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green

God's call to Renew and Energise Earth & Nature



Voice of Creation

04 Editor's
Note

05 AOE
Diary

06 Voice of
Creation

13 Diocese
Diary

22 Articles

26 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

I write this message having recently returned from an exposure programme conducted in Goa, where I saw wetlands and mangroves being destroyed. The rampant destruction of such wondrous ecosystems is beyond tragic, having consequences on our lives - particularly those of us on the coast. And yet, though we are rapidly running out of time to save our planet, all is not lost.

Read about the key takeaways from the United Nations COP15 Biodiversity summit [here](#)

In the Book of Isaiah (Is 35:1-6a, 10), the prophet foretells a great rejoicing that creation is very much a part of - of dry lands flourishing and wastelands blooming. In our times, we experience this following a rare rainfall in the desert. As we can see in the picture, the flower blooming from a long-dormant seed transforms, albeit for a short time, a barren landscape into a beauty of colour.

Life, tenderly shaped by the Lord of creation springs forth, even in the harshest environs. It gives all of us involved in the restoration of creation hope that we can still bloom in our own personal deserts and in the world. While experts highlight that November's Climate COP27 in Egypt made virtually no progress in reducing emissions, December's Biodiversity COP15 in Canada resulted in the adoption of a Global Biodiversity Framework to address biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and protect indigenous rights, including putting 30% of the planet and 30% of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030.

What a hopeful prospect, right on time for Christmas!

As we mark Christmas, we are painfully aware that creation is being destroyed all over the world. But I hope that the birth of the Christ Child in our hearts this year makes us bearers of hope, for we still believe that creation can be nurtured.

I wish you all a hopeful Christmas with a quote attributed to Aristotle - *Hope is a waking dream*.

May our hope and our listening to the voices of creation transform our dream of a restored creation into reality.



EDITOR'S NOTE

In the Christmas song *Do You Hear What I Hear?*, the king exhorts people everywhere “Listen to what I say!” – asking prayers for peace and proclaiming that the sleeping Child will bring goodness and light. We may not be royalty, but all of us want to be listened to, to be heard, to be understood. In this rapidly changing world in which our lives are entwined with busyness, it is a gift to experience the invaluable comfort an encounter with a listening ear and an open heart brings. Knowing how rare this gift is, this Christmas and New Year, could we resolve to make it more common by being listeners ourselves?

Of course, listening isn't easy. It takes effort on our part to even be receptive to what we are hearing in the first place – filtering out distractions, giving our time, setting aside our own priorities. How many of us have been on the receiving end of half-hearted congratulations or perfunctory condolences?

Do we want to give out the gift of shoddy listening? Secondly, what we listen to may be perturbing and disrupt our own sense of wellbeing – conflict, illness, death, crime, our own shortcomings, and so on. And perhaps most importantly, with listening comes the discerning of our response – we cannot give this gift of listening with add-ons of panic or being judgemental or unnecessary advice or negativity. Truly listening is not convenient but is its own reward – an experience that is as transforming to the listener as to the one being listened to.

In this issue of GREEN, we hope to bring out the transformative experience of listening to the voice of creation. This Christmas comes to us in fraught times, the sweet chorus of carols at the glorious birth of the Christ Child in our hearts is harshly accompanied by the agonised cries of a world in the throes of the raging fires of the climate emergency, biodiversity loss, war, etc. Listening to the chorus and the cries must transform us – and thus we feature various initiatives, articles and poems that constitute our response to the voice of creation. Our ecological stewardship activities may not be monumental, but are the work of our hands that we present to the Lord of creation. May Baby Jesus bless our efforts as we continue to listen and respond to Christ and creation this Christmas season, the New Year and well into the future!

The Editorial Team

Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ

Head, Archdiocesan Office for Environment

Naomi Gonsalves

Shawna Nemesia Rebello

P.S.: Don't forget to **join our mailing list through [the form linked here](#)**. And if you want to listen to why this GREEN issue was delayed, we offer the explanation of additional responsibilities, limited personnel, technical glitches and layout software crashes!



AOE DIARY

- Fr Luke conducted an Eco Retreat for Jesuit novices at Belagavi, Karnataka from 14th-21st May
- In connection with World Environment Day, the AOE collaborated with the the Membership and Environment Forum of the Bombay Catholic Sabha for a gathering themed *One Earth, One Family* on 11th June
- Laudato Si' Diocese Update - Fr Luke and Shawna have held sessions on *Leveraging the Laudato Si' Goals for Ecological Transformation* in five parishes, for a total of nine of the ten representative parishes to date; to be continued in the new year:
 - 19th July: St Michael, Mahim - North Mumbai Deanery
 - 27th July: St Jude, Jeri-Meri - Kurla Deanery
 - 4th August: Our Lady of the Sea, Uttan - Bhayandar Deanery
 - 29th August: Our Lady of the Rosary, Mazagaon - South Mumbai Deanery
 - 30th October: Holy Family, Andheri East - Andheri Deanery
- Fr Luke participated in an Ecology Networking programme at Nadiad, Gujarat from 24th-26th July
- Fr Luke conducted an Eco Spirituality programme for teachers of schools run by the Religious of Jesus and Mary (RJM) schools on 5th August at Byculla and on 12th August at Pune
- An Eco Youth camp took place at Alibaug from 13th-14th August and read updates on parishes participating in our Youth wing's Eco Relay on pages 16-18
- We celebrated listening to the voice of creation with a Season of Creation Gathering on 10th September (read more on page 14)
- Sessions of the Certificate Course for Eco Ambassadors were held on 25th September and 2nd, 9th and 30th October - participants will receive their certificates on 5th February 2023!
- Fr Luke and Shawna animated the afternoon session of the seminar on Disaster Management and Care for Creation organised by Raigad Deanery's Care for Creation core group at Kolkhe on 27th September
- On 29th September, Fr Luke conducted a session on *Laudato Si'* for animators of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) at Pune
- The AOE collaborated with Muktisagar Prabhodhan Kendra for a *Harit Bal Melava* for children of Bhayandar Deanery on 1st November
- On 10th November, Fr Luke and Shawna gave an input on *Enlivening Ecological Stewardship in Our Parishes* for the Kurla Deanery at Shivaji Nagar, and Fr Luke spoke on the *Laudato Si' Goals* at Byculla for the South Mumbai Deanery
- Fr Luke and Shawna conducted an online session *Impact of COVID-19 on the Environment* for the Deepen Your Faith course on 19th November
- On 10th December, Fr Luke took a session on *The Bible and Care for Creation* for laity at Bandra

Listen to the voice of creation

The glorious chorus of the angels' praise (cf. Luke 2:13-14) at Christ's birth precedes a loud chorus of lamentation when Herod orders the killing of Bethlehem's infants (cf. Matthew 2:16-18). In our times, Pope Francis points out the dissonance we find in the voice of creation - between its sweet song in praise of our beloved Creator and its cries of anguish at the mistreatment of our common home.

Are we listening?

This Christmas and beyond, how will we respond to the voices of mother earth, the different creatures, the poor, the native people and the young?

Listening to the voice of creation inspires us to be more mindful this joyous season. Thus, A GREEN CHRISTMAS FOR ME IS...

... to sow the seeds of reconciliation, unity and peace amidst all the divisions and uncertainty to restore the broken world with our love and care for one another.

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

... not just about the new in-season sale, but a chance to let sustainability prevail!

Sandra Pereira
Holy Family, Andheri East

... the season of giving, giving back to Mother Earth.

Enola Gonsalves
St Andrew, Bandra West

... Jesus' love blooming for me; an evergreen love!

Snehlata Alphonso
St Francis Xavier, Dabul

... taking less and giving more, without counting the cost.

Adele Godinho
Holy Family, Andheri East

... instilling the values of sustainable living in our children, friends, and community - all it takes is a little effort and time to make everything from our decorations to our food more green.

George D'Mello
Our Lady of Salvation, Dadar West

... to buy less, buy smart and think green.

Leander Viegas
Our Lady of the Visitation, Nerul

LISTEN TO THE CHORUS OF NATURE

Marcia D'Cunha | St John the Baptist, Thane

All God's creatures got a place in the choir
Some sing low and some sing higher
Some sing out loud on the telephone wire
And some just clap their hands or paws or anything they got now.

Folk musician Bill Staines has described so vividly for us the chorus of the animal world, as he speaks of the little birds taking up the high notes with the croaking bull-frog, groaning hippo and mooing cow holding up the bass! Why just animals? Listen to the wind whistling through the trees, the palms swaying in the breeze, the waves lapping the shore... what better music could you ask for? This chorus of creation is only matched by the rich artistic canvas of nature - stunning shades of green, picture-perfect blues and the golden sun rays dazzling you with their unmatched beauty. Sadly, too often, our headphones in our ears, the phones in our hands, a raucous rock band playing at full volume, can block out the gentle music of nature. We miss the hasty shuffle of crabs on the rocks, the whispering of the leaves, even the roar of the sea, while our earth struggles to communicate with us.

It's not surprising. Our efforts at distancing ourselves from the honking of traffic, the venting of road rage, the din of a construction site and the general cacophony of the city have rendered us deaf to the symphony of nature. What's more, our haste towards 'development' may still the gentle voices of nature and slowly kill our world.

Another kind of chorus is playing out loud and clear, if we want to hear it. The sound of saw or axe felling down a mighty forest. The hacking cough of those terminally affected by pollution. The howling of dying elephants and rhinos, killed for ivory. The cries of the poor as their habitats become extinct due to floods or desertification.

Sensitive singers and music composers have sung their warnings to alert us all. Michael Jackson's Earth Song with its real, chord-striking imagery has brought to life the soulful cry of our planet Earth, with those 'aahs, oohs' and that oft repeated chant, "What about us?"

Did you ever stop to notice
All the blood we've shed before?
Did you ever stop to notice
This crying Earth, these weeping shores?
Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah, Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh
Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah, Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh

Country singers like John Denver have eulogised nature and albums are dedicated to this theme. His song It's about time summed up the urgency to preserve our planet, almost forty years ago.

It's about time we start to see it, the Earth is our only home
It's about time we start to face it, we can't make it here all alone
It's about time we start to listen, to the voices in the wind
It's about you and me together, and it's about time.

Right here in India in 2020, A R Rehman created an amazing anthem, with the angelic voices of little children, accompanied by their stomping of feet and beat boxing, to wake us up to the need to conserve water. MISSION PAANI was a campaign to raise awareness and who better to communicate this message than enthusiastic little children!

*Poochegi dharti
Tab kahan the tum
Nadi ro rahi thi
Tab kahan the tum*

*Swachata aur paani
Humko bachani hai ye zindagani*

The earth will ask
Where were you when
the river was crying
Where were you then

Sanitation and water
We have to save this life

Indigenous peoples who value nature, and have retained their bonds with it, warned us of the dire consequences in not protecting our planet. A Cree American-Indian prophecy reads, “Only when the last tree has been cut down, the last fish been caught, and the last stream poisoned, will we realise we cannot eat money.” “Songs come from creation itself,” and “songs come from the earth. We are merely vessels through which it can flow and come forth and give joy...,” explained Whirling Cloud Woman from the Ute peoples.

Even the song Colours of the Wind from the Disney movie Pocahontas has so much of worth that needs to be reflected upon.

The rainstorm and the river are my brothers
The heron and the otter are my friends
And we are all connected to each other
In a circle, in a hoop that never ends ...
... Can you sing with all the voices of the mountain
Can you paint with all the colors of the wind.

India has a long tradition of folk music inspired by nature. Many of the biggest environmental movements of the past fifty years have been chronicled in song. Three years ago, in the green lungs of Mumbai – in Aarey, where forests were alive to the sound of music, discordant notes were struck.

The proposed Metro car shed, the acquisition of forest land united the Warli tribals and Adivasi activist Prakash Bhoir with Swadesi – a socially conscious group of writers and artists. Bhoir’s song The Warli Revolt that rent the air on a night 300 trees were felled soon went viral with Hindi and Hinglish versions, energising the #SaveAarey campaign.

*Hume na pasand ye khota vikas,
na hai tum jaise choron pe vishwas
Metro banane ukhado tum zhaad
jab zhaad na bachege kaise loge saans
Saja pakshi prani ki hai kya,
kyu inhe bedakhal kar rahe aisa
Udyogi sarkar hume rahe fasa,
hume vata ke ye bana re paisa*

We don’t like your ‘fake development’,
nor do we trust your thieves.
To build a metro you’re killing the trees
When they are gone then how’ll you breathe?
What did our birds and animals do,
why are you evicting them too?
Your sell-out industrialist government
is making us fools

Prakash Bhoir has led many a protest against the destruction of Aarey's biodiversity and the relocation of Adivasis from their ancestral lands.

He expresses his disappointment in the people of Mumbai. "Aarey is an oxygen factory. The entire population of Mumbai depends on Aarey for clean air. Yet, whenever there is a protest, some 100 people turn up. Why?"

The Aarey project is once more in the forefront. And the only forest we possess, Mumbai's lungs in fact, that offers Mumbaikars a harmonious chorus of birds, animals and forest, will sooner or later be choked. The symphony will turn to cacophony, the green life-giving pulse of the city will be reduced to shanties, slums and all the appendages of a concrete jungle.

Unless we change course to bring back the music, the song of creation, the chorus of earth's voices. Can we bring back the harmony in our lives? Wherever there are heartening signs, we must nurture them. Efforts at teaming up with indigenous peoples, paper batteries, water conservation, resurgent coral reefs, green architecture are all cause for optimism.

Arundhati Roy gives us hope when she says, "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathe."



WE ASKED...

for links to your original compositions and / or songs or hymns sung by you on Listening to the Voice of Creation
So in addition to carols this Christmas, here's your chorus:



The **Confirmation group of St Blaise, Andheri West** (Amboli) regale with creation songs: <https://youtu.be/olxx3UKvRvw>



Rhonda Divecha from Our Lady of Lourdes, Malad West (Orlem) gives us a modification of All Things Bright and Beautiful, on the theme of Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si' - On Care for Our Common Home: <https://youtu.be/QSZFLdLQ4Hc>

Singing of the encyclical, we (that is the **AOE** in collaboration with the the FABC Office of Human Development and Climate Change Desk and the CCBI Commission for Ecology) came up with Laudato Si' - The Song in 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9NESayggyU>

Its popularity is reflected in the several requests we have received to perform it.



Here's the outcome of one of these requests all the way from America:

A Delightful Song

Sr Mary Ann Caspary FMA | Music Teacher - St Theresa School, New Jersey, USA

On 28th April 2022, St Theresa School in Kenilworth, New Jersey, USA, celebrated an Earth Day Liturgy in our parish Church of Saint Theresa. Kindergarten through 8th grade participated in the liturgy with prayer and song. At the Offertory, the whole school sang the delightful song composed by Fr Ryan Alex for the Archdiocesan Office for Environment in Mumbai, India. A speaker box was connected to a laptop which played the song loud and clear while all the students joyfully sang out.

They had been practising the song in their music class for several weeks and always sang it with gusto. They loved the video which was played during their music class and learned a little about Indian culture when they saw and understood the dance performed to the words on the video. I don't think they will ever forget that song and above all, it has helped them to be more aware of ecological issues and how ALL of us are called and can make a difference!

Fr Bolmax Fidelis Pereira, Convener of the Goa Diocesan Commission for Ecology (DCE), sends us four songs:

1. **Save the Earth** composed by Lloyed Pereira:
<https://youtu.be/Kxe0gnuj4dQ>



2. A Konkani song (originally from the Tiatr *Panvdde* by Prince Jacob) on the DCE Instagram page sung by Monica Vaz, the head nurse at Chicalim's sub-district hospital:
<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CGJtQtUnCl6/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY=>



3. A sort of anti-coal campaign protest song by Bollywood composer Joe D'Costa, sung by him with Fr Bolmax Pereira and Pranita Gaude:
<https://youtu.be/1IrCdEOl8oc>



4. And finally, *Amchi Mati* by Joe D'Costa and Fr Bolmax Pereira that was chosen as an anthem for the Goa government's Save the Soil campaign:
<https://youtu.be/RGcb8IK7YXY>





AOE SEASON OF CREATION GATHERING

Naomi Gonsalves - Eco Ambassador | St John the Baptist, Thane



On 10th September 2022, the Archdiocesan Office for Environment (AOE) hosted a Season of Creation gathering at the Salvation Seva Kendra Hall, Dadar, with around a hundred persons in attendance.

Following a welcome address by Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ (Head – AOE), the gathering commenced with a bang as Astrid Lobo, the compere for the evening, rapped an original composition and then got all of us to shake a leg and get to know one another. As everyone got acquainted with each other, it was time to deep dive into the real issues. We went in to groups to discuss for a short while what we thought were the most pressing environmental issues. The young and old came up with concerns such as electronic waste management, single use plastic, deforestation, fast fashion and so on and so forth. We then had an insightful session by environmentalist Mr Johnson Fernandez on ways in which we could reduce our environmental impact. He promoted the need to restore urban ecosystems, highlighting five lifestyle changes to do so: avoiding single use plastic, riding a bicycle to reduce carbon footprint, switching to green infrastructure, conserving urban green spaces, and buying sustainably by spending locally. On a lighter note, the youth of the AOE put up a witty skit which shone light on the consequences of deforestation. Ms Shawna Nemesia Rebello (Consultant – AOE) then enlightened us on the initiatives that have been conducted by the AOE over the years and what is in the pipeline for the near future.

A high point of the gathering was the distribution of The Ishwar and Penny Bajaj Awards for Committed Environmentalism by His Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay for ecological stewardship in the diocese and in the wider community. Recipients included:

- Environmental Cell of Our Lady of Lourdes Church – Orlem, Malad West
- Green Cell of Our Lady of the Visitation Church, Nerul
- St Michael's Church, Mahim
- St Anthony of Padua Church, Kalwa
- The Confirmation Group – St Anthony's Church, Vakola
- AOE Eco Youth Movement
- Don Bosco Senior Secondary School, Nerul
- Kherwadi Social Welfare Association / Yuva Parivartan
- Startup Green Biz

It was indeed inspiring to hear some of the initiatives that have been undertaken which could become a road map for others to adopt. After the vote of thanks by Bishop Allwyn D'Silva (Bishop In-Charge – AOE), the evening concluded with a Mass by Cardinal Gracias with hopes and inspiration for a fruitful Season of Creation.



*Listen to the
Voice of creation*
SEASON OF CREATION 2022

AWARDS AND EXPERIENCES

Fr Leon Cruz SDB | Don Bosco Youth Services, Matunga



Don Bosco Youth Services (DBYS) marked the Season of Creation with two key programmes: Young Green Researches Award and Voices of Creation.

The Young Green Researches Award was an opportunity for the youth to listen to the voice of creation groaning in pain, facing neglect and destruction, and offer their simple but unique research solutions to make our planet earth a better place. The two best projects (*Alternate Eco-friendly Distribution Systems* by Pramila Irudayaraj and a *Study on the Adverse Health Effects Generated by Kanjurmarg Dumping Ground* by Jino Johnson and team) were awarded cash prizes by the DBYS to further their research.

Voices of Creation, a two-day programme in September, was held in the green city of Nashik in Maharashtra with youth from Mumbai and Nashik. The youth had varied experiences like sessions on eco-spirituality, hands-on work experience in small farms and exciting nature trails. One of the highlights was interaction with a local farmer in his farm which enlightened the youth to many aspects of farming including the struggles of farmers. They also visited other vineyards and farms on the way. This was followed by the traditional Maharashtrian food. The Holy Eucharist in nature and the Forest Bath session gave a rich spiritual experience to the youth. The two days in Nashik helped them to listen to the varied voices of creation and gave a new lease of enthusiasm to care for our common home.



A HEALING PRAYER FOR SILENCED VOICES

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

To heal the ailing planet and sustain its vibrant life, a Eucharistic adoration was conducted by the Green Cell of the Our Lady of the Visitation Church (OLVC), Nerul on 2nd September 2022. Three candles were lit during the prayer service to represent the voice of biodiversity, indigenous people and women whom we have failed to acknowledge. A moment of silence was maintained as the candles were extinguished in memory of the voices of creation that have been silenced. The adoration concluded with the Benediction, seeking for the grace to be enlightened by the Spirit that renews the face of the earth.



OLVC ECO RELAY INITIATIVES

Leander Viegas | Our Lady of the Visitation, Nerul



Each parish had to perform one eco-activity for the Eco Relay organised by the AOE Youth team, and then pass on a sapling of a native plant species to the next participating parish. But I thought why just one, why not conduct more activities? And thus we ended up doing four eco-activities in the month of April. Our OLVC team for this relay consisted of Mervin, Yannah and myself.

Our first activity was the **e-waste collection drive**. There was a great response to this. Some of our parishioners called us and requested us to pick up the heavy gadgets like microwave, CPU, printers from their residence. E-waste was collected over two days in our parish, which the recycler from Vashi collected and on the third day.

Next was the **plastic bottles collection drive**. This was rather a difficult collection but nevertheless, we managed to collect 516 plastic bottles. We had put up a dustbin in Central Park, Kharghar especially for plastic bottles and simultaneously also collected bottles from our neighbourhood.

During the summer season many birds die due to lack of food and water, so we decided to keep some **bird feeders / water containers** in our parish premises. We were delighted to see that this was being used by the birds and hence we also encouraged our friends to install bird feeders in their balconies.

Last but not the least was the **milk packet collection drive**, which was hectic as we had to collect milk packets from tea stalls and restaurants on a daily basis, but we challenged ourselves and went ahead. The most important part was that we ourselves washed and cleaned each and every milk packet with our bare hands, collecting a total of 2270 milk packets during the month. It was a big accomplishment for us and we gave ourselves a pat on our shoulders. At the end of April, the plastic bottles and the packets were given away to a recycler at Turbhe.

Having completed our activities, we passed on a sapling to Sacred Heart Church, Vashi. Our part in the Eco relay may be over, but we continue working with the youth to collect plastic bottles and milk packets.



REFILL-RELAY

Dianne Andrade | St Peter, Bandra West



Did you know that an average human consumes 5 grams of plastic (the equivalent of a credit card) every week, or that by the year 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish?

That's why we chose to promote reusing plastic containers as our Eco Relay activity. On 4th and 5th of June, the Care for Creation Group of St Peter's Church Bandra organised a successful 'Refill Revolution Campaign' in partnership with Refillable. Parishioners became part of this zero waste revolution by their bottles refilled with their favourite brands.

We urge you to make the refill choice yourselves, reuse and repurpose everything so that we live zero waste lives and save the planet together!



OUR RELAY TREK TO MAMA BHANJA

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

13th August - the day for our trek had finally arrived! For our Eco Relay activity organised by the Environmental Cell of Orlem, all 131 of us (many of whom were first-timers) were all going to Thane for a one-day trek to Mama Bhanja Hills.

After an introductory session, the trek began with great enthusiasm and excitement. Halfway through, our energy was exhausted, but the breathtaking view from every angle kept us going. At one point amid the fog with the path ahead obscured, we felt like we were walking with the clouds. As soon as we reached the top, all of us had a sense of accomplishment, and the view certainly made the struggle worthwhile. We took a few pictures, and set out on our way down. Honestly, it was tougher going down as it had rained mid-trek and there was moss and loose mud everywhere.

But we all managed and reached the base camp in no time.

Even while having leg pain, twisted ankles and sore necks, we were still very happy with the amazing experience. Now we just can't wait for the announcement of the next trek!





A PURPOSEFUL RELAY TREK

Roselle Fernandes | Our Lady of Mercy, Pokhran

20th August was a special trek for the cause of the environment organised by the Youth of Our Lady of Mercy Church, Pokhran as an Eco Relay activity. Being a working day, not too many people joined in, but even a few make a huge difference to our planet! As we headed up the trail, we could see the upsetting human menace - Trash!! The need for eco trekking became obvious; we must pass on this message as often as we can - each of us have to be responsible and kind to the ecosystem, and not leave our rubbish behind. After spending a good time in the greens capturing memories and enjoying the waterfalls, we did our bit to pick up the trash on our way back. We are so fortunate to have these beautiful mountains very close to our parish in Thane itself, and we look forward to involving more parishioners in eco treks. In the meantime, let's spread awareness and keep our surroundings clean... continuing to do things for a good cause.



QUANTIFYING RECYCLING

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

With the support and cooperation of parish priest Fr Lancy Pinto, committee members and parishioners of St Michael's Church, Mahim, the Bombay Catholic Sabha St Michael's Unit regularly spearheads the recycling of plastic bottles and single-use plastics (to Bisleri), e-waste (to Cerebra) and Tetra Pak cartons (to RUR GreenLife). Some of the quantities reported to the AOE this year include:

	June	August	October	December
Plastics	29 kg	27 kg	26 kg	33 kg
Tetra Pak Cartons	450	550		450
E - Waste			64.22 kg	



ZOC - ZERO OUT CARBON

Anjali Heredia Gracias | ZOC Team



In December 2021, St Andrew High School, Bandra proudly presented the fifth edition of **Yeh-lo Santa**. While the Red Santa gives gifts to children at Christmas time, the Yellow (Yeh-Lo) Santa collects gifts from children after Christmas and distributes these gifts to the underprivileged in the community. The theme for 2021, chosen by Principal Fr Magi Murzello, was **Save Yeh-Lo Santa! Zero Out Carbon!**. The Zero in Zero Out Carbon represents both Aryabhata's revolutionary invention of the number, exported by India to the rest of the world; as well as the country's bold pledge to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2070, post the COP26 summit at Glasgow.

Over the first quarter of 2022, the students at St Andrew's learnt strategies to reduce their carbon footprint. They started with the first basic rule – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – via a pedal dustbin designed specifically for garbage segregation. These bins were gifted to the students in a specially designed reusable bag that folded into a small pouch – very easy to tuck inside a handbag/ purse while out shopping. There was also a Zero Out Carbon folder with three green leaves and a special marker pen. Students wrote down their personal strategies to reduce their carbon footprint and returned them to the school. On 26th January, the students took a pledge to Zero Out Carbon and hung the leaves on the 'Tree of Promises'. This tree, made from recycled plastic bottles and waste products, stands outside the school lobby. The initiative works on the premise of 'Don't make sacrifices; make a choice... change your lifestyle!'; thus hooking the adopter with its ease of use.

The adopter is encouraged to shortlist a few sustainable lifestyle changes like unplugging devices when not in use, using public transport, carrying cloth shopping bags, etc. They then write it down and save it as a reminder to adhere to these changes. To reinforce the seriousness of the issue at hand, Fr Magi also twisted the lyrics of the catchy Tenglish hit 'Why This Kolavery Di' to 'Why Is Coal-our-worry, Dear' - do check it out the ZOC2070! YouTube channel!

Fr Magi believes that our schools must be at the heart of this transformation because schools spark and galvanise community change. They are well-positioned to harness the positive and resilient energies of young minds and keep them focused on the Earth's health each time a decision must be taken. In fact, young people have been the driving force of climate action around the world as they must safeguard their future.

The initiative has garnered support from the Archdiocesan Office for Environment and the Consulate General of Sweden. On the occasion of World Environment Day 2022, St Andrew's Centre for Philosophy and Performing Arts presented 'I want to be a Hummingbird', a play that encouraged its audience of teachers and students to do their best to reduce global warming however small those gestures may be. To make a difference, grandiose gestures were not required. While Bishop Allwyn D'Silva was the Chief Guest that evening, Mr Erik Malmberg (Consul - Consulate General of Sweden in Mumbai) was the Guest Speaker. The Consulate also set up an exhibition detailing the efforts being put in by Sweden to reduce their carbon footprint.



As of today, more than 500 teachers and students across several Archdiocesan schools in Mumbai have attended workshops and have pledged to Zero Out Carbon. To know more, do visit our website – www.zoc2070.org.



ECO - FRIENDLY DAY

Sr Anitha Rodrigues SCC | Our Lady of Dolours High School, Marine Lines

The students of the Primary and Pre – Primary section of Our Lady of Dolours High School, Marine Lines celebrated “Eco - Friendly Day” on 29th July 2022, with great enthusiasm and vigour, portraying the saplings they had planted to promote the growth of trees to save lives. There was a beautiful display of a Green Army wearing the green attire by the Pre-Primary tiny tots. Our students come from a lower-strata of society. We created an awareness to improve the living style in the environment they live in and make this world a better place.



GREEN SALVATION

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

The Salvation Green Cell of the parish of Dadar's Our Lady of Salvation Church was inaugurated on 15th August this year with Fr Glasten Gonsalves as our Spiritual Director. On 21st August 2022, the entire team (comprising fifteen members at present) met for a presentation by an NGO on recycling and upcycling plastic.

During the Novena days for the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Salvation Green Cell put up a stall in the parish premises on 5th and 7th September and explained to the parishioners both the urgent need to save creation, take care of the environment and have a healthy lifestyle, as well as the scratch to finish of discarded plastic. On 8th September, with the help of the Youth and the Children's Parliament, a flash dance was performed after the Feast Mass to create an awareness of mother earth.

The church's Rosary Garden, maintained by the Salvation Green Cell, was blessed by Fr John Rumao on the evening of 1st October. A plantation of twenty-three fruit saplings, representing the twenty-three communities of the parish were planted on 5th October. As the rosary was recited daily in the Marian month of October, we thought of doing something different. A WhatsApp message sent to all parishes to switch off the lights and recite the Rosary at 8PM on 29th October received an outstanding response to this call. On 30th October, the Salvation Green Cell collaborated with the Parish Pastoral Council, the Small Christian Communities and the Youth to successfully conduct our first plastic drive in all four zones of the parish, with people of other faith participating. Over four hours, we collected approximately 336 kg of plastic which was then picked up by Bisleri.



There are more future plans, but we are taking a step at a time.



ECO WARRIORS IN ACTION

Monica Fernandes | St Andrew, Bandra West

Fired by their successful garbage collection drive in April and June, the Eco Warriors from different organisations united again for a clean up of the Bandra Bandstand Promenade. On 7th August 2022, more than 300 enthusiastic volunteers - the children of St Catherine's School, the Focolare family, Aasra Welfare Association, Divya Darshan, Rainbow Kids, St Anne's Cell and Youth, Bandra One ALM, the Council of Catholic Women – Mumbai and Goa, Inner Wheel Club of Bombay – Andheri East, Rotary Club of Bombay – Andheri, the St Andrew's Unit of Bombay Catholic Sabha, YWCA Bandra and Borivali units, Taj – Bandra and the Trustees of BBRT – Bandra - braved the showers to lend a helping hand! The volunteers gathered at Bandra Fort and were divided into groups to simultaneously either clean up or plant saplings at different locations along the promenade. For the trustees of St Catherine's School, this was an ideal opportunity to inculcate clean habits among the children and teach them about their duty towards the environment. The kids got a chance to develop their social skills while working alongside people from all walks of life. As some of these children come from broken homes, the drive gave them a feeling of self worth, of doing their bit for a worthy cause.



According to Global Citizen, there are 8 million tonnes of plastic waste in our oceans. The eco warriors did their bit to reduce some of this waste!

FRCRIT ECO CLUB TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

Baniz Antony | Fr C Rodrigues Institute of Technology, Vashi

On the occasion of seventy-five years of Independence *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, the Eco Club of Fr C. Rodrigues Institute of Technology (FrCRIT), Vashi celebrated this milestone by planting seventy-five trees in our Vashi campus on 15th August 2022.

After the flag hoisting and cultural programme, all the faculty members and students were involved in planting saplings of different species such as mango, custard apple, lemon, sweet lemon, Java plum, guava, chikoo, etc. The plantation was carried under the guidance of Fr S Almeida, Fr Sebastian, Dr S M Khot, and the Environment Consultant Mrs Rashmi Joshi. Five teams of students and faculty members led by Dr Pranali Choudhari and Dr Snehal Kargirwar accomplished this one humble step towards creating a pollution-free and greener society. This well-organised campaign witnessed active participation from all the students, faculty and non-teaching staff. Earlier in July, the Eco Club had planted fifty saplings of fruit-bearing trees in the FrCRIT campus, for a total of 125 saplings planted.



THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN MATHEMATICS AND THEOLOGY ON OUR ECOSYSTEM

Martin Nchedo Umeatuegbu | Nigeria (now studying in Rome)

Among the most ancient questions asked by philosophers are those regarding the origin of humans and the origin of the cosmos. Though being two different questions, both have the same answer in theology - both humans and the world have their origin in God (cf. *Genesis 1*).

Besides the theological answer, a famous response to the question of cosmo-genesis was given by the great mathematician and philosopher, Pythagoras of Samos. According to him, the universe originates from numbers. Even though mathematical items do not have real existence, their application and relevance are useful. Pythagoras' answer that the universe originates from numbers does not mean that numbers created the universe, but rather implies that numbers are infinite. Theology would take this further to reply to him that there is a residue of reference to creation contained in it. For if number is infinite, it is a way of explaining God who, devoid of age, is the Infinite Mover. But, while the mathematics of Pythagoras insists on numerical cosmo-genesis, the theology of creation answers that this numeral is important to God because numbers are used in explaining the divine. In other words, God is One in Three Persons, yet not divided.

However this argument is seen, there is information it has for our ecosystem - that we can hear numerical chants from creation. These songs from numbers appeal to us humans on how we should use and not abuse natural resources. Here, we imagine an interplay between Pythagoras and gematria (a Hebrew idea of values possessed by numbers). We shall limit it to three numbers: one, three and six.

The number one theologically refers to oneness and unity with reference to the One God who created all things, visible and invisible. Mathematically, it represents other numbers by standing as the unit or point from which other numbers progress both arithmetically and geometrically. Both theology and mathematics remind us that we have only one earth and it belongs to us all.

While the number three theologically echoes the Trinity, it mathematically refers to the three sides of a triangle. Deriving from the immediate paragraph above, both assert that since we have no other earth, how we use its resources affects us all.

The number six theologically refers to the days of creation, while mathematics presents it as the first multiple of three. Both remind us to be aware that creation comes from God and that it is morally unjust to destroy creation through our activities.

THE CRIES OF NATURE TO AN ECO-FRIENDLY KING

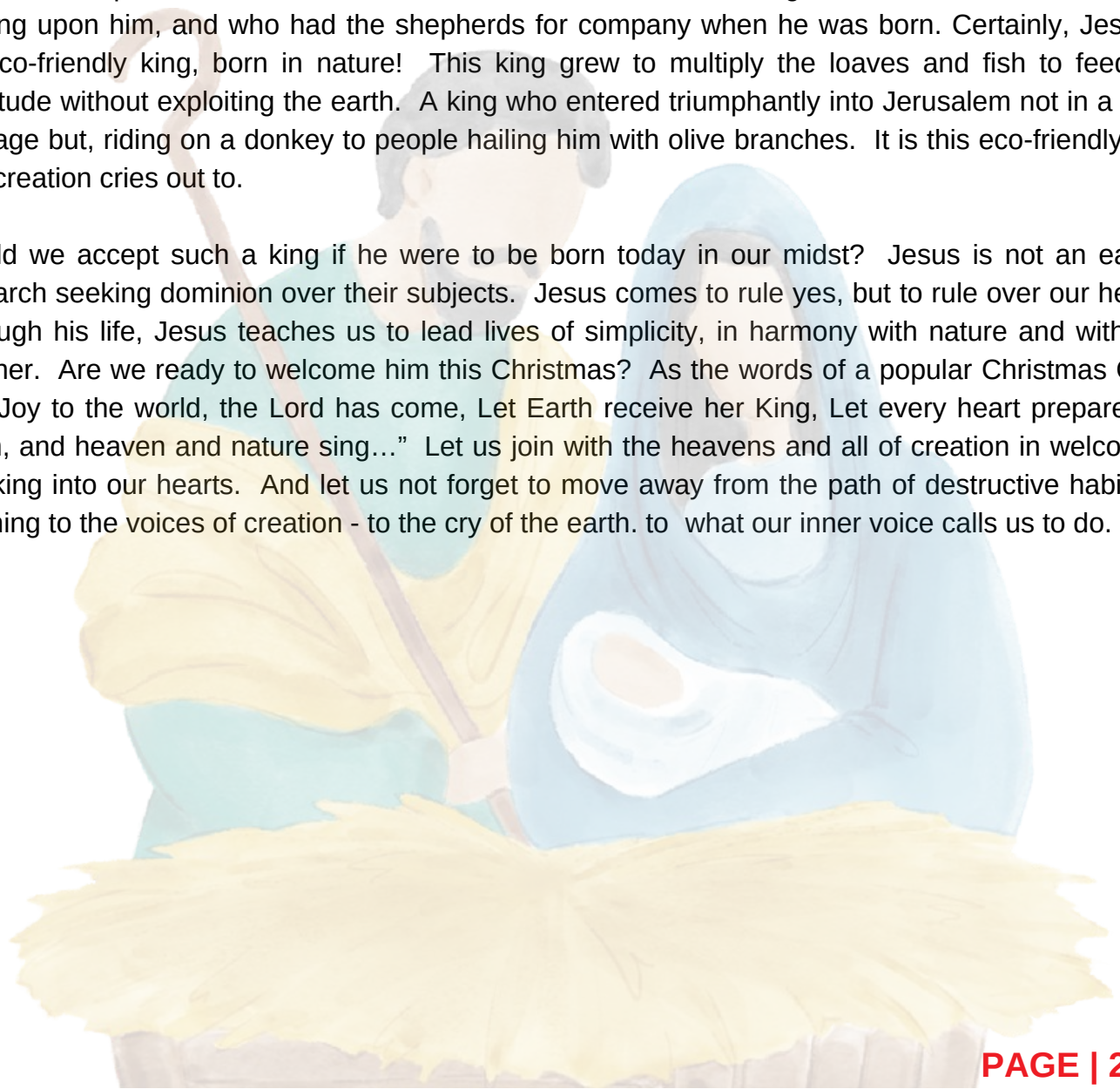
Melville X D'Souza | Our Lady of Lourdes, Malad West (Orlem)

Over the past few years, our country and the entire world has been facing hostile, strange weather conditions. Yes, climate change is for real. Here in our own city of Mumbai, we are witnessing the vagaries of nature. We are witnessing tremendous heat waves and erratic rainfall. No more is the monsoon season limited from June to September, but there are unseasonal showers throughout the year, resulting in destruction of crops, especially paddy and mangos.

How do we view the changes in the environment? Everytime we face hot weather, we curse the heat and move on. Everytime there are rain showers in the middle of festivities, we curse the rain and move on. Yes, we tend to just move on with our lives, putting the blame on nature herself. Nature has been sending us warning signals in the form of heat waves, thunderstorms, tsunamis, earthquakes and unseasonal rains. These are voices of creation and we need to listen to these voices.

We would do well to remember that more than 2000 years ago, a king was born to us. This king was not born in a palace, but in a stable with straw for his bed. A king who saw the moon and stars shining upon him, and who had the shepherds for company when he was born. Certainly, Jesus is an eco-friendly king, born in nature! This king grew to multiply the loaves and fish to feed the multitude without exploiting the earth. A king who entered triumphantly into Jerusalem not in a royal carriage but, riding on a donkey to people hailing him with olive branches. It is this eco-friendly king that creation cries out to.

Would we accept such a king if he were to be born today in our midst? Jesus is not an earthly monarch seeking dominion over their subjects. Jesus comes to rule yes, but to rule over our hearts. Through his life, Jesus teaches us to lead lives of simplicity, in harmony with nature and with one another. Are we ready to welcome him this Christmas? As the words of a popular Christmas Carol go, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come, Let Earth receive her King, Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing..." Let us join with the heavens and all of creation in welcoming this king into our hearts. And let us not forget to move away from the path of destructive habits by listening to the voices of creation - to the cry of the earth. to what our inner voice calls us to do.



MY AAREY EXPERIENCE

Pramila Irudayaraj | Young Green Researcher - Don Bosco Youth Services

My Aarey experience began in childhood with family walks to Aarey. Later I started venturing there with friends, experiencing the beauty and the wildness of nature: the beautiful butterflies, strange insects and curious little fish in the streams, along with a dense green diverse plethora of trees, creepers, etc.

In 2019, I went for my first protest to save Aarey. Oddly enough, it was at Marine Drive and we made a human chain along the coast. After that I started going regularly with my mother for the Sunday protests at Aarey picnic point. We even attended one of the High Court hearings where we met Aarey activists who work with the indigenous community of Aarey - the Warli tribe. The day the High Court hearing ended (5th October 2019), they started cutting trees and many people went to protect the trees. I was scared but went there along with my mother. On the way the words of Scripture "...I go before you always" (Dt 31:8) comforted me. I won't go into details of that night because it is already well documented.

After the first wave of COVID-19, some tree plantation activities started in Aarey guided by Sanjiv Valsan. Through him we became better acquainted with some Warli community members. We would buy organic vegetables, help with watering their farms, plant native trees and share meals with them. My favourite part was eating the fruits directly from the trees. But we noticed that the authorities had continued construction activities on open green land during the pandemic. I felt angry and helpless upon seeing this. A similar strategy was employed with the construction of the Coastal Road project, the work being done during the pandemic when people could not leave their homes. This revealed the link between destruction of the environment and the lack of true democracy in our municipal institutions.

With Maharashtra's sudden changes in political power, aggression in Aarey rose again. This time they started detaining anyone on site. Now the call was to stand outside the police station and demand the release of innocent alert citizens. I'm ashamed to say, out of fear I didn't go the first time. But a few days later a similar incident took place with fourteen people detained and while praying the 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary', I felt guidance and courage to go. At Aarey police station, they released the detainees around 6PM and the group decided to peacefully protest the same evening. By 9PM that night, we were all sitting on the ground at Birsa Munda Chowk, hands clasped to form a chain so that the police could not easily drag and detain any protestors.

Fear and uncertainty came in waves – we could be lathi charged, detained, cases put against each of us. All I could do was pray for God's guidance and Mother Mary's protection for the whole group, by repeating the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary'. The authorities tried to warn us of action to be taken and disagreement within the group grew whether we should stay or leave. Again I prayed, and I remembered Fr Stan Swamy who faced so much in standing up against injustice. Inspired by him and a fourteen-year old student next to me, the least I could do was stay. By God's grace, all went well. Later however, I learnt that cases had been put on a few people and the police were visiting the homes of others.

Many people don't see the point in protesting but I always think that we will face suffering one way or another, through illnesses from air pollution, drought or a loved one dying in a flood. At least some action now will reduce our regret in the future. Remember Boxer from Orwell's *Animal Farm*? He could have fought while he was young and strong but he chose to be complacent. He finally got the courage to push back only when it directly affected him, but by then he was too weak to make a difference.

THE MONSOONS AND ME

Rajiv Pereira | St Anthony, Malwani (Malad West)

We are blessed to have three seasons: summer (March -May), monsoon (June - October), and winter (November-February). After a period of scorching heat, everybody waits for the monsoons.

It is that time of the year everyone is happy - humans, and most importantly, nature. Monsoons play an important role for all of us. The smell of rain can help reduce stress and improve mood.

The nastiest monsoons I have ever experienced was last year when the false ceiling came down in my bedroom due to very heavy rains, just missing my wife and my dog. It left a huge crater in the ceiling. We immediately called our contractor who said that he could not do anything until the rains stopped completely. Till then, we somehow managed to pull through while staying in the other room.

This year the monsoons have been kind to me. I love plants and took a lot of interest in planting a lot of them this monsoon. I have put plants on the steps, the balcony and the window grills. After every rain shower, it is lovely to see them glow in their beautiful colours. Every morning as soon as I wake up, I open my window and see God's creation. The biggest joy and satisfaction I get is when I see my plants bloom with vibrant flowers.

When the seeds I plant start to sprout, I thank God for giving me hope that life will be better. Each flower that blooms and each leaf that grows are different from each other. God's ways are so mysterious! The most alluring part of the monsoons is when I see raindrops on the leaves, as they look like pearls and diamonds shining in all their glory.

The monsoons have been a teacher to me. This monsoon, I learnt quite a bit about gardening like making big drainage holes for my pots, pruning, cutting off the dead leaves, roots rotting due to heavy rains, etc. The biggest joy is wearing my raincoat and holding my plants in the rain, behaving like a child with a carefree mind. I have also learnt about rainwater harvesting and sustainable living. When it rains I keep a bucket outside to get it filled with rainwater, and I use the same water for watering my indoor plants. In this way, I save water.

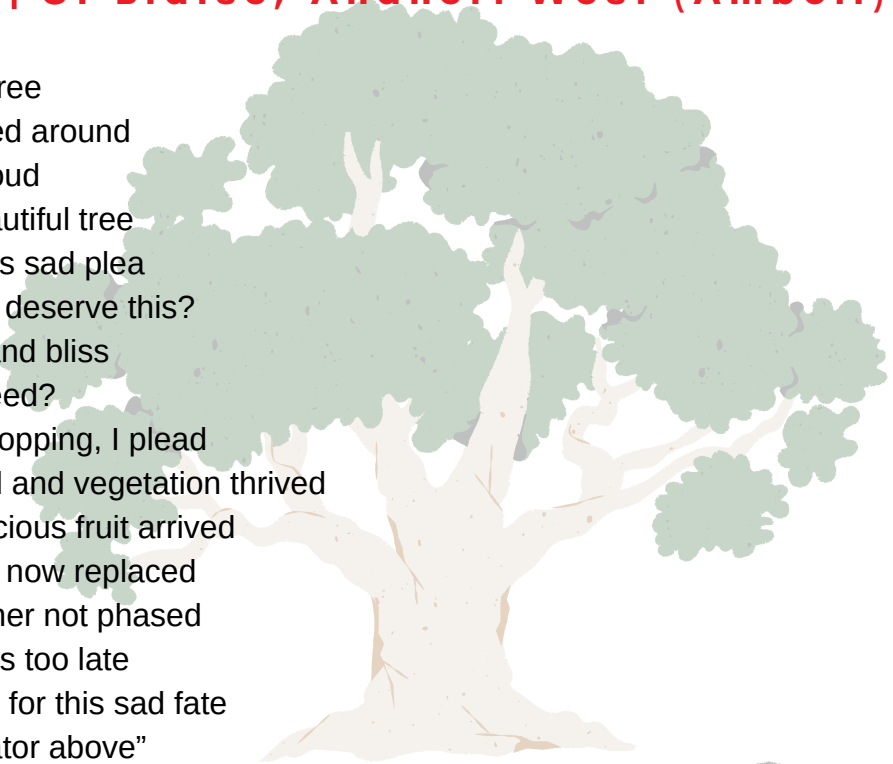
I would like to end by saying that without the monsoons nature will be lost, flora and fauna will die and humans will perish. So let's do our bit by growing more plants and trees to save mother earth.



FOR A GREEN GREEN MUMBAI

Dionysia Creado | St Blaise, Andheri West (Amboli)

In the silence of the night,
while passing by the old oak tree
I heard some sound and turned around
It sounded sad, audible and loud
To my surprise, I saw this beautiful tree
Bending over for me to hear its sad plea
It asked "What have I done to deserve this?
After you enjoyed my shade and bliss
Why upset me to suit your greed?
Please stop this senseless chopping, I plead
In years gone by, people lived and vegetation thrived
And every year crops and luscious fruit arrived
The lush beautiful greenery is now replaced
By concrete jungles in a manner not phased
Arrest this madness, before it's too late
Because you'll be responsible for this sad fate
Listen to the voice of the Creator above"

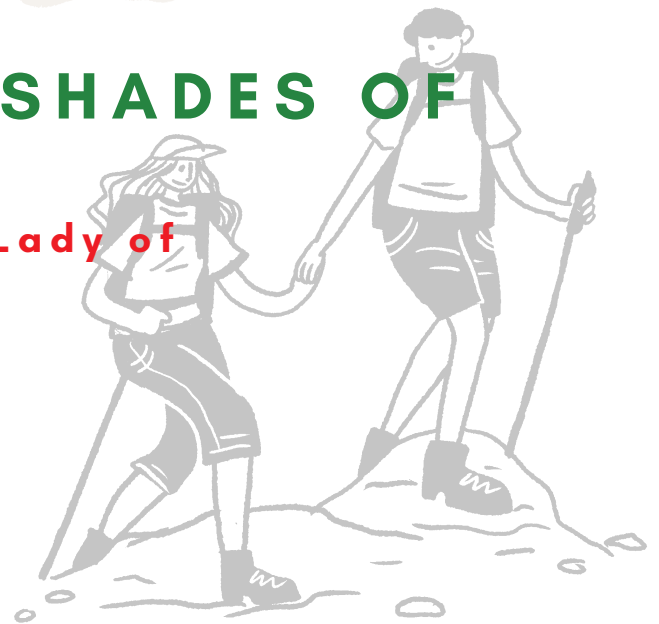


AMIDST VARYING SHADES OF GREEN

Elvira Lourdes Alvares | Our Lady of Lourdes, Malad West (Orlem)

Our Lady of Lourdes Church - E.C.O cell,
with its band of Eco warriors, on a trek we went,
Trudging along stony steps and steep paths,
that were not easy but rather pretty bent.
One hundred and thirty-one were we,
from age seven right up to seventy,
Rain, drizzle and shower, didn't dampen our spirit,
In fact we enjoyed it plenty.

With a mission to be amidst verdant hills,
to appreciate nature's gift and awesome beauty,
On the hills of Mama Bhanja, with its tall trees,
slippery rocks, gurgling streams, and serenity.
Lending a helping hand, motivating the other,
completing the climb and then pledging together,
To protect and sustain the environment,
by doing our bit and encouraging each other.



The elation and the frustration,
the joy and the pain,
The ascent and the descent,
the warm sun and the cool rain.
Aware of the striking landscape,
aware of strange sounds of birds and insects
unseen,
There we heard the voice of creation,
there we heard it, amidst the varying shades of
green!



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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