

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART PROVINCE OF INDIA NEWSLETTER



10th December 2021

NEWSLETTER FROM THE PRERANA COMMUNITY, PUNE

Vaccination:

Sister Venizia was trying to get vaccines for Victoria and me. God sent Father Roxy and a young girl, like angels, to Sr. Venizia. They found out where to get vaccines and did the registration for Victoria and me.

On 30th June 2021 I got the opportunity to go for the 1st dose with Sr. Venizia. We got out on the main road in Viman Nagar and entered a narrow gully. I saw that the people in that area live in small houses. The whole family lives in one room, sharing a common bathroom. I got the opportunity to know how poor people live in the city. I thanked God for this experience.

On 3rd October 2021 Victoria and I went to the Shaanwadi parish church compound for our 2nd dose. This vaccination drive was arranged by the parish priest and parish council. The members of the youth group came together and helped to arrange the chairs, to write names, to give water, to tell people to wait in a queue according to the numbers given to them. I saw that they were very helpful and united. When I saw them I was inspired by them to work together, to help others and to live in unity.

That same day Sr. Venizia, Victoria and I met sisters, novices and candidates of three different congregations. I was very happy to meet them. After the vaccination the priests invited the religious to have some snacks and drinks. We talked with each other. I enjoyed that day.

Community:

In community I have taken responsibility of being kitchen-in-charge by myself for one month. In the beginning it was difficult for me and I struggled. Sr. Venizia taught me how to prepare the menu. Now I am finding it a little easier. Now Victoria and I together carry out this responsibility. When we do it together, it is much easier than when doing it alone. I have also taken my turn for preparing the community prayer. At first I was afraid. Srs. Phila and Venizia helped me to read the gospel of the day. They take my reading practice. My community encouraged me by saying “you can do it”.

Once a week we read character building stories. These are helping me to change my character and behaviour. Through this I am becoming aware of my inner life.

Ministry:

I go to the Nursery class in the Prerana Nursery school. First I thought “children will not be happy with me. They will not talk with me.” But they are happy with me. I help children to write. Also I am learning many things. I am enjoying my ministry.



We presented 2 dialogues and 2 stories. While I was preparing these God gave me ideas to be creative. I am growing in confidence. That evening I was very happy that we played a game “Passing the parcel.”

Through my work responsibilities, ministry, study and prayer, I experience God’s love. God is breaking me, moulding and shaping me into a new creation. He is strengthening my trust in Him.

Kumudini Tirkey (candidate)

I am grateful to God and to the Society. Since I joined the Society I have experienced God’s love, blessings and graces through the Society. God is taking care of my health through the Society and the community members.

Ministry:

On 13th July 2021 I started going to the Nursery class in the Prerana Nursery school to help the teacher with the children. In the beginning I felt shy and diffident, but slowly I adjusted. Now I am happy to be with the children and to help them to write. They are also happy with me. Each child is very special and different. Being with children I experience that God is making me aware each day to let go of the ups and downs and live life happily, to grow in understanding (empathy), to become patient, to give value to each child, because each person is very important.

In the *Kids Bulletin* we read about the lives of so many saints. Some saints were intelligent, some were not so intelligent, some were rich, others were poor, yet God chose them to serve him. They faced so many difficulties. They didn’t become saints easily. They didn’t have comfortable lives. Yet they didn’t run away from God. They didn’t give up their hope and their aim to serve God in their lives because they knew that with God all things are possible and each day prayer had given them strength and wisdom to do everything. They are giving me hope, to work hard, to get over my fears and my negative thoughts. Also, they are inspiring me to pray to God each day to get strength and wisdom to do all these things, because without God nothing is possible.



Victoria Hapadgara (candidate)

See I am doing something new

The theme of the Special General Chapter 2021, “See I am doing something new”, invited me to be constantly conscious of the ‘something new’ in my own life and environment. Our compound is mostly rocky land, but in the areas where there is some soil trees like custard apple, papaya, guava etc. have given us sweet and delicious fruits and of course plenty of fleshy, tasty and nourishing drumsticks.

There is ‘something new’ that I perceive in the candidates as they have taken responsibilities both at the personal and community level – there is much satisfaction and gratitude in seeing the wonderful ways in which God acts in their lives. He is helping them to become responsive, alert, sensitive and generous. This gives me joy and helps me to be creative, able to cope with daily

happenings. This encourages me to persevere in dealing with the ups and downs of daily life. According to Rumi 'To walk the way and the way appears'.

Retreat:



Unexpectedly, 'something new' for me was my retreat. I had no hope of making a retreat this year and then a mixed group retreat was made possible – 3 rscjs, two elderly medical sisters of Shevgaon and two young sisters of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart. The retreat was a time to discover the Lord anew and walk the journey with Him again; it was both stimulating, as well as confidence and trust building. The talk on the 'walk to Emmaus' by our retreat giver, Fr. George Beck SJ, was

especially appreciated as it tuned in our journey to the Heart of Jesus with the Synodal journey of the Church, with the delegates of the Special General Chapter and the world leaders attending COP26. The relaxation I experienced in the retreat has renewed me in health of mind and body, opening me to do 'something new'. The Lord is calling me to be present to the present. "God does not ask of us the perfection of tomorrow or even of tonight but only of the present moment." – St Madeleine Sophie Barat.



Silver Jubilee:



The Silver Jubilee of our first Profession (Annie and I) was on 2nd June 2021. However, due to the restrictions on movement because of the pandemic we had the joy of coming together to share the experiences, joy and struggles of these years only when Annie visited Prerana for a couple of days recently. Our evening outing on 27th November 2021 was grace-filled and the blessings of the Lord have strengthened us to walk in the 'something new' with confidence and to be 'agents of hope' in our blessed and broken world.

Venizia Fernandes rscj

Befriending the Animal World

I am not an animal lover, but my appreciation of and interest in the animal world has grown in the past year. My mother was very much at home with dogs and hens and my brother and sister-in-law have to have a pet dog. When one dog dies because of old age or has to be put to sleep for some reason they soon get themselves a puppy who is nurtured with much love. Their lives would be incomplete without a pet dog.

I acquired a Smartphone about a year and a half ago. Besides enabling me to keep in touch with a few friends and relatives, it has been a source of education, inspiration, relaxation and sometimes entertainment. One of the things I have enjoyed immensely and found heart-warming are the videos on animals, some of which I have watched two or three times because they have been so refreshing. Since these videos circulate all round the world you will be familiar with some of them.

There was a lovely one of a dog who falls into the sea and is rescued by a dolphin. The dog's expressions of gratitude (hearty, friendly barks) after he has been deposited safely from where he had fallen off and the dolphin's playful acceptance of these expressions are delightful to watch.

The most recent video I received was that of a friendship between an elephant and a dog (Tara and Bela) living in the Tennessee elephant sanctuary in the U.S.A. The two are absolutely inseparable. When it is time to eat, they eat and drink together, play together, sleep together. In course of time, the dog suffered a spinal cord injury because of which it could not walk or wag its tail. For 3 weeks it lay motionless in the office of the sanctuary where it was being treated. With 2700 acres to roam, Tara held vigil for 3 weeks in an enclosure close to the sanctuary office. When Bela was better, she was carried daily by the Co-director of the Sanctuary down to where Tara was, so that the two could spend some time in each other's company. It was charming to see the overwhelming responses of Tara on meeting her friend. The newscaster ended the short programme on the two with these challenging words: **Here are two living creatures who somehow manage to look past their immense differences.** Take a good look America, take a good look world. **If they can do it, what's our excuse?**

"Science is beginning to confirm the intuitions of mystics throughout the ages, including Francis, that we share kinship with animals" says Richard Rohr, a Franciscan contemplative in the U.S. He continues "Jeffrey Mason in his book *When Elephants Weep* explores the emotional lives of animals and says there are animal relationships that surely transcend mere survival and can even be called love."

In the toxic emotional climate that characterizes much of the socio-economic political world of today where physical and verbal violence are everyday occurrences, we need our animal brothers and sisters **to HUMANIZE US, TO HELP US RE-DISCOVER OUR GOD-GIVEN CAPACITY TO CARE FOR OTHERS, TO BE COMPASSIONATE, TO ACCEPT DIFFERENCES, TO SHOW KINDNESS AND BE GRATEFUL FOR KINDNESSES RECEIVED.**

Aristotle said "Man is a rational animal". In large sections of our world today, rationality seems to have atrophied, and of the three brains human beings possess, reptilian, mammalian and human, often the reptilian takes charge of our behaviours and is responsible for the unrest, violence and miseries in our world. We are fortunate to have a Pope who keeps reminding us of our God-Self, our responsibility for our common home and for all the living creatures of our world.

"John Muir calls animals our horizontal brothers. Throughout history, they have played a major role in human thought and culture. They inhabit our myths, fables, proverbs and stories. There is a profound, inescapable need for animals among all peoples. We have never lived without the companionship, example and practical help of animals." (Earth Prayers)

"Mother, Father, God, Universal Power, Remind us daily of the sanctity of all life."

"Touch our hearts with the glorious oneness of all creation,

As we strive to respect all living beings on this planet." (Earth Prayers)

Phila Gomes rscj

Prerana Nursery School

This year Prerana Nursery school began in June. We started the Nursery class with offline classes from June and the Lower KG and Upper KG with online classes. However, the parents were requesting to begin offline classes as they were finding it difficult to teach their children at home and so from November, after the Diwali vacation, we have started offline classes for the

L.KG and the U.KG. It feels so good to hear the laughter and crying of the little children as during the lockdown the classes felt empty and silent. The presence of little children brings life in the school. This year too we celebrated all the festivals online, but now we are planning to have our Christmas celebration offline in school.

What I have realized is that due to the pandemic the little children are the ones who are the most affected, especially the 2-3 year olds. I would like to share some of my experiences of such cases. There are parents who have come to take admission in our school because ours is the only school which had started the Nursery class offline. I was surprised to hear a parent tell me that the child who would earlier speak words or sentences has suddenly stopped speaking and would only make sounds to communicate with the parents or sibling. The desperate parents have gone to therapists, but they too say that there is nothing wrong with the child. I did give admission to this kid in the Nursery class. The child does interact with other children but still does not speak a word and we are trying our best to help this child. Some parents have come with the complaint that their child is so afraid to go out or to communicate with anyone besides the parents or that the child is too frightened to move out of the house. Now as the children have been coming to school they are learning to communicate with other children and adults. There are so many such cases and problems among children that parents are coming to me asking for their child to get admission in Prerana Nursery school. This age is a very crucial age in the social development of the child when the child learns to communicate with others; but due to the pandemic the messages given to child are: 'Don't touch there', 'Don't go out', 'It's not safe', 'Stay indoors'. As a result, fear has been communicated to the children, I don't blame the parents for this because everyone was living in fear during the pandemic and lockdown, but these little children have been the most affected.

As we are now in the Advent season I am hoping and praying that the situation in our world becomes better and that the little children will once again be free to play and run around without fear of Covid-19.

Fatima Azavedo rscj