

# Nasara

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## The R. C. Mission of Afghanistan Newsletter

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عید میلاد ۲۰۱۸ میلادی

### THE DESIRED OF ALL THE NATIONS

This year I sent you my digital Christmas greetings quoting a sentence from the prophet Haggai: *Ecce veniet Desideratus cunctis gentibus* (“Behold, the Desired of all the nations will come”). If you look up this sentence in your Bible, you will not find it. Most probably you will read, “All the *treasures* of all the nations will come in” (Hg 2:7) or something like that. Reading the modern translations of this verse, it seems as if Saint Jerome, translating it from Hebrew to Latin, made a mistake or committed an abuse, as he wanted at all costs to give a messianic interpretation to a text which was without it. Actually, the Hebrew word now rendered with “treasures” literally means “desire” or “object of desire.” The *King James Version* did correctly translate this verse, “The desire of all the nations shall come.” So, Saint Jerome, using the word *desideratus*—“the Desired”—and giving to it a messianic interpretation, did not force the meaning of the original text; he faithfully rendered it into Latin and gave it a possible and legitimate interpretation. It is instead the modern translators that, rendering with “treasures,” put a personal interpretation of the original text. Fortunately, what the Biblical scholars have excluded from the modern versions of the Bible, has been preserved for us by the liturgy. This text is used as Communion Antiphon on December 17 and as one of the Antiphons at the First Vespers of the Fourth Sunday of Advent. We find it again in the Antiphon at the *Magnificat* on December 22: *O Rex gentium et desideratus earum* (“O King of the nations and their desire”).

The latter antiphon reminds us of an important truth: Jesus Christ is not only the *Messiah of Israel*; he is also the *King of all the nations*. He has come into the world to save not only the Jews, but the whole human race. And, as Jesus Christ was expected for ages by the Israelites, so he was desired by all the peoples from the beginning. Maybe, most of the time, without even knowing. But there has always been in the heart of each man a desire for salvation. And that desire was satisfied with the incarnation of the Son of

God. We find the embodiment of that desire in the Magi coming from the East—from here, from these regions—in search of the King of the Jews. What did they have to do with the King of the Jews? It would seem nothing; but in reality, they were looking for the One who was not only the King of the Jews, but also their King.

The same desire keeps being present in the heart of every man even nowadays. Not only Christians are waiting for the coming of Jesus on Christmas; all men desire him, even though often unconsciously. Christmas is a feast day not only for Christians, but for all humanity. Christ is coming not only for us, but for all. *Even for the Afghans!* He is the Savior of the world. Let us welcome him as the One whom we have always desired and awaited. He stands at the door and knocks. Let us open the door, so that he may enter and dine with us and we with him.

(From Fr. John’s homily on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2018)



# GIVE PEACE A CHANCE: JRS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

“JRS taught me English, starting with the alphabet!” Tabasum has come a long way since learning her letters. Within a few years, she became an English teacher and dreams of studying political science. Tabasum was lucky because she met JRS (*Jesuit Refugee Service*), which since 2005 has worked closely with government, civil society, and local communities to enhance access to education especially for girls, forcibly displaced persons and returnees.

JRS engagement in education is wide-ranging. This year, JRS has trained over 14,000 children and youth, through projects in Kabul, Herat, Bamiyan and Daikundi. To address the challenge of the lack of qualified teachers, we conduct teacher training, focusing on micro-teaching and language skills. We teach and guide research studies in universities, and have been actively involved in building institutional and human resource capacity of the Herat Technical Institute and the National Institute for Management and Administration in Kabul.

For students, we organize English language and computer courses, as well as vocational skills training; and prepare grade XII students for the national pre-university Konkur exams. We conduct intensive winter training programs when schools and universities are closed for vacation. We organize workshops on education, healthcare, leadership, and peace-building. Since 2013, JRS offers on-site-online Certificate and Diploma higher education courses in partnership with international Jesuit universities.

As we press ahead, a dual approach can be discerned: one aim is to create tomorrow’s leaders, encouraging young people to flourish by building their capacity and confidence. The means: formation in leadership and peace-building; teacher-training; English language classes; technical and vocational skills. Tabasum and others like her show that this approach is bearing fruit, as they swell the teachers’ ranks, eager to share what they freely received.

The other prong of the JRS strategy is reaching out to children on the margins, living in neglected and remote areas, who otherwise would stand no chance of going to school. “I wanted to learn English but my family couldn’t afford to pay my fees at a private institute. Then I heard that JRS was going to start a project in my township. It was my dream come true,” says Shamsi, a returnee from Iran.

Just outside Kabul, JRS teaches English to street children in a day centre and to displaced children in two in-



formal settlements. Nearly 34,000 people live in some 52 such settlements in and around the city; most fled their home provinces because of insecurity and poverty. “We left Paktia Province because of fighting,” says 11-year-old Bebi Juma. “We couldn’t study or go to school because girls were not permitted to study. My father could not work and we had nothing to eat so we decided to leave our village and come to Kabul.” In their new home, disease and malnutrition are common, access to safe drinking water is rare and there is no insulation to protect them from freezing winters. But they feel better off: “Here we are happy that we can study and my father can work. I come to JRS classes at 7 am every day. I have learnt the Dari and English alphabet. I want to be a teacher.”

As we look forward to the New Year with hope, I would like to share Fr. Prem’s special message to our JRS students soon after his miraculous release in 2015: “Afghanistan has great potential and is blessed — 30 million people, a vast land with lots of resources. So I urge you to use all the opportunities that come your way to get empowered. You need to become agents of peace, to study, teach and inspire others, taking leadership and contributing to rebuild your country.” May our celebration of Christmas draw us to connect people from diverse backgrounds to work together for peace and reconciliation, for positive change, for sustainable development, and for respect of the human rights of all.

—Stan Fernandes, S.J.





# LATEST NEWS

## SR. TERESIA'S ARRIVAL

On November 1, Sr. TERESIA CRASTA, SCCG arrived in Kabul, to join the religious community of the PBK Center. She hails from Bela, Kasaragod District, Kerala State, India. Even though her native place is in Kerala, from an ecclesiastical point of view, it belongs to the Diocese of Mangalore (which is in Karnataka). Their language is not Malayalam (the language of Kerala), but Konkani (the language of Goa and the western coast of India). Sr. Teresia belongs to the Sisters of Charity (SCCG), a big Congregation founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Sts. Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa (in Italy, known as *Suore di Maria Bambina*). She made her first profession in 1993 (this year it was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of it!) and made her final vows in 1999. Before coming to Afghanistan Sr. Teresia worked for 14 years in a rehabilitation center in Mangalore. She is a special educator and trained nurse; so, she is fit for her new service with the developmental delay children at the PBK Center. *Welcome, Sr. Teresia!*



## SR. MARIAMMAL'S DEPARTURE

On November 29, Sr. MARIAMMAL IRUDAYASAMI, FSMP left Kabul, after five years and a half of service at the PBK Center. Sr. Mariammal, an Indian from Tamil Nadu, had arrived in Afghanistan in 2013. She belongs to the Daughters of Saint Mary of Providence (FMSP), aka *Guanellian Sisters*. Now she has been assigned to the community of her Congregation in Bangalore, Karnataka, India. We bade her farewell on Sunday, November 25. *Thank you, Sr. Mariammal, for your service and all the best for your new assignment!*

## *Hoping against Hope*

*It has not been a peaceful month, that just elapsed, in Afghanistan. Without considering the rest of the country, in Kabul alone there were several heinous attacks: on November 20, the eve of the Prophet's birthday, a suicide bomber attacked a religious gathering at the Uranus Wedding Hall, killing 55 people and injuring more than 60 people; on November 28, the compound of G4S security agency was attacked after a car bomb was detonated outside (10 dead and 19 injured); on the afternoon of December 24, Christmas Eve, an hours-long gun and suicide attack on a government compound killed at least 43 people and injured 25. More than 100 dead and as many injured in one month. It is not a reassuring toll.*

*And yet lately positive signals have not been missing: the Parliamentary Elections (on October 20); several meetings, within the country and abroad, aimed at restoring peace; the willingness of the Taliban to talks; the intense diplomatic activity of the Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad; the announcement of a partial withdrawal of the American troops.*

*What to do? To look to the future with confidence or with apprehension? To be optimistic or pessimistic? Abraham believed, hoping against hope (Rom 4:18). So do we.*

*The Catholic news agencies keep being interested in Afghan vicissitudes. Recently they have interviewed more than once Father John, who is the only official Catholic representative in the country, about the latest events. Here below you can find a list of the interviews (they are all in Italian, but some of them have been translated also into English):*

Il Barnabita a Kabul: "I Talebani sconfitti alle elezioni, il desiderio di pace è più forte delle bombe": *Agenzia Fides*, 29 October 2018

Italiano: <http://www.fides.org/it/news/64999>  
English: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/64999>

Voto in Afghanistan. P. Scalese (Kabul): "Dalle urne è uscita la voglia di democrazia, di rinnovamento e di pulizia": *Agenzia SIR*, 29 October 2018

<https://www.agensir.it/mondo/2018/10/29/voto-in-afghanistan-p-scalese-kabul-dalle-urne-e-uscita-la-voglia-di-democrazia-di-rinnovamento-e-di-pulizia/>

Voto in Afghanistan: "desiderio di pace e democrazia": *Vatican News*, 31 October 2018 (with podcast)

<https://www.vaticannews.va/it/mondo/news/2018-10/voto-in-afghanistan-desiderio-di-pace-e-democrazia.html>

P. Scalese: "La via del dialogo è l'unica percorribile per il futuro del paese": *Agenzia Fides*, 5 November 2018

Italiano: <http://www.fides.org/it/news/65023>  
English: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/65023>

Avvento e Natale in un paese in guerra da 40 anni: *Agenzia Fides*, 20 December 2018

Italiano: <http://www.fides.org/it/news/65291>  
English: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/65291>

Afghanistan: p. Scalese, un Natale di testimonianza per i cristiani: *Vatican News*, 25 December 2018 (with podcast)

<https://www.vaticannews.va/it/chiesa/news/2018-12/afghanistan-scalese-natale-testimonianza-cristiani.html>

Natale in Afghanistan: padre Scalese (Kabul) al Sir, "afghani stanchi di questa interminabile guerra": *Agenzia SIR*, 26 December 2018

<https://www.agensir.it/mondo/2018/12/26/natale-in-afghanistan-padre-scalese-kabul-al-sir-afghani-stanchi-di-questa-interminabile-guerra/>

# DAILY, WEEKLY, MONTHLY & YEARLY SCHEDULE

## HOLY MASS

**Everyday, at 5:30 pm**

**On Saturdays**, the anticipated Sunday Mass is celebrated, whereby the obligation can be satisfied.

## DEVOTIONS

### *Weekly & Monthly Devotions*

**Every Friday, at 5 pm: Eucharistic Adoration**

**On the first Friday of the month**, the adoration takes on a character of reparation and the litany of the Sacred Heart is recited.

**During Lent**, the Eucharistic Adoration is replaced by the "Way of the Cross."

**On the first Saturday of the month, at 5 pm: Holy Rosary**

### *Annual Devotions*

**January 1: Chant of the *Veni Creator***

**January 18-25: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

**March 16-18: Triduum to St. Joseph**

**Month of May: Chant of the Litany of the BVM**

**Ascension to Pentecost: Novena to the Holy Spirit**

**July 2-4: Triduum to St. Anthony M. Zaccaria**

**August 6-14: Novena to O. L. of Assumption**

**Thu. to Sat. before the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun. of November: Triduum to O. L. of Divine Providence**

**Nov. 27 – Dec. 8: "Crown of Twelve Stars" – Chant of the *Tota Pulchra***

**December 16-24: Christmas Novena**

**December 31: Chant of the *Te Deum***

## MASS INTENTIONS

Mass is usually offered for some specific intention.

As a rule, on Sundays, Mass is celebrated for the people (*pro populo*).

On weekdays, the faithful can ask that Mass be offered for their own intentions, either for the living or for the dead.

In accordance with the approved custom of the Church, the request is usually accompanied with an offering, whereby the faithful contribute to the good of the Church, supporting its ministers and activities.

In our Mission, the approximate offering for a Mass is either **10 USD** or **10 EUR** or **500 AFS**.

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The Roman Catholic  
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The INDEPENDENT MISSION OF AFGHANISTAN (*Missio sui juris Afghanistaniensis*) is a jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church, immediately subject to the Holy See, covering the whole territory of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It is a "particular church"—that is to say, a portion of the people of God—likened to a Diocese (Can. 368). By the law itself, it possesses juridical personality (Can. 373). It was established by the Holy See on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, 2002 and entrusted to the care of the ORDER OF CLERICS REGULAR OF SAINT PAUL—BARNABITES (CRSP). It is presided by an Ecclesiastical Superior (*Superior ecclesiasticus*), who acts as the Local Ordinary (Can. 134 §2).