



# In the Shadow of the Cross



| Vol. VII | Issue-2 | July - December 2019 |



*Holy Night*

# CONTENTS

03 Editorial

Christian Education at the Cross Roads 04

10 Listening Heals...

Is Mary's Queenship Biblical? 13

15 Missionary of love

Gratitude in love 16

18 Christ is Alive and He Encounters in the Lives of  
Young People: A Biblical Perspective of *Christus Vivit*

“The purpose of the **Apostolic Teaching Society** is to strengthen, to defend and to spread the Catholic Faith everywhere in so far as this is committed to it by Divine Providence. Therefore, by exercising this ecclesiastical teaching function in word and writing, it intends to achieve the end that all people might know more and more the one true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ, and that might live holy lives and save their souls”

Venerable Francis Jordan (Rule 1882).

Our Founder was a man of vision. He envisioned the mission of the Church and the Society as well. He was very clear about his way of making known the Saviour: **in word and in writing**. The first thing he did to make known the Saviour was to publish magazines. **II Monitore Ramano - The Roman Monitor, L'Amico dei Fanciulli -The Children's friend, The Missionary, Manna and Nuntius Romanus** are the publications begun by the Venerable Founder for the evangelization and for the Catholic instructions. He was up to date. He moved along with the signs of the times modern developments. We as Salvatorians and spiritual children of the Founder called to move with the modern developments and modernity.

I have witnessed the different stages of this magazine: **'In the Shadow of the Cross'**. I have seen it in black and white and in different sizes and with different qualities of papers. It has evolved gradually and has contributed generously to our Society and to our members. It has evoked our zeal for souls like our Founder through our words and writing. It was a great excitement to see the written works being published and distributed to all the Salvatorian Communities across the world. Now is the time to become digitalized. Everything is now done through digital media. We are here to adapt the new ways and means for the evangelization. Hence for the first time and from now on we are going to publish the magazine digitally. I hope all will be able to access the magazine easily and do our ministry effectively too.

I thank all the authors for contributing in a unique way. In this issue we are called to listen carefully, reflect on Mother Mary, and introspect our Christian education and to have an encounter with Christ. Let us grow and let others also to grow.



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT THE CROSS ROADS

Education is an important dimension of human growth and touches upon every other dimension of that growth. In fact peaks of human progress in history are earmarked by education of a populace. The determinant factors include the prevalent systems, their targeted efficacy and proportional efficiency, and the prevalent philosophies.

Christian education is undoubtedly popular in the four corners of our round world. Yes, it is strange, but true. In as much as we have discovered corners

for a round world Christian education seems to be both Christian and yet no so Christian.

This current pandemic crisis can stir us out of our Christian stupor and our benumbed brains.

## **The Success Story**

I do not want to make a sweeping statement that Christian education has always been faulty and aimless, and that it should have only been about imparting Christian morality and spirituality.

Humanities and natural sciences do find a definite place in Christian education as they very much resonate with our Christian faith. Christian education has in fact done a lot to the growth and well-being of humanity while simultaneously educating the conscience of the world as its prime goal. It has commendably integrated all these elements in doing the ministry of education in the name of Christ.

Still I would contend that we have fallen short of our goal especially as revealed by the consequences of the present crisis. What can be lost about Christian education would be its very goal: educating towards what God has ordained in Christ. In brief, the goal of our education can either be Christian or non-Christian. There cannot be a generic Christian education. However, people do end up understanding Christian education to be education received in institutions run by Christians and with no reference to Christ.

### **Inspect and Introspect**

Our success stories need not stop us from examining ourselves nor make us complacent. Now is one such moment in history when the stark reality of a pandemic and unexpected deaths stare in our face. We need to introspect, examine and change: our attitudes, philosophies, and methods and approaches. We need to analyse not merely the efficiency of our methods but the very goals of our efforts. We need to take stock of our situation.

In fact the present conditions of the world demand and impel us to reflect more intensely about our human realities, of daily living, of the purpose of life, things that can bring us fulfilment, rewards and punishments based on our actions, improving the quality of life even when it could be shortened by a pandemic. All reflection, thought, decisions, and effective actions need proper education.

Further, the present context poses some pertinent questions that we need to understand, reflect upon, and finally redraw the course of our life. As said earlier, these depend definitely on the education we have received, our outlook on life, and on our affiliation to prevalent philosophies.

Each of us is a product of our times. And mostly we have been the passive recipients or trainees of the existing popular educational systems. These systems have become so ingrained in us that they probably have blunted our Christian brains. We continue to replicate external educational models in our Christian education.

We seemed to have lost our Christian uniqueness. We have probably allowed into us philosophies and world views which have numbed and rendered sterile our Christian educational system. We have allowed ourselves to be sucked into the whirlpool of popular philosophies and their educational systems.

These we have taken unquestioningly lying down. Yet, these present crises



arising out of the pandemic can be an opportunity: an opportunity to shake up our thoughts and question our blunted philosophies and which can spur us on into right actions as Christian educationists. Let us seize the day.

### **A Variety of Questions**

The current pandemic is not merely one single crisis. It has spiralled into several types and counts: economic, social, religious, political, scientific, and ecological, to name a few. What can we learn from the current crises: crises, not merely of an infectious disease, but those other realities that the pandemic has exposed? Learning requires questioning. Here are some questions that we can pose ourselves to think, reflect, and act.

1. At the start of the spread of the Covid-19 disease, when the vast majority ran back into villages preferring less-populated locations why did they do it?
2. What had made the humans build cities instead of villages? Who are the actual beneficiaries of a city system? Which are more humanizing: cities or villages?
3. When we began to understand that privacy and isolation are two different things during the crisis, did that also not expose our heightened sense of individualism ever found in history?
4. When the factories with cheap labour closed down in China, were not those industries which

interpreted human labour as cheap stand convicted? Can businesses steal from the due profit of the lower rung employees?

5. Can there be such a thing called 'cheap' human labour? Is not every human entitled to a fair pay?
6. Can science and medicine be used for destructive ends? Can they be used for profiteering and for making biological weapons? At the end of the day are they not used for satisfying selfish appetites?
7. Is there not the 'modern' tendency to misuse science and knowledge? In such a case can we really say that the humans have truly progressed? Is cunningness and marketing deception the winning norm?
8. What about those millions of migrant labourers? Human progress does not seem to be part of their lives. Thousands of migrants who suffered in India due to the unorganized lock down may still stand in need of justice. Who would own up responsibility for the injustice caused them?

We do also thus realize that we have managed to produce much information and its technology but not an educated majority. We have missed the crux of true education. We ourselves seem to have been not educated enough to handle crises adequately. We are unable to keep in control a technologically progressing world. And we as Christians have not

been able to sufficiently contribute to the education of responsible consciences.

### **Where did it all go wrong?**

We probably have failed in several fronts. We were caught unawares in some areas and while in others we had turned lukewarm in our responses to contingencies. We were caught unawares when new political systems and their philosophies took us by storm in the last two centuries. We did not need to change our faith but we failed to use appropriate language of the educational system. We were not quick enough to respond and regain our stand.

Worse still, in the modern era we have sold our souls to rampant commercialization. We have been too slow to realize evil in some realities and have only given a lukewarm response. Are not our educational systems directed, repurposed, and controlled by beneficiaries of capitalism, oligarchic socialism, and dictatorial communism? More than ever these systems have come to be the varied manifestations of a global corporatism. The euphemism is 'multinational companies'.

We as Christian educators have been contributing to the new types of slavery hidden in these systems. We have been committed to their cause churning out 'employable' individuals through our educational institutions. We have been serving the god of mammon more efficiently using the resources of the God of the Christians.

### **The Curse of Corporate Employability**

We in India are familiar with the term 'convent' education. Those who are 'convent-educated,' stand a better chance of employment besides a better social standing. And education in a Christian institution in India would definitely increase the possibility of the 'corporate employability.' We voluntarily pawn our time, energy, and all resources to promote this.

On the contrary if we had truly kept to Christian education, would we not have been proud of designing curriculum which is village-life based? Will we not educate youngsters towards microeconomics and micro-commerce? Will we not be proud of educating them towards the pride and freedom of self-employability than of the slavery of incorporation into a multinational company? Will we not be proud of educating and working towards self-sufficient villages?

History does bears witness to many successful Christian missions and educational institutions. Most of them were begun in remote villages. These are truly celebrated, because they promoted human dignity, respect, and true freedom.

### **What Christian Education needs to be**

It is time that we examined if Christian Education has actually shrunk from being multi-dimensional to a minimalist, narrow corporate oriented system. Christian Education was to free every human through the Good News of Jesus Christ.

On the contrary we seem to have become part of an enslaving system. Education is always towards transformation: it is neither mere skill training by imparting knowledge of certain sciences, nor is it imparting certain soft skills towards business running.

We Christians have missed the holistic approach to education. Education needs to be education to inner freedom: freedom of the soul, of the mind, of thoughts, of expressions, of creativity aligned with that of the Creator God. Genuine actions spring from such freedom. Thoughts of a free soul bring forth educated actions.

When the goals of education are limited by vested interests, education becomes enslaving. It is rather a negation of education itself – an ‘uneducation’.

Christian education is to put into practice the principles of education taught by Christ. It is educating towards being a good shepherd (Jn 10:11), educating to forgiveness and patience (Mt 18:21,22), to bringing home the strayed (Mt 18:12), feeding the hungry (Mt 14:16), clothing the naked and caring for the prisoner (Mt 25:36) and being a good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), of humbling oneself before the Creator God (Lk 18:9-14) and so much more. In Christian education knowledge and skills are only secondary.

Let us not forget Christ’s beautiful declaration: “Seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:33). Christ’s calling is be light of the

world and to be a town set on a hill (Mt 5:14). Christian education should then base itself on Christ’s Good News.

Good News of Christ educates us to freedom: from sin, death, human slaveries, darkness of the soul, controlled knowledge, manipulated philosophies, and tailored social structures. It basically frees from selfishness and pretentious individualism. It educates to communion of the spirit manifested in equality, in universal brotherhood and sisterhood. It educates to sharing of resources of all types, welfare and growth of every human being, protection and respect of nature and so on.

Let this corona pandemic become a ‘coronal’ moment of realization of how and where we are going. Our Christian education is at the crossroads. This crises has given us Christian educationists and educators the opportunity to introspect. We cannot allow Christian education to fall into the traps of commercialism, competition, and populism. We cannot afford to waste our time, energy, money, personnel and all resources in ‘uneducation,’ promoting commercial slavery and culture of dominance and exclusion. We cannot afford to collude with agencies and structures that promote utilitarianism, casteism in any form, or a culture of death.

## **Conclusion**

Firstly, we need to admit that our Christian education that we glory in is usurped by Capitalistic corporate philosophies.



Secondly, we need to re-examine our philosophies and working principles in the light of the Gospel of Christ. Thirdly we need to learn from the consequences of present educational system and our subservience to popular systems. The present crises can be understood as the God-given moment for us Christian educationists to introspect.

Particularly in India we might need to think better and faster especially as our country continues to be pinned down by corporatism. It may be that our lips hum the tune of nationalism while our actual allegiance go to parties funded by the corporates. We can be sure that the light of the Gospels can educate us towards breaking away and breaking free from cultures and structures of sin.

And a last personal realization: lately, I have realised that the popular metaphor of a global village is a farce. We actually have a global city very similar to an anthill, full of workers. And very soon, the ant and the nest would be evicted by easy lazy snakes. Poor ants rarely learnt the global scripts. Nor did they know they were only slaves who could never own an anthill except in its name. An earthquake-like-pandemic shook up the anthill and revealed the actual occupants of this great anthill – the cunning snakes.

Crises will come. Crises will go. Should I as a Christian not stop, look, and proceed?

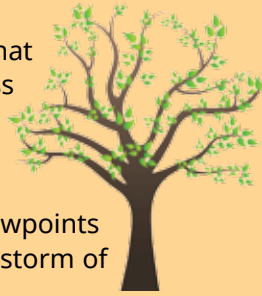
Will we Christians emerge out of these crises more educated about Christian education?

**Fr. K. J. Anthony SDB**

Registrar, Sacred Heart Theological College,  
Shillong

## Lessons from Trees

**Be flexible.** The trees that bend a little to the harmless breeze will later grow to withstand the wild wind. Similarly, if we maintain a degree of flexibility in our viewpoints we will not be broken in any storm of criticism or opposition.



**Value the little things.** Leaves, though they can be small, are vital to the life of a tree. Similarly, expressions of encouragement and appreciation, in any form can go a long way to build the spirits of the receiver.

**Do not be intimidated by small beginnings.** Mighty oaks do indeed grow from little acorns. Efforts, when enriched with strong motivation and determination, will grow to fruition.

**Do not be afraid of change.** An acorn is unafraid to destroy itself in growing into a tree. Invigorate your life by letting go of the past and pressing forward to something new.

**Practise teamwork.** In forests, individual trees support one another. By interlocking their roots with other trees around them, they are able to stand as a grove against any wind. Do we support each other?

**Develop a value-system.** Trees have extensive root systems. Some trees, such as mesquites, grow taproots that are often larger than the trunk and that can extend down into the ground hundreds of feet to reach vital sources of water. How extensive is your root system? Is it solidly embedded in principles and values?

— Grant M. Bright



# Listening Heals...

After many years, I got a call from one of my childhood friends, saying “I want to talk to you,” few hours later I called and enquired about her. As we were talking, she literally cried and said “I have so much pains, sufferings, emotionally disturbed and overburdened in life, my family members refused to listen to me, there is no one to whom I can speak and pour out my pains, I feel suffocated, depressed and find no meaning in life.” Few days later she said, “I feel relieved and lightened after talking to you.” Though I did nothing but just listened. Then I began to realise that how important it is to listen for listening had healed her.

Most of the people long to express their feelings of both pains and joys with their loved ones. To such people we can give our precious time as a help to them and

lend our ears to their voice. The time that we give to others is the portion of our life, we boost them with hope and positivity in their hardships. God has given the precious gift of listening to hear the voices of many who have no consolation in life. Our greatest failure in life is that we are not realizing the pains of our neighbours. Though the world has developed so much, but the art of listening to one another is still underdeveloped. We are living in a global village, yet sometimes, our families and communities have become so far apart in relationships. Probably, it is the result of lack of love, affection, attention and refusal to commune with one another.

Mutual trust and love play a very important role in human relationships, so with affection we should listen to one

another. Every good listening ensures a good conversation and leads people to open up for healthy communication because it is the sign of mutual respect and acceptance. Jesus as Son of God knew everyone's mind yet he lent his ears to the lonely and needy, all those who encountered him were never sent empty but were healed physically, strengthened mentally and nourished spiritually and thus paved the way for a happy life.

It is normal and natural to feel lonely when a person is alone, but the disconsolate situation is to feel lonely even when we are with others. This may lead many into depression and even ending their lives pathetically. There is so much suffering in the families, people are torn apart and remain with brokenness.

In this competitive world all are occupied with so many things and find no time for their near and dear ones and show no signs of care and concern. Relationships exist in many families without much affection and joy. Each day, the aversion for each other grows worst; eventually the families are split apart. The joy of being together is no more appreciated but the life of individuality is accepted. Very often the bond between the couples are deteriorating, love does not exist and eventually it ends in broken families. Our families' bond will grow stronger each time we share our joys and sorrows and listen to one another. A child may cry out of pain but when the child feels the affectionate attention by mother, instantly the child feels relieved. So also, every person feels consoled and

respected as we lend our ears to them. In every family, the joy begins when each one feels accepted, valued, heard and appreciated. This, in turn directs them to respect and care for one another. This brings a loving unity and growth in the families and this will be manifested in the form of faith and close relationship with God. The Christian faith calls everyone to be united in faith and become one family in Jesus Christ, where all, united in one spirit and mind, with mutual respect, honour and live with human dignity.

We believe and accept the sacrificial love of Christ for us. So too, we must share that love with our fellow humans. As I visit the families during my Sunday ministry, I have realized that the difference of languages and places do not come as obstacles for our relationship with the people, as long as they feel that they are respected, cared and loved. Every catholic family feels glad when their shepherds visit their homes, knowing that they have a spiritual person who is ready to listen and assure them hope in their lives. This is not a remedy for all atrocities in life but gives consolation and solace through our accompaniment. As Jesus hears every cry in the sacrament of reconciliation, so we too, need to listen to the cries of the people in their agony. Gradually, the sufferings will be alleviated, faith will be strengthened and hope reassured in love.

Another sensitive dimension is building up a sound relationship is to build up the trust between the persons. There should not be any freaky attitude which is an obstacle to genuine relationship, proving



**If you want the Society to be firmly established, to accomplish great things, then be faithful in little things. (Exh & Adm: Chapter 19)**

trust is the foundation to become the trustworthy friends. Many people may be betrayed and feel left out in life and it is their trust in us that will make them pour out their emotions and hidden pains.

It is my experience with my grandmother that made me to realize that old people need more attention and love. She would always tell me that she feels so lonely because after working and caring for all her children and grandchildren for many years, now they have no time and patience to listen care for her. As every house has a room to dump the waste, likewise every human has a pain filled room in life; young-old, rich-poor are alike. They need our support and guidance to dispose everything off from their hearts and to renew their lives and start a new energetically as a fellow human being.

Our attentive listening to such people heals half of their pain; patiently accompanying them will heal fully. Our attitude towards them always instils a sense of belongingness in the family. Many suffer due to attention crisis in the families and society. They feel discouraged and abandoned, feel sick all the time. It is our love and constant support that

will heal them. Our attitude of negative reaction and judgemental statements will cause severe psychological disorder. This only makes them feel more ashamed and guilty and in no way helps them to be hopeful and healthy in life. Sometimes, what money and medicine cannot do to a person, our presence and attentive listening can do to them. Therefore, our human energy must be engaged in building up the human society as we share the social life in common. Healing every scar of the people at their most vulnerable state of life is our social duty and responsibility. Being generous in lending our ears to the lonely, the suffering, the unloved, young-old, rich-poor, depressed and marginalized bring a turning point in their lives. This will make our world a better place to live and no one is to be found lonely in this crowded world. It is rightly said that "A problem shared is a problem halved." If you care yourself to be free of worries talk with someone, if you care for others, listen to them patiently, be approachable and available. The ministry of Jesus has to continue in today's world through you.

**Bro. Sigeon Pradeep SDS**



# Is Mary's Queenship Biblical?

**M**ary's title as "Queen of heaven and earth" is a great scandal to many non-catholic Christians. After all, the Bible doesn't mention anything about Mary, being a queen in God's kingdom. All this royal attention Catholics give to Mary whether it's singing hail holy queen enthroned above or portraying Mary in statues and paintings with crown on her head seems to many non-Catholics to detract from the royalty of Christ, who alone is king of kings. Besides, how could Mary be a queen, since she is not the wife of Jesus but only his mother?

One Biblical theme sheds light on these questions and serves as a key for unlocking the mystery of Mary's queenship: the Old Testament tradition of the queen mother in the Davidic kingdom. In the monarchy of King David, as well as in other ancient kingdoms of the near east, the mother of the ruling king held an important office



in the royal court and played a key part in the process of dynastic succession. In fact, the king's mother ruled as queen and not his wife. The great pre-eminence of the king's mother may seem odd from our modern western perspective, in which we think of a queen as being the wife of a king. However, most ancient near-eastern kings practiced polygamy. King Solomon had seven hundred wives (1 kings 11:3). Imagine the chaos in the royal court if all seven hundred were awarded the queenship! But since each king had only one mother, one can see

the practical wisdom in bestowing the queenship upon her. a member of Old Testament passages reflect the important role of the queen mother in the Davidic kingdom for example, almost every time the narrative of 1 and 2 kings introduces a new monarch in Judah, it mentions the king's mother as well, showing the mother's intimate involvement in her royal son's reign. Similarly the queen mother is listed among the members of the royal court whom king Jehoiachin surrendered to the king of Babylon in 2 kings 24:12. Her royal office is also described by prophet Jeremiah, who tells how the queen mother possessed a throne and a crown symbolic of her position of authority in the kingdom. Probably the clearest example of the queen mother's role is that of Bathsheba, wife of David and mother of Solomon. Many scholars have noted the excellence of Bathsheba's position in the kingdom once she became queen mother during Solomon's rule. After Solomon assumed the throne she became queen mother and so Bathsheba receives a glorious reception upon meeting with her royal son. Once he sat down on his throne, "a throne was provided for the king's mother, who sat at his right" (1kings 2:19), the highest place of honour he could give her. Then when she interceded there with the king for his subjects, he gladly granted her request (1kings 2:20).

In the Bible the right hand is the place of ultimate honour. Thus, the queen mother sitting at the king's right hand symbolizes her sharing in the king's royal authority

and position in the kingdom.

With this Old Testament background, we can now more clearly see how the New Testament portrays Mary in light of the queen mother. Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is the son of David; with this kingly imagery it should not be difficult to find queenship of Mary. Matthew shows intimate relationship between the mother and her royal son Jesus. just as the queen mother was constantly mentioned alongside her royal son, A woman from the house of David giving birth to a son who will be the new king whose reign will never end.

Mary's queenship also can be seen in the great vision described in revelation 12:15 the woman clothed with sun and moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. Her queenship is made ever clearer by the crown of twelve stars on her head. Just like the queen mother in Jeremiah 13:18, here Mary is wearing a crown, symbolizing her royal office in the kingdom of heaven. Understanding Mary as queen mother sheds light on her important intercessory role in the Christian life just like the queen mother of the Solomon; Mary serves as advocate for the people in the kingdom of God today. Thus we should approach our queen mother with confidence, knowing that she carries our petitions to her royal son and that he responds to her as Solomon did to Bathsheba.

**Bro. Aviral Kumar Minj SDS**



# MISSIONARY OF LOVE

Coming from different places  
Born from different races  
We come together here  
To give love and share

Speaking different language  
Bearing with one same message  
Spread the love and to all  
And make us one in whole

We are called, now hand in hand  
Together we shall stand  
Let us show the world  
How to spread God's word

In the midst of diversity  
Let us be one in unity  
We are missionaries of love  
For all, share and give what we have

All have different talent  
Each one is unique  
We are all being sent  
Being humble and meek

I is not equals you  
And we are different two  
We're united as one  
Have communion with everyone

**Bro. Johnson Bhengra SDS**




# Gratitude in love

I am grateful to Fr. Alex Aseervatham SDS for helping me to visit all the Salvatorian presences both in India and Sri Lanka. It was a pleasure to be in his company wherever and whenever it was possible. I am indebted to all the other SDS and their friends who in one way or another have assisted me in my visits. I have been asked to write a few lines expressing my impressions of the visit, and I am, indeed, happy to do it.

It is not my intention to describe the places I visited. Instead, I shall make a few reflections of my visit as useful impressions of unforgettable days. First of all, I cannot think of any of the places I visited and the dear SDS I met there who was not a welcoming person. In fact, I felt myself at home everywhere. Off and on I used to think that SDS and SDB have very much in common. Nay, there is not much difference. Both are missionary-minded Congregations. Both are present in different parts of the globe. Both are engaged in education, a *sine-qua-non* for real and effective progress in all fields. Both the Congregations work with young people. That means, we can learn from each other, collaborate effectively and do many more things together for God's glory. I hope a day will come when Congregations instead of competing with each other will be able to pool resources

and personnel and work unitedly and achieve more for the spread of the Good News. Let competition, if any, give way to collaboration and mutual up building and strengthening of each other rather than glorying in achievement-oriented isolation. Multinationals and companies and global achievers are uniting and putting their personnel and resources together to do things better. Can religious Congregations learn anything more from secular efficiency and collaboration?

A second reflection regards personnel. I feel that there is need of greater coming together of personnel of different Congregations to pool the wealth of their traditions, experiences, studies and qualifications of different kinds. It is true that we meet together for some common programmes. What I would like to emphasize here is the coming together of members of different Congregations on a regular basis to meet the challenges of our time according to the places we are in. Take for example, the betterment of a slum area, educational challenges people of a particular area may be facing, housing problems, job opportunities, lack of employment, etc. To remedy these and other such challenges Congregations could work together rather than working alone.



In addition to the above-mentioned general suggestions, here are a few reflections strictly from my visits: The visits gave me a fine opportunity to see for myself the enormous amount of service the Congregation is rendering for the growth of the Church in different places: educational institutions, formation houses, mission Centres, village visits, Christian education of the faithful, instruction of would-be Catholics, publications and, above all, the pioneering work of the first Salvatorians in Northeast India. What struck me especially is the spirit of bouncing back to life after several years of absence from India's Northeast and from India itself. It is the missionary spirit that challenged the first SDS to come to India in 1890's and to come back in 1989-90 after they had to leave in 1915 because of political situation. When we speak of SDS priests and brothers, we cannot forget the SDS Sisters who were associated with the Indian Mission almost right from the start. India enjoys the unique privilege of being the first country in Salvatorian history to which Salvatorian missionaries were sent by the Venerable Founder, Fr. Francis Jordan himself.

It was with a sense of pride that I had the joy of visiting all the SDS both in India and in Sri Lanka: the SDS in Mawroh, Shillong, in Carmelaram, Bangalore, in Nagaon, Dhing and Tokobari in Assam, in Ranchi, Jharkhand, in Laitkynsew, Meghalaya, in Chullikara, Kerala, in Warangal, Telangana State and Chilaw and Jaffna in Sri Lanka. My only desire and prayer as I mention

the names of the above-mentioned places is to see the SDS increase in leaps and bounds. May the daring spirit of the Founder fill these communities, and may they increase in number and in missionary spirit.

It is exciting to realize that in February, 1890 Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller to keep the expenses low thought it best to hire one cart for three persons at the cost of Rs. 44.00, that is, three travelled in the cart and all four took it in turn to follow the cart on foot! However, after loading the luggage, there was not much place left on the cart and they had to travel more or less all the way – **Guwahati – Shillong** – on foot. I am sure that Fr. Hopfenmuller is watching us from heaven to congratulate the SDS of today as they do their best to establish one house after another.

I wish and pray that the SDS may get more vocations and a steady flow of priestly ordinations so that they can courageously launch into establishing more mission centres both in India and in Sri Lanka. More vocations are a must. More mission centres both in India and Sri Lanka are a sign of the Savior's Blessings. Just as Don Bosco promised his Sons and Daughters three things – **work, bread and paradise, so that they may grow**, I believe Venerable Francis Jordan too is promising the SDS – work, bread and paradise, so that they too may grow and flourish further.

**Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal SDB**



# Christ is Alive and He Encounters in the Lives of Young People:

## A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF *CHRISTUS VIVIT*

### Introduction

The Holy Bible is the story of God's encounter with his people. To be more specific, Christ's encounter with his people. The title of the document, "*Christus Vivit*" highlights Pope Francis's desire to have a Christocentric focus with his audience, as he begins "Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life." (CV 1). Pope Francis's artful use of Scripture throughout '*Christus Vivit*' provides a model of kerygmatic proclamation. They are not a proof text of his argument; rather they serve to accentuate the beauty of the word of God and its enduring application

to the youth of this generation. In the first two chapters, the Pope presents the witness of youths whom God called throughout salvation history, to show how often the Scriptures speak of Young People. He uses scriptures to encourage an encounter with Christ that they may grow in holiness and in their personal commitment.

### Challenges of Youth Today

The majority of youth of today are faced with many challenges, confusions and problems in life, many of them have become victims of digital environment, relationship problems, lack of proper role models, loss of purpose and meaning

in life, rather than becoming authentic witnesses of God's kingdom. Let us see, how the bible and *Christus Vivit* would help youth to enrich their life.

## Biblical Understanding of the term 'Life'

The Hebrew vocabulary for life centers on *khayah* and its word group. It describes something that is not inanimate or dead (Gen 5: 13). It is applied to the duration of person's experience under God. *Khayah* describes not merely our ability to move and breathe and think, but the character or outcome of what we do with our existence. The Hebrew *nefesh* is often translated 'soul'. *Nefesh* is that which is characteristically us, something that keeps us not simply alive, but thinking, feeling, praying and being. It is *nefesh* that makes us recognizable to one another despite age and infirmity. Another term used to describe this animating dimension of life is Spirit *ruah*. It is a versatile word that also describes the wind (Gen 1: 2), and breath (Gen 7:15), as well as the living movement of God. It makes humans alive, vital, and moving. On occasion life can be referred to as *basar* flesh. It simply reminds us that life is lived within creation and its limits.

The New Testament vocabulary for life includes *Zoe*, *psyche* and *bios*. *Zoe* is the leading term (135 times in the NT, its verb *zaw* occurs 140 times). They occur most frequently in the writings of John and Paul. For Paul, *zoe* is a contrast of death (*Thanatos*, Phil 1:20). Paul used this

term to express central soteriological categories. The (*zoe aiwonios*,) eternal life (Rom 6:23) is a free gift of God in Christ, and the fruit of the spirit (Gal 6:8) and thus confirms the authenticity of life of those who believe. John uses the term *zoe* always in reference to the life of the believer in Christ. For John, life starts from God and comes to human beings through Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16, 5:26, 6:57). The concept of *zoe* is more than *bios* and *psyche*. *Zoe* has to do with divine sphere and it lies in future for the believer in Christ. The life which belongs to God and Christ, which believers will receive in the future is true *zoe* characterized by immortality and indestructibility.

Both OT and NT agree on central ideas about life. Life is a gift from God and without God, no life would be possible. God continues to intervene in human history to restore life, to give humans life once more, provided that we respond to him and make our lives more meaningful. This responsibility mainly lies on youth.

## Biblical Understanding of the term 'Youth'

The Hebrew word for Youth is *nar* and Greek is *neanias*. A youth is a person whose age is somewhere between infancy and relative adulthood. Throughout the Bible, Youth is a Period of Vigour opportunity, and prophetic receptiveness to God's call. The Hebrew word, *na'ar* means 'younger' or 'servant' and implies high birth or great responsibility. Esau, Jacob, Joseph, and Samson are *nearim* (youths). Rebekah,



Ruth, Esther are called *na'ara* (girl or young woman) (Gen 24:16; Jud 19:3; Ruth 2:5-6, Esth 2:7).

In the bible Yahweh repeatedly enlists young people in the salvation of Israel. Samuel, Jeremiah and Timothy serve as God's envoys in spite of their apparent immaturity. St Paul admonishes Timothy, the young leader of the contentious Christian community in Ephesus, "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, faith and charity (1Tim 4:12). Young woman named Mary is chosen to be the Mother of Jesus (Lk 1:20). As an angel, Gabriel makes clear, how low social status, inexperience, and physical vulnerability do not defer God from employing her for his people.

## **Christus Vivit and the Young People**

Chapter one of **Christus Vivit** looks into the Sacred Scriptures to see what they tell us about young people. This chapter is given the title "What does the word of God have to say about young people? And is divided into two broad sections: "In the Old Testament" (CV 6-11) and "In the New Testament" (CV 12-21). Here, Young People are blessed with ample examples to enhance and enrich their lives.

## **Young People in the OT**

In chapter I, in the section on the Old Testament, the pope basically takes up the examples of several young persons,

both male and female commissioned by God, and drawing from their life-stories significant lessons regarding young people. The basic concern is God's dealing with them and how they respond to God. God showed Joseph "great things in dreams and when about twenty years old he outshone all his brothers in important affairs (Gen 37-47) (CV 6). Gideon displayed the frankness of young people who ask questions even about affirmations of religious faith, which are normally taken for granted. He asked: "But if the Lord is with us, why then have all these things happened to us? (Jg 6:13). And yet God chose him and sent him: "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel! (Jg 6:14) (CV 7).

Helped by the advice of an adult, the young boy Samuel opened his heart to hear God's call: "speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:9-10). God made him a great prophet to guide the history of Israel (CV 8). This in fact serves as an example for those young people who do not listen to the advice of their parents, elders and teachers.

When the Lord chose him king, Saul was still a youth (1 Sam 9:2) (CV 8). God's choice of David as the future king also came when he was still a boy. It shows that "the glory of Youth is in the heart, more than in physical strength or the impression given to others" (CV 9). Solomon was "a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act" (1 kg 3:7) when he succeeded his father David. In his youthful audacity he asked God "for wisdom and he devoted



himself to his mission" (CV 10). Those young people who find no purpose and meaning in life can ask God for wisdom and live a meaningful life. God called Jeremiah despite his youth to prophesy to people. He was full of fear: "Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (Jer 1:6). "The devotion of the prophet Jeremiah to his mission shows what can happen when the brashness of youth is joined to the power of God" (CV 10). Today, The Young people, who have low self-esteem and fear about their future, can trust in the power of God like Jeremiah.

An unnamed Jewish servant girl of the foreign commander Naaman intervened with faith and helped him to be cured of his illness (2 kg 5:2-6) (CV 11). The young Ruth showed herself as a model of generosity when she chose to stick with her widowed mother-in-law Naomi in her hard times (Ruth 1: 1-18). She also "showed boldness in getting ahead in life" (Ruth 4:1-17) (CV 11). Ruth continues to remain as role model for daughters-in-law and single mothers of today, and thus enhancing their lives.

## Young People in the NT

The NT also enlightens us on youth. Referring to the younger son of the Lukan parable of the prodigal son, the pope says: "Young hearts are naturally ready to change, to turn back, get up and learn from life." However, "his older brother already had a heart grown old; he let himself be possessed by greed,

selfishness and envy (Lk 15: 28-30). The pope says: "Jesus praises the young sinner who returned to the right path over the brother who considered himself faithful yet lacked the spirit of love and mercy" (CV 12). The word of God wants us to treat young people as brothers and sisters (I Tim 5: 1). Parents should not provoke their children and discourage them (Col 3:21). The Scriptures also urge young people "to accept the authority of those who are older" (1 Pet 5:5). The elderly "have a wealth of experience; they have known success and failure, life's joys and afflictions, its dreams and disappointments. In the silence of their heart, they have a store of experiences that can teach us not to make mistakes or be taken in by false promises." The pope cautions young people against the foolishness of buying "into the cult of youth" and dismissing others "simply because they are older." The pope says, "A wise young person is open to the future, yet still capable of learning something Referring to the Markan narrative of the rich young man visiting Jesus (10:17-22), the pope says to the youth: "we should never repent of spending our youth being good, opening our heart to the Lord, and living differently. None of this takes away from our youth but instead strengthens and renews it." What happened to the rich young man was very unfortunate: "yet that rich man, who had been faithful to God in his youth, allowed the passing years to rob his dreams; he preferred to remain attached to his riches" (CV 17). So, in the present scenario, attachment to

the digital devices would be unfortunate for the young to live their life to its fullness. Drawing insights from the parable of the ten bridesmaids (Mt 25: 1-13), the pope tells us that the time of youth gives us two opposite possibilities: “we can, in fact, spend our youth being distracted, skimming the surface of life, half-asleep, incapable of cultivating meaningful relationships or experiencing the deeper things in life. In this way, we can store up a paltry and unsubstantial future.” Alternatively, “we can spend our youth aspiring to beautiful and great things, and thus store up a future full of life and interior richness.” (CV 19). To the young persons who might have lost their inner vitality, dreams, enthusiasm, optimism and generosity, Jesus says: “Young Man, I say to you, arise!” (Lk 7: 14) (CV 20). Saint Paul invites us to strip ourselves of the old self and to put on a “young” self (Col 3: 9-10). How does one put on a young self? How does one renew one’s youthfulness? The apostle explains the way: “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another” (Col 3:12-13). The Pope summarizes this insight: “in a word, true youth means having a heart capable of loving, whereas everything that separates us from others makes the soul grow old.” Hence the words of St. Paul: “above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14).

Throughout the exhortation, he constantly invites the young to an encounter and

friendship with Jesus, as the Holy Father pastorally states, “No matter how much you live the experiences of these years of your youth, you will never know their deepest and fullest meaning unless you encounter each day your best friend, the friend who is Jesus” (CV 150).

## Conclusion

As presented in the Bible and *Christus Vivit*, even today, God is alive, Christ is alive and He continues to encounter in the lives of Young people. Let me cite the living example of the young girl by name Greta Thunberg, an eco-activist from Sweden; she was born in 2003. In August 2018, just at young age of fifteen, she started a school strike for the climate as a single person outside the Swedish Parliament that has since spread all over the world, and now involves over 1 million school children. This movement is now called **Fridays for Future**. She has spoken at climate rallies across Europe. Thunberg is vegan, and she does not fly, in order to live a low-carbon life. She has been nominated for Nobel Peace prize. She has been hailed as the ‘prophet of our time’ and ‘voice of this generation’. All her speeches are compiled under the title of the book **‘NO ONE IS TOO SMALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE’**. Yes, Christ is alive and he continues to encounter in our lives; with great responsibility and personal commitment, let us respond to his encounter and make positive difference in our lives and in the world. **NO ONE IS TOO SMALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

# BE THANKFUL

*Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire. If you did, what would there be to look forward to?*

*Be thankful when you don't know something, for it gives you the opportunity to learn.*

*Be thankful for the difficult times. During those times you grow.*

*Be thankful for your limitations, because they give you opportunities for improvement.*

*Be thankful for your mistakes. They will teach you valuable lessons.*

*Be thankful when you're tired and weary, because it means you've made a difference.*

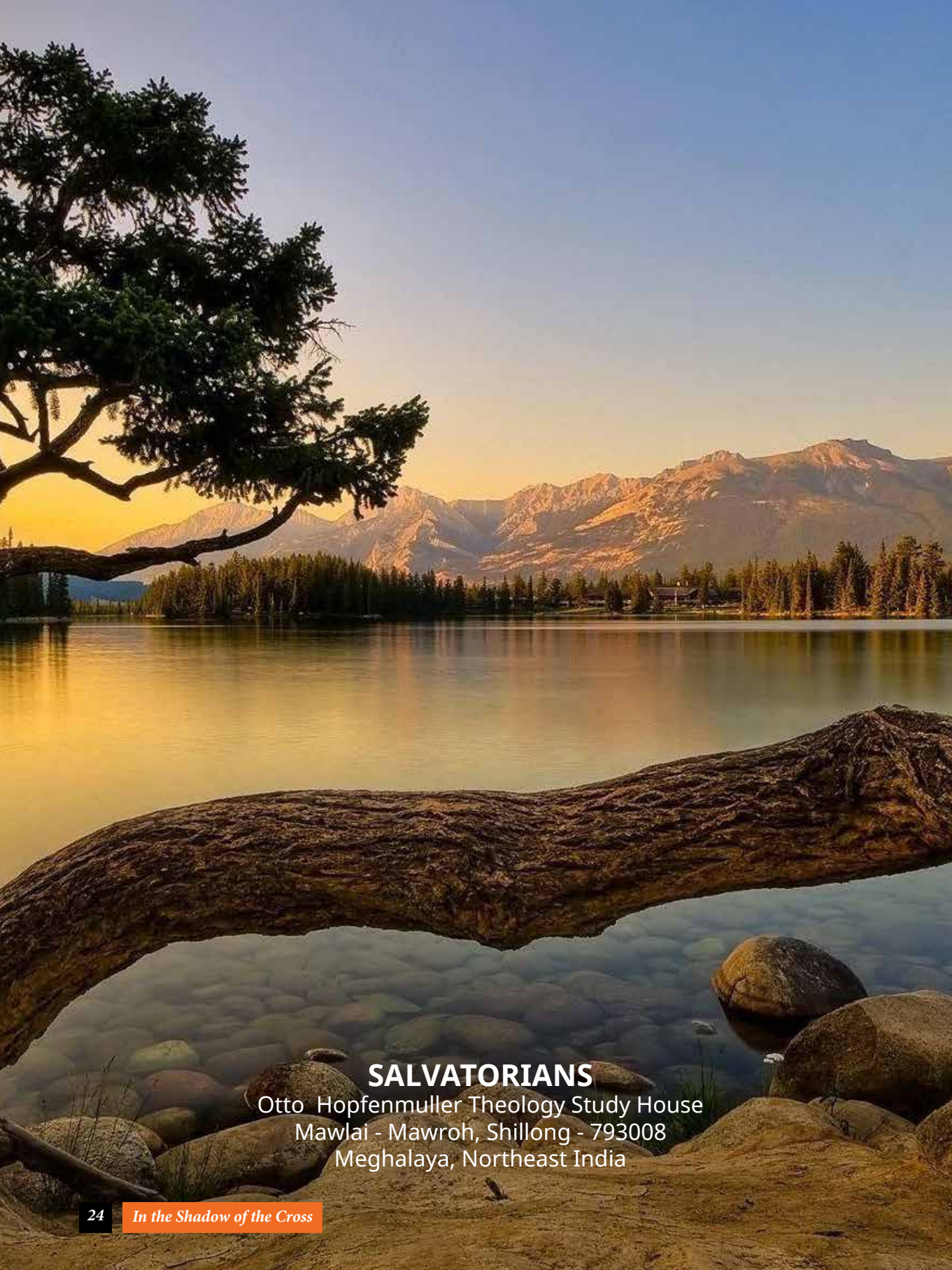
*It's easy to be thankful for the good things.*

*A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who are also thankful for the setbacks.*

*Find a way to be thankful for your troubles, and they can become your blessings.*

*Facebook Page: ALBERTO CASING*





## **SALVATORIANS**

Otto Hopfenmuller Theology Study House  
Mawlai - Mawroh, Shillong - 793008  
Meghalaya, Northeast India