



St. Thomas Parish Goregaon East Newsletter

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Christmas is an attitude

December 25 is celebrated as the birthday of Jesus. God loved us so much that He wanted to give us the best gift. So He sent his only Son to earth, to be with us and teach us to live. He even died a death on the cross out of love for us. In this troubled world of hatred, wars, cheating, greed and jealousy, Jesus comes as the Prince of Peace. We see his life: teaching the people, telling them stories, healing the sick, providing food in the desert and loving them in so many different ways. In today's

world so full of bad news, let us like Jesus be a peacemaker in our own little ways. Yet this Prince was not born in a palace. He was born in poverty. At that time there was a census going on and everybody had to go to their own place to register. In those days there was no online registration; neither was there transport like we have today, so you can imagine how long the journey was and how uncomfortable. When Joseph and Mary finally arrived at their destination, Bethlehem, there was no place to stay. The only place they could find was a stable. So that's where Jesus was born.

The Angels informed the shepherds that the Savior was born. And they sang "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" i.e. 'Glory to God on high and peace to people of goodwill'. Besides the Shepherds some wise men came from the East bringing gifts for Jesus. This little baby brought joy to people. So Christmas is celebrated with a lot of joy—new clothes, sweets, people decorate their houses, make cribs to depict where Jesus was born, and make a special star as the wise men



followed a star to reach Jesus. People wish each other Merry Christmas and exchange gifts. Jesus did many things in life to make people happy. He loves us dearly. Whenever we do something to make people happy, we are imitating Jesus. Just as Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem to fulfill their civic duties, we too will fulfill our civic duties, when we exercise our right to vote.

We don't have to give people just cards and gifts. We can do a simple service for others, especially to the needy. We can forgive someone who has hurt us. We can remember to say 'thank you' to someone who has done us a favour. Besides, we can visit someone who is sick or lonely. We can do this any day and every day. Thus it will always be Christmas in our hearts.

A Happy and Holy Christmas and a love-filled New Year 2024!

-Sr. Bernadette Rodricks, dhM

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JOURNEYING LATE NIGHTS TO MELODIOUS HEIGHTS



The St. Paul's Bandra carol singing choir competition recently witnessed the remarkable journey of our nine dedicated choir members - Valerian, Simran, Nicole, Melzina, Valencia, Clare, Merrick and Sohan led by Ginelle. They displayed unwavering commitment and passion through their hard work and persistence during the elimination round held on Monday, December 18, 2023 which resulted in them making it to the top five out of the 17 competing teams from across Mumbai. This further culminated in a commendable achievement as they clinched the prestigious second prize in the finals on Tuesday,

December 19, 2023.

What made their success truly exceptional was their sheer determination, driven by a shared love for music which reflected in their relentless efforts every single day during each practice session. Their commitment knew no bounds, evident in

their routine of staying back late almost every day, striving for perfection in their harmonies and melodies.

The competition at St. Paul's Bandra became a stage for their synchronised voices and cohesive performance. The second-place victory stood as a testament to their resilience, talent and tireless dedication.

Their triumph didn't just signify an accolade but embodied the spirit of teamwork, determination and relentless pursuit of excellence.

Well done "Thomasian Voices"!

-Ginelle Gracias



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIT GETS TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE AS ONE FAMILY

Nothing strengthens the bond than a get-together with loved ones, which is vital for our unit's growth. The St. Francis Xavier Unit (Piramal Nagar) had a fun-filled get-together on December 10 in the school basement. We believe that being together and celebrating as a unit pours blessings upon those present, and the gathering is also a natural witness of God's goodness in our unit. The get-together was full of fun-filled activities for the whole family to enjoy, which included music, snacks, games, spot prizes, bingo, lunch, etc. This get-together was reviving and refreshing where all present, from children to senior citizens, and even priests from our parish



actively participated to make this day a memorable and grand affair.

The busy world today pulls our attention left and right, and a wonderful unit get-together helps each one of us as members of the unit to strengthen our bonds, refresh our memories, stay focused, and encourages us to plan for more activities for our unit.

We thank all members present for making this day a grand success. We hope to see more members join us for our upcoming activities.

-Valerie D'Silva

TOGETHER IN THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

St. Peter's unit, Peru Baug, came together to build a wonderful crib keeping with the message 'Born to love and transform the world'.

We thought of none other than Mother Teresa, who through Jesus Christ learned to love and transform many hearts across India and the world. Probably the best Christmas present we can give anyone is the good news that the one true God has come down to love, save, and help us.

We also had a Christmas Bazaar during the season inviting our dear parishioners to get into a festive mood. Lovely and delicious Christmas goodies were sold. Every member of the community spent this special season in the warm circle of family and friends.

-Keith Gonsalves



CLERGY HOME VISIT [MAHINDRA NAGAR]

It was a hot afternoon on September 30, but despite the heat, members from our community including senior citizens, youth and children all filled up into a van that took us to the Clergy home in Bandra.

Father Leslie, who had coordinated the visit, gave us a meticulous introduction to each of the priests en-route, so before we met them we already knew a bit about them.

Sr Veronica was very welcoming and the gratitude that we were shown was overwhelming. We were expecting the fathers to be frail and weak but they were full of life and humour.

We had loads of fun as the youth played old songs and conducted games with props like hula hoops, balls and an umbrella.

Everyone competed and did their best and cheered for their friends.



We had gone to entertain them but ended up being entertained ourselves.

We certainly had more fun than the Fathers did and everyone wanted another chance to visit. The youth who came along were so happy to serve, a request was put by them to keep the visit every year

-Brian Monteiro

OUR FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

A Christmas celebration is incomplete without singing and playing Christmas carols. On December 16th, our community held a carol singing event. Many people, including elders, parents with their children and grandchildren, sang carols in various societies in our community, spreading Christmas cheer to everyone.

In the heart of our close-knit community, a



spectacular Christmas crib was created as a symbol of unity and creativity. It was crafted by a group of unlikely collaborators: teenagers, young mothers, and elders. What initially began as a simple idea became a testament to the power of intergenerational cooperation. With the guidance of



experienced individuals and the youthful enthusiasm of teenagers, the scene came to life.

The teenagers infused modern flair into the traditional crib, while the mothers added delicate touches of warmth and love. The elders, with their "time-honoured" wisdom, supervised and shared stories of Christmases past. The result is a mesmerising display that not only captures the essence of the season but also showcases the richness of our community spirit. When visitors admire this unique creation, they can feel the collective pride of a community that comes together to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas - "Born to love and transform the world".

-Lorraine Sequeira

DEANERY CAROL FESTIVAL



beautifully draped white and red stoles with Santa caps that added to their stunning looks. The children were well trained by the choir mistress Ginelle and Tr. Jennifer. After the performance the children and teachers present were treated to a yummy pizza and cake arranged by our Parish.

The Deanery Carol Festival was hosted at our very own St. Thomas Church on December 17, 2023, to keep the Christmas spirit alive.

Children from parishes belonging to the Goregaon Deanery - St. Joseph Parish (Gokuldharm) & Rosary Parish (Goregaon-west) along with St. Thomas Parish - participated and captivated the audience with their angelic voices & lovely performances!

18 children of our parish participated, wearing

St Thomas children also received yummy chocolates from Fr Nelson.

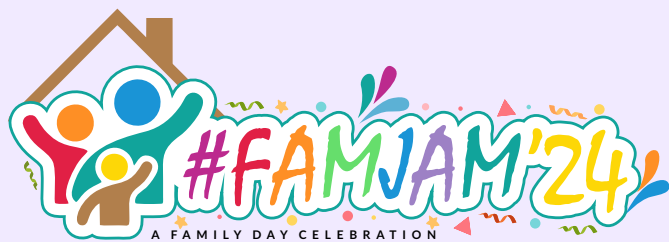
Sincere thanks to Fr. Nelson, Fr. Leslie, Fr. Joe



and Mrs. Anna for helping out in the arrangements for the singing, supporting and encouraging the future generation of our parish to rise and shine before all. Overall the event reminded us that Jesus is the reason for this season!

-Jennifer Stevens





A CELEBRATION OF FAMILY AND TOGETHERNESS

FamJam'24, an eagerly awaited family day celebration, turned out to be a vibrant and colourful evening that brought not just individual families but our family of parishioners together for an evening of fun, dance and dining. The event, held on Saturday, January 6, on the school grounds, witnessed more than 450 people attend and featured a diverse range of entertainment activities catering to all age groups. The theme for this year was 'Match your outfits'. It was all about getting on to the twinning trend and matching with your family members. Families put their best fashion forward with interesting twinning ideas. The event also featured a photo booth with colourful novelties, allowing families to capture those joyous moments and create lasting memories.

Able, our compere for the evening, ensured active participation from every member, encouraging them to dance to their heart's delight, or at least until they were tired. Families enjoyed quality time together, fostering bonds in a lively and welcoming atmosphere. The evening ended with a scrumptious meal by Chris Caterers, leaving each and everyone not just entertained but well fed. The organisers and parish council members deserve a special mention for putting together such a fantastic event. The priests of the parish, Fr's Nelson, Leslie, Joseph, and Bro Anand also played a vital role in making the event a grand success.

-Melita Menezes





CHILDREN CHOIR CAROL SINGING

The children's choir had a special opportunity this year to sing for the Christmas Eve vigil mass for the first time. After a fantastic performance at the deanery, Fr. Leslie gave the choir the chance to sing a few carols during the Christmas Eve mass. Everyone was excited as it was the first time the children's choir would be part of a festive mass celebration. On the day, we wore Santa caps and sang carols like Jingle Bell Rock and 12 Days of Christmas before and after the mass. With the parishioners cheering us on and our parents proud, it was a special night for us to remember. On behalf of the children's choir, I would like to thank Fr. Leslie for his continuous support, along with Fr. Nelson and Fr. Joe. Special thanks to Ginelle and Jennifer, our teachers who trained and guided us to sing better. I am proud to be a part of the children's choir,



which has become very lively and has given me the opportunity to learn new hymns. We look forward to singing every year on Christmas Eve. Season's greetings to everyone, and have a wonderful year ahead.

-Kimberly Menezes (On behalf of St. Thomas Children's Choir)

ST ANNE COMMUNITY [SUNDER NAGAR]

In October, members of St. Anne's Community gathered every evening for the first 15 days to recite the Holy Rosary in honor of Mother Mary. Each decade was dedicated to different intentions and families provided dinners after the Rosary. The community members mingled with each other and felt like one family.

In December 2023, we visited the Assisi Bhavan Old Age Home, which is known for taking care of old women who have been abandoned by their children. The visit took place during Christmas, and the community members made an effort to bring joy to the old women. Carolers sang songs, Santa danced and pranced around, and each of the old women received a gift. The event was memorable and will be remembered for a long time.

-Jyoti Lobo



ST FRANCIS XAVIER FEAST

For the second time we celebrated the feast of St. Francis Xavier on December 3 at St Thomas Church in a solemn Eucharist at 7pm by our Parish Priest, Fr. Nelson Saldanha, in Konkani. The parishioners gathered in large numbers to give praise and glory to God for the gift of St. Francis Xavier, fondly called Goencho Saib, to our country India and the patron of our Archdiocese. The choir with their melodious singing helped the faithful lift their hearts in perfect prayer to the Almighty Lord through the intercession of St. Francis Xavier. Fr. Nelson presented in short the life of St. Francis Xavier and challenged the congregation to follow in his footsteps.

After mass mostly all present were treated to a piece of cake and those registered moved to the school quadrangle to join in the festivities. All present were served cake and wine and joined in the feast March, followed by a group game and spot prizes, and snacks. Everyone as best as they could participated in the dance session to some well-known Konkani numbers. The sale of sannas and mouth watering sorpotel brought excitement to this celebration. After the vote of thanks and words of appreciation by Fr. Nelson all present joined in the truly festive dinner carrying home memories of an evening well spent.

-Jennifer Stevens



THOMASIAN CHRISTMAS BAZAAR:

On December 17, the Thomasian Christmas Bazaar transformed our parish into a vibrant celebration of the season, where all the units of our parish came together and put up a variety of delightful Christmas snacks and decorations. The event drew a large crowd, with parishioners eagerly supporting the vibrant units. The bazaar, adorned with festive decorations, showcased homemade Christmas sweets and spices and savoury snacks. The delicious aroma of freshly baked items filled the air, adding to the warm and inviting ambiance. The day's highlight was a surprise visit from Santa Claus, who brought joy to children and adults alike. Dressed in his red suit, Santa distributed chocolates, creating a festive and cheerful atmosphere. Families and friends gathered to patronise each stall, creating a sense of unity and togetherness within the parish. The event was a simple yet heartwarming celebration of Christmas, leaving lasting memories for all who attended. St. Thomas Christmas Bazaar was not just a marketplace but a joyful expression of community spirit and the true meaning of the season.

-Sharol Menezes



A FESTIVE FIESTA



BORIVALI DEANERY SCC RALLY 2024

On 7th January 2024, the Borivali Deanery S.C.C Rally was held on the school grounds of St. Thomas Parish. The event started at 6 pm and saw the participation of 15 parishes, with the theme of “Hearts on Fire - S.C.C's on the Move”. The event began with inviting the dignitaries: Bishop Barthol Barretto, Fr. Nelson Saldanha, and Dean Saby Fernandes on stage. Each coordinator marched with their Church Flags, representing their respective parishes. This was followed by lighting the Samai and unveiling the backdrop, conveying the message - “No one in Want”. Dean Saby Fernandes gave the welcome note, and St. Thomas Parish kick-started the event with the Welcome song. Other parishes followed with skits, dance performances and action songs. Bishop Barthol was felicitated during the event and shared some vital thoughts on the Rally. He bid farewell to all as he now embarks on his journey of yet another important role as Bishop of Nashik Archdiocese. During the break time, appetizing snacks were served, and diaries were distributed to all the priests present. Lucky draw winners were awarded prizes. The Rally was well attended by 900 plus Coordinators and Animators and concluded with a Vote of thanks by Fr. Nelson. The entire logistics, ground arrangements, snacks coordination, and ushering were efficiently managed by the St. Thomas Parish Team. The Rally concluded at 9 pm with a lot of memories, on the move, for the years to come.

- Loretta Silveira
S.C.C Co-ordinator

