

# KALAMAZOOS

GLOBAL

## SHEPHERD OF HOPE AND MERCY

ALSO ↓

**Strongholds  
for the  
Catholic  
Family**

■ SHEENA ANDREWS

**Embraced by  
the Blessed  
Mother**

■ DR SUNNICHAN  
V GEORGE



Jesus Youth

A Missionary Movement At The Service Of The Church



## MARY, OUR MOTHER



O Mary, my dear Mother, how much I love thee! And yet in reality how little! Thou dost teach me what I ought to know, for thou teaches me what Jesus is to me and what I ought to be for Jesus. Dearly beloved Mother, how close to God thou art, and how utterly filled with Him! In the measure that we know God, we remind ourselves of thee. Mother of God, obtain for me the grace of loving my Jesus; obtain for me the grace of loving thee!



# EDITOR'S ROOM



DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

X @readkairos

THESE MESSAGES DO NOT ARGUE DIRECTLY AGAINST MARRIAGE; INSTEAD, THEY REFRAME STRUGGLES AS REASONS FOR SEPARATION, GLORIFY INDIVIDUAL HAPPINESS OVER COMMITMENT, AND NORMALISE WHAT WAS ONCE SEEN AS A LAST RESORT.

## Who Controls Us?

Undeniably, media and digital platforms have the power to shape perspectives, often without people realising it. In a world overflowing with content, ideas once considered radical or unacceptable are slowly normalised through subtle, repeated exposure.

Take, for instance, a young person who suddenly grows conscious of their eating habits. Once indifferent to food choices, they now avoid junk food, refrain from eating out, and speak passionately about health and nutrition. While this newfound discipline seems positive, a closer look reveals its source – social media influencers and online trends promoting strict dietary habits, sometimes bordering on extremism. What began as a desire for healthier living could, if unchecked, lead to unrealistic expectations, unhealthy obsessions, or exclusionary mindsets.

Similarly, a Catholic mother, previously strong in her values, begins speaking about spouses living separately and expressing a new acceptance of divorce. Such a shift in perspective is not abrupt but the result of exposure to certain YouTube channels and WhatsApp discussions that subtly introduce ideas challenging traditional Christian teachings. These messages do not argue directly against marriage; instead, they reframe struggles as reasons for separation, glorify individual happiness over commitment, and normalise what was once seen as a last resort. Over time, an idea that would have been firmly rejected starts feeling reasonable, even inevitable.

These instances highlight a deeper concern – when messages are direct, they can be analysed and debated. But when ideas are subtly embedded in narratives, entertainment, and casual discussions, they influence minds without resistance. The digital age has made such messaging nearly impossible to monitor, and without discernment, even well-meaning individuals may be led astray.

Jesus reminds us to be *innocent as doves and shrewd as serpents* (Matthew 10:16). Innocence does not mean blind acceptance, and wisdom must not turn into paranoia. Instead, we are called to be discerning – to question the information we receive, to understand its origins, and to measure it against the truth of our faith.

Lord, grant us the wisdom to recognise subtle influences that pull us away from Your path. May we remain firm in our values, vigilant in our choices, and unwavering in our mission to be faithful workers in Your vineyard. Amen.

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This is my beloved Son, listen to him  
Mark 9:7

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# ASK



FR. BITAJU

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## How do we differentiate between suffering allowed by God and that which we cause?

In order to differentiate between the sufferings allowed by God and the suffering we cause, we need to understand the nature of suffering from a theological perspective. From Church teaching, we shall try to understand the purpose and meaning of suffering which can help in this differentiation.

**Suffering Allowed by God:** The Church teaches that God allows suffering for reasons beyond human understanding. This can include the idea of testing faith, fostering growth in virtue, or bringing about a greater good. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, 'In the face of evil and suffering, God's love is not absent' (CCC 311). This would mean that while God permits suffering, He could bring about good from it, such as deepening a person's faith or compassion. The life of Job in the Old Testament is an example for such suffering permitted by God. Also, God allows suffering due to illnesses and natural disasters for reasons known only to Him.

**Suffering We Endorse:** On the other hand, suffering we endorse or cause often arises from our own choices or actions. This could include harm we inflict on others through sin, neglect, or injustice. *The Catechism* underlines the moral responsibility of individuals: 'Man is responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary' (CCC 1749). When we make choices that lead to suffering for others, or ourselves

we are endorsing that suffering. For example, violence and use of narcotic drugs for pleasure.

**Understanding Suffering:** The teachings of the Church acknowledge that suffering is a part of the human condition. According to the *Catechism*, 'Suffering is a consequence of original sin' (CCC 1500). This would mean that suffering entered the world through human disobedience, and it is often a result of the fallen state of humanity. However, the Church also teaches that suffering can have a redemptive quality as seen in the life of Christ (CCC 1505). For example, individuals can unite their pain with Christ's suffering, finding meaning and purpose in it. St Paul who knew the redemptive power of suffering exclaimed: *I find joy in the suffering I endure for you ...* (Colossians 1:24).

**Prayer and Discernment:** To differentiate between these types of suffering, prayer and discernment are essential. The teachings of the Church encourage believers to seek God's guidance in understanding their suffering and to trust in His plan.

In conclusion, the differentiation between suffering allowed by God and suffering we endorse involves understanding the nature of suffering, recognising human freedom and responsibility, and seeking to respond to suffering in a way that aligns with God's will.



YOUCAT 281

## WHY DO WE YEARN FOR HAPPINESS?

God has placed in our hearts such an infinite desire for happiness that nothing can satisfy it but God himself. All earthly fulfillment gives us only a foretaste of eternal happiness. Above and beyond that, we should be drawn to God. [CCC 1718-1719, 1725]





DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

## Prayer Intentions May

### For Working Conditions

Let us pray that through work, each person might find fulfilment, families might be sustained in dignity, and that society might be humanised.



# Pope talk



*The best medicine to heal the pain of a wounded family is forgiveness. Forgiveness means giving another chance; God does this with us all the time. God's patience is infinite. He forgives us, lifts us up, and gives us a new start.*

*Every age brings with it challenges and hardships, but also opportunities to grow in confidence. In every age faith is a treasure to be shared with joy.*

**Jesus reveals the heart of God: Jesus heals our wounds so we can love others. He is always merciful toward all, so that we can love each other as brothers.**



*Pilgrimage is a concrete sign of the desire to renew faith, to strengthen the bond with the successor of Peter, and to bear witness joyfully to the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Romans 5:5), because it is born of the love that sprang from the pierced heart of Christ and poured into us by the Holy Spirit.*

*Welcoming God's plan does not mean having all the answers but rather trusting that wherever He leads us, it is preceded with His grace. Our 'yes' simple and sincere, can become a tool in the hands of God to achieve something great.*

*Jesus continues to go out in search of those who seek God even when faced with personal limitations, struggles, or uncertain circumstances. When you have a strong desire, you do not lose heart. You find a solution in Jesus.*

# JESUS YOUTH



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

## The JY Charism of Spirit-filled Enthusiasm

→ One of my fond memories from the formative days of Jesus Youth involves Johny, a member of our First Line group, which began meeting monthly in 1982. Our initial few gatherings were held at Vidyaniketan, the institution where I lived and worked while teaching and caring for 17 teenagers. We would meet from the third Friday of the month until Sunday afternoon.

A businessman, Johny had been unable to arrive early for our first meeting. It was past midnight when he reached Vidyaniketan, and rang the doorbell waking the college director, a senior Jesuit priest. With all of us fast asleep, the elderly priest came down to open the door. Johny, with his characteristic exuberance, greeted him with a loud 'Praise the Lord,' only to receive a cold look and a stern, 'Don't wake up the whole neighborhood!'

Johny was one of the movement's early builders, embodying a charism of vibrant enthusiasm. He passionately laid the groundwork for the music apostolate and composed the theme song for the 'Jesus Youth 85' Conference, Yeshuvin Yuvakal Naam. During our group meetings, we would remind him of his 'upsetting' midnight incident at Vidyaniketan if he became too loud and animated.

### A NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT BRIMMING WITH ENTHUSIASM

Many people come to Jesus Youth after a life-changing encounter. In contrast, many others embark on a quiet journey in a group and often experience a renewed outpouring of the Spirit much later, during a retreat. Either way, a fresh dose of joy and enthusiasm is nearly guaranteed. St Paul expresses it well: *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come* (2 Corinthians 5:17). A sign of this 'abundant life' and newness is that you *sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God* (Colossians 3:16).

One thing is for sure: Jesus Youth groups thrive because of individuals with this remarkable enthusiasm. Although Johny's vibrant zeal faced a rude shock one night, it is essential to remember that his presence in any group brought immense joy and encouraged active interaction, marked by cheerful greetings, lively conversations, and laughter. But are all enthusiastic people loud and boisterous like Johny? Certainly not.

In the group I mentioned, Ravi was clear and thorough in all background planning, preparation and follow-up work, yet he never spoke during the

discussions. Jose Jacob excelled at recognising and articulating the movement's direction in his writings. Alice would quietly converse with almost everyone, personally mentoring and guiding them. There were also others deeply committed to praying for everyone, performing various tasks as we gathered, and tending to different aspects of our journey forward. But what was common among that loving and zealous missionary group? They all shared a spirit filled with enthusiasm, fully aware that they were part of something significant and grand, ready to contribute however they could. The impact of that group was evident; from this zeal, a broader movement emerged. As St Augustine said, 'Only one who has fire within may fire up others.'

In JY, this charism of enthusiasm endures. I remember JYs from my college inviting speakers for the 'Yuvajoythi' training. This was a two-week programme consisting of one-hour sessions for students. Our college was known for being politically vibrant and chaotic. Yet, when its JY leaders approached Dr Beena from the nearby college, she readily accepted the invitation. She said, 'Looking at their beaming smiles and enthusiasm, I couldn't resist.' Similarly, when the





Of course, enthusiasm is a gift of the spirit. It must be born in your heart, constantly battling the negativity inside and around you. In Jesus Youth, the elements of the six pillars, especially daily quiet time, reflection on the Word, and active participation in the sacraments keep alive that 'life in its fullness.'

state Bishops' Council organised a Mission Congress, the programme committee wanted Jesus Youth to provide engaging activities to instil genuine enthusiasm and fervour in the participants. To follow up on that initiative, my diocese proposed that a JY team visit every parish to share the missionary message through skits, dances, and songs.

### THE HOW AND WHERE OF ENTHUSIASM

Of course, enthusiasm is a gift of the spirit. It must be born in your heart, constantly battling the negativity inside and around you. In Jesus Youth, the elements of the six pillars, especially daily quiet time, reflection on the Word, and active participation in the sacraments keep alive that 'life in its fullness.' But if it remains in the heart alone, it will eventually disappear or become a mask of piety. So, it must shine forth in everyday deeds.

**Learn to smile:** When your heart rejoices, it reflects upon your face.

**Warm greetings:** Social etiquette carried out with sincerity and warmth

can be the best sign of the fruits of the Spirit. The Apostle repeats, 'Greet one another with a holy kiss.'

**Times together – eating, chatting, and fun:** Enthusiasm grows in vibrant communities.

**Sing, pray, and let the Spirit lead:** When you hear people sing aloud or make a prayer enthusiastically in a group, that fire catches on.

**Joyful service:** Like Mary, those bubbling hearts are eager to help needy people.

**Talents and beauty:** Lack of self-awareness leads to lack of enthusiasm. Knowing who I am and what I love leads to greater joy and authenticity.

**Readiness to reconnect and forgive:** The journey toward greater radiance includes deeper healing and wholeness.

**Belong to a caring and sharing community:** A good Jesus Youth fellowship can provide the best formative setting for growing in enthusiasm.

### FIGHT NEGATIVITY WITH VIBRANT ENTHUSIASM

Pope Paul VI, talking about why people are reluctant to share the Gospel, says, 'It is manifested in fatigue, disenchantment, compromise, lack of interest and above all lack of joy and hope. We exhort all those who have the task of evangelising, by whatever title and at whatever level, always to nourish spiritual fervour' (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 80). St Paul is insistent, *Never flag in zeal; be aglow with the Spirit!* (Romans 12:11)

Some days, when the atmosphere feels gloomy, I announce in our prayer group, 'Hello, everyone. Please stand up! Go around the room, greet as many people as possible, and shake hands. Then we will start our praise and worship.' That would change everything. ■

.....

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



# What is the Examen?

**Basil DCunha**

encourages us to use the spiritual exercise of St Ignatius, explaining how it lifts us out of the dark pits of life.



**O**n many occasions we get discouraged, feel low and miserable. Sometimes it feels like we are fighting a losing battle, single-handedly. Why do we feel this way? The answer lies deep within us.

Jesus tells us, *And remember, I am with you always till the end of time* (Matthew 28:20). Clearly somewhere down the line we have forgotten that He is within us. So how do we find Him again?

The answer is the Examen. This spiritual exercise, if used methodically, can help us find Him again. St Ignatius of Loyola was the one who, through trial and error, formulated the Examen. At first glance it seems a simple exercise – it suggests a five-step method.

The first step begins with our sense of **Gratitude** to God – for things that have gone well. It moves then to **Petition** – we seek grace to find answers to our predicament – in other words, why did some things go right and why some didn't. St Ignatius then asks us to **Review** the day – what has gone right, and what has not gone so well. We prod deeper and consider the whys and why nots. We then ask ourselves – was this from God who has been with us the whole day or did we permit foreigners to invade our private space? If we did, then it's time to seek **Forgiveness**. Finally, we seek **Renewal**. Ask for grace to repel the intruders and in humility ask for continuous protection and guidance.

It does not sound difficult, does it? But it's like when we try dieting. We are asked to keep away from some foods we enjoy or some stimulants that seem to make us happy. We try but fail, then after a few days we are back to square one.

Fr Timothy Gallagher in his book *The Examen Prayer* explains his personal story that while with a group of youth in the chapel – he felt the need *to let myself be helped* as he felt his own inability to do so. He adds further *the examen becomes most profoundly possible when I accept my own helplessness and my need to be led by God*. He then goes on to say the *Examen is our way of being regularly available to God so that divine light and love can heal our darkness and point the way toward spiritual growth*.

So let's go deeper with the five points of the Examen as instructed by St Ignatius.

**Gratitude:** What hit me strongly about gratitude was what St Ignatius wrote to a layman about God's deep love for each of us. He says, *We will much sooner tire of receiving His gifts than He of giving them*. This happens as soon as we commit ourselves to God and seek His Grace. So when gifts come pouring into our hearts – isn't it a natural thing to be ever grateful to a God so loving and generous.

**Petition:** Clearly, when we petition our loving God to help us in our areas of darkness, immediately things light up and we are able to see, as if in broad daylight. *Whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son* (John 14:13). For all the dark clouds hovering all around us, we must seek understanding so we are better placed to overcome those hurdles and say like St Paul that *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13). A super way to trusting faith and the best way to have a deeper relationship with Jesus.

**Review:** Basically, here we consider spiritual consolation or spiritual desolation and why each happens. St Ignatius tries to discern which thoughts are of God and which from the enemy, and determines to accept or reject. It is here that we must decide firmly to determine the cause of such thoughts and seek grace to accept those that come from our Maker and reject those that clearly are from the enemy. When we choose the real relationship, we then feel we are one with God.

Fr Gallagher gives a beautiful example of a person who is a regular church-goer. One day she feels like she'd rather stay at home. On further thought, decides to go for Mass anyway. The girl then reflects on why she originally felt against going. It was the enemy. Sometimes we feel we should do the wrong thing – for no reason whatsoever, but a quick thought can change our mind. Grace is always near, but do we have the courage to use God's grace?

**Forgiveness:** When it comes to forgiveness, St Ignatius puts it very succinctly, 'in the time of my faults, God loves me more than I love myself.' So, the saint views his faults peacefully and brings them to God with trust and seeks forgiveness. Just like the parable of the prodigal son, where even before the son seeks forgiveness, the father welcomes him with open arms. It is in that camaraderie that love flourishes.

**Renewal:** St Ignatius' advice here is very clear, He says we should allow the first four steps to illuminate step five. In other words, we generally know what the next day will be like – we will meet so and so, we discuss with another, etc. – if we spend time to think about our actions of the previous days, we should be in a position to do things better. If we have been unnecessarily harsh or indifferent, we could change our stance, if we have been unforgiving we could use a forgiving approach. ■

... the Examen becomes most profoundly possible when I accept my own helplessness and my need to be led by God. ... the Examen is our way of being regularly available to God so that divine light and love can heal our darkness and point the way toward spiritual growth.





Most of the time the fault lies with us when we judge others, writes Brother **Jithin Joseph**.

**W**hy do we judge others? Why do we criticise others? Is it not because of our ego...? How did the saplings of ego start growing in us?

When we see others doing better in life than us, or when we find ourselves not at par with them, we try to bring them down or sully their name. We do this consciously to impose our own mistakes on others. The Gospel of Luke advises us against this. *Do not judge others that you may not be judged and the measure you give will be the measure you get* (6:37-38).

A man once felt that his wife's hearing had begun to deteriorate. Unsure of how to approach her regarding this, he called the family doctor to discuss the problem. 'Here's what you do,' said the doctor, 'stand about 40 feet away from her, and in a normal voice see if she hears you. If not go 30 feet, then 20 feet, and so on until you get a response.' That evening, his wife was in the kitchen cooking dinner, and the man was in the sitting room. He

thought to himself, 'I am about 40 feet away, let me see what happens.' Then in a normal tone he asked, 'Dear, what's for dinner?' There was no response. Next, he moved into the dining room where he was about 20 feet from his wife and asked, 'Dear, what's for dinner?' Again he got no response. So he walked to the kitchen door, about 10 feet away and asked once more, 'Dear what's for dinner?' There was still no response. He then walked right behind her and asked, 'Dear what's for dinner?' The wife replied, 'For the fourth time, it's biriyani!'

Sometimes, the problem may not be with others as we think, but could be ours entirely! Before blaming anyone for any inconvenience we face, we need to analyse if there is something we can do to improve the situation.

This is what the Gospel asks us to meditate upon. We have no right to pass judgement on others, unfortunately, we are swift to point at the emptiness of

others. Never do we take a good look at our own life. We blame others for their shortcomings, even though we are deep down the pit of weeping and gnashing of teeth. We are asked to measure only the good of others, not their negatives because we all are human beings. So let's not be jealous and let's not feed our ego and greed.

Jesus went beyond Calvary by becoming the icon of love and forgiveness. Let us also become icons of love and forgiveness, judging not and letting go of our ego. ■

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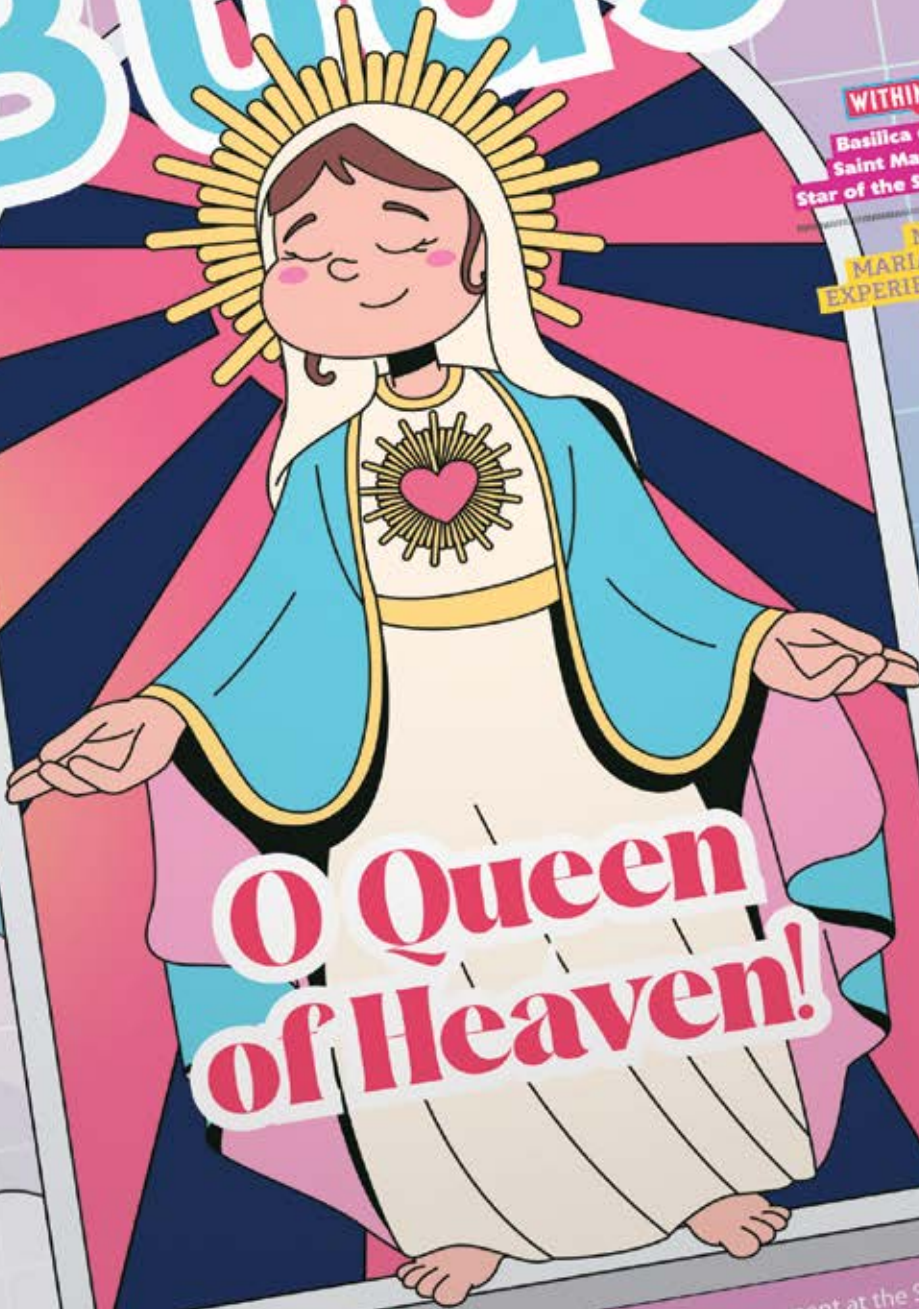
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A CATHOLIC MAGAZINE FOR KIDS

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 53

KAIROS

# Buds



## O Queen of Heaven!

WITHIN  
Basilica of  
Saint Mary  
Star of the Sea

MY  
MARIAN  
EXPERIENCE

A Missionary Movement at the Service of the Church

Jesus Youth

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## EXPERIENCE



# 'THIS IS MY TIME FOR THE CHURCH'

**Silvy Santhosh** introduces us to a young pre-med student and Catechism teacher, who has been instrumental in galvanising the faith lives of the youth of her parish.





**F**ew years ago, I noticed a quiet high school girl at our parish. Alecia Paul had just moved to Dallas with her family from another state. Her parents were super active in Shalom ministries and Jesus Youth, and she'd often come to evening Mass with them. She didn't really talk much – she just came, prayed deeply, received Jesus in the Eucharist, and quietly left. No show, no spotlight. Just love.

Then when she started college, I started seeing her at the neighbourhood Roman Catholic parish during morning Holy Mass. Rain or shine, she would be there, kneeling silently, eyes fixed on Jesus in the tabernacle. You could tell – she knew who she was talking to. That kind of faith can't be faked. It was real.

Fast forward a few years. That same quiet girl? She's now speaking after Sunday Mass about the TORCH Youth Conference – an event where hundreds of youth come face-to-face with Jesus through the Eucharist. Her encouragement definitely motivated so many to attend the conference that year.

I recently had the joy of working with her to plan retreats for elementary and middle schoolers at our parish. She teamed up with another on-fire-for-God young woman, Diya. The three of us would spend hours on the phone – praying, planning, laughing, and dreaming big for Jesus. Every time we talked, I could feel the Holy Spirit moving. These girls were alive in their faith, and it was contagious.

Alecia told us during one meeting, 'Aunty, we need to do a novena for this retreat.' She continued, 'My mom always told me, "We should prepare with intercession before we do anything."' So we planned a Divine Mercy novena, and she was there on Zoom at 9:15 every night to lead the group in prayer. She also went to our parish priest and asked for an hour-long adoration for all the team members just before the retreat began. She led the group in adoration that evening, pleading for God's presence and encounter!

One night, we were up really late finishing retreat details. Around midnight, I got a message from her, 'Aunty, please pray for me. I have my Immunology exam at 8 am.' I felt terrible! I told her, 'Alecia, I'm so sorry! I hope this retreat planning isn't affecting your studies.' But what she said next shook me in the best way, 'No,

**Aunty. This is my time for the Church.'**

Read that again.

In a world where so many young people struggle just to make it to Sunday Mass, here's a college pre-med student – buried in labs and exams – still joyfully giving her time, her late nights, her heart, to serve Jesus and His Church. Not out of guilt. Not to impress anyone. Just out of love – for Jesus in the Eucharist, for the Church, and for the kids she's leading closer to God.

This is what sainthood in the 21st century looks like.

Alecia was kind enough to share her testimony for Kairos. So now, we invite you to dive into her story. Get ready to be inspired – and maybe even challenged – to make your own 'yes' to Jesus a little bolder, a little deeper, a little more real.

### **1. Can you please tell me a little bit about your background/family/parish/education?**

**Alecia:** I am a senior biochemistry major at the University of Dallas (a Catholic University). I was born in Las Vegas and moved to Dallas as a high school sophomore. I enjoy playing basketball and football with my younger brother.

### **2. I have seen you coming for daily Mass for a long time. Who influenced you the most to lead a Eucharistic-centred life?**

**Alecia:** Honestly, it's the influence of my mom. I see how she prioritises daily Mass, even though she works a full-time job and has the responsibilities of a mother. When I see how she is deep-rooted in her faith and is gaining energy, I want to experience that same power. I see the joy on her face that comes from knowing Christ. To her, going to Mass is not a checklist in her day but the source and strength of her life.

### **3. Can you please explain a few of the roles you played in your own parish and diocese in bringing others to the Eucharistic Jesus?**

**Alecia:** From 2023-2024, I was the Diocesan Youth Apostolate (DYA) representative for the Coppell parish. Fr Kevin Mundakkal (who was the DYA Director that year) had the vision to host *Qurbana* on Campus (QoC) at all the colleges across America. The intention



was to provide a time and space for college students to meet together and grow in their faith. I really agreed with this idea because I know that it is hard to keep your faith in college. So, the other Garland representative (Kevin Thomas) and I worked with UTD's campus ministry and started to host a once-a-month QoC. English *Qurbana* would happen in the evening, followed by food and activities. Non-Syro Malabar Catholics and Protestants even attended, to learn more about the beauty of our Eastern Catholic tradition. The *Qurbana* on Campus at UTD still happens to this day,

attracting decades of college students to the sacrifice of Christ.

#### 4. How does an active Eucharistic life help the young lead holy lives?

**Alecia:** My grandpa always says, 'There are three ways that we should be fit: in our body, mind, and soul.' On a daily basis, young people spend time looking after their bodies: eating a nutrient-rich diet, engaging in frequent exercise, and getting adequate rest. Young people also hang out with their friends, perform a hobby, or treat themselves to sweets to satisfy their minds. But what do we do to

feed our souls on a daily basis? As Jesus asks us, *what does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his soul?* (Mark 8:28). In the end, how fit you are or how much money you earn does not matter. We come naked into this world and leave with nothing but our souls. Attending Mass more frequently will remind you of your true worth and purpose in life. You will learn to distinguish between the voices of the world and the voice of your Father. In other words, hearing the Scripture and consuming food for our souls is the surest way to grow closer in your relationship with Christ. As Jesus says, *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.* (John 15:4). When you receive Jesus in Communion, he *literally* abides in you and becomes a part of you. There's no other god in any other religion who gets that close to his followers than our God.

#### 5. How important, for the young, is keeping the Eucharistic Jesus at the centre of their lives?

**Alecia:** Oftentimes, I feel anxious and lonely. Uncertainty about the future or the stress of daily life weighs my heart down. Yet, whenever I go to church and

In a world where so many young people struggle just to make it to Sunday Mass, here's a college pre-med student – buried in labs and exams – still joyfully giving her time, her late nights, her heart, to serve Jesus and His Church. Not out of guilt. Not to impress anyone. Just out of love – for Jesus in the Eucharist, for the Church, and for the kids she's leading closer to God.



see the community of believers gathering together, I feel peace and comfort. Just seeing other people who are passionate about their faith motivates me to be like them. For instance, there is an elderly woman who attends the nearby Roman Catholic church. On most days, I see her frantically leaving church right after the blessing. One day, I was able to catch her before Mass and ask her why she leaves so urgently. She explained that her Buddhist husband was against her going to church. So, she'd come quickly for Mass in the morning and rush back before he woke up. Hearing her story was eye-opening. She still came to daily Mass even though her husband was not pleased with her. She told me that without the Eucharist, she felt crushed inside. After that encounter, I pondered: if she can prioritise daily Mass, what is stopping me?

#### 6. How does one pay attention during Mass?

**Alecia:** I love paying attention to the Scripture readings and homily. Often, we do not listen carefully to the Scripture, but we just let it wash over us. But, I urge you to listen carefully to the readings because Scripture is one way God *directly* speaks to His people. You might think that the readings are boring or the same.


Even though the Gospel reading might be the same, the priest emphasises the reading in a different way in his homily. Or sometimes I may not get that 'aha' moment immediately but months later when I look back in my journal.

#### 7. How do you find time for Jesus every day in the midst of your busy pre-med schedule?

**Alecia:** When someone is busy, the key step is learning how to prioritise what matters. There are only 24 hours in a day, and everyone has the same hours. So the first step really is to focus on what matters and go from there. I know the local church's Mass times, and I've rearranged my schedule so I can attend Mass without impacting my schedule. Ultimately, it comes down to time management.

constant prayers and hard work was unbelievable in our parish during this Lent: 216 kids (91 elementary and 125 middle school) had their best ever Lenten retreat focusing on Holy Eucharist and Theology of Body with lots of spiritual fruitfulness. More than 45 high school, college, and young adult volunteers served the Lord by helping with this three-day retreat. The Spirit was flowing throughout the retreat!

Alecia's witness reminded me: The Church is alive. The youth are rising. Jesus in the Eucharist is calling each of us – young and old – to deeper love, radical holiness, and joyful service.

If you're wondering where to start, start where she did: at daily Mass. Come meet Jesus. Fall in love with Him. Give Him your time, your talents, your whole self. You'll never regret it. 



**Above:** Family photo- Blessy (left), Alex (middle), and Benny Paul (right)

**Left:** Elementary and middle school retreat at St. Alphonsa Church, Coppell, USA

#### Conclusion

This is what it means to be on fire for the Eucharistic Jesus. It's not about being perfect. It's about being available. It's about loving Jesus so much that no matter how busy life gets, you never put Him on the back burner. You keep showing up. You keep saying yes.

The fruit of Alecia's Eucharistic love,

**Alecia Paul** is a Biochemistry student at the University of Dallas, America. She will start medical school at Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Worth in July. An 8th-grade Catechism teacher, she is a parishioner of St. Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Coppell. The oldest child of Blessy and Benny Paul, she plays a key role in the faith formation of the children and youth in the parish.

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





# Embraced by the Blessed Mother:

## A LIFE UNDER HER MANTLE

**Dr Sunnichan V George** shares about his personal devotion to Mother Mary, and how she has been the bedrock of his life.

**F**rom my earliest memories, the Blessed Virgin Mary has gently walked beside me – guiding, consoling, and interceding. Born into a Catholic family where trust in God’s love and mercy was the bedrock of our home, my Marian devotion took shape in the tender rhythm of daily Rosaries and quiet moments of faith. My parents, faithful and deeply rooted in prayer, taught me not only by instruction but by example. The Rosary was not merely recited – it was lived. It became the golden thread that wove together every joy, every sorrow, every ordinary moment of life.

As a child, I was drawn to the beauty of Catholic traditions. The sacred silence of Adoration, the images of Mary gently cradling the infant Jesus, the litanies, novenas, and Marian feasts – all these instilled a deep reverence and awe in my heart. This foundational love grew through my Catholic school and college education, where I encountered a vibrant Church, rich in tradition and alive in the Spirit.

But my relationship with the Blessed Mother deepened in a more personal way when I was just a middle schooler and first encountered the private revelations given to Fr Stefano Gobbi. His book, *To the Priests, Our Lady’s Beloved Sons*, opened my young heart to an intimate awareness of Mary’s tender and urgent maternal concern for the Church and the world. I began to understand her role not only as the Mother of Jesus but as a spiritual mother to each of us, especially in these times of confusion and crisis. It was through these messages that I began to truly listen to her voice and respond to her gentle invitations. Also, it was the beginning of my love, passion and gateway to Our Lady’s Messages. *Afterward she appeared on earth and lived with humankind. She is the book of the commandments of God, the law that endures forever. All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die* (Baruch 3:38 and 4:1).

### Guided by Her Hand

Throughout my academic and professional life, I have experienced the Blessed Mother’s guidance in very tangible ways. Decisions that seemed complex or overwhelming – such as choosing my field of study or research topic – were made clear through prayer, especially the Rosary. Each step forward, whether into national or international projects, unfolded with unmistakable signs of her intercession. I often felt I was simply walking along a path she had quietly laid out for me.

Her help extended to the most personal areas of my life. When it came time to discern marriage, I placed everything in her hands. There was only one condition I asked of my future spouse: that we begin and end each day with the Rosary. This simple commitment became a profound foundation for our marriage, and one that has carried us through both peace and storm.

During the births of our children, we faced moments of uncertainty and fear. Yet even then, her maternal care surrounded us. Each child was born safely, and in thanksgiving, we gave each of them a Marian middle name – Mary, Marie, Maria, or Mario. It was our way of consecrating them to her, acknowledging that she had watched over their lives even before their first breath.

And she taught me something I carry to this day: prayer is never a homework assignment. We do not pray to complete a task – we pray because we love Jesus, and we love Mary. Every inspiration to pray is a divine invitation. The more we respond, the more we begin to see: *Pray until prayer becomes a joy for us!* And truly, it has become the joy and breath of my life.

My prayers are never for myself. I have learned to offer everything for the intentions of the Blessed Mother, trusting that she sees and knows far better than I do. What she desires for me always leads to Jesus. And so, over time, she has led me straight to the Eucharistic Heart of her Son – where all love, mercy, and healing flow.

### Pilgrimage and Apostolate

Over the years, I’ve been privileged to visit many Marian apparition sites – places where Heaven kissed the earth through her presence. Lourdes, Fatima,

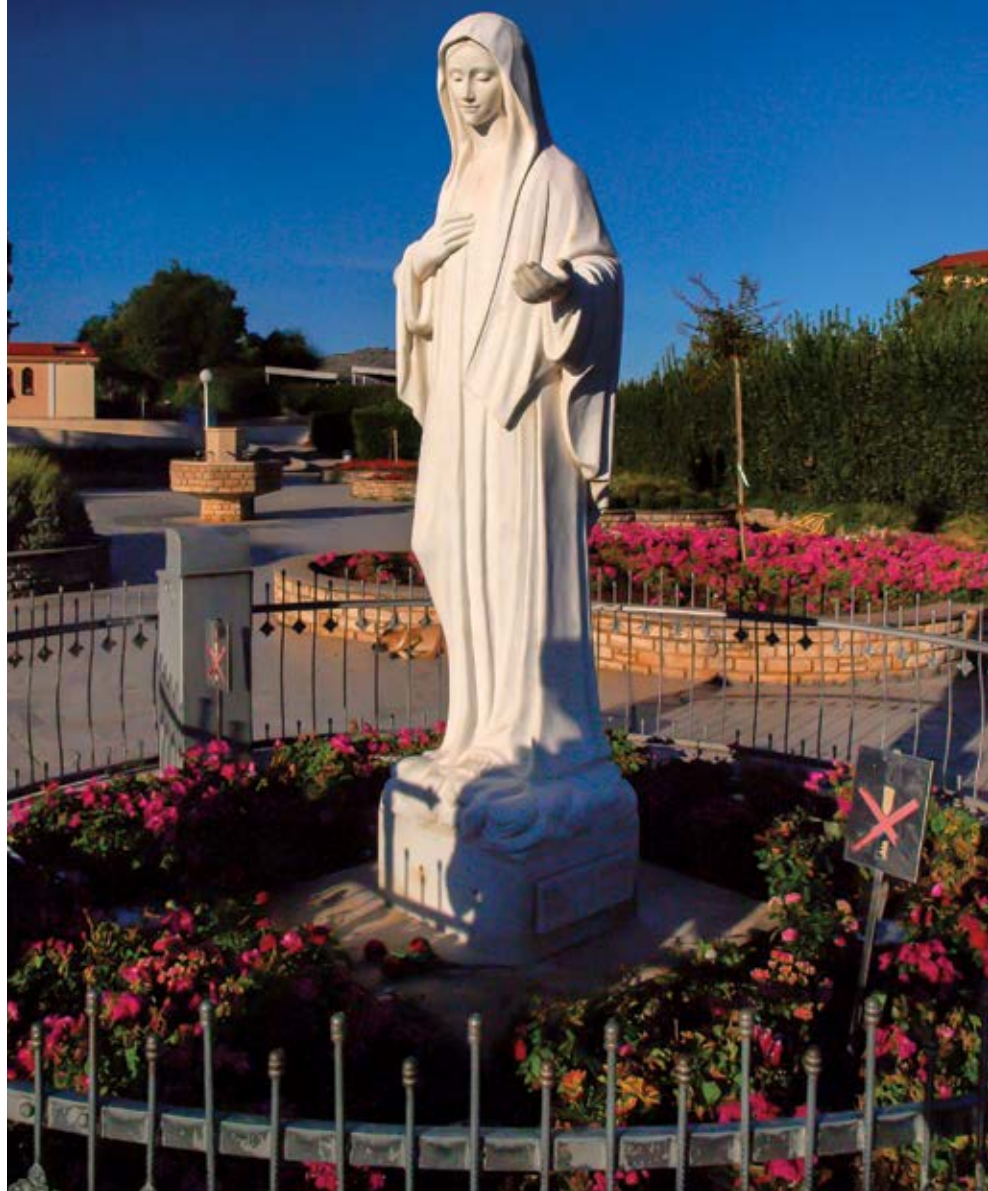


Knock, Naju, Kibeho, and Guadalupe all left their mark. But it was Medjugorje that became the spiritual home of my heart. There, on Apparition Hill and in the silence of Eucharistic Adoration, I encountered the living presence of Our Lady in a way that changed my life forever. This encounter inspired me to begin organising Marian pilgrimages so that others, too, could be touched by her love and messages.

Another powerful site I've been blessed to visit is the Shrine of *Holy Love Ministries* in Ohio, USA. Though lesser known, this place has been a spiritual refuge for many, including myself. The messages received there echo the heart of Mary's mission – to call humanity to holiness, to unity, and to complete trust in Divine Love. My devotion to the apparitions of Holy Love has only strengthened my conviction that Our Lady is actively preparing us for the triumph of her Immaculate Heart.

Living in the United States has opened new dimensions of Marian ministry. I felt strongly called to become involved in the pro-life movement – not through argument or protest, but through prayer. Week after week, I have joined others in praying the Rosary outside Planned Parenthood centres across the country. These are places of immense sorrow, but also potential for grace. We do not condemn – we intercede. We believe in the power of prayer, especially the Rosary, to transform hearts and bring healing. Through the tender and powerful intercession of the Blessed Mother, I have been blessed to witness the miracle of peace returning to many wounded wombs and weary hearts. After each decade of the Rosary, I was inspired to quietly offer the heartfelt ejaculation: 'Jesus, protect and save the unborn.' This simple, whispered plea – born of love and trust – became a lifeline of grace. Over the years, I have seen countless signs of divine intervention: women once told they could not conceive rejoicing in the gift of life, hearts once closed to motherhood opening in surrender, and lives once at risk sheltered under Mary's mantle. These are not just moments; they are sacred encounters with mercy. And this beautiful work continues – not because of me, but because of her, who always carries our

*Through the tender and powerful intercession of the Blessed Mother, I have been blessed to witness the miracle of peace returning to many wounded wombs and weary hearts. After each decade of the Rosary, I was inspired to quietly offer the heartfelt ejaculation: 'Jesus, protect and save the unborn.'*





prayers to the Heart of her Son.

I have also taken part in organising **Rosary Rallies**, publicly proclaiming our love for Mary and our hope for a culture of life. In Syro-Malabar churches across the US, I've helped initiate and conduct **10-day Eucharistic Adoration programmes** – spiritual fortresses built through hours of prayer, reflection, and sacramental grace. These events have touched many lives, drawing people into deeper union with the Lord through the loving hand of His mother.

### Marian Saints: My Spiritual Companions

My journey would feel incomplete without gratefully remembering the saints who have quietly walked beside me – those holy souls who loved the Blessed Mother with a depth I still strive to imitate. Their lives have been a compass pointing me always toward Jesus, through Mary.

St Louis de Montfort awakened in me the beauty of total consecration – *Totus Tuus, Maria* – a simple surrender that has become the foundation of my spiritual life. He taught that true devotion to Mary is the shortest, surest, and safest path to holiness. St Alphonsus Liguori, with his tender writings and deep love for the Mother of God, opened my heart to the power and gentleness of her intercession. St Maximilian Kolbe, who laid down his life in charity, revealed the heroic love that flows from a soul entirely given to her. And St John Paul II, whose life was a Rosary in action, inspired me with his humility and courage to entrust everything – my past, present, and future – to her maternal hands.

I also carry deep reverence to St Euphrasia, often called the *Praying Mother*. Her hidden life of prayer and silent sacrifice is a model that gently reminds me: no act of love or intercession is ever wasted. Her life echoes the Blessed Mother's own hidden *fiat*, repeated

daily in silence and fidelity. I feel a closeness to her, especially when I pray the Rosary in solitude, trusting that prayer offered with love can change the world – even if no one sees it.

St Padre Pio has been another guiding light. His simple but profound invitation – *Pray, hope, and don't worry* – and his witness of 'praying without ceasing' have helped me see prayer not as a moment of the day, but as the breath of the soul. Like him, I've come to believe that prayer – especially the Rosary – can pierce the hardest of hearts, heal the deepest wounds, and bring about miracles beyond our understanding.

In truth, I am only a small soul, treading a well-worn path that these great saints have already walked. And yet, I am filled with gratitude that the Blessed Mother still calls the simple, the weak, and the little ones to her

side. Through the Rosary, through the inspiration of the saints, and through every humble yes I have tried to offer, she continues to gently shape my heart to resemble her own – full of trust, love, and total surrender to the will of God.

### A Heart Anchored in the Eucharist

Ultimately, my Marian devotion has never led me away from Christ – but directly into His Heart, especially in the Holy Eucharist. Mary does not keep us for herself; she prepares us to receive her Son. Through her, I have come to cherish the Mass, the Tabernacle, and the Sacred Host more deeply than I ever imagined possible. Her Rosary has led me to the Cross, and beyond the Cross, to the Resurrection.

### A Life for Her, through Her, with Her

As I reflect on my life – its joys, sorrows, achievements, and struggles – I see one common thread: the presence of the Blessed Mother. She has been my guide, my companion, my advocate. Every decision, every mission, every act of prayer has been touched by her love.

To this day, I continue to walk with her. I pray the Rosary not out of duty, but out of love. I serve the Church not out of pride, but out of gratitude. I live my vocation not as a personal achievement, but as a response to her call.

To her, I have entrusted everything. And through her, I have received everything – most especially, the burning Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. With St Pope John Paul II, I humbly pray:

***Totus Tuus, Maria. I am all yours. And all that I have is yours.*** ■




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Dr Sunnichan V George is professor of food technology at Amal Jyothi College of Engineering, Kanjirapally, India. He is married to Dr Mini Mathew and they have four children.

# STRAINS AND GROANS



The weather is slowly changing in Rome and so is the Jubilee mood. On one side, winter has given way to spring, the clock has been turned back an hour, we have more daylight and warmth and therefore more tourists. And since we are entering Holy Week and Easter, there is a sacred vibe everywhere, 'faithful pilgrims' are also on the rise.

Do you like KFC? Definitely, if you are a kid or a teenager! Well, do you know, KFC is now the official food partner of the Jubilee. The Dicastery for Evangelization's Section for Fundamental Questions of Evangelization in the World, has announced a new food partnership with the world's leading fried chicken brand, Kentucky Fried Chicken. To mark the Jubilee, KFC will offer specially priced menus to pilgrims in over 120 KFC outlets in 16 regions of Italy. Pilgrims will be able to take advantage of these special rates for the entire Jubilee year through the Iubilaum25 app and its Service Charter. That's some yummy good news!

There are other collaborators for the Jubilee Year too. BPM Bank has announced its support by offering a contribution for the smooth running of events and setting up voluntary donation points for the pilgrims. Airbnb has also announced a joint initiative to smoothen the accommodation concerns of 30-35 million people expected during the Jubilee Year, which will also benefit local tourism. To ease the pressure on

Rome's infrastructure and encourage a better flow of visitors, Airbnb has launched multilingual web pages which, in addition to offering a wide range of accommodation options in the Rome metropolitan area, will also highlight the rich cultural and spiritual heritage which lies outside the city centre, giving an opportunity to discover some of Rome's hidden corners.

Italy's taste buds are generally wired to two things: coffee and *gelato*. Gelato Day was on 24 March (the European Artisan Gelato Day, the only date officially recognised by the European Parliament dedicated to a food product) and the flavour of the year is *Hallelujah* – isn't that a beauty! Sponsored by the Dicastery for Evangelization, the chosen flavour is a *gianduja* ice cream with toasted hazelnuts and pure chocolate chips. The official recipe, by Maestro Vincenzo Squatrito, was selected in the Artglace competition during SIGEP WORLD 2025 – the World Expo for Foodservice Excellence – I



should get a Jubilee scoop!

But, the biggest highlight of last month was Pope Francis' discharge from hospital after 37 days. On 23 March, at the end of the long hospitalisation caused by a serious bilateral pneumonia, the Holy Father appeared at the hospital balcony, sitting in a wheelchair, to greet the faithful and thank them for the prayers and affection from all round the world. Before returning to his Vatican residence Casa Santa Marta, the Pope went to pray at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. Pope Francis' recuperation continues at his residence with continued treatment, mobility and respiratory-related physiotherapy, especially for voice recovery, personal prayer, and concelebrating Mass in the residence's chapel, which may continue for about two months. His is currently not receiving any visitors. As he recuperates, all eyes are on him with bated breath for the canonisation ceremony of Bl Carlos Acutis.

Another major event that took place during this time was the Jubilee of Missionaries of Mercy (sixth of the great Jubilee events), from 28-30th March, which was missed by the Pope. Instituted by Pope Francis, this group of priests are sent throughout the world to bring forgiveness and hope, with a special mandate to absolve sins reserved to the Holy See. My friend and confrere, Fr Jijo Manjackal MSFS, who is part of





Missionaries of Mercy, told me how the day went. Mind you, this being a major event and their Jubilee, one would think they would get preference in the activities of the day. Normally, the Jubilee pilgrimage begins at Via Conciliazione, the long straight street leading to St Peter's Basilica. But he told me that due to the sheer number of pilgrims, they were unable to even get to the starting point. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the pro-Prefect of Dicastery of Evangelisation, came down in person but the Pilgrim's Office and volunteers said they were helpless due to the huge number of pilgrims. Thus on 29th March, Saturday, the pilgrimage – the start of this official Jubilee event – began an hour late. This reflects the current scenario on weekends! For this event, Pope Francis had chosen a particularly significant motto: 'You are my hope' (Psalm 71:5). The purpose of this is to put the sacrament of reconciliation

back at the centre of the pastoral life of the Church. As part of this event, the Diocese of Prato, together with the city and the Prato textile district, donated 1,500 stoles for this group of priests.

There are regular Holy Year concerts during this Jubilee Year, and the fifth of them was on 30th March, the final day of Missionaries of Mercy Jubilee – *Armonie di Speranza/ Harmonies of Hope*. The event was part of the cultural season 'The Jubilee is Culture.'

From the start of the Jubilee Year, the Guardia di Finanza in Rome has intensified its controls to combat the illegal trade in counterfeit religious articles, having already seized more than 16.5 million illegal articles and the prosecution of 11 people. During checks, irregular religious articles were discovered and seized, including rosaries, pendants,

bracelets and medallions, bearing sacred images, Vatican coats of arms and the official Jubilee logo, illegally reproduced in violation of intellectual property rights. It's quite shocking indeed.

One of the heart-warming events was how the Church commemorated St Pope John Paul II on his 20th death anniversary. There was a special prayer vigil attended by thousands and I witnessed special Masses being held with so much love everywhere. Archbishop Tadeusz Wojda, President of the Polish Bishops' Conference recollected the day 'the world knelt down in tears in Vatican



Square.'

And finally, the seventh great event, Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Professions, took place from 5-6th April. Reportedly, 35,000 sick people and healthcare professionals gathered. Many saints were remembered, especially St Camillo de Lellis, Bl Luigi Novaresse and Bl Benedetta Bianchi Porro, a medical student who died of a rare disease. ■

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

## IN FOCUS

# Strongholds for the Catholic Family

Mom-of-seven **Sheena Andrews** shares Catholic resources that provide wisdom and discernment from the information blitzkrieg surrounding us today.





In today's world of information blitz, where everyone is overstimulated through every kind of media platform, finding what is true is hard for children and adults alike. When life constantly throws situations that require decisions made, or a plethora of options to choose from, making the right choice can get overwhelming. Being a practicing Catholic, and making sound decisions based on Church teachings is one thing. Then there are a multitude of instances where your decisions are drawn from a well-formed conscience. Youngsters and adults alike need to continually equip themselves with resources that speak the truth in this ever-changing, ever-evolving world.

When listing resources that help discernment and decision making, I cannot start anywhere else but the Holy Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In Matthew 22:29, Jesus says, *you are mistaken because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God*. When studying the Bible it is helpful to choose a **study Bible**. Below are a couple of suggestions:

1. Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament (Ignatius press, 2010)
2. The Navarre Bible: New Testament Expanded Edition (Scepter, 2008)
3. Word of Fire Bible series
4. Bible in a Year by Fr Mike Schmitz, Ascension Press

With the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* available to us since 1992, Catholic teaching on any topic can be found here. It may be hard to read from front to back, but can always serve as a reference. The *Catechism in a Year* by Fr Mike Schmitz and Ascension Press is a great way to get through the book in bite size portions.

With the internet and social media taking over people's lives, we are fortunate to have several evangelisers and Catholic leaders abreast with those changes and creating content to enrich faith and Catholic culture. Below are some of the platforms (books/talks/resources) that help sensitise people.

**Formed.org** by the **Augustine Institute**, offers resources to encounter



scriptures, sacraments, and saints in creative and intellectually stimulating ways for both children and adults alike through movies, talk shows, audiobooks, documentaries and animated and live action kids shows. Free subscriptions are available for individuals through their respective parish or organisation.

**Ascension Press.com** Another Catholic media giant behind *Bible in a Year* and *Catechism in a Year* that brings out a variety of Catholic content. The Ascension app has a lot of free content but a subscription can give you access to its complete resources.

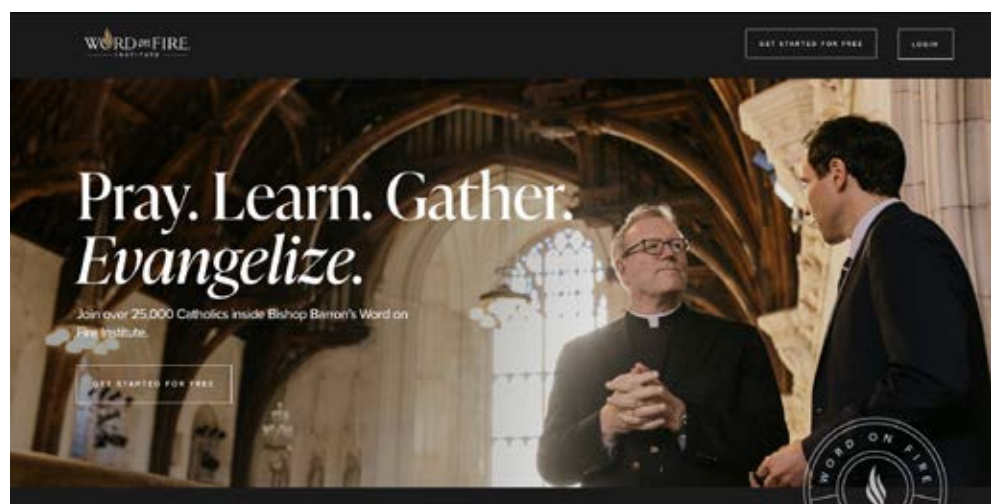
**Word on Fire Institute** by Bishop Robert Barron offers formation and training through courses, talk shows, monthly seminars and Q&As, useful for cradle Catholics and converts alike to obtain lifelong formation. They also publish books on Catholic tradition, religion, spirituality, theology,

philosophy, fiction and poetry. They have published several children's books, one among them being *Princess of Heaven*, showcasing some of our beloved female saints as God's princesses, as the world tries to rally around Disney princesses. **WordOnFire.org** is their online ministry which provides thousands of videos and articles connecting faith to popular movies, books and current events.

**Catholic.com** by the Catholic Answers apostolate will help you find answers if you are stumped by a question from your children or your atheist friend, even after reading the Bible, the CCC and religious books. They have several articles, videos, books and podcasts all accessible through the search box on the site.

**MagisCenter.com** is the place you can find science-based Catholic apologetics to grow in your faith. It has middle school and high school curricula and their content provides science-based evidence for God, Jesus, soul, the Church and her moral teachings. They have a blog where you can read articles by Catholic physicists, biologists, theologians and philosophers. They have daily Ignatian reflections and weekly podcasts on understanding God, the cosmos and us.

**St Paul Center** founded by Scott Hahn, who converted to Catholicism in 1986 is a research and educational institute that offers life-transforming Bible study with a goal to create a





The Chastity Project was founded by Jason Evert and Crystalina Evert to help teens and young adults find the beauty and freedom that comes with chastity. In recent years they have put out great content on LGBTQ related topics.

generation of biblically literate priests and lay people. They have a digital library with vast audio and video content that helps exploring scripture in a meaningful and life changing way.

**Axis.org** is a non-denominational ministry, remarkable for their parenting content. Their goal is to equip parents to engage with their teenagers through meaningful conversations and culture translation skills. They offer short videos, email newsletter, culture translator, podcasts and free downloadable parent guides.

**Chastity.com** or The Chastity Project was founded by Jason Evert and Crystalina Evert to help teens and young adults find the beauty and freedom that comes with chastity. In recent years they have put out great content on LGBTQ related topics. Their course on 'Navigating Gender with Charity and Chastity' is a great resource for youth ministers, parents, educators, priests and anyone struggling with ministering to individuals affected by same sex attraction, gender confusion and related issues. They have podcasts, YouTube videos available for free on topics, like dating, marriage and family, pornography, birth control and STDs, etc.

**The National Catholic BioEthics**



**Center** For those in the United States, this is a great resource on matters of bioethical and moral issues in healthcare and biomedical research to uphold the dignity of the human person. Besides providing online resources they are available to consult by email or telephone.

**Hallow app** is something I personally use daily which offers Catholic prayers and meditations that help users to deepen their relationship with God through a variety of audio-guided prayers, meditation and music that is liturgy oriented. It has free and paid content but it's free for priests and religious.

Now that I listed several online resources I will suggest some good reads. There are hundreds of good books that you can turn to, not to mention the biographies of saints which you can draw inspiration from any given day.

***Beyond the Birds and Bees: Raising Sexually Whole and Holy Kids*** by Greg and Lisa Popcak is a great guide for parents on not just how to provide sound sex education to your children but also ordering your marriage and family life to be conducive to raising holy children.

***Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church*** by Brandon Vogt is an excellent book for parents who are dealing with young adults who have left the faith and the Church. It gives a step-by-step plan to bring your adult children back to faith.

***Theology of the Body for Teens*** by Brian Butler and Jason Evert presents the teachings of John Paul II in a relevant, easy to follow and entertaining way that comes with a leader guide and student workbook, which can be used in youth groups.

***Persuasive Pro-Life: How to Talk About Our Culture's Toughest Issue*** by Trent Horn (Catholic Answers, 2014) is a great book on the topic of abortion.

More books that are great reads for Catholic parents or families:

***Answering Atheism: How to Make a Case for God with Logic and Charity*** by Trent Horn (Catholic Answers, 2013)

***The Contraception Deception: Catholic Teaching on Birth Control*** by Patric Coffin (Emmaus Road, 1992)

***Making Sense Out of Suffering*** by Peter Kreeft (Servant, 1986),

***Made for Love: Same Sex Attraction and the Catholic Church*** by Fr. Michael Schmitz (Ignatius Press, 2017)

***The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth*** by Scott Hahn (Doubleday, 1999)

***Delivered: True Stories of Men and Women Who Turned from Porn to Purity*** by Matt Fradd (Catholic Answers, 2014) ■

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**Sheena Andrews** is a neonatal practitioner working at Texas Children's Hospital, and mother of seven. She lives in Houston, USA.





# Today's Cartoons and 'Present' Parenting

**Joanna Joy and Aleena Joy** write about the perils of blindly allowing children to watch cartoons today, given the woke ideologies that have been creeping into these children's programmes.

**I**n the late 1920s, a mouse with huge ears and impeccable humour presented to us a new world of entertainment. Mickey Mouse entertained kids and adults alike. Even as the world of cartoons has evolved significantly, what hasn't changed is the immense love children have for cartoons. Whether it's Disney creations, Japanese anime or the caricatures in newspapers, cartoons have the ability to get people to do something. Kids, often with their limitless creativity and imagination, immerse themselves in the world of cartoons.

From classic Disney films to the latest streaming series, these stories have been our constant companions. Yet, beneath their entertaining surfaces lies something deeper: messages about right and wrong, about what it means to be good, about how we should treat others. However, some cartoons do not comply with our Catholic worldview – normalising behaviours our faith cautions against, presenting moral relativism as wisdom, or treating the supernatural as merely a plot device rather than the profound reality our Church teaches. When characters disrespect authority figures or pursue

selfish desires without consequence, it can quietly shape our expectations about real life.

When fairy tales were adapted as cartoons by animation companies like Disney, the stories were corrupted and the depictions were far from the real work. For example, in the Brothers Grimm original (1812), Snow White flees to the forest, bargains and works to earn her shelter. But in Disney's version, she simply sings to the animals and waits to be rescued. The character lacked the feminine charm as compared to the Grimm version. The most recent version (2025) of *Snow White* faced backlash from various spheres since it created significant controversy regarding its cast, changes in the story and the reimagining of the seven dwarfs. With the attempts to be 'politically correct', Disney drifted from being a 'safe place' for children. They introduced woke ideologies into their new projects. Their executives were vocal about this 'not at all secret gay agenda'. Even before parents could educate their kids, they wanted to inject gender ideology into little minds. JRR Tolkien, an English writer famous for his work *The*

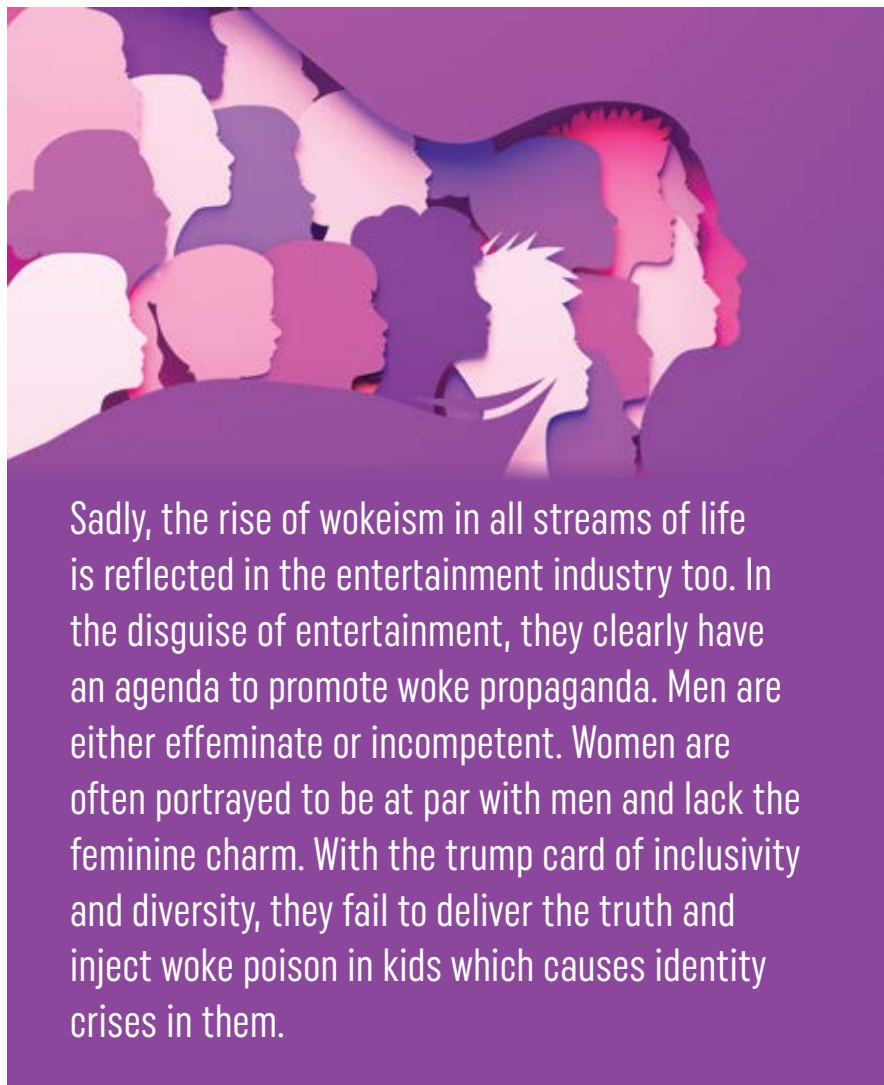
*Lord of the Rings* which is a fundamentally Catholic work, disliked Disney. Though there is news that Disney is moving away from woke storylines due to the backlash and boycott, it is not prudent to give kids exposure to their visual entertainments. GK Chesterton once said, 'Fairy tales do not tell children that dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be killed.'

Sadly, the rise of wokeism in all streams of life is reflected in the entertainment industry too. Disguised as entertainment, they clearly have an agenda to promote woke propaganda. Men are either effeminate or incompetent. Women are often portrayed to be at par with men and lack the feminine charm. With the trump card of inclusivity and diversity, they fail to deliver the truth and inject woke poison in kids which causes identity crises in them.

Children grasp more information from visual media than from traditional methods. Research points out that children are more attracted to cartoon content than traditional learning methods because of their scenes, audio, visual effects and colours that are well-crafted. The bright colours, engaging visuals and attractive sounds together play a significant role in gluing children to the screens. Cocomelon, one of the most viewed and subscribed to YouTube channels, uses this manipulative strategy to keep kids coming back to it. Two to six seconds frame changes and highly saturated bright colours make the cartoon addictive to kids. This creates an effect which is similar to that of an addiction out of binging Instagram reels. Children glued to the screens face issues with socialising.

Violence is another major issue in kids' shows. Although violence in cartoons is showcased as humour, little kids who cannot differentiate between good and bad might try to imitate the characters and the violence that they cause. This creates problems when they realise that things do not work the way they see in cartoons. The kids are desensitised towards the real world. They lose the ability to differentiate between reality and fiction, which affects their rational thinking.

Not only cartoons, but present-day



Sadly, the rise of wokeism in all streams of life is reflected in the entertainment industry too. In the disguise of entertainment, they clearly have an agenda to promote woke propaganda. Men are either effeminate or incompetent. Women are often portrayed to be at par with men and lack the feminine charm. With the trump card of inclusivity and diversity, they fail to deliver the truth and inject woke poison in kids which causes identity crises in them.

comic books have also become a very useless medium for kids. Comic books were a great way of storytelling for kids with beautiful pictures alongside. Today, they portray meaningless pictures and writings which never deliver any value to the kids.

Children until their teenage years can be moulded like clay. The values and virtues they have at this age are carried to their grave. Most parents put their kids in front of screens because it is convenient. But little do they realise that the 'comfort' they enjoy while doing this put their kids into greater danger. Pope Benedict said, 'we are meant for greatness and not for comfort.' As parents, it is our duty to discern if we are to expose our children to such dangers for our mere comforts. Children deserve to have 'present'

parents. The material goods that we provide to our children will be forgotten and what remains are the virtues we impart in them, the quality time we spent with them and the validations that we as parents give to our kids. As parents, let us not endanger our kids with the lies of the world by exposing them to propaganda entertainment. Let us be intentional and prudent in what we serve to them. ■

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# WHO IS TEACHING US TODAY?

**Mikhil George** tackles the subject of how Catholic discernment is essential across ages to choose from popular entertainment today.

**W**hat you are is God's gift to you, what you become is your gift to God – Hans Urs von Balthasar.

The 21st-century Christian is consistently under attack. With the explosion of online streaming platforms like Netflix, Prime, etc., there's so much adulterated and unfiltered content in the ether which goes against the Christian moral view.

With no censor whatsoever, it can be very easy to slide away from the presence of God in today's times. I mean, ask yourself, how much time in a given day do you engage in watching movies and shows with themes of gore, violence, or profanity across distribution platforms?

Not just movies, but even the music you hear – does it propel you towards God? Do you accidentally get influenced by ad films that portray anti-Catholic values?

Friends, these are serious questions to ask. If not, the enemy can easily occupy us to his territory. In this article, we'll look at how adults and kids can discern content against the Catholic faith in mainstream media and entertainment and live a life faithful to God.

## **DISCERNMENT: THE CHRISTIAN CALL TO BE FAITHFUL**

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).*

The Apostle Peter knew that a good Christian couldn't afford to slack. Why? The adversary, the Devil or Lucifer, is constantly hunting faithful Christians down and leading them to hell at all times.



So in this world, as the 'church militant', we ought to live a life of discernment. At the heart of discernment lies the quality of differentiating between good and evil. A basic awareness of our Catholic standing will help us to discern between what's acceptable and what lies in the radar of the enemy.

St Paul exhorts Christians in Romans 12:2, *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*. Christians are called not to passively absorb culture but to evaluate it through the lens of truth.

When engaging with media, ask:

Does this promote values that align with Christ's teachings?

Is the representation of faith respectful or distorted?

Is sin normalised or glorified?

What kind of artists and actors influence you?

There are so many celebrities who now use sacred Catholic symbols such as the rosary and crucifix simply as a fashion statement and also as props for anti-religious or immoral messages. Popular singers like Madonna, Lady Gaga, Kanye West, Jay-Z, Beyonce, Rihanna, etc. have repeatedly used sacred Catholic symbols in their music videos in blasphemous contexts.

Take, for instance, the music video 'Like a Prayer' (1989) by Madonna, which featured burning crosses and scenes in a church setting with sexual undertones. She frequently wears rosaries and crucifixes during performances that mix sexual and religious themes. Her 2012 MDNA tour had a 'religious rebellion'

theme, showing mock crucifixions and religious figures in scandalous scenes.

Pop icon Lady Gaga even went to the extent of wearing a latex nun outfit and swallowing rosary beads in her 'Alejandro' music video. As of recent times, Sam Smith dressed as Satan, surrounded by fire and dancers in cages in his 2023 Grammy Awards performance of 'Unholy' with Kim Petras.

These are just a few examples of how pop artists misuse sacred Catholic imagery in their music videos.

Now let's look at some movies that portray anti-Christian and occult concepts. Gen Zs and youth of the 90s must surely have watched the movie, *The Da Vinci Code* (2006). If you've watched it, as a devout Catholic you would have sensed how anti-Christian the movie is.

#### HOW HOLLYWOOD & POP CULTURE MISUSE CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS AND MESSAGES

Majority of Catholic teenagers and youth today are seamlessly influenced by mainstream Hollywood actors/actresses and billboard artists. It's not entirely sinful to have a liking for a film star or a pop artist, but the pertinent question is:







In the film, Robert Langdon, a professor, uncovers a secret about Jesus and Mary Magdalene that suggests the Church covered up His supposed marriage.

Let's stop there and ask how blasphemous that is. The moviemakers are promoting the idea that the Catholic Church is corrupt, power-hungry, and anti-woman.

In recent times, a show, namely *Lucifer* (Netflix), depicts the Devil as a charming anti-hero, blurring the line between good and evil. There are several others like *Twilight Saga*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and even the popular *Harry Potter* books and movies that portray vampires, witches, wizards, and black magic spells that explicitly are against God and the First Commandment.

In Latin America, famous movie producers released a satirical comedy film, *The First Temptation of Christ* (Netflix, Brazil), in 2019, which is supposedly a blasphemous portrayal of Jesus suggesting He was in a homosexual relationship, sparking outrage among Christian communities.

Even though these films/shows/music videos come under first rank anti-Christian themes, several other secular and profane concepts such as nudity, violence, and psycho thrillers have fit the bill of the popular American and world culture. It's not just Catholic teens and youth today who are being influenced by media/entertainment but also adults who know to distinguish between good vs evil.

### ARE ADULTS ALSO INFLUENCED?

As adult Catholics, it is our responsibility to set good examples for our kids so that they don't fall short of holiness. However, today the issue with moderating the usage of content based on the aspects of good vs evil has become very difficult.

*One of the reasons why adults find it difficult to draw a line is because modern entertainment normalises sin by presenting it as 'liberating', 'modern', or 'progressive.'*

Also, there's a growing subject of moral relativism which suggests that truth is subjective and everyone's opinion is equally valid, regardless of God's law.

You could easily watch a nude scene with your wife in a romantic movie and entertain the aspect of sinning against the character in the film. There are also other possibilities of sin when you might have a good understanding of Christian morals and faith, but your family friends are not of the same worldview. You might decide to have a movie night with such 'secular' friends and end up watching anti-Christian movies such as psycho-thrillers, satanic themes, etc.

The same could also be true if you're going out to a music concert or watching Grammy events featuring artists who propagate Satanism through satanic rituals.

### HOW ADS PROPAGATE ANTI-CHRISTIAN MESSAGES

Burger King Spain released 'The Sacrilegious Whopper', a Holy Week Ad Campaign in 2022 with messages such as 'take and eat of it. It does not have meat.' – a parody of Jesus' words at the Last Supper.

Scottish comedian Fern Brady released a promotional poster for her stand-up tour, 'I Gave You Milk to Drink,' depicting herself as the Virgin Mary squirting breast milk into a kneeling man's mouth dressed in ecclesiastical clothing.

These are explicit ads that profane Christ and the Virgin Mary, but several other ads propagate anti-Christian values by supporting the cause of abortion or the use of condoms and fashion statements that project nudity.

We might just watch these ads casually without having noticed the messages they carry. That's why I've taken the effort to showcase examples and themes where you need to take a stand against.

### PRACTISE THE ART OF FILTERED MEDIA USAGE

I decided to use the word 'filtered' because that brings a sense of responsibility to the viewer. Whether you're an adult or a youth or a teenager, you need to start teaching yourself the importance of staying true to your Christian values while consuming content online from various media platforms.

You can set standards for yourself and decide to watch movies and listen to songs that propagate the Christian values of love, faith, and hope. As a matter of fact, there are several Christian movies and songs that represent Christ in their totality and offer healing, rejuvenation, and bonding towards Christ.

Lean towards artists like Don Moen, Chris Tomlin, etc., and film actors the likes of Mel Gibson, or Jim Caviezel who create and act in life-changing movies such as *The Passion of Christ*.

Today, the younger generation can also get inspired by watching *The Chosen* or *House of David*, series that depict the lives of Jesus and His disciples and the story of David respectively.

So, dear adults and youth of the Catholic community, let's stand together and stay alert while consuming content and discern between good and evil at all times.

Stay Blessed!



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# 'FORCE-FED' MANIPULATION?

Are we (as adults) being subtly yet forcefully 'groomed' to accept as normal ideas that go against our faith? Jyothsna Dsouza addresses this issue.



There are several ways in which Catholics might be unconsciously or subconsciously exposed to ideas that contradict the teachings of the Church. These influences can come from various sources and affect people in different ways, sometimes without them even realising it. Let us look at some of these areas.

## MUSIC, MOVIES AND TV-SHOWS

In 1976, the song 'Hotel California' by the Eagles, mysterious as it was iconic, bought the term subliminal messages into public focus. Fans have speculated that there was backward masking, where a message is recorded backwards and can only be heard when the song is heard in reverse. Some claim that when you play the song in reverse, you hear phrases like 'Satan, he hears this,' and such like. These claims have been largely debunked as hoaxes or misinterpretations both by experts as well as by the Eagles.

Cut to 2025. Along with the rest of the world, Satan too has evolved and does not just hide in subliminal messages, but is influencing our thought processes, not subtly but in broad daylight.

Take for instant the hugely successful American sitcom *Modern Family* which began in 2009 and features the glamour queen Sofia Vergara, lasting 11 seasons and 250 episodes. Winner of the Primetime award for Outstanding Comedy series, this addictive series has a catch. The story involves a gay couple with two lovely kids, portraying a near perfect family and presenting this unnatural setup as a new normal. As people binge watch through 250 episodes of rip-roaring family humour, it won't be surprising if this influences acceptance of the concept of same-sex families which are against the will of God.

It is common to come across gay and lesbian themes in mainstream movies where the protagonists are portrayed as victims of discrimination, violence, or other form of adversity. *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and *Moonlight* (2016) to name a couple. While these struggle do reflect the real world and attune us to be forgiving, they also influence people into thinking that such relationships are normal. The trend has moved a step further to present 'cute' same-sex couples in happy relationships. Happiness is



infectious and an average Catholic may get the message that it normal for same-sex couples to have a normal family, complete with adopted or surrogate kids. The reality of the issues these children face growing up in those conditions is not up for viewing, exposing and influencing young impressionable adults to choose a wrong path.

The depiction of pre-marital sex in movies and serials is so rampant that it is difficult to find a clean watch. This is conditioning young adults with the idea that having a pre-marital relationship with or to move in with your partners is the right thing to do, to see if things can work out, rather than have an expensive divorce later. A marriage offer comes months or even years after moving in and marriage takes place with a even prettier baby in hand.

Today's movies tell us it is normal to marry after you have children or not at all, thus directly violating God's commandments, and it is difficult to discern whether movies changed the culture or the culture changed the movies. Nevertheless, the reality is today's young adults are being fed a different family model.

### THE INTERNET

A boon like no other, Google, YouTube, and now ChatGPT and Grok have become our go-to for knowledge, information and entertainment. Yet, there is darkness lurking around, and just a click on the wrong link may be enough to lead the gullible astray. Recently a paedophile network called 'Kidflix' was busted. It had 72,000 child abuse videos and 1.8 million users with possibly some misled Catholics. Then there are the doomsday specialists who condemn nations for their wrongdoings and predict that the wrath of God will soon destroy them. They use our weakness for sensationalism to amplify their own glory. There are gifted Protestant preachers who while genuinely proclaiming the gospel, may not adhere to Catholic doctrines and teachings, particularly with respect to our blessed mother. Any deviation from our Catholic teachings must be a strong cue to tune off.

Pope Francis has repeatedly urged responsible and mindful use of social media, warning against its potential for

'toxicity, hate speech and fake news' and emphasising the importance of fostering real connections and relationships, not just algorithms.

At no time in history have we humans been manipulated by bots and multi-billion dollars being poured into systematically influencing our thoughts on voting and on issues like abortion and recognition of gay rights. We are bombarded with negative messages cleverly wrapped in humour slowly but surely putting into our hearts feelings of hatred and negativity.

We must guard against this and must learn to pick, choose and imbibe the positive while rejecting the negative.

### MOTIVATIONAL BOOKS

At the other end of the spectrum are brilliant motivational and self-help books that drive you be a better person, through various tools like meditation, mindfulness and discipline to achieve wealth, peace, happiness, health, etc. Some of them help readers discover the purpose and meaning to their life, with a strong emphasis on faith and God.

God now has many such innovative names in the modern world like 'Higher Power' and 'Universal Mind,' which while acknowledging His power, deny the Trinity, the resurrection of Jesus, and therefore the fundamentals and core of Christianity. Others bestsellers stress on purely human effort to achieve success and discount the role of God in the transformation. While reading and implementing the principles and ideas of these books may bring immense benefits, and may even influence the reader to be humble, patient, loving, contributing, and so a better human, adults not strongly rooted in the Catholic faith risk distorting their perspective and the role of God in their lives. Many Catholics today are influenced by a more individualistic approach to faith, where personal spirituality and experience become the primary source of authority, rather than the teachings of the Church. This can lead to subjective interpretations of Catholic doctrine that are shaped more by personal preferences or feelings than by objective theological understanding. Books which focus on philosophies like relativism, individualism and those that prioritise personal desires can be problematic.

### WHAT TO DO?

Adult Catholics are often exposed to these ideas through a variety of channels, many of which they may not even realise are influencing their beliefs. The challenge is for individuals to remain grounded in the authentic teachings of the Church and to engage critically with the world around them, all while holding fast to the truths of the Catholic faith. The key to counteracting these unconscious influences is the Eucharist, ongoing formation, prayer, and engagement with the Magisterium of the Church. We need to be a little more careful and do some basic background research about the books we read or the movies/serials/videos we watch.

An indicator would be to check whether the authors, creators or producers define themselves as Catholics or Christians, or if they go by descriptions like agnostics or if atheists. Online reviews can also be helpful.

Pope Francis has called for tech and media reforms in 2021, saying, 'In the name of God, I ask the technology giants to stop exploiting human weaknesses, people's vulnerability; for the sake of profits without caring about the spread of hate speech, grooming, fake news, conspiracy theories and political manipulation... In the name of God, I ask the media to stop the logic of post-truth, disinformation, defamation, slander and the unhealthy attraction to dirt and scandal, and to contribute to human fraternity and empathy with those who are mostly damaged.'

We too need to pray with Pope Francis for a better world, free of the defects of social media, agreeing with him that while technology clearly can be a tool for the good, it can never replace contact between people, it can never be a substitute for a community in which we can be rooted and which ensures that our life may become fruitful.

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A Mumbai-based Chartered Accountant, **Jyothsna DSouza** has chosen to be a homemaker and raise up her three children. She spends her spare time developing Christian merchandise.

# Finding





# Balance

## Faith, Social Media, and Our Well-Being

**S**ocial media has become an integral part of our modern lives. It allows us to stay connected with loved ones, share moments of joy, find community across distances, and access inspiration, education, and even spiritual resources at our fingertips. For many, it has opened doors to evangelisation and connection in ways never before possible.

Recent research acknowledges these benefits, highlighting how social platforms can foster belonging, spread awareness on important issues, and provide emotional support – especially during times of isolation. For example, during the pandemic, online communities helped people remain spiritually connected and emotionally supported even when physically apart.

However, studies also show growing concerns about the effects of excessive or unreflective social media use – especially when it begins to shape how we view ourselves, others, and the world around us.

Researchers have noted a rise in anxiety, depression, and social isolation, particularly among young people, who often feel the need to be constantly connected. The fear of missing out (FOMO) and the pressure to keep up with trends can make people feel like they are falling behind or not measuring up. Even adults are not immune to these feelings.

As Catholics, we believe that every

person is created in the image and likeness of God, and our dignity is not based on appearance, popularity, or performance, but on our identity as beloved children of God. Social media, while useful, can sometimes lead us to compare ourselves with others or feel that we must present only the best parts of our lives. This can unintentionally lead to feelings of isolation when we are struggling.

Another area of concern is how quickly we respond to trends or opinions online. It's easy to feel pressure to align with popular views without taking time to think critically or reflect prayerfully. But as followers of Christ, we are called to be discerning, to seek truth with love, and to speak and act in ways that reflect our faith.

Technology also offers instant gratification, which can make waiting and patience more difficult. While there is nothing inherently wrong with efficiency and speed, we need to make sure we are not losing the richness of face-to-face connection or the ability to sit with silence, reflect, and truly be present with one another.

Meaningful relationships – built through empathy, compassion, and shared experiences – take time and presence. Spending too much time online may unintentionally reduce

opportunities for these deeper connections, especially among children and teens who are still developing these social and emotional skills.

### So what can we do?

The first step is simply becoming aware. Recognising how we use social media and how it affects us is a powerful starting point. Catholic teaching reminds us to regularly examine our hearts and habits, asking: Is this drawing me closer to God? Is it helping me love others better?

Jesus teaches us the two greatest commandments: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbour as yourself. These guideposts can shape every part of our lives – including how we engage online.

We can ask ourselves:

- Am I using my time in ways that reflect God's purpose for my life?
- Is my online presence uplifting, truthful, and loving?
- Do I make time for real-world relationships and spiritual growth?

### How can I bring Christ into my daily digital habits?

For parents and caregivers, this is also an opportunity to gently guide children to form healthy digital habits. Encouraging them to see social media as a tool – not a measure of worth – can help them stay grounded in their true identity in Christ. Reminding them that faith is not only lived out in public moments, but also in quiet, personal choices, can shape how they carry themselves both online and offline.

In our Catholic tradition, we are reminded that we are not alone in navigating these challenges. God is with us in every space – digital and physical. By staying rooted in prayer, Scripture, and the sacraments, we can engage with the world – including social media – with wisdom, compassion, and grace.

Let us continue to be ambassadors of Christ in all things, letting our words and actions reflect the love of God in us, both on screen and in person. ■

IN MEMORIAM



Author with Pope Francis

# A Compassionate Leader with the Face of the Merciful Father

Looking back upon the many personal audiences he has had with the Pope, **Manoj Sunny** fondly remembers Pope Francis.

Shortly after Pope Francis became the successor to Pope Benedict XVI, he announced a gathering of ecclesial movements at the Vatican to be held on Pentecost. On 26 May 2013, during this gathering, I had the privilege of meeting the new Pope for the first time, just two months into his papacy. Having previously met St Pope John Paul II and the late Pope Benedict XVI, I found this experience quite different. When I first met with St John Paul II, I couldn't control my tears because I was aware that I stood on holy ground in the presence of a holy person. I met





Pope Benedict at the end of the Synod on Evangelisation. After a month of listening to him, I knew I was in the presence of an authentic Catholic teacher – a seat of wisdom and knowledge.

I have had five personal audiences with Pope Francis, each time encountering the same radiating smile and joy that instilled hope and courage, uplifting my entire being. He made me feel valued, cherished, and loved. During my first audience, when I addressed him as 'Holy Father,' he responded with a broad smile, calling me 'holy son.' Unlike my previous

audiences, he was reluctant to allow me to bow down and kiss his ring. Instead, he held my hands firmly and talked with me, looking into my eyes. Whenever we met, I gave him our *Kairos* magazine, International Newsletter, etc. He listened attentively as I introduced our movement and explained recent international initiatives. He strongly encouraged our work and supported our movement. I requested his blessing for our movement, which he always granted wholeheartedly. After meeting the Pope, several bishops have commented on his knowledge

and appreciation of the Jesus Youth movement.

I will never forget that gathering at the Rome Olympic Stadium on 1st June 2014, with the Italian Charismatic Renewal and global leaders. After his address to over 40,000 people, Pope Francis knelt on the bare stage, bowed his head, and asked the people to pray for him – a gesture he repeated from his first address as Pope. Seeing the congregation extend their hands towards the Pope and pray for him was overwhelming. Again, on 3rd June 2017, during the vigil at Circo Massimo celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Charismatic Renewal, Pope Francis bowed his head, asking his friend Giovanni Traettino, a Pentecostal pastor, to pray for him along with the thousands gathered there. Pastor Giovanni, whom Pope Francis visited at his Pentecostal Church in 2014, led a beautiful prayer for the Holy Father. I still remember Pope Francis singing 'How Great Thou Art,' standing and raising his hands in praise, singing aloud with other Charismatic leaders. One of Pope Francis' remarkable qualities was his 'ordinariness' – from his residence to his car to his interactions – he didn't present himself as an authoritative leader but as an ordinary person, just like any of us, chosen by God to lead the Church while acknowledging his limitations and vulnerabilities. This 'ordinariness' was the trademark of his leadership. He referred to himself as a 'sinner' but a 'redeemed sinner.' I believe this is why he took the motto, *Miserando atque eligendo*, or 'Because he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him.'

Pope Francis was the one who gave the most audiences to ecclesial movements, initiating efforts to bring the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to the entire Church and Life in the Spirit to everyone everywhere. With the launch of CHARIS in 2019, he integrated the Catholic Charismatic Renewal into the Church's hierarchical structure.

In February 2016, Pope Francis was scheduled to address us at the end of one of the conferences with over 150 delegates in the Vatican. The previous night, we heard that the Pope had a fever and might not speak to us, and even if he did, he might not meet everyone at the conference. However, he joined us on time, appearing tired but determined, and insisted on meeting each person, not

just a few bishops and leaders. I was also fortunate enough to meet him personally. In his presence, we were all treated equally, as he showed each of us the same dignity and honour, just as Father God treats us all.

Pope Francis embodied the Merciful Face of the Father. His belief that 'God hates sin but loves the sinner' opened the doors of the Church to everyone. His non-judgmental stance towards the LGBTQ community reflects his deep conviction about the dignity of every human being created in the image and likeness of God. He believed there is always a place in the Father's heart



CCR Golden Jubilee



At the Rome Olympic Stadium

that welcomes those seeking to return, and the Church's doors should remain open to all who want to reconnect. He said, 'I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures.' (*Evangelii Gaudium* 49) His vision of the Church as a 'field hospital after battle' underscores this. He ignited this process by announcing 2016 as the 'Year of Mercy'. He said, 'So many people need their wounds healed! This is the mission of the Church: to heal the wounds of the heart, to open doors, to free people, to say that God is good, God forgives all, God is the Father, God is affectionate, God always waits for us.' He chose love over doctrine, compassion over judgment, and most remarkably, action over applause. Time magazine published an article on 21st April titled 'Pope Francis' Greatest Achievement was Emphasising Mercy.' On the same day, Whoopi Goldberg wrote on Instagram that he was 'the closest in a long time that seemed to remember

One of Pope Francis' remarkable qualities was his 'ordinariness' – from his residence to his car to his interactions – he didn't present himself as an authoritative leader but as an ordinary person, just like any of us, chosen by God to lead the Church while acknowledging his limitations and vulnerabilities.

that Christ's love enveloped believer and non-believer.' His writings and stance on mercy, human dignity, migrants, a Church that is poor and for the poor, reaching out to the peripheries, climate change, protecting our Mother Earth, etc., were embraced and followed by everyone, not just Christians. A true compassionate leader who reflected the face of a merciful Father!

Pope Francis clearly envisioned the Church's primary mission – evangelisation. In his first Apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, he shares his 'dream of a "missionary option," that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation' (*EG* 27). He calls each one of us 'to be always "on the journey," to not stand still, and to always carry in our hearts the idea that there is "always more" to do in order to be true disciples and missionaries of Christ; be men and women who are not afraid to take risks, get our hands dirty, make mistakes, and know how to move forward'

(Plenary Assembly of PCL, 18 June 2016). What a powerful challenge this man of God sets before us in Jesus Youth, a 'missionary movement at the service of the Church'!

Our beloved Pope Francis, we will miss you, but we are glad you are in your Father's house. We witnessed your bodily suffering in the last days and your unwavering courage to continue your mission. We saw how difficult it was for you on this Easter Sunday, even to raise your hands to bless us. But you continued the mission entrusted to you until the last breath of your life. On April 21st, on that 'Master's morning,' when you met your Master face to face, you would have proudly said, like St Paul, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.' Today, we too run the race, not knowing when the Master may come. Please pray for us, that in following your footsteps, we may say the same words when we meet our Master face to face. Amen.





# Hope and Simplicity

As Kairos Global's Pope Talk columnist, **Dr Kochurani Joseph** reflects on those elements that illuminate the papacy of Pope Francis.



The first thing that comes to mind whenever I think of Pope Francis is the Pope Talk column in *Kairos Global* magazine. To prepare it every month, I go through the various speeches and interventions given by the Pope to various audiences – simple ones like the Wednesday audiences or serious interventions to a particular category or group. All these are downloaded and distilled into a gist for *Kairos* readers. In fact, while preparing Pope Talk, I get to go through the updates to our Catholic teaching, our magisterium. In this way, even as I am helping *Kairos*, I can keep abreast of the latest teachings of the Catholic Church.

What impressed me most about Pope Francis was his cheerful nature, the wholeness and happiness that he radiated to all around him. Whomever he meets – be it a small child or a senior citizen, a highly qualified intellectual or

an uneducated person, an ordinary man or a leader – to each of them, his attitude and approach was the same. And he said that nobody is insignificant – everyone is precious because each person is created in the image and likeness of God and we are all children of God. That was his approach to everyone. In fact he once said, 'Each human person in this world is a love story of God the Father. Each new born baby shows that God still loves us.'

Another thing that both fascinates and astonishes me is the effort the Pope takes for the ongoing catechesis of his flock, the people of God – through encyclicals, apostolic exhortations or apostolic letters. In each document, he endeavours to make the catechesis available to everyone. And anyone can, in fact, digest the depth of the document given the simplicity of the language used. Each document concludes with a prayer to Mother Mary, because she played an important role in both his

personal and pastoral life.

Another thing that touches me is his simplicity, something that has been the hallmark of his life. I remember twelve years ago, when he started his papacy, he bowed before the audience and asked them to pray for him. His simplicity was reflected in his dressing, his mode of transport, and in his eating habits. Even in his death, his request was for the funeral to be as simple as possible. Towards the last days of his papacy, his simplicity was very evident on Easter Sunday too. Even though he was weak and frail, he wanted to be with the people, to meet and greet them.

Social commitment was very important to Pope Francis. He would always think of the people on the peripheries – the marginalised, the downtrodden. No one was excluded. He preferred the principle of inclusion – holding hands with everyone. It actually was a spirit of synodality: holding everyone and listening to everyone, walking with everyone and upholding everyone. This is the essence of synodality. It was the essence of his life. He would always say, 'Go to the peripheries.' Sometimes I've felt that this statement could have been his tagline.

Throughout the papacy, he had the courage to say what was right and to distinguish between right and wrong; the moral teaching of the Church with regard to the dignity and preservation of life. He was a pro-life champion – defending life from the womb to the tomb.

Lastly, I want to share what has touched me about Pope Francis – the hope to which we are called to. No matter the situation, however negative: there is always an element of hope. This is what the Risen Christ has given us. Pope Francis was a man of hope. Wherever he went, he preached hope. His autobiography too is named, 'Hope'. ■

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# The Legacy of Pope Francis



**H.E. Most Rev Dr Alex Vadakumthala**, spoke to Shekinah News on the day Pope Francis passed. Below, with his permission, is an excerpt.

A great spiritual leader, respected all over the world has passed. The prophetic voice of this era has ceased. Even on his last day, during his Easter sermon, *Urbi et Orbi*, his desire and final wish was for peace in the world. Certainly, the world must consider his last words and remember them.

From 13 March 2013 till 21 April 2025, while God had entrusted to him the pastoral ministry of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, regardless of race or religion, put his time and his voice before the world's conscience for peace, harmony and brotherhood. Now, when that voice has fallen silent, its echo must remain in our hearts and consciences, especially in those areas where war still rages. The solemn prophetic voice of Pope Francis should resonate in the minds of the rulers who harbour hostile attitudes.

Despite his illness, frailty and hospitalisation, Pope Francis' mind and heart always stood for the well-being of the entire world. Through his encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, *Fratelli Tutti*, he laid out that firm conviction that a human culture, unity, and fellowship beyond the boundaries of faith and religion is most essential for this era.

Pope Francis loudly proclaimed to the conscience of the people through the exhortation, *Laudato Si*, not only for Christians or the Catholic Church, but for the entire world, how imperative it is to protect our common home. This should be



a commitment on our part. *Laudato Si* will complete ten years this 25th May. It was further underlined by the exhortation, *Laudato Deum* (the praise of God) – that if we do not preserve this lush and green environment around us, it will be the greatest injustice to the next generation. Though he drew his last breath on 21st April, a little after 7.30 in the morning, the echo of his great message reminds the conscience of the world and of each of us. And we must listen to it.

In fact, the whole world has been praying for Pope Francis these days. Since that day in mid-February, when he was admitted to Gemelli Hospital, the world's attention has been upon him, anxious and concerned. People world over knew how important he was as a leader and a spiritual head for this era, and it brought them together to raise their prayer to heaven.

We can take solace in one thing – he was able to return to the Vatican in the days before Easter. And, was able to continue the great and long tradition by every pope – leading the Way of the Cross during Good Friday.

Christ's death is still relevant today; a death that still gives hope to humanity because it is not found in those 14 stations, but at the 15th – it is here that we receive the great message of the resurrection. This is what Pope Francis said while reflecting upon the Stations of the Cross. The great and beautiful message of this Good Friday is the message of hope.

Having received the joy of Jesus' resurrection within himself, and completing the mission God entrusted to him – that of successfully leading the Catholic Church in the way God desired – Pope Francis passed away to be with the Risen Christ. For the message of hope that he gave to the whole world, for the stances he took and his restless work, let us thank Pope Francis.

We must listen, particularly in these times, to the voice of everyone in the Church; that the Church is a Church of community – it was with these thoughts that Pope Francis initiated the Synod on Synodality, which took place from October 2021 to October 2024. It was a process, a period of extensive discussions listening to even the smallest of families,

at the diocesan, local, national, and international levels throughout the Catholic Church. Finally, having gathered the voices from across the Church, Pope Francis approved them, recognising in them the need of the times. This was his legacy: giving the Church a clear sense of direction for the coming times. Not just for the world-wide Catholic Church, but through the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, for universal brotherhood, for the communion of believers of all religions, for the status as children of God the Father. At the same time, for the protection of our world. On 21st April, we saw the culmination of a great ministry.

Should we be saddened by the passing of Pope Francis? Of course, when such a great man, such a large-hearted person passes from this world, there is great pain and a pang in our hearts. But, in Pope Francis' passing, we can be proud that his life and his message were lived in the manner needed for this era.

Remember when he took up this ministry? He said that the cardinals had chosen someone from a corner of the world. In fact, it was God himself who chose. God knew the pastor who had to lead the Church. As St John Paul II said in his apostolic exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis*, God is the one who sends shepherds suitable for each age for the Church and society. For our age, and to lead the Church, Pope Francis was the prophetic voice given to us – let us thank God for that.

In my opinion, we have no reason to be sad because his passing was at the time God chose to return to His presence.

Some of Pope Francis' recent exhortations have been so beautiful. In *Dilexut Nos* – the exhortation that reminds us of the limitless love of the heart of God, Pope Francis wrote about the human and divine love of Jesus. So let us be grateful for that love. The great ministry of that love has been made available to the Church through Pope Francis.

Hope does not disappoint – *Spes non confundit*. That is the theme Pope Francis chose for this Jubilee 2025. In this Jubilee Year, we can enter the presence of God with hope. Pope Francis fulfilled his responsibility and bid goodbye by giving the world this great message of hope.

Pope Francis had a few favourite words. One of these has been echoing through the Church: joy. Joy has been the title of many of his exhortations. *Gaudete et Exsultate* – Rejoice and be glad. No matter what happens this joy must be safeguarded in our hearts, said Pope Francis, as he gave the world the message of the beatitudes. For even when you are unjustly persecuted and insulted, you should rejoice and be glad. In his exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* – Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis said that all those who encounter Jesus Christ have their hearts and whole lives filled with the joy of the gospel. One of his favourite sayings was, those who trust in God are filled with the joy of the gospel. Pope Francis explained, in this exhortation, that this joy frees us from all sin, loneliness, inner emptiness. Now, on this occasion of his passing, let us thank God for all the graces He has given us, praying that this joy not leave our hearts.

Another word that Pope Francis loved was compassion – mercy towards others. That is why he declared a Year of Mercy and wrote that beautiful apostolic letter on the face of mercy, *Misericordia et misera* – Mercy with misery. All of his teachings were contained in these three words: joy, mercy and hope. When these evangelical qualities are alive in the whole Church, then, irrespective of events, we will be able to see it as part of God's plan.

He had a tremendous affection for children. On his last Maundy Thursday, despite his illness and confined to a wheelchair, where did Pope Francis go? He went to a prison. Until his last moment, Pope Francis showed us that he had a heart that beats with the marginalised, with them in their sorrows. Let this be a great example. Let this be an inspiration, let this be a constant in the hearts of the members of the Church in these times.

Let us remember Pope Francis and thank God for giving the Church such a good shepherd, a great shepherd. ■



# Return to Senses

When must not be led astray by the deafening noises of the 'desires of the flesh,' writes **Anil Israel**. Rather we need to listen, as the voice at the Transfiguration said, to the 'Beloved Son' and have His words echo in our hearts.

If a child aspires to be a teacher when they grow up, quite probably they might have recognised teaching as a noble profession. If they wish to be a sports-star or a social worker, perhaps they are inspired by similar personalities. Most people crave to achieve goals they hold high in value. How we attribute value to certain things depends on our self-perception and what we have been fed with.

As children grow, so do their preferences – a particular brand of shoe, just because their friends have the same, or a choice brand of clothing. Some adults are extremely crazy for a specific brand of automobile. We all have been influenced to varying degrees and continue to shape our lives, based on what we choose to comply with. Everyone seems to be carried away or should I say distracted in one way or the other.

When we look at major decisions like career-paths, sometimes one's aptitude is side-lined by popular trends. Just because everyone else is studying abroad, doesn't mean I too must follow suit. *Everyone's doing it anyway* must not become an excuse for me to try. Just because there's a hype, doesn't mean it can't be fake. Does that make some sense?

What are the implications of following the crowd? *If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit* (Matthew 15:14). Ever since abortion was legalised, millions of unborn babies have been brutally massacred. Abortion has become the leading cause of death worldwide, more than cancer, HIV, traffic fatalities and suicide combined. Last year, abortion killed more people than World War One.

Likewise, many other evils which were not prevalent a century ago, are now overshadowing our cultural and moral landscape. Isn't artificially terminating a life an unethical act? Isn't gender identity disorder a crisis meant to be dealt with, rather than casually embraced under the pretext of being inclusive? *Surely you know that the wicked will not possess God's Kingdom. Do not fool yourselves; people who are immoral or who worship idols or are adulterers or homosexual perverts* (1 Corinthians 6:9). Wasn't Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by *brimstone and fire* (Genesis 19:24) for the sin of the homosexual act? Same-sex attraction has paved its way into the fabric of modern life. What ought to be condemned is sadly

being celebrated.

A devastating tragedy of our times is the growing sense of complacency regarding live-in relationships. *Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Sex is sacred within the framework of marriage. Sex outside of marriage is a serious immoral offence. *God will judge the sexually immoral* (Hebrews 13:4). *No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD.* (Deuteronomy 23:2). What ought to be treated as sacred, loses its blessings when defiled willingly.

'The greatest sin today is that men have lost the sense of sin' (Pope Pius XII). 'When you lose the sense of sin, you lose the sense of the kingdom of God' (Pope Francis). Why do we lose the sense of the kingdom of God? Probably, because we are only interested in the kingdom of our choice. We only want to listen to what is pleasing to our ears and ignore the bitter truth attributing it to *itching ears* (2 Timothy 4:3). We are so stooped down by concupiscence that we only desire instant gratification. Is there a way out of this misery?

We need to remove the headset off of our self-selected playlist. We need to allow ourselves to be 'tuned in' to the supreme frequency of the divine. We need to wait for our turn to make our 'you-turn'.

Every time we opt: 'my will be done', we are behaving like the prodigal son who left the father's house and had his back to the father and his face towards all that the world could offer. However, 'my will be done' is an illusion which will soon crumble. When we have squandered every blessing, we hit rock-bottom. When we have nothing else to rely on, we begin our 'you-turn'. We consider relying on the



LEAD THE BLIND, BOTH WILL FALL INTO A PIT › MATTHEW 15:14



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One whom we ought to have relied on all the while. We make a prayer of repentance from the depths of our heart and resolve to embrace *thy will be done*. The prodigal son finally *came to his senses* (Luke 15:17). That was his 'you-turn'.

Where am I heading to? Am I being swept astray by the deafening noises of the *desire of the flesh* (Galatians 5:17)? 'A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it' (GK Chesterton). Why am I living like a dead fish? Why am I not swimming against the flow of the world? When am I going to make my 'you-turn'?

Jesus said: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand* (John 10:27-28). To be on the safe side, we need to follow the Good Shepherd who leads us to *green pastures* (Psalm 23:2). He is not fake.

To be able to follow Him, we need to listen to Him. May the voice on the mount at the Transfiguration: *This is my beloved Son, listen to him* (Mark 9:7) echo in our hearts and lead us to our transformation. To listen to His voice, we need to *be with him* (Mark 3:14). Am I being with the One who alone can truly lead or am I allowing myself to be led along the broad way to doom? May we pray for the grace to 'return to senses' and embrace the 'you-turn' of our lives, to listen to the One who leads us along the narrow path to eternal life.

# NewsWatch



## Pope Francis: Faith Is a Joyful Gift Meant to Be Shared

During a special message delivered at the Slovakian National Jubilee Pilgrimage in Rome, Pope Francis emphasised that faith is ‘a treasure to be shared with joy,’ and reflected on how saying ‘yes’ to God can lead to peace and new possibilities.

Pope Francis expressed his heartfelt desire to attend the pilgrimage but was unable to be there in person. His message was read at Mass in St Peter’s Basilica by Archbishop Bernard Bober of Košice, who also serves as President of the Slovak Bishops’ Conference. Among the 4,300 pilgrims gathered were Slovak President Peter Pellegrini, government officials, and Archbishop Nicola Girasoli, the Apostolic Nuncio to Slovakia.

The Pope reminded the faithful that even in challenging moments, faith remains a valuable gift – one that invites deeper trust and surrender to God. He pointed to Mary’s humble ‘yes’ as a model, showing how a simple act of faith can become a powerful tool in God’s plan. ‘Saying yes today,’ he said, ‘opens the door to new paths of faith, hope, and peace – not just for ourselves but for everyone we encounter.’ He also encouraged believers to listen to the

Holy Spirit in a spirit of unity, remaining open to God’s surprising plans without fear of change.

Pope Francis described the pilgrimage as a visible sign of the Slovak people’s desire to renew their faith, strengthen their connection with the Pope, and bear joyful witness to the enduring hope found in Christ. This hope, he explained, is at the heart of the Jubilee and calls believers to become lifelong pilgrims, journeying with purpose toward eternal life. The pilgrimage to Rome, passing through the Holy Doors and visiting the tombs of saints and martyrs, represents both a spiritual and physical expression of this journey. He acknowledged Slovakia’s deep Christian roots, nurtured for over a millennium by saints such as Cyril and Methodius, whose legacy continues to inspire. Pope Francis concluded by invoking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially venerated in Slovakia as Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. He prayed that she would guide, protect, and bring hope to the pilgrims and to all the faithful of the nation.

## Jubilee of the Sick: ‘We Offer a Glimpse of Eternity’

During the first weekend of April, more than 20,000 pilgrims arrived in Rome to take part in the Jubilee of the Sick. Among them are volunteers from Lourdes, who tell Vatican News they hope to deepen their dedication to supporting the sick and disabled who visit the shrine in large numbers each year.

The Hospitalité Notre-Dame de Lourdes, a group that supports pilgrims visiting the Marian shrine in southern France, is represented in Rome by around 70 members. These volunteers, part of an international organisation involving helpers from over 90 countries, are typically the ones assisting others on their faith journeys – this time, they’re the pilgrims themselves. Daniel Pezet, the organization’s president, emphasised the importance of the pilgrimage. Based near Lourdes, he sees this Jubilee in Rome as a chance to renew his faith and share hope with the sick. ‘Our presence, our smiles – these are ways we help others glimpse eternity,’ he said. ‘We are Mary’s arms, Jesus’ arms for them.’ Maider Urruty, from France’s Basque region, echoed the sentiment, saying volunteers offer more than physical help – they bring spiritual comfort. She came to Rome ‘simply as a pilgrim and a Catholic,’ joining her ‘second family’ in faith. She noted





By Sam Biju

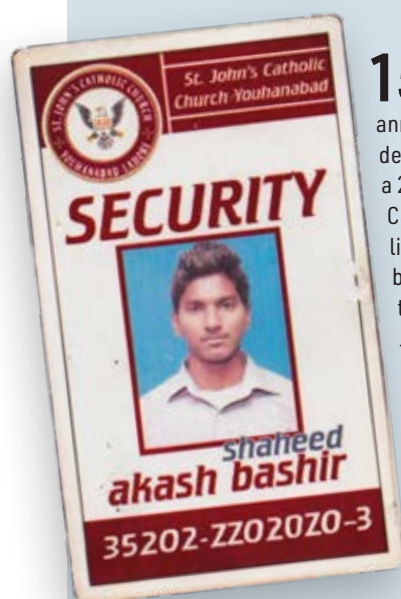
that many who come to Lourdes aren't Catholic, or even religious. 'We welcome everyone, even those with no faith – many are simply searching for hope.' Helena Foy, a long-time Irish volunteer, explained that many sick pilgrims are in despair when they arrive. 'Our role is to help them believe that life still has value, even in illness,' she said. This pilgrimage to Rome is her first and a meaningful way to celebrate the 140th anniversary of

Hospitalité. For Christiane Varachaud, a retired nurse and member of the Society of Saint-Vincent-de- Paul, being in Rome felt like a natural continuation of her calling to serve. She continues to visit Lourdes regularly and sees her role as bringing comfort and spiritual support. 'The world changes, but what's in our hearts doesn't,' she said. Father Michel Daubanes, rector of the Lourdes shrine, accompanied the group. He hopes the

Jubilee renews what he calls the 'soul of service' – a spirit of openness and care that allows volunteers to offer faith, friendship, and solidarity to those most in need. He emphasised that these qualities enrich both those who serve and those who are served.

The Jubilee of the Sick and the Healthcare World marks the seventh major celebration of the 2025 Jubilee Year.

## AKASH BASHIR: A DECADE LATER, HIS LEGACY OF FAITH AND COURAGE LIVES ON



**15<sup>th</sup>** March marked the tenth anniversary of the death of Akash Bashir, a 20-year-old Pakistani Catholic who gave his life to stop a suicide bomber from attacking the Church of Saint John in Youhanabad, Lahore. His brave actions saved hundreds and led to his recognition as a Servant of God – the first step toward sainthood and a historic

milestone for Pakistan's Christian community. Born on 22 June 1994, in Risalpur, Pakistan, Akash grew up in a Catholic family and displayed a strong sense of responsibility to his faith and community from a young age. On 15 March 2015, during Lent, he was serving as a volunteer security guard outside his church when he spotted a man acting suspiciously. Realising the

man was carrying explosives, Akash physically blocked him from entering, saying, 'I will die before letting you enter.' In that moment, he threw himself on the terrorist, preventing a mass tragedy. The bomber detonated the device, killing Akash along with himself. Father Pierluigi Cameroni, postulator for the Causes of Saints for the Salesian Family, described Akash's story as deeply meaningful – not only because he was a young man and the first Pakistani on the path to sainthood, but also because of its message of unity and hope.

The attack occurred shortly after another targeted an Anglican church nearby, drawing both Catholic and Anglican communities together in grief. A Muslim man even donated the marble for Akash's grave – an act that highlights how his sacrifice transcended religious lines.

Since his cause for beatification began, 32 individuals – including friends, family members, clergy, and even some Muslims – have testified about Akash's character

and faith. The diocesan investigation concluded on 24 October 2024, and the process is now being evaluated in Rome. Akash's selfless act has inspired many, particularly young people in Pakistan and around the world. According to Father Cameroni, his example has encouraged conversions and strengthened Christian communities. His story, rooted in sacrifice and hope, mirrors the meaning of Easter – resurrection and the triumph of life over death. Despite his remarkable courage, Akash was known as a humble and compassionate person, always ready to help the poor and stand up for justice. Father Cameroni recounts a powerful story: Akash once told a friend about a dream in which he died while serving others – a dream that tragically came true, as later confirmed by his father.

Akash's final words – 'I will die before letting you enter' – remain a symbol of unwavering faith and moral strength. Father Cameroni believes this message is especially relevant for young people today, urging them to stand firm against evil. 'Akash didn't let evil in,' he said. 'He chose to die rather than let harm come to others. That's a message of hope and spiritual strength. Evil never has the last word – Christ does.'

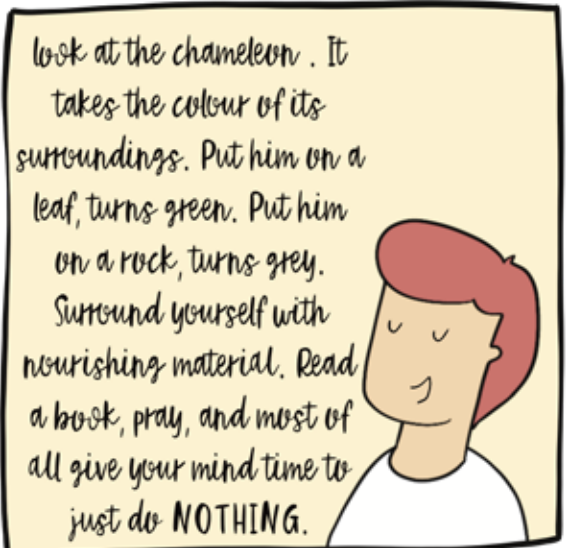
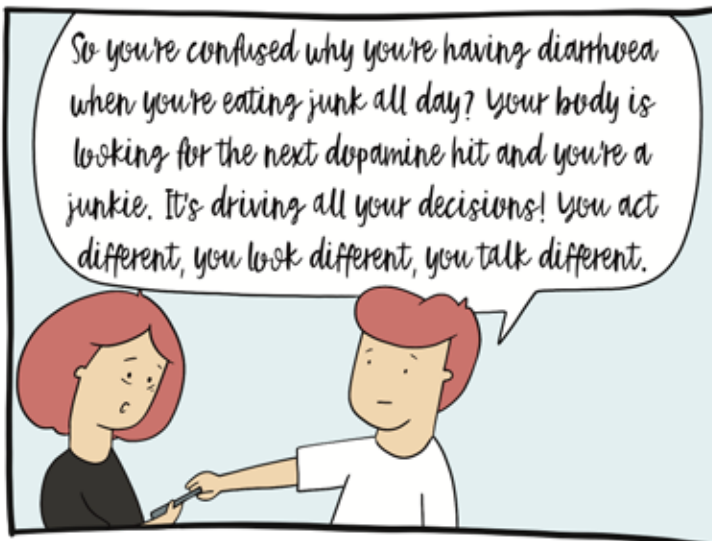
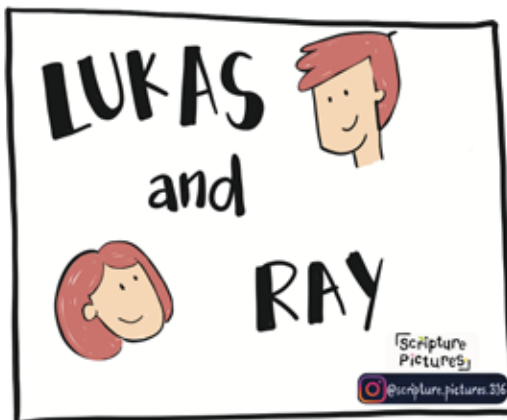


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