

December 2021  
Vol 08 | Issue 3

# green

God's call to Renew and Energise Earth & Nature





# Preparing a way

**04** Editor's  
Note

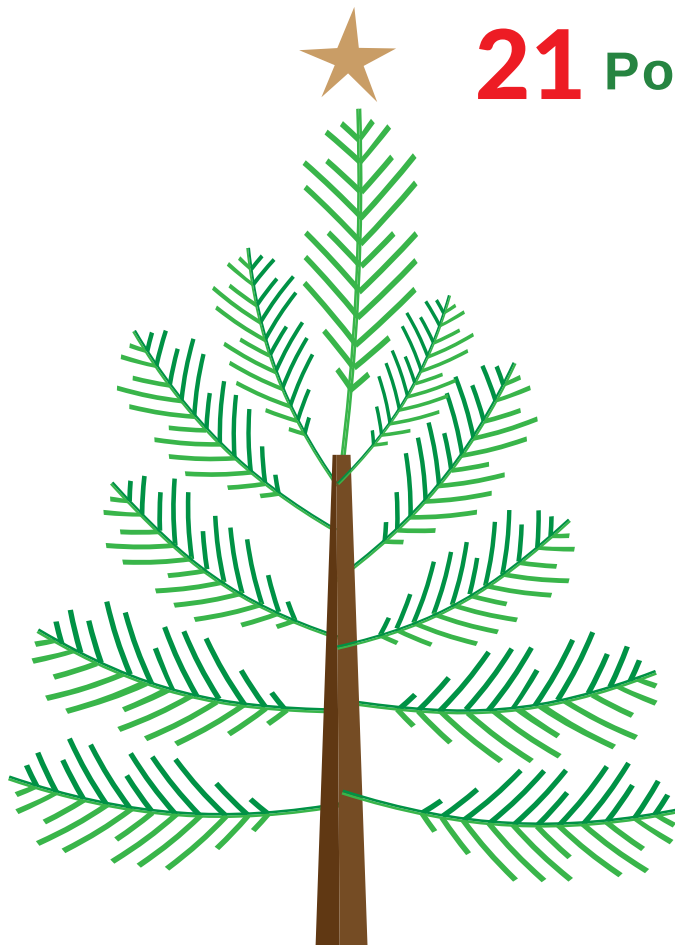
**05** AOE  
Diary

**06** Preparing a  
way

**11** Diocese  
Diary

**18** Articles

**21** Poems





## Bishop Allwyn D'Silva

Bishop In-Charge

Archdiocesan Office for Environment

Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay

Chairperson – Commission for Ecology  
Conference of Catholic Bishops of India

Christmas is a time of coming together, of putting aside our myriad differences in order to commune. This is evident at the manger - where else have we ever heard of a couple of limited means with a new baby, domestic livestock, “blue-collar” shepherds, and three kings coming together in a stable? Angels and an unusual star were there too. At that glorious moment, the Divine, the mortal, creature and Creation were all gathered together – participants at the exact time in history when redemption was set in motion!

One glimpse at the baby, and the shepherds' ordinary humdrum routine became one of joyous, expectant hope. Thus, Christmas is a time of transformative encounter. It provides an impetus to cast away fear, prejudice and pride; and to truly listen to, and discern the message of God. Once we have discerned, we obey. Heeding the angel, Joseph moved his family to safety in Egypt. The Magi went a different way, no longer adhering to Herod's old instructions. The birth of Jesus signifies the beginning of his mission of evangelisation – a mission that continues over two thousand years later.

Just like Christmas, the ongoing [Synod on Synodality](#) (October 2021 to October 2023) is on the theme Communion, Participation and Mission, characterised by Encounter, Listen and Discern for the life and mission of the Church. It enables us all to “walk together” in the direction God wants us to take. To discern God's purpose for us in this time, we ought to listen with our hearts not only to people alone, but also to the cry of the Earth. We need to truly encounter the people (particularly the poor and the young) as well as the Creation that share our common home. In this, we will discern the voice of the Creator.

This Christmas, may we begin to discover a new way of being Church through our response to God's call embedded in the cry of the Earth.





## EDITOR'S NOTE

We know well how the Incarnation came about. God, in his infinite mercy, decided to redeem us through his only child. Despite our sins, we remain precious to our Lord, having been formed carefully in the palms of his hand. God prepared Mary by sending the angel Gabriel, whose purpose was to inform her that she would conceive. An angel was sent to Joseph, preparing him to honour the betrothal and protect his new family. Mary and Joseph braved through a difficult journey, finding shelter in an inn to prepare for Jesus' birth. The purpose of the Star of Bethlehem (featured on the cover page) was to direct the Magi to the Christ Child. The Magi, transformed by their encounter with the Word made flesh, found their purpose and went a different way.

Then and now, Christmas remains the perfect time to blend introspection and action. Soon, it'll also be a new year with new beginnings and new resolutions. In this edition therefore, we focus on purpose – preparing the way – for our own encounter with Christ, for discovering our purpose as stewards of God's Creation, for a better tomorrow.

At the Archdiocesan Office for Environment, we've been preparing for our journey as a Laudato Si' Diocese – enrolling on the Laudato Si' Action Platform (LSAP) in November 2021. Our discernment process has been put together in an outcome document which will be disseminated in the new year. Read more about what we have been doing in our AOE Diary on the next page. We also warmly welcome Naomi Gonsalves to the Editorial Team for layout and design. You'll notice this issue looks different, and perhaps she's preparing to give GREEN a whole new avatar next year! So do get on to our mailing list through the [form linked here](#).

In line with our theme, we feature your ecological purpose and methods for preparing a better tomorrow. We have an interesting article from overseas about baby Jesus' climate change preaching(!), one on not blaming God, and one on how balcony gardens can help us heal from grief. There's a poem on merry times, and hear the whispers of a dried leaf in another!

We feature a wide variety of initiatives across the Archdiocese of Bombay in our Diocese Diary – from waste management and recycling, to a trek, shroud burial, bicycling, upcycled cribs and gifting with kindness. Each effort in itself may not create a big impact, but collectively, our individual actions keep adding up while also inspiring others to do their part. May we continue to do the best we can, knowing that our acts of caring for the earth are aligned with the purpose God has for us.

We hope you have a lovely and safe Christmas. Despite these trying times, may we all find hope and peace, for unto us a child is born!

The Editorial Team

Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ

*Head, Archdiocesan Office for Environment*

Naomi Gonsalves

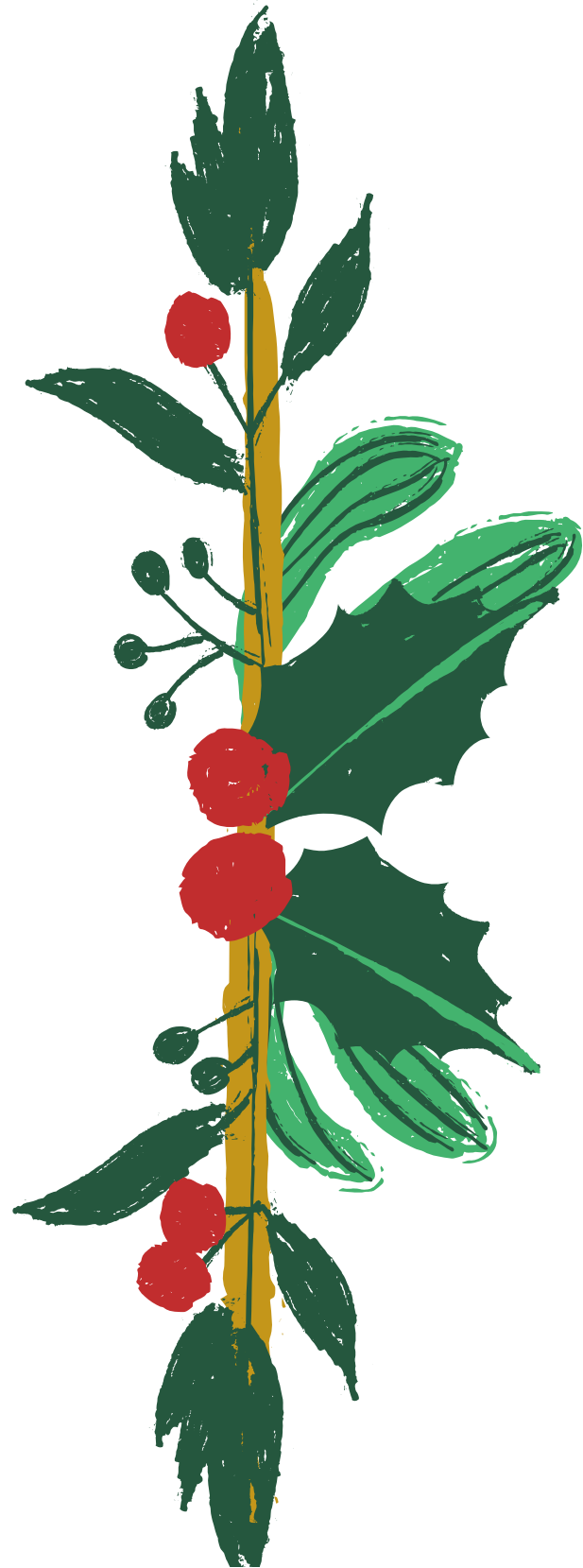
Shawna Nemesia Rebello



## AOE DIARY

- Thanks to our vibrant Eco Youth team, we're now on [Instagram](#) and have a new [YouTube](#) channel; so do follow us and subscribe!
- Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ conducted the following online and in-person sessions:
  - *Integral Ecology* for Vedruna Sisters on 26th September
  - *The Catholic Church and Ecology* for the Basics of Inter-Religious Dialogue (BIRD) group on 3rd October
  - *Towards a Laudato Si' Diocese / Parish* at the Bandra Deanery meeting on 14th October
  - *Laudato Si' Action Platform* for seminarians at St Pius X College on 3rd December
  - *Ecospirituality* for the Women's Desk, Goa on 8th and 10th December
  - *Pope Francis and Ecology* for the Deepen Your Faith course on 18th December
- We continued our discernment process with a meeting on 17th October as part of the Archdiocese of Bombay's journey as a Laudato Si' Diocese through the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) (LSAP) and enrolled on the platform on 16th November
- Online sessions for our Certificate Course for Eco Ambassadors - 2021 were held on 23rd, 24th, 30th and 31st October
- We released our Eco Advent December 2021 calendar on 24th November – hope you've seen it
- Our Eco Youth Engagement Programme continued with a trek and terrarium workshop on 27th September – read all about it on page 12

We hope you've taken note of our new email [ecoteam@aoebombay.org](mailto:ecoteam@aoebombay.org) and do **get back on our mailing list by filling the [form linked here!](#)**



# Preparing a way

As we prepare our hearts to worship Christ this Christmas, may we also prepare to restore our relationships with each other and with Creation - rediscovering our life's purpose.





# PURPOSE THROUGH ECOLOGICAL SERVICE

Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ | Head - Archdiocesan Office for Environment

In his Spiritual Exercises, St Ignatius of Loyola reminds us that the purpose of human life is *to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and thus attain salvation* (#23). He urges us to keep this purpose firmly in mind as we journey through life, employing all the means at our disposal to move in the desired direction.

All of us would agree with the ultimate purpose of life as mentioned above, but we also need to spell out the practical implications of this. What exactly does it mean to praise, reverence and serve God? How can this be best expressed in our current age?

Down the centuries, the Church has offered various guidelines and indications regarding the type of service we must render. We learned that we cannot attain salvation alone. We are saved as a community and service of the needy is recognised as the clearest way to serve God. In the context of the situation today, this concept of service has been expanded to include care for creation. Indeed, Pope Francis affirms that the earth must today be counted amongst the poorest of the poor, and to care for her is an authentic expression of praising and serving God.

It is heartening to note then that the different ecological initiatives we undertake fit in within the larger purpose of our lives. Our efforts to care for creation are all part of our service to the Creator. At Christmas time, we celebrate the great mystery of God sharing our human life and our common home. This is not a one-time event. He ever comes to be with us. We normally prepare our hearts to receive him. Perhaps, we could also think of renewing our common home in order to make it a more fitting place for him to dwell.



# HOW DO WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW?

We asked, you answered -

- Study the relationship that we have with the natural world in order to better engage with the environment
- Move from a provider-consumer relationship to one which recognises our interdependence
- Use faith and reason to make positive choices in our lifestyles, in how our economies are run, and in building a true global solidarity necessary to avert the climate crisis
- Be inspired by stories of hope all around - the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa ([CYNESA](#)) engages in urgent ecological issues and raise their voices globally against climate change; the [Laudato Si' Movement](#) trains animators to make an ecological difference in their parishes and neighbourhoods; the leadership of Pope Francis keeps eco-issues at the centre of public discourse and urges us to get involved!

**Belinda Tharakan | Our Lady of the Assumption, Kandivli West**

- Small steps of Awareness and Action on our part can catch the attention of others and lead to a change in their lifestyle as well
- Be dutiful and responsible citizens who take care of the environment, without giving in to apathy or waiting for the government to tackle the damage
- Live sustainably – grow our own veggies, segregate waste, adopt healthy living, use public transport, etc. (look up the Internet for a big list of ideas!)
- Harness social media to showcase our eco-works to inspire and be inspired

**Leander Pereira | Don Bosco Youth Services, Mumbai**

- Change our behaviour and habits through the mantra of Reduce – Reuse – Recycle
- Reduce: Stop purchasing impulsively and carelessly wasting water and electricity
- Reuse: Repurpose or give away unneeded items, opt for reusable alternatives
- Recycle: Segregate waste and hand over to authorised recyclers - this benefits the environment, creates jobs in the recycling industry and reduces the waste sent to landfills

**Sheryl Pereira | Our Lady of Lourdes, (Orlem) Malad West**

- Appreciate, rather than take for granted the sound of the ocean, gravity, the skies, the aroma of plants, sand, bees, chocolate, etc.
- Translate children's inherent love of the outdoors into a commitment to environmental stewardship by showing them nearby oceans, rivers, forests, or waterways and how poorly managed these are
- Educate ourselves and act differently – use biodegradable bags or bring our own bags while shopping; take our own water bottle while travelling and say no to single use of plastic, straws, and food wrapped in plastic; separate plastic from the biodegradable garbage bin for easier recycling or reuse
- Think twice before buying something or throwing something out
- Treat each other and the earth with respect and dignity: our future is dependent on the planet for everything, from rain to food. Several people are working hard to shape the ocean and the world for creatures such as sand crabs, turtles, birds, and many more

**Nevil Pinto | ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Versova**

- Prioritise the small present moments in life and give your best today for the future to exist

**Stephanie Liban Cardoz | St Michael, Mahim**



# My purpose is...



To keep the ocean blue,  
the planet green and  
the animals safe.

- Alicia D'souza

To ensure that earth  
remains a place that is  
liveable and sustainable  
for the current and  
future generations to  
come.

- Allan Rodrigues

To plant as many trees  
as possible and recycle  
as much waste as  
possible.

- Rebecca Coutinho

To save, nurture and to  
lead a sustainable  
lifestyle keeping nature  
in mind and preserving  
it for the future.

- Earnest Thomas

To reduce my carbon  
footprint and serve  
nature with the same  
kindness it has treated  
me with.

- Kallis Nadar

To work and walk  
towards a better,  
healthier future.

- Christina Jacob

To make our  
surroundings more  
clean and more green.

- Olivia Couto

To make the earth more  
nature-led rather than  
human-led that will  
help to achieve  
sustainability.

- Olivia Crasto

To take care of the  
future best by taking  
care of the present  
now.

- Trevor Mascarenhas

To practise and spread  
awareness about the  
importance of  
sustainable living.

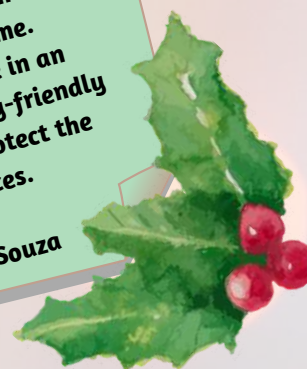
- Reynold D'Souza

To help provide a better  
future.

- Zenia D'souza

To protect the environment  
for all humanity and the  
generations to come.  
Therefore, to live in an  
environmentally-friendly  
manner and protect the  
earth's resources.

- Priyanka D'Souza



# My purpose is...

To switch to an eco-friendly lifestyle by bringing changes in my day to day habits.

- Prasibha Nadar

To contribute to fixing things in my little way.

- Natasha Fernandes

To make a difference and create a better place with all.

- Astrid Lobo

To ensure protection of the environment and promote grassroots democracy, social justice, and non-violence.

- Ria Keezhadath

To admire nature and learn a lot out of it.

- Crystal D'Souza

To increase greenery and bird population in my area, creating awareness, conducting workshops and so on.

- Chris Menezes

To perform simple environmental tasks that will simplify life for the generations to come.

- Leander Pereira

To sustain the environment as presented to us by our Maker for our future generations.

- Fr Clement De Lima

To ensure that our future is green and bright.

- Nelson Naik

To nurture and care for the environment as our mother nature needs love too.

- Honbrie Mendonca

To be more mindful about and stay in tune with nature.

- Ashita D'Almeida

*What is your purpose ?*







# AOE ECO YOUTH TREK AND TERRARIUM WORKSHOP

**Rochelle Serrao | St Joseph, Vikhroli**

I was always fascinated by the idea of connecting with nature and getting to know people. So, it was a dream come true when a day-long event was announced by the **Archdiocesan Office for Environment** as part of its Eco Youth Movement!

57 Youth from eight different Parishes trekked in the hills of Yeoor on 27th November 2021. Our guides - Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ, Fr Baptist Viegas, Fr Cliffy Fernandes and Fr Denvel Nunes - reminded us that God has beautifully created, and is present in everything that we see: every little creature, the plants, the hills... we experienced a sense of unity with creation.

The trek was followed by engaging and thought-provoking sessions by Fr Luke and Bishop Allwyn D'Silva at St John the Baptist, Thane. We understood that in order to save the environment, we need to be the ones taking serious steps, instead of sitting back and waiting for someone else to do it. The value of God's creation was acknowledged when we created terrariums. While creating our own mini-ecosystems, the realisation sank in that we neglect the universe that has been so carefully planned and designed by God.

We had our share of fun with the games and icebreakers conducted by the youth of Our Lady of Lourdes, Kalyan and St Pius the Tenth, Mulund. The day was well-spent as we were brought closer to nature and had a chance to relax our minds (stuck in busy routines) and our bodies (mostly confined indoors due to the pandemic). We understood that we belong to nature and we have to give back to it in every possible way.

## Participating Parishes:

### Thane Deanery

- St Joseph, Vikhroli
- St Pius the Tenth, Mulund
- St John the Baptist, Thane
- Our Lady of Mercy, Pokhran
- St Joseph, Mumbra
- Our Lady of Lourdes, Kalyan West

### Navi Mumbai Deanery

- St Theresa of the Child Jesus, Airoli
- St Francis Xavier, Panvel



**Youth group representatives are welcome to contact the AOE to co-create your green engagement programme!**





# MALWANI MELANGE

**Marcia Rodrigues, Rajiv Pereira and Rudyard Gomes**  
| St Anthony, Malwani

Three parishioners of St Anthony, Malwani (Malad West) share their inspirations:

**Marcia Rodrigues** presents her poster where the significance lies in the roots depicted. If the tree is beautiful and green, it is because we protected it and helped it grow, we were part of those roots that helped the tree stand strong. But if the tree is burnt and weak, it is because we didn't take care of it, we were those roots which were not strong. In order to remain strong, we all need to come together like those roots which help the tree to stand strong. If we don't, then those roots will grow weak and eventually the tree might fall apart.

**How can we intensify our preparations to work together and save our planet?**

As yet another variant sweeps across the globe, **Rajiv Pereira** revisits the **life lessons picked up from his home garden** during the lockdown: Each flower that blooms shows that there is hope. Our lives are not bleak, but colourful, and we need to spread joy and hope to brighten up the lives of others. When a flower dies, he isn't saddened as it will be one with the earth from where it originally came. The garden changes constantly, as do our lives; we need to adapt ourselves to constant change. Sometimes, we need doses of love and encouragement to fertilise our lives and make us better human beings. And, just like a plant needs water, let's not forget to water our dreams and ambitions with prayer; for life is nothing without the greatest Gardener – God, our Father.

Finally, **Rudyard Gomes** encourages us to take up **cycling as a commitment we can make to Mother Earth**. A study reveals that those who switch over just one trip per day from car driving to cycling, reduce their carbon footprint by about 0.5 tonnes over a year – a huge difference - and also allows us to travel in a socially-distant manner!



The cool news is that Mumbai has already awakened to the call – on 22nd September, World Car-Free Day, a bunch of city cyclists took to the road to urge the city to avoid using vehicles and switch to bicycles. The event was spearheaded by Mumbai Bicycle Mayor Firoza Suresh whose initiative has been relentlessly advocating for cycling as a primary mode of transport, safety for cyclists, cycling infrastructure for the city and more for over a year now.

Read more [here](#), and let's prepare to heal our world, starting with our local environment!





## ORLEM'S CRADLES OF KINDNESS

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



Many of us may have partaken in Crib and Star competitions hosted by parishes, putting in a great deal of effort to come up with different concepts each year. **Melville D'Souza** too loves doing this ... though not for the competition. His crib, star and tree are created out of scrap / waste / obsolete items, and of items found in nature - coconut shavings, sea shells, sticks taken out of discarded brooms, parts of coconut trees, packing material from cartons, discarded small pill containers, scrap wire and metal tubes, just about anything he can find!

Meanwhile this Advent, **Jean Fernandes** decided to prepare a green path for the coming of the little babe Jesus. She began collecting cardboard boxes (received during Diwali), paper bags which come with takeaways, beautiful glass bottles, tins, etc. She also looked for other discarded and unused articles at home - ribbons, old calendars, felt paper, glossy editions of newspapers and other knick-knacks; deciding to use these items to distribute Christmas sweets and thus reduce the use of foil-coated paper plates.

Christmas, however, isn't necessarily a joyful time – the pandemic has taken its toll and brought uncertainty, death, fear, pain, and suffering to many families, hitting the needy the hardest.

Jean decided to engage in daily small acts of kindness to bring a ray of hope to those around: lending a listening ear, reaching out to students, a kind word or doing that daunting chore at home with a smile. For the needy, she suggests fashioning hampers out of old cartons and cardboard boxes, filling them with items they need, while adding a warm Christmas touch, with a cut-out from an old Christmas card. Imagine one person touching just one life with a kind gesture, while reusing the material that is lying around.

Melville ponders on what the crib truly signifies: it isn't a piece of art to be appreciated but a manifestation of the true spirit of Christmas. So, could we help create a cradle for baby Jesus who wants to be born in our hearts? Reaching out to grieving families may enable Jesus to be born in their hearts too, bringing the comfort and peace only he can give.

Here's to a green and blessed Christmas and may we be kinder to each other and the planet!





## DRIVES OF THE RECYCLING KIND

**Rita D'Sa (Eco Ambassador) and Victor D'Mello (Eco Ambassador) | St Michael, Mahim**



With the active encouragement of parish priest Fr Lancy Pinto, parishioners of St Michael, Mahim continue their recycling drives. In November 2021, **37 kg** of **plastic bottles** and **single-use plastics** were collected and given to Bisleri for their [Bottles for Change](#) initiative. **105 kg** of **electronic waste** were handed over to [Threco](#) for recycling, while **1339 Tetra Pak cartons** were sent to [Sahakari Bhandar](#).

Parishioners also participated in a beach clean-up behind the Mahim Darga. They removed **350 kg** of **plastic** and other **debris**, saving all this from flowing into the Mithi river or the sea.



## RINSE-AIR-ROLL AKA HOW TO RECYCLE MILK BAGS

**Sujata Dsouza | Our Lady of Mercy, Pokhran**

Most of the 1.5 crore milk bags generated daily in Mumbai end up in landfills and choke water bodies. Under the *Care for Environment* scheme, we decided to take up milk bag recycling in the parish of Our Lady of Mercy, Pokhran.

The youth made a [YouTube](#) video to depict the need for recycling of used milk bags. The SCC then took it forward to the parishioners with the following instructions:

- Cut across the width of the bag. Do not snip off the corner
- Rinse the bag to remove residual milk
- Air dry the bag
- Roll up the bags together and secure them with a rubber band
- Store the bags and bring them to the church

Our parish collected **13 kg** in the month of October, and handed over the same to the [Milk Bag Project](#) team. The milk packets will be processed into plastic granules and used to make a variety of products.

To do your bit in managing plastic waste, contact [themilkbagproject@gmail.com](mailto:themilkbagproject@gmail.com).





## WASTE NOT

**Naomi Gonsalves | St John the Baptist, Thane**

Many of us are aware that most plastic ends up in landfills and in the oceans. But did you know that according to a United Nations study, the world produces more than 300 million tonnes of plastic waste every year? That's nearly equivalent to the weight of the entire human population - all 7.9 billion of us!

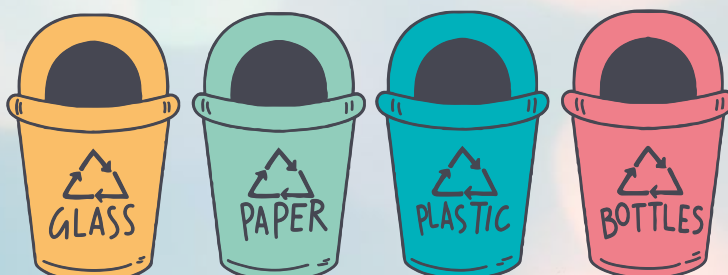
The parish of St John the Baptist, Thane decided to try and do our bit to make a difference and spread awareness by conducting a waste management drive in collaboration with [5RCycle Foundation](#) from 20th October to 14th November. We collected a whopping **971.6 kg of flexible plastic, rigid plastic, metal, paper, glass and electronic waste**. This will now be recycled by [Shakti Plastics](#), [Hulladek Recycling](#), [reCharkha](#) and other authorised recyclers. We hope to continue making a difference in whatever way possible.



## E-WASTE ENERGISES!

**Andrean Youth Group | St Andrew, Bandra West**

The Andrean youth, under the guidance of Fr Anthony Alphonso, recently organised an e-waste drive in the parish. We collected **299 kg of e-waste** and handed it over to [Threco](#) for recycling. This effort has energised us and we look forward to doing more to care for the Earth.





## 3S = SEGREGATE-SCOOP-SHROUD

Janet Dsouza and the Care for Creation Group |  
St Peter, Bandra West



We've all heard about the 3Rs so here's the 3S being advocated by the Care for Creation Group (CCG) at St Peter, Bandra:

**Segregate:** There are three labelled bins, one each for Tetra Pak cartons, E-Waste and Plastic in the church compound; and for those who have doubts segregating - worry not - the watchmen are there to guide! The CCG has tied up with different NGOs to collect segregated waste for reuse and recycling.

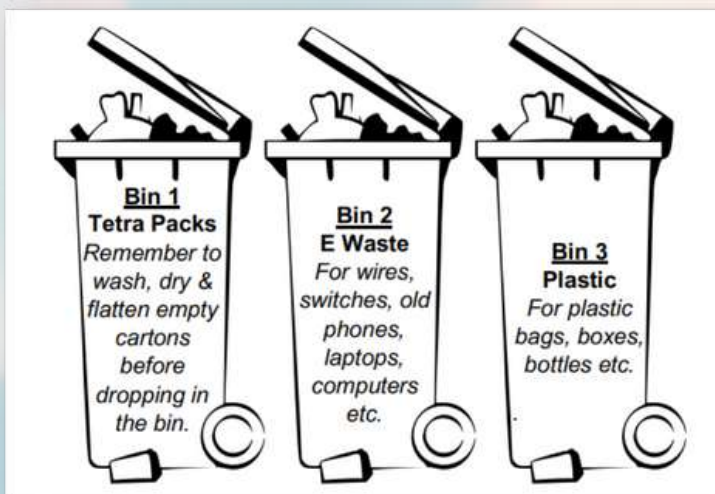
Parishioners are also encouraged to keep two bins at home for wet and dry waste. Putting in the effort to dispose correctly means that we help 'waste' transform into 'value' - compost, bricks and a host of recycled items!

**Scoop:** Your pet's No.2 is your No.1 responsibility. So demonstrate your love for your pets and your neighbourhood by scooping when they poop. Alternatively, opt for a biodegradable dog diaper which is clean, hygienic and not messy. Now that's a *PAWS for Thought!*

**Shroud:** The CCG and the Parish frequently advocate Shroud Burial, have circulated consent forms among families, and got undertakers to agree to offer this dignified option. By setting aside doubts and denials, and opting for a shroud, we don't just keep burials simple and eco-friendly, but follow in the very footsteps of Jesus Christ! So let's:

- Save trees and raw material... no coffin
- Avoid chemicals... no embalming
- Save space... quick decomposing

Take the pledge as a family. It is never too late to Save the Planet for our children!





# THE GOSPEL JESUS PREACHED ON CLIMATE CHANGE FROM THE MANGER

**Martin Nchedo Umeatuegbu | Port Harcourt, Nigeria**

Christmas celebrates that Jesus was born to redeem us. At the spot of his birth in Bethlehem, he makes a wonderful teaching without words (Luke 2:7; 2:16). This is the teaching of ecology - as a baby, Jesus teaches us about care for our environment! The manger itself is composed mainly of grass because it was meant for animals. Consequently, Christmas can be seen from an environmental perspective. This would later explain why Jesus often used parables that make references to agriculture.

In his choice of the manger, Jesus tells us three things. First, he echoes creation of the universe (Genesis 1:1), testifying that God saw that all he made was good (Genesis 1:31). Thus, everything in our environment was made for our well-being.

The second is to sanctify what has been created. Jesus urges us to use and not to abuse what God has created, for God is ever present as the Agent in Creation. It validates the four blessings given to humans by God (Genesis 1:28), as well as brings to light the healing power of herbs entrusted to the care of doctors (Sirach 38:1-15).

Thirdly, Jesus tells us to be mindful of how we use and misuse what is in nature. This is because of the symbiosis that exists in the ecosystem. Misuse of natural resources causes pollution and other negative effects. Pope Francis emphasises this by inviting us to handle the earth properly because as a mother, she is fertile (*Laudato Si'* 2). We can achieve this by seeing values in everything around us. This is a great lesson from the manger. No wonder it influenced the spirituality of the crib which is traceable to St Francis of Assisi, as echoed in his "Canticles of Creation". Like him, we have to see creatures as our siblings.

Baby Jesus teaches us from the manger that how we handle creatures is important to God who created them for our benefit. If Jesus chose green grass in the manger as his place of rest to welcome the Magi and shepherds who are involved in agriculture, then, it calls for a universal examination of conscience on how God sees the greenhouse effect. This can enable us to revisit and apply the resolution made at Conferences of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on coal and other areas. In doing this, we contribute to a better environment tomorrow, extending charity to future generations, just as the previous generations right from creation were to us.



## ECO-SPIRITUALITY: NEVER BLAME GOD!

**Fr Fio Mascarenhas SJ | Retreat House, Bandra**

During my time as Parish Priest, I was surprised one day to learn that I had to insure my church *against God!* In the insurance contract was the line: “We insure this building against floods, fires, earthquakes, and *such acts of God!*” I protested to the agent that my God, the God revealed by Jesus Christ, could never be blamed for natural calamities, but was instead a God of surpassing love! (I eventually signed the contract only after cancelling the offending words).

The incident taught me, sadly, how in the secular world, the “perverse genius of suspicion” has become so ingrained in human traditions that a good God gets represented as a moody, tyrannical deity! Instead of recognising our refusal to be an obedient steward of God’s creation (see Genesis 1:28) as the cause of suffering, we prefer to make God the scapegoat for everything amiss! Humanity needs to be reminded that, despite all its technological progress, a spiritual battle of Good versus Evil is still on, and involves every human being together with all of Creation! (see Romans 8:22-23).

Most spiritual leaders are confirming that the problems humanity is facing are of our own making, and cannot be blamed on a “capricious” God! Pope Francis has written a whole encyclical - *Laudato Si’* - on this topic, and the recent COP26 statement has made clear that we cannot blame God for the suffering that comes to us from anthropogenic problems.

Technological advances have created the illusion that humans are in control of their destiny as never before. But Creation is an interdependent, undivided whole, not an assemblage of isolated, unrelated parts that can be eliminated or modified as we see fit. We have lost half of the great forests of the world; and some of the world’s greatest rivers are filled with chemical fertilisers, herbicides, insecticides and waste materials collected along their course. Other activities of industrialisation have produced a major ecological crisis for all: pollution on all fronts, and global warming.

So, a first principle of eco-spirituality is: “Never blame God!” And a second is: “Each one of us has a responsibility in conserving creation: our decisions, personal and collective, determine the future of the planet.”

Happy Christmas!



## GREEN MIRACLES

**Lisette Fernandes | St Peter, Bandra West**

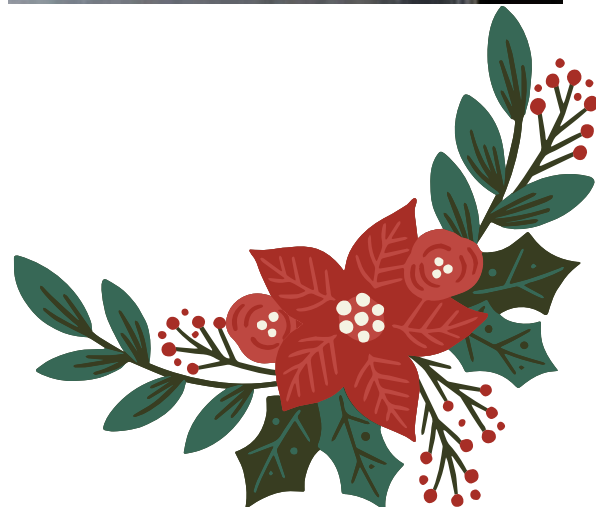
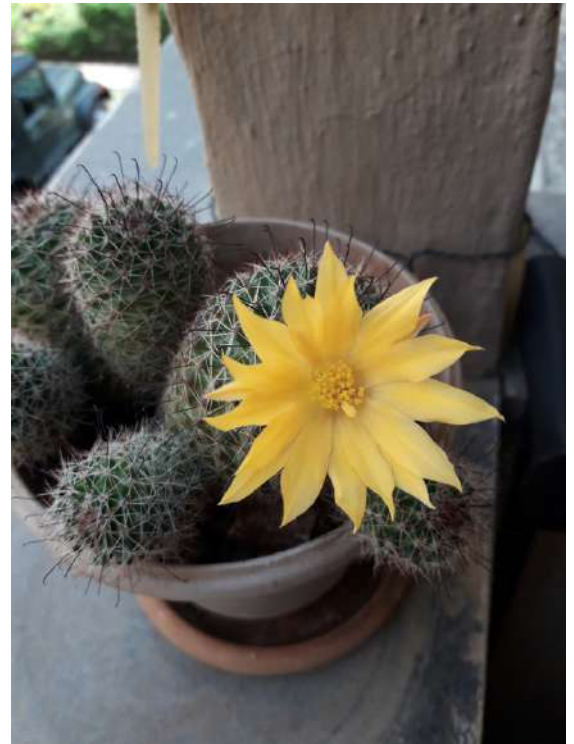
Like most old flats in Bombay, our house came with balconies. My dad, who was appreciative of nature and open spaces, resisted enclosing these when it became a fad. Our balcony always had things growing. I'd heard my mother's tales of *vaalchi bhaji* (Malabar or buffalo spinach) growing in abundance and I remember a maid with particularly green thumbs who coaxed pineapples to grow in yellow *Dalda* tins!

As siblings married and moved away, the balcony garden became mine. At first, it was just another chore, but soon, the green drew me in. I experimented with growing tomatoes (never had any success with it), chillies, mint, curry leaves and a variety of colourful flowers and foliage. Each pot became invested with its own story - who gifted it or where it was bought, how it survived the puppies knocking it down, or how the sparrows stripped it off its leaves. I watered them daily, tended to them weekly and re-potted them every other year, but stopped short of talking to them.

Since 2020, everyone has faced many challenges and I too lost a friend who was very close to my heart. I was devastated by this sudden loss and the lockdown made coping with grief more difficult. A year later, a cactus which generally blooms mid-monsoon, sprouted five buds in May - it usually only gave three. The first bud bloomed on my birthday and the last one on my friend's first birthday in heaven. A few days later, my dad passed away and I channelled the loss into making the balcony - his favourite place - a little green haven. It has since become my favourite spot too, to curl up with a book, enjoy a cup of coffee, watch the rain, or just do nothing.

The green has helped me grieve, has reminded me to grow through what I go through, and to be aware of miracles that constantly surround me and love that will always bloom.

*Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning (Psalm 30:5).*





# MERRY TIME BACK AGAIN

**Anuradha Lobo | Eco Ambassador**  
**Holy Cross, Kurla**

Milk and cookies are out,  
Kids are tucked in tight.  
Hang up stockings,  
Decorate the trees,  
What a sight to see!

There's so much to do,  
On Christmas Eve night!  
Before you take a snooze.  
To help Santa through the night,  
And get important stuff done!

For the friends who pull the sleigh,  
You see, reindeer need snacks too!  
A little love and fun.  
At this season of joy and mirth,  
The peace and goodwill all feel.

The golden Christmas stars shine,  
With a cheerful Christmas glow,  
And twinkle of the Yuletide message  
To the busy world below.  
They tell of peace and smile  
At Christmas time down on earth.



# A DRIED LEAF'S WHISPER

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

Sam stopped abruptly in the Woodland,  
seized the dried leaf stuck on his hand  
and got astonished as he heard:

Sam! Listen! Said a subtle voice

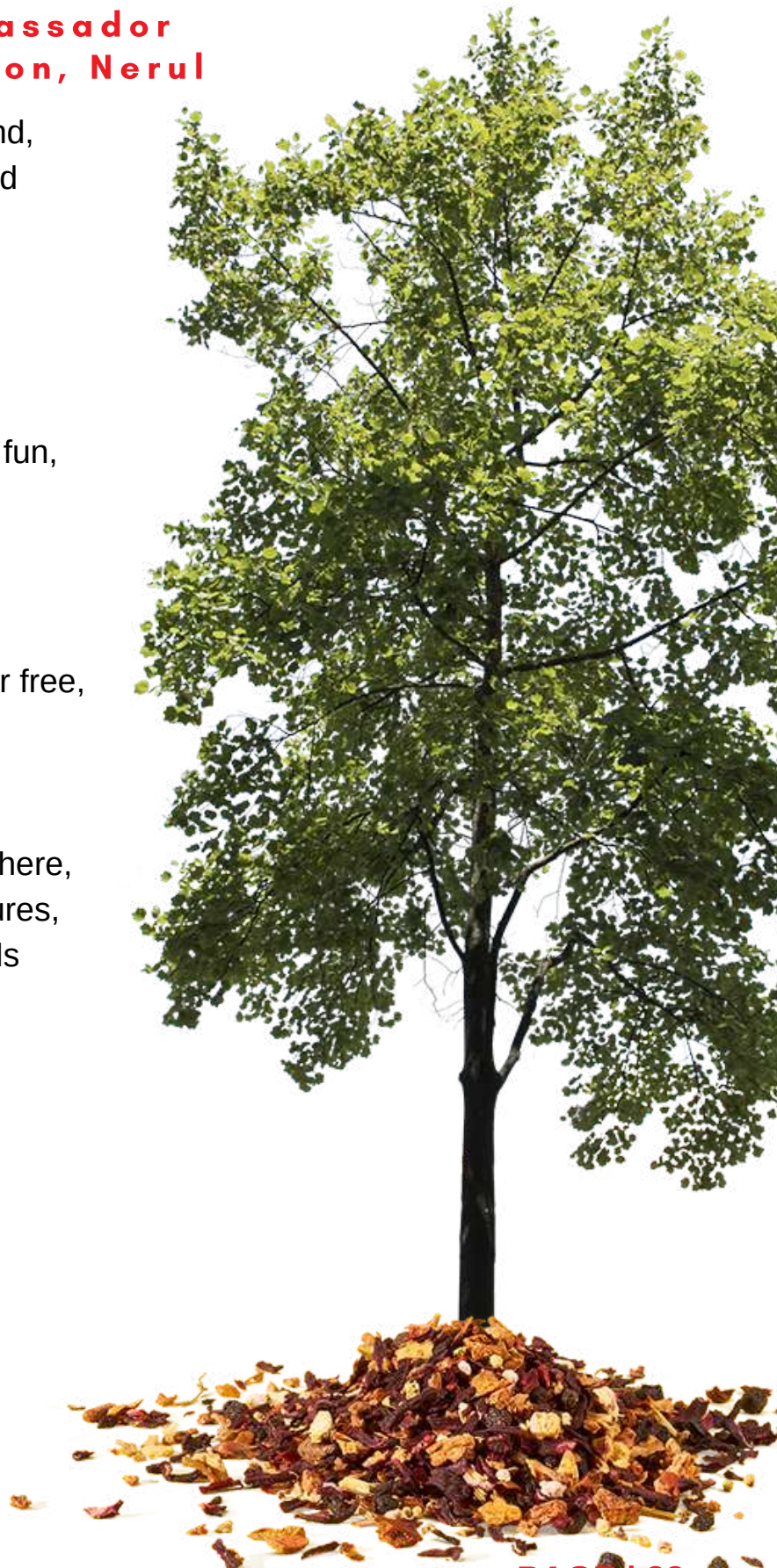
As the morn welcomed the sun,  
the gusty wind shook me off and had fun,  
I felt myself drifting off  
and finally settled on your arm.

Being a part of the oak tree  
I have laboured from dawn to dusk for free,  
Have rustled up meals for multitude  
and have nestled birds of all kinds.

I have cleansed the air of the atmosphere,  
and shared the breath of life to creatures,  
I have created the fluffy floating clouds  
and commanded them to pour down.

As a dried leaf I sway,  
get drifted and would perish away!  
Have got loads of stories to say  
of my glorious past of those days.

I implore you people of every race,  
To protect the world by your grace,  
To nurture saplings and plantations,  
and save your generation!







**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2022**

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





St Pius X College,  
Aarey Road, Goregoan (E),  
Mumbai 400 063

P: +91 22 29270953

E: [ecoteam@aoebombay.org](mailto:ecoteam@aoebombay.org)

W: [aoebombay.org](http://aoebombay.org)