

# SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART

## PROVINCE OF INDIA

### NEWSLETTER



September 2019

#### NEWSLETTER FROM THE MALWANI COMMUNITY

As we reflected together about the content of our newsletter to the province, we realised that 2019 is a milestone anniversary for the Society in India: **EIGHTY YEARS ...** since Reverend Mother Andersson, Mer. Woellwarth, Sr. Bullen arrived by sea on Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1939, in the *Conte Verde*, followed by Mer. Ward, Davis, Srs. Kenny and Camilleri on Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>. A momentous year, with the start of World War II, and seven little Indian “*RSCJ-to-be*” being born, as if in welcome greeting to the Society!

Over these 80 years, our province has responded to many calls to justice, but never before, perhaps, have the voices of the World, Church, Society, Country, Archdiocese, Parish, and, even, Corporate Housing Societies (CHS) like ours in Nazarene, all blended in one loud voice, as today, in the cause of **Justice and Peace through *Care for our Common Home* (JPIC)**.

As our community has taken this call seriously, we share some of our activities and responses.

#### **Manisha Gonsalves rscj**

In our last community newsletter of July 2018, I had mentioned the idea of starting a new Children’s group. This came to birth on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and was named the NEIGHBOURHOOD CHILDREN’S COUNCIL (NCC). The USP of this group is that it comprises children of Stds. 4-12 belonging to different schools, boys and girls, children of all faiths, who live within an extended neighbourhood.

The first official “début” was on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2018 when the children recited the preamble of our Indian Constitution followed by a presentation of our basic *Rights and Duties* after the traditional interfaith prayer service followed by the hoisting of the National flag with the entire Nazarene Society. The Council was divided into 9 ‘Ministries’ pertaining to the lives of children. Some of these were ‘Care of Mother Earth’, ‘Talent search’, ‘Sports’, ‘Spiritual Connect’, ‘Outreach’, ‘Communications’. At each meeting a team of 2 or 3 made a presentation in these areas after which there was discussion and honest feedback. We had 6 such meetings during the last academic year. Some of the parents as well as Sr. Daphne acted as ‘guides’ for the topics. Five major events took place culminating in a ‘Talent Fiesta’.

One highlight was ‘Children’s Day’ in November when our children conducted and partly sponsored a party with the children of a nearby orphanage with their own pocket money saved over 2 months. Through all our interactions, some of the values we emphasize are team work, leadership, respect for one another’s uniqueness and opinions, learning to listen, to express encouragement and gratitude, growth in self-confidence, public speaking, and the like.

Since May 2019, the NCC has been alert to certain issues in the environment that need redressing. Prior to 'World Environment Day', on 5<sup>th</sup> June this year, a small group of them made a video, titled "Our Mission", of the garbage heaps around Nazarene that are the result of our carelessness and complacency. As 'Care of Mother Earth' was one of the priorities framed last year, they have decided this year to focus on this particular area.

At the first meeting held in June, the trio who had prepared the video, made a short presentation on the need to maintain clean surroundings. It was decided that they would take this seriously and work as a group of children (about 20 of them) to create awareness of the situation and to spearhead small initiatives in the neighbourhood.

At this year's Independence Day Celebrations they enacted a skit "SAVE OUR EARTH" written by one of our neighbours in which they pleaded with the adults around to become more aware of what pollutes the environment through our carelessness, and precautionary measures needed to save it. They also desire to be agents in their families to work towards 'zero garbage' that is being planned by our CHS. I was happy to see this echoed by Pope Francis in his message for the 'World Day of Prayer for Creation' on 1<sup>st</sup> September: "The young remind us that the Earth is not a possession to be squandered, but an inheritance to be handed down. They remind us that hope for tomorrow is not a noble sentiment, but a task calling for concrete actions here and now..."



At our second meeting this academic year the children shared spontaneously on "The India I dream of". The idea of 'social and gender discrimination' was often reiterated as one of the evils we have to fight against in our country. We celebrated the 'Day of the Girl-child' (Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>) with a session for our girls, entitled 'Enjoy your Girlhood'. It was much appreciated and a follow-up is being planned on popular demand!

All these humble efforts are in line with our dream of 'Being Artisans of Hope' underlining the JPIC 2018 commitment: "We desire to participate in the care of 'our common home', in working against injustices, constructing peaceful relationships and protecting the earth."

### **Albina Guria rscj**

The **Parable of the Lost Sheep** ([Mt. 18:12-14](#)), whom the shepherd goes in search of, leaving the other ninety-nine unattended, was the Gospel reading at the start of our academic year 2019. And the words of Head Teacher, "your real achievement is when you bring the weak children to a higher level."

As per government policy this year, teachers have to obtain from the previous class teacher a list of the weak students, and note their progress each month. Of the 65 students in my class, 10 to 15 are in this category; so I faced a big challenge of finding concrete steps to help these students.

To give them more attention I placed them in the front two rows, regularly met with their parents, had personal talks, during the break, about their family or whatever else they wanted to share; in general, tried to be present to them. I appreciated, whenever they did something, such as better handwriting or writing faster if they were slow in writing; giving them extra time to complete their work, making sure to check their note books.

My next aim is to make these children prepare the Assembly prayer and present it on the stage, since the clever ones have many chances in school or interschool competitions. In this way I can work towards justice in the classroom.

A very demanding task, draining my energy and sometimes very irritating to have to repeat the same topic again and again, but at the same time it gives me joy to see the priceless smile when s/he is appreciated for an achievement. I see them growing in confidence. The process has to be slow and gentle as I don't want to repeat the mistake of last year, when a girl started crying when she was asked to solve a sum on the black board.



It is a learning process for me too, in how to be tolerant, hopeful and happy even in small achievements.

### **Daphne Viveka Furtado rscj**

We are happy to be sending this bulletin during the “**Season of Creation**”, an annual celebration, by Christian Churches, of prayer and action to protect creation. It spans five weeks between the World day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, or *Creation Day* (September 1<sup>st</sup>) and the *feast of St. Francis of Assisi*, patron saint of those who promote ecology (October 4<sup>th</sup>).

Last year, on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>, Cardinal Oswald Gracias launched the “Green Diocese Initiative” and we were privileged to attend a CRI (Catholic Religious of India) meeting during which several religious spoke of projects already undertaken in their provinces. Among many others, the one that struck us most was the decision taken, at provincial level, by the *Daughters of the Cross*, for “Shroud Burial. We also observed this in Vasai, at the funeral of Noel from our College Office, and for one of our parishioners.

At Malwani, we have taken seriously the *Green Diocese Initiative*. To raise awareness we dedicated two issues of our parish bulletin, *Tonian Tweets*, to the themes *EGO v/s ECO* and the *Tree of Life*. We also organised a talk by Mr. Parab, social activist and champion of “Zero Garbage” who had personally visited all the “dumping” grounds in Mumbai. He told us that the mountains of garbage were so high, that the people around did not live beyond the age of 35. In our own CHS, the previous sweeper died at Christmas, and the present one has had two bouts of pneumonia. Indeed, in the story of the Environment today, the greatest impact is on the poor.

Last year, June 5<sup>th</sup>, World Environment Day, was hosted by India with the theme: “**Say ‘No’ to Plastics**”. On Aug. 31<sup>st</sup>, eve of the anniversary of the *Green Diocese Initiative*, a workshop was organised by the AOE (Archdiocesan Office for Environment) on: **PLASTIC A BANE OR BOON**. Attended by about seventy people from several parishes, it was an eye-opener on the work being done by committed lay persons to achieve “**#EndPlasticWaste**”.

While studying the encyclical *Laudato Si* in 2015, it was a shock to realise that on the *Global Vulnerability Index* of 1-234, India ranked 216, with Japan (221) and the Philippines (228) in the category of *Extremely Vulnerable Countries* (Nos. 200-234). Truly, a WAKE-UP Call!

Listening and learning from so many has really fired me up. We are all inter-connected through the “Web of Life” and cannot abdicate our responsibility. As environmentalist, Rukmini Walker, warns, “Unless we clear the contamination within the ecology of our own hearts, no matter how many rivers and mountains we clean up, the pollutants will just revert because of our greed”.

Tagore teaches us so delicately: **I came to your shore as a stranger, I lived in your house as a guest, I leave your door as a friend, my earth.**