

KAIROS

GLOBAL

SHEEP IN THE MIDST OF WOLVES



SR TESSY JACOB SSFS

ALSO ↓

Seven
Habits of
Hope

■ FR JIJO JOSE MANJACKAL MSFS

A Heart Stretched
in Hope

■ ROSE NADARAJAN





MARY, MY MOTHER



O Virgin Mary, protect the young and help the aged, save sinners and console the dying. You are our hope, Mary, Mother of Mercy and Gate of Heaven. Pray to your Son for us so that we may be filled with selfless charity and deep faith. Ask Jesus for those things which we cannot obtain through our own actions and help us in this our present necessity. May we always see the Will of the Father of our lives. We ask you this, sweet Spouse of the Spirit, so that we may come to your Son in grace. Amen

EDITOR'S ROOM

DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

X @readkairos



TO OUR AMAZING WRITERS, WHO GENEROUSLY OFFER THEIR TIME AND TALENT WITH NO EXPECTATION OF PAYMENT – WE SEE YOU AND ARE GRATEFUL. TO EVERY READER, EVERY PERSON WHO PRAYS FOR US OR SENDS A SMALL CONTRIBUTION – THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH US.

Kairos Global Wins Again – A Moment of Gratitude and Invitation

We're absolutely thrilled to share that *Kairos Global* has once again received recognition from the prestigious Catholic Media Association – for the third consecutive year! Starting with three awards in our first year, then five in the second, and now seven in this third year, our joy knows no bounds. This is not just an achievement for a magazine, but a testimony to God's abundant grace and the commitment of a beautiful, unseen community behind it all.

Looking back, the journey hasn't been easy. Kairos Media is now in its 28th year – surviving and growing even when the world around us is shifting rapidly. In an age where print magazines are slowly fading from popularity and digital platforms dominate how people consume content, we are still holding on, still creating, and still reaching hearts. And all this is possible only because of God's hand leading us – and your support encouraging us.

This moment calls for deep gratitude.

To the Kairos Media Board, thank you for the vision and constant guidance.

To the *Kairos Global* editorial council, who dream, plan, write, and revise tirelessly – your work is invisible to many, but deeply impactful.

To our amazing writers, who generously offer their time and talent with no expectation of payment – we see you and are grateful.

To every reader, every person who prays for us or sends a small contribution – thank you for standing with us.

To the Jesus Youth Movement, to the Kairos office staff, and to all our well-wishers – you are part of this story.

A very special mention must go to Tania Rose Josun, our Executive Editor for both *Kairos Global* and *Kairos Buds*. Her unwavering attention to detail ensures that every issue goes out flawless, powerful, and relevant. Tania, your commitment over the years has been a backbone of this mission.

And we can't forget the creative touch of the Mustard Tree Delhi team – from our very first issue till now, they have shaped the visual identity of *Kairos Global*. We are grateful for your excellence and dedication.

As we celebrate this recognition, we also want to invite you into this mission. Wherever you are in the world, you can be a *Media Missionary*. Help us spread the magazine, share it with your parish, your friends, your youth groups. Just send me a message – we'll get in touch immediately with all the details and support you need.

It only takes a little effort to take the Good News to your neighbour. We're counting on you.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

chackochan.njavallil@jyjkairosmedia.org



Also LOOK OUTFOR

- 10 Sheep in the Midst of Wolves
- 20 Seven Habits of Hope
- 34 The Catholic Coachella



Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy.
Psalms 126:5

PATRON

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

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Fr Joseph Ezhumayil
(Jesus Youth International Chaplain)

PRINTER AND PUBLISHER

Dr Edward Edezhath

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr Midhun Paul
(Jesus Youth International Coordinator)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dr Chackochan Njavallil

MANAGING EDITOR

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

ISSUE EDITORS

Fr Alvin Mundackal	Aleena Joy
Bro. Anthony	Jyothisna DSouza
Kunnumpurath	Sijo Thomas
George Paul	Tania Rose Josun

CIRCULATION COORDINATOR

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

ASSOCIATE CIRCULATION COORDINATORS

AUSTRALIA: Mintu Vijoy, Melbourne +61 452 538 785

BAHRAIN: Neenu Maria Jibin +973 33715472

BANGLADESH: Tias Victor Palma +880 1717-152023

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

CANADA: Abhilesh Thomas +1 289 952 1785

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

GERMANY: Anna Paul, Berlin +49 176 83495451

INDIA: Austin Michael, Mangalore +91 8277405251

IRELAND: Suresh V Joy +353 87 963 0904

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

ITALY: Anoop P Varghese +39 3884256258

KUWAIT: Rajeev J Chacko, Ahmadi +965 66388310

MALAYSIA: Sweety Kamala Prasad +60 162568139

NETHERLANDS: Jojo Varghese, Utrecht +31 684974552

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

OMAN: Jiju Paul, Ruwi +968 99467516

PAKISTAN: Asif Emmanuel +92 3022534254

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Abin Michael +675 7479 4368

QATAR: Sijo C Johny +974 3357 2544

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

LOOK INSIDE

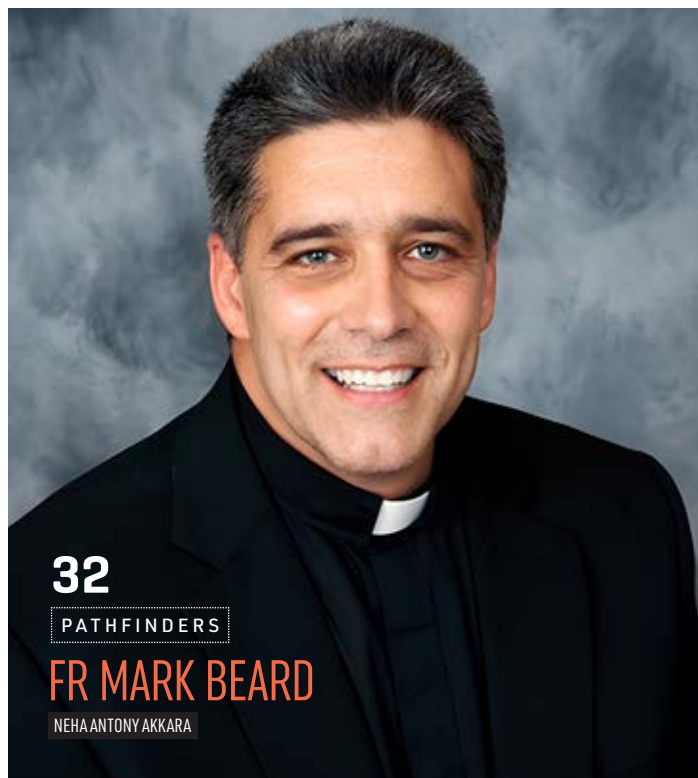
ISSUE 90

REGULARS

- 6 Ask Fr Bitaju
- 7 Pope Talk
- 8 Jesus Youth
- 38 Chandeliers
- 40 Our Daily Bread
- 42 SoundReply
- 44 Newswatch
- 46 Timeout
- 47 Lukas and Ray

ENGAGE

- 10 Sheep in the Midst of Wolves | SR TESSY JACOB SSPS



32

PATHFINDERS

FR MARK BEARD

NEHA ANTONY AKKARA

CONTENTS

14

EXPERIENCE

FINDING MY
TRUE SELF IN
THE HEART OF
THE FATHER

ANU THOMSON

POEM

13 The Silent Pandemic | NITIN MATHEW

EXPERIENCE

16 Fuel for My Journey | JOHNSON PILLAI

IN FOCUS

20 Seven Habits of Hope | FR JIJO JOSE MANJACKAL MSFS

23 Praising Over the Pain | SUJAMOL JOSE

25 Witness to Faith in the Digital Age | DR NYCIL ROMIS

28 From Victim to Victor | JILU CHENGAT

30 A Heart Stretched in Hope | ROSE NADARAJAN

JUBILEE PAGES

34 The Catholic Coachella | FR JUSTIN PANACHICKAL MSFS

SPECIAL

36 The Award Winners

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



Kairos Media is a member of the
Catholic Media Association.

@ReadKairosGlobal X @readkairos

To subscribe to this magazine
scan QR code or visit
www.jykairosmedia.org



DISCLAIMER: Kairos Media is the mass media initiative of Jesus Youth, an International Catholic movement approved by the Holy See. Kairos Media considers its sources reliable and verifies as much data as possible. However, reporting inaccuracies can occur. Consequently, readers using this information do so at their own risk. While every effort has been made to ensure that information is correct at the time of print, Kairos Media cannot be held responsible for the outcome of any action or decision based on the information contained in this publication/website. The publishers or authors do not give any warranty for the completeness or accuracy of this publications' content, explanation, or opinion. Although persons and ministries mentioned herein are believed to be reputable, neither Kairos Media nor any of its employees, sales agents, or contributors accept any responsibility whatsoever for such persons and ministries activities. No part of this publications and/ or website may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form without prior written permission from Kairos Media. Permission is only deemed valid if approval is in writing.

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 Associate Pastor at the Pastorate of St Lawrence Martyr Parish, Hanover, and Resurrection of Our Lord Parish, Laurel, Maryland, USA. He is a member of the Jesus Youth International Formation Team.

➤ Does the Church support LGBTQ+ people? If not, why?

The Catholic Church's teaching on LGBTQ+ individuals is complex and nuanced, reflecting a commitment to both upholding the dignity of every person and adhering to its moral teachings regarding human sexuality. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides guidance on this matter, emphasising the distinction between the orientation of individuals and the moral implications of sexual acts.

Dignity of the Individual: The Church affirms the inherent dignity of all people, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. *The Catechism* states that 'every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided' (CCC 2358). This reflects the Church's commitment to treating all individuals with respect and compassion, recognising their human dignity as created in the image of God.

Homosexual Orientation vs. Homosexual Acts: The Church distinguishes between homosexual orientation and homosexual acts. *The Catechism* teaches that while having a homosexual orientation is not sinful in itself, homosexual acts are considered contrary to the natural law and are therefore morally unacceptable (CCC 2357). This teaching is rooted in the Church's understanding of human sexuality and its purpose, which is oriented toward the complementarity of male and female and the procreation of life.

Call to Chastity: The Church calls all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, to live a chaste life. For those with same-sex attractions, this means living in accordance with the Church's teachings on sexuality, which emphasises that sexual

intimacy is reserved for the sacrament of marriage between a man and a woman (CCC 2359). The Church encourages individuals to seek support and community in living out this call to chastity.

Pastoral Care and Support: The Church emphasises the importance of pastoral care for LGBTQ individuals. *The Catechism* encourages the faithful to approach those with the same-sex attractions with sensitivity and compassion, recognising their struggles and offering support. The Church seeks to foster an environment where LGBTQ+ individuals can find acceptance and love within the community of believers, while also upholding its moral teachings.

Ongoing Dialogue: The Church acknowledges the need for ongoing dialogue and understanding regarding LGBTQ+ issues. While the official teachings remain consistent, there is recognition of the complexities involved in individual experiences and the importance of listening to the stories of LGBTQ+ individuals. The Church encourages a pastoral approach that balances truth and love, seeking to accompany individuals on their journey of faith.

In summary, the Catholic Church does support LGBTQ+ individuals in terms of recognising their dignity and calling for respectful treatment. However, it maintains its teachings regarding the moral implications of homosexual acts, calling all individuals to live according to the Church's understanding of chastity. The Church seeks to provide pastoral care while upholding its teachings, fostering an environment of compassion and understanding.



YOUCAT 286

WHAT IS FREEDOM AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

Freedom is the God-given power to be able to act of one's own accord; a person who is free no longer acts under the influence of someone else. [CCC 1730-1733, 1743-1744]

God created us as free men and wills our freedom so that we might decide wholeheartedly in favour of the good, indeed for the greatest 'good' – in other words, for God. The more we do what is good, the freer we become.



Popetalk

DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH



Prayer Intentions September

For our relationship with all of creation

Let us pray that, inspired by Saint Francis, we might experience our interdependence with all creatures who are loved by God and worthy of love and respect.



Dear youth, the world needs messages of hope. You are this message, and you must continue to give hope to everyone and you will be heard unto the ends of the earth. Study, work, and love according to the example of Jesus.

Evangelising on social media is more than just gaining followers, but should proclaim peace to the world. Nothing that comes from man and his creativity should be used to undermine the dignity of others. It is not simply a matter of generating content but of creating an encounter of hearts.

Our mission is to nurture a culture of Christian humanism and to do so together. This is the beauty of the 'internet' for all of us. Networks where we can mend what has been broken and heal from loneliness. We live in a society that is becoming ill due to a kind of 'bulimia' of social media connections: We are hyper-connected, bombarded by images, sometimes false or distorted.

To truly know Jesus, one must complete a journey; one must remain with Him and also experience His Passion. When we have seen Him humiliated and suffering, when we have experienced the saving power of His cross, then we can say that we have truly come to know Him. There are no shortcuts to becoming disciples of Jesus.

In the midst of your tribulations, moments of loneliness and spiritual dryness, of misunderstandings, of weariness, may your hearts be established in Him who is 'the way, the truth, and the life,' the source of all peace, joy, and love.

A culture of death is so prevalent in today's society which includes indifference, contempt for others, drug use, the pursuit of an easy life, sexuality turned into entertainment and the objectification of the human person, injustice, etc.

We are not born Christians; we become Christians when we are touched by the grace of God, this touch is expressed through our thoughtful choice and our personal journey.

JESUS YOUTH



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

It's a Small World in JY!

→ My colleague from the chemistry department was travelling to a city in Australia for a paper presentation. He had a couple of stops on the way and was eager to visit some places along with his wife and kids. With some hesitation, he approached me asking if I knew anyone in those countries. 'Of course I have Jesus Youth friends there,' I replied. I connected him with my JY friends in Singapore, Australia, and other places. When he reached there, he was joyfully welcomed and shown around. My friend was pleasantly surprised by the warm welcome and the close connection among these Jesus Youth friends. After his return, he told everyone about this marvellous network called Jesus Youth.

For those of us in Jesus Youth, this close connectedness and family-like bond is something we often take for granted. By now, this movement that started in a small way in South India has spread to almost all major countries and cities. Most of its leaders are closely linked, and there is a culture of genuine hospitality and readiness to be of service everywhere. My friend was a small beneficiary of this network of friendship and generosity.

BAMBOO GROVE – UNITED BELOW, RISING TOGETHER

My wife has a fascination for bamboo trees. In our backyard, she has planted different kinds, but they all share a pattern of mutual support and standing tall. Individually, a single tree is so humble and slender. But underneath, they hold on to each other through a strong network of roots. And above, they grow so tall that even strong winds cannot bring them down. Some other tall trees may bend and break in the lashing monsoon winds, but not these bamboo stalks.

Something beautiful that happened at the end of my high school days was becoming part of a joyful and intimate prayer group. I tried never to miss a single Wednesday meeting. Everyone there was deeply connected through a strong spiritual bond. All wanted to build a life of praise and eagerness to do God's will. They were also eager to get to know each other and help others in any way possible.

Two years later, when an opportunity came to connect with other youth groups, we were all so excited. Of course, I was the one who went around to different cities to ask the leaders of the other groups if they wanted to join hands. But many of my friends were there to dream, propose ideas, and

offer all possible help. Soon, a network of young leaders and groups took shape and began to grow. This bamboo grove got a name after many years – and that name is Jesus Youth.

TO NETWORK OR NOT TO NETWORK

In these changing times, many prefer to go it alone. The percentage of people who say they have no friends is growing fast. Many believe that life is a contest, and to succeed, you should walk alone. Not only individuals but even families want to disconnect. Many parents tell their children not to waste time with others. Even when they form groups, they aim to compete with other groups to come out on top. What is worse, many forms of spirituality that promote a lonely path and focus only on personal perfection are on the rise.

Here, Jesus Youth is countercultural. As someone commented, in Jesus Youth, it is not six pillars but one big pillar – fellowship – and five other smaller pillars. In the movement, there is such a strong emphasis on coming together, building meaningful relationships, and doing mission as a team. But then, this was the true style of Jesus Himself. He called His disciples to be with Him. He wanted His followers to be as well-connected as the vine and branches.



His mission plan was also to go out in friendship groups and build a large network of friends. And He said, 'By your love, others will know that you are my disciples.'

But people may ask: why connect? People are so messy. Isn't it better to go alone? But God is a community, and He created us to connect and enjoy each other's company. This is basic human nature. We grow when we gather and journey together. I've seen this again and again in youth ministry. When a young person first joins a group, he or she is unsure and confused. But after a few months of journeying together, they become confident. Without realising it, they become fruitful and joyful. And we do marvellous things when we join hands with people of different interests and talents. You may be a hand, another a leg, and all others different organs – and together, you become the wholesome Body of Christ doing wonders.

Connectedness becomes most helpful when a person faces challenges in life, becomes weak, or gets lost. 'I was quite active in the group, but when I failed in one exam, I became so depressed and disconnected from everyone,' I heard Peter share. 'But my friends did not leave me alone. They

Connectedness becomes most helpful when a person faces challenges in life, becomes weak, or gets lost. 'I was quite active in the group, but when I failed in one exam, I became so depressed and disconnected from everyone,' I heard Peter share. 'But my friends did not leave me alone. They prayed for me, came in search of me, and gently brought me back to the group. I am so indebted to them for saving my life.'

prayed for me, came in search of me, and gently brought me back to the group. I am so indebted to them for saving my life.'

This is not just for individuals. I have seen that groups also have seasons of luscious growth and periods of dryness. When a group is part of a wider network and is actively interacting with other groups, it becomes easier to weather those dry spells. Such mutual help ensures everyone's growth. And this is the pressing need for networking.

HOW DO THEY NETWORK IN JESUS YOUTH?


- Connect with others and build friendships
- Become part of a prayer group or small group
- Come alive in Jesus Youth ministries
- Jesus Youth teams and councils constantly attend to networking leaders and groups
- Gather in Jesus Youth events,

picnics, and trainings

- Share time, talent, and money with others
- Form online groups and networks
- Immerse themselves in a culture of love, joy, and connectedness

I like the way Pope John Paul II speaks of the importance of this connectivity:

'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)

God wants us to connect, and we are also eager to have good friends. So why hesitate? Let's do it! 

.....

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

ENGAGE

Sheep in the Midst of Wolves

Rising Persecution against Christian Missionaries in India



In light of the recent arrest of two nuns in Chhattisgarh, Sr Tessy Jacob SSPS writes about the increasing attacks on Christians, particularly upon the religious, in India.

Way back in 2003, as part of our formation, we were assigned to work in different social service sectors. I was sent to the Salesian Child Helpline, where they rescued street children found in Bangalore railway stations and bus depots. We would roam these places, looking for any child in a suspicious situation. It was overwhelming, in one instance we saw at least three children who had run away from home. The kids wouldn't easily give in to our advice. When all our efforts to rescue those children failed, the railway staff, police, cleaners, or vendors came to our aid to get the children and rehabilitate them to the shelter home.

Decades later, the railway station has now become an unpleasant place for a nun, especially one dressed in her religious habit. Many eyes watch us suspiciously, possibly planning to trap us during our journey.

One such incident happened on 25th July 2025, when Sisters Preeti Mary and Vandana Francis went to the railway station to accompany two young adults and their brother to the next city. Things didn't go well, they were accused of human trafficking and conversion and ended up in jail. Did they ever think that the railway station, such a familiar place, would turn hostile against them? Similarly, for another sister who was travelling from her home in Odisha,

barely 100 kilometres away, it turned into a battleground where hooligans created chaos for nearly 18 hours. In another instance, the principal of a Christian nursing college had to face the fury of anti-Christian groups when she had to implement academic discipline on one of her students. These aren't rare occurrences, but frequent and alarmingly increasing.

Providing quality education and comprehensive health care was once primarily the domain of Christian missionaries. Urban society may not need our services as much as it used to, even though admissions in our schools and hospitals suggest otherwise. But, definitely, people in rural areas need us, and it is here that the Christian missionary presence is highly felt. It is not to exploit their vulnerability, but to help them build their lives – to give their kids a better education, help youth find a future, comfort families in their struggles, and so on. Government agencies provide this service too. In some cases, the government seeks our aid in handling those projects. So it is not that the government does not know us, rather certain fringe elements who do not wish to know us.

Missionaries – both men and women in India face the fury of the government in subtle ways. Although physical violence is a sporadic occurrence, interrupting our daily functions with administrative

mismanagement allegations and legal accusations is very common. There are government agencies barging into our religious houses in the name of raids; they interrogate our inmates with vested interests, and frequently find fault with our documents.

Most of the accusations are fabricated and well-organised; otherwise, where do they get a raging mob all of a sudden? The participants of a rally organised to arrest a nun accused of taking disciplinary action in her institute were hundreds of village women! Who sponsored their travel and conveyance to that particular city? Did those who participate have an iota of an idea of what they were rallying and shouting slogans for?

In tribal dominated states of India where homes are situated deep within forests, missionaries had been operating residential schools to provide quality education and safety for girls. The stringent legal formalities set forth by the government caused the closure of many such hostels, leaving numerous students to look for other alternatives, often compromising the quality of education received and their safety.

The velocity of violence against Christians announces the impending danger of the death of secularism. The strength of India is its unity in diversity, and that diversity empowers us to see each other as human beings rather than as Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, etc.

Urban society may not need our services as much as it used to, even though admissions in our schools and hospitals suggest otherwise. But, definitely, people in rural areas need us, and it is here that the Christian missionary presence is highly felt. It is not to exploit their vulnerability, but to help them build their lives – to give their kids a better education, help youth find a future, comfort families in their struggles, and so on.



Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (meaning ‘the world is one family’) is our culture, and showing respect to a religious figure is our civilisation. However, it came as a huge blot on the secular fabric of India when fanatics surrounded two nuns and the tribal youth they were accompanying, reading in the nuns an ‘intention most cruel’. The Train Ticket Examiner (TTE) found it more appropriate to seek the aid of Bajrang Dal (a Hindutva militant organisation) rather than legal procedure of informing the railway police to take into custody those women who were travelling without platform tickets! Salute his duty-mindedness.

And then it was the turn of the self-declared safe-guarders of Bharat (India). In the pursuit of saving Bharat, they were blind to the vulnerable group sitting before them – choosing to see them as two human traffickers, and a young boy, perhaps the agent! If nuns are traffickers, how could anyone send their child to a convent school?!

The United Forum of Christians has reported 379 incidents of attacks on Christians in India in 2025 thus far.

While some incidents draw the attention of the media and the Church, many incidents, including brutal physical attacks, go unreported. While the negative impact of Christian groups on society is unclear, their contributions to nation-building are evident to those who are willing to see.

The attack on the nuns has raised many issues, including their dress code. Even though one needs to be prudent when the socio-political scenario is not favourable, yielding to extremist forces contravenes fundamental rights. Nuns

in religious habit have been in India for decades. Their habit carries an identity, a meaning to it; it has a witness value. It is not meant for films to make a mockery of nuns, or to brand Christian religious women. It stands for something greater than its face value. Should congregations give up what they consider sacred? During our formative years, we were told that our roles were neither as social workers, nor pious holy people. We are religious missionaries, so wearing our identity while on a mission carries no wrong. Our striving towards religious freedom in the country also entails wearing what is acceptable, and eating as one chooses.

The timely and persistent intervention of Church and political leaders resulted in the granting of bail to the poor sisters within 10 days. That is a huge relief, and perhaps a miracle. There have been cases where priests and nuns were made to languish in prisons for months. Here, it is also disturbing to note that the perpetrators go scot-free – even if their role in defaming the dignity of the persecuted is publicly visible. This gives goons a free hand to take the law into their own hands anytime they wish.

As has always been, the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity. We wish and pray that these atrocities against religious minorities become a stepping stone toward restoring the secular fabric of India.



About Sr Tessy Jacob SSps



Sr. Tessy Jacob SSps belongs to the congregation of Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit [SSps], India East Province. A native of Kerala, she has been engaged in mission activities in Odisha for the past 20 years as an educationist, media and communication coordinator, youth animator, and media educationist. Currently, she is pursuing her PhD from XIM University, Bhubaneswar. Besides her doctoral research, she is also the Associate Director of Excellent IAS Academy founded by the Odisha Bishops' Council. The academy identifies and trains youth from economically weaker sections of society, especially SC/ST communities of Odisha, to appear for competitive examinations of varied categories. Sr. Tessy is also a freelance columnist cum reporter contributing to various magazines and online portals like Matters India, Global Sisters Report, The Tablet, Indian Currents, Satyadeepam, Kairos Media, The New Leader, The Examiner, Teenager Today, and so on. She is also involved with other Catholic media forums, such as the Indian Catholic Press Association [ICPA], where she serves the current term as Vice President, and is an executive member of SIGNIS India.

POEM

The Silent Pandemic

Each day in America,
Over five-thousand young lives are hanging by
a thread.
Grades 7 through 12,
A generation that feels the weight of the world
in their chest.

It's not just about statistics –
It's faces we know, people we love,
Struggling in silence,
Battling demons no one can see.

They walk with smiles,
But the smiles are masks.
The laughter? It's hollow.
The cries? Too quiet, too soft,
Too afraid to shatter the walls of pride.

We don't see the screams,
We hear the silence.
But silence can be a scream too,
A scream so loud, it breaks their hearts.

A social media feed,
A platform for connection,
But it's also a stage for judgment,
For pressure, for comparison,
For trying to be everything
When you feel like nothing.

In the halls of high schools,
There are shadows that never leave.
A teen's reflection in the mirror –
But is it even theirs?
Who are they really?
When the world's opinion becomes their own.

Suicide is a silent pandemic,
A deadly epidemic that no one talks about.
Not in school, not at home,
Not in the places we need it most.

*I think the saddest people always try their hardest
to make people happy. I think that's why they're
sad. They just don't want anybody to know. –*
Robin Williams

We talk about everything but this,
Like it's taboo,
A dirty secret.
But these young souls are not dirty secrets.
They are broken promises,
Unseen cries for help,
And a future slipping through their fingers,
While we're too busy to notice.

But there is hope,
There is power in breaking the silence,
In reaching out,
In hearing their pain,
In standing by them,
So they don't stand alone in the darkness.

*The greatest weapon we have in the
fight against suicide is hope. And hope is
contagious.*

– **Kevin Hines**

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and
saves those who are crushed in spirit. – Psalm*
34:19

The time is now –
To listen, to talk, to act.
Because no one should feel like they have to
disappear
Just to make the pain stop.

*Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be
dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen
you and help you; I will uphold you with my
righteous right hand. – Isaiah 41:10*

The silent pandemic is loud enough.
Let's make the love louder.
Let's make the hope louder.
And together, we'll help them find their way
back to peace.

A Catholic spoken word author, **Nitin Mathew** blends
faith, personal growth, and reflection.



EXPERIENCE



FINDING MY TRUE SELF IN THE HEART OF THE FATHER

Anu Thomson shares about finding freedom in the Father when she let go of 'defining factors' to be whom God had always intended her to be.

I grew up in a small village in India where life was simple and everyone knew each other. Life moved slowly, and people lived with a quiet rhythm, rooted in faith, family, and the little things that made each day meaningful. Still, even in that simplicity, I picked up strong ideas about what it meant to be a 'successful' woman.

I often heard that to be respected, I needed to be independent, have a career, and prove I could be just as strong and accomplished as any man. Without realising it, I began to believe that staying home to raise a family wasn't enough – that it was somehow less important or even a waste of my potential.

Looking back, I can see how the world's messages had crept in quietly. Ideas like feminism – and even subtle traces of communism – whispered that motherhood was limiting and that real freedom and worth came from working outside the home. Little by little, the beauty of faith-filled motherhood was overshadowed by a hollow version of womanhood – one that promised empowerment but often left us tired, overwhelmed, and searching for our worth in all the wrong places.

I started believing that success meant doing more, achieving more, and always pushing forward. So I started chasing the world's version of success.

I ran after degrees, job titles, and accomplishments – trying to prove, to others and to myself, that I was smart, capable, and strong. I thought that if I just worked hard enough, if I earned enough titles after my name, I'd finally feel like I mattered. That I'd finally feel enough.

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

From the outside, everything looked fine. I was doing well at work. I had achieved a lot. But inside, I was worn out. I felt like I was falling apart at home. I didn't feel like a good wife. I didn't feel like a good mom. I often told myself, 'Maybe the only thing I'm really good at is working hard.'

I couldn't picture myself as the kind of mom who joyfully played, cooked, or prayed with her kids. I didn't think I could ever love being home the way I thought a mother should.

Letting go of my career wasn't easy. It had defined me for so long. But as I slowly laid it down, I didn't feel empty. I felt full. Full of joy and peace. I was finally free to embrace the mission God had given me from the beginning – my vocation as a wife and mother.

I had believed the lie that my worth came from what I did, not who I was.

But God, in His mercy, stepped in.

I went on a silent retreat, and there, away from the noise of the world, I encountered the gentle love of my Father in Heaven. Slowly, He began softening my heart and opening my eyes. He showed me that what I truly longed for wasn't out there in the world, but right here, in the life He had already given me.

So I began making small but intentional choices to put my family first. I started saying no to things that once felt important. I began praying more. Listening more. And slowly, things began to change.

My marriage began to heal. My children became more joyful. Our home, though still messy and imperfect, felt more peaceful. And in the process, I began to come alive again.

I remembered the parts of myself that I had forgotten – not just the woman who loved reading, writing, and baking, but the one who felt deeply called to be there for women who simply needed someone to listen. That quiet desire to encourage others, especially moms and young women, began to stir again.

And through it all, God gently reminded me: *You are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you* (Isaiah 43:4).

I had spent so many years believing I wasn't enough as a wife or mother. But the Lord kept whispering to my heart, **'You are already enough – not because of what you do, but because you belong to Me.'**

And when I finally let go of the belief that my identity was tied to my PhD, PE, or my career, I found real freedom. Not the kind the world offers, but the kind that comes from resting in who I am as a daughter of God.

Come to me, all you who labour and are

burdened, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28)

Letting go of my career wasn't easy. It had defined me for so long. But as I slowly laid it down, I didn't feel empty. I felt full. Full of joy and peace. I was finally free to embrace the mission God had given me from the beginning – my vocation as a wife and mother.

If you want to bring happiness to the whole world, go home and love your family – St Teresa of Calcutta.

I began to see clearly that the most meaningful work I could do wasn't out in the world – it was right here, within the walls of my home. Loving my husband. Raising children. Building a peaceful, prayerful space where Christ is at the centre – my *Domestic Church*. This is my sacred calling. This is my joy.

Dear mama, if you're reading this and feeling stretched thin, please know you're not alone. So many of us have felt the pressure to do more, be more, achieve more – while quietly wondering if we're missing what matters most.

It's okay to pause.

It's okay to step back and re-evaluate.

It's okay to come home – to the life God has placed right in front of you.

You don't have to do it all.

You just have to be faithful to what God is asking of you today.

Your worth doesn't come from how much you do – it comes from who you are: a beloved daughter of your Father in Heaven.

And that, truly, is more than enough. ■

Anu Thomson lives in Houston, Texas with her husband Thomson Varghese and their two kids. She's a full-time home-schooling mom who enjoys writing about books, motherhood, parenting, and home-schooling on her blog, *The Little Way of Homeschooling*.



Mike, Jose and myself, met Fr. Roychan at Kalagram, Nagpur - a space where culture, creativity, and mission beautifully converge.

FUEL FOR MY JOURNEY

Johnson Pillai recollects his three years of being Assistant Coordinator of JY India, and the graces that he has reaped.

Looking back at the past three years of being the Assistant Coordinator of Jesus Youth India, I am ever grateful to the Lord for the gift of the Church and the movement.

When I took this commitment, there were two Bible verses close to my heart. Luke 1:38, *Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.'* Mary's yes was the image on my mind when I was asked to take up this role. The second, closely related to it is 1 Timothy 4:12: *Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.* These verses helped me to take the commitment – the youngest to take up this commitment for the Lord.

Formation and mission involves travel. Once you are formed, going for mission is a natural progression. Over the past three years, I was able to travel all across India, visiting numerous families, Jesus Youths and sitting with the authorities of the Church. Seeing first-hand the sacrifices people have made for their faith was an unforgettable aspect of mission.

I remember travelling in central India, visiting some of the poorest families, but who wanted to experience the love of God. They want to serve God in the best way possible. When we sit with them, talk with them, eat with them – they want to give us their best, because they have experienced the best. Then through the cultural exchange programme of Jesus Youth, families from other parts of India come to Kerala and experience God's love through families here, especially big families open to many kids. And when

they return, they want to imitate the same.

Another aspect I find touching is how programmes were coordinated. At times, people are not able to afford, or are clueless as to how to organise, or how to come together to make it a success. In such situations, seeing how other young folk came to help was so inspiring, because these were young people who worked very hard to provide for their families. Small farmers who had their fields would sell their produce to make money for the Church and for the movement. For a programme in Southern Gujrat, the people brought various food items to sell during a programme, the proceeds of which were donated. Another time in the Northeast, the people arranged a sale of second-hand clothes, food and vegetables to mobilise money for a programme, and even to send other young people out for missions or to attend national-level programmes. Their

sacrifices have taught me a lot.

One incident, which inspired me greatly happened during JaGo 2023 (a 3-day JY national conference). One of our JYs from Karnataka, who was part of the JaGo general team, lost his daughter in a tragic accident shortly before. Yet, despite the pain of this great loss, he was present for JaGo – playing a vital role in the coordination. Some of the major events of the conference were because of him. Keeping his personal anguish aside, he was there making sure the 18,000 people who had gathered had a fruitful experience.

My journey within this movement has been a profound blessing from the Lord. Witnessing the conviction of countless individuals who embrace mission in the most challenging situations imaginable is truly inspirational, constantly fuelling my own faith.

One of the most incredible things is observing entire families take on long-term missions – relocating to the remotest areas, with five or six children – fully immersing themselves in God's work. I was blessed to stay with some of these families. Witnessing their daily lives – the way their children pray, have meals together, focus on their studies, and how parents lovingly guide them – is amazing! It's truly inspiring to see such commitment from families and young people alike, embracing full-time, week-long, or month-long missions, even

A gathering of young hearts in Bongaigaon, Assam – united in faith, friendship, and a shared mission to grow deeper in Christ.





Above: Joyful moments shared with youth and families in Bagdogra during the outreach mission, celebrating community and simplicity.

Top Left: A heartfelt traditional welcome in Ranchi – a gesture of warmth, love, and cultural richness from the local community.

Left: A time to connect with leaders of the movement, bonding in mission and fraternity.

amidst personal difficulties or crucial stages of their career.

Embracing mission always involves risk, but it's within this risk that we truly experience the grace of God. I recall countless hours spent travelling by train, bus, and various other modes of transport. Yet, through it all, the Lord kept us safe. He was with us constantly, in every food offered to us, every climate, from the plains to the hilly terrains. Every step we took for Him was met with His providence. He ensured we could fulfil His mission and carry His message to the people we met. With so many young people in the movement making commitments, I strongly urge others: take the risk of serving Him while you are young. Our youth provides us with the time and energy to engage in mission, bringing glory to God. Serving God and sharing His message with other young people can make a tremendous difference.

Within the movement itself, there is endless inspiration. JYs actively build houses for those in need, offer emotional, spiritual, or monetary support. People consistently journey together, striving to support one another and share Christ in

many small ways. There are those who earn little but contribute a lion's share as tithe to the movement and the Church. These seemingly 'little things' are what make mine a continuous journey within the movement.

While my journey has been overwhelmingly positive, there were moments of pain and disappointment, particularly during certain transitions or generational shifts. It's personally painful when, in leadership, we haven't done justice or met expectations. This is precisely what the Lord asks of me – faithfulness in small things – and there have been times I've struggled. In those moments, I've prayed, 'Lord, please help me be faithful in these small things,' and it's then that I truly feel His grace.

Leadership is all about serving people, not about power or position. As our Pope and many saints have taught, it's about being 'the servant of the servants.' What is disappointing, however, is when the position is given undue importance, overshadowing the grace that comes because of it. I am sure in all this we are learning, and as the Spirit moves, the movement continues to grow.

We are incredibly blessed with the wisdom, guidance, and accompaniment of the elders and senior members of the movement. This is an invaluable opportunity for us, young people, to journey alongside them. Let us allow their guidance and wisdom to shape our path. I am confident that through this, the Lord will work wonders. I've personally experienced the profound impact of our elders' accompaniment in every area of my life. From navigating simple decisions to discerning God's will and my vocation, they have been a guiding light. Whether it was struggles, vocational discernment, or even my married life, I could freely approach them for guidance.

The movement has blessed us with the gift of 'open houses,' where numerous families welcome young people into their homes. These spaces are a true blessing. Jesus Youth also provides vital 'healing spaces' where we can converse, receive forgiveness, and experience healing. While working in teams, councils, and various ministries, sometimes simply being heard is part of the journey. But these dedicated healing spaces are a testament to the abundant blessings the Lord has poured upon us through this movement.

As I conclude, a statement that fills me with immense energy and internal drive resonates: If we do something for the Lord, let us do our best. This is the core teaching of the movement, and it's what I've witnessed people embody. From formation to mission, and across our various ministries – publications, media, Gospel bands – the movement consistently strives for excellence for the Lord and His people. This dedication is how we see the Holy Spirit moving so powerfully among us. Let us all embrace the risk of giving our absolute best for the Lord and His people; through this, we will undoubtedly experience the abundant grace of God in our lives.

Johnson Pillai is married to Reena and lives with family in Vadodara, Gujarat. He is currently serving as the JY National Council Member.

A CATHOLIC MAGAZINE FOR CHILDREN

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 57

KAIROS

Buds

WITHIN
Blessings
in Rome
THE TRIVIA
GAME



Great is Thy Faithfulness!

A Missionary Movement at the Service of the Church



Jesus Youth



To purchase scan
QR code or visit
[www.jykairosmedia.org/
kairosbuds](http://www.jykairosmedia.org/kairosbuds)

Kairos Buds

Where Kids Discover
the Joy of Faith

IN FOCUS

Seven Habits of Hope



Who was the real Pier Giorgio Frassati that even his family didn't truly know until his passing?
Fr Jijo Jose Manjackal MSFS introduces this saint-to-be in habits we can imbibe.

They thought they knew who would come to his funeral. A well-dressed crowd, perhaps. The sons of senators. The daughters of dignitaries. After all, he was the son of an Italian ambassador and the heir to a newspaper empire.

But when Pier Giorgio Frassati died suddenly at age 24, the streets of Turin were filled with thousands of people no one expected: the poor, the homeless, the sick – those he had quietly served, given his shoes to, visited in back alleys and hospital beds.

His family, stunned, asked: Who are these people?

They were the ones he loved in secret. The ones who had seen Christ in his eyes. They had come not for a funeral, but for a farewell to their friend. Indeed, 'justice is love wearing boots!'

In a time of uncertainty, in a world still recovering from war, economic collapse, and the creeping darkness of fascism, Frassati had lived a radically different kind of life – one that refused despair. His was a hope not of sentiment, but of action. Not soft, but steel-strong. The kind of hope that walks into the chaos and says: God is still here. As he would often say, 'Jesus is with me, I have nothing to fear!'

And it was not accidental. It was formed. Practised. Sharpened like a blade. These are **the seven habits of hope** that made Pier Frassati's life a light in the gathering dark.

HABIT OF HOPE #1: Climb Higher Than the Headlines

Frassati often led friends up the Alps, rising before dawn, scaling summits, breathing in the silence of heaven. 'The higher we go, the better we shall hear the voice of Christ,' he wrote.

In a world obsessed with noise – news cycles, arguments, distractions, social media reels – his instinct was to ascend. Hope begins where elevation starts. It is not blind to the world's brokenness, but it refuses to be buried by it. Frassati climbed not to escape the world, but to see it rightly, from the perspective of eternity. Just as our Blessed Lord would time and again 'ascend the mountains,' Frassati would have his 'moments of transfiguration' beholding the Creator!

Verso l'alto! (To the heights!) became his personal motto. But it wasn't about mountain peaks. It was about lifting the soul above despair.

HABIT OF HOPE #2: Turn Faith into Flesh

Frassati didn't keep his convictions in his pocket like a prayer card. He wore them in his footsteps. He visited orphanages. He brought medicine. He shared his lunch and coat and time. He didn't just 'volunteer' – he entered into solidarity.

Faith, for him, was incarnate. It walked the alleys, rode crowded trams, and went missing from parties to sit with a sick child. He once said, 'Jesus comes to me every morning in Holy Communion, and I repay him with my miserable means by visiting the poor.'

The habit of hopeful people is this: they do not wait for the world to change; they live as if it already has.

HABIT OF HOPE #3: Make Justice a Spiritual Discipline

For Pier, justice wasn't a talking point; it was a form of prayer. He joined movements rooted in Catholic social teaching. He stood up to fascist gangs. He defended the dignity of workers, even when it cost him popularity. His life reminds us of the words of St Basil the Great: 'The bread in your cupboard

belongs to the hungry. The coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it.'

Hope doesn't mean being quiet in the face of wrong. It means speaking the truth because you believe redemption is possible. As Frassati put it, 'Charity is not enough; we need social reform.'

To live with hope is to believe that human structures, no matter how unjust, can be transformed. And that belief demands action.

HABIT OF HOPE #4: Don't Hide Your Faith, Live It Out Loud

Frassati was compelling. Not because he was perfect, but because he was joyful. He didn't check his faith at the classroom door or hide it in front of his friends. He joked, sang, debated, organised Eucharistic processions and led retreats, all while being part of the activities of the world.

He once helped a fellow student finish his degree by secretly paying his tuition. He lived the Gospel not by retreating from culture, but by infusing it with beauty and conviction.

Hope needs witnesses, not just believers. Frassati's faith was not a theory. It was a flame others could warm their hands by. We are powerfully reminded that 'in the ruins of a broken world, like Frassati, we need to behold the scaffolding of the Kingdom!'

HABIT OF HOPE #5: Engage in Worldly Affairs Without Losing the Prophetic

Pier wasn't naïve about power and politics. He knew the temptations of ideology. But he also knew that Christ's kingdom had social implications. He refused to stay silent while others were oppressed. He joined the Italian People's Party and resisted Mussolini's regime,

not to gain power, but to safeguard conscience.

His political engagement was rooted in something deeper than partisanship; it was anchored in principle. Hope is not apolitical – it's prophetic. It looks at injustice and says, 'This will not have the last word.'

Frassati shows us that to be hopeful is to get your hands dirty – not just folded in prayer, but lifted in protest when truth is trampled. As Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, 'A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the Church has a political responsibility... she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines.' (*Deus Caritas Est* #28)

HABIT OF HOPE #6: Give, Without Being Seen

One of the most remarkable things about Frassati's life was how little his family knew about it. He never boasted. He never invited attention. He gave because love demanded it. Recognition was least in his mind!

He lived Matthew 6:3 *Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.* He left prayer cards under pillows, paid for funerals anonymously, delivered groceries by moonlight.

In a world of curated goodness and filtered generosity, true hope often moves in secret. It trusts that God sees what no one else does, and that is enough.

HABIT OF HOPE #7: Live, With Your Eyes on Heaven

Pier Giorgio's final days were spent in agony. Doctors misdiagnosed his illness. Polio ravaged his body. But even in his last hours, paralysed and unable to speak clearly, he scribbled a note to ensure medicine reached a poor man he had been helping.

He didn't waste his suffering. He offered it.

Hope doesn't fear death; it transfigures it. When he died, it wasn't his elite education or family name that lingered. It was his goodness. His courage. His relentless joy. Hope is the habit of looking beyond the grave and seeing glory.

A Light That Won't Go Out

Pier Frassati lived less than a quarter-

Pier Giorgio's final days were spent in agony. Doctors misdiagnosed his illness. Polio ravaged his body. But even in his last hours, paralysed and unable to speak clearly, he scribbled a note to ensure medicine reached a poor man he had been helping. He didn't waste his suffering. He offered it.



'Verso l'Alto' – a Map for each one of us in the modern world

If you are weary, hope. If you are watching the world and wondering whether anything matters, hope. If you have failed,

fallen, been forgotten, hope. Because hope is not a mood. It is a virtue. And this virtue was embodied, with God's Grace, by a man who walked with the poor, climbed mountains, laughed with friends, stood up to tyrants, and whispered prayers to a God who was always with him. That man was Pier Giorgio Frassati.

And through him, God is still reaching for us, still saying, 'Come. To the heights.'



century. But he burned bright enough to light the way for generations. He wasn't trying to be a saint. He was trying to follow Christ, in the slums, up the mountains, into the crowded city streets.

He reminds us that hope is not optimism in disguise. It is gritty, patient, and full of fire. It does not surrender to cynicism or cloak itself in irony. It weeps, it walks, it climbs, it dares.

His life is a quiet revolution against the shrug of indifference. In every injustice, every tired soul, every broken system, he saw not a wall, but a door. As St John Paul II remarked on Pier Frassati: 'A man of the eight Beatitudes.'

Fr Jijo Jose Manjackal is a Missionary of St Francis de Sales (MSFS). Ordained in 2012, he is currently pursuing his Licentiate in Sacred Scriptures from Biblicum, Rome. He was appointed as a Missionary of Mercy by Pope Francis in 2016.



PRAISING OVER THE PAIN

Christian suffering is being able to praise God even in the midst of adversity. **Sujamol Jose** takes the example of two women, who suffered yet loved heroically.

However we look at it, human life is one of suffering. Sorrow and difficulties are not strangers to us, and often these problems exhaust us. Despair and sadness consume us – for some to the extent that they end their lives. These are the usual consequences of suffering.

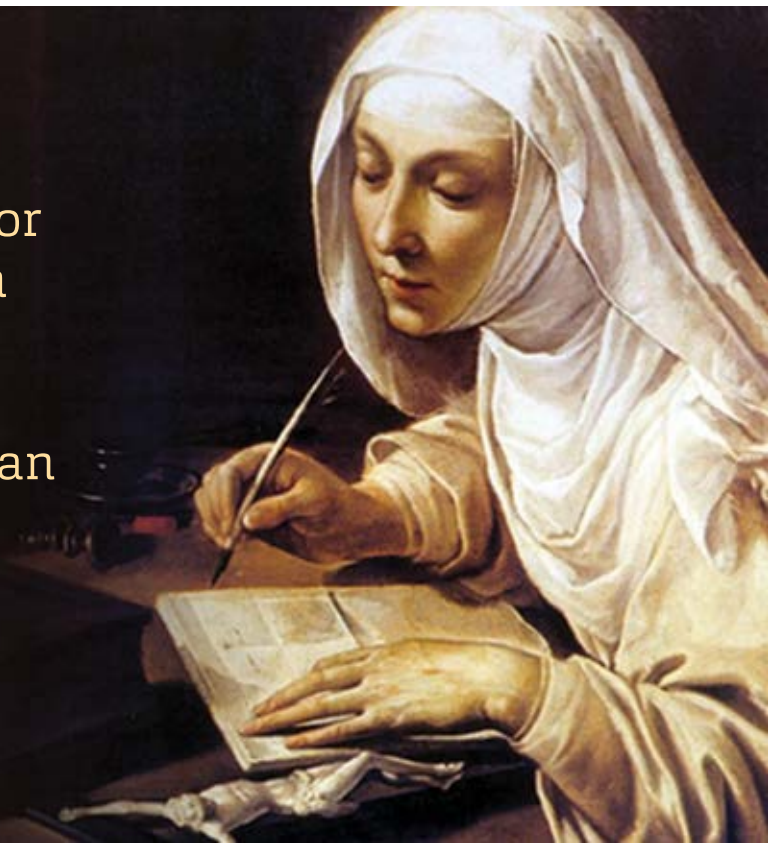
Christian suffering, however, is completely different. We have many witnesses who have faced suffering with a smile. Like Daniel in the Old Testament, who praised God even when thrown into a fiery furnace, there are many who live lives praising God despite being crippled by crises and

suffering. It is the brave witness of these people who show what Christian suffering truly is.

St Alphonsa's life was one of intense suffering. But what made her a saint was her ability to turn her trials into grace. Likewise Joicy Jaison, the Jesus Youth who endured suffering with a smile and who recently passed away, shows us that we too can transform our bitter cups into grace. Joicy, a mother of five, battled cancer heroically, all the while remaining steadfast in her faith – particularly her devotion to the Eucharist.

God gave me the opportunity to

The gift of enduring for Christ has been given to every Christian. As St Catherine of Siena said, 'Nothing great can be achieved without enduring much.'



speak with Joicy during her final months. One day, she talked more than usual, and then said, 'Let's pray for each other. May God help us both in our suffering.' Her words made me realise that only a person undergoing tremendous pain could recognise the depth of another's. As the saying goes, 'It takes one to know one.'

Christian life is blessed when you can share in that pain and be comforted. Joicy was able to offer up her illness and its ravages for souls and to win many for Jesus. A life that could've been spent sorrowfully with disappointment and tears, Joicy turned into one of testimony when she united her suffering with Christ's.

I've often felt that Joicy won more souls after her cancer diagnosis than before. She was always on fire for the kingdom of God through her YouTube channel, her writing, words, and deeds. Joicy's life, which held tight to the Word of God, gives hope to many even after her passing.

Ajna George was another Jesus Youth, whose short life still continues to touch people. Ajna too was struck by cancer, but in a most grotesque manner that made her once beautiful face too difficult to even look at. Yet, Ajna's love for the

Eucharist and her hope-filled battle became a witness to many. Her ardent love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist was proof that even in the midst of suffering, one can become a witness to Christ. If today, many young people still visit Ajna's tomb, it is a sign that she took on her suffering for the sake of souls.

The gift of enduring for Christ has been given to every Christian. As St Catherine of Siena said, 'Nothing great can be achieved without enduring much.' We should be able to accept the sufferings of life, however small or great, as a path on our journey to heaven. Christian suffering is a symbol of love and faith in Christ. Everything Christ suffered and endured was to save the world.

Suffering strengthens our faith. Through it, we draw closer to Christ. It is medicine for our spiritual growth.

Suffering is not only that of the body – not just the pain that illnesses bring. When those we love deeply hurt us, when those we considered dear isolate us, when we experience the selfishness of some, we all go through suffering. We who want to own the salvation of Christ must walk the path that Christ walked. He was humiliated, isolated, accused, betrayed, and suffered in the body more than we

can ever do. When we remember that all of his suffering was for us, we will also find the strength to endure.

Jesus prayed, 'Father, let your will be done in the midst of pain and suffering.' We too can receive this grace when we submit ourselves to God's will. Saint John of the Cross says that a single 'Praise be to God' in times of trouble is worth a thousand thanksgivings in prosperity. May we be able to praise God even when we are in the furnace of suffering.

For he has not spurned or disdained the misery of this poor wretch, did not turn away from me, but heard me when I cried out (Psalm 22:25). We do not have a God who is absent, or who rejoices in the sorrows and pains of man. Our God walks with us in our pain and suffering.

Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us (Romans 5:3-5). ■

Sujamol Jose works as a psychologist in Ernakulam, India. She is also the Associate Editor of Kairos Malayalam.



WITNESS TO FAITH IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Insights from Carlo Acutis

What lessons can a 15-year-old teach us today? Several, if that person is the soon-to-be-canonised Carlo Acutis.

Dr Nycil Romis writes about this much-beloved teenager.

On 3 February 2025, while addressing Catholic pilgrims from Scandinavian countries, Pope Francis said, ‘Carlo Acutis, this young saint of and for our times, shows you, and all of us, how possible it is in today’s world for young people to follow Jesus, share his teachings with others, and so find the fullness of life in joy, freedom, and holiness.’ Having lived only a brief 15 years, Carlo was able to make a significant impact, earning him the distinction of being the first soon-to-be millennium saint. His life offers a powerful blueprint for witnessing faith in a technology-driven world. The extraordinary way Carlo led his ordinary life reveals the depth of his relationship with Jesus, inspiring us all to emulate his example. *My Son Carlo: Carlo Acutis through the Eyes of His Mother*, by Antonia Salzano highlights Carlo’s life, providing us with a glimpse into his world.

Carlo was an ordinary boy, just like anyone we know. A joyful and optimistic child, he enjoyed playing soccer and basketball, loved animals, played video games and Pokémon, and played the saxophone. His mother recalls that his friends enjoyed his

jokes and the films he made. However, what truly defined his life was his relationship with Jesus, which made a big difference. His mother and friends also remember him as someone who used his money to buy sleeping bags for the homeless, helped children facing bullying, and distributed food and blankets to those in need. He also taught catechism and helped young children to grow spiritually. He had two companion saints, St Francis of Assisi and St Teresa of Calcutta, who influenced his love for the Lord, other fellow beings, and nature. He was full of energy and viewed life as an incredible gift from God. His mother referred to him as 'my little saviour' and 'my great educator in the faith' because Carlo's life completely transformed her into a person of unwavering faith.

Blessed Carlo's vibrant presence as a living Christian in the digital world highlights him as a pilgrim of hope in this digital era. As a computer geek, he used his skills and knowledge to glorify the Lord. His website, 'The Eucharistic Miracles of the World,' launched when he was 11 years-old, continues to teach and deepen people's faith worldwide; the current webpage has been translated into more than a dozen languages. This ordinary boy from Milan was able to attract millions to Jesus through his small life by simply curating his online activity to reflect the Lord's love and joy. Indeed, Carlo is a clear example of holiness thriving on digital platforms, in online activities and interactions, as he integrated his faith into every aspect of his life. Living in a tech-driven world where people create their identity around social media feeds, he showed us how to be authentic, rooted in Christ, and connected with others – both locally and virtually – turning it into a pathway to heaven.

Dr Mercedes Arguello, his paediatric oncologist, remembers Carlo offering his pain and suffering from leukaemia to the Lord. She was a witness to the peace that came from his relationship with God. His mother also recalls him reminding her that there are people who suffer much more than him. His perspectives about death demonstrate the depth of his faith in the living God. Following are Carlo's words on facing death and life after death:

'Do not be afraid because with the



He used to say that the more Eucharist we receive, the more we become like Jesus. In addition, he saw confession as the platform for removing the weights of sin. According to him, the smallest flaw keeps us anchored to the earth just like the string of a balloon, and he viewed confession as the fire that makes the hot air balloon rise up again.



they were not interested. He used to say that the more Eucharist we receive, the more we become like Jesus. In addition, he saw confession as the platform for removing the weights of sin. According to him, the smallest flaw keeps us anchored to the earth just like the string of a balloon, and he viewed confession as the fire that makes the hot air balloon rise up again. He used to go for confession every week, to the same priest. His deep faith in the merciful God made him define conversion as 'lifting one's gaze upward, a simple movement of the eyes...

In his efforts to grow in holiness, he often tried to practice self-control as a weapon. He used to talk a lot, and at times, he made efforts to talk less. When he noticed himself fond of food, he tried to eat less. When he felt he was spending too much time on video games, he limited it to two hours per week. Carlo, a millennial living in an era where many people invest significant time and energy into maintaining their physical appearance, had a different perspective. Despite being an adolescent, Carlo stressed the importance of inner beauty.



Incarnation of Jesus, death becomes life, and there's no need to escape: in eternal life, something extraordinary awaits us.'

'I am happy to die because I have lived my life without wasting a minute on those things that do not please God.'

'Our goal must be infinite, not finite. The infinite is our homeland. Heaven has been waiting for us forever.'

In a world where people are uncertain about the things they see, this assurance comes from a boy for whom life on earth was a time for glorifying God, and life after death was reaching his goal, with death serving only as the gateway to it.

A defining characteristic feature of Carlo's life was his love for the Eucharist, which he called 'the highway to heaven,' his goal. He thought that, like tanning in the sun, we become saints in the Eucharist. He persuaded and urged his family to attend daily Mass, even when

looking at things from the perspective of heaven.' He had true faith in the power of the sacraments, which he believed was essential in his daily life with Jesus.

Carlo often told his friends and the young children he taught that they too could become saints, he encouraged them to want it with their whole hearts. Carlo asked them to pray to the Lord for the desire to be holy. He advised reading a Bible passage, receiving Holy Communion, praying the Rosary, examining one's conscience daily, confessing once a week, and asking regular help from one's guardian angel – whom he called the best friend – to consistently grow in holiness. He saw prayer as an effective means to look at everything from the perspective of eternity. He also urged them to 'seize the moment' because, according to him, every minute wasted is one less minute to glorify God.

'Everything fades....What will make us truly beautiful in the eyes of God is only the way in which we loved him and how we loved our neighbours' – these were his words on worries about physical beauty.

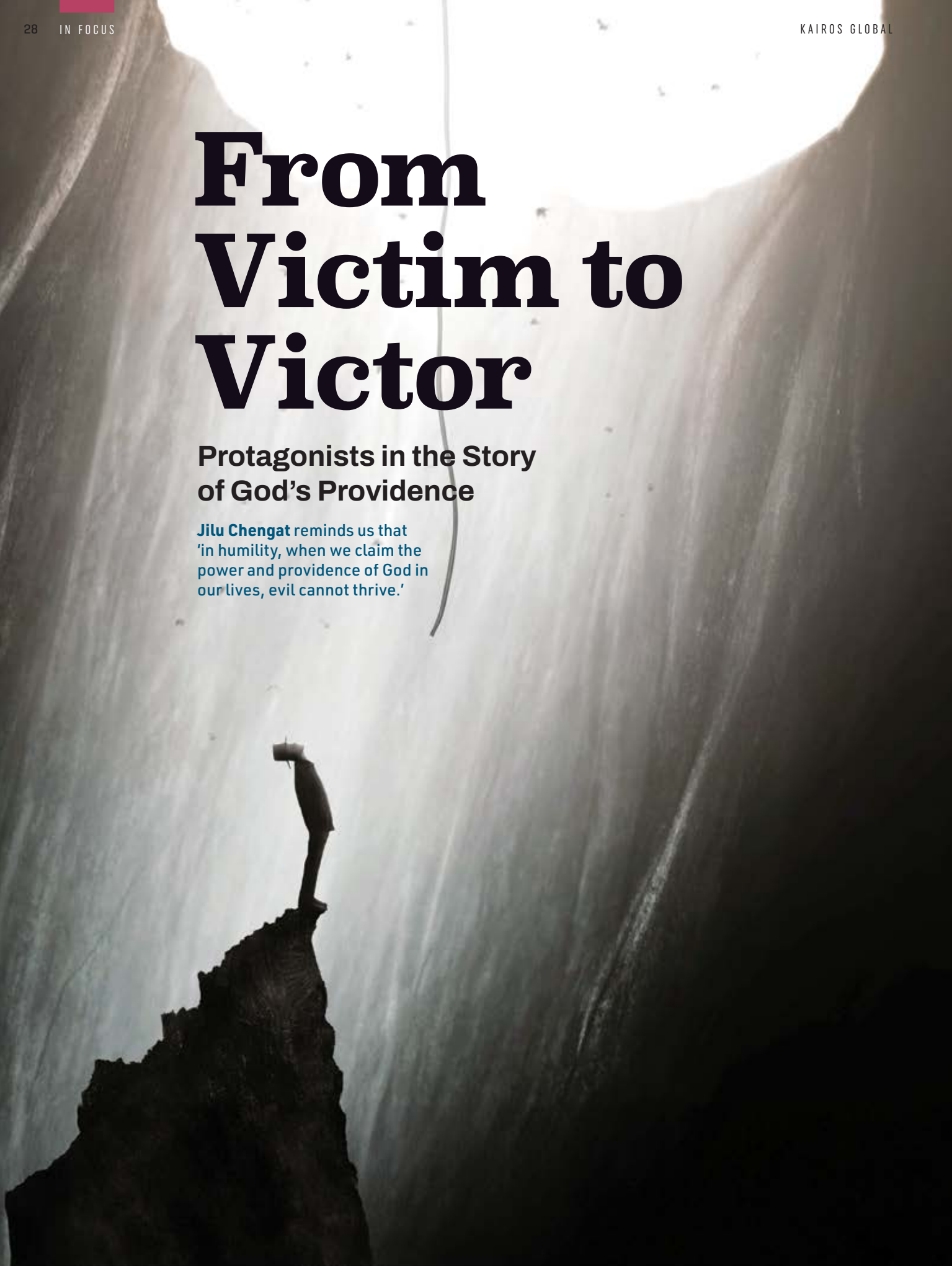
His beliefs, perspectives, and experiences confirm the beauty of his life, which was lived fully on earth for about 15 years with his gaze fixed on Jesus. Carlo stands before us as a true icon in this era of the search for meaning and connection in digital platforms. He reminds us to be connected to the Lord with a burning desire through sacraments and prayers, to be available to others around us, and log in with a purpose to share the joy and love of the Lord. ■

An academican by profession, **Dr Nycil Romis** teaches at Rajagiri College. She lives with her husband and two kids in Ernakulam, India.

From Victim to Victor

Protagonists in the Story of God's Providence

Jilu Chengat reminds us that 'in humility, when we claim the power and providence of God in our lives, evil cannot thrive.'



What do a boy sold by his family, an unmarried pregnant teenager, and a Jesuit martyr have in common? The Patriarch Joseph, Mother Mary and Isaac Jogues appeared powerless in their lives and helpless over their future. Yet, upon close examination, they were not victims of their circumstances but freely consenting victims of God's love. Their lives had a powerful impact for the redemption of many around them, much like the life of Christ.

In our daily lives, is it possible to go from victim to victor? To do so, we must stand in our dignity and baptismal identity. Romans 8:15 says: *For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption.* One who is free and stands in their identity as a son or daughter can never be truly taken captive. They become unafraid of those who can kill their bodies, but cannot kill their soul (cf. Matthew 10:28).

PROTAGONISTS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

We begin with Joseph in the Old Testament. If anyone can claim to be a victim, it is he. Sold by his brothers, falsely accused by his master's wife, for many years – even decades, his life seemed like a loss. He was a victim of others' power, greed, and selfishness.

Yet his faith, hope and humility kept him rooted in his identity. In crucial moments where he could have exacted revenge, he became a powerful instrument of God's mercy and saving power. He tells his brothers, when they are desperate and worried about their lives: *Even though you meant to harm me, God meant it for good* (Genesis 50:20). The victory was made visible in the mercy he showed his brothers, but it was won much before that, in his humble refusal to deny God's providence and protection.

St Paul reminds us that our battlefield is not *against flesh and blood* (Ephesians 6:12), but with evil. In humility, when we claim the power and providence of God in our lives, evil cannot thrive. When we realise that we are no longer a victim to circumstances but a protagonist in the story of God's providence, the victory that has been won in our hearts will soon be followed by a victory experienced in our lives.

THE KEY IS YOUR CONSENT

Extremely essential in all of this, is our consent, freely given to us by God. The CCC (1730) tells us that God willed that man should be *left in the hand of his own counsel* (Sirach 15:14) so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain His full and blessed perfection by cleaving to Him. He does not force us into our salvation, but invites us to grow in our freedom and understanding of who God is.

This, then, is the key to engaging as a victor in our life with the Lord. The key is our consent – our fiat, our yes. There may be many moments when we feel powerless and become victim to the perceived reality of helplessness. In the midst of our confusion, doubts, and misunderstandings, God invites us to consent freely to His divine plan. Upon this consent hinges the shift from victim to victor. We do not consent to suffering itself, but to God's will amidst our pain and confusion. His will is always ordered to our glory and redemption. This consent – freely given – is extremely powerful because it unites our will to God's.

We see this come alive in the consent of Mother Mary. Unstained by original sin, she was free to say yes to God's will. Her yes continued from the Annunciation to the foot of the cross. At the moment of the greatest suffering, her presence at the cross implies her consent to God's plan. This ongoing consent reveals a powerful choice to trust and surrender that precedes the victory of the Resurrection, but is later magnified in her glorious Assumption.

MARTYRED NOT MURDERED

Centuries later, we see this radical consent in Isaac Jogues, a French Jesuit missionary in North America. Fr Isaac Jogues was wounded and witnessed the martyrdom of his companions. He barely escapes to safety, only to decide that he must return to his mission where he is later killed by the Native Americans. His 'yes' became the seeds of the Church in that land. A few years later, a young woman, St Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Native American saint, is born on the grounds of his martyrdom.

He had no reason to return, especially in the face of imminent death, except for

his love of God and the native people. In his martyrdom, he provided a powerful image of Christ's eternal victory over death. He received his crown of glory and planted the seeds of new life, watered by his blood. In this story, he was not the victim of a senseless murder, but a glorious martyr; a willing co-participant in God's story of salvation.

REFRAMING OUR REALITY WITH CHRIST

Most of us won't face death or even dire situations. Yet every day, we must choose to stand with Christ, in the freedom and victory that has already been won for us. How can this be lived in our daily lives? As Scripture says, let us put on the 'mind of Christ' to reframe our thinking.

A simple exercise is this: recognising the difference between 'having' to do something versus 'getting' to do something. The latter implies freedom, consent, and even fulfilled desires. A tired mother can receive endless graces when she realises that her child's night awakenings are opportunities for prayer and union with Christ. Repeated failed attempts can lead to discernment of a new path from the Lord. A sudden layoff from a job could provide an opportunity for perpetually delayed mission trip or a time of rest.

These scenarios, from ordinary frustrations to devastating setbacks can easily pull us into seeing ourselves as victims. Yet, with humility, when we consent to God's will, we will always see that He uses all for our good. When we receive His love and mercy, we are compelled to become the protagonist in God's beautiful plan of salvation for our lives. In doing so, we do not simply endure life – we embrace it, not as victims, but as victorious children of God.



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



A Heart Stretched in Hope

As she shares her own personal journey into hope, **Rose Nadarajan** writes about its true meaning, and the significance of being pilgrims of hope.

Our hope for you is unshaken for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort (2 Corinthians 1:7)

What is hope, and why does the world we live in need it so desperately? ‘The Church has celebrated Jubilees for centuries, “sacred seasons of liberation, forgiveness, and restoration,” that occur every 25 years.’ For this year’s Jubilee, the Church, in her wisdom, has chosen hope. The Church has also invited its members to be pilgrims of hope during this season. However, some of you might even wonder about the

meaning of it all.

First, let’s define hope. If you asked the average person about hope, most might describe it as an optimistic feeling about things to come. For example, you might be hopeful for a good grade or that a dozen eggs cost less than \$5. If you asked me a year ago to define hope, I might have said something along the same lines. However, that’s not the kind of hope that this year’s Jubilee is about, nor is it what the world is thirsting for. So what is hope, really?

The true meaning of hope didn’t come to me in a powerful sermon or even from Pope Francis’ *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope does not disappoint). I discovered

what hope was as I chatted with a dear friend on a quiet evening that seemed like any other. As we talked, my friend shared some of their current struggles and disappointment very vulnerably. However, as I listened, I realised that they were mistaking hope for optimism. Consequently, they were struggling to truly receive God’s love for them in their pain because they were desperately ‘hoping’ things would ‘work out.’ Many people believe that this is what hope is, but it isn’t, because they are trusting in the world or humanity’s goodness, rather than God’s goodness. And real hope is the latter, not the former. ‘Put no trust



in princes, in mere mortals, powerless to save.' I love this line from the Syro-Malabar liturgy, and I feel it perfectly encapsulates real hope.

But why has the Church chosen hope as the theme for this year's Jubilee? I believe it's because our society is starved for hope. I can say this because I didn't truly have hope until last year. God really stretched and exercised my trust 'muscles' as He invited me to take leap after leap of faith, even though I had no idea where I was going and had limited human goodness to rely on. Moreover, during a retreat last year, I realised how much I had lacked hope for the future. During my

college years, the zeal of my missionary parents and incredible experiences of God's love made me desire Heaven sooner rather than later. I couldn't wait to be united with God in Heaven and dreamed of dying young like St Therese. As a result, I didn't make many plans for my future. As I prayed during my retreat, it occurred to me that there might be more to my lack of future plans. I didn't think about the future because the discomfort of an unknown that I had no control over frightened me. Thankfully, as I named this fear and surrendered it to the Lord, I found a new hope blooming in my heart. My future was still unknown, but the Christ who walked with me in the present also waited for me in the future.

One of the most significant ways God has stretched my heart in hope was through my vocational discernment. I've always dreamed of having my own family and children. After graduating from college, I dreamed of having a family of my own, and the community of young families around me only made me want one even more. Yet I didn't know when or how it would come true, even as the hope burned deeper after my retreat. I'm a teacher at a Catholic school, and once I joked with my students that caring for them made me yearn for a family of my own. It was during this time that Romans 8:24-25 came alive in my heart. I was like Abraham, who had to follow God to an unknown land, trusting every step of the way. I had to learn to step forward in faith, to be courageous in expressing my desires and dreams, even if I couldn't see them. The only thing I had to hold on to during that time was the quiet promise God had made to me during my retreat that 'all things work for good for those who love God.' During those many dark months, I had to dream like Abraham and 'hope beyond hope' as I waited for God to reveal His plan. After this long waiting, I'm now engaged and as I prepare for my wedding this winter, my heart rejoices and thanks God for fulfilling His promise! Although there were many moments it seemed impossible and I was on the verge of giving up, each day is another reminder that God is always faithful. I'm also learning to be thankful for that time of waiting, as I reflect on Psalm 126:5: *Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy.*

And this is what being a pilgrim of

hope means. We walk in a land we do not know or own. We are sojourners in search of home and often face disappointment in the perilous terrains we encounter. Moreover, we often lose our way in this journey through our fault, and that can lead to the deepest kind of despair.

Judas Iscariot is a great example of the consequences of despairing in God's love for us in our weakness. Unlike Peter, who runs back to Jesus and asks for forgiveness, Judas hangs himself. Judas couldn't see that Christ had chosen him as an apostle, fully aware of his future betrayal, and was waiting, ready to receive him and forgive him.

This confidence in Jesus, who walks with us and gives us strength, is where true hope lies. Even as we stumble and fall, He picks us up, dusts us off, and helps us keep walking. God also sends friends to keep us company on the way. People who remind us that God is good and has a plan even when things aren't going well. At the end of the day, hope is not a solution that makes the problems go away. It is the walking stick that supports us as we trek up the mountain through the blisters and heat.

This is the hope that Paul speaks of in his second letter to the Corinthians. As he witnesses the sufferings of the flock he guides, he has hope because he trusts that Christ will comfort them in their sufferings with the comfort He received from God the Father on the cross. Moreover, just as Christ gives us hope in our suffering, as pilgrims of hope, we are also called to be Christ-like and share hope with others, just as He did.

War, poverty, chronic pain, and isolation are inescapable in our modern world. With such dark circumstances, one might wonder at the purpose of existence. This is why Pope Francis established the Jubilee of Hope and why Pope Leo has taken up the mantle. In a world so dark, our greatest light comes from a hope in a God who has conquered it and is with us in it. As pilgrims of hope, we are called to share the hope we have received, so that others may 'share in our comfort.' ■

Rose Nadarajan is an ELA and Religion teacher at a Catholic school. She lives with her family in Delray Beach, FL, USA and loves helping with her parents' mission, *Amoris Christi*, in her free time.

PATHFINDERS

A portrait of Fr Mark Beard, a man with short, dark hair and a friendly smile, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. The background is a textured, greyish-blue.

Fr Mark Beard

Neha Akkara writes about Fr Mark Beard, who rediscovered his Catholic faith and put his lavish and playboy lifestyle aside to embrace the priesthood.

In this article of the Pathfinder series we explore the story of an obligatory Catholic, who stayed for Mass only if the priest didn't bore him, how he witnessed Mother Mary and returned to Catholicism with greater fervour, and became a priest who treated every homily like it was his last.

Mark Beard was born into a deeply Catholic family. He, however, was quite a rebel. The Rosary, he would see his mother devotedly pray, was to him 'just praying in circles.' Mark loved and respected his father tremendously, his approval meant a lot. Which was why joining the family business was a matter of pride. He excelled at it, and as the business grew, so did his income and flamboyant lifestyle. By the age of thirty, Mark was 'married to money,' enjoyed having power. In his conversion story, he says that he did not have time for alcohol or drugs as he was busy chasing women.

His father, however, was alarmed at the road his son was speeding on.

One day, his father popped in at the office and asked, 'Did you know the Blessed Mother is appearing in Medjugorje?' When Mark answered in jest if his father wanted him to fly there, the old man replied, 'If I were you, I'd go check it out.' Mark paused in shock at his father's response. Recollecting the incident, he said that his desk was piled high with cash flow documents and that the last thing on his mind was travelling to Medjugorje, on the other side of the world, to see the Blessed Mother. He turned down his father's request and went on to review the lawsuits that had been brought to the firm.

But during a break from work, a rush of love and respect for his father suddenly surged and he spoke to a friend about his father's conversation. The friend suggested he read the book, *Queen of the Cosmos* – which Mark ended up reading completely while standing at the bookstore. And even then, Mark had difficulty believing – why would God send His own mother to earth when He had sent so many prophets, disciples, and even His own Son?! But something kept disturbing him, and by the end of the day he decided to go to Medjugorje and see for himself. His father was extremely happy that Mark had decided to go.

As a person who travelled often and was familiar with airports, Mark knew that this visit wouldn't be strenuous. However his journey to Medjugorje was far from easy. The flight was two hours late and he lost the group of pilgrims he was supposed to travel with. Infuriated and on the verge of returning home, he met another group and asked if he could join them. When they agreed Mark decided to tag along. One of the pilgrims was a pastor who had left everything and converted to Catholicism. He said that walking away from his previous life was very difficult and that it had cost him dearly.

The day after they landed in Medjugorje, they were to meet the visionary, Vicka. Mark was amazed to see pilgrims flock to the visionary's home. Vicka spoke a few sentences in Italian and had a translator who conveyed the message in English. She narrated how the Blessed Virgin showed her heaven, hell and

After hearing everything, the roommate asked him a question. A question that would alter Mark's life forever. 'You sure you're not supposed to be a priest?'

purgatory. Mark was amazed at how Vicka's face glowed as she narrated the vision she had seen when she was just twelve. Mark says that he saw a sort of internal beauty in her smile. She surely knew something the others didn't, and what she knew was definitely not something the world could have produced. After her sharing, Vicka said she would like to pray with everyone present, and asked the people to come forward in twos. Ever the cynic, Mark was sure Vicka would not pray over all the people there, and to prove this, he went and stood at the end of the line. But to his amazement, Vicka laid her hands on everyone and prayed. And finally, when she prayed over him and removed her hands off his head, she had removed a lot of his cynicism too.

Their next visit was to the visionary, Ivanka's house. Being an introvert, Ivanka preferred answering questions with the help of her translators. Mark, who was eager to prove that all of this was a lie, stood up and said he had a statement to make. He then went on to narrate an experience of Ivanka's he had read in *Queen of the Cosmos*, but altering the incident in slight ways hoping she would just agree with it – thus proving to him that all of this was fake. However at the end of his narration, Ivanka, in a tone that a mother uses for her child, gently corrected all the changes that he had made. It was then realisation dawned upon him that this was the truth, no one was lying.

On his way back, he began to see the people of Medjugorje with new eyes. They would go to the church and take part in Adoration for three whole hours. Mark realised that so many people could not conceal a lie for so long. It was then he decided that it was time. He called his father and told him, 'Pop, they are telling the truth.' This was the news Mark's father had been waiting to hear. His son had found his way to Mother Mary.

On his last day in Medjugorje, Mark was upset that he had to return back home. That night he went to a fellow roommate and asked if he had time to talk. The roommate was feeling unwell but he allowed Mark to speak with him. Mark poured out his heart – his past, his worries and his concerns. After hearing everything, the roommate asked him a question. A question that would alter Mark's life forever. 'You sure you're not supposed to be a priest?'

In the months that followed, Mark quit his family business and began seriously dating a woman with marriage in mind. However priesthood was never off the plate. As he spent more and more time at Mass and Eucharistic Adoration, Mark felt God was pulling him closer and closer towards priesthood. Finally when Mark found himself in the seminary, there was still a strand of doubt.

One day during class, one of his friends told Mark about a vision he saw. A beautiful woman dressed in white and blue was holding an infant in her arms. She was gazing at the baby lovingly. He was so excited that he kept on speaking about the vision. Sometime later, Mark, the person who saw the vision and a friend, Sr Mary, went to a bookstore. There, Mark came across a portrait quite similar to the vision his friend had described earlier. The three of them proceeded to show the portrait and explained the situation to a priest. He looked at the portrait for a moment and then looked Mark in the eye and said, 'You got everything right, minus one thing. She is not holding the Christ child, rather she is holding you.' This particular incident marked a distinct turning point. It became a profound redirection in his spiritual journey.

Neha Antony Akkara is a literature enthusiast currently pursuing her Bachelor of Education. With deep appreciation for Catholicism, she writes thoughtful reflections and stories exploring the beauty of faith and literature.



The Catholic Coachella

All of us wait for the ‘**the**’ moment in our life, ‘the’ job, ‘the’ home, ‘the’ car, etc. Well, we just witnessed ‘the Jubilee Celebration’, the **Jubilee of Youth** here in Rome. One would feel this was what we all had been waiting for. Such was the aura and magnitude of this jubilee, with officials reporting youth participation at over 1.2 million. The jubilee took place from 28 July-3 August. The most eagerly anticipated events took place on 2nd and 3rd August in the Tor Vergata area of Rome, in the presence of Pope Leo XIV, with the Prayer Vigil and the Jubilee’s closing Mass. The preparation was huge and the arrangements were spot on. Bravo to the Vatican!

A handbook was published in advance, providing practical information on the programme, travel arrangements, the Pilgrim’s Kit, and the Jubilee Pass, along with information on transportation and meals. Various awesome apps were available to help people get around. The official multilingual Cicero App offered guided tours, especially to see the city of Rome lit up at night. On the evenings of July 30 and 31, youth groups were able to take part in two night-time walks designed to help them discover the spiritual side of Rome, following a path marked by art, history, and faith.

Other apps – *Jubilaeum25*, *Amici del Pellegrino*, *Vatican for All*, *Vatican Vox* – offered simultaneous translation and commentary in multiple languages for celebrations and key moments of the Jubilee. The Vatican Radio app, *Radio Vaticana* broadcasted events live with translations; *Acquea* helped locate public drinking fountains in the city;

The virtual assistant Julia, a practical and informed tool for experiencing the city, provided real-time information on city mobility, public transport, waiting times, liturgical celebrations, museum openings, pharmacy opening hours, and points of cultural interest.

For the youth, these well-organised techs were great help to navigate the city and participate in the jubilee programmes as well. We should know that youth from around 146 countries were present for this event, and let me tell you Rome was on a choke point. Approximately a million pilgrims attended the Prayer Vigil with Pope Leo XIV. Approximately 370 parishes, 400 schools, 40 extracurricular sites including civil protection centres, sports halls, and municipal gyms had been made available for the arrivals, as well as numerous families who hosted the young pilgrims. Their presence brought a kind of **cheerful ‘commotion’** (to borrow a word used by both Pope John Paul II and Pope

Francis) that will linger in the memory of the people of Rome for a long time. In Rome’s Circus Maximus, there were 28,000 confessionals and 1,000 priests hearing those confessions.

On Saturday afternoon, young people were welcomed with entertainment, live music, and testimonies in preparation for the Vigil with the Holy Father. After the Vigil, participants spend the night on site in sleeping bags, in an atmosphere of friendship, celebration, and fraternity. I felt this was another thing which vibed with a young generation, and stood out from the rest of the programmes. Mind you, Pope Leo received a rock star welcome as he arrived by helicopter for the Vigil in what’s been dubbed the





Catholic Coachella. The concluding Mass of the Jubilee of Youth was celebrated by 450 Bishops and 7,000 priests.

The centrepiece of the event was a Q&A session with the Pope responding to three questions posed by young pilgrims in Spanish, Italian, and English. During the Mass for the Jubilee of Young People at Tor Vergata, Pope Leo XIV reminded the young people that Jesus is our hope, and urged them to ‘adventure with the Lord toward eternity’ as the Lord is ‘gently knocking’ at the window of their soul. *On Sunday, 3 August, Pope Leo XIV announced the dates of the next World Youth Day, to be held in Seoul, South Korea: 3–8 August 2027.*

‘After this jubilee, the “pilgrimage of hope” of young people continues and will take us to Asia,’ he said. ‘You are a sign that a different world is possible,’ Pope Leo XIV stated.

During this event, 10,000 copies of *YOUCAT Confession* were donated by the YOUCAT foundation – a gift to help rediscover the sacrament of reconciliation. The special jubilee edition is available in four languages – Italian, English, French, and German.

Another spiritual attraction was that for the first time the incorrupt body of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati was made available for veneration during the Youth Jubilee at the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva till 4th August.

An important event that was ‘washed away’ in the wake of the Jubilee of the Youth was **the Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers** (28–29 July). Father Lucio Ruiz, No. 2 at the Vatican’s communication department, said that from 2018, the Vatican has recognised the activity of what they now brand ‘digital missionaries ... people who love Jesus and the Church and

who dedicated themselves to seeking out suffering and spreading the Word [online].’ I think this was a major leap and a much needed one by the Church, to acknowledge and gather digital missionaries.

This was organised by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Communication starting with online prayer meetings with thousands of these so-called digital missionaries – Catholics with large social media followings. One of the highlights of the jubilee’s preparation has been the release of its official hymn, **Todos** (Everyone). The song is a collaborative project uniting Catholic artists from around the globe. This echoed the message of Pope Francis on WYD in Lisbon – ‘In the Church, there is room for everyone, everyone, everyone!’

Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Dicastery for Communications said that what truly unites are people not algorithms. On 29 July, after celebrating the Eucharist with Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, they consecrated their digital mission to Mary, whom Ruffini called ‘the first influencer of God.’ The jubilee was open ‘to all who evangelise’ and included workshops on the ‘challenges and opportunities of the Church’s mission in the digital age.’

Catholic actor Jonathan Roumie, known for his portrayal of Jesus in *The Chosen*, sent a video message to those gathered for this jubilee in which he called their work ‘incredibly important.’ He said, ‘As someone who’s been blessed to portray Jesus in *The Chosen*, I’ve seen first-hand how a story shared online can touch a heart, soften a soul, even change a life. You’re doing the same... Whether it’s through a post, a reel, a comment thread, or a livestream, you’re showing up in these digital spaces with the heart of Christ – not to preach at people but to

meet them, to listen, to engage, to start conversations that actually matter.’ The actor explained that working in digital media is what ‘evangelization looks like today – it’s not just pulpits and church walls – it’s Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, blogs, all of it. And you’re stepping into that world with love, creativity, and authenticity.’

The sad part of the story was the death of two young people during the Jubilee of Youth: Pascale Rafic from Egypt and Maria Cobo Vergara from Spain. Pascale died in Rome of a heart attack while going to the parish that would host her group. Maria, who was battling an illness, died en route from Madrid to Rome. Pope Leo privately met with the group of pilgrims travelling with Rafic at the Vatican to comfort the young people shaken by the tragic event. ‘All of a sudden, we are reminded in a very powerful way that our life is not superficial nor do we have control over our own lives nor do we know as Jesus himself says, neither the day nor the hour when for some reason our earthly life ends,’ he told the young people from Egypt.

According to Lamberto Giannini, Prefect of Rome, the 2025 Youth Jubilee was the largest event in the Italian capital over the past 25 years, even surpassing the funerals of Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. ‘I think I can say that in the last 25 years this has been the most significant and impressive event in Italy and perhaps even in Europe.’ ■

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

SPECIAL

The Award Winners!

CMA AWARDS

2025

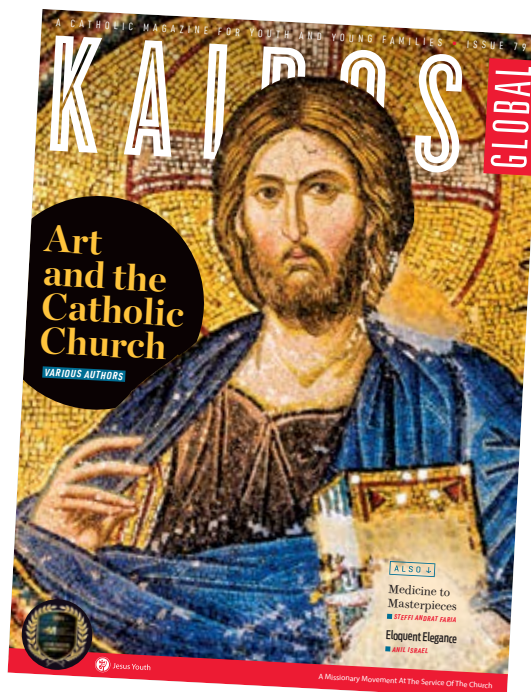
The 2025 Catholic Media Awards were very special for *Kairos Global*, with seven awards including first place for Magazine of the Year (Prayer and Spiritual category). Below are the winners of the awards this year.

FIRST PLACE**Magazine of the Year (Prayer and Spiritual magazine)**

Our October '24 issue won this award. The theme of the issue was 'The Catholic Church and Art.' With six authors writing on various aspects, the awe-inspiring art and the design of the magazine, this is a 'collector's copy' of *Kairos Global*.

SECOND PLACE**Best Cover (Large)**

Every issue of *Kairos Global* has been designed by Delhi-based Mustard Tree, with Ashish Rozario as the Creative Head. One of the frequently received compliments we get is on the visually arresting and breathtaking pages of *Kairos Global* – all thanks to the acumen and creativity of Mustard Tree.

**THIRD PLACE****Best Explanation of Marriage**

The theme of our February '24 issue was 'Catholic Marriage.' Joseph Anthraper's 'Catholic Marriage 101: A Primer' won us third place in this category. An engaging and thought provoking read, it addresses some relevant-for-our-times questions on Catholic Marriage.

A regular contributor for the magazine, Joseph Anthraper lives in Southampton, UK, with Mahima, his wife and their five children.

**THIRD PLACE****Best Original Poetry**

'Waiting' was the theme of *Kairos Global*'s December '24 issue. 'You waited for me,' the poem by Tania Rose Josun describes God's longing and patience as He waits for our return.

Tania Rose Josun lives in Kottayam, India with her family. She is also the editor of English magazines at Kairos Media.

HONOURABLE MENTION

Best Essay

► In June '24, *Kairos Global* dwelt on 'Sexual identity and LGBTQ.' With articles from the Desert Stream Ministries among the five In Focus, this issue is a valuable resource answering questions and providing clarity on a topic that has invaded our everyday lives.

Brother Gem Jacob George in 'Straightening out the Pride Rainbow,' dismantles the gender ideology focusing on what the Church holds as truth in this regard. Brother Gem Jacob George is a Dominican in the making and belongs to the Indian province of the Order of Preachers.

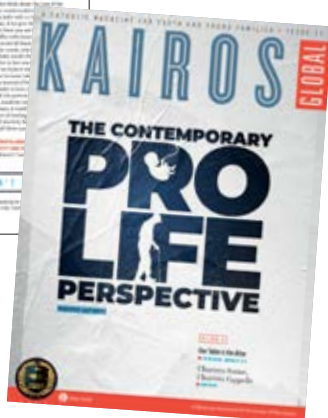


HONORABLE MENTION

Best Feature Article

► 'Current Pro-life issues,' was the theme of the August '24 issue. 'Pro-life Answers' – a Q&A styled article written by Kevin Jerome, Dino Raj Paul and Aleena Joy – it provides answers to some of today's oft-asked pro-choice questions.

Dino Raj Paul is an IT engineer, currently living in Bangalore, India with his wife, mother and four kids. He is the coordinator of JY India pro-life ministry. Kevin Jerome is married to Aleena Joy, and they are blessed with their first child. Kevin finds joy in pursuing the truth through the beautiful intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church. Aleena is involved in apologetics and pro-life ministries, is part of UBC apologetics and a member of the Syro-Malabar Theology Forum.



HONOURABLE MENTION

Best Review

► SoundReply is a regular section of *Kairos Global* featuring movie and book reviews. Joseph Anthraper's review of *Hacksaw Ridge*, the Mel Gibson directed movie about Desmond Doss, the first conscientious objector to be awarded the US Medal of Honor, won us this special mention. A frequent contributor to this section, Joseph Anthraper's insightful commentary, especially connecting themes of the movie to the Christian faith, makes his reviews a must-read.

This review was from *Kairos Global*'s November '24 issue, which was on the theme 'Fatherhood.'



Chandeliers

✧ *Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati*



As the Jubilee Year is being reverently celebrated around the world, the Catholic Church is also celebrating the fact that, in an increasingly secular world, the Catholic faith is still lived with great ardour and fervour. Attesting to this fact is the upcoming canonisation of two young men who lived and offered their lives for the glory of the Divine Kingdom. Two heroic lives that fixed their eyes on heaven and shouted from the rooftops that life has no meaning without Christ at its centre.

One of them has been the news of the decade. The name Carlo Acutis is not strange to the world these days, but have you heard of Pier Giorgio Frassati, a young missionary for whom no obstacle was too big on the pilgrimage to his heavenly homeland?

Beatifying him on 20 May 1990, in St Peter's Square, Pope John Paul II famously called him 'a man of the Eight Beatitudes,'

outlining how this 24-year-old pointed his soul heavenward and laid down his life for his brethren, loving God and his neighbour without compromises. Blessed Pier Giorgio is set to be declared 'Saint' on 7 September 2025, offering a powerful testament to the enduring vitality of faith, especially among the youth.

IN THE CRADLE OF AGNOSTICISM

Pier Giorgio Frassati was born into wealth. His father, Alfredo Frassati, was the founder and director of *La Stampa*, a highly influential liberal newspaper; he later served as an Italian senator and ambassador. His mother, Adelaide Ametis, was a renowned painter. His family enjoyed immense wealth and social prominence in Turin. Both, successful as they were on the career front, fostered largely agnostic views.

Pier Giorgio, on the other hand, was introduced to the faith by a devout nanny. But it was his innate spiritual inclinations that became the kindling flame for the

growth of that seed. He joined the Marian Sodality and the Apostleship of Prayer at a young age. Quite uncommon at the time, little Pier also obtained permission to receive daily Holy Communion. This daily Eucharistic encounter became the cornerstone of his spiritual life, the spring from which all his actions flowed. His devotion to the Rosary was also unrelenting, and his father often found him asleep at the foot of his bed, tired from hours of personal prayer.

FAITH TRANSLATED INTO ACTION

Pier Giorgio's faith, though, was never merely intellectual or confined to private devotion; it was an internal fire that propelled him into action.

At 17, he had already joined the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, dedicating a significant portion of his time to serving the most vulnerable in Turin. He ministered to the sick, the poor, the homeless, orphans, and demobilised soldiers returning from World War I. His generosity was legendary; he would often give away his shoes, coat, and even his bus fare to those in need, running home barefoot or shivering.

His passion for the marginalised naturally extended to a commitment to social justice. In 1919, he became an active member of the Catholic Student Federation and Catholic Action. He was a vocal opponent of fascism, which was then rising in Italy, and actively engaged in the newly formed Catholic political party, the People's Party. His convictions were so strong that he bravely participated in street protests, even enduring arrest once in Rome during a Young Catholic Workers Congress. He was also known to physically defend priests and religious sisters from anti-clerical attacks, demonstrating his courage and unwavering commitment to his faith.

At the age of 21, Pier Giorgio became a member of the Dominican Third Order

(now known as the Lay Dominicans, an association of faithful who, though not consecrated to religious life, desire to attain Christian perfection in the secular life under the direction of the Friar Preachers).

Even with all these faith-fuelled actions, he was far from a boring soul to be with. He was vibrant, joyful, and athletic, excelling in various sports. His particular passion was mountain climbing. He saw profound spiritual parallels in ascending the peaks, viewing the physical ascent as a metaphor for the spiritual journey towards God. He often led his friends on excursions into the Italian Alps, turning even these trips into opportunities for evangelisation. These 'mountain retreats' included Mass, Rosary prayers, and fervent discussions about faith. He affectionately called his close-knit group of climbing companions 'Tipi Loschi' (meaning 'shady characters' or 'suspicious types'), highlighting their shared commitment to both physical and spiritual ascent. His famous motto, **'Verso l'Alto! (To the Heights!)** has since become synonymous with his legacy, encapsulating his philosophy of life: always striving upward, both physically in the mountains and, more importantly, spiritually towards God and the perfection of charity.

His personal life was also a living testimony to the faith he harboured. All through his brief stint at his earthly abode, he faced staunch opposition from family for his faith and ensuing charity. A source of quiet suffering for him throughout his life, he bore this patiently and with great love, and went the extra mile of making sure that his family's harmony was never lost on his account. Stories recount of him falling in love with a young woman. Though he aspired to marry her, after much prayer and discernment, he decided against it when he realised that such a union would likely cause further tension within his already

Quite uncommon at the time, little Pier also obtained permission to receive daily Holy Communion. This daily Eucharistic encounter became the cornerstone of his spiritual life, the spring from which all his actions flowed. His devotion to the Rosary was also unrelenting, and his father often found him asleep at the foot of his bed, tired from hours of personal prayer.

strained family. This significant personal sacrifice, a truly heroic act of selfless love for his family, became a testament to his prioritising God's will above his desires.

YOU BEFORE ME, EVEN IN DEATH!

In June 1925, just days before he was to receive his university degree, Pier Giorgio began to experience severe pain and fever. Since his maternal grandmother had died a few days previously, his family's attention and grief were entirely focused on her passing. So, his rapidly deteriorating health was largely overlooked and initially misdiagnosed. He had contracted acute poliomyelitis, likely from the very sick and impoverished people he had been tending to in the slums of Turin. Despite agonising pain and progressive paralysis, Pier Giorgio never complained or drew attention to himself.

Even his final moments eloquently expressed his selfless love: on the eve of his death, with a paralysed hand, he managed to scribble a note to a friend, asking him to take the necessary medicine for injections to a poor, sick man he had been visiting, whose needs were still paramount in his dying thoughts.

Pier Giorgio Frassati died on 4 July 1925, aged 24. At his funeral, his family,

who had largely been unaware of the extent of his service, were astonished to see thousands of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the marginalised, whom he had quietly served for years, fill the streets of Turin to mourn him.

His sanctity was not forgotten even in death. An immediate movement for his canonisation was made, with the cause officially opening in 1932, a mere seven years after his passing. The process, however, was temporarily suspended in the 1940s due to false allegations, but the tireless efforts of his sister, Luciana, cleared his name. In 1981, the body was exhumed and found incorrupt, and subsequently moved to the Turin Cathedral. Hitherto, his veneration grew exponentially. He was officially declared 'Venerable' in 1987, and beatified in 1990. Now, after the recent recognition of a second miracle – the healing of a seminarian in Los Angeles – Pope Leo XIV has set the date for his canonisation on 7 September 2025, during the Jubilee Year, a fitting tribute to a young man whose life was a journey of hope and charity. ■

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



Embracing Eternity

How committed are we to personal sanctity? For God who made us for Himself, do we set apart time for Him, asks **Anil Israel**.

Seasons change and the rhythm of life continues. All those who are born, someday will surely die. Yesterday is history, tomorrow is mystery, today is a gift – we call it the present. We are always on the move. In the process, we learn, gain, grow and life goes on – infancy, childhood, teenage, adulthood, old age. Am I merely existing or am I truly living? If I look back from where I am today, do I see a better version of myself, than what I was probably a year ago?

One's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Luke 12:15). What then am I on earth for? Am I here just to eat, drink and be merry (Luke 12:19)? Life is not merely for enjoyment. Surely moments of joy are a gift from God.

But since, we are created in the image and likeness of God, we come from God and *we belong to the Lord* (Romans 14:8) and are called to live *according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28).

'He who has a why to live for, can bear almost any how' (Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher). If we know why we are here on planet Earth, then we can figure out how to go about fulfilling that purpose. The challenge mostly comes in identifying the purpose of my being. One then tries to self-allocate a purpose for oneself. And then when things do not turn out as hoped, one might respond to life differently – negatively or positively. So, it is highly crucial to have adequate clarity about what God has planned for me – His unique purpose for my life. When we begin to grasp a glimpse of what God has intended exclusively for me, then life starts making sense and we begin to enjoy life afresh altogether.

There is an inbuilt longing for the infinite in the human heart. *You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.* (St Augustine). None of our earthly craving can quench our infinite longing. Only something that is infinite can fulfil our hearts true desires. Only the infinite can fill the God-shaped hole deep within. Only He who created us, can satisfy our unquenchable thirst. *He has planted eternity in the human heart* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

'Man's search for God' is a desire planted by God Himself. For God's search for man is more profound than man's search for God. Since, He has created us for Himself, it is His plan that *we may become partakers of the divine nature* (2 Peter 1:4). We are created to be reunited with our Creator and participate in the eternal exchange of love – the life of the most Holy Trinity.

To make us realise His purpose for us,

we are made to go through several ups and downs of life, till we give up 'my will be done' and embrace *thy will be done* (Matthew 6:10). This explicit search for the truth, leads us to Him, for He is the Truth. The Truth is a person. For Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth and the life* (John 14:6). Meeting Jesus – the Truth, is what we all as 'seekers' are searching for. Life on earth is therefore also referred to as a pilgrimage – the journey of a pilgrim.

A pilgrimage is not merely visiting a geographical place of religious significance, like a place of Marian apparition such as Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe or Medjugorje or the Eternal City or the Holy Land or one of the historical locations of one of the Church's venerated saints like Ars, Avila, Lisieux or Rotondo. Some even opt to walk the Camino de Santiago – 'the Way of St James' – leading to the shrine of St James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Our response to set forth on a journey or a pilgrimage to a holy place, is a sign of our yielding to God's invitation to come and meet Him. In Old Testament times, the Jewish people were required to visit the Holy Temple at Jerusalem. *Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose; at the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of the Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths* (Deuteronomy 16:16). *Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival* (Luke 2:41). Setting out on a religious trip, was all about stepping out of our normal routine to devote time exclusively for God – our maker and provider, in whom *we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28). It's all about setting apart time for God.

Physical journey is good occasionally. However, our spiritual journey is more vital and indispensable for the life our soul. Am I spiritually alive? Do I have a regular prayer life? Am I nourishing

PARENTS WENT TO JERUSALEM FOR THE PASSOVER FESTIVAL › LUKE 2:41



To make us realise His purpose for us, we are made to go through several ups and downs of life, till we give up 'my will be done' and embrace thy will be done (Matthew 6:10). This explicit search for the truth, leads us to Him, for He is the Truth. The Truth is a person. For Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

my starving soul with the nutrients of the eternal Word of God? Do I dispose myself at the receiving end of grace? Am I an active cell in the mystical body of Christ? Is my life flavoured with praise and thanksgiving or is it peppered with grumbling and complaining? Is my life coloured with prayer and sacrifice or am I living a colourless life? Do I live with eternity in perspective? Am I concerned about the salvation of my soul? If yes, what am I doing about it?

We all need to make an interior journey from pride to humility, from anger to meekness, from lust to chastity, from gluttony to self-control, from greed

to generosity, from laziness to diligence and from envy to love. It is then that we respond to our call to pursue personal holiness and strive to change the direction of our lives from selfishness to selflessness, from darkness to light. May we firmly resolve to detach ourselves from all that is temporal and strive to embrace all that is eternal – absolute truth, absolute beauty, absolute goodness – God Himself. ■■

Anil Israel lives in Mannheim, Germany, with his wife Sunitha and their 6 children.

SOUNDREPLY



MOVIE

KING RICHARD (2023)

and a hope that every child (as well as every grown-up human being) needs to traverse the complex maze of life.

King Richard is a biographical sports drama directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green, based on the life of Richard Williams, the father of the famed tennis stars, Venus and Serena Williams, with Will Smith portraying to perfection the role of Richard Williams. Richard lives in Compton, California with his wife Oracene and their two daughters, Venus and Serena, and their three stepdaughters from Oracene's first marriage. The movie begins with Richard trying to find funding for Venus and Serena's next stage of tennis coaching, but getting rejection after rejection from every door he knocks at. Tennis is a rich man's game, and as Richard gets reminded every so often, it takes a lot of money, exposure and expert instruction to make it big, and even when people have unlimited resources to get the best of everything, they still might not make it to the top.

But Richard is not someone who gets easily dejected, even when he faces disappointment at every turn – in fact, even before the girls were born, he had written this 78-page plan on how to get Venus and Serena to become the best tennis players in the world. He and his wife Oracene have trained the girls from when they were 4, taking them to the local tennis court and practising hour after hour, day in and day out, come rain or shine. Richard knows that the girls have profound potential and it's just a matter of time before all their hard work would

be rewarded. So even when he is called a lunatic by the world around him for working the socks out of his girls, he keeps going – not because he wants success at any rate, but the contrary. He believes in his children getting a normal childhood, and working their way out of the poverty, drugs and a life of crime that has plagued most of the African American community.

He inspires and motivates his children to put in their whole effort both at school and at tennis, and he believes (and has planned) that success will come at the right time. As Richard says, from having a childhood where running from either Ku Klux Klan or the police was the norm, and no father to protect him from the cruel world around them – Richard wants to protect the people he loves, and wants the best for his family.

Through his sheer audacity, Richard manages to convince Coach Paul Cohen (the coach of Pete Sampras and John

Luke starts off chapter 18 with two sets of parables with prayer as the central theme – first, the Prayer of the Widow for justice (1-8) and the second, the Prayer of the Pharisee and the Tax collector (9-14). Luke emphasises that Jesus told His disciples the first parable to reiterate that we *ought always to pray and not lose heart*. Not losing heart, carrying on even when you are feeling dejected and despondent is however, a huge ask. And the harsh truth is that hardly anyone can do this on his own! Even Jesus, we read in various Gospel accounts, in His moments of despair, sadness and loneliness, hid under the shelter of His Abba's wings. We all need a shoulder to lean on, a father to raise our eyes to when life feels hard, and its problems look insurmountable. As Karl Kohlhasse sings in his album, *The Simple Life*, 'Daddy's arms will rescue me' – that is a promise

REVIEW BY Joseph Anthraper

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



McEnroe) to see the girls play, and eventually Paul agrees to coach Venus for free. Although the arrangement seemed sub-optimal, Richard records Paul's sessions with Venus, which is then used by Oracene to coach Serena. Paul also urges Richard to enrol Venus in junior tournaments, as they are the gateway to success and stardom and to being noticed by agents. Venus quickly becomes very successful on the junior arena, winning tournament after tournament – and without Richard's knowledge, Serena also starts playing juniors. But during these tournaments, Richard also gets to witness the pressure his as well as the other girls playing the tournaments go through. Very quickly, agents come searching for Richard and Venus with big money offers. Yet, Richard rejects the offers and pulls the girls out of junior tournaments and fires Paul Cohen as coach – all unilaterally, without consulting his wife or his daughters.

Looking for a different coach, Richard manages to get the attention of Rick Macci, the coach who catapulted Jennifer Capriati to stardom when she was just 13 years-old. Macci travels to California to meet with the Williamses, and is quite impressed by both Venus and Serena. He offers to coach the girls for free at his training facility at Florida, but Richard being the shrewd businessman he is, manages to get Macci to sponsor the whole family to move to Florida to be with the girls – all while keeping secret his decision that the Williams sisters would not be playing



any more junior tournaments. The family moves to Florida where Macci makes preparations for Venus to participate in the upcoming junior tournament, when Richard tells a shocked Macci of his decision. Through the next three years, Venus and Serena practise at Rick Macci's Florida facility; tensions between Macci and Richard, as well as tensions within the family increase, and finally explode when Richard doesn't agree to Venus turning pro at 14, to play at the Bank of West Classic tournament in Oakland.

This is one story where anyone watching should be well acquainted with how the ending would be – given the phenomenal success of Williams' sisters in the last two decades. Yet, the rest of the movie focuses on whether Richard would be willing to make changes to his set-in-stone plans, now that his daughters have become capable of making decisions for themselves.

When Venus and later Serena burst into the tennis scene in the late 1990s, I remember reading many articles on Richard Williams, their unruly, over-

aggressive and uber-controlling dad, who the press portrayed as a villain and a negative impact on his daughters. Yet, watching this movie, where both Venus and Serena served as executive producers for the movie, one realises how off-the-mark some of the popular narratives can be. Of course, Richard Williams is no saint and makes many mistakes along the way – and with his unrefined speech and uncouth manners as well as his willingness to go to any extent to protect his family – he does not fit the stereotype of a gentleman – and it is no wonder that the world that is so often hooked up on manners and looks, failed to see the real person behind the man and his speech.

King Richard is a wonderful watch, masterfully portrayed by Will Smith as well as the entire cast around him (special mention to Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor who plays Oracene), – above everything else to see the joy on the face of Venus (and Serena) throughout the movie and the trust the whole family has on Richard – even when trusting seems unnatural. ■■

NewsWatch

Global Catholic population reaches 1.4 billion

The Vatican recently published the 2025 *Annuario Pontificio* and the 2023 *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae*, offering a comprehensive global overview of the Catholic Church. These reports show a 1.15% rise in the worldwide Catholic population between 2022 and 2023, growing from 1.39 billion to 1.406 billion.

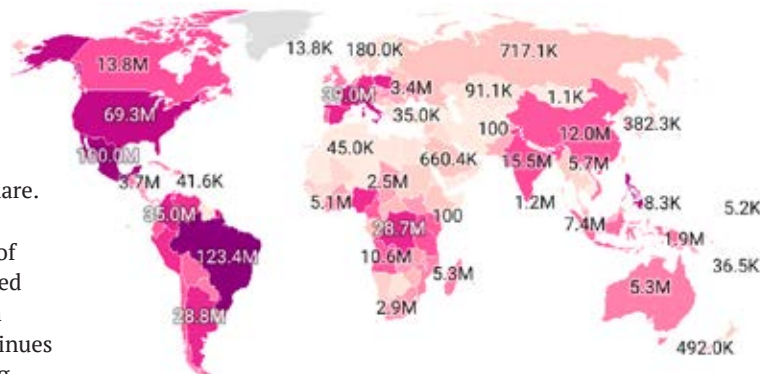
Africa experienced the highest growth, increasing by 3.31% to 281 million Catholics. The Democratic Republic of Congo leads with nearly 55 million faithful, followed by Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. Africa now accounts for 20% of the global Catholic population. The Americas remain the most Catholic region globally, with 47.8% of the world's Catholics, growing by 0.9%. Brazil alone has 182 million Catholics, while countries like Argentina, Colombia, and Paraguay report over 90% Catholic populations.

In Asia, the Catholic population grew by 0.6%, with the Philippines and India making up most of the region's

11% Catholic share. Europe, while home to 20.4% of Catholics, showed minimal growth (0.2%) and continues to see increasing secularisation. Italy, Poland, and Spain maintain high Catholic populations but reflect the continent's overall stagnation. Oceania, with a smaller Catholic base, grew by 1.9%, reaching just over 11 million faithful.

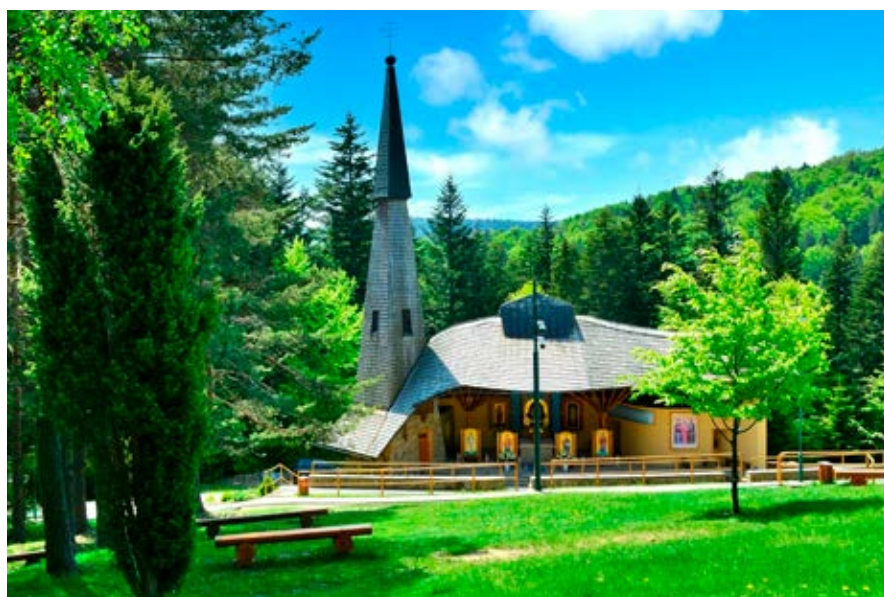
The number of bishops increased globally by 1.4%, with growth in all continents except Oceania. Africa and Asia saw the most significant gains. However, the number of priests declined slightly by 0.2%, from 407,730 in 2022 to 406,996 in 2023. Africa and Asia experienced increases, while Europe and Oceania saw declines.

There was also a 1.6% drop in the



number of religious men and women, though Africa showed a 2.2% increase in women religious. Europe remains the continent with the highest number of women religious, followed by Asia and the Americas.

A notable concern is the ongoing decline in seminarians. From 2022 to 2023, the global number fell by 1.8%, from 108,481 to 106,495, continuing a trend since 2012. While Africa saw a modest increase, the Americas, Asia, and Europe all recorded decreases. Currently, Africa and Asia together account for over 61% of the world's seminarians, highlighting regional disparities in vocations.



Vatican approves Marian apparition in Slovakia

In July 2024, the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), under Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, granted a *nihil obstat* (nothing hinders) for the Marian devotion associated with alleged apparitions of the Virgin Mary on Mount Zvir in northern Slovakia. This marks the first such ruling by the doctrinal office since Pope Leo XIV's

By Sam Bijū

election and comes in the wake of new Vatican guidelines simplifying the evaluation of reported supernatural phenomena.

The devotion stems from a reported series of apparitions beginning on 5 August 1990, as three children – Iveta (Ivetka) Korčáková, 11; Katarína (Katka) Češelková, 12; and her nine-year-old brother Miško – encountered what they described as the Virgin Mary while picking blueberries near the village of Litmanová. The children took shelter in a forest cabin after being frightened by mysterious noises. During prayer, Ivetka and Katka claimed to see a glowing woman in white and blue, whom they identified as the Virgin Mary. Although their families and local priest initially reacted with scepticism, the girls continued to return to the site, claiming repeated visits and messages from Mary urging prayer, particularly the Rosary.

These events attracted growing numbers of pilgrims, many of whom reported miraculous experiences, including a solar phenomenon reminiscent of the Fatima apparitions. The site became a major centre of Marian devotion, with spring water nearby believed to possess healing qualities. From 1990 to 1995, the two girls received regular messages, until the alleged apparitions ceased on 6 August 1995. Despite the end of the apparitions, devotion to the site persisted and even grew.

After the breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1992, Mount Zvir became part of Slovakia, a predominantly Catholic nation. The Archeparchy of Prešov, part of the Slovak Greek Catholic Church, assumed jurisdiction over the site. Archbishop Ján Babjak formally established Mount Zvir as a place of prayer in 2004 and named it an official pilgrimage site in 2008. Liturgies and confessions have been held there daily since 2009, and pilgrimages remain common, particularly on 5 August.

In 2024, the DDF introduced revised norms for evaluating apparitions, moving away from binary judgments of authenticity. Instead, the *nihil obstat* allows bishops to promote devotions that

produce positive spiritual and pastoral outcomes, even without confirming supernatural origins. In this context, Archbishop Jonáš Maximof Prešov petitioned the DDF for such a declaration, citing spiritual benefits experienced by pilgrims. Cardinal Fernández's letter, published 9 July granted the request, while cautioning against a few problematic messages recorded in 1990 and 1991 – one linking all illness to sin and another implying mass condemnation during the Gulf War. These were deemed

doctrinally unacceptable but could be contextualised within the broader, more hopeful spiritual messages.

The *nihil obstat* does not confirm the apparitions' supernatural nature but allows public devotion at Mount Zvir to continue. Archbishop Maxim will also publish an edited collection of the messages, excluding the ones flagged by the DDF. This approval encourages the faithful to draw spiritual nourishment from the devotion, aligned with the Gospel's core message.



Josh Brooks, originally from Delaware County near Philadelphia, once dreamed of becoming a professional basketball player like his idol LeBron James. But his life took a different direction – he's now in his third year studying for the priesthood at St Charles Borromeo Seminary in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Raised in the Baptist faith, Brooks was first introduced to Catholicism at St Ignatius Loyola Elementary School and later deepened his interest while attending Monsignor Bonner and Archbishop Prendergast High School. Drawn by the Church's sense of

universality and the identity of the priesthood, he felt called to something greater, especially since he lacked a strong family foundation while growing up. Though he poured effort into making the basketball team in high school, he didn't succeed, leading him to question his life's purpose. A failed romantic relationship also contributed to his inner search. In a moment of spiritual reflection, he turned to Christ, realising that God had been waiting for him all along – with a love deeper than he had ever known. This turning point ignited a passion for serving others through the Church.

At the seminary, Brooks

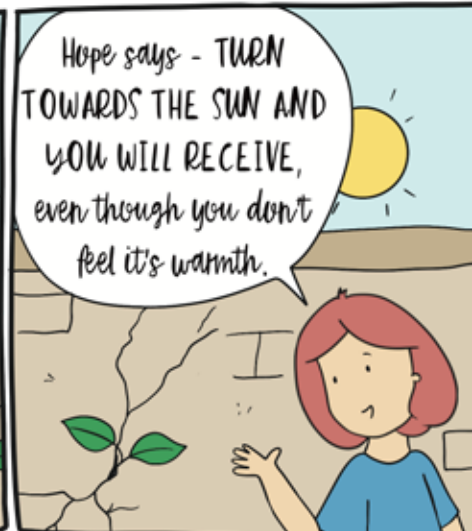
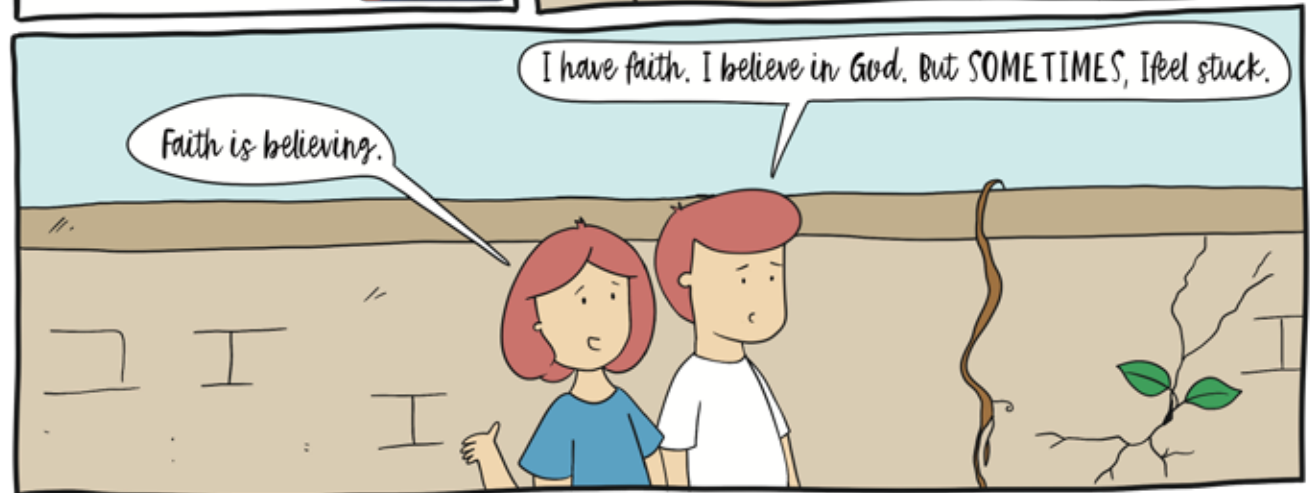
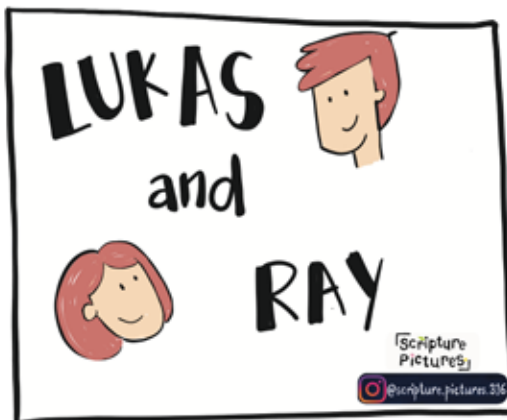
found not only a vocation but a sense of brotherhood he had never had before. His fellow seminarians, including Sean Barker, admire his dedication, spirituality, and ability to inspire others to grow in prayer and study. Brooks embraces the Church's rich tradition and views it as a large, imperfect but divinely guided family. Though his parents are not Catholic, they support his journey, and he prays daily for their conversion. For Brooks, the search for love and purpose culminates at the altar of God, where he believes true fulfilment is found.



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

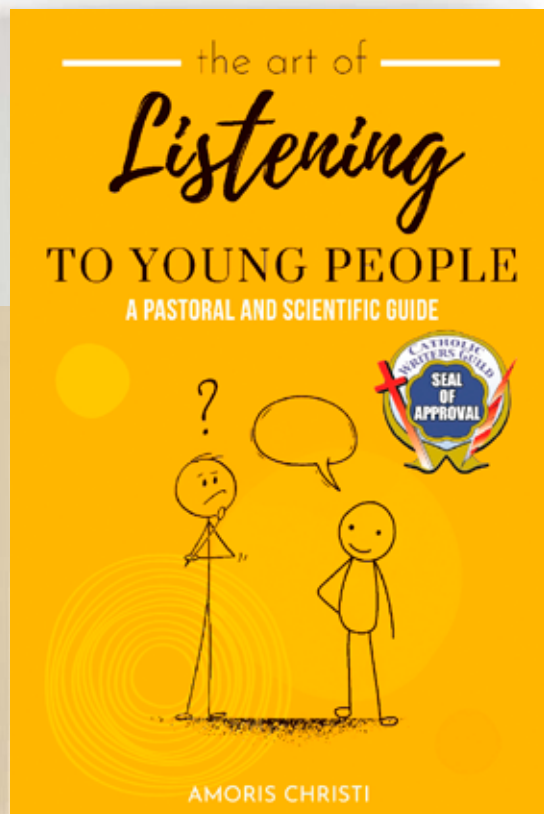
**SOLVE
THE
MAZE**





Nurturing Young People of Faith

Are you called to guide youth in faith?
Equip yourself with these Kairos Media books.

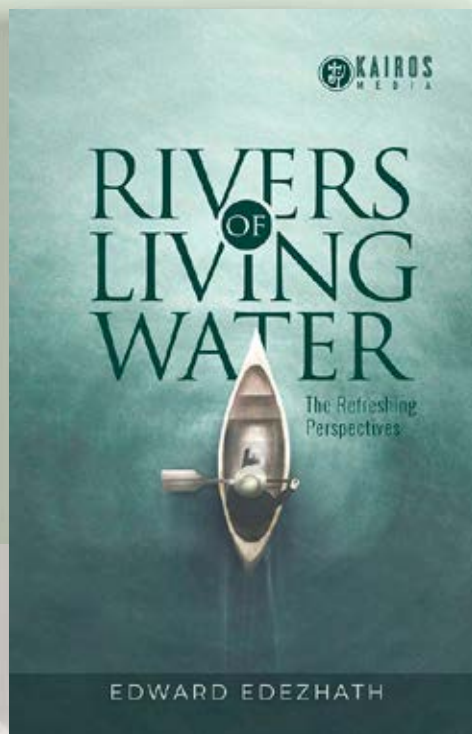


Art of Listening to Young People

Young people today need hearts that listen. This guide from Amoris Christi combines pastoral wisdom with scientific research to help you build deep, transformative relationships.

Rivers of Living Water

Explore how the Jesus Youth movement transforms the lives of youth through the experiences and insights of its pioneering animator, Dr Edward Edezhath.



Scan to visit our website, or contact us at circulations@jykairosmedia.org