

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART PROVINCE OF INDIA NEWSLETTER



4th October 2021

NEWS FROM PRAGNYALAY COMMUNITY

My sister Gulab



My beloved elder sister, Gulab, died on 18th April 2021 in a battle with typhoid (and possibly also Covid). My mind brings back to me a small lively person full of energy usually spent in making life brighter and easier for others, especially those in need. She was joyful, compassionate, friendly, humorous, practical, committed, courageous and a great organizer!

I had just heard on Friday, 16th April afternoon that Gulab was admitted to hospital, and she was fairly alright till Saturday 17th evening. Late Saturday evening my brother Fabian rang to say that Gulab's condition was worsening. On Sunday morning he rang to say that Gulab had gone to God (at 8.00 a.m. on Sunday, 18th April 2021). It was devastating news, too great a shock for me. My system could not bear it after my own bout of Covid-19. My mind went blank, my body limp, my strength ebbing out fast. Such suffering I had not experienced even at my parents death because at that time Gulab had been with me to strengthen me and hold me fast. Now who would hold me? Nor could I attend her funeral because after a Covid death the funerals had to be immediate and private. My brother, Fr. Fabian SJ, along with his Rector and two scholastics took Gulab's body to Khunti where few sisters of her congregation received her. No family members, except Fabian, could be present. She was buried quietly (as the law required after Covid) in the cemetery of her congregation of the Ursulines in Khunti. Yes, the funeral was quiet – it had to be. Her whole life had overflowed with work, right to the time of her admission to the hospital. All those who knew her will remember Gulab, her bubbling service, unselfish goodness and continuous hard work.



She had planned that we would be together during the months of April and May. Deacon Praful's ordination was to take place on 14th May. Our holiday together was to be before the ordination. So she booked our tickets for going to Ranchi for 25th April 2021. But this was not to be. The Lord had arranged for her to go up to Him on 18th April to be with Him

forever. Deacon Praful and I now with heavy hearts did use the tickets to Ranchi, which Gulab had bought for us, on 25th April.

We reached Ranchi on 26th April evening and spent the night at Manresa House. The next morning, 27th April, we visited Gulab's Community at Kumhartoli in Ranchi. We returned for lunch and for a little rest at Manresa House before leaving for our own home. On the way we stopped to pray at Gulab's grave at Khunti. While praying at the grave, my brother Fabian broke down; both Praful and I broke down as well. This experience made me realize how deep was the pain at her loss. From Khunti we went to Torpa, to our rscj house where the community was expecting us. The warm welcome of our sisters touched our hearts, we could relax with them. My brother could speak of Gulab's death for the first time. We left Torpa about 8.00 p.m. to reach our own home, where our youngest brother, Ashok, with his wife and children were waiting for us. They listened sadly as we described the events of the day.

After a restful night Fabian my priest brother accompanied Deacon Praful to Gumla from where Praful went to his own home and I stayed at home for 3 weeks with my younger brother. Because of the complete lockdown I could not visit siblings/relatives/ friends, nor could they come to meet me. I was confined to the house feeling hopeless: missing Gulab's liveliness, her presence, her message of joyful faith and understanding. This experience brought both great sadness as well as a great strength from God poured out on me in my pain, loneliness and suffering. Without Gulab our house felt empty. But God filled it quietly with His consolation.

Throughout those days I felt strengthened relying on prayers that our communities offered for me and my family. I have known through my pain, the love of Jesus for me, the love and support of my friends and especially all our sisters, in my great loss. This is what sustains my affection for Gulab and for all of you. Thank you!

Kirti Bhuinyan rscj

Praful's Ordination to the Priesthood



It was Gulab who had adopted Praful Ekka and we treated him as a member of our family, as our brother. So we were all overjoyed when he made known his call to the priesthood. The influence of his mother's devotion and life inspired him to give himself to God. His mother insisted on his going to Mass with her on Fridays in honour of the Sacred Heart. At one of the seminars given by different congregations Praful was attracted to join the Bombay Jesuits. When he finished Std. XII he left for Bombay. It was here that I came to know him.

In February 2020 we celebrated his Diaconate. They were 16 other young men at the same ceremony. So the general mood was one of great feasting and rejoicing. Since I was the only one in Pune from both (Ekka & Bhuinyan) the families, I attended the ceremony. After

diaconate, he continued his studies till June 2020 at J.D.V., Pune. Then he was sent to Manikpur for his diaconate ministry. A year later he could go back to his home town Ganjhar for his ordination which was supposed to be held on 14th of May 2021. This was made impossible by the complete lockdown due to the second wave of the Covid pandemic. When lockdown was a little relaxed he returned to Mumbai. Our two families were preparing with enthusiasm, much work and great joy for the Ordination. Gulab was the live wire among us. But ceremonies and enjoyment were turned upside down by Covid-19. Praful came back to Mumbai and was transferred to St. Peter's Church, Bandra, where he was specializing in Sports and doing his Diaconate ministry till the new date for his ordination was announced.

Praful suddenly telephoned me to say that "please inform the family members both (Ekka and Bhuinyan) that the 'date is out'" and that His Eminence, Oswald Cardinal Gracias, would ordain him on 24th of July. Ha! Very good news had arrived: It was exciting news. Excitedly I rang up his family in Ganjhar /Kenduda that the ordination of Praful would be on 24th July at St. Peter's Church, Bandra, Mumbai, by His Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias.

The family members rejoiced! At last there was a definite date for the ordination! We all turned to prepare for it! We were restricted in numbers – only the immediate family members could come. And this was the season of hard work for the farmers; therefore some were glad to stay at home but also sad to miss the great occasion. Only 15 would attend the solemn event! Due to lack of time Praful was a bit anxious about their travel arrangements. But my priest brother Fabian quickly found out the numbers of the travellers and arranged for the tickets. A big thanks to Jesuits who gave us accommodation in Bandra Retreat House and a bus was arranged to take us from the retreat house to St. Peter's Church for practices and on the final day itself. That was simply wonderful.



My heart was full of gratitude, my mind overjoyed, and my whole being uplifted to God for His goodness to us. Both families were flooded with happiness in spite of the pain of Gulab's absence, while they prepared to travel to Mumbai. I had been given the privilege of being commentator at the mass. My deep joy was tinged with fear: fear to be commentator; my joy was to be responsible for the Liturgy, preparing every detail of the church ceremony – a deep joy, yes, together with a little fear! The ceremony was restricted to family members, a few Jesuit priests and the 12 dancers. My responsibility was to the shepherd Praful's immediate family and relatives wherever we were called or whatever we were asked to do.

This celebration was with family alone – an experience of close bonding. Gulab's spirit was everywhere. I was filled with emotion with my family, my extended family, surrounding Praful while he was ordained for the direct service of God. After the church service we were escorted to St. Stanislaus School Hall for the felicitation followed by a short cultural



programme of singing and dancing by the family members and the 12 dancers during which light food was served to all.

I thank my own community, Pragnyalay, for their prayer and close interest and for allowing me to be present for this great event. Above all, I experienced the mission of the Society alive in my heart. I am grateful to God and all who prepared me to be generous. I thank my sister Gulab for her great heart which reached out to all with whom she came in contact. We all attended Praful's first Thanksgiving Mass and wept when he announced that he was offering the mass for our beloved Gulab; then we lifted our hearts with

joy as she had always done.

Kirti Bhuinyan rscj

An Invitation and a Garden

Have you ever seen the Pragnyalay Garden in September? Please come and look at it NOW!
It is just glorious!



The cactus takes first prize this year – 12 feet high ending in 4 to 6 feet fronds, each studded with small pink /yellow flowers which bloom towards evening. I gaze at them open mouthed! Geraniums, shoe flowers on large healthy bushes, heads straining to catch the sun! Countless shades and shapes of cactus – do come and count them; butterflies small ones and big ones yellow, orange, white, flitting from grass to pot, leaf to flowers, stem to leaf to flower,

hopping, hopping. Do come and count them.

And bring your woollies! You will need to wear them these days. Also practice a quick step so that you don't get stricken cold! Even the three rscj here who need the help of a walker seem to stride or skip behind their walkers happily. I am planning to get a walker too – they look so dignified and respect-deserving!

At the moment of writing I am looking (with the door wide open) at a still garden – every leaf, every branch unmoving at 11 a.m. when the sun is emerging sleepily to see if it can revive the green earth (a happy thought for a warm late morning); lovely weather in which to have a cosy siesta flowed by hot tea to warm our bodies our hearts and minds. In this way we are ready for evening prayer and spiritual input – one evening it was the story of Jesus appearing on earth as a man like other men giving hope and strength wherever they were needed (a programme that we saw on the TV).

Millicent Francis rscj

Changes in my life's journey

I would like to begin thus:

“We are not at Home.

We are safe at Home.

When we change our thinking, everything changes.”

The third line seems to be apt for what I wish to share with you.

I was Community Treasurer for a long time. Now at 82 years I asked for a change and my wish was granted. I have been in this ministry ever since I was a Junior!! I have enjoyed this ministry very much. This is now a time of transition for my Inner life. I still continue some treasury work in the present Community.

I discovered a new JOY! “TIME”!

- More time to share my other Gifts with my sisters.
- I have time to be available to others, in service.
- More time for quiet and reflection.

“The Spirit of the Society is essentially based upon Prayer and the Interior Life since we cannot glorify the Adorable Heart worthily.....” (Constitutions paragraph no. 17).

- More time to use my practical gifts that God has endowed me with. Some gifts being artistic ones of creating beauty by making charts for the Refectory Board, for feasts and birthdays.
- I also give time to some of my sisters with stitching, and to mend and alter some clothes.



With the present change of finding “TIME”, I give myself more time to Spiritual Reading, General Reading, viewing inspiring programmes in YouTube, which is a great help. I give myself time to Reflect on the Bible and Constitution, to bring about greater peace and joy in living my religious commitment.

Another desire that has surfaced is to reuse my Teaching Skills. I have given expression to this desire by starting to teach one of our workers, to sign her name, in Marathi. Were it not for Covid-19, I would have helped poor children in one of our neighbouring schools.

There is still scope for CHANGE, which is vast, and I hope to discover what will give me greater fulfilment. There is a growing sense of peace within me, as age progresses.

I thank God for the potential He has blessed me with, and allowing for change for a more committed life.

Anjali D'Souza rscj

The Power of a Graceful Presence

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend some nights and days with our dear Sr. Elisha. She was in hospital, admitted for a lung infection. Looking back at our time together, I now know these were grace filled days for us both!

On seeing each other, we were very happy! I became aware of touching a deep bond we shared not only as RSCJ sisters, but as two sisters who had lived together in special circumstances in the C.P.S. Ashram, Pune, and in Dongripada village, in the Ashagad Mission. There was a sense of touching the Cor Unum between us. On seeing me, almost immediately she was able to eat normally, because earlier she was unable to do so. She was also concerned about my own meals! This helped me understand the influence of our mind and emotions on our eating.

Everyone who entered her hospital room immediately noticed the difference in Elisha's whole being. I also noted she never complained about anything. She accepted, surrendered everything and expressed gratitude to everyone.

The hospital is managed by the 'Queen of the Apostles' sisters. I was deeply impressed, experiencing a cordial atmosphere everywhere. All the staff, from the sisters and doctors to the nurses (they have no ayah category), were very warm, caring, friendly, available for any kind of service, and always with a smile. I was particularly moved by the great respect they showed Elisha. A young lady-doctor, after she finished checking Elisha, went on her knees, bowed and asked for her blessing. Taking Elisha for a walk along the hospital-corridor, young mothers with sick babies would approach her. Our Elisha would touch them tenderly; bless them and the mothers too. One day after she had blessed some babies, a nurse came to tell Elisha that one of the babies she had blessed was cured! Elisha was not able to speak much. However, I felt as if power went out of her, creating a peaceful presence around her.

Several of the young nurses related their personal experiences of having taken care of their grandmothers. They took care of Elisha giving her the same devotion and affection. On the last morning of my stay, a young nurse came to help Elisha with her bath, with much enthusiasm and joy. She later told me Elisha and she came from the same place in Kerala, and her grandfather had taught Elisha in school. She discovered this connection from some relatives who had come earlier to visit Elisha.

I returned with deep admiration for our Elisha, and a heart full of gratitude. Let us all continue to hold her dearly in our love and prayer.



Shanti Fernandes rscj

Vaccination!!!!

As you know, the talk these days world over is about Vaccines and Vaccination. So here is our story. One set of RSCJ was packed off to get their first jab and returned looking brisk and healthy. And some time later the second set was announced to be vaccinated at N.M. Wadia Hospital nearby, in the same compound as Jehangir Hospital. We were escorted by our nurse, Jaya, who had served there for 36 years as a Staff Nurse. We were duly impressed when we saw the staff greeting Jaya with so much affection and warmth. Even the peons came running to meet her though she retired from there some years ago. We were registered promptly and courteously by the head nurse and then sent to the first floor to await our turn. And so we were ushered into a waiting room for our 'JAB'. It was duly administered with efficiency and we were taken to another room and told we would have to wait for at least 15 minutes. An oxygen cylinder was nearby to help any ill effects. And then cups of hot tea and a packet of biscuits were served to all in the room. It was a kind of comfort I could not resist! I noticed that we were all munching on our biscuits, looking comforted and comfortable. A great deal of information was then distributed on what to do should we experience any ill effects. We were all impressed with the courtesy and kindness with which we were treated. Back home not a soul experienced any ill effects. I was hoping to have the day in bed at least with loving attentions from the kitchen staff. Not at all; if you feel normal, act normal! So much for our first dose of the vaccine!

Weeks later, N.M.Wadia Hospital had stopped providing Covaxin and we had to look elsewhere for our second vaccination. Father Malcolm Sequeira from Bishop's House kindly let us know that the Gurudwara in the camp area was providing free Covaxin vaccination. There was some confusion so we were told to hurry as the vaccine was being provided only in the morning. I was the only one ready so they sent me off with Waman, our gardener, as my companion in case I collapsed on the way. An elderly Sikh greeted us at the door and speaking in perfect English said that it was a pleasure to serve us. The Gurudwara is a huge structure but the whole of the ground floor had been emptied and prepared with printed notices to indicate where we were to go and comfortable chairs arranged all at the expense of the Sikh community. I was ushered into the first row and it looked as if I was to be first. Two efficient looking nurses were in attendance. The old Sikh gentleman invited me to breakfast as soon as the vaccination was over and when I replied that I had already had breakfast said "Ma'am it will be such a pleasure and a privilege to serve you with breakfast". The vaccination over; I was taken to a chair under a fan and served with hot tea and a plate of freshly made poha. By then Waman seeing it was all so easy and free, decided to have his vaccination as well. In the meantime, Jaya arrived late because there had been a puncture on her two-wheeler. After her came Shanti and Benedicta, all to receive the same kindly treatment. As I was waiting for an auto to be called to take us home the elderly gentleman

gave me his card and said: “Ma’am if you ever need anything please call on me”. I was dumbfounded.

I have always believed that LLL, namely LIFE LONG LEARNING, was a degree superior to the BA, the MSc or even the Ph.D. I am not yet a graduate in LLL, but aspire to be one someday soon when all learning will end and total vision will be ours. In the meantime and during vaccination I have been enriched by these learnings: Kindness is always so supportive and comforting when we are uncertain and anxious. It smooths the way, as we experienced it at N.M. Wadia Hospital that day. Secondly, Social Service is fine, and we are good at it in the Church, but service graciously given with large-hearted hospitality towards all in the human family and free of charge, is something quite special which I learnt that day from our Sikh community.

HAPPY LEARNING!

Ambuja rscj

Message to Namrataji (Barbara Crombie rscj)

Very dear Namrata,

It gave us so much joy to know that Sr. Elizabeth Sneddon has arranged for a Zoom Programme on 10th September 2021, to which the RSCJ of the Indian Province are also invited, in celebration of your 100th birthday.

Congratulations! You truly have ascended to the top of the house!! What a feat! I am sending you my warmest wishes for a joy-filled birthday, peace-filled blessings and many graces for the year and years to come.

My heart is filled with gratitude for your friendship and fidelity in keeping in touch with me, with beautiful cards and kind wishes, year after year at Christmas, Easter, Birthdays, Jubilees and other occasions.

I remember the time you spent with Sr. Vandana, here in Pragnyalay, always attentive to her requests, sitting in silence at her bedside, praying with her and for her. What an inspiration for all of us here!

May the Lord bless you a thousand fold and more and let us keep each other in our prayer till He calls us home.

Much love as always,

Celine D’Silva rscj