



# Goethals News



The Goethals Indian Library & Research Society, Kolkata

Vol. XXI

No. 4

Christmas Issue

October - December, 2018

## Christmas Message of Pope Francis:

“Christ is born for us; let us rejoice in the day of our salvation! Let us open our hearts to receive the grace of this day, which is Christ himself. Jesus is the radiant “day” which has dawned on the horizon of humanity. A day of mercy, in which God our Father has revealed his great tenderness to the entire world. A day of light, which dispels the darkness of fear and anxiety. A day of peace, which makes for encounter, dialogue and, above all, reconciliation. A day of joy: a “great joy” for the poor, the lowly and for all the people (cf. Lk 2:10).....”

“...Where God is born, hope is born; and where hope is born, persons regain their dignity. Yet even today great numbers of men and woman are deprived of their human dignity and, like the child Jesus, suffer cold, poverty, and rejection. May our closeness today be felt by those who are most vulnerable, especially child soldiers, women who suffer violence, and the victims of human trafficking and the drug trade.....”



Pope Francis

“...On this festal day may the Lord grant renewed hope to all those who lack employment – and they are so many!; may he sustain the commitment of those with public responsibilities in political and economic life, that they may work to pursue the common good and to protect the dignity of every human life.....”



Mary and Jesus - Yamini Roy

December calendar is often filled with social obligations. They may not even know the inner reason why the party is being held. The spiritual aspect is often overlooked or

## Every day is Christmas

Christmas is a time for celebration. We celebrate the birth of the one who brought a message of peace, love and hope.

People celebrate Christmas in many ways. Some do it publicly; they throw big parties, wanting to share their excitement with others.

even excluded.

Some prefer to celebrate Christmas privately, with their family members and relatives. This type of celebration is warm and supportive. There are individuals and families who reach out to children, the aged, the poor and the dying and destitute and express their joy by sharing a meal or distributing gifts.

Christmas is also a celebration of the past to be thankful for the blessings and favours of God on us; it is a celebration of the present, an opportunity to share and celebrate the richness of life; it is with this focus of today we can move forward with hopes to tomorrow.

May Child Jesus bless us in this Christmas and guide the steps we take.

Fr. J. Felix Raj, SJ



---

# The Mission Of Christian Artists Today

This paper is developed from an address delivered on November 16 to the Jesuit Artists at Kalakridaya, Kolkata.



**Fr. Dr. J. Felix Raj SJ**  
Vice-Chancellor  
St. Xavier's University, Kolkata  
&  
Director of GILRS

My paper has four aspects:

- (1) A brief note on Art and Religion;
- (2) Jesuits and Art;
- (3) Art and Christianity as seen by the Church; and
- (4) The Mission of the Artists with a Specific Vocation today.

## 1. Art and Religion:

Art as a diverse act of divine endowment enables an artist to offer aesthetic form to ideas conceived in the mind in a way that gives delight to humanity and elicits a sense of contemplation as it contains elements of essential beauty and truth.

Art is a cultural benefit in so far as culture is broadly defined as “everything whereby human beings develop and perfect their bodily and spiritual qualities.”

For Aristotle the proper end of art is “contemplation” resulting from aesthetic response to the beautiful and the ideal.

Michelangelo considered art as an experience “sacred” in itself, precisely because there is an extremely profound relationship between art and spirituality. The virtue of these qualities inherent in art has always played a very important role in all religious experiences. In fact, all major spiritual movements have had a lasting influence on art.

## 2. Jesuits and Art:

Although St. Ignatius, the architect of the largest religious Order in the Church, was not known as an artist, his sons inherited from him a sense and sensibility, an appreciation for the revelatory ability of the imagination which was a breakthrough in the western spiritual tradition.

Unlike many earlier spiritual writers who warned against fantasy and the use of images, Ignatius encourages retreatants to actively use their imaginations and intellects. Meditations and contemplations of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius take the retreatants into visual compositions with eyes, ears, minds and



Triumph of St. Ignatius of Loyola, ceiling fresco by Br. Andrea Pozzo, SJ in Rome

hearts open. Each exercise ends with an application of senses - to see the persons, to hear what they say, to smell, to taste and to touch. Life becomes an orchestration of the senses bestowed upon us by God.

Even before the demise of St. Ignatius in 1556, full-scale plays were staged with his blessings in Jesuit colleges in Messina and Rome. The Ratio Studiorum of 1599, the Jesuit educational code recognized the dual value of performance for the young as training in poise and memory:

"Our students and their parents become wonderfully enthusiastic, and at the same time very attached to our Society when we train the boys to show the result of their study, their acting ability and their ready memory on the stage."

From these beginnings, a rich tradition of plays filled the courtyards and theatres of Jesuit colleges from Vilnius to Cuzco, from Goa to Manila.

The early Jesuits were primarily educators and wherever they started a school or college, they built a church or a chapel. This necessarily propelled them into architecture, sculpting and painting. They used local artists and also artists from other countries, when needed. It is clear from Fr. John O'Malley's findings that in different countries the Jesuit would sometimes adapt their creations to the local culture, as in Japan or in Paraguay, to suit the sentiments of the people of the place.

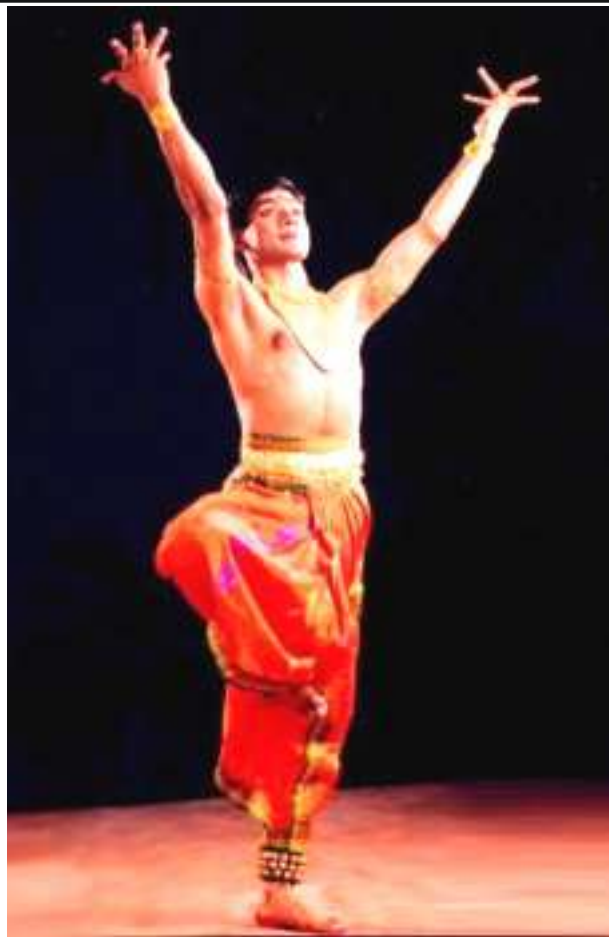
To quote O'Malley, "By building churches, they became involved with architecture and painting; by building schools and colleges, they involved in theatre, music and dance."

John O'Malley claims, the Jesuits were as eclectic in painting as they were in architecture. They were (no doubt in vigorous response to Reformists), enthusiastic producers and most prolific patrons to the Baroque art with its ornate, exaggerated and exuberant characteristics displayed in music, dance, design and painting. He reminds that John Paul Reuben and Gianlorenzo Bernini were consistent collaborators with the Jesuits.

Over the course of nearly 500 years, Jesuits, among whom many were Brothers like Brother Andrea Pozzo (who was responsible for the wonderful ceiling painting of St Ignatius' Church in Rome), have used a wide range of artistic platforms to reach out to people.

### **3. Art and Christianity:**

Art is an integral ingredient of Christian life and mission. The Church, by its very nature, is missionary. Hence, it has learned to enter into lively engagement with a variety of art forms embedded in cultures it encountered for the benefit of inculturating Christian life and mission, Christian cult, literature, sculpture and architecture. Its long-standing association with the world of art is climactic in the closing Message of the Second Vatican Council addressed to the artists:



**A Dancing Jesuit - Fr. Saju George, SJ of Kolkata**

"We now address you, artists, who are taken up with beauty and work for it: poets and literary men, painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, men devoted to the theatre and the cinema... The Church has long since joined in alliance with you. You have built and adorned her temples, celebrated her dogmas, enriched her liturgy. You have aided her in translating her divine message in the language of forms and figures, making the invisible world palpable. Today, as yesterday, the Church needs you and turns to you... Do not allow an alliance as fruitful as this to be broken."

"This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair... It is beauty, like truth... unites generations and makes them share things in admiration. And all of this is through your hands... Remember that you are the guardians of beauty in the world".

### **4. Mission with a Specific Vocation:**

St. Pope John Paul II categorically stated, "Beauty is the vocation bestowed on [artists] by the Creator in the gift of artistic talent". Their talents are not simply for the self but for the human race, at the service of their neighbours and the community of the human kind. Further, Christian artists have a pastoral responsibility to share their unique talent for the benevolence of the Church. From this ecclesial perspective, I would like to suggest some



Two Jesuit Fathers: Rudolf Acquaviva and Antony Monserrate at the Akbar's Court

possible areas of artists' mission in the Church.

#### a) Mission of Inculturation

A keen commitment of Christian artists to develop inculturated Indian Christian art models will be an enduring service for evangelization. Let me explain: India is known from ancient time for its rich Asian multicultural heritage. Christianity is also an Asian religion. But when it is presented in Medieval Western cultural garb, as it is being done, what impact will it have on the general public other than looking at it suspiciously as a colonial religion?

Pope John Paul II recalled this problematic situation in which evangelization is caught up in India. He commented: "In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought".

Further, Pope Francis reminds us: "Each particular Church should encourage the use of the arts in evangelization, building on the treasures of the past but also drawing upon the wide variety of contemporary expressions so as to transmit the faith in a new "language of parables".

From the seventh century to the present, inculturated Christian art has existed in India which reached a heightened period in the sixteenth century with the work of Jesuit missionaries. Hence, Jesuit artists'

mission of inculturation is not something new but only renewal of that great legacy in our contemporary pastoral context.

#### b) Mission for the Common good

Society needs artists, just as it needs professionals in other branches of knowledge who ensure the growth of the individuals and the development of the community. Within the vast cultural panorama of each nation and culture, artists have their unique place.

Obedient to their inspiration in creating works that must be both entertaining and educative, both worthwhile and beautiful, they enrich the cultural heritage of each nation and of all humanity. They also render an exceptional social service in favour of the common good recognizing the eminent dignity of every person endowed with capacity to decide one's destiny in life.

Today, many artists in India are also social activists engaged with the struggles of the people at the margins of the society. Jesuits in Asia/India have profound as well as practical reason to collaborate with this movement by providing social critical art, because many Jesuits had been forerunners for subaltern movements in Asia/India.

#### c) Prophetic Mission against Consumerism

Today the culture of commercialization and consumerism has turned our society into a huge multicultural showcase tied only to the tastes of certain consumers, while the poor eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

Pope Francis advises that the Christian artists, through their talents and by drawing from the sources of Christian spirituality, can be the contemporary prophetic voices for "an alternative understanding of the quality of life led by a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment, free of the obsession with consumption."

#### d) Mission of Dialogue

Pope John Paul II proposes that the Christian artists are the best agency to promote dialogue between cultures. He reminds us, "Even beyond its typically religious expressions, true art has a close affinity with the world of faith." Hence, they can be bridge-builders between cultures, and between Church and cultures.

There is a vast social space in India for Jesuit artists to utilize their talents for building bridges between people in a world in which narrow domestic walls, raised out of fear of fellow beings, stifle the stream of clear thought and pertinent reason. Remember, Pope Francis acclaims the artists as "the custodians of beauty, heralds and witnesses of hope for humanity."

---

# Christmas, A New Way Of Seeing God



Fr. D. John Romus  
Bishop's House, Raiganj.

ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT, when Christians gather for worship, the ancient yet ever new proclamation of Christ's birth rings out. It is the angel's message of good news given to the shepherds of Bethlehem living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night: "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12).

Nothing miraculous, nothing extraordinary, nothing glorious is given to the shepherds as a sign to see Christ, the Incarnation of God. All they will see is a child wrapped in swaddling clothes, one who, like all children, needs a mother's care; a child born in a stable, who therefore lies not in a cradle but in a manger. God's sign is the baby in need of help and in poverty.

## Christmas, a Parable of God's Simplicity

The narratives of Christ's birth given in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke absolutely demolished the imagery of Christ the Jews had. They waited for a royal Christ endowed with political power to redeem their nation from Roman imperialism. He was expected to appear in his regal apparel in Jerusalem temple, a magnificent work of art and architecture and also the holiest place of worship in those days. The religious centres of Palestine consistently propagated this idea of Christ. On the contrary, the Christ-child of Bethlehem sought no crown, no sovereign mantle and no palace. God does not want to overwhelm us with divine immensity. God made God's self small and became a human being as we are so that we understand who God is for us, the one with whom we can bond ourselves as we are.

Look, God's dwelling place is a messy stable! The message of Christ's birth was first given not to those who wield power in Jerusalem, but to the poor shepherds. In ancient Palestine, they were not part of the orthodox

puritan Judaism. They lived in the fringes of the society because their trade isolated them from ritual purity and orthodox piety. Christmas reminds us to rethink our perspective of God.

## Margins, the Favoured Sites of God

Christmas directs our attention to see God in the margins of the society where the world's despised and the deprived people of all categories live in droves. Living on the margins means being poor, homeless, unemployed or displaced persons, denoting being away from the centres of wealth, financial influence and power. It could also mean exclusion on account of ethnic and religious impurity markings imposed of some groups of people, implying segregation from main stream society.

The Gospels abound with numerous incidents in which Jesus is putting into action the deeply engrained concern of God who privileges those who are in the margins of the society, just as at his birth the shepherds were privileged to receive the angelic message to see him first. This is evident right from the beginning of his ministry as given in his mission manifesto that he is sent to preach the good news of God's favour to the poor and the rejects of the society (Lk 4:16-19). He also made it clear that caring for someone in life-threatening situation is a defining value of God's reign as given in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37); in the criterion set by him for the Last Judgement (Mt 25:35-40); in the frequent association and table-fellowship he celebrated with sinners and tax collectors (Mt 9:10-17); and in the acts of compassion he showed towards the lepers, the blind, the deaf and the lame (Mt 11:4-6).

Jesus' privileging the despised ones of the society has deep meaning: first, it is to show in action how the mercy and compassion of God is with those whose dignity worthy of human persons created in divine image is denied. Secondly, it is to reveal that human well-being is the sole concern of God and, therefore, God rejoices in the flourishing of human life in all its goodness and beauty, beginning with the least and the last in the society. Precisely, the purpose of Incarnation is to share with us in a most possible human way this deep-seated longing of God for humanity.

Contemplating on the mystery of Incarnation, Tertullian, an eminent theologian of the third century, commented: "The flesh is the hinge of salvation." It means all round human well-being is the decisive criterion to know that God's salvation is at work in our

midst. God who enfleshed God's self in our nature is a world-loving God and, therefore, this world matters. If that is the case, then all people deserve love, care, and dignity; all need water, food, shelter, hospitality and healthcare. When we work for these amenities of life, we participate in human projects that resonate with the heart of God to create a better humane society where justice flourishes, affirming the inalienable worth of every person as a child of God.

### Service, the Call of Christmas

Nothing has proved harder in the history of civilization than to extend service to protect the life of those whose faith is different, whose skin is a different colour, whose truth is different kind and whose ethnicity is different than one's own. However, the horror of holocaust and the destructions of the World Wars have forced the countries of the world to come together to revisit our common humanity we all share and to celebrate our unity in diversity. This has enlightened the hearts of many to cross identity boundaries and barriers for rendering humanitarian service. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the result of this process. It is an indispensable beacon of modern civilization, showing the way to a more humane world order in the post-world War II era.

The example of Incarnation helps to embrace all human beings without barriers and accept them in their diversity and differences embodying their unique characteristics, because through the mystery of Incarnation (Jn 1:9) God identifies God's self with every person. This is the reason why the Church needs to love the world, society, cultures and traditions of the people and enter into collaborative service with all people for common good. This was particularly brought out by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a renowned German theologian and an anti-Nazi dissident, who died in the concentration camp. Shocked by the terror of Nazi genocide, he wrote in his classic, *The Cost of Discipleship*: "The 'philanthropy' of God (Titus 3:4) revealed in the Incarnation is the ground of Christian love toward all on earth that bear the name human."

Inspired by the mystery of Incarnation, service has been an identity-mark of the Christians. The Church's service to society through education, health-care, improvement of the poor and social service has led the people in the Global South to consider Christianity synonymous with service. But service to one's neighbour in need is the responsibility of every one. It is in-built in human nature because humans are social by nature which entails support and care for one another.



Nativity by M. F. Hussain

The spirit and practice of service is necessary for everyone to become a genuine human person. However, in caste-ridden societies like the ones in South Asia, which seem to repeat the Cain's question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9), it is necessary to promote the ethics of service for the advancement of common good. This will be yet another service the Church can offer to society especially through its educational institutions where millions of students from different backgrounds and faith affiliations pass through.

### Conclusion

Christmas invites us to take a fresh look at our understanding of God and to put an end to all kinds of pernicious dualisms that divide heaven and earth, God and humanity, and soul and body into unbridgeable binaries, because through Incarnation God has become part of our secular history while being God. Christmas tells us God's dwelling place is everywhere with a spirit of universality, beginning with the least and the last in the society. Christmas reminds us of our service to humanity to build a future of greater human solidarity and to bring joy and hope to everyone with whom God is pleased to dwell. Happy Christmas!



## Province Meet of Alumni/ae Associations:

The meeting of the Calcutta Province Alumni/ae Associations was held at the Press Club on Sunday, November 25, 2018. It was hosted by Mr. Snehasis Sur, President of the Club and the SXCCAA and attended by presidents and other office bearers of the Associations.

The General council decided to meet twice a year. The next meeting will be held in Burdwan on July 28, 2019. Some province level projects were adapted: 1. Old and strong Associations like ALSOC, SXCCAA and

SLOBA are encouraged to extend their support to new and weaker Associations; 2. Health camp for teachers, staff and students of our Alma Maters; 3. Expressions of our loyalty and respect to our teachers; 4. Educating a girl child and 5. Dissemination of information of activities between Associations.

Thanks to Mr. GP Gupta, Mr. Snehasis Sur and Mr. Sanjib Konar for their excellent coordination of the meeting.

## 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Address

September 11, 1893 is a historic day for all. It was on this day that Swami Vivekananda made his appearance at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago and it was for the first time a religious leader, appearing on a world platform; spoke about the dire need for harmony of religions.

He spoke not only about universal toleration but acceptance of all religions as true. He made a fervent appeal to the assembled religious leaders to shun all forms of "religious fanaticism, persecution and violence, whether with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way towards the same goal."

2018 marks the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's historic Chicago speech and the Ramakrishna Missions all over the world are observing

this great occasion in a befitting manner. Ramakrishna Mission Delhi organized an Interfaith Meet with representatives from the nine major religions of India, in their Ashrama on September 11, 2018 to discuss and understand how clearly different religions have truly accepted and adopted the idea of harmony as preached by Swami Vivekananda and put it into practice.

Fr. Felix Raj, SJ, Director of GILRS participated at the Interfaith Meet and addressed the religious representatives on "Christian Response to Swami Vivekananda's message of Religious Tolerance and Harmony".

To celebrate the great occasion, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata organized an essay competition on "Swami Vivekananda's Message of Harmony and its Relevance to the Youth Today".

## New Arrivals

1. **Science & Religion**, by Swami Ranganathananda, Advaita Ashrama Publication, Kolkata, 2013.
2. **Science & Religion**, by Swami Lokeshwarananda, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, 2015.
3. **Can one be scientific and yet spiritual?**, by Swami Budhananda, Advaita Ashrama Publication, Kolkata, 2017.
4. **Religious Resources for Peace Work**, by Pangernungba Kechu, Melvil and Atungo Shitri, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, Assam, 2016.
5. **The Challenges of Fundamentalism**, by Michael Amaladoss S.J., IDCR Publications, Chennai, 2009.
6. **Interreligious Marriages in India**, by Dr. Vincent Sekhar S.J., Claretian Publications, Bangalore, India, 2017.
7. **Understanding Sankara Essays by Richard De Smet**, Edited by Ivo Coelho, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, India, 2013.
8. **Conflict Resolution in Multicultural Societies**, Jjumba Mukharjee, SAGE Publication India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2014.

## Mails and E-mails

1. A beautiful facility on a beautiful campus full of relevant materials helpful staff. **Coilin Persons**.
2. The paintings are really great & impressive. They appear to be very lively & naturistic. It was nice being here. **Shweta Kuntala**.
3. An excellent collection with impeccable maintenance of the glories of our beloved institution. **Anupam Ghosh**.
4. It was a splendid collection making us feel very proceed to be a part of this great college. **Saheli Sur**.

## The Warning Signs

“But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I

will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. . . . . and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life”.  
-Jesus Christ (Luke 21:12-19)

## Researchers at the Goethals



1. **Coilin Persons** on History of the Observatory at St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, USA.
2. **Devi Chakrabarti** on History of Hooghli, West Bengal, Kolkata, India.
3. **Lumbini Sharma** on Documentary of Mutty Lal Seal, Kolkata, India.
4. **Subham China** on Maritime Predation in the Northern Bay of Bengal Littoral 10<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Kolkata, India.
5. **Shruti Goswami** on Dictionary Independent, Kolkata, India.
6. **D.J. Azavedo** on History of All India Catholic Mission, Kolkata, India.
7. **Fr. Joseph Kulandai S.J.** on Jesuit Contribution to Education, Kolkata, India.

## Goethals Team Wishes You



A  
Merry  
Christmas



and  
A  
Joyfilled  
New Year  
2019



The Goethals Indian Library & Research Society, St. Xavier's, 30 Mother Teresa Sarani, Kolkata 700016, India.

Tel: 0091-33-22801919, Email: goethalscal@gmail.com, Website: www.goethals.in

Director: Fr. Dr. J. Felix Raj, SJ, Asst. Director: Fr. Dr. Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ, Staff: Avijan Mondal & Sudipto Ghosh.

(For Private Circulation Only)