

SCHOLAVIEWS

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THE KOHIMA JESUIT SCHOLASTICS



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A Call to Renewal of the Heart

Editorial

Parciush R Marak, SJ

The great debate on change and permanence between Heraclitus and Parmenides is thought-provoking and worth reflecting upon. Heraclitus argued that everything in the universe changes (*panta rhei*). He said that nothing but change is permanent. "One cannot ever step in the same river twice" is his famous saying. He reasoned that by the time one steps into it again, the river has already changed. Parmenides, on the other hand, argued that everything in existence is permanent and unchangeable. According to him 'everything is' and nothing ever changes. It was Democritus who attempted to bring a synthesis of the arguments for permanence and changeability. By proposing the concept of the atomistic universe, Democritus argued that the world is both permanent and changeable.

Given this background, how should we approach the need for renewal and change? Should we say, "This is me. I can't change anything about myself?" or should we say, "This is me, but I want to change and improve myself for the better?" Needless to say, some aspects of our being remain permanent, and a lot of other things in us change. My identity as a person, for example, remains the same, but I am not the same person as I was at my birth. There are a lot of changes taking place in me even without my deliberate choice – physically, psychologically, spiritually, and so on.

Humankind has been constantly evolving through time and history; we have not been stuck

in or be confined to one way or stage of life. We desire to renew our lives, and we believe that tomorrow will be better than today. It is this hope and attitude that keeps us going in spite of hardships and failures. We've just celebrated Christmas and the New Year. Many of us would have made New Year resolutions. Generally speaking, we do believe that we can bring in changes to our lives for the better.

"Be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect" should be our everyday and lifetime goal. Human beings are gifted with freedom. Sartre argued that human beings are 'condemned to be free'. When we are thus free, responsibility comes along with it. It follows that one needs to be responsible for one's own wellbeing, growth and development in order to realize one's full potential. This is why we make New Year resolutions. Freedom and responsibility are endowed upon us in order that we respond generously to the call of Jesus to be perfect as the heavenly Father is.

The world today is at the crossroads: global warming, terrorism, violence, war-like situations on the international scenario, the rise of right-wing powers, scandals in the Church and misuse of power in the name of religion, increasing poverty, a rising number of refugees, and so on. Humanity as a whole is in desperate need of change and renewal towards peace and progress. It calls for a renewal of the heart both on the personal level and societal level.

The current issue of the Scholaviews, “A Call to Renewal of the Heart”, helps us to reflect on different pressing issues. Fr Paul Raj Santiago writes on how he finds Pope Francis as his spiritual guide. He suggests that the Pope's Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, could be an eye-opener for all on the Call to Holiness in Today's World. W K Pradeep reflects on the Pope's call to ecological holiness and how not only to live ecological holiness but also to promote it. Pelevito Kipfe's poem sings of



the grandeur and beauty of the Dzükou Valley which is a symbol of peace and brotherhood and not of hatred and violence. Melwyn Fernandes looks at how the laity, who share the common priesthood in baptism, can play a pivotal role in the mission of the Church. Daniel Syiemlieh challenges the Church to pay heed to the voice of the Spirit and shake off all the chains of corruption, sexual abuse, and clericalism in order to be a shining example of God's love and mercy. Gerald Myrthong reflects on how both the Church and the youth are in need of self-examination and renewal. In the background of the present political scenario of India, Zenith Xavier invites the readers to be politically active citizens. Royal Saldanha writes on how the North-Eastern tribes of India must preserve their rich cultural ethos in the face of globalization characterized by “no culture, no religion”.

Francis Gangmei reminds us that we should practice tolerance so that we can have a peaceful coexistence. We are also happy to present to the readers C M Khathing's painting (Thangkhul Mother Mary) and Ronald Kharsohtun's cartoons. It is our hope and wish

that the efforts by our writers and artists will bear its desired fruit of helping our readers towards self-introspection and a renewal of the heart.

We extend a hearty congratulations to our newly ordained priests – Fr C M Khathing, Fr Rejin Joseph, Fr. Melwyn Fernandes and Fr Liavi David. The editorial team would like to sincerely thank Michael Kolb, SJ for his generosity and insightful suggestions. He has been helping us since the inception of the Scholaviews. Thank you, Mike. In addition, Rejin and I, gratefully acknowledge Fr Anand Pereira for his constant support and encouragement.

Have a fruitful reading.

(Sch. Parciush is a regent at Goa)



POPE FRANCIS, MY SPIRITUAL GUIDE

Fr Paul Raj Santiago, SJ

I am a die-hard fan of Pope Francis, and who wouldn't be? I have begun to re-discover Ignatian spirituality through his life and teachings! Every action of his speaks of the wellspring of his depth, and I am glad that I am a Jesuit like him these last 60 years. Yes, he joined the Society of Jesus in 1958, just like me! Now you know our connection. This personal detail apart, his latest Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (GE), has been an eye-opener for me on the Call to Holiness in Today's World. It's a simple primer and an excellent document on this Christian call. Before becoming pope, even before he was the archbishop of Buenos Aires, he spent much of his life as a Jesuit guiding young Jesuits, introducing them to spiritual life as the director of novices and the rector of the community of young Jesuits studying philosophy and theology.

Francis' goal is "to re-propose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time, with all its risks, challenges and opportunities" (GE

2). How well he does this! One needn't be a bishop, a priest or a religious to be holy. "We are called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves" (GE 14). He does not believe that everyone's path to holiness is the same. Each person has to discern their own way to holiness rather than "hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them."

The Pope summons all of us to see the entirety of our lives as a mission, and he affirms that each of us is called to be a saint. "Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel" (GE 19). This mission finds its fullest meaning in the life of Christ, and by contemplating his mysteries, as our holy founder teaches us, we are led to incarnate them in choices and attitudes. We also try to do this by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs he gives us. We allow thus the Spirit to forge in us the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in



today's world (GE 20-24). All this and more, rich and powerful message, in just the first chapter of GE, which ends with Pope's encouraging words: "Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace" (GE 34).

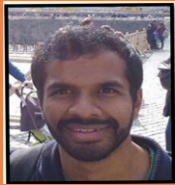
Like a good spiritual guide, Francis goes on to point out two false forms of holiness, Gnosticism and Pelagianism, in Chapter II, and then draws a road map of Christian life in the chapter that follows. In his meditation on the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives. The fourth chapter is as inspiring as the first, where the Pope leads us to find the signs of holiness in today's world. "Within the framework of holiness offered by the Beatitudes and Mathew 25:31-46, I would like to mention a few signs or spiritual attitudes that, in my opinion, are necessary if we are to understand the way of life to which the Lord calls us" (GE 110). He enumerates them: perseverance, patience and meekness; joy and a sense of humor; boldness and passion. Francis concludes this section by saying that "growth in holiness is a journey in a

community, side by side with others" (GE 141); and that "common life, whether in the family, the parish, the religious community or any other, is made up of small everyday things" (GE 143). He urges not to forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details (GE 144). Hence, "a community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment, is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father's plan" (GE 145).

The Pope, at the end, reminds us that holiness consists in a habitual openness to the transcendent, expressed in prayer and adoration (GE 147). "In that silence, we can discern, in the light of the Spirit, the paths of holiness to which the Lord is calling us" (GE 150). The exhortation thus concludes with the fifth chapter on discernment as we need vigilance in the spiritual battle of our Christian life. Young and old will find his perspectives on discernment (GE 166-175) very refreshing, and enlightening.

Truly in our spiritual journey we need a spiritual guide to accompany us in every aspect of our life, and help discern God's ways. I found one in Pope Francis who in this apostolic exhortation is down to earth and practical. And I would suggest, if not urge, that we get hold of a copy, and make of it a ready reference.

(Fr Paul Raj is a Spiritual Guide in DNC, Pune)



Gaudete et Exsultate Reread:

A Call to Ecological Holiness in Today's World



W K Pradeep, SJ

Pope Francis begins his Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* (indicated henceforth as GE) saying he has 'no treatise on holiness' (GE 2). I confess here that neither do I have any treatise on ecology, but just a *call to ecological holiness*. What has an ecological approach to do with holiness? As the Pope and the *General Congregations* of the Society of Jesus reiterate, 'human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself' (*Laudato Si* 66), and holiness sees 'the entirety of our life as a mission' (GE 23). It refers to a holistic holiness – spiritual, psychological, physical, social, economic and ecological. Rereading *Gaudete et Exsultate*, we try therein to hear the call to *ecological holiness*.

1. Ecological Saints – far, 'next door' and within

Saints of different eras like Francis of Assisi and Ignatius of Loyola lived close to creation by seeing *God in all things and all things in God*. Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Vandana Shiva, Wangari Maathai, David Suzuki, Robert Athickal, Rappai Poothokaren and Ignaci Muthu are testimonies of ecological holiness during our times. However, to be ecologically holy does not require being acclaimed an ecologist; present around us are a number of testimonies that encourage us to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Hb 12:1), including our mothers, grandmothers and other loved ones (GE 3). The Holy Spirit bestows ecological holiness in abundance among God's holy and faithful people (GE 6) addressing to each of us

personally (GE 10). This should excite and encourage us to give our all (GE 13), guided by the Holy Spirit and allowing the encounter between our weakness and the power of God's grace. As the French writer Léon Bloy says, the only great tragedy in life is not to become a saint, (GE 34) and I would say, today it is not to become an ecological saint!

2. Two Subtle Enemies of Ecological Holiness

Let us see here two false forms of Ecological Holiness: Ecological Gnosticism and Ecological Pelagianism (GE 35).

2.1. Ecological Gnosticism

Ecological Gnosticism implies a subjective approach where a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information meant to console and enlighten, ultimately keep one imprisoned in his/her own thoughts/actions. Gnosticism fails to understand that holiness is measured not by the knowledge one possesses, but by the depth of his/her charity (GE 36-37).

Ecological Gnosticism has two faces: *Gnostic Elitism* and *Gnostic Indifference*. Gnostic elitism encourages being locked up in an encyclopedia of abstractions (GE 37), and so to pretend 'to domesticate the mystery' (GE 40). It considers 'its own vision of reality to be perfect' not realizing that 'this ideology feeds on itself and becomes even more myopic.' It is satisfied with its 'presumed certainties' and 'psychological or intellectual theories' (GE 40-42), derived from shallow researches, philosophies and theologies,

and presented just as statistics-filled or abstract talks, articles and books. This distancing oneself from the reality – “I know, in the long run, I'm not affected” – results in Gnostic indifference which in turn fails to recognize – and so to act accordingly – that 'the questions of our people, their suffering, struggles, dreams, trials and worries, all possess an interpretational value that we cannot ignore if we want to take the principle of the incarnation seriously' (GE 44).

2.2. Ecological Pelagianism

The same power ecological Gnosticism attributes to intellect, ecological Pelagianism attributes to human will and personal effort, forgetting 'that everything “depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy” (Rom 9:16) and that “He first loved us” (cf. 1 Jn 4:19)' (GE 48).

Ecological Pelagianism also has two faces: Pelagianistic Elitism and Pelagianistic Indifference. Pelagianistic elitists, characterized by 'a will lacking humility', trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain environmental rules and standards better than the others, ignoring that not everyone can and need to do everything (GE 49). Their righteousness lies in planting a few saplings or organizing a few rallies without adequate attention to the short-term and long-term consequences caused or/and expected. This attitude induces pelagianistic

indifference, which caught up by 'self-centred and elitist complacency, bereft of true love' (GE 57), looks at ecological holiness from a materialistic perspective, rather than realizing that each human is a multi-dimensional being and the environment is a complex organism. This evades self-examination and so neglects the holistic development of all humans and a long-term safeguard of the entire creation. A way out would be to realize 'God is eternal newness. He impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond' (GE 135).



3. In the Light of the Master

Nothing is more enlightening than turning to Jesus, our Master. Jesus explains holiness 'with great simplicity' (GE 63), especially as we see it in Mt 5:3-12 and Mt 25:31-46.

Beatitudes: Going against the Flow

We are surely haunted by materialism and consumerism; but more subtly, we are torn by the dilemma between, on one hand, economic progress and human development, and, on the other, meeting current needs and sustaining resources for the future. The Beatitudes invite us to go against the flow in order to overcome these problems and dilemmas; the only way out is the way of letting the Holy Spirit fill us with his power and free us from our weakness, our selfishness, our complacency and our pride (GE 65), and make us simple, poor, humble, meek, merciful and peaceful, even when persecuted while working for ecological justice.

The Great Criterion

The strongest of Jesus' denunciations were against the transgression of *omission*; be it the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31), of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) or of the Last Judgement (Matthew 25:31-46). It is not that they *committed* anything wrong, rather that they *omitted* to do what is right. That is what James (cf. James 1:23-24) and Proverbs warn us against: 'If you hold back from rescuing those taken away to death... if you say, "Look, we did not know this"— does not He who weighs the heart perceive it?' (Prov 24:11-12) So the greatest challenge to ecological holiness is shedding off our transgression of omission – 'I'm not an ecologist,' 'The world has always been so' – and embracing the 'uncompromising demands of Jesus' (GE 97): fighting against all conditions that leave people 'hungry,' 'thirsty' 'naked' and 'sick' and 'strangers,' in whatever dimension of life.

4. Signs of Ecological Holiness in Today's World

In the light of the Beatitudes and Matthew 25:31-6, let us examine some signs and expressions of

ecological holiness that would confront and stand out of the 'dangers and limitations present in today's culture – negativity and sullenness; the self-content bred by consumerism; individualism; and all those forms of ersatz spirituality' (GE 111).

4.1. Patience and Perseverance: The first sign is 'solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us.' He gives us inner strength, not to fall into the temptation of looking for security in vain pleasures, possessions, power and social status, not to be carried away by violence, but to persevere amid life's ups and downs, to endure hostility, betrayal and failings on the part of others, and to give a witness of ecological holiness through patience and constancy in doing good (GE 112,116,121).

4.2. Joy: 'The Lord rejoices in all His works' (Ps 104:31), and the eco-saint rejoices with the Lord, the Creator. He possesses a joyful heart: not a heart bloated by individualistic and consumerist culture (GE 128) but 'a heart set at peace by Christ, freed from the aggressiveness born of overweening egotism' (GE 121). This joy can result from admiring the beautiful lilies of the fields (cf. Mt 6.28-30), but it arises ultimately from a profound realization that 'through Him, all things were made' (Jn 1:3).

4.3. Audacity: Complacency tells us that there is no point in trying to change things, because there is nothing we can do and this is the way things have always been (GE 137). But ecological holiness is *parrhesia*, a boldness and enthusiasm to proclaim the good news of salvation to the whole creation. "Woe to me if I do not preach the

Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16). This audacity is founded on listening to the Incarnate Word saying, “Do not be afraid” (Mk 6.50).

4.4. Community: Growth in ecological holiness is a journey in community which renders possible the fight against concupiscence, the snares and temptations of the devil, and the selfishness of the world. By conscientizing and learning from the community, sharing the word and celebrating the Eucharist together, living the Gospel heroically, by paying attention to details of everyday things of the family, the parish, the religious community or any other, this growth in ecological holiness is achieved (GE 140-144).

4.5. Constant Prayer: 'Holiness consists in a habitual openness to the Transcendent, expressed in prayer and adoration' and finds expression in our daily lives. As the Russian pilgrim confessed, prayer in no way separates the eco-saint from what is happening around him/her. Rather, a person recognizes kindness and love poured over him and 'the whole outside world also seemed to me (him) full of charm and delight.' Prayer, besides being an expression of trust in God and a moment of discernment, becomes our covenant with Him allowing Him 'to carry out evermore fully His work of transforming our lives' (GE 147-157).

5. Combat, Vigilance and Discernment

Living ecological holiness is a battle not just against human weaknesses and proclivities, but against the devil, the prince of evil. Contemporary life with its immense possibilities for action and distraction, renders difficult the distinction between the need for passionate battle against the evil forces and the need for trustful surrender to the Spirit's whispering. But the victory comes from Our Father – ‘deliver us from evil’, ‘let Your will be done’: vigilance, carrying one's cross,

and humble surrender to the Lord and receiving His strong support. Discernment, as an urgent need of the hour, is not about discovering what more we can derive from life, but how, reading the signs of the times, we can more obediently listen to the Gospel, the ultimate standard, and how we can better accomplish the mission entrusted to us by God. (GE 159-175).



Rejoice and be glad

Hopefully these words will prove helpful by enabling us to devote ourselves anew to promoting the desire for ecological holiness. May Mary our Mother and the saints who lived the Beatitudes, be our inspiration and intercession. May the Holy Spirit make us eco-saints for God's greater glory; we, filled with happiness that the world will not be able to take from us, shout: Rejoice and be glad (GE 176-177).

*(Sch. Pradeep is a Student
of Theology at Paris)*



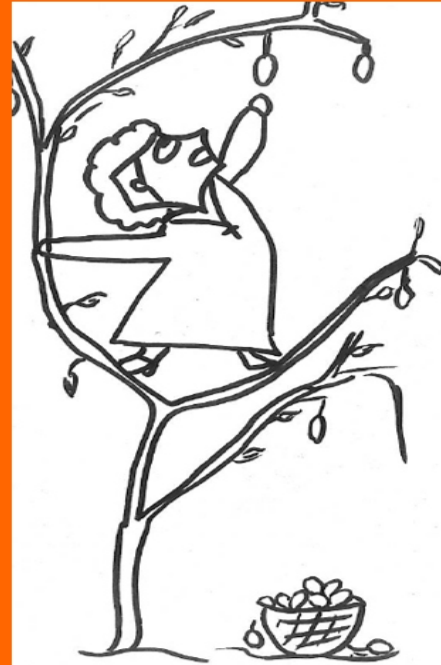


Ronald Kharsohtun, SJ

JUST FOR LAUGHS

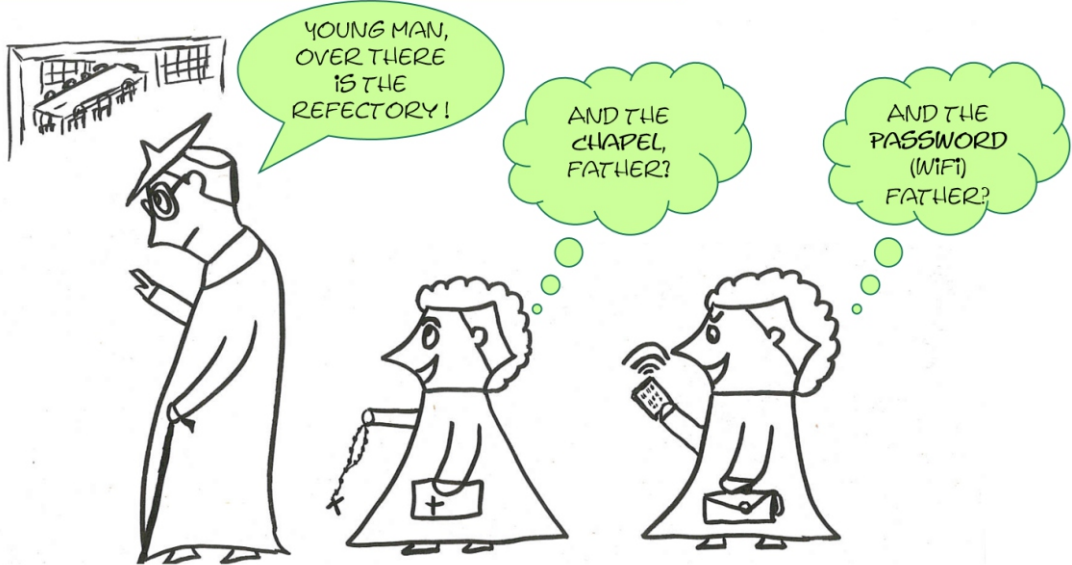


WHEN THE
PHRASE
« COLLECTING
THE FRUITS »
IS BEING
MISINTERPR-
ETED AT THE
END OF AN
ANNUAL
RETREAT !



R. Kharsohtun

WHEN YOU ENTER IN THE COMMUNITY FOR THE FIRST TIME.
WHAT COMES FIRST TO YOUR MIND.....



ONCE UPON A TIME

TODAY

R. Kharsohtun

(Sch. Ronald is a Regent at Gunjung)





Lay Collaboration - A Theological Perspective

Fr Melwyn Fernandes, SJ

The Catholic Church is at the crossroads of its credibility. In one of our theology classes the class beadle accidentally broke a glass. Pointing to the broken glass, the professor said, “Today the state of the Church is that of the broken glass. We need the faithful to restore the credibility of the Church.” The Church is made up of human beings, and as human beings, we are limited and vulnerable. Hence, a few in the Church hierarchy, by their loose living, have failed in being the witness to the body of Christ. Moreover, the faithful feel alienated by the Church because of the narrow understanding of the teachings of Jesus. The Church seems to focus on itself. The Church-centred teaching restricts the fundamental teachings of Jesus, i.e. love, justice, forgiveness and peace. Therefore, the Church needs renewal from within in order to restore the Church to its foundational purpose. The Church is not the end in itself. Rather, the Church is the instrument in realising the Kingdom of God. The mission of Jesus was the reign of God. Jesus said, “...the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent... (Mk 1:15)” Jesus came to give visibility to the presence and Reign of God. The Church is the symbol and servant of the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, realising the Kingdom of God is the mission of every baptised Christian.

The renewal of the heart, which subsequently renews the Church, is the collective responsibility of the people of God who share the common priesthood in baptism. Moreover, it is not just the responsibility of the Church hierarchy alone. The People of God are the collaborators in restoring the Church to its original spirit, the servant of the Kingdom of God. The term 'collaborators' means that the faithful, along with the clergy, are given dignity and equal standing in the Church. Does this mean that the faithful can administer Sacraments? No. The function of administering the sacraments is usually reserved only to the Church hierarchy, who are ordained priests. This does not mean, the faithful are deprived of their collaborative role. The difference between the *Ordained Priests* and the *Common Priest* is functional. The primary mission of the Church is making Christ and his teachings known to others. In other words, the mission of every baptised Christian is to give visibility to the Kingdom of God. Every baptised Christian shares in the priesthood of Jesus, as

pointed out by St. Peter, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people in order that you may proclaim mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” Therefore, by *Common Priesthood*, the baptised Christian is called to fulfil the role of King, Prophet and Priest, like Jesus.

In the modern world the faithful, more than the clergy, have a vantage point of making Christ known. The faithful carry Jesus to every human situation and circumstance of the world, unlike the clergy who seem to be



restricted within the four walls of the church campus. A Christian life is that of witness to Christ. Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *Gaudete et Exultate*, or *Call to Holiness*, No. 7, says, “We are all called to be witness, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness.” Besides those saints and martyrs whose lives were “an exemplary imitation of Christ,” Pope Francis also praises the “middle class holiness.” He speaks of the everyday sanctity of “those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile”. Hence, in today's world, more than the clergy, the faithful impact greatly through their life of holiness.

I want to recount my own experience of my parish ministry at St. Mary's Church, Old Delhi. The faithful of this parish are so God-loving that we can perceive God's love through their gentle love and care. Among the many parishioners of St. Mary's, I am quite

touched by the witnessing life of Mrs. Elizabeth Miller. She is married to Johnson Miller and they have a son (9 years of age) and a daughter (15 years of age). Mr. Johnson Miller is on dialysis and his health is sinking. But Mrs. Elizabeth has to balance her time and energy between Church activities, since she is the Catechism Co-ordinator, and her family. In spite of the struggle

in her family, she is very committed to the Church. She makes sure that her children are regular for catechism classes besides attending other church

activities. Moreover, I have never seen her trying to get sympathy from the fellow catechism teachers. She does her work cheerfully and with the same enthusiasm, week after week. She is the inspiration for all the teachers and the students. More importantly, the teachers and students listen to her respectfully because of her committed and witnessing life. I believe she is a real disciple of Jesus who makes Christ known through her life. She reminds me of St. Paul's statement (2 Cor 5:20): “So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us.”

In our day to day reality we have compartmentalised every aspect of our life. The life of holiness begins and ends within the premises of the church campus. So much so, we have heard the phrase *holiness is for the religious people, not for laity*. We have restricted the teachings of Jesus only to religious affairs like

participating in the mass or receiving sacraments. However, Pope Francis, through his apostolic exhortation, invites all baptised Christians to holiness 'each in his or her own way'. By this, the Pope means that there is diversity of holiness which encompasses every aspect of our life. The teachings of Jesus must percolate into socio-economic and political life too. Every Christian must stand in solidarity with the oppressed and the poor. The holiness of every Christian can be realised only when Christ's teachings are given visibility by challenging the unjust structures and persons. Moreover, the triple role – King, Prophet and Priest – of every baptised Christian will come into reality, when each Christian becomes the instrument of salvation and grace.

In conclusion, the clergy must recognise the pivotal role of the lay faithful in the mission of the Church. In a literal sense, when the faithful become the disciples of Jesus, they can transform the world, more than the clergy. The priests and the religious are

always looked at by the faithful as people who are set apart. Hence, their appeal to transformation is of less impact compared to that of the faithful. The faithful, being part of the larger society, can transform the society from within, not by their words, but by their Christ-centred life. Moreover, those days are gone when the priests were considered master of all trades. Today, many of the lay faithful are qualified and resourceful; they can contribute greatly to the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the clergy, by acknowledging their advantageous position in accomplishing the mission of the Church, must encourage and give opportunity to the faithful to come forward on public forums. On the other hand, the clergy must take the back seat for the sake of the Church's mission.

(Fr Melwyn is presently at Dawagre)





The Indian Church & the Scandals

Daniel Syiemlieh, SJ

The word 'scandal' includes a wide range of unethical acts or behaviors. But when we talk about it in the context of the Church today, one cannot but think of sexual abuses and cover-ups that have taken place in the Church. This is a serious crisis that the Church is facing today; it has shaken the Church to its very foundations. What adds to the complicity is, as I would put in Benjamin Wicker's words: "The scandal now besetting the Church serves as fuel for increasing the secularization of the culture."

Pope Francis said, "Earth, our home, is looking more and more like a pile of filth". This resonates well with the recent image of the Church just as the then Cardinal Ratzinger on Good Friday, 2005, exclaimed: "How much filth there is in the church and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to Christ." Today, hundreds of sexual abuses and the cover-ups around the world especially in Chile, the USA and other parts of the world expose the ugly image of the Church. The Church has also been accused of negligence in handling investigations into such matters; some dioceses have also been blamed for destroying evidence of sexual misconduct. All this explains the gravity of the crisis that the Church finds itself in today.

The Church in India, too, is no exception. Recently a number of accusations against priests in Kerala came to light. In Shillong the allegations against Br. Francis Gale and Br. Muscat Carmel surfaced in the social media "Me too" campaign. The case of Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar is the most serious one. It stirred mixed reactions from within and outside the Church. It has been pointed out by some that a few powerful members of the Indian Church tried to silence the accusers. Pope Francis mentioned clericalism as the root cause of sexual abuse. Of course, we cannot say whether clericalism is in play in the alleged case of Bishop Franco. However, there is no denying that clericalism has become a grave problem in the Indian Church too.

The Pope points out in *Laudato Si* that sin is the cause of rupture between people and God, people and their true selves, people and other fellow beings and, people and nature. What has wounded the

Church is the sin of its 'consecrated' persons who have violated the dignity of the persons involved and destroyed their faith and trust in the Church. The image of the Church has thus been damaged. It calls for a serious effort and dedication to, in a way, rebuild the Church of hope, faith and love. It demands for a personal and communal conversion. Such a collective change of hearts, minds and lifestyle is the need of the hour as pointed out in *Laudato Si*.



While it is true that these abominable crimes stare at the Church and the damage done to the victims is irreversible, the Church as a whole, with the grace of God, can rediscover its path to holiness, justice and truth. *Laudato Si* affirms the goodness of human beings and their ability to respond to God's grace at work deep in their hearts. Thus, the Church is capable to set on a journey towards renewal and conversion. If the Indian Catholic Church desires to be a shining example of God's love and mercy, it has to pay heed to the voice of the Spirit and shake off all the chains of corruption, sexual abuse, and clericalism. We have to remind ourselves that it is possible. Pope Francis said, "Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning." Let us be inspired by this to improve ourselves and our Church.

(Sch. Daniel is a Student of Philosophy at Paris)



Dzūkou: The Valley that Never Sleeps

Pelevito Kipfe, SJ

*What is greater than God's embrace in nature?
The majestic mountain so captivating even for weary eyes to behold.
Dew-cold lilies and gathering dreams in perfect choreography.
Crystal clear rivulets apprehensive as mirage.
Whispers of illusionary fairies rouse wanderlusty travelers.
Bewitching every soul-searching hiker to wade deep.
Serenity so musical pumps ripples of sentiments to melancholy hearts.*

*Why? Oh, why? The valley wails in silent misery.
Love so divine entangled in cold tribal wars.
Corrupted by human greed for territorial supremacy.
Enveloping the sacred corridor with cloud of tears.
Who embarks on a mission to avenge the sporadic atrocities committed.*

*From the core of the valley peace and brotherhood beckon.
A banquet divinely prepared welcomes us all.
This masterpiece was painted with eternal love.
Let's not perish in egoistic confrontations, rather cherish in the arms of Unity.
For ages to go we are the lucky ones.
In unison we praise and revere the Great Almighty.*

(Sch. Pelevito is pursuing an MA degree at Loyola, Chennai)





Gerald Myrthong, SJ

THE CHURCH & THE YOUTH



Today the Catholic Church finds itself in a situation where the young no longer have a strong connection with it. Attempts to get youngsters more involved in the Church's activities have not been substantially successful. Many youths do not even feel part of the Catholic family any more. Many are disappointed with scandals that corrupt the Church. A good number of them also feel that the Church is outdated and it does not offer solutions/answers to problems and questions of today. As a result, the gap between the Church and its youth is getting ever wider.

We must find a way to put this to an end, the earlier the better. The Church cannot continue without the youth. The doors of the Church must be opened wide to invite and welcome young people. This would call for a renewal within the Church to accommodate them. The youth, on the other hand, need to open their hearts and embrace the Church as their own; the Church is not only for the clergy, the priests and the aging. The Mother Church surely needs her youth if she is to be strong, effective and true.

The Church needs to keep growing to be better and more perfect. It must keep renewing itself continually according to promptings of the Spirit. To that end the Church must take into account some important aspects.

1. Young people must never be neglected. Neglecting them is neglecting the future of the

Church itself. Failing to form good and responsible youth is like laying a shaky foundation for a building. Today the youth are faced with forces that pull them into different and wrong directions. The Church, as a mother, should find ways to reach out to them.

2. The Church's teachings and the way they are imparted need to be updated according to times. A large number of the young today finds the teachings to be unsensible and meaningless. This is an alarming issue that threatens the very future of the Church. This calls for a frequent update in the style and method of imparting the teachings of the Church. We have to find appealing and attractive ways of communicating Gospel values to the youth. The *Youcat* is one such initiative. Today social media is a new platform that could be used to the maximum for an effective communication of Christ-values.

3. The Church is holy. The Church hierarchy – bishops, priests, nuns – must bear witness to this through their life. The Church had been blessed with great men and women who are exemplary. Today the Church is faced with scandals and corruption. Young people are deeply affected by such issues. It's difficult for them to see how the Church could give hope when its own representatives are thus corrupted. We have to find ways to form credible ministers of the Church.

4. In today's fast changing world, the Church has to make itself relevant. Perhaps age old theological and philosophical perspectives need to be revised and updated. Perhaps some views the Church holds or the kind of language that the Church leaders speak do not make sense to the youth. Perhaps the Church as a whole is not reading the signs of times adequately.

5. The Church is for the faithful, as such it should open more space for greater lay collaboration. The laity should also be allowed to participate in decision-making processes at various levels.

6. Women must be allowed to play a greater role in the Church. They can no longer be let down by the highly patriarchal Church hierarchy. Women deserve more respect and recognition as they are part and parcel of God's family. In the same way, women religious should not be subjected to discrimination and injustice.

We have observed and pointed out how the Church, especially the Church hierarchy, should effectively play its role. Young people, on their part, must be responsible and proactive. They have a great task in front of them as they are going to be leaders of tomorrow. I suggest some points for the youth to ponder and act upon.

1. Prayer should be part of our life. Youths need to pray to come into contact with God, the Creator. Muslims pray five times a day and Jews pray three times a day. They pray whether they are happy or not, whether they are under some threat or not. While I was in St. Aloysius college, I saw how the Muslim students would go faithfully for *namaz* every day, whereas the Christian students would rarely visit the college chapel. I think we should learn a lesson or two from our Muslim and Jewish companions.

2. We know the familiar statement of Socrates: "The unexamined life is not worth living". Today people are

caught up with many things that they don't have time to examine their life. Thinking and reflecting, so important for human life, is almost gone. In 2018, the students of philosophy at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV) did some research on the topic "Smart phone use among Indian youths". According to the research, most of the youth forward messages without knowing their validity and truth. They forward only because they feel it's important for others to know. This is a serious issue; we need to do something about it. The youth of today are going to be leaders in the future. If they don't take time to think and reflect, if they don't thirst for truth, if they are busy forwarding messages for the sake of it, then they could never hope to be responsible leaders not just in the Church but in society at large.

3. The younger Church are scandalized by corruption and other evils in the Church and they condemn it. It is true that some priests or bishops have been involved in sex scandals. However, the youth must not forget that a priest has come from some family. He could have come from a dysfunctional family. Ultimately, it's the youth who get married and build families; they have a great responsibility of raising healthy families. Therefore, the youth mustn't think that problems in the Church are isolated ones from which they can run away. Instead they should feel concerned about such issues and contribute towards building the Church that is more perfect, and society that is more just.

(Sch. Gerald is a Regent at Dawagre)





Zenith Xavier, SJ

Being Politically Active Citizens

Human beings, as social animals, live in society and are governed by societal structures and norms. Such structures and norms exist to facilitate a peaceful and meaningful life for people. At times these structures may become outdated and work against us. Therefore, it is the duty of every one of us to keep our society up to date, progressive and inclusive. Politics is one of the most predominant structures in our society. Most of us become indifferent and shy away from engaging actively in politics.

In our country, the politicians are blatantly using power and intimidation, money, communalism and casteism as tools to garner votes. The important issues like economic slowdown, unemployment, or lack of basic necessities like water are brushed aside. We cannot be mute spectators to all this. Being indifferent is no more an option; we must get involved in politics as responsible citizens. This engagement is not limited to elections; we have to continually question, analyze and reflect on various political ideologies and narratives. Liberals and intellectuals in the civil society must build consensus for reform. Every citizen should not let oneself to be carried away by the politicians' jigsaw puzzles. Political agendas and manifestos of every political party should be scrutinized. We should learn to read between the lines of what a politician is saying. In the Indian context today, we need to be aware of how religion and caste are being used for personal political gain.

The public sphere is a place where people discuss many relevant questions and it has become a central figure in modern society. Public spheres like editorials in newspapers, tea stalls in India, bachelor's room, hunting expeditions among tribal people and innumerable other forums involve celebration of and participation in common ideologies or views. In a simple sense, the public sphere is the place where a mere discussion happens not necessarily resulting in any concrete conclusions. These discussions need not lead to action. Today, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp

and the like are the common space. People are linked together in these common spaces and they have an opportunity to express their views and opinions. Universities should be a place where political questions are raised and answers sought. Unfortunately, the powerful few are trying to control and manipulate the system of education as well. We see how there is a lot of tension in the Jawaharlal Nehru University campus these days. We should be awakened and alerted to such issues in our society.

It would do well for us to recall the three great revolutions: the French Revolution, the American Revolution and the Russian Revolution. In each case, ordinary people suffered under unjust structures and they revolted. It was intellectuals who provided inspiration and a platform for

people to rise against injustice. In India the intellectuals have made a considerable impact on the issue of intolerance and mob lynching. Some individuals like Gauri Lankesh spoke openly against growing intolerance, mob lynching, cow vigilantism and so on. Of course, such individuals are being intimidated, threatened and even murdered. Yet such voices cannot be silenced completely and we must not be disheartened as we fight against evil forces.

Each one of us must be politically active citizens. We have to think critically and raise our voices against injustice, corruption and violence. We cannot afford to sit back and hope that someone else would do this. Priests and religious can no longer be doing only 'spiritual' ministries, and shy away from 'dirty' politics. Pope Francis, who is vocal about his political views and opinions, should be our model. Our colleges, schools and other institutions should be a platform where students are empowered to think differently.

(Sch. Zenith is an M. Sc. Student at Loyola, Chennai)



Ralph Waldo Emerson



Fr CM Khathing, SJ

“Every artist was first an amateur”



Tangkhul Mother Mary

(Fr Khathing is presently at Liyai)



Francis Gangmei, SJ

Good Smell or Bad Smell?

Ravishankar Maharaja, a popular Hindu saint, narrated this story. Three fisherwomen went daily from the fishing village to the market town to sell fish. One day, on their way back, they were caught in a wild storm and took refuge in a house by the wayside. The owner of the house was a kind man and invited them to spend the night in his house as the storm kept raging. He laid three cots for them in a room, and left them to their sleep. After a while, however, he noticed that the women were restless and he went to enquire what the matter was. He found them awake and agitated. They said, “We cannot sleep. We are sorry, but there is a heavy stench in this room and that has taken away our sleep. We cannot bear the smell.” The man was surprised and hurt. “Bad smell in my house? Everything is clean here and I have brought these roses for you in the room. I am a gardener and take pride in my flowers.” The women nodded, “Yes, that is it. Those flowers stink. We cannot bear it and we cannot sleep in this room.”

Which is the good one and which is the bad one? The smell of the raw fish or the smell of the fresh roses? Our nose goes by the smells of what is familiar to it and starts classifying different types of smell from the start. For the gardener, the scent of his roses is his pride and delight. For the fisherwoman, the pungent odour of the fish is her delight. Perfume or stench is only a label fixed by the mind on a neutral smell. The trouble with many of us is that we, like the gardener, consider the scent of the roses is obviously, objectively and essentially good. We think that the stench of the fish is repulsively bad by itself and by its own composition. Many, who are not familiar with the famous *akhuni* (fermented beans) and *ngari* (fermented fish), may brand it as unhealthy food and abhor it. But people from the North-East India relish it.

We, human beings, have a desire and need to dictate or impose our will and our way of thinking on others. If someone doesn't think like me or

conform to my ways, I go an extra mile and think that something is wrong with that person.

A biochemist may look at a woman in terms of cells or DNA. An artist may look at her in terms of form, figure and colour; a philosopher may look at her as a rational animal; her enemy may look at her as someone to be destroyed; her boyfriend may look at her as a symbol of love. One's perception of, and take on, a thing or person varies. We are familiar with the story of the six blind men and their experience with the elephant. All of them had different experiences of the elephant and they were right in their own way.



Humans are rational beings gifted with the ability to think, judge and analyse. Humans value freedom of thought and expression. Therefore, it is natural for them to have varying thoughts, opinions and ideas. In such a situation, disagreements and conflicts are normal. If serious and deep conflicts arise, we must learn to dialogue and settle the issue. Sometimes ideas and convictions of the other may well be totally opposite to those of mine. My Muslim neighbour for example eats beef, but I as a Hindu may not agree with it at all. In such a case each one of us has to practice tolerance. Only then we can live peacefully as neighbours. Not everybody can be fit into the same shoe. Good smell? Bad smell? Who can tell?

(Sch. Francis is a Student of Philosophy at Chennai)



Reginald Kurkalang, SJ

Yearning for Peace



Gaibirei Phaomei, SJ



In the heart of high mountains and divine scenery
There lies the wonder of God's creativity.
The colorful tribes enjoy the work of your hands,
Celebrate in the symphony of music and dance.

Fresh nature is slowly being turned into a desert,
Ruining the graceful design of your loving earth,
Violence and destruction have crept into our hearts.
Come oh! Lord, rescue your people.

*Drop your mercy as a gentle rain from heaven,
Not just today, not just tomorrow, but without end.
Send down your peace to reign over your race
No longer will we shut our doors to your grace.*

Awake friends, from the darkness of greed and disunity.
Let us learn now how to Love and live in harmony.
God's mercy is bigger than our mistakes and failures
Run to him, his mercy is new every morning.



(Schs. Gaibirei & Reginald are Students of Philosophy at Pune)



THE NORTHEAST - FOLKLIFE & GLOBALIZATION



Royal Saldanha, SJ

Nowhere in India do we find a great diversity of cultures as in the Northeastern region of India. For ages it has been a home to a large number of tribes. Some of these are Bodo, Kuki, Mizo, Singpho, Khasi, Mishing, Deori, Adi, Apatani, Naga, Garo, Nishi, Rengma, Angami, Rabha and so on. Each tribe has its own rich tradition and culture. Tribes are famous for



t h e i r u n i q u e traditional dances, songs, and life style. Their folklife is full of myths, legends, tales, music, oral history, popular beliefs and customs. Today

globalization stands in the way of the folklife of the Northeastern tribes. This piece looks at the impact of globalization on the folklife of the various tribes of the Northeast India.

Globalization is an international process of interaction among the peoples of different regions of the world. In other words, it is a process of increasing interrelationship among the people of different ethnic groups and communities of the world. It has already made a significant impact on the life and culture of the Northeast region, both positively and negatively.

Globalization has positively affected the folklife of the tribes of the Northeast to a great extent. Due to globalization, the world at large has begun to recognize and appreciate the people

of the Northeast and their rich cultural heritage. Increased trade and commerce, better roads and improving tourism across the region have attracted visitors from around the world. This has opened up a way to the intermingling of cultures. This has been an opportunity for the Northeastern tribes to showcase and integrate their culture, beliefs, and customs with other dominant cultures. It has resulted in some positive reforms; many superstitious beliefs among the tribal communities have disappeared; for example, head-hunting is not in practice anymore. A favorable impact of globalization on the region's folk music and dance is clearly seen. Western music and Carnatic music have influenced the folk music and contributed to the quality of the traditional songs. Different folk dances of the Northeastern tribes like 'Bagrumba' of the *Bodos*, 'Gumrag' of the *Mishings* and others have become very popular in the other parts of the country and the world outside.





Globalization has not been all positive to the folklife of the region. The very concept of globalization itself can work against uniqueness of cultures and peoples. It's not surprising, then, that the individuality and uniqueness of the Northeastern tribals and their cultures have been greatly undermined. Day by day, the individual cultures are being swallowed by western culture in particular. It is seen noticeably in fashion, food habits, language and other areas. As a result, traditional customs and values are fast eroding. The Northeast tribals are generally communitarian and have a strong sense of *we feeling*. Unfortunately, today, more and more self-centered values are being promoted and are being embraced. Beautiful practices like respect for the elderly and helping the neighbor are all disappearing. Traditional dances and songs are fused with the modern jarring music which destroys their original beauty. It is sad to say that the Northeast which, once upon a time, was the richest land of tribes and natural beauty, is now blowing along with the common air that sweeps the rest of the world into a world of "no culture, no religion".

As we have seen, globalization has far-reaching consequences on the people both favorably and unfavorably. The process of

globalization has been set in motion and there's no stopping it. Whether we like it or not the Northeast is fast changing in ways we could never comprehend. The people are at the crossroads: what shall they do in the face of modernity and everything associated with it? It is not a question of embracing all that globalization has to offer and discarding their own culture and uniqueness. They must, rather, learn to benefit from both – their rich traditional heritage and globalization. However, this could happen only when they understand the importance of their rich cultural ethos and work consciously to preserve them.

(Sch. Royal is a Student of Theology at Pune)

"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire"

Gustav Mahler

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Rejin joseph



Parciush Marak



♥ A Big Thank You ♥
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All the Best to
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