



alumNews

Newsletter of Salesian College Alumni Association Siliguri
and Sonada



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Dear Alumni,

I am immensely pleased to be able to reconnect with you after a period of seven years. Much has happened over these past years and many of you have moved on in life and advanced in your careers. That is a matter of great joy for me! As I write these few lines I am aware that, like many others, you are braving the present pandemic with its anxieties and insecurities. I often remember you in my prayers to the Almighty for your safety and well being.

“An unexamined life is not worth living”, said Socrates. The current Covid-19 situation has forced us, in a sense, to reexamine our life and its priorities. What is the purpose of this short, uncertain period that we spend on the earth? Is it to get or to give; to consume or to contribute; to move into oneself or to move out of oneself? I guess it is all these. William Blake in his poem *The Little Black Boy* wrote, “And we are put on earth a little space, That we may learn to bear the beams of love.” That ‘little space’ may be your home, your work place or your society. We have been told ‘stay home, stay safe’ and we did. As a result, did home, that ‘little space’ become a warmer, gentler, kinder place to live? Did some ‘beams of love’ reach the neighbour next door?

Rick Warren, in his book *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* says that no one is born into this world by accident. There is a purpose, a role that each person is ordained to fulfil. He adds, “The only really happy people are those who have learned how to serve.” No wonder ‘service learning’ is highly recommended and promoted in most centres for higher education. Let serving begin at home but let it not end there. The time and season calls for a multiplication of kindness and compassion. As we learn to think and analyse, we ought to learn to feel and empathize. The Buddhists say *sunyata-karuna-abhinnambodhicittamitismrtam* (The fusion of knowledge and compassion is enlightenment). The Bhutanese teach us that happiness is the true index of progress and quality of life. Happiness happens when we learn to bear the beams of love. The Bible says, “Be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” (1Peter 3:8) My wish and prayer for you is that your life be truly happy. *Sarvebhavantusukhinah!*

I take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Priyamrita Chatterjee, the Alumni Coordinator and her team for this issue of the Alumni news. God bless you all!

Fr. Tomy Augustine, sdb
Rector
Salesian College Sonada



Dear Alumni of Salesian College,

India celebrates 74th Independence Day. Seventy-three years, since 1947, have gone before us. There are still persons living who have witnessed that momentous, historic day as young adolescents. There are still more who have heard stories of that day, and those times, from their parents and grandparents.

The flag fluttering across the country on August 15th is a symbol of that collective memory, inviting us, who were not direct witnesses, to commemorate the significance of keeping the memories alive. In and through us, shall pass on, the values enshrined in this ceremony, to a generation that will come after us. The more we delve into the formation of an identity – be it based on nation, language, religion, or regional ethnicity - we begin to see: on the one hand, how impactful such identities are; and on the other, how transient they are. Life itself teaches us this lesson.

What we hold dear, in order to keep it dear, we need to keep alive memories. Alum News the newsletter cum magazine of the old students of Salesian college – be they Salesians, former Salesians, lay students or religious or priests of different persuasions, this is a humble effort to keep us connected and to let one another know we are here for each other.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed and specially the alumni coordinator, Ms. Priyamrita Chatterjee, who herself designed this issue from her home. Thanks to everyone who has contributed by way of poetry, recollections and reports to this issue. I am sure you will enjoy reading Dr AJ Thomas and Mr Niten Chettri bringing the past and the present in the dexterity of linguistic expression.

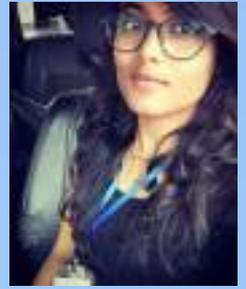
The college continues in its online mode, as vibrant as ever, with teaching learning and co-curricular online events like webinars and training programmes for faculty and the new students to cope with the changed times.

Wish everyone safe times, good immunity and a speedy recovery (if ill disposed). May we brave the trials that come our way to bring cheer to the lives of others. Let the bells of freedom ringing in our ears, never fade, and may we be courageous to keep chiming the chants of freedom within and without.

With Best Wishes of Independence Day and the Founder's Birthday
Yours in Don Bosco,

Fr George Thadathil sdb
Principal & Rector, (Siliguri Campus)
15 August 2020

THE WORLD PANDEMIC



Today the world is at halt, due to this pandemic, coronavirus (COVID-19). We have never dreamt of such a petrifying situation but now here it is. We all are fighting against an invisible enemy. After a century, this virus has created terror in the minds of human. Our lives and livelihood are severely affected. This deadly virus spreads vigorously from one infected person to others through coughing, exhaling or sneezing. The speed of spreading is so fast that it is devastating. We all are instructed to stay at home and have no physical contact with people around. A complete lock-down was initiated. During the first phase of lock-down, it wasn't too much troublesome, people were happy to be at home it gave them the much needed break. A leisure time when everybody would be present at the dining table to eat and smile along. According to the news headlines the lock-down helped the environment heal, the air pollution had dropped by 88% and other pollution levels had dropped down significantly as well. Later, when the lock-down phase two started, lot of industries and business houses had to face economic fall and trimmed the work force because of the decreased revenue. By this time the lower middle class has exhausted their savings and there was a dearth of basic necessity goods. This created panic among the citizens. The migrant laborers had no work nor any financial help to survive, so they strived to go back to their native land. The hazard did not stop here, as there was no movement of vehicles, these laborers had to walk for 14-15 days to reach their home. Many had lost their lives on the way. It became the headlines of every news channel. Some kind souls like Mr. Sonu Sood and many more helped them to reach their home. There are many unsung heroes who worked a lot to make this time little easier for the people in need.

It is a difficult time for everyone. Some are tensed about security of their professional lives, some cannot even manage to feed their families. As the lock-down extends the people are facing with mental health issues, loneliness causing depression and anxiety and this may take an ugly shape if not taken proper care in time. So we all should stand beside each other in any possible manner to fight this danger. It is our duty to reach out for our near and dear ones. May be by video calling, chatting or by staying in contact and lend them our ears when they need to talk. Because during this lock-down phase the suicide cases are increasing only because of insecurity and depression.

The whole globe is attacked by this virus. The nations like China, Italy, America, India and some other countries are in a difficult state as the virus is spreading vigorously and the death rate is very high. The government is also trying their best to keep things in control by implementing new laws, controlling the movements of people, changing the examination patterns for schools and universities, by extending deadlines, making medical facilities available, ensuring that the right measures are taken at the right time. This is the most difficult time but we have ever faced but we need to stand strong, follow the rules and regulations set by the government and help our fellow beings who need us. Lastly I would like to salute the frontline warriors like the medical personnel, police, the media, the helpers and cleaners and everyone for contributing selflessly, being the real heroes of the nation and protecting us, in such a crucial stage.

THANK
YOU

Sapna Prasad
Vice-president
Alumni association
Salesian college Siliguri

Lock Down and my experience



Niten Chettri
Alumnus of Salesian
College Sonada

During the course of lock down I had a couple of experiences which I would like to share.

First was on 25/03/20 morning, the day lock down started, when I got a call from 'one of the departments' Chief Finance Officer who told me that he is in urgent need of medicine named 'Concurr 5' and as he lives with his wife and a child of two years he could not come to get it from the pharmacy and hence requested if I can help him as most of the medicine shops were near to our branch. Without thinking too much, I decided to drop the medicine on my own and as there was no cab I walked to his place which was approximately 3 KMs from our branch and handed him the medicine. I was just inquisitive as to what this medicine was for? So without any hesitation I asked him, he replied "this is for heart and I need to take it daily and I didn't had for today".. The moment he was about to complete his saying, his wife rushed in from inside and with folded hands (Namaste) she thanked me. With lots of happiness and satisfaction I returned back.

Second instance which I wanted to share is of one of the High Ranking Official . On the morning of 15 April I got a Whatsapp message, wherein he told me that he wanted to transfer the funds to the family members of his building construction workers. I instantly recommended him our Axis Mobile App (although he was using earlier but due to some problems he had stopped). I guided him to reinstall app and the problems he was facing with the app was sorted out. Later, in the evening I received another Whatsapp message saying "Succeded Niten Sir". It was followed by a call from him, once again he thanked and passed on messages of gratitude from his construction Labourers and their families.

Never have I seen
such a mess in life.
The air is pure but
wearing a mask is
mandatory.

Roads are empty
but it is
impossible to go on
long drive.

People
have clean hands
but there is a
ban on
shaking hands.

Friends
have time to sit
together but they
cannot get together.

The cook
inside you is crazy,
but you cannot
call anyone to
lunch or dinner.

On every Monday..
the heart
longs for the office
but the weekend
does not seem to end.

Those who
have money
have no way to
spend it.

Those who
don't have
money have no
way to earn it.

There is
enough time
on hand
but you can't
fulfill your
dreams.

The
culprit is all
around
but cannot
be seen.

A world
full of irony!

***So be
positive but
test
negative.***

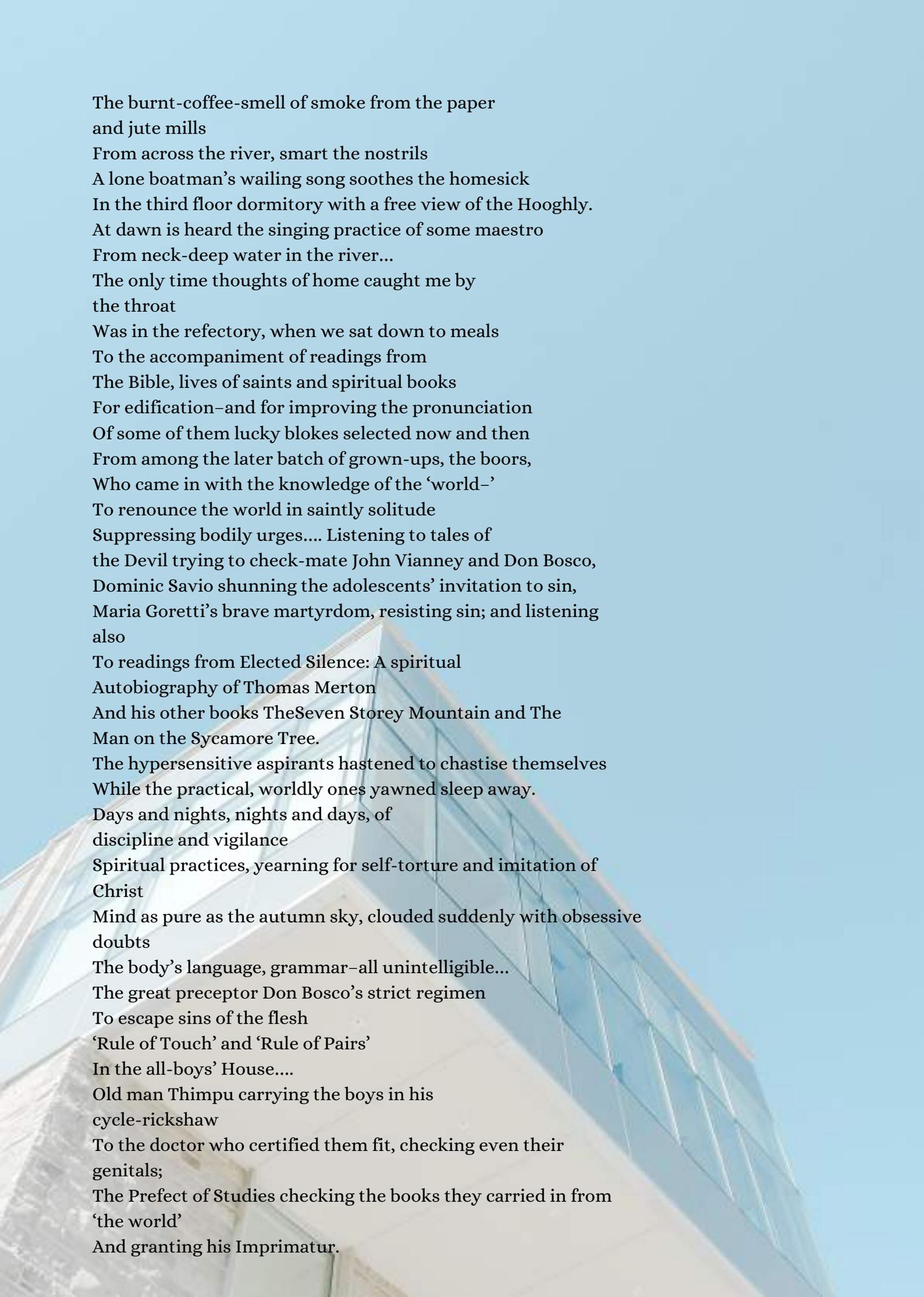
Visions of a Journey: “Bengal in My Blood”



Dr. A.J. Thomas

The great river, with its muddied stream the
colour of mixed decanted tea
Loomed up like a ghost through a rent in the clouds
As the plane prepared to land. Bengal throbs in my
heart...
The thread-like rain falling without stop
Is the connection between the heavens and the earth.
Down on the ground, misery, want and uncouth
inefficiency
Quicken my Delhi-wrath; I fail, groping for the words
of a language
I lost decades ago, lisp and try haggling with the taxi
man, to no avail,
But it's unbelievably cheap as it turns out!
What turns me off is the sight of man-pulled
rickshaws in the veins that lead out
From the heart of Kolkata; three decades and more of
humane governance!
Intransigence, complacency, egotism, arrogance,
mediocrity, apathy, sloth
Set against the brazen inhumanity of the new 'ivory
towers' of the MNCs
Choke me....
The food is leaden on my palate; the fear of cholera
Forbids my thirst....
Dakshinesvar beckons me...
Kali Ma blesses me...
The great temples of art and learning,
The icons of the nation
Reassure me...
This is our Bengal...our Kolkata
Take heart....
Four Decades ago....
What shall I say of one teat
I let go
And the other I groped to suck,
I, a kid in the world of experiences?
The last hope of survival
In my native soil lost
The long walk of eight kilometres in the wee hours
To catch Baby Express to Kochi, thence
A train to the end of the world.
My father by my side—the father didn't know

What his brightest son could do
After his washout failure in the exams.
I boarded the Howrah Mail
With like-company of other bewildered lads
The coal-steam engine wheezing past rows of palmyrae
Reaching Madras Central, the vast
Hall with endless platforms, deafening din of people
And carts, and the pungent smell of bleaching powder
Unsuccessful in driving out the stench of shit and piss
From the open tracks, the tawny, smouldering heaps
Of putrid nightsoil and puddles and mangy dogs and pigs—
A void in the stomach, a sob in the throat....
'What'd have become of my mother, sister and brothers?'
A sweltering day in the third class coach
Andhra running back on both sides
The mud-cup of hot tea peeling the skin of the lip
The water-melon's sensuous red cooling the mouth
And stunning the sun's demanding stare.
The coal engine spewing thick, choking smoke,
The cinders flying into the eyes....
Past the rocky haunts of Srikakulam, in the
news lately
For Kondappally and his comrades...
Past Chilika and waves after waves of storks
Against the heaven's bounty of countless shades of gold...
Hopes of offering my life in the service of the Lord...
Sometime in the night, long, unrelenting nightmares
About my mother and siblings dying of hunger....
On the platform at Howrah at last,
A repeat of the sights, sounds and smells of Madras Central—
The platform was dancing
As I stepped on to it after a continuous train ride
Of three days and three nights...
The electric train took us to Bandel;
The cycle rickshaw ride beneath the underpass
Odour of smoke from the coal-ovens and cow-dung-cake
chulas.
Reaching the House, smells of freshly baked bread
And channa, soups and dessert, plantain and guava....
The yellow neem fruits on the mud-road
Crushed under the boots of the boys
The yellow-and-black gadflies sucking the juice—the clay-mud
Crusted around; from the pores in the mud, crawling
Millipedes and such—the Hooghly close by.



The burnt-coffee-smell of smoke from the paper
and jute mills
From across the river, smart the nostrils
A lone boatman's wailing song soothes the homesick
In the third floor dormitory with a free view of the Hooghly.
At dawn is heard the singing practice of some maestro
From neck-deep water in the river...
The only time thoughts of home caught me by
the throat
Was in the refectory, when we sat down to meals
To the accompaniment of readings from
The Bible, lives of saints and spiritual books
For edification—and for improving the pronunciation
Of some of them lucky blokes selected now and then
From among the later batch of grown-ups, the boors,
Who came in with the knowledge of the 'world—'
To renounce the world in saintly solitude
Suppressing bodily urges.... Listening to tales of
the Devil trying to check-mate John Vianney and Don Bosco,
Dominic Savio shunning the adolescents' invitation to sin,
Maria Goretti's brave martyrdom, resisting sin; and listening
also
To readings from Elected Silence: A spiritual
Autobiography of Thomas Merton
And his other books The Seven Storey Mountain and The
Man on the Sycamore Tree.
The hypersensitive aspirants hastened to chastise themselves
While the practical, worldly ones yawned sleep away.
Days and nights, nights and days, of
discipline and vigilance
Spiritual practices, yearning for self-torture and imitation of
Christ
Mind as pure as the autumn sky, clouded suddenly with obsessive
doubts
The body's language, grammar—all unintelligible...
The great preceptor Don Bosco's strict regimen
To escape sins of the flesh
'Rule of Touch' and 'Rule of Pairs'
In the all-boys' House....
Old man Thimpu carrying the boys in his
cycle-rickshaw
To the doctor who certified them fit, checking even their
genitals;
The Prefect of Studies checking the books they carried in from
'the world'
And granting his Imprimatur.

Naxals snatching rifles of the placid policemen,
(who later began fastening them to their belts with dog-chains)
Decapitated bodies floating in ponds;
Night vigils by senior boys by turn, to protect the priests;
Genocide in East Pakistan;
Indian Army and Mukti Bahini snatching the country
From Pakistanis and creating Sonar Bangla;
Millions of refugees flooding Calcutta (it was that then).
The history-minded amongst the boys including me, writing pages of
immortal'
Accounts of what they thought would reveal to the world
The magnitude of the genocide, the train-loads of dead Indian soldiers
Cleared daily from the grounds
Where they fought and died along with the Mukti Bahini;
And the Sabre Jets felled by Indian Ack-Ack Guns at Mogra,
The undulating wail of the siren
Sending the boys packed to the air-raid shelter in the cellar
With cotton wool stuffed in their ears;
The misery in the refugee camps at Krishnagar....
All forgotten in the euphoria of victory,
The future dictator and the Emergency, a step away.
Bullies and chauvinists striking terror, to be suffered mutely.
Strange affections and affinities
Of the hapless Santhals and other meek confreres
Who never were on par with the snobbish
Middle-class priesthood-aspirants.
A couple of months' residence in Darjeeling;
The first sightings of rhododendrons,
And an exam done, straight from the quilts;
Chilly water from the taps inhibiting ablutions...
Deep brown hard-baked bread laden with crimson marmalade
With thick knife-swabs of butter for evening tea;
Walks along the winding road; tea-pinching Sherpa women
Of indefinite age smiling with toothless gums, their gigantic
Baskets slung from the head; orchids and sub-Himalayan
Tiny-leaved shrubs and flowers;
An early-morning trek of several miles to Tiger Hill,
To miss out the glory of Kanchenjunga at dawn, enveloped
In the clouds and fog...

Failing to hear God's call in turmoiled emotions,
Leaving the House for good...

Old man Thimpu's cycle rickshaw once again
To the ancient Bandel Station
Fond impressions of the eternal river
And the vast sky reflecting on it, a silvery sheet....
Life's many scenes played out; the script and theme
Changing over and over again with time.....

Four decades later, a visit in driving rain and sleet...
To this haven green in memory and
Oft visited in dreams and reveries over the years as the heart
Quickened in nostalgic anticipation...
The House no more, only the buildings remain
The ancient venerable Bandel Church face-lifted into
A gaudy, garish 'basilica'....the maidan shrunken, decrepit...
A priest, years junior to me in the House
Fearful, hesitant to offer bonhomie. The river's invite
Still irresistible. The path that led to the riverbank
Slushy, the sticky mud hugging the shoes
The tiny fishing village, with cute, black boats
Tucked away in the inlet-stream. The greenery
Of banana trees, colocasias, mango-trees and drumstick trees
The misery of the shacks and hovels, all unchanged
In spite of the few new terraced buildings.
The road to the station is the same; same the lump
In the throat that rose as I left on a cycle-rickshaw
For the station last, four decades ago.
The heart of Bengal
Still draws me close; the squalor and hopelessness
Of the villages and towns and the metropolitan streets
Of Kolkata save for me a familiar wag of humanity's tail.
I, like Yudhisthira, look towards it...
the end of trials and tribulations.

*This
Poetry was earlier published in
The Beacon on April 21, 2008.xt*

Album



Dr. Thomas Mathew
Alumnus of SCS



*The most colorful
part of my life began at Don Bosco
High School, Mannuthy, India*

*Back to SCS as an
Associate Professor of English.
(Staff Picnic to Darjeeling in
July 2019)*



*End of my tenure for
2019. Thanks to all who made my
stay comfortable. Principal &
Rector, Vice
Rector, Bursar, the Five-Star-Level
chef and the Wizard-at-the-wheel
Driver.*



THE WINNER AGAINST COVID-19



The 9th principal of Salesian College Sonada, 94-year-old Fr. (Dr.) Peter Vincent Lourdes, won the battle against Covid-19, hoisted the flag on 74th Independence day of India before leaving the hospital and return home to Don Bosco Nitika Kolkata, 15 August 2020. Fr. Lourdes was diagnosed with Covid-19 in July-end. He was put in home isolation on oxygen support for a day before Fortis Hospital could offer him a bed.

“Though he had only hypertension as a co-morbid condition, age was against him. The Covid pneumonia was so bad that his oxygen requirement kept increasing. Since all ICU beds were occupied, we kept managing him with medication and oxygen support in the Covid ward,” said Basab Bijoy Sarkar, consultant, internal medicine at Fortis Anandapur, under whose supervision the patient was treated.

Fr. Lourdes started improving after nine days. After testing negative twice on 14th and 16th day, he was shifted out of the Covid ward. But he was put under intensive rehabilitation, including physiotherapy, due to being extremely frail. “He must lead a disciplined lifestyle because of which he had only one significant co-morbidity. He is a fighter. It is so heart-warming that he won the battle and went home in good health,” added Sarkar.

Earlier, a few other priests from the same order had been treated at the hospital. Though 73-year old Joseph Aymanathil (SCS batch of 1971) succumbed to the infection on 19th July, while the rest recovered. A student of the first batch at Don Bosco School Liluah in 1937, Fr Lourdes was the first Indian principal at Salesian College Sonada from 1967 to 1970. There have been 14 principals so far, in Salesian College established in Gorabari village in 1938t

FR. C.M. Paul SDB
SCS

OBITUARY



A Salesian College Sonada alumnus and pioneer educationist who brought free Don Bosco education to Kolkata's slum children died in a Kolkata Hospital, 19 July 2020. The first Covid victim among Kolkata Salesians was 73 years old. Fr. A Covid-19 Warrior Priest

Fr. Joseph Aymanathil organised 115 days of uninterrupted feeding program for Covid Relief with his team at Kapali Bagan and Kolkata's Sealdah Railway station area. For some 30 plus years, Fr manathil pioneered quality education of the slum children when he offered free tuition classes for children of the slums from Kolkata's Corporation schools of Tangra and Sealdah area. Some of the slums from which children and teachers came for daily classes included: Bibi Bagan, Kapali Bagan, Motijheel, Merlai Lane, Suarmari, Bamonpara, Seal Lane, Pottery Road, Dui Number Bridge, Theen Number Bridge, Palmer Bazaar, and Muchipara.

Popularly known as Dr. A.C., Fr Aymanathil was the first Salesian of Kolkata province who secured a doctoral degree in Canon Law from Salesian University Rome in 1989, and served also on Calcutta Archdiocesan Tribunal for several years. As a Canon Lawyer, Fr Aymanathil was specialized in marriage rectification as well as consultant for laicisation of priests and religious for several congregations and diocese

Alumnus of Salesian College Sonada 1971 batch, Fr Aymanathil did his theological studies in Kristu Jyoti College Bangalore and was ordained Priest on 19 December 1977 at Pannimattam, Pala diocese, Kerala. Aymanathil was cremated on 20 July 2020.

Campus



Salesian College Siliguri campus is delighted to welcome Fr. Dr. George Thadathil SDB, Principal as the Rector and Head of Alumni Office .



Fr. Dr. Mathew Pulingathil SDB the former Rector of the campus and Head of Alumni Office has now joined Don Bosco Mirik as Parish Priest



Orientation Programme:

Salesian College Siliguri campus organised Online Orientation Programme 2020 for Semester-III and Semester-V students on August 1, 2020

World Environment Day

On June 5th, 2020 The World Environment day, the Department of Social Work organised an online campaign on "Save Environment"



FDP

Department of Computer Science and Applications, Salesian College Sonada and Siliguri organised a Faculty Development Program for young faculty members from 10th June to 15th June 2020. The FDP is being held at online platform of Moodle.

Webinar

Dept. of History, Salesian College Siliguri organised a series of webinar on July 31st.



Intra B.VOC QUIZ COMPETITION 2020

As people are all staying at home and being safe from the spread and transmission of the pandemic COVID-19, it is for sure that the students back at home are going through some sort of distress, anxiety, feeling of isolation, miss out of fun activities with their friends circles and bundles of entertainment as well. So, to ease them and provide them a kind of short term relief from the state of distress, college had initiated to conduct the Online Quiz Competition on 24th April, 2020

Brain Tzer:

Entrepreneurship Development Cell, Salesian College Siliguri Campus hosted its last event of the academic session 2019-2020. Brain Tzer, organised on 20th April, 2020. A four day online riddle competition where one could enjoy the cognitive challenges presented. The cell witnessed a total of ninety participants from which three overall winners were chosen based on the number of timely correct answers given by them

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