1-2 speaks of the Magi or Wise Men, who saw a star, and followed it in search of the new born king, whom they desired to worship. The sign led them to Jerusalem, where they enquired about the king of the Jews. Herod, the king greatly troubled, asked the priests and scribes, where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem of Judea, from you shall come a ruler, who will govern my people Israel," wrote the prophets. Herod sent them to Bethlehem. Following the sign, they came to the house, where the child Jesus lay, with Mary, his mother and Joseph, and they fell down and worshipped him.

They opened their treasures and offered him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Each of these gifts is a sign. Gold, signifies his Kingship on earth, Frankincense, perfume, as to a king, and myrrh, an embalming and anointing oil, a symbol of death, as to one who is a mortal.

JESUS' MANGER - A SIGN IN MY LIFE

We ask the Holy Spirit to give us a sign to enable us to take the right decision. It could be a word from the Bible, a thought, a feeling, or a vision.

In December 2021, the time of the Covid, I could not get a caregiver for my husband, who was nearing ninety years. Due to ill health, I was forced to admit him in a home for assisted living, an hour's drive from my home. In July, when I was attending an online healing retreat by Fr. Edattu on U.K. Divine, I was touched by the word from Isaiah 46:3-4, "Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb, even to your old age I am

He, I have made and I will bear, I will carry and will save." I would recite this word often.

I had put a petition for a good male caregiver on **Divine U.K. 24/7 Prayer Tower**, and miraculously, my request was granted. He still takes care of my husband.

The next morning, my son got Covid, and two days later, I slipped and broke my thigh bone. As I lay helpless, my maid rushed and brought my mobile and phonebook. I managed to contact family members, and my doctor, who called for an ambulance. I soon landed in hospital.

The Lord took care of all our needs through family and friends. My daughter, settled abroad, came down. Within a month, my husband was brought home with his caregiver. We celebrated his 90th birthday at home with family. My priest son on mission abroad, was present to offer a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving for the Lord's Saving Help, His Faithfulness, and Care. As I recuperated, I felt an urge to write, and to build up God's Kingdom. Through grace, I accepted His Call.

VISIT TO JESUS' MANGER - A SIGN OF GRACE AND SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

From 8th December 2023, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, until 2nd February 2024, the feast of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, Catholics will be able to receive a Plenary Indulgence, by praying before a Nativity Scene, a Manger, set up by the Franciscans, in their churches, throughout the world.

As part of the celebration of the 800th Anniversary of the approval of the rule of St. Francis of Assisi in 1223, and the Creation of the Nativity Scene in Greccio, the Pope has granted the Conference of the Franciscan Family, their request for the approval of the Plenary Indulgence, to promote Spiritual Renewal and increase the Life of Grace of the Faithful, under the usual conditions.



Norma Kamath lives in Bangalore. She experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1983 and was called to serve in the intercessory, counselling and healing ministry.

WHICH WAY TO JESUS?

- Fr. Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar

On a cold harmattan morning, three palm fruit farmers were warming themselves by the fireside. Soon two of them were engaged in a heated debate comparing their religions to decide which one was the true religion. Okoro, the oldest among them, sat quietly listening to the debate. Suddenly the two turned to him and asked, "Decide for us, Okoro. Which religion is the right one?"

Okoro rubbed his white beard and said thoughtfully, "Well, you know there are three ways to get from here to the oil mill. You can go right over the hill. That is shorter but it is a steep climb. You can go around the hill on the right side. That is not too far, but the road is rough and full of potholes. Or you can go around the hill on the left side. That is the longest way, but it is also the easiest." He paused and then added, "But you know, when you get there, the mill-man does not ask you how you came. All he asks is, 'Man, how good is your fruit?'

In the stories of Jesus' birth, two special groups of people came to visit the new born babe: the Shepherds and the Magi. The Church has no special feast to commemorate the visit of the Shepherds but we have a special feast of Epiphany to celebrate the visit of the Magi. Why is that? It is because the visit of the Magi is an eye-opener.

The Shepherds learnt of the birth of Jesus through a direct revelation from angels appearing in the midnight sky. This is direct and supernatural revelation. Many of us have no problem with that. The Magi, on the other hand, learnt of the birth of Jesus by observing a star. The star did not say anything to them. They had to interpret this natural sign of the star to know what it meant and where it led. If we remember that the Magi, or the three wise men, were probably nature worshippers, people who divined God's will by reading the movements of the stars and other heavenly bodies, then we can see how the visit of the Magi challenges some of our popular beliefs.

Like the palm fruit farmers, religious people of all persuasions tend to think that their religious tradition is the only way to God. This is what some of us hear when we hear such words of Jesus as: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). We hastily conclude that the way of God equals the way of our religious tradition. Yet the word of God cautions us against such a narrow interpretation. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). That is why we are fascinated with the story of the visit of the Magi. It is a unique story that opens our

eyes to the fact that God is not limited to any one religious tradition.

Notice how people of different religious traditions came to know that the Son of God was born. The shepherds who were regarded as unclean and could not take part in Temple worship without undergoing purification, came to know through a direct vision of angels. The Magi knew through a

reading of the stars and King Herod's scribes, came to know through searching the Scriptures. Visions, Stars, Scriptures are different ways of arriving at the same truth. Of course this does not mean that any religious tradition is just as good as the other. Notice how Matthew indicates that when the guiding star got to Jerusalem, its light failed and the Magi had to consult the Scriptures to direct them to Bethlehem. Over and above the natural light of the star, the Magi still needed the supernatural

light of scripture to finally get to Jesus.

Yet the crucial question in the story remains: Who actually got to find Jesus? Herod and his scribes who had the Scriptures failed to find Jesus but the Magi who followed the natural light of the stars were able to find him. Why? Because the Jewish authorities, even though they possessed the shining truth of revealed Scriptures, did not follow it. They did not walk in the light of the Scriptures. The Magi, on the other hand, who enjoyed only a star light, followed its guidance. It is not the possession of the truth that matters, but it is how prepared we are to walk in the light of the truth that we possess. It is better to have the dim light of the stars and follow it than to have the bright light of the Holy Scriptures and neglect it.

As Christians, we believe that our religion possesses the fullness of truth. But what does that benefit us if we do not walk in the truth? Nature worshippers or non-believers who are sincerely committed following the dim light of natural reason may arrive at Jesus before Christians, who have the exalted truths revealed by God but who do not walk of faith. This is the challenging truth we celebrate today in the story of the three wise men, who seek and find the Lord.



Fr. Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar is from the Diocese of Guntur. He has authored two books on Important Feast Days in the Liturgical year and contributed Articles to various National and Local magazines. He is also available for talks and retreats: allamgnt2020@gmail.com

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

- Leon Bent

On 1st January, the Church celebrates the feast day of Mary, Mother of God - the greatest saint, and our greatest example of discipleship.

1st January, officially became a Catholic feast day, marking Jesus's circumcision in the 1500s, and it remained as such until 1961, when it was changed to the "Octave Day of Christmas." In 1969, the feast day was changed again, getting its current name: "Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God." In the General Roman Calendar, the 1st January feast, which from 1568 to 1960 was called "The Circumcision of the Lord and the Octave of the Nativity," is now the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and the Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord.

Why Honour and Revere Mary to such an extent?

How did the Virgin Mary, about whom very little is said in the Gospels, become one of the most powerful and complex religious figures in the world? To arrive at the answers to this far-reaching question, one of our foremost medieval historians, Miri Rubin, investigates the ideas, practices, and images that have developed around the figure of Mary from the earliest decades of Christianity, to around the year 1600. Drawing on an extraordinarily wide range of sources - including music, poetry, theology, art, scripture, and miracle tales - Rubin reveals how Mary became so embedded in our culture that, it is impossible to conceive of Western history without her.

In her rise to global prominence, Mary was continually remade and reimagined by wave after wave of devotees. Rubin shows how early Christians endowed Mary with a fine ancestry; why in early medieval Europe, her roles as mother, bride, and companion came to the fore; and how the focus later shifted to her humanity and unparalleled purity. She also explores how indigenous people in Central America, Africa, and



Asia remade Mary and so fit her into their own cultures.

Nevertheless, when Catholics celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, we are not only honouring Mary, who was chosen among all women throughout history to bear God incarnate, but we are also honouring our Lord, who is fully God and fully human.

The Evolution of the Feast

On New Year's Day, Catholics celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, with a feast. This celebration is the octave of Christmas. An



octave is an eight day extension of the feast. In the modern Roman Calendar, only Christmas and Easter have an octave. This

holiday is a celebration of Mary's Motherhood of Jesus. It is a reminder of the role she played in the salvation of humankind. The title "Mother of God" is a western derivation from the Greek Theotokos, which means "God-bearer." Mary being chosen by God, the Father, to bring Jesus Christ into this world, and her willingness to do so, is great cause for celebration. Without her role, Jesus would not have been able to die for the sins of humans, thus giving them a second chance at redemption.

The honouring of Mary as the Mother of God can be traced back to the Council of Ephesus in 431. By the 7th century, 1st January was observed as a celebration of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the 13th century, the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ had come to replace the feast honouring Mary. However, in 1751, Pope Benedict XIV allowed Portugal's churches to devote a feast to Mary on the first Sunday in May. This was because of a push in Portugal for an

official feast day celebrating Mary's divine maternity. Eventually, the feast was expanded to include other countries.

In 1914, the feast started to be observed on October 11. In 1931, Pope Pius XI extended the feast to the entire church. In 1974, Pope Paul VI removed the feast of the Circumcision of Christ from the liturgical calendar. He replaced it with the feast of the "Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God," bringing Mary's feast day back to the first day of the calendar year.

The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God is a feast day of the Blessed Virgin Mary, under the aspect of her motherhood of Jesus Christ, whom she had circumcised on the eighth day after His birth according to Levitical Law. Christians see Him as the Lord and Son of God.

It is celebrated by the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church on 1st January, the Octave (8th) day of Christmas. This solemnity is a Holy Day of Obligation in areas that have not abrogated it. Christians of Byzantine, West Syriac, and East Syriac Rites celebrate Mary as the Mother of God on 26th December (also known as the Synaxis of the Theotokos), while the Coptic Church (an Oriental Orthodox church) does so on 16th January. The Eastern Orthodox Church, Traditional Catholics, Anglican Communion and the Lutheran Church, observe the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ on 1st January.

The feast is a celebration of Mary being the mother of Jesus. The English title "Mother of God" is a literal translation of the Latin title Mater Dei, which in turn is a rendering of the Greek title Θεοτόκος (Theotokos), meaning "Bearer of God" dogmatically adopted by the First Council of Ephesus (431) as an assertion of the divinity of Christ.

History

The Second Vatican Council stated: "Clearly from earliest times, the Blessed Virgin is honoured under the title of Mother of God" and at an early stage, the Church in Rome celebrated on 1st January, a feast that it called the anniversary (Natale) of the Mother of God. When this was overshadowed by the feasts of the Annunciation and the Assumption, adopted from Constantinople at the start of the 7th century,

1st January began to be celebrated simply as the octave day of Christmas, the "eighth day" on which, according to Luke 2:21, the child was circumcised and given the name, Jesus.

In the 13th or 14th century, 1st January began to be celebrated in Rome, as already in Spain and France, as the feast of the Circumcision of the Lord and the Octave of the Nativity, while still oriented towards Mary and Christmas, with many prayers, antiphons and responsories glorifying the maternity of Mary. St. Pope John XXIII's General Roman Calendar of 1960 removed the mention of the Circumcision of Jesus and called 1st January, simply the Octave of the Nativity.

Mysterii Paschalis

The Paschal Mystery and its celebration constitute the essence of Christian worship in its daily, weekly and yearly unfolding. The Second Vatican Council

clearly teaches this. The revision of the liturgical year and the norms which follow logically from this restoration have no other purpose than to permit the faithful to communicate in a more intense

way, through faith, hope and love, in "the whole mystery of Christ which she unfolds within the cycle of a year."

The 1969 revision of the liturgical year and the calendar in the Roman Rite states: "1st January, the Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord, is the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, and also the commemoration of the conferral of the Most Holy Name of Jesus." It removed the 11th October feast, even for Portugal, stating: "The Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on 1st January in the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God." The 11th October feast is celebrated by Traditionalist Catholic individuals and groups who mostly observe the General Roman Calendar of 1960.



In his Apostolic Letter Marialis Cultus (Marialis Cultus is the title of a Mariological apostolic exhortation by St. Pope Paul VI issued on 2nd February, 1974), Pope Paul VI explained: "This celebration, placed on 1st January ... is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the 'holy Mother...through whom we were found worthy to receive the Author of life! It is likewise a fitting occasion for renewing adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels (cf. Lk. 2:14), and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace."

Pope Francis' Prayer on the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God

As we celebrate Mary this 1st January, we can pray with Pope Francis, who ended his recent exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), with the following prayer: "Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the Word of Life

in the depths of your humble Faith: As you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own "Yes" to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. Filled with Christ's presence, you brought joy to John the Baptist, making him exult in the womb of his mother.

Brimming over with joy, you sang of the great things done by God. Standing at the foot of the cross with unyielding Faith, you received the joyful comfort of the Resurrection and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit, so that the evangelizing Church might be born. Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the Resurrection that we may bring to all the Gospel of life, which triumphs over death. Give us a holy courage to seek new paths, that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman.

Virgin of listening and contemplation, Mother of



love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast, pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are, that she may never be closed in on herself or lose her passion for establishing God's Kingdom. Star of the New Evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous Faith, Justice and love of the poor that, the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world. Mother of the living Gospel, wellspring of happiness for God's little ones, pray for us.

This final flourish! There is a beautiful little story about a long, tedious train journey, made one Christmas day by some elderly residents of a nursing home who were on their way to a vacation spot. At one station, a young mother with a small child entered the train. The child smiled at all the grim faces around him and began moving from one lap to another talking, shouting with joy and chatting with everyone.

Instantly, the grim and silent atmosphere in the train was changed to one of joy and happiness. Today, we remember with joy and

gratitude, how Mary and her Divine Son Jesus transformed a hopeless, joyless and sinful world into a place of joy and happiness.

Now, this gold nugget: The Blessed Virgin Mary, Μήτηρ Θεοῦ (Mētēr Theou, "Mother of God"), is poetically called Πλατυτέρα τῶν οὐρανῶν (Platytéra tōn Ouranōn, "More spacious than the heavens") because she bore in her womb the Creator of the Universe.



Leon Bent repeatedly contributes Researched Articles to Newsletters, Theological Journals, and manifold Online Portals, in India and worldwide – sometimes with a reach of 40 million!

UNDERSTANDING WHAT LUCK TRULY IS

- Ibonio D'Souza

It is a very wrong idea to believe in good or bad "luck." We should get rid of such ideas and never allow such wrong thinking to influence us. Scriptures teach us that good effects or good results come from good causes, and that bad results come from bad causes.

A person who does not think clearly and whose actions are not good cannot reasonably say that the bad effects that come into his life are just "bad luck." Bad thinking and bad living produce bad conditions of life. On the other hand, good thinking and good action produce good conditions of life. It is superstitious to believe in "luck."

We make our own happiness or unhappiness and there is no such thing as luck. Everything that happens in our life happens as a result of a cause we have ourselves have created. It is only the weak-hearted who fall victim of influences of certain stars and planets on people, and their imaginations aggravate the situation. Do not surrender yourself giving up your efforts thinking you have no good luck nor should you allow to be a victim of worries. That can only hinder progress of your career.

If a man's failure is due to his bad deeds, he can overcome that by doing more good. To do good, it is not necessary for him to spend anything; instead he can do a lot of meritorious deeds through his sympathy, tolerance, patience, loving kindness and understanding. If his failure is due to his inefficiency, inexperience or laziness, he must try to improve himself and learn how to overcome his failure without blaming the stars.

Again, there is no such theory as inevitable fate or irrevocable destiny. We can often observe how certain faults we committed yesterday are alone



responsible for the unhappiness or ill-health we experience today. The wise say, we are heirs to our deeds: our deeds are our heritage; our deeds are our inheritance.

Destiny is something entirely self-created, self-earned,

whether it is for good or for evil. Destiny is not a blind force; it is one expression of the greater cosmic intelligence, God, who rules the universe. It has a purpose to fulfil, and that purpose, so far as man is concerned, is an educational one. There is no motive of punishment in that divine force. As a man creates his own destiny by his thoughts, feelings and actions, he gets back unerringly from life sooner or later, what he himself gives to life.

Man can make those things also happen which were not destined to happen. One should therefore, overcome one's unfavourable destiny by greater efforts in the present, with all his God-given gifts. There is nothing in this world which cannot be achieved by men by right sort of efforts. Man

can overcome the universal law of suffering and death, if he acts in accordance with the universal law of morality and cultivates his mind and purifies it by using his intelligence; he can mould his life according to his wish and shape his destiny without

depending upon some external forces.

DHIRUBHAI AMBANI'S SUCCESS -
Dhirubhai used to say "Luck is nothing but when preparation meets opportunities." He started off by working at a petrol station in Yemen in the 1950s and moved to Mumbai in 1958 to start his own business in spices. After making modest profits, he moved into textiles and opened a mill in Naroda industrial estate of Ahmedabad. He founded Reliance Industries in Mumbai in 1966.



Dhirubhai took Reliance Industries public in 1977. He has figured in the list of top 50 businessmen in Asia. In 2016, he was honoured posthumously with the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian honour for his contribution to trade and industry. By 2007, the combined fortune of the family was 60 billion dollars, making the Ambanis the second richest family in the world.

Dhirubhai passed away on July 6, 2002, but it can well be said that his victory continues even after his life.

Luck is not a whimsical fairy that magically bestows success. Instead, it's a complex interplay between readiness and chance, a serendipitous alchemy that transforms ordinary moments into extraordinary opportunities.

PREPARATION - the first part of the equation. It's the countless hours dedicated to honing a skill, understanding the market, or mastering a craft. It involves learning, experimenting, failing and learning again. It's the sweat and toil unseen by the world, the endless pursuit of perfection. Preparation is essential because it equips us with the knowledge, skills and abilities to seize opportunities when they appear. It's the sturdy bridge that connects the chasm between a promising opportunity and the ability to capitalise on it.

OPPORTUNITIES - the second part of the equation. They are the doors to potential success - often unseen or overlooked. Opportunities might arise from changes in the market, shifts in customer needs, or even global crises that demand innovative solutions. Opportunities are everywhere, but they are often disguised as challenges, setbacks, or even failures. They require a keen eye, an open mind, and an adventurous spirit to be identified and seized.

WHERE MAGIC HAPPENS - When preparation meets opportunity, that's where the magic happens. This intersection is where 'luck'

comes into play, it's when the trained athlete who has devoted years to honing his skills, gets the chance to play in a major league. It's when the entrepreneur who has studied the market intricately, identifies a niche that no one else has noticed. The truth is, these moments are not mere instances of luck but the fruits of diligent preparation meeting the right opportunity. The intersection transforms hard work into success, making the unseen visible and the impossible possible.

C H A L L E N G E S U P E R S T I T U T I O N S - Belief

i n b a d o m e n s a n d
superstitions are deeply ingrained

in the minds of some people. Associating certain objects or events with good or bad luck makes us weaker and a victim to unholy and unhealthy visions, illusions and counter-productive situations. Challenge your superstitions and you will realise that it is all in your mind. Planetary movements, objects, situations and people do radiate energies that impact your life. But the influence of your mind on your life is much higher than any external influence.

Your thoughts create your feelings, developing your attitude. The attitude comes into action, which becomes a habit. The habits make your personality, which creates your destiny. So, your thoughts create your destiny. Negative and weak thoughts lead to external powers influencing your thoughts, your destiny. Pure, positive and powerful thoughts don't allow external factors to influence your destiny.



Ibonio D'Souza is the author of the widely read motivational tome 'Rise And Shinethe lotus way', columnist, and a social activist.

JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

Christmas is over and in this month of January, we welcome the New Year. Happy New Year to you! New Years are exciting for they are like a new start, many of us make New Year Resolutions and each one of us hopes the year ahead will be a bright and happy one.

With optimism and a positive attitude, let's begin...

New Year's Resolutions



The first recorded people to celebrate the New Year were the ancient Babylonians. Their New Year celebration was a 12-day festival called Akitu which began at the start of the spring planting season of March. Babylonians would make resolutions to their gods.

In 1592, Pope Gregory introduced the world to the Gregorian calendar and he stated that Jan 1 should mark the start of the New Year. The western world soon complied.

Many people make New Year's resolutions but few stick to them. Either they find it difficult to do so or somehow they forget their good intentions as the year progresses. The four most popular types of New Year's resolutions are to exercise, eat well, lose weight and save money.

If your New Year's resolution is any one of these or perhaps even all, then you are in good company. But the best way of really following our New Year's resolutions is to be realistic and specific about your goals and to write them down in a diary or calendar, so that you will not forget when the year progresses. As you achieve even minor success in any of your goals, remember to feel proud of yourself for at least getting this far. This will enable you to slowly but surely meet all your New Year's resolutions.

Quiz

1. In which country is the biggest New Year celebration?

2. Where in Australia is one of the best New Year celebrations?
3. Which state in India is renowned for its New Year celebrations?
4. New Year's Eve in Paris is celebrated as a feast day of a saint. Who is the saint?



Smile Please

1. Women really know how to hold a grudge. My wife asked me to pass her a lip balm, but by mistake, I passed her a tube of superglue. It's been a month now and she is still not speaking to me!

2. A boy breaks an old expensive vase at a wealthy uncle's house. The uncle is furious and yells, "Do you even know how old the vase was? It was from the 17th century."

The boy breathes in relief, "Oh good! It was not new!"

3. Today, my son came to me and gave me a hug out of the blue. I was pleasantly surprised until I heard him say to his dad, "You are right. She has gained weight."

4. The son asks his dad, "Dad, what can I do if I want to live forever?"

Dad replies, "All you have to do is to marry."

Son says, "And that will really help me live forever?"

Dad says wearily, "No, but your wish will soon die."

5. Boy: "Hey, dear how many kilos do you weigh?"

Girl: "I am not telling you."

Boy: "Hey come on, at least give me the last two digits."



The Two Wolves

An old Cherokee chief sat down to teach his grandson about life. "There is a fight going on inside me. It is a fight between two wolves."

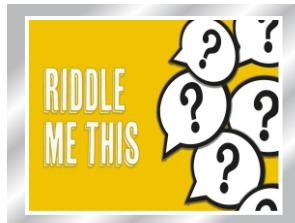
He continued, "One wolf is evil, he is full of malice, greed, anger, false pride and self-pity. The other wolf is good. That wolf is full of peace, love, joy, kindness and goodwill."

The grandson was quiet and pondered this revelation for a moment, then asked, "Grandfather, which wolf will win?"

The old chief smiled, "The wolf you feed each day."

What do we learn? We learn that that good and evil exists in each one of us. It is our responsibility to let good win and nurture the good in us. We must not let evil win against the good. This is solely in our hands and only prayer can really help us, for as humans we are often weak and need divine guidance. So let's feed the good wolf in each of us and then good will triumph over evil.

Riddle Me



1. What cannot be put in a saucepan?
2. What has a thumb and four fingers but not a hand?
3. What can fill up a room but takes up no space?
4. What can be touched but cannot be seen?
5. What sounds beautiful when played and has 88 keys?



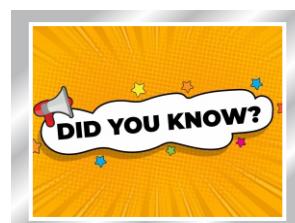
3. I give milk and have a horn. But I am not a cow or buffalo. What am I?
4. Multiply this number with any other number and you will get the same number every time. What is this number?
5. There are six pomegranates in a basket. Six people took a pomegranate but there is still a pomegranate in the basket. How can this be?

6. There are ten fingers on two hands. How many fingers are there on ten hands?
7. If $A=C$, $B=20$ and $A+B+C=64$, what is the value of A and C ?



What is the Good Word?

1. Plates breaking on New Year's Eve is considered good luck in this country.
2. The chocolate company Hershey's means of celebrating New Year.
3. The total amount of wine drunk by Americans on New Year's Eve.
4. A baby as a symbol of New Year, dates to this country.
5. In this country, they eat 12 grapes at midnight on New Year's Eve to bring 12 months of happiness.



Fun Facts of New Year

1. Kissing someone at midnight is said to come from the idea that doing so will prevent loneliness during the coming year and ward off evil spirits. Ancient Romans are credited with the kissing tradition.

2. The most common New Year's resolution made is to get healthier and each year, it is estimated that 80 percent of these resolutions are abandoned.
3. Lobster and chicken are both considered to be bad luck foods. According to the superstition, this is because of a lobster's ability to move backward and the chicken's ability to scratch itself backward.
4. Russians, during New Year make their wish, write it on a piece of paper and burn the paper. Then they put the ashes into a glass of champagne and drink it. Cheers!

New Year - True Facts



The tiny Pacific island nation of Kiribati celebrates New Year first, for it is located in the world's earliest time zone, so it is always the first place to

welcome the New Year.

The last place to welcome the New Year is the American Samoa in the Pacific Ocean.

Goa in India is known as the party destination of India. It is one of the best places to celebrate New Year with its stunning beach parties, clubs, casinos and many other New Year events. The beaches come to life in Goa with bonfire and barbecue being served, as well as crazy parties and breathtaking fireworks. Cruise party is also popular here. To celebrate New Year grandly, Goa is a good place to visit.

Inspiring quotes on New Year



"The best inspiration is not to outdo others but to outdo ourselves."

-Anonymous

"Your mind is a powerful thing. When you fill it with positive thoughts, your life will start to change."

-Anonymous

"Approach the New Year with resolve to find opportunities hidden in each new day."

-Michael Josephson

Burning the Old Man

I can clearly recall childhood memories of New Year's Eve when we all watched an old man effigy made of hay and wearing old clothes being burnt at midnight. This I am sure is something you too witnessed and, still at many places, this is a tradition.

However, not everyone knows the significance behind this. The old man represents all the sorrows of the past year gone by and they are to be



burned before the New Year begins. This tradition originated in Santa Fe, New Mexico and dates back to 1924. This tradition allows people to write notes expressing their reasons for sorrow and place it around the old man, so that the sorrows burn along with him. Thus, this is a

step to display that all negativity is removed and we must greet the New Year with optimism and joy.

Here's my heartiest New Year's wishes for each of you, dear readers. A New Year is a new chapter in your life. I hope 2024 is a lovely happy part of your story. Happy New Year!

Till next month, take care ...

Answers

Quiz

1. Brazil in Rio de Janeiro.
2. Sydney.
3. Goa.
4. St. Sylvester.

Riddle Me

1. It's lid.
2. A glove.
3. Light.
4. Someone's heart.

Piano.

Brain Teasers

1. With a wave.
2. It gets wet.
3. A milk truck.

4. Zero.

5. The sixth person took the pomegranate with the basket.

6. 50

7. 22.

What is the Good Word?

1. Denmark.
2. A giant chocolate kiss.
3. Around 360 million glasses.

4. Greece.

5. Spain.



Christine is an author of over 30 books available on Amazon worldwide in paperback and Kindle. She also enjoys playing the piano and has a YouTube cooking channel Christine D'Sylva's fusion kitchen.



FR. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

AUSTRALIA: We would like to thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for the several favours received, through his kind intercession, over the years. We pray fervently to the Venerable and he has been our constant intercessor.

-Richa Christian

THANKSGIVING ON 13TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

VASAI: We would like to thank Ven. Fr. Agnelo for his kind intercession in blessing our family and helping us celebrate our 13th Wedding Anniversary.

-Henry & Annette

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

GUJARAT: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for interceding for me and blessing me in every way. It fills my heart with joy to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram, whenever I am in Mumbai.

-Chandrika P. Parmar

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

GOA: We have been blessed with many favours, through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. We have been staunch devotees of the Venerable for several decades. We feel a closeness since he hailed from Goa and was known for spending hours in prayer and community service.

-Mathew D'Souza

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

CHENNAI: I am very much thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping and interceding for me at all times. I am his staunch devotee and make it a point to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra, during my visits to Mumbai.

-Arthur D'Cruz

BLESSINGS ON THE FAMILY

THANE: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, our family has been blessed abundantly. Several of our prayers have been answered regularly.

-Maria Soans

THANKSGIVING FOR SPECIAL INTENTIONS RECEIVED

VASAI: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me in many ways. I always look up to him for his kind intercession with Lord Jesus.

-Rasika D'Silva

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

UAE: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received many favours. My family turns to him to intercede for us, whenever we have special intentions and he has never let us down.

-Rashmika Korgaonker

THANKSGIVING FOR THE GIFT OF A CHILD

GOA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we have been blessed with our heart's desire, the gift of a child, we have been yearning for. He has been interceding for us in heaven.

-Claudia D'Souza

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

BHAYANDAR: I would like to thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for the innumerable favours received, through his kind intercession. I just can't count my blessings received, through the power of Lord Jesus Christ.

-Venesca Chettiar

THANKSGIVING FOR KIND INTERCESSION

VASAI: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me in many ways. I always look up to him for his kind intercession with Lord Jesus.

-Elmira

STRONG FAITH IN VEN. FR. AGNEL

MUMBAI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, our family received several favours. We have tremendous faith in the constant intercession of the Venerable.

-Sylvester Fernandes

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

VASAI: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me with good health. I am indeed grateful for all the favours received.

-William Fargose

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

BORIVALI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we have been blessed immensely. Our family always looks up to the Venerable.

-Raymond Rodrigues

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Jayan/Nisha	Mumbai	60,000	M. Fernandes	Mumbai	3,000	A. Kawatkar	Mumbai	1,100
J. Divecha	Thane	50,001	P. Mendonca	Mumbai	3,000	P. Gala	Mumbai	1,100
M. Kapadia	Mumbai	41,407	S. George	Oman	3,000	M. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,005
A. Kavasmaneck	Mumbai	40,000	S. Inigo	Tamil Nadu	3,000	A. Bana	Mumbai	1,001
Rita/J. Dunbar	Canada	27,300	Techno Prod.	Chennai	3,000	A. Arockiaraj	Tamil Nadu	1,000
A. Pereira & Fly	Mumbai	25,000	V. Fernandes	Mumbai	3,000	A. Chalissery	Mumbai	1,000
A. Varkey	Karma	25,000	A. Nazareth	Thane	2,500	A. Donnel	Kerala	1,000
S. Rodrigues	Mumbai	25,000	A. Thomas	Kerala	2,500	A. Honavar	Mumbai	1,000
T. D'Souza	Mumbai	16,000	Alice	Mumbai	2,500	A. Jacob	Kerala	1,000
P. Gawde	Navi Mumbai	15,000	J. D'Mello	Vasai	2,500	A. Pashana	Thane	1,000
N. Kanga	Mumbai	14,000	L. D'Mello	Virar	2,500	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1,000
R. Thakkar	Mumbai	13,612	Sharon	Mumbai	2,500	A. Sheth	Kenya	1,000
S. Srinath	Mumbai	12,500	Suzanne	Mumbai	2,500	A. Stephen	Tamil Nadu	1,000
H. Gala	Thane	10,500	M. Chandra	Kerala	2,400	A. Surve	Maharashtra	1,000
A. Noronha	Mumbai	10,000	T. Rodrigues	Mumbai	2,400	Alfred	Karnataka	1,000
A. Robin	Mumbai	10,000	A. Jangade	Maharashtra	2,001	Antony M.	Kerala	1,000
C. D'Souza	Mumbai	10,000	D. Patel	Mumbai	2,001	C. Devassy	Kerala	1,000
G. Pung	Delhi	10,000	A. Brahmane	Pune	2,000	C. Jacob	Kerala	1,000
J. Machado	Mumbai	10,000	A. Elavia	Mumbai	2,000	D. Alphonso	Mumbai	1,000
L. Christian	Gujarat	10,000	A. Lobo	Mumbai	2,000	D. D'Silva	Mumbai	1,000
M. Cardoz	Mumbai	10,000	A. Ohal	Sivassa	2,000	D. Fernandes	Mumbai	1,000
Mariaraj	Bangalore	10,000	Anne	Mumbai	2,000	D. Kolge	Ahmednagar	1,000
Melini	Mumbai	10,000	B. Dutt	Kolkata	2,000	D. Modi	Mumbai	1,000
P. Braganza	Mumbai	10,000	B. Kajar	Vasai	2,000	Dhiraj/Kevin & Fly	Mumbai	1,000
P. Pinto	Karnataka	10,000	C. Monteiro	Mumbai	2,000	F. D'Silva	Mumbai	1,000
S. Castalino	Dubai	10,000	Cozihom	Mumbai	2,000	Fittech Inds.	Mumbai	1,000
S. Dadarkar	Mumbai	10,000	D. Patrao	Karnataka	2,000	G. Arputharaj	Tamil Nadu	1,000
S. David	Mumbai	10,000	E. Sebastian	Kerala	2,000	G. Babu	Tamil Nadu	1,000
S. Desai	Mumbai	10,000	H. Kenny	Mumbai	2,000	G. Patel	Mumbai	1,000
W. Crasta	Mumbai	10,000	I. Chettior	Vasai	2,000	H. Pereira	Vasai	1,000
H. Bharucha	Vasai	9,000	I. Rodrigues	Mumbai	2,000	I. D'Souza	Karnataka	1,000
D'Souza & Assoc.	Mumbai	8,000	J. Chackochen	Kerala	2,000	J. Fernando	Mumbai	1,000
M. Alangaram	Tamil Nadu	6,200	J. D'Silva	Mumbai	2,000	J. Thomas	Kerala	1,000
M. Fernandes	Karnataka	6,000	J. Jose	Kerala	2,000	K. George	Ahmednagar	1,000
S. Nadar	Mumbai	6,000	J. Patel	Mumbai	2,000	L. Chandran	Kerala	1,000
S. Pai	Singapore	6,000	Jacob	Karnataka	2,000	L. D'Souza	Vasai	1,000
Warren	Mumbai	6,000	M. Bharucha	Mumbai	2,000	L. Ekka	Nasik	1,000
B. Kotwal	Mumbai	5,001	Maria	Mumbai	2,000	L. Lobo	Karnataka	1,000
F. Crasto	Mumbai	5,001	N. Karadekar	Mumbai	2,000	M. Antony	Kerala	1,000
A. Nero	Kerala	5,000	N. Pinto	Mumbai	2,000	M. Dabhi	Gujarat	1,000
C. Fargose	Vasai	5,000	P. J. George	Kerala	2,000	M. D'Souza	Pune	1,000
C. Jones	West Bengal	5,000	P. Khatry	Mumbai	2,000	M. George	Kerala	1,000
Danny	Vasai	5,000	R. D'Silva	Vasai	2,000	M. Paulose	Kerala	1,000
Dr. V. George	Kerala	5,000	R. Francis	Kerala	2,000	M. Rodrigues	Mumbai	1,000
Francis Shipping	Mumbai	5,000	R. Johnson	Kerala	2,000	M. Shilotri	Thane	1,000
G. D'Mello	Mumbai	5,000	S. Bohra	Mumbai	2,000	N. Bafna	Mumbai	1,000
G. Nautiyal	Thane	5,000	S. Darole	Mumbai	2,000	N. Naik	Palghar	1,000
J. George	Mumbai	5,000	S. D'Monte	Palghar	2,000	N. Pereira	Palghar	1,000
J. Puthur	Kerala	5,000	S. Kedari	Pune	4,000	P. Pai	Mumbai	1,000
L. D'Souza	Mumbai	5,000	V. Fernandes	Mumbai	2,000	P. Thakker	Thane	1,000
L. Goveas	Mumbai	5,000	Z. D'Souza	Goa	2,000	Princeton	Mumbai	1,000
L. Rebello	Karnataka	5,000	A. Jadhav	Kerala	1,500	R. Parmar	Mumbai	1,000
Pranita	Vasai	5,000	A. Kuttikadan	Thane	1,500	R. Tauro	Mumbai	1,000
R. Parmar	Gujarat	5,000	C. Manjalkar	Mumbai	1,500	S. Christopher	Tamil Nadu	1,000
S. Barboza	Vasai	5,000	Irudayaraj M.	Tamil Nadu	1,500	S. Dam	West Bengal	1,000
S. Nicks	Gujarat	5,000	J. Saldanha	Mumbai	1,500	S. Damu	Ahmednagar	1,000
Steffi/Zara	Mumbai	5,000	R. Joseph	Kerala	1,500	S. Driver	Gujarat	1,000
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5,000	S. Salunkhe	Maharashtra	1,500	S. Miranda	Vasai	1,000
C. Alvares	Mumbai	4,000	T. Sebastian	Kerala	1,400	S. Patel	Mumbai	1,000
R. Samuel	Kerala	3,500	N. Atram	Mumbai	1,280	S. Rangoonwala	Mumbai	1,000
M. Fernandes	Mumbai	3,200	L. D'Souza	Palghar	1,250	S. Rodrigues	Mumbai	1,000
D. Dutt	Mumbai	3,003	Melvyn	Thane	1,250	S. Sebastian	Kerala	1,000
A. Kelawalla	Mumbai	3,000	D. Singh	Karnataka	1,200	S. Shah	Mumbai	1,000
A. Pasad	Thane	3,000	S. Leon	Mumbai	1,150	S. Thomas	Mumbai	1,000
H. Gupta	Mumbai	3,000	Dimple	Gujarat	1,111	T. Dalmet	Thane	1,000
J. Alex	Mumbai	3,000	K. Patel	Mumbai	1,111	U. Shende	Maharashtra	1,000
J. Patrick	Mumbai	3,000	S. Remje	Mumbai	1,111	W. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,000

Bob's Banter

by Robert Clements

New Year, and Christ's Revolution..!

There are no celebrations of either New Year or Christmas, I heard in the Palestinian Bethlehem as they mourn the death of innocents, especially children killed in Gaza. But maybe that's because we celebrate thinking wrong thoughts or doing the wrong things.

Because violence also marked the birth of the Lord 2000 years ago: Even as shepherds and wise men gathered around the infant in the manger, the wise men were warned in a dream not to go back and report the birth of the Messiah to King Herod. A furious King Herod once he knew he'd been tricked, slew all Jewish children under the age of two.

Not a great beginning, and like the wailing in Gaza, mothers wailed as their children were killed around that first Christmas long ago. A bad beginning, you may think, for the one who was supposed to change the world.

were treated like the dregs of society, were made to sit in the back of public transport and were scorned and called derogatory names. They were segregated and made to feel less than animals.

Today, they are equal and even voted in a black President!

This New Year, we need to rejoice and celebrate the 'distribution of these beautiful weapons' that can win against any dictator or unjust monarch either abroad or at home.

Revolutionary weapons of love, and turning the other cheek!

More than cancelling the celebrations in Bethlehem, the people there should have dug deeper into the true meaning of Christ's birth and should present it vividly to the terrorist organisation, the powerful USA and a vengeful Israel.



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On the contrary, violent acts against the birth of Christ or the celebration of Christmas anywhere reveal only one thing, and that is fear!

The kind of revolution that Jesus brought about is one that no dictator, ruler, or country with unjust laws can withstand. You don't have to go far back in time to see how true this is.

Mahatma Gandhi, used non-violence and principles from the Sermon on the Mount, to win against a formidable England. Today, India is free because of those non-violent techniques, and a victory won through methods, the same Babe in a Manger, brought to the world, two thousand years ago.

Martin Luther King Jr, used the same. His civil rights movement, just over fifty years ago, completely transformed the lives of African-Americans in the United States. The blacks who

Vengeance by the Israelis should be stopped, and solutions that are just and people-oriented should be called for. The way to peace is long and arduous but revenge gains no victory, but provides a retreat for a future war.

It is in the midst of violence that Christ's life makes more sense. So, celebrate this year even more, not through imbibing spirits and revelry, but by practising the thoughts, and principles, that the God above sent through His son, the Messiah!

Happy New Year, my dear friends, let us celebrate our revolutionary leader..!

Robert Clements is a newspaper columnist, whose column has graced over 80 newspapers and on certain days has a readership of over 6 million. He can be contacted at bobsbanter@gmail.com

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