

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART PROVINCE OF INDIA NEWSLETTER



10th February 2021

NEWSLETTER FROM THE BHOKAR COMMUNITY¹

“Into God’s embrace”

The year 2020 brought the world’s trouble of the COVID-19 pandemic. I thought that the year 2021 will bring joy and peace. In the words of St. Philippine Duchesne, “Do not look back to the past, nor forward to the future. Claim only the present, for it holds God’s will.” I took these words to heart and surrendered to God’s will to accept it as it comes and entered the year 2021 with hope to enjoy God’s will. 1st and 2nd January went off peacefully, but the 3rd came with a painful experience of the will of God as God suddenly called my father to his eternal reward. As usual, early in the morning around 3.00 a.m. he had gone out to sea for fishing. “When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.” (Lk. 5:11) These words literally came true in the case of my father. He left everything and followed Him when he reached the shore. At the age of ten or twelve he began fishing and till the end he did it faithfully. Someone has said, “When I know that I am going to die, I will continue the work that is in my hand.”

My father used to say, “When I am in the sea, I belong to the sea, if I come back I will be yours.” He had learnt a lot from the sea, the wind and the rocks of the sea. His faith in God was very deep like the sea and strong like the rocks. He, like Abraham, always used to say “God will provide” (Gen. 22:14), that was his unshakeable faith, and we his children have always witnessed God’s providence in his life. It was his faith and his wish to have a sudden and happy death because he didn’t want to depend on anyone for anything.

My father was a man of prayer. He always called us his children together at 7.00 p.m. for the Angelus and then at 8.00 p.m. the Rosary. He also spent most of his free time in reading the Bible. He was so in love with the Eucharist that he never missed mass on Wednesday, Friday (adoration and mass) and Saturday (i.e. the anticipated mass of Sunday); thus he sowed in us the seeds of the love for God. The day before his death was Saturday and he had attended Holy Mass. Thus, till his last, he never gave up his love for God.

He was a very generous person, in the words of St. Paul he was a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7); with whatever he earned he fulfilled the daily needs that arose. He not only fulfilled his obligations and duties as a father to take care of the family, but was also very generous in sharing his mite with others in need. He never wanted to save a lot; on this point, he used to quote Lk.10:20 “...you fool...” and also “we have brought nothing into this world and nothing we will carry” (1Tim. 6:7). Thus, he did his duty of bringing up his family (his children 6+1) and making them stand on their own feet. When we were together as a family mourning for our father, the Word of God was our stronghold, each one sharing the Word that spoke to his / her heart for consolation. We felt that our father was present around us; it was only when we thought that he was no more that we could we cry. It is still the same for me.

¹ The Bhokar Community comprises two RSCJ, one CCR and one lay volunteer; all the members of the community have contributed to this newsletter.

I take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to each one in the province for your prayerful support. One day my brother David (who is a deacon) and I, while returning from Mass, said “we don’t feel that our daddy is no more, this is the power of prayer. So many people are praying for us to comfort and console us.” Yes, we did feel it; thank you so much. May God bless you all.

Deodita Gudino RSCJ

The Joy of Gardening

“Hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul” – Alfred Austin. This line has become true in my life. This year, the lockdown has showed me my interest in gardening. Recently, I discovered that being with nature has given me inner strength. Like others, I too was frightened about this Coronavirus disease. But nature has the power to heal and to bring peace and I have experienced this while doing gardening. Although I had never worked in the garden at home, recently I have discovered that gardening is interesting and energetic work. To plant seeds or to make pots with crotons and collias for the chapel brought me joy. I can imagine now how God the Father, our creator, must have felt after creating the world and seeing that it was good. I too felt good when I saw that flowers are blossoming and plants are growing. Gardening was soothing to my soul and I did not feel tired or dirty after it. My only focus was that my garden should look nice. Also, I started admiring the beauty of nature. I have felt that in one way the lockdown has blessed me with this gift and I glorify God through my gardening and bring joy to others who come here. I thank God and Sr. Prisca for giving me this opportunity to grow in admiring and nurturing God’s creation.



Rita D’Souza (Volunteer)

Life during Lockdown

As I look back, I thank God for all that I have been through and it gives me the courage to say “Yes” to the future. The lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic was a sudden stop to the normal life-style that we followed, a time when hopes seemed shattered, everything looked blurred, but through the vision of God’s grace it was a time of a fresh outpouring of the love of God into my life.

It was a time when I started looking at life from a different perspective. When the whole world was still due to Covid-19, I got time to spend with myself. When I look back, it was not a negative experience, but it gave me a positive outlook towards life.



During the lockdown, when our normal activities came to a halt, we as community spent hours together stitching masks and distributing them to the people. This was done only with the motive of ‘how can I make a difference to the life of the people’. Another most important thing was being positive and sending ‘Positive Vibrations’ to the world. These two activities during the lockdown were indeed life giving for me.

A lot of people suffered during the lockdown not having food to eat and no shelter, especially the migrants; then there were the people who bid farewell to this earthly life due to Covid-19 – they all have been a part of history which will never be erased. Covid-19 has indeed created history, which the next generation will hear about what the present generation has experienced. I thank God for His intervention in my life through various experiences during Covid-19. Also, I thank everyone who has

been the pillar of strength in my life, and thank God for all that I could contribute during the time of the lockdown.

Sr. Gracy Arokiadass CCR (Congregation of Carmelite Religious)

Life is a journey: 2020 is the start of a new decade.....

On 1st January 2020, we, the Ashankur family, started our journey for an exposure trip of ten days to



south India in order to visit different historical and religious places. The purpose of it was to widen our knowledge of the socio-cultural situation in the country. We visited different places and learnt to adjust with each other in the group as well as to different cultures. Our return journey was by flight. It was the first experience for our staff to travel by air. It gave me great joy that we could journey together and remain united. God accompanied us and gave us the strength and courage to remain

united together as a team. Thus, we began the year with joy and hope for our ministry.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused many events around the world to be cancelled or postponed due to the government imposed restrictions of large gatherings. But, before the lockdown could come

into action we had our regular events at Ashankur, Bhokar. On 15th February 2020, we had the **Lamp Lighting Ceremony**. The nursing (Auxiliary Nursing & Midwifery) girl students of Ashankur had their oath-taking ceremony. The message of the chief guest to the nursing girls was the importance of nurses in our society, and he explained the meaning of the word ‘Sister’. He shared many experiences where girls who have done their basic nursing course have saved the lives of people. People call a nurse ‘Sister’ because nurses render selfless service to people. The students expressed their gratitude towards Ashankur for their training and to St. Luke’s Hospital for their hospital experience. These students come from different backgrounds; several are wounded, rejected or deserted. Most of them are economically poor and socially disadvantaged. Through this training these students gain self confidence and are helped to stand on their own feet.



On 22nd February 2020, Abacus training was conducted for the remedial class teachers. 14 teachers were present for the training. The teachers were given an introduction to Abacus with the help of a video. Then the teachers were given the Abacus teaching aid and shown the basics of Abacus on the black board – such as counting and simple addition. For them it was a new method of teaching mathematics.

Women’s Day celebration: International Women's Day has become a day to celebrate how far women have come in society, in politics and in socio-economic status. We at Ashankur had the Women’s Day celebration on 10th March 2020. Relating to the International Women’s Day theme, i.e. “An equal world is an enabled world”, the theme for our Women’s Day celebration was “An equal family is an enabled society”. Sr. Vimala Verghese RSCJ was the chief guest. The speaker's message to the women was about the superstitious beliefs that women have accepted from their



ancestors. "What will people say about me?" It is fear that paralyses women. We need to work together to create a gender equal world. The Self Help Group women came for the celebration from different villages; they belong to different castes and religious communities.

On 24th March 2020, the Government of India ordered an immediate nationwide lockdown, initially for 21 days, as a preventive measure against Covid-19. Some nursing students from far off places were forced to remain in Ashankur. They were emotionally down because they could not go home; I had to cope and make them understand the seriousness of the situation. Every day, we had outdoor games with them to release our emotions.

The government rules and regulations, such as wearing masks, maintaining social/physical distancing etc., were always maintained by us. During the lockdown we made use of our tailoring department. We made thousands of masks and distributed them to people in the villages. We took orders to stitch masks for other organizations as well. We were busy working the whole day and we did this as our contribution to be in solidarity with the people. This global pandemic brought chaos and poverty into our world. Those who were working in the city came back to their villages. People lost their jobs so there was no way to get income. It resulted in much anxiety, worry, and insecurity, causing tension, fear and uncertainty in the lives of people. During this time we had a group of four young girls in the hostel doing the tailoring course. Three of them are HIV positive and are taking treatment, getting free medicine from the Government hospital. But I realized that they need nutritious food in order to boost their immunity. So I started finding contacts and generous people to help them. All four have no parents. They are neglected and rejected by their extended families. My hope is that they will learn a skill in order to stand on their own feet. They need to supplement their normal food to improve their health and immunity so that they can be healthy enough to learn and be independent.

During the pandemic, I have grown in my devotion to the **Divine Mercy Prayer** at 3 p.m. We did the novena of the Divine Mercy prayer for the healing for the people who got affected by Corona virus. I thank God for accompanying me in my journey and giving me courage to accompany others in their journey during this pandemic.

Prisca Tirkey RSCJ