

SHRINE OF THE INFANT JESUS

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It matters



JESUITS
FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD

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SHRINE MATTERS – DECEMBER 2022

The month of December was a busy month at the Shrine. We had many pilgrims visit the Shrine to thank the Infant Jesus and to ask for grace and peace.

We had three presentations of “Food from the heart and to the heart” on December 1, 8 and 15, 2022. We also released the November 2022 Issue of IJ Matters on December 1, 2022.

On December 3, 2022, we celebrated the feast of St. Francis Xavier who is the patron of our school here at Nashik. The celebrations included the Eucharist, a cultural programme and a quiz on Francis Xavier. The school also had their annual sports day on December 10, 2022.

We began the Advent Novena on December 16, 2022 and it went on until December 24, 2022. A few people attended in person but many more online. The themes of the Novena were linked to the Gospel reading of the day. The Novena was in preparation to welcome the vulnerable Christ child into our broken world.

This year we decided to go around 3 kms from the Shrine to a place where people work in Brickkilns. There is a hamlet surrounding the Brickkiln, and all the men and most of women work in the Brickkiln. We went to the hamlet in November and invited the people for our party which was held today, December 22, 2022. At the beginning of December we went

again and took down the names and details of those who would come so that we could cater for them and buy the appropriate gifts for the children. We invited also the employees who work in the Shrine along with their families. There were 160 people in all. The party was held on December 22, 2022 from 4-6.30 pm in the premises of the Shrine of the Infant Jesus, Nashik Road. Of those who attended, most were women. Some of the men could not come since they were at work and some children were still at school. We began with a short message on the meaning of Christmas. We then served snacks. After this we had two games for the children and for the parents separately. We distributed a number of prizes and there were many winners. We invited the children to showcase their talents. Some came forward to recite poems or to sing songs. We ended with a few Christmas carols and a prayer. As they left, each family was given rations worth Rs. 900, a box of sweets, a packet of snacks for each individual and Rs. 500 for each family. Every child was given a gift which was a cricket bat, Badminton racket, dolls and other toys. There were a total of 49 families who attended. They left at 6.30 pm with a smile on their faces and a song in their hearts. We were able to do this because of the generosity of the patrons of the Shrine of the Infant Jesus, the help from our co-workers and the support and co-operation of the Jesuit team at the Shrine.



Our Christmas night Mass was at 8 pm and masses on Christmas day were at 6.30 and 8 am in English, at 10 am in Marathi and at 12 noon in English.

This year we will have a Thanksgiving service on December 31, 2022 from 11 pm until 12 am followed by the Eucharist at 12 am to usher in the New Year 2023.

We are grateful to the patrons of the Shrine of the Infant Jesus for their constant generosity. We thank the Infant Jesus for all blessings we receive and we keep asking for the intercession of our Blessed Mother.

CHRISTMAS IS UNIVERSAL BECAUSE IT CELEBRATES THE BIRTH OF HOPE

In most cultures in the world, the birth of a child is a cause for great rejoicing and celebration. How much more profound and joyful must this celebration be if the child, born in our midst, is the Son of God?

Christmas is the birth, not merely of a child, but the birth of the child who would change the destiny of humans forever. It is the celebration of the unconditional love of a gracious and generous God who holds nothing back but gives of his very self. It is the celebration of the fact that God wanted so much to be part of the human race that he took on flesh and blood, and thus, became limited so that he could reveal to us our own limitlessness.

Though God had been constantly conversing with humanity from the beginning of creation, through prophets and kings, through blessings and punishments, these did not seem to have had the desired effect. Humanity, as a whole, moved further and further away from God. Thus, in the fullness of time, God decided that the way to draw people back to himself would be if he became one like them, in every aspect of their being. This was so that he could feel with our feelings, think with our thoughts and, in doing so, show us who we are meant to be.

At the beginning of his Gospel, the evangelist John speaks about the “logos” (the word) becoming “sarx” (flesh) and dwelling among us. This means that the abstract, the indecipherable, the incomprehensible, and the inconceivable, through one decisive act, become concrete, decipherable, comprehensible, and conceivable. The impossible has become possible.



The possibilities that the birth of Jesus have opened up are innumerable. No longer is humanity a disadvantage or a limitation. No longer is humanity something to be looked down upon or to be ashamed of. No longer is humanity weakness. After the birth of Jesus, humanity takes on a new look and a new meaning. Now, there are no limits. Now, humanity need not be confined. Now, there are no restrictions on how far we can go. Jesus has shown the way.

However, even as this is true, there is another, and sad, side to the story. The prologue explains it by stating that “the darkness tried to overcome the light”, and “he came unto his own, but his own received him not”. Surprising, astounding, and startling as this may sound, it was true of the time when Jesus came. It continues to be true even today. Darkness constantly tries to overcome light.

Why would darkness try to overcome the light? Why would his own not receive him? The answer to these questions can be found in the person of Jesus and all for which he stands. First, when he came, he did not come as many were expecting, in pomp, in splendour, and in glory. He did not come, as many would have wanted, mounted on a horse. He did not choose to be born in a palace, as kings usually are. He came in humility, in nothingness, and in total helplessness. He came in the form of a child. This kind of a God seemed, and still seems, an aberration to some and they cannot, they will not, accept him. Second, in a world where authority is interpreted as domination and where rulers expect to be served and not to serve, Jesus' approach of interpreting authority as service, and his desire to serve and not be served, was regarded as an anomaly. Third, when all logic seems to point to the fact that it is better to have more and accumulate as much as one can for oneself rather than share with others, the life of Jesus, a life spent for the well being of others, was an abnormality. In other words, when Jesus came, he did not fit the pre-conceived and stereotyped notions that people had. He was different, and difference, because it may not be understood, is often rejected.



Yet, despite this rejection of the Word, there is a note of hope and promise. There continue to be people who will choose light over darkness, who will choose selflessness over selfishness. There will continue to be people who will fight for justice and will never give up this cause. There will continue to be people who will generously give, not only of their wealth, but also, of themselves, in imitation of the one who became human and gave all. Those who opt for the light can continue to do so because their openness to the Incarnate Word and all that he stands for makes them open to receive grace upon grace from him. This abundance of grace continues to sustain them through the most trying times. It gives them the courage never to give up or to give in, but to continue and carry on.

By taking on our humanity, Jesus has shown us that we can be divine. He has shown us how far we can go, even in our humanity. We can love more, we can dare more, we can believe more, and we can be more. Nothing is now outside the scope of our humanity which, after the birth of Jesus, is no longer a limitation but an advantage. The oracle of Isaiah, composed towards the end of the exile, and which announces the return of the exiles to Jerusalem, finds its fulfilment in the birth of Jesus. Captivity and limitation have come to an end. Now, only freedom and limitlessness are real.

Thus, Christmas is not merely the celebration of a historical birth that took place over two thousand years ago. It is about becoming conscious of who we really are as human beings. It is the celebration of life in all its fullness. It is the celebration of the transformation of limit to limitlessness, of selfishness to selflessness, of bondage to freedom, and of fear to unconditional love.

Those who dare to accept the light and walk in its ways begin to realize that God, himself, walks with them and ahead of them. They know that God does not stay distant from them, remote and isolated. Rather, they know that, in Jesus, God chose to live with humanity in the midst of human weakness, confusion, and pain. This bond holds true for all times and all places. To become flesh is to know joy, pain, suffering, and loss. It is to love, to grieve, and someday, to die. The incarnation binds Jesus to the “everydayness” of human experience. The Word lived among us, not simply in the world. The Word became flesh and the Word's name is Jesus Christ. This Jesus continues to be born in our midst, even today. When selflessness triumphs over selfishness, when generosity triumphs over greed, and when light overcomes darkness, then is Jesus born, again, and again, and every day is Christmas.



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

What Christmas means to me

As a woman Religious, and a teacher I have been privileged to experience both rural and urban life. I have been closely associated with Christmas celebrations at both levels. We can see the reflection of our developed India and a developing Bharat and the economic divide in this celebration. I am reminded of an occasion when I was in an Adivasi village (pada) for a Christmas celebration when the youths were working on a crib name Christ Janma Govhan (The birth of Christ Grotto). Some Social leaders were supposed to visit the Grotto. Baby Jesus was for the whole of Humanity. Irrespective of caste, creed and culture. The previous week was the week of Spiritual preparation. We had a series of sessions with the youths on the topic "The universe is my home" (vishwachi mage ghara) We prepared the crib on this theme. Let all beings be happy and holy. Let everyone be joyful and joy filled. The youths using their Adivasi art, culture and creativity displayed a wonderful Bethlehem Grotto in local style. The Government authorities visited the Grotto and congratulated the youths. The message spread across the mountains and hills. "Glory to God in the highest and Peace to all of good will. This is what Christmas is about: spreading joy, peace and love to all of humanity. Jesus never restricted himself to a particular group, but made himself available to all and especially the poor.

The message of Christmas was accompanied by Christmas carol singing, social awareness programmes, home building, Community building, a Christmas tree and Community sessions. We also stressed the importance of ecology and protecting our environment. Nature is a reflection of God's infinite love. God abides in nature. Whenever nature is nurtured Baby Jesus takes birth.

When I was teaching in schools in Mumbai, I used to visit families to pray for the sick and try to experience their pain, suffering and loneliness. Some have a lot of wealth but their children are abroad. When feasts like Christmas are celebrated, many of these who have wealth miss their children. I have seen a lot of grandparents communicating with their children and grandchildren on video calls with tears in their eyes and pain in their hearts. When Mother Mary visited Elizabeth she was overwhelmed. The baby in her womb leapt for joy. I have experienced similar joy when I visited homes for the elderly, orphanages and other care homes and filled the lives of those living there with Christmas joy by singing carols, playing with them and sharing sweets.

During the corona wave, I experienced similar joy when I took patients to hospitals even at risk to my own life. I offered comfort to poor women, gave hope to unemployed youths, comforted the sick and reached out to educate the poor. I lighted a small candle of knowledge to dispel the darkness of ignorance and gave hope to the down trodden. It is these small ways that we can share the joy of Christmas with everyone we meet. Christmas does belong to all.

The famous Marathi poet Borker writes, "My hands join at that place wherever I see a spark of divinity". This means that the divine can be seen and recognised when love is shared. Humanity is the best religion. To be someone to somebody who has nobody is the greatest joy.

We see this in Mother Mary's life. Let us imitate her as we celebrate her Yes which gave to our world a Saviour and let us make at least one person's Christmas more joyful because of our love. As a religious, I make every attempt to see the Divine in everyone I meet. I am privileged to share the joys and challenges of those I encounter. I praise the Lord for my joyful life.

*Sr. Alka Lopes FDCC
The Immaculate Conception*



THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

We might know how he once was born

A helpless little child

His parents like the migrant crowds

Had no place to abide

They were not folk with wealth nor power

He grew like you and me

Son of a village carpenter

Not famous publicly

He walked this very human path

With care for those in need

Speaking the truth so fearlessly

That justice might succeed

They killed him for the way he taught

But he still lives today

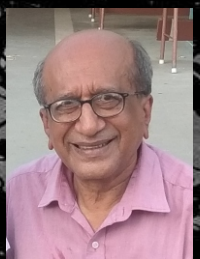
To strengthen human hearts with hope

Christmas starts this way



dazzle beyond

photo/collage: terryq



Fr. Terry Quadros SJ

beyond the dark beams dazzle quiet as silhouette surrenders slow
afar in distanced haze is seen an iridescent glory glow

foreground shadows mark space and time of gifted light long lost and grace
abandoned as usurping hands greed clawing grab at guttered waste

"'tis wealth!" they claim as wars are waged injustice heaped and lords enslaved
to bonded hate devouring man unbalanced deep by sin engraved

all now is lost, all lost and yet catastrophe stayed still by plan
divine redemption will be wrought by Son of God in form of man

so gentle heaven's child new born his peace gift brings to turbulence
and in the hush of Christmas morn is re-created - innocence!

More peace-joy
blessings of the season
on all of you !!

DANCE ON...

You surely must have noticed it... all of nature dances.

People dance occasionally... and most of the time they require music and a rhythmic beat to dance to.

That isn't the case with nature.

Nature dances all the time... and the rhythmic music and beats are picked up from the universe all around. You have surely seen birds dance... and animals... and perhaps insects and fish and other living creatures.

Movies have been made of these dances.

And one sees these movies and smiles at nature being so much like us.

Actually it is the other way around.

Nature doesn't dance.

IT IS THE DANCE !

We humans are the copy-cat imitators of the music and dance in plants and animals, in breezes, waves on the sea-shore, swaying tree-tops...even dried up leaves on the ground graced by winds playfully waltzing them around.

If only we too could become the dance with them!

I do believe we are meant to be that.

Here's a photo freeze of a dance I came up on in the chilli fields we were working on at our SSL rural camp long ago.



No comment. You can see the grace and beauty for yourself.
If you close your eyes and listen, you will hear the music too! Maybe you will want to sway gracefully and join in.

Listen to music inside you...feel the rhythmic beats of the music around you...
And let your life and living be the celebration dance that it is meant to be.
Dance with joy, with gay abandon.
God is watching you. He is with you.

He is the Lord of the dance and is reason enough for all your dancing.

Share your music with the sad and desolate, the miserable and the lonely.
Pick them up from dark spaces and draw them into the dancing with you.
Wake up the music and the dancing inside of each one of them too.

And when we meet up, as we occasionally do, it would be wonderful if we dance around a bit together!

I would like that.

Take care. Stay blessed and rhythmic.
Dance on...



Fr. Terry Quadros SJ



Surrendering to Love

Fr. Terry Quadros SJ

*Surrendering to Love's unbounded will
The Word descends in human form to be
Incarnate witness of God's love for man.
A virgin graced gives flesh to divine plan.*

*A child is born no ordinary child is this
Star wakens earth from death to life of bliss
As angels, shepherds, Kings from distant lands
Sing loud, bow low and touched by Father's hand
See Son make dwelling with the simple poor.*

*In rough hewn hands accepted is the gift
Mortalised by Spirit's grace, sent down
Now vulnerably held surrendering
To whims of human destiny ordained
As God's eternal omniscient plan
Miraculous unfolds, redeeming man.*

*Father's compassion shown, concern for man
Who from his sorry plight so full redeemed
Now man for man a like concern must show
Compassion love for fellow man in need.*

*A kingdom new with God-child's birth begins
As earth and heaven fully now rejoice.
Celestial choirs fill the heavens, sing
Creation joins with celebration voice :
"To God in highest heaven glory be!
To all of good will here on earth - His peace!"*

माझा नाताळ !!

सि.अलका.
तलासरी.

मी एक व्रतस्थ सिस्टर म्हणून आणि त्यात शिक्षिका असल्याने शहरी ग्रामीण असा दोन्हीकडला अनुभव माझ्या पाठीशी आहे. शहरातील ख्रिस्मस आणि खेडेगावातील नाताळ सणदोन्ही मी अनुभवले आहेत. आपला देशच विकसित 'इंडिया' नि विकसनशील 'भारत' असा आर्थिक दृष्ट्या विभागला आहे.तेव्हा तेथील सणावारांवरही तोफरक, परिणाम सहज दिसून येतो.मला आठवते मी एका पाड्यावरहोते. तुरळक ख्रिस्ती वस्ती होती.तेथील युवकांनी 'ख्रिस्त जन्म गव्हाण' ह्या विषयावर या प्रक्रियेत सक्रिय सहभाग घेतला होता शिवाय त्या भागातील अधिकारी वर्ग तिथे शुभेच्छा भेट देणार होते. धर्म ,जात ,पंथ अथवा प्रांत या पलीकडे जाऊन ख्रिस्त हा अखिल मानव जातीसाठी भूतलावर अवतरला . येशूचा गोठा नि ख्रिस्त गव्हाण तयार करण्याआधी पहिला आठवडा आमचा प्रक्रियेतील तयारीचा होता. मानवतेच्या ज्वलंत विषयाला न्याय देण्यासाठी त्या आठवड्यात आम्ही युवकात समाज जागृतीसाठी चर्चा घडवून आणली. 'हे विश्वचि माझे घर,'ह्या रेशमी नात्याने हा गोठा तयार करण्यात आला होता.सबका मंगल सबका मंगल सबका मंगल होये रे इस धरती के सभी एक प्राणी सुखीया होये रे , ही भावना आमच्या अंतकरणात उसळत होती.युवकांचे विचार, युवकांची कला, आदिवासी आर्ट सर्व गुणांना वाव देऊन त्यांच्यातील सुप्त कलांनाचालना दिली. आणि पंधरा दिवसांच्या मेहनतीनंतर अर्थपूर्णअशा देखाव्यानिशी गव्हाण उभी राहिली. साहजिकच कष्टाला फळ लागले. स्पर्धेत युवकाच्या कलेला सृजनशीलतेला दाद मिळाली. संदेशाला आणि त्यांच्या जागृतीचीही दखल घेतली गेली. शासनाच्या ग्रामीण आरोग्य खात्यानेही गव्हाणीला भेट दिली. पंचक्रोशीत बोलबाला झाला. घरोघरी संदेश पोहोचला.कोणता असेल बरे? हा संदेश होता 'स्वर्गात परमेश्वराला गौरव आणि पृथ्वीवर सज्जनाला शांती'खेड्यांमध्ये येशूबाळावरील श्रद्धेबरोबर नि संदेशाबरोबरचकॅरल सिंगींग बरोबरच समाज जागृती गीते, क्रीब बरोबरच घरकूल बांधणी, ख्रिस्मस टी बरोबरच 'झाडे लावा झाडे जगवा' अशा पर्यावरण पूरक योजनेची माहिती दिली गेली. निसर्ग म्हणजे देवाच्या प्रेमाचा प्रतिबिंब होय जिथे निसर्ग जोपासला जातो तिथे ख्रिस्त बाळाचा जन्म होतो.शहरी आणि ग्रामीण दोन्ही भागात मिशन सेवाकार्य करताना मी एक व्रतस्थ आहे हा अनुभव मला नेहमीच जवळून आला. नाताळ सणातही मी तो अनुभवला.मी जेव्हा मुंबई सारख्या तारांकितशहरातील शाळांत शिकवीत असे. तेव्हा सणावाराला नि इतरवेळीही कुटुंबांना भेटी देत असे.त्यांच्या दुःख वेदना आजारपण जाणून घेत असे. शहरांत गरजवंताच्याही घरी भेटी देऊन त्यांचे एकाकीपण मीअनुभवले आहे. घरात धनदौलत आहे.पण सणावाराला मुले परदेशात आहेत. विडिओ कॉॅलवर नाताळ सप्ताहात आपल्या मुलांना सुनांना नातवंडांना पाहून एकांतात आवंठा गिळणारे, अश्रु ढाळणारे , एकाकी उदासीन आजीआजोबा मी पाहिले आहेत. "दुखितांच्या धावली सांत्वना" आणि मावस बहीण एलिझाबेथच्या भेटी घरचा हा पवित्र मरियेचा आनंद अनुभव मीही भर नाताळ सणाच्या मौसमात घेतला आहे. वृद्धाश्रमात अश्रूत, बालकांच्या अनाथालयातील स्पर्शात ,सर्व धर्मीयांना घटकाभर नाताळ सणाचा आनंद ,संदेश देऊन गीते गाऊन त्यांना रिझविले आहे.

कोरोना काळात स्वतःच्या जीवाची पर्वा न करता इतरांना हॉस्पिटलपर्यंत पोहोचविण्यास केलेली मदत, दुर्बल स्त्रियांना दिलेले काम, बेकार तरुणांना दिलेला आशेचा किरण, आज्ञांच्यांना भेटून दिलेली प्रेमाची नजर. रंजल्या गाजलेल्यांना दाखविलेली करुणा ,दिवसरात्र शाळेत गोरगरीब विद्यार्थ्यांना शिकून पेटविलेला ज्ञानाचा दिवा ,झोपडपट्टी हे मिशन मानून स्वतःला झोकून दिल्याचा आनंद! जणू वाटत होतं अशा प्रत्येक लहान कृतीत एक नवीन कोंब सोनेरी प्रकाशात उगवत होतं. हाच माझ्यासाठी क्रिसमस होय. ख्रिस्ताप्रमाणे 'सदा सर्वदा सर्वस्वी सर्वांसाठी बनणे ' हाच नाताळचा खराखुरा आनंद होय.

बोरकरांनी सांगितल्याप्रमाणे दिव्यत्वाची जेथे प्रचिती तेथे कर माझे जुळती. माणुसकीसारखा धर्म नाही. ज्यांचं कोणी नाही आणि जे कुणाचे नाहीत त्यांचे आपण बनाणे ह्याशिवाय मोठं कर्म नाही आणि मानवतेसारखी सेवा नाही.बाळ येशूला जन्म देणाऱ्या पवित्र मरियेची विविध रूपे आज आपण जगात पहातो. पवित्र मातेच्या ह्या अनुभवात ,आनंदात नि वेदनेत मलाही शहरी, नागरी ,सागरी, डोंगरी भागात सुख:दुःखाचा सर्वस्पर्शी अनुभव देवाने मला माझ्या व्रतस्थ जीवनात दिला. त्याबद्दल मी जीवनात देवाच्या अनंत प्रेमाबद्दल कृतार्थ, कृतज्ञ आहे. माझ्या व्रतस्थ पाचारण जीवनात समाधानी आहे.

.....+++.....

ख्रिस्तजन्म!!

वेन्सी डिमेलो

देवाने निर्माण केलेल्या सुंदर शाश्वत पृथ्वीचा सरतेशेवटी दुष्ट, स्वार्थी, सैतानी मानवी प्रवृत्तीने असा अंत केला. ... तो म्हणाला, "अंधार होवो."

नि सर्वत्र भयाण 'अंधार' पसरला. हा 'तम' त्यास सोयीचा होता. कारण भक्षकांसाठी हा 'काळोख'

रक्षक होता. माफियांसाठी आंदण होता. पृथ्वीवर दुर्जनांना गौरविणारा होता. त्या अंधारातून त्याने प्रसवली जात, पात, धर्म, वर्णवर्गाची धर्मांध पिल्लावळ.

तेव्हापासून पृथ्वीवर नव्हती सकाळ, दुपार की संध्याकाळ! पृथ्वीचा अंत होण्यापूर्वीचा हा सातवा दिवस.

मग तो म्हणाला... उरल्या सुरल्या प्रकाशपुत्रांचा नायनाट करावयास मदमस्त सत्ता येऊ दे. आणि तसे झाले.... आता प्रवक्त्यांचे मुडदे पाडण्यासाठी रान अगदीमोकळे मोकळे होते. तेव्हा तेथे नव्हती पहाट की प्रहर. हा सहावा दिवस.

तो म्हणाला.... भाजून मारायला फर्नेसच्या भट्ट्या नि गुदमरून टाकायला गॅसच्या टाक्या. निर्माण होऊ देत. युद्ध आगडोंब पेटू देत. आणि तसेच घडले. अर्भके, बालकांचे श्वास कोंडले. स्त्री पुरुषांचे देह धुमसले. आकाशातील विहंग कोसळले. जल आटले. जमीन भेगाळली. झाडे कोमेजली. तेव्हा तिथे नव्हती सकाळ की संध्याकाळ. काळाकुट्ट अंधार... हा पाचवा दिवस.

आणि यदाकदाचित ह्या अंधाराला छेद देणारा प्रकाश किरण निर्माण झाला तर? म्हणून तो म्हणाला... झिंगू देत सैराट आणि झिंगाट यौवने.

ड्रग्स, दारूच्या नशेत. पांगळी पडू देत नेतृत्वे नि धगधगती तारुण्ये व्यसनाधीन. आणि तसे झाले.

पृथ्वीचे तारुण्य आचके खाऊ लागले. तेव्हा तेथे सकाळ नव्हती की संध्याकाळ हा चौथा दिवस.

नि तो म्हणाला ... द्वेषात माजू दे यादवी शांती प्रिय देशात. विभागू दे सत्ता आणि तसे झाले. तेव्हा तेथे सकाळ नव्हती की संध्याकाळ. हा तिसरा दिवस.

अणि सरतेशेवटी मानवाने निर्माण केला त्याच्या विचाराचा विधाता!! जगद्गुरु!!! ज्याचे डोळे होतें हिंसक हृदय होते पाषाणी. आणि तसे झाले. पृथ्वीला द्वेषाग्नीने घेरले. तिचा लोभस प्रेमळ चेहरा म्लान झाला. सुंदरतेच्या सुमनाला सुरकुती पडली. पृथ्वीला ग्लानी आली. तेव्हा तेथे नव्हती..... होती केवळ भयाण स्मशान शांतता....

स्वहस्तेच विनाश ओढवून घेतलेला माणूस खजील झाला. अगतिगतेने आराधना करू लागला. देवाने निर्माण केलेल्या त्या सृजनशील पृथ्वीकडे तिचे खंडहर होताना पाहून देव रडला.

पण निराश झाला नाही. त्याने दुसरे स्वप्न रंगवले. तोच हा "ख्रिस्तजन्म!!" (ब्रोकन बट लव्हड!!) विवेक

माझा नाताळ !!

वेन्सी डिमेलो

मी मिशनरी म्हणून शहरी आणि ग्रामीण अशा दोन्हीकडील नाताळ सणाचा अनुभव माझ्या पाठीशी आहे. शहरातील झगमगता चंदेरी ख्रिस्मस !! आणि खेडेगावातील खंडहर, खडतर, कष्टाळू, श्रमिक, मेहनती, तरीही दुर्लक्षित, दुर्गम विशेष सुविधा नसलेला सदा कुपोषित असलेल्या खेडूतांचे सणसोहळेही मी पाहिले आहेत.

आणि अशा खेड्यांतच आपला जन्म व्हावा म्हणून देवदेवतांनी अशा ठिकाणांची निवड केलीली आपण पहातो आहोत. आणि त्याच देवदेवतातील एक "दावीद पूत्र येशू ख्रिस्त" हा देखील आहे !!

आपला भारत देश हा विकसित 'इंडिया' नि विकसनशील 'भारत' असा आर्थिक दृष्ट्या पुढारलेला नि मागासलेला असा विभागला गेला आहे. साक्षर नि निरक्षर असा दुभागला गेला आहे. एका ठिकाणी सर्व सुविधा तर दुसऱ्या ठिकाणी सुखसोयींचा तिव्र अभाव. तेव्हा येथील सुखसोहळे नि सणावारांवरही त्याचा परिणाम दिसून येतो.

मला आठवते मी अशाच एका खेडेगावी सेवाकार्यात होतो. तुरळक ख्रिस्ती वस्ती होती. तेथील युवकांनी चर्चपातळीवरील "ख्रिस्त जन्म गव्हाण" स्पर्धेत भाग घेतला होता. मिशनमधून परीक्षक येणार होते. विषय, आशय, संदेश, श्रद्धासंवर्धन आणि सजावट असे निकष होते. विषय दिला होता. 'कुपोषित बालकांचे निवारण नि संगोपन' हा ज्वलंत नि जिव्हाव्याचा नाताळ संदेश देण्यासाठी युवकयुवतींमध्ये उत्साह संचारला होता.

येशूचा गोठा वा ख्रिस्त गव्हाण तयार करण्याआधी पहिला आठवडा आमचा त्या प्रक्रियेतील तयारीचा होता. या ज्वलंत विषयाला न्याय देण्यासाठी त्या आठवड्यात आम्ही युवकात समाज जागृतीसाठी चर्चा घडवून आणली. शिबीरात 'कुपोषणाची' कारणे शोधून काढली. आणि तसे देखावे तयार केले.

युवकांचे विचार, युवकांची कला, आदिवासी कला अशा सर्व गुणांना वाव देऊन तसेच त्यांच्यातील सुप्त कलां विचारांना चालना देऊन, पंधरा दिवसांच्या प्रदीर्घ चर्चेनंतर आणि मंथनानंतर अर्थपूर्ण अशा देखाव्यानिशी एक भयानक वास्तवाचा संदेश देत गव्हाण उभी राहिली. साहजिकच आमच्या कष्टाला फळ लागले. स्पर्धेत युवकांनी प्रथम क्रमांक पटकावला. त्यांच्या कलेला, सृजनशीलतेला दाद मिळाली. संदेशाला आणि त्यांनी केलेल्या जागृतीचीही दखल घेतली गेली.

महाराष्ट्र शासनाच्या ग्रामीण आरोग्य खात्यानेही गव्हाणीला भेट दिली. पंचक्रोशीत नि शासन दरबारी सात्विक परिपूर्ण पोषण आहाराचा बोलबाला झाला. घरोघरी तसा संदेश पोहोचला.

येशूच्या जन्माचा उद्देश, संदेश
आणि भूतलावर येण्यातील इप्सित लोकांना कळले.

माझ्या शहरी नाताळाच्या तयारीची सुरुवात मात्र इंग्रजीतील 'सी' ह्या आद्य अक्षराने होत असे. 'सी' फॉर ख्रिस्मस कार्ड , कॅरल सिंगिंग, क्रिब, ख्रिसमस ट्री, केक आदि....

खेड्यांमध्ये येशूवरील श्रद्धा आणि शिकवणूकीबरोबरच ख्रिसमस कार्ड ऐवजी आधार कार्ड, रेशन कार्ड, काढण्यास मदत करणे. कॅरल सिंगिंग बरोबरच समाज जागृती गीते, क्रीब बरोबरच घरकूल बांधणी, ख्रिसमस ट्री बरोबरच 'झाडे लावा झाडे जगवा' आदी शासकीय योजनांची माहिती दिली जाते. आणि केक ऐवजी 'दररोजची कष्टाची भाकर आज आम्हाला दे' अशी प्रार्थना नि ती मिळवण्यासाठीचे श्रम आदींवर घरोघरी सांजेला चिंतन मनन प्रबोधन केले जाते.

आमच्या मिशनरी व्रतस्थ जीवनात कमीटमेंट, कन्सर्न, केअर, कॅंपायशन, क्रिएटिव्हिटी आदी 'सि' ना महत्व आहे. (बांधिलकी, आस्था, काळजी, करुणा, सृजनशीलता आदि) तो अनुभव मला शहरी नागरी आणि ग्रामीण आदि भागात मिशनसेवा कार्य करताना आला. नाताळ सणातही मी तो अनुभवला.

मी जेव्हा मुंबई सारख्या चंदेरी तारांकित शहरात सेवेत होतो. तेव्हा सणावाराला नि इतर वेळीही कुटुंबांना भेटी देत असे.

त्यांच्या दुःख वेदना आजारपण जाणून घेत असे. शहरांत वृद्ध गरजवंताच्याही घरी भेटी देऊन त्यांचे एकाकीपण मी जवळून अनुभवले आहे. घरात धनदौलत आहे. सर्व सुखसोयी आहेत. पण घरात कोण नाही. सणावारावेळी मुले परदेशात आहेत. विडिओ कॉन्फरसद्वारे नाताळ सप्ताहात आपल्या मुलांना, सुनांना, नातवंडांना पाहून एकांतात आवंठा गिळणारे, अश्रु ढाळणारे , एकाकी उदासीन जीवन कंठणारे आजीआजोबा मी पाहिले आहेत.

वृद्धाश्रमात एकाकी आईवडिलांना, आणि बालकांच्या अनाथालयात जाऊन मातृपितृक्षेत्र हरवल्या सर्व धर्मीय आबालवृद्धांना घटकाभर नाताळ सणाचा आनंद संदेश देऊन, गीते गाऊन "दुःखितांच्या धावला सांत्वना" हा येशूचा अनुभव देत त्यांना रिझविले आहे.

जीवनसत्वाअभावी खेड्यात बाळाला जन्म देणाऱ्या मातेचा पान्हा जसा आटलेला असतो.

नि नवजात बाळ आशेने मातेकडे

पहातानाचा. तसाच शहरातील अभागी मातांची ओढ नि त्यांचे ऊर परदेशातील आपल्या मुलांच्या भेटीसाठी कासावीस होताना मी अनुभवले आहेत.

बाळ येशूला जन्म देणाऱ्या पवित्र

मरियेची विविध रूपे आज आपण जगात, समाजात पहातो. पवित्र मातेच्या ह्या अनुभवात ,आनंदात नि वेदनेत मलाही शहरी, नागरी , सागरी, डोंगरी भागात सहभागी होता आले आहे. सुख:दुःखाचा सर्वस्पर्शी असा हा अनुभव देवाने माझ्या व्रतस्थ जीवनात मला दिला आहे. त्याबद्दल मी जीवनात देवाच्या त्या अनंत प्रेमाबद्दल कृतार्थ, कृतज्ञ आहे. माझ्या व्रतस्थ पाचारण जीवनात समाधानी आहे.

"येशू इतरांसाठी जगला."

ह्यातच त्याचे जीवनचरित्र नि सारी शिकवण सामावली आहे.

आणि तो संदेश अंगिकारणे म्हणजेच "नाताळ" "ख्रिस्त जन्म!!" साजरा करणे.



Daily Reflection

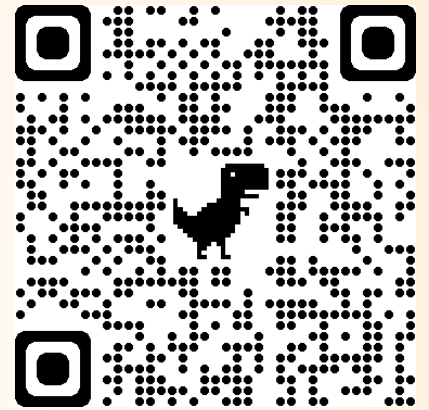
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-Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ



The Shrine of the Infant Jesus, Nashik also has a youtube channel. On this channel the 12 noon Mass is live online everyday. You can reach this channel by Scanning the QR Code or Tapping on the QR Code. Do subscribe to this channel. **Subscription is Free**



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