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GLOBAL

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Alive, Beautiful,
and Desperately
Needed

■ SONY THEVALAKARA

HARMONY
OF CHRISTIAN
FAITH AND
GREEK
THOUGHT

■ GEORGE K PAUL

THE WYD CALL TO JAAGO

VARIOUS AUTHORS





PRAY FOR US



Oh, St John Paul, from the window of heaven, grant us your blessing! Bless the Church that you loved and served and guided, courageously leading it along the paths of the world in order to bring Jesus to everyone and everyone to Jesus. Bless the young, who were your great passion. Help them dream again, help them look up high again to find the light that illuminates the paths of life here on earth.

EDITOR'S ROOM

DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL



BEING PART OF SUCH A LARGE GATHERING WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WAS AWE-INSPIRING. THE PRESENCE OF THE POPE AT THE EVENT WAS ELECTRIFYING, AND I ENJOYED MEETING PEOPLE FROM VARIOUS BACKGROUNDS, EVEN IF WE HAD LANGUAGE BARRIERS.

Jaago Conference

It was during my graduate days. A year after I started attending the prayer group in college, I got an opportunity to attend the historical Jesus Youth '85 conference in Kochi, Kerala. Around 2,000 young people gathered for this event, and it had a profound impact on me. It expanded my horizons in numerous ways.

Here, I encountered new and unfamiliar dynamics like music, testimonials, and workshops that employed the most simple techniques. One workshop I attended focused on sharing God's love through letter writing. We also spent a lot of time learning and singing songs.

In 1989, I had the chance to attend a larger conference in Chennai, quite different from what I had attended back home. Conversing in English, trying new food, and meeting people from all over the country were challenges, but became valuable experiences. It was my first trip outside my home state, and such an eye opener as somebody jokingly said, 'the Holy Spirit is not limited to only our home region.'

In 2002, I had an amazing experience at the Toronto World Youth Day, where I joined other Jesus Youth members from around the world. Being part of such a large gathering within the Catholic Church was awe-inspiring. The presence of the Pope at the event was electrifying, and I enjoyed meeting people from various backgrounds, even if we had language barriers. Smiles became our universal language. The memories of this event are still vivid in my heart.

Another unforgettable gathering was the Jubilee Gathering of Jesus Youth in 2010 in Kochi, which brought together over 20,000 Jesus Youth members from across the globe.

Now, the entire country is eagerly anticipating the upcoming gathering of over 15,000 Youth at Christ University campus in Bangalore this month. More than 60 ministries and departments have been working hard to ensure this event is a fantastic experience for all participants. They're planning surprises and unleashing creativity in every aspect.

Kairos Media is also gearing up for a new beginning during this Jaago Conference.

Let's come together in prayer to ensure that this conference becomes a stimulating and memorable experience, allowing the Youth Ministry to gather energy and enthusiasm for future endeavours.

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Lord, what do you want me to do?
Acts 9:6

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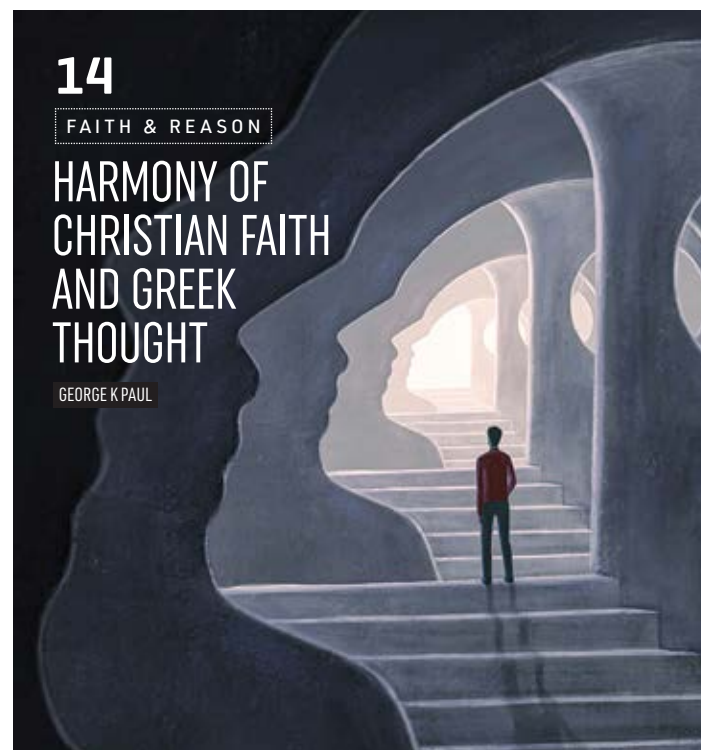
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ASK



FR. BITAJU

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➤ If someone commits evil, are their offspring affected by it?

Thank you for your query on whether the ‘sins of fathers visit their children.’ Certain passages in Scripture, taken in isolation, would seem to endorse this saying. In particular, Exodus 20:5 – *You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me.*

Scripture, taken in its totality condemns the idea that children are punished or suffer for the sins of their parents. The above passage from Exodus apparently contradicts that, and this misinterpretation was so prevalent at the time of Prophet Ezekiel. He vehemently addressed this issue in the following manner: *What is the meaning of this proverb you recite in the land of Israel: ‘Parents eat sour grapes, but the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As I live – oracle of the Lord God: I swear that none of you will ever repeat this proverb in Israel. For all life is mine: the life of the parent is like the life of the child, both are mine. Only the one who sins shall die!* (Ezekiel 18:2-4).

It is important to note the context of Exodus 20:5-6, that tells the consequences of violating the commandment against false gods and idolatry. The Lord says that the practice of idolatry can be inserted into a cultural heritage, and subsequently, children raised in such a tradition will be hard-pressed to overcome it.

Moreover, the Exodus passage gives a clear message that the iniquity of the parents gives a bad example for their children to imitate. Consequently, it is not only the parents who

will experience the negative impacts of their sins but also the children who follow their bad example. This bad example may be ingrained in a family that it will last generations to come, and they too will bear the bad consequences for their sins. For example, alcoholic parents or those who practise the occult. It is a warning passage from the book of Exodus for the parents that not only do they suffer for their own sins but that their bad example might condemn even their future generations.

Further, there are a number of Scriptural passages that confer to man being judged for his own sin, not that of another. For example: in 2 Kings 14:6 we read, *every man shall die for his own sin.* Jeremiah 31:30 says, *but every one shall die for his own sins...* Ezekiel 18:20 makes it very clear that *The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffers for the iniquity of the son.* 2 Maccabees 7:32 says, *For we are suffering because of our own sins.* Jesus affirmed the same idea when he said, *Neither this man nor his parents sinned...* (John 9:2-3).

Therefore, we can conclude that the idea that ‘children are punished for the sins of their parents’ is not in accordance with the teaching of the Bible. The Catholic Church teaches that each person is responsible for their own actions and is not held guilty for the sins of their ancestors (CCC 1738). This means that although the consequences of sin can affect future generations, individuals are not condemned for the sins committed by their forefathers.



YOU CAT 69

ARE WE COMPELLED TO SIN BY ORIGINAL SIN?

No. Man, though, is deeply wounded by original sin and is inclined to sin. Nevertheless, with God’s help he is capable of doing good.

In no single case are we obliged to sin. In fact, however, we sin again and again, because we are weak, ignorant, and easily misled. A sin committed under compulsion, moreover, would be no sin, because sin always involves a free decision.



DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

Prayer Intentions October

For the Synod

We pray for the Church, that she may adopt listening and dialogue as a lifestyle at every level, and allow herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit towards the peripheries of the world.

Pope talk



God loves littleness, and through it he loves to accomplish great things, as Mary herself bears witness; do not be concerned about small numbers, limited success, or apparent irrelevance. Let us keep our gaze fixed on Mary, who in her littleness is greater than the heavens.

Entrepreneurs can contribute to the common good through job creation, especially for young people.

What seems impossible on our own, with Jesus we can go forward.



Look to Jesus always, look to Jesus who walks beside us, who welcomes our frailties, shares our efforts and rests his firm and gentle arm on our weak shoulders. With him close at hand, let us also reach out to one another and renew our trust.

That word of the Gospel that is so important to everyone: there are no first, second or third class Catholics. All together is the Lord's invitation.

The Eucharist can fill the wounds and voids produced by sin.

Our Lady, who had just conceived, travelled almost 150 kilometres, that is about 93 miles from Nazareth to reach Elizabeth's house. Helping is costly and we always experience this in the fatigue, patience, and worry that taking care of others entails.



JESUS YOUTH



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

Mothers build community

➔ **MOTHERS, NOT MANAGERS, BUILD COMMUNITY, AND NOT IN CLASSROOMS**

My forty-odd years of teaching life have taught me some important lessons. One among them is that the classroom is the biggest hurdle to learning. In the classroom, students freeze. They are not only dull, but it is there that the kids learn to wear masks and pretend to be someone else.

But unfortunately, we have classrooms everywhere where a teacher stands up, and others sit down looking at the teacher. I slowly learned that these situations do not help children. Slowly, I learned to break down these and change the setting and tone of my teaching sessions.

BUT WHAT IS THAT FOR JY?

When we initially started building up our youth groups, there was a question: How should the persons in leadership be named? Before this, I was active in another youth group where we used to name our key leaders, President or Leader. In 1978, when the responsibility of gathering youth in the renewal came to me, I started using the term 'Convener.' Its dictionary meaning is 'a person whose job it is to call people together.'

Of course, the problem is not about terms or titles but what happens in a

group, mainly how a leader functions. Like a coin, a group has two sides: persons and work. I didn't want to focus on what we had to do but attend to the people in the group. A good balance between these two is essential. But greater attention to persons becomes extremely important in our work, focusing on mercy and building a kingdom of love.

HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT PRACTISING THIS 'PERSON-FOCUS'?

In our early days, when a programme for beginners would conclude, there would be a model group experience. We were told, 'To live a life in the Spirit, you need to be a part of a group.' Then there would be a practise session. The first instruction would be, 'The group should not be like a classroom, but always sit in a circle; a nest, as everyone comes in, smile, say hello, and chit-chat. Help people to be relaxed and at home!'

Since 1976, the prayer group has been my good training field, week after week. There, I received training to smile at and attend to everyone who came in and make them feel at home. All of us enjoyed the intimacy and friendship in the community. We tried many novel ways to keep this love and joy alive in the group, also trying our best to welcome newcomers and make

them feel one with all of us.

Here, there is a big issue. We need teaching and instruction for a Christian group to grow. If people are not challenged on this journey of deepening, their love and joy will be shallow and eventually eclipse. But the challenge is the mode of faith instruction. People learn and study in diverse ways. Forcing people to learn faith in a classroom mode can damage the group. That will be good for a small section, but head-level teaching can be very heavy for most others. And slowly, this type of faith teaching can also kill a community.

The seven learning styles

One fundamental problem is that many people cannot sit and listen to teachings, whether in a prayer group or retreat. For many, long sitting in a prayer group is torture. Often, we conclude that it is their problem and they have to change. But in Jesus Youth, over the years, we have learned that if we change the ways of instruction, many people will be able to participate, and they will grow in faith.

What are these different ways of instruction we use in Jesus Youth? For many youths, songs are the best teaching mode. For others, a skit or drama helps them learn. For many, discussing in a group is the best way. For some people, through an activity,



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they learn. The list goes on. Thus Jesus Youth programmes became very different from Catechism classes in the parishes and Charismatic retreats. We may teach the same faith content, but how youth learn in Jesus Youth became radically different.

With this experience in Jesus Youth, I was so excited when I heard about

seven learning styles. This we do in Jesus Youth, and it changes people's lives! Many who study education say that people are very different in the way they learn. These seven ways are, seeing (visual), listening (auditory/musical), physical (kinesthetic), language (verbal), logical (Math), relationship (social), and being alone (solitary). Unfortunately, we often force people to learn through teaching, that is, in a classroom mode. That is mostly language and logical learning. But someone with a physical learning style needs some good activity to learn, and 'just talk' will be boring. A person with a relational style will enjoy some discussion.

BY THEIR FRUIT, YOU WILL KNOW

We have heard the saying, 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating.' Using a correct method is not enough, it should produce proper results. What fruits? In Jesus Youth, we want people to continue to live in fullness and be more loving and joyful, and want communities to grow with love and commitment. How will we do it?

There is an old song 'Who Builds Community?' Sometimes when experts fail to gather people and help them grow, some very simple and humble leaders succeed. What is their secret? I would say, like Jesus or the prodigal son's father, he or she has a mother's heart.

Home is where you are accepted as you are, no matter what. And to create a home, the first ingredient is, of course, a mother's heart. I can think of different leaders in Jesus Youth. Such a leader keeps the whole community together, ensuring they enjoy being there. For an odd one out, you have special care. I am sure under the caring eye of such a mother, everyone in the group will grow well, bearing fruit of a rich community.



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Dr. Edward Edezath, is a retired professor from St. Albert's College, Ernakulam. He lives with his wife Audrey in Kochi, India.

EXPERIENCE

Embracing Grace in Humility

Rojas Coalbe shares an incident that brought intense shame and anger to his life, but which turned out to transform him when he chose forgiveness.



In the journey of faith, we encounter numerous challenges that test the depth of our beliefs and our strength of character. One of the most profound and transformative challenges we face is the act of forgiveness. As followers of Christ, forgiveness lies at the core of our beliefs, for we are taught to forgive as we have been forgiven. I would like to share about the power of forgiveness, its impact on our lives, and the abundant grace that flows from this act of love and reconciliation.

A Personal Testimony of Forgiveness

In my early years, I served as an altar boy at my local church, immersing myself in the sacred duties of the faith. At the tender age of 12, during a Sunday Mass, I was entrusted with the Second Reading from the Holy Bible in addition to being an altar server. The church was filled with familiar faces, including my catechism classmates, friends, and beloved parents.

As I completed my reading, my heart swelled with pride and a sense of accomplishment. However, what followed was an unexpected and humiliating moment. After the Gospel reading and the ensuing homily, the parish priest chose to openly criticise my reading skills. He remarked that my words were unclear and delivered at an excessive speed, making it impossible for anyone to understand. To make matters worse, he even mentioned my father's presence in the congregation, hoping he would correct my shortcomings.

The weight of shame, anger, and pain descended upon me like a dark cloud, and tears streamed down my cheeks. The hurtful words of the priest echoed in my mind, and I found it difficult to sleep or concentrate on anything else. I harboured a growing resentment towards the priest for shaming me in front of my loved ones.

The Struggle to Forgive

In the aftermath of this hurtful incident, I found myself torn between two paths – holding onto my anger or embracing forgiveness. My parents, devoted to their faith and understanding the true essence of forgiveness, encouraged me to seek

reconciliation with the priest. However, I initially resisted, unable to comprehend how I could face the one who had caused me such pain.

The Turning Point: Seeking Forgiveness

The unyielding love of my parents and their unwavering commitment to their faith eventually compelled me to reconsider my decision. After much inner struggle, I made the difficult choice to seek forgiveness from the priest for any perceived errors on my part during the reading.

Summoning every ounce of humility within me, I approached the priest and asked for his forgiveness. To my surprise, he not only forgave me but also offered valuable guidance for my future readings. He requested that I read the passages to him before Mass to ensure clarity and fluency. Though initially disappointed, I recognised the importance of humility in the journey of forgiveness.

The Grace that Followed

The most remarkable aspect of this journey of forgiveness was the shower of grace that followed. As a passionate public speaker from my childhood, I had struggled with speaking too fast, making it difficult for people to comprehend my words. However, after the humbling act of seeking forgiveness, God granted me the gift of eloquence and clarity in speech. Miraculously, I began to excel in speech competitions, securing first place consistently at both the state and national levels, in both English and Malayalam.

Moreover, I found myself victorious in Bible reading competitions, a testament to the divine transformation within me. In the years that followed, I was blessed to become part of the Jesus Youth movement, where I was entrusted with the Word of God to share with people across the world. The grace of forgiveness opened doors to a fulfilling journey of serving God's kingdom, an opportunity that I could never have foreseen before.

The power of forgiveness is an essential aspect of our faith that can profoundly transform our lives. Through my personal testimony, I have

experienced the immense grace that follows the act of forgiveness and the healing it brings to the wounded soul. We are called to follow the example of Christ, who forgave even those who crucified him, offering us the gift of redemption and eternal life.

Throughout history, saints have exemplified the power of forgiveness and its transformative effect on their lives and the lives of others. One such remarkable example is Saint Maria Goretti, who forgave her assailant on her deathbed, demonstrating Christ's mercy and love in the face of unspeakable evil. Saint Francis of Assisi, too, embraced forgiveness and humility when he forgave his father for opposing his calling to serve God, leading to a life of poverty and devotion.

Let us not hesitate to forgive, for in doing so, we open ourselves to God's abundant grace and blessings. By embracing forgiveness, we release the burden of anger and resentment and create space for love, mercy, and compassion in our hearts. Just as the saints before us demonstrated, forgiveness is a pathway to true freedom, allowing us to walk in the light of God's love and share his Word with the world.

As we journey through life, may we remember the words of Ephesians 4:32, *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* Let forgiveness be the beacon that guides us in our interactions with others, drawing us closer to God and enriching our lives with his divine grace. Embrace the transformative power of forgiveness, for it is through forgiveness that we find healing, restoration, and the boundless love of our Heavenly Father. ■

Rojes Coalbe lives in Melbourne, Australia with his wife and their three boys. He is the national coordinator of the English ministry for Shalom World Australia.

When a House becomes a Home

Steffi Siby reflects on the place called 'home', and how her family was blessed with theirs.

World Youth Day was an amassing of millions from all across the world. But one thing that led to those young people gathering there is their experience of faith from home. As the saying goes, 'Charity begins at home.' There is a moment when a house becomes a home. A moment when the amalgamation of bricks and stones turns into a haven for a family to fill with love and laughter. And this moment is a great blessing orchestrated by God.

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labour in vain (Psalms 127:1).

Most of us have the privilege of having somewhere to live. Homelessness rates are increasing and recent statistics show that child homelessness has increased in the UK. This paints a bleak picture. One of the main things we can often forget is that God is the one who has blessed us with our homes. We can easily think that 'we' own 'our' house, 'we' pay for it, it is 'ours'. However, the money, the opportunity, and the means are all God's grace and blessing.

When we decided to move house, praying for a house was at the forefront of my mind. I discovered the 54-day Rosary Novena but I felt resistance. I believed that it was selfish for my intention to be regarding a temporal need, a worldly thing such as a house.

It was only later that I would truly appreciate how much the Holy Family cared about my desires and the needs of our family. I learnt that they care immensely about the details of our life, we may think they are too trivial to pray about but they are not. In fact, the more we give over control regarding every small aspect of our life, the more opportunity there is for blessings to abound.

The 54-day Rosary Novena originated in the late 19th century in Naples, Italy. It is attributed to a young girl suffering from an illness which was deemed incurable. Mother Mary appeared to her and promised her healing if she prayed three novenas. She did and was miraculously healed. In a later apparition, Mother Mary conveyed that the full prayer should have three novenas in petition, and three novenas in thanksgiving.

The devotion consists of saying a Rosary for 54 days in a row (with a few added prayers within the Rosary). A novena is usually 9 days in a row, so the 54-Day Novena is 6 novenas: the first 3 novenas over the first 27 days are prayed in petition, where you ask Mother Mary for her prayers for a particular intention. The remaining 3 novenas said over the last 27 days are in thanksgiving, whether or not you received what you brought to prayer.

The process of finding a new home would firstly involve selling our houses both in England and India. Selling a house during that time was no easy feat. Covid restrictions were in place so only a limited number of people could come for viewings. Even if someone liked the house, that was only the very first step in a lengthy process to follow. At any moment, things could change and any progress would reverse back to the beginning. We also had to find a new house. Again, we were met with barriers such as covid restrictions, paperwork and limitations on viewing.

We viewed many houses online and on site. There were positives about each house and negatives. We realised that like much else in life, there would have to be compromise and negotiation on our part. I remember first glancing at the house that has now become our home. I loved the look of it but instantly thought it was an unattainable goal for us. Nevertheless, we went for a viewing to explore. I remember praying with my dad in the car before going into view.

The real estate agent told us about the possibility of a part exchange. This was more than we could hope for. This meant that the owners of the new house would buy our old one to renovate and sell on. We would then pay the difference left. This was an incredible arrangement because otherwise selling our old house would be a big concern and the timing of it could delay everything.

My mum was in India trying to finalise the sale of our house there. She was met with many setbacks which meant she had to stay in India for six weeks rather than two weeks as planned. The paperwork and procedures seemed to be constantly met with barriers and there was delay after delay. The thing with a process like this was that there were so many variables. There were so many things that could go one way or another. In terms of paperwork, procedures and restrictions, there was very little we humanly could do, we had to wait. However, in my limited human way, I worried and stressed.

It seemed the restrictions were on a global scale and everything was out of control. When we feel out of control, it is a good chance to hand over control to the



As a family, our faith has deepened over the years and living in such a home helps us to keep growing in that faith. Our home is not just a worldly, temporal thing as I had first imagined. It is a place where we can laugh, forgive and learn to love better. It is where God gives us opportunities to grow in patience, grow in sanctity and help each other become saints.

one who is in charge, our Lord. Amidst all this, I prayed the novena fervently. 27 days exactly after starting the novena, when the prayers for petition were completed, the offer got accepted and our new home was confirmed to be ours. Praise the Lord!

In our lives, every block in the road can sometimes seem like an overwhelming obstacle. It is very easy to get worried and stressed. We know through experience that worry is not beneficial. If anything, it rids us of the peace we already have. Yet, we still do it. But we have the biggest weapon against worry, our faith.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see

(Hebrews 11:1).

Our faith relies on hope. Assurance about what we do not see. It can be hard to be reassured even about the things we do see. So being assured about the invisible, the uncertain and the stressful takes a massive leap of faith.

When we went to view our new home, my dad and I saw a man with a dog on our street. We would later marvel at him being St Joseph as he never appeared after that. My devotion to St Joseph would continue to grow as I undertook the Consecration to St Joseph. He has been a powerful intercessor who I can turn to in any need and he has helped our family through many difficulties.

We have been happy in our new home for over two years now. We wanted to acknowledge God's immense goodness in giving us our beautiful home. This led us to dedicate a room as the prayer room (photo). It is filled with statues and pictures. Most of them are of Mother Mary which reflects my mum's deep Marian devotion. The centrepiece is a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus alongside a statue. There are statues of saints such as St Padre Pio and St Francis of Assisi as well as pictures of St Alphonsa, St Kuriakose Elias Chavara and St Euphrasia. There are items from the Holy Land, Lourdes, Medugorje, Fatima, Velankanni and Knock.

The prayer room is a reminder for ourselves and others about how God is the centre of our home and our lives. All glory goes to him. There are lots of pictures on the wall in other rooms too. One of my favourite things about our home is that no matter where you stand, there is usually something to do with our faith in my field of vision.

As a family, our faith has deepened over the years and living in such a home helps us to keep growing in that faith. Our home is not just a worldly, temporal thing as I had first imagined. It is a place where we can laugh, forgive and learn to love better. It is where God gives us opportunities to grow in patience, grow in sanctity and help each other become saints.

The Holy Family has continued to look after us and bless us through many obstacles. My devotion to the Holy Family has increased immensely. I truly believe the Holy Family gifted us our home and continues to bless us and sustain us each and every day.

If you are going through situations in life regarding a new job, new home, new decision, I hope this story encourages you to realise that God has it all under control. We only need to have faith, trust in him and keep hoping and praying. ■■

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FAITH & REASON



HARMONY OF
Christian
faith AND
GREEK
THOUGHT

Weaving a tapestry from the Apologist Fathers to questions that grapple us today, **George K Paul** helps us understand the dialogue between faith and reason.

Introduction

In a recent exchange with an atheist friend, I found myself confronted with an accusation that, while intriguing, has deep historical roots. The charge of cannibalism levied against Catholics due to their belief in the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist is a perplexing one. What's even more fascinating is that this allegation finds its origins in the early days of Christianity when the Roman Empire's persecution of Christians was at its zenith. During this tumultuous period, the Romans, in their bid to justify the persecution of Christians, resorted to levelling various charges against the fledgling Christian community.

Answering the charge of 'cannibalism'

It was St Justin Martyr, a remarkable figure of the second century, who provided a compelling response to these accusations. In his influential work, the *First Apology*, St Justin engaged with these charges, specifically addressing the Eucharistic aspect. Please note that the word 'apology' in this context means 'speaking in defence of the Christian doctrine'. In Chapter 66 of his *First Apology*, he eloquently describes the Eucharist in the following words:

'And this food is called among us Eukaristia [the Eucharist], of which no one

is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.'

St Justin's explanation underscores the profound transformation that occurs during the Eucharist. He emphasises that the bread and wine, following their consecration by the priest, become the actual body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. This teaching reaffirms the central role of the Eucharist in Catholic theology, highlighting its spiritual significance and its profound connection to Christ's sacrifice for the redemption of humanity.

To further elucidate the nature of the Eucharist, later theologians, particularly during the Scholastic period, turned to the rich philosophical framework of Aristotle. It was during this era that the

term 'transubstantiation' was introduced to articulate this transformation.

Transubstantiation, etymologically, means the 'transformation of the substance,' referring to the intrinsic essence of a thing, which makes it fundamentally what it is.

In the Eucharist, following the priest's consecration, the bread and wine undergo a transubstantiation, where the substance of bread and wine transform into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. Importantly, this transformation is one of essence while retaining the external characteristics, termed 'accidents,' such as size, weight, taste, and texture. In simpler terms, although the bread and wine continue to appear, taste, and feel like bread and wine, they have fundamentally and intrinsically become the body and blood of Christ. In essence, Catholics receive the real presence of Christ in a sacramental form (of bread and wine) during the Eucharist, not in cannibalistic form. It is not a cannibalistic act but a sacred and profound participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Encounter of Greek Philosophy and Christian Faith

The importance of this historical context lies in the fact that the Christian Church did not shy away from the intellectual rigour of philosophy when addressing matters of faith and when explaining these matters to those outside the faith. The early centuries of Christianity bore witness to an extraordinary encounter between the Greek world of philosophy and the burgeoning Christian faith. As Christianity extended its reach beyond the boundaries of Judea into the boundaries of the Roman empire and beyond, it found itself face-to-face with a diverse array of cultures, each with its distinct belief systems and worldviews. Among these, the Greek-speaking world held a prominent position, boasting a rich intellectual tradition that could not be overlooked.

Greek philosophy, with its great thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras, had already laid the groundwork for grappling with the

fundamental questions of existence, ethics, and the nature of the divine. It was in this fertile intellectual soil that early Christian theologians discerned an opportunity for a meaningful dialogue with Greek philosophical thought. Besides, there existed a cohort of Greeks with a keen interest in the monotheistic beliefs and moral principles of the Jewish community (John 12:20-23).

St Justin Martyr and the Apologist Fathers: Uniting Faith and Reason

This pivotal juncture in the history of Christianity gave rise to a group of early Christian thinkers known as the Apologist Fathers. They took on the challenge of defending and elucidating the Christian faith to a sceptical and often hostile Greco-Roman world. Among these luminaries, St Justin Martyr emerges as one of the foremost figures in this tradition.

Born in the early 2nd century, Justin Martyr had a unique intellectual journey. He began his philosophical pursuits under the guidance of various philosophical schools, including Stoicism and Platonism. These early explorations left him yearning for a deeper truth. He later recounted his quest for meaning, stating, 'A fire was suddenly kindled in my soul. I fell in love with the prophets and these men who had loved Christ; I reflected on all their words and found that this philosophy alone was true and profitable. That is how and why I became a philosopher. And I wish that everyone felt the same way that I do.'

St Justin's transformative conversion to Christianity marked the beginning of his mission to bridge the gap between Christianity and philosophy. In his seminal works, particularly the *First Apology* and the *Second Apology*, he employed the language of philosophy to elucidate Christian beliefs to the broader world. In the *First Apology*, Justin crafted a compelling narrative of the Christian worldview within the framework of Greek philosophy. He invoked the concept of the Logos as the bridge connecting these two worlds, presenting Christ as the ultimate embodiment of reason and divine wisdom. Justin's argument resonated with the Greek quest for a rational and coherent understanding of the cosmos.

Moreover, Justin addressed common

objections raised by non-Christians, particularly the accusations of atheism and immorality lodged against Christians. He skillfully countered these claims by demonstrating the compatibility of Christianity with the highest moral and philosophical ideals of the time. In doing so, he illuminated the capacity of Christian theology to engage with and transform the philosophical landscape.

Justin viewed Christianity through the lens of philosophy. He saw it as the correction and perfection of philosophy itself—the true philosophy. His eventual move to Rome saw him become a teacher and writer, adapting to the customs of the era where public preaching had become perilous. In response to this climate, Justin conducted private lectures for those eager to delve into the depths of the Christian faith. Today, he is remembered for his writings, with three attributed to him, although scholarly debates persist regarding the authenticity of one, particularly the second *Apology*.

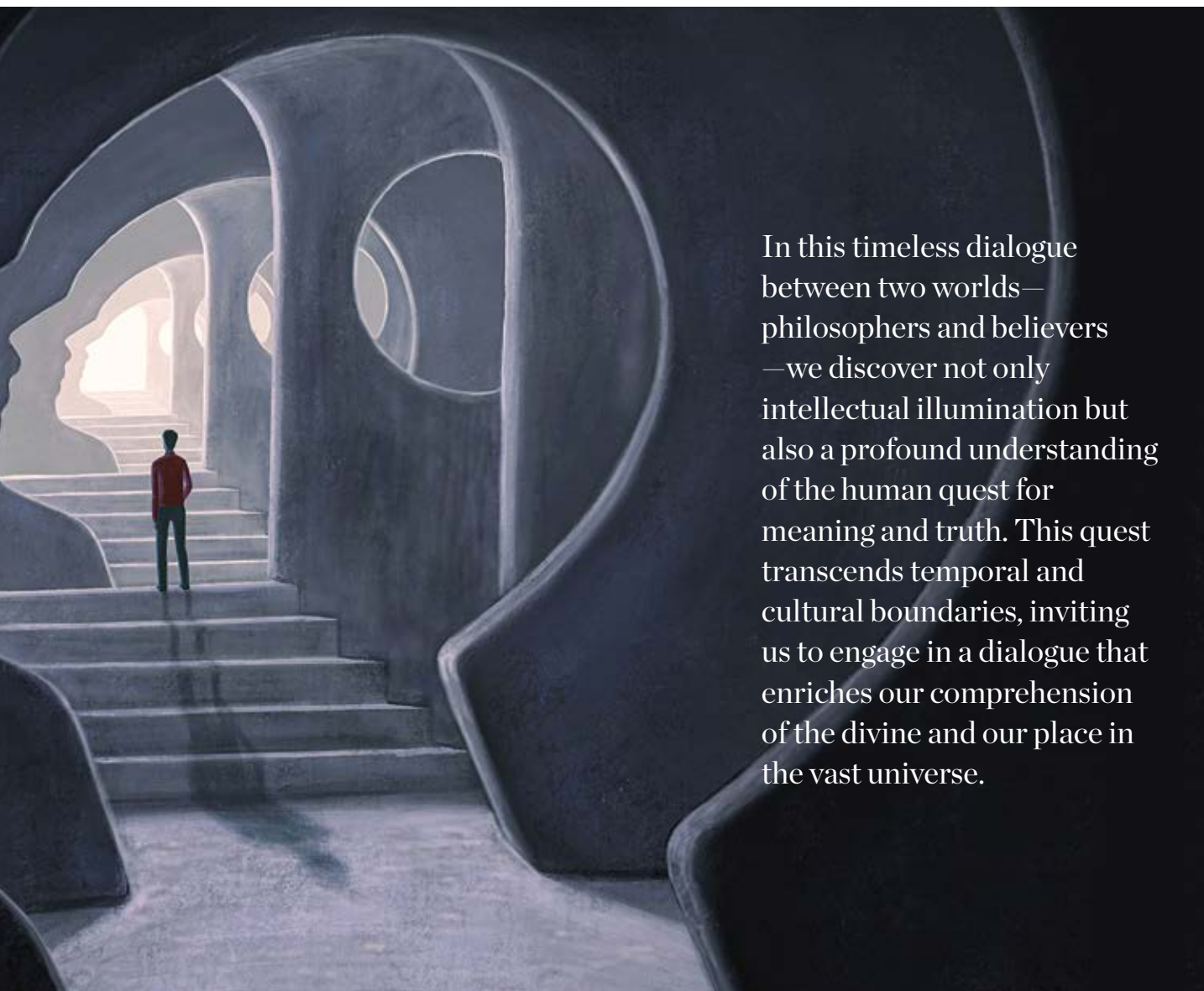
The genius of St Justin Martyr lies in his remarkable ability to harmonise faith and reason. He did not merely appropriate Greek philosophy to appease his audience; rather, he demonstrated how the Christian faith represented the ultimate realisation of the intellectual and moral aspirations deeply embedded in Greek thought. In Justin's work, we find a powerful testament to the idea that faith and reason need not be adversaries. Instead, they can be partners in illuminating the human experience. He invited his contemporaries—and continues to invite us today—to contemplate the profound compatibility between the pursuit of truth in Greek philosophy and the revelation of truth in Christian theology.

The influence of the Apologist Fathers, particularly figures like Justin Martyr, extended far beyond their own era. Their fusion of Greek philosophy and Christian theology laid a sturdy foundation for centuries of intellectual engagement within the Christian Church. This fruitful dialogue would eventually give rise to theological giants such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, who continued the tradition of integrating philosophy into Christian thought. The renowned author C.S. Lewis once remarked, 'Good philosophy

must exist if for no other reason because bad philosophy needs to be answered.' The Apologist Fathers recognised this need and rose to the occasion, providing a compelling response to the challenges posed by their philosophical contemporaries.

The Apologist Fathers' ability to articulate Christian truths using the language of philosophy laid the foundation for a tradition that continues to thrive in the modern era. Their legacy serves as an invitation to all truth seekers to explore the harmonious relationship between faith and reason. As St John Paul II once observed, 'Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing





In this timeless dialogue between two worlds—philosophers and believers—we discover not only intellectual illumination but also a profound understanding of the human quest for meaning and truth. This quest transcends temporal and cultural boundaries, inviting us to engage in a dialogue that enriches our comprehension of the divine and our place in the vast universe.

and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.’

The Timeless Dialogue: Reason & Faith

In this timeless dialogue between two worlds—reason and faith—we discover not only intellectual illumination but also a profound understanding of the human quest for meaning and truth. This quest transcends temporal and cultural boundaries, inviting us to engage in a dialogue that enriches our comprehension of the divine and our place in the vast universe. In the intersection of faith and reason, we discover an enduring wellspring of wisdom and inspiration, offering profound insights into the nature of reality, ethics, and the human condition. The truths revealed by faith in divine revelation elevates reason to a

whole new level.

In our contemporary age, where questions pertaining to faith and reason continue to resonate, the legacy of the Apologist Fathers—particularly that of Justin Martyr—stands as a beacon of intellectual rigour and spiritual insight. Their example encourages us to embrace the interplay of philosophy and theology, recognising that together, they illuminate the path to truth and meaning.

During the Church’s two-millennium history, countless questions and challenges have been posed, scrutinised, and met with thoughtful responses. When we find ourselves grappling with contemporary allegations against the faith, it would be prudent to delve into the wealth of answers that have been meticulously crafted over the centuries within the Church.

In the forthcoming articles of this series, I invite you to embark on a journey through the annals of Christian apologetics. Together, we will explore the profound insights and wisdom of some of the most influential Christian apologists. What we’ll discover may well surprise us, for their timeless contributions continue to offer invaluable guidance in addressing similar questions and concerns that echo through our present era. ■

George Paul is a Communication Designer currently working with the Catholic Health Association of India. An avid student of Theology, Philosophy and History, George is still active in JY, helping youngsters connect with the Catholic intellectual tradition.

IN MEMORIAM

The formation of a pearl is quite phenomenal. It takes time, but when the process is complete, the result is stunning. Here is the remarkable story of one such pearl: Fr Stelin Jesenther. Like a pearl that emerges from a painstaking process, he went through a long haul of suffering to reflect God's love.

HIS STORY

Stelin was born on October 24th, 1981, in Vallavila, a coastal region about 50 kilometres from Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Kerala, India. Vallavila is primarily a community of fishermen. He was the eldest of four children born to Jesenther and Celin. His sisters are Francis Mary, Saroja, and Reji. At the age of 13, he desired to become a priest. But someone told him that since he was the only boy, it wouldn't be easy for his family to sustain if he became a priest. Having lost his dream, Stelin joined his father for fishing and helped with other jobs. At the age of 16, he started showing

signs of pain in his throat. He ended up vomiting blood and was admitted to Jubilee Hospital in Thiruvananthapuram, where he was diagnosed with cancer. While he was in the hospital, Bishop Susai Pakiam of the Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram gave him the Most Holy Eucharist. Stelin always had great respect for the bishop, a gentle and righteous man.

Stelin was eventually admitted to the Regional Cancer Center in Thiruvananthapuram, where he underwent radiation and chemotherapy for about one year. During the Jubilee Year

2000, when he was 19 years old, Stelin and his family attended a charismatic retreat at the famous Divine Retreat Center in Kerala. There, during Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Stelin had a miraculous healing. The doctor, after examining him, confirmed his complete healing. This became a new beginning for him when he dedicated his life entirely to Jesus. He started attending local prayer meetings. In the year 2002, he attended his first Jesus Youth programme in Kuravankonam, Thiruvananthapuram. After the retreat, he initiated prayer groups in about ten parishes in and around Vallavila. Even though he did not have cancer, he still had pain in his throat because of some previous treatment that caused him difficulty swallowing.

From 2004 to 2008, he was part of two consecutive Regional Service Teams of Jesus Youth. He once shared his testimony during the All Kerala Jesus Youth Conference in Pavaratty in 2006.

During those years, Stelin became known to many because

A Pearl in the Father's House

24th
October
1981

24th
August
2023



of his humility and holiness. In 2008, he entered the seminary to become a priest. In 2020, he was ordained a deacon by Bishop Christudas Rajappan. On April 27, 2021, he was ordained by Archbishop Susai Pakiam to serve as a priest for the Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram.

TRAITS OF HOLINESS

Nearly 17 years ago, while we worked together in the Jesus Youth movement, he visited my house in Kochi with a few others. Along with our family and companions, we were having a campfire when my dad asked everyone about their ambitions in life. Stelin said that he wanted to become a saint. One of our neighbours was with us, and Stelin asked him, 'What would you do if you were in front of Jesus, who is suffering on the Cross?' It was his hallmark. He was proud to talk about Jesus and the redemptive value of suffering.

He challenged many of us during our youth by living an exceptional life of virtue. He walked with the poor and the broken. He was bold in his proclamation of truth. He once shared his concerns with me about the dangers of getting too mechanical when it came to evangelisation activities. He had in him an antidote to the vices of hypocrisy and pride. As a seminarian, he once travelled from Trivandrum to visit my home. My brother was supposed to pick him up at 5 am from the Kochi railway station. Stelin reached Kochi station at 3.30 am but stood there waiting until 5 am when he could have just called my brother right away. It might not have been a pleasant experience for him trying to avoid mosquitoes that early in the morning at the station. It is an example of how he put other people's well-being before his own. His serenity and inner peace were apparent when he socialised with others. Even before entering the seminary, he had the qualities of a good priest. Purity and innocence were in him. Because of his humility, he disliked being valued more than others.

EMBRACING SUFFERING

Cancer caused him intense pain; he could barely speak, but with joy and certainty of faith, he said, 'This is a gift for me.' I was

humbled to hear that from him; it was not surprising, having known him for 19 years. Even if his mouth was in pain, he would still talk and give advice and prayers. He did not care about his appearance or profile. In this age, when people try to impress or worry too much about their looks, he was a joyful contradiction. Years ago, when we sat together to eat, since he could not swallow well, he would not complain. He chose kindness and suffered with a gentle smile without complaining. Even though it was difficult, he would travel frequently for two-and-a-half hours from Vallavila to Thiruvananthapuram for Jesus Youth meetings and programmes. He did not have an easy means of travel, just the regular bus. I believe these small sacrifices prepared him to endure enormous suffering later in his life. When my family visited him in the hospital during the last days of his life, he was suffering from excruciating pain. He could barely move but gestured to his sisters to serve food for my family. Fr Stelin's sisters then served my family rice and curry. How can someone care so much about others while going through such pain? It reminds me of Jesus healing Malchus' ear during the great agony.

ORDINARY LIFE. EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS

Stelin had a great reverence for the Holy Eucharist. He once shared this story with me about a miracle. Once, as a priest, during the Holy Mass, after distributing the Holy Eucharist, when he came to the Holy Altar, he accidentally dropped the Most Holy Eucharist from his hands. Miraculously, the Holy Eucharist stayed floating in the air and did not touch the ground. He once prayed for a family who desired a baby, and they were miraculously conceived. On another occasion, a person physically afflicted with diabolical attacks was healed by his prayer. He once shared a story with my family about a miracle that happened when he was a seminarian in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. He visited a village where they were in dire need of rain for their crops. He prayed for rain, and it happened. He then came back to the seminary and shared the story. Some of his fellow seminarians could not believe it and asked him to pray for rain in the area around the seminary.

Stelin prayed again, and it so happened that it rained just around the seminary. His very first Holy Mass was like a miracle when the eleven people from his parish lost in the sea were found, and the news came in while he was praying for them during Holy Mass.

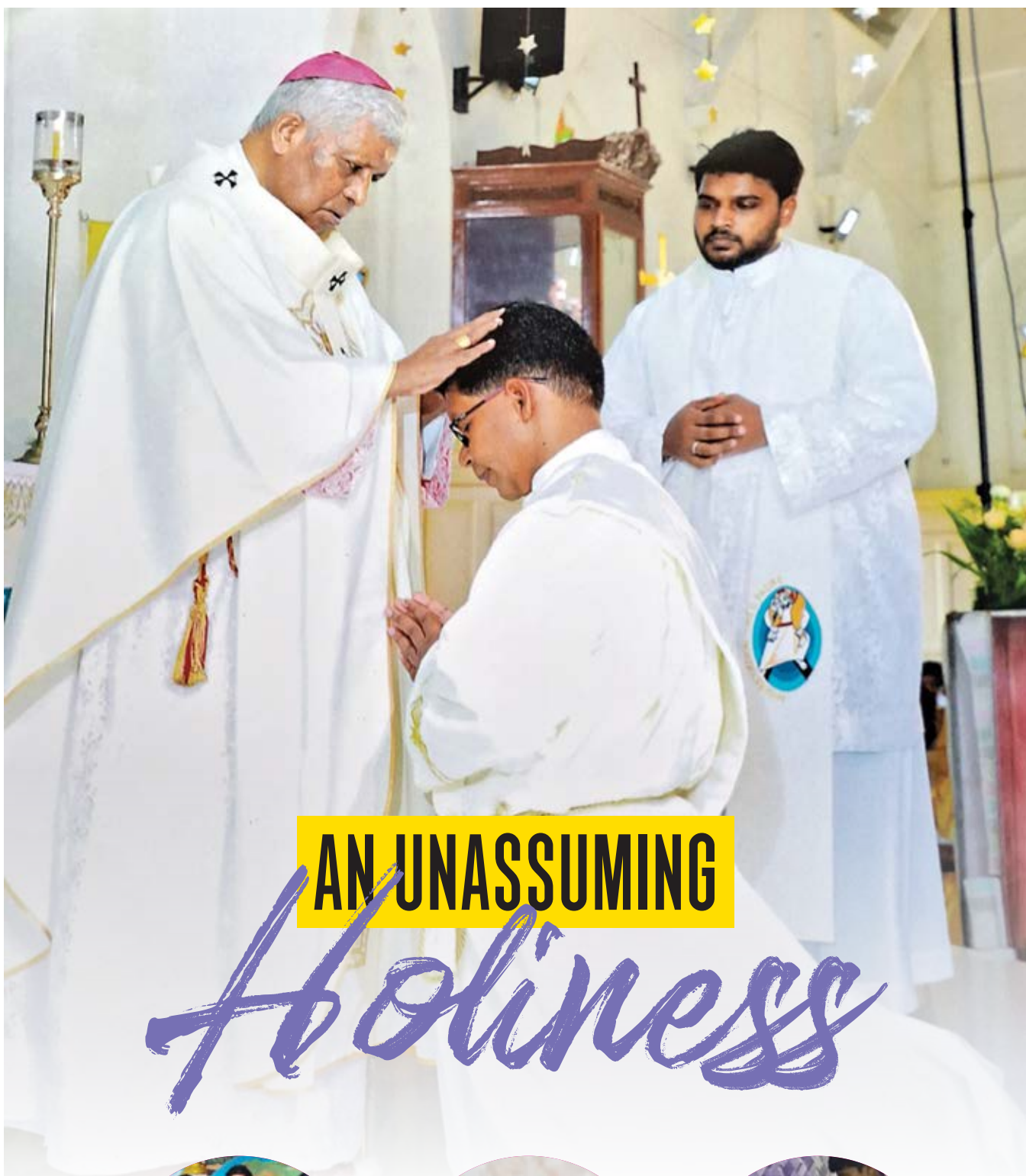
TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE

On August 8, 2022, he was diagnosed again with cancer. For the next one year, he went through incredible suffering. Eventually, his health deteriorated. His mouth and neck were completely disfigured. He lost his sight entirely, and could barely hear. The only way to feed him was through a narrow tube. He would sometimes cry because of pain, but none of these made him complain at all, ever. The day before he died, he requested that his family dress him well and take him to church. He probably knew that his time had come. On August 24, 2023, at 10.15 am, just a few seconds after receiving Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, Fr Stelin Jesenther passed away. How fitting to leave this earth with a taste of heaven!

Years ago, he would go fishing with his earthly father. He then became a priest to catch men for his Heavenly Father. Jesus said, *In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.* (John 14:2). Fr Stelin, who knew the life of a fisherman, probably knew how an oyster gives its own life to produce a precious pearl. It seems like the final months of unimaginable suffering were the refining moments for the making of that precious holy pearl to adorn the Father's house, where it will shine for eternity.

Fr Stelin's life indicates that, as Jesus Youth, holiness is never a faraway possibility. Even though some of us may not be suffering in our bodies as he did, we can all take his inspiration to win the battle of good and evil within our hearts. Every moment we cultivate holiness and intentionally choose not to do even the smallest venial sin, we too take part in that process to become a holy pearl. ■

George Harris lives in Chicago with his wife Josephina and five children. He is a software professional.



AN UNASSUMING *Holiness*



Stelin was a part of the Trivandrum Jesus Youth for a long time, though he had not been much involved outside Trivandrum. He was a member of the Trivandrum Zonal Jesus Youth Team for two terms.

I still remember the first time he came for a JY programme. It was the JY Prayer Group Training in Trivandrum in 2002. We didn't know anything about him. He came from the farthest part of the zone, but was the most active participant, taking notes and asking many questions. After the programme, he began to regularly invite us to go to his parish. I was the zonal coordinator at that time. Though at first, I wasn't very interested in going there, his constant invitation compelled me. I was amazed to see that he had started prayer meetings in eight parishes in the Forane (Thoothoor). The unassuming young man was doing fiery preaching in half-Tamil and half-Malayalam.

There were many young people in each prayer meeting. Stelin was a great organiser. He meticulously built those prayer meetings over the next many years. They would have annual retreats for the area (subzone), which would attract a large number of young people. I remember helping organise the first retreats for the region. During those days, I was accommodated at his home, where we slept on the floor. We would talk late into the night, sharing our dreams of building the ministry in that place.

Last year, that subzone had its 17th annual retreat. JY has transformed the lives of thousands of youth and families over the years. A gentle transformation that changed the face of the region. It

was a place where alcoholism and other anti-social habits were ingrained in the lifestyles of young people. But through these prayer meetings, many were saved from drinking and bad habits. We heard of youth praying together in the boats at sea in the middle of the night when they went fishing. The Way of the Cross walk that the JYs used to organise, stretching across the Forane during Holy Week, became well known due to its massive participation. Many initiatives, retreats, training programmes, prolife exhibitions, music programmes, visits, etc. happened over the years. Many JY families came into being. For us, this was a confirmation that the JY style of committed prayer, initiation efforts, dedicated follow-up, reach-outs, personal contacts, discipling, and teamwork can transform a place.

He told me, once when I met him, that there were around 6–7 priests and over 60 religious vocations from those prayer groups alone at that time. And there are many more still in formation.

Stelin deeply desired to become a priest. I was blessed to have been able to listen to his early aspirations and encourage him to follow the Lord's will. He joined the Trivandrum Latin Archdiocese for priesthood studies. This was when he was first diagnosed with cancer. Many factors hindered his priesthood journey. With his poor health, poor English, and disrupted studies, he wouldn't have become a priest without the unwavering support of Archbishop Soosai Pakiam of Trivandrum Diocese. Stelin's greatest dream was to become a priest and to celebrate at least one Holy Mass before he died. The cancer

was managed initially. Many JYs also supported him in his journey to the priesthood.

I remember talking to Stelin once while he was doing his regency in Tamil Nadu. He was spending a lot of time with the poor locals. He told me a lot about their struggles. I was touched to know how much he identified with their poverty, struggles, and pain. Many times, he donated a good part of his monthly allowance to poor families and even went without food. I always saw a saint in him. Shortly after Stelin was ordained as a priest, the cancer returned and aggravated. Something exceptional in his life was his love for prayer and suffering. When faced with any small difficulty, he would be the first to remind us, 'Let us pray.'

During one of his final days, I met Fr Stelin, and he reminded me of the Bible verse *for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin* (1 Peter 4:1), joking about his sufferings. There are no words to express the feeling of loss sitting next to his cold, dead body, as I fought my tears. His father recounted the extreme pain he suffered during his last 10 months as cancer progressively took away his speech, his sight, and finally his breath. One of our friends, who is now a doctor, shared about his visit to Fr Stelin during one of his last days (we were all part of the same zonal team previously). Fr Stelin was overjoyed to see him. When Fr Stelin's sister addressed him as 'Doctor', he reminded her to call him 'Elder Brother'. He communicated by actions and writing, as he couldn't speak by this time due to cancer. When this friend was bidding farewell, Fr Stelin knelt before him, made him lay his hands over him, and asked him to pray for him. The friend told us he would never forget this visit.

Fr Stelin loved the JY movement dearly. I'm sure he is all the more close to us now and will pray for all of us in the movement. And hopefully, one day, we'll all be together again in our heavenly home. Please pray for the soul of our own dear Fr Stelin. ■



An agricultural officer in the Kerala Government Department of Agriculture, **Rodney Pereira** lives in Trivandrum with his wife Leema Pereira and their son Joshua.

IN FOCUS



LIVING MY WYD DREAM

Rosa Rose Pallan shares her enthusiastic experience of WYD 2023, a dream that came true.

World Youth Day has been a longtime dream. Just the thought of being present for the world's largest Catholic youth gathering together with the Pope simply fascinated me. I always envision the idea of thousands of young people like me, though from so many different countries, cultures and backgrounds, united in the same faith – all equally eager to experience this beautiful fellowship of joy of being one in Christ.

I first heard about WYD some years ago, it all started with one of my favourite saints, the one responsible for WYD, Pope St John Paul the Great. I've known about JP2 since childhood, but I began to better know him through a Theology of the Body (TOB) study group, John Paul II's teaching of love and sexuality, that I was part of during the Covid years. We were a bunch of crazy JP2 fans. The more I got to know about JP2, his teachings on TOB, his life, his five loves, one of them being 'young people', because of which eventually WYD

came to be, the more I understood his love for the youth. Being part of WYD, being part of something JP2 had started made me feel in a sense his presence, as I believe that it was his sure intervention that made this WYD possible for me.

The first step I took when I first heard, during the Covid years, about WYD Lisbon 2023 was to pray. And so towards the end of 2022, I began praying the novena to JP2, which I prayed multiple times before WYD. I made it clear to him that because he was the one who started WYD, it was up to him to take me for it.

The whole process for WYD, though challenging, was instrumental in helping me realise how God provides according to the need and in his own time. The Bible verse, Psalm 37:4 kept me moving forward with faith in the one who keeps his promises. *Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.* I knew my desire for WYD was not for something temporary but for the lasting experience I would still

carry within me even after. So my trust remained firm in the Lord even though there were moments during the visa process where it seemed impossible to move forward. Or while raising the needed funds, some truly hopeless days were made by relying on my own strength, only to realise nothing would happen by relying on myself. I could witness the Lord's love and concern in the way my family and friends supported me through their generous contributions, prayers, and encouragement, which made me realise again that it was nothing I did, it was because of so many people that this dream became a reality for me.

Other preparations I did were reflecting on the theme of this year's WYD, 'And Mary arose and went with haste', listening to Pope's messages regarding WYD, listening to the amazing theme song which I absolutely loved, and also following the Instagram official page and getting the exciting updates there. So the day finally arrived when I started this journey that I would never forget with Jesus Youth India; more people joined us from all across the country. We started on 27th July and landed in Madrid, Spain (an added opportunity to set foot in one more country) and from there journeyed by bus for 6-7 hours to Fatima, where we were to attend two pre-WYD events namely Youth Arise International and Jesus Youth International's gatherings.

These two gatherings were a great time of interaction with people from different nationalities. It also focused my vision towards the great evangelisation for the year 2033, of how diverse communities have to come and work together to evangelise and reach-out to the unreached.

There were super powerful sessions and testimonies during the programme. Also was super excited to meet and be part of Fr Rob Galea's anointed and amazing live worship session. Another blessing was surely being so near the shrine of Fatima, so close to our Lady. We had to pass through the shrine daily going from and to our accommodation. There was this special kind of warmth where you actually felt you were on holy ground. Being able to pray in the shrine and in the apparition spot of Our Lady of Fatima, who had appeared to those three children felt surreal to me.

Now comes the best part, the whole purpose of the trip, the WYD. We travelled from Fatima to Lisbon by bus on 31st July and settled in for the night. 1st August 2023 was the first day of WYD, oh it was such an exciting day with people everywhere on the streets, in the metro stations, everywhere with flags waving in the air, singing and rejoicing and shouting, *Esta é a juventude do Papa!* (This is the youth of the Pope) which we eventually learnt and chanted along. We visited the City of Joy, oh what joy was filled everywhere! There we went to the reconciliation park and I had one of the best experiences of confession, and in the adoration tent. By evening it was time for the opening Mass of WYD; it was huge! After Mass, oh the joy in each heart, the church bells were ringing together all over. What I absolutely loved about this WYD was the theme song. We danced and sang to it waving our Indian flag as well.

Meeting people was so heartwarming, as what bonded us was the most precious thing, our faith.

Day 2 was again a blessed day for I met His Holiness Pope Francis. It was by an unexpected turn of events that we reached the place where the Pope was going to pass by. Excited, we waited for an hour, and being right in front of the barricade, all ready to receive him, I shouted my lungs out when I first saw him wave from the car. And as he neared, I simply shouted 'Papa Francis!' For moments after I just couldn't comprehend what had happened, I felt so overwhelmed, so blessed. It was indeed a huge moment. Even though he is so old and tired now, the grace on his face and the sweet smile he gave while waving was so beautiful.

Got the amazing opportunity to attend a live Theology of the Body (TOB) session by Christopher West. Was so excited to

listen to him live since I've been following him through his YouTube videos. Likewise many such people like Bishop Robert Barron, Jason Evert, Chris Stefanick, Matt Maher, Jonathan Roumie, and more were present doing various talks and concerts. And then there was this beautiful city of Lisbon to be explored, so many places to visit. We got to see the church of St Anthony of Padua, his birthplace being Lisbon. Then crossing the Tagus River, we went to visit the statue of Cristo Rei (Christ the King) overlooking the whole city of Lisbon.

Since the WYD package included free public transport for those days, we got to travel in almost all forms from train, to metro, then tram, bus, as well as ferry. The package also included two free meals per day, which were mostly the fast food joints found everywhere. One amazing thing that happens during WYD, which I was sadly unaware of, is the exchange of





But the most beautiful thing happened when the Blessed Sacrament was brought for adoration. Nobody had to be told, there wasn't any announcement to maintain silence. At that moment, a quiet descended upon the whole ground. Everyone gave due reverence for Jesus because everyone knew. This was the difference of being in a Catholic crowd.

gifts. You exchange something from your country, it could be anything like flags, or badges, or wrist bands or keychains, or even some saints cards. I just had three extra bands that came in handy, which I exchanged but got back more from generous people. Had I known, I would have taken a ton of things but anyway now can surely prepare better for the next WYD!

Coming to the main events of WYD that would have everyone participating, Day 1: Opening Mass, Day 2: Welcome Ceremony of the Pope, Day 4: Way of the Cross with the Pope, Day 5: Night vigil and the final Day 6: Concluding Papal Mass. The night vigil was where we slept for the night and venue for the final Mass. To reach there, we had to walk some kilometres with our sleeping bags, meal

kits and our belongings.

As for me, along with three others, we chose to walk the entire way from our accommodation instead of travelling partly by metro as many were doing. So we walked around 14 kms before we reached. Since we had to walk steep roads and hills, it was a good time to reflect on the theme with Mary. And while looking around, seeing the whole countryside from the top of the hill, we realised we were also following Mary as the theme said, 'And Mary arose and went with haste.' Remembering something I read, I began to think of Mary walking with haste through the hill country of Judea on her way to serve Elizabeth, with Jesus in her womb, reflecting on the 'Word made flesh within her'. Was I carrying Jesus within me as well? Was Jesus being made flesh in



me? These were the questions I pondered within as we walked and prayed the Rosary together along the way.

We finally reached our assigned sector of the ground at 6.30pm, six-and-a-half hours after we began. Wary and exhausted, with blisters on my feet and back nearly breaking because of the terribly heavy meal kits, we eventually recovered after a short nap and rest. The ground was already full with many having set up their sleeping bags for the night, and many more still flocking in. Our place was almost 1.5 kms away from the main stage, but the screens and speakers everywhere helped us be a part of what was happening. This was the scene in which 1.5 million people had gathered together and were accommodated for the final vigil and Mass.



All around, everyone was settling in, spreading their sleeping bags, talking, laughing, eating and sharing meals during which time, songs were being played on the screen. But the most beautiful thing happened when the Blessed Sacrament was brought for adoration. Nobody had to be told, there wasn't any announcement to maintain silence. At that moment, a quiet descended upon the whole ground. Everyone gave due reverence for Jesus because everyone knew. This was the difference of being in a Catholic crowd. I was so struck with that thought! It felt beautiful to worship Jesus joining so many young people from across nations.

That night we shared and sat with people around us, roamed around seeing people, so many sleeping, others dancing and rejoicing and singing. That night is one core memory for me.

The final day of WYD 2023 Lisbon dawned bright and sunny. The speakers were buzzing so loud with songs as a morning alarm to wake 1.5 million people. I was woken up with shouts and dancing around me shaking me awake. All around people were getting up and getting ready, and we also went around meeting and greeting everyone good morning. The Pope passed through our sector in his

Popemobile while going for Mass and many from our group who hadn't seen the Pope got the opportunity that morning. I also saw the Pope for the final time during this trip, from a distance. Even though it was difficult to understand and get the translated version through radio during the previous days, the final Mass had the translation and we could listen to the Pope's homily as well. The Pope asked us to reflect on what we were taking back from this WYD. He asked us to focus on these three: to shine, to listen and to be unafraid. One thing that he kept repeating was, 'Do not be afraid, young people. Do not be afraid,' and 'Nobody is excluded, the Church is for everyone, everyone and everyone.'

The final announcement for the next WYD was an exciting moment as well. Everyone held their breath while he announced that the next WYD would be held in Seoul, South Korea in 2027. Everyone shouted and rejoiced, especially us Indians who were shouting, 'Asia!'

With that my first WYD journey came to an end, though certainly not the last; the experience and the memories will be cherished forever. And the friendships which started from Delhi, to India to the whole world, people from Italy and



Germany and Australia and the whole world would remain treasured as well.

From WYD 2023 Lisbon, Portugal to the dream for the next WYD 2027 Seoul, South Korea, it continues!

Rosa Rose Pallan is a BA (Elective English and French) graduate. A young missionary of the Santvana Community, she is based in Ghaziabad, India.



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES @ WYD LISBON

WYD Lisbon lived up to the expectation of showcasing the truly universal nature of our Catholic Church. The young people who gathered deeply yearned to know Him more in silence and songs, dance and adoration alike.

Our band had a lovely time engaging with the people who came for our concerts, cementing our conviction that the Lord works in miraculous ways through which his mercy and healing flow. It was also a special time for us as we emerged from the Covid slumber with a bang. Leading people into the presence of the Lord unchained us from our own bonds and constraints, it was beautiful, peaceful and energising. Last but definitely not the least, we had a great time enjoying the food there *pastel de belém* was my personal favourite!

GEORLIN BABU, LEAD GUITARIST

Band members of the Acts of the Apostles share their experiences of performing onstage at WYD Lisbon.

It was wonderful to minister with the band both on and off stage. It was great to see how language is never a barrier in worshipping, and as God's children, how we are one big family. Our love for the Lord Jesus is what binds us all together. The crowds singing the band's songs in Hindi louder than us was a joy to hear! Off stage too, it was wonderful as we sang our songs in the metro and on the streets to the pilgrims as we travelled, not leaving a single opportunity to minister to people by sharing joy through the medium of our music.

TIMSON THOMAS, LEAD VOCALIST

Thirteen magical days of my life. I had one of the best experiences in Lisbon for World Youth Day. After I graduated from college, the only thing I dreamed of was becoming a musician and playing live shows. For almost two years, I wasn't

hired for any show, even in my city, New Delhi. My only dream at that point was to play in at least a small club in the city with a small group of people.

By God's grace, when Covid settled, I started playing small shows and performing. But never in my dreams did I imagine that I would be playing in front of thousands of people waving their countries' flags and cheering. A year ago, I was fortunate enough to be called by one of the most popular gospel bands in our country, 'Acts of the Apostles'. I used to sing their song *Jeevan Jal* at church in the choir when I was a kid. I never knew that I would be playing with brilliant musicians one day.

Long story short, I got to play with them, and I played one of the biggest concerts I'll ever play in my life. I'm so grateful for this opportunity, and experiencing Jesus through music was another enriching experience. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a sea of people right in front of me. I never knew I would play such a big concert in my life. Thanks to all the lovely people in the band for trusting me and giving me this opportunity. It was a dream come true moment for me, which I'll always cherish.

ABIN JOHNY, DRUMMER

The preparation for WYD started almost 3-4 years back with each one of us putting in small sums of money each month in our accounts to make it for the WYD in Lisbon. It was all worth it, where I personally experienced the bond we have created with the people and out of their love they contributed to our mission too. Because of all their help we were able to make it to this WYD. The daily experience of spending time with youth around the world, listening to various preachers and pushing through crowds just to see a glimpse of the stage were unreal experiences.

The main stage venue, separated by a river, had a breath-taking view. The two concerts we had were the ones to remember because the crowd experienced the joy and peace of Christ. To party with them in this festival will be the highlight of the tour. But something which touched me the most was the Shalom volunteers' smile and prayer that we had with them.

Overall truly memorable experience. Looking forward to South Korea!

EDGAR FARIA, BASS GUITARIST

My Prodigious WYD Experience

Stephy Varghese Thazhane shares her WYD 2023 experience and how it has been a blessing.





It was my first-time attending World Youth Day in Lisbon. I'll never forget the hours I sat staring at the clock, obsessively checking the calendar, daydreaming, preparing my belongings, and counting down the seconds till July 29th. The desire to set foot in Lisbon as soon as possible was driven by excitement and curiosity. I was travelling that day with a companion. The delay to our flight was notified every 15 minutes until it exceeded two hours. Yet our spirits were unaffected by the flight's two-hour delay.

On arriving in Lisbon our next stop was getting to Fatima by Flixbus to attend the last two days of Jesus Youth International. Most of the Jesus Youth members from Germany had already arrived at Fatima to attend the Youth Arise International on July 18th. The spectacular beauty of the tower with a golden crown could be seen, from a distance, as we arrived at Fatima and embarked on our way to the programme venue. A sight to behold was Jesus' golden statue on a pillar in the centre of the square with open arms. The church seemed to be gathering believers to her, from far and wide like a magnet.

Though we arrived late we decided to directly take part rather than retire to our accommodation. When we reached

the venue, it was already evening and time for the Youth Arise International anointing prayer. I was slightly hesitant if I should be a part of it. No sooner had I thought that I felt an invisible push and found myself joining the crowd on the stairs descending to the line of priests standing at the foot of the stage, praying with their hands over our heads. My turn came about half-an-hour later. As I was prayed on, I was told what Jesus had to say to me. It made me feel joyful, but I was also overcome with a strange feeling at the same time. Truth be told, one starts to cry when you're standing in front of God. But I needed to hold back because I wanted to hear every word, He had to tell me. The dam didn't burst until I got to the back of the auditorium. Calmed down, I saw that over 95% of the crowd couldn't hold back either. They felt Him. Some even got together and hugged one another in tears. A couple of more people tried to console their friends. There was a very strong spiritual energy in that huge hall that night, and it was felt by all who were there. It was the Upper Room all over again. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was taking place again as it had happened aeons ago. I stood on top of the hall, watching it all unfold before my eyes. I've often found it difficult to talk about

spiritual experiences, but here I've seen a lot of people who felt the same way I did. My first day there and a lot had happened. He brought everyone at face value. And the way Jesus did it was magnificent.

The spiritual experience at Fatima was intense and so much that it made those gathered there very excited. The fact that there was such a great number of nationalities paying their respects to the beloved Virgin Mary everyday was even more inspiring. Many shuffled on their knees around the mega-park-lined esplanade all the way to the chapel of apparitions. I've also learned that the locals gathered in the square every night, even after work, to pray the Rosary, something that today's generations are reluctant to do.

It was time to set out for Lisbon, then join the rest of the world in celebrating World Youth Day.

I'd been accommodated in the school gym in Odivelas with other women and some men. In total, the accommodation was occupied by 200 people. We were told to wake up before 9 am and leave the building so that the volunteers could lock the school and attend the day's events until 7 pm.

Our plans began with the City of Joy, where vocational exhibitions from many countries were set up and over 150 confessionals were held in different languages. The WYD theme song - *Há Pressa no Ar* was heard all over Lisbon. In the evening we gathered at the enormous park, Parque Eduardo VII. As witnesses to the events, more than 1.5 million were present. Opening Mass and an ideal day to strike up friendships with many from all over the world marked the first day of WYD. When brought together in the name of Jesus, we were ONE. Guards were lowered, and hearts were opened. It was a time for joy, laughter, and most of all to shower affection on those who were not well-acquainted. The exchange of religious souvenirs with people from other countries felt heavenly.

For four days from 9 am-12 pm we gathered for Rise Up encounter sessions with Holy Mass. The train stations, restaurants and streets in Lisbon were packed with thousands of pilgrims. What took just 5 minutes, took almost an hour to get to the estimated destination.

As I was prayed on, I was told what Jesus had to say to me. It made me feel joyful, but I was also overcome with a strange feeling at the same time. Truth be told, one starts to cry when you're standing in front of God. But I needed to hold back because I wanted to hear every word, He had to tell me. The dam didn't burst until I got to the back of the auditorium. Calmed down, I saw that over 95% of the crowd couldn't hold back either.





Each day brought with it surprises and fulfilment. The feeling of fellowship had grown and strengthened with each passing day. In and around Lisbon, concerts and talks were organised, the most popular of which was called 'The Change'. After Mass on 5th August, we began to prepare for our pilgrimage journey from Saldanha to Campo da Graça. Under extreme heat the 8.45-kilometer trip (after 5.5 kms with fire-hose showered all of us with cold water to cool us down) to Campo da Graça was completed on foot. Many were overwhelmed by fatigue and dizziness. We headed to Tagus Park in thanksgiving to celebrate Night Vigil and the final Mass by Pope Francis the next morning would surely remain in our hearts forever. It was one of the most unique experiences I've ever had, and I'll never forget how it made me feel to be among everyone who saw Pope Francis in person.

Whoever said that Christianity in Europe is dying?! The 1.5 million people gathered there was proof enough that it is very much alive. Only His sheep know to listen for a shepherd's voice and come back to Him.

The day arrived where with great difficulty, we had to part.

After reaching Frankfurt, it took me a week to come back to normal life. I've only been meditating with the Rosary and the Bible in my hand in those days. Jesus, the Rosary, and the Bible: the spiritual hunger was real. My heart felt at peace. None mattered, not even phone calls or email and social media. It was the same thing with my friends, I learned after a week.

The fact that each of us felt something and received powerful blessings in different ways from God was clear. We all experienced our own divine encounters that have enabled us to begin a new life. It's unique and special to us, a reminder from God that when we fall, he'll always be there to get us back up and move on, until we get to our destination that Jesus has in store for us.

Stephy Varghese Thazhane lives in Frankfurt am Main, Germany and works as a project manager in the Frankfurt university hospital.



Left page from top: At Parque Eduardo VII; Pre-WYD Youth Arise International Conference at Fatima, Portugal.

This page from top: Bishop Mar Raphael Thattil giving a homily to youth during the Arise Encounters; After Opening Mass on first day of WYD; Porto-Ribeiras overlooking the Douro River.



Alive, Beautiful, and Desperately Needed

Sony Thevalakara
remembers World Youth
Day 2002 and shares five
lessons it imparted to him.

The Pope is coming to Canada!

This is all I knew about World Youth Day back around 2002. I had never heard of WYD. I knew that Pope John Paul II had come to Denver back in 1993 but never realised it was for this. World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto, Canada would be my first experience of this. The theme for it was from Matthew chapter 5, 'You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.' The next ten days left a lasting impact on my life. Here are five takeaways from my first WYD experience.

Universality of the Church

During one of the Holy Masses we attended during the days of WYD, there was one I vividly remember. It took place in this large hall with several hundred people in attendance from all over the world. When it came time to pray the Our Father, the celebrant asked everyone to recite it in their own language. Next thing I knew, all these hundreds of people began reciting the Our Father in so many different languages. It was one of the most beautiful things I have ever experienced. It felt like a glimpse of heaven with all these different people in different tongues praising God Almighty.

One of the biggest takeaways I had from WYD was the universality of the Church. By this I mean how the faith is One, the faith is EVERYWHERE, and the faith is beautiful. There were close to 800,000 people in Toronto for WYD that year. They were not just from America

or Canada but from all over the world. All these different people with all these different flags speaking all these different languages; ALL believe in the same faith, this faith that has been passed down since Christ walked this earth. That was just mind-blowing for me. No longer was the faith confined to something we did at my church or something that happened in the local churches around my house. NO WAY! The faith was everywhere with people from all walks of life trying to grow in it and understand it while getting to know the master of it all, Jesus Christ.

Youthful expression of the faith

A lot of times growing up, I felt that there were different parts of the faith that were, well, boring. Many times it seemed faith was something that you practise when you are an adult in an adult type of way. WYD changed my perspective on that very quickly. It was earth shattering for me to see young people jump and dance at a Christian concert like I've seen at secular ones, or the excitement by which groups of people would shout at the top of their lungs from one packed train platform to the other, 'We love Jesus, yes we do. We love Jesus, how 'bout you?' and the other side chiming back the same in a louder voice, or the singing and the dancing that took place on board trains and trolleys, in parks and halls. The faith seemed alive for the first time in my life and something that could be lived out by young people in the way we live our lives.

WYD welcome ceremony





Clockwise from top left: Pope John Paul II at WYD 2002; Inside a packed train during WYD; RexBand saying goodbye; WYD Cross

Young people living out their faith

There are a lot of things you have to do at WYD. One of those things is walking, A LOT! As you walk you meet people from all over the world. In speaking with these young people, you get inspired by how much they struggle with the same struggles we have or have it much worse than we do, yet they still strive to be holy. It serves as encouragement for you to want to keep going on your path of holiness and to never give up. I mean, if a young person who is almost just like you on the other side of the world going through worse can do it, why not you? If they can live out their faith and be the salt and light of the world, why not you?

Pope John Paul II

JPII was the only pope I had ever known in my life. I did not know much about him but definitely wanted to see him. That chance came during the welcoming ceremony for the Holy Father. I got a spot next to the fence where he was going to drive by. As he drove by, amidst the shouting and hoopla, there was this great

sense of peace. You could almost feel this cloud of holiness surrounding him. Later on the big screens you could see people crying as he was driving by. I had seen that happening for celebrities like Michael Jackson but never for a religious figure. What was better was that he had called us all together so that we could grow closer to God. What vision he had for the future of young people! Later during the final Mass, he struggled with the wind and with his Parkinsons, having to have the side of his mouth wiped as he could not control the saliva from coming out as he spoke. Even lifting the chalice during the consecration prayers of the Holy Mass was hard for him. Yet, he showed us such a wonderful witness of how to serve the Lord despite the hardships, how to live as the 'salt' and the 'light' of Christ in this world despite the hardship.

Challenging my faith

The entire experience challenged my faith. There was constantly this question coming up in my head, are you really being the salt and light of the world? I

remember attending a concert by Tony Melendez. Tony is an American musician who was born without arms. He learned how to play the guitar with his feet. At the end of his concert in which he was not just singing and praising God but also preaching to us about God's love, he said something that will forever stay with me. 'If I, a guy with no arms, can do this, how much MORE can you do?' His words pierced like a knife. What am I doing with all that the Lord has given me? Later, the Holy Father's theme of his message that I took was that we young people are the Church of today and it was time for us to stand up for the faith! Both of these messages challenged me to the core and still continue to do so.

Now, 21 years later, although not perfect, I still strive to live out that WYD experience in my life. To be the 'salt' and 'light' of the world. But more so, to come to know Him and to serve Him with everything I have. Our faith is a treasure. I once thought it was old and dusty. World Youth Day showed me how it is ALIVE and BEAUTIFUL and how the world desperately needs it.



Sony Thevalakara is a high school history teacher from Chicago, USA. He has been part of the movement since his WYD experience. He is married and has six kids.



Let's जागो

The coordinating team shares the Jaago story, from inception through all the preparations that will culminate on 21 October 2023, a grand gathering of Jesus Youths in Bangalore, India.

In October 2022, during a national council meeting, members gathered to discuss and pray, ultimately recognising the need for a national conference that would foster a sense of togetherness. To accomplish this mission and reach the farthest corners of India, they started forming a team under the general coordinator, Praise Kuriakose.

Several ministries were established, and on December 24, 2022, looking at the need of the hour and the objectivity of the conference, the name, 'Jaago,' was coined. In Hindi, 'ja' means go, and 'jaago' together signifies wake up. This name aptly captures the conference's theme: to awaken and reach out. The official launch of Jaago took place during an online meeting of regional coordinators, and its logo was revealed at the 34th Plenary Assembly of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) Meeting by Cardinal Philip Neri. 'Jesus Youth

is very special,' he said, 'they witness Jesus, they bring youth to Jesus.' His beatitude Basileos Cardinal Cleemis, Major Archbishop-Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and Major Archbishop Cardinal George Alencherry, head of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church were also personally met, and the Jaago poster handed to them.

Following this, a nationwide campaign called Jaago Day was initiated with the goal of inviting 15,000 participants from various walks of life, including pre-teens, teens, youth, families, priests, seminarians, religious, and bishops. The conference is scheduled for October 21 to 24, 2023 and features 12-15 sessions every hour across 15 venues for different groups. These arrangements are inclusive of morning to evening access to Movie Theatre, Confessional Huts, Personal Prayer Corner, and Holy Mass in different languages and rites. Participants will have

the flexibility to choose their sessions, aligning with the concept of 'schedule your own programme.'

The powerhouse of the conference is the 24x7 intercession. From 7am to 9pm, intercession takes place at Christ campus and continues at Premalaya, Bangalore from 9pm to 7am. This initiative has been continuing since 26 January 2023.

The conference witnessed multiple intercession initiatives like Jaago with Mary Ma. Jaago Week, celebrated from May 13 to 20, 2023 was aimed at having zonal-level programmes throughout India to facilitate Jaago registrations. Activities included workshops, community service, small group discussions, Catholic art exhibitions, Rosary walks, cultural celebrations, daily Mass, adoration, and more. It was planned and executed with the help of zonal coordinators and the regional mobilisation team. The month of May, dedicated to Mary, focused on prayers and asking Mother Mary's intercession. During Jaago Week, May 13th – the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima served as a National Intercession Day for Jaago.

Jaago *Yatra* was a journey across India with the relic of St John Paul, which was a piece of the cross he held during the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum in 2005. The *yatra* (journey) approximately covered 26 states, engaging over 350,000 people and reaching 350 parishes, 100 campuses, schools, and other institutions.

June was celebrated as a special month of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, known as *O Holy Dil* (heart), with various prayer initiatives held across India. July's theme being 'The Precious Blood of Jesus,' JYs across India were encouraged to donate blood. Various blood donation camps were also set up in different parts of India as an intercession offering for Jaago with the tagline #My Blood for My Conference.

The month of August was themed 'Jaago with the Morning Star,'

Poster of Jaago theme song.



encouraging the recitation of the Holy Rosary across India for the conference. A lot of people shared their testimonials of praying the Holy Rosary. The theme for September is 'Reach Out.' It aligns with the second Joyful Mystery, the Visitation of Mother Mary to St Elizabeth, coincides with the World Youth Day 2023 theme in Lisbon, and also matches well with the theme of Jaago: Awake and Reach Out.

The theme song of the conference was composed by *Acts of the Apostles* and it has garnered almost 40,000 views on social media. There were also multiple social media challenges taken up by the youth like the Jaago hookstep challenge, #jaagoglasses filter challenge, etc. These also included Jaago Bytes, which had individuals ranging from the team members to students across colleges and working professionals sharing what Jaago means to them.

The Jaago general team comprises 18 members overseeing 80+ ministries. Registrations concluded on August 15th, with 20-25 bishops, 250 priests, 600 religious, 250 seminarians, 9,000 youngsters, 1500 families, and 1,200 preteens confirming their attendance, totaling 16,150 registrations.

Over the past six months, numerous intercession initiatives have been carried out in India. These include formation of intercession teams in different regions and zones, 24x7 intercession in Bangalore and Delhi, night vigils, 40-hour adoration, thousands of Rosaries, and Holy Mass offerings. Bangalore also organised an Intercession Charism retreat by Br. Thomas Paul with an intention to promote Jaago intercession.

An app was developed for Jaago, enabling participants to schedule their own sessions at the conference. The app offers many features like meal sharing (*Dil Se*), personal prayer reminders, intercession tracking, goodies store, and access to Jaago videos from Jaago Day to Jaago Yatra, providing a comprehensive Jaago experience.

As we prepare for the great get-together, we pray for an outpouring of grace over each and every participant, that these days become an unforgettable spiritual experience of rejuvenation and the call to evangelise.



Team Jaago



Jaago logo unveiled by Cardinal Philip Neri.

JAAGO PREPARATIONS IN PICTURES



Jaago Yatras conducted across 26 states of India, engaging over 350,000 people and reaching 350 parishes, 100 campuses, schools, and other institutions..



Snapshots of various initiatives that took place as a precursor to Jaago: Jaago Day, Jaago Yatra, Jaago Week, Jaago with Mary, and many more across India, which celebrated fellowship and contributed to spreading the word.



SPECIAL

IF I HAVE YOU

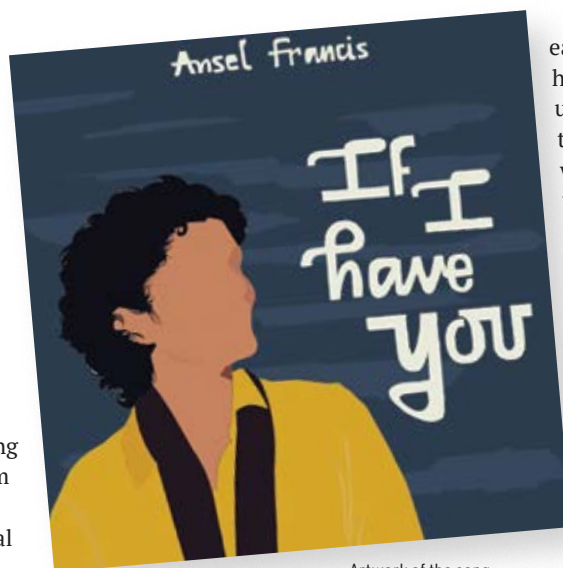
Singer-songwriter, **Ansel Francis** shares the journey of his song, *If I have You*.

As a child who grew up singing in the church choir, songwriting was something very distant to me. It was only meant for Chris Tomlins, Matt Redman or the kind of people who were born for it. I never thought God would lead me in that direction. It has been a transformative journey from doubt to belief, not that the doubt ever fully went away. Over time, God began changing my perspective, challenging me to either focus on him or the voices inside my head, much like he did with Peter. I gradually came to see songwriting as a tool that God could use to transform my life.

The song *If I Have You* was a personal journey for me that took two years to complete. I had to live out the lyrics before I could share them with the world. I doubted whether this was what God wanted me to do, but he was inviting me to live what I wrote, each day, one line at a time.

It took time to place God at the centre of my life, to stay calm in the storm, and to truly rest in the knowledge that if I have God, I have enough. It was easier to sing those words than to live them, but God knew I wasn't ready to live them back when I wrote this in 2022.

Team behind production. Elton D'Aruja, Reniel K Reji, Ansel Francis



Artwork of the song

Today as I share the story behind *If I Have You*, I can say confidently that I am experiencing God's love and his providence in my life every day, and that I am still learning to live the words 'If I have You, I have enough.'

It was after Ajna George's (The Nightingale of the Holy Eucharist) death that my friend Jith asked me to write something about her, which got me thinking about what words she would say. A life that battled cancer, a battle that took all that was dear to her; her beauty, her dreams and everything she cared about. Throughout all of her struggle, all she would tell us was to simply cling on to Jesus. As I went through a very difficult time in my own life, what I needed was for God to tell me the same words he spoke to Ajna George.

If I have you were the words God whispered into my heart.

I really did think about these words with Ajna in my mind – what else do we have to hold onto when the storms of life come our way? While she was still with us, Ajna used to remind us everyday

that if you have God on your side, you have enough. Of course you will face the storm, but he will take you through it, undoubtedly and lovingly, one step at a time. These words started to speak to me louder after Ajna's death – a quietness in the noise and a calm to my storm. As I thought about letting these thoughts be, God was inspiring me to write my struggles into a song that he could use.

The more I started writing, the easier it became, and soon it wasn't hurting anymore. I knew God was using the music I loved to reassure me that 'we will get through it', and that was all I needed to hear. I thought I was writing this song for others, but in fact it was for me, to remind me once again that he knows what I am going through and that he is with me in the storm. He sees me and he truly knows it all.

I found my calling in songwriting, I have always known it has the power to move hearts, and that God was calling me to be his instrument. I am called to merely be open to the notes from above.

Once this song was complete, I had it played over and over again and each time I heard it, I felt different. My heart has been moulded and stretched along the way, but I share this song with a conviction that my Father is with me, and my Father knows my story.

As you listen to this song, my prayer is that you will be reminded that you are special and uniquely loved by our Father. He is with you through all the battles that you are facing, the struggles that only you know of, and everything in between. He sees you every step of the way, and he knows your story too. God bless. ■

Ansel Francis is a Catholic singer songwriter based in South India who started his music journey with the local church choir. His musical journey has seen him perform at various Catholic youth programmes across India as well as internationally, where he has collaborated with numerous musicians. Over time, Ansel has identified that the art of songwriting is what truly captivates his heart. For him, songwriting is a calling and a means of making a meaningful impact in the world, one note at a time. Ansel's singles include *If I Have You* (2023), and he is currently working on two new songs, *The Beauty of the Cross* and *What Love It Is*, which will be released later in the year.

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Chandeliers

☀ *Servant of God Geevarghese Mar Ivanios*



Illustrated by Fr Prince Alex Neriattil OIC

Max: Welcome to Chandeliers! We are blessed with a special guest today.

Mar Ivanios: Glory to God! Here I am, your Ivanios.

Max: Yay! Servant of God Archbishop Geevarghese Mar Ivanios OIC.

Mar Ivanios: Quite a long name, my pardon.

Max: Actually, it is quite interesting. Such a stylish name is apt for an Archbishop. And

now, Ivanios is a brand name.

Mar Ivanios: Oh dear!

Max: Dear Archbishop, you've got many titles. To be frank, I'm clueless about starting right.

Mar Ivanios: It's nothing. Let us chat.

Max: Super relaxed at your paternal love. I'm listening.

Mar Ivanios: Thomas Panicker and

Annamma Panicker, my devout parents belonged to the Malankara Church. I was born to them on September 21, 1882 in Mavelikara, Kerala. I had good memories of my childhood. Once, my mother told me, pointing to a Catholic Church that it was the real Church. That was a spark. And my mother infused in me devotion to Mother Mary. I owe my mother for that. Time passed. I was studious. An unexpected intervention of Pulikkottil Mar Divannasios, the then Metropolitan changed my life. He took me to Kottayam for studies. I was to become a priest. My diaconate was in 1900. After my intermediate course, I left for Madras Christian College for my Bachelors and Masters.

Max: You were the first priest from Malankara to secure an MA degree, hence you were popularly named 'MA Achan' (Father). And your thesis too was outstanding. The Malankara Church always took pride in your name. You were a rare gem. This made you the principal of your alma mater, MD Seminary High School, Kottayam. The institute was at its glory during your tenure. Heard that you just slept for four hours those days. Am I right?

Mar Ivanios: Oh dear, you have been thorough!

Max: But still, it is a unique experience hearing it from you.

Mar Ivanios: I see! My journey continued. And my next nest was Serampore College, Calcutta. I was appointed a professor there, and I began to bring students from Kerala there for their higher studies. Education is a liberating and empowering force. It is the basic right of every citizen regardless of caste, sex and creed.

Max: You were one among the reformers of Kerala, I would say. Your contributions as

By Jisha John

an educationist must be highlighted. And securing education for women during those times shows that you were a real visionary.

Mar Ivanios: My eyes were on Christ. He was my light, my vision. He led me in his path. I had to renew the Church which was deteriorating. I had to free her and make her Christ's again. When I learned that *sanyasam* (monasticism) was my way, I resigned my job, returned to Kerala and founded Bethany Ashram in Mundanmala, Pathanamthitta. Possessing God is more sublime than serving him. Monastic life was a blessing. By the grace of God, Order of Imitation of Christ (OIC) in 1919 and Sisters of the Imitation of Christ (SIC) in 1925 were founded. I was consecrated the Bishop of Bethany in 1925. But God had other plans. I was realising my way ahead. God wanted his flock to be united. We were to return to the See of Peter, installed by Christ himself. It wasn't easy. I was cornered and humiliated. The ones who praised me were no longer on my side. I wasn't shaken, for I knew it all. Though many in Malankara thought about reunion at first, they didn't persevere. When God calls, he makes us courageous to throw all our possessions, just like the Apostles. I climbed down the hill, which was once my nest. A few monks accompanied me. It was August 20, 1930. After a month, five of us reunited with the Catholic Church, on September 20, 1930 before the then Bishop of Quilon, Aloysius Maria Benziger OCD. He was delegated by Pope Pius XI.

Max: That incident became history. One that created waves around the globe. It was a universal talk. World media spoke about it. And the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was established. God's flock found their way back. Your courage and decision

to leave Bethany Ashram, which was the fruit of your prayer and hard work is indeed praiseworthy! You just left it behind and followed Him. Your sacrifice has brought the good news to multitudes. People who sat in darkness found a new light. I am a Malankara Catholic. I think of you with immense gratitude when I receive the sacraments. It would have been impossible without you. When I hold and recite the Rosary, when I receive Jesus in my heart, and when I am pardoned at confession and above all for every grace I receive, I am indebted so much to you! I am speechless. Thank you *Aboun* (title addressing a bishop).

Mar Ivanios: Thanks to God. I am happy to know I was the plan of God for you too.

Max: Yes, *Awsar Tubayn*, Treasury of our Blessings, as scribed on your tomb. *Pithave* (Father), how was the voyage after the installation of the rite?

Mar Ivanios: I'm speechless when I think of it. God's presence was explicit. The Holy Father received us just like the prodigal son's return. When I approached him, he said I'm his good son, not the prodigal one. He was so generous in entertaining our needs. The Church began to sprout shoots under the shelter of her father and by sitting in the lap of her mother. It has been growing ever since that reunion day. Many have joined it since. The OIC priests, SIC nuns and DM sisters. Yes, and along with them, the priests from the Latin and Syro-Malabar rites were at mission. They worked day and night for Christ, for his people.

Max: Yes, it is still growing, gathering and distributing graces and pardon. A Moses was needed to bring the Israelites back home. An Ivanios was needed to bring the prodigals back home. You are undoubtedly the 'Newman of the East'. And just like

him, you committed yourself to Catholic education. The education institutions started by you are at its best. There was another crucial intervention. I have read that it was you who changed the position of women in the churches of Kerala. Women used to stand behind men. But you insisted that they must be treated as equal, ensuring them the right side.

Mar Ivanios: It is fundamental.

Max: You have travelled to many countries after the reunion. You worked hard till your last breath. You were a true Christian, a real Servant of God. I love the way you addressed Mary, as *Ente thampurane petta ammachiye* (Mother who gave birth to my Lord). You were a man of prayer.

Mar Ivanios: Praise be to God. Christ was shouldering me. When I was left alone, I was alone with the Alone. He was my source of energy. I left my earthly abode on July 15, 1953. I was bedridden for some time but still I could see God was at work in the Church. That was joyful.

Max: Bless us and pray for us, dearest *Aboun*.

Mar Ivanios: May you be blessed with love of Father, the protection of the Son, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Max: Amen. Thanks a ton for your visit.

Mar Ivanios: With you in Christ, dear. He loves you.

Max: Thanks Jesus. I love you.

SOUNDREPLY



MOVIE

FINCH (2021)

News, the news that we are saved not by transcending the limits of our human limitedness – but precisely through it, for our life-long suffering, struggles and failures can now have meaning, and joined to the cross of the man-God Jesus, it becomes vicarious – as St Paul puts it, completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, the Church.

Yet, today humanity has become so inward looking, so narcissistic that we see our humanity and either make our brokenness a virtue (as in the West), or like the Pharisees, truly believe that all of the brokenness is in the other (as in the East) – making the Good News feel like it has become a bit stale. The movie *Finch* sits somewhere in that spectrum, looking deep into our humanity and finding the brokenness, but not knowing where to turn or what to do.

Finch is a 2021 post-apocalyptic dystopian sci-fi movie starring (just) Tom Hanks as robotics engineer Finch Weinberg, and Caleb Jones providing the voiceover for the robot Jeff that Finch creates. Not far into the future, the world as we know it has become

uninhabitable because of a solar flare that has destroyed the ozone layer and has set temperatures soaring on Earth. Fifteen years have passed since the solar flare, and one of the few survivors on Earth, Finch, lives in his underground laboratory in St Louis – once his workplace, but now has become home to him, his dog Goodyear and his small helper robot, Dewey. Donning his thermal suit, Finch sometimes goes out into what was the town, in order to get supplies from now abandoned shops, but his supplies are running low as he has already scavenged most of the places around.

With extreme weather patterns being the order of the day, Finch realises that a massive storm is heading his way that has the capacity to destroy his laboratory and the home he is in, and he makes the decision to travel west, to San Francisco. However before leaving, Finch hastily brings into life the humanoid robot he has been working on, training him on volumes of data of encyclopaedic knowledge, including how to take care of dogs. We realise that Finch is dying from exposure to solar radiation, and his intention

Bishop Barron begins his Catholicism series with the statement that *the great principle of Catholicism is the Incarnation, the enfleshment of God – God becoming human, one of us, one among us; as the fourth Eucharistic prayer puts it – he shared our human nature in all things but sin. God becomes man!*

The God of the universe, of all creation – of all things seen and unseen, somehow deemed it worthwhile, even necessary to enter into the brokenness of our fallen human nature, and to experience the full breadth of its suffering, pain and evil. So much so that the author to the letter to the Hebrews could confidently proclaim joyfully that, *we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.* This has to be not just *Good News* but *Great*

REVIEW BY Joseph Anthraper

Joseph lives in Southampton, UK with Mahima, his wife and their 4 kids.



of making the humanoid robot is to take care of his dog in his absence.

But because of the impending storm, they had to leave abruptly before the data transfer to the robot completed – with still lots of knowledge yet to be transferred, they begin the road trip to San Francisco in a heavily modified motorhome – Finch, Dewey, Goodyear and the newly made humanoid robot, who takes the name Jeff. With an incomplete dataset, Jeff has to learn stuff along the way – and Jeff makes mistakes, some small, others big with potentially profound consequences, and Finch finds it hard to reconcile with the fact that Jeff needs time – something that Finch doesn't have much to offer as he is dying and dying quickly. Halfway through the journey Finch becomes so sick and is almost at death's door, that Jeff has to take control of both the motorhome and their destiny, but without his mentor and guide, Jeff seems lost in more ways than one. Would Jeff be able to befriend Goodyear – the purpose of his existence; would Finch and team reach San Francisco; and would they be saved from the storm – forms the rest of the movie.

Jeff is a humanoid robot that has been anthropomorphized heavily – he feels emotions of sadness, suffering, emptiness and loss – profoundly and uniquely human emotions – in some ways more than Finch. Finch has a profound mistrust of other human beings, yet he asks Jeff to gain his and his dog's trust – he is a man of contradiction, as he himself puts it. Through the course of the movie, we get



This has to be not just Good News but Great News, the news that we are saved not by transcending the limits of our human limitedness – but precisely through it, for our life-long suffering, struggles and failures can now have meaning, and joined to the cross of the man-God Jesus, it becomes vicarious – as St Paul puts it, completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, the Church.

glimpses of why Finch might be the way he is – his absent father during his childhood and some of the profound mistakes he made at critical moments in life that are still haunting him. Oddly Jeff more than Finch, it would seem, through the movie tries to make sense and find meaning of the experiences of life.

Tom Hanks is tailor-made for the role of Finch – as he has done in *Cast Away*, makes the character alive and yet at the end of the movie, I felt that the script could have been better – it had all the right ingredients and a masterful actor, but somehow lost the plot in the end. ■■



REJOICE ALWAYS, PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

God's Dance Floor

Am I willing to be the hand and feet of Christ in the environment I am planted in? **Anil Israel** asks us to ponder as we reflect on the words 'rise up and go'.

Very often several things consume our time and we conclude that we just don't have enough time. Is my life cluttered to such an extent that I find excuses to skip certain things with the intention of not missing certain other things? It is then these certain other things that eventually end up getting done. Were these the things that I actually wanted to be on the top of my priority list? Or do I end up grumbling that I didn't get time for the important things in life just because I wasted time on the not-so-important things in life? We only live once. Let us make sure we live a life without regrets.

So what am I supposed to do? *Lord, what do you want me to do?* (Acts 9:6). Do we ever ask what the Lord wants of us? Mostly, we submit a list of things we would like the Lord to do for us, while we are busy with other not-so-important things. When we try to fill in our time



(AND) GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES › 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

When our Blessed Mother was greeted by the angel of annunciation, she did not lose her peace of soul. She, being convinced of God's favour, immediately submitted her 'yes' in the profound trust that what God wills is ultimately the best.

with things that hardly matter, we realise that we are hardly left with time for things that matter most. How often do we brood over what others have said or done to us? Have we instead pondered over what the Lord is saying or doing in our lives?

We seem to be trapped in attempting things we consider will flood our lives with unending joy. We pursue our selfish interests and personal ambitions. Sadly to realise that all earthly pursuits are only temporal and fading. But when we devote time towards heavenly things like relationship with God, corporal and spiritual works of mercy, walking the extra mile, we store up imperishable treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:20) and our hearts are filled with a sense of serenity from above.

How come some people are incessantly radiating joy while others are wrestling inside, to put a smile on their face? It's

what's on the inside that gets manifested on the outside. If there is an inner conviction, of the presence of God deep within, then one need not drain one's energy to exhibit a fake face. God does not want us to live grumbling awkward lives, but to *rejoice always, pray without ceasing (and) give thanks in all circumstances* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

To be able to raise ourselves to God's desired ways, we must be in constant communion with him. When our Blessed Mother was greeted by the angel of annunciation, she did not lose her peace of soul. She, being convinced of God's favour, immediately submitted her 'yes' in the profound trust that what God wills is ultimately the best. Aligning our fragile human will to God's perfect divine will, brings about the unveiling of showers of heavenly blessings.

When Mary heard that her distant cousin Elizabeth was in need, she *arose and went with haste into the hill country* (Luke 1:39). To rise up, is to act – to respond. Not being weighed down by our unique set of limitations, but abandoning ourselves to supernatural grace – the *power from on high* (Luke 24:49). Empowered with divine strength, Mary *went with haste*. The urgency of the mission demanded a fast response. When we pause and focus on this verse, we realise that Mary's missionary journey was to a tough terrain – she went *into the hill country*. It was stepping out of one's own comfort zone and reaching out to the other in need. It is indeed an endeavour of courage for a young teenage girl to be on a three month mission during the first trimester of her pregnancy.

Joseph too sets an example of sincere obedience. *Then Joseph arising from sleep, did just as the Angel of the Lord instructed him* (Matthew 1:24). He too responded positively to the divine call – without doubt – with genuine trust. Not only once but every time as the occasion demanded. When infant Jesus was threatened, Joseph

obeyed a second time when asked to *rise up and flee to Egypt* (Matthew 2:13). Hardly had he settled as a migrant in the new territory, once again he chose to obey the call to *rise up and go into the land of Israel* (Matthew 2:20).

Do we always 'rise up' every time the situation demands us to? Are we willing to 'rise up', even when we perceive that the timing and circumstances are extremely inconvenient? Have I grown so used to being in my comfort zone, that I have given up rising at all? Am I willing to be the hand and feet of Christ in the environment I am planted in?

When Peter's mother-in-law was healed by Jesus, *immediately she rose and served them* (Luke 4:40). All those who experienced the healing touch of our Lord, even when instructed not to tell anyone, instantaneously broadcasted the good news unafraid. The Samaritan woman also did her part of the mission, leaving behind *her water jar* (John 4:28). What are we so afraid of leaving behind, when prompted to respond to the divine calling?

Each one of us has got our own unique role to play. 'All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players' (William Shakespeare). Have I recognised what my unique irreplaceable role in God's big great design is? If we just fool around, we are merely existing and not really living up to the divine call. *The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few* (Matthew 9:37). Am I being an active labourer in the Lord's vineyard? When we walk, we may be on the move; but when we dance we are consciously involved to make every step make sense. Why walk when we can dance? May we joyfully respond to the call – to be actively on the move on God's dance floor. Shall we resolve to 'rise up and go'? ■

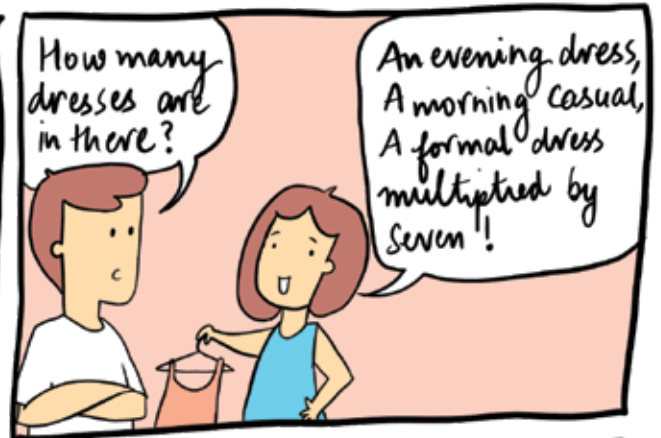
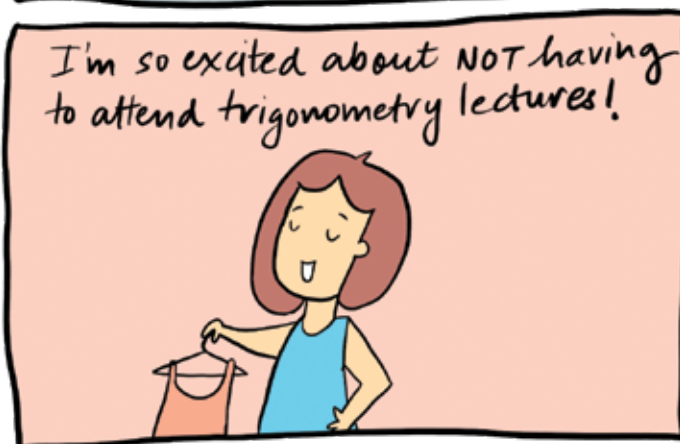
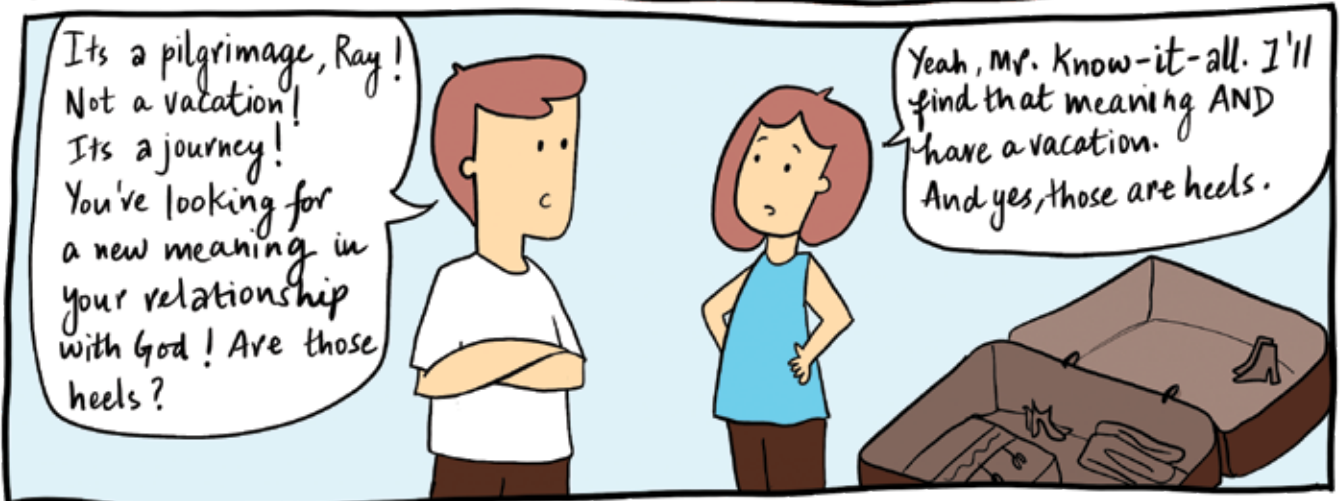
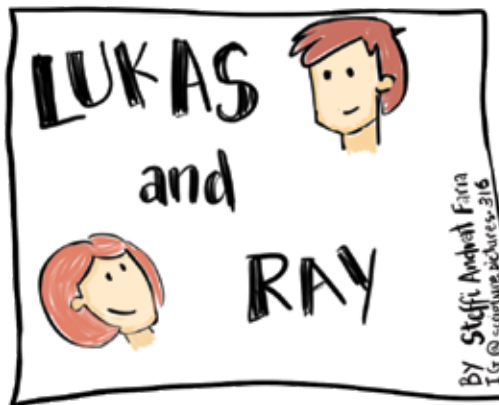
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Take a picture of the solved image and send it to quiztime@jykairosmedia.org before 25th October 2023.
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🔍 Spot 10 differences

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Holy Habits

An All Saints' Day challenge to dress up as your favourite saint

How does it work?

1. Dress up

Dress up as your favourite saint.

2. Shoot

Take a photo or video. For video submissions, kids can recite a quote of the saint they've dressed as.

3. Upload

Submit the photo/video to the Holy Habits web page jykairosmedia.org/holy-habits

4. Share

Kairos Media will publish the photos and videos on Kairos Buds Instagram page @KairosBuds. You can share the post with your friends and family.



Five Little Saints, each with the most number of likes in photo and reel categories will receive a gift from Kairos Buds. Open for all children aged 14 and below. Last date of submissions: **28 October to 5 November 2023**



Jesus Youth



SCAN ME