



## Asian Journal of Religious Studies

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### Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Editorial: .....  | 3  |
| Making Prophetic Leadership Relevant for Our Times<br><i>M. Surekha BS</i> .....                | 5  |
| Christian Disobedience.....<br><i>Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ</i>                                     | 15 |
| The Revolutionary God of Mary: Reflections on<br>Independence Day and Feast of Assumption ..... | 19 |
| <i>Suvarnaraju Golla &amp; Jacob Kulangara SJ</i>   |    |
| An End to the Vicious Cycle of Violence! ...  | 23 |
| <i>Lijo Chalissery</i>  |    |
| Bored Out of Your Wits? Get Creative! .....   | 32 |
| <i>Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ</i>  |    |
| Homily Notes.....   | 34 |
| Book Review .....   | 45 |



## Asian Journal of Religious Studies

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## Editorial

### **Poverty Is at the Heart of the Gospel**

During his homily at a Mass in Casa Santa Marta on June 16, 2015, Pope Francis said the Gospel becomes incomprehensible if poverty is removed from it, and that it is unfair to label priests who show a pastoral concern for the poor as “Communists”.

In the homily he recalled how St Paul organized a collection in the Church of Corinth for the benefit of the Church of Jerusalem, whose members were facing great hardship. Pope Francis noted that, today as then, poverty is “a word that always embarrasses.” Many times, he said, we hear: “But this priest talks too much about poverty, this bishop speaks of poverty, this Christian, this nun talks about poverty ... aren’t they a little communist, right?” On the contrary, as reported by Vatican Radio, he warned, “Poverty is at the very centre of the Gospel: if we remove poverty from the Gospel, no one would be able to understand anything about the message of Jesus.”

St Paul, he said, speaking to the Church of Corinth, highlights what is their real wealth: “You are rich in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and love that we have taught you.” The exhortation of the Apostle is: “as you are rich, be you also great in this generous work in “this collection”.

“If you have so much richness in the heart, these great riches of zeal, charity, the Word of God, the knowledge of God - let this wealth reach your pockets - and this is a golden rule: when faith does not come with pockets, it is not a genuine faith. Paul tells us: ‘You are rich in many things now, so be generous in this work of generosity.’ here is this contrast between wealth and poverty. The Church of Jerusalem is poor, is in economic difficulty, but it is rich,

because it has the treasure of the Gospel message. This poor Church of Jerusalem has enriched the Church of Corinth with the Gospel message; it has given the richness of the Gospel.”

Pope Francis asks us to follow the example of the Church of Corinth. Jesus Christ, who was rich - with the very richness of God - made Himself poor, He lowered Himself for us. This, then, is the meaning of the first Beatitude: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit,’ i.e. “to be poor is to let oneself be enriched by the poverty of Christ, to desire not to be rich with riches other than those of Christ”:

“When we give help to the poor, we are not doing the work of aid agencies ‘in a Christian way’. Those are good, it is a decent thing to do - aid work is good and quite human - but it is not Christian poverty which St. Paul desires of us and preaches to us. Christian poverty, is that I give of my own, and not of that which is left over - I give even that, which I need for myself, to the poor person, because I know that he enriches me. Why does the poor person enrich me? Because Jesus Himself told us that He is in the poor person.”

“This is the theology of poverty: This is because poverty is at the heart of the Gospel; it is not an ideology. It is precisely this mystery, the mystery of Christ who humbled Himself, who let Himself be impoverished in order to enrich us. So it is understandable why the first of the Beatitudes is ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit.’ Being poor in spirit means going on this path of the Lord: the poverty of the Lord, who lowers Himself even so far as to become bread for us.”

May we be enriched by this treasure! May we experience the heart of faith and radiate the joy and abandonment of possessing the true riches (of poverty) in abundance!

Kuruvillea Pandikattu SJ  
Editor



# **Making Prophetic Leadership Relevant for Our Times in the Light of Lumen Gentium**

*M Surekha BS*  
Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune

## **The Context**

What was our reaction when that brutal gang-rape of a 23-year-old woman in Delhi on 16 December 2012 led to a sudden outpouring of anger and frustration about the situation that allowed such attacks to take place? How did we respond to the latest incident of landslide at Malin village in Ambegaon Taluka of Pune district on July 30, 2014 – another heart-rending calamity, with its massive destruction of precious human lives and property? Did our hearts ache when over 1.5 million Iraqis were forced out from their homes since the insurgents captured Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, in June 2014 and quickly swept over other parts of the country? Did we feel helpless when millions of innocent children, men and women were massacred at the disastrous human crisis in Mosul, Iraq? Have we not become indifferent when the nearly 500 Syrians, Palestinians, Egyptians and Sudanese, migrant workers and refugees, were put on a boat that left from the Egyptian port of Damietta and are feared dead at the hands of human traffickers who rammed and sank the boat off

the Malta coast in Sept 2014? Were they the saddest moments in our life, such that they knit us together with deep emotional and spiritual ties drawing our attention anew to dreaded inhuman and barbarous acts? What about the recent Church attacks in Delhi, the fears of the re-conversion (*ghar vapsi*) campaign of Sangh affiliates and, the silence shown by the Prime Minister, who has been accused by opposition parties and Christian groups of turning a blind eye to a string of recent attacks on five churches and a Christian school in Delhi,? Did we become speechless, spellbound on hearing that callous and heinous acts of desecrating the sentiments of the Christians?

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, of the Second Vatican Council makes a significant statement concerning the prophetic leadership that “the entire people of God, who by their baptism, equally share in Christ’s prophetic office [and] are called to be living witnesses to Him” (# LG 12, 35). It is true that we live today in a world that has an abundance of resources, but it is not sufficient to satisfy the greed of every individual.<sup>1</sup> Therefore taking a clue from the teachings of *Lumen Gentium* which has given a dignified status to every one of the faithful, and inspired by the insights of George M. Soares-Prabhu SJ, which have enriched my vision with an awareness and understanding of the prophetic role one is called upon to play in today’s Indian context. I as a Christian disciple would like to understand prophetic leadership as a call offered to the entire people of God, who equally share in Christ’s prophetic office, to be living witnesses to Him.

## **1. Leadership: The Scripture as the Ultimate Leadership Book.**

Leadership is a topic of great interest currently. However, the present is comprehended by looking backwards at great and small leaders, and by examining leaders of today who influence the lives of trillions. To understand the past, one studies the leaders who have shaped history. It is obviously true that the call to leadership is a continuous pattern in the Bible. Humanity is created in God’s

image and entrusted with a unique calling among all creatures.<sup>ii</sup> This calling reflects God's own relationship with creation, a leadership role i.e. generative and expansive, seeking the flourishing of a world affirmed as intrinsically good. Though the entire biblical story shows the downside of such freedom the first pedagogical question "where are you?" (Gen 3:9) brings back the scattered being before God and oneself and the wider creation. This is the primordial and mystical picture of the Christian understanding of leadership. And for Christians Jesus Christ is the primary lens for understanding both human and divine leadership.<sup>iii</sup>

## **2. Theological Basis of Prophetic Leadership**

The prophet was but one office of leadership in ancient Israel, but it was in its full expression in the Hebrew canon, the most unique to Israel and the most directly related to the covenant foundations of community as the people of God. New Testament explorations have documented a strong role for this prophetic tradition in the life, teachings and ministry of Jesus. The multidimensional charisma of the biblical prophets according to their office, nature, role and communication informs this biblical prophetic role. Hence, prophetic leadership is God calling and authorizing a person to speak on his behalf.

### **2.1 Etymology and Meaning of the Word 'Prophet'**

Four terms were applied to individuals, both men and women, who demonstrated prophetic traits: "man of God" (*ish hā-elōhîm*), "seer" (*rō.eh*), "visionary" (*hōzeh*), and "prophet" (*nābî*). The word "diviner" or "soothsayer" (*qōsēm*) is used of those who practise formal divination, perhaps using lots of other methods of discerning the will of the deity, but that term was not applied to those prophets who receive legitimate sanction in the OT. The terms "seer" and "visionary" (*rō.eh* and *hōzeh*) are descriptive of the individual's experience, the first emphasizing

the extraordinary insight that came to the prophets and the second the method of reception by means of visions or dreams. The terms “seer” and “man of God” are both attested in the case of Samuel (1 Sam. 9:9), the former term being the older of the two. The implication of the phrase “man of God” is that the person was possessed by God for special service. With the dawn of literary prophecy, however, the Hebrew term *nābî*<sup>iv</sup> became the common name for the prophet.<sup>v</sup>

According to Luis M. Bermejo S.J., the biblical prophet is primarily a man of sterling fidelity to God. The very acceptance of the prophetic office is an act of supreme obedience, of submission to God. In his opinion, the biblical prophet feels constrained by God into acquiescence: Jeremiah feels cheated by God; Moses seems to have suffered a crisis of depression; and Ezekiel, who experienced the hand of God firmly pressing upon him, was filled with bitterness and anger (Ez. 3:14-15). For, intense suffering is connected with mission and often the prophetic office is crowned with martyrdom.<sup>vi</sup>

## **2.2 Prophetic Leadership: Finding its Roots in Jesus the Prophet Par Excellence**

Jesus came as the promised Prophet, Priest, and King, the one worthy and able to live and speak the truth in every situation, able to be the mediator between God and humans, and able to reign in righteousness and peace. For our consideration, we shall limit ourselves to the prophetic leadership of Jesus which is seen at a functional level, in his mission and to substantiate the relevance of prophetic leadership finding its roots in Jesus the prophet.

The socio-economic, political and cultural domains had their own impact on Jesus. But the response of Jesus was different in making his presence relevant to his time. The primary source of Jesus’ prophetic courage was his intimate relation with his *Abba*. *Abba* denotes God’s unconditional love.<sup>vii</sup> As George Soares-Prabhu states: “If it is the God-experience of Jesus that empowers him to identify with the poor and confront the rich, it is an act of solidarity with the poor that is the occasion for his experience of

God.”<sup>viii</sup> It is this God-experience that allowed Jesus to address God as *Abba*.

The Kingdom of God was central to the life and ministry of Jesus. <sup>ix</sup> “Jesus responds to the situation of poverty and exploitation he encountered in His time by proclaiming a new social order which is founded on a new experience of God as *Abba* and humankind as brothers and sisters.”<sup>x</sup> He does not teach a new doctrine but he announces a new event and asks that it be welcomed, because it can change everything. Therefore, grounding himself on His *Abba* Consciousness He reveals to us, life as God wants to build it and share with us the unconditional love of God, our Father/Mother. In other words, it’s an inclusive community where no one is excluded and all live in solidarity.

Jesus’ table fellowships form the essence of his prophetic leadership. By sharing a meal with ‘sinners,’ God’s love and solidarity is vividly painted as far more superior to any other action. For it reaches down even to the lowest level of human society. Jesus’ table fellowship with prostitutes, tax collectors, and sinners had a tremendous meaning – he was elevating them to his status circle and expressing his solidarity with them. Jacob Neusner observes that the zeal for ritual purity extended so far that the Pharisees viewed the tables on which they ate their meals as representations of God’s altar in the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>xi</sup>

In the patriarchal, androcentric society of the first century Palestine, where women were numbered with children and slaves as minors with diminished responsibility, and a restricted role in worship and in public life, Jesus admits them into his movement as helpers and disciples. Not only do women follow him to take care of his needs (Lk8:2) , but Mary who sits at his feet listening to what he teaches (and so assuming the role of a disciple) is commended for having chosen “what is best”. (Lk 10:42). The sensitive loyalty shown to Jesus on the eve of his Passion by a woman at Bethany contrasts sharply with the ideological fixation of the disciples and the disloyalty of Judas. This contrast is

carried a great step further in the stories of Passion and resurrection, where the women disciples of Jesus are found at the cross and at the tomb (Mk 115; 40-41, 47; 16:1-8).<sup>xii</sup>

Indeed, Jesus proclaims this with a special urgency, because he is aware that in him the 'Kingdom', God's definitive offer of salvation, has come, precipitating a crisis in the lives of men and women and summoning them to a most radical decision.<sup>xiii</sup> The God - experience of Jesus and his identification with the poor and the marginalized are thus joined together finding a powerful expression in a pair of symbols both of which are basic to Christian life. The symbols are the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection. The Cross is therefore, the outcome of a life of solidarity with the poor and the outcast. And this is the Cross which shows forth not just the death of Jesus but announces his resurrection from the dead which grounds our hope for the future. Resurrection, in the words of George M Soares Prabhu, though it is not accessible to our naked eyes, is still accessible to us in our present experience of the living Jesus, which assures us that he is alive. This faith experience which grounds our hope is only available to us in a life of love.<sup>xiv</sup> Because it anticipates the end of history, the resurrection of Jesus, which is God's overwhelming answer to our cry for life which can be understood and grasped only through our sharing in the prophetic mission of Jesus.

### **3. Making Prophetic Leadership Relevant for our Times**

Prophetic leadership of Jesus involves a radical response for the construction of a new society leavened by the values of freedom, fellowship, truth, love and justice.<sup>xv</sup> From the Catholic perspective (among other Christian perspectives), the source of human dignity is rooted in the concept of *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26-27), in Christ's redemption and in our ultimate destiny of union with God. The Church, the entire people of God has to think anew with resourceful innovativeness if we want to be relevant. The urgency of innovativeness is glaring at our face as more and more disillusioned youth take recourse to religious fundamentalism. Is the Church ready to face these upcoming challenges? What is

required of us the people of God to respond to the inherent challenges encountered in our context?

### **3.1 Contemplating the God of Compassion**

One of the main challenges that the Church is facing today is to instill God consciousness. God is more to be experienced than to be intellectually known. The traditional idea of a judging and punishing God needs to recede to the background and a ‘youthful’ idea of a loving, forgiving and affectionate God needs to be presented to the young population. For this, one has to encounter God in Jesus in the Gospels, who transcends human made petty divisions of caste, creed, clan and colour.

### **3.2 Creating a New Understanding of Mission**

One of the important trends in the contemporary paradigm of mission is that though the geographical principle of mission *ad-gentes* is relevant there is equal emphasis on mission *inter-gentes*. That is to say that “every area of life that is still not sufficiently transformed by the values of the Kingdom, our politics, social relationships, trade relations, economic structures, everything has become concerns of the mission of the church.”<sup>xvi</sup> Today, the message of the Gospel is eclipsed in the dark clouds of globalization and post-modern thinking. Relativistic thinking is the characteristic of modern - day youth. While the religious practices are reduced to ritualistic performances, faith has remained skin deep. As a result there is ambiguity, confusion and lack of commitment to an ideal.<sup>xvii</sup> The consequences are painfully felt at the family level, at the parish level and in the larger society. The day-to-day life of the struggling people and the Newspapers should be the syllabus and the text - book for our daily update. As Rudolf C. Heredia affirms “For divorced from the social context the expression of faith-tradition cannot be made relevant.”<sup>xviii</sup>

### **3.3 Becoming Embodiments of the Kingdom Vision**

We are in need of a cultural revolution which will produce a new hierarchy of values, a new world of vision, a global strategy. The new vision of the Kingdom which Jesus was oriented to is a kingdom where the Gospel values prevail. New values that are liberating will replace anti-human values; thus the value of sharing will replace exploitation, cooperation will take the place of competition; freedom, brotherhood and sisterhood of people will replace hate and suppression; justice will replace powerlessness; basic needs of the people will have priority over the wants of the affluent in the use of resources and domination, inequality and discrimination in policy making decisions will give place to equality, respect and participation; and unrealistic and inhuman technology give way to need based and people oriented technology and development.<sup>xix</sup> The only way to restore the dignity of humanity is that Church and Church leaders must be a counter-cultural community witnessing to the communitarian values of the Kingdom<sup>xxx</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Theology, indeed, is a faith response in a context. As we know, the subject of theology is the common people. As has been pointed out, in the biblical times the king, the priest and the prophet were the three pillars of the society of Israel, with this difference that, whereas kings were appointed and priests were ordained, prophets were created exclusively by divine initiative. The prophet is called by God, called for a specific task. This task is innovative, creative and contextual. When we consider the prophets of the Old and New Testaments, we see none rivals the majesty and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the final prophet. He opened the Scriptures as no man ever could and spoke as no man ever spoke (see John 7:46). Jesus is the culmination of the prophetic stream that runs through the history of Israel. The approach of Jesus the prophet was Kingdom-oriented, coupled with *Abba*- experience. The way of the kingdom

is a viable solution to the present crisis of Indian society. His vision ultimately created a community.

Can the vision of Jesus be relevant to the present? Making Jesus' prophetic leadership relevant for our times means sharing in his vision and in his mission. It is to respond to the situation of today only by entering into Jesus' heart, his world-view and his God-experience. The need of the hour is that we confront the challenges of today and enhance and ennoble the human dignity of the person who is created in God's image. The call of today is to take a plunge into the lives and struggles of people. Therefore, Christian life in India needs to be redefined ☩

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<sup>i</sup> S.L. Gandhi, *Anuvibha Reporter, Jaipur*, Vol. 5 (September-December 2000): 4.

<sup>ii</sup> To care creatively and collaboratively for the earth and its inhabitants (Gen 1: 27-28).

<sup>iii</sup> Dwight. J. Zscheile, *Christian Biblical Understanding of Leadership*, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota book.(ed.) Sharon Henderson Callahan, *Religious Leadership: A Reference handbook*, (U.S.A : SAGE Publications, 31, May 2013), 153.

<sup>iv</sup> T. J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 147. Cf. *The Stone Age to Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1957), 303.

<sup>v</sup> T. J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, 16.

<sup>vi</sup> Luis M Bermejo, SJ. *The Three Jewelled Crown: Trinitarian Spirituality*, 2-3.

<sup>vii</sup> His God experience allowed him to address God as Abba (loving parent), a name which, like all the names of God, is an invocation rather than a description. Abba is the usual invocation Jesus used to address God in prayer. God is never directly addressed as 'Father' in the Hebrew Bible; God is addressed as 'Father' with a qualification in rabbinic texts of the time of Jesus. The language of Jesus, then, is unique and points to a unique experience of God. Cf. George M. Soares-Prabhu, *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action* (Pune: J.D.V. Theology Series, 2003), 3.

<sup>viii</sup> George Soares- Prabhu, "The Spirituality of Jesus as a Spirituality of Solidarity and struggle," in *Liberative Struggles in a Violent Society*, (ed.) J. Vattamattam (Hyderabad: Forum publications, 1991): 152-153.

<sup>ix</sup> George M. Soares Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God: Vision of a New Society", in D.S. Amalorpavadass (ed.) *the Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society* (Bangalore, 1981), 584.

<sup>x</sup> George M Soares Prabhu, "Jesus and the Poor," in *collected writings of George M. Soares Prabhu*, Vol 4, (ed.) Francis X. D'Sa (Pune: JDV Theological Series, 2001), 190.

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- <sup>xi</sup> Jacob Neusner, "Two Pictures of the Pharisees: Philosophical Circle or Eating Club?" *Anglican Theological Review* 64, (1982): 525-38.
- <sup>xii</sup> Soares- Prabhu, *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, 6-7.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Soares- Prabhu, "A *Biblical Theology for India*", 128.
- <sup>xiv</sup> "The Resurrection is not a doctrine that we try to prove or a problem that we argue about," Thomas Merton has said, "it is the life of christ himself in us by the Spirit". Cf. Soares- Prabhu, "A *biblical Theology for India*", 11. See also T. Merton, *He is Risen* (Niles, IL: Argus, 1975), 10
- <sup>xv</sup> Soares-Prabhu, "The Miracles" in *Jesus Today* (ed.) Kappen. (Madras: AICUF Publications, 1985):5.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Joseph. Mattam, *Formation of Evangelizers for the Church's Mission and Ministry in the 3rd Millennium*". Paper Presented in the National Mission Seminar, (Rajkot: Joseph Mattam, 2010), 4.
- <sup>xvii</sup> S. M. Michael, "A Vision of Faith for Asia in the Context of Post -Modern World", *Third Millennium Indian Journal of Evangelization* XV (10 2012): 57. Cf. Flossy Molly Lobo (Sr Surekha BS), "The Role of Vision in the Transformative Mission", *MPM Thesis* Guided by PT Joseph SJ.(Pune: JDV, 2013). Unpublished Material.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Rudolf C. Heredia S.J., *A Church that is Poor and for the Poor*, (Ramwadi, Pune: in collaboration with Jnanam, 2013), 34.
- <sup>xix</sup> John, Vattamattam and others, (ed.), *Liberative Struggles in a Violent Society*, *Forum Series – 1*, (Hyderabad: Forum Publication, 1991).
- <sup>xx</sup> Flossy Molly Lobo "The Role of Vision in the Transformative Mission," *MPM Thesis*.



## Christian Disobedience

*Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ*  
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The title of this article will probably shock some people. In this article I shall contend that there are times and occasions when disobedience is the only Christian thing to do.

### 1. Biblical Perspectives

The Bible does not directly deal with this topic. But there are instances of disobedience in the Bible. Chapter 7 of the 2 Maccabees has a vivid account of the martyrdom of seven brothers who disobeyed the king's command to eat swine's flesh out of loyalty to God's law. The seventh brother clearly expressed the attitude of all the brothers and their mother: "I will not obey the king's command, but I obey the command of the law that was given to our ancestors through Moses" (2 Macc 7:30).

In the Acts of the Apostles there is an instance of Christian disobedience. The rulers of the Jews ordered Peter and John not to speak or teach in the name of the Jesus. Peter and John answered them; "Whether it is right in God's right to listen to you rather God, you must judge" (Acts 4: 19). In other words, the apostles chose to disobey the Jewish leaders out of loyalty to God. This, I think, is a case of Christian disobedience.

## **2. The Teaching of the Vatican II**

Obviously the Council did not expressly deal with Christian disobedience. But there are three passages in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World which seem to advocate Christian disobedience. While discussing the life of the political community the Constitution states:

Let those who are suited to it, or can become so, prepare themselves for the difficult but most honourable art of politics. Let them work to exercise this art without thought of personal convenience and without the benefit of bribery. Prudently and honourably let them fight against injustice and oppression, the arbitrary rule of one man or one party, and lack of tolerance (GS 75).

Now to “fight against injustice and oppression and the arbitrary rule of one man or one party or lack of tolerance” definitely involves Christian disobedience, and probably something more.

There is another passage in the Constitution which also advocates Christian disobedience. “Where public authority oversteps its competence and oppresses its people, these people should nevertheless obey to the extent that the objective common good demands. Still it is lawful for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against any abuse of this authority provided that in so doing they observe the limits imposed by natural law and the gospel” (GS 74).

Defending people’s right against the abuse of the authority will involve Christian disobedience.

There is a third passage in the Pastoral Constitution which is relevant here:

Contemplating this melancholy state of humanity, the Council wishes to recall first of all the permanent binding force of universal natural law and its all-embracing principles. Man’s conscience itself gives ever more emphatic voice to these principles. Therefore, action which deliberately conflict with these same principles, as well as orders commanding such actions, are criminal.

Blind obedience cannot excuse those who yield to them.”  
(GS 79).

This is a call for Christian disobedience.

Vatican II is quite sympathetic to conscientious objectors. “Moreover, it seems right that laws make human provisions for the case of those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms, provided, however, that they accept some other form of service to the human community” (GS 79). Conscientious objection involves a certain Christian disobedience of the law of the land asking people to join the armed forces.

### **3. Concluding Thoughts**

Many years ago Gandhiji, as part of our freedom struggle, advocated and practised civil disobedience. He was convinced that the British rule in India was colonial and so illegitimate. Hence Indians had no obligation to obey its laws.

It is possible that in the years to come some government in one of the states of India or the central government may issue orders or enact laws which we Christians, because of our faith, ought not to obey. At such times Christians have to show courage to disobey and pay the price for such disobedience. The martyrs of the Church were men and women who practised Christian disobedience.

There is often in the Church a tendency to lay great emphasis on docility, loyalty and obedience to the neglect of such virtues as love, fortitude, commitment to justice and fair play. The formation of our people – be they candidates for the priesthood or the religious life or lay people – should include training in Christian disobedience. The most important thing here is the proper formation of their conscience so that it will tell them when to obey and when to disobey.

What the Church in India needs today are well formed adult Christians who have the courage to stand up for truly Christian

values. They will, most of the time, know when and how to practise Christian disobedience.

### NEWS FROM THE HOME OF LOVE

The Alumni of Papal Seminary and Jnana-Deepa Vidaypeeth are invited for an International Conference on **“Befriending the Other”** on the occasion of sixty years of their existence in Pune, on November 24-28, 2015. Please mark these dates on your calendar.

Details of the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee by the Home of Love will be sent to all its alumni.

For details, please visit: [www.papalseminary.in](http://www.papalseminary.in)

New staff members at Papal Seminary:

Fr. Karunaidass SJ (AND): Minister

Fr Francis Gonsalves SJ (GUJ): Professor of Systematic Theology

Fr. Francis Ezhakunnel SJ (JAM): Moderator of Philosophers

Fr. George Cordeiro SJ (BOM): Spiritual Director

We say bye to:

Fr. Jacob Kulangara SJ (GUJ): Served as Minister for eight years and is transferred to DeNobili College (Minister)

Fr. Anil Gomes SJ (CCU): Served as Spiritual Director for three years. Returned to the Calcutta Province.

Fr. Vincent Crasta SJ (KAR): Served as Spiritual Director and transferred to PG Block, JDV (Administrator).



## **The Revolutionary God of Mary: Reflections on Independence and Feast of Assumption**

*Suwarnaraju Golla & Jacob Kulangara SJ*

Papal Seminary, Pune

It is a well-known fact that the Assumption of Mary is a dogma defined by Pope Pius XII. In fact, there is no reference to the birth or death of Mary in the Scriptures. In other words, the scripture is silent about it. This dogma was developed based on the popular Christian belief. Early Christian Community of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, was convinced of the extraordinary holiness and the unique role of Mary in salvation history. They believed that since Mary lived an exceptional life according to God's design, she would also have an exceptional destiny. Basing on such traditions this dogma on the assumption of Mary was promulgated in the Apostolic Constitution "*Munificentissimus Deus*", translated as "**The Bountifulness of God**" on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1950. The dogma proclaims, "At the end of her earthly life, Mary ever virgin, the immaculate mother of God, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory".

Even after such a solemn act of defining the dogma the exact details of this great event in the life of Mary remain a mystery to all of us. It can be asserted that none can exactly describe Mary's

triumphant entry into heaven. If God had judged it proper that the ark of the old covenant should be brought with much pomp into the city of David, what pomp should God have not displayed at the entry of His own mother into the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. This view echoes the statement that in the older order Adam and Eve shared immediately in the resulting consequences and punishments of the Fall. In the new order, similarly, both Jesus and Mary share immediately in the resulting consequences and blessings of the redemption, the fullness with God; Jesus through the Ascension and Mary through the Assumption.

If the Ascension of Jesus is the fruit of the fulfillment of God's mission on earth, then Mary's Assumption is also the fruit of *her* free and active co-operation with God's plan of liberating all from the clutches of sin and death. According to Rahner, 'Mary is the most perfect fruit of Christ's redemption. She is the accomplishment of the redemptive grace in the Church'. As a mature adult woman Mary always supported her son and the group that gathered around him, namely his disciples, in their struggle for integral human liberation.

This Assumption into heaven, indeed, is a remarkable event in the life of Mary and foreshadows the ultimate resurrection of the body of all human beings. In fact, the key to Mary's greatness lies in her intimate association with Jesus in his triumph over sin, Satan and death. As a result she was sinless, immaculately conceived and gloriously assumed into heaven.

The Assumption of Mary, indeed, is a precious gift of God. In the *magnificat* we find Mary praising God for this precious gift and the greatness He endowed her with. That's why the Church has always connected the feast of assumption with Mary's *magnificat*, in which she says, "My soul magnifies the Lord for choosing me, the lowly servant, as his favored one and henceforth all generations will call me blessed". The God that Mary praises here is well portrayed in the second part of the same *magnificat*.

The context that Mary lived in works as an aid for us to know her understanding of God which, in fact, is a unique one. Mary lived at the time of a double exploitation and taxation of the poor

both by the imperial Romans and the Jewish leadership. The women were the most vulnerable of all. This context of Mary situates her understanding of God vividly in the *magnificat*. Her God is not a supporter of the status quo, nor a defender of the rich and protector of the unjust, rather He is a revolutionary God. Such an understanding of revolutionary God is presented well in the second part of the *magnificat*. Here she depicts the God of reversals.

Mary, in Luke 1:51-53, proclaims these reversals in structures and values, acted out by her revolutionary God: **a) A Cultural Revolution** in which the proud hearted are got rid of in favor of the poor and the simple **b) a political revolution** in which the political power passes from the mighty to the common people and **c) an economic revolution** by which the hungry and starving get good things but the rich are sent away empty. Thus Mary, in the *magnificat*, displays a revolutionary God who is always on the side of the needy, the weak and the exploited.

If we think along with Mary's understanding of God as revolutionary and liberating, then we could trace back the events in which the same mode of liberation was at work in the freedom struggle of our nation before independence. Mary, today, reminds us of the protective intervention of the same liberating God in delivering us from the imperial rule of the British. While reminding us of this divine assistance she also questions us, the Indians, as to how many of our brothers and sisters of our nation really experience and cherish the fruit of the independence. I am afraid that the hard and heartening realities, that paralyze the peace and progress of our nation today, may make Mary mourn over than rejoice over the liberative act of her revolutionary God for us.

In such a situation of our nation, Mary's concern, as the mother of all, would be to see that all her children are cared for and provided for. She would be very sad to see some of her children exploit the others and deprive them of their means of

existence. She would struggle with all her might to change a situation in which the millions of her children die due to starvation because some others take too much out of the common stock. She would want peace to prevail among her children and would regret the building up of armaments by different groups of her children to destroy and kill each other. She would oppose local and national corruption that leads to the resources of the poor people being deposited in banks by persons and companies that exploit and rob them.

Now, what does Mary, in the *magnificat*, convey to all of us, the Indians, who celebrate the independence of our nation while struggling with so many hard realities that still chain so many people in so many ways in our own country? The *magnificat* motivates us towards new ministries required for our Indian context: Commitment to justice, action for peace, the liberation of women and down trodden, and the care for nature. The *magnificat* also calls us to combat all kinds of cultural domination and discrimination, racism, sexism, casteism, classism and regionalism.

**Let our prayer on the independence of our nation be:** Mary, help us the oppressed to liberate ourselves and all those who are awaiting to get liberated. Let us, with the support of the Mary of magnificat, venture into our struggle for integral liberation of whole humanity in all the aspects of life. May the liberating and revolutionary God of Mary bless us all with true freedom.

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# **An End to the Vicious Cycle of Violence! An Introduction to Dramatic Theology and Its Relevance in the Indian Context**

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Today it is nearly impossible to avoid the constant bombardment of violence which affects people of all ages, genders, religions and socio-economic hierarchies.<sup>1</sup> India, since gaining independence in 1947, has been a secular state. However, now the greatest danger to the nation's extremely strained social fabric is religious fundamentalism or fundamentalist politics which grips much of India's population. In the name of God religious intolerance and hatred have seized India and a campaign waged to destroy mosques, temples and churches, and thereby leading to religious riots is blatantly noticeable throughout the whole country irrespective of whether South or North, East or West. Such instances of vicious violence claim thousands of innocent lives in addition to damaging social stability, economic growth and public and private property. Although Christians have always maintained a peaceful flavour in the social structure of India, they have frequently been recipients of violent movements over allegations of conversion. Churches have been burned down, missionaries physically attacked, priests brutally murdered and tens of thousands of Christians have been forced flee their homes.

This context of unjustified violence calls for a theological consideration of the situation from within.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis reminds, “Our world is being torn apart by wars and violence, and wounded by a widespread individualism which divides human beings, setting them against one another as they pursue their own well-being.”<sup>2</sup> Against violence and evil forces the societies, cultures and religions have developed its own laws and mechanisms. India has enacted a number of progressive laws to address different kinds of violence, but the data from the National Crime Records Bureau<sup>3</sup> warns that violence is increasing day by day. How can we get rid of violence? Is there a theological guideline to resolve the question? When we search in the Bible for answer to these complex situations of violence, things are getting more complicated. More than one thousand passages in the Old Testament spell out of divine violence and also detect a language of vengeance and retribution which outcrops an archaic substrate.<sup>4</sup> Yet, it is a fact that the references to violence in the Bible are often either overlooked by scholars or inappropriately addressed without offering systematic answers to the question of evil resulting from violence. In effect, the issue of divine violence remains unresolved. The complacency towards the issue of divine violence puts theology to a great extent aside to the corners of academic world with the effect that theology fails to make a noticeable impact in the modern digital world.<sup>5</sup> Raymund Schwager exposes a privileged entry point to this theological debate on the paradoxical images of God’s love and God’s justice or anger and brings a “dramatic lens” to read the salvation history in order to understand its relevance in the problematic context of violence today. The purpose of this short article is, therefore, to trace Schwager’s new dramatic theological approach to the problematic of divine violence through a dramatic reading of the life of Jesus and how it could be applied to the Indian context.

## **1. Raymund Schwager and Dramatic Theology**

The dramatic theology was initiated by the dogmatic theologian Raymund Schwager and a group of theologians at the theological Faculty of the Leopold-Franzens University in Innsbruck. Raymund Schwager was born<sup>6</sup> in an agricultural family as the second of seven children on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1935 at Balterswil in Switzerland. After primary and secondary school, in 1955 he joined the Society of Jesus. He did his philosophical studies in Pullach, Germany and theological studies in Lyon- Fourvière, France. On 31<sup>st</sup> June 1966 he was ordained a priest. He completed his doctorate in 1969 in Fribourg, Switzerland with a thesis on *Das Dramatische Kirchenverständnis bei Ignatius von Loyola* (The dramatic understanding of the Church by Ignatius of Loyola). Schwager became professor of dogmatic and ecumenical theology at the faculty of catholic theology at the Leopold-Franzens university in Innsbruck, Austria in 1977 and was dean in the years of 1985-1987 and 1999-2003. He was also a co-founder and first president of the Colloquium on Violence & Religion,<sup>7</sup> and since 1999, an honorary life-member of its advisory board. He gained international recognition for his “Dramatic Theology” through the comprehensive research program “Religion - Violence - Communication - World Order”<sup>8</sup>. Schwager was preparing for his retirement in 2004, when he unexpectedly died on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004. He was not only a theologian who lived and grounded in the experience of the Ignatian exercises, but also an intuitive thinker. In his main work *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation* Schwager presents the life and ministry of Jesus in a dramatic way and explores the message of a radically non-violent God, which is the main focus of this article.

In the history of Jewish people, their God-experience is radically transformed through violence they faced and they committed.<sup>9</sup> They perceived God as perpetrator of violence par excellence;<sup>10</sup> however, the victims of violence as well as perpetrators were they themselves. The drama of Jesus testifies this situation with particular poignancy, hence, according to

Schwager, the Old and New Testaments of Bible played out a single drama between God and human being.<sup>11</sup> Based on the categories of Rene Girard's theory,<sup>12</sup> Schwager presents a new biblical hermeneutic in his *Brauchen wir einen Sündenbock?* (Must there be Scapegoats?). The perception of YHWH as the perpetrator of violence par excellence was being undone step by step through progressively presenting a non-violent image of God. Through presenting a radically non-violent God, Schwager proves the divine violence as only an illusion. Schwager was also influenced by Hans Urs von Balthasar<sup>13</sup> and presents drama as the tension between uncreated and created freedom within the process of salvation history. We are not neutral spectators in the drama, but co-actors and we are fully responsible for how the drama develops.

Schwager's detailed presentation helps us to understand the whole history of salvation as a dramatic process of revelation in which God the Father, Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit and different human beings played their own specific roles just as the actors in the drama and it clarifies the image of God.<sup>14</sup> Schwager divided the drama of Jesus into five acts. Each act is formally differentiated by an agent who offers the initial stage for the actions and on the other side the reactions of all other agents; materially the events develop further and challenge the image of God communicated through the drama; finally the image of God is contested, transformed and settled;<sup>15</sup> and this new non-violent and unconditional loving image of God will come into sharper focus as we follow Schwager through the acts of the drama.<sup>16</sup>

### **17.1.1 First Act: Proclamation of the Kingdom of God**

According to Schwager, Jesus entered into the scene after baptism in Jordan with the announcement that; "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk.1:15), is the starting point of the first act in the drama where God inaugurated a new shift. Jesus' whole message and mission were within the framework of kingdom of God. By presenting the kingdom of God, Jesus was trying to reveal the picture of God who is an unconditionally

merciful and loving God. Jesus called God “my Father” and for Schwager, this is the most plausible basis of his proclamation.<sup>18</sup> Everything flowed from this “Abba-experience” (Mk.14:36) which was beyond the Jewish messianic expectations.

Jesus through his words and deeds affirmed the messianic announcement of Isaiah 61:1-2; “To bring good news to the poor, to announce liberation to captives, and to give sight to the blind” (Lk. 4:18). Jesus turned toward sinners, tax-collectors and prostitutes (cf. Lk. 15:1-10; Mt. 9:10; 21:31; Mk. 2:13-17). The poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame and all were invited to God’s great banquet (cf. Lk. 14:15-24) where there were no divisions or discriminations. His approach and dealing with people gave them a different picture of non-violent God and of a loving father. Healing of the sick, the forgiveness of sins and the miracles performed by him showed the unconditional love of God and declared that the kingdom of God was “not merely as near at hand, but as *already dawning and present.*”<sup>19</sup>

In order to create a new community characterized by love and forgiveness (Mt. 5:39), where violence was no longer the determining factor, Jesus exhorted his contemporaries to establish peace and justice among humanity. His Sermon on the Mount, according to Schwager, was a radical call to a life conforming to the norms of the kingdom of God which describes exactly what is necessary for human behavior, so that the new community might be different from the old violent evil actions which were in the history of Israel and might finally be conquered through these new norms of non-violence.<sup>20</sup>

## **1.2 Second Act: Rejection of the Kingdom of God**

For Schwager, the second act of the drama of salvation is people’s rejection of the message of kingdom of God and Jesus’ reaction to it through judgment sayings. The peculiarity in Jesus’ message that a non-violent image of God who “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust”

(Mt. 5:45) broke the traditional religious thinking of Israel. The new community which Jesus proclaimed was completely distinct from the old laws and mechanisms of the human world. By uniting the will of God with the will of the people he envisaged to make them as brothers and sisters (cf. Mk. 3:31-35; Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21) in a loving community. But initial reaction was directly opposed to the will of Jesus and the people stood clearly against it (cf. Mt. 23:37).

Schwager explains that the reason for the rejection of the unconditional call to the kingdom of God was the old hidden satanic forces that were still working in them which had led them to kill even the prophets.<sup>21</sup> Jesus warned against their unwillingness for conversion and their desire to stay in their own old world of satanic forces. “Get behind me Satan! For you are not on God’s side but do what men want” (Mk. 8:33). Jesus’ words and deeds were to expose these hidden forces of human behavior, which are for Schwager, bases of human societies and cultures. Schwager says, “His coming uncovers the deep-seated tensions already present and thus provokes open enmities. He seems like a sword and a troublemaker because he un.masks as delusionary the familiar forms of human harmony.”<sup>22</sup>

The contradiction between Jesus’ unconditional love and his judgment sayings are unresolved problems in the theology of redemption. Schwager believes that Jesus’ judgment sayings reveal not the harshness of God but the self-made punishments which people made themselves as the result of their own evil doings. In other words, the judgment sayings reveal not the harshness of God but people’s inner dimension of rejection. “For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get” (Mt. 7: 2). For Schwager wherever people are willing to forgive and accept, there they will be given more and even they will become able to give themselves. Wherever people are unwilling to forgive and accept, they will remain trapped in the norms of payment and repayment. There they will lose even what they have received, and they hand themselves over to a process of judgment based on repayment and

payment down to the last penny.<sup>23</sup> God is always a loving father, who meets sinners with anticipatory love, but the sinners notwithstanding the experience of loving grace stick to their own criteria of judgment and they imprison themselves in them. However, “the judgment sayings are not a sign that God has a double face, but they bring out with great seriousness that people possess no power to save themselves and God carries out against them no ‘violence to compel love.’”<sup>24</sup> In this way the sinners cling fully to their passions by which they themselves keep aloof from God and their fellow beings. The chance of experiencing God’s love and grace is always there, but rejecting this grace there is also every chance for them to be judged by themselves for their own actions. Thus, for Schwager, the judgment sayings are the self-made consequences of people’s non-graceful life.

According to Schwager, people’s rejection of God’s unconditional invitation and consequently Jesus’ judgment sayings are making clearer the truth of salvation. “Only with the judgment sayings does it become clear what decision people are faced with and how disastrous the old and apparently proven ‘wisdom’ of retribution finally is.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore an affirmative response to the unconditional invitation of father would realize the new gathering more concretely. And through this new non-violent community he wanted to bring a blessing to the whole world, whereas a negative response to the invitation hinders the possibility of the realization of the new gathering and left the world in the hands of evil powers. Imprisonment in the diabolical circle of selfish ambition, envious rivalry and violent expulsion denied the unconditional offer of redemption. *(To be continued in the next issue)*

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<sup>1</sup> The *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014* states that more than 1.3 million people worldwide die each year as a result of violence in all its forms (self-directed, interpersonal and collective). According to the *World Report on Violence and Health 2002*, one of the most violent periods in human history

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was the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is estimated that nearly 191 million people lost their lives directly or indirectly as a result of violence. Cf. *World Report on Violence and Health 2002*.

- <sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 99; Pope Francis warns religious leaders in his speech on interreligious meeting (in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2015) that religion should never be used to justify violence; He believes that the violence, exploitation, discrimination, marginalization, restrictive approaches to fundamental freedoms, whether of individuals or of groups are some of the chief elements of poverty. And people remain indifferent to the cries of the victims of the inhumane and brutal violence in our next doors. Cf. Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. Official website of National Crime Records Bureau, India, <http://ncrb.gov.in>.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Must There be Scapegoats*, 55; cf. Stork, *The Drama of Jesus and the Non-violent Image of God*, 186.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. Schwager und Niewiadomski, *Dramatic Theology as a Research Program*, 1.
- <sup>6</sup> For the biographical notes I have heavily depended on the introduction written by Niewiadomski und Palaver, *Vom Fluch und Segen der Südenbocke*.
- <sup>7</sup> In 1990, a group of scholars founded the Colloquium on Violence and Religion (COV&R) with the aim to 'explore, criticize, and develop the mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture.' It organizes a conference in every year devoted to the topics related to mimetic theory, scapegoating, violence, and religion. Girard is Honorary Chair of COV&R. Cofounder and first president of the COV&R was Raymund Schwager. Cf. <http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/>.
- <sup>8</sup> This research project is carried out by several institutes in cooperation with the theological faculty in Innsbruck. It aims to relate social problems (like, mimesis, rivalry, violence, ostracism, authority, justice and law, order, peace) with the theological questions, cf. <http://www.uibk.ac.at/rgkw/index.html>.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Stork, *The Drama of Jesus and the Non-violent Image of God*, 187.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Must There be Scapegoats*, 53-135; cf. Niewiadomski, *Das Drama Jesu*, 32; cf. Stork, *The Drama of Jesus and the Non-violent Image of God*, 187.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Niewiadomski, *Das Drama Jesu*, 32.
- <sup>12</sup> Schwager encountered the person and works of René Girard (1923- ) as the editor of Jesuit journal 'Orientierung' in Zurich, Switzerland. Girard is a French-born, American historian, literary critic, and philosopher of social science whose work belongs to the tradition of anthropological philosophy. According to him, mimetic desire is a deeply rooted tendency in human beings, i.e., to imitate the desires of others. This eventually leads to mimetic rivalry or mimetic conflict. A further development in this process is the victimizing mechanism as the solution to the crises it generates. This scapegoat mechanism is the origin of sacrifice and the foundation of human culture. Cf. Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, 3-47; cf. Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 33-38. Schwager commits his own theological project to a critical application on the sacrifice of Girard's theory, cf.

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Schwager, *Briefwechsel mit René Girard*; Cf. Moosbrugger, *Die Rehabilitierung des Opfers*, 219-250.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905 – 1988) in his *Theo-Drama* presents the Father as the author of the drama, the Son the primary actor and the Spirit the director. The main characters of the drama are God (who is responsible for the entire play), humanity (which is endowed with and condemned to freedom) and the mediator, Jesus Christ (who is the true character and a model for the others). Cf. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 5 vols.; Schwager's main theological concerns on *Theodramatik* has written in *Der Wunderbare Tausch*, 273-312; Cf. Steinmair-Pösel, *Gnade in Beziehung*, 78-86; Cf. Sroka, *Wer oder Was ist der Teufel*, 85-91.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 196-229.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Wandinger, *Drama and Conversion*, 1206.

<sup>16</sup> For this section I have heavily depended on Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 29-158, and *Jesus of Nazareth: How He Understood His Life*, 32-182; Cf. Steinmair-Pösel, *Gnade in Beziehung*, 229-314; Cf. Kuzhippallil, *The body of Christ and the body of India*, 193-223; Cf. Sroka, *Wer oder Was ist der Teufel*, 120-135.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Jesus of Nazareth: How He Understood His Life*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 41.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 77. Schwager says, "Their insight into their father's bloody deeds and self-deception is not enough to warn them and guide them to true self-knowledge. On contrary, the warning serves only to hide even more the truth about themselves. They see the past unjust violent deeds, reject them, but do not notice that they are doing exactly the same." Schwager, *Must There be Scapegoats*, 150-151.

<sup>22</sup> Schwager, *Must There be Scapegoats*, 155.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 67.

<sup>24</sup> Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 81.

<sup>25</sup> Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, 67.



## **Bored Out of Your Wits? Get Creative!**

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Have you been truly bored? “So bored your mind churns through every chore you have to complete, every aspiration you have yet to accomplish, every fear and every dread, every flaw in your character.”

When Manoush Zomorodi, online reporter, anchor and video consultant, New York, was eight years old, she walked around her house gathering up all the houseplants. She arranged them in rows, gave them all nametags and then performed a concert for their benefit. Why? Because she was bored.

And now? “I suddenly realised I haven’t really been bored in about seven years,” Zomorodi says. “That was when I first got a smartphone.” That realisation prompted Zomorodi to undertake a project called Bored and Brilliant, designed to explore the intersection of boredom and creativity. For the project, she has created an app called Moment, which measures how much time we spend on the phone and also logs how many times you pick it up “just to check it.”

Zomorodi is creating a set of challenges for her listeners to follow, a different one each day. “As we go through the week, we’re going to start giving them assignments to help them be creative in some way. We’re going to ask them to get bored and then complete an assignment.”

The project is based on conversations Zomorodi had with scientists who are examining the issue of boredom and creativity. While science hasn't proven that looking at smartphones inhibits our creativity, there is research suggesting that unstimulated, unengaged states of mind can prompt more creative, divergent thinking, writes Kurt Andersen of the American based Public Radio International.

Zomorodi uses the term 'default mode', which was first coined by Marcus Raichle in 2001, to describe a network in the brain that gets activated when we are bored. She spoke with Jonny Smallwood, a neuroscientist in the UK who studies 'mind wandering'. He saw the same kind of 'default mode' activity in the brain when he asked test subjects to lie in a scanner and just look at a fixed point. When they did so, the brain exhibited "very organised spontaneous activity," Smallwood says. "When you're given nothing to do, your thoughts don't stop. You continue to generate thoughts even when there's nothing for you to do with those thoughts."

Zomorodi uses 'positive, constructive daydreaming', a term coined by the renowned psychologist Jerome L Singer, to describe the state of mind that occurs when our brain gets bored. "You start to do things like problem solve and have original thinking and do 'autobiographical planning,' where you make sense of all the things that are happening to you in your life and you set your goals and you figure out ways of getting to those goals," Zomorodi says.

This is precisely the kind of thinking many psychologists believe leads to creative ideas, intuitive insights and "a-ha" moments — the kind of thinking that may become a thing of the past if we are addicted to smartphones.

Zomorodi found a different perspective on this issue from an unlikely source: Buddhist monks. Alex Pang, the author of a book called *The Distraction Addiction*, talked to monks who are active on the internet and social media. Maybe boredom, isolation and loneliness enable us to get in touch with ourselves helping us to be more brilliant, authentic and deep.

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## Homily Notes

July 5, 2015: XIV Sunday in Ordinary Times

Ez 2: 2-5; II Cor 12: 7-10; Mark 6: 1-6

### **I Am Strong When I Am Powerless**

Those who assume that the followers of Jesus will be respected, honored, or followed and that power and recognition, authority and influence will be their lot will find little comfort in today's readings. Christianity is not a religion for those who seek recognition, success or power. Today's gospel passage is about how people in Jesus' home town misunderstood and rejected him, leading Jesus to apply an already familiar proverb to a new subject, "*No prophet is without honor except in his own country.*" The first reading tells us that rejection and persecution were the fate of most of the Old Testament prophets including Ezekiel. In the second reading Paul admits the fact that in spite of the revelations given to him, God has given him a share in Christ's suffering from a chronic illness so that he may glory in God's power and grace.

If Jesus were to come to our midst right now, would we recognize Him? Almost certainly, No. We would probably expect Him to look extraordinary, to speak or act or live in unusual ways, while He went about His normal life in a normal way, as a normal human being. This is what happened to Him two thousand years ago.

Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary? How can this ordinary man, whom we know since childhood be the Messiah? God apparently loves the ordinary. God hides in what is unnoticed. When God chose to come among us as a man, that man was an ordinary worker, with no trumpets or thunderbolts to herald His arrival.

When God chose Paul to preach to far-flung nations and found numerous churches, he did not take away his humiliating limitations. The Lord told him those famous words which have strengthened so many believers since: My grace is enough for you, for in weakness, power reaches perfection." Paul who (like any of us) would have liked to be strong and free of humiliating handicaps found a new and deeper truth:" When I am powerless, it is then that I am strong."

The ordinariness of everyday life seems to be God's favourite field of action where He loves to hide and work. Our limitations seem to goad the Lord into choosing us to do great things for Him. -

**-Shibin Mattathil CST**

July 12, 2015: XV Sunday in Ordinary Times  
Amos 7: 12-15, Eph 1:3-10, Mk 6: 1-13)

### **We Are the Children of God**

Today's readings remind us of our Divine Adoption as God's children and of our call to witness to God' love and mercy as revealed through Jesus. We are chosen by God as His adopted children and sent as witnesses to the Gospel of His only Son Jesus. In the first reading today, the priest Amaziah tells Amos to take his prophesying back to his own country. They don't want to listen to him in Bethel. Amos replies that it was not his idea to become a prophet. He was a simple shepherd and a tender of Sycamore trees. It was the Lord who plucked him out and told him to prophesy to Israel. Amos frankly expresses his amazement at his selection as God' prophet. Yet Amos' elevation as a prophet pales before God's choice of each one of us through the mystery of Divine Adoption in Jesus. In the second reading, St. Paul explains how this adoption takes place: God adopts us as His children by giving us a share of

His own divine life. He elevates our human nature, so that we become God-like. In today's gospel, the evangelist tells the story of Jesus' preaching in Galilee, followed by the story of the commissioning of the Twelve to preach the "good news" message of repentance, forgiveness of sins and liberation.

We have a mission to live as children of God. Realization of our dignity as children of God should change our outlook on life. We are to be children filled with love, rather than selfishness and disobedience. We are to respect our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. As God's children, we should live a life of absolute trust in the goodness of our Heavenly Father, who knows what is best for us. The realization that we are the children of God should bring great comfort, peace and joy- even in our worst moments.

We have mission to grow in Divine Adoption: It is through the Church- principally through the seven sacraments- that our Divine Adoption is made possible. We are chosen by God in Christ, baptized into His church, healed by His forgiveness, and nourished at the Eucharistic table. Today, when we gather at this table of Christ's sacrificial banquet, we can rightfully address our Divine Father as His adopted sons and daughters and ask for the special anointing of the Holy Spirit to grow daily in the true spirit and practice of our divine adoption.

**-Arun Vincent**

July 19, 2015: XVI Sunday in Ordinary Times

Jer 23: 1-6, Eph 2: 13-18, Mk 6: 30-34

### **From the Presence of God to People**

Today's readings explain how God, like a good shepherd, redeems his people. In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah, (VI century B.C.) consoles the Israelites, who were enslaved in Babylon, by assuring them that God will lead them back to their original pasture in Israel. The second reading explains how Jesus, the good shepherd, reconciled us with His Father by offering himself on the cross. Likewise, the gospel shows Jesus attending to his weary apostles, who have just returned from their first preaching mission, while at the same time expressing his concern for the people who like "sheep without a shepherd," have gathered to meet him in the wilderness.

Jesus gave us the example of the balance we need in our spiritual life. Jesus had the custom of going to the synagogue for communal worship every Sabbath. He participated in the temple liturgies in Jerusalem at the appointed time. He also went off by himself and spent whole nights in prayer to his heavenly Father.

The Christian life is a continuous passage from the presence of God to the presence of people and vice versa. Prayer is essentially listening to God and talking to Him. One of our main problems is that we do not truly allow God the opportunity to speak to us. We also do not know how to “be still and to listen.” Hence, we are often in danger of refusing to allow God to recharge us with spiritual energy and strength. Besides, we do not set aside enough time for Him to speak to us and for us to speak to God. How can we shoulder life’s burdens if we have no contact with the Lord of Life? How can we do God’s work unless we rely on God’s strength? And how can we receive that strength unless we pray to him individually, in the family and as a parish community in the church and receive His grace by participating in the Holy Mass and through the reception of the sacraments?

**-Vanathu Antony**

July 26, 2015: XVII Sunday in Ordinary Times

2Kgs 4:42-44, Eph 4: 1-6, Jn 6: 1-15

### **Communicating Compassion**

Today’s readings invite us to become humble instruments in God’s hands by sharing our blessings with our brothers and sisters. The first reading tells us how the prophet Elisha, by invoking God’s power, fed one hundred men with twenty barley loaves. This miracle foreshadows the gospel account of Jesus’ feeding of the crowd who followed Him to hear His words. In the second reading, St. Paul advises the Christians of Ephesus to preserve unity and peace by sharing with others all their blessings: their wealth, talents, time and resources--just as they share one Lord, one faith and one baptism.

It is hard to know what we can do. But in a way the stock piling of surplus food is as great a scandal as the stockpiling of nuclear weapons. Yet it is accepted as normal. Martin Luther King had a simple answer: We can store our surplus food free of charge in the empty stomachs of the millions of God's children who go to bed hungry at night. But the chances of that happening are remote.

So what can we do about the hungry in the world. We could surely do something about it. Have a day every year in which we fast in solidarity with the hungry in the world. And what money we spare we could give to some organization that is working for the relief of hunger. "You have to fast for those who are hungry. It is a question of atonement. You can't eat too much when so many people are hungry. Remember the words of Jesus at the Last Judgement : I was hungry and you did not feed me. We cannot multiply the food like Christ could. But then we do not have to. All we have to do is share it, or the money to buy it. Christ continues to ask us the question he asked Philip: Where can we buy bread for these to eat?"

Commit yourselves to share and to work with God in communicating His compassion. It is too easy to blame God, too easy to blame governments, too easy see these things as other people's problems. But they are also our problems. That is the meaning of the Eucharist we celebrate here today. In other words, as Christians we have to commit ourselves to share and to work with God in communicating his compassion to all. God is a caring Father but He wants our co-operation. That's what the early Christians did, generously sharing what they had with the needy. They were convinced that everything they needed to experience a fulfilling life was already there, in the gifts and talents of the people around them. People of our time have to be encouraged to share, even when they think they have nothing to offer. Whatever we offer through Jesus will have a life-giving effect in those who receive it. We are shown two attitudes in the Gospel story: that of Philip and that of Andrew (John 6:7-9). Philip said, in effect: "The situation is hopeless; nothing can be done." But Andrew's attitude was: "I'll see what I can do; and I will trust Jesus to do the rest." Let us have Andrew's attitude. -

**-Jesusaja Fernando**

Aug 2, 2015: XVII Sun in OT: Transfiguration of Our Lord

Dan: 7: 9-10, 13-14; II Pet 1: 16-19; Mk 9: 2-10

### **Towards the Promised Land**

The common theme of today's readings is metamorphosis or transformation. The readings invite us to transform our lives by renewing it on a daily basis, radiating the grace of the transfigured Lord around us by our Spirit-filled lives. The first reading from the book of Daniel explains how the "Son of man" coming on the clouds of heaven, gets transformed by receiving dominion, glory and kingship from the Ancient One seated on the throne of heavenly glory. In the second reading, St. Peter explains to his Christian community how he was an eye witness to the transfiguration scene when Jesus received honor and glory from God the Father.

In today's reading we hear of lack of faith of those Galileans, of their utter worldliness and lack of interest in their future life. We may be inclined to judge them severely. But we must not forget that as Jews they knew almost nothing about the future life. It was only with the full revelation given by Christ that people learned of God's wonderful plan for them. Thank God, we have this full knowledge today. We know that this life is only a period of preparation, a few years during which we can make ourselves worthy to enter the real kingdom of God in heaven. We know that Christ was God's divine Son, who took our human nature in order to make us his brothers and sisters and therefore sons and daughters of God. We know that heaven is awaiting us, if only we accept Christ here and follow his teaching. Surely, we are infinitely fortunate than were the Galileans we read about today.

Let me conclude with this reflection:

Lord, we turn to you for that food,/ Which endures to eternal life,/ Which you alone can give us/ And which alone can satisfy all our hungers/ And all our longings,/ And which will sustain us/ As we journey through this life/ Which at times can become

as bare as a desert,/ Until we reach at last the promised land of heaven.

**-Arun Vincent**

August 9, 2015: XIX Sunday in Ordinary Times

I Kg. 19: 4-8, Eph. 4:30-5:2, Jn. 6: 41-51

### **Nourished by the Bread of Life**

Today's gospel describes Jesus' discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. In it he reveals himself as the true "bread of life that came down from heaven," to give life to the world. Jesus clarifies that he has not come to give them things that satisfy their material needs. He has come to show them their deeper need for spiritual realities. The bread of life Jesus speaks about is prefigured in the first reading by the miraculous food by which the angel nourished Elijah in the desert while he was fleeing from the soldiers of Queen Jezebel. After being nourished by the Lord, Elijah was strengthened for the long journey of forty days to the mountain of the Lord. The second reading presents Christ Jesus the "bread of life" as a "sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma." Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians that their discipleship must be guided by the virtues of compassion and forgiveness, avoiding "bitterness, fury, shouting and reviling which would grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

Accept the "Real Presence" of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist as an inspiring challenge. Based on sound tradition and centuries long teaching of the Magisterium, the Roman Catholic Church has consistently held fast to the belief in the Real Presence. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the other sacraments as the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all sacraments tend." In this most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore *the whole Christ, is truly, really, and substantially* contained." (CCC 1374). The Fathers of the Church explain that while ordinary food is assimilated into man, the very opposite takes place in Holy Communion. Here man is assimilated into the Bread of Life. Hence

let us learn to receive Jesus really present in the Eucharist with due reverence, true repentance, proper preparation and grateful hearts. Let us remember that Holy Communion a) increases our intimate union with Christ. b) Preserves, increases, and renews the sanctifying grace received at Baptism. c) Cleanses us from past sin and preserves us from future sins. d) Strengthens the theological virtue of charity, thus enabling us to separate us from our disordered attachments and to root ourselves in Christ. e) unites us more deeply to the mystery of the Church.

**-Vibin Varghese**

Aug 16, 2015: XX Sunday in Ordinary Times  
Pro 9:1-6, Eph 5:15-20, Jn 6: 51-58

### **Sustaining the Hunger for God Alive**

Today's readings stress the fact that the Holy Eucharist, which perfectly fulfils the symbol of the manna of the Old Testament, is the food that gives us life forever. In today's first reading from the Book of Proverbs, Lady Wisdom, representing God, offers wisdom and understanding in the form of a rich banquet to all those who are willing to heed her invitation. The responsorial psalm thanks God for this food. The second reading echoes this note of thanksgiving. The first and second readings encourage us to turn aside from those things that do not nourish and sustain us and turn towards the divine source: "*be filled with the Spirit.*" John, like all early Christians, believed that Jesus' body and blood are contained in the bread and wine consecrated in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In today's selection from his gospel, John describes the life-giving characteristics of those two elements.

A challenge to break your body and shed your blood for others: When we receive the consecrated host we accept a great challenge. We accept the triumphs and the tragedies, joys and the pains necessary to build up the Kingdom of God in that part of the world in which we have been called to serve. As we walk away from the altar we may perhaps hear Jesus saying: "*This is my body, given over for you*" and "*This is my blood, poured out for you*". What a power we would be for our world around us if each one of us could

say that and mean it! That is why, at the end of the Mass, we are sent out *to love and serve the Lord*, reflecting Jesus' love, mercy, forgiveness and spirit of service all around us.

Keep the hunger and thirst for God alive in your hearts: Every human being is blessed with an insatiable longing for God. We want God as our Father whose arms hold us gently in safety throughout the dangers we face. But, often we use substitutes as an escape from that need: fast living, fast food, fast cars, needless luxuries, unrestricted sexual fulfilment. We demand the right to do whatever we want to do whenever we want. But unless we keep the hunger for God strong in our hearts, we will eventually realize the emptiness of our lives without God.

**-Arun Chakkalakkal**

Aug 23, 2015: XXI Sunday in Ordinary Times  
Josh 24: 1-2, 15-17, 18; Eph 5: 21-32; Jn 6: 60-69

### **Accepting Christ Unconditionally**

The main theme of today's readings is that Christian life is a series of daily choices for God or against God and the truths He revealed through his prophets in the Old Testament and especially through His Son Jesus as detailed in the New Testament. Concluding his long Eucharistic discourse, Jesus challenges his audience to accept him as true bread from heaven who gives his body and blood as their heavenly food. Joshua in the "first reading" and Paul in the "second reading" make similar challenges.

Will you also go away? "And what about you, do you want to go away too?" Are we going to join the ranks of the incredulous, or join instead the group of the twelve with Peter? "Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life." We undertake to follow the way of Christ and make choices for Christ, fortified by the bread he gives and relying on the power of his Holy Spirit. The heavenly bread and the Holy Spirit will give us the courage of our Christian convictions to accept Church's teachings and to face ridicule, criticisms and even social isolation for our adherence to sound Christian principles in our lives. The very option or possibility of choosing for or against Jesus is repeated over and over again in the modern age. We should resolve to take a stand for Jesus and accept the consequences. We recognize in our going to communion the accepting of that challenge to be totally one with Jesus. When the

priest gives Holy Communion saying, “*The Body of Christ*”, we have to respond with a total “*Amen.*” That ‘*Yes*’ is not just an act of faith in the Real Presence but a total commitment of ourselves to Jesus in the community of which we are members. We must accept him totally, without any conditions or reservation. His thoughts and attitudes, his values, his life-view must become totally ours. Above all we are to identify with him in the offering of his flesh and the pouring out of his blood on the cross, the symbol of God’s unutterable love for us.

**-Johnson S**

Aug 30, 2015: XVII Sunday in Ordinary Times

Dt 4:1-2, 6-8; Jam 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27; Mk 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

### **Focussing on Relationships**

The first reading is an attempt to reinterpret the spirit of the ancient legal traditions codified by Moses and given to the Israelites to keep them together as God’s Chosen People. The observance of the Law was considered as a sign of commitment and obedience to God, enabling them to lead lives better than their ‘*pagan*’ neighbours. The responsorial psalm describes a person who lives justly before God. In the second reading, James reminds us that keeping the Word of God is not just keeping the letter of the law. Rather, it is to glorify God by caring for those who are unable to care for themselves. In today’s gospel lesson our attention is drawn to a debate between Jesus and the Pharisees on the subject of “*Tradition.*” Jesus blames the scribes and the Pharisees for giving undue importance to the external observances in the name of tradition, ignoring the real spirit. He also criticizes Pharisaic observance and clarifies that it is our inner motivations and dispositions that reflect our purity or impurity.

**Cast out the Pharisee from within and accommodate the spirit of Jesus:** There is a strong attraction for some to have a religion of laws and regulations. The question on their lips is often: “*Is this a sin?*” “*Is it a mortal sin or ‘only’ a venial sin?*” But these are not the questions to ask. Our real concern should be: “*Is this a loving thing to do?*” It is possible to keep all the laws and rules perfectly and yet be very far from the spirit of Jesus and the Gospel. The law-keeper is

primarily concerned with “*saving his soul*”, with “*being in the state of grace*”. Even when he shows “*charity*” to others it is often simply to get “*merit*” for himself. In the final analysis, each one has to discern for himself just how, in given circumstances, he can best love and serve Christ. It calls for a great deal of honesty, integrity and a high level of real freedom, the freedom to choose what is good, what is better, what is more loving. The Gospel is not a code of laws. It provides a vision of a truly human life lived for God among other people. It is focused on relationships rather than individual actions. This very day we will have many opportunities to love and serve Jesus in various situations. Instead of worrying over our little mistakes and weaknesses, let each one of us ask, “Where and how I can be a more loving, caring and compassionate person this day?”

**-Sibin Francis**



## Book Review

Stephen Jeyard, *A Book that Cannot Be Titled*,  
Ilanthalir Educational Trust, Tiruchirapalli, 201, pp. 192 +5 xvi  
Rs 125.

The book presents deep reflections upon God, science, society, spirituality, philosophy, theology, cosmos, biology and several things under the sun and above the sun. This book is a mixture of many things that have lessons for life. The author hopes that the readers find thoughts and insights of their own after having read this book. The author does not want to impose his ideas onto the readers, rather stimulates them to newer thoughts, attitudes and life-styles. Therefore, he has not given a particular title to the book. In fact, he has had a real struggle to find an apt title and failing to settle his mind on a particular title, he has expressed his struggle in black and white with the irony of the title: a book that cannot be titled. Anyway, that is the title of the book.

This book of a mixed bag has many themes which are relevant and meaning to human living. Some of themes that would increase curiosity in the minds of readers are: A Case against Angel Gabriel; Jesus without Cross and Cross without Jesus!; Human beings: Cosmically Insignificant but Cognitively Indispensable.

The coverage clearly conveys, as the author wishes, the theme and the spirit of the book. Yes, a piece of rock is being hammered and chiseled out to create a particular sculpture. Interestingly, the sculptor himself emerges out of his own efforts to chisel out. Similarly the ideas

and the insights that are presented in this book are given to the readers; and the readers have to situate them in their own life-situations, to find out what they mean to them. They have to cull out their own implications and lessons from the reflections given here, and lo and behold, there will emerge their own book! In today's ultra modern world, full of scientific achievements, people have no time to "think" or to "reflect"; so, they end up doing many things and saying several things just because others do and say, without ever stopping to ask themselves, why they do or say what they do or say.

We, therefore, need to take the usual and the familiar events or conversations or proverbs, which we usually take for granted, into serious consideration to see what it really means to us personally in our existential contexts. When we do this, it is highly probable that we may get newer insights and lessons that would help us improve our lives. The author has left the book without a title precisely, since the freedom and the responsibility of finding a title is meaningfully left to the readers themselves, and that justifies the title of the book

The book has definitely something for people of all walks of life—the young and the old, the elite and the simple, the rich and the poor, students and teachers, theologians and philosophers – all will find something interesting and inspiring in this book. **-J. Charles Davis**

Kuruvilla Pandikattu, *Insights from Reason and Religion in Arrangement with Financial Chronicle*, Christian World Imprints, New Delhi: 2005. pp. 230 +xvii Rs. 495; ISBN-13: 978-93-5148-070-9

Today more and more people are getting convinced that the future humanity depends on how science and religion can collaborate with each other. This book contains short articles on reason (science) and religion (spirituality) meant for a general audience, who may or may not be organisationally religious. They are meant to inspire a band of young and old women and men to think deeply about themselves, leading to deeper insights and wisdom. It is the author's conviction that genuine spirituality is open-ended and reaches to the other in love and compassion. Open-minded and visionary, these articles are meant to touch the daily life of busy people who are fully involved in the struggle and success of daily life. So, the articles are limited to 625 words. They attempt to enhance the precious and vulnerable life by reaching out to others. It assumes that only when we can maintain

the healthy tension between the spiritual and material aspects of life, we become more authentic. The Author has roughly categorized the articles into the following nine sections:

Human Uniqueness; Human Compassion; Mind and Body; Science and Religion; Truth and Reality; Towards Greater Authenticity; Evolving Spirituality; Openness to the Deeper; Lessons from Life.

These articles appeared in the “My Mind” Op-Ed Column of *Financial Chronicle* ([www.mydigitalfc.com](http://www.mydigitalfc.com)) and are characterised by: 1. Contextual sensitivity: Normally he takes up a current event – from politics, science or religion – and reflects on it giving it a spiritual basis and contemporary relevance. 2. Religious openness: Committed to his Catholic faith, the author’s critical and creative acceptance of other religious and nonreligious traditions is extraordinary. Without falling into eclecticism, he has a way of drawing the positive aspect of every event. 3. Forward movement: His writings pursue our quest as individuals and communities, to move ahead in our pilgrimage of life, conquering new peaks. He is convinced of the Spirit working within us to move us to another level, where human beings can live in peace and harmony, affirming and respecting the differences that exist among each other.

The book is dedicated to the students and staff – academic and domestic – who have contributed to the growth of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth and Papal Seminary (founded at Kandy in 1983) during the last sixty (1955-2015) years in Pune.

By and large, these spiritual essays are non-denominational and are not limited to any religious group. At the same time, they open the inquisitive spirit in us and thus widen our experience. As such, these reflections are very inspiring and forward-looking.

**-Libin Joseph**

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## PAPAL SEMINARY JUBILEE

In view its Diamond Jubilee in Pune, the Home of Love, Papal Seminary is planning to bring out:

1. A souvenir containing articles of alumni
2. A short brochure on Papal Seminary
3. A documentary on Papal Seminary
4. To edit/reprint the book "History of Papal Seminary"
5. To create an archive on Papal Seminary with photos and books; images and articles; reports and documents
6. To conduct blood donation camps
7. To plant 60 saplings around the Home of Love

There will also be some charitable support to the domestic staff of the seminary. In view of these plans, the language academies will be encouraged to conduct food fests to raise funds. However, these plans would require a considerable amount of money to implement them well.

An account in the name of PAPAL SEMINARY ALUMNII FUND will be maintained for permanent use in future.

The Papal Seminary - your alma mater - the HOME OF LOVE, NEEDS YOU and humbly requests you to send your contribution to execute these plans.

A/c Name: Papal Seminary  
Saving A/c No: 0261101010465  
Bank: Canara Bank, Ramwadi, Pune  
IFSC Code: CNRB0000261

After remitting your donation, please send an email mentioning the purpose, PS Alumni Fund, to: [davischarlesj@gmail.com](mailto:davischarlesj@gmail.com) or [alexgsj@gmail.com](mailto:alexgsj@gmail.com). For more info, please contact Fr.Charles Davis (Mob: 84464 58445).

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