

green

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God's call to Renew and Energise Earth & Nature



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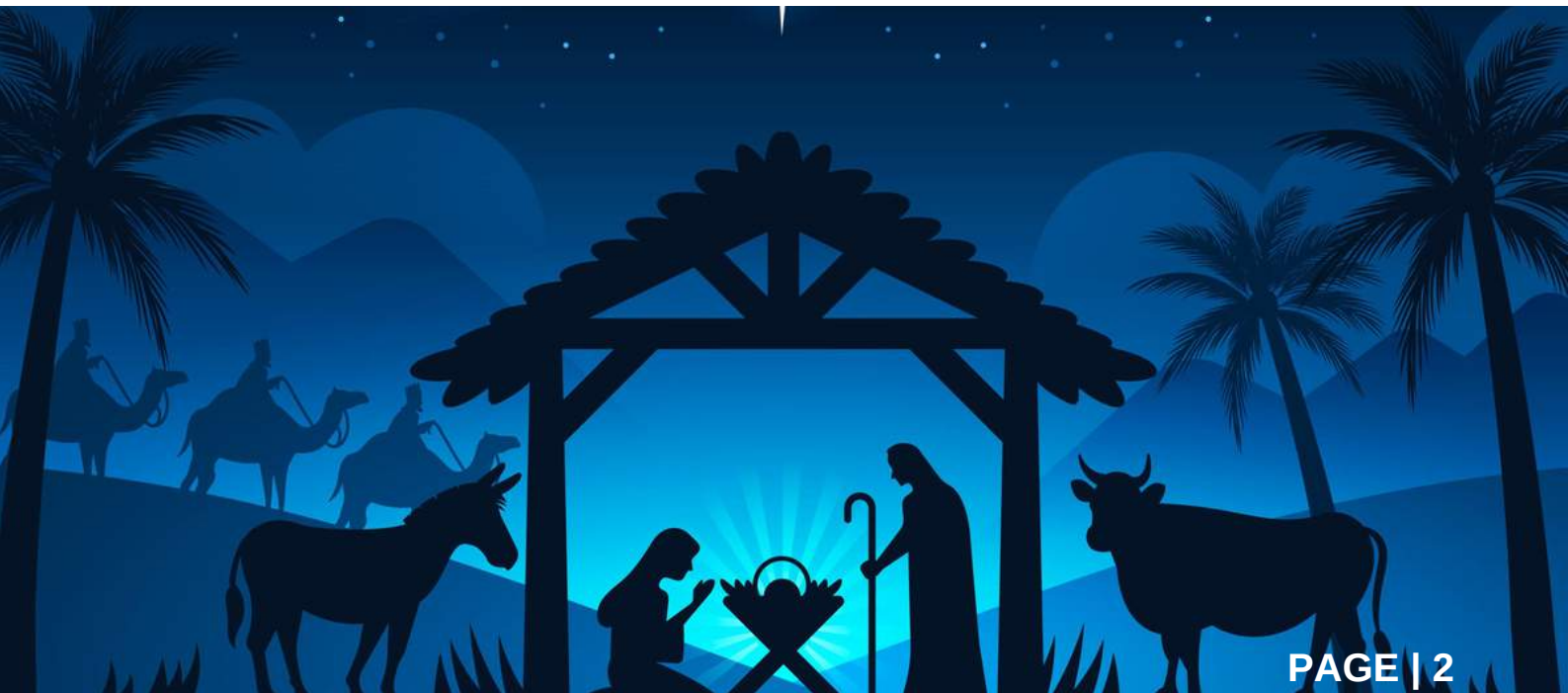
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Bishop Allwyn D'Silva

Bishop In-Charge

Archdiocesan Office for Environment

Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Bombay

**Chairperson – Office for Environment and
Climate Change**

Catholic Bishops' Conference of India

Christmas makes a difference in our lives.

Two thousand years ago, the Roman Empire was in control of Palestine. They were oppressive rulers and the Israelites were suffering. Then, as today, there were many poor people who had just about enough food and money for their families, and there were a few very rich aristocrats who controlled all the money. The scribes and the Pharisees put heavy burdens on the people who had to strictly adhere to the laws of the *Torah*. Jesus made a difference in all their lives.

In stark contrast to the oppressive Romans, Jesus - Lord and Master - came along and told his disciples that he would wash their feet! He told people not to worry about seats of honour but to take the last place; he told the sons of Zebedee not to fight for seats at his right and left. Jesus made a difference to the power structures of his time. Jesus shared five loaves and two fish with every one - he did not restrict his sharing with only the apostles. - bringing a difference to the economic conditions of that time as well. He taught people not to take revenge, to offer the other cheek, to not worry too much about the laws - whether to wash one's hands before worship or wash one's feet before eating as the Sabbath was made for the person and not the person for the Sabbath. Jesus' birth brought a real difference in the lives of people.

Jesus continues to make a difference now, otherwise we wouldn't be gathering together every Christmas. I pray in a very special way that this Christmas season is a meaningful Christmas - a difference that makes our difference in our lives. The birth of Jesus breaks through all the selfishness, indifference, pain and crises of our world, bringing us hope, peace and joy. May our celebrations be mindful and inclusive to each other, as well as kind to our earth. Let the difference Christmas makes carry on in our commitment to care for creation.

Have a 'different' Christmas!



EDITOR'S NOTE

At Christmas time, the fragile and precious newborn Jesus finds a place in the crib of our hearts, and love enfolds us. We find peace and tend to be bit kinder. We become more thoughtful, more accepting, more generous and more joyous. We may be tense about current affairs, just bereaved, perhaps we're battling illness or facing financial difficulties – life after all is never easy – but the Christmas magic rarely fails to uplift us. Gifts and goodwill abound. We share sweets and cakes, and apart from the presents under the tree, we also exchange the gifts of smiles and togetherness with our loved ones. We also usher in the New Year with the hope of turning over a new leaf! Let's take this moment to ask ourselves – what have we gifted the Earth this Christmas?

The commitments taken at the recently concluded COP28 need to be translated into urgent action by countries throughout the world to avert the climate emergency – [here's an article from the World Resources Institute for further reading](#). Our own beloved country weakened laws related to forests and biodiversity in 2023 – [read more here](#). On an individual level, even those of us who usually tread a little lighter on the planet tend to go overboard at Christmas time. A lot of us complain the pollution of Diwali and preceding festivals but have no qualms tossing out artificial Christmas trees, mounds of gift wrapping, old plastic ornaments and so on. We get swept up in deals and offers and buy new clothes and things. How many of us have attempted to make our celebrations greener? Have we only been able to 'gift' the Earth our waste?

For this issue of GREEN, we asked our current batch of Eco Ambassadors what they want for a Green Christmas, and we have another article on the same topic. Several parishes made green commitments earlier during the Season of Creation (1st September to 4th October). Our LAUDATO SI' – The Song resounded in an Australian forest while an AOE Eco Youth member from the neighbouring Vasai diocese shares eco-friendly tips with us. We've covered initiatives from Dadar, Andheri, Thane, Bandra, Nerul and Khopoli, but we know our readers are good people who are involved a lot more in greening (– please make sure to share your work with us in the next issue). There are two articles on saving and supporting Mother Earth, a special visual inspired by the Green Beatitudes, and a Bandra poem set amidst the hustle and bustle of 'Aamchi Mumbai'!

Mercifully, we have together been able to make a small difference to our common home – may it be our humble gift to little baby Jesus in the stable. And let's resolve to do better henceforth. Wishing you all a blessed Christmas season and a Green New Year!

The Editorial Team

Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ

Head, Archdiocesan Office for Environment

Naomi Gonsalves

Shawna Nemesia Rebello

P.S.: Do join our mailing list through [the form linked here](#).

AOE DIARY

- An AOE Eco Youth camp was held at Mahad on 6th and 7th May - read more on page 8
- To mark Laudato Si' Week 2023 (21st-28th May) with the theme *Hope for the Earth | Hope for Humanity*, Bishop Allwyn D'Silva issued a letter exhorting recitation of the common prayer and for care for creation efforts to be strengthened in parishes and communities on 18th May
- Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ was the resource person at a workshop organised by The Environment Wing of the Bombay Catholic Sabha at Bandra on 18th July on the theme of *Greening our Parishes*
- As part of pastoral work training with the AOE, seminarian Br Joshua D'Souza interacted with the members of the Salvation Green Cell at the Church of Our Lady of Salvation in Dadar on 20th July and the Ecopals group of Holy Family Church, Andheri on 24th September
- Read about our 3rd September Season of Creation Gathering on page 9
- Fr Luke presented a Paper on *Environmental Ethics* at a Conference on "Ethical Issues in Ministry" organised at Jnanadeepa Institute, Pune from 21st-23rd September
- The AOE and around fifteen young people who are part of its Eco Youth Movement participated in the Prithvi Parivar youth gathering organised by the Commission for Ecology of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) held from 30th September-2nd October in Hyderabad, Telangana
- The AOE held sessions of the Certificate Course for Eco Ambassadors - 2023 every Sunday from 8th October to 5th November

The AOE has conducted the following in-person and online sessions on request:

- *Green Schools* by Fr Luke at Loyola High School, Pune on 13th and 14th June for the faculty and support staff of three High Schools in Pune
- *Integral Ecology* by Fr Luke at Wadala on 28th June for the Principals and Superiors of the Salesian Sisters
- A session for the confirmation batch at St Anthony Church, Vakola on 20th August 2023 about awareness of the current situation of the environment and eco-spirituality by Br Joshua D'Souza
- *Women and Environment* by Ms Shawna Nemesia Rebello at Borivali on 20th August as part of the Women's Leadership Training Programme conducted by the Women's Commission of the Archdiocese of Bombay
- *Laudato Si' Goals – From Crisis to Action* by Ms Shawna for the second year philosophy seminarians at Goregaon on 25th August
- *The Bible and Ecology* by Fr Luke at Bandra on 9th September for a group of lay participants
- A session for the confirmation batch at St John the Baptist Church, Thane on 17th September on general awareness of the current ecological crisis and the Laudato Si' Goals by Br Joshua
- An Ecology Retreat by Fr Luke for the Holy Cross Fathers at Shillong from 25th to 30th October

Here's what the 2023 batch of the Certificate Course for Eco Ambassadors answered to ALL I WANT FOR A GREEN CHRISTMAS IS...

Streets with only bicycles and walkers, humans living in harmony with animals & birds, never ending forests and no concrete - **Denize Anklesaria**

Like the parable of the talents, let each one of us strive to make our green planet a GREENER planet. This is my GREEN CHRISTMAS wish - **Genevieve Martins**

That each and every citizen of this planet irrespective of beliefs be the best care-takers the planet has ever seen to handover the world to the next generations in the best possible condition - **Jeffrin Rodrigues**

That everyone should be as mindful of one's actions and thoughts as possible and be sensitive and caring of the environment - **Patricia Rodrigues**

My beautiful hope for Christmas! Working towards a sustainable and thriving world. We will make the much needed change in our small little ways - **Alfred Nogueira**

Everyone plants one tree this Christmas and makes our home "EARTH" green, so every creature God created may live in green forever - **Florine Fernandes**

This year is that we may welcome the Eternal WORD with a high Air Quality Index and Canopies of Natural Christmas trees; May He teach us to understand the subtle languages of other species in the biosphere, (as St Francis of Assisi did) thus enabling a more humble communication among ourselves and with Mother Earth after COP28
- **Sr Daphne Furtado rscj**

Sustainable joy, where nature thrives, renewable gifts, mindful feasting, wrapped up in recyclable warmth and twinkling with eco-cheer lighting, cherishing our shared planet's future for a brighter tomorrow - **Marie Misquitta**

To Buy less: Some holiday gifts fill a practical need and need to be bought new... Buy smart: think 'green'... Lower the impact of holiday lighting... Choose a live tree... Make homemade cards... Find alternatives to wrapping paper... Reuse/recycle - **George D'Mello**

A world like the stable that Jesus Christ was born in, in harmony with the animals around him
- **Andrew Williams**

For all to
Glorify our Saviour by
Renewing and
Ennobling an
Evergreen
Nativity
of our virgin Mother Earth again
- **Milind Murzello**

To become a green star radiating the never ending love of Christ without envy making this land a better and brighter one to live in
- **Maryanne Miranda**

To be Recharged with His Spirit and may more people join the chorus that sings "Less is More"
- **Gwyneth Rasquinha**

This Christmas I'd like the Earth to be green, the air to be clean and the sky to be blue, all the year through
- **Dorothy DeSouza**

ALL ARE GREEN IN THOUGHT & DEED,
FOR EACH AND EVERY NEED - I PLEAD
- **Jill Forte**

A world that **CARES** unconditionally, with no strings attached (no offsets) for both the living and non -iving and especially the poor and thereby fulfil our Creator's 1st command of us being stewards of the earth Gen 2:15 - **Felix D'souza**

A conscious effort to make a change in my thoughts and deeds - **Natasha Desa**



AOE ECO YOUTH CAMP AT MAHAD

Leann Dsouza | Holy Cross, Kurla

Jovita Fernandes | Our Lady of Salvation, Dadar West



An Eco Youth Camp organised by the AOE took place over the weekend of 6th-7th May 2023. Fifty youth participated in the camp, accompanied by Bishop Allwyn D'Silva and Fr Sunil Godinho.

At Mahad, Fr Praveen D'Souza, priest-in-charge at Mahad, provided insights into the history and geography of Mahad, the mission work there, and the recent floods that affected the area. Through an icebreaker activity led by Leander Viegas, we got to know each other better. After having a very tasty meal cooked by local tribals, we proceeded to the main campsite - the eco-farm, which spans an impressive 45 acres. Its remarkable features include a flowing river, a crocodile-inhabited pond, 1500 mango trees, cows providing 70 litres of milk daily, as well as chickens and goats. The biodiversity on the farm was awesome and we enjoyed the serenity of the place.

On the occasion of his 75th birthday, Bishop Allwyn donated and blessed a statue of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, setting it up in the centre of the *Laudato Si'* garden at the farm. Bishop Allwyn invited the youth to embrace his vision of environmental stewardship. He emphasised the power of individual actions and how these can collectively create a substantial impact on the environment. In the evening, we engaged in creative group activities, resulting in captivating presentations that caught everyone's attention. A team of generous volunteers prepared a delicious dinner of fried chicken, paneer, dal and rice using firewood. This experience tested our time management and cooking skills.

The following morning, we gathered amidst the beauty of nature to celebrate Mass. Sr Bridget Viji ACI gave us a thought-provoking talk on the seven *Laudato Si'* goals and encouraged us to make these our personal goals to save nature. Each group then embarked on our assigned farm duties, including weeding, picking up stones, and filling mud around the mango trees. The camp concluded with a meaningful reflection session wherein we put forth a range of ideas about the policy changes our country and city require, as well as explored career opportunities within the green economy.

Despite the hot weather, our enthusiasm remained unwavering. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Astrid Lobo and the vibrant AOE Eco Youth team, the trip was a resounding success.



AOE SEASON OF CREATION GATHERING 2023

Br Joshua D'Souza | St Pius X Seminary, Goregaon



The AOE organised a gathering to initiate the Season of Creation in our Archdiocese on 3rd September 2023 at the Seva Kendra Hall, Dadar. The event, attended by around 100 people, commenced with a welcome greeting and an ice breaker session conducted by Ms Astrid Lobo (AOE Eco Youth – Lead) and the vibrant emcee Ms Shalveeta Pereira, followed by an action song on *Laudato Si'*.

A short prayer service was conducted by Br Joshua D'Souza, after which Bp Allwyn D'Silva (Bishop In-charge – AOE) addressed the audience on the 2023 Season of Creation theme – *Let Justice and Peace Flow*. He highlighted the importance of caring for our common home and invited the participants to share their suggestions on taking the ecological movement forward in the Archdiocese of Bombay. Our chief guests Mr Ishwar and Ms Penny Bajaj were then felicitated, the latter encouraging all participants to continue their good work of caring for the environment. Ms Naomi Gonsalves then conducted an enjoyable interactive game, testing our knowledge of environmental concepts.

In the next half of the gathering, Mr Jocelyn Dsouza and his team spoke about their experiences from the recently conducted World Youth Day at Lisbon, Portugal. He shared his learning on the Economy of Francesco, energy resources, waste management, urban farming, and being a part of God's creation. Finally, Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ (Head – AOE) addressed the participants, urging us to continue our ongoing efforts towards a Green Diocese. The AOE extends its gratitude to the Salvation Green Cell members, the Eco Youth team and all those who made the event a success.

ACROSS THE OCEAN...



We are happy to inform that the AOE production "LAUDATO SI' - The Song" has been making waves across the oceans. Recently, Catholic Earthcare (Australia) organised a Season of Creation programme in Sandhurst Diocese's Whipstick Forest. Here is a line from their report: **"Mass concluded with a lively rendition of 'Laudato Si' – The Song' (from the Archdiocese of Mumbai) which was a highlight with all present enthusiastically joining in the chorus."**

Way to go, AOE...!

OLVC GREEN CELL ACTIVITIES

Annie Gomez - Eco Ambassador | Our Lady of the Visitation, Nerul



During the Season of Creation, the Green Cell of Our Lady of the Visitation Church, Nerul organised a Eucharistic adoration themed on Creation on 15th September, with Fr Prem Arokia as the main celebrant. The adoration created a spiritually uplifting atmosphere while encouraging the congregation to practice sustainable activities. The primary objective of the adoration was to foster a deep and lasting connection with the Divine and with creation.

An e-waste collection drive was held in October 2023 to address the growing problem of electronic waste. Thanks to the active participation of parishioners, the Green Cell collected around 100 kg of electronic waste including computers, smartphones, and peripherals. The event was organised in collaboration with the Nerul Rotary Club and Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation. This initiative not only facilitated the responsible disposal of electronic waste but also raised awareness about the environmental impact of improper e-waste management.



The OLVC Green Cell also organised a stall showcasing saplings and eco-friendly products on Mission Sunday. The stall offered a diverse range of saplings, including indoor plants, succulents and plants known for their environmental benefits. Information cards provided details on each species, educating visitors about their specific ecological contributions. The stall also showcased an array of sustainable alternatives, such as vermicompost, organic plant vitalisers and bio-enzyme. The event served as a platform to connect with the local community and raise awareness about adopting sustainable practices in daily life.





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AMAZON



A YEAR OF GOING GREENER!

Adele Godinho & Joseph Moraes - Eco Ambassadors |
Holy Family, Andheri East (Chakala)



The Certificate Course for Eco Ambassadors in 2022 helped a group of individuals - the Ecopals - from Holy Family Church, Andheri, comprehend the impending threat to the Earth caused by global warming and climate change. Beginning with a group of just ten parishioners, we set out on a journey, taking small steps towards our goal of helping people understand the need for responsible consumption by being the stewards we're created to be. With a curiosity about our surroundings and keeping in mind two of Pope Francis' appeals - 'the cry of the Earth' and 'the cry of the poor' in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, we initiated two major conservation projects on the parish level, i.e., biodiversity management and the dry waste management programme.

Though our parish has been blessed with a good green base, not much was known of their variety and value. That's when we decided to undertake a study of the biodiversity at Holy Family Church. The first phase involved understanding all the trees on our campus. With the help of a few naturalists, the team spent days measuring the DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) and identifying the trees based on the bark, leaves, flowers and fruits. We were surprised that there are 40+ different species and 150+ trees on our campus, without including the ornamental, flowering plants, shrubs and creepers. We recorded this data in a specific format and put it up on the church website. Additionally, we had tree tags affixed on each tree providing specific information with a linked QR code which could be scanned for further details. This achievement further enthused the team to make it more interactive by directly engaging with the parishioners through Tree Walks. The first Tree Walk was on 3rd September, the first Sunday of the Season of Creation 2023. We had an excellent response with approximately 150 parishioners participating after the morning masses. The website, tree labels and the Tree Walk have generated a lot of interest among parishioners towards trees and nature at large. Our next plan is to curate a specific tree walk for our Jesus Fan Club (Sunday School children) with exciting hands-on activities.

Besides this, we initiated the parish-level dry waste management programme coordinating with NGOs that recycle dry waste in an appropriate manner. A successful e-waste collection drive was also executed and although we began by accepting only plastic and Tetra Pak waste, we are now accepting all kinds of dry waste and have even begun collection of dry waste from individual households. Moreover, we firmly believe that planting seeds of awareness, irrespective of size, will sprout and turn into a fruitful tree in due course of time. We, therefore, organised educational games for children at the Summer Fun Club; Sunday school sessions on the 3Rs, food wastage and electricity wastage for children of classes 1-10; a workshop on making Christmas decorations out of waste for the primary students; nature walks and various other workshops on microgreens, kitchen gardening and dry and wet waste management for all. We've designed an area on the campus called the Ecozone with information on herbs, birds, types of plastic, etc.

Furthermore, we've worked towards including people of all ages by seeking spirituality in nature especially through the liturgy on occasions like the World Environment Day, World Water Day, Earth Day, etc. We invited RuR to organise a workshop, primarily for housewives and the elderly. We celebrated Children's Day by inaugurating a large hopscotch patch within the Ecozone. We also had a blessing of pets on our church premises where pet owners and their pets were welcomed for a fun-filled evening. All in all, we're now a group of twenty parishioners striving to move on to level two, helping a wider audience be aware of, and take on their duty of responsible stewardship towards all of Creation.

ECO TOGETHER

Pauline Fernandes - Eco Ambassador & Elvira Alvares | Our Lady of Lourdes, Malad West (Orlem)

In Orlem there is an RMC plant operating amidst many housing societies, spewing out cement dust and critically affecting the health of citizens. The Environmental Cell of Orlem (ECO) rose to the occasion and started a signature campaign, gathered over 8,000 signatures, and submitted this to the various concerned authorities. Additionally, to further help deal with the rising dust pollution, we distributed various types of flowering, evergreen, air-purifying plants and fruit trees. All the plants and trees were taken by our parishioners leaving us with requests for more. ECO's endeavours to care for Mother Earth continued with a weekend campaign comprising a Beach clean-up and Tree-plantation to celebrate the Season of Creation. After a time of prayer in the Church of Our Lady of the Sea, 60 volunteers set off towards Erangal Beach for a clean-up activity. The group then planted 58 saplings and ended the event with a time for fellowship in St Bonaventure's quadrangle. The ECO team then passed on the baton of environmental service to our neighbouring parish to keep the momentum going.



CELEBRATING CREATION

Belinda Lopes - Eco Ambassador | St John the Baptist, Thane



The Eco Club of St John the Baptist Church, Thane, spearheaded the celebration of the Season of Creation in the parish with the Holy Half-Hour on 1st September. A dry waste collection of old religious articles, old clothes and plastic items was then organised on the 16th and 17th September. An upcycling exhibition-cum-sale "MYSTIC DIY" was held at the auditorium, in collaboration with the Sunday School on 24th September. The children along with their respective class teachers portrayed beautiful posters aimed to raise awareness on upcycling, waste recycling and the efficient use of resources. Children also made articles like coasters, wind chimes, bowls and baskets of newspapers, bird feeders made from plastic bottles or with coconut shells, coloured paper dolls, moving vehicles and musical instruments of paper rolls, created their own indoor games, and wall hangings. All these articles, including the previously collected religious articles, books, and clothes, were sold at a very minimal rate at the exhibition. To end the Season of Creation, Rosary was recited at the grotto of St Francis the Assisi on 4th October.

REUSE 2 REJUVENATE

George D'Mello | Our Lady of Salvation, Dadar West

In December, the Salvation Green Cell organised 'Reuse 2 Rejuvenate' where parishioners were requested to bring in any unused items that were in good condition. The slogan was 'Give your items a second chance'. Parishioners were very excited to bring in clothes, household items, books, toys, shoes, etc. Around fifteen boxes full of items were collected and ready for display, and almost all were picked up for free. The excitement and enthusiasm felt by the entire parish was indeed heartwarming.



In addition to this, the Salvation Green Cell has been organising a number of eco activities in the Parish. We have regular cleanliness drives in the area, promote tree plantation, and conduct prayer services on the theme of caring for creation. Most enjoyable of all is the gardening that we do in the parish campus every Saturday.

Inspired by one of the Green Beatitudes shared by Fr Leon Cruz during his homily after a session of the Certificate Course for Eco Ambassadors in October, **Gwyneth Rasquinha** shares a visual created for the Salvation Green Cell:



Blessed are ...

those who use public transport,
cycle and walk, thus ensuring
minimal carbon foot prints.



Issued in public interest.

Salvation Green Cell
Our Lady of Savation Church, Dadar

PRESTIGIOUS AWARD TO THE ECO WARRIORS OF ST CATHERINE OF SIENA SCHOOL



Monica Fernandes | St Andrew, Bandra West

Hearty congratulations to the staff and students of St Catherine of Siena School and Orphanage, Mount Mary, Bandra for winning fourth place in the 'Wear My Shoes 2023' Award. St Catherine is the first school in India to win this international environmental award supported by Arigatou International, UNICEF and others. Fifty schools from around the world participated and winning against such competition is very commendable.

A 'Children's Huddle' was organised at Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai on 18th November to felicitate the school and give a platform to all the participating schools from India to convey their message through visuals and dance performances. The audience was regaled by a flute performance as well. Khadija Bakar of St Catherine's gave an impassioned speech on saving the environment followed by a choir recital by its students. Archbishop Felix Machado and Ms Rebecca KKS Kohn of Arigatou International gave out the certificates to trustees Ms Patricia Furtado and Br Joseph Sebastian, and to the headmistress Ms Lizelle Pereira.

The Eco Warriors of St Catherine of Siena School won the award is because of their untiring efforts to clean up Bandstand and the Bandra Promenade. St Catherine of Siena School, Bandra spearheaded the ninth eco-cleanliness drive on the Bandra promenade and Bandstand on 2nd October. Various schools and organisations joined hands with them. The slogan of the group was "Follow the Mahatma for a Clean Bandra." The enthusiasm of the kids was impressive - they scrambled down the steps onto the rocks to do their good deed of picking up the trash so thoughtlessly thrown by others. The reason for their commitment was expressed succinctly by a youngster who said, "I want to save the planet."





JAN KALYAN OUTREACH

Reynold D'souza - Eco Ambassador

In May 2023, the Central line ecology group of MAGIS conducted an outreach program for the tribal children and youths at the Jan Vikas Kendra in Khopoli Village along with the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod.

We conducted sessions for around 60 participants, taking up topics such as waste management while also highlighting the evils of child labour and child marriage. Through games and different activities, we helped them identify dry and wet waste and also brought home the importance of conserving natural resources.



SHIFT TO THRIFT

Genevieve Martins | St Peter, Bandra West

The 'Care for Creation' cell of St Peter's Parish, Bandra showcased a unique bazaar entitled SHIFT TO THRIFT which reinforced their mantra of Reduce-Reuse-Recycle. Twenty exhibitors came on board with items that could be reused, scraps of cloth which were ingeniously turned into bags and runners as also papier-mâché Christmas tree hangings.

The purpose was to create an awareness among people of the need to follow the maxim "Less is more". The entrance to the Church was lined with posters depicting various ways we can care for our environment by converting used items such as our old bottles into something useful instead of sending them to the landfills. There was also a colouring event for the children, "Show and Tell" related to segregation of waste. Thirty-six kids were able to describe what they were colouring.

The highlight of the event was a personal encounter with Odette Katak, co-founder of 'Beautiful Bharat' who addressed the audience and read out her poem – *Less is More*. We also had live demos by D-ERT who showed us how palm fronds, branches etc. can be shredded. A solar panel expert was also available to share his expertise.

This was the start of an ongoing sustainability Campaign in the parish and we are eager to take it to greater heights.

SUPPORTING MOTHER EARTH

Melville X D'Souza | Our Lady of Lourdes, Malad West (Orlem)

Recently, I came across a news item in a Goa newspaper, *The Herald*, titled, 'Earth Our Common Home'. It was an initiative undertaken by the Chicalim Youth Farmers Club in collaboration with the Diocesan Commission for Ecology, Goa. There were various activities to commemorate Earth Day, raise environmental awareness, and pledge support to protect Mother Earth. Such initiatives need to be appreciated.

All such awareness programmes are good, but much more action is needed at the ground level. It is up to each and every one of us to take the initiative by planting trees, protecting the mangroves, recycling waste, etc. Surely, our small little steps can lead to a larger picture, to the protection of the Earth, 'Our Common Home'!

A song comes to mind at this moment, 'It all begins with You!' Just one verse is reproduced below:

*There's something 'bout the morning sun, a day's begun anew
Reminds me to appreciate the mystery of you
To see a bird soar in the sky I've often wondered why
We take so much for granted, we're too blind to see the view.*

For far too long we have been taking things for granted; it's time we gave something back to Mother Earth! Are we willing?



LET'S SAVE OUR PRECIOUS EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Sharmeela de Vas | St Peter, Bandra West

Planet Earth is in a dreadful crisis. Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio is rightly obsessed with the subject of climate change and has even made a documentary 'Before The Flood', made for National Geographic on the dangers of climate change on Planet Earth.

Beautiful trees are being felled, glaciers are melting and green parks are giving way to shopping malls and car parks. Fortunately, environment activists have protested constantly against this alarming trend and have made their mark in certain cases like Patwardhan Park and Sadhu Vaswani Park, which were being hijacked for car parks but have been stalled for the time being with the upcoming elections.

Water is becoming an increasingly scarce resource and there will come a time when salty seawater will have to be desalinated to produce potable water. Rainwater harvesting and various other methods of salvaging water sources will have to be sought. Air pollution has reached such alarming levels that Mumbai is becoming another Delhi... and that's a frightful prospect. Greater use of electric vehicles and solar energy panels is a way of promoting clean energy alternatives. Piped gas is also a safer and possibly cheaper option for cooking and is used in most new and redeveloped constructions.

In metros such as ours, sanitation and waste removal has become quite a challenge. We citizens must have a better civic sense in disposal of our dry and wet garbage. Finally, it is up to us citizens to be more responsible in caring for our environment.

SOME ECO FRIENDLY TIPS

Rebecca Lewis | St Ignatius of Loyola, Vasai

- Avoid fast fashion, it is one of the highest contributors of carbon footprint
- Initiate and participate in plastic collection drives in your community or tie up with plastic recycling NGOs
- Utilise polythene bags from your homes as dustbin liners, rather than buying dustbin bags
- Carry your own water bottle and carry bags when travelling, these always come handy
- Use sustainable menstrual options like menstrual cups / cloth pads
- Avoid plastic crockery; opt for greener options like paper / sugarcane / bamboo / coconut coir crockery
- Choose local transportation when commuting



I'M DREAMING OF A GREEN CHRISTMAS...

Rudyard Gomes | St Anthony, Malwani, Malad

During the festive season the air is filled with excitement – the shopping list is endless! At this exciting time, my mind has been racing feverishly: 'Buy less. Buy smart. Think green'. What if we could all experience a green Christmas?

No, I haven't gone nutty...while singing Jim Reeves' song, 'I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas', I automatically went into lyric change mode and started replacing 'white' with 'green'! I envisaged what a huge difference that would make. That said and done, the lyrics seemed contrived, but you know where I'm heading... thoughts of making Christmas a lot kinder to our planet, without cutting down on the fun and excitement! So, here's sharing my two bits on how this could really happen.

No more fake Christmas trees... Let's get the actual Christmas tree, roots and all. At the end of the season, the tree could be re-potted into a bigger pot and ultimately find a suitable place in the garden, which can be decorated there the following year. This comes from my personal experience - when I first bought my real, live Christmas tree, it used to be decorated and placed on my centre table. The next year as it grew bigger, it found a place between the settee and chairs. And still larger, it was placed on my veranda, and finally planted in my garden. Today it occupies a place of pride in my garden and looks ever so beautiful when decorated with fairy lights!

Gifts could be practical...how about a 'TIME CHEQUE' to a family who has an older person? Offer an hour of sit-down TIME, to read to the senior person, or just chat, or take them for a stroll in their garden/complex. Help them on a shopping trip. Or maybe help out with a specially-abled child, a visually impaired person, a migrant, an orphan...Invaluable! One would definitely see the face of baby Jesus and experience inner joy. Or gift tickets to an event/activity. Gift potted plants to encourage the environment-friendly concept. The list could be endless....

For home décor - reuse fancy alcohol bottles as candle holders fitted with fairy lights inside the bottle. Or create a reindeer from thick, colourful fabric pieces, cut out shapes like snowflakes and bells from old cards and enhance with straw or pieces of wood and paint them in bright colours. Maybe some DIY gift bags from pieces of old newspaper or calendars and add splashes of paint for aesthetic value? Pine cones, dried leaves, flowers and twigs, can be great décor strung together to make a streamer to hang in a doorway. There's no end to creativity! And what's more important is to motivate one's guests to join the eco-friendly spirit - so that their gifts will also be in tune with our planned move towards that green Christmas!

How can we make Christmas greener? Apart from the above suggestions, avoid single-use plastic items that cannot be recycled and look for organic-certified food and clothing for the family. Vintage clothes and home furnishings, and refurbished technology can make great sustainable gifts.

Amidst all this, please don't forget:
Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat,
Please drop a penny in the old man's hat!
Charity brings down immeasurable blessings!

A SEA OF CLEAN AND GREEN FORE'ER

Sharmeela de Vas | St Peter, Bandra West

Banners galore at Patwardhan Park
No to Car Parks, Yes to Green Trees, Flora and Clean Energy
Children Playing Cricket and Running Around,
Senior Citizens Walking n Talking with Gay Abandon...
Metro exit near Sadhu Vaswani Park
Alas, Oxygen-filled Walks, Green Beauty Fore'er...
Amidst the Hustle and Bustle of Aamchi Mumbai!

Green is the language of Peace, Tranquility n Harmony
Am sure you all will readily agree...
Land o'er the Sea May Be Reclaimed
And the Mangroves May Gradually Disappear
But the Gulmohar Avenues will Persist
And the Aarey Forest will Most Definitely Endure
Say the Environment Activists, The Thackerays,
You and Me in Aamchi Mumbai...

Bandra indeed is the Queen of the Suburbs
With Carter Road and Bandstand Promenades,
Jogger's Park, Prof. Almeida Park and Guru Nanak Park;
Are our Pride, Luxurious Verdure and Cynosure of All Eyes,
With the Air Quality and Pollution at Par with Delhi
Pray May Our Green Cover Remain Fore'er...





Wishing you all a
Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year



Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ, the
Laudato Si' Diocese Team, and
all green lovers in the Archdiocese of Bombay





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