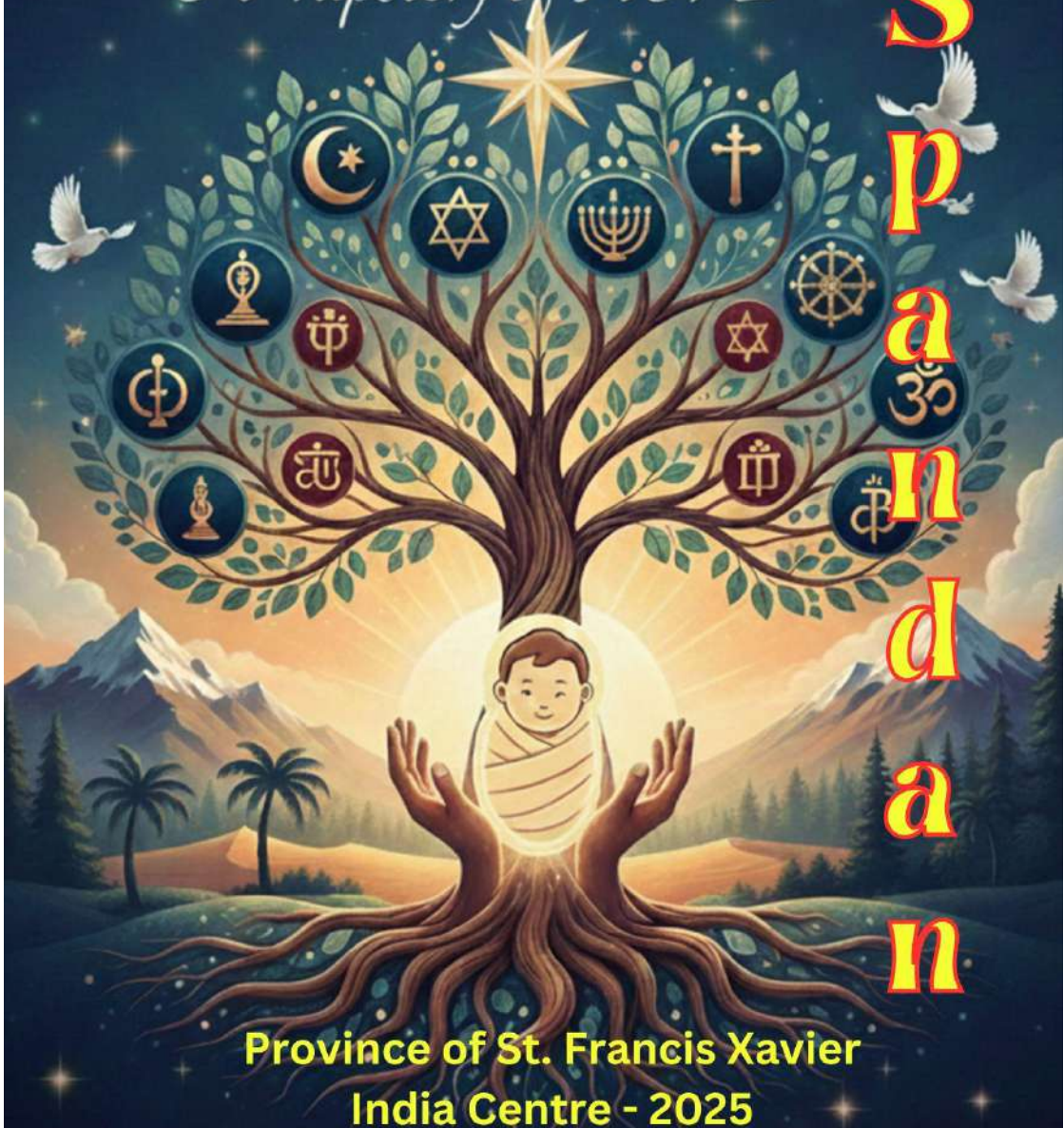


THE UNITY CHRISTMAS

NATURE'S EMBRACE

A Tapstery of HOPE

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Province of St. Francis Xavier
India Centre - 2025

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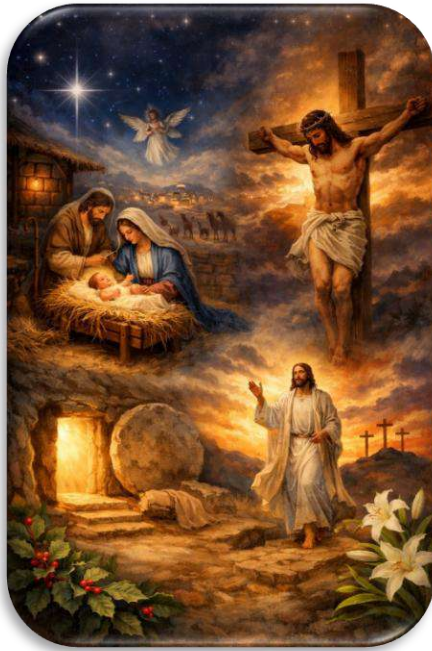
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Editor's Note



Season of Light

As December unfolds, nature itself seems to whisper the message of Christmas. Trees shed their leaves, skies turn silver, and the earth pauses in quiet reverence. In this stillness, we are reminded that the birth of Christ was not announced with thunder, but with a star—a gentle light guiding all nations toward hope.

Christmas is more than tradition; it is a sacred invitation to unity. Across continents and cultures, people gather under different roofs, speak in different tongues, and sing carols with unique melodies. Yet, the heart of the celebration remains the same: Emmanuel—God with us. In a fractured world, this truth binds us together. The manger in Bethlehem did not belong to one race or nation. It welcomed shepherds and wise men alike, symbolizing a love that transcends borders.

Hope, too, is woven into the season. It flickers in candles lit at midnight Mass, in prayers whispered by children, and in the resilience of communities that choose joy despite hardship. The Christ Child came not to the powerful, but to the humble—to remind us that hope often begins in the smallest places.

Let us look to nature this Christmas: the evergreen that stays vibrant through winter, the snow that blankets the earth in peace, the dawn that follows even the longest night. These are not mere symbols—they are divine reminders.

May this season renew our faith, deepen our compassion, and inspire us to build bridges across cultures. Let us be like the star of Bethlehem—shining not for ourselves, but to lead others toward love, healing, and unity.

This Christmas, may we not only celebrate the birth of Christ, but embody His message: that in God’s kingdom, all are welcome, all are cherished, and all are one.

Spandan Team



Leader's Perspective



A Continual Christmas... A Continual Hope

The Pulse of Christmas in this issue of *Spandan* is more than a festive edition. It is an invitation to carry Christmas beyond December, to let its pulse guide our days. May every page remind us that the Child of Bethlehem is not a seasonal guest but a lifelong companion.

Let us celebrate Christmas not as an event, but as a way of being, a way of living. Let us live hope not as a sentiment, but as a commitment. And let us, together, make our communities places where Christmas is continual, and hope is unending.



Dear Sisters,

Christmas is not another date on the calendar. It is not confined to the twinkling lights of December or the carols that echo through our

chapels and homes. Christmas is a continual reality — a rhythm of grace that beats within the heart of humanity. It is the eternal reminder that God chose to dwell among us, not once, but always.

When the angels sang “*Glory to God in the highest*”, they were not announcing a fleeting joy. They were proclaiming a hope that endures beyond seasons, beyond circumstances, beyond the limits of time. This hope is not fragile; it is resilient. It is the hope that

sustains the weary, lifts the broken, and ignites courage in the face of uncertainty.

A Continual Christmas is to live Christmas continually is to embrace the Incarnation as a daily call. It means allowing Christ to be born in our words, our actions, our communities. Every act of kindness, every gesture of forgiveness, every effort to build communion is a manger where God's love takes flesh again. *Christmas is not nostalgia; it is mission.*

A Continual Hope is not naïve optimism. It is the steadfast conviction that light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. In a world often marked by division, despair, and noise, continual hope is the quiet strength that keeps us moving forward. It is the courage to believe that reconciliation is possible, that peace can be built, that love will prevail. *Hoping is mission.*

As Canossians, we are called to be **women of this hope**. Our charism invites us to stand at the foot of the Cross, where suffering and love meet, and to proclaim through our lives that resurrection is real. To nurture continual hope is to be witnesses of God's fidelity — in our families, our communities, our institutions, our society.

Lord of Light and Love,
You chose to dwell among us,
to make every day a Bethlehem,
every heart a manger of Your
presence.

Grant us the grace to live
Christmas continually—
in kindness that heals,
in forgiveness that reconciles,
in hope that never fades.

May your peace be born anew in our communities, your joy shine through our actions,
and your hope sustain us in every season. Amen.

Sr. Audrey D'souza
Province Leader



The Little Light of Christmas in My Village

The narrative unfolds in a small, remote village with quiet, unassuming surroundings. The atmosphere was one of profound simplicity, where the true meaning of the birth of Jesus—the *little light of Christmas*—was experienced in its most genuine form.

As I entered the village, an immediate sense of discouragement washed over me. The residents were visibly impoverished, facing significant challenges in meeting even their most basic needs. A silent inner disturbance arose within me, questioning the reasons for such hardship and persistent struggle.

During a moment of quiet reflection, a profound, almost divine whisper resonated within me: “*Whom shall I send to save my people?*” This spiritual inquiry shifted my perspective.

My focus then fell upon a small child standing in front of a modest dwelling. Though no words were spoken aloud, the child’s presence and circumstances communicated a series of poignant questions directly to my heart:

- The lack of a proper and safe house to call home was evident.
 - Access to a suitable school for education was a distant dream.
 - Proper medical facilities for health and well-being were absent.
 - The availability of good food necessary for healthy development was a daily struggle.
-
- The absence of basic infrastructure hindered connectivity and communication with the outside world.

Despite these immense challenges, the child radiated an extraordinary spirit. A heart full of kindness and a bright, unwavering smile revealed a readiness to face life’s adversities with remarkable resilience and joy.

Realising the True Meaning of Christmas

In that moment of connection, the true essence of the *little light of Christmas* became clear. Christ was not found in grand celebrations or material wealth, but was reborn in the

spirit of this young child and in the many other children of the village who navigate life with hope despite poverty.

The core message of Christ—love, peace, and joy—thrives among the poor and the needy. This realisation was profound: Christmas is not measured by the abundance of material possessions, but by the depth of love and compassion one offers. The genuine spirit of Christmas resides in simple, believing hearts that trust in the saving power of Jesus.

Sr. Bharti Macwan

Raigad



Advent: A Journey of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

Advent is a sacred time when we prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus. Just as nature moves gently from darkness to light, Advent reminds us of God's beautiful promise: *"I have loved you with an everlasting love."* It is a season that

invites us to pause, reflect, and welcome the light of Christ into our daily lives.

Hope is like the morning sunrise that softens the night. It teaches us to trust that God brings new beginnings even in difficult times. Hope whispers that every moment can be transformed by God's grace, no matter how heavy our burdens may feel.

Peace is the calm we find in still waters or quiet breezes. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, invites us to forgive, to heal, and to live in harmony with one another. In a world full of noise and hurry, Advent gently calls us to slow down, breathe deeply, and rest in God's presence.

Joy is the song of creation—the blooming flowers, the singing birds, and the laughter that rises from grateful hearts. True joy springs from knowing that God delights in us. Even the simplest moments—warm smiles, shared meals, or acts of generosity—become reminders of the joy God plants within our lives.

Love is the heartbeat of Advent. It is seen in the warmth of a caring word, a helping hand, or a quiet prayer offered for someone in need. God's love became flesh in Jesus, showing us that real love is patient, generous, and self-giving. Each loving action we offer becomes a reflection of Christ's light in the world.

As we light the candles of the Advent wreath, the glow grows brighter each week. These flames remind us that God's light overcomes every darkness. They mark our journey—not just

toward Christmas Day, but toward deeper faith, renewed hope, and hearts more open to God.

Advent is a journey of the heart. It teaches us that waiting is not empty or wasted time. In the stillness, God speaks. In the quiet moments, He shapes our thoughts, strengthens our spirits, and guides us to live with compassion and courage.

May this Advent season fill us with hope that lifts us, peace that steadies us, joy that warms us, and love that transforms us. As we prepare to welcome Jesus, may our hearts shine with His light and our lives reflect His presence to the world.

Sr. Jenet



Our Children: The Little Offerings We Prepare for the World



Advent is a beautiful season of anticipation and hope—a time during which we prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus. It is a season of active waiting and conscious preparation rather than passive idleness. Advent invites reflection, spiritual renewal, and concrete acts of love and service, helping us ready our hearts not only for the celebration of Christmas but also for Christ's promised return.

When we, as educators, reflect on our vocation, we realise that we are continually living in the season of Advent. Each day, we prepare the little children entrusted to our care for a

vast and challenging world. This preparation is neither accidental nor superficial; it is marked by active waiting, thoughtful planning, and a deep commitment to forming pilgrims and bearers of hope, joy, and love.

From the moment a child enters our school, a profound journey of preparation begins. They are not merely transient beings passing through our institutions. They are the most precious and valuable little offerings that we carefully shape and present to the world. Our role is both demanding and sacred, requiring us to mould these offerings with intention, ensuring that they go forth to enrich the world with goodness, compassion, and faith.

As Canossians, our approach to this mission is rooted in the belief that every child is created *imago Dei*, in the image and likeness of God. We strive to look beyond fleeting behaviours and momentary struggles, recognising instead the inherent dignity and divine potential within each student. Education in a Canossian school focuses on the formation of the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—extending far beyond the boundaries of the standard curriculum, just as our Foundress, St. Magdalene of Canossa, envisioned.

This holistic preparation is nurtured through a variety of opportunities such as drama, debate, competitions, sports, yoga, and other co-curricular activities. These experiences allow children to discover their talents, build confidence, and gradually recognise their unique potential.

At the same time, we prepare our children to become lights in a world that so often struggles with hatred, violence,

selfishness, and destruction. Our students are gently guided to understand that they are called to be bearers of hope and instruments of peace. Service to the marginalised and the vulnerable is central to this formation. Charity is not merely taught but lived and visibly practised within our institutions. Through annual outreach programmes, Christmas sharing initiatives, and the cultivation of small, everyday acts of kindness, our students learn compassion, generosity, and empathy, growing into caring and responsible children of God.

We are also deeply aware of the need to prepare our students to become responsible members of the global family. In an interconnected world, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collaboration for the common good is essential. Our active participation in initiatives such as the Planet Fraternity programme has offered our children meaningful exposure to global perspectives. It has provided them with opportunities to interact with students from other nations and to collaborate in identifying and addressing common challenges faced by humanity.

As educators, we are truly blessed with the sacred responsibility of preparing our children—our little offerings to the world. Through our guidance, they are gradually formed to lead with integrity, serve with compassion, illuminate the path for others, and ultimately fulfil their purpose as God's beloved children.

Mrs. Anna Maria Nunes
Canossa High School, Mahim

CHRISTMAS and BETHLEHEM at Mangalwad



We made a difference by celebrating Christmas with our most deserving tuition children, Substation Homnalli children, play school children, and our Mangalwad children through small acts of kindness and gestures of love, joy, and hope.



For those who do not yet know Jesus and for many people living in poverty, Christmas can be a difficult time. Some of our people often struggle to afford even the basic necessities, but despite these challenges, Christmas brings hope and joy to their lives.

It is a time when we sisters come together and share what we have with the less fortunate. We share our happiness by adding kindness, smiles, joy, peace, love, and hope to their lives, while sharing stories and creating cherished memories.

This was the first time we invited children of other faiths onto our premises and shared joyful and happy moments together. Tuition children of other faiths, Substation

Homnalli children, and non-Catholic men joined us in celebrating the true spirit of Christmas.

Christmas is about sharing in the struggles of the poor, the needy, the marginalised, and those often overlooked in society. It is a time to embody compassion, empathy, and kindness. Christmas is not only about distributing things, but about being present with the poor—listening to their stories and sharing in their joys and sorrows. This is how we build connections and foster a deep sense of solidarity and humanity.

BETHLEHEM is the place where Jesus' birth unfolds blessings of peace, joy, and love. Becoming a **Bethlehem** for the poor means embodying compassion, kindness, and generosity. Becoming a **Bethlehem** in daily life means spreading love, kindness, and compassion by offering a smile, a kind word, and a helping hand.

The staff and students of St. Joseph's Convent School brought life and light by generously sharing their resources, time, and skills. We are deeply grateful to them.

We can make our Christmas truly meaningful:

- By forgiving one another and letting go of grudges
- By cultivating gratitude and appreciation
- By building bridges of love and compassion
- By offering genuine compliments
- By being present for someone in need
- By visiting a lonely neighbour or friend

Every act counts, and collective kindness can create significant change and brighten the lives of others.

Sisters of Mangalwad



The Divine Herald



New hope born as a tiny Babe

Ring out shouts of joy... let us adore the Divine!

Each year, we eagerly await the dawn of Christmas Eve to welcome once again the tiny Babe in the manger—Child Jesus. He comes with symbolic significance as a vulnerable and helpless infant. His loving parents wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, a sign rich with meaning, foretelling His divine mission to redeem humankind.

He could have chosen a royal palace, arrived with trumpet blasts and grand spectacle—an awe-inspiring event that would have outshone all our celebrities and celebrations, shaking the very foundations of the world. Yet He chose an inn, a humble stable, and poor, bewildered shepherds dazzled by the bright star that shone on that holy night to signal His arrival.

They were the first witnesses to meet the Redeemer, our Saviour. It was a sight beyond compare. They never understood why the angels appeared to them—mere shepherds, poor, unclean, and considered low citizens at the time. Yet they became the chosen witnesses to this heavenly vision, blessed by One who was Himself equally vulnerable. He identified with them by becoming small, yet filled with deep and tender love for the lowly and downtrodden. In His vulnerability, He came to uplift them.

Nature itself offered its greeting in that humble abode—the sheep, donkeys, and other creatures of the stable, cooing and bellowing around the Child Jesus, gazing upon Him with eyes of gratitude and delight. It was nothing short of a miracle.

We can only imagine this awe-inspiring moment as we recreate it today in our communities with cribs and all the elements that keep Christmas meaningful even now. Yet Jesus does not need hype or festivity. He desires virtues—togetherness, faithfulness, generosity, and a willingness to go beyond the call of duty. He calls us out of our coldness, indifference, and apathy, urging us to revive old traditions of caring for our neighbours in need.

Let the merriment be toned down a little this year, and let love glow instead—through outreach programmes, celebrations with the old and lonely, and moments shared with children of labourers’ families who struggle daily, often unaware of when a festive season begins or ends. Let us not only decorate the crib with baubles and lights, but go out of our way to touch the life of someone we rarely visit, speak to, or even acknowledge. Then the Babe will truly feel welcomed—not by artificial lights, but by the warmth of loving hearts.

Let us make this year brighter and more compassionate by becoming like the small Babe—innocent, vulnerable, and open to reaching out. Extend a helping hand and make Christmas not just a festive season, but one that begins with hearts open to God’s will, becoming a real season of joy, peace, goodwill, hope, and love—not mere words, but concrete actions of charity done quietly, without fanfare.

Share your “Secret Santa” this year with someone unknown. Make it meaningful. Like the perplexed yet blessed shepherds, they will remember and pray for the Good Samaritan who passed their way. In doing so, the lights in the crib will glow brighter—even without lamps.

See Christ in the needy, the humble, the forgotten, and the unknown. Open the door of your inn—do not send anyone away, even when space seems limited. If the innkeeper had a stable, so do you and I. Believe me, no Christmas gift will bring as much joy as the peace, love, and happiness that will fill your heart.

I can do it... will you give it a go too?

There is a season of celebration, and it begins with a generous heart and giving hands. Merry Christmas—make it worthwhile. You never know how your simple act of kindness may brighten a soul waiting for someone to pass by.

Have a holy and jolly Christmas. May the Babe who came to save the world 2,000 years ago, leaving an indelible mark on our hearts, be our Hope and Joy.

Be that heavenly blessing to someone. Make the magic happen. Let us change our paradigm this year—make it matter. Show love and appreciation, for goodness is bliss to both giver and receiver. Let us lessen the indifference we see around us. Though giving and receiving seem universal, let us turn a new leaf—look at the humble crib and learn that even in our vulnerability and littleness, the Baby Jesus sees our big hearts.

Like the shepherds, may we look for the unexpected in our communities and respond with generous hearts. Nothing goes unseen. One good deed may seem small, but its reward will be bountiful.

So listen... think... and believe.
The rest will follow you through the year.

Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year 2026.

Sr. Hyacinth Fernandes
Nirmalashram

Little Roshini's Journey – From Darkness to Light



“To all the destitute, to all those who are wronged, to all those who are broken-hearted, He comes to give consolation, comfort, forgiveness, and joy.”

Yes, this is the true experience of a young child whose life was marked by helplessness and brokenness.

We came across Imala Durmada on the footpath of Manickpur. Her little girl, Roshini, would roam around with her, playing with dogs and cats. Their home was a rickshaw, a tempo, or sometimes a bench on the footpath near the talav. The villagers had many stories to share about Imala, each from their own perspective.

From October, Nirmalamata, Manickpur, entered into their lives. We took little Roshini and admitted her to our Nirmalamata Primary School. For a few days, Roshini attended school regularly, but soon Imala took her back to their former way of life. In early December, as we began our Advent practices, we noticed Roshini begging near the Church. The money she collected was taken by Imala and used for her drinking.

One fine morning, when we noticed Roshini again, we gently took her hand and brought her to the Convent. We kept her with us for two days. Imala was fully intoxicated and did not even bother to look for her child. During this time, the little girl expressed her fear, saying, *“I don't want to be with Imala because men come at night and do bad things.”* Though so young, she understood that her mother's behaviour was

wrong and felt deeply disturbed by it. She wanted to stay with us, but we were aware that legally we were not permitted to keep her.

We knocked on many doors and informed the police and civic authorities. They advised us to keep Roshini outside the gate to observe Imala's reaction. That evening, around 6:30 pm, we placed Roshini outside the gate. Her mother did not come looking for her, and Roshini herself did not wish to return to her.

Poor Roshini sat outside the gate on a stone, crying bitterly. She pleaded to come back to us. Seeing her in such pain moved us to tears. I immediately contacted one of the officers whom we had already informed about the case. He was very cooperative and came at once. He said, "*Sister, you take her in. I will inform the police, and whatever the consequences, we will face them.*" He assured us of his full support.

Roshini returned to us, and it was like heaven for her. Meanwhile, her mother Imala, still drunk, was lying on a bench.

The next day, we contacted the boarding in-charge at the Chulna Convent, from where some children attend our Nirmalamata School. Although they could not keep Roshini permanently, they agreed to take her temporarily. We bought everything she needed for daily use and took her to the boarding. Roshini was very happy and began attending Nirmalamata School from there.

She did not know her date of birth or her father's name. We had no detailed information to prepare her Aadhaar card, which was required for her school admission. Meanwhile, we continued searching for a safe and permanent home for her. We faced many hurdles while trying to gather the necessary details.

By the grace of God, a new door opened. We learned of an Ashram boarding for girls in distress at Papdi, run by the Poor Sisters of Our Lady. We visited the Ashram, and the Sisters graciously agreed to accept Roshini, provided we could obtain a legal affidavit with her mother's consent and thumb impression.

The next challenge was to approach Imala when she was sober. We prepared the affidavit on stamped paper and approached her for her thumb impression. Though she made a few demands and was still struggling with alcohol, she cooperated. She willingly gave her thumb impression, and after completing the court formalities, we received the legal affidavit for Roshini.

On Tuesday morning, the 16th of December, Roshini came to thank and greet all the Sisters and everyone on the campus. Later, we took her to her final place of safety, where twenty-two other children like her lived. She was warmly welcomed by all.

There was a deep sense of joy and satisfaction within each of us. During this Advent season, we were given a precious opportunity to bring life, light, and joy to a little child of

Jesus. We thank our Heavenly Father for guiding us at every step.

Our mission, however, is not yet complete. We are now exploring ways to rehabilitate Roshini's mother, Imala, as well. We firmly believe that God will surely make a way.

We wish our dear Roshini God's choicest blessings and assure her of our continued prayers in all her endeavours.

Sr. Annie and the Sisters of Nirmalamata
Manickpur



Christmas Vibes ... From Anand Sadan, Shirpur



**Joyful Tidings of Christmas: Sharing the Gift of Jesus
with All People of God**

As we celebrate the joyful season of Christmas, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the work we have been able to accomplish together in our Anand Sadan Community. We take this opportunity to reflect on the gift of Jesus and how we are sharing His love with the beautiful people around us through various initiatives. This year, as we celebrate the Birth of our Saviour, we are reminded of the impact we can make by embodying the true spirit of giving.

The Father's incarnated love in Jesus offers us a profound model for living. By adopting His principles in our daily lives—through kindness, empathy, forgiveness, and service—we can not only experience His love more fully but also share it with the world around us. In doing so, we contribute to a society that mirrors the very heart of Christ—a society defined by love, understanding, and connection. Each day presents an opportunity to reflect and embody this divine love, reminding us that Jesus is not just a figure of the past but a living presence in our lives, encouraging us to radiate His love in everything we do.

Daily Dispensary: Healing Through Love

In our daily dispensary, we extend the love of Jesus to the Adivasi people by providing not only medical care but also hope and compassion. Our dedicated staff works tirelessly to ensure that every person who walks through our doors feels cared for and valued. This Christmas, we celebrate the healing extended to more than 8,530 people and the strong community bonds that have flourished through this essential service.

Boarding for Girls: Empowering Futures

Our boarding facility for girls continues to empower young women by providing a safe haven to learn, grow, and thrive. We believe that every girl deserves the opportunity to access education and develop her God-given potential. As we celebrate Christmas, we reflect on the transformation taking place in the lives of 75 girls who are finding their voices and stepping confidently into their futures, embodying the joy that Jesus brings.

School for Tribal Children: Nurturing Young Minds

At our school for tribal children, the Spirit of Jesus inspires us to provide quality education within a loving and supportive environment. This Christmas, we rejoice in the knowledge that we are not only teaching academic subjects but also instilling values of love, kindness, and faith in our 465 students. Every lesson learned is a step closer to a brighter future, made possible through the love we share in Jesus' name.

Indigenous Health Project: Caring for Community Well-Being Our Indigenous Health Project stands as a testament to our commitment to holistic well-being. Through this initiative, we address the unique health challenges faced by Adivasi communities, ensuring they receive the care they need. During this Christmas season, we cherish the relationships built in 15 remote villages, reminding ourselves that Jesus' love calls us to serve those most in need.

The Joy of Giving Jesus: A Celebration of Love and Hope

This Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we are reminded of His compassionate love and our call to share it

with others. From the dispensary to the classrooms, within the hearts of the girls in our boarding facility, and across our 12 Catholic villages, we strive to live out this calling. Jesus is born anew in the hearts of those we serve, bringing hope, joy, and transformation to their lives.

To bring God's love closer to those experiencing deep suffering and pain, our community organized a compassionate outreach initiative at the Dhule Prison. Recognising the importance of offering both spiritual support and tangible expressions of care, we visited the inmates with sincere hearts. During the visit, we conducted a prayer service emphasizing God's unconditional love and forgiveness. As a sign of encouragement and compassion, we also distributed 100 blankets to the inmates.

As we reflect on the impact of our collective efforts during this joyful journey of giving and service, we recognise that your support and prayers remain the lifeblood of our mission. They enable us to touch lives and share the love of Jesus in meaningful and transformative ways.

We wish you a blessed and joyful Christmas, filled with the spirit of giving and love.

**In His Service,
The Community of Anand Sadan**

"Jesus is born there today!"



Ready or Not, He Comes



“Ready or not, He comes...”

Those words, glowing from the wall of St. Michael’s Church during the first week of Advent, stayed with me long after I left. They stirred a question I carry quietly more often than I admit: how does Christ enter a world like ours, where so much feels unsettled?

Chaos takes many shapes. It lives in strained relationships, in families where peace feels delicate, in neighbourhoods where trust is worn thin. It echoes through a nation and a world frayed by conflict, injustice, and fear. And still—within this swirl of uncertainty—I continue to meet people who carry a rare calm, people who move with compassion, steadiness, and a grace that seems to rise from some deeper well. They remind me that God’s presence has never retreated. Christ does not wait for the world to be tidy; He steps into its disorder precisely because we cannot restore it on our own.

Scripture traces this truth from the beginning. God brings order to the formless, speaks through fire and through silence, and enters the fragility of human life in a manger under the shadow of political tension. He quiets storms with a word and transforms the chaos of the Cross into redemption. Again and again, God steps toward confusion, never away from it.

As a Canossian, this truth feels tender and close. St. Magdalene encountered Christ not only in prayer but in the rawness of daily life—in the poor, the broken, and the

overlooked. She shows me that Christ reaches others through us when we choose gentleness over urgency, compassion over judgement, and love over fear. He comes, often through the smallest choices we make.

This Advent, “*Ready or not...*” feels less like a warning and more like a loving invitation—to stay awake to Christ who enters my worries, my community’s tensions, my family’s struggles, and the wounds of a world aching for peace. He does not ask whether I have prepared enough. He comes with what I need most: clarity in confusion, calm in unrest, and hope where despair tries to take root.

That is the quiet wonder of Advent—not that I am finally ready, but that God keeps choosing to come.

Ready or not... Christ comes, carrying light, peace, and the transforming love we are meant to offer in return.

Sr. Vailankani Fernandes

Canossa, Mahim



December's Here



Streets are decked with twinkling lights,
People dance with sheer delight,
Laughter fills the crisp cool air,
Contagious joy is everywhere.

Wishes hanging on a string,
Voices rise while caroling,
Hearts and homes represent a new beginning,
Amidst the sweets and Christmas shopping.

Leaving behind the sorrows of the past,
Spreading cheer intended to last,
Releasing the pain and letting go of fear,
As we reach the end of another year.

Celebration time draws near,
To welcome our only Savior dear,
He who became our true Redeemer,
That's why we say December's here!

Gracienne Musquitto



'Tis the Season



A season filled with love and laughter,
And opening gifts the morning after.
A warm cup of cocoa with marshmallows,
As we sit by the fire in the evening glow.

A season filled with hope and joy,
While children list every gift and toy.
A fellowship that brings people together,
With courage to believe, have faith, and endeavour.

A season filled with solace and peace,
While the warmth of Christmas will never cease.

We play songs like ‘The First Noel’,
To recall the story the angels tell.

A season that you and I keep waiting for,
As we decorate the house, the windows, and door.
We listen to hear Santa’s sleigh bells ring,
And celebrate the birth of our Newborn King.

Grecienne Misquitta



We Are All Pilgrims of Hope



Jeremiah 29:11 says: *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* This Bible verse has always been my favourite. It constantly reminds me that God’s plans are always bigger, kinder, and more beautiful in their own way.

I felt this verse come alive in a whole new way when I was blessed with the opportunity to be in Rome during the grand celebration of World Youth Day, together with millions of young people from around the world and the Canossian Daughters and Sons of Charity.

As strangers, the journey began far away from home, yet in God’s own land. From 23rd July to 12th August, I had the blessing of being in Rome. I stayed with over 86 Canossian sisters, fathers, brothers, and youth from across the globe. Coming from different nations, cultures, and languages,

communication was not always easy, but the smiles they shared were enough to understand everything they wanted to say. Slowly, they began to feel like family—a big Canossian family.

My journey in Rome was truly one of the most beautiful blessings of my life. I had the opportunity to pass through the Four Holy Doors and venerate the relics of many saints, including the first millennial saint, St. Carlo Acutis. Walking through the historic paths of Vatican City felt like a dream come true. Attending the High Mass at St. Peter's Square and seeing Pope Leo XIV for the first time felt surreal.

On 2nd August, we walked all the way to Tor Vergata for the night vigil with the Holy Father. The heat made the journey challenging, but standing among millions of youth chanting, *"Jesus Christ, You are my life, You are my light,"* gave me goosebumps. Spending the whole night under the open sky and attending Holy Mass the next day made every bit of tiredness worthwhile.

I also visited Verona, where St. Magdalene of Canossa began the Canossian mission, and prayed in the very cell where she took her last breath. Later, I travelled to Schio to visit the remains of St. Bakhita, and then to the Canossian convent in Venice.

I returned home with countless memories and beautiful experiences. Through every step, prayer, and smile, I realised that we are all pilgrims of hope, carrying God's light wherever we go. This Jubilee Year was truly a gift that I will treasure forever. The entire pilgrimage was deeply

meaningful and taught me so much about faith, sacrifice, and God's love. The dedication of the priests and nuns truly inspired me, and I pray that God continues to bless them always.

Vienna Carvalho

Youth from Manickpur, Vasai



PRAISE THE LORD

My name is Mrs. Belinda Mascarenhas. I belong to Our Lady of Salvation Parish, Dadar West. I would like to testify to what God has done in my life.

One year ago, I planned to visit my daughter, who was in Sydney for further studies. Before going, I decided to undergo a health check-up at Holy Family Hospital, Bandra. To my utter shock and dismay, the check-up detected a Stage III colon cancer tumour in the lower part of the large intestine (colon). Though it had not spread elsewhere in the body, it had spread to the outermost layer of the colon.

All my life, I have been very active, healthy, and busy, so the diagnosis was shocking. My husband and children gave me courage, strength, and assurance that I was not going to be alone, but that we would all walk together on this difficult journey. Doctors at Tata Memorial advised chemotherapy and radiation as soon as possible to shrink the tumour,

followed by surgery. The cancer was detected on 15th May, 2024.

Over the past one year, I underwent both chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Today, I am well on my way to full recovery, and my health has been restored.

I would like to share that in the early stages of my illness, I found the relic of St. Bakhita, which was given to me a long time ago by a dear friend but had been lost among my possessions. I found it shortly after my diagnosis and began to pray often with the relic, asking the saint to intercede for me. I truly believe that she helped me during my illness and recovery. St. Bakhita was my great support during this time.

Many good things worked well for me — I got good doctors to attend to me, my family supported me, office colleagues reached out to me, finances were taken care of, and many intercessors stormed heaven for me. Two more relics of St. Peregrine and St. Anthony came into my possession after a few months. I personally and strongly believe in the powerful intercession of the saints, and I truly believe they all came to my aid during my illness.

Thank you, dear St. Bakhita. Please continue to pray for me, my family, and all my friends too.

Belinda Mascarenhas

Our Lady of Salvation Church
Dadar West, Mumbai

Dated: July 29, 2025

My Christmas Experience



A Journey of Faith, Service, and Compassion

Christmas 2025 was a deeply enriching and grace-filled experience for me, marked by faith, fellowship, and meaningful service. As we concluded the year and prepared to welcome the New Year 2026, the celebration of Christmas became not merely an event, but a lived experience of God's love shared with people of all ages and backgrounds.

In preparation for Christmas, we organized various programmes focusing on inclusion, joy, and spiritual nourishment. A special programme was arranged for senior citizens and widowed women on 22nd December. It was a touching experience to be with them, listening to their stories and sharing moments of joy. Their presence reminded us of the wisdom of age and the silent sacrifices they have made. The celebration helped them feel valued, remembered, and loved during this sacred season.

We also organized a joyful Christmas programme for our boarding girls. The children actively participated by performing dances and a meaningful Christmas drama that beautifully conveyed the message of Christ's birth—love, peace, and hope. I had the opportunity to share a Christmas message with them, encouraging them to recognize God's presence in their daily lives and to grow in gratitude and kindness. The programme concluded with a common dinner, which strengthened the sense of family and togetherness among us.

Another significant highlight was the Christmas programme for our tuition children, in which around 43 children participated. The celebration included games, dances, and joyful interactions. I shared a short Christmas message emphasizing the values of sharing, love, and hope. The children's enthusiasm and happiness reflected the true spirit of Christmas—simple joy and sincere hearts.

During the Christmas season, we also made pastoral visits to the elderly and the sick, which became one of the most moving experiences for me. Visiting Ramilaben and Narimanbhai, especially Narimanbhai who was unwell, gave a deeper meaning to Christmas. Spending time with them, offering prayers, words of comfort, and simply being present helped me experience Christ in their vulnerability and faith. This visit reminded me that Christmas is truly lived when we carry God's compassion to those who are suffering, lonely, or weak. It was a moment of grace that touched my heart deeply.

Being with my community sisters during the Christmas season was another great source of joy and strength. Sharing prayers, preparations, responsibilities, meals, and moments of laughter together deepened our sense of sisterhood and unity. Celebrating Christmas as a community reminded me that religious life itself is a gift, where faith is nurtured through mutual support, understanding, and shared mission. The presence of my community sisters made the celebration more meaningful and helped me experience Christmas as a time of communion and gratitude.

Another meaningful dimension of our Christmas celebration was the *Pilgrimage of Hope* with the youth. Walking together in faith, prayer, and reflection helped the youth understand Christmas not only as a festival, but as a journey of hope, commitment, and responsibility. Through songs, moments of prayer, and simple sharing, the youth experienced companionship, faith, and encouragement. This pilgrimage strengthened their sense of belonging to the Church and inspired them to become bearers of hope and joy in their families and society.

Christmas celebrations were further enriched through prayer services, intercessory prayers, and personal reflections. The Thanksgiving Prayer Service at the end of the year 2025 helped us recall God's abundant blessings, graces, and guidance throughout the year. It was a moment to pause, thank God, and entrust the coming year into His loving hands.

Village visits and carol singing were also part of our Christmas outreach. Visiting families, praying with them, and offering short Christmas messages in Gujarati helped deepen bonds with the people and brought the message of Christ into their homes. The live crib put up by the Mahila Mandal women in their villages beautifully conveyed the message of love, peace, and joy that Jesus brought at His birth. This initiative made the celebration more meaningful and deeply rooted in the local context of the Zaroli Mission.

Personally, this Christmas was a time of deep gratitude and renewed commitment. Through the smiles of children, the silent tears of elders, shared meals, prayers, village visits, and

encounters with the sick, I experienced Christ being born anew in our community. Christmas reminded me that mission is lived in small gestures of love, listening, presence, and service.

In conclusion, my Christmas experience was not limited to celebration alone, but became a journey of faith lived through community, compassion, and service. I thank God for the opportunity to be an instrument of His love and pray that the joy of Christmas may continue to inspire us throughout the year.

Sr. Sarika Manbhat
Zaroli



Platinum Jubilee of Canossian Presence in Talasari



When we count our years, we see only numbers. But when we count God's deeds, we see wonders. And when we remember the people who walked with us, we realize — grace has many faces.

With hearts overflowing in gratitude, we celebrated **75 grace-filled years** of Canossian mission in Talasari with a solemn Thanksgiving Eucharist at Gyanmata, presided over by Bishop Thomas D'Souza.

The sacred celebration began with a deeply symbolic and vibrant entrance procession. The students of our Nursing

School led the procession with the rhythmic beats of the traditional Tarpa dance, expressing the soul of the local culture. They were followed by the Canossian Sisters from various communities, the priests, and finally the Bishop. The entire sanctuary resonated with joy, faith, and the living spirit of Talasari.

Many priests, religious, and Jesuits from far and wide concelebrated the Mass, demonstrating their solidarity with our mission journey. We are especially grateful to Fr. Neelam and the Jesuits for their wholehearted cooperation and constant support.

In his homily, Bishop Thomas beautifully highlighted the Canossian hallmarks of **“compassion, conviction, and courage.”** He recalled how the Canossian Sisters “wiped the tears of the tribals, leaving no stone unturned,” and how they persevered even while “swimming against the current.” His words affirmed our mission and strengthened our resolve for the journey ahead.



The hall was artistically decorated with the number “75,” symbolizing our Platinum Jubilee, giving the entire space a truly festive look. A special moment of grace was experienced during the Doxology when our Lay Canossians performed the arati, expressing their deep sense of belonging and collaboration in our mission.

Heartfelt tributes by Fr. Andrew, Mrs. Teresa Madha, Ignas Master, and Sr. Gulab echoed the decades of transformative service rendered in Talasari. We also offered grateful remembrance of the Jesuit pioneers — especially Fr. Ramon Nibiola and Fr. Regi Gonsalves — whose steadfast support strengthened our early foundation and mission growth.

The Eucharistic celebration was followed by a vibrant cultural programme. Our young sisters presented a beautiful dance, and the children from our boarding showcased their talents with joy, adding colour and life to the occasion. The history of Canossian presence in Talasari was presented in an innovative and engaging manner through a PowerPoint presentation, taking us on a moving journey through the years of trials, faith, mission, and grace.

Sr. Lavina D’Souza, on behalf of all Canossian Sisters, thanked the Bishop, clergy, religious, guests, benefactors, collaborators, and everyone who made this Jubilee celebration a memorable one.

After a warm and sumptuous festive meal shared with all, everyone departed, their hearts carrying the joy and spirit of communion and thanksgiving.

No mission stands on one pair of feet,
No harvest grows on one pair of hands.
God weaves His plans with many threads —
and that is the story we celebrated.

Standing on this Jubilee summit, we recall the beautiful words of St. Augustine: *“In all our past — there is mercy; in all our present — there is love; in all our future — there is hope.”*

Yes — Mercy behind us, Love beside us, Hope before us.
That remains our hymn today.

To God be all glory, and to all who journeyed with us — our heartfelt thanks.

May the Lord, who began this good work in Talasari, bring it to fulfilment.

Sisters of Talasari



THE CHRIST-CHILD LIVES IN US



Chorus

*Gloria in Excelsis Deo,
Peace to all peoples on earth!
Gloria in Excelsis Deo,
Peace to all peoples on earth!*
For it is Christmas in our
community,
The Christ-Child is born anew.
In every heart, in every mission,
Peace to His people — in me and you.



Stanza 1 – The Josephs

(Jessie, Theresa, Natalia)

In Jessie, Theresa and Natalia we see
Joseph's quiet strength and fidelity.
In silence strong, in trust unspoken,
Guarding life when hearts feel broken.
They stand beside the fragile promise,
Holding hope with hands so still...
And Christ is born in hidden service,
In a love that does God's will.

*Chorus
Gloria in Excelsis Deo...
Peace to all peoples on earth...*

Stanza 2 – The Marys

(Martina, Maggie, Richa)

In Martina, Maggie, in Richa's surrender,
Mary lives in grace so tender.
"Let it be" in joy and sorrow,
Trusting God beyond tomorrow.
Simple, transparent, seeking and true,
Lovers of the Trinity's flame,
Through their hearts the Word is spoken,
Through their lives His holy Name.

Chorus

Gloria in Excelsis Deo...

Peace to all peoples on earth...

Stanza 3 – The Star & The Waiting Ones

(Margaret Sequeira S, Cecily, Rosa, Meena, Usha Margaret John, Monica, Margaret G)

Margaret Sequeira, Cecily, Rosa,
Meena and Usha Margaret John — our stars,
Shining gently in our darkness,
Pointing souls to where He lies.

Monica and Margaret G — Zechariah's waiting grace,
Teaching us that even barrenness
Is a womb for God's own face.
In silence deep and long surrender,
He fulfills what hearts can't see —
God is faithful to His promise,
In our age and mystery.

Chorus
Gloria in Excelsis Deo...
Peace to all peoples on earth...

Stanza 4 – Shepherd, King and Angel

(Dola, Lavina, Shalini)

In Dola, shepherd of the lowly,
Walking with the poor and small,
The Good News finds its first home
Where love answers poverty's call.

In Lavina, kingly seeking,
Wisdom bowing low in grace,
Offering her life and service
At the Child's most holy place.

In Shalini, an angel's singing,
Obedient, joyful, bright,
Spreading peace in word and action,
Setting broken hearts alight.

Chorus
Gloria in Excelsis Deo...
Peace to all peoples on earth...

Final Stanza – The Living Canossian Crib

In our pregnant silences of love,
When gossip dies and mercy grows,

Christ is born in gentle whispers
Only listening hearts can know.

In every orphan's broken story,
In each hungry, thirsty face,
In slum and school and sickroom lonely,
We cradle Christ in His distress.

As one community discovering who we are,
Not alone but heart in heart,
We celebrate His constant coming
In our mission, life, and part.



Final Chorus

*Gloria in Excelsis Deo,
Peace to His people on earth!
Gloria in Excelsis Deo,
Peace to His people on earth!*
For the Christ-Child lives among us,
In our love, our care, our unity,
And together we proclaim this wonder:
Glory to God — and Peace on Earth!

Sisters of Talasari



“A Rainbow of Hope: A Student’s Reflection”



The inter-religious prayer service held at Canossa Primary School (Mahim) on 9th December, 2025 was truly a meaningful and symbolic event. The teachers beautifully explained how the seven colours of a rainbow, all originating from the same sun, represent people from diverse backgrounds, religions, and beliefs, yet united in their essence.

The service, which included a prayer dance, left everyone feeling filled with a divine presence. Umme Aiman Farooqui, a student of Standard 4, captured the essence of the event in a heartfelt message written on a rainbow-designed card. She expressed her love for the assembly, appreciating the teachers’ emphasis on kindness, understanding, and recognising God in every child and everywhere.

It is remarkable how this ten-year-old student was able to pen down her thoughts, reflecting the profound impact of the assembly and her deep understanding of the unity and love that was shared.

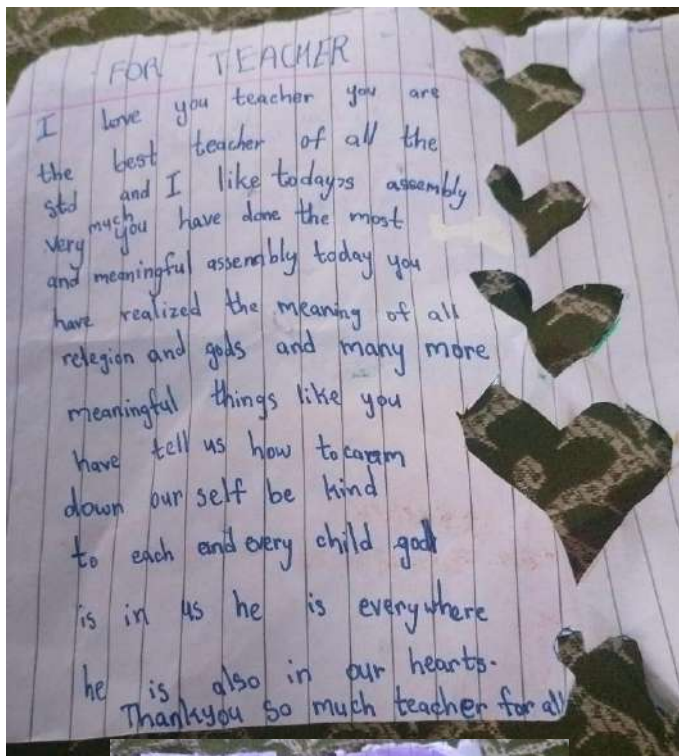
Summary by:

Tr. Jennifer Bekare
Canossa Primary School, Mahim

Thank you and God bless.



Picture and a handwritten letter written by a student.



नाताळचा खरा अर्थ

मी सौ. मीना हिलरी लेमोस. गेली ३७ वर्षे मी आपल्या निर्मलामाता प्रायमरी शाळेत शिक्षिका म्हणून निष्ठेने ज्ञानदानाचे कार्य करीत आहे. या दीर्घ सेवाकाळात प्रत्येक वर्षी माझ्या वर्गात ४० पेक्षा अधिक विद्यार्थी असत. मात्र शिक्षिका म्हणून माझे कार्य केवळ अभ्यासक्रम पूर्ण करण्यापुरते मर्यादित राहिले नाही. प्रत्येक मुलाच्या, विशेषतः दुर्बल आणि वंचित पार्श्वभूमीतील मुलींच्या जीवनात डोकावून पाहणे, त्यांच्या वेदना समजून घेणे आणि त्यांना आधार देणे, हेच माझ्या शिक्षकी सेवेचे खरे स्वरूप बनले.

आई-वडिलांचे छत्र नसलेल्या, आर्थिक अडचणीत सापडलेल्या किंवा अनाथ असलेल्या मुलींकडे माझे विशेष लक्ष असे. एखादी मुलगी शाळेत अनुपस्थित राहिली, की तिच्या अनुपस्थितीमागचे कारण जाणून घेणे मला महत्वाचे वाटे. केवळ शिक्षिका म्हणून नव्हे, तर आईच्या मायेने त्यांच्याशी संवाद साधण्याचा मी नेहमी प्रयत्न करत असे. त्यांच्या घरातील परिस्थिती, रोजच्या संघर्षाची ओळख करून घेणे आणि त्यातून मार्ग काढण्यासाठी त्यांना धीर देणे—हे माझ्यासाठी शिक्षणाचाच एक अविभाज्य भाग आहे.

या आपुलकीमुळे अनेक मुलींमध्ये आत्मविश्वास निर्माण झाला. हळूहळू त्यांचा शाळेकडे पाहण्याचा दृष्टिकोन बदलू लागला.

अभ्यासात रस वाढला, शिस्त लागली आणि स्वप्ने पाहण्याची हिंमत त्यांच्यात निर्माण झाली.

पायल, प्रीया, पलक, आणि ज्योती या मुली त्याची जिवंत उदाहरणे आहेत. आज त्या मुलींना शाळेत पहिल्या बाकावर बसलेले, आत्मविश्वासाने उत्तर देताना पाहताना मला अपार समाधान आणि अभिमान वाटतो.

८ डिसेंबर २०२५ त्या दिवशी वस्तीतील काही आदिवासी मुली शाळेत आल्या नव्हत्या. कारण समजत नसल्याने शाळा सुटल्यानंतर मी त्यांच्या पाड्यावर गेले. तेथे माझ्या मनाला चटका लावणारे दृश्य दिसले. माझ्या वर्गातील एक लहानशी मुलगी केवळ चड्डीवर फिरत होती. तिचे केस विस्कटलेले, कपडे फाटलेले आणि चेहऱ्यावर बालपण हरवलेली निरागसता दिसत होती.

मला पाहताच सर्व मुली माझ्याभोवती जमल्या. त्यामध्ये आरती, गौरी, श्वेता, लविना, पूजा आणि वैष्णवी या मुली होत्या. त्यांच्यापैकी लविना, आरती आणि गौरी या कधी कधी भंगार गोळा करून कुटुंबाच्या उदरनिर्वाहासाठी झगडत असत. त्या वयात जिथे हातात पुस्तके असायला हवी होती, तिथे त्यांच्या हातात ओझे होते—हे वास्तव पाहून माझे मन अस्वस्थ झाले. त्या दिवशी त्या मुली शाळेत न येता भंगार गोळा करायला गेल्या असाव्यात, या विचाराने मला स्वस्थ बसवेना. म्हणून मी त्यांच्या घरी भेट दिली. पालकांशी

संवाद साधताना शिक्षणाचे महत्त्व, मुलींच्या उज्ज्वल भवितव्याची स्वप्ने आणि शाळा म्हणजे बदलाची पहिली पायरी आहे, हे समजावून सांगण्याचा प्रयत्न केला. तो संवाद कठीण होता, पण आशेचा किरण घेऊन आला. त्यानंतर त्या मुली नियमितपणे शाळेत येऊ लागल्या—आणि त्यांच्या आयुष्यात बदलाची सुरुवात झाली.

त्या क्षणी मला प्रकर्षाने जाणवले की, ख्रिस्ताचा संदेश हा केवळ उपदेशात नाही, तर सेवेत आणि संवेदनशीलतेत आहे. दुर्बलांच्या जीवनात आशा निर्माण करणे, त्यांच्या अंधारात शिक्षणाचा दिवा लावणे, हेच नाताळचे खरे सार आहे. आज त्या मुली शाळेत नियमित येतात, स्वच्छ गणवेशात हसत-खेळत शिकताना दिसतात. त्यांच्या डोळ्यांत भविष्याची चमक दिसते. त्या दृश्यातच माझ्या सर्व परिश्रमांचे चीज झालेले मला जाणवते.

हीच माझ्यासाठी नाताळची खरी भेट, खरा आनंद आणि खरा उत्सव आहे.

मीना लेमोस
निर्मलामाता प्रायमरी स्कूल
माणिकपूर वसई

CHRISTMAS



CHRISTMAS: ROOTED IN NATURE,
EMBRACING ALL FAITHS, UNITED IN HOPE