"My heart rejoices in the Lord for He has shown His faithfulness and steadfast love for me."

The last eight months have been filled with graces and challenges. I express my sincere gratitude to our Provincial and his Consultors for their trust in appointing me as the Province’s youth co-ordinator. I am grateful to all of you, dear fathers and brothers, for your encouragement and prayers.

We are entrusted with the task of ACCOMPANYING young people as they build their lives for today and tomorrow. Nelson Mandela said ‘The youth of a country are a valued possession of a nation. Without them, there can be no future.’

Accompanying the young means two things: believe in the young and be present among them. They need people who express trust in them and who can live with them without anxiety, sincerely believing that they are capable of noble acts and never considering them as ‘half empty glass’ but as ‘half full glass’ with great energy and potential. This is a basic attitude that one needs in order to journey with them. We are constantly challenged to imitate the Good Shepherd who ‘came up and walked by their side’!

The ministry of accompanying the youth in our Province, and being their advocate, is yet to create its own identity and structure. It is high time that we reach out to young people in our Telugu States for their empowerment. I draw inspiration from Antoine de-Saint-Exupery: ‘If you want to build a boat, don’t begin by looking for wood, cutting boards or distributing the work. First you must evoke in men the yearning for the wide and free ocean.’ I sincerely believe that there is already a deep yearning and wide ocean to satisfy our thirst in serving the youth. I earnestly pray that we march on with bigger dreams and plans for the well being and growth of our youth.

"The foundation of every state is the education of its youth." - Diogenes

"Our primary focus of the ministry has been ‘psycho, spiritual and social accompaniment.’"

This newsletter titled YESJ ECHOES is an humble attempt to reflect on our mission and on the activities and programmes that have been carried out from January 2016 up to the month of August 2016. This is our first edition and we plan to publish it every four months, hence forth. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Watch out!

Your suggestions and comments are most welcome for its enhancement.
A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. We have started and we are on the way. I should like to tell you how we set out, where we plan to go, and whom we would like to take with us.

The Youth Empowerment Service – Jesuits (YESJ) is our new brand name. It emerges after much thought, prayer, discernment and discussion about how the Jesuit presence could give the most benefit to young people striving to find their rightful place in our society. Our vision includes psychological, spiritual and social support through accompaniment, engagement and education. It elucidates the vision, mission, target groups, and the intended programmes. During the recent Commission Coordinators session with Fr General, Fr Bala Bollineni had the privilege of presenting the vision of YESJ to them. Fr General had also kindly launched the Logo and website for YESJ. It is officially up in running now. Please feel free to log on to www.yesj.org to know more details.

"Youth is wasted on the young." - G B Shaw
So far Fr Bala visited all the Jesuit parishes except for Krishnapuram and Hindupur and also conducted camps in some of the parishes. In collaboration with our Parish Priests we have collected the basic data of the exiting youth of our parishes. The data reveals that most of our young men and women are engaged in some form of studies. Truly, it is a welcoming and heartwarming finding. Since they are studying in various boardings, their availability is restricted only to the time of vacation. Hence, the programmes are targeted accordingly.

**Gudlavalleru:** On 15th of January 2016, a day’s programme on *The importance of youth in the context of a community* was conducted. Rapport with the youth was built up.

Also on 14th to 15th August, 2016, we organized two day workshop on *Youth Leadership*. At the end of the camp, the Parish Youth Team is formed. They call their group as GUD YESJ. Thankful to Fr Mathew Neerakal for his constant support and enthusiasm in accompanying the vibrant youth of the parish.

**Amalapuram:** On 27th January 2016 Fr Bala, SJ had a session with the youth of Amalapuram and listened to their hopes and expectations. He also shared his vision for them to be more vibrant and life giving youth for today. Grateful to Fr Sandanasamy, the then PP and the community for their warm hospitality and encouragement to work with the youth.

"It takes a very long time to become young." - Pablo Picasso
Vinukonda, Sivapuram and Kondramutla: From 14th to 17th of Feb and also from 10th to 27th of March, Fr Bala had the privilege of doing pastoral ministry besides meeting the youth of the above mentioned parishes. During our visits to the villages we encouraged them to go for ‘Tailoring course’ which was conducted by VRO and also the ‘English Camp’ for rural youth at Darsi.

YESJ expresses a deep sense of gratitude to Fr. Augustine the Mission Superior of Vinukonda, and also the Parish Priests of Sivapuram- Fr Prakash, Kondramutla - Former PP - Fr Vatti Joji and the present PP - Fr Prasad, Darsi - Fr Peter Peram and the communities for their kind hospitality and cooperation.

Shantinagar: Visited the parish from 5th to 7th April 2016. Also one day ‘Leadership Camp’ was conducted on 22nd May 2016. YESJ is grateful for Fr T Balasamy’s welcome and openness for youth work.

"You are only young once, but you can stay immature indefinitely." - Ogden Nash
PARISHES AND PROGRAMMES

LA, Alwal: Met up with the youth of St Francis Xavier Youth at Loyola Academy on 28th Feb and shared the plans to accompany the group. The group in turn had shared their enthusiasm and eagerness to build up an active youth group in the parish.

On 17th July, one day Youth Leadership Camp was conducted and at the end of the day 'SFX YESJ' parish youth team was formed. The leadership team was elected. Kudos to the team and a big thank you to Fr Santiago, the PP.

Seethampeta: From 15th to 18th April 2016 Fr Bala spent time visiting the villages and meeting the youth. He also had a morning session with the youth of parish at parish centre and encouraged them to come forward to be more active and to make use of the opportunities that come their way. YESJ is thankful to Fr N Kishore’s hospitality and positive response for greater collaboration in organizing more programmes for tribal youth.

Karimnagar Deanery:
Fr Bala conducted a seminar on 4th May 2016 for 190 youth of Karimnagar Deanery on the topic ‘The Problems of Youth Today and the Possible Ways to Deal with Them.’
Thanks to our Fr. Sagayaraj for the invitation.

"Youth needless critics and more models." - Thomas S. Monson
ENGLISH COACHING CLASSES
[FOR RURAL YOUTH]

YESJ is very pleased to bring to your kind attention that conducting three week residential English coaching classes for the rural youth of our Vinukonda, Kondramutla, Sivapuram and Darsi missions organized as part of our youth ministry Youth Empowering Service-Jesuits (YESJ) reaped good results in infusing confidence in 40 young people to listen, speak, write and read English. The camp also helped them to develop their self-worth and self-identity. We had 40 young people of various backgrounds attending this camp from 30th April to 20th May. Their level of English was very poor. Most of them gave their best and had gone home with lot of enthusiasm and confidence in themselves. The performances of three small skits in English, reciting English Prayers and inspirational passages and three of them sharing their camp experiences in English (of course, there were many mistakes) are a clear indication that they have grown for something better.

We are glad that both the inauguration and the closing ceremony was covered in the local print media and the initiative of Jesuits was very much appreciated by the locals.

YESJ thanks Frs. Francis Xavier, Raju and Rex Angelo for inspiring the students with their presence and brief interaction.

YESJ owes a great deal to Darsi Community - Frs. Peter Peram, Suresh and Gandhi, Sch. Vijay and Sr. Caroline for their fullest cooperation and support in hosting us. They have been very magnanimous. We have also been blessed with a good team in running this camp. We are very thankful to Mr. Babu, Mr. Rajesh, Mr. Siddiah and Mr. Vijay (Jesuit Candidate) for standing by us through out.

YESJ is deeply grateful for the great services of the helping staff of the campus, Mr. Anthony and his wife, Mr Raju, Mrs. Vijayamma and others.

Thank you dear Parish Priests of Vinukonda missions for your support and collaboration in encouraging the youth.

We express our deep sense of gratitude to Fr. PS Amal, our Provincial for his accompaniment and support in reaching out to this youth to learn, to have fun and to grow together.

"If you are young and talented, it’s like you have wings." - Haruki Murakami.
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

YESJ also reaches out to various schools and colleges on invitation to conduct seminars and camps in the area of personality development, soft skills, social skills, and retreats for students and teachers who accompany the young minds.

The outreach so far has been:

* Seminar for 110 nurses of St Ann’s Nursing College, Malkapuram, Vizag themed ‘Dealing with Stress and Burn out in Care-giving Profession’ on 20th April 2016.

* Talk on ‘The role of parents in accompanying their children effectively’ for Parents of St Mary’s School, Narasaropet on 25th April 2016.

* Teachers’ Orientation for SMC School staff of 30 at Pedavegi on 7th June 2016

* Teachers’ Orientation for St Francis English Medium School staff of 60 at Machilipatnam on 10th June 2016.

* Seminar on ‘Habits Formation and Motivation’ for 200 students of JMJ Degree College students, Tenali on 14th June 2016.

"The secret of remaining young is never to have an emotion that is unbecoming." - Oscar Wilde
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

* Camp on **Motivation** to 310 students of St Rock’s Girls High School, Bangalore from **17th to 18th June** 2016.

* One day seminar for BED, DED staff and students on *‘What type of teacher are you and the role of a teacher in present day education scenario’* conducted at St Joseph’s BED College, Guntur on **5th July** 2016. There were 140 participants.

* One day **orientation** was conducted for the staff of JMJ Junior College, Nallapadu on **07th July** 2016.

* On **21st of July** the students of St Anthony’s School, Vijayawada had a seminar on the *‘Importance of Goals for Life’*.

* Nirmala High School Children of Machilipatnam were motivated according to the classes on the topic *‘Goal Setting’* from **08th to 09th July** 2016.

"Youth is easily deceived because it is quick to hope."  - Aristotle
Fr Jojayya for the past 45 years with utmost dedication and commitment has been involved in conducting leadership camps for students of various schools. I deem it a great blessing to assist this simple and humble Jesuit of 84 yrs old and accompany him in conducting the camps. In spite of not being so well with his mobility, by sheer will power and determination he takes me around for the camps and introduces me to the long tradition of empowering the young minds to be better citizens of this country. He cannot but be admired. **So far we have conducted camps at:**

- **St Theresa’s High School, Vissannapet** from 17th to 19th June 2016.
- **Fr Bianchi English Medium School, Gudivada** from 29th to 30th June 2016.
- **Nirmala and Loyola High School, Vinukonda** from 08th to 10th July 2016.
- **Nirmala High School, Machilipatnam**, from 13th to 16 July 2016.
- **St Mary's High School, Bhimavaram**, from 03rd to 06th August 2016.
- **St Ann's High School, Nuzividu**, from 17th to 18th August 2016.
- **Nirmala High School, Dornakal**, from 23rd to 24th August 2016.

"I just want to be someone, to mean something to anyone..." - Charlotte Eriksson
Part of its mission to reach out to the youth, YESJ provides volunteer opportunities to people (18 yrs old onwards) from local and abroad through Voluntary Immersion Programme (VIP). VIP provides placements in communities of all sizes, from rural villages to big cities, so you could be living in either an urban or rural setting. The volunteers usually stay with the local religious community and share in their mission work.

Accommodation will vary depending on location, but wherever you are staying we will make sure it is safe and has all the basic amenities you need. However, it is important that you are prepared for basic living conditions and are adaptable to those conditions.

The immersion experiences are aimed towards a lasting impact, both on local communities and on individual volunteers. VIP enables you to challenge yourself, experience another culture and develop an attitude of being ‘GRATEFUL’. The acceptance of the other with respect and being open minded to learn and give is what VIP works towards.

Ms. Gloria from Austria has made avail of this opportunity and spent few months in India. YESJ is deeply grateful to Fr Pramod in Jesu Ashram, Fr Jose Mathew in THARA and Frs. C J John, Dhanapal, Sundar at Samdarshini Community, Frs Alex, Selvam and sisters at Krishnapuram for their support and hospitality for Ms. Gloria.
‘My first destination was Jesu Ashram, a hospital where I worked for one month. After that I went to Hyderabad for one week and worked at Tara, an orphanage for street children. Then I went to Krishna Puram, a little village where I worked at a school as a teacher.

India offers you a new lesson every day. I was impressed by the totally different mentality and perspective on life that people in India have. I admired their ability to be satisfied and content with what they have. They are happy to have a family that they love and to have food on the table. We should be like this instead of being jealous of other people’s lives.

Another thing I noticed is that, whether they are Hindu, Christian or Muslim, their everyday life has a spiritual focus. They believe in something bigger and that makes the small things so beautiful and strong. We people from Europe seem to forget we are here for. What sense our life has or should have. We just live for our pleasure and hope to die happily and old.

Another great experience was the totally different lifestyle I had there. No Internet, no phone, hand washing cutting vegetables on the floor, jumping into a driving bus filled with 200 people, bargaining for absolutely everything, and walking on the streets wishing not to be noticed. All those things we take for granted in Europe is considered Luxury in India. From the washing machine and the shower to the infrastructure and the health-system.

It was challenging to leave a place once you got to know the people and started to settle in. Every time I left one place and arrived at a new one, I had to introduce myself, tell my story, and get to know new people. On the other hand that’s what it makes it so adventurous.

Likewise it wasn’t easy to be confronted with such poverty and misery without showing my feelings. I tried to show interest and talk to them and didn’t want them to think I am someone better or special just because I am white.

Going to India was the best decision I had in my life. I learned and experienced so much and I got so many stories to tell and pictures marked in my brain that I will remember for the rest of my life. I went to India with the ambition to help. When I came back I realized that India helped me.

I am deeply thankful Fr Bala and to the Voluntary Immersion Program that made this time possible and I recommend it to all the young people that want to travel abroad to gain experiences and discover the beauty of India. I would always do it again! THANK YOU!!’

"Youthfulness is about how you live and not when you were born." - Karl Logerfeld
100 yard dash: A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back every one of them. One girl with Down’s Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, “This will make it better.” Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.

"Who is a true winner for you?"

Interviewer said “I shall either ask you ten easy questions or one really difficult question. Think well before you make up your mind!” The boy thought for a while and said, My choice is one really difficult question. Well, good luck to you, you have made your own choice! Now tell me this.

“What comes first, Day or Night?”

The boy was jolted into reality as his admission depends on the correctness of his answer, but he thought for a while and said, “It’s the DAY sir!”

“How ?” the interviewer asked,

“Sorry sir, you promised me that you will not ask me a SECOND difficult question!”

He was selected for IIM!

"Presence of mind takes you a long way in life."