

# 6 Jeeu♥tsau!

## TO CELEBRATE LIFE!

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*From the desk of Bishop Barthol Barretto*

I guess the entire Christmas Season could be based on a series of “What if...” questions.

- ♦ What if Mary had refused God's invitation to become the mother of Jesus
- ♦ What if Joseph had gone ahead with his original plan to break his alliance with Mary, disregarding what “the angel told him in a dream”?
- ♦ What if Jesus Himself had said NO to the Father, to be born as a human baby, in poor circumstances, to be at the mercy of other human beings?
- ♦ What if God had decided He was better off without repairing the ruptured relationship between Him and humankind?

And in spite of all WHAT Ifs, the Good News is that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not be lost, but have life in abundance. This for me is Christmas: Jesus being born to save me from sin.

Today, I see Christmas as a time to examine our attitudes towards unwed mothers, kids on the street or in slums, abandoned girls – whether as babies, children, teenagers, young adults, wives and soon?



As we celebrate Christmas, each of us is called to make room for HIM in the INN.

The INNermost place in my heart — the letting go of myself and allowing Jesus to take root in me.

The INN of our family. How are the elderly treated? Are they ignored because they do not contribute to the family income?

The INN of our society: How are women treated? As second class citizens, good enough only to wash, cook, clean, take care of babies? Or equals — in decision making, etc.?

This Christmas, let us welcome Jesus in-to our families, to see the face of Jesus in the new-born and the elderly, and indeed, in each other.

*I wish you a truly Joyous Christmas.*

## Welcoming Jesus Into Our Homes

Fr. Ashwin Castellino

**A**t Christmas, only rarely will you find a home without a crib. The crib symbolizes Christ's birth into this world, where He had a singular mission to save us and lead us back to God. Far from being an implausible story of the past, or just some historical event, the crib also has great relevance and significance in our family lives - Jesus' desire to be born in our very homes! We can draw inspiration from the crib in understanding its significance in the manger of our families.

Jesus, being God, was not born in some 5-star suite, with the perfect surroundings and comforts. In fact, the place where He laid, amidst animals and the stench, nobody would want to spend a single night. Similarly, our families may not be the perfect families. You might find the stench of a broken relationship, the

discomfort of emotional pain and physical suffering, the presence of people who do not value you. From the outside, our homes may have a fairy tale-like appearance, like the scene of the crib, as portrayed in cards and plays, but the reality is often very different and unpleasant. It is in this setting, however, that Jesus chooses to be born, in our imperfect but very human homes! And it is His presence that makes the difference. It draws not only the multitude of angels around the manger but also the shepherds and kings to adore and worship God. When we welcome Him into our homes, and make Him the centre of our family life, we truly attract the unexpected..... peace, joy, love, strength and God's abundant blessings. This Christmas, will there be room in the inn of your home for Jesus?

## Hope for the Hopeless

Sr. Udaya

**W**e are in the Advent Season – A season just before Christmas. We are waiting and preparing with celebrations for the coming of Jesus once again into our world. This is a time of waiting, for hope, joy, and love and to embrace peace at the birth of the 'Prince of Peace'. God's son, Emmanuel! (God with us).

Mary is very important to us as we reflect upon the advent and Christmas. Mary's submission to God's will make the difference to our broken world. She brought light into our dark world and taught us to respond to God's will with deep faith and hope. Mary's painful journey as a virgin to bring forth Jesus into the world has changed the outlook of mankind. A child was born to Mary to transform the world with his Love, Peace, Joy and Hope.

While preparing for this advent season, I was reflecting upon the waiting period of Mary as she brought forth her promised son into the world. Suddenly my thoughts travelled across to thousands of childless couples, the humiliation, the stigma and longing to be a mother. Today there is a ray of Hope for these childless couples through 'Adoption'. The only drawback is that their joy can only be fulfilled through CARA (Central Adoption Resource Agency) which was centralized in the year 2015. There is a long waiting list (1-3 years) before the babies are matched and given for adoption.

I have witnessed and heard painful stories of

childless couple which moved my heart. Thus today 'CARA' has become a boon to millions of childless couples all over the world including special need children. Some of the stories of the children and the couples will grip you with emotion and finally agree totally that the long waiting to have a child is being fulfilled. There are many hurdles one had to face to finally reach the reality of Adoption. Each couple has a different story to tell us.

Today, I am going to share with you a story of a couple Rashmi and Deepak who found their little Pari from Hardwar. Thus began Rashmi's desire to have a child but there was reluctance from all quarters of her life (husband, parents, in-laws, etc). Then came a day when her husband finally agreed or rather gave in to her wish to have a second child through adoption). As we enter the season of Advent, I want to take you down her memory lane of this adoption journey, sharing various instances where she received, hope, love, peace and finally unbridled joy

"The couple was then introduced to St. Catherine's Home for a Home Study Report. (HSR -an important document required for adoption).

Once the HSR was accepted by CARA then





began the long wait of 3 years (as CARA home study validity is only for 3 years). But during this waiting period Rashmi's excitement was elevated to confusion, anxiety and sometimes frustration over the long wait. But as they say, even the best laid plans are led astray, many things changed over three years including energy level, health and other circumstances, which caused even more confusion in her mind regarding her decision to adopt a second child. She was constantly swinging between uncontrollable excitement and deep anxiety. Suddenly before she knew it, one day in May 2019, she finally received their first referral of a baby. Their Baby! And indeed, it was love at first sight!

Rashmi's eyes well up at the memory of that day when their baby finally found them. Oh, the feeling was overwhelming she had no words to describe it. She had one big doubt in her mind "whether she would be able to give as much love to her adopted child as her biological child." Love was all that she felt at that moment without wasting any time she contacted the person concerned and completed the formalities and brought her baby home from Hardwar. Pari was three years old. The first few days were the toughest as she

kept crying and wanted to go back home. But the enormous love and affection from all the family members slowly calmed her down. It has been six months since their Princess has come to live with her. Their home has become chirpier with endless mischief and laughter and children quarrels and fights of their two girls. Their family feels complete. Pari's grandparents are totally in awe of their youngest granddaughter, the ones who were opposing the adoption decision are the ones who play with her the most now."

Adoption is just another way of entering parenthood, just like having a baby through normal delivery C section, surrogacy or IVF. It is important to understand and absorb the normalcy of adoption, so that one is able to bring up a child in the same normal comfortable environment.

I truly believe in the divine grace, destiny and the connection of the universe. St. Catherine's Home constantly works towards giving joy, hope fulfillment of happiness in people's lives and Rashmi's story is one such example to complete the family.

## Pro-life Messages





## How to welcome a Foster Child

One of the best decisions we as a family have ever taken is not only to open our homes but our lives as well to children that are abandoned or marginalized. This decision took us many years of discernment while providing the needs of the marginalized children through education, warm meals and clothing. However we realized that these children need much more than just basic requirements. They need the Love and Care of a family.

We now have a Foster Home with 11 children which is a registered NGO called 'Love Joy and Hope Foundation'.

Foster parenting is a difficult but wonderful way of providing support, stability, healing, and love to the many children who need it the most. We are entering the world of abused and neglected children. It takes a lot of emotional strength, and it also cleanses your soul. When you get to connect with a child who needs an adult to care and love them, there's simply no other feeling like it.

Perhaps you are inclined to start a foster home. Here are a few tips to keep in mind if you plan to begin with.

Firstly it's very important to be registered by the Government norms and legalities before you start a foster home.

Welcome the child with warmth and friendliness. It's good to break the initial discomfort by giving them a gift and probably play with them for a while.

Don't force them to call you Mom and Dad cause that could cause confusion in a child. The kids



call us Bhaiya / Didi (Brother / Sister).

Have meals together as a family.

Be Patient.. Take your time in teaching them basic manners and good habits.

Make sure they have their own things and that they understand

those items will always belong to them.

Becoming their friend is the best and most important gift you can give them and yourself.

At Love Joy and Hope Foundation, we all live as a family, eat the same food, the children go to good schools and have been growing very well by the grace of God. But most of all, we have seen tremendous transformation in them over these few years just by loving and caring for them as our own.

One of the greatest and best decisions we have ever taken is to be a channel of Love Joy and Hope as a foster home.



**The Archdiocesan Human Life Committee**

**wishes all its readers the Joy, Love and Peace**

**that babe Jesus brings this Christmas. Have a Super 2020.**



## Jesus is the Joy of Living

By Dr. Jeanette Pinto

Nathan was born in a poor family and had five sisters after him. His parents struggled all their lives to make ends meet, and to save 'dowry' for his sisters' marriages. This is a horrible custom among many Indian families even to this day. As a teenager he studied and worked hard to add to the family income and help educate his sisters. Early in life he fell in love with a pretty Brahmin girl named Laxmi. They eloped and got married but were soon ostracised by their families and communities. They left Chennai and settled in Mumbai. By God's grace, Nathan landed a good job and they lived happily. Nathan's love of God and his staunch faith soon had an influence on Laxmi, and she converted and was baptised a Catholic taking the name of Mini. I listened intently to Nathan and then commented, "How wonderful! I am so happy for you."

He continued that a year later, Mini was pregnant and shared the good news with him. Since they were just settling down to a new city life, on the one hand they were happy, but felt unprepared for this new state. Besides, Nathan was financially still supporting his parents and family back home. *"To have a baby so soon would be an additional burden, and an inconvenience,"* he muttered *"so we aborted our baby."* Hearing this I insensitively gasped exclaiming; "O, No!" Nathan noticed the displeasure on my face, and then sadly and painfully in a soft voice muttered; *"You know Mini never ever conceived again, and today I have no children."* I felt a sharp stab of pain when I heard this.

We both fell silent for about two minutes. Then he continued that the years rolled by, life moved on and one day in 2006, Mini suffered intense abdominal pain. After a battery of tests the doctors diagnosed that Mini was suffering from advanced cancer of the uterus, and sadly she died a few months later. This came like another shock to me, and I truly felt very sad for Nathan and said, *"I'm so sorry to hear about your personal loss of Mini"* He muttered, *"Thank you."* To comfort him I mentioned that it was a good idea for him to celebrate Christmas and be with the family in Chennai, especially since he lived alone. He agreed, *"Yes, look at my face, the glow is because of Jesus, He is the joy of my living. I visit the Tabor ashram every weekend to pray, volunteer my time and sing praise and worship. In fact I have just returned from the ashram."* At that moment one of the guys greeted him and they got chatting about the cricket match.

My thoughts wafted from Nathan, to Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, celebrated on December 25<sup>th</sup> by millions of people around the world.



I recalled the meaning of Christmas; in Old English it is *CristesMaesse*, the Mass of Christ, first found in 1038, and *Cristes-messe*, in 1131. In Dutch it is *Kerstmis*, in Latin *Dies Natalis*, whence comes the French *Noël*, and Italian *Il natale*; in German *Weihnachtsfest*, from the preceding sacred vigil. The term *Yule* is of disputed origin.

I was lost in thought when suddenly Nathan returned to my side and said that he had not finished his story. I wondered what next? He asked if I knew why Christmas is very special to him. I shook my head conveying that I didn't know. He bluntly said that he had spent his life cursing God, condemning their poverty, the hard life, his parents, sisters, his ill luck, their family fate and what not. He even cursed Mini for aborting their child. *"She should not have listened to me; she should have refused my suggestion,"* he said emphatically. After Mini died, he cursed himself, felt rejected and wretched, suffered pangs of guilt, and experienced condemnation. He had rejected and abused the gift of life that God had so kindly given to them. He had no right to kill his baby...yes he should not have killed his baby. Thereafter Nathan turned a Sunday Catholic, prayed occasionally, but refused to forgive himself.

It so happened that his friend Russel invited him to his house for Christmas, the year that Mini died. Nathan decided to visit him. That Christmas, Russell's younger sister Nancy, a teenager had decorated the hall and beautifully recreated the Nativity scene at one corner of the room. In the midst of music and chitter chatter, Nathan was drawn like a magnet to the crib. He walked up to it and his eyes were directed towards baby Jesus. He was suddenly dazzled by a brilliant glow around the little babe. To his amazement the babe grew in size, moved out of the crib and stretching its arms the babe hugged him. Nathan was aghast; he uttered a loud sound, was in shock, fell to his knees, covered his face and began to sob uttering! *"I'm sorry Jesus! Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!"* Then he crumpled onto the



floor sobbing bitterly, and beating his chest with a clenched fist.

Russel, his mother and sister rushed to his side, shocked, confused and speechless. Russel bent low to pick up Nathan. His father came out on hearing the loud sound, "What happened?" he asked; but everyone stood dumbstruck. Nobody present could understand what had happened. Then thinking that Nathan was grieving in memory of his dear wife, they sat him down, comforted and consoled him. After a good cry, to everyone's relief he related the awesome encounter he had with baby Jesus in the crib. A miracle indeed! They all immediately knelt down and prayed to the babe Jesus. Ever since that time Nathan shares his testimony and urges people to choose life, and have a prolific

attitude.

What makes Christmas so special for all of us? Throughout our lifetime we enjoy many earthly experiences and relationships. Some relationships fail for various reasons; some relationships leave us broken-hearted, devastated and disillusioned. There is only one relationship we can count on; a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He only can heal a broken heart; He only can bring joy and happiness in spite of flawed relationships. Jesus came to give us life in abundance. (John 10:10) A miraculous encounter with baby Jesus at Christmas had transformed Nathan's life; he was liberated, and could now live life in all its fullness. Truly Jesus is the Joy of Living, here and now, as well as for time and eternity.

## A Pro-Life Exhibition

By Rajan Mathew

Outside the Our Lady of Perpetual Succour church, was a Pro-life exhibition arranged and co-ordinated by Rajan Mathew of the Jesus Youth team, Mumbai. In midst of the Mass going crowd was a family preparing for a baptism, one lady amidst them viewed the model babies exhibited and her eyes were filled with tears. She confided in a team member that she was trying for a child for over 8 years. Our team gathered then around and interceded with her for her desire.

The venue arrangements were excellent. We had the exact space for our posters and with excellent suggestions by Dr Joaquim Rodrigues; we got the perfect location for the banner, to catch the attention of the people moving out of the main gate. Also to complement the banner, he recommended relocating the table for the exhibition of the models, to allow more visitors to view it.

With a captive audience in the Confirmands, and supported by catechists Nicola & Mikhail. Dr. Joaquim & I explained the posters and exhibition, and transformed the time of catechesis where we shared the basic concepts of faith, based on love of God, self & neighbour. Our talks also underscored another core tenet that God is the Author of life, and only He can give and take it away, and that life begins at the

moment of conception. We took them through abortion, contraception, population myths and value of life & dignity in general.

Later as we were packing up the Pro-life



Exhibits, a man named Datta approached us and requested to see the models of the babies. We had to unpack the same. Datta then just asked for the smallest model of the baby and wanted us to sell it to him. He mentioned that he and his wife were trying for another child.

He then shared with us that he had attended the exhibition 7 years back in 2012, when earlier held and at that time the Jesus Youth team had distributed clay models to the people. The man took the model home and prayed, and soon thereafter his wife conceived. He informed us that his son's 7th birthday was that day. We did not have a model to give him this time, but gathered around and prayed for him and his family.

It was a wonderful time of reaching out to the parishioners also and to draw attention to knowing & learning the important concepts, especially in the current scenario where worldly beliefs dominate, and evident breakdown of society, family values and morality seen. It is important to educate all Catholics in these matters of faith.

A special thanks to our parish priest, Fr. Theodore D'Souza CSsR.



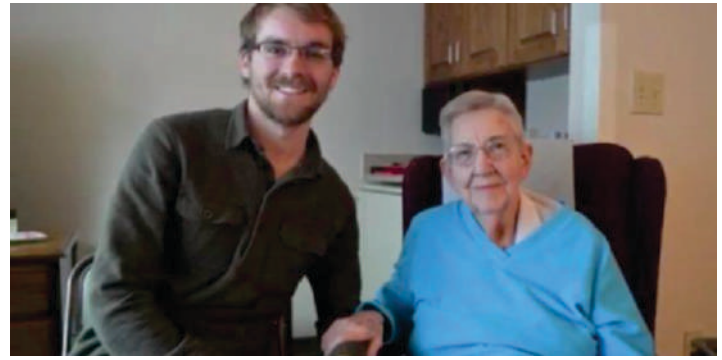
## Adopt a Grand Parent

**D**o you know why India is one of the worst countries to grow old in? We have the second highest population of elderly people in the world; projected to rise to 12% of the total population by 2020. Therefore, under some definitions, we are doubtless an 'ageing population'.

Picture this situation told to me recently by a friend: My father, his best friend and I are chilling over glasses of single malt in the living room during his recent visit. My father brings up a development project in Calcutta that sounds interesting which has state-of-the-art facilities plus an on-call doctor and on-site nurse, fully serviced apartments from cleaning to linen changes and cooks. My uncle looks at him askance and says disdainfully, "You're just describing one of those new-fangled old age homes. That's not for me." My father doesn't press the point, but it appears clear that he is in favour of such a residential arrangement for himself, at the right time of course.

I'm left a little bewildered by this exchange. Like most of the families I know, we're a nuclear family – I grew up with mom and dad, moved abroad, and now live in India with my own nucleus in a different city from my parents. Coincidentally, my brother and his wife and kid also live in my city. My parents, though, are happily entrenched in Calcutta, living the golf club life while still actively working. They're in their mid-60s and have no intention of retiring – not in this lifetime anyway by the looks of it. We all know that at some point they will need to be minded though. It never occurred to me that I would not be the one doing the minding, although I hadn't considered the possibility of moving to their city to do it. I just assumed they'd come to me. All of this got me thinking – what are the options today for the elderly when they reach that stage of becoming dependent?

This is a concern of many sons and daughters who are well into their 50's. Studies indicate that there are areas with 40% below the poverty line and over 73 % illiterate. Scarily, about 90 % of them have no official social security (i.e. no PF, gratuity, pension, etc). 73 % of deaths among the elderly are related to heart disease,



smoking and cancers. 20% of doctor's visits, 30 % of hospital days and 50% of bedridden days are ascribed to elderly patients. So our elderly require many levels of care in inaccessible locations. Who is going to look after all these people and who is going to pay for their care? A universal health insurance and pension scheme would certainly be a welcome move in our country and several advocacy groups have been working towards promoting a governmental policy on this.

A Pro-life approach to the problem is when families welcome new family members and cultures with warmth and genuine love. They should be open to changes in their life patterns. Young people should be taught of this moral responsibility towards their parents and elders. There are many complex considerations facing families when welcoming a new member into their fold. When planned for well in advance, approached openly and executed in a spirit of mutual trust and respect, this potentially turbulent process can be successfully navigated to the benefit of all involved. So adopt a grandparent or an elderly this Christmas and continue to bring him/her the joy of the babe Jesus.

Here is what one grandparent said on her being adopted: "It's wonderful one of the best experiences of my life. Being with the younger generation has been such an inspiration to me. I love the friendship of the kids and the relationship I have developed with their families; my granddaughter Neela who has adopted me and I hope to stay in touch forever and I look forward to building new relationships with my future grandkids.

*(A future program is envisaged from sharing thoughts of the AHLCTeam)*



12<sup>th</sup> December – Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe  
Patroness of the Pro-life Movement

PROLIFE PRAYER

Heavenly Father,  
thank you for the precious  
gift of life.  
We pray for all those who  
snuff out life in unborn  
babies,  
eliminate life for self-  
interest,  
suppress life with hate when  
unwanted, or terminate life  
for medical and other  
considerations  
Grant that we may **VALUE**  
and **CHERISH** human life,  
**RESPECT** and **DEFEND**  
life always.  
We make this prayer  
through Jesus Christ,  
our Lord.  
Mary our Mother and  
Protector, pray for us and  
for all mothers-to-be,  
Amen.



**Archdiocesan Human Life Committee**  
**Archdiocese of Bombay**

For more details on Pro-life issues, please visit our website : [www.ahlc.org.in](http://www.ahlc.org.in)