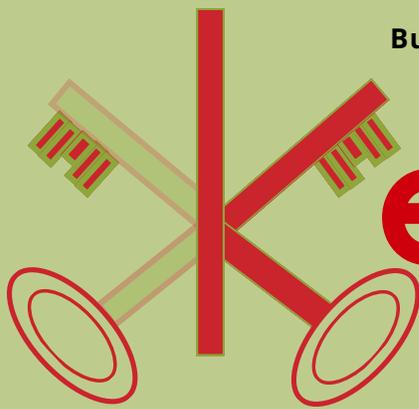


Building a Faith Community for Service



KEYSTONE

**ST. PETER'S CHURCH BANDRA
NEWSLETTER**

COMMITMENT LIVING FAITH INTEGRITY CONCERN (CLIC)



<http://stpetersbandra.com>

December 2025 - January 2026

★ Memories of Christmas past

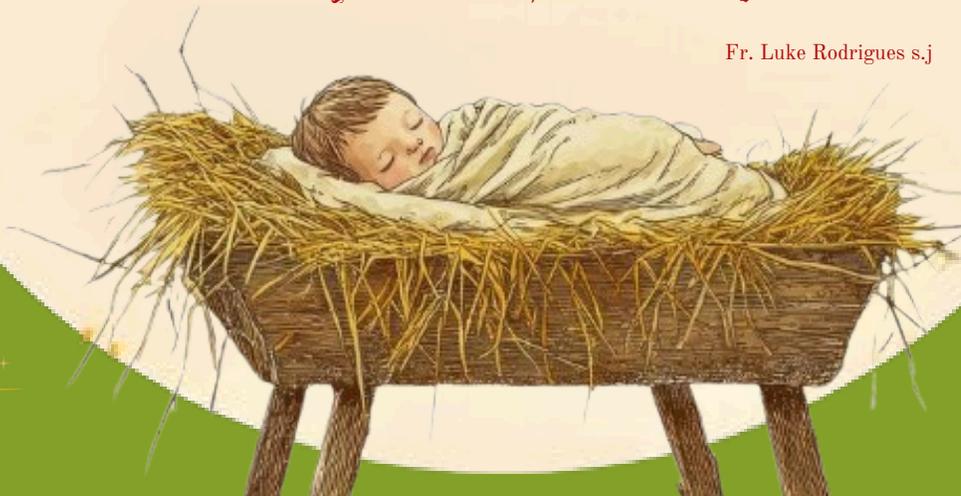
In the novel 'A Christmas Carol', the Ghost of Christmas Past takes Ebenezer Scrooge on a trip down memory lane, helping him re-live the experiences of earlier celebrations of Christmas.

Taking a cue from Charles Dickens, the Keystone team thought it a good idea to invite our readers to undertake this same trip. We are confident that, unlike Scrooge, our response will not be "Bah! Humbug!" but rather a grateful exclamation of 'Thank you, Lord'.

The next invitation we offer is regarding the future. May the gratitude for our experiences of Christmas Past guide our approach to the new year. Instead of multiple resolutions (most of which die out by February), let's resolve to make only one resolution – "I shall be grateful for the experiences of each day". Does this sound too pious, too idealistic? Try out the habit of the Gratitude Jar (refer page within). It works!

**The Jesuit Team at St. Peter's wishes you a Joy-filled Christmas
and a New Year filled with God's blessings.**

Fr. Luke Rodrigues s.j



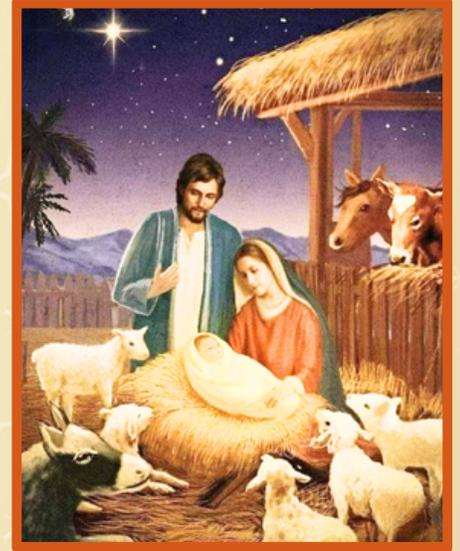
DID YOU KNOW?

The man behind the manger Uncovering the story about the crib

St. Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first living Christmas crib in the town of Greccio, Italy, on Christmas eve in 1223. Inspired by his trip to the Holy Land, he wanted to represent the birth of Jesus using a real manger, hay, an ox and a donkey to bring the story to life for the local people. This event became a revolutionary tradition that spread throughout the world, helping people to better understand the humility and poverty of Christ's birth.

St. Francis' recreation of that first Christmas night was so popular that soon every church in Italy had its own Nativity scene. The devotion also spread to private homes.

Hopefully this story of the first Nativity scene will inspire us to see our nativity set as much more than just a pretty Christmas decoration. It is a tool for meditation on the humility, simplicity and poverty of Christ.



Christmas

**Every time a hand reaches out
To help another... that is Christmas
Every time someone puts anger aside
And strives for understanding
That is Christmas
Every time people forget their
differences
and realise their love for each other
That is Christmas
May this Christmas bring us
closer to the spirit of human
understanding ;
closer to the blessing of peace!**



What is the deeper meaning of Christmas?

- Bunny Cardoz

It's sometimes hard to teach children the true meaning of Christmas. The season has been turned into a commercial event, about all the wrong things. Where it should be more about the birth of the infant Jesus, most people think about it only on Christmas day or at the Christmas mass. The weeks prior are spent shopping for gifts, decorations, clothes and preparations for the season's celebrations.

Many ask "Where is this Prince of Peace?" In a world filled with so much turmoil, wars, terrorism, fear and isolation, how do you find the true message of Christmas, with all its promises of hope, goodwill and cheer? The answer is something amazing. Christmas heralds the entrance of God into human history. Heaven descending to earth. Every Christmas is a promise of hope renewed. It's as though a trumpeter has taken his stand upon the turrets of time, and announced to a despairing, hopeless and frustrated world, the coming of the 'Prince of Peace'. The Christmas message is relevant, revolutionary and reassuring to us even today.

On that first Christmas night the Bible tells us about the angel coming to those fearful shepherds saying "Fear not, I bring you good news." (Lk:2) This then is the true meaning of Christmas; Good News, that God sent his only Son to earth, to save His people. Christmas is not a myth, a tradition or a dream, but it's a glorious reality. Let us prepare our hearts and homes to accept God's Christmas gift of salvation.

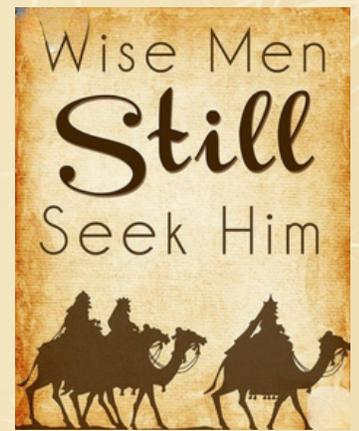
Prince of Peace

They went home another way

- Bunny Cardoz

As we enter a New Year, full of joy and endless possibilities, we celebrate the feast of the Three Wise Men, who visited Jesus, presenting Him with gold, frankincense and myrrh.

They were led by starlight to a baby who would Himself be called, 'the light of the world'. They travelled far to discover what God would reveal, and they found Jesus. And then being warned in a dream, they went home another way. Every year I remember the words of a James Taylor song; "Maybe me and you, can be wise guys too, and go home by another way."



As followers of the Christ Child, sometimes we need to take a different way because God is taking us out of harm's way. Historically, those who follow stars often find themselves the object of the wrath of the power obsessed Herods of this world. But sometimes we need to take another way, because God wants us to experience something we would not have, if we had stayed on the safe path. Yes, alternate routes slow us down and are more difficult, so we have to pay close attention. This is a great metaphor for our spiritual life. It's about being brave, trusting God and surrendering to God's will, so we ultimately find the right path to our final home, which is to live in the heart of God. For me, the Epiphany is a reminder to follow stars, bow before God, listen to His voice and have the courage to be a "wise guys too" and "go home by another way."

Pope's Intention - December 2025

For Christians in areas of conflict

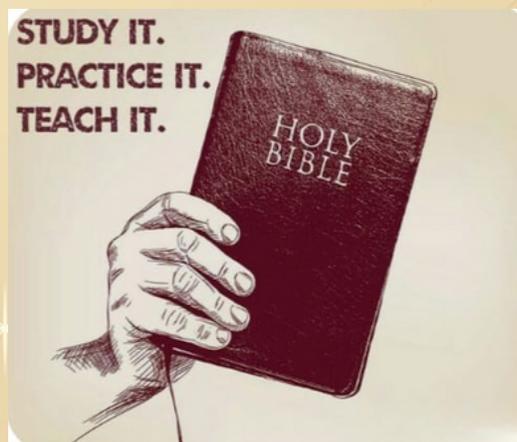
Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation and hope.



Pope's Intention - January 2026

For prayer with the Word of God

Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.



Our REAP experience

St Peter's colony SHC visited REAP (Reach Education Action Programme) in Kalwa as part of their outreach. Besides a cash donation, the children were given stationery, books and toys, which brought them great joy. The organisation educates underprivileged children and youth in various disciplines to build skills and shape their careers. Their latest endeavour is STEM education which exposes the children to creativity and logic. Interacting with them and learning about the organisation was truly a Rewarding, Enriching, Admirable, Positive experience!

Truly worth a visit!



YSS in action!

The YSS conducted a successful stationery drive in aid of the Ashagad mission..



The St. Peter's parish bone density camp was well attended.



National Symposium on Synodality

-Agnes Taites

Three members of our PPC (Brian D'Szoua, Michelle D'Souza, myself), along with Fr Luke attended the National Symposium on Synodality at the Goregaon Seminary from 24th - 26th October. We were approximately 250 participants all over from India including 7 Bishops, 33 Diocesan officials, 45 priests, 66 Religious and over 100 laity.

'Communion, Participation, and Mission' are the three focus areas of the ongoing synodal process in the Catholic Church.

It was a privilege to hear eminent speakers from different parts of the county share their insights and reflections.

The presentations and discussions helped us deepen our understanding of how we, as Church, can truly become a community of believers who are united (Communion), actively engaged (Participation) and sent out to serve the world (Mission).

The whole Symposium was a truly enriching experience and we came away with a strong desire to continue our journey of being a Synodal Church - walking together, discerning together and working together.



Echoes of Joy



The Sunday school children of our parish nailed it at the Psalms festival held in our school hall!

Well done!

The Holy Rosary Community visited the Udhawa mission of the Daughters of the Cross. It was a privilege to learn, witness and be inspired by the simple yet profound way of living of the school children and the community.



An enriching experience

PUT THIS on YOUR CALENDAR!

4
D
E
C

Advent recollection for senior citizens

6
D
E
C

Seminar on Gift deeds and Release deeds

6&7

D
E
C

Shift to thrift

16
D
E
C

St. Peter's Parish Christmas tree

25

D
E
C

Christmas lucky draw
post midnight mass

26
27
28
D
E
C

Christmas Ball
Nostalgia Night
Christmas Carnival

Details of the events are on the Notice Board

Bandra Christmases, a nostalgic stroll

Mirthful moments, cherished memories, a dash of poignancy..



St. Peter's Heavenly Altar boys

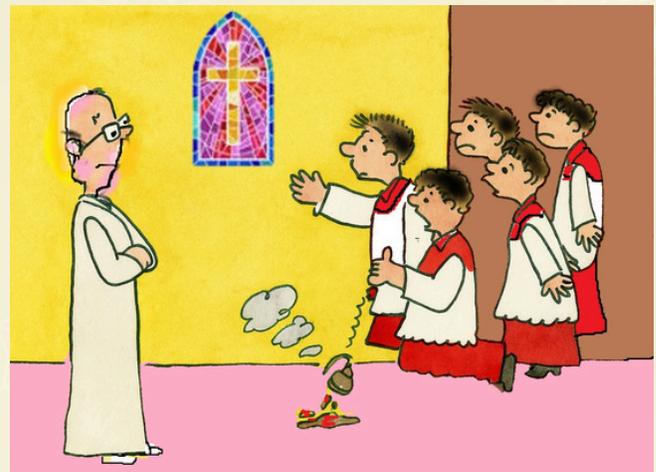
- Fr. Francis Gonsalves s.j.

Christmas in the 1960s-70s at St. Peter's, Bandra, was heavenly! We altar boys not only buttered Aunt Sandra from Bandra for her out-of-this-world marzipans and plum-cakes, but also strove to curry favour with beloved padri, Fr. Tony Saldanha. Reason? We longed to be called-and-chosen, then disciplined-and-decorated by Fr. Saldanha as altar boys - clad in red and white, matching Santa.

'Paper Tarzan' we'd jokingly call Fr. Saldanha - skinny as a beanpole, lionhearted as Tarzan and as eagle-eyed as Inspector Rodrigues of Bandra Police Station. He loved us more than our moms did, but was stricter than our dads put together. No nonsense! Certainly not during Christmas midnight Mass when Fr. Barjau's sermons warmed our hearts and the celestial choir transported us to heaven. Being altar boys 'prefect' for two years, I had the prerogative of wielding the thurible, happily sending clouds of incense-smoke heavenwards with Iggy, my giggly deputy, throwing in chunks of incense to heighten the mystery and majesty.

What was extraordinary about Christmastime altar-serving? Sadly, out of 200-plus enthusiastic altar boys, only a miserly 30 were called-and-chosen. Your place among those 'chosen few' was never secure. During practices, one clumsy bow or unwarranted laugh would get Fr. Saldanha flustered. "You! Get out!" he would shout to the erring altar boy, who exited, crestfallen, like Adam leaving the Garden of Eden. As replacement, another waitlisted altar boy would be inducted, rejoicing in seventh heaven.

Times have changed. Fr. Barjau and Fr. Saldanha are in heaven. Down here, I'm elated that altar girls complement altar boys. Frankly, as priest now, I find altar girls more focused and faithful than we, altar boys, were. However, looking back, I treasure being altar boy - with bells, incense, prizes for 'extra Masses' and altar boy picnics to Gorai - and, undoubtedly, disciplining by Fr. Saldanha. I take pride in training some 'special' altar boys. Guess who? Archbishop John Rodrigues!



Crafting The Crib!

- Clement Desylva



The wheat was planted three weeks ago. Not for the kharif or rabi crop, but for the crib. To line around the meadows of your little Bethlehem in Bandra. You get the figures together. Joseph and Mary in a football huddle over a missing baby Jesus. (He can only be put into place after midnight mass on the 25th) The shepherds, one with a crook and one with a lamb slung over his shoulders (is it for warmth? is it a fashion statement?) The donkey and the cow. Chewing their cud, looking on at their manger being used as the delivery room.



Angels doing their balancing act on the roof of the crib. A flame that flickers with the cozy warmth of red and yellow cellophane paper. Wine shops would be visited to get the hay for the roof. Liquor came packed in wooden boxes lined with hay then. A mirror to look like a little Bethlehem pond. Then came the snow storm. Enough snow to make even the Hummer need snow chains on its tires. Until Mr. Know It All Cousin Reggie told us it doesn't snow in the Middle East now and it didn't snow in the Middle East 2000 years ago. So no more cotton from Bandra Medical! The crushed brown paper that formed the bricks and mortar of the manger was splattered with wet mud to make it look earthy and realistic. The three kings with their one camel would be genuflecting near the showcase far away from the altar to a baby Jesus they would reach only on the 6th of Jan.



All is well in the manger until the next morning when Leelabai, the maid, troops in to work and you are away at school/office/putting up your mother-in-law's crib. She cleans and she dusts and then proceeds to rewrite the nativity. Mary is hanging out with the shepherds. The sheep, cows and the donkey are being shepherded by Joseph. Two kings are heading towards Japan while one waits in line for his American visa. She's destroyed your hills and valleys of Bethlehem and it now resembles the plains of the Punjab. Wheat grass in neat orderly rows. Spin in your graves Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

You being a purist, reunite Joseph with his wandering betrothed, and the shepherds with their wandering sheep. The three kings are once more looking at the star and their camel has been made to toe the line. Baby Jesus is safe on the altar hidden and looked at by Joseph and Mary in their Holy Family avatars.

GLORIA IN
EXCELSIS
DEO ★

Waiting for the heavens to open up and choirs of angels to burst into Gloria in Excelsis Deo while he takes his rightful place in the manger and in our hearts.



Christmas at St. Peter's Colony

Where traditions are made,
memories are cherished....

- Neil Pais

Over the past 60 years, St. Peter's colony, a landmark of our parish, is renowned for its enjoyable Christmas celebration. Despite housing a large community, its doors were always open to all for the Christmas tree party or the New Year ball.

There were multiple days of exciting events like a fancy dress, Christmas plays and carol singing around a bonfire (coffee included!) Children enjoyed the Christmas tree party with unusual games... all culminating with the exciting arrival of Santa, who every year, chose a different mode of transport adding to the suspense and excitement. The gifts were always placed around the iconic decorated Christmas tree (which grew from a tiny sapling to a height taller than that of the buildings).

The popular New Year's ball held on the lawns, with live music, attracted people from near and far ... all vying with each other to book their tables well in advance. Children would peek out of their balconies excitedly watching their parents dance the night away. Come early morning, they would sprint down to the lawns to pick up left over tik tiks or horns.

In recent years the Colony has become a sight to behold ... truly a fairyland at Christmas time! Although the Christmas tree finally met its fate recently, it won't dampen the joy and community spirit of Christmas at St. Peter's colony.



Christmas!

- Roland Cardoz

The family gathers around the crib, after returning from midnight mass. They sing 'Silent Night' and remove the covering over the crib, kiss Baby Jesus and place Him in the manger and wish each other a 'Happy and Holy Christmas.' I was asked to write about "Christmas of old" -being 95 years young! How do you do this when Christmas is 'ever new?'

Times change and today you see streets decorated with more Christmas trees than there were in Bethlehem! Sidewalks are hogged by vendors with hand made cribs stretching across the pavements. Streamers and stars jostle each other, tinkling bells jingle merrily, the sound clear and joyful. Santa's tummy has grown twice as large and Christmas carols beat out of pocket phones.

Oh! How things change! But for me Christmas stays ever green. Christmas is a celebration of Jesus' birthday and he is a present to all the world. Merry Christmas and God's blessing through the coming year.

The sounds and songs of Christmas

- David Cardoz

'Christmas Carols' – These 2 words just go together like they were made for each other, you simply can't have one without the other.

The fact is that Christmas in Bandra (and all over) is always associated with the sounds of singing – from that very first Christmas night, when a multitude of angels sang 'Glory to God in the highest', to herald the birth of Jesus. The singing echoes through the ages and continues even today, with Christmas songs and carols that begin from the end of November itself, to let us know that Christmas is near... and then continues through the Season's year end and well into the New Year. One has only to hear carol singers – a rarity these days or choirs diligently practicing in Church – to bring back cherished memories of good cheer, that fills your heart with the warm feeling only Christmas can bring.

And it's not just carols or choirs singing. There are Christmas songs for everyone, Santa songs for the kids, Jingle Rock for the juveniles, music under the mistletoe for lovers and the traditional, timeless tunes for the family – all of these play a note worthy role in making the season so very special.

And on that note, remember the 'Grinch' and how he tried to steal Christmas. Yet despite him stealing every last crumb of Christmas from the 'Whos' – the one thing he could not steal from them was their singing! And it was their singing, that eventually melted the cold heart of the Grinch, made him bring back all he stole and join in the Christmas celebrations. In the end, amid all the bustle and noise of the season, it is the sound of carols and choirs singing, that best reminds us of the true reason for the season! May you enjoy a happy, holy and song filled Christmas.



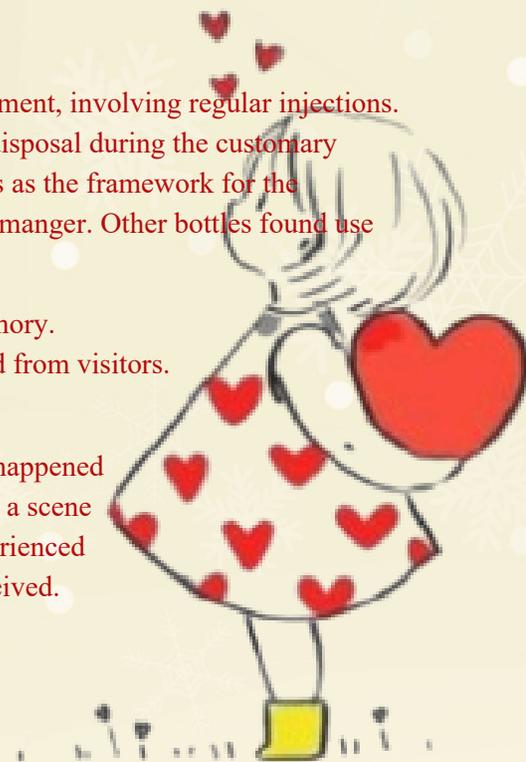
A special crib – 50 years ago

- Fr Luke Rodrigues s.j.

In 1975, our dad was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo intensive medical treatment, involving regular injections. Over the months, the empty injection bottles began to pile up and were earmarked for disposal during the customary pre-Christmas cleaning. Suddenly, one of us had the bright idea to use these tiny bottles as the framework for the family crib. The bottles were delicately glued to one another, making the structure of a manger. Other bottles found use as a fence for the whole scene.

From among all our cribs during childhood, this one stands out most vividly in my memory. Perhaps due to the creativity involved. Perhaps due to the warm appreciation it received from visitors. More likely because it was Daddy's last Christmas with us.

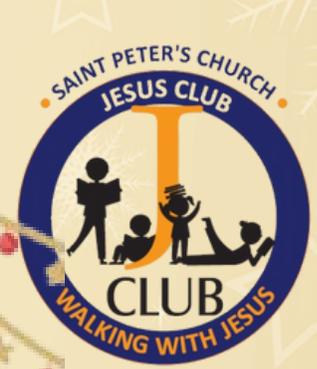
Daddy passed away during that Christmas season. I cannot remember what eventually happened to those injection bottles. But the image of that crib lingers in my mind. A crib portrays a scene situated in physical hardship, yet filled with divine love. Beyond the pain and loss experienced those days, what remains with me is the deep experience of the love and assistance received. Fifty years on, that experience still warms my heart. Love does not come to an end ...





CHRISTMAS

KINDNESS CALENDAR



Spread kindness.

Light up December by doing an act of kindness each day

<p>1</p> <p>Fold and put away the clothes</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Hug your parents "Just because...."</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Go through your toys and give one away</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Say Thank You to your house help/ watchman/ Amazon delivery man</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Send someone an encouraging text/ email</p> 
<p>6</p> <p>Sit with someone who's alone at lunch break</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Help grandma/ grandpa understand/ use their phones</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Help to decorate the house at Christmas</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Make a Christmas card for your teacher</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Say something appreciative to each family member</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Phone and chat with someone who lives alone</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Include a shy friend in an activity</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Tell 3 of your friends what you like about them.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Make a gratitude jar with someone.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Volunteer</p> 
<p>16</p> <p>Smile at someone new today</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Put away your books / toys / stationery</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Offer to carry someone's heavy bags</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Write something inspiring on your friend's Facebook page</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Water the plants</p>
<p>21</p> <p>Surprise someone with a simple meal</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>Collect notebooks for children at the Ashagad mission</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Go carol singing</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Take out the garbage</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Clear the table</p> 

Psst...Send in photos of any three kindness challenge activities you have done.

By: 24 December To: stpeterschurchkeystone@gmail.com in jpeg format. The first 3 submissions win a prize!

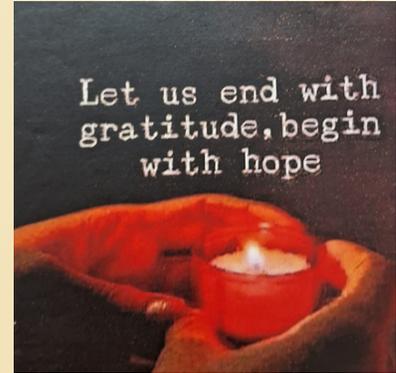


The beauty of December

December feels like a doorway - one foot in the past, the other in the future. It holds everything this year has been: the chaos, the quiet, the heartbreaks and the tiny victories that kept you going. It's heavy with memories but soft with the promise of something new.

Maybe December isn't about fixing what went wrong or rushing toward what's next. Maybe it's about breathing - about sitting with the year as it is, messy and beautiful in its way. It's about recognising the strength it took to make it through, even if all you did this year was survive.

2026 will come with its own rhythm, its own lessons, its own storms and sunshine. For now, let December be a time to honour how far you've come. To trust that even in the uncertainty, life is moving exactly as it should. Let it remind you that endings don't have to be rushed, and beginnings don't need to be perfect.



Gratitude

for the Gratitude jar! - Fr Luke Rodrigues s.j.



The Keystone issue of February 2024, explained how a gratitude jar could be a lovely way of marking our experiences in the new year. Intrigued by the idea, I decided to try it out. Right through the year 2024, I jotted down on a note the things that I was grateful for in the week gone by. This was done every Monday, with the date written for quick reference later on.

Every two months, I used a different coloured paper, thereby ensuring that it was easy to put all the notes in chronological order at the end of the year.

The following are the learnings from this exercise

1. There's much to be grateful for. All the nice things of the week could not be expressed on the note, so it was necessary to reflect a while and jot down the most significant ones.
2. Blessings are a free gift. Most of the beautiful moments experienced were not things that I had worked towards or merited. They came unexpectedly, as a reminder that my Creator is looking out for me.
3. Open up the blind spots. Halfway through the year, it dawned on me that only some areas of my life were reflected in the jottings while areas of difficulty did not feature in the gratitude moments. Were they really devoid of blessings? Or was I blind to the working of God's grace there? I made a special effort to go beyond the obvious and recognize the blessings present in difficult situations as well.

So ... it is quite easy to implement the 'Gratitude Jar' project. Give it a try, persevere for the first months, and you will be pleasantly surprised to discover how blessed you truly are.

This January start the year with an empty jar. Each week add a note with a good thing that happened.

On New Year's Eve empty the jar and read about the amazing year you had.

Joyfully celebrating our annual event

Christ the Eternal King



Wedding Bells



Webster Savio Alves & Thi Ngoc Yen Truong
Ashish Kohli & Georgina D'souza

106/108, Bazar Road
10, Boran Road



Returned to the Lord

Isabel D'monte	02.10.2025	10, Waroda Road
Walter Francis Condillac	06.10.2025	Rebello House, Hill Road
Flavia Mendes	10.10.2025	Pearl Croft, Turner Road
Agnes Anthony	11.10.2025	Gonsalves House, D'Monte Street
Fr. Anthony Victor D'souza s.j	16.10.2025	St. Peter's Church, Hill Road
Nascimento Pereira	24.10.2025	Sanna Villa, Bazar Cross Road
Ayleyne Juliet D'souza	30.10.2025	Victory Blocks, Hill Road
Percival Joseph Gomes	02.11.2025	Diana House, Bazar Road
Michael Cyril F. Mascarenhas	13.11.2025	Rebello House, Hill Road
Jessie Maria Coelho	14.11.2025	Rebello House, Hill Road
Sarita Fernandes	18.11.2025	Viegas Bldg., Station Road
Alexander Finton Lewis	20.11.2025	Rebello House, Hill Road
Rosy D'souza	22.11.2025	Waroda Road

We welcome your suggestions, if any.
Reach us on email
at
stpeterschurchkeys
tone@gmail.com