

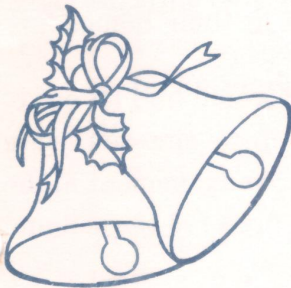


XAVIER BOARD NEWSLETTER

December 1996

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Christmas Greetings

*May the Love and Peace of the
Child Jesus at Christmas
Bring you Cheer and Joy
in the New Year 1997*

from THE XAVIER BOARD SECRETARIAT

Message from the President

The role of Xavier Board as a catalyst towards faith formation of students and staff of Catholic Colleges in India, has meant a flurry of activities at the Secretariat and in the various regions. Regional meetings have witnessed active participation of teachers, Principals and students, planning concrete outcome programmes and other events.

While at Hyderabad recently, the President, Past President and Secretary had occasion to visit the revered Founder of the Xavier Board, Fr. M.M. Balaguer SJ and to present him with a copy of the first Newsletter. He blessed the continuing activities by the Xavier Board. The Annual Board Meeting just concluded at Hyderabad was an example of intense and focussed participation by the great number of members present, defining priority areas and issuing guidelines for future programs in College campuses. The active and mature participation by student members reinforces our faith in the openness and enthusiasm of youth.

May the holy season of Christmas bring new vigour in the activities of the Board, its regions and all Catholic Colleges.

Dr. A F A Mascarenhas
President

**NATIONAL SECRETARIAT : The Xavier Board of Higher Education in India,
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ENVIRONMENT - A GIFT OF GOD'S CREATION TO MANKIND

Awareness of environmental issues and study of ecosystem are urgently necessary programmes for all the Catholic Colleges in India. These colleges must first disseminate knowledge of the evils of environmental pollution and organize group-reflections on the value of environment to mankind, as written in various scriptures. This will hopefully motivate the young minds of our students to involve themselves enthusiastically to preserve the ecosystem. Given below is an account from one of the member-colleges of the Xavier Board.

St. Agnes College, Mangalore, has involved itself for the last several years to spread environmental awareness.

- 1) In 1990, an exhibition on "Pollution" - including water pollution, noise pollution and air pollution - was an outcome of project studies in the Department of Zoology, Botany, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Commerce and Economics
- 2) In 1995, to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of the College, the department of Microbiology, Zoology and Botany built up an exhibition on the Theme "Environment, Health and Hygiene" - the exhibition was open to other educational institutions and the public
- 3) Importance is given to strengthen values against human pollution in the form of alcoholism, drug addition, AIDS etc. A course on Family Life Education forms part of the curriculum; students involve themselves actively with LINK-TRADA deaddiction cell.

4. Earth Summit Day is remembered with a session conducted over the intercom for environmental awareness and a pledge is taken by all to work for the preservation of the eco system. The NSS has a tree-planting drive in the college and university campus and in a village school adopted by the college. Saplings and seeds are made available at monsoon time and students plant these in their homes
5. Water pollution, sea erosion and let out of industrial effluents into the sea were studied and watershed management in the campus is adopted to preserve the soil and water.

ANNUAL XAVIER BOARD MEETING AT HYDERABAD, 16 - 17 NOVEMBER 1996

Thirty members of the Xavier Board drawn from all parts of India and including student members, assembled at Hyderabad for the Annual meeting. Inaugurating the conference, Archbishop S. Arulappa exhorted the Xavier Board to be visionary and to accompany the youth in their search for the truth. Various thrust areas were highlighted at the meeting and important action-oriented decisions were taken.

1. Women concerns were discussed in the light of the present oppression of women and the documents of the Church on women.
 - a) It was resolved to request all Colleges to establish active Women's Cells with direct involvement of students in outreach programmes.

- b) Regular prolife programmes in all Colleges and special workshops to train young women to acquire political and public leadership of skills.
2. Environment was viewed as a gift of God's creation to mankind and it was resolved to give great priority to environmental issues.
- a) Starting Of Environmental Science and Nature Clubs, with regular programmes on Environmental degradation and imbalance of ecosystem
 - b) Programmes for disposal of garbage and recycling of waste, water conservation etc. Awareness programmes on alcoholism, drugs & pornography which cause pollution of the human mind
 - c) Annual essay competition on an aspect of Environment
3. Motivation of students and teachers
- a) Regular prayer meetings with active involvement of students and staff.
4. Preparation for the great Jubilee year 2000
- a) Programmes on relationships and reconciliation in 1996-97.
 - b) Programmes on liberation and freedom through Jesus Christ in 1997-98.
 - c) A three year research study reflection on Faith and Reason.

Excellent local arrangements and hospitality were arranged by Sr. Romana Fernandes and team from St. Francis College, Hyderabad.

Prof. Fabian Fernandes, the Past President of the Xavier Board of Higher education in India, conducted an extensive study covering 115 Catholic Colleges in India, regarding the status of research work in these institutions, he has documented his findings in an extensive monograph entitled "On the need for establishment of a Central Research Institute". The Xavier Board Secretariat has posted this monograph to all Catholic Colleges, to all members of the Hierarchy and to all related agencies. We thank Professor Fabian for this monumental contribution to the field of Higher Education in India.

**NATIONAL COMPETITION 1997 -
STUDENT ESSAY ON "ENVIRONMENT -
A GIFT OF GOD'S CREATION
TO MANKIND"**

The Xavier Board of Higher Education in India wishes to give urgent and special priority to the issue of Environmental degradation and Ecological Imbalance as it exists in India today. It wishes that all Catholic colleges in India should view the seriousness of this problem, should make a positive study of the issue involved, should reflect on the values of environment enshrined in the scriptures and should thus involve a concrete plan of action for each college in the coming years.

In order to stimulate this process further, the Xavier Board is happy to institute an

annual national essay-competition for all undergraduate students of catholic colleges in India. We request you to give wide publicity to this essay competition in your college and to enthuse your students to participate actively.

Rules for Essay competition

1. Each catholic college in India may send not more than two entries every year.
2. The Essay of 2000 words must be the sole effort of a single undergraduate student (without any help of faculty, whatsoever). The student must give a written undertaking that the essay is his/her original work. All essays must be recommended by the Principal of the college.
3. Completed essays two fair copies typed or computer-printed on one side of good paper, bearing the full name of the student, the class studying, the name of the Principal and name and address of the college, must be forwarded by 28th Feb. 1997 to the National Secretary, Xavier Board of Higher Education in India, 31 Primrose Road, Bangalore - 560 025.
4. These essays will be judged by a competent panel and the winner will be declared by May each year. The winner will receive an attractive prize of Rs. 1000/- and a scroll.

SUMMER PROGRAMMES FOR 1997

The following National Summer Programmes are being arranged for the benefit of Catholic Colleges :-

1. **National Youth Camp** from 15 to 19 May 1997 (for 60 students). This Youth Camp, to be conducted by Salesian Fathers Fr. Cletus, Fr. Bastin, Fr. Jude and Fr. Joy Jacob together with Sr. Shanti, CMC, will concentrate on experiencing the love of Jesus and aim towards concrete action in our college campuses.
2. **"The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People"** - from 20 to 23 May 1997 by Prof. Albert Selvanayagam - will take 30 teachers and focus on developing competency in three important areas - Professional Competence, intra-personal harmony and interpersonal effectiveness.
3. A **"guided spirituality retreat"** for 25 college teachers - from 24 to 27 May 1997 directed by Fr. Anto Poruthur, SVD - will facilitate reflection and prayer.
4. **"How to facilitate a college retreat"** - a workshop for 12 college teachers from 28 to 30 May 1997 - directed by Fr. Anto Poruthur SVD, Fr. Jose Thaiparambil SJ, Ms. Rajam Godwin and Sr. Ezechiel CMC. This workshop, focussing on meditation exercise, use of scripture, sharing life-experiences, etc. will equip college lecturers to take this fruitful ministry to the college in each region.

Venue : All the 4 summer programmes will be held at Indian Social Institute, 24 Benson Road, Benson Town, Bangalore - 560 046.

Registration : All application with registration fee Rs. 100/- should reach Xavier Board on or before 20th March 97.

Travel Booking : Write early to avoid disappointment to Sr. Ezechiel CMC, Xavier Board Secretariat, 31 Primrose Road, Bangalore - 25 first-come-first-served. Book your travel only when the Secretary confirms your acceptance as a candidate.

THE GREAT JUBILEE 2000

The whole church is preparing for the coming of the Third Millennium by various programmes during these preparatory years. The Holy Father has called all Catholics to focus their preparation year wise on Jesus Christ (1997), The Holy Spirit (1998) and the Father (1999), culminating in the celebration of the Great Jubilee in the year 2000.

Following the spirit of the Universal Church and the guidelines issued by the church in India, the members of the Xavier Board discussed ways and means to make this preparation meaningful in all Catholic colleges in India.

Hence, the period from **December 1996 to May 1997** will be devoted to the theme, of "**relationships**" - at various levels within our campus and with those outside the campus leading to a change within ourselves and reconciliation with others.

The academic year from **June 1997 to May 1998** will be devoted to the persons of Jesus Christ and will focus on the Theme of "**liberation and freedom**" - freedom within

ourselves, our campuses, our community and our country. Themes for subsequent years will be intimated later.

A small group will soon work out and circulate to all Catholic Colleges in India, concrete guidelines to enable each college to put the programme into shape. It is necessary that students, teachers and administration must, each take the initiative and forge ahead.

At the academic level the Xavier Board purposes a 3 year study-reflection of "Faith and Reason" a principle of 'Samanuaya' leading to a well documented dossier which will be available to the Church in India.

The Xavier Board Secretariat invites application from Catholic Colleges for financial assistance for programs on faith formation, directly involving the students and with the active participation of the teaching staff. A special team of committed lay persons are ready to offer their services to conduct such programmes in the College campuses. Their sessions on faith formation are very relevant to the modern youth, who have enthusiastically responded to all programmes so far conducted. For further details, contact directly "Mr. Colin Calmiano, 352, 7th Main, Vivekanagar, Bangalore - 560 047. Tel : (080)-5545408.

THE POWER OF THE TEACHER

*The artist works with colours rich and deep
And paints a summer sunshine, or a bleak
And cold but sparkling wintry scene; and yet
The glowing canvas has no power to speak.*

*The sculptor carves on marble, and his work
Through night and day of weary toil and strife
Produces masterpieces of art;
And yet the gleaming marble has no life.*

*How mute and idle stands the instrument
Until ecstatic music with its sway
Thunders or thrills or murmurs at the touch
Of some musician; yet this too dies away.*

*But oh, the sacred power that is thine
To work with human souls; with hearts and minds
That speak and live. Oh could there ever be
A task more noble, where artist finds*

*His toil rewarded, and perhaps repaid
In being reproduced from day to day?
For oft the inspiration of his life
Fills other lives that touch his on the way.*

*Then, oh what tribute can we give you
Oh wondrous sculptor of the human mind?
Yours is the privilege, teacher, yours the power
To mould the hearts and lives of all mankind!*

FIUC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The next general Assembly of the International Federation of Catholic Universities will be held at Santiago de Chile from 21-25 October 1997. The main theme is "The Catholic University facing the challenges of the 21st Century" Three types of challenges and three fields of major interest (in each) have been spelt out

(A) Technical Challenges

1. Guidelines to define a strategic plan concerning technological research
2. Implementing technical research to match the needs of developing countries.
3. Impact evaluation of technological development on persons and communities

(B) Socio-economic and Political challenge

1. Insertion of marginalised continents and countries
2. Re-insertion of excluded people; their participation in society
3. Promotion of peace and decriminalisation of societies

(C) Relational challenges

1. Examples of programmes, methodologies making the university the place of interdisciplinary dialogue
2. Programs & courses making the university a training milieu for interpersonal dialogue
3. Initiative by academics towards interaction & dialogue within and outside the university

Those Catholic colleges in India holding an expertise in these fields may inform the IFCU Secretariat, 21 rue d'Assas, 75270 Paris cedex 06, France, Europe, urgently by mail or Fax 00-331-44-39-52-28.

FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

We spend a great part of our lifetime in waiting. We wait for the morning, we wait for the letters, we wait for people, we wait in front of operation theatre, we wait in front of ICU, we wait for bus, we wait at the ticket counter, we wait at the rationshop, we wait at the railway station.... we wait because of hope. This hope is moving us forward in life. We wait for the Lord. He is coming every moment. Let us together pray 'MARANATHA'.

The three most difficult things for a human being are not physical feats or intellectual achievements. They are, first, returning love for hate, second, including the excluded, third, admitting that you are wrong. "Let us be aware of this difficulty. Let us study our experience and attempt to understand it. Where did it come from? What brought it on? When you understand it, it changes. Jesus came to liberate, to save, Good News"-

May I request you to take a journey from your head to heart - it is the longest journey - and see if there is a small vibrant place for the Xavier Board. If not please give a place there in your heart. Then I am sure it will come up with renewed Vigour. Please give admittance to Xavier Board in your heart.

SR. Ezechiel C.M.C.

Secretary

COSMIC VISION IN NATURE : A SEARCH FOR SPIRITUALITY

by Dr. (Sr.) Sheila Kannath C.M.C.

Introduction :-

The whole creation is groaning because its vitality and sustainability are slowly diminishing due to the serious crisis caused by human greed for wealth, power, glory and pleasure. There will not be any future for it unless we put an end to our greed. The floods, cyclones, earthquakes, droughts, increasing pollution and diseases and deaths related to radiation, rising temperature and irregular seasons warn us of the eco-disaster. "In the name of human progress and development there is growing devastation of nature and widespread and increasing poverty. The present world economy makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. It has promoted consumerism and greed and a preoccupation of people and nations with money, control and power at the cost of justice and cultural and spiritual enhancement. Rising international debt enslaves some peoples, even as it enriches others", says the World Council of Churches (1992). The rivers and oceans which give life are used as dumps for our wastes, the forests which give life are destroyed for crass profit to benefit the few. We are alienated from ourselves, from one another and from nature. everyone now speaks about this environmental crisis and tries to counter the threat of danger. There are awareness programmes organised and conducted by governments, political parties, scientists, educational institutions, human welfare societies etc. Do these programmes bring out the desired effect? If not, what is the reason for it? What we need today is a

reversal of values based on our attitudinal change. Our attitude must be constructive and harmonious. We have to understand the earth as a gift or blessing from God entrusted to our care in order to experience and feel God's loving presence, kindness, generosity, power, beauty and glory. Therefore, our task is to liberate her, protect her and to restore the lost cosmic harmony in order to feel and see the invisible God in the visible universe and to ensure a peaceful and prosperous life for the present and future generations.

If the earth is a gift entrusted to our care we have to consider seriously our role as stewards or guardians. We must have a deeper understanding of the significance of human life, its role and relationship with the other forms of life on earth and all that is on it. India's religious and cultural heritage will inspire modern man to change his attitude to nature it takes courage to dive deep down into recess of God-man-nature relationship as portrayed in the sacred writings of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. Within this short period of time available let's try to understand.

God-man-nature relationship in the Holy Bible

The God of the Old Testament was known as Elohim (God of earth), El Shaddai (God Almighty, God of the mountain) and Yahweh (the God of Israel). Yahweh was once considered as a God of thunder. We find how he was associated with thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai. Yahweh who was considered as a tribal God was conceived as the one transcendent God of all creation in the great prophetic movement of the eighth century.

The Old Testament begins with the story of creation. In the creation story we read that the spirit or the breadth of God was brooding over the waters. This suggests of God's immanent presence in the universe. In the Book of wisdom Solomon says, "The Spirit of the Lord has filled the world" (1/7) and "pervades and penetrates all things (7/24)".

In the creation story humanity is represented as being in harmony with itself, with nature and with God: "And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food (Gen. 2/9)". Whatever he created was found good and he blessed them: And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen. 1/31)". After the creation of man in his image he took him and "put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. God did not want man to be alone. So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he could call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name (Gen. 2/19)". This shows that man was in perfect harmony with God and with the universe. The Lord was seen to walk "in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen. 3/8). But, a power of evil, of disharmony was present there. The serpent, a symbol of cosmic evil, the disintegrating force in the universe made man fall. He falls away from the guidance of the spirit that unites, the spirit that is the ground of the universe. Thus, the fall of man marks the beginning of his conflict with God, with nature and with himself.

The main theme of the Bible is the restoration of humanity and of the whole creation to its original harmony. If the Bible

begins with the creation of "heaven and earth". (Gen. 1/1) it ends with the new creation of a "new heaven and a new earth". (Rev. 21/1)

God, the creator and protector of all things in heaven and on earth.

St. Paul in his letter to the Collosians says, "For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible". (1/16) All forms of life, the living and the non-living speak of God's relationship with the earth. The Psalmist who knew the depth of God's love and care exclaims, "O lord how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, which teems with things innumerable, living things both small and great. There go the ships, the Leviathan which thou didst form to sport in it. These all look to thee, to give them their food in due season, when thou givest to them, they gather it up; when thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good things. When thou hidest thy face, they are dismayed; when thou takest away their breath, they die and return to the dust (Ps. 104 : 24-30). God speaks to the Psalmist, "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world and all that is in it is mine (Ps. 50:10-12).

The inanimate objects too belong to the Lord. Therefore, in the book of Haggai the Lord says, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (2/8)

Nature, a Manifestation of God's Presence, Glory, Love and Care.

In Genesis we read, "The spirit of God was moving over the face of the water (1/2)". The Psalmist sees the imprint of God upon nature. The wondrous and great God is known through the silence of nature.

So he sings :

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his
handiwork. Day to day pours forth
speech, and night to night declares
knowledge. There is no speech, nor are
there words, their voice is not heard;
Yet their voice goes out through all the
earth, and their words to the end of the
world. (Ps. 19:1-5)

God's tender care is expressed in Psalm 65.
David speaks to the Lord :

Thou visited the earth and waterest it,
thou greatly enriches it;
the river of God is full of water;
thou providest their grain,
for so thou hast prepared it. (9-10).

God's love fills the whole creation with joy. They shout and sing together for joy (Ps. 65:13). David is able to hear the powerful voice of the Lord upon the waters. His majestic voice is heard in thunders. Psalm 29 is a glorification of his powerful voice that is heard in nature :

The voice of the Lord breaks cedars ... glory (5-9).

During the journey to the promised land the Lord walks before the Israelites by day in a

pillar of fire to give them light (Exod. 13 : 21). The Lord protects the host of Israel from the host of Egypt by standing between them as a pillar of cloud (Exod. 14:19). In the last supper the bread and wine becomes the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ (Mk. 14: 22-26). Mount Calvary becomes the Holy Mount with the crucifixion of Jesus, the creator and the Redeemer of the world. There, the Son gives himself up into the hands of His Heavenly Father. This peak experience of Christ's mystical union with the Father is silently witnessed by Mount Calvary. After His death, the eleven disciples go to Galilee, to The mountain to which Jesus directed them. There He appears to them (Matt. 28:16-17). On the day of Pentecost when the disciples and Mary the Mother of Jesus sit together in one place a sound comes from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and it fills all the house where they are sitting. The Holy Spirit descends and rests on each one of them as tongues of fire. (Acts 2: 1-4).

Nature, a Way to God.

Mountains, rivers, clouds, fire, birds and animals are helpful for man to attain God-realisation. Moses meets God on Horeb, the mountain of the Lord. Jesus goes to the mountain to appoint the twelve disciples (Mk. 3:13). After the last supper Jesus and his disciples go to the Mount of Olives (as was His custom) to spend sometime in intimate relationship with His Father. Abraham is asked by the Lord to sacrifice his only son Isaac on one of the mountains in the land of Moriah. When Abraham is about to slay his son for the sacrifice God gives him a ram to be sacrificed in Isaac's place (Gen 22/2). When Jesus is born in a manger the shepherds come and see Him in it. During Jesus's baptism in

the river Jordan the Holy Spirit descends upon Him as a dove. Jesus heals a blindman by spitting on the ground and anointing the man's eyes with the clay of the spittle. He asks the man to wash in the pool of Siloam (Jn. 9:6-7).

The Earth groans with Pain.

There was harmony in this perfect world, the paradise, when God reigned and man took care of it as God had asked him to do. He cultivated and guarded it. But when man grew sinful, greedy and selfish he started exploiting everyone and everything on it. This brought in disharmony. Man turned against man, animals against animals, birds against birds and sometimes the whole nature against man. Nations turned against other nations. Man ruined the earth. Hence prophet Joel, finding the devastation of the land by locusts asks everyone to mourn, "The priests mourn, the ministers of the Lord. The fields are laid waste, the ground mourns; because the grain is destroyed, the wine fails, the oil languishes... The vine withers, the fig tree languishes. Pomegranate, palm and apple, all the trees of the field are withered; and gladness fails from the sons of men" (1:9-13). In agony the Prophet cries to the lord, "Unto thee O Lord, I cry, for fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has burned all the trees of the fire. Even the wild beasts cry to thee because the water brooks are dried up and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness" (1:19-20). These sentences show how the living things depend on one another for their existence, welfare and happiness.

Today when we face the eco-crisis we wonder whether this is what Prophet Joel had in mind when he wrote, the above quoted

sentences nearly 800 years before Christ. Prophet Zachariah who sees the destruction of forests and disappearance of wildlife shouts in distress, "Wail, O Cypress, for the cedar has fallen, for the glorious trees are ruined! Hark, the wail of the shepherds, for their glory is despoiled! Hark, the roar of the lions, for the jungle of the Jordan is laid waste!" (11:2-3). Prophet Hosea sees how faithless the people of Israel are. "They break all bounds and murder follows murder. Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field, and the birds of air; and even the fish of the sea are taken away" (4:2-3). When God brought Israel to promised land, the earth was blessed with everything that man needed. But soon man defiled it. The Lord says to Israel, "I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination" (Jer. 2:7). As man violates God-given laws, statutes and breaks the covenant the Lord makes the earth desolate and cursed. "The earth mourns and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant," says Prophet Isaiah (24:4-6). God who asked the man to till the earth, also asked him to keep it and care for it (Gen. 1:28;2:15). God who is merciful and kind hears the cry and redeems the earth. The Lord says, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind." (Is. 65:17).

Jesus Christ comes to redeem the whole universe from its curse and He redeems it at

His crucifixion : "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly". (Jn. 10:10). He says that even the birds of the air and lilies of the field are taken care of by God (Matt. 6:26-30). At Cana, water blushes at His glance. Jesus is a lover of nature. He is a nature poet who made use of numerous imageries from nature to illustrate His teachings. The Sea of Galilee, the hills and dales of Jerusalem, all seem to be dear to him because they are frequently visited by Him. He goes to the mountain to address the crowds.

The redeemed earth is again oppressed by human beings who are greedy and selfish. so, St.. Paul says, "The whole creation has been groaning in trail together until now" (Roms. 8:22). Today the earth cries louder than before as it is facing a severe crisis that threatens the very existence of all life including human life.

What can we do to heal the earth?

The restoration or healing of the wounded earth is the mission and task of every faith and every tradition in India. Christians must be partners in this venture as Jesus their master has set the example of healing. He asks the Christians to eliminate inequities, injustice, oppression and greed which are the root causes if the environmental crisis. He says, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). Jesus had a mission and it was to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to give sight to the blind and to set the oppressed free (Lk. 4:18) in order to establish right relationships among the human beings who had gone astray . He was concerned not only with the

welfare of the human beings but also of the other living things and the physical world. Through Christ, God wanted to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross (Col. 1:19). St. Paul in the letter to the Romans says that the whole creation is waiting eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God who would set it free from bondage and sanctify it through the re-establishment of the broken covenant between God and His creation (8:18-21). Here Paul proposes a new spirituality, the eco-centric spirituality for the Christians. This spirituality, affirms the Lordship of God over all His creation and He liberates not only human beings but the whole creation. In the reign of God there is no place for man's dominance and exploitation of the earth; it affirms abundance for all.

CREST has brought out an interesting booklet "The splendour of human life" by Dr. Marie Mignon Mascarenhas. This booklet is specially written to answer many questions in the minds of the youth regarding human life, abortion, euthanasia etc. Moderately priced at Rs. 10/- per copy, it is available at CREST, East of NGEF, Bangalore - 560 016.

This spiritual vision calls for a risky commitment. Man should stop distorting and destroying God's creation. If he has to do so, he will have to change his values and life style that stand against it. He can no longer be a passive observer of the earth in agony and turmoil. He must align himself with those who are genuinely committed to the restoration of eco-balance and work for it. The environmental crisis will be worsening everyday if he refuses to accept that all people

are his brothers and sisters and whatever he has must be shared with those who are in need of it.

This is what St. Paul's emphatic statement of hope demands from every Christian. He says, "The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). God will "renew the face of the ground" by sending his spirit (Ps. 104:30) and will give "life evermore" (Ps.133:3) if man takes effort to restore the rapidly deteriorating human environment through the processes of reconciliation, selfless sharing and love.

How to promote Eco-spirituality?

1. Make a documentation centre in each college, collecting books, journals, posters, audio and video cassettes etc.
2. Form a nature club in each college to conduct awareness programmes like
 - a. Nature Meditations based on the sacred scriptures of all religions.
 - b. Lectures and Discussions on Nature Mystics like Tagore, St.. Francis of Assisi and others.
 - c. Distribution of pictures, leaflets, booklets etc.
 - d. Competitions in essay writing, versification, painting, drawing, poster making etc.
 - e. Guided tours to beauty spots, mountains, lakes, rivers, seashore etc. followed by a sharing of their experiences, feelings etc.
 - f. Street plays, dances, songs etc. to highlight the environmental issues.
3. Environment Day Celebrations.

