



Jeevotsav!

TO CELEBRATE LIFE!

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Pro-life Role as a Religious

Bishop Allwyn D'Silva

Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Bombay

During the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10:10, Jesus declares, "***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly.***"

A more abundant life does not entail having trendy apparel or going on expensive holidays. Neither is it about having a lot of material comforts or indulging in all sorts of entertainment. Rather, having life and having it more abundantly means to live deeply, to live life to the full. Truly living abundantly entails seeking what brings us life – and bringing life to other people. Each of us cannot enjoy individually, holding on to the comfort of solitude and not bothering with our neighbours. That is not what Christ did or taught us.

We know that Jesus gathers people, not only individually, but also gathers us as a flock. While the Good Shepherd does go after the lone sheep that strays, it is to unite the flock as one, so that the entire flock is brought together and is lead forward together. Therefore, by being in the midst of us, Christ redeems us together – we are not saved individually. Emulating Jesus thus requires us to consider life in its fullness, life that is interwoven with the life of others.

Why have we to respect the life in others?

Each time we look at another person, we behold a creation of God painstakingly formed in the palm of the Creator's hand. But we are not just created by God, all of us are created in the very image of God. This makes everyone of us precious and exceedingly special – with a due right to life and dignity that is a consequence of being created in God's likeness. It follows that all of us have the right to be accorded dignity and to be treated with respect; and actualising this happens collectively. This is because the dignity of the human race can only be recognised and protected in a community.

The dignity due to every individual is only fulfilled in a pro-life community which recognises that we all are respected only when we live abundantly as God intends us to. And 'all' encompasses not just the able-bodied, or those with prestige and power, but 'all' includes even the "least of these" (cf. Matthew 25:40). As Pope Francis explains in his 2013 Day for Life message: "Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect. "

How can we be pro-life as Religious?

Being pro-life is to see each as a gift, rejoicing in one another in our mutual sharing of the gift of life that we have received. We share life when we take the time to encounter each other, even if it is in little ways, as opposed to superficial interactions devoid of any true understanding.

Religious, therefore, have an important role to play in the community. Having truly comprehended the teaching on human dignity, they are compelled to have others understand the same. They have to teach the community to love the unborn baby and to welcome the disabled child. We need to love without prejudice people of all castes, races and religions, care for the person who is gasping for breath, and volunteer to help people in need. We need to respect the poor and the marginalised, to seek the abolishment of death sentences and the cessation of wars. We need to care for the elderly and the lonely. All of these demonstrate that we are not alone, and that even through our simple gestures we can convince others that we are with them – we are rooting for their dignity, and that they are not alone either. In these pro-life actions stemming from a culture of encounter, we are being brought together in the flock of the Good Shepherd for our common salvation.

However, we are not born with pro-life attitudes, these values need to be formed and inculcated in our families and schools. Religious Houses in particular require to create structures and a curriculum that promotes the different ways to respect life in all forms, and especially in our love for creation. May the pro-life formation in our religious houses deepen even more so that we actualise the unbiased according of dignity and respect to all.

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New Wine in the New Wine Skins

Brother Joseph Sebastian

The St. Catherine of Siena, Welfare Society for Destitute Children was started in 1957 under the shady trees of Bandra, by Reverend Father Anthony Elenjmittam. We are happy to share the **Pro-Life activities** undertaken in the past 15 months. These '*angels in rags*' practiced Jesus' teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. It has helped one to adopt a new lifestyle or be the '*New Wine in the New Wine Skins*' during these challenging Covid 19 times.

The School System for Marginalised and Destitute

Children from financially and socially backward families found schooling a big problem due to the pandemic. Most city schools had already started online learning.

Telecommunication infrastructure and mobile-data signals are available even in the deep slum pockets, but many children from low-income strata could not afford the latest and cheapest android phone where school apps can work. Many families have only one smart phone for four children/students. In most circumstances, the eldest child gets the opportunity to study while the remaining miss school.

St Catherine of Siena School purchased **72 new mobile phones** which were handed to parents so that children can attend online classes. With this initiative most of our students were able to do their studies. The Head Mistress or school staff made home visits to locate families so that the students can attend the online classes. Most were struggling to make two ends meet since there was no income. Some students had migrated to the village for safety, but soon decided to return and join the classes.

Breakfast and Lunch Boxes for School Children and Destitute:

St Catherine's started supporting families with food materials and cooked breakfast and lunch boxes - distributed at the school gate, also for destitute in the streets of Bandra. The class teachers, made sure the families of students got provisions, since many bread winners at home were jobless. Our volunteers till date **distribute 500 packets of hot breakfast and lunch boxes** every day to school children and destitute right from April 2020. Volunteers noticed that people from different ethnic backgrounds came for the lunch boxes.

Relief for all:

Those facing starvation included widows, slum dwellers, migrants, the homeless and destitute. Essential items were beyond their reach. With the local vadapav shops shut, children were hungrier than ever. Migrants, single parents, widows, poor and destitute families had no other option but to be mute spectators. To meet their needs St Catherine's volunteers now started food distribution with 100 hot lunch boxes for their school children who were attending the daily classes. Soon it turned to be 500 packets when their families also started collecting lunch boxes.

The volunteers focussed on old people unable to move due to age, sickness and dehydration due to the summer heat. Many remained on the streets since they had lost their homes being unable to pay their rent. The panic was visible. The scorching heat made

the destitute on the street make choices refusing food and asking for water. Free water supplying hotels were shut and many kept social distance. Equipped with more water bottles, bananas and lunch boxes our volunteers often regrouped so that their effort was welcomed and no food wasted. Volunteers also kept taking feedback on the quality of food

Support came from all corners. An organisation came forward to support over 200 widows who were able to receive Rs 1000/- directly credited to their bank accounts. These widows had lost their jobs due to the lockdown. Grocery kits for the poor and widows, clothes and toiletries, combo Covid 19 preventive medical kit were distributed. The Asha workers in the tribal villages hired teachers for villages.

Help to Widows and Single Mothers:

The **Happy Home** project run by St Catherine's tried to rehabilitate mothers by giving temporary jobs to cook food, so they do not lose their rented homes and end up with their children on the street. In a day, a mother can cook and deliver 100 snack boxes under this project. Free haircuts, beard dressing and shaving for destitute men who come to pick up breakfast and lunch boxes are given occasionally also by some volunteers. Volunteers visited homes assessed the need of these women, and provided rations, school fees, vaccination cost etc.

Outreach in Village/Tribal Areas:

"India lives in its villages," wrote Mahatma Gandhi, Father of our Nation.

Murbad Taluk located 110 km away from Mumbai has 2 to 2.5 lakh tribal population. Most are agricultural labourers and daily wage workers. Few of them attend the weekly Bazar where the agricultural produce is sold locally and the remaining bulk products are sold to whole sale agents who provide them with basic farming requirement of seed, manure etc.

Volunteers reached out to a village with *grocery kits for very poor families and widows*. Soon other village heads came forward to request the grocery kits for the poor in their villages. The village sarpanch and assistants agreed to have better coordination. With many good-hearted city people coming forward to support the grocery kit distribution, volunteers were able to provide **grocery kits to 3000 poor families** in the nearby villages nestled in *Malshej Ghat* villages.

Pregnant tribal mothers were provided a **full baby kit**. Most children are born malnourished; hence the baby kit distribution was carried out at the local primary health centre under doctor's supervision. Medical gloves, sanitizers, Dettol bottles, masks were distributed in the villages to make sure the villagers are felt cared and protected. Widows were given mask making jobs to earn from their work.

In the hilly areas, a novel idea was introduced by St Catherine of Siena Education Empowerment Project at Ekhlahare, Murbad, namely the '**One Village, One Teacher**' programme. The aim was to recruit a local teacher from the village so that children can revise their lessons and focus on their learning. Currently four villages have come forward to experiment with this novel idea.

As the third wave is already predicted, we have started to provide **Covid 19 Combo Medical preventive kits** to the Asha Workers in the villages. Pulse oximeter, thermal gun, gloves, N 95 masks, face shields, sanitizers and a vaporizer are included in the kit. Each kit costs around Rs 3,000/- We have already covered 100 villages so that health of the marginalized population in these remote areas are monitored by Asha Health Workers who report to the PHC doctors.

We are grateful to all who supported us during this pandemic time to reach out to the marginalised and destitute children. This support has created a sense of joy among these unfortunate people keeping them safe from the pandemic. A **Thought from Our Founder** "**There in Mumbai (in St Catherine of Siena) you will have a bigger family on whom you can lavish your love and service. As long as we are pilgrims on this planet, God appears to us in so many forms, even as destitute children, whom I began to serve from the year 1957. In fact, it is not that we who serve God, but God is serving Himself through us. We are the hands and feet of the Lord**" - Late Rev. Fr. Anthony Elenjmittam (1915-2011)

Brother Joseph Sebastian is Trustee and Secretary of St. Catherine of Sienna School for destitute children and orphanage.

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Pro-life work: Holy Spirit Hospital

Sr. Sneha ssp

Holy Spirit Hospital is a charitable trust mission multi-specialty hospital with the capacity of 300 beds. It has a full -fledged Maternity department with 5 consultants. Our vision is "**to respect life, through person - oriented quality health-care for ALL in loving service**". One of our philosophies is "In providing holistic care of the patients we will allow nothing which would militate against the Natural Law and the rights of human dignity".

Annie and her husband Jeff were excited to be expecting their first child. The first few months sailed past happily, mild nausea and the blood work and early ultrasound scans were normal. When the anomaly ultrasound report at 18 weeks came in, their happiness turned to fear. They had a report which read that their baby had multiple tumours in the heart [a medical term called myxoma was mentioned]. The number and size of these tumours made the outcome of this pregnancy look bleak. Simultaneously there was an ongoing court case dramatized over the media that had a young woman appeal to a court to abort her baby at 26 weeks, as the baby had a hole in the heart.

Experts were interviewed and opinions were conflicting. The court deliberated that this was beyond the legal limit of medical terminations and hence permission was denied. The medics involved urged the party to appeal to a higher court. Strangely, the same woman went into preterm labour mysteriously and the baby succumbed. Returning to the first patient, the couple did a lot of prayer and reflection on the advice of the hospital counsellor, and decided to continue the pregnancy. Joy replaced their fear and they made a joint decision to accept the outcome of this pregnancy as loving parents. This baby was born by caesarean section and surprised all the specialists by never needing life support in spite of large myxomas situated in vital areas of the heart. This baby is now a happy youth and his big grin widens when reminded of the scare he gave everyone on his way into this world.

So also, the case of another couple who decided to continue their first pregnancy in spite of knowing that the child had an open spinal defect. The child was welcomed, nurtured and cared for till her demise at age seven. The parents believed it was their privilege and duty. Numerous cases are counselled about some unusual ultrasound finding that has no long-term bearing on the health and wellbeing of the child, to make decisions that favour life. So important to subtly insinuate that the foetus is a child of the couple and as parents it is a responsibility to look after a weaker or unhealthy child with a more humane and compassionate attitude. Even the hard hearted have a soft spot when asked to be the defender and protector of their own offspring.

The world can never be a perfect place but it can choose to be more loving and accepting to those who show their imperfections in the womb. The rest show up our deficiencies later and would be vocal if anyone would even try to mute us let alone exterminate us. Mother Teresa said '*It is poverty that a child must die so that you may live as you wish*'.

Sr. Sneha ssp is the Director of Holy Spirit Hospital, Andheri East, Mumbai

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Pro-life: A constant choice and challenge

Sr. Gracie Rodrigues fddc

Life can be a beautiful journey, a crazy ride, and a big adventure. But it can also be a living nightmare, a constant struggle and challenge. It's all up to one to make a choice and move ahead. In each moment, you choose which side of it to embrace in order to become the person you are destined to be. The current COVID-19 pandemic has played an important role in our life. In the midst of such crises, it has left us to make a constant choice to enhancing life for a better living. In spite of the challenges and risk of one's own life, and in order to bring new life to the other courageous steps have brought not only hope and new life to others, but also to me.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused enormous trauma, disrupted economies, social life, transportation, work and employment, supply chains, leisure, sport, international relations, academic programmes, literally everything. Churches and religious communities have not been spared. The pre-COVID-19 world is gone, replaced by a 'new normal'. The new landscape calls for both resilience and adaptation, embracing new ways of doing things and of being new people of God. The crisis has given us ample opportunities to enhance life, though at times it has been a choice and a challenge, because of certain lockdown restrictions and fear of getting infected. But still we witnessed new life, a new beginning.

It was during the first wave that we could support and reach out to our poor and needy people by providing dry ration, masks, medicines, cooked food, sanitizers and so on. One thing that touched me was the testimony of Mr. Rajesh, a 48-year-old autorickshaw driver. He said that before COVID-19, the calls were from his customers to get them dropped at their destination. Now, he makes calls to his customers asking if they need help. He notes each one's needs and then make over a dozen calls, seeking help for those who have no essentials for their daily living. Despite his own struggle in the last three months, he has distributed groceries to nearly 300 families from fellow auto drivers to physically challenged persons. This isn't easy, yet possible because some customers and well-wishers came forward to donate. This is truly becoming another Christ, reaching out to others in order to bring joy and happiness to people.

Covid-19 lockdown has hit the country in different ways, be it rich, poor or marginalised sections of the society, all have been facing its severe impact in their own ways. One such section of the society is that of **Transgenders**, who are struggling every day to survive as the nationwide lockdown has put a temporary end to their services, leading to financial crisis and lack of basic amenities like food and medicine. It was on 23rd April 2020, during the first wave of pandemic I met Zara (transgender) on Facebook. As we were chatting, she

expressed her difficulties and family crisis. She was also mentally disturbed due to lack of food, medical assistance and other basic needs. Due to the current situation, she was not able to earn her daily living. Zara was invited to our convent along with her companions and were provided food items and medical aid. She was happy. Now, during this second wave she shares with me how she has become an agent of change in her neighbourhood by sharing with others the little she gets. Isn't this inspiring and a witness of new life?

Our Foundress St. Magdalene of Canossa said, "**walk with the times**" and it was during the second wave we had to change our strategy in reaching out to the people. Every day we learnt of the rise in deaths in Goa due to Covid. We tried networking with different NGOs and Government organisations in reaching out to the neediest people. We set up Covid care teams, supported the Covid patients and their families in hospitals and at home. We also initiated **tele-counselling services** in order to support families who are mentally disturbed. We also initiated legal aid counselling where people could get access to online counselling as legal interventions were not happening on a regular basis. In our house in Goa, we reached out to the homeless and displaced families at the Mapusa playground. Weekly and monthly ration, and medicines were provided to them. We also supported the **rag pickers community** of Betim who were jobless.

One case was that of Neetu, a minor and beautiful child, confused, disturbed and fearful, who called me and related her story. Neetu hailed from Kanpur. When Neetu was born, she was given to her neighbours since her mother was a Bar dancer. Now after 14 years Neetu's mother began to claim her. She tried through various legal sources to get Neetu back from her neighbours, but all in vain. Neetu was grown up with wisdom and she knew every action of her mother. Every vacation when Neetu went to spend a few days with her mother, she observed that mother used to return at mid night with makeup and well dressed. She knew something is not going well in the house and this is not the safe environment for her. She even saw some men coming home and that's why Neetu requested the authorities not to send her back to her mother. She also knew that if she goes back to stay with her mother soon, she would soon be in the hands of pimps.

Neetu's biological mother tried her level best to take custody of her daughter and she even filed a case against the foster parents, but ultimately the legal authorities focused on the best interest of the child. It was not so easy for us to make the decision for this child. Neetu was now grown up as a beautiful young adult. Surely such a pretty girl would have definitely been in the hands of those pimps in the brothel as the mother was now intending to earn on her daughter. It really needs a true discernment because a wrong decision can ruin the whole life of a child. Today Neetu is happy and enjoying the safe environment with her foster parents. She is now in 12th std and the foster parents are raising her as their own child.

We as consecrated persons can play an important role in this challenging and radical Pro-Life ministry. God's cry to Cain, found in the first page of the Bible, "Where is your brother?" challenges us to examine seriously this current pandemic situation. Let us accompany them on a path of re-integration into society and the recovery of their human dignity. Let our every effort of the Canossian sisters bring the balm of God's mercy to the suffering and strengthen our network to fight against Covid-19.

Sr. Gracie is a qualified lawyer has been engaged in a number of activities, such as...

- *Handling legal cases and providing assistance in domestic violence cases, marital separation, mutual conciliation, counselling, etc.*
- *Online sessions on child trafficking, child safety, and cyber-crimes for children.*
- *Offline counselling at Calangute police station, Goa.*
- *Remedial classes for the poor and children of migrants.*
- *Providing dry ration, medical support and counselling for transgenders, as this is their greatest need.*

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DAUGHTERS OF THE CROSS - HEALING, LIBERATING THE OPPRESSED AND THE VULNERABLE SINCE 1833

Sr. Venita Fernandes fc

The French Revolution that started in 1789 spread to Belgium bringing violence and death all around. In 1794 young Jeanne Haze's family from Liege, Belgium fled to Germany as the revolutionaries wanted to hang her father who was faithful to the Church and held an important post in the Church and the State. Their property was taken by the French army and the once rich family was now reduced to poverty. While fleeing, her father died and 3 years later, her only brother, on completing his studies as a lawyer, got seriously ill and died. Jeanne, her mother and sister Ferdinande did embroidery for a living and their own experience of suffering, led them to be drawn to those most in need. On the request of a friend Jeanne and Ferdinande took up her paying, private day school but gave it up in order to get help and build a school for needy children. They also visited and cared for the sick.

Yes they experienced the Power of the Cross, when in 1833, in the evening Jeanne and her companion Virginie were crossing the courtyard between the house and the Carmel. They both saw a large black cross with a white crown in the sky. God had given them a sign. In contemplating the cross Jeanne discovered the mystery of the love and the compassion of God for humanity. The Cross was a sign that all suffering can be transfigured.

On 8th September 1833 Jeanne Haze took the name Marie Therese and the Daughters of the Cross came into being with the Charism :

The Daughters of the Cross form an institute of apostolic life which has as its aim to understand and proclaim to others that the love of God has been revealed to us in the most striking way in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Their response to this love is to glorify and honour Christ by loving and serving him, above all in his weakest and most suffering members.

Mother Marie Therese began in 1833 with a postulant and five sisters. Depending on God for everything, with love, dedication, gentleness, kindness, zeal and dynamism they readily took up daring, pioneering works and changed the lives of those in their care in :

- a prison in Liege
- a refuge for destitutes and juvenile delinquents
- hospitals
- homes and schools for the most needy.

She sent all the available sisters to care for patients during the 3 epidemics of Cholera. She offered a convent as a hospital in Liege.

On 27.01.1862, Mother Marie Therese sent 5 sisters to India although she did not know the place. She spent time with the Sisters, prepared them and said to them "Never lose courage". Despite not knowing the language and the culture, the Sisters were very much appreciated for their love, care and winning simplicity.

During the Austro- Prussian war of 1866 and again in 1870, the Sisters worked tirelessly, caring for the wounded & being with the dying.

On 07.01.1876 Mother Marie Therese went to God after being unwell for a year. She was beatified on 21.04.1991.

We live in a BROKEN WORLD torn apart by selfishness, greed, hate, violence leading to Broken Relationships :

within oneself - Self destruction

with others - Violence, Death

with creation - Pollution, Climate Change

Inspired by the example of our Blessed Mother Marie Therese and her Pioneer Sisters, we, Daughters of the Cross, seek to make God's mission as our mission to the deprived... the marginalized...the oppressed...the most neglected through Education, Social Work, Health Care, Pastoral Work through :

- Revisiting our Charism of serving all especially the weakest & most suffering
- Being the feminine face of God
- Being in kinship with all creation

- Following an inclusive God to the peripheries to empower people to live a life of dignity and freedom and to embrace the world in a profound and totally new way.

Presently we serve in :

Belgium, Germany, Rome, Ireland, England, Brazil, Cameroon , India, Pakistan, Nepal

In India: Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal, Jharkhand,

Assam, Kerala, Orissa, Dadra Nagar Haveli, Delhi

Pakistan: Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot, Nawabshah, Badin, Kunri, Khanewal

Nepal : Jhapa

In India our works are varied :

Education : Schools in the rural and urban areas as agents of social change, boardings for girls in rural and urban areas, computer classes for children in interior villages, identification and training of Village Health Workers to prepare herbal remedies, awareness and empowerment programs for the adivasis, dalits and the vulnerable, training of the marginalized to be Barefoot Counsellors, Barefoot lawyers to provide information to villagers about the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution and Government schemes, training of school dropouts to be Hospital Aides.

Social Work : Homes to lovingly care for abandoned, relinquished babies, orphans, provide a family and a home to babies and children without parents, nurture children with HIV, creche for care for children of slum dwellers, support and rehabilitate the unwed mother, targets of violence and survivors of human trafficking, Grain Bank to encourage sharing of grains with the needy, encourage and support income generation through livelihood programs and entrepreneurship, make available resources to farmers, sponsor adivasi girls for professional courses, counsel persons in distress especially women and youth, Credit Cooperative Societies of women - to make women financially self reliant.

Health Work : Hospitals, medical care for people in the interior villages through mobile dispensaries, outreach programmes of the hospital - Medical Camps - Urban and Rural, patients - referred from rural areas to our urban hospital, regular Free Polio Camps held in collaboration with the "Lions Club" where polio affected persons are successfully operated upon.

Pastoral Work : sharing God's love with people through visiting families and the sick, preparing children and adults for the sacraments, praying with people.

During the Covid Pandemic, the Sisters from the medical field are visiting interior villages creating awareness of the Corona Virus, examining and screening people and treating them. This has helped to reduce the fear among villagers and ensured early and timely treatment of the disease. In collaboration with NGOs and Govt officials, the Sisters distribute food grains and provisions to the most needy especially widows. Job opportunities are created or identified so as to suitably employ people. Counselling services are provided to women and youth. Shelter was provided to migrant workers with work and payment provided on our campuses. 4 women were sheltered in a convent.

We need you to collaborate with us to create a just, healthy, happy world :

- come join us
- be our lay associates
- in our urban/ rural boardings/ institutions take up studies, teach music, dance, conduct games
- visit our children/ works
- share your ideas, expertise with us
- share your contacts of Corporates for Corporate Social Responsibility.

Following Jesus, the Daughters of the Cross, seek to be bearers of the Good News of God's Love, Hope and to co create with God for life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

Sr. Venita Fernandes is the Provincial of the Daughters of the Cross, Bombay Province

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A CALL TO PROMOTE LIFE – LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST

Sr. Udaya fc

Today more than ever, we have begun to value life. This awareness has been greatly created in the Covid- 19 scenario, when all of us experienced uncertainty about ourselves and our families and friends. We were not sure about our own safety and health, let alone that of others. During the second wave of Covid -19, we began to appreciate life very deeply as there was not sufficient oxygen available to save the affected lives and there was fear all around about the fate of our loved ones and ourselves. We have heard about the pain and suffering of many patients and those who have died due to the oxygen shortage.

I remember our Lord's words. "I have come so that you may have life ... life to the full." John 10:10. Jesus respected life and he worked towards fullness of life. He was not a silent spectator but spoke for justice and dignity for which he was crucified. The main source of my strength is my faith formation from a very tender young age of 4 yrs. Today, I realise my call as a life promoter. Only after joining the Congregation of the daughters of the Cross, I was able to have clarity in my call to be a religious sister and how I was going to serve the Lord and His people.

From the start of my apostolic mission, I was placed in some of our Institutions and schools like St. Catherine's Home, St. Joseph's Home, and St. Joseph's High school, Bandra. This gave me a sensitive exposure to the pains and struggles of the **abandoned and orphaned children**. I was also able to accompany and help many young girls and women who were faced with major social problems. I have also shared in the joys of **placing babies in their adoptive homes** as well as supporting young girls and women in their families or even in marriage.

I consider it a great blessing to have reached out to the **neglected and marginalized** people both in the rural and tribal area of Manor and Mahad. I have gained much from their simple life style. I was able to understand their life struggles and other difficulties of their daily life. There was so much inner satisfaction to see the women and the girls are being empowered in that region. There were ample opportunities to gain much knowledge, experience and above all, for an attitudinal change within myself. I have realized that we have the responsibility to reach out to the ones who are most in need, lift them, and help them to find meaning in their lives. We are there to empower them to face the challenges of life and society.

Today I recall the love with which Jesus called me to be a religious. I have experienced His presence in these last 53 years of my life as a daughter of the Cross-God has walked with me especially while I faced new challenges in my life and work. Often, He has revealed His presence in the most difficult situations in my life, giving me courage and strength. Jesus has helped me to bring the good news to the poor, **give dignity and respect** to all especially to those who have lost it in their lives. I can truly say that I have seen and experienced the real meaning of empowerment in the people whom I served-thus leading them to live a life to the fullest.

In spite of all the struggles of Covid -19 God is asking us to trust in Him. He is with us. Let us listen to His voice; "Do not be afraid ... I am with you." Yes, Jesus is with us. Let us trust in Him and place all our anxieties in Him and pray for the healing of our world.

Sr. Udaya fc is a member of the congregation of the Daughters of the Cross. She is currently the superintendent of St. Catherine's Home for children at Andheri West, Mumbai. Sister has worked with socially deprived, neglected and abused

children for almost forty-five years in the urban as well as in the rural areas. She has also been working for in-country and inter-country adoption for several years.

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For more information on Pro-life, including the Church's standpoint on various pro-life issues, please visit our website www.ahlc.org.in