



# alumNews

Newsletter for Salesian College Alumni Siliguri and Sonada



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***Dear Alumni,***

We are passing through a very difficult time. I am writing to assure you that we at Salesian College Sonada and Siliguri are with you in thought and in prayer to God as we face this unprecedented situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. The second wave with its new variant has spread a second wave of panic and anxiety.

The visuals that appear constantly on the TV and the social media are undoubtedly scary. News is dismal, views are disturbing. There is everything that goes to make one afraid. It's time to fight fear. An often repeated phrase in the Bible is, "Do not be afraid". But how? Love is prescribed as the antidote for fear, "Perfect love casts out fear".

Perfect love is manifested in, to borrow from Buddhist Ashtanga marga, samyag darsana (right perception) samyag vak (right speech) and samyag karmanata (right action). The perception of the present predicament determines our response in thoughts, words and actions. A wider perspective makes us think beyond ourselves and our immediate family. It makes us reach out to others in thoughts of wellbeing, words of comfort and meaningful actions.

Loneliness to Solitude: The time of quarantine and isolation need not leave us lonely but leave us in solitude. If loneliness is being alone and disconnected, solitude is being alone but connected. Solitude often leads us to spiritual awakening, to new realizations and emancipation. It provides a conducive atmosphere for realignment and reordering of our priorities in life. We get connected with our interior self and the supreme self. Thoughts to words: Words energize. If thoughts can become rebuilding and reaffirming self-talk, words can do the same for others. Bible says, "Do not use harmful words in talking, use helpful words that build and provide what is good to those who hear you." Right speech (samyag vak) is what is true, pleasant and helpful. Let us be generous with comforting, consoling, encouraging and reassuring words.

Words to actions: Fear creates an instinctual response within living beings to huddle together, stand together, forget differences, and fight together. People under fear come together, live together and build closer bonds with each other. They get interested in the affairs of each other. They realize that their lives are interdependent. People get even birds and animals to live with them and plants to serve as food and medicine. They care for every element of nature making the globe a home - Vasudhaiva kutumbhakam.

It is time to switch channel. Let thoughts be energizing, words life-giving, and actions care-giving. Self-centered thoughts can be depressive but other-centered thoughts can make us expressive. Wishing other's happiness (sarve bhavantu sukhinah) is the best way to ventilate our minds. Where our hands cannot reach our thoughts and words certainly can. Let us wish the wellbeing of others. Let us be generous with encouraging words, remaining connected and expressing concern. Joining the band of care-givers, be it at home or in society, let us augment love in the world. In this way, fear may be cast out for "perfect love casts out all fear." It may well be the time to 'build the ark', to bond with others, with creatures and with the creator, to save and to be saved.

Fr. Tomy Augustine sdb  
Rector, Slesian College Sonada

## From the Alumni Desk



Dear all,

Hope all are doing good and safe amid pandemic.

We all are going through the toughest time. We are losing our family members, friends and loved ones. The pandemic has shown us the real picture of 3rd World Nation in terms of medical amenities, economic structure and the issues of urban migration.

Life is a conglomeration of various vicissitudes that embrace us at every junction. The process of growth is intrinsically linked with the dynamic process of learning via life's experiences.

Monika Rana in her poetry reflects the issues of colonialism, uprootedness and marginalized society. It also reminds me Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan. Miss Sapna Prasad gives the scenario of India during the second wave of covid-19.

We as a Salesian Family mourn deeply over the early demise of Sir Deepjyoti Das. The Alumni Association of Salesian College Siliguri is organizing a free RATION KIT distribution drive for the needy and down-trodden people. In this battle of survival amid pandemic it is a plan to help people so that they don't struggle to sleep with empty stomach at night.

From Editorial and Alumni Office  
Sayak Moitra

**Please keep sending the articles in email ID given for next issue/s.  
Sayakmoitra92@gmail.com/alumni@salesiancollege.net**

# ***Amnesia***



**Monika Rana**  
**Alumna and Assistant**  
**Professor , Salesian**  
**College**

Whenever I think about my  
    grandma  
I'm reminded of Okonkwo  
And his stories of resistance  
Against the colonial tidings that  
    swept away  
    His generations.  
I often looked at my grandma  
And tried to imagine her  
    Vivacious youth  
    The young bride,  
    Mother of ten  
    When she left,  
She took the language with her  
    To be buried in debris.  
Now all we have is gravel and  
    sand  
    And we not know  
How to build a house with it!

## II

    Grandpa  
They are moving again  
In roads, railway tracks, across  
    the paddy field.  
The migrants are walking again  
Their soles parched like your  
    patch of land  
    In Asar that didn't rain.  
Does it remind you of another  
    time  
    Another displacement?  
    How young were you  
When the Partition gave birth  
    to  
India ?

Were you as young as me?  
A quiet spectator to the deaths  
A train that brought bodies, not  
    Human  
A bus that carried corpse, not  
    Lives  
    Tell me  
Were you as young as I am?  
Helplessly watching  
As my country succumbed to  
    Its poverty  
They say, poverty is the new  
    pandemic  
    But they, you and I  
    Only gaze at it  
As if it were a carnival.

Like you remembered Partition  
And took the story with you,  
Should I only remember this  
    Pandemic  
And take the story  
    To be forgotten?

*\*Asar is monsoon season in  
Nepali.*

## First Alumnus to Serve as US Military Chaplain

**Fr. John Kakkuzhiyil**  
**Alumni, SCS batch 79**



To introduce myself, I am Fr. John Kakkuzhiyil. I belong to 1976 -1979 batch at SCS. Initially I belonged to Kolkota Province. When the division of the Province took place, I opted to continue to work in the “Hindi Region” where I had been working since my ordination in 1986.



In May 2007 at the invitation of the Bishop of Grand Island in USA and with due permission from my then Provincial, I came to work in the USA on a temporary contract. After 6 years of working here and after due discernment and necessary dialogue with the Provincial and the Bishop I chose to get incardinated in the Diocese of Grand Island. In 2015 I became a Naturalized Citizen of the USA.

In 2020, with a “Letter of Good Standing” and recommendation of the Bishop, I applied to the AMS (Archdiocese for Military Services) to serve as a Contract Priest (Chaplain) at US Military Bases. (The AMS provides Catholic Chaplaincy to US Military Personnel around the world). My application was accepted and I received endorsement as a Contract Priest (Catholic Chaplain). Soon I was informed about a Chaplain vacancy here at the US Army Garrison on Kwajalein in RMI (Republic of Marshall Islands). I applied for the same and thanks be to God, I was able to meet all the requirements and clear the rigorous background checks and security clearances in about 6 months.

Due to the Covid situation, getting here was a long process. On Feb 22nd I was instructed to fly to Honolulu, Hawaii. There I had fifteen days of quarantine in a four star hotel on Waikiki Beach. (Could enjoy the beach only from my hotel room balcony)! Then I was flown to the Island in a Military transport plane and put through another three weeks of quarantine. This Island is five hour flight from Honolulu.

I got out of quarantine just in time for Holy Week and began my ministry here. The Island Memorial Chapel Complex consists of 2 Chapels (Large and Small) side by side, offices and a two story REB (Religious Education Building). The Chapel was constructed by the US Military Personnel towards the end of WWII, soon after the US Military defeated the Japanese who till then occupied the Islands. Catholics and Interdenominational groups share the facilities. We are two full-time Chaplains, Interdenominational and Catholic (me). Except for the strictly sacramental ministry, both chaplains plan and do all activities and everything else as a team. It is very ecumenical around here. As far as Church attendance is concerned, Catholic faithful are more than the others. At weekends we average 100-125.

On 2nd and 4th Fridays I fly to another Island, 50 miles away (20 minute flight). Celebrate Mass for the few who live there, have a night stay and fly back following morning. To serve as a Priest here is a very unique and fulfilling experience. The whole community is very friendly. On the Island we have no Covid restrictions... No Masks, no distancing. Thank God !!! The Island is about 3 miles long and 0.75 miles broad. About 6-8 feet above sea level. Chaplain belongs to Category III and has a comfortable duplex house to live in.

# Covid Pandemic



**Sapna Prasad**  
**Vice President , Alumni Association**  
**of Salesian College , Siliguri Campus**

As the whole world is now a democratic society, but we are being enslaved by “the virus”. In the era of artificial intelligence and technological advancement are not enough to suffice the requirements of our fellow beings.

The media is constantly showing us the condition of the countries worldwide, how some have controlled the situations (countries like Australia and Israel with no upcoming cases) but the second wave of virus attack has created a tremendous pressure on some nations like the U.S., India with 3000000 cases every day. Thanks to U.A.E., Russia and other nations including Bangladesh for sending help in this crucial time. In this difficult time, where the war is against an invisible enemy, we are still fighting against each other, it is so unfortunate to wake up to such disheartening news every morning.

Talking about our state West Bengal, the scenario started to take a bad turn before the elections when rallies started to happen, Holi came near the corner and marriage ceremonies took up its speed in the month of March. Surprisingly, no social distancing was practiced while voting instead the Covid positive voters were asked to cast their votes at a special hour was allotted to them, that was from 6 p.m. to 7p.m. Riot happened between the political parties which lead to murder, looting and also raping and assault of women. With increasing death rates, the cremation ghats are at their worst, tickets being given and the bodies of the beloved needed to wait in line for 3-4 days for their turn to get cremated. The images of such situations bring grief and sorrow where an aged father is lying with the body of his only son and he isn't allowed to do the religious rituals. India would not have been facing the lack of oxygen cylinders today if it would have done something to preserve its natural habitats instead of deforesting them for some selfish needs. We should get a lesson from our neighboring country Bhutan to make their nation green at every occasion possible.

We as an individual citizen need to take the responsibility to make the country a better and fair place to live, where everybody is given proper medical attention and basic amenities to carry on their livelihood. We have to think about humanity before any religion, political party or any other criteria that would lead to distinction between each other. All we can do now is to stay indoors, practice yoga regularly to keep our body and mind healthy, read positive and be grateful for a roof to stay under, and for food to feed our families. Keep sanitizing ourselves and our surroundings, meditate and help others in need. Use the power of social media to increase awareness and not to create panic. This may be the difficult time but we need to stand strong, follow the rules and regulations while keeping i the social distancing. The doctors are tired, the armed forces are working day and night; now let us show some gratitude towards them and their selfless service. I would like to salute the police, the doctors, the health workers and their volunteers, for extending their hand selflessly, being the real heroes of the nation and protecting us, in such a crucial stage. For once we need to ask ourselves what have we done for our nation? For our fellow citizens? And if we don't have an acceptable answer we need to think and start to work for it, this is the time to help wounded India, which is continuously burning.

# Salesian College Alumni Association Office Bearers



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