

KAIROS

GLOBAL

Go in Peace

FR JUSTIN JOSEPH PANACHICKAL MSFS

ALSO ↓

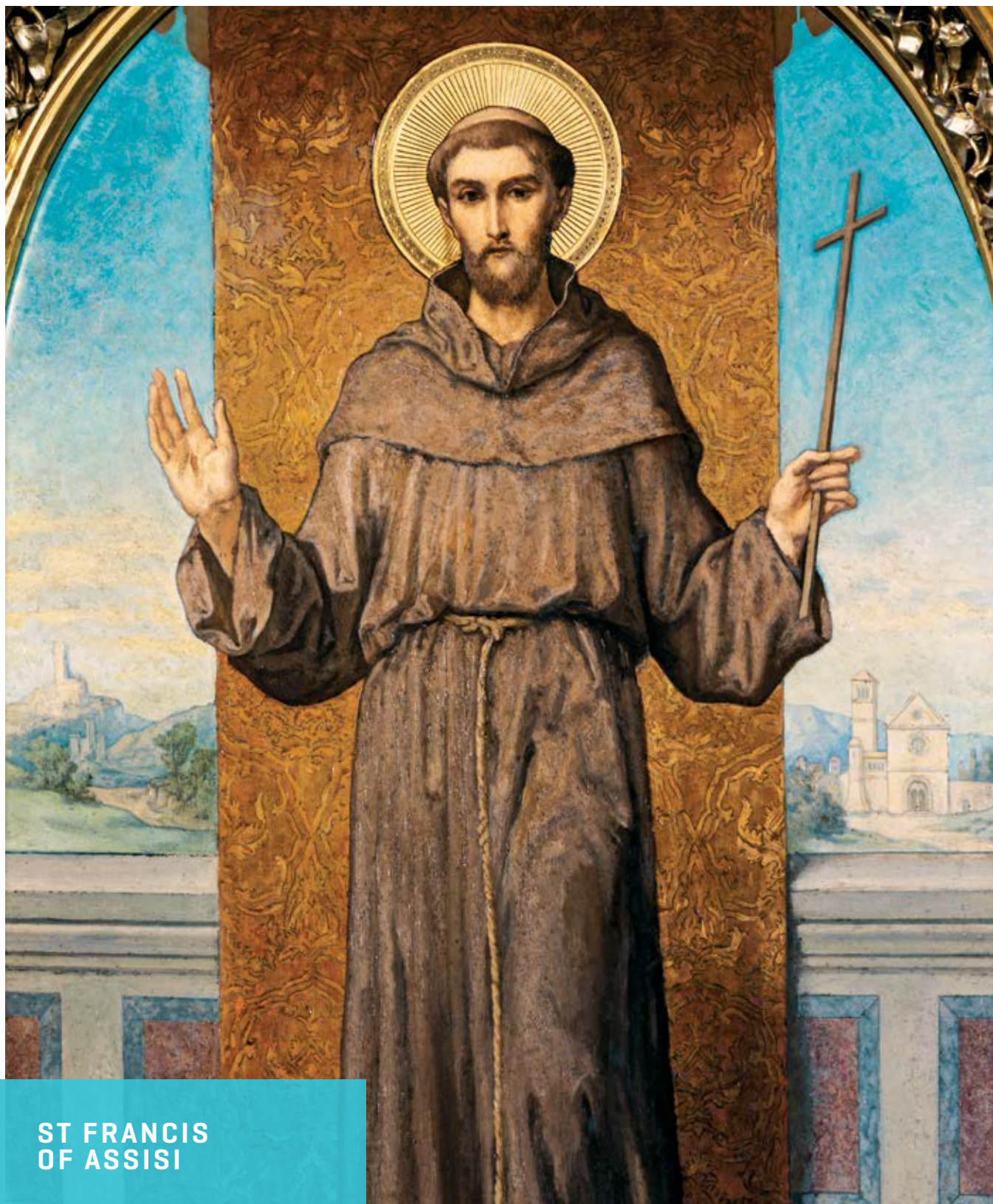
Upon the Blood
of Martyrs

■ RODNEY PEREIRA

MUSTARD
SEEDS OF
LOVE

■ SONIA KURIAN





ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

EDITOR'S ROOM

DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL



PEACE IS EVERYONE'S PROFOUND DESIRE, OFTEN ANTICIPATED WITHIN THE FAMILY. HOWEVER, AT TIMES, THE FAMILY ITSELF BECOMES A SOURCE OF DISHARMONY, CHALLENGING THE VERY NOTION OF SECURITY WITHIN ONE'S PERSONAL SPHERE.

Lord, Grant us Peace

There are several occasions in life that destroy my peace. When I see people make feeble excuses for neglecting their responsibilities and commitments, I become deeply frustrated and angered. Thus far, I haven't discovered an effective method to overcome this challenge and find resolution in such situations.

It's intolerable when individuals hastily jump to conclusions without making an effort to understand the situation or context. It undermines meaningful communication and often leads to misunderstandings and unnecessary conflict.

To manage my irritation when others don't keep time, I've found solace in occupying myself with other tasks using my mobile phone. It helps me stay productive and diverts my attention from the frustration caused by delays or tardiness.

Perhaps it is my unrealistic expectations that contribute to my loss of peace. It's important to reflect on whether I am placing excessive demands on others. Additionally, acknowledging that my own problems may impact not only my peace but also that of others is crucial.

Sin has the potential to disrupt inner peace. It introduces guilt, shame, and internal conflict, damaging relationships with others and with oneself. The consequences of sin, both tangible and intangible, erode the tranquillity that comes from living honestly and with righteousness.

What strategies do you employ to overcome irritations? I would be delighted to hear how you deal with such situations. (Scan below QR code)

Peace is everyone's profound desire, often anticipated within the family. However, at times, the family itself becomes a source of disharmony, challenging the very notion of security within one's personal sphere.

Going beyond basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, the lack of adequate communication is often a significant cause of families losing their peace. It becomes crucial to train individuals in empathetic listening and speaking skills, fostering understanding and harmony within family dynamics.

Our past experiences and resulting prejudices can significantly influence and contribute to worsening a situation.

Expectations often lead to disappointments. Deflating our expectations of others can help avoid many stressful situations. However, be it our personal or professional life, expectations play a vital role for they drive motivation, growth, and success.

The Serenity Prayer is a valuable source of guidance and solace. Praying it and taking the effort to live it will help foster inner peace through acceptance, change and discernment.

Ultimately, a deep and unshakeable faith in God is all that is needed for a peace-filled life. Challenges and struggles are inevitable, and during such times, God is our sole source of solace. As the Psalmist proclaims, it is God who is our steadfast rock, providing strength, comfort, and guidance, allowing us to navigate through life's turbulent waters with resilience and peace.

Relying on earthly means often leads to increased chaos, confusion, and problems. Placing our trust in God and seeking his guidance brings clarity, peace, and a sense of direction in navigating life's challenges.

I wish you all peace in your lives.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
chackochan.njavallil@jykairosmedia.org



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KAIROS GLOBAL

PATRON

Bishop Mar Raphael Thattil
(Ecclesiastical Advisor, Jesus Youth International)

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Fr Joseph Ezhumayil
(Jesus Youth International Chaplain)

PRINTER AND PUBLISHER

Dr Edward Edezhath

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr Midhun Paul
(Jesus Youth International Coordinator)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dr Chackochan Njavallil

MANAGING EDITOR

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

ISSUE EDITORS

Fr Alvin Mundackal, India
Sona Michael, USA
George K Paul, India
Noel Benno, India
Tania Rose George, India

CIRCULATION COORDINATOR

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

ASSOCIATE CIRCULATION COORDINATORS

AUSTRALIA: Mintu Vijoy, Melbourne +61 452 538 785

BAHRAIN: Neenu Maria Jibin +973 33715472

BANGLADESH: Tias Victor Palma +880 1717-152023

CAMBODIA: Sophearong Ravy, Phnom Penh +855 96 426 5472

CANADA: Joby Joseph Ontario +1 2899 686 074

EAST TIMOR: Sr. Julie Antony +670 77827618 (Whatsapp+91 97447 32431)

GERMANY: Anna Paul, Berlin +49 176 83495451

INDIA: Austin Michael, Mangalore +91 8277405251

IRELAND: Suresh V Joy +353 87 963 0904

ISRAEL: Jaison K Thattil, Tel Aviv +972 55 9974339

ITALY: Anoop P Varghese +39 3884256258

KUWAIT: Rajeev J Chacko, Ahmadi +965 66388310

MALAYSIA: Sweetie Kamala Prasad +60 162568139

NETHERLANDS: Jojo Varghese, Utrecht +31 684974552

NEW ZEALAND: Derick Daniel, Auckland +64 29 127 0650

OMAN: Jiju Paul, Ruwi +968 99467516

PAKISTAN: Asif Emmanuel +92 3022534254

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Abin Michael +675 7479 4368

QATAR: Metty Don, Doha +974 7040 868

SINGAPORE: Savio Francies +65 9021 9798

SRILANKA: Sonal Fernando +94 77 3818399

SWITZERLAND: Anu Jose +41 799177100

THAILAND: Vineeth Andrew +66 86 372 6601

UAE: Thomas Jose +971 521316868

UGANDA: Mboowa Ronald +256 706844152

UK: Mathachen Maduckakuzhy +44 7969 365686

USA: Denny Joseph +1 (832) 640-3106

FINANCE COORDINATOR

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

DESIGN

Mustard Tree, Delhi, India

www.jykairosmedia.org @ReadKairosGlobal @readkairos

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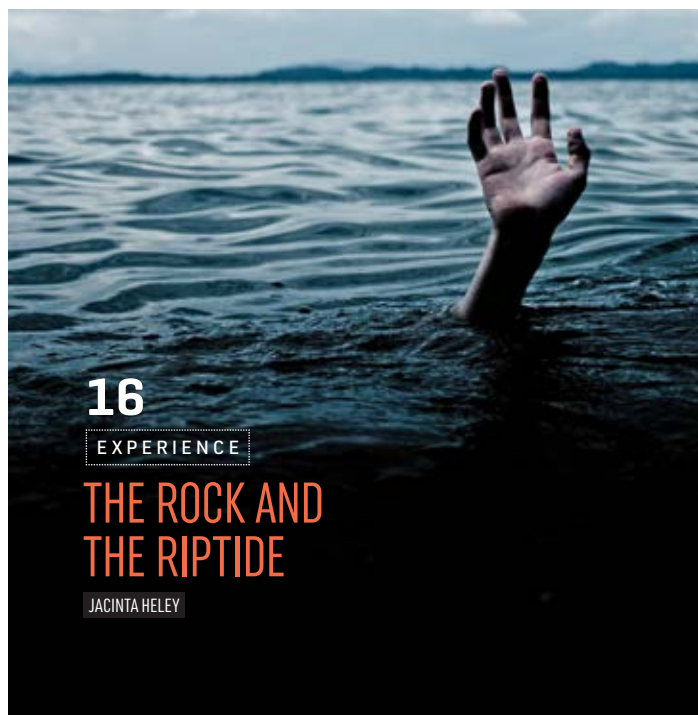
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MAILING ADDRESS

Kairos Media USA

3010 Mason Grove Ln
Pearland, TX, USA. 77584

info@jykairosmedia.org
+1 832 592 3675

Kairos Media UK

St Charles Street,
Sheffield S9 3WU,
United Kingdom

infouk@jykairosmedia.org
+ 44 7969365686

Kairos Media India

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

infoin@jykairosmedia.org
+91 9895711718



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ASK



FR. BITAJU

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

➤ If I decide to sin, doesn't God already know about it? Isn't it in his plan; so, how am I at fault?

Thanks for your important question regarding the foreknowledge of God and the free will of humans. Having knowledge about an event does not mean causing it. God in his divine omniscience can know about things people choose without depriving them of free will. On account of our God-given free will (CCC 600), we can choose to or not cooperate with God's plan for our lives (Matthew 25:31).

God is outside of time and knows our past, present and future choices, but this foreknowledge does not control our choices. Imagine, you know a place where, right now, one of your friends is cooking. Yet, your knowledge does not force the person to cook. Or suppose you are on top of a hill, and you see two bikes about to collide in the street below. Your knowledge of what is about to happen does not cause it. It was the choice of the bike riders that led to the accident. Thus, whether we talk about the past, present, or future, knowledge of an event does not force it to happen or deprive those involved of free will.

Neither does God's knowledge of events, as he dwells in an eternal now outside of time. Past, present and future are equally present to him, and he knows what people choose to do in those days. But this knowledge of what people choose does not make their decisions not free any more than our knowledge of their choices.

God is infinitely good, he cannot engage in moral evil, because it is impossible for him to act against his very essence (CCC 385). Moreover, God's will is for everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:1-2). Therefore, one can't assume that God is responsible for the sins one commits, just because God knows about it. Sin is the result of the choice humans make on account of their free will. Scripture makes it clear in Deuteronomy 30:15,19. *See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil ... therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.*



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HOW DOES GOD DRAW US OUT OF THE WHIRLPOOL OF EVIL?

God does not just look on as man gradually destroys himself and the world around him through the chain reaction of sin. He sends us Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer, who snatches us from the power of sin. [410-412, 420-421]

'No one can help me'—this maxim of human experience is no longer accurate. Wherever man may have strayed by his sins, God the Father has sent his Son there. The consequence of sin is death [cf. Romans 6:23]. Another consequence of sin, however, is the marvelous solidarity of God, who sends us Jesus as our friend and Saviour. Therefore original sin is also called *felix culpa* [= happy fault]: 'O happy fault . . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!'



DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

Prayer Intentions July

For a Eucharistic life

We pray that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and being open to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters.



Pope talk



Jesus calls us to set our sights on heaven. Let us not be overwhelmed by the present; let us remember the goal, that we are called to eternity, to the encounter with God.

If the world is divided, if the Church is polarised, if hearts are broken, let us not waste time in criticising others and growing angry with one another; instead, let us invoke the Holy Spirit as he is capable of resolving these things.

Please, let us not get used to conflict and violence; we must not get used to war.



God wants everyone to strive to be just in every situation, to live according to his laws and thus to enable life to flourish.

To the many young people today who are restless and do not know what to do with that restlessness, I say, look at the horizon of the world, look at so many people in need, look at so many people who are suffering, so many people who need Jesus and give them him as missionaries and saints did.

A society's birth rate is a key indicator of the hope people have in the future. If few are born it means there is little hope. And this not only has repercussions from an economic and social point of view but also undermines confidence in the future.

JESUS YOUTH



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

The New Epidemic

➔ After Covid, another pandemic? The United States Surgeon General announced this to the press, and quickly, all media took it up. Indeed, all the newspapers and news portals carried this as their top news. A new wave of the pandemic has already hit. There is an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. The disease is widespread, and it can be deadly.

'In society, 58% of the people felt abandoned', said Dr Vivek Murthy, the head of American health services, bringing out an 81-page document that presented the seriousness of the situation with the support of ample statistics and research findings. 'Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling – it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death.' But like Covid or other pandemics, can it kill people? He says that it does. 'The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day and even greater than that associated with obesity and physical inactivity.' What is more, its harmful outcomes are going to affect the whole society. Effects of the lack of social connection 'can be felt in our schools, workplaces, and civic organisations, where performance,

productivity, and engagement are diminished'.

ITS MEDICATION? SOCIAL CONNECTION

The top doctor details the big problem, why this has come about, the solution, and a plan for society to change its ways. Sure, this big disease of loneliness and isolation spreads with severe consequences, but there is a medicine hiding in plain sight: social connection. The remedy for loneliness is close friendships. But in 2021, sadly, 49% said they had less than three friends. Many studies show that people with good friends and who interact with them are healthy and live longer compared to those who don't have good relationships. 'Evidence shows that increased connection can help reduce the risk of serious health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, dementia, and depression.'

This is not just what this prominent doctor is saying. Recently, various fields of knowledge like psychology, medical science, sociology, philosophy, and so on point to this fact: to live fully and healthily, we need close social connections. And we know that this only points to what our faith teaches us, 'God who created man out of love also calls him to love – the fundamental and innate vocation of every human

being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love' (CCC 1604). No wonder we become seriously sick if we forget to love. On the other hand, love heals the body, mind, and soul.

Dr Murthy's above-mentioned announcement evoked widespread discussion. But my happy thought was, 'Thank God, the Holy Spirit surely led the Jesus Youth movement to a deep realisation of this core commandment of Jesus and, at every phase of its journey, helped us to develop practical ways of serving this medicine well.'

FROM PROGRAMME MODE TO LIFESTYLE MODE

Life in society has become relatively rigid, and loneliness is a big reality even for active people. Many live with so many people around them, busy yet profoundly lonely. Life in the Church is not much different; even an active Jesus Youth can become that way. Without realising it, we become structure builders and schedule-driven machines without warmth or joy. This is far away from the Spirit-led lifestyle that Jesus proposed. So, there is a need for us to ask once again: What are the building blocks of a good JY life?

Solitude: This is not loneliness but finding the intentional private time. I like Eric Fromm's words,



'Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling — it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death.' But like Covid or other pandemics, can it kill people? He says that it does. 'The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day and even greater than that associated with obesity and physical inactivity.'

'Paradoxically, being able to be alone is the condition to be able to love.' For a Jesus Youth, this is for reflecting on my life, thoughts, and experiences and connecting with the Triune God who dwells in me.

Belonging to a friendship cluster: During our preparation for the 1985 conference, we dreamed that every youth should become part of a cell, and our movement would be a network of such cells. Not so easy. Yet a JY can be a good friendship builder and actively part of a JY group.

Personal accompaniment: One highlight of Pope Francis' recommendation for youth is journeying with someone. We used to call it Eldering, Pastoring, and Emmaus-journey. Such a long-standing relationship is profoundly supportive and transformative.

Talents to Personal Mission: In our movement, we are convinced that self-awareness is essential to deepen my spiritual journey. Thus, I learn to accept that I am different and have special interests. This builds up a conviction that I am created for and called by God to do something special in this world.

Participation in Church life: One big problem that the doctor points out is that more and more people are leaving the Church and other religious groups. In Jesus Youth, we encourage people to participate actively in parish life. In many ways, this gives roots and shoots in one's life.

Service: Teaching people the joy of giving and serving is at the heart of Jesus Youth life. This is undoubtedly the best way to counter loneliness and build connections.

I love the prophetic words of John Paul II: To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings. (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43.)

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

ENCOUNTER

The Saint who fought for Free Press

Vincy Stephenson writes about St Titus Brandsma, the Dutch priest and journalist, who was canonised in 2022.

Is there such a thing as a journalist-turned-saint? There are many who have shed their blood for the sake of freedom of the press. In this regard, one of the most memorable names in the history of the Catholic Church is Titus Brandsma.

Titus Brandsma, a Dutch priest, professor, and journalist, who was murdered in the Dachau concentration camp, is described as the **First Holy Journalist and Martyr of Nazism**. He was martyred for speaking out the truth through his writings to the press.

EARLY LIFE

Given the birth name Anno, Brandsma was born in Friesland, Netherlands on 23 February 1881, as one of the six children of Titus Brandsma and Tjitsje Postma. All the children grew up in an atmosphere of piety, and hard work, sharing the joys of a large family. The family-owned dairy farm was the source of their livelihood. The parents brought up their children in strong Catholic faith and morale. Five of these children entered religious life later.

From age 11, Anno was educated at a preparatory school for boys studying for the priesthood. He joined the Carmelite novitiate in 1898. When he became a Carmelite priest, he took his father's name, Titus, in 1905.

A TIRELESS ACADEMICIAN AND INFLUENTIAL WRITER

After his ordination and studies in Rome, Titus Brandsma returned home and began working in the field of Catholic education. In 1923, when the Catholic

University of Nijmegen was founded, he joined the faculty, and over the years rose to become the *Rector Magnificus*. Though he was a Carmelite, he felt drawn to another vocation – journalism. And he was successful in reconciling both his seemingly contrasting vocations. Brandsma was appointed spiritual adviser to the staff of more than 30 Dutch Catholic newspapers by the then Archbishop of Utrecht, Johannes de Jong. As a tireless advocate for Catholic daily newspapers, Brandsma devoted years of his life to their advancement. He was a gifted communicator; he started to use his innate gift of writing and journalism skills so that he could address the readers hastily. He was fearless to voice against any inequality or injustice in society. In addition, he was involved in writing the biography of St Teresa of Avila and in preparing the reflections for the Way of the Cross.

FEARLESS JOURNALIST TO A CRITICAL MISSION

Subsequently, in the aftermath of Nazi German invasion of the Netherlands, Brandsma got involved in a dangerous mission, which was to raise his voice against the ominous development of Nazism. Titus and a few others intervened forcefully to halt the anti-Jewish marriage laws and the spread of Nazi propaganda. This act came after the Nazis' strict regulations against Catholic schools to expel Jewish students, and other strained circumstances, including curbs on educational and press freedom. In addition, priests and religious were

barred from serving as school principals, charitable collections were restricted, and Catholic press strictly censored.

When the invaders gave orders for all Dutch newspapers to publish Nazi advertisements and press releases, the Archbishop of Utrecht asked Brandsma to warn the country's Catholic editors to refuse the Nazi order. Though the archbishop stressed that the mission was dangerous and that Brandsma was not obliged to accept the order, the Carmelite priest accepted the request wholeheartedly, and travelled around the Netherlands, delivering letters explaining the decision to editors.

ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT

The sooner he got involved in the Nazi ideology's criticism, the worse things got for him. This brought him to the attention of the authorities, which eventually led to his arrest, on 19th January 1942.

The Nazi secret police offered him a deal that would let him lead a peaceful monastery life if he announced that Catholic newspapers would publish Nazi propaganda. But he refused. During his imprisonment, when the interrogating officer asked his reason for disobeying the state regulations, Brandsma boldly replied, 'As a Catholic, I could have done nothing differently'.

A CHEERFUL SUFFERER AND SOURCE OF STRENGTH

He was taken to a concentration camp in Dachau, where most of the prisoners were Catholics. There were more than 2,500 priests and Christians among them. The bold Brandsma continued his mission there too. He was an ever-calm, ever-caring saintly figure to his fellow prisoners. Even while imposed with severe manual labour, he remained cheerful. He gave hope to his fellow suffering inmates by hearing confessions, consoling the dying, leading Stations of the Cross, and other spiritual services.

WITNESSING FAITH EVEN AT THE FACE OF MURDER

Within a few weeks, Titus fell sick. Knowing about the evil practises in the prison infirmary, where the doctors conducted sadistic experiments on the



patients, he refused to go there. Finally, on 26th May 1942, the authorities ordered a nurse to give him a lethal carbolic acid injection. He was kind even to this person who was to attempt this deadly act. He gave her his rosary, just before she took his life. Receiving the gift, she said that she didn't know how to pray. He asked her just to pray, 'Pray for us, sinners'. Though the nurse was not a believer at that time, she became a Catholic years later.

The Church now honours Titus Brandsma as a martyr. He was beatified in November 1985 by Pope John Paul II. The nurse was also present for his beatification ceremony. 'His acts brought me to faith', she said. On 15 May 2022, Titus Brandsma was declared a saint by Pope Francis. His feast day is observed within the Carmelite order on 27 July.

HOPE IN THIS CONFLICTING TIME

We now live in a time when press freedom is constantly threatened. Be it social media or any other platform, news, reports, or truth-revealing content on 'certain topics' are blocked to promote false or misleading information to the public. Just to lead the world into dangerous population control propaganda.

As press freedom and human rights suffer grave injustice, it is essential that we seek this holy soul's fervent prayers and follow his example to stand up for the rights of the people. Saint Titus Brandsma was diligent in upholding his values and faith. He was fearless to stand for truth and justice. He always had a profound understanding of the value and dignity of every human being.

The pursuit of true and lasting peace, and the thirst for justice, will put one at odds with the world. Let us be therefore reminded of St Titus Brandsma's famous statement, *The one who wants to win the world for Christ must have the courage to come into conflict with it.* ■■

Vincy Stephenson is a content writer and translator by profession. She lives in Trivandrum, India with her husband, Sybin and their 3 children.

ENGAGE

Mustard Seeds of *Love*



How much do we know and experience God's tender love and attentive care? **Sonia Kurian** shares an incident from her life.

How often do we go about life wondering how present the Lord is to us? Do you ever wonder, is God really listening, answering my prayers, loving me in every moment as others have told me? And though we all may have had powerful encounter experiences with the Lord at retreats and the like, perhaps you, like me, may have suspected the attentiveness of the Lord in the more mundane and boring moments of life. This is the story of one of many such times, that the Lord has used to plant the mustard seeds of understanding his love in my heart.

The story took place around five years ago, when I had been going through a difficult friendship in my life that needed to end. Ending it from my side would have brought on a lot more strife than if the other person had ended it, and I knew that clearly. So, I had been (perhaps selfishly) asking the Lord if he could do something to end it from the other side. After a few days of praying, I got the verses Daniel 10:10-12:

And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, 'O Daniel, thou man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent.' And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, 'Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard: and I am come for thy words' sake.'

When I first read the passage, I felt so consoled that the Lord had heard my

prayer and would soon send an answer for me. I waited joyfully for a day, then two, and then a couple more, but no answer seemed to be coming to sight. The friendship continued to press in on me and I could see no way out but to end it myself.

A week after I had received the verse, I was beginning to lose hope. Had I perhaps misunderstood the verse? Was I supposed to do something or perhaps I should pray again and pick another verse. In fact, perhaps I had picked the Daniel passage by mistake and missed what the Lord actually wanted to say to me. I began to belittle myself and my own silliness for trusting so blindly and easily. Soon after that, the advice of other people began to enter my ears, mingling with the scripture verses in my mind. 'God helps those who help themselves', 'You must do your part and only then can God do the rest', 'Work as if all things depended on you and pray as if all things depended on God'. Yes, I mustn't be so silly and childish, I thought to myself. Besides, if so many people who wanted the best for me were giving me such advice, perhaps God was correcting my misunderstanding through them.

By now a week had gone by and I was beginning to make up my mind that I was definitely mistaken. God wanted something else, and he was telling me so through my elders and others, and I needed to listen. I made up my mind that before the end of the week I would end things with the friend, and I gave myself that ultimatum, so I wouldn't lose courage and back out of doing what I needed to.

Now this was a work week and I was in the habit of typically taking the lunch

break to go to noon Mass at a church nearby. On this weekday, I had noticed a homeless man at a traffic intersection on my way to Mass and so decided I would get him some food on my way back to the office. As I pulled up to the intersection and into the left-only lane so I could reach the homeless man, the light turned red. So I rolled down my window and offered him the sandwich I had gotten for him. We were both ready to pause our conversation and I was ready to roll my window back up, when the man suddenly turned to me and asked, 'Are you a Christian? Have you ever read the Bible?'

I was a little taken aback to hear such a question from a homeless man, but I responded and said, 'Yes I have read the Bible, I'm Catholic in fact.'

'Oh good,' he said. 'Have you ever read the book of Daniel or heard of the Prophet Daniel?'

I had experienced enough God-incidences for my senses to suddenly perk up. What are the odds someone would mention Daniel to me, when I had been wrestling with a passage from that very book? 'Erm yes, I have actually,' I replied.

'Oh good, have you read that passage where Daniel is praying and then an angel appears to him and tells him that even before he had started praying, God sent him from heaven with an answer?'

My heart was beating much faster now. I looked at him, with what must have been a rather stunned expression, not knowing what to say and finally said 'Yes, yes I have.'

'Good, don't forget it,' he said, rather decidedly and turned away to look at the cars behind me. I was still stunned, trying to understand what was happening and

waiting for him to say something else. The next thing I remember is the man looking behind him at the light and then at me and saying, “The light turned green, you can go now.” I snapped out of my state of shock, said a quick thank you and took the left turn.

I’m not sure I really remember the rest of the day too clearly. My mind kept going back to the homeless man. Surely it must have been the Lord reminding me of his promise! Suddenly all the other advice faded to the background. I felt my heart soaring again with hope and anticipation of what the Lord could be planning. I went home that day, knowing I needed to call my friend, and slightly anxious about it. I didn’t know what answer the Lord was going to send, but I was eager to find out. Perhaps it would go in an expected direction, or perhaps it may go in a completely unexpected direction, I was both nervous yet hopeful in a strange way. But I felt a confidence that surely if the Lord had reminded me of this verse, then he meant it and I could trust him at his word.

When I got home that evening, I called my friend, who then suggested that we should take a break due to several reasons. I was jubilant at the Lord’s plan. How faithful he is to his word, even when we are such fickle and impatient children, wandering away at the slightest temptations. I was reminded once again, that I am not an orphan, but his daughter and that he is a good father. Even when I had belittled myself, and considered my life decisions as too little for the God of the universe to trifle with, or take an interest in, here he was – attentive, and not just interested but heartily involved in answering the smallest desires of my heart. He could have left me to handle my business, to face the music on my own and yet he chose (like he usually does) to show such tenderness to his little ones.

In fact, the tenderness of the Lord often forces me to examine my own heart. I often think about the Parable of the Prodigal Son and how two sons could see the same father so differently. How could one son see the father as at least welcoming enough to take pity on him and accept him as a servant; while the other son, who lived in his father’s home all his life with freedom enough to

How do we see the Father? And in turn, what does our perspective say about how we see ourselves and others in the Father’s house? Why do we think of God in such ways? Was it because of what we were told about God in our childhood? Did we allow our familial and human relationships colour in what we thought God must be like in a relationship? How many places have we allowed such little mercy to seep into our hearts towards ourselves, to others, and even to the Lord, due to the lack of tenderness we may have experienced at the hand of others?

take anything he wanted, never felt the freedom to do so?

How do we see the Father? And in turn, what does our perspective say about how we see ourselves and others in the Father’s house? Why do we think of God in such ways? Was it because of what we were told about God in our childhood? Did we allow our familial and human relationships colour in what we thought God must be like in a relationship? How many places have we allowed such little mercy to seep into our hearts towards ourselves, to others, and even to the Lord, due to the lack of tenderness we may have experienced at the hand of others? What lies about the world have we believed and by our own beliefs have locked out the true nature and tenderness of our heavenly Father? How much tenderness and love have we withheld from our loved ones and even strangers, because of what we have allowed the world to teach us about the world and ourselves, rather than the Lord?

A wise man once told me that you

learn to love, by being loved. And if you desire to love others as God loves them, then you must let yourself be loved by the Father. This has been the hardest and most delightful lesson of my life – to allow the Lord to break the hardness of my own heart and give me a heart of flesh. To first learn love from the Father, so that I too can learn how to love my brothers and sisters well. And his breaking of my heart is not harsh, but rather it is through corrections so tender, my heart crumbles quite easily.

Scripture tells us *a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.* (Isaiah 42:3). Such is the love of the Father that we all need to taste again and again, to know for ourselves what he is like. We must learn for ourselves so we don’t end up like the elder son in the house of a father whose heart he doesn’t understand, and in turn builds up hurt for himself and jealousy for his brother. How pitiable we would be, to live under the shadow of such a tender God, to hear of his goodness from others, and never to know it for ourselves! No let us not be so stubborn as to steal away the taste of heaven from ourselves.

So let us take a step of faith and allow the Lord to love us, so we may learn day by day, to *taste and see that the LORD is good* (Psalm 34:8). How transformed we will be to receive such hearts of flesh from the Lord, with what confidence we will live our lives and how generous we will be with giving away love just like our Heavenly Father does with each of us. So may the kingdom of God spread over the world through each one of us being loved by the Lord, one day at a time, a kingdom that like a mustard seed, *when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade*” (Mark 4:32). ■■

Sonia has been a Houstonian for quite some time now.

She currently works as a Clinical Systems Analyst in the healthcare sector. Her interests include writing compulsively through the night after months of writers’ block, reading in awkward positions, iconography, and animated karaoke sessions in her car. She strongly believes God has a sense of humour and sees her life as an adventure worth discovering with him (mainly because he has the master-plan).

EXPERIENCE

The Pain-bearer's Reward

Life was a bed of roses until her legs were afflicted with a crippling pain that left her unable to walk. **Aleesha Wilson** shares her story.

From an innocent YES to being the limbs of Christ... the journey is quite interesting. I still remember those days when my dad taught me the action song YES LORD. Although I used to sing this song very frequently during my childhood, later at some point, I said with all my heart to Jesus, 'Yes Lord, Here I am ...take me and use me for your glory.' Beware when you recite this prayer! Say this only if you are willing to work for him wholeheartedly for you will have to walk through roads you've never travelled before, which might sound strange to the world, but is amazing in His sight.

My life happened to be just like a bed of roses until I was afflicted with severe leg pain. It got to a stage where I was unable to even take a single step. None of the doctors I consulted were able to diagnose the reason behind the pain. I had an amazing journey through the different branches of medical science which finally culminated in Ayurveda. After several Ayurvedic treatments, I was finally able to walk but my gait had changed. It was obvious to anyone who observed me closely. And so, in that initial stage of my recovery, I had to face many questions which left me utterly inferior. The worst was when I began to question

my fate and began comparing myself with others – why am I like this? Why am I different from others? I too ought to be like them...

It was indeed an epiphany when I heard the voice of Jesus within me. He said, 'There was a time when you were not able to walk, and if you're walking now, you are walking with my legs. I will make you travel for me. You are going to do more for me than people could ever imagine. It is in your weakness that my strength is revealed.' I was overwhelmed with joy when I realised that I had become a valuable instrument for the Lord. All my inferiority complexes shattered into pieces, and I was a new being. Even today, there are moments when I go through intense pain in my legs, and every time I come across it, the Lord also grants me a special grace to proclaim his glory. He made me realise that I am specially chosen to take some pain in my ministering.

In saying YES to the Lord I received the ultimate strength to say NO to several episodes of my life, which brought me a plethora of opportunities to glorify him. It so happened that I was offered the job of English language trainer and content developer at De Paul International School in Mysore. However, my date of joining got extended due to the second wave of Covid-19. This led me to rethink my shift to Mysore and instead began an online English teaching platform of my own. On top of that, I also got various opportunities within the Jesus Youth movement to develop content, especially for the teens' ministry. Instead of becoming a content developer for a school, God made me create content for him. He further lifted me up to be a part of the National Teens Team, because of which I was able to understand teenagers in depth. Had I taken up that job in Mysore all this would never have been possible. Moreover, I was offered another job at a school nearby, which made it possible for me to manage it along with my online English teaching platform. This gave me an exposure to teaching school students as well as learning their psychology to a great extent. These episodes of my life gave me a strong conviction towards my area of



ministering.

Along with this, there have been moments when I was affected with intense leg pain for a while, which served as a reminder that I am called to take pain. Our ministering will never be fruitful without pain. Taking pain will further help you remain humble throughout your mission. It will bring a realisation that it is not you but God who resides in you who must be glorified.

Thus, be joyful if you are chosen to be a pain bearer as you are also gifted with a special grace to endure it. Your prayer 'Use me Lord' is being answered in this manner. Yes,

I am trading my sorrows,

I am trading my pain,

I am laying them down for the joy of the Lord ...



Aleesha Wilson is an English language trainer, running an online English teaching platform. She lives with her parents and three siblings in Palakkad, India.

A hand reaches up from the water, palm facing up, against a backdrop of a cloudy sky and distant land. The water is dark and rippled. The title 'THE ROCK AND THE RIPTIDE' is overlaid in large, bold, red letters.

THE ROCK AND THE RIPTIDE

Jacinta Heley recounts the harrowing swimming incident she and her daughter experienced one summer, and being saved by a rock.

My youngest daughter, Anna, aged 11, and I were swimming at the harbour in Apollo Bay, Victoria, Australia one day during the summer holidays of 2022. We had swum there many times before having experienced no difficulty, although I had heard a few rumblings about water currents given the place's proximity to a boat harbour and the open ocean. It was probably not the best place to swim and generally we swim between the flags, but as I said, it was familiar with our family having gone there for the last twenty years with no incidents. On the day it seemed quite churned up and difficult to read, currents going everywhere. We only intended to be in a short time because the sky was grey, overcast and cold.

We jumped under the water and went in up to our waist, at that stage in control of the situation. I then went fully under, enjoying the sensation of floating in the water but crucially losing contact with the bottom and the way the currents were moving. It didn't take long before I had the feeling I was being pulled, quickly and strongly out to sea. The sky was grey and windy and Anna began to say she couldn't feel her feet below her, the current was pulling us away from the safety of the beach. A wall of water as big as our bodies was forcing us backwards.

It took seconds to register that this was a very bad situation. I hadn't experienced this before and being out of our depth meant we were quickly losing control. I glanced at Anna, out of my right eye I could see her starting to drift from me. I tried to swim toward the beach but every stroke forward was met by a strong force moving me out to sea. It was like the swimming pools that have jets of water directed at the swimmer to allow them to swim in the same place. We were caught in a rip. This was a reality that I had continuously been warned about since childhood. To my knowledge, twenty-four people lost their lives in an Australian rip in the 2021/2022 summer.

I had flashes of knowledge, one piece after the other that could only have come from God. *Anna is moving away from me. If she drifts any further I won't be able to reach her. This is a bad situation. I need to find something solid.* To find

something solid was our most desperate need. Second-by-second the situation was getting worse and thoughts clicked through my mind as data through a computer. We were becoming pieces of driftwood floating on the open sea. Then I saw out of the corner of my left eye, the heavy black rocks that are used to build up the harbour wall and keep the sea from destroying the boats. The trouble was my eye was level with the very end of the rock wall which meant this was our last solid object before the open sea. The only options available were swim to shore, which was impossible due to the rip, *float out to sea or swim to the rocks*. We had to swim to the rocks, there was NO other option! None. The rock was our only hope.

'Swim to the rocks!' I yelled at Anna as I realised we had to act fast and conserve the limited energy we had. With everything in me, I screamed at the top of my lungs, trying to outdo the wind, 'Swim to the rocks!' I didn't have time to think about the outcome of reaching the rocks. How would they feel? Would we bash against them and hurt ourselves? Would they be hard to climb onto? It was a pure survival situation. The rocks were a good 25-metre open-ocean-swim and I am grateful for all the water safety classes I attended as a kid, and every teacher that asked me 'can you swim 25 metres?' I am forever grateful that Anna was born with a fabulously strong body and big biceps, because if ever there was a time for mental and physical strength, this was it. She followed my lead and we both started swimming for the big black rocks, battling the current, the rip, the steadily disappearing sand beneath our feet. We were intuitively doing the right thing which was to swim parallel to the beach. I don't think it was an accident, we were being inspired as to what to do.

It was probably a few minutes that this drama played out, maybe only five or ten. I was given seconds to realise the danger and powerlessness of the growing distance between Anna and myself. I couldn't afford to allow it to happen. I am her mother and had protected her from so many things, and to now find that in a few seconds she could be swept away from me was an achingly powerless feeling; utter powerlessness that in minutes we could be another beach statistic. In minutes our

lovely holiday activity was turning into a possible tragedy.

I made huge swimming actions with my arm, powered by the adrenaline and Anna, with trust, followed. Up and down in the choppy windy swell, the howling wind, the powerful currents and the desperation to get to the rocks. We got closer and closer and as we neared them I understood what shipwreck victims probably would have experienced as I tried to grab the black slippery, shiny, porous rock – the only stability on offer.

First time I missed and tried again with an over-arm action to get closer, thrown around like an inanimate object on the swell, without any autonomy, without any power – utterly defenceless. The second or third time, my left arm wrapped around the slippery rock but this time I clung as though our lives depended on it. It scraped my skin but I didn't care. This rock was solid ground.

Once safe I looked over my right shoulder and could see Anna bobbing in the swell just out of reach. I knew what terrible danger we were in but I couldn't let myself or her panic. As I held the rock tightly I could feel the attempts by the ocean to wrest me from my grasp of the rock. It was a battle to hold tight while the ocean lifted our bodies up and down. I wouldn't have been able to deal with Anna's panicked cries and desperation on top of my physical struggle, yet God kept us calm. He was with us the whole time. The calmness we had was entirely supernatural, even she remembered how calm we were. I heard her recounting later in her sweet eleven-year-old voice, 'We were really calm, weren't we mum?'

Anna had been trying to grab me and there were seconds when I thought she was going to pull me under as she was losing touch with the bottom. Knowledge flashed past me from every lesson on water safety I had ever attended – people in this situation can drown others as they try and grab onto them. Reaching the rock meant everything to me. It meant I could hold it with my left arm, like some type of nautical rope that moors a boat and then attempt to grab Anna as she floated up and down beside me on the disturbed sea. I could make myself safe and then her, by extension.

The first attempt to grab her didn't

While bobbing up and down on the green sea desperately wanting to reach the rock, aspiring to it, seeing its solidness and steadiness – it's unmoving nature in a constantly moving sea – all I wanted to do was to reach out and hold onto the rock that wouldn't move. I don't think I can read the word 'rock' in Scripture any more without remembering what happened to us.



work – she was unreachable, floating just out of the way as though we were being teased. I then tried to grab any part of her that I could and awkwardly caught her right wrist. Now I had a grip on her, nothing was going to make me let go. I yelled at her to grab onto the rocks and she did. As we clung to the rock, we were moving up and down like vessels at sea, constantly shifting. It was all a little uncomfortable, a bit like playing twister out in the ocean. I kept yelling instructions to move along the rocks to shore. We now had a plan for survival and we were executing it.

We inched our way along with the open sea smashing us and pulling us up-and-down and side-to-side against our will. Our bodies tumbled forward toward the black rocks, a mix of arms and legs and coloured bathing suits, pushed by the waves, propelled toward the beach in a rushing action. Miraculously within a few moves forward, we found our feet on a sandbar and pulled ourselves up and away from the situation and toward shallow water. The adrenaline was coursing through our bodies as it is supposed to, giving us energy to survive. As we were able to stand up and walk toward the shore in increasingly shallower water,

we could see all the children playing at the water's edge and the parents talking to each other on the beach, as though nothing had happened. My pounding heart which wouldn't slow down was testament that something major had just happened. This is how easily people drown and how a situation can change in a few seconds under the wrong conditions.

After the events I intuitively felt as though everything we had experienced had a purpose deeper than a near drowning, that we had been led through an immersive meditation on Scripture laid out one step at a time by God – to teach us. We had been saved by a rock. What did it mean?

I know there are Scriptures that tell us that God is our Rock and our Strength (Psalm 18). The lines of Scripture in the Psalms and the title of Rock given to Peter. *The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold* (Psalm 18:2).

In our situation, the rock was the centre of our existence for a short period of time. Without the rock we may have drowned. Before this I had never given much thought to rocks.

This is what the rock meant for me.

We were utterly abandoned, defenceless, powerless, without strength, without hope, unable to help ourselves. This all happened within minutes. We went from self-sufficiency to helplessness. All we possessed in that moment were our bathing suits and bodies. We desperately needed help – a solution – but there was no one. Only the rock in the distance

The rock at that moment was the centre of everything. It was life itself in our short drama. I was focussed on nothing else except getting to the rock and being saved by it. We had no strength and hope of survival on our own, the rock possessed everything my daughter and I needed. If we didn't grab the rock we were headed to Tasmania on the open sea! If we didn't get to the rock for strength and security we might as well have not survived.

Before the situation, the rock had just been part of the landscape. It was integral to the harbour but fairly uninteresting. Solid but without much attraction. Seeing the rock at eye level was life changing. I didn't know for a while if we would survive. Our life was in the balance. While bobbing up and down on the green sea desperately wanting to reach the rock, aspiring to it, seeing its solidness and steadiness – its unmoving nature in a constantly moving sea – all I wanted to do was to reach out and hold onto the rock that wouldn't move. I don't think I can read the word 'rock' in Scripture any more without remembering what happened to us.

We are heading more and more into stormy seas in our world. To a large degree we left our safe moorings in 2019, and in the last few years have struggled to find solid reference points in our world. Is this why God describes himself as a Rock? He is the great 'I am,' the Rock in an endlessly shifting world. The solid destination that we all need. Reach out for the Rock, grab it, hold it tightly and don't let go!



A Catholic mother-of-three, **Jacinta Heley** is a music teacher and small-business owner in Victoria, Australia.

POETRY

Lily of Chastity

In the garden of my heart
Was planted a lily,
A Lily of Chastity.
Not my hands, not my care
Made it grow there,
But it grew
Beautiful and tall.

And I was busy
Planting other flowers,
Rose, hibiscus, jasmine –
Not noticing the wild lily,
Wild, yet pure.
My Maker put it there;
He planted and watered
All the while.

When one day I saw,
The lilies in the hands
Of my dearest saints,
It struck my senses
Of the beauty and greatness
That a lily brings

Then to the backyard I rushed
O! It did amaze me.
My own lily standing tall,
So lustrous, so pure
Not my hands, not my care
Made it grow there.
The Maker put it there,
He nurtured it secretly
All the while!

Now that I know
Now that I see
I will give it all my love,
With a heart of thankfulness;
For when I meet my Maker
On the threshold of death,
I will return this lily
Maybe what's only left with me.
Of all that He has given me;
A Lily of Chastity.

MEETU TONY

*That I Never Give Up*

MARIA TERES SEBASTIAN

Tired of repeatedly falling and getting hurt,
Unable to get out of pits I dug myself,
Helpless, resigned and ready to give up,
I looked around one last time.

Whipped, spat at, bleeding,
I saw you, nailed naked,
And raised up on two pieces of wood.

The beatings you took,
That I be unbeaten by the enemy's tricks.
Repeatedly humiliated,
That sin's guilt would never humiliate me,
Crushing falls and stinging wounds,
To keep me from falling for the enemy's snares.

Your wounds made sure
That sin would never fatally wound me.
The iron that nailed you,
Eternally freed me from all bondage.

You died
That I would never fear death...
And You rose to show me
That though I still keep failing
In spite of all You did for me,
I'm never run out of chances
To claim the redemption
You so freely offer me.

Lord, I surrender my falls to Your Mercy.
Fill me with the strength of Your Love
To get back up and bravely fight this fight anew.

EVOLUTION

THE ONE-WEEK-NOTICE MIRACLE

During the pandemic, Rojas Coalbe was tasked with informing a group of employees of their imminent job loss. But trusting in God's protection worked a miracle.



In the face of unprecedented challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, the world witnessed countless stories of struggle and uncertainty. During this time, I held the position of Head of Talent Planning at a major IT company in Australia. Little did I know that amidst the difficult decisions and uncertainties, God would manifest his presence and power in an extraordinary way, bringing hope and providence to those in need.

As the pandemic unfolded, the economic impact led to a significant decrease in project availability within our company. Many employees found themselves without projects, and difficult decisions had to be made. I was tasked

with the responsibility of informing these individuals that they would be released with just one week's notice. The weight of this decision was immense, knowing that these employees had families, children, and financial obligations. I felt a deep sense of sadness and concern for their well-being, particularly during such challenging times.

In light of the circumstances, I felt compelled to take action beyond what was expected of me. I approached the management with a heartfelt request for an additional two weeks to explore every avenue to find projects for these individuals. The past 90 days had proven unsuccessful in securing placements, and I knew that the prospects of finding new employment during the pandemic were daunting. I fervently prayed for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of these employees, knowing that human efforts alone would not be enough.

Seeking divine guidance and intervention, I reached out to my trusted prayer group and shared the names of the affected individuals. We united in prayer, lifting each person before the Lord, beseeching his favour, providence, and direction. Our prayers were centred on Psalm 91, finding solace in its promises of God's protection and deliverance during times of uncertainty. In addition to the group prayers, I personally surrendered and prayed for these ten individuals during my daily Mass, placing their well-being in God's hands.

What unfolded next can only be described as a true testament to God's faithfulness and the power of prayer. Through divine intervention, I received unexpected help from project managers within the company. They recognised the skills and potential of the employees we were seeking to place and graciously offered them project opportunities. Miraculously, within just eight days (even though I had been granted an extended two-week timeframe), all ten individuals were successfully placed in new projects.

This experience left an indelible mark on my heart, reminding me of the profound lesson of faith that was revealed in the midst of uncertainty. During a time when the world seemed to offer little hope, God demonstrated his

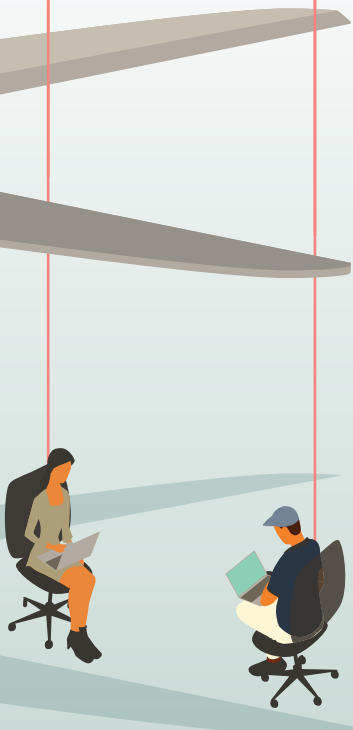
During a time when the world seemed to offer little hope, God demonstrated his sovereignty and loving care. Through the power of prayer and the unwavering belief in God's provision, we witnessed the transformative impact it had on the lives of these employees and their families.

sovereignty and loving care. Through the power of prayer and the unwavering belief in God's provision, we witnessed the transformative impact it had on the lives of these employees and their families.

As I reflect on this remarkable journey, I am filled with gratitude for the faithfulness of our Heavenly Father. In the midst of immense challenges and uncertainties, God's presence and providence shone through. Through earnest prayer, a supportive community, and unwavering faith, doors were opened, and lives were transformed. This testimony stands as a reminder that no matter how dire our circumstances may appear, we serve a God who is ever-present, attentive to our needs, and capable of working miracles beyond our human understanding.

May this story serve as an encouragement to all who face trials and uncertainties in their own lives. Let us hold fast to our faith, knowing that even in the darkest times, God's light shines brightest.

Rojas lives in Melbourne, Australia with his wife and three boys. He is the National Coordinator of English ministry for Shalom World Australia.



FAITH & REASON

THE GREAT BIBLICAL CREATION DEBATE

PART 1

In this sixth part of the God and Science series, **Aby Jacob** looks at the debate around the biblical days of creation.

How old is the universe? Is it about 14 billion years or 6,000 years old? Doesn't the Bible say God created everything about 6,000 years ago in the six literal 24-hour periods? Is not this scientific nonsense? How do we deal with this issue? This is a widely disputed topic famously called *Young-Earth Creationism (YEC) Vs. Old-Earth Creationism (OEC) Debate*. The challenging questions are: are the days in the book of Genesis literal

24-hour periods, and did the creation take place about 6,000 years ago? This subject needs to be discussed with a lot of humility and respect because there are different views. Unlike any previous article I have written for the God & Science series, this topic is unique, complex, and important to understand as you are on an intellectual journey with me. I have divided this topic into two parts.

Part one, the current article, covers the different views on the biblical creation days and some major points to note. Part two, the following article, covers the biblical reasons why the creation days in the book of Genesis are longer than literal 24-hour periods and my personal view on it. Please note that my goal is not to discredit any opposing views but to encourage truth seekers to maintain a charitable approach to this discussion,

even within the Christian community. I also aim to equip you with important information and resources to answer honest skeptics and biblical critiques on this hot issue. There are many views on Genesis creation days.

The Different Views of the Creation 'Days' in the Book of Genesis

1) Fiat Creation: This view, widely known as Young-Earth Creationism, holds that the 'days' are literal 24-hour solar days, and it is a 144-hour creation week. According to this view, the Earth was created between 6,000-15,000 years ago.

2) Progressive Creation: This view, widely known as Old-Earth Progressive Creationism, holds that the 'days' are long finite periods. According to this view, the Earth was created about 1.5-4.6 billion years ago. The universe ages about 14 billion years.

3) Gap Theories: This view holds a long gap between Genesis' first two verses (1:1 and 1:2), into which all the geological ages fit. However, this view holds a 24-hour day from verse 2 of Genesis. This way, the 'day' could be 24 hours, but the world could be millions of years old.

4) Localised Creation: This view holds that Genesis 1:1 is billions of years, but 1:2-2:4a are 24-hour days.

5) The Revelatory-Day view: This view holds that the 'days' may be 24-hour days of revelation but not days of creation. This view proposes that it took God a literal solar week to reveal to Adam (or Moses) what he had done in the long ages before humans were created.

6) Alternate-Day-Age view: This view holds that the days are 24 hours, but the days are separated by long periods in between.

7) Relativistic Time view: This view holds that the 'days' are 24 hours for humans but eons from God's standpoint.

8) Idea-Time view: This view holds that all things were created with the appearance of age. That means they were created mature. So, for example, Adam may have looked 21-years-old a minute after he was created, but he was really only a minute old. Therefore, according to this view, the world can be actually young

The challenging questions are: are the days in the book of Genesis literal 24-hour periods, and did the creation take place about 6,000 years ago? This subject needs to be discussed with a lot of humility and respect because there are different views.

and only apparently old.

9) Literary-Framework view: This view holds that the terminologies and phrases such as 'days,' 'evening and morning' are used as ancient literary devices to cover certain periods.

10) Religious Myth view: This view holds that the Genesis account is purely religious or mythical. Some view Genesis as myth-history. Theistic Evolution comes under this view.

The Most Crucial Points to Note

There is no conflict between the Bible and scientific facts. The two books (metaphor), the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature, are given by God. The actual conflict is between some interpretations of Scripture and some scientific theories. Both biblical and scientific interpretations are not free from error. The Bible does not say how old the Earth or universe is. Since the Bible does not say it, the age of the world is not a test for orthodoxy. Whatever view is accepted must preserve (a) The historical-grammatical interpretation, (b) The historicity and context of Genesis 1-2, and (c) the Inerrancy and Infallibility of Scripture.

It is important to respect all views that can preserve the above points. Everybody should treat each other's views with a lot of gentleness and respect instead of trying to attack opposing views arrogantly. People on all sides present good reasons to support their claims. Defenders on all

sides are honest conservative Christians. All defenders include intelligent academic theologians, philosophers, and scientists with great credibility. They all commonly believe that God created everything out of nothing (creation *ex nihilo*). Everyone believes that we all need Jesus Christ for salvation which is the central point. It is fine to believe in an old earth or young earth as long as the central salvation message of the Bible is not neglected. It is okay to kindly disagree with each other's view on how God created the world. I will close this topic in the following article by presenting some biblical reasons why Genesis creation days are longer than 24-hour periods and my personal view on this debate, which you can evaluate. Stay tuned!

Recommended Resources:

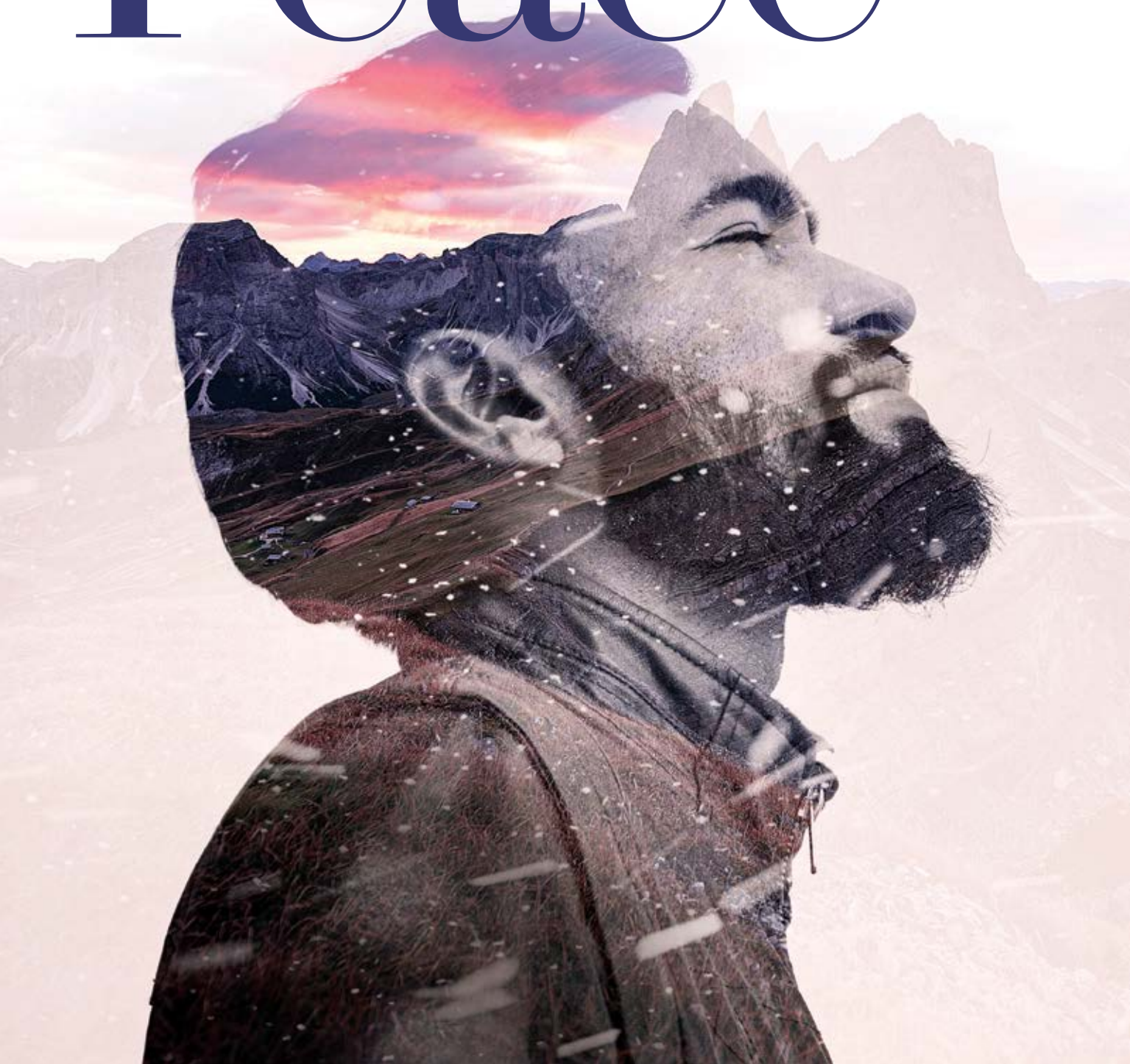
Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy*, RTB Press, 2015.

Hugh Ross, *Navigating Genesis: A Scientist's Journey Through Genesis 1-11*, RTB Press, 2014.

Aby Jacob was formerly a skeptic who encountered Christ. He then investigated the rational side of the Christian faith and dedicated his life to philosophy and defending the truth. His majors are philosophy, apologetics, ethics, scientific apologetics, and business. He lives in the USA.

IN FOCUS

Go in Peace



What does the word 'peace' mean for us Christians? **Fr Justin Joseph Panachickal MSFS** invites us to reflect on the oft-repeated words of Jesus.

May the peace of God that surpasses all understanding reign in our hearts and in our minds (Philippians 4:7).

The term **peace** is very generic and has a variety of meanings in a variety of contexts. It's easy to get muddled up when trying to understand the true meaning in a Christian perspective. The internet would define peace as, '... a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups.' Peace also refers to rest. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines peace as 'a state of tranquillity or quiet', while the Oxford Dictionary defines it as 'the state of being calm or quiet'. Such as when describing a place as peaceful or saying your mind is at peace. But is that what peace really is all about? Just the absence of violence or being calm?

The Catholic Church has always been an advocate for peace in the world. However, in the Catholic tradition, peace is not merely the absence of war and conflict; rather, it is the ordering of human nature according to the eternal law of God. Peace is founded on the primary relationship that exists between every human being and God himself, a relationship marked by righteousness. **According**

to biblical revelation, peace is much more than the simple absence of war; it represents the fullness of life.

Peace is the effect of the blessing that God bestows upon his people, producing fruitfulness, well-being, prosperity, absence of fear, and profound joy. The promise of peace that runs through the entire Old Testament finds its fulfilment in the person of Jesus, the 'Prince of Peace'.

Pius XI wrote in the encyclical *Ubi Arcano*: 'True and lasting peace is more a matter of love than justice, because the function of justice is merely to do away with obstacles to peace: the injury done or the damage caused. Peace itself, however, is an act and only results from love.'

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for peace is *shalôm*. Literally, it means 'to be complete or whole'. The verb conveys both a dynamic and a static meaning 'to be complete or whole' or 'to live well'. *Shalôm* is used in many different ways in the Old Testament. It can mean general prosperity or well-being (Genesis 15:15, Psalm 4:8); safety or success (2 Samuel 11:7, 18:29); harmony among friends and family members (Zechariah 6:13); (see 'covenant of peace' in Numbers 25:12-13, Isaiah 54:10, Ezekiel 34:25-26); and harmony among nations (1 Kings. 4:24, 5:12). When used as a greeting or as a blessing (as it was and is used by Hebrew speakers), it conveys the notion that one is wishing all good things to the person addressed (2 Samuel 15:9).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *eirene* is the word most often translated by the word 'peace'. In classical Greek, this term denotes the state that is the opposite of war or civil disturbance. *Eirene* also was used to speak of an inner peace, in which a person had no conflicts or hostile feelings. Under the influence of Jewish religion and Greek philosophy, the term evolved to refer to ethical goodness. So Christians who were native speakers of Greek began to use *eirene* when speaking of the 'the good that comes from God either in this age or the age of salvation'.

Pope Francis would say *shalôm* means 'abundance, prosperity, well-being.'

'When in Hebrew we wish shalom, we wish for a beautiful, full, prosperous life, but also according to truth and justice, which will be fulfilled in the Messiah, prince of peace,' he said. He said that peace is not 'the fruit of one's own abilities,' but a 'manifestation of the grace received from Christ.'

God alone is the source of peace, for he is *Yahweh Shalom* (Judges 6:24). The Lord came to sinful humankind, historically first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, desiring to enter into a relationship with them. He established with them a covenant of peace, which was sealed with his presence (see Numbers 6:24-26). Participants were given perfect peace so long as they maintained a right relationship with the Lord (see Isaiah 26:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:16).

The Old Testament anticipated, and the New Testament confirmed, that God's peace would be mediated through a messiah (see Isaiah 9:6-7; Micah 5:4-5). Peace with God came through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14-17; Colossians 1:19-20; see Hebrews 13:20). Peter declared to Cornelius: *You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all (Acts 10:36).*

Peace is often misunderstood today as a subjective psychological idea, said Pope Francis, stressing that true peace is found in Christ's sacrificial love. 'Those who have learned and exercise the art of peace are called children of God, they know that there is no reconciliation without the gift of one's own life, and that peace must always be sought.' The pope said that there is a widespread sense today that 'peace' means 'a sort of inner tranquillity', but this idea is deficient and can hinder personal growth as it is subjective. Inner tranquillity can correspond to a domesticated conscience and not to a true spiritual redemption, and at the same time restlessness can be an important moment of growth in life. The Lord must be a 'sign of contradiction', shaking our false certainties, to bring us to salvation, and at that moment there would seem to be a lack of peace, but it is

The peace Jesus gave them was designed to move them from behind the locked doors of fear and into the purpose that Jesus had for them. Jesus' peace is not designed to make you static but to get you moving.

the Lord who puts us on this path to reach the peace that he himself will give us.

Peace with God is God's gift to us. God alone can place us in right relationship with him. This teaching is clear in both the Old and the New Testaments. God initiated the covenant with man, restored it when we fell, and fulfilled it in Jesus Christ. With Gideon we can say that *the Lord is our peace* (Judges 6:24). God gives his peace as a gift to those who entrust themselves to him. As Jesus told his disciples: *Peace I leave with you, my own peace I give you; a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid* (John 14:27). This peace is no superficial freedom from conflicts or difficulties, but a deep, abiding inner peace that comes from union with and confidence in God.

Why did Jesus keep on offering peace, repeatedly? Firstly, *Jesus uses Peace to address fear.* On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders (John 20:19). Within this one line of Scripture, we will understand how weak the disciples were in heart and bound by fear. As we very well understand, fear renders us incapable of realising our potential and strength. Peace is the antidote – the Peace of Christ, which is not a temporary word of relief but a real core reassurance that he is with us and that nothing will harm us (Luke 10:17). When we are afraid, we lock everything down like the disciples. Jesus, knowing how we feel, shows up and assures us.

This is why St Paul said: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:6-7). This is what the Peace of Christ encourages us to do,

not to take matters into our own hands, for our own doubts and insecurities will crush us. Rather present everything to the Lord in humility, and we will receive the calmness, confidence and assurance that cannot be explained by the world. The reason 'peace be with you' is more than a platitude is because it transcends the circumstance and settles those out-of-control emotions raging inside of us. We feel safe, secure, not afraid of failure or humiliation but assured of the higher good kept for us by God.

Secondly, *Jesus reassures forgiveness and Love of God* by offering peace. When Jesus heals people or forgives their sinfulness, (Mark 5:34, Luke 7:50) he tells them, Go in Peace. We know there are times, we are unable to feel that forgiveness or healing that the Lord is giving us. We are doubtful and insecure about forgiving love. Here, by offering this peace, Jesus is calling the person into a holistic healing of body, mind and soul, a new life in Christ. It's an assurance of the magnanimity of the love received and the companionship offered.

Finally, *Jesus gives peace to secure our purpose.* After giving peace, Jesus is sending out the disciples – to fulfil their true calling. *Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you* (John 20:21). The peace Jesus gave them was designed to move them from behind the locked doors of fear and into the purpose that Jesus had for them. Jesus' peace is not designed to make you static but to get you moving. Jesus never intended for the disciples to stay behind a locked door and for us not to stay locked up by anger, hatred, inferiority, insecurity, guilt and the like. He will do for you what he did for his disciples – give you peace which in turn can give you the confidence to move forward.

So peace is not a greeting or virtue of passivity but that which is very much active. 'Peace is a virtue that requires the

"active" commitment of individuals and entire societies', says Pope Francis. Peace is an 'active virtue', one that calls for the engagement and cooperation of each individual and society as a whole. True *shalom* and true inner balance flow from the peace of Christ, which comes from his Cross and generates a new humanity, embodied in an infinite host of inventive and creative saints, who have always devised new ways to love. 'The saints build peace. This life as children of God, who because of the blood of Christ seek and find their brothers, is true happiness. Blessed are those who go this way,' Pope Francis said.

Peace that the world gives is dependent mostly on circumstances. When everything lines up, life is good, and there are no problems, this is when a measure of peace comes. Peace, by the world's standards, is simply the absence of any problems, disturbances, or inconveniences. It's what we call outer peace. The peace that Jesus gives is far different from that. It is not dependent on circumstances and it doesn't take away any difficulties. This peace flows in the midst of persecution, trouble, disappointment, confusion, and anxiety. Jesus never promised that he would remove you from the challenging situations of life. What he assured was the strength, wisdom and presence to go through and overcome it. It's a peace that the world can neither give nor take away.

God's peace— *shalôm* —gives assurance that all is right in your soul, even if you can't resolve all the issues affecting you or predict the outcome of anything at this point. God's peace provides the assurance that he is still in control. Biblical peace is unrelated to circumstances; it is a goodness of life that is not touched by what happens on the outside. It's all about allowing God to take control and to lead us, knowing that we are safe and victorious when we are with HIM! Amen. ■■

Fr Justin Joseph Panachickal is an MSFS priest who serves at Charis Bhavan retreat centre in Kottayam, India.

How I Remain At Peace

Kairos Global asked few people to share ways in which they maintain peace during stressful situations. Here are some of their replies.



ASHIK JOSEPH

Engineer, India

> I give you my peace, my peace I give unto you. Not the way the world gives you (John 14:27).

Though life has changed drastically, problems still await man; although conveniences have improved the standard of life, the intensity of problems faced now is still great.

Over the last 30 years of my life, my quest was for peace in the midst of turmoil, and how to remain calm in any tribulation. While the years have brought me many acquaintances and experiences, I've also been able to grow spiritually. And I wish to continue to do so.

Jesus taught us to love each other, and to be in constant communion with him. From my childhood days,

Jesus has been a friend to me. And I spend long hours in prayer. This has made many people question me about it. Some have argued with me about my spirituality, and have even humiliated me as a 'no-gooder' and 'jobless person'. But through prayer, the Lord has helped me be patient with them, and to bear with them.

Recently, I was left feeling down and dejected. Feelings of depression began to torment me, leaving me afraid to face others. I even began to question my purpose in life. But when I took all this to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he reassured me about my life's purpose. I felt his hand of assurance upon my life. Praying the Rosary also helped me get out of this gloom. A new confidence started to flood over me. And I began to pray for others experiencing similar situations.



ALEENA JOY

Civil Engineer, India

> Understanding that losing my cool doesn't help in a situation is the basic key to maintain peace of mind. In general we are worried about some happenings of the past or future. But we have only the present moment that is ours. Hence focus on what could be done at the moment.

RINTUMOL KIZHAKKEKKARA REJI

Semiconductor industry, Singapore

> I go for adoration.

MAYROSE

Manager/mother, Australia

> Sit in silence...

SHANICE CASTELINO

Teacher, India

Haven't really thought about it so I don't know if I'm able to be peaceful in trying times. I do speak to my loved ones, venting to my friends. I maintain a journal that I write during personal prayer time. Listening to gospel music.

I close my eyes and invoke the Lord's presence in me and remember he is God and he is still in control. I say Psalm 46:10 to myself and remember how he calmed the sea. Just smile at him, say Amen. That's it.

ELSA TOM

Homemaker, Australia

**AJI THOMAS**

Teacher, India

TO MAINTAIN PEACE DURING TRYING SITUATIONS AT SCHOOL

- Stay calm and composed, modelling emotional stability.
- Communicate openly and honestly with students and colleagues.
- Show empathy and understanding towards students' emotions and concerns.
- Establish clear expectations and boundaries.
- Utilise conflict resolution strategies and problem-solving techniques.
- Prioritise the well-being and safety of all individuals involved.
- Seek support from colleagues or school administrators when needed.

**TENA CONIL**

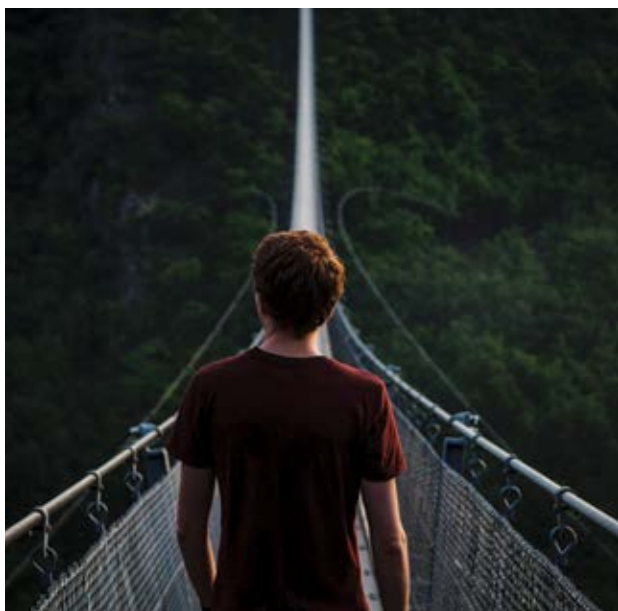
Integrated Creative Director & Filmmaker, India

> As you grow spiritually, faith becomes a quietly flowing, steady stream of living water in your soul. This has helped me not to panic in the most trying life events. God speaks loudest in situations - with faith, we are able to see within the difficult circumstances itself, God's way forward.

HECTOR LEWIS

Respiratory Therapist, USA

> Yes these past weeks were really rough for me but St Paul reminds us to rejoice at all times in Philippians 4, and the reason to rejoice is 'The Lord is near'. So as I make a simple effort to bring my burdens to him through prayer with a thankful heart for all he has done, I've always found peace without fail - the peace that Jesus offers goes beyond our understanding. Some scriptures I really love embracing when I feel weak - We know that in all things God works for good for his beloved (Romans 2:28), and also knowing that God's plan for me is all about my welfare (Jeremiah 29:11). Reminding myself over and again of these words from our Lord, words that are alive and active, helps me cross the bridge from sadness to hope and joy. Thank you Lord!

**ANNILYN PURAYIDOM**

Doctor by profession/ home-schooling mother, USA

> I think I have a strong underlying conviction that whatever happens, happens for our good. And that has helped me carry through. Of course I fail a lot of times in maintaining peace, but whenever I do focus on God, and not on the particular situation, that has helped me.

ANIL ISRAEL

Software Engineer, Germany

> Having too high expectations is a likely cause for loss of peace. Accepting the truth that this also will pass away and there is a calm after every storm, enables us to let go of the uninvited destroyer of peace and remind ourselves that God of peace is always in control.

LIMI KALAPURACKAL

UNCCD Programme Assistant, Austria

> For me when I get stressed or go through a crisis period, I try ALL ways that I can think of to get out of it. It surely depends on what the exact crisis is about but following are some practises I try to incorporate:

- Talk to friends or my mom. It usually takes me some time to open and be vulnerable but eventually it helps.
- Go on solo walks or hikes (the more nature the better ;))
- Journal about it! And being a writer I cannot not write poems about my feelings. <3
- Prayer and meditation: total surrender! If the opportunity is there and I feel mentally fit enough, I go to adoration. But if not I tend to pray in my room. For meditation, I use the app 'Headspace' which has some guided meditations.
- Get moving! I love running so I like to go on a long run or do some cardio workout at home.
- Self-care! Might require me to say 'No' to some people but trying to fill my cup before I am drained.

**STEFFI SIBY**

Single, UK

In a difficult situation, I pause for a moment. Then I say in my mind, 'Come Holy Spirit!' Then I approach the task again and it feels much easier. I also try to stay quiet and calm. If the difficulty persists, I find peace in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

**ROJES V COALBE**

Senior HR Manager, Australia

> I start the day with 30 minutes of personal prayer, meditate over a portion of the Bible as well. I surrender all my tensions and worries during my daily Mass and then I try to forget about them. I also pray more when in crisis situations.

**AJITH JACOB**

Engineer, Germany

HERE ARE FEW METHODS I TRY:

- Be rooted in prayer with the complete belief that God is in control
- Meditation
- Exercise
- Make a list and do things objectively, those that are in your control - be engaged
- Think of the people who are going through far greater struggles than you do
- Stay humble and ask for help

JINTO JOHN

Development professional, India

> Depending on God, spending time with friends, recalling past positive experiences, trying to understand the real situation.

SHERIN MARY JOHN

Doctor, India

> I surrender the situation to God... receive it from the Lord. The knowledge that it has been allowed by God and it will turn out for good itself helps me to stay calm. I have always experienced that along with the box of crisis, the Lord also sends a box of grace that stops just above our head; all we need is to look up to Him and receive it.



Praising
and
thanking
God in
tongues
silently.

TITY ANTONY

Nurse, Australia

GEETHA JOSE

Homemaker, UAE

> If nothing is impossible for GOD, then all that goes out of our way is also meant for a purpose. The only thing is to seek for HIS accompaniment. The Lord will surely help us to believe in what is unseen and to trust that everything works for our good. Keep trusting, move forward!

SHIBU M

IT engineer, Australia

In my personal opinion, true inner peace can be found in embracing a steadfast commitment to loving God above all else, earnestly desiring to prioritise God's will over our own, and consciously choosing not to withhold anything from him, even in the most challenging and stressful circumstances.

**LIZI DAS**

Staff nurse, India

> Maintaining peace during trying situations in a nursing job requires staying calm, practising effective communication, demonstrating empathy towards patients and colleagues, prioritising patient care, and seeking support when needed.



By being calm,
thinking of
options to fix the
crisis or situation,
listening to the
Holy Spirit.

JUSTIN INNASI

Married, Australia



CARMAL MARY J

Parent (Retired govt. employee), India

Isurrender the problem and my nothingness at the feet of the Crucified Jesus. I seek assistance from the Holy Spirit and Mother Mary. Whatever be the situation and problem, I pray and wish that the will of God be done. Then I feel peace in my inner self and guidance of the Lord.



Eucharistic Adoration.

DHANYA AUGUSTINE

Banker, India



ROBY JOSHUA

Volunteer, Australia

> When I undergo difficult situations such as when my kids are being disobedient or any other stressful occasions, immediately I speak out the words 'Come Holy Spirit'. After I speak those words, I feel a peace coming into my heart which surpasses all understanding that helps me not to be reactive, and to stay calm.

A JOSEPH ANTONY

Journalist, India

> By uttering, 'Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me, melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.' The Hail Mary calms me. I also repeat, 'Jesus we trust in you.' When reading the Bible, I draw strength by saying, 'Word of God, enlighten, empower and sustain me.'



THE CATHOLIC STORY

Upon the Blood of Martyrs

THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

In this second part of the series on the history of the Catholic Church, **Rodney Pereira** takes us through one of the most difficult periods of the Church – the first three centuries.



From Pentecost (AD 33) to the Edict of Milan (AD 313)

Jesus left the twelve apostles with the Great Commission and ascended to heaven. Here were twelve ordinary men standing, looking up to heaven, entrusted with the greatest task ever. How could they ever hope to achieve it? The answer came as they sat praying and brooding over it in the Upper Room on Pentecost Day, as the fire of the Holy Spirit roared into them. This marked the inauguration of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church, which began with a handful of men, has grown to become the world's largest single religious body, comprising over half of all Christians and nearly one-sixth of the world's population. The story of the Church is one of all sorts of things—successes and failures, persecutions and honours, saints and sinners, the natural and the supernatural.

Every Catholic needs to have at least a basic understanding of the Church's history. Here we take a brief look at the Catholic story of the first three centuries. It was one of the most difficult periods the Church encountered – evoking memories of missionary journeys and conversions, as well as catacombs and blood-drenched coliseums.

The Apostolic Age

The apostles led the early Church from the front with their preaching and apostolic initiatives. They travelled to different places, preaching the gospel, building churches, teaching, and managing discipline. The early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles primarily recount the Church's growth among the Jews. The early Christians were called the 'people of the way'. The apostles guarded the Church watchfully, and their teaching and tradition were handed down by their successors. This helped to keep the Church united, even though heresies rose from time to time. Writings of the Church Fathers, who were the early scholars, bishops, or theologians, also helped to explain scripture, doctrines, and the Tradition to the people. Thus, the presence of the Apostles until almost the end of the first century helped lay a strong foundation. This period is called

the Apostolic Age. The Church believes that public revelation ceased with the death of the last apostle.

The spread of the faith

In the beginning, Christian activity was centred on the Jewish communities around the Mediterranean Sea. The martyrdom of Stephen was a decisive event that led to believers moving out of Jerusalem to farther places and even distant countries since they felt they too were now in danger. It was in some ways the beginning of the persecution of Christians. However, the Christians spread their faith wherever they went. One of the first places that the believers reached was an ancient Greek city named Antioch (now in Turkey), where they were first called 'Christians' (Acts 11:26). Soon, significant things began happening there. The gospel was first preached to the gentiles, and the first baptisms of the gentiles took place. Antioch soon became a centre of mission among the gentiles.

The conversion of Saul, who became St Paul, was yet another event that had a significant influence. The good news was now proclaimed to the wider world. The faith spread far and wide during the first two centuries, mostly due to the personal efforts of the early Christians. They were mostly ordinary men and women from all walks of life, with no great academic credentials—fishermen, traders, tentmakers, labourers, slaves, and homemakers. Their journeys, life situations, and friendships all became opportunities to share their faith. Every Christian was a teller of the Jesus story. The early scholar Origen recounts the apostolic zeal of the early Christians: 'Christians make every possible effort to spread the faith on earth. To this end, some of them pose formally to themselves as a duty of their lives to go from city to city, also from village to village, to win new faithful to the Lord. It cannot be said that they do it to benefit themselves, because they often reject even what is most necessary to live.' In his book *Friendship and the Fathers: How the Early Church Evangelized*, Mike Aquilina describes, 'The common narrative, however, is a story of friendship. There

was, as far as we know, no talk of evangelistic methods or institutional programs in the underground Church... it seems that Christians converted the world simply by befriending their next-door neighbors and persevering in friendship'. And abiding Christian charity was yet another factor that attracted people to the faith. Tertullian tells of how a pagan official was struck by the witness of Christian love and exclaimed, 'Look, how they love one another!'

By the end of the first century, Christianity was already a well-established religion. By around AD 150, Saint Justin Martyr wrote that the Mass was already celebrated among every race on earth. By the end of the third century, Christianity had percolated deep into society and had become well organised, with buildings and charities. And by this time, the number of Christians was too high for the Roman Emperors to get rid of them.

Persecutions

During the second and third centuries, persecution featured prominently in the life of the Church. For most of this period, choosing to become a Christian almost certainly meant choosing martyrdom. Persecutions happened intermittently from AD 64 until 313, when Constantine signed the Edict of Milan. The early Christians were considered dangerous to the Roman Empire and were persecuted by 11 emperors. It began with Emperor Nero. There was a great fire in Rome that burned for six days and seven nights, destroying almost three quarters of the city. After the fire, Nero grabbed a huge chunk of the destroyed area to build a splendid palace and also wanted to rebuild Rome to his liking. As people started suspecting that Nero himself started the fire, he blamed the fire on the Christians and made them scapegoats. With this, the first wave of terrible persecution against Christians began. Tacitus (AD 53–130) recounted this: 'Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burned, to serve as a

nightly illumination when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle and was exhibiting a show in the circus while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car'. He went on to note that it roused sympathy for the persecuted even among many Romans.

The Romans were angered that Christians wouldn't join worship to their gods. This, they believed, would displease their gods and become a threat to their community. Tertullian wrote about it: 'The Christians are to blame for every public disaster and every misfortune that befalls the people. If the Tiber rises to the walls, if the Nile fails to rise and flood the fields, if the sky withholds its rain, if there is earthquake or famine or plague, straightaway the cry arises: "The Christians to the lions!"'

One of the most severe persecutions was during the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284–305). Unspeakable cruelties were inflicted, especially upon the religious leaders who were arrested. They were burned at the stake, fed to wild animals, or condemned to the mines. Many had their tongues cut off, their

eyes gouged out, and their feet and hands sawed off.

Historian Schaff notes that 'all the pains, which iron and steel, fire and sword, rack and cross, wild beasts and beastly men could inflict, were employed' to persecute Christians. We don't know for sure how many Christians were martyred during this period. Eusebius, an early Church historian, mentions 'myriads' or 'countless numbers' of Christians embraced martyrdom.

The catacombs constructed in the first, second, and third centuries were primarily burial places, but they were also used for meeting as a community and celebrating Mass. Every time the candle is lit in a church for Mass, we are reminded of the early Christians who secretly celebrated the Holy Mass in the catacombs at night during the centuries of persecution.

The early Christians had a holy indifference to death and received martyrdom with courage, joy, and even celebration. When we remember the terrible persecutions of the early Christians, we are reminded of the words the writer of Hebrews used to describe the Israelite heroes of the Old Testament:

...they of whom the world was not worthy (Hebrews 11:38). But the more they were persecuted, the more Christians grew in numbers. Tertullian wrote these famous lines in AD 197: 'Kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to dust; your injustice is the proof that we are innocent... The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.'

Christians condemned gladiatorial shows and the shedding of human blood. During a fight, St Telemachus, a Christian monk, ran into the amphitheatre, trying to separate the gladiators. The crowd, irritated at the interruption of their cruel sport, stoned him to death. But that death turned the hearts of the people and the Emperor. That was the last time blood fell on the arena floor from a gladiatorial fight.

In AD 312, Constantine, who was a Roman general, had a vision in which a cross appeared on the sun and had an inscription that read, 'By this, conquer'. Understanding this as a message from God, he went to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge with a cross painted on each soldier's shield. The battle was won, and

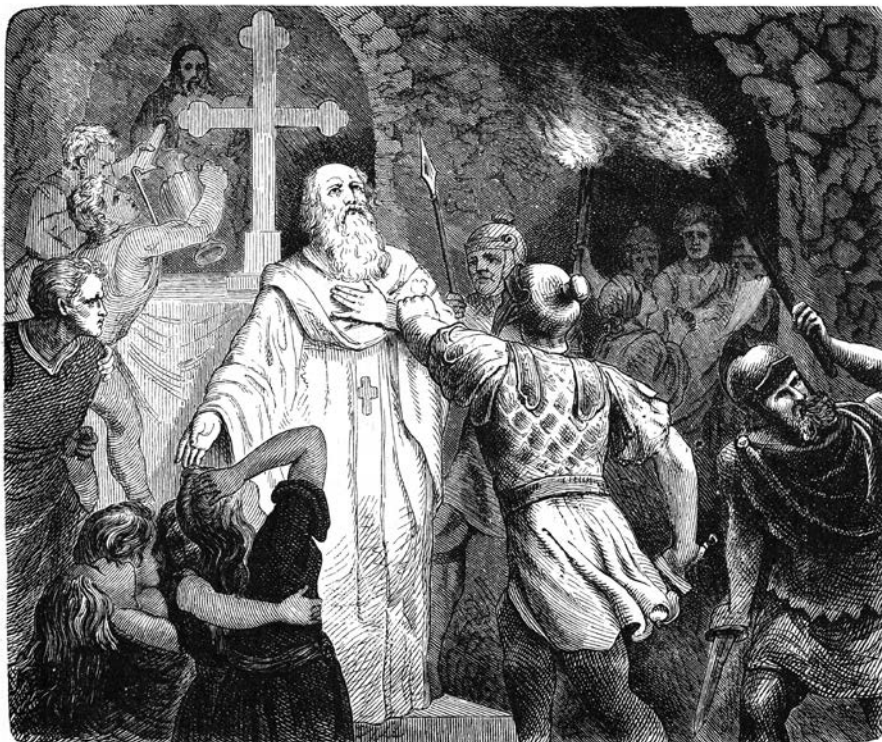
How the Apostles Died

We don't have all the details of the work and deaths of the apostles. But we can gather some information from the scriptures and early writings. All the apostles except John were martyred. St James the Greater was the first apostle to be martyred. It is believed that he preached in Israel, Rome, and for a long time in Spain, encouraged by Our Lady. He was beheaded by King Agrippa I when he was in Jerusalem in AD 44. His remains were taken to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, by some of his followers and buried there. St Peter, who preached in Antioch and Rome, was crucified upside down in AD 67 on Vatican Hill. St Andrew is believed to have preached in Asia Minor (Turkey), Scythia (north

of Iran), Greece, and Macedonia. He is believed to have been martyred tied to an X-shaped cross at the city of Patras in Achaea in AD 60. St Matthew preached in Africa and is believed to have been martyred while offering Mass in AD 65 in Ethiopia. St James the Lesser was the first bishop of Jerusalem and died from a death blow from a club in AD 62. St Simon the Zealot, and his brother, St Jude (Thaddeus), are believed to have preached in Persia together and died in AD 65. Simon is said to have been either crucified or cut in half with a saw. Jude was beaten to death with a club, and his body was later returned to Rome, where it remains buried in a crypt under St Peter's Basilica. St Philip preached in

Greece and is believed to have been either beheaded or crucified upside down in the city of Hierapolis in AD 62. St Bartholomew (or Nathanael) is believed to have preached in Arabia, Persia, and as far as India. He returned to Asia Minor and was martyred later by being skinned alive in Armenia in AD 72. St Thomas was one of the apostles who travelled the furthest, 'to the end of the earth', and reached India. In AD 74, he was stabbed to death in Mylapore, India. It is believed that St Paul was beheaded on the same day as Peter; outside the walls, the place of his execution is called the 'Tre Fontane' (in accordance with the legend that his head bounced three times when beheaded, forming three fountains).

St Matthias, who replaced Judas, is believed to have preached in Judea, Cappadocia, and Asia Minor and is believed to have been either hacked to death or crucified in AD 65. St John, the youngest apostle and the only one who escaped martyrdom, worked mostly in Jerusalem and Ephesus and founded churches in Asia Minor. By order of the Emperor, he was brought to Rome. Having failed to kill him by boiling him in oil, he was sent into exile to the island of Patmos (where he wrote the book of Revelation). It is believed he was later freed and died in AD 100 at the age of eighty-eight at Ephesus.



Constantine converted to Christianity. The Edict of Milan, issued in 313 AD, accepted Christianity, and 10 years later, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, thereby conquering the Empire that had persecuted it for almost 3 centuries.

What we can learn from the early Christians

Missionary zeal: One of the most impressive features of the early Christians was their burning zeal to evangelise, even at a time when there was the risk of being martyred for the faith. They couldn't stop talking about their faith, even while they were being martyred. St Andrew preached from the cross (to which he was tied) for two days to the crowds who came to see him, making his cross a pulpit. St Paul exhorts us to *proclaim the message; be persistent, whether the time is favourable or unfavourable* (2 Timothy 4:2). We need to pray for and grab the opportunities we get to share our faith with our friends, neighbours and colleagues.

Heroic witness: Christians had high moral standards that baffled the pagans. An anonymous disciple writes in the 'Letter to Diognetus', 'Every foreign

land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all'. Ideas like equality, democracy, compassion for the weak, and protection of the oppressed were not endorsed by Stoicism. Abortion, child abandonment, infanticide, gladiatorial fights, slavery, and even suicide were integral parts of Roman culture. The early Christians upheld the dignity of every human person and the dignity of life and shook up the pagan social order. Their charity was so great and they evolved such impressive systems of social security that even the pagan emperors were embarrassed. Emperor Julian the Apostate lamented: 'How apparent to everyone it is, and how shameful, that our own people lack support from us. The impious Galileans (Christians) support not only their own

poor but ours as well.' In a world where the post-Christian culture is increasingly resembling the ancient pagan culture, and every kind of evil is getting glorified—abortion, pornography, violence, exploitation, and dehumanisation—we need to reclaim the heroic witness of true Christian charity.

Spiritual Growth: In these days where everything about Christian life is comfortable and we have too many good things, we push our spiritual life to the periphery. Today, we can see families who have no time for family prayer, young people who have no time for Mass, and even religious who have no time for meditation. One of our greatest regrets on our deathbed will be the time, resources, and graces we wasted. We need to learn from the early Christians, who *devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers* (Acts 2:42). The Holy Mass was central to their lives. They risked death to celebrate Mass and pray together. They lived on earth, preparing themselves for heaven.

Martyrdom: The Commission for the New Martyrs of the Great Jubilee, appointed by Pope Saint John Paul II, in preparation for the great Jubilee year of 2000, discovered that the '20th century has produced double the number of Christian martyrs (than) all the previous 19 centuries put together'. We may never undergo extreme persecution or suffer martyrdom like the early Christians. But we too can become martyrs! St Gregory observes that all the saints have been martyrs either of the sword or of patience. He reminds us, 'We can be martyrs without the sword, if we keep patience.' St Jerome says: 'Martyrdom does not consist only in dying for one's faith. Martyrdom also consists in serving God with love and purity of heart every day of one's life'. Our everyday lives offer us immense opportunities for practising self-denial, self-control, sacrificial giving, and selfless love. It's a kind of simple 'martyrdom' we can all begin practising. ■

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

UPCLOSE

Today we are talking to George Ettiyil, who was lovingly known in JY as 'German-George', about his spiritual journey, which started with the early days of Jesus Youth. George is the Senior Director Sales (South Asia) at Lufthansa Group Airlines and is responsible for overseeing all commercial activities for Lufthansa Group Airlines' business in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. He currently lives in Delhi with his wife Manu and their two daughters, Anjali and Roshni.

I recently had the opportunity to have a casual yet heartfelt conversation with him, and here are a few excerpts from the talk we had about his spiritual journey and where God is leading him.

George, if you were born and brought up in Germany, how did you come to be a part of JY in India?

At the age of 15, my parents sent me to Kerala for my PDC at SB College, Changanacherry. A year later, in 1990, JY was organising a regional campus meet at our college, and the central music ministry was looking for a local guitarist for the meet. I had hostel mates who were JY, and knowing that I played the guitar, they suggested my name. That's how I ended up meeting Manoj Sunny, Beena, and Shelton for a first practise session, where my strong apprehension towards a 'weird', if not 'crazy', charismatic renewal gradually faded as I encountered their

genuine love.

Yet my somewhat notorious reputation turned out to be a challenge, as the college principal did not agree that someone like me should be on stage for Jesus Youth at his college. It was a test of true fellowship when the JY leadership, believing in my genuine desire to change, stood up for me and convinced my college management to allow me on stage under the precondition that I would attend a retreat before the campus meet. Coincidentally, the college was conducting a Potta*-led retreat just a week prior to the campus meet, and there I had my first conversion experience. I received deep inner healing and obtained

SENT SOARING BY GRACE

Lissy Julius has a heart-to-heart chat with George Ettiyil, Senior Director Sales (South Asia) at Lufthansa Group Airlines about his spiritual journey.



the gift of tongues. My life changed completely ever since, and with the campus meet, a completely new journey started for me with the JY music ministry. It was still the early days of the Rex Band, of which I was soon to be part of.

How did your parents and friends react to your getting deeply involved in JY?

My conversion became a U-turn towards a life focused on Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. I chose to surround myself more and more with people seeking true Christian fellowship. With this new-found power in the Holy Spirit and the help of these new friends, I gradually changed – my foul language got refined and I was able to let go of many vices.

My former friends could obviously see the change but chose to ridicule me, even challenging me to retain my newfound faith and way of life. But as I continued my path of change, the distance with my 'old' friends grew involuntarily as the expected abandonment of my new-found faith never set in. Instead, the Lord blessed me with many new friends, far more than I ever could imagine, initially all over Kerala, then India, and later on in many parts of the world. Seeing and understanding the Lord's creation, guided by the Holy Spirit, was and remains the greatest adventure till today. My renewal occurred in the early days of JY; a formal full-timership was yet to be born and in those early days most JYs lived like full-timers.

The whole movement used to extensively use the gifts of the Holy Spirit to discern how to build the Church through evangelisation, extending to the whole of Kerala and travelling every weekend without any break. For me, this meant reaching out within my college and hostel during the week, which often meant going for Rex Band programmes but also helping in retreats, conferences, or helping the prayer groups in other colleges. It was a wonderful experience seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and working for the Lord full time, which in a way continues until today.

My parents were in Germany; they initially didn't get to see the whole extent of my involvement, and communication was limited to once a week or so due



Only the Holy Spirit can truly touch and move the heart of a person and not us.

to expensive international calls those days. They learned about my spiritual experiences from me as well as from our relatives, and from what they heard, they became very concerned, especially my mother. She even thought that if I kept this up for long, I would end up becoming a priest; not that such a thought never crossed my mind.

Were you able to influence your secular friends in college through your lifestyle to bring them to Jesus?

In 1990, the charismatic renewal worldwide kicked off the decade of evangelisation with the aim to evangelise the whole world as a jubilee gift to the Lord by the turn of the millennium. Everyone in JY was trained to become an evangelist. Only the Holy Spirit can truly touch and move the heart of a person and not us, so conversion was never our aim but to be a witness to all by befriending anyone, even a stranger, to reach a point where others would want to listen to our conversion story. So, the focus of all our efforts was towards proclamation, for no soul should meet us one day and accuse us of not having shared our precious gift of salvation!

During the early nineties, the Rex band was constantly on the move throughout Kerala and India proclaiming *Christus Rex* through our songs, audio visuals and testimonies. The prayer towards the end of our concerts was always a high point. We were reaching out to both Christians

and non-Christians alike. Everyone mostly turned up to enjoy the music, but then many would be touched during prayer. Only a few heard the Word and left it at that, but sometimes, years later, we would get to know of someone's renewal, where our concert was the first impulse.

After your studies you started working in the corporate field and even left India for Germany in 2009; were you able to follow the JY pillars still?

Very early on the Lord planned for me to live out His call in the open world and over the years increasingly less inside a sheltered environment. Against many odds, he opened doors and lifted me up professionally. In return the Lord uses my professional access in many ways for the JY movement, e.g. for many years I was travelling with Manoj Sunny, Raju Varghese, CC Joseph and Rex Band members on my discounted staff tickets, meeting other movement leaders, preparing World Youth Days or for Rex Band concerts. Very often the Lord has used me to liaise more effectively with embassies, especially to manoeuvre visa systems which are mostly biased against Indian nationals.

Regarding JY pillar adherence, I personally think that for many years now we have been living in a very connected world with extensive travel and meetings, whether as JY or otherwise. One has to find creative ways to live out the JY pillars. My calling to evangelise stays strong as I strive to be a witness to Christ in a corporate environment.

Is it hard to maintain your spirituality in the corporate world?

Over the years I have come to see that the challenges of maintaining one's spirituality are similar, irrespective of whether one is predominantly engaged in or outside the movement. Challenges may take different forms, but always address the same need for purification and growth. After so many years, the key for me is to have an open communication channel with the Lord. I consult with him on everything in life, small or big.

I faced one such challenge at my workplace in 2016. I had just been promoted as a Senior Director at the

corporate head office, while a Rex Band concert tour to Australia spanning 2 weeks had been planned and committed to. In the preceding 20 years of my career, there had never been any major push back against my commitment to the Rex Band, so as usual, I informed my direct superior well in advance about my days off, of course, not missing out on mentioning the band and my faith. At my level, he could not formally object, unless there was a serious need for my presence.

Yet, after my return from Australia, everything about my boss suddenly changed for the worse. He picked on me on every possible occasion, like a bully in school. Anything that went wrong in his department was somehow turned against me, however unrelated the matter was to my responsibility. And over a period of one year he worked on getting me demoted. Due to my otherwise extraordinary performance, a demotion was not possible, but transferring me to a faraway place was the next best thing. That is how in 2019 I moved from Germany to Delhi.

Though initially I started worrying about my job and my family, I kept asking the Lord to help me make sense of this and soon got a clear conviction that I need not worry about anything. I remember witnessing at the Philip Course in Hamburg how the Lord would soon see me through this suffering. Instead of any harm being done, my move to Delhi became a game changer for my career, with my organisation's entire board of directors recognising me and my performance.

The biggest lesson throughout my life is that come what may, we should not fear or worry. Worry is the greatest evil power that takes us away from God's grace. 'No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,' declares the LORD.

Though you are involved in various spiritual activities, do you feel any spiritual dry phases?

There is never a real dry phase, perhaps only the usual ups and downs. Overall, the journey of growing in Christ continues beautifully. Yet, for the last few years I

feel that there has been change in how the Lord wants me to live out my calling. For many years, I had felt the need to spend most of my time directly for the movement, while I benefitted as my spirituality grew within this protected environment. Consequently, serving the Lord meant spending a great share of my time within the movement or within the Church. Over the years the Lord has required me to spend more time and be a shining light in my profession as my mission area. It goes beyond living by certain values and being a witness to my co-workers, but goes more and more into how I make decisions as a manager.

You spoke about being a light with Christian values. Can you share any incident where you thought you were being a light as a manager?

Sure, as everyone is aware, the airline industry suffered a massive crisis during the pandemic. I had to manoeuvre through this period to ensure the survival of our company. The choice I had to make where my witness played a role was in how I would take risk and also ensure the survival of my workforce and our trade partners. Businesses are never driven by compassion or a responsibility towards fellow human beings, but always safeguard the organisation's own interests.

Through my actions, I could prove that in the long-term, taking responsibility for the lives within or outside the organisation that depend on your business, as well as safeguarding your organisation's needs even in the worst crisis can go hand-in-hand. It basically follows the miracle of feeding the multitude, where God's richness can be unlocked if only we change our hearts.

Rather than cutting salaries permanently, which most companies would do, I managed to implement long-pending structural improvements in the compensation of our workforce in the middle of the pandemic, to ensure equitable pay. Also, with business partners, as soon as travel restarted, we allowed our partners to participate more generously than elsewhere in our recovery, so they could cope better with losses they had incurred. Because of the ensuing support, we could come out of

the crisis more successfully than if we had let everyone hang in order to safeguard the organisation's interests only.

It would be really challenging to take such an approach and go against the flow. Do you really feel your actions impact your co-workers?

You are right. Usually, at my level, one does not seek approval from co-workers anymore, but it's a constant competition for attention and affirmation from the top management. Decisions that are human-centric are often not easy, because there is no prescribed formula on how to manage a business. There is always a risk of failure and there are people waiting to point fingers at you.

Another testimony, where an initial inspiration to do something against the flow turned out very positively was when I took my entire team to reach out to a street-children's shelter in Dehradun, instead of the usual 5-star resort team trips. My intention was to share the joyful experience of providing love and dignity to other human beings whom we consider underprivileged.

Together with the children, our team painted the shelter, practised songs, learned geography and, later on, took close to 100 children for a movie. There was no further intention beyond the outreach, but the trip touched many team members and inspired some to spend more time on such projects. This caught the attention of the top management including the chairman's wife and patron of my organisation's CSR wing, and we are about to start an NGO in India. So, a Christ-inspired leadership impulse can turn to one's favour.

If I asked you to share one message with the youth of today, what would you say to them?

I would say that the Lord is looking for many to grow into leadership in the corporate world in order to make his heavenly kingdom felt here on earth. ■

** One of the earliest retreat centres in Kerala, India.*

Lissy Julius works as a guest lecturer in logistics at Cochin, India.

☼ Blessed Bartolo Longo

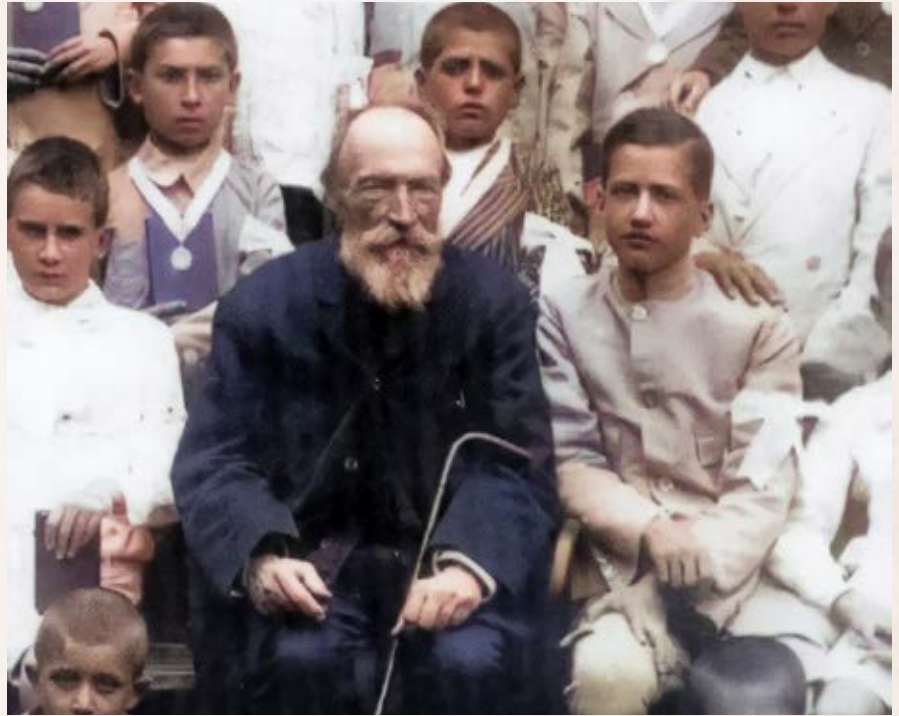
By Jisha John

My Brethren,
Peace be with you!
I am inspired to write to you
to restore peace and joy in
your hearts.

Bartolo Longo, I was named so at my birth in 1841 in Latiano (Southern Italy). My parents were ardent Catholics, and I had a joyful childhood. When I was 10, my dad was taken to his heavenly abode and my mom remarried a lawyer. To become a lawyer, that was my ambition. But my stepfather wasn't happy about it. He wanted me to be a teacher. Later, he agreed with my wish and I was sent to the University of Naples to pursue a degree in law. A life-changing decision. I would call it so.

It was the time of nationalistic movement in Italy and its repercussions affected the Church. The movement wanted the papacy to be eliminated. I was involved with it and that directed me to a Satanist cult. My bad! I became a satanic priest. It took me to a state of depression and confusion. Paranoia and anxiety bothered me. A childhood friend of mine, Vincenzo Pepe guided me at that juncture. He led me to a Roman Catholic priest, Alberto Radente. Fr Alberto was my door to Mary, our perpetual help. I was at the safest hands at last! I started reciting the Holy Rosary. I tasted peace. Mary kept me at tranquillity.

It was on the feast of the Holy Rosary in 1871, I became a Dominican tertiary. The next two years were a blessing. Some Franciscan friars took me along to help the poor and the sick. Later, I went to Pompei to continue my law practise. I was assigned to Countess Marianna Farnararo De Fusco. That was another beginning. Pompei gave me a true picture of the people's faith. There was a crucial lack of catechesis. It was time I faced another episode of mental trauma. I was messed up with depression and anxiety. I even survived suicidal thoughts many times. Every incident was strange. I couldn't



Pompei gave me a true picture of the people's faith. There was a crucial lack of catechesis. It was time I faced another episode of mental trauma. I was messed up with depression and anxiety. I even survived suicidal thoughts many times. Every incident was strange. I couldn't help myself. But Mother Mary covered me in her blue veil.

help myself. But Mother Mary covered me in her blue veil. It was a conviction to me to inculcate public devotion to the Rosary.

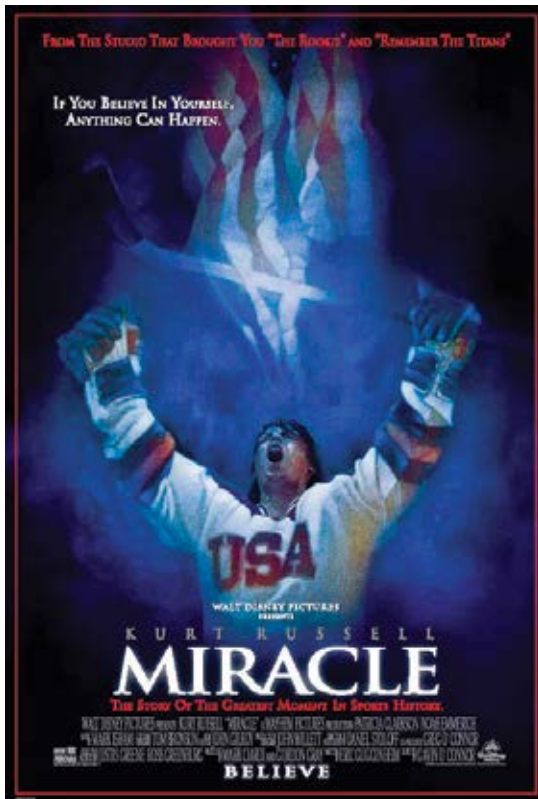
God always sends us the best people. The Countess was a great help. We began a confraternity of the Holy Rosary. God made us restore a dilapidated church. We were together in serving Christ. And on April 7, 1885, we tied the knot at the suggestion of Pope Leo XIII. We remained continent until death. She was a great friend, and both of us could assist each other on our way to heaven. And finally my day arrived. I went to the Father on October 5, 1926.

Brethren, look at my life. I was greatly disturbed. Nothing could help me regain a life of joy and peace, except God. The Holy Rosary was my stronghold. And Mary continued to hold me so close to her always. She was a blessing, a true treasure.

Peace I share with you. Taste it and Have it.

Go in peace!

SOUNDREPLY



MOVIE

MIRACLE (2004)

provide the way out so that we may be able to endure it'. Yet, often times, our main struggle is to trust – to trust the Father in heaven who says he will give the strength for us to endure and become victorious – Adam and Eve found it hard to trust; most of us don't fare any better either when faced with what seems like the insurmountable problems of life.

Miracle is a 2004 sports film, directed by Gavin O'Connor based on the true story of the United States men's ice hockey team's journey to winning gold at the 1980 Winter Olympics held at Lake Placid. With just months to the start of the games, Herb Brooks (Kurt Russell) is hired to coach the US ice hockey team.

And at a time when American culture and American society is going through a period of rapid turmoil and uncertainty – with the Watergate scandal, the Iranian hostage crisis, the cold war with the Soviets, and the deepening fuel shortages dominating the news, the US hockey federation is desperate to avoid another embarrassing defeat to the Soviets – arguably the best ice hockey team in the world and probably in a generation. However, much to the dismay of the federation officials, Brooks selects a roster of 26 preliminary players, all amateur college players, leaving aside many of the best players, with the intention of building a team, and not a group of MVPs.

With six months to the start, Herb embarks on a rigorous practise routine, with the goal of improving the physical stamina of his players, as he believes most teams fail against

And at a time when American culture and American society is going through a period of rapid turmoil and uncertainty – with the Watergate scandal, the Iranian hostage crisis, the cold war with the Soviets, and the deepening fuel shortages dominating the news, the US hockey federation is desperate to avoid another embarrassing defeat to the Soviets – arguably the best ice hockey team in the world and probably in a generation.



In her best-selling book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie Ten Boom narrates a beautiful story from her childhood. Upon encountering the reality of death for the first time in her life, the young Corrie is so shaken and overwhelmed with fear that death would one day snatch away her loved ones, she recounts this dialogue with her dad;

'Corrie,' he began gently. 'When you and I go to Amsterdam, when do I give you your ticket?' 'Why, just before we get on the train.'

'Exactly. And our wise Father in heaven knows when we're going to need things, too. Don't run out ahead of him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need—just in time.'

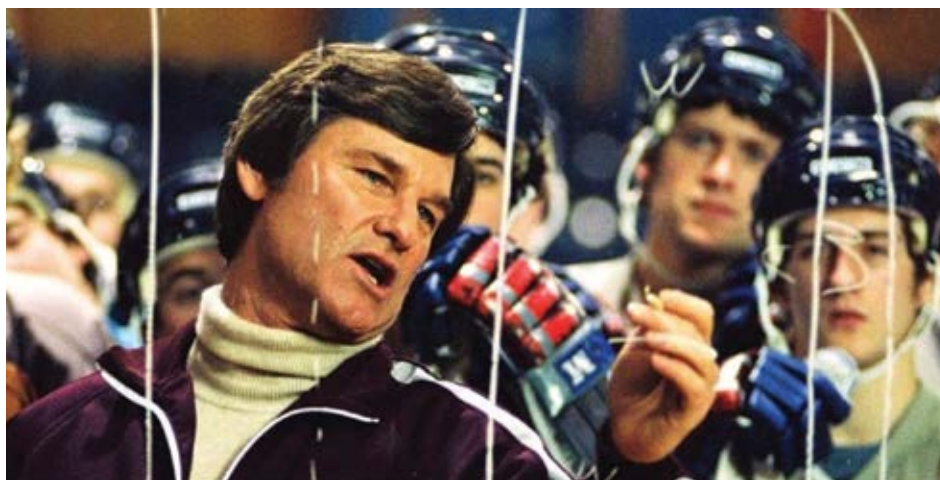
St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians also makes it a point to reiterate the truth that with our struggles, 'God will also

REVIEW BY Joseph Anthraper

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

the Soviets because they are exhausted by the third period and are unable to match the stamina and endurance of the Soviet team. He also employs unorthodox methods to make this group of college athletes gel together as a team, who care and play for each other rather than seeking individual glory. And yet Brooks notices that the team puts in a below-par performance during a practise match against Norway in Oslo, with neither commitment nor putting their heart into the game. With tactics, at times bordering on insanity and at other times considered cruel by those around him, Herb Brookes slowly gets his group of amateurs into a formidable team. Still, just three days before the start of the Olympic Games, Herb arranges a final warm up match against the Soviets, and his team of young guns buckle under pressure and overcome with fear, lose 10-3. With the gaze of the whole nation upon them, being in a very tough group to advance through to the medal rounds, and Jack O'Callaghan injured in the warm-up game, Herb and his boys have their task cut out. Yet against all odds, they earn a 7-3 victory against the second-best team in the world, Czechoslovakia and go on to beat other opponents, earning a semi-final spot against the Soviets. Deep in his heart, Herb knows that his team is no match for the Soviets, yet he exhorts his team to dream big.

Sports has this uncanny ability to unite people across boundaries. Although 'it is just a game', that game often has the power to do wonders to the morale of a nation. Even for



those of us 'who do not know the difference between a blue line and clothesline', as commentator Al Michaels said on air during the prelude to the game that would later be immortalised as the 'Miracle on Ice', the power of sports to invigorate a nation to dream is palpable and beyond doubt.

Yet, while going through the seemingly insane practise routine for more than six months, Herb's team could never really understand the meaning

or the value of what Herb was asking them to do – yet he gave them the power to dream, and dream big. As St Paul says, athletes train hard so as to achieve 'a perishable wreath, but we endure for an imperishable one'. Yet I wonder how often I have missed the chance of glory because I have bailed out on the training that the heavenly Father was providing me. ■■



Shadow of His wings

Anil Israel takes us through a Bible reflection on 'peace'.

In the roller-coaster ride of life, we constantly go through a series of ups and downs. At times we cherish the joy ride, delighted to be up there on cloud nine. At times we find ourselves gathering up the broken pieces left behind when our fragile world just crumbles down unannounced. Along with the sunshine, we've got to learn to put up with the rain. *The world's full of cactus, but you don't have to sit on it* (Will Foley). Things are not always the way we would like them to be. It is the way it is. The way we cope with it, is what makes all the difference. *Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it* (Helen Keller).

Tough times can either make us or break us. An unexpected life situation can provoke someone to panic and succumb. The same challenge can sprout forth unforeseen creativity in another and motivate them to shine and excel. No wonder we have so many survivor's stories. We are either driven by excuses or reasons. We either see difficulties or opportunities. They say, what we look for is what we get in life. Perception can make a lot of difference. In the end, *it is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves* (Sir Edmund Hillary).

In the spiritual life, *we walk by faith, not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7). What do I stand for in life? Do I solely depend only on what I perceive to be invincible human merit? Or do I abandon myself to inexhaustible divine grace? I am sure to hit rock-bottom and crash if I ignore the parachute of *power from on high* (Luke 24:49). I can choose to *take refuge in the shadow of His wings* (Psalm 36:7) and bask in the glory of his *marvellous majesty* (2 Maccabees 15:13). I can choose to count on him, for whom *all things are possible* (Matthew 19:26) or grumble in vain.

Often we tend to forget that *we are God's masterpiece* (Ephesians 2:10) – *the apple of his eye* (Psalm 17:8). We impatiently lose sight of his gaze and fail to remind ourselves that, *like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young,*


spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions (Deuteronomy 32:11), it is the Lord alone who has been leading us through our wilderness experiences. The eaglets triumph in reckless abandon for they are convinced that they will be caught before they crash. Why do I – *beloved of God* (Romans 1:7) – dump my trust in the thrash? *In Christ alone, my hope is found, he is my light, my strength, my song* (Adrienne Liesching).

To stay afloat in every turbulent storm, we need to remind ourselves that Jesus is there in our boat and he can easily rebuke every wind of fear and calm every wave of doubt. All that is required of me is trustful surrender. When we are sick and visit the doctor, in childlike trust we blindly obey the medical advice, with the firm belief that it will heal and restore us. This faith in action wells up in us a sea of peace. In the Gospels too we hear Jesus tell the woman who was healed by touching the *fringe of his garment* (Luke 8:44): *Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace* (Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48). So we see a strong correlation between an act of faith and restoration of peace.

In the Old Testament too, we see that Joseph had to spend the prime of his youth in prison for an uncommitted crime. He didn't protest or despair in misery, but peacefully embraced the trial that came his way. Even Daniel's friends peacefully sang hymns of praise while walking in the blazing furnace. Daniel himself stayed calm when thrown in the lion's den. Where there is faith in action, there is peace at work. Jesus himself stands out tall as the Prince of Peace. He endured humiliation and pain, embracing the Father's will. When we too align our imperfect human will to the heavenly Father's perfect divine will, our repulsiveness gives way to inner peace and joy.

The word 'mass' is derived from the Latin *missa* meaning to be sent. At the end of every Holy Mass we are 'sent forth' with the priestly blessing: Go in peace! We

YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL; GO IN PEACE › LUKE 8:48



In the Old Testament too, we see that Joseph had to spend the prime of his youth in prison for an uncommitted crime. He didn't protest or despair in misery, but peacefully embraced the trial that came his way. Even Daniel's friends peacefully sang hymns of praise while walking in the blazing furnace. Daniel himself stayed calm when thrown in the lion's den. Where there is faith in action, there is peace at work.

are meant to be bearers of peace in our personal lives and in our surroundings. Often this peace is short-lived. Is it a sign of ruptured faith?

The key to restore peace is to keep faith intact. My inclination to retain control is a sign of lack of absolute trust. My willingness to give control to Him who knows best, is an act of unwavering faith and a firm foundation of unshattered peace. May we have the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage

to change the things we can and the wisdom to know it's me – who is in need of change.

We are works in progress. He's still working on me to make me what I ought to be. May we faithfully seek healing at the fringe of his garment and trust in the peace under the shadow of his wings. *He will cover you with his wings; you will be safe in his care; his faithfulness will protect and defend you* (Psalm 91:4).

An old hymn captures it beautifully:

Trust in me when you know your sinking,
Trust in me when things are falling apart;
Trust in me, I'll never leave you,
Trust in me, you'll have such peace in
your heart.



Anil Israel lives in Mannheim, Germany, with his wife Sunitha and their 5 children.

NewsWatch

Pope Francis laments the spiritual poverty in a culture that leads to teen suicides



Pope Francis has said that the rise in teen suicides points to a deeper spiritual poverty in our culture today that leads young people to believe they are failures.

In his message for the 2023 World Day of the Poor, the pope wrote that he could not fail to mention ‘an increasingly evident form of poverty that affects young people’.

‘How much frustration and how many suicides are being caused by the illusions created by a culture that leads young people to think that they are “losers”, “good for nothing”,’ he said.

‘Let us help them react to these

malign influences and find ways to help them grow into self-assured and generous men and women.’

The pope warned that a culture of ‘haste’ can prevent us from stopping to care for others. He added that Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan ‘continues to challenge each of us in the here and now of our daily lives’.

‘It is easy to delegate charity to others, yet the calling of every Christian is to become personally involved’, Pope Francis said.

The pope noted that youth are particularly vulnerable to cultural changes that have led people to ‘disregard anything that is unpleasant or causes suffering and exalt physical qualities as if they were the primary goal in life’.

‘We are living in times that are not particularly sensitive to the needs of the poor. The pressure to adopt an affluent lifestyle increases, while the voices of those dwelling in poverty tend to go unheard’, he said.

Pope Francis established the World Day of the Poor in 2016 at the end of the Catholic Church’s Jubilee Year of Mercy. The day is celebrated each year on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, a week before the feast of Christ the King.

The seventh World Day of the Poor will be celebrated on 19 November with the theme *Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor*, taken from the Book of Tobit 4:7. In the message signed on June 13, feast day of St Anthony of Padua, the pope highlighted how ‘dramatic price increases’ have further impoverished many families.

‘If a family has to choose between food for nourishment and medical care, then we need to pay attention to the voices of those who uphold the right to both goods in the name of the dignity of the human person’, he said.

‘We are reminded of the insistence of St John Paul II that

“the primary basis of the value of work is man himself... However true it may be that man is destined for work and called to it, in the first place, work is ‘for man’ and not man ‘for work’”,’ he said, quoting John Paul II’s encyclical *Laborem Exercens*.

Francis, who is currently recovering in the hospital after a hernia surgery, wrote that ‘caring for the poor is more than simply a matter of a hasty handout’.

He said that caring for the poor requires ‘reestablishing the just interpersonal relationships that poverty harms’ and leads us to ‘enjoy the benefits of mercy and charity that give meaning and value to our entire Christian life’.

Pope Francis also quoted St Thérèse of Lisieux, who wrote in her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, that ‘charity must not remain locked in the depths of one’s heart’.

“No one”, Jesus says, “lights a candle to put it under a bushel basket, but puts it on a candle stand, so that it can give light to everyone in the house”. For me, that candle represents the charity that must give light and bring joy not only to those dearest to me, but to everyone in the house, with the exception of none’, the French Carmelite nun wrote.

Pope Francis added: ‘In this house of ours, which is the world, everyone has a right to experience the light of charity; no one must be deprived of that light. May the steadfast love of St Thérèse stir our hearts on this World Day of the Poor and help us not to “turn our face away from anyone who is poor” but to keep it always focused on the human and divine face of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.’

Ajith Jacob works as a product designer. He lives with his wife Neethu and their children Diego, Georgio and Ephrem in Stuttgart, Germany.

By **Ajith Jacob**, Stuttgart, Germany

Here's what the Portuguese want you to know about St Anthony of Padua before World Youth Day

Everyone's favorite patron saint of finding lost things is not from where you may think.

The Franciscan saint known around the world as St Anthony of Padua was not born in the Italian city of Padua but in Lisbon, Portugal.

St Anthony was known in his own day as the 'Hammer of Heretics' due to the powerful witness of his life and preaching. He was commissioned by St Francis of Assisi to teach theology to the friars in 1224 and went on to preach as a missionary in France and Italy before he died at the age of 36. He was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1946.

Nuncio, who is a volunteer helping to organise World Youth Day in Lisbon, said that he hopes that the 1.5 million people expected to visit Lisbon for the youth event this August will discover St Anthony to be a very helpful intercessor – and not only for lost things.

In the city hosting the 2023 World Youth Day, Catholics can visit the church built on the site where St Anthony was born, the cathedral where he was baptised, and the monastery where he entered religious life.

CHURCH OF ST ANTHONY

Located in the heart of Lisbon's

historic center, the Church of St Anthony, or *Igreja de Santo António de Lisboa* in Portuguese, is not to be missed for those who want to venerate the 13th-century saint.

The church was built on the site where St. Anthony was born and raised before he entered religious life and took Anthony as his religious name after the fourth-century desert monk St Anthony of Egypt. At his birth in 1195, his parents gave him the name Fernando Martins de Bulhões.

St John Paul II visited the church and prayed in the crypt chapel in 1982 before continuing on to Fatima to give thanks to the Blessed Virgin Mary for saving him from an assassination attempt. The pope also inaugurated a statue of the saint, which can be seen outside the church.

LISBON CATHEDRAL

St Anthony was baptised in Lisbon's Metropolitan Cathedral of St Mary Major, or *Santa Maria Maior de Lisboa* in Portuguese, located just a block away from the Church of St Anthony.

The cathedral, built in 1147, is the oldest Catholic church in Lisbon. The baptismal font, locally believed to be the original, is found to the left to the main entrance of the cathedral

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR KAIROS MEDIA!

It is with pride that *Kairos Media* announces the receipt of three awards from the Catholic Media Association for their 2023 Catholic Media Awards.

The Catholic Media Awards are given out to honour outstanding work in Catholic media. The three categories in which *Kairos Global* won the awards are: **Best Essay (Mission Magazine)** – second place; **Best Explanation of Marriage** – second place; and **Best Review** – honourable mention.

Overall, while it was *Kairos Global's* Issue 53 (August 2022) that won in all the three categories, previous issues' articles (from 2022) were also mentioned under these categories.

Mission Talk is a regular section of *Kairos Global* that features mission experiences. It is only fitting that we won under this category, for Jesus Youth is after all, 'a missionary movement at the service of the Church'.

Kairos Global's Issue 53 was centred on the theme, 'Overcoming challenges in young families'. Both the In Focus (main) articles of this issue were the winners of Best Explanation of Marriage. '**Safeguarding Priceless**' was a discussion young Catholic families had with JY elder, Prof George VM on the various challenges faced by young families in present times. The article was co-ordinated by Alina Ann Mathew. '**You raise me up**' was an elaboration of a case study encountered by marriage counsellor, Sr Sherin CSN. The third article that won under this category was from Issue 48 (March 2022), the theme of which was 'Catholic Parenting'. Anil Israel's '**Cleft of the Rock**' was a scriptural study on the duty and responsibility of parents in raising children in faith.

Sound Reply is another regular feature of *Kairos Global* that looks at movie and book reviews. The movie reviews written by Joseph Anthraper for *The Way Back* (Issue 53), *CODA* (Issue 54, September '22), and *Greyhound* (Issue 55, October '22) won honourable mentions in the Best Review category.

For a magazine that began as a humble regional newsletter, *Kairos Global* – the English magazine for youth and young families, which evolved from *Kairos* (Malayalam), has come a long way. The journey has never been easy, and gargantuan obstacles have constantly come our way. Yet, every page of ours is a bold testament to the unfailing love and outrageous providence of a merciful God, the Good Shepherd, whose words we cannot but heed, '*Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*' (Matthew 4:19).

Team Kairos Media





Kairos Global wins Catholic Media Awards in three categories!



Honourable Mention
Best Review



CONTACT

+91 8921886095 Cebin (Co-ordinator)
+91 95620 36234 Abin (Office)
Email: resilientfaith@jy.kairosmedia.org

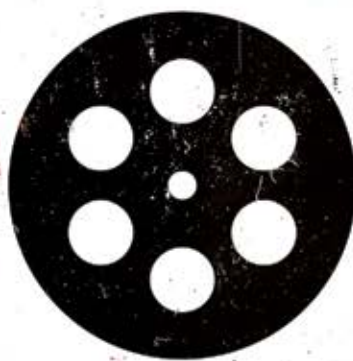
THEME: RESILIENT/HEROIC FAITH

Registration: 6 June to 15 July 2023
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