

# KAIROS

GLOBAL



Cultivating  
Hearts that

# Listen

JILU CHENGAT

ALSO ↓

**Zoo in a Pew!**

■ FR MICHAEL WEIBLEY O.P.

A Journey to  
the Eucharist:  
The Source and  
Summit

■ SILVY SANTHOSH



Jesus Youth

A Missionary Movement At The Service Of The Church



## LET US PRAY



God of silence and God of all sound, help me to listen. Help me to do the deep listening to the sounds of my soul, waiting to hear your soft voice calling me deeper into you. Give me attentive ears that begin to separate the noise from the sounds that are you; you who have been speaking to me and through me my whole life, for so long that you can seem like background noise. Today help me hear you anew.

# EDITOR'S ROOM

DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

𝕏 @readkairos



MANY DISAGREEMENTS  
STEM NOT FROM  
DIFFERENCES  
OF OPINION, BUT  
FROM A FAILURE TO  
LISTEN DEEPLY AND  
UNDERSTAND EACH  
OTHER'S PERSPECTIVES.

## Let's Listen to Understand and Console

**A**cross all age groups, communication is one of the most important activities of our lives. Whether oral or written, formal or informal, communication occurs at various levels. Yet, despite its central role in human relationships, there is a common issue: we often fail to truly listen. Rather than attending to the other person's words with care, we find ourselves preparing a response or a reaction while they are still speaking.

This tendency to listen superficially leads to a lack of understanding. Even when we express our deepest thoughts or emotions, we may walk away feeling neither consoled nor comforted. The absence of genuine understanding often results in dissatisfaction, frustration, and sometimes even conflict. In fact, many disagreements stem not from differences of opinion, but from a failure to listen deeply and understand each other's perspectives.

It is surprising that despite the vital importance of listening in building strong relationships, very few people receive any training in this area. This skill, which can either strengthen or weaken relationships, is rarely taught or emphasised. The consequences of poor listening can be profound, affecting not just our relationships, but the quality of our lives as a whole.

I am pleased that this issue of *Kairos Global* is dedicated to exploring this crucial topic. We hope to offer some practical insights on how we can become better listeners, and by doing so, improve our relationships and our sense of connection with others.

In addition, *Kairos Media* is excited to announce the release of the Indian edition of *The Art of Listening to Young People*, in collaboration with Amoris Christi and *En Route Publications USA*. This book offers valuable, practical advice for anyone working with young people – whether parents, youth leaders, priests, seminarians, teachers, or religious educators. In my own experience, I have found this book to be immensely helpful. It is not just a one-time read but a resource to return to again and again.

The ability to listen, particularly to the young, is an essential skill in today's world. As we move forward, we invite all our readers to consider the importance of listening not just with our ears, but with our hearts.

You can find more information about the book within the pages of this issue.

We wish all our readers a joyful and fruitful new year, filled with meaningful conversations and deeper understanding.



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

[chackochan.njavallil@jykairosmedia.org](mailto:chackochan.njavallil@jykairosmedia.org)



Do whatever he  
tells you  
*John 2:5*

# KAIROS

GLOBAL

**PATRON**

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil  
(Ecclesiastical Advisor, Jesus Youth International)

**SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR**

Fr Joseph Ezhumayil  
(Jesus Youth International Chaplain)

**PRINTER AND PUBLISHER**

Dr Edward Edezhath

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dr Midhun Paul  
(Jesus Youth International Coordinator)

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Dr Chackochan Njavallil

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Joshy Joseph, Houston, USA  
(joshy.joseph@jykairosmedia.org)

**ISSUE EDITORS**

Fr Alvin Mundackal  
George Paul  
Aleena Joy  
Jyothsna DSouza  
Dr Sunny George  
Tania Rose Josun

**CIRCULATION COORDINATOR**

Anto Puthur, Cochin, India +91 96055 11644  
(circulations@jykairosmedia.org)

**ASSOCIATE CIRCULATION COORDINATORS**

**AUSTRALIA:** Mintu Vijoy, Melbourne +61 452 538 785  
**BAHRAIN:** Neenu Maria Jibin +973 33715472  
**BANGLADESH:** Tias Victor Palma +880 1717-152023  
**CAMBODIA:** Sophearong Ravy, Phnom Penh +855 96 426 5472  
**CANADA:** Joby Joseph Ontario +1 2899 686 074  
**EAST TIMOR:** Sr. Julie Antony +670 77827618 (Whatsapp +91 97447 32431)  
**GERMANY:** Anna Paul, Berlin +49 176 83495451  
**INDIA:** Austin Michael, Mangalore +91 8277405251  
**IRELAND:** Suresh V Joy +353 87 963 0904  
**ISRAEL:** Jaison K Thattil, Tel Aviv +972 55 9974339  
**ITALY:** Anoop P Varghese +39 3884256258  
**KUWAIT:** Rajeev J Chacko, Ahmadi +965 66388310  
**MALAYSIA:** Sweety Kamala Prasad +60 162568139  
**NETHERLANDS:** Jojo Varghese, Utrecht +31 684974552  
**NEW ZEALAND:** Derick Daniel, Auckland +64 29 127 0650  
**OMAN:** Jiju Paul, Ruwi +968 99467516  
**PAKISTAN:** Asif Emmanuel +92 3022534254  
**PAPUA NEW GUINEA:** Abin Michael +675 7479 4368  
**QATAR:** Metty Don, Doha +974 7040 868  
**SINGAPORE:** Savio Francies +65 9021 9798  
**SRILANKA:** Sonal Fernando +94 77 3818399  
**SWITZERLAND:** Anu Jose +41 799177100  
**THAILAND:** Vineeth Andrew +66 86 372 6601  
**UAE:** Thomas Jose +971 521316868  
**UGANDA:** Mboowa Ronald +256 706844152  
**UK:** Mathachen Maduckakuzhy +44 7969 365686  
**USA:** Denny Joseph +1 (832) 640-3106

**FINANCE COORDINATOR**

Leena Shaju, Cochin, India +91 62382 79115; finance@jykairosmedia.org

**DESIGN**

Mustard Tree, Delhi, India

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Readers are encouraged to share their comments/feedback on the articles to [editor.global@jykairosmedia.org](mailto:editor.global@jykairosmedia.org).

#### MAILING ADDRESS

##### Kairos Media USA

3010 Mason Grove Ln  
Pearland, TX, USA. 77584

info@jykairosmedia.org  
+1 832 592 3675

##### Kairos Media UK

St Charles Street,  
Sheffield S9 3WU,  
United Kingdom

infouk@jykairosmedia.org  
+44 7969365686

##### Kairos Media India

No 8/174, Navodaya  
Studio Complex,  
Thengod P.O,  
Cochin, Kerala,  
India. Pin: 682030

infoin@jykairosmedia.org  
+91 9895711718



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# ASK

## FR. BITAJU



Fr. Bitaju Mathew, O.S.S.T. belongs to the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Captives (The Trinitarians). He serves as the Director of Formation for students of Philosophy and Theology of their order at Bangalore and is currently the Chaplain of the Jesus Youth International Formation Team.

 **People say that there is evil in the world because God gave us free will. So, is God's intervention in our lives a contradiction to free will?**

Thanks a lot for your relevant question regarding the relationship between human free will and God's intervention in our lives, which is a profound topic in Catholic theology. Church teachings give us insights into this relationship, emphasising that God's respect for our free will does not negate His ability to intervene in our lives. Let us clarify some basic concepts related to this question in order to appreciate a proper response to the above question.

**Free Will:** The Church teaches that God created humans with free will, allowing us to make our own choices. This freedom is essential for genuine love and moral responsibility (CCC 1730). God desires that we choose to love and follow Him freely, rather than being forced into it (Deuteronomy 30: 19-20).

**God's Intervention:** While God respects our free will, He is also actively involved in our lives. *The Catechism* affirms that God continually invites us to a relationship with Him and offers His grace to help us make good choices (CCC 1996). God's grace can inspire, guide and strengthen us, but it does not override our freedom.

**Understanding Divine Providence:** The Church teaches that God's providence is His plan for creation and His guidance of the world. This

providential care does not eliminate human freedom; instead, it works in harmony with it. God can bring good out of evil situations and can use our choices, even those that are flawed, to fulfil His divine plan (CCC 311).

**Cooperation with Grace:** God's intervention often comes through grace, which we can choose to accept or reject. The teaching of the Church emphasises that we cooperate with God's grace by responding to His call and making choices that align with His will (CCC 2001). This would mean that while God can intervene in our lives, He does so in a way that respects our freedom.

**Mystery of Evil:** The presence of evil in the world is a mystery, and the teachings of the Church acknowledge that while God allows evil for the sake of human freedom, He can bring about good from it. This is part of the mystery of God's plan and His ability to work through human history (CCC 311).

In short, God's intervention in our lives is not a contradiction to free will. Rather, it complements our freedom by offering grace and guidance while respecting our ability to choose. The Church teaches that God's providence and our free will coexist, allowing us to participate in His divine plan while still being responsible for our choices.



YOUCAT 4

**CAN WE KNOW THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BY OUR REASON?**

**Yes. Human reason can know God with certainty. [CCC 31-36, 44-47]**

The world cannot have its origin and its destination within itself. In everything that exists, there is more than we see. The order, the beauty, and the development of the world point beyond themselves toward God. Every man is receptive to what is true, good, and beautiful. He hears within himself the voice of conscience, which urges him to what is good and warns him against what is evil. Anyone who follows this path reasonably finds God.



DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

## Prayer Intentions January

### For the right to education

Let's pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected



# Pope talk



*Desire and Christian hope can overcome the 'dangerous plague' of nihilism prevalent in society. Nihilism is perhaps most dangerous because of its attempt to erase hope in the world.*

*To love the Church as she truly exists needs to promote a genuine sense of history that takes into account the historical dimension of Church history free from ideologies. We must abandon an 'angelic' conception of the Church and embrace its 'stains and wrinkles' in order to love the Church as she is.*

***Schools, universities, cultural centres should teach us to desire, to remain thirsty, to have dreams as the Second Letter of Peter reminds us, we 'await new heavens and a new earth' in which righteousness dwells.***



*It is impossible to think about migration without considering climate change, the current economic system, and its political consequences. Migration cannot be done in isolation because the interconnection between these factors is absolute.*

*Self-sacrifice and humble service are keys to good leadership. Jesus denounced people esteemed in the temple, including scribes, who possessed a 'hypocritical attitude' and 'feigned piety' to attract attention and gain approval from people.*

# JESUS YOUTH



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

## Does Our Prayer Attract or Repel?

→ I knew about St Augustine's conversion but had never heard of his three conversions. Reading Pope Benedict, I learned of them. Augustine's first conversion was turning from his sinful worldly path to accepting Jesus and his ways. Then, he joined the Christian community but was disappointed by it. Their prayer styles were dull and repulsive, and he went away. Later, he happened across the congregation of St Ambrose – where it was a beautiful and uplifting experience. It led him to a heavenly joy. He fell in love with that Christian community and its ways. That was Augustine's second conversion.

Most people come to like Jesus and then look for a Christian fellowship. However, the groups they see often put them off by their prayer practices. Today, we need places and groups where people can have a 'second conversion,' a transforming love for real community with meaningful prayer. The problem is that they don't find many.

### PRAYING TOGETHER NEEDN'T BE DULL

St Paul puts it in a practical way, *When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be*

*done for edification* (1 Corinthians 14:26). Almost two thousand years ago, Paul reflected much about how the gathering of Christians can be beautiful. There needs to be: 1) coming into God's presence, 2) Awareness of the Body of Christ and people present, 3) participation, bringing most people alive, and 4) Cultural adaptation by 'reading the signs of the times.'

Remember how we prepare for our ordinary get-togethers. You invite home guests for an evening, take children for a picnic, or have a birthday party. You plan and try to make them so creative and memorable. But not for a prayer time. People tend to think, 'You can't touch prayer time. I cannot plan it, because it has to be in a certain way. It should be planned by leaders or preachers not us joyful or creative people.' And what is the result? Prayer becomes so dull, and that is the part people want to skip.

### DON'T SEPARATE SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURE

The Renewal in the Holy Spirit was a radically freeing experience for me. The freedom to pray as my heart moved me was something special. I could be spontaneous and creative. Elsewhere, during the Mass and Rosary, I could only recite prayers, but here, I could

smile, speak freely, clap, and shout, and all that was prayer or rejoicing in the Lord.

During our Wednesday prayer gatherings, we did exciting things and helped people find freedom in prayer. We also asked questions about how we prayed. Most people are scared to question how they pray, but we had the freedom to do so. Thus, we learned that free praise is not just shouting but the freedom to pray as the Spirit leads. We also learned to pray and sing in the Spirit and began to use the tongues in genuine and enjoyable ways. And those were not repulsive, even for newcomers.

One more thing: early in our renewal walk, we had very authentic leaders to guide and challenge us. Fr Fio's practical tips helped us to be simple yet spontaneous in our prayer meetings. Fr Marcelino would say, 'When you pray or sing in tongues, give one ear to the Spirit inside and the other to the voice of the community.' Fr Gino used to highlight, 'Make a joyful noise to the Lord' (Psalm 100:1; 66:1); prayer should not be an irritating babble.

### YOUR PRAYER STYLE IS THE ACTUAL TEST

'How you pray tells who your God is!'



**Fr Fio's practical tips helped us to be simple yet spontaneous in our prayer meetings. Fr Marcelino would say, 'When you pray or sing in tongues, give one ear to the Spirit inside and the other to the voice of the community.' Fr Gino used to highlight, 'Make a joyful noise to the Lord'.**

The Catholic tradition of prayer is rich in variety and creativity. It does not always address God, but when others are there, you speak to them about what God is doing, like 'My soul magnifies the Lord.' In the Holy Mass, the priest tells us, 'God be with you!' we respond enthusiastically, 'And with your spirit,' in a conversational tone. The Church proposes the Angelus three times daily; its style mostly speaks out Bible verses. Take another prayer, the Way of the Cross. Children like it because it is primarily an activity

combined with reflection. But some find it boring and put long prayers into it. In the great wisdom of Mother Church, she takes Jesus' instructions seriously and does not use long prayers or babbling unnecessary words. So, in the Church, there is an ongoing reflection and renewal of everything about spirituality, especially prayer. And what is more, the most splendid memorial of worship that Jesus left for us is feasting around the table, eating and drinking.

'You say intercession should be interactive and creative,' Jose called me one afternoon. 'This evening, different groups will intercede online. How can we do it in a lively and relevant way?' I was happy about the question because someone was searching for new ways of praying. It means saying, 'Lord, teach us to pray!' That night's intercession was for Manoj's surgery; everyone came online to pray.

I said that prayer should not be using many words to convince God or convert Him. It needn't be an ugly shouting or a counting the number of prayers. *Your Father knows . . . before you ask him* (Matthew 6:8). Instead, intercession can be a joyful journey of a loving and interactive group asking God

for guidance on our needs and talking to one another about what God speaks.

'Why don't we do the intercession in a "conversational tone" instead of a "prayer tone"? Maybe people could talk with gratitude about what Jesus did in their lives through Manoj and then offer a short prayer as the Spirit leads. Begin the prayer time by telling them the new way and why we do it. Also, the sharing should not be long, but limit it to just one thing.'

After the prayer, I heard it went very well, and everyone was alive. Jose said, 'The plan was for one hour, but we went on for three hours, and no one noticed the time. It was great!' I am sure, at least for a few, that would have been their 'second conversion': Praying together can be beautiful; it can be an experience of the love and beauty of the Body of Christ.

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

ENGAGE

# Essence of Family:

## A Call to Love and Commitment

**Bro Jithin Joseph** shares St Kuriakose Elias Chavara's advice to families.

*T*he Catechism of the Catholic Church defines family as, 'the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society' (CCC 2207). Family is the foundation for the formation and growth of society.

A healthy family builds a prosperous nation. A model family consists of parents, children, and grandchildren living in love, happiness, and harmony. A good example of this is the Holy Family of Nazareth: a father who fulfils his duties without complaint, a mother who cherishes all joys and sorrows in her heart, and a son who embodies humility



and love, unaffected by accusations or prejudice. Every Christian family is called to emulate the Holy Family.

St Kuriakose Elias Chavara speaks of a good Christian family as resembling a heavenly dwelling. Growing up in a family based on these principles, Chavara *achan* understood the importance of family life. Even after losing his parents and siblings to an epidemic, he regained his confidence by choosing the Holy Family as his heavenly model, integrating the Christian values taught by his mother and their midnight prayers. His devotion to family shines through in his character as a loving priest.

To deepen the personal relationship between parents and children, Chavara *achan* advises his children:

- Choose a life partner with good character and behaviour
- As you grow older, continue to honour and submit to your parents
- It is your duty to care for your parents
- Do not cause your parents to shed tears
- Remember, you are God's investment in the hands of your parents.
- God-loving and God-fearing children will love and respect their parents.

Chavara *achan* also imparts wisdom to parents on leading an exemplary family life and raising children with moral values:

- Treat your children as divine investments, nurturing them with the utmost care

- Include them in your daily prayers
- Pay special attention to their education
- Be cautious about their friendships
- Exercise moderation when reprimanding and disciplining them
- Allow them the freedom to choose their career paths as they mature.

These timeless scriptures remind us that social reform and values can only be achieved through families. The transition from joint families to nuclear families has led to significant changes over the centuries. As families have become smaller, relationships, lifestyles, and backgrounds have transformed. Today, issues like personal independence, marital discord, and rising divorce rates challenge the family unit.

The great hornbill is the state bird of the Southern Indian state of Kerala. This bird exemplifies a beautiful family lifestyle. They mate for life, both parents sharing the responsibility of nurturing their young. When it's time to lay eggs, the mother finds a safe place and lays them inside a tree trunk. The male seals the entrance, leaving a small opening for feeding the mother and the chicks. Once the young ones are ready to leave the nest, the mother signals, and the male opens the entrance, allowing them to fly free. If anything were to happen to the male, the mother and the chicks would be left without food or escape. This harmonious family dynamic illustrates the beauty of love and sacrifice.

Family backgrounds profoundly influence individuals. It is said that life lessons and values are best learned within the family. In a certain family when the grandfather passed away, one grandson mourned deeply, while others did not.

After the funeral, the grandson took an old plate and glass from his grandfather's room. When his father questioned him, he replied, 'Just like you did for Grandfather, I want to feed you both in this plate and glass when you grow old.' The way children treat their parents reflects how they will be treated in the future. Actions have consequences, and parents who model good behaviour will see the benefits later on.

Children learn invaluable lessons from parents who support one another and apologise for their mistakes. Families that pray together and share meals foster a loving environment, ensuring that children remain connected to their parents.

The wedding vows taken by parents—'From this day until death, in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, in wealth and in poverty, we promise to live in one mind, with mutual love and faithfulness, with the Holy Gospel as witness'—serve as a reminder of the commitment needed to create a heavenly family. Family is the foundation of a thriving society, shaping our character and values. By fostering love, respect, and commitment within our families, we create an environment that nurtures future generations. Let us embrace these principles, ensuring our families reflect the beauty of unity and devotion.

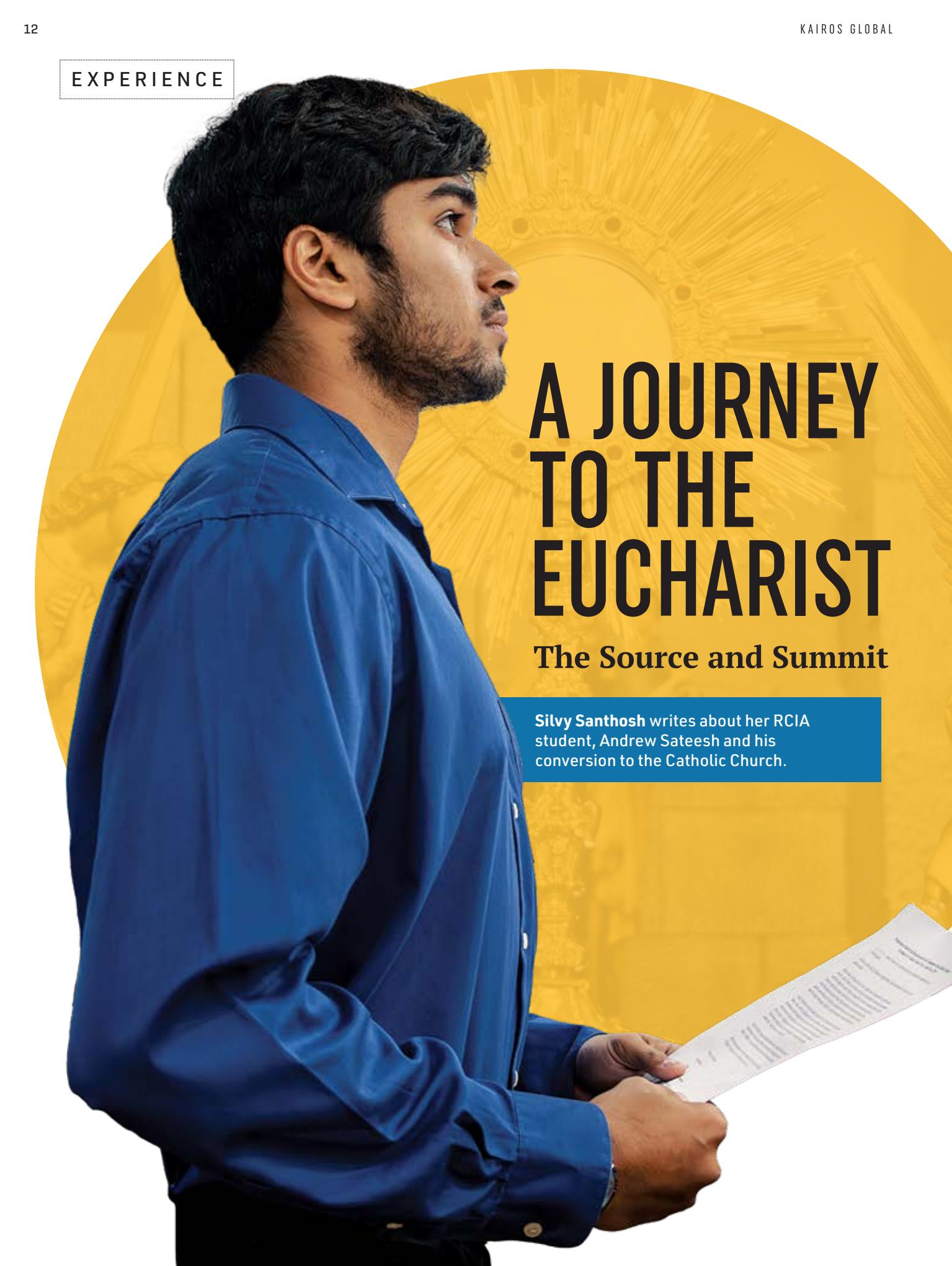



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Bro Jithin Joseph is currently pursuing his second year theological studies at Samanvaya Theology College, Bhopal, India



EXPERIENCE



# A JOURNEY TO THE EUCHARIST

## The Source and Summit

**Silvy Santhosh** writes about her RCIA student, Andrew Sateesh and his conversion to the Catholic Church.

**D**uring the summer of 2024, I received a call from our parish vicar, Fr Mathews Kurian Munjanattu, about a young man named Andrew Sateesh, a Mar Thoma Christian, who wanted to join RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) to become a Catholic. (The Mar Thoma Church is an Oriental Protestant Christian church based in Kerala, India.)

Most of our RCIA candidates attend because they plan to marry a Syro-Malabar Catholic. Naturally, I assumed the same for Andrew. On that note, when I received a text from him the next day asking for the RCIA class details, I told him that I was currently busy with three other candidates, and that the next session would begin in August. He responded politely, and I didn't think much of it.

Weeks later, after a daily Holy *Qurbana* (Holy Mass), Fr Mathews mentioned, 'Andrew has been coming to Holy *Qurbana* every day and receives the blessing.' Surprised, I decided to meet him the next day, and my husband and I met him the next morning after Mass.

Andrew shared, 'I'm moving to Houston in August for my first year of college, and I really want to become Catholic before starting school.' His humility struck me – he had waited patiently for God's timing without pressing me to start earlier. Moved by his sincerity, I began his RCIA classes that week itself.

#### RCIA Classes

Every session was a blessing. Andrew wasn't just a student; he became an inspiration for me as well. When I suggested Catholic books, he'd respond, 'I've already read that one!' He showed me a list of spiritual books he'd finished, including writings by saints and Church Fathers. He shared, 'St. Ignatius of Antioch is my favourite saint, and I'm taking his name for Confirmation.' My 19-year-old daughter overheard one of our Zoom classes and asked, 'Wait, he's only 18?!"

Andrew's story is a testament to God's work in his life. When I asked him to share his journey for God's glory, he graciously agreed.

#### ANDREW'S FAITH JOURNEY

##### A Foundation of Faith

Andrew grew up in a Mar Thoma family with his parents, Sateesh Thankachan and Beena, and his elder sister Angela, where Sundays were filled with Bible readings and family prayer. His parents fostered a deep love for Christ and Scripture in him from an early age. When I met his family for the first time, it was very clear that Andrew received his gift of faith from his parents. Andrew shares: 'In the Mar Thoma Church, they have *Qurbana*, but they did not put emphasis on the presence of Jesus within the Eucharist.'

##### The Blessing of the Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic unexpectedly became a turning point for Andrew. Quarantine gave Andrew, then a ninth grader, time to explore his faith. He embraced Evangelical Protestantism, drawn to its teachings on the Rapture and believer's baptism.

##### Discovering the Early Church

Andrew's journey took a new direction when he began reading about the Early Church. The writings of Church Fathers like St Ignatius of Antioch, St Augustine, and St Jerome fascinated him. He discovered beliefs like the real presence of

Jesus in the Eucharist, transubstantiation, the authority of the Pope, veneration of saints, and the importance of the Church's unity – none of which aligned with Protestant teaching.

Andrew says, 'Yeah, my favourite book was the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch. He wrote seven letters to six different Churches and one to a fellow bishop. He was one of Antioch's first bishops and was a disciple of the Apostle John. In his writings, he talked about the role of the bishop and how everyone must submit to his authority, the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, no salvation outside the Church, and how we must view Sunday as the Lord's Day. He is also the first person to document the Church as, "the Catholic Church," by name in his writings. Through his theology, I was able to understand that the Early Church was synonymous and identical to the Catholic Church.'

By mid-2021, Andrew realised that the Early Church was unmistakably Catholic. This realisation led him to decide to join the Church, but the road ahead was still long.

##### His First Catholic Holy Mass

In 2023, Andrew attended a Traditional Latin Mass for the first time. The beauty and reverence of the liturgy left him in awe. The chants, incense, and prayers brought him into God's presence in a way he had never experienced. At the heart of it all was the Eucharist – Jesus Christ, truly present.



Andrew's journey took a new direction when he began reading about the Early Church. The writings of Church Fathers like St Ignatius of Antioch, St Augustine, and St Jerome fascinated him. He discovered beliefs like the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, transubstantiation, the authority of the Pope, veneration of saints, and the importance of the Church's unity – none of which aligned with Protestant teaching.



### Eucharistic Adoration and Mother Mary's Guidance

Andrew began attending Eucharistic Adoration, where he found peace and strength in Jesus' presence. He said, 'Adoration takes away worry and fills my soul with joy.' He also developed a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, praying the Rosary daily and reflecting on the mysteries of Christ's life. This was very different from his childhood experience!

### Finding a Home in the Syro-Malabar Church

His grandmother used to watch Syro-Malabar Catholic homilies on TV and told Andrew that the Syro-Malabar Church has so many similarities to Mar Thoma traditions. At his grandmother's request, Andrew attended a Syro-Malabar Catholic parish in Dallas. Though the liturgy (*Qurbana*) was new to him, its beauty and reverence struck him. He found the same Jesus in the Eucharist, no matter the rite. Andrew says: 'I love Holy *Qurbana*, it invokes the saints especially Mar Thoma Sleeha (St Thomas) and St Alphonsa and I love the Syro-Malabar consecration part, which I find to be beautiful and magnificent as you truly see Christ.'

### Waiting for the Eucharist

During these months, I could see his sincere thirst for Holy Communion. He would come for daily Holy *Qurbana* to our parish, attended very reverently and received blessings. Though he couldn't yet receive Communion, Andrew said, 'Even though I can't receive, I know God has great things in store for me. Waiting can be hard, but I trust in God's timing.'

### First Holy Communion

On 29 November 2024, the day before the feast of St Andrew, Andrew's long wait ended. He received his Confirmation, First Confession, and First Holy Communion at St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Coppell from Fr Jimmy Edakulathur. He chose the name Ignatius for Confirmation, inspired by St Ignatius of Antioch.

Afterward, Andrew described the experience as 'breathtaking'. He said, 'I finally understood what Heaven on earth means. I feel spiritually nourished after receiving First Holy Communion.'

### His Advice to Young People

Andrew says: 'Stay in a state of grace and receive the Eucharist as often as you can. It's God's will for you!'

### Andrew's Testimony

Andrew's story shows us how Jesus draws hearts to Himself, especially through the Eucharist. His love for the Eucharist is a powerful witness to Christ's real presence in Holy *Qurbana*. As St Ignatius of Antioch wrote, 'Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.'

Andrew is a first year college student in University of Houston where he majors in Political Science with his goal to become a lawyer. He attends daily Holy Mass on all possible days on campus (<https://uhcatholic.org>) and attends Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* on possible Sundays in Houston.

Let's pray that Andrew, and us all, continue to grow closer to Jesus in the Eucharist, the source and summit of our faith.

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

# Medjugorje: A Mission of Reconciliation and Peace



**Dr Sunnichan V George** writes about the Marian pilgrimage site, Medjugorje, and his own visit there in September 2024.

Medjugorje stands as a beacon of peace and reconciliation, a sanctuary where countless souls find healing and grace. Nestled quietly in the hills of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Medjugorje, transformed from a quiet agricultural community to a global pilgrimage site after the Blessed Mother reportedly appeared to six children in 1981. Despite the flow of pilgrims, the village retains its serene charm, rooted in faith, simplicity, and deep hospitality. Locals, many of whom still farm and live by traditional practices, warmly welcome visitors. With

its unhurried pace, humble landscape, and heartfelt hospitality, Medjugorje is a sacred refuge, leaving a lasting spiritual impact on all who come.

Since 2016, I've been blessed to visit Medjugorje seven times, each pilgrimage deepening my spiritual journey beyond words. In October 2016, I received an invitation from the founders of Praying for the Wounded Humanity to attend a conference with global participants, including Fr Charbel Prasad, Paul Emil Johnson and myself. Renowned spiritual leaders like Vassula Ryden and Medjugorje seers also attended. This



Pilgrims from Kerala, India, 'Auspice Maria' group, united in faith in Medjugorje.

event was a profound reminder of the power of faith and unity in addressing the world's deepest needs.

#### What Our Lady wants to tell the World

The central message of Medjugorje has consistently emphasised reconciliation: with God, with others, and within ourselves. The messages from Our Lady of Medjugorje, as conveyed through the visionaries, emphasise several core themes that she wishes to communicate to the world. Here are the key themes:

1. **Pray:** Daily prayer, especially the Rosary, to strengthen faith and

connect with Jesus.

2. **Peace:** Promoting peace through love, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
3. **Fasting and Penance:** Spiritual growth through sacrifices and humility.
4. **Conversion:** Continuous turning from sin to deepen faith.
5. **Family and Community:** Building strong, prayerful families and supportive communities.
6. **Witnessing Faith:** Living out love, compassion, and service.
7. **Hope and Trust:** Confidence in God's care amid struggles.
8. **Preparation:** Spiritual readiness for future challenges.

#### Apparition Hill: Encountering the Sacred in Medjugorje

Apparition Hill, where the Blessed Mother appeared to six children in 1981 with a message of peace, prayer, and conversion, has become a revered pilgrimage site.

Pilgrims climb the rocky path, pausing at each mystery of the Rosary, feeling the hill's sacred atmosphere. At the first apparition site, marked by a statue of the Blessed Mother, we also felt peace, healing, and spiritual clarity. Apparition Hill's humble simplicity resonates deeply, inspiring us to embrace compassion, forgiveness, and peace, carrying Our Lady's message of love back into our lives.

Walking up the rocky path of Apparition Hill is a journey in itself,



where each step feels charged with the devotion of those who have come before. Pilgrims pause at each mystery of the Rosary, praying and reflecting on the life of Christ and the powerful messages given by Our Lady. As one climbs higher, the air thickens with reverence and expectation. The hill's silence – interrupted only by the whispers of prayer and the occasional song of faith – create an environment where pilgrims feel they are in the presence of something divine, a threshold between Heaven and Earth.

#### **The Five Stones of Medjugorje: Pathways to Spiritual Strength and Peace**

Our Lady of Medjugorje has given the

faithful five essential 'stones' for a stronger spiritual life, modelled after the stones David used to defeat Goliath. These simple, powerful practices offer a path to overcoming life's challenges and deepening our relationship with God.

#### **1. Prayer with the Heart**

Heartfelt prayer, especially the Rosary, is key. Our Lady urges sincere, daily conversation with God, making prayer a journey of faith and peace.

#### **2. Fasting**

Practising fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays as Our Lady recommends, frees us from material attachments, fostering humility and compassion.

#### **3. Daily Bible Reading**

Reading Scripture invites God's wisdom into our lives, helping us grow in faith and align with His guidance.

#### **4. Monthly Confession**

Regular confession brings healing and peace, renewing our spirit and strengthening our resolve to live faithfully.

#### **5. The Eucharist**

The Eucharist, as the heart of Christian life, nourishes and empowers us. Participating in Mass deepens our bond with Christ and the Church.

#### **The Grace-Filled Stations of the Cross in Medjugorje**

The Stations of the Cross in Medjugorje is a deeply moving spiritual journey, following the path of Jesus' suffering, death, and ultimate victory over sin.

A powerful story of devotion and sacrifice occurred at the 13th Station – where Jesus is taken down from the cross. In the year 2000, a Croatian priest named Fr Slavko Barbarić, a beloved spiritual leader who had dedicated his life to guiding pilgrims in Medjugorje, died at this station while leading a group in prayer. Fr Slavko was known for his deep spirituality, humility, and unwavering dedication to Our Lady's mission. His passing at the 13th Station, as he meditated on Christ's suffering and compassion, was a moment marked by grace, leaving a lasting impression on Medjugorje's pilgrimage tradition.

#### **The Blue Cross in Medjugorje: A Place of Grace and Healing**

The Blue Cross, a sacred site at the base

of Apparition Hill in Medjugorje, is where pilgrims gather for prayer, seeking grace, healing, and connection with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Visionaries, notably Ivan Dragicevic, often experienced apparitions there, drawing pilgrims seeking peace and spiritual renewal.

The history of the Blue Cross began in the early days of the Medjugorje apparitions in the 1980s. As word spread that the Virgin Mary was appearing to six young visionaries, people from all over came to Apparition Hill, seeking to witness the apparitions and to receive Our Lady's messages. However, during the Communist era, religious gatherings were restricted, and the authorities often attempted to prevent the visionaries and their followers from climbing the hill. To avoid confrontation and ensure a safe space for prayer, the visionaries began meeting in the secluded spot at the base of Apparition Hill, where Mary continued to appear to them.

#### **The Role of Franciscans in Shaping and Nurturing Spirituality in Medjugorje**

The Franciscan order has been central to Medjugorje's spiritual life, fostering faith, community, and devotion among locals and pilgrims alike. The Franciscan friars provide daily Mass, confession, and prayer services, creating a welcoming atmosphere for pilgrims. Their pastoral care emphasises prayer, humility, and the messages of peace and reconciliation, inspiring locals and visitors to deepen their faith.

#### **St James Church: Heart of Medjugorje**

Built in 1897 and dedicated to St James the Apostle, patron of pilgrims, St James Church embodies the rich spiritual life of the region. The church hosts daily Mass, confession, and prayer services, welcoming people from diverse backgrounds in unity and reverence. Adjacent to the church, the Adoration Chapel provides a serene space for reflection before the Blessed Sacrament.

#### **The Ten Secrets**

The 'Ten Secrets' of Medjugorje are a series of messages allegedly given by the Virgin Mary to the visionaries, relating to future events and spiritual guidance. Key

points about the secrets include:

1. **Nature:** Significant future events, possibly prophetic, to be revealed at the right time.
2. **Call to Prayer and Conversion:** A divine invitation for humanity to return to God through prayer and penance.
3. **Warning and Hope:** Reminders of sin's consequences and the mercy of God.
4. **Preparation:** Guidance on preparing spiritually for coming events.
5. **Church's Role:** The Church will support and guide believers in understanding the secrets.
6. **Timing:** Secrets will be revealed in a sequence known only to God.
7. **Message of Love and Unity:** The secrets emphasise love, unity, and a world founded on peace.

Three visionaries (Mirjana, Ivanka, and Jakov) have received all ten secrets, while the others have received some but not all. The secrets will be revealed in God's timing.

#### The Rise of Vocations to the Priesthood in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina

Following the traumatic conflicts of the 20th century, particularly World War II and the Bosnian War, Bosnia and Herzegovina has seen a remarkable rise in priestly vocations. This resurgence is rooted in a deepened collective faith, inspired by the legacy of martyrs, and a shared desire for healing and spiritual leadership.

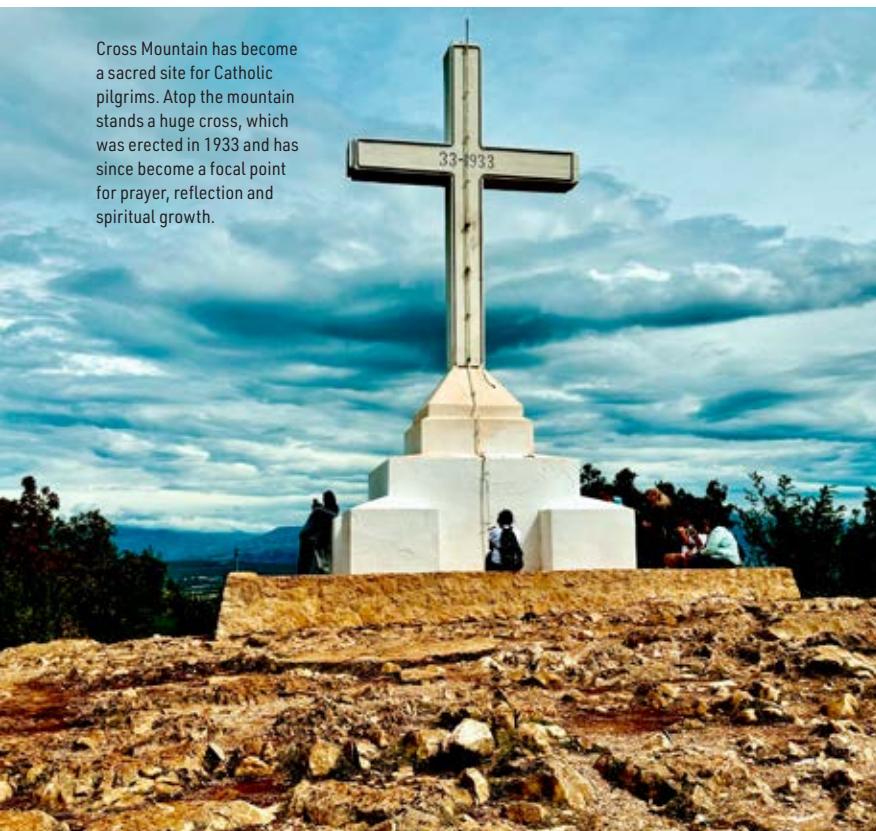
The sacrifices of Franciscans and other clergy who gave their lives became a powerful inspiration, encouraging young people to embrace religious vocations. Families, honouring this legacy, often support their children's calling to the priesthood as both a spiritual path and a means of contributing to the renewal of their communities. Many future priests were seen as 'gifts from God,' with families believing that God had deposited these vocations in the hearts of their sons from a young age. The phrase 'deposited in the womb of mothers by God' reflects a deep conviction among families that God had a plan for their children, calling them to serve as spiritual leaders in a time when their communities needed them most.

The Risen Christ statue is a majestic bronze sculpture depicting Jesus Christ rising from the cross, symbolising hope, redemption, and the triumph of life over death.



In the year 2000, a Croatian priest named Fr Slavko Barbarić, a beloved spiritual leader who had dedicated his life to guiding pilgrims in Medjugorje, died at this station while leading a group in prayer. Fr Slavko was known for his deep spirituality, humility, and unwavering dedication to Our Lady's mission.

Cross Mountain has become a sacred site for Catholic pilgrims. Atop the mountain stands a huge cross, which was erected in 1933 and has since become a focal point for prayer, reflection and spiritual growth.



### Medjugorje: The Confessional of the World

Medjugorje has become renowned not only as a pilgrimage site but also as what many refer to as the 'Confessional of the World.' This title reflects the profound spiritual impact that the sacrament of reconciliation, or confession, has had on countless pilgrims who visit this small village in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The essence of Medjugorje as a confessional lies in its atmosphere of peace, prayer, and healing. Many people who come to Medjugorje seek spiritual renewal and the opportunity to confess their sins, receive God's mercy, and experience profound forgiveness.

For many pilgrims, the experience of confession in Medjugorje is life-changing. They often recount feelings of relief, liberation, and renewed faith after confessing their sins. The combination of prayer, the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary through the apparitions, and the sacrament of reconciliation creates a powerful spiritual atmosphere that encourages deep healing and conversion.

### Vatican and Medjugorje

The Vatican's stance on Medjugorje has gradually evolved since the reported apparitions began in 1981. Key points include:

- Initial Caution:** In the early years, the Vatican urged caution, as investigations were ongoing.
- Pilgrimage Site:** While not formally approving the apparitions, the Vatican acknowledged Medjugorje as a significant pilgrimage site with positive spiritual impact.
- Investigations:** A Vatican commission led by Cardinal Ruini reviewed the apparitions, submitting findings in 2014.
- Pope Francis' Remarks:** Pope Francis has recognised the site's spiritual value, encouraging pastoral care for pilgrims.
- Pastoral Care Approval:** In 2019, the Vatican allowed local bishops to oversee pastoral activities in Medjugorje.
- Spiritual Fruits:** The Vatican acknowledges the conversions and

renewed faith experienced by pilgrims visiting Medjugorje.

### Our Medjugorje Pilgrimage: 6-12 September 2024

Our journey to Medjugorje was a powerful experience of faith and unity. A group of 83 pilgrims from Kerala, India, including five priests, spent seven months preparing spiritually, offering 20,000 Rosaries to seek Our Lady's intercession.

### Climbing Apparition Hill and the Cross Mountain

One highlight was our ascent of Apparition Hill and the Stations of the Cross Mountain. Despite physical challenges, even our elderly members climbed with inspiring devotion, drawn by faith. At the summit, we reflected on the profound presence of Our Lady, feeling connected to all pilgrims who seek prayer and healing there.

### Moments of Prayer and Community

Daily Mass, Rosary, Adoration, and personal reflection deepened our bonds. Guided by our priests, we grew in understanding of Our Lady's messages and experienced peace, particularly through reconciliation. As we shared our reflections, each of us felt strengthened by the community and inspired to continue our journey with God's grace.

On September 8, while celebrating our Lady's birthday, our preparation culminated with the offering of the 20,001 Rosary during a candlelight procession. Walking together with candles symbolising our faith, we prayed and sang in unison, creating a powerful moment of communal prayer. The flickering light illuminated our path, enhancing the sacred atmosphere and deepening our connection to Our Lady and one another.

Dr Sunnian V George is a distinguished professor of food technology at Amal Jyothi College of Engineering, Kanjirapally, India. A devout Marian pilgrim, he regularly leads spiritual journeys to revered sites such as Medjugorje and Guadalupe. Dr George is married to Dr Mini Mathew, and they have four children.

UP CLOSE

# Listening to the Movement





## **Jesus Youth International Coordinator Dr Midhun Paul shares his thoughts about the movement's new initiative on listening.**

### **What does 'listening to the movement' mean?**

'Listening to the Movement' is an initiative that allows the Jesus Youth community to reflect deeply on its identity, values, and purpose. This journey involves spiritual conversations at various levels, encouraging members to listen to each other with open hearts and minds, tuning in to the Holy Spirit's guidance. It's about creating an environment where each voice is valued, allowing us to discern collectively where God is leading the movement. The process follows a phased approach – awareness, spiritual conversation, and consolidation – emphasising unity and renewal through attentive listening.

### **How can we bring about changes around us by listening – both at the grassroots level within the movement and on an individual level outside?**

At the grassroots level, listening strengthens relationships by fostering trust, empathy, and shared understanding within our movement. When members feel heard, they are more committed to shared goals and open to transformative growth. This, in turn, builds a strong foundation for a culture of mutual support and accountability. After each spiritual conversation, there's a phase of discernment and consolidation. This step helps each local group gain clarity on how the movement can move forward within their unique context, addressing specific needs and challenges. Through this, grassroots realities can actively shape

the future path of Jesus Youth in their movement.

On an individual level, listening enables us to respond more compassionately to the needs and aspirations of those outside the movement. By being attentive to others' experiences and challenges, we can actively participate in God's work around us, offering practical support, spiritual encouragement, and fostering a sense of belonging in our movement. On an individual level, we encourage each person to take time for prayer and reflection before participating in these conversations, grounding themselves spiritually. Additionally, the recent October month of prayer was an initiative aimed at fostering personal renewal within the movement. Through these practices, individuals not only engage deeply in the process but also experience spiritual regeneration, empowering them to be transformative influences in their families, movement, and workplaces.

### **As a movement at the service of the Church, how can we listen to the Universal Church?**

Listening to the Universal Church means aligning with the Church's mission and priorities. Recently, during the Synod, one of our Jesus Youth animators, Matthew Thomas, along with Bishop Alex, introduced *Listening to the Movement* to Pope Francis and other Church leaders, including cardinals and bishops. Their enthusiastic response to this initiative has been incredible, reinforcing the value of

this journey. To further this connection, we are currently releasing videos with messages from various cardinals and bishops, expressing their encouragement and support for this initiative.

Through *Listening to the Movement*, we are not only enriching our community but also participating in a central process alongside the Church. This journey deepens our relationship with the Universal Church, helping us stay rooted in the Church's mission while engaging in a shared journey of discernment.

**On a personal level and as JY International Coordinator, please can you share how listening has affected your life?**

Embarking on this journey of listening has profoundly impacted me, both personally and in my role as International Coordinator. This process has given me greater clarity on how beautifully the Holy Spirit is leading our movement. During the preparation phase, I experienced a deep sense of purpose and connection, realising fully the need for everyone's voice to be heard and valued.

In the spiritual conversations, listening to different people's experiences has revealed the unique beauty of our movement and the importance of each person's participation. Witnessing this has reinforced my appreciation for our community and the invaluable role of attentive listening in strengthening our bonds. This clarity has enriched my understanding of Jesus Youth and its mission, helping me lead with greater insight and openness to the Spirit's guidance.

**What is your message to Jesus Youth members – youth and young families – regarding 'listening'?**

To all Jesus Youth members, especially young people and families, I encourage you to embrace listening as a path to personal and communal transformation. Listening is not passive; it's a powerful, active engagement that opens us to God's love and wisdom.

**Having experienced the Church and faith on a global level, what are your observations on faith, mission and vocations?**

**A key challenge lies in providing a deeply personal experience of Christ to every young person – a transformative encounter that goes beyond classroom learning. Youth ministry and movements must focus on four essential pillars: encounter, community, continuous formation, and mission. By addressing these dimensions, we can nurture the next generation of disciples and sustain the Church's mission globally.**

Faith among youth varies globally, but there is immense hope as I have witnessed many young people with a solid commitment to faith, actively participating in sacraments, prayer, and studying the Church's teachings. In almost every country I visit, there are groups of youth who are deeply serious about their faith, and when committed, they pursue it wholeheartedly. Vocations, too, remain a vibrant aspect, as seen in events like the JAGO Conference in India, where countless youth prayed fervently for vocations and engaged in adoration, and in religious orders I continue to see a positive response. However, a key challenge lies in providing a deeply personal experience of Christ to every young person – a transformative encounter that goes beyond classroom learning. Youth ministry and movements must focus on four essential pillars: encounter, community, continuous formation, and mission. By addressing these dimensions, we can nurture the next generation of disciples and sustain the Church's mission globally.

**If you could teach three things to every JY, based on your experiences as Intl Coordinator, what would they be?**

**Deep Personal Encounter with Christ:** the foundation of our faith is a personal relationship with Christ. Every JY should strive to encounter Him deeply, through prayer, sacraments, and Scripture,

allowing His presence to transform their lives. This encounter fuels everything we do as disciples.

**Commitment to Mission:** The call to evangelisation is not optional but central to our identity. I would encourage every JY to embrace their unique missionary calling, living as witnesses of Christ in their daily lives and stepping out to share the Good News, especially with those who are distant from faith.

**Life in Community:** Faith grows and sustains itself in fellowship. Being part of a Christ-centred community like Jesus Youth fosters accountability, encouragement, and growth. I would emphasise the importance of journeying together, supporting one another, and continuously being formed in faith and leadership within the movement.

**Lastly, please share about yourself and family.**

I am Midhun Paul, married to Bitty, who works at Windfall Productions in Koratty and is an active Jesus Youth. We are blessed with two wonderful children: Jessica, who is in 7th, and Jerome, who is in 2nd. My family also includes my father, mother, and two younger brothers. One of my brothers is a marine officer, and the other resides in Australia after completing his doctorate studies.

VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 49

KAIROS

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JUBILEE PAGES

# JUBILEE 2025

The word 'Jubilee' derives from the Hebrew *jobel*, a ram's horn blown to proclaim the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This Jewish holiday occurs every year, but it takes on special significance when it marks the beginning of a Jubilee year.

We can find an early indication of it in the Bible: a Jubilee year was to be marked every 50 years since this would be an 'extra' year, one which would happen every seven weeks of seven years, i.e., every 49 years (Leviticus 25:8-13). Even though it wasn't easy to organise, it was intended to be marked as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, one another, and all of creation. It involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields.

In 1300, Pope Boniface VIII called the first Jubilee, also known as a 'Holy Year,' since it is a time in which God's holiness transforms us. The frequency of Holy Years has changed over time: at first, they were celebrated every 100 years; later, in 1343 Pope Clement VI reduced the gap between Jubilees to every 50 years, and in 1470 Pope Paul II made it every 25 years. There have also been 'extraordinary' Holy Years: for example, in 1933 Pope Pius XI chose to commemorate the 1900th anniversary of the Redemption, and in 2015 Pope Francis proclaimed the Year of Mercy as an extraordinary jubilee.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE

The Jubilee calls for us to set out on a journey and to cross boundaries. When we travel, we not only change places physically, but we also change ourselves.

The word 'pilgrimage' comes from the Latin *per ager*, meaning 'across the fields,' or perhaps from *per eger* meaning 'border crossing': both possible origins point to the distinctive aspect of undertaking a journey.

In the Bible, Abraham is described as a person on a journey: *Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house* (Genesis 12:1). With these words Abraham begins his adventure, which ends in the Promised Land, where he is remembered as a 'wandering Aramean' (Deuteronomy 26:5). Jesus' ministry can also be seen as a journey, from Galilee to the Holy City of Jerusalem ... *As the time drew near when Jesus would be taken up to heaven, he made up his mind and set out on his way to Jerusalem.* (Luke 9:51). Christ Himself calls His disciples to walk this road, and even today Christians are those who follow Him and set out after Him.

Pilgrimage is an experience of conversion, of transforming one's very being to conform it to the holiness of God. During the pilgrimage, one also shares in the experience of those who, for various reasons, are forced to leave their homelands to seek a better life for themselves and their family.

## HOLY DOOR

From a symbolic viewpoint, the Holy Door takes on a special significance: it is the most powerful sign of the Jubilee, since the ultimate aim of the pilgrim is to pass through it. The opening of the door by the Pope constitutes the official beginning of the Holy Year. Originally, there was only one door, at the Basilica of St John Lateran, which is the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome. Later, to allow as

many pilgrims as possible to take part in the Jubilee experience, the other Roman Basilicas also opened their own holy doors.

In crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, the pilgrim is reminded of the passage from chapter 10 of St John's gospel: *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* Passing through the Holy Door expresses the decision to follow and be guided by Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd.

In Rome, this experience takes on a special significance because of the special links between the Eternal City and Saints Peter and Paul, the apostles who founded the Christian community in Rome and whose teachings and example are models for the Universal Church

## RECONCILIATION

A Jubilee year is a sign of reconciliation because it establishes a *favourable time* (2 Corinthians 6:2) for conversion. We are called to put God at the centre of our lives, growing toward Him and acknowledging His primacy. If God is the creator of the universe, He must be given priority over every reality and partisan interest. It is God who makes this year holy by bestowing on us His own holiness.

In practical terms, reconciliation involves receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation, taking advantage of this time to rediscover the value of confession, and experiencing God's personal words of forgiveness.

## PRAYER

There are many reasons and ways to pray, but at the root of prayer is always the desire to be open to God's presence and

Starting with this issue, for the rest of this year, Kairos Global will feature articles and info about the Jubilee Year 2025.



His offer of love. It is the Spirit of the Son that calls the Christian community to prayer and allows for each person to return to the Father.

The prayer opportunities on the journey show that the pilgrim holds the path to God *in his heart* (Psalm 83:6). Refreshment is also provided by the various stops and opportunities for rest along the way, which are often organised around shrines, sanctuaries, and other places filled with spiritual significance, where one realises that – before us and alongside us – other pilgrims have also passed along and travelled those same roads.

#### LITURGY

The liturgy is the public prayer of the Church. At the centre of Christian liturgy is the Mass – the Eucharistic celebration, where the Body and Blood of Christ are truly received. As a pilgrim, Christ Himself walks alongside the disciples and reveals to them the mysteries of the Father, so that they too can say, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, *Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.* (Luke 24:29).

#### PROFESSION OF FAITH

The Profession of Faith – also known as the ‘Symbol’ – is a sign of the identity of the baptised person. The Profession of Faith expresses the central content of the faith: it succinctly captures the main truths that a believer accepts and witnesses to on the day of his or her baptism and shares with the entire Christian community for the rest of his or her life.

Traditionally, however, there are two that have gained special recognition

in the Church: the Baptismal Creed of the Church of Rome and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. ‘To say the Creed with faith is to enter into communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and also with the whole Church which transmits the faith to us and in whose midst, we believe’ (CCC 197).

#### INDULGENCES

The Jubilee indulgence is a concrete manifestation of God’s mercy, which goes beyond and transforms the boundaries of human justice. The Jubilee indulgence allows us to free our hearts from the weight of sin because the reparation due for our sins is given freely and abundantly.

In practical terms, the experience of God’s mercy involves some spiritual acts indicated by the Pope. Those who cannot make the Jubilee pilgrimage due to illness or other circumstances are nonetheless invited to take part in the spiritual movement that accompanies the Jubilee year, offering up the sufferings of their daily lives, and participating in the Eucharistic celebration. ■



#### THE JUBILEE PRAYER

Father in heaven,  
may the *faith* you have given us  
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,  
and the flame of *charity* enkindled  
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,  
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*  
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us  
into tireless cultivators of the  
seeds of the Gospel.  
May those seeds transform from  
within both humanity and the whole  
cosmos in the sure expectation  
of a new heaven and a new earth, when,  
with the powers of evil vanquished,  
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee  
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,  
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread  
the joy and peace of our Redeemer  
throughout the earth.  
To you our God, eternally blessed,  
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen



# Listening to our hearts and listening to Christ

Bro Anthony Kunnumpurath invites us to trust in our hearts as we listen to its promptings, which leads us to listen to and trust Jesus.

These past two years, the word buzzing around the Catholic Church seems to be 'listening'. In the Synthesis Report of the First Session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023, 'A Synodal Church in Mission,' we read an entire section on listening and how the attitude of listening is essential to who we are as a Church.<sup>1</sup> Recently, it has been beautiful to see how Jesus Youth has responded to this call to listen. We have seen videos of bishops, cardinals, and the Holy Father, who have shown us their loving encouragement as we embark on this listening journey.

Our journey to listen to others first begins with our ability to listen to ourselves and Christ. Often, it can seem like we are moving from one event to the next, one meeting to the next, or from planning one activity to thinking about the next big thing! These are valuable and ever-fruitful efforts, but it may also be

worthwhile to ask ourselves why we put everything aside and follow Christ? What leads us to go forward?

## Listening to our Heart

In his latest encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*, on the human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus Christ, Pope Francis describes the heart as 'the locus of sincerity where deceit and disguise have no place.'<sup>2</sup> When we come before the Lord, we are called to come with our heart, the place of sincerity. When we come before the Lord with our hearts, we do not come as the ideal of who we are but rather from a place of sincerity. We see our heart as it is, with no disguise. As we listen to our hearts, we listen to our struggles, challenges, joys, hopes, dreams, and many more, along with the emotions accompanying them. But it is this very sincerity of the heart that we are called to listen to and recognise. This awareness is not for condemnation but

for resurrection. In all our challenges and disappointments, hopes and dreams, Christ longs to be with us. He wants to be part of our life in all its joys and all its mess. Only by listening to our heart, can we seek to understand the beauty of the Risen Lord, who is eager to meet us in our sincerity.

## Listening to Christ through Silence

In Ignatian spirituality, a key theme often used is 'Be aware, understand, and take action.' St Ignatius of Loyola trained himself in this threefold paradigm, which became part of his famous 'Rules of Discernment.'<sup>3</sup> To be aware of what is going on in our hearts, to understand where our hearts are, and to listen to our hearts requires stillness. It is also in the silence that we hear the voice of Christ.

The point of silence is not just to calm my mind or understand my emotions; silence allows me to listen to something

beyond myself. The Taizé community in France, where silence is an integral part of their prayer, writes on the value of silence: 'Silence means leaving to God what is beyond my reach and capacity.'<sup>4</sup> It is true in silence, we can listen to our heart, our emotions, and our desires, but silence is also saying there is more to my heart than what I can listen to; silence is saying this is what is going on in me, but there is something more beyond my understanding. It is in this silence that

we listen to God. Br Emile of the Taizé community, in his explanation of silence to little children, would say, 'Silence is not about you not saying anything, but acknowledging that God has something more to say to you.' When we allow silence and create spaces for silence, we acknowledge that God has something to say to us, that I am here to listen to God. The story of Prophet Samuel is a beautiful example of how in times of confusion or lack of understanding, our best response

can be to come before the Lord and say, *Speak Lord, thy servant is listening* (1 Samuel 3:10).

### **The Fruit of Listening – Trust!**

This beautiful exercise of coming before the Lord with our hearts as they are, listening to our hearts and bringing them to Christ, but at the same time acknowledging there are things beyond my understanding and capacity, thus allowing me to listen to Christ, can bring



tangible fruits to our everyday life. One such simple gift of listening to our hearts and listening to Christ is trust.<sup>5</sup> When we come in silence to listen to our hearts – are we not saying, I trust what's going on inside me? I trust that these are my hopes and dreams; I trust that these are my challenges and disappointments. The very awareness of listening to our hearts allows us to trust ourselves. What does trusting ourselves do, then? The next time we experience disappointment, the next time our dreams inspire us, we realise they are not to be dismissed but rather trusted as something real that is happening within us. How often do we not trust ourselves and what's within our hearts?

As we come to trust ourselves by listening to our heart, so also we come to trust the Lord as we listen to Him. As I come before the Lord with my emotions, desires, and thoughts – sometimes beyond my understanding – and say, Lord, I come to listen to you, are we not showing how much we trust the Lord? By simply acknowledging that we want to listen to the Risen Lord, we are saying I trust you, Lord, that you have something to say to me. Does not this trust open our hearts to faith? For faith is *the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1). By listening to Christ, we do not know whether Christ will speak or not, but we dare to listen to Him in the assurance that He has something to say to us. Is this not faith? Listening to Christ brings us to trust Christ. By acknowledging or desiring that Christ has something to say to us, we trust in this relationship with the Risen Lord. This relationship of trust from listening to Christ now brings an 'assurance of things hoped for' and a 'conviction of things not seen' – Faith.

### Listening Leads us to Mission

Listening to our hearts and listening to Christ is not an end, for listening leads to action. Even if that action is to trust ourselves or trust Christ, that act of trust is an action we take. As St Ignatius of Loyola describes in his Rules of Discernment, awareness, and understanding are not an end in themselves but lead to action. We can see an analogy in the relationship between

listening and action to the beautiful relationship between prayer and mission. We can compare this relationship to a figure of 8.<sup>6</sup>

Our encounter with God happens at the centre of the figure of 8, where God comes to us, and we listen to Him. This meeting point of Christ that happens in listening often sparks us to our mission. Our life in discipleship can begin in prayer, where we receive the inspiration for our mission. However, it doesn't end in a mission; rather, we are called to listen again to the Lord in prayer. Listening is this constant attitude of seeking the Lord wherever we are. In listening, we say it is not I, Lord, but you are leading me.

Our life in Christ is this constant journeying between prayer and mission like this figure of 8. Listening allows us to encounter God in our missionary journey. We receive the inspiration for our mission by listening in prayer, and we seek constant guidance in our mission by listening. Listening to our hearts allows us to realise the profound trust within ourselves. It is this trust to listen to that leads us to listen to Christ, which brings about faith. And our response to this faith leads us to our mission. ■

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Anthony Kunnumpurath is a seminarian studying for priesthood for the St Thomas Syro-Malabar Earchy of Chicago, USA and Jesus Youth.

## TAKEAWAY

### Listening to our Heart

As we listen to our hearts, we listen to our struggles, challenges, joys, hopes, dreams, and many more, along with the emotions accompanying them. But it is this very sincerity of the heart that we are called to listen to and recognise.

### Listening to Christ through Silence

Br. Emile of the Taizé community, in his explanation of silence to little children, would say, 'Silence is not about you not saying anything, but acknowledging that God has something more to say to you.'

### Fruit of Listening – Trust

The very awareness of listening to our hearts allows us to trust ourselves. What does trusting ourselves do, then? The next time we experience disappointment, the next time our dreams inspire us, we realise they are not to be dismissed but rather trusted as something real that is happening within us.

### Listening leads us to Mission

Listening allows us to encounter God in our missionary journey. We receive the inspiration for our mission by listening in prayer, and we seek constant guidance in our mission by listening.



# CULTIVATING HEARTS THAT LISTEN

Are we people who listen and respond to the voice of God? **Jilu Chengat** shows us how we can.

**I** didn't hear you call my name!" This phrase, uttered by countless children to exasperated parents all over the world, remains timeless. Is it that they didn't hear or simply didn't want to listen?

The challenge of listening – the kind of hearing that results in an appropriate response, whether through words or actions – transcends age, language, and culture. In this article, we will explore some challenges of listening and learn how to cultivate listening hearts by

clearing blocks, clarifying confusions, and responding with joyful obedience.

#### **The Proverbial Wax That Blocks Our Ears**

Imagine being at a concert, wedding reception, or airport where there's so much going on that it's hard to hear the person next to you. In those cases, only changing the environment – or, at the very least, making eye contact and lip reading – will help you understand what's being communicated.



What does that look like in the context of hearing God? What kind of background noises are preventing you from hearing God's voice? Are they voices of urgency or inadequacy? Or perhaps the voices are harsh and negative and remind you of your sin and unworthiness. The effects of sin and encouraging these voices end up pulling us away from God and our ability to listen to Him.

When we feel unable to hear God, one of the best remedies is to come before Him in the Blessed Sacrament or receive the graces of confession or Holy Mass. These moments allow us to step away for a moment. The graces received strip away the noise and make space for God, who persistently calls our name.

#### Is It You, Lord?

But what happens when we come before Him and are unsure if it is actually God speaking to us? Take, for example, the young prophet Samuel, who heard

God calling his name. At first, Samuel didn't know it was God and woke up Eli, his trusted elder. Initially, Eli didn't realise what was happening. But once he understood, he guided Samuel to a posture of receptivity, teaching him to respond: *Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening* (1 Samuel 3:1-10).

This offers a beautiful model for clarifying confusion. We must remain faithful, persevering in prayer, and returning to the voice of God in our hearts. Often, we attempt to navigate confusions alone, leading us backward into an echo chamber that amplifies the cacophony of voices and blocks God's voice. Naturally, many of us struggle with self-reliance from previous relationships, wounds and broken trust. Prudently done, vulnerability and humility in sharing confusions with trusted elders, friends, or a spiritual director can help to lead us out of this echo chamber and into great freedom! Here, we may not fully

understand what is being asked of us, like young Samuel, but leaning on the confidence of what has been revealed to us, we can make a prayer of surrender and receptivity before the Lord.

#### A Joyful Response

How is it that even after hearing God's voice, there can still be challenges to listening?

Let's return to the child who claimed not to hear his name being called. It's unlikely he didn't hear his parents, but rather, the importance of the parent's request paled in comparison to his current activity – TV, a game, a book, or something equally attention-grabbing. This child listened passively, unconsciously ignoring the call before him. Are we so different?

This tale as old as time goes back to the original story of Adam and Eve. The sin of pride, subtle yet sinister, ensnared Eve in the Garden of Eden when she

At first, Samuel didn't know it was God and woke up Eli, his trusted elder. Initially, Eli didn't realise what was happening. But once he understood, he guided Samuel to a posture of receptivity, teaching him to respond: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening

listened to the voice of the serpent and doubted God, ultimately leading to disobedience. It's no wonder that if Adam and Eve, who saw and heard God, doubted Him, we continue to doubt that His plan is the best for us.

Sadly, this great tragedy of being separated from God continues to play out when we don't understand the nature of God as a good, good Father who always desires to hear us. He doesn't reject our confusions – rather, He wants us to bring them to Him! He holds our doubts, our pain, our fears, and even anger. When we allow our listening to turn into a dialogue with Him, He gently separates the truth from the lies and invites us to respond in trust and freedom! Thus, when our monologue of questions are received and held by God with compassion, this wordless dialogue, where we are heard, seen and loved, leads us to action. We enter more deeply into a trusting relationship with God the Father and even amidst uncertainties can step forward in faith.

Mary, our Blessed Mother, engages in this dialogue beautifully. When the angel announced God's plan, she had doubts, asking, *How can this be?* (Luke 1:34). Though the angel offered very little clarity in his response, Mary's trust and confidence in God prompted her to say boldly, *Be it done unto me according to your word* (Luke 1:38). Similarly, the Prophet Samuel's lifetime of listening to God gave him the confidence to obey without hesitation when God directed him to anoint the unlikely young shepherd boy,

David, as king (1 Samuel 16:1-13). Do we have such confidence in acting on what God reveals to us?

### You, yes you!

It's easy to believe God's voice is reserved for the 'holy ones' like Mother Mary, the prophets, or those consecrated. Yet, every day, from before we were born, His voice, firm in truth and love, has called our names quietly and persistently. Once our ears are attuned to the voice of the Lord, we can't help but hear Him in everyone and everything! As we grow in listening, we are able to engage in dialogue with God and the world, listening without judgment and responding without misplaced anger or fear. Just as God has done for us, we are able to hold the truth and needs of our families, loved ones, and even our enemies and feel compelled to respond. Thus, by turning to God, faithfully listening and joyfully responding, our lives become transformed!

It is you that he longs to speak to! Will you respond with, 'Speak Lord, for your servant is listening?' ■

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Jilu Chengat is a wife and mother of four children, living in Massachusetts, USA. In addition to hybrid-homeschooling and managing her home, she writes and spends much of her time serving the Jesus Youth movement with a focus on spiritual advisement and accompanying young people to hear the voice of God in their lives.

## WORD OF THE YEAR

As we begin this year, here is a challenge for you to step into your baptismal identity as a prophet, one who listens and responds to the voice of God.

Take time to come into a place of quiet and prayer. Imagine the Lord before you. Come into His presence with the confidence that He wants to speak to you, even in the face of your sins and doubts. In your imagination, consider moving close enough to hear Him if He whispers. Ask Him to reveal a word that will bring truth, healing, and closeness in your relationship with Him. You may use Scripture to guide your prayer or simply wait in the silence for the Lord to reveal a word, image or memory. Be patient, remember that the Lord revealed Himself to the Prophet Elijah, not in a wind, storm or fire, but as a still small voice [1 King:19:12].

Once you have a word in your heart, return to it often in prayer over the course of the year. Ask the Lord to reveal the deeper meanings and purpose of this word. Trust that this is a Word that is truly alive. Don't be surprised if through this word, He calls your name and blesses you abundantly!





# Being True Listeners

**What does listening involve and what does it not? How can listening help one grow in faith? Dr Joseph Sebastian answers these questions.**

We often hear about 'Knock, Seek, and Ask' when it comes to seeking God, but the deeper meaning of seeking Him involves more than these actions – it's about listening to His voice and following His will.

Listening is more than simply hearing words; it's an essential part of communication, understanding, and spiritual growth. As Christians, we are called not only to speak but also to listen – both to God and to others. But what does true listening look like, and how can we cultivate it in our lives?

## Listening – The Dynamics

Listening goes beyond hearing; it's about engaging actively. It requires us to truly understand and respond in a way that shows comprehension. It's not just about sound, but about grasping the message and making the speaker feel heard. Listening involves both the mind and the heart.

The Bible offers many references that highlight the importance of listening. For example, in Mark 4:24, Jesus says, *Consider carefully what you hear*, while Proverbs 18:15 emphasises that attentive listening leads to wisdom: *The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.*

When we speak, we only share what we already know. It's through listening

that we expand our understanding beyond our own knowledge. Thus, it is crucial to be discerning and thoughtful listeners, exercising prudence and care. By listening with open hearts and minds, we foster deeper connections and a greater comprehension – not just of worldly matters, but also of God's will and the needs of others.

Additionally, Proverbs 18:13 warns us, *To answer before listening—that is folly and shame.* This scripture underscores the importance of fully understanding before responding, a key element of effective listening.

Julian Treasure, a sound expert and TED speaker, advocates for teaching listening in schools and offers a shortcut formula for active listening called **RASA**:

- Receive (pay attention),
- Appreciate (nod, smile, make eye contact),
- Summarise (repeat or reflect on what was said),
- Ask questions (clarify what was meant).

While hearing can often be a physical act, listening involves a deeper engagement: physical, psychological, and spiritual. True listening is a deliberate choice to focus on someone else's voice and message, paying attention to both verbal

and non-verbal cues. It means giving full attention, without distractions, and with an open heart. Listening isn't just about gathering information; it's about connecting with the speaker. James 1:19 advises, *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*. This highlights God's call for us to value others' thoughts and experiences, making true listening an active engagement with both God and our neighbours.

### True Listening: Active and Present

True listening is active, not passive. It requires presence, where your entire focus is on the speaker. This kind of listening promotes understanding and builds relationships. For example, in prayer, God calls us to listen for His still, small voice. In 1 Kings 19:12, Elijah hears God's voice not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper. This story teaches us that true listening often requires quieting our surroundings and inner noise to hear the subtle and profound messages God has for us.

Similarly, we are invited to listen to the needs and concerns of those around us with empathy and compassion.

### What Helps Us Listen?

Several factors can help us become better listeners. First, patience is key. In a fast-paced world, slowing down allows us to give others the time they need.

A person I know is a very fast mover and patient listening has always been tough for him. He would constantly interrupt his wife and children at home, his colleagues at work. He realised that his way of communicating with the people around him was leading to misunderstanding. Though a prayerful person, it took quite a long time to understand what was going wrong – it was his impatience. So, he decided to change his approach. Instead of jumping in with his own comments, he patiently waited for those talking with him to finish speaking. His patience made others feel heard and valued, which significantly improved the communication.

Second, empathy helps us listen with the heart, truly caring about what others are experiencing. Third, openness allows us to set aside our assumptions and be receptive to new ideas and perspectives. By

practising these qualities, we improve our ability to listen to both God and others.

### What Hampers Listening?

Conversely, several factors can hinder our ability to listen. Distractions are a significant barrier, whether caused by technology, noise, or our own busy thoughts. Prejudices and biases can lead us to dismiss others' words before truly hearing them. Impatience may cause us to interrupt or cut off conversations prematurely, preventing deeper understanding. Furthermore, a lack of emotional availability can make us disengaged, unable to listen with empathy and care.

### What Is Not Listening?

Not listening is when we fail to give our full attention. It's hearing without absorbing, responding without understanding, or even completely ignoring what is being communicated. Jesus teaches us to love our neighbours as ourselves (Matthew 22:39), and that includes listening to them with the same care and respect we would want for ourselves.

Zora Lazarov, a psychologist and corporate trainer, explains that a key trait of an effective leader is the ability to listen deeply and observe. In contrast, poor leaders often struggle with this skill. She outlines five traits of bad listeners and offers solutions to manage these behaviours:

#### 1. The Impatient Interrupter:

This person constantly interrupts conversations, making others feel undervalued and frustrated. A solution is to jot down key points to share later, practise active listening by nodding, maintaining eye contact, and allowing others to finish.

**2. The Critical Judge:** This person frequently judges or corrects others, leading to a tense, defensive environment. To address this, try asking clarifying questions to better understand their perspective, and reframe criticism as curiosity – e.g., instead of saying 'This is wrong,' try asking 'What's different about this?'

**3. The Response Cooker:** This person focuses more on preparing their own response than on listening to the



speaker. This leads to people feeling unheard, which can result in withdrawal or defensiveness. A solution is to ask open-ended questions and show genuine interest in understanding before offering your own input.

#### 4. The Clueless Cue-Reader:

This person misses emotional cues in conversations, making others feel misunderstood. To improve, observe body language, tone, and facial expressions, and listen to the emotions behind the words.

**5. The Distracted Mind:** This person allows external distractions, such as mobile phones, to interfere with listening, leading to missed information. A simple solution is to minimise distractions – keep your phone out of sight, silence notifications, and focus on the speaker.

### Listening Without Judgement

Listening is a multifaceted skill that



can deeply impact our relationships and spiritual growth. One form of listening is without judgement, which fosters an environment of healing and understanding. Ephesians 4:29 advises, *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* By practising non-judgemental listening, we create space for others to express themselves freely and find peace.

Another form of listening involves attentively hearing an idea and helping to bring it to life. This aligns with Proverbs 2:2, *Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding.* By actively engaging with and implementing insightful ideas, we honour the speaker and contribute to the realisation of their vision.

To conclude, listening is not merely about hearing words, it's an active,

empathetic, and responsive process that honours the speaker and enriches our interactions. As we grow in our faith, let us practise listening with our whole selves – mind, body, and spirit – so that we may reflect the heart of God in every conversation. By cultivating this practice, we deepen our connection with Him and with each other, living out His call to love and understand. **IK**

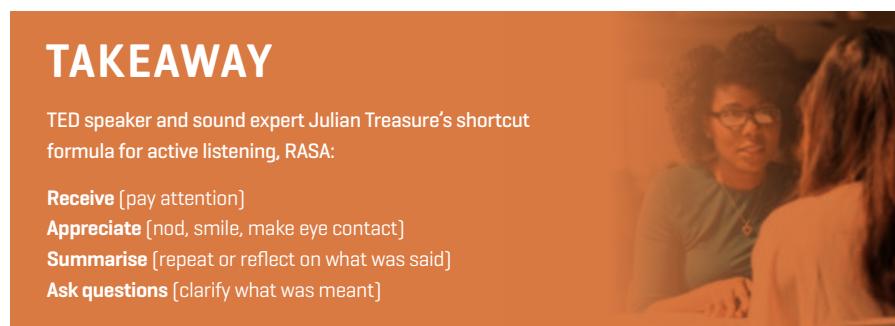
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Dr Joseph Sebastian is a professional social worker. He has been working with young people for more than three decades. He is presently Chief of Party for a US-based non profit based out of Delhi and Kerala, India. He is married to Darlin and they have two children.

## TAKEAWAY

TED speaker and sound expert Julian Treasure's shortcut formula for active listening, RASA:

- Receive** [pay attention]
- Appreciate** [nod, smile, make eye contact]
- Summarise** [repeat or reflect on what was said]
- Ask questions** [clarify what was meant]



## PARENTING

# Zoo in a Pew!

## Tips for Bringing Your Kids to Mass

**Fr Michael Weibley O.P.** shares wisdom with parents on how to get their little children to behave during Mass.



**H**ow do I get my kids to behave during Mass? It's a question that probably dates back to when that kid fell out of the window during Paul's homily (Acts 20:7-12) – you just know he was goofing off! As a priest I can honestly say that kids moving around, making noise (at least not too much!), and just being themselves doesn't bother me when I celebrate Mass. It's life! And life in a church is a sign of life in the Church! If you don't hear some noise at Mass it's likely that your parish is drifting into or has already arrived at something dormant at best, dead at worst. So here are some tips for bringing your kiddos to Mass!

Expectations for behaviour need to be geared to kids' developmental abilities. Depending on the age of the kid, a little bit of 'wigglyness' should be allowable.

Be more interested in your children knowing and loving Jesus than being perfectly still children at Mass. You want to form saints, not statues! Obviously, take your kids out if they're disruptive,

but you don't want them to hate Mass and punish them for being kids.

Your expectations should depend on their age. A seven-year-old who will be receiving his First Communion this year ought to be expected to fully participate and pay attention. Maybe he wants to be an altar server in the near future, so talk to him about how important that job is and encourage him to really pay attention to what they are doing. A five-year-old ought to basically be expected to be quiet, stay in her seat, and encouraged to participate. For those younger, expectations should be much lower.

Bribery is okay! I know families who bribe their children with a special treat after Mass when they behave well. Even if you don't think they were on their A game at Mass, if anyone around them comments positively on their behaviour, maybe that trumps mom or dad's opinion and earns an automatic treat at home!

But make sure you have consequences for bad behaviour too. Some parents have

told me that when their kiddos really act up at Mass, that every time they reprimand their child then they have to sit/stand/kneel at home (whatever they didn't do in Mass) a certain amount of minutes per infraction. I bet they get the lesson!

Make Sundays special for the whole family. If the whole day is special, and the specialness is focused upon Mass, then your children will begin to see that everything flows from their time in church. Celebrate the day with special treats and activities, but make sure that those treats and activities are always flowing forth from time in prayer together at Mass.

Put a lot of energy into positive reinforcement. Show your children that you love them and love to have them at Mass with you. Try to make it as positive an experience for them as you feel it is for you. Thank them for coming, tell them how happy it makes you feel to be able to bring them to God, as He gifted them to you. Hold hands with them, smile, give positive touches. Open the missal and hymnal and read and sing along with them, point out the bells and remind them of the miracle of the Eucharist, the really special part of Mass. God wants you to bring your children, He loves them as they are.

And above all, it's often just a matter of persistence. Just keep going back every week building good habits. Depending on the age of your kids, repetition and learning how to behave takes practise. Just seeing mom and dad on their knees in prayer in the pew each week is so important. It builds an expectation and a desire to follow in your footsteps. The more you go, the better they will get, and give yourself some grace. You made it to church!

And someday, when your kids are all grown up and you're sitting behind a small pack of really wriggly kids, don't forget to lean over and give those beleaguered parents a few words of encouragement!

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A Dominican priest, **Fr Michael Weibley** is the pastor and superior of SS. Philip & James Catholic Church, Baltimore, USA. He was ordained in 2016. He loves the Lord, baseball, good beer, a good book, and getting to know people through a good meal.

SPECIAL



# FESTIVE BOOK RELEASE

The Indian edition of Amoris Christi's book, *The Art of Listening to Young People* was released on 3 December 2024 in Bangalore, India. The first copy of the book was presented to Fr Rob Galea at his concert held at Redemptorist Grounds of the Holy Ghost Church, Bangalore.

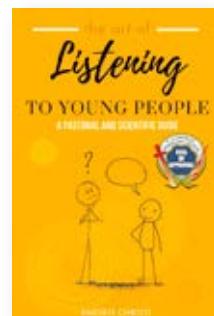
Fr Sandeep Menezes, Redemptorist priest and one of the main coordinators of the concert presented the first copy to Fr Rob Galea.

An extremely relevant resource for the present times, *The Art of Listening to Young People* encourages all who work with the young – parents, teachers, mentors, spiritual directors, or counsellors to be better listeners. The book is an excellent guide, offering everything needed to walk alongside

young people with empathy, skill, and faith. Combining pastoral wisdom and scientific research, the authors provide a holistic approach to understand and support young people.

Amoris Christi, a Florida-based affiliate of Jesus Youth, focuses on training Christian leaders through formation, research, and education. Its research team authored *The Art of Listening to Young People* with invaluable contributions from Dr Edward Edezhath, one of the pioneers of the Jesus Youth movement.

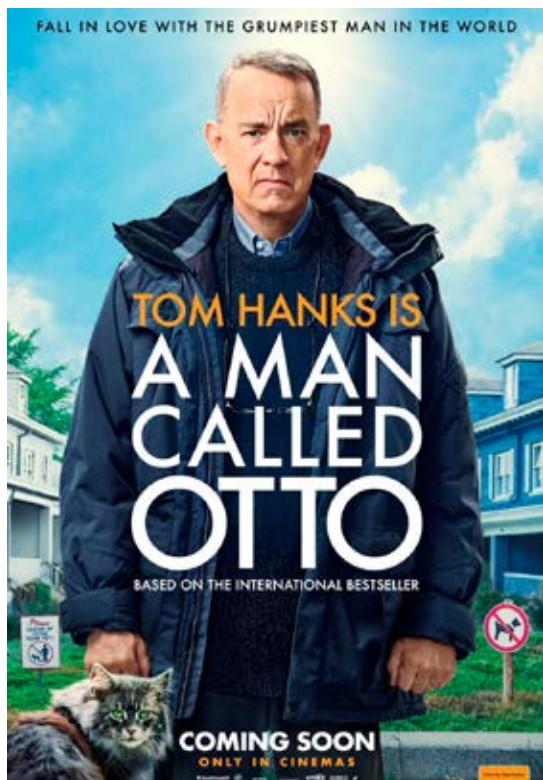
Blessy and Thobias Vakayil, and Jeena Kuruvilla on behalf of Kairos Media, as well as Martin David of Bangalore JY leadership were present on the occasion.



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For enquiries, please contact +91 9496171705



# SOUNDREPLY



They say loneliness is becoming an epidemic these days, at least in the Western world. Well, if one thinks about it, it might appear as an oxymoron, since science and technology has made so many advancements in our life, and has made both communication and transportation, easier and faster. Yet, for all his technological prowess, man is still far from finding the meaning and purpose of his life through the gadgets and gizmos that surround him. St John Paul II famously spoke about the *Law of the Gift - that man cannot fully understand himself, unless through a sincere gift of himself*. And in our post-modern, post-Christian Western societies pivoting on the individual and his narcissistic 'freedom of choice', it is no wonder that our relationships, families, and communities are becoming more fragmented and

REVIEW BY  
Joseph Anthraper

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

## MOVIE

### A MAN CALLED OTTO (2022)

ephemeral than ever before. This is far from a first world problem though. If it is self-obsessed individualism that is the scourge of the West, it is socio-religious-nationalistic fanaticism that is driving many other parts of the world.

Based on *A Man Called Ove*, the 2012 book by Fredrik Backman, *A Man Called Otto* is a 2022 comedy drama directed by Marc Forster, with Tom Hanks playing the title role of Otto Anderson. Otto is a 63-year-old widower, living alone in suburban Pittsburgh in a townhouse within a small enclave, in the middle of a much bigger development by property developers Dye & Merika, who are desperately trying to buy these townhouses as well. An introvert by nature and deeply sceptical of the people and the society around him, Otto is a fastidious perfectionist whose attention to detail can annoy even those with the best of intentions, and with age has become more bitter, sarcastic, and acrimonious, repelling even the people who were once his friends in the neighbourhood. After being forced to retire from his engineering job where he has worked for his entire life, he comes back home and decides to end his life.

True to his nature of planning every little detail of life to perfection, Otto has it all figured out – he gets just enough rope to make a noose that he attaches to the ceiling. But his plans are interrupted by the new neighbours moving in, heavily pregnant Marisol with her husband Tommy, and their two little girls Abby and Luna.

As Tommy struggles to steer the trailer into the small parking space in front of the house (with Marisol vociferously shouting out instructions to him), Otto decides to intervene and after a brief, abrasive (but normal for Otto) conversation with Marisol and Tommy, parallel parks their trailer with no effort at all. With that out of the way, Otto goes back home once again to be interrupted by Marisol and Tommy, bringing some food as a token of gratitude, as well as to introduce themselves properly. Although Otto tries to shut down the conversation, he meets his match in Marisol, who is hell bent on building a relationship with her neighbours.

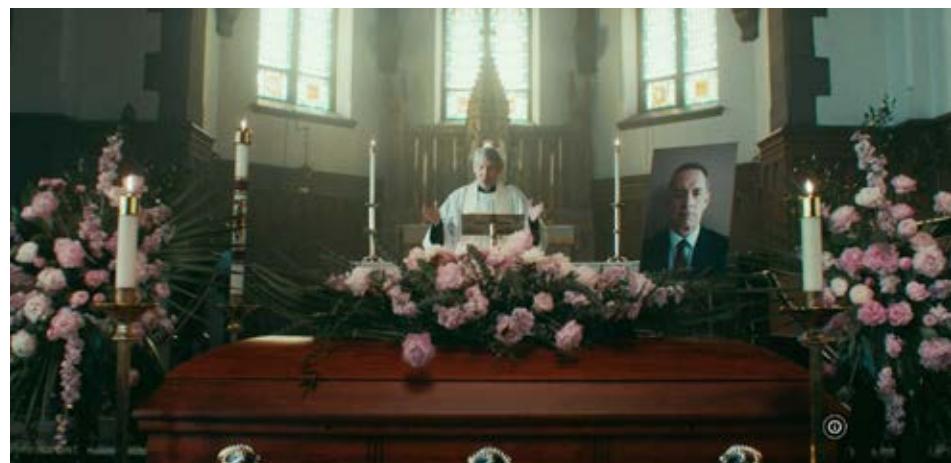
Having finally seen off the new neighbours, when eventually Otto tries to hang himself, to his utter dismay, the noose breaks off the ceiling. Disappointed, he decides to visit his wife Sonya's grave, who had died six months back. With no one to live for now, Otto's only desire now is to join his wife where she has gone before him. So he tries to take his life once more, this time by carbon monoxide poisoning, once again to be interrupted by Marisol, as Tommy has fallen down from the top of the ladder that Otto had lent them, breaking his leg! Off he goes, taking Tommy and family to the hospital.

In between the various encounters with Marisol and Tommy, the story shifts back to Otto's memories – his younger years, how he meets with Sonya on the train after being rejected from the army because of a heart condition, and how they get acquainted and eventually

get married. We are also given a glimpse into how during a holiday to Niagara Falls, the bus Sonya and Otto were travelling in crashed, causing Sonya to be permanently paralysed and losing their unborn child. The bus company never changed the brake lines, even though there had been a recall. Life experiences have made Otto cynical – everywhere he looked, he saw people taking the easy way out rather than doing the right thing.

Over time Otto, albeit reluctantly, gets more involved in the life of Tommy and Marisol, teaching Marisol to drive as well as baby-sitting the girls so that Marisol and Tommy can have a night out together before the birth of their new baby. Yet, he lashes out at Marisol when she suggests getting over Sonya's death and moving on in life, deeply hurting her. As Otto makes plans for subsequent attempts at taking his life, Jimmy, another of the neighbours living in the development, tells Otto about how Dye & Merika are planning to forcibly evict an old couple living in the neighbourhood, Rueben and Anita from their house. Would Otto be third/fourth time (un) lucky? And would he be able to stand up to the bullying of the big property developers? And what about his relationship with Marisol and Tommy? This forms the rest of the story.

Otto was angry at the world at large – at the corruption and lack of responsibility in the world around him. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines anger as *a desire for revenge. To desire vengeance in order to do evil to*



*someone who should be punished is illicit, but it is praiseworthy to impose restitution to correct vices and maintain justice.* The anger in him, just at first but over time made him bitter; bitter with himself and the world around him – and when the only love in his life, Sonya died, his life was left bereft of meaning, until Marisol and Tommy moved into the neighbourhood. Even in our profoundly atheistic culture, I found it revealing how the timing of the various distractions just before Otto proceeds with the plans to end his life, point to a

bigger reality, a different realm of being.

Tom Hanks is tailor-made for the character of the grumpy old man, Otto Anderson, and plays it to perfection, as is his wont. But the star of the movie is Mariana Treviño as Marisol – she makes the character her own and lives it. All in all, *A Man Called Otto* is a good movie, more so as a kaleidoscope of the many problems facing contemporary society.

PS: Viewer discretion is strongly advised as there are scenes of attempting suicide.

# Chandeliers

## ★ St Lydia: A Model of Listening and Faith



**L**istening is a transformative process that deeply enriches our lives. Whether offering a compassionate ear to a friend's hardships or sitting before the Holy Eucharist, we engage as active listeners. In the sacred silence before the Eucharist, we tune our hearts to the Holy Spirit, seeking our Heavenly Father's perfect will. Through His Word, God speaks tenderly, guiding us to His truth and love. True listening fosters connection, understanding, and a profound openness to God's divine plan.

Jesus Youth is in a phase of listening, inspired by Pope Francis' synodal vision. Rooted in faith and unity, this process

involves discerning the Holy Spirit's guidance through attentive listening to others. As we listen, we resonate with St Lydia, the patron saint of listening, who inspires and guides us in discerning God's voice together.

St Lydia was a woman of faith, a trailblazer whose life exemplifies the virtues of attentiveness, discernment, and hospitality. Though mentioned briefly in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 16:11-15), her story is rich with meaning, offering a profound example of how listening to God and others can transform lives and communities.

Lydia hailed from Thyatira, a city known for its thriving dye industry, especially the production of purple dye, a symbol of wealth and prestige. As a dealer in purple cloth, she was a successful businesswoman, independent and resourceful. Her name, 'Lydia,' likely reflects her origin, linking her to the region of Lydia in Asia Minor.

She resided in Philippi, a Roman colony, where she is described as a 'God-fearer' – a Gentile who worshipped the God of Israel. Lydia's openness to divine truth and her regular participation in prayer gatherings by the river demonstrate her sincere search for God, laying the groundwork for her pivotal encounter with the Gospel.

During Paul's second missionary journey, he and his companions arrived in Philippi and sought a place of prayer outside the city. There, they found a group of women gathered, and among them was Lydia. Paul spoke to them about Jesus Christ, sharing the message of salvation.

The Scripture reveals that 'the Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul.' Lydia's ability to listen deeply to Paul's words marks the moment her life changed forever. Her heart, attuned to God, recognised the truth of the Gospel. As a result, she became the first recorded convert to Christianity in Europe.

Following her conversion, Lydia was baptised along with her household, an act that symbolised her full acceptance of Christ and her commitment to the faith. But her faith did not stop at personal conversion; it immediately moved her to action. She extended an invitation to Paul and his companions, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.'

This act of hospitality was significant. Lydia's home became a haven for Paul and a place of fellowship for the early Christian community. It is widely believed that her house served as one of the first Christian house churches in Europe, a centre for worship and teaching. Her willingness to share her resources and her life with others demonstrates the transformative power of a heart truly listening to God.

Lydia's role in the early Church highlights several important milestones. She was a faithful worshiper of God even before her encounter with Paul, showing that she sought truth with an open heart. Her baptism marked a turning point, making her the first European believer to embrace Christianity. Through her hospitality, she became a leader in the fledgling Christian community, her home a symbol of unity and mission.

While Scripture does not provide extensive details about her later life, Lydia's impact is unmistakable. Her example of faith and leadership likely inspired many in her community to follow Christ. Her story reminds us that listening to God requires not just hearing but also responding with faith and action.

Today, Lydia's story holds special relevance. In a world filled with noise and distractions, her example challenges us to create space to hear God's voice. For movements like Jesus Youth, which focus on mission and community, Lydia's life serves as a model of how listening to God and to one another fosters communion

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and participation.

Lydia's ability to listen deeply also resonates with the Church's current emphasis on synodality – a process of journeying together in faith, guided by the Holy Spirit. She teaches us that listening is a cornerstone of discernment, enabling us to recognise God's voice and respond in love and unity.

Her legacy as a leader and a listener in the early Church also emphasises the power of hospitality and generosity. By opening her home, Lydia created a space where faith could flourish, offering an example of how our lives can become instruments of God's mission.

Lydia's life reveals that listening is not a passive act; it is an active engagement with God and the world around us. Her story encourages us to approach prayer, Scripture, and community with open hearts, ready to hear and respond to God's call.

St Lydia's example challenges us to listen with our hearts and act with courage, showing that when we truly hear God's voice, our lives – and the lives of those around us – are forever changed. Her legacy shines as a beacon of faith, guiding

us to embrace the call to listen, discern, and respond in our own journeys of faith.

Dear St Lydia, faithful servant of God, You listened with an open heart to the words of the Apostle Paul, embracing the Gospel and responding with love and action.

You became a beacon of faith, welcoming Christ into your life and into your home, creating a sanctuary for the early Church to grow in unity and mission.

Teach us to listen as you did – with attentiveness, humility, and faith. Help us to discern God's voice in the quiet of prayer, in the wisdom of Scripture, and in the needs of others around us.

Intercede for us, St Lydia, that we may have the courage to respond generously to God's call, fostering communion and spreading His love.

St Lydia, patron of listening and discernment, pray for us.





# Undivided Heart

How do we listen to what God is telling us? **Anil Israel** illustrates how people in the Bible listened to God and obeyed.

We are living in a world where everyone desires to be heard, but few are willing to listen. This makes it significantly urgent, to draw our attention to the soul-sensitive need of listening. What do we listen to? We normally tend to give a listening ear to those things that we value. We tend to be prominently occupied with those things that interest us. We are more than willing to devote our time and attention to those things that matter most to us. Isn't this biased inclination – being prone to giving a listening ear to selective stuff – what people refer to as selective listening?

When God commanded Adam and Eve to refrain from the forbidden fruit, they ended up unhesitatingly giving in to the erroneous voice of deception. Obedience took a back seat. Flawed listening led to undesired downfall and separation from the God's Garden. Relationship was ruptured. Peace was lost.

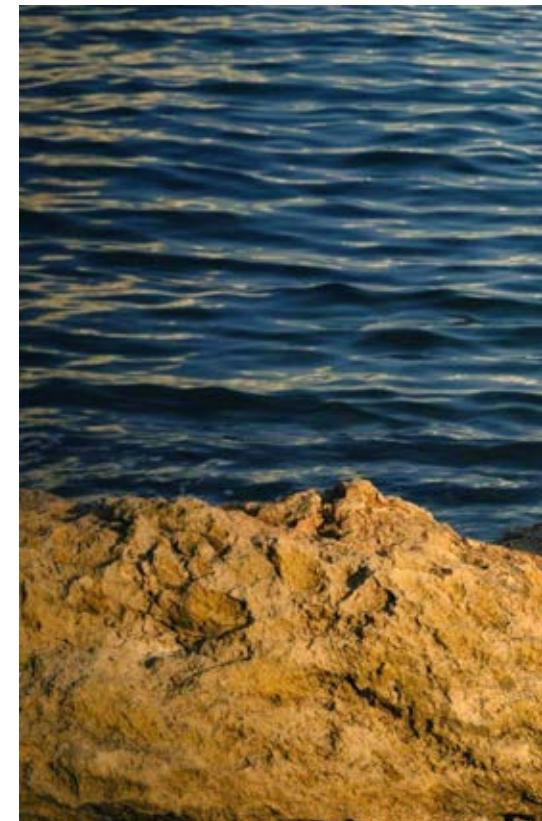
However, when God asked Noah to build an Ark, he promptly obeyed and set on the herculean task, though it made no sense to the onlookers. Because his heart was close to the Lord, he could respond in trustful obedience. Abraham too set out on a long journey to a far-away unfamiliar terrain, leaving everything familiar behind. Those who responded positively, have tasted sweet fruits of obedient listening.

Joshua marched around Jericho thirteen times, once on the first six days and seven times on the seventh day. Naaman the leper, dipped himself seven times in the River Jordan. Peter got a massive catch of fish when he was asked to *put into the deep* (Luke 5:4) despite zero results having toiled all night long. All those who obeyed, obeyed because they listened in the first place. It all began with focused listening. Listening can therefore be considered as the first step to obedience.

At the wedding feast of Cana, our blessed mother's attentiveness to the concern of the host family, made her request Jesus: *they have no wine* (John 2:3). She turned to the servants and urged them to *do whatever He tells you* (John 2:5). The servants willingly obeyed. Human obedience to Divine Will helps turn hopeless sinners into victorious saints.

At the feeding of the multitude, Jesus asked his disciples: *You give them something to eat* (Matthew 14:16). Probably one young boy had a listening ear to the need of the hour and offered all that he had – *five loaves of bread and two fish* (Matthew 14:17). All were satisfied and there was much leftover. We have nothing to lose when it comes to letting go of everything we have been clinging on to.

A Franciscan Friar, Maximilian Kolbe volunteered to offer his life in place of a fellow prisoner, Franciszek Gajowniczek, at Auschwitz. Mother Teresa discovered her call within a call and founded the Missionaries of Charity, to satiate the

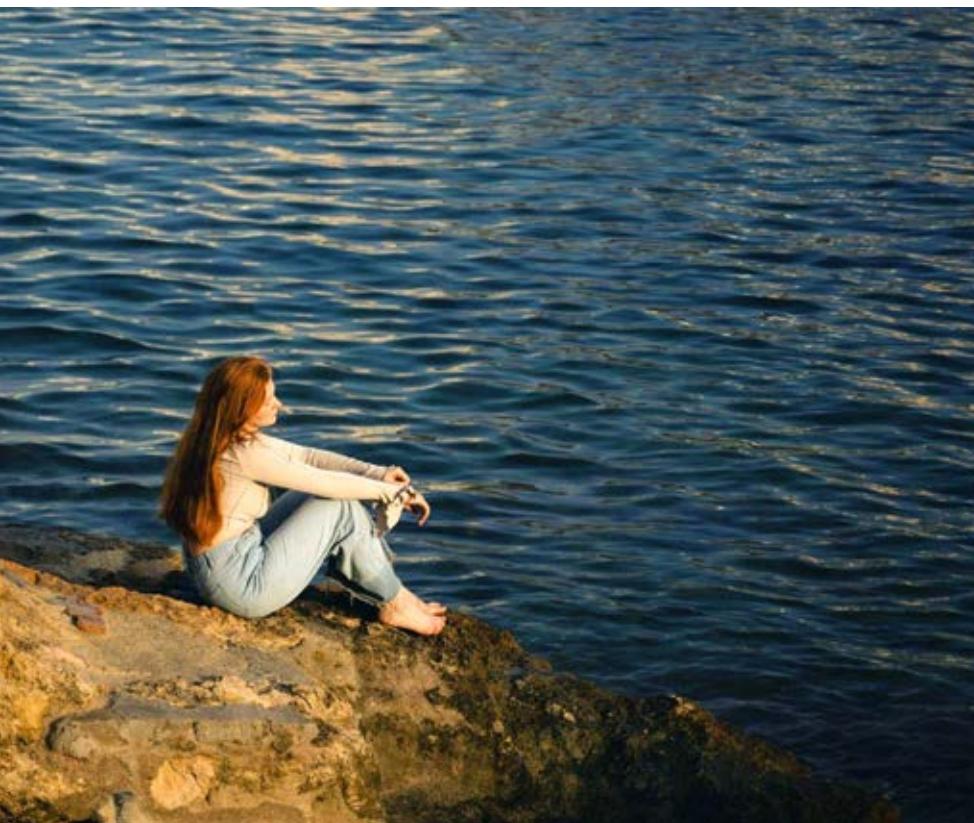


thirst of Jesus Christ on the cross for love and souls. Do I ever hear Jesus say, *I Thirst* (John 19:28) in the feeble cry of the needy?

In the Holy Scripture, do we hear His tender voice: *You are my Beloved Son* (Mark 1:11). *You are a chosen people* (1 Peter 2:9) *to be holy and blameless* (Ephesians 1:4). *God chose you to be saved* (2 Thessalonians 2:13). We are *called to freedom* (Galatians 5:13). Do we realise that we are *called children of God* (1 John 3:1) – *heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ* (Romans 8:17). Do I recognise that I am a *pearl of great value* (Matthew 13:46) – that in God's eyes I am of immeasurable worth? Am I embracing or ignoring my spiritual identity?

We are constantly reminded: *turn from your sins* (Matthew 4:17), *turn from*

## B E S T I L L A N D K N O W I A M G O D ) P S A L M 4 6 : 1 0



If everything emanating from God's Word is meant for the well-being of my soul, why am I deaf towards it? Why do I fail to set apart spiritual-wellness time, to pay attention to what my soul is earnestly thirsting for? Probably, I'm deafened by the distracting noises of the world of selfish pursuits that I fail to tune-in to the silent whisper of the sacred.

*darkness to light (Acts 26:18), shine like the sun (Matthew 13:43). You are all children of the light (1 Thessalonians 5:5) live as children of light (Ephesians 5:8). Be holy (Leviticus 21:8), be merciful (Luke 6:36), be perfect (Matthew 5:48). Love your enemies (Matthew 5:34), walk the extra mile (cf.5:41), forgive one another (Colossians 3:13), conquer evil with good (Romans 12:21), carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2). We might at times wonder if all these difficult to follow advice is for us. If we are meant to grow into the image and likeness of our heavenly father, then surely this invitation to *deny oneself, take up our cross every day and follow the Master* (Luke 9:35) – this challenge to *enter the narrow gate* (Matthew 7:13) is for each one of us.*

If everything emanating from God's

Word is meant for the well-being of my soul, why am I deaf towards it? Why do I fail to set apart spiritual-wellness time, to pay attention to what my soul is earnestly thirsting for? Probably, I'm deafened by the distracting noises of the world of selfish pursuits that I fail to tune-in to the silent whisper of the sacred. God speaks to us in the silence of our hearts. *Be still and know I am God* (Psalm 46:10). I need to put myself in moments of serene silence to be able to listen to His still small voice. Interestingly, the word 'listen' contains the same letters as the word *silent*.

The blind Bartimaeus tried to reach out to the Lord: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me* (Mark 10:47). The crowd tried to silence him, but Jesus heard his cry. Eventually he heard: *He's calling you* (Mark 10:49). Am I also being called? Am I attentive to His call? *Attentiveness will cause the greatest sins to cease* (Ecclesiastes 10:4). God give me an inner silence to respond to your divine inspirations.

A childhood hymn continues to echo deep within:  
 Listen, let your heart keep seeking;  
 Listen to His constant speaking;  
 Listen to the Spirit calling you.  
 Listen to His inspiration;  
 Listen to His invitation;  
 Listen to the Spirit calling you.

Like King Solomon, may we learn to pray: *give me the Wisdom that sits by your throne* (Wisdom 9:4), *give me the wisdom I need to rule your people* (1 Kings 3:9). Some translations use the phrase – an understanding heart, an obedient heart, a receptive heart, a listening heart. Lord, give me an *undivided heart* to comprehend your will for me.

# NewsWatch

## Pope's decision results in stronger bond between Catholic and Assyrian Church



Mar Awa III, Catholicos-patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, discussed the significance of Pope Francis' decision to include St Isaac of Nineveh in the Martyrology of the Roman Catholic Church, in an interview with ACI MENA. He described the move as 'a very positive step' for ecumenical relations between the Assyrian and Catholic churches. St Isaac of Nineveh, a seventh-century mystic and theologian, is deeply revered in the Assyrian Church. Mar Awa commended the recognition of saints and martyrs from non-Catholic Eastern churches, describing it as a meaningful step toward sincere ecumenism. He emphasised that the lives and teachings of saints foster an 'ecumenism of spirituality,' transcending ecclesiastical and doctrinal differences to unite believers in mutual respect.

Reflecting on the relationship between the two churches, Mar Awa highlighted the progress achieved through decades of theological dialogue, beginning with the 1994 Common Christological Declaration. This declaration resolved misunderstandings stemming from the Council of Ephesus in 431, clarifying

theological positions and fostering mutual understanding. Mar Awa noted that unlike other divisions within Christianity, there were no formal condemnations or excommunications between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Catholic Church. He suggested that redefining the role of the bishop of Rome, respecting the patristic traditions of the first millennium, could provide a strong foundation for continued dialogue and unity. The patriarch called for solidarity among

Christian churches in addressing the challenges faced by Christians in the Middle East, particularly persecution and displacement. He urged churches to set aside theological differences and work together to confront these shared struggles.

Mar Awa expressed hope that the inclusion of St Isaac would inspire Christians, reminding them of their common faith and its strength in times of adversity. He also highlighted the unifying power of shared spirituality, such as the lives of saints and universally shared prayers like the Lord's Prayer, which transcend linguistic and doctrinal divides. Cooperation between the Catholic and Assyrian churches in education and humanitarian efforts, he said, should expand to address historical divisions and heal past wounds. The Assyrian Church of the East, which traces its roots to the Apostolic Age through the evangelisation of St Thomas and his disciples, has endured centuries of persecution. Today, it serves a global community of approximately 500,000 under the leadership of Mar Awa III, the first Western-born patriarch, elected in 2021.

## POPE FRANCIS CALLS FOR YOUNG CATHOLICS TO BE AUTHENTIC WITNESSES TO THE FAITH



Pope Francis celebrated the Solemnity of Christ the King and the conclusion of the liturgical year with Mass at St Peter's Basilica, urging young Catholics to seek authentic Christian witness over fleeting recognition. The ceremony included the World Youth Day (WYD) observance, marked by the symbolic transfer of the WYD cross and the Marian icon *Salus Populi Romani* from Portuguese youth to Korean delegates, who will host the next WYD in Seoul in 2027. Reflecting on the challenges of today's world, the Pope emphasised the enduring power of Christian love and joy. 'Love is the gift of oneself,' he said, highlighting acts of love as life's true legacy. He pointed to 'little lights' that sustain faith, such as family affection, children's innocence, youthful enthusiasm, and respect for the elderly. Addressing youth, Francis urged them to resist superficiality and social media stardom, calling them instead to leave a lasting impact through genuine acts of love. 'Do not be stars for a day but shine in a wider sky,' he advised. The Pope also condemned global violence and oppression, questioning how those responsible for war and suffering will answer before God. Against this backdrop, he underscored the role of young people in spreading Christ's message of peace and reconciliation. He reminded the Korean delegates receiving the WYD cross that Mary, the mother of Jesus, accompanies them on their spiritual journey. Concluding the Mass, Francis reflected on Jesus' kingship, contrasting it with worldly power. Christ's authority, he explained, lies in his truth and self-sacrifice, transforming the world through love and salvation.

## Exposition of Saint Francis Xavier's incorrupt body continues until January 2025

Every decade, Goa, India, becomes a hub for pilgrims and tourists during the exposition of the sacred relics of St. Francis Xavier. This year, the 18th Solemn Exposition began on 21 November 2024, at the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Old Goa and will continue through January 2025, as reported by Catholic Connect. This event honours St Francis Xavier, a Spanish missionary and co-founder of the Jesuits, renowned for his groundbreaking missionary work across Asia. Revered for spreading Christianity in India, St Francis Xavier's legacy continues to inspire devotion worldwide.

Cardinal Filipe Neri António Sebastião do Rosário Ferrão, Archbishop of Goa and Damão, welcomed a gathering of 12,000

faithful from across India and abroad at the inaugural Eucharistic celebration. The Mass was presided over by Archbishop Anil Joseph

Thomas Couto of Delhi, who described the saint as 'a man on a mission.' In his homily, Archbishop Couto urged attendees to draw inspiration from St Francis Xavier's zeal and unwavering discipleship. The saint's sacred relics, normally housed in the Basilica of Bom Jesus, were ceremonially transported to the Sé Cathedral in a specially designed electric carriage. Public veneration is



available daily at the cathedral from 3:00 pm until the exposition concludes in January 2025. Throughout the exposition, a series of religious events, including Masses, prayer services, novenas, and processions, provide opportunities for reflection and devotion. This solemn occasion also highlights the cultural and spiritual heritage of Goa, blending profound religious significance with communal celebration.



## Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati joins the list of young Catholics to be canonised in 2025

Pope Francis has officially recognised a miracle attributed to Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, setting the stage for his canonisation during the Catholic Church's Jubilee of Youth on 3 August, 2025, in Rome. Frassati, who passed away in 1925 at the age of 24, is admired by Catholic youth for his inspiring faith and dedication to holiness, embodied in his motto 'to the heights.' A native of Turin, Italy, Frassati was a passionate mountaineer, a third order Dominican, and a committed advocate for the poor.

The miracle attributed to Frassati involved the healing of a seminarian from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, who later became a priest in June 2023. After suffering a severe Achilles tendon injury during a basketball game, the seminarian began a novena to Frassati. Midway through, he experienced a sudden warmth in his ankle while praying. Subsequent medical evaluations revealed

no remaining injury, enabling him to resume sports activities. This healing was confirmed by a thorough diocesan inquiry and reviewed by experts from the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. This miraculous recovery is fitting, given Frassati's own love of sports and outdoor pursuits.

Born on 6 April 1901, Frassati dedicated much of his life to helping the poor and sick through his involvement with organisations like the St Vincent de Paul Society. His faith was central to his life; he obtained permission to receive daily Communion and participated actively in Catholic Action. Frassati died of polio, likely contracted while caring for the sick. His selflessness and faith earned him the title 'man of the eight beatitudes' by Pope John Paul II, who beatified him in 1990. Pope Francis also commended Frassati for his devotion to the poor, emphasising his profound love for Jesus and humanity.



Take a picture of the solved image and send it to  
[quiztime@jykairosmedia.org](mailto:quiztime@jykairosmedia.org) before 25th January 2025.  
The winner will be rewarded with 1 year subscription of Kairos Global

## Q FIND 7 DIFFERENCES

A

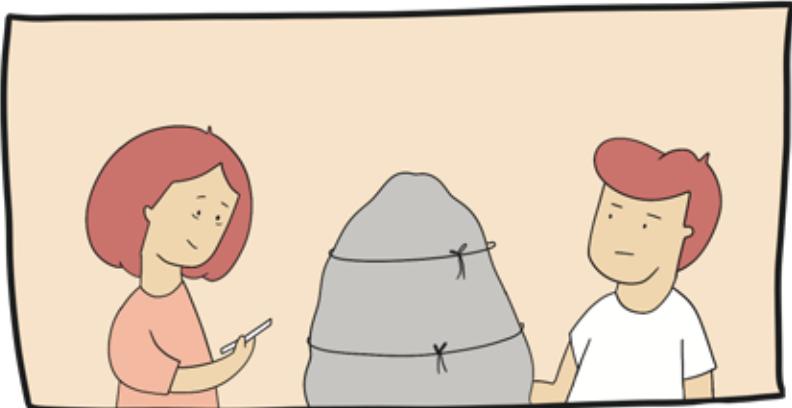


B



# LUKAS and RAY

Scripture  
Pictures  
@scripture.pictures.316



We're late for the exhibition, Ray.  
Why are you in your pajamas?  
I thought that was tomorrow.

No, Ray, TODAY! you promised to  
help me set up my exhibit!  
Of course yes, I remember.

Ok, if you remember, then tell me who my  
exhibit is.

Umm... Albert Einstein?

WHAT!? No!

Ok, I'm sorry! I don't remember. I didn't  
listen to you carefully, I was preoccupied!  
Instagram has fried my brain. I'm doom-  
scrolling and it's always fireworks in my  
head.

Ray, there's too much  
traffic in your brain to  
actually let you LISTEN  
to those around you.  
You've literally jammed  
your neurons!

Ugh, Lukas, I'm sorry, can you  
please re tell me what your  
exhibit is? I'm all ears!

This? It's the Christmas  
tree that's going back to  
the attic.

# Congratulations to Winners of Holy Habits 2025!

## Photo Category

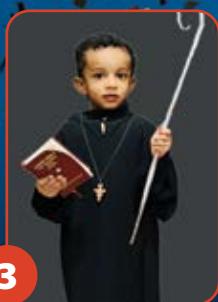
### TOP 5



1



2



3



4



5

**Hazel Mariyam Alex**  
(3 years, India), dressed as  
St Therese of Lisieux

**Jessica Clair Geo**  
(3 years, India), dressed as  
St Agnes of Rome

**Michael Manu**  
(2 years, UAE), dressed as  
St Benedict

**Jayden Jomon**  
(3 years, India), dressed as  
St John Bosco

**Anniya Ashish**  
(3 years, India), dressed as  
St Therese of Lisieux

## Reels Category

### TOP 5



1



2



3



4



5

**Gianna Theresa Joseph**  
(3 years, UAE), dressed as  
St Teresa of Calcutta

**Noah Matthew Tijit**  
(6 months, UK), dressed as  
St Anthony of Padua

**Sera Prince**  
(8 years, UAE), dressed as  
St Faustina Kowalska

**Clara Prince**  
(5 years, UAE), dressed as  
St Clare of Assisi

**Rooha Mariam Antony**  
(5 years, India), dressed as  
St Jacinta Marto