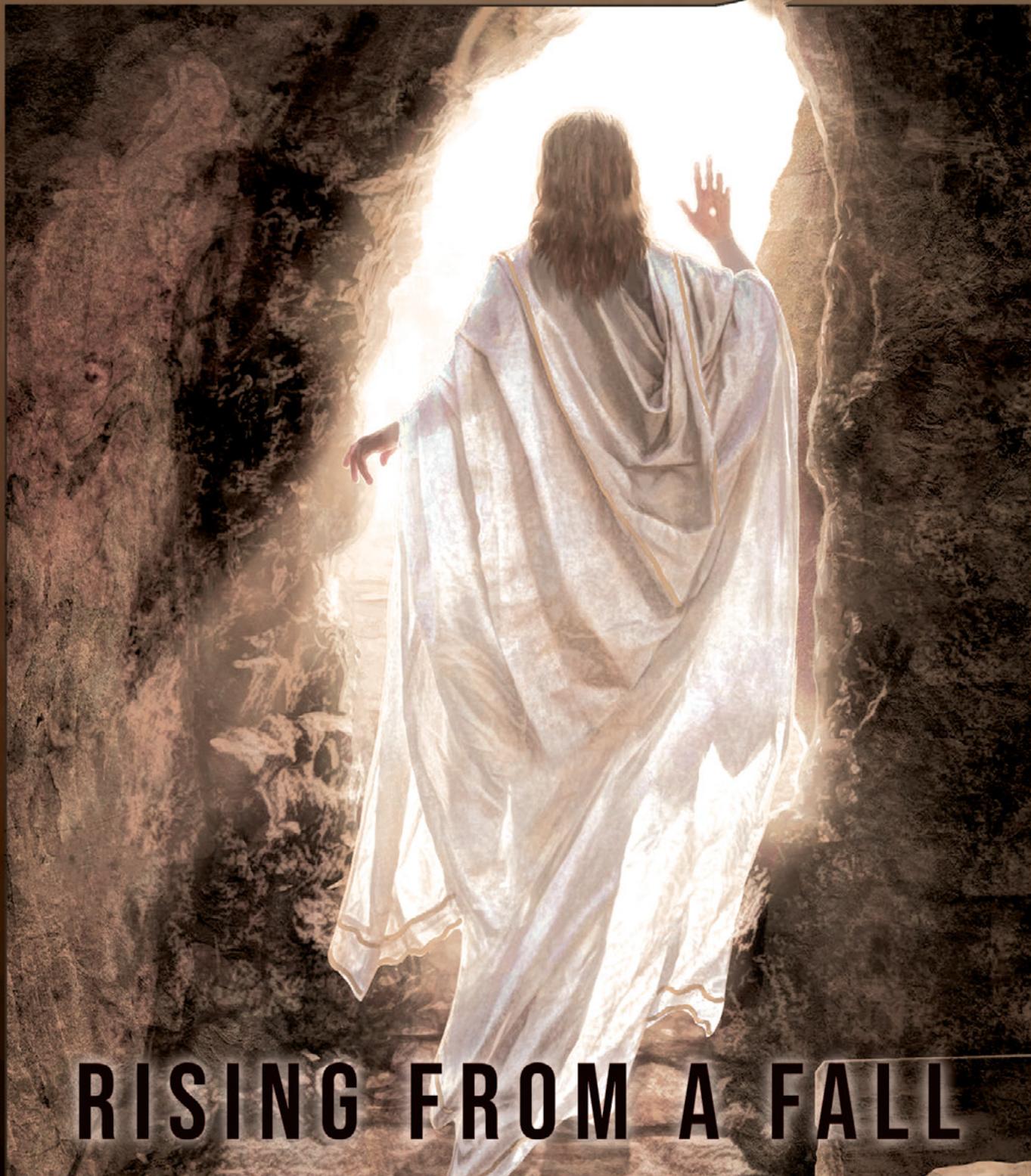


Reaching Out



RISING FROM A FALL

INDEX

Fall To Rise - Fr. Stephen Kika	3
Rising From Sin - Melville X. D'Souza	4
Rising After A Fall - Arlene Alves	5
Rising From The Fall - Francis Fernandes	6
Jesus Help Us Rise With Every Fall - Angela Fernandes	7
Arise.....Jesus Is Risen - Olga Pereira	8
So, What Is Love? - Sonia Rodrigues	9
A Covid Warrior	10
Children's Bible Class	11
Children Activities - Happy To Be Involved!	12
Bible Class 2020 - A Report	13
Children's Bible Club in the Pandemic	14
JBC Children Enact the Stations of the Cross!	15
Amoris Laetitia - Year of the Family	15
United in Faith & Solidarity	17
World Catholic News...	23

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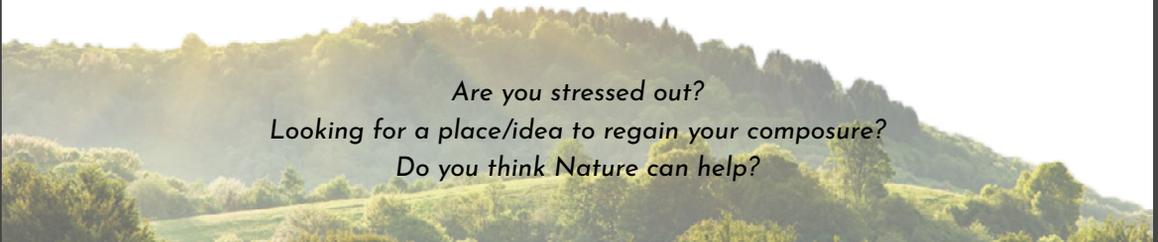
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Theme for the June 2021 issue of the Reaching Out

LOOKING FOR STRESS BUSTERS?



*Are you stressed out?
 Looking for a place/idea to regain your composure?
 Do you think Nature can help?*

Please send in your articles, as attachment by email only, to reachingout.orlem@gmail.com, latest by 15th May, 2021. Article sent to any of the members of the Reaching Out team will not be considered. Please send article as attachment. Please send images separately and not along with the Word document. Please do not forget to mention your zone and sector number.

FALL TO RISE

Fr. Stephen Kika

Our life is a big challenge. Every day brings in some new challenges; but we need to look at those challenges as opportunities, not as the obstacles. Every challenge that we face, helps us grow in self confidence. We should look at the challenges with a positive attitude. We should learn a lesson from every challenge. Remember the famous saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." **Every challenge gives us strength to rise again and walk.**

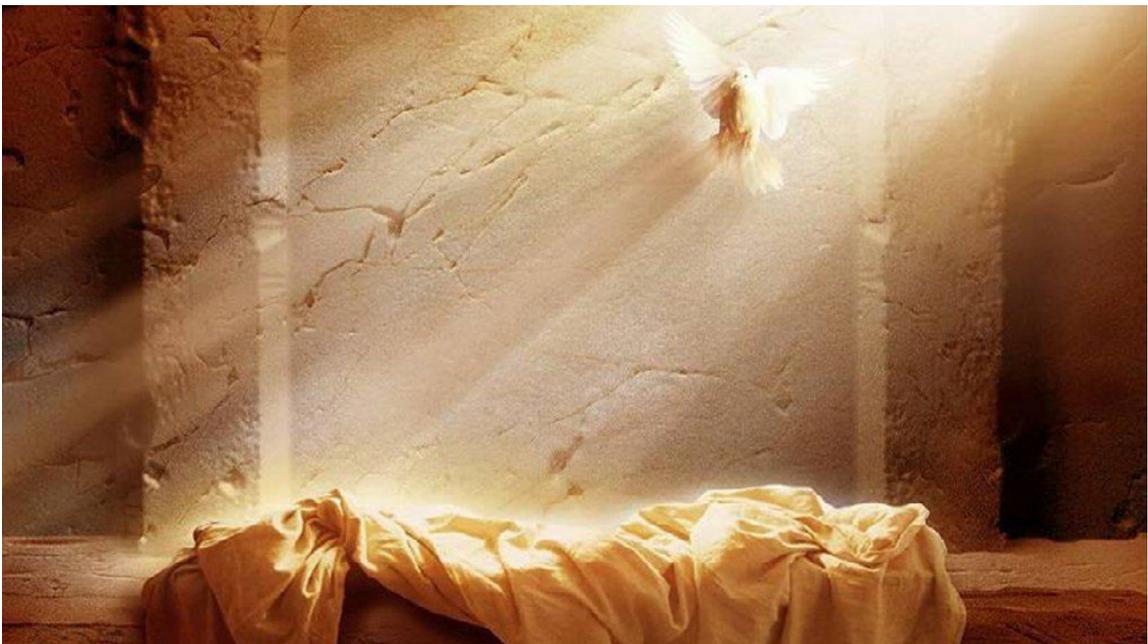
Jesus said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your mat and walk (John 5:8)." He trusted Jesus and was able to rise again.

Jesus too fell three times; but there was no one to encourage Him – get up and walk. The scorching heat of the sun, the lashes of the Roman soldiers, the heavy Cross, hunger and thirst must have made Him weak, and fall. But He knew that he needed to rise again, otherwise the mission of His Heavenly Father would be incomplete. He gathered all his strength, got up, walked and reached Calvary.

He did not look at the Cross as an obstacle. Though, the Cross was a sign of shame and punishment; **through His death the Cross became the symbol of victory and triumph.**

Very often we tend to give up when we face some challenges or when we fall. Say to yourself – This too shall pass. We need to have a "never quit" attitude when challenges come our way. Remember: **Tough times don't last, but tough people do!**

Easter reminds us that we need to rise to a new life, to a new beginning. Let no challenge shake our hope in the risen Lord. Torture, humiliation, insult was all a challenge for Jesus. His own people rejected him. His own apostles betrayed, denied Him. He received no respect in His hometown. But he only focused on his goal. **In the midst of challenges and problems of this life, we need to focus only on our goal.**



RISING FROM SIN

Melville X. D'Souza



We are filled with fear when we hear of a fall, dreading physical injuries, and recovering from such injuries is of course, a painful process. We also suffer falls in our spiritual life, falling short of the glory of God.

In the Scriptures, we read of several people who had fallen into sin, fallen in the eyes of God, and have risen from their fall. Jesus fell three times on the way to Calvary, but was it Jesus who had fallen? Or was it all those people who had lined the streets to watch the drama, who had fallen in the eyes of God? **There was one woman, Veronica, who must have realised that, and decided to rise, wading through the crowds and the soldiers and wiped the face of Jesus. Veronica rose up from that fall and was rewarded with the imprint of Jesus' face.**

There was some more, like that Samaritan woman at the well, leading an immoral life, Zacchaeus the tax-collector had become rich through unethical means, Mary Magdalene,

caught in the act of adultery and about to be stoned. Then, there were two thieves crucified along with Jesus, both of whom had sinned. But one of them realised it and asked Jesus for forgiveness. He had risen from that fall and Jesus assures him of salvation.

Where do we stand? Like those in the scriptures, we too have surely fallen in the eyes of Jesus, we all are sinners. **If they could be lifted up by Jesus will he not lift us up as well?** Jesus promised us salvation when he took up that cross and walked up to Calvary. We are not perfect, we have all fallen. Confucius the philosopher says, **"Our greatest glory is not, in never falling, but in rising every time we fall"**. Just as recovering from a physical fall is often a painful process, requiring sacrifices, extra efforts, so also recovering from spiritual falls, calls for sacrifice and repentance. **Jesus is just a step away. He had stretched his arms out for us with the promise of EASTER! The question is, are we willing to hold His hand and rise?**

RISING AFTER A FALL

Arlene Alves - JBC Community 3, Sector 1

In ancient History we hear this phrase "Rise and Fall". Many kings, rulers had come to power, establishing empires and were defeated one after another, all because they chose to conquer for the love of power, honour, riches, wealth, territory and possessions. Their reign did not last long.

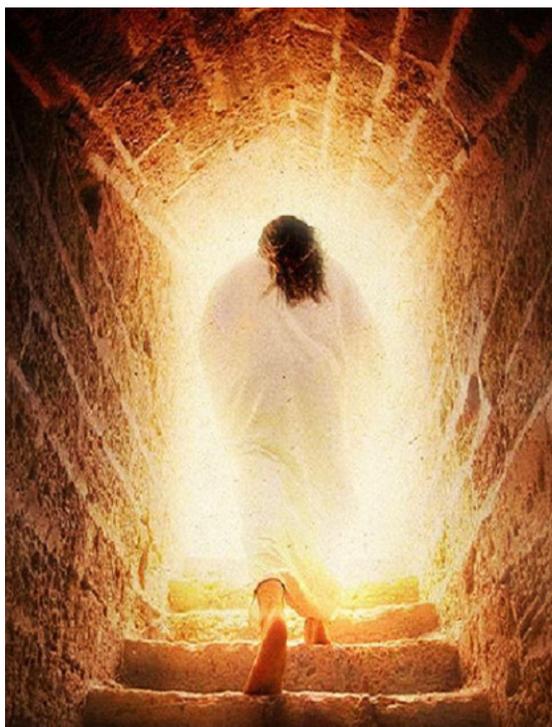
For us Christians, Jesus has come to rule the world 2000 years ago, establishing an everlasting kingdom, and has made History, Why? Jesus had no army, wealth and riches but He came in all humanness and humbleness, obedient unto death. He came to abolish sin and evil and established a world of love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. His life on earth was not an easy one as He encountered difficulties, trials, temptation and suffered pain, agony and a cruel death on the cross.

Standing on a beach one can watch the waves constantly rising and falling ashore. Sometimes we hear of high tides and Tsunamis which cause havoc and destruction to life and property. When we reflect on our life's journey, we too encounter times which are rough and stormy in different phases of our life. We may face physical, emotional suffering, pain, agony, loneliness, dejection, rejection anxiety, depression and desperation at times struggling to cope up and carry on in life.

We have times of joy and sorrow, sickness and pain and we wonder, why me Lord? Seeing our Lord on the cross, we should have a strong belief, faith and trust in God our Father who will never abandon us in moments of distress. Through the Eucharist, prayer and Word of God, we will always find succour and consolation that we be saved and have life eternal in the kingdom of God. Jesus leads our way, our truth and our life. In the way of the Cross, Jesus falls three times under the weight of the cross. Although He seems weak as He was bruised and bleeding under the most violent scourging and whipping, He still did not give up but chose to trust in His Father and rose up to carry on His journey to Calvary.

His courageous acceptance of the sufferings He bore, redeemed us from sin and evil. Even in the face of cruel behaviour of the soldiers and men in authority, Jesus rises from His falls, carrying the heavy cross till the end. Reflecting on this self-giving love and life of Jesus should make us think that we too should carry our daily crosses and move ahead in life, carrying out the will of God. It may be the cross of suffering of a terminally ill person or a failure in studies or no success in getting employment, the challenge of looking after a specially-abled person or any other difficulties and challenges we may encounter in life, should not make us give up. Trusting that God is with us and loves us unconditionally we can carry on our earthly journey.

The words of this beautiful hymn are encouraging - "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground, it still remains a grain of wheat, but if it falls and dies then it bears much fruit, so it is with those who lose themselves in me."



RISING FROM THE FALL

Francis Fernandes – Community 4, Sector 8



How many times have we fallen in life? Are we ready to rise from those falls?

Every time we sin, we fall from God's righteousness. Our sins could be gossip, lust, pornography, hatred, envy etc. We often confess our sins and tell God that we are merely human and as such, are bound to sin. However, to some extent though this seems right, we need to pray to God to strengthen our faith instead we are always praying to God for some or the other human wants and desires.

Every human being right up to the Pope at some point of time, sins and we all have our share of falls. Most important is, when we fall we need to pick ourselves up and surrender to God and place this weakness in front of our God who will provide us the strength to increase our faith.

Satan keeps trying his best to lure us to sin and wants us to fall in the eyes of God. However, we must remind ourselves that when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness it was God's word that defeated the evil spirit. We also need to read God's word daily to strengthen and armour ourselves from all temptations lured by the evil one.

In our day-to-day life, we keep sinning and falling from God's righteousness and thus deprive ourselves of God's grace and blessings. We let the Holy Spirit in our life take a backseat in front of the worldly pleasures etc. which we thrive on.

On Calvary, every time Jesus fell on the ground with the Cross on his shoulders, he got up because he had love for us and knew that he needed to take the fall for us sinners as this was God's plan for our Salvation. In the same way, we need to learn from Jesus that when we are burdened with our own problems and find our crosses heavy, we need to seek divine intervention and Jesus will make our crosses light enough for us to carry till we reach our final destination i.e., Heaven.

This Lent, let us know that Jesus loves us so much that he will definitely help us and carry us every time we fall provided we seek him. Don't worry about the fall, remember to rise from every fall.

Though I Fall, I will Rise Again.

Hallelujah, Praise the Lord!!!

JESUS HELP US RISE WITH EVERY FALL

Angela Fernandes - Community 1, Sector 2



Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, sleep to wake – Robert Browning

Sin is an act of disobedience and rebellion against God. When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, sin entered the world. This moment was known as the fall of mankind (Romans 5:12). Sin brought God's judgment on mankind for the wages of sin, is death.

When Adam and Eve fell in the sight of God, did God abandon them? No. God killed an animal and used the skin to cover their nakedness. This act was a fore shadow of the ultimate redemption to come, when Jesus the perfect lamb was slain as a sacrifice for mankind's sin.

Man fell because of the original sin of Adam; but he had hope to rise again, hope of eternal salvation. Through Jesus, man was reconciled with God.

The Bible teaches us that we are all infected with sin. We all possess a sinful nature. Sin plagues us to the very depth of our being.

On his way to Calvary, Jesus falls the first time, gets up and carries on without wasting time, so as to complete his father's will. In this Covid 19 pandemic, people have to carry their cross of

financial problem, job loss, striving to get rid of their addictions. They fall and rise up to face a new day.

In his 2nd fall, the soldiers jabbed Jesus and kicked him. In spite of the help from Simon, Jesus' strength fails him and he falls the second time. When we do not forgive ourselves and recoil in our guilt, not rising up to accept the mercy and compassion of Jesus; when we criticize others and inflict emotional wounds, instead of giving them a helping hand to rise, we are jabbing at Jesus. When Jesus forgives us through the sacrament of reconciliation we need to rise and face a new beginning.

Jesus almost arrives at the summit of Calvary, when he falls the third time beneath the cross. For all those disillusioned in life and near to despair, we need to reach out to them and help them to rise.

All history is incomprehensible without Christ - Ernest Renan (The Life of Christ).

The key to success is making the right decision. How do you make the right decisions – through experience? How do you gain experience – by learning from wrong decisions made.

To illustrate this, I was working for a multinational for 10 years. As I was stagnating without a growth in career and stress to add to it, I left the job. It was a big fall. I faced the ire of family and society. I sailed through uncharted seas and rose up to find a job close to my residence, in a firm that recognized my talents (I got 2 promotions). I left the firm after my retirement. God helps those who help themselves. Make God the first priority in your life.

I thank God that many families which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfill their callings and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way....Pope Francis (Amoris Laetitia).

ARISE.....JESUS IS RISEN

Olga Pereira - JBC Community 3, Sector 1



“Those who trust in the Lord for help, will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not get weak.” (Isaiah 40:31)

“I was fiercely attacked and was being defeated, but the Lord helped me.” (Psalm 118:13)

Life on this Earth is a journey and it starts with our birth and ends with our death. Each day we traverse the path that leads us on to our final destination to be happy with God Our Abba Father in Heaven. Our journey entails both, joys and sorrows, pain and pleasure, challenges and obstacles.

Currently we are in the aftermath of an unprecedented pandemic. It has put our whole world and our lives at risk and we have been working on healing and seeking survival through medical interventions. We had a whole year to pray and reflect on our earthly existence and as baptised Catholics, we put our faith in God our Father and prayed earnestly for healing and cure for our world, and we can give thanks for hearing our supplication and helping us rise through the pandemic. At the same time, because of our lack of faith and trust in God we face a lot of pain and misery, uncertainty. He is our Creator and will never let us fall.

In His infinite Love for us, He sent His beloved Son Jesus, to walk with us on this earthly journey, to experience all our human frailties and failures, our darkest hours. Jesus was as human as us, except

sin. He took upon Himself our sins and iniquities and walked on the road to Calvary. As He carried the heavy cross amidst a jeering crowd, cruel soldiers, weeping women, He fell three times, each time He got up and drove on, every step became more painful, He never gave up. He knew fully well that His finale will be His death on the same Cross. He had accepted God’s will to redeem us, His goal was our salvation. He asked his Father to help him. “Father if you will take this cup of suffering away from me, not my will but your will be done.” (Luke 22:42).

If we fall God our Abba Father will lift us up, and when we put our trust and have intense faith in Him, He will renew our strength and help us to walk towards our goal of Heaven. Nothing can come between us and the love of God. We should never give up, even when we face tough times, God our Abba Father is powerful and merciful, we must surrender and entrust our life to Him, then, like St. Paul we can say, “I can do all things and his grace is sufficient for me.”

Our prayer this Easter shall be, “Let me start again, pick the pieces of my brokenness, fill the spaces in my emptiness. Let me start again with you Lord.” The Risen Lord Jesus reassures us of His abiding presence and He will accompany us. **Let us then joyfully celebrate the commemoration of His Resurrection and may we have a Blest and Peace filled Easter. He is Risen. Hallelujah!**

Happy Easter to us all.

SO, WHAT IS LOVE?

Sonia Rodrigues, JBC Sunder Lane

**#whatislove #unconditionallove #godislove
#happyeaster #seasonoflent #lifelessons #love
#lovelanguages #positivity**

"How do you spell 'love'?" asked Piglet. "You don't spell it, you feel it" replied Pooh.

Love - an often misused and misinterpreted word. Is there anyone who can confidently say they know what love actually is? Is it a multi-hued emotion or an enthralling experience, an ongoing journey or a final destination, a meaningful expression or just an excuse? How do we love? How much do we love? What is the language of love? Shhh stop, let's tiptoe into the mysterious world of love to try and find out.

The thought that effortlessly occurs when we mention love is the romantic kind present between couples. Around occasions like Valentine's Day, this builds up with the aroma of roses, delectable cakes and dazzling gifts sweeping many off their feet. External symbols of love occupy center-stage flooding social media with creative exhibitions. While it is no doubt immensely popular and of course commercially successful, we are left wondering how much of depth this kind of love reveals in the long run.

At times we come across a strange kind of love that wears masks of pretense showcasing perfection behind which lurks some startling and at times hideous truths. Words of love might be expressed eloquently unfortunately they do not match up with gracious acts of love in reality. At some point we realize that it is not the people here who change with time, but the mask that falls off eventually.

We all experience the love that exists in relationships such as parent-child, siblings, student-teacher, relatives, acquaintances and friends. While it is often unconditional, there are times these can be tied down by weighty expectations; they then turn into transactional relationships governed by give and take. When obligations and compulsions enter the equation, the love quotient can veer off in different directions.

Animal lovers experience a pure kind of selfless love that is unspoken yet so powerful and precious. Animals occupy a special place in our hearts like no human ever can, filling us with indescribable joy and leaving us with priceless memories for life.

There is then a sublime kind of love that exists between us and our Creator where we experience a deep sense of gratitude offering our devotion and reverence to the divine. Each one expresses this uniquely depending on their relationship with the Creator.

With the right intent, our deep connection with God can lead us onto a kind of love for humanity that is not often seen or spoken about. It manifests in subtle forms like treating people with respect and dignity, being thoughtful and kind, exulting in others' success without envy and taking time to notice and listen with focus and patience. It comprises of rare gestures such as going the extra mile, reaching out and offering service to people in need, accepting without judgment, forgiving those who may have hurt us and selflessly putting others before ourselves.

While this kind of love is humble, persistent and enduring, it is also empowering as it seeks to believe, holds on to hope and never gives up. This can only be inspired by the ultimate and matchless love that Jesus demonstrated for all of mankind on the cross. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

So love then is a decision each one of us has to make for ourselves. What I have understood about true love is simple - it radiates from the heart of our Lord and connects to our soul encompassing our lives completely. As St Teresa of Calcutta said, "When you know how much God is in love with you, then you can only live your life radiating that love to God and to others" (Matthew 22:37-38, John 13:34-35).

During this Easter season, let us discover and experience this amazing gift of love for ourselves and share this gift with the world. Happy Easter !

A Covid Warrior

Carl D'Penha, JBC Community, Sector 2

Nikita Salvi, a professional nurse employed with Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai, has been working tirelessly, around the clock, for the last 9 months in the COVID ward of the Hospital.

Nikita has worked in various roles caring for these patients, at times her job was demanding, taking into account the risk involved, the long hours of duty, weighted down by the mandatory PPE kit that had to be worn during duty hours.

Soft spoken, modest and unassuming, Nikita said if the call of duty demanded, she was prepared to do the same duty over again, just from the satisfaction derived from the Patients appreciating their noble work and their happiness when they find out that they have been cured and discharged to return home.

We salute this true Covid Warrior, and are proud to have a young dynamic personality in our midst. Nikita is from JBC Community, Sector 2, St Joseph Sector.

WELL DONE BRAVE COVID WARRIOR, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

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www.facebook.com/ANGEL-12
 angeldiagnostic12@gmail.com

Children's Bible Class

Kyle Fernandes, Std 3



Big Thank You to Jesus for the inspiration and guidance we received during the Pandemic in our Children's Bible Club. We are truly Blessed with the amazing highly interactive classes as we grow deeper in faith.

Children's Bible class was at Teacher's house prior to the lockdown after which it was conducted online.

The fellowship as the Children gathered to learn the Bible.



Children enacting the parting of the Red Sea, following which, Peter heals the blind man. Bible class went online during the lockdown, but the drama & smiles continued!

Children Activities – Happy To Be Involved!

Rachael , Daniel & Michael

The Children of our Parish have indeed kept themselves busy these past months, and have sent in their reports..... Well done Children !

We would like to thank Jesus for the exciting activities and role plays we were able to do in the year 2020, especially since we went into lockdown. It is our immense pleasure to be part of the Children's Bible class online, which raised our aspirations to a whole new level.

Little did we think we would enjoy it this much especially as no stone was left unturned to keep our faith alive. Despite the lockdown, we didn't feel the restrictions, as our spirits were kept alive, through learning about Jesus and His work on this earth right up to His Resurrection, which made the classes even more enjoyable through the colouring of Bible stories before class.

This made us expectant about what was to follow, dressing in costumes and learning Bible Psalms and Scriptures. This whole experience reminds us of a Bible verse we learnt "I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me" – Philippians 4:13



Advent Wreath Making



The 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread



The Good Shepherd
[Role play]



The Ascension Role Playing

Bible Class 2020 – A Report

Lynelle

The Children's Bible Classes have been inspiring. Various topics on Palm Sunday, the Resurrection of Jesus-Divine Mercy, Jesus our Good Shepherd, Miracles of the Multiplication of 5 loaves and 2 fish and the coming of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost Sunday.

We learnt how the apostles and disciples of Jesus and Mama Mary were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

On another Saturday evening, we learnt that ADVENT is all about the coming of Jesus Christ. The wreath is a bunch of leaves and candles--- it signifies continuous life or an eternity with God. The 5 candles symbolize Hope, Peace, Joy, Love

and Christ. For the first time, we actually made our own homemade Advent Wreaths and had a fun-filled experience.

Lynelle and Ellen's parents, along with the other parents, are happy that children are Learning and growing in their Catholic Faith, through Bible readings, prayers, hymns, coloring/ craft activities, videos, songs, etc...The lessons are enjoyable.

It's truly great to be part of the Children's Bible class. We also got the opportunity to interact online with other parents and children. Here are some of the work we did throughout the year:



Children's Bible Club in the Pandemic

Griselda and Reuben Lopez

Come March 2020, Covid-19 reared its ugly head in Orlem town,
Housebound we were due to the lockdown,
In the midst of this, all activities came to a halt,
Leave alone the Bible Class for which Teacher May faithfully called,
Drawings on the Good Shepherd, Chirst The King and Acts Of The Apostles
Readings from the Bible and their significance,
Etched in our minds forever,
New learnings, interpretations and inspiration,
Spirit of God was with us for all the sessions.

Beautiful prayers of children filled with a hopeful spirit,
Inspired us to get through a tough pandemic,
Brought us closer to feel the warmth of God's love,
Life experiences from Teacher's life,
Envisioned for us an image of a miracle God above.

Creative activities galore, we learnt to make ,
Live story sets on Moses crossing the Red Sea, an Advent Wreath made from
 'Best out of Waste,
Under Jesus's guidance, grace, and inspiration, Praise and thanks be to God,
Bible class was a gift this year, with which we were truly blessed.



Christ the King



Moses Crossing the Red Sea



Christmas Wreath

JBC Children Enact the Stations of the Cross!

Sheldon Pereira, Parish Councillor

March 13, 2021, the beautiful children of JBC Community, sector 3 met at St Joseph's High School and enacted the 14 Stations of the Cross.

by Kelly, Emilia, Megan and Christina. Sheldon Pinto did a fabulous job with Jesus' makeup, the outfits and the props used.

Jesus was well played by Aaron and Mary by Nia. Veronica was played by Nicole, Mary Magdalene by Mireille, Pilot by Merwyn, Simon by Christo, Soldier Elijah and Tristin and Women of Jerusalem

It was indeed a great joy to have young people experience the love of Jesus Christ through the veneration of the Cross, that Cross which is a symbol of Christ's unending Love for us.



**Stations of
the Cross**



JBC Sector 4
Community 3

Amoris Laetitia - Year of the Family

(sourced from Vatican News)

On March 19, 2021, the Church celebrated five years since the publication of the Apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia on the beauty and joy of the family. On the same day Pope Francis launched the Year "Amoris Laetitia Family" which will conclude on June 26, 2022, on the occasion of the X world meeting of Families with the Holy Father in Rome.

Pope Francis noted that "the main intention of the document is to communicate...that today a new look at the family is necessary on the part of the Church." He stressed that reiterating the value of doctrine is not enough. Rather, we must become "custodians" of the beauty of the family, and take care of its fragilities and wounds "with compassion".

Pope Francis went on to say that there are two aspects at the heart of all family Ministry: "the frankness of the proclamation of the Gospel and the tenderness of accompaniment".

He explained that, on the one hand, "we proclaim to couples, spouses and families a Word that helps them grasp the authentic meaning of the union and love, the sign and image of Trinitarian love and of the covenant between Christ and the Church."

On the other hand, the Pope noted, "this proclamation cannot and must never be given from above or from outside." He explained that the Church is incarnated in history, as was her Master. So, when she proclaims the Gospel of the family she does so by immersing herself in real life, knowing firsthand the daily struggles of spouses and parents, their problems, their sufferings, all those small and large situations that weigh down and sometimes hinder their journey."

"Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family and its beauty in God's plan." (Amoris Laetitia, 325)

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Elias Gonsalves

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United in Faith and Solidarity! Small Christian Communities at work in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Orlem.

The Small Christian Communities of our Parish have been at work - reaching out spiritually and through their social initiatives. Here are some of the spiritual and social outreach activities undertaken.

Community 2 Sector 1(Somwar Bazar) celebrated Women's Day. Janet D'Silva from the community representing woman cell spoke on the work done by the Women's Cell



Community 4, Sector 2 celebrated Women's Day with Senior Citizens..





Community 3 Sector 1
Reconciliation Service
(Online+Offline)
25.03.2021



**MITHCHOWKI
COMMUNITY Sector 5**



**ROSARY in honour of
SAINT JOSEPH 19 March**

Community 8, the Tamil community, reached out to the Little Angel Ashram at Madh island



Evershine Community Sector 6, celebrated Women's Day with house helps



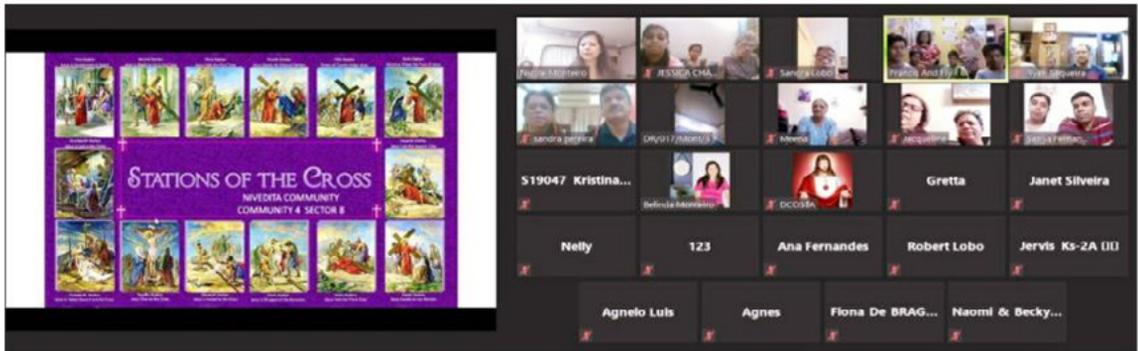
Somwar Bazaar Liberty Garden Community – Sector 2 St Martha's Community
A small token of our appreciation to the domestic helpers working in our homes.



The Way of the Cross by the children of Mith Chowki Community St Augustine's sector



Nivedita Community children, youth and adults walked the Stations of the Cross with Jesus on Zoom to commemorate His Passion, Death and Resurrection.



World Catholic News...

The Pope in Iraq - he says to the Catholics in Iraq: 'Love is our strength'.....Read on.....

(Source: CNA) At Mass in Baghdad on Saturday, Pope Francis told Iraqi Christians that no matter what the world thinks, love is our strength, and it always triumphs over sin and evil.

Love, "even if it seems weak in the world's eyes, in fact always triumphs," the pope said March 6 at the Chaldean Catholic Cathedral of St. Joseph in Baghdad.

"Love is our strength, the source of strength for those of our brothers and sisters who here too have suffered prejudice and indignities, mistreatment and persecutions for the name of Jesus. Yet while the power, the glory and the vanity of the world pass away, love remains," he said.

"On the cross, it proved stronger than sin, in the tomb, it vanquished death," Francis continued. "That same love made the martyrs victorious in their trials – and how many martyrs have there been in the last century, more even than in the past!"

Pope Francis said Mass at the Chaldean Catholic cathedral in Baghdad on the second day of a three-day visit to Iraq intended to strengthen the hope of the country's persecuted Christian minority and foster fraternity and interreligious dialogue.

Francis is the first pope in history to visit the Middle Eastern country, fulfilling a hope of St. Pope John Paul II. In his homily, the pope reflected on the promises of God, which he said "guarantee unrivalled joy and never disappoint." "At times we may feel helpless and useless. We should never give in to this," he encouraged the Chaldeans, "because God wants to work wonders precisely through our weaknesses."

Pope Francis said "of course, we experience trials, and we frequently fall, but let us not forget that, with Jesus, we are blessed. Whatever the world takes from us is nothing compared to the tender and patient love with which the Lord fulfils his promises."

The Chaldeans are one of several Eastern Catholic

communities found in Iraq. They trace their history to the early Christians through their connection with the Church of the East. Before the population was diminished by Islamic State violence, Chaldeans made up two-thirds of Iraqi Christians.

Pope Francis also made history March 6 by being the first pope to offer Mass in the Chaldean rite. The papal Mass was said in a mix of Italian, Arabic, and the Chaldean language, which is a dialect of Aramaic. The Prayers of the Faithful were read in Arabic, Chaldean, Kurdish, Turkmen, and English. "Perhaps when you look at your hands they seem empty, perhaps you feel disheartened and unsatisfied by life. If so, do not be afraid: the Beatitudes are for you," the pope said. "For you who are afflicted, who hunger and thirst for justice, who are persecuted. The Lord promises you that your name is written on his heart, written in heaven!" he stated.

"Today I thank God with you and for you, because here, where wisdom arose in ancient times, so many witnesses have arisen in our own time, often overlooked by the news, yet precious in God's eyes," he continued. "Witnesses who, by living the Beatitudes, are helping God to fulfil his promises of peace."

St. Joseph Cathedral, called Mar Yousef, was constructed in the 1950s, and restored in 2018 by Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphaël Sako. The cathedral can seat 400, but due to COVID-19 precautions, the Mass was limited to an attendance of 180 people.

In his homily, Francis encouraged Catholics to not try to be "occasional heroes, but to become witnesses day after day." "Witness is the way to embody the wisdom of Jesus. That is how the world is changed: not by power and might, but by the Beatitudes. For that is what Jesus did: he lived to the end what he said from the beginning."

He pointed to the Scripture passage in 1 Corinthians 13, which says "love is patient," to remind Catholics that though people throughout history have been unfaithful to the covenant with God, and have fallen into the "same old sins," the "Lord always remained faithful."