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**COMMUNITY**

VOICE OF THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

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EDITORIAL

## JESUS IS THE CENTRE OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas will soon be upon us. What does this feast mean for most of us? Preparation in the form of shopping, cleaning our houses, sweet-making, putting up the Christmas tree and other decorations – all externals. However, that is just one aspect; the most important aspect, which at times gets overlooked, is the spiritual preparation. Hence, the Church offers us four weeks of Advent to prepare ourselves for the Birth of Jesus on Christmas Day, and also for HIS second coming in glory. The Church desires that we listen to the prophets - Isaiah from the Old Testament and John the Baptist from the New Testament - who inspire us to prepare ourselves for Christmas: **Make straight the path** (*Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:3*).

Every celebration is preceded by a lot of ground work to ensure that the final outcome is memorable. As we prepare to welcome our Saviour Jesus Christ into the world, we are instantly reminded of the manner in which He was born. Not in a fancy hospital with doctors and nurses buzzing around, not in a palace or mansion with maids and footmen at our Blessed Mother's beck and call,



but in the humblest of places – on a bed of straw in a manger, surrounded by sheep and cattle. The Son of God, who took the form of a human like you and me, chose to enter this world in the lowliest manner – wrapped in swaddling cloth – the only available covering to keep a newborn babe warm. His visitors were the shepherds who were watching their flock that night.

As Jesus grew into manhood and started His public ministry, He showed utmost compassion for the downtrodden, without distinction. Then and now, Jesus exhorts us to be sensitive to our unfortunate fellow beings – the poor, the marginalised, the exploited, the weak, the wounded, the lost, and minister to them: **Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do unto Me** (Matthew 25:31-46).

This pandemic has certainly jolted us out of our complacency, our wasteful and extravagant lifestyles, and presented us with stark reality – the suffering of the poor and underprivileged in our SCCs, our neighbourhood, our families. I can say with absolute conviction that our SCC Animators and Coordinators have risen to the occasion like true witnesses of Jesus Christ, ministering to all those in need, ensuring to the best possible extent that **NO ONE IS IN WANT** (our Archdiocesan SCC Vision Statement). And their ministry went beyond their own parishes and communities, reaching out to scores of migrant workers who undertook arduous journeys back to their native homes on foot, feet blistered and bleeding, some dying on railway tracks, many who died from thirst and starvation, and back home, the elderly and homebound who were forced to stay put in their homes, and did not have anyone to help them with their essentials; the list is endless. Yes, our Good Samaritans in the form of our SCC Animators came to the rescue, and through their

selfless service, reached out to all these people, bringing a ray of hope and sunshine into their lives. In the course of their ministry, some of these Animators and Coordinators contracted the coronavirus, and yes, a few died as well. May the souls of these beautiful brothers and sisters rest in peace.

While the situation on ground level is a little better compared to "the second wave" of COVID-19, there is the emergence of a new variant, Omicron, and the possibility of the third wave coming with a bang. We therefore need to be both cautious and sensitive to the needs of the deprived around us; we cannot leave the poor to fend for themselves. As Catholics baptised into the Body of Christ, we must feel challenged to rise to the occasion, and become "missionaries of mercy" to our brothers and sisters in need. Pope Francis, in his recent meeting with the participants of the Christmas Contest, said that Christmas is not "out of tune" with the trials of the pandemic. While the lights of Christmas seem dimmed by the consequences of the pandemic, he stressed that the beauty of Christmas shines through in the sharing of small concrete gestures of love.

That is the true meaning of Christmas. It is only when we share our gifts with the poor around us – clothes, a telephone call, a meal – that we will feel Christmas in our hearts, in our very being, allowing us to celebrate with a clear conscience and a giving heart. It is only when "we break our bodies and shed our blood" through our lives of dedicated service that we will translate the Eucharist into reality. It is then and only then that we will be able to say: "Happy Christmas." May Christmas, the Birth of Jesus, challenge us to reach out in service and become Missionaries of Mercy, Ambassadors of Christ.

✠ **Barthol Barretto**  
Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay &  
Bishop in-charge of SCCs

# CHRISTMAS

## A SOURCE OF HOPE AND PROMISE OF THE FUTURE

Christmas  
Cheer on Sale!  
Christmas  
Cheer on Sale!



Ever come across something like this?

Well, if you'd walk the market streets in your respective areas, you'll see something similar. Lights, decorations, streamers, trees, cribs, stars, gifts – the markets are filled with all of these. Malls have promotions, sales, schemes, Santas, etc. and most people throng to these areas at this time of the year, trying to buy Christmas Cheer!

But can we really do that? Well, it does give us a good feel, but what after it's over? It reminds me of a neighbour down the street whose house was the best decorated with the choicest of decorations and amazing fragrances of cinnamon and gingerbread. Yet, I'd often see him standing alone by the window, waiting for someone to visit him.

A couple of decades ago, we'd witness families coming together to prepare sweets, children excitedly making the building crib and star, people rushing to church and standing in lines to ensure they were able to make their confession, groups carolling in and around their homes spreading the festive cheer, some knitting sweaters or beanies or mufflers as gifts for one another, families happily walking together to attend the midnight Mass, the traditional exchange of Christmas sweets with almost everyone in the area, not forgetting the watchman, and of course, the Christmas visits to relatives and friends, and so much more... While communities coming together enthusiastically to celebrate Christmas has taken a backseat for many reasons, the most recent one being COVID-19, we have now shifted to a more virtual celebration – with family and friends joining in on video calls to wish one another to save ourselves from the infection of the virus, whether COVID-19, or

its variants - Delta or Omicron.

With COVID-19 restrictions mounting, it is time perhaps for us to focus on the real meaning of Christmas – celebrating new life through the birth of Baby Jesus. As Prophet Isaiah says, “*To us, a child is born.*” The birth of a child in a home would generally bring with it fatigue and tiredness and sleeplessness. Yet through all the discomfort, the family of the child is so full of love for the child and feels all the love of the child, even through deafening bawls and frequent changing of diapers. As Pope Francis said in his homily, “A birth is always a source of hope and a promise of the future.” Thanks to Jesus being born as a child, we now share a common Father, and are all part of the same family of God. Let us therefore strengthen our bonds with one another at home, in the community and the larger Church, as we share our faith with one another and revive traditions that keep us together. Christmas is the season of Joy, of gift-giving and of families coming together. It would however work wonders if we lived Christmas every day, and we could do so by little actions – spending some time with the elderly who are lonely, or sharing clothes or toys or food with children who don't have much.

Even as we continue to walk through the uncertain times of the pandemic, let us all draw **COURAGE** from Christ to walk through any anxiety that may come our way. Let us take time to be **GRATEFUL** for all the graces that we are continuously being showered with. Let us experience Christmas Cheer, as we reach out to others, especially the ones in our respective communities. Let us celebrate the birth of Jesus who is the **LIGHT** of the world by being a Shining Hope for Humanity, especially to people around us who are in darkness. Like Baby Jesus, let us be a source of **HOPE** through our acts of mercy to those who have lost hope. Like the Christmas Star that guided the Wise Men or Kings, let us be a **GUIDE** to the lost and downtrodden. Like the Gifts that the Wise Men or Kings shared with Jesus, let us too **SHARE** gifts, especially with those who do not have any, and as we do that, let us tie the ribbon around the gift tight, as we bind ourselves in bonds of unity and goodwill as One Family headed by God our Father. Happy Christmas to one and all. May we all carry Christmas in our heart, not just during the season of Christmas, but right through the year.

Monica Rodrigues





## A LUCKY CHRISTMAS

Last December, as the pandemic raged through our planet, children everywhere began to get anxious. Would coronavirus affect the arrival of Santa on Christmas Eve? This was a matter of such grave concern that the World Health Organisation (WHO) stepped in to reassure worried kids everywhere that Santa was “immune to the virus” and he would be able to travel as usual.

Things are not as dreadful this year. With the festive season already in full swing, we’re heading for a seemingly “normal” Christmas. Roadside stalls with colourful paper stars, spindly Christmas trees with bright, blinking lights and shiny ornaments have already been spotted. After the devastation of the past year, vendors and consumers alike can’t wait to fill their homes with some much needed cheer.

It’s not just pretty baubles that bring cheer, though.

If there’s one thing COVID-19 taught us about the human condition is that we are capable of great compassion. Even at the height of the pandemic, we saw people – friends, neighbours, relatives – go out of their way to help others. Some set up neighbourhood WhatsApp groups to source food packets and fresh vegetables for the homebound. Others cared for children when their families were quarantined. Thousands of people got together online and in person to help migrants travel back home, when they could no longer afford to stay in their adopted homes. In Goa, where I’m based, we saw how ordinary people turned superheroes, spending time and their own money to buy food, pay for travel, wipe tears. Providing food and coordinating travel for hundreds of workers and their families every day was no small task. Nothing like this had been done before, yet people didn’t hesitate. It was

extraordinary to witness. This is love in action.

The lockdown gave us all pause for thought. We suddenly had time off from commuting. While many lost jobs, some were lucky to be able to work from home. We spent more time with our children – which was maddening, yet wonderful. It was a gift.

While deaths and long-term effects of COVID-19 still continue, many of us escaped unscathed. As the second wave hit the country earlier this year, I was so sure we’d all be dead at the end of it. I worried endlessly about what would happen to my child, if both his parents were dead or incapacitated. I made arrangements with my sister in Mumbai to take over, should this happen. I asked a cousin in Goa if she would be a temporary guardian, should the need arise. I put financial affairs in order, ensuring that my family had access to whatever details they might need in an emergency.

Half a year later, the trauma and fear of that time have dimmed, and it feels like over-kill. Yet I’m glad I did it, because now those procedures are in place.

We were blessed to survive this calamity. Thousands of others didn’t escape so easily.

Even as the prospect of the Omicron variant darkens our doors, it cannot dampen the sheer joy of being alive. There is a sense of exuberance, of expectation. In Goa, we see it in the thousands of tourists everywhere, celebrating life, but throwing caution to the wind.

This is a lucky Christmas – one we are privileged to celebrate. While we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, let us also keep alive our compassion, kindness and the incredible sense of generosity we discovered we had within us. And yes, watch out for Santa!

**Chryselles D’Silva Dias**



## **CHRISTMAS THE TIME IS NOW!**

Come on and sing along! Rocking around the Christmas tree and deck the halls with boughs of holly, so you better be good, you better be nice, you better not cry 'cause I'm telling you why ... Mary's boy child Jesus Christ was born on Christmas day...

That's going to happen soon – the real reason for this beautiful festive season of Christmas.

The Christmassy feeling of love and happiness is now with us, and so preparations are on for the big family meal to celebrate that occasion. It's so much joy to be preparing all the delicacies around the table with the entire family chipping in to make the fruit cake, kul kuls, dodol, doce, roast chicken/turkey, sorpotel, pork roast and much much more. Yes, all this will warm our hearts (read stomachs). Let's all feel fortunate and blessed to have so much to satiate us.

Your home, with the Christmas tree adorned with baubles and candy sticks is the pride of your living room. You too, like the Christmas tree, can be that pride for your family. The crib below the tree is a constant reminder that He came to give us hope. He chose this humble dwelling to ensure we continue to be humble and grounded. Let's not forget, St Joseph shouldered the responsibility of being husband to Mary, asking no questions. Carry out your responsibilities to the T, giving your best. The beautifully dressed up star at the entrance of homes, should be a constant sign that we need to aim high and follow our dreams. Set a target and go all out to achieve it. Let each star we see in the neighbourhood and admire, serve as a reminder that 'I' should be that star in my own home, throughout the year.

We have been blessed with so much, so now is the time to share whatever we have with the less fortunate. For it's the rule of life – the more you give, the more you get! It's not about giving money or material gifts, but one can give the most important and precious gift – TIME – to those who are alone in homes at this time of the year. Find a way to share a meal to make someone feel loved. A short call to have a chat with someone who is sick would mean 'I care' and that would help to lift up the drooping spirit of someone struggling to cope with illness.

Let Christmas Carols fill your homes, giving you all the opportunity to sing and swing along...

So the Time is Now, and the season of joy is here to experience and share with all those whose lives you touch.

**Jennifer Gadgil**





## RETHINKING CHRISTMAS IN A PANDEMIC WORLD

**There is a famous story told about four candles which goes like this:**

One night, there were four candles burning brightly in a room. The first candle said, “I am **Peace**, but in the present times, there is turmoil and conflict everywhere. No one wants me anymore.” Saying this, the candle extinguished its light. The second candle then said, “I am **Faith**, but these days every family and nation is facing lies, betrayal and deceit. I am lost and alone.” Saying this, the second candle too extinguished its flame. The third candle then spoke, “I am **Love**. What a great power I have to keep burning, but with people being so busy, materialistic and selfish, they forget about me. They have no time to show love.” Saying this, the Love candle extinguished itself. Just then an innocent lad entered the room, and seeing three of the candles not burning, he thought out loud, I wonder why these three candles are not burning. The room is not as bright as before. Hearing this, the last (fourth) candle spoke up and said, “Dear child, don’t be sad. I am **Hope**, and while I am still burning, you can relight all the other three candles of Peace, Faith and Love with my light. They will burn brightly again.” The child’s eyes sparkled, and he took the candle of Hope and relit the other three candles with its flame.



This story reminded me of a popular part of Psalm 33:20-22 which reads, “*We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.*”

Indeed, Hope is what carries us along; through the storms of our lives, through times when our faith is low, when the future seems bleak, it is the hope of a better tomorrow that keeps us going.

We are now in the month of December 2021, the season of Advent, and the analogy of the story above is so clear, as we think of the Advent Candles burning brighter in the “hope” of the coming of Jesus. It was hope that made John the Baptist cry out in the wilderness; it was hope that kept Mary and Joseph going on their arduous journey; it was hope that warmed the shepherds’ hearts and let the star guide them; and it was hope that brought the wise men to see the newborn King. It is the same flame of ‘hope’ we kindle in our hearts.

Yet, on the international and national front, people are battling the one thing that works against hope – ‘fear’ – of an oncoming ‘third wave’ of the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic. This very month, new fears have been kindled about a more infectious, dangerous, and stealthy mutant strain of the virus. In this situation, how are we to be happy and cheerful in the spirit of the Christmas promise?

Well, I thought it would be good to brainstorm about simple ways in which we can rekindle the spirit of Hope and Joy, while having to follow norms of staying home and maintaining social distancing, but before we do that, if you are reading this article, it's already good news and a reason to celebrate because you are alive, unlike so many who are not. Let me share a few thoughts with you:

- 1 Delivery people have kept us going; from Swiggy and Zomato to Amazon and Flipkart, they have worked tirelessly to meet our needs. Leave a small box of chips or cold drinks with a note on top addressed to them to help themselves.
- 2 Leave good tips for those who serve you when you go out to a restaurant to dine. It may help them to smile brighter the next day.
- 3 Brighten up a hospital/an old age home/an orphanage with your presence or some small hampers.
- 4 Send hand-made cards to friends and family the age old way via snail mail! It would be a welcome change.
- 5 Call up relatives (especially older ones) whom you haven't spoken to in a while, and share some love and laughs with them. If a video call is possible, that's the way to go. In fact, with technology like Zoom and Google Meet, you can create meeting links and connect with all or some family members online.
- 6 Surprise co-workers with random notes of compliments or positivity or random acts of kindness (even towards strangers) to spread the joy.
- 7 Share some Christmas sweets or goodies with your regular grocery vendors or storekeepers. They will feel happy that you see them not just as providers.



A Christmas message on the internet caught my attention because it was so apt. Here it is in a box!

In India, most of us can't really dream about a White Christmas, but can we think of a Green Christmas? If it is possible to reduce consumption and wastage this Christmas, and be eco-friendly in our distribution of sweets and decoration of our homes and neighbourhoods, let's take a cue from COP26 to reduce our waste and our carbon footprint, and give our Earth a reason to smile too.

Well, these were just a few random musings on a cool winter day in Goa, but let's all remind ourselves that the spirit of 'hope' is alive, and it can be ours. Let's decide to smile a little more this Christmas, whatever we do and wherever we are!

We are all innkeepers. Do we have place for Jesus?

Larissa Castelino Rodrigues

## LITTLE STEPS FOR GREATER GOOD: ECO-INITIATIVES IN THE SCCs

The Year of Care for Creation (2010) in the Archdiocese of Bombay invited every parish and family to enrich and enhance the beauty of the environment, as well as take up initiatives to protect the environment from damage. This led to the setting up of Environment Cells in parishes.

**ECO KIDS CLUB:** This was first introduced in our parish by the late Rev. Fr Felix Rebello in 2016. Under his guidance, we started Eco Kids Clubs in the SCCs, where children of all faiths participate; this has continued till date. The objective of these Clubs was to make children aware of the climate crisis and teach them ways to save planet Earth. Children were taught by the animators to grow small plants and shrubs at home and in their surroundings, to segregate dry and wet waste, run poster campaigns, etc. The kids performed street plays in and around their areas on multiple occasions. We have conducted several cleanliness and e-waste collection drives within our SCCs. Each year, all the SCCs would come together for an Eco Rally, that would end in an entertaining awareness programme.

**Batti Bandh** for just half an hour once a week. Reducing consumption of electricity, even just a little bit every week, has a two-fold advantage of cutting costs and saving electricity. This half-hour was to be utilised in family prayer or meaningful family discussions. A good number of our parishioners follow this practice in their homes.



**Milk Packet Collection Drive:** Used plastic milk packets end up in the garbage bin. We ran a pilot programme in one of our SCCs (2019-20) to collect these milk packets in a clean and dry state. The response was good, as the two SCC animators appointed did a good follow-up. We also found a vendor who would take these bags along with other plastic items. In the pandemic period from 2020-2021, we recycled around 4500-5000 milk packets from one SCC. In October 2021, we extended this drive to the entire parish. To encourage this activity, we are offering 5 paise per packet that they bring for recycling. They have to deposit in bundles of 20 or 100. The drive is catching on slowly, as parishioners coming for Mass deposit the empty packets in the church box.

In a city where we are surrounded by the concrete jungle on all sides, such small steps work for a collective greater good.

**Maria D'Silva**

Parish SCC Coordinator  
Infant Jesus Church, Jogeshwari (E)

## THE MILK BAG RECYCLING PROJECT .....

Millions of empty milk bags go into garbage bins daily, creating more pollution in the water and on land. Every day, more than 1,50,00,000 (1.5 crore) milk bags are generated in Mumbai alone.



Under the **Care for Environment scheme**, Our Lady of Mercy Church (OLMC), Pokhran decided to do something for the environment. The recycling of milk bags was highlighted at one meeting, and the Clergy Team took it forward with the Youth and the Confirmation class to create awareness among the parishioners. A video created by the youth was uploaded on the YouTube channel of OLMC; click <https://youtu.be/xxdzfeDeLXE> to see the video depicting the need for recycling used milk bags.

The SCCs then took it forward to the parishioners, and the collection started early October 2021 with the instructions below:

1. Cut across the width of the bag. Do not snip off the corner.



2. Rinse the bag to remove residual milk.
3. Air dry the bag.
4. Roll up the bags together and secure them with a rubber band.
5. Store the bags and bring to the church.

Our parish collected 13 kg in the month of October, and handed over the same to the Milk Bag Project Team. These packets are thoroughly washed at recycling units, dried and cut into small pieces by machines, and processed into plastic granules. These recycled plastic granules are used to make a variety of products, such as garbage bags, etc.

### **Meet the Milk Bag Project Team:**

Started in May 2019, the Milk Bag Project aims to create awareness and facilitate recycling of milk bags. Founded by Hansu Pardiwala (NGO: Har Ghar Hara Ghar), Kunti Oza (NGO: Clean Mumbai Foundation) and Chitra Hiremath (NGO: Garbage Free India), the Milk Bag Project has helped save more than 700 kg of empty milk bags from going into landfills and choking water bodies. Some of their regular donors include The World Trade Centre, IDBI, LIC, Leopold Cafe, Cricket Club of India (CCI) and Indian Merchants' Chamber.

***If you would like to do your bit to manage plastic waste, contact the Milk Bag Project Team at [themilkbagproject@gmail.com](mailto:themilkbagproject@gmail.com).***

**Sujata D'Souza**

Parish SCC Coordinator

Our Lady of Mercy Church, Pokhran, Thane

## OUTREACH

### **ST JOSEPH'S FOOD BANK, MIRA ROAD**

*Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor (Proverbs 22:9).*

It was a dream of our parish to start a Food Bank since the past two years. However, due to the pandemic, the project got postponed, until we decided to inaugurate the same on November 14, 2021 - the fifth World Day of the poor. This project is in line with our parish vision of "Sharing, Caring & Bearing" Communities to ensure that "No one is in want".

The proposal was first placed before the PPC; a team of 11 members was formed for planning and implementation - quantity, cooking, storing, packing, distribution and evaluation of the Food Bank project. Information was gathered from other parishes who are managing similar projects. The following decisions were made:

- The food will be served every Sunday, starting from November 14, 2021, between 12 noon and 1 p.m.
- The food will be open to all our needy brethren, irrespective of caste, creed and religion.
- Fresh food will be served, packed in containers for takeaway. No leftover food to be served to any one.
- The food will be prepared by a caterer, keeping uniformity in mind, but the packing and serving



will be done by the community members. A community-wise list is being prepared to ensure that all the 56 communities of the parish will be involved in packing and serving the food.

- A refrigerator was donated by one of the members.
- Besides distributing the food packets in the church premises, certain areas having poor and needy persons have been identified in case the food is in excess, so that it could be distributed there.
- Donors are requested to contact the Parish Office to donate towards the food packets.

- Rules and regulations have been put in place, in keeping with the COVID-19 protocols.

Finally, Fr Melvin inaugurated St Joseph's Food Bank, along with the other priests and the Organising Committee. The wonderful coordination of the Organising Committee with the SVP Team, coupled with the cooperation of the PPC members and Area Coordinators was a great learning for all of us; it made this event a big success! In all, 450 food packets were distributed on November 14.



**Francis Vaz**  
Parish SCC Coordinator  
St Joseph Church, Mira Road

## MISSION OUTREACH TO VEHLOLI

On the occasion of Children's Day, November 14, 2021, the youth of St Joseph Church, Juhu, accompanied by Fr Allwyn Nazareth, visited Mukta Jeevan Ashram at Vehloli, which is about 90 km from Mumbai. The Ashram has different institutions – a clinic, Hospital, Rehabilitation Centres with various works like orphanages, Leprosy Home, HIV+ Home, old age Homes, hostels for children and girls in need. The Mukta Jeevan Ashram is managed by the Society of the Helpers of Mary (SHM). They provide food, shelter and medical assistance.



In the wee hours of the morning, we began loading all the donated items in the bus. Generous donations from the parish SCCs and families included diapers, towels, bedsheets, soaps and toiletry, food grains, etc. On our arrival at the Ashram, we were warmly welcomed by Sr Meena Jose, the Superior of the Ashram. We were delighted to hear that we were the first group of visitors allowed after a span of two years since the pandemic began. We enjoyed the refreshments arranged for us.

Fr Allwyn celebrated Mass for us and for the members of the Ashram. After Mass, Sr Meena enlightened us about the fascinating history and works of the Ashram. She told us about how the pioneer, late Sr Vandana and a group of the Society of the Helpers of Mary started the Ashram in 1985, with the vision of liberation and freedom. With this vision, they founded homes for lepers, schools for orphan children, homes for HIV-affected children, homes for Senior Citizens, homes



for rescued women and children. After the interactive session with Sr Meena, we were anxious to meet the children, youth and senior citizens.

We visited the different institutions, and it was a joy to interact with all the inmates. We participated in a special programme of Children's Day organised by the Sisters. We performed some action songs for the children and seniors present. We were truly touched by the enthusiasm and lively singing and dancing of the



children; their joy and happiness was contagious. The generous donations collected from the SCCs of our parish were handed over to the Ashram by the youth. The Parish youth thanked the Sisters, seniors and children for welcoming them in their midst and sharing the day with them.

It was a learning experience for us to reach out as a "young Church". We were touched by the missionary spirit of the Sisters, and it kindled in us the fire to reach out to the poor and disadvantaged around us.

**Rebecca Paul**  
St Joseph Church, Juhu



## WORLD DAY OF THE POOR 2021

"Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty." - Fr Joseph Wresinki

November 14, 2021 saw the celebration of the fifth World Day of the Poor - an initiative by Pope Francis urging the Church and its faithful to reach out to those in need.

The Community of the Holy Spirit (J2 Zone) of St Pius X Church, Mulund chose this day to be of service and to lend a helping hand to the less fortunate, specifically keeping in mind how the COVID-19 situation has further pushed families into grief and poverty.

Packages of essential groceries and daily necessities were put together, and an animator and a youth (along with our Spiritual Director, Fr Clifford) visited the needy families in our community. In addition, it only felt right to reach out to the building security and housekeeping staff who, in spite of the trying and difficult times, kept us safe and our surroundings clean, day in and day out.



The joy of bringing a little happiness to these families gave us a sense of fulfilment and gratitude, and left us pondering on the Pope's questions: "Do I help someone who has nothing to give me in return? Do I, as a Christian, have at least one poor person as a friend?"

**Laveena Pinto**

Animator, Holy Spirit Community (J2 Zone)  
St Pius X Church, Mulund West

## ENSURING NO ONE IN WANT...

Chiplun is an upcoming town in Raigad district, that has seen rapid unsustainable development. Extreme weather conditions brought it under a heavy spate of incessant rains in July 2021, and the resultant flooding caused unprecedented damage and loss of life and property. Through the coordinated efforts of Badlapur SCCs, we pooled together aid worth ₹18,000. We networked with Dharmadhikari Anand Dighe Foundation to reach out to families of two villages that were ravaged by the floods.

We provided stoves, garments and essential utensils - items that were not covered by other aid agencies.



**Noel Kodian**

Parish SCC Coordinator  
St Francis Xavier Church, Badlapur

## HANDS REACHING OUT IN LOVE

Our trials during the pandemic have only managed to increase our faith in God. We learnt the true meaning, fragility and preciousness of LIFE! We learnt to make do with whatever we had, AND share it with our neighbours or anyone who came to us with a NEED. We did our best to reach out to everyone in need, including people of other faiths.

The needs ranged from groceries, toiletries, a pair of shoes, paying overdue electricity bills, purchasing gas cylinders, paying medical bills and education

fees, buying smart phones and laptops required by children for online education. We also made funeral arrangements for families who lost their loved ones during the pandemic. Recently, clothes for First Holy Communicants were also provided.

All this was possible thanks to the support and cooperation of our parishioners.

**Saviana Phulsunghe**

Parish SCC Coordinator  
Cathedral of the Holy Name, Fort





## TOUCHING LIVES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE

Inspired by an article that appeared in one of the issues of The Examiner in the month of February 2021 on how the **Archdiocesan Health Outreach Programme** was making a difference, I immediately called a friend, Dr Giselle Paes, who was part of the Core Team to find out more. We agreed that it was the need of the hour to start a similar programme in our parish of **Sacred Heart, Andheri East**. We reached out to Dr Richard Pereira to understand the intricacies involved. We were convinced that the programme would address the current situation created by the pandemic, with able resources from the Archdiocese.

**How we went about setting it up** - We were excited about this from the word “GO”, so we mobilised resources to take this forward. We were also aware that our CCO (Centre for Community Organisation) and the SVP were directly involved with some of the identified beneficiaries.

**Meeting the stakeholders** - We met with each of these groups - CCO, SVP, Health Cell, Holy Spirit Hospital Staff and the Health Outreach team to know more about the people who needed medical help. We did a mental calculation of the number of possible vulnerable people in our parish, across the communities. We also included the Health Outreach initiative in the Parish Pastoral Council Agenda, and sought volunteers from each community.

**Forming a volunteer team** - This turned out to be the most exciting part - to induct about 20+ Volunteers, who would in turn reach out to the identified vulnerable people in their area. We have a few doctors on our team to offer medical assistance. Meeting up online initially, interviewing, sharing a mission **to provide affordable healthcare services to our vulnerable parishioners**, equipping them with training, information, and gradually setting up a Health Desk to meet every Wednesday from 4 pm to 6 pm, gave new meaning to the team.

**Getting tech-savvy** - Trying to reach out to many people without risking going out during the pandemic meant going hi-tech and high-touch. We used Google Forms to gather data and upload documents and published bi-weekly enrolment status updates that prompted communities into action. “**No one in want**” was the Archdiocesan SCC Vision shared by Bp Barthol Barretto, which was constantly reiterated by our Parish Priest, Fr Innocent Fernandes SVD, the Health Cell Spiritual Director, Fr Callisto Gomes SVD and the Clergy Team.

**Phenomenal results during the lockdown** - In a short span of three months, we had over 172 enrolments digitally obtained, mapped volunteers and community leaders to enrolled members, tasked them with checking vaccination status, medical history, regular medicines requirement, etc. Seeing the painful effects of the second wave of the pandemic, we immediately issued 54 Health Cards.

**When the second wave situation improved**, our volunteers at the Health Desk undertook, with the help of the respective PPC members and SCC Animators, to validate and verify the Google Forms information of the beneficiaries. Dr Richard Pereira and Dr Giselle Paes advised us on the specific criteria, which helped us to factor in the poorest of the poor into the Health Outreach Programme.

**Families and lives touched** - Through the Team efforts, we were able to reach out to about 20 people for their prescribed medicine supply, disbursed multi-vitamins to over 35 people, arranged free vaccination, arranged medical assistance for diagnostics and discounted pathological services to some families, and obtained monetary assistance for one COVID-19 stricken parishioner.

**Challenges that we face...** Convincing the Health Card beneficiaries to avail of medical facilities available at State Government and civic hospitals which would significantly bring down their expenses, as well as the medical expenses disbursed annually from the Parish funds.

**Way Forward** - We have a committed team and we intend to assist our enrolled members with preventive and diagnostic facilities, mobile Health camps for senior citizens, transport and discounted dialysis, cataract and eye treatments, health aid items – all with a simple vision to access affordable healthcare, that any vulnerable person need not defer, delay or deny himself/herself any medical treatment for want of financial resources. Knowing that health is of paramount importance, we are now geared up for good Community health.

**We appreciate and place on record** the tremendous goodwill and tireless efforts of Dr Richard Pereira and team who have worked extremely hard to develop and direct this health programme as it dynamically evolves.

**Vincent D'Souza**

Parish Volunteer Coordinator  
Health Outreach Programme  
Sacred Heart Church, Andheri East

## KUTUMB UTSAV 2021



2020 came and went. We weren't sure about 2021 too, but we were hopeful. So when our Priest in-charge, Fr Denzil Correia, put forward the idea of having the Kutumb Utsav, our parish SCC Rally, the most awaited event of the year, we all said YES with one voice.

After numerous deliberations, keeping in mind the pandemic, we decided to have a virtual SCC Rally. Fr Denzil came up with a very innovative theme for the Rally – 'Futuristic Families'. The theme was apt, as this was the year of our patron St Joseph, the head of the Holy Family. Besides, we all know how advances in technology are adversely affecting family time together, and thereby, family life. So, it involved foreseeing family life in the future, reflecting on the problems it may face, and proposing viable solutions to them. The fact that it would set us thinking about the most important unit of society - the family – made the theme get a thumbs up from all.

We Josephians are very competitive; the fact that this year there was no competition took the pressure off, and we were free to experiment with different styles of presentation. Each Community committed itself to working diligently within the constraints of the pandemic. Visualising the Futuristic Family years from today, and presenting it in the form of an online skit was indeed a challenge.

Six Communities participated, and in a unique, creative manner, brought to light the challenges that may be faced by families in the future, and how being in close communion with God would help them tide over these problems.

Community 2 portrayed how future families will be totally dependent on robots; the life of humans will become mechanical, and the spiritual life among family members will be lost. Community 3 enacted the story of two families – one spiritual and the other totally swamped by technology. Following the lives of both

families as they lived now and the way they would live in future was a lesson in itself. Community 4 zoomed in on a Catholic family living in different corners of the Universe. Loneliness, separation and high-tech life has affected the youth of the family. When the daughter falls in love with a robot, it took the family a lot of effort to get her out of this situation. This was possible only because of good upbringing, close family ties and elders insisting on a strong prayer life. Community 6 presented the theme through a quiz format; three strong pillars that will become the foundation of futuristic families – Health, Relationships, and above all, Prayer. Community 9 gave a wonderful message that no matter how much we progress, how much technology evolves or how busy life becomes, Christian families will always remain one in Christ. They will always remain rooted to their SCCs. Community 10 showed how social and family relations would be 50 years hence, with machines mixing with humans, both spiritually and physically.

Bishop Barthol was kind enough to record and send a very important message for this occasion. He began by commending our parish for taking up an event of this magnitude during these challenging times. Connecting with the theme of Futuristic Families, he said that he believes that since earthly families are designed by God, they can never be destroyed. Being the fifth World Day of the Poor, he appealed to all to see every needy person in our SCCs as part of "MY" family. Only then can we be inspired to reach out and ensure that there is **no one in want** in our SCCs.

This was indeed a unique Rally - one we cannot forget. Of course, it did not have the buzz and excitement of a live event. But whenever we look back at this Rally, we shall remember the virus that changed human life so drastically. And yes, in 2022, we have faith that the Kutumb Utsav will be back bigger and better than ever!!!

You can watch our SCC Rally on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU5MtvNgBc0&t=644s>



Eliza Mathew

St Joseph Church, Goregaon (E)



## MARIAN NITE 2021

The feast of the Nativity of our Lady saw our parishioners locked out of church and spiritual activities and devotions. After the overwhelming response received last year and to continue the trend, the Parish YouTube team organised Marian Nite 2021 to honour and celebrate Our Lady, while offering the parishioners a platform to showcase their talents.

The team received over 26 entries this year. Each performance was truly remarkable, and showcased the hidden talents of our parishioners across all age groups. They ranged from prayers to Our Lady, comedy skits, songs and dances in several languages. It also included a special message by our Parish Priest, Fr Anselm Gonsalves. The programme started with a beautiful prayer service conducted by the Parish Women's Cell, followed by an original hymn dedicated to Mary, composed by one of the SCCs. The very talented Symbeline composed a meaningful East Indian Song on a patient's struggle with cancer. The parish Youth Group made sure we had our share of laughs through a skit that focused on spreading awareness about COVID-19 vaccination. We also had a very young budding violinist performing for Our Lady. The traditional Goan Mandos and East-Indian Masala song performances had everyone grooving and dancing to their beat. Flavian and his puppet, Andy, humoured the audience throughout the programme with their COVID-19 tales. Many performances enlightened the audience with their messages of love, devotion and unity – a perfect blend of prayer, fun and raising awareness.



Keeping with the theme of the Girl Child, the programme was compered by a trio of girls – youth group members - Anoushka and Sharlene, and catechist Mary. They made sure the audience was entertained, and built up the excitement for each performance.

While the programme took about two hours, the effort put in by the participants was noteworthy. From recording the videos to editing and collating the entire programme was a challenge for the team, but truly worthwhile at the end. The event wouldn't be possible without the support of the Parish Team and the talented parishioners.

Marian Nite 2021 was entertaining and delightful. People enjoyed watching the Marian Nite and felt part of the larger parish community. Even though the lockdown had us confined to our homes, it was truly a time of learning and evolution, especially in terms of technology. The event received a lot of positive feedback, and the parish hopes to continue organising such events to reach out, unite and uplift the parish community.

The entire programme is on the parish YouTube channel, click on <https://youtu.be/ejoPHYH-SYM>



**Clarence & Denver**  
Holy Cross Church, Kurla West



## ORLEM SCCs: SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL OUTREACH

United in Faith and Solidarity! The Parish Councillors and Animators of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Orlem went the extra mile to ensure that Spiritual and Social outreach continued all through the past year. The pandemic did not deter them; they brainstormed, came up with novel ideas, and continued to be in touch with their communities, keeping in mind the appropriate norms. Here are glimpses of some of our activities organised in 2021:

**March:** Women's Day was celebrated honouring the 'Sheroes' – the Domestic Workers and Senior Citizens.

**April:** Holy Week. Nivedita Community children, youth and adults commemorated Maundy Thursday by washing the feet of their



family members and walking the Stations of the Cross with Jesus (on Zoom) to commemorate His Passion, Death and Resurrection.

**June:** School children were facilitated with fees and mobilephones, with the help of generous donors. School fees of about 300 poor children, whose parents were jobless, were paid. With the digital divide proving to be the biggest hurdle in online education, we stepped in to bridge the gap to ensure that our poor children do not miss out on education. Needy students were provided notebooks and stationery.

**July:** Parents, especially the elders and Senior Citizens, were remembered on Parents' Day and Grandparents' Day. Gifts, Snacks and Quiz time was organised for them.

**Monsoon project:** Raincoats, umbrellas and plastic sheets were distributed to those affected by

the pandemic. When the Cyclone Tauktae wrecked many homes, our school premises were thrown open to those whose houses were damaged; all these people were provided with food, toiletries and shelter. The following day, all those whose houses were flooded with water pouring in were provided with plastic sheets.

**August:** Independence Day celebrations were held where the community was asked to prepare items in the tricolour.



One Community invited their building cleaner to hoist the flag; she was overwhelmed and honoured to have been selected! She was also gifted with a mobile for her school-going daughter.

**September:** September 8 marks the birthday of Our Blessed Mother Mary, and Girl Child Day was celebrated by felicitating them. We held a Fancy Dress competition where the girls dressed as their favourite Christian female religious figure.

**October:** In the Mission month, all the Cells, Associations and SCCs gave a 20-minute session, which included praise and worship and a short talk on the work they do. The SCCs highlighted that Small Christian Communities are the thrust of the Archdiocese and the focus now is to build Small Human Communities and Clusters.

**Reaching out to the needy:** The Tamil Community reached out to a Children's Ashram in Malad with food grains, toiletries etc. The SCCs and parishioners constantly let their generosity reach the Church, so that those in need could be helped.



**Michelle Pinto**

Parish SCC Coordinator  
Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Orlem

## VIBRANT SCCs IN MUMBRA-DIVA

- St Joseph Community #1, Mumbra helped two families during their dear one's funeral by being with them, providing the family food for a few days; helped a family by saying the prayers and providing snacks from the community collection during Mother Mary's Image house to house, funeral and Month's mind Mass. Another poor family was helped at their son's wedding by decorating the church, singing, and helping to serve. This Community celebrates the birthdays of their community members every month, and has started offering a Mass for them.
- 17 families of Holy Family Community #3 Mumbra completed reciting the Rosary continuously for 500 days everyday on the phone during the lockdown. They celebrated that day as a community, and also honoured little children (aged 5 and 6) who conducted the Rosary over the phone. During Lent 2021, they contributed money and gave for the mission Work; they also contributed money to help a sick person, besides providing rations even to families of other faiths.
- Women's Day was celebrated on Sept. 8, 2021; the men did beautiful decoration, and helped in serving them. There were 120 women participants in Mumbra and 90 in Diva, including young girls.
- During the Novena for Sept. 8, St Joseph Community got an opportunity to conduct the Novena for two days in the church; on the remaining days, they conducted it in homes where there were sick people.
- On Christ the King Day, we prayed especially for all the men and young boys during the Mass, and gave them the opportunity to take part in the liturgy. Some read the readings in their own languages; others took part in the offertory procession.
- Men's Day was celebrated with a small function; the entire preparation, decoration and fun programme was conducted by women. There were 24 men and young boys in Mumbra and 30 men and young boys in Diva.
- On Oct. 17, we celebrated Senior Citizens and Grandparents' Day. PPC members and the youth conducted it; the Senior Citizens were assisted to come to church; those who could not come were honoured in their respective homes by Coordinators, animators, youth and children visiting their homes and giving them gifts.
- Youth Day and Children's Day were also celebrated. The SCC Coordinators, animators and some members helped with registration, decoration, and conducting the programme.
- The cleaning of the church premises was undertaken by 23 people from all four communities of Mumbra.
- At a vaccination camp recently in Diva Church, Coordinators and animators helped the people to enlist; elderly of all faiths were helped to come to the centre.

**Wilma D'Souza**

Parish SCC Coordinator  
St Joseph Church, Mumbra





## चर्च आले आमच्या दारी

आमचे उरण धर्मग्राम तसे पाहिले तर थोडे ग्रामीण व काही शहरी भागामध्ये मोडते. उरण धर्मग्रामात ४५० वर्षापूर्वी मिशनरी येऊन लोकांना ख्रिस्ताची ओळख दिली. आता तर उरण धर्मग्राम हा दिवसेंदिवस विकसित होत चालला आहे. त्यामुळे उरणचे नैसर्गिक सौंदर्य हे आज लुप्त पावत चालले आहे. द्रोणागौरी डोंगरावर छानसे जुने पडके चर्चची इमारत आहे आणि त्याच्या कुशीमध्ये विसावलेली ख्रिस्ती वस्ती आहे जी पाच समुदायामध्ये विभागलेली आहेत.

१. दर्यामावली, कोळीवाडा
२. वेलंकनी माता, चाणजे
३. सेंट अँथोनी, उरण
४. सेंट ज्यूड, मोरा
५. सेंट फ्रान्सिस झेवियर, न्हावा

अशा जवळपास शुद्धता माता चर्च पासून पंचवीस ते तीस कि. मी. अंतराच्या परिसरामध्ये हे समुदाय विखुरलेले आहेत. अशा ठिकाणी आमचे लाडके रेव्ह. फा. मार्शल लोपीस आणि सिस्टर्स मेरी, सेवरीन आणि कन्सेप्शन या अथक परिश्रम घेत कार्यरत आहेत.

गेल्या दोन वर्षांपासून कोविड - १९ च्या आलेल्या महामारीमुळे सर्व जनजीवन विस्कळीत होऊन अचानक लॉकडाऊन लागले त्यामुळे धार्मिक स्थळे, विद्यालये, उद्योग, कार्यालये, बाजार पेठा आणि इतर अनेक ठिकाणे जिथे - जिथे लोकांची गर्दी होईल अशी सर्व ठिकाणावर निर्बंध लावण्यात आले. त्याचे कारण एकच होते कि तेव्हा या आजाराविषयी उपचार आणि नियंत्रण कसे करावयाचे याबाबत जागरूकता झाली नव्हती. सर्व लोक परमेश्वराच्या भरवश्यावर या महामारीतून बचाव कसा होईल म्हणून प्रार्थना करत होते.

नंतर कालांतराने अनलॉक सुरु झाले व टप्प्याने परिस्थिती सुरळीत होत गेली. त्यानंतर व्हॅक्सीन आली. तरीसुद्धा सावधानता बाळगत एक - एक गोष्टी सुरु होत गेल्या. पूर्वी बंद झालेली सर्व चर्चस ३० ते ५० टक्क्यांच्या क्षमतेने सुरु झाले परंतु चर्चमध्ये सगळ्यांना सहभाग घेता येत नव्हता. विशेषकरून बालके आणि ज्येष्ठ नागरिक यांच्यावर कडक बंधने होती.

सालाबादप्रमाणे यंदासुद्धा ऑक्टोबरच्या ७ तारखेला रोझरी मातेच्या सन्मानार्थ संपूर्ण ऑक्टोबर महीना फातिमा माऊलीच्या कुटुंब भेटीचा महीना म्हणून पाळला गेला. रेव्ह. फा. मार्शल लोपीस यांच्या मार्गदर्शनाखाली निवडक सेवक नेत्यांच्या सहाय्याने पाचही समुदायामध्ये प्रत्येक कुटुंबाचे दिवस आणि वेळ ठरवून नियोजन केले गेले आणि सर्व कुटुंबामध्ये जाऊन भेटी आणि ओळख करून घेण्याचे फा. मार्शल यांनी आपले विचारव्यक्त केले. त्यामुळे पाचही समुदायातील सेवक नेते त्यांच्या ह्या निर्णयाचे स्वागत केले. ठरलेल्या वेळापत्रकानुसार गाव परिवारात ऑक्टोबर महीन्यात पवित्र जपमाळेच्या रोझरीला सुरुवात झाली तेव्हा इमाजीचे पावित्र्य लक्षात घेऊन फातिमा माऊलीची इमाज एका घरातून दुसऱ्याच्या घरात जात असताना लहान बालके, स्त्रिया आणि तरुण - तरुणी यांची मोठ्या प्रमाणात मिरवणुकीमध्ये सहभाग घेतला. जणूकाही चर्चच आमच्या दारी आल्याची अनुभूती आम्हास आली. जी बालके आणि ज्येष्ठ नागरिक यांना चर्चमध्ये येता येत नव्हते, त्यांच्या चेहऱ्यावरील उत्साह हे सर्वकाही सांगून जात होता. ईश्वरप्रिती आणि परस्परप्रितीचा असा संगम याअगोदर कुठे पाहायला मिळाला नव्हता. हे सर्व करत असताना समुदायामध्ये सर्व सेवक नेत्यांनी अतिशय महत्वाची जबाबदारी पार पडली. कोविड - १९ च्या शासकीय नियमांची अंमलबजावणी करणे तसेच रोझरीचे पावित्र्य राखणे यात तसूभरसुद्धा ढिलाई दिसली नाही.

श्री. डॉमनिक कोळी, उरण





## मुलगामी ख्रिस्ती समाज (S.C.C.)

इतिहास हा वर्तमान काळाची सुंदरता पाहण्यास फार उपयुक्त ठरतो. जेव्हा आपण एखादी चांगली किंवा वाईट गोष्ट वर्तमान काळात पाहतो तेव्हा त्याचा इतिहास पाहणे फार महत्त्वाचे असते. मुलगामी परिवार बांधणी लहान ख्रिस्ती समुदाय हे वृक्ष मुंबई सरधर्मप्रांतात टप्पाटप्प्याने मोठे होत आहे. फळाफुलांनी बहरलेले आहे.

खरे पाहिले असता ख्रिस्तसभेची सुरुवात लहान ख्रिस्ती समूहात झाली आहे. प्रेषितांची कृत्ये २:४०-४७ व ४:३२-३५ आपल्याला सांगते की, विश्वास ठेवणारे सर्व एकत्र आले आणि त्यांचे जे काही होते ते सामायिक होते. प्रत्येकाला जशी गरज लागत असे तस - तसे सर्वांना ते वाटून देत असे. ते दररोज एक चिंतन घरोघरी भाकर मोडत असत व देवाची स्तुती करत असत. आद्य ख्रिस्ती लोक ह्या लहान ख्रिस्ती समुहाद्वारे समृद्ध व संपन्न ख्रिस्ती जीवन जगून हर्षाने व प्रसन्नतेने राहत होते. ख्रिस्ताच्या मरणानंतर शिष्य व इतर अनुयायी एकत्र आले. एकत्र प्रार्थना केली, एकत्र जेवले. त्या गटातील एकही व्यक्ती उपाशी राहू नये, बाहेर पडू नये म्हणून ख्रिस्तामध्ये एक समूह त्यांनी निर्माण केला. तोच हा खरा लहान ख्रिस्ती समूह.

हे चांगले कार्य करता करता हा समूह संपूर्ण जगभर पसरला. त्यांच्यातून अनेक गट निर्माण झाले. अनेकांनी आपापल्या परीने ख्रिस्ताचे कार्य पुढे नेण्याचा प्रयत्न केला. परंतु या चांगल्या कार्यात आपली ख्रिस्ती ओळख आपण विसरून गेलो. म्हणजेच आपण सर्व ख्रिस्ताचे शिष्य आहोत, आपलं देणं - घेणं, खानं - पिनं, उठणं - बसणं एकत्र असावं ही भावना विसरून गेलो होतो. परंतु अशा परिस्थितीत हा इतिहास आहे कि देव कोणाच्यातरी द्वारे इतिहासाची पुनरावृत्ती करीत असतो. ही संधी ख्रिस्ताने आपल्या मुंबई सरधर्मप्रांताला, बिशप बॉस्को पेन्हा यांच्याद्वारे दिली. बिशप बॉस्को पेन्हा ह्यांना पवित्र आत्म्याद्वारे प्रभावित करून या मुलगामी ख्रिस्ती समुहाचा प्रवक्ता देवाने बनवले. १९८५ साली सेमेनेरीत रेक्टर असताना त्यांनी काही ब्रदरांना घेऊन हा ख्रिस्ती समाजाला शोभणीय आणि खऱ्या ख्रिस्ती जीवनाचा अर्थ सांगणारा प्रकल्प सुरू केला. सुरुवातीला एका पॅरीशमध्ये, नंतर पुढचं पॅरीश अस करता - करता फक्त मुंबईतच नव्हे तर संपूर्ण भारतात मुलगामी ख्रिस्ती समाज हा शब्द प्रत्येक ख्रिस्ती व्यक्तीला परिचित झाला. बिशप बॉस्को पेन्हाने हेच दाखवून दिलं कि हजारो ख्रिस्ती लोक एकत्र येणं शक्य नसलं तरी आपल्या खेड्यापाड्यात, गावात, शेजोळात आपण हा ख्रिस्ती समूह स्थापन करू शकतो.

सुरुवातीला कोणत्याही प्रकल्पाचा स्वीकार करताना अनेक अडचणी येतात. बिशप बॉस्को पेन्हा आणि काही फादरांना खूप जड गेलं. ही संकल्पना पटत नव्हती. पण बिशप बॉस्को पेन्हाने धीर आणि हिंमत सोडली नाही. आपल्या पदाचा आणि आपल्या स्वर्गीय दानाचा उपयोग करून मोहरीच्या दान्याचं झाड केलं आहे. आणि या झाडावर अनेक ख्रिस्तरूपी पाखरं विसावा घेत आहेत. आणि खरोखर हा समूह किती उपयुक्त आहे, फायदेशीर आहे, त्याचे किती फायदे आहेत हे आज आपण अनुभवत आहोत.

लहान ख्रिस्ती समूहाची Home to Rome आणि Rome to Home. ही संकल्पना खूप चांगली आहे. आणि त्याद्वारे प्रभू येशूचे कार्य व सुवार्ता प्रत्येक ख्रिस्ती कुटुंबात पोहचवण्यास खूप मदत होते. प्रत्यक्षात पोपसाहेब, बिशप्स आणि धर्मगुरू प्रत्येक कुटुंबात पोहचू शकत नाहीत. पण लहान ख्रिस्ती समुहाच्या प्रकल्पाच्या साहाय्याने शेजोळ गटाच्या रूपात शेजोळ प्रमुख त्या कुटुंबात पोहचत असतो. आणि प्रार्थनेद्वारे, सभेद्वारे व कुटुंबभेटीने त्यांच्या सुख दुःखात एकरूप होत असतो. सेवक नेत्यांमार्फत लोकांच्या अडचणी, गरजा, धर्मगुरू व बिशपा पर्यंत पोहचतात. तसेच पोपसाहेब आणि बिशप साहेब जे संदेश देतात ते लोकांपर्यंत पोहचू शकतात. आद्य ख्रिस्ती लोकांच्या परंपरेनुसार आज देखील आपण ख्रिस्ती समूह म्हणून एकत्र येतो. सात पायऱ्यांची प्रार्थनेद्वारे देवाच्या वचनाची ओळख करून देतो. देवाची स्तुती करतो व त्यानंतर आपल्या लहान ख्रिस्ती समुहाच्या अडचणी, गरजा सोडवण्याचा प्रयत्न करतो.

आज मी एक धर्मगुरू म्हणून मला या मुलगामी ख्रिस्ती समूहाचा अभिमान आहे. गेल्या महिन्यात आमच्या गावात त्यांनी सण साजरा केला. जवळ जवळ एक हजार लोकं एकत्र जेवली. हे जेवण शेजोळातल्या सियांनी आणि पुरुषांनी केलं होतं. ते चित्र पाहून मन भरून गेलं. तेथे सर्व फादर्स - सिस्टर्स, प्रापंचिक एकत्र येऊन स्नेहभोजन घेतले.

दुसऱ्या एका गावात एक व्यक्ती आजारी होती, ६ लाख गोळा करायचे होते. गावातून ५०-६० हजार गोळा केले. त्याचप्रमाणे एका गावापरिवारात त्यांनी ३१ शेजोळे (Cluster) बनवली आहेत. प्रत्येक तारखेप्रमाणे शेजोळाला नंबर दिलेले आहेत. प्रत्येक तारखेनुसार प्रत्येक शेजोळ आपल्या शेजोळात रोझरीचे आयोजन करतात. हा कार्यक्रम ते अनेक वर्षांपासून राबवत आहेत. मातृ - पितृ दिन, शिक्षक दिन, रोझरी, सणाचे आयोजन असे एक नि अनेक कार्यक्रम गावात होत असलेले पाहताना खरं चर्च गावात आहे असं वाटतं.

असा हा ख्रिस्ताला अभिप्रेत असलेला समाज आपण लहान ख्रिस्ती समुहाद्वारे करू शकतो. प्रत्येक ख्रिस्ती कुटुंब हा आपला ख्रिस्तसभेचा पाया आहे. अशा ह्या प्रत्येक ख्रिस्ती कुटुंबापर्यंत पोहोचण्यासाठी ख्रिस्तसभेने लहान ख्रिस्ती समुहाच्या माध्यमाने जगावे ही तात्पुरती सोय नसून ती पवित्र आत्म्याची प्रेरणा आहे.

फा. सायमन रॉड्रिक्स (उत्तन)



A Synodal Church implies that the People of God who constitute the Church walk or journey together. The Logo of the Synod (designed by a French artist) depicts the Synodal Church, represented by 15 silhouettes that includes the people of God (Church), children, youth, parents, elders, sick, bishops, clergy, religious etc. all walking together. It is interesting to note (in the silhouette) that the bishops, priests and religious are not in front of the crowd but among them. And all walk together. A truly synodal Church ought to walk together as depicted in the logo.

Keep updated – visit [www.synodindia.com](http://www.synodindia.com) and [www.synod.va](http://www.synod.va)

## Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

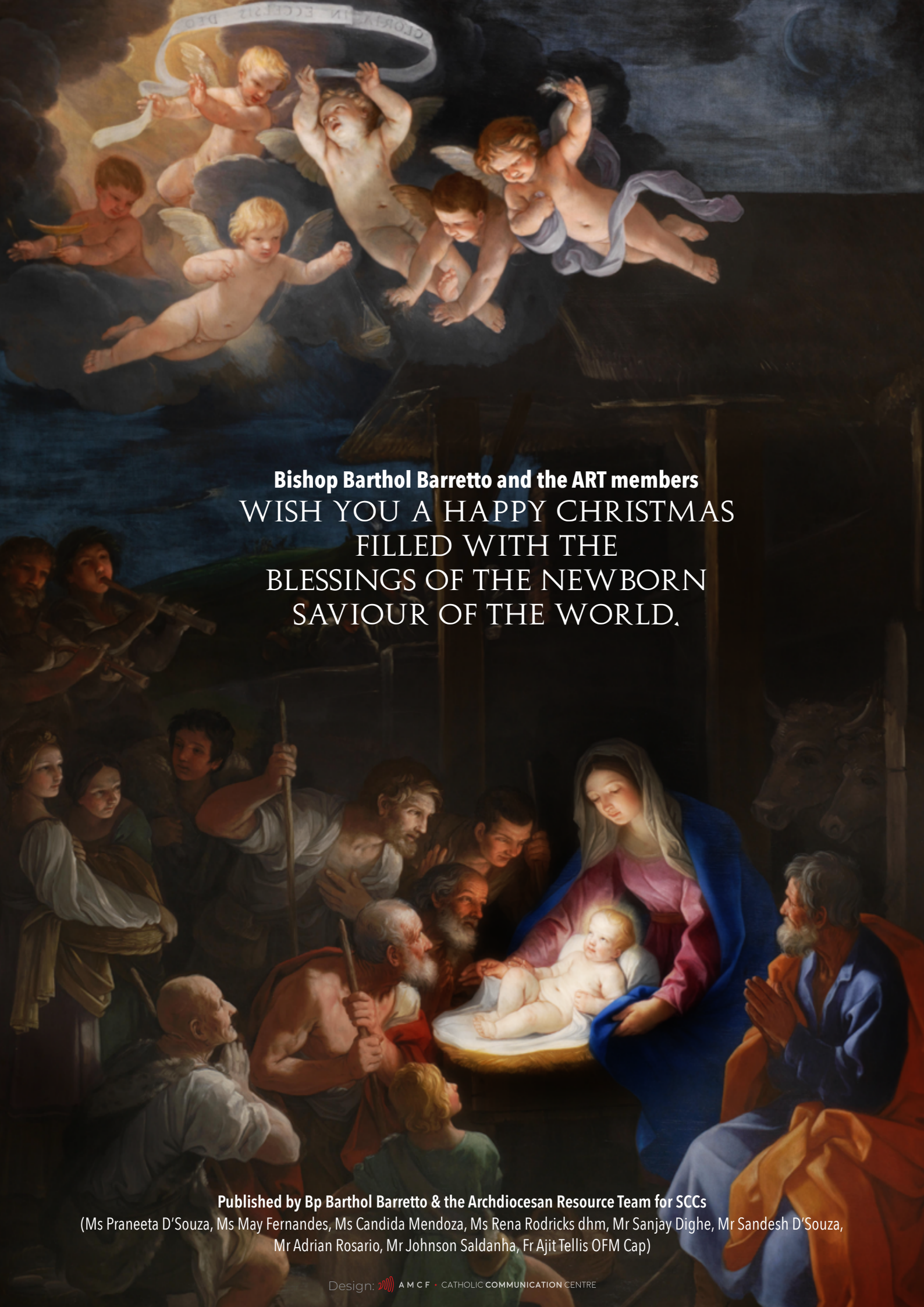
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.







**Bishop Barthol Barretto and the ART members**  
**WISH YOU A HAPPY CHRISTMAS**  
**FILLED WITH THE**  
**BLESSINGS OF THE NEWBORN**  
**SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.**

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