



Celebrating COMMUNITY

VOICE OF THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

April 2021

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Easter Joy

“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” (1 Cor. 15:14) It is our faith in the Resurrection that makes us uniquely who we are – an Easter people! This means that we profess the Risen Lord, the One who broke through the shackles of suffering and death into a glorious way of living. This also means bearing witness to this way of living: sharing the joy, sharing the love and sharing all that we have been blessed with, so that all may experience God’s unlimited bounty. Easter gives us hope and encouragement in a world torn by pain and sorrows, evil habits, dangerous addictions, despair, discouragement or doubt.

This has been the experience of many of our SCC Coordinators and Animators during the ongoing pandemic. They have seen a ‘death-resurrection’ taking place in the lives of the people in their respective Communities: the victims of COVID-19, their grieving families; daily wage earners; migrant workers who walked thousands of kilometers, who have died on the road and in train accidents; senior citizens living all by themselves; the sick and homebound; the poor who had to struggle for even the basic necessities; others finding it difficult to pay their medical bills; children who needed assistance to attend online classes - the list is endless. What is striking is that a small, invisible virus has brought the entire world to its knees. Everyone seems to be in a helpless and hopeless situation. Such situations may either shatter our faith and make us doubt the existence of God, or they may make us surrender to the unsearchable design of the Almighty,

like Job in the Old Testament (Job 1:21, 2:10, 5: 8-9). Here, I am reminded of the consoling and comforting words of St Peter: “these trials will show that your faith is genuine.” It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold – though your faith is far more precious than mere gold (cfr 1 Peter 1:7). Look beyond the Cross to the Resurrection, always remembering that God’s promise is true.

And as I conclude, I would like to bring to mind Pope Francis’ message to his global audience at the Easter Vigil in April 2020: “Even from the grave, Jesus brings life. May the hearts of those who have enough be open to filling the empty hands of those who do not have the bare necessities; tonight, we acquire a fundamental right that can never be taken away from us: the right to HOPE”. Our Archdiocesan SCC theme of “**No One in Want**” resonates beautifully our Holy Father’s message. I have absolute admiration for our SCC Coordinators and Animators, our very own “frontline warriors” who have gone out on a limb, cutting through the barriers of caste, religion and societal status to become beacons of HOPE to our unfortunate sisters and brothers, all through this pandemic. Yes! We are an Easter people; let us rejoice in our Lord’s Resurrection. Let us continue to spread this joy enthusiastically through our acts of mercy and works of charity, heeding the fundamental call to love our neighbour. As true Christians, we must do all in our power to ensure that “**NO ONE IS IN WANT**” in our Communities, our Parish, our Neighbourhood, so that we will experience Easter Joy and continue to be an Easter people always.

✠ **Barthol Barretto**

Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay &
Bishop in-charge of SCCs, Archdiocese of Bombay

THE SPIRIT OF EASTER RISING WITHIN US

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused untold misery for many and has disturbed life across all possible spectrums. For those who have a habit of looking at the other perspective, notice that “Being with myself,” was a side effect of the pandemic. We were forced to ‘pause’ from: the rat race, the competitions, accumulating material possessions, travel and of course from damaging our fragile environment. Many of us did turn ‘inwards’, brought in a kind of inner ‘silence’ and gained immensely. The pandemic also brought out the ‘big heart’ that people possess and showed the world how inner happiness is poured out to make others less miserable and lighten their suffering.

Our Church calendar also offers a time ‘to pause’. And then, there is Easter!

Those of us who have read about Easter islands, will know of the society and how it wantonly destroyed itself by wrecking its environment, which was sustaining them.

People with near-death experience speak about a ‘light’ that they had seen. Post this, they tend to spend more time with their families, become more loving, kind, appreciative of relationships, of service to others and start believing that their lives have a purpose.

During this Easter, we have a choice - identify with the latter set of people or with the society that destroyed itself. Can we allow Jesus to RISE within ourselves? Can we have the spirit of Easter rising within us?

During Lent, a common trend is to fast from certain foods, parties, alcohol, and smoking while some others make conscious efforts to give time to scriptures and attend special services including the Mission preaching. It is a different kind of life we try to live during this ‘pause’ of 40 days. It does make a difference to our health, which is otherwise neglected in the hustle and bustle of life, and also to our spiritual wellbeing. If we allow Jesus to rise within ourselves there will be a difference at Easter and thereafter. During Lent, we are with Jesus in His Passion and death. At Easter, if we allow Him to rise within ourselves, we will continue the ‘fasting’. Then:

- We will look out for ways to increase our success at quitting, or at least reduce by avoiding situations that stimulate one to smoke and replacing them with non-smoking activities.

- We will realise that there are other ways of adding bliss and ecstasy to our life than by ingesting some chemicals in the various forms of alcohol, whose detrimental effects on our bodies are seen after a period of time.
- We will examine our diet and identify at least one unhealthy food or drink item that is consumed regularly; make a commitment to ourselves to cut it down significantly or eliminate it, then replace it with a healthy substitute.
- We will be able to see the living relationship that we share with our environment. We will be able to think of ways of healing our planet and make conscious efforts to contribute in any manner that we can, to improve our climate.
- We will become conscious of every fresh intake of oxygen without which we are dead. We will realise that we have forgotten to breathe properly, which we did when we were infants.
- We will notice that we do not have time for improving our physical condition, controlling our weight and having a ‘quiet’ mind. We will then try to fit in regular workouts, at least walks and meditation in our daily activities.



- We will feel the need to participate actively in religious activities. We will look out for ways to improve our spiritual growth and development. Regular personal prayer and study of God's Word, meditation and centering prayer which help us stay in touch with the Divine will become our focus among other things needed for daily living. They will help us deal with the daily stress of life and keep us focused on our faith in God's saving power.

Over a period of time, we will realise a slow transformation taking place within us. We can draw a parallel between the passion of Jesus and our personal growth and transformation. The cruelty of His suffering led to His glorious Resurrection. The Resurrection within us gives each of our lives meaning, direction and the opportunity to start over - no matter what our circumstances are.

Now, with a healthy body, serene mind and higher spirituality, we will become more tolerant, compassionate, kind, loving to ourselves and empathise with ourselves. They say, perception is projection - you project what you carry inside onto the world around you. The world is a reflection of your inner thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs. When you take care of yourself, you become a better person for others and you can give yourself to those who need you. Whether you are a businessman/woman, a spouse, a parent or a youth, it all starts with you, to be spiritually, mentally and physically strong. And then you will yearn to pour out the goodness and happiness inside you to the world around you. You will realise that the more you give, the more you get; the more loving you are, the more love you get. This is a continuous cycle and thus your growth trajectory - well being, wellness, spirituality and relationship - will be northbound.

With my three decades of experience in the SCCs of Mumbai across four different parishes, I can say with confidence that there is lots to be done which can be done and lots to be achieved which can be achieved. With a transformed self, you can contribute immensely to the world around you. Your SCCs need you to make your world a better place to live in. Your SCC is in need of persons who can:

- Bring the Church to the neighbourhood, be one with the Universal Church, create an atmosphere of community prayer, provide solace to those grieving, give company to the lonely, give a listening ear to the depressed, spread love in broken

families, appreciate the caregivers, nurture talent, provide a platform for displaying gifts people are endowed with, give direction to those who have lost theirs, help in having a clean surrounding, reduce pollution, appreciate Nature, guide with reducing and recycling waste, to bring justice to those oppressed, help youngsters in education/career planning/financial planning/job networking and settling in life. And the list goes on.

Anyone and everyone can contribute. If you think the SCC is too vast and spread out, then start with the Cluster that you are in. Start small and eventually you will see how your good work will grow slowly, steadily and progress in the whole of your SCC. You will be able to embrace the Mission of Jesus in your life and live out the Word of God in your Cluster or SCC. Your resurrection phase will now merge with true community living. This phase exhibits acceptance of individuality, freedom and recognition of latent talent. It further allows delegation of responsibility and openness of communication. You will be creating joy and moving towards establishing the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Life is not all roses. There will be some brickbats thrown at you, some gossiping, some back-stabbing. With a strong will and good mental health, you will be able to ward off the external difficulties thrown at you and will ensure that it does not affect your wellbeing. By and by, these people, which are very few in number, will collapse and give up. If they do not, find a different avenue, and you will be blessed with one because of your resolve. Remember, God doesn't close one door without getting you ready to open another with bigger and greater things. And finally, when it is time to hang up your boots, you will be happy that you have left good footprints on the sands of time, you have left the place a little better than you found it, and you will go with a virtuous feeling that at any rate you have not wasted your time but have done your best.

A wise saying of Picasso - 'The meaning of life is to find your gift, and the purpose of life is to give it away'. With the Spirit of Easter dwelling in you, go find the meaning and purpose of your life. I found mine.

Michael Rodrigues

Counsellor, Trainer and an ardent admirer of SCCs
Parishioner of Sacred Heart Church, Andheri (East)
Former FILMC Member and Former Secretary of Laity Training Centre,
Archdiocese of Bombay

EASTER: SEASON OF LOVE, HOPE AND PEACE



“Mary!” said Jesus, and her countenance was filled with JOY on seeing the Risen Lord. (Jn 20:16)

Are we going to experience a JOYOUS Easter during this pandemic? Our participation in the Holy Week Services seems bleak with the restrictions on social, political and religious gatherings enforced once again!

The pandemic, since March 2020, has given us a reason to search for meaning in life in all circumstances, be it in prayer, socially, emotionally, physically or intellectually. All of us have gone through some degree of pain, loneliness, frustration, anger, or loss of a beloved family member or job! We are all in the same storm – be it the rich or the poor! This is an opportunity for us to identify with the poor, the marginalized and the downtrodden.

It has given us “Joy” in spending time with our beloved family members; getting to know each other’s strengths and weaknesses; reaching out to those in need in our parishes, communities, zones, or the society at large.

The disciples, Mother Mary and the women who followed Jesus experienced a period of lockdown after the Crucifixion of Jesus for fear of the Jews. Theirs was a similar experience to ours! Though it was for a very short while! Fear, lockdown, all huddled up together in the Upper Room, no one came out and

did not want to be seen or noticed by anyone for 40 days! (Jn 20:19)

The disciples were afraid, and many questions probably arose in their hearts and minds like ours! Why did I trust HIM? Why did I leave my home to follow Jesus? Had I known this would be the end, I would have never left the comfort zone of my family, friends and fishing job. Is my decision wrong? Will I be the next person to be crucified like Jesus and die the same shameful death? Now, where do I go from here – back to fishing? These may have been the doubts, fears of the disciples, after the death of Jesus on the Cross!

Lo and behold! there appeared Jesus to them in dazzling white, and they saw HIM as HE was! An experience of AWE and what a JOY to see, touch, feel, eat together, be strengthened on seeing Jesus and beholding HIM!

Jesus says to them: “Do not be afraid!” (Mt 28:10) In Luke 24:37, Jesus says: ‘Peace be with you!’ In verses 39–43, He goes further: “Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed! Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.” Their JOY was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded. In verses 42–43, He asks them, “Have you anything here to eat?” And they offered Him a piece of grilled fish, which He took and ate before their eyes.

Jesus comes to each one of us during these days in small measures. We too have experienced the Risen Jesus and experienced JOY! There have been moments of JOY, AWE, and ASTONISHMENT!

Jesus assures us, “Take Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid” (Mk 6:51) We move ahead during this pandemic leaving familiar shores and comfort zones with the JOY of the Risen Lord, with Hope and Trust in HIS unconditional love for each one of us, every moment of our lives.

Like the Good Samaritan, whom Pope Francis mentions in his Encyclical ‘*Fratelli Tutti*’ – the coordinators, animators and SCC members of the Archdiocese of Bombay have become neighbours to others (para 81). Overcoming prejudices, personal interests, historic and cultural barriers, they have reached out fearlessly and zealously to the poorest on the streets, migrants, hungry, homebound, aged and needy families of the various parishes, thus giving

Hope and Joy in times of distress and becoming a strong pillar of support to all those who have lost their jobs! Pope Francis says: “We all, in fact, are co-responsible in creating a society that is able to include, integrate and lift up those who have fallen or are suffering” (para 77). Love builds bridges and “we were made for love” (para 88). The Pope adds, particularly exhorting Christians “to recognize Christ in the face of every excluded person” (para 85).

We need to live in hope and not to give up the fight against the pandemic. Let us intensify our prayer life and together we can renew and regenerate our

lives and communities to create a better society, community and world, from the crisis!

May we continue during these days of the pandemic to experience the JOY of the Risen Jesus each moment of our lives and may Jesus give us the grace and assurance of HIS presence with us.

A Happy JOYOUS EASTER! May the Risen Jesus fill us with His Love, Hope and Peace throughout this Easter Season!

Rena Rodricks DHM

Member of ART

(Archdiocesan Resource Team) for SCCs

SCCs: OUR “GO TO” 24x7

“**Love is always at the service of others. Because love is seen in actions, not words.**”
– Pope Francis

The SCCs have come a long way: from being labelled the “neighbourhood Church” in the early days of its inception, to the present day Ministry donning many hats: that of a caregiver, a mother, a father, a sibling, a friend, a companion, a shoulder to cry on, hope to the downtrodden, the abandoned, the migrants, the homebound, families in the throes of grief – the roles are numerous and each hat worn, ably plays its part.

SCCs and the Pandemic

Until midnight of March 23, 2020, when the Government imposed a total lockdown in the country, little did we realise the severity of the pandemic which had crept upon us like a thief in the night. Our happy bubble was suddenly quashed propelling us into a nasty spin that none of us had ever experienced. With life in general coming to a grinding halt, we were in for desolate and desperate times. The SCCs of the 124 parishes of the Archdiocese of Bombay became the “Go To” for the people – as the animators risked their lives, at the peak of the pandemic, to bring solace to a stranded brother or sister.

“Giving” is one of the noblest acts we can perform. Because “giving” and “ceasing to give” are both choices made by the giver, and will stop only when the “giver” decides. The animators have in these difficult times been giving wholeheartedly, not always from

their surplus, but most often from their frugality. Do we give to be rewarded in equal proportion? If that is our intention, we are definitely treading down the wrong path. The upside of the pandemic is that it has taught us some very valuable lessons – one of them being, “**empathy for the ones most affected**” - resonating our Archdiocesan Vision of “**No One in Want**”. Like the early Christian Community and communal life, the SCCs are doing their best to reach out to the needy in the community they live in, in their parishes and society at large. Pope Francis’ exhortation to us is: “**To be part of a Christian community is to belong to a group of believers who shun selfishness and give witness to God’s love by loving and caring for one another.**”

I belong to the Parish of Sacred Heart, Andheri East. The parish is under the care of the SVD Fathers (Society of the Divine Word) who are basically Missionaries. So reaching out to persons in dire need comes very naturally to our Priests. The SVD Fathers are supported in their Missionary outreach by a large group of Lay Collaborators called the Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW). Way back in September 2019, the DDW in collaboration with the SVD Fathers, started a programme on September 8th, to coincide with the birthday of Mother Mary and the 144-foundation anniversary of the SVD Congregation. The programme titled “**Feeding the Hungry**” was an outreach of a different kind and continues even today: the members themselves cook the food and go out into the streets every Saturday, feeding the hungry and the slum-dwellers.

Besides this, when COVID-19 was at its peak, the lay president of the DDW initiated another programme as a collaborative effort of the DDW and the SVD

confreres. The project received the support and generous donations of many people of good-will which made it possible to supply ration kits to more than 8,000 families. People of all Faiths have benefitted and continue to benefit from this project.

In the parish, the SCC animators helped identify families and individuals in need, irrespective of their religious beliefs, and handed over the names and contact details to the DDW representatives /the SVD priests of the parish and the adjoining SVD campus. The good work continues but as the lockdown stipulations are easing out and job opportunities becoming available, some of these families are now willing to forfeit this act of kindness so that families, who are still struggling, can benefit.

The graciousness and selfless attitude of the SCC animators in trying their best to ensure that “No One is in Want” has rubbed off on many in the parish who are coming forward to offer assistance, as the need may be. The pandemic has awakened feelings that some of us didn’t know we possessed, apart from bringing us closer to God and our individual families. Suffering can sometimes be a blessing in disguise because it is then that we realise

and begin to value what we have which perhaps, we were till now, taking for granted.

In conclusion, let us continually remind ourselves of Pope Francis’ *Urbi Et Orbi* Easter Message, at Saint Peter’s Basilica, on April 12, 2020:

“Dear brothers and sisters,

Indifference, self-centredness, division and forgetfulness are not words we want to hear at this time. We want to ban these words forever! They seem to prevail when fear and death overwhelm us, that is, when we do not let the Lord Jesus triumph in our hearts and lives. May Christ, who has already defeated death and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, dispel the darkness of our suffering humanity and lead us into the light of his glorious day, a day that knows no end”.

We are an Easter people and hallelujah is our song. May the joy and peace of our Risen Lord reign in our hearts and homes, helping us to be “Christ-like” at all times, especially when the going gets tough.

Candida Mendoza

Parish SCC Coordinator

Sacred Heart Church, Andheri (East)

Member of ART

(Archdiocesan Resource Team) for SCCs

Chowk: A journey of Strength, Consolation, Joy and Hope

The pandemic has drastically affected the people of Chowk. The inhabitants have suffered greatly in terms of their fishing business, unemployment and the sudden suspension of spiritual nourishment.

Despite these difficulties, the people of Chowk have shown strength in the midst of turmoil. Ration kits were periodically distributed to the poor, throughout



last year. People willingly sacrificed a portion of the Government ration and gave it to the people who didn’t have a ration card. Some of the youth who were working in the hospitality industry lost employment but they didn’t despair. They helped their families in the fishing business and did some odd jobs.

As the restaurants, cafes and hotels have opened in a restricted setting, some of them have got their jobs back. Others are still trying, without losing confidence. A COVID-19 awareness camp was conducted for the SCC leaders and village leaders by members of the Municipal Corporation. The leaders then spread the information gained, at the community level. Six COVID-19 antigen testing camps were conducted in order to assess the health of the villagers. Those who tested positive were not ostracized, but instead, given a warm welcome when they returned from isolation.

The restrictions imposed on religious places have significantly impacted the villagers. They rely greatly on the Eucharist and have an immense devotion to Our Lady. The restrictions caused a bit of stress.

It felt like God had abandoned them. To dispel that thought, Masses were streamed live on YouTube and loudspeakers installed at various locations of the village. One of the greatest consolations they experienced was venerating our Blessed Mother and the Blessed Sacrament from their doors and windows as the procession to honour our Blessed Mother on the Feast of the Nativity and the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast of Christ the King, made its way through the village. The procession was managed by five volunteers and served to bring peace and consolation to the villagers. They felt that the Spirit of the Lord was with them in the village.

There have been moments of joy too, as the Parish Youth Group won the first prize at the Deanery level competitions such as “bringing scripture alive” and “Christmas Crib and Star”. The Communities conducted Christmas Crib and Christmas Star competitions to usher in the spirit of Christmas. On the occasion of the Parish Feast, a cultural singing and dance competition was organized for the SCCs. Since large gatherings are not permitted, the programme was streamed live on YouTube. The programme was a huge success. It garnered more than 13,000 views on YouTube. These moments of joy helped in keeping the atmosphere positive.

The people of Chowk hope for a better future. This year with the help of some SCC leaders, youth and social worker students of Nirmala Niketan, a survey of youth was conducted in order to assess the situation of youth at Chowk. The data of 400



single youth aged from 17 to 30 has been collected. It is now important to analyse this data and come up with a plan to help the youth so that they can shape a better future for themselves, the community and the Church. The people pray for the pandemic to end and bring things back to normal, to a time when they could move freely and attend Holy Mass. It is this hope that pushes them forward.

Bro. Noel D'Souza
St Andrew Church
Uttan Chowk

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e2elinks is an initiative of the Archdiocese of Bombay designed to connect persons seeking gainful employment with employers and recruiters looking for suitably qualified personnel. This is an effort supported by professionals with rich experience in Management Consultancy, Finance, Marketing and Human Resources. The aim is to offer efficient and quick access to candidates to search jobs and post resumes, and enable employers to effectively source the required talent.

History in the Making

Anyone acquainted with the history of Sion will be aware of its Marathi nomenclature 'Sheev' implying boundary/limit. During the British era, Sion marked the end of the island city. Hence it comes as no surprise that history is always in the making, at Sion. Our Lady of Good Counsel Church (O.L.G.C.) set upon a hill, rests contentedly on one side next to Rewa Fort which now houses an Ayurveda Hospital and Sion Railway Station on the other. It has been home to the Order of Friars Minor, (O.F.M.) commonly known as Franciscans, founded by St Francis of Assisi in 1209.

There is a saying that a Franciscan is always found in the midst of common people and this has been found true during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Small Christian Communities of our parish played a vital role to see that "No One was in Want". Many communities took upon themselves the task of distribution of food grains as well as cooked food packets to families within their area. Visiting the sick and lonely and getting groceries and medicines for the senior citizens who were indoors due to the lockdown, were also part of these activities.

The parish is ethnically diverse and has a dynamic team under the able guidance of Fr Basil Lobo, Parish Priest and his assistants, who set no limits to generosity and benevolence when it comes to 'outreach' activities.

2020 – the 'annus horribilis' as we might be tempted to call it, did not dampen the enthusiasm of our Parish Priest and his team in reaching out to those most in need. From April 1, 2020, Fr Basil, along with the Priests of the Parish and some volunteers of the Order of Franciscan Seculars (O.F.S.) started an initiative that continued for nearly two months; to have meals cooked and served to around 350-400 less fortunate ones living on the streets and in the vicinity and also for those families suffering from a 'double whammy' due to the pandemic and the loss of livelihoods. Food grains were distributed eight or nine times during the lockdown period and the parish still continues to do so as and when the need arises, for the pandemic is still not over.

Fr Basil also approached the Navjeevan Social Enterprise Foundation where Ms Pauline offered to arrange varied entrepreneurship classes for the parishioners and for domestic workers to initiate small scale start-ups such as soap making and

designing artificial jewellery. Chicken breeding (poultry) was yet another initiative undertaken which was then moved to Paned in Pen (Raigad District) to assist the local tribals and farmers there. In addition, Fr Basil and his team made arrangements to purchase tables and jars of ghee, sacks of white onions and other items for sale for the Raigad Mission of the Archdiocese of Bombay. In this way our Parish Priest helped the Mission and the person who sold their produce in Mumbai. Perhaps the icing on the cake was the approval Fr Basil and Fr Julius sought and received from their Regional Superior/Provincial to purchase 25 electric sewing machines, 3 electric wet grinders and 2 dry grinders to help families tottering in poverty for want of a steady income, and to become more self-reliant.



Fr Basil also involved the parish youth to document the whole episode of the outreach of the Franciscan family in the Archdiocese of Bombay. It was difficult to move out during the lockdown period but our Parish Priest used the ambulance to move to different communities of the Franciscans in Mumbai to video shoot the outreach activities. This video is available on the YouTube channel "Joy is being Franciscan" <https://youtu.be/zjZuT1Abvgs>.

"The only limits in our life are those we impose on ourselves." - Bob Proctor. Perhaps Sion/Sheev metaphorically suggests this. Fr Basil and the priests of our parish have exemplified this in all their acts of self-giving and generosity. We pray that many more young men be inspired to join the Franciscan Friars at Sion, to work in the vineyard of our Lord.

May the Priests in our parish be blessed abundantly by Our Father in Heaven 'who sees all that is done in secret' and will reward it.

Michael Pereira

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church
Sion

Outreach @ Holy Trinity Church, Powai

Fr Cajetan Pinto, our Parish Priest, and the entire Parish Team have been very supportive and have encouraged and continued with our outreach efforts during the pandemic, meeting the needs of 180 families in addition to the SVP adopted families. The PPC Members have helped in the distribution of ration in their respective Communities. Few PPC members initiated a fund collection drive for students who could not afford to pay their fees besides requesting our Principal, Fr Simon Lopes, for fee waiver. They even got sponsors to directly help the students. A total of Rs 3,48,000/- was collected and handed over to St Anthony Church, Tembipada towards fees for the needy students for the first 3 quarters. Efforts are on for the 4th quarter also.

Our parish comprises 18 Communities spread over a vast geographical area from Powai to Bhandup. Most Communities are functioning well.

With the enthusiasm shown by the Core Group, one SCC had another physical meeting; Brother Clinton and our parish SCC Coordinator explained the method of conducting meetings, activities and also reporting. As Christmas was approaching, they succeeded in getting the young children to participate in a few competitions namely; drawing / painting and crib making. As the pandemic was still on in full force, all were excited to put their time and talent to fruitful use. The end result, beautiful Christmas greeting cards and cribs were designed. The contests were held online. The Core Group wishes to thank all those who helped in this endeavour namely the sponsors, the judges and the participants. The sustenance of the Community Welfare Fund and the monthly Bulletin distributed to each family were other commendable efforts of the Parish Team. Every family was encouraged to pray the Rosary in their homes but the emphasis was to pray for their neighbour.



Infant Jesus Community arranged for toiletries for 38 SVP families in our parish, as part of our Christmas contribution to the needy. We utilized some portion of our Community Fund for this activity. One member, individually distributed cakes to these families as well. Holy Communion was arranged for the 17 sick, home bound and members above 65yrs.

St Francis Xavier Community collected around Rs 15,600/- from their members and provided the SVP families with one blanket, one bedsheet, one towel and a Cadbury chocolate, for Christmas.

St Mother Teresa Community conducted virtual Christmas Carols.

Gonsalo Garcia Community donated a sum of Rs One Lakh (collected from their members) to Our Lady's Home at Dadar after receiving an appeal from the Director, Fr Elias D'Souza.

Our Lady of Fatima Community renovated their Grotto by collecting funds from their members. We recorded the Feast Mass and uploaded it on to our group. Children prepared a short dance/song video which was coordinated by our SCC Coordinator and circulated on the Feast Day. Our Youth assisted by our SCC Coordinator again presented short videos on Carols, etc. which was circulated just before Christmas.

St Jude Community distributed ration to 7 families in December. The Jesus, Mary & Joseph Group of the Community identified needy families of other faiths and distributed monthly ration and medicines. 175 members of the JMJ Group visited Sneha Sagar Ashram, Malad and distributed fruits, medicines and blankets to the children. 55 members of the JMJ Group and the Community visited Prem Daan Ashram, Airoli and distributed toiletries. As part of the Christmas contribution, 12 families sponsored a festive meal to 12 poor families in their community.

Holy Family Community reached out to families affected by COVID-19 and took care of their needs like hospitalisation, food, quarantine, etc. The Christmas programme had 17 families sharing their stories on the pandemic and coming of Jesus as a SHIELD (Christmas Message).

Don Bosco Community made a nice Community Crib in their complex which was appreciated by all.

Holy Spirit Community Animators along with 3 youth

prepared a Christmas Star which was displayed at St Xavier's High School (done every year).

Christ the King Community had a Crib Competition, the theme being Corona and its effects on our Lives.

We also reached out to Divya Prabha, Thane (A Street Shelter for Girls (24) managed by the Sisters) by donating a sum of Rs. 3,000/- from our Community Fund for Christmas along with Goody Bags. On March 21, 2021 one of our Community

Members sponsored ration for 20 families, and the Security Staff and workers of our Colony.

Reaching out to the marginalized, the senior citizens, the sick, helping with the funeral arrangements of some members, providing physical, financial and spiritual help were our outreach efforts during this pandemic.

Clarissa D'Mello

Parish SCC Coordinator
Holy Trinity Church, Powai

Team Rosarian Spreads Christmas Cheer

HOPE AND POSITIVITY @ CHRISTMAS

Christmas, the birth of our Saviour, fills us with hope and positivity. The Clergy Team of the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, Goregaon (West), along with the youth, decided to celebrate Christmas 2020 a little differently. Donning Santa caps and with joy in their hearts, they visited the grieving families – families that had lost their loved ones during the year 2020. They were welcomed lovingly; the priests led the families in prayer.

Christmas sweets were distributed to these families. Mrs. Fatima Chettiar of Epiphany Community expressed her joy, "It warmed my heart to welcome Father into my home as he prayed for us, this Christmas. My son passed away in August 2020 and I am still trying to cope with his loss". Mrs Benedicta from Divine Mercy Community said, "I lost my husband to COVID-19 just last month and we are still grieving his loss. Welcoming Father into my home during the Christmas week along with the youth lifted my spirits."

The aim was to comfort and empathise with these families and make them feel loved and cared for during the Christmas season. The pain of losing a loved one can never be fathomed.

“ Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour.

Romans 12:10

On December 31, 2020, the Rosarian youth along with Fr Anto Denish, visited the transgender community. Society in general, treats the transgender community with disdain and disrespect. However, following the teachings of Jesus, who said we must love and serve one another, Fr Anto, accompanied by the youth visited and spent some wonderful time

with them. They were welcomed and greeted warmly. Some of them shared the struggles and contempt they face each day in their lives. All were saddened to hear that even their own families did not care for them.

When their families discovered that they belonged to the third gender, they were tortured and eventually at a very young age, they left their homes and their families. Society has still not accepted them and today too, they live and support one another as a separate community. They are refused employment and shunned at every stage. Listening to them gave the youth an insight into how difficult it is for the transgender community to lead a normal life.

Fr Anto and team shared the teachings of Jesus with them and later all prayed together. Lastly, they celebrated by cutting a cake and enjoying their togetherness. It was a beautiful experience for the team. It taught them that no matter what or who we are, we are all God's children, created in His image and likeness; we must accept one another with all our human frailties and treat one another with dignity, respect and love.



Francis Rebello

Parish SCC Coordinator
Church of Our Lady of the Rosary
Goregaon (West)

Activities during the Pandemic @ St Anthony's, Mankhurd

Ration Kits: Every community contributed towards the Community Centre Collection Drive for the supply of ration kits to the needy families. Around 70 needy families were helped every month.

A fitting farewell: Funeral expenses of a few needy people were met. Condolences and Prayer Services were conducted at the homes of the bereaved families.

Joyful outreach: An outreach programme to Maa Niketan, Mermier Bal Ashram and Jan Vikas Society was organised by different communities and a donation was made to the ashram.

Blood Donation, Medical camp and Consultation: The youth donated blood at The Tata Memorial Hospital, Parel. A medical camp was conducted in the school premises to test the parishioners and others for COVID-19. Medical Consultation and dispensing of medicines were part of the drive.

Holy Week – April 2020: With the onset of the pandemic and the suspension of all Church services, thanks to Fr Francis Martis and Fr Sean Sequeira, the Church was beautifully decorated to signify the importance of these auspicious days, right from Palm Sunday to Easter.



Online Spirituality: The families in the parish participated in the online Masses, Sunday School and the Rosaries conducted by the Archdiocese. Some communities conducted Rosaries and Novenas through Zoom.

Novena to St Anthony in June 2020: The Novena in preparation for the feast of St Anthony was conducted online by our Parish Fathers, youth, choir and a few dedicated parishioners.

Nativity of our Blessed Mother Mary: In preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of our

Blessed Mother, an online Novena was initiated which was attended by many. Few communities celebrated the Feast with their members.

Vianney Sunday: The Communities and Committees came together to felicitate and thank Fr Francis Martis and Fr Sean Sequeira for their commendable service to the parish. They were presented with a video.



Christmas 2020: 9 Masses were held in the Church as well as in the school basement to accommodate only 50 members at a time. The Church was very well decorated for the same. Some communities distributed sweets and gifts to each family. The Jan Kalyan Kendra distributed gift hampers to the needy families. Christmas carols were sung online by our choir, spreading Christmas cheer.

Blessing of the sick and the old on 11th February 2021: Fr Sean visited all 10 communities to bless the sick and the old, through a prayer service.



Gregory Noronha
Parish SCC Coordinator
St Anthony Church
Mankhurd

Joyful Giving and Joyfully Serving go hand in hand @ St Blaise Parish, Amboli

GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER

Kahlil Gibran has said, “Generosity is giving more than you can and pride is taking less than you need”.

The COVID-19 Pandemic took center stage towards the end of March 2020 and its repercussions were already being felt as early as April 2020. The world was facing difficult times and almost overnight, shops, restaurants, markets, hawkers’ zones, schools, colleges, trains, road transport, flights, places of work and places of worship, were closed. Life came to a standstill with people being locked in their homes. There was fear and uncertainty all around. The world was facing difficult times and the shutting of businesses and offices left a devastating effect on many, some included even our own parishioners. Loss of jobs, salary cuts, lack of emotional support to the elderly who lived by themselves were some of the distressing matters that needed urgent attention.

The upside to this pandemic is that it has brought out the best in our people. Mission Sunday which is celebrated on the penultimate Sunday of October, was brought forward in our parish – as early as April 2020. It became our Mission at St Blaise Parish, Amboli to ensure that NO ONE SHOULD BE IN WANT during these trying moments. Our Parish Councilors themselves with the help of other parishioners began the outreach to the needy and those in distress. Donations poured in, in the form of money, groceries, vegetables, food, and most importantly people’s time and effort. The Society of the Helpers of Mary based in our parish, also

used their resources to provide ration, vegetables, masks and sanitizers free-of-cost for people who needed them.

Since there were no public Masses, there were no collection boxes being circulated in Church, But many people conscientiously and generously put money into boxes kept near the gate or came up to the parish office to make their contributions for the maintenance of the Church, replenishing the St Blaise Community Fund. Thus, the poor and the needy continued to receive from the Church the money and the rations required during these stressful times.

Our Centre for Community Organization along with some of our parishioners helped in ensuring that supplies reached every person in need, irrespective of faith. During the severe lockdown, no person was turned back. News reporters, migrants, bus drivers, conductors, police personnel – all were fed and supported.

The parish also went a step forward and on the occasion of Mission Sunday, invited the fisher folk of Uttan Pali village to Amboli. They were allowed to sell fresh fish and salted (dry) fish in the parish. This allowed them to earn their livelihood during the lockdown by selling their wares without worry. Our parishioners once again supported and the stock of fish was sold out in no time at all.

THE JOYS OF SERVING

Our Small Christian Communities too reached out in extraordinary service. One of our Communities, Mary Help of Christians, discovered the Joy of



Serving by reaching out to the people living on the streets, the migrants in addition to our own people. Senior Citizens living on their own were supported and their groceries and their daily needs were taken care of during the stringent lockdown. Some needy families were provided with groceries for four months. This community also provided groceries to The National School Hostel for Blind Girls and their efforts were heartily appreciated by the school.

The community members truly went out of their way to ensure that around 60 to 85 homeless people and migrants from Andheri J.P. Road to Juhu Lane signal were served hot tea, breakfast and lunch. Varied menus every day, served hot and fresh brought joy and hope to these lesser fortunate. Experiencing the smiles and appreciation from these homeless and

migrants indeed warms the heart and affirms our belief that there is definitely a great joy in serving.

Scripture invites us to remember the words of Jesus: “Happiness lies more in giving than in receiving” (Acts 20:35). St Paul also added, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). May God bless them all.

This was truly a Christ-filled experience for each and every one in our communities and our parish. As is said in the bible in Matthew 25: 35, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in”. Surely, Christ was present in our midst during these difficult pandemic moments.

Xavier Pires

Parish SCC Coordinator
St Blaise Church
Amboli, Andheri (West)

Beyond the Pandemic

It may seem difficult to see an unexpected good outcome, especially following the series of events that took place from the beginning of 2020; if we look ahead there is a lot of good that has come out of this unprecedented time. It is said that everything happens for a reason and that better things will always follow. We have all seen the ugly side of the pandemic, loss of lives, damage to the global economy, etc. The upside is that we have all gone through a life changing experience as compared to earlier, we now value our health, happiness and family more than anything. We have grown closer than ever. Moreover, digital communication has brought a radical change to the way we communicate while simultaneously reducing carbon footprint.

At St Anthony’s Vakola, the pandemic did not restrict us from coming together. It is not only in the good times, but even during the so called not so good times, we worked together. The Priests’ Team, Religious, the Coordinator and the Animators reached out to all those in need. The help rendered by the Parish Priest to the families in need still continues. Coordinators and Animators helped by providing dry ration, money, offering services like buying groceries, medicines, etc. during the lockdown. There are many senior citizens who stay all by themselves; a lot of help was rendered by taking them to the hospital in case of an emergency and checking on them regularly.

Technology served to bring us closer. With our Churches closed for services, the daily live-streamed online Mass by our Priests’ Team satisfied our spiritual needs. In order to stay connected there were a number of online events which began from May 2020; Chill & Skill an online summer camp organised to develop one’s passion for learning. Being the 75th Year of St Anthony’s Vakola, we had the Tonian Feast House Party, Swing and Sing - connecting our seniors and the Artist of the Month. To appreciate the unconditional love and selfless efforts of our Parents, an online programme was showcased for them.

The activities and events did not let us forget our Stars; the weekends



in August witnessed “**Saluting our Saviours**” – a tribute to Our Profound Priests, our Noble Nuns and our Frontline Warriors like our police, doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. **The Happy Hours** – Skills upgrade, an online skills camp, was conducted by the professionals of our parish in various fields like “Get fit with Daniella”, “Bake with Alisha”, “Art & Craft with Rochelle”, “Yoga with Crawford”, “Get Glamorous with Petula”, “Classic cooking with Rudolph”, “Let’s dance with Lillian” and many more. The events that followed were celebration of Teachers day, a Retro Night, YOUVAK Speaks 2020, Rosary with the youth, Let your Light Shine,

Puppet show for Children’s Day, Carolling all the Way and Christmas Customs and Symbols. The events definitely brought out the best in all, making it enjoyable for the parishioners too. The children from the Children’s Parliament tried their hands at cooking, baking, painting and presented the same on the group.

The pandemic has indeed opened newer avenues for everyone. Instead of looking at closed doors, let us look for many other open windows we have around and move ahead.

Melanie Fernandes
St Anthony Church, Vakola

MAGIC IN THE SCC

The St Ann’s SCC of St Joseph the Worker Church manifested the power of belonging during the recent pandemic in an exemplary manner, worthy of emulation by all.

Ms Rosy Gomes, who had no family and lived all by herself, suddenly took severely ill, and was admitted to Holy Family Hospital on March 4, 2020. The SSVP members helped with the hospitalisation, and arranged for her care and medication. While she was in hospital, the SCC members swung into action, holding meetings (despite the lockdown) to strategise ways and means to help her. They visited her regularly, not forgetting to constantly keep her in their prayers. Rosy had a severe lung infection, and the doctors had given up on her, but the SCC members believed (and made her believe) that she would get well. To everyone’s surprise, by the grace of God, she recovered. Owing to the pandemic, she was discharged from the hospital on March 24, 2020. The SSVP members ensured that Rosy was provided with a full-time maid.

The maid (M) was illiterate; she could neither converse properly nor use the mobile. The SCC animators visited Rosy every day, in turns. They began getting calls from Rosy’s maid M, even early in the morning or at midnight, but they were always ready to help. Despite the situation, they ventured out to assist Rosy with her daily shopping—grocery, medicines, etc. As it was difficult to get a doctor to pay Rosy a house visit, the SCC members began treating Rosy with home remedies which, fortunately, had a very good effect on her, and she began responding well. Playing

the role of peace-maker between Rosy and her maid M, the SCC members helped Rosy sail through seven months (March to October 2020) without the help of a doctor, relying on home remedies alone.

Rosy finally left for her heavenly abode on October 16, 2020, with a peace-filled heart. Arrangements for her funeral were made by the SSVP and SCC members. Although Rosy had no relatives, nobody could say that Rosy died all alone. That is the power and magic of SCC belongingness! A Month’s mind Mass was offered for her soul, and a small Prayer Service was conducted at her residence with a few SCC members. Out of the generosity of her heart, Rosy had donated the little property she owned to charitable institutions. God bless her soul!

Rosy had been a regular and well-known face at all SCC meetings and activities; she developed a bond with everyone in the SCC. Even though this community is not affluent, its members are strong in the spirit of love, care and service, and follow Christ’s teaching – “Love your Neighbour as yourself.”

In another incident, the dead body of a Catholic person (R) was lying unattended, as he had strained relations with his family. The Muslims in his neighborhood brought his body to the cemetery for the last rites. On hearing this, members of the St Ann’s Community sprang into action, participating and helping with his funeral, erasing the tag of “lonely and abandoned”. Our Muslim brothers were deeply touched and said, “We are very happy and proud of you Christians, as you are always there for one another.” Such a gratifying and emotional moment!

Other communities of our parish also held several spiritual, social and charitable activities; regular online zonal Rosaries and interactive meetings were held; seniors citizens were paid a visit wherever possible or even reached out to via a phonecall. Parents' Day in July was a pleasant surprise in one community; a musical video with old photographs and memories of families was circulated. Some community feasts were celebrated online. Financial assistance was offered to the needy. Women of St Jude Community, cooked food and took 50 food packets to the inmates of Sr Christobel's Trust, celebrating World Day of the Poor and lighting up their day. During the pandemic, the SCCs of our parish were fortunate to be able to garner help from the SVP and BECC (Bandra East Community Centre) who collaborated with St Peter's MANNA ON WHEELS,

from whom food-packets were procured and distributed daily to the needy and hungry in Bandra East. This feeding of about 400 persons daily went on for several months, and one could see people dotting the Western Express Highway, waiting for their lunch-packets to arrive at a certain hour daily. The Centre for Social Action (CSA), headed by Fr Mario Mendes, was instrumental in sponsoring and distributing ration kits to the needy families of the ten SCCs of our parish.

Thanks to technology, we were able to connect with one another, although one yearned for personal contact. God bless the SCCs all over, and God bless us all!

Aurelia Rodgers

Parish SCC Coordinator

Church of St Joseph the Worker, Bandra (East)

MAKING HOPE A REALITY- ENSURING 'NO ONE IN WANT'

A plan for physical meetings of the Parish SCC Coordinators of our Archdiocese bore fruit in February 2021, with Bp Barthol visiting ten deaneries to meet with the lay persons who bear the responsibility of coordinating the SCCs in each parish.

The attendance at these meetings (held between February 22 and March 08) was high, in spite of the fact that some had begun fulltime days at their workplaces. This was the first physical meeting since January 2020; two virtual meetings had taken place in the year 2020.

After a welcome and Opening Prayer by Bp Barthol, the Parish SCC Coordinators shared their experiences of the pandemic, and their parish and SCC responses to the needs of the people. Bp Barthol was overjoyed to listen to a number of activities organised during the pandemic - including outreach to people of other faiths - translating the Archdiocesan SCC Vision 'NO ONE IN WANT' into reality. (Several of these have been published under the title 'Stories of Courage and Compassion' in The Examiner,

as well as on the Archdiocesan SCC website - www.mumbaiscc.in).

The positive feedback on the monthly Reflection papers sent to the SCC Coordinators (for dissemination to the clusters and families) since June 2020 has encouraged the preparation of more papers. The number of Quarterly Reports received from parishes has been scaling new records; in addition, we can be proud of the fact that online reports are saving the environment (in this fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*).

An information folder on 'The Year of Amoris Laetitia Family' and a poster on the CCBI Laity Commission's online training for lay leaders called 'GOAL' (Go out and Lead) were distributed; each one present received a token of gratitude from Bp Barthol.

In addition, some deanery meetings had the presence of the Deanery SCC Priest Coordinator, as well as the local Parish Priest.

All the meetings closed with a Concluding Prayer, and a joyful spirit of hope for the future.

(Collated from Deanery reports)

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS!

The pandemic has been a new experience for all of us. The lockdown last March caught us all unawares. There were mixed reactions among the faithful. The restrictions prevented all of us from coming to Church for Masses and other spiritual needs. The pandemic also affected many people in different ways. Most affected were the migrants and the daily wage workers. Our own parishioners too faced challenges and difficulties. Some of our near and dear ones lost their lives to the coronavirus.

The SCCs in our parishes, went out of their way to reach out to those in need. While all our parishes in South Bombay Deanery made concrete efforts to ensure that **“no one was in want,** I would like to highlight what some of our parishes have done to help the faithful, socially and spiritually.

Elephant Stall. The needy in the parish were given monthly money. The youth of the parish also distributed blankets to the homeless. Bishop Barthol and Deacon Ivan encouraged the youth by joining them. The tech-savvy helped those who found it difficult to use technology.

Our Lady of the Rosary, Dockyard, from the very beginning of the lockdown, began with food distribution to different areas in Mazagaon, Reay Road and Byculla. Later, ration was given to 90 poor families in Reay Road and 20 families in Geeta Nagar. Jeevan Dhara, an NGO, collaborated in this endeavour. All through the pandemic, the parish fathers ensured that the spiritual needs of the parishioners were fulfilled. Initially, the Sunday Mass was relayed through Zoom and Holy Communion was



St Anne Church, Mazagaon addressed the spiritual needs of the parishioners through online Masses on Sundays. SCC and PPC meetings were held via Zoom. The communities prepared the adoration prayer service for the feast of Christ the King. The parishioners participated in other activities like the Feast of St Anthony, St Anne, Grandparent's day, Independence Day, World Day of the poor, etc. through their communities. Homebound persons were taken care of and families with financial difficulties were helped through these difficult times.

St Francis Xavier Church, Dabul also ensured that they kept in touch with the families through their community animators. The homes of the deceased were visited and prayer services conducted. Communion was distributed to the elderly in their homes. The parish distributed food packets to the poor and homeless. The youth also distributed goodies to the poor children on the street. Sale of second hand and unused items donated by parish members were sold at a low price at a White

distributed community-wise. Novenas in September and for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary were conducted via Zoom and likewise Holy Communion was distributed community-wise. In keeping with the Archdiocesan SCC Vision Statement, **“no one in want,”** the parish had taken up a project even before the pandemic to provide meals to parishioners who cannot prepare meals or who cannot afford to have a proper meal. The parish has been providing medicines on a regular basis to those who need them. Both these projects were sustained all throughout the pandemic and still continue. The recent restrictions have not dampened our zeal.

Many other parishes have done much to reach out during these challenging times. We owe it all to the Lord, who has been good to us. It is by His grace that we are able to act as his messengers of hope in these trying times. May we continue to follow the Good Shepherd as we strive to ensure that there is **“no one in want.”**

Fr Shavito Correia
Reporting on behalf of
South Bombay Deanery

महामारीत केलेले कार्य

२३ मार्च २०२० हा दिवस सर्वच भारतीयांना कट्टर आठवणींसाठी तसा फारच अविस्मरणीय असा ठरणार असे म्हटले तर वावगे ठरणार नाही. मानवी मुल्यांना इच्छा नसताना देखील तिलांजली देण्याची वेळ कोविड १९ नामक कोरोना वायरस मुळे येऊन ठेपली कारण सुरुवातीला आजार कशा प्रकारचा आहे. त्यावर औषध काय आहे हा होऊ नये म्हणून काय काळजी घ्यावी. या विषयी विश्वसनीय अशी माहिती फारच तुरळक प्रमाणात उपलब्ध झाली. त्यातून राज्य आणि केंद्र सरकारने जगातील सर्वात मोठ्या लोकशाहीवर लॉकडाऊन लावले. त्यामुळे लोकांची सामाजिक, आर्थिक, मानसिक परिस्थितीवर प्रचंड ताण पाडला. आमचे प्रमुख धर्मगुरु फा. जेम्स कोरीया यांनी शोशल मिडिया म्हणजेच वॉट्सअॅपच्या माध्यमातून झोन वाईज कोरोना वायरस आणि कोविड १९ वायरस पासून कसा लोकांचा बचाव होईल यासाठी लोकांची जनजागृती करत शुद्धता माता चर्चचे छोटेसे क्लिनिक चालवतात त्याच्या माध्यमातून जेव्हा ते ऑनलाइन मिस्सा करत शासकीय नियमाचे पूर्ण अनुपालन करून धर्मग्रामातील लोकांची आध्यात्मिक भूक भागवित. तसेच आजारी, गरीब आणि विधवा यांना प्रत्येक झोन मध्ये Parish pastoral council च्या द्वारे गरजवंताना रेशनसाठी, उपचारासाठी किंवा गरीब विद्यार्थ्यांच्या फी भरण्यासाठी भरीव मदत केली.



त्याच दरम्यान म्हणजे ऑगस्ट २०२० च्या शेवटच्या आठवड्यात महाराष्ट्र ख्रिश्चन कोळी समाजाच्या वॉट्सअॅप ग्रुप वर एक वसई येथील आश्रम शाळेच्या मदतीच्या आव्हानाचा मॅसेज आला की कोविडच्या प्रादुर्भावामुळे त्या दुर्गम भागात एरवी जे मदतीचे ओघ येत असत ते गेले अनेक दिवस बंद आहेत तेव्हा तो मॅसेज मी माझ्या झोन वर आमच्या प्रमुख धर्मगुरूच्या सहमतीनी टाकला तसेच काही माझे इतर हिंदू कोळी ग्रुप आहे त्यावर सुद्धा टाकला. त्याचा प्रतिसाद इतक्या लवकर मिळेल असे मला स्वप्नात सुद्धा वाटले नाही की बऱ्याच लोकांचे आलेले कपडे तांदूळ, गहू, साखर,



तेल, चहा पावडर, स्टेशनरी, कोलगेट, साबण, सर्दी, खोकला, ताप यावर औषधे असे आम्ही एक टेम्पो भरून समान वारली कोळीवाडा हे मध्यवर्ती ठिकाण निवडून तेथे माझ्या गाव परिवारातील बँकेत काम करणारे श्री. मोजेस फ्रान्सिस कोळी कारण त्यांच्याकडे एका जिल्ह्यातून दुसऱ्या जिल्ह्यात जाण्याचा पास होता. सर्व झोन मधील लोकांना आपल्या गरजे व्यतिरिक्त जे जे त्यांच्या जवळ जास्त होते ते ते त्यांनी देऊ केले. कोणी ५ किलो तर कोणी ५० किलो छोट्या वस्तू दिल्या पण त्यामुळे मला ज्यांनी मदतीकरिता आव्हान केले होते त्यांच्या पर्यंत मी त्यांच्या गरजेच्या वस्तू पोहचवू शकलो ते ही विक्रमी वेळत.

त्याचबरोबर काही राजकीय पक्षांनी सुद्धा गरजू गरीब लोकांसाठी मोफत त्यांच्या गरजेच्या वस्तू वाटप करण्यासाठी माझ्याकडे आले असता तुम्ही गरजू लोकांना घाल ह्या गोष्टी चांगल्या आहेत पण त्यांचा ही विचार करा की या महामारी मध्ये जे चांगल्या नोकरीत होते त्यांच्या पगार कमी झालाय किंवा नोकरी गेलीय ते गरिबांच्या रांगेत उभे राहणार नाहीत पण त्यांना सुद्धा या वस्तूंची गरज आहे. कारण त्यांचा स्वाभिमान आडवा येईल. तर त्यांनी मला विचारले तर मग त्यांच्यासाठी काय करावे त्यांना मी म्हटले त्यांच्यासाठी तुम्हाला बाजारात ज्या वस्तू नेहमीच्या भावाने विकल्या जातात त्या तुम्ही अर्ध्या भावाने विकत त्यांना दिल्यात तर त्यांचा स्वाभिमान सुद्धा राखता येईल आणि त्यांना मदत सुद्धा होईल. त्यात त्यावेळेस गरीब कोणी आला तर त्यांच्या कडून पैसे घेऊ नका हे त्यांना पटले. हे जेव्हा प्रत्यक्ष अमलात आणले तेव्हा लोकांचा चांगलाच त्यांना प्रतिसाद लाभला. असो देवावर विश्वास ठेवणार्यांना नेहमीच देव सर्व प्रकारच्या अनिष्टापासून दूर ठेवतो. ते ही दिवस गेले आता शेवटी सर्व समर्थ परमेश्वराने आपल्या लोकांचा कैवार घ्यावा आणि हा जीव घेणारा वायारसचा समूळ नाश करावा आणि सर्व जगात सर्वांना निरोगी निरामय आरोग्य लाभावं हिच ईश्वर चरणी प्रार्थना.

देवाचा गौरव असो!

डॉमणिक कोळी

समाज बांधणी - साजरीकरण

मार्च २०२० ला लॉकडाऊन जाहीर झाला, त्यावेळी आमचे प्रमुख फा. मार्शल लोपीस, हे वांद्र्याला तपसाधना करून चर्चमध्ये परतले. काशिमिरा परिसरातील सर्व दुकाने आणि बाजार लॉकडाऊन होण्यापूर्वीच बंद करण्यात आले होते. चर्चमध्ये परतल्यावर त्यांच्या लक्षात आले की चर्चमधील सर्व अन्नधान्य संपत आले आहे व अन्नधान्य किंवा भाजीपाला इत्यादी खरेदी करण्याचा कोणताच मार्ग उपलब्ध नाही. हायवेच्या व बाजार परिसराच्या आसपास पोलीसांचा कडक बंदोबस्त होता. येणार्या - जाणार्यांना पोलीसांकडून लाठीमार होत असे. या भितीने कुठेही बाहेर जाण्याची कोणतीही सोय नव्हती. अश्या कठीण परिस्थितीत असताना एक अखिस्ती गरीब कुटुंब फादरांकडे अन्नधान्याची मागणी करीत होते, त्यांना फादरांनी होते - नव्हते तेदेखील देऊन टाकले व ह्या काळामध्ये फादरांना व त्यांच्या सेवकाला एका वेगळ्याच संकटाला सामोरे जावे लागले.



आमच्या पॅरीशमधील काही लोकांच्या हे लक्षात येताच, त्यांनी फादरांना फोन करून त्यांची चौकशी केली आणि चर्चमध्ये मदतीचा, म्हणजेच अन्नधान्य व इतर जीवनावश्यक वस्तूंचा ओघ सुरु झाला. "आंधळा मांगतो एक डोळा आणि देव देतो दोन डोळे" ह्या उक्तीप्रमाणे पॅरीशमधीलच नव्हे तर पॅरीश बाहेरील धर्मग्रामातून व शेजारच्या धर्मप्रांतातून ओळखीच्या लोकांनी फादरांना अनेक प्रकारे निधी व वस्तू स्वरूपात सहाय्य केले. दिवसेंदिवस परिस्थिती हाताबाहेर जात होती. पॅरीशमधील गरीबांपर्यंत पोहचायचे कसे, हा प्रश्न पोलीसांच्या कडक बंदोबस्तामुळे निर्माण झाला होता. फादरांनी खाजगीरीत्या एक रीचींग आऊट कमिटीची

स्थापना केली, ज्या कमिटीमध्ये आठ जण सभासद होते. ह्या कमिटीने फादरांच्या खांद्याला खांदा लावून सेवाकार्याचे खूप महान कार्य केले. फादरांनी धर्मग्राम पाळकीय समिती तसेच गाव सेवक नेते ह्यांच्याशी संपर्क साधून त्या त्या विभागातील गरीब व गरजू लोकांची यादी मागितली. ह्यामध्ये ख्रिस्ती व अन्यधर्मिय लोकांचा समावेश केला गेला. काही ठिकाणी फादर स्वतः गेले व त्यांनी गरजू व गरीब लोकांना अन्नधान्य वाटप केले, तर अनेक ठिकाणी कमिटीचे सभासद प्रत्यक्षपणे जावून धान्यवाटपाचे काम करत होते, शेकडो लोकांना चर्चमध्ये बोलावण्यात आले व फादरांनी स्वतःच्या हातांनी तसेच कमिटीच्या सहाय्याने मोठ्या प्रमाणात धान्याचे वाटप केले. अनेक लोकांना विविध प्रकारे वैद्यकीय मदत देखील देण्यात आली.

फादर मार्शल लोपीस सामाजिक कार्यात अग्रेसर होतेच, पण त्यांनी आपले आध्यात्मिक कार्यदेखील सुरु ठेवले. हा काळ उपवासकाळ असल्याने लोकांची आध्यात्मिक भूक भागवणे गरजेचे होते. देऊळ बंद होते तरी सुद्धा फादर खाजगीपणे पवित्र मिस्सा अर्पण करून परिस्थिती आटोक्यात येण्यासाठी व लोकांच्या संरक्षणासाठी सतत प्रार्थना करत होते. पवित्र आठवड्याचे सर्व विधी त्यांनी आमच्या दोन्ही कॉन्व्हेंटच्या सिस्टरांबरोबर खाजगीरीत्या साजरे केले. ह्याकाळात खाजगीरीत्या समुपदेशनासाठी, प्रार्थनेसाठी तसेच ख्रिस्तशरीर व प्रायश्चित्त संस्कार घेण्यासाठी फादरांना जवळजवळ दहा हजारांपेक्षा जास्त लोकांनी भेट दिली. ह्यामध्ये पॅरीश बाहेरील लोकांचा मोठा ओघ होता. फादरांनी कोणालाही नकार दिला नाही, तर सर्व नियम व कायदे पाळून ते लोकांच्या सतत संपर्कात राहिले व त्यांनी लोकांसाठी प्रार्थना करून त्यांना प्रायश्चित्त संस्कार दिला. भाविकांसाठी फादरांनी चर्चचे युट्युब चॅनल सुरु केले व लोकांसाठी पवित्र मिस्सा व प्रवचने त्यावर उपलब्ध केली.

हे आध्यात्मिक कार्य करीत असताना आमच्या पॅरीशमध्ये अचानक झंझावात यावा त्याप्रमाणे कोरोनाची एक लाट आली. पॅरीशमधील जवळजवळ दिडशे लोकांना कोरोनाची ह्या ना त्या मार्गांनी लागण झाली. त्यापैकी काहींना उपचारासाठी इस्पितळात नेण्यात आले, तर काही लोकांना विलगीकरण कक्षात ठेवण्यात आले. ह्यासर्व लोकांशी फादरांनी वैयक्तिकपणे प्रत्यक्ष किंवा फोनवर संपर्क साधला, त्यांच्यावरती प्रार्थना केली व त्यांना आशीर्वाद दिला. भयभीत झालेल्या आमच्या ह्या लोकांना फादरांनी विविध प्रकारे मार्गदर्शन केले व त्यांना आपल्या बोलण्याद्वारे आधार दिला. ह्यालाच परिणाम की काय म्हणून सर्वांचे सर्व

लोक बरे होऊन घरी परतले. आज खरच आम्ही आनंदी आहोत व फादरांच्या प्रार्थनेबद्दल व त्यांच्या देणगीबद्दल धन्यवाद देत आहोत.

ह्या काळात गंभीरपणे आजारी असलेल्या कोरोना रोग्यांना व इतर रोग्यांना फादरांनी रात्री - अपरात्री घरी, इस्पितळात किंवा अतिदक्षता विभागात जावून रुग्णाभ्यंग संस्कार दिला. पॅरीश बाहेरील लोक जे आमच्या परिसरातील अनेक इस्पितळात दाखल होते त्यांचे व त्यांच्या नातेवाईकांचे ह्याकाळात फादरांना सतत फोन येत असत. त्यासाठी फादरांनी पि.पि.ई. किट खरेदी केले व ह्यासर्व कोरोना रुग्णांना परिसरातील सर्व इस्पितळात जावून रुग्णाभ्यंग संस्कार दिला व त्यांच्यासाठी प्रार्थना केली. हे कार्य म्हणजे "वन मॅन आर्मी" सारखे स्तुतीपात्र कार्य होते. परीस्थिती हाताबाहेर गेली होती, कोरोनाचे रोगी वाढत होते आणि आमचे फादर ह्या रोग्यांना आशीर्वाद देण्यासाठी व त्यांच्यासाठी प्रार्थना करण्याकरीता रात्री - अपरात्री आपल्या जीवाची पर्वा न करता रस्त्यावर धावत होते. फादरांसाठी मरत असलेल्या माणसाच्या आत्म्याचे तारण अत्यंत मोलाचे होते.

हे सर्व सामाजिक व आध्यात्मिक तारणकार्य करत असताना शासनाचे नियम तसेच बिशप हाऊसने सांगितलेले सर्व नियम त्यांनी पाळले. कधी कधी ह्या नियमाच्या पलीकडे त्यांना जावे लागले. जवळ जवळ एक वर्षाच्या ह्या कालावधीत त्यांनी अनेक ख्रिस्ती व अन्यधर्मियांच्या अंतःकरणाला आपल्या सेवेद्वारे स्पर्श केला. ख्रिसमस, नविन वर्ष व संत जेरोमचा पारंपारीक सोहळा ह्याबाबत कठोर निर्णय घेऊन त्यांनी शासनाला सहाय्य केले व लोकांना कोरोनाच्या प्रादुर्भावापासून दूर ठेवले. त्यांचे हे कार्य आजही मोठ्या जोमात सुरु आहे. परमेश्वराने ह्या काळात त्यांचे आरोग्य राखले, जणू



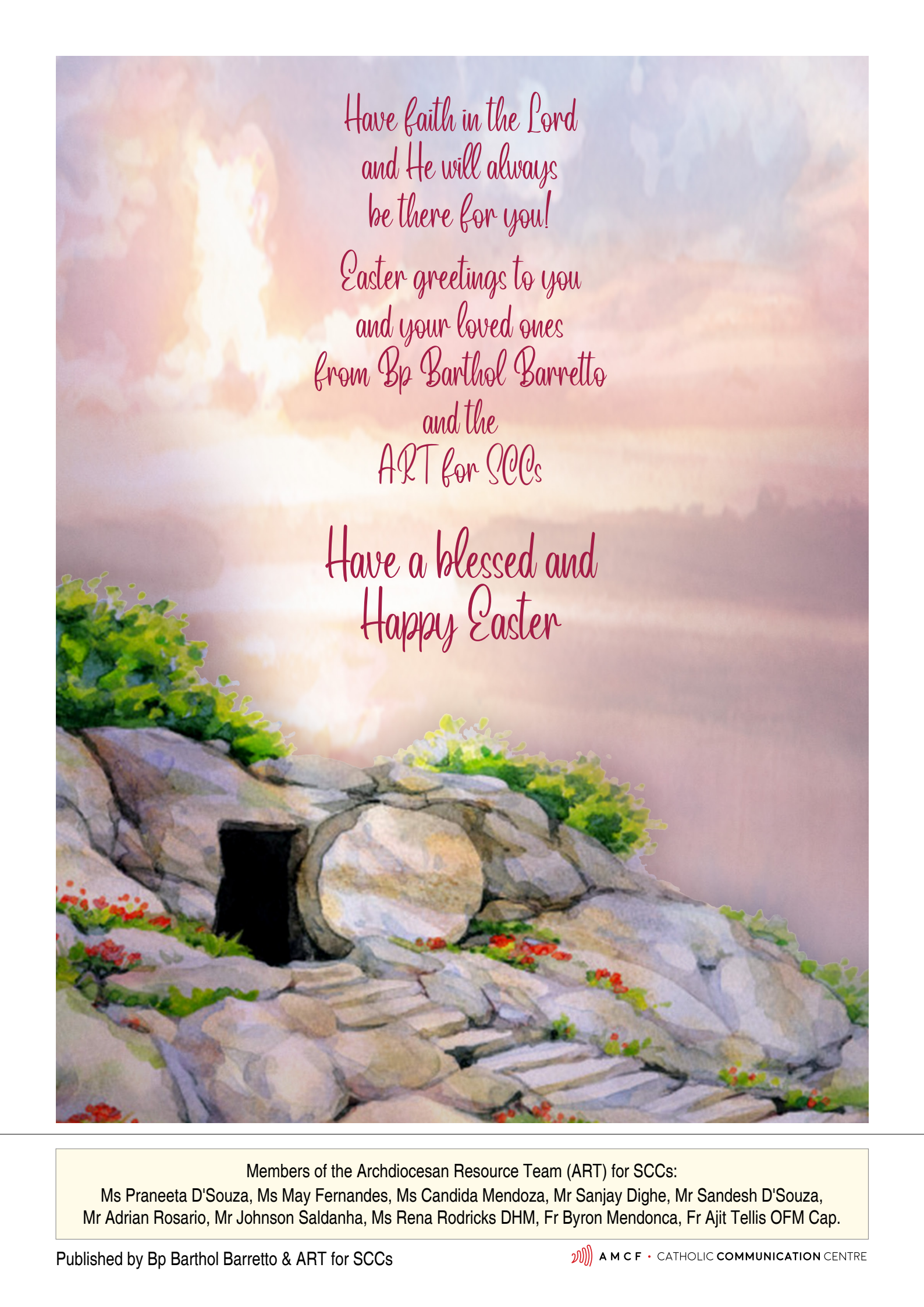
काही आजारांना त्यांच्या सेवेची व प्रार्थनेची गरज असावी.

असे हे आमचे फादर मार्शल लोपीस आमच्या काशिमिरा धर्मग्रामाला मिळालेली परमेश्वराची महान देणगी आहे. आमच्या पॅरीशमधील सर्व संघटना व लोक सदैव त्यांच्या पाठीशी खंबीरपणे उभे आहेत. त्यांना हे सेवाकार्य करत असताना चांगले आरोग्य व आयुष्य लाभो हिच आमची प्रार्थना.

कु. रेन्सी डिसोजा

If any Parish desires to share information about your SCCs, outreach through SCCs, photographs of your SCC activities, Core Group and/or cluster meetings on virtual platforms, etc., send it to **bombayscc@gmail.com**
We shall post it on the SCC website.

PLEASE LOG ON TO THE UPDATED SCC WEBSITE:
<https://www.mumbaiscc.in/>

A painting of a sunrise over a rocky landscape. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. In the foreground, there is a rocky path leading to a dark, rectangular opening in the ground, which appears to be a tomb entrance. The rocks are rendered in shades of grey and brown, with some green foliage and small red flowers scattered around. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, pink, and blue.

Have faith in the Lord
and He will always
be there for you!

Easter greetings to you
and your loved ones
from Bp Barthol Barretto
and the
ART for SCCs

Have a blessed and
Happy Easter

Members of the Archdiocesan Resource Team (ART) for SCCs:

Ms Praneeta D'Souza, Ms May Fernandes, Ms Candida Mendoza, Mr Sanjay Dighe, Mr Sandesh D'Souza,
Mr Adrian Rosario, Mr Johnson Saldanha, Ms Rena Rodricks DHM, Fr Byron Mendonca, Fr Ajit Tellis OFM Cap.