



21st February 2023

NEWSLETTER FROM THE SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY

A Marian Pilgrimage – A Virtual Journey

This is the first time I am teaching catechism to the children of Std. II at the Sacred Heart parish. I enjoy being with little children.

This year we had many activities in our Sunday School, such as The Nativity Novena, Mission Sunday sale, Carol Singing, Christmas party, various competitions etc. I would like to share about the Nativity Novena celebrations with you.

Fr. Magi gave us the idea about “The Marian Pilgrimage – A Virtual Journey” to celebrate the Novena for the Nativity of our Lady. Our initial preparation was choosing the Marian Pilgrim Places of different countries – “The Black Madonna” of Poland, “Our Lady of Lourdes” in France, “Our Lady of Pilar” of Spain, “Our Lady of Fatima” in Portugal, “Our Lay of Good Health” in USA, “Our Lady of Guadalupe” in Mexico, “Our Lady of Kibeha” of Rwanda, “Our Lady Help of Christians” in Australia, and “Our Lady of the Mount” in India.

Each child was to get a pouch with the Marian passport and literature of each pilgrimage place. The virtues to inspire the children each day were – A humble heart, An Open Heart, A Patient Heart, A Committed Heart, A Caring Heart, A Generous Heart, A Loving Heart, A Wise Heart and A Forgiving Heart.

It was such a joy to see little children coming to the Embassy each day to get their passport stamped with the flag of the country and the parish stamp. A video on the country – its culture, occupation, food, clothes of the people was shown to help the children feel that they have entered the country. Each day a girl would be dressed up as Our Lady of that particular country and a few other children were also dressed in the clothes of that same country. At the beginning of the Mass the celebrant, the children and the girl dressed as Mary processed to the church and the latter stood near the picture of Our Lady which she depicted.

The priests who celebrated the Mass each day were friendly and they welcomed the children. They gave their homilies on the given virtues (themes) which were simple, with examples that the children could understand. Children brought their love offerings which were different each day, e.g. rice, pulses, soap, toothpaste, tooth brushes, sugar, tea leaves, biscuits and some even offered cash.



At the end of the Mass, the children went back to the Embassy where they received snacks that were sponsored by parishioners. The children were happy to travel through Europe, USA, Australia and Asia. They were happy to have the experience of having a passport and participating in the Virtual Journey.



Our aim was to increase the children's attendance and to give them the experience of the Marian Pilgrimage through a virtual journey. We feel happy that the attendance was 100% and so the Marian Pilgrimage was a great success and the spirit of team work of the catechists was commendable.

Jokina D'Mello rscj

Moving to a New Community

As our community assembled in June 2022, I was reminded of two sayings: the first, that *even if one member is new, the group is different*; and the second: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (the more things change, the more they remain the same). So, I was prepared for the excitingly predictable! And I have not been disillusioned!

The commitment to Justice, Peace, and Environment is evergreen in this community. Each day our chapel is decorated with potted plants, lovingly nurtured from seed to variegated foliage. Though vision may be dimming, a new budding flower will be noticed, and caring hearts reach out to the marginalised and the peripheries – to the last, the lonely and the lost.



The start of our new community also coincided with the installation of our new parish priest, Fr. Felix D'Souza, who has been actively involved with the training of the SCCs and Parish Councils since 1984. Transferring from Malwani, which was celebrating the Pearl Jubilee of the SCCs and where I learned so much about pastoral work from Sr. Manisha, to another parish dedicated to the Sacred Heart, where I am involved with the PPC and Steering Committee has made this an interesting year, at community, parish and neighbourhood levels.

Fr. Felix believes in visibility and has installed a 10-ft high statue of the Sacred Heart at the entrance to the church compound as a symbol of seeking God's blessing on us all and an Adoration Chapel which can be seen from outside the church gate. There is an *Events* gallery which gives a glimpse of the happenings in the parish through flex charts. We also have a *Rosary Garden* (with the 15 decades), a *Medical Herbal Garden*, (with plants for therapeutic use) and a *Physiotherapy Centre* at subsidised rates.



A group of confirmands visited us on *Teachers' Day* and presented each of us with a special hand-crafted gift package, a bouquet of flowers and a card; another young lady, whose family was joining our parish also celebrated her preparatory rites for confirmation in our community. The zonal Mass was well attended and the participants were happy to meet Srs. Marie and Pratibha again.

On a personal level, my involvement with the Archdiocesan Office for the Environment (AOE) and the Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR), as well as with the Asian Bioethics Association (ABA) and local Bioethics groups (FIAMC) has resulted in meetings through online webinars because of the

pandemic. The *Bharat Jodo Yatra* (women's group) was of particular significance as there were about 90 participants from various walks of life, religions and different states, who interacted on various platforms, keeping us updated as the yatra moved from Kanyakumari, culminating in Srinagar on January 31st.

Indeed, RE-TIRED takes on a new meaning: *Change to new tyres to continue!*



Daphne Viveka Furtado, rscj

My Phone Ministry

When I hear about the suffering and the loneliness of the people around us, my heart feels for them. Many such persons cannot share their pain. There are widows, widowers, sick and lonely. I cannot visit them. So I call them on my mobile phone as I have some phone numbers. From time to time I talk to them and try to give them joy and hope. My aim is to give them hope in their loneliness in their suffering. They do feel happy and comforted when they receive my phone calls that somebody thinks of them is very soothing and lessening their pain.

When I called one person from Pune, she was delighted and said, “Sister, nobody calls me, I am so moody, nobody wants me, your phone call gave me joy.” So in the silence of my heart, I like to carry them to the Lord and whisper, “Lord they are yours, you wipe their tears and be their strength.”

Irene D’Souza rscj

Communication in a special way

An experience I had a few years ago remains etched in my memory and has challenged me in many ways. A family had gone on a holiday. A young mentally challenged girl aged about 20, was part of the group. Some members of the family happened to be talking, in the presence of the girl, about her future and the possibility of moving her to a ‘home’. Suddenly they noticed huge tears running down her face. She was sobbing silently. It was a wakeup call to all in the group. Were they aware that she understood what they were saying – though she was nonverbal? Were they aware that she too had feelings?



AWARENESS, in my opinion is basic to communication with persons with special needs. Our awareness has to be “special” as well –

Working at SPJ Sadhana School for children with special needs has been a tremendous challenge. It is very likely that the definition of communication for most people includes “speaking words.” And while it’s true that speaking is a key component of communication, true communication is much

more than words. It is important to remember that communication goes far beyond just words. Interaction does not always need to involve the use of language and speech. Many children with an ASD (autistic spectrum disorder) are delayed in their use of language and shy away from verbal interactions. Therefore, other methods of communication need to be established prior to spoken language. True Communication involves both nonverbal behaviour (eye contact, facial expressions and gestures) and verbal behaviour (speech or spoken language). This is necessary if one desires to convey a message, to express feelings, to share ideas and to solve problems, big and small.

One of the priorities at SPJ Sadhana is to prepare the students to be productive members of society. What does this entail? Do we have to prepare them in such a way that they fit into a society that considers itself “normal” or will society change in such a way that these special children feel a part of the group they belong to? A few years ago we took a big group of our graduating students for an excursion to the North. To my dismay, at the airport, were people staring at these children. What were their thoughts? Did they pity them? Were they afraid to come anywhere near them – lest the child becomes violent? To be honest, I too felt the same during my first days at Sadhana – not knowing when a student would turn boisterous. I soon realized that my vibrations of fear, apprehension and inner emotional movements were unconsciously conveyed to the child., hence the child reciprocates in a similar manner with fear and aloofness.

What then is the challenge before us – so called ‘normal’ people? Are we going to continue expecting special persons to change and adapt to our world?

Which do you think is easier

– *special persons adapt to others?*

- *persons without disabilities adapt to those with disabilities?*

Will society become more inclusive and ready to include them in our corporate works? Coming to terms with them in society is to know and recognize our own ‘abnormalities’ that others have to adjust to. There’s a dire need for us to discover the special contribution they make to the corporate world. We will then not just accept them but value their contribution – a contribution that many “normal” persons will not even venture to attempt. Are we ready for this challenge? Giving them opportunities to showcase their ability in the corporate world?

‘Some of the most wonderful people are the ones who don’t fit into boxes’



Pratibha Pinto rscj