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green

God's call to Renew and Energise Earth & Nature



Building Bridges

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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**



The IPCC released its Climate Change Mitigation Report earlier this year – read some key takeaways [here](#)

At Easter, we can see new life springing forth from where we have destroyed it. This life comes from death. In John 12:24, Jesus said that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He put to death sin, shame and grief, and gained our redemption. The sorrow of death is vanquished by the joy and glory of the resurrection. Easter's juxtaposition of death and life is precisely a passage from what is against creation to the preservation of the goodness of creation as intended by God. How, though, are we preserving life today?

As I write this, wars are going on in every continent except Australia, in each of which at least 1,000 people have violently died during 2021-22. At the same time, there is an exceptionally high rate of biodiversity loss that is akin to a sixth mass extinction. The screeching of tyres, the honking of horns, the drone of equipment, the pings of our phones are getting louder, but the chirping of birds, the song of the whales, the croaking of the frogs, the squeals of children playing outdoors are falling silent. More and more, our world is becoming increasingly chaotic and unequal. We are seemingly emerging from a pandemic that dominated every facet of our lives in the past two years, while the threats of another mutant and new diseases continue to lurk. We are running out of time to avert the climate catastrophe. We can no longer afford to remain passive or indifferent.

We have to build a bridge from the fraught world we have to the just and sustainable world that we are meant to be. In building this bridge, we have to take an active and co-operative role. Just as there are a number of people involved in building an actual bridge, we must all work together to bring about the restoration of our world. During this Easter season, let us emulate Christ and be bridge builders so that creation may once again be renewed. May ecological sin die and our selves be restored with creation in the fullness of Christ.

EDITOR'S NOTE

It's Easter – hope springs anew! Through his passion, death and resurrection, Christ conquered sin, opening a bridge between heaven and earth through which all things will be restored to God. Restoration can be understood as the righting of our relationships with God, with each other, other living creatures and indeed, all of creation. It is the attainment of the inherent goodness of our original purpose and function – the manifestation of God's perfect love.

If, therefore, we are to fulfil Jesus' command of loving one another as he loved us, we ought to partake in restoration. In our world of strife, war, tribulation, injustice, deterioration and poverty, our role is to engage in the 'Easter' of ecological restoration and societal regeneration. As Pope Francis puts it in *Laudato Si'*, the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ must become evident in our relationship with the world around us. Thus, our vocation becomes that of builders and protectors of bridges – bridges of peace, of communion and harmony, of sobriety, of understanding, of protection, of health and well-being. We chose to highlight these relational aspects of Easter and came up with the theme *Restoration – Building Bridges* for this edition of GREEN.

We've been establishing bridges between the Archdiocesan Office for Environment and selected parishes in the diocese with the hope of fostering green collaborations as part of our *Laudato Si'* Diocese journey. Catch up on what we've been up to in the AOE Diary. We also want to ensure that our relationship with you endures, so **please make sure to get on our mailing list through the [form linked here](#).**

We're pleased to feature your restoration and bridge building initiatives and perspectives in our Easter issue – from alternatives to single-use plastics, a charging station for electric vehicles and recycling to eco-friendly homes, your takes on the theme and your ecological journeys.

While the season of Lent has given way to Easter-tide, a personal ecological *examen* will always have a vital role in letting us know whether we're part of the disruptive or restorative brigade. To mark Earth Day on 22nd April, we have a special piece on whether we will *Invest in Our Planet* – the 2022 theme.

And we hope you take as much delight in the poem as we did.

May the Risen Lord – the Way, the Truth and the Life – guide our bridge-building and restoration initiatives. Have a blessed and wondrous Easter season!

The Editorial Team

Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ

Head, Archdiocesan Office for Environment

Naomi Gonsalves

Shawna Nemesia Rebello



AOE DIARY



- The online valedictory function on 15th January for the Certificate Course for Eco Ambassadors - 2021 was our first event of 2022
- Laudato Si' Diocese Updates:
 - The [outcome document](#) (January 2022 version) of our diocese discernment process was published on our website on 2nd February and discussed with our discernment team during an online meeting on 3rd March
 - On 8th February, Bishop Allwyn D'Silva emailed letters through the AOE to the parish priests of representative 'model green' parishes of each deanery in order to foster a green collaboration between the parish and the AOE through the opportunity offered by the Laudato Si' Action Platform ([LSAP](#))
 - In this context, Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ and Ms Shawna Nemesia Rebello met with the Care for Creation Group of Raigad Deanery on 1st March to support its ecological stewardship initiatives
 - Sessions on *Leveraging the Laudato Si' Goals for Ecological Transformation* have been conducted by Fr Luke and Shawna in four of the ten representative parishes to date; and will resume in June 2022:
 1. St Anthony, Vakola - Central Suburbs Deanery on 17th March (read more on page 14)
 2. St Peter, Bandra West - Bandra Deanery on 24th March
 3. Our Lady of Lourdes, Malad West (Orlem) - Borivli Deanery on 27th March (read more on page 12)
 4. St John the Baptist, Thane - Thane Deanery on 9th April
- An online master class on Natural Healing was organised with the Prithvi Parivar pan-India ecological movement on 12th February
- Fr Luke conducted a session on *Setting up Eco Cells in Parishes* at St Peter's Church, Bandra on 10th March that was attended by representatives from eight parishes of the Bandra Deanery
- Our Youth wing is organising an Eco Relay for all parishes in the Archdiocese of Bombay - invites were sent out on 11th March. The Eco Relay - 2022 aims at spreading awareness and caring for creation while making you join hands with other parishes in our diocese
- Fr Luke and Shawna conducted a half-day *Reconciliation with Creation* Lenten programme at the Vinayalaya Retreat House on 20th March; attended by 26 persons from ten parishes, it even inspired a poem featured on page 23
- Fr Luke was invited by the Commission for Ecology of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) to lead its consultation on *Listening to the Cries of the Earth* on 2nd April in connection with the on-going Synod on Synodality

Building Bridges

The bridge between
Heaven and Earth
opened through the
Resurrection serves
to restore all things
to Christ.

How are we building
bridges and restoring
relationships today?

I BUILD ECOLOGICAL BRIDGES BY...

We asked, you answered -

Simply spending time with nature and reflecting on our human dependence on creation, acknowledging the fact we are brothers and sisters, all part of one family belonging to God our father, our maker

Giselle Wilson Eco Ambassador
Our Lady of Lourdes, Orlem

Replenishing the soil, nurturing the plants, welcoming the birds and embracing nature in every possible way

Fr Joaquim Tellis SJ
Vinayalaya, Andheri

Sharing tested organic tips, e.g. using cinnamon sticks to keep away ants from food / pantry especially in the summer.

Pamela Fernandes
Our Lady of Egypt, Kalina

Following the laws of nature always.

Jude D'Mello
St John the Evangelist, Marol

Being involved in my community and striving for clean air, water and healthy soil for all people freely.

Pramila Irudayaraj
Don Bosco Youth Services

By vouching to take care of the earth devastated by all kinds of pollution through love and concern.

Roshni D'Souza Eco Ambassador
St John the Baptist, Thane

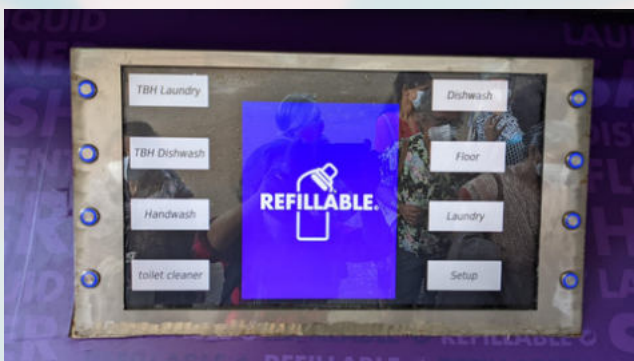


REFILL TO REDUCE!

Janet D'Souza | St Peter, Bandra West

What did we do with our last detergent or floor cleaner bottle? Most of us would have mindlessly tossed it in the bin - where it joined the rest of the 7 billion single-use plastics that annually enter landfills. Our collective dependency on plastic and our careless disposal practices chokes our systems, pollutes our land and sea, and causes catastrophic damage. But we found a way to change course!

With a common goal of reducing single-use plastic, our parish is partnering with [Refillable India](#) whose Mobile Vans supply everyday essential household products... without the needless plastic packaging. The Care for Creation Group of St Peter's invited Refillable India for a live demo on 15th February. All we have to do is bring our own glass containers, and we get quality, fuss-free products at affordable rates in quantities of our choice! With equally simple payment options, what's stopping us from joining the Refill Revolution?



St Peter's parish priest and dean Fr Frazer Mascarenhas SJ set up the Bandra Deanery Care for Creation Committee with Fr Daniel Fernandes (Our Lady of Mt Carmel) as coordinator - check out the posters created below. The AOE hopes that the other deaneries come together for ecological initiatives too!

This Easter, turn to the LIGHT! Go Solar...

DID YOU KNOW?

In 14 and a half seconds, the sun provides as much energy to Earth as humanity uses in a day.

How solar panels work

1. Sunlight hits the solar panels and generates DC current.
2. The inverter converts DC electricity to AC.
3. The AC electricity is supplied to the building.
4. Excess of electricity flows into the grid.
5. Electricity is drawn from the grid when supply from solar panels is not sufficient.

Solar Energy saves....

- MONEY
- ENVIRONMENT
- RESOURCES

St Peter's Church, Bandra installed solar panels thereby reducing their electricity bills by 80% in the last 6 years..

Created by St. Theresa's Care for Creation group, Bandra (W) for Bandra Deanery Care for Creation Coordinating Committee
bdccc22@gmail.com

#alllivesmatter

Numerous birds & pets die of water scarcity and by drinking polluted water in the summers. Give them a reason to visit you!

Keep a water bowl outside your homes

Bandra Deanery Care for Creation Coordinating Committee
bdccc22@gmail.com

A STEP TOWARDS CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

Rocky Pinto | St Anthony, Malwani (Malad West)



Let's think of 'Collective Resolutions' and not just individual ones! One area to work on is the reduction of single-use plastics. Much good can happen if each one of us minimises our daily usage of one-time plastics. We can act now by using a stainless steel water bottle which we can use multiple times for years. A good example has been set by Fr Felix D'Souza of St Anthony's Church (Vakola), who supported the **'Refuse Single Use' campaign** and gave out steel bottles to parishioners of St Anthony's Church, Malwani at a subsidised rate.



XIE + EV = CHARGING STATION

Fr John Rose SJ | Xavier Institute of Engineering (XIE), Mahim

In order to promote the use of green vehicles, Xavier Institute of Engineering (XIE) Mahim has set up a charging station for Electric Vehicles (EV). This was done in collaboration with [Magenta](#), one of the leading Charge Point Operators in the country. The Charging Station in XIE is a combination of AC and DC Chargers (30 kW DC Fast Charger + 7.4 kW AC Charger) which supports two-, three- and four-wheelers. It is important to note that the Institute generates its electric supply from solar energy. XIE now uses two electric cars and one scooter. Three staff members have already shifted to electric scooters while a couple more have booked electric cars. It is hoped that many more on the campus would shift to electric vehicles.



XIE is probably the first educational institution in Mumbai to install EV chargers. The next phase would be to encourage other institutions in Mumbai and India to go in for this option, thereby significantly contributing to the Church's mission of caring for our common home.

ECOLOGICAL INITIATIVES IN RAIGAD DEANERY

Sr Marina Fernandez SCC | Sisters of the Cross, Khopoli



Laudato Si' has invited us to listen to the cry of the Earth and be connected to nature. Jan Vikas Khopoli, our social centre, under the Raigad Janhit Manch and the Centre for Social Action, has been responding to this call. During the celebration of World Environment Day, the importance of oceans and forests was explained in detail. Through videos, drawing competitions and skits in the various *wadis*, the children were taught to care for nature. In all 12 villages, the *Balsabha* children and their families have set up kitchen gardens and are growing various types of vegetables. Cleanliness drive and waste management awareness was also done. A box of seeds of various plants and 30 trees were given to people in each village. It was good to see the children and youth take an active part in all these initiatives. An Ecological Calendar has been drawn up in order to include environmental issues in our planning process for 2021-2030. We now plan to have an orientation on *Laudato Si'* for our youth. We are grateful to Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ and Ms Shawna Nemesia Rebello who have enthused us to do more for our common home.



2021'S RECYCLING CHAMPION!

Rita D'Sa (Eco Ambassador) | St Michael, Mahim

The Bombay Catholic Sabha unit of St Michael's has been active in the collection and recycling of bottles and single-use plastic. On 4th April 2022, we handed over **37 kg** of this material to Bisleri - [Bottles for Change](#).

We have also been regularly collecting used Tetra Pak cartons and handing these over for recycling to [RUR GreenLife](#), which has donated ten school desks made from these recycled cartons. To date, our parish has handed over **11704** Tetra Pak cartons, and in recognition of our consistent efforts, St Michael's has been awarded a certificate of appreciation as the Recycling Champion of the Year 2021 under the [Go Green with Tetra Pak](#) initiative!

We are grateful to the entire team of parishioners for regularly collecting plastic and Tetra Pak cartons for recycling; special thanks to our parish priest Fr Lancy Pinto who has been our constant support and motivator.





SMALL STEPS MATTER!

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

Being selected as a 'Model Green Parish' for the Borivli Deanery by the Archdiocesan Office for Environment comes with a lot of responsibilities, and we at Our Lady of Lourdes' have tried our best to fulfil them. Our active Environmental Cell of Orlem (E.C.O) regularly comes up with many initiatives. We have recycling drives conducted every third Sunday of the month. As of March 2022, the total waste recycled is:

1,500+ kg plastic
60,000+ Tetra Pak cartons
3,500+ kg e-waste
400+ kg paper and cardboard
100+ kg glass

Furthermore, our parish has donated **80+** First Holy Communion dresses and **40+** wedding gowns to families of slender means. E.C.O also tries to engage children and youth by having beach clean-ups and competitions that encourage eco-living (thereby creating awareness and beginning conversations on mother earth), and organises various workshops (e.g. on zero-waste, bio-enzymes) too.

As part of the Lenten journey, an interactive session was conducted on 27th March 2022 by Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ and Ms Shawna Nemesia Rebello for all our E.C.O members along with other parishioners. This gave us the opportunity to understand the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) (LSAP) and its [actionable goals](#). We are eager to continue being a 'Model Green Parish' and also assist other parishes in their greening efforts.



GREENING THE PARISH

Fr Felix D'Souza (Parish Priest) | St Anthony,
Vakola



Since we have been selected as a 'Model Green Parish' for the Central Suburbs Deanery by the Archdiocesan Office for Environment, Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ and Ms Shawna Nemesia Rebello conducted a session at St Anthony's Church, Vakola on 17th March 2022. Around 80 participants from all community cells attended. Following an overview of the [LSAP](#) - a collaborative venture for implementing the Church's mission of Caring for Creation - and the [seven Laudato Si' Goals](#); participants were divided into groups to brainstorm on the initiatives the parish was already doing and ideas that could help to redefine these initiatives and its betterment.

Sharing by representatives of each group made us aware that our parish is indeed doing a lot. Our on-going initiatives include installing a community fridge, organising training on health awareness, promoting solar energy, encouraging local entrepreneurs and organic products, caring for senior citizens and having e-waste drives. We also listed other areas which could be taken up - rainwater harvesting, supper for senior citizens, creche services for poor families, carpooling to church, promoting small businesses and connecting with government officials.

These sessions were also conducted by the AOE at the parishes of St Peter, Bandra West on 24th March 2022 and St John the Baptist, Thane on 9th April 2022. All parishes are encouraged to contact the AOE for scheduling the same June 2022 onwards.



FOLLOW THE CROSS OF CHRIST, THE NEW TREE OF LIFE!

Savio Fernandes | Our Lady of Salvation, Dadar West

Adam and Eve were not content with the lovely conversations that they were privileged to have with God, the bountiful garden of Eden that the Almighty had provided them to look after with responsibility, and the special status that God had given them over the rest of creation. They wanted more and more and did the very thing that God forbade them to do. They succumbed to temptation and ate the fruit from the *Tree of Knowledge* and brought *Death* into the world. Adam and Eve, by their action, destroyed the bridge between heaven and earth and immediately lost the grace that they once had. God was angry and Adam and Eve's access to the *Tree of Life* was cut off.

After that first sin, which has been passed on to all of us, our human nature has been weakened and inclined to sin. We seek more wealth, property, power, prestige - ruining our relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the environment. So God sent his only son Jesus, who emptied himself and took the path of love, to set right our relations with God and others. Thus, in the words of Pope Benedict XVI, the Cross of Christ became the *New Tree of Life*. In *Wood of the Cradle, Wood of the Cross*, Caryll Houselander (a Roman Catholic mystic) stunningly connects us to Jesus our Saviour who was nailed to the wood of the cross, and the wonderful world with trees and all living things which God created for us, and which we have unfortunately destroyed by degrading the Earth.

Do we realise what is happening to our common home? For example, due to the increasing presence of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the earth is getting hotter. March 2022 was the hottest March for India ever recorded in 122 years.

Over 3,000 years ago, Israel was a land "flowing with milk and honey" but over-cultivation and chopping down of trees turned it into a desert like the rest of the Middle East. However, now there is a glimmer of hope. In the last few decades, despite scarcity of water, the Israelites were able to make the land fertile by drip irrigation. Israel's success story is a model for other arid regions to follow.

Scientists recently warned that 24 billion tonnes of fertile soil is being lost per year, largely because of unsustainable agricultural practices. To offset this, at the least we need to plant trees. We can adopt techniques such as the Miyawaki afforestation method, to create an urban forest in a city like Mumbai. With this method of plantation, an urban forest can grow within a short span of 20-30 years without chemicals or synthetic fertilisers, while it may be noted that a conventional forest takes around 200-300 years to grow.

When we are in harmony in nature, we are in harmony with God. At Easter, while we are reminded of Christ's resurrection, let us take up our own cross, repent for our sins, turn to the *New Tree of Life*, and also do our bit to save the planet.

GROWING IN RELATIONAL ECO-SPIRITUALITY

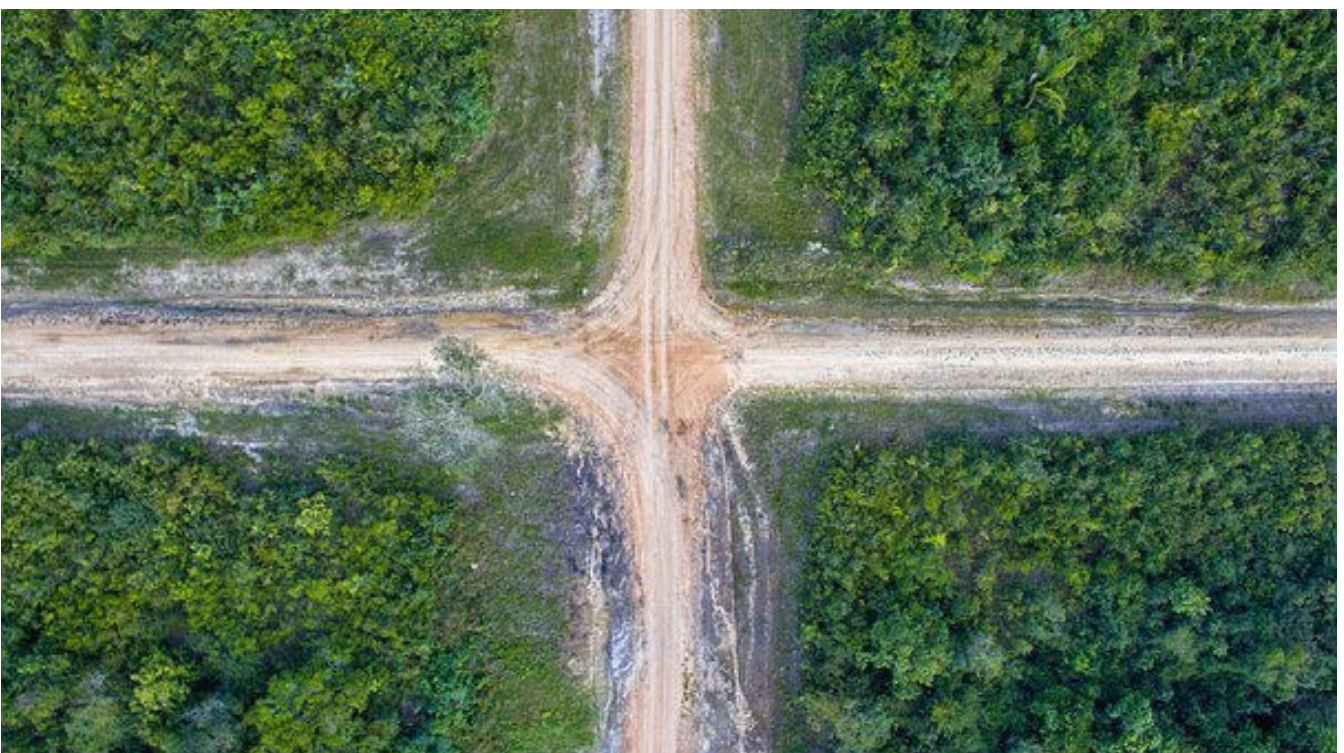
Janina Gomes | Our Lady of Lourdes, Kalyan West

Living in Jamshedpur and later in Mumbai, all my spiritual experiences were in an urban setting. It was also a time when eco-spirituality was not widely known and propagated. As my reading widened, I gradually realised that we are all interconnected. We are like the Holy Trinity, relational beings and the Trinity itself is a relationship of love. Where once I took nature for granted, I now see my connection to every tree, plant, cloud, river, pond, bird, animal and flower - the whole of creation.

To restore this sense of relationship, I now write about how nature and all of God's creation is part of the very essence of my spirituality. It also reminds me to restore the sense of how men and women are related in an equal relationship in the eyes of God. I realise how widespread patriarchy is in the Church and want to help work for a Church where the feminine is respected as much as the masculine. If we look at nature, we see how these elements are inter-related in an integral fashion.

I now admire not only the soft aspects of nature such as a beautiful flower and a cloud in the sky, but also the raw powers of nature. So far, we have harnessed nature to serve our needs. But, we have also destroyed nature in our quest for dominance. Sadly, this kind of thinking was rationalised by misinterpreting the Bible. Many people think that an answer to environmental problems can be found through technology and the human intellect. There again we are wrong. We must learn from indigenous people who live in tune with the earth and the elements around them.

Will we ever learn? The God of the Bible is the very same God who created nature and all creatures. We ignore this connection only at our own peril. We can only fight the ill effects of climate change when we restore our relationship to all creatures and give them equal treatment and respect.



RISING IN LOVE

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

What is Love? Just a couple of months ago we celebrated 'Valentine's Day', a day when Love seems to be overflowing. Generally, the feeling is good, showing our love for one another. And Jesus tells us – *Love one another as I have loved you*. God demonstrated Love by sending Jesus to save this world. Jesus carried our sins on that heavy cross, falling several times under its weight and rising again. He was crowned with thorns, was scourged, mocked, and beaten along the road to Calvary. He did it for Love.

God created the Earth with all its flora and fauna. He created darkness and light, the oceans and seas, the birds and animals and every living thing, the hills, mountains and valleys, God created them all. God loved creation and expected humans to take care of it. But look at what we have turned it into - destruction abounds all the way. Today, as we look back, was it worth the effort on the part of Jesus? Was it worth the scourging, beatings, the insults? Was that the end of God's Love? We need to understand that every time we destroy nature, we increase the burden that Jesus is carrying on his shoulders.

Do we want to see Love rising again? Then, it's up to us. The Lord is calling us to restore God's Kingdom on Earth. We are being called to restore God's creation to its former glory, to build bridges among humans and with nature. Can we do that? Yes, we can, we have the assurance that God's love will rise and be triumphant!

ONE FAMILY'S ECOLOGICAL JOURNEY

Cherylann Dias | St Anthony, Malwani (Malad West)

Pope Francis has been urging us to restore our relationship with Mother Earth through ecological awareness, ecological conversion and ecological justice. The pause provided during the COVID-19 lockdowns has forced us to rethink various celebrations and eco-unfriendly practices associated with them. In our family we have tried to redesign some of our habits to help restore our ecosystem:

- Since "big fat weddings" impact the delicate ecological balance negatively, with large numbers of guests at multiple functions increasing carbon emissions, we have tried to pare down the guest list and the number of parties hosted for a single occasion.
- Further, we reduce noise and air pollution by eliminating the customary fireworks at our family weddings and communion parties.
- To save paper, our family and friends now create electronic invitation cards and also use electronic media to share the hymns and prayers at church.
- Our household segregates all waste generated daily, composting it to produce organic fertiliser for our family vegetable patch.
- As far as possible, plastics are not discarded, but recycled and used for plants or storage containers.
- Car-pooling and shared transport is preferred, wherever possible.
- We are planning to install solar energy panels.
- Finally, our family has decided to have shroud burials instead of wooden coffins.

FIVE WAYS ECOLOGY SPEAKS OF THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

Martin Nchedo Umeatuegbu | Abuja, Nigeria

The lives of humans and other creatures are logical and theological - logical because all things in nature were created for humans, theological because humans were created for God. Thus, the way these created things are used matters to God because the humans who use them matter to God. All these created things speak to us in different ways of their importance to the crucified Lord.

The wheat from which bread is made represents food. Jesus taught us to ask God for our daily bread (Mt 6:11). He demonstrated its necessity in his multiplication of loaves (Mt 14:13-21). He involves the spiritual satisfaction of our hunger and sustenance by bread which becomes his body (Mk 14:22-24). The wheat asks us to learn from Jesus' example of gathering the fragments of bread that filled twelve baskets which has a deep spiritual meaning in the context of reserving the sacred bread in the tabernacle.

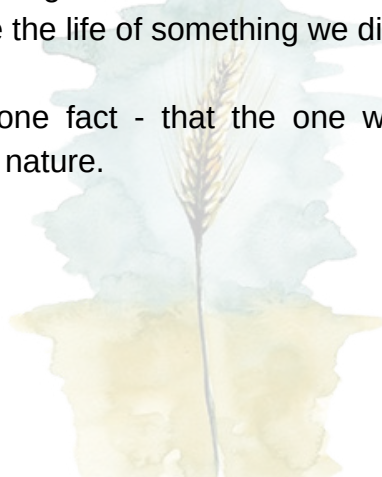
Jesus uses the imagery of various trees such as calling himself the true vine (Jn 15:1-7) and transforms wine into his blood. He gave us the parable of the mustard seed (Mt 13:31-32) and was welcomed into Jerusalem by children who spread branches from palm trees (Jn 12:12-15). The trees ask us to desist from abusing them by incessant deforestation. It even pleases the trees that they supplied the wood for Jesus' Cross where humankind who abuses them was redeemed.

Water recalls various functions in life. Jesus himself was baptised with water (Mt 3:16), a reality he also invited Nicodemus to receive (Jn 3:1-5) since Jesus is the living water which quenches our spiritual thirst (Jn 4:11-14). He also needed water when he was thirsty on the Cross (Jn 19:28). Water rejoices in the fact that Jesus uses it for his identity 'living water', and that the centurion was healed by the water from Christ's pierced side.

The earth is symbolic of productivity as seen in the creation of humans from it (Gen 2:5) and unto which humans shall return (Gen 3:19). This is further seen in Jesus' analogy of the growth of a grain of wheat after death on the ground (Jn 12:24). The earth is glad that it received Jesus and encourages us to support it as it supported Jesus.

The animals through the sheep remind humans that the Lord provides us with green pastures (Ps 23:2) because he is the Good Shepherd who knows them and they know him (Jn 10:11,14). Thus, the sheep and other animals encourage us to conserve their lives and not drive them to extinction since we have no right to terminate the life of something we did not create.

All these five elements point to one fact - that the one who was crucified was the one who sanctified humans and all things in nature.



INVEST IN MOTHER EARTH - WILL WE?

An Earth Day (22nd April) special on the 2022 theme: Invest in Our Planet

Suren | Green Madcaps

Human beings are strange creatures. They willingly waste money consuming toxic and addictive substances like alcohol, tobacco, or drugs, despite evidence of their harm, and then later spend good money repairing the damage done. Not content with this, they attempt to influence others to consume these substances. Many humans end up as addicts, controlled by the same substances they thought made them feel good; while many others fondly (and foolishly) believe it will not happen to them.

However, with increased awareness, some humans are making radical changes in their lives. Some are choosing to be vegetarian or vegan or fruitarian; others are opting for organic foods or locally grown produce; still others are making the choice to avoid toxic chemicals, addictive substances, or preservatives. Armed with knowledge on the long-term deleterious effects of toxic living, they choose to invest in their future by making healthier options while still young.

A Toxic Earth; A Scorched Sky

From the time human beings invented garbage, Earth has been perceived as more than just the good and generous Mother. She has also been seen as the quintessential all-purpose Grocery Store and the ultimate limitless Garbage Bin! With greedy over-enthusiasm, Earth's resources have been and continue to be plundered. Tonnes of waste are casually disposed with deleterious effects on Earth and other living creatures. Water bodies are rendered unfit for drinking, the air is polluted, forests are depleted, animals are being pushed into tinier habitats, fish stocks are being ravaged and sea levels are rising.

The sheer amount of carbon that has been dug or drilled from Earth and shoved into the atmosphere has caused temperatures to rise at an unprecedented rate. We crossed the tipping point of 350 ppm of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere years ago and are now in the range of 419-422 ppm, gradually approaching a point of no return even with the most severe carbon-reduction measures proposed.



A Different Investment

Whether we can turn the situation around depends to a large extent on governments and industry heads who place economic growth and profit above environmental health. So we do face an uphill battle in the attempt to save Earth. Make no mistake: Earth will survive the worst we throw at her. The question is: Will we?

There are at least three prongs in the attempt to slow down or even reverse the gross environmental destruction underway: governmental and industrial policies to invest in green practices; corporate investment in industries that recycle and reuse materials; individual investment in lifestyle changes.

The first depends on political and economic common sense, which is surprisingly lacking across the world. While token pronouncements and actions are made, much more needs to be done to ensure green development and environmental protection are national and global priorities. Advocacy plays an important role here.

The second is slowly growing across the world. Some countries have amazing recycling programmes that almost eliminate waste and dumping in landfills. India is progressing very slowly in this field, even though it has a huge potential for recycling glass, plastic, paper, metals, electronic waste, rare earths, etc.

The third is where each of us can do our bit!

Strong Choices

We need to seriously consider how our 7.9 billion and growing human population uses Earth's limited resources. To the extent that we recognise our carbon and ecological footprints (which are disproportionately much larger for the affluent, and increase with a rise in living standards) and do as much as we can to reduce them, change will take place. If we lead by example in living simple lives, eliminating unnecessary plastic from our homes, curbing wastage of fuel and electricity, we inspire others. If we show that we can eat local produce, limit our clothes and shoes, reduce food wastage, we can use our voice effectively.

Deciding not to purchase a personal vehicle, refusing to buy a new phone every time a new model comes out, standing against the prevalent disposable culture, are strong choices that we can make.

The question again is: **Will we?**



AM I PART OF THE SOLUTION? – AN ECOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Fr Ashley Miranda SDB (Vice Provincial) | Don Bosco Provincial House, Matunga

Here's a straightforward *examen* that focuses on the little things that can enable us to be true 'eco warriors' doing our bit to safeguard the world:

- Do I reuse plastic and paper bags and cardboard boxes that provisions, clothes, and other things come packed in?
- Have I stopped using single-use plastic cups, straws, forks, spoons, plates, etc.?
- Am I one who needs to constantly buy bottled water because I fear unreasonably that water everywhere is contaminated?
- Do I try to segregate so-called 'garbage' (plastic-paper-glass-aluminium) so that whatever can be recycled can be kept aside to be reused or sent to a 'recycling facility'?
- Do I use water and electricity responsibly?
- Can I do some advocacy at the local level to ensure that 'grey water' in my home, housing society or school may be recycled and used to water a garden or wash vehicles?
- Is my wardrobe full of clothes and shoes which I have rarely used? Am I okay with using second-hand clothes and shoes that have been passed down from my siblings or cousins? Or do I need new and branded clothes every year?
- When I go to the park or the beach do I ensure that I leave a place better than I found it?
- Do I get shoes, clothes, backpacks, spectacles, repaired or am I quick to throw away things?
- Similarly, what about televisions, computers, food processors, ovens and refrigerators? Can I encourage my immediate family to take them to a service centre where these can be repaired so that their lifespan may be extended? Can I collect e-waste and take it to a recycling facility?
- Does my home, school, workplace or neighbourhood have a composting facility so that leaf litter, fruit peels and other green plant material can be used to enhance soil quality?

The above questions can be answered with a simple yes or no answer. We could raise our hands in resignation saying, 'there is nothing we can do'. Or we could adopt a different stance altogether of blaming everyone else but oneself. Both these stances help no one. The best thing we can do to make this *examen* of consciousness different is to ask ourselves each time 'what can I do differently?'. And then we need to actually do it!!

At the turn of the millennium, 'the power of one' campaigns were launched in many parts of the world. What united these campaigns was the belief that one single-minded, passionate person committed to a cause can make a difference. One person can change the World! There is a much cited African proverb that says so succinctly, "You are either part of the solution or you are part of the problem."

As each one of us makes our personal eco-examen we could conclude by asking ourselves very plainly, **"What about me? Am I part of the solution?"**

ECO-FRIENDLY HOMES: A STEP TOWARDS BETTER SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

Lohit Lee Pais | St Francis de Sales, Koparkhairane

An Eco-friendly Home or Green Building is one which, when compared to a conventional building, uses less water, optimises energy efficiently, conserves natural resources, generates less waste and provides healthier spaces for occupants. Here are some considerations:

1. **Eco-Friendly Building Materials** can be used when we build or renovate a house (read about examples [here](#) and [here](#)). Light colour paints absorb less heat and will keep the house cooler in summer, thereby minimising the use of air conditioners.
2. **LED Lights** are more cost-effective in the long run, resulting in lower electricity bills and less radiation of heat.
3. **Solar Panels** generate renewable electricity and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.
4. **Water Conservation** addresses the challenge of adequate supply throughout the year for our growing demand on limited water resources. Some cities like Chennai have made Rainwater Harvesting compulsory for new buildings, other cities would soon have to follow the same. Low-flow fixtures for taps are also a simple way to reduce water consumption (check out such fixtures [here](#)).
5. **Energy-Efficient Appliances** result in cost-savings and lowered electricity consumption over time (search appliances and compare [here](#)).

Green Buildings are increasingly popular as the need for a sustainable environment is absolutely crucial for the survival of future generations. Many countries like Singapore have compulsory certified green buildings with minimum criteria that include some of the considerations mentioned above. In India, Green Building certification and rating are voluntary. However, even without government compulsion, we could take the initiative and contribute with simple steps to build a sustainable future.



THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

Monica Fernandes | St Andrew, Bandra West

I wondered why somebody didn't do something; then I realised that I was somebody - Anonymous

We humans were created in God's own image and given the awesome duty to be stewards of the environment, to use and replenish it. Instead we rush to exploit nature for personal gain.

Plastics are a boon when used in life-saving equipment but they are also a bane. Eartheasy informs us that some liquid shampoos contain plastic microbeads that end up in our waterways. They suggest the use of soaps instead. Many of the easy-to-wear synthetic garments release microscopic plastic fibres when washed. They suggest using our washing machines with a full load, in cold water and slow spin cycles.

The indiscriminate misuse of paper leaves carbon footprints. The wanton destruction of forests is leading to climatic changes and is a threat to biodiversity. Pulp and paper mills release pollutants in the air, water and land. Vendors resorting to packaging of goods bought online are partly to blame.

Wastage of paper occurs in the washrooms of public places such as airports. Government bureaucracies with their forms in triplicate are also guilty! Fortunately there is a trend to save important information on cloud storage services. We buy much more than we consume. We need bigger wardrobes and bigger houses to fit our bulging wardrobes. We could review our closets from time to time and give away unused articles of clothing.

Chemicals in detergents, cleaning liquids and cosmetics all eventually contaminate the soil and waterways. We could switch to non-chemical liquid cleaners for our floors. Around 60% of power in India is generated through fossil fuels. Simple actions such as putting off switches when we leave the room, switching to bulbs that use less electricity and air conditioning rooms only when in use go a long way in conserving energy.



A NEW BEGINNING

An Easter poem inspired by the AOE's 'Reconciliation with Creation' Lenten programme

Giselle Wilson | Eco Ambassador
Our Lady of Lourdes, Malad West (Orlem)

It's Easter - we hear the words 'the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End' once again

And yet somehow these words ring differently this time around.

Beginning, just a word, bearing a whole lot of history.

'The beginning' - a moment that began 13.8 billion years ago.

It all began with the Big Bang.

When the Universe began as a tiny, dense, fireball that exploded, creating the Sun, planets and our dear Mother Earth.

Over these billions and millions of years, life grew, developed, evolved from single-celled organisms to multicellular ones, from water-borne organisms, to land mammals and then finally us, you and me, humans.

With us entered science, technology, culture, art, economy...

And now, here we are, you and me in the present, a product of evolution, reading this tiny poem, trying to comprehend the depth of this word 'beginning'

Through this entire process we have our Creator; overseeing us, living with, around and in us,

His reassuring voice speaks calmly, **I am with you till the end of time,**
And I give you freedom, to choose good or evil,

So now it is up to us to decide an ending,

The ending of the 13.8 billion year-old beginning.

Each and every action we take in the present, is deciding this future

Our Father peers down from heaven to see if we are being responsible stewards of this planet, as he called us to be...

Would he be pleased?

Do our actions respect the 13.8 billion year-old beginning?

Or has the constant darkness worn us down?

Has the immensity of reality crushed our spirits?

Do we feel our actions are a mere nothing, hence end up doing nothing?

Has the light once radiating so brightly within us, seem to have dulled?

Help us to be the persevering light in the ongoing darkness.

Make us joyful stewards, spreading the hope and love of Easter.

Help us to embrace the fact that we are your instruments,

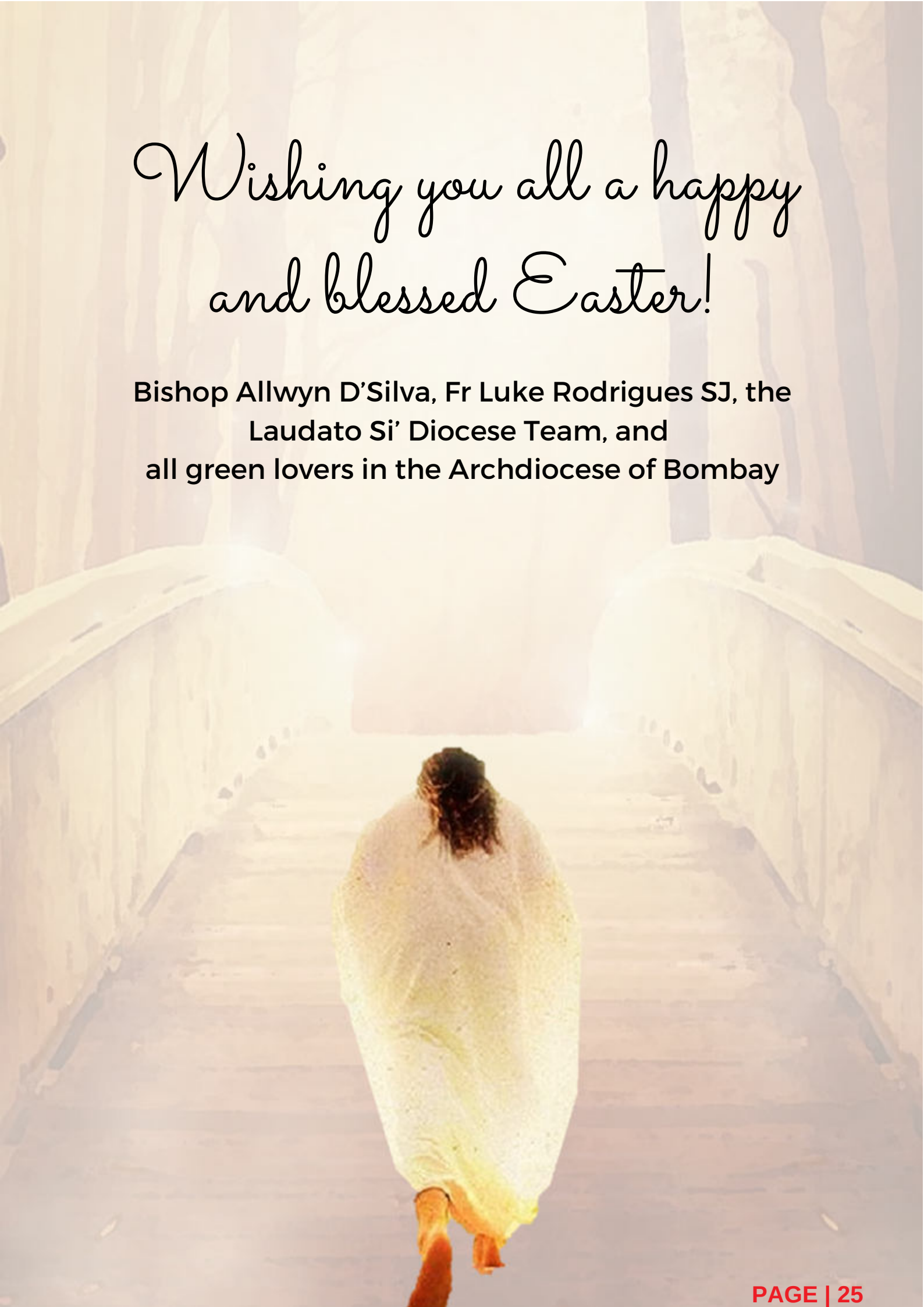
We are the servants not the master,

Help us to open our hearts and say,

Here I am Lord, I come to do your will.

Begin a new 'beginning' in me.

Let the light of Easter awaken and inspire me!

The background of the page is a photograph of a person from behind, wearing a long white robe and walking away into a brightly lit tunnel. The tunnel has a high, arched ceiling and the floor is made of stone steps. The light is very bright at the end of the tunnel, creating a strong glow. The overall tone is warm and hopeful.

*Wishing you all a happy
and blessed Easter!*

**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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