

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART PROVINCE OF INDIA NEWSLETTER



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NEWSLETTER FROM THE SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY, MUMBAI

Vocation Re-discovered

One of the joys of 'recovery' time is the opportunity it gives us to take long hours for reflection and reading. I took up a book I had long wanted to read – "A world waiting to be born" by Scot Peck, sub-titled "Civility Rediscovered". Besides many other insights, it has a chapter on 'vocation' which fitted right into my reflections on where I am at this turning point of 'vocation' in my life. I recall my call to Religious Life as a deep desire to offer each action of my day to God, which of course I found almost impossible until I realised 'I can give it all, once for all.' and be relieved of the tension. In the Society this call crystallised into the option for the rural ministry that I made as a third year Young Professed, and that the authorities continued to send me to for more than thirty years of my religious life, as teacher, as educator and as formator in so many different settings and situations. For me personally it became a way of realising the 1970 Chapter 'option for the poor' and as I lived it, I discovered the depth and scope of the call to inculturation and insertion as essential to our mission.

"God does call each one of us to success, but that has little to do with the world's measurements... it does not guarantee happiness, but it does set the stage for a peace of mind that may result in fulfilment, that gives a delight to see and a sense of *fit*." but Scot further adds "inner torment is an essential ingredient of the calling". There were changes and challenges I struggled with over those years.

Scot also believes in what he calls 'sequential' vocation, a new and different call or sometimes even calls that appear on the horizon, challenging one to experience once again a different path. This is what happened when I was sent on this mission in Santa Cruz, in an urban setting and with a different stratum of society. I took up the challenge and in the first two years visited almost all the families in our zone, many elderly couples or even single people, living in big flats, well cared for by helpers, yet very lonely and needing spiritual company and often longing for Holy Communion. Our zone also needed a new co-ordinator and so came the vocation to help and guide the one chosen and continue the activities in the zone that had almost stopped in the interim.



The last two years of the pandemic have been for many a moment of awakening and re-aligning. For me it was this sudden "knock down", like St. Paul, that brought me to my senses – I was admitted in hospital due to Covid! I lost control of everything and had to just leave myself in the hands of others – my sisters, the doctors and nurses, fellow patients and helpers. Interiorly God gave me the grace to just let go and flow with the tide. It was a moment of awakening to many realities in my life. I watched with care the responsibility and attentiveness these young women (nurses) showed, felt within the need for reassurance and recognition from doctors and yearned for the company of my

sisters and relatives. I took note of so many realities in my own life – the sense of completeness and self-sufficiency, the ability to put my hand to anything, maintaining order and tidiness around, taking control in moments of indecision and often allowing the leadership role to surface in different situations unaware of, or at times even ignoring, the feelings of those around. Where was that deep sense of responsibility for others, that attentiveness to and caring for them at a very human level, walking in their shoes and being sensitive to their feelings? This surely was a call to a new vocation, especially as that is what has preoccupied my prayer and reflection of late.

Scot Peck shares "a vision of old age as something more than a time to watch yourself rot away – but rather as a period filled with opportunities for spiritual growth and preparation..." This time in our lives, is a time when God calls us to 'revitalisation', not necessarily in big ventures but in the little struggles to live daily, sisterly love and caring as I have experienced it, to avoid being a block in the web of relationships I am part of, to be ready for diminishment and illness as 'a call to spiritual power – the power to surrender', and like the person who was slowly going blind and growing more and more dependent on others, **simply resolve to make every person I meet "feel good" about themselves.**

Marie Noronha rscj

Carrying the cherished memories of the Pragnyalay community

Today, 7th February 2022, I have returned from Pragnyalay after my 10 days' stay there. I am still re-living some of the most life-giving and refreshing moments that I enjoyed with our elder sisters there – sisters who have laboured hard for the life of the Society – I became more and more aware that their daily faithfulness to their Lord and Master enables the Society to keep going and the able ones are standing on their shoulders. While enjoying good health, and when I was in my youthful days, I never wanted to be in an elder care community because I did not want to face this truth about life. Today, I regret those attitudes. The Coronavirus pandemic has taught some hard lessons to all of us – "today me and tomorrow you" are the whisperings that are heard in the Covid ward of every hospital. There are no age differences for the Coronavirus. But for me "do what you can today and leave the rest to the Lord" has become my slogan. It gives me a fearless attitude with courage and confidence and in return I experience deep Peace and Joy.

On the last day of my stay with Sr. Millicent in the hospital, I was contemplating on all that she had gone through during those 10 days. The Lord was teaching me many lessons about life. After having had some heart-to-heart chats with her, I asked her a question. "Millie, you are in your 90s and I am in my 60s. You have gone through a lot of ups and downs in your life. What advice would you give to me as someone in the 60s?" She gave the following answer which was very thought-provoking. "Jesus is mine, and I am His. Nothing else matters. It is the Lord who designs everything in our life. For designing, we need very vast spaces like designing a city. Look at a baby child. It is more than a baby. It is the Lord who designed him/her. Just like a baby runs to his/her parents, we too run to Jesus and to His mother. When he has chosen us and we keep Him in that chosen place, then we need nothing else."

I then asked one more question. "Do you ever feel scared of death?" Her spontaneous answer was "No, I do not feel scared of death. I feel sad to leave my loved ones. I feel sad that I could not do more for Him in this world. Still with Jesus, there is only the "**You and me**" situation. Nothing else. God gave life, no one else did. He decides when to give life and when to take life. 'Come to me, come to me', which is said several times in the Gospel."

Anyone who has experienced Sr. Millicent during her disoriented moments will not realize that the same woman possesses such spiritual wealth and depth within her. I said to myself: "Be aware of this when you judge others in a moment of their fragility."

Words fail me in expressing my indebtedness and gratitude for these grace-filled days I had with Sr. Millicent and our fragile, but great, souls in Pragnyalay. *“I thank my God each time I think of you and when I pray for you, I pray with joy”.*

Sophie rscj

Lord help me to surrender

After having been hospitalized twice in the last six months, I learnt some things. I saw persons quietly suffering, accepting the illness courageously and patiently. I saw that others had more pain. Besides physical suffering, many lost their dear ones. They are in pain even now as their dear ones are no more with them.



As my eyesight is weak I could not read much in the quarantine periods. I felt very lonely. God seemed far from me. The ‘Logos Healing’ prayer sessions in the afternoons kept me going. I repeat the prayer phrase, “Lord I surrender to you.”

“And in the silence of my heart Lord, I seek your face;
In the silence of my heart, Lord I gaze upon you;
In the silence of my heart, Lord I worship and glorify you;
In the silence of my heart, Lord I know you are there walking with me.”

Irene D’Souza rscj

Migrants not on distant roads but at our door step

The pandemic has been difficult for everyone to cope with life including us.

During the first wave of the Pandemic the migrants from our own country have suffered the most. The migrants are on their mission to earn money for their families who are in their native place in other states. Most of the migrants stay in rented places in the cities where they work. During the pandemic they lost their jobs. Lack of money made them walk to their native places and the whole world took notice of it.



Last October the church was celebrating Migrant Sunday. Our parish priests invited each family in the parish to call the migrants who are working in their area and have a get together with them. We decided to call our five employees – Nandu, the part-time gardener, Sarita and Anima, our part-time helpers, and Dinesh and Monu, the day and night watchmen, who come from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh respectively. We invited them to morning tea. They were delighted to get this invitation and came dressed up for as for a party. Anima came with her 5 years old daughter, who enjoyed the space in our house.

The gardener Nandu’s daughter is given a mobile phone – to be used for her online classes

We began our celebration with a prayer for their families. After which we served snacks – Samosas, Dhokla etc. and tea. We sat around and ate with them, inquiring about them and their families, how and when they had come to Mumbai. We realized that they have to send money every month to their families who are in their native places. We spent a lot of time with them. Now we really know them and feel close to them and can understand them better. Anima’s daughter became friendly and came one day and spent time with us.



With Anima and Sarita – our helpers

All of them felt happy and accepted as we sat together, listened to them and took interest in their families. They felt important and recognized as special people with their own dignity. We thank the priests who invited us to have this encounter with migrants.

Jokina D'Mello rscj