

together

a national family magazine

"YOUR CHOICES... YOUR ACTIONS.
THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU WHO YOU ARE."



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**The Sacred Art of
Caregiving**

Dr George John

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**A Story of Caregiving and
Unwavering Hope**

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**From Coma to Calling:
A Brother's Testimony**

Mathew Joy

Together is a national family magazine. It is a monthly, published by the Franciscans (OFM) in India. It was started in 1935 in Karachi, now in Pakistan. It got its present name in 1966.

The magazine *Together* is a conversation platform. Nothing changes until our families change. It is an effort at making worlds meet by bringing

down fearful, pretentious and defensive walls. *Together* is a journey, an ever-expansive journey—from me to us, from us to all of us, and from all of us to all. Let us talk, let us cross borders. The more we converse and traverse, we discover even more paths to talk about and travel together.

Together is also an effort to uncover our shared humanity.

Your critical and relevant write-ups that promote goodness, inclusivity and shared humanity are welcome. Your articles must be mailed to **editor@togethermagazine.in** before the 15th of every month.

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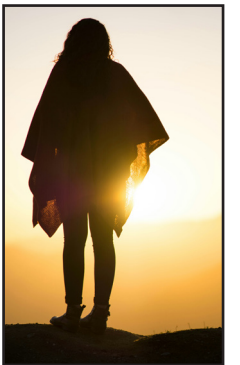
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Caregiving Is a Calling

To every caregiver: thank you for the sacrifices you make, thank you for choosing dignity and love over indifference, presence over profit, and service over self.

SAJIP MATHEW OFM

You and I were once completely helpless—dependent on someone else for our very survival. We were fed, changed, comforted, and loved into existence. And if we are fortunate to live long enough, many of us will return to that place of needing others once again. This is the cycle of human life, and caregivers make that cycle work. A caregiver, meaning an unpaid informal caregiver, is a spouse, partner, family member, friend, or neighbour involved in assisting others with activities of daily living and medical tasks.

This calling is not easy. The hours are long. The emotional weight and drain can be overwhelming. How long can one keep comforting and assisting? The call to be caregivers is a call to be superman and superwoman. I am reminded of the weighty and momentous dialogue from the Superman film, which resonates beyond superhero stories, “Your choices, Clark. Your actions. That’s what makes you who you are.” Clark, in the film, could use his abilities for personal gain, domination, or destruction, but he consistently chooses to assist others.

Statistics tell us that our elderly population is growing. According to the World Health Organisation, in 2020, the world population of those 60+ was one billion, and is projected to reach 2.1 billion by 2050. This increase is happening at an unprecedented pace, particularly in developing countries. More people survive

accidents and illnesses that would have been fatal decades ago. Mental health awareness is breaking down barriers, helping us recognise needs that were once hidden in shame and silence. With continued wars and conflicts, and when parents for other reasons become unstable, the need for kinship caregiving is also on the rise.

The need for caregivers is increasing. The demand for people who believe that the dignity of care recipients matters must increase too. I have seen caregivers who are five years old, comforting a grandmother with dementia. I have met others who found their calling at their retirement when they themselves had encountered illness and difficulties, urging them to offer the profound gift of human compassion—caregiving.

Caregiving is not just helping, but the guarding of human dignity. When the world turns away from mental illness in fear, a caregiver steps forward with understanding. When society looks at an elderly person and sees decline, a caregiver sees a lifetime of contribution, experiences, and memories that demand listening and gratitude. Caregivers serve as advocates and preservers of dignity. They see past the wheelchair to the person within, beyond the confused words to the soul trying to communicate, through the challenging behaviours to the individual struggling to maintain their sense of self. They become voices for the voiceless and champions for those whose autonomy may be compromised due to age, illness, or both.



Caregivers are often involved in decision making with and, in some circumstances, for the care recipients, as individuals with advanced illnesses often lack decision-making capacities.

Navigating the process of aging and dying of our loved ones, or navigating through the lives of those in our families and communities with special needs and mobility issues, is not easy. How can we make the most of one’s dying days when they are suffering from dementia, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, or even fatal illnesses like cancer? How can we make the most of the situation for the one who is ill or dying, and also for the one who is caring? Toine Heijmans in his TEDx Talk speaks about what he and his family went through in the process of caregiving. He says that the day when his father was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, the entire family too was diagnosed as clueless and stranded. They had automatically been appointed as caregivers, but in truth were lost and did not know what to do. How do we step forward to care?

The complexity of the caregiving role has increased in recent years. Though there is no fixed path with regards to the intensity of care or the duration of care, caregivers traditionally provide material, physical, and emotional support. But what is more challenging, according to a study done on caregiving trajectories, is that a family caregiver must be aware that there is a change in the balance of reciprocity in the caregiver–care recipient relationship. With increasing needs, the care recipient may not

be able to give much to the relationship while needing more from it. In addition, the care recipient’s own emotional response to his or her changing circumstances may require a higher level of emotional support from the caregiver.

In addition to the above, caregivers are often involved in decision making with and, in some circumstances, for the care recipients, as individuals with advanced illnesses often lack decision-making capacities. Family/community caregivers often need to serve as advocates and care coordinators. As advocates, their role is to identify and to help care recipients obtain needed community and health care resources, supplies, and funds, as the care recipient is often unable to voice their needs.

Though the effects of caregiving are not all negative, caregiving still remains a massive test of one’s patience, tolerance, and endurance. To every caregiver: thank you for the sacrifices you make, thank you for seeing dignity where others see burden, thank you for choosing love over indifference, presence over profit, service over self. You are heroes in the truest sense—not because you wear capes, but because you show up, day after day, to make someone else’s life a little brighter, a little easier, a little more filled with hope.



The Sacred Art of Caregiving

DR GEORGE JOHN

Caregiving is an act of profound human compassion, a relationship where one individual assumes responsibility for another's well-being, often at a cost to their own physical, emotional, and financial resources. It encompasses a spectrum of activities, from assisting with daily physical tasks like eating, dressing, and mobility, to providing emotional and psychological support to foster dignity and a sense of belonging. At its core, caregiving is rooted in empathy, the capacity to understand and share the feelings of another, and in the philosophical concept of self-giving love, often described as agape, a love that seeks no reward.

Globally, caregiving is a growing necessity. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance, there are approximately 53 million family caregivers in the United States, representing nearly 21% of the population. In the United Kingdom, an estimated 5.7 million people provide care for loved ones, amounting to 12% of the adult population. In India, where cultural traditions often dictate that caregiving is a familial duty, the numbers are harder to quantify, but studies suggest that over 100 million individuals, mostly women, provide care to the elderly or disabled family members. These statistics underscore the magnitude of caregiving as an integral component of human life and societal functioning.

Caregiving manifests differently across cultures, reflecting societal norms, religious beliefs, and familial structures. In Western countries like the US and the UK, caregiving often involves external support systems such as home care agencies or nursing homes, influenced by individualistic cultural values. Conversely, in India and other collectivist societies, caregiving is viewed as a familial obligation. The eldest son or daughter, often supported by extended family, traditionally assumes the caregiving role. The concept of "filial piety," rooted in Confucian and Hindu traditions, imbues caregiving with a moral and spiritual dimension, making it both a duty and an act of devotion.

The obligation and duty inherent in caregiving roles can, however, lead to role strain, particularly when caregivers lack adequate support. In the West, the balance between professional obligations and caregiving duties often creates tension, while in collectivist societies, the lack of external support places immense pressure on individuals, particularly women, who shoulder most of the caregiving responsibilities. Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential to developing policies and practices that address the unique challenges caregivers face globally.

In the Indian context, caregiving is traditionally embedded in the structure of the joint family, especially in rural and semi-urban settings. Younger family members, typically daughters, daughters-in-law, or nieces, often assume caregiving responsibilities by default.

The Philosophy of Caregiving

At its philosophical core, caregiving represents the intersection of ethical duty and altruism. Philosophers like Emmanuel Levinas have argued that the essence of humanity lies in our responsibility for the “Other.” This responsibility is not contractual but intrinsic; we are bound to care for one another simply because we coexist. Levinas posits that the self is defined through its relationship to others, and caregiving becomes a moral obligation arising from this interconnectedness. The act of caregiving, therefore, is not about fulfilling social expectations but about responding to the call of the vulnerable other, an act that defines our humanity.

Carol Gilligan’s *ethics of care* further expands this understanding. She critiques traditional moral theories like Kantian ethics for their emphasis on abstract principles and universality, arguing instead for an approach rooted in relationships and context. Caregiving, through Gilligan’s lens, is a relational act that values empathy and emotional intelligence over rigid moral duties. This perspective challenges the notion of caregiving as a burden, presenting it instead as a path to personal growth and mutual flourishing.

Adding depth to these perspectives is the work of Edith Stein, who highlights the spiritual and psychological dimensions of caregiving. Stein, a philosopher and phenomenologist, emphasised *empathy* as a foundational human capacity that enables understanding and connection. For Stein, caregiving is not merely a physical act but a spiritual one, reflecting the caregiver’s capacity to enter into the lived experiences of others. This empathetic engagement is what transforms caregiving into an act of profound moral and existential significance.

Caregivers

Caregivers often exhibit a unique set of traits, including resilience, patience, and emotional intelligence. Research in personality psychology has shown that individuals high in agreeableness and conscientiousness are more likely to succeed as caregivers. Empathy, the ability to connect with and understand another’s emotions, is perhaps the most critical trait. Caregivers must also possess adaptability and problem-solving skills, as they frequently encounter unpredictable challenges that require immediate solutions. Studies also suggest that those with a strong sense of purpose and intrinsic motivation are more likely to thrive in caregiving roles, finding meaning and fulfilment in their work.

However, caregiving is not for everyone. People who lack emotional stability, who are highly self-centred, or who struggle with empathy are generally unsuited to caregiving roles. Those with unresolved personal trauma may find caregiving re-traumatising, leading to burnout or even neglect of the person in their care. Another category includes individuals with controlling tendencies. Such people often find caregiving challenging because they are intolerant of unpredictability, which caregiving inevitably entails. Their desire for control, often driven by their own need for stability, can lead to frustration and conflict in caregiving scenarios, ultimately undermining the caregiving relationship.

Who Needs Care?

The inherent vulnerabilities of the human condition necessitate caregiving. The very young, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities are particularly dependent on care for their survival and well-being. The ageing population in developed nations has created a “care crisis,” with more elderly individuals requiring assistance than ever before. Similarly, the increasing prevalence of chronic illnesses, such as Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease and autism spectrum disorders, has expanded the caregiving burden.

Yet, caregiving is not solely about physical support. Emotional and psychological care is equally, if not more, important. A patient recovering from surgery, for instance, may need encouragement and a sense of hope as much as they need medication. The role of psychological care is evident in practices like “companion care,” where caregivers provide social interaction to combat loneliness and depression.

Providing personal care, however, can also be a messy and challenging affair. Tasks like managing incontinence or assisting with bathing and feeding can be emotionally taxing and require a level of patience and compassion that not everyone possesses. These intimate aspects of caregiving highlight the caregiver’s role in preserving the dignity of the cared-for person, even in the face of discomfort or awkwardness.

Can Anyone Be a Caregiver?

Not everyone is suited to caregiving. While caregiving can be a professional choice, requiring formal training and certifications, it is also deeply personal, demanding a level of emotional investment that not all individuals can provide. People who lack empathy, patience, or the capacity for self-reflection may struggle in caregiving roles. Similarly, those with unresolved personal trauma may find caregiving re-traumatising, rather than fulfilling.

Certain personality traits, such as an aversion to unpredictability or a tendency toward self-centeredness, can make caregiving particularly difficult. Those who are excessively controlling may struggle to adapt to the dynamic and often chaotic nature of caregiving. Their inability to tolerate unpredictability can lead to tension and frustration, ultimately harming both the caregiver and the person being cared for. Recognising these limitations is crucial in determining who is best suited for caregiving roles.

Caregiving Among the Young: A Global and Indian Perspective

In many parts of the world, caregiving is not only a familial responsibility but increasingly a role undertaken by young people, sometimes from adolescence onwards. In countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, studies show that between 6% and 12% of adolescents regularly care for elderly or unwell relatives, often while managing their own schooling and emotional development. Among young adults aged 18 to 34, millions provide unpaid care alongside work or study. In these societies, caregiving is often prompted by gaps in healthcare systems, economic pressures, and longstanding expectations placed disproportionately upon women and minority communities. In contrast, across East and Southeast Asia, particularly in China, Taiwan, and South Korea, cultural traditions of filial piety and multigenerational living foster a deep-rooted expectation that children will care for ageing parents as a natural extension of familial duty.

Although these patterns suggest strong intergenerational bonds, there is no clear academic evidence that regions with a higher density of caregivers are necessarily more tranquil, peaceful, or free from societal conflict. The bulk of research focuses instead on the emotional, social, and financial burdens that young caregivers quietly bear, often without adequate institutional recognition or support.

In the Indian context, caregiving is traditionally embedded in the structure of the joint family, especially in rural and semi-urban settings. Younger family members, typically daughters, daughters-in-law, or nieces, often assume caregiving responsibilities by default. While such arrangements nurture familial cohesion and cultural continuity, they frequently limit educational opportunities, personal aspirations, and long-term independence for the caregivers themselves.

The Necessity of Psychological and Emotional Care

Physical care may sustain the body, but psychological and emotional care nourishes the soul. A caregiver who listens, empathises, and offers reassurance can profoundly impact the well-being of the person they care for. For example, a child with autism may benefit as much from a caregiver's patience and understanding as from specialised therapies. Similarly, a dementia patient's quality of life can be significantly improved through validation therapy, which emphasises emotional connection over factual correctness.

The psychological need for care is universal. From the newborn who craves a parent's touch to the elderly person who finds comfort in a caregiver's presence, human beings are hardwired for connection. Emotional neglect, even in the presence of adequate physical care, can lead to profound psychological distress, underscoring the importance of holistic caregiving.

Abuse and Financial Exploitation in Caregiving

Unfortunately, caregiving is not always carried out with benevolence. Cases of physical and emotional abuse, though underreported, are disturbingly common in caregiving settings. The cared-for person may be subjected to neglect, verbal abuse, or even physical harm. In rare but deeply troubling instances, sexual abuse occurs, often unreported due to the vulnerability of the victim and the power imbalance inherent in caregiving relationships.

Financial exploitation is another significant concern. Theft of money or assets by caregivers, whether professional or familial, is alarmingly prevalent. Family caregivers may manipulate the cared-for person into financial transactions, expecting rewards or inclusion in wills. Such exploitation not only violates the trust placed in caregivers but also exacerbates the vulnerability of the cared-for individual.

Caregiver burnout also poses a significant risk. Prolonged emotional and physical strain can lead to exhaustion, resentment, and even abusive behaviour. Recognising and addressing caregiver burnout through counselling and support services is essential to maintaining the integrity of the caregiving relationship.

The Emotional Rewards and Challenges of Caregiving

Caregiving is often described as a labour of love, but it is also a source of immense stress. Caregivers frequently experience "compassion fatigue," a state of emotional exhaustion that arises from prolonged caregiving. Yet, many caregivers also report a sense of fulfilment and purpose, finding meaning in their selfless acts of service. This duality of burden and reward is a defining feature of caregiving.

Caregiving's rewards often stem from its alignment with core human values. Acts of care reinforce our interconnectedness, reminding us of the shared vulnerabilities that unite us. Yet, the challenges cannot be overlooked. High rates of caregiver burnout and mental health issues,

including depression and anxiety, highlight the need for systemic support, such as respite care and counselling services. These measures are critical in enabling caregivers to continue their work without compromising their own well-being.

Caregiving also offers intangible rewards. Many caregivers report that their roles deepen their understanding of humanity, instilling values of patience, humility, and gratitude. The act of caregiving becomes a journey of self-discovery, fostering emotional growth and a sense of connection that transcends the immediate caregiving relationship.

Caregiving is about more than meeting physical needs; it is about fostering dignity, connection, and hope.

Caregiving is a profound expression of humanity's capacity for empathy and selflessness. It is both a moral obligation and a source of personal growth, reflecting the best of what it means to be human. As societies grapple with ageing populations and increasing care needs, the role of caregivers will only become more critical.

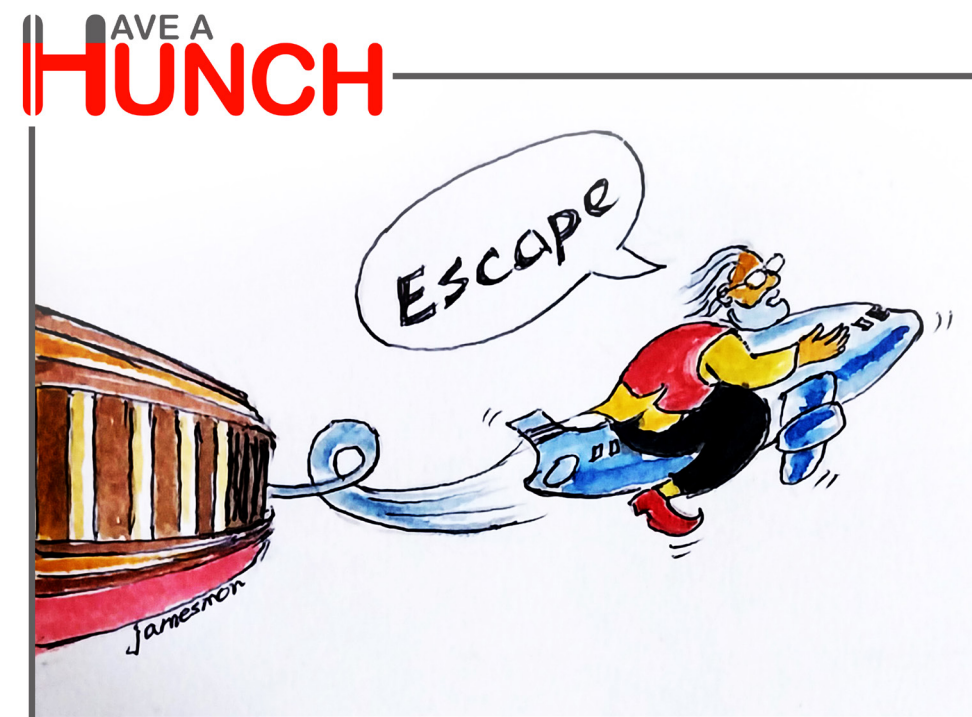
Yet, caregiving is not without its complexities. The philosophical underpinnings of caregiving, as explored by thinkers like Levinas, Gilligan, and Stein, remind us that caregiving is as much about the caregiver's moral and emotional journey as it is about the person receiving care. It challenges us to balance duty and compassion, self-care and altruism, structure and adaptability.

The issue of abuse and financial exploitation underscores the need for vigilance and systemic safeguards. Caregiving, when done poorly or

exploitatively, can exacerbate the vulnerability of those who rely on care. This reality serves as a stark reminder that caregiving is not merely a task but a profound responsibility that requires ethical integrity and emotional commitment.

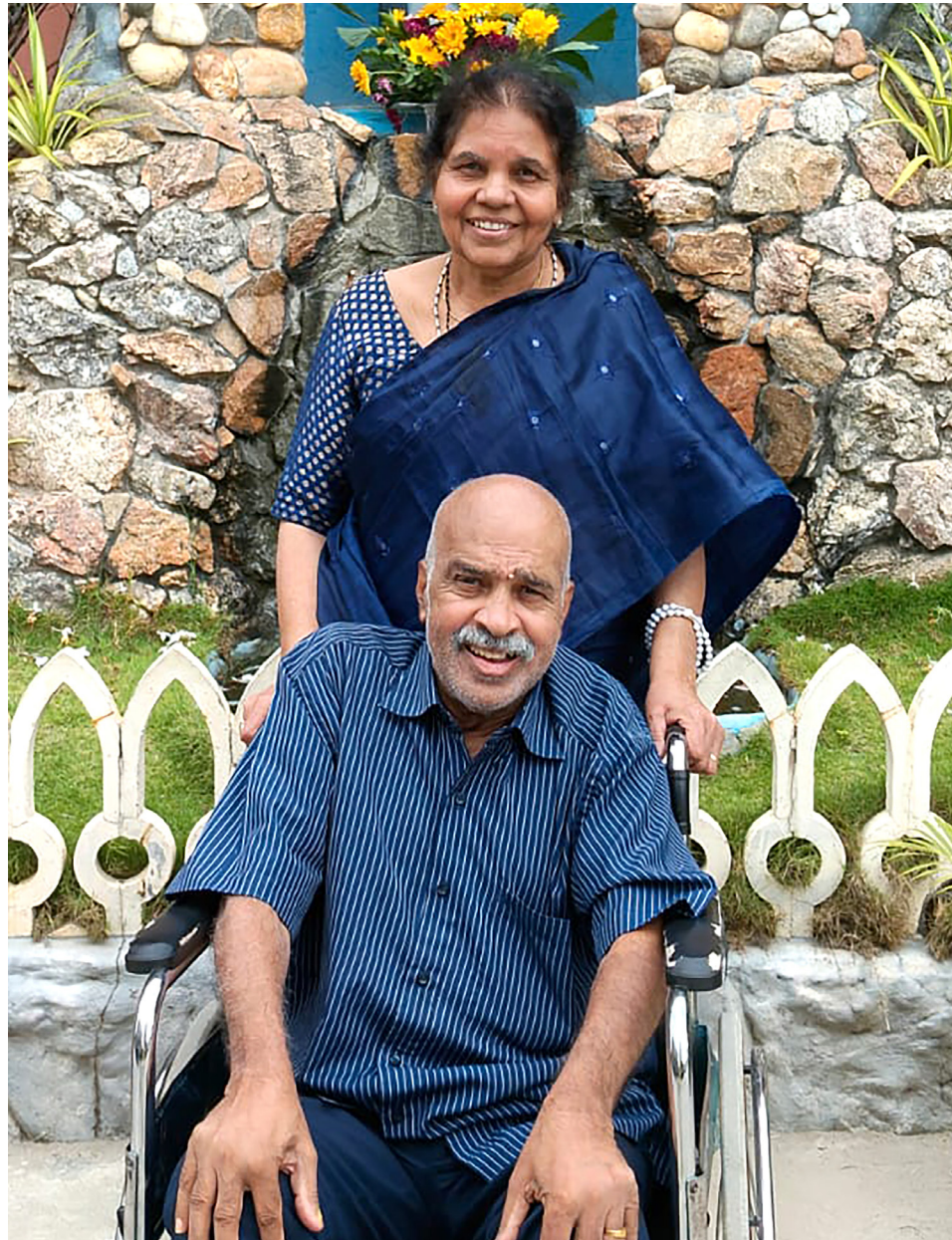
Ultimately, caregiving is about more than meeting physical needs; it is about fostering dignity, connection, and hope. It is a labour of love that transcends duty, reflecting humanity's enduring capacity for kindness and care. As we honour caregivers and their contributions, we are reminded of the profound truth that to care for another is to affirm the shared humanity that binds us all.

Dr George John is a retired British Emeritus Consultant Psychiatrist from London, now living in Kochi, India. He is a full-time caregiver to his wife, suffering from advanced Parkinson's disease. Contact him at docgjohn@aol.com.



A Story of Caregiving and Unwavering Hope

ELSY MATHEW



In my family, the most unexpected and life-altering moment came when my husband, Mathew, became wheelchair-bound. Once active and full of energy — deeply rooted in his faith and always involved in prayer and service — he suddenly found himself unable to move without help. A long-ago bout of meningitis had quietly returned in the form of fluid accumulation in his brain, causing balance issues and gradual memory loss. It was the beginning of a long and painful journey — one that would test, stretch, and transform us.

My life changed overnight. From a quiet rhythm of devotion, ministry, and companionship, I now stepped into a new role — as a full-time caregiver. Every part of my day had to be reoriented. From helping him with the smallest tasks to ensuring medical appointments, managing medications, watching over him at night, and being a constant presence — I had to let go of my familiar comforts and take on this cross, lovingly and patiently.

At first, I felt overwhelmed. But slowly, I realised this too was part of God's call — a deeper invitation to love through service. I came to understand that caregiving is not only a duty — it is a ministry of love, one that often goes unseen but is precious in God's eyes.

One of the biggest challenges was the distance of one of our children, who lives in another country. Though he supported us with love, prayers, and regular calls, his physical absence was deeply felt. But even here, the presence of our daughter close by was of immense strength as she cooperated whole heartedly in taking care of her daddy. I sensed the Lord asking me to trust — not in what I could see, but in His invisible hand, always providing strength.

In our lowest moment, when my husband was in the ICU with complications and advanced dementia, God showed us His mercy

in a miraculous way. A medical sister prayed over him using blessed oil and a medal from Kreupasanam. That night, Mathew had a vision of Mother Mary. She looked at him gently and said, "Why are you lying here? Why don't you get up?" To which he answered, "I'm helpless." She simply replied, "You can."

The next morning, he began to improve. Two days later, he was discharged from the hospital — to the astonishment of the doctors. That experience remains etched in our hearts as a profound sign of divine intervention.

This testimony is not just mine — it is for every elderly couple navigating life with dignity and faith. The Christian community, especially, has a role to play — to be a source of support, prayer, and companionship to those in suffering. Simple acts of presence, listening, or help can make all the difference.

What motivates my faithfulness is not merely a sense of duty — it is the deep awareness that God is at work, even in suffering. In fact, it is often in suffering that we see Him most clearly. This truth gives me the strength to move forward, one day at a time, even when the path is hard.

My hope in life is not rooted in temporary relief, but in eternity. I trust that everything lies under God's perfect plan, and nothing happens without His knowledge. As long as I have breath, I want to remain faithful — in love, in service, and in prayer.

So yes, my life today is different — slower, quieter, more demanding. But it is also full of grace. I see the face of Christ in my husband's dependence. I feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in every small moment of care. I find comfort in the embrace of Mother Mary, who continues to guide us with her tenderness. And above all, I live each day with the quiet, steady hope that God is not finished with us yet.

From Coma to Calling: A Brother's Testimony

MATHEW JOY

Humanity is distinct from the rest of the animal kingdom not only by its rational nature but also by many other parameters. One of them is the capacity to worry and despair—which is most often overlooked and given less thought but is a common experience whose intensity can sometimes bring lives to a standstill and cause them to be lost in a giant black hole of hopelessness. At thirty-four now, I would have to admit that having lived in a household with a specially abled brother for the last twenty-eight years, I have never seen worry take over our home; because “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

My brother, John Joy, was only seven months old—healthy and charming. A day or two after Christmas in 1997, Papa and I were in Kerala when Mom left for work, leaving little John behind with a maid and planning to be back at lunch hour, as had been the routine. However, that day, a little after 9 in the morning, my mom received the news that little John had been rushed to St. John's Hospital as an emergency. Upon reaching the hospital, Mom learned that an internal blood clot had formed in his brain and the baby had slipped into a coma. The exact cause was unknown, but my parents were faced with a grim reality—even after 15 days on the ventilator, little John showed no signs of improvement, and all hope seemed to fade. Doctors put my parents through the necessary counseling and briefings to prepare them for what seemed imminent and certainly probable, as there was no sign of hope. A six-year-old me could only grasp little of the gravity of what was happening around me, but I was a mute witness to it all.

It was only later, while narrating his story, that I heard Mom say, “Doctors had given up and told us that there was no point in waiting. At a crucifix I saw near the room, I prayed, ‘When I left for work, my baby was perfectly well. I need him back. Whatever his condition may be, I shall take care of him; but just this one time, please give him back to me, and then you may do with him as you please.’ After this, they proceeded to remove the ventilator, and for the first time since the mishap, little John tried to breathe on his own. The doctors immediately sensed a change. They put his support back immediately, and little John has been improving little by little since that moment.” The mishap left my brother with cerebral palsy and intellectual disability.

With John in our lives, we were exposed to the Church, the Altar, the Blessed Sacrament, Holy Qurbana, and Sacred Liturgy in ways we had otherwise never dreamed about or planned to pursue.



When we brought him home, all he had as visible signs of life were his cries and his breathing—nothing else. But those were only the beginning of the miracle that would later unfold. From such a vegetative state to having him as we have him now, as everyone sees him today—those who have seen him through thick and thin can attest that we have seen more miracles than tragedies, we have received more blessings than we could ever complain about. My parents have left no stone unturned to cater to my brother's needs and continue to do so with ever more zeal and fervor. It is amply clear that John is a gift of God, that John belongs to God, and we are all blessed through John. Each time we bring John to church, as we have been doing regularly, this is what we stand to proclaim and share with everyone we meet. This is the evangelisation that we are called to through John.

I have seen a bruised reed not be broken, a smoldering wick not be extinguished (as in Isaiah 42:3) in my own life, right next to me. It wasn't easy, and when my parents faced the rough tide with only the Almighty to rely on, and I was brought up in that calling, it became a habit not to take anything for granted and to face life with purpose. To me, God is an everyday reality. With John in our lives, we were exposed to the Church, the Altar, the Blessed Sacrament, Holy Qurbana, and Sacred Liturgy in ways we had otherwise never dreamed about or planned to pursue. Thanks to it all, I was exposed to Catholic faith life in abundance and had three living examples in my own house. I had enough matter and material to ponder more about our faith, put it to the rationality test, had the freedom and faculty to learn and explore more, and arrive at answers and convictions that deeply brought myself peace and joy in the life calling that I have been given.

Personally, life with John has been my biggest motivation to become pro-life. My life gives me better footing on the subject because my household has been one that has been championing the defenseless for so many years and will continue to do so for many more to come. I engage myself in defending and voicing pro-life and anti-abortion causes on personal and public platforms available to me. When people use circumstances, uncertainties, and conveniences to advocate for evils against life, I come from a background where I too have personally been through all of them, accepted the call, have been living it, and am proclaiming its fruit. Hence, freedom that is irresponsible, ethics that are only self-centered, ideologies that deny the divine, blind notions, and niche conveniences cannot substitute or erase my reality and the many strong realities out there like ours. Everybody is entitled to their freedom, and it is easy to dismiss such experiences. To trust His plans, to surrender voluntarily, to humble oneself, to be faithful, and to live according to one's call is not easy, but it is divine. We do not walk this path because we know where it will lead, but we walk because we know with whom we walk. It is a journey of hope, and this Jubilee Year of Hope is a recognition of lives like that of John and many others.

Wisdom in an Age of Outrage

Rage is information, but holds no answers for what's next. If not cautious it can quickly galvanise action.

RICHARD ROHR OFM

Sikh activist Valarie Kaur traveled to Guatemala to learn about the 20th-century genocide of Mayan Indigenous peoples. While there, she explored how we might honour and learn from our anger. She addressed saying, I'm speaking to you all from Guatemala City. I have been here for a week to study the state-sponsored genocide of Mayan Indigenous peoples that happened in Guatemala between 1960 and 1996. It was important to me to be here at a moment when the United States is undergoing such catastrophic crisis. I've gone from gravesite to gravesite. I've looked at so many skeletons.... I've been reeling, I've been feeling grief, I have been feeling rage.

The US government was complicit in carrying out the genocide that happened here, and I was taught by an elder Mayan woman, a sage elder, Rosalina, who was still searching for her father and her husband. As I held fast to her, I realised that the world has ended many times before and the world has been rebirthed many times before. This is simply our turn in the cycle. In every turn through human history, people have been thrown into the darkness, and we have a choice: Do we retreat into our despair, into the smallest parts of our hearts, or do we dare to lift our gaze and reach out through the dark, holding fast to one another and standing in love?

What I learned from these Mayan women, as I've learned from so many Indigenous elders, is that in order to show up with our whole hearts, we must not be ashamed of any part of ourselves. Oh, my grief! Oh, my anger! Oh, my rage! You are a part of me I do not yet know. You have information to teach me.

This brings me to why I use the word rage in my work. I want us to be able to confront the fiercest and perhaps most terrifying parts of our own hearts, to feel angry about something. To feel rage is the fiercest form of anger and I didn't want to shy away from that. I use rage as both a noun and a verb. To rage is how we can process that vital fiery energy inside of us just like our wisest ancestors did.

The solution is not to suppress our rage or to let it explode. The solution is to process our rage in safe containers like the Mayan elders I've been with all week, dancing and drumming, singing, screaming, wailing, shaking. We have to move those energies. Once we rage, once we move that energy through our body, we can ask ourselves: What information does my rage carry? What does it say about what's important to me? What does it say about what I love and what I wish to fight for? How do I wish to harness this energy for what I do in the world? I call that harnessed energy divine rage. The aim of divine rage is not vengeance; its aim is to reorder the world.

Valarie Kaur describes how the Sikh faith teaches the difference between rage stirred from personal frustration and rage that fights against injustice: In the Sikh tradition, rage, or krodh, is one of the five thieves, a destructive impulse that can hijack who we want to be. Krodh is often paired with the word kaam, which refers to unhealthy desire. Kaam krodh suggests that vengeful wrath is tied to desire: When the world denies what we want, rage rises in us. Guru Nanak calls it a corrosive salt that destroys the gold in us. At the same time, Guru Nanak spoke in fiery language against injustice. Rage, when consciously harnessed, is a force that connects us with our power to fight for others, and for ourselves.

Kaur offered this wisdom: When we bottle up our rage, it can go in two different places. One is to go inward, and that leads to all of the damage it can wreak inside of our nervous systems, our psychological health, our spiritual health. We're basically severing ourselves

Even the hardest, potentially most shameful parts of ourselves have the potential to give us insight for healing, growth, and transformation.



off from parts of our own hearts. We make ourselves sick. That is what so many women in particular have been forced to do in this culture. The other direction it can go is out to explode, creating harm, creating violence, the rage that drives the hatred and cruelty. We only have to look at the headlines to see what world that creates.

My invitation is to honour our rage, to name it, to find safe containers to process it, because it's also a way that we love ourselves. In Sikh wisdom, the very heart of the Sikh cosmic vision is Ik Onkar, oneness ever unfolding. It's an invitation to look at anyone or anything and say, "You are a part of me I do not yet know." Separateness is an illusion....

Even the hardest, potentially most shameful parts of ourselves have the potential to give us insight for healing, growth, and transformation. The more we are able to build our capacity to love all parts of ourselves, the deeper our capacity to love all parts of the world around us, the beloved within and without. That is the shift in consciousness and culture that I believe we desperately need in order to birth a new world, a way of seeing, a way of being that leaves no one outside of our circle of care. What we need is a revolution of the heart. This is why I believe revolutionary love is the call of our times.

Theologian Meggan Watterson describes the source of what she calls "sacred rage": There's a rage that gives us clarity about when our boundaries are being crossed, a rage that gives us critical information that we're in danger, that someone is harming us or someone we love. There's a rage that demonstrates to us how interconnected we are, for example when we feel rage while witnessing an injustice....

Seeing George Floyd murdered was something we all witnessed collectively because seventeen-year-old Darnella Frazier refused to leave his side, refused to listen to the police officers who told her to move on, and instead remained, and filmed on her iPhone the murder that would reignite social justice movements all over the globe. This form of rage is sacred. It's a rage that clarifies what we care most about in this world, about what we will put our bodies on the line to stand up for. The distinction is that we let this sacred rage motivate us into action, but when we act we move from love.

Watterson compares sacred rage with rage that seeks to cause harm. It's the rage of revenge. The rage of trying to get even. It's the rage of an endless cycle of retaliation. It's the rage that can compel us to act in ways we will regret for the rest of our lives, or that will cost us our lives or someone else's. It's the rage that refuses mercy. It's the rage that keeps us up at night locked in a horrific egoic struggle going over again and again a betrayal, a terrible wrong someone has caused us.

Rage is often necessary in order to draw fierce boundaries when we or those we love or those we feel connected to are being harmed.

And it's a rage that thinks it's right that we have every right to cause harm to someone who has harmed us. That we have every right to get all caught up in the ego, in our own tiny window of perception about some person, that we get to take our rage out on them.

Watterson affirms our inherent goodness as the source of both rage and healing: Rage and goodness are not mutually exclusive. Rage is often necessary in order to draw fierce boundaries when we or those we love or those we feel connected to are being harmed. And rage is necessary to remind us of our innate goodness. We're angry because we are good, because we recognise, we know innately, what is good. Rage, like a slow controlled burn, can fuel and inform us....

Rage is information. Rage is not an action plan. Rage holds no answers for what's next. And it can quickly galvanise action. Yet, if we act only from that rage, if we move the way rage wants us to move, we will cause harm to ourselves and others. So when we go to take action, we must first intentionally return to love. Rage informs us

about what we love, and love moves us to act in ways only love knows.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972) was one of the great religious leaders of the 20th century. Heschel came to the United States in 1940 under great duress, narrowly escaping the brutal Nazi onslaught in Europe.... Tragically, many of Heschel's family members—including his mother and three of his sisters—were murdered by the Nazis in the following months and years.... After acculturating to life in the United States and establishing himself as a respected academic and gifted religious writer, Heschel became increasingly involved in public affairs....

Heschel gave his first major address on civil rights in March 1963 at the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago. In his remarks, he compared the plight of African Americans in the United States to the ancient Israelite slaves in Egypt. In one particularly dramatic moment, he stated, "It was easier for the children of Israel to cross the Red Sea than for a Negro to cross certain university campuses." He went on to challenge listeners—including many Jewish audience members—to choose between the legacies of Pharaoh or Moses.

Heschel embodied the wisdom of the Hebrew prophets at a critical time in history. His Jewish faith inspired his commitment to justice for those on the margins. In fine prophetic fashion, Heschel rails against ritual observance divorced from social responsibility.... He wrote, "Prayer is no panacea, no substitute for action." While Heschel was an eloquent spokesperson for a life of disciplined religious praxis—including prayer and other traditional observances—he was steadfast in his call for a holistic approach to spirituality and ethics....

Heschel joined Dr King and other civil rights leaders in the famous Selma to Montgomery March. Upon returning from that protest, he wrote the following words: For many of us the march from Selma to Montgomery was about protest and prayer. Legs are not lips, and marching is not kneeling, and yet our legs uttered songs. Even without words, our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying.

For Heschel, marching for voting rights was a holy act, an embodied devotional response to God's ongoing call for dignity and equality.... Rather than turn away in rage or despair from engagement with non-Jews, Heschel became a champion of racial justice and interreligious cooperation. He used his own experiences as a victim of bigotry and hatred to work to stamp out these destructive phenomena in his new homeland and throughout the world....

Heschel played a vital role in healing racial, religious, and political wounds in America and beyond.... Rather than retreating and insulating himself from the aches and pains of the world, he cultivated relationships with a diverse set of colleagues and organisations and set out to help transform it.

Another Woman

BOBBY JOSE KATTIKKAD OFM CAP



I watched a short video. A man, feeling that he hadn't been spending enough time with his wife, decided to take her on a short trip. He was certain she would agree with admiration and delight. But things didn't go as he expected.

She declined the offer, saying she had to attend to the children and couldn't leave at the moment. Instead, she said something that completely took him by surprise, "You can take another woman along for the trip." "Another woman?" he asked. "Yes," she said, "your mother."

It was then that he remembered—it had indeed been quite a long time since he had last gone to see her. His mother was overwhelmed with joy at his invitation. How many years had it been since she had stepped out of the house? Suddenly, it was as though she had become young again. A movie, a dinner at a restaurant, a little drive... just a day or two with his mother. Every moment filled her with immense happiness. She refused nothing that he offered her. Popcorn and a soft drink during the movie, her favorite dish for dinner—he pampered her.

A few days later, news came that his mother had passed away. Along with that message came an envelope from the

restaurant where they had last dined. It was an invitation for a meal for two. His mother had paid the bill in advance.

The ending should have felt melodramatic. But it didn't. What filled the heart instead was a deep sense of guilt. Didn't our parents too, in the twilight of their lives, long for small journeys like that? A little breeze, some sunlight, the company of people—wouldn't such things have brightened their evenings?

It brought to mind the beginning of Gabriel García Márquez's autobiography *Living to Tell the Tale*, where his mother comes to invite him on a journey—a son she didn't even know how to locate anymore: My mother asked me to go with her to sell the house. She had come that morning from the distant town where the family lived, and she had no idea how to find me. She asked around among acquaintances and was told to look for me at the Librería Mundo, or in the nearby cafes, where I went twice a day to talk with my writer friends. She arrived at twelve sharp. With her light step she made her way among the tables of books on display, stopped in front of me, looking into my eyes with the mischievous smile of her better days, and before I could react she said, "I'm your mother."

India and Its Freedom

The great question is whether the freedom *from* has led to freedom *for*.

GERRY LOBO OFM



On the foundation of an ancient civilisation, one is proud to proclaim that an Independent country was born on August 15, 1947, having been freed from the British colonial domain. It was a freedom “from” towards a freedom “for” a harmonious existence among diverse cultures, languages, faces and persons. It was a freedom and self-governance. A glorious vision, indeed it was! Let there be no grain of doubt that the Independent India has invariably lived its vision and has found its prominent stand among the nations of the world. Within its territory it has held together, as a hen gathers her children under her wings, the diverse regions and geographical landscape. India, since her Independence, has made significant strides in various sectors, including infrastructure, human development, economic growth, technological advancements and democratic consolidation while also facing ongoing challenges related to social issues, political instability, regional conflicts, poverty and inequality.

The great question is whether the freedom “from” has led to freedom “for” in reality in a positive sense. Normally to be freed from subjection to any power is an arduous struggle. The subjected ones hope for liberation from oppressive power structures in order to govern themselves in an independent manner. That being stated, where does freedom stand? What does that freedom imply? Is it an ocean of unquestionable movement which licenses anyone to do anything at anytime? The scenario of the Independent India, and in particular the scenario of the last two decades quite obviously indicates that the aim of freedom “from” towards a freedom “for” has led to a kind of lawlessness, deep animosity between cultures and religions resulting in callous speeches and the diminishing of human dignity. This practice has gone hey way throughout the country with no limits. Freedom “for” is liberally taken to mean that one has no boundaries to perform his or her independence from whatsoever structure even if it causes harm to humanity. What one experiences on a daily basis is precisely this form of behavior mostly among the political clout in the country. They consider themselves above the law and manipulate the system to suit their avaricious profits even if it involves murderous crimes against the innocent. This is their Independent India by usurping the freedom “for” heinous crimes which are shoved under the carpet of hellish lies with a religious façade to protect their falsehood. Here religion and politics go hand in hand in our country; we call ‘Independent India.’

Freedom “from” the Colonial rule was meant not for the freedom “for” of the activities which compress the day-to-day movement of people in an Independent India, making them to live in fear. The Emergency declared by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, which lasted a while, was one clear instance of taking freedom “for” in order to suit one’s own convenience. It only murdered the freedom “for” doing good, and perhaps went beyond the Colonial domination over the Indian citizens. In other words, the Emergency was a time of dark days when the politically independent India suffered in her exercise of freedom for the good of all. The

Governments have come and gone since then, while some returned to the idea of freedom whereby the citizens of the nation could strive for justice, peace and integrity together with economic well-being and equality among all, maintenance of religious harmony and with a true sense of democracy, others, particularly in the last two decades, of the majoritarian government have managed to percolate religious ideology into the political system endearing towards one religion, one nation, one election and one language. Having usurped power by cheap theatrics and empty promises, not only the common citizen is driven to believe that every move of the incumbent government is an expression of freedom “for” the human development and economic progress, but everyone else, even the most enlightened educated citizens. Not all the country, however, is fooled by the attractive jargons and promises.

India is a home of religions. All religions are sacred paths for humanity to traverse their human journey towards the Transcendent home. However, religion pushed towards the sentimental and emotional religious practices can result in providing a safe refuge for crimes committed and hidden from the public by a thick coating of devotional exercises. India had obtained freedom “from” the British Raj paving the way towards a freedom “for” religious harmony, for respect for every human person, for upholding human dignity and providing all their human rights. However, shockingly this freedom “for” has been grossly annihilated by the day light atrocities against the innocent humans in our Independent nation. Crimes against women, in particular, have been committed as if the freedom gained by the nation is for such gruesome acts. Most often these are committed by the influential, powerful, and by the so called ‘gurus’ of religion and are buried under ‘holiness’ and ‘incense.’ Holy places where people exercise their faith and devotion, believing in God in whatever form it might be, have become den of robbers and killers. Is this what freedom “for” means? On account of the ongoing agitations held by conscientious citizens for many years, for example, and because of the social media relentlessly bombarding about the sexual

violence against hundreds of young women and children, including beggars and others that have been taking place around the temple town, Dharmasthala, a holy place for Hindus, in the coastal area of Karnataka, the bare truth is coming to the open light. And now specially because of the revelation in the recent days of a whistleblower, a certain sanitation worker of that temple whose job was no other than to unceremoniously bury the innumerable human bodies left along the bank of the river, Netravati, which he did for almost twenty years, under threat to his life by the lords who manage the temple affairs even if it would be against his conscience, the chilling silence which prevailed for almost thirty years, is now in the open. Even the State of an Independent nation where these crimes were taking place, had been mute, obviously to protect the managers of those murders and to gain monetary profit and political benefits. Is the freedom “for” is a license to kill?

The 1947 Freedom “from” the British should have provided freedom “for” a harmonious existence and equality of all in one India. Even though economically and scientifically Indian Independence has made great strides among the nations of the world, the gap between people economically and socially has only widened because of the dominant mentality of those who continually appropriate the wealth of the nation, seeking their own position in the society and outdoing others in the public domain through the political influence. The minority is marginalised and, at times, those in political positions act disrespectfully towards the disadvantaged. The influential ones hold the scale to weigh others in this free nation which is built on ancient civilisation with a deep religious foundation. There is a ghostly imbalance in our social living and daily discourse. We may have obtained freedom from the British but seem to have become new type of colonisers for oppressing others economically, socially, politically and even culturally. Freedom “for” is only

towards the common good. However, it is diverted towards licentiousness: ‘I can do whatever I wish’ attitude,’ be it in politics, in economic affairs or social dynamics. That is the fundamental cause for concealed mass murders of innocent and the harassment meted out to those who are weak and voiceless.

St Paul offers the citizens of the Independent India the true meaning of Freedom which is always a freedom “for.” He states: “For you were called to freedom. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another” (Gal 5: 13-15). In terms of the *Fratelli Tutti* of the late Pope Francis, St Paul is propagating a “political love” born of a social awareness that transcends every individualistic mindset and “makes one to effectively seek the common good of all people, considered not only as individuals or private persons, but also in the social dimension that unites them” (FT 181). Sadly enough, one observes today in our Independent nation how the freedom from the Colonisers is used for building self-enclosed empires of monetary wealth and an existence manipulated by powers pursuing spurious interests as opposed to building communities at every level of social life, in order to recalibrate and reorient our freedom for the common good.

Remembering the Indian Independence gained in 1947 on August 15 this year will remain only a ritual performed by the high and mighty under the Flag of integrity and peace, justice and truth, unless it becomes a commitment to transform the freedom gained towards the freedom “for” a definite love that integrates and unites individuals, groups and peoples and eventually eliminates every form of fundamentalist intolerance which constantly damages the relationship that makes for true Independence.

Mental Health in Culturally Diverse Adolescents

NIHARIKA



Adolescent mental health becomes particularly complicated for culturally diverse teens who face distinct challenges affecting their psychological well-being.

Cultural stigma presents a major obstacle. Many cultures view mental health problems as shameful, preventing help-seeking behavior. This stigma isolates adolescents and prevents timely care, with shame extending to entire families. Language barriers further complicate care. First- or second-generation immigrants struggle to express emotional issues in the dominant language, hindering communication with professionals and potentially causing misdiagnosis.

Acculturation stress significantly impacts these adolescents. They struggle balancing cultural identity with dominant culture, especially immigrants or children of immigrants. This tension between family expectations and societal norms creates internal conflict and emotional distress. Identity development is strongly linked to cultural ancestry. Strong cultural pride correlates with improved mental health outcomes, while identity problems or cultural disconnection increases anxiety or depression susceptibility.

Racism and discrimination increase psychological burden. Teens experiencing discrimination may internalise harmful stereotypes, resulting in anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem.

High family expectations create immense pressure. In collectivist cultures prioritizing family honour, adolescents feel pressure for academic success and tradition

maintenance, causing significant stress. Generational conflicts arise when teenagers embrace prevailing culture more than parents, creating disputes over behaviour, education, and independence. These conflicts strain families and compromise well-being.

Accessing culturally competent mental health services remains problematic. Many professionals poorly understand cultural contexts, resulting in inappropriate treatment conflicting with adolescent values.

Migration and trauma experiences add complexity. Refugee teenagers bear psychological burdens that can result in long-term issues like PTSD. Pre-migration trauma, migration stress, and post-migration adjustment create complex mental health risks. Traditional coping strategies like religious rituals and community support are culturally meaningful. However, providers miss opportunities for appropriate support when dismissing these approaches.

Addressing culturally diverse adolescents’ mental health needs requires understanding multifaceted issues. Culturally competent care integrating values, traditions, and experiences is essential. Inclusive services and environments celebrating cultural diversity significantly improve mental well-being. Professionals must work within cultural frameworks while maintaining clinical effectiveness, honouring both psychological science and cultural wisdom.

Man and the Nature by Subodh Kerkar



Prayer by Subodh Kerkar

Chillies by Subodh Kerkar



MOG Celebrates the Life and People of Goa

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

Art is the universal language of humankind and has the power to connect people from all over the world. The Museum of Goa (MOG), Panaji, was conceived in 2015 by artist Dr Subodh Kerkar. The lack of cultural spaces in Goa, particularly those dedicated to contemporary art, led Kerkar to envision an institution that would democratise art and make it accessible to a larger audience.

In the local Konkani language, MOG means love, representing the museum's commitment to promoting art practice, culture, and histories. By engaging diverse audience it ensures art to be accessible, affordable and inclusive, both physically and digitally.

Much of the works here are by Subodh Kerkar celebrating Goa's history and people through contemporary art. A large sculpture titled *Chillies* discusses how this South American spice was introduced to India by the Portuguese sometime in the 16th century.



The Courage To Accept Acceptance

JOY PRAKASH OFM

Paul Tillich, an eminent Protestant theologian, defines faith as “the courage to accept acceptance,” meaning acceptance by God. Very many people find it difficult to accept the persons that they are, and such people will find it even more difficult to accept the fact of God accepting them as they are: the very physical self, the psychological self, and the intellectual self.

Areas of Our Non-Acceptance

These are the areas where people struggle to accept themselves: physical appearance, lack of education, chronic illness, real or imagined inadequacies, unsatisfying jobs, difficult relationships, family burdens, disabilities, and personal shortcomings often measured against others. Most of these lie beyond our control, making our inability to change them particularly distressing.

God regards us exactly as we are—with our strengths and weaknesses, good deeds and sins. This fundamental acceptance encompasses our whole selves, imperfections included. God’s love doesn’t depend on our worthiness but simply on our existence. To know and embrace who we are as beloved by God is true humility.

“Is God pleased with me?” This question underlies our spiritual anxieties. We struggle to accept that God doesn’t love us because we’re good, but rather we are good because God loves us. Acceptance is the difficult part! Unless we experience human love, accepting God’s love requires a great leap of trust.

To know we are flawed yet still loved brings relief from spiritual anxiety. We may find certainty only through trusting God’s fidelity. Life becomes a process of understanding our existence and *becoming* what we are in God’s sight—profoundly lovable.



What Happens When I Am Not Accepted

Every human being craves acceptance for who they truly *are*. Nothing has more lasting impact than experiencing complete non-acceptance. When we’re not accepted, something fundamental breaks within us. An unwelcome baby suffers damage at existence’s roots. Students rejected by teachers struggle to learn. Workers lacking colleague acceptance develop stress-related illness and create home tension. Many prisoners went astray because no one truly accepted them. Religious individuals feeling rejected by their communities cannot find happiness.

Acceptance means others enhance our self-respect, helping us feel worthwhile. While they may not approve of everything we do, acceptance welcomes our authentic selves. It provides growth space without coercion—we don’t need to become someone we’re not, nor remain trapped by past mistakes. Instead, we’re given room to unfold and outgrow previous errors.

Acceptance functions as unveiling. Everyone possesses potentialities, but unless drawn out by another’s warm acceptance, they remain dormant. Acceptance liberates everything within us. Only through complete acceptance can we become ourselves. Others’ love makes us the unique persons we’re meant to be.

When appreciated for *doing*, we’re replaceable—others could perform the same tasks. When loved for *being*, we become unique and irreplaceable. We need acceptance to be ourselves. Without it, we cannot reach fulfillment. Accepted individuals are happy because openness enables growth.

True acceptance doesn’t require denying defects or pretending everything someone does is perfect. When we gloss over defects, we don’t truly accept—we haven’t touched their being’s depths. Only sincere acceptance allows facing reality honestly.

Acceptance means never making someone feel they don’t matter. Expecting nothing from a person renders them sterile. Like children with rickets who scratch lime from walls for calcium, people lacking acceptance desperately seek it wherever possible.

Symptoms of Non-Acceptance

According to experts, symptoms of self-non-acceptance include: *Boastfulness*—individuals brag constantly, deeply desiring praise and validation from every situation and person. *Rigidity*—insecurity creates unyielding attitudes that hide behind strict interpretations of rules. *Inferiority Complex*—masquerading as humility while undervaluing personal qualities, assets, and strengths. *Escapism*—seeking fleeting satisfaction through various means that provide temporary relief without requiring genuine human connection.

Essentially, people who don’t accept themselves become stubborn and self-defeating, creating barriers to genuine relationships and personal growth. These symptoms serve as defense mechanisms against feeling unworthy, yet ultimately perpetuate the very rejection they seek to avoid.

The Litmus Test of Self-Acceptance

These fundamental questions require confrontation: Do I like and respect myself? Am I basically positive about myself, glad to be *me*? Am I acceptable to myself? Or do I fundamentally dislike and devalue myself? Am I intrinsically negative, making the worst of my life situation? Am I rejecting toward myself?

These questions cut to the heart of our relationship with ourselves and God. They demand honest self-examination and courage to face what we discover without immediately trying to fix everything we find lacking.

The Zen mantra, “What I *am* is enough, what I *have* is enough,” reflects how great religions approach this question. Saint Francis of Assisi advised his brothers simply: “That what I am, that I am, nothing more, nothing less.” Romano Guardini called self-acceptance “the foundation of our existence, the ‘root of all things’.”

This must be complete and absolute self-acceptance: we *must* accept ourselves following God’s example who accepts us as precious in His eyes! This is the leap of faith we owe ourselves. Such acceptance becomes the foundation for all genuine spiritual growth, freeing us to become the unique persons God created us to be.

CLARE: BRIGHT AND CLEAR

TOM THOMAS



St Clare of Assisi (16 July 1194_{CE}–11 August 1253_{CE}) was inspired to leave behind a worldly life full of riches and embrace Lady Poverty after being touched by St Francis of Assisi's preaching and his great renouncing of worldly wealth before the bishop and people of Assisi. She shows the way—bright and clear.

Clare was known for her great beauty, and her rich, royal family wanted to get her married off to an earthly prince or king. It is documented that on the night of Palm Sunday, she escaped from home, had her luxurious locks of hair (which are preserved to this day in Assisi) cut by Francis, and wore a simple brown religious cloak after trading in her luxurious worldly garments. A few days later, her sister joined her as well. Her family tried to drag her back, but to no avail.

Ever since she embraced this radical call, she never looked back. She went on to live twenty-seven years after the death of St Francis. A strong woman, she wrote the first monastic rule for her order, something that several popes rejected as being too rigid on poverty. She relentlessly pushed for the acceptance of her rule, and finally, papal approval was given two days before her death.

I call attention to the letter that Clare wrote to Agnes, a candidate who similarly wanted to leave the world and find Him in a life of contemplation and poverty. Her letter asks us: when we look at the Mirror—the image of the crucified Christ—what do we see reflected? Is it our proud or vainly glorious self? Or is it the crucified Christ? How can we be transformed like Him? Only by constant contemplation, says Clare.

Clare continues to say, “I see too, that by humility, the virtue of faith, and the strong arms of poverty, you have taken hold of that incomparable treasure hidden in the field of the world and in the hearts of men (Mt 13:44), with which you have purchased that field of Him by whom all things are made from nothing. And, to use the words of the Apostle himself in their proper sense, I consider you as a co-worker of God Himself and a support of the weak members of His ineffable Body. Who is there, then, who would not encourage me to rejoice over such marvelous joys?”

We can reflect on the three pillars that Clare mentioned which we must have in order to see the Lord in the Mirror—the true treasure in our lives. These pillars are: Humility, Faith, and Poverty. Without these three in equal measure, we are looking at the mirror in vain. By Poverty, it could mean Poverty of Spirit. But for Clare and her companions, it meant embracing Lady Poverty completely and wholeheartedly, just as St Francis did and exhorted all the Franciscan orders to do. Humility was brought to them through their simple attire and simple food (most times they ate only one meal a day, and meat hardly ever!) This austere lifestyle and complete concentration on the Lord through a contemplative lifestyle began generating interest. Such was the power of this great contemplative St Clare that the many Poor Clare monasteries all over the world are known for the great power of their prayers. It is said that fishermen of some communities don't even venture out to sea without obtaining the prayerful invocation of the Poor Clares.

Some years ago, accompanied by family, I happened to visit a Poor Clare Monastery of Perpetual Adoration in Milagres, Mangalore. Here, Adoration goes on around the clock. The public sits on one side of the walled chapel, and the sisters, hidden away from the gaze of people, live a life of absolute poverty. The high wall, with some metal gratings at the very top, separates us. It is through these gratings that one can hear, at the specific times of praise and prayer, the Poor Clares singing to Him. Truly it is the sound of angels, as anyone who has the good fortune to have heard this can attest. The only contact the Poor Clares have with the outside world, or the outside world can have with them, is through the Mother Abbess. Once they make their profession, they don't leave the walls of the convent unless they are sick and need medical attention or need to vote during election times.

In our modern-day, 24/7 always-on digital world where we are constantly surrounded by noise, this seems to be an aberration of sorts. Why would these sisters voluntarily consent to live such a life of rigid monasticism, leaving the world behind them, to focus on the Lord completely, living lives that are spent either praying to Him or adoring Him constantly? They have found the most important thing in life—Him!

It could come as a great surprise that St Clare is the patron saint of television and that Mother Angelica, a Poor Clare nun, founded the giant Christian broadcasting network EWTN! The ways of the Lord are marvelous indeed, to make contemplative nuns masters in communication. How a girl who renounced everything at the peak of her life at eighteen years and went into the seclusion of the convent found God, and helps us to find Him through her words and the congregation she founded and left behind, many centuries after her death, is remarkable.

Upon Witnessing the River of Poetry

SAILAJAMITRA



Poetry becomes a boat on the ocean of time, moving with the dawn and standing as a symbol of human consciousness. It offers an unfamiliar experience with a divine fragrance and golden glow. The dawn is not a jewel on a dictator's head—it's not a crown at all. Poetry reflects the hidden mysteries of life, like the imprints of joyful forms embedded in a deep, vast ocean. It traces the transition from thought to experience, like a series of shadows on the earth and a blazing sun above, resonating with the rhythm of life and flowing with a new wave of vitality.

This new identity and shape of poetry—its firm foundation—has been gifted to us by lovers of poetry and a complete poet, Dr Perugu Ramakrishna.

His poetic journey proves that poetry doesn't belong to just a region, a class, a caste, or a system—he is not only an Indian poet but an international one. His work asserts that poetry transcends nations. Beginning with *Vennela Jalapatham*, his masterpieces like *Nuvvellipoyaka*, *Flamingo*, *Munjalu*, *Poolamma Voooru*, *Kanti Deepam*, *Doodipinjala Vaanu*, and others—though rooted in Telugu—have been translated into English, Hindi, Tamil, and have gained recognition both nationally and internationally.

His poetry is not mere imagination born of fantasy. It is realistic, rooted in the footsteps of real experiences found in hills, corners, caves, riverbanks—in both day and night. Each of his poetic moments blooms in hearts like a fragrant lamp, spreading an aroma of light. Even the flowering vines by a window feel compelled to sign in white ink when touched by his pen.

Each poem of his, composed with the yoga of moments, ignites hearts. His poetry, arising from the friction of intense emotions, awakens knowledge that stirs the very core of life. It won't fade into the past. It will always continue making wet signatures in the present.

Each line of this poet introduces a beautifully indescribable future—a blend of memory, emotion, unshakable courage, and the unspeakable depth one feels when gazing at the ocean. That's perhaps why, though *Poolamma Voooru* was published in 2012, it still reflects today's world. Just like clouds reveal the weather of tomorrow, his pen reflects the future in its words.

He writes, "To make humanity win, bombs and bullets are not the answer... Inhale a handful of love... and universal brotherhood will blossom." Such lines reveal how he observes tomorrow through the window of his pen.

As the poet progresses in his journey, even boundaries fade—it's no exaggeration. Like sculpting from stone, creating art, and evolving from primal wilderness to civilised empathy, he has sculpted a unique poetic language and expression. He is a skilled craftsman of emotional sensitivity.

He writes, "I may not say from which embrace I was separated... but a shattered dream waits to be comforted." How beautifully expressed! His poetry contains not only immense love but also amplifies reality and sorrow. A tree evokes ancestral memories; a home reminds one of many experiences; a familiar hill stirs unshakable courage; and flowing waters stir boundless enthusiasm—such is his poetic stream, always shining like the sun flying with wings of moonlight.

In a world composed of many societies, poets shine like twinkling stars, asserting their presence. His poetic fragments stop by rocks, linger near bushes, stand on sage-like toes, and then run like anklets—found abundantly in his poetry.

He proclaims, "Poetry is not shouting. Poetry is not provocation. Poetry is an embrace with reality...

a handshake with tears. Poets live on memories... they nourish on emotions. Who can deny such poets?" Could there be a more beautiful definition of poetry?

He writes, "Every time I enter a world of pure smiles, I feel a warm lamp lit near my heart." Such expressive warmth! His choice of words—their intimacy, depth, brevity, and philosophy—stretches the limits of poetry. Ideals between person and person emerge naturally. While it is natural for a person to wait for a genuine smile, a poet, says Perugu Ramakrishna, waits endlessly for a profound one.

A poet has no sleep. It is thought that occupies him, trailing him with petals of words. When one opens the window and the doors of the heart even once, beams of light fall on the chest like grace. With people moving beside us and resonating soundscapes, everything becomes a visual sequence—a group of sentences.

He writes, "Every time I breathe, I believe poetry is what keeps me alive. I'm a poet who wishes to turn this world and the moments I lived into a garden of poems—hiding the eternal fragrance of poetry deep in my heart." Such words walk with travelers, urging them forward, making them embark on their own poetic pilgrimage.

He says, "In the flock of poetic butterflies, I managed to open my wings beautifully. The day poetry from different nations sang in unison, it felt like those songs settled in the flower garden of my poetry." It's clear—his heart is prepared for a poetic quest.

With words pushing aside veils like snowflakes and embracing emotions like garlands of flowers, this poet stands like an innocent child hugging the warmth of meaning. Darkness may frighten us, but stars stand as beacons of courage. His

words, like letters of invitation, bring hope to the heart and stir a deeper longing to live. The touch of poetic sunlight transforms time and makes life shimmer. Even faces turn into poetry.

It begins with *Doodipinjala Vaanu* and continues: "Fighting with invisible enemies alongside visible humans. No one asks who's to blame. Parents are no longer relevant. The mistakes that happened must be corrected."

This is how he confronts the pandemic. He writes, "Whether a flower blooming in Antarctica or a cactus blooming in the deserts of South Africa—life is precious. Life is not a cycle of birth and death. Life is the melody of a spring breeze. Life is the fragrance of song."

With such poetic inscriptions, untouched by artificiality, carrying time in his eyes, he remains like a living page of poetry. These indescribable words, letters, phrases, and objects come from his pen to question, soothe, bring justice, and make us laugh—ultimately presenting life experiences that stir and calm the soul.

Dr Perugu Ramakrishna's pen hasn't stopped with himself. He has curated the dreams of many poets. He has brought forth the inner worlds of many voices. He continues to introduce countless poets to the literary world, striving to declare that, wherever they may be, poets share one inner spirit. He brings other languages closer to his own, striving for universality—the true hallmark of a great poet.

However turbulent the ocean, it never turns back. However strong the winds, they lack the tenderness to create. But the poetic journey of Dr. Perugu Ramakrishna—like a stream in summer, like a full-grown tree in winter—touches all with the message of humanity, always offering a warm greeting. perugurama2020@gmail.com

When Darkness Befalls

JAMESMON PC OFM



It is unfortunate when you come across a video from Gaza, where a Palestinian artist Taha Husien breaks his paintings for firewood to cook food and provide warmth to his children in Gaza. You know that the night has fallen in a metaphorical, moral and civilisational sense. It is an act of despair, protest and at the same time one of the extreme measures towards survival.

We have trivialised or normalised genocide of thousands of children by starving them or bombing them to death. We turn our face away from such a grotesque act of murdering the innocent children and the beauty of life they hold within and spread around. It is not merely the destruction of beauty but the very meaning of existence is called into question. Children are God's own way of telling us that life is beautiful and it should be preserved.

There is of course a diplomatic silence in many world leaders as they simply ignore what is happening in Gaza. Most of these leaders have an uncanny way of destroying what is good and beautiful. They rob humanity of whatever semblance of sensibility it still has. It can't stand roses and loves instead guns and bombs.

One of the best examples of such betrayal we find in scriptures where a misguided man betrays what is truly good and beautiful. It happens at the last supper that Jesus shares with his beloved disciples. The aesthetic element in holding a meal together, the beauty of friendship and camaraderie, was destroyed by one man who walked out after having gulped down his morsel of bread. Kahlil Gibran says: "Travel and tell no one, live a true love story and tell no one, live happily and tell no one, people ruin beautiful things."

In Gaza, there is no limit to the pain and hunger that is inflicted mostly on children. Instead of beauty that is found in children you see sunken eyes and malnourished little bodies. As bombs destroy not just shelters and humans gathering for food at the little humanitarian centers, we also see culture, family stories, and unique identities getting annihilated systematically. Aesthetic destruction is genocide of memory. The burning of a painting is not just an individual or domestic act — it is an ugly global wound. It is nightfall over humanity's sense and civility and it is falling fast at the moment. Dawn?

IN STAMPS



26 AUGUST

International Dog Day

TOM JOHNS OFM

The International Dog Day was created in 2004 by pet lifestyle expert and author Colleen Paige, to bring awareness to the condition of animals and to encourage adoption.

Whether they're pets, service animals, police dogs or rescue dogs, these amazing creatures play important roles in humans' lives. Canophiles celebrate the Dog Day to observe the love, loyalty and companionship that dogs bring to their lives.

Dogs can help us relieve stress, and their presence can better the quality of health in general and mental health in particular.



A Pilgrim's Journey

RUTH DIAS FSM



I began with hope, purpose, and eagerness as I boarded my flight to Europe. I was surrounded by many new faces—new friends and fellow sojourners.

I was captivated by the breathtaking architecture of Rome, renowned for its rich history and vibrant culture. The Vatican heritage city spoke to my soul with the radiant brilliance of its storied past. As I walked its cobblestone streets, the bright “Brother Sun” warmed my skin, while the Divine Presence—evoked by the enduring legacy of Pope Leo XIV—touched my heart. The precious encounter with the ancient Vatican paintings at the Sistine Chapel by the master artist Michelangelo gave me an opportunity to understand where the finger of God touches the human heart.

As I approached Padua with reverence and awe, I knelt at the tomb of Saint Anthony, one of the most beloved saints of the Church and dear to me as well. I laid my hands on the cool marble of his resting place and whispered silent intentions for loved ones, for healing, and in gratitude for this sacred life.

Our walk through the city of Venice was memorable. It is a beautiful city surrounded by waterways. With no traffic or noise, the city invited me to slow down as I walked through its narrow alleys and across the famous Rialto Bridge. I savored peaceful moments, watching pilgrims sail in boats and seagulls play in the waters.

A scenic train ride brought me to Florence, a city where art, architecture, and spirituality converge. I walked through its historic streets, with every corner echoing with beauty and ancient history.

My further travels led me to Assisi. As we walked the streets of Assisi, I called upon St Francis to walk with me. The birds’ songs, the strangers’ smiles, the olive trees swaying in the breeze, and the view of the historic, sacred city—all proclaimed the message of peace and holiness of Saints Francis and Clare. Every corner seemed to whisper his praise and prayer. This place is the living wellspring of Franciscan spirituality, and here, as a pilgrim, I learned to walk the talk, to give generously and live joyfully.

As I approached the Basilica of Saint Francis, a place of profound sacredness and holiness, I knelt before the tomb of my dear saint who lived the Gospel with love, simplicity, and poverty. The ancient stone walls resounded: “Here is the man who gave up everything, now dear to everyone.”

In the Basilica beneath lies Saint Clare, the saint whose life was wholly given to God—a true friend of St Francis and dear to us all. As my eyes gazed upon the sacred original San Damiano Cross, my lips wouldn’t stop singing: “Glorious God from heaven’s height...” and “Lord, teach me Your ways.”

Once the dwelling place of Saint Clare, San Damiano Monastery remains peaceful and offers us a spiritual pilgrimage. It was the place where she breathed her last, reminding the world that nothing matters more than the Love of Christ. A week’s stay in Assisi was not just a visit—it was a pilgrimage of the heart, a spiritual renewal alongside my fellow brethren, and a step deeper into the Franciscan way of life.

My visit to Paris was truly remarkable. The city is filled with cultural centers and stunning architecture. Each day brought me new wonders and unforgettable moments. The first place I visited was the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, located on the hill of Montmartre. This majestic white church offered a breathtaking view of Paris. The peaceful atmosphere and the beauty of the architecture made it a truly memorable experience. Next, I went to the famous Cathedral of Notre-Dame. Standing inside, I could feel the reverberations of prayer, faith, and devotion surrounding me. I had the privilege of viewing the Crown of Thorns of Jesus, which is preserved as a sacred relic in Notre-Dame. No trip to Paris is complete without seeing the iconic Eiffel Tower. I saved it for the final day of my visit. Standing beneath it and admiring this gigantic wonder was the perfect grand finale to my trip.

The pilgrimage to Lourdes was a grace-filled day with our Blessed Mother Mary. I had a deep spiritual and unforgettable experience as I journeyed in union with thousands, especially the sick, seeking healing and peace. Each corner of Lourdes inspired prayer and reflection. The magnificent Basilica on the mountain

where the apparition appeared to St Bernadette holds unique beauty and spiritual significance. As I approached the Grotto of Our Lady, where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St Bernadette, I knelt in faith and felt close to Mary, as though she gently whispered to me, “I am here with you.” The miraculous spring of water is a life-giving source of healing and hope for countless pilgrims who come in faith and prayer. The beauty of the International Mass was profound—standing among thousands of pilgrims from every nation, with different languages but one faith, as they formed the body of Christ. As night fell, candles illuminated that sacred space. With rosaries in our hands and songs on our lips, we walked in procession in honor of our Queen. The Eucharistic procession in Lourdes was one of the most powerful and life-transforming moments of my pilgrimage. Surrounded by thousands of pilgrims and the sick, each with their own pain and prayers, a sacred silence filled the place.

I stopped at the Carmelite Monastery where Saint Thérèse lived her vocation in hidden holiness. I saw the quiet monastery where she offered everything to God in the smallest acts of her daily living. It was there that she breathed her last.

I went home to Blois, France, the cradle of my FSM family. As I reached our mother house, I was warmly welcomed by the sisters. The tomb of our beloved mother, Marie Virginie, rests there. As I approached the tomb, my heart was filled with love, reverence, and gratitude. I reflected on how remarkable this woman was, who began her mission with five francs, goodwill, and her God. Walking through the streets of Blois, we literally walked in the path of Marie Virginie, recalling and retracing the mission she lived so passionately.

This pilgrim journey was one of deep reflection, renewed vision, vigor, and zeal. My heart is filled with gratitude for all my brothers and sisters who made this pilgrimage possible for me—helping me to travel, to encounter new places and people, to follow the footsteps of St Francis and our Mother Foundress, and to be a witness of Jesus through my life and ministry.

MILES OF MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

The past didn't vanish, but it no longer held power over them. They stood in that room not as estranged relatives, but as people restored.

HELEN LAKSHMI

Clare embarked on a soul-stirring journey from Bengaluru, through the vibrant landscapes of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, onward to Kerala. Nature, in its full summer bloom, seemed to guide them—green forests, yellow blossoms, lavender trails, and occasional sightings of peacocks and elephants. With mango breaks and shared laughter, joy danced in the air, yet Clare felt the quiet weight of unanswered questions. Why am I going? What will I receive?

Arriving at a spiritual centre, Clare was quietly anxious. She sensed this would not be a mere visit, but something deeper—perhaps a divine appointment. As they passed through the garden gates, a profound stillness embraced them. What followed was more than a conversation—it was a divine unfolding. Sr Agnes spoke words that seemed tailored to Clare's deepest longings and hidden wounds. As she listened, tears welled in Clare's eyes, but her heart felt unburdened.



As they drove away, Clare gazed out at the road, her heart brimming with gratitude. This wasn't just a summer escape. It was a divine redirection.

In a long while, she felt seen, known, and loved—truly touched by grace. This peace wasn't unfamiliar. Two years earlier, Clare had experienced something similar at a retreat in Trivandrum. She remembered the uphill walk to the prayer hall with a heavy heart, carrying the baggage of past mistakes — and how during Adoration, she was healed. Those three days had transformed her. On her return, even strangers on the train were drawn to the way she exuded as she spoke of Jesus, her Tau cross around her neck bearing silent witness.

But now, two years later, she had slowly allowed the distractions of the world to dull that joy. Jesus had not changed—but her focus had. Other people, concerns, and even her own loneliness had become idols. Her spirit longed for realignment. The next morning, again in the Garden, that question that she feared the most came to her, "Why do I feel so alone?" She, though not fully clear, had answers. She could no more make an idol of her loneliness, she had to move out. Her heart found its anchor again.

As they drove away, Clare gazed out at the road, her heart brimming with gratitude. This wasn't just a summer escape. It was a divine redirection. A healing. A calling back to Mercy.

Forgiveness, she learned, is not about denying the hurt. It's about choosing love over resentment. It's about giving others the grace we ourselves have received.

Facing Familiar Faces Again

Clare felt a quiet stirring in her heart—a gentle nudge to continue her journey, not just in pilgrimage, but in purpose. With the encouragement of her priest friends, she set out to meet her extended family and visit the elderly she had long neglected ad left, unsure of how she would be received.

She began her travels with hesitation. Old memories surfaced—some sweet, others painful. There were wounds from the past, harsh words exchanged, moments of misunderstanding that had grown into silent walls over time. Clare carried them all with her, like invisible weights in her heart.

Yet, as she stepped into the homes of her loved ones, something unexpected happened. Eyes lit up. Faces softened. Her presence, though simple, brought a sense of joy. Even those who had once hurt her welcomed her with surprise and warmth. The children ran to her, the elderly held her hands longer than usual, and the conversations flowed like rivers released from winter's grip.

Clare realised something profound in those moments: her presence wasn't just about reconnecting—it was about healing. And that healing was fruit of forgiveness. She did not wait for apologies. Instead, she forgave silently—genuinely, deeply. She forgave for the times she had been misunderstood, for the harshness she had received, and even for the times she had turned away in pride or pain. With each act of forgiveness, she felt a weight lift from her soul.

It was in those small, quiet moments—sharing tea with an aging parents, laughing with cousins over childhood memories,

praying beside a sick aunt—that she experienced a joy unlike any other. It wasn't loud or dramatic. It was a peace that filled the hidden spaces of her heart.

Forgiveness, she learned, is not about denying the hurt. It's about choosing love over resentment. It's about giving others the grace we ourselves have received. As she walked from one home to another, Clare became more than a visitor—she became a vessel of peace.

One evening, as she sat beside a frail grandmother who had once spoken harshly to her, Clare gently held her hand. The old woman looked into her eyes and whispered, "Thank you for coming back." No apology. Just presence. And that was enough. Clare smiled, her heart swelling. In that quiet exchange, both women were healed.

The Final Frontier

Returning to Palakkad, Clare felt a quiet stirring in her heart—a call to confront a memory long buried, but never forgotten. Amidst the routine of official work and short reunions, one face kept appearing in her mind: her uncle, lovingly known as *Prasad Maman*. He had once been a cherished part of her life, but time and misunderstandings had built a wall between them, one that had stood untouched for eight long years.

The memories were bittersweet—moments of joy, shared meals, laughter, and quiet guidance. But they were shadowed by a conflict that had never truly been addressed, only avoided. As the flashbacks

Reconciliation didn't erase the past, but it healed its sting.

flooded her thoughts, Clare realised this visit to her hometown wasn't just about tasks or errands. It was time to reconcile—not to rebuild the relationship for the sake of others, but to free her own heart. She needed peace, and she knew forgiveness was the only key.

With a trembling heart, Clare shared her desire with three of her closest companions—people who had been like Christ to her in different seasons of life. Fr Tom, her dear priest friend and spiritual father, listened intently. Though advanced in years and burdened with priestly commitments, he nodded gently and said, "Let's go, Clare. This is important."

Her police officer friend, Vikas, despite his overwhelming workload and pending case files, smiled and simply said, "I'll be there." And Divakaran, her childhood friend, didn't hesitate. "I've seen you carry this for too long. Let's end it."

With that, the four of them set out together—each a symbol of different walks of life, united for one sacred purpose. Clare felt God's presence woven into this odd little fellowship: a priest, a policeman, a friend, and a searching soul.

As they approached her uncle's home, Clare's heart pounded. She didn't know what would await them—anger, indifference, or silence. But she trusted the One who had brought her this far.

Fr Tom gently took the lead, his presence calm and reassuring. He introduced the group and explained why they had come—not with accusations or expectations, but with a spirit of peace. Clare stood quietly beside him, her hands folded, her eyes filled with humility and courage.

Uncle Prasad and Aunty listened. There was an awkward pause, the kind that hangs heavy when old wounds are reopened. Aunty remained guarded, her expressions unreadable. But Clare's uncle—her *Maman*—was different. His eyes softened. He listened with more than ears—with memory, with love, with understanding.

And then came the moment that changed everything. Clare, with grace in her voice and Christ in her heart, gently said, "I've come to reconcile, not to justify or explain. I come because Christ reconciled me first. And I want that peace for us, too." She didn't preach. She didn't debate. She simply witnessed Christ through her presence, her honesty, her vulnerability. And that made all the difference. Her uncle's eyes welled up. He reached out, blessing her with trembling hands and a heart full of gratitude. "You've become someone beautiful," he said softly. "And today, I see Christ in you."

The past didn't vanish, but it no longer held power over them. They stood in that room not as estranged relatives, but as people restored—not just to one another, but to grace.

Later, as they left the house, Clare felt light—as if the air itself had changed. Her friends were silent, respectful of the sacredness of what had just occurred. Fr Tom patted her shoulder, Vikas gave a proud nod, and Divakaran whispered, "I think heaven smiled today."

Reconciliation didn't erase the past, but it healed its sting. And Clare knew that by choosing to witness Christ through love, humility, and forgiveness, she had stepped into something far greater than closure. She had stepped into freedom.

GUNN'S SUPERMAN

Superman refuses to kill; he isn't naïve, he isn't soft, and he isn't ignorant. He's principled.

ROMIL UDAYAKUMAR TNV

Superman has always been political, whether he's punching Nazis on the cover of wartime comics or saving the world with the quiet sincerity of a Kansas-raised alien. But in James Gunn's hands, the character enters a new era less of a demigod in a red cape and more of a mirror reflecting everything the world is afraid to say out loud. In *Superman: Legacy*, Gunn doesn't just revive the *Man of Steel* he rewires him, gut-first, soul-first. And in doing so, he builds a version of Superman that is both nostalgic and entirely modern. There's no detached deity here, no monument of steel looking down from the clouds. This *Superman* walks among us, bruised, hopeful, watching. And what makes him feel especially urgent is not his strength or speed but his relentless kindness, a trait Gunn boldly elevates into a political act.

What unfolds onscreen is a fable about identity, belief, and belonging in a world that's forgotten how to believe in goodness. Gunn doesn't shove metaphors into the dialogue or drench scenes in moral exposition. Instead, he lets the choices speak. Superman refuses to kill not out of naivety but because he believes in the radical idea that every life matters, even when the world doesn't agree. He isn't soft. He isn't ignorant. He's principled. And in today's fractured, fight-first climate, that makes him revolutionary. This choice, this code, becomes his quiet rebellion. It's what draws the line between power and tyranny. It's also what makes Lex Luthor hate him so much not because Superman is stronger, but because he makes it harder for others to justify their cynicism.

There's an electricity to Gunn's version of the classic showdown. Lex Luthor, played with unnerving charm and surgical coldness, isn't just a power-hungry billionaire. He's a spin doctor. A manipulator. A walking think tank of disinformation. And his war against Superman isn't just fought with weapons or traps. It's waged through fear, media manipulation, and strategic doubt. It's about framing Superman as the outsider. The alien. The threat. And for a character whose origin has always been wrapped up in the immigrant experience, this lands with extra weight. Gunn doesn't say it outright, but the parallels are everywhere. A being who looks human but isn't fully trusted. A hero who saves lives but is still asked to prove his loyalty. Sound familiar?



It's impossible to separate *Superman* from politics because the idea of *Superman* is political. Gunn understands that. So did Richard Donner. So did Zack Snyder, though his take leaned more toward iconography and gods-at-war spectacle. Gunn, however, roots his Superman in vulnerability. There are moments when Clark Kent feels completely lost, torn between his upbringing and his sense of universal responsibility. He's not saving cats from trees in this film. He's weighing the consequences of every punch, every flight, every public appearance. His kindness isn't a personality trait it's a choice he makes over and over, even when it costs him.

And yet Gunn never lets the film feel like a lecture. It's funny. It's hopeful. It has edge, sure, but never slips into sarcasm. That's what separates it from the bulk of superhero movies today, especially those bogged down in multiverse fatigue or quip-driven detachment. Gunn seems to be asking, what if sincerity could still work? What if we made room for belief again? *The Daily Planet* isn't just a backdrop this time. Journalism matters. Lois Lane is more than a love interest. She's a watchdog. She holds power accountable. She's brave in a way that has nothing to do with flying aliens. Jimmy Olsen gets space to breathe too. The newsroom scenes pop because Gunn gets what a lot of directors don't: the fourth estate is part of the heroism.

This idea of *Superman* as a moral compass, rather than a military weapon, feels especially relevant when viewed against the broader canvas of cinema both Western and Indian. In Hollywood, we've watched as heroes have grown darker, murkier, more conflicted. The rise of the anti-hero gave us brilliance, but also fatigue. Batman broods. Tony Stark drinks. Deadpool jokes through trauma. But Superman? Gunn chooses to strip him of irony and hands him something more dangerous: conviction. It's not just throwback optimism it's countercultural.

In Indian cinema, the tension between idealism and pragmatism is long-established. Films like *Nayak*, *Swades*, *Rang De Basanti*, or even *Article 15* have dealt with systems of oppression and the fight for justice. There is always a character caught between what is right and what is easy. Often, it's the system itself that becomes the villain. Like in *Indian*, where Kamal Haasan plays a vigilante haunted by a corrupt society, or *Mulk*, where prejudice and political opportunism fracture a family. Gunn's *Superman* would feel right at home in that kind of storytelling not because he solves corruption, but because he refuses to play by the rules it sets.

The political storytelling of Indian cinema frequently leans into emotion. The message is worn on the sleeve, driven by family, memory, loss. Gunn leans in that direction too. Clark Kent is defined by his parents, not just biologically, but spiritually. Jonathan and Martha Kent raise a son to do good not for reward, but because it's the right thing. Gunn gives those values space to breathe. There are no grand lectures. Just small choices. Everyday decency. These are the moments that feel like a quiet revolution against the noise of contemporary cinema.

Even the aesthetic reflects this shift. The film doesn't bask in apocalypse. There's light. There's warmth. The cinematography serves the human moments. And the action, when it comes, is visceral but never indulgent. It doesn't celebrate destruction it mourns it. Superman isn't here to win. He's here to help. That difference ripples through the entire film. And in doing so, Gunn positions Superman not as a savior, but as a guide. Not someone who fixes us, but someone who shows what it means to try.

This is where Gunn's version distinguishes itself even more. Because it's not just about Superman as a symbol of hope it's about how hard that symbol is to maintain. How easy it is to twist. How quickly the crowd turns. There's a moment when Superman saves a building full of people and is still met with suspicion. One comment goes viral, and the narrative shifts. In this age of spin, even the cleanest truth can be dirtied. And Gunn knows that. His film wrestles with it, quietly but powerfully.

The story also doesn't pretend that empathy is easy. Clark's path is filled with loss and frustration. He fails. He misreads people. He wants to lash out. But every time he's pushed toward anger, he turns back to restraint. Not because he's a coward, but because he's trying to prove a point that restraint is strength. That justice without cruelty is possible. And maybe, just maybe, worth believing in again.

Of course, none of this works without the actor in the suit. And Gunn's casting choice pays off. There's no smugness, no performative pain. Just a young man trying to make sense of his role in a broken world. His Superman doesn't speak like a prophet. He speaks like your friend. He's not selling hope. He's living it, however imperfectly. That's the point.

As the credits roll, you don't feel overwhelmed. You feel recharged. That's rare in modern blockbusters. We've grown used to cliffhangers and franchise setups. Gunn gives us something else a complete story. One that stands on its own, even as it opens doors for the DC universe. There's joy in that. And courage too. Because in a cinematic landscape that often rewards spectacle over soul, Gunn chose soul. He chose kindness. And maybe that's the most political act of all.

Superman doesn't bask in apocalypse. There's light. There's warmth. The cinematography serves the human moments. And the action, when it comes, is visceral but never indulgent. It doesn't celebrate destruction it mourns it.



LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR AT THE SERVICE OF THE ELDERLY POOR!



In 1839 in cold winter, Jeanne Jugan met and found God in the face of a poor elderly woman, blind and paralysed. She gave her bed to the poor woman, opened her home and her heart to her. Since then, many elderly people were welcomed by Jeanne Jugan and her daughters who are called "Little Sisters of the Poor" present all over the world in 32 countries. Jeanne said, "It is so good to be poor, to have nothing and to count on God for everything." She literally lived her saying and taught her daughters to trust in God's divine Providence.

**"Whatever you do to the least of my brothers you do unto me."
Would you like to take care of Jesus in the elderly poor?**

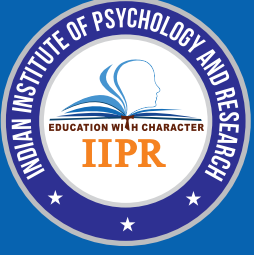


**If you hear the call to follow Jesus in the footsteps of Saint Jeanne Jugan,
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