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Dear Principals, Managers and Faculty members,

We are glad to place in your hands the Xavier Board bulletin for the period March to September 2019. This last half year of the outgoing Board had a number of important programs. The most important was the launch of the online Academic and Administrative Audit which was the dream of Xavier Board. After intense preparations consisting of a number of meetings and revision of the draft, the final online instrument was launched at Christ University, during a meeting of special invitees from different parts of India, on March 23, 2019. I am sure this will put the Xavier Board as a significant academic Association in the academic circles of Higher Education in India. I am extremely grateful to all who worked hard to make it possible, especially Rev. Fr. Joseph Xavier SJ, Ms. Ordetta Mendoza, Sr. Annamma Philip FMM and Prof. Kennedy Andrew Thomas.

We were also very happy to have had an excellent program for students organized at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur on March 9-10, 2019. The Social Work PG Dept. which took the responsibility for the program did a wonderful work and the students from Colleges in South India found the program very informative and motivating.

As a follow up of the launch of AAA instrument and to help colleges to prepare for the NAAC accreditation a training program was organized at St. Agnes College, Mangalore for Principals, IQAC coordinators and coordinators of NAAC-SSR. The feedback from participants was that the program was excellent and many such programs should be conducted to help colleges prepare well for the NAAC accreditation.

The culmination of all these programs was the 23rd Triennial Conference held at DBI, Guwahati, Assam from September 13-15, 2019. It was one of the best attended Triennial Conferences I have attended during the last 15 years, though not from the point of view of the number of participants but from the representation from all regions and active participation of all through very meaningful interventions.

The active participation of the Xavier Board in responding to the Draft Education Policy 2019 was also very widespread through all regions and with meaningful suggestions.

As the old Board hands over charge to a very enthusiastic new Board, we look forward to many more attempts to coordinate, network all member colleges and give a real fillip to Higher Education in India.

Leslie Moras

National Workshop *cum* Training Programme On
XB - Administrative And Academic Audit
Held at
Christ (Deemed to be University), Bangalore
March 23 - 24, 2019



A training programme was held on the XB-AA Audit at Christ (Deemed to be University), Bangalore on March 23 - 24, 2019. The workshop was inaugurated by Dr. Fr. Abraham V. M., Vice-Chancellor, Christ (Deemed to be University).

The resource persons were Dr. Fr. Joseph Xavier, SJ, former Principal, Loyola College, (Autonomous) Chennai, Dr. Ordetta Mendoza, Former Head, PG Dept. of Bioinformatics, Stella Maris College, (Autonomous) Chennai and Dr. Kennedy Andrews, Christ (Deemed to be University), Bangalore.

Fr. Leslie, President XB, officially launched the XB-AA Audit portal and Dr. Sr. Annamma Philip, Secretary General explained the dynamics of the workshop.

The objectives of the programme were to

- give the participants an overview of the online version of the XB-AA audit manual
- train participants on how to audit their colleges which are for XB for AA Audit and
- obtain feedback on the XB-AA audit manual for further improvement and fine tuning.

Participants included XB Executive Board Members, retired University Professors, Individual members of XB, Principals of several colleges, IQAC coordinators from member institutions and a few faculty members who were interested in becoming XB-Audit team members.

The participants were given hands-on training in filling up the manuals and also writing a report from a sample manual.

There were over 30 participants who very enthusiastically completed the training programme and volunteered to become audit team members for the XB-AA audit in colleges.

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National Youth Leadership Camp
organized by
Sacred Heart College (Autonomous), Tirupattur
in collaboration with
Xavier Board of Higher Education in India, Bangalore
March 9-10, 2019

National Youth Leadership Camp was organized by PG & Research Department of Social Work, Sacred Heart College (Autonomous), Tirupattur in collaboration with Xavier Board of Higher Education in India, Bengaluru on 9th and 10th March, 2019. Totally 53 youth from nine colleges from South India participated in the camp.

The camp was inaugurated by Dr. Sr. Annamma Philip FMM, Secretary General, Xavier Board, Fr. Dr. C. Antony Raj, Rector and Secretary of Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur and Dr. S. Paul Raj Head, Department Social Work. Fr. Henry Daniel Ambrose welcomed the dignitaries and the participants from the various colleges.



In her inaugural address Sr. Annamma Philip emphasized the importance of youth in nation building and development. Rev. Dr. C. Antony Raj shared his words of inspiration and wished the camp all success. Dr. C.R. Christi Anandan proposed vote of thanks.

The first session conducted by Dr. Clayton Michael Fonceca was an ice-breaking session to make the participant feel at home.

Rev. Dr. S. Emmanuel SJ, National Advisor, AICUF, Chennai conducted a session on the theme 'Understanding the Society and Politics in today's context'. He highlighted the current scenario in India and the role of youth for social change. Mr. Gnanaraj, Co-Founder, Ministro Foundation, Chennai conducted a dynamic session on the 'Civic Responsibilities of Youth and Volunteerism', using several activities and simulation games. He reiterated the role of youth in civic management and also helped them realise the need for Volunteerism.

Mr. Sambath, Lad2Leader Consultancy and Training Services conducted the session on 'Youth and Scope for Entrepreneurship' and showed a number of videos of successful entrepreneurs.

The importance of 'Fitness for youth and importance of sports and games' was given by Dr. K. Arockia Raj, followed by a Throw ball match for girls and boys separately.



The entertainment program after dinner was colourful and energetic with students performing mimes, skits, song and dance on themes such as Women's empowerment, road accidents, violence and peace. Dr. S. Paul Raj, gave a good night thought, which is one of the traditions of Salesian Institutions. He emphasized the need for continuous learning and unlearning to be a better person after the students retired for the night having enjoyed a fruitful day.

On day 2, the programme began with the resource person Ms. Latha Munuswamy, Student Counsellor from Sacred Heart College who conducted a session on 'Youth and Use of Media'. She highlighted the power of media and its positive and negative impact in the lives of youth.

Dr. J. Henry Rozario, the Director and Principal Consultant of Exodus for Training and Development Pvt. Ltd and a Youth Work Specialist for three decades conducted the next session on 'Youth Leadership and Youth Led Development'. The activities were inspiring and enriching.



A poster preparation and presentation coordinated by Dr. Clayton Fonceca was held in the afternoon. Various themes such as; women empowerment, violence, environment development, health and wellbeing and corruption were presented and a cash prize was announced.

Valedictory function was conducted where, Rev. Fr. Leslie Moras, President, Xavier Board, was the Chief Guest and Rev. Dr. D. Maria Antony Raj, Principal, Sacred Heart College, and Dr. S. Paul Raj, were present.

In his Valedictory address, Rev. Fr. Leslie Moras, highlighted the contribution of Christian educational institutions and Xavier Board as well. He requested the youth to use the resources and support and contribute back for the peace and nation building. Certificates and prizes were given to the winners in the sports, cultural programme and in poster presentations. Dr. S. Paul Raj finally thanked Xavier Board, the Management of Sacred Heart College, Staff of Social Work Department, student volunteers and participants from various colleges and the principals of the participating colleges who made the two day National Youth Leadership Camp a great success.



**‘Documentation and Preparedness for Accreditation’
Organised by
St Agnes College (Autonomous), Mangaluru
in collaboration with
Xavier Board of Higher Education in India
June 20 - 22, 2019**

A three-day National Level Workshop on ‘Documentation and Preparedness for Accreditation’ was organised by St. Agnes College (Autonomous), Mangaluru in collaboration with Xavier Board from June 20 - 22, 2019. Thirty-eight participants ranging from Principals to College IQAC coordinators from Colleges across the country attended the workshop. The workshop was inaugurated by Dr. Sr. Jeswina, AC, Principal, St. Agnes College. In her address she highlighted the achievements of St. Agnes College and also mentioned that the college would be celebrating its centenary in 2020. She spoke about the longstanding relationship between Xavier Board and the College and stated that the Sr. Hedwige Award was named after one the former Principals of St. Agnes College.

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The workshop covered all the criteria of NAAC SSR and also highlighted the various documents that an institution needs to maintain as well as the procedures for maintaining documents. The resource persons also assured the participating institutions of the full support of XB should they require any assistance in any areas of growth and development.



The workshop was well appreciated and some of the feedback from the participants is given here:

"I feel very happy to share my feelings about the workshop at Mangalore. It was a well-managed event. The focal theme was very time referent. A small group of participants gave us enough opportunity for in-group interactions. The resource persons were excellent in terms of knowledge base, communication skill and their readiness to answer endless queries. I really felt enriched and fulfilled".
Dr. Amrita Choudhary, Patna Women's College, Patna.



"The feedback:

- Highly specific and delivered all that it promised:
- Resource persons complemented each other and could address the queries raised
- All queries from participants were treated with respect and no sessions were rushed
- Participants shared some of their practices...since this was allowed, some pointers could be picked up from participants' experiences. That was also very useful.
- The resource persons dealt with each point in the SSR, clearly, distinguishing between autonomous / affiliated colleges. They also shared their ppt's with us. That was very useful.
- Overall a well-planned and conducted workshop".

-Dr. Nandita Mangalore, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.

"I would like to share my views on the workshop: It was an eye-opener for most of us knowing that there are a lot of changes in the SSR that NAAC is doing and the most significant is the transparency of assessment of colleges, which both the resource persons enabled us to prepare ourselves with. After reaching our institution we are glad to inform that all care has been taken and the best part is that all the faculty members including the Principal are involved in the preparation of our next assessment..."

Herbert G Lyngdoh, St. Anthony's College, Shillong

"I thank Dr. Sr. Jeswina, Principal, St. Agnes College, Mangalore and Dr. Sr. Annamma Philip, Secretary, XBHEI, for organising this 3-day workshop. This was of great help to us, the colleges which are applying for assessment by NAAC, as this is the first time that our institutions are undertaking this process. The information received was truly valuable. The resource persons enlightened us in the latest guidelines and directives from NAAC. We truly benefitted from this workshop. Our sincere thanks to Dr. Ordetta Mendoza and Dr. Joe Jesudurai for their expertise and generous sharing of information in detail. A special thanks to Dr. Nancy, faculty St. Agnes College and her team for catering to all our needs. The workshop was very informative and enriching...."

Sr. Emmy Vas, Principal, St. Ann's Degree and PG Col. for Women, Hyderabad.

"The national workshop on NAAC accreditation process was highly informative and purposeful from the perspective of affiliated colleges like ours as well as those applying for the first cycle of NAAC accreditation. The resource persons Dr. Ordetta and Dr. Joe explained the revised accreditation framework with every minute detail taken care of explaining each indicator along with important pointers and consistent discussion with the participants making it a two-way learning exercise. The pace of sessions was as per the need of the participants which helped in better outcome. I'm thankful to St. Agnes College and XB for organizing a very useful and much needed workshop for all XB member colleges. Also, the hospitality co-ordinated by Dr. Nancy Vaz, faculty St. Agnes College and her team was remarkable".

Dr. Yashwardhan Singh, Co-ordinator, IQAC and NAAC Steering Committee, St. Xavier's College, Jaipur

"The workshop at St. Agnes College Mangalore on the NAAC SSR preparation was very useful in bringing a lot of clarity regarding the new framework. Each question in the SSR was dealt with and ample examples were quoted by the resource persons as well as the participants. It was a very interactive session wherein we learnt a lot from both the resource persons (Dr. Joe and Dr. Ordetta) and also from the participants. The workshop dealt with all aspects – from the SSR preparation to the peer team visit. I cannot help mentioning the hospitality extended by St. Agnes College. Dr. Nancy and the students took great care of all our needs. I sincerely thank St. Agnes College and XBHEI for organising this workshop and supporting its members in the accreditation process...."

Dr. Uma Harikrishnan, K., St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad

"I thank St. Agnes College, Mangalore and Xavier Board of Higher Education in India for organising the workshop. This was of great help to all colleges applying for accreditation or re-accreditation by NAAC. The resource persons were thoroughly prepared and they knew about the latest guidelines and directives from NAAC. They explained each metric in great detail and gave the participants pointers for scoring the maximum points in the metrics. The workshop included participants from both affiliated and autonomous colleges and all were immensely benefitted. Dr. Ordetta Mendoza and Dr. Joe through their rich experience made us aware of all the nuances of the SSR. All queries, however small, were patiently addressed and participants were also encouraged to give their inputs if they felt they could contribute in anyway. This made the workshop even more enriching. The workshop was greatly informative and of great help to all the participants.

A special thanks to Dr. Nancy Vaz, faculty, St. Agnes College, and her team for the excellent hospitality and taking care of every minute detail to ensure that the participants had a pleasant stay".

-Dr. Srijitha Chakravarty, Loreto College, Kolkata

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**Report of the 23rd Triennial Conference
held at
Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati
on Sept. 13-15, 2019
Revisioning Higher Education in India –
Challenges and Strategies for Catholic Institutions**

Xavier Board of Higher Education in India held its 23rd Triennial Conference on the theme: 'Revisioning Higher Education in India- Challenges and Strategies for Catholic Institutions'. The Conference was attended by 180 delegates including the Secretary General of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), Paris.

The Inauguration of the Conference began with the Eucharist concelebrated by the Most Rev. Dr. Thomas D'Souza, Archbishop of Kolkata and Chairman, CBCI Commission for Education and Culture and several priests.

Dr. Fr. Stephen Mavelly, SDB Vice-Chancellor, Assam Don Bosco University gave a special address. He stated that teaching and learning should be in a digital landscape for the digital generation of today. Institutions must be innovative and carefully examine how they prepare students for the changing world... a world which is changing right before our eyes. He said that the journey of lifetime starts with the turning of a page and we are what we repeatedly do, excellence is not a practice but a habit.

Dr. Sr. Annamma Philip, FMM, Secretary General, presented the dynamics of the Conference while Dr. Fr. P. D. John, SDB, Director, Don Bosco Institute (DBI), Guwahati presented the mission and effective presence of DBI.

The Conference Souvenir was released by Most Rev. Dr. Thomas D'Souza, Archbishop of Kolkata who also presented the Sr. Hedwige award which is given annually to the best Xavier Board College. For 2018-2019 it was awarded to Stella Maris College (Autonomous) Chennai (Principal - Dr. Sr. Rosy Joseph, FMM). The award for 2017-18 was shared by Sacred Heart College (Autonomous) Thevara, Kerala, (Principal - Dr. Fr. Johnson Palakkappillil, (Fr. Prasanth)) and Marian College Kuttikkanam, (Autonomous), Kerala (Principal - Dr. Fr. Roy Abraham P). For 2016-17, the award was given to Mount Carmel College (Autonomous) Bangalore (Principal - Dr. Sr. Arpana CSST). Congratulations to the Principals, Managements, Faculty, Staff and students of the award winning Colleges for the tremendous work carried out in Higher Education.

The Inaugural session came to a close with vote of thanks by Dr. Fr. Emmanuel Kallarackal, CSC, Vice-President, Xavier Board.

The Keynote address was delivered by Prof. N.V. Varghese, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. He stated that the Universities will not be the same as they are today and that secondary education needs to be improved so that tertiary education can be on a firm footing. He expressed that the changing face of higher education is about developing students with entrepreneurial skills and HE must move from state controlled enrolment to market driven enrolment.

Academic Session 1 was moderated by Fr. Joye James SJ, Secretary, Jesuit Higher Education for South Asia, Bangalore. Dr. Ms. Anitha Kurup, Prof. and Head, Education Programme - National Institute of Advanced Studies, IISc Campus, Bangalore, spoke on Democracy, Secularism and Education.

The Academic Session 2 was moderated by Dr. Fr. Joseph Xavier SJ, Administrator, XIBA, St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai. The speaker, Dr. Bijay K. Danta, Professor and Head, Department of English and Foreign Languages, Tezpur University, Assam, spoke on the 'Draft National Education Policy 2019: A Bridge too Far'. He stated that the DNEP was being discussed purportedly for its radical outlook and robust outreach. He examined two aspects of the document—the philosophy and the delivery system so that the participants of the conference could get a clear view of what is on offer and how the deliverables can be improved.

The next session was moderated by Fr. Antony Arackal, Chairman, St. Albert's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam. Dr. Fr. Joseph Manipadam SDB, National Secretary, CBCI Commission for Education & Culture, New Delhi spoke on 'Church repositions itself in the face of DNEP 2019 and the changed national scenario'.

After the tea break the participants broke up into groups for a discussion on various topics pertaining to the functioning of XB and an exchange of ideas and views on the same.

The grand finale of the day was a spectacular cultural programme by DBI students showcasing the various dances and songs of the North Eastern states.

The second day began with the Eucharistic celebration by Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Menampampil, SDB, Archbishop (Emeritus), Guwahati, concelebrated with several other priests of XB.

Academic Session 3 was moderated by Fr. Joseph Nellanatt, SDB, Pro Vice- Chancellor, Assam Don Bosco University. The speaker, Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Menampampil, SDB, drew the participants' attention to the topic on 'Getting People to Think and Develop a Sense of Social Responsibility'. The two India's must meet: ongoing dialogue is the only way

1. The India of the Indologists – philosophers, intellectual – economic- political elite, the upwardly mobile middle class

2. The India of the poor, the marginalized, social activists justice- fighters. Each is incomplete without the other.

He posed the question: 'Do we have an inclusive view of the Indian society to make sure that our educational plan is relevant and effective?' Bishop Menampampil spoke about building up a human capital, stating that nations with a 'Youth bulge' are facing problems of social tension, unemployment, partisan politics of self-serving leaders ultranationalists and the danger of young people being reduced to cheap labour for big business governments. He added that it was necessary to encourage young people to emerge as a 'Force for Good Society' to act as leaven, to implant in them human values that will stand them in good stead all their life-time.

Dr. Ms. Ordetta Mendoza, Former Head, Dept. Bioinformatics, Stella Maris College (Autonomous), Chennai introduced the speaker Prof. Philip Altbach, Director of the Center for International Higher Education, Lynch School of Education at Boston College, MA, USA, for the video session 'Higher Education at a Turning Point'.

Prof. Altbach raised the challenges that are facing India in HE *vis-à-vis* the growing challenges that are facing the world. The two challenges were (i) massification of HE, occurring currently in both India and China and in the foreseeable future in the African continent, leaving out countries like South Africa and Egypt and (ii) the global knowledge economy and its effects on HE.

A panel discussion followed which was moderated by Dr. Fr. Prasanth CMI, Principal, Sacred Heart College, Thevara, Kerala.

Mr. Eldho Mathews spoke on the 'Internationalization of Higher Education: DNEP and Possible'. He stated that a deeper shift involving the governance of Indian higher education has been taking place over the last few years and that the biggest signals of these changes are reflected in major strategic initiatives such as the draft National Education Policy (NEP), Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP) with the recent move to establish a National Research Foundation (NRF).

Prof Mabile, gave an overview of how internationalization is viewed from the global perspective and the global challenges for the same. Some of the challenges were the internationalization of curriculum, Access (inequalities): Cost involved especially for students from poor economies, adequacy between university offerings and student / parent / employer expectations; Purpose for our Catholic universities: 'Competition' (markets-homogeneity-differentiation) or global work including global solidarity among our universities? Other issues he stressed upon included Integration of innovation *vs* Strategic Management of innovation, integration of innovation issues and practices in programs and at the pedagogical level; and finally the issue of digital strategies.

Prof. M. A. Kalam spoke on the topic 'Tribulations of Mainstreamed Higher Education: Lack of Choice in Clogged Systems'. He stated that to this day, almost invariably, from high school onwards, it is the education imparting bodies that decide what subject combinations students choose. He stated that private universities have broken the inflexibility of the erstwhile straightjacketed and outdated rigmarole on many issues. He called upon XB member colleges to explore ways in which Liberal Arts programmes must change the mindset and outlook of higher education institutions in India.

Post lunch saw the 3 parallel sessions on themes related to the functioning of colleges with respect to quality assurance – i) Academic and administrative audit, ii) networking among XB colleges and iii) Use of Learning Management Systems.

Dr. Fr. Joseph Xavier and Dr. Kennedy Andrews chaired the discussion on Administrative and Academic Audit. Fr. Anthony Arackal chaired the session on Networking among XB colleges and Dr. Ms. Ordetta Mendoza chaired the session on Learning Management Systems where Mr. Santhosh Danewale from Talent LMS demonstrated the use of their product.

Finally a discussion on the thrust of XB for the next 3 years ensued and the members came out with some positive ideas for implementation.

The final programme for the day was a visit to Assam Don Bosco University. The participants had a guided tour of the University followed by tea. They then gathered in the auditorium and Dr. Fr. Stephen Mavelly, SDB, addressed them. This was followed by a dinner hosted by ADBU.

Day 3 began with the Eucharistic Celebration by Most Rev. John Moolachira, Archbishop of Guwahati concelebrated with other priests.

The sessions started with the finalization of the Triennial Conference Statement. The draft statement was put forth and after discussion the final statement was drawn up.

Business Session: Annual General Body Meeting

This session began with the presentation of the Report of the years 2016-2019 by Dr. Sr. Annamma Philip, fmm, Secretary General and presentation of the audited statement of accounts for the same period by Fr. Joye James, SJ., on behalf of the Secretary General. After the coffee break there was the election of the office bearers. Earlier Fr. Joye James, SJ was appointed as Election officer as per the statutes of the XBHEI - Memorandum of Association. Since there was only one nominee for the post of President, Fr. Anthony Arackal, was declared elected unanimously. The Vice-Presidential nominee, Dr. Fr. Joji Reddy, was also elected unanimously.

Elections were held for the posts of Regional President, Vice-President and Secretary. This was followed by election of Executive Committee members from four regions (on rotation) and the Joint Secretary. Following are the Executive Committee Members for the period 2019-22

President: Fr. Antony Vacko Arackal, Chairman, St. Albert's College, (Autonomous), Ernakulam & Manager, St. Paul's College, Kalamassery, Kerala

Vice President: Dr. Fr. Joji Reddy SJ, Vice-Principal, Loyola Academy Degree & PG College, Alwal, Secunderabad.

Secretary General: Dr. Sr. Annamma Philip, FMM, Former Principal, Stella Maris College (Autonomous), Chennai (from March 2015 onwards)

Joint Secretary, Dr. Fr. Arockiasamy Xavier M, SJ, Principal, St Joseph's College, (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli,

The other EC members were

- i) Dr. Fr. Sebastian Ousepparampil, Principal, St. Josephs College (Autonomous), Kohima.
- ii) Dr. Fr. D Sunder Reddy, Principal, St. Joseph's Degree & PG College, Hyderabad
- iii) Dr. Fr. James John, Principal, St. Thomas College, Pala, Kerala

After felicitation of the newly elected Executive committee members, the new Board held its first meeting along with the outgoing board members.

The Valedictory session began with the summing up of the conference. A written evaluation was taken from the participants. Fr. Leslie Moras the outgoing President then addressed the general body and offered his felicitation and wishes to the new president and the team. Fr. Antony Arackal then addressed the gathering and exhorted the members of XB to always start everything with the Word of God.

XB placed on record the generosity and meticulous organization of the conference and specially thanked Dr. Fr. P.D. John, SDB, Director, DBI; Dr. Fr. Sebastian Ousepparampil, Regional President, Dr. Sr. Christine Coutinho, Regional Vice-President and Dr. Fr. Joy Thomas SVD, Regional Secretary and Dr. Fr. Joseph Nelanatt, SDB, Regional treasurer of the North and NE Region, XB for their untiring and unstinting efforts to make the conference a memorable experience. A special word of thanks to the staff and students of DBI for the services extended.

Xavier Board thanks all those who have placed advertisements in the Conference souvenir.

Grateful thanks to Fr. Stephen Mavelly, SDB, Vice-Chancellor, ADBU for all his support and for hosting the participants on his campus.

A special thanks to Fr. Leslie and the executive board of 2016-2019, the members of the various committees and the office staff of XB for their commitment and dedicated service.

The conference came to a close with the vote of thanks given by Dr. Sr. Aradhana, AC, Principal, Carmel College, Goa. This was followed by lunch.

Glimpses from the Triennial Conference





No Schooling, but a Big Heart

- ORDETTA MENDOZA

The simple story of a village woman with no schooling and no money, who knew how to care for her step-daughters and the others around her, with a cheerful smile and no complaints. There will be many thousands of such strong and loving women all around us.

I first met Padmavathi at the national office of Xavier Board of Higher Education in India (XB) a couple of years ago. A simple, hardworking woman, she served me tea and disappeared into her one-room dwelling in the XB office complex. Several months later I met her again and had the opportunity to interview her and her husband and son.

Padma, as she is fondly called, hails from Andhra Pradesh. She was married at the age of eighteen to a widower called Krishna Reddy, who had two daughters from his first marriage. His marriage to Padma ensured that she would bring up the little girls Soujenya and Yasoda, who were then five and two years old. Being young herself, it was a daunting task for Padma to bring up the two girls. Even after the birth of her son, Amar, she made sure that the three children grew up together without any differences, loving and caring towards each other.

After Soujenya's marriage, the rest of the family moved to Bangalore at the request of Sr. Marietta Pudota, the then Secretary of XB. While Krishna Reddy worked in the office doing both outdoor

and indoor jobs, Padma was the domestic help, taking care of cleaning the office cum residence, washing and cooking, the proverbial homemaker who has rustled up fantastic food for the Xavier Board residents and her family for the last sixteen years.

Like many other women in her situation, Padma is gifted, kind-hearted and compassionate. She has learnt the various tasks assigned to her—setting the table for a meal with cutlery and crockery, executing her jobs with the dexterity of a professional. Over the years she has learnt to use gadgets and instruments by either watching the TV or others. I asked her where she had learned to make the Kerala style 'Appam' and pat came the reply, "Sr. Theresa Cherian." Her culinary skills are excellent, with no recipe books, just memory, executed with the finesse of a chef! Fresh, traditionally hand-pounded ingredients for the masalas, brought together in a gentle, slow cooking process, tickle the taste buds. At the end of the meal she loves to hear the words *chala bagundi* ("Very good")!

With no schooling to speak of, Padma learnt all that she knows using her native intelligence and observing people or watching TV.

Although she converses only in Telugu irrespective of the language of the speaker, she is adept at making use of a smattering of English words at the right time and place, all of which has the suffix *hu*.

Padma has been the backbone of her family, and faced the ups and downs of life with strength of mind and determination. When Yashoda got married against her parents' wishes, Padma ensured that she was not estranged from the family,

and continues to maintain an extremely cordial relationship with her daughter and son-in-law, and loves her two grandchildren. She made sure that Amar had a good education and completed his degree. Today, he works for an IT firm in Bangalore and supports his parents.

Both Krishna Reddy and Padma always dreamed of owning a house in their native village. With some help from their son, they have made this dream come true. She was so very excited when they finally had the house warming ceremony last year. She is proud of the family's achievements and is looking forward to going back to the village and spending the rest of her life with her mother-in-law, who is ninety-five years old, her three sisters, brother and extended family. She is also keen on saving some money to buy herself some gold jewelry, which she hopes will be her surety for the future. This, too, as we know, is typical of Indian women.

Many families are held together in harmony, with the children growing up with emotional security and much joy, not through sophisticated theories picked up from books, but by the wisdom, inner strength and hard work of wives and mothers like Padma. ☺



● Dr Ms Ordetta Mendoza
former Head, Post Graduate
Department of Bioinformatics
Stella Maris College,

(Autonomous), Chennai, is an Associate of the Congregation of the Franciscan Servants of Mary (FSM). She conducts workshops on College Autonomy, Assessment and Accreditation, On and e-learning, as well as Mentoring Student. She is involved in her parish and in reaching out to the needy.