

JANUARY 2024

>>> NEWSLETTER <<<  
SOCIETY OF THE SACRED  
HEART  
PROVINCE OF INDIA



NEWS FROM THE SANTA CRUZ  
COMMUNITY

**>>> SO I LEAVE MY BOATS BEHIND, LEAVE THEM  
ON FAMILIAR SHORES...  
....SET MY HEART UPON THE DEEP,  
FOLLOW YOU AGAIN MY LORD"**

This song of Frank Andersson came alive for me as I prepared to leave the familiar “shores” of Malwani, moving in “obedience” to the unfamiliar terrain of Santacruz. June 8<sup>th</sup> was significant for me as it was the Day I had left my familial home 51 years ago to join the Novitiate and in 2023 it marked my move from At. Anthony’s Parish, Malwani, which had been home to me for 17+ years, to the Sacred Heart Parish, Santacruz. Also moving from a small “inserted community” of 3 RSCJ in an apartment, as part of a larger, familiar, cosmopolitan neighbourhood community, to a Community of 5 RSCJ in a “convent” may not appear unusual but the demands as well as the joys of the two local communities have been very different and challenging as ever!

My initial attraction to this parish is the very name “Sacred Heart.” As it coincides with the name of our Society it gives me an inner “élan” to be serving here. The other plus point has been that I have known the parish priest, Fr. Felix D’Souza, for many years and am familiar with his stand for the poor and marginalized, his zest for building Community in his parish and in the neighbourhoods, his thought patterns and leadership personality-style, and much more, as we had worked together since 1990 in the large FILMC Team of Bishop Bosco that worked for the empowerment of the Laity in Mumbai, reaching out to other parts of India as well. With this background of mutual trust, acceptance and appreciation we dialogued about my work schedule in this parish keeping in mind my strengths, my experience with the SCCs and my physical limitations realistically.

At present I have been appointed as a “mentor” to 7 SCCs; I attend their core group meetings every month, guide their Gospel-sharing sessions, and sometimes suggest efficient ways of functioning or dealing with difficulties encountered by the Animators. Occasionally, I have attended significant events organized by them for their entire community.



**Celebrating Independence Day**



**Visiting the home bound**

Besides, Fr. Felix invited me to be part of the Parish Pastoral Council as well as on the Steering committee for the SCCs. In the latter capacity I prepare every month, a short half-hour Training Programme on topics relating to the animation of the SCCs for their Coordinators. For 3 months initially I also served as a Psychological counsellor to the boys’ high School in the Parish. The problems faced by many



students in this our post-Covid era have been overwhelming and burdensome for them. My heart went out to them as they unburdened themselves as to a “didi” (older sister). I really would have liked to continue there but certain personal limitations of energy levels, time constraints, the pending work with the Archives, trying to balance community needs and the like prompted me to quit that fruitful part of my ministry with great regret.

In addition to my parish work, as a Resource person in the Diocese of Mumbai for several years now, I was asked to conduct a couple of times, a hands-on Training programme for 60 animators from all over Mumbai during the weekend programme, ‘Skills for Animators’, on the value and methodology of ‘Gospel-sharing’ for SCC meetings. These sessions on the Word of God fill me with great delight as I treasure this Word in my own life and am eager to share this love with interested persons, to empower them further in their Christian lives and service.

My ministry with the Associates of Malad (Friends In the Sacred Heart) continues unabated daily on the WhatsApp and once in 3 months through an energizing in-person meeting. The last 2 meetings were specially geared to preparing the Associates to face our move to the ‘New province’ by discussing the ‘Apostolic Priorities’ with them and listening to their experiences especially in areas of JPIC and Education in their present ministries, linked with our Charism and Mission which they too have learnt to own. This was also discussed and shared with the ‘International Connections’ – a group of Associates/lay collaborators from the Northern hemisphere (including about 5 or 6 of our Indian group) who meet online every month, together with a few RSCJ.



In conclusion, as I look back I realize that what appeared initially as moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar has in a short time become part of me. New places and new faces continue being a daily learning challenge for me. A quote from T.S. Eliot seems to echo my recent heart-stirrings: “We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.”

***Manisha Gonsalves rscj***

## **>>> Where there’s hope there is life.....**

In August 2023, Sr. Anila asked me to represent her at the Annual General Body Meeting of the Western Region CRI with the theme “Social Harmony”. It was something to look forward to as there would be prominent speakers. The experience I had there was something quite unexpected. Social Harmony was meant to be the end result of the reflections and interactions. The unexpected aspect was the input we had from those involved in the “miraculous” overthrow of the ruling party in the State of Karnataka. The strategy they used and the involvement with civil society groups to such a large extent was mind boggling. It was truly inspiring and challenging: “If it can happen in Karnataka, why not in other states?”



The President, Vice President and Secretary of the Mumbai

Unit of the CRI were at the meeting. Being on the executive committee myself, we made a foursome inspired enough to carry out whatever was possible in Mumbai. We set to work immediately – drafting a letter to the Provincials of Congregations in the Mumbai while waiting for the return train to Mumbai!! The months that followed were full of hectic activity – meetings in two places for the religious in the North Mumbai and South Mumbai to inform and educate the religious about the importance of ensuring that **every single person** casts his/ her vote. The response was very encouraging – more than 100 at each meeting. Even the President of the Mumbai Catholic Sabha and **Teesta Setalvad** social activist, who were resource persons, were very happy.

## >>> **CRI Meeting**

This new involvement in the political issues that face the country was very energizing for me. I learnt to check the electoral roll to ensure that RSCJ and others were included, to register new voters or change the polling booth for those who would have to travel long distances to vote. It was a moment of deep satisfaction when I was able to ensure that our elderly Sisters who have been transferred from Mumbai can vote in the place where they are, without having to travel. It was a service I was able to offer to religious of other congregations as well. There have been other energizing experiences – participating in Zoom meetings with civil society groups, seeing the positive and determined efforts that different people are making, keeping each one's hope alive – if we work together – no matter what religion we belong to, there is a possibility of bringing about change. The next few months before the elections are crucial. Let us keep our HOPE alive that something will happen if we only work together.



***Pratibha Pinto rscj***

## >>> **My Journey**

A Voice whispers in my heart: -  
“Be Simple. Be Human. Connect Hearts”

By:-

- Listening to the Heart Beats of God in the Silence of my heart.
- Enjoy Being with God and with people
- Build relationships with people, especially the needy
- Feel for the Suffering and pray with them
- Create hope
- Forgive others
- Let your life speak of Christ to others
- Surrender and walk with God

***Irene D'Souza rscj***

## >>> **SO IT GOES ON.....**

The Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR), Pope Francis' exhortation Laudate Deum on (Care for our Common Home) and the assertion of veteran Sharad Pawar that “80 is the new 18” have been guiding lights, helping me respond to invitations and challenges received this year.

One of these was the very important residential, two-day *Maharashtra Mahila Sammelan* held in *Shantivan*, Panvel. Organised by sixty women's and transgender groups in various districts, to deliberate and respond to issues of communal violence and hate in the State of Maharashtra, it was a very enlightening experience. As JCoR was a member, it was fully subsidised.



We were divided into zones, with group meetings, plenary sessions and a *think tank* to collate the strategic moves suggested. On the second day, at the *Trans/Women Meet*, many of us personally felt the vibes of women struggling and crying out for our presence and help – a deeply moving experience. The general feeling was that the deliberations were a sincere search for what we, women, must do to save our country at this particular juncture. Hopefully, it will lead to policy changes at the State level.

Two other interesting invitations were in keeping with the call of Synodality to *Inter-religious Dialogue*. The first was to speak on *Christianity and Organ Donation* at a function organised by the members of the *Regional Organ Tissue and Transplant Organisation* (ROTO) at the KEM hospital on the occasion of *Indian Organ and Tissue Transplant Day*, with four others - Hindu, Muslim, Bahai and Sikh. It was very inspiring to see how every religion encourages live, as well as cadaver, *Organ and Tissue Donations* GIFTING LIFE – AN ACT OF LOVE.



The second was at Christmas, when Manisha and I attended the annual Archdiocesan inter-religious celebration, on the theme: CHRISTMAS: GOD'S MESSAGE TO GIVE PEACE A CHANCE. The panel discussion by the eight eminent dignitaries (Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Brahma Kumaris, Muslim, Christian) focused on the essential nature of peace as emanating from within and spreading around. The chants and quotations from the Holy Scriptures themselves radiated peace, while students from the Gloria Convent High School enacted a skit: *Peace, A New Word Today*. This ended with a display of the word PEACE in fourteen different languages, which we used as the backdrop to our community crib.

Finally, I attended a five-Sunday *Certificate Course for Eco Ambassadors*, organised by the Archdiocesan Office for the Environment (AOE), of which I am a member. The assignments included a talk on *My journey in Eco Spirituality*, and an in-depth presentation of the papal exhortation, *Laudate Deum*. There is also a project to be submitted, which is keeping me busy.

**Daphne Viveka rscj**