

SHRINE OF THE INFANT JESUS

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IJ matters

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A word before.....

The month of September is the month in which we celebrate the birthday of our Blessed Mother, the Exaltation of the Cross of Jesus and the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. In India, we celebrate Teachers' Day and the feast of Ganesh Chaturthi.

We celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8 every year. The gestation period for a human being in the womb of its mother is approximately 9 months, which is why we celebrate the Nativity or birth of the mother of Jesus and our mother on September 8, which is 9 months after her mother, conceived her immaculately. When we think of or reflect on Mary, the one word that comes to mind to describe her whole life is the word, AMEN, a word which may be translated, “so be it”, “your will be done”, “do whatever you want to do in my life”. This was, indeed, Mary's constant response to every situation in her life, especially when she could not understand why things were happening the way they were. The text of today is, then, a call and challenge to each one of us that we, too, like Mary, might be able to say YES to everything that God wants to do in our lives. It is a challenge to be open and receptive to the Spirit of God, so that we, too, might be able to give birth to the Saviour in our hearts.

The cross of Jesus is at the centre of our lives every time we face sickness and death. The cross is at the centre of our lives in frailty and old age. The cross is at the centre of our lives every time we feel utterly alone and abandoned. The cross is at the centre of our lives every time we are tempted to give in and give up. It is at the centre of our lives every time we are tempted to throw our hands up in despair. It keeps reminding us that only when we embrace the cross in the midst of suffering and abandonment can we understand the power of the resurrection. Only when we have the courage to keep on keeping on can we like Christ become victorious and conquer. Only when we embrace the cross is it possible for God to raise us up and give us new life.

The feast of Our Lady of Sorrows is relevant for each of us today. It shows first that though Jesus and Mary were constantly doing God's will, they were not spared from the cross and the challenges and vicissitudes of life. Second, it shows that even in the midst of these challenges we must always remember that God walks ahead of us and will never abandon us. This is why we never give up or give in. Finally, it reminds us that sorrow and the cross is never the end, but only a step towards resurrection and the fullness of life.

Ganesh Chaturthi or Vinayaka Chaturthi is a 10-day festival that celebrates the birth of Lord Ganesha. Ganesha is known as the God of wealth, sciences, knowledge, wisdom and prosperity, and that is why most Hindus remember him and seek his blessings before starting any important work. Lord Ganesh is known by 108 different names like Gajanana, Vinayaka, Vighnaharta among others.

Teachers' Day in India: Teachers' Day is celebrated across the country on September 5 every year to celebrate the birth of former president Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who was also an acclaimed scholar. We celebrate this day to remember and honour our teachers and the contribution they make to society. They have the honour of touching the future. The vocation of a teacher is not to teach a child how to drink, not even to lead the child to the water, but to make the child thirsty.

In keeping with the above celebrations, the September issue of “IJ Matters” has articles based on these themes.

It also has an article on “The Look of Jesus” who was the foremost of teachers. If we learn to look as Jesus did, we will enhance the lives of others without saying a word.

Be born in us incarnate love

In all the four Gospels Jesus has told the disciples and Peter that Peter would deny him three times. He had predicted it. He has said this in advance and true to that prediction, Peter does deny his Lord. The Lord said it would happen and it did happen.

It is only the Gospel of Luke, which has this verse after the third denial, 'the Lord turned and looked at Peter' (Lk 22:61). Luke does not tell us what kind of a look it was but he does tell us what happened to Peter because of that look. "And he (Peter) went out and wept bitterly." (Lk 22:62) Only Luke makes the connection between look of Jesus and the weeping of Peter.

There are at least three interpretations of the look that Jesus gave Peter.

One interpretation is that Jesus was telling Peter, "I told you!" This is certainly NOT the kind of look that Jesus would have given. You and I may have given such a look to the ones whom we warned that something untoward would happen if they did what we said they would or if they did what we told them not to do. It is a small person, an insignificant person who will respond in this way saying, "I told you".

Another interpretation is that the Lord would have looked at Peter and said, "I forgive you; I have compassion on you; I have pity on you." We must remember that sometimes, forgiveness, compassion and pity can be condescending. If I never allowed myself to be hurt, I would not need to forgive. You do not have the power to hurt me and so I do not need to forgive you. The Lord was not hurt with Peter's denials. He expected it.

My interpretation of the look of Jesus is that Jesus looked at Peter and through the look said to him, 'Peter if I was in your place I would do the same. if I was in your place I would also deny, I would also be frightened, I would also want to run away.....'

When someone whom I believe in, someone who is close to me, when someone whom I trust betrays that trust, abandons me, denies me, how do I respond? If I have expectations of something in return then I will respond possibly by saying, "I knew that would happen. I knew they would be ungrateful; I knew they would abandon me; I knew they would betray me;" but if I develop the attitude of Jesus and if I ask for this grace

consistently he will give it to me; he will give me his eyes and his vision; his mind and his pure thoughts.

Because of the look of Jesus, there was a transformation in Peter. The tears of Peter here are a metaphor for the transformation. The Lord has lifted Peter up by his look. The Lord has raised Peter to the Lord's level. He has not pushed him down further than he already would have been after the denial. Will I decide to look in this manner? Will I place myself in the shoes, the sandals, the slippers or the bare feet of those who I think have betrayed me, who I think have denied me, who I think have hurt me? I put myself in their place and I say like the Lord, "If I was in your place, if I was in his/her place, I would do the same". The question of compassion, the question of forgiveness does not arise at all. It is placing myself on the same level as the other and through that; I lift the other person up. I boost the other person. I do not push the person further into the mire, into the ground.

Another look of Jesus is found in Mt 9:9.

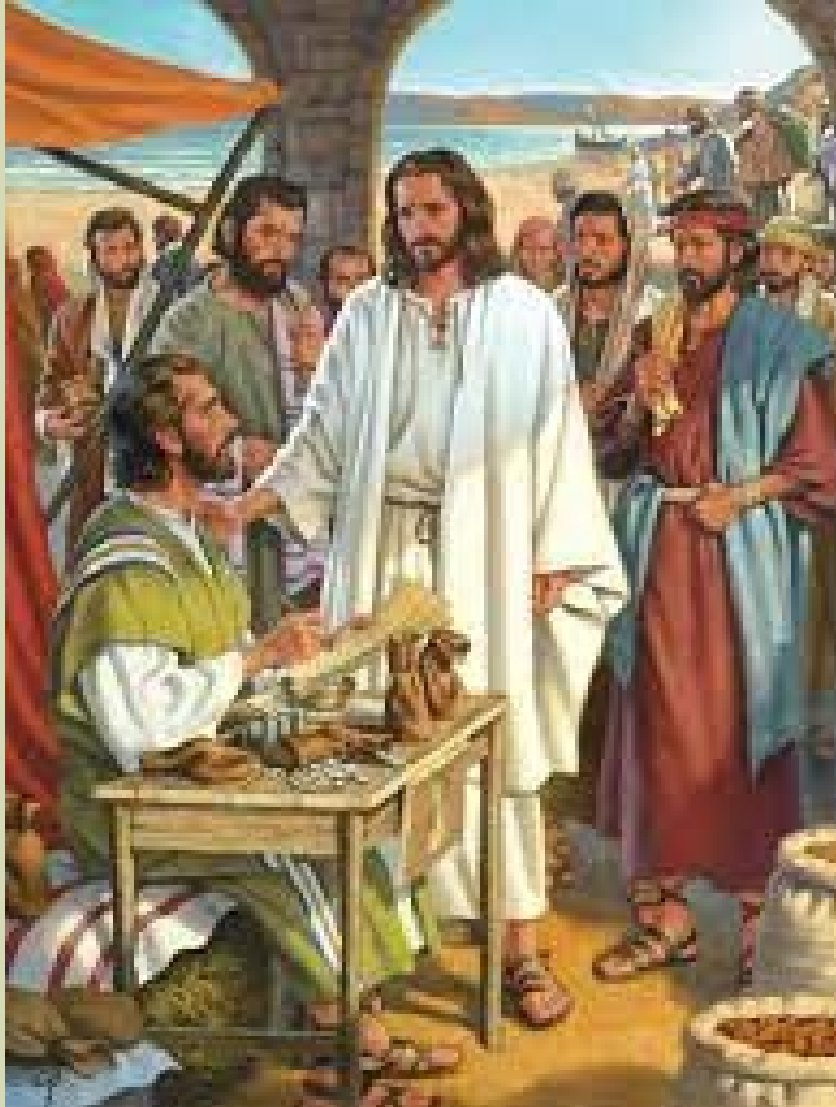
Jesus is passing by the tax office and in the tax office; there were tax collectors or toll collectors sitting at their booths. Everyone else who passed by the tollbooth would look at the person sitting behind that desk and see a cheat, a thief and an extortionist. Jesus passed by that same tax office, sees that same toll collector that others saw, and sees in him a potential disciple. And after seeing in him a potential disciple Jesus acts by calling him.



This look of Jesus, the look of enhancement, the look that told Matthew that he was precious, that he was honoured, that he was loved. It was a look that raised Matthew up from the level of one who was to be despised, one who was a cheat, one who was a thief to one who became a disciple and one after whom one of the four canonical Gospels is named. When I look at an egg let me not merely see the chicken, but an eagle. When I look at my child/colleague/neighbour, can I see someone great? Rather than berating my child, rather than using negative titles for my friend, for members of my family, can I look at them as Jesus looked? It was the look of the Lord and the action of the Lord in calling Matthew that made him see in himself the potential that he possessed. When I look at my child, when I look at my spouse, when I look at my children, when I look at my parents can I see that they have the potential to rise up to the level at which they are?

In Jn 8:1-11, the religious leaders of that time had caught a woman whom they accused of committing adultery and they bring her to Jesus and want to make a public spectacle of her. Not only that but they also want to humiliate Jesus. They want to test him, they want to trap him, and they want to see if he is as renowned a rabbi as people said he was. The woman is used as bait; the woman is a tool in the hands of the religious leaders. They bring the woman to Jesus and accuse her of the sin of adultery. They contend that according to the law an adulterous person ought to be stoned. However, the law was very clear that it was not only the adulterous woman but the adulterous man as well and there is no man, so very clearly it is a loaded question and situation. They do not want really to work for justice or right, they want to trap Jesus and they use the woman. If they were serious about their belief in the law, they would have brought the man also. It would have been fine then, but they bring only the woman.

Jesus knows that they seem to have made up their minds; he bends down and writes with his finger on the ground. The reason why he does it is that he does not want to get involved. They have made up their minds so what can he say. They have come to trap him so what can he do. By his action of



writing on the ground with his finger 'you have made up your minds now you do what you think is right.' There is a phrase in English which says do not try to teach a pig how to sing. It is a waste of your time and it irritates the pig. Jesus says something similar in Mt 7:6, when he says "do not give to dogs what is holy or cast your pearls before swine lest they turn around and trample you underfoot". Jesus is thus acting out these words, he does not want to get involved because the accusers of the woman have made up their minds, they seem to know the law, they seem to be biased and they seem to have to want to trap him, and then they insist they are not going to let him get off so easily. Because they insist, he straightens himself up and says to them that if they are without sin they can cast a stone at her and immediately bends down and writes with his finger on the ground a second time. Why does he bend down and write with his finger on the ground a second time? Because he does not want to condemn the condemners.



He does not want to show them their place. He does not want to show them up. When they go away one by one he does not get elated. In fact, even to them he is possibly saying by bending down and writing the second time 'if I was in your place I might have done the same thing.' He lets them go with their dignity intact. He lets them go with their heads held high. He never challenges them; he only invites them to do what they consider right. 'if one of you is without sin let him cast the first stone.' They cannot do that. Jesus himself, does not cast the stone at the woman. Because he does not cast the stone, it means that Jesus also is a sinner because if he was not a sinner he would have cast the stone at her but he does not do so. He does not mind becoming sin for our sakes, he does not mind going to the mire and the muck because he loves us and because he wants to lift us up out of that mire with the same look that he gave Peter, Matthew the toll collector, the condemners of the woman and the woman herself. He does not tell the woman that he forgives her because for him there is nothing to forgive. What does he say to the woman; "Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you?" And she says "No one Lord" and then Jesus does not say "I forgive you". He says "neither do I condemn you". When there is no condemnation, there is no need to forgive. It is only when I condemn you or point a finger at you and say you hurt me, you upset me, you made me angry, you did this to me that I will think wrongly and unfortunately that I need to forgive.

In addition, I will feel proud of my forgiving nature. Nevertheless, Jesus knows that there is no need to forgive the accusers because he does not condemn them neither is the need to forgive the woman. Because he does not condemn her Jesus condemns no one.

Let us learn from the look of Jesus: the look that he gave Peter because of which Peter became a changed man, the look that he gave Matthew because of which Matthew became a disciple and the look that he gave the woman who rose with her head held high.

Jesus is saying to you when you sin, Jesus is saying to you when you think that you are lesser than you ought to be, Jesus is saying to you when you fall short, "If I was in your place I would do the same" and the second point for reflection is my own way of looking. Will I take a cue from Jesus and look at my spouse, look at my children, look at my neighbours, look at my colleagues in the same way?

I pray that through the intercession of Our Lady of Sorrows that each one of us will receive this grace, the grace as she had, right from the beginning of her life - the Annunciation 'let it be done to me according to your word.'

Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ
Chaplain, The Shrine of Infant Jesus



MARY -

THE FIRST DISCIPLE OF JESUS

How does the CROSS of Jesus and the SEVEN SORROWS of Mary affect my life as a Christian? The Cross is a reminder of the passion and death of Jesus. However, this was not so in the earlier times. It was considered a sign of suffering and of human cruelty at its worst – a sign of punishment. Nevertheless, the death of Jesus changed everything. It has now become a sign of 'TRIUMPH AND VICTORY OVER SIN AND DEATH'. A sign of God and God's love for us all, through His Son Jesus Christ. O death where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?

We now see the CROSS as a sign of:- 1) COMMUNION 2) PARTICIPATION and 3) MISSION.

(1) COMMUNION: Jesus prayed that all may be one as He, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are one. The sign of the Cross is a sign of unity between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(2) PARTICIPATION – Jesus could have very easily done everything by Himself, but He chose His Apostles and others to carry forward His mission by working together and proclaiming His Kingdom of love, joy, peace and forgiveness. Today He invites each one of us to do the same.

(3) MISSION: If we have to carry out His Mission, we need to look at the Cross of Christ as a sign of victory over sin and death and be ready to carry our own crosses and follow Him faithfully.

The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is celebrated on 14th September and is followed by the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows on 15th September. Mary is considered to be the FIRST DISCIPLE of Jesus, and we see her as a living witness of Communion, Participation and Mission in and through her. From the moment of the ANNUNCIATION her 'YES' to God was a response of to surrender to God's Holy Will. It was the beginning of all the other “yeses” which

enabled her to remain faithful to God till the very end. In doing so, Mary also had her share of suffering and pain in her life. We shall now reflect on the 7 sorrows of Our Lady and pray for the Grace to remain faithful in our own commitment to God as followers of Jesus. Even before the birth of Jesus, Mary was pregnant. She and Joseph had to travel the long distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem by road to get themselves registered for the census.

1) As the child grew up, it was time for him to be presented in the temple, and there, there was a man named Simeon came to the temple led by the Spirit, took the baby in his arms and praised God. He then made a prophecy about the child Jesus and his mother (Lk 2:35) and ended the prophecy saying to Mary, “and sorrow like a sharp sword shall break your own heart,” Hearing this, Mary was gradually beginning to understand her role in God's plan of salvation.

2) Soon after the birth of Jesus, Joseph had to take Mary and the baby and flee to Egypt by night, because King Herod wanted to kill the child. (Mt 2:13-19). The anguish and sufferings in Mary's life had already begun. Yet she remained strong in her commitment to God's Will. She was already experiencing communion with and participating in the mission of Jesus.

3) When Jesus was 12 years old he went with his parents to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. After the feast was over, when Mary and Joseph were returning home, they found that the boy Jesus was not with them, and became extremely worried and anxious. They returned to Jerusalem in search of him and after 3 days they found him. Imagine the sorrow in Mary's heart as a mother, when her child was lost for such a long time, and she treasured all these things in her heart.

4) Mary watched Jesus growing up from childhood to manhood. He begins his public ministry of preaching and working miracles. Many people listen to what he is saying and also experience miracles in their own personal lives and begin to follow him. Although Jesus has done no harm to anyone he is accused of blasphemy and of going against the Sabbath, and is condemned to death on a Cross. On his way to Calvary he meets his Mother and some other women who are accompanying her. Seeing her son in this condition must have increased the pain in her heart. It was as though the sharp sword was breaking her own heart, as prophesised by Simeon. (Lk 23:27-29).

5) And now the pain starts increasing as she sees her son being crucified and left hanging on the cross to die. Mary looks up at him and he says to her 'Woman behold your son,' referring to John who is standing by her side. And then he says to John, 'Behold your mother'. After a little while, looking up to heaven he says, 'Father into your hands I commend my spirit'. And bowing his head, he gives up his spirit and dies. (Jn 19:25-27).

6) When a family member dies in the presence of his/her loved ones, time seems to stand still. The eyes of everyone in that room is fixed on the motionless body lying on the bed. There is pin-drop silence. Then all of a sudden, the weeping and wailing begins. The family members sit huddled together. As Mary is made to sit, the lifeless body of Jesus is placed in her arms. At that moment she must have experienced tremendous pain and loneliness, as a wife and mother. A little while earlier while Jesus was on his way to Calvary, bleeding and carrying his cross, their eyes met. And now his eyes were closed and his body motionless. What must have been going on in the mind of Mary as she held Jesus in her arms.

7) As the sun was beginning to set, the crowd was slowly dispersing. Only a handful of people remained by Mary's side. The body of Jesus was now being wrapped in a cloth and was being carried away. Mary accompanies these people

and sees the body of her son being laid gently in a tomb, (Jn 19:38-42). She stays for a while, and then John takes her to his home.

The first person that Jesus would have appeared to after his Resurrection from the dead would surely have been his own mother Mary. Later he appeared to Mary Magdalene and then to his chosen apostles. Mary in communion with the Apostles participated in the growth of the early Church and continues to pray and intercede that the Mission of Jesus spreads everywhere. We are now in the 21st Century. The Church has had its share of suffering and persecution down the ages, but the mission of Jesus has to carry on. Each one of us is called and invited to participate in the building of God's kingdom of love, joy, peace and forgiveness in communion with one another, believing that Jesus is there to support us and Mary is interceding for each one of us,

PRAYER:

God our loving Father, when Jesus your Son was raised on the cross, it was your will that Mary, his mother should stand there and suffer with him in her heart. Grant that in union with her, the church may share in the passion of Christ and so be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Fr. Bosco D'souza SJ
Asst. Chaplain The Shrine of Infant Jesus

RURAL TRANSFORMATION

(WORKS OF MPSM)

Maharashtra Prabodhan Seva Mandal (MPSM) is a not-for-profit *Jesuit Organisation* of the Bombay Province Jesuits of the Society of Jesus (SJ) that works for the welfare and development of rural Maharashtra, preferentially with *adivasis* (tribal communities) with most of its works concentrated in Nashik and its districts nearby. The name itself may not have a very Christian ring to it, however there can be no debate that the works of the organisation are very much in line with every teaching of our Lord Jesus. Some of the prominent areas of work that it covers are rural community-based education, training of farmers in agriculture and allied enterprises and other livelihood programs, research on sustainable and environment friendly technologies, hostels and boardings, and providing facilities for drinking water to villages. These are some of the many works that MPSM is associated with. During the time of the covid crisis, it reached out to many people in villages through their timely intervention by their distribution of food and ration kits, and also covid health camps through Mobile Covid-19 Care Units (MCCU) which helped in diagnosing at an early stage those that showed symptoms of covid infections and were given the necessary medication in order to ensure that the effects of the pandemic were not devastating as those villages were remote and lacked adequate medical facilities.



The regular works of MPSM encompass a vast array of programs. The supplementary education program is one of the prominent programs that are conducted in many villages. The villages are far away from the city and have very minimal facilities that can be accessed. The program on supplementary education is run by using a methodology that works on strengthening the foundations in English, Marathi and Maths. It comprises of creative and innovative material that consists of charts, songs, audio and video material. The speciality of this content is that it is very contextual and largely comprises of material that the children from the villages will relate to and at the same time it will help them strengthen their foundations in the various subjects. Apart from these main subjects there are some topics on health care and social awareness. There are many other programs that are conducted for the children like kitchen garden and forest plantation that help in the overall development of the child and the village community. Hence this program is named as 'Community-based Education Program – CEP'. MPSM reaches out to 55 villages where it runs its classes for the students of the talukas of Surgana, Peth, Trimbakeshwar, Dindori and Mokhada. There has been very positive response to the supplementary classes in terms of progress of the children and overall growth of the community. In order to strengthen this outreach, a program called the Nodal Centre for Excellence (NCE) has begun with MPSM as the nodal centre. It will be implementing in a uniform way this same program across multiple mission stations with a base number of 10 classes each to begin with. These will be 10 classes of MPSM, Manor, Tara, Shilonda, Shirpur and Ambatha which would be a total of 60 classes.

Apart from the supplementary education program, MPSM also has its hostel for young men at Nashik. There are 180 students who are residing in the hostel. They are largely students who are pursuing their higher studies. Many of these students are also preparing for a number of competitive exams such as MPSC, UPSC, NET, SET and many other exams. MPSM also has a boys and girls boarding at Ambatha. The boys boarding which is run by the Jesuits at Ambatha and girls boarding by the Daughters of the Cross of Liege (FC) sisters help in giving the young boys and girls from rural villages an opportunity to reside in the boarding and to attend 'Prabodhan Vidyalaya' school at Ambatha which is managed by the Jesuits. The educational interventions are making an immense difference in the development and growth of the villages.

Agriculture is the most important occupation of those living in the villages. MPSM helps the farmers by providing fruit trees that can be planted which will bear rewards in the long run. They are trained in various methods of farming and especially organic farming is encouraged. MPSM has started promoting farmer producer organizations (FPOs) through NABARD which enable the farmers to have more say in the price they fetch for their produce and it prevents the exploitation of these farmers. There is a revolving fund that enables them to make small purchases for various livelihood interventions. The women have also grown in confidence by participating in the various associated projects. The Prabodhan Centre for Research which is the research wing of MPSM has also been trying to work on methods to demonstrate ways by which the farmers can get more yield by using minimal fertilisers and using naturally available resources such as a water fern like 'Azolla.'



Another important area of intervention has been the healthcare and wellness of the people. Today, even in the villages people are being influenced by the media and are turning to allopathic medicines. MPSM is creating awareness of the benefits of the traditional herbal and forest medicines that are available through the 'Tribal Health Program – THP' which is helping them in the preparation of medicines using the available forest herbs. There was also a 'Forest food festival' that was conducted recently which displayed the wealth of the vegetables found in the forest. Water is most essential for our daily survival and well-being. However, it is very ironical that villages that have the water sources that supply water to the cities are deprived from receiving water and so MPSM has been intervening by setting up water distribution units that use solar power to pump water to the villages in order to ensure that every house in the village has access to good potable water. The mission statement of MPSM is *'Together we grow'* and it is very encouraging to witness the manner in which many people from all walks of society also wish to participate in this our mission of MPSM through their prayers, support and contributions in various ways.



Fr. Wesley D'Costa SJ

My callto become a teacher



Ms. Priscilla Kolge
Asst. Teacher, St. Xavier's School, Nasik Road

Ten years ago I was working for a leading corporate firm in Mumbai as an HR assistant. My remuneration was good and I was doing pretty well. But deep down inside me I felt an empty space. I felt like there was something missing in my life. Being a mother, I had to admit my children in school and so I came to St. Xavier's School. The sweet commotion of the little ones shouting in absolute joy filled that emptiness. I began noticing the joy of helping my own children brought a sense of peace to my soul and joy in my heart. And that's where my life took a U-turn. I quit my job and began teaching in Xavier's.

I realised that through teaching I would be able to fulfil my soul's craving to make a contribution in shaping the world of tomorrow. My passion and God's divine plan soon led me to an opportunity to become equipped with skills to meet the needs of the students.

A teacher is the only lucky one who can touch the future because she is dealing with the future of the world. For me teaching came naturally. I began living and enjoying what was I doing. I knew, I was called for it. The laughter of the little ones never failed to put a smile on my face. I was their mother, in school.

One needs to have a mother's heart to be a teacher. We all know the story of Thomas Edison, his mother turned him into the genius of the century. Such is the power of the teacher who is a mother to her students and has the power to change their destiny. She moulds the child to be a better version of himself.

Teachers are some of the most selfless, giving, caring individuals in our world. Their goals and ambitions are in seeing their students succeed in life and many of us have our teachers to thank for where we are.

A teacher plays a significant role in a child's life, for him/her she is always correct. A child finds his mother in her. She is the one who can make things possible. Children around the world are influenced by their teachers as they learn concrete skills and strategies or simple life lessons. It is the teacher's power that enables them to impact students of all levels and instill in them the awareness that they can be successful individuals. Students who are empowered in school light up with the realization that they can accomplish something truly challenging. Touching the life of a child is the single snowflake that can start the snowfall. Teachers have a legacy that extends far beyond their time in the classroom.

James 3 :1 -2

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

A teacher can make or break a child's personality. That is the power given by God to a teacher and we must use it well. Teachers are chosen by God to touch these tender minds and I feel proud to be a teacher, because I am the reason for a smile, I am the reason for their enthusiasm to learn. Each Child is God's special creation to be nurtured, each child is an individual, who needs to be dealt with in a way which is never the same, each child unfolds a new learning experience for a teacher.

I touch the future I teach and play a major role in moulding my *Future World Changers* .

Teaching is a vocation and not a profession. You are called for it.

The Impact of a Teacher in a Student's Life.

Education has an important role in character-building of students. Teachers are builders of society and the nation. Students imbibe the ideals of respect for elders, for culture and tradition, discipline and most importantly, human values from teachers.

The progress of an educational institution is assessed not only by the academic excellence which students achieve but also on the role it plays in instilling discipline, a sense of confidence, an attitude of co-operation with others and the commitment to the country and humanity.

A devoted teacher and a willing student together make one of the purest and deeply inspirational relationships. Aristotle once said "Those who educate children well are more to be honoured than they who produce them, for these only gave them life, those the art of living well".

In my view, the student-teacher relationship must be like a friendship.

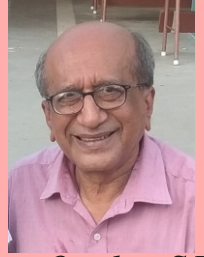
Today's children are tomorrow's society. Together, the families of children and schools can impart value-based education as the sole aim in the continuous and all-round development of a child.

Together we give our children roots to grow and wings to fly.



Mrs. Kavita Francis

Run run on



Fr. Terry Quadros SJ

*It's lonely out there oftentimes
long distances yet longer run
through less traversed new wooded paths
light shadow patterns ever change
dreams silently quick pace pursued
ne'er fully sure what lies ahead.*

*And yet the will to run, run on
committed to the dream once had
assurance known, fulfilment hoped
attained with steadfast effort made.*

*Much easier to stop and say:
"Enough! I've had enough!" Return
to old familiar paths devoid
of charm and challenge, wreck debris
already lived, now safer lives.
Sunrise, sunset day after day
the yet again but safe routine
through second-handed bygone dreams.*

*The challenge is to run, run on
new paths discover, newer scenes
to newer quests, horizons reached
beyond horizons distant seen
an invitation yet beyond
with joy accepted, hope pursued
fleet footed spirit winged soul
to soarings trans-ethereal.*

*Quite suddenly the bridge is crossed
and one arrives to joy surprise
unchartered heavens way beyond
to stars no mortal eyes can see.*

*Behind a journey much enjoyed
ahead the skies and so much more
of life and wonders yet to be.*

*So I will run, run on till life
and breath still run run on in me...*



the cross remains

Background blur
unnoticed form
he hangs on there
poster perfect
in churches, chapels
walls and hearts

he hangs on still ...

passing by
casual reverence
touch and go
devotion kiss
of nailed feet
and hurry away.

he hangs on still ...

the holy women
Joseph of Arimathea
long dead entombed
no one now around
to bring him down

he hangs on still...

The good Samaritan
his caring spend
now sermon preach...
no longer there.

he hangs on still.

They pass him by
I pass him by
like hurry priest

like scurry levite
uncaring plight
of brigands victim.

he hangs on still ...

still crucified
to all the world...
for all the world
for you and me

"Come to me
you heavy laden
my yoke is sweet
my burden light"

"I was hungry thirsty
naked cold...
each time you cared
you helped me down"

"Greater love no one has
than life to lay down
for his friends"

"My life for you
with love I lay down
if I had more
even that as well."

"Love one another
as I have loved you.

You help me down
I'll raise you up."

THE CROSS OF JESUS

I wonder if it was a loss
That Jesus died upon the cross
He could have shown his godly might
With miracles to put things right
More hungry crowds he could have fed
More sick to heal or raise the dead
He could have routed satan's reign
That it might pose no threat again

I asked him: Jesus tell me why
You chose upon the cross to die
And after doing so much of good
You let them nail you to the wood

Then Jesus said: "I thought you knew
I walked the path so many do
Who have no might to save the day
When evil strikes them on their way
"I walk with them so they will know
That when they suffer blow on blow
No matter how the scourge will fall
Their lives will bring a change for all
"So every human being can save
not just the deities that we crave
but steadfast when the chips are down
you'll partner me to win the crown"

When threats and fears arise in spate
Christ leads us through the narrow gate
His Cross and Death will fire each test
That we may strive to do our best
And none can rout our faithful quest
A new world to create



Godfrey D'Lima, S.J.



प्रतीकातील सौंदर्य नि सात्विकता!!

..... वेन्सी डिमेलो एस.जे.

प्रत्येक धर्मात पूजेला अनन्य साधारण महत्त्व आहे.
त्यातील

प्रतिकांचा अर्थ समजून घेतला

आणि त्या प्रमाणे वागले आणि आचरण केले.

त्याला सेवेची जोड दिली तर ती पूजा मानवतावादी
रूप धारण करते. केवळ तंत्र मंत्र पठण केले तर
ते कर्मकांड ठरते.

पूजा ही भक्ताला सेवेची प्रेरणा देते.

मानवतेला दिशादर्शन करणारी काही प्रतिके
वापरून ख्रिस्ताने

बलिदान पूजेची स्थापना केली.

त्याला ख्रिस्ती धर्मात अतीशय महत्त्व आहे.

ख्रिस्ताचे हे बलिदान वा मिस्सापूजा खूप गांभीर्याने
जबाबदारीने आणि सेवेतील बांधिलकीने घेतली
जाते.

राष्ट्रभक्तीत जसे आपण ध्वजाला वंदन करतो.

आणि देशाशी एकनिष्ठ, प्रामाणिक राहून देशसेवा
करतो. हुतात्म्यांचे आपण स्मरण करतो. आणि त्या
महात्म्यांच्या सेवाकार्याचा आदर करून तशी सेवा
करतो. तशी ही ख्रिस्त बलिदानाची एक आठवण
आहे.

प्रत्येक धर्मात ही त्यागाची प्रतिके वापरून तशी
सेवेची प्रेरणा त्यातून दिली जाते. त्याकडे केवळ

कर्मकांड म्हणून पाहू नये. मात्र जेव्हा ही पूजा
रूढी होऊन जाते तेव्हा एक सोपस्कार पार

पाडला इतकेच समाधान त्यातून मिळते.

जेव्हा त्या पूजेतील प्रतिकांचा अर्थ स्पष्ट करण्यात
आणि योग्य निरूपण करण्यात पौरोहित्य करणारा

पुरोहित, पुजारी यशस्वी ठरतो त्यावेळी त्या

प्रतिकांतून प्रेरणा घेऊन भक्त त्याला सेवेचा सौरभ
प्राप्त करून देतो. तेव्हा ती पूजा अर्थपूर्ण बनते.

तीर्थरूप होते.

काहींना ह्या पूजेची गरज भासत नाही. पूजेचे

अधिक अवडंबर न माजवता ते स्वयंभू त्याचा अर्थ

आत्मसात करून तसे प्रेमाचे, सेवाकार्याचे व्रत
अंगी बाणवत असतात. तेही योग्यच आहे.

ज्या वेळेस प्रतिके ही अर्थहीन पुजिली जातात

तेव्हा धर्म यंत्रवत होतो. ती प्रतिके मग फक्त
पूजेपुरतीच उरतात. स्वकेंद्रित बनतात.

जीवनसेवेवर त्याचा काहीही परिणाम होत नाही.

मग खरीखुरी अर्थपूर्ण प्रतिके अशी यांत्रिकी

बनतात. आणि त्यातून फक्त नि फक्त सण

सोहळे, उत्सव साजरे होतात. पूजाअर्चा मांडल्या
जातात.

भारत हा उत्सवप्रिय देश आहे इथे

सर्वच धर्मीयांचे वर्षभर उत्सव चालू असतात.

कधीकधी चर्च, मस्जिद, मंदिरातील उत्सव

रस्त्यावर येतात. नि मग माणूसच माणसाला

वेठीस धरतो. सार्वजनिक वाट अडवली जाते. गर्दी

होते. माणसे चेंगरून मरतात. प्रदुषण वाढते.

रोगराई पसरते. मग ही प्रतिके अर्थहीन होतात.

निरोपयोगी वाटतात. जीवनाचा गंभीरतेने विचार

करणारे विवेकी नवतरूण त्या प्रतिकांना मानत

नाहीत. फेकून देतात.

'त्या प्रतीकातील मानवतावादी अर्थ सांगा.' असे

त्यांचे म्हणणे असते. अर्थ दिसताच ते प्रतिके

जिवंत होते. त्या प्रतीकात सामर्थ्य येते. आणि मग

माणूस त्या प्रतीकातील मूल्यांसाठी समाज

कल्याणार्थ लढू लागतो. सेवा देऊ लागतो.

कवीची कविता समजून घ्यावी तशी ही प्रतिके

समजून घ्यायला हवीत. त्याकडे अर्थपूर्णदृष्ट्या

पहायला हवे. कवितेला केवळ भावनिक चाल

लावून होत नाही.

तसे प्रतीकाकडेही भावोत्कटतेने

पाहून होत नाही. नाहीतर ती केवळ पूजा ठरते. नि

केवळ संत महात्म्याचा उदोउदो होऊन नाच

गाणी, मंडप सजावट होऊन उत्सव तिथेच संपतो.

ख्रिस्ती लोक जेव्हा तीर्थक्षेत्री जाऊन ख्रिस्ताचे बलिदान साजरे करतात. किंवा त्याच्या मातेची मेरीची नवभक्ती आरंभितात आणि बाह्य देखाव्यालाच अधिक महत्व देतात. तेथे मात्र संत महात्म्यांची, आणि त्यांनी दिलेली मूल्ये विसरण्याचाच धोका अधिक वाढतो.

अशा उत्सवाचा लाभ मग स्वार्थी राजकीय नेते. मतलबी नेतृत्व, समाज कंटक उठवत राहतात. किंबहुना धार्मिक पुरोहितांपेक्षा हीच मंडळी तो पवित्र उत्सव हायजक करून ताब्यात घेतात.

अलीकडे नैतिकतेच्या अशा या सणउत्सवात निंदण खूप वाढते आहे. मग अशा कर्मकांडातून अंधश्रद्धा वाढतेच. शिवाय त्या धर्माधतेतून धार्मिक वाद उफाळून येतात. धार्मिक अभिनिवेश वाढतो. "माझाच धर्म श्रेष्ठ" ही अहमिका वाढते. स्पर्धा सुरू होते. आणि सणावारातील प्रसन्नता लोप पावते. नि प्रेमाच्या जागी मग द्वेषाचे वातावरण पहायला मिळते.

धर्म संस्थापकांनी निर्मिलेल्या ह्या मानवतावादी प्रतिकांना मग काजळी चढते. त्यांच्या मूल्यांचे अवमूल्यन होते.

मंदिरावरील शालीन कळस पहा, मस्जिदवरील गोलाकार घुमट पहा किंवा चर्चवरील लाल क्रॉस पहा.

आपोआपच मान लवते. हात जुळले जातात. माणसाने माणसाशी माणसासम वागणे असे ही प्रतिके दूरवरून मानवतेचा संदेश देत रहातात. खुणावत राहातात.

अशा प्रतिकांची तोच मानव मग एकमेकांचे कळस, घुमट नि क्रॉस क्रोधाने उद्ध्वस्तही करतात.

हे सर्व मानवी कौर्य पाहून विवेकी माणूसही मग धर्माला त्यातील उदात्त प्रतिकांना दुषणे देत रहातात.

ती प्रतिके अबाधीत ठेवून त्या प्रतिकातील मूल्ये

शिक्षणासाठी लढण्याऐवजी एका विशिष्ट गर्तेतून, भीतीतून, नैराश्यातून, निराश उदासिनतेतून मग दुषणे देऊ लागतात.

परिवर्तनासाठी धर्म आहे. त्यातील प्रतिके आहेत. हे दुर्लक्षून. ती प्रतिके उद्ध्वस्त करणाऱ्या एकंदरीतच स्वार्थी समाज कंटकांना जबाबदार धरण्याऐवजी, दंगली, कत्तली घडवून आणणारा हा धर्मच वाईट ह्या निर्णयाप्रत येऊन पोहचतात. हे मात्र आतताईचे होईल. धोक्याचे ठरेल.....

धर्मालाच दुषणे देण्यापेक्षा धर्माधर्मात जाणूनबुजून अडथळे निर्माण करणाऱ्या समाज कंटकांच्या स्वार्थी हेतूकडे पारख करूनच पहावे लागेल. जे काम जी धर्माची खरी पारख जगात धर्म सुधारकांनी केली.....

अशा तर्हेने पूजेतील, त्यातील प्रतिकांतील सौंदर्य नि सात्विकता ओळखून मूल्याधिष्ठ जीवन जगणे, आज अतिशय गरजेचे झाले आहे.

एकूणच धर्माकडे आणि संस्कृतीकडे थोर धर्म चिकित्सक चिंतक असेच प्रेमाने, पावित्र्याने, त्यागाने, ज्ञानाने, आशेने, माधुर्याने पहात होते. स्वता आनंदी जीवन जगत होते. इतरांना आनंदी करीत होते.

म्हणूनच ख्रिस्त, महात्मा गांधी, महर्षी टॉलस्टॉय खरा सात्विक नि सौंदर्याचा धर्म जगत होते. स्वताचे नि इतरांचे अशा प्रतिकांतून धर्मानुवर्तन करीत होते.

होली क्रॉस !! विजयोत्सव!!

मीना बनसोडे
9764202220

क्रॉस म्हणजे मानवतेच्या तारणासाठीचा उचललेला वधस्थंभ!! आपणही तो दररोजच्या जीवनात वाहत असतो. कुटुंबासाठी, स्वतासाठी, आपल्या प्रियजनांसाठी वैगरे.... अशा क्रूस धारणेमध्येही त्याग आहेच. पण त्यात 'स्व' अधिक आहे.

स्वतासाठी न जगता इतरांसाठी जगणे ह्याला येशूचा क्रॉस वाहणे म्हणतात. ज्यात त्याग तर आहेच. पण इतरांसाठी मरणेही आहे. ज्यात प्रेम आहे. प्रेम मैत्रीचं शृंगाराचं असतं. तसं ते भोगाचं योगाचं नि त्यागाचंही असतं. ह्या त्यागाला इतरांसाठी वधस्थंभ वाहून, मरणं, झिजणं असे म्हणतात.

येशूने इतरांसाठी झिजणे आणि मरणे हे जीवन निवडले. पिलाताने राजकीय सत्ता आणि त्यावेळच्या पुरोहित वर्गाने धर्म सत्ता गाजविण्याचे जीवन निवडले. येशूने जे जीवन निवडले ज्याला आपण "आगापे" प्रेम म्हणजे दुसऱ्यांसाठी जगणे असे म्हणू.

जीवनात परमेश्वर प्रत्येकाला आमंत्रित करतो. प्रत्येक जण आपापली सेवेची उदरनिर्वाहाची वेदी निवडत असतो. कुणाला शिक्षकी पाचारण, परिचारिका, राजे, मंत्री, शेती पोशिंदे, वैद्यकीय डॉक्टर, कायदे विषयक वकील, न्यायमूर्ती जज, इंजिनियर, मजूर, कारकून आदिची ती पाचारणे असतात. त्याच्याशी प्रामाणिक राहून वधस्थंभ वाहायचा असतो. जो प्रामाणिक रहात नाही तो भ्रष्टाचारी बनतो.

येशू देवपित्याच्या मूल्यांसाठी प्रामाणिक राहिला. पिलात सत्तेच्या अंधत्वात नि पुजारी धर्मांध बनल्याने प्रामाणिक राहिला नाही.

कुठली माता आपल्या स्वयंपाक वेदीवर आपल्या मुलांसाठी निकृष्ट अन्न शिजविल?

एखादी शिक्षिका आपल्या विद्यार्थ्यांशी प्रतारणा करील? वा परिचारिका पेशंटवर दुर्लक्ष करील? तसे ती करील तर ती ख्रिस्ताचा वधस्थंभ वाहत नाही. तर पिलाताचे सिंहासन नि पुरोहितांच्या मऊ गादी उबवत राहिल.

तेव्हा देवपित्याला अभिप्रेत असलेले पाचारण हे क्रूसाचे आहे. एक दुसऱ्यांसाठीच्या जगण्यातील आहे. जागतिक मानसन्मान सत्ता स्पर्धा आदि प्रतिष्टेसाठीचे नाही.

असे देव पित्याचे पाचारण जगणे म्हणजे आनंदाने स्वच्छेने वधस्थंभ वाहणे. मरणोत्तरही पुनरुत्थित होणे. क्रूसाचा विजयोत्सव खऱ्या अर्थाने साजरा करणे.

त्यासाठी देवाकडे आपली प्रार्थना अशी असू द्या की...

"हे देवा मी क्रूस नाकारत नाही. तो आनंदाने नि समाधानाने वाहण्यासाठी माझे खांदे मजबूत कर....."

आमच्या होलीक्रॉस चर्च नाशिक येथे आम्हा भाविकांना अशा प्रकारची क्रूसाची ओळख नि शिकवण दिली जाते. त्याग, सेवेचे धडे नि संस्कार तनामनात रुजवले जातात.

त्यामुळे इथे केवळ क्रूस पुजीला जात नाही. ना केवळ कर्मकांड केले जाते. तर खऱ्या अर्थाने देवाचे पाचारण जगण्याची शिकवण दिली जाते. मने घडविली जातात. आमच्या कामा व्यवसाया व्यतिरिक्त ह्या चर्चचा सभासद न केवळ स्वतासाठी जगत तर तो इतरांसाठीही आपला देह झिजवित असतो. म्हणूनच चर्चच्या दाराशी प्रवेश करते वेळी येशूचे वाक्य लक्ष वेधून घेते. "मी सेवा करवून घेण्यासाठी नाही तर सेवा करण्यासाठी आलो आहे." हाच खरा येशूच्या क्रूसाचा विजयोत्सव

वेदना आणि संवेदना

आयुष्यात कसलीही वेदना झाली नाही असा माणूस आपण शोधायला निघालो, तर भेटणार्या प्रतेक माणसाची कहाणी वेदने शिवाय पूर्ण होणार नाही. काही माणसं खुप सहनशील असतात याचा अर्थ त्यांना वेदना होत नाहीत असे नाही किंवा होणार्या वेदनांची तीव्रता कमी असते असेही नाही. त्यांच्या अंगी निर्माण झालेली सहनशीलता आणि मनाची खंबीरताही गतकाळातील वेदनादायी अनुभवातूनच निर्माण झालेली असते.

उदाहरणार्थ! संत इग्नेशियस लोयोला, प्रभू येशु ख्रिस्त, पवित्र मरीया आणि बरेचशे संत होऊन गेले ज्यांनी पुष्कळ यातना, दुःख सहन केले. एखादया अपघाताने किती वेदना होतात हे ज्याला अनुभवातून माहीत असते तोच माणसाच्या वेदना जाणू शकतो. म्हणजेच अनुभवातूनच माणूस अधिकाधिक संवेदनशील बनत जातो त्यातूनच संवेदनशील माणसे समाजातील दुःखी दुर्बलांचा आधार बनतात. वेदनेने पछाडलेल्या माणसाला तत्सम वेदनेचा अनुभव घेतलेला संवेदनशील माणूसच आधार देऊ शकतो. कोणत्याही महान व्यक्तीचे चरित्र वाचा त्याच्या आयुष्यात आलेल्या अनेक वेदनादायी अनुभवातून त्यांच्या व्यक्तीमत्वाची जडणघडण झालेली असते. वेदना हा आयुष्याचा अविभाज्य भाग आहे, हे पहिल्यांदा आपण स्वीकारले की आपल्या प्रमाणे इतरांनाही वेदना होतात ही आपल्यातील संवेदनशीलता जागृत होते त्या क्षणी माणूस बनण्याच्या प्रक्रियेत आपण एक पाऊल उचललेले असते.



Daily Reflection

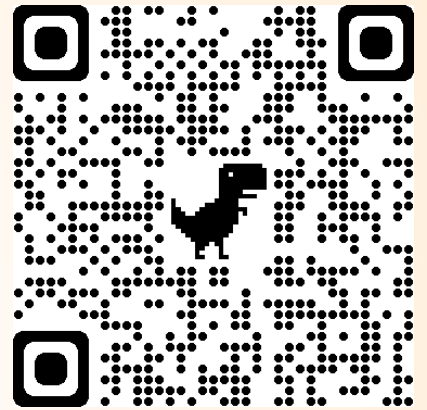
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-Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ



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