

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART PROVINCE OF INDIA NEWSLETTER



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NEWSLETTER FROM THE MALVAN COMMUNITY, MALVAN

As we look back on these past months of our life here in Malvan, we wish to share with you our reflections on our life and experiences in community, ministry and in the parish especially during the lockdown.

The Covid-19 pandemic has severely restricted our movements and activities of the community during these past months. With the rapid digitalization of work, school and social life have never been the same. We entered the new normal with faith and hope and trust stimulated by the pandemic. We spent more time in praying for the world suffering from the impact of the pandemic. God has been our strength and support during



this time. We realised that we had difficulty at times at seeing God's presence in this challenging situation the world is facing today. But we believe in faith that God is always with us, never abandoning us. His love sustains us daily. God is in, with and among us, inviting us to be hopeful, courageous and loving in this challenging time.

In response to the Province Solidarity for Covid Relief, we as a community were happy to reach out to a few families in our parish. We packed and distributed relief materials to 20 families in our three wados, namely Medha, Revtale and Bhatt. We also reached out to a few families in Deobag which is an extension of our parish. These families were grateful to receive some ration as other doors were closed to them.





Online classes for children have been a learning experience for me. I discovered my own capacities to meet this challenge, to work as a team with my colleagues and to be creative. This new way of teaching has empowered and encouraged me to give my best to the children. This year being the Silver Jubilee year of our school, Rosary English Medium School, I was responsible on the Events Organizing Committee for conducting various inter-school competitions like elocution, carol singing, fruit carving, flower arrangements and monologues. I learnt to make posters and E-Certificates. Working as a team was a very enriching experience of learning from one another. During

my free time each day in the afternoon I have also had the added joy of coaching a few students who needed help with their studies since their parents were not able to follow the online classes.



This year, I had the responsibility and the joy of accompanying and guiding the youth of our parish. Much to my surprise, their response was overwhelming. For the first time we conducted three activities for the parish– A Bible quiz competition for children, Rosary making competition and carol singing competition for the parishioners. Sr. Rita conducted a Recollection for the youth which was much appreciated and also accompanied the youth on the guitar in their Carol singing at Christmas. All these events in the school and parish have brought us closer to one another to experience our oneness and solidarity.

Monika Fernandes rscj



This was a challenging year for me in Ashadeep Nursery School. In the beginning I was confused and I was wondering whether we needed to close the nursery school because of the poor response of the parents. Of the 25 forms that were taken only 8 children got enrolled in the school due to the fear of the pandemic. However, in spite of the setback, Inasen, my assistant teacher, and I, conducted online classes for the 8 children who were enrolled. I reminded myself of St M.

Sophie's words "I will go to the ends of the earth for the sake of one child". I also felt the community support in contacting the parents and at the meetings we conducted. The parents participated wholeheartedly and shared freely how they were coping with their children's education during the pandemic.

Some of our children who come from poorer families did not have access to technology like the computer or mobiles. Online learning became difficult for some since they didn't possess a mobile or the parent who owned one needed it for his personal work. Hence some children have been coming to the nursery since October 2020 and have been fortunate to get some attention from us. We feel encouraged that some parents take pride in showing their children's performance through videos prepared by them. I think with sufficient access, online learning programmes can ensure that children, especially girls, do not drop out of education but are better equipped for a highly digitized future.



Different competitions like making Rakhees and Christmas cards were held online. These brought out the talents and creativity of our little children. One little child from our nursery was feeling lost at home. She was missing the school so much that one day she dragged her grandmother to the nursery school wanting to see "Sr. Lily". She was happy to see me but as soon as she saw the swing she ran towards it and enjoyed a few movements on the swing. Every evening I enjoy doing some gardening which has been a means of relaxation for me. I also distributed Holy Communion to the sick and house-bound parishioners in our different wados. It was an opportunity for me to enter into their loneliness and pain and to pray with them.

Lily Kullu rscj

I have enjoyed watching and meditating on God's creation here in Malvan especially the colourful and beautiful birds that come each day to drink water from the lotus pond. One evening I was happily surprised by an eagle sitting on the cross in our garden in great majesty then flapping its wings as it flew away. It reminded me of the Lord's majesty and power. I begin my day with the online masses celebrated by his Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias. I look forward to his inspiring homilies that have touched my heart. Once a week after the severe lockdown was over, I have been able to attend the Sunday liturgy in the parish and have had the opportunity also to meet the parishioners and interact with them after mass. It was a joy to meet some of our ex-students too who are doing well for themselves and holding important positions in the professions of health, engineering and food technology to mention a few. They expressed their gratitude profusely for the good foundation and education they received when the school was administered by the rscjs. It has been a time of renewing my contacts with a few ex-



students who also took time to visit me. I rejoiced with them as they shared their successes and I offered them my prayerful support in the challenges of life that they are facing today

One of our ex-students, Apurva Fernandes (some of you may know him), took us (Rita & me) to Achare. He has undertaken a huge project of “Prawn farming” on a 30 acres land in Achare which is about 21 Kms. from Malvan. I think our boys have come of age in supporting and giving a helping hand in their father’s business. My visits to the Ashadeep nursery school, especially meeting with parents, seeing their interest in the online education of their child and their joy in encouraging and mentoring, have been a heartwarming experience. I feel grateful for this time for spiritual reading and updating myself on the events of the world which I have shared with the community and which I have often taken to prayer.



On 25th December, Christmas Day, a Carol Singing competition was held in the parish. For the first time, approximately 15 participants from every wado, young and old, presented a variety of carols in 4 languages – Konkani, Hindi, Marathi and English. The carols were accompanied by creative Christmas scenes to bring out the theme “A Ray of hope in the midst of uncertainty”. We, the parish fathers team and sisters gave a surprise item – a medley of 5 Christmas carols – at the end of the competition which was appreciated and applauded by one and all.

Archana Pinto rscj

It has been a long journey to reach Malvan since I returned from the US and my little boat has berthed in various ports; I am grateful that it was so, for it has brought me a wealth of experience and is part of my story. From the time I arrived in Mumbai i.e. mid- March 2020 until now, I was able to discover the potency of a life of silence and contemplation, and get closer to the suffering reality of the world whose preferential option is to serve the poorest in society. My journey has brought me to share life with people who have had their share of struggles and problems due to the pandemic. It has been a journey with times of joy and sorrow, where I have learned – and continue to learn – to welcome the clay that is me, my lights and shadows, my wealth and my poverty.

I have been engaged in, zoom meetings of RUN (Religious at the UN) in different webinars on topics like NEP (National Education Policy) issues concerning the migrants, the farmers, human trafficking, the imprisonment of Fr. Stan Swamy S.J, women and children etc. These meetings have opened my heart to the challenges of our world, the vulnerabilities, the pain and sufferings of those affected by Covid-19. I was also happy to participate in the zoom meetings of JPIC regarding International structure and their Strategic Plan and also of the Vocation Commission with the

ASIANZ region. It made me aware of the need to work together and to collaborate with one another in our mission to promote justice and peace and Vocations to the Society as we grow as ONE BODY.

During Advent, the prayer guidelines from the JPIC International Team for the four weeks encouraged me to bring to our community prayer, the world at this time with all its painful events, to reflect with the help of the JPIC Document “Artisans of Hope in our Blessed and Broken World” and to connect with our sisters and brothers who are committed through their ministries in sharing the tender and compassionate love of God.

I experienced a crying need to transition from relief to focussing on core needs of our people in Malvan who are struggling to survive on the long road to economic recovery, to help them build long term resilience.

During the lockdown the fisher-folk suffered badly because they were prohibited from going out to sea. So the younger generation of the traditional fisher-folk families are seeking alternative means of livelihood. Those who run hotels and other business for tourists have also been affected as not many tourists were allowed to enter Malvan in the lockdown period. The daily wage earners too have experienced a loss of income and are struggling to make both ends meet due to the pandemic.

We as rscj in Malvan parish are responsible for three areas (wadós), namely Medha, Bhatt and Revtale and we are also closely connected with Devbag, a neighbouring village which is an extension of our Malvan parish. With the help of the local people we have been able to identify those who are needy and belong to the above mentioned wadós who would be the beneficiaries of our project which has been sanctioned by the Mother House. Some of the activities that our women and men hope to undertake are: chapatti making, candle making, food stalls and canteens for tourists, fishery, sea-water recreational activities, electrical and fabrication works. The projects have still to take off as we are in the process of getting the formalities completed at the local level.



We never emerge from a crisis just as we were. We come out either better or worse. The pandemic has forced us to think clearly about how we want to emerge from this: either better or worse. It has shown us that we cannot live without one another. I experience the call to make good use of my time and energy in order to transform the challenge that lies before us into an opportunity to build together, once more, the future we all desire.

Rita Pinto rscj