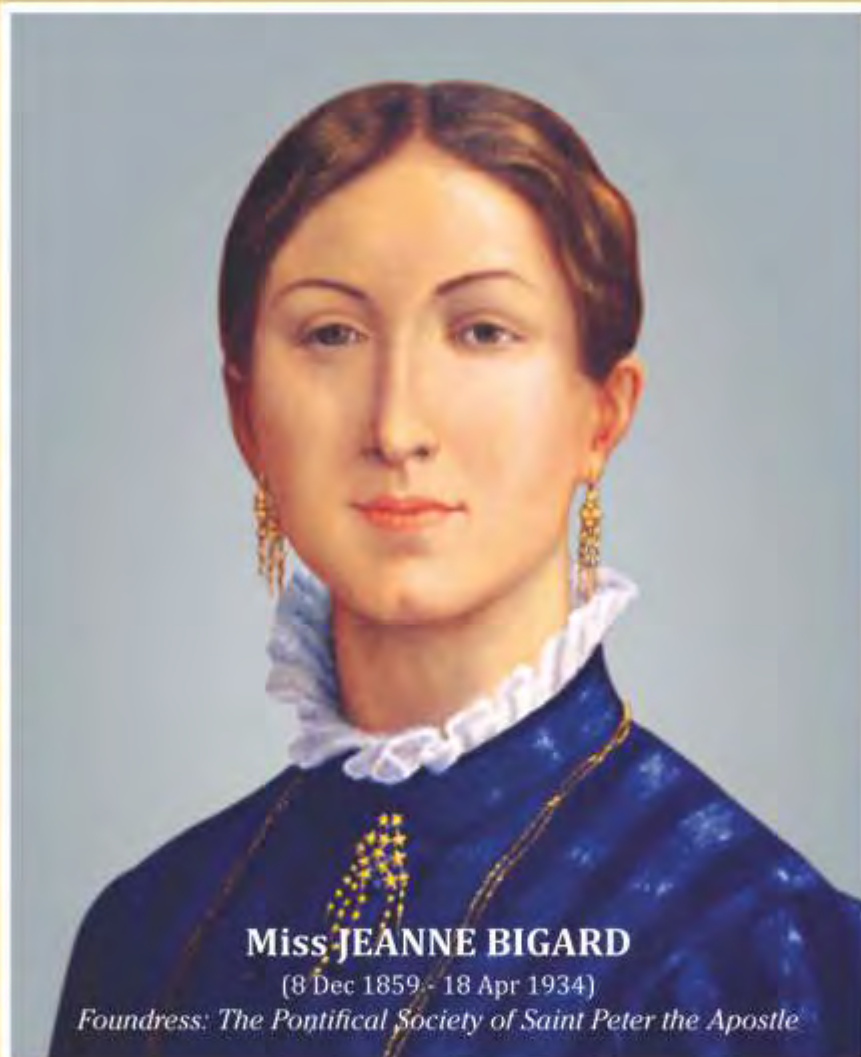


Vol 46, No. 4

July - August 2023

PROCLAIM

A magazine for Missionary Animation



Miss JEANNE BIGARD

(8 Dec 1859 - 18 Apr 1934)

Foundress: The Pontifical Society of Saint Peter the Apostle

EQUIPPING
the man of **GOD**
for every good work - 2 Tim. 3:17

The Pontifical Society of Saint Peter the Apostle

- an overview -

The history of the Mission Societies shows how **support for the missions comes from the people of God.**

The Society of St Peter the Apostle (POSPA) was established to support the **indigenous clergy.**

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the Holy See repeatedly drew attention to the question of the indigenous clergy.

Missionaries in any country were always convinced that their action would be incomplete if it did not come to the creation of a local clergy, but the realization of this reality always clashed with various obstacles and difficulties. **Above all, the dispositions of the missionaries were stopped due to the lack of resources for both the creation of seminaries and the formation of seminarians.**

In order to find a solution, **the missionaries issued anguished appeals to their benefactors in Europe.**

Everything began in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when Msgr. Jules-Alphonse Cousin, of the Foreign Missions of Paris, Apostolic Vicar of Southern Japan, in 1855, then Bishop of Nagasaki in 1891, despite his conviction of the need to have Japanese priests for the resurrection of the local Church, was forced, due to lack of resources, to refuse with sorrowful suffering and send back home young people who had clear signs of a priestly vocation.

He turned to the Bigard ladies through a letter written on June 01, 1889, which became the starting point for the foundation of the Society of St Peter the Apostle.

MISSION

The Society of St Peter the Apostle promotes, in Christian communities, the awareness of the need to develop local clergy and consecrated life in recently founded missionary Churches.

It animates and coordinates missionary collaboration in all the local Churches, through the offering of prayer, sacrifices and alms, to support the formation of future priests and men and women religious of young Churches, and the necessary preparation of their formators.

It collects and distributes financial aid to support seminaries and novitiates, in collaboration with local Christian communities and under the guidance of their pastors.

SUBSIDIES

The economic collaboration of the Society of St Peter the Apostle is achieved through the Ordinary Subsidies for the maintenance of seminarians and novices:

Extraordinary Subsidies for the construction of new seminaries, for the rehabilitation and self-financing projects of the existing ones:

The "Holy Mass Intentions" to support formators:

Scholarships for future formators in India or Abroad:

The final objective of POSPA, like that of all the other Pontifical Societies, remains the spread of the Gospel and the progress of the Kingdom of God.

PROCLAIM

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St Alphonsa

19 Aug 1910 - 28 July 1946

(Feast: 28 July)

Patron: against illness & sickness

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Laity's role in formation of priests

There is no Church without the Eucharist, and there is no Eucharist without priests. This is not claim superiority of priests over the laity, but we insist on the importance of priests, because of whom the continuous presence of Christ in the Church is made possible.

Having realized the importance of the priests and the duty of the Church to cater to the needs of the seminarians, the Pontifical Society of St Peter the Apostle, one of the Pontifical Mission Societies, dedicates itself to promote and support the education and the formation of priests, religious and seminarians and also mission dioceses all over the world. But it had a very humble beginning.



Jeanne Bigard (1859 - 1934) is the founder of the pontifical society of St. Peter the Apostle. Along with her mother Stephanie, who motivated her to grow deeper in the Christian Faith and missionary zeal, Jeanne Bigard worked in a society for packing the objects of worship and personal equipments for the missionaries. They also wrote to the missionaries, who in turn responded to the queries and wrote about their struggles, which deepened Jeanne Bigard's interest to help the mission stations and missionaries. She wanted to involve other people who were unaware of the struggling missionaries and to motivate them to pray and contribute financially.

The initial plan in fact came from Japan. Despite his interest in promoting indigenous vocations, Msgr Jules-Alphonse Cousin, Bishop of Nagasaki, had to refuse to admit young boys to the seminary due to financial crisis. He appealed to Bigard to help the young people who had the signs of having received the call from the Lord. The letter was written on 1st June 1889 which is considered to be the starting point of the pontifical society of St Peter the Apostle. Jeanne dedicated her life for raising funds and helping the mission stations and missionaries all around the world. Pope Leo XIII in 1893 in his *ad extremas Orientis* emphasized the need to encourage indigenous people for the ministry. Jeanne saw this as papal approval of the work that she had been doing.

We need more priests in different countries these days and we realize that the laity have a great responsibility in the formation of their Ministers. The most important participation in formation can be done in prayer. By offering personal prayers, within families and in parish communities, the laity can provide spiritual support to those in formation. Secondly, they should encourage and foster a culture of vocations within the family and parish community. Thirdly, by sharing their own experiences, offering guidance, and providing a supportive presence, the laity can play a significant role in the personal and spiritual development of those who have answered the call to the priesthood. Fourthly, the laity can actively engage in formation programs and ministries that support seminarians and promote priestly vocations.

Finally, financial assistance is another way the laity can participate in the formation of priests. Jeanne Bigard as a lay woman, in her own way, creatively supported the priestly formation by raking in funds for forming priests. The laity should be motivated to take seriously the way of Jeanne Bigard and support the Society of St Peter the Apostle primarily and contribute in various other ways mentioned above to promote and support priestly formation.

Pope Francis said early this year in the month of February, "The lay faithful are not 'guests' in the Church, it is their home, so they are called to take care of their own home." One way of taking care of their home is to realize their responsibilities in priestly formation.

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
National Director (PMO-India)

Preaching Christ, not distributing money

..... it is important to remember that the Christian community is missionary by its very nature. In fact, every Christian has received the gift of the Holy Spirit and is sent forth to continue the work of Jesus, announcing the joy of the Gospel to all and bringing his consolation to the various situations of our often wounded history. Those who allow themselves to be drawn by the love of Christ, thus becoming his disciples, also experience the desire to bring to everyone the mercy and compassion flowing from his heart.

I want to invite you to contemplate the heart of Jesus, whose Solemnity occurs in this month of June. In gazing upon his merciful and compassionate heart, we can reflect on the charism and mission of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

1. The heart of Jesus and mission

First of all, as we contemplate the heart of Christ, we discover the greatness of God's plan for humanity. Indeed, the Father "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (*Jn 3:16*). In the pierced heart of the Crucified we can discover the infinite measure of the Father's love: he loves us with eternal love; he calls us to be his sons and daughters and to share in the joy that comes from Him. He comes to seek us when we are lost; he lifts us up when we fall and raises us from the dead. Jesus himself speaks to us about the love of the Father in this way when, for example, he affirms: "This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me" (*Jn 6:39*).

... Jesus shows us this throughout his life: in his compassion for those who are wounded, in his concern when faced with suffering, in the mercy with which he anoints

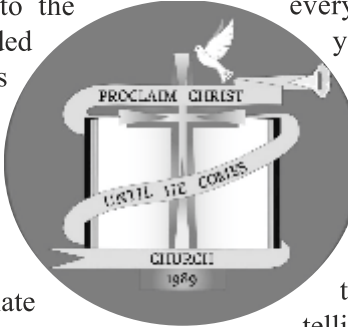
sinner, in his sacrifice for the sins of the world. He has shown us the heart of God, that of a Father who always awaits us, sees us from afar, comes toward us with open arms; a Father who turns no one away, but welcomes all; who excludes no one, but calls everyone. I once enjoyed a pop-style

youth play about the parable of the prodigal son. At one point in the play, the prodigal son tells a friend that he misses his father. "I mean, I would like to go back, because I miss my father, but I can't, surely he won't accept me". The friend

then tells him: "Write him a letter, telling him that you want to go home;

apologize and say that if he wishes to welcome you back, he should take a white handkerchief and display it on the window of the house". The play continues and towards the end, when the son is still on his way home, we see that the house is awash with white handkerchiefs. This tells us that God's love, God's forgiveness, is without measure. We too must confidently travel along that same path.

We have been sent to continue this mission: to be signs of the heart of Christ and the love of the Father, embracing the whole world. Here we find the "heart" of the evangelical mission of the Church: to reach all through the gift of God's infinite love, to seek all, to welcome all, excluding no one, to offer our lives for all. All! That is the key word. What does Jesus tell us in the parable about the wedding banquet (cf. *Mt 22:1-14*) – which went wrong because the guests did not come



– what does the Lord tell us? He says, Go to the crossroads and invite everyone, *everyone*: those who are healthy, sick, bad, good, sinners... all. This is the heart of mission: that “all”, excluding no one. Every mission of ours, then, is born from the heart of Christ in order that he may draw all to himself. This was the mystical and missionary spirit of Blessed Pauline Marie Jaricot, the foundress of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, who was very devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

2. The charism of the Pontifical Mission Societies today

In this perspective, I want to reiterate what I emphasized in the Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, in recalling the vocation of the Societies to be “instruments for promoting responsibility for the missions on the part of all the baptized and for the support of new particular Churches” (art. 67 § 1).

The Societies, therefore, are not a mere agency for the distribution of funds for those in need of help, but a reality called to support the “mission of evangelization in the Church, both universal and local” and to “fostering the missionary spirit among the People of God” (*Message for World Mission Day 2022*, n. 3). I urge you, therefore, to intensify even more, with the

and forming the missionary spirit. I invite you to promote the missionary responsibility of the baptized, supporting the capillary network of national offices, both in newly evangelized countries and those of ancient Christian tradition, who perhaps need another first evangelization; the latter, we know, are marked by a serious crisis of faith and are in need of renewed evangelization and pastoral conversion. Please do not reduce the Societies to money! They certainly need money, which is a means, but do not reduce them to that, for they are bigger than money. Money is what we need to move forward. Yet if spirituality is missing and they become merely a business, then immediately corruption arises. Indeed, even in these days, we have seen newspaper reports of alleged corruption having occurred in the name of the Church's missionary work.

3. Prospects and dreams for renewal

In light of all this, allow me finally to dream with you, “with eyes wide open”, that is to say, to look far ahead with you, towards those horizons to which the Pontifical Mission Societies are called to advance at the service of the evangelizing mission of the whole Church.

The greatest dream is that of an ever closer and more coordinated missionary cooperation among all members of the Church. In this endeavour you have an important role, of which we are reminded by Father Manna's motto for the Pontifical Mission Union: “The whole Church for the whole world”.....

..... It is significant that the founders of the Societies were a bishop, a priest and two laywomen, that is to say, representatives of different categories of the baptized. This is a sign that commits us to involve all members of the People of God in missionary activity! Let us not stop dreaming of “a new era of missionary activity among Christian communities” (*Message for World Mission Day 2022*, 3). Please, let us keep this dream alive! ♦



boldness and creativity of the Holy Spirit, the various activities directed to guiding, educating

Work of God in vessels of clay



Every authentic apostolic mission is the work of Christ, who acts by grace and in the lives and hearts of his disciples, thus making himself "perceptible" to others. This was recalled by Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle, speaking on Wednesday, May 31 during the first day of the General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies, underway in Ciampino (Rome), at the Institute Madonna del Carmine "Il Carmelo", (see *Fides*, 30/5/2023).

To the more than 100 national directors of the PMS, from all continents, the Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization proposed in an "off the cuff" speech, three simple points of reflection to accompany the work of the PMS Assembly, drawing inspiration from the Gospel story of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, celebrated as a feast in the liturgy of the day at the close of the Marian month of May.

The Gospel story - the Cardinal underlined - tells of the meeting of two pregnant women who experience two inexplicable pregnancies from a human point of view. Elisabeth is old and "everyone said she was sterile". Mary is a Virgin, and her first words before the Angel who announced her divine pregnancy were: "How is it possible?" How can I be a mother if I do not know a man?

God himself - Cardinal Taglie commented in the first passage of his reflection - intervened in

their lives, in view of a mission: "Mary's son has a mission. And Elizabeth's son also has a mission, in view of the mission of Mary's son". The question of "how is it possible" of Mary and Elizabeth starts from the recognition of the impossibility of accomplishing by human capacities what can only be the work of God. A recognition that vibrates in any authentic apostolic work, which is always the work of God carried out "in vessels of clay", as St. Paul recalls in the Second Letter to the Corinthians. "If we have faith, we recognize that the Lord will accomplish what he wants to accomplish in our lives", and that the treasure in the vessels of clay of which Saint Paul speaks is "a treasure which does not come from us". It's not about justifying mediocrity, laziness or lack of creativity. But to recognize that even with the greatest human efforts, we remain limited". A recognition that "has a missionary dimension", because people will only be surprised if they see "in us, with our vessels of clay", "it is God's work, and not ours", which is accomplished. The credit goes to him, the credit goes to God".

Following the thread of the Gospel of the Visitation, Cardinal Tagle confessed to being "fascinated" by the fact that Jesus, still hidden in Mary's womb, was already "perceived" by others, as was the case for Elizabeth and for John the Baptist himself, who "rejoices" in her womb at Mary's arrival. "A still hidden presence was perceived by those who were filled with the Holy Spirit, which allowed them to perceive even what was not visible but present", underlined the Pro-



Called to walk together in fraternity



In his address to the Meeting on Human Fraternity that took place in Saint Peter's Square on Saturday 10 June, Pope Francis said "the heavens above invite us to walk together, to rediscover each other as brothers and sisters and to believe in fraternity as the foundation of our pilgrimage." He praised the Declaration on Human Fraternity prepared by 30 Nobel Prize laureates and signed at the conclusion of the meeting.

Pope Francis offered his welcome and expressed his profound gratitude to all those from near and far participating in the Meeting on Human Fraternity. The Pope's words came in a message read by Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, Archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica and Vicar General for Vatican City. Pope Francis is currently recovering from surgery in hospital and was unable to be present for the event as had originally been planned.

Fraternity and peace

The Pope added his voice to all those present in affirming "the desire for fraternity and peace in the world." The worldwide dimension of the event came through with moving testimonies and interviews of people of all walks of life from around the globe sharing experiences of their trials and tribulations.

All underscored the gestures of goodwill and fraternity that they had received, despite the scars left from harrowing experiences of war, poverty, or suffering. but united together in solidarity

and friendship, they have been able to go forward in life and called on everyone to come together as brothers and sisters to witness to our common humanity and to respond to the call to fraternity.

"Indeed, the heavens above invite us to walk together, to rediscover each other as brothers and sisters and to believe in fraternity as the foundation of our pilgrimage."

Participants shared their experiences and testimonies also live with link-ups to over eight countries around the world, including Italy (Trapani), Congo (Brazzaville), the Central African Republic (Bangui), Ethiopia, Argentina (Buenos Aires), Israel (Jerusalem), Japan (Nagasaki), and Peru (Lima).

Recalling his Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, the Pope in his message said authentic fraternity calls us to see each other as a brother or a sister - not just a statistic, or a "other", but a human person who has dignity and merits respect. In our suffering world marked by exploitation and indifference, violence and wars, "tweaks and adjustments are not enough," the Pope writes.

"Only a great spiritual and social covenant born from the heart and centered on fraternity can restore the sacredness and inviolability of human dignity as the core of relationships."



Action for a culture of peace

The Pope underscored that more than theories we need "concrete gestures" also made together in order to promote a "culture of peace." And we should ask first "what can I give to my brothers and sisters" rather than just focus on what society can do for me. He said let's come up with concrete gestures of building fraternity, even simply reconciling with family members, friends and neighbours, and praying for those who hurt us, helping those in need, speaking words of peace in all places of our lives, and consoling with our closeness those who feel alone.

Balm of tenderness

We are called to "apply the balm of tenderness" to help heal relationships between individuals or peoples that have become "gangrenous" he noted.

"Let us not tire of crying out "no to war", in the name of God and in the name of every man and woman who aspires for peace."

Recalling that fraternity is also fragile as it is precious, the Pope said that "the feeling of fraternity uniting us is stronger than hatred and violence" and that in our common suffering the sense of "feeling together" can lead to a spark that can "rekindle the light that stops the night of conflicts."



With fraternity, change for the better

Believing that we are all brothers and sisters helps us look beyond our own ethnic and cultural roots to see our common human dignity that merits respect, he explained. And when individuals and communities choose fraternity, policies can change for the better, the Pope observed. Whether policies that safeguard the environment, ensure a just wage for work, or efforts to overcome past wrongs, all can lead to hope, prosperity, justice and healing.

Nobel Prize laureates

In conclusion, the Pope thanked the organizers of the meeting and paid tribute to the Declaration on Human Fraternity drafted earlier in the day by the 30 distinguished Nobel Laureates also present in Saint Peter's Square, saying it offers a guide for living fraternity and witnessing to it every day in concrete ways.

"I wish you to keep in your hearts and memories the desire to embrace the women and men of the world in order to build together a culture of peace. Indeed, peace needs fraternity and fraternity needs encounter."

Representatives of the group of Nobel Laureates, Dr. Muhammad Yunus and Dr. Nadia Murad, presented the Declaration on Human Fraternity during the event, with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, putting his signature to it.

---- Thaddeus Jones, www.vatican.va ♦



Declaration on Human Fraternity

Rome, St Peter's Square, June 10th, 2023



"We are diverse, we are different, we have different cultures and religions, but we are brothers and sisters and we want to live in peace" (Pope Francis).

Every man is our brother, every woman is our sister, always. We want all to live together, as brothers and sisters in the Garden that is the Earth. The Garden of fraternity is the condition for all life.

We are witnesses of how, in every corner of the world, lost harmony blooms again when dignity is respected, tears are wiped away, work is fairly remunerated, education is guaranteed, health is cared for, diversity is appreciated, nature is restored, justice is honored, and communities face their loneliness and their fears.

Together, we choose to live our relationships based on fraternity, fueled by dialogue and by forgiveness that "does not mean forgetting" (Fratelli tutti, n. 250), but renounces and does not "yield to the same destructive force" (FT, n. 251) whose consequences we all suffer from. United with Pope Francis, we want to reaffirm that "authentic reconciliation does not flee from conflict, but is achieved in conflict, resolving it through dialogue and open, honest and patient negotiation." (FT, n. 244) All this within the context of the

human rights framework. We want to shout to the world in the name of fraternity: Never again war! It is peace, justice, equality that guide the fate of all mankind. No to fear, no to sexual and domestic violence! All armed conflicts must come to an end. We say no more nuclear weapons, no more land mines. No more forced migrations, ethnic cleansing, dictatorships, corruption and slavery. Let us stop the manipulation of technology and AI, let us put fraternity before technological development, so that it may permeate it.

We encourage countries to promote joint efforts in order to create a society of peace, for example by instituting Ministries of Peace.

We commit ourselves to healing the land stained by the blood of violence and hatred, by social inequalities and corruption of the heart. Let us counter hatred with love. Compassion, sharing, generosity, sobriety, and responsibility are for us the choices that nurture *personal fraternity*, the fraternity of the heart.

Growing the seed of spiritual fraternity begins with us. It is enough to plant a small seed each day in our relationships: our homes, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, public squares, and within decision-making institutions.

We also believe in *social fraternity* that recognizes equal dignity for all, fosters friendship and belonging, promotes education, equal opportunities, decent work and social justice, hospitality, solidarity and cooperation, social

solidarity economy and a just ecological transition, a sustainable agriculture that ensures access to food for all, thus favouring harmonious relationships based on mutual respect and caring for the welfare of all. In this perspective, it is possible to develop proximity actions



and human laws, because "fraternity necessarily calls for something greater, which in turn enhances freedom and equality" (FT, n. 103).

Together, we want to build an *environmental fraternity*, to make Peace with nature, knowing that "everything is in relation to everything else": the fate of the world, the care of creation, the harmony of nature and sustainable lifestyles. We want to build the future on the notes of Saint Francis's *Canticle of the Creatures*, the song of eternal Life. The plot of universal fraternity weaves the threads of the *Canticle's*



verses: everything is in relation, and in relation with everything and everyone is Life.

Therefore, we, gathered on the occasion of the first *World Meeting on Human Fraternity*, call on all women and men of goodwill to embrace our appeal to fraternity. Our children, our future can only thrive in a world of peace, justice and equality, to the benefit of the single human family: only fraternity can generate humanity.

It is up to our freedom to want fraternity and to build it together, in unity. Join us in signing this appeal to embrace this dream and transform it into daily practices, so that it reaches the minds and hearts of all leaders and of those who, at every level, have a small or great civic responsibility. ♦

Continued from Page 5: Work of God in vessels of clay

Prefect of the missionary Dicastery. This is a "beautiful mystery" which also relates to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel. The disciples of Christ are called to confess and bear witness to their faith "openly", but there are situations and circumstances in which they carry Christ with them and also bear witness to him in an intimate and silent way, and "those who are close to us", thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, will be able to "perceive" the presence and the work of Christ in us. This is why missionary work has its source in prayer and in the encounter with Jesus: allowing the Holy Spirit to "form" Christ in us, so that people can feel His presence more than when we walk and do something else", added Cardinal Tagle.

The Visitation - continued the Cardinal, developing the third point of his reflection - is an event of joy: John the Baptist rejoices in Elizabeth's womb, Elizabeth pronounces the words of joy repeated in the Ave Maria, and Mary herself prays with the "beautiful prayer" of the Magnificat, with which she praises the Lord. She "does not draw attention to herself". She is humbled by the joy of recognizing that it is God who "does great things" in her. And her joy

immediately becomes communion with the poor and the little ones of the people of Israel. Mary accepts what God is doing in her "as a sign that God will do great things for his people". In what is happening in her, Mary recognizes "the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise". Carrying Jesus in her bosom, she proclaims in communion the



liberation of those who suffer. In this way - Cardinal Tagle underlined, recalling in simple words the real reason for any apostolic mission - Mary shows that the grace of God is never only for me, but for everyone. Happiness is authentic only when it is shared". Any mission undertaken in the name of Christ "can never be separated from the encounter with Jesus, from taking Jesus with us and in us", so that it is He who makes Himself "perceptible" for the people we meet, and that the work of God may "shine on every occasion". (GV)

-----Agenzia Fides, 01/06/2023 ♦

Christian engagement with social media

Pastoral reflections by the Vatican



The 20-page text, “Towards Full Presence: A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with Social Media,” published on May 29, addresses the challenges Christians face in using social media. Topics covered in the pastoral reflection include information overload, constant scrolling, not giving others one's full attention, being an “influencer,” witnessing to Christ, “digital detox,” the need for silence, intentional listening, and building community in a fragmented world.

“One significant cognitive challenge of digital culture is the loss of our ability to think deeply and purposefully,” it warns. “We scan the surface and remain in the shallows, instead of deeply pondering realities.”

The Vatican Dicastery for Communication published the document, which was signed by its lay prefect Paolo Ruffini and its Argentine secretary Monsignor Lucio A. Ruiz, who cite many of Pope Francis' speeches from past World Communications Days.

The text is “not meant to be precise 'guidelines' for pastoral ministry,” the dicastery clarified, but seeks to promote a common reflection on how to foster meaningful and caring relationships on social media.

Robbing our attention

The Vatican's pastoral reflection posits that social media's constant demand for people's attention “is similar to the process through which

any temptation enters into the human heart and draws our attention away from the only word that is really meaningful and life-giving, the Word of God.”

“Different websites, applications, and platforms are programmed to prey on our human desire for acknowledgment, and they are constantly fighting for people's attention. Attention itself has become the most valuable asset and commodity,” it says.

“Instead of focusing on one issue at a time, our continuous partial attention rapidly passes from one topic to the other. In our 'always on' condition, we face the temptation to post instantly since we are physiologically hooked on digital stimulation, always wanting more content in endless scrolling and frustrated by any lack of updates.”

The text highlights the need for silence and for schools, families, and communities to carve out times for people to detach from digital devices.

It warns that space for “deliberate listening, attentiveness, and discernment of the truth is becoming rare.”

“Without silence and the space to think slowly, deeply, and purposefully, we risk losing not only cognitive capacities but also the depth of our interactions, both human and divine.”

Social media pitfalls

The document raises red flags about “pitfalls to avoid” with social media, such as aggressive and negative speech shared under the “cloak of pseudonymity.”

“Along the 'digital highways' many people are hurt by division and hatred. We cannot ignore it. We cannot be just silent passersby. In order to humanize digital environments, we must not forget





those who are 'left behind.' We can only see what is going on if we look from the perspective of the wounded man in the parable of the Good Samaritan," it says.

The text notes how algorithms' content personalization can reinforce people's own opinions without exposure to other ideas, which at times can lead to "encouraging extreme behaviors."

It also raises concerns about how social media companies treat people as commodities whose "profiles and data are sold." The text underlines that social media "is not free: We are paying with minutes of our attention and bytes of our data."

The text adds: "Increasing emphasis on the distribution and trade of knowledge, data, and information has generated a paradox: In a society where information plays such an essential role, it is increasingly difficult to verify sources and the accuracy of the information that circulates digitally."

From being an 'influencer' to a witness

The text highlights how "every Christian should be aware of his or her potential influence, no matter how many followers he or she has."

"Our social media presence usually focuses on spreading information. Along these lines, presenting ideas, teachings, thoughts, spiritual reflections, and the like on social media needs to be faithful to the Christian tradition," it says.

It recommends that Christians should take care to be "reflective not reactive on social media" to ensure that the way one treats others online is in itself a witness.

"We should all be careful not to fall into the digital traps hidden in content that is intentionally designed to sow conflict among users by causing outrage or emotional reactions," it says. "We must be mindful of posting and sharing content that can cause misunderstanding, exacerbate division, incite conflict, and deepen prejudices."

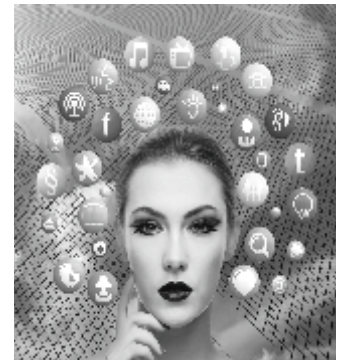
One question the text encourages Christians to reflect on is whether their social media posts are pursuing "followers" for themselves or for Christ.

"What does it mean to be a witness? The Greek word for witness is 'martyr,' and it is safe to say that some of the most powerful 'Christian influencers' have been martyrs," it says.

It urges people to remember that "there were no 'likes' at all and almost no 'followers' at the moment of the biggest manifestation of the glory of God! Every human measurement of 'success' is relativized by the logic of the Gospel."

"While martyrdom is the ultimate sign of Christian witness, every Christian is called to sacrifice himself or herself: Christian living is a vocation that consumes our very existence by offering ourselves, soul and body, to become a space for the communication of God's love, a sign pointing toward the Son of God."

"It is in this sense that we better understand the words of the great John the Baptist, the first witness of Christ: 'He must increase; I must decrease' (Jn 3:30). Like the Forerunner, who urged his disciples to follow



Christ, we too are not pursuing 'followers' for ourselves, but for Christ. We can spread the Gospel only by forging a communion that unites us in Christ. We do this by following Jesus' example of interacting with others."

----- Courtney Mares;
catholicnewsagency.com 30.05.23 ♦

A Church that embraces diversity

A document of some sixty pages that incorporates the experiences of local Churches in every region of the world – Churches that are experiencing wars, climate change, economic systems that produce “exploitation, inequality, and ‘waste’.” Churches whose faithful suffer martyrdom, in countries where they are minorities or where they are coming to terms “with an increasingly driven, and sometimes aggressive, secularisation.” Churches wounded by sexual abuse, or abuses of power and conscience,” whether economic and institutional – wounds that demand answers and “conversion.” Churches that are fearlessly confronting the challenges by engaging in the synodal discernment, without trying to “resolve them at all costs”: “Only in this way can these tensions become sources of energy and not lapse into destructive polarisations.”

Released on Tuesday morning, the document – known as the **Instrumentum laboris** – will be the basis for the work of the participants in the General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality, which begins in the Vatican in October 2023 and concludes with a second Assembly one year later.

Deliberately conceived as a starting point and not a point of arrival, the *Instrumentum laboris* brings together the experiences of dioceses around the world over the last two years, starting from 10 October 2021, when Pope Francis set in motion a journey to discern what steps to take “to grow as a synodal Church.”



Synod
on
the
Family

The *Instrumentum laboris*, therefore, is intended as an aid for discernment “during” the General Assembly,

while at the same time serving as a means of preparation for participants as it looks ahead to the gathering. “Indeed, the purpose of the synodal process” the document states, repeating the words of the earlier Document for the Continental stage, “is not to produce documents but to open horizons of hope for the fulfilment of the Church's mission.”

The *Instrumentum laboris* is composed of an explanatory text and fifteen worksheets that reveal a dynamic vision of the concept of “synodality.” Specifically, there are main sections: Section A highlights the experience of the past two years and indicates a way

forward to become an ever more synodal Church; Section B – entitled “Communion, Mission, Participation” – focuses on the “three priority issues” at the heart of the work to be done in October 2023. These are elaborated in three main themes: Growing in communion by welcoming everyone, excluding no one; recognizing and valuing the contribution of every baptised person in view of mission; and identifying governance structures and dynamics through which to articulate participation and authority over time in a missionary synodal Church.

“Rooted in this awareness,” the document affirms, “is the desire for a Church that is also increasingly synodal in its institutions, structures, and procedures.” It notes that a synodal Church is first and foremost a “Church of listening” and therefore “desires to be humble, and knows that it must



Girl who directed army commander

Fr Dr Yesu Karunanidhi



Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favour, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." ... So Naaman went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (2 Kings 5:1-14)

The story of Naaman the leper being healed by Elisha the prophet is propelled by an unnamed Israelite girl. Naaman was a captain of the army of the king of Aram, which was a nation to the north of Israel with a border roughly equivalent to that of

modern-day Syria. Naaman is described as a great man who was highly respected (cf. v. 1) He had honour, valour, recognition, victories, respect, and status. But! Yes, there is a 'but'. He had everything that a man longs for, but he also had a very serious problem : Naaman had leprosy. None of the other successes or positives in the rest of his life could outweigh this or deal with the disease that wrecked his life. There would come a day when he would be forced to withdraw from public life, leave the army, lay down his authority and position, remove himself from the service of his king and country and ultimately be separated from all those whom he loved, including his family. And all this because he was sick. All because he was Naaman the Leper.

Down throughout history there have been, and still there are, border disputes. The Aram-Israel border was no exception and the Arameans sent bands of soldiers across the border to raid towns, villages, and settlements in the vicinity of the disputed border (cf. v. 2). It was in one such raid that the girl in this passage was captured. She was an Israelite, and she was young. That is all we really know about her. She was captured for reasons that we can only guess at. Maybe her parents were killed. Maybe one of the raiders thought she would provide some form of entertainment for the men. Maybe her whole family was carried off into captivity. We don't know. What we do know is that she was pressed into service and became a servant to Naaman's wife (cf. v. 2).

The little girl is presented in contrast to Naaman: (i) Naaman was the commander of the army; the girl was in the service of Naaman's wife;





(ii) He was a man of might; she was fragile and vulnerable; (iii) He was in his own land; she was in a foreign land.

We don't know how old this girl was. She was clearly old enough to work as a servant but young enough to be described as little. What is clear is that, over time, she became aware that all was not well in the household of the Commander Naaman. She was presumably able to communicate with her mistress despite her forced service and as she went about her work, she would have pieced together the facts: her mistress's husband had a disease called leprosy and he was not able to be cured from it.

Seeing the dilemma and knowing she can help, she speaks out. Less than 20 of her words are recorded for us but they are dynamite!

a. Moved with empathy

This little girl has been captured by enemy soldiers, removed from her home, family, village and country and is now dwelling as a slave in a foreign land. She could have been bitter and resentful. She could have wished the worst for her master. But instead, she sees a very real need and in empathy offers a solution. 'I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria.' (cf. v. 3) Why? Because, 'Then he would cure him of his leprosy' (cf. v. 3). The desire of this slave girl is to see her master made well. To see him healed. To see his skin restored. To see him freed from this disease. She speaks out of an overflow of

compassion: 'I wish...!' Her compassion did not remain as a mere emotion 'sympathy,' but turned out to be an action showing 'empathy.'

This girl challenges us. When we are wronged, do we not become defensive or indifferent or reactive? Do we not wish our enemy be punished? Do we not secretly hope that some misfortune will befall our offender? Not so this little girl. Out of a heart filled with empathy she speaks hope. Even to her enemy.

b. Animated by Faith

When she speaks she doesn't simply tell of how much better it is back home. She could have said, 'Back home we have someone who cures this disease.' Instead, she states a fact: 'I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy' (v. 3). These are words full of faith. These are words that reveal how big this little girl's God is. In her mind there is no question that God would (i) heal, (ii) heal a 'foreigner' and (iii) heal an enemy foreigner. She has grasped something of the depth of the grace and mercy of God. Her God can and will heal. Social standing, ethnicity and merit are not factors that are in any way relevant to the outpouring of His mercy.

Her view of God echoes the promise God Himself made to Abraham centuries before when He said that though Abraham (and his descendants) all nations of the earth would be blessed (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). This girl believes that

promise to be true. This little girl takes God at His word and believes that He will do as He says.

c. She speaks of what she knows

Although little when removed from her home, it is obvious that her early years must have been filled with stories and accounts of how good and faithful God is in His dealings with human persons. She must have heard stories of the history of God's people. I am certain that she would have known



about the way God dealt with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as the accounts of the rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the inheriting of the Promised Land, the glory years of King David and King Solomon and the exploits of the prophets Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. Out of this knowledge of her rich heritage she spoke words of compassion and faith.

The credit goes to her parents. They must have told again and again of the things of God to their daughter. They must have helped to fill her mind with the history of God's dealings with His people. They must have faithfully communicated the attributes of God. They must have explained that God has not forgotten them, despite the victories that Aram seems to be having over them at the moment. Her parents' God is faithful, merciful, gracious, reliable, real, and involved in their lives. This little girl's God is too!

d. A resilient heart

Resilience refers to the ability to adapt and bounce back from difficult or challenging situations. It is the capacity to withstand, recover, and even grow stronger in the face of adversity, trauma, or stress. Resilience involves mental, emotional, and psychological toughness and flexibility.

Resilience is not about avoiding or denying the existence of hardships but rather about effectively navigating and overcoming them. It is a dynamic process that allows individuals to maintain a sense of well-being and functionality in the midst of challenging circumstances.



The girl in the story has developed resilience on her own. This is revealed in her courage to speak her mind to her mistress. She attempts to do something which is beyond her grasp. Today war and violence cause a lot of traumas on the children who escape them. It is very important that these children develop resilience.

e. Her intelligence vs King's ignorance

The author of the text in a subtle way makes fun of the King of Syria. Upon hearing the words of the little girl through his wife, Naaman goes to his lord (the king) and reports verbatim. The king seems not to have heard completely. Naaman talks about the prophet. But the king writes a letter to the king. Maybe this might have been a protocol. What surprises the reader is that the girl was brought in forcefully when the army went on a raid. To kill someone, a raid is enough. For someone to be healed we require a letter.

f. The flesh of a little child

At the end of the healing story, the author writes that Naaman's flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child (in Hebrew, *na'ar qaton*). At the beginning of the story the little girl (in Hebrew, *na'arah qatannah*) directs the army commander. At the end, the commander's skin becomes like that of a little child.

Hence, the little anonymous servant girl is the protagonist of the story. Her empathy, faith, charity, resilience, and intelligence have made the army commander clean.



SAINT OF THE MONTH - I

St Anthony Mary Zaccaria

1502 - 1539

Feast Day - July 05

At the same time that Martin Luther was attacking abuses in the Church, a reformation within the Church was already being attempted. Among the early movers of the Counter-Reformation was Anthony Zaccaria.

Anthony Mary Zaccaria was born into an Italian family of nobility in Cremona during 1502. His father Lazzaro died shortly after Anthony's birth and his mother Antonietta – though only 18 years old – chose not to marry again, preferring to devote herself to charitable works and her son's education.

He received a medical doctorate at 22 at the University of Padua, and while working among the poor of his native Cremona in Italy, was attracted to the religious apostolate. He renounced his rights to any future inheritance, worked as a catechist, and was ordained a priest at the age of 26. Anthony is said to have experienced a miraculous occurrence during his first Mass, being surrounded by a supernatural light and a multitude of angels during the consecration of the Eucharist. Contemporary witnesses marvelled at the event, and testified to it after his death.

Called to Milan in a few years, he laid the foundations of three religious congregations, one for men, one for women, and an association of married couples. He was greatly attracted to St Paul, especially his preaching and evangelizing style. Inspired by the apostle's life and writings, the order was founded on a vision of humility, asceticism, poverty, and preaching. After the founder's death, they were entrusted with a prominent church named after St Barnabas, and became commonly known as the “Barnabites.”

Their aim was the reform of the decadent society of their day, beginning with the clergy, religious, and lay people.



He also started a congregation for women who would strive for holiness through service and ministering to the poor. Further he got together lay couples and founded an Associate Sodality in order to bring about a change in the family life based on Gospel values.

Saint Anthony popularized the Forty Hours Devotion, where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed over a three-day period corresponding to Christ's forty hours in the tomb. He encouraged churches to toll their bells on Friday afternoons, and preached indefatigably in the streets on the crucifixion, on the Eucharist, and on the texts of Saint Paul. The age for scholastic theological distinctions as fine as lace had long ended by the early sixteenth century. The one-church world was crumbling and with it the luxury of inter-Catholic speculations of a purely theoretical nature. Dissenting Protestantism was spilling into Northern Italy. What was needed was preaching in the streets, raw fervour, and the core biblical message. Some priests spoke with quiet erudition and convinced the few; others explained the catechism well, but only inside churches to the scattered faithful in the pews. Saint Anthony's method was, essentially, to walk into the town square, light his hair on fire, and yell “Watch me burn!” It worked — but not for long enough. Saint Anthony



SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

St Jeanne Jugan

1792 - 1879

Feast Day : August 30

St. Jeanne Jugan is the beloved Patron Saint of the Elderly and Destitute. Foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor, this remarkable French saint endured her own persecution and exile with peaceful surrender, accomplishing great things for God. She is a friend and model for us all, especially in times of intense struggle and personal trials. Her service resulted in the establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who care for the elderly who have no other resources throughout the world.

Jeanne Jugan was born at Cancale, in Brittany, France, on 25 October 1792 in the turbulent period of the French Revolution. She was the sixth of eight children, four of whom died in infancy. Their fisherman father was lost at sea when Jeanne was only four. From her mother and the place of her birth, Jeanne inherited a lively, deep faith and a profound determination that could overcome any difficulty. The political climate and the family's financial plight prevented Jeanne from going to school.

Jeanne barely learned to read and write, but had an extraordinary heart for God and an unusual tenderness and charity for her age. In her early teens, she became a kitchen maid for a family who treated their servants well and cared for the poor and the elderly. Ten years later she became a nurse and joined a Third Order founded by St. John Eudes. From that time her one desire was to "be as humble as Jesus".

In 1801 Napoleon Bonaparte restored religious freedom and a true spiritual awakening ensued. Numerous missions were preached and it was in this fervent atmosphere that the future

Foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor heard the Lord's call. When a young man asked for her hand in marriage she told him that God wanted her for himself, and was keeping her for a work as yet unknown. And as an immediate response she divided her clothes into two piles, leaving the prettiest to her sisters. She then left for Saint-Servan where for six years she worked as an assistant nurse.

One winter evening in 1839, in Saint Servan, France, she opened her heart and home to an elderly blind, paralyzed woman who suddenly

found herself alone after the death of her sister. Jeanne carried Anne Chauvin through the streets of the small town, brought her to her apartment and placed her in her bed. Another woman followed and then, a third. The Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, with its mission of hospitality to the elderly, was born.

Because of the great poverty in France in the years following the French

Revolution, Jeanne's bold gesture of charity toward the aged answered a pressing need. Her small apartment soon became too small to accommodate the growing number of elderly who knocked at her door seeking hospitality. Several young women came to assist Jeanne in the care of the Aged and the group moved from one building to another until they could obtain a suitable home.

Jeanne envisioned hospitality to the elderly as a humble fraternal service which unites in one family the Little Sisters and lay associates, friends, benefactors and volunteers, who desire to share the sufferings of their brothers and sisters and provide



generously for their needs. After communities of Little Sisters had begun to spread throughout France, the work spread to England in 1851. From 1866-1871 five communities of Little Sisters were founded across the United States.

By 1879, the community Jeanne founded had 2400 Little Sisters and had spread across Europe and to North America. That year Pope Leo XIII approved the Constitutions of the Little Sisters of the Poor. At the time of her death on August 29, 1879, many of the Little Sisters did not know that she was the one to have founded the Congregation. For 27 years Jeanne was put aside by Father Le Pailleur who helped the nascent Congregation, however was investigated and dismissed in 1890 and Jeanne came to be acknowledged as their foundress.

On 13th July 1979, the Church recognised the heroicity of Jeanne Jugan's virtues. On 3rd October 1982, Pope John Paul II proclaimed her Blessed and on 11th October 2009 on St Peter's Square in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed Jeanne Jugan to be a Saint!

“Jeanne lived the mystery of love by peacefully accepting darkness and divesting herself of all material possessions until her death. Her charism is always relevant, while so many

aged persons suffer different types of poverty and solitude, sometimes even abandoned by their families. The spirit of hospitality and fraternal love, founded on limitless trust in Providence, which Jeanne Jugan drew from the Beatitudes, illuminated her whole existence. The evangelical

impulse is followed today throughout the world in the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, which she founded and which bears witness to her following the mercy of God and the compassionate love of the Heart of Jesus for the littlest ones. May

Saint Jeanne Jugan be for the elderly a living source of hope and for the persons so generously placing themselves at their service a powerful stimulus to pursue and develop her work.”

----- www.littlesistersofthepoorindia.org;
www.vatican.va; www.catholiccompany.com ♦



Continued from Page 16: St Anthony Mary Zaccaria

Zaccaria flamed out at the early age of thirty-seven. His holiness moved many to reform their lives, but as with all saints, it also moved many to oppose him. Twice his community had to undergo official religious investigation, and twice it was exonerated.

While on a mission of peace, Anthony became seriously ill and was brought home for a visit to his mother. He died at Cremona at the age of 37. Nearly three decades after his death, St Anthony Mary Zaccaria's body was found to be incorrupt. He was beatified by Blessed Pope Pius IX in 1849, and declared a saint by Pope Leo XIII in 1897.

In 2001, the future Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, wrote the preface for a book on St Anthony Mary Zaccaria, praising the saint as “one of the great figures of Catholic reform in the 1500s,” who was involved “in the renewal of Christian life in an era of profound crisis.”

The Italian saint, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, “deserves to be rediscovered” as “an authentic man of God and of the Church, a man burning with zeal, a demanding forger of consciences, a true leader able to convert and lead others to good.”

source: www.franciscanmedia.org;
www.catholicnewsagency.com;
www.mycatholic.life; www.newadvent.org ♦

Continued from Page 12: A Church that embraces diversity

ask forgiveness and has much to learn.” It continues, “The face of the Church today bears the signs of serious crises of mistrust and lack of credibility. In many contexts, crises related to sexual abuse, and abuse of power, money, and conscience have pushed the Church to undertake a demanding examination of conscience so that

a Church that “is not afraid of the variety it bears,” but on the contrary, “values it without forcing it into uniformity.” The Church is synodal when it is unceasingly nourished by the mystery it celebrates in the liturgy, during which it experiences everyday “radical unity” in the same prayer, in the midst of a “diversity” of languages and rites.



'moved by the Holy Spirit' the Church 'may never cease to renew herself', in a journey of repentance and conversion that opens paths of reconciliation, healing, and justice.”

A synodal Church is also “a Church of encounter and dialogue” with believers of other religions and with other cultures and societies. It is

through new or traditional forms of media.” The renewal of language, the text states, must “aim to make these riches accessible and attractive to the men and women of our time, rather than an obstacle that keeps them at a distance.”

By Salvatore Cernuzio
<www.vaticannews.va> ♦

Continued from Page 15: Girl who directed army commander

The little girl of the story offers us the following lessons for our life and mission:

- a. We need to be proactive towards others despite their enmity towards us. This proactive attitude emerges when we take responsibility for our life.
- b. An action with empathy is more than a mere feeling of sympathy.
- c. Our deep faith in God may not move mountains, but it will surely move an army commander to action.

d. Storytelling is a good way of inculcating faith. Faith comes through hearing.

e. Resilience makes us survive hardships. Through resilience we become master a negative situation, not its victim.

f. 'We often say we can do only this much. We must at least do that much' (Albert Camus). The little girl did what she could. And that made a difference to Naaman, to his family, to his army, to his country, and to the entire salvation history.

*** Executive Secretary, CCBI Commission for Bible, yesu@live.in ♦**

'Cancer was a marathon'

A chef & runner's stubbornly positive fight for life

By Krystelle Dsouza, April 25, 2023

Prachi Kulkarni, a cancer survivor, recalls being extremely fit and active before discovering a lump in her breast that changed her life. Here's her inspiring journey of reclaiming her life and being "stubbornly positive". "I will always look on the bright side," 36-year-old Prachi Kulkarni from Mumbai, now based in Dubai, tells me. At the fag end of a one-hour phone call with her, the major part of which she spends detailing her battle with cancer and its accompanying odds, I am impressed at the positivity she exudes. There isn't a doubt, she is a fighter.

Ironically, Prachi's tryst with the obstinate disease began with her deciding to pay more attention to her health in 2019. As she recounts in a conversation with The Better India, "Wanting to take a step towards a healthier life, I registered for a hike in Kashmir. But the trainer said I would need to be fit enough for the trek, and so I spent the next six months working out, running and building my stamina."

Not only did she scale the summit, but went on to start her running journey, training for marathons alongside her full-time job as a chef. In December 2019 in Pune, Prachi completed a 21 km run, her first half marathon. While she moved to Dubai post this as part of work, the fitness enthusiast in her was still alive, and by the year 2021, she had seven marathons to boast of. But before she could attempt the eighth, she had a fall on the road. 'This was when I discovered a lump in my breast' Taking a week off from work to recover, Prachi decided to get her

blood tests and an overall health checkup done. It was during this time she found the lump.

"They did a biopsy and I underwent surgery in November 2021 to remove the lump, which was later found to be malignant. The next few months were filled with the words — mammograms, CT scans and chemotherapy, and all the while I couldn't believe I had cancer. I was fit!" Not only did the chemotherapy sessions cause Prachi to go through an all-time low phase in life, but their repercussions were severe. As a chef, her job necessitated 12-hour shifts, involving standing for the most part of the day. Weakened by the chemo, this was a challenge.

To add to this, she was severely constipated most times, while at other times bouts of diarrhoea meant she couldn't go out of her apartment in Dubai. "During one visit to the hospital, they discovered I had haemorrhoids. I couldn't sit or walk. I was miserable."



She adds, "My tongue looked like an octopus because of all the sores that had erupted. I couldn't swallow or talk. My fingernails and toenails used to separate from my skin. Things were bad." When told she would have to undergo 16 sessions of chemotherapy, she was devastated. But, decided she wouldn't let a disease defeat her. 'I would overcome it'

Being a runner, Prachi says, she began to think of her chemo sessions as a marathon. "When running you don't look at the entire picture, you only look at how much is left to

go, at how close to the finish you are.” “I decided to adopt this approach for my chemotherapy as well. And instead of lying in my apartment, I began short walks.”

Meanwhile, the doctors had diagnosed her with a genetic mutation on the BRCA2 gene — the gene most commonly affected in hereditary breast and ovarian cancer in younger women. To reduce the risk of getting cancer once more, Prachi underwent a bilateral mastectomy and another surgery to remove the seven lymph nodes that had developed. While hope seemed tough those days, Prachi says on her lowest days she would do the 'Macarena' to feel better. “I didn't even know the words. I would just dance,” she laughs, adding that



as a way to commemorate her last chemotherapy session, she danced with the hospital nurses to Govinda's 'Kisi Disco Mein Jaaye'. The battle was finally over, she thought. But alas, it wasn't. 'I contracted COVID'

Getting COVID exacerbated every symptom that Prachi was feeling, making her feel miserable. This was around the same time that she was also

undergoing radiation for the cancer. “People don't understand the gravity of cancer and how the treatments make you feel. Sometimes, I wanted to tell people what I was going through, relay the anxiety I went through while I sat in the room before going in for radiation, express the frustration and sadness and pain that radiation left me with, turning my armpits black and burnt.”

This was when she turned to art as an escape. In January this year, Prachi had her ovaries and fallopian tubes removed surgically, the final crux of a five-year-long journey. Today, as she looks back at the winding years with all their twists and turns, she says nothing scares her anymore. “I figured life is unpredictable. And so I made up my mind to get back to kickboxing, zumba and walks once again, telling my coaches that if anything happened I would take the responsibility for it.”

When people from the culinary industry would pity her while cautioning her about entering the kitchen again, she decided not to heed them. “How will you stand for such long hours? How will you bear the heat after radiation?”

“It was tough, but I did. What scared me most was that the chemotherapy caused me to lose my sense of taste. Everything tasted like medicine. I was worried if I would ever be able to cook. When I told my husband the irony that as a chef I wouldn't be able to taste, he said, 'Do you remember Beethoven, the famous composer and pianist, was deaf?'.”

These words inspired her to persevere. “Today,” says Prachi, “I am a different person because of cancer. When people complain about minor inconveniences in life, I feel like telling them 'At least be grateful your body supports you for those small tasks'. When I run or walk or exercise, I think back to those times when I didn't value it more.” So, she adds, when people ask her why she is so stubbornly positive, she has her retort ready. “I will always look on the bright side.”

Edited by Pranita Bhat -

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/316301> ♦

Rome prepares for 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope



As Rome and the Vatican prepare for an influx of millions of people for a special year focused on hope, one experienced jubilee attendee is offering her advice for a fruitful pilgrimage. “A pilgrimage as massive as that of a jubilee year should be a wonderful, unique, spiritual experience,” Joan Lewis, author of “A Holy Year in Rome: The Complete Pilgrims Guide for the Jubilee of Mercy,” told CNA.

The Vatican and the city of Rome are expecting an estimated 35 million people to flock to the Eternal City for the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope — the first ordinary jubilee since the Great Jubilee of 2000.

A jubilee is a special holy year of grace and pilgrimage in the Catholic Church. It typically takes place once every 25 years, though the pope can call for extraordinary jubilee years more often, such as in the case of the 2016 Year of Mercy or the 2013 Year of Faith.

A central part of any jubilee are the Holy Doors. These doors, found at St. Peter's Basilica and Rome's other major basilicas, are sealed from the inside and only opened during a jubilee year. In 2016, Catholic dioceses also had their own Holy Doors. The opening of the Holy Door symbolizes the offering of an “extraordinary path” toward salvation for Catholics during a jubilee. Pilgrims who walk through a Holy Door can receive a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions.

Jubilees have biblical roots, as the Mosaic era established jubilee years to be held every 50 years for the freeing of slaves and forgiveness of debts as manifestations of God's mercy. The practice was reestablished by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300.

Jubilees are planned years in advance, with the 2025 Year of Hope being no exception. The theme was announced in January 2022. Now, the

city of Rome is preparing to launch a number of infrastructure projects to make the experience better for pilgrims. The Vatican said an estimated 20.4 million people attended Year of Mercy events at the Vatican over the course of 2016.

Lewis, who participated in the Jubilees of 1983, 1987, 2000, and 2016, noted that if people can plan their visit in nonpeak times it could be helpful but to be prepared for throngs regardless.

For the 2025 Jubilee, Rome has allocated approximately \$2.5 billion to go into 87 public works projects, though this may increase to \$4.3 billion. The city is planning to improve its public transport and public bathroom facilities, repave roads, build underground parking and pedestrian underpassages, and clean up the area around the central Termini train station. For the Jubilee Year in 2000, Rome built a large parking garage for tour buses under the nearby Janiculum Hill. Lewis said they also worked hard to make the ancient city a little bit more accessible for people in wheelchairs by adding sidewalk ramps and ramps at church entrances.

Sometime early next year the pope will publish the official bull declaring the Jubilee and establishing the date for the opening of the Holy Door, which will likely be in December 2024. Registrations for the Jubilee will open in September, the Vatican said.

The Vatican also recently published the full list of themed Jubilee celebrations that will happen throughout 2025, such as the jubilees of families, artists, and seminarians. Lewis recommended that families traveling with young children make sure that part of every day there is something for them and pointed out that Rome has greenspaces, parks, and playgrounds, good for a picnic or letting kids run around.

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Logo for 53rd International Eucharistic Congress

On Monday, Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses unveiled the official logo for the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress (IEC2024), to take place in Quito, Ecuador, on 8-15 September 2024.

The theme of the Congress, "*Faternidad para sanar el mundo*" ('Fellowship to heal the world'), is inspired by Jesus' words in the Gospel according to St. Matthew that "You are all brothers," and recalls the current synodal experience of the Church, called to become a fraternal place of inclusion, shared belonging and deep hospitality. The Congress culminates with the celebration of the concluding "*Statio orbis*" of the event.

Earlier this month, the logo and official hymn of the Congress were presented at the headquarters of the Ecuadorian Episcopal Conference.

A statement released on Monday explained each element of the logo and its meaning. "The Cross of Christ," it highlighted, "enters the flesh of the world to heal the wounds opened by sin: disobedience to God, abuse of neighbour and exploitation of creation. It is the new axis of history. There where humanity has unloaded the greatest violence on the Lamb of God, it is

precisely there that God has poured out His love with superabundance in the signs of the water and blood that flowed from the open side of Christ on the Cross. The Crucified One is the Risen One. With open arms, He embraces all as brothers reconciled to the Father. The illustration of the open Heart of Christ on the Cross, it added, represents "the source of the love that makes all things new."

"His wound," explains the statement, "no longer exudes death, but is the source of life and reconciliation. Therefore, the open wounds of the Risen One are the new wounds of love that heal, here and now, all the still open wounds of hatred, enmity, violence and death." The Host depicted refers to the Eucharist which is the summit and source of all Christian life. "The light of the Eucharist," says the statement, "gives a new direction to human history because God continues to gather his people, from east to west, gathering them around the Word of life and the living Bread descended from heaven. The Eucharist is a bond of brotherhood: where sin disowns us as brothers, the Eucharistic celebration gathers us to the same table as children of the same Father."

The logo highlights the city hosting the Congress. "Quito, a city in the middle of the world, situated at latitude zero," the logo's explanatory note goes on to say, "widens its tent to become an immense Eucharistic city where we are all invited to participate in this great dream of a fraternity redeemed and healed by the perfect love of Christ, a love that always precedes, a love that in this hour of history helps us to become aware that: 'You are all brothers' (Mt 23:8)."

----- www.vaticannews.va 23 May 2023 ♦



Theme for World Youth Day 2023

Every World Youth Day (WYD) has a theme and motto that helps guide the various events that are attended by thousands of young people from around the world.

For the WYD 2023, Pope Francis chose *"Mary arose and went with haste" (Lk 1:39) as the motto and theme of the upcoming World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal* --- a Bible verse from the Gospel of Luke that highlights the action of Mary to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

The official WYD website gives an explanation behind this particular theme:

"Mary arose and went with haste" (Lk 1:39) is the Bible quote chosen by Pope Francis as the motto of the World Youth Day that will be held for the first time in the capital city of Lisbon, Portugal. The biblical phrase (a quote from the Gospel of St. Luke) opens the account of the Visitation (Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth), a biblical episode following the Annunciation (the angel's



announcement to Mary that she would be the mother of the Son of God, and the theme of the last WYD, in Panama).

Pope Francis chose this verse to point young people to the Virgin Mary and to imitate her heroic life, highlighting her missionary action.

Mary of Nazareth is the great figure of the Christian journey. She teaches us to say yes to God. She was the protagonist of the last edition of WYD and will be so once again in Lisbon. In the biblical episode of the Visitation, the action of standing up presents Mary as both a woman of charity and a missionary woman. Leaving in haste represents the attitude depicted in Pope Francis' indications for WYD Lisbon 2023: "May young people's evangelization be active and missionary, for this is how they will recognize and witness the presence of the living Christ."

As young people around the world prepare to travel to Portugal, they will have in mind the Visitation and how they can imitate the Virgin Mary in their lives.

www.aleteia.org 05/31/23 ♦



Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

July 2023: For a Eucharistic life

We pray that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters.

August 2023: For World Youth Day 2023

We pray the World Youth Day in Lisbon will help young people to live and witness the Gospel in their own lives.

- ❖ **Praying** for all the four Pontifical Mission Societies (keeping this as a prayer intention, if possible once a week or at least once a month).
- ❖ Having the **portraits/photos** of the founders of the four Pontifical Mission Societies, or at least the founder of the Pontifical Society of St Peter the Apostle to remind and inspire the seminarians.
- ❖ Including PMS in the **Pastoral Course** for the Deacons.
- ❖ Inviting a **Missionary** to share their testimony during the Missiology classes.
- ❖ **Promote** the Pontifical Society of Saint Peter the Apostle especially among the Professors, Priests, Formators, Past Pupils, Seminarians and Religious as they are the direct beneficiaries.
- ❖ During the Alumni Day, remind the **Past Pupils** about PMS; and appeal to contribute to the Pontifical Society of St Peter the Apostle through the Seminary.
- ❖ Encourage the Professors, Formators, Seminarians and Religious to participate in the **special offering** on Pope's Day.
- ❖ Make sure to have the Child Protection Policy.
- ❖ Sending a soft copy of the POSPA Application Form to PMO Secretariate, Bangalore.
- ❖ Have the signature of the National Director (PMO) before submitting the Application Form.
- ❖ Kindly acknowledge the amount received and mark a copy of the Pastoral Report with Photos and the Financial Statement to the donor National Directions too.

PMS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2023

The Annual General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies was held at Istituto Madonna del Carmine "Il Carmelo" Via Doganale 1, Caimpino, ROME, from May 31 to June 06, 2023. PMO National Director Rev Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu was one of the two moderators; and member of the steering committee in the PMS general assembly. In this PMS general assembly, the PMO National Director was elected as a member of PMS Renewal Commission.



Archbishop Emilio Nappa
President of PMS



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With Holy Father
Pope Francis

