

DECEMBER 2012

(For Private Circulation)



MESSAGE FROM THE PROVINCIAL



A CHALLENGING INSPIRATION

December is a spiritually enriching and inspiring month for all of us for several reasons. We are celebrating the feast of St Francis Xavier, the great Jesuit missionary of the East and the patron of the missions. Just a day before that feast, we are privileged to witness the beatification of the Venerable Servant of God, Devasahayam Pillai, Martyr, at Carmel School, Nagercoil. Thirdly, we will celebrate the 125th year of our committed service to the promotion of special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through our publication, Thoothan. Then, of course, comes the greatest of all feasts, the birth of Christ, which fills our hearts with inner joy and peace.

While Francis Xavier “lived” the life of a martyr with all the difficulties and austerities of life and problems related to his missions, travels, etc., Devasahayam Pillai

actually “sacrificed his life itself” after innumerable sufferings and humiliations. It is appropriate that his beatification takes place just one day before the feast of St Francis Xavier.

The celebration of these two events should definitely inspire every one of us to ask the same question which these two great personalities asked themselves in one form or the other: “What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Mt 16:26a). These words changed the life of 24-year old young philosophy professor, Francis Xavier. The same words can be attributed to the Venerable Martyr, Devasahayam Pillai, since he counted nothing else more valuable than his loyalty and love for Christ and his Gospel, and offered his very life for his faith.

As we celebrate the Feast of Francis Xavier and are privileged to witness the beatification of the Venerable Devasahayam Pillai, all of us are definitely inspired by these words of Jesus. Moreover, as we celebrate the 125th year of our publication, Thoothan, it is appropriate that we get new

inspiration to continue this noble mission of taking the people closer to the Heart of Jesus.

We have consciously opted to be his faithful disciples through our religious commitment, a commitment which demands from each one of us total dedication, constant search for His will, perseverance in promoting the Gospel values among the people, particularly to those people who are victimized and marginalized by the prevailing socio-political realities. We are aware that we need to be sources of inspiration to others and be effective guides and guardians. Hence, this is the clarion call to each one of us: to become “a little Francis Xavier” and “a little Devasahayam Pillai” with “a heart filled with Christ” - in the way we give leadership, serve the people, carry out our ministries and conduct our personal life. Let this highly challenging call inspire and energize every one of us!

Fraternally,
Sebasti L. Raj, SJ
Provincial

Greetings!



*The Provincial and the members
of the Curia wish all the readers
of the MNL a joyful Christmas
and a grace-filled 2013!
May the Christ Child
and His Virgin Mother bless
everyone of you
and all your dear ones!*

Provincial's Programme:



DECEMBER 2012

- 01-02 Visitation: Thozhamai Illam
- 02 Beatification Ceremony of Devasahayam Pillai, Nagercoil
- 03 Visitation: KARISAL
- 05-07 Visitation: St. Mary's, Dindigul
- 08 CIC, Madurai – Blessing of buildings
- 09 Thoothan Jubilee Celebrations
- 10-12 Visitation: Arul Kadal
- 13-14 Visitation: Dhyana Ashram
- 15-16 LS/TL Meet – Dhyana Ashram, Chennai
- 16 Province Consult, Dhyana Ashram, Chennai (afternoon)
- 27-29 Renewal Session: Seva Missionary Sisters, Manali, Chennai

JANUARY 2013

- 02 Blessing and Inauguration of Kalangarai Building, Nagapattinam
- 05-06 Workshop by Fr. Charles Lasrado (Rome) for Superiors, Directors of Work and Treasurers, Dhyana Ashram, Chennai
- 07-11 Visitation: St. Mary's, Madurai
- 12-14 Visitation: De Britto, Devakottai
- 15-17 Visitation: Oriyur
- 19-25 Visitation: St. Joseph's, Trichy
- 26 TNPCRI-Executive Committee Meeting – Citadel, Chennai
- 28 Province Consult
- 29-31 Visitation: Xaveriana, Thoothukudi

Announcements



CALLED FOR LAST VOWS

Fr General has called Fr John Peter Arulanandam L (St. Xavier's, Palayamkottai) and Fr Arockiam Kulandai (St Joseph's, Trichy) to make their final profession in the Society of Jesus.

DIACONATE APPROVED

Schs Clement Jesudoss, Jayaseelan Saminathan, Leo Anand, Maria Felix Kennedy and Thersunathan Soosai have been approved for Diaconate.

REQUEST FOR DIACONATE

Schs. Lawrence Benedict V. and Jeyabaskaran Savariraj have applied for the Sacred Orders of Deacon and Priesthood. If anyone has any relevant information, kindly contact Fr Provincial before the end of Dec '12.

SPECIAL WORKSHOP ON FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The Province is organizing a special Workshop on the Jesuit way of Financial Management and Administration. This is meant for Superiors, Team Leaders, Work Directors and Treasurers. The resource person is Fr. Charles Lasrado SJ, Assistant Treasurer, Jesuit Curia, Rome. This one-day Workshop will be conducted in two batches of 30 persons each, on 5 and 6 Jan '13, at Dhyana Ashram, Chennai.

SCHOLASTICS FOR SUMMER:

Attention Work Directors: The First Year Theologians of Arul Kadal are planning the Summer Camp, 2013. If you are in need of Scholastic/s, please contact them before the end of December. (Email: summermeet2013@gmail.com, Mobile: 9498098285)

NEW E-MAIL: Fr Pavulraj's email: pavulrajsj@gmail.com. Madurai Scholastics in DNC, Pune: dncphilosmdu@gmail.com.

LEFT THE SOCIETY:

Schs Antony Sebastiraj on 8 Nov. and Lawrence M.M. on 11 Nov. 2012.



Events



INTER-THEOLOGATE SEMINAR

On 2 Nov, the community of **Arul Kadal, Chennai** visited the Quibble Island cemetery at Santhome to pray for and to the two Jesuits who are buried there - Fr De Sire Honore, SJ (1862-1934) and Fr James Nolan, SJ (1896-1952). *Fr Baskar Antony* spoke on 'life after life' to a group of laity at Dhyana Ashram on 3 Nov. This year, it was our turn to organize the Chennai Inter-Theologate Seminar (CITS) at Arul Kadal on 15 Nov. *Schs Thangadurai and Antony Inigo* presented a shared paper on people's movements in the context of politicized corporate power. The meticulous planning and the contribution from everyone made this event memorable. At an inter-faith celebration of the birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Devji on 21 Nov, *Fr Alangaram Arockiam* spoke on the relevance of Guru Nanak's message for modern times.

- Alex Yagoo

"BE MEN OF SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEPTH!"

The Madurai Philosophers at **De Nobili, Pune** met *Fr Robin S. Seelan*, the Convener of the Formation Evaluation Committee for a profound sharing about our experiences during the formative years. During his visitation *Fr Sebastien L. Raj*, the Provincial, inspired us to be men of spiritual and intellectual depth. He also enlightened us on the purpose of our studies and the current scenario of our Province. He congratulated *Sch Thayriam* for coming up with 'Maduralaya' - the name finally chosen for the new Province Curia building. Led by our new Coordinator, *Sch Joseph*, we offered a special rosary for the souls of our dear departed.

- Joe Livingston

HEROIC LEADERSHIP AT LOYOLA

To increase awareness of our responsibility for the future, **LIBA** Enviro Club organized on 1 Nov

'the LIBA Green Summit' for which the Chennai Mayor, Saidai Duraiswamy and Minister for Social Welfare, Ms. Valarmathi were present. On 3 Nov the Finance Conclave brought to LIBA Dr Oza, the former Vice Chancellor of the Gandhigram University. The Silver Jubilee Alumni Day was celebrated on 17 Nov. The alumni have pledged to help poor students with their academic fees.

The much-expected two-day workshop on 'Heroic Leadership' by Chris Lowney was attended by many Jesuits from Madurai, Andhra and Kerala Provinces and nuns from a few congregations. Chris Lowney helped the participants interiorize the Ignatian principles to march towards becoming heroic leaders.

Loyola Institute of Vocational Education (LIVE) had its 17th graduation day on 23 Nov and Dr Paul T Henry, M. Ch. of Apollo Hospital, delivered the graduation address focusing on honesty, hard work and integrity in life. Fr Anto, the Director, awarded the Diplomas to the graduating students. Tata-Loyola Community College celebrated 'Parents and Alumni meet 2012' on 30 Oct with the purpose of getting the help of the alumni for placement of the present students.

On the eve of the feast of Christ the King, the titular feast of the Loyola Church, the traditional Corpus Christi Procession meandered through well-decorated roads all over the campus covering all the institutions and hostels. Fr Prasad, the Rector of the Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, preached eloquently in both Tamil and English. The Campus Minister, *Fr Vincent Sekhar's* meticulous planning and the generous cooperation from all institutions made it an inspiring event.

- Emma

SMART BOARDS IN STRATEGIC LOCATIONS

On 15 Nov our staff at **Loyola College, Vettavalam**, underwent a training programme to use the smart board. Some staff are already using the board

and enabling students to enjoy their classes while learning. College has acquired six smart boards which have been fitted in strategic locations. Ten Jesuit scholastics from St Joseph's, Trichy stayed with us for two days, as they went around Sathanoor, Gingee and Pondicherry for their annual picnic. They interacted with the community were happy to see the facilities provided to our students in the college and interact with the community.

- Eugene

IGFA BRANCH OPENED IN MADURAI

The campus ministry team at **LTI, Madurai**, organized Deepavali celebration on 10 Nov, with representatives of three religions as the special guests of the day - Fr Edwin Sahayaraj, the parish priest of Gnanaolivupuram, Mr S. Nambirajan, Assistant Commissioner of Police, and Moulavi A. Mohamed Asrarul Hug Alim, Professor at Jamal Mohamed College - who spoke on "You are the light of the world."

The Madurai branch of IGFA (Ignatian Family) was inaugurated on 18 Nov with a seminar jointly organized by the three Campus Ministers of AAC, LTI and St. Mary's - *Frs Kingsly, Lawrence Gabriel and Felix Joseph*. About 50 Sisters and a Brother participated in the programme presided over by *Fr Maria Singarayar*. The purpose of the seminar was to initiate the participants into Ignatian spirituality, who, in turn, would do the same to the other members of their community or congregation. The participants expressed their joy in becoming part of the Ignatian family and promised to support it.

- J. L. Pragasam

"INTEGRATE LIFE WITH CRUCIFIED JESUS!"

Paathai Centre, Vallam was happy to host the regents

of northern part of Tamilnadu for their day of recollection on 10 Oct. *Fr Yesumarian* gave them points for reflection, calling them to integrate the realities of life with crucified Jesus through the prism of intellectual, ethical, praxis and grace dimensions. - **Alton**

CHILDREN'S DAY IN FOUR PLACES

The staff and core leaders of the widows' movement started by **Kalangarai, Nagapattinam** had a two day meeting at IDEAS, Madurai to revisit and interiorize Kalangarai's strategies. *Paul Michael* facilitated a two-day meeting in Trichy, organized for the social activists of the FIHM Sisters, Pondicherry working in different parts of the country. On Children's Day, Kalangarai organised day-long cultural and sports events in four different



zones - Nagapattinam, Tranqubar, Poombuhar and Kollidam, for the students of our evening study centres. In each zone, roughly 200 children took part in the celebration. - **Velankanni**

GUIDED LOVINGLY BY THE LORD

Madurai city Jesuits gathered at **St Mary's, Madurai** to felicitate the Golden Jubilarians, *Frs Emmanuel Raj* and *Y. Raju* along with the newly-ordained priests, *Frs Robin, Richard, Jesu* and *Packia Raj*. *Fr Lourdu Samy* felicitated *Fr Emmanuel Raj*, who described how the Lord always guided him lovingly. Nearly 300 hostel students, led by *Fr Arockiasamy* and *Sch Annaraj*, went for a spiritual and educational tour to Kanyakumari, 'Xavier land' in the coastal area, Velankanni and Tanjore. On Children's Day the staff, through their acting and singing,

kept the students entertained.

- **Felix Joseph**

SOFT SKILLS

FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES

As the Director of JASS (Joseph's Academy for Soft Skills), **St Joseph's College, Trichy**, *Fr S. Lazar* launched on 22 Nov a new semester-long course on Soft Skills for first year PG students in order to improve their prospects for employment. The preparation during the last few months involved readying a text book and training the faculty. Impressed by his presentation at a workshop, the Cape Breton University, Canada has invited him to be an associate in some of its research projects, while Loyola University, Chicago, US has promised to engage him on its Ecology projects till 2014. 'Promoting Business Leaders' Cell organized a one-day workshop on 'Self-employment Training' for student entrepreneurs conducted by Mr M.R. Arulraja. The Birthday of Veeramamunivar and Deepa Oli Vizha were celebrated meaningfully in our school on 9 Nov. Our school alumnus, Mr Anandasayanam, the GM of BHL, Trichy, distributed prizes to the winners in cultural competitions. On 21 Nov at a special assembly on Inter Faith Sharing *Fr Francis Xavier* spoke on value systems of various religions.

- **Maria Packiam**

REWARD POSITIVE BEHAVIOR AND SEE THE IMPACT!

Fr Robin from Satya Nilayam gave a one-day retreat on 20 Oct for our staff at **Loyola Academy, Vadampakkam** on the theme, 'Going Beyond'. The sub themes within this main theme included going beyond fears and inhibitions, doubts and discouragements, appearances and perceptions and accepting failures and taking risks. Our teachers gained a lot from the retreat. All the HMs, AHMs and Correspondents of our schools participated in a seminar on 'GOs and Minority Issues' organized here on 10 Nov. *Fr. Xavier Arulraj*, Legal Adviser to TANSEAN, was the resource person. He clarified many of our doubts on appointments, fee collection, School Management Committee, RTE etc.

All the programmes on the Children's Day aimed at making our

children cherish and relish their childhood. Our teachers put their heart and soul in entertaining our children on this 'no book, no bag' day. *Fr. Kennedy* conducted a one day seminar on Comprehensive Continuous Evaluation (CCE) to the teachers and teacher trainees in Loyola Institutes in Kuppayanallur.



Ms. Sabene, a close associate of the late *Fr Albert Diedrich*, our founder and patron, and Ms. Abel, Vice President of Anbaham German Society from Germany visited our school and lauded our efforts in giving quality education to the poor and the needy. They joined us and our Anbaham children for a concelebrated Eucharist on the first death anniversary of *Fr Diedrich*.

As we believe that reinforced positive behavior becomes one's character, we reward good, positive behavior of our students with a recognition certificate, given during the assembly. We have 16 different certificates for genuineness, service-mindedness, generosity, cultural excellence etc. Now, we have started recognizing the efforts of the parents for their collaboration with the school in promoting the all-round development of the students. Every Monday, we invite two such parents to the school assembly, describe their efforts in facilitating the growth of their children and honour them. We have started forming our parents through our students, commented one parent.

- **John Kennedy**

E-LEARNING LANGUAGE LAB AT VMI

A three-day course on folk dance, given by Ms Juliyes at **VMI, Vilangudi**, helped our candidates imbibe the culture of our people

and to give expression to it through creative arts. *Fr Selvanayagam*, our Province Treasurer, blessed and inaugurated the E-learning Language Lab. *Fr Albert Muthumalai*, Principal, St Joseph's, Trichy, spoke on his life experiences and motivated the candidates. Community Day helped us strengthen our relationships.

- Prabu Francis

SUPAMITES AT SATHIAMANGALAM

On 15 Nov we had Supam sharing and reflection at St John de Britto parish, Sathiamangalam. The Supamites shared their ordination experiences and reflections. In the presence of *Frs Jerry* and *Arockiaraj* we had evaluation of the ordination. The group expressed gratitude to the whole province and St Mary's community, Dindigul for making the ordination a red letter day. Fr Maria Benzigar, the parish priest and VF of Sathiamangalam, shared his experiences and insights. After Fr Arockiaraj spoke of ways and

means to enhance our pastoral ministry, a few creative ideas came from the group to celebrate the Advent season, Christmas, New Year and Pongal. We stayed for a day at Makkampalayam parish. *Fr Jesu Nesa Raju* successfully organized the meet.

- Packiaraj

MORE WORK FOR FR LEONARD

Fr Leonard Fernando of Vidya Jyoti, Delhi has been appointed by the ecumenical body, the Church History Association of India, as General Editor of the multi-volume *History of Christianity in India*. Dr Webster's book *History of Christianity in Northwest India in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Fr Leonard Fernando was released by Prof. Basudev Chatterji, Chairman, Indian Council of Historical Research, Government of India on 31 Oct at Constitution Club, New Delhi.

On 31 Oct, we had a requiem Mass presided over by Archbishop Vincent Concessao of Delhi, for our departed staff Fr Desiderio Pinto SJ (PUN), who passed away in Mumbai after a

prolonged illness. We enjoyed and cherished the pilgrimage as seekers of the divine.

On 13 Nov, we had the culmination of the community day celebrations. On 18 Nov the Balamela was successfully organized for around 300 children.

- M.A.Leo Anand SJ

TO ANALYSE SOCIAL ISSUES CRITICALLY

On 30 Oct we, the Juniors at Vidyaniketan, Trivandrum, attended the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum presided over by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

Fr M.K. George SJ, Director, ISI, Bangalore gave us a two-day course on Social Analysis and taught us to analyse social issues critically. On 17 Nov we began the Novena to St John Berchmans, the patron of Jesuit Juniors.

- Arun Pandiyan

LETTERS FROM ABROAD

THE OLDEST IN THE CLASS, BUT...

During these last three months I had a chance of visiting sacred places in this Holy Land like Mount of Beatitudes, St Peter's Primacy, Tabga and the Lake of Galilee. I walked around these places pondering God's compassion and love. After many years, I went to Rome last month to meet the officials who are collaborating with our Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem to discuss our financial situation. Along with my usual administrative work, I have begun to study Hebrew two days in a week. There are 30 students - young and old and I am the oldest in the class, but I am as comfortable as the other youngsters. At 62 I feel young enough to venture even further.

- Tony

NO SUCH THING AS LOSING OR WINNING

On 18 Oct, my 29th birthday, I visited a dormitory that accommodates 63 students of Herat University, Afghanistan who belong

to the Hazara community. I was deeply pained to see them in small, cramped rooms in which 8-10 students have to live. If they have to welcome guests, they have to sacrifice their places. The socio-religious atrocities against the Hazaras have left a deep scar in these students. Informing them about JRS and its activities throughout the world and in Afghanistan, I invited them to benefit from our winter programme and 36 students registered their names. To explore expanding our services to them, I have decided to visit similar dormitories in which hundreds of students live a very hard life. 432 children and 20 teachers participated in this year's Children's Day celebrations. Innovative games made the children shout and cheer, forgetting all the social pressure dumped on them. While giving away prizes to the winners, we tried to make the children understand that there is no such thing as losing or winning, that everyone is a winner in some way and that participation is more significant than victory. Their leaders thanked JRS Afghanistan for its painstaking efforts to bring light and joy to their lives.

- Swaminathan

THEY REFLECT THE FACE OF JESUS, WHO WAS A REFUGEE

I have begun ministering to Haitians in this city in Brazil, as I was deeply moved by their difficult situation. Haiti is a Caribbean nation, repeatedly hit by terrible natural calamities like the earthquake of 2010 and several hurricanes. The alarming situation in Brazil forces thousands of Haitians to migrate to Brazil and other countries. Haitians, who work in factories and construction sites, are paid meagre wages. My JRS team consists of Jesuits and other religious and lay people from seven countries. Our collective work involves teaching Portuguese, offering legal assistance and humanitarian help.

For me, this Christmas is going to be specially meaningful, because of my work with Haitians, who reflect the face of Jesus, who was a refugee and migrant. Along with this pastoral work, I have made steady progress in my theology through a multidisciplinary approach and I have completed the first year. I am happy and thankful.

- Cyril Suresh

BI Devasahayam Pillai - The Jesuit Connection

The solemn ceremony to beatify the first layman from India to receive this rare honour is held on 02 Dec '12 in the Jesuit-run Carmel School grounds. But this is not the only Jesuit connection between the heroic martyr and the Jesuits.

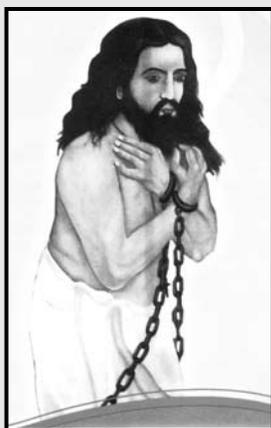
Nilakandan Pillai, the court official of Marthanda Varma, King of Travancore, was baptised by Fr Giovanni Battista Buttari, a Jesuit missionary of Nemom Mission, based in Vadakkankulam. He was baptized as Devasahayam (Lazarus) on 14 May 1745. After this D.P. sought Fr Buttari's counsel frequently.

There was a chapel in the Udayagiri fort dedicated to St. Michael, where Mass was celebrated by the Jesuit chaplain living nearby and paid for by the King. We can assume that Devasahayam Pillai attended Mass here as the Fort was the residence of D'Lannoy, the Dutch captain, who introduced D.P. to the Christian faith. Fr. Barreiros SJ was his regular confessor. Fr. Pimentel and Fr. Thommaso de Fonseca, both Jesuits, brought the consolation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to Devasahayam Pillai during the period of his trial and tribulation.

Bishop Clemens José Colaço Leitã, SJ (living at the British fort of Anchuthengu, because the Dutch had driven him away from Cochin) on receipt of the news of the martyrdom celebrated a solemn Mass of thanksgiving, ordered his clergy to sing *Te Deum* in churches, and wrote a long report about the

martyrdom.

Almost all those who wrote the detailed reports that became the most valuable records that have brought this honour to D.P. are all Jesuits: The Bishop of Quilon who wrote the Ad Limina Report to Pope Benedict XIV in 1756, Bishop Clemens José Colaço Leitão, Fr Buttari who baptized him, and Fr. Jean Bertrand, Fr Cyr, Fr August Jean, and Fr Leon Besse the Jesuit historians who chronicled the life and martyrdom of D.P.



Fr Joseph Kottukapalli SJ's two part historico-theological article published recently in *Vidya Jyoti* establishes the real cause of the martyrdom: Devasahayam Pillai, inspired by his Christian faith, waged a brave, incisive attack on the brahminical caste system.

Fr George Nedungatt SJ, who was then teaching in Rome, was appointed by Bishop Leon A. Tharmaraj of Kottar the Postulator of the Cause in Rome. Bro Paul Chinnappan SJ has worked tenaciously for the furtherance of the cause and the spread of devotion to the Martyr over the last 16 years. He now has the satisfaction of seeing his efforts crowned with the beatification ceremony in the grounds of the very school where he has been residing all these years.

Celebrating the Jesuit connection, Fr Sebastia L. Raj, SJ, the Provincial Superior of the Jesuits in Tamil Nadu, is participating in the ceremony, joyfully hosted by the Jesuit community of Carmel, Nagercoil.

- Francis Jayapathy, SJ

JOSEPH NEDUNGATT, SJ

(02.05.1931 - 17.11.2012)

Fr Joseph Nedungatt, 81, passed away in the early hours of Saturday, 17 Nov '12 at St Joseph Hospital, Dindigul. A few months ago, when



he was in Tindivanam, where he had gone to be the chaplain of Gonzaga Sisters, it was found that both his kidneys had failed and so he needed regular dialysis. First treated at a hospital in Pondicherry, he was later brought to the Madurai Kidney Centre and then to St Mary's, Madurai for recuperation. In November refusing further treatment, he wanted just nursing care and was admitted at St Joseph Hospital, Dindigul. But unable to eat or sleep, he knew his end was near and was fully resigned to the will of God. With Sch Lawrence at his bedside, he passed away at about 1.00 a.m on 17 Nov.

Fr Nedungatt, an exemplary Jesuit, full of tireless zeal, was a pastor in Madurai, Palayamkottai, Sattur, Trichy and in Oriyur where he served for 9 years at different times. He was spiritual animator at Palamalai and De Britto and a busy charismatic retreat preacher who travelled far and wide to guide retreats.

At 4.30 p.m on 18 Nov, Fr Provincial presided over the funeral Eucharist at Beschi Illam. In his introduction Fr Provincial said that Fr Joseph Nedungatt was a man of action who always wanted to do something great for God and the Society of Jesus. The Gospel was read by Fr Antony Raj and the homily was preached by Fr S.P. Savarimuthu. At the end of the Mass Fr Darwin praised the unstinting zeal of Fr Nedungatt. Fr Mampra, speaking in Malayalam to the hundred odd relatives of Fr Nedungatt, read out from Fr Nedungatt's book, *Towards God Experience*, an inspiring incident that took place at the airport in Malaysia. Then Fr Vincent Nedungatt, nephew of the deceased, thanked the Jesuits and every one present. The final blessing of the body was done by Fr Provincial and the the last rites at the cemetery were performed by Fr P. S. Arul of St Mary's Cathedral, Madurai.

- Xavier Mampra

Abide with the Lord



Fr Edward Gurung (DAR), 66/43, on 22 Nov.

Mr M. L. Savarimuthu, 63, Br Bosco's eldest brother, on 13 Oct.



Why Incarnation?

We measure time in relationship to the birth of Jesus. All dates end with a tiny suffix, BC or AD, indicating whether an event took place before Jesus's birth or after. The whole world does this. There are reasons beyond the purely religious why this is so. Nonetheless, the fact that the whole world records time in relationship to the birth of Jesus does indicate something about his importance. For those of us who are Christians, time obviously should be measured by when Jesus was born. For us, he is the centre of everything: our meaning, our hope, our self-understanding, our church lives, our theologies, and our spiritualities. He is also the guide for our discipleship.

The central mystery within all of Christianity, undergirding everything else, is the mystery of the Incarnation. Unfortunately, it is also the mystery that is the most misunderstood or, more accurately, to coin a phrase, under-understood. It is not so much that we misunderstand what the Incarnation means, it is more that we grasp only the smallest tip of a great iceberg. We miss its meaning by not seeing its immensity.

Why would God want to take on human flesh? Why would an infinite power want to limit itself within the confines of history and a human body? Why Incarnation?

There is a marvelous story told about a four-year-old child who awoke one night frightened, convinced that in the darkness

around her there were all kinds of spooks and monsters. Alone, frightened, she ran to her parents' bedroom. Her mother calmed her down and, taking her by the hand, led her back to her own room where she put on a light and reassured the child with these words: 'You needn't be afraid, you are not alone here. God is in the room with you'. The child, replied: 'I know that God is here, but I need someone in this room who has some skin!'

In essence, that story gives us the reason for the Incarnation, as well as an excellent definition of it. God takes on flesh because, like this young girl, we all need someone with us who has some skin. A God who is everywhere is just as easily nowhere. We believe in what we can touch, see, hear, smell, and taste. We are not angels, without bodies, but sensual creatures in the true sense of the word, sensuality. We have five senses and we are present in the world through those senses. We know through them, communicate through them, and are open to each other and the world only through them, and God, having created our nature, respects how it operates. Thus, God deals with us through our senses. The Jesus who walked the roads of Palestine could be seen, touched, and heard. In the Incarnation, God became physical

because we are creatures of the senses who, at a point, need a God with some skin...

God takes on flesh so that every home becomes a church, every child becomes the Christ-child, and all food and drink becomes a sacrament. God's many faces are now everywhere, in flesh, tempered and turned down, so that our human eyes can see him. God, in his many-faced face, has become as accessible, and visible, as the nearest water tap. That is the why of the Incarnation.

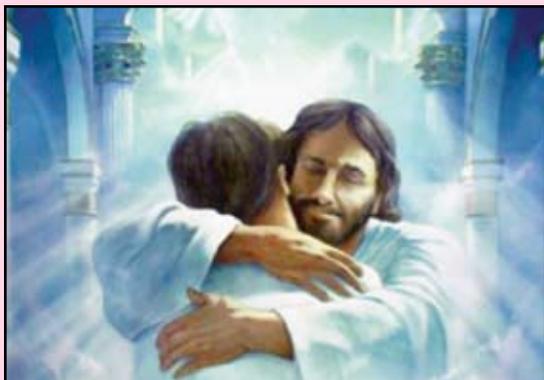
Finally, the Incarnation is not a thirty-three year experiment by God in history, a one-shot, physical incursion into our lives. The Incarnation began with Jesus and it has never stopped. The ascension of Jesus did not end, nor fundamentally change, the Incarnation. God's physical body is still among us. God is still present, as physical and as real today, as he/she was in the historical Jesus. God still has skin, human skin, and physically walks on this earth just as Jesus did. In a certain manner of speaking, it is true to say that, at the ascension, the physical body of Jesus left this earth, but the body of Christ did not. God's incarnational presence among us continues as before.

- Ronald Rolheiser

(from *Seeking Spirituality*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1998)



Experience



MY SECRETS FOR WELL-BEING AND PEACE

I am just a simple, humble, bright and pious person right from childhood; but I realize that I have been a pet child of God and our Society, providing me good food, cool habitat for so many years, fulfilling missions and youthful communities all through my 26283 Jesuit days. Hence... my peace.

On my part, I ate well, took sufficient exercises and rest, read much and studied eagerly; I welcomed people and events as gifts from my loving "Abba"; I did my best, trusting that He'll do the rest; I always tried to discern and do His will with a joyous "yes", since it was for that I entered the Society. Besides, I cultivated positive thinking and attitudes, and when negatives attacked me, I changed them prayerfully into positives: e.g. when 15 years ago, "white spots" began disfiguring my fair skin, I was worried, but soon on contemplating Francis Assisi, I told our Crucified Lord, "Thank you, Jesus, for not inflicting on me the wounds of your passion but only the scars of your resurrection." Some small trials were there indeed, but, in the warmth of Jesus' embrace, they soon melted away like the morning dew on sunrise. Praise God!

- G. Ignatius, SJ



New Releases

Job - Dalit Bible Commentary - Old Testament, Volume - II by Fr A. Maria Arul Raja, Centre for Dalit/Subaltern Studies, New Delhi, pp.138, Rs.200.

Towards God Experience by Fr Joseph Nedungatt, SJ, Vaigarai, Dindigul, pp.160, Rs.120.

Memories

CHRISTMAS CONFESSIONS

After a long bus ride Fr L.V.K reached Ponmalaipatti parish on Christmas eve to assist the parish priest in Christmas celebrations. In the evening he began hearing confessions that continued till late into the night. Although very tired and almost dozing, he continued manfully and kept telling the penitents, "Say three Hail Marys." But soon his prescription became "Three Marys" and then just "Three". When a confused penitent asked, "Three what, Father?", Fr K, dozing off, said, "Hm. Three Coco Colas!" Startled, he woke up to realize what sleep was making him say. Not wanting to take any more risks, he got up and went straight to bed. When the parish priest sang the Gloria at the midnight Mass, Fr K was snoring in his bed. That Christmas he realized the truth of "the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

- A. Arulanandam



Just for...



A few days before Christmas Johnny asked his mother if he could have a new bike. She told him that the best idea would be to write to Santa Claus. But the smart and shrewd Johnny said he would prefer to write to the baby Jesus himself. So he went to his room and wrote, "Dear Jesus, I have been a very good boy and would like to have..." He shook his head, struck that and wrote, "I'm a good boy most of the time.." He was still not happy and tried again. "Dear Jesus, I could be a good boy if I had a new bike." But he still wasn't satisfied and thought about a better approach. He ran to the neighbouring house which had a small statue of the Virgin Mary in the front garden. He crept in, stuffed the statue under his coat, hurried home and hid it under the bed. Then he wrote this letter. "Dear Jesus, if you want to see your mother again, you'd better send me a new bike."



Congratulations

To **Fr Leonard N. Fernando**, Vidya Jyoti, who has been appointed the General Editor of the multi-volume *History of Christianity in India*.

To the **five Scholastics** who have been approved for ordination as Deacons (*see p.2*).