



# Ursuline Links

Vol. 12 Issue 3

July - December 2024

*“Jesus: The Reason for the Season.”*



# EDITORIAL

## Embracing the Message of Christmas the Synodal Way



There's a profound connection between the incarnation of Christ and the principle of synodality. Christmas, a time of spiritual significance for many, marks the extraordinary moment when the divine became human and the eternal Word was made flesh. Synodality, the principle of walking together in dialogue and collaboration, mirrors the divine journey undertaken in the incarnation of Christ. Christmas, the celebration of this sacred embodiment, serves as a poignant reminder that God chose to become one with us, bridging the gap between the divine and the human.

The incarnation, the embodiment of the divine in human form, is a testament to the ultimate act of synodality, the coming together of the divine and the human in perfect unity. In the humility of a stable in Bethlehem, we witness the convergence, the meeting point of the heavenly and earthly realms. This divine synod, where God takes on the frailty of human existence, speaks volumes about the power of unity and shared purpose. Synodality, in essence, is about journeying together, collectively discerning the path forward. The incarnation, likewise, invites us to recognize the sacredness of every human journey, for in the birth of Christ, we find a God intimately acquainted with the human experience.

Moreover, the life of Christ exemplifies the principles of synodality. His ministry was marked by inclusivity, dialogue, and a deep respect for the dignity of each person. Whether at the wedding feast in Cana or in the humble conversations with outcasts, Jesus demonstrated the beauty of walking together in love and understanding. As we celebrate the birth of Christ this Christmas, let us embrace the synodality embedded in this sacred event. Let us be inspired to foster unity, to engage in meaningful dialogue, and to recognize the divine in each person we encounter. In a world that often yearns for harmony and understanding, the incarnation serves as a timeless example of the transformative power of synodality.

May this Christmas be a reminder that, just as Christ entered the world to walk among us, we are called to walk together in unity, compassion, and love. In the spirit of synodality, let us strive to build bridges, seek common ground, and journey together towards a world infused with the peace and goodwill that the Christmas

story so beautifully embodies. Christ's life exemplified the principles of synodality, embracing all, engaging in dialogue, and demonstrating a profound respect for the inherent worth of each individual.

Christmas also brings with it a call to **MISSION**. We are not a static community but always walking together towards the goal. Our communion with the divine Babe strengthened, we share the spirit of this Babe with the world, thereby transforming it and giving glory to its rightful master- the King of Kings- and using all gifts of the earth for this mission. In a world often marked by division and discord, the message of synodality and incarnation is a beacon of hope. It beckons us to bridge divides, foster understanding, and recognize the divine spark in every person we encounter. This message is not confined to a historical event but resonates as an eternal call to walk together in love and compassion. The celebration of this synodal incarnation gives us a clarion call for each and every one to journey/walk with others, leaving behind the man-made barriers, especially with those who find themselves at the periphery and margin whose voice is never heard in the Church. As Christ descended into our reality to give us life in fullness, every Christian, who celebrates this nativity of the synodal nature, has the moral obligation to walk together and give life to those in need. This synodality is not an optional possibility but an urgent and immediate necessity. In this season of joy and reflection, let us embrace the spirit of synodality, recognizing the beauty in our shared journey as one global community. As we celebrate the incarnation of hope and love through the birth of Christ, let the guiding principles of synodality inspire us to walk together in love, mercy and compassion.. As we celebrate the joyous season of Christmas, let us carry the spirit of unity and divine connection into our lives, fostering a world where the principles of synodality and the transformative power of the incarnation guide our collective steps.



To conclude Synodality is Communion, Mission and Participation and has its deepest origin in the Christmas event.

Wishing you all a joyous season filled with profound insights, shared reflections, and a deep sense of interconnectedness. May the **Peace, Joy, and Love** which the nativity of Jesus brought reign in your hearts.

Sr. Susanne

## Advent - A U-Turn to the Lord

### Hope Never Disappoints

We always look forward in hope for a brighter future or some reason to live for. Some people hope for success, while others hope for security; some hope best for their children, while others hope for peace in the family. Christian hope is quite different as Jesus' story did not end on the cross but triumphed with a new hope in the resurrection. Therefore, we proudly proclaim, **"We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song."** Jesus, the Son of God who was born of a virgin, lived as a man, revealed himself as Emmanuel that is **"God is with us."**

### Pilgrims of Hope

The entire Catholic Church under the able leadership of Pope Francis is preparing for the forthcoming Jubilee Year 2025. It is a sacred milestone in the life of the Church. Unveiling the motto for this Jubilee Year, Holy Father wrote: "We must fan the flame of hope ... the forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly in



restoring a climate of hope and trust ... that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, 'Pilgrims of Hope'".

### Hope in the Bible

The Holy Bible is full of hope. It is founded on God's faithfulness and His unchanging nature. Hence God never disappoints us. Letter to the Hebrews describes faith, closely linked to hope when it teaches, **"Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."** (Heb 11:1). Hope involves waiting patiently for God's timing and enduring through trials. The people of Israel certainly waited for the Lord but often they lost their hope and fell into the trap of disobedience and sin. We have many accounts of how despite God's love and faithfulness, they made images of other gods and worshipped them.

### Without Hope, we may not Cope

All of us are eagerly waiting to celebrate the birth of our

Lord Jesus Christ. Are we waiting in hope? We experience many hopeless situations around us. We live in an intensely broken world. There are traces and evidences of brokenness around us. For instance, struggles in marriages, financial securities, job struggles, broken relationships, and many other areas of life. In all these, we need hope to keep going; without hope, we may not cope. Do we firmly believe that this Christmas, Jesus is coming to dispel the darkness of sin and disobedience and illumine our lives with unwavering hope?

### Mary as a woman of Hope

When the angel gave Mary the 'good' news of being the Mother of the Saviour, in human terms, Mary's hope tumbled down like a pack of cards. She was engaged to a man named to Joseph from the house of David. All was set for her marriage, a young girl dreaming of her marriage day. All of a sudden her dreams were shattered and hopes ended. Now she had to surrender all her plans to God and embrace God's Will. Mary did not grumble or complain but joyfully exclaimed, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be to me according to your will." (Luke 1:38). She became the "Pilgrim of Hope". Mary's journey of hope began at the Annunciation with Jesus in her womb and continued to Calvary with Jesus on the cross but did not end with the death of Jesus, it definitively continued to the Resurrection and



Ascension of Jesus. Mary became a beacon of hope to the Apostles who had given up hope after the crucifixion of Jesus. A sound like the blowing of a violent wind coming from heaven and filling the whole house where the Apostles were sitting with Mary (Acts 2:2) brought new hope in the lives of the Apostles who were now set on fire to proclaim the Good News and witness Jesus.

### Advent A time of Hope

Mother Mary teaches us to be patient, to wait in hope and to surrender all our plans to God and embrace God's will in every situation of our lives. She invites us to have deep hope in life, and build on firm faith and total trust in God.

Where there is God, there is hope and therefore **'Hope never disappoints. Hold On, Pain Ends.'**



## Christmas: The Gift of New Beginnings

At the start of his ministry, a priest made a pilgrimage to Greece to visit a respected elder on Mount Athos. Seeking guidance, he knew Athos was a significant centre of Christian Monasticism and Enlightenment. He described to the Abbot all that he had done, hoped for and planned to accomplish. The Abbot smiled and said simply, **"It is a good beginning."**



shows that God is with us, He is 'Emmanuel,' in the midst of our messy world. It is good because it brings hope to 'people of goodwill' (Lk.2.14). Every birth is the arrival of new hope, and the birth of Christ, is the ultimate fresh start a new beginning for all humanity.

St. Paul described this new way of life as a transformation: shedding

the old self and putting on the new, or dying to old ways and being born into new ways of living. He wrote in Ephesians, **"Be made new in the attitude of your minds; and put on the new self, created to be like God"** (Eph. 4:20-24). Today, we might liken it to upgrading to a new computer operating system. One that rewrites the program of our lives, rewiring our connections, goals, and behaviors. The old operating system teaches us to view those different from us as threats, but the new one calls us to welcome those on the margins. The circumstances surrounding Joseph and Mary still resonate today. People in their situation are often whispered about, ridiculed, and turned away. Those like the shepherds continue to be disdained and mistreated. The old habits of the world die hard. But Christmas is always an invitation to step into God's new beginning and make our own fresh start, year after year.

Consider the example of Anne de Xaintonge, who pioneered the radical idea of educating girls through an un-cloistered women's order, operating a free school for girls. Her vision was revolutionary at the time, it was a new beginning. It was met with great resistance, yet it triumphed because it was rooted in Christ's love. This Christmas, may we all experience the love of God. May we feel welcomed, seen, and heard. And may we begin anew again, sharing this love and life with everyone around us. Happy Christmas and Happy New Year-2025.

the old self and putting on the new, or dying to old ways and being born into new ways of living. He wrote in Ephesians, **"Be made new in the attitude of your minds; and put on the new self, created to be like God"** (Eph. 4:20-24). Today, we might liken it to upgrading to a new computer operating system. One that rewrites the program of our lives, rewiring our connections, goals, and behaviors. The old operating system teaches us to view those different from us as threats, but the new one calls us to welcome those on the margins. The circumstances surrounding Joseph and Mary still resonate today. People in their situation are often whispered about, ridiculed, and turned away. Those like the shepherds continue to be disdained and mistreated. The old habits of the world die hard. But Christmas is always an invitation to step into God's new beginning and make our own fresh start, year after year.

Consider the example of Anne de Xaintonge, who pioneered the radical idea of educating girls through an un-cloistered women's order, operating a free school for girls. Her vision was revolutionary at the time, it was a new beginning. It was met with great resistance, yet it triumphed because it was rooted in Christ's love. This Christmas, may we all experience the love of God. May we feel welcomed, seen, and heard. And may we begin anew again, sharing this love and life with everyone around us. Happy Christmas and Happy New Year-2025.

Sr. Meena

## Love Made Flesh

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The divine became human. The miracle of Jesus: God takes on flesh and blood. He desires to live as one of us and with each one of us. This means God, who is love would care for us so much that he became a part of our world. God's love is infinite and so, relentlessly he pursues us. **"Have you not heard His silent steps, He comes comes ever comes."**

The bird sings in the forest not because of an audience but because there is a song in the bird. Is 43:1-5 says, "You are precious in my eyes" He comes into places of darkness and of light. He lives in our neighbourhood specially with the people who are struggling. He comes into our homes, our communities. God is with us at every step of our lives. God moves and lives with us. We meet him everywhere. God is one of us in flesh and blood. We can see God if we look around us.

**The Person of Jesus:** The beloved Son of the Father, love made flesh, Jesus' arrival opened the door to salvation for all those who wish to receive it. Our dear Mother Mary's acceptance expressed in her 'yes' made this possible. In a world so torn apart by rivalry and hatred, Jesus' coming gives meaning and bridges all divisions and heals all wounds. We can share God's love shared in Jesus with those who we meet on our journey of life with a smile, a warm hand-shake, friendly greetings and so on.

The people of Israel waited for the promised Messiah and at last light dawned upon them unfailingly in the birth of His Son Jesus. God fulfilling His promise to his chosen people. Patience and restraint is unavoidable for growth. The memory of this love can last for a lifetime, an eternity as we rejoice at the incarnation, God's entrance into our lives. God poured the Divine into the

lowliest of humanity into an animal stall and picked us up, so human race could walk with God.

Christmas is a time to be recipients of God's love and care. Christmas is an attitude and event of the heart and just not a season of the year. It is an event that should touch our lives for an entire year. Christmas is an opportunity to let the strength and beauty of love flow through our lives to others. It's a time to reach out and touch another's life with love and warmth. Christmas is a time to share love, friendship, care, and concern. It is a time for healing of relationships. Christmas is a celebration of God's giving



to us the gift of healing. Christmas is a time for joy to ring throughout the chamber's of the heart.

Jesus depends on us to spread the Good News of God's love, offering the world hope, and joy.

Now go into the neighbourhood and proclaim to everyone that the Lord has come and invite them to come and see this wonder miracle

that has happened. Spend time with this Baby Jesus in the crib.

Happy Christmas

Sr. Judith

## The Saint I most Admire

We do well when we look up to the saints, our elders in their spiritual life. They are a light for every Christian and every Christian community. Every saint is a godly person, eminent in piety and virtue. The saints loved God and on that account loved their fellow beings and served them. Every saint is also a Mission of our souls, he or she helps us to look within ourselves and discover our own souls, pure or blemished as they may be. The stories of saints urge us to walk the path of Holiness. If he or she could, why not I?

As I was reflecting on the life of many saints I have read, their lives were not a bed of roses, they had lots of struggles and difficulties in life. Their lives have been the source of inspiration and yet I was a bit confused, as to whom I could look up to and suddenly St. Clare's image came before me, and so I thought of writing on the life of St. Clare.

St. Clare, the first woman follower of St. Francis of Assisi, was born on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1194, in a noble family of Favarone Assisi in Central Italy. Her name Clara in Latin and Chiara in Italian means Clear Shining or Bright. One day, just before Clare's birth, her mother was praying before the crucifix in the Monastery of Assisi for her child about to be born. When she heard a voice telling her, "have no fear woman, you will bear your child safely and she will be a torch to give a clear light to the world".

At the age of fifteen Clare was deeply impressed by the preaching of St. Francis and wanted to follow him. Having no provision for any woman member in his Order, St. Francis kept her in suspense for three years. Then on Palm Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March 1212, she went to St. Francis and begged him to admit her into his Order. Seeing her determination and zeal he agreed.

Clare was temporarily accommodated at the neighbouring Benedictine Convent. Clare's father and

relatives protested angrily but she did not change her mind. Soon after that her younger sister Agnes also left home and joined her. Clare had *one complete victory over her own egoism and the craving for earthly possession. She had chosen a life of radical poverty.*



In 1228, when Pope Gregory IX offered to absolve her from the vow of Absolute Poverty, she refused the Pope saying, "Holy Father, absolve me from my sins but not from the obligation of following the Lord". Her love of poverty, humility and charity of Christ was exceptional. In 1247, Pope Innocent IV sanctioned the holding of property by Clare, but St. Clare composed a rule requiring them to practise Absolute Poverty.

St. Clare breathed farewell to this world on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1253. She founded the Order of Poor Ladies, A Monastic Religious Order for Women in the Franciscan Tradition and wrote their Rule of Life. The First Set of Monastic Guideline known to have been written by a woman.

St. Clare led her Spiritual Life by putting her understanding of God and Scripture into action. She served others continuously. Her sisters testified after her death that whenever the sisters would spend the day begging or doing works of Charity to the people, when they came home, St. Clare would bend down and wash their feet.

At night she would stroll the town and cover the homeless with blankets so they wouldn't feel too cold. St. Clare always provided for the poor and was attentive to their need. For St. Clare, humility and poverty were intertwined. She worked hard and fought consistently for less because she knew in her heart that LESS is MORE. When we empty ourselves we think less of ourselves, so we can love and serve others MORE

Sr. Archana

# News Around the Globe

## The Solemn Exposition of the Sacred Relics of St. Francis Xavier



Began on 21st Oct. 2024 at 9.30 a.m. with the Solemn Eucharistic for the opening of the Exposition after which the Sacred Relics of the Saint was taken in a Solemn Procession to the See Cathedral Church. The Theme chosen: " We are Messengers of the Good News." A special Logo was prepared designed for the event. The Theme and Logo focus on the responsibility of every Christian in spreading the message of Love, Hope, and Peace to the four corners of the World. The Sacred Relics will be kept at the Cathedral Church for veneration by the devotees for 45 days. On 5th June 2025, the Sacred Relics of the Saint will be taken back to the Basilica in a Solemn Procession which will begin at 9.30 a.m. followed by the Solemn Eucharist for the closing of the Exposition.



## Federation Session At Montferrand In France 23rd -26th October 2024

35 Sisters participated coming from different Nationalities - Brig, India, South Africa, Dole, Fribourg, Tours, America, Congo. It was indeed an enriching time to see and greet one another, to have an exchange of our life and mission as daughters of Anne de Xainctonge.



The theme was: "*Called to build a synodal Church: our way of following Christ*". Father Luc Forestier, a researcher in Ecclesiology associated with the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Lille, in France was the resource person. The talks and the group sharings were helpful and relevant to the time.

We had a cultural evening, where each Nationality presented their rich heritage through song and dance. These lighter moments knitted us in love and togetherness. We bid farewell continuing to be little lamps of God's love and mission wherever we are....

Sr. Rita

## Silver Jubilee Celebrations



On 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024 we had the Silver Jubilee of Five of our Sisters (Right - Left)- **Sr. Nalini, Sr. Elizabeth, Sr. Mercian, Sr. Lavina and Sr. Valsa** at Shanti Ashram. Rev. Bishop John Rodrigues was the main Celebrant. We thank God for our Sisters for the gift of their call and for working in the Vineyard of the Lord so faithfully for the past twenty-five years.

## Journeying into Oneself

The junior course this year was held in St. Mary's Convent in Goa from 4<sup>th</sup> November to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Thirteen juniors attended accompanied by Sr.Lissy Thomas.

Resource person - Fr.Clifford Castelino a Diocesan Priest from Goa along with Mrs.Perpetua a Nurse by profession and a Member of the Goa Diocesan Holy Family service.

### Highlights of the Course: \_

- Sexuality -Human and Divine
- Introducing and sharing of ourselves with each other.
- Self-Discovery
- Writing our Obituaries

The course was very enlightening as we explored how emotions influence our actions, thought processes and interactions with others. It was an enriching experience, enhancing our knowledge and motivating us to explore



our abilities and potentials. It encouraged us to reflect on our own feelings and appreciate the complexity of emotion in shaping who we are.

We are very grateful to Sr.Marina who arranged such an informative and motivating course for us.

Sr. Prerana

## BE A LIGHT - Mission in Romania

We began the academic year on the 9th of September. In our kindergarten this year we have 130 children, divided into 6 groups: Playgroup with 2 divisions, L.K.G. with 2 divisions, and the U.K.G. with 2 divisions. In the hostel, we have 24 high school students whom we accommodate.

On the 21st of October, we celebrated the feast of our patron St. Ursula with our parishioners and collaborators. We had the solemn Holy Eucharist in St. Anthony's Church which belongs to the Franciscans and where we are involved in pastoral activities. It was



a joyful and meaningful celebration where we as one parish community prayed for the entire Ursuline family.

This year for our Summer Camps we organized training and formation programs for the volunteers. They were divided into 2 groups. For the age groups from 10 to 5 years and those of age 16 to 20 years. We invited some resource persons who enlightened the volunteers with valuable inputs on team building and leadership skills and also through few brainstorming activities. It was indeed a fruitful coming together and learning from each other.

Sr. Marie Therese, Sr. Joseline, and Sr. Diya



South Africa Province - We are blessed with two novices who made their vows this day. We wish them God's Blessing as they journey with the Lord.

## Empowered To Witness



On this year's Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Ursuline Sisters of the South African Province celebrated 90 years of mission in South Africa (1934-2024) and the first profession of two young sisters, Sr. Francis Ngiba SU and Sr. Augustine Mbanjwa SU.

The Ursulines of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded in 1606 in France by Anne De Xaintonge. Over the last 418 years, we have spread to many parts of the world, including South Africa (1934), where sisters are engaged in education, pastoral ministries, medical assistance, social work, and other forms of service, all aimed at empowering the communities they serve.

In gratitude to God, the province celebrated its 90th Anniversary on December 9, 2024, and the first



*The first five missionaries of the SA Province*

profession of Sr Francis and Sr Augustine. The theme chosen for the Anniversary was, **"Empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness God's Love"** taken from Acts 1:8. The event was honoured by the presence of Sr Nicole Glenz SU

and Sr Mary Joseph SU from our Mother House, Brig. Bishop Sithembele Sipuka of the

The First Pioneering Missionaries of the S.A. Province Sipuka of the Mthatha Diocese, along with priests, religious brothers and sisters, and many members of the Catholic and non-Catholic community. Their attendance highlighted the significant impact the sisters have had on their lives.

The Liturgy was lively and well-prepared enabling all to take an active part in it. In his homily, Bishop Sipuka spoke about the strong and confident nature of Mother Mary. He encouraged us to embody that same boldness, "How can this be, since I'm only a virgin?" (Luke 1:34) paired with humility and respect. He highlighted that Mother Mary's ability to stand her ground, having a dialogue with God yet still very young, will help us serve God wholeheartedly, using the gifts He has given us to fulfil our roles as religious. As religious individuals, we are called to dedicate all our energy to the service of God's people.

Our hostel children with the help of Sr Celine and workers, beautifully entertained our visitors with a cultural programme.

The SA Province will forever be grateful to God for enabling the mission of Mother Anneto reach this part of the world where it is still alive and active. The seed planted by our pioneering sisters will keep germinating and bearing more fruit. Each day we look to the future with hope.



## Walking In The Footsteps Of Mother Anne



It was a remarkable experience and a privileged moment for each one of us to visit our Mother House in Brig. We were warmly welcomed by our sisters there. From 21<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Oct along with some of the sisters we travelled to Dijon and Dole to attend the Federation Meeting. At Taize, we were fortunate to visit and pray with the Taize prayer community where hundreds of youth come together from all over the world. A day in Taize, through common prayers, singing, silence and personal reflection, could help us to rediscover the presence of God in our lives, thus to find inner peace and a renewed sense of purpose. In the modern world, where youth are so distracted with gadgets and worldly pleasures we were happy to see a group of youth spending time to rediscover the inner peace thus to find God within.

At Dijon, the birthplace of our Foundress Anne de Xaintonge, Sr. Jacqueline Roblot, the Superior General of Dole explained to us in detail the birth place of Anne, the Jesuit college, the Parliament etc. It gave us the feeling of walking with Mother Anne. At Dole we saw the gate through which Mother Anne might have entered Dole, the common washing place where Mother Anne instructed girls and women, Madame Duzin's house where she lived for sometime and the steps where she sat when she was put out of the house. We sat on those very steps recalling all that Mother Anne experienced - loneliness, disappointment and a feeling of not being wanted. The feelings in us at that juncture were beyond words. Our eyes welled up in tears, our hearts filled with love and admiration for Mother Anne, the difficulties that she endured and the problems that she faced to fulfill her vision and mission

and the courage and conviction she exhibited at that age and at that time is noteworthy and inspiring even today.

### Tombstone of Mother Anne

The gigantic Church at Notre Dame has a historical importance for the beginning of our Congregation there. We earnestly prayed for vocations to our Congregation. We visited two communities of the Dole Federation, the ones at Mount Roland. What surprised us is that, these communities have two or three sisters, who

are aged above 75 but are young at heart and giving joy and love in daily life. They gave us a very warm welcome.

The Federation Meeting was at **MONTFERRAND IN FRANCE**. The theme was: **"Called to build a Synodal Church: our way of following Christ"**. Father Luc Forestier was the resource person. The talks and the group sharings were helpful and relevant to the time.



What inspired us the most was the being together with our sisters from different Federations. Like most Congregations where there are no vocations one wonders what will be the future in Europe as the existing missions are being given out to different organisations. But at the same time it was consoling to hear that these organisations are rooted in the mission and vision of Mother Anne.

In conclusion we want to thank all our sisters who were instrumental in giving us this golden opportunity to visit our Mother House and from there to attend the Federation Meeting enabling us to meet so many of our sisters of the Federation. In a special way we thank Sr. Rita, Sr. Nicole and Sr. Marina. This is a lifetime experience which will be etched in our memories in the days to come.

**Sr. Malini, Sr. Mercy, Sr. Leela and Sr. Jacinta**



## My Prayer Experience



As I reflect on my prayer life and how I have grown, I can say that it has been a wonderful journey. I remember my childhood days, where my mother and grandparents played a vital role in inculcating the importance of prayer into my life. They used to force children to start the family evening prayer when the

evening Church bell rang,

and to attend the morning the Mass regularly. Later, it became part of the us, yet we did not know the meaning of prayer. In those times, my understanding was that prayer meant asking for blessings and God fulfilling our needs. As the years passed by, I found meaning in my prayer life.

It has been a profound journey of spiritual growth and self-discovery. Today, Prayer, for me, is more than just a routine or an obligation; it is a deeply personal and transformative practice that connects me to Someone greater than myself.

In the quiet moments of prayer, I find a sanctuary away from the chaos of daily life. This sacred time allows me to reflect, seek guidance, and express gratitude. It is in these moments of solitude that I feel a profound sense of peace and clarity. Prayer has become a refuge where I can unburden my heart and mind, leaving me with a

renewed sense of purpose and direction.

Throughout my journey, I have experienced different forms of prayer, each with its unique impact. Silent meditation allows me to listen to the whispers of my soul, while communicative prayer helps me to articulate my deepest desires and concerns. The communal prayers shared with my faith community brings a sense of unity and collective strength, reminding me that I am part of a larger world.

One of the most transformative aspects of prayer for me has been its ability to foster resilience and hope. During challenging times, prayer has been a source of comfort and strength, helping me navigate through life's uncertainties. It has taught me the importance of surrendering to a Higher Power and trusting in the Divine Plan, even when the path ahead seemed unclear. Moreover, prayer has deepened my sense of empathy and compassion. As I pray for others, I become more attuned to their struggles and joys, fostering a greater sense of connection and understanding. This practice has encouraged me to act with kindness and generosity.

In conclusion, my prayer experience has been a vital aspect of my spiritual journey, offering solace, guidance, and a deeper connection to both the divine and the world around me. It continues to shape my perspective, nurturing a sense of peace, resilience, and compassion.

Sr. Ida

## My Experiences in Prayer

Prayer is a conversation with God. It is the longing of the soul. And it is not merely asking for help. But a relationship and a daily admittance of one's unworthiness before the Divine, and experiencing the divine energy for the day. I like this hymn very much. **"What a friend we have in Jesus."**

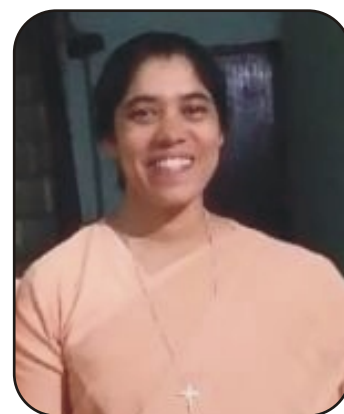
Every day I experience the presence of God through simple and ordinary things. Romans 12:2 **"Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer."** When we pray we receive graces to bear pain and suffering with patience. And also a grace to wait patiently with hope. We have the courage and strength to wait till prayers are granted. God is faithful in all His promises so whatever we ask in His name He will give according to His plan and purpose.

From childhood onwards I have learnt to have a deep trust in God. Isaiah 14:27 says, **"Nothing can stop God's plan for your life."** In my nothingness God's grace is abundant. He can make me a hero in my zero. This has been my experience in life. As soon as I joined the Pre-Novitiate I was suffering with severe headaches and no medicine could cure me. I believed that if my mother could pray over me and make the sign of the cross with holy oil on my forehead and attend Holy Mass in my

Parish I will be healed. So it happened and the headache departed from me and never came back to me till today, when I have completed Silver Jubilee of my profession.

In my life there were times when I experienced much suffering due to the sudden death of my brother. I felt rejection from God and misunderstanding from companions and many difficulties hemmed in on every side but God gave me the strength to face them with courage and confidence. Isaiah 30:20 says, **"When you receive bread of adversary and waters of affliction your Master will never turn away from you and you will only see His eyes fixed on you"**. This is an assurance that God gives us each and every time when we are in trouble.

When I look back into my life I can say that the best God-experience I had was when I faced challenges in my life. When things are okay and friends are with us and everything is going on smoothly that time prayer is like a



routine. But when everything is in a mess and we are in utter confusion then we turn to God in prayer and that has tremendous impact in our life.

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 **"Rejoice always .pray without ceasing., give thanks in all circumstances ,for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"**

Pope Francis has declared 2024 as the Year of Prayer, in preparation for the Jubilee of 2025 with the theme, **"Pilgrims of Hope"**. The Year of Prayer seeks to rejuvenate our spiritual life individually and as communities, inspiring a renewed commitment to faith and service.

Sr. Elsy

## Prayer - a Hotline To God

True Prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It's a personal spiritual relationship between God and me. Pope Francis rightly categorized prayer into four segments: **Listening, Adoration, Intercession and Thanksgiving**. All of us have experienced prayer in the above manner. Listening in prayer enables us to quieten ourselves in order to be attentive, focussed and aware of our inner movements and the relationship we share with God and one another.

**Listening** creates deeper empathy towards creation and fellow human beings. Whenever I have listened to others without prejudice, it has re-awakened in me the need to **adore** God for His mighty power in the lives of people. I realised it's only the Lord who is worthy of all praise. Attending a Vipassana Retreat recently made me aware of the pattern of my breathing whether it be deep, shallow, slow or fast which is affected by the thoughts, memories and emotions that crossed my mind.

**Intercession** becomes automatic only when we have listened caringly to the heartbeats of God and that of others. It's not always an easy task and I have fallen short many a times, however, the Lord trained me in patience and determination through it all. Intercession can be done both in word and deeds of compassion. Great intercessors like Abraham, Moses, prophets, Mother Mary, saints and so on, are our inspiration. We

too act as bridges between God and our brothers and sisters. That's why when people see us, very often they ask us to pray for them. They believe that we have some kind of a hotline to God.

When I think of **Thanksgiving**, what comes to my mind is not mere words, but like the blind man Bartimeus in Mk 10:52 out of gratitude for the inner sight which he received wanted to follow Jesus and commit his life in service of the Lord.

Therefore, Thanksgiving is not a mere lip service, but a wholesome action of self-surrender. Many times I have experienced that after trying hard in all possible ways, there seems to be no way to resolve the issue, then I surrender myself and the issue, that's the time the Lord opens a new path for me. The surrender gives me a sense of tranquillity and I find calmness in the eye of the storm. The docility to co-operate in doing His Will comes from surrendering. Thus, my prayer becomes my way of life....a reflection of my relationships, ministry and finally my hotline to God personally and globally.

Sr. Lissy.



1. **Question:** What did the other reindeer not let Rudolph do because of his shiny red nose?
2. **Question:** Elvis isn't going to have a white Christmas, he's going to have a....
3. **Question:** What words follow "Silent Night" in the song?
4. **Question:** In Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, what was the first name of Scrooge?
5. **Question:** Which real-life person is Santa Claus based on?
6. **Question:** Which one of Santa's reindeer has the same name as another holiday mascot (Emblem)?
7. **Question:** Which country started the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree?
8. **Question:** How do you say "Merry Christmas" in Spanish?
9. **Question:** What gift did the Little Drummer Boy give to the newborn Christ?
10. **Question:** Three of Santa's reindeer's names begin with the letter "D." What are those names?
11. **Question:** What are Christmas trees also called?
12. **Question:** What plant is sometimes known as the 'Christmas flower'?



### Answer

- Answer 1 : Join in any reindeer games  
 Answer 2 : Blue Christmas  
 Answer 3 : Holy night  
 Answer 4 : Ebenezer  
 Answer 5 : The Christian bishop St. Nicholas  
 Answer 6 : Cupid  
 Answer 7 : Germany  
 Answer 8 : Feliz Navidad  
 Answer 9 : He played a song for him on his drums  
 Answer 10 : Dancer, Dasher and Donner  
 Answer 11 : Yule-Tree  
 Answer 12 : Poinsettias

## For your sweet tooth

### 1. Peanut Butter Cookies

#### Ingredients

1 cup peanut butter,  
1 cup white sugar,  
1 large egg.

**Method:** Preheat the oven to 350 degreesF (175 degrees C). Mix peanut butter, sugar, and egg together in a bowl using an electric mixer until smooth and creamy. Roll mixture into 1-inch balls and place 1 inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet.

Flatten each with a fork, making a criss-cross pattern. Bake in the preheated oven until edges are firm, about 10 minutes. Cool on the baking sheet briefly before removing to a wire rack to cool completely.



### 2. Kulkuls

#### Ingredients

1/4 kg Semolina (rava),  
1/4 kg All purpose flour (maida),  
1 egg,  
A splash of milk,  
3 tbsp clarified butter (ghee),  
150 ml freshly extracted coconut juice),  
salt to taste,  
Superfine (or powdered) sugar, to taste (Start with a couple of heaped tablespoons and add more as needed),  
Oil, for deep frying.

**Method:** Knead all the ingredients to a dough using milk as needed. Cover the dough with a damp cloth and let it rest for about half an hour. Make balls and then shape into kulkuls.



### 3. Boros

#### Ingredients

All you need to make boros are powdered sugar, butter, sojee or semolina, eggs, ground coconut, and rose essence or rose water.

**Method:** Beat the egg whites to a froth with a whisk or a fork. Add the egg yolk and whisk them again. Add in the butter and then the powdered sugar and mix well. Then add the semolina and rose essence and mix together. To this mixture, add the grated coconut and mix, and allow to rest overnight or for a few hours. Next morning, line a tray with baking paper and sprinkle with flour. Make small balls of the mixture, flatten them, and place them on the tray. You can also make designs on them with lines of a fork or dots with color. Bake these in a pre-heated



oven for about 30 minutes, at 180 degrees.

### Date Rolls

#### Ingredients:

1/2 cup soft butter, 60 gms powdered sugar, 1 egg, 1 1/2 tsp vanilla, 2 cups maida, 1/2 tsp salt.

#### Method:

1. In a bowl add the butter and powdered sugar and mix with a beater.
2. Add the egg and vanilla essence and beat.
3. Add 2 cups maida and 1/2 tsp of salt.
4. Mix like for chappatis, cover and keep for 1/2 hour.
5. Remove the seeds from the dates and in each date place a piece of walnut.
6. Roll the dough like chappati(not so thin) cut into strips and roll each date and seal the ends.
7. Paint the dates with the yolk of an egg.
8. Heat the oven and bake at 180 degrees for 10-15 mins.
9. Remove on wrack, let it cool and put in airtight containers.



### Wheat Flour Nankaties

#### Ingredients and Method

1. 3/4 cup ghee, 1 cup powdered sugar, Mix with spoon., Add 1 1/4 cup wheat flour
2. 1/4 cup semolina (rava), 1/2 tsp cardamom powder, 1/4 tsp baking powder
3. Mix it all with spoon. Then knead like for chappatis. Please do not add water, if needed add a little ghee.
4. Make balls and press as show in the picture. You can put a dot of different colours on top of the Nankaties or put pieces of any nuts on top.
5. Pre-heat the oven and the bake at 180 degrees for 10-15 minutes.
6. Remove on wrack, let it cool and put in airtight containers.



Sr. Susanne

