

KARDS

GLOBAL

Reclaiming the Truth of **Womanhood**

JILU CHENGAT

ALSO ↓

Sisters on the
Frontlines

■ LUKE COPPEN

The Dignity
of Woman

■ NICHOLAS KOEPPPEL



Jesus Youth

A Missionary Movement At The Service Of The Church



PRAYER TO THE RISEN CHRIST



Heavenly Father and God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for He is alive and has become the Lord of Life. From the waters of death, you raise us with Him and renew your gift of life within us. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EDITOR'S ROOM

SIJO THOMAS

X @readkairos



*SHE IS A DAUGHTER.
SHE IS A WIFE. SHE
IS A MOTHER. SHE IS
A FRIEND. SHE IS A
MENTOR. SHE IS AN
INTERCESSOR. SHE IS
SOMEONE WHO LOVES
DEEPLY AND SACRIFICES
QUIETLY.*

The Strength within Her

On Women's Day 2026, a post by the food delivery platform Zomato went viral: 'Yes, women should be in the kitchen.' For a moment the internet paused in disbelief. Then came the twist: '...grabbing a *belan* (rolling pin) to beat up everyone who says so.'

The humour instantly flipped a familiar stereotype into a powerful commentary on gender assumptions. The post spread rapidly across social media, reminding us how sensitive and often misunderstood the conversation about women's dignity and roles continues to be.

Yet beyond viral posts and cultural debates lies a deeper truth that the Christian faith has long proclaimed: the dignity of women is not defined by stereotypes or social expectations, but by God Himself.

When I reflect on this truth, I do not begin with theories. I begin with two women I know closely: my mother and my wife.

About my wife, I can say this with honesty: the woman she was twenty years ago is not the same woman she is today. She has grown, changed, and endured storms that could have easily broken her. She has fought silent battles that few people ever noticed. She has carried pain, doubts, and fears quietly in her heart.

Even now, in the delicate season of motherhood and postpartum challenges, she continues to navigate emotional struggles that not everyone understands. Some misunderstand her journey; some even wait to see her stumble. Yet she stands – stronger than before – revealing a resilience that cannot be easily explained.

Because the strength she searched for was always within her.

She is a daughter. She is a wife. She is a mother. She is a friend. She is a mentor. She is an intercessor. She is someone who loves deeply and sacrifices quietly.

Motherhood did not end her dreams. In many ways, it ignited them.

In watching her journey, I realise that this quiet strength is not unique to her alone. It reflects the experience of countless women across the world, who nurture families, sustain communities, and carry responsibilities that often remain unseen.

To every woman reading this: your courage matters. Your faith matters. The silent battles you fight are not unseen by God.

And to all of us – families, communities, and the wider Church – this moment invites reflection and action. Let us honour the women around us not only with words but with genuine appreciation and support. Let us create homes, parishes, and workplaces where women can flourish in their God-given gifts and vocations.

Because when women thrive, families flourish. When families flourish, communities grow stronger. And when communities reflect the dignity of every person, the world begins to resemble the Kingdom of God.

May we recognise those gifts, nurture them, and celebrate them – today and every day.



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She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.
Proverbs 31:25

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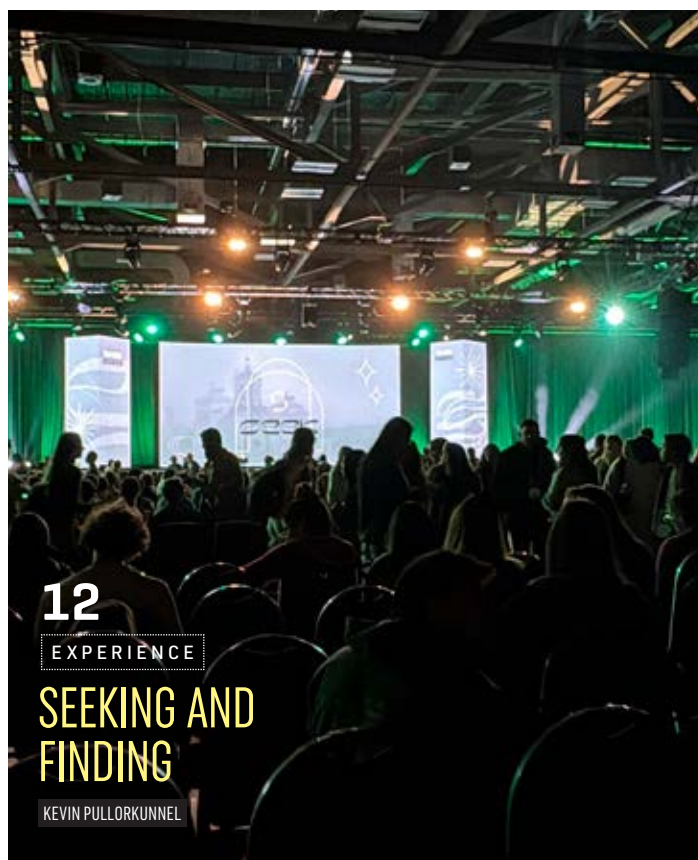
SR Graphics, Kottayam, India

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Kairos Media is a member of:
Catholic Media Association (USA)
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ASK



FR. BITAJU

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→ Is living together before marriage a sin?

Living together or cohabitation before marriage is contrary to the moral teaching of the Catholic Church. This understanding is rooted in the Church's view of marriage and sexuality.

The Nature of Marriage: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that marriage is a sacred covenant established by God, intended to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman (CCC 1601). Living together is a self-centred escape from the responsibility of raising a family (other-centred life).

The Purpose of Sexuality: The Church teaches that sexual intimacy is reserved for the context of marriage. The *Catechism* underlines that sexual union is not merely a physical act but is deeply connected to the total gift of self that is meant to occur within the marital relationship. 'Sexuality is ordered to the conjugal love of man and woman' (CCC 2331).

Cohabitation and Commitment: The Church encourages couples to prepare for marriage through a process that includes understanding the sacramental nature of their relationship and the responsibilities that come with it. Cohabitation or living together may undermine this understanding, as it can lead to a situation where the full commitment of marriage is not honoured.

Moral Implications: The Church teaches that engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage is a sin, as it violates the sixth commandment (sin of fornication and sin of contraception). Cohabitation often involves sexual relations, which the Church views as morally problematic when not situated within the context of a valid marriage.

Pastoral Approach: While the Church holds these teachings, it also recognises the importance of pastoral care and understanding. Many couples may find themselves in situations of cohabitation for various reasons. The Church encourages dialogue, discernment, and, where possible, a path toward sacramental marriage. The *Catechism* states, 'The Church, while teaching the truth of the Gospel, must also be a place of mercy and forgiveness' (CCC 982).

In conclusion, according to Catholic teaching, living together before marriage is generally considered a sin because it does not align with the Church's understanding of marriage and sexuality. However, the Church also emphasises the importance of pastoral care and the possibility of reconciliation for those who find themselves in such situations. Couples are encouraged to seek guidance and support from the Church as they navigate their relationships.



YOU CAT 292

WHY DID GOD GIVE US 'PASSIONS' OR EMOTIONS?

We have passions so that through strong emotions and distinct feelings we might be attracted to what is right and good and repelled from what is evil and bad. [CCC 1762-1766, 1771-1772]

God made man in such a way that he can love and hate, desire or despise something, be attracted by some things and afraid of others, be full of joy, sorrow, or anger. In the depths of his heart man always loves good and hates evil – or what he considers to be such.



Popetalk

DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH



Prayer Intentions **April**

For priests in crisis

Let us pray for priests going through moments of crisis in their vocation, that they may find the accompaniment they need and that communities may support them with understanding and prayer.



Peace begins with dignity. Christ's greeting after the Resurrection, 'Peace be with you,' is more than a salutation. True peace begins with the recognition and protection of the God-given dignity of every person.

The Good Samaritan showed love by taking care of the wounded and abandoned man on the road. An essential aspect of love of neighbour requires concrete gestures of closeness while being capable of assuming the fragility and suffering of others, particularly those who experience illness accompanied by poverty, isolation, or loneliness. Christ, the Good Samaritan, continues to draw close to wounded humanity and, through the sacraments, pours out the oil of consolation and the wine of hope.

Let us create space for silence by turning off televisions, radios, and cell phones for a while. Let us meditate on the Word of God, approach the sacraments, and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to us in our heart. Let us also listen to one another, in our families, workplaces, and communities.

There is always the risk of discouragement or of being drawn to easier paths to satisfaction, such as wealth, fame, and power. Such temptations are merely poor substitutes for the joy for which we were created and ultimately leave people dissatisfied, restless, and empty.

Authentic educators and catechetical leaders arouse the desire for truth. By deepening your relationship with Jesus and continuing to be faithful and joyful disciples in your daily lives, authenticity will enable transmitting the Gospel in such a way that it leads to a true encounter with the Lord and contributes to building up a lasting and life-giving culture.

Our youth must be helped, not hindered, in their journey toward maturity and true responsibility. Access to data must not be confused with intelligence. Authentic wisdom has more to do with recognising the true meaning of life than with the availability of data. AI can also be misused for selfish gain at the expense of others, or worse, to foment conflict and aggression.

JESUS YOUTH



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

Talk can build a group, but kill it too

→ 'How goes your small-group?' I asked Mary. Recently, Jesus Youth in their region was focused on strengthening existing groups and starting new ones. 'I am not sure if I should be happy or upset,' she said, and began expanding on the joys and challenges of building communities.

Young people and families eagerly look for a place to meaningfully belong, openly share, and grow together with others. It is like exercising with friends, you persevere – and enjoy it too. Here, people come to grow together and the efforts bear fruit. Groups are growing in depth as well as in number. But there are subtle challenges too, and they are mostly about how people share and interact in these groups.

SHARING IN A GROUP IS SIMPLE YET CHALLENGING

When most people initially come to a group, they find it difficult to open up and share. Many are not used to it, not even at home. They are used to listening to or giving advice. For some, talking is merely polite greeting. But to open up in a group, one must grow accustomed to it. Most people have not had real friends with whom to speak about their experiences or yearnings. Thus, many don't want to talk in a group.

And, when they start talking, many take the easy route and discuss politics or church gossip. Someone mentioned, 'During the elections, our group almost broke up. Arguments went on endlessly, though only a few were really interested. We didn't know how to stop it.' In a similar vein, there can be critical evaluations of what is happening in the parish or diocese – engrossing and interesting, but this is often gossip in a new garb, in which one's true inner self need not be opened or shared.

Discussing their group, Jancy from another region raised a major issue. 'In our group, once a couple of people start sharing, they cannot easily stop. They go on talking, jumping from one memory to another. Everyone loses interest, and some even get up and go out on the pretext of water breaks. But they don't realise or put an end to their rambling.' If one or two people take up most of the available time, it can be frustrating for everyone else. Of course, if someone is going through a crisis, we would give that person more time. But if one person consistently takes up most of the group's time, that would be unkind and unjust.

Then there are the activity enthusiasts. The very purpose of a small-group is for people to open up and share about their interior life,

but a group can easily be distracted into something else. Some fill up time with singing; some drift into activity planning; long prayer times can eat into sharing time; and if food arrangements or even a game takes up much of the gathering, the purpose of the group can be defeated.

Conversation is the lifeblood of any group, be it family, a circle of friends, or a Church community. If that conversation helps everyone come to know one another better and builds them up in love that is a helpful step. But if our journey is not towards love, that chat will be a *noisy gong or a clanging cymbal* (1 Corinthians 13:1).

GROUP SHARING IS A SYNODAL JOURNEY

With Pope Francis came talk about synodality, which means journeying together, and is apt for small-group sharing. This journey begins with conversion – a change of attitude: from my journey to our journey, and an openness to the Lord's presence along the way. This change of attitude makes all the difference. More important still is that the group is on a journey in which the growth of each person – and of the whole – truly matters.

I have heard many young people speak about how their JY small-group prepared them for their future family,



career, and mission. Those in family small-groups speak of how it equips them for the fast-changing challenges of family life. This is the fruit of a little community journeying together.

HOW SHOULD WE TALK IN A COMMUNITY?

The Epistle of James speaks of the power of speech and the danger it can bring about. With our mouths we can communicate great things and also do much damage (James 3:5), so we need to be watchful. Speech full of love builds; careless talk harms much. The question is: what kind of talk truly builds?

Be vulnerable: It is about setting aside masks and being ready to share one's struggles with others. Very often, if people are courageous enough to do this, others will follow.

Have a sense of belonging: When a person realises the group is his own and begins to consider everyone as part of their journey, a big change occurs.

Learn to accept differences and forgive: Most groups have an initial honeymoon period, followed by a time of conflict. Leaving the group or breaking it up can seem like a quick way out, but the right path is the harder

path of acceptance and forgiveness.

Balance feeling and thought:

Should a group always talk about experiences and subjective perceptions? Intellectual discussions and study also have a place, but there needs to be balance.

Respect the moderator, or be one:

When a few people are gathered, there is often a need for someone to ensure things stay on track and to intervene when necessary. When the need arises, anyone in the group should be ready to step up and help moderate.

Be simple, humble, and ordinary:

An organic and natural pace is important for a good group. This allows everyone to be their natural self, without masks, yet with due respect for one another. Being joyful and even playfully positive is part of this.

The Kingdom dimension: Jesus Youth, being a missionary movement, naturally participates in that call. Being Christ-centred – motivating, encouraging, and equipping each person for Christian mission – becomes the purpose of every small group.

A BUILDING BLOCK FOR THE NEW WORLD

Some JY friends once took me to meet Fr Eduardo, a Hispanic priest, to introduce him to the movement.

After listening to us, he asked a very pertinent question: while many similar groups focus on organising retreats and training, why does Jesus Youth concern itself so much with effective group-building and participation?

I wanted to tell him: the vision behind this focus on building relationships and groups has to do with Jesus' dream of building a culture of love, one that will lead to joyful families and a wholesome world. Pope Francis' words on the synodal Church are quite relevant here too: 'Our gaze also extends to humanity as a whole... As a Church which "journeys together" with men and women, sharing the travails of history, let us cherish the dream that a rediscovery of the inviolable dignity of peoples and of the function of authority as service will also be able to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations.'

.....

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 Amor Christi in Florida, USA.

EXPERIENCE

LIFE-CHANGING UGANDA

Joel Nelson shares his experience of a mission exposure trip he had undertaken to Uganda.



God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. I give you dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and every living thing that moves on the earth' (Genesis 1:28).

Hi, my name is Joel Nelson, a 16-year-old from Al Ain, UAE. It is an immense joy to share my life-changing mission experience in Uganda. This was not just a physical one, but also a spiritual and emotional mission that opened my eyes and heart to the beauty and challenges of this incredible country.

Growing up as a Jesus Youth, I've always felt a strong calling to engage in mission work. Witnessing the struggles of my own community motivated me to extend a helping hand to those in need beyond my immediate surroundings. I embarked on this mission with the intention of learning, serving, and helping better the lives of the people in Uganda. My expectations were high, but what I gained far exceeded them.

During my stay in Uganda, I was welcomed by the warm embrace of the sisters who provided us with accommodation. The simplicity of life, delicious local food, and basic facilities taught me contentment and gratitude. I learned how to wash clothes by hand. Even though at first I struggled a bit with the food, I got used to it. During our time there, we enjoyed a wonderful climate, night skies filled with stars and mornings of fog and birdsong.

Our journey was graced by encounters with remarkable individuals. We had the privilege of meeting bishops and priests, who shared their wisdom and deep faith with us. Their devotion to their communities and their unyielding spirit left an indelible mark on my heart. Particularly Bishop Sanctus Lino of the Lira diocese, Dennis, the JY coordinator of Lira, and all the enthusiastic JYs we met there.

From visiting street kids to spending time with the elderly in the parish, every interaction was a lesson in compassion and empathy. Visiting the girls' school taught me the importance of education and empowerment. While there, I was tasked with conducting a small praise and worship session for the girls – something I had never done for such a big crowd. But



by God's grace, it happened beautifully and after the programme some of the people came up and told me that Jesus had touched their hearts

Our time in the babies' home taught me the need to provide love and care for the most vulnerable. The babies at the home had been abandoned on the streets, in washrooms, and dustbins! That visit opened my eyes to how much God loves me, and the gift of my loving parents.

Visiting the school for the blind shattered my thoughts about limitations and showcased the power of determination and adaptability. Even though they are blind, their capabilities far exceed normal children.

Trips to the village community and homes were so emotional for me; seeing their appalling living conditions, threadbare clothes, meagre food and poor health conditions broke me inside. In one of the houses we visited, we met an old grandfather who was bedridden. Local people would come every day to clean and feed him. Hearing some of his dreams made me sad. They were for 'big money, big food, and big sugar.'

We also visited a prison (first time for me), which was a wonderful experience. In my opinion, no one is born a criminal. It's their decisions that make them so. When I went there, I remembered the Bible verse, *Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners'* (Mark 2:17).

The fishing village revealed the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. The Missionaries of Charity



sisters exemplified selfless service, and the hospital visit underscored the significance of health and well-being. The Prayer Garden and Martyr's Shrine provided a spiritual sanctuary where I found peace, and the personal prayers and Holy Masses offered a sense of unity with the local faithful.

My interactions with the people we met were a two-way exchange. While I shared my time, knowledge, and companionship, I received a lot of love, warmth, and insights in return. I realised that what I could give could not be measured physically but in genuine care and the willingness to listen and learn.

My mission exposure in Uganda has been a transformative journey. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have immersed myself in the lives of the remarkable people of Uganda and to have witnessed their strength, resilience, and faith. This experience has inspired me to continue my mission work, and to always strive to be a beacon of light and hope for those in need. If I get another chance to go back and serve the Lord, I would definitely take it up. ■■

Joel Nelson is doing his first year BBA in Christ University, Bangalore, India. He was part of UAE Teens' ministry's first mission exposure trip to Uganda. Joel is the son of Nelson Varghese and Dhanya Nelson. He has four siblings.



Having attended the January 1st to 5th conference, Kevin Pullorkunnel shares how it has impacted his life.

Walking into SEEK for the first time was overwhelming in the best way possible. Young Catholics from across the country, all gathered with a shared desire to deepen their faith. At first, what struck me most was the scale of it all: the crowds, the constant movement, the sheer number of people. After a while, the massiveness began to feel almost ordinary.

That sense of familiarity quickly gave way to awe when I witnessed the priestly procession for each of the daily Holy Masses. Seeing priest after priest enter (men from different cultures, backgrounds, and parts of the world) was deeply moving. The procession itself often lasted a good fifteen minutes,

which meant that even if we arrived five minutes late, we somehow still managed not to miss the beginning of Mass. Each priest wore vestments reflecting their heritage, yet all were united in the same reverence and mission. In that moment, the universality of the Church stopped being an idea and became something visible and real. It was then that I began to understand that SEEK was not simply a conference, but a living witness to a Church that is alive and still boldly proclaiming Christ. This led me to reflect more deeply on what SEEK truly is and why so many people are drawn to it.

SEEK is an annual Catholic conference organised by FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students). While it

is primarily centred on campus ministry, SEEK has grown into a gathering that welcomes young Catholics of many backgrounds. SEEK 26, hosted in Columbus, Ohio, welcomed nearly 17,000 attendees from across the United States. I went with a group of around 12 people from the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Chicago.

Traditionally, the conference brings together college students, FOCUS missionaries assigned to campuses, and the priests who serve those communities. Over time, it has also become a space for young professionals and others discerning their vocation to gather and grow together. Despite this growth, the mission of SEEK has remained consistent: forming disciples who are willing to live their faith intentionally and bring Christ into their everyday environments, especially on college campuses. Understanding this purpose helped frame everything I experienced during the conference, particularly the message that surfaced again and again throughout the sessions I attended.

Throughout SEEK, one theme consistently emerged: evangelisation. Whether addressed directly or woven subtly into talks, the call to share Christ was unmistakable. SEEK did not present evangelisation as something reserved for experts or missionaries alone, but as a natural response to encountering Jesus. This call felt especially personal when Pope Leo offered his blessing to the conference on the first evening. He encouraged us not to be afraid to ask God what He is calling us to do. That invitation lingered, and I found myself asking God of what He wanted of me.

As the conference unfolded, this question became more pressing. I began to feel a growing desire to evangelise more intentionally within my own parish and community. SEEK helped me see that evangelisation does not always begin in distant places; **it often starts close to home**, through presence, courage, and faithfulness in ordinary circumstances. That interior shift opened me up to receiving several moments of grace that shaped the rest of the conference for me.

One of the most impactful moments came during a session led by Natalie Garza, who spoke about heaven not as an

abstract concept, but as a real destination. She made a striking comparison: a Christian who does not reflect on heaven is like an athlete who does not know what they are training for. That image immediately resonated with me. We were invited to reflect on the most beautiful place we had experienced on earth. For me, it was a hiking trail in Kentucky with a quiet lake surrounded by stillness. I remembered reflecting on that image once, experiencing a deep and unexpected peace, free from worry or distraction. I realised that this image had already shaped how I imagined heaven, with peace entering before being fully welcomed into eternal life with Christ. That reflection reignited my desire for heaven and clarified why evangelisation matters. If heaven is real and beautiful, then bringing others closer to Christ is not optional, it is an act of love.

This renewed desire naturally led me to examine what might be holding me back from fully trusting God with my life, which deepened during the sacrament of confession and a conversation with the priest afterward. After hearing my confession, he spoke to me about detachment, pointing to Christ's death on the cross with His arms open, holding nothing back. He explained that I, too, am called to live with open arms toward God's will – willing to surrender comfort, control, and certainty, even when change feels uncomfortable or frightening. His words challenged me to reflect on where

fear might be limiting my openness to God's plan.

The encounter with Christ in the confessional helped me see detachment not as loss, but as freedom. It revealed that holiness often requires surrender, and that true peace comes not from control, but from trust. This realisation prepared my heart for one of the most practical lessons in evangelisation I received during the conference.

One talk I nearly skipped turned out to be my favourite. Mallory Smyth spoke about accompaniment in a way that was both simple and deeply challenging. I attended only because a friend encouraged me to join, unaware that it would leave such a lasting impression. She spoke about the importance of finding a 'Philip' in your life – a mentor who walks with you in faith – and then becoming that person for someone else. She shared how she began evangelising in her parish by simply asking people if they wanted to start a Bible study. Later, she took an even simpler approach: inviting others to accompany her in everyday tasks, like grocery shopping. This approach resonated with me because it removed pressure and replaced it with a relationship. It showed me that evangelisation does not require elaborate plans or perfect words, but availability, intentionality, and a willingness to walk with others – something that is very attainable,

As SEEK came to an end, these

moments began to form a clear conviction within me. I felt called to evangelise in this next stage of my life – not only to those who have never encountered Christ, but also to those who once knew Him and have since gone another direction. SEEK helped me trust God's plan for my life, without the need to have everything figured out. One of the greatest gifts I came to recognise more clearly was my ability to be present with others. Through Jesus Youth, accompaniment has been central to my formation, and during SEEK, I saw how powerful that gift can be. I feel called to pass it on, even to those who may seem difficult to reach, helping them encounter both Christ and the wider Church through genuine relationships. This conviction also took concrete form. During SEEK, I committed to praying the Rosary every night before bed, starting on January 1st. No matter how tired I was, I made it a priority, offering each decade for a specific person or intention. This simple habit reminded me that holiness is built through daily faithfulness, not perfection.

Looking back, SEEK 26 reshaped how I see the Church. What I encountered was not a disengaged or declining community, but a vibrant body of believers eager to live their faith and share it with others. SEEK renewed my hope that evangelisation is not only possible, but already happening – led by ordinary people willing to say yes. For me, SEEK was more than a conference. It was a reminder that the Church is alive, united, and still being sent out into the world. With open hearts and the courage to ask God what He is calling us to do, we can take part in that mission and help bring others closer to Christ.



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IN FOCUS



Reclaiming the Truth of Womanhood

Jilu Chengat invites us (both women and men) to ponder upon certain mysteries of life as she reflects on the meaning of authentic femininity in the Lord.

Early in my journey of motherhood, I encountered a moment that quietly unsettled my every understanding of femininity. Before being a mother, I served in various ministry and leadership roles. After marriage, I quietly stepped back from leadership to tend to my vocation and family, until a few months after my daughter's birth I was invited to step forward again.

I have a distinct memory of standing before a group, with my husband in the back of the church caring for our infant, feeling as though everything was upside down. Dozens of 'shoulds' and 'should nots' flooded my mind. Though I had grown up in the United States and considered myself an independent woman, I was surprised by the traditional expectations that surfaced within me. In that moment, I felt deeply torn by the dissonant social and cultural realities that shaped my understanding of womanhood. I found myself in the middle of a battlefield, longing to discover the true meaning of authentic femininity in the Lord.

DEFINING THE BATTLEFIELD

Perhaps it is important to begin by defining this battlefield. Who are we fighting against? From whom are we reclaiming femininity? Is it from men, the government, or society? Though there are real battles that need to be fought in all those areas, the real battlefield is in hearts and souls, where humanity's deepest questions about dignity, identity, and vocation are fought. *For our struggle*

is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens (Ephesians 6:12).

Seeds of doubt planted in Eve's heart around God's provision and protection were deceptively simple but powerful enough to open the door to sin. The subsequent guilt and shame experienced by both the first man and woman further weakened them and strengthened the enemy's claim. When Adam was unable to protect Eve's vulnerability – either preventively or in response to the enemy – a blueprint was created that would repeat itself throughout history. The dynamics of sin and isolation became powerful weapons against women's dignity, both from within and from outside. But in the beginning, it was not so.

When God made Eve, He called her *ezer kenegdo*. These Hebrew words are often reduced to 'helpmate,' a translation that falls far short of their meaning. Throughout Scripture, *ezer* is most frequently used to describe God Himself, the One who comes to the aid of His people, who saves, defends, and fights on their behalf. It is not the help of an assistant, but the help of a deliverer.

Kenegdo means 'corresponding to,' 'facing,' or 'equal to.' It denotes a counterpart who stands opposite, not beneath. Together, *ezer kenegdo* reveals that when God made woman, He made a strong ally – one who stands face-to-face with man in dignity, strength, and purpose. She was created not as

a subordinate, but as a partner, equal in worth, distinct in mission. Yet, sin distorted this gifted identity, and it would be generations before the miraculous birth of God made man – in the womb of a humble virgin – could reclaim true womanhood.

As *ezer kenegdo*, a woman's role in this battle against evil is not marked by brute strength or striving. When her receptivity and vulnerability are surrendered to the Lord, and she presents herself as quiet, grounded, and powerful, the evil one's deceptive tactics are thwarted. Mother Mary, as a young virgin mother who became the Queen of Apostles, exemplifies how these qualities, when yielded to God, become formidable weapons. In this way, quiet, grounded, and powerful, as imaged by Mother Mary, emerge as a beautiful rallying cry in reclaiming womanhood.

Quiet. Grounded. Powerful.

QUIET

Quiet may seem an unlikely word to lead a rallying cry. Yet, in the face of evil, silence holds incredible power. This is different from silence in the face of injustice or the silence of ignorance. This is not a silence that endures abuse or violence. This quiet is not marked by a certain number of words, but describes a way of being. This quiet does not engage in dialogue with the lies and doubts of the evil one – as Eve did – but stands in silent protest, strengthened by faith in God's provision and promise.

For many years, a woman's reality may be being everything to someone, whether through physical or spiritual maternity. Chesterton reminds us that this influence is enormous and becomes an indispensable reality in disputing lies against ceaseless productivity and the 'useless' vulnerabilities of women. Our vulnerability and receptivity become our greatest strength that allows us to stand in hope in the most difficult of situations.

It is a pregnant silence, one that consents to God's will, and bears truth. This quiet characterises the image of Mary at the foot of the Cross. Her silence speaks volumes and her quiet rebellion undermines the enemy's plan. Even in the most devastating circumstance, she does not submit to the lie that God could be overcome. She may have been swayed by grief and sorrow, but the many words of the Lord and the ponderings of her heart had given her a strength beyond understanding.

GROUNDING

This quiet confidence speaks volumes against fear and uncertainty. At the foot of the cross and amongst the disciples before Pentecost, she does not run away in self-protection, nor is she paralysed by uncertainty. She does not give in to hysterics and gossip, but stays grounded in the truth of God and His provision. She exemplifies these words from St Paul to the Colossians (2:7), *rooted in him and built upon him and established in the faith as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving*. Her presence at the birth of the Church amongst the frightened disciples images the gift of her rootedness and faith.

This is not just a spiritual grounding, but one that is embodied. Women move cyclically, in their bodies, in their ways of working and in their relationships. The Church, in her liturgical seasons, embodies this rhythmic movement. The predictable cycles, year after year, provide

stability for all the faithful. Likewise, the grounded woman who honours the rhythms of her body, becomes a source of security and an anchoring point, as exemplified by Mother Mary.

This embodied wisdom emerges slowly. Through the hidden years of Nazareth, Mother Mary's attunement to the quiet whispers of God helped her grow in confidence of God's direction and her own capacity. Her presence at the birth of the Church mirrors a woman's inner awareness of life growing within her, marked by quiet anticipation and awareness of her changing body.

POWERFUL

In this way, when a woman submits to God's timing rather than the world's urgency, her power is no longer reactive or anxious. It becomes authoritative. This is the kind of power we witness in Mary at Pentecost. In those desperate moments, she was both queen and mother, beloved and trusted because of her constant witness of faith. Her power is not used for personal gain but becomes a self-gift. Her faithful and fruitful maternity reveals a powerful love that mirrors God's love for His people and begets new life.

This power is entrusted to all women, visibly expressed through motherhood where authority is exercised through presence, formation and sacrifice. GK Chesterton talks about motherhood in this way, *'How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No; a woman's*

function is laborious, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute.'

For many years, a woman's reality may be being everything to someone, whether through physical or spiritual maternity. Chesterton reminds us that this influence is enormous and becomes an indispensable reality in disputing lies against ceaseless productivity and the 'useless' vulnerabilities of women. Our vulnerability and receptivity become our greatest strength that allows us to stand in hope in the most difficult of situations.

LIVING OUR FEMININE GENIUS

For most of us, when faced with impossible or dire circumstances, whether we are in a boardroom or our bedroom, we often turn to despair and anger or fear and grief. These responses have their place, but none are quite so effective as a quiet pondering in our hearts: **'How can this be?'**

With Mother Mary, let us learn to ponder these mysteries in our heart. How can it be that God has called me to be an *ezer kenegdo*? How can it be that the quiet of my heart can bear so much fruit? How can it be that the genius of my feminine body is meant to instruct humanity about the movements of God? How can it be that God has entrusted me with the power to form the next generation and shape cultures and societies?

These questions are not simply for women to ponder! In fact, men are invited to deeply reflect on these profound realities with us. Let us ponder these truths and hold them in our hearts, live them in our bodies, and form them in our families. In doing so, we have already begun the great task of reclaiming true womanhood, one that is quiet, grounded, and powerful. ■

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.

Why we can never have enough of Therese and Teresa

Despite the similarity in their names, St Teresa of Avila and St Therese of Lisieux were completely different people. **Maryn Kunthara** writes about their influence on her life.

As a young girl, I desired to be unique and uncommon. So in ninth grade catechism, when we had to do a group project on a saint, I was displeased by the list of saints on the list: popular saints like St Joseph, St Therese, St Teresa of Avila – so overdone and common. I wanted St Moses the Black, former leader of a bandit gang! Or St Maximilian Kolbe, sacrificing his life for another prisoner in Auschwitz! I definitely didn't want any popular female saints, who all seemed to be different iterations of the same quiet nun or beautiful virgin martyr. How many Teresas could we possibly canonise? But to my dismay, my group was assigned St Teresa of Avila and I begrudgingly began my research.

As I read about St Teresa, I was kicking myself over how narrow-minded I'd been. No wonder I knew so many Teresas – who wouldn't want to be named after her? She was charmingly fiery, clever, loving, and so in love with the Lord. A rebellious Spanish teen, she chose to stay at the convent after initially being sent there by her strict father. There, she desired to grow closer to God through mental prayer, but struggled; her convent was full of vanity, partying, money, and prestige. She found herself falling into the same narcissism, gossiping, and flattery. Eventually, after years of struggling with sickness and a great inability to pray, she rediscovered the power of prayer, blossoming an intimate relationship with



God. She was inspired to start reformed convents and monasteries dedicated to poverty and prayer. Yet this endeavour was met with many great challenges.

During my project research, a particular story struck me. St Teresa, on a trip to establish a new monastery and in the midst of a storm, slipped off her horse and into the mud. In her quick temper and familiarity with God, she yelled to him, 'Oh my Lord! When will you cease scattering obstacles in our path?!' The Lord replied, 'Do not complain, daughter. This is how I treat my friends.' Her response? 'If this is how you treat your friends, it is no wonder you have so few!' As a ninth grader, I was taken aback by St Teresa's unbridled honesty with Christ. How could she be so biting frank? It dawned on me that their relationship had to be quite intimate and trusting for her to say such a thing. This simple story reminded me how my honest, unfiltered thoughts do not cause God to pull away from me; on the contrary, it draws me into closer intimacy with Him. Like Teresa, I could be brutally honest, I could complain and weep and rejoice and rage and expose every part of my heart to Him, with confidence that He would always receive me and share His heart in return.

St Teresa's growth also comforted me. I struggle with a wandering mind when I pray, which discourages me. But St Teresa relates: 'I was more anxious for the hour of prayer to be over than I was to remain there.' And, 'this intellect [of mine] is so wild that it doesn't seem to be anything else than a frantic madman no one can tie down.' Ultimately, Teresa overcame these obstacles by allowing the heart, rather than the mind, to take the front seat: 'For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything.'

I felt such a kinship with St Teresa. Like her, I too struggled with gossiping and vanity. Like her, I struggled with great interior battles when it came to prayer – distractions, boredom, and mental blocks. And like her, I was tempted by the world's

distractions to ignore God. But she gave me hope – that I could grow in holiness and deeper union with God. And then came into focus for me what everyone else had already caught onto; these female saints are so beloved because of the radical yet approachable ways they love Christ every day. I may not be called to slay a dragon like St George, but I know I am called to love in my every action like St Teresa.

About the female saints, my mom says: 'They're all so different, some fiery and complex, some quiet and simple. Yet all have intense depth.' While St Teresa was fierce and full of action, St Therese of Lisieux was simple and quiet. I joke that I regard St Therese as an enemy, while she insists on calling me friend. St Therese was a French girl who joined the convent at fifteen and spent the rest of her life there until



her death at age twenty-four. She didn't do anything remarkable by worldly standards; at her passing, one nun at her convent even remarked that there wasn't much to say about her, yet her 'Little Way' of loving God and others has made her a Doctor of the Church, one of the greatest titles among saints. Her simple, little life has impacted generations of people all around the world.

St Therese wrote *Story of a Soul*, detailing her life and her 'Little Way,' which consisted of doing small, ordinary things with great, extraordinary love. She lived like a tiny, little child of God, nestled in His strong, encompassing arms with complete love, trust, and humility. And upon first reading it, it irked me. St Therese's dewy-eyed, simpering, weepy, utterly saccharine approach to God just irked me. It was like reading the words of a helpless, intensely emotional little girl

who loved being childish and coddled by God.

Yet that's exactly what I so desired... I was jealous of her.

I realised that she irritated me because she attained what I yearned for but was too proud to pursue.

At my core, I'm just a girl who wants to let go and be taken care of and loved by God. I wanted to be dewy-eyed and weepy and saccharine and overly emotional with God, and I resented St Therese because she unapologetically lived how I so wanted to live – with the freedom of a child of God. As Therese said, 'it is your arms, Jesus, that are the lift to carry me to heaven. And so there is no need for me to grow up: I must stay little and become less and less.' And that's why I joke that Therese is my enemy while she insists I'm her friend; I'm jealous of her because she's a woman after my own heart. At one

with extraordinary love. And I see what immense strength she must actually have to live this way. One of my favourite stories involves a particular nun at Therese's convent who completely irritated her. Instead of acting on her annoyance, Therese would actually seek this nun out and treat her 'as if I loved her best of all.' In fact, this nun once asked Therese, 'What attracts you so much toward me; every time you look at me, I see your smile?' It was only after Therese's passing that the other nuns discovered from her diary that Therese had actually greatly struggled to get along with this nun.

I also want to love in every little, unseen way. When someone cuts me off in traffic, I can thank God for them and my life. When my siblings don't wash their dishes, I can wash them, praying for them and for souls in purgatory as I wash. St Therese said, 'to pick up a pin for the love of God, can convert a soul.' When I first heard that, I was working at a restaurant where sometimes I was given the mind-numbing task of packing tortilla chips into small bags. Inspired by Therese, I offered each chip I packed for a soul in purgatory and prayed for the person who would buy that chip bag.

The stories I've heard from many different people about St Therese and St Teresa's intercessions in their lives are staggering – they are widely loved. Ultimately, I see how great these female saints are for everyone; they are friends who help us join them in heaven with our loving God. ■

I felt such a kinship with St Teresa. Like her, I too struggled with gossiping and vanity. Like her, I struggled with great interior battles when it came to prayer – distractions, boredom, and mental blocks. And like her, I was tempted by the world's distractions to ignore God. But she gave me hope – that I could grow in holiness and deeper union with God.

point, after worrying about her vocation, her ultimate conclusion was: 'O Jesus, my Love... my vocation, at last I have found it... My vocation is Love!' Oh how annoyingly sweet of a disposition to have! I can feel a cavity coming on.

But honestly, I love St Therese very much, and her writing always greatly moves me. Her Little Way transforms my life. It's so easy for me to complain, to be discouraged, to get annoyed, yet St Therese teaches me by example how to overcome these everyday struggles

Maryn Kunthara is a software engineer living in San Francisco, California and a parishioner of St Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Fremont. Originally from Houston, Texas, she is a thrift-store treasure hunter and an unconventional cook who is always on the hunt to learn something new, whether it's a niche subculture or a new hobby.



WHERE FAITH FIRST TAKES ROOT

Rosmin Mathoor shares simple truths of how a mother shapes the faith of her children.

Recently at a gathering of moms, we were invited to reflect and share on a woman who had inspired us to live a virtuous life. More than half of the women present spoke about their mothers. What stood out in each sharing was the same theme: they were deeply inspired by their mothers' prayerfulness and unwavering faith.

St Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, reminds us: *The mother's role is of special importance in forming the conscience*

and faith of her children. The future of evangelisation depends in great part on the Church of the home.

A mother plays a pivotal role in the spiritual formation of her child. Her role is not limited to providing for just the physical or emotional needs of her children. She is often the first to introduce her child to God, to prayer, and to faith. It is through her eyes, her example, and her daily life that a child first encounters the love of God.

In today's world, this responsibility is

sometimes unintentionally outsourced to the parish, religious education programmes, or teachers. While these are important supports, they cannot replace what happens within the walls of a home. If faith is not alive there, it struggles to take root elsewhere.

As mothers, we love our children immensely and naturally desire the very best for them, the best food, the best education, the best opportunities, the best we can possibly provide. These things are good and important. They reflect our care,

our sacrifice, and our deep commitment to their well-being. Yet, above all these gifts, there is one gift greater than any other: God Himself.

There are many ways in which we as mothers can be the first and most effective spiritual teachers of our children. The first and foremost is to **live our faith**.

In Deuteronomy 6:6–7, God commands and says:

And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Notice that God first says the words *shall be upon your heart*. We cannot pass on what we do not ourselves live. Faith formation begins not with instruction, but with interior conviction. When God's Word shapes our decisions, our priorities, and our daily habits, it naturally overflows into the lives of our children.

To 'teach them diligently' means making God a part of our daily life – speaking of Him at the dinner table, turning to Him in times of worry, thanking Him in moments of joy, and seeking His guidance before making decisions. It also means taking intentional time to read the Bible, memorise Scripture, and study God's Word together. The Word of God is what truly shapes hearts, transforms lives, and equips both parents and children to live faithfully. By allowing our children to see that God takes first place in our lives, we demonstrate that He is our priority and the foundation upon which our family is built.

We must also **pray for them and with them**.

When we pray *for* our children, we entrust their hearts, their struggles, their friendships, and their futures to God. Even when they do not see it, a mother's intercession surrounds them with grace. From my personal testimony, I can say that it was my mother's prayers that drew me closer to God and helped shape who I am today.

When we pray *with* them, we teach them how to turn to God themselves. God has already planted seeds of faith in their hearts. They have great potential to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him. It is our job to unlock that potential

Encourage them to thank and praise Him for the little things in their lives, a heartfelt 'Thank You, Jesus' when they receive something they have been hoping for, when they have a good day at school, enjoy time with a friend, or spend a happy afternoon at the park.

and water those seeds. Begin when they are small, by establishing simple family prayer times. Teach them to sit in silence, even briefly, and to recognise God's presence. Encourage them to thank and praise Him for the little things in their lives, a heartfelt 'Thank You, Jesus' when they receive something they have been hoping for, when they have a good day at school, enjoy time with a friend, or spend a happy afternoon at the park. Teach them also to pray when their sibling is sick or in pain, and when they are facing disappointments or struggles. In this way, they learn that prayer is for every moment – joy and sorrow, success and challenges.

Prayer does not need to be complicated, nor do we need to use big words. What matters most is that they are drawing close to God, speaking to Him with simple, sincere hearts. When children learn early that they can talk to God about everything, they grow up knowing they are never alone.

Bring your children to the **sacraments and to adoration**. The importance of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and Eucharistic adoration should first be taught at home – not only through words, but by example.

Try to take them to Mass as often as possible during the week. Let us not limit ourselves to Sunday alone if we are able to do more. When children grow up seeing that we make time for Jesus in the midst of busy schedules, they learn that He truly comes first.

If possible, go with them for adoration each month. Many parishes even offer special adoration hours just for children, helping them learn how to sit quietly before the Lord.

Take that time out intentionally. The world competes for their attention, but only the presence of the Lord can truly mould their hearts. In the quiet of adoration, children learn reverence.

They learn to listen. We cannot always protect them from every challenge in life, but we can bring them to the One who strengthens them from within. If we give our children God first, we give them the One who orders everything else rightly. And that is the greatest gift a mother can offer.

If you, as a mother, are just beginning this journey of imparting faith to your children, remember that it is never too late to start. God works in every season, and He honours even the smallest step taken toward Him. Begin with a simple conversation. Speak to your children about the importance of faith and why your relationship with God matters. Share your own experiences. Start slowly with family prayer or a short prayer. Above all, invite the Holy Spirit into your home. Ask Him to touch your children's hearts, to guide them, and to lead your family step by step on this journey of faith.

I would like to conclude with this beautiful saying from Pope Pius XII:

'The mother is the heart of the family. Through her, faith is first learned, first loved, and first lived.'

As our children's primary spiritual educators, we have the privilege and responsibility of teaching them who God is, not only with our words, but with our lives. We walk alongside our children, guiding them toward Heaven. Our guidance helps them form character, instil virtue, and grow into the people God created them to be.



Rosmin Mathoor is married to Stanny, and is a mother of 5 children ranging in age from 12 to one. They live in Dallas, USA, and are active members of a lay community called Missionary Families of Christ.

The Debt Owed by Modern Healthcare and Education

Sr Soniya K Chacko DC writes of how Catholic nuns revolutionised two fundamental areas of society.



Pictures courtesy author

‘Consecrated life is at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission’ (*Vita Consecrata*, 3).

For over four centuries, religious sisters, particularly congregations like the Daughters of Charity, have paved the way for modern healthcare and education, embodying the Church’s mission of mercy. Founded in the 17th century by St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity pioneered an apostolic life of service outside the cloister, blending contemplation with active charity

among the poor. This model predated formal canonical distinctions between cloistered and active communities, influencing later institutes. While Vatican II encouraged renewal and clarified charisms (eg, *Perfectae caritatis*, 19), many congregations had long embraced active apostolates in education, hospitals, and orphanages. ‘Consecrated life is a gift to the Church; it is born in the Church, it grows in the Church, and it is entirely oriented to the Church’ (Pope Francis).

Pioneers of Modern Nursing

‘The consecrated life truly constitutes a

living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren’ (*Vita Consecrata*, 22).

St Louise de Marillac (1591-1660) played a foundational role in organised nursing by training sisters in practical skills: caring for the sick in homes and hospitals, maintaining hygiene, observing patients, and ensuring order in wards. Her approach – rooted in seeing Christ in the poor – deeply influenced 19th-20th century nursing systems, with her letters preserved as guides in Paris.

Catholic sisters professionalised



St Louise de Marillac (1591-1660) played a foundational role in organised nursing by training sisters in practical skills: caring for the sick in homes and hospitals, maintaining hygiene, observing patients, and ensuring order in wards. Her approach – rooted in seeing Christ in the poor – deeply influenced 19th-20th century nursing systems, with her letters preserved as guides in Paris.



nursing through discipline, sanitation, and training, often decades before secular systems. Since 1634, the Daughters of Charity nursed in Paris' Hotel Dieu, cared for foundlings, plague victims, and prisoners. The Sisters of Mercy managed hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the vulnerable by the 19th century. In early 20th century America, Sisters of Charity in Buffalo ran an orphan asylum, a technical school, an infant asylum, and a 250-bed hospital treating thousands annually. Similar efforts included St Vincent's Hospital in Portland (350 beds) by Sisters of Charity of Providence and homes like St Agnes Baby Home.

Sisters responded to wars, pandemics, and underserved areas in rural Europe, frontier America, colonial Africa/Asia, and India, treating the poor, women, lepers, and wounded where no care existed. In India, dispensaries often adjoined convents, providing first access to healthcare.

Revolutionising Women's Education
Religious sisters expanded girls'

education from the 16th century onward, countering historical limits. The Ursulines, founded by St Angela Merici in 1535, mark the Church's first religious order explicitly for educating young girls. They pioneered teaching methods, combining boarding and day schools, parochial education, and even colleges. In Australia, congregations like the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of St Joseph oversaw high schools and primary schools.

In colonised regions like India, convents offered early structured schooling for girls, including English-medium education that bridged caste barriers and fostered social upliftment, beginning as evangelisation but yielding transformation. Sisters trained as professional teachers, promoting literacy, mathematics, and faith.

Until Vatican II, some sisters lived more secluded lives, but renewal allowed broader outreach, adapting charisms to Church needs.

Living Legacy

St Louise's vision endures in the Daughters of Charity, serving in hospitals, schools, clinics, orphanages, and missions across 96 countries, prioritising the poor. As one of the largest women's Catholic congregation, they exemplify apostolic service as exhorted by their co-founder, St Vincent de Paul, 'Your convent will be the house of the sick; your cell, a hired room; your chapel, the parish church; your cloister, the streets of the city or the wards of the hospital.'

Conclusion

St Louise de Marillac transformed charity into organised healthcare and education, training sisters for competent, compassionate service. Her legacy – professional nursing, hospitals, and schools – remains vital, reminding us that true care recognises Christ in suffering. Today, sisters continue this mission globally, a 'precious and necessary gift' to the Church. ■

Sr Soniya K Chacko belongs to the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in Bangalore, India. She is a lyricist, teacher and journalist, with a heart for the poor and voice for the Church.



SISTERS ON THE FRONTLINES

Luke Coppen writes about the 'quiet' work done by thousands of nuns around the world, rescuing the vulnerable from trafficking.

Sr Rose Paite describes¹ herself as 'a simple nun' and a 'small one.' But what she lacks in height and political power, she makes up for in boldness.

She is a familiar figure at Guwahati railway station, where trains arrive and depart at all hours as they crisscross north-eastern India. Dressed in a white veil, with a black handbag hanging from her elbow, she scans the platforms through her rimless glasses.

When she spots something suspicious – an unaccompanied child or young woman – she bounds up to them and asks questions. If she believes they might be victims of trafficking, she seeks to rescue them.

Paite is a member of Talitha Kum, a 6,000-strong² network of nuns that combats trafficking in 108 countries³ on every inhabited continent.

The nuns recognise that the forces they are up against are far larger and better resourced. According to the International Labour Organization, 50 million⁴ people worldwide are living in conditions of modern slavery. That's more than the entire population of Spain – and their number is rising.

Modern slavery is a broad category

that covers forced marriages (around 22 million people) and trafficking for forced labour (28 million), which includes commercial sexual exploitation. Almost 12 million of those in forced labour are women and girls.

The ILO estimates⁵ that forced labour in the private economy generates \$236 billion in illegal profits annually. The beneficiaries of modern slavery include not only countless faceless criminals, but also wealthy and socially well-connected individuals – and even sovereign states.

While human trafficking is commonly understood to be the forced transfer of a person from one place to another for exploitation, that is not, in fact, the official definition. The US State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report⁶ notes that 'trafficking in persons is a crime of exploitation and coercion, and not movement.' A person can be a victim of trafficking even if they remain in the neighbourhood where they were born – for example, if they were forced to perform unpaid domestic work at a local residence.

Trafficking is increasing in scope and complexity due to advances in technology. The 2025 TIP Report notes that emerging trends include the use of 'AI-generated

text-to-image technology, deepfake photo and video manipulation, voice and video generation,' especially targeting women and girls.

Human trafficking is not a new phenomenon, and the courageous struggle against it is not new either. Josephine Bakhita was born in Sudan around 1869. Her carefree childhood was interrupted when slave traders seized her before her 10th birthday. It was her kidnappers who gave her the name Bakhita, which means 'fortunate' in Arabic. She was 'bought' and 'sold' multiple times, enduring abuse at the hands of some of her 'owners'.

Ultimately, she was taken to Italy, where she was baptised and joined the Canossian Sisters. By sharing her testimony, including through the dictation of an autobiography, she inspired efforts to end slavery long after her death on 8 February 1947. Pope Francis declared in 2015 that 8 February would be commemorated annually as the World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking.

Nuns' modern-day battle against trafficking arguably also has its roots in Africa. Sr Eugenia Bonetti, a member of the Consolata Missionary Sisters, spent

24 years serving in Kenya before she returned to her native Italy in the early 1990s. Back home, she was disturbed to discover that young African women had been trafficked to Turin's red light district. She began a successful outreach to them.

In the year 2000, she was asked to move to Rome and establish⁸ an anti-trafficking office for the Union of Major Superiors of Italy. Bonetti helped to unify the efforts of more than 250 people from over 70 different congregations working in Italy into a single, powerful network.

Meanwhile, the International Union of Superiors General, also based in Rome, began to establish anti-trafficking networks in regions around the world. In 2009, the UISG launched Talitha Kum, the international organisation to which Sr Rose Paite belongs.

Many nuns engaged in the fight against trafficking describe it as a 'call within a call,' the phrase famously used by Mother Teresa to describe her discovery of a vocation to serve the poorest of the poor after entering religious life.

Some are called from unexpected places. Sr Rose Paite, the guardian of Guwahati railway station, was born⁹ into a Baptist family in India's ethnic conflict-prone Manipur state. She was so moved by the service of Catholic nuns among her own Paite people that she decided to follow in their footsteps, entering the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

Wherever people are trafficked today, you are likely to find nuns fighting for their liberty. In Pattaya, Thailand, a city that has been described as a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah, the Our Lady of the Good Shepherd Sisters oversee the Fountain of Life Women's Center¹⁰. The centre helps young women freed from sexual exploitation to learn trades including hair dressing, jewellery design, and IT.

In Mindelo, a port city in Cape Verde, an island country near West Africa, three members of the Sisters Adorers established¹¹ *Kreditá na bo*, which means 'Believe in you' in the local Creole language. The programme helps vulnerable women who live in shacks made from shipping container metal on the city's outskirts. Many are single



mothers who are forced into the sex trade to provide for themselves and their children. The sisters help the women to learn to read, write, cook, sew, and use computers, offering them a path to freedom and financial independence.

Another member of the Sisters Adoratrices carries out similarly liberating work in London. Sr Ancy Mathew (also known as Sr Doly) was born in the southern Indian state of Kerala and served initially among street children in the eastern city of Kolkata. In the year 2000, she was transferred to England, where she came into contact with trafficked women. She founded the charity Rahab¹² – named after a prostitute mentioned in the biblical Book of Joshua – which offers pastoral care to victims of sexual exploitation.

The nun has accompanied police officers as they raid premises suspected of

housing trafficked women. Her role is to speak to the women, who are more likely to confide in her than in the police, and help to arrange accommodation for those who need to move to safe houses.

Despite these effective initiatives, it is hard for nuns to keep pace with the evolution of human trafficking, which is developing at a supercharged rate due to the internet. In his message¹³ for this year's World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, Pope Leo XIV highlighted the rise of 'cyber slavery,' where 'individuals are lured into fraudulent schemes and criminal activities, such as online fraud and drug smuggling.' He described the phenomenon as 'particularly disturbing,' because it turns victims into perpetrators, 'exacerbating their spiritual wounds.'

But even in the digital world, nuns are inspiring breakthroughs. In 2008, the

The US State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report notes that 'trafficking in persons is a crime of exploitation and coercion, and not movement.' A person can be a victim of trafficking even if they remain in the neighbourhood where they were born – for example, if they were forced to perform unpaid domestic work at a local residence.

Sisters of St Joseph Federation asked an organisation that helped them plan their annual national meeting to ensure the sisters would be staying at a hotel with a strong anti-trafficking policy.

Thanks to their interactions with the sisters, the organisation's leaders realised they could identify hotels used to exploit women by examining the backgrounds of online advertisements. They founded¹⁴ a new company, the Exchange Initiative, that developed the TraffickCam app, with a grant from the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph. The app enables users to submit photos of rooms anonymously, helping to build a giant database of images, helping police to find victims and prosecute traffickers.

In 2024, Talitha Kum launched the Walking in Dignity app¹⁵, which allows users to convert their daily steps into tokens that can be donated to support

anti-trafficking projects.

It is on this technological frontier that nuns will need to expand their fight against trafficking in the coming decades. To continue to be successful, they will have to be, as Jesus counselled his disciples, as *shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves* (Matthew 10:16).

Perhaps they will work with experts who will use AI and data analytics to map trafficking hotspots and predict increases due to factors such as rising unemployment. Or maybe they will offer virtual support to victims who live far from any religious community. Technology will also help the nuns to extend and refine their current networks, ensuring that sisters are present wherever they are most needed.

Given that the number of women religious worldwide is declining¹⁶, they will likely seek to mentor young lay

Catholics who want to join the anti-trafficking struggle. While nuns have led the battle, every baptised Catholic arguably has a responsibility to do whatever they can to combat the scourge.

For some, that will mean praying daily for those on the front line. For others, it will entail donating to a charity. For a small number, it could require laying down their lives for the love of their 50 million friends currently living in slavery.



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A Joyful Contradiction

Simi Sahu writes about Consecrated Virginity, and her journey towards it.



Consecrated Virginity, a little known vocation in the Catholic Church, is one of the most ancient forms of consecrated life. So it might be surprising that we already know several of them from the Early Church; in fact, we remember them in the Eucharistic prayers often: Saints Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, and Anastasia. Since apostolic times, out of spousal love for Jesus, some women dedicated their lives to Him in virginity. Their spiritual fertility comes from an intimate relationship with Christ which allowed them to offer the fruits of this relationship to the Church and the world. This unique way of life expressed the mystery of the Church as the Bride of Christ: revealing the intimate nature of the relationship that Jesus wanted to establish with the community of those who believed in Him. (ESI, 1) Their presence reminds the Church of who, and whose, she really is. Unlike religious and monastic vocations that belong to convents and monasteries, this vocation belongs in the local diocese led by the bishop. Consecrated Virgins live in their ordinary homes, worship at local churches and are consecrated and guided by their bishops.

At the age of 14, when I first encountered Christ in the Eucharist at a Jesus Youth retreat in Kearney, New Jersey, I would not have called the love I received and gave Jesus as ‘spousal.’ That was something I assumed was only for regular husbands and wives. It would have seemed ridiculous to love God in a spousal way – and in some ways it still does! What I did know and could say even at that time, was my surprise at Jesus and being drawn to Him deeply.

Having grown up in India with a Hindu father and a Catholic mother, I certainly believed in God’s existence, His power and His commandments for all to live morally. What took me completely by surprise was that God was a person. A real person. Not just a force, or a power, or some sort of consciousness. A person with a name, a face, a voice, and a heart. This meant that I could know God in a very different way. That it was possible to have a friendship with God. It was possible to know Him and so it was possible to really love Him.

I went home and cried for about two or three days, asking my mother why she didn’t tell me that Jesus was truly real: as real, and more real than me and her. She did not know how to respond except to say that she tried her best by taking me to Church, telling me the stories of the Gospels at night and making sure I received baptism. I was in shock because ever since I was a little girl, a part of me worried that I was alone in the world and everyone around me was perhaps not really real – so in some strange way, Jesus was the first person I knew as real, even more real than me. He was also entirely noble, fully powerful, and yet completely humble. Knowing He did not have to become one of us, I asked Him simply, ‘Why did you come here (to earth)?’ I felt Him say to me, ‘I came here to be with you. Because I love you.’ At the age of 14, I would not have called it spousal love before the Eucharist but I knew then that I wanted to live for Him and that nothing and no one else would matter to me like Him. However, many turns and several years would pass before I would even consider a celibate vocation, but the seeds were already there.

I did not feel particularly attracted to religious life and so was dating during college years, yet, a subtle nagging feeling persisted that there was someone already in my heart, occupying me in a way that I could not give myself to anyone else. Since I volunteered at the campus priest’s office, I shared this with him and also that

I was thinking of therapy for it. He asked if I considered discerning my vocation.

It would still take a few years before the connection between my desire for marriage and the marriage feast of the Lamb became apparent, but it became most clear during my time in Haiti, serving as a full-timer. Spending each day with priests, religious and seminarians in daily Mass and Liturgy of the Hours, spending the whole day in mission, and coming back to quiet evenings with the breviary and some fellowship, I felt unusually content and mysteriously fulfilled. One evening having a cup of tea and spending time listening to the Lord in the breviary, I realised it was the fulfilment of a dream I had for my future marriage. To spend my life with a true friend, whom I’d want to know deeper for the rest of my life, who would care to know me, and with whom I could build a home of love. It seemed strange but the peace within me, even with many contradictions and struggles, was real.

As I returned to public accounting as a profession I also started visiting religious orders – their lives are a recipe for holiness: the evangelical vows, life in community and visible witness of belonging to their orders. Yet when I would visit convents, I felt certain that I was called to live in the world, and that the Lord would provide for me not through a community or a structure within the Church but simply Himself through providence. I also knew that I

To a world that thinks of the Church primarily as buildings or an institution of organised power, it reminds her that the Church is a woman – a bride and a mother. A bride is not simply a daughter since she must step into her womanhood and be a true counterpart to her bridegroom, yet, she is also led by Him and delights and rests in His care. The Lord is not only the Saviour of mankind, He is also the Divine Spouse: the one who sees and seeks out her beauty and refuses to share her love with other false gods.



was somehow not called to live as His bride privately, but that He would espouse me in righteousness before all (Hosea 2:19) and this would be tied to the public life of the Church. I also felt certain that although community life would be important, the spousal aspect of my vocation would be primary. I suspected, and was told by many respected, that this was not possible. But through spiritual direction and a few close friendships, I persevered long enough till I found out about this vocation.

Until 2018, apart from the Rite of Consecration itself, there was a description of it in Canon Law (Canon 604) and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 922-924). I had many other questions about the vocation and asked the Lord for greater clarity, which were abundantly answered when *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago*, the instructions about Consecrated Virginité were released on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. There was nothing left to discern, only to apply and wait for the response of the Church.

Consecrated Virgins are 'inscribed' into their diocese as part of the Order of Virgins and remain under the guidance of the bishop. In the solemn Rite of Consecration at the hands of the bishop, with the local Church gathered around them, Consecrated Virgins resolve to

persevere in the state of virginity, to be faithful witnesses and signs of the Kingdom of Heaven and accept the solemn consecration as brides of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They come to the Mass of Consecration wearing a wedding gown and with an oil lamp, signifying the greatest desire of the human person to be united with God, completely and forever. The gathered community prays for them as they lie prostrate during the Litany of Saints before the bishop who prays the consecratory prayer over them. After this they are given three 'insignias' or signs as marks of this espousal: a veil to remind them that they are now hidden in Christ and belong to Him, a ring on their ring finger to mark them as a spouse of Christ, and a breviary that they might pray constantly for the salvation of the world. Consecrated Virgins must provide for their means and do not take on any special titles or items of clothing. This consecration is perpetual and at par with perpetual vows of religious life in terms of their permanence.

I have had the joy of witnessing many inspiring Consecrated Virgins serving their local churches and the world, through their hidden lives of prayer and work as doctors, teachers, canon lawyers, hospice workers, vocations work, nurses, and even in the military. They remind us

that the Church is not fruitful because of human wisdom, planning or help, but because the Lord Himself overshadows her so that she can bear Christ to the world.

To a world that thinks of the Church primarily as buildings or an institution of organised power, it reminds her that the Church is a woman – a bride and a mother. A bride is not simply a daughter since she must step into her womanhood and be a true counterpart to her bridegroom, yet, she is also led by Him and delights and rests in His care. The Lord is not only the Saviour of mankind, He is also the Divine Spouse: the one who sees and seeks out her beauty and refuses to share her love with other false gods. In Mary we see that the poverty and vulnerability of virginity is not something to dismiss or fix...it is something to open to the Lord who guards, protects and makes it fruitful beyond all expectations.

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As at the Beginning

Aleena Joy explains the woman's role as the *ezer kenegdo* to man.

Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner' (Genesis 2:18).

This in Hebrew reads - 'Yah-weh 'ě-lō-hīm way-yō-mer lō- ṭō-wb hā-'ā-dām hē-yō-wṭ lə-bad-dōw 'e-'ě-śeh- lōw kə-neg-dōw 'ē-zer'.

A woman's dignity, vocation and purpose is derived from this very moment of creation. The Creator designed her with a unique purpose in mind. To be the *Ezer Kenegdo*. Unfortunately, words do not justly describe this Hebrew phrase. *Ezer* means 'helper' – it describes God as Israel's helper in the Old Testament, indicating strength and support. It appears 21 times in the OT, often describing God as a rescuer/protector. Even though the word is not explicitly used in the NT, the theological idea of this 'helper' is found when referring to the Holy Spirit. *Kenegdo* is a combination of 'ke' (like, as) and 'neged' (front, opposite). It suggests a counterpart who corresponds to man, highlighting equality and mutuality. Together, *ezer kenegdo* can be understood as a helper corresponding to him or a strong ally as his front. The term does not



imply subordination or inferiority, but rather a complementary role, emphasising the woman's importance and strength.

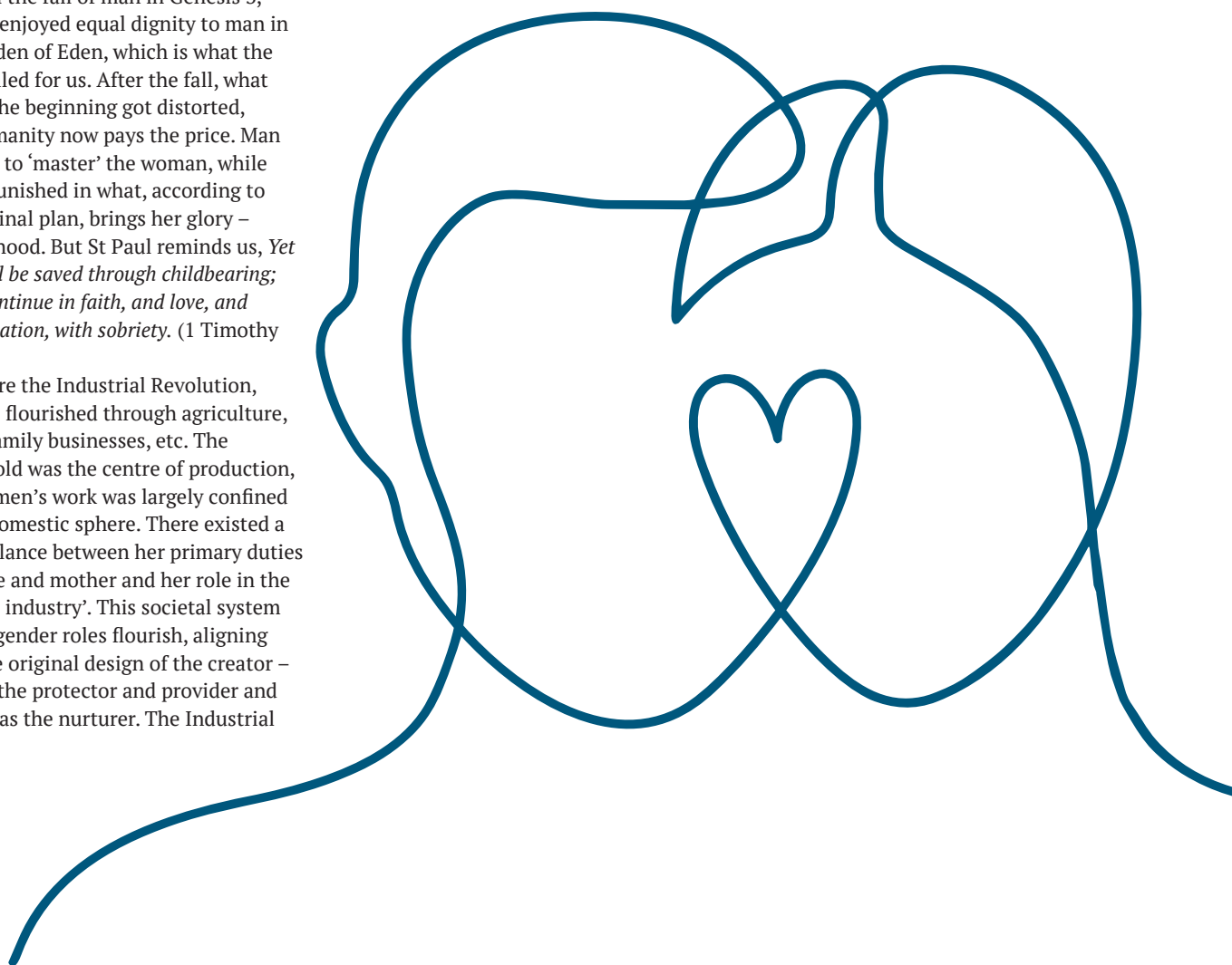
From the beginning, woman is created unique to man, with a vocation that complements a man's. She is not inferior to him, unlike the dictates of today's culture. With her unique feminine qualities, a woman's innate calling is to nurture. Today, blinded by the fake promises of feminism, women have forgotten who they are and fight to 'become' what they are not – a man.

Proverbs 31:10-31 is a beautiful passage that portrays *ezer kenegdo*. This chapter is advice that King Lemuel's mother gives to him. She speaks about the virtues of an ideal wife, one who is diligent, fears the Lord, and is of noble character. Accordingly, a virtuous woman is trustworthy, productive, generous, prepared, elegant, wise in speech and God-fearing. It foreshadows the description of Ruth in the OT. The woman (wife) is the queen of the household.

Until the fall of man in Genesis 3, woman enjoyed equal dignity to man in the Garden of Eden, which is what the Lord willed for us. After the fall, what was in the beginning got distorted, and humanity now pays the price. Man inclines to 'master' the woman, while she is punished in what, according to the original plan, brings her glory – motherhood. But St Paul reminds us, *Yet she shall be saved through childbearing; if she continue in faith, and love, and sanctification, with sobriety.* (1 Timothy 2:15).

Before the Industrial Revolution, humans flourished through agriculture, trade, family businesses, etc. The household was the centre of production, and women's work was largely confined to the domestic sphere. There existed a good balance between her primary duties as a wife and mother and her role in the 'cottage industry'. This societal system helped gender roles flourish, aligning with the original design of the creator – man as the protector and provider and woman as the nurturer. The Industrial

Venerable Fulton J Sheen says, 'To a great extent, the level of any civilisation is the level of its womanhood. When a man loves a woman, he has to become worthy of her. The higher her virtue, the more noble her character, the more devoted she is to truth, justice, goodness, the more a man has to aspire to be worthy of her. The history of civilisation could actually be written in terms of the level of its women.'



Revolution pulled everyone out of their usual spheres. With everything being industrialised, small businesses suffered, men and women were forced to work in mines, factories and other industries, and the children were deprived of quality childhood. Women, too, had to work in dangerous environments, risking their health. The rise of feminism, which has its roots in communism, around this time worsened the situation. The tendency of men to 'master' women amplified the voices of feminists, giving the feminist ideology a greater reception among women.

Fast-forward to present day, women are led to believe that their worth depends on their work beyond the home and the monetary income they bring. Desperate women largely bought into the lies of communism masquerading as feminism, and struggled to do justice to their innate calling towards motherhood. While the first wave of feminism considered mothering a powerful work, the second wave planted the seeds of resentment towards motherhood, separating the mother from her child by promoting the culture of placing babies into day care. Betty Friedan, one of the pioneers of second-wave feminism, in her book compared women staying at home with their children as 'a concentration camp with comforts'. Today, even if not a necessity, women tend to choose to work outside their homes, largely compromising their nurturing roles, knowingly or unknowingly. St John Paul II, through *Familiaris Consortio*, reminds us that 'the mentality which honours women more for their work outside the home than for their work within the family must be overcome. This requires that men should truly esteem and love women with total respect for their personal dignity, and that society should create and develop conditions favouring work in the home.' (FC 23).

Historically masculine institutions such as law, governance, police, military, etc., now have a higher proportion of women. Places where the feminine charm

is essential, especially the homes, are deprived of it. St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, famously known as Edith Stein, speaks about the 'feminine genius' – the ability of a woman to make a sincere gift of herself to others, which is rooted in spousal and maternal nature. Many Church documents (*Rerum Novarum*, *Casti Connubii*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, *Divini Redemptoris*, *Natalis Trecentesimi*, *Familiaris Consortio*, etc.) and papal addresses discourage married women from taking up work outside the home – not because the Church wants to oppress women, rather Mother Church knows who a woman is and what she is capable of if she embraces her true vocation. *Quadragesimo Anno* referred to mothers working outside the home as 'intolerable abuse'.

St Joan of Arc stands as a real example of *ezer kenegdo*. It may surprise us that Joan of Arc never fought a war. A peasant girl from the village of Domremy, God chose Joan to crown Charles VII as the rightful king and to guide the French army towards their victory in the Hundred Years' War with the English. After receiving visions from St Michael, St Catherine and St Margaret for around four years, Joan convinced the king of her divine mission to defeat the English and to assist at his overdue coronation. It is interesting to note that while being the commander of the French army, Joan didn't participate in active combat. Joan, who is remembered as a fearless warrior and a heroine of the Hundred Years' War between England and France, never actually fought in battle or killed an opponent. The life of St Joan remains as a great example of how woman is 'the helper – *ezer kenegdo*' for man. Judith is a similar example from the OT. The women at the foot of the Cross, too, show their inner strength.

The reality of the 'fallen' world cannot be neglected, but that is not an excuse for us to ignore the truth and original plan of the Creator. After the fall came redemption through Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. In Matthew (19:1-11), the scribes question Jesus about the Mosaic law that allowed man to divorce his wife for any cause. Jesus refers to the 'beginning,' pointing to the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God Himself, the reality of creation,

and confirms His opposition to the tradition (of divorce) which discriminated against women. Jesus Himself calls out grave discriminations against women that existed back then, and even now. Jesus' response to the 'woman caught in adultery'; calling the woman with a stoop 'daughter of Abraham'; defending the widow who put two copper coins, etc. are instances where women's dignity is upheld (restored from that of the fallen world). Venerable Fulton J Sheen says, 'To a great extent, the level of any civilisation is the level of its womanhood. When a man loves a woman, he has to become worthy of her. The higher her virtue, the more noble her character, the more devoted she is to truth, justice, goodness, the more a man has to aspire to be worthy of her. The history of civilisation could actually be written in terms of the level of its women.' Mary, the woman in the *protoevangelium* (Genesis 3:15), the one through whom the Saviour entered this world, is the epitome of womanhood – both motherhood and virginity, the two dimensions of women's vocation, are meticulously present in her.

It is the duty of the men of faith to help restore the dignity of women and rediscover their vocation – to be the *ezer kenegdo*. In Pope Paul VI's address to women at the close of the Second Vatican Council, we read, 'the hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid mankind in not falling.'



Aleena Joy, wife of Kevin Jerome and mother of two (one on earth and one in Heaven), was formerly a civil engineer. A member of the Syro-Malabar theology forum and active in Catholic apologetics and pro-life circles, she works with her ABBA FATHER.

FEMININE GENIUS THROUGH CHURCH HISTORY

Nycil Romis traces the role of women through the history of the Catholic Church.



Women have played a pivotal role in the history of the Catholic Church, their active presence has been diverse in nature, from silent roles of motherhood to martyrdom, even though 'they were frequently at a disadvantage from the start, excluded..., underestimated, ignored and not given credit for their intellectual contributions,' to quote St John Paul II. To understand that the Church equally belongs to both men and women in this millennium, a reflective retrospection is essential.

The early period of the Church demonstrated openness, respect, and

acceptance of women, as they followed Jesus in transcending the cultural norms of the time. The Acts of the Apostles provide glimpses of women like Priscilla, who worked alongside her husband Aquila, and the businesswoman Tabitha, who supported the Church through funds and charity, among others. St Paul mentions several other women in his letters who actively contributed to the Church and its growth. For example, Paul praises Phoebe in Cenchrea, who was a deaconess there. Women deaconesses were prevalent and held in high regard in the early period of the Church until the

12th century. Apart from deaconesses, several notable women leaders used spiritual gifts and their intellect for the common good. For example, St Genevieve (422-500), the patron saint of Paris, had saved the city many times through her prayers and negotiations.

The early medieval period of the Church marks active contributions of women. A remarkable woman of the time was St Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179). One of the four female Doctors of the Church, she was known for her mysticism, music and supernatural gifts. During the 12th century, the notion

of women as the weaker sex influenced the Church, leading to restrictions on women. But this period is also marked by monasticism, characterised by the establishment of several monasteries and convents, unlocking another era of women's contributions to the growth of the Church.

These communities gave nuns a safe space to explore new mission possibilities and the power to act on their ideas. Numerous examples of women using their capabilities for the love of Christ abound. These women ranged from mystics and visionaries such as St Catherine of Siena, a Doctor of the Church; to courageous military leaders like St Joan of Arc; to compassionate royals like St Elizabeth of Hungary, renowned for her charity and a model for those in authority; and reformers like St Claire of Assisi. Their spiritual lives, ministry, writings and insights are rich sources that inspire Christian life today.

The modern period of the Church is also illuminated by the lives and writings of women like St Teresa of Avila, St Therese of Lisieux, St Faustina, to name a few. Both St Teresa of Avila and St Therese of Lisieux were declared Doctors of the Church in recognition of their profound spiritual insights and enduring theological contributions through their writings. The Missionaries of Charity, founded by St Teresa of Calcutta, is an ever-shining example of women-run organised charity, one among numerous initiatives by religious women in the Church. Catholic hospitals and educational institutions run by these women are further examples where they could experiment, refine and establish charitable services for the poor and needy. Mother Angelica's EWTN network is yet another brilliant example of stepping into the unexplored area of internet-based evangelisation, the first of its kind in the Church. Even today, women constitute the majority of members in the consecrated life in the Church.

Lay women in the Church, on the other hand, were mostly visible in organisations like Marian movements, St Vincent de Paul Society, Opus Dei, etc. The Second Vatican Council played a prominent role in welcoming lay movements, which gave an impetus to numerous such

movements that have rejuvenated the life of the Church. For example, the Focolare movement was founded by Chiara Lubich after World War II. Currently present in more than 180 countries, Focolare has a long list of to-be-canonised saints, demonstrating the transformative impact it has had in the life of the Church.

Women's mission and roles reached not their zenith only in the active involvement in lay Catholic movements, parish councils or philanthropic foundations. Many present-day saints have acknowledged the quiet yet formative influence of the women in their families on their spiritual journeys. For instance, St Therese of Lisieux often spoke of the deep faith and example of her mother, St Zélie Guérin Martin, as well as the nurturing influence of her sisters. Mother Teresa frequently pointed to her mother's compassion and generosity as the foundation of her own missionary vocation. Likewise, the transformative impact of St Monica on the conversion of her son, St Augustine of Hippo, is widely recognised.

The role of women in today's Church needs to be reflected on the basis of two Church documents for women. *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, 1988), the encyclical by Pope John Paul II, and his pastoral letter *Letter to Women* (1995). His encyclical, *Lay Catholics in Schools: witnesses to faith*, is yet another document reiterating the missionary role of working men and women. These documents openly acknowledge that women have played an equal role in the history of the Church. They also emphasise the importance of discovering and using the 'feminine genius' in every Catholic woman, shaping her vocation and life, and bearing the fruits of that feminine holiness. In the words of St John Paul II, 'the life of the Church in the Third Millennium will certainly not be lacking in new and surprising manifestations of the feminine genius.'

He adds that feminine genius and the personal resources of femininity are in no way inferior or less than that of masculinity, but they are simply different and complementary. So, what stops women from fulfilling this role? It's rather a combination of factors.

Historical conditioning has made it difficult for women to break through the barriers in getting acknowledged. Even when they have managed to get through, the aura of habitual male dominance prevented them. Constant reminders about including women sometimes end up in mere representations. Comparisons between men and women have often deepened tensions and created additional challenges, while opposing forms of the call for equality have sometimes led to frustration and disappointment within the Church. On the contrary, sometimes women also tend to submit themselves to the cultural conditioning that devalues or does not acknowledge their dignity, and internalise it.

The long history of the Church teaches us a simple lesson: women have consistently distinguished themselves in their service to the Lord, often transcending the social limitations of their times. The remarkable lineage of women martyrs, saints, and renowned mystics stands testimony to their courage, faith, and unwavering commitment. The Church in the new millennium needs such women to fervently serve the Lord and His kingdom, at homes, in neighbourhoods, parishes, workplaces, mission stations, and to the ends of the world, because 'the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society' (Pope Francis). For this, the Church at every level has to learn to be open to women, respecting and welcoming them as persons of dignity. Women also need to learn to recognise and embrace their inherent dignity and unique vocation – free from the pressures of rivalry or comparison, and instead grounded in a spirit of co-responsibility. And let the Church be a solid example of genuine inclusion, teaching the world that it is possible in Christ.



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



THE DIGNITY OF WOMAN

TOB educator Nicholas Koeppel reflects upon Pope John Paul II's document on the dignity and vocation of women.

I recently attended a weeklong course on the Writings of St John Paul II on Gender, Marriage and Family at the Theology of the Body Institute in Pennsylvania, USA. One of the documents written by St John Paul II is called *Mulieris Dignitatem*, which means, 'On the Dignity of Woman.' It is amazing how a celibate man, Pope St John Paul II, had such profound insights into what it means to be a woman, the nature of marriage and sexuality. The writings John Paul II gave to the Church are a wonderful gift that still needs to be unpacked and understood, and most importantly 'lived out'.

When I think about what the dignity of woman means, I think about the God given dignity He has given to each person, each of us, for a number of reasons. First, we have dignity as humans because God created us 'in the image of God,' as Genesis tells us. Secondly, because Christ died and rose for us, He 'purchased us at a price,' and so this also raises our dignity. Thirdly, St Paul tells us that we are 'Temples of the Holy Spirit' and this again raises our dignity. Finally, the 'Word made flesh,' the Incarnation, the historical fact of God becoming human as a baby in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago, raises our dignity too. St Irenaeus said, 'God became man so that man might become God.' By becoming human, God raised the level of human dignity.

Because of this dignity, this should shape the way we behave and treat others and the way we treat ourselves. The dignity of the human person requires that I treat every person according to their dignity – this means EVERY person, no matter if they are rich or poor, black or white or brown, male or female – each person deserves this respect and love. In fact, Karol Wojtyla (JPII before he was Pope), wrote that the only adequate and just way we should treat any human person is love. Love given to a person is a matter of justice, it is what they are owed.

The dignity of the human person is then applied to the dignity of woman. What does it mean to be a woman? What

is the meaning of femininity (we could also ask the same about masculinity)? To know this answer, we should look at the nature of femininity, we should look to the body to 'reveal the invisible' reality and meaning of femininity.

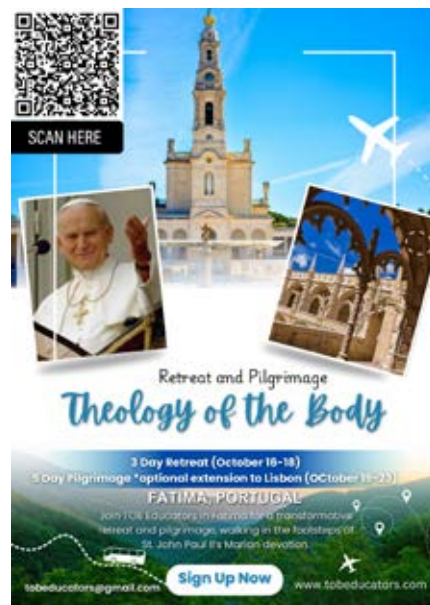
The body of a woman reveals something of 'receptivity' – this is seen in the spousal meaning of the body that we all exist in as male or female. The body reveals to us that we are not made to be alone, but that we are made for relationship and communion. This is what John Paul II calls the spousal meaning of the body. So for a woman, her spousal meaning of the body reveals receptivity. This receptivity is an aspect of our humanity common to both men and women. We are receptive and dependent on God the creator for everything. As a creature, God gives us every good thing we have as a gift, and for this we should have a constant attitude of gratitude.

The woman's body also reveals a nurturing aspect. A baby feeding at the breast of a woman. This shows us the call of woman to give and be nurturing to others, to her children, to those in her life. To make a sincere 'gift of self,' in order that she may find herself. John Paul II, in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, refers to a specific

'feminine genius' that a woman has. This gift of femininity is needed in all aspects of society, from business to Church, from the home to the public square; the gift of femininity is needed to complement and balance the gift of masculinity. We could also say that men have masculine genius, or a particular gift God has given to men, a way to be and to behave.

John Paul II says the 'duty of every man is the dignity of every woman, and the duty of every woman is the dignity of every man.' How do we live this out in daily life? How do we treat the women in our lives, our mothers, our sisters, our friends, our classmates, our colleagues? Do we love them according to their dignity and worth given by God? Treating each other according to human dignity is the task of every married couple, all throughout their married life. It is also the task of dating couples, who respect the dignity of their partner through a dating life of chastity. When we can better understand the dignity of each human person, and specifically the dignity of women, this can help us in how we treat and behave towards one another. May the truth of the dignity of woman, enable us to love one another better, and so walk together towards heaven.

Finally, we should keep in mind our Blessed Mother Mary, this woman of Nazareth chosen by God to be the Mother of God. Mary shows us the true meaning of femininity in her humility, receptivity, nurturing love and obedience to the plan of God. She shows us the way to be a disciple of Jesus. Mary teaches us a receptivity to the plan of God, an openness and servant attitude of following God's will. May Mary intercede for all of us, for our mothers, for our sisters, our friends, that we may see and value the great dignity of woman and treat one another accordingly. ■



Nicholas Koeppel grew up in southeast Missouri, USA. Since 2020, he has served on the leadership team for Theology of the Body Educators, seeking to teach and share TOB all over the world. In 2025, he began working fulltime for TOB Educators as Executive Director and TOB Missionary, living in Krakow, Poland, and seeking to share St John Paul II's message with people anywhere in the world.

Ask Boldly. Live Deeply. Grow Honestly.

In this brand new section, **Joseph Sebastian** (social worker to youth) will provide answers, in the light of faith, to a life situation. Readers are encouraged to send their questions to the email mentioned below.

Long back, during my third year of undergraduate studies, I found myself standing at one of those quiet but defining crossroads of life.

I was doing my BSc in Mathematics. Numbers made sense to me. Logic excited me. Proofs were satisfying. The natural next step seemed obvious – MSc in Mathematics or perhaps Computer Science. That's how most life decisions get made, isn't it? We follow the logical extension of what we are already doing.

Around that time, an older cousin of mine and I were chatting over coffee. We were having the usual 'what next after graduation?' conversation.

In the middle of that ordinary discussion, she said something that caught me off guard: 'Why don't you try a Master's in Social Work? It aligns beautifully with your Jesus Youth spirituality, and your desire to give back.' Social work? Me? The maths guy? I had no idea that there was a Master's programme for social work let alone what it contained and what all it involved.

It wasn't a dramatic moment. No lightning bolt. No booming voice. Just a gentle suggestion across a table. That question stayed with me as I completed my graduation.

However, another reality was unfolding. I had expected to move naturally into MSc Mathematics. I had studied sincerely, and I was deeply involved in my faith life through Jesus Youth. ***I had done everything right.*** Somewhere within me was the quiet

conviction that effort and faithfulness would align neatly with outcomes. But my marks fell just short of what was required. Doors I had counted on did not open. I remember the disappointment, even a deep anger with God. *Why, after trying to do things right, did this not work out?* Yet at home there was no blame, only space. Space to talk. Space to think.

The more I reflected, the more it began to make sense. That small question over coffee became a doorway.

The rest, as they say, is history – not neat or linear, but marked by the usual ups, downs, and confusions through which God quietly works.

But here's what I learned from that season: Life does not come with a manual. And perhaps more importantly, each life is different. What works for one person may not work for another. What looks 'safe' may not be aligned. What appears illogical may actually be vocation. And often, the right question asked at the right time can change everything.

That is why we are beginning this new monthly space – **Life Questions**. Because questions matter.

We live in a time where young people are overwhelmed with information but starved of wisdom. Families are busy but not always deeply connected. Faith is available but not always examined. Choices are many, but clarity is rare.

And somewhere in between Instagram reels, career pressure, expectations, disappointments, silent struggles, and spiritual longing, real questions are waiting to be asked. We are in an era where the young dare to ask – but finding wise responses is not always easy.

Looking back, I realise that the turning point was not the course I chose. It was the questions I allowed myself to ask.

So let me begin with this invitation – ASK!

Ask about your disappointments.

Ask about your closed doors.

Ask about your anger.

Ask about your direction.

Questions like:

- How do I know what God wants for my life?
- How do I deal with comparison?

- Why do I feel lonely even when surrounded by people?
- How do I choose between passion and security?
- How do I forgive when I am deeply hurt?
- What is success, really?
- How do I handle failure?
- How do I raise children in a confusing world?
- How do we balance ambition and faith?
- What does love mean beyond romance?
- How do I discern a vocation?
- Is it okay to doubt?

These are not small questions. They are life-shaping questions. And here's the truth: silence does not make them disappear. If anything, unasked questions become internal noise. They turn into anxiety. Or quiet confusion. Or restless ambition. Or spiritual dryness.

A healthy life is not a life without questions. A healthy life is one that dares to ask them honestly.

This space is not about giving perfect answers. It is about beginning honest conversations. Some responses may be deeply practical; others may explore philosophical dimensions. At times we may draw from faith, Scripture, lived experience, psychology, or social realities. And sometimes, the response may simply invite you to think deeper rather than rush toward a conclusion. But all of them will be rooted in one conviction: **Your questions are valid. Your journey matters.**

To the youngsters reading this: don't assume your questions are silly. They are not. If you are confused about career, relationships, purpose, faith, mental health, identity, or direction, simply ask.

To families, begin conversations at home. Let dining tables become spaces of dialogue, not just logistics. Let children speak. Let parents admit uncertainty. Growth happens where honesty is allowed. But there are questions you may want to ask and this is one of the spaces for you too.

To those who feel they should 'already know by now'; remember, life unfolds in seasons. Even discernment matures over time. And perhaps that's the deeper

philosophical truth here: We are not called to have all the answers. We are called to live awake.

- Awake to our inner stirrings.
- Awake to God's gentle nudges.
- Awake to injustice.
- Awake to joy.
- Awake to discomfort.
- Awake to possibility.

As it did for me:

- Sometimes one question over coffee can redirect a life.
- Sometimes one honest conversation can heal years of confusion.
- Sometimes one courageous 'Why?' can become the beginning of purpose.

So this is your invitation. Write in. Ask boldly. Ask sincerely. Ask anonymously if needed. Ask what you have never voiced before. Ask what keeps you awake at night. Ask what you are afraid to ask in public.

Let this not just be a column.

Let it be a movement of honest living.

Because life may not come with a manual, but it does come with moments – moments to pause, to question, to discern, to grow.

And if we dare to ask deeply, we may just discover that the answers were shaping us all along.

So go ahead. Ask. Reflect. Engage. Grow.

And let's journey this: with clarity, courage, and a little holy curiosity.

Now... what's your question – write to lifequestions@jykairosmedia.org. ■

Joseph Sebastian, PhD is a social development professional with a Doctorate in Social Work, having over three decades of experience spanning multiple regions and time zones. He has been actively involved with the Jesus Youth movement since his undergraduate days. Passionate about mentoring young leaders, he also walks closely with individuals and families in their vocational journeys. Joseph is married and lives in Kerala, India



Heart of Gold

Lives of the women mentioned in the Bible show their complete surrender and cooperation to God's will, writes **Anil Israel**.

A unique purpose lies in everything created. Human beings, created in the *image and likeness* (Genesis 1:26) of God, are his masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). So, our existence has a meaningful purpose, a distinct contribution to make in God's great big design. We have been blessed with a special combination of temperament, talents, abilities, gifts and charisms to fulfil the divine assignment entrusted to us.

Those who have gone before us have done their part; many have lived exemplary lives and are still remembered today. We can learn from their cooperation in God's plan and be encouraged to do our part in the times and places we are blessed to be part of.

A look at the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospels shows mostly names of men

from one generation to another. It might appear that the names of women are intentionally excluded. This is not to be misinterpreted as a different treatment for women. For the creation story vividly recalls God creating women from the side of man, making her equal in dignity. The few names that do appear in the genealogy, have powerful messages to convey.

Among the first names mentioned, is Rahab, who is not even of Jewish origin. Rahab lived in the Jericho city wall. The famous wall that crumbled down when the Israelites marched around the city of Jericho for seven days. On the seventh day, presumably the entire city wall collapsed, perhaps except the part where Rahab lived. What made Rahab exceptional? Though Rahab lived a foreign culture with a belief system alien to those of God's chosen people, she had a profound faith in the God of the Israelites. Hearing the stories of how the Lord had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, she was convinced that *the Lord your God is he who is God in heaven above and on earth beneath* (Joshua 2:11). This unwavering belief in the one true God led her to hide the two Israelite spies who lodged at her house. This act of kindness resulted in her and her household being saved.

The very next name mentioned is that of a non-Jewish, Moabite woman, Ruth. Ruth could have chosen, like Orpah, to return to her own people. She opted not to leave her mother-in-law Naomi alone and chose to embrace the Jewish faith: *your people shall be my people, and your God my God* (Ruth 1:16). Her bold proclamation to follow the God of the Israelites led to her becoming the great grandmother of King David.

Queen Esther, elevated to the royal title, cooperated with God's plan; her timely courageous move to plead before the king saved the lives of the exiled

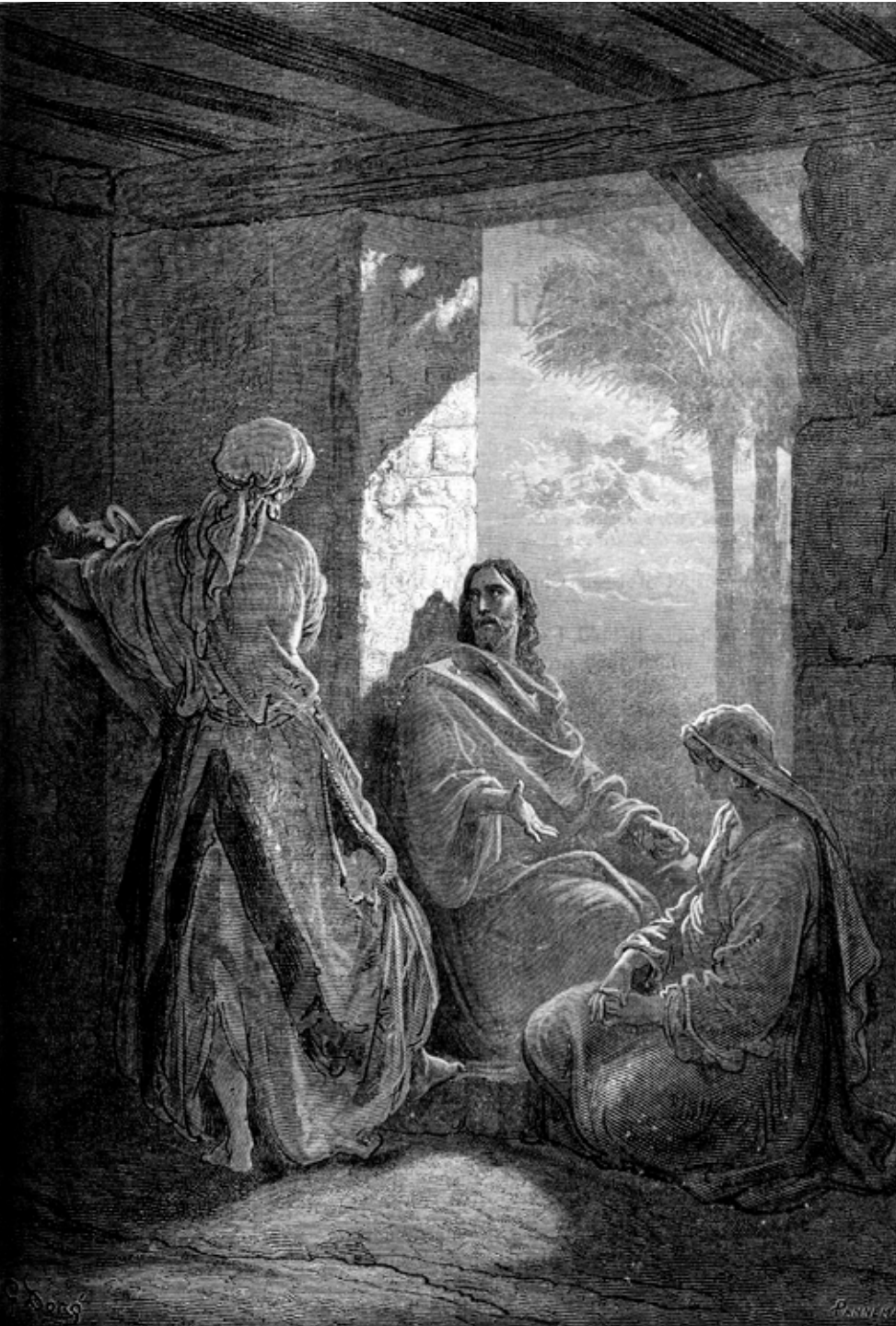
Jewish people. Truly, it only takes a mustard-seed sized faith to move seemingly immovable mountains.

It matters not your history or present circumstance, what matters is who you place your hope and trust in. Courageous women from the Old Testament like Deborah, Jael and Judith magnificently cooperated with God's plan. A teenage Jewish girl, trusting the message of an angel, consented to the will of the Most High, *Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word* (Luke 1:38). Mary's astounding 'yes' at the Annunciation, gave the world the long-awaited saviour, Jesus. Mary, invited as a guest to the marriage at Cana, compassionately recognising the wine had run out, intervened and interceded to her son. She not only brings our petitions to Jesus, when we have recourse to her, but also encourages us to align our lives to God's will: *Do whatever he tells you* (John 2:5).

Besides Martha and Mary Magdalene, the Gospels also mention the names of a few women who accompanied Jesus: *Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means* (Luke 8:3). It is interesting to see here 'many others' who provided for the ministry work, from what the Lord has blessed them with. They not only supported His ministry but were faithful till the end. Apparently, more women are mentioned to have been *standing by the cross of Jesus* (John 19:25). Even on Easter Sunday morning, we find *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb* (Matthew 28:1).

Mary Magdalene will always be remembered as 'the Apostle to the Apostles'. St Lydia, is reportedly the first European Christian. Phoebe, Sts Perpetua & Felicity, St Agnes of Rome, St Agatha of Sicily, St Lucy of Syracuse, St Catherine

SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, AND YOUR GOD MY GOD > RUTH 1:16



If there is one thing we ought to learn from them, it is that they placed all their hope and trust in the Lord and cooperated with His Will, despite their share of unfavourable circumstances, hardships and sufferings.

of Alexandria – all stood tall in upholding Christianity in the early centuries. St Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, travelled to the Holy Land and discovered the True Cross in Jerusalem.

St Teresa of Avila, St Catherine of Siena, St Therese of Lisieux and St Hildegard of Bingen are recognised as women Doctors of the Church. Among the six patron saints of Europe, three are women. Mother Teresa's sisters all over the globe continue to radiate other-centred love in a world succumbing to self-centredness.

If there is one thing we ought to learn from them, it is that they placed all their hope and trust in the Lord and cooperated with His Will, despite their share of unfavourable circumstances, hardships and sufferings. Such self-emptied hearts are interiorly beautiful and immensely precious in God's eyes. May we too aspire to do our share of the good work God has planned for us. It is nice to be beautiful; it is more beautiful to be nice. May the Spirit inspire us to exhibit a 'heart of gold' – the sign of a beautiful soul. ■■

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

PsalmMeet:

THE VIRTUE OF HOPE



Fr Jijo Jose Manjackal delves into our reason for hope.

Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song. These hope-filled words of the Great Pope Saint John Paul II capture the essence of hope: an enduring, unseen confidence that lifts the heart even in darkness. Hope is the firm assurance that God is faithful, His promises true and His love never fails.

The Psalms are full of hope – hope that encourages, strengthens and sustains us when life feels uncertain.

Hope is the confident expectation that God brings life, healing, and joy in His perfect time.

Psalm 42 – Hope that revives the soul

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why

are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God (Psalm 42:5, 6a).

Psalm 42 captures the human experience of despair and longing, yet turns it into a song of hope. The Psalmist is honest about inner turmoil, sadness and longing for God. True hope acknowledges reality but refuses to surrender to despair.

We are reminded that hope is rooted in God, not in circumstances. Even when we feel weak, abandoned, or lost, our hope can revive our spirit.

- Revive the sentiment of hope in your heart daily
- Recognise feelings of trouble and difficulty, but don't let them dominate

We are reminded that hope is rooted in God, not in circumstances. Even when we feel weak, abandoned, or lost, our hope can revive our spirit.

you

- Praise God even in waiting, for hope is strengthened by prayer

Psalm 130 – Hope that waits patiently

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope (Psalm 130:5).

Psalm 130 is one of patient expectation. The Psalmist places his hope in the timely faithfulness of God, acknowledging that deliverance comes from the Lord alone. Hope matures when we learn to wait without anxiety, trusting that God's timing is perfect.

This Psalm teaches that hope is active waiting, not passivity, but a confident expectation in God's Word.

- Anchor your hope in Scripture, for God's promises never fail
- Transform periods of waiting into periods of trust-filled preparation
- Recall moments of God's goodness in your past, and be hopeful

Psalm 27 – Hope that inspires courage

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be

afraid? Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! (Psalm 27:1-2, 14)

Psalm 27 speaks of hope as courage and confidence. The Psalmist anticipates seeing God's goodness and calls himself to strength while waiting. Hope calls us to be brave, to persevere and to keep our hearts steadfast even in trials.

Hope is always accompanied by courage and trust. It strengthens the soul to rise above fear, despair and discouragement.

- Let hope motivate courageous choices and steadfast faith.
- Look beyond gloomy circumstances and trust in God's ultimate goodness
- Encourage others with hope, showing that God's promises are trustworthy.

This month, let us specially practise the virtue of Hope – Hope that heals hearts in the hardest hours.

Hope is letting God's promises shape every heartbeat. St John of the Cross invitingly challenges us: *'Live in faith and hope, though it be in darkness, for in this darkness God protects the soul. Cast your care upon God for you are His and He will not forget you. Do not think that He is leaving you alone, for that would be to wrong Him.'*

Through Psalms 42, 130, and 27, we are invited to revive our lives, wait patiently for Him and to act courageously. Yes, we need to realise that Hope, one the three theological virtues, rests on God Himself! People may fail; plans may crumble; yet God's love never falters. As St Bede, the Venerable says, *'Unfurl the sails, and let God steer us where He will!'*

May our life joyfully proclaim: *Amid hardships, God is my Hope!*

God Bless! Live Jesus!



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.

NewsWatch

Cardinal Anthony Poola President of CBCI



Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) elected Cardinal Anthony Poola as its new president, making him the first Dalit (term referring to the lowest rung of castes in India) to lead India's Catholic bishops. The archbishop of Hyderabad, elevated to cardinal by Pope Francis in 2022, called for unity, reconciliation, and service-oriented leadership amid social tensions.

During its February meeting in Bangalore, the bishops urged repeal of state anti-conversion laws, arguing they violate Article 25 of Constitution of India and enable false arrests and harassment of Christians. They criticised vigilante violence and what activists term 'safronisation', pressing the government of Narendra Modi to safeguard minority rights.

The CBCI also highlighted discrimination against Dalit Christians and Muslims, who are excluded from Scheduled Caste benefits granted to Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist Dalits. Reaffirming commitment to constitutional values, the Church pledged continued advocacy for religious freedom, equality, interreligious dialogue, and national unity.

Adult Baptisms Surge in Belgium

Adult baptisms in Belgium are projected to rise sharply again in 2026, with dioceses reporting 689 adult candidates, nearly 30% more than in 2025 and triple the number recorded a decade earlier. The Catholic Church says the figures confirm an ongoing 'baptism boom' in a country long seen as highly secularised. While overall baptisms and Sunday Mass attendance continue to decline – infant baptisms fell from 51,000 in 2017 to 30,000 in 2024 – the growth in adult conversions is viewed as a hopeful sign.

The increase is particularly strong in French-speaking dioceses such as Brussels, Namur, and Tournai, though Flemish dioceses like Antwerp and Ghent are also seeing notable numbers. Church commentators describe the trend as a shift from 'cultural Christianity' to a faith based on personal conviction.

A similar rise is reported in neighbouring France, where more than 10,000 adults were baptised in 2025 and numbers continue to grow in 2026.

BEATIFICATION OF ARCHBISHOP FULTON J SHEEN CONFIRMED

Fulton J Sheen will soon be beatified after the Vatican authorised his cause to proceed, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peoria announced on 9 February. Bishop Louis Tylka said the diocese is coordinating with the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to finalise details, though no date has been set. Sheen's 2019 beatification was postponed weeks before its scheduled celebration following concerns from some US bishops about his tenure leading the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester (1966-1969), amid scrutiny tied to clergy abuse cases and New York's Child Victims Act. However, Peoria officials maintain that no allegations were ever made against Sheen personally. His cause, opened in 2002, advanced after Pope Francis approved a miracle attributed to his intercession. Sheen, a prominent 20th-century evangelist known for his preaching and writings, has seen growing devotion, with increased pilgrimages to his tomb and renewed interest in his works.



SAGRADA FAMILIA REACHES MAXIMUM HEIGHT

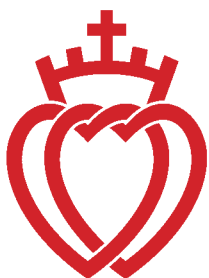
Sagrada Família in Barcelona reached its maximum height of 172.5 meters (566 feet) on 20 February, as a crane placed the upper arm of a cross atop the Tower of Jesus Christ. The milestone makes the basilica the world's tallest church, surpassing Ulm Minster in Germany.

Designed by Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí, construction began in 1882. Only one tower was completed when Gaudí died in 1926, but work has accelerated in recent decades thanks to tourism. Though the structure has now reached its planned height, interior work on the central tower continues, and the cross will be fully unveiled this summer.

The completion of the tower comes ahead of June commemorations marking the centenary of Gaudí's death. His cause for sainthood is underway. Funded largely by visitor fees, the basilica remains under construction, blending Catholic symbolism with Gaudí's distinctive organic modernist style.

By Sam Biju

The Society of St Pius X heads towards an uncertain future



The Society of St Pius X (SSPX) has announced it will proceed with consecrating new bishops on July 1 without papal approval, escalating tensions with the Vatican and risking a formal schism. In a 19 February letter, Superior General Fr Davide Pagliarani informed Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith that the society would not suspend the consecrations despite Rome's offer of theological dialogue aimed at restoring full communion.

The SSPX, founded by Marcel Lefebvre, rejects key teachings of the Second Vatican Council, including liturgical reforms and aspects of interreligious dialogue. Lefebvre's illicit 1988 consecrations led Pope John Paul II to declare a schismatic act, though Pope Benedict XVI lifted excommunications in 2009. SSPX argues the new consecrations do not constitute schism, claiming they remain loyal to Pope Leo XIV. However, canon law requires a pontifical mandate for episcopal ordinations, setting up a direct confrontation with Rome.

Pope Leo Urges Avoiding use of Artificial Intelligence for Homilies



At a closed-door meeting with clergy of the Diocese of Rome, Pope Leo XIV urged priests not to use artificial intelligence to write homilies or chase popularity on platforms like TikTok. According to Vatican News, the Pope said relying on AI weakens a priest's intellectual and spiritual life, stressing that 'to give a true homily is to share faith,' something technology can never do. Authentic preaching, he said, must flow from personal prayer and lived experience of Christ.

Leo also warned against seeking 'likes' online, calling digital self-promotion an illusion if it does not transmit the Gospel. He encouraged priests to deepen prayer, foster fraternity, and engage young people through personal accompaniment and creative outreach. Citing an example of priestly friendship in Chicago, he emphasised mutual support. Addressing euthanasia and pastoral care, he urged clergy to witness to life's value and personally bring Communion and anointing to the sick.



A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

Kairos Global began regular publishing in 2018, though the desire for an English Catholic magazine had been in the minds, hearts and prayers of the Kairos team many years before. This is particularly true for Dr Chackochan J Njavallil, whose tireless efforts and unwavering dedication made this Catholic magazine for youth and young families a reality.

For the past eight years, Dr Chackochan has been guiding the magazine (and Kairos Media) as its Editor-in-Chief with unparalleled vision and dogged determination. Everyone on the

Kairos team will unanimously agree that there is no other person so passionate about the growth of Kairos Media as our dear Chackochan Sir.

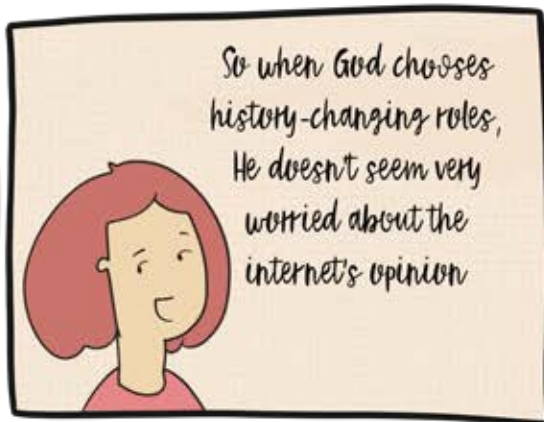
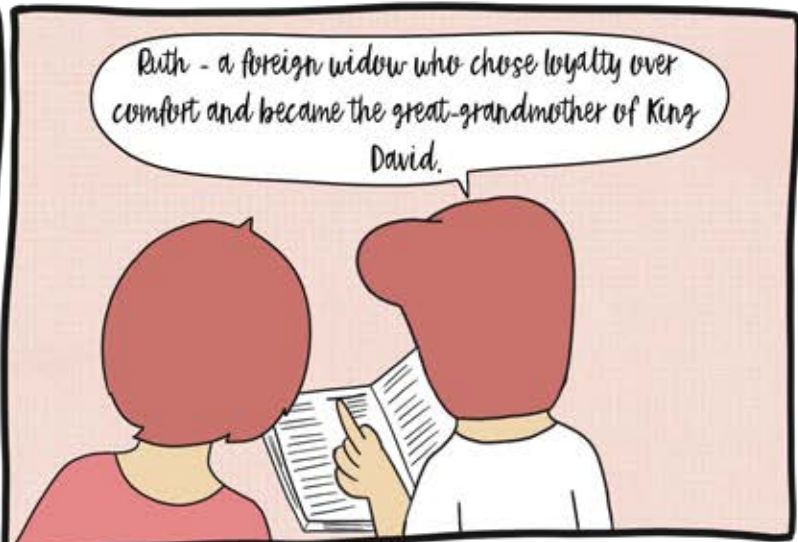
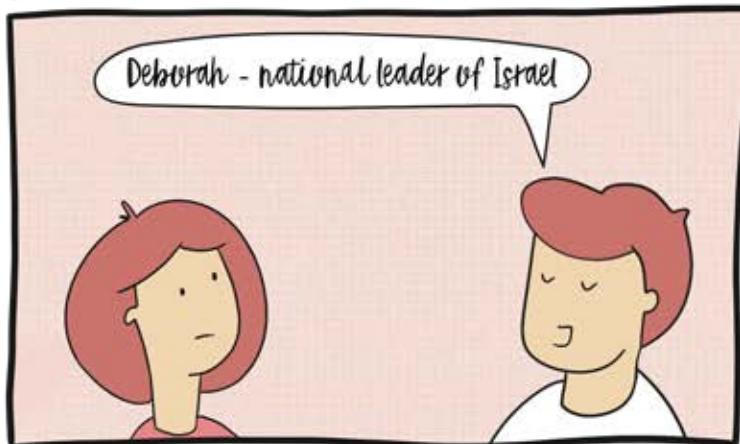
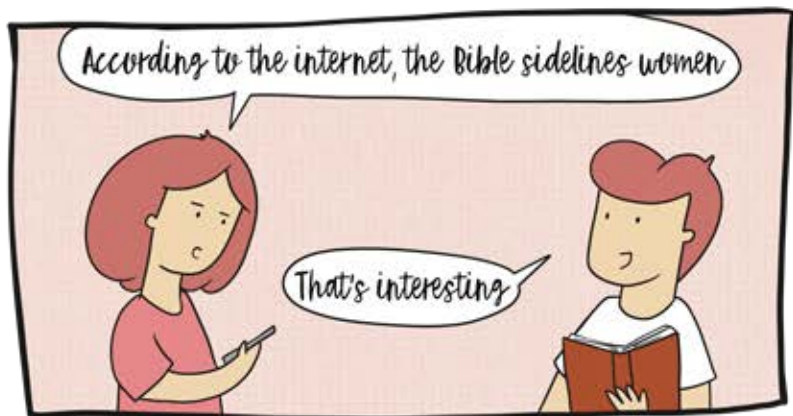
As he continues his mission in Kairos Media as its Director, having handed the baton of Kairos Global's Editor-in-Chief role to Sijo Thomas, we would like to thank Dr Chackochan J Njavallil for his inspiring leadership of and selfless service to Kairos Global. And we keep him in prayer, that through him God may continue to lead Kairos Media towards greater heights.

Team Kairos Media



FIND  x10 FIND  x25





Dear Little Friends,

Do you want to get closer to Jesus? Would you like to rejuvenate your mind too?

Kairos Buds presents **'Gospel by Hand'**, a wonderful challenge where you slowly and prayerfully write the four Gospels as a special gift for Baby Jesus. As you write the Word of God, you will open your little hearts and hands to Jesus and understand Him deeply through the Bible classes to be held once every two weeks.

Here's how it works:

- This challenge is open to all children aged 9-15.
- You are welcome to write in any language you like.
- We recommend using the BibleOn app, which offers the Bible in many languages (English-NRSV).
- An option to write one Gospel instead of the four is also available for our little angels.
- A unique writing paper design will be provided for all participants, which can be printed either in black and white or colour.
- Your status will be evaluated monthly through a WhatsApp group and published on the Kairos Media website.
- Your completed work will be reviewed and corrected by a regional/zonal Jesus Youth leader.
- After finishing, you will bind the Gospel locally as per the instructions provided.

By Christmas, you will have your very own handwritten Gospel by writing just 15 verses a day!
Just imagine...holding a copy of the Gospels written in your OWN handwriting!

Let's write His Word and live His Word.

GOD BLESS YOU.

Yours lovingly,

Uncle Nobin



Scan the QR code to register. For more info please contact +91 6282137478.