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What is Catholic Homeschooling?

Schools have always been akin to a second home, with teachers like second parents. Reminisce about your childhood, and you will agree that some of the fondest memories we have of our childhood were made in school. But what if our home became our school, and parents donned the role of teachers as well?

As much as the concept of homeschooling sounds absurd and unconventional to most, it is considered to be a better option by some. In fact, before the introduction of compulsory school attendance laws,

However, homeschooling is just another form of schooling, where parents take up the role of teachers, and learning is not just limited to books, assignments and projects, but the process of imparting knowledge is done through stories, music, audiovisuals, field trips, observing and learning; and all this at the child's own pace and comfort, within its own home. Sounds appealing already, doesn't it?

While the concept of homeschooling has yet to catch on in India, a small group of parents have already started blazing the

Some Catholic families in Mumbai have gone even further and embraced 'Catholic Homeschooling'. Mrs Reena Poddar (nee Viegas) (who comes from a very missionary Catholic upbringing) and her husband (who converted to Christianity) have been homeschooling their child since the age of six; faith formation being a very integral part of the curriculum. Catholic Homeschooling brings faith and reason together, nurturing young minds with the best of secular education combined with

and the one who studied at home. She says, "Seeing my cousin, I noticed she was never really stressed about studies; she was at peace and relaxed all the time." Initially, when they decided to homeschool their son, they received the expected frown from others. Many thought they didn't think this through, because while their children were in school, Giovanni would be wandering in the church compound. However, Reena was very confident about her choice in homeschooling her son, as she feels that there is no stress of waking up



What if our home became our school, and parents donned the role of teachers as well?

most children were educated at home by their own families. In today's competitive world, most of us believe that education is essential, and since parents want the best for their children, they resort to schools they think will provide top-notch education, leading to an all-round growth of their children.

way since the late '90s. The advantages are many. Children can learn at their own interest and pace. There is no comparison or competition with other children. There is no conflict between learning and playing. There is internal motivation, and socially, children of different age groups interact together.

an outpouring of Catholic values.

Reena and her husband always wanted to homeschool their child; however, due to unforeseen circumstances, their son, Giovanni, was admitted to a regular school up to Sr KG; once things fell in place, they opted him out of school and began homeschooling him. Reena had always heard about homeschooling and was intrigued by it, and spoke to several couples who were homeschooling their children. In fact, one of Reena's relatives had been homeschooled, and she saw the difference between a child who studied in school

early in the morning, getting ready for school, exams, etc. In fact, she finds it extremely relaxing, and it's a learning experience for both the child and the parent.

Unlike others, who follow the general Boards like SSC, CBSE etc., Reena follows a structured, Charlotte Mason style curriculum for Catholics, called *Mater Amabilis*, which means 'Mother most Amiable' (Find out more on the website <http://materamabilis.org/ma/>). This particular curriculum follows the liturgical cycle, and begins in the first week of Advent. This means that along with subjects like Mathematics,

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History, Geography, etc., a religious aspect is added to it. For example, when she was teaching her son about the gladiators and the Colosseum, she also spoke to him about the early Christian martyrs who were killed in the Colosseum, and how their blood became the seed of the Church. This is just one example of secular and religious education combined in a holistic way. Along with this, she has also been teaching her son hymns and prayers in Latin. She sends her son to Sunday School, as she wants him to learn the community aspect of faith.

that homeschooling gives the child that space to breathe and enhances their creativity. She teaches her child in a story format, which makes learning more engaging. Giovanni is eight years old now, and he's already got himself engrossed in audio books, and takes keen interest in military and war. Reena emphasises that homeschooling enables the child to learn at his own pace, and exams are not the criteria to test his intellect.

Renita Vaz (name changed on request), on the other hand, has two daughters and a son. She

homeschool your child. Reena and Renita both have incorporated Nature studies into their child's curriculum. They made it a point to take trips, and make their children observe and learn. Reena has noticed that her son who is just eight years old has already gained knowledge equivalent to that of a 13-year-old.

How does one graduate or join college after being homeschooled? Children who are homeschooled have an option to apply for the NIOS examination i.e. National Institute of Open Schooling. The child has to be 14 years and above to give this examination. Renita's daughter gave her Class X and Class XII Board exams from the National Institute of Open Schooling, and then joined a college to pursue her Bachelor's Degree. There is no hard and fast rule as to when one should give these exams; it solely depends on the child, when he/she is willing and prepared to appear for these exams.

Homeschooling, according to some experts, is one of the best options for education, as it builds an even stronger rapport between parent and child. The Church has always strongly defended the right of parents to be the primary educators of their children. There is no pressure of studies, projects, assignments on the child, as well as on the parent. Today, we see most of these projects from schools are completed by the parents or subcontracted to tutors, which doesn't really help the child grow, as well as parents taxing themselves and shelling out huge

amounts for school fees and on private tutors. Catholic Homeschooling, according to Reena, has helped her fulfil the call and vocation to pass on the faith. Apart from this, there is no schedule as such that needs to be followed; it is very relaxing for both the parent and the child. Homeschooled children tend to learn faster and better, since homeschooling removes the obstacles and difficulties of a regular education system, which some have described as a 'Factory Model' of education.

On the other hand, when it comes to challenges of homeschooling, for instance, since parents are teachers to their children, they themselves have to pre-learn a lot of things, before teaching their children. There also needs to be a balance between what you want to teach your child and what your child wants to learn on that particular day.

In conclusion, while homeschooling sounds like an appealing option, it isn't for all parents, since at least one parent has to be present at home, and there is a lot of investment of time involved. Working parents will find this a difficult path, and find regular schools a more feasible option. However, as the current pandemic has shuttered schools, and parents have turned teachers, helping their wards with lessons and homework, we may just see homeschooling catching on in the post-pandemic period. ■

Schools help us learn to socialise, negotiate, adjust, understand other points of view, and become part of the larger society.

Some of us would raise an objection that receiving a formal education is just one aspect of the regular schooling system. Schools also help us learn to socialise, negotiate, adjust, understand other points of view, and become part of the larger society. How does homeschooling take care of this aspect? Reena personally feels socialising was never an issue, as children in her building complex would come down to play every evening, and her son too would join with them. Secondly, once homeschooled, the children join a regular college for their graduate studies, thus giving them ample time to integrate themselves into the regular system before they enter into the responsibilities of adulthood. She feels

homeschooled her daughter right from the beginning, and now her daughter is a college graduate. She too has incorporated faith formation in her daughter's curriculum, and at the same time, she opted for the CBSE syllabus. According to her, homeschooling enables the parent to spend a lot of quality time with the child. She could also keep a check on the negative influences that peers could have on her daughter, and though there is a lot of investment of time, it is worth it, as it is a process of learning and unlearning at the same time. Unlearning, because as parents who have gone through the regular schooling system, following a particular Board and a particular pattern of learning, the same cannot be applied when you

Making of an Adman

Born and brought up in Mumbai in a Catholic family, Sheldon D'Souza has been a lover of the Performing Arts from a very young age. He would actively participate in plays, musicals, dramas, etc. at school and even in church. Currently working as a Copy Supervisor at his dream company – Ogilvy, Sheldon is a go-getter in the field of advertising.

Working in the advertising industry, however, was not Sheldon's original dream. When he was in Class X, he realised he had a passion for photography and film-making. Seeing how interested he was, his godmother gifted him a Kodak camera, with which he went around clicking pictures; he even joined photography workshops. But although he enjoyed this thoroughly, he had no idea how to convert it into a future. He enrolled in Commerce after school, and following the trend, decided to give the Company Secretary exam, and cleared the first level. It was in Second Year B.Com. that he was introduced to the subject of Advertising, and it was love at first sight.

"My professor, Mrs Desiree Gonsalves at St Andrew's College, taught the subject brilliantly; that's the only subject where you could find me sitting on the first bench, lapping up every word she said, like an awe-struck disciple." At the end of the course, when he was asked to make an advertisement, he directed two ads, and realised how much he enjoyed making those short films. Sheldon's parents work in the financial sector, and hence were reluctant with his choice, but seeing his interest, they supported him. While still at St Andrew's, he wrote and directed plays for his college fest. He would also read a lot about advertising – news, articles, books etc., one such book being '*Confessions of an Advertising Man*' by David Ogilvy. He also maintained a little notebook in which he would think of fictitious products and create ads for them. After completing his B.Com., he decided to enrol for the Advertising and Marketing Course at the Xavier Institute of Communications (XIC). Turns out, his little book of ads clinched his admission.

Sheldon wanted to step into the professional world of advertising to check whether the job fit him well, after he completed his post-graduate course. Despite XIC offering placements at the end of the course, he decided to network and find opportunities for himself. "There was this Creative Director who came from Lowe-Lintas as a guest lecturer, and I decided to clear my doubts with him, or at least ask him if he would be willing to offer an internship, just for the experience, so that I would know whether I was really meant for this." However, he worked as an intern at Draft FCB Ulka for a month, then moved to Lowe-Lintas, where he joined as a trainee. In the first two months of his internship, he had his first TVC ad approved and released, and seeing his name in the credits section on the Now Showing board, gave him

his much needed break in the industry. After six months, Sheldon decided to broaden his horizon and try his hand at digital ad making, since he felt that was where advertising was headed. He worked at Webchutney, a completely digital agency, for a year. Finally, after working at Dentsu Webchutney, Ogilvy opened its doors for Sheldon. Ogilvy had always been his dream company, and he has successfully completed five years there. At

Ogilvy, he has worked on various brands—Bajaj Motorcycles, Amazon, Pantaloons, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Wild Stone, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). He is currently working on a new brand – Marico.

In 2018, Sheldon was among the six short-listed Indians to attend the annual Fasttrack programme at Malaysia by AFAA (Asian Federation of Advertising Associations). 2020 has been a great year for Sheldon, with awards and recognitions coming his way. He won two awards for a campaign for Wildlife Trafficking—a gold for the Best Outdoor Public Service Ad of 2020, and a silver – Best Young Green Writer of the Year at the International Advertising Associations (IAA) Olive Crown Awards 2020. He also won the '40 under 40' Award for the Best Outdoors Campaign. These campaigns were extremely challenging, but looking at the bright side, it has helped Sheldon touch upon subjects rarely spoken about. It brought great joy to do in-depth research and talk to experts in the field while working on these campaigns. "The Wildlife Trafficking Campaign for WCCB and UNEP and the Global Pulsar Mania are my favourites, as it made me explore a whole new world, and it was creatively satisfying."

Apart from advertising, Sheldon has several hobbies such as beat boxing, whistling, emceeing and teaching. He uses these hobbies in the professional sphere as well; he beat-boxed, whistled and did some *a capella* sounds for a McDonald's and Volvo commercial. He says, "My interest and love for music comes from my family. Family gatherings are more like a talent show with singing and musical instruments." He hosts a lot of Karaoke Shows on weekends, and has also conducted two beat-boxing workshops—one



at a summer camp and one in his parish. He plays the guitar, harmonica, and the ukulele. His stage name is 'The Shel Rock'. He has been invited as a guest lecturer at Dahanukar College, St Andrew's College and Clara's College.

Advertising does not negate the spiritual for Sheldon who comes from a devoted Catholic family. "I personally love having a one on one conversation with God; it is my form of prayer. Spending some time alone, just talking to God makes me feel calm and good. I remember I had a notepad in which I would pen down all my ideas for an advertisement, and each time an idea would be approved, I would write 'Thank You Jesus!' at the top of my book", he says with a smile.

Sheldon has come a long way in the advertising industry. "Many people feel advertising is all about glamour and fun, but I totally disagree; it's about your passion and love for

this field. It's the survival of the fittest. Every day is a new challenge, and every day you're competing with yourself from the previous day. Advertising is an industry that changes and adapts to the moods and trends of society. It is an industry wherein one needs to connect with the people, understand what can be offensive, and when one should refrain from touching a sensitive topic. The more passionate you're about this field, the more enjoyable this industry is."

For those dreaming of a future in advertising, Sheldon says, "Be ready for rejections. And stand by your ideas if you feel there's merit. The more passion or obsession you have for your work, the more enjoyable your journey will be."

Cynera Rodricks

Making a Difference

Humanity may never again get a chance like this; let's not squander it!

While to a certain degree, returning to "business as usual" will not likely happen, that does not mean the vast majority of those who hold most of the world's wealth and power will not use every advantage at their disposal in trying to hold on to broken, corrupt, unjust systems – what St Pope John Paul II called "structures of sin" – which feed their greed, while starving the morally just aspirations of the world's poor and vulnerable.

And so, what should each follower of Jesus do?

We should pray sincerely for the spiritual conversion of the rich and powerful. And we should oppose them! We need to put up the non-violent fight of our lives to ensure that we don't sleepwalk ourselves right back into a morally sick "normal."

Old habits die hard – both individually and structurally. After the coronavirus pandemic, the sinful structures of raw profit-centred capitalism and death-dealing militarism will surely continue marching on – crushing underfoot the poor and vulnerable and the planet itself – unless we humbly admit our significant personal indifference, repent, and strive to transform ourselves and these structures of sin.

Pope Francis, in his recent homily on Divine Mercy Sunday, warned that as the world looks forward to the eventual recovery from the pandemic, "there is a danger that we will forget those who are left behind. The risk is that we may then be struck by an even worse virus—that of selfish indifference: a virus spread by the thought that life is better, if it is better for me. It begins there and ends up selecting one person over another, discarding the poor, and sacrificing those left behind on the altar of progress."

The Holy Father continued, "The present pandemic, however, reminds us that there are no differences or borders between those who suffer. We are all frail, all

equal, all precious. May we be profoundly shaken by what is happening all around us; the time has come to eliminate inequalities, to heal the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family."

In every parish, diocese, civic, academic, business, labour and social forum, we need to start dialoguing, planning and organising ways to build structures and systems that work for everyone – from the moment of conception to natural death – where no one gets left behind, and everyone has a seat at the table!

And we need to develop strategies on how best to influence and pressure government and corporate leaders (e.g. boycotts, divestment) to put the common good and the care of the planet as their top priorities – not power and profit (see: <https://gofossilfree.org/divestment/what-is-fossil-fuel-divestment/>).

All of this can easily tempt each of us to feel overwhelmed.

But it is essential not to allow ourselves to become overwhelmed. It's not all up to you and me. The Holy Spirit is with us! Each of us, in our own personal sphere of influence (e.g. family, friends, parish, workplace, social media, lobbying), can make a difference.

In their courageous 1983 Pastoral Letter on war and peace titled, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response," the U.S. Catholic bishops wrote: "Let us have the courage to believe in the bright future and in a God who wills it for us - not a perfect world, but a better one. The perfect world, we Christians believe, is beyond the horizon, in an endless eternity where God will be all in all. But a better world is here for human hands and hearts and minds to make."

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist.

Are Virtual Classrooms here to stay?

The month of May is usually one of energy, cheer, the outdoors and play, as schools shut down and families embark on vacations. This year, though, the end of April and the beginning of May have turned into an extension of the academic year. Schools, colleges and universities have had to cancel exams due to social distancing and the lockdown. Online classes and examinations are now being adopted to get past the stalemate and complete the academic year. A few Education Boards have decided to promote students and begin with online classes for the next academic year. This has led to the promotion and growth of technology in the field of education.



However, the introduction of online learning methods and classes has received mixed reviews. Everything has moved online, from conducting online lectures to conducting online seminars, meetings etc. Perhaps, the workforce segment has been able to cope with this trend more easily, as most of their work is done on laptops anyways, but students have had to make adjustments as they move from the familiar environment of the classroom to the new challenge of e-learning.

When seen from one perspective, digital learning or virtual classrooms are a huge blessing in disguise. It has allowed schools and colleges to continue with classes followed by online assessments and exams, even during the lockdown. Video conferencing systems ensure continuity of classes. Virtual classrooms have enabled students to learn at their own pace and time, accessing lectures as per their convenience, which has enabled a certain degree of flexibility in their daily schedule. Priyal Joshi, who is currently pursuing her MBA, says, "In my opinion, E-learning helps to access the lectures at any available location with an internet

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connection, which is a huge advantage. There is a lot of flexibility in online classes since the lectures are already recorded, and we are able to avail these lectures at any time of the day."

Children have also been able to adapt to online classes and showcase their creativity and learning abilities. Parents have also become more aware about the teaching methods in schools, how much their child is involved, the activities conducted at school, etc., since they have now been drawn into the education process, and more importantly, into the student-teacher dynamic. It has also exposed them to a very different method of imparting education, which makes them more adaptable to different styles of learning. According to Keegan Pinto, a student from Campion School, "To put it simply, online teaching from homes makes life simpler not only for the teachers, but also for the pupils at home. At school, in most cases, a lot of time is wasted during class hours getting the students to settle down and in maintaining discipline, whereas if the children are taught online through videos and live video meetings, a lot of time is saved which can be used constructively." Teachers have also been able to further develop their teaching skills with technology. Many websites have also allowed teachers to use their resources and platforms for free. All this has given teachers an opportunity to learn how to integrate technology into the teaching pedagogy, which will stand them in good stead once the lockdown ends.

The pandemic has also disappointed those who were planning to go to foreign universities for further education. However, many of these universities have assured foreign students that their admission will be carried forward to the next semester, and have enabled access to their online lectures and learning platforms. This eliminates the factor of distance, as well as the payment of fees. Keegan points out that online classes can be cheaper too, as travel costs are mitigated, not to mention the time saved. One major benefit of online classes is that an unlimited number of students can be enrolled, as opposed to the limited number of students that can be seated in one classroom. In this way, the teacher can teach two to three sets of students at once, which saves a lot of time, and benefits both the teachers and the students.

However, many others see online learning, especially at the school level, as just a temporary measure, and advise against the appropriation of online learning for the long term for children. Studies have shown that longer screen time is detrimental to developing brains and the child's ability to effectively develop motor skills. Unlike in a classroom, online learning quite often leads to children sitting passively in

(Contd on Pg 13)

was not the case earlier. Everyone is involved in the setup of the Mass altar, from placing the Cross to connecting to the *YouTube* channel or placing the candles or diyas. God has blessed us with so many Altar Servers at home. We thank God for making our home a 'domestic Church'!

We also attend the weekly parish adoration, again with

the full family. Even though we are not in the church, but at home, we can feel the presence of the Lord and can feel Him touching and healing us—a very anointed time spent with the Lord. Praise the Lord!

My husband and I have also attended an hour of Night Vigil from our home. We praise and thank God for using us during this

lockdown period. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we need to take care of it. We are now spending time doing physical exercise, which we never did before. We spend time talking with each other, playing games, solving quizzes about our faith, as well as other quizzes.

Phil 4:13 says "I can do all things through Christ

who strengthens me", and actually by the grace of God, I'm enjoying this lockdown period. ■

ARE VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS HERE TO STAY... (Contd from Pg 10)

front of screens without any student-teacher interaction, which ultimately makes the child feel bored and less interested in the learning process. Being in the physical company of other children sparks ideas and questions that may not come when the child is alone. Some parents are of the view too, that the regular syllabus should be postponed for a few months, and children allowed to get creative during the summer with projects and activities that will spark creativity and curiosity. Cooking, baking, narration of stories, art and craft, and even helping with the household chores can be huge triggers for children.

Another downside that is often not talked about is that parents now have to spend time helping their children set up for online classes and then assist in the projects and homework later, all at the same time, while they grapple with their own 'work from home' deadlines. Not to mention that most often, the presence of a single laptop at home means that screen time has to be apportioned between parents and their children. The online system also assumes that every

household has access to good internet speeds, which is not always the case. The lockdown has divided people into the high-speed and low-speed internet categories.

It may also not be necessary that children would pay attention at home, as there are several distractions when one has access to their screens and the internet and they are bound to multitask. According to Vivaan Shah, "It is only so difficult to switch off my microphone and camera, and go on with my day's business. How can the teachers ensure that all children are receiving the quality education they are imparting? No matter how advanced we are as a modern society, students will go out of their way to 'enjoy' their life, and so online classes could be a leading cause in hampering a child's education."

When it comes to teachers, most are trained intensively in the traditional teaching methods, and may not be comfortable with the whole concept of virtual classrooms. Delivering a lecture also becomes a challenge as they are used to teaching students who are

physically present in class. Teachers are also not able to monitor or pay personal attention to students who sometimes turn off their cameras, which leaves the teachers clueless whether the child is following the lecture or not. Technical problems and connectivity issues often disrupt the flow of teaching. Younger children exposed to this digital classroom are often lost, as they are not very familiar with technology. There is also a lot of time investment, as some teachers are needed to pre-record lectures and then upload them to the platform. All this is a huge challenge to teachers who are not well versed with technology and software.

Cyril D'Souza, who teaches at Campion, agrees with all these arguments and regards them to be essential to the current situation. However, post-lockdown, schools must get back to the classroom system and use technology only as a teaching aid. He says that the various Education Boards need to be flexible about the syllabus in the current year. It cannot be business as usual, and the Board's insistence to stick to the regular syllabus

can prove to be a huge burden both for teachers and students; the syllabus will have to be trimmed and prioritised.

To conclude, virtual learning may not be accepted by all as a future learning medium, as many still prefer the hands-on personal student-teacher interaction. However, what we must really focus on is how virtual learning is eliminating the whole issue of distance, and is opening vast resources and possibilities of education for students who would otherwise not have been able to access these classes. Online classes for higher education will enable students to pick and choose from a bouquet of options, so as to tailor learning to their interests and aptitudes, and prepare themselves for suitable careers. Traditional college degrees are proving to be insufficient for the job market. Desperate times call for desperate measures; even the darkest hour of the night leads to dawn. ■

CATHOLIC PROFILE

Different Roads, New Experiences

Have you ever felt the need to pursue something out of the box? Did a desire to do something off-beat which would make a difference in people's lives envelop you? **Nicole Coutinho** is a 22-year-old young and vibrant social worker who hails from Immaculate Conception Church, Borivli. She has woven many extraordinary threads into an interesting life pursuit at an early age. Be it sports or her career, Nicole has always opted to do things that are not mainstream.

"As a child, my parents noticed I had a lot of pent-up energy and wanted me to join extra curriculums, but my first school didn't have any for lower grades. So, in Class 2, I was transferred to another school - Rustomjee - which had sports for lower grades, and also had a specific division allotted for students who took up various sports. In order to be a part of the sports division, a small shuttle race was organized; I beat the fastest runners in that division and got selected," says Nicole with a beam on her face. Unlike many, Nicole did not opt for popular sports like football or basketball, but instead decided to join athletics and trained for high jump. It was in Class 5 that she started training rigorously for athletics.

During off-season, she trained every single day, but suffering from asthma, her health always gave way during the seasonal competitions. "My golden year began when I was in Class 8 (2011-12). My very first competitive high jump attempt was for my school Sports Day, and my very first coach was actually a discus thrower; but the medal podium clearly showed how well she instructed me, as I was able to clear the height of 1.25 m and bag the gold medal in my very first attempt. I then started training for High Jump, Long Jump and Hurdles extensively. I distinctly remember my first qualification for the inter-school DSO competition, then moved on to be selected for the district and state DSO level competition for High Jump and Long Jump, to finally reaching my very First National DSO level competition where the best athletes of India come together to compete. I could literally feel the pressure, as I was a bit small in stature, and new compared to the other participants. But that year, I won my very first National Gold medal, and I also went on to create a Meet record." Since then, Nicole has competed three times at the national level, and has also won the title of 'Best Female Athlete' twice. However, she had to take a break from athletics to focus on academics.

Nicole is always in pursuit of doing something new and different. She loves having new experiences. She studied Arts in Junior College at St Xavier's College, but after appearing for her Class XII exams, she did not want to

pursue a Bachelors in Arts, but rather walk down a different path. It was her Youth Animator who introduced her to Bachelor's in Social Work. She was instantly intrigued, and took admission in Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work. It was in her very first year when she was introduced to field work, and was allotted an organisation that worked in a slum in Jogeshwari.

"My task was to cater to the elderly and build a community for them. Initially, I found it very taxing and challenging, mainly because I never really had any experience doing social work, and secondly, because the centre was at the top of a hill, people were reluctant to come and have meetings there. So we had to find an alternative location, and we decided to mobilise everyone at one house and organise the sessions there." However, Nicole's breakthrough came when she had to make a photo documentation on the food consumed by 15 households in a Warli community. "In my second year, I was placed in a rural setup to work with the Warli tribe. There were two things that really caught my eye. One being that there was nothing rural about that village, because the children were so fluent in English, they had their own laptops and plenty of food. The only shortcoming was electricity going off time and again. The second thing that blew my mind while I was documenting the food consumption of 15 households was that despite having so much of food to eat, they barely ate, and this is because in their culture, they believe that cow's milk is only for the calf. As a result, the people in that settlement lacked proteins and calcium, making them malnourished. The year we were placed there, there was a high rise in the death of farmers due to malnourishment. This experience was an eye-opener for me, and I realised that this is the place I want to be." Nicole has also worked as a Communications Associate at Myna Mahila Foundation, an organisation that aims to empower women, to help them get employed, improve menstrual health and build networks.

Currently, Nicole is pursuing her Master's in Social Work, and her long-term goal is to work on a nutrition project in rural India and find solutions to end the scourge of malnutrition among the poor. She is also eager to take sports to children on the outskirts of Mumbai who are immensely talented, but lack infrastructure and mentoring. "Whenever I'm in the field working, one scripture verse that has always struck me is John 15:5 - '*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit.*' This verse is a constant reminder to integrate everyone in society, and not leave anyone out."

Cynera Rodricks



National Museum of Indian Cinema

If you are looking for options for an outing in the city this summer, this new museum at Pedder Road is worth a visit.

Have you ever wondered how films are made or how the Bollywood machine works? Are you enchanted by the world of movies and film stars? Or are you passionate about the historic, social or cultural impact of Indian cinema? Whatever your motivation for films or Indian films in particular, the newly opened National Museum of Indian Cinema in Mumbai is bound to expand your horizons and give you an educated insight into all things 'cinema'.

Since its inception, cinema has remained the most powerful media of mass communication in India. Cinema has the ability to combine entertainment with communication of ideas. It also has the ability to touch the innermost layers of a person. A film can evoke joy, pain, empathy and happiness in a viewer, a myriad of emotions. Cinema is not just a form of entertainment; it can be a reflection into the world we live. The Indian film industry has evolved over a period of time, and can now be probably considered to be a global second to its more illustrious elder brother in the US. But Indian cinema cannot be really compared to Hollywood, since it carries a unique DNA and outlook towards the making of films. Indian cinema is intrinsically connected to India and the Indian people.

The museum commemorates the entire history of cinema from its origins to the New Wave, in a story-telling mode with the help of visuals, graphics, short films, publicity materials, artifacts, interactive exhibits and multimedia, making the entire experience very engaging. The museum is housed in an elegant 19th century heritage bungalow, Gulshan Mahal, along with another newly built state-of-the-art NMIC building (New Building of National Museum of Indian Cinema) that has four floors and two mezzanine floors with a total built up area of 12,000 sq. meters. The entry fee is minimal, and to be honest the museum offers you way too much for the price you pay. It is Rs 20 for locals, Rs 500 for foreign nationals and free for kids below 12 years and students with valid college ID.

Gulshan Mahal consists of the ground and first floor. The ambiance itself is breath taking and the place leaves you feeling nostalgic, as it takes you down 100 years journey of

Indian cinema. The exhibits are divided into nine sections - The Origin of Cinema, Cinema comes to India, Indian silent Film, Advent of Sound, the Studio Era, the Impact of WWII, Creative Resonance, New Wave and Regional Cinema. There are several artefacts, posters and documents in the museum. Early cinematic devices such as the 'Praxinoscope', 'Zoetrope' or the 'Wheel of Life', 'The Magic Lantern', and many other devices used to create the illusion of an object in motion, all are exhibited at the Mahal. There are posters and clippings on small screens, which portray how early Indian cinema instilled feelings of patriotism during the colonial era. Indian cinema also helped in social change by spreading awareness on questionable social traditions and practices.

Moving on, the new building has four floors and the right way to visit this museum is in a descending manner i.e. starting from the fourth and moving progressively downwards to the first floor. This building is modern in appearance and architecture and showcases the various departments that are involved in the making of a movie, i.e. the script, the costume, makeup, dialogues, lighting, etc. The fourth floor houses costume, make up, script writing, screening, tent and travelling cinema (there is an actual tent where some of the movies of that era are screened). This gallery is basically dedicated to Cinema across India; it highlights the vibrant cinematographic culture of India, and how technology has enabled movie makers make movies in many Indian languages.

Level three of the museum portrays the creative use of technology and how this technology created an impact on the silver screen. It showcases the animations made by 'Dadasaheb Phalke', Flashback Techniques by 'Barua', etc. Level two is the most interesting and the most engaging, though the room is titled, 'Children's Film Studio', it is amusing for both children as well as adults. It enables you to explore the technology and art behind film making and allows children to get acquainted with the film making process. Children can get a hands on experience with camera, lighting, make up, costumes, singing, editing, acting, and shooting. Budding child directors and film aficionados can get very creative here.

The last level i.e. level one is dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi and explains the relation between Gandhi and Cinema. We all will wonder why? But the reason behind this

Cynera Rodricks, is a Bachelor of Arts student at St Xavier's College, Fort, and is currently interning at The Examiner.

is, Mahatma Gandhi, had such a charismatic personality, and his works towards the freedom movement in India, inspired and influenced many movie writers to produce movies on his political philosophy and practice. There is also a section on the same floor, where they show how even great actors like Charlie Chaplin were influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and films such as *Modern Times* and *The Great Dictator* were made. The New Building also comprises of a 30 seater mini theatre, where movies are screened regularly.

In a city starved of engaging and top-line museums and interactive educational centers, the National Museum of Indian Cinema is a welcome addition. In the city of Bollywood, this museum can give film enthusiasts, an insight

into the fascinating history of Indian cinema, with its creative blend of technology and culture, and its icons who provided the foundations for an industry now made famous across the world. This is also a great family place, especially since a number of interactive exhibits and an entire section has been designed for kids. So if you're staying back in the city this summer, and looking for a memorable family day-out, a visit to the museum coupled with any other south Mumbai hangout, is a great option! ■

CRICKET PRODIGY gives God the Praise

The writer met up with cricketing star, Jemimah Rodrigues, in Bandra, and quizzed her on cricket, family, God, and her pillars of strength.



Jemimah Rodrigues, the youngest player of the Indian women's cricket team, has achieved such great success at such a young age. She started playing cricket at the age of four, and now at the age of 18, she's already playing for her country. I was fortunate enough to meet Jemimah personally and interview her.

Jemimah was born on September 5, 2000 in Bhandup, and began holding a cricket bat at the tiny age of four. In order to avail of better sports facilities, her family moved to Bandra. Jemimah's dad, Ivan Rodrigues, who has been her primary motivator in pursuing sports, would take her along with her two brothers, Enoch and Eli, to the nets everyday, and train them. She shares a small anecdote on how she would have to field for one hour, just to get a chance to bat for 15 minutes. Her parents assumed that it would be her brothers who would make a career in cricket, but Jemimah giggles, "how the tables have turned!" She studied in St Joseph's Convent School, Bandra, where her dad was appointed as a cricket coach. There he formed the first ever Girls Cricket Team in her school. Jemimah took to the game like a fish in water, and displayed an in-born charisma for the game. At the age of twelve, she was selected for the Maharashtra under-17 team; at the age of 14, she made the Mumbai Seniors; and in 2018,

at the age of 17, she made her debut in the Indian national squad at the ICC Women's World Twenty20 tournament in the West Indies.

Jemimah wasn't only making her career in cricket, but simultaneously training and playing hockey at the state level. In fact, she is equally good at the sport, being called up to represent Mumbai and Maharashtra, even before cricket. Choosing between the two sports was a tough decision to make. "It was a tough choice to choose between the two, as I was excelling in both these sports, and both of them were very dear to my heart," she says. "This decision was emotionally draining, but then I finally decided to give up on hockey." Her love for hockey hasn't diminished though.

Jemimah's pillars of support are her mom, Lavita Rodrigues, and her dad, Ivan Rodrigues. She is proud of them for supporting a daughter to make a career in sports. "My dad has taught me how to be determined, persistent, and hard working. He was the one who trained me in school, and I still consider him as my coach. It was my dad's dream to play for Team India, but he couldn't, due to lack of support, and instead ended up being an Aircraft Maintenance Engineer. But today, I see him living his dream through me, and I feel overwhelmed."

"When I made my debut in South Africa, he came along, and I saw tears of joy in his eyes. I owe it all to him and Mom, because they have made me the person that I am today. My Mom is the one always working behind

the scenes. She takes care of my diet and my health. She would wash all my cricketing whites by hand, muddled with the grime and dirt of the field."

So how does she manage her studies along with her sporting career? Well, her parents actually run a coaching class, and are well versed with the academic field. This was a huge boon to Jemimah, whose parents helped her prepare for her board exams in a very short span of time. "I don't think I would have been where I'm now, if it were not for them," says Jemimah.

Jemimah also has a strong spiritual life, which came out strongly when I spoke to her. "God has always been the centre of my life. I read the Bible every day, because my parents taught me that Jesus comes first in my life. However good I am, or whatever I have today is not mine; the grace, the talents and all the gifts are God-given." Her dad would always remind her of this scripture verse – "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). She remembers how the children were always asked to say a short prayer before they went downstairs to play.

She also shares one of her experiences, when her performance had dipped badly, and the grace of God helped her do better. "I played 50 matches, and my score was just 150, which was pathetic. I was on the verge of giving up, as my frustration was building up, and was taking a toll on

Cynera Rodricks is a Bachelor of Arts student at St Xavier's College, Fort, and did a summer internship with The Examiner.

on me. But it was my parents who told me to pray, have faith, work hard and keep persevering. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This verse inspired and motivated me to do well and get back on track. I just believe that the solution to every problem is prayer, and God will work His wonders in some way or the other. Giving up can never be, and should never be, an option. One

should just trust in the Lord."

I asked Jemimah to share her

experiences on being selected to Team India, on sharing the dressing room with great players like Mithali Raj, Jhulan Goswami, etc. "Well, in the beginning, I felt a bit lost in that dressing room, extremely nervous... I couldn't believe my eyes that I was actually sharing the dressing room with these great players that I grew up idolizing. But they were so loving and hospitable, and now we are really good friends, and gel along very well." She also claims that fame has not drastically changed her life in any way; her parents and her brothers still treat her the same way. People in Bandra have just about started recognising her, but she's still

the regular girl-next-door. She loves the fact that people appreciate her work, and that encourages her to do well.

Pursuing sports is extremely challenging in India; very little financial and other support comes one's way at the initial stages of a sports career. Add to that, women's cricket does not garner the same interest and eyeballs as their male counterparts do. But Jemimah begs to differ, "The women's team now receives a lot of support from the administrators and the fans. We actually have a huge fan base – both male and female – who regularly follow our matches on television."

She adds, "I believe that everything depends on one's performance; if you do well, you'll be noticed. I don't see any bias in promoting only men's cricket. The very fact that even women have IPL matches now shows that we are progressing too, and our duty is to work hard and keep getting better. With regards to all those who are pursuing, or planning to pursue, a career in sports, it's very important to do well when no one's watching. It's also important to be equally determined, persistent, faithful and disciplined."

Jemimah's steep upward trajectory in the cricketing world has brought immense pride to her family, friends and her country. We wish her many laurels and milestones, and the continuing help of God in her future career.



Four Catholic Netflix Shows for the Streaming Soul

With the intense May heat, staying indoors with the AC on, and binge watching your favourite series on either *Netflix*, *Prime* or *Hotstar* is an enticing option. Traditional television is on the downswing, especially among the younger populace. With the facility for watching your favourite shows on demand, wherever you are and whenever you want, streaming services fit well with the on-demand user mentality currently in vogue. *Netflix* has something for everyone, from old favourites to new binge-worthy Originals. However, after a certain time, you seem to have watched everything worth watching, and wonder, "What do I watch next?" Secondly, choosing the right shows can also be a tough choice, with many popular shows filled with uncensored sexuality and over-the-top violence. Watching such shows over a period of time can numb us to immorality, and normalise these actions in our mind. It is therefore important to be attentive to the kind of shows we choose to watch online.

But did you know that you can also find a lot of 'Christian' shows on *Netflix*? Well, there are! If you just type 'Catholic' or 'Christian' in the search bar, it will bring up a list. Some of these series and movies are worth a watch. Below is a list of some of the shows we recommend:

90 MINUTES IN HEAVEN (MOVIE)

'90 Minutes in Heaven' is an intrinsically spiritual movie which elicits the true story of the life and death of a Pastor - Don Piper, blessed with a beautiful wife and three loving kids. On January 18, 1989, Don Piper died in a car accident. As he is driving home from a ministers' conference, Baptist minister Don Piper collides with a semi-truck that crosses into his lane. He is pronounced dead on the spot. For the next 90 minutes, Piper experiences heaven, where he is greeted by those who had influenced him spiritually i.e. his grandfather, his great grandmother, friends who passed away earlier, etc. Ninety minutes later, after a preacher prays over him, Piper comes back to life with an extraordinary story.

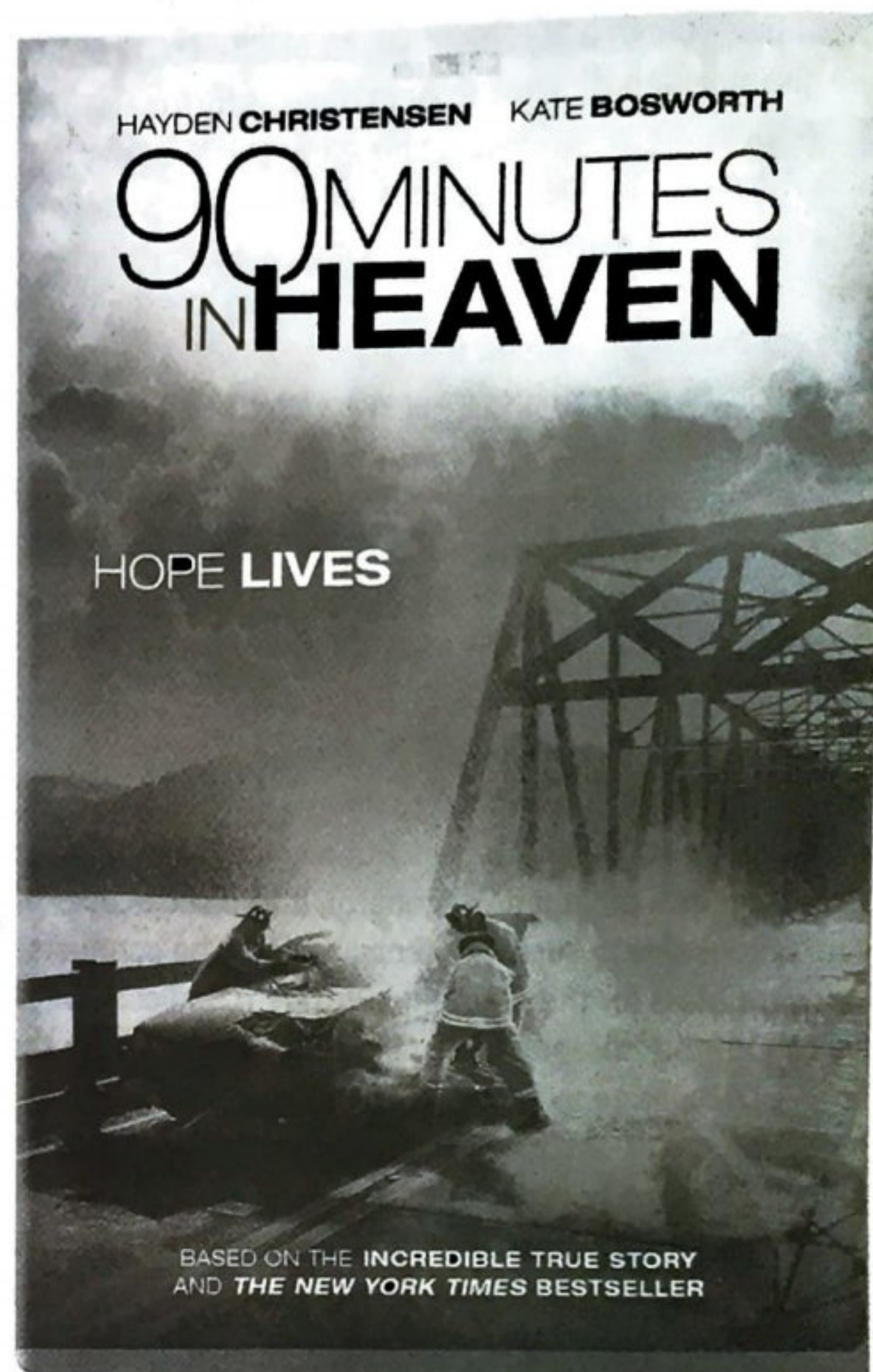
Don is just as devoted to the Lord before the accident, as after. This is depicted very distinctly in the movie when, on that fateful drive, he's listening and humming along to praise and worship hymns, and has his typed sermon by his side. The movie shows glimpses of heaven, and Don describes the music in heaven, sounding like the rush of an angel's

wings, and finds true peace. In fact, Don is so overwhelmed and happy to be in heaven, that when he's miraculously brought back to life 90 minutes later, and the bliss of heaven is replaced by the pain and suffering of his injuries, he asks God to take him back to Heaven. But as he begins to heal, he begins to thank God for a second chance and for his recovery.

In the movie, it's not only the spiritual aspect that is well highlighted, but also the emotions of love, care and togetherness. The movie also portrays Don's friends and family praying for his speedy recovery, but Don tries to shun all those who lend him support and encouragement. It's only when Fred Thompson, who plays the role of a minister, issues his soft-spoken but straightforward warning — "You really need to get your act together!" — that Don is roused up from his state of hopelessness.

For the millions who look to him for inspiration, Piper offers the hope that if he could survive his ordeal after the accident, then others can survive whatever life circumstances they're going through, and grow in God's love through the experience.

For years, Piper kept his heavenly experience to himself. Finally, however, friends and family convinced him to share his remarkable story.



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CALL ME FRANCIS (SERIES)

'Call Me Francis' is a *Netflix* series about the story of Fr Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who later became Pope Francis. It comprises of only one season, with four episodes. The series covers a historical period of darkness that prevailed in Argentina from the 1960s to the present. It tells the story of a humble man, committed to Christ, and his undeniable calling to help the less fortunate. The series starts off by focusing on his early years, beginning in Buenos Aires in 1960, in which he's seen in his early 20s enjoying a healthy social life with friends, including a girlfriend whom he came close to marrying. It then moves forward to concentrate on the years 1976-1983, during the height of Argentina's "Dirty Wars", in which the military government brutally oppressed the left-wing Opposition.

It's this period, when Bergoglio was a Jesuit leader, and forced to deal with the authoritarian government, which inspires one of the film's more dramatic scenes. Obeying orders from his superiors, he withdraws protection from two priests, who were subsequently abducted and tortured by the military. The episode dramatically illustrates the dangerously thin line the future Pope was forced to walk, at a time of great peril to himself. But while the biopic portrays its subject as a pragmatic negotiator, it also showcases his courageous side in such moments, as when he conducts a private Mass for the Argentine President and confronts him about the "disappeared" political dissidents, with their families desperate to know their fate. It also shows him providing secret sanctuary in his seminary to students who had incurred the government's wrath.

'Call Me Francis' also covers his ascent to the papacy, with the older Bergoglio well played by Sergio Hernandez. From a cultural and historical perspective, this is an excellent and authentic 'bio' of a man with a calling in a tumultuous Argentina in the throes of a ruthless military junta, and the attempted return of Juan Peron in the early 70s.

This series is a must watch; it not only depicts Pope Francis as the beloved Pope we know him to be, but also depicts his early struggles and his commitment to serve the Lord by serving his people, despite the problems he had to face.

THE LITTLE PRINCE (MOVIE)

'The Little Prince' is a modern day rendition of the best-selling children's book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. It is an animated film using stop motion technique, and features the voices of Jeff Bridges, Rachel McAdams, Marion Cotillard, Ricky Gervais and others. The film revolves around a young girl, whose ambitious mother has imposed a gruelling 'life plan' of academics on her daughter, so that she can gain entry into the prestigious Werth Academy. Her world becomes grey, cold and joyless, where every moment of her life is calculated, leaving her no time for leisure and fun (reminds me of the gruelling academic routine that some of our own children go through). The girl's life takes a turn, when she suddenly meets a bumbling old man next door (the book's now-elderly aviator and narrator) who tells her the story of his meeting with the Little Prince in the Sahara



desert. The girl enters the world of the aviator, where it all comes to life, and she is taken on an extraordinary and heart-warming journey and adventure. The film forces us to look at our own world, and examine whether we have forgotten to behold the true beauty and purpose that life holds for us. A pressure to succeed forces us to become industrious, and cold to the real world around us—a world that we once embraced as children.

A.D. KINGDOM AND EMPIRE (SERIES)

'A.D. Kingdom and Empire' is a sequel to 'The Bible' mini series with 1 season and 12 episodes. This sequel of sorts begins with the death and resurrection of Christ, and then goes on to the chronicle of the earliest days of the Christian Church; essentially, the first ten chapters of Acts.

The show depicts how Christianity survived the tense early days, eventually becoming one of the biggest religions on Earth. Without that element of suspense to push the series forward, 'A.D.' must rely on the drama in the details—the whos and wherefores and whys. And those details in this 12-week mini series make for worthwhile watching, both as a television show and as an expression of faith.

'A.D.' is indeed an expression of faith. Burnett and Downey, the directors, have not crafted some imaginative, seemingly biblical story. Instead, just as they did with their 'Bible' project, they've approached the story with reverence and a true believer's understanding. Half of the events from 'A.D.' were pulled directly from the Bible.

This show is not merely an epic that is true to the spirit of the Bible, but also illustrates the fractious political and religious landscape of turn-of-the-epoch Roman Judea—a time and place filled with power plays, intrigue and the rumblings of rebellion.

No ear-blackening language here. 'A.D.' serves as both a lavish spectacle and a tense dramatic narrative. What sets it apart from its peers is that it also encourages viewers to crack open their Bibles and visit their local church. ■

Football Fanatic

She's just 20, but she has already played for India four times, won several private tournaments and bagged titles like Best Player, Golden Boot and Top scorer along the way. Meet Karen Pais - a football fanatic who's set her eyes on professional soccer and playing for India in international tournaments.

Her love for football began when she was seven years old. "I was never really interested in playing with Barbie dolls or the like. I enjoyed playing football with guys who were almost four years older than me," she says. When she turned 10, Karen joined her school football team - Mary Immaculate Girls (MIG). Her team qualified and won the MSSA and DSO matches. From then on, Karen steadily started climbing the ladder of opportunities, consecutively winning matches at local and district levels. At 11, she got selected to play for Maharashtra in the Under-14 team. Though they didn't qualify, she thoroughly enjoyed the experience, getting to meet and play with senior footballers.

Soon after, she was called up for the Team India Under-13 camp. The experience at this camp was very different for Karen. "We were around 70-72 girls, and we would have to train both in the morning and evening. At first, I thought I wouldn't make it to the squad, as the intensity was very high. But the moment I made it to the final 30, I gained confidence that I would make it to the squad, and I finally did!" On receiving their kits, she was overwhelmed seeing the Indian flag on her jersey. "It was indeed a surreal and proud moment for me to represent my country." She played her first Asian Football Cup match in Sri Lanka in 2012, and they bagged the first place, winning a gold medal.

After that, there was no looking

back. In 2013, she made it to the Indian Under-14 team and captained it. She played for Team India again in October 2014, for the Under-16 team. To realise her dream of playing professional football, she went on to do an under-graduate programme in Sports Management at the Cardiff Metropolitan University, Wales, the United Kingdom in 2018. However, not finding any professional women's football club, she decided to return home. In that one year though, she did play in her University team at the British University College Sports League, which they won.

Karen joined one of the top Mumbai based clubs - Bodyline Sports Club, at the age of 15, and played for the team in the Indian Women's League. She was also taken on loan by some other League teams such as Delhi-based Hans Women Football Club and Haryana-based Alakhpura FC. In February 2020, she gave her trials for the Mumbai district open category League and made it to the senior team, and won that championship too.

Karen's never-say-die attitude has brought her a lot of success. Her mother Flavia, father Kenneth and brother Keegan have always supported her throughout, and this has helped her strike a balance between academics and sports. Her family also ensures that they are there for all her matches, especially her dad. "The second time I played for Team India, there were 17 of my family members who came to support the team," she recalls exuberantly.

She also had a very intimate God experience that changed her life. "I attended the Alpha course, and during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, I saw the face of Jesus, and there was this huge gush of tears. From that day onwards, I attend Mass



every day and spend 45 minutes in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel." She truly believes in the power of the words in Romans 8:38-39 — *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our LORD."* These verses, in particular, give her hope that no matter what, come rain or shine, God will always be there, and will always love her.

Just like most sportspersons, Karen follows an exercise routine and a diet plan to keep herself fit, as her ultimate goal is to play professionally and make it to the senior Indian Women's team. However, on a personal note, Karen feels that women's football needs to gain more impetus and equal stature, as many girls want to pursue this sport professionally. She admires Messi for his down-to-earth personality. ■

Cynera Rodricks

Ministering in the New Reality

Due to the current pandemic, we are all getting accustomed to the virtual world. The Internet and Social Media have been a blessing in disguise. This entire lockdown has taught us to value relations and people a little more, which we sometimes take for granted. In this time of self-isolation and social distancing, most activities, work and services have moved online. The Church too has stepped into this digital phase, and is making efforts to engage with parishioners. Many parishes have creatively tapped into the potential of digital communications to stay in touch with parishioners and continue 'being Church', in spite of church buildings being closed. Here are a few novel and creative initiatives that have been undertaken in the Archdiocese of Bombay.



Meet Your Parish Team – Lockdown Style

The month of June usually marks the beginning of a new pastoral year. Some parishes have new priests moving in and others moving out, portfolios being assigned and activities scheduled for the year. This year is different; due to the pandemic, everything has been postponed. However, at Our Lady of Dolours Church, Wadala, a Salesian parish had a whole new team of priests who arrived in May. A special initiative was taken by Macklin Lacerda, a parishioner, to make a special 'welcome video' capturing the candid moments of the entire team of priests. The whole idea behind it was to get to know them virtually. "Due to my weekly trips to church, I had met our new priests, and was

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getting to know them well. But the rest of the parishioners sadly couldn't. I also sincerely believed that the longer the lockdown went on, the harder it would be for any kind of rapport to form between the parishioners and the new team of priests. I thought there was an urgent need to bridge the gap and break the ice, and I felt I was in a position to make a difference. So I went ahead, and did just that."

Though Macklin wasn't adept at video production and with the lockdown bringing its own set of restrictions, he managed to put the video together by taking help from a couple of his friends. He went about resolving and crossing the many hurdles that came his way. "I did not have the required equipment at hand. All I had was a photo camera (that wasn't built for shooting video), a tripod, a single battery, and the will to see this through. But it was worth it. Folks from way beyond Wadala, some from across the world, are now able to partake in the Eucharist and connect or re-connect with the parish, thanks to our *YouTube* broadcasts."

You can watch the video on the parish *Facebook* page 'Our Lady of Dolours, Wadala' - Meet Your New Parish Team ~ Lockdown Style.

Students Faith Academy

During the lockdown, most schools have switched to e-learning and online classes, to ensure that there is no hindrance to the academic growth of students. Sunday School also plays a very important role in a child's faith formation, and in order to continue teaching the faith, Sarah Joseph, the Sunday School Coordinator at St Anthony Church, Vakola led the initiative to take faith formation classes online as well. "I had a deep desire within me (ever since I completed my IMFE course in 2017) of taking the Church digital, and making faith formation for young minds available online. This new normal was just the right opportunity to do so." And hence the project began with a call to her Sunday School director, Fr Savio De Sales, and the DCC Director, Fr Vincent D'Cruz, who nurtured the idea and provided the right encouragement and impetus. "We began by forming a core team, then split into teams to work on various aspects to reach a launch date of June 21. One thing we had in common was that we were all aflame with the Spirit, and passionate to reach out to as many as possible through our efforts." It was a beautifully coordinated team effort which brought out the Students Faith Academy (Sunday School) online on the parish *YouTube* channel.

"We were all new to this, and none of us had prior experience. However, we did have technically sound team members who were adept with the know-how of getting things going. In the midst of this, learning, researching, re-learning was the key, that was backed by prayer, perseverance, preparation and perfection. It was just getting the right resources at the right time to reaching the result," says Sarah.

Students Faith Academy can be found on *Facebook* at 'St Anthony's Church, Vakola'.

(Contd on Pg 16)

7. Start a small online group: People need connection, relationships, and a place where they can hear God's Word and process it together. This can't happen in a one-sided consumption of religious media. Gather a few people who have expressed a desire to know God more, commit to meeting once a week, plan a Bible passage, spiritual book study, or a Catholic podcast or video you can discuss, and make sure each person has a chance to share what God is saying and doing. This is not a place to preach or give lots of advice, but to accompany and encourage people as God

speaks, challenges and convicts.

Pope John Paul II wrote in 1990, *"God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel. I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples."* This is as true in 2020 as it was thirty years ago. Come, Holy Spirit, use us to proclaim Christ! ■

MINISTERING IN THE NEW REALITY (Contd from Pg 15)

Stump the Pastor

Our Lady of Immaculate Conception Church, Borivli, is known for conducting youth activities all year round, and though the lockdown brought several obstacles, nothing has stopped the youth of this parish from exceeding their abilities and conducting online activities. One such activity conducted recently was 'Stump the Pastor' – a forum to ask the priests in the parish any question related to faith. Under normal circumstances, such an activity would have taken place in church; however, the youth decided to do the same using a social media platform – *Instagram LIVE*. As youth, we have all taken up the role of doubting Thomas at some point in our life, and have questioned our faith. In order to have our questions answered, the entire team of priests at IC Church got on board, and answered questions based on five categories, viz. Scripture and Tradition, Mariology, Marriage and Relationships, Eucharist and Pop Culture.

Ryland Coutinho, the Joint Secretary of the PYC said, "This project, which initially started off with only six youth, went on to have a total involvement of 60 youth. There was an entire production team set up, with editors, sound engineers, musicians, and youth animators. We received over fifty questions from the youth of our parish, and it was interesting to see so many questions on scripture and traditions." To coordinate with all sixty of the youth was a task, but the outcome was rewarding. "It's only during such challenging times that we are able to get the best out of ourselves, and know our true potential. I would like to thank the entire team of priests for extending their support, and Fr Robin Kinny, our Youth Director for his guidance," added Ryland. You can check out the series on their *Facebook* page 'IC Church PYC' and on *Instagram @icchurchpyc*.

Late Nights Live with DC

A number of college-going youth in Mumbai are complaining of boredom, anxiety due to being locked indoors, absence of social life, and stress due to an uncertain future. Deacon Clifton Mendonca was one of those to be ordained for the archdiocese of Bombay at the end of March 2020, but the sudden lockdown postponed all plans. As he spent time at home with his family, he was forced to stay completely locked in, as there was a COVID case in his housing society. Being adept at social media himself, he was impressed by how a number of celebrities, social media influencers and

brands were reaching out to their followers by creating new and engaging content. This planted in him a seed of doing something himself, and while ideating, he thought of answering young people's questions regarding faith and life. This fit well with his own ordination theme—'In Search of the Lost Sheep'.

He pitched this idea to his cousins, and it was their encouragement and prayers that helped him launch the show 'Late Nights Live with DC' on *Instagram LIVE*. The Spirit has been with him right through. His candid style and witty humour, coupled with a youthful style, has endeared him to hundreds of young people on *Instagram*. What began as a one-off initiative to make a few videos has now entered Season 3 on popular demand. His lively interactions can be found on *Instagram @clifton_dn*.

Conclusion:

The Church, in general, is still struggling to come to terms with the current crisis. While the Church has been in the forefront of relief efforts, questions are being asked on how the Church is going to continue its pastoral work in the face of an extended partial lockdown.

Sarah Joseph agrees, "Our old training methods, old ways of meeting, previously successful frameworks of community service and ministry need to be re-defined, and it needs to be done soon to stay relevant. Having said this, one tip is surely creating short videos on a periodic basis to connect, creating virtual platforms for interaction (monthly online games/quizzes for children, faith-based activities to engage them on a regular basis, conducting virtual activities for youth, SCCs can have virtual meetings and Bible sharing, virtually visiting the sick, etc.). In all this, keeping an open mind, a willing spirit and a learning attitude is a must!"

Macklin, on the other hand, says, "The key lies with the parishioners. We need individuals to step up and take the lead, either on their own, or with a small team. I can only speak from experience. This wasn't a task that was assigned to me. But I forced myself to pick up skills every week, from friends and from *YouTube*. Yes, I think there is a solution, but it's not an easy one. Initiative... and the willingness to learn and think outside the box. That's what we need. But given the situation outside, I'd say it has to start with a little bravery. And a whole lot of generosity." ■

A collage of several covers of 'The Examiner' magazine. The central, most prominent cover is from February 2019 (Vol. 170 No. 05) and features a large photograph of Pope Francis in his white cassock, smiling and gesturing with his right hand. To the left of the Pope, there is a graphic for 'WYD PANAMA 2019' showing a colorful bridge and a ship. Below the Pope, there are smaller images of a religious procession and a group of people holding flags. The magazine's title 'The Examiner' is in a large, green, serif font. Above the title, it says 'A Catholic Newsweekly' and 'Est. 1850'. To the right of the title, it says 'Vol. 170 No. 05 • FEBRUARY 02 - 08, 2019 • Rs 15'. Other covers in the collage include one with a dramatic painting of a volcanic eruption (June 2019), one with a historical religious scene (June 2019), and one with a large crowd of people (March 2019). The background of the collage is a mix of colors and patterns, including a stained glass window design.

The Examiner traces its genesis to 1850. When Bishop Hartmann came to Bombay in 1850, the one Catholic newspaper for those under the Vicar-Apostolic's Jurisdiction was the Bombay Catholic Layman, run by two Irish laymen, who used the paper to oppose the first Bishop Whelan and then Bishop Hartmann. Rather than cross swords with them, Bishop Hartmann encouraged the starting of the Bombay Catholic Standard, under the editorship of another Irishman. Soon, disappointed with that paper as well, the Bishop approached a certain Mr. Borges, a son of the soil, who in July 1850 had, on his own initiative, started a monthly publication, The Examiner. Three months later in September 1850, with Mr. Borges' consent The Examiner became the ecclesiastical organ of the Vicariate under the Bishop's control and management, but under another title, The Bombay Catholic Examiner. By 1852, the other two publications folded up while The Bombay Catholic Examiner kept on going. In April 1905, its title was shortened once again to The Examiner.

The Examiner has continued its legacy of informing and catechizing the lay faithful for 170 years. It is widely read not just in Mumbai, but also nationally and internationally. It is usually a 40-page magazine, with articles from prominent writers, both lay and clergy, on the relevant themes of the week. The magazine also covers all Church news on a local, national and international level. The faithful are kept abreast of all Church happenings and the pronouncements of the Holy Father. The weekly editorial gives a critical reflection/analysis on a current issue of ecclesiastical or secular significance.

The Examiner also has an e-paper version that is especially accessed by people abroad. The Examiner also has a fledgling presence on social media, with regular digital projects to make its presence felt in the virtual space, to reach out to younger audiences.

The current Editor of The Examiner is Fr Anthony Charanghat, who completed 25 years at the helm in 2018.