PROCLAIM

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HOPE DWELLS AMONG US

Hope is born where the world feels poor,
A Child lights the pilgrim way.
This Jubilee, we walk together,
For God makes His dwelling among us.





CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

wishes for 2026

TO THE READERS, COLUMNISTS, SUBSCRIBERS,
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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Hope dwells among us



"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). This bold confession stands at the heart of Christian faith and mission. Hope is not an abstraction, nor a distant promise postponed to the end of time. Hope has a dwelling. It has entered history, taken flesh, and made its home among women and men in their vulnerability and longing. Where God dwells, hope becomes real.

The title of this issue, Hope Dwells Among Us, invites us to rediscover the Incarnation not only as a mystery to be adored, but as a mandate to be lived. Saint Paul proclaims, "Christ Jesus is our hope" (1 Tim 1:1). Hope is not merely inspired by Christ; it is embodied in Him. Mission flows from this embodiment --- from God's decision to be present, close, and faithful.

The Church has always understood this dwelling as the foundation of her missionary vocation. Gaudium et Spes reminds us that in Christ, God has united Himself "in some fashion with every human being" (GS 22). Consequently, no human situation is foreign to God, and no place is beyond the horizon of hope. Mission, therefore, is not the Church bringing God where He is absent, but discerning and revealing the God who already dwells among His people.

Pope Leo XIV, in his Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi Te, deepens this vision by insisting that hope is learned where God chooses to dwell most visibly: among the least. He writes that the Church must "kneel before the mystery of God at work in the poor, not as benefactors who give from abundance, but as disciples who receive from grace." Such a Church does not merely speak about hope; she allows hope to evangelize her.

Hope, Pope Leo XIV notes, is sustained by proximity. "God's love is not distant compassion but abiding nearness; He remains where wounds are deepest, not to observe them, but to heal them" (Dilexi Te). This nearness defines mission today. In a fractured world marked by disbelief, injustice, and fatigue, the most eloquent proclamation of the Gospel is faithful presence—staying where others withdraw, listening where others pass by, accompanying where others abandon.

Scripture confirms this logic of divine closeness. "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted" (Ps 34:18). Missionaries are invited to mirror this nearness, becoming living signs of Emmanuel, "God-with-us" (Mt 1:23). As Ad Gentes teaches, mission is participation in the sending of the Son and the Spirit, who enter human history not with power, but with humility and love (AG 2).

Pope Leo XIV cautions against reducing mission to activity alone. He observes that "hope withers when mission forgets contemplation; without dwelling with God, we risk speaking about Him without revealing Him." Hope dwells among us first because God dwells within us. Prayer, silence, and listening are thus not escapes from mission, but its wellspring.

This dwelling also shapes the Church's public witness. As Evangelii Gaudium affirms, "The Church does not grow by proselytism but by attraction" (EG 14). What attracts is a community that lives as if God truly remains among His people-generating joy, perseverance, and compassion even amid uncertainty. "Hope does not disappoint us" (Rom 5:5), precisely because it is rooted in God's unfailing presence.

...Continued on Page 05

Hope dwells in us

A Christmas reflection

*Dr Thomas J DSouza**

The darkness of hopelessness



In the depths of human experience, hopelessness casts a shadow that seems impenetrable. Consider the single mother working multiple jobs, watching her children go to bed hungry, unable to see a way out of generational poverty. Every bill becomes a mountain, every setback confirmation that change is impossible.

Or picture the elderly man sitting alone, his family too busy to visit, his body failing him. He wonders if anyone remembers he exists, if his life mattered at all.

Consider the teenager struggling with depression, overwhelmed by pressure to be perfect while drowning in darkness, unable to tell anyone the truth. Each morning brings the heavy question: "Can I face another day?"

These represent millions living in despair — refugees with nowhere to call home, patients receiving terminal diagnoses, addicts trapped in cycles they cannot break, marriages crumbling, young people unable to find purpose in an increasingly chaotic world.

The ancient hope: The Messiah foretold

Yet into this darkness, a promise was spoken — ancient, persistent, unwavering. The Old Testament rings with expectation of One who would come to set all things right.

Isaiah painted a vision: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2). He proclaimed, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Micah foretold the birthplace: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel" (Micah 5:2).

Jeremiah spoke of a shepherd-king: "'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land'" (Jeremiah 23:5).

Even in exile and suffering, Isaiah declared God's promise: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland" (Isaiah 43:19).

For centuries, Israel waited, clinging to these promises through oppression and occupation. When would hope dawn?

Hope Incarnate: Jesus comes

Then, in the fullness of time, hope took on flesh and blood. Not in a palace, but in a stable. Not announced to kings, but to shepherds. Angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14).

John captures the magnitude: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and



truth" (John 1:14).

Jesus didn't just bring hope — He became Hope itself. When John the Baptist questioned if He was truly the Messiah, Jesus pointed to His works: "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor" (Matthew 11:5) — the very signs Isaiah had prophesied.

Hope through word and deed

Jesus proclaimed hope through teaching and embodied it through action. To a woman caught in adultery, facing death, He said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). To the weary and burdened, He extended an invitation: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

His actions demonstrated hope's power: He touched the untouchable leper, healing and restoring him (Mark 1:40-42). He wept with Mary and Martha, then raised Lazarus from death (John 11:35-44). To a woman who suffered for twelve years, He said, "Your faith has healed you. Go in peace" (Luke 8:48).

He proclaimed, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink" (John 7:37). He calmed storms, sought the lost, and declared heaven's rejoicing "over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7).

The ultimate act of hope

The supreme demonstration came through Jesus's death and resurrection. On the cross, hope appeared to die. Yet this was God's plan. Peter preached, "God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24).

Paul explains: "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The resurrection changed everything. Death had been defeated. Paul triumphantly declares, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).



Hope dwells in us

Christmas reminds us that hope is not just historical but present reality. The same Jesus born in Bethlehem offers to dwell within us today. Paul describes this as "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

This indwelling hope transforms how we face darkness:

When circumstances seem hopeless: We remember "in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28). Our hope isn't based on circumstances changing, but on God's presence in them.

When we feel alone: We cling to Jesus's promise: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

When we're overwhelmed by failures: We remember "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us" (1 John 1:9). Our hope isn't in our perfection but in His grace.

When we face suffering: We hold onto truth that "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

When death approaches: We rest in assurance that "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Becoming bearers of hope

If hope dwells in us, we're called to be hope-

bringers to others. Just as shepherds spread the word (Luke 2:17-18), we too are messengers of hope.

This means practical compassion—meeting tangible needs as Jesus did. It means authentic presence—sitting with those who suffer. It means speaking truth—that transformation is possible, that God hasn't given up on anyone. It means living differently—our joy in hardship and peace in chaos become testimonies that another way is possible.



The hope that never disappoints

As we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate fulfilled ancient promises and eternal hope. The baby in the manger became the Savior on the cross, the risen Lord, and the coming King. Paul writes, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

This hope is an anchor for the soul (Hebrews 6:19), unshakeable because it's grounded in God's character and promises.

To the struggling mother, lonely elderly, despairing teenager, and all who feel hopeless: The message of Christmas is that Hope has come, Hope remains, and Hope will return. Jesus is Immanuel — God with us — yesterday, today, and forever.

Conclusion

This Christmas, let us receive anew the gift of hope that came wrapped in swaddling clothes. Let us allow Christ to dwell in us more fully, transforming us from the inside out. Let us become bearers of this hope to a world that desperately needs it.

Hope dwells in us — not because of our strength, wisdom, or goodness, but because of His. And that hope, as Scripture promises, "does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5).

The light has dawned. Hope has come. And His name is Jesus.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

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Continued from Page 2: Hope dwells among us

As Advent opens our eyes to expectancy and Christmas to joy, this issue invites every reader to a renewed missionary examen: Where do we allow God to dwell in us and through us? Where are we called to remain, rather than rush ahead? How can our ministries become spaces where hope is not explained, but encountered?

Hope dwells among us. To believe this is to be sent — not as owners of hope, but as witnesses to a God who chooses to stay. In remaining with humanity, God entrusts to the Church a simple yet demanding mission: to dwell where He dwells, so that the world may not lose courage, nor forget how to hope.

+ Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
Bishop of Vellore
Director, PMO - India

The light shines in the darkness

Advent hope for a troubled world

*Fr Dr Patrick Mathias SDB**



To celebrate Advent is to recognize the continual coming of God in light of the Lord who has already come. Advent invites us to rejoice in the Lord who freely comes to us and to live in hope of His manifestation. In times of anxiety and uncertainty, Christian hope becomes a seed of trust, an opening of horizons. It calls us to enter into the generous logic of God, our merciful Father. Christian hope lifts our vision to the greater promises of God, urging us to "prepare the way of the Lord" in the ordinary steps of our lives without losing sight of the new heaven and new earth: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Is 65:17). As Christians, we are not only receivers of salvation but also its heralds, called to be signs and bearers of God's love. Advent is therefore a time of responsibility—of welcoming God's gift personally and preparing the way for others to encounter Him.

Light shines in the darkness

John 1:5 declares, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." This verse reveals the mystery of the Incarnation: Jesus Christ, the true light foretold by Isaiah (Is 9:2), enters a world clouded by sin, bringing salvation and hope. Since Christ is the Light of the world, no force of evil can overpower Him (Mt 16:18; Jn 16:33). John emphasizes light and darkness to point to profound spiritual realities. Light represents eternal life and truth in Jesus Christ (1 Jn 5:11), while darkness signifies sin and rejection of God (Jn 3:19). Just as physical light dispels darkness, Jesus' light conquers sin, ignorance, unbelief, and spiritual blindness. The Greek verb for "overcome" (katalaben) conveys overpowering or extinguishing, underscoring Christ's triumphant and permanent victory over darkness.



People who walked in darkness

On Christmas, "a great light" shines forth (Is 9:2) for the whole world. Isaiah prophesied, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shone" (Is 9:2). The Gospel of Matthew quotes this prophecy when narrating Jesus' public ministry in Galilee (Mt 4:16). The new Immanuel (Is 7:14) is the light shining in darkness. On the blessed night of Christmas, Jesus Christ—the true Light—descended into humanity's darkness, and Mary, Joseph, the angels, and shepherds rejoiced at His birth. The Incarnation reveals that God chose to dwell among us as Emmanuel—God-with-us—present in every moment of our lives, even amid war, ecological crises, poverty, and human fragility.

The birth of Christ in the darkness of night

Throughout salvation history, God has often manifested His presence during the night (Ex 12:31; Lk 2:11; Acts 16:25). The birth of Christ in darkness signifies that even in our darkest moments, God's power and glory shine forth. When Christ came into the world, there was no light; when He left, there was no darkness. The birth of Jesus transforms the darkness of our lives into an inhabited darkness—illumined by the One who is the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12).

The danger of deception

When King Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by a dream, Daniel interpreted: "He reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him" (Dan 2:22). We live today amidst a struggle between human wisdom and divine wisdom. Jesus exposed the illusion of false goodness. Many things appear

attractive—wealth, power, success, religious practices—yet may conceal darkness within. The newborn Jesus invites us to see with the eyes of the Spirit. In a world overflowing with information, we need discernment to follow the True Light rather than false light.

Christmas – The true feast of the poor

The Word was made flesh in the poor setting of a humble family, surrounded by shepherds, manifested through swaddling clothes and a manger (Lk 2:12). God shows Himself as the lover of poverty, manifesting under the appearance of poverty and as poor Himself. In Bethlehem, God revealed Himself not as a mighty sovereign but in humility, simplicity, and poverty. The glory of God manifests in humility, self-emptying love, and total solidarity with the lowly.

The humility of the manger



Every Advent leads us to contemplate the humility of the Incarnate Word. Jesus entered our world born to poor parents in a cold stable, laid in a manger—a feeding trough for animals symbolizing humility and simplicity. In the crib as on the cross, we perceive the weakness of God, stronger than human might (1 Cor 1:25), and the poverty of God, infinitely richer than any human wealth. He embraced our poverty and sorrow to give us his riches and joy. This humble beginning points to Jesus' mission: to restore dignity to the poor, heal the sick, and bring peace to the broken-hearted. Through His birth, Christ embraced our fragility; through His death, He restored our dignity. To welcome Jesus is to welcome the poor, forgive the sinner, and love one another deeply.

Models of advent attitudes

Isaiah – The prophet of hope



Isaiah's encounter with God in the temple (Is 6:1–8) set him on fire with prophetic mission. He proclaimed God's faithfulness and called Israel to conversion, painting God's promises: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Is 9:2), "A shoot shall spring from the stump of Jesse" (Is 11:1), "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, Immanuel" (Is 7:14). During exile, the "Second Isaiah" renewed hope: "Comfort, O comfort my people" (Is 40:1), and "Behold, I am doing a new thing" (Is 43:19). Isaiah becomes the evangelist of Advent, announcing God-with-us.

John the Baptist – The voice of preparation

John the Baptist bridges prophecy and fulfillment. Living a life of fasting and prayer, he fulfills Isaiah's prophecy: "A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord" (Is 40:3; Mk 1:3). John preached repentance—"Make straight the paths of the Lord" (Mt 3:3)—and directed disciples toward Jesus, humbly confessing: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). His mission ended in martyrdom, making him a witness who prepared hearts for the Lamb of God.

Mary – The model of Advent waiting

Mary embodies perfect watchfulness and responsibility. She opened her heart to God's Word: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). In her, the Word took flesh, and she became the living Ark of the Covenant. Mary shows us that Advent is not passive waiting but active cooperation with God's plan, lived out with all our heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:5). Advent and Christmas form the true Marian season.

Becoming messengers of hope

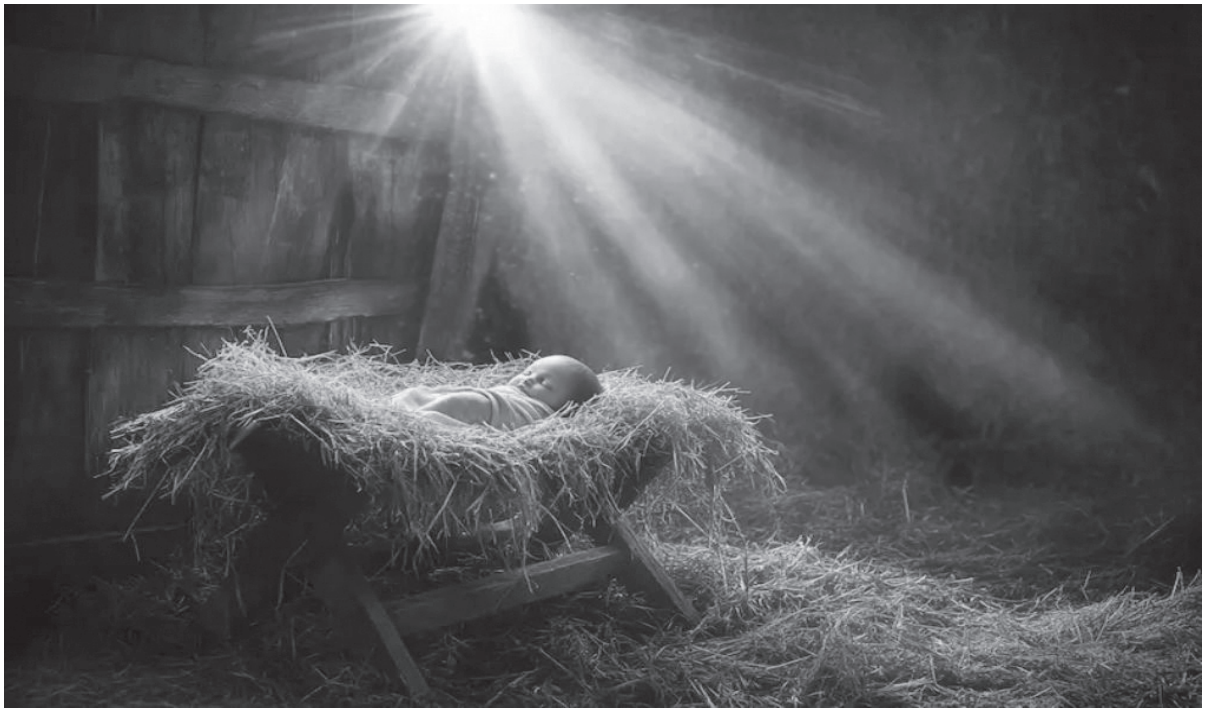
Just as the angel proclaimed good news, we are called to be messengers of hope (Lk 2:10-11).

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When love became poor

The Gospel of simplicity

*Fr Dr I Raymond Joseph**



Introduction

When Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected pope, he chose to name himself after Francis of Assisi, the 12th-century saint who championed poverty and served the poor. In his first audience with journalists, Pope Francis recalled three pivotal moments from his election. First, when the votes reached the required two-thirds majority, Cardinal Claudio Hummes embraced him and said: "Don't forget the poor." Second, the word "poor" rang so powerfully in his heart that he immediately knew he must take the name Francis. Third, echoing St. Francis of Assisi's desire for a poor church, he declared: "How I would like a church that is poor and for the poor." This recalls the Council of Jerusalem's command to Paul and Barnabas to remember the poor in their mission to the gentiles (Gal 2:10).

Humble birth of the Messiah

Seven centuries before Jesus' birth, two prophets foretold the Messiah's coming. Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bear a son called Immanuel (Isa 7:14). Micah prophesied that from tiny Bethlehem would come Israel's ruler (Mic 5:2). When the Messiah arrived, his birth defied expectations—he came in humble simplicity.

Both Matthew and Luke emphasize this modesty in their birth narratives. Matthew recounts how the holy family fled to Egypt, becoming displaced refugees—landless, homeless, and destitute. Luke describes how Joseph and Mary, arriving in Bethlehem for the census, found no room at the inn. Mary delivered her child in a stable and laid him in a manger. The newborn's first visitors were shepherds, members of the lowest social stratum. The world's savior was born on the margins of a bustling town, in lonely isolation.

Kenotic form of incarnation

Paul was the first to articulate a theology of Christ's incarnation. Writing to the Philippians



around AD 55, he explains that Jesus, though equal with God, emptied himself, taking the form of a slave and becoming human. He humbled himself to the point of death on a cross (Phil 2:6-8).

This is kenotic Christology—from the Greek word kenoo, meaning "to empty." Paul uses this verb five times in his writings, referring to Jesus' voluntary renunciation of divine privileges. Jesus abandoned his heavenly affluence, emptied his own will, and became entirely receptive to God's will. In this kenosis, Jesus descended through six stages: emptying himself, taking slave form, becoming human, experiencing death, facing crucifixion, and ultimately humbling himself in complete obedience to God. This self-emptying reveals the depth of Jesus' redemptive love.

The economy of Christ's incarnation

Matthew speaks of Emmanuel—"God is with us" (Mt 1:23). After walking on the moon in 1971, astronaut James Irwin reflected: "God walking on the earth is more important than man walking on the moon." Indeed, God's footprints on earth outweigh ours on the moon. The "economy of Christ's incarnation" means God making his imprint on earth—becoming man to make himself available, approachable, and totally given to humanity.

Two historical figures grasped this profound truth. After Emperor Constantine's mother Helena initiated construction of Bethlehem's Nativity Church in AD 324, Constantine continued the work until its completion in AD 339. While planning an ornate manger of costly stones, he suddenly realized: if God's Son chose radical poverty—born in a stable, laid in a manger—then Constantine could not justify using gold and diamonds. He chose simple wood instead.

Francis of Assisi, after visiting the Holy Land in 1219-1220, was deeply moved by the nativity cave. In 1223, he recreated the scene in a cave at Greccio, using real animals and a manger. As deacon at the Christmas Mass, Francis spoke with such tenderness that many believed the statue of the infant Jesus came alive in his arms. He revitalized humanity's imagination of the Incarnation, and the tradition of Christmas cribs spread worldwide.

Both Constantine and Francis understood that Christ's incarnation represents God visiting his people (Lk 1:68), saving them (Lk 1:71,74), showing mercy (Lk 1:72), giving light to those in darkness, and guiding believers into peace (Lk 1:79).

Love of Jesus becoming poor

Jesus told Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son" (Jn 3:16). Paul writes that Christ's love has four dimensions—breadth, length, height, and depth—immeasurable by human knowledge (Eph 3:18-19). Yet at his incarnation, Jesus emptied even this all-encompassing love for humanity's salvation. The fullness of God's love was demonstrated at Calvary. When a soldier pierced Jesus' side, only blood and water remained (Jn 19:34). As Jesus said: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13). By emptying his love for humanity, Jesus became poor so that humanity might become rich.

Became poor for humanity's sake

Paul explains Christ's incarnation most clearly in Second Corinthians: "Jesus who was



rich became poor for our sake, so that by his poverty we might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). This verse reveals three stages of divine exchange.

First, in his pre-incarnate state, Jesus possessed infinite riches—the glory, power, and majesty of God. He was rich in possessions, honor, power, love, and joy beyond earthly measure.



Second, Jesus willingly set aside divine privileges and embraced human poverty. He left heaven's holiness and glory for earth's profanity and poverty. No one forced this choice—Jesus volunteered. His poverty was not merely spiritual. He was born in a stable, laid in an animal's feeding trough, wrapped in swaddling clothes (Lk 2:6-7). He fled to Egypt as a refugee (Mt 2:13-15). He grew up as a carpenter's son (Mt 13:55). He experienced hunger (Mt 4:2; 21:18), thirst (Jn 4:7; 19:28), and fatigue (Mk 4:38; Jn 4:6). He was "tested as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). He died like a common criminal (Mt 27:44; Lk 23:32) and didn't even own his grave (Mt 27:59-60).

Third, humanity became rich through Jesus' poverty. Believers share in Jesus' eternal, spiritual, and heavenly wealth. By inheriting material poverty, Jesus shared his spiritual gifts. Humanity is freed from sin's penalty and power. Every sin is forgiven (Heb 10:14-18). Every person becomes righteous before God (2 Cor 5:21). Angels announced peace on earth (Lk 2:14), and humanity receives peace with God through Jesus (Rom 5:1). Paul writes: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3). Reflecting on this gift, he declares: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Cor 9:15).

Conclusion

Christ's incarnation reveals that disciples must empty themselves and embrace selflessness in proclaiming the gospel. Jesus' followers are called to live simply and serve the poor, deprived, afflicted, and needy. The Church, representing Christ, must become humble and poor, imitating Christ by loving and being loved by the oppressed, persecuted, and marginalized. As Christ's body, the Church's nature is to be poor and serve the poor, consistently prioritizing the neediest and most marginalized, welcoming all people beyond boundaries, offering dignity and opportunities.

God's wealth passes not through our wealth, but through our personal and communal poverty, enlivened by Christ's Spirit. Jesus emptied his love and graces through incarnation to enrich humanity. Christ's believers are invited not merely to empty their purses, but to empty their hearts in love toward the needy, afflicted, and poor—thereby reliving Christ's incarnation in themselves and throughout the world.

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Pilgrims of Hope

Preparing the way of the Lord

*Fr Dr Yesu Karunanidhi**



Advent draws the Christian heart into a sacred rhythm of longing, listening, and living in hope. At its centre stands John the Baptist, the forerunner who prepared the way of the Lord, calling Israel to a conversion that would open hearts to the Messiah. His cry — "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mt 3:3) — resounds across centuries, summoning every disciple to become a pilgrim of hope, a messenger who announces God's nearness in a fractured world.

Today, humanity thirsts for reconciliation and renewal. Conflicts divide nations and neighbourhoods; mistrust wounds relationships; interior fatigue burdens minds and spirits. In this wounded landscape, the Advent mission becomes urgent: Christians are called not merely to await the Lord but to prepare the way for His coming through concrete acts of peace, justice, and healing. As Pope Francis reminds us, "The world needs Christians who let themselves be moved, touched, and sent forth as witnesses of hope" (Evangelii Gaudium, 119). Advent, therefore, is not passive waiting — it is active discipleship.

1. Reconciliation and renewal within oneself

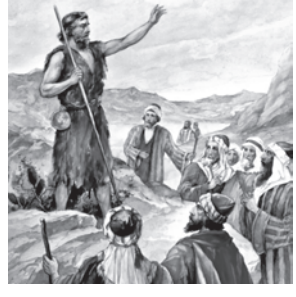
Mission begins within. Before one becomes a herald of hope to others, one must first let the Lord's light enter the undisclosed corners of the heart. Advent calls each believer to interior honesty, inviting openness to God's mercy.

Scripture repeatedly links the coming of the Lord with personal transformation. "Rend your hearts and not your garments" (Joel 2:13) is an enduring invitation to turn inward. When the prophet Isaiah proclaims, "Every valley shall be lifted up... and the rough places made plain" (Is 40:4), he points to an inner topography that requires God's levelling grace. Interior valleys — discouragement, resentment, fear — need to be lifted by hope; mountains of pride and self-sufficiency must give way to humility.



The Magisterium likewise teaches that mission is rooted in personal encounter with Christ. Redemptoris Missio affirms that the missionary is above all "a witness of the new life" (RM 88). Renewal of mind and heart is not an optional spiritual exercise; it is the precondition for becoming a pilgrim of hope. Advent thus becomes a moment to recover silence, renew prayer, seek forgiveness, and rediscover the joy of God's tenderness.

2. Reconciliation and renewal in families



Families are the first schools of hope. When reconciliation is absent at home, mission elsewhere becomes hollow. In the Gospel, before Jesus begins His public ministry, He grows in the quiet sanctity of the Holy Family — a household marked by trust, obedience, sacrifice, and divine love. Their example offers a model for every Christian family during Advent: a community that listens together, waits together, and opens its doors to God's will.

Saint Paul's exhortation — "Bear with one another... forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you" (Col 3:13) — is a necessary Advent instruction for families. Unresolved wounds, unspoken tensions, or the fatigue of daily burdens can weaken communion. Yet Advent calls families to reconciliation: a shared table, a humble conversation, a willingness to begin again.

Pope Francis, in Amoris Laetitia, beautifully states: "No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow

and mature in the ability to love" (AL 325). The mission of Advent, therefore, is to allow hope to be rekindled within domestic life — through listening, compassion, mutual patience, and sincere forgiveness.

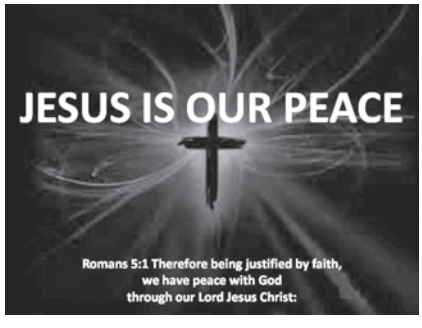
3. Reconciliation and renewal in communities

A world marked by polarisation and inequality cries out for communities that incarnate the Gospel of peace. The mission spirit of Advent urges Christians to become bridges where others see walls, to plant seeds of harmony where mistrust prevails, and to advocate for justice where people are silenced or suffering.

John the Baptist does not preach a private spirituality; he proclaims a social conversion. His call — "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none" (Lk 3:11) — links repentance with social responsibility. Authentic preparation for the Lord's coming inevitably expands outward, shaping communities of solidarity and mercy.

The Church teaches that working for justice and peace is intrinsic to evangelisation. Gaudium et Spes affirms that Christians must read "the signs of the times" and respond to the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of all (GS 1). Peace-making, reconciliation, ecological responsibility, and advocacy for the poor are not optional add-ons; they are expressions of Advent hope lived publicly.

Being a pilgrim of hope means accompanying the wounded, welcoming the stranger, healing divisions, and standing with those denied dignity. Advent invites communities to examine how they embody Christ's nearness, especially to those on the margins.



4. Becoming forerunners of Christ's peace and justice

To prepare the way of the Lord today is to embody His Gospel in the ordinary spaces of life. This mission takes shape in small gestures — gentle words, restored relationships, acts of generosity — but also in courageous commitments to structural justice.



Pope Francis' Jubilee theme "Pilgrims of Hope" reminds the Church that hope is not escapism; it is a transformative force. Christians walk not with passive optimism but with a prophetic conviction that God is at work even in dark times. As Lumen Gentium teaches, the faithful are called to be "a leaven and a kind of soul for human society" (LG 38). Advent renews this vocation.

Like John the Baptist, every Christian is asked to point to Christ — to direct others toward the One who heals, reconciles, and renews. In a world longing for peace, disciples of Jesus must become heralds whose lives echo the message of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace" (Lk 2:14).

Conclusion: The Advent journey of mission

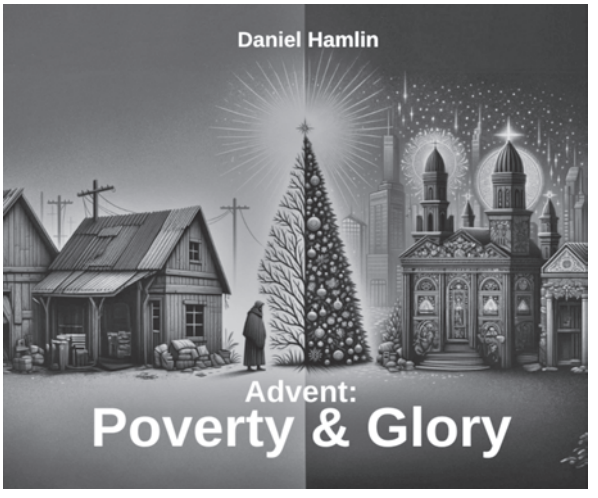
To be a pilgrim of hope is to walk with God while preparing space for others to encounter Him. Advent mission invites Christians to clear the inner pathways of the heart, mend relationships at home, and renew the fabric of communities. In doing so, they become forerunners who prepare the world for the Lord who comes with healing, justice, and peace.

May this holy season awaken in every believer the courage of John the Baptist, the faith of Mary, and the steadfast hope of all who look for the dawn. As we journey toward Christmas, may our lives proclaim that "the Lord is near" (Phil 4:5), and may our witness help prepare His way in a world yearning for reconciliation and renewal.

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The poor are our Advent companions

*Fr Dr J Anthony**



Advent is more than a time of anticipation. It is a season of active waiting in which we are morally urged to accompany those who suffer, who are forgotten and those live on the margins. God's incarnation was realised to bring joyful news to such people. The heart of Advent is not to simply to wait at a distance but to walk alongside the vulnerable, moving together towards God's incarnational love. It is a call to illuminate the dark corners of our world with the light of God's love and stand with the vulnerable just as the Word made flesh and lived among us (Jn 1:14).

The four weeks of Advent that we would be passing through with joy and patience symbolise the four different ways that Christ comes into the world: i) at his birth as a helpless infant at Bethlehem; ii) at his arrival in the hearts of believers; iii) at his death; iv) at his arrival on judgment day. The four candles lit on each Sunday of Advent, representing hope, peace, joy and love, remind us our the solidarity and compassion of our Lord towards the poor. The advent is the advent of compassion, where it is not mere waiting but a compassionate waiting.

Isiah 40:31 promises us: "Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." In this season of Advent – a time of hopeful waiting – we prepare not only for the birth of Immanuel, our saviour, but also for the coming of Jesus as the champion of the poor and the marginalised. His birth is the supreme testimony of his solidarity with the poor, needy and suffering.

Waiting time for the messiah is not passive or lifeless, or unrealistic – it is full of expectation, trust and transformation. In this year of Hope, Advent calls us to walk alongside the marginalised and to accompany those whose futures seem dim and dark, solitary and full of suffering and weighed down by pain and agony. By doing so, we become participants in God's work of salvation in renewing strength and igniting hope in places of suffering.

Incarnation and radical poverty

Waiting for Christ means recognising his solidarity with our deepest vulnerability. Pope Leo XIV, in his first apostolic exhortation Dilexi te, dated 4 October 2025 ("I have loved you"), mentions the purpose of the incarnation. He states: "precisely in order to share the limitations and fragility of our human nature, he himself became poor. We came to know him in the smallness of a child laid in a manger... and in the extreme humiliation of the cross, where he shared our radical poverty which is death" (Dilexi te, 16). The poverty of Christ is not just symbolic. It is real, and it is deeply redemptive. One cannot celebrate the birth of our Immanuel (God with us), overlooking his decisive choice to be poor and among the poor.





Our duty as a Church to radically choose the weakest

In this season of preparation, there is a call to action - a compassionate waiting: not passive, but one in which the Church chooses to stand with the weakest. It is the embodiment of the kingdom of Justice. Today, the Church must choose to stand with the weakest, not just occasionally help them on festive days. God always has a special place in his heart for those who are discriminated against and oppressed. The Church has to make a decisive and radical choice in favour of the weakest.

The Poor are our Advent companions

The caring for the poor is not something extrinsic to ourselves; it is intrinsic to our spiritual life and our encounter with Christ. Walking alongside the poor is the Christian response to waiting. "Love for the lord then, is one with love for the poor…This is not a matter of mere human kindness but revelation: contact with those who are lowly and powerless is a fundamental way of encountering the Lord of history. In the poor, he continues to speak to us." (Dilexi te, n. 5). Let us walk along with the poor to understand the true meaning of hopeful waiting.

Evangelisation and conversion – need to be evangelised by the poor

The poor are not just recipients of charity, but are bearers of Christ's suffering. Our solidarity should be reinforced during the season of Advent. It calls us to conversion. In accompanying the poor, we open ourselves up to the wisdom and the Gospel lessons they carry. We must allow ourselves to be evangelised by the poor, something often missing in our charitable activities. Pope Francis of our venerable memory reminds us that we must let ourselves be evangelised by the poor and acknowledge the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them. We are complacent about all our charitable activities during Christmas. The charity should not end there. Charity should lead us to conversion. It should reshape our priorities and values. Not merely recognising the needs of the poor would suffice, but they always have something to teach us. Their lived experience, resilient hope, their positive spirit amidst challenges and sufferings are not to be merely admired but serve as the sources of spiritual insight in this season of Advent. They are the best companions in the season of Advent to understand the incarnation of Jesus.

A few questions for reflection

1. Should I wait for Jesus only in the comfortable manger or should I wait for him in the faces of the suffering?

2. Who are the poor and forgotten in my community, and how is God calling me to accompany them this Advent?

3. How can my waiting be active - not just in prayer but in concrete love and solidarity?



Conclusion

Advent is more than just waiting for a child among us. It is preparing for Christ by loving him where he is already present – in the poor, the lonely and the suffering. Only in serving and accompanying the poor, we become part of the Advent story – participating in God's coming.

*** The writer, a priest of the Diocese of Chingleput, is a professor of Canon Law, St Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore. ◆**

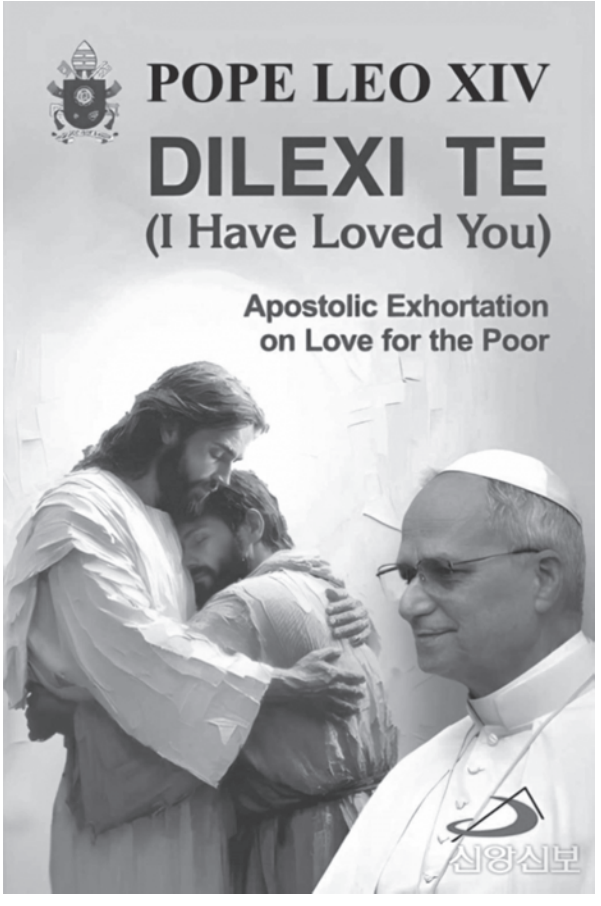
The poor evangelise us

Learning the Gospel from the least

*Fr Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose**

Introduction

In society's tapestry, the impoverished and marginalised are not merely passive recipients of Christian charity; rather, they are profound evangelists, illuminating the broader community with the essence of the Gospel. Encounters with Christ in the faces of the poor foster deeper spiritual understanding and ignite a commitment to justice and solidarity. Thus, the marginalised emerge not only as beneficiaries of goodwill but as vital evangelists, guiding us toward a more authentic expression of faith.



The Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te*

On November 16, 2025, as the Mother Church celebrated the 9th World Day of the Poor, Pope Leo XIV issued a strong call to action. Launched in 2017 through the Apostolic Letter Misericordia et Misera by Pope Francis, this day highlights the many faces of poverty and urges Christian communities to embody Christ's charity. In his recent Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi te—"I have loved you" (Rev 3:9)—Pope Leo XIV invites us to reconsider how we perceive poverty. He challenges us to move beyond viewing the poor as mere beneficiaries of our occasional kindness. Instead, he calls us to be evangelised by the poor. Their struggles become reflections of God's grace and reminders of the emptiness of material pursuits. This exchange shifts our perspective from simply giving to receiving profound spiritual truths from those we might overlook—the "poor in spirit" who teach us what it means to be truly rich.

The paradox of the poor in spirit

- Dependence is divine strength

The concept of the "poor in spirit," taken from the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3), is foundational to Christian spirituality. It transcends material deprivation and recognises our radical spiritual need for God, understanding that everything good is a gift. The poor, by necessity, often live lives of dependence and reliance on providence—a lesson easily forgotten by those surrounded by worldly security. Their lives reveal that true strength is not self-sufficiency but trust in God. As the Psalmist cries, "In you, Lord, I take refuge; I shall never be put to shame" (Ps 71:1). The poor become living testimonies to this truth, passing from fleeting hopes to lasting hope by acknowledging God as their first and only source of security.

- Spiritual wealth — The real treasure

The poor often possess a profound spiritual wealth. They teach the world that faith, community, and God's unconditional love are the true treasures, standing in contrast to the empty pursuit of riches. As the papal message notes, material wealth frequently disappoints and creates a poverty "born of the failure to recognise



our need for God." The poor embody Christ's instruction to "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Mt 6:19–20).

- Action and witness — Shining God's light

Their perseverance becomes a powerful non-verbal witness, echoing the mandate of Matthew 5:16. Their resilience amid uncertainty challenges the complacency of the Church and recalls its mission to justice and love. They are not passive recipients of charity but "creative subjects" whose lived wisdom redirects the Church to the heart of the Gospel.

How the poor evangelise

- Through Their Very Existence

The Trust Test: Those who rely totally on God show a radical dependence that contrasts sharply with the illusion of self-sufficiency. Facing trials and uncertainty, they lean on spiritual conviction rather than possessions. Their experiences reveal that real strength lies not in holding on but in surrendering to God's plan. Their witness challenges us to rethink our own definitions of security and faith.

- Through Their Generosity

Honouring God with Little: Even in scarcity, the poor often share what they have. Such acts of kindness become a non-verbal "good work" that radiates God's light. When someone struggling to meet basic needs still offers food or comfort to another, they embody selflessness and trust in God's provision.

These gestures highlight a deep understanding of community, showing how one person's little offering becomes another's hope. Each shared meal strengthens both giver and receiver, reminding us that true generosity flourishes where faith and love endure. Their acts illuminate the path of compassion, showing the blessings that arise from kindness.

- Through Their Perspective

The Kingdom's Clarity: A humble spirit aligned with the struggles of the poor is far more valuable than the hollow achievements of worldly pride. In a world obsessed with status and possessions, their perspective reminds us of the richer treasures found in compassion, faith, and genuine human connection.

When we engage deeply with the poor, a beautiful exchange unfolds: we bring the good news, and they enlighten us with resilience, courage, and hope. This sacred interplay becomes true evangelisation—giver and receiver are transformed together.

The mandate for the evangeliser

- Listen and learn

Their Stories Are Sacred: Open dialogue reveals that every experience holds value. Listening without judgment honours their struggles and triumphs. Each testimony becomes spiritual gold, offering wisdom that can guide and inspire. Their stories illuminate paths through darkness and deepen our understanding of the human journey.

- Receive Grace

The Dependence Lesson: When you assist others, you participate in a profound exchange. Helping the poor reminds you of your own dependence on God's providence. Their vulnerability teaches humility, gratitude, and trust. As you give, you receive renewed awareness of your own spiritual needs.



This mutual exchange fosters community and reinforces the belief that we are woven together by grace. It invites us to trust God's plan, recognising dependence not as weakness but as assurance in our journey through life.



- Act Justly

Dignity First: Honouring the poor is honouring Christ. Christian service must foster a society that upholds the God-given dignity of every person. This means going beyond temporary relief to address root causes of poverty and injustice. We must advocate for policies that empower the marginalised and ensure access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity.

By engaging directly with those we serve, we understand their struggles and aspirations, shaping programs that are truly transformative. A just community listens to every voice, respects each person's worth, and provides platforms for participation. Our mission is not merely to alleviate suffering but to work toward a more equitable world that reflects Christ's love.



Conclusion

Canon 600 of the Code of Canon Law teaches that the evangelical counsel of poverty calls us to imitate Christ, who became poor for our sake. Poverty, for disciples, is a call to walk with Jesus toward the beatitude of the Kingdom (Mt 5:3). True poverty accepts our limitations and overcomes the temptation to seek happiness in money, career, or luxury. It enables us to shoulder our responsibilities with trust in God's closeness and grace.

Pope Francis recalls how St. Francis of Assisi was transformed by the poor. Initially repelled by lepers, he discovered through grace that what once seemed bitter became sweet. The same is true of other great saints—St Teresa of Calcutta, St Vincent de Paul, St Katharine Drexel, St Damien of Molokai, Dorothy Day, and Blessed Oscar Romero. They not only evangelised the poor; they were evangelised by them. Their lives show that helping the poor changes the heart, shaping us into the saints God calls us to be.

*** The writer, a priest of the diocese of Kottar, is currently a professor of Canon Law at St Peter's Pontifical Institute in Bangalore and the Executive Secretary of the Commission for Canon Law in the CCBI. ◆**

A home for all

The missionary spirit of the Holy Family

*Sr Dr Metti Amirtham, SCC**

1. Introduction



In every age, humanity yearns for signs of hope — a place of welcome and healing. Our present moment is no different: economic uncertainty, migration, family fragmentation, terrorism, and the erosion of human and spiritual values weigh heavily on society. As we close the Jubilee Year 2025 and prepare for Christmas, every Catholic family is invited to become a beacon of light, mirroring the gentle glow of Nazareth.

The Holy Family — Jesus, Mary, and Joseph — reveals what God desires every home to be: a sanctuary of love, a school of faith, and a wellspring of hope. Their life in Nazareth teaches us that holiness grows through ordinary fidelity, prayerful trust, and quiet labour. Pope Francis reminds us that the family is where we learn to live with others, to be loved, and to grow in love.

In a hurried and fragmented world, the Holy Family stands as a countercultural witness, inviting every Christian household to become a "little Nazareth." Such a home becomes a living mission — practising intentional love, offering forgiveness daily, and extending hope to all. The following reflection seeks to help Indian Catholic families embody the missionary spirit of the Holy Family in the concrete realities of everyday life.

2. Nazareth: God's first mission field

Before Jesus preached, healed, or proclaimed the Kingdom, He lived thirty quiet years in a small village home. Nazareth was God's chosen environment for forming the heart of the Redeemer. This shows us that God begins His mission in the home before it expands to the world.

St John Paul II called the Holy Family "the first domestic church," the place where God Himself learned human love, trust, and obedience. The mission of the Church begins not in grand projects but in hidden acts of daily love.

In Indian households, where values are transmitted as much through gestures as words, the Holy Family becomes a mirror. Every mother who sacrifices quietly, every father who works honestly, every child who prays, forgives, and shares participates in God's mission. As an Indian proverb says, "A home without love is a lamp without oil." Nazareth invites us to fill that lamp daily.

3. The Holy Family: A school of love, faith, and tenderness

a. Love that heals and welcomes

The love of the Holy Family was courageous and self-giving. Mary said "yes" amid uncertainty. Joseph protected the Child even when misunderstood. Jesus obeyed His parents and grew "in wisdom and grace" (Luke 2:52). In a society facing stress, migration, addiction, and economic pressure, their example reminds us: love is the first missionary act. As Pope Francis says, "Love is our mission because God loved us first." A loving home becomes a healing home.

b. Faith that listens and trusts

Mary listened to the angel, Joseph to his dreams, Jesus to the Father's will. In a time when Sunday Mass and family prayer are often neglected, Nazareth calls us back to simplicity—praying the rosary together, reading Scripture, blessing one another, and celebrating feasts meaningfully. Faith does not ask for perfect families, only open hearts.

c. Tenderness as a mission

Pope Francis often speaks of tenderness as "the language of God." In Indian homes, tenderness is often expressed through small acts — serving meals lovingly, caring for the elderly, sitting beside the sick, or silently sharing burdens. In a harsh world, tenderness becomes prophecy.

4. Hospitality: Making space for God and neighbour

The Holy Family knew homelessness. There was no room for them in the inn. They fled to Egypt as refugees. They returned to Nazareth to live among simple village folk. Their story makes them



patrons of every migrant, every child born in poverty, every family longing for dignity.

Hospitality is the heart of missionary family life. A home becomes a mission when it opens to the poor, the lonely neighbour, the wounded relative, the stranger seeking a listening ear, the differently abled, and those of other faiths. An African proverb captures it well: "The heart is a house; only the generous keep its doors open."

5. When families become domestic missions

a. A place of prayer

- Where parents and children pray together, even for a few minutes
- Where the Bible is opened and reflected upon
- Where children learn that God is family

b. A place of forgiveness

Families carry wounds — misunderstandings, temper, broken promises. The Holy Family teaches us that forgiveness is the daily bread of Christian life. Mother Teresa said, "A joyful family is the result of a thousand small acts of forgiveness."

c. A place of joy

Missionaries are joyful; so are missionary homes. Joy is not noise. It is peace, gratitude, and trust.

d. A place of service

Serving one another — through cooking, cleaning, and caring — becomes a spiritual discipline. When families serve joyfully, children grow into compassionate adults.

e. A place of witness

Living truthfully, respecting women and children, avoiding corruption, protecting creation, honouring workers, and practising justice are powerful missionary acts.

6. Indian Catholic families: A call to prophetic hope

India's strong family bonds, respect for elders, spiritual depth, and culture of hospitality offer fertile ground for living the spirit of Nazareth.

Yet Indian families today face severe challenges: parents working far from home, children overwhelmed by digital overload, growing interfaith tensions, loneliness among elders, increasing stress and consumerism, domestic violence and the silent suffering of women, the struggles of migrants, and the persistent reality of poverty and unemployment.

In these difficult circumstances, Christian families are invited to become "bearers of hope," witnessing to Christ's light in practical ways:

- Prioritising relationships over things
- Respecting life
- Protecting the dignity of women and girls
- Practising ecological care
- Standing with the poor
- Nurturing vocations



7. Conclusion

The Holy Family is not a distant ideal but a living model for every home. Nazareth teaches us that mission begins where love is practised, where forgiveness is normal, where hospitality is natural, and where faith is lived sincerely. As Pope Francis says, "The family is the place where hope is woven into the fabric of everyday life."

If every Indian Catholic home becomes a small Nazareth — where tenderness reigns, where prayer rises, where welcome is offered, and where faith is nurtured — hope will indeed dwell among us. The missionary spirit of the Holy Family will continue to renew our nation and our Church.

May every home become a dwelling place of Christ. Every family is a bearer of hope And every heart is a small Nazareth where God finds joy in staying.

*** The writer is a nun of the Cross of Chavanod Congregation, belonging to the Province of Trichy. Currently she serves as the animator of her religious community and teaches Systematic Theology.** ◆

SAINT OF THE MONTH – I

St John Berchmans

13 March 1599 – 13 August 1621 **Feast Day: 26 November**

John Berchmans was born on 13 March 1599, in the city of Diest situated in what is now the Belgian province of Flemish Brabant, the son of a shoemaker. His parents were John Charles and Elizabeth Berchmans. He was the oldest of five children and at baptism was named John in honor of John the Baptist. He grew up in an atmosphere of political turmoil caused by a religious war between the Catholic and Protestant parts of the Low Countries. When he was age nine, his mother was stricken with a very long and a very serious illness. John would pass several hours each day by her bedside. He studied at the Gymnasium (grammar school) at Diest and worked as a servant in the household of Canon John Froymont at Mechelen in order to continue his studies. John also made pilgrimages to the Marian shrine of Scherpenheuvel, some 30 miles east of Brussels, but only a few miles from Diest.



In 1615, the Jesuits opened a college at Mechelen and Berchmans was one of the first to enroll. Immediately upon entering, he enrolled in the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. When Berchmans wrote his parents that he wished to join the Society of Jesus, his father hurried to Mechelen to dissuade him and sent him to the Franciscan convent in Mechelen. At the convent, a friar who was related to Berchmans also attempted to change his mind. Finally as a last resort, Berchmans's father told him that he would end all financial support if he continued with his plan.

Berchmans entered the Jesuits in 1616 and performed all the novice duties with joy and exacting fidelity. He also sought to control himself through penances. A few months after he entered the Jesuits, his mother died; then his father gave up his shoemaking shop and entered the diocesan seminary. He was ordained a priest in April 1618. Later that year, on Sept. 25, John pronounced the three vows of religious life and went to Antwerp to study philosophy. After only three weeks he was informed that he would move to Rome for studies. Before he could return to Mechelen to say goodbye to his father, the latter died suddenly.

The young Jesuit arrived in Rome on Dec. 31 and joined the community at the Roman College, where he was as faithful to his studies and religious life as he had been in the novitiate. He excelled in his studies and at the end of his third year he was selected to defend the entire course of philosophy in a public disputation. His health had suffered from the effort he had put into studying for his final exam, and he became steadily weaker as he prepared for the public disputation, held on July 8. He hoped to rest when it was over, but he was also selected to represent the Roman College at another disputation to be held in August at the Greek College. The two events took too much out of his weakened condition.

On Aug 7 he suffered an attack of dysentery, and then a fever set in. When the superior saw how pale and weak Berchmans was, he sent him to the infirmary. The young Jesuit grew more ill day by day as his lungs became inflamed and he grew weaker and weaker. He spoke of Paradise as if he would soon be there when other scholastics came to visit. The brother infirmarian suggested that he should receive Communion the next day, even

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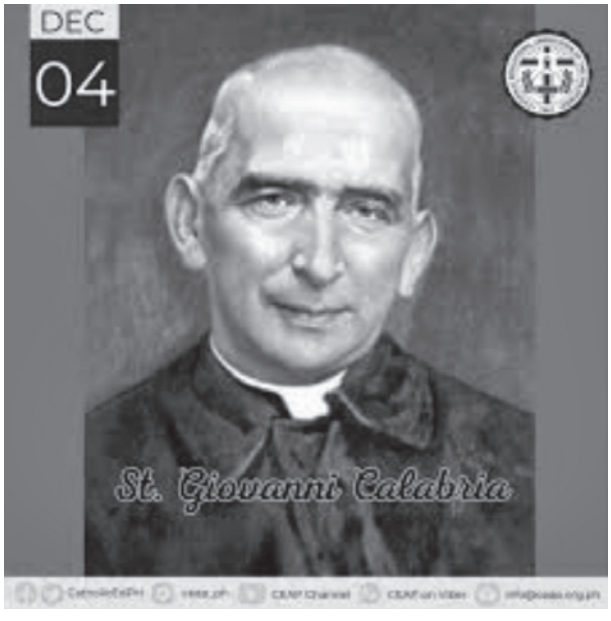
SAINT OF THE MONTH – II

St Giovanni Calabria

08 October 1873 – 04 December 1954 **Feast Day: 04 December**

John Calabria was born on October 8th, 1873, in Verona. He was the seventh and last child of Luigi Foschi, a cobbler, and Angela Calabria, a maid-servant to the high-class people and a woman of great faith, educated by the Servant of God Fr Nicola Mazza in his Institute for poor children.

Poverty was his mistress right from his birth. After his father's death he had to interrupt his 4th year of the Elementary School to find a job. The Rector of San Lorenzo, Fr Pietro Scapini, noticing the virtues of this boy, prepared him privately for the admission examination into the Lyceum at the Seminary. Having passed his exams, he was admitted to and frequented the Lyceum as an extern. His studies were once again interrupted by a two-year military service.



Charity was his lifelong characteristic. It is in this field that he distinguished himself mostly. In fact he served all, offering himself to do the most humiliating and courageous tasks. He won the heart of his fellow soldiers and of his superiors, and helped many to come back to the Church, and to practise faith. Having terminated his military service, he resumed his studies. One very special cold night of November 1897 returning home from a visit to the sick in hospital, he found a boy crouching on the doorstep of his house; he had run away from the gypsies. Fr Calabria picked him up, took him in, kept him in his house and shared his room with him. It was the beginning of his works in favour of the orphaned and the abandoned boys.

A few months later he founded the "Charitable Institution for the assistance to poor sick people." These were only the beginnings of a life characterised by charity. "Every instant of his life was a personification of St Paul's marvellous canticle on charity," wrote a Hebrew woman-doctor in her Lettera Postulatoria to Paul VI about Fr Calabria. She had been in hiding from the nazi-fascist persecution, dressed in a nun's habit in one of his religious Institutes.

After being ordained priest on August 11th 1901, he was appointed confessor of the seminary and curate of St Stephen's Church. He devoted himself with particular zeal to hearing confessions, and to charitable works, helping in particular the poorest and the outcasts. In 1907 he was appointed Rector of St Benedetto del Monte. He also welcomed soldiers in his house and cared for their spiritual welfare. On November 26th, 1907, he founded the "Casa Buoni Fanciulli." The following year it moved definitely to Via San Zeno in Monte. Today, it is their Mother House.

Besides the boys, the Lord also sent him lay people, wishing to share with him the offering of their own life to the Lord. With this handful of men totally given to God in the service of the poor, with a life rooted in the Gospel, he revived the apostolic spirit of the Church in Verona. This nucleus of men was the foundation of the "Congregation of the poor servants of Divine Providence" which was approved by the Bishop of Verona on the 11th February 1932 and obtained Pontifical approval

on the 25th April 1949.

In 1910 he also founded the female branch "Le Sorelle" which later became the Congregation by Diocesan Right on the 25th March 1952 bearing the name of Poor Women Wervants of Divine Providence and on the 25th December 1981 it obtained the Pontifical approval.



He conquered everybody's love. Even the Lutheran Pastor, Sune Wiman of Esklstuna (Switzerland), who had had several epistolary sharing with him, on the 6th of March 1964 in a Lettera Postulatoria to the Holy Father Pope Paul VI, asked that his venerable friend be glorified.

And this was also the most mysteriously and sorrowful period of his life. It seemed that Christ had associated him to his agony in Gethsemane and on Calvary, accepting the offering of his life as a "victim" for the sanctification of the Church and the salvation of the world. On the eve of his death he made his last act of charity, offering his life to God for the dying Pope Pius XII. The Lord accepted this offer. The pope almost on is death bed recovered mysteriously and unexpectedly and lived for another four years. Fr Calabria died on 4 December 1954.

Fr. Calabria was beatified on the 17th April 1988 and was canonized on 18 April 1999 by Pope John Paul II

Source:
www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints; www.catholic.org/saints www.catholicculture.org◆

Continued from Page 7: Advent hope for a troubled world

Paul reminds us that Christmas should renew our awareness of the hope to which our Savior's birth calls us (Eph 1:17-18). The mystery of God becoming man teaches us how to love selflessly, offer mercy abundantly, inspire joy, kindle hope in weary hearts, and work tirelessly for justice. In Jesus, we have seen God's face. Where God is born, hope is born. Where Christ is born, peace is born.



Conclusion

Advent draws us into hopeful, missionary anticipation grounded in the truth that Christ, the Light of the World, has pierced the deepest darkness of human history. John's Gospel proclaims that no matter how thick the shadows of sin, suffering, or fear may grow, the Light remains unconquered. This becomes an anchor of hope in a world shaken by conflict and fragility. The Incarnation reveals that God chose to be with us in every instant of our life, made up of poverty, limitations, and fragility. The true spirit of Advent is expressed in humbly surrendering ourselves to God's plan. Despite dark times, no one can take away the joy of meeting Jesus at the manger, for he is our light (Jn 1:9) and our only hope (1 Pet 3:18) in this darkened world. Today, humanity faces unprecedented challenges. Yet Advent reminds the Church that we wait not in fear but in faith; not in resignation but in readiness; not as victims of darkness but as witnesses to the Light.

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A Christmas adventure

STORY

I remember my first Christmas adventure with Grandma. I was just a kid. I remember tearing across town on my bike to visit her on the day my big sister dropped the bomb: “There is no Santa Claus,” she jeered. “Even dummies know that!”



My Grandma was not the gushy kind, never had been. I fled to her that day because I knew she would be straight with me. I knew Grandma always told the truth, and I knew that the truth always went down a whole lot easier when swallowed with one of her “world-famous” cinnamon buns. I knew they were world-famous, because Grandma said so.

It had to be true.



Grandma was home, and the buns were still warm. Between bites, I told her everything. She was ready for me. “No Santa Claus?” She snorted….”Ridiculous! Don't believe it. That rumour has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad!! Now, put on your coat, and let's go.”

“Go? Go where, Grandma?” I asked. I hadn't even finished my second world-famous cinnamon bun.

“Where” turned out to be Kerby's General Store, the one store in town that had a little bit of just about everything. As we walked through its doors, Grandma handed me ten dollars.

That was a bundle in those days. “Take this money,” she said, “and buy something for someone who needs it. I'll wait for you in the car.” Then she turned and walked out of Kerby's.

I was only eight years old. I'd often gone shopping with my mother, but never had I shopped for anything all by myself.

The store seemed big and crowded, full of people scrambling to finish their Christmas shopping. For a few moments I just stood there, confused, clutching that ten-dollar bill, wondering what to buy, and who on earth to buy it for. I thought of everybody I knew: my family, my friends, my neighbours, the kids at school, and the people who went to my church.

I was just about thought out, when I suddenly thought of Bobby Decker. He was a kid with bad breath and messy hair, and he sat right behind me in Mrs. Pollock's grade-two class.

Bobby Decker didn't have a coat. I knew that because he never went out to recess during the winter. His mother always wrote a note, telling the teacher that he had a cough, but all we kids knew that Bobby Decker didn't have a cough; he didn't have a good coat. I fingered the ten-dollar bill with growing excitement. I would buy Bobby Decker a coat!

I settled on a red corduroy one that had a hood to it. It looked real warm, and he would like that.

“Is this a Christmas present for someone?” the lady behind the counter asked kindly, as I laid my ten dollars down.

“Yes, ma'am,” I replied shyly. “It's for Bobby.”

The nice lady smiled at me, as I told her about how Bobby really needed a good winter coat. I didn't get any change, but she put the coat in a bag, smiled again, and wished me a Merry Christmas.

That evening, Grandma helped me wrap the coat (a little tag fell out of the coat, and Grandma tucked it in her Bible) in Christmas paper and ribbons and wrote, “To Bobby, From Santa Claus” on it. Grandma said that Santa always insisted on secrecy. Then she drove me over to Bobby Decker's house, explaining as we went that I was now and forever officially, one of Santa's helpers.

Grandma parked down the street from Bobby's house, and she and I crept noiselessly and hid in the bushes by his front walk.

Then Grandma gave me a nudge. “All right, Santa Claus,” she whispered, “get going.”

I took a deep breath, dashed for his front door, threw the present down on his step, pounded his door and flew back to the safety of the bushes and Grandma.

Together we waited breathlessly in the darkness for the front door to open. Finally it did, and there stood Bobby.

Fifty years haven't dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shivering, beside my Grandma, in Bobby Decker's bushes.

That night, I realized that those awful rumours about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said they were – ridiculous. Santa was alive and well, and we were on his team. I still have the Bible, with the coat tag tucked inside it of $19.95.

May you always have LOVE to share, HEALTH to spare and FRIENDS that care...

Source: christmasstories.org ◆

Continued from Page 20: St John Berchmans

though it was not a Sunday. The Jesuit community came in procession bringing Viaticum to their dying brother. He asked for his crucifix, rosary and rule book and received a steady stream of visitors, including Father General. He spent his final night in prayer and died on August 13 in the morning.



When he died, a large crowd gathered for several days to view his remains and to invoke his intercession. That same year, Phillip-Charles, Duke of Aarschot, sent a petition to Pope Gregory XV with a view to beginning the process leading to Berchman's beatification. His remains were eventually entombed in Rome's Sant'Ignazio Church.

Berchmans took as his spiritual model his fellow Jesuit Aloysius Gonzaga and was also influenced by the example of the English Jesuit martyrs. It was his realistic appreciation for the value of ordinary things, a characteristic of the Flemish mystical tradition that constituted his holiness. He had a special devotion to Mary, mother of Jesus.

At the time of Berchmans's death, his heart was returned to his homeland in Belgium where it is kept in a silver reliquary on a side altar in the church at Leuven (Louvain).

He was beatified by Pope Pius IX on May 28, 1865, and canonized by Pope Leo XIII on January 15, 1888. Statues frequently depict him with hands clasped, holding his crucifix, his book of rules, and his rosary. In recognition of his life and example, Saint John Berchmans is honoured as the patron saint of altar servers, Oblate novices, and young people. His story reminds us that even in the simplest acts of kindness and fidelity, we too can strive for holiness.

Source: www.jesuits.global/saint; www.catholic.org/saints ◆

Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

November 2025 : For the prevention of suicide
Let us pray that those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts might find the support, care, and love they need in their community, and be open to the beauty of life.

December 2025 : For Christians in areas of conflict
Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation, and hope.

- World Mission Day marks 100 years since its institution by Pope Pius XI.
- Theme 2026: “One in Christ, united in mission.”
- Theme echoes the Pope’s pontifical motto: “In Illo uno unum.”
- Focus on unity in faith rooted in Christ and the Father.
- Mission flows from communion: unity gives rise to evangelization.
- Pope Leo XIV calls World Mission Day a moment when the whole Church prays as one.
- Special prayer for missionaries and the fruitfulness of their apostolic work.
- The Holy Father’s message will guide formation and missionary animation worldwide.
- Year also celebrates 110 years of the Pontifical Missionary Union.
- The four Pontifical Mission Societies promote missionary responsibility of all the baptized.

Celebrating 100 YEARS *World Missions Day 2026*



100th ANNIVERSARY

1926 - 2026 WORLD MISSIONS DAY



FROM POPE PIUS XI TO POPE LEO XIV

Get Ready to Celebrate

Theme:
One in Christ, United in Mission

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