

**FR. AGNEL**

# **ASHRAM NEWS**

**November 2023**



**The power of intercessions**

**'Ven. Fr. Agnelo' Interceding for the world**

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**VEN. FR. AGNELO'S 96TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY**  
**Monday, 20th November 2023**

**PROGRAMME****SPECIAL NOVENA SERVICES | 11th to 19th November 2023****Every day**

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

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

**N.B.**

On Sunday, 12th and 19th November, Masses and Novena Services will be held as on normal Sundays.

On Sunday, 12th and 19th November, Novena Services will be in Gujarati at 3.00 p.m.

**20th November (Monday) : 96th Death Anniversary of Venerable Fr. Agnelo**

**Morning** : Mass followed by Novena Prayers at 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m.

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



**Most Rev. Henry D'Souza,**  
**Bishop of Bellary, will be the Main Celebrant on 20th November 2023.**

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

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

**Rev. Fr. Superior**

**FR. AGNEL ASHRAM**

Bandstand, Bandra (West),

Mumbai - 400 050, India.

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



## ***THE OBSCENITY OF MILITARY MIGHT***

Most of the world's population's attention is focused on the Israeli-Palestinian war for the last 30 days, and most have taken sides by applauding the Israeli killing machine as justified by the horrendous and gruesome attack carried out by Hamas on the Israeli civilian population on October 7, 2023. The siding with the Israeli appears to be almost automatic, beginning with the United States of America, whose proxy Israel is, because it is needed to defend American interests in the Middle East and is its bulwark against the Arabs and, more importantly, against Iran. Of course the clout of the Jewish financial lobby in the United States is no less overwhelming. India, too, has made it very clear that they have cast their lot with the Israeli State because of its close defence collaboration with it, as also its allergic reaction to any terror event.

The Western world also has the civilizational antipathy towards the Muslim world and no less against Hamas for their resistance to a situation of oppression by the Israeli State, that the West is not committed to address and would be happy as long as there are no reprisals from the oppressed Palestinian population. Western Europe, and more precisely, Germany will never be comfortable in being indifferent to any threat to Israel, because it considers that it will have to perennially carry the burden of the Nazi persecution and extermination of the Jews.

There is no doubt that the attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023, was cruel, the killings gruesome and the publicity sickening. That was and cannot be pardoned. The killing of 1400 Israelis in one day, and that too in their own land, is something that hit at the very core of the Jewish State's self-proclaimed identity that their security is impregnable and that their citizens are not vulnerable to any attack not only because the Jewish State is the most potent military power of the region but also because of the self-proclaimed belief that no one dare touch them.

Israel's reaction, therefore, is not only fuelled by the terror attacks but perhaps even more decidedly by the pathetic evidence of its vulnerability which hurts much deeper than the human loss. On the other hand, Israel finds this as an opportune moment to hit at its arch rival Iran, whose proxy Hamas is, in all sense of the world since it is funded, armed and directed by Iran with its open and declared running conflict with Israel and its avowed stand that Israel does not have the right to exist, which is also Hamas' declared stand.

### **HISTORY AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

The birth of the Jewish State (Israel) came about as a result of the western world recognizing the need to create a nation for the Jews because of the suffering that had been inflicted on them in the Nazi holocaust where millions of Jews had been exterminated. The present day region of Israel and Palestine was under the British control, and the suggestion to give them part of that land, which is the land that the Jews lived as recorded in the Bible, was made. However the Palestinians were living there, and giving them that land which is today's Israel, automatically would mean that Palestinians would lose part of the land. No final decision had yet been taken and the negotiations between some countries such as U.K. and U.S.A. and the Arabs were still going on when David Ben-Gurion, the founder of Israel, declared it as an Independent Jewish State, in 1948. Obviously more than 200,000 Palestinians were driven out of their land.

There were several smaller wars but the biggest were in 1967 and 1973, where Israel prevailed and became much stronger. In the 1973 war, Israel was in a serious danger of being defeated but America bailed it out, and carried out a massive airlift of arms, aircraft, armoured vehicles and tanks that helped Israel to survive.

Israel decided that its military might was its greatest strength and through the help of France

was able to enrich Uranium and produced nuclear weapons although it has never officially admitted but it is generally admitted that it has over 90 nuclear bombs and has delivery systems by missiles, aircraft and submarines. This militarism gave the Jewish state a certain sense of invincibility which it has translated into an unopposed oppression of the Palestinians, occupying their lands, establishing new settlements in violation of U.N. resolutions, and the world has watched it do it with impunity.

The force it has used against the Gaza population, reducing the city to rubble with thousands of civilians dead, does not hurt the conscience of most people in the world, for two main reasons. Our social consciousness accepts that a military and economic power has a right to make rules that are differently applied to weaker nations. The horrendous and gruesome killing of the innocent civilians, men, women, children, babies and the elderly by Hamas, is condemnable with all our might. But nobody raised their voice when the Israelis arrest, assault, kill Palestinian protestors almost regularly in the West Bank which together with Gaza are the places where the Palestinians live and have been demanding recognition to live as a separate nation. Israel refuses to acknowledge that right on the grounds that they should recognize Israel and must always remain demilitarized, which simply stated means that only Israel will be the dominant state and no one else will be able to compete with it.

Militarism is a profanity, an obscenely crooked view of a state's right to its existence, only on the condition that others will be inferior to it, which is a clear political obscenity. It is this obscenity coupled with the world view, especially of emerging powers, that military might allows one to set terms for others to follow, is also the denial of the fact, that the solution to a problem is not always found, by addressing what was the provocation (October 7), rather than the real cause of the problem (the Palestinian problem).

We often condemn totalitarian or fascist governments as undesirable but in our own personal Perception, are absolutely comfortable with the use of military might as the sole means of solving problems. The greatest cause of the present tragedy in Gaza is not the massacre of

Hamas but the 75 years of uncontrolled and unending oppression of the Palestinian people, and our inability to distinguish between one's perception of 'might gives you right' rather than 'justice has no preferences', and that might can never be the criterion for problem solving.

We need to get rid of this false and dangerous obscenity.

I have always placed myself with Palestinian people, because I believe that their oppression was unjustified, although both Arabs and the rest of the world are not helping address it. When the founder of the Palestinian movement, PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) was unofficially invited to India (he could not be invited officially as he represented a terrorist organization as decided by militarist powers such as the US), he was allowed to visit India in 1970s in his private capacity and I too was invited to receive him. India, was then, not a militarist power and always cast its lot with the oppressed people, but today it is more comfortable with the other side. There is no justification for the killing of the innocent in Gaza, as there was no justification for the Hamas attack, but the provocation is not the only cause of the present problem, the oppression of the Palestinians is a much bigger one!

***J.A. Carvalho***

*(jalarc22@gmail.com)*

## VEN. FR. AGNELO – A BEACON OF LIGHT

-Tancia Pires

**A zealous preacher, a virtuous priest, meek and mild, physically so frail, yet so courageous and prominent when it comes to faith, God, and devotion. These phrases well describe a priest of Goan origin, who is remembered fondly and loved by people all over the world, none other than Ven. Fr. Agnelo.**

### Early life

*“A good tree bears good fruit...”* is a truly befitting idiom when we look back at the life of Ven.

Fr. Agnelo. Agnelo Gustavo Adolfo de Souza, the sixth of nine children, was born on 21st January 1869, to very religious and devout parents, Miguel Arcanjo de Souza and Maria Sinforosa Perpetua Magalhães in the village of Anjuna, Goa. Imbued with true Christian values and filled with the zeal to know God, little Agnelo showed deep interest in catechism and sermons. His knowledge and inspiring words attracted not only kids but also grown-ups who flocked around him with a listening ear and a mesmerized expression. At 11, when he lost his parents, Agnelo was entrusted to Mother Mary by his dying mother. He continued to grow in faith, wisdom, and love, so much so, that it led him to devote himself fully to God and become a priest.

### A Missionary Priest and Preacher

Upon completion of his sacerdotal studies at the Patriarchal Seminary of Rachol, Goa, he went on to lead a life of total dedication, seclusion, and piousness at the hillock of Pilar, where he was ordained a priest on 24th September, 1898. He dedicated himself as a missionary on 8th September, 1908.

As a priest, he worked tirelessly, for the people of Shiroda, Sanvordem, in Goa, and Kumta in Karnataka. He proved himself as a true shepherd in the vineyard of the Lord, his sermons were always inspiring and thought-provoking. When appointed as a curate in Shiroda, he was also appointed as the confessor of the external seminarians at Rachol, whom he tendered with

utmost love and care. After serving the parishes of Kumta and Sanvordem, and evaluating his spiritual work, he was then appointed as the Spiritual Director at the Patriarchal Seminary, Rachol.



He was always looked up to and respected. He was a man of prayer and silence, he said, *“In order to become a saint, one must suffer much and talk little.”* He advised the people too, to do the same, *“That a sinner may be converted and come to the right path of*

*penance and perfection, it is necessary that he should meditate daily for a quarter of an hour and examine his conscience at night.”* His spiritual advice was not only for preaching, but he would practice it in his day-to-day life as well. Though he appeared fragile and weak in health, he was tremendously courageous in mind and soul, with a zealous spirit. He had a deep and strong faith in God, which was his strength, and so he fearlessly worked for Christ. He always said, *“One must not leave off a good action on account of the criticism of others.”*

### Life after Death...

*“It is not the clothing that honours a man, but his virtues.”* Fr Agnelo led a pious and simple life, clothing himself with virtuosity. The Rector of the Seminary, Monsinhor Ganganeli Rebello, often referred him as 'amcho sant' – our saint with love and reverence!

Ven. Fr. Agnelo had a special place in his heart for the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and he propagated and preached about the love of the sacred heart in the missions and sermons he preached. *“Burn in the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to avoid burning in hell”*, he would tell his seminarians. He confided in a priest that he would be blessed if he ended this earthly sojourn on a Friday, - a day dedicated to the Lord. The Lord rewarded the Servant of God, Ven. Fr. Agnelo, who collapsed in the pulpit while preaching for the vespers of the Sacred Heart and died subsequently at 5 a.m. on the day of the feast of the

Sacred Heart of Jesus, on 20th November, 1927.

The seminarians cut his nails and kept it with them as relics. Others touched their rosaries to his body out of reverence. Due to his virtuous life and holiness, people flocked in large numbers at his funeral. The Parish Priest of Rachol Church who led the funeral prayers at the cemetery, came out and exclaimed: *"I have laid a saint to rest!"* To the weeping Rector Mons. Ganganeli, he said: *"Don't weep, our Agnelo is in heaven!"*

Every year at Pilar, Goa, and Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, Mumbai, we have nine-day novenas, in preparation for Ven. Fr. Agnelo Day (20th November). It's not yet called Feast because he is yet to be canonized as a saint. It has been so many years since he has left for his heavenly abode, yet, his virtues, legacy, and exemplary life dwell in the hearts of people all over the world. The society and people have been storming heaven and devoutly praying for the great day when Ven. Fr. Agnelo would be canonized as a saint.

This 96th death anniversary of Ven. Agnelo, let us

continue to pray fervently, that before the centenary celebration, we may be privileged and blessed to call our beloved 'Padr' Agnel, 'Sant' Agnelo. Let us pray for the process and proceedings of his first-class miracle, which is needed for the completion of the canonization process. Let us all lead a humble, and prayerful life like him and earn heavenly graces here on Earth itself. Let us seek his intercession and grow in faith and mercy.

**Ven. Fr. Agnelo, Intercede for us.**



*Tancia Pires is on the Faculty in MIT, Dept. of Radiodiagnosis, SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre, Chennai. She is passionate about writing, acting and singing.*



## There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

**Zubin/Khorshed/H.Z. Bharucha,  
Evershine City, Vasai**

We are pleased to donate a cheque of Rs.7,200 towards the maintenance and care of the Balbhavan children at Fr. Agnel Ashram, which we have been donating on a regular basis. The good work done by Fr. Agnel Ashram is well appreciated.

**Lovely Antony, Kottayam, Kerala**

We are more than glad to donate an amount of Rs.10,000 via NEFT to Fr. Agnel Ashram and the children of the Balbhavan orphanage. We wish to express our sincere appreciation for the tremendous efforts taken by Fr. Agnel Ashram to look after and train the children.

**Ashanthi & R. F. Machado, Tuticorin,  
Tamil Nadu**

Please accept our contribution of Rs. 15,000 via NEFT, to your Union Bank of India, Bandra account, towards the Yearly Sponsorship of a boy, who is being cared for in your Balbhavan orphanage.

**Garth Lawrence D'Mello,  
Bandra (West), Mumbai**

My wife and I have made a contribution of Rs.10,000 via NEFT, as a donation to Fr. Agnel Ashram. In addition, we would also like to donate clothes and bags to the children.

**Joseph/Milton Johny Puthur, Kerala**

I have transferred Rs. 15,000 through NEFT bank transfer to the account of the Society of St. Francis Xavier, Pilar, towards the one year Sponsorship for one boy, in continuation with his Yearly Sponsorship Scheme. I wish to do the Full Year Sponsorship of Rs. 15,000 per year for one boy.

**Catherine and David Fobler, Canada**

Peace and Blessings. Thank you for placing my petition at Ven. Fr. Agnelo's relic. We have sent Rs.10,000 as a donation in thanksgiving. God Bless you and all at Fr. Agnel Ashram.

**Melini Joseph D'Souza, U.A.E.**

In continuation of my regular donations, I wish to donate Rs.10,000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram and the Balbhavan orphanage, in thanksgiving for favours received.

## FROM MIRACLES TO FAITH???

-Dr. Fio Mascarenhas SJ

**The month of November commemorates great feasts: Feasts of All Saints, and All Souls, of Christ the King, of the Presentation of Mary, and of very many well-known saints and martyrs.**

In the context, first of all, of All Souls' Day, let us start by looking at the very interesting revelation by Jesus (Lk 16:19-31) about a dead rich man who (hypothetically) goes to "hell."

This man tries to "intercede" on behalf of his five (very selfish) brothers on earth, asking that they be converted *through a miracle!* But he is told by Abraham: *'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'* And he said, *'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'* He said to him, *'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead!'*

From this we must conclude that miracles do not necessarily lead to conversion and new faith! Remember Jesus also said: *"This generation... seeks a sign, but **no sign shall be given to it** except the sign of Jonah"* (Lk 11:29). And very importantly, to Thomas, *"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those **who have not seen and yet believe**"* (Jn 20:29).

Of course, a few miracles of healing (through the intercession of Mary and the saints) are still occasionally worked by the Holy Spirit, and sometimes these do lead people to new faith. There is the famous case of Dr. Alexis Carrel of the Lyons Medical University (who won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1912). He went in 1903 to the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes as an unbeliever and ex-Catholic, in order to study *"psychological improvements in health that are easily explained by the mass hysteria accompanying emotional demonstrations of faith."* He said: *"If a truly organic cure took place, it would be different. **If this woman was cured, I would believe. But she will not be cured!**"*



This woman, *Marie Ferrand*, was in the same compartment of the Lourdes Pilgrims' Train that Carrel had travelled in from Paris. She was in the last stages of tubercular peritonitis, the hard mass of fluid in her stomach bulging ominously. Several times on the train journey she passed out, and Dr. Carrel gave her morphine injections. He angrily jotted in his notebook that religion became fanaticism when it dragged dying patients like Ferrand halfway across France in the heat of summer – *only for them to die in greater misery!*

At Lourdes, he tried unsuccessfully to prevent the unconscious woman being taken to the outdoor blessing of the sick. But though by now half-dead, she was carried to the procession, where the bishop blessed her with the Eucharist, and lo and behold, her death pallor left her face! When the swollen stomach flattened out, Carrel later wrote, he thought he was going mad. He accompanied Ferrand back to the hospital, where several other doctors examined her carefully, and declared that the pathetic patient of several hours *before was fully cured.*

Carrel had witnessed a physical miracle, the very one he said could not happen, but *"still he could not believe."* He argued with himself for hours that maybe there was something in the air at Lourdes that could be responsible for the cure, as yet unknown to science. But no, he realized, that's rubbish! No hitherto unknown substance could selectively cure just one of the crowd, turning scientific laws of medicine topsy-turvy in the process. Was some other explanation possible? His mind and emotions thrashed about without rest.

It was late that same night, and Carrel was as confused as when he first saw the woman physically healed. Then, a group of pilgrims passed him singing to the Virgin and entered the Lourdes Rosary Basilica. He too entered the church and sat on a chair at the back. For the first time since school days, he prayed. *"Gentle Virgin ... take unto Thyself this uneasy sinner with the*

troubled heart and intellectual pride ... who has a dream of believing in Thee and of loving God with the shining spirit of the men of God.” He then walked out into the night “absorbed in prayer,” and found his prayer was answered!

Returning to his hotel room, Carrel took out his notebook and concluded his observations: “All preoccupations with theories, and intellectual doubts, have vanished. Beneath the Holy Virgin's hand has come ... **certitude**.” It was now 3 a.m. and enfolded in a peace that banished doubt, he slept like a child. (His experience at Lourdes is told in his slim volume, *Journey to Lourdes*, a book that soon went into many languages).

Dr. Carrel made no progress in the ancient human dilemma – **is the supernatural real?** – until he prayed with a real desire to know, and with humility. God, through Mary, solved his dilemma. As with St. Peter, the first disciple to proclaim that Jesus was the Son of God (Mt.16:13-17), so too Jesus could say to Carrel, “It was not flesh and blood (i.e. human thinking and cleverness) that revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.” **God reveals himself**, we don't figure him all out ourselves.

Vatican II declares significantly: “Human beings must have the grace of God, the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, to move and assist them, before they can

exercise faith” (*Dei Verbum*, n.5). Yes, faith is a gift, but it can only be received with a childlike spirit! A miracle alone cannot automatically result in faith. One must personally **reflect** on the miraculous happening **in prayer**, and allow the Holy Spirit to breathe faith into one's inner self, for faith is not just belief in some theoretical proposition, but a Spirit-led “**assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen**” (Heb.11:1).

Frequent *Lectio Divina* is the most favourite means of the Spirit to bring us true faith, in an ongoing way, throughout life! “**Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ**” (Rom 10:17). We can also claim that faith is, in practice, the most important spiritual gift of God to us human beings. That is why the New Testament assures us, “**This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith**” (1Jn 5:4).



*Jesuit Fr. Fiorello Mascarenhas is well-known as a teacher of biblical spirituality, and has authored 24 books, some together with his colleague Dr. Renu Rita Silvano OCV. Their 25th book, *The Full Gospel – a Pauline perspective*, is published by St. Paul Fathers, Mumbai.*

## AGNEL CO-OPERATORS

You can join the Ashram Family by becoming a member of Agnel Co-operators and enjoy the fruits of a Special Sunday Mass offered at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, for all the members. You will also enjoy the fruits of all the prayers and good works of the Agnel Ashram Fathers and entire Agnel Ashram Family.

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**Rev. Fr. Superior**, Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandstand, Bandra (W), Mumbai-400 050. Tel. : 022 67114000



## SAINTS: ROLE MODELS OF OUR FAITH

-Fr. Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar

**The Church, day by day, gives special veneration to one or more of the holy men and women who have helped to establish it by their blood, develop it by their labours, or edify it by their virtues.** But, in addition to those whom the Church honours by special designation or has inscribed in her calendar, how many martyrs are there whose names are not recorded! How many humble virgins and holy penitents! How many unknown anchorites and monks, Christian fathers and mothers, young children snatched away in their innocence! How many courageous Christians, whose merits are known only to God and His heavenly court!

All baptized Christians who have died and are now with God in glory are considered saints. It was Pope Gregory IV who, in 835, ordered the Feast of All Saints to be observed universally on 1st November. It is a day on which we thank God for giving ordinary men and women a share in His holiness and heavenly glory as a reward for their faith. In addition, the feast is observed to teach us to honour the saints, both by imitating their lives and by seeking their intercession for us before Christ, the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5).

Today, the Church reminds us that God's call for holiness is universal, and all are called to live in His love and to make His love real in the lives of those around them. Holiness is related to the word wholesomeness. We show holiness when we live lives of integrity and truth, that is, wholesome and integrated lives in which we are close to others while being close to God.

At this juncture, we must know some of the reasons why we honour our saints. Firstly, the saints put their trust in Christ and lived heroic lives of faith. St. Paul asks us to serve and honour such noble souls. In his epistles to the Corinthians, to Philip and to Timothy, he advises Christians to welcome, serve and honour those who have put their trust in Jesus. The saints enjoy heavenly bliss as a reward for their faith in Jesus. Hence they deserve our veneration.

Secondly, the saints are our role models. They teach us by their lives, that Christ's holy life of love, mercy, and unconditional forgiveness can be lived by ordinary people, of all walks of life and at all times. Thirdly, the saints are our heavenly mediators who intercede for us before Jesus, the only mediator between God and us (James 5:16-18, Exodus 32:13, Jer. 15:1, Rev. 8:3-4). Fourthly, the saints are the instruments that God uses to work miracles at present, just as He used the rod of Moses (Exodus), the bones of the dead (2 Kings 13:21), the towel of Paul (Acts 19:12) and the shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15), to work miracles.

**For Roman Catholics, the Orthodox, and to some extent, the Anglicans, "All Saints' Day" is**

**a day, not only to remember the saints and to thank God for them, but also to pray for their help.** It is also a day to glorify Jesus Christ, who by his holy life and death has made the saints holy. This feast offers a challenge to each one of us: anybody can become a saint, regardless of his or her age, lifestyle or living conditions. St. Augustine accepted this challenge when he asked the question: "If others can become saints, why can't I?" (*Si iste et ista, cur non ego?*).

In fact, we must be always happy and ever grateful to our Mother Church, because the Church keeps a special day for all saints. We celebrate the feast of each canonized saint on a particular day of the year. But there are countless other saints and martyrs, men, women and children united with God in the heavenly glory, whose feasts we do not celebrate.

Many of these would be our own parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters who were heroic women and men of faith. All Saints' Day is intended to keep their honourable memory. Hence, today's feast can be called the feast of the Unknown Saint, in line with the tradition of the "Unknown Soldier." According to Pope Urban IV, All Saints' Day is also intended to supply any deficiencies in the faithful's celebration of saints' feasts during the year.

As Christians, we know that a person's life story is not limited to what happens to him or her between birth and death. Our story starts before we are born, at our conception, and goes beyond the day we die, to all eternity. That is why we do not simply forget people after they die and why the Church sets apart two days to remember them, honour them and pray for their special intercession on our behalf: All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.

On the feast of All Saints, the Church invites us and challenges us to walk the walk of the saints and not just talk the talk: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). The feast gives us an occasion to thank God for having invited so many of our ancestors to join the company of saints. May our reflection on the heroic lives of the saints and the imitation of their lifestyle enable us to hear from our Lord the words of grand welcome to eternal bliss: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of your master" (Matthew 25:21).



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

# PRAYING FOR THE DEAD

-Norma Kamath

**All Souls' Day is celebrated in the Catholic Church on 2nd November, in remembrance of the dead, when Catholics visit and show care of the gravesites of their loved ones, pray, and place flowers, and offer masses for their souls, in the church and cemetery.**

Pope Benedict reminds us that, 'Each of us is a thought of God, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. Our parents and loved ones who have passed away from this life are still willed, loved and are necessary. They are no less alive to God today than as when they lived on this earth.'

## ORIGIN OF PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

From the first century, prayers were offered for the dead. The Jews held that just after death, the dead went to sleep with their fathers (Gen. 47:30). When Judas Maccabeus and his men were preparing the slain soldiers for burial, they discovered under their tunics, sacred tokens of idols, which the law in the Book of Deuteronomy forbids the Jews to wear. Taking account of the Resurrection, they made atonement for their sins, by sending a sin offering to the Jerusalem Temple, and prayed for their deliverance (2 Mac12: 40-45). In Rome, during the first three centuries, prayers were offered in the catacombs, the underground burial place of the Christians. In the New Testament, St. Paul prayed for the soul of Onesiphorus, as the Christians believed that the soul slept in Christ. Orthodox Jews even today pray for the purification of the deceased. The Protestants, however, have rejected the doctrine of praying for the dead.

## PRAYERS DURING A CATHOLIC BURIAL

In the Catholic Church, the liturgy for Christian burial is not merely an expression of grief, but an act of worship and expresses hope, that God will set free the departed soul from any burden, due to sin, and prepare a place for him in Heaven. The church gathers the family and friends of the deceased, and gives praise and thanks to God, for Christ's victory over sin and death, to commend the sin to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength through Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection.

## CATHOLIC BELIEFS - PURGATORY

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines Purgatory as a purification, so as to achieve the holiness, necessary to enter the joys of Heaven, which is experienced by those who die in God's grace and friendship, but are still imperfectly purified (CCC 1030). Scripture reveals that the process of sanctification involves suffering (Rom 5: 3-5). Each man's work will be tried and what happens if a righteous man fails the test, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only through fire (1Cor.13:15). The Catholic doctrine of Purgatory alone explains this passage.

Many saints and visionaries share how Our Blessed Lady, comes to console and encourage the holy souls, and delivers them on certain feast days, like Christmas, All Saints, Good Friday, the Assumption, and the Ascension.

## THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Through the Creed, Catholics profess their belief in The Communion of Saints. The living members of The Communion of Saints are connected with the Church Suffering in Purgatory, through membership of the Mystical Body of Christ. We are called to assist them

through our spiritual support, prayers, rosaries, various devotions like the chaplet of the Divine Mercy, the Stations of the Cross, prayers by St. Bridget for the holy souls, and especially the Sacrifice of the Mass, as they continue to be members even after death. Maria Simma, who is favoured with a particular and rare charism in the church, like many saints, of being visited by the souls in Purgatory, shares that when we offer a mass, these souls request that we be present for it, and they even ask for our sufferings offered in union with Christ's, our penance and fasting, which are effective in relieving and delivering them.

The Mass is the highest form of prayer in the Catholic Church, and the Masses for the dead or Requiem masses, and Funeral Masses are most effective for departed souls. Then there are the Gregorian Masses, a series of thirty masses for the individual or family offered consecutively, which can be offered by a different priest each day.

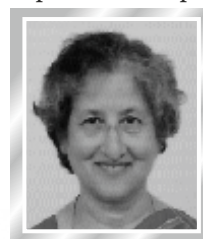
The ecclesiastical authority also grants indulgences, plenary and partial. It removes either part, or all of the temporal punishment due to sin. They can be granted for oneself or given for the dead, only on determined conditions. When offered for the dead, they cultivate charity, bringing a wiser order, into the things of the world.

## MY EXPERIENCES OF MASSES FOR THE DEAD

When I was counselled and prayed over by a priest at my first Charismatic Retreat at St. Peter's Seminary in 1983, he revealed to me that I had not given a mass for the dead. As he continued to pray over me, I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was an awesome experience of the Father's Presence, as my spirit cried out Abba Father! Abba Father! In the dazzling light of the Father's Presence, I could see some of my dead relatives.

A month passed by, and I was awakened one night from my sleep, with these words, 'I know my own and my own know me.' I recognised the Presence of the Good Shepherd. I turned to look, and immediately the gift of tongues, I had received at the retreat, started on its own from my mouth. I could see in my spirit, the image of a person bound with cords. I was not afraid. The person asked for forgiveness, and made a request for a mass. I forgave, and promised to offer a mass for that soul. I continued to pray in tongues, and I could see the cords fall off and the person set free.

On another occasion, I kept falling ill for nearly four months after my child's birth. My mother suggested that I offer three masses for the souls in Purgatory. Soon after, I regained my health. Now, every year, I offer three masses for the holy souls, nearer to All Souls Day. I also included in our daily family night prayers, this prayer for the holy souls. 'Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let Your perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.'



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

## TO CHILDREN WITH LOVE

-Ninette D'Souza

**On the occasion of 'Children's Day', here are a few traits of children that helped me realise how difficult it really is to respond to Jesus' call to be 'like one of these,' if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven.**

When I, as an adult, look at a bunch of stringy green stalks, sporting partially withered flowers, all I see are weeds. And kids? They see glorious Nature, a perfect gift to offer parents, teachers and even God!

When I, as an adult, encounter a drunk smiling at me, I recoil in part disgust, part fear, quickly looking away, for I perceive a dirty, smelly person who I suspect wants money. And kids? They simply see another human being and they smile right back, broadly!

When I, as an adult, am convinced, I cannot carry a tune, am tone deaf, am not capable of rhythmic moves, I withdraw self-consciously. And kids? They feel the beat of the music and allow it to flow through them, singing the lyrics out loud or making them up as they dance!

When I, as an adult, feel the wind on my face, I brace myself against it, worried about my perfectly coiffed hair. And kids? They close their eyes, spread their arms and literally fly along with the wind, continuing to do so, until they collapse laughing in sheer ecstasy!

When I, as an adult, find I have to navigate muddy puddles during the monsoon, my immediate reaction is a grimace. Lifting my well pressed attire clear off the area, I will step gingerly around them, lest I end up with muddy footwear or even worse a muddy carpet at home. And kids? They will plop into the embrace of those puddles.

As they frolic around, they will allow God's given imagination to take over. In no time at all in their mind's eye they would have gone boating, river rafting, maybe built bunds and dams and ... Sorry.

As an adult, I just cannot let the same gift of imagination run riot.

When I, as an adult, pray, it is according to my time, my pace, petitioning God with wants disguised as needs, indulging in words and rituals liberally sprinkled with Thee's and Thou's.

And kids? They most likely wake up with - Hi God! Throughout the day, they can be heard in loud conversations like, 'Thanks for my friends, thanks for helping me ace that Math test which I

thought I wasn't prepared for, thanks

for ensuring teacher X was

absent, since I would have

taken home a remark for

not completing my

Science journal, thanks

for that 5 rupee coin I

found on the road - can

buy a five star with it.'

At the close of day, while I have mumbled something under my breath ready to hit the sack, yet tossing and turning all night, kids in all likelihood are not done talking to God.

Their night prayer will probably be 'God thank you for a super day. I'm sorry God for being disobedient in school/college and at home. I was a bit of a show-off when I won the match for my team with that last minute goal. God I really love my mom, dad, brother/sister, so please see that nothing bad happens to them OK. God, please keep me safe from bad dreams. Love you God, sweet dreams!'

And with a goofy grin on their angelic faces, they drop right off to a deep sleep, awakening to God's promises which are new every morning.

**Happy Children's Day, everyone!**



*Ninette D'Souza is a prolific writer and retired teacher of Canossa High School, Mahim.*

# WORLD DIABETES DAY

-Tony Menezes

***"Raising awareness on World Diabetes Day is a step towards a healthier world, where knowledge and compassion unite to defeat diabetes."***

World Diabetes Day was launched in 1991 by the International Diabetes Federation, in association with the World Health Organization, in response to the rapid rise of diabetes around the globe.

By 2016, World Diabetes Day was being commemorated by more than 230 IDF member associations spanning over 160 countries and territories, as well as by other organizations, companies, healthcare professionals, politicians, celebrities, and people living with diabetes and their families. Their major activities include diabetes screening programs, rigorous media campaigns, sports events and others.

**World Diabetes Day has become a crucial platform to highlight the growing prevalence of diabetes and to advocate for better prevention, management, and care of this disease.** It is but natural that we seriously explore the significance of World Diabetes Day, the global diabetes epidemic and the actions required to combat it on a war footing.

Unhealthy diets, sedentary lifestyles, genetic predisposition and 'work from home' trends are some of the factors that boost the disease in present times. No doubt, diabetes is aptly called a silent killer.

World Diabetes Day serves as a reminder of the need for urgent action to address this growing health crisis. One of its primary goals is to promote diabetes awareness and education. Communities, healthcare professionals and organisations use this day to engage in public health campaigns, organise workshops, and conduct seminars to inform people about the risk factors, symptoms and management of this deadly disease.

Moreover, the blue circle, which is the recognised global symbol for diabetes, is prominently displayed on landmarks, social media profiles and public spaces to show solidarity and raise awareness.

Another essential aspect of World Diabetes Day is advocating for better care and support for individuals living with diabetes. This includes access to affordable medications, free regular check-ups and extensive diabetes management programs.

Diabetes self-management education and support are essential for individuals to maintain a good quality of life and prevent complications. Additionally, the day highlights the importance of early diagnosis, which can significantly improve outcomes and reduce the economic burden of the disease on patients and healthcare systems.

Prevention is a fundamental pillar of World Diabetes Day. Strategies to prevent diabetes include promoting healthy eating lifestyles, regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy body weight ratio. Another crucial factor is the importance of a

balanced diet and reducing the consumption of sugary and processed foods. Dedicated physical activity, not only helps prevent diabetes, but also contributes to overall healthy wellbeing.

Globally, an estimated 422 million adults were living with diabetes in 2014, compared to around half a billion today.

The global prevalence of diabetes has nearly doubled since 1980, rising from 4.7% to 8.5% in the adult population. Ironically, over the past decade, prevalence of diabetes has risen faster in low and middle-income countries than in high-income nations.

It is essential to know that Diabetes is a major cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart attack, stroke and lower limb amputation and many other related diseases. Healthy diet, physical activity and avoiding tobacco use can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. In addition, diabetes can be treated and its consequences avoided or delayed with medication, regular screening and treatment for complications.

In 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 61/225 and named **14th November as World Diabetes Day**. This document recognized "the urgent need to pursue multilateral efforts to promote and improve human health, and provide access to treatment and healthcare education."

The resolution also encouraged Member States to develop national policies for the prevention, treatment and care of diabetes and the need to initiate their own healthcare systems.

## **BACKGROUND OF DIABETES:**

Diabetes is a chronic disease, which occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces.

This leads to an increased concentration of glucose in the blood.

**Type 1 diabetes is characterized by a lack of insulin production.**

**Type 2 diabetes is caused by the body's ineffective use of insulin. It often results from excess body weight and physical inactivity.**

Gestational diabetes is hyperglycaemia (high sugar levels) that is first recognized during pregnancy.

**In conclusion, World Diabetes Day plays a pivotal role in reducing the burden of diabetes on individuals and society as a whole. It reminds us that our collective efforts can make a substantial difference in the fight against diabetes, leading to healthier and happier lives for millions of people around the world.**



*Tony Menezes is a writer, aspiring poet, hospitality management professional and animal lover.*

### **25th 'Conceicao Rodrigues Memorial Debate (CRMD)' National Level Competition, an overwhelming success**

Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering marked its 25th cursive year of the Conceicao Rodrigues Memorial Debate (CRMD) with an unflinching commitment to the pursuit of academic excellence. The event rolled on 6th and 7th October 2023. This intermediate Oxford-style debate competition had **32 promising Teams** from all over India eagerly anticipating bagging the esteemed trophy. These teams, armed with their rhetorical skills and persuasive prowess, vied for the top honors, including a substantial first prize of Rs. 40,000 and a second prize of Rs. 25,000. The event also recognized excellence in individual performance, with Rs. 7,500 earmarked for the best speaker and

the best adjudicator. The convergence of talent and intellect from all over the country elated the intellectual rigor of the event with interactive engagements from teams of colleges like **VJTI, SPIT, SNDT, NMIMS**, to mention a few.

The event advanced its onset with the inaugural ceremony at Samvad on 6th October 2023 in the honorable presence of the **Director Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza, Assistant Director Rev. Fr. Trevor Pereira, Principal Dr. Surendra Singh Rathod, Chief Guest Mrs. Archana Archrekar**, judges, teachers, and students. The judges were composed of experts from the realms of Communication, Education and the Corporate world.



**The inaugural function: From left to right are Assistant Director Rev. Fr. Trevor Pereira, the Director Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza, Chief Guest Mrs. Archana Archrekar and Principal Dr. Surendra Singh Rathod.**

Delving into the foundations of beliefs and opinions, the two finalist teams demonstrated their adeptness in presenting clear and logical arguments, aligning with the designated motion.

**“Motion: This House regrets the creation of the International Monetary Fund and the WTO.”**

The chief guest for the final day event was **Dr. Subramanya Kusnur**, Founder Chairman & CEO of AquaKraft Group Ventures, an eminent figure in water sustainability and public health.

The guest of honour for the event was **Adv. Afroz**

**Shah**, an Indian environmental activist and lawyer renowned for his world's largest beach clean-up project and recipient of the United Nations Champion of the Earth Award.

In a fiercely yet constructive competitive showdown that defined the championship of CRMD 23, **Team CMD25 hailing from Rizvi Law College showcased their eloquence and persuasive skills as Side Proposition, ultimately securing the prestigious title.** Their remarkable journey through the debates was marked by their unwavering commitment to presenting well-structured arguments and

compelling rhetoric, capturing the essence of this year's theme, "Sustainable Coalescence: A Socio-Economic Odyssey." **Team CMD14, representing Tolani College of Commerce, emerged as the formidable runners-up.** Their impressive performance in the debates left an indelible mark, pushing the boundaries of thought and dialogue, and earning them a well-deserved position in the finals.

**Ms. Aayushi Jha from Tolani College of Commerce, shone as the Best Speaker,** captivating the audience with her articulate and persuasive discourse in CRMD 23, while **Mr. Yogeshwar Singh's astute adjudication skills earned him the accolade of Best Adjudicator,** enriching the event with his insightful evaluations and contributions.



**The winners from Rizvi Law College (fourth and fifth from left) receiving the first prize from Adv. Afroz Shah, the Guest of Honour (sixth from left).**

## Agnel Happenings

**- Pune**

### **Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune, wins in Robotics Competition**

Robotics has been introduced in Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune, as a co-curricular activity since a decade. Along the journey, the school has participated in many Exhibitions and Competitions and has bagged many laurels.

This year, the Universal Public School in collaboration with OMOTEC, Pune, hosted the '**ROBUSTA – Igniting Innovation through Robotics**' Robotics Competition which was held at Hadpsar on 14th October 2023.

Many state as well as international schools participated and Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School enrolled three teams for the same, under the category of Group A – Grade IV & V, Group B – Grade VI to VIII and Category – II, Electronic Open Source Line Follower.

**The school bagged a Silver Medal each in Group B and Category II, as well as a Bronze Medal in Group A.**



**The winners of the Robusta competition.**



**Judges examining the robots.**

## Happy Children's Day with Raveena Tandon

-Sunil D'Cruz

She adopted two girls as a single mother when she was just 21 and gave shelter to 30 girls, in her own home, when they were asked to vacate an orphanage overnight. Bollywood actress and Padma Shri award-winner Raveena Tandon always has the welfare of children close to her heart and is loved by them.

Since decades, gorgeous Raveena Tandon has been working for the empowerment of the girl child, through various organisations such as UNICEF and CRY. She was the youngest chairperson of the Children's Film Society of India.

On Children's Day, Raveena Tandon continues to inspire us with her efforts for the betterment of society. She wants to fulfil her dream of opening her own school in a village for children, to give them basic education and vocational skills such as tailoring or beauty therapy, thereby helping them secure a job.

A versatile personality, Raveena Tandon gave a TEDx talk at Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering in 2017 and takes a walk down memory lane.

**Raveena ji, you hold girl child welfare close to your heart. Your journey as a single mother began in 1995 when you adopted your girls, when they were just 8 and 11 years and you, just 21. Now that both are happily married, how do you look back on society pressures back then?**

Whenever you do something, there will always be someone who will make remarks, trying to create controversies out of nothing. I remember one article saying that these must be her (Raveena's) hidden children, which she must have had out of

wedlock. When I was 21, they were eight and 11. So, when did I have them? When I was 11 or 12? Trolling happens even today... Anything you do, there will be trolling. I say you shouldn't pay attention to these people. Some 'well-meaning' aunties asked who will marry me now because I come with excess baggage. I was like, whoever loves me will love me, my girls, my dogs, my cat, and whoever I come with.



President of India Draupadi Murmu awarding Raveena Tandon with the Padma Shri for her contribution to the field of art.

**You have been working for empowerment of the girl child with various organisations such as UNICEF, CRY, Spina Bifida Foundation and Smile Foundation.**

**Do you feel that there is an even bigger need for social change and more people should come onboard?**

I feel that everyone has a responsibility to give back to the society that we live in. I believe that all public figures have the power to inspire the larger population and I am happy to be doing my bit. We definitely have a responsibility to give back to society after all that they've given us. We've earned name and fame due to their love. So, it's imperative that we reciprocate and inspire more people to come forward to help.

**Your journey towards the welfare of the girl child continued when you sheltered 30 orphans at your own home, before building an orphanage for them in Vasai. Your comments please.**

When I see the orphanage that I built in Vasai for those 30 girls thriving and them increasing their dormitories, and batches moving out from there and growing up, getting into jobs, that makes me proud and happy.



**Your efforts include reaching out to the girl child in marginalised communities, providing education, healthcare and support services. What makes you take up social causes?**

It's what I have chosen to do and every one of them is something I am passionate about. Using my time and influence to do good is a human being's social responsibility and I take my social responsibility seriously.

**As a former youngest chairperson of the Children's Film Society of India, how do you look at movies being a medium of education for children, especially at film festivals such as Smile International Film Festival for Children and Youth (SIFFCY)?**

Movies are the best media to educate our children, so I also want to thank SIFFCY which has acted as a media to communicate goodness to our children as it is the right time to educate them about what is good and what is bad for them.

**You must be a proud mom since your daughter Rasha is following your footsteps and is making her film debut.**

Rasha has always been into performing arts at school. She has just begun her journey and I am excited to see what's to unfold. Ranbirvardhan is 16 and in school. He is also a chess player. In 2012, at the age of five, he became the youngest chess player to compete with masterminds at the National Chess Championship in Delhi. If Ranbirvardhan wants to join the film industry, it will be his call.

**Tying up with an NGO, your Rudra Foundation's Oxygen Seva on the Wheels, Mumbai to Delhi, reached out with 300 oxygen cylinders during Covid-19 that**

**helped save lives. Does this stem from your compassion for those in need?**

Rudra Foundation had collaborated with DCP south and provided 300 oxygen cylinders for the people in need. We had also sent cylinders to Radha Swami Satsang Beas, the Army hospital in Delhi and for lawyers and legal journalists in Delhi NCR via the Honorable Supreme Court Bar Association.

Through Rudra Foundation, I have been working towards extending a helping hand to the less privileged. We've contributed towards the education of the children of the Pulwama martyrs through Rotary Club and have donated to many NGOs to help people who were fighting to survive during the pandemic, including those organisations that are helping animals.

**What is your message on the occasion of Children's Day in India?**

Children are the best learners, for no one's perspective is as fresh as theirs.

**Happy Children's Day!**



*Sunil D'Cruz is on the Editorial team of Fr. Agnel Ashram News. He has contributed articles to various local, national and international publications.*



# DIWALI: ITS FASCINATION, FIESTA AND FANTASY

-Leon Bent

**Diwali, India's biggest and most important holiday of the year, is a Festival of Lights that celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil and the human ability to overcome crises and translate them into opportunities. Diwali has become a national Indian festival.** The colourful feast is also known as Deepavali, Dewali, Deepawali, or the Festival of Lights. The name is derived from the Sanskrit term dipavali, meaning "row of lights." Diwali is the shortened word of the original Deepavali... deep means lamp and awali is a line. So, deepawali means lines of lamps. It is celebrated in October or November each year. It's a time for vibrant colours, eye-popping fireworks, twinkling lights and delicious food, delighting in the company of family and friends and, most of all, prayers, by way of Pujas.



## Diwali is celebrated over Five Days:

**DAY ONE:** The womenfolk spring-clean their homes and purchase gold or kitchen utensils, to help bring good fortune. According to Hindu Mythology, it is believed that goddess Lakshmi will visit the cleanest house first. Dhanteras is the first day that marks the festival of Diwali in most parts of India.



Dhanteras is the birth anniversary of the god of Ayurveda. On this day, traditionally, a lamp for the god of death is lit, outside the home, so that, any untimely 'passing away' of family members can be avoided. In the evening of Dhanteras, earthen lamps are lit, at the entrance to homes, by the entire household, to dispel evil spirits, and also to get the blessings of Lord Yama. Business people celebrate Dhanteras with pujas to Lakshmi and Kuber, the god of wealth.

**DAY TWO:** People decorate their homes with clay lamps and create exquisite, graceful patterns at the threshold of their homes, called rangoli: traditional Indian decoration made with ground rice to which colours are added.



**DAY THREE:** On the main day of

the festival, families gather together for Lakshmi Puja, a prayer to goddess Lakshmi. Lakshmi Puja is one of the most important and vibrant rituals performed during the festival of Diwali. During the ritual, goddess Lakshmi is invited into homes, so that, the New Year is filled with peace, wealth, and prosperity - followed by mouth-watering feasting and sublime, often frightening, deafening fireworks, some of which can shatter eardrums.

**DAY FOUR:** This is the first day of the New Year, when friends and relatives come over, with gifts and wholesome greetings for the season.



**DAY FIVE:** Brothers visit their married sisters, who welcome them with love and a lavish meal. The Marathi-speaking populace call it "Bhav Bij," which is a time for family reunions, as all brothers and sisters in the family come together. Close relatives and friends are also invited to celebrate

Bhav Bij. The sisters apply 'kumkum' on their foreheads and sweeten their mouths with sweets and chocolates. [The sixth chakra, also known as the third eye, is centred in the forehead directly between the eyebrows and is believed to be the channel through which humankind opens spiritually to the Divine. Thus, the kumkuma is placed, where Indians believe to be the most important spot for (centre of the forehead - just above the nose) receptivity to be enhanced]. Brothers, in return, give special gifts to their sisters as a token of their love and care for them. Special dishes for the festival include the Maharashtra sweet called *basundi poori* or *kheerni poori*. It is the day when sisters



Happy Bhav Bij

pray to god and wish healthy and happy blessings for their brothers. This day helps one understand the importance of having siblings, as many as possible.

## Origin of the Diwali Festival

The five-day long Diwali Festival originated in the Indian subcontinent, and is likely a fusion of harvest festivals in ancient India. It is mentioned in early Sanskrit texts, such as the Padma Purana and the Skanda Purana, both of which were

completed in the second half of the 1st millennium C.E. In ancient India, Diwali was mainly celebrated by farmers as a harvest festival. Since, farmers would harvest their crops between October and November. The farmers faced a huge threat from insects which destroyed the crops by eating them. So, the tillers of the soil, started lighting diyas to attract insects and kill them.

I was surprised by this part of the research I did to pen this piece: Lord Mahavira established the dharma followed by the Jains worldwide. In Jainism, Diwali marks the nirvana, or spiritual awakening, of Lord Mahavira on October 15, 527 B.C. For the Sikhs, Diwali is a story of the struggle for freedom and attainment of victory. It celebrates the victory of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, from the designs of Emperor Jahangir, who had imprisoned him and 52 other princes with him, in 1619.

### Sweets

As a celebration of these joyous times, sweets are exchanged between people. Diwali also marks the end of the harvest season, hence farmers would distribute sweets, as a show of thanks for the bounteous harvests, and to mark the start of a new harvest year. The most-loved Indian delicacy during Diwali, is the diamond-shaped "kaju katli," which is a North Indian delicacy. Made with khoya, sugar and cashews, the festival of Diwali is incomplete without these tempting treats. Kaju Katli is one of the most frequently gifted sweets during Diwali.

There's also a tradition of preparing delicious and mouth-watering Diwali delicacies during this period. This includes various Indian recipes like *Samosas*, *Murukku (chakli)*, *Namakpare*, *Rice Kheer*, *Gajar Halwa*, *Besan Halwa*, *Jalebi*, *Gulab Jamun* and many more.

Sugar leads to direct stimulation of the brain by triggering the release of dopamine, the "feel good," neurotransmitter. In fact, sugar's effect on the

brain resembles that, of highly addictive drugs like cocaine. This may explain why you crave for something sweet (cookies, ice cream, etc.)

But, more than sweets, homes are dressed in fairy-light illuminations and other imaginative starry attractions at night; and the celebrants, all decked-up in extravagant outfits, dazzling diamond-studded gold ornaments, waiting on friends or meeting at a favourite haunt, with ear-to-ear smiles on their faces, joy surging in their hearts and a spring in the feet. This is truly an amazing experience. One cannot, for anything else in the world, leave out flashy-eye-catching fireworks and



purchase of the latest in expensive, trendy cars, motor-cycles and scooters, for the less wealthy.

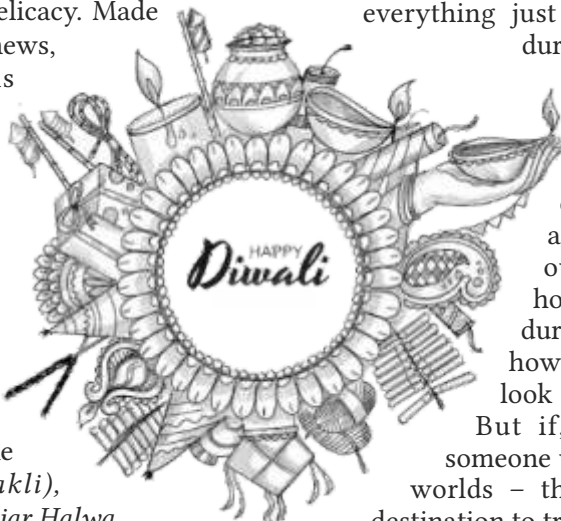
I read in a report in "The Times of India" that, Rs. 50,000 lakh crores is expected to be lavished on Deepavali 2023 festivities, including the purchase of exotic gifts and electronic goods, vehicles and prices-rising-sky-high newly bought in the Realty Sector. India lives life king-size, especially the City of Mumbai, during the almost week-long celebrations. Simply unbelievable! An incredible splurge!

### The Spirit of Diwali

Bright lights, radiant colours, food, rainbow and mirror-work outfits and fireworks – isn't everything just too beautiful and bright during this festival? Right from the streets and markets to homes and hotels. And the best part about this festival is the wide range of foodstuff and holidays and tours, in India and overseas. When so many holidays line up bewitchingly during this time of the year, how can the traveller's soul not look for a destination to visit?

But if, like me, you are also someone who wants the best of both worlds – the spirit of Diwali and a destination to travel, we show you how the festival is celebrated around the world. Grab your diaries and start noting!

Over the centuries, Diwali has become a national, nay, international festival that's, also enjoyed by non-Hindu communities. For instance, I repeat, in Jainism, Diwali marks the nirvana, or spiritual



awakening, of Lord Mahavira on October 15, 527 B.C.; in Sikhism, it honours the day that Guru Hargobind Ji, the Sixth Sikh Guru, was freed from imprisonment. Buddhists in India, also celebrate Diwali.

Southern India celebrates it as the day that Lord Krishna defeated the demon Narakasura.

In western India, the festival marks the day that Lord Vishnu, the Preserver (one of the main gods of the Hindu trinity) sent the demon, King Bali, to rule the nether world. South Indians celebrate Diwali as a remembrance of the day Lord Krishna, defeated the demon Narakasura. North India

celebrates Diwali as the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya. After 14 years of exile, Rama along his wife Sita and brother Laxman returned home. Since it was a new moon day and was dark, his subjects lit diyas across the kingdom that day. This tradition is followed to this very day and age.

Diwali is an important religious festival originating in India. People often think of Diwali as a Hindu festival, but it is also celebrated by many other communities than you have dreamed of.

Diwali takes place annually and lasts for five days, marking the start of the Hindu New Year. The exact dates change each year and are determined by the position of the moon – but it usually falls between October and November.

The offering to the goddess Ganga, at Varanasi or Benares, is considered sacred, and has a special significance. The importance of the Ganga Aarti increases even more during the Ganga Dussehra, which is the time when it is believed that the goddess descended to Earth from heaven. In the region of Bengal, people worship the goddess Kali, the destroyer of evil forces, during Diwali. And in Nepal, a country bordering north-east India, people celebrate Lord Krishna's victory over the wicked king Narakaasura.

The city of Leicester, in the United Kingdom, holds the largest Diwali celebrations outside India. Every year, tens of thousands of people gather in the streets 'to let their hair down loose' at vibrant shows of light, music and dancing!

Diwali is also a major cultural event for the Hindu, Sikh, and Jain diaspora. It is the most important

day of festivities in Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. On the occasion of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, is celebrated in honour of the notional return of the daitya-king Bali to earth, celebrating the love of husband and wife.

Ah! How could I have forgotten the 'Mariegold bloom – the flower of ritual?' We carpeted departed Ganesha's path with its golden petals. Durga puja pandals are studded with them, and on the sixth day of Navartri, devotees receive its showers of benediction. Its special place in ritual will reach fruition during Diwali. Nothing like the e f f e r v e s c e n t

efflorescence of the marigold, in the consciousness and conscience of Bharat that was, and is, India: Oh! When will the goodness of love vanquish the evil of hatred?

Then, the omnipresence of the "Genda" phool, its local name, will weave its magic into every occasion, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of its people – for its joy, peace and exuberance, with its undefiled purity! Thanks to the Portuguese traders who brought the flower to India in the early 16th century. Maybe the Israelis can send this 'golden glory' with its halo of peace, harmony and unity to Palestine and the Arab nations, and the Ukrainians to their Russian counterparts, and more importantly, that the powers that be, in our country, find perfect freedom and harmony in the intricacies of castes, regions, languages, the opposition parties and masses of different religious persuasions.

**A Joy-filled and peace-imbued Diwali to one and all!**



*Leon Bent is the author of several Books and his Re-searched Articles, are published by Digital Online Portals worldwide, with a reach of, at least, 18 million readers.*

## Pope Francis calls for a ceasefire in the Holy Land



**Pope Francis prays for an end to the violence in the Holy Land, especially in Gaza where a humanitarian catastrophe has unfolded, as well as for the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas.**

Pope Francis has called for a ceasefire in the Holy Land. Addressing the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square for his Sunday Angelus, the Holy Father invited everyone to "continue to pray ... for the serious situation in Palestine and Israel." In particular, he asked that humanitarian aid be allowed to enter Gaza and that all hostages be freed. The Holy Father quoted Father Ibrahim Faltas, the

Egyptian Franciscan vicar of the Custody of the Holy Land in Jerusalem, who recently spoke on the Italian television programme A Sua Immagine. I listened to him and he said "cease fire, cease fire," explained the Pontiff.

"We too, like Father Ibrahim, say cease fire", said the Pope, adding "stop, brothers and sisters: war is always a defeat - always, always!"

-VATICAN NEWS

## Vatican approves beatification process for 35 Kandhamal martyrs



**His Excellency Most Rev. Fr. Leopoldo Girelli, the Apostolic Nuncio to India and Nepal.**

**Bhubaneswar, Oct 25, 2023:** The Vatican has given a go-ahead to start the beatification process for 35 people who were martyred for their faith during the 2008 anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal in eastern India.

A message from Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli to Archbishop John Barwa of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar says the Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints has granted "no objection" to initiate the process of beatification for the Servant of God Kanteeswar Digal and companions.

The news has been welcomed by people associated

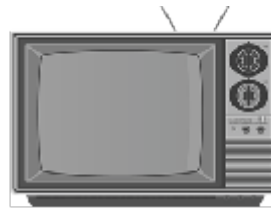
with the martyrs of Kandhamal for 15 years. "It is indeed a great tribute for the simple villagers who followed Jesus on the Calvary," says Father Ajay Kumar Singh, a social activist who has been fighting for justice for the Kandhamal survivors.

The Kandhamal martyrs "could have succumbed to temptations of denying faith and Jesus as most of the attackers gave the options of death or conversion. It is testimony of their faith and belief that priorities over comforts, family and world," Father Singh said. The 35 martyrs are 24 men and 11 women.

-MATTERS INDIA

*The month of November is an exciting month for Indians since Diwali is celebrated enthusiastically in this month. November also has kids enjoying their Diwali vacations after their exams and this vacation provides a much needed break. Also, 21st November is celebrated as the World Television Day. So let's begin...*

-Christine D'Sylva



3. Which was the most popular television program ever aired?
4. Name the most popular television show in India.

## November - The Month of Remembrance



During the month of November, the church traditionally remembers those who died and are called to eternal life.

This is related to the fact that the end of November is the end of the Liturgical Year and marks the four week Advent preparation before Christmas.

Therefore, it is beneficial for us to remember all our beloved who have died and perhaps we may offer masses for them.

1st November is celebrated as All Saints' Day, in honour of all the saints of the Church, whether they are known or unknown. 2nd November is celebrated as All Souls' Day.

November is also a month of remembrance because each one of us understands that we are drawing towards the end of the year. We should take stock of all the events in our lives during the past months and realise that these experiences have hopefully shaped us into more mature people who can learn from our experiences.

It is true that highly productive people do not blame circumstances, conditions or conditioning for their behaviour, their behaviour is a product of their own conscious choice.

So with that positive note, let us be honest and accept our failings honestly, appreciate our successes and strive to be the best version of ourselves.

### Quiz. The wonderful invention of television.

1. Who invented the television?
2. Name three shows aired on television that starred Lucille Ball?

## Smile Please



1. What kind of chocolate do astronauts like?  
Answer: Mars bars.
2. A man asks his iPhone, "Siri, why am I single?"  
Siri activated the front

camera.

3. Girl to her mother: "Mum, I am getting fat."  
Mother: "Never be afraid of getting fat. Fat people are harder to kidnap!"
4. A husband and wife are having dinner at a nice restaurant. However, the woman spills some tomato ketchup on her white blouse. "Oh no! I look like a pig!"  
The man nods, "Yes, true and you also spilt some ketchup on your blouse."
5. How do you pick up a girl at a nightclub?  
Just smash some ice cubes in front of her and say, "Now that the ice is broken, let's chat."

## Riddle Me



1. What kind of coat is always wet when you put it on?
2. What has to be broken before you use it?
3. I am easy and light to lift but hard to throw. What am I?
4. What is bought by the yard and worn by the foot?
5. If 2 is company and 3 is a crowd, then what are 4 and 5?

## A true story - It's never too late



A man named Sanders, lived from social security benefits for much of his life. Around 65 years of age, he lived in a tiny house and drove an old battered car. In his heart, he knew he had

to change his life.

He was a good cook and many of his friends and family had complimented him on his cooking. He decided to use his cooking abilities to change his life for that was what he felt he did best. So Hartland Sanders travelled across the United States trying to sell his chicken recipe which he knew was good. He told the restaurant owners that he would give away the recipe for free as long as they gave him a small percentage of sales.

Unfortunately, Sanders heard the word, 'no' at least over 1,000 times.

But he did not give up. He just had confidence in his recipe. So he persevered. He knew he had something special and finally, he heard a yes. KFC was soon born and remains one of the most successful businesses to date.

**What do we learn from this story? We learn that we must never give up. In life, it is never too late to begin doing what you love and want. Yes, negativity and discouragement will come but as long as you believe in your worth, your chances of success will be high.**

### What's the Good Word?



1. Another word for Diwali.
2. The meaning of Diwali.
3. Most popular tourist attraction of India.

4. The number one tourist place in the world.
5. The least visited country in the world.
6. Two other popular names for India.

### Paris

Since November is a month for vacations, let's dwell on a beautiful city that most people just would love to visit. The City of Lights - Paris.



Paris is the capital of France and known as the City of Lights. Built on an arc of the River Seine, it is divided into two parts - The Right Bank to the north and the smaller Left Bank to the south.

Here is a true story about the city. Today, the Eiffel Tower is the undisputed symbol of Paris but many of the city's elite were viciously opposed to the construction of this great monument.

They considered it as ugly and felt it ran the risk of falling over and crushing unsuspecting residents below. One of the leading critics was writer, Guy de Maupassant, who penned petitions, newspaper columns, even books, lambasting the giant metal structure.

Once the construction was completed a friend begged Guy to climb the tower. He refused but eventually was persuaded. He and his friend ate a fine meal of lobster and wine gazing down on the sprawling metropolis below.

After that Guy de Maupassant visited the same restaurant every day for the rest of his life. When he was dying, a friend asked him, "So you changed your mind about the Eiffel Tower then?"

Guy just shook his head, "No, I never changed my mind. I only visited because it is one place in Paris that I do not have a view of it!"

### Brain Teasers



1. A man stands on one side of a river and his pet dog is on the other side. The man calls his dog to cross to his side and the dog does so.

The dog does not get wet nor does he use the bridge or a boat. How did the dog do it?

2. You are escaping a huge cave and there are three doors in front of you. The door on the left leads to a pit of hot lava, the door in the centre leads to a room filled with poisonous fumes and the door on the right leads to a hungry tiger who has not eaten for three months. Which door would you choose?
3. Tim's mother has three sons. One is called Sam and the other Rocky. What is the name of the third son?

4. The more you take, the more you leave. What are they?

5. Complete this Math teaser.

$$1=4$$

$$2=16$$

$$3=64$$

$$4=?$$

6. If 3 cats can catch 3 rats in 3 minutes, how many minutes will 100 cats take to catch 100 cats?

---

### Did you know? True facts about vacations



1. Global tourism industry is worth USD1trillion a year.

2. Jet lag feels worse if you travel from west to east.

3. There is a lot to explore in Russia. Incredibly, the

country is bigger than the planet Pluto.

4. Saudi Arabia officially has zero rivers.

5. There is enough fuel in a Boeing 747 plane to power a car around the entire planet 4 times.

6. Australia has over 10,000 beaches, so you could visit a new beach every day for over 27 years.

7. Finally, travel has been known to increase creativity.

So what are you waiting for? Take a short vacation and refresh your mind.

---

### The unknown saints amongst us



Since November is a month to remember departed souls and saints, both known and unknown, I would like to tell you about a man who could qualify as an unknown saint.

His name was Dr. Nazareth and he resided in the suburb of Mahim.

I, personally as a child, visited him once.

He was a tall, married man with a good personality, not loud however but kind and very personable. He saw his call to be a doctor as a vocation, not a career to make money or to fleece people. He dedicated his entire life to serving the poor. If you

every visited him, poor or not, you would pay just a nominal fee and if you could not afford to, it would be alright. There were lines of people awaiting him, mostly, the poorer class of people. This amazing doctor worked tirelessly for several years, always willing to lend a helping hand and cure a sick person with little thought of money. He lived rather frugally and his home bore no testimony to wealth at all. I think that he was an unknown saint in my book. He died but I think his memory lives on in the grateful hearts of many.

Perhaps you have met such a wonderful person in your life. If you would like, please share about how this person enriched your life by their goodness. We would like to hear from you.

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### That is all for this month. Take care. Till next month...

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#### Answers

#### Quiz

1. Philo Taylor Farnsworth. 2. I love Lucy. Here's Lucy and The Lucy Show. 3. The most watched program of all time goes to NASA when on 16th July 1969, 650 million people across the world tuned in to the Apollo 11 mission. 4. Ramayan.

#### Riddle Me

1. A coat of paint. 2. An egg. 3. A feather. 4. A carpet. 5. 9.

#### What's the Good Word?

1. Deepavali. 2. Row of Lights. 3. Taj Mahal in Agra. 4. Paris. 5. Tuvalu, its inhabitants are around 12,000 only. 6. Bharat and Hindustan.

#### Brain Teasers

1. The river was frozen. 2 The door on the right because the tiger must be dead for he had not eaten for three months. 3. Tim. 4. Footprints. 5. 256 because 4 raised to the power of 4 is 256. 6. 3 minutes.

---



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



# FR. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

## THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL BRAIN SURGERY

**DAHISAR:** Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo, my brain surgery went off successfully and I was able to come back home safely. I have made a love offering to Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

-R. Kakade

## THANKSGIVING ON 25TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

**MUMBAI:** Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed us in many ways, for 25 years. We will celebrate our Silver Jubilee Anniversary Mass at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra. A thanksgiving offering has been given to the Ashram.

-T. & G. Chettiar

## THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

**GHATKOPAR:** I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing me in every way. I have come to the Ashram and made a love offering.

-S. D'Souza

## THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

**GOREGAON (EAST):** We have been blessed with many favours, through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. An offering has been made to the Ashram.

-J. D'Cruz

## THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

**BHANDUP:** I am very much thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping me at all times. I have come to the Ashram and made an offering.

-R. Pinto

## THANKSGIVING FOR ANSWERING PRAYERS

**PUNE:** My prayers have been answered. I have received many favours, through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. A thanksgiving offering has been made at the Ashram.

-R. L. Parge

## BLESSINGS ON THE FAMILY

**KANDIVALI:** Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, our family has been blessed abundantly. With a grateful heart, I have come to the Ashram and made a love offering in thanksgiving.

-J. D'Silva

## THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

**VIRAR:** Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received many favours. With a grateful heart, I have made a love offering to Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

-P. Miranda

## THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**VIRAR:** Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed our family in many ways. We are indeed grateful for the favours received and have made a thanksgiving offering to the Ashram.

-M. J. D'Cunha

## THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS ON BOAT

**ARANALA:** Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, blessings have come on my boat and my fishing business is successful. A thanksgiving offering has been sent to the Ashram.

-Divine Boat

## THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

**UDIPI:** Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received many favours. A love offering has been sent to Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

-V. Aranha

## THANKSGIVING FOR BEING BLESSED

**MANGALORE:** Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received several favours. A thanksgiving offering has been sent to the Ashram. I have tremendous faith in the Venerable and his constant intercession.

-H. Miranda

## THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

**VILE PARLE:** Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed us immensely. We are indeed grateful for all the favours received and have made a thanksgiving offering at the Ashram.

-T. Baptista

## THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**BANGALORE:** I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for all the blessings received. Ven. Fr. Agnel, has his devotees all over the world and I am one of them. With a grateful heart, I have sent a love offering to the Ashram.

-E. N. Pinto

## THANKSGIVING FOR BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS

**VASAI:** Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me in many ways and made my birthday special. I always look up to him for his kind intercession with Lord Jesus. A thanksgiving offering has been given to the Ashram.

-L. V. Chowdhary



# OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Denise	Mumbai	15,000	R. D'Cruz	Mumbai	1,500	G. Fonseca	Mumbai	750
R. Fernandes	Mumbai	15,000	R. Patel	Nasik	1,500	C. Monteiro	Mumbai	700
F. Fernando	Vasai	10,001	S. Dalvi	Mumbai	1,500	S. Natarajan	Mumbai	700
A. Rodricks	Mumbai	10,000	W. Pereira	Karnataka	1,500	K. Alexander	Kerala	600
Melinda	Mumbai	10,000	C. Ferreira	Vasai	1,250	Lissy	Kerala	540
Omega Wine Mart	Mumbai	10,000	Melvyn	Thane	1,250	A. Aloz	Vasai	501
T. Kariangattil	Mumbai	10,000	Monica	Pune	1,200	A. Mer	Mumbai	501
C. Saldanha	Mumbai	8,000	V. Raiyani	Mumbai	1,001	A. Polekar	Mumbai	501
F. Creado	Mumbai	7,000	A. Antony	Vasai	1,000	B. Raykar	Mumbai	501
F. Solanki	Mumbai	6,000	A. Paranjpe	Mumbai	1,000	M. Kurian	Karnataka	501
S. Gandhi	Gujarat	6,000	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1,000	M. Mistry	Nashik	501
Warren/Philomena	Mumbai	6,000	A. Stephen	Tamil Nadu	1,000	P. Patel	Mumbai	501
A. Fernandes	Mumbai	5,000	B. Mehta	Mumbai	1,000	A. Attara	Mumbai	500
D. D'Monte	Maharashtra	5,000	D. Figeer	Palghar	1,000	A. Braganza	Mumbai	500
D. Sequeira	Mumbai	5,000	Darragh Smail & Co.	Kerala	1,000	A. Dabhi	Maharashtra	500
G. Naik	Mumbai	5,000	E. Teresa	Kerala	1,000	A. Fernando	Tamil Nadu	500
J. Puthur	Kerala	5,000	F. Mascarenhas	Vasai	1,000	A. Khristi	Gujarat	500
K. Kapadia	Pune	5,000	F. Thekketh	Kerala	1,000	A. Lal	Mumbai	500
N. Mekwan	Gujarat	5,000	Fittech Inds	Mumbai	1,000	A. Parab	Mumbai	500
Priyanka/Vini	Mumbai	5,000	G. Arputharaj	Tamil Nadu	1,000	Alakode SC Bank	Kerala	500
S. Divyeshkumar	Daman & Diu	5,000	G. Katak	Mumbai	1,000	B. D'Cruz	Kerala	500
S. Kothari	Mumbai	5,000	G. Rajesh	Ahmednagar	1,000	B. Martin	Odisha	500
S. Varghese	Kerala	5,000	H. Carvalho	Goa	1,000	B. Vadiyar	Mumbai	500
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5,000	H. Fernandes	Mumbai	1,000	J. Agnel	Mumbai	500
M. Kadam	Ahmednagar	5,000	H. Miranda	Karnataka	1,000	J. Colaco	Mumbai	500
Sharon	Mumbai	4,750	H. Patrick	Gujarat	1,000	J. D'Souza	Mumbai	500
C. Alvares	Mumbai	4,000	Irudayaraj M.	Tamil Nadu	1,000	J. Lopes	Vasai	500
A. Thomas	Kerala	3,500	J. Balsara	Nasik	1,000	J. Sooraj	Kerala	500
Jacob	Mumbai	3,250	J. George	Mumbai	1,000	Jose V. A.	Kerala	500
S. Thakkar	Mumbai	3,001	J. Saldanha	Mumbai	1,000	K. Doshi	Mumbai	500
J. Patel	Mumbai	3,000	J. Sinu	Kerala	1,000	K. Khandagale	Ahmednagar	500
M. Mascarenhas	Karnataka	3,000	J. Thomas	Kerala	1,000	K. Shaino	Navi Mumbai	500
M. Pereira	Pune	3,000	Jaison-Lifeway Hol.	Kerala	1,000	K. Solanki	Gujarat	500
N. Manmoawqai	Africa	3,000	K. Desai	Gujarat	1,000	Kochala/Dr. Jose	Kerala	500
R. Radha Krishnan	Tamil Nadu	3,000	K. George	Ahmednagar	1,000	L. Chandran	Kerala	500
R. Samuel	Kerala	3,000	L. D'Silva	Karnataka	1,000	L. Johny	Kerala	500
S. Inigo	Tamil Nadu	3,000	M. Antony	Kerala	1,000	L. Joseph	Kerala	500
S. Rakshit	Mumbai	3,000	M. Balseira	Mumbai	1,000	L. Machado	Vasai	500
Techno Prods	Chennai	3,000	M. D'Cunha	Karnataka	1,000	Leena	Tamil Nadu	500
A. Jagtiani	Mumbai	2,500	M. D'Cunha	Pune	1,000	M. Gaikwad	Maharashtra	500
C. Rodrigues	Mumbai	2,500	M. George	Mumbai	1,000	M. Gregory	Kerala	500
A. Dias	Vasai	2,000	M. Gonsalves	Vasai	1,000	M. Joseph	Karnataka	500
A. Elavia	Mumbai	2,000	M. Mathai	Kerala	1,000	M. Patel	Canada	500
A. George	Mumbai	2,000	N. Babu	Kerala	1,000	M. Rajkumar	Tamil Nadu	500
A. Joseph	Kerala	2,000	N. Cerejo	Vasai	1,000	Machado & Sons	Tamil Nadu	500
A. King	Mumbai	2,000	N. Macwan	Gujarat	1,000	N. Amolik	Ahmednagar	500
B. D'Couto	Kerala	2,000	N. Parikh	Mumbai	1,000	N. Tribhuvan	Pune	500
C. Peszkowski	Mumbai	2,000	N. Shahayam	Tamil Nadu	1,000	Neelasha/Navin	Mumbai	500
G. Lemos	Vasai	2,000	P. Kulkarni	Mumbai	1,000	P. D'Silva	Vasai	500
H. Kenny	Mumbai	2,000	P. Pawade	Mumbai	1,000	P. Thomas	Kerala	500
I. Selvaraj	Vasai	2,000	R. Johnson	Kerala	1,000	R. Araujo	Goa	500
J. Doshi	Mumbai	2,000	R. Mathias	Mumbai	1,000	R. D'Souza	Mumbai	500
L. Crasto	Mumbai	2,000	R. Swaathi	Tamil Nadu	1,000	R. Fonseca	Vasai	500
N. Thomas	Kerala	2,000	Rita/Hilda	Mumbai	1,000	R. Modi	Gujarat	500
P. Benitra	Tamil Nadu	2,000	Ronald	Mumbai	1,000	R. Raju	Chennai	500
P. D'Costa	Vasai	2,000	S. Chaudhar	Maharashtra	1,000	R. Victor	Tamil Nadu	500
P. George	Kerala	2,000	S. John	Kerala	1,000	S. D'Mello	Vasai	500
P. Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	2,000	S. Lopes	Vasai	1,000	S. Naik	Mumbai	500
R. Francis	Kerala	2,000	S. Mudliar	Mumbai	1,000	S. Surti	Maharashtra	500
R. Napoleon	Mumbai	2,000	S. Randive	Mumbai	1,000	S. Thomas	Pondicherry	500
S. Joseph	Kerala	2,000	Sahil Vaz	Vasai	1,000	Sanmati	Navi Mumbai	500
Shobhana Suresh	Mumbai	2,000	Shauden/Kayden	Mumbai	1,000	Santhosh V.	Tamil Nadu	500
Duncan/Elroy	Canada	1,900	T. Davar	Pune	1,000	T. Dev	Ahmednagar	500
Sybel	Vasai	1,800	U. Angre	Navi Mumbai	1,000	T. George	Kerala	500
A. Honavar	Mumbai	1,500	V. Arahna	Karnataka	1,000	T. Kotak	Gujarat	500
A. Jadhav	Kerala	1,500	R. Skariah	Palghar	1,000	V. Fernandes	Gujarat	500
A. Kuttikadan	Maharashtra	1,500	E. Jose	Kerala	950	V. Lopes	Vasai	500
C. Fernandes	Pune	1,500	N. D'Mello	Mumbai	800	V. Sophia	Tamil Nadu	500
E. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,500	Neena	Kerala	800			

# Bob's Banter

by Robert Clements

## The 'Almost' People...!

And in my imagination, I am given a glimpse of hell. The fires rage, and flames almost, yes almost come to where I am as I look down. Most of those below, though dreading the flames that scorch them, still bear no remorse, because in their minds, they feel they deserve the punishment they are getting. "But look Bob, at that group there, standing against the wall that divides hell from heaven!" says the angel who is showing me hell.

"Who are they?" I ask.

"The almost people," says the angel sadly, "They almost made it to heaven, but finally they didn't!"

"I've never heard of the 'almost people'," I whisper, as I stare at the forlorn lot who scream and claw at the walls and gates of hell, even as the devil laughs at their antics.

"Well, you have an 'almost' person mentioned in

would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds! And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them.

What sad words!

Paul, who with his letters, his sermons and his words brought Christianity to the gentile world, and because of whom, one third of our world are Christians, used those same powerful arguments when he was alive to King Agrippa. But what did Agrippa say?

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" And then they got up and left.

"He's there!" says the angel, and in my imagination, I lean into hell again, and see a man



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the Bible, and they should all have heeded that passage and avoided coming here," says the angel, giving me an old Bible, opened to a particular page.

"It's when Paul was brought by Governor Festus, into the presence of King Agrippa, and Paul, when questioned by Festus, says, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest'

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, 'Almost, thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I

with a burnt crown shouting, "Let me out of here! I almost became a follower of Christ!"

"Almost is not enough!" whispers the angel, and then points to the earth, showing me millions attending church, reading the Bible, and even praying, "But almost when they have to believe in Christ and welcome Him into their lives, they turn away and go back to their sinful ways! Almost is not enough!"

I look at the flames that almost come to where I am, and shudder...!

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



**Fr. Agnel Balbhavan  
Greater Noida Celebrates  
Solemn Feast  
of Our Lady of Pilar  
on 12th October 2023**



**The statue of Our Lady was taken in a procession, to the recitation of the Holy Rosary, on the grounds of Balbhavan. It culminated with a solemn Eucharistic Celebration, attended by all the prominent Fathers and Sisters of Greater Noida.**

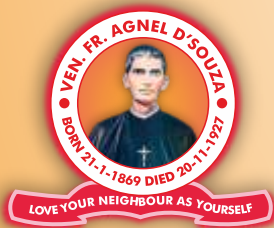


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