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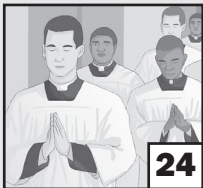
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Editor : Dr Suresh Mathew

Editorial Board : A. J. Philip
John Dayal
Marydasan John

Advisory Board : George Plathottam
Benoy Joseph
T. Dominic
P. A. Joseph
C. J. Baiju

Design and Layout : Ankit Wilson

Circulation Manager : Ashish Victor

Finance Manager : Jainamma

Office Address

Manager
Indian Currents, 375-A, Pocket 2,
Mayur Vihar - Phase -I, Delhi - 110 091

Telephones

011- 45873264
Mob: 7042562963

E-mail

icdelhi@gmail.com
frsureshmathew@gmail.com

Website

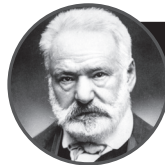
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Power Quotes



Virgil Garnett Thomson

Try a thing you haven't done three times. Once, to get over the fear of doing it. Twice, to learn how to do it. And a third time, to figure out whether you like it or not.



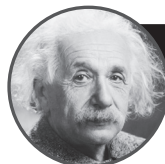
Victor Hugo

Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake.



Nelson Mandela

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.



Albert Einstein

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.



Marcus Jullius Cicero

Friendship improves happiness and abates misery, by the doubling of our joy and the dividing of our grief.

Editor's Message



Show Them Light to Tread in Darkness



We have witnessed, in the recent past, a few instances of priests and nuns taking their life, a consecrated life started with a lot of passion and fervour. At another level, there are cases of those requiring psychiatric or counselling support as their life starts vacillating between frustration and calling it a day. It is apparent that something is going awry as consecrated people traverse along a path set for them. Various reasons are cited as catalysts in changing the course of their lives.

Humiliating experiences seem to play a major role. It could be due to several reasons – discrimination; lack of understanding and healthy relationship, dearth of freedom and liberty; abandonment; sexual abuse and so on. Faced with such a situation, some suffer in isolation; some run away; and some commit suicide. In the face of unacceptable behaviour from others, nuns and priests look for support from their superiors. Unfortunately, instead of providing a shoulder to rest, the victims become subjects of ridicule. The role of superior is not to scold, control and dictate; rather to identify the struggling members and help them find solutions to their problems. The superiors are called upon to impart a sense of belongingness to them.

At a time when people feel isolated in the midst of crowd, priests and nuns could be deeply hit by the same as their life has loneliness inbuilt in it. Making more opportunities for sharing in the community could be a way out. Life cannot be insulated from loneliness, but its impact can be mitigated. Healthy relationship with families through holidays and participation in family events can go a long way in creating a feeling of camaraderie. It is in family that one gets more empathy and compassion. Family is also the bedrock of human formation which can be replicated in formation houses. But it requires mature, loving and inspiring formators who create a joyful and caring atmosphere.

Work load and lack of leisure are trouble spots which lead to heartburns and despair among many religious men and women. Daily community spiritual exercises along with slogging at work place leave little space for personal life. Add to this the competition among various congregations to enlarge their community number-wise and institution-wise. This leaves very little time for relaxation and holidays. Superiors and authorities have to accept these problems and look for remedial measures to save the struggling souls.

Priests have long years of training; nuns too have many years of formation before they take the final vows. However, they do not have many opportunities for 'ongoing formation' after they enter religious life. Refresher courses, unlike yearly retreats, have much wider application and utility in the life of the consecrated. Setting up of internal forums, wherein members can express themselves, can go a long way in making the troubled souls at ease; it may stop them from saying goodbye to life in a huff.

The image of priests and nuns is taking a dent because of the tragedies hitting them. It would be unrealistic to turn a blind eye to it. The Church and the congregations should find out some ways to help out those feeling lost, abandoned, confused and lonely before they commit any fatal act.

Dr Suresh Mathew



**Letter
To The
Editor**



**Unholy Act
Redefining Citizenship
by A. J. Philip
(IC, 16 - 22 December, 2019)**

Multi-coloured lungi or a white dhoti will determine your citizenship in India.

Josy John On Facebook

Well commented. With political opportunism in mind and lust for power, Shah and Modi are driving country to a state of communal divide and hatred among peace-loving people.

Vee Kay Sharma On Facebook

Excellent piece, but saddening, what will the govt/BJP gain out of this petty decision unless it's part of parivar's communal narrative...

Kay Benedict On Facebook

A.J. Philip's Anglo Indians Stand Banished is fascinating and as usual exhaustive (IC, 09 - 15 December 2019). However, there was no need to tag Christians with Anglo-Indians in the end of the article. In Kerala, there are Christians who are more proud of being of Nambudiri descent than being the follower of Christ. In my childhood days in the 1930s, I was under the impression that Christians were a caste of the Hindus, something like between Nairs and Ezhavas in the hierarchy. When I was in Madras in 1947, I saw Anglo-Indians who were pitch black. There was no English blood in them. The husband and wife were servants of

an English family and they spoke English. They spoke English at home and their children too became Anglo-Indians.

N. Kunju, Delhi

An RSS Agenda

This is in reference to the Editorial 'Yet Another Partition', by Dr. Suresh Mathew, (IC 16 - 22 December, 2019). Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) is a hotly debated issue today. The Prime Minister repeatedly says 'Sab ke saat, sab ka vikas', but the CAA contradicts his claim. It is obvious to anyone that this Act is based on religious divide.

If Vivekananda Swami was proud to belong to a nation which sheltered the persecuted and refugees from all religions and all nations, today the RSS wants to practice what Golwalkar and Savarkar stated: "The non-Hindus may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserve no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's rights".

All the reforms, rewriting of history, abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu-Kashmir, CAA and the proposed National Register of Citizens are all visible signs of establishing 'Hindu Rashtra'. They do not want secular democratic socialist republic; instead they are proceeding on the line of a theocratic authoritarian Hindu Rashtra.

Lima Varghese, Indore, M.P.

Politics sans Ideology

This is in reference to the article "Politics Without Morality" by Jacob Peenikaparambil (IC, 02-08 December 2019). It is really disgusting to see how politics is being played out in India. Politics without principle is one of the seven dangers as cited by Mahatma Gandhi.

Kiran Joseph On E-mail

Taking Care of Kids

This is in reference to the article "With Bricks and Books" by F.M. Britto (IC, 02-08 December 2019). I am very glad that M.S. Asish Mittal cares for children and provides them with food and education.

Rohit Wagh On E-mail



Students' Rage Nation's Protest



BY A. J. PHILIP

Students in large numbers took part in a demonstration in Chandigarh. They were protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). Panjab University has few Muslim students, though it was originally located at Lahore in Pakistan.

It is one university that migrated along with the millions who migrated across the border in the wake of the

Partition, advocated, first, by "Veer" Savarkar, long before MA Jinnah took it up as a political demand.

Yet, the students felt compelled to join the agitation. And so did many of my friends and colleagues. One of them, a lady, suffered bruises while taking part in the protest. Writer and academic Ramachandra Guha said that if he had not joined the agitation, he would have missed a great opportunity to stand for the truth. He is a Gandhian by conviction.

Why I mention all this is to bring home the point that it is not a Muslim agitation as some vested interests have been trying to portray it. Agent provocateurs are also at work to defame the agitation as the act of "urban Naxalites". In West Bengal, the police have arrested some BJP workers wearing Muslim caps and veils.

In Delhi, I have seen pictures showing an ABVP worker wearing police gear and attacking the students of Jamia Millia Islamia. There are also videos showing policemen in uniform putting DTC buses to the torch and destroying two-wheelers of students.

I do not know how many people know that in Jamia at least fifty per cent of the students are non-Muslims. The point is that CAA and NRC are not a Muslim issue at all.

When many persons who were concerned over the goings-on in Jamia brought the matter to the notice of the Supreme Court, its first reaction was to ask the students to end violence. The fact of the matter was that it was the goons of a particular kind, aided by

A CLOSE LOOK

the uniformed, who were resorting to violence to show the students in a poor light.

When almost everybody is equipped with a video camera in the form of a mobile phone, such violent acts are unlikely to escape the notice of citizen journalists. It is not the first time that students have resorted to an agitation. Since the 13th century when the Paris University students resorted to an unprecedented agitation, students had always shown the way when governments took undemocratic paths.

American campuses were up in flames when the US attacked Cambodia or Kampuchea in the seventies. In Gujarat, it was an agitation led by the students which led to the fall of the Congress ministry during the same period. Lalu Yadav, Sharad Yadav and Nitish Kumar are some of the products of the student protest. The agitation has no religious or class or caste colour.

In fact, the agitation against the CAA and the NRC began first in Assam and Tripura and they were not led by the Muslims. What's more, the Republic TV owner Arnab Goswami, whom most television viewers see as the unofficial spokesman of the Modi government, was seen for the first time questioning the Centre's foolishness.

The people have many reasons to protest. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) is one party which supported the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament. When the party realised that its MPs and MLAs could not walk on the roads in Assam because of the public anger, they changed the stance and said that the CAA was unwarranted.

Some of the BJP's allies like the JDU and the Akali Dal seem to have developed cold feet over supporting the CAA and the NRC. Yet, the government is adamant that it will not budge an inch and would go ahead with the new Act. Amit Shah's decision to pilot the CAB all of a sudden was as thoughtless as Modi's demonetisation.

He thought that he would get clapping like the one he received for the abrogation of Article 370. The fact is that even months after Jammu

and Kashmir was vivisected to form three Union Territories, the Kashmir Valley remains like a jail with citizens suffering untold miseries.

The world has been watching the atrocities committed on the people there. Of course, Islamophobia, widely prevalent in the West and elsewhere, has helped Shah and Co. to pretend that everything is hunky dory in the Kashmir Valley.

The latest heard is that Kashmir would be renamed like Mughalsarai, Gurgaon, Agra and the Aurangzeb Road.

The only logic in abrogating Article 370 was to let citizens from the rest of India buy land there and eventually reduce Muslims to a minority there. The BJP and its forerunner, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, were opposed to the Inner Line Permit system prevalent in states like Arunachal Pradesh.

When I got a fellowship from the National Foundation for India to study the problem of Chakmas, mostly animists from Bangladesh, in Arunachal Pradesh in the mid-nineties, I was told that I should have the permit from the Arunachal Bhavan in Delhi. Since I was a journalist, it was not difficult for me to get the permit which I had to show the police a couple of times while I was in the state.

The permit was the brainchild of Verier Elvin, who came to India as a Christian missionary, lived with the tribals, married one only to abandon her, married again one of them from Meghalaya, settled down in India, and wrote several books on tribals in Central India and the Northeast. He became an adviser to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and fathered the Inner Line Permit system to ensure that the tribal states did not suffer from the exploitative characteristics of the "mainlanders".

Elvin feared that if people from the rest of the country were allowed to buy land, the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) as Arunachal Pradesh was known, would become like modern-day Jharkhand where non-tribals are in majority now. The BJP opposed tooth and nail

Dayal, Cedric among Hundreds detained for protesting CAA

John Dayal and Jesuit Father Cedric Prakash were among hundreds of human rights activists on December 19 detained in various parts of India for protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which they say is divisive.

The Delhi Police detained Dayal, a senior journalist and human rights activist, along with others for protesting in front of police headquarters. Others detained included socialist leader R K Jain, former Karnataka legislator B R Patil, Nisar Alam of Madhya Pradesh, Manoj Sehrawat and M A Johar of Mushawarat.

They were later released. All were picked up from Shaheed Park headquarters and were taken to Shaheed Park Police Station, said A.C. Michael, former member of Delhi Minority Commission.

Father Prakash was detained with others in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Upon the detention, the Jesuit priest said, "We are truly living in a fascist state."



the Inner Line Permit system. Yet, neither Atal Bihari Vajpayee nor Narendra Modi had the guts to end it.

In order to douse the flames of protest against the CAA and the NRC in the Northeast, Amit Shah promised introduction of the Inner Line Permit system to Manipur also. He has called the leaders of Meghalaya for talks after Christmas to discuss the possibility of letting its introduction there as well. In Assam, which is ruled by the BJP, everybody cannot visit some areas without an Inner Line Permit.

In other words, Verier Elvin's idea is now fully endorsed by the BJP. Of course, this is because of the realisation that the government will have great difficulty to control the situation if the people of Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, too, join the agitation like the Assamese people.

This is because China has been claiming that Arunachal Pradesh is a part of the Chinese territory. It does not allow any citizen from Arunachal Pradesh to visit China on Indian passport. Its argument is that the people of Arunachal Pradesh do not need a passport or visa to visit their own

country. In short, AP is a province of China!

This stance has been irritating India which does not want to complicate the situation there. That is why Amit Shah does not want the special provisions in the Constitution for the Northeast to end the way he ended Article 370.

A significant point is that out of the 19.2 lakh people identified as illegal migrants in Assam, a majority belongs to the Hindu community. To get the benefit of CAA, all of them will have to give a declaration that they reached India because of religious persecution. Many of them might have migrated because of economic, rather than religious, reasons.

They will have to give a false affidavit that they were persecuted for religious reasons to get the citizenship, a provision denied to the other because they are Muslims. It now transpires that Amit Shah gave Parliament incorrect details while piloting the Citizenship Amendment Bill.

For instance, he claimed that the population of Hindus in Pakistan had been dwindling over the years. The fact is that the percentage of Hindus in Pakistan, earlier West Pakistan, has been consistently increasing, not decreasing.

A CLOSE LOOK

This itself knocks the bottom off his argument that Hindus in Pakistan have been decreasing, as he says, on account of 1) forced migration, 2) killing and 3) migration to India.

What is under attack is not Muslims but Article 14 of the Constitution. It specifically rules out discrimination on the basis of religion, caste or class. The principles of equality is applicable even to non-citizens who live in India. For instance, a tourist from, say, Europe or Africa, cannot be barred from entering a restaurant because she or he is a foreigner. Ditto for a Dalit or a Muslim or a Christian.

There was a time when restaurants and students hostels in India were reserved for separate communities. This is illegal now. It is this provision of the Constitution which is threatened by Shah's CAA, which seeks to exclude foreigners who are Muslims from citizenship. That is also why people all over India have stood up against the discrimination.

The government has every right to protect the borders and prevent infiltration. But how can some infiltrators become eligible for citizenship because of their religion while some others

cannot? It is like making a terrorist who worships Gandhi's killer as a Member of Parliament. This is what is questioned. Spokesmen of the Sangh Parivar like Rakesh Sinha, MP, argue that there is no plan to extend the NRC to the rest of the country.

Amit Shah had time and again stated that the NRC would be extended to other states also and no illegal migrants would be allowed to live in India. How does an infiltrator enter India? He or she enters India only because of the failure of the Border Security Force and the Indian Army.

For instance, the Pakistani terrorists could create mayhem in Mumbai only because they could not be intercepted by the Indian Navy, the Coast Guards Organisation, the Indian Army, the Maharashtra Police, the Mumbai Port authorities and, finally, the Mumbai Police.

By the way, how do beggars prove their identity to be eligible for citizenship? Shah can see them at every intersection in India. It is he who has been terrorising the Muslims and other minorities by such talk of disenfranchisement. It is not just loud talk.

Citizenship Amendment Act: Archbishop Pakiam expresses concern

Archbishop Soosa Pakiam M. of the Latin Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram has come out against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, terming it discriminatory.

Discrimination against anyone in a democratic and secular country like India was unacceptable, the Archbishop said at a press conference here on Dec 18.

The act is against the secular values and the church will express its views over the act at the apt time, he said.

"Discrimination against some people in the country is worrisome. Church doesn't support it. The amendment is anti-constitutional and against the secular values. There is a concern whether the amendment conceals a declaration that anything can be done in the name of majority," he added.

Many of the church followers are taking part in the protests against CAA staged inside and outside the state. This is with the knowledge of the church, he clarified adding that the church's objection will be communicated strongly when the right time comes.

(Source: Mathrubhumi)

Christian leaders condemn repression of youth protests

More than 200 Christian leaders from across India have condemned the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, and “brutal repression” of protests by youth and civil society against the legislation. “We express our solidarity with the students and others who have been grievously injured and pray for their speedy recovery,” said the statement signed among others by Father George Pattery, head of the Jesuits in India, former theology professor T K John, human rights activist John Dayal, and Evangelical Fellowship of India general secretary Reverend Vijayesh Lal.

The statement noted several controversial legislations passed by the Parliament since the new government came to power in May. They have led to the collapse of the democratic institutions of India built “carefully and painstakingly” by “enlightened leaders” over the last seven decades, the Christian leaders bemoaned. The new law, they say, is deeply divisive, discriminatory and violative of human rights. In particular, this legislation discriminates against Muslim communities in India, who constitute over 14 percent of the population of India, and therefore, it is totally unacceptable in a secular democratic republic of India.

“The letter and spirit the Constitution, framed by men and women who had participated in the freedom struggle, cannot be thrown out at the whims of a particular ideology. We are deeply saddened at the haste in which the President of India gave his assent,” the statement added.

The BJP is just an extension of the RSS. The RSS founders like Guruji Golwalkar had in their books like Bunch of Thoughts proclaimed that Muslims and Christians would be allowed to live in India only as second class citizens and that, too, at the mercy of the Hindus. It is not easy for the minorities to obliterate such fears from their minds, more so when Shah frequently refers to extending the NRC to the rest of the country.

The clever propagandists of the BJP have been misquoting Rajiv Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, CPM resolutions etc to claim that CAA was in accordance with their thinking. Pray, when did the BJP commit itself to follow the resolutions of the Marxists and the statements of Congress leaders?

It would be pertinent to quote a leader from Tripura whose ancestors allowed Bengalis seeking shelter from Noakhali to settle down in Tripura. Recently, he asked whether Modi and Shah would announce that in view of the Assamese’s protest against settling the “illegal migrants” in Assam, Gujarat would

accommodate the 12 lakh “Bangladeshi Hindus” to settle down in Gujarat?

Then, the duo would know how the Gujarat Navnirman Samiti resorted to violence in their protest against Chimanbhai Patel’s government at that time. One good thing has happened. Now the people know, how Indians, irrespective of caste or colour, fought against the British to gain Independence. There is another aspect to the agitation. People have stopped talking about the decline in the economic growth rate, the growing unemployment and the total failure of demonetisation and skill India.

Countries after countries have been issuing advisories to their citizens about the risks of travelling to India. Japanese Prime Minister, who was taken to Varanasi to show Arti in the Ganga, preferred to cancel his visit to India this time. Yet, Shah continues to say that the CAA is here to stay. For once, people know the danger of entrusting responsibility with irresponsible people. This is the New India Modi had promised!

(The writer can be reached at ajphilip@gmail.com)

IC

LOVE God Neighbour Thyself

Suicides by priests and nuns call for closer look

Love thy neighbour 'AS THYSELF'?



BY DR JOAN ANTONY

Love God.

Love thy neighbour as thyself.

Two noble motives underlie the choice of an individual contemplating Religious life. The primary one - dedicating oneself to Consecrated life of Priests and Nuns - is a response to the Sacred Call and the first commandment "Love God" facilitated through detachment from all worldly aspirations - an attachment that is more profound than the profoundest of relationships known to ordinary man.

Secondly, for many, what attracts them to Religious Orders and Congregations is their notion of dedicating their lives to serve humanity - a very noble cause - with a desire to fulfill the second commandment: Love thy neighbour AS THYSELF - to its Word and Spirit.

If the reasons of joining religious life are noble, the intriguing question is: Irrespective of age, why are the number of Religious requiring psychiatric help increasing and many requesting leave of absence from active religious life?

Love God would mean you have got to know Him. You cannot love the unknown. The first stage in religious formation should be the increased awareness of the omniscient God whom you chose to closely commune with. Is this basic knowledge, the solid foundation of religious life, missing or fading from the lives of many Religious today?

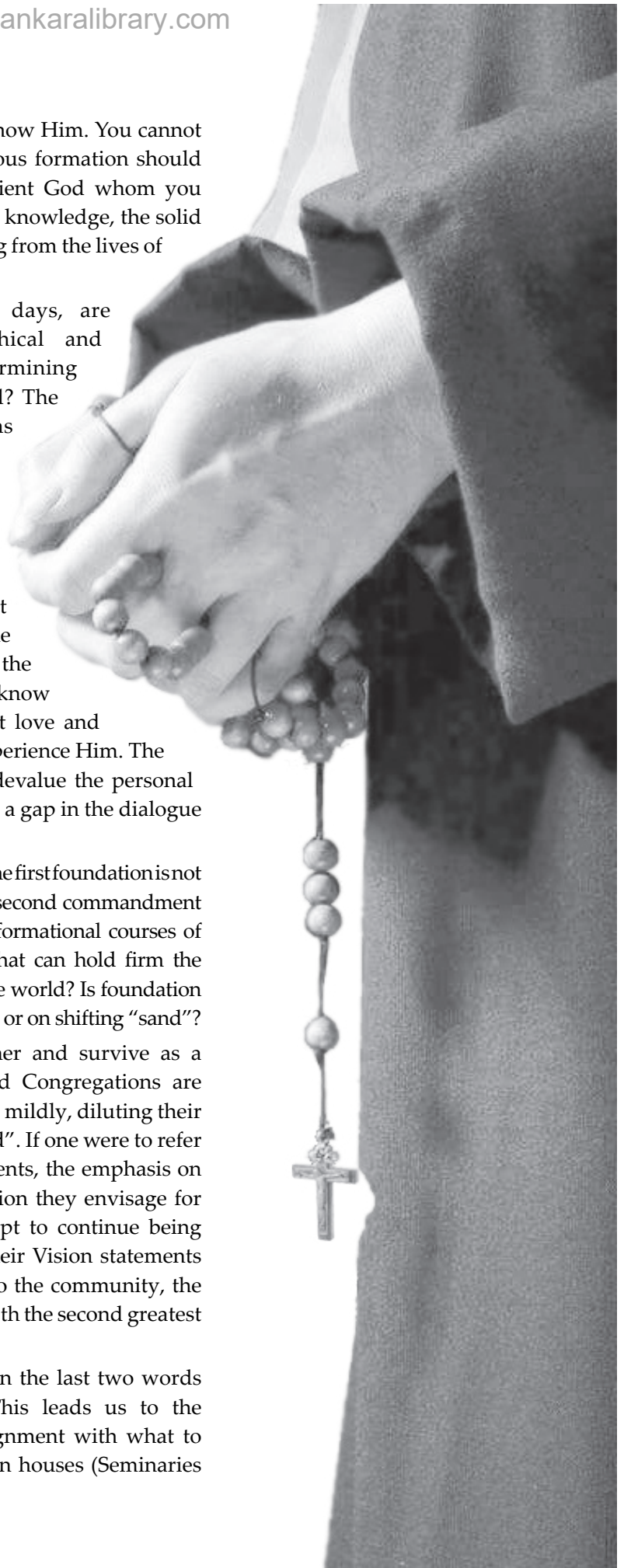
The Religious, from their formation days, are stirred in the direction of philosophical and theological theorizing. Is there an undermining of the spiritual experiential aspect of God? The common man is more open to discussions on such experiences than the Religious. Is religious formation focusing too much on knowledge based in the brain-power of the human-self?

Experiencing the Almighty, like that which Moses encountered, is based not on human knowledge alone but entails the collaboration of human submission to the transcendental power of God Himself. To know Him is to experience Him. You cannot but love and commune with Him once you touch and experience Him. The inhibition in sharing and the tendency to devalue the personal unempirical mystical aspect in itself exhibits a gap in the dialogue between God and Man.

Tempest are multitude in the world today. If the first foundation is not firm, then on what ground structure will the second commandment – love your neighbour - stand firm? Do the formational courses of religious life provide for concrete stability that can hold firm the house of Faith to withstand any tempest of the world? Is foundation of Faith in the Almighty built on strong “rock” or on shifting “sand”?

In the struggle to keep the flock together and survive as a community, many a Religious Orders and Congregations are themselves losing sight of, or putting it more mildly, diluting their primary Sacred Call to “Know and Love God”. If one were to refer to some of their Vision and Mission statements, the emphasis on the Sacred Call has got blurred by the Vision they envisage for their congregational set-ups in their attempt to continue being of relevance in the fast changing world. Their Vision statements are mainly directed towards reaching out to the community, the underprivileged, the youth, etc., in accord with the second greatest commandment - Love your Neighbour.

The test of the two commandments lies in the last two words “Love your neighbour AS THYSELF”. This leads us to the question: Are the formative courses in alignment with what to expect in the world outside of the formation houses (Seminaries



A Preventable Tragedy

BY SR. JESSIA MSJ

As we scour news every day, we get to see someone has taken his/her life. Young, old, rich, poor, priest, religious, healthy or sick (priests and nuns included) – suicide doesn't discriminate between them. Every suicide is a tragedy that affects families, communities, congregations and has long-lasting effects on the people left behind.

Suicide was the second leading cause of death among young people globally in 2015. In fact, over 78% of global suicides occurred in low and middle income countries (India is listed out in the middle income group).

Research says suicide is a serious public health problem and completely preventable with timely interventions. Screening and early intervention is a must during formation period (psycho-socio-spiritual and cultural intervention). We live and act out of conviction not compulsion, we should focus on quality rather than quantity in religious life.

Research says that many of the behavioural, psychological and mental health problems among young people can be prevented if it is intervened at an early stage. Eg: crime, violence, sexual permissiveness, drug abuse, academic competition, bullying and suicidal tendencies.

People who report high levels of social isolation also report more depressive symptoms, lower self-esteem, and are at a higher risk for suicidal ideation or suicide attempts than those who do not feel isolated. This demonstrates that socially inclusive environments are important for ensuring people to get the support they need to cope with challenges of everyday life.

(The writer is Research Scholar, Don Bosco University)

and Novitiates)? To "Love" another as "thysel" in the real sense of the word in the real world is a tough "call"!

Advancements in scientific modalities of communication and its effective use by the Religious to enhance the span of outreach worldwide, to persons in close proximity as

well as oceans apart, is happening at great pace and is commendable. Connectivity with the "neighbours" with the focus to uplift them spiritually, psychologically, and materially, is the target of most Congregations and is being well met.

However, simultaneously there is another troubling phenomenon taking place in just the contrary direction – lack of inward-soul-searching by the Religious to check on their level of inner tranquility and happiness, at both the individual and communitarian levels.

Transcendence in "giving" to others comes from the self that is satisfied in itself.

Outside of the formation houses, the reality of dealing with unanticipated adjustments in actual community life and field work hits hard on the young Religious, who in fact is yet to be "formed". Here then is another pertinent question that must seriously be looked into: How harmoniously communitarian are the





Religious communities today? The youngster's actual formation begins here and depends on the sensitivities of the other members of the community in which he/she is placed.

In the early years of formation, the feeling of comradeship is predominant in Religious houses amongst "companions", a term used to refer to batch-mates. But with moving into adulthood, separation from companions, with companions being assigned to different mission stations, being shifted from place to place (with or without ample notice), overemphasis on detachment, and non-exclusive emotional connections leads to self-distancing from core-human feelings. One trains oneself to justify to the self that the suppression of emotions is all for putting into

practice the "Love of the neighbour".

We can argue that this was the situation ever since the foundation of Consecrated life from historic times. But the days of prayerful serenity and quiet, sheltered in the four walls of communitarian life, have been replaced by high speed connections to any one or any idea generated anywhere on the globe. Free and frequent accessibility to material attractions of the world and social networking are having a draining effect on the focused dedication required for consecrated prayer life and the renouncing of one's good for the benefit of others. Craving for cloistered solitude for prayer life falls in the purview of only a few now.

Another phenomenon, the sense of competition, has seeped into the minds of the Religious who have to prove their 'individual' worth vis-à-vis each other on assignments undertaken, developmental programs successfully completed, number and quality of retreats conducted/attended, seminars organized and chaired, etc. Let's for a moment move into the heart of the Principal of a school being compared to success stories of his/her companion with a similar assignment. So a shift occurs from being "one with the collective" to being "one amongst the collective". The pressure to prove one's 'own' worth begins to increase.

Life after formative period

— BY SR LIMA GEORGE SJA —

The most important area we need to pay attention to is the formal formative period. During this period, ample attention and opportunities should be given for personal, emotional, psychological, spiritual and interpersonal growth. This should be done under specially qualified formators.

Equally important is the religious' life after formal formation. When a religious is assigned to a community after his/her formal formation, the community should not look at him/her as a 'finished product', rather as a person who still needs support and accompaniment in their journey.

The community members should not be judgemental on various aspects of his/her life, rather accept them with love and understanding. This will help them to further their formation and deepen their trust and love for the congregation.

As it is, the world today is moving into a place of persons with blurred emotions. Lack of prayer life and the suppression of normal human emotions is a deadly mix leading to 'dulled human interiority'. Loneliness is the powerful emotion underlying many a negative emotions and it is creeping into the hearts and minds of more and more people. This trend is seen in humanity as a whole and the Religious are not insulated from it. In fact, they are more affected by it as they are living "individualistically" within the "collective"!

Emotional distancing is taking place at two levels – one from those within the congregational community and second from the people they work for. With so much emphasis on detachment, the Religious move into their work stations mentally prepared in advance to move out in a couple of years. Basic human defenses will come into play to protect oneself from the very onset – restrict to only so much of emotional bonding and commitment and no more! Where then is expression or indulgence with true love? They are compelled to live in "phases of attachment" and "phases of detachment".

How healthy is this psychologically? Does this not lead to superficiality in commitment to the mission assigned? And superficiality in relationships with their institute and the associated persons? Frequently moving from one cycle of attachment-detachment to another can have a two pronged effect – craving for stable relationships outside of the norms stipulated, or a dent in the ability to form long term trust.

Even within the community, attachments are discouraged. Dialogue and sharing is mostly related to activities undertaken, responsibilities accomplished, or discussions about persons other than themselves. Rarely does one share deep personal insecurities as these will expose their personal vulnerabilities. This is accompanied by an underlying anxiety of being criticized or downgraded.

Criticisms from within the congregational community are very difficult to handle for many. The support system within the Orders and

Congregations are falling apart. Subordinates are falling prey to the demands made by seniors. Most Congregations are in a state of denial of these practices. How effectively is the practice of "contemplative dialogue" used? The question is whose "contemplative thought" is given priority?

Many in positions of power also become victims of dejection resulting from falling out of favor of their community members/institution employees – a consequence of taking irrevocable unilateral decisions based on their own notion of what is right, without taking into account the views of others.

When a member falls victim inadvertently to his/her own mistakes or is dragged into situations of compromise, the guilt that comes into the repentant soul is bad enough to handle. Even worse is the instance when it is talked about by multiple persons or referred to in multiple contexts, even if done without the intent to hurt. Thus, guilt resolution is often unintentionally hindered or prolonged.

The "Neighbour" they are working for and with, is no fool any more. Awareness and critical approach to all services provided and accepted is the order of the day, particularly amongst the literate and the urban. They see through - that "love" is preached but not practiced in its true sense; often, that "love" practiced may have an ulterior motive. This does not wound the "neighbour" as much as it would wound the Religious who expects in the least a minimum reciprocation of appreciation and respect.

Most join consecrated life at a very young age, many in late adolescence and early adulthood.



Let no one feel excluded

— BY SR MARY BEENA SND —

Rising cases of suicides among priests and nuns are certainly a matter of concern; it shows that they are not immune to the perils of the society they live in. Suicides are mostly the result of depression, causes of which could be many.

Simply raising awareness by talking about it openly, allowing discussions and sharing among the members will surely enable individuals to get the right perspective. An increasingly isolated and lonely life often causes emotional imbalances.

Individuals need to feel connected and valued as persons to develop sound mental health with good self-esteem and self-worth. Formation period is a critical time to educate and empower the younger members to practice responsible freedom, mature relationship and create spaces to interact and address common concerns.

Members need to be accompanied with much love and understanding, where no one feels excluded or threatened. As graced companions in their faith journey, formators and superiors can definitely ensure that the younger members enjoy physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing.



For a large part of their youth life, they exist in a world cloistered from the real struggles of life – like fending for themselves (food, shelter, medical), of personal achievements and targets to be met, of competing with those with worldly experiences, of relationships with persons with extreme diverse attitudes, cocooned from day-to-day interactions with the opposite gender, and the list can go on - thus lacking many a life skills. If the responsibility of running institutions are placed on their shoulders, many find themselves falling short of effective managerial skills.

In today's technologically fast-tracking globalized world, adolescence/early adulthood is an age too early for discernment for life-long decisions. They lack the experience of the world at large. From a very early impressionable phase of life itself, the young who aspire to be members of Religious life are drawn into the call and vision of the Founder – which more often than not, is an idealistic prospect to life emphasizing selfless service. With maturity they begin to see the varied paths that could have been walked and missed opportunities they have left behind.

The best option to continue maintaining the age old high standards of Religious Orders and Congregations could be to increase the age bar of those entering into Religious life with a background of a certain number of years of work experience in the Secular jobs. This would, to a large extent, ensure a well thought out decision to renounce the worldly gains as well as having had the lived experience of the struggles of real life that is undertaken by people they are committing to serve.

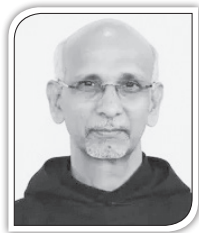
To conclude, the three blocks to inner joy - loneliness, diminished trust, hindered guilt resolution – need to be minimized to put into practice the two great commandments. Only when the two are strongly bound together – control over their own spirit of discipline and commune with God – can the Religious not fall prey to personal disillusionment. Those who withstand the tempest around will be the ones to be held in high esteem by themselves and by others, and they will stand out as beacons for those sliding downhill.

(Dr. Joan Antony is an Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi)

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Boost Mental Health

The Church leadership has to help those weak in mental health to deal with their impulses and emotions



BY JOHN BAPTIST OFM CAP

News reports on suicides of priests and religious in recent times are forcing us to have sincere discussions and conversations about its impact upon the society and the Church. We need to come out of the culture of silence and converse about it. Suicide is a matter of pastoral concern in the Church. Suicide does not just happen to a person, rather it is an act a person does to himself and therefore it is an act of self-murder. There may be varied reasons why a person commits suicide. It can be either due to depression, spiritual despair, to avoid consequences of one's act, loneliness, to surmount tension with the authorities, lack of healthy sexual maturity, failure to maintain boundaries in relationships, inability to maintain meaningful relationships, fear of failure in ones undertakings, fear of hardships, suffering, torture, etc.

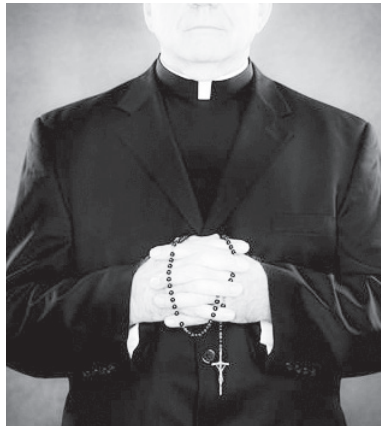
Some may have the feeling that it is not worth living and are tempted to give up their lives. Some suicides may have nothing to do with one's mental illness or fitness. It's worth questioning whether the priests and religious fail to find meaning in their consecrated lives. The Church has to initiate ways and means to take good care of the mental health of her own priests and religious men and women. An awareness is to be created among priests and religious that they are also human beings at risk of suicide and are in need of assistance.

We could find a few biblical personalities who thought that death would be better, who made attempts of suicide and who did commit suicide. The story of prophet Elijah brings out the inner conflict of the prophet when he encountered adverse situation and when his own life was at risk. "He prayed that he might die, saying, 'it is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life . . ." (I Kgs. 18:4), but the Lord strengthened him to go to Horeb.

We have again King Saul who killed himself. When he was at the point of defeat during war, Saul asked his armor-bearer to thrust him through with the sword but his armor-bearer did not do it. We read, "therefore Saul took his own sword, and fell upon it" (2 Sam. 31:4). We have Judas Iscariot who 'hanged himself.' Suicide was the tragic end of Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ.

He committed suicide because of his guilt feeling of betraying 'innocent blood' (Mt. 27:4).

Some of the recent events in the Church, whether in Europe or in Asia particularly in India, indicate that a few of Jesus's disciples who chose Him as their Way later on took the path of Judas to end their lives. Suicides by priests and religious are being reported in India and abroad. It was unheard of till recent times. What happens to the mental health of the 'shepherds' who have to seek the 'lost sheep'? As shepherds of the sheep of Christ, they have to go after the ones who lost the way. The one 'lost sheep' has lost the way only for some time and is therefore not perished. The priests and religious who are to be 'shepherds' give a bad and scandalous example by their suicides. Is not a blunt violation of the commandment of God, "Do not kill"?



The Catholic Church teaches that suicide contradicts the natural inclinations of the human being to preserve and perpetuate his life. It is contrary to the just love of self (CCC 2281). Suicide is also a social sin because it is contrary to what we owe others, including God. It offends love of neighbour because it unjustly breaks ties of solidarity with family, nation, and other human society to which we continue to have obligations. Suicide is contrary to the love for the living God (CCC 2281)

Priests and religious men and women are called to teach the believers "to love one another" as Jesus loved and learn to 'love thyself'. As Jesus said, "can a blind

man lead a blind man"? (Lk. 6:39). Jesus disappeared from the places where he had been targeted because he knew that his hour had not yet come. When it was time for Him to glorify His heavenly Father, he handed himself over to them. Priests and religious ought to build up and should have a very good and healthy relationship with the mental health experts. As spiritual leaders of the community, priests take seriously the cases of mental health and treat suicidal mania of their faithful as the situations demand. The Church leaders likewise need to take up adequate means to treat suicide

among priests and religious men and women. All issues related with mental health cannot be solved by prayer and spiritual direction alone. Since suicide is a real problem in recent times in the Church in India, it has to be addressed with due seriousness and urgency as it deserves. Priests and religious are to be helped to

heal their own frozen memories. To lead a committed life is the biggest challenge today for some of the priests and consecrated men and women.

The Church leadership has to help those weak in mental health to deal with their impulses and emotions. All those who did commit suicide could be entrusted to the mercy of God. St. Paul assures our hope: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . I am sure that neither death, nor life, . . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8: 35-39)

Lessons for All of Us

Today, the challenge before the Church is not, how to put right a rotten organization, but rather how to improve a system that does lots of good, but can and must do even better



BY FR JOE MANNATH

Several million people will travel to work today in Delhi. Most will get back home safe, with no accidents. Their names will not be in the papers tomorrow. The “news” will have the names of the very, very few who died in accidents or who committed violent crimes.

News is not about what is normal, but what is exceptional. An old rule of news reporting was: “Ninety-nine children born with one head do not make news. One child born with two heads will make news.” Most news channels go for what is sensational. Evil is generally more sensational than good.

It would be a mistake to form our ideas about a place or its people from the “news.” Such images will tend to be dangerously sensational -- and generally negative.

We do not have statistics on how many priests and religious have committed (or attempted) suicide in the recent past. There are no grounds for thinking that such cases are more frequent today than earlier. This mistake is often made. What is new is technology -- and the much faster and easier transmission of news. Thus we know how many died in police firing in Mangalore this past week. Decades ago, we would not get the information, or get it very late. Today, the transmission of “news” is instantaneous, and it is further relayed, almost endlessly, over social media.

About ten days ago, social media passed around the comments of Father Victor Ferrao of Rachol Seminary on this same topic. I agree with most of his suggestions. They are certainly sensible. I would like to add the following comments.



Depression, Madness or... a Trial?

But first, I would like to invite you, reader, to do a simple exercise in assessing people:

Look at the four quotations below. They are true statements made by real persons. Mark each with one of these four letters:

- (a) if you think the person is mentally sick or abnormal;
- (b) if he/she seems to lack faith;
- (c) if you consider this individual is saintly or unusually mature;
- (d) if he/she seems to be an ordinary human being, with a normal problem.

"I am incapable of finding any other comparison than that of a man hanged by the neck who, with his hands tied behind him and his eyes blindfolded, remains hanging from the gallows and yet lives, with no help, no support, no remedy." (...)

This young man experienced "...a state of extreme mental anguish, firmly believing that he was doomed to go to hell and had no hope of salvation. This made him go cold with fear. This state of anguish lasted about six weeks... and it was so violent that he could hardly eat or sleep and went thin and yellow as wax." (...)

"[From my own experience of temptations of despair] poisonous medicines should not be kept near severely sick people; for they may be tempted to take them...I do not feel any of the beautiful things I write about. The tempter whispers in my ear: 'Carry on hoping! There is nothing waiting for you after death.'" (...)

"I have thought of suicide many times. May be I would have done it, if I knew how to." (...)

OK? Finished rating the four statements? Then, read on. Here is the identity of the writers:

These words belong to Blessed Angela of Foligno, a thirteenth century mystic. In her time of "most horrible darkness" (as she called it), she cried for death. She asked Christ "to send me to hell without delay." Yet from this she came forth into "a state of joy so great

that it is unspeakable. In it I knew everything I wanted to know, possessed all I wanted to possess."

The person in question was a bright young student of a Jesuit college in Paris who would later be known as Saint Francis de Sales. The description of his experience of despair comes from the person who knew him best—his soul friend, Jeanne de Chantal. How did the young Francis get over this torment? "Coming to a certain church...he knelt down in front of an altar of Our Lady, where he found a little wooden board on which was mounted a copy of the prayer beginning: 'Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, ...' He said it right through, rose from his knees and at that very moment felt entirely healed; his troubles, so it seemed to him, had fallen about his feet like a leper's scales."

Words of Saint Therese of Lisieux. In addition to her extreme physical sufferings, she was tried with severe mental anguish, with no consolation, no felt sense of God's nearness. She would say: "The death of love I so much desire is the death of Jesus on the cross." In spite of such pain and near despair, her last words include: "I do not regret surrendering to love" and "My God, I love thee."

A contemporary priest holding a very public office, during a time of severe depression. What helped him and healed him were the love and support of family and close friends, and competent medical help. He got over his depression and went on to a very productive public life.

Lessons

Why did I present the experiences of these four persons?

To highlight a few truths we may easily forget:

Any of us can undergo severe depression, and lose all interest in living. Depression is commoner than many of us think. We all need, at least occasionally, a shoulder to cry on, and a loving heart into which we can pour what is

going on in our lives, with all the good and the bad within.

All of us, especially superiors and formators, need to be healers. Most people carry unhealed wounds, especially from painful childhood experiences. When we do not see, or care about, people's pain, we tend to judge them.

As philosopher Bertrand Russell once wrote, "To understand a person generally means to understand the tragedy of his/her life, for it is around it that his/her life is organized." Having sat in therapy groups with religious and priests, I would agree. Many shared tragedies and hurts that made us the rest of cry. Hardly anyone is as confident as they look in "normal" life.

This is why, if we truly believe in Jesus and are serious about following Him, we will become more and more compassionate. God came among us as a compassionate healer. He came to heal, not to condemn. *To be Christlike means to be a compassionate healer, not a CID or Cop!*

In classes on Psycho-sexual Integration and Celibacy, I quote Sr Melanie Svoboda, a US Sister who writes honestly and competently about choosing celibacy. Two things she insists on: (a) The desire for intimacy is a deep human longing. A person needs to discern well before deciding to choose life-long celibacy; (b) *We can*

fail in celibacy in two ways, namely, by going "too far" in relationships (as when a priest falls in love with a parishioner) or by not relating enough. She would tell her novices the second is the greater and more frequent danger in celibacy -- to live together without loving one another.

We, religious and priests, join these special settings or profess celibacy, not just to do some work. Our work -- teaching, nursing, social work, media, etc. -- does not require celibacy. This unusual choice of life -- saying No to two of life's BEST pursuits, namely, spousal love and parenting -- would be healthy only if chosen out of a deep spiritual awareness. To coax ("recruit") someone to join us just because we have institutions to run, and need hands for work, is neither just, nor is it "vocation promotion."

Larger Issues

So, rather than focus on a few sensational cases of suicides, we need to pay honest and discerning attention to the larger issues of religious life and priesthood. Is there true fraternity in most dioceses? Are most of our communities homes of love, or simply work-related settings with frequent power games and divisions? Our "real job" as religious is to set an example to the Catholic community on how the Gospel can be lived joyfully. Our core duty as priests is to help people in their relationship with God. Are we really faithful to these main duties, or are we simply a bunch of people living by worldly standards, with several hours spent in the chapel every day?

Formation

India has the largest number of religious in the world -- around 150,000 -- and also the largest number of religious in formation. We are not providing adequate formation for living our life joyfully and lovingly. Diocesan seminaries face the problem of being staffed by professors who may not be formators (the two roles are quite different, and require different qualities and skills).



Religious formation houses differ greatly in the seriousness and quality of selection and formation of candidates.

Apart from these general observations on formation -- which I cannot go into in a short article -- I need to add one weakness which the Church is aware of: The weak link in the formation of priests and religious is HUMAN FORMATION.

Human formation includes the following six areas: (1) Adequate health and capacity for work; (2) Emotional balance; (3) Psycho-sexual integration; (4) Healthy relationships; (5) Responsible use of freedom; (6) Contact with reality.

Human formation requires mature, loving and inspiring formators who create a joyful and caring atmosphere in which the young can really grow up. It also requires honesty and responsibility in the formees. But, of the two, the greater responsibility is with the formators, for this simple reason: "The young have a right to be immature, but superiors and seniors should be exemplary."

Conclusion

With all its limitations -- which the press is delighted to highlight -- the Catholic Church, I believe, is the largest agency in the world for doing good. The good done in and through the Church is amazing. To quote just one statistic, the Church is the largest private provider of medical care in India, with over 3,500 presences.

Our challenge is not: How to put right a rotten organization, but rather: How to improve a system that does lots of good, but can and must do even better.

Providing better human formation, including counselling and spiritual direction, using our long years of formation to become better and more mature human beings, seeking and getting help rather than hiding our problems, being healers more than bosses when we are in positions of authority, understanding that every human being is more insecure than they



look, and building loving communities -- all this is stuff we are supposed to know. There is really nothing new or revolutionary in any of these suggestions.

Since we all tend to blame structures or expect miracles from changing structures, I would like to end by putting two questions for personal reflection to the reader: (1) Is there anyone I go to, or can go to, to share deeper personal issues? How much help have I sought and got in this area? (2) Am I the type of person -- warm and genuine, compassionate and not judgemental -- whom someone in pain or confusion will feel like approaching, certain that I will listen with love and respect, keep matters confidential and do all I can to help? Do people approach me for confidential help. That is the simplest way of checking whether I am suitable for this form of ministry.

We need many more persons of this type -- warm, genuine, respectful, compassionate and sincerely interested in helping others -- to become all that God wants them to be. They are true life-givers.

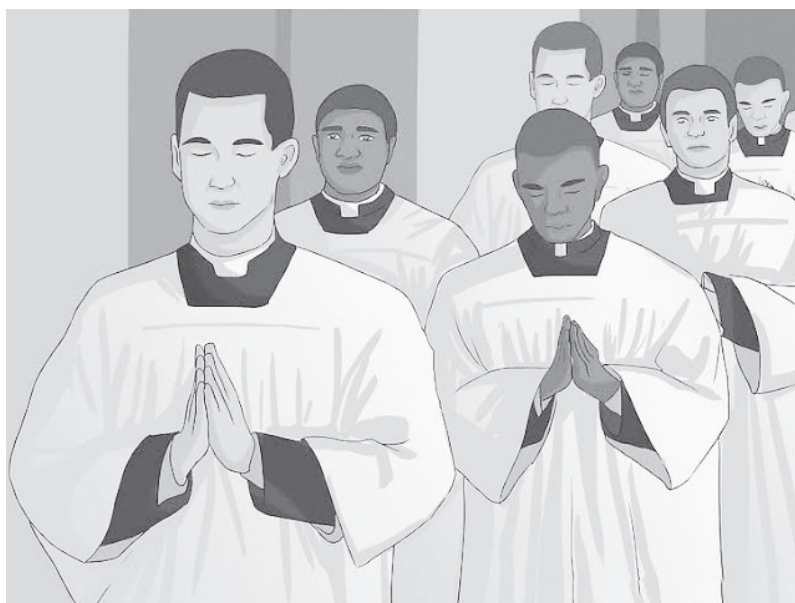
(Fr Joe Mannath SDB is the National Secretary of CRI, and the editor of MAGNET magazine. His experience includes 20 years of formation ministry, 12 years of university teaching, 8 years of work in on-going formation, as well as international lecturing, spiritual direction and writing. E-mail: jmannath@gmail.com)

Needed: A daily date with God

When we try to understand why there is a growing number of young religious or priests committing suicide we need to keep in mind the nature of society that they come from



BY SR SHALINI MULACKAL



It appears that a growing number of priests and young religious sisters have ended their lives in the past few years. How do we understand this growing phenomenon of suicide especially among the radical followers of Jesus? And how do we respond to this situation adequately?

Each human being is a product of the society we are living in. If there is anything permanent in a society, it is change. We need to realize that our society is always changing and these changes affect human beings for better or for worse. The candidates who desire to become a priest or a religious is coming from this same society. Consequently when we try to understand why there is a growing number of young religious or priests committing suicide we need to keep in mind the type of society that they come from.

We are living in a capitalistic, consumerist and to a large extent a patriarchal culture. What are some of the values promoted in such a culture? There is cut-throat competition everywhere. A person is valued depending on the wealth s/he processes. Today's generation can be aptly called as moral orphans since ethics and morality do not fit in this world view of reaching the top by any means. The present generation is growing with the sole aim of success at any cost and are not taught how to face failures in life.

It is important to keep in mind that it is from this same society that a young woman or a young man decides to join the religious or priestly life. She spends at least four to five years of training before she makes her first profession/vows. She is not only taught the basic understanding of Christian faith, to read and interpret the Scriptures, how to pray, especially how to meditate and contemplate besides learning to pray with the community. She is also given classes relating to religious life in general and religious vows in particular. During the time of formation, they are taught to lead a disciplined life. After her first profession, the young sister is assigned to a community and her formation continues for the next five to six years until she makes her final vows/profession.

On the other hand, a candidate to priesthood spends at least eight to ten years in his religious/priestly formation before getting ordained as a priest. What is most important during these formative years for both priests and religious is to help them to build a strong personal relationship with God/Christ. This relationship is deepened, strengthened and sustained through quality time spent daily in personal prayer and meditation. During the formative years, the daily schedule of the formation house ensures that each formee spends at least one hour in personal prayer. But once they are out of the formation set up, many abandon personal prayer.

In a normal community, each one is expected to find time for personal prayer. But the big question is how many are faithful

to personal prayer and thus strengthening one's relationship with God. When faced with difficulties of any sort, misunderstanding, serious illness, broken relationships, rejection or failure, it is one's deep faith and trust in God that helps one to tide over these situations.

It is true that each one's workload has increased and everyone is struggling to find time. And most of the times what goes out of one's time schedule are the time for personal prayer. Nothing else is sacrificed. We are faithful to our social networks, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, etc. We do not miss our meals either. Time management and a

Once they are out of the formation set up, many religious abandon personal prayer. When faced with difficulties, it is one's deep faith and trust in God that helps one to tide over crises

disciplined way of life must be insisted from the beginning. According to me, the lack of faith and loving relationship with God is the key reason for many ills facing priestly/religious life today including the tendency to end one's life. The remedy, therefore, lies in our faithfulness to God and a strong resolve not to miss our daily appointment with God, no matter what happens.

Another factor that needs to be taken seriously is the motivation with which the candidate

is entering religious life or priesthood. Often the motivation may not be pure in the sense that one comes with the pure motivation of following Jesus radically or are convinced of their mission as that of being at the service of people especially those on the margins of society. Young people may join just to get a good education or for their safety and security. If they do not get what they came looking for, then they are not able to face any disappointment in life.

As I already mentioned the candidates joining religious life/priesthood come from a society that gives very little importance to human life whether it is one's own or others. There is a considerable degradation in our society with regard to the preciousness of life in general and human life in particular. Violence and killing has become the new normal. Every day we are bombarded with news of killing and murder and also of suicide. Once again the preciousness of our life and our responsibility to preserve it has to come into our conversations and exhortations.

We also need to give serious thought to our recruitment policy of taking young boys and girls at the tender age of fifteen or sixteen. Once they make their first vows and are in their religious dress, it is difficult for most of them to go back even if they find that they are not called for this life. Because of the societal taboo, many parents discourage their children to leave and put pressure on them to stay on. This could be another reason for some to take the extreme step.

Finally, we need to humbly admit that all is not well with the way we live religious and priestly lives today. We have very few role models for the young ones to follow. We are also plagued by individualism, nepotism, regionalism, etc. in our communities. Each one is carrying their own baggage and brokenness. Even the young come with their own brokenness and wounds. Therefore the question is how do we respond to this situation?

I think the response should begin in our families itself. It is imperative to ensure an environment at home and in our society which promotes positive well-being. Parents

and schools not only prepare children to be successful but also mentally and psychologically prepare them to face failures as well. It is also vital that organisations and governments receive support to promote mental health education and promote coping skills in youth. We must advocate for better policies and implementation of resources for mental health. We must view suicide as a condition needing treatment, not as a punishment. Mental health education and resources for dealing with symptoms of mental health should be taught and promoted from an early age. Doing so will provide an avenue for the maintenance of dignity and help-seeking behaviour.

Coming specifically to religious/priestly life, we need to find ways to help young ones to fall in love with God. We need to make it mandatory that all will have a spiritual accompanier. As Fr. Victor Ferrao pointed out in his reflections, we need "to educate them instead/or along with the existing curriculum, alternative sciences promoting life, stress management, handling relationships, responsible freedom and personal liberty."¹ Fostering dialogue between community members is very important. The community, especially

the community animator need to create time and space for the young religious to share their concerns openly. Finally, if we know someone who is feeling emotionally distressed, we need to tell them that we care for them and are ready to help in any way possible.

We need to humbly admit that all is not well with the way we live religious and priestly lives today. We have very few role models for the young ones to follow

Reference

¹ <http://mattersindia.com/2019/12/why-does-suicide-among-religious-priests-increase/>

Reinvent Religious Life Urgently

The most important reason for discontentment and alienation of many Religious appears to be lack of a sense of belonging



BY JACOB PEENIKAPARAMBIL

At least a dozen priests and nuns who ended their lives in the past few years: says a recent article in Matters India. Disturbing news, yet the issue is not discussed in any forum within the Church. Unfortunately, no introspection or analysis is done to find the answer to the question, “Why” in the religious congregations.

For the last 30 years, I have been in contact with various Religious congregations in different parts of India as a resource person for training, workshops, seminars and guiding chapters. This has given me an opportunity to interact with many women and men Religious individually and collectively. I wish to share with the readers some of my observations and analysis regarding the disenchantment of a good number of women and men Religious with Religious life. There could be many reasons for the vacuum or emptiness experienced by the Religious.

Reasons for the Disenchantment in Religious Life

1. A good number Religious, especially women Religious, have the feeling that they are being used to build and maintain institutions without contributing much to their personal growth and fulfilment. The result is discontentment and disappointment.

2. The priestly and religious formation does not equip a person to face the challenges in life. It does not help a person to evolve personal vision, goals and policies that provide purpose in life and enable a person to withstand obstacles and failures. When the candidates join Religious life or priestly formation their goal is to become a Religious or a priest. Once that goal is achieved, then there is no further goal in life that creates passion and enthusiasm in them. They often lead a routine life by following the routine timetable and activities. When confronted with critical situations some of them are not able to withstand. The routine prayers and devotions do not equip a person



to face crisis with courage and positivity. Contemplation, an appointment with God and oneself and reading inspirational books, especially biographies of persons who faced crisis have the capacity to bring out strength and energy from within. Reading serious books and reflection are neglected due to the overload of work.

3. The outdated lifestyle followed in many religious congregations is another reason for the discontentment. Theoretically many Religious are taught that they are radical disciples of Jesus to continue the mission of Jesus. But in practice, the old concept of aspiring for perfection by keeping a negative attitude towards the world is prevalent in a good number of religious congregations.

4. The most important reason for discontentment and alienation of many Religious appears to be lack of a sense of belonging. Two opposite tendencies are observed in the religious communities. Members are becoming more and more individualistic in many men congregations, and community exists for namesake. There are individual members who do not appear even for common meals. On the other hand, in many women Religious congregations, uniformity is imposed and individuals do not have any freedom. Many childish rules like not allowing individuals to have a mobile phone, depositing mobile phones with the superior after 9.00 pm, not allowing individual members to have their own e-mail id etc exhibit lack of trust in the members. How can a person love a community that does not trust him/her? Will anyone feel any sense of belonging if he or she is suspected and treated as a thief? Many rules and regulations reflect a lack of trust in the members.

Need for Reinventing Religious Life

Religious life in India is facing a serious crisis. The symptoms are plenty: drastic reduction in the vocation, erosion in the quality of the members recruited, increasing trend of suicide among the Religious, accusations of



sexual abuse, growing discontentment among the Religious, increasing trend of individualism and over-institutionalization that leads to alienation from the people. Often the Religious congregations fail to introspect and do a critical self-analysis. Instead, they adopt easy routes like introducing new rules and regulations, increasing pious exercises and focusing on spreading the Gospel without living the Gospel etc. If the Religious life in India is to survive the crisis, it has to reinvent itself.

Reinventing requires letting go of outdated rules, regulations, traditions, rituals etc. "If you let the past control you, you will have no future", says Peter Drucker. Reinventing Religious life also demands adopting relevant lifestyle and effective ministries, being faithful to the vision and mission of Jesus and the founder. Regarding Religious life, reinventing requires rediscovering the Jesus of the Gospels. Hence there is an urgent need for going back to the Jesus of the Gospels.

How to Reinvent Religious Life?

1. The very concept of Religious life has to undergo a radical change. It is a call not to become a devotee of Jesus but to become a radical disciple of Jesus to continue his mission of building the Kingdom of God, a situation in which God is accepted as the loving Father or Mother and all human beings as brothers and sisters with equal rights, opportunities and dignity. It is a call to become a prophet.

2. The role of the Religious has to change from service providers (Education, Health Care and Social Welfare) to leaders, animators and facilitators if they are to be relevant in the years to come. The over-institutionalization has alienated the religious from the people. The Religious have to be in the midst of the people and transform the society by being salt and light. Hence new ministries are to be initiated that will bring the Religious out of their comfort zones and take them to the midst of the people.

3. Love has to replace the innumerable laws. Jesus gave his disciples only one law, the law of love. He told his disciples that love will be the sign of discipleship and not the colour and the shape of the dress they wear or the shape of the cross they hang on their necks. A life based on rules, restrictions, rituals and devotions should be changed to a way of life that's based on love and freedom. The formation process should equip the Religious to use freedom with responsibility. Those who are not able to use freedom with responsibility should be guided to discontinue during the formation period. The practice of treating adult Religious as children should go. Reading the constitutions of the religious congregations daily will not make any difference if the law of love does not become the foundation of Religious life.

4. The madness for institutional expansion and using individual Religious for building institutions should stop. Investment should be on the individual Religious to build them as mature Religious with character, spirituality, competence and creativity. The ministries the Religious undertake should be the flowering of their creativity and initiative as teams.

The old concept of aspiring for perfection by keeping a negative attitude towards the world is prevalent in a good number of religious congregations

5. The Religious communities have to undergo a thorough overhauling. Not only the Religious but also the co-workers and the domestic staff have to become part of the community. There should be common meal, common prayer and common planning and evaluation, involving all members of the community. Then the religious communities will be able to witness to Jesus and his message like the early Christian communities.

6. The above-mentioned changes can be brought about in Religious life mainly by changing the formation system radically. The formees should be convinced that the Religious life is a call to become prophets to the nations and to continue the mission of Jesus. The formation process should transform the formees as persons with self-discipline and self-education. The formees are to be assisted to evolve personal vision, goals and policies. Developing self-discipline and self-education in the formees should be the focus of the training. They are to be persons with character and competence. They should be able to say like Mahatma Gandhi, "My life is my message".

Religious life is practically becoming extinct in many European countries. This can happen in India in the near future. The drastic reduction in the vocation, especially from the southern states of India and the increasing incidents of suicide among the Religious are the indicators of the impending tragedy. The solution is to reinvent Religious life without any further delay.

(jacobpt48@gmail.com)

IC

One Step Closer

The fight for justice in the case of Nirbhaya is far from over. However, with the Supreme Court rejecting the review petition of all the accused, it is one step closer

BY AARTI



Undoubtedly, the heinous “Nirbhaya” incident of December 16, 2012 in which a 23-year-old physiotherapy intern was sexually assaulted in the most brutal manner by 5 men in a moving bus and later abandoned on a Delhi road shocked the conscience of the nation. However, thanks to the nationwide protests that followed, many amendments have been made in the criminal law like redefining the ambit of offences, providing for effective and speedy investigation/trial.

But even after such changes, contrary to expectations, all the 4 surviving rapists (the main accused Ram Singh ended his life by hanging in his Tihar jail prison cell in 2013) are yet to face the gallows till date for a plethora of reasons.

With the accused trying various last minute strategies to avoid death penalty, the case is still being heard at various levels in the judiciary. One of the accused, Akshay Kumar Singh’s review petition had come up for hearing in the Supreme Court on December 18. It is to be noted that the trial court handed him the death sentence after his complicity in the crime was proved. Further, his conviction and death were upheld by the Delhi High Court and also confirmed by the Apex Court in May 2017.

Yet, Akshay Kumar’s lawyer raised several contentious issues in the review petition. Among others, it was argued that death sentence was futile in Kalyug, where a person is no better than a dead body; as the level of pollution in Delhi NCR was so great, life was short anyhow. Further, the investigation was flawed and unreliable. Due to lack of professional skills of the investigating agency there was the need for an unbiased investigation. Finding no error in its ruling of May 5, 2017, the Supreme Court dismissed review petition.

Another convict, Pawan Gupta’s claim that he was a juvenile at the time of the offence in December

2012 has been dismissed by the Delhi High Court on December 19. Observing that the convict's plea was not maintainable and it was filed to delay and drag the matter so that execution of death sentence does not take place in near future, his advocate, besides being reprimanded for playing "hide and seek" has been fined Rs 25,000 for filing forged documents and not appearing in the court.

With the Delhi Government moving the trial court for issuance of death warrants against the accused in Nirbhaya case, the Tihar jail authorities have been directed by the court to ascertain from the four accused and respond within a week whether they wanted to file mercy petitions with the President. By January 7, 2020 a clearer picture is expected to emerge.

Nonetheless, another important fall-out of the Nirbhaya case is that the Supreme Court suo motto has issued to various stakeholders for furnishing a status report on February 7, 2020 to assess the criminal justice system in response to sexual offences to make the system more efficacious and responsive towards the offence of rape and other sexual offences.

Noting that delay in such matters has, in recent times created agitation, anxiety and unrest in the minds of people, the notice is appreciable.

Essentially the Apex Court seeks to ascertain to what extent its directions in *Lalita Kumari vs Govt. of UP* and others decided by it in 2014 have been put into actual practice which among others had held that registration of FIR is mandatory under Section 154 of the Code, if the information discloses commission of a cognizable offence and no preliminary inquiry is permissible in such a situation.

Further if the information received does not disclose a cognizable offence but indicates the necessity for an inquiry, a preliminary inquiry may be conducted only to ascertain whether cognizable offence is disclosed or not. The police officer cannot avoid his duty of registering offence if cognizable offence is disclosed. Action must be taken against erring officers who do not register the FIR if information received by him discloses a cognizable offence.

The scope of preliminary inquiry is not to verify the veracity or otherwise of the information

received but only to ascertain whether the information reveals any cognizable offence. In addition to this, the statements of the victim under Section 161 are required to be recorded by a woman police officer or any woman officer.

The Court has sought a status report on a number of issues ranging from availability of woman police officer at Police Stations to record information of the victim; registration of Zero FIR when the place of commission of the offence is beyond a Police Station's territorial jurisdiction; recording of first information by a woman police officer in the residence of the victim in case the victim is temporarily or permanently mentally or physically disabled.

In so far as the liability on medical institutions, both public and private to provide medical treatment free of cost to the victims of such offences (IPC 166B), as it offers intrinsic evidences for the trial, the report now sought by the Court calls for details of advisory or guidelines issued by authorities to all hospitals and medical centres as also details of cases registered against any person for violation of Section 166B of IPC which attracts an imprisonment extending to one year or with fine or with both.

With the amended Cr PC Section 173(1A) having set a deadline for completing investigations, the Apex Court seeks to know (i) whether the police is completing the investigations and submitting the final report within 2 months from the date of recording of information of the offence and if no, reasons for delay; and (ii) if sufficient number of women police officers are available to conduct investigation into the offences relating to rape and other sexual offences?

To ensure speedy trial of rape cases, the Court has called for status report of whether trial of rape cases is presided over by a woman judge and if sufficient number of lady judges are available to deal with sexual offences and rape. Information related to infrastructure, conduct of in-camera trials for rape cases, data on the number of special courts established to deal exclusively with cases of rape and other sexual offences including information on the utilization of the Nirbhaya Fund for the purposes envisioned have also been sought. **IC**

Christmas: A Challenge to Reincarnate Oneself



BY VARGHESE ALENGADEN



“Living faith of the dead has become the dead faith of the living”, the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan is being proved in all the celebrations of saints of all faiths. People of all religions spend much of their time, money and energy in celebrating festivals and birthdays of saints. The pomp and show during the religious festivals display their spiritual bankruptcy.

Christmas which is a celebration of God’s incarnation as a human being in simplicity and poverty has become a thriving business. Market forces introduce various products to attract customers. Even people who do not practice Christian faith are engaged in marketing Christmas with various kinds of toys depicting Santa Claus, caps, masks, cakes and sweets. Markets across the world are flooded with people doing Christmas shopping.

With nostalgia I used to recall my childhood days when I made crib in my home, prepared stars and enjoyed special sweets made by my mother. Later as a parish priest I used to go around singing Christmas carols even in Hindu families, villages, made large cribs with light and sound effects, illuminated the church with electric bulbs and organized special functions in the church. I was passionate to make Christ known to people of the other faiths.

Since many years I do not make Christmas cribs. I remember my friend Father Shepherd going with a community of sisters to a tribal village in Searmau in Raisen District on December 24th to repair a house of a poor tribal family. After working the whole day with the family members they used to have Christmas prayer in that family and celebrate Christmas with the villagers. Fr. Shepherd and the sisters were living the incarnation of Christ in that village giving their time and service to provide a shelter to the poor family in the village.

While thousands of Christians celebrate the joy of Christmas singing, "Joy to the world..." announcing the arrival of God, do they reflect about the turmoil the country is going through in these days? How many of us reflect about the suffering of millions because of the recent laws enacted by the BJP Government? How many of them have studied the implications of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and amended Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the terrible sufferings they are going to bring to millions of women and men in our country?

Why do Christians who are called to be "prophets to the nations" (Jer 1: 4) remain silent to the cry of the millions? When hundreds of girls and women are exploited and brutally raped in the country how can we celebrate Christmas with pomp and show? How dare we sing, "Joy to the world...", when thousands of children die due to lack of medicine and food every day in our country? How dare we go around singing joy of Christmas and light up our buildings? When conflicts and scandals are shaking the foundation of the church institutions and when the priests and high priests are accused of rape and financial scandals, how dare we preach of the Peace of Christ?

Christmas is a call from Christ to reincarnate ourselves to be agents of peace and work for reconciliation, starting from our families and communities. We can preach peace and reconciliation only when we become an incarnation of love, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation here and now. We can give joy to the world only when we set example of repentance and return to the way of Christ. Each Christian should be a voice against all that is unjust and discriminatory in the society and within our community. The voice may be a feeble "cry in the wilderness" without success and recognition.

I had been lighting up our building for a week during the Christmas. I have decided not to light up the building because I dare not to light up my house when hundreds of people in this country are living in utter darkness and hopelessness. Millions of people are at the brink of becoming stateless and suffer discrimination and exclusion. How dare I remain indifferent? Prophets are called to "cry in the wilderness" and walk through the "narrow path" without bothering about response or recognition. **IC**

Australian Hall of Fame Award to Fr. Felix Raj SJ

At the international Conference on "Frontiers in Accounting" organised jointly by the Institute of Certified Management Accountants (ICMA), Australia and St. Xavier's University, Kolkata, on Monday, December 16, and in the presence of a galaxy of distinguished guests and delegates from a broad range of companies and business houses, Faculty members and students of SXUK, the Global President of ICMA, Dr. Brendon O'Connell and the COO & CFO, Dr. Chris D'Souza presented the Hall of Fame to Fr. Felix Raj, Vice-Chancellor of SXUK in recognition of his outstanding contribution and life-time achievements in the field of education and management.



While presenting the award, Dr. Chris D'Souza said, "The ICMA Australia applauds the ground breaking value creation and achievements of Rev. Fr. Felix Raj. We are honoured to induct Dr. Felix Raj to the global Management Accounting Hall of Fame for his services to the profession in India". Fr. Felix Raj is the first Indian to receive this award. In his acceptance speech, Fr. Felix Raj said, "I am grateful to the ICMA Australia for recognising St. Xavier's University, Kolkata and I accept the award on behalf of the Xaverian family. I am just one of the many who deserve to receive it".

Bharat Jalaaoo?

The basic human values and the values, especially, democracy and secularism enshrined in the Indian Constitution are being burnt



BY M. L. SATYAN

India was burning during the British period. Through 'Divide and Rule' strategy, they burnt (ruined) many small kingdoms in India. They succeeded in capturing power in India. The fire they set for Indians started 'back-firing' during 'independence movement'. Ultimately the fire of independence movement burnt the British Rule and made them go back to their country. After 72 years of independence the same thing is being repeated and the same scenario is being enacted. The aim is: Bharat Jalaaoo!

Some Hindu fundamentalist groups like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and other fanatic groups have been kindling fire in the hearts of the people

to safeguard the Hindu religion and ruin other religions. The Babri Masjid was demolished due to this religious fire. The oil that the party used was 'Hindu Rashtra'. Rath-Yatra and innumerable secret and public meetings were conducted by the party leaders for this purpose. The party also managed to kindle fire in Gujarat, induce communal violence and burn innocent people, especially Muslims. Churches and Christian worship places were burnt in various parts of the country. The aim was: Bharat Jalaaoo!

During the BJP regime between 2014 and 2019 the party managed to burn many things in the country. To list a few: through demonetisation it burnt the earlier currency notes of 500 and 1000 denominations all in the name of 'counter terrorism'. By doing this, it burnt the small and medium savings of the common people. Small and medium scale businesses were burnt. Marginal farmers and their agriculture were burnt. The aim was: Bharat Jalaaoo!

During the Parliamentary Election-2019, the party 'smartly and cunningly' misused the whole electoral process, government departments and its officials, police force, tampered the EVMs, purchased votes for money and bought the media for its own gain. By doing this, the 'democratic process of election' was burnt to ashes. The aim was: Bharat Jalaaoo!

The 'power-crazy' party was never satisfied with the power in the centre. The ruling party went on capturing power in Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Meghalaya and Haryana. The classic example is Karnataka. It kindled fire in some selected MLAs belonging to the coalition government, purchased them with money and burnt the government. It continued to set fire



during the mid-term election and managed to come back to power. The most recent example is Maharashtra. The party kindled fire in one political party leader's family, divided the family members, pulled some elected MLAs and formed the government. What a dramatic scene the whole nation/world witnessed! The aim was: Bharat Jalaa!

The wrong economic policies and the hurried introduction of GST have burnt the economy of the country. The growth rate has made a downward movement from 8 per cent to 4.3 per cent. It is probably heading towards rock bottom. The ever-increasing prices of essential commodities, the latest to be added is onion, have burnt many kitchens of middle, lower middle class and poor families. The party also has burnt Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, BSNL/MTNL, Air India and Natural Resources by selling them off. The others on the 'Burning Waitlist' are the Indian Railways, Airports and Banks etc. The aim is: Bharat Jalaa!

The history tells us that sexual abuse of women was present in the past but in small numbers, may be occasional. But during the regime of the present government the number of sexual abuses has escalated to an alarming height. The rapists do not stop with the rape but they go one step ahead and burn the rape victims. Some recent examples: A 27-year old veterinary doctor was brutally gang raped and then burnt alive in Telangana. In UP a rape victim was burnt by the same rapist on her way to the Court. A woman was admitted to a hospital in Muzaffarpur on 15 December 2019 after she was allegedly set ablaze by a man who had attempted to rape her but failed. 'Beti Jalaa' or "Rape and Burn" has become the latest trend under this ruling government. The aim is: Bharat Jalaa!

Last year the government money was burnt for doing the National Register of Citizenship exercise in Northeast India in a hurried manner. This exercise backfired. Now the ruling party has managed to pass the Citizenship Amendment Bill both in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and got it signed by the President. Citizenship Amendment Bill



(CAB) has now become Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The secular nature of the Indian Constitution is burnt. The aim is: Bharat Jalaa!

The party also is going to introduce NRC all over India. By doing this, the ruling party had kindled fire in the North Eastern states. From there the fire has spread fast to Kosi-Seemanchal, West Bengal, Ballia, Varanasi, Bhagalpur, Bhopal, Kanpur, Allahabad, Muzaffarnagar, Lucknow, Mumbai, IIT-Mumbai, Jamia Millia Islamia and JNU, Delhi, AMU-Aligarh, almost all other Universities in the country, Delhi city, Pune, Ahmedabad, Azamgarh, Aurangabad, Surat, Goa, Nanded, Gulbarga, Bengaluru, Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Puducherry and some parts of Kerala. Public properties were burnt in Delhi (successfully executed by the police!!). Today many sensible Indians are burning with anger protesting the CAA and NRC. Ultimately, the ruling government has set India ablaze! The only aim is: Bharat Jalaa!

Last but not the least! India has been rich with its spiritual values and traditions. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation had mentioned about the 'seven crimes'. These crimes such as *Pleasure without conscience; Politics without principle; Wealth without work; Worship without fellowship; Science without humanity; Commerce without sincerity* and *Education without character* are widespread in the country. The major credit goes to the ruling party. The basic human values and the values, especially, democracy and secularism enshrined in the Indian Constitution are being burnt. The aim is: Bharat Jalaa! How long are we going to allow India to burn? When are we going to stop it? It is time for us to ACT – Better late than never!

IC

Partition Distortion

Those who want to downplay India’s diversity of communities and religions want to feed Indian citizens with the distorted fact that partition took place on religious lines



BY P A CHACKO

Unlike Amit Shah and his colleagues’ claim, the partition of India was never on a religious basis. The argument of partition on religious lines is a purely concocted lie. People have been, of late, fed with distorted facts about India’s history and culture that have been dished out for public consumption.

India’s partition took place. It is history. Jinnah went his way and Pakistan was formed as a separate state. That new nation decided to be a Muslim state. Our freedom fighters in India wanted a country where everybody will be equal with a spirit of oneness under the constitution. They saw beauty in diversity, cultural and religious. Hence, taking inspiration from this united effort, the founding fathers of our constitution presented to us a constitution with fundamental rights of equality, freedom to profess, practice and propagate one’s religion, freedom from discrimination and exploitation.

That in no way meant that India decided to be or opted to become a Hindu state. The non-Hindus who lived in India before the partition and after the partition have Indian identity, not Hindu identity. Every community has its own religion and culture. There is no one culture that can be considered as India’s total culture or superior culture. India’s culture is varied. There is the Dravidian culture. There is the indigenous culture. There is the Aryan culture, the Khasi culture, the Naga culture and the like.

So is the religious factor. The fact that India has Hindu majority does not mean that this is a Hindu Rashtra. Our constitution does not accord such a privilege. No wonder, there are sinister forces calling for changing and rewriting the constitution into saffron.



Those who want to downplay India's diversity of communities and religions want to feed Indian citizens with the distorted fact that partition took place on religious lines. It is a ploy they play to assert that this is a Hindu state. Nothing can be far from the truth. It is misrepresenting history and those who advocate it, as Shashi Tharoor very well put it, did not pay attention in their history class.

Home Minister Amit Shah's controversial statement in the Lok Sabha that there was 'the deal between Jawaharlal and Liyaqat Ali to take care of their minorities' is purported to din into the minorities that they are and will be in future at the mercy of the majority community. This was in no way the mind of the freedom fighters or the constitution makers. Our freedom fighters belonged to all communities and stood shoulder to shoulder to win India's freedom. There was no identity problem or identity crisis. They never thought that they were fighting for freedom so that they would cut up our country into two nations. If Jinnah wanted to go the Muslim way, it did not mean that India's leaders wanted to go the Hindu way.

Taking care of the minorities is not the prerogative of any party or faction. That responsibility is given to the Constitution of India and the party in power has the bounden duty to abide by the constitutional provisions. Therefore, let not anybody fool us with the argument that minorities in India are to live and behave at the behest of a particular party or a community, neither the Congress, nor the BJP nor any messianic muse.

The Sang Parivar's attempt to be on a warpath to go the Hindu way with the aim of reconstructing India into a Hindu Rashtra is a well calibrated attempt to take this secular nation into a suicidal precipice. Savarkar had openly advocated it. His followers are now choreographing his idea for a murderous dance of death for the Indian nation. We have been witnessing many sinister steps in that direction. Sadhus and Sadvins capturing the political stage for advocating the Hindu Rashtra.



There is no one culture that can be considered as India's total culture or superior culture

A clear example of politicising religion and using inflated religious emotions even to wrest a legal point.

Their vituperative and vilifying remarks against minority communities, particularly the Muslims have been condemned by sensible people as nauseating vomit. The nation has been shocked by the gory lynching of persons of minority communities mostly in the cow belt. According to UCA News agency, "Since 2014, the attacks on Christians have been increasing. It was 292 in 2018, 240 in 2017, 208 in 2016, 177 in 2015, and 147 in 2014. As a matter of fact, according to the World Watch List of 50 countries, India is the 10th most dangerous country in the world to live in for Christians as against 28th in the year 2014."

In order to push their communal agenda they are adept in turning fiction into facts, deny scientific findings and call them concocted. They tell the nation that they hold the keys to

ANALYSIS

the truth which everyone should uphold. A monumental example is the controversy unleashed by them about the Aryan entry into the Indian subcontinent. They want to assert and establish that it was the Aryans who entered India first and they have the right to call this a Hindu nation. The excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa and the findings point to a different direction.

The group of 'the horse riders from the Steppe who spoke a precursor to Sanskrit began migrating to South Asia, bringing their language, rituals and belief systems with them.' That was the Aryan migration between 2000 and 1500 BCE as a well established scientific proof. The nationalist advocates do not accept this proof and still hold on to the argument that the Aryans were the earliest settlers at Harappa-Mohenjo-Daro belt. Bolstered with such distorted and

unscientific arguments, they ride roughshod on the rest of the Indians as if their religion is the Indian religion and they have the primordial prerogative to establish their Aryan Kingdom as Hindu Rashtra.

It is such an agenda that propels them to take umbrage under the argument that the Congress was party to breaking India into two religious nations. In one way they blame the Congress. In another way they are happy to project India as a religious nationalist nation.

It has been the agenda of the Sang Parivar all along to establish India into a Hindu Rashtra. The recent Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 is another determined effort in that direction. Today they say Muslim migrants are out and the other minorities are allowed in as if by way of their benevolence. Tomorrow they can say that India being a Hindu Rashtra the minorities have no place here. They can go to the extent of carpet bombing the constitution and achieve their purpose. They have already been brazenly telling the Adivasis that they are fallen away Hindus and their only identity is Hindu identity.

Amid anti-CAA protests, former president Pranab Mukherjee cautions party in power against 'majoritarianism'



The recent timely caution at this juncture by India's former President Pranab Mukherjee is very pertinent. Delivering the Second Memorial Lecture in honour of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Mukherjee said: "A numerical majority in elections gives you the right to make a stable government. The lack of proper majority forbids you becoming a majoritarian government. That is the message and essence of our parliamentary democracy." This word of abundant caution came when the nation from the North-East to Kanyakumari burst into flames of anger and resistance at the introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The Act is enough proof that the BJP government with its numerical majority in the Lok Sabha is riding rough shod to establish the so called majoritarian thrust on all citizens.

"The reduction of non-Hindus to second class status in their homeland is unthinkable. It would be a second Partition: and a partition in the Indian soul would be as bad a partition in the Indian soil." (Shashi Tharoor in 'The Paradoxical Prime Minister.')

IC



Case against Mysore bishop: Victim withdraws allegations

A woman who had recently leveled sexual harassment charges against Bishop K A William of Mysore has now retracted her allegations and withdrawn her statements. The woman had recently released a selfie video that went viral on social media, in which she had accused the bishop of sexually harassing her. She had also filed a complaint signing the document herself.

Based on the complaint, the Mysuru police had registered an FIR against the bishop on November 29. The complaint was filed against the bishop by Robert Rosario of the Association of Concerned Catholics (AOCC), a citizen's group. Besides, 37 priests from different parishes had written a letter to the Vatican seeking the bishop's removal. The whole episode had caused a huge uproar in the Christian community Mysore diocese. Many Catholics even demanded the change or suspension of the bishop. However, the woman has given a whole new twist to the issue by withdrawing all her statements against the bishop.

The woman, who had accused the bishop of having continuously subjected her to sexual harassment, conducted a press conference in the city on December 13 along with a team of lawyers and said, "I have not had any trouble, whatsoever, from bishop K A William. Someone had forced me to make a video and also write a complaint against the bishop. I was threatened with dire consequences during the making of the video. So I had given statement against the bishop under threat. Now the same video is going viral on social media and is being sold for lakhs of rupees.

"Due to my statement and video, which were done under duress by some people, the names of Bishop William, Fr Leslie Moras and Vijay Kumar have been tarnished. There are 37 priests behind this plot," added the woman. The woman further clarified, "I am not giving this statement under pressure of bishop or anyone else. My life is under threat even now. I am living in fear. So I will not file complaint against anyone. Now inquiry is being conducted by the police based on the complaint filed by Robert Rosario. I have already clarified my stand in front of the investigating officers."

(Courtesy: Daijiworld)

IC

"Cop Said He Would Tear My Beard": Lucknow Journalist Detained, Released

A journalist with The Hindu newspaper was picked up by the Lucknow police from a city restaurant, detained for over two hours at a police station and then a police post, and finally released after harrowing moments where he was accused of conspiracy in the Lucknow violence against the Citizenship Amendment Act on Thursday that saw one person killed.


Omar Rashid is the Uttar Pradesh correspondent for The Hindu newspaper, and says he was busy with filing his story at a local restaurant along with a friend when the police arrived. "I was using someone's WiFi in the hotel. Suddenly about four to five people in plain clothes came and they started interrogating my friend. They asked him to identify himself. They asked me to identify myself. They then put him in a jeep and ask me to also come along. I identified myself as a journalist and told them who I am. They

insisted I went with them," Omar Rashid said in an interview to NDTV.

"They locked us up in a room. They took away all my belongings including my phone. They beat up my friend brutally. They questioned him and linked him to the violence. They also linked me to the violence saying I am a key conspirator in the violence. They were asking me questions about certain Kashmiris coming here and participating in the violence. Each time I was trying to ask them something they asked me to shut up. They used expletives and said you can put your journalism elsewhere, we don't care about it. They told me they had proof against me. They put us in a jeep again and took us to an outpost. Another police officer used a lot of communal slurs against me and said he would tear my beard," he added.

Omar Rashid was let off after calls were made to the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister's Office and to the Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police OP Singh. While the journalist was in detention, NDTV spoke with Mr Singh who promised to look into the matter. The state police chief called back to say that Mr Rashid has been released.

Among those picked up by the Lucknow Police for the Thursday violence include prominent activists like lawyer Mohd Shoaib and former IPS officer and activist SR Darapuri. It is not clear if they have been arrested. "The police first failed to control the violence and now to cover their faults they are going after activists who wanted to protest peacefully. This is not right. The police has to tell us where these people are," said Sandeep Pandey, Magsaysay award winner and human rights activist.

There have been massive protests across the country, including many cities in Uttar Pradesh, over the new Citizenship Act, which for the first time makes religion the test of citizenship in India. (Courtesy: NDTV) 

Omar Rashid is the Uttar Pradesh correspondent for The Hindu newspaper, and says he was busy with filing his story at a local restaurant along with a friend when the police arrived



Points to Ponder



Light in the Valley

BY F. M. BRITTO

“When a nation is filled with strife, then do patriots flourish” – Lao Tzu

She sat upset over the fate of her home state Kashmir. Nighat Shafi Pandit, born on Jan 16, 1951, had shielded her children from the militancy. But when she moved from New Delhi to Kashmir in 1995, she was saddened to see how families had been torn apart by war and internal strife. Militancy has captured many of their youth. The constant firing between Pakistan and India has turned many wives into widows and many children into orphans. When she visited the inmates in the sole mental hospital in Srinagar, she realised that the damage was not merely physical, but also emotional. Though as a wife of a bureaucrat, Nighat lived a comfortable life, what about the lives of others in the Valley? But, she wondered, as an ordinary housewife, what can she do either?



When Nighat shared her concerns to her husband, Muhammad Shafi Pandit roped in a few dedicated people. They formed a Foundation in 1997, calling it HELP, meaning Human Effort for Love and Peace. The main focus of the Foundation is to provide education to the orphans and mental health to widows, youth and children - the victims of the turmoil. It is also to provide relief and rehabilitation to the physically disabled and economically deprived. They began first to raise funds through zakat, a compulsory charity payment made by Muslims in the holy month of Ramzan. Then many humanitarian and developmental agencies poured in to aid them, such as Dorabji Tata Trust of Mumbai, Godfrey Phillips Ltd, Action Aid, Oxfam, Women without Borders and scores of other welfare organisations. The Foundation first built a three storey free hostel for orphan children, naming it Shehjaar, meaning the shade of a Chinar tree, at Saida Kadal in Srinagar. It contains also a women’s empowerment cell, a health centre, a drug de-addiction facility and a computer centre.

Over the years HELP has also started many other schools, especially in Kupwara district, the mostly affected. The interest-free loans and sponsorships have helped many students to become aeronautical engineers, industrial chemists, doctors, food technologists and to secure jobs abroad. HELP also runs many clinics and camps with psychiatrics and doctors. The Foundation also runs three libraries in Srinagar and Kupwara districts. It also began a micro-financing programme for women, under which a woman can take a loan to start a venture.

The Foundation also offers succor to the differently-abled children. It runs a Childline in Srinagar to assist the children in distress. The HELP also conducts road shows and regular street plays to create awareness on social issues. Nighat has facilitated the women with embroidery and tailoring classes and a food processing centre, which are sold at their store in Srinagar. Her works also include other minority communities like the Kashmiri Pandits, Sikhs and other vulnerable sections and has extended them to Jammu region as well. With the unexpected assistance of many more donor agencies beyond the Valley it also does many other humanitarian and welfare activities for those who are affected.

Nighat will do anything to wean the Kashmiri youth from violence. Her works have impacted hundreds of children and women. She has striven relentlessly against a background of bullets fired by militants and armed forces. Many see in her a mother figure and an idol. She has received many awards like the Jamn Lal Bajaj Award for Development and Welfare of children in 2012. “Be it an orphan, a destitute or a widow, we want these people to stand on their own feet,” says Nighat

Bob's Banter

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Too Young Mr Ganguly?

Sourav Ganguly's eighteen year old daughter, Sana, is said to have posted a message on Instagram, against the CAA. But loving father that he is, Sourav has said, that 'she is too young a girl to know about Indian politics!' And in that statement lies the snooty, snigger and smirks greeting the cries and protests of students all over India.

"You are children!"

"You are being manipulated!"

"You are too young to know about Indian politics!"

So, Dada, when did you start playing cricket for your state? When you were eighteen wasn't it? Or have you forgotten? Did you understand the game? Or do think it was just a children's game, of which now at the age of 47 you have become president off?

As I listened to student protestors from all over India, speaking out on TV, I realized, how intelligent, decisive and articulate they were.

And maybe that is what politicians, most of whom have, if at all, scraped through their schools or bluffed their degrees, need to know, that education gives you the power to analyze, to think, to probe into the deeper meaning of things, and to open up for scrutiny, lies, that the uneducated accept as gospel truth.

Also, it's only in politics, even cricket politics, that seniority counts, whereas in today's corporate world, people like the forty seven year old Ganguly, would have been serving under a thirty or thirty five year old boss. "And he wouldn't even call you Dada!"

"Would you call him 'too young' Mr Ganguly?" I'm sure you wouldn't, seasoned politician that you are.

So, also the politician, if he was working anywhere else other than the secure walls of Parliament, would have been like Sourav, serving under one of these youngsters.

These in colleges are not the vote banks of the country. Vote banks get swayed en masse. Like a herd of sheep, they follow blindly, trusting completely in rhetoric and scripts written for good actors.

Vote banks are what brings wrong men and women to power, while thinkers are those who can see beyond.

And yet, we call these the thinkers of India, naïve, 'too young' and impressionable?

What a laugh!

Wake up India! These so called children you are firing upon, hurling tear gas onto and brandishing your lathis on are today's generation!

They are 'not too young', they know more than you and I do.

It is not they, the educated who have been manipulated, it is we who have been.

If the father of Sana could play for his state at eighteen! If Sachin could have played for his country at even less, shouldn't we stop thinking of them as 'young' and start thinking of them as 'mature educated thinkers' who are showing us, and here I quote Shakespeare, 'that there is 'something rotten in the state of Denmark..!'

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