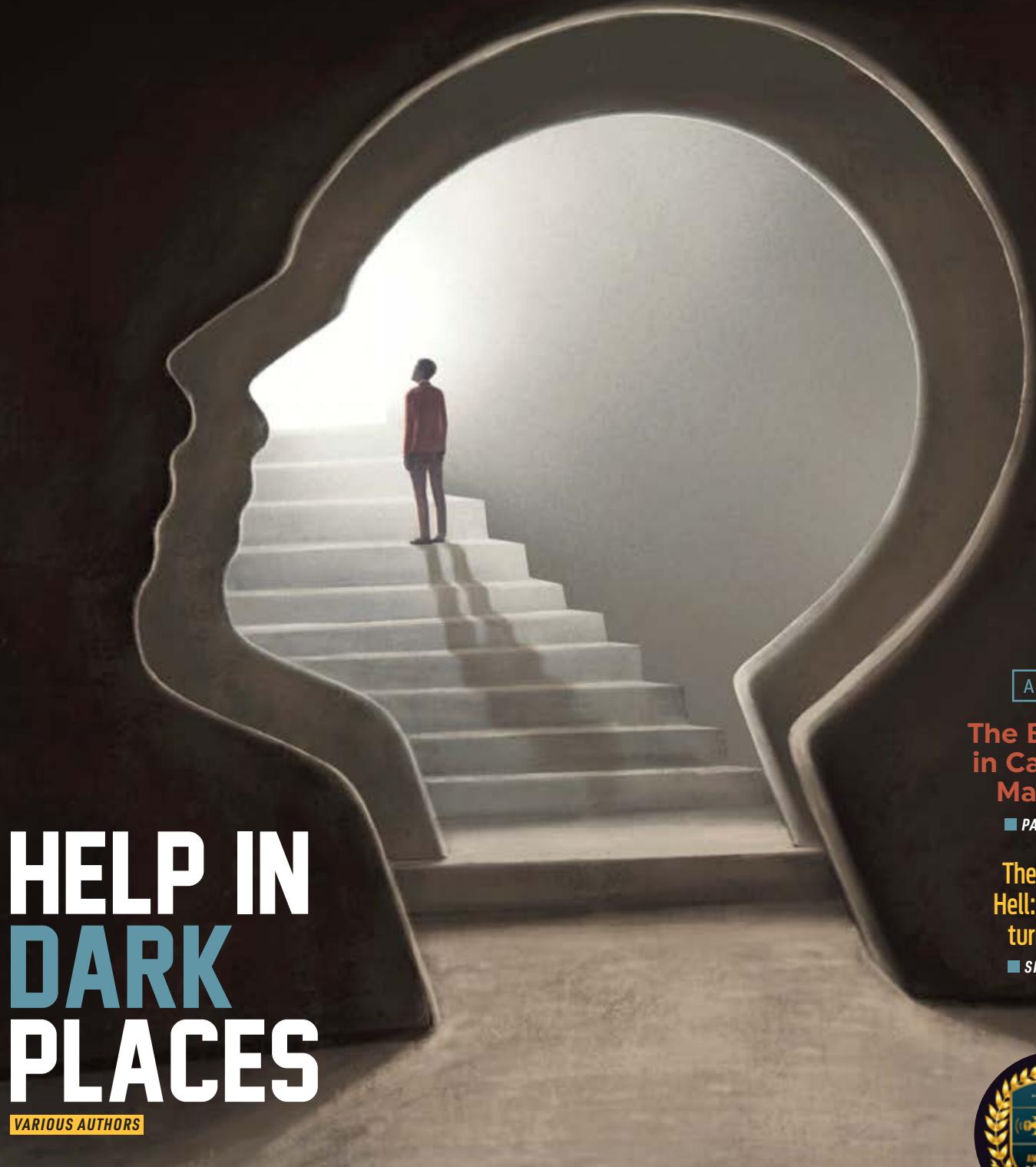


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A Missionary Movement At The Service Of The Church



Jesus Youth





MARY, OUR MOTHER



O Lady of Mental Peace, Mother of tranquillity and Mother of hope, look upon me during my time of weakness and unrest. Teach my searching heart to know that God's love for me is unchanging and unchangeable, and that true, human love can only begin and grow by touching His love. Let your gentle peace, which only God and not this world can give, be always with me. Help me to bring this same peace into the lives of others. Our Lady of Mental Peace, pray for me! Amen.

EDITOR'S ROOM

DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

X @readkairos



THE PARENTS - GENTLE, COMPOSED, AND ASTONISHINGLY CALM - EXUDE A GRACE THAT DEFIES WORDS. IT WAS CLEAR TO ME THAT THEIR SERENITY DID NOT COME FROM AN ABSENCE OF SUFFERING BUT FROM AN UNYIELDING STRENGTH BORN THROUGH IT.

Unshaken and Unwavering

t had been a long time since I last visited that family. I vaguely knew that one of their children was challenged. But nothing prepared me for the depth of pain, the silent endurance, and the quiet heroism I witnessed during that visit.

What unfolded before me wasn't just a story of a child struggling with a condition – unaware of her actions, lost in a world of her own – it was the story of a family carrying a cross, not for days or months, but for years, perhaps for a lifetime. The girl, now a teenager, lives in a reality detached from those around her. She does not understand the weight her parents and siblings bear each day. Her condition has stolen from her not only a normal childhood but also the ability to comprehend the heartache of those who love her most.

The parents – gentle, composed, and astonishingly calm – exude a grace that defies words. It was clear to me that their serenity did not come from an absence of suffering but from an unyielding strength born through it. They had learned, over the years, to hold their pain silently, to smile through the tears, to find purpose in simply being present.

Their home is filled not with complaints but with quiet courage. The siblings, though young, have matured far beyond their age. They, too, have adjusted to a life where normalcy is a distant dream. Yet, in the midst of this storm, love binds them all – unshaken and unwavering.

As I sat with them, listened, observed, and absorbed the atmosphere, a thought kept echoing within me: these are the true saints among us. Not canonised by the Church, not known by the world, but glorified in the silence of their suffering. Saints who rise each day to face the same impossible reality, with no hope of respite, and yet continue to love, serve, and endure.

We often speak of grief in terms of sudden loss – a death, an accident, an illness. While those are deeply painful, they are, in some sense, finite. But the kind of suffering this family endures is different. It's a continuous, unrelenting pain with no closure in sight.

What can we do in the face of such suffering? We can offer our prayers. We can stand by them in solidarity. We can lend them the warmth of our presence, and above all, we can honour their quiet, invisible sainthood with the reverence it deserves.

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Also LOOK OUTFOR

10 From the Altar to Living Room

26 Rising Together from the Battle Within

34 The Vision of Hell



So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
Isaiah 41:10

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LOOK

ISSUE 87

INSIDE

REGULARS

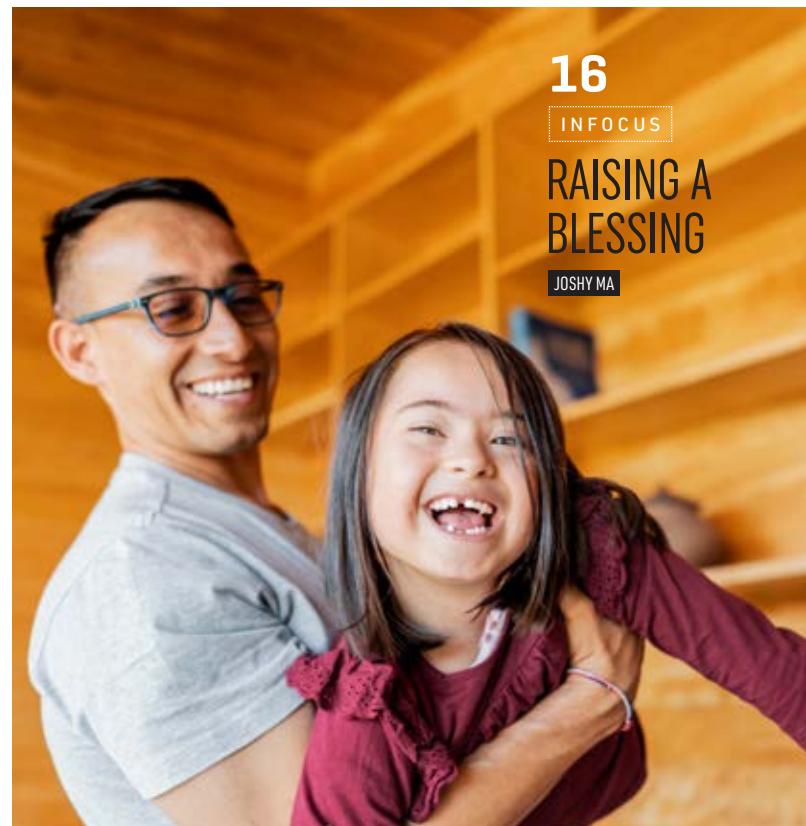
- 6** Ask Fr Bitaju
- 7** Pope Talk
- 8** Jesus Youth
- 29** Newswatch
- 40** Chandliers
- 42** Our Daily Bread
- 44** Sound Reply
- 46** Timeout
- 47** Lukas and Ray

16

INFOCUS

RAISING A BLESSING

JOSHY MA





30

CULTURE OF LIFE

THE BIG 'NO' IN CATHOLIC MARRIAGE

PATRICK SIBLY

EXPERIENCE

10 From Altar to the Living Room | **SILVY SANTHOSH WITH STANNY AND ROSMIN**

IN FOCUS

14 Children with Disabilities need Patient Love and Understanding | **TISHA MATHEW**

18 Mental Health is Everyone's Reality | **SANGEETHA KURIAN**

22 Help in Dark Places | **VARIOUS AUTHORS**

ART

34 The Vision of Hell | **SHAJI JOSEPH ARAKKAL**

JUBILEE PAGES

38 Changing the Baton... | **FR JUSTIN PANACHICKAL MSFS**

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ASK

FR. BITAJU



Fr Bitaju Mathew O.SS.T. belongs to the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Captives (The Trinitarians). He serves as the Associate Pastor at the Pastorate of St Lawrence Martyr Parish, Hanover, and Resurrection of Our Lord Parish, Laurel, Maryland, USA. He is a member of the Jesus Youth International Formation Team.

► Why does God allow us to sin?

Thank you for your important question, which is a profound theological inquiry that touches upon the nature of free will, the purpose of creation and the overarching plan of salvation. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) offers insights into these themes, particularly in the context of human freedom and the consequences of sin.

Free Will: *The Catechism* emphasises that God created humans with free will, which is essential for genuine love and moral responsibility. It states that 'God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions' (CCC 1730). This freedom allows individuals to choose between good and evil. Without the possibility of choosing evil, the choice of good would lack authenticity.

The Nature of Sin: Sin is understood as a rejection of God's law and a turning away from the good. 'Sin is an offense against God,' (CCC 1849) and it disrupts the relationship between humanity and the divine. The allowance of sin is not an endorsement of it but rather a consequence of the gift of free will. God respects human freedom, even when it leads to sin.

The Purpose of Creation: The Bible articulates that God's creation is fundamentally good (Genesis 1:31; CCC 299). However, the existence of sin in the world is a reality that arises

from the misuse of human freedom. God, in His omniscience, allows for this reality, knowing that it is through the experience of sin and its consequences that humanity can come to understand the depth of His mercy and the necessity of redemption.

Redemptive Plan of God:

Importantly, the Church teaches that God does not abandon humanity to sin. Instead, He provides a path to redemption through Jesus Christ. *The Catechism* states that, 'The victory that Christ won over sin and death has given us the hope of resurrection' (CCC 410). This emphasises the belief that while God allows sin, He also offers grace and salvation, inviting humanity to return to Him.

The Mystery of Evil: The existence of sin and evil remains a mystery within the divine plan. The Church teaches that 'in the face of the problem of evil, the Christian faith is not a faith that has no answer to the question of evil' (CCC 309). Instead, it affirms that God can bring good out of evil, and that the ultimate purpose of creation is fulfilled in the love and redemption offered through Christ.

In summary, God granted humanity free will, which is essential for authentic love and moral choice. Sin is a reality that arises from this freedom, but it is met with God's grace and the promise of redemption through Jesus Christ.



YOUCAT 282

DOES SACRED SCRIPTURE SPEAK ABOUT A WAY TO HAPPINESS?

We become happy by trusting in Jesus' words in the Beatitudes. [CCC 1716-1717]

The Gospel is a promise of happiness to all people who wish to walk in God's ways. Especially in the Beatitudes [Matthew 5:3-12], Jesus has told us specifically that eternal blessedness is based on our following his example and seeking peace with a pure heart.



I am an Augustinian, a son of Saint Augustine, who once said, 'With you I am a Christian, and for you I am a bishop.' In this sense, all of us can journey together toward the homeland that God has prepared for us.

We are to bear witness to our joyful faith in Christ. This is the world that has been entrusted to us, a world in which, as Pope Francis taught us so many times, we are called to bear witness to our joyful faith in Christ the Saviour without fear, to be missionaries.

A lack of faith is often tragically accompanied by the loss of meaning in life, the neglect of mercy, appalling violations of human dignity, the crisis of the family and so many other wounds that afflict our society.

In Jesus, God revealed Himself to us in the trusting eyes of a child, in the lively mind of a young person and in the mature features of a man, finally appearing to His disciples after the Resurrection with His glorious body.

Together, we must look for ways to be a missionary Church, a Church that builds bridges and encourages dialogue, a Church ever open to welcoming, like this Square with its open arms, all those who are in need of our charity, our presence, our readiness to dialogue and our love.

Peter, in his response, understands that salvation is both 'a gift of God' as well as 'the path' to follow in order to allow himself to be changed by that gift, and affirmed that a gift and a path are inseparable aspects of salvation entrusted to the Church to be proclaimed for the good of the human race. To succeed Peter, as such, has entrusted this treasure to me so that, with his help, I may be its faithful administrator for the sake of the entire mystical Body of the Church.

All of us are in God's hands. So, let us move forward, without fear, together, hand in hand with God and with one another! We are followers of Christ. Christ goes before us. The world needs His light. Humanity needs Him as the bridge that can lead us to God and His love. Help us, one and all, to build bridges through dialogue and encounter, joining together as one people, always at peace.

JESUS YOUTH



Dr Edward Edezhath, one of the pioneers of Jesus Youth, gives us a glimpse of the growth of the movement.

Sensitivity to Interior Journeys of the Young

→ Last Sunday, I was at Holy Innocents' Parish, where it was the day after the first Holy Communion. The seventh graders animated the Holy Mass. I was so glad to see the liturgical celebration tailored to those groups of teenagers. The teachers and elders welcomed and sat with the teenagers. The celebrant was friendly and joyful. Without being boring or forceful, the priest and the teachers ensured good participation from the youth. Even the homily included portions read by youngsters from their seats. This too was a sign of the priests' sensitivity to the mindset of these adolescents. They would have been quite embarrassed to stand in the crowded church to read, so they were allowed to sit and do it. In many ways, everyone considered how the youngsters would feel about themselves and each other, ensuring participation without upsetting them. Such thoughtful youth accompaniment!

LET THEM BE A LITTLE IMMATURE!

Sometimes I ask the students in my class, 'What do you want me to tell your parents?' They answer, 'Tell them not to force their expectations on us.' Then they explain that their parents forget how they themselves were years ago, and want their children to achieve things they couldn't. 'Please allow us to

live our lives!'

We all need to be aware of one essential reality: we are all, especially the young, on a journey toward greater perfection and maturity. One critical attitude to cultivate about myself and others is accepting that I am on this journey. The Japanese have a special name for the room where they train people in martial arts: *dojo*. But '*dojo*' means 'the place of the way.' Each of us is at one stage or another of our long journey toward perfection in Christ. St Paul puts it well: *I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect. But Christ has taken hold of me. So, I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize* (Philippians 3:12, Contemporary Eng Ver).

A good Jesus Youth is someone who, when witnessing a young person behaving immaturely, does not become upset but instead understands the youth in 'the place of the way' and joyfully connects with them. In my own life, I can recall many clumsy moments when others saw far beyond my doubts or rebellion, accepting or placing their trust in me.

Soon after completing my high school, I attended my first renewal retreat. When I had the chance to sit with the main preacher, I told him that I didn't have much faith and didn't pray.

I thought he would be upset with me, but his response was reassuring and trusting, as if it were quite natural. Two years later, during the first leaders' training, I went there in some crazy outfit, anticipating an adverse reaction from the important Church leaders present. To my utter shock, almost no one made any negative remarks; instead, when the main team for the renewal coordination was selected, I was asked to be on the team representing the young people of the state.

I could move from one degree of maturity to another, not due to correction and negative remarks, but through limitless acceptance and wholehearted encouragement from significant elders. My youthful friends would be happy with my questioning and rebellion. Still, when those I consider important do not get upset about that, but instead recognise something significant in me, I, in turn, try to bring out the beauty they see in me. I am sure the generous trust of an elder is the most formative force in a young person's life.

NEED TO IDENTIFY THE STAGES

Youth is a period during which individuals explore diverse experiences, particularly emotional



Something Fr James told me helped me reflect deeper on these stages: 'A seeker moves on with some help to a believer and later to a disciple and so on. But one should not forget that one never ceases to be a seeker or a believer even when one climbs the ladder of perfection.'

responses. Transitioning swiftly from joy to sadness, moments of intimacy to loneliness, and excitement to boredom is quite common for them. A well-behaved child may suddenly exhibit temper tantrums, a committed youth in the group might vanish for months, a youth leader who planned a big programme may irresponsibly abandon leadership, and an impulsive love relationship between two leaders could disrupt the whole group. These are all instances of this youthful vacillation.

A youth ministry like Jesus Youth becomes effective when a mature visionary encounters these 'places of the way' or immature behaviours and is not shocked by them. Instead, they listen, accept, encourage, and challenge. Almost everyone has a chaotic inner journey to share with you, and you can choose to listen with understanding and encourage them. John sat with me and shared his chaotic present journey, 'Everything is in a mess.' But my heart whispered that the Father looks at him with love and wants

him to look away from that confusion, and look up to His love and rejoice. I struggled to tell him, 'Hi John, there is nothing terribly wrong with your life, it is only a phase of your journey. Rejoice and look to the Lord and His wonderful love.'

When we read the Gospels and reflect on how Jesus connected with those around Him during His journey of maturity, we identify several groups or stages: Seekers, Believers, Disciples, and Apostles. This paradigm and naming may be helpful as we journey with young people today. A youth may approach you at any stage of this journey. The names themselves may be descriptive and beneficial. It is important to recognise and understand the related strengths and challenges.

But what is the purpose of these descriptions? Is it to categorise them or to describe them to others? Understanding where they are in their faith journey will help you offer suitable accompaniment and even challenge them to move forward. Something

Fr James told me helped me reflect deeper on these stages: 'A seeker moves on with some help to a believer and later to a disciple and so on. But one should not forget that one never ceases to be a seeker or a believer even when one climbs the ladder of perfection.'

Seeing the immaturity of youth, what do most people do? They judge them, try to correct them, or shame them. However, if someone understands that this youth is struggling with their inner journey toward maturity and gently stands by them, it would make a world of difference. This would also be your contribution to building beautiful families and a vibrant missionary Church for the days to come.

.....

One of the pioneers of the Jesus Youth movement, an international preacher and author, **Dr Edward Edezhath** is a retired professor from St Albert's College, Ernakulam. He is presently a researcher at Amoris Christi in Florida, USA.

EXPERIENCE

FROM THE ALTAR TO LIVING ROOM

Embracing the Domestic Church
in Everyday Family Life



Silvy Santhosh introduces us to Stanny, Rosmin and their five children, who are all daily communicants.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15).

Two years ago, I began noticing a family of six for the noon Holy Mass in our neighbourhood parish, St Ann Catholic Church, Coppell. We spoke a few words to each other every time we met in the church. I learned that they had recently moved from Chicago and they came for daily Mass during Stanny's lunch break. We are parishioners of St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. When our parish started evening English Holy *Qurbana*, their family started coming for daily Holy *Qurbana* at our parish.

In 2024, while coordinating the All Saints' Day celebration, I worked closely with Rosmin. Despite being five-months pregnant, she collaborated with parish youth to create one of the most beautiful celebrations our church has seen. Stanny was there to support Rosmin throughout the planning and preparations. I learned more about them during that time. Their family quietly preaches the Gospel.

Their son Nathan now serves reverently at the altar during the evening Mass every single day! Even as Rosmin's due date approached, their family never missed Mass. Their consistency and commitment to worship together left a deep impression on me and fellow parishioners.

Recently, they celebrated a double blessing: the baptism of their newest baby, Jerome, and the Solemn Holy Communion of their son, Jonathan. Witnessing this as a fellow parishioner felt like seeing the fruits of faith lived with humility and joy.

Even amidst busy parenting, both Stanny and Rosmin stayed late with a new-born to answer questions for the *Kairos* family. Their dedication inspires us to live a truly Eucharistic-centred life.

1. Can you please introduce yourselves.

Rosmin: My name is Rosmin Francis. I have been married to Stanny for thirteen years. I am a stay-at-home mother of five kids. We have been home-schooling our children for the last five years. I grew up in Delhi with my parents and two sisters. We were very active in our parish. In our family, God and Church were always given priority.

Stanny: My name is Stanny. I am an IT Consultant by profession. I grew up in Gujarat, India with my parents and younger sister. My parents were both working professionals and worked hard to bring me and my younger sister up in the small Syro-Malabar community there in Vadodara, Gujarat.

2. Who influenced you the most in your Catholic faith, especially your Eucharistic love?

Rosmin: My parents, especially my mom. Her love for the Eucharist has always inspired me. For most of my early childhood, my dad was in the Middle East, so it was just my mom who was around. She used to take the three of us girls to retreats and night vigils even though it was not easy for her. We also had a beautiful tradition of First Friday Holy Mass in our local community, which used to happen in our homes. We were involved in setting up the altar, singing songs and the fellowship which followed was something we looked forward to. Another person who really inspired me when I was in high school was my elder sister, who is a religious sister now. I saw her grow in faith and attend daily Mass even if that meant waking up early in the morning and walking 30 minutes to reach church.

In school and college, I attended retreats and got involved with a Catholic Renewal Ministry which also

strengthened my faith and allowed me to grow in my love for the Eucharist.

Stanny: From my childhood, my parents ensured that we attended the Malayalam *Qurbana* every Sunday at the nearby Latin-rite church where we grew up. Even though at that time I did not enjoy going to *Qurbana*, looking back, that was the seed which my parents sowed which allowed me to now appreciate the *Qurbana*. As I got married, my faith only grew with my wife playing a crucial role in my faith formation along with the religious community we were part of. However I would say Mother Mary was the one who strengthened my faith and love for the Eucharist and I cannot thank her enough. After moving to Chicago, attending the regular English *Qurbana* at our Mar Thoma Syro-Malabar Cathedral along with the enthusiasm of the young priests of our diocese played a pivotal role in my appreciating the depth and beauty of our Holy *Qurbana*.

3. How do you find time to go for daily Holy Mass in the midst of your busy life with five kids?

Rosmin: Making Holy Mass an integral part of our daily life is a conscious decision which requires effort. When we moved to the US, I always had this desire to receive Jesus daily but I was not prioritising it. When I had my third child, I started slowly with small steps. First, I made a decision to go for daily Mass during Lent. Once Lent was over, I took another small step of attending Mass every Friday. Then I made it two days a week and slowly it became a daily habit. I would give the credit for it to my husband for our special connection with Syro-Malabar liturgy. Since I grew up in Delhi, we had only the experience of Latin-rite Mass. We used to attend Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* only when we went to Kerala for vacations. However, when we moved to

Chicago, we started attending the Holy *Qurbana* at the cathedral. Initially we felt weird participating in the English *Qurbana* since we were not used to it, but slowly we understood the liturgy, the meaning of each part of the *Qurbana*. Stanny especially took more effort to understand the Holy *Qurbana*. We also enjoyed watching and learning from Fr Kevin Mundakkal's movie, *The Qurbana Explained* (See QR code below).

Stanny: For me too, it was a conscious decision to attend daily Holy Mass as often as possible. While working, I would block off my lunch breaks to attend Mass. Having attended many Eastern-rite liturgies, the way we celebrate our Holy *Qurbana* is especially unique which makes me love it. The signs, symbols and theology of our Holy *Qurbana* draws me more and more to it. In the words of St Augustine, 'Singing is praying twice,' which is deeply rooted in our liturgy. The prayers and songs of our liturgy allow us to experience heaven – which every Holy Mass calls us to.

4. What do you do at home to cultivate the habit of daily Holy *Qurbana* in your own children?

Rosmin and Stanny: Our kids know that daily Mass is part of their daily life. Since we home-school, we plan our day around the time we will attend Mass, giving it priority. We sometimes sing *Qurbana* songs at home. Our kids have a *Qurbana* set and the book with which they play.

5. How does home-schooling help you to keep your family Eucharistic centred?

Rosmin and Stanny: One of greatest advantages of home-schooling has been that we have been able to attend daily Holy *Qurbana*/Mass as a family. Attending Mass has nourished us spiritually and mentally providing us the grace to continue to home-school. We cultivate our faith in our home-school by celebrating feast days and important days that the Church has given us. Home-schooling has allowed us to grow closer together as a family and it has also allowed us to bring our children closer to God.



Making Holy Mass an integral part of our daily life is a conscious decision which requires effort. When we moved to the US, I always had this desire to receive Jesus daily but I was not prioritising it. When I had my third child, I started slowly with small steps. First, I made a decision to go for daily Mass during Lent. Once Lent was over, I took another small step of attending Mass every Friday. Then I made it two days a week and slowly it became a daily habit.

6. Rosmin, can you please share your tips on motherhood, especially how you cultivate faith in your daughters at this young age?

Rosmin: Motherhood is a gift from God. It is not an easy role and it requires us to be completely dependent on God. Every morning before I start the day, I pray for strength from God. My go-to Bible verse is Philippians 4:13: *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Being consistent is the key to cultivating faith in our children. Family prayer should not be only when time permits. We try never to miss our family prayer time. Sometimes if it's late we may not be able to say the whole Rosary, so we try to at least say a decade of the Rosary or do the Jesus prayer together. If we are outside in the car and know we will be late in reaching home we pray in the car together.

I also believe that just like what we eat affects our body, what we hear, read and so on affects our mind. As a family, we try to make sure that our language, the books we read, the media we consume are all good. Because in the end what's in our mind and heart somehow contributes to the person we are.

As a home-schooling family, we start our school day with the Morning Offering followed by thanks and praise. Each of the children share one thing they are thankful for, followed by an intention to pray for. We pray the Divine Mercy at 3pm.

During every pregnancy, as a couple we pray with Sirach 17:3-13 and we replace the word 'them' with 'our baby'. Also something beautiful that Stanny does is, as soon as each baby is born the first words he speaks into the baby's ears is a verse from the Bible.

7. Stanny, can you please share a few pointers on fatherhood – how you cultivate faith as a father in your children, especially your boys?

Kids learn from their parents. We make it a point to lead by example.

Whether it's attending daily Mass or doing our family prayers, the kids know that those are priorities and a non-negotiable part of our life. This has fostered, in our kids too in some way, the habit to prioritise God.

Be it church programmes or participating in any extracurricular activities, we encourage our kids to participate. This not only builds their faith but also builds their confidence and love for the Church.

One habit which we inculcate in our daily routine is to pray the Aaronic blessing over our kids after every family prayer.

Giving a listening ear to my kids and getting involved in their activities go a long way in building a bond with them.

My recommendation to young fathers is to be patient, be compassionate and take responsibility for being the primary educator of the kids by keeping God first in your life.

8. What is your message to other young families on living a Eucharistic-centred life?

Rosmin and Stanny: We would like to say that living a Eucharistic-centred life first starts with parents themselves. If they have a desire to attend daily Mass, they should take it to the Lord and ask Him for

the grace for the same. Your love and reverence for the Eucharist is what your children will learn from. The joy you experience from attending Mass should permeate into your children through your behaviour and lifestyle. Moreover, it's important to show the importance to the Lord in everything you do. You keep trying and do your part and trust in the Lord that He will help you find a way to go to Church daily and receive Him body, blood, soul and divinity.

Conclusion

In our parish life, it's easy to overlook the quiet grace beside us. Yet, families like Stanny and Rosmin's illuminate the path of Eucharistic devotion through their consistent, joyful presence at the altar. Their daily 'yes' to Christ – attending Mass, serving, and nurturing faith at home – embodies the essence of living a Eucharistic life.

Their witness reminds us that holiness is found in ordinary acts of faithfulness. In a world that often sidelines faith, such families become beacons, inspiring us to centre our lives around the Eucharist.

May we, as a parish, recognise and cherish these quiet witnesses, drawing inspiration to deepen our own commitment to the Holy Eucharist and to live out our faith with love and joy each day.

Are you wondering where to start? Just go for Holy Mass today with your family and Jesus will take care of the rest. He is waiting for you in the Eucharist! As Stanny mentioned, hold the hands of Mother Mary too!

Stanny and Rosmin are parishioners of St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Coppell, Texas, USA. They are blessed with 5 children: Nathan (11), Jonathan (8), Carolyn (7), Clare (2) and Jerome (3 months) Rosmin's sister is a religious nun (Sr Tresa Francis, Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Most Blessed Sacrament).

Silvy Santhosh is married to Santhosh Kurian and a mom of three, Sophia, Sonia and Solomon. She is a parish member of St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Coppell, Texas, where she prepares children and adults for their First Holy Communion and Confirmation. She works as a Paediatric Nurse Practitioner, sharing the love of Christ with children and their families through healing ministry.



IN FOCUS



Children with Disabilities need Patient Love and Understanding

From her first-hand experiences, **Tisha Mathew** writes of children with behavioural issues, and how parents need to bring them up.



From the moment a family receives news of a baby's conception, they are filled with longing for the baby's arrival. Either with baby clothes or toys and with a whole lot of dreams, every mother and father probably waits for the big arrival. And so, after nine months of hopeful waiting for the little prince or princess, how shattered would the parents be to know that their long-awaited darling has come with a disability? A very complex situation that others would not even be able to fathom. Many a time, they would face isolation from society too, which would lead to some falling into severe depression. And

And so, after nine months of hopeful waiting for the little prince or princess, how shattered would the parents be to know that their long-awaited darling has come with a disability?

in certain cases, without any support from family and friends, some might even think of ending their lives.

The problems faced by parents of physical and mentally disabled children are huge. Most of them would be worried about their children's future – the question 'who will take care of them after us' will always be uppermost on their minds.

In the light of getting to know and spending time with some such children and their parents, I've found that many of these parents love their children unconditionally, and do all they can to ensure their children can settle along with society at large. However, often circumstances do not allow this. The numerous hospital visits since birth might possibly have made a dent in their financial stability. In other cases, their siblings may have been neglected in terms of attention or care. Or, due to their behavioural challenges, they may often have had to bear the blame from others. In truth, how great are the parents who lovingly care for these children while overcoming all these challenges.

Children with such conditions may not even understand the physical changes happening to them. They may not be able to communicate their needs to their parents or teachers. In such situations, they often become aggressive and disturb others. For some children, harsh sounds or bright lights can even be frightening. It is important not to punish them for their behaviour in such situations, thinking it is disobedience; instead, we should be patient with them and try to understand them.

Behavioural disorders are very common among these children. Once, while talking to a child's parents, they mentioned certain behaviours of their child. The oldest of their three children was mentally challenged. As he reached adolescence, just like all children, he experienced age-related emotional changes. But he did not know how to

camouflage his thoughts and feelings. If he felt a liking towards any child, and if someone else talked to that child, he would become aggressive.

I know parents who have had to leave many public events in tears due to their children's behavioural disabilities. I know of a father who abandoned his wife and child when he realised that the child had a disability. I know of a child who is severely autistic – a very aggressive personality and hyperactive. When the situation became unmanageable for the family, they started confining this child with a mobile and computer. Gradually, the child became screen addicted. If those devices were not given, there would be tantrums. Now, efforts are being made to free the child from screen addiction.

In reality, these children are like angels. Knowing if something is wrong, they will never commit a mistake. Sometimes, the way they express their emotions may be inappropriate. If they are punished, they may not even understand what the punishment is for. Therefore, they need training rather than punishment. These children and their parents need support from the community. They should be given training even if it is to fulfil their own needs. For many of them, vocational training is possible. Their unique skills should be identified and understood so that they can be provided with the respective job-related training. It is essential for parents and the community to always be aware that these children are not to be marginalised but rather are to be integrated into mainstream society.

Tisha Mathew is married and lives in Ernakulam, India with her husband and their two children. She is a Counselling Psychologist and works with Green Brain Counselling Centre.

Raising a Blessing

Father of a severely disabled child,
Joshy MA shares the joys and
challenges of raising his daughter.



After the birth of our first two children, we prayed a lot and prepared ourselves to welcome our third – our daughter Ava. We were very happy when she was born. Our girl was extremely beautiful. Her playfulness and laughter filled our home with happiness. Like ordinary children, she began to grow up. After she turned one, she began to walk. Her play and laughter continued as she progressed. However, it was after she turned eighteen months that we began to realise that she wasn't speaking. Still, we didn't take it seriously because our elder son began to speak only after he turned three. And so we thought Ava was a bit slow.

Before Covid, things had been going on without much trouble. When Ava was five, we enrolled her in a regular school. Along with that, I started taking her for speech therapy. However with Covid, things turned upside-down. She contracted Covid. Subsequently, she began to have fits frequently. In between, she also got chickenpox. After going through two viral attacks, the small issues she had started to snowball into greater problems. She was gradually transitioning to the differently-abled category. She lost all interest in socialising. There was a doctor we frequently consulted for her dental issues, and another doctor whom we regularly visited when she had fever and other issues, then there was her mother's house – outside of that, she started refusing to connect with anyone else.

Earlier, we used to go to church every day but because of her new situation, we would often arrive at church exactly when Mass would begin. One day, we arrived a little early. That day, the entrance song began suddenly and unusually loud. Startled, Ava ran outside the church, and from that day on, the church became one of the places she disliked going to. However, she is very interested and actively participates in family prayer, especially the song at the end of it. She selects the song to be sung. It is a time she greatly enjoys.

Although she finds it difficult to go to school, it was Ava who encouraged her older siblings to study and aim for full A+ results, especially during their 10th and 12th board exams. How she learned the term 'A+' is a surprise to us. While she

shows knowledge and maturity in certain things, she behaves completely differently in other matters. Because of this, our life has changed drastically from what it had been.

This is not just our situation. This is a complex crisis that all parents and family members of such children go through. Now, our lives all revolve around her. All our journeys have come down. The situation is such that we aren't even able to attend ceremonies at the homes of our closest relatives and friends. Our lives have shrunk into hers.

Since Agnes is also working, very often our second daughter manages all that has to be done for Ava with the responsibility of a mother. Our elder son cooperates with this situation as much as he can. When both of us go to work, it is my mother who takes care of Ava. We see it as a great blessing that, by the grace of God, we can stay together as a family and take care of Ava's needs. However, the painful reality is that in many places the opposite happens. I have heard of many cases where relatives isolate such families. Sometimes, when such a little one is born, the husband walks out on the wife and children.

For us, it is only God's grace that these scenarios are absent. However, it is not that easy to care for and raise such children. In Ava's case, she often has fits during the day, falls down and gets hurt. Often, she is unable to convey her basic needs or use the bathroom on her own. This also seriously impacts the smooth functioning of our home. The older two children cannot bring their friends over or live like other kids. Yet, we all see and understand our situation as a divine blessing.

Sometimes I wonder and ask God why this happened to us. Just like any other person, these thoughts affect me too. From my earliest memory, I have knowingly never cheated or hurt anyone... and yet, I've wondered why this cross. From the time I've come to the Jesus Youth movement, I've prayed that the cross be an inescapable part of life. Did not Jesus ask us to carry our cross and follow Him? And sometimes I wonder if all this was the result of that prayer.

If I am able to attend events of Jesus Youth and other programmes, it is

because Agnes adjusts accordingly. We cannot leave Ava alone and go anywhere. Similarly, a large portion of our finances gets spent on Ava's medication and other expenses. Despite both of us having jobs, there is still a significant financial burden arising from this. In our personal opinion, it would be a great relief for parents of such children if the government were to provide regular financial assistance. Similarly, having a daytime facility either by the Church, or focused on large dioceses to accommodate such children, would come as a great help for parents. My prayer is for such a facility in the near future.

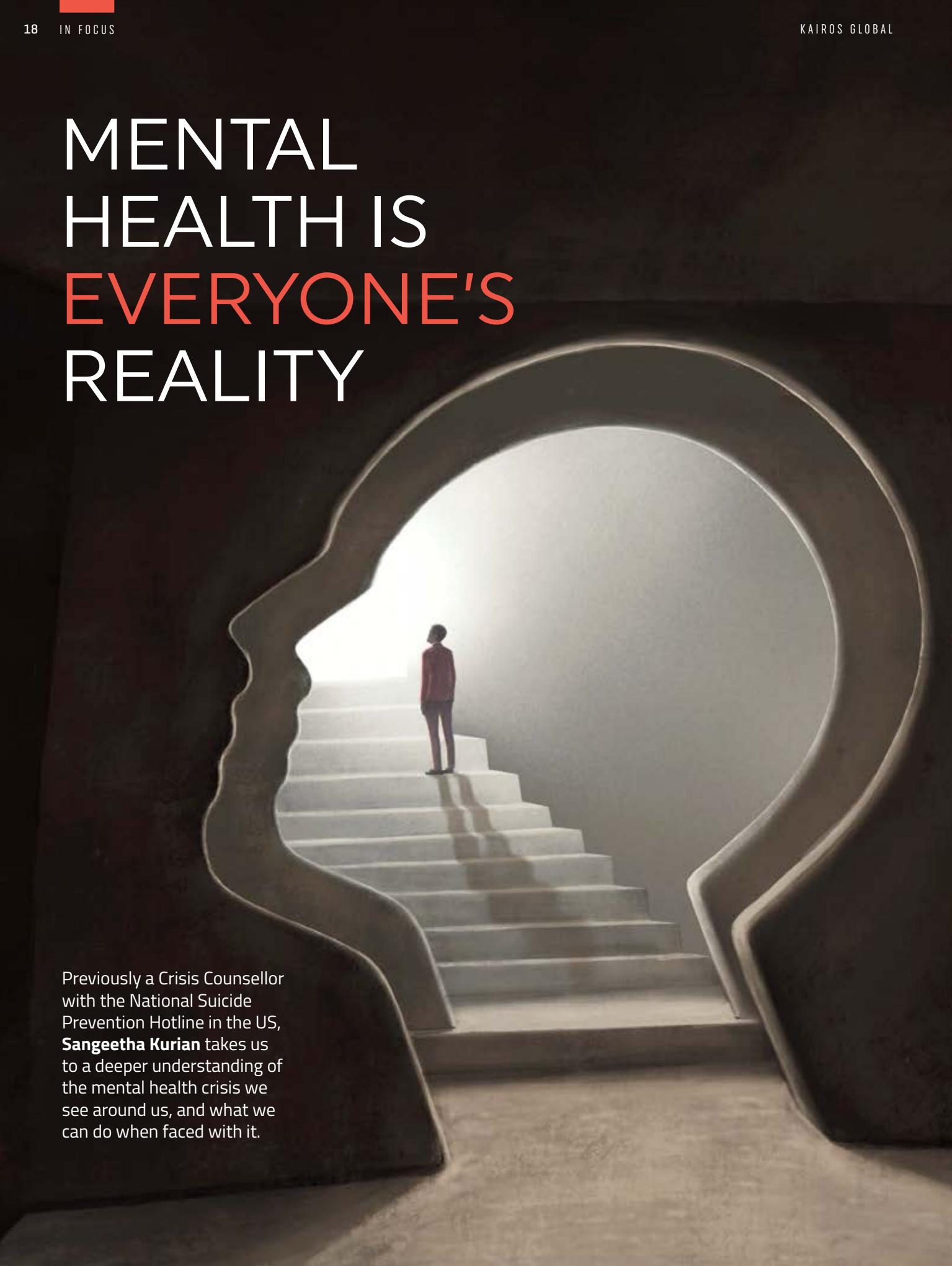
Another challenge faced by parents with such children are the scams perpetrated by certain institutions that look after such kids. Helpless parents often hear that there are better services elsewhere when they visit one centre. Then they are directed to that place. When they reach there, it leads to another. It is essential to be cautious to avoid jumping from one exploitative situation to another.

One question that everyone asks or discusses with us is: what will happen to our daughter after our time. But we are not anxious about that. We firmly believe that God who has ordered everything to perfection has a clear plan and purpose in this matter too. Another thing a lot of people have suggested is to go to this or that priest/retreat centre. While we are not against going to such places, it is our belief that no one else can pray for a child more fervently than the child's own parents. And if after all our prayers, the situation remains the same, then we are called to trust in God's will. As Fr Bobby Jose Kattikad says, 'Have what is served to you,' that is all we need to do. The Lord who has cared for us so far will continue to take care of us. This is a life full of challenges and crises. But when it has been received from the hands of God, He will take care of the rest. With that faith, we journey onward joyfully.

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Joshy MA works as a non-teaching staff in St Thomas College. He lives with his wife Agnes and their three children in Thrissur, India.

MENTAL HEALTH IS EVERYONE'S REALITY



Previously a Crisis Counsellor with the National Suicide Prevention Hotline in the US, **Sangeetha Kurian** takes us to a deeper understanding of the mental health crisis we see around us, and what we can do when faced with it.

During one morning Mass, 82-year-old Father Will, with a voice both fragile and steady, was delivering the homily. After a few minutes, he concluded by saying, 'My mind's not working well this morning.' He explained that his golden retriever, Murphy, had begun barking at 4.00 am, disrupting his sleep and leaving him unable to rest properly thereafter.

Father Will is known for his thoughtful and moving homilies, which is one of the reasons I attend this particular church for morning Mass. When he made that remark about his mind not functioning well, I was momentarily surprised – how could a priest, a spiritual guide, say such a thing? Yet almost immediately, it struck me as completely understandable. It's purely human to feel that way. Having worked as a crisis counsellor the expression, 'my mind isn't working' or 'my mind doesn't feel well' has become deeply recognisable to me through years of listening to individuals in distress.

There is a common misconception that mental health struggles are rare or affect only a specific segment of the population. In reality, our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are often shaped by the circumstances we face. It's a reality how frequently we all experience mental fatigue. Our mood can be altered by a sharp comment from a loved one or by the grim headlines of the daily news. The mind is not always within our control, and it can be affected subtly, even without our conscious awareness.

Understanding Today's Mental Health Crisis

This notion that mental health challenges are reserved for a smaller segment of the population is misleading. During my six years working with the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, I encountered individuals from all walks of life: young, elderly, married, divorced or separated, single parents, young adults, teenagers, etc. They shared their anxieties, fears, emotional pain, and, in some cases, a desire to end their lives as a means of escaping mental distress. Of all these

individuals, only a small percentage suffered from severe mental illness. The vast majority struggled with the cumulative impact of stress, childhood traumas, life pressures, and emotionally taxing circumstances. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the leading mental health issue globally is anxiety disorder. Approximately 19.1% of adults are experiencing various anxiety disorders in the US. The second is major depression which is 8.3%. Today, **1 in 5 adults in the US** experience some form of mental illness. **1 in 20 adults** live with a serious mental illness. Even among young people, the numbers are concerning – **about 17% of youth aged 6 to 17** deal with a mental health disorder.

Can you believe this? That means **1 in 5 people we meet** may be struggling with anxiety, depression, or a mood disorder. This isn't something we can just ignore or push aside. Mental health challenges don't always have a visible starting point. They can affect anyone – **you, me, our friends, or family**. That's why it's so important to be aware, supportive, and compassionate. Recognising this reality is the first step toward healing and creating a more understanding world.

Therapy and Faith: A Journey toward Deeper Healing

Several therapeutic techniques used in counselling like cognitive behavioural techniques, mindfulness-based approaches to therapy, relationship-based and spiritually-based therapies all have contributed much to mental health care and helped individuals understand and change unhealthy thought patterns. While therapists, counsellors, and psychiatrists can offer invaluable support, their interventions have limitations.

Professional help, though essential, cannot always reach deeper layers of emotional wounding – such as feelings of rejection, fear, betrayal, and trust issues – that accumulate over time. It is still vital to make use of these mental health resources. Expressing or 'venting' long-suppressed fears and traumas is an

important step in the healing process. Opening up can bring relief and help individuals begin to reclaim their inner stability. Yet, beyond these clinical avenues, there is a greater source of healing. There is a God who has already borne our wounds and paid the price for our pain. During my time as a crisis counsellor, I often lifted silent prayers for each individual I spoke with, praying: 'Lord, we as healthcare workers can only go so far but You are the true healer. Please reach their trauma and inner wounds, and set them free.' After listening to each individual, I often find myself thinking: If only they had known Him, many would not have reached such depths of emotional suffering. Even amidst pain, trauma, and chaos, the knowledge of a loving, redeeming God could bring purpose, peace, and restoration where human efforts fall short. As it says in Isaiah 41:10, *Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

The Lasting Impact of Childhood Environment on Adult Mental Health

When considering the impact of one's circumstances, it is important to recognise that a child raised in a nurturing and loving environment develops emotional and cognitive patterns that differ significantly from those shaped by neglect or chronic stress. It is deeply concerning to realise that many of the callers I have spoken with have experienced significant childhood trauma or come from unstable or broken families. Children who grow up in toxic family environments – characterised by exposure to abuse, parental hostility, absence of safety, affection, or consistency – often face considerable challenges in managing similar stressors later in life. As adults, they may experience anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, aggressive behaviour, or a tendency to repeat abusive patterns. When confronted with emotional challenges or interpersonal

conflict, they are more likely to withdraw or prematurely end relationships, lacking the resilience or emotional resources necessary to navigate such difficulties.

Fight the Real Enemy

Today, parents have a greater responsibility in raising a family rooted in faith and love. As parents, we must intentionally let go of ego and past emotional baggage so these do not become part of the foundation of the family we are building. As I was growing up, I always watched my parents maintain a strong and loving relationship, even in the midst of several difficult situations. They consistently showed remarkable patience and kindness while raising their five children. There were many moments when they could have easily reacted with anger or frustration. Instead, I vividly recall my father with outstretched arms, in front of the Sacred Heart of Jesus image, praying aloud and asking God to grant him more patience and kindness.

In moments when he might have lashed out, he would approach us calmly, embrace us, and say, 'Jesus loves you – and I love you. So there is no room for fighting.' We often wondered how he managed to respond that way, but it was the intentional decision of a father who deeply trusted that Abba Father would treat him with the same mercy and love.

He would often remind us that the real source of family conflict is not one another, but the evil one. 'Toxicity in the family comes from Satan,' he would say. 'He is our enemy – fight him, not your siblings, your family, or your friends.'

That simple yet powerful wisdom has stayed with me. Many times in my own family life, when anger or resentment tried to take root, I remembered his words. We must realise that it is not the people we love who are the enemy – it is the Evil One that seeks to destroy unity and love. In those moments, our job is not to fight each other, but to raise our arms in prayer and, in the name of Jesus, renounce the evil that brings hatred, selfishness, pride, and ego.

As Scripture reminds us: ***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual***

1 in 5 people we meet may be struggling with anxiety, depression, or a mood disorder. This isn't something we can just ignore or push aside. Mental health challenges don't always have a visible starting point. They can affect anyone – you, me, our friends, or family. That's why it's so important to be aware, supportive, and compassionate. Recognising this reality is the first step toward healing and creating a more understanding world.

forces of evil in the heavenly realms

(Ephesians 6:12).

Caring for the Mind

The first step in overcoming mental health struggles is taking care of your own mental well-being. For those of us who walk in faith, peace of mind is a gift that comes from staying connected to God – through prayer, reflection, and surrender. Yet, as human beings it's natural to feel overwhelmed by life's challenges. In those situations, talk to someone you trust, seek professional help when needed, journal your thoughts and feelings. Remember, your mind is a sacred space. Treat it with the care and respect it deserves. By doing so, you're not only protecting your own well-being, you're also becoming a source of peace and strength for others. Besides, ***Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you*** (1 Peter 5:7). This verse is a powerful reminder that we have a caring Father who wants to ease our pain and carry our burden – if only we turn to Him.

Mindful Interactions for Effective Mental Health

Lastly, I would like to highlight the importance of mindful interaction. It is a powerful tool in supporting mental health and reducing the mental stress or anxiety an individual feels. Mindful interaction is not just about better communication – it's about building relationships that heal, support, and uplift. In a world where people are often overwhelmed or unheard,

even one mindful conversation can make a lasting impact. Giving someone a listening ear and listening without interrupting, allowing the other person to talk is a great act of compassion where powerful healing of the heart takes place. As Pope Francis beautifully said, 'Knowing how to listen is an immense grace; it is a gift we must pray for and then strive to practice daily.' As Pope Leo XIV reminds us, 'Peace begins with each one of us,' let us strive to be instruments of peace and healing by seeing every person as a child of God. St Dymphna, patron saint of mental health, pray for all those who are struggling with mental illness.

Sangeetha Joseph is a devoted Catholic wife and mother of four beloved children. She strives to live out her Catholic faith every moment of life and is committed to teaching her children to do the same. A social worker by profession, she served as a Crisis Counselor for six years with the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, USA. In addition to home-schooling her children, Sangeetha enjoys spending time outdoors, listening to music and travelling with her family.

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HELP IN DARK PLACES

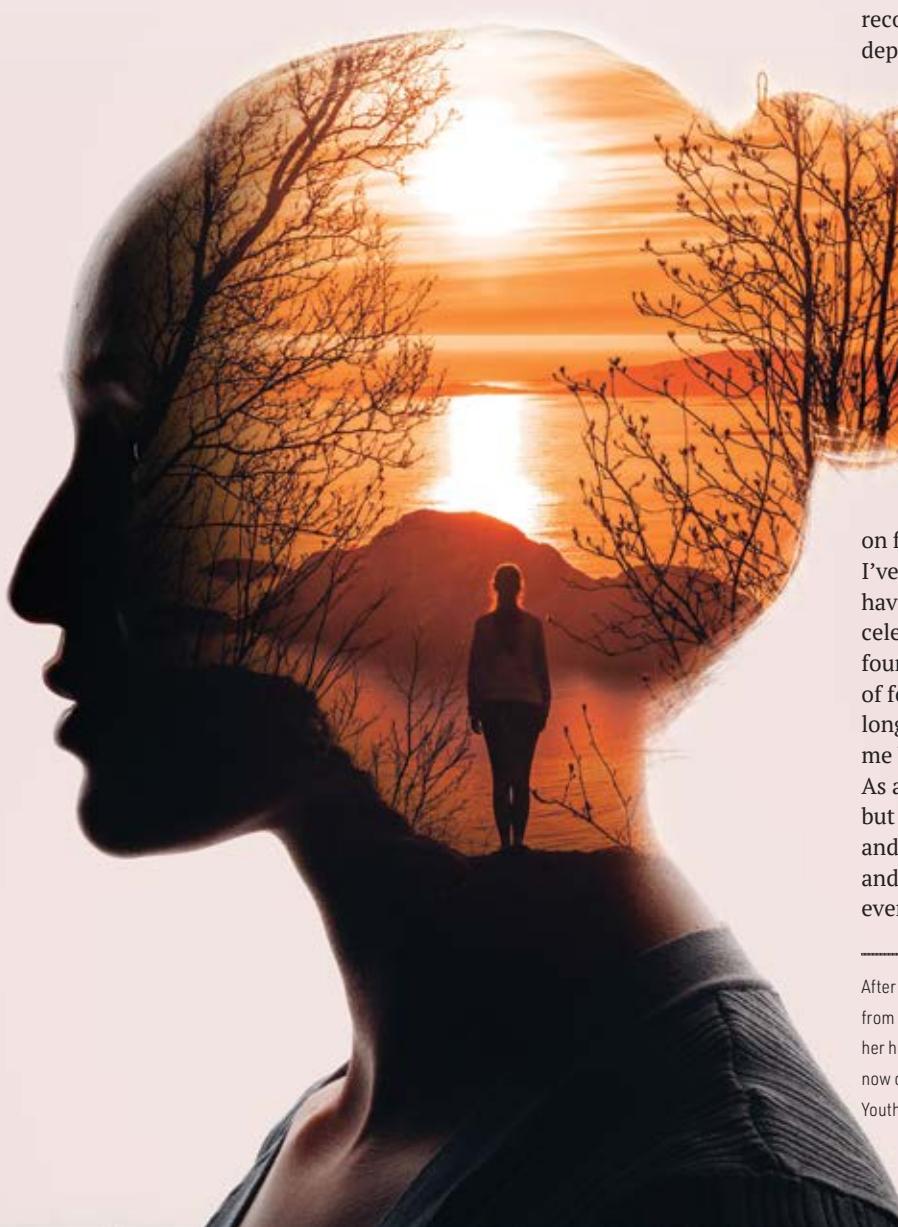
Kairos Global requested people to share stories of their personal struggles with mental health issues. Below are a few sharings we received.

Rising from Depression

I struggled with my mental health in both my teens and adulthood. As someone with a generally positive disposition, I didn't recognise my teenage-years' struggle as depression. However when it manifested in adulthood to a point I was incapacitated, I realised with the help of a few medical professionals that I was indeed clinically depressed. Although I cherished and loved Christ, somewhere along the way Satan found a foothold and clambered into my life. It was hard for me to turn to prayer and Scripture at that point and I relied on medication to numb my mind. However three years on from the point of my deepest pit of despair, I've been medication free for over two years, have a beautiful relationship with my Lord, celebrate daily Mass as often as possible, have found the joy in frequent reconciliation, the joy of fellowship with like-minded people and no longer feel a sense of hopelessness that plagued me before. Praise God!

As above, medical help, medication, counselling but ultimately improving my personal prayer and reuniting with Jesus in complete surrender and working hard to maintain that relationship even if it meant that I walked alone doing it.

After moving from Kerala, India, **Teena James** grew up in New Zealand from the age of five. She is currently settled in Brisbane, Australia with her husband and daughter. Originally a Human Resources Advisor, she now operates a small childcare business. She has been part of Jesus Youth for 18 years





Battling a Blurred Reality

It's a grace to be able to see sufferings as blessings, not everyone can. I am grateful I could.

Back when I was in tenth grade I had an experience that strengthened my trust in God and His plan for me. It started off with a heavy fever. Both my mom and dad were sick too at the time. I recovered from it soon enough but I still didn't feel quite right after. For a week I went back to school.

On the day before Onam celebration, I remember going to the washroom with my friend to fix my hair. I saw my class teacher walk past and smiled at her. But a minute later, I found myself asking my friend if it was just me or if she

saw our class teacher too. Somehow it felt like I was dreaming. I couldn't differentiate between my dreams and reality.

My parents felt that something was off when I started acting weird. My mom panicked and she took me to our church to be blessed by our parish priest, and also to a mental wellness hospital nearby. After a few days my dad, who works out of town, came. On the advice of our relatives, I was taken to a hospital. There, I was immediately taken to the ICU, to be kept under observation. They said that the fever must have affected my brain. Everyone was shocked – I was gifted with an incredibly good immune system that I rarely got

sick. Even fevers were rare for me. So this was a huge shock for my family to handle. The doctors ran some tests and then moved me to a room where I was still under observation. For almost a week I was there with my family and friends visiting. I began having the worst dreams and hallucinations, even suicidal thoughts.

By then, many people were praying hard for me. I still don't know what the actual problem was but I know that I was going through the most difficult phase of my life till then. I was continuously in bed, not able to go anywhere, having the weirdest thoughts and dreams, and scared. But thankfully I had a very supportive family.

When I look back at all that I went through, I feel those experiences were needed in my life. They strengthened me and brought me deeper into my faith life. Truly, God's plans for all of us are so great!

After a week, I was sent back home with a whole bunch of medicines to avoid my hallucinations and get my brain back to normal. For a whole month I couldn't go to school. My first terminal exams were going on and I couldn't attend it. My school and the principal were so kind and considerate. My class teacher was my greatest support. She would call me almost every day and comfort me. I had my best friend come over a few times, who also played a major role in my recovery. Our Jesus Youth friends were of great support for my parents. I still thank Jesus for all the lovely people He surrounded me with at the time.

By God's grace and with the special intercession of Mother Mary, I fully recovered within a month. I started going to school and was able to cope up quite well. But then came the real struggle – to be surrounded by people who were just as confused as I was and who either ignored my presence or sympathised. Every single person in my school other than a few

teachers and my good friend were acting weird, or so I thought. I was finally feeling what my sister, who is wheelchair-bound, experiences every day. I realised how strong she was. After a week or so, I was hit with another anxiety attack. All the while I had been visiting psychiatrists and counsellors.

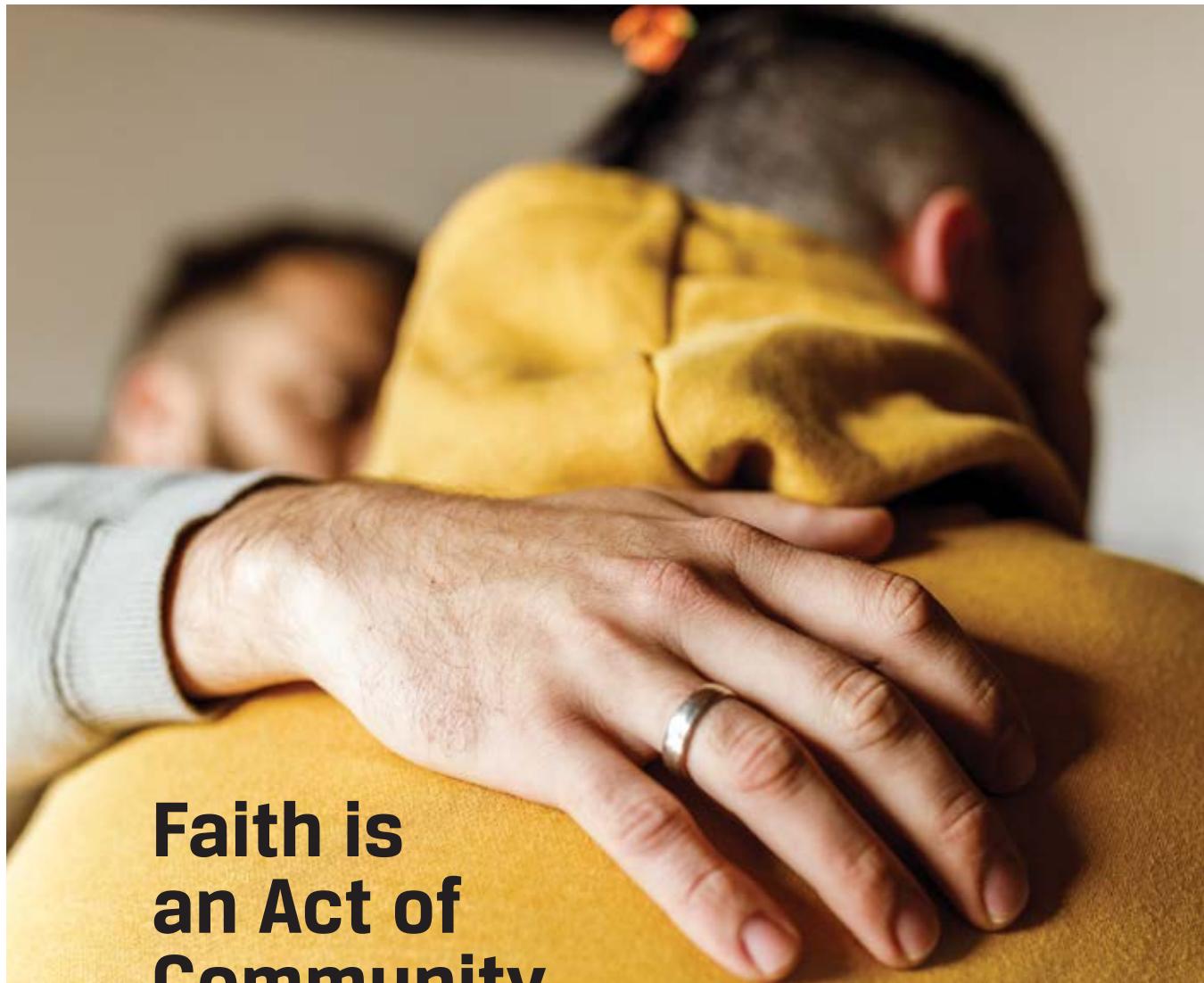
When I look back at all that I went through, I feel those experiences were needed in my life. They strengthened me and brought me deeper into my faith life. Truly, God's plans for all of us are so great!

Even though I felt all kinds of bad things, I never once felt like I was alone in this. My family, friends, school, doctors and nurses were so supportive, I recovered well. I am greatly indebted to all those who prayed for me. I strongly believe that it was because of the special intercession of Mother Mary that I was able to have a quiet recovery. It was a difficult time but since I had so many considerate people around me, it was made easier.

At that time I realised how blessed I was to have all of them. There are many in this world who undergo suffering all alone because they don't know God. All I know is that God was with me the entire time comforting me and cradling me in His loving arms. I started praying for all those people.

The greatest struggle for me was to adjust with people sympathising. It was what caused my anxiety attack. But thankfully with the help of a wonderful Jesus Youth counsellor, I recovered from that too. The experience surely brought me closer to God and humbled me so much. It made me realise how weak I am without Him. I thank the Lord for His ineffable gifts!

Anita Treesa Benny lives in Kakkad. An artist by passion, she has finished her 12th grade this year.



Faith is an Act of Community

I lost my faith in bits and pieces. It started out in the form of missed morning Mass. Falling asleep was so difficult every single night, and when I did manage to finally fall asleep, it wasn't sound sleep, so waking up in the morning was even more difficult. I was fatigued all the time, (and my perfectionism did not help!) so evening Mass, too, skipped the list. I would promise myself to restart, and do so every other week, but two days was the longest streak I managed to achieve.

Mass had been a refuge, and losing it shattered me. The symptoms were getting worse; I was getting little to no sleep, skipping meals too frequently, eating to barely keep myself alive... I was tired all the time, and I felt like a big failure.

I blamed myself.

I'd beg God to at least let me make it to church every day, nothing more... but that never happened. My sleep disturbances kept getting worse, and even making it to class on time became a heavy burden. I wasn't getting any better, and since my kith and kin kept insisting that it was 'all in my head', I couldn't get proper help.

God, up in the Heavens, was too silent.

Amid all this loss and brokenness, I couldn't find the strength to trust in Him anymore. The 'faithful' around me kept telling me that it was my lack of faith, my lapse in pious practices... What they did not realise was that, as I was complaining of not being able to find God amid all this pain, they could easily

have become God's presence to me.

Every time I see someone in pain, I'm reminded of myself in pain. So I set aside my expert opinions, and even my lived experiences, and just sit with them, listen to them, let them cry... And I promise to be there, beside them or at the receiving end of a phone call, any time of any day or night. Because I cannot solve or heal. That's His mojo.

I can only be the person who trusted Him enough to heal you when you couldn't trust Him yourself.

Maria Teres is a social worker by education, and writer by passion and profession. In her spare time, you may find her curled up on a couch crocheting, reading, or sketching.

Rising Together from the Battle Within

Yo, I am fighting battles deep inside,
I am trapped in my mind, nowhere to hide.
The weight of the world, yeah, it's pulling me down,
In the silence of the night, I am lost, and I drown.

Depression's a storm that clouds up my view,
Anxiety's a thief that's stealing my truth.
I'm praying for peace but it's hard to find,
Trying to heal when I am stuck in my mind.

I know I am not alone, but it feels that way,
Like I am walking through darkness, day after day.
But I remember the cross, I remember the grace,
And I find strength in His holy embrace.



I got anxiety, but I am not giving in,
 I got depression, but I am trusting Him.
 I will rise again, through the pain and the fear,
 With Jesus beside me, I know He is near.
 He is my refuge, my light in the night,
 I am struggling, but I know He will make it right.

Lord, I am crying out, but I don't know what to say,
 I am stuck in the struggle, but I am praying every day.
 Jesus, take the weight that is breaking my soul,
 Lift me from this darkness, make me whole.

I remember the words, 'Come, I will heal,'
 But it is hard to trust when the pain feels real.

I know you are my Shepherd, you carry the load,
 Even in the valley, I am not walking alone.
 Saints in the heavens, they are rooting for me,
 I can feel the prayers, I can feel them set me free.
 I am not perfect, I am human, I am flawed,
 But through my suffering, I am drawing closer to God.

He is my peace when the storm gets loud,
 He is my strength when I am feeling down.
 I don't have to carry this on my own,
 With Jesus, I will find my way home.

Through the highs and the lows, He is by my side,
 I am walking with Him, I am learning to ride.
 In His love, I am starting to grow,
 I am healing, I am trusting, I am letting it go.

I got anxiety, but I am not giving in,
 I got depression, but I am trusting Him.
 I will rise again, through the pain and the fear,
 With Jesus beside me, I know He is near.
 He is my refuge, my light in the night,
 I am struggling, but I know He will make it right.

So when the storm's heavy, and the night's too long,
 Just know you are not alone, keep holding on strong.
 Through the struggle, through the fight,
 You have got the love of Jesus to shine in your life.
 Let His light in, let His peace flow,
 Recovery starts with Him, and that's how we grow.
 I have walked a road where the shadows would linger,
 Where the weight of the world pressed down on my fingers.
 Felt like I was sinking, drowning in despair,
 Caught in the grip of depression, gasping for air.

Anxiety whispered lies, pulling at my soul,
 Telling me I am broken, I will never be whole.
 Addiction is a battle, a fight every day,
 Trying to break free but I kept losing my way.

But there is a truth I have learned, a fire in the night,
 We do not walk alone in this struggle, in this fight.
 In this group, I found strength in the shared,
 A community rising, knowing we have all been there.

We have seen the darkness, felt the pain of the fall,
 But we stand together, stronger than before, standing tall.
 The chains of addiction, the weight of the mind,
 They may try to break us, but they will never define.

We are rising together, through the storm and the strain,
 We are breaking the silence, we are healing the pain.
 Depression, anxiety, addiction, they don't own us,
 We are lifting each other, rising above the fuss.
 From the ashes we rise, from the depths we climb,
 Together, we heal, we are taking back our time.

Yeah, we have stumbled, we have fallen, but we are not defined
 By the scars or the struggles left behind.
 It is in the recovery, in the courage to fight,
 It is in the love we give, the faith we ignite.

The journey is long, but we are not alone,
 We have built a family from seeds we have sown.
 Through the darkest nights and the hardest days,
 We have found a way out, we have found a way to pray.

Our struggles don't vanish, but we don't let them win,
 We lean on each other, find healing within.
 This group is more than just a name,
 It is a lifeline, a bond, a beacon, a flame.

Each step we take is a victory won,
 We are not just surviving, we are becoming one.
 From brokenness to wholeness, from dark to light,
 We are lifting each other out of the fight.

We have got the power, the strength, the voice,
 We have made the choice to rise and rejoice.
 And together, we will keep on rising above,
 Living with faith, living with love.

We are rising together, through the storm and the strain,
 We are breaking the silence, we are healing the pain.
 Depression, anxiety, addiction, they do not own us,
 We are lifting each other, rising above the fuss.
 From the ashes we rise, from the depths we climb,
 Together, we heal, we're taking back our time.

Hallelujah. All praise and glory be to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. AMEN!

Above is a 'spoken word' piece written by the person who is struggling and has found help, but this piece emphasises the importance of a group of people similar to him who are also in the process of recovery/healing. The author wishes to remain anonymous.



ONLY Grace

I've heard that it was difficult for my mother while delivering me. There are distinct depressions of fingers on my head – by whoever it was that got me out. Were I to shave off all my hair, the bumps on my head would be fascinating. But did that difficult delivery alter me? When I look at my 'different-ness', my odd-ness, how I feel like the 'black sheep' – totally unlike my family members, was it because of how I came into this world?

When I was four or five, I was sexually abused. Vague memories surface from time to time – and thank goodness; I don't think I'd be able to 'deal' with the clarity of it. But it destroyed me. Being sexually exposed at such a young age, I kept drowning in sins against purity – all

before I was even ten.

Nobody in my immediate family had any idea about this. It was a secret that festered, changing me from inside out. No one could understand why the cheerful and sometimes 'difficult-to-control' child had become withdrawn and quiet all of a sudden.

Then, just as I was turning ten, and again in my teenage years, I went through sexual abuse by being touched inappropriately.

It didn't help that I couldn't talk about this to anyone. Being of a different generation (and I don't blame them at all), my parents were emotionally distant to the point of strictness. In short, I grew up with a constant voice in my head that

told me how dirty, fat, worthless and useless I was. Guilt built impenetrable walls and tormented me.

As I grew older and moved away for a higher education, I suffered terrible loneliness and home-sickness. Sadness and manic introspectiveness were my constant companions – if I made the slightest faux pas, my mind would go on overdrive fretting about it for days. To add to that, I was extremely awkward socially, especially when it came to the opposite sex.

Work-life began and marriage happened. Life became extremely difficult and burdensome. Stress began to destroy me. All of a sudden, life just looked bleak. How I longed to be free from all that was shackling me, free from all that hounded me, free from my own self. I fell deeper and deeper into habits that harmed. And when nothing made sense, I drowned out all the disturbance with food and screen addiction.

So what helped me get out of the abyss and on with my life? It was Jesus, my Catholic faith, Mass and especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Somehow, in my darkest moments, I've always found heaven-sent solace. By some divine comedy, I was blessed with an ever-hopeful attitude, which has pulled me through some of life's insurmountable odds.

I can't say that I'm completely healed or totally free of my past. It is a constant struggle and battle. But as long as I can run to Confession, or simply cry before the Lord, I know I will be fine. His grace is all I need.

Author wishes to remain anonymous.



Would you like to share about similar struggles either you or a loved one is going through or has overcome? You can do so through this Google Form. Who knows, your story may bring help or healing to another.

Team Kairos Global

NewsWatch



JY India's New Council

Dr Midhun Paul, International Coordinator of the Jesus Youth movement recently announced the new JY India National Council. He also commended Justin P J, who led the outgoing council as Coordinator and Johnson Pillai (Asst Coordinator), both of whom had taken a break from their careers and dedicated themselves completely to the ministry over the past three years.

WANT TO CONDUCT CRAFTCITY WORKSHOPS?

If you're interested in conducting a 2-hour Jesus Youth Buds CraftCity programme for children aged 6-12 years at your parish or at any children's gathering, resource material for 2-hour sessions featuring songs, Bible stories, saint's stories, and crafts are readily available. Please get in touch if you're willing to lead this fun and creative initiative.

HOW TO GO ABOUT IT?

1. Find youth volunteers from your parish or locality.
2. Share the resource materials and assign their parts based on their interest, (song, Bible story, saint's story, or craft).
3. Coordinate the programme at Sunday school (grades 1-7) or at family group gatherings with children.
4. For more information subscribe to Kairos Buds, the Catholic magazine for children.

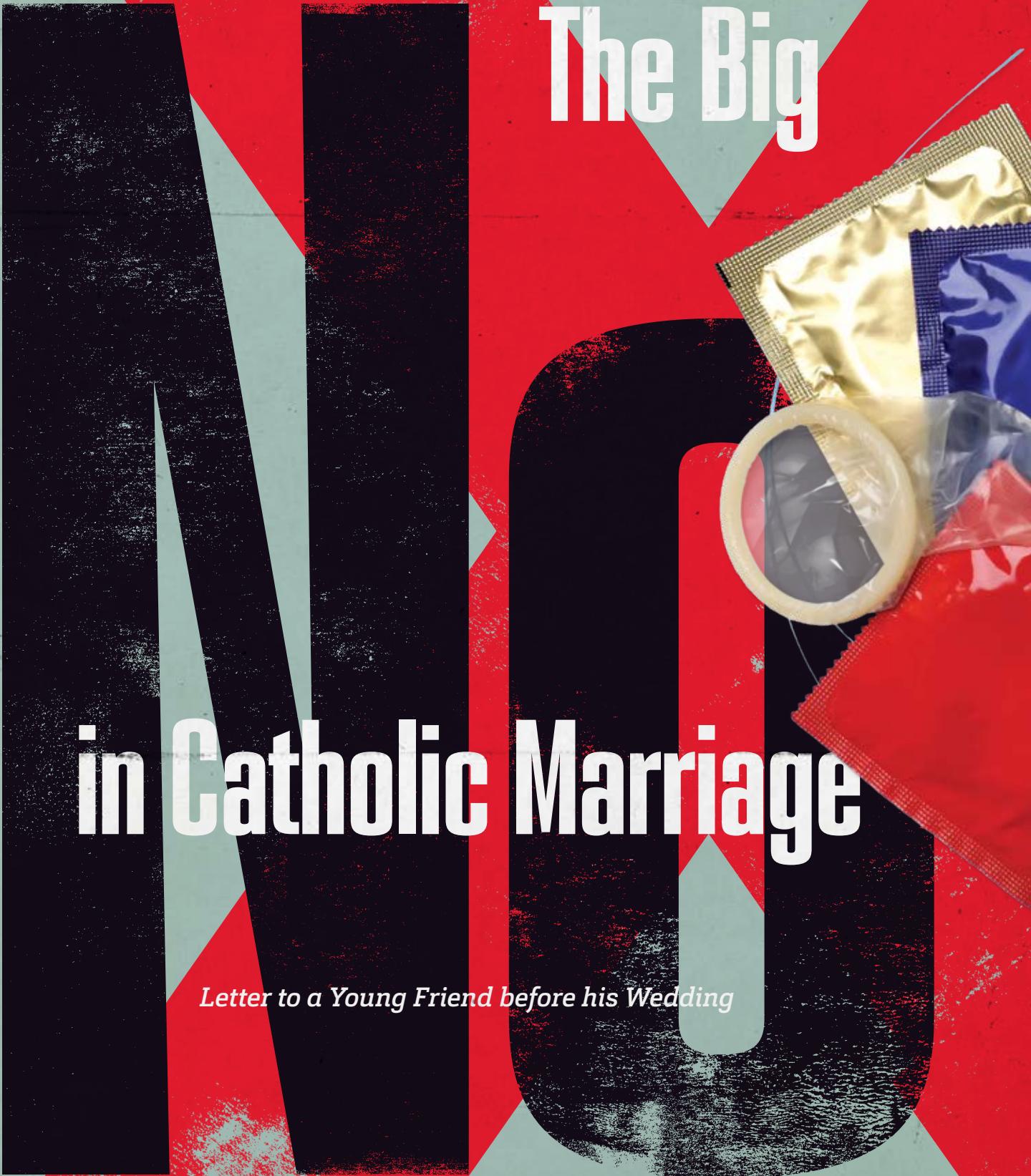
Those interested may please contact:
kairosbuds@jykairosmedia.org.



CULTURE OF LIFE

The Big in Catholic Marriage

Letter to a Young Friend before his Wedding



When a friend asked for prayers the night before his wedding, **Patrick Sibly** also wrote him a letter, giving the young man wisdom to guide his marriage. Below is the letter in a two-part series.



No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24)

Dear JJ,

As I reflect upon your marriage and your request to pray for you, I feel in my heart deep gratitude for your marriage, and I would like to speak a word of warning.

And that is, you must never ever use contraception in your marriage. The

temptation to do so usually comes via the suggestion of a person outside of the marriage – a mother, father, friend, doctor.

This could be obvious for a Catholic since obstructing life goes against God's Commandments yet, the Devil has subtle ways to impose his anti-childbirth attitude upon the gift of fertility in marriage and rob you of the inheritance of children, the most precious of riches.

In her wisdom, Mother Church imposes no obligation to have any number of children, or any children at all; the Church instead, remains faithful to Holy Scripture, when it teaches that every marital act must remain open to the possibility of life – conception. Therefore, it is evident that a couple must never use condoms or any physical obstruction.

With so many infertile couples, you can never be so presumptuous as to put off your family until later.

Ironically, because of the nature of a woman's oestrus cycle, it is impossible for every marital act to result in conception. Yet, as the teachings of the Church explain, every single marital act without contraception remains ever fertile in spirit and in truth. A writer made a distinction between Mary and Zechariah's responses to the Angel Gabriel; I will here apply it to contraception. *And Mary said to the Angel, 'How shall this be, since I have no husband?' (Luke 1:34)*. The attitude of the couple who never use contraceptives remains humble and open as did the Virgin Mary. In a fashion, all of us have no husband but the Lord, so-to-speak, and therefore depend on Him for everything, since we know that we personally do not have all the resources that we need to accomplish the work ahead of us. Mary's response is contrasted with Zechariah's response when the Angel Gabriel visited him, telling him that his now elderly and barren wife was going to conceive and bear a son. He said, *How shall I know this* (Luke 1:18) In other words, 'How shall I know if I can trust God?' reflecting Eve's appetite for knowledge over and above God's generous authority in which lies our very providence, peace... and joy.

Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but



In a fashion, all of us have no husband but the Lord, so-to-speak, and therefore depend on Him for everything, since we know that we personally do not have all the resources that we need to accomplish the work ahead of us. Mary's response is contrasted with Zechariah's response when the Angel Gabriel visited him, telling him that his now elderly and barren wife was going to conceive and bear a son.

have envisioned for you delusions and false prophecies (Lamentations 2:14).

Secondly it is abundantly evident that a couple must never use hormonal contraceptives. Here is why: previously understood facts were again recently confirmed by Carlo Bastianelli and his team from the Department of Gynaecology, Obstetrics and Urology, at the Sapienza University of Rome, who went through every combination of hormones available on the contraceptive market and concluded that every combination has the same effect: if ovulation occurs, a defective Corpus Luteum function ensures the conception does not survive. This is to say that every hormonal contraceptive, without exception, causes an abortion of the early embryo – they all are abortifacient.

The hormonal contraception does not kill the embryo directly, but rather deprives it of a residence... it is like starving your child to death, rather than killing it directly.

This information is not disclosed by the medical profession when prescribing the Implant to teenage girls or adult women. It appears that this fact is too inconvenient for a medical profession sponsored by the multi-billion-dollar international pharmaceutical industry. Archbishop of Sydney, Anthony Fisher once said words to this effect: 'What a boon to convince a whole generation of women that they need to take your pill in order for them to be liberated.'

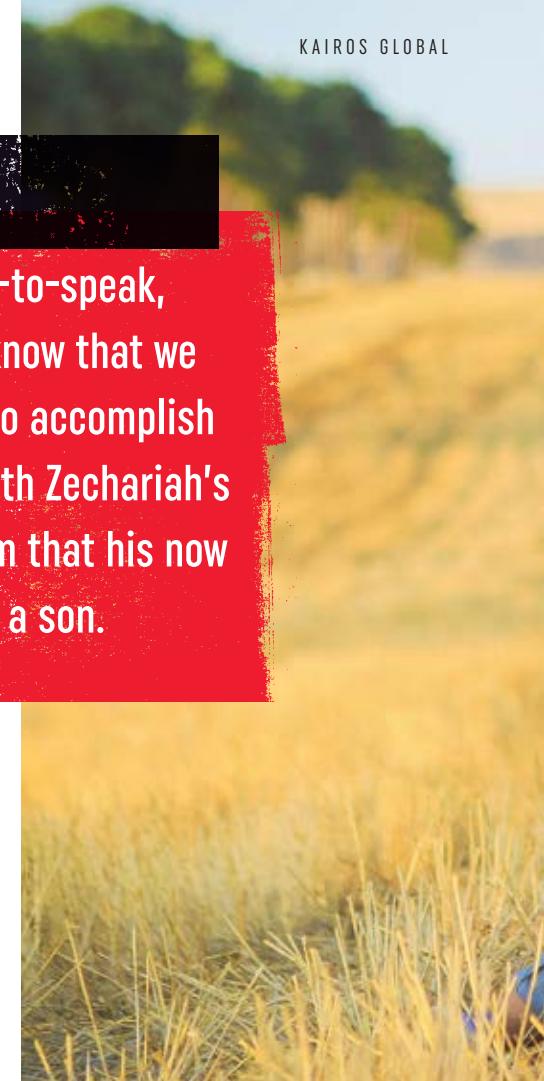
For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities,

against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

Never mind the 'battle-of-the-sexes', it is nothing but an invention of the evil one; there are real enemies to fight. The neglect of the medical profession to disclose the effects of hormonal contraceptives completely negates the four Principles of Valid and Legal Informed Consent to Medical Treatment or Procedure. In reality, hormonal contraceptives act as a poison, while masquerading as medical treatment. In truth they serve only to maim, disable and cause the dysfunction of a healthy body – as North American Professor Dr Janet E Smith elaborately articulates in her *Contraception: Why Not!* series.

Sin carries with it an overburden of guilt; *The wage of sin is death* (Romans 6:16) and the corollary of this reality is immediate in the case of the use of hormonal contraceptives; the gift of life entrusted to you by God, bound together to your marital vow, will not reach maturity. For this reason, Church teaching in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* identifies the use of contraception as a very serious sin.

Lastly, there is a more subtle form of contraception and that is the method of withdrawal. In a Chilean study, 18% of young women sighted withdrawal as their chosen contraceptive method. Please read the story of Onan in the Holy Bible (Genesis chapter thirty eight) to see what God thinks of withdrawal. Evidently God



is mysteriously and profoundly invested in the bringing forth of new creations, made in His image, and His command to Adam and Eve to 'go forth and multiply' is not to be taken lightly.

Withdrawal appears harmless enough, yet it is very unreliable and additionally it has the same corollary as all other contraception – that pregnancy can be experienced as an 'unplanned' inconvenient, and therefore unwanted consequence that in some circumstances is exterminated.

There is so much more that could be said but here is a simple philosophical approach.

Married couples must understand that the teaching of the Church on contraception is designed to protect the relationship from self-destruction, and to save the souls of the spouses. There are several identifiable phenomena associated with contraception and relationship failure that are clearly articulated by Professor Janet E Smith, who reminds us that when a woman conceives and holds a pregnancy, her body is working



perfectly, just as it was made to do – strong, healthy, robust – fertile and excellent. We must never subject a woman to the embitterment that follows wasted fertility, especially when it was wasted chasing illusions that later are exposed.

Saint Pope John Paul II, in his writings, refers to woman as: 'the Masterwork of Creation'. She is a being so masterfully created as to multiply God's very gift of life, while simultaneously being so versatile as to be the most perfect 'help-meet' of the man in every respect including psychologically, which is also tempered by the excellence of her rhythmic nature.

However, relationship experts say that when the woman's body is shut-down, disabled, chemically altered – interfered with until it malfunctions – reduced to sterility, then the dynamic of her rhythms and variations can sometimes be ignored and forgotten. Conversation can be negated and then she can be taken for granted. It is said that this can be 'the-beginning-of-the-end' of the relationship.

Alternatively, the approach of the

Church is that when a man must wait, he grows in his capacity for other-centred love... that is, he grows in his capacity to express love in other ways, like helping with the children, cleaning the house, fixing things, working harder. 'Put him to work' was the sentiment of one very industrious stay-at-home mother; she expected her husband to work as hard as she was working. 'Treat them mean, and keep them keen' said in-jest by one husband who had initiated an agreement with his wife to refrain from using any form of contraception. Instead they abstained from marital relations while they bade their time in between children. He expressed how difficult it had been, yet acknowledged the profound wisdom of the teaching of the Church because of how great-a-force this action had been to grow his appreciation for his wife and to strengthen the marriage bond.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (John.10:10).

Experts say that a couple can be fertile for an absolute maximum of about eight

days a monthly cycle. So a couple can manage their relations around these natural times too. However, they are not to use natural methods with a said 'contraceptive mentality'... for example, to avoid pregnancy altogether. This is simply another cunning avenue of self-deception that steals away the fruit of their union. Being financially well-off does not make up for living out one's dying days alone in a big empty house. This is not part of God's plan for our happiness.

Saint Pope John Paul II (JPII), in his 1994 *Letter to Families - Gratissimam Sane*, wrote words to this effect: 'the problem with some towns is simply the fact that they don't have enough children... because children bring joy.' Saint Pope JP II is emphasising what Jesus said so often 'Do not be afraid,' of children.

Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? (Matthew 16:9)

God's plan for children is not based on economic rationalism but rather a divine economy. ...and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15).

Children are the good news of peace in God's divine economy. *Oiwodu* is a Nigerian name meaning 'child is wealth!' This is how God sees it too and this is the reality. If a couple falls for the temptation to sterilise their love-life, then they will naturally have less love and joy in the marriage. It's not about the number of children, but rather about abandonment to the will of God. The couple who use contraception, like Adam and Eve, turn their backs on God and as a consequence are, in a spiritual fashion, sent out of the Garden of Eden.

To be continued. ■

Patrick Sibly grew up on a dairy farm in Victoria, Australia. He lives in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, and works as a religious educator at a Catholic secondary school. He completed a masters in Bioethics at the Pope John Paul II Institute for Marriage and the Family in 2008. Following this, he taught Health Care Ethics at the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine, Australian Catholic University (Melbourne) from 2012-2014.

ART



The Vision of Hell: An Artist turns to God

Shaji Joseph Arakkal introduces us to an intriguing painting, one that was pivotal to the painter's faith.

At the age of 55 (1959), the world-famous Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dali was spiritually trapped between atheism and faith. Dali's father was an atheist and mother, a Catholic. In his autobiography, Dali wrote that, 'Heaven is to be found exactly in the centre of the bosom of the man who has faith.' He added, 'At this moment I do not yet have faith, and I fear I shall die without heaven.'

It was around that time that Salvador Dali was invited by John Haffert, co-founder and director of the World

Apostolate of Fatima (also known as The Blue Army), to paint a picture of the first vision that the children of Fatima saw in 1917. The idea for the painting, and for Dali to do it, came from a seminarian, who had converted to Catholicism after reading Sr Lucia's memoirs and her vision of hell. He felt that Dali would be able to reach young people and unbelievers with this message far more effectively.

On meeting him at a New York hotel to discuss the painting, John Haffert said, 'It's up to you to present this vision truthfully and vividly. You are being

chosen to be Our Lady's artist. A visual interpreter for God.' Dali listened and then ordered a plate of escargot (edible snails). When it arrived, he began to probe the snails with escargot forks, explaining to Haffert that the great artists always used pitchforks to depict the devils in hell, but he would use escargot forks instead. 'The soul of a sinner is like a snail,' he explained. 'It curls and cowls up in the shell and the only way to retrieve it is by using an escargot fork!' (www.bluearmy.com)

Haffert tried to arrange for Dali to



Dali said he would study what she said about the vision, and paint what he saw (Dali's creativity and surrealism arose from images he drew from the subconscious as he fell into a state of semi-wakefulness). But even after a year of pouring through Sr Lucia's description of hell, Dali's efforts were in vain.

Salvador Dali presents the final painting to Msgr Harold Colgan

meet Sr Lucia, who in 1960, was living in a cloistered convent in Portugal. When that didn't work, Dali said he would study what she said about the vision, and paint what he saw (Dali's creativity and surrealism arose from images he drew from the subconscious as he fell into a state of semi-wakefulness). But even after a year of pouring through Sr Lucia's description of hell, Dali's efforts were in vain. Haffert finally suggested he go to Fatima for inspiration.

At Fatima, Dali met the priest who would become his guide, Canon Jose Galamba de Oliveira, who took him to the exact place where the Blessed Mother appeared and where the children saw the earth open revealing hell. The key to understanding the vision, Canon Galamba told him, was the appeal for conversion. Through his help, Dali was able to meet Sr Lucia briefly, and spoke to her through the parlour grill. Dali would later comment how special it felt to 'breathe the same air as a future saint.' Finally he had the inspiration to put the vision of hell to canvas. Before leaving Fatima, Dali asked Canon Galamba to hear his confession.

Blue Army co-founder John Haffert with Salvador Dali.



For Dali, the time spent in Fatima was a turning point for his faith. According to Nicolas Descharnes, the world's leading expert on Dali's writings, he was transformed into a believer. But Dali hid this from his acquaintances. Only his wife and a handful of people knew about it. This was Dali's secret.

Salvador Dali completed *The Vision of Hell* in 1962. It had been done in secret, and Dali never showed it to anyone until it was presented to Msgr Harold Colgan, co-founder of The Blue Army. Msgr Colgan was quite shocked by it – it was not at all what he had expected!

However, upon further study and examination, it is believed that Dali portrayed himself in the vision and painted his own conversion. It shows a dying person, his soul translucent red, tortured and tormented by demons in hell who probe him with escargot forks, trying to extract his soul. The fissured earth opens beneath to the place of hell. The Blessed Mother above, in anguish, revealing her sorrowful and loving heart before the horror of a soul being lost. A lone figure holds up a crucifix to heaven

in prayer. (www.bluearmy.com)

Few people in the Sanctuary of Fátima liked the painting. Because it did not attract much attention, Haffert placed the painting in his office in New Jersey, then in the Apostolate, and then in the Blue Army office in New Jersey. Later, since no one noticed it anymore, a nun there moved it under her bed. After lying hidden for nearly 30 years, the painting was purchased by a private art collector in 2007.

The meaning of the painting and the secret of Dali's life came to light in 2012 when Paul Perry, author of four New York Times bestsellers and producer of the documentary *Dali's Greatest Secret*, researched Dali's painting *The Vision of Hell*. As Perry explained during the interview, 'It was surprising to see that so many people expected hell to be a fascinating place.'

But Perry didn't stop there; he began researching the impact this painting had on Dali. Through The Blue Army, Perry was given access to John Haffert's archives. This enabled him to include events in the documentary through the testimonies of people who were still alive and knew the artist. Perry also included some photos, amongst them one of Dali going to church.

The result of the painting *The Vision of Hell* brings us to an image of fear, hope, pain, and mystery. The colourful presence of the Blessed Virgin depicts purity and peace in the midst of hell. Is it a coincidence that Salvador Dali, considered one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century, discovered God?! No, it must have been divine plan! Because art is a divine gift. *I have filled him with the spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge, and with all kinds of skills* (Exodus 31:3).

Shaji Joseph Arakkal has been a graphic designer for 39 years. He lives in Ernakulam, India with his wife Shoba. They have three children, Niranjana, Nirmal and late Niveditha. **Translator: Aleesha Wilson** lives in Bangalore, India with her husband Job Jose. She works as a trainer in the HR department of Christ University.

CHANGING THE BATON...



What a rollercoaster ride! A lot of things happened and fast. The academic and professional life of Italy comes to a halt during Holy Week and Easter. It's a time when a lot of priests go to different parishes in and around the country to help pastorally. I had gone to Crotone in southern Italy and it was a completely novel experience. From the chaos of Rome to the tranquillity of the countryside, from the city to the village. One interesting thing was, they feel quite distant from all the Jubilee hubbub. I felt that there was only a peripheral involvement, or bare awareness.

It was shocking, though not unexpected, hearing about the passing of Pope Francis. He had been very weak and was asked not to go out and mingle with people, but Pope Francis made it a point to bless *the sheepfold* on Easter Sunday. This inspired many and considered that he was blessed to have died in the wake of Easter, especially after giving this blessing. As soon as the news was out, the talk was of who would be next. This had already been in the air from the moment Pope Francis was hospitalised.

Now the biggest blow was for the Jubilee of Adolescents/Teenagers. The canonisation of Bl Carlo Acutis, which all were eagerly waiting for, had to be suspended with *Sede Vacante*, aka having no pope. Officially 80,000 teens had booked and been expected for this Jubilee alone, over and above the general Jubilee



and tourist crowd, and add to this the crowd that came to pay homage to Pope Francis! The Jubilee was conducted with some minor programme changes. But the crowd was HUGE. There was no place in the streets to step foot in, especially near the Vatican.

When the body of Pope Francis was placed for homage (from April 23rd), multitudes rushed to the Vatican. It took people almost half a day to enter the Basilica. I was constantly checking the live cam, to find a breathing space to get inside. Noon was the only time when the crowd relaxed and I rushed to pay the visit. It was a moment of awe and *amore*, a sense of solemnity filled as you beheld the simplicity yet grandeur in

the way the Pope's body was laid. It was again a memorable event when we could concelebrate in the funeral rites. It was simple, solemn and impeccably arranged. The Pope being an international leader of a sovereign state, it was both religious and political.

Many clapped when the Pope's body was brought out in procession and when his life was commemorated. I was puzzled at first, but later realised that this was out of love, passion and respect for this man, who was an advocate of compassion. Rome was literally at standstill during the week following Easter, due to all this. Though all who came for the Jubilee missed the canonisation, they were blessed with something even more



solemn.

Then the focus changed very fast. As I mentioned when Pope Francis was hospitalised, journalists flocked even more, and the press office was crammed. We went again for voluntary work. Every nook and corner was filled with only one phrase – *Who will be next?* Even in our classes, we analysed surveys and reports from previous conclaves, as part of study. Crowds gathered in anticipation to watch the smoke. Even more were glued to live cam for the news. The white smoke came much earlier than many anticipated.

From the moment white smoke rises to the announcement of *Habemus Papam*, there is usually a 30-45 minute interval. It was a huge surprise for many when the name was announced in Latin – St Peter's Square fell silent. Though there was some mention of Cardinal Robert Prevost before the conclave, nothing much was heard when the conclave began. Italians largely hoped and were confident of getting an Italian Pope. Adding to the memo from Trump, many locals were not that happy, nor was it easy for them to take it in. But generally, many were astounded and later so joyous with the selection of the Pope, which as always was a surprise.

The general comment is that we've got a complete package in Pope Leo XIV. A Pope with Italian roots, American citizenship and South American missionary experience. A religious, a bishop among the poor and being the president of the college of bishops, a cardinal with great visibility. He can speak 8 languages, has travelled around the world, and is fluent in English. All of us who were part of the press and media, had an audience with the Pope on 12th May, and it was so exciting to see him very cheerful and down to earth. I have to tell you, he is a man who is very friendly

and approachable, yet one can sense a firmness and clarity in the manner he conducts himself.

Last time I mentioned the many sponsors for the Jubilee, including KFC. The harsh reality is that people bought food coupons, but KFC wasn't prepared for the crowds, and I believe they didn't have the technology in time to get them validated. A family I knew had such a bitter experience. Luckily, they were able to get the food discount from a different restaurant. What filled me with awe was the fact that after this family registered a complaint, the Vatican gave a prompt reply on how unfortunate this had happened and that the Vatican was ready to reimburse the money. That was something exemplary.

Each month, new companies and ventures are partnering with the Vatican for the Jubilee year, like Cicero navigation app, Glovo delivery app, Gi Group Holdings, etc. Rome revised the public transport schedule, especially the metro to be available until midnight, local train weekend passes at cheap rates with which you can travel the whole of Italy, and special parking permits for tourist buses.

The highlight of this month's Jubilee was the Jubilee of Teenagers. Rome was in its teens during the Easter Octave, to be honest. Each registered teenager received an official Jubilee kit including a Jubilee bag, two t-shirts, a hat, a recycled plastic bottle, a rosary, a bandana and a bracelet. They had special discounts and vouchers especially for food and travel. It was a wonder, to have held this Jubilee, avoiding all celebration due to the passing of the Pontiff, but nonetheless, true to its essence. It was really historic.

In addition, we had, Jubilee of People with Disabilities for which around ten-thousand showed up in Rome. Travel

arrangements were specially made by the public transport to aid them through this time. They had confessions, Mass, testimony sharing and a special lunch in the Gardens of Castel Sant'Angelo.

1-4th May was the Jubilee of the Workers. Over ten thousand people from 90 countries were present. Various associations, including the Christian Workers' Movement, ACLI (Italian Christian Workers' Associations), the Catholic Action Workers' Movement, FEMCA CISL, ConfCooperative and many others, who accompany and assist workers on a daily basis were present.

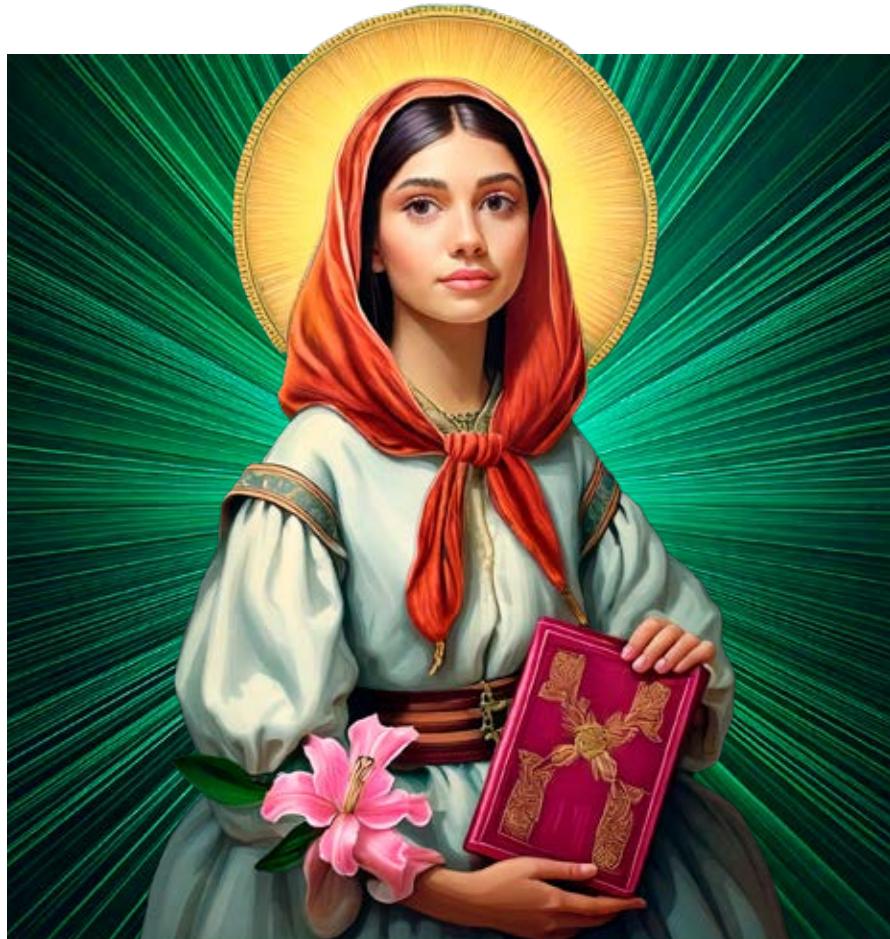
It was very interesting to also know that there was a Jubilee of Bands and popular entertainment as well from 10-11 May. There were a variety of musical performances, dancing and singing of various bands (more than 100) across that weekend. It was so cheerful and lovely.

All the energy and discussion these days is about Pope Leo XIV. More than anything, it was marvellous to witness the amount of organisation and arrangements that have gone into the Jubilee events, to have it so elaborately, even when the Vatican was experiencing the most difficult as well as tense moments, that of *Sede Vacante*. Anyway, the baton has changed hands... all are waiting with their fingers crossed to see what is going to happen.

Fr Justin Panachickal MSFS is currently doing his licentiate in social communications at the Pontifical University of Santa Croce, and will share with us throughout the Jubilee year ground reports from Rome.

Chandeliers

★ St Dymphna: A Love Stronger Than Stigma



Mental health is now the talk of the town. Words like depression, anxiety, and self-care are thrown around so casually that their true weight is often lost. The overuse of these terms in everyday conversations and social media has blurred the lines between momentary struggles and deep, debilitating conditions. And in this noise, those who are truly suffering – the ones drowning in their own minds – are often denied the care and attention they so desperately need.

The world claims to be more ‘aware’ than ever, yet genuine understanding remains rare. To the outside world, their

pain is either dismissed as a passing mood – something that will simply go away with time – or burdened with the weight of stigma, leaving them feeling ashamed for even struggling. And so, they hide it, they minimise it, they force a smile – because what else can they do when even their cries for help are met with misunderstanding? The result? They struggle alone, unseen, unheard, and often, unloved.

FAITH'S PLACE IN HEALING

If it is hard to explain mental suffering to the average person, it is even harder to convince the ‘pious, devout’ one who insists that ‘prayer can heal anything.’ Faith is not a magic wand that makes suffering disappear. The Church, in its teachings, calls for compassion and understanding, yet even its shepherds sometimes fail to recognise this. Too often, faith is treated as a quick remedy – say a prayer, have more trust, and all will be well – rather than an invitation to journey alongside the suffering.

But faith is not irrelevant either. Alongside proper treatment, faith has its place in the healing process. The Church has always been a place of healing, not through instant solutions, but through its presence, steadfast companionship, and love that refuses to turn away. Peace is found in the fellowship the Church offers – the unwavering support of a community that stands beside those who suffer, praying and trusting for them when they cannot do it themselves.

A TOWN THAT CHOSE LOVE

Perhaps no place embodies this better than Geel, a small town in Belgium where something remarkable has been happening for centuries. Here, families have long opened their homes to people struggling with mental illness, integrating them into daily life rather than isolating them. It is not a hospital, not a place of

exile, but a community that understands what true Christian fellowship means. And at the heart of Geel's extraordinary story is a young woman whose life and death shaped its destiny: St Dymphna.

The story of Geel's compassionate and open doors begins with her. Stories narrate that the Irish princess Dymphna came to this town in the 7th century. She had run away from her father, King Damon, escaping a fate too dark to imagine. Grieving and unable to bear the loss of his beloved wife, he sought someone who resembled her, and in his distorted sorrow, his eyes fell on Dymphna.

She was barely fifteen... Brought up by her devotedly Catholic mother, young Dymphna had dedicated herself to a virginal life the previous year. Accompanied by her confessor, Fr Gerebernus, she fled Ireland, seeking refuge in Geel, where they lived in hiding. Blending into the quiet life of the town, legend has it that she started a hospice to care for the destitute, especially those with mental and emotional difficulties.

But her father, relentless in his search, eventually found them. His grief had twisted into madness, his rage uncontrollable. When persuasion failed, he killed Gerebernus in cold blood before turning his blade on Dymphna herself.

WHERE SUFFERING FOUND A HOME

Her blood consecrated the soil of Geel, but her story did not end there. Instead, something inexplicable happened. People began experiencing healing in the very place of her martyrdom. The mentally ill, the distressed, the tormented – they came, drawn by stories of healing at her tomb, seeking peace and relief from their suffering. They found solace not in sudden miracles, but in the quiet, unwavering presence of a community that embraced them.

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In Geel, they were not problems to be avoided, but human beings worthy of love and dignity. They were welcomed as 'boarders,' living with the townspeople as normal inhabitants rather than 'mad' outcasts. Healing did not come in sudden flashes of divine intervention, but in the patient grace of God that was evident in the simple, persistent kindness of those who, inspired by Dymphna's sacrifice, refused to turn them away.

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Over time, a church was built in her honour, then a hospice, then an entire model of care – one that still exists today. Long before the modern psychiatric hospital was conceived, Geel was living out a radical form of inclusion, rooted in the understanding that healing is not just about medicine, but about being seen, being loved, and being welcomed. The tradition continues even today, with around 250 'boarders' still experiencing the inclusion and hospitality that Dymphna inspired.

A CALL TO US TODAY

St Dymphna's story is not just a tragic tale of martyrdom; it is a witness to something deeper. It is a call to reimagine how we care for those suffering in mind and spirit. We need more than awareness campaigns. We need communities willing to embrace the suffering as their own. We need what Geel has lived for centuries.

And maybe, in some small way, we need St Dymphna's model and inspiration now more than ever.

Maria Teres is a social worker by education, and writer by passion and profession. In her spare time, you may find her curled up on a couch crocheting, reading, or sketching.



Marah to Maranatha

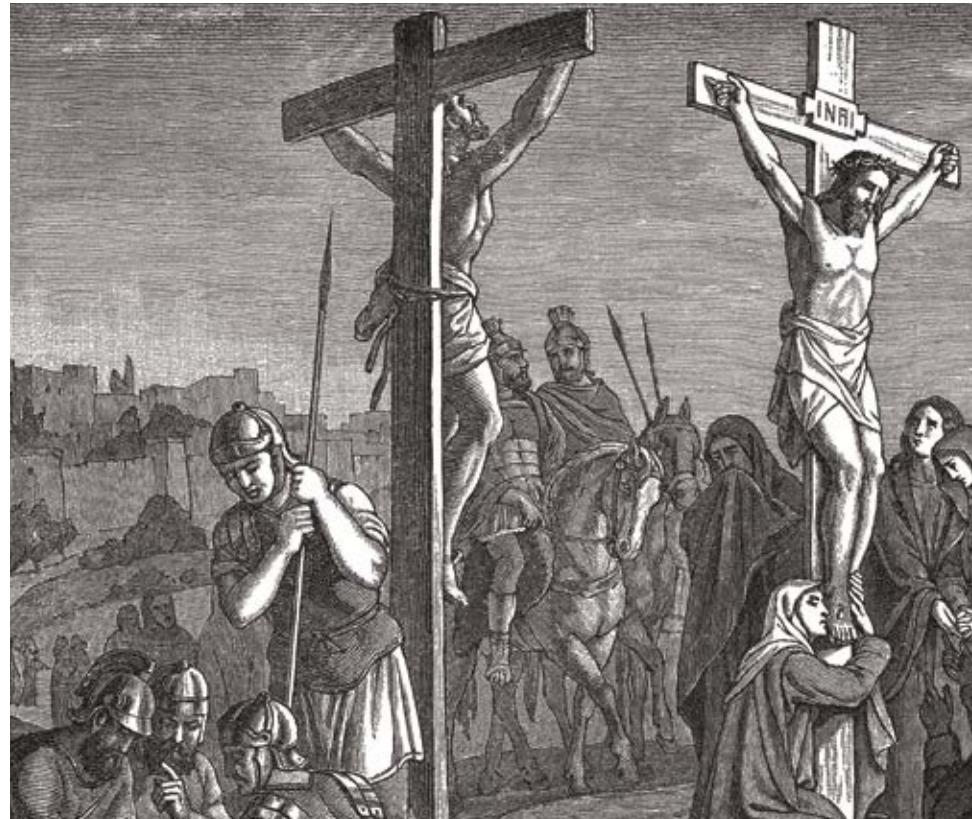
Mentally disturbing situations elicit varied responses from people. Yet, even in life's harsh trials, we have the One who turns the most bitter into sweet, **Anil Israel** writes.

Life is not a bed of roses. We all have our unique share of not-so-good unpleasant experiences. There may have been difficult childhoods – either because some lost their parents, or their parents were incapable of meeting all their childhood dreams. Some were perhaps bullied or made fun of during their school-going years. When comparisons with peers arise, one might end up blaming destiny for not getting to experience all that one's friends presumably enjoyed. Others might have simply accepted it as their fate and compromised with their non-favourable reality.

We happen to be most hurt by those closest to us. The more we intend to grow in intimate relationship with others, the more we risk being bruised and fractured

deep within. People end up thinking, *nobody understands me*. They might eventually give in to the realisation that their vigorous efforts to be understood, are but futile and in vain. Somewhere the harmony seems to be disrupted, and the weight of the relationship becomes burdensome.

When the people began to sing, *Saul has killed thousands, but David tens of thousands* (1 Samuel 18:7), King Saul, could not bear it and wanted to eliminate David, even though David had won victory for Saul by killing the Philistine giant, Goliath. When Absalom could not tolerate being ignored by Joab, he burned Joab's fields to get his attention (2 Samuel 14:30). When people are mentally disturbed, their responses can produce damaging results.



When Jesus was being arrested, *Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the High Priest's slave, cutting off his right ear* (John 18:10). Peter was willing to die for Jesus but ended up denying Him out of fear. *All the disciples deserted him and fled* (Matthew 26:56). Only the Apostle John stood at the cross. The situation was the same. The response was drastically different.

The Israelites who had been in slavery for over four-hundred years, had witnessed the ten plagues thrust on the Egyptians. They even *went through the sea on dry ground with walls of water on both sides* (Exodus 14:22). Yet they complained, murmured and grumbled after having left the land of bondage. Only two of the twelve spies, Joshua and Caleb, voted positively to enter the Promised Land.

NOT MY WILL, BUT YOUR WILL BE DONE → LUKE 22:42



Out of the two thieves who hung on either side of Jesus, one repented, the other despaired. It is in our rock-bottom moments in life, that we can either choose to succumb to misery or be open to mercy. In our valley of tears we can opt to either dwindle in grief or seek refuge in grace.

The challenge was the same. The response was different.

‘Two men looked out from prison bars, one saw the mud, the other saw stars’ (Dale Carnegie). Out of the two thieves who hung on either side of Jesus, one repented, the other despaired. It is in our rock-bottom moments in life, that we can either choose to succumb to misery or be open to mercy. In our *valley of tears* we can opt to either dwindle in grief or seek refuge in grace.

It isn’t easy to swim against the tide. There are several examples in scripture, of people who lived upright lives when all around them evil prevailed. Three Hebrew youth – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown in the blazing furnace for having refused to bow down to the King’s image. Daniel was thrown into the den of lions for choosing to remain faithful to the one true God.

We are constantly churned in this spiritual warfare. The Evil One deceives us to trust other false gods. The pressure to give in to popular worldly ways will continue to discourage us. One will need to eventually ponder over downsizing the desires of the flesh while attempting to pursue the desires of the spirit. The two can never wholly co-exist. We end up either embracing ‘my will be done’ or ‘thy will be done’. ‘The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness’ (Pope Benedict XVI).

From 1921 to 1922, Padre Pio was prevented from publicly performing his priestly duties, such as hearing confessions and saying Mass. When things don’t go our way, we may have a strong tendency to revolt. However, in uncompromising obedience, he complied.

When relationships turn stale due to dampening conflicts, it paves the way for bitterness to seep in. After crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites wandering through the wilderness, *could not drink the water*

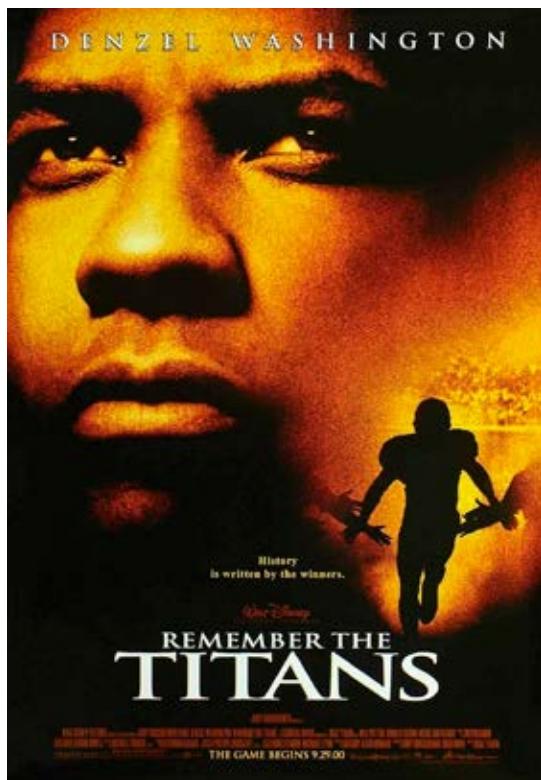
of Marah because it was bitter (Exodus 15:23). Marah in Hebrew means bitter. Our bitter experiences make us taste the bitter *waters of Marah*.

Jesus himself endured bitter agony in the garden of Gethsemane. *In great anguish he prayed even more fervently; his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground* (Luke 22:44). Jesus even prayed to the Father to *take away this cup of suffering* (Luke 22:42). In His ‘dark Calvary’ moment, He cried out, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Matthew 27:46). Jesus experienced bitter moments and taught us the way to go through them: *Not my will, but your will be done* (Luke 22:42).

When the Israelites could not drink the bitter waters of Marah, *Moses cried out to the Lord and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink* (Exodus 15:25). Isn’t it marvellous to see that the Lord had already planted a tree in the wilderness, which could turn the bitter water sweet? When Adam and Eve tried to hide their nakedness by sewing fig leaves, *The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them* (Genesis 3:21). God sacrificed an animal to clothe his children. Jesus is the Lamb that was sacrificed. Jesus is the ‘tree of life’ – the wood that turns bitter water sweet.

We are hereby reminded to draw our attention to invite the Lord into our bitter lives. We need to shift our focus from ‘Marah’ (bitter) to *Maranatha - Our Lord, come!* (1 Corinthians 16:22). With Jesus in my boat, I can smile in the storm. Am I willing to let the Lord come in and do His part – to turn the bitter water into sweet wine? ■

SOUNDREPLY



REVIEW BY
Joseph Anthraper

Joseph lives in Southampton, UK with Mahima, his wife and their 5 kids.

MOVIE

REMEMBER THE TITANS (2000)

scapegoating – although it brings about a brief pause in violence and a temporary restoration of social order, yet it also ushers in new forms of oppression and injustice. Hence Girard famously argued that only in Christianity, which exposed the irrationality of violence and the injustice of the scapegoat mechanism (throughout the biblical narrative but fundamentally in the death and resurrection of Jesus who accepted His sacrifice as 'the scapegoat'), is to be found true hope for lasting social order and peace.

Remember the Titans is a US sports drama film loosely based on the true story of Herman Boone, played by the brilliant actor, Denzel Washington. It is 1971 and in Alexandria, Virginia, where racial tensions are running high, the school district decides to turn the whites-only TC Williams High School into an integrated school, and to placate the simmering troubles on both sides, nominates the black Herman Boone as the head coach of TC Williams' football team, assigning the current head coach Bill Yoast (white) as assistant to Boone's team. Yoast is a highly experienced and decorated coach, and having successfully coached the all-whites school team for most of the past decade, is just one season away from being inducted into TC Williams' hall of fame. So Yoast considers this demotion completely unfair and uncalled for, and decides to move on – and yet, is persuaded by his team to stay; and being the selfless teacher that he is, decides to stay on for one last season for the sake of his white students.

Boone is highly ambitious and a no-nonsense character, and at the outset itself he realises that if this black-white integration experiment has to have any chance of success, the players need respect for each other and play as one unit – rather than whites against blacks. With that in mind, Boone takes the whole team to a training camp at Gettysburg College, where he forces white and black players to integrate, share rooms and get to know each other. In spite of having a few successes on and off, racial prejudices run deep and even though Boone grills the players through intense practise and physical workout sessions day-in and day-out, he is no closer to accomplishing his dream of the college team playing as a single unit. Exasperated by the infighting and as a last-ditch effort, Boone takes the team on an early morning run to Gettysburg National Cemetery (the final resting place of the American civil war casualties of the Battle of Gettysburg), where he gives the tired team an emotional pep-talk, telling them that 'If we don't come together right now on this hallowed ground, we too will be destroyed (just like those young men who fought and died here).'

Even though the odds are stacked heavily against him and the students, Boone's methods of training slowly begin to produce the desired outcome. Gradually, one by one, the students come around, forming bonds of friendship and camaraderie, with the strongest relationship forming between defensive captains Gerry Bertier (white)

One wonders through the movie whether the tough love that Boone advocates and pursues would instead break and destroy the kids. Yet, for Boone the bar is always high: mediocrity is not an option, he demands excellence and weird as it may seem, when profound questions are asked, man always seems to come up with an answer.

and Julius Campbell (black). Although the training camp finishes as an unprecedented success, as the students get back to campus, they return to renewed racial conflicts, with the battle lines between white and black being drawn more clearly than ever. And Boone is secretly informed that the school board has taken the decision to fire him and reinstate Yoast at the first loss of the season. Boone, who regards himself as a winner, demands perfection from his players and from his team. But with the whole world (even some of his own assistant coaches) plotting against him, how far into the season can he take his TC Williams' team and whether through football Boone would be

able to unite a fragmented town, forms the rest of the story.

Remember the Titans is considered a classic in sports movies – with Denzel Washington playing the part of Boone to perfection. Treading the thin line between confidence and arrogance, practise and torture, building and destroying people – Washington was able to play Boone 'to a T.' One wonders through the movie whether the tough love that Boone advocates and pursues would instead break and destroy the kids. Yet, for Boone the bar is always high: mediocrity is not an option, he demands excellence and weird as it may seem, when profound questions are asked, man always seems to come up with an answer.

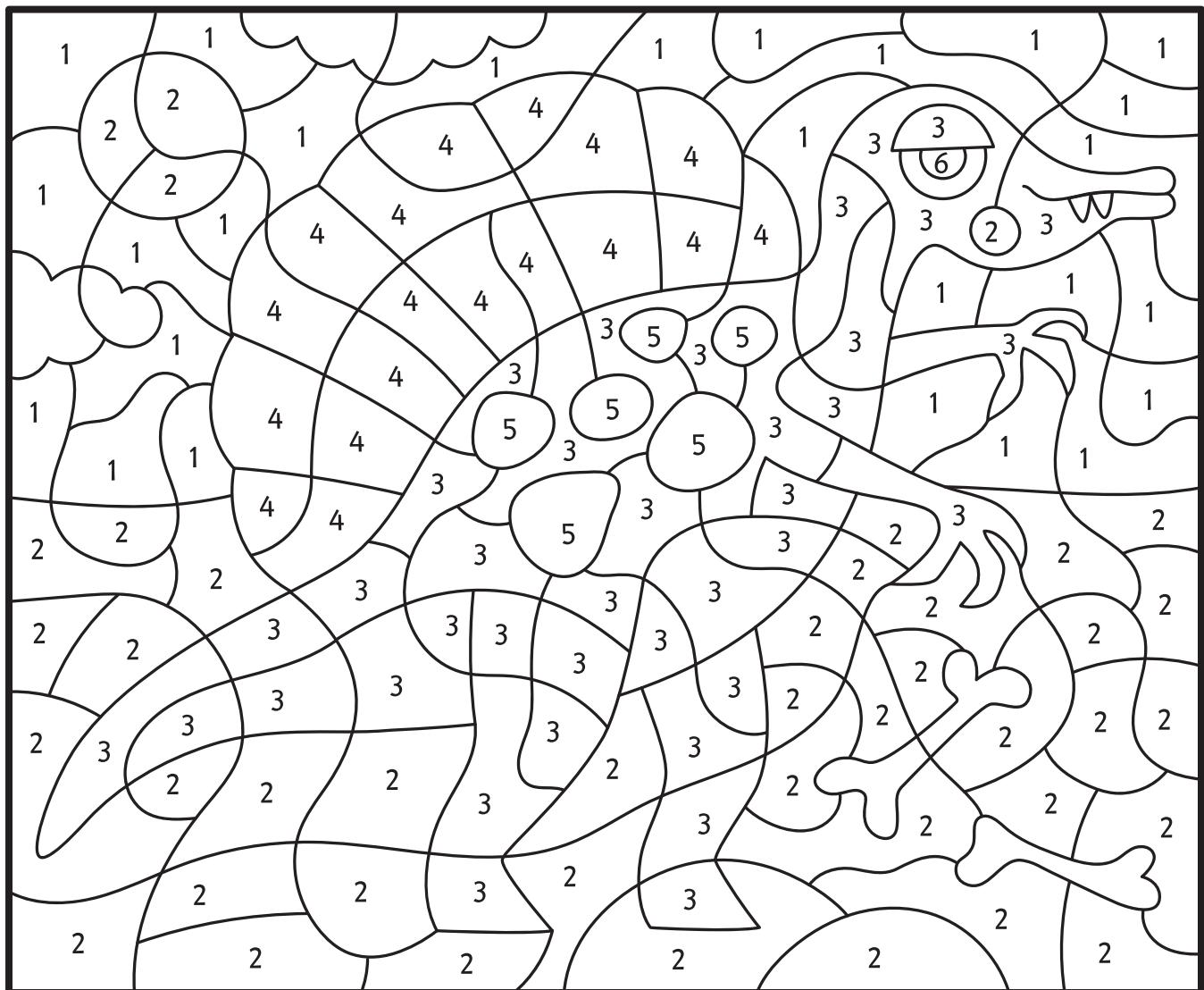
We live in a world that is becoming more and more polarised by the day. The world order as we know is changing, and changing rapidly – through nationalism, xenophobia and/or through religious polarisation. Everywhere we see René Girard's scapegoat theory being played out in subtly different ways, yet history has time and again shown what the results of these experiments would be. In this deeply divided world, and to those human hearts, maligned yet masquerading itself as virtuous/religious/Catholic, *Remember the Titans* serves as a good reminder of our Christian calling; as Jesus' answer to the lawyer's question of 'who is my neighbour?' ■





Take a picture of the solved image and send it to quiztime@jykairosmedia.org before 25th June 2025.
The winner will be rewarded with 1 year subscription of Kairos Global

COLOUR BY NUMBER



LUKAS

and



RAY

Scripture Pictures
@scripture.pictures.316



Wow, Lukas. OCD called. They want their poster child back.

And ADHD called. You didn't answer... got distracted by a squirrel?

What's with the color codes and bookmarks?

It keeps the chaos out. Unlike your room, which probably needs a deep clean!

It's not messy. It's "creative flow."



You know, if I don't plan everything, my brain spirals.

If I do plan too much, I freeze. like... what if I can't pull it off?



Sometimes I joke to hide I'm overwhelmed.



Sometimes I obsess to feel in control.



Turns out, we're all a bit messed up. And we all need a God who understands that.



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