

# Reaching Out



**LOOKING FOR STRESS BUSTERS?**

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Theme for the August 2021 issue of the Reaching Out

## WHAT FREEDOM?

*Seems like the Coronavirus is here to stay  
 Snatching away the Freedom of  
 our near & dear ones....  
 In such a scenario what kind of freedom are we looking for?*

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## JESUS – OUR ANCHOR IN COVIDTIDE

Fr. Cedric Rosario



We are in the midst of the deadly second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. An infection which was belittled and ridiculed with chants of “Go Corona Go!” when it first entered our land has turned catastrophic and engulfed in its fatal wave so many of our near and dear ones. The number of fatalities has turned into names and persons we knew closely. Seemingly healthy people have succumbed to the invisible enemy and life seems more uncertain and stressful than ever before. While the triad of masking, sanitizing of hands and social distancing is the norm to protect oneself physically, one must acknowledge that the effect of the coronavirus on us is multi-faceted. The passing away of a dear one who till yesterday appeared seemingly healthy can be emotionally traumatizing.

The closure of places of worship has challenged us to live out our faith in unprecedented ways and a spiritual vacuum has been created in the lives of many. Right from children having to adapt to the online mode of education to senior citizens having to exercise restraint by staying indoors, the coronavirus has affected people from all walks of life. In the midst of all this chaos and confusion one cannot but wonder: “When will this pandemic end? Could life get any more stressful?”

Let us take heed in the comforting words of our Lord who says: “Come to me all you who are weary and are burdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart.” (Mt 11:28-30). Jesus knew the anguish of losing a loved one (cf. Jn 11:35), he too experienced pain and suffering

in his life and yet offered all of it in complete submission to his heavenly Father. He could do so because of an intimate relationship of love and fidelity which he shared with his Abba. You and I are called to develop a similar relationship with the Lord, especially during these trying times which are testing our faith in Him. Now is the time to deepen our relationship with the Lord, casting all our worries and anxieties unto Him and journeying through life with the conviction that He is journeying with us, accompanying us silently through all the pain and agony.

We have just concluded the paschal season with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon each of us. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of renewal, a Spirit who strengthens and vivifies us to live out our Christian vocation with complete dedication and commitment. Even in the midst of the covid wave, the Spirit of God is ushering in a renewal in humanity. Let us not be disheartened but latch on to Jesus our anchor who will keep us firmly rooted in his love and protect us from the upheavals of Covidtide. He is our sure hope who will never let us down.

Stay safe, God bless!



## DOES NATURE TALK BACK?

Melville X. D'Souza



For the second year in succession, we are in a Lockdown-style mode on account of the second wave of this life threatening, rampaging coronavirus. Some time at the end of the first wave, we have been discussing what we called the 'new normal'. And now, suddenly we find all this has changed. **One of the biggest negative effects the Covid has had upon man is that he is now stressed out completely.** If the first wave had broken his back **the second wave has thrown man completely off balance.**

A lot of people are stressed out, falling dead on account of shortage of oxygen supply or ventilators. But, why am I talking about ventilators as a source of oxygen? As is commonly known, plants absorb all the pollution, the gases released by us, carbon dioxide, etc., during the day and give out oxygen to enable us to breathe. But here we have a scenario where human lives are lost due to lack of oxygen. Oxygen is freely available in the air and yet, we are being made to breathe through a ventilator and pay for it.

**Stress is known to be one of those silent killers -**

**the #1 proxy killer?** This is a dangerous situation, surely. So, how do we tackle this silent killer? What are the options available? Visiting counsellors, psychiatrists, speaking with elders in society, etc. Yes, all this perhaps helps, although sessions with professionals may be boring at times. Prayer, of course. Is there another practical option available?

**Well, how about turning to Nature?** Can we speak with Nature? Oh, but doesn't that sound a bit weird? Perhaps yes. Speaking with Nature - you must be out of your mind. This could be the general reaction! There was a message recently doing the rounds on WhatsApp, which was something like, **'Talk to Nature, and if Nature talks back, visit a psychiatrist'**. How do you look at it, as a cryptic comment or sarcastic? I for one, thought, perhaps there is some sense in that message. All it says is, try turning to Nature as an alternative. **Of course, Nature may not talk to you after all, literally, but what's the harm if you find some solace in Nature?** Never mind the reaction of people, never mind what they would think of you. Why bother? Talking to Nature of course, can do you no harm, even if it doesn't seem to be doing you any good. But, you would not be disappointed for sure!

There is another WhatsApp video which talks of what is called **"Forest Therapy"** involving strolling through the forest barefoot on the leaves, wrapping one's arms around a tree, breathing in its scent, feeling its presence promising one an amazing experience. Well, that's Nature - **you Love Nature and Nature will Love you back!**

**One last point - does Nature talk back?** Of course it does! **Nature talks back in the form of Heavy, torrential rains, cloud bursts, cyclonic storms, landslides, earthquakes, etc. Nature talks back in the form of high waves, floods, rainstorms, tsunamis. Nature has been talking to man in various ways over the past several years, but man seems to have shut his ears to what Nature is trying to tell him! Perhaps, we will continue to shut our eyes & ears to Nature - at our own peril!**

## Fr. Harry Vaz, Orlem Welcomes You Once Again



We extend a warm welcome to Fr. Harry (Harold) Vaz for his second innings at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Orlem. His first brief stint was from 1999 to 2000. Fr Harry is an alumnus of Holy Name High School in Colaba and of the Archdiocesan Seminary in Goregaon. He was ordained a priest on December 22, 1976. During the 45 years of his Priestly Ministry, Fr. Harry has donned several hats. He was Rector at St. Pius X College, the Archdiocesan Seminary and later at Holy Name Cathedral. He was also Priest-in-Charge of St. Joseph Church, Goregaon, and Parish Priest of Our Lady of Egypt Church, Kalina, and recently of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church, Borivli (W).

In 1986, he obtained the highly reputed degree of Licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute (Rome). In 1996, he defended his thesis and received the prestigious degree of 'Doctor in Theology' from the 'Institut Catholique de Paris' (France). His long tenure at St Pius College as Professor of Sacred

Scripture spanned a little over three decades! Fr Harry briefly summed them up in these words: "I feel deeply fulfilled and truly enjoy the well-balanced mixture of being a Professor of Sacred Scripture and shepherd of God's people".

He is a priest-shepherd after the heart of Christ, deeply rooted in God's Word. He continues to teach Sacred Scripture at the Seminary. The fruit of his thesis and years of lectures in Scripture have taken shape in his book "**Sermon on the Mount – Way to Blessedness**", released last year in December. Besides his expertise in Sacred Scripture, Fr. Harry possesses an array of skills in areas of counselling, spiritual direction, dramatics etc.

We feel blessed and grateful to have a celebrated and multi-talented priest like Fr. Harry in our parish. As we commend Fr. Harry to our Lord, we pray that his second innings at Our Lady of Lourdes, Orlem, may be a long and fruitful one.

## Pained To Say Good Bye!

Willrine Mendonca Vaz



Wrapped with creativity behold!  
Mesmerizing listeners by homilies,  
Well planned and bold.  
Travelling galore,  
To pick yet another story,  
to enchant us more and more!

Be it the family cell or Confirmation,  
You just knew how to get our attention!  
**Mr and Mrs** was a hit,  
It still would need you as their charm.  
Just hop in by, you will be welcomed  
Am sure With open arms!

**Confirmation** overall had a spirit filled impact,  
With relevant topics, committed teachers,  
Value of Discipline, prayer and fasting,  
A treat of the Passover,  
The youth will always remember you,  
And that's for a Fact!

With **Reaching out** you stood with us,  
A different leader in you we saw!  
You believed in our skills,  
let us take the final call,  
What do you think,  
Doesn't this call for a humble bow.?

**Fr. Clifton**, hope you had not to go this far,  
We would have loved to have you,  
As our neighbour next door,  
But guess the call of priesthood is greater,  
To tread different paths,  
**And touch the lives of many more!**

Your knowledge is par excellence  
higher than a **Cliff**,  
Your presence made a difference  
Coz you are irreplaceable and  
more than a **ton**,  
**You are Gonna be absolutely missed!**

## Farewell Speech for Fr Clifton on Behalf of the Confirmation Teachers

May D'souza

I feel honoured to write this piece on behalf of the teachers of the Confirmation Classes, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Orlem.

After having retired as Principal of many worthy establishments, and after a long and colourful career as educator, Fr Clifton returned to Our Lady of Lourdes Church, as Assistant Pastor to the Parish Priest. Like a breath of fresh air, he soon took the International School under his efficient wings, while simultaneously also heading the Confirmation Team. With great expectations, we were kept on edge, as he promised to overhaul and propel our Confirmation classes to new heights: The students and teachers were supposed to know the substance in the Bible and be guided by the Holy Spirit in our responses to non-Christians and to those denominations who were trying to spirit our parishioners away. Father Clifton was true to his word.

Beginning with the animators down to the students, our lessons became clear cut, crisp but razor sharp, depicting the Word from the OT and the NT on colourful slides, on PPTs which soon became the norm for our classes and teachers began carrying their laptops to class. Fr Clifton was so dedicated and hardworking, taking time with each teacher as each one prepared his or her lessons to be shared with others. As Karen put it, he accomplished whatever he did with beauty and finesse whether it was his lessons taught with aplomb or his well researched sermons. All was done in utter humility, making many faithful friends in the process. Charmaine says, the programme was never going to be the same again, humour, anecdotes, testimonies, Fr. Clifton's vast store of knowledge on any topic, not only made the lessons interesting (we never wanted them to end) but they also enriched the growth of faith in our families.

Linus rightly says that the last 4 years, being part of Fr Clifton's team was one of the most enriching learning experience we have ever had. Mariana gushes sadly, that what Orlem has lost, Cathedral will gain. According to Janet, Fr Clifton, having celebrated her nuptial Mass, continued to be guide and a source of spiritual nourishment to her new family in Orlem, as she strove from nervousness to confident teacher, able to give online class without stuttering, because of the special bond the teachers share with their pastor. Bella exuberates that with all her teaching experience of the past, she was still apprehensive about taking classes on stage for the whole batch of 150 students and more so online, (with the help of our dedicated and hardworking Young computer-savvy catechists, Trevin, San and Shannon) on Youtube, due to the persistent Pandemic. But Fr Clifton's kind encouraging words and assurance of his prayers helped her to grow spiritually, in spite of a discouraging painful knee. She enthusiastically adds that parents, relatives and friends have viewed our presentations online and have remarked that we do high quality work. We hope, Fr Clifton, to keep to the standard you have helped raise us to.

Gracy and Gwendoline, Caroline all added that Father's insights in his homilies and his guidance in preparation of lessons have helped in the growth of their faith formation as they have never had a better mentor or guide. Orlem will miss his humour and testimonies. His sudden entries into the class, in normal times, with a joke on the spur of the moment, would send everyone into splits of laughter. Last but not the least, Marie Fernandes had this to add: You literally laughed, wept, danced with us and even stayed up late hours, as together, we put up the Confirmation Day backdrop. We not only felt the spiritual embrace of your love but you also made the Eucharist that

you presided over, a true Thanksgiving in every way. Besides training us, Fr Clifton pushed us forward to work for God's greater glory and our hearts ache as we say our teary but fond farewell. We shall indeed miss you, Fr Clifton, your quiet but happy presence in our different church cells, and your soft spoken but rich, Christ-like personality which propelled all who met you, to better dedication and even bigger heights.

In his parting words to us Fr Clifton quoted the famous adage in Ecclesiastes 3:1 there's a time to..... and Fr ended with, it's time for me to leave. Well Fr Clifton, in the Acts of the Apostles, after Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesians, people wept because he said that they would never see him again..... but here's the difference: We shall keep in touch and Fr. confides and reassures us that he will always be there for us if we need his advice, prayers or words of consolation. Lydia has the last word when she expounds, we have learnt so much and hoped to gain more. May the Spirit of the Lord always be with you so that you continue Jesus' mission of spreading His love through the Scriptures. Thanks for everything Fr Clifton, May you always continue doing God's Will and may the good Lord Jesus Christ, Mama Mary, with the angels and saints, walk with you.

I end with the words of love some of our alumni of Std. XI confirmation classes describe Fr Clifton: Confidant and Friend, Wise, Courageous, Energized, Dedicated, Compassionate, Knowledgeable, Indescribable, supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, Persevering, Courageous, Pious, A priest after our own hearts.

Thank you and God bless.

## Goodbye Fr. Steven Kika.....

Melville X. D'Souza



Goodbye Fr. Steven Kika.....

Kind hearted, smiling, soft spoken, meek, humble, understanding - have you seen someone with all these qualities? Then you couldn't have missed out on Fr. Steven Kika, coming as he does from humble surroundings in a small village on the outskirts of Mumbai. Why am I saying all this? Well, Fr. Kika's term in our parish has come to an end and he has taken up his new assignment at St. Anthony's, Vakola. When he first came to the parish in June 2018, perhaps one must have

been skeptical about him. But I think he has proved himself. He has efficiently handled several important portfolios in the parish. **We shall miss his ever smiling face. He could put anybody at ease with his cherubic smiling face.** His short Homilies have always driven home the point.

**We wish Fr. Steven Kika a fruitful ministry at Vakola. Fr. Kika, we shall certainly miss you. Goodbye Fr. Kika!**

### Fr Kika... You will be missed!

Willrine Mendonca Vaz (Community Evershine sector 6)

It is difficult to keep smiling for a longer time. But Fr.Kika you are the one gifted with that upward curve. Its indeed God's special gift to you. The warmth and the ease you bring about by your presence whenever we have met you is something that will be missed.

Your homilies were crisp and easy to savour too. You simply amazed us and got our attention with **'Through Him, with Him and in Him'** that you would sing in Marathi - absolutely remarkable! This moment created that special aura, so soulful

and prayerful.

The best thing about you that we see, is a person always ready to learn who has so much of humility.

I do not know if many know about you Fr. Kika. You have a funny bone too. Your subtle humour just lights up our face whenever a few have interacted with you. Thank you for being you! God bless you Fr. Kika and may you grow in your ministry ahead. Farewell till we meet again!

## NATURE – THE BEST STRESS BUSTER

Olga Pereira, JBC Community 3, Sector 1

“The Lord is my Shepherd I have everything I need. He lets me rest in green grass, and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.” (Psalm 23:1-4).

God our Abba Father created us in His great love and also bequeathed us a lovely and beautiful planet, Our Mother Earth, with a conducive natural environment for us to live a life worth living. Fresh air, fresh water, sunshine and all the flora and fauna, He gave man for his use and also to pass it down for generations. We know that man sinned and God had to correct the wrong, He did not take away his gift but, now we have to work hard to inherit the Earth and make a living. Today, we are facing a deluge of problems, but our God is Mighty and Merciful, He never lets us down and continues to provide for us through the pristine nature. He has given us and renews our spirit, come what may, whether death, sorrow, depression, fear, and uncertainty we can refresh and renew through spending some time in the midst of nature. It will help us to get back our health of body and mind, we need to relax and breathe, all nature is good because the Creator, our God Abba Father is Good. We need to have faith in Him and believe. “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers.” (1 Peter 3:12).

There are other stress busters like yoga, positive attitude, prayer, meditation, also praying the Rosary. Mary Our Mother always intercedes for us. The stress we experience is a response to a challenge or threat we face, actually it is good for us as it improves our thinking, our memory and our body gets ready for action, by supplying more oxygen, glucose, etc., to face the challenge or threat. We should try to lessen our frustrations, our anxieties, overwork, pain and sadness, by engaging in creative activities and do something which we enjoy, like listening to music, gardening, painting, dancing, exercise, etc., that suits us.

To achieve harmony in our life, we must learn to balance the ups and downs, good times, bad times, joys and challenges. We need to sit quietly

for a few minutes and commune with the natural surroundings around us and be thankful. Watching a river flow through its banks and then merge into the sea gives you a feeling of oneness and fills our mind with peace. We experience through nature how to anticipate dangers and opportunities and take steps to make our life sublime. Watching a flower bloom or a butterfly come out of its cocoon, feeling the cool breeze on our face, are luxuries which nothing can buy. Nature teaches us to face the struggles of our lives, like climbing a hill, it's one step at a time but when we reach the top, the panoramic view fills us with a sense of awe and gratitude. It takes sunshine and rain to make a rainbow.

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms, their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.... Nature's sources never fail.” – John Muir.



## Looking for Stress Busters?

Francis Fernandes – Community 4, Sector 8



In today's world there is stress everywhere. Especially at our work place and now with this pandemic extending over a year, the stress level in humans is touching the sky with fear for existence and sustenance. As I am writing this article India is facing the 2nd wave of the Covid-19.

People are trying various ways to de-stress themselves like meditation, yoga, exercise, laughter therapy, walking, watching movies etc. However, I feel that Nature is a great stress buster. It improves your mood and boosts your feelings of happiness and wellbeing. I along with my family often go for short vacations for 2/3 days to de-stress ourselves. We prefer to be disconnected from the world for some time with no phone calls etc. and spend this quality time with Nature. Life in Mumbai is fast and we are always on the run to keep up with its pace. However, it is different when we go and stay in the hills etc. where we can just relax and enjoy every moment of our life with friends and families. A few days before the lockdown we had gone to Mahabaleshwar to unwind and it was such a pleasant and peaceful experience. However, these stress busters are

temporary and work for us for a short time.

In the Bible we find that all the prophets, disciples and others experience stress on various occasions throughout their lives. Yet they found peace only when they experienced God's Love. Faith is not having lesser level of stress but how we put our trust and believe in God in the midst of this situation.

Adam and Eve were living in Paradise yet they were in deep stress and hiding from God because they had disobeyed God and were in Sin. Sin breaks our relationship with God and hence no matter where we go and hide, even in paradise, we will not be at peace until we re-connect our relationship with Jesus. Jesus is the one who will change our stressful lives to peace. This is the peace that the world cannot give only JESUS can!

**John 16:33- "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble (Stress). But take heart! I have overcome the world."**

## NATURE : THE MAGIC PILL

Augustine Fernandes. Zone 4. Sector 2



GOD created man from the womb of nature ( earth, air, water, trees, animals and birds) that's why we refer nature as MOTHER NATURE. Nature not only sustains and nurtures man but also medicates him (medicine from herbs and plants) plants and fish serve as food. There is calm and serenity when the wave length of man is perfectly tuned to the wave length of nature.

**STRESS :** What is stress? It's nothing, but a self inflicted wound on oneself by disconnecting from nature and confining oneself to homes and offices. Humans are caught in the rat race in a polluted (air& water) concrete jungle and consuming toxic food. The stress of an unpleasant environment can cause one to feel anxious, sad and helpless this in turn elevates the blood pressure, heart and muscular tension and suppresses the immune system.

**ANTIDOTE :** A pleasing environment reverses stress. Being in nature reduces anger, fear, stress and increases pleasant feelings. Exposure to nature

makes us feel better emotionally, it contributes to our well-being reduces blood pressure, heart rate, muscular tension and reduces stress hormones. Spending time in nature has found to help with mental health problems including anxiety and depression. Breathing fresh air can therefore help regulate ones levels of serotonin and promote happiness and wellbeing. Nature is an antidote for stress - it lowers blood pressure, stress hormones, it reduces nervous system arousal, increases immunity and self esteem and reduces anxiety.

**BREAK FREE :** It's time to break free from a mediocre life ( confinement in homes and offices, addiction from technology, by limiting our screen time (computers and mobiles). Its time to embrace MOTHER Nature, by being directly involved in it.

Humans must consume the magic pill of nature. Only this magic combination of nature and humans can help us to enjoy a BLISSFUL AND STRESS FREE LIFE.

# Look at Nature! Nothing is Impossible for God “The Architect of the Universe”

Arlene Alves - JBC Community 3 (Sector 1)



**N** - Note in the Bible the book of Genesis Chp. 1 – God created everything on this Earth and completed His creation in six days. On the seventh day, God blessed and made it holy because on that day God rested from all His work that He had done in creation. Psalm 33 Vs. 9 ‘The world was created at His command, everything appeared.’

**A** - Admire, Appreciate, be Aware and Alert to save mankind.

**T** - Thank and praise God for this natural environment we live in.

**U** - Understand the Uniqueness and Usefulness of all that God has created.  
Learn to love, care, preserve and protect nature.

**R** - Remember, we are stewards of God’s creation. Let us act responsibly with all God’s given natural resources by Reducing, Reusing, Recycling and Replenishing,

**E** - Everything that God has made is indeed so beautiful and awesome, ‘eye catching’ on our planet “Mother Earth”.

Although this pandemic has now brought a standstill to all our outdoor activities like sports, trips, treks, picnics, holidays and sightseeing. Remember our quota of good times we had before and cherish those memories with all the fascinating and captivating views.

There is wonder in everything we see, so thank God for the marvels He has worked for us. NATURE brings healing to mind and body. So live and let live and enjoy God’s gift of nature to us.

## JESUS THE WAY - MY STRESS BUSTER

Angela Fernandes



A Stress buster is a noun, a product, a practice, a system and a Horizon. It is designed to alleviate stress.

When you are stressed you can fight, get angry and face the problem squarely or take flight by stress responses like anxiety, worry and depression, either of which doesn't help.

We can come out of stress by going into a relaxation mode, i.e., listening to music, dancing, talking to a friend, by staying calm, taking a deep breath and analyzing the problem. If you feel the problem is aggravating your mind and your emotions then seek the help of a counsellor, and if the problem is grave, psychiatric help may be needed.

You can reduce stress by eating well and having a change in lifestyle i.e., managing your time, slowing down on your work, making time for your hobbies, family and God.

When God is your horizon, your goal, then no problem is too big for God to handle. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phillipians 4:13). Persistent prayer and patience will see you through the problem. When you focus on God, surrendering everything to him, there is a paradigm shift from worldly snares to the soothing comfort of His faithful presence,

Prayer and meditation helps to increase our inner peace and consequent self esteem, as it shifts our focus on stressful mentalities like anxiety and depression. Regular time for prayer and meditation disciplines the mind and emotions.

When your stress level exceeds your ability to cope with the problem, you need to restore the balance by adapting ways to reduce stress". If you are angry, agitated, overly emotional or anxious, worried or depressed, close your eyes, take a deep breath and talk to God on a one-to-one basis, get angry with God, he can take it, and vomit out your negative emotions.

Prayers yoga, meditation, facing the problem squarely with the help of God through his channels Lawyers, counsellors and psychiatric doctors. Nature also plays a role in de-stressing a person. Taking a walk in the park can shift your focus and calm your mind. Deep breathing oxygenates your blood and clears your mind of stress.

Exercise is a powerful stress reliever; this includes aerobic, yoga, meditation, running, swimming, cycling and dancing which can be done by joining a gym. or yoga and dancing classes.. Exploring nature by way of picnics, trekking and mountaineering can also help in reducing stress.

You can also express yourself in creative art and feel calm and better eg., painting, scrap-book, ceramics, photography and creative writing or journalism.

A good body massage followed by a warm bath with a drop or two of eucalyptus oil is a good way to unwind and relax.

No matter what life throws at you, be it your family, workplace or property matters, surrender it all to God. On our own strength we can do nothing, God has authority over man and nature, stay calm, pray and take stock of your life.

## Who Is My Mother?

Ms. Sonia Rodrigues, JBC Sunder Lane

*#fiction#lifelessons,#gratitude#simplereminders  
#mothersday #motherearth #motherland  
#healtheworld #countyourblessings*

"Hush dear go off to sleep. Tomorrow is a very special day, we have to wake up early and get ready for the celebration." I looked at her with sleepy eyes and asked, "Didi, who is my mother?" She looked at me with a hint of sadness but didn't reply, and cradled me in her loving arms as I slowly slept off.

As I drifted off to dreamland, my imagination began conjuring up images of who my mother could possibly be. From the colorful books I read, vivid stories I often heard from Smita didi and brief snatches of television I caught between my studies and chores, I had formed diverse imageries of my 'mother'. Now in my dreams, like a movie playing out, I saw them gradually floating past one by one.

Would she be like a fairy waving her magic wand and getting me everything I asked for, though she could barely afford it? Or someone who always found the time to listen to me regardless of her unending responsibilities? Would she with a heavy heart leave me with outsiders and go to serve a cause whenever duty called? Would she bravely face criticism and abuse on all fronts, but stoically laugh, hiding her tears from me? Would she stay up all night applying cold compress on my hot forehead, praying that my fever would subside? Would she cheer the loudest when she saw me perform on stage? Would she pawn all that she had for me to obtain that scholarship I yearned for? Would she care for me selflessly even though at times I behaved indifferent and uncaring? Would she happily forego her needs and dreams to fulfill all of mine? Would she ...

A sudden "Wake up Simran, rise and shine, it's a beautiful day" woke me up and broke the chain of images running in my sleepy mind. Smita didi stood there with a smile, ensuring I got out of bed, into the washroom and then the dining area. Before long, I was ready and joined the others waiting excitedly in the big hall of the orphanage. Today we were all going to celebrate Mother's Day.

Surprised? Don't be. This has been a ritual for as long as I can remember, and I am almost fourteen now. Most of the inmates here, including me, don't know our birth parents. Nor do we know why we are not with our families and how we landed up at the orphanage. But that has never stopped any of us from celebrating the gift of life.

People like Smita didi and others who take care of us always taught us to count our blessings and to focus on what we have, instead of fussing about what we don't. They fulfilled our every need and instilled in us firm faith in the Almighty which helps us live with dignity, hope and courage. Armed with education and a heart full of dreams, we look forward to our life ahead with anticipation and confidence.

And what about those dreams I saw at night about my 'mother', you ask? Yes, those dreams do occur from time to time; perhaps in a corner of our hearts we do miss our parents and wonder what they would be like. Nevertheless, that doesn't get us down. We have learnt to rise above our limitations and value ourselves and others around us. Anyways, Smita didi who has dedicated her entire life for us is more than a mother to us, maybe even better than our own. Today, and in fact every day, we leave no stone unturned to express our heartfelt gratitude to her. So Happy Mother's Day Smita didi

Author's Thoughts

So, how did you celebrate Mother's Day? What does this day mean to you? Does it give you an opportunity to walk down memory lane and relive all those moments when your Mother put you before herself? You know, the dream Simran often visits in the above story is a reality for so many of us, but do we even realize and value it? And yes, do we need to wait for just one day in the entire year to say Thank You to the ones who work tirelessly for us day in and day out? You never know, that one day might never come.

So before it is too late, let us express our warm love and gratitude in words and in deeds every single day; express it to our Mothers and to all the Mother-figures in our life. Let us also spare a

moment and pray for all those mothers who have lost their children and the children who have lost their mothers; life as they knew it will never be the same again.

And while we are at it, let us not forget our dear Motherland and Mother Earth who are in deep anguish and distress today.

Let us strive to mend our ways to help relieve her pain,

So that she can recover and live and happily breathe again.

Now wouldn't that be a wonderful way

For us all to say Happy Mother's Day !

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## Vaccination: The Key to Bend the Covid Curve

Alexio Fernandes [BCS – Executive Committee Member]



A Vaccination Centre was inaugurated at **Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Orlem**, on Monday 24th May 2021, the Feast of Mary Help of Christians. We began the inauguration with a short prayer service, led by Fr. Cedric. Fr. Michael Pinto, Parish Priest welcomed Mr. Parminder Singh Bhamra, Ex. Municipal Corporator and the members of The Bombay Catholic Sabha, Orlem Unit. He appreciated this **“Need of the hour”** initiative by The Bombay Catholic Sabha. He said that vaccination is the only way to bend the pandemic curve.

“People of all faiths will take advantage and benefit from the service that this Vaccination Centre is providing”. This is a wonderful initiative to provide comfort to our people in these troubled times.

The Vaccination Centre was inaugurated by Fr. Michael Pinto [Parish Priest], Mr. Parminder Singh Bhamra (Ex. Municipal Corporator) on behalf of Shri. Aslam Shaikh (Cabinet Minister in the MVA Government) and the residents of Orlem along with Mrs. Jaya Satnam Singh Tiwana (Municipal Corporator Ward 47).

### Orlem Vaccination Centre : Testimonies from our Parishioners

On Monday, May 24, 2021 our Parish Priest, Fr. Michael Pinto along with the members of the Bombay Catholic Sabha, Orlem Unit, inaugurated the Vaccination Centre at the premises of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Orlem. This is done to facilitate the vaccine for Covid-19 for all..

compassion and empathy by offering their service during this extraordinary time.

Our heartfelt gratitude to the Bombay Catholic Sabha for taking this initiative to open a vaccination centre at the Church premises.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought out the best in many people - people who have shown

We extend our sincere gratitude to Minister Aslam Shaikh, our caring Parish Priest, Fr. Michael Pinto

and Ex-Corporator, Parminder Singh Bhambra for their support and guidance.

The centre is well set up and organised. This is clearly seen through the kind and caring attitude of the doctor/nurses team, those at the Registration Desk and every helper involved.

A Drive-in Vaccination facility is also available for disabled citizens who can sit in the car and get

vaccinated comfortably.

A job well done !!! Keep up the great Management and Team work.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

*-Charlotte Naronha, Tank Road  
Community 4 Sector 3*

In this midst of the second wave of the pandemic that hit Mumbai, many of our parishes have reached out to help the affected in various ways. A few churches in Mumbai joined hands with the BMC, opening their doors / premises as vaccination centres to help reach out and vaccinate people against the Covid 19 virus.

The Orlem unit of the Bombay Catholic Sabha along with Our Lady of Lourdes Church took

the initiative of starting a vaccination centre in Orlem. Fr. Michael was quick to offer the ground side of the Church premises to be converted as a Vaccination centre.

With relentless efforts and support of Guardian Minister Mr. Aslam Shaikh and Mr. Parminder Singh and the Orlem Vaccination centre was made possible and the Centre inaugurated on Monday 24th May 2021.



Most centres outside Orlem are crowded, the Senior Citizens were the biggest beneficiaries as they now have a Vaccination centre close at hand, in Orlem. The process is systematically conducted.

The Parishioners were grateful for the vaccination facility available and in their words :

“Thanks to a well-co-ordinated and organised centre, my mother was able to come and take a vaccine without any hindrance”

“Truly appreciate the BCS for taking the initiative for a vaccination centre in Orlem as it was an urgent necessity for senior citizens. I had travelled out of Orlem thrice and returned without getting the vaccines, as most centres were crowded/ unplanned.

*-Carlyle Pereira*

## Community 4 (Tank Colony) – Prayer Service During the Lockdown

During the lockdown imposed due to the pandemic, Community 4 (Tank Colony) conducted activities which brought out the uniqueness of every Parish Councillor's thoughtfulness and creativity. The entire Community was happy to be a part of the prayer service, held in the first week of May 2021, involving unique intentions mainly to ward off the pandemic, Litany of Mama Mary, Gospel reflections etc.

Our Parish Priest, Fr. Michael Pinto praised the Community for the prayer initiatives which are a source of hope, healing, unity, comfort and strength to our people during these uncertain times.

Fr. Michael Pinto commended the efforts of the Parish Councillors to build the spiritual immunity of the community. Fr. Clifton Lobo, our Community Priest, concluded the service by blessing the Community and encouraged us to continue our efforts of spiritual growth during these difficult times

Some Community members have penned down their thoughts which are detailed here below:

Keeping the current scenario in mind 'Together Caregivers', families and neighbours ought to be shielded from the onslaught of the virus and to give solace to those who grieve the loss of loved ones so that we may restore our communities to wellness and good health. There was a beautiful testimony by a Parish Councillor who tested COVID positive and was critical in the ICU. She ended with a message "If we give our time and service to the Lord, He repays us tenfold more."

All in all, each day of Prayer was beautifully and thoughtfully conducted on how we should overcome our self centeredness and be mindful to others who are going thru their own struggles, not only when sickness and tribulations affect us. I'm sure, this made each of us reflect and realize

how merciful and loving our God is. He will never forsake us. We are blessed indeed!

I take this opportunity to thank all the parish priests and Fr. Clifton in particular, the Parish Councillors, Animators and Laity for uniting us in prayer and oneness during this lockdown.

**-Lester Pereira**

Thank you for organising the prayer service and leading us in prayer every evening for the last 8 days. Seeing our community come together as one and praying for COVID relief really touched our hearts. Our prayers go out to everyone affected by COVID in our community and the world at large.

**-Lisha Mascarenhas**

The pandemic has wreaked havoc in our lives and we are pained to see the suffering it has brought in its wake and the loss of precious lives all over our country. The meaningful prayer service on the Zoom platform conducted by Sector 8 on 8th of May, began with a reading from Jeremiah 29: 10-14 followed by a reflection which emphasized that God is our Hope and our Saviour and He will never forsake us. The prayer service included petitions and a touching hymn, praying for the frontline workers, the sick, for those who have lost their loved ones during the pandemic and for the souls of those who have succumbed to the deadly virus. Some members of Sector 8 who are currently away in the US, Melbourne, London and Goa sent video recordings to express their solidarity with us in this time of grief.

**-Annie Braganza**

Hats off to all Parish Councillors for a well-organized prayer service and for organising the Women's Day celebration on the Zoom platform, on the topic "Choose to Challenge". In whatever we do, we must be different, if we are different, we will stand out.

**-Charlotte Naronha**

## Tank Colony – Women’s Day Celebrations!

Schneider Mendes

Women’s day was celebrated with great pomp on the Zoom platform with the theme - Choose to Challenge. The Women’s Cell got together as they intended to remove gender barriers and end discrimination, because they believe in justice and human rights for everyone. I was eager to participate in the program and being a college student, found the program very stimulating and encouraging. Veera Davies Community 4 coordinator helped us to get through with the program.

The Women’s Day celebration brought awareness to many women striding forward to realise a better world for women. Community 4 sector 1, gave a strong message BE BOLD BE BRAVE OUR BODIES OUR STRENGTH. With the numerous

activities that took place, it was a great eye opener for people from all walks of life to dream big. Fr. Anthony Fernandes, spoke about the mindset of some men and how women were treated in the household despite the other challenges.

I would like to say a big thank you to the women cell for putting a lot of hard work and doing it with enthusiasm, in making the event a grand success.

A message to all women: Feel empowered today. Be the heroine of your own life. Always remember: you are beautiful, you are worthy, you are important, you are special, you are unique, you are wonderful, you are talented and you are IRREPLACEABLE.