



# XAVIER BOARD NEWSLETTER

April 1997

Vol 2 No. 1

*A publication of the Xavier Board of Higher Education in India*

## *President's Message*

*In this joyful season of Easter, we greet the Students, Teachers, Principals & Management of all Catholic Colleges in India to wish them the power and joy of the Risen Christ. May the resurrection of Jesus bring renewed vigour into all our plans & programs, to witness to Christ in our College Campuses.*

*The response from the Colleges to the Annual Essay Competition is very encouraging. May our students continue their zest for preserving the environment from degradation and destruction. Our preparation for the Great Jubilee 2000 necessitates a planned program of activities and Xavier Board is happy to propose activities towards knowing the person of Jesus.*

*The Summer Programs of Xavier Board announced previously, promise to be active, stimulating and resourceful and we hope our teachers will benefit from them.*

*We mourn sincerely the death of one of our founders, Fr. M.M. Balaguer S.J. and we dedicate this issue <sup>of</sup> to the Xavier Board Newsletter to his illustrious memory.*

**Dr. A F A MASCARENHAS**

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## **ENVIRONMENT- A GIFT OF GOD'S CREATION TO MANKIND**

**Prize Winning Essay by  
Shilpa Anna Rajan**

"Our environment is God's action and God's beneficent action towards man, a spontaneous act that can have no source other than the supreme initiative of divine love which does not presuppose its object and yet brings about its loveableness.. To blaspheme creation would be to imperil life...." What St. Augustine prophetically declared centuries ago, today rings as, if not all the more true. Indeed, as Ernesto Cardenal, in his book "To live is to love" writes, the environment is a shadow of God's corporate energy, animating our hearts with enthusiasm for all that is creative, right and noble".

"Mastery and Mystery" speaks of the awareness, since ancient times, of the environment being God's gift. The tradition of 'Karuna' and 'Maitri' in and to creation, was integral to Taoism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Islam, as much as to Hinduism. The Hebrew concept of creation out of "nothingness" (Ex-nihilo), growing into the "Somethingness-state" of Chaos, on which the divine spirit worked to result in the Cosmos is, interestingly, comparable to the "Big-Bang theory", too.

The patron-saint of ecology, St. Francis of Assisi and the Sanyasis who preached self-denial, visualized the environment as the matrix of origin, growth and fulfilment of the created order, its language being a constant invitation to compose the "Cosmic symphony of love Praise to God", thought the right attitude to nature-that of brotherliness in communion.

Gregory of Nazianzus states that each bit of created matter is the channel of a "finite expression of the infinite God, the manifestation of his grace". St. Thomas Aquinas also staunchly believed that, in every atom of all cosmic elements, there lives a figure of the trinitarian God.

However, man's sovereignty over the technical works that have come of his own creative hands, has resulted in the secularisation of man's image from a steward over the "household" of God, to that of a vice-regent licensed to create his own universe with himself at the centre. In the ultimate analysis of the ecocrisis and its implications, the problem appears to be spiritual in nature and hence, the exhortation by ecotheologists and ecofeminists to repattern the present-day ecological interest into a sacramental view of the environment; "to heal the wounded creation", in the words of Pope John Paul II.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) documents viz. 'Agenda 21,' and 'Rio Declaration' at the 1992 Earth Summit were complemented by the World Council of Churches (WCC) reports titled "Search of the new Heavens and the New Earth" and "One Global Community". These were pointers to the influential discipline called Nature or Green Theology, the language, reflecting the common anxiety of the Christian churches and the world community and calling for evolving the religious spirituality of a new world-order, which understands ecodegradation as detrimental to physical survival as well as spiritual life. For a collective awakening of human conscience to the environment that "feeds man, is worked upon by man, develops his body and mind and is reciprocally, developed by the body and mind of man"; (Bennet: "Towards and ecological world view"). An integrated planetary approach 'through and in the knowledge of God's goodness towards all creation' has been recommended by J. Moltmann and Wesley Michaelson in their "God in Creation: And ecological doctrine of creation and challenges for mankind". Psalms 19, 24, 33, 65, and 104 bear eloquent testimony to this very idea. Going by the premise that, to address ecological problems as though God and nature were diametrically



opposite poles is as hypocritical as absurd, the God-Nature-Man Continuum requires uninterrupted sustenance. For this, a metanoic shift from anthropocentric (man-centred) to a cosmocentric (life-centred) ethic needs to be promoted. For, God's covenant with Noah was the promise of liberty and perfection to the whole of creation, and in the salvation scheme of God, matter and nature have as much a place as Man (Charles Birch). The Incarnation itself is proof that these are not disjunct entities since "in His created body, the Lord lifted up creation, so that human-kind may participate in His eternal priesthood" (Claus Westerman).

The Decade Action Strategy for Environmental Conservation was led to state: "It is a wonder how the environment, as long as left undisturbed, functions as a self-sustaining entity despite its many minute intricacies". A biological survey of a single tree in Peru found that it supported more species of ants than exist in the whole of Great Britain. The canopy of an intact primary rain-forest can naturally absorb upto 35% of the rainfall, and it is this species-rich treasury of organic diversity, which we are plundering in the Tropics! When virgin forests are destroyed, one does not know how many varieties of plants and animals we would have lost, each with its unique gene pool, interdependent in the ultimate 'gene bank' maintained by the environment. Forest and rangeland habitats have myriad ecological functions, besides subsistence values and commercial usage-the maintenance and protection of watersheds and soil, climate regulation, preservation of habitat for wild species sensitive to pollution etc. When this synchronized sequence is upset, the result is flooding, erosion, salutation, pollution of potable water, a serious decline in fish population, an habitat fragmentation into 'islands' amidst vast seas of wasteland, engendering the extinction of even mobile migratory species. Extractive products like

dyes, oils, resins, honey, fibres, plantfoods, wax, firewood, medicinal plants, tropical timber, fish and game, as natures' immense bounty secure natural livelihood-niches for millions of locals. "Forests being the powerhouses of evolution are gift, the health of which is synonymous with the survival of those who depend on them. Each undesirable phenomenon entailed due to interference in their well-being is multidimensional, and all experience goes to show that, one cannot be tackled, without exacerbating the synergy between related aspects", states the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

The environment being a common gift to all mankind, Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's), taxonomists, ethnobotanists and conservation biologists alike, must redefine "Susceptibility of the environment" and the co-evolutionary dependencies therein, to remedy the unjust sharing of its resources. Dishonouring this has been counter-productive, since, luxury in the case of the developed world and sheer necessity of the third world (which hosts 75% of the population with only 25% of resources to draw from) have both inflicted irreparable damage on the environment. Vandana Shiva in her "The Violence of Bioimperialism" showcases biodemocracy as inspiringly the green ethos of recognising the intrinsic value of all species (independent of the value man puts on them), and their inherent right to co-exist with man. The provisions of the GATT have only made way to colonisation of the biodiversity of the gene-rich South, show how disoriented our efforts at "Ecology, Equity, Efficiency" have been. We need to tame and exorcise this demonic selfishness with the "think globally, act locally" principle, because, after all, body was alone in creating the present impasse, and the consequences of the mutually-entangled environmental problems have to be shared collectively by the globe. For restoration of the created harmony, "agapaic



sharing" of the world's resources is mandatory.

In its report "Our Common Future", the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development (87) declares, "unbridled consumption of non-renewable sources of energy, depletion of fossil-fuels, metals and minerals due to reckless pursuit of liquid wealth for industrial growth; highways, factories, dams, have all been the result of maximum exploitation of biotic systems operation in the ecosphere, even at the cost of saturating the earth's Carrying Capacity, progress being the opiate". Genesis 1 ("have dominion") has been viewed as the Exploiter's Charter vouching for progress of this type, whereas Genesis 2:15 which speaks of man's accountability to God in 'tilling and keeping' his environment, has been deliberately toned down. Ecotheologist like John Cobb Jr. have condemned our luxury-dependent syndrome and overconsumption of finite sources of energy, drastically increasing entropy and accelerating environmental degradation. It is well to concede that the problems of physical survival, such as starvation, poverty, global insecurity, manufacturing of nuclear bombs, preparations for 'star-wars', weakening of ozone layer, increasing slums in cities, Green House Effect, desensitisation, acid rain, dumping of radio-active wastes into oceans, rendering marine flora and fauna lifeless, even natural calamities like earthquakes and floods-all these spring from our failure to acknowledge environmental costs as integral to technological advances and developmental decision-making. Taking resort to Schumacher's 'Small is Beautiful' concept would promote intermediate technologies instead of adulterated progress. Not till environmental considerations are made the logic of production, can integrated progress actualise. The Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN) for instance, itself fears that experiments in genetic engineering, which involve manipulations with DNA, the

unit molecule of life, could disrupt the very homeostasis of the environment. The WRI (World Resources Institute), projecting the radicality of the present crisis, says, "The current situation is not only leading to the death of species, but also to an 'end of birth'. We do not hear the voice of the dying species, simply because we have all along ignored the plethora of life-forms, with which we have been gifted to share the planet".

In as much as the foregoing statement is true, it is obligatory that, even the micro-organismic life, comprising our natural heritage, the environment, needs to be preserved as an integrated whole, and the environment secured from being thrown out of equilibrium by wanton human interference. There is a long way to go before conservation, be it 'in situ' or 'ex situ', and development, are integrated into economic decision making. What emerges is that, the knowledge of indigenous peoples in conserving environment is an indicator as to how the multitude of needs could be guided and purposefully adapted, with environment conservation in view. The rubber tappers of Amazon are cited as model for an ecologically benign fashion of utilising the rain forest eco-system for a wider market, even while creating new uses for biological resources. This concept of 'new utility' seems to have got woefully misconstrued by others, whose focus has been the myopic "uniformity in production", with the result that, value-added in one domain is inevitably, built on the value-robbed in another. No wonder that there is abundant evidence pointing to how biotechnology development could only translate into biodiversity erosion' loss of the original gene pools and poverty creation. Equity and Justice are the sine qua non of sustainable eco-development and involves equity between economics and ecology and science and spirituality, whether it be among or within nations or between generations. The dynamic process of ecological sustainability must not



suffer due to either the developed world which seeks to maintain the status quo (its economic and technological competitiveness) or the third world, which seeks to make the existing world-order more egalitarian.

Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines have incorporated the perspective of "environmental self-reliance" instead of a schizophrenic, centralized approach to conservation, which protects neither biodiversity nor people's rightful access to it, and which explains why, instead of being contained, economic destabilisation tends to be amplified. Only measures like updating the Biodiversity Status Report at least every two years, and structural ecological adjustment in affluent societies of the West can be the panacea to arrest the alarming rate at which our home is nearing the precipice of self-destruction. Local research and development (R & D) efforts aiming at "Conservation-alongside-Utilisation" of the local biological resources, must work with the three-tired guiding motto of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Programme- 'Understand, Defend and Use Wisely and Equitably.' The Third World Network opines that, eradicating illiteracy, unemployment and encouraging self-support of human resources and local community self-reliance alone, will reduce the burden on the environment. The Green Forum of the Philippines and the Green Belt Movement of Kenya, set up following the United Nations Environment Programme (Stockholm Conference 1972), to study human environment, declares that, pillaging environmental wealth would only destroy indigenous cultures and further aggravate environmental decay and consequently, human misery. The only way to live up to the challenge is to make the environment the foundation of global economic planning. Else, it is to be believed that 'the wolf' is, finally, 'at the door'.

The church follow-ups of the UNCED have been encouraging the acceptance of the environment as the womb of life, not merely an input for development, and measures to counter the factors challenging the functional checks and balances between non-human organic and inorganic components. The resource sharing system (rss), a sub unit of the WCC, declares that ipso facto, the created order becomes the central concern, glory and responsibility of all who love God. Progress and eco-ethical perspectives must be revised in terms of the meaning of human existence, the quality of life we wish to promote on earth and wholesome development with more of "being-becoming" than "having-consuming". Christ's victory commits us to overcome evil by good and death by life. Hence, we ought to adopt modest life-styles and love and treat the earth and the 'ecospheric metabolism' as gently as God does, because man who exploits nature for selfish ends, destroys the best in himself-the sense of human responsibility.

"Our apocalyptic times demand, that concerted efforts at the grassroots level be focused on to build a culture that can live in harmony with creation's integrity, for preserving the gift of the earth to nurture and sustain life" (Commitment to the Conciliar Process of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Global Forum, Earth Summit). Without any claims to innocence from rapacity, the global community needs to admit that the foreboding future is of its own making. Its own thoughtless onslaught on the finite resources, for the sake of increasing production and consumption of goods and services, has led to this quasi-suicide of life. With atomic, chemical, and biological weapons of mass-destruction, the future is no longer a matter of course, it needs to be deliberately created. It is to be accepted that technology can provide the means but never the will to eradicate injustice. We need to reshape global culture to elicit creatively renewed commitments for the environment,



such that, the programming of the solution is no longer tinctured with detached calm and indifference, so characteristic of our consumerist society. Strategies need to be drawn up by the developed world, which address the impact of their social, economic and national developmental policies on the global biosphere.

Developmental process should be so articulated and planning so optimised, that ecological balance and environmental purity are least disturbed, if at all. "The quality of human life is inseparable from the quality of the environment and depends on its assimilative capacity, renewability and carrying capacity", says UNFPA (1990). Environmental protection, rehabilitation and restoration of degraded eco-systems augmentation of the stability, diversity and resilience of both natural and human-managed eco-systems and the creation, expansion, and development of new eco-systems, both major and minor, will go a long way in man's attempts to treasure the gift called environment and permit it to have its own sway. Humanity must carry itself, safely forward, to newer heights of progress, for which, it has to keep note of the imperatives, as well as the potentials of its environment. In blending the experimental knowledge of the past with the scientific knowledge of the present, we would not only be able to create new knowledge, but more importantly, new wisdom, in conserving and recouping the unique genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity of our environment. Finally, the globe needs to tune itself to be receptive to the heartbeat of the fragile Life Support System of our planet, being stifled by materialism and urbanization. In accordance with the 'Pan-entheistic' tradition

of the universe, the globe ought to live according to the 'Spirit, the Giver and Sustainer of all life.

As pioneers of a new humanity and of the Kingdom of God, who have been endowed with the gift of Liberty of Choice, we need to be guided by the Divine Spirit, to save from the impending doom, the environment, which we have "borrowed from the future generations". As we bequeath to them this legacy, which we have inherited from our ancestors, it is to be hoped that the globe would be able to attune the Orchestra of life to the divine love, with the incantatory cry, "Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation!!"

**SHILPA ANNA RAJAN**  
II B.A. FUNCTIONAL ENGLISH  
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### **Fr. Balaguer Passes Away**

It is with great sorrow that we inform you of the death of Fr. M.M. Balaguer SJ, on 8th March 1997 at Hyderabad. As one of the founders of Xavier Board, Fr. Balaguer took very active interest and guided the destinies of the Xavier Board for many long years. He was always a source of great strength and perceived in coaxing the Xavier Board to play its rightful role to spread the message of the gospel and human values to teachers and students in all Catholic Colleges in India.

We pray for the peaceful repose of his soul in Heaven and we pledge to continue with vigour, the mandate that he gave to Xavier Board.



## GREAT JUBILEE 2000

We are, perhaps, about to participate in the greatest event of our life time, viz, the closing of the second millennium and the beginning of the third millennium. Pope John Paul II has set the ball rolling by issuing an apostolic letter, Tertio Millennio Adveniente, which is being discussed and debated the world over, both by friends and foes of the Church.

The jubilee year is calculated by multiplying 7 years by 7 times and adding one more. Number '7' is probably taken from the lunar calendar. It is one quarter of the 28 days which is the year for the Moon. God The Mighty One created the whole universe in 6 days (Gen.1) and rested on the seventh day (Gen.:2:2). And that is one day of the week, much more the humans require a bit of rest. It assumed the importance of one of the Ten Commandments of God, to be strictly observed by the Israelites (Ex. 5:13). The seventh day is dedicated to Yahweh because He rescued them from Egypt (Ex 5:15) which shall not be forgotten by the Israelites.

Jubilee in the Old Testament is a time of thanksgiving. In Lev. 25:10, the fiftieth year is stipulated as of special importance. It is a year of declaring freedom for all the inhabitants. According to the Book of Exodus, Yahweh tells Moses; "Go and tell the king of Egypt that he must let the Israelites leave his land." (v.10). Liberation from Egypt was definitely an experience of freedom and at the same time it was also an experience of the Divine intervention in human history, more particularly in the life of the Israelite nation.

Hence the Israelites are eternally grateful to Yahweh for his saving action. And so whenever the Israelites come together to pray they recall the Exodus story and at once thank Yahweh for it. Perhaps, the Israelites have made a significant contribution to the

heritage of religious experience of humankind, i.e., thanksgiving is a way to go to the Almighty. Moses was so moved that he sang a song of thanksgiving to the Lord (Ex. 15:1-4, 8-13, 14-15). Therefore one can also find repeated references to the Exodus experience in the Book of Psalms (Ps.77, 78, 105, 106, 136).

When the number 50 is doubled we get the year 100 and thus that becomes also a Jubilee year. When 100 is multiplied by 10 we get a millennium and now we are on the threshold of the third millennium after God intervened in history in and through the person of Jesus Christ, the New Israel, the Saviour of Humankind.

On the day dedicated to Yahweh, i.e, the Sabbath day, Jesus announced in the synagogue that he was anointed to bring good news to the poor, to set free the captives, to give recovery to the blind and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (LK 4:16-19). The words from the Book of Isaiah (61:1-2) which were a consolation to the Israelites who were exiled in Babylon, have found their realization and fulfilment in Jesus. His coming, his life, his works, etc., have signalled a permanent jubilee for humankind and a new as well as an unparalleled era has begun.

The Great Jubilee of the year 2000 has been already ushered in, by Pope John XXIII when he said to open wide the doors of the Church for the Spirit to enter in and renew her from within. The Second Vatican Council set the agenda for the third millennium and it presented a vision of the Church for the future.

The emphasis of the present jubilee is not on fanfare but on internal renewal of Christian life, aggiornamento, and promote reconciliation at various levels. Pope John Paul II, is working through various fora to impress upon the rich countries that debts of the Third World should be written off and



thus to make it truly an acceptable year of the Lord both in letter and spirit. No doubt the Apostolic letter of the present Pontiff covers a large number of humankind's concerns.

However in the Apostolic Letter, there is very little mentioned about women. Perhaps in the beginning of the coming millennium, women will be in the forefront and therefore their role in the Church, in society, in the whole world needs to be brought into sharper focus. So also the issues concerning environment requires to be addressed as these concerns affect human life very much today. The wholeness and integrity of God's creation needs to be maintained and the Church being an international body should initiate discussion and action in this regard.

Furthermore, another area the Church needs to take into account is the lack of doctrinal support for Christian political involvement both at national and international levels. For the Christian community of the next millennium some guidance in this regard, from the official Church, is not only desirable but is becoming increasingly a felt need. Christians need not shy away from this important area of human life nor should they feel guilty for their involvement.

The Great Jubilee is a golden opportunity for the Xavier Board of Higher Education. It avails an occasion for this resourceful body to make a specific contribution in the field of higher learning. Instead of multiplying the variety of programmes other organizations might undertake, Xavier Board should seize this opportunity to guide the thinking of academia and intelligentsia.

As it is well known many from the scientific fraternity have been and are labouring under the burden of a conflict between faith and reason, vis-a-vis, science and religion. In the Indian systems of thought different points of view are well synthesised; intellectuals,

putting their heads together, should think of a project to reconcile the conflict between faith and reason by effectively applying this philosophical principle. If the Xavier Board takes an initiative to resolve this issue it will undoubtedly be a historically significant achievement and a vital contribution for the coming millennium.

**Fr. Anto Poruthur S.V.D.**

### **XAVIER BOARD AND THE GREAT JUBILEE**

In preparation for the Great Jubilee 2000, this year 1997 is dedicated to Jesus Christ. This year, being also the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence, focusses on the theme of Freedom. In this context Catholic Colleges can plan and conduct awareness programs, dialogues, seminars and specifically discuss.

1. Freedom of the marginalised and oppressed - in a special way, the cause of Dalit Christians, their liberation from poverty and bondage - move the Govt. to restore their rights and privileges.
2. Freedom and dignity of women - at home and in society - specifically issues of injustice and harassment based on gender, freedom from evils of dowry and bride-burning.
3. Freedom to live and grow as an unborn foetus in the mother's womb - respect for human life - prolife activities.
4. Freedom for the young girl-child to live and grow - infanticide and inequity towards girl-children - freedom from being pushed towards prostitution.
5. Freedom for the youth from pornography, drugs and alcohol - education of our campus youth on the violence caused by these to mind, body and soul.



6. Freedom of the heart and the spirit -  
"Christ has set us free by sacrificing himself for all our sins."

This quest for freedom leads on to a great desire to know the person of Jesus. We must make a conscious effort, month by month, to learn various aspects of the life, mission and person of Jesus. We suggest the following themes upto end of 1997.

1. The birth and manifestation of Jesus
  - born in poor surroundings in a stable
  - birth first announced to poor shepherds in the field
  - recognition & worship of Christ by the three wisemen.
2. Presentation of Jesus and his youth
  - following the customs and laws
  - the dutiful youth of Jesus in the family of Nazareth
  - the Young Jesus "at his father's business" at the temple
3. Preparation of Jesus for his ministry
  - the anointing (at baptism) of Jesus by the Father
  - the submission of Jesus to temptations and His victory over Satan
  - the call of Jesus to his apostles
4. Jesus as a teacher
  - the sermon on the mount
  - teaching through parables and examples
  - teaching with authority
5. Jesus as a healer
  - healing the sick through their faith experience
  - healing them from the spirits of evil
6. The prayer life of Jesus
  - praying often and in public
  - praying alone and in silence
  - praying for forgiveness
  - transfiguration - Jesus as God and Man

7. The suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus

- the human experience (missionaries murdered for Christ)
- the faith experience (take up our cross and follow Him)
- the mission experience (build up the faith of others)
- the joy of the Risen Christ
- Christ with us always till the end of time
- the second coming of Jesus.

### ANNUAL ESSAY COMPETITION

The Xavier Board of Higher Education in India conducted an All-India Essay Competition for undergraduate students of the Catholic Colleges on the theme "Environment - a gift of God's creation to mankind." Twenty three students from many colleges across the country competed. The essays were evaluated by (Christian) environment experts. The prize essay goes to SHILPA ANN RAJAN, of St. Theresa's College, Ernakulam, Kerala. Shilpa will receive a prize of one thousand rupees from the Xavier Board secretariat.

To acknowledge and encourage the effort of the other participants, the Xavier Board has decided to award consolation prizes of one hundred rupees each to all the other 22 participants listed below. They will receive their prizes from the Xavier Board secretariat.

We wish to thank the principals for enthusing the students and the competitors for their laudable effort. We hope that many more will pay renewed attention to the problems of Environment and do something concrete to ease the situation.



## Consolation Prize Winners

1. **Ms Anupama Jayidev**  
St. Bede's College, Shimla - 171 002.
2. **Ms. Kanupriya Vashisht**  
St. Bede's College, Shimla - 171 002.
3. **Ms Thushara P.J.**  
Vimala College, Trichur - 9, Kerala
4. **Ms Asha Kiran D'Souza**  
St. John's College of Nursing, Bangalore - 34.
5. **Ms Muneera Pookunju**  
Assumption College, Changanacherry,  
Kottayam Dist., Kerala
6. **Ms Reshma S.L. D'Souza**  
St. Ann's College of Education, Mangalore - 1.
7. **Ms Shakun Rana**  
St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad - 380 009.
8. **Ms Aakanksha Singhvi**  
St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad - 380 009.
9. **Ms Nandini Cardoso**  
Carmel College, Nuvem, Goa - 403 604.
10. **Ms Sangeetha Menezes**  
Carmel College, Nuvem, Goa - 403 604.
11. **Ms Jaya Santhanam**  
Auxilium College, Gandhi Nagar, Vellore - 6.
12. **Ms Meera K.S.**  
Carmel College, Mala - 680 732, Kerala
13. **Ms Sheeba P.J.**  
Carmel College, Mala - 680 732, Kerala
14. **Mr. John Peter**  
Arul Anandar College, Karumathur - 625 514  
Madurai Dist., Tamil Nadu.
15. **Mr. E. Sekhar**  
Arul Anandar College, Karumathur - 625 514  
Madurai Dist., Tamil Nadu.
16. **Ms Lilly Pushpam**  
Holy Cross Home Science College  
52, New Colony, Tuticorin, T.N. - 628 003.
17. **Ms Beverly Fernandes**  
St. Andrew's College of Arts, Science & Commerce  
St. Doninic Road, Bandra, Bombay - 400 050.
18. **Ms Qurratulain Khan**  
St. Francis College for Women, Secunderabad,  
Begumpet, Hyderabad - 500 016, A.P.
19. **Ms Laxmi**  
St. Francis College for Women, Secunderabad,  
Begumpet, Hyderabad - 500 016, A.P.
20. **Ms Gnanam**  
Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women  
Mt. of St. Anne, Thamaraiikulam, Periyakulam - 625 601
21. **Ms Radhik R.**  
Providence College for Women  
Springfield P.O., Coonoor, Nilgiris - 643 104.
22. **Ms M. Renga**  
Providence College for Women  
Springfield P.O., Coonoor - 643 104., Nilgiris.

### "WHAT WOULD CHRIST DO IF HE WERE IN MY PLACE"

Dear Friends,

Easter Joy, Peace, Hope  
'Jesus is Alive' 'Do not Fear'

Easter is a day of transparency. The risen Jesus is transparent to the core. But He paid heavily for it. His transparency led him to the summit of calvary revealing his credibility and intimacy. (Jn 18/19).

#### **Transparency - Credibility - Intimacy**

Let us admit this we are far from these ideals. These are the qualities that can touch hearts of our youth.

Awareness brings the cure.

For me and for you Easter is a unique day. It comes and it goes, but the deep experience of the wonder of the day, stays with us to awaken us to relive our lives, inspite of all the obstacles and challenges coming in the wake of each day. Easter is the culmination of Christ's life mission to give totally for others.

Emmaus experience changed the attitude of the apostles. They perceived a new vision, accepted a new mission and made a new commitment. At the right moment the intervention of Jesus transformed their lives.

Let the same experience be ours in this paschal season.

Sr. Ezechiel C.M.C., Secretary

### JESUS OF NAZARETH

by Fr. Herve Morissette, CSC

This book is meant to guide the faith formators at college level in helping their student to answer the question that Jesus asked his disciples one day, "And you, who do you say I am?" Eleven chapters describe various facets of Jesus' Personality. The second part of the book evokes the encounters he had with different groups of people, and the later chapters are meditations on the Passion and the Resurrection. Thus the students will be helped to have personal encounters with Jesus, know him more personally and follow him with deep joy in their hearts.

368 pp.

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## **CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOR RELIGIOUS HARMONY**

**DR. LOUIS XAVIER S.J.**

### **The Two Concerns**

Faith formation in our institutions has two dimensions. Our primary concern is the faith formation of our catholic students. We have to cherish and affirm our Catholic identity. But in the meantime, we cannot ignore that a sizable number of our students are non catholics. We are responsible for their faith formation as well. We have to recognise the fact God calls different people to an intimate relationship with Him in different ways and their response to his call has found expression in different religious traditions. We have to recognise the fact that for non Christians their own religions are legitimate ways of seeking a personal and intimate relationship with God.

Our serious concern for faith formation of Catholic and non catholic students in pluri religious context will prepare students for living in harmony with other religions. But to Christian educators concerned about faith formation, our pluri religious context poses a tremendous challenge. While we remain rooted in our own faith and proclaim and affirm our identity, we have to remain open to other religions and enable people to find their relationship with Him in ways God chooses to call them. This rootedness on one hand and openness on the other brings in its wake certain tensions and dilemmas and we have to boldly resolve them in creative ways drawing our wisdom, courage and power from Him who is the Father of us all.

### **Catholic Students - Our Approach**

If we are promoting religious harmony, the catholic youth who are our primary concern should become more open to other faiths while they are rooted in their own. We may

find this openness difficult in these days of growing fundamentalism. The temptation may be to assert only our identity and deny other religions their legitimacy and due respect. We may tend to get ourselves entrenched in the same fundamentalism we deny to others. This trend is opposed to our evangelising mission of building common human communities of justice, peace and love. If we want to build such communities, being open to other religions, while remaining rooted in one's faith, is a must.

The church invites us to such openness. The Document of Vatican II on The church in the modern world spoke of the universal salvific will of God which makes salvation available to everyone in a manner known only to God. The declaration of other religions stressed that all people, form a single community which has God as its origin and goal. The Bishops of Asia in 1974, accepted other religions as 'significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation- 'They have helped to give shape to the histories and cultures of our nations. How then can we not give them reverence and honour? And how can we not acknowledge that God has drawn our peoples to himself through them? The symbolic gesture of Pope John Paul joining the leaders of other religions in praying for peace at Assisi in Oct. '86, confirms these new dimensions. Marcello Magno, who as secretary to the Pontifical Council for inter-religious dialogue, reflecting on the theological significance of Assisi meeting said;

"At Assisi, the welcome given to the religious representatives and people, being present at the prayer offered by various religions were in some way a recognition that these religions and prayers not only have a social role but are also effective before God".

The thinking of the church, our own evangelising mission to build common human communities and the possible enrichment to



one's own faith through interaction with other faiths, make us believe that we could foster a creative and critical interaction with other religions among our catholic students.

### Our Strategies

The following strategies could be thought of:

- i) Our students must acquire an empathic and critical knowledge of other faiths. Along with christian doctrine, the good aspects of other religions could be shared with catholic students showing them how they could complement, enrich and deepen their own faith. This will engender not only a spirit of openness but also an ability to share at a deeper level with people of other religions.
- ii) We could also create contexts for faith sharing while collaborating with people of other faiths in community building activities. To quote from the FABC document April 1995-Asian worship and truth; "In Asia, where almost all Christians live as small minorities, there is a need to form human communities with people of other faiths. They can work on joint projects for development, social action and human rights. But they could also gather for prayer where each person reads his / her own scriptures and prays in the presence of people of other faiths. Thus justice is linked to faith and people of different religions experience God and form a community that moves towards the kingdom of God."

### Faith formation and Religious Harmony

Faith formation of Catholics and non catholic alike is the dynamics we opt for promoting religious harmony on the campus. But educating in the faith makes an initiation of the person to a living commitment of faith at three different levels-experience, celebration and reflection. Such an education takes place all throughout life. The family and religious community have an important part to play in nurturing this faith and they have their own areas of emphasis in faith formation namely experience and celebration. But the college would emphasise the level of faith-reflection in the light of questions posed by the living reality. This reflection should lead to better relationships with God and neighbour. Growth in the faith takes place in an atmosphere of freedom- open to tradition and guidance but free. Growth in the faith is a personal process of our ongoing dialogue between God and the human person. We can only be witness and facilitators. We should not seek to dominate and control. Educating in the faith is respectful of the mystery of God's action in the world, while remaining a loyal witness, in word and action to one's own faith commitment. This type of faith formation, I believe, is an essential dimension of the integral evangelisation of the building up of a new humanity of peace, fellowship and justice which is the reality of God's Kingdom for all people.

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