



CHRISTIAN BROTHERS



Nine is Mine

February 2015

NEWSLETTER

Volume 7 Issue 2

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Dear Brothers and friends of Edmund,

Greetings from Mumbai where I am spending a few days at home attending to my teeth before I go back to Chandigarh. Mumbai is surprisingly chilly and the minimum has touched 15 degrees Celsius.

The season of Lent has approached us very quickly this year and I arrived in Goa a day before Ash Wednesday. I missed the Carnival that must have been celebrated with the usual gusto. Judging from the newspapers, many people including the youth in Goa take the Lenten fast and abstinence quite seriously.

While in Goa, I was able to make my annual retreat. Goa has always had a number of very peaceful, quiet and beautiful places to make ones retreat. There is the Retreat House in Baga up on a hill and overlooking the sea. The Pedro Arupe Center in Raia is another lovely location though there is no sea nearby. The Jesuits have a number of good retreat Directors in Raia. I chose to make my retreat at the Pastoral Center in Old Goa. The center is very near the Mandovi River and one can see the ferries taking people across to Divar. The center, centuries ago, was a monastery for the Theatine order- an Italian group. It is attached to St. Cajetans's church, a church that is modeled on St. Peter's in Rome and has an altar in the center.

When St. Jose Vas was doing his priestly studies, he lived in an oratory up on a hill in Old Goa. Over the centuries, the place fell into neglect but in the last few years the church has been refurbished and now a huge conference center has been built adjoining the site. The conference center can accommodate 280 people and standing near the entrance of the center one gets a bird's eye view of Goa. So now there is yet another wonderful place for a quiet retreat.

During February, the Christy Murphy Memorial Lecture was held at the CRI Institute in Bangalore. The Brothers were represented by Placid, Len Noronha and Jocky. Len has written an account of the event for the Newsletter. Placid adds in an e-mail, "Christy was a man of great foresight. His relationship with people was marvelous. He sensed that Mrs. Stalker who owned the property wanting to sell it to a congregation of sisters, but despite all odds, Christy who was a student and superior of the institute pursued the matter and eventually got ownership of the property, which is a prime property today. The institute which was set up caters to all the Congregations of Brothers in India who send their Brothers to get qualified. Perhaps the institute is the only one of its kind in Asia!!!"

Grateful thanks to Joe Johnson for his write up on the Strategic Planning Workshop and to Len Noronha for his write up on the Project Management Program.

Yours fraternally

Mark

- Ann Weems

Lent is a time to take time to let the power of our faith story take hold of us, a time to let the events get up and walk around in us, a time to intensify our living unto Christ,

a time to hover over the thoughts of our hearts, a time to place our feet in the streets of Jerusalem or to walk along the sea and listen to his Word, a time to touch his robe and feel the healing surge through us, a time to ponder and a time to wonder....

Lent is a time to allow a fresh new taste of God! Perhaps we're afraid to have time to think, for thoughts come unbidden.

Perhaps we're afraid to face our future knowing our past. Give us courage, O God, to hear your Word and to read our living into it.

Give us the trust to know we're forgiven and give us the faith to take up our lives and walk.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP IN DELHI

In July 2014, when the PLT took up the mantle of leading the Province, we spent 10 days together in Nalasopara with Fr. Tony D'souza in an attempt to build team; form community; share our dreams, hopes and aspirations for ourselves and the province. We were able to articulate this in a vision statement that was quite broad but certainly incomplete – in terms of objectives, goals and action steps. Over the remaining months of the year with each set of PLT meetings we felt the urgent need to have composite and comprehensive plan to work from and towards.

Br. Dean McGlaughlin had facilitated the Mission Sustainability Council meeting in Cape Town, South Africa and Joe and Ralph returned from it very impressed with what Dean had achieved with the group in the 6 days they were together in Stellenbosch. They recommended that we approach Dean to help us work out a Strategic Plan for Leadership in the Province to help us steer the changing course we will journey on till 2020. He was approached by the PLT in October and responded to working with us in the affirmative. Owing to prior commitments he was only able to come work with us in February. Prior to this he has worked with the CLT and the TST in helping them announce their Vision and Mission in the form of a Strategic Plan.

And so, we have spent the first 2 weeks of February engaged in a Visioning Exercise which took the shape of a Strategic Planning Workshop. We engaged the wisdom and experience of the Leaders (Office bearers) of crucial ministries in the Province. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity and enthusiasm of all the brothers who participated in this experience.

We began by listing certain assumptions (major factors that were relevant to our area of involvement) such as - Realities which were bigger than our limited contexts (eg. Decisions mandated by a higher authority); Ground realities that we were aware of and which we needed to pay heed to and Group Agreements and other relevant information.

Once we had clarified our Base, we brainstormed to surface values that are central to the Edmund Rice Tradition: compassion, faith in a Providential God, Integrity, humble service et al. Our attention then moved over to the environment in which this Vision would operate. We examined our Resource Environment (human resources, assets), Stakeholder Environment (the expectations of our students, alumni, parents, staff) and finally the Risk Environment (with a view to ameliorate some of the risks that would be entailed in our initiatives).

Having gathered all this information we then went about looking at the strategic directions we will be moving towards. These Directions are grounded on goals we have set for ourselves. Our goals have been broken down into enabling ones which help in the bringing about of the ultimate goal for a particular strategic direction. Dean kept us firmly planted in our present context and had us work through how each goal is helped into becoming a reality through a set of strategies that had clear indicators of achievement. The latter part of the visioning exercise work was done during the 2nd week which was spent on actually working out one goal implementation plan. It took us 2 days to have just one done. We spent another session starting on another goal. This is certainly a work in progress which we believe will take us the most part of our term to implement. At the end of our 2 weeks together we felt quite delighted with the time, energy and focus we and other helped us put into coming up with our plan.

We are most grateful to the Brothers who helped us in formulating our vision and mission document and strategic plan. Without their input and the excellent facilitation of Dean we would not have been able to accomplish the objective we set out to achieve. Over the next couple of weeks and months we intend to share our efforts with you our Brothers and members of the Edmund Rice Network.

Joe Johnson

“THE CHRISTY MURPHY MEMORIAL LECTURE”



In recent months, we in the Province have been aware of the immense treasure we have in the Brothers who have gone before us. Martin Fernandes and Bap Finn have given us brief lives of Brothers like Ben Maher, Al Browne, J E McCann, Ben Dewsbury, Frank Ponise, P C Hart, O'Malley, Vinny Lynch, Dineen and so on.

The CRI Brothers' Institute in Bangalore is going through a similar awareness exercise. Every month they celebrate one of their earlier Superiors with a "Veterans' Memorial" Endowment Lecture, attended by all the student Brothers of Vidya Deep, and a number of Sisters studying theology in Bangalore. The 14th of February 2015 was chosen to honour Br. Christy Murphy with a lecture by Fr. Arul Raj, csc. He chose to speak, naturally enough, on what it was like to be present during the Synod of Bishops on "Family" - how appropriate for Christy, who brought his strong sense of family to his community life, and who was always in "Valentine's

Day" mode : in love with people, be they poor, or sidelined, or old - or just feeling low.

The Christian Brothers were represented by Placid Henriques, Len Noronha and Joachim Almeida. Len was of the opinion that one couldn't possibly do justice to Christy without talking about his vibrant happiness, which ever showed in the twinkle in his eye(s), unless the listeners could see some photographs. Martin Fernandes, Joachim and Frank Gale delved into their troves of pictures and came up with some fine specimens. Len, as was to be expected, spoke for just a short while with the photographs on screen, refraining from using any puns. Placid filled in with some marvellous examples and had the students quite charmed by a man who probably has his heavenly audience in stitches at this moment.

What was quite heartwarming was the warm welcome given to all who bear the name Christian Brother. Even though we are not currently represented in Bangalore, the Principal, Br. Xavier, the Director, Br. Pancras and all the others on the staff obviously hold us in the highest regard, which is a tribute to those who have been there in different capacities over the 50 years of the existence of "Vidya Deep".



Len Noronha

The Project Management Program

Recent Congregation publications often speak of "people MADE poor" - and of how we intend to ENGAGE with them. Many of us, after years of teaching in institutions, have had difficulty getting our minds around this concept of our future mission. And so, when Ralph organized a week's training in "Project Management", we looked forward to a time of enlightenment. We were not disappointed.

We were blessed that in the group there were Brothers who had done this sort of thing before: James, Gus, Donald, Mouvin and Lurshai had experienced serious immersion with disadvantaged people, and so we did not have to rely only on Steve Rocha, Lawrence and (of course) Ralph when we had to cope with stuff like "Situational Analysis", and mull over just what the status of a "Discussant" was. When we heard formidable acronyms like PRA, it took time to remember whether it was the same as a PTA or not (or was it like an RBM?), but with people like Edwin, John P, Roshan K and Sunil Lobo around to give us a couple of hints, even old folks like Jerome, Tino and myself could come up with responses - if people were willing to wait long enough! During the week, we were reminded of the passing of time by Lawrence and Joel. They gave us the opportunity (excuse?) to celebrate

by clocking up personal milestones. Joel's 50 yielded some memorable speeches.

But, right from the beginning, it was clear that this was not going to be just an academic learning exercise. The person Ralph had chosen to lead us through our paces was not a professorial type. **Khilesh Chaturvedi** was a revelation. His knowledge of the kind of work done by NGOs had been acquired over years of living among marginalized people, eating their food, (accepting their restrictions!), hearing their stories, agonizing with them about generations of systemic injustices and walking with them through their daily hardships. If our Congregation vision is now verbalized as "Heart Spirituality", Khilesh could be a wonderful model to follow. Rather than focus only on our thinking and planning abilities, he challenged us to move "out there" and then to take stock of the feelings we must necessarily experience.

We (teachers ever) found his preparation impeccable, and his mobilization of resources astounding. At one stage he and Ralph wondered if some "field exposure" would help our learning. Within minutes, Khilesh was able to contact two NGOs at the outskirts of Delhi who offered to show us around - such is his networking capacity. The tight programme made it possible for us to interact with only one of them, but during that short time we marveled at the real empowerment of the women and girls in that locality after representatives of the NGO had lived and worked among them. It gave many of us a taste of the kind of gospel ministry that is going on parallel to our easily recognized / formal educational structures, and an excitement about what can happen when we allow the Spirit to rule.

There were those of us who had looked forward to some activity around Delhi during the week. We were disappointed. Not only were the sessions quite demanding: we were often challenged to come up with some responses which required midnight oil consumption. But I am sure I speak for all those who attended the programme when I say that my abiding memory is not of how to fill up forms while pleading for money. It was, instead, of a person - a person filled with the Spirit, a person who is adept at listening to the voice of God speaking to us through those who have been marginalised - and for whom we might be the only option.

Len Noronha

Vocation Promoter's Report

Dear Brothers, greetings from Mumbai. Not Dadar, but Prabhadevi. No the Brothers have not started a new Community, rather I'm at home enjoying my last 2 days of a 2 week break from fishing for a little RnR.

In the past month I did manage a visit to Goa and Vasai, one unsuccessful and the other, quite the very opposite. I also did spend some time planning for a Vocation Camp for those who might join the Study House in Bajpe that we (Shawn, Sabino, Charlie and the Bajpe community) are conducting from the 13th to the 17th of April in the new Edmund Rice Study House. Any Brothers visiting Bajpe during those 4 days will be welcome to share their stories with the boys. So far we have 5 boys confirmed for this camp and hope that a few others who are also interested in attending this camp will join us. Let's hope for the best.

My plans for the month of March are quite simple. Fish, fish and more fish. By then the Board Examinations will be over and so I am planning to conduct a vocation camp in Shillong for boys from the North East who might be interested in joining the MIQ Study House, with the help of Ryan, Parag and the Scholastics. Then there is a visit to Jharkhand and Odisha where a few boys who are interested in the CBs, might come to Kolkata for a brief visit.

As I wind up, I remind you to keep up your prayers for those boys and young men who are in the process of discerning whether religious life in the Christian Brothers is their real calling or not. Also, do say a special prayer for K. Martin, the young man from Tamil Nadu who is in the middle of his immersion experience in the Bow and Dum Dum as well as attending a conversational English course at the British Council.

Until the next report, be good!

Sameer