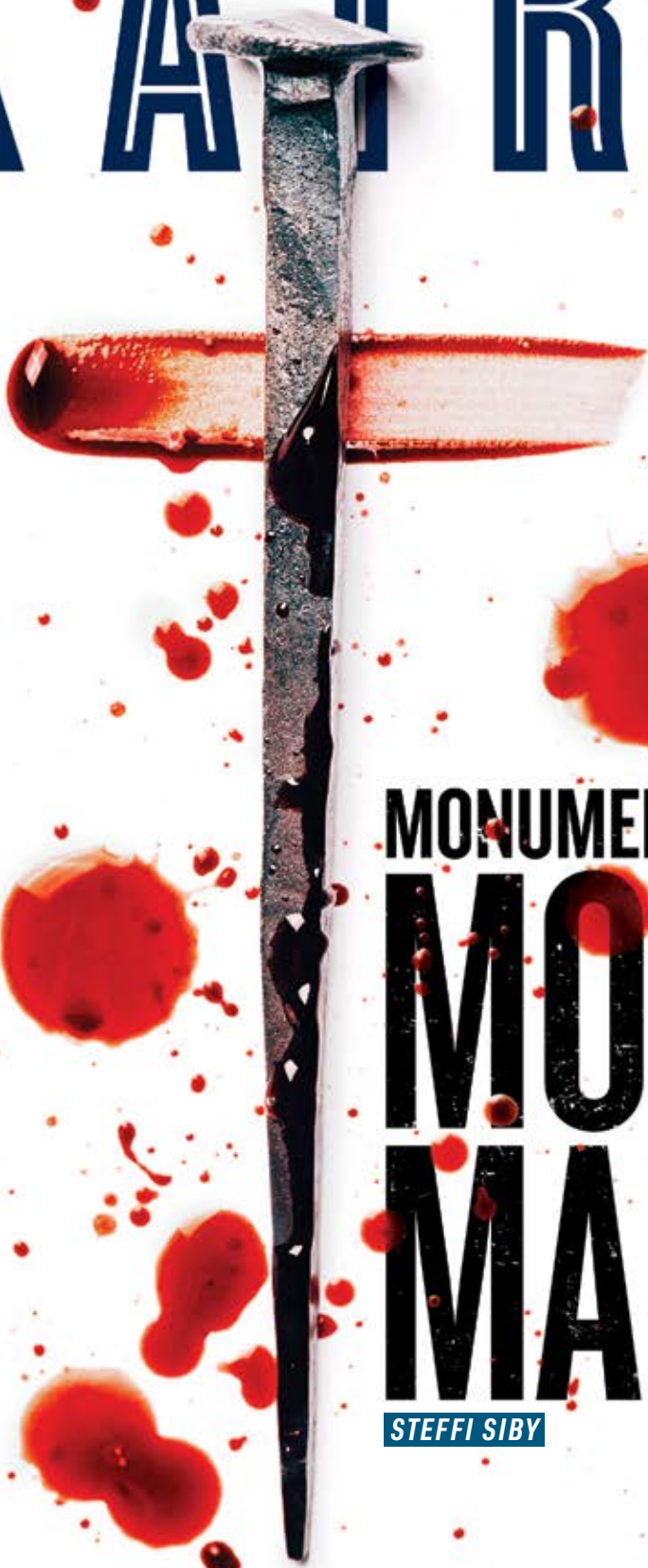


KAIROS

GLOBAL



ALSO ↓

Blessed
Devasahayam
■ JISHA JOHN

IMPRINT OF
THE DIVINE
■ ANIL ISRAEL

MONUMENTAL MODERN MARTYRS

STEFFI SIBY



MARY, MY BELOVED MOTHER



O Mother of Good Counsel, to you we turn for light to guide our uncertain steps through life. Through you countless people have been restored to good health, been given peace of mind released from worry and fear, cleansed from sin and restored to a strong and lasting faith. Be to us a mother, and counsel to become your true and faithful children, and may the blessing of your only Son come upon us. Amen

EDITOR'S ROOM



DR. CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL



ARE WE UTILISING ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER AND WITNESS CHRIST?

MARTYRDOM

He had been working as a voluntary security guard that day, at the church gate. He spotted the terrorist with the ammunition trying to enter the premises and took quick steps to prevent it. The result... he died instantly in the explosion. A very young student, twenty-years-old. This young person from our neighbouring country, Pakistan was declared Servant of God by the Church. There is no doubt that this young man challenges all of us to stand firm in our faith, even be willing to embrace martyrdom.

The first lay person from the Indian subcontinent is going to be canonised in May 2022. A man from our land, who happened to receive the gift of faith through one of his European colleagues, had to lose everything, endure deeply humiliating and extremely painful physical, emotional and mental torture. As a culmination of his suffering, he was shot multiple times till he died.

Akash Basheer and Blessed Devasahayam, two men of our times who remind us that we also need to be brave and serious in living our faith, if needed die for it.

Devasahayam's faith story is a unique one with many pointers and lessons for today too.

- He was a high ranking official serving the ruler but that did not prevent him from responding to the promptings of the Spirit.
- There is something to be appreciated about the foreign army official who sowed the seeds of faith in Devasahayam. He was employed in a foreign land but did not forget his primary duty of witnessing Jesus and sharing faith.
- It may have been the genuineness of Devasahayam's faith that influenced his wife, who had been very sceptical in the beginning about his endeavours.
- He grew so deep in faith that finally Devasahayam had to give up his positions, possessions and everything prestigious and edifying from a human point of view.
- No amount of persecution, torture and harassment could make him waver from his deep-rooted faith in Christ.

In our country and in other parts of the world, the number of people who are persecuted for their faith in Christ are increasing. In that context, let's ask ourselves a few questions.

Are we utilising all the opportunities to volunteer and witness Christ?

There were different options available before Akash Basheer but he opted to save the lives of many at the cost of his own. In a similar situation how would you have responded?

Being a security guard is not a high profile task, and it brings up the fact that we should not be doing prestigious tasks to become saints.

Are we zealous in sharing Jesus with our colleagues, are we utilising all our opportunities to witness Christ as done by Devasahayam's foreign colleague?

What will our response be when several enticing opportunities are placed before us as bargain for our silence or the rejection of our faith?

In today's world, through our words, posts, undue judging or even with our silence, are we also contributing to the suffering of many faithful?

Let this Easter bring us the joy of living our faith.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.
Luke 9:23

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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. In Luke 19:27, Jesus says, 'But for these enemies of mine who did not want me king over them - bring them here and slay them before me'. Does Jesus want Christians kill all non-believers?**

Thank you for your important question. Please note that in Luke 19:11-27, Jesus is telling the 'parable of the ten gold coins', where a nobleman goes to a distant land to obtain kingship for himself. Before going away, he calls his servants and gives them ten gold coins and asks them to trade with it until he returns. On his return as the king, he asks those servants for an account of their trading. The king also orders that his enemies who did not want him to be the king over them be brought and be slayed.

It would be a mistake to read a parable of Jesus and conclude that he is advocating all the actions that take place in it. A parable is a story, meant to drive home a specific point. In the 'parable of the ten gold coins,' the ruler orders his enemies to be slayed. This does not mean that Jesus was advocating his followers to do away with the 'non-believers.' Remember, the disciples of Jesus were not a military group equipped to make war or fight. The disciples who heard the parable never carried out this alleged command because they knew that Jesus was telling them a story and not issuing a command to be executed. Jesus in fact ordered his disciples, at the time of his arrest, to lay down their arms because 'one who takes the sword will die by the

sword' (Matthew 26:52). Moreover, Jesus asked his followers to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute (Matthew 5:44) and to do good to those who hate them (Luke 6:27).

Jesus through this parable taught his disciples what worldly rulers do when they take over a dominion; they do away with their enemies. They crush any hint of rebellion. The disciples never took the story of Jesus as a command to slay those who refused to be ruled by Jesus - the 'non-believers.' Moreover, the kingdom that he spoke about is not physical, as Jesus said his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36).

It is good to keep in mind the instruction of the Church regarding the interpretation of Sacred Scripture. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit and under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church rendering to three criteria: 1) it must be read with attention to the content and unity of the whole Scripture; 2) it must be read within the living Tradition of the Church; 3) it must be read with attention to the analogy of faith, that is, the inner harmony which exists among the truths of the faith themselves (CCC 109-114).



YOUCAT 103

WHAT DOES JESUS THINK ABOUT NONVIOLENCE?

Jesus places a high value on nonviolent action. He commands his disciples: Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also [Mt 5:39]. [2311]

He rebukes Peter, who wants to defend him with force: Put your sword into its sheath [Jn 18:11]. Jesus does not call his disciples to take up weapons. He remains silent before Pilate. His way is to take the part of the victims, to go to the Cross, to redeem the world through love, and to call the peacemakers blessed. Therefore the Church, too, respects people who for reasons of conscience refuse to be part of the armed services but place themselves at the service of society in some other way.

DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

Prayer Intentions April

Healthcare Workers

We pray for healthcare workers who serve the sick and the elderly, especially in the poorest countries; may they be adequately supported by governments and local communities.



Pope talk



To be holy means to conform ourselves to Jesus, only when we strive to love others as Jesus does, do we make God visible and fulfil our vocation to holiness.

Let us ask ourselves if, in our hearts, we love the Church by safeguarding the Church and walking with the Church.

Christ is the bond uniting the communion of saints



Accept the 'Paradox of the Beatitudes'; indeed, the Beatitudes define the identity of the disciple of Jesus.

Symphony of prayer is essential in the life of people of God and the Church.

Human trafficking has created 'an open wound on the body of Christ'.

Please, let us not remain barricaded in the sacristy and cultivate small closed groups where we can be comfortable as the world is waiting for the Gospel.

Jesus wants to enter our emptiness and fill it with his presence, to make use of our poverty to proclaim his wealth, of our miseries to proclaim his mercy.

An authentic artist is able to speak about God better than anyone else, to make people perceive His beauty and goodness.

JESUS YOUTH



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

Healing has a special place in Jesus Youth



Our prayer group used to have a weekly slum outreach. I remember my first visit. 'Lawrence can get violent and could attack you. Don't go near him!' When we got into a little hut, an old lady – the young man's mother warned us. In a corner of the room, we saw a dirty-looking young man in chains. There in that poor and shabby area, like many other sights, this was also a deeply disturbing scene for us. That was in early 1978. It was our first visit for my friend Joy and I, to see what the young people from our group could do there.

There were about 50 huts in that colony, and we visited each house to get to know them. When we reached this house, Lawrence's mother told us his story. As a little child he was taken for a church festival and somehow in the thronging crowd, he was accidentally trampled upon on the head. Ever since he had had serious problems. Occasionally, he could get violent and so was bound in chains.

Joy and I were there with a mission, sent by our prayer group. We knew our friends were fervently praying for us and we were also praying in the Spirit. As I looked at Lawrence, I experienced a special love and power welling up in me. 'Shall we pray for him?' I whispered to Joy. When I extended my

hands Lawrence was staring at me, but as I touched and prayed, suddenly, he became so gentle. I loosened his chain. He was so gentle like a dove. Was it a miraculous healing? I don't know. But I am sure deep love, and its genuine expression heals. Anyway, that day launched our 'slum ministry'.

HEALING HAS A CONTEXT

Charismatic renewal came with a renewed understanding of sickness and healing. Our sicknesses and hurt are effects of sin and a lack of love. The salvation that Jesus offers us is also an invitation to healing. Then, another very important aspect about healing is that it is not only a curing of body illness, but it involves my spirit, mind, emotions, and relationships. 'Healing is becoming a wholesome person.'

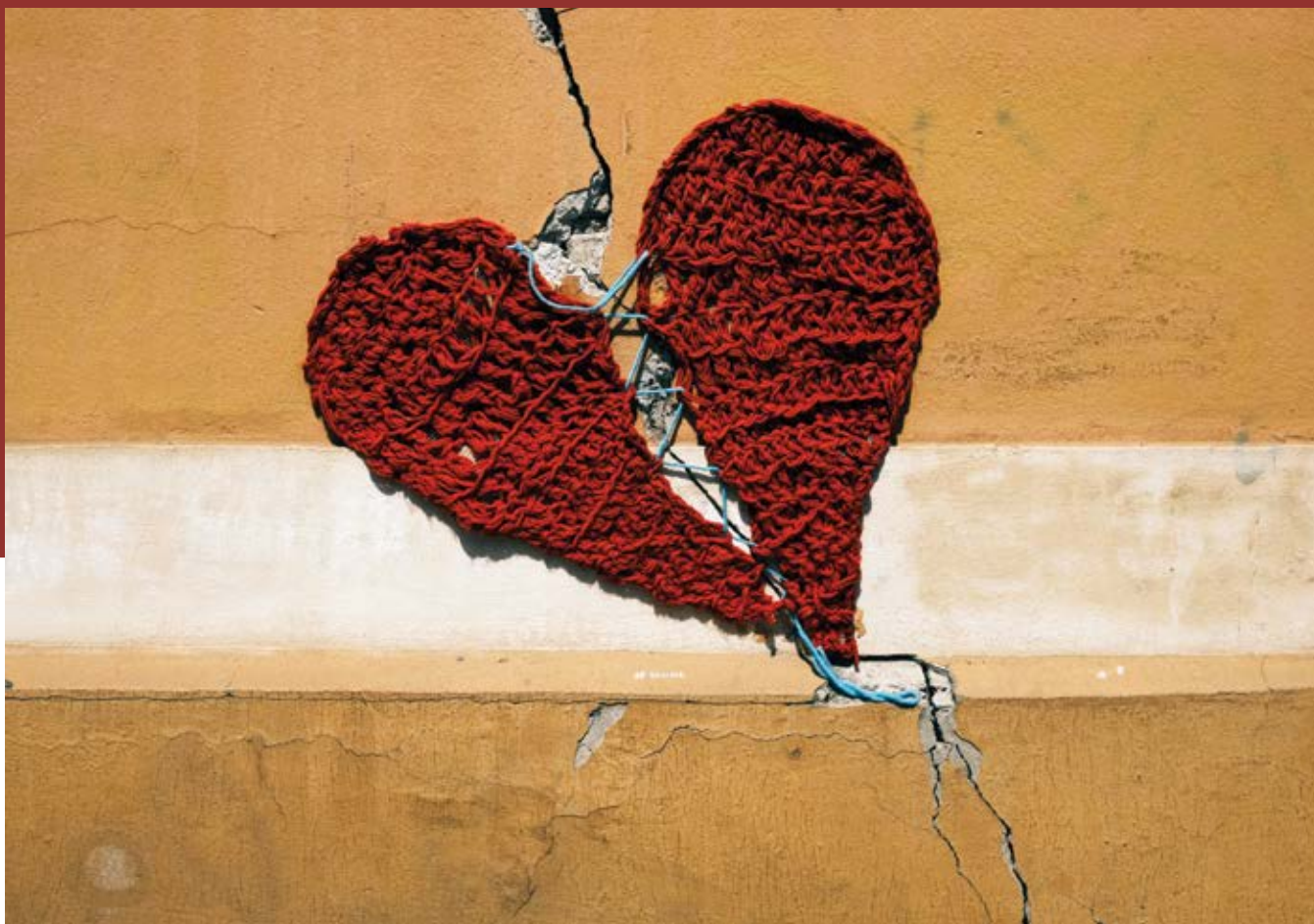
For many, Charismatic renewal is a 'healing service', that is, retreats or large prayer gatherings to which people to get cured of sicknesses and other physical problems. 'Healing' often becomes dramatic and noisy affairs, disturbing many inside the Church circles and in the wider society. But in Jesus Youth, 'healing' takes a different shape and emphasis. There is always reference to healing the 'whole person', body, mind, soul and relationships. Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist become

deep healing experiences. Inner healing sessions, where we talk of emotions and relationships become important journeys to wholeness. Very strangely, helping others also becomes an important process of healing.

Why is the healing approach of Jesus Youth quite different from other charismatic groups? One important reason is that the needs of youth are different from other sections of society. Pope Francis explains it well, 'Young people . . . experience setbacks, disappointments and profoundly painful memories. Often they feel "the hurt of past failures, frustrated desires, experiences of discrimination and injustice, of feeling unloved and unaccepted". Then too "there are moral wounds, the burden of past errors, a sense of guilt for having made mistakes". Jesus makes his presence felt amid these crosses borne by young people; he offers them his friendship, his consolation and his healing companionship. The Church wants to be his instrument on this path to interior healing and peace of heart.' (*Christus Vivit*, 83).

JESUS YOUTH MISSION OF HEALING

The passing away of the young saintly girl, Ajna George has hit headlines these days. Many videos have been



Then, another very important aspect about healing is that it is not only a curing of body illness, but it involves my spirit, mind, emotions, and relationships. 'Healing is becoming a wholesome person.'

circulating highlighting different Jesus Youth programmes Ajna participated in. One such video is about the weekly outreach of her college JY group to the sick and suffering. Watching those beautiful moments of youth in action, it struck me, 'this is the best healing ministry that the Lord wants Jesus Youth to do'.

In it a large group of old and sickly had gathered, and the JY were moving

among them. Those college boys and girls, with much love and beaming smiles, were interacting with the sick, gently holding their hands and attentively listening to them. I am sure those youth would have brought something special for them to eat or offered clothes for those in need. But more than all that, their loving presence and smiles imparted the much-needed healing of the Lord.

GIVING AND RECEIVING HEALING

What Jesus said becomes quite relevant here, *Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap* (Luke 6:38). When we reach out in love and pass on the Lord's healing touch to those in need of it around us, we ourselves get healed in the best way possible.

Many a time along with youth groups, I have gone out to hospital wards, old-age homes, or slums. We go out with a time of preparation and prayer. When we reach there, every young person comes alive, to smile,

to listen, to say a kind word, and sometimes to pray with the needy ones. After the outreach, there would be an evaluation and sharing of experiences. Then, many would share, 'This is my first time venturing out to people in need. More than what I gave, I received love and care from those suffering people'.

I think Jesus Youth healing charism comes alive most beautifully, not in a prayer session or retreat, but when youth go out to give love and care, in situations of dire need. When youth are challenged to extend their hands and heart, to listen to the needy and pray with them, it is then that the hand of the Lord become visible for those in need of healing. But these care givers also receive love and healing in abundant measure, making them wholesome persons. ■

.....

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

MISSION

TALK

SIJIYA ANTONY

Sijiya Antony of Technopark, Trivandrum writes about her mission exposure programme to the villages of Visakhapatnam.

Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven (Mathew 10:32).

Omicron waves were hitting hard during those days and we were assigned Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh for our mission exposure programme. Both the pandemic-related challenges and two years of working from home were obstacles for our parents to agree to our mission plans.

One day during Holy Mass, when Jesus was raised, I looked at his face and demanded, 'I have longed so much to go for this mission programme. If it's your will, please make arrangements at home for my permission.'

When I got back home, it was a huge surprise to receive a positive response from my parents. I do not doubt the intervention of my beloved Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist who brought about the change in attitude of my parents towards this mission journey. With their blessings now with me, I began with the final preparations for the journey as well as the leave from office without much hustle.

Seven months of prayer, preparations and desire – finally our dream mission exposure programme was a reality.

We had been learning and preparing spiritually for the mission through our online gatherings. Along with Fr Nigal CMF, 13 working professionals from Technopark, Kerala got ready for the journey. Though we were from different parts of the state, the oneness in Christ and Jesus Youth fellowship united us.

When your words came, I devoured them: your word was my delight and the joy

of my heart; for I was called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts (Jeremiah 15:16).

Bearing the powerful name of Jesus, we reached Visakhapatnam at 11.30 pm on 8th January 2022, where we were joyfully received by our JY friends there. Though tired from the long train journey, we soon rebounded and actively started off our mission programme immediately with a Holy Mass by Fr Nigal before going to sleep and rest.

This mission programme found each of us unusually active and pleasant. Many programmes for the youth and children of Visakhapatnam diocese awaited us. Though not familiar with their language or culture, the love of Christ we were experiencing was easily communicated to the youth groups through gestures and bits of English that they understood. We played with them, prayed with them, sang and danced – we did not miss any chance to effectively communicate Christ with them. It was a fruitful experience for all of us and we silently witnessed the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit throughout our services.

Our journey to the hilly terrains of Visakhapatnam and the interaction with missionaries working in the villages there was one of the most enriching experiences of the mission programme, moreover it challenged us too. We were surprised to see the joyful attitude of villagers who lived with the bare minimum of resources. This challenged us to introspect – we who constantly complain about the missing luxuries. Those joyful villagers put us to shame!

Along with Sr Anitha, a missionary working there, we went to visit the houses of Peddagondi, an agricultural village. There, we played with children playing in front of their houses, taught them action songs and learnt new games from them too. At their houses we were able to meet family members and greet



them. We prayed before leaving each house and said goodbye with the Sign of the Cross. The warmth and happiness of the village was slowly infecting us too and our hearts filled with more and more joy and peace on visiting each house there.

Another heart-warming experience was our visit to a tribal village in Araku valley. They welcomed us with their native Dhimsa dance and rituals. Their tiny church was overflowing with the villagers and we were surprised to see that everyone brought something they had as an offering for the church. They reminded us of the early Christian communities who shared everything they had with others in the community. We too gave them the small gifts we had bought and distributed chocolates to show our token of gratitude for their love. We celebrated Holy Mass with them and as Mass ended, it began to rain. It was like we were being blessed from heaven.

We found time in between to discuss and study topics that would enrich our spirituality. We discussed the Catholic Church, sacraments and the new evangelisation. It was a blessing to have a priest with us to bring clarity and give us the right conclusions. We celebrated Holy Mass daily feeling every second of it like never before. Altogether it was a refreshing experience for each one of us.

We are grateful to all those who prayed for us and helped us during this mission. From our parents to JY friends, all did their part beautifully to make this experience real for us. Once again, it is a challenge for us to give more of ourselves for missions in the days ahead.

In fact, preaching the gospel gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble if I failed to do it (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Jesus is inviting each of us to go to the nooks and corners of the world still unaware of the Gospel. Let's respond to this call from



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our given circumstances by saying, 'Here I am Lord, send me'. Let's pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to witness Christ in our homes, parishes, workplaces and beyond, to the ends of the world. Let us live the anointing to be true disciples of Christ that we received in the sacrament of baptism.

Glory be to God!



EXPERIENCE

YES, LORD

The story of Gianna Mariam who lived for 60 days

Jerin George writes about his first born, an angel in heaven.



We recite the prayer 'Our Father' everyday, in which we say, 'Thy Will be done'. We also learn the deeper meaning of this prayer in the Emmaus Course of Jesus Youth formation. But how easy is it to say YES to the Lord's will in our daily life?

After many years of prayer, discernment and searching, I embraced my vocation of married life in 2020. It was the biggest and sweetest YES I told the Lord when I took Blessy as my wife! To love each other in better and in worse, to stay together no matter what happens on the sea of life, is only possible by grace. We cherish this presence of the Lord in our marriage, as it takes three to get married!

Bigger call

After a year of togetherness, our family life received a bigger call from the Lord, to be parents. We said YES to parenthood. It was so exciting to learn that we were pregnant and we began deepening our prayer and preparations. Every moment of our daily life was focused on the new family member to come! But things were going to get rough.

There were some complications in the first trimester itself and doctors labelled the pregnancy as 'high risk'. There were a lot of medications to be taken, including injections, infusions, many days of being admitted at the hospital, much care to be given. In the fifth month scan, it was found that the baby was not growing as expected. Doctors were not in a position

to guarantee that the baby would survive. Things were getting difficult for the baby inside. However, we decided to go ahead, trusting in the plans of Father God. After all, it was his child that was in the womb. We were just stewards to raise the baby for him.

Choices to make

On the evening of December 5th, things got more complicated. The baby's movements were slowing down and Blessy was under close observation. After conducting a scan, the doctor called us both and described the situation to us. The baby's weight was only 600 grams in the 27th week of pregnancy, which was far less than normal. Blood flow to the uterus had decreased, and there were some variations to the heartbeat. Being high risk, there were two choices ahead: operate and prematurely deliver the baby, and place in the neonatal ICU or stop the medicines and wait for the baby to die. The toughest choice of a parent's life, but we were sure of the answer. It was our YES to save the baby, in the best possible way we could.

'God is Gracious'

On the morning of December 6th, Blessy was taken to the operation theatre; waiting outside, tears were splashing down as I prayed that both mother and baby be safe. Those 40-45 minutes felt like days for me. Though I had a rosary in my hand, I couldn't utter a word of prayer, it was like praying in tears, 'Lord, let Thy Will be done'. After a while, I was called to the NICU, and was informed of the good news. The baby survived, and was a girl! They took me inside the NICU and showed her to me. There she was, lying on a table, a little baby, the smallest baby I have ever seen, connected to wires and breathing with the support of a CPAP (ventilator). Though I couldn't see too clearly because of all the tears, I kept thanking the Lord. The doctor said that she had cried when she was taken out, which was a good sign, yet we had to be patient, to see her grow. She had a birth weight of only 560 grams. It would take her 2-3 months to gain the weight of a normal baby. After three days, Blessy got to see Gianna. It was a huge moment for Blessy to see her for the first

time, while holding our hands together. We were relieved to have taken the right decision to save the baby, as she survived a tough time in the womb. We named her Gianna Mariam (Gianna means 'God is gracious'), after the Italian saint, Gianna Beretta Molla who gave her life to save her child.

Days of hope

Little Gianna slowly started gaining weight, taking breast milk by means of tubes, actively moving her arms and legs on the table where she lay. Our parents and friends were always there to help us with prayers and all possible support. I was surprised by a few friends who came forward with financial help, without my even asking. It felt like they too wanted a share in saving this little angel! We celebrated Christmas and New Year at the hospital. On Christmas Day, we reflected on the struggles Mary and Joseph might have faced in giving birth to Jesus, saving the baby from enemies and journeying to Egypt. We could find relief as our situation was quite similar to the Holy Family.

As the baby became stable after a month, many tests were done as per procedure. One such test showed signs of glaucoma (eye disease) which needed specialised surgery that could only be done after a couple of months, along with an infection in the blood, some problems with the heart and brain. An open-heart surgery was needed, but could not be done for a low-weight baby. These problems affected her growth; the weight which had been increasing in her first month did not continue to. She developed some breathing problems and was placed in the CPAP again for a few days. The doctors advised against placing too much hope, as the baby had multiple problems. But we were still hopeful. Our initial thought was: why would God take Gianna back after all this! We prayed adamantly that God would save the baby and give her to us.

Gianna Mariam was baptised on 10th January 2022 inside the NICU by the priest working at the hospital, in the presence of a few nurses, Blessy and myself. After that her condition improved slightly, we believe it was the sacramental

grace of baptism.

Many people started praying for Gianna, including our family members, friends, nuns and priests. We believed strongly that God would answer our prayers and save her. In between, the baby was shifted from the NICU to a room with supporting facilities like oxygen and monitors. On that day, there was an intercession gathering online, with Eucharistic Adoration led by Fr Justin MSFS, the chaplain of Kottayam zone. We attended this prayer gathering, along with the baby. It was a graceful time of prayer, where 100 participants joined us in praying for the baby, most of them being JYs, including people whom we didn't even know!

A miracle

Till then, we had been waiting for a miracle to happen. But slowly, the conviction that it was not our will that was important began to grow; that we had to let God's will happen, even if it would be extremely painful. It seemed like God wanted to know whether we would accept his will, even in such a crushing situation, just as he had asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his only son. Gianna's condition got worse and gradually we began to accept that she was being called back to heaven. This was the toughest YES to say, to let her go. After living with us for 60 days, on Saturday, the morning of February 5th, baby Gianna left us peacefully and quietly. We got a chance to see her and kiss her two hours before her death. Lord, let Thy Will be done, were the words running through our minds. The miracle had happened. It was not the miracle we expected. But a greater one. The real miracle happened in us both. We learnt to surrender to God's will.

Way of the Cross to the cemetery

The little coffin was small and it needed only one person to carry it. It was my duty to carry her to the cemetery after a short prayer in the church. From the gate of the cemetery to the chapel inside, I



carried her for the last time. It felt like the longest distance I had ever walked. Like the sacrifice asked from Abraham, it was my duty to give Gianna as an offering through my hands. The verse from the book of Job was ringing in my mind, *The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised* (Job 1:21). Thoughts about the Way of the Cross consoled me. After all, my pain was nothing, compared to what Jesus suffered on his way to Calvary, after saying YES to his Father's will. As Jesus said, *'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me'* (Luke 9:23). In the presence of our near and dear ones, all who prayed for Gianna, we bid her goodbye. See you in heaven, Gianna.

All this happened for a reason, for our sanctification. *For gold is tested in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity* (Sirach 2:5). We are glad that we could say YES at the right time, we accepted the baby despite challenges ahead, and we thank God for all that we went through. Now we have Gianna as a little angel, who reached heaven ahead of us, interceding for us. We no longer cry for her, because we know she's with us. And for Blessy and me, we know that God loves us, is with us. Gianna brought us closer to God in the few days she had and now she reminds us to live a life worthy enough to reach heaven, to join her. Lord, let Thy Will be done, always. Amen. ■■

EVOLUTION



WORK. LIFE. FAMILY.

Cyriac Panackal writes about the challenges faced when together with his wife, they emigrated to another country as students and expecting parents.

the salary slip that brings you joy but also the moments you spend playing, cooking, bathing with your kids.

We had our family altar at our eye level, where we could see and pray. But once the baby started walking, we moved the altar to her eye level so that she could see and pray to Jesus, Mama Jesus and Papa Jesus! Yes, we have the Holy family at the centre of our altar. As we grew in love, our second baby came to us by the time our first daughter turned two and we had just finished our Masters. It was not easy – both of us writing master theses with two kids, one outside and one inside! At times the only prayers were when we gasped, ‘Oh Lord!’ But as in the traditional blessing during the marriage ceremony, we never lacked friends and family who were there for us. Thanks be to God for that!

At each turn of life there was someone to help us. Soon after our arrival we had to look for an apartment as we could not stay in the student dorm with a baby. It was the Advent of 2017 and we found parallels in our search for an apartment and St Joseph’s and Mother Mary’s search at the inn. We finally found an attic apartment for rent, where we have been staying for the last four years, and where we’ve welcomed a lot of guests. We landed in Germany as expecting parents with no idea about child-rearing in a temperate country. It was the Jesus Youth friends who gave the basic idea and very useful inputs which helped us. Akhila took it as her personal mission to support expecting parents and young parents who migrate. What you received as gifts, spread it to others as gifts.

Directly after our Masters, I started working full-time and Akhila started her maternity leave for one year. Paid maternity leaves in Germany made it viable for us. After all, the family-friendly policies was one reason we moved here. And as the Corona pandemic hit the world, we also had to isolate ourselves from our neighbours and friends. YouTube Holy Mass by Bishop Michael Gerber was a consolation for us and helped a lot to cope up with the situation. Despite the pandemic, we were blessed to be able to travel a little and spend time in fun and

IT WAS NOT EASY – BOTH OF US WRITING MASTER THESES WITH TWO KIDS, ONE OUTSIDE AND ONE INSIDE! AT TIMES THE ONLY PRAYERS WERE WHEN WE GASPED, ‘OH LORD!’ BUT AS IN THE TRADITIONAL BLESSING DURING THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY, WE NEVER LACKED FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO WERE THERE FOR US.

prayer with our friends in Austria and the Netherlands. At a time when going home was difficult, those meet-ups helped our personal and prayer life.

Last year Akhila started working again. After a few months of experimenting, we found out that we could not manage life with both of us working eight hours. Hence as the primary driver of our car, and the one who is responsible for the transportation of our kids to kindergarten as both of us work at home, I decided to reduce the working hours to 6 hours per day. Now, by the time the kids are back at home we both complete our work and one of us is there for the kids. Well, 25 percent less income for me but we get more time as family together. Also weekends are prioritised for the family. Sundays are for the Lord and to rest.

At the end of the day, as Jesus said, rules are for the man, man is not for the rules. It is up to each family to find what unites them. Things that mark you as a single unified unit. It is great to live up to ideals but joy hides in tolerance, in letting go and trusting in the Lord. ■■

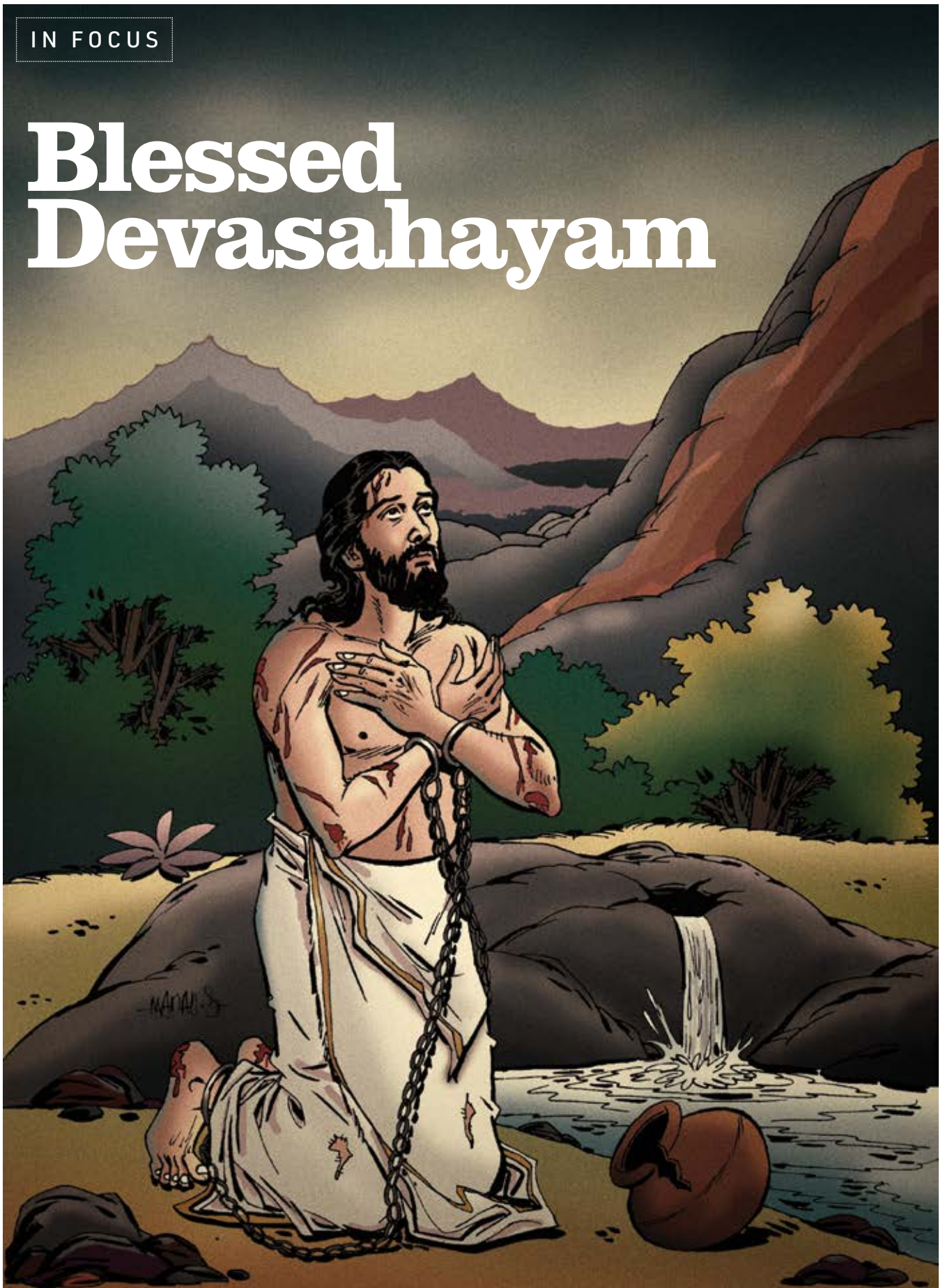
It was four days after our marriage, we were at the Passport Office for new passports; purpose? One surname and one address for both of us, and adding the name of the spouse in the passport. Of course it is a personal choice, but we believe that it is important to have identifiers that show that you are a single family. As we migrated in 10 months to Germany both as students and expecting parents, having the same address on our passports was important for us. For that we had to choose a university which offered suitable courses for both of us, a small university in a small German town. Fifty months down the line, when I look back, that was one of the best decisions we made.

The Lord blessed us with a family-friendly university, where the professors welcomed us to the classrooms with our infant. Akhila, my wife used to feed the baby and attend the class. Our first born was at times the most active student in some of my classes and was naturally the beloved student of the professors. Not going to the most reputed institutions did not affect our happiness, it is not only

Cyriac Panackal lives in Fulda, Germany with his wife and two kids. He loves ‘The Way of a Pilgrim’ and Jesus Prayer. Enjoys travelling and migration consultation as well.

IN FOCUS

Blessed Devasahayam



In May 2022, Blessed Devasahayam will be canonised a saint – the first layperson and martyr of Indian origin to be declared a saint of the worldwide Catholic Church. A brief biography by Jisha John

After his baptism into the Catholic Church, he lived seven years. Though he had been a Catholic for only 2437 days, it was sufficient to place him among the hallowed ranks of the canonised in the altar of the Holy Catholic Church. Let us take a look at the life of him, who chose to call himself ‘God is my help’, Devasahayam – the local rendition of the name Lazarus.

The road that traversed from Neelakandan Pillai to Devasahayam was a long, arduous and excruciating one. It will inspire us to live out the call to unique sainthood we are created for. Come, let us make that journey.

Two-and-a-half centuries ago

India was a land of numerous kingdoms in the 1700s. One of the kingdoms in the southern region was the kingdom of Travancore. Here, in a place called Nattalam, in the present day Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, a baby was born to an affluent Hindu family on 23 April 1712. He was named Neelakandan. His father Vasudevan Namputhiri, a Brahmin, was a temple priest and his mother was Devaki Amma, who belonged to the Nair caste. According to the traditions prevalent at the time, children were identified by the caste of the mother. So Neelakandan was considered a Nair – a high caste second only to the Brahmins.

As a youth, Neelakandan Pillai was trained in the study of languages and the art of warfare. He knew Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit. Apart from languages, he was probably taught archery, Varma Sastra – the South Indian martial art, as well as use of weapons of war. A calm and gentle young man, Neelakandan advanced

in knowledge and stature, and was well-beloved of his teachers and friends.

He began his career as a soldier, a profession he excelled in because of his integrity and acumen. He married Bhargaviammal, a woman belonging to his own caste, from a traditionally wealthy family.

Serving the King of Travancore

When the king, Marthanda Varma came to know of the enthusiastic, intelligent and upright Neelakandan Pillai, he made him steward of the royal palace and custodian of the Padmanabhapuram court. Neelakandan thus became renowned in the kingdom as a court official loyal to the king. Later in his capacity as palace official, he came to work in the royal treasury.

An unlikely friendship

In 1741, Dutch East India Company intent on establishing a trading post there tried to capture Colachel, a port belonging to the kingdom of Travancore. In the Battle of Colachel that followed, the Dutch were defeated and the men killed or captured. Twenty-four Dutchmen were imprisoned, including the Flemish commander Captain Eustachius De Lannoy. They were later pardoned on the condition that they serve the Travancore army. De Lannoy earned the king’s trust and was made commander-in-chief of the Travancore army. Under De Lannoy, the Travancore armed forces went on to win many battles and annexed various neighbouring territories.

When King Marthanda Varma entrusted the rebuilding of Udayagiri Fort to De Lannoy, it brought the Dutchman into contact with Neelakandan Pillai,

who was the paymaster there. An unlikely friendship began to grow between the two. It was further cemented with the sharing of each other’s personal lives. This friendship became a source of solace for Neelakandan when a period of trials afflicted his life.

The twist in the tale

It so happened that Pillai, who was usually happy and content, was observed over a few days by De Lannoy to be grief-stricken. When enquiring the reason, Neelakandan shared his ordeal. He had been undergoing a series of unfortunate events with loss of crops and the perishing of herds of livestock. Neelakandan was beset with doubts and worry that the fury of the gods were upon him or that enemies were plotting against him with black magic. What bothered him was that even religious ceremonies and sacrifices performed for the appeasement of the gods had been futile.

De Lannoy consoled Neelakandan by sharing his own Christian faith, speaking about God who instead of punishing, loves and saves everyone. De Lannoy’s narration of the biblical story of Job touched Neelakandan profoundly. That Job had such absolute trust in God amidst all his afflictions was such an alien yet consoling concept to Neelakandan’s Hindu sensibilities.

The ongoing discussions between the two convinced Neelakandan Pillai that Christ was sufficient for him. He fell in love with Jesus and expressed a strong desire to get baptised. De Lannoy sent him to Fr Giovanni Battista Buttari, head of the Jesuit Mission at Vadakkankulam. De Lannoy was well aware of the political situation in the kingdom of Travancore and the implications of Neelakandan’s conversion. The king had threatened with imprisonment and death those noblemen who quit his court to become Christians. This was why he sent Neelakandan to Vadakkankulam, which was outside the territory of Travancore.

Fr Buttari’s test

While Neelakandan was seized with the enthusiasm to become a Christian immediately, Fr Buttari made him pursue a period of catechumenate without

specifying the period's length. The priest too was aware of the dangerous path Neelakandan had chosen with his conversion, and wanted to be convinced of the depth of his conviction in the Catholic faith.

The eventual nine months of preparation and the periods of stay at Vadakkankulam gave Neelakandan the opportunity to test his reasons for becoming a Christian. He was able to observe the local Christian community and the problems of caste that still existed among them. Together with his study of the Christian faith, Neelakandan came to the realisation that he did not want to be a Christian encumbered with the burdens of the caste system. He wanted to be a follower of Jesus in its true essence – free from the yokes of casteism.

Another problem that would arise from Neelakandan's conversion was that he would be stripped of all his positions, lose his lofty social standing and be considered the equivalent of a low-caste – who the higher castes considered Christians to be. Yet Neelakandan was resolute. He was prepared to sacrifice every advantage he enjoyed – his wealth, his position, and even his life so that he could obtain Christ.

Nine months of preparation later, Neelakandan was baptised by Fr Buttari on 14 May 1745. He received the name Devasahayam, the Tamil rendition of the name Lazarus.

Devasahayam, the follower

Devasahayam's life was now filled with a great joy – that of being able to live out his new faith. He was a devout Christian who dedicated his life to deepening his understanding of the faith and the practise of virtue. Though he had to walk long distances to the church, he made it a habit to go there frequently to receive the sacraments. His joy became complete when Devasahayam was able to win his wife over to the faith – this against the furious objections of the family. She too was baptised and received the name, Njanapoo, a rendition of Theresa.

Devasahayam continued to be in the service of the king for four years but began to be in the service to the King of kings for eternity. He preached the gospel and was determined and firm in his faith.

THE THREE YEARS HE WAS IN CHAINS WERE YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY AS TO LIFE OR DEATH. BUT DEVASAHAYAM LIVED THOSE YEARS WITH A SURE AND RESOLUTE FAITH, CONFIDENT IN THE GRACE OF GOD THAT WAS AVAILABLE TO HIM IN PRAYER, PENANCE AND THE SACRAMENTS.



Racial discrimination and struggles of the lower castes disturbed him. He became friends with the poor and the oppressed. Returning to the Padmanabhapuram court, Devasahayam wanted to be enlisted in the Christian army of the king, commandeered by De Lannoy. Though this surprised the king, Devasahayam was able to win for Christ souls from the army too. These military companions decided to fight under the sign of the Saviour – to win for the heavenly kingdom instead of the earthly one. Despite all threats from his relatives and those of the higher caste Brahmins, nothing could make him renounce Christ; he wasn't afraid of those who could kill the body. He entrusted himself to Christ who is high above every power on earth.

A Christian in a Hindu Palace

Devasahayam's new way of life became

a cause of consternation for his fellow Brahmin co-workers. They noticed that he had stopped attending all the Hindu rituals and practises that were performed at the palace temple but attended with 'alarming' regularity the church. His interactions with the low-caste Christians was more so now. It became a cause for insult that he not just freely moved about with them but even ate together with them. Devasahayam did not stop there. He began to speak against the superstitions and injustices the Brahmins and the ruling class perpetrated against the people. Devasahayam often challenged the Brahmins working at the palace to respond to his criticisms of their teachings and beliefs.

The tolerant king and prince

Marthanda Varma had apparently been tolerant of the Christians in the kingdom, much to the infuriation of the Brahmins. His heir, the prince, had even donated land to Fr Buttari to build a church there. All this angered those against the Christian faith and they waited for a change to turn the king against Christians.

Though Fr Buttari had the land for the church, he did not have the resources to build one – financially or otherwise. When he approached Devasahayam for a solution to this, the priest was assured help in the form of timber. Devasahayam thus petitioned the Dalawa (supreme governor) permission for wood. A Brahmin and one among those unsympathetic to Christians, the Dalawa got furious with Devasahayam and even threatened to exile the Christians of the kingdom. Unperturbed, Devasahayam simply stated that the said persecution ought to begin with him, a Christian.

Those who had been waiting for an opportunity to strike discord in the king against Devasahayam now got their chance. They began to fill the king's ears with false accusations that the prince and heir was under the 'evil influence' of Devasahayam, and it was due to this that the prince donated the land for the church. They even insinuated that if the prince was so influenced, what would be the state of the kingdom when he would inherit it. This at last was the ammunition they had been waiting for. The king

ordered Devasahayam's arrest.

Some friends of his came to know of the king's order and immediately informed Devasahayam, urging him to escape. But Devasahayam was no coward. He continued to live his Christian faith courageously. De Lannoy, who also came to know of the king's order, was a source of strength. He encouraged Devasahayam to remain firm in the faith and even helped him receive sacraments from a priest nearby. Thus prepared, Devasahayam was arrested on 23 February 1749, four years after his baptism.

The Way of the Cross

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Romans 8:35)

Arrested and brought before the king, when Devasahayam was threatened with cruelty unless he renounced his Christian faith, he politely affirmed his faith as a Christian. Neither could bribery coerce him. Enraged at his resolve, the king ordered his imprisonment. Away went the royal tolerance and soon Christians in the kingdom faced harsh persecutions.

Devasahayam was confined to a narrow dark prison. Though the death sentence was pronounced the next day, which brought him happiness at the grace of martyrdom, it was immediately revoked. Instead, he was ordered to be paraded across the kingdom, seated on a buffalo. This was a punishment by humiliation meted out at the time. Seated backwards on a buffalo, with his hands bound behind him, Devasahayam was paraded thus for sixteen days, open to the cursing and mocking of the people. All through these days, he was beaten with a thorny stick that tore at his flesh, and chilly/pepper powders rubbed into the wounds. When he lifted his eyes to pray, this was even put in his eyes. Often the beaten, wounded and tortured Devasahayam would fall off the buffalo, riding on rough terrains or at the whim of the animal.

A second death sentence was pronounced and revoked like the first. This was followed by another tortuous parade around the kingdom as a form of deterrent against conversion. But people began to gather in great numbers

to witness his courage and the joy with which he bore the suffering.

Angered that none of these punishments were working, the king ordered that Devasahayam be imprisoned in Travancore. The torture continued even there but people began to gather at the prison. To prevent this, the king ordered his transfer to a prison at Peruvilai. On the journey there, overcome with thirst, he was battered for requesting water. Thrown among the rocks, Devasahayam wept and prayed. Then when he struck the rock, a spring broke forth – waters that quenched his thirst. This spring still flows at the place now called Muttidichan Parai.

At Peruvilai, Devasahayam's chain-bound feet were fettered to a tree in such a manner that he could not stand or move. Seven months he was made to lie below the tree, under the watch of the executioner. He would spend his time in prayer. Here too, people would gather to meet him and seek his prayers. The executioner himself had no children and on Devasahayam's prayer, was blessed with a child. To all who would come visit him, he would speak about Christ. Soon the prison began to get so crowded and resemble a place of prayer.

Disappointed that every method of punishment was used by Devasahayam to bring more people to Christ, the king ordered for him to be incarcerated at another prison in Aralvaimozhi, where prisoners could be put to death in secret and people prevented from visiting. Tortures upon tortures were inflicted upon him. He was starved, suffocated, denied water, not permitted to bathe for three years, thrown into biting ant-infested caves, thrown amongst poisonous snakes and scorpions. He was dragged and carried on a stick. He was banished. He was brutally beaten regularly. But Devasahayam stood firm in his faith. Despite the torture and persecution, Devasahayam continued to share the merciful love of Jesus with the soldiers and all who came to visit him regardless of the restrictions.

Martyrdom

Three years after his Gethsemane, he reached his Calvary. The king, prey to the fabricated stories of the Brahmins finally gave the order for Devasahayam's secret

execution.

On 14 January 1752, at midnight, Devasahayam Pillai was taken to the fringes of the wild Aralvaimozhi forest, to a place called Kattadimalai. His legs bound in chains, he was carried on a pole like an animal for slaughter. When they reached the place, Devasahayam begged for time to pray and was given a few minutes. Then he was placed on a hillock, took aim and shot. Three shots were fired, and though wounded mortally, he was still alive. Five more shots were fired and his body fell.

Since the execution was carried out in secret, it was only much later that Christians came to know – after having visited the prison and not finding him there. It was only days later that they managed to find Devasahayam's mortal remains, which were then buried before the main altar of the Church of St Francis Xavier at Kottar, with all the honour due to a martyr.

More info.

- The rock at Kattadimalai still makes the sound of a bell when struck with an object.
- De Lannoy failed in the war but gained a soul for Christ.
- Devasahayam was baptised at the age of 33 and martyred at 40.
- The three years he was in chains were years of uncertainty as to life or death. But Devasahayam lived those years with a sure and resolute faith, confident in the grace of God that was available to him in prayer, penance and the sacraments.
- Just before he was killed, Devasahayam prayed on the rock at Kattadimalai, which left imprints of his knee and elbow, which can still be seen.

His last prayer:

'O Jesus, do not abandon me.
Into your hands O Lord,
I commend my spirit.
O beloved Mother Mary help me.'



Christian Joy: *GOD IS WITH US!*

Fr Fio Mascarenhas SJ explains Christian joy through the example of Him who lived it best – Jesus.

The title of this article, is the very same title given by St Pope Paul VI to his Apostolic Letter, published on Pentecost Sunday in 1975. It was on that day too that this Pope officially gave a solemn welcome and blessing to the 10,000 participants of the first Charismatic Renewal Congress present in St Peter's Basilica, Rome, and serenely singing in tongues in praise of God. The Pope then personally met 6 leaders, one representative from each continent (I was privileged to be the representative for Asia), and said these wonderful words in his speech:

'This Renewal ought to rejuvenate the world, give it back a spirituality, reopen its closed lips to prayer and open its mouth to song, to joy, to hymns, and to witnessing ... Those who do not belong to your Movement should unite themselves with you, so that they too might nourish themselves on the enthusiasm and spiritual energy with which we must live our religion. For today, either one lives one's faith with devotion, depth, energy and joy, or that faith will die out!' (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 29-5-75).

Fulfilling these prophetic words of the Pope, millions of people today are living a spirituality of praise, because they know (not just theoretically but from a *lived experience*) that '**God is with us!**' On the other hand, sadly, millions of the baptised who have not lived their faith '*with devotion, depth, energy and joy*' have in fact lost it completely in recent years, and opted out of the Church, joining the post-modern 'secular citizens' of our world.

Our own beloved Pope Francis, of the same mind as St Paul VI, keeps telling the faithful of today:



'Any Christian without joy is either not a Christian or she/he is sick. There's no other type! He/she is not doing well, health-wise! A healthy Christian is a joyful Christian. Joy is like the seal of a Christian. Even in pain, tribulations, even in persecutions...' (Morning Mass, 22 May, 2014).

But please notice *the reason why* a Christian can continually possess an unquenchable inner joy: it is because she/he has a genuine and ongoing experience of God's intimate and personal love for her/him. This was the case with Jesus himself, as Paul VI put it in his 1975 Letter, *On Christian Joy*:

'It is necessary for us to understand properly **the secret of the unfathomable joy which dwells in Jesus and which is special to him.** If Jesus radiates such peace, such assurance, such happiness, such availability, it is by reason of the inexpressible love by which he knows that he is loved by his Father: "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you." This certitude is inseparable from the consciousness of Jesus. It is a presence which never leaves him all alone. It is an intimate knowledge which fills him; it is an unceasing and total exchange. **For Jesus it is not a question of a passing awareness. It is the reverberation in his human consciousness of the love that he has always known as God in the bosom of the Father.**'

For us too, the charismatic Baptism in the Spirit is the *current of grace* which enables each of us to know experientially that 'God is with us,' that 'I am truly loved by God at every moment of my life,' and hence our joy does not come from worldly success or earthly blessings but from God the Father saying to us too, as he said to Jesus, our Model and Co-heir, '*You are my beloved son/daughter, in whom I find my delight.*' So, our joy is a *Christian joy!* Pope Francis again has pointed out, 'Joy is like the seal of a Christian: even in pain, tribulations, even in persecutions.'

To quote from my recent book, *JESUS LAUGHED – A Fresh Look at the Human Jesus*, we must all make efforts to correct our wrong first impressions, that Jesus was '*a chronically grim person!*' On the contrary, since he was being continually affirmed lovingly by the Father, I ask, how could Jesus NOT be a happy and cheerful Person throughout his life and ministry?

So we must take 'a fresh look' at Jesus as our *truly human brother*. Did he laugh? Did he cry? Did he get angry? Did he enjoy being with people? Did he reach out to the needy? Did he

Since he was being continually affirmed lovingly by the Father, I ask, how could Jesus NOT be a happy and cheerful Person throughout his life and ministry?

experience great fear – when, and where, and of what? Did he have friends – both female and male? Was he dim-witted or intelligent? What about his *character* – was it a weak one, or was he a trustworthy leader of *excellent character*?

In our quest for the real flesh and blood Jesus, let us look with new insight at the many Gospel passages **contemplating the scenes and entering into the feelings of Jesus** as he interacted with the different persons mentioned, and so capture the richness of each Gospel encounter.

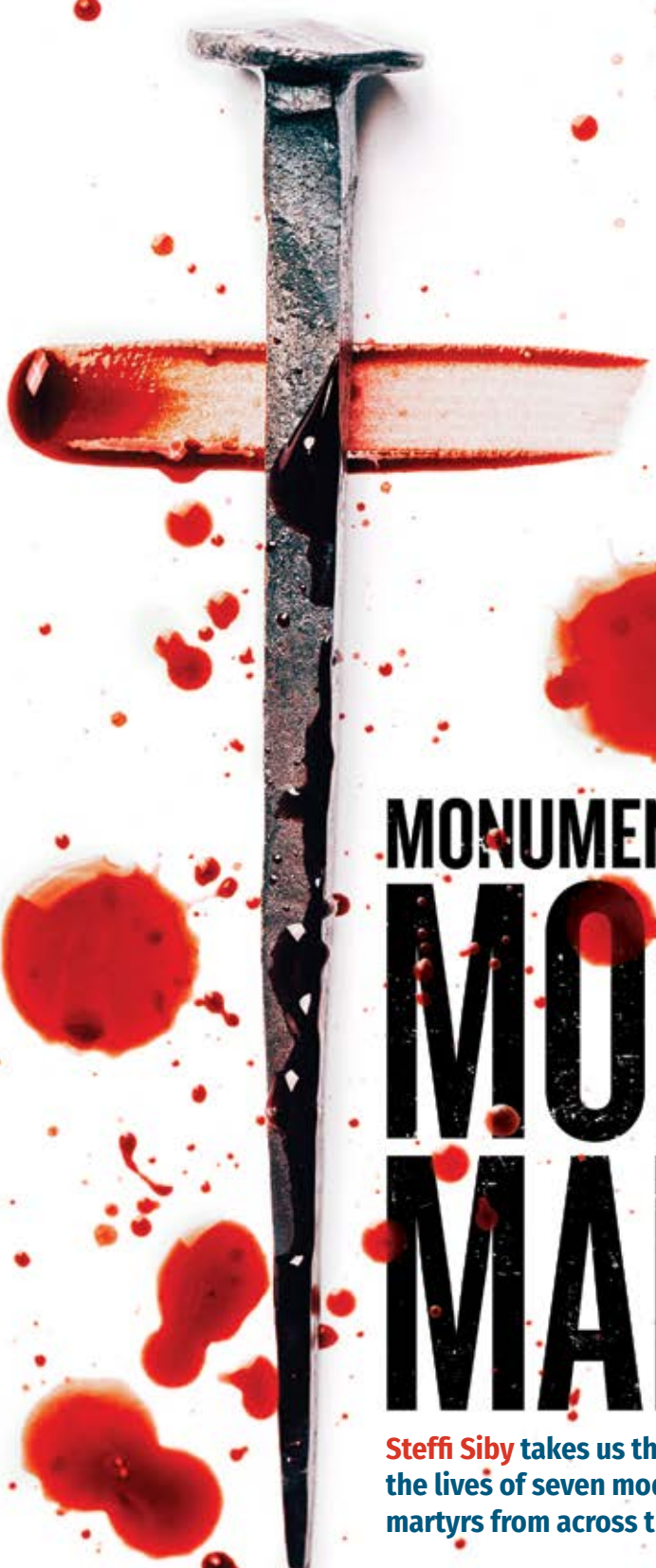
An effective way of entering and personally taking part in any Gospel scene is to use St Ignatius of Loyola's contemplative prayer-method called 'Application of the senses' or 'Imaginative Prayer' (*Spiritual Exercises*, nos. 121-126), wherein the person contemplating **starts by imagining, as**

vividly as possible, an interaction with Jesus and/or the other characters of the biblical scene, even becoming one of them. In this imaginative participation, the mind engages the heart. The aim of this mode of prayer is to make the events of salvation 'present' to us, and thus to attain a direct experience of God's love. Thus we will grow also in abiding joy.

We must remember too that the early Christian disciples were told by St Paul that a very important *fruit of the Holy Spirit is - joy!* (Galatians 5:22). Moreover, Jesus too had promised his disciples: '*I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete* (John 15:11). Let us remember that there is nothing less attractive in today's world than a humourless Christian, the type that is mostly tight-lipped, judgmental, unsmiling, puritanical, who views light-heartedness as heresy. That is not wholesome Christianity! That is why Pope Francis has named his major encyclical, *The Joy of the Gospel*. Pope Francis also teaches:

'If one doesn't have a sense of humor, it's very difficult to be happy... A sense of humor is fundamental to be able to breathe, because it is linked to the capacity to enjoy life, to be enthusiastic... A sense of humor also helps us to be in good humor, and if we are in good humor it's easier to live with others and with ourselves... A sense of humor is like the water that springs sparkling naturally from the source; one perceives life, movement' (from his book, *God Is Young*).

To conclude, let me insist, Jesus' continual and intimate God-experience is what made him a truly happy and joyful person! He himself wanted this joy for every disciple when, at the end of his life, he prayed to the Father: '*that they may have my joy made complete in themselves*' (John 17:13). Jesus is the model of Christian Joy, and we must all sincerely ask the Holy Spirit to give us too a continuing God-experience and *make us like the happy Jesus*, our Model! ■



When we think of the word ‘martyr’, we may immediately think of the early martyrs of the Church who undoubtedly were profound influences. This article looks at martyrs in much more recent times, from the 1900s onwards. They all come from different backgrounds but have one thing in common – their utter and complete faith and love for Christ which led them to lay down their lives for him.

Blessed Nikolaus Gross

Nikolaus Gross was born in 1898 near Essen, Germany. He started working as a coal miner in 1915 and he became involved in the Christian Miners’ Union. He went on to become representative for the young miners of St Anthony’s Miners Association (KAB), a Catholic miners’ union. He eventually settled in the Ruhr Valley where he married his wife, Elizabeth, and had seven children. He was a devoted father who raised his children to uphold good Catholic values.

Nikolaus had to confront the political changes within Germany and the rise of Adolf Hitler. When the Nazis came to power, Nikolaus had become the editor of the *West German*

MONUMENTAL MODERN MARTYRS

Steffi Siby takes us through the lives of seven modern day martyrs from across the world.

Workers' Newspaper, an organ of the KAB. In addition to guiding Catholic workers on social and labour issues, he was able to speak out about his Catholic faith when it had become dangerous to do so. Given the moral and social dilemma that arose due to the political situation, he realised that this could be only countered by spiritual efforts.

Due to his strong opinions, he was labelled as an 'enemy of the state' and became a target of the Nazis. The newspaper was banned permanently in 1938 but Nikolaus tried to continue the work of KAB. In 1943, Gross wrote in a booklet, *'If a generation must pay the highest price, death, for its short life, we look for the answer in ourselves in vain. We find it only in Him in whose hand we are safe in life and in death. We never know what problems are waiting to test the power and strength of our souls.... Man's ways lie in obscurity. But even darkness is not without light. Hope and faith, which always hasten ahead of us, already have a presentiment of the breaking of a new dawn'*.

After years of political activism, Nikolaus was arrested on August 12, 1944. His wife recounted signs of torture on his hand and arms. His letters from the prison and the witness of the chaplain, Fr Peter Buchholz gives evidence that he persevered in prayer even in his dire position.

Blessed Nikolaus Gross was executed on January 23, 1945. The priest who was with him at the time of his death testified, 'Gross bowed his head silently during the blessing. His face already seemed illuminated by the glory into which he was getting ready to enter.' He was beatified in 2001 by Pope St John Paul II.

Reflection: In his doctrine of faith written in 1943, Nikolaus wrote: 'The majority of great achievements come into being through the daily performance of one's duties in the little things of everyday routine.' Blessed Nikolaus emphasises how carrying out our daily duties can be of immense importance. We may think that this is mundane but we can only be faithful in big things if we spend our lives being faithful in every little thing too.

Blessed Benedict Daswa

Tshimangadzo Samuel Benedict Daswa was born in 1946 in the village of Mbahe in the province of Limpopo, South Africa. At the age of seventeen, Benedict was baptised and received into the Catholic Church. Tshimangadzo chose Benedict as his baptismal name inspired by St Benedict and also adopted the Saint's motto, *Ora et labora* (pray and work). Benedict led a



Blessed Nikolaus Gross

'If a generation must pay the highest price, death, for its short life, we look for the answer in ourselves in vain. We find it only in Him in whose hand we are safe in life and in death.'

devout Christian life in which he passionately loved Christ and Mother Mary. His faith blossomed through daily prayer, Scripture reading, the Eucharist, regular confession and helping the poor.

Blessed Benedict was a committed school principal who actively promoted the welfare of his local village community. He served as a teacher and catechist and was a highly respected individual known for his honesty and integrity. Being Catholic, he realised he had to completely dissociate with the practices of witchcraft and sorcery in his traditional African culture. He publicly opposed them which led others to resent him. However, he willingly endured the risks for himself and for his family.

In January 1990, his village was struck by a series of strong storms. The elders stated that it was due to black magic and demanded money from all the residents to pay for a sorcerer who would resolve it. Benedict asserted that storms were a natural phenomenon and refused to join his neighbours and stood up for his faith.

Consequently, on the 2nd of February 1990 as he was driving home in the evening, he was ambushed and attacked by a mob of young people who stoned and clubbed him to death. He was targeted and hated for his beliefs yet he prayed on his knees as they killed him.

According to the diocese investigation into his death, when Daswa saw a man coming towards him with a club to deliver the final blow, he said, 'God, into your hands, receive my spirit.'

He was beatified as a martyr for the faith on 13 September 2015, the first South African-born Catholic to be beatified.

Reflection: As he was a devoted husband and loving father, Blessed Benedict Daswa is a relatable role model for Christian families. He nurtured the faith within his family. Furthermore, he was an active member of the local Catholic community acting as a voluntary catechist and youth leader. It is because he lived out his faith in all aspects of his life that his faith was strong enough to persevere even in the face of death.

Blessed Miguel Pro

Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez was born on January 13, 1891 in Guadalupe, Mexico. Miguelito, as his family lovingly called him, was from childhood very spiritual and very mischievous, known for his practical jokes. He was close to his older sister who entered a cloistered convent. This led him to recognise his own vocation to the priesthood. Although he was popular in the worldly sense and could have inherited a thriving business from his father, Miguel gave it all up for Jesus and entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1911. Miguel was afflicted with a severe stomach condition which did not improve despite having three operations. In 1926, his superiors allowed him to return to Mexico which was going through terrible religious persecution.

The churches were forced to close and priests went into

hiding. Miguel had to spend the remainder of his life in a secret ministry to the Mexican Catholics who persevered in their faith. He took care of the people's spiritual needs but he went further by carrying out charitable works of mercy by helping the poor in Mexico City. He undertook many disguises to carry out his secret ministry. In the night, he would be dressed as a beggar to baptise infants, bless marriages and celebrate Mass. He would visit jail dressed as a police officer to bring Holy Viaticum to condemned Catholics. When going to affluent areas to gather money for the poor, he would show up dressed as a fashionable businessman. His many exploits could rival those of the most daring spies. The most important thing was that, in everything he did, Fr Pro remained obedient to his superiors and was filled with the joy of serving Christ, his King.

Miguel was falsely accused in the bombing attempt on a former Mexican president and became a wanted man. Betrayed to the police, he was sentenced to death without the benefit of any legal process. On Nov. 23, 1927, as Father Pro was led from his prison cell to the firing squad waiting to kill him, he stopped and blessed the soldiers. He paused for a moment, knelt on the ground and prayed quietly. Miguel refused a blindfold, instead choosing to bravely face his executioners with a crucifix in one hand and a rosary in the other. He held out his arms in imitation of the crucified Christ and shouted out, 'May God have mercy on you! May God bless you! Lord, Thou knowest I am innocent! With all my heart I forgive my enemies.' His last words were 'Viva Cristo Rey', 'Long live Christ the King!'

Reflection: When things go wrong, how do we react? Blessed Miguel endured many difficulties in terms of his health and then having to hide his identity as a priest. However, he quickly adapted to these difficulties with enthusiasm. The manner in which he faced his eventual death is inspiring and a testament to the depth of his love for God.

Blessed Charles de Foucauld

De Foucauld was born in Strasbourg, France in 1858 and raised by his aristocratic grandfather after being orphaned at the age of six. He rejected his faith and joined the French army. As a young man, he lived a life of indulgence and was known to have an immature sense of humour. This led him to be dismissed from the army as he would not give up his mistress.

He returned to France and, with the guidance of a priest, came back to his Catholic faith at the age of 28. He joined the Cistercian Trappist order and was a monk in France and Syria for seven years. He also lived as a hermit for a period near a convent of Poor Clares in Nazareth. He was ordained a priest in 1901 at age 43 and left for northern Africa to serve among the



Blessed Charles de Foucauld

'The love of God, the love for one's neighbour...All religion is found there...How to get to that point? Not in a day since it is perfection itself: it is the goal we must always aim for, which we must unceasingly try to reach and that we will only attain in heaven.'

Tuareg people, a nomadic ethnic group, saying he wanted to live among 'the furthest removed, the most abandoned.'

The outbreak of World War I led to attacks on the French in Algeria. In December 1, 1916, an armed gang of fanatics set out to deal with Charles. According to an eyewitness, the priest was dragged but he remained silent, did not resist and seemed immensely at peace. He was forced to kneel and offered freedom if he renounced Christ. He courageously declined and was shot in the head. His body in a kneeling position with his hands tied behind his back was left in the sand while his killers destroyed his home and oratory.

Reflection: 'The love of God, the love for one's neighbour...All religion is found there...How to get to that point? Not in a day since it is perfection itself: it is the goal we must always aim for, which we must unceasingly try to reach and that we will only attain in heaven.' These words of Blessed Charles remind us that ultimately it comes down to love of God and love of neighbour. We have to assess every action we do through this lens and ensure we are acting out of love and not self-interest. The Prayer of Abandonment by Blessed Charles Foucauld is a beautiful prayer we can use to surrender ourselves to God's love.

Blessed Sr Rani Maria

Mariam Vattalil was born in Kerala on 29 January 1954 and brought up in the faith. Even at a young age, she regularly attended Holy Mass. During her last year at school, she felt the call of the Lord to become a nun. She made her first profession in Franciscan Clarist Congregation on 1st of May 1974 under the new name Rani Maria, the word Rani having the meaning 'Regina' or queen.

She felt a missionary call to serve in North India. She first worked as a teacher and then became heavily involved in social activities to help the poor and downtrodden. She organised educational programmes for the children, the young, and the elderly. She discovered that the tribals of the villages had unconsciously fallen into the debt trap laid by tradesmen. The villagers had become reliant on the money lenders who exploited them. Through various initiatives, Sr Rani Maria made them aware of their rights and injustice. This led to her being disliked by their oppressors.

On 25th February 1995, Sr Rani Maria started her journey down to Kerala by bus. A young man kept her bag near the driver and asked her to sit in the back seat which was unusual as sisters were always given front seats.

Samundar Singh sat near Sr Rani Maria. His accomplice Jeevan Singh began to insult her saying: 'Why have you come here from Kerala? Have you come to convert these poor tribal people to Christianity? We will not allow that.'

Samundar Singh rose from his seat and asked for the bus to be stopped. He got down from the bus and broke a coconut against a rock on the road side, a sacred ritual for their gods. With pieces of the broken coconut in his hands he re-entered the bus and gave them out. He offered a piece to Sr Rani Maria but suddenly withdrew it as if to mock her. She asked him, 'Why are you so overjoyed today?' Brandishing a knife he said, 'Just for this,' and thrust it into her stomach. He stabbed her repeatedly. He dragged her out of the bus and stabbed her to death. The post-mortem registered 40 major injuries besides 14 bruises. Till her last breath, she kept on saying, 'Jesus! Jesus!'

Reflection: Blessed Sr Rani Maria is an incredible example of someone who acted out their faith through helping others. She acted out against injustice even though it ultimately led to her death. She died proclaiming the name Jesus on her lips. After she had spent all her life following and loving Jesus, dying for him would be her final act of surrender and love.

Blessed Rutilio Grande

Rutilio Grande was born on 5 July 1928 to a poor family in El Salvador. As a result of his parents' divorce, he was raised by his older brother and grandmother who was a devout Catholic woman. When he was 12, Rutilio made an impression on Archbishop Gonzalez during his annual visit to their village and was invited to attend the high school seminary in San Salvador and went on to enter the Jesuits aged 17.

Father Grande was ordained in 1959 and served as the prefect of discipline and the professor of pastoral theology in the diocesan seminary from 1965 to 1970. He became the pastor of Aguilares in 1972 and encouraged the local population to fight for land reform and justice; he also became a member of the priests' senate in 1974. Father Grande understood that as a priest he had to be an example of loving service and self-sacrifice. He was deeply involved in the lives of the people he served, Grande led with the Gospel but did not shy away from speaking on social and political issues, which had profound consequences for the Church. He underwent struggles with his physical and mental health. He was a contemporary of St Oscar Romero who was influenced by him.

On February 13, 1977, Father Grande said Mass in honour of a Colombian priest who had been recently arrested in El Salvador and deported without charges. In his sermon, he declared: 'I'm quite aware that very soon the Bible and the Gospel won't be allowed to cross our borders...because all the pages are subversive. And I think that if Jesus himself came across the border at Chalatenango, they wouldn't let him in...without any doubt, they would crucify him again.' As a direct result of this sermon, on March 12, while driving from Aguilares to El Paisnal with 15-year-old Nelson Lemus and 72-year-old Manuel Solorzano, his car was sprayed with gunfire and he died instantly. He was declared a Blessed in January 2022.

Reflection: In Blessed Rutilio Grande, we find someone who underwent struggles on a personal level such as with his physical and mental health. He also had to deal with conflict with authorities and others. However, he remained true to his values in the face of opposition and ultimately death.

Servant of God Akash Bashir

Akash Bashir was born on June 22, 1994 in Risalpur, Pakistan. He was a student at the Don Bosco Technical Institute in Lahore and one of the young people active in the parish community of the Church of Saint John.

Akash, a volunteer security guard, was on duty at the church entrance gate on Sunday, March 15, 2015. He spotted a man who wanted to enter the church wearing an explosive belt on his body. Akash blocked him at the entrance gate, stopping the terrorist's plan to destroy everyone in the church. The terrorist blew himself up and the young Akash Bashir died with him. Akash's last words were: 'I will die, but I will not let you in'.

His bravery and courage meant that more than a thousand Catholics inside the church that day were saved from death. On the feast of St John Bosco (January 31st), Pope Francis proclaimed Akash Bashir as 'Servant of God'. He is the first Servant of God from Pakistan.

Reflection: In this day and age, when it might feel like the younger generation are not particularly enthusiastic about their faith, the example of Akash Bashir stands out. It shows that there are still many young people with the bravery and courage, led by the Holy Spirit who remain strong even when faced with danger and death.

The legacy left by these great men and women inspire and encourage us in our own walk of faith. We many not face persecution and the threat of death for our faith. But we do face situations regularly where we can either choose to live out our faith boldly or remain passive. When we feel hesitant to speak out, let us remember these brave men and women who willingly gave up their life. Let us pray for the courage to have an enduring faith. ■■

Imprint of the Divine



We are all called to die to self and thereby be a martyr in some unique way, says **Anil Israel.**

A fable is told of a chicken and a pig living in a farm. On being confronted with the occasion as to what they could gift their master on his birthday, the chicken suggested, 'How about eggs with ham or bacon?' The pig politely declined: 'No thanks. For you its involvement, for me its commitment!' Truly, giving out of one's surplus is convenience but giving one's all is total sacrifice. What would one call this height of commitment? This level of total self-donation can aptly be called Martyrdom.

Three Hebrew children – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego *were cast into the burning fiery furnace* (Daniel 3:21) because of their faithfulness to God. They refused to bow and *worship the golden image* (Daniel 3:12) made by King Nebuchadnezzar. They were willing to offer their lives rather than disobey God's commandments. They chose to embrace: '*Death rather than sin*' (St Dominic Savio).

Eleazer, one of the scribes in high position, a man advanced in age refused to eat swine's flesh and disobey God. He *set an example of nobility and a memorial of courage by welcoming death with honour* (2 Maccabees 6: 18-31). Likewise, a mother and her seven sons too bravely embraced martyrdom for the love of God, in obedience to the commandments given through Moses (2 Maccabees 7).

Jesus, *though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God... but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross* (Philippians 2: 6, 7). Jesus' example of self-emptying (kenosis), encourages us to follow the path of self-denial repeated often in the Gospels. *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me* (Luke 9:23).

The apostles too did not refrain from following the example of their Master. James the Great was the first apostle martyr. Herod killed James the brother of

John with the sword (Acts 12:2). The first Pope, Peter too was crucified at Rome by Nero. He requested to be crucified upside down, for he didn't consider himself worthy to be crucified like Jesus. His brother Andrew too was crucified by being bound to an X-shaped cross. Similarly, the other apostles (except John the beloved disciple) too embraced martyrdom. They were either crucified or struck by a spear or a club or even sawed. One is believed to have been flayed (skinned) alive.

Deacon Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 7:58). Paul, the apostle to the gentiles was beheaded. Many of the early Christians were also persecuted for their faith. The Church observes the feast of the first holy martyrs of the Church of Rome, on 30th June. This feast commemorates the sacrifices made by early Christians after they were blamed for the burning of Rome, during the reign of Nero in 64 AD.

It is enlightening to see that martyrdom was not limited only to the early church. The forty martyrs of Sebaste are also known as the Armenian martyrs. Franciscan friar, St Berard of Carbio and companions, martyred in 1220, are called the Morocco martyrs. Japanese Jesuit seminarian Paul Miki and companions are known as martyrs of Japan. They were martyred in Nagasaki in 1597. A Portuguese Franciscan lay brother, Gonsalo Garcia of Bassein (Vasai) – the first canonised saint from India is one among them. Andrew Dung-Lac and companions are known as the 117 Vietnamese martyrs from the 17th to 19th centuries.

St John the Baptist was beheaded. The fourth Pope, St Clement of Rome was martyred by being tied to an anchor and thrown from a boat in the Black Sea. St Lawrence of Rome was grilled to death. St Margaret Clitherow was pressed to death. St Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. St Boniface the apostle of Germany, was martyred as he was reading the Scriptures to Christian neophytes on Pentecost Sunday. In 1980, St Oscar

Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, was martyred when he was celebrating Holy Mass. Innumerable are the ways in which fervent devout holy souls have won the crown of martyrdom out of undying love for Christ.

All those who gave their life for their faith, seem to echo in one unified voice: *I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me* (Galatians 2:20). *To die for God gives me joy* (St Jose Sanchez del Rio). *I die, but God does not! Viva Christo Rey!* (Bl Anacleto González Flores).

Lives of the saints continuously remind us to re-direct our focus from selfishness to selflessness – to grow from self-centeredness to other-centeredness. Holy Scripture draws our attention to grow in humility. *In humility consider others as more important than yourselves* (Philippians 2:3). The heartbeat of the Gospel – the commandment to *love one another* (John 13:34) – continues to incessantly prompt us to unceasingly do good to others. *Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me* (Matthew 25:40). We show our love for God by reaching out with love to the neighbour in need.

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop (John 12:24). If our lives must bear lasting fruits, we need to learn to fall in love with dying. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John 15:13). Polish Franciscan Friar, St Maximilian Kolbe stepped forward and opted to die in place of Franciszek Gajowniczek at the Auschwitz concentration camp. During his canonisation, Pope John Paul II declared him ‘martyr of charity’.

Like St Maria Goretti, Brazilian Roman Catholic girl, Bl Albertina Berkenbrock, also sacrificed her life when she refused her attacker’s rape attempts. During these times of moral degeneration, they stand out as strong examples of ‘martyrs of chastity’. St Josaphat Kuntsevych is referred to as martyr of Christian unity. Patron of altar-servers, St Tarcisus is a martyr of the Blessed Sacrament.

In 1962, Italian paediatrician, St Gianna Beretta Molla refused abortion amidst her dangerous fourth pregnancy. She succumbed within a week after

Not all are called to be martyrs in blood, but all are called to die-to-self and thereby be a martyr in some unique way. What am I called to die for?



delivering her fourth child, Gianna Emmanuella. Like her there are several women who stood for the life of their unborn child, at the risk of their own life. They all can undoubtedly be called ‘martyrs of love’.

Franciscan Clarist Sr Rani Maria was stabbed in 1995. Her younger sister Sr Selmy Paul, forgave her sister’s assassin, Samandar Singh and tied a *rakhi* which symbolises brother-sister love, on his wrist. Australian missionary Graham Staines was burnt to death along with his two sons in 1999. His wife Gladys Staines remarked: ‘I have forgiven the killers and have no bitterness because forgiveness brings healing.’ Only forgiveness liberates the sinner. May we too learn to *conquer evil with good* (Romans 12:21).

Akash Bashir, a lay Catholic and former pupil of Don Bosco Technical institute of Lahore became a martyr on 15 March 2015, in his bid to prevent a suicide bomber from entering the St

John’s Church where he was serving as a volunteer security guard. Examples of martyrs are endless. *The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church* (Tertullian of Carthage).

May this blessed *cloud of witness* (Hebrews 12:1) inspire us to awaken to our call. *Not all of us can do great things but we can do small things with great love. Love until it hurts. If you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love* (Mother Teresa). *To love is to give oneself and to give all* (St Therese of Lisieux). Like the poor widow who *put in her two small copper coins* (Mark 12:42) and the young boy who offered his lunch of *five small barley loaves and two small fish* (John 6:9), may we to be encouraged to give our all.

Whenever a life was martyred, the flame of life might have been extinguished, but an invisible light of love was lit in the hearts of many and continues to shine brightly forever. They all left behind a dazzling glow of eternal light – a startling presence of the divine light – an imprint of the Divine.

Martyrdom does not consist only in dying for one’s faith. Martyrdom also consists in serving God with love and purity of heart every day of one’s life (St Jerome). Not all are called to be martyrs in blood, but all are called to die-to-self and thereby be a martyr in some unique way. What am I called to die for? *Lord, what do you want me to do?* (Acts.9:6).

Is the Lord calling me to *crush the pride* (Leviticus 26:19), to quench the anger, to extinguish the fire of lust and to crucify *the flesh with its passions and desires* (Galatians 5:24)? Am I being prompted to *throw off my old sinful nature and my former way of life* (Ephesians 4:22)?

The important thing in life is to live our life for something more important than ourselves. *Becoming a martyr for the sake of Christ is the greatest thing we can do* (St Symphorosa). *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints* (Psalm 116:15). May we learn to pray every day: ‘Lord Jesus, You gave your life for me. Help me to live my life for you.’ ■■

Anil Israel lives in Mannheim, Germany, with his wife Sunita and their 5 children.

PAKISTAN'S FIRST CATHOLIC MARTYR



Ayyaz Gulzar writes about Akash Bashir, the young Catholic martyr and Pakistan's first Servant of God.

Congratulations to the Christians of Pakistan, and to the Universal Church especially to the young people around the globe. Akash Bashir is a hero, our hero and his martyrdom is a role model for all, especially young people serving the Universal Church, to be obedient and faithful to our responsibilities and in all that we do.

The news of the elevation of the young Christian martyr Akash Bashir as Servant of God has spread a huge joy among the Christians living in Pakistan and beyond. Church leaders and young people have actively shared the news on social media, warmly welcoming this historic announcement. We praise and thank God for this blessing to the Catholic Church in Pakistan. Akash's life and mission is already an inspiration for our faithful and will inspire many more people to serve the Church with zeal, obedience, faithfulness and dedication.

'I will die but I will not let you go in,' were the last words of Akash Bashir to the explosives-clad terrorist. Brave words that were followed-up with the highest act of bravery. Without a second thought for his own life, Akash did his best to save the people who had gathered in the church for Sunday Holy Mass. And this great sacrifice is a witness for his love for Jesus Christ and for the Catholic community of his parish, St John's Church, where he served as a volunteer security guard till his last breath. And proved that he is one among those who stayed faithful until death, and has gained the crown of eternal life. (Revelations 2:10)

Akash Bashir was one among the several members of St John's Catholic Church security team on 15 March 2015, the day his church was attacked. He was

on duty at the church's entrance gate with one of his companions, when a stranger tried to enter without a body check but was stopped. Akash noticed that the man was hiding explosives inside his jacket. Without losing a moment, got hold of him and stopped him from entering the Church. When the stranger did not listen, Akash immobilised him in a tight embrace and held him at the gate, quarelling with the man for a few minutes, completely foiling his plan to attack the congregation present inside the Church, more than 1500 people.

Akash Bashir, aged 20, knowing well the consequences of grabbing a man armed with explosives, stepped forward and grabbed the attacker tight. The terrorist, finding no way to enter the church, detonated the explosives killing himself and the brave Akash Bashir.

On 15 March 2015, two suicide attacks were made by members of the terrorists group Tehreek-e-Taliban Jamaatul Ahraar (TTP-JA) on the churches in Youhanabad, 17 people died and 70 were injured. Youhanabad is the biggest locality of Christians in Lahore, accommodating more than 100,000 Christians and has numerous churches including the attacked St John's Catholic Church and Christ Church of the Church of Pakistan. The locality is home to several religious congregations, has three colleges of the Catholic Church, several Church-run schools and a major seminary for philosophy student candidates to the priesthood.

Pope Francis was quick to denounce the act of terrorism against Christians. Hours after the attack, at the midday Angelus prayer that day, he said, 'Dear brothers and sisters, with sorrow, with much sorrow, I learned of today's terrorist



Clockwise:
The family of Akash Bashir with a Salesian priest.

Visitors at the grave Akash Bashir.

The poster paying homage to the Servant of God Akash Bashir. It states 'Akash! Your sacrifice is exemplary'.



attacks on two churches in the city of Lahore, Pakistan, which caused many deaths and injuries. They are Christian churches. Christians are being persecuted. Our brothers and sisters are spilling their blood solely because they are Christians. While I assure the victims and their families of my prayers, I ask the Lord, I implore the Lord, source of all goodness, the gift of peace and accord for that country; may there be an end to this persecution of Christians, which the world tries to hide, and may there be peace.¹

Akash Bashir was born on 22 June 1994 in Risalpur, Nowshera Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan to Bashir Emmanuel (father) and Naz Bano (mother). Emmanuel had moved the family – his wife, their daughter and four sons to Lahore in 2002. Akash Bashir was a student at Don Bosco Technical Institute for Boys in Youhanabad, Lahore and was an active member of St John's Catholic Church. After completing a diploma in stitching and grafting, Akash started work at a garment factory. He joined as a volunteer member of the church security in 2014.

Akash Bashir saved hundreds of



'I will die but I will not let you go in,' were the last words of Akash Bashir to the explosives-clad terrorist. Brave words that were followed-up with the highest act of bravery.

Christian men, women and children that day, all of whom were people of Pakistan. He should not only be considered a hero for the Church but also for the nation. He courageously fought against a terrorist who was not only there to kill Christians but innocent Pakistani citizens as well.

The title 'Servant of God' is given to a candidate at the beginning of the sainthood process at the diocesan level. On 24th January 2022, the feast of St Francis de Sales, news arrived that the Holy See had granted authorisation for

the opening of the Cause of Martyrdom of Akash Bashir on 9th November 2021.

The Archbishop of Lahore, Sebastian Francis Shaw announced it to the faithful on 31st January 2022, on the feast day of St John Bosco.

The Archbishop said, 'It is a great news for the Catholic Church in Pakistan that on the feast day of St. John Bosco (Jan.31) the Holy Father Pope Francis has proclaimed Akash Bashir as "Servant of God". He offered his life as a sacrifice to save the lives of the hundreds of Christians present inside the St John's Catholic Church. We praise and thank God for this brave young man, who had a possibility to run away after seeing the suicide attacker but he stayed firm in his faith and did not let the

attacker enter the church. He gave his life to save more than 1500 people present inside the church for Sunday Mass'.

Archbishop Sebastian Shaw on several occasions appreciated the bravery and sacrifice of Akash Bashir. The Archbishop has also worked his best to facilitate all the Christian families who lost their loved ones on 15 March 2015, during the twin suicide attacks at St. John's Church and Christ Church. Along with the parish pastoral team, the Archbishop has also helped them to set up small businesses to support their families. ■

¹ www.vatican.va



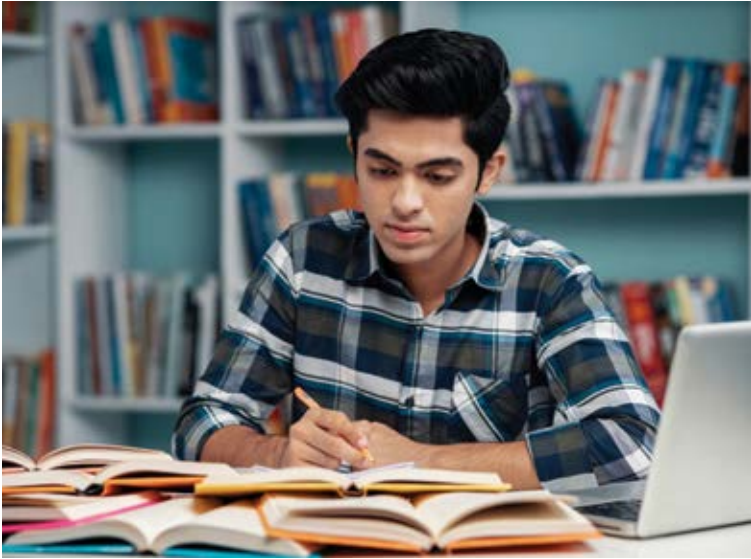
Glimpsing Everyday Sainthood

Martyrdom is not only the giving up of one's life, it is also the giving up of aspects and the giving more of one's life as one lives. Noel Benno invites us to take a look at examples of everyday martyrdom.

Glimpses of sainthood are all around us if we look a little closer. That shopkeeper who ensures your daily supply of fresh fruits and veggies, the old lady down the road who wishes you a good morning on your way to work or your neighbour who painstakingly brings up their family, could all be saints in the making. Taking a close look at their lives and appreciating their presence in our lives would remind us how becoming who we are, and becoming the person that God created, is a simple path to happiness, peace of mind and even sanctity.

Sasha, Retired Mother, 62

Sasha retired from her long-standing government service career about two years ago. Despite the curveballs which life threw at her – ageing ailments and associated trouble, Sasha is undoubtedly one of the most joyful faces in our community. For someone who was super passionate about her life and career, the transition to a retired life was not easy – and that's when her grandchildren came into the picture. Today, her source of joy and inspiration are her grandkids, whom she helps raise while their parents are occupied at work. From storytelling sessions to running around with them and feeding food at right intervals, she does it all with utmost zeal and charisma.



Murph, College Student, 21

Being a first generation college goer, Murph had a lot of hurdles to cross in his first year of university. Not too long into the course, he realised that he was not alone in the journey, and even made friends with a handful of learners like himself. A strong advocate of ‘making the best of one’s God-given abilities’, Murph took the lead in creating a student support group for first generation learners on campus. Helping students get more involved in campus events, finding part-time jobs to support studies, utilising resources like the library on campus – the group is doing their bit to ensure that first generation learners do not lag behind in any way.



Asta, Homemaker & Mother of Three, 36

Asta took a break from her career in technology and is now the primary caregiver to her three children, aged eight, five and two. The transition from a full-time engineer to a full-time caregiver wasn’t the easiest of roads for Asta to manoeuvre; the intricacies involved were a lot more than she had imagined. Hers is the conviction that ‘to be a mother is a great treasure’, recognising the invaluable opportunity and responsibility she shares with her husband. From changing diapers for the little one to getting the older ones ready for school every day, her life is an everyday battle that is tackled with exuberant joy. Despite her busy schedule at home, her focused efforts to stay updated on technological developments in her domain give her the deftness to get back on her career trajectory in the years to come.



Robin, School Teacher, 29

A recent appointee to the school, Robin's unique trait would be the substantial amount of preparation he does for each lesson. He finds immense joy in making mathematics simple for high schoolers and is impressively good at what he does, often burning midnight oil for classes the next day. Robin truly and sincerely believes that as a teacher, it is his responsibility to 'kindle in his students a thirst for truth and wisdom', as St JPII remarked¹.

¹ Address of Pope John Paul II to the council, staff, and students of the Institute of Catholic Education, Melbourne, Australia, November 28, 1986.

Kaiya, Grocer, 42

Kaiya has been running her grocery store in a small neighbourhood for over a decade now. Not only is she a familiar face for everyone in the community, she pretty much knows everyone in the locality. She wouldn't have to think twice if someone were to come asking for directions to a particular house around there. It is this deep integration with the community and her commitment to creating a thriving local economy that lead her to start sourcing local produce too to be sold at her shop. A passionate advocate of the local economy, she now offers her customers the option of buying things on credit for a month – a boon for her buyers. Kaiya finds her peace of mind in knowing that even a small grocery store goes a long way in serving a community.





Jay, Potter, 34

Jay grew up watching his father create clay pots for a living and it was quite natural for him to help his father out from a very young age. He was neither particularly excited about pottery nor did he know anything else to earn a livelihood. Despite wanting to get a job and move into the city, the odds of getting a school education were not in his favour and Jay had to prioritise learning the craft to keep the family going. It wasn't the easiest of journeys for Jay as he took up the responsibility of his ageing parents and continued the traditional craft as well. Over the course of years, Jay put his heart and soul into the craft and associated trade, ensuring a decent amount of return to pay for his workers and take care of his family of five, including his parents. Today, Jay is committed to making the best of his skill and craft, ensuring that his children get a school education and have more options to choose from than just pottery.

Sagar, Farmer, 43

Sagar's day starts way early in the morning, even as the village still sleeps. He milks the livestock to deliver essential dairy in his neighbourhood, packs his lunch and proceeds with the routine work at his farm nearby. Though small farmland, the local community looks forward to the produce from his place and their source of organic food. A strong believer of organic ways of cultivation, he is very particular about what goes into the soil as he cultivates grains and some vegetables. Deeply influenced by the Benedictine priests at his local church, Sagar is now an advocate of sustainable agriculture and growth and considers this as his unique way of participating in God's good intentions and active care for our world.





Rayna, School Student, 15

Rayna is your classic school student who is deeply committed to her studies. She dreams of becoming a scientist herself and has been preparing herself for the same ever since the idea struck. She's not just a good academic for herself, but has been taking an active effort in sharing her know-how of academic subjects with other students as well. She'd proudly hold up the teaching of the 'parable of the talents' (Matthew 25:14-30), if someone were to question the point of all the effort over and beyond her studies. Drawing inspiration from the quote of St Catherine of Siena, 'Love does not stay idle' (Letter T82), Rayna is committed to making the best of her talents for herself and for the good of her fellow beings.

Bhumi, IT professional, 34

Being the bundle of joy she is, Bhumi can be easily spotted even in a large group of people. A mid-career IT professional, she champions her firm's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team ensuring that the campus hires of her division get the right amount of mentoring and support in the early years in their career. The whole process of keeping track of new joiners in the firm, ironing out all their unfamiliarities, and aligning them to work they are excited about is no easy task. You can easily find her offering guidance to a junior during her break/coffee time. If someone were to ask why she puts in all this extra effort, at the drop of a hat she'd go, 'Just doing my bit to ensure that everyone gets a bright start for their career'. Bhumi is undoubtedly the personification of what we read in the Gospel, *'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*' (Matthew 25:40)



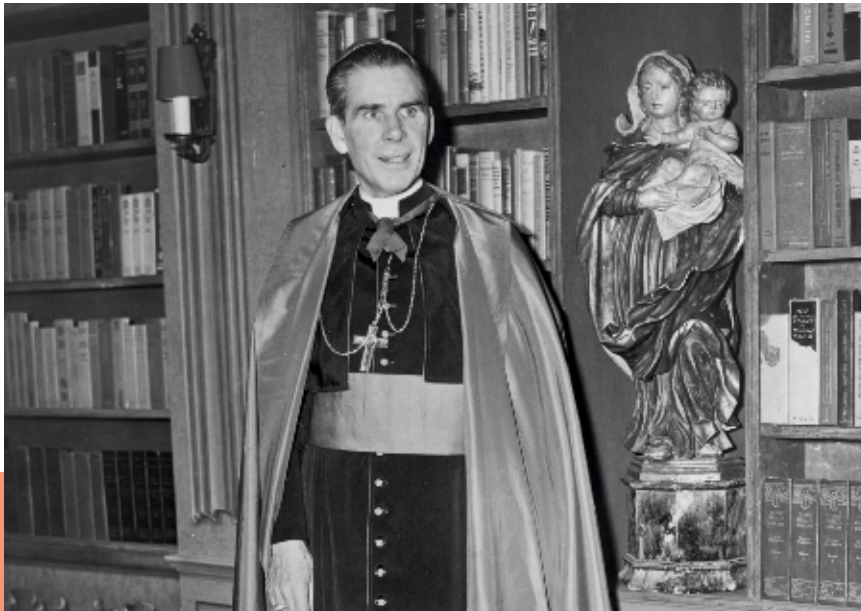
Rex, Retired Professor, 65

Deep inside his heart, Rex knew that his calling was to excel in the field of education. Throughout his career, spanning over a whopping four decades, his commitment was not just to teach, but to guide his students in their careers and life in general. Students recollect him being one of the most cheerful and holistic professors they'd ever met. When his service with the government university came to a close upon reaching the retirement age, he took up the responsibility of teaching at a private university, for the love of teaching. Through thick and thin he continues to teach, guide students, making sure they all fly high. With the pandemic kicking in, Rex had to steer a very steep learning curve to keep up with the online learning systems of Zoom and Google Classroom. Though not as agile with these, for someone who has spent a lifetime with chalks and blackboards, it is still great progress. For us, Rex is an embodiment of commitment, courage and resilience in a changing world.

'For me to be a saint means to be myself,' wrote the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton in his book *New Seeds of Contemplation*. 'Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and discovering my true self'. We could spend a lifetime pondering over these words and putting into effect the insight from it. Our day-to-day life is so full of opportunities to live intensely and be who God desires us to be, and it is often in the simplest of lives that we find God's marvel and love for each of us.

SPECIAL

Easter Wisdom from the Saints



*Unless there is a Good Friday in your life,
there can be no Easter Sunday.*

Venerable Fulton J Sheen

The cross is the school of love.

– St Maximilian Kolbe

The Cross had asked the questions; the Resurrection had answered them... The Cross had asked: ‘Why does God permit evil and sin to nail Justice to a tree?’ The Resurrection answered: ‘That sin, having done its worst, might exhaust itself and thus be overcome by Love that is stronger than either sin or death.’

– Venerable Fulton J Sheen

God had one son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering.

– St Augustine

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages.

– St John Chrysostom

If this mission may sometimes seem difficult, call to mind the words of the Risen Lord: ‘*I am with you always, to the close of the age*’ (Matthew 28:20). Certain of his presence, you shall fear no difficulty and no obstacle. His word will enlighten you; his Body and his Blood will nourish you and sustain you on your daily journey to eternity.

– St John Paul II

How precious the gift of the cross, how splendid to contemplate! In the cross there is no mingling of good and evil, as in the tree of paradise: it is wholly beautiful to behold and good to taste. The fruit of this tree is not death but life, not darkness but light. This tree does not cast us out of paradise, but opens the way for our return.

– St Theodore the Studite

Christ’s resurrection is the strength, the secret of Christianity. It is not a question of mythology or of mere symbolism, but of a concrete event. It is confirmed by sure and convincing proofs. The acceptance of this truth, although the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s grace, rests at the same time on a solid historical base. On the threshold of the third millennium, the new effort of evangelisation can begin only from a renewed experience of this Mystery, accepted in faith and witnessed to in life.

– St John Paul II

All that crucifies is good: do not look at what wood the crosses are made of, as long as it is a ‘cross wood’. Great crosses present themselves rarely, little crosses are given to us at every moment. Make sure not to lose any of them.

– Bl Edward Poppe

Mary guides us in knowing the mysteries of the Lord: and as in her and with her we understand the meaning of the cross, so in her and with her we come to grasp the meaning of the resurrection, enjoying the joy that emanates from this experience.

– St John Paul II

The Church is alive, as her Divine Founder is alive! The Church advances with the very virtue of life, as Jesus, after having submitted to the debt of mortal nature,

proceeds victoriously beyond the stone barrier, which his enemies have placed to guard the tomb! Over the centuries, too, there have been other enemies for the Church, who have tried to close it as if in a sepulchre, celebrating its agony and death from time to time. But she, who has within her the invincible strength of her Founder, is always reborn with him, forgiving everyone and assuring serenity and peace to the humble, the poor, the suffering, to men of goodwill.

– St John XXIII

And he departed from our sight and we might return to our heart, and there find him. For he departed, and behold, he is here.

– St Augustine

Easter is for everyone a mystery of death and life: For this reason, according to the express precept of the Church, which we paternally remind you, every faithful is invited at this time to purify their conscience with the sacrament of penance, immersing it in the Blood of Jesus; and he is called to approach the Eucharistic Banquet with greater faith, to feed on the life-giving flesh of the immaculate Lamb. The mystery of Easter is therefore of death and resurrection for each believer.

– St John XXIII

Christianity is not that complex of oppressive factors ... but it is peace, it is joy, it is love, it is life that is always renewed, like the secret pulsing of nature at the beginning of spring. The source of this joy is in the Risen Christ, who frees men from the slavery of sin, and invites them to be with him a new creature, waiting for blessed eternity.

– St John XXIII

Throughout the Easter season the Church will make the joyful announcement resound: *Surrexit Dominus vere!* The Lord is truly risen! ... Our prayer rises fervently to the Divine Saviour for all and for each of you: for priests and for the souls consecrated to God; for the bold and thoughtful youth, the future hope of the Church; for Christian families, especially for those who in their wombs

keep the precious deposit of a numerous sonship with greater fidelity and sacrifice; for those whose advanced age makes the heavenly homeland look with firm hope; for those who study, who teach, who work; especially for workers who do heavy work during the day and night; for the sick, who are so dear to us. We want to assure everyone that not only our particular predilection constantly follows them, but also that their life, even if hidden and humble, is so precious before God.

– St John XXIII

Since, Scripture says, *‘Honour your father, and forget not the groaning of your mother’* (Sirach 7:27), Christ most perfectly kept the law of honouring parents. It follows that he appeared to his mother first, who was stressed [*tribulata*] more than all the others.

– St Vincent Ferrer

Everything is a reminder of the Cross. We ourselves are made in the shape of a cross.

St John Vianney



While the world changes, the Cross stands firm.

– St Bruno

The Virgin Mary was most certain that her son would rise on the third day, as he had predicted, but perhaps she did not know the hour of his resurrection, because it is not written that Christ had revealed the hour of his resurrection, whether at *prime* or *terce* [first or third hour of daylight], etc. ... And she prepared the room, and found a chair for her son, saying, ‘Here my son shall sit and here I will speak with him.’ And she looked out of the window, and she saw the dawn breaking, and she rejoiced, saying, ‘Now my son is rising.’ And on her knees she prayed, saying: ‘Rise up Lord to meet me, and behold: even you, O Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel’ (Psalm 59:5).

– St Vincent Ferrer

He cries out, saying: See, I am with you all the days of this age. He is himself the shepherd, the high priest, the way and the door, and has become all things at once for us.

– St Athanasius

Why should we today sing *Alleluia*, *Praise the Lord*? Because this day we are fed, freed, assured of the truth, and given promises of being endowed, in our resurrection, with the gifts of clarity, agility, brightness and impassibility, which Christ showed in his resurrection.

– St Vincent Ferrer

As, then, Jonah spent three days and as many nights in the whale’s belly, and was delivered up sound again, so shall we all, who have passed through the three stages of our present life on earth – I mean the beginning, the middle, and the end, of which all this present time consists – rise again. For there are altogether three intervals of time, the past, the future, and the present. And for this reason the Lord spent so many days in the earth symbolically, thereby teaching clearly that when the fore-mentioned intervals of time have been fulfilled, then shall come our resurrection, which is the beginning of the future age, and the end of this.

– St Methodius of Olympus

FAITHOGRAPHIC

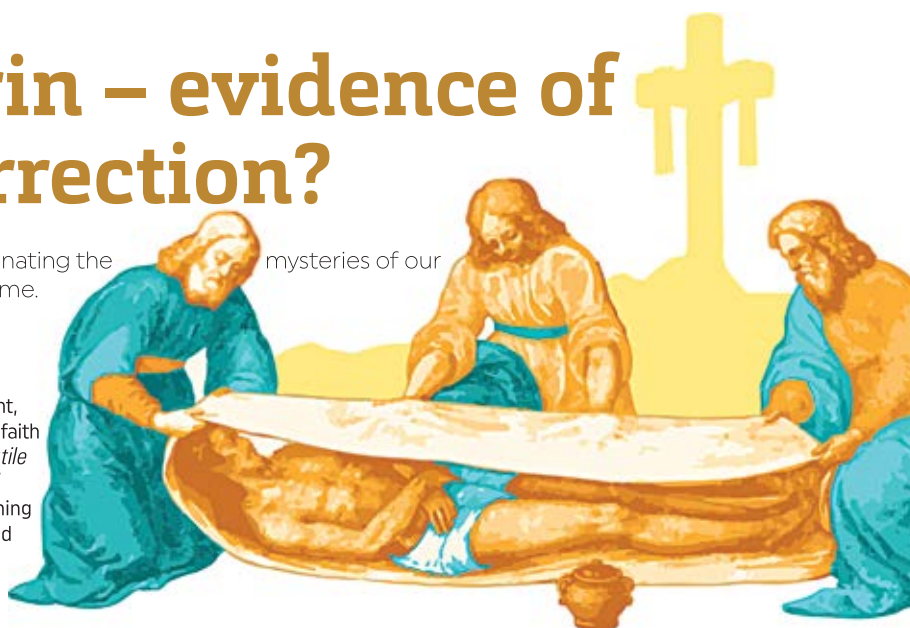
Shroud of Turin – evidence of Christ's Resurrection?



A monthly infographic by **Tena Conil**, illuminating the mysteries of our Catholic faith and values, one pixel at a time.

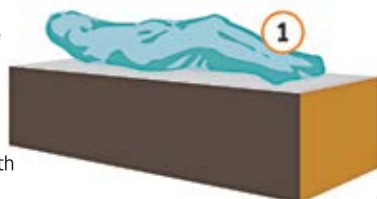
ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD

The Resurrection of Jesus is the spectacular meta-historical event, the most pivotal in salvific history and the 'crowning truth of our faith in Christ' (CCC 638). *If Christ has not been raised... your faith is futile and you are still in your sins... we are of all men, most to be pitied* (1 Cor 15: 17-19). The Resurrection is not just of symbolic meaning – we believe this as historic truth as was consistently preached by all the Apostles from Paul in Greece to Matthew in Ethiopia and Thomas in India. In terms of its liturgical solemnity and theological prominence, Easter outshines even Christmas.



RESURRECTION ACCORDING TO SCIENCE

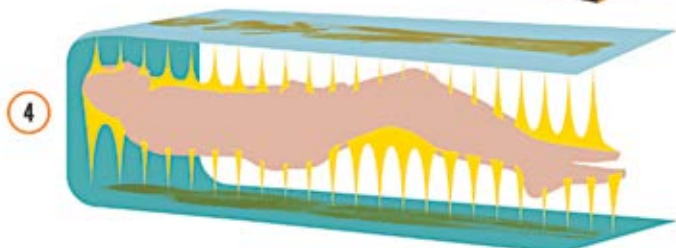
4 AM, 5th April, 33 AD. The corpse of Christ, bent in a 'rigor mortis' shape lies wrapped in the traditional white linen Shroud on the stone slab, inside the sealed sepulchre, 37 hours after his death on the cross.



Two mutually-cancelling 'event horizons' (caused by the same 'singularity' that created our universe in the 'Big Bang') appear simultaneously at the axis plane of Christ's body inside the closed Shroud, one from top and the other from the bottom, collapsing into one.



The Body of Christ floats up, just above the stone slab in the zero-gravity created by the collapsed event horizon (similar to a black hole). The Shroud pops open and remains in a stiff 'C' shape, a tiny distance off the body, without touching it.

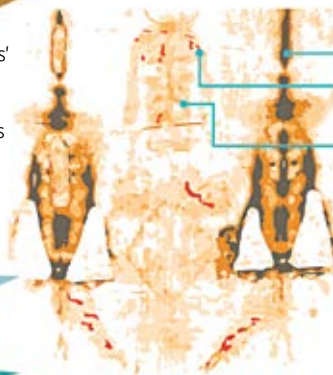


Two simultaneous bursts of 34 trillion watts of neutron flux VUV light radiation from either side of Christ's floating body causes a holographic scorch on the Shroud's hairline surface, colour-reversing the image in the process. The body disappears, leaving the empty Shroud on the stone slab. The Resurrection is completed within a nanosecond.

MOST STUDIED OBJECT IN HISTORY

The Shroud of Turin, a long white linen cloth, roughly 4.5 x 1 metre, believed to be the burial Shroud of Jesus Christ is the most important relic in all of Christianity, venerated from early times as 'Acheiropoieta' (Greek – 'not made of human hands'). Housed since the 17th century within the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, the Shroud had a miraculous, millennia-long journey from Jerusalem. This cloth is the single, most studied artefact in all of history; a whole field of study – 'sindonology' exists exclusively for it.

There are three sets of images on the Shroud:

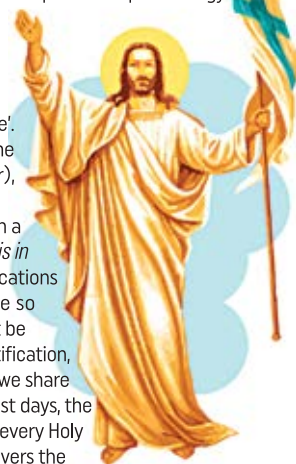


- A set of large burn marks from a 1532 fire
- Blood stains from the flogged and crucified body of Christ
- A separate faint brown, photographic negative image of the full-length, frontal and dorsal body

Although a faulty 1988 carbon test (which sampled a medieval patch-up instead of the original fabric) briefly stalled its study, the Shroud continues to attract top scientists from diverse disciplines – particle physics to holography, quantum optics and epistemology.

EASTER – A NEW BEGINNING

Sindonologists say the collapsed event horizon in Christ's tomb indicates the start of a 'new universe'. Easter Vigil liturgy too is filled with the same theme – new fire, new water, new time (liturgical year), new life (baptismal vows). In the New Testament, St Paul's epistles and Revelation are obsessed with a *new heaven and new earth* (Rev 21: 1). *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation* (2 Cor 5: 17). If the implications of the discoveries behind the Resurrection are so spectacular, the new life Christ opens for us, must be infinitely more so. Crucifixion secures us divine justification, reinstating us in God's grace and by Resurrection we share in the life of the Father's only Son. From her earliest days, the Church has provided a reminder of the Shroud at every Holy Mass, through the 'corporal' (white cloth which covers the chalice; 'corpus' – Latin for body), so that, *as Christ was raised from the dead... we too might walk in newness of life* (Rom 6:4). Let us turn this Eastertide into a luminous new beginning and unleash in our life, the power of the Risen Lord's 'victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace' (CCC 654).



KAIROS Buds

Highly Recommended!

It's been a year we are receiving Kairos Buds magazine for our 5 and 3 year-old girls. Initially, the kids were very excited about colouring pages and the beautiful pictures inside. As a mother, I had been in search for a Catholic magazine like BUDS. It is designed perfectly, attractively and printed well! My kids ask me to read the stories from it. Since they are in pre-k, I use the magazine to teach them to read. It's perfect for their growth. I began to make conscious efforts to spend time with my kids with BUDS. The Smart Parenting section is very beautiful with good wisdom that helps us to grow together! My kids' main interests are the Dare to be Saints cartoon, activity pages, colouring and Hobby Hub. From the Luminous Library page, I've started making lists of books and movies we can use for future references! Personally, we highly recommend this book for all children aged 3-12. Young couples who want to raise their kids in faith from a young age, please don't miss this opportunity to buy!

Depthy Tomy, Houston, USA



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The Joy of Want

What do we do when our repeated prayers fall on God's seemingly deaf ears?

Raifiel Cyril tells us.

I am the youngest of 11 children and none of my siblings have had any trouble conceiving. Entering the 13th year of being married and open to life, my husband and I are still waiting to bear children after two miscarriages.

Recently, Mass readings have been going through the first book of Samuel recounting the fascinating story of Hannah. Hannah the famous lady who asked God for a son and He answered her prayer, blessing her with Samuel.

Before I was married and before I had a life-changing encounter of Christ, I had plans for my life. I used to think to myself: I must get married latest by 27 years, so that I can have natural and healthy deliveries and have a bunch of children. I had heard that having the first child after one was 30 years-old made normal delivery hard. Now I understand how foolish I was to think that it was all in my control. After encountering the Lord, a year before I got married, my plans lost all value at the surpassing greatness of knowing him. In those early years, I only remember once worrying about my age and talking to God about wanting normal

deliveries and he instantly reminded me of Sarah. I realised surely Sarah had a normal delivery despite her advanced years, so it was not for me to worry about! In God's time and God's way. From that moment I did not lose my peace.

However, I realised that while I was very much at peace, a lot of people were and are not. They pitifully looked at my husband and I as someone would at a word misspelt. Something's wrong or something's amiss. In their loving concern they would fervently pray for a blessing of a child in our lives.

What is interesting to note however is that God's Word about Sarah dug deep into my heart and found a home there. Even though the two miscarriages did tire us, we did not despair. That is how powerful God's assurance to our heart has been. God's Word is powerful. And Jesus' name is higher than every other name. And he has told us that in his name we are to drive out demons, heal the sick and raise the dead. But the greatest attribute of God is not his power in driving out demons or healing the sick or raising the dead. His greatest attribute is Love. God is Love.

When we focus on this truth our focus changes from what He can give us to Who He is. A powerful question for any relationship. Not what this person can give us but who he/she is. Often, we spend more time loving what we can get, than we do loving the 'who'. There was a time in my life when through a study of the Word I understood the power of Jesus' name and started seeing miracles around and within me, healing the sick, driving out demons. I was captivated by this feeling of impregnability and started feeling invincible. From loving God, I shifted to loving his blessings, seemingly appropriating them to myself in faith. Here was God offering me his whole self on a platter, but I was getting distracted and mesmerised by the crumbs that fell off his table. God is LOVE. He can do and grant in our lives more than we can ever ask or imagine but all God's blessings in

the world put together can never compare to HIM. HE is the Blessing. JESUS is the blessing. What a great mistake we make when we push aside God's generous offer of himself and pray in faith to claim the crumbs in Jesus' mighty name. I started humbling myself only when despite praying in great faith, I was becoming steadily weaker with an illness. Praise be God!

Since then, I have given up twisting God's arm, using his name to accomplish my will. Sickness, barrenness, heartache, trials and even death does not call for an overriding of His Will. His Will first. And if God is Love and I am missing something in my life then not only is it known to the Lord, but he can only have allowed it for my well-being. This realisation has brought great peace in my life. In my barrenness I see God's hand of love. In the unchanging struggles I see God's hand of goodness. In an unplanned financial crisis I see God's hand of mercy. I don't purport to know what is best for any given stage and area of my life. God is much more able in that department, and I wholeheartedly trust him.

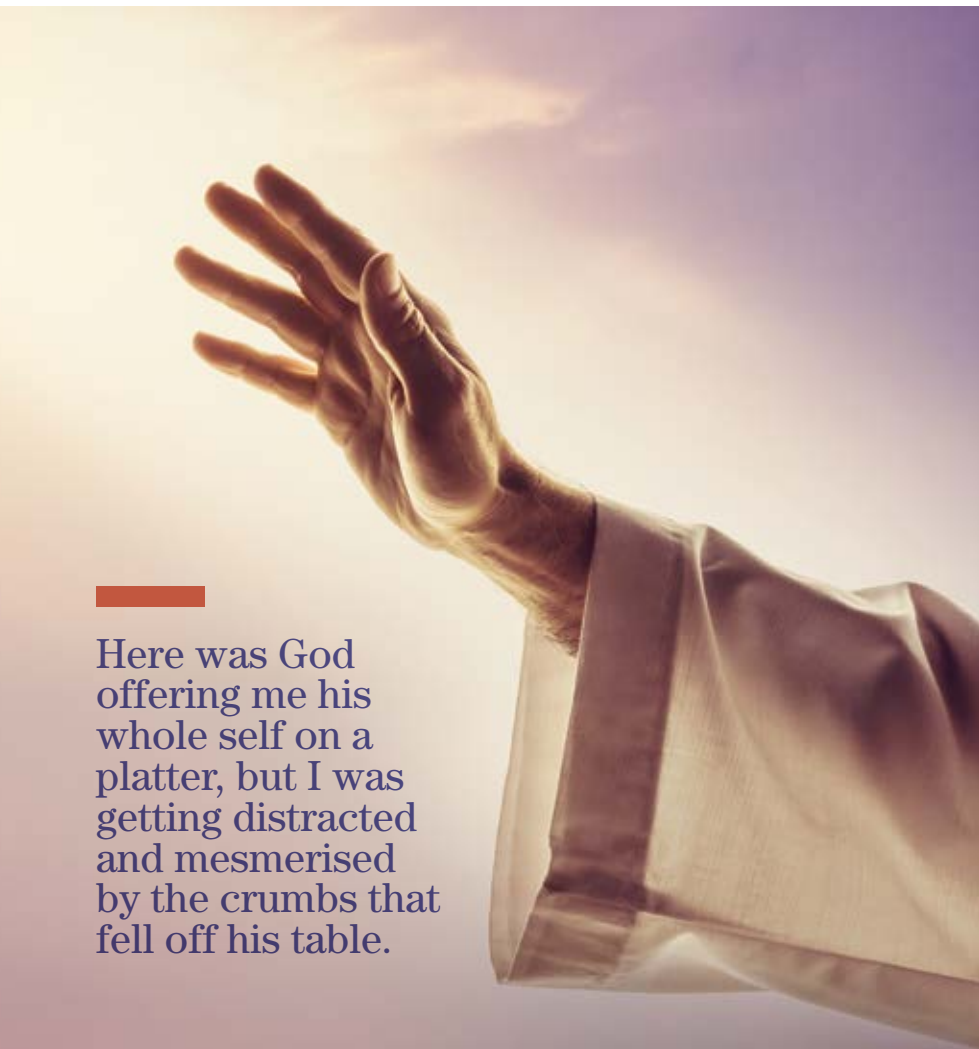
Coming back to Hannah, let us look at this passage from 1 Samuel 1:1-5.

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.

Whenever people sighed about us not

ALIVE; HE BRINGS DOWN TO THE GRAVE AND RAISES UP. > 1 SAMUEL 2:6



Here was God offering me his whole self on a platter, but I was getting distracted and mesmerised by the crumbs that fell off his table.

having children, I've told them, 'Don't worry I will have children in God's time'. But recently, reading the above passage warmed my heart. All that I had been experiencing and believing was reaffirmed when I noticed the phrase, 'the Lord had closed her womb'.

Hannah was not a victim to physical infertility or a curse or the impact of a generational sin. The Lord himself had closed her womb. Now you may want to ask why would God do something negative like that? Well look at this next passage, an excerpt from Hannah's version of the Magnificat in 1 Samuel 2:4-8.

The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. For the foundations of the earth are the LORD'S; on them he has set the world.

God breaks the warrior's bows, strengthens the weak, makes the full hungry, and the hungry full. He grants children to the barren and sorrow to one with children. He brings to death and to life, brings poverty and wealth and can bring honour to the poor.

Friends, what I want to drive at is that God brings both that which we love and that which we don't enjoy so much in our lives. He does this because he loves us. He wants to form us, help us grow, help us be purified, help us bear eternal fruit, all the wonderful things that are not always gained in a hale and hearty life. So, much to the distaste and distrust of his children, God continues to love us into being. I had a fracture when I was 12 years-old and got hit by a bike on the road. At the hospital after being anaesthetised the doctor yanked my bone back into place resulting in me letting out a scream that pierced through my Mum's heart. My mother did not come barging into the room to scream at the doctor for hurting me. She knew I was broken, and the doctor was only fixing me. It is exactly the same with God. We are broken more than we are ever aware of, and our lack of awareness makes us smart and growl when God patiently puts us back together again.

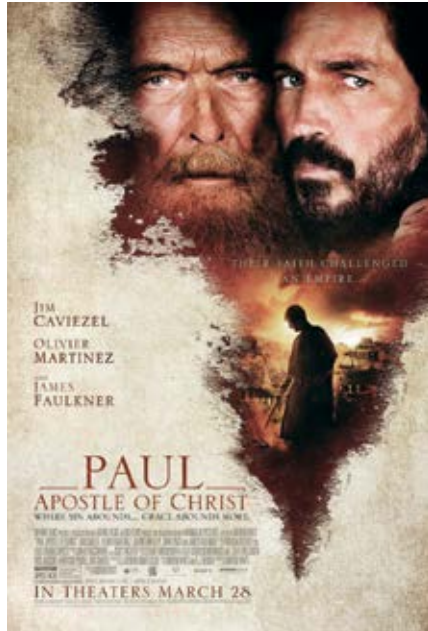
So, what are you missing in your life? What is the blessing you have been praying for? What is the problem that isn't going away? Open wide your arms and say, 'I receive this lack/this problem as a precious gift from you, my Lord. Thank you for loving me. Forgive me for aiming for the crumbs when you desire to give me your whole Self. I open my heart to you, dear Master. You are enough. You are the answer to my every desperation. Help me find my rest in your deep, tender, abiding Love. And all else will follow. ■■'

'A nobody who is precious to Christ', Raifiel lives with her husband, Cyril in beautiful Canberra, Australia.

SOUNDREPLY



THE CATHOLIC LIBRARY ON MARTYRDOM



MOVIES

Lorenzo Ruiz: The Saint... A Filipino

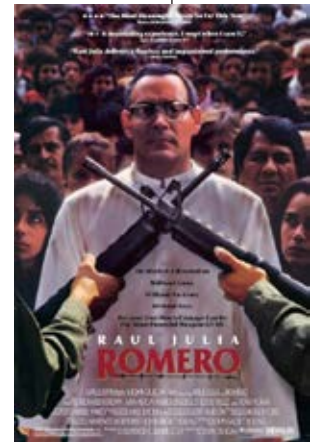
Depicting the first saint from the Philippines to be venerated by the Catholic Church, the film reminds us of the saint's unwavering faith and his determination to stay true to the Catholic Church.

Pedro Calungsod: Batang Martir (Young Martyr)

This 2013 movie from the Philippines portrays the missionary life and subsequent martyrdom of Pedro Calungsod who shed his Visayan identity to spread the Good News in Guam.

Maximilian: Saint of Auschwitz

An intense depiction of Nazi-ruled Germany and one priest who sacrificed his own life to save another at the concentration camp in Auschwitz – the film stands as a testimony to the faith and virtues of Saint Maximilian, and in particular, his devotion to our Blessed Mother.



Paul, Apostle of Christ

God chose Paul as his apostle even before Paul had known Christ, as a reminder to us all that in Christ, we are all redeemed and made anew. This 2018 film highlights the staunch faith exhibited by him even in the greatest distress.

Romero

The movie represents the struggles faced by Saint Oscar Romero, trapped in the Civil War at El Salvador while he was the Archbishop there. His decision to organize peaceful protests against an unruly government and the unflinching courage he showed in the face of adversity serves a reminder to all.

BY
Jessica M

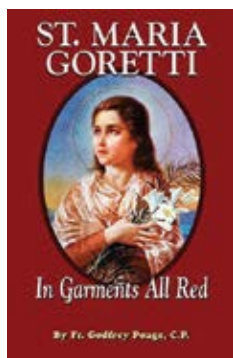
An Associate Consultant in Marketing & Communications, Jessica lives with her mother in Kochi, India.

BOOKS



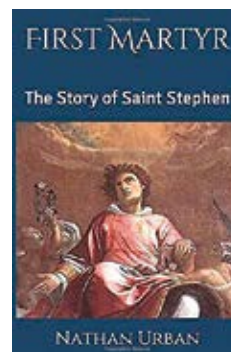
Saint Joan: The Girl Soldier by Louis de Wohl

Acclaimed Catholic author Louis de Wohl in this illustrated book vividly describes the life of Saint Joan of Arc, as one marked by the transformative power of Divine Grace and how her faith bore her through the entirety of life, even to death at the stake.



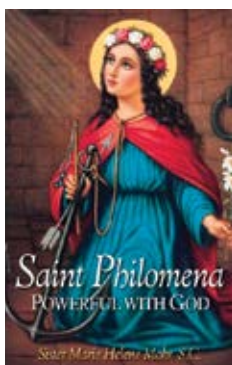
St. Maria Goretti: In Garments All Red by Fr. Godfrey Poage

Highlighting the importance of cultivating a spirit of love towards our Creator and placing the virtue of purity at the forefront, the book is a beautiful account of the life of Maria Goretti and her desire to stay chaste whilst staring death in the face.



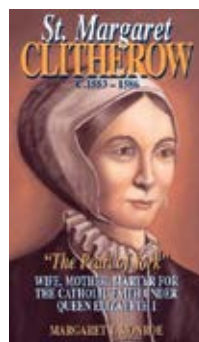
First Martyr: The Story of Saint Stephen by Nathan Urban

Though a short account, the book actively describes the life and times of Saint Stephen, right from the days of him preaching the Gospel to being stoned to death for his passion to serve the Lord.



St. Philomena: Powerful with God by Sr. Marie Helen Mohr

The book describes the wondrous miracles and astounding blessings received through the intercession of Saint Philomena after the discovery of her relics and how the faithful can take a leaf or two out of her life to stay undaunted even while persecuted.



St. Margaret Clitherow: The Pearl of York by Margaret T. Monroe

Saint Margaret Clitherow who is a shining example of a Catholic wife and mother was executed in a horrifying manner for the act of receiving Catholic priests into her home to celebrate the Holy Mass. The book provides a detailed account of her life and the heroic execution she faced with patience and valour.



RECORD HOLDER AT 5!

Claire Noble writes about India Book of Records' five-year-old achiever, Evlin Fana Jofy, who recited 22 Bible verses in 1 minute and 1 second.



We all dream of reaching greater heights. Guided by the Holy Spirit, even the smallest of efforts can lead to astounding feats.


Evlin Fana Jofy, at the age of five, etched her name in the India Book of Records 2022 for reciting 22 verses from the Bible in one minute and one second. Evlin, who hails from Thrissur is the daughter of Jofy and Vinaya. Jofy runs his own business while Vinaya works as a nursing tutor at Amala Hospital in Thrissur. Vinaya has also served as a Catechism teacher at her local parish for a year.

Evlin's interest was kindled when her mother Vinaya joined a WhatsApp group called Little Angels. 'Every day, a Bible verse would be sent, with an audio clip,'

Vinaya said. After the family prayer, she would help Evlin memorise the Bible verses she had written down.

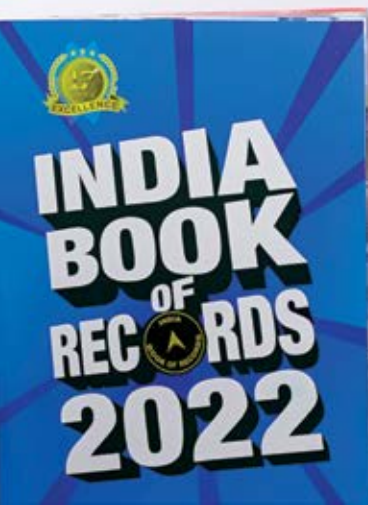
Vinaya had never known about the records until recently when a neighbour's child performed a similar feat. Confident of her daughter's talent, she sent in the application form, upon which a link was provided for the video submission.

The mother-daughter duo prepared fervently and young Evlin learned to recite 25 verses in two minutes. But the requirement was either for one minute or five minutes. Realising five minutes was a lengthy duration, Evlin learned to say 22 verses in one minute, after which the recorded video was sent and accepted by the jury.

It was truly a moment of great joy for the family. Though she secured the prestigious record, young Evlin hasn't stopped in her pursuits. 'She happily asks to be taught more, eager to learn new verses,' her mother said. A UKG student at Amala Mary Rani Public School in Thrissur, Evlin is also interested in public speaking and dancing. 



Brought up in a Catholic family in Kerala, Claire Noble is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in Bangalore.



NewsWatch

Divyakarunyaththinte Vanambadi (Nightingale of the Holy Eucharist)

Authors: Fr. Joseph Kumbuckal & Jith George
Published by: Kairos Media

Divyakarunyaththinte Vanambadi is a newly published book on the inspiring life of the late Ajna George, an exemplary Jesus Youth (a Catholic lay movement), member of the JY Kerala Music Ministry and of the JY Teens Ministry.

Ajna George reached her eternal abode on 21st January 2022. She was born in Vyttila, Kochi as the second daughter of Muttungal George and Achamma on 2nd April 1994. Her piety towards the Holy



Eucharist was notable even at a tender age. A retreat during her Plus Two (HSC), 'PowerTeens', conducted at St Teresa's Higher Secondary School brought her to the Jesus Youth movement. In 2012, she joined Sacred Heart College Thevara for her undergraduate course and eventually became the campus coordinator of Jesus Youth. During her years of degree and

post-graduation at SH College, she was actively involved in winning students to JY and for the Blessed Sacrament. Ajna George shouldered the leadership of many activities in and around the campus, all to give witness to the love of Christ.

She cleared the UGC-NET examination during her PG course and was appointed lecturer at Rajagiri College, Ernakulam. She was diagnosed with sarcoma (jaw bone cancer) on the very same day she received her appointment letter from the college. After the surgery and chemotherapy, she worked as a guest lecturer at Sacred Heart College Thevara for a year but couldn't continue when the disease reappeared. She fought cancer valiantly for five years, receiving strength from the daily Holy Communion.

Divyakarunyaththinte Vanambadi is written by Fr Joseph Kumbuckal (Sabu Thomas) Ajna's teacher and faculty in-charge of Jesus Youth at SH College, and Jith George who was her close friend. *Kairos Media* is proud to publish this book as we believe that the life of Ajna is definitely an inspiration for youth to follow Christ and to live a virtuous life.

Divyakarunyaththinte Vanambadi can be purchased from www.jykairosmedia.org. ■



The Set Free Festival of the Arts

A unique tribute to St JohnPaul II to be launched on **22 April-USA & Canada | 23 April-rest of the world, via Zoom**

Inspiring presentations by International Catholic artists of various genres

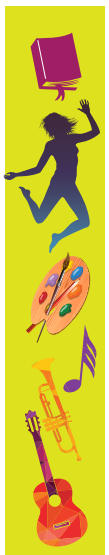
KEYNOTE SPEAKER: BILL DONAGHY
(from the *Theology of the Body Institute, USA*)

TIME:
USA & Canada
EST: 10 pm | PST: 7 pm | CST: 9 pm
India: 7:30 am | London: 3:00 am
Malta/ Poland/ Holland: 4:00 am
Malaysia/Singapore: 10:00 am
Johanssburg/Cape Town: 4:00 am
Melbourne/Sydney: 12:00 pm
New Zealand: 2:00 pm

Zoom Meeting ID 540 495 2483
Passcode 123456

Email: setfreesummit20@gmail.com

Organised by Set Free Ministry
(ICPE Mission)





Mail your answers to quiztime@jykairosmedia.org before 25th April 2022.
The winner will be rewarded with 1 year subscription of Kairos Global

PART A

Do you know?

The answers to these questions can be found in the In Focus articles of this issue.

- 1 'Ora et labora' is the motto of this saint.
- 2 Name of St Ignatius Loyola's contemplative prayer method.
- 3 Which country did Akash Bashir belong to?
- 4 This Franciscan Clarist nun was stabbed to death in 1995.
- 5 Nikolaus Gross was beatified by this Pope.
- 6 Devasahayam's baptismal name is a rendition of which Biblical name.
- 7 The saint who was pressed to death.
- 8 'On Christian Joy' is the name of a letter by which Pope?
- 9 Name of the Flemish commander whom Devasahayam befriended.
- 10 How old was Akash Bashir when he died?
- 11 The Trappist monk mentioned in the article 'Glimpsing Everyday Sainthood'.
- 12 Name the man for whom St Maximilian Kolbe opted to die for.
- 13 The same last words of two beatified persons.
- 14 The Jesuit priest who baptised him Devasahayam.
- 15 The first South African-born Catholic to be beatified.



**Cast your burden on the Lord,
and he will sustain you.**

Psalm 55:22



ANSWERS TO QUIZTIME ISSUE 48

Part A

Naaman, Jethro, Korah, Ehud, Mordecai, Onesimus

Part B

Josiah

LUKAS and RAY



By Steffi Anshul Faria
IG @sunfirepictures.steffi

What happened to your eye, Lukas ?!

I was hammering a rather pesky nail and it decided to launch itself into my eye defying two laws of physics.

WOW

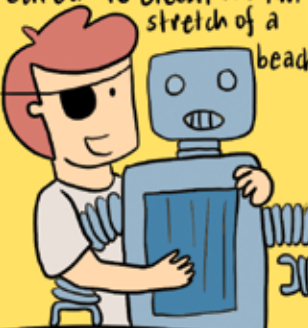


What is THAT?

My submission for the science fair!



Created to clean a 5 km stretch of a beach



WOW! That's going to be very useful! I'm so proud of you!



Oww!
Oww!
Oww!
Oww!



What happened?

I burnt my finger!



It keeps getting tougher! I cannot do this anymore!



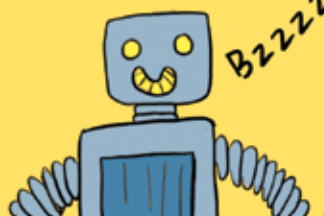
well, you know, no pain, no gain! A little suffering goes a long way.



BOOM



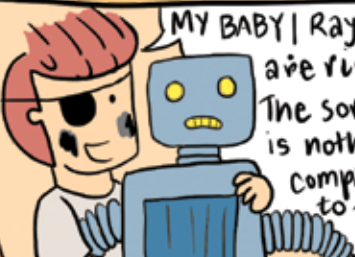
Bzzzzz

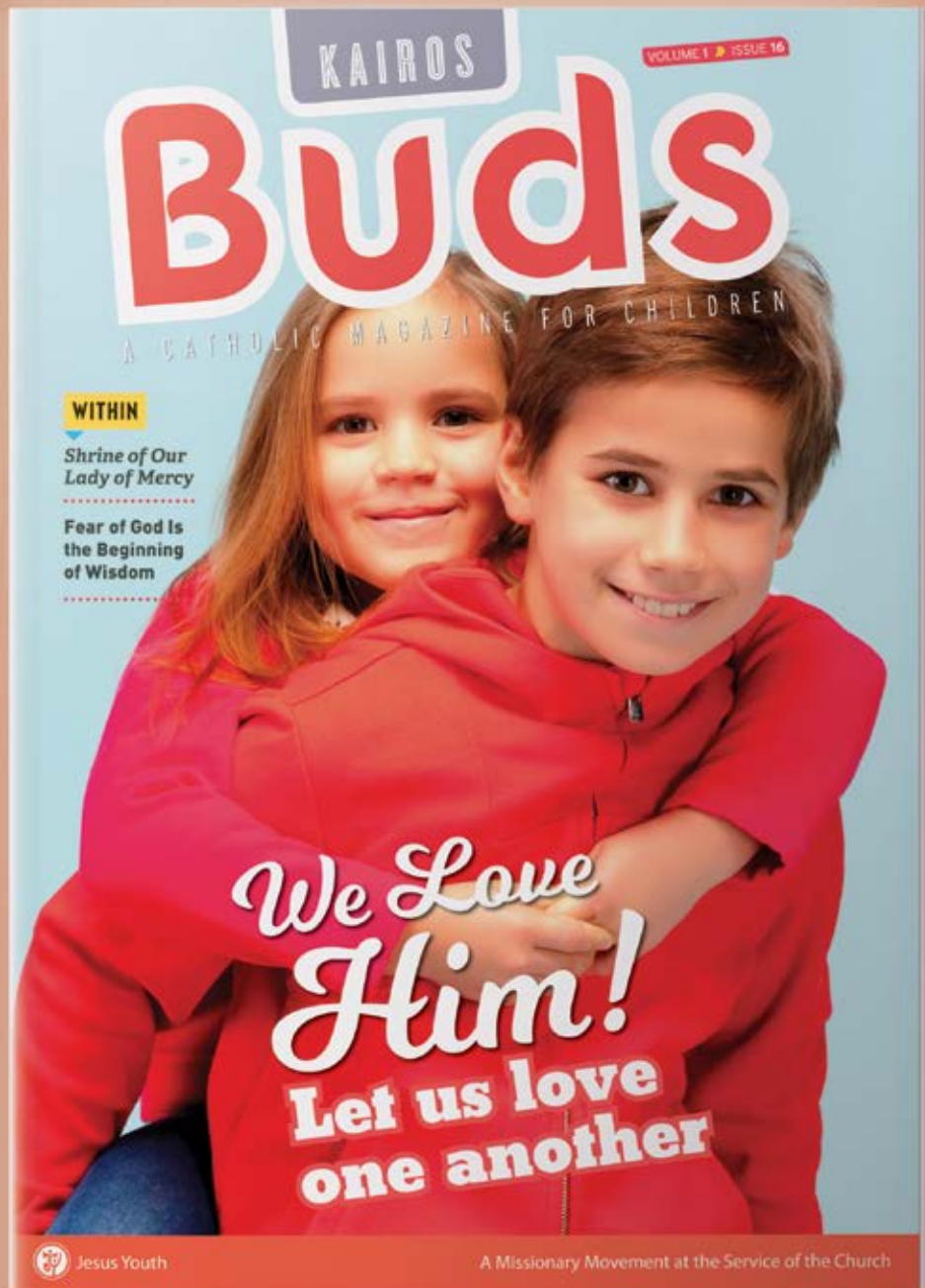


Wow! An explosion! How much longer do I have to suffer!



MY BABY! Ray, you are right! The sorrow is nothing compared to the joy!





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