

KAIROS

GLOBAL

PRIVATE
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ONLY



ALSO ↓

**HE DELIVERED
IMPOSSIBILITY**

■ DULANJALI ACHINTHA

*Called to
Nurture*

■ FR. JOJO VATTAKERIL MCBS

**Remember
the**
**Lord's
Laughter**

DR. JOBY CYRIAC



MARY, MY BELOVED MOTHER



Heavenly Father, you blessed the Virgin Mary with the fullness of grace. She is my model of faith, hope and love. I give this new year to her intercession and ask for her holy prayers. Guide me in understanding your infinite love. And join my heart, dear Lord, to the Holy Mother's Immaculate Heart, so that I may improve in loving everyone unconditionally, in imitation of Jesus. Amen.

EDITOR'S ROOM



DR. CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

 @readkairos

WE ALWAYS REFLECT ABOUT THE PASSION OF JESUS, DOLOURS OF MARY AND THE MARTYRDOM OF THE DISCIPLES THAT WE SOMETIMES FORGET THAT ALL OF THEM MAY ALSO HAVE HAD THEIR MOMENTS OF ENJOYMENT AND CELEBRATION.

CELEBRATE LIFE

W

e were having a small chit-chat with a few friends regarding the theme of the current issue of *Kairos Global* and one of them said, 'Do you know how I celebrate my life? By doing something very inexpensive – curling up in bed, usually on Sundays, enjoying the cool mornings'. We all laughed and agreed that it could be the cheapest form of celebration.

In the Gospels, on many occasions we see Jesus and his disciples attending feasts, festivals, etc. But unfortunately all those events are given a pious and serious connotation. But could it have been that way? It is very difficult for us to imagine Jesus smiling, laughing, playing and thus celebrating. We always reflect about the Passion of Jesus, dolours of Mary and the martyrdom of the disciples that we sometimes forget that all of them may also have had their moments of enjoyment and celebration. Somehow we have all been wrongly led to believe that prayer and spirituality are grave matters that we even forget to smile. When we read about saints too, the focus is on their sufferings and sacrifices for the Lord. I still remember, as a boy, reading a story book about Don Bosco that was beautifully illustrated. It felt like I was reading an adventure book.

One enjoyable thing about *The Chosen* web series is that each episode has scenes that make us smile, even Jesus cracking jokes, pulling the legs of others. Jesus and his friends are presented as a bunch of ordinary fun-loving people. This relatable portrayal could be the reason for the huge numbers who follow the series.

For most people, life may not be easy and comfortable most of the time. Of course, it is always filled with plenty of challenges and struggles but we need not be bogged down by that. We need to always look for reasons to be joyful, happy and celebrate.

I wish that all readers of *Kairos Global* are able to celebrate every moment of life in the year 2022. Let's resolve to smile, laugh and celebrate more in this new year.



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- 38 Miracles that came My Way

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

chackochan.njavallil@jykairosmedia.org



This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24

PATRON

Bishop Mar Raphael Thattil
(Ecclesiastical Advisor, Jesus Youth International)

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Fr. Joseph Ezhumayil
(Jesus Youth International Chaplain)

PRINTER AND PUBLISHER

Dr. Edward Edezhath

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Shoy Thomas
(Jesus Youth International Coordinator)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dr. Chackochan Njavallil

MANAGING EDITOR

Joshua Joseph, Houston, USA
(joshua.joseph@jykaivosmedia.org)

EDITORIAL COUNCIL

Ammu Zachariah, Maryland, USA
Jilu Jacob, Boston, USA
Raiffel Cyril, Canberra, Australia
Sonia Kurian, Houston, USA
Tania Rose Josun, Kerala, India

ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE EDITORS

Divya Immanuel, Mumbai, India
Jiss Jose Thoppil, Kuwait
Jothees Thomas, Dallas, USA
Ponny Sebastian, Dublin, Ireland

CIRCULATION COORDINATOR

Leena Shaju, Cochin, India +91 6238279115
(circulations@jykaivosmedia.org)

ASSOCIATE CIRCULATION COORDINATORS

AUSTRALIA: Mintu Vijoy, Melbourne. +61 452538785
BAHRAIN: Roshan George, Manama. +973 36906995
CAMBODIA: Sophearong Ravy, Phnom Penh. +855 964265472
CANADA: Joby Joseph, Ontario. +12899 686 074
GERMANY: Anna Paul, Berlin. +49 176 83495451
INDIA: Jackulin Sheela, Mumbai. +91 9967329244
IRELAND: Suresh V Joy, Dublin. +35 3879630904
ISRAEL: Jaison K Thattil, Tel Aviv. +972 559425308
KUWAIT: Anish Thomas Kappil, Salmiya. +965 90063685
MALAYSIA: Deepu James, KL Sentral. +60 12649 4628
NETHERLANDS: Jojo Varghese, Utrecht. +31 684974552
NEW ZEALAND: Derick Daniel, Auckland +64 291270650
OMAN: Jiju Paul, Muscat. +968 99467516
PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Abin Michael, Port Moresby. +675 74794368
QATAR: Jomichan P George, Doha. +974 33688437
SINGAPORE: Jilu Nobin, Sengkang. +65 93294529
SWITZERLAND: Joseph C Robert, Zurich. +41 762499295
THAILAND: Mary Harris, Bangkok. +66 843138626
UAE: Thomas Jose, Dubai. +971 521316868
UGANDA: Dominic Mathew, Kampala. +256 757207200
UK: Mathachan Madukkakuzhy, Stoke on Trent. +44 7969365686
USA: Denny Joseph, Houston +1 8326403106

FINANCE COORDINATOR

Rani George, Cochin, India +91 9446563335 finance@jykaivosmedia.org

DESIGN

Mustard Tree, Delhi, India

www.jykaivosmedia.org [f](#) @ReadKairosGlobal [t](#) @readkairos

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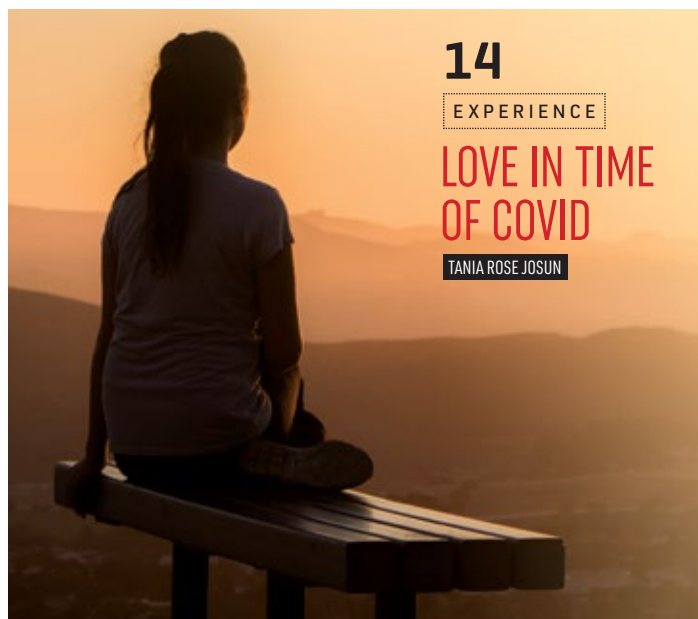
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MAILING ADDRESS

Kairos International Inc.
3010 Mason Grove Ln
Pearland, TX, USA. 77584
info@jykairosmedia.org
+1 832 592 3675

Kairos Media,
No 8/174, Navodaya
Studio Complex,
Thengod P.O,
Cochin, Kerala,
India. Pin: 682030
infoin@jykairosmedia.org
+91 9895711718

Kairos Media,
St Charles Street,
Sheffield S9 3WU,
United Kingdom
infouk@jykairosmedia.org
+44 7969365686

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ASK



FR. BITAJU

Fr. Bitaju Mathew, O.S.S.T. belongs to the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Captives (Trinitarians). He serves as the Secretary Vice Provincial of the Order in India and is currently the Chaplain of the Jesus Youth International Formation Team.

➤ **Q. It seems reasonable when people with no belief in God suffer. But what about kids born poor and who die due to starvation?**

Let me begin by responding to the first part of your question. Suffering is an inevitable part of human life, whether one believes in God or not. Belief in God certainly can make a difference in the way one responds to suffering. While a non-believer suffers without any meaning/purpose, a believer accepts and suffers for, and with a purpose. Suffering can make the life of a non-believer miserable and it is his choice that makes him suffer without a purpose. Whereas a Christian who finds meaning in suffering transcends his suffering for a noble cause. St. Paul, having grasped this meaning well, said, *In my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church* (Colossians 1:24). Thus, for Christians, when an individual spiritually unites himself to the cross of Christ by taking up his cross (suffering), the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed to him; his suffering becomes redemptive (*Salvifici Doloris* 26).

Second part of your question is a perpetual query about the meaning and purpose of innocent suffering, especially children born poor and who die of starvation. I must admit that it is hard to propose a reason for such suffering as it belongs to the mysterious plan of God. All that we can do is to learn from the history of salvation how people responded

in faith to such innocent sufferings. Think of Mary at the foot of the cross. St. John Paul II reminds us that her *fiat* at this moment can be thought to be an even greater act of faith than her initial *fiat* to the archangel Gabriel (Luke 1:38). Pope Francis while addressing a group of terminally ill children and their families said that Our Lady also did not understand and did not have an answer 'when they handed down to her the dead body of her Son, covered with wounds, spat on, bloodied and soiled'.

The Holy Bible presents Job as an excellent example of innocent suffering without knowing the reason. In the course of time Job realises that suffering is part of God's plan, that it needs to be accepted as long it lasts, and that God never abandons the one who suffers. Paul who apprehended the meaning of suffering in the context of eternal life declared, *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us* (Romans 8:18).

In responding to your question, I am pretty clear that I did not resolve the perennial mystery of suffering. I only tried to shed some light for you to appreciate that there is meaning and purpose in suffering – a mysterious plan of God for our redemption.



YOUCAT 96

WHY WAS A MAN OF PEACE LIKE JESUS CONDEMNED TO DEATH ON A CROSS?

Jesus posed a decisive question to his contemporaries: Either he was acting with divine authority, or else he was an impostor, a blasphemer, and a violator of the Law and who had to be called to account. [574-576]

In many respects Jesus was a unprecedented challenge to the traditional Judaism of his time. He forgave sins, which God alone can do; he acted as though the Sabbath law were not absolute; he was suspected of blasphemy and brought upon himself the accusation that he was a false prophet. All these were crimes punishable under the Law by death.

DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

Prayer Intentions January

For True Human Fraternity

We pray for all those suffering from religious discrimination and persecution. May their own rights and dignity be recognised, which originate from being brothers and sisters in the human family.



Pope talk

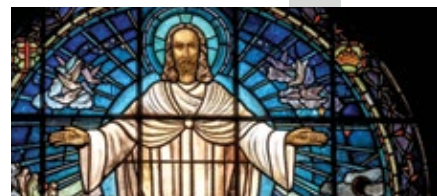


Life's essential ingredient is prayer.

Digital revolution forces us to rethink what it means to be human.

Young Catholics should be the 'critical conscience of society'.

Christ is not like other kings. He is the King for others.



The supreme rule regarding fraternal correction is love.

Be tireless builders of hope amid suffering; crises are also windows of opportunity.

The Gospel is the most humanizing message known to history: read, reread, and be passionate about the Gospel.

Care for creation is one of the great moral issues of our time.

Learn to invoke the Holy Spirit often when facing difficulties, exhaustion, or discouragement in daily life.

Now is the time to act, urgently, courageously, and responsibly.

JESUS YOUTH



Dr Edward Edezhath, one of the pioneers of Jesus Youth, gives us a glimpse of the growth of the movement.

Youth 'restless' for other youth



The last weekend of June of 1986 was quite special. About a hundred college students from all over Kerala gathered to join hands for a change in college campuses. This gathering at Sacred Heart College, Thevara¹ became a big first step in the history of the movement, creating a new platform to connect activities in college campuses.

'When I went to my college to get the admission form,' Santhosh from Trivandrum² enthusiastically shared, 'as I climbed the steep flight of steps, I prayed, "Lord, if I get admitted here, let it be to bring many to you"'. Sony, an engineering student from Kothamangalam³ spoke about her struggles to start a group in her college. Treasa from Trichur⁴ spoke about support from the sisters that made possible student gatherings in her college. This went on. Many of these students talked about their deep desire to help other young people in their colleges, which soon became plans for the future. Before they left on Sunday, Jesus Youth Campus Ministry was born.

HOW CHANGE MAKERS ARE BORN

Youth is a time of restless dreaming. Before they become 'mature' and start building a comfortable life for themselves, they look around and wish

for the impossible, especially in the world around. When they are touched by Christ's spirit this becomes a fire that is impatient to spread 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). If this little fire is alone in the wind, it will be soon blown out. But when many little tapers come together, they make a bonfire.

Recently, I presented some of Jesus Youth's social concern initiatives to a large group of social work students in Europe. Later many of them commented, 'this gives us great hope amidst growing hopelessness'. Many of them were talking about how most youth are talented and wish to do a lot of good, but eventually become cynical finding negativity all around. But here were signs of hope, ordinary youth coming together and making a big difference!

One big question is 'What is at the heart of these good turns?' Stirring of the spirit in young people is mostly the Lord's work, but the bystanders can tend the flame and foster it. Much before that campus gathering a few of us had met a few times to prepare the background. And we worked with one plan: identifying a few young people and grooming them into people with vision and a sense of responsibility for other youth.

THOSE WHO RISE TO RESPONSIBILITY

Look at the youth culture around! Signs of degeneration abound. Aimless life, violence, drug abuse, fashion frenzy, mindless partying, shunning spirituality and numerous other indications are a cause for many elders' consternation. One clichéd response I hear often is, 'We have to pray a lot for today's youth'. If that means 'we have to persuade the Lord to do something for youth' because we have other things to do, then it is a very shallow spirituality. What we need is a bunch of youth and others who will hear the call of the Lord, stand up and take responsibility for other young people.

Pope Francis phrases it quite beautifully, 'The love of God and our relationship with the living Christ do not hold us back from dreaming; they do not require us to narrow our horizons. On the contrary, that love elevates us, encourages us, and inspires us to a better and more beautiful life. Much of the longing present in the hearts of young people can be summed up in the word "restlessness" ... Restless discontent, combined with exhilaration before the opening up of new horizons, generates a boldness that leads you to stand up and take responsibility for a mission. This healthy restlessness typical of youth continues to dwell in every



The love of God and our relationship with the living Christ do not hold us back from dreaming; they do not require us to narrow our horizons. On the contrary, that love elevates us, encourages us, and inspires us to a better and more beautiful life.

heart that remains young, open and generous.' (*Christus Vivit*, 138)

Something beautiful about Jesus Youth movement is that in it you come across numerous people who have this positive restlessness, wanting to make a positive change in the lives of others. Thomas and a few other friends have taken a special commitment to fast and pray every Friday so that the youth in their parish will change their ways. Simi was so concerned about adolescents and together with a few friends, she came to me with their big plans. They wanted to gather teens in different places and offer interesting options to continue and grow in groups.

Joseph and his friends were trying out many ideas and proposals to use music for changing youth lives. Looking at a long procession of such young missionaries I understand the passion behind the words of St. Paul, *My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you* (Galatians 4:19).

BUILDING UP THIS POSITIVE 'RESTLESSNESS'

When Sab had his encounter and came into the group, he saw a new world and, in some ways, it was his dream come true. There were a lot of enthusiastic youth reaching out to other young people in creative ways. He was so excited. But from my experience with youth enthusiasm this was only stage one. Some time passed by, and situations changed. Gradually he had difficulties working with certain group members. 'Some of them are crazy'. And what is more, some of the approaches found effective at the beginning were not working well. I knew this was stage two.

One good turn was that during this period of change and personal crisis,

Sab did not just leave everything and disappear. Instead, he came for a quiet chat. We could take a fresh look at the whole situation. Sab could see that not everything was lost, but this was only an inevitable change. There was a need to turn more to the Lord and learn to accept difficult people and situations as they were. At the end of our brief chat, he was peaceful. This was a good stage three. In a world that is increasingly becoming dark and confusing, the best thing to happen is the emergence of enthusiastic youth who are restless to bring in a positive change in the lives of others, especially other needy youth. But one thing that we shouldn't forget is that these missionaries will also need accompaniment to deepen their mission and be mellowed up to become beautiful persons. ■

1, 2, 3, 4 Thevara, Trivandrum, Kothamangalan, Trichur are places in Kerala, India

.....
Dr. Edward Edezhath, is a retired professor from St. Albert's College, Ernakulam. He lives with his wife Audrey in Kochi, India.

MISSION

TALK

SHAHREEN

Shahreen Ghouri shares her mission experience in Cambodia and the challenges and hurdles she had to face before going on a one-year mission.

Few years back, a JY retreat for youth was organised in my city. Unfortunately I couldn't attend it. My brother took part though and was deeply touched by the Holy Spirit. And he invited me to be part of the JY prayer group.

Being an unconfident and shy person, I used to avoid gatherings. I was just a daily-Mass-going girl who would personally pray but was extremely uncomfortable with prayer gatherings. This nature of mine even brought me to tears. But one day, my brother was adamant I join him. That day at the prayer meeting, I remember praying for an intention without realising it. For sure, that was the Holy Spirit inspiring me and speaking through me. Praise God, the journey began.

Slowly I began to attend prayer gatherings regularly and was even given responsibilities. But I always felt incapable and unable to carry them out. One day, as I was preparing for our weekly reflection, I felt overwhelmed and lost. I began to question God, 'Why do you always give me responsibility when I am unable to do it or I can't do it?' Just as I asked, this popped up on my laptop screen: **'It is not your ability that matters to God but your availability'**.

This line changed my entire perspective and became a turning point in my life. Gone were my insecurities. After that, I began to say yes to the Lord, no matter what. I became more passionate to serve him and started to develop good fellowships, growing together in Christ. During this journey of self-discovery and personal encounter with Christ, I was selected for JYIFT (Jesus Youth International Full-timership Training) 2018. I couldn't attend that because of my exams but God provided the opportunity to attend this training in Bangkok in 2019. This one-month training was a prelude

to a one-year mission commitment to any country.

Going on a mission was never an easy task for me as I come from a very simple family and am part of a community where going abroad is discouraged, be it for educational or professional purposes. And even worse was that I had to leave my new job and put my further studies on hold. I knew from the very beginning that my going for a one-year mission was an impossibility but again, God had different plans.

During the last days of my training, a deep desire and strong conviction to take the mission commitment began to grow. During the counselling sessions, I shared this desire with the coordinator and Fr. Das. They encouraged me to ask my parents that I would not regret not doing so; after that it would be God's will. I prayed and asked my parents. It was no surprise when they said NO. I asked them to take some time and consider it and that I would definitely obey whatever they would decide. During that whole time, I kept thanking God for whatever would happen. My brother and some of my very dear JY friends also spoke to my parents and one day I received a message on my phone saying that they had agreed. God made it possible, my heart was more grateful to him.

I returned to Pakistan after the training, there were still some struggles to face but the visa procedures began. Everything seemed to be going well until one day my father suffered a stroke and was admitted to the hospital. My family was in shock; JY family around the world prayed for him. God was merciful and my father recovered. At home, it was I who took care of his medicines and diet and so couldn't imagine leaving him and going on mission. One day while we spoke about this, my father said that I should go, that God had a plan for me. That was how I reached



my mission place, Cambodia – the ‘land of wonders’.

Going to a new place, where the people, food, language and culture was different made me nervous and excited at the same time. But I kept trusting in God because it was not me who would do things but God. I just prayed that God would use me as an instrument of his love and compassion. Before this, I had always thought that being on mission was to do big or great things but what I realised was that mission is giving glory to God in small things and trusting him completely.

I was assigned to teach at the high school, as well as the boys’ and girls’ center and I got to interact with many young people. Slowly I started a prayer group where I would teach them action songs about Jesus, we would share our heart and reflect on the Word of God. Most of the students were from humble backgrounds and broken families. What they needed most was someone who would listen and tell them that they were children of a God who loved them immensely. Every moment spent with them were moments I found myself in Christ.

There were difficult times of loneliness and brokenness but the love and grace of God kept me going. Each time I was stuck somewhere, I would say one Hail Mary and miracles would happen.

God never abandoned me and always protected me. Whenever I felt demotivated, he encouraged me. I remember once when a lady came to me and said tearfully, ‘Shahreen, please thank your mother for me when you call her’. When I asked her why, she replied with a smile, ‘For sending you here for us’. It touched me but I wondered why she said it all the same. That was when I remembered that I had gifted her little son some clothes for Christmas when I came to know she was struggling financially and couldn’t buy her



Most of the students were from humble backgrounds and broken families. What they needed most was someone who would listen and tell them that they were children of a God who loved them immensely. Every moment spent with them were moments I found myself in Christ.

one-year-old new clothes. This small gesture meant so much to her.

And then when I wanted to buy clothes for some of the kids and volunteers there, I didn’t have the money. So I decided to sacrifice meals bought while travelling and was able to buy the clothes but God provided for every need of mine. I realised how God uses us and I also understood that it was not I who was doing things but God; we just had to give

ourselves to be his instruments.

Saying **Yes to the Lord** without thinking of my own weaknesses but trusting God has made me stronger than ever. ■

Shahreen Ghouri currently works as program coordinator in Ishraq Catechetical Center of her diocese and also serves as asst. coordinator of Jesus Youth Multan, Pakistan.

ENGAGE



WE'RE NOT KINGDOM BUILDERS...?

Chris Cammarata explains why we are not really kingdom-builders.

Recently I was speaking to a priest and I shared some of my dreams and desires. At one point I mentioned my desire to 'build the kingdom'. He cut in and pointed out something very interesting: *Do you know that the Scriptures never instruct us to 'build' the kingdom?*

We read in letters to the Corinthians and Ephesians of the need to build the Body of Christ (i.e. the Church, our community), but interestingly, we are never charged with building the *kingdom*. Similarly, the descriptions about the kingdom of God in the Gospel are many: it is like the mustard seed, the leaven of dough, and a wedding banquet. Jesus tells the disciples to preach the kingdom (as Jesus himself did at the very beginning of his ministry). He instructs us to pray every day for its coming in the Our Father. He tells us that unless we are like little children, we can never enter it. Yet for all this, he never instructs us to *build* the

kingdom. Why is that?

'The kingdom of God' is a complex idea which eludes being put into a neat little box, but the reason we do not 'build' the kingdom is quite simple: *it is God's kingdom, not my kingdom*. That is why it's called the 'kingdom of God'. The kingdom, that is, the Lordship of God, is not something we could ever construct. What could we ever add to God's greatness or to his Lordship? *Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain* (Psalm 127:1). We do not 'build' the kingdom – we *receive* it, an inheritance that has been promised to us. That is why we pray each day, 'thy kingdom come'.

How many times have I fooled myself into believing I could build God's kingdom for him? Like David offering to build a temple for God, I have set out with the best of intentions to build for myself what God gives to me freely! *Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom* (Luke 12:32).

Pope Benedict remarked that Jesus Christ is the kingdom of God in Person; Jesus is the coming of God's kingdom. When I look at it that way, it starts to make sense why building the kingdom is not my job. There's no improving on Jesus himself! Why spend so much time and effort building my idea of the kingdom, when Jesus has already built one for me? We labour under the sun all day to build our own utopias, when all along Jesus promises us that his yoke is gentle and refreshing to lay on our shoulders.

'My' image of what my life should be, 'my' plans for this-or-that ministry, 'my' idea of what the Church should be – I am safe to lay all of these aside at Jesus' feet. He has a kingdom far greater than my 'kingdom'. All he really asks of me is to pray to receive it, preach it, and be faithful to it. Jesus Christ is the kingdom of God, and the Father was pleased to give him to me (and to you!). What a happy relief.

Chris Cammarata works as a clinical systems analyst in Houston, USA and has degrees in Catholic theology and philosophy. He also writes for Catholic Café.



EXPERIENCE

Praise God! Psalm 46:10 says *Be still and know that I am God.*

When the ocean roars and the skies darken, be still and know that God is holding your hand and leading you through the greatest tides. He is holding you with his righteous hand and promises, 'Fear not for I am with you'.

I am an IT professional who had never wanted to pursue IT as a career or future. Electronics was something I hated to study but by God's grace, I am an electronics engineer. Being so inspired with the world of chemistry, becoming a chemical engineer was my long-time dream. But God spoke to me through my parents and discouraged me from pursuing a chemical engineering career. This decision shattered me. The breakdown was so traumatic initially; everything I touched turned out to be absolute failures. I wanted to give up, but the Lord didn't want me to. He sent me his angel who touched me with God's love and suddenly everything turned to be colourful. With flying colours, I aced subjects that were so contradictory to my interest. God gave me the wisdom of his love and he himself wrote the exams for me. Everything seemed brighter. But I didn't know what my future would be, since I took up something I never liked.

God had a plan for me which was any day better than mine, that was not only

Hakuna Matata in the Lord

Anu Thomas
recollects how God
thwarted her dream
career for good
reason.

for my good, but for the best to come out for me. Years passed, I graduated, and he placed me in one of the most promising multinational IT companies with the least effort on my part. Beyond all the worldly achievements, I started valuing the situations God gave me to know him more, love him wholeheartedly and travel in the path he lightens for me. It is truly hard for one to leave behind dreams one has yearned for, but you will be astonished to see what God has prepared for you.

Life went on for me; one day, coincidental though it may seem, God's plan took me to a glass painting shop where chemical glass paints were being used. Though the chemicals weren't as concentrated as those used in a laboratory, on inhaling them, I became dizzy, fell ill and had to take to bed – this was the case each time I got exposed to it. Whoa! So that was why God prevented me from pursuing the career of my dreams. He loved me more than my love for my dreams. Thanks to my parents, who acted as instruments of God's choice for me when I was in darkness and deaf to God's whispers. Agape is my God's love for me and you.

As you open your eyes to a fresh new morning and find everything around turning darker and grey, do not worry, for this tunnel shall be a passage that God takes you. It leads you to beautiful sunshine and rainbows. The path may be too dark to travel, with worry and helplessness. But be calm and still and listen to his voice. God whispers to you by your side. *And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it."* (Isaiah 30:21). When trials and troubles make you blind, when your faith wavers; look at the cross to his outstretched love, stay calm and believe, there is someone out there watching over and making better plans for you.

Hakuna Matata. 



Originally from Kerala, India, **Anu Thomas** currently resides in Ontario, Canada. She has been part of the JY movement since 2016.

LOVE IN TIME OF COVID

Tania Rose Josun **recounts**
how surrendering to the Lord
during Covid, brought peace
and healing.



'Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, to turn away from thoughts of tribulation and to put yourself in my care, so that only I act, saying, "You take care of it."'

September 14th. I woke up feeling something deep within my chest was gripped tight. We had just returned the day before from a trip and I thought it was a throat infection. Things seemed okay until the next day, when all of us began feeling slightly feverish. Maybe it was the rainy weather, we thought and resorted to the medicines at home.

September 16th. Half the month was over. Usually *Kairos Buds* would have gone to designers for layout. Final edit of *Kairos Global* would be underway. But this time, I was still struggling to finish editing *Global* Issue 43; work on *Buds* not even begun.

All of us at home were unwell, feverish.

September 17th. I felt much better and was able to nurse my family, who had taken to bed.

Almost a month ago, one of the writers of *Global* Issue 43 had shared the Surrender Novena with me. And so I began to pray the small, simple prayer, 'Jesus, you take care of everything.'

But I was puzzled by this viral fever. Usually fevers last only a day for us.

September 18th. Woke up with a fever and found that I couldn't speak much either. That something-within-my-chest was now holding my lungs in a vice-like grip. I was shocked to realise that taking deep breaths was painful! All smell and taste seemed to have fled overnight. And the headache! Both of us adults ill and our daughter just recovering. We had no family close by. Very sick and alone! Though far from us, our parents, relatives and friends kept calling us every day to check on us.

'Jesus, you take care of everything.'

Things began to get worse over the next few days. Paracetamol didn't work! And the cough syrup that always worked wonders now seemed powerless! 'Is this Covid?' We began to wonder...

Global Issue 43 and *Buds* Issue 10 somehow got ready amidst fever, headaches, sore eyes and chest-wracking coughs.

'Jesus, you take care of everything.'

September 22nd. The pulse oximeter began displaying low levels for me. The test confirmed our fears.

The headaches were horrible, coughs literally took my breath away. Feeling dreadful and in bed with nothing to do, unable to even read was the worst thing possible. Anything is bearable so long as I can find refuge in a book.

'Lord, I prayed with all my heart to you to take care of everything! And yet, why this?'

My husband, thankfully, began to recover but my fever kept recurring. Our daughter was a pillar of strength. Barely eleven, she made sure our flasks had hot water, did the dishes and served us app-delivered food.

Palliachen's calls and messages to my husband were very encouraging. A senior JY family, who live not far away, made visits to our gate, bringing us provisions and medicines we needed. Having just recovered from Covid themselves, their selflessness was very touching.

'Jesus, I'm sorry. Please take care of everything.'

September 24th. The fever finally left me and my oxygen levels began to improve.

Day 2 of the Surrender Novena begins with Jesus telling us, '*Surrender to me does not mean to fret, to be upset, or to lose hope, nor does it mean offering to me a worried prayer asking me to follow you and change your worry into prayer. ... Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, to turn away from thoughts of tribulation and to put yourself in my care, so that only I act, saying, "You take care of it."*

Though my 'Covid days' were painful, terrifying and bleak, leaving me utterly sick and at times desolate, it was in that seemingly 'bottomless pit' of misery and helplessness that I realised I had to let go of all my fears and surrender my family and myself to the will, the time and the plan of the only one who mattered – Jesus. ■



Tania Rose Josun lives in Kottayam, India with her family. She is the editor of *Kairos Global* and *Kairos Buds*.

UP CLOSE

Called to Nurture

Fr. Jojo Vattakeril MCBS answers questions put forward by Noel Benno, on his vocation, priesthood, doctoral research studies about the movement and his life in Rome.

Noel Benno speaks to Fr. Jojo Vattakeril MCBS, a research scholar and gold medalist at the Salesian Pontifical University, Rome who was recently awarded a doctorate in pastoral theology.

Congratulations on your doctorate and the gold medal as well! It is in fact a moment of great pride for all of us. Do you mind telling us a bit about yourself, your roots and your journey so far?

I was born in Mannar, a small village in Kottayam¹, the second child of my parents, V C George and Kunjamma George. After completing my schooling till the 10th standard, in June 1993, I joined the MCBS (Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament) congregation and on 27th December 2004 was ordained a priest along with five of my companions. In 2015 I came to Rome to pursue higher studies.

How did you discover your vocation? What are the things that have been enriching it?

Everyone has a story to tell about his /her vocation. Born and brought up in a devout Catholic family, the desire to be a priest developed from childhood. The *Directory for Catechesis* states that 'The family is a proclamation of faith in that it is the natural place in which faith can be lived in a simple and spontaneous manner' (DC, 227).

Our home, apart from my parents, brother and sister, included my grandmother (who passed away during my first-year of minor seminary) and my uncle (my father's eldest brother who is unmarried). My uncle sponsored my education and looked after all my later needs. The attitude to depend on God for everything was learnt from my father. My grandmother used to tell us stories of

saints and she inspired me to read more about them. But it was my mother who inspired me to the life of priesthood.

Once when I was a teenager, my mother said, 'I pray to God only for one thing, that one of my children chooses religious vocation.' She always supported me and I have always experienced God's intervention through her. After my class 10 exams, when I shared my desire to become a priest, my father and uncle were against it but my mother was always there to encourage me.

When the time came to meet the vocation promoter, my mother took me to the seminary in the absence of my father and uncle. On reaching there however, we found that the vocation promoter had left for three days of vocation promotion. We were in a dilemma: if we returned home, my father and uncle would not permit us to come back again. As we had reached the seminary just when the seminarians were about to go for prayer, my mother suggested that we stay for it. I saw my mom praying earnestly. Just as we came out after prayer, we ran into the vocation promoter! He had not been able to proceed with his journey due to heavy rains. I met him; he selected me and told me to join after ten days. This is where I strongly felt the confirmation of my call to priesthood. I always remember my mother's letters telling me, 'Dear Jojo, you have to become a holy priest; for that pray to God, do small sacrifices, hold on to Mother Mary. My prayers are always with you.'

My introvert character made seminary life a struggle. Adjusting to community life was another difficulty. It reached the point where I went to see my novice master about leaving the seminary. He



Meeting with Holy Father, Pope Francis.



told me, ‘God has given you the gift of openness in spiritual direction. So go ahead in God’s call and he will strengthen you to overcome your limitations and reach your goal of priesthood.’ He guided me constantly – to pray, to do meditations, to sit before the Lord, to love priesthood. I experienced God’s grace which helped me to be open and confident, to mingle with others. The most difficult part of being in the community changed into love for community life. Today I prefer community life over any other and enjoy it with my brother priests. This is how I have experienced God’s guidance and grace in my life in answering God’s call.

I learned that Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS) has its roots in Kottayam, India. Please tell us a bit more about your congregation, and what excites you the most about it.

I belong to the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS). In 1933, the Jubilee year of the 1900th anniversary of redemption, on Sunday, May 7th, the feast of St. Joseph’s patronage, Fr. Mathew Alakalam and Fr. Joseph Paredom outlined a new way of religious life in the Church. The MCBS congregation was born. They entrusted its members with a religious life marked by love and single-minded devotion (*bhakti*) to the Eucharistic Lord and missionary vitality.

Our charism is to live and proclaim the Eucharistic Mystery we celebrate, to gather the children of God around the altar to ‘praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice and to eat the Lord’s Supper’ and to uphold the real presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

I love my congregation and thank God always for leading me here. Being an MCBS priest, I believe that God has infused in me a love for the Eucharist. I always enjoy two things – sitting before the Blessed Sacrament and celebrating Holy Mass. At the beginning of my priesthood, when I underwent health issues, these two helped me overcome

those struggles and to see life positively. I found God's presence in every event and experience of my priestly life. From the second year of priesthood onwards, one of my favorite prayers is the *Magnificat* (the Cantic of Mary). When I recall the last sixteen years of priestly life, I can proudly say, 'God has done great things for me...' (Luke 1:49).

How did you develop a love for the youth ministry?

Young people are one of the significant voices within the Church. Their future, in some ways, depends on how the Church evolves in their time and how well they take up the task of living the Gospel. The Church must become the travelling companion of its young people as in the footsteps of 'Jesus who walked with the disciples to Emmaus'. During my theological studies of formation, God allowed me to work with young people in different parishes and the congregation also gave me the opportunity to conduct youth retreats, youth programmes, youth pilgrimages, etc. When I was appointed assistant parish priest in the diocese of Changanassery², the parish priest gave me free rein to animate the young people by conducting various activities. Later, placed in various communities of our congregation, God gave me the opportunity to develop my special call of working with youth.

I remember my life in Sannidhana Ashram, Malayattoor³, where I deepened my love for the Eucharist and discovered the need to minister to young people. Once, a few young people asked me to accompany them for their night vigil at Malayattoor *mala* (mountain). Initially we were only a few, but later it became a big group. There I witnessed the passion youth have to follow and witness Christ. Moreover, I could see the urgent need for pastoral care young people await from us, priests. Seeing my involvement with the youth ministry, the congregation sent me for youth ministry studies to Salesian College, Bangalore⁴. After its completion, I was appointed spiritual director of Jeevalaya Major Seminary, Bangalore. It was a great experience to work with young religious and to teach them about youth ministry; with the help of seminarians we arranged many

youth programmes in the campus for the laity and religious. Gradually, God was deepening my call to accompany young people. When I completed my term in the seminary, I was sent for further studies on youth ministry to Rome.

I believe it is during the novitiate period that you got introduced to the Jesus Youth movement. How do you recall that period?

Recalling my association with Jesus Youth movement, I see God's guidance through the person of my novice master. It is God who sends someone to guide us when we really trust him. My novice master made me realise my capability to work with the youth. When I was in Bangalore for my postgraduate studies in youth ministry, he encouraged and helped me be a part of the movement and invited me to celebrate Holy Masses and animate programmes for JY groups. During my time at Jeevalaya Seminary, the Karnataka⁵ JY Nurses



'Dear Jojo, you have to become a holy priest; for that pray to God, do small sacrifices, hold on to Mother Mary. My prayers are always with you.'

Ministry invited me to be their animator, giving me the chance to be more involved with the movement. I participated in various gatherings of the JY Nurses Ministry across cities in Karnataka; prayed with them, celebrated Masses, guided adorations and got involved in discussions with them. I could see their passion and vibrancy to live the Christian identity and share the Gospel; I began to love the movement more. Also, I could encounter the challenges they faced in the context of migration and the necessity of pastoral care.

My licentiate on the theme *youth formation of Jesus Youth*, and being an animator in the movement for three years provided me with explicit insight into the reality of and the movement's influence among migrant Christian youth. Carrying the experiences of my life with JYM, I moved to Rome for my further studies. I decided to study more about the movement and decided to help the migrant youth. My first-hand experience convinced me of the importance of nurturing discipleship among youth, which is vital to attain fullness of their Christian life in the family, in the Church and in society. The current phenomenon of migration and displacement affects the lives of millions of youth throughout the world, including the youth of Kerala living abroad. The research demonstrates how important it is to nurture discipleship among Christian youth, and analyses the involvement of Jesus Youth in nurturing discipleship among Christian youth in migration.

You have been in Rome for a couple of years now. How has the experience been?

Every experience enhances the life of a person. My stay in Rome has been a blessing. Various experiences have deepened my priesthood. In the Year of Mercy, there was a day of confession for the youth at the Vatican. Many priests made themselves available for the sacrament of reconciliation. Most inspiring was to see Pope Francis himself sitting in the confessional for these young souls. Being a shepherd of the Church, he witnessed his love and care for his sheep. I was touched by those moments, how he esteemed the youth with his availability, listened to them in

confession and identified himself with the Master. This made me deepen the value of my priesthood. Pope Francis's presence in the confessional touched many young people, who were drawn to the sacrament and experienced healing and forgiveness. It inspired me to be more available in confessionals, to listen to young people and bring them healing.

I had many chances to attend and concelebrate Holy Mass with Pope Francis. It was my greatest desire to meet Pope Francis personally and God arranged it for me. In April 2018, I had the joy of concelebrating a private Mass with the Pope in the chapel of Santa Marta. After Mass, I was able to speak to him, introduced myself and my studies on youth ministry. He blessed me and said, 'it is the need of the Church, let your studies and ministry enkindle many youth'. Similarly, there are many blessings I have received during my stay in Rome. God has been gracious to take care of all my needs, sending many generous souls my way. I cherish these blissful years of experience in Rome.

Additionally, my association with JY continued by connecting with JY friends. I could participate in the Rexband, when they performed in Rome. There I met Manoj Sunny and the friendship gradually developed. He supported me a lot in my studies by sharing available resources on the movement as well as his experiences, which enriched my research. Through him I contacted all the national coordinators to collect data for the survey on 'discipleship and youth ministry'. All of them encouraged me and helped collect responses from the youth. The research inspired me to commit and contribute more to Jesus Youth.

What are some of those eye-opening findings in your research journey, and how can we act upon these?

The purpose of the research, *Nurturing Discipleship in Youth Ministry: An Empirical-Theological Research on Christian Discipleship among the migrants of Jesus Youth Movement*, was to evaluate the effectiveness of the movement's youth ministry in nurturing Christian discipleship among Christian youth. Using an empirical (based on observation/experience)-theological method, the

theory of Christian discipleship in the context of Catholic youth ministry and the JY movement has been discussed, and empirically verified among JY migrants.

When reviewing the thesis literature, the nature of the JY movement as interlinked to the goal of Catholic youth ministry is revealed. If young people are not empowered to be full, active, conscious participants within the life of the Church, then youth ministry within the Church will have failed in nurturing their baptismal calling of discipleship. The call to be a disciple is – *to adhere to, to walk behind, to stay close to* – to follow Jesus and share in his mission. The theoretical part of the research sets the stage for the empirical part. The study brings to light that Jesus Youth movement is significantly effective in nurturing Christian discipleship among young people. Furthermore, based on the findings and discussions on the current study, Jesus Youth has to address some urgent priorities. I share here mainly three findings of the study.

First, Jesus Youth movement constantly creates missionary disciples among young people. Pope Francis writes, 'Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel' (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20). The current study brought to light that the movement takes this challenge as its own mission and cultivates *missionary discipleship* among young people and sends them to different countries carrying the mission of the Church, *to make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you* (Matthew 28:19-20). By fostering missionary discipleship among Jesus Youth migrants, the movement remains a missionary force of the Church.

Second, the movement provides young people *a suitable environment* for experiencing discipleship – to intensify their Christian faith and experience in Christ. The community has an important role in the accompaniment of young people; it should feel collectively responsible for accepting, motivating, encouraging and challenging them. The study manifests that the JY community

is a suitable setting for young people to grow as disciples and it has to take into account the specific role of other interlinked and interdependent milieux of youth ministry: parish community, Catholic schools, and youth associations.

Third, Jesus Youth introduces an *effective discipleship model* through its youth ministry. American Catholic theologian Arthur Canales has defined youth ministry models from a broad based theological and Catholic perspective. The research explores four of his models, such as the biblical-hermeneutic model, the servant-leadership model, the Christian discipleship model and the liberation model that can be applied to Catholic youth ministry. The study brought to light that all four models were closely connected to the youth ministry of Jesus Youth. Furthermore, the youth ministry model of discipleship derived from the movement moves young people to experience a deep and rich theological and spiritual life.

Based off your experience interacting with young adults from across the globe, what would be your message for them?

My favourite saint is Francis of Assisi. I read a lot about him, reflect on him, speak about him, and have even got the opportunity to attend a week-long retreat in Assisi with brother priests of my congregation. The most attractive thing in his life is that he lived in this world for a small period of time, but lived life in its fullness for and identified with the Master. So, my message to young people everywhere is, 'it's not the span of our life that matters, what matters is we live it in fullness for God and others.' ■

¹⁻³ Kottayam is a district while Changanassery and Malayattoor are places in Kerala, India.

^{4,5} Bangalore is a city in the South Indian state, Karnataka.



A former William J. Clinton Fellow and TEDx speaker, Noel Benno is a Technology Strategy Consultant and enjoys cooking fish and meat while not busy with charts and excel sheets.

IN FOCUS

REMEMBER THE LORD'S LAUGHTER

Dr. Joby Cyriac asks us to think often about the moments of joy Jesus would have celebrated, as we are called to celebrate life.

We have just celebrated the birth of our Lord, having prepared for his arrival with Advent. That tiny crib lit our homes and our hearts with its divine simplicity and joy. The little infant in the manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes comes to us with a peaceful, beaming face, as a true bundle of joy.

Every visualisation of the Nativity scene sends us vibes of celebration. But how do we usually picture the Lord in our mind's eye? Isn't it usually as Christ with his hands stretched out in love and nailed to the cross? Certainly, in moments of pain, the suffering Lord on the cross is a source of comfort and an experience of being deeply understood. However, it may be worthwhile to see the smiling face of Jesus too, at least once in a while. A scene from the now famous web series, where Jesus is seen dancing with his friends is a rare depiction of the jovial side of our Lord. It is desirable that we embrace this face of our Lord too – one who celebrates with his friends and disciples, one who likes to party, surrounded by peals of laughter, one who revels in lighter

moments of sharing and companionship, rubbing shoulders with those on the peripheries of the society.

Holding on to the hand of Jesus who celebrated his life and his mission in the world, how can we celebrate our life too – life with family, friends, nature, workplace, community, and the like? How can we practise joyful living, at every stage of our life? How can we do it both during periods of plenty and in times of aridity?

A blueprint for a joyful life

The term 'celebration' can rake up images of unruly merriment and festivities. While we do need watchful eyes and discerning minds when we celebrate life, how do we decide upon boundaries and when to let go? Surely, we have to tune our ears to the voice of the Lord for that.

In the eight opening lines of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shares 'the Beatitudes', which spell out the guidelines of joyful living, of celebrating life. Through them he reveals the goal of human existence, the culmination of every human effort, by responding to our


natural desire for happiness God placed in our hearts. We are in this world now, to love and to serve him and to come to paradise. CCC explains 1717: 'They (the Beatitudes) express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the action and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations'.

In order to celebrate our lives experiencing the Kingdom of God and entering into the joy of the Lord, we have to make decisive moral choices. We have to purify our hearts of our base natures and seek the love of God above all else. Our celebration must be rooted in the understanding that 'true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in fame or power, or in any human achievement... but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love'. The beatitudes give us the blueprint for Christian living.

Celebrating relationships

Life, we say, is a celebration of relationships. The experience of love – of giving and receiving love – is the essence of celebrating relationships. First and foremost is my relationship with the Lord. The essence of being a Christian is to be able to say from the heart, 'Jesus loves me'. And it is this experience of God's love that gives us joy, balance and peace.

Then comes my relationship with others. How can I celebrate the ways I relate to another person? Martin Buber speaks about two ways of relating. 'I-thou' and 'I-it'. The former where we relate to each other as authentic beings, without judgement. The encounter is characterised by mutuality, directness, and presence. When I meet the other as 'thou', the encounter becomes a



'LEAVE THE PAST TO THE INFINITE MERCY OF GOD, THE FUTURE TO HIS PROVIDENCE, GIVE THE PRESENT WHOLLY TO HIS LOVE BY BEING FAITHFUL TO HIS GRACE' – A PERFECT RECIPE FOR A LIFE OF CELEBRATION.

celebration of a relationship in which both become fully human. The uniqueness and individuality of the other person is experienced and at the same time, a common humanness is also shared.

Being loved and accepted for my own sake, not for my achievements, positions, talent or performances, gives me security, safety and contentment. It is this unconditional giving and accepting that makes 'I-thou' relation a celebration. But in this world of sick hurry, over-taxed minds, and divided aims we do miss out on this. Sadly, many a time, smartphones keep people absurdly out of touch, and the much-hailed connectivity doesn't do much to bridge distances between people. Celebrating relationships as 'I-thou' is easier said than done. We need to creatively find ways to do that with our spouses, children, youth, friends, parents, grandparents, the sick, homeless, the refugees and those in prison. We need to strategise, because every encounter with another person is a vocation to love.

Different folks have different ways

of celebrating – different ways of experiencing this foretaste of divine joy. For one person it could be silence, while for another, giving, and for a third, gratitude. A patient listening to your aged parent, a moment to kneel down and hug your waiting child, a touch of physical intimacy with your spouse, hand-holding a classmate through a challenging academic task, a random act of kindness and empathy to a needy soul, the first step taken to mend a relationship, a readiness to forgive without strings attached, a gift expecting no returns – all these can create exquisite moments of celebration for a discerning person.

Even when the fig trees do not blossom

Can a person celebrate amidst trials of life? For a Christian, even a tragedy is a matter of celebration; in fact, Christian tragedy is a contradictory term. How can it be so? This is where pain and suffering take the divine meaning which St. Alphonsa celebrated. Suffering can be salvific. It is the awareness of the uplifting summer within the depth of a heartbreaking winter that helps you rejoice in the Lord, even when the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines.

'Work is love made visible'

Our workplaces can become places of celebration when we realise that the duties of each moment are shadows behind which hides divine operation. Clarity of purpose precedes celebration of an act. Why am I doing this? What purpose drives me in this task? What is my destination? What is the product and how is the process? Finding answers to these questions can connect us to the fountainhead of joy, turning work into 'love made visible'.

Mother Teresa wrote these words to Naveen Chawla, who authored her biography, 'All you do, all you write, do it all for the glory of God and the good of all people. Let your book be love for God in action'. She was a woman who made love fruitful in service to the poor and needy. Hers was a celebration of faith and love marked by an unwavering clarity of purpose. Like her, we are also called to partake in the mission of Jesus.

Pointers to Teens, Youth & Families

ANITHA BABU

FAMILIES

- ▶ Celebrate anniversaries and birthdays or day-outs where family and friends come together and nurture relationships.
- ▶ Celebrate one-to-one moments between husband-wife, father-child, mother-child and siblings, which deepens these bonds.
- ▶ Celebrate memories. Purposefully create memories that can be cherished forever. Get-togethers, picnics, family chit-chats, eating-out, working together, shopping times.
- ▶ Get actively involved in socially responsible activities and celebrate your social role.
- ▶ Celebrate spirituality as a family. Attend Holy Mass, confession and other sacraments together. Attend a retreat together at least once in a year and replenish the spiritual strength.
- ▶ Have a spiritual mentor to guide and help you celebrate inner peace and happiness.

TEENS AND YOUTH

- ▶ Celebrate your passion: travelling, designing, vlogging, cooking, farming... Go for it and do what you enjoy.
- ▶ Celebrate successes. Build on your talents and dream big. Create your best self.
- ▶ Celebrate friendship. Have friends. A lot of them. Play.
- ▶ Celebrate wellness. Be health conscious, try out new styles in dressing, look good and confident, care for oneself, work for a good career and be financially independent.
- ▶ Get actively involved in social media. Use it wisely and for good.
- ▶ Celebrate your relationship with God. Remember your creator in the days of your youth. Practice enthusiasm, forgiveness and spiritual union.
- ▶ Develop your identity – self, ethnic, religious and human. Be responsible, reliable and decisive.
- ▶ Volunteer – contribute to society. Feel self-esteem, honour and dignity.

The sacrament of the present moment

Many a time, celebration of life goes hand in hand with the experience of living in the present. Dwelling excessively in our past or focusing obsessively about the future can rob us of 'now', making us incapable of discovering the sacrament of the present moment. 'To escape the distrust caused by regret for the past or fear about the future this is the rule to follow', says Jean Caussade: 'Leave the past to the infinite mercy of God, the future to his providence, give the present wholly to his love by being faithful to his Grace' – a perfect recipe for a life of celebration.

The ceremony of innocence

For whom is celebration? Can any attribute of age or gender, class or

position, wealth or power decide the quality of joyful living in a person? It's the ceremony of innocence – the childlike love and openness, the interdependence and vulnerability – that qualifies you to be a celebrant of life.

Taking inspiration from the blessed infant in the manger and the smiling face of Jesus, let us celebrate our life, relationships and work, with an innocence and humility that rejoices in the Lord even in times of trials. May the *Magnificat* of Mother Mary ring in our ears every day of our lives. ■■



Dr. Joby Cyriac is a faculty member of Marian College Kuttikkanam in Kerala, India. He currently serves as Head, Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Celebrating Life, Every Moment

Limi Kalapurackal ponders on how one can live with joy and celebrate every moment in life.

Honestly, when I received the theme for this article, I was like, 'Oh yeah this seems rather straightforward'. However, once I started reflecting on it a bit more I realised how deep and complex the topic is. Like any social being, I decided to discuss this with friends and find their thoughts. Some of them kept it simple while others were quite eager to elaborate. What you are about to read here is my effort to unpack this deep, philosophical topic based on my own ideas and inspired by the many chats with friends. Mind you, I could write pages on this topic, and it took some effort to organise my thoughts and jot it down in a structured manner. So please hold on there.



I would like to start off by defining the word 'celebrate'. A quick Google search tells me that celebrate is defined as 'to acknowledge (a significant or happy day or event) with a social gathering or enjoyable activity'. Interesting... A few terms that stand out to me within this definition: **significant, happy, and social**. What is a significant event? Are only happy moments to be celebrated? If we celebrate alone, is it not considered a celebration anymore? Surely, some moments in our lives may be more significant than others. Similarly, there are times when we are not too happy with life. If we were to strictly adhere to the given definition, celebrating every moment in life may seem impossible. Let's go beyond this definition and see why and how we ought to celebrate every moment in life.

One recurring theme among my friends' reflections is gratitude and celebrating the small things in life. A celebration need not only be for a 'significant' day or event (e.g. graduation, birthday, baby showers, etc.), instead every little thing in life requires to be acknowledged and celebrated. Society has witnessed such development that we now take for granted the many things our parents or grandparents dreamed of. And we don't realise its value until it is lost. There is a saying in Malayalam which loosely translates, 'when we have eyes, the value of sight is not known'. Now, apply this to any materialistic or non-materialistic aspect of our lives. Be it the security we have in the countries we live in, the clothes we own, the ability to breathe, the gadgets we purchase, or the beauty of nature we can see – all of these could be the heartfelt longings of someone else...Once that person receives their wish, they will surely celebrate it, so why don't we celebrate the big and small blessings we already have?

I love the following lines of the song 'Endless Alleluia':

*In the moments where You go unnoticed
In the ordinary day to day
Countless miracles of life around us*

Point like arrows to Your name

If you are someone who has encountered Christ you know how it feels to be filled by his love and mercy. At times we see that this 'energy' unfortunately drops over time. We may have big expectations of having extraordinary encounters every day and when that desire isn't met, we may feel lost. I believe that the lyrics above are a good reminder to see the Lord in everything and everyone around us. Even in the ordinary mundane activities, he is present with us, working miracles within and around us. Now, how does that not require a celebration?

Recently, I read a novel where two teenage boys are told they only have 24 hours at the most to live. Their transformed approach and passion for life is truly inspiring. Let's face the truth – depressing though it be – that we are all going to take our last breath some day and it could be in the next moment. Sometimes we are blinded to this harsh fact, missing out on cherishing every

'While happiness is an emotion that fluctuates, joy is a mindset that comes from the Lord and helps to celebrate every moment in life without being consumed by the negativity around us.'



moment that could be our last. We tend to make plans for the far future, often also worrying about them, when none of this is in our control. The pandemic has certainly taught us this lesson as we were suddenly limited in several respects. Don't get me wrong, but would you be so taken back by your sorrow if you were told that this was your last moment?

In contrast to sorrow, we have joy on the other end of the spectrum. Cynthia Lewis, a good friend, beautifully differentiated the difference between joy and happiness. According to her, 'While happiness is an emotion that fluctuates, joy is a mindset that comes from the Lord and helps to celebrate every moment in life without being consumed by the negativity around us.' Certainly, easier said than done but I believe that there is a truth to it and St. Paul agrees. In his letter to the Romans he says, *May the God of hope fill you all with joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope* (Romans 15:13). Similarly, his reminder in Galatians 5:22 that joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Joy and hope are hence linked through the Spirit and one who is filled by this joy can find hope even in dark times. This not only allows the individual to celebrate every moment in life but reflecting this joy to others helps them make a celebration of life too.

You might say, 'Bravo Limi! Very good theory, now how do I practise this?' A dear friend, Hentrin Thomas suggests, 'self-acceptance may be a good start'. In a world strongly centered around social media and the self-comparison that arises from it, our lives may seem inadequate. To be able to look at the mirror and fully love the person you see inside-out every day, is a step towards being able to celebrate every moment in life. Knowing that you are a work in progress, created as a masterpiece by your loving Father, may aid in growing in self-acceptance. Self-assurance is the next step- knowing that everything that happens (desirable or not) leads you somewhere and that it is worth it. This is certainly not easy but trusting in God, surrendering every moment in his hands, and acknowledging that every blessing is a gift from him, we will be able to celebrate each moment in life.

'While climbing the ladder of life,

How can we really celebrate every moment in life?

- Be grateful for EVERYTHING you have! There is plenty to be thankful for.
- Enjoy the small things in life, they require celebration too. Open your eyes and see the endless miracles God is working around you. Trust me, there are many!
- Nothing is really in your control anyway, so why worry about the uncontrollable? Let's celebrate instead!
- The Spirit fills us with joy and hope, which will allow us to celebrate every moment in life. Take a moment to invite the Holy Spirit into you.
- Love yourself, trust the process and know that you are a work in progress. Foster a lifestyle of self-acceptance, self-assurance and surrender.
- Take a breather, slow down and enjoy every moment in this rushed world. Your constant run may have blinded you to many blessings around you.

taking some time to look around and enjoying the view is what celebrating every moment of life is to me,' says Rick Jansen, a close friend. We live in a fast-paced world fueled by consumeristic behaviors that are fed by a speed-based economic system. There is little space to accommodate slow activities. Our lives have become so busy that rather than being fully present in the moment, our minds run ahead thinking of the next activity. Our agendas are packed with meetings and appointments which lead to missing out on the blessings around us, as we run from A to B. I admit that I am guilty of this myself. It not only causes my mind to be overly engaged but also risks my being unable to see true beauty in anything. Can you relate?


Taking life a little slower may allow us to be more observant, patient, calm and gentle in this rather rough world. It will help us to see what was previously unseen, both within ourselves and in our surroundings. Psychologically speaking, being busy may cause more stress so taking a breather will keep us mentally sane too. Slowing down will allow us to see beauty in people. It will help us reflect and gain the aforementioned self-acceptance. Remember, *there is a time for everything and a season for every activity*

under the heavens (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Coming back to Google's definition for 'celebrate', I think there is so much more to it! Celebrations include the classic celebrations we all know of but also the smaller everyday moments in life which we ought to be grateful for. With the grace of God, we can celebrate any moment – good or bad. Like the saints, let us grow in self-acceptance, surrendering it all into his hands.

To conclude, you may have a different understanding of what 'celebrating' means but I invite you to take a pause and reflect on what 'celebrating every moment' means to you. Most importantly know that you are loved, and your presence is celebrated by those around you.

God Bless!

P.S. Special thanks to all my lovely friends who shared their words of wisdom on this topic. 



Limi Kalapurackal is from Vienna, Austria and is currently pursuing her masters degree in sustainability as part of a European University initiative. Writing has been her passion since childhood and she often posts her writing on <https://www.instagram.com/limikalapurackal/>.



Simple Joys are Holy

How We Celebrate Life

Dr. Annilyn Sebastian

God created man for love, work, and leisure. It is very important to celebrate the special gift of life that God gave us, and the world God created for us to enjoy.

We are a homeschooling family of 11, and we try to celebrate life as many ways we can within our own family as well as with others. Apart from our routine celebrations of birthdays, special feast days, and liturgical events, there are several ways we try to make this happen.

As a family, we make many trips including two extended trips over about a week to

different destinations each year, to enjoy the different scenic views, explore areas of historic interest, and relax in nature. We also make several day-trips or field trips to local areas. Besides relaxation, these are all great ways to strengthen our family bonds. Our trips in the past have included a wide variety of activities, including lakes, farms, birdwatching trips, beaches, mountains, skiing, kayaking, tubing, resort parks, pilgrimage sites, as well as a host of other activities. We usually take an annual membership each year to

either the zoo or museum that we go to often as we are able. We also take an annual pass for state parks which we explore and go for nature hikes, camping trips, etc.

Another way we try to celebrate the beauty of creation is simply from our own backyard, by watching the stars, moon and planets with our telescope; or understanding the complexity of life with our microscope. We encourage our kids to spend lots of time outside to develop a good appreciation for nature.

We also celebrate life together with others outside

our family. Apart from our JY gatherings and fellowship, we occasionally invite families over during traditional US holidays such as Thanksgiving or Independence Day, and spend time in fellowship. We also come together with other homeschool families and enjoy our time together.

God wants us to enjoy life as we go, and celebrate every moment in its awesomeness! By enjoying time with family, friends, and enjoying the wonders of creation, we will be doing exactly that!

Backpacking to the heart of God

Geo Roncy

There was a small group of people that wanted to see God's creation all while staying in tune with their faith. This idea was called THRIVE and it was a way to enjoy nature and experience the Lord in his creation. This was not your usual gathering because it could not be contained in a church or a hall. Rather, the venue was the world that God created.

Knowing that this gathering was not in the usual meeting places excited many of us and there was an intentionality that arose from this knowledge: that we were all taking the extra step to know and encounter the Lord in and through what he has made for us. This backpacking trip was fun and memorable. We saw many beautiful sights,

made our own food, and enjoyed each other's presence.

Every day Mass was celebrated and a separate time for prayer was kept aside. It was especially through Mass and prayer that many of us felt the presence of the Lord so close to us. The privilege of celebrating Mass outdoors made us realise that the Lord was present at all times, everywhere. We arose to each new day knowing that the Lord had placed in us a purpose, to be joyful missionaries in this world. Each of us took this purpose back home to our realities and have since tried our best to implement this grace.

Without the experience of this backpacking trip, I would have never been so inspired to live for the Lord!



Road-trip through the soul of India

Prejomy Jose

Friendship is a gift to be celebrated with gratitude. Jinto, Sinoj, Prejomy and Renoy took this idea to heart. Though each was busy with families, career and responsibilities, the longing for the warmth of their once cherished friendship could not be put aside. Finally, they decided to come together to celebrate. Travel was a passion that was common to them and when the desert beckoned, they chose Rajasthan as their final destination.

Prejomy flew down from Abu Dhabi to Bangalore to meet his brother Renoy and his friend who arrived from Kerala. Together a jovial road trip stretched before them to meet their beloved friend, Jinto at Rajasthan.

They talked, they drove, they fought and they enjoyed themselves. A short break from the daily hustle and bustle of life was a refreshing experience for all. It was indeed the first time Prejomy had gone on a trip without his wife and their six children. Together the friends spent ample time talking, eating, sharing and appreciating each other. Beyond sightseeing, the ten days spent together in Rajasthan refreshed them anew.

Though they have travelled a lot through the soul of India, the villages, they never missed their daily Holy Mass. It was a miracle that they could attend Holy Mass even at the most remote of places without impacting their travel plan. The warmth of friendship shared and the memories created will fuel their lives to spread the love, joy and fellowship of the greatest friend of all – Jesus.

FAMILIA



He Delivered Impossibility

Dulanjali Achintha recounts the many obstacles she had to face during her pregnancy and how blindly trusting in the God of impossibilities, made everything possible.

To expect a child is a happy moment for all parents and so was it for us. We were praying to God about this for a while and one day I had a dream that I would be getting pregnant the next day. I didn't give it much thought since it was just a dream! This was on a Saturday, and the next day we went for Sunday Mass; coincidentally the Gospel readings were also about how Mother Mary conceived and bore a son. In my heart I claimed this Word and immediately after coming home, we did a pregnancy test. It turned out positive! It indeed was a dream come true!

My pregnancy wasn't as easy as I hoped it would be. At the very beginning of the journey, during a scan I came to know that I had multiple fibroids. This caused many days of suffering during the first trimester with severe pain and uneasiness. There were several occasions where I had to be rushed to the hospital in the middle of the night, thinking that I had experienced a miscarriage. We were very scared and helpless and we began to seek God's hand in this pregnancy. While seeking healing for the fibroids and protection for the unborn baby, during an adoration we attended, we heard this message spoken, 'if God has blessed you with this child, he will make sure that everything goes well'. We claimed this promise and held on to it. But little did we know that it was just the start of a huge faith journey.

We went for our regular checkups as usual, and then came our 20th week scan that tells us more about our baby. Unfortunately, it was not good news. I was diagnosed with a rare condition, where the amniotic fluid (the liquid in the water bag) levels were critically low and the baby's survival was at a huge risk. At first the doctors thought that the water bag may have had a leak and I was losing fluid. Tests were done but by God's grace, there wasn't any indication of that sort.

The investigations continued and the scans showed that the baby hadn't grown as expected due to the low fluid level and that his development was far behind. Many organs such as the brain, abdomen, lungs, and limbs hadn't grown for the gestational age. It was suspected that the baby had genetic disorders and chromosomal deficiency – which would result in a low chance of normal growth in the future. Many growth indexes that were supposed to have positive values by that time were severely showing negative numbers and this confirmed that the baby would be small and skinny. And all these factors pointed out to the baby having something called Intrauterine Growth Retardation (IUGR).

With this, my pregnancy was categorised as high-risk with multiple foetal abnormalities. There was a great chance of the baby being prematurely born at 7 months, which would require NICU incubation (that would cost more than SGD200, 000). I remember our doctor telling us to make arrangements for the funds.

Many blood tests and other procedures were performed on me to find out the cause of the baby's underdevelopment. At one point the doctors insisted that we do an amniocentesis – a procedure in which amniotic fluid is extracted from the water bag but this risked the foetus being miscarried. This test could also confirm if the baby had Down syndrome or any other genetic complication.

It was a very tough call for us. But we prayed about it and in faith we rejected it, because we didn't want to put our baby at risk of being aborted.

Within the course of the days, we were sent for multiple sessions of counselling, where we were told about the difficulties of raising a child with genetic problems. These sessions were devastating for us! After clarifying that there was nothing external that could be done to make the baby grow, the doctors suggested we

terminate the pregnancy!

I couldn't think straight; the only thing I was able to do was continuously cry and find solutions to what we were facing. But as the Word of God says in Exodus 33:14, *My presence will go with you*, we felt that we were not alone in this storm and there was hope at the end of the tunnel.

Days passed by, and we changed our doctor since we wanted to go ahead with this journey with some who was pro-life.

During the scans of the second and third trimester, there were always some issues found. Positive signs of our baby's growth were less and we were told that he was not pulling enough nutrition from the placenta. The blood flow to my uterus was less at the same time and medicine was prescribed to stabilise the pregnancy to avoid a premature birth. To add to all these complications, I developed gestational diabetes and was on high doses of insulin injections and heavy diet restrictions.

With each week close monitoring was done on the baby's growth. The doctor's target was for the baby to reach 2kgs by the end of the 40th week. It was only a miracle that could change the situation and we knew that we needed to pray for one. As James 1:17 states, *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows*. We visualised daily that our baby was going to be perfect and truly believed that God could move mountains for those whom he loved! We recalled the message we received at the beginning of the pregnancy, 'if God has blessed us with this child he will see that everything goes well'.

Despite the fact that what medical science told us was a reality, we knew that the ultimate truth was that Jesus was above the situation and that God could heal our baby. So the first thing we decided was to refuse to believe in what the scans told us and dwelt on what Jesus could do for us instead. Each night, we laid hands on the tummy, thanked and praised loudly, claiming the Word of God that nothing was impossible for Jesus, that only he had authority over our baby's life. I drank holy water daily in faith, asking Jesus to transform every drop of holy water into amniotic fluid so that the baby would survive and grow. My husband fasted and prayed and we read the Bible to our baby, offered rosaries and attended healing services almost on a daily basis.

The last two weeks of my pregnancy approached and we saw things were improving slowly. My amniotic fluid was increasing, blood flow to the womb had improved and the baby was gaining weight! The baby started to kick and I started feeling strong movements! Growth index values which were on negative curves were now turning positive and the baby was showing signs of healthy development! And on the last scan, just one week before my delivery, we heard those magical words from our gynecologist, 'your baby is okay now'!

The day of my delivery approached, and I felt a strong sense of peace and hope. I knew that Jesus would not disappoint us. Throughout this journey, God had taught both of us to blindly trust in him and have faith. And most importantly to believe in the impossible, because our God is a God of impossibilities!

On the 24th of August, I delivered a healthy baby boy. I can't explain the joy we had at that moment! When I held the baby in my hands, we figured out how perfect he was! A birth weight of 2.7kg, a full term pregnancy and a baby with zero genetic or chromosomal disorders unlike predicted! The initial screening revealed that all his organs were perfectly formed! Jesus invalidated all the predictions and issues that medical science threw at us! He saved our baby's life and proved that he is above everything and nothing is too hard for him! Surely if God is for us, nothing can be against us!

We named our baby 'Shamel' which means comprehensive! And with this we thank Jesus who indeed performed a miracle and made the impossible happen! *So let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful* (Hebrews 10:23).



Dulanjali was the former assistant coordinator of Jesus Youth Singapore and lives with her husband Achintha and baby Shamel in Singapore

As James 1:17 states, Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. We visualised daily that our baby was going to be perfect and truly believed that God could move mountains for those whom he loved!



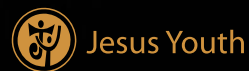
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Living life

C E L E B R A T I N G E V E R Y M O M E N T I N L I F E

I learnt the English language through Hindi, so the verb 'to celebrate' in Hindi, holds several meanings like to persuade, expostulate, or commemorate. I have always associated the latter with the meaning of celebrate, it isn't always about the joy. You can commemorate a sad event too.

You can celebrate (read commemorate) an event/moment by writing a journal about it, talking to a friend about it, praying about it and literally anything you do about it, once it's reinforcing the memory of the event, it's a valid celebration.

IYERIN SABU / IRELAND

► Everything that happens to you shapes you as a person. And even bad things happening to you or bad decisions you make are moments that you learn and grow from. So accepting that these moments have happened and being glad that they helped you grow as a person is what I think celebrating every moment in life is.

LAURENCE MOUTAFOV / THE NETHERLANDS

► Living everyday with Christ in full surrender, knowing that no matter what, everything will turn out for good; that everything we go through in life is totally worth it.

HENTRIN THOMAS / IRELAND

It is joy that helps me to celebrate every moment of life, not happiness. Happiness is an emotion that fluctuates with circumstances while joy comes from the Lord and does not depend on outside circumstances but rather it's a heart attitude.

CYNTHIA LEWIS, ITALY

► To me, 'celebrating every moment in life' means to take some time to reflect on past experiences and be grateful for the blessings to today.

RICK JANSEN / THE NETHERLANDS

► Ever since my mom lost some people dear to her, she has adopted this mindset of doing what makes her happy because life could be taken away at any moment. For me, it is to see joy in everything around me and cherishing togetherness.

ELINE VAN BALLEGOIJ / IRELAND

► 'We need never be hopeless, because we can never be irreparably broken.' I really like this quote from John Green's *Looking for Alaska*. When I think of celebrating every moment in life, it's about being grateful and hopeful. If things are going well, be grateful, and if they aren't, be hopeful.

EVELYN VINCENT / IRELAND





I would think about enjoying every moment in life because they always change. So instead of hoping and waiting for the next big thing, be present in the moment, in every moment.

DANIEL PAUL / UNITED KINGDOM

▶ When I was younger, the health of my parents went down pretty fast, and I did not realise how grateful I should have been for having them. Seeing their health going down pretty quickly, I realised that I should celebrate every moment in life, as quality of life can decrease suddenly.

CYNTHIA STRUIJK / THE NETHERLANDS

▶ Appreciating the 'small' but significant happenings in your daily life. Like conversations you have or gestures you notice.

SANGEETHA AVARAPATT / AUSTRIA

▶ Imagine you had to break down a wall and it took you 20 hits with the boulder to break it down. It's not just the 20th hit that broke the wall but the 19 before that too. Sometimes we look at just the last big one and forget about the 19 ones before. Essentially it is all those little trials, mistakes, failures, falls – that we don't celebrate enough. Celebrating can come in different ways. Sometimes people think it requires a lot of people to celebrate but sometimes people just want to be all alone and that's not sad!

JENITTA JIMMY / IRELAND

▶ To celebrate every moment is like enjoying the breeze, the flying autumn leaves, watching the patterns and colours of sky, watching the birds, seeing the lights, enjoying every morsel of food, conversations with the people, observing people around, etc. To have lived every moment, you have to be present in each of them.

ROSEMARY KURIAN / IRELAND

Am I celebrating every moment of my life with what I have at that present moment? For example, let's just say I only have 10 euros with me. Am I able to celebrate the moment with that? I would probably get two double cheeseburgers, fries and a drink, share it with a friend over a good conversation and have a good memory of it. That could be my way of celebrating every moment in life.

Does that celebration bring you joy and memory with it? Am I able to celebrate the moment even in the worst stages of my life? Am I able to cherish life, to celebrate the good with and share in the not-so-good of my family and friends?

ROSHEN REJI VARGHESE / IRELAND

STORY

Andrea

Devout Catholic, Andrea has just recently joined her new job. Extremely demanding work, an ever-angry boss and an atheist colleague become her new reality. When she earns the respect and friendship of Michelle, her work buddy, Andrea reveals the story of her past.

AUTHOR

Sijumon Abraham

PART III

As they prayed, Caroline's words faltered and tears streamed down her cheeks. Andrea, too, began to weep. They both felt the strong presence of Jesus. 'Mom ... I had thought of aborting the baby ...' Slowly, she unburdened her heart to her mother and Jesus.

'Baby, you know that abortion is wrong. It is murder.' Caroline spoke to her calmly.

'I know... I know, Mama, but what else can I do? My studies, my dreams – all that I worked for will be lost!'

'Andrea, leave all your worries to Jesus! He will be with you and guide you. Tomorrow before Holy Mass we can go for confession.' Together, they prayed till late in the night, surrendering all their worries to Jesus.



'Your Frappuccino is melting!' Michelle reminded.

'Oh, right! I forgot the time; your father must be looking for you. We'll talk later, Michelle,' Andrea said.

'Sure, but tell me, does Jesus really exist? How can your mom talk to him?'

'Of course he does!' Andrea replied. 'Jesus is real, he talks to everyone, but we need to learn to listen to him.'

'Interesting! Maybe I'll come visit your church one day.'

'Sure. You can come with me next Sunday. We can go for the evening Mass.'

'Okay. Sounds good,' Michelle replied.

'Bye Michelle! Take care.'

'You too.'

Michelle remained with her father till he was discharged from the hospital. When she returned to work on Wednesday, she was surprised to see her desk cleaned up.

'That must be you?' asked Michelle, indicating her well-ordered workstation.

Andrea smiled and said, 'Hope you don't mind.'

'Oh dear, thank you so much,' said Michelle, taking Andrea's hand gratefully.

'By the way, my father was so happy to meet you. He said that your visit made him feel a lot better.'

'That's not my doing. It was Jesus,' replied Andrea with a smile.

'You know, Andrea, I can feel something different now; especially after Dad's recovery,' Michelle said softly. 'And I really want to hear the rest of your story!'

Andrea smiled at her.

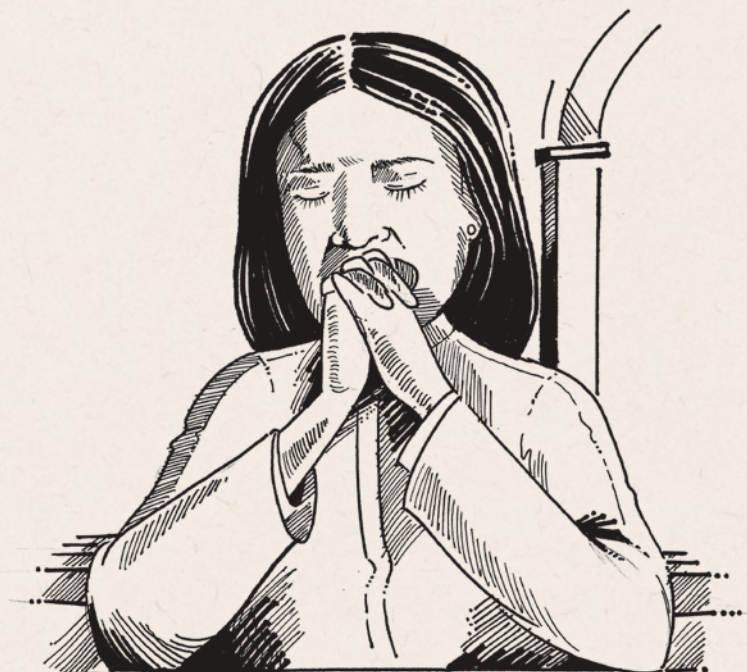
That morning, Michelle busied herself with all the pending work that even Andrea was surprised at all that she managed to finish. During lunch break, at Michelle's insistence, Andrea continued with her story.



'Are you working today, Mamma?' Andrea asked her mother.

'No, sweetheart. I wanted to be with you.'

They were silent on the way to church. This gave Andrea time to reflect upon her spiritual state and prepare for a good confession. Unfortunately, when they reached church, the confessional was empty. Caroline continued to pray, believing that Jesus had a plan.



Story illustrations: Binu KP, Ireland

After Mass, Caroline went to the parish office and sought out a priest, 'Father, my daughter would like to make a confession, do you have time?'

'Oh, I have a house visit now. Could you wait in the adoration chapel and pray? I will be back in 30 minutes,' Father replied.

'Yes, Father, we will wait. Thank you!' Caroline replied.

She brought Andrea to the adoration chapel. They sat down close to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and began to pray. Slowly Jesus began to speak to Andrea.

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future' Jeremiah 29:11.

The Bible verse she had learned in her school days kept echoing in her head. She looked at Jesus and cried bitterly.

Caroline took Andrea's hands in her own and said to her, '*Children are a gift from the Lord; they are his reward* Psalm 127:3.' Unable to control the freely falling tears, Andrea looked down; Caroline continued, '*Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself* Matthew 6:34.'

'Jesus, I do not want to kill my baby, can you help me?' pleaded Andrea.

Caroline reached her hands out and enveloped Andrea in an embrace, 'Jesus will be with you and I will take care of you and our baby'.

Andrea simply closed her eyes and wept.



'I made a good confession that day,' Andrea said, wiping

away her tears. 'That gave me the strength I needed against aborting the baby. And I gave birth to a baby boy.'

'Wow!' said Michelle, overwhelmed. 'And what happened to your studies? Your dreams?'

'I finished my studies while pregnant and took a year off to pursue my dreams.'

'And the cycling competition? Were you ever able to compete in that?' asked Michelle.

'I did, yes. Not just the nationals but also the Southeast Asian championships. I was champion for a couple of years! I never dreamed it would happen, but it did. Praise God!'

'That's amazing! Southeast Asian cycling champion!' Michelle gushed. 'And your son? What does he do now?'

Realising that their lunch break had come to an end, Andrea said, 'I think we are late. I will introduce him to you next Sunday.'

'Great!'

'And when you meet him, you can ask what he does yourself!' Andrea said with a smile.



The next Sunday, Michelle texted Andrea: 'When should I reach your church?'

'Mass starts at 5 pm. If you can come a little early that would be nice.'

'Ok sure, see you then!'

Michelle reached Good Shepherd Cathedral by 4:30 pm and was just about to reach for her phone to call Andrea, when she heard a voice behind her.



'Hey Michelle!' Turning around, she saw Andrea and greeted her.

'Where's your son?' asked Michelle.

'Oh, he's inside the church, you can meet him after Mass,' Andrea replied. 'Come on, let us meet Jesus.' She took Michelle to the adoration chapel.

'Years back, Jesus spoke to me personally for the first time in this adoration chapel,' Andrea said as she explained the chapel and the Blessed Sacrament to Michelle. The two walked in. It was empty except for another person, who was praying.

Andrea knelt and bowed before the Blessed Sacrament, while Michelle simply sat down on a chair. She looked at the Blessed Sacrament for a while and looked around. She saw a Bible on a shelf close by and took it. Opening it at random, she began to read. As she did, one verse stood out to her; Michelle began to read it over and over.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'
John 3:16.

They sat there for a while in silence. Michelle was surprised to see Andrea staring at the Blessed Sacrament without averting her gaze; the other person too was engrossed in intense prayer.

After a while, when they came out, Michelle was surprised to see the other person walk towards them with a smile on his face.

'Michelle, meet my husband,' said Andrea.

'Hello,' Michelle smiled warmly.

'Hi Michelle, I am Evan!'

'Oh! Evan!' Michelle's eyes widened.

'I guess Andrea told you about me,' Evan said, seeing the recognition on her face.

'Yes! She has! Nice to meet you!'

'Come on, Mass is about to start,' Andrea said to them.

They sat down in the second row, keeping a safe distance from other people attending the service. It was all a new experience for Michelle. Holy Mass was celebrated by Father Michael, a young priest. During the homily, he spoke about God's love for humanity and how each person was precious to him.

'And that is why God sent his only begotten Son, Jesus into the world to save us. Whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. My dear brothers and sisters, today our Father God is calling each one of you specially. He wants to draw you closer to him through Jesus, the way, the truth and the life.' Father concluded his sermon.

Michelle remembered the Bible verse she had been thinking about in the adoration chapel. It was such a coincidence to her that the priest said the same thing. And she closed her eyes.

The Holy Mass was a new experience for Michelle. She felt an indescribable peace come upon her after Mass. When she saw the Father greeting parishioners in front of the church and blessing them, she walked up to him.

'Hello Father, I am Michelle. This is my first time at a church service. I was very touched by your sermon,' she said.

'Hello Michelle, I am Father Michael. It's a pleasure to meet you and I am sure you have chosen the right place to seek God.'

'Thank you, Father, I hope to see you again.'

'Certainly, God bless you, Michelle.'

Michelle turned and went to look for Andrea and Evan.

'Hi, sorry, thanks for waiting, I just wanted to thank Father Michael,' Michelle apologised to Andrea.

'Oh, no problem,' Andrea replied with a smile.

'By the way, where's your son?' asked Michelle.

'Come!' Andrea told her.

She followed as Andrea and Evan both walked back towards the church's main entrance. The last of the parishioners had just walked away from him as Father Michael looked up and beamed.

'Hi, Mom! Hi Dad!' Father Michael said as he came and hugged them both.

Michelle stopped abruptly. She could not believe it!

'Michelle, meet our son, Father Michael! He was ordained just a few months ago,' Andrea said, pride unmistakable in her eyes.

'... Wow! Father Michael is your son! That's incredibly beautiful!' Michelle's eyes were moist, and her words were broken, but she tried to express her happiness.

Later, as they were about to bid Father Michael goodbye, Michelle said, 'Can I ask you all a question?'

'Sure!' They answered in unison.

'How do I become a Catholic?' Michelle asked with a smile. ■■



Sijumon Abraham is an IT manager by profession. He served as National Animator of JY Singapore from 2017 to 2021. He lives in Singapore with his wife Sindhu and five children.



LATEST RELEASES
BY KAIROS PUBLICATIONS

Miracles that came My Way

Sports Commentator and author of *My Way – The biography of M L Jaisimha*, **A Joseph Antony** remembers how providence took care of his needs and more as his book took shape.

THE SMILE SAYS IT ALL: Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella with *My way—The biography of M.L. Jaisimha*. In his autobiography *Hit Refresh*, Nadella wrote, 'The only poster I really wanted was one of my cricketing hero, the Hyderabad great, ML Jaisimha, famous for his boyish good looks and graceful style, on an off the field.'

The odds were stacked heavily against it. Rejected by every publisher and distributor approached, it came close to being abandoned. A stunning revelation from Psalm 138 led to a printing sponsorship and the book took shape. *My way—the biography of M.L. Jaisimha* (Apple Books, Amazon) is currently No. 11 (as of December 4, 2021) among cricket's all-time bestselling biographies as ranked by Forbes, CNN and Inc¹ (It was No. 1 from July 2020 to February 2021 but dropped due to my poor marketing).

Former Indian test cricketer M L Jaisimha – hero to Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, cricket's best ever opener Sunil Gavaskar and Eden Gardens' legend VVS Laxman – passed away in 1999. When his widow asked me to write his biography, I plunged headlong into the project without really discerning God's will on the same. In time, I realised the Lord was with me all the way!

In one of my earliest emails to Laxman, recently appointed head coach of the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru², I wrote that this task involved three Js. The first is Jesus Christ who can make it possible. The second is Jaisimha, the subject of the biography. The third is Joseph, the one to pen the life-story of a flamboyant cricketer, who made his debut at Lord's (Cricket Ground, London).

One morning, after Holy Mass at Capitanio Convent, Begumpet, Hyderabad³, Sr. Christine Rebello, the then principal of St. Francis College for Women stopped me. 'Something is really worrying you,' she said. I lied that everything was fine. She insisted on knowing the truth.

I told her about the book project that wasn't taking off, despite Sunil Gavaskar twice mentioning me by name in his column syndicated across the country and overseas too, perhaps. While I had hoped to work in secret, word got out and friends made fun of me for the delay.

Cash-strapped at the time, I couldn't visit Jaisimha's friends in other cities to research his biography properly. In a single day, Sr. Christine obtained approval from higher-ups in the order to give me a grant of Rs. 20,000!

When the manuscript took shape,



there was all-round rejection of the work from publishers, distributors and sponsors. Since I couldn't afford printing costs, the hunt for a sponsor began. On my behalf, Laxman mailed appeals to several corporate houses with no positive response from any for about a year.

For various reasons, the work floundered till cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle enquired in an email about the book's progress. I replied that I was planning to abandon it since nobody seemed interested. I was very depressed that day and when I got home, I picked up the Good News Bible and randomly flipped it open. My eyes were drawn to one sentence and only that one. It was the last line of Psalm 138, which, strikingly, said, *Complete the work you have begun*. Interestingly on the same table, there were an RSV and Gideon's Bibles. Both don't have this line at the end of the said Psalm. Typically human in my reaction, I was skeptical. 'It's fine for You to say "Complete the work" but where's vitamin M (money) to finish it,' I asked.

In less than a week, Bhogle met PR Man Singh, manager of the 1983 World Cup winning Indian cricket team, who had returned to his native Hyderabad. 'Tell Joseph not to give up on the book. I will pay Rs. 1 lakh towards printing 1,000 copies,' Bhogle asked Man Singh to convey to me.

While I couldn't decide what to do about this offer, I was assigned by *The Hindu* to report a south zone basketball championship in Yanam, Puducherry⁴. Interestingly among all our friends and officials, mine was one of the few mobile phones that could be reached, BSNL being the only service provider with an active network there. One evening, Rose, my wife called to ask whether she should open a couriered packet. I told her to go right ahead. It contained a cheque for Rs. 2.2 lakhs from the TVS Motor Company, arranged through the good offices of Mr. Cecil Dewars, a Vice President and although an Anglican, a Marian devotee.

As it happens with many of us, I thought everything was alright with the arrival of the money. But it took another two years. Many obstacles later, it was launched by Sunil Gavaskar, who also wrote the foreword, on November 14,



CRICKET'S GREATEST OPENER: Sunil Gavaskar (second from left), the game's most eminent commentator now, launches the biography of his all-time hero ML Jaisimha. Also present is VVS Laxman (first on left).

2005. Incidentally, Gavaskar flew down to Hyderabad only to launch the book and left for Mumbai⁵ that same night.

During the launch, a reporter asked me where the book was available. Since there was no one willing to stock it, I still hoped it would do well but if God's will was otherwise, so be it, I replied. A problem of plenty arose, with no place to store the 10,000 copies printed. My devout, daily Mass-going big brother, George, offered to store the 200 bundles, each holding 50 books in his office.

Since there were no retail sales, bulk purchases kept the stock moving. In later years, when I was in a cash crunch, someone would buy 20, 50, 100, 200, 350 or as it happened recently in Covid times, 500 copies, the penultimate figure bailing me out of a couple of back-logs on my housing loan!

When Jesus Youth Hyderabad's Sunny Raj Neelam asked me to share my testimony at the CPG (Central Prayer Group), I was secretly disappointed when just four turned up, which included Sunny, Rose and a young man I never saw again. Less than a month later, I was at the airport heading for Agartala⁶ to report a Ranji Trophy match, when friends called with good news. On November 7, 2017, Avijit Ghosh of the *Times of India*, New Delhi⁷ published a pan-India piece based on my book⁸. It was approved among three pieces by Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, who was the newspaper's guest editor for the day! At the India Today Conclave 2017, Nadella went on

record saying that as a romantic at heart, Jaisimha meant more to him than even Sachin Tendulkar⁹.

Sunny Raj Neelam, I am convinced, was part of God's plan for the book. He decided on his own to publish it on Amazon and Kindle. When he moved to Georgetown University in the US, he placed it on Apple Books too.

As if in response to Amazon's advice for the book's frequent mention in the mass and social media to push sales, help came from many quarters.

VVS Laxman tweeted its launch on Valentine's Day, 2018. Rediff.com published an extract about it. Under-19 World Cup winning captain, Unmukt Chand tweeted its launch on Apple Books. Mr. K. Tarakarama Rao, Telangana¹⁰ Minister tweeted on the eve of the now famous 2021 Brisbane Test. Latest to support it is world rapid chess champion Koneru Humpy.

Post-script: Every day during prayer, I pause for emphasis at Psalm 34:6, which says, *A pauper calls out and Yahweh hears, saves him from all his troubles*. Not only did God provide right from childhood, he would reach out (and still does) through someone or some happening to ensure our needs are taken care of, especially in tough times.

People wonder how this book, the biography of a cricketer who passed away in 1999, continues to find interest over two decades later and readers (even from Japan, according to Amazon's sales)! I would say it is the secret chip embedded in it that keeps it going – the opening line of its Acknowledgements that reads: **Dedicated to Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour, my Shelter and Strength.** ■

⁴ <https://rb.gy/8frxbw>. ²⁻⁷ Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Puducherry, Mumbai, Agartala and New Delhi are cities in India. ⁸ <https://bit.ly/2MPTv3d>
⁹ <https://cutt.ly/gr4zRws>. ¹⁰ Telangana is a state in India.



Sony Sports commentator for FIFA World Cup 2018, Euro, Copa America and Tokyo Olympics 2020/21, A Joseph Antony authored My Way—

The biography of M.L. Jaisimha (Apple Books, Amazon). The Hindu's ex-senior assistant editor is based in Hyderabad, India.



FRANCESCO AS CERBI THE LION WHO BEAT CANCER TO CONQUER EUROPE

Sports Consultant, **Joseph George** writes about Italian footballer and devout Catholic, Francesco Ascerbi.

11th July 2021 gave Italians across the world reason for jubilation. ‘*Forza Italia! Campioni d’Europa!* – Come on Italy! Champions of Europe!’ roared the supporters. Italy was the first and hardest hit country in Europe during the coronavirus pandemic. Loss of human life, economic hardships, travel bans, and unemployment had dealt hard blows in the recent past, but their national team’s success brought cause to forget their sorrows and rejoice in glory.

Italy brought the Euro 2020 trophy to Rome when the English were signing, ‘It’s coming home’. The penalty shoot-out win over England at Wembley, London was a resurrection for the Italian football team. The second European success tasted even sweeter for the 4-time World Champions, as they overcame the failure to qualify for the previous World Cup (FIFA World Cup 2018 in Russia) in some style. The *Azzurris* went on to establish a new world record run of 37 matches unbeaten before Spain got the better of them in the first week of October in the UEFA Nations League semi-finals.

The guiding force behind their success: Roberto Mancini

Italy’s dominant run of 37 matches was spearheaded by Coach Roberto Mancini. He abandoned Italy’s pragmatic defensive approach to adapt an attacking 4-3-3 formation, which gave them a new identity and sense of belief. The Italian football team under Mancini was a hard working unit composed almost entirely of non-superstars, mostly young with a few polished veterans, who did their job at Wembley.

The 57-year-old manager, who won 3 Italian Serie A titles with Inter Milan² (2005/06, 06/07 & 07/08) and the famous Premier League title with Manchester City in 2011/12 collected his 14th trophy as a manager, which was also his first with a national team. The former Sampdoria and Lazio³ attacker, had won 12 trophies during his playing career including the Serie A titles with Sampdoria in 1990/91 and with Lazio in 1999/00. During his playing career, Italy finished 3rd best side in Euro 1988 in West Germany and had to settle for the 3rd place at the 1990 World Cup as well.

The first international trophy was a crowning jewel in the devout Catholic’s cabinet. Roberto Mancini had a small relic of St. Therese of Lisieux in his pocket, when Manchester City won the dramatic Premier League title in 2011/12 season.⁴

Mancini had also made a pilgrimage to the holy village of Medjugorje in Bosnia after his father recovered from a heart attack in 2012. Former altar-boy turned football manager said he didn’t ask God or the Virgin Mary for football help as it wouldn’t be right. ‘I have been very religious since I was a young boy. But I would not say that God or the Virgin Mary

helped me in my career. They have more important stuff to do’, he laughed.

Cancer Survivor to European champion: Francesco Acerbi

Lazio defender Francesco Acerbi was part of the Italian squad which won the Euro 2020. The ‘help’ that Roberto Mancini needed came when his first choice defender and skipper of the national team, Giorgio Chiellini was forced to withdraw due to an injury during Italy’s second game at the Euro 2020, against Switzerland. This at the 24th minute with the game tied at 0-0. Up stepped Lazio’s 33-year-old veteran, Francesco Acerbi, who earned his 14th cap for the national team that night. Italy kept a clean sheet in that match and went on to score 3 goals to secure 3 points in the absence of the skipper.

In the third match against Turkey, Mancini opted to pair youngster Alessandro Bastoni with veteran Leonardo Bonucci, who was handed the skipper’s armband in Chiellini’s absence. Injury played spoilsport yet again, the man wearing the captain’s armband couldn’t complete the game, and once more it was Acerbi who stepped up to the field. Acerbi helped Italy keep another clean sheet and they progressed to the round of 16 as group champions. In the round of 16 game, Mancini went with the pairing of Acerbi & Bonucci to marshal the defence, the teams couldn’t be separated in normal time and in extra time,

Italy scored 2 goals against Austria’s solitary goal to book their Quarterfinal spot. Francesco Acerbi, held the ball upfront and set it up for Matteo Pessina to score Italy’s second which eventually proved out to be the difference maker. Skipper Giorgio Chiellini regained fitness ahead of the quarterfinals and rest, as they say, is history.

As we often see, an injury to key personnel in defence, especially to the skipper can derail any team in a major tournament. Italy held their fort in the absence of their leader, even when they were dealt a double blow, thanks to the experience and calmness of Francesco

Acerbi, who fit the scheme of things like duck to water.

It wasn’t an easy ride for the Milan-born defender, who had to wait until 2014 to make his debut, 35 matches after he got his first call-up to the squad in 2012. Before Mancini took charge of the national team in 2018, Acerbi only had 2 caps to his credit. By the end of 2021, Acerbi accrued 22 caps in the era of Chiellini-Bonucci partnership – the foundation



upon which the Italian national team was built. But Francesco Acerbi was the rock Mancini could rely upon when needed.

During his early days, Francesco Acerbi was a party animal whose career nearly derailed. The youngster was part of the Milan ultras group⁵. At 14, he left a small team to play amateur football with his friends. He got his career back on track in 2008/09 season at the age of 20, with then fourth division side FC Pavia 1911⁶. Two years later, he found himself at Serie B side Reggina 1914⁷. In 2011 he secured a contract with Serie A side Genoa⁸ and then played for ChievoVerona⁹ in Serie A and the next year he found himself making his UEFA Champions League debut for AC Milan¹⁰ against Malaga CF¹¹ and also earned a call up to the Italy national team.

Francesco's father, Roberto, survived multiple strokes but died in 2012, four months before his son signed for giants, AC Milan. He was the one who constantly challenged Acerbi and the dutiful son dedicated his Serie A debut with the following words, 'I did it for my father, not for me'. Years later Acerbi shed some light on his party life, 'I was wearing Alessandro Nesta's No 13 but I was partying rather than training. I used to drink anything and I seriously considered quitting football. Cancer saved my life. I thank God for this.'

In July 2013, during a preseason medical with Sassuolo¹², Acerbi was diagnosed with testicular cancer. The tumour was removed but reappeared soon afterwards, forcing Acerbi to undergo chemotherapy for three months. 'Back then I had no fear. I just wondered why the cancer did not change me. Then, during a Sunday afternoon nap, I had a strange dream. It was like my father and God were the same person, pushing me to improve. I cried and realised that cancer was an opportunity. I had something to fight against again.'

A new life began, night outs were replaced by regular life, training and peaceful evenings. Alcohol was replaced by water, vegetables, fruit, rice and bresaola. Acerbi got his career back on track with 149 appearances in Serie A without missing a match, first for Sassuolo and from 2018 onwards for Lazio. No rest, no injury or suspension for over three years.

Premier League champions in 2015/16 Leicester City came calling for his signature in-between. Acerbi didn't leave the family club Sassuolo, which always stood by him. Acerbi started spending hours with disabled people and children with cancer. Almost every Thursday morning, you could find him in a work smock, assembling fishing floats and modelling clay with disabled workers. 'I feel at home here,' he said. 'These guys hug each other, always say "thank you" and do not judge other people. They help me see life from the right perspective.'

Even after his move to Lazio for Champions League football, his priorities didn't change. He still sees sick

'Back then I had no fear. I just wondered why the cancer did not change me. Then, during a Sunday afternoon nap, I had a strange dream. It was like my father and God were the same person, pushing me to improve. I cried and realised that cancer was an opportunity. I had something to fight against again.'



children and prays to his father. An admirer of Pope John Paul II, Acerbi leads a life inspired by Catholic values.

In July 2019, Bologna manager Sinisa Mihajlovic revealed that he had been diagnosed with an acute form of leukemia. Acerbi put up an Instagram post asking the former Milan manager to show courage. 'You must not give up, you must have courage! These are obvious but true words. Mister, let me tell you to face this bad phase fully, not caring about what you have! Live as if you have nothing and always think positive, COURAGE.'

The Italian national team had visited a Children's hospital in October 2019, and the members of the squad gave away gifts and match tickets to them. When it was time to return, Acerbi was willing to miss the team bus: 'I don't care, they can go. I'll take a taxi. But I won't leave until I've seen everyone.'

Among other things, Acerbi's Instagram bio reads, '*Account ufficiale del Leone*', which translates 'Official account of the Lion'. The lion became a symbol for Acerbi in memory of a little boy who succumbed to cancer. 'He is my lion, he passed away fighting'. Acerbi adopted the nickname, 'Leone', lion in Italian.

The lion who beat cancer to conquer Europe lives a life of Catholic values. ■

¹ The Italian National team is nicknamed Azzurri.

^{2, 3, 6-12} Inter Milan, Sampdoria, Lazio, FC Pavia 1911, Reggina 1914, Genoa, ChievoVerona, AC Milan, Malaga CF, Sassuolo are Italian professional football clubs.

⁴ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/priest-reveals-roberto-mancinis-saintly-1218390>

⁵ Ultras are a type of association football fans, known for their fanatical support.



Software engineer turned sports management professional,

Joseph George is currently sports consultant with Sony Pictures Sports Networks - India. He has worked as producer, commentator, statistician and sports analyst across multiple sporting events in the recent past.

Chandeliers

* Humour and Wit from the Saints



*Grant me, O Lord, good digestion, and also something to digest.
Grant me a healthy body, and the necessary good humour to maintain it.
Grant me a simple soul that knows to treasure all that is good
and that doesn't frighten easily at the sight of evil,
but rather finds the means to put things back in their place.
Give me a soul that knows not boredom, grumblings, sighs and laments,
nor excess of stress, because of that obstructing thing called 'I'.
Grant me, O Lord, a sense of good humour.
Allow me the grace to be able to take a joke to discover in life a bit of joy,
and to be able to share it with others.*

St. Thomas More composed the above prayer for good humour



A young priest once asked Philip Neri on what prayer would be the most appropriate one to say after a wedding Mass. The future saint replied, 'A prayer for peace'.



In the 1940s, Pope John XXIII was still an archbishop and the papal nuncio in Paris. One night, at a grand dinner, he was seated across from a woman wearing a not-so-modest dress with a plunging neckline. Someone turned to him and said, 'Your Eminence, aren't you embarrassed that everyone is looking at that woman?' He replied, 'Oh no, everyone is looking at me, to see if I'm looking at her.'

Once, Pope John XXIII visited a hospital in Rome, called the Hospital of the Holy Spirit and was introduced to the sister who ran it.

'Holy Father,' she exclaimed, 'I am the superior of the Holy Spirit.' 'Well, I must say, you're lucky,' said the pope, delighted. 'I'm only the Vicar of Christ!'

It is requisite for the relaxation of the mind that we make use, from time to time, of playful deeds and jokes.

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

It often happens that I wake up at night and begin to think about the serious problems afflicting the world and I tell myself, I must talk to the pope about it. Then the next day when I wake up I remember that I am the pope.

ST. JOHN XXIII

Once, while St. Teresa of Avila was travelling on horseback to visit a convent, she was thrown from her horse into the middle of a huge muddy puddle. Looking up to heaven, she said, 'If this is the way you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few!'



True Life

Anil Israel asks us to take stock of our lives. Do we live as princes and princesses of the heavenly kingdom or are we like paupers, blind to our royal inheritance?

We are born, we grow and we finally bid adieu. We dream, we pursue, we excel. We fall, we fail, we learn. Life can either make us or break us. Life is not what happens to us, it's all about how we respond to what happens to us. We either think in terms of excuses and miss the fun or dare-to-explore the world of possibilities and enjoy the run. Do we just go with the flow or do we choose to row? Are we merely existing or are we truly living?

Many youngsters in developed countries opt to take a voluntary year off, after their schooling in a potential attempt to discover what they are meant for here on earth, before consciously following the call of their heart. Sadly, some on attaining adulthood, bring their childhood religious practices to a grinding halt, probably under inappropriate misguided peer-influence or a deliberate attempt to concede to one's disillusioned ill-formed immature convictions or perhaps in response to their indigenous search for answers to a cloud of surmounting doubts. After all, no matter

how tall one's parents are in life, we all have our own unique share of learning and growing to do.

Even when surrounded by a strong circle of pious companions, it still takes time for one to reach a conclusion and admit that *now is the acceptable time* (2 Corinthians 6:2) for me to change. The unending list of countless blessings might have failed to draw our attention and we might have failed to see *his power at work in us* (Ephesians 3:20). We all need his merciful patience, for our response to his *marvellous loving kindness* (Psalm 17:7) is as if we are consistently stubbornly *slow at heart* (Luke 24:25).

We think we are trapped in the 'dungeon of darkness' and are unworthy to be in the presence of him *who dwells in unapproachable light* (1 Timothy 6:16). We tend to forget that for him who is *the Light of the world* (John 8:12), *even our deepest darkness is like daylight* (cf. Psalm 139:12). We fail to realise that as *children of light* (1 Thessalonians 5:5) and *co-heirs with Christ* (Romans 8:17), *we are indeed his offspring* (Acts 17:28). We are sons and daughters of the *Lord of lords and the King*

of kings (1 Timothy 6:15). We are princes and princesses of the heavenly kingdom. Yet we end up dragging our lives as if we are paupers, turning a blind eye to the riches reserved for us in the storehouse of *spiritual blessings* (Ephesians 1:3) – our royal inheritance. 'We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures, we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of His Son Jesus' (Pope St. John Paul II).

We once met a religious sister, who left her country and joined a congregation on another continent with an altogether foreign language. While sharing her testimony informally she mentioned that she started discerning her vocation at age 21 and finally decided to join the convent at age 29. What struck me most was her humble confession: *I am so bad. For 8 long years I said 'No' to Jesus*. This made me ponder over all the times I too failed to say 'Yes' to the divine inspirations – the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit. Christ has been waiting in the Eucharist for the past two thousand years. It is encouraging to see senior citizens with mobility challenges coming for daily Mass with their support strollers. Yet, how often have I rejected the *one necessary thing* (Luke 10:42) *to be with him* (Mark 3:14)? How often have I failed to *watch an hour with him* (Matthew 26:40)? How faithful am I to my pursuit of personal holiness? Do I own up genuine responsibility for the eternal salvation of my immortal soul?

Like the prodigal son, we too tend to return to our senses only when we happen to hit rock-bottom – having wasted every lavished blessing. What are the squandered blessings in my life? Do I turn a deaf ear to the early morning nudge to wake up a few minutes earlier than usual to start my day in a quiet time of prayer? Do I end up busying myself from dawn to dusk that I miss to read from the Holy Scriptures a nourishing verse or two? Do I just let things clutter my life that I end up having hardly any time for God? Am I just drifting through life, swayed by the winds of the world, that I am least bothered to

THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM WHO SAVED US › ROMANS 8:37

After all, no matter how tall one's parents are in life, we all have our own unique share of learning and growing to do.



approach the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16)?

Are we so distorted by a culture of rapidly changing lifestyles and superficially laced flavours that we crave only for that which gives us instant gratification? God always answers prayer. It is either no or go or slow. We cannot expect God to always answer now, for he alone knows what's best for us and when we are ready to receive what he has kept in store for us. Being infinitely patient, he wants us also to learn to be *unfailing in patience* (2 Timothy 4:2). Waiting for warm water on a cold winter morning is a strong lesson on *patient endurance* (Hebrews 10:36). We can either take a hurried cold shower and grumble there was no warm water or just be a little patient for the initial cold water to give way to the warm water that will eventually follow.

This reminds us that in order to really cherish, we need to learn to pause and *be still* (Psalm 46:10). For it is when we are in silence that we can hear God speak. We were delighted to be in a prayer session led by the Taizé brothers, where there were no explicit verbal instructions to keep silent. Only a couple of volunteers holding sign-boards that read 'SILENCE', represented a powerful reminder that 'silence is God's first language' (St. John of the Cross).

Your true life is not made up of the things you own, no matter how rich you may be (Luke 12:15). It's not at all about temporal material possessions that will one day wither, decay and fade. It's all about the priceless immaterial things that money can't buy. It's about sharing and caring, loving and forgiving, letting selfishness die and letting selflessness live to the full. In the ebb and flow of life,

may we not forget to cooperate with the present moment grace and celebrate this *ineffable gift* (2 Corinthians 9:15) called 'Life'.

We are more than conquerors through him who saved us (Romans 8:37). 'Dear young people: do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life' (Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 104).

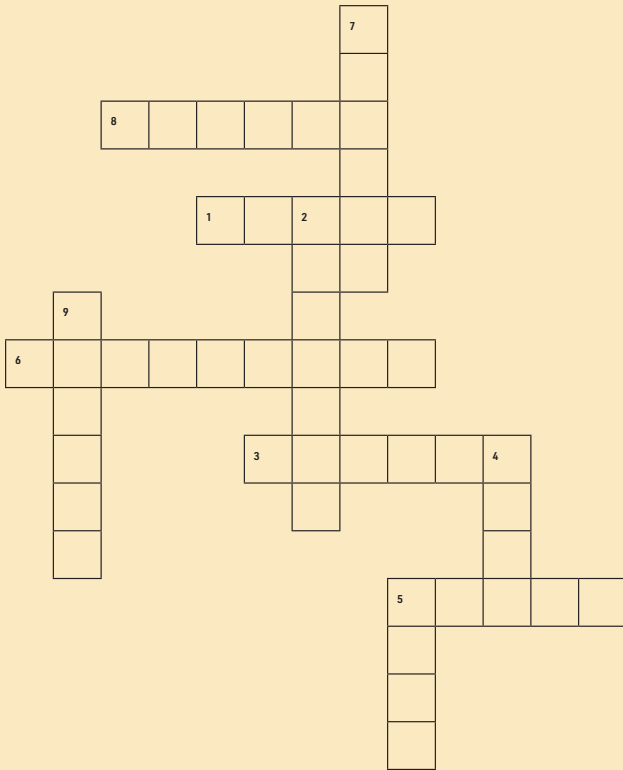


Anil Israel lives in Mannheim, Germany, with his wife Sunitha and their 5 children. He is the current National Formation Coordinator of JY Germany.

Quiz Time



Mail your answers to quiztime@jykairosmedia.org before 31st January 2022.
The winner will be rewarded with 1 year subscription of Kairos Global



PART A

Crossword – Women of the Old Testament

Across

- 1 I was ninety when God blessed me with a son.
- 3 I am the younger daughter of Laban.
- 5 I helped the Israelite spies enter Jericho.
- 6 I am the mother of King Solomon.
- 8 I was able to save the Jewish people from destruction.

Down

- 2 I was born to Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother.
- 4 I am Jacob's wife who bore him six sons.
- 5 I followed my mother-in-law to the land of Judah.
- 7 I am the sister of Moses.
- 9 I am the wife of Elkanah and the mother of Samuel.

PART B

Decode

A	B	C
D	E	F
G	H	I

N	O	P
Q	R	S
T	U	V

	J	
K		L
	M	

	W	
X		Y
	Z	

Using the keys above, decode the puzzle below:

Γ √Γ<< .Γ.Γ. Γ. Γ.Γ.Γ.
 <∪.∪ ∪∪∪.Γ.∪.∪ ∪∪ ∪.∪.
 ∪∪∪<Γ ∪∪.Γ.Γ.Γ.Γ.Γ.Γ.<<<<
 √Γ.Γ.Γ. ∧∪

ANSWERS TO QUIZTIME ISSUE 45

A. Christmas Trivia

1 Bethlehem; 2 Bethlehem; 3 The Angel Gabriel; 4 Egypt; 5 One; 6 The Wise Men; 7 Three; 8 Gold, Myrrh, Frankincense; 9 King Herod; 10 God Is With Us

B. Choose the right answer

1 No longer wishes to marry her; 2 To be enrolled; 3 They were terrified; 4 King Herod; 5 Nazareth

LUKAS and RAY

By Steffi Anshel Farina
IG @somewherebetweenstuffs

Check out my CCC! My new years resolution. This is not the CCC that you know. CCC is customary-celebratory-cupcakes. To celebrate any occasion - big or small!

Wow! That's great. My resolution is to be a nicer person and not tell lies.

That calls for a celebration! Here, have a sample!

This CCC I don't mind!

It's my healthy flax seed-carrot-pumpkin beetroot-buckwheat cupcake.

CRUNCH
SPLUSHY
CRUNCH

What do you think?

Be kind
Be kind

gulp

This is sooo good that I am going to save it for after I complete this work. If they accept it, I'll get a scholarship!

ONE WEEK LATER...

I think that scholarship letter is here

Really? Oh man! I hope I get it!...

hmm...

Did you? should I start baking my CCC?

Don't Lie

No, no celebration today, Ray

Well, good for you, my CCC are also Customary-Condolence-Cupcakes! The ones you liked so much!

KAIROS Buds

The Catholic Magazine for Children

Kairos Buds Diary 2022 not just a diary!

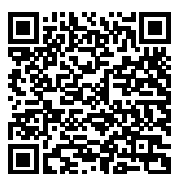
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