



# The Flying Squirrel

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« *Fraternitatem Diligite* » (Love Brotherhood) - 1 Peter 2:17

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*"How beautiful it is for a grey head to have judgment, and for elders to know counsel! How beautiful it is for those who are aged to have wisdom, and for those who are honored to have understanding and counsel! Great experience is the crown of the aged, and the fear of God is their glory" (Ecclesiasticus 25:6-8).*

*"In old age is wisdom, and in length of days is prudence. With him is wisdom and strength, he has counsel and understanding" (Job 12:12-13).*

*"Behold, how good and how pleasing it is for brothers to dwell in unity" (Psalm 133 [132]:1).  
Father Brucciani and Father Beaublat make a friendly visit to Father Matthias, at Trichy (24 July)*

Pope Francis  
**Homily on the Feast of St Ignatius**



Vatican City, July 31, 2013  
[Translation by Junno Arocho Esteves]  
<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/37821>

In this Eucharist in which we celebrate our Father Ignatius of Loyola, in the light of the readings that we have heard, I would like to pose three simple thoughts guided by three expressions:

1°) placing Christ and the Church at the Center;  
2°) allowing oneself to be conquered by Him to serve;  
3°) to feel ashamed of our limits and sins, in order to be humble in front of Him and our brothers.

1°) The coat of arms of us Jesuits is a monogram, the acronym of Iesus Hominum Salvator (IHS).

Everyone of you can tell me: we know that very well! But this coat of arms continuously reminds us of a reality that we should never forget: the centrality of Christ for everyone of us and for the whole Society, which St. Ignatius wished that it be called of Jesus to indicate the point of reference.

Of the rest, even in the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, he places in first place our Lord Jesus Christ, our Creator and Savior (cfr. *Spiritual Exercises*, 6).

And this places us Jesuits and the entire Society to be decentered, to have in front Christ always greater, the *Deus semper maior*, the *intimior intimo meo*, which continuously takes us out

of ourselves, it takes us to a certain kenosis, to escape from our own love, wants and interests (SE, 189).

We cannot take for granted the question made to us, to all of us: *is Christ the center of my life? Do I truly place Christ at the center of my life?*

Because there is always the temptation to think of us as being in the center.

And when a Jesuit places himself at the center and not Christ, he is mistaken.

In the first Reading, Moses repeats with insistence to the people love the Lord, to walk in his ways because He is your life (cfr. Dt. 30, 16.20).

Christ is our life!

The centrality of Christ corresponds as well to the centrality of the Church: they are two flames that cannot be separated; I cannot follow if not in the Church and with the Church.

It is also in this case that we Jesuits and the entire Society are not in the center, we are, so to speak, displaced, we are at the service of Christ and of the Church, the Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy Mother Hierarchical Church (cfr SE, 353).

To be men rooted and founded in the Church, that is how Jesus wants us.

There cannot be parallel or isolated paths.

Yes, paths of searching, creative paths, yes, this is important:

going to the outskirts, the vast outskirts.

For this creativity is needed, but always in community, in the Church, with this affiliation that gives all of us the courage to continue forward.

Serve Christ and love this Church concretely, and serve with generosity and with a spirit of obedience.

2°) What is the path to live this dual centrality?

Let us look at the experience of St. Paul which is also the experience of St. Ignatius.

The Apostle, in the Second Reading that we have listened to, he writes: *I strive towards the perfection of Christ for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus.* (Phil.3,12).

For Paul this occurred on the road to Damascus, for Ignatius, in his house in Loyola, but the fundamental point is the same: to let oneself be conquered by Christ.

I search for Christ, I serve Jesus because He searched for me first, because I have been conquered by Him: and this is the heart of our experience. But He is first, always.

In Spanish there is a very graphic word that explains this well: **El nos primerea.**

He is always first.

When we arrive, he arrives first and waits for us.

And it is here that I wish to recall the meditation on the Kingdom in the Second Week.



Christ our Lord, Eternal King, calls each and every one of us saying he who wishes to come with me must work with me, because following me in suffering, will follow me also in glory (SE, 95): To be conquered by Christ to offer to this King all ourselves and all our labor (cfr. SE, 96); to tell the Lord that you wish to do everything for his greater service and praise, to imitate Him in bearing even insults, rejection, poverty (cfr SE, 98).

I think of our brother in Syria at this time.

To let oneself be conquered by Christ means to always reach out to those in front of me, towards the other half of Christ (cfr. Phil. 3, 14) and to ask yourself with truth and sincerity: *What have I done for Christ? What do I do for Christ?* (cfr. Phil. 3, 14) *What should I do for Christ?* (cfr. SE, 53)

3<sup>o</sup>) And I come to the final point. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us: *for whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it....He who is ashamed of me....* (Lk. 9, 23).

And so on.

The shame of the Jesuit.

The invitation that Jesus makes is to not be ashamed of Him, but to follow him with total devotion, trusting and relying in Him. But looking at Jesus, as St. Ignatius teaches us in the First Week, above all looking at Christ crucified, we feel that very human and very noble feeling that is the shame of not being at that height; we look at the wisdom of Christ and our own ignorance, at his omnipotence and our own weakness, to his justice and our own iniquity, to his goodness and our wickedness (cfr. SE, 59).

Ask for the grace of shame, shame that comes from the continuous discussion of mercy with

Him; shame that makes us blush in front of Jesus Christ; shame that places us in tune with the heart of Christ who has made himself sin for me; shame that places in harmony our hearts in tears and accompanies us in the daily sequence of my Lord. And this takes us, individually and as a Society, towards humility, to live this great virtue. Humility that makes us aware every day that it is not us that constructs the Kingdom of God, but it is always the grace of the Lord that acts in us; humility that urges us to place all of ourselves not at the service of ourselves or our ideas, but to the service of Christ and to the Church, like earthen vessels, fragile, inadequate, insufficient, but in which there is an immense treasure that we carry and make known (2 Cor. 4, 7)



It is always pleasing for me to think on the sunset of the Jesuit, when a Jesuit finishes his life, when the sun sets.

There are two icons of this sunset of the Jesuit that comes to mind: one classic, that of **Saint Francis Xavier**, looking towards China.

Art has always depicted many times this sunset, this ending of Xavier.

Even in literature, in that beauti-

ful piece by Pemán.

In the end, with nothing, but in front of the Lord; this does well to me, to think of this.

The other sunset, the other icon that comes to mind as an example, is that of Father Arrupo in the last discussion in the refugee camp, when he tells us - this is how he himself would say it - this I say as if it were my swan song: pray.

Prayer, the union with Jesus.

And, after saying that, he boarded his plane, and arrived to Rome with a stroke, which began that long and exemplary sunset.

Two sunsets, two icons that will do us well to look at, and return to these two.

And ask for the grace that our sunset will be like theirs.

Dear brothers, let us turn to Our Lady.

She who carried Christ in her womb and accompanied the first steps of the Church, may she help us to place Christ and his Church always at the center of our life and our ministry; she who was the first and the most perfect disciple of her Son, may help us to let ourselves be conquered by Christ to follow and serve Him in every situation.

She who responded to the announcement of the Angel with the most profound humility: *Behold the servant of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word.*

(Lk. 1, 38), may she makes us taste the shame of our inadequateness in front of the treasure that has been entrusted to us, to live humbly in front of God.

May the paternal intercession of Saint Ignatius and of all the Holy Jesuits accompany us on this path, may the continue to teach us to do all with humility, **ad maiorem Dei gloriam.** ■



## Briefing NEWS FROM INDIA



### ► Mumbai: a Spanish football team spends WYD [World Youth Day] among Indian orphans

By Nirmala Carvalho - Mumbai (AsiaNews)  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mumbai:-a-Spanish-football-team-spends-WYD-among-Indian-orphans-28570.html#>

**Nineteen young Catholic men from the Atlético Madrid football team help the kids of Our Lady's Home, an orphanage in Dadar, Mumbai. "In spite of the difficulties and challenges of life," the orphans have enriched their lives during this "different" WYD.**

Far from Brazil, a "different" World Youth Day is being held in India at present. In Dadar, central Mumbai, 19 young *Opus Dei* members from Zaragoza (Spain) are offering their services in *Our Lady's Home*, an orphanage for boys founded 53 years ago for poor, needy and abandoned children, of every caste and religion. All 19 are university students, and play for the *Atlético Madrid* football team.

"Our common passion for football and the call of Pope Francis and of Saint Jose Maria Escriva who repeatedly said, 'A university must educate its students to have a sense of service to society,' made us come to Mumbai to share our love for the game and help underprivileged kids," 23-year-old medical student Aliaga Arturo told *AsiaNews*.

The days at the orphanage go by quietly with the Spanish group spending a lot of time with the boys. "Twice a day, we hold two-hour sessions teaching kids how to play football as well as additional sessions teaching them how to use computers," said Luis Cipres.

"However, we don't only give, but we also receive from these boys, who enrich our lives. In spite of the difficulties and challenges of life, these boys are happy. This orphanage is so different from how we imagined it. There is such hope and happiness! We are grateful to be here and share our lives with them."

"Guiding students to develop skills, knowledge and the right attitudes is an important part of our mission," said Perico Herraiz, member of *Opus Dei* in the Spanish province of Aragon.

"We try to shape the whole person from a mental, technical and social point of view. Thus, these boys will not only be great footballers, but also young men of strong character. In creating opportunities for them and nurturing their talents, we hope to toughen them up so that they can become successful individuals."

"For these kids, it is essential to learn, through the great game of football, respect, friendship, collaboration and sharing, and preserve these values as important lessons for their future," said Carlos Soler.

At the same time, "for us it is a great lesson in life. Seeing children of different religions play together is something very special and a sign of a bright future for them."

Created in 1960, the orphanage has helped 1,804 boys who found a place in *Our Lady's Home*, as well as love, and the education needed to build a future. Today the facility is home to 125 children and teenagers, ranging in age from 6 to 18. ■



### ► Gujarat: 12,000 baby girls killed in the state's cities

By Nirmala Carvalho - Mumbai (AsiaNews)  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Gujarat:-12,000-baby-girls-killed-in-the-state's-cities-28587.html#>

**In urban areas, the number of deaths for girls under one year of age is 12,325 against 8,076 for boys. In rural areas, the gap is more balanced. For the director of a Jesuit centre for human rights, this is due to a patriarchal outlook, which continues to prefer sons over daughters and favours selective abortions and female infanticide.**

Girls under one year of age are the most vulnerable social group in Gujarat's cities, this according to the Indian state's demographic statistics.

In the last three years, urban areas have registered the death of 12,325 girls under the age of one against 8,076 boys. In rural Gujarat, 2,739 boys died before their first birthday compared to 2,246 girls.

Gujarat is one of India's richest and most advanced states. According to the latest national census



(2011), its urban population is around 20.7 million people, whilst more than 30 million people live in the countryside.

According to some analysts, these figures show that there is no practical reasons-poor health facilities, poverty, illiteracy-that can justify a greater number of deaths of baby girls in urban areas than in rural areas. The problem is cultural-women are discriminated.

"Gujarat is a deeply patriarchal society," said Fr Cedric Prakash. Speaking to *AsiaNews*, the clergyman, who heads *Prashant*, a Jesuit centre for human rights, justice and peace, said that "this situation is reflected in the prevailing social ethics. Girls are not wanted and women's inferiority is taken for granted. Throughout Gujarat, women are condemned to a life of hard work and only a very small percentage become professionals or reach important positions. "The same is true in politics, where only two women are ministers." This has an impact on families, where boys are still preferred to girls even if it means relying on sex-selective abortions and female infanticide.

"A case in point," the priest noted, "is that of Amisha Yagnik, Ahmedabad. Her husband and his family forced her to undergo sex determination tests (which are illegal in India) every time she was pregnant and abort when the foetus was a baby girl. After several years, she managed to escape to her mother's home to give birth to her first and only daughter, Kamya, who is now 9 years old."

If the state government really wants to tackle the problem, it should "close down several of the illegal abortion clinics that have sprouted in the urban areas of Gujarat," he said. "Only when there is a joint and focused effort from every section of society, will we really stop killing our girls." ■



### ► Tamil Nadu, a Pentecostal pastor in prison for baptizing a woman

By Nirmala Carvalho - Mumbai (AsiaNews)  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Tamil-Nadu,-a-Pentecostal-pastor-in-prison-for-baptizing-a-woman-28528.html>

**Hindu extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) lay false charges of forced conversions and denounce the Reverend to the police. Christian leader: "persecution of Christians has become a lawful practice in this state."**

A Pentecostal pastor of Tamil Nadu is in jail for two days for having converted - with her consent - a woman of 30 years. Members of the Hindu nationalist group *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)* accused the man of practicing forced conversions and complained to the local police.

The arrested man is Rev. R. Reuben, pastor of the *End Time Church of Gundur* (suburb of Trichy). This Pentecostal Church was founded 30 years ago and now has about 250 members. On 18 July, the pastor administered baptism to a woman of her community, who had asked him to convert her to Christianity. RSS activists denounced the episode to the inspector Siva Subramanyam, of Srinangam police, arguing that the river Cauvery - where she had been baptised - had been contaminated and that the pastor was converting people by force. At that point, the officers proceeded to arrest the religious leader.

According to Sajan George, president of the *Global Council of In-*

*dian Christians (GCIC)*, what happened is yet more evidence that "religious intolerance in Tamil Nadu, when perpetrated by Hindu extremists and nationalists, becomes lawful if directed against the Christian minority."

In October 2002, the Government of Tamil Nadu introduced its anti-conversion law. The decree was canceled in May 2004, one month after the defeat in the state elections of the *Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP)*, the Hindu nationalist party that supports extremist groups like the RSS. ■

### ► Radio Maria Inaugurated in India

By Daniele Trenci - Zenit  
<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/radio-maria-inaugurated-in-india>

**The official cutting of the ribbon, inaugurating the headquarters of the Radio Maria Website in India, took place on Sunday morning, June 30.**

A solemn blessing began the day in the city of Cochin (or Kochi), in the state of Kerala. Attending the inauguration were members of the Indian government and of the World Family of Radio Maria, in the person of Father Francisco Palacios. Hosting the event was Father Raphael Kootumghai, director of the Indian radio station. H.E. Monsignor Joseph Kariyil, Bishop of Cochin, blessed the studios (...).

[Father Raphael:] "Thanks to the missionaries who have dedicated their life to spread the Catholic faith, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is deeply rooted among Catholic families in our country, a devotion that is also spreading among Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. She is not seen as a threat but as a Mother who cares for and loves her children, bringing graces to people. Because of this, Mary is an important key for the evangelization of India." ■



# NEWS FROM INDIA



Statue of Our Lady  
(Singpur, Jharkhand)

## ► Jharkhand: tribal Madonna for Singpur Catholics

by Nirmala Carvalho - Mumbai (AsiaNews)  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Jharkhand-tribal-Madonna-for-Singpur-Catholics-28271.html>

Card Telesphore Toppo, archbishop of Ranchi, unveiled a statue of the Virgin wearing a sari with red borders, holding Jesus according to local tribal customs. One tribe, the Sarna, has criticised the work, saying that it is a *tactic to convert*. For Verbite priest, *Christian missionaries defend and protect indigenous cultures and traditions*.

A statue of Our Lady with the features of a tribal woman in a sari with red borders, holding her son Jesus in a white cloth, has gone from being a masterpiece of inculturation to a source of discord in the State of Jharkhand. Unveiled by **Card Telesphore Toppo**, archbishop of Ranchi (the state capital), near a Catholic church in the village of Singpur, the statue has sparked criticism from some members of the Sarna tribe, who want the work of art removed. The Sarna worship Mother Nature (or *Maa Sarna*). According **Bandhan Tigga**, a local Sarna guru, *dressing up*

*Mary with a red bordered white sari seems to be a tactic to convert tribal Sarnas to Christianity. It is absolutely wrong. We do not want conflict between our communities, but we do want the statue removed, or changed so that it no longer looks like a tribal woman. Otherwise, we shall step up our protests.*

Card Toppo, who is the first ethnic tribal Oraon cardinal in India, rejects the guru's accusations. In his view, the dispute is political because *Next year, there will be elections*, he said, *and someone wants to take advantage from a conflict between Christians and non-Christians*.

For **Fr Augustine Kanjamala SVD (Society of the Divine Word)**, an expert in the sociology of religion, *The depiction of Our Lady in accordance with local usage is legitimate from a legal and theological standpoint. Around the world, tens of thousands of artists have depicted Mary adapting her to local sensitivities. Indianisation and inculturation are important issues today and are opposed by Hindu nationalists who use it for political pur-*



Miraculous Picture  
of Our Lady of Guadalupe

poses.

*In India, the Verbite clergyman noted, foreign Christian missionaries were the first to protect and promote the indigenous cultures of tribal people. They passionately defended indigenous rights.*

*Culture is not a static thing, but a unifying factor. Although religious practices vary, most traditional customs and practice bind together. Culture includes many elements. Although important, dress is a small aspect of tribal identity. ■*

### Our comment:

1°) We must distinguish between good and bad inculturation.  
2°) In Mexico, Our Lady (of Guadalupe) appeared in 1531 to Juan -Diego, an amerindian convert. She showed an amerindian face and wore the traditional clothes of the local people (cf. picture above).

## ► Indian Bishops: Solidarity with Hindu pilgrims affected by floods

by Santosh Digal - New Delhi (AsiaNews)  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Indian-Bishops-Solidarity-with-Hindu-pilgrims-affected-by-floods-28263.html>

The Bishops' Conference of India sends a message to monsoon victims. Deathly toll of more than 150 victims in Uttarkhand: at least 50 thousand pilgrims still stranded by landslides. Diocesan *Caritas* and NGOs alongside state agencies in rescue operations.

The Bishops' Conference of India expresses *deep concern* over the devastation caused by floods and landslides that have hit many parts of the State of Uttarkhand and which has produced serious casualties. To date, the toll is about more than 150 people dead and tens of thousands of Hindus affected by torrential rains during a pilgrimage. The police have carried over 30 thousand people to safety, but 50 thousand other are still trapped by landslides (...).

Through the diocesan **Caritas** and NGOs, the Indian Church supports government agencies to provide aid and assistance to victims of floods. ■



## ► By 2030 India will be the most populous state in the world, despite forced sterilizations

by Nirmala Carvalho - Mumbai (AsiaNews)  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/By-2030-India-will-be-the-most-populous-state-in-the-world-Despite-forced-sterilizations-28213.html>



75 thousand children are born every day, but the baby boom also depends on a decrease in the rates of infant and child mortality. Member of the *Pontifical Academy for Life* criticizes use of sterilization in family planning policies and recalls the campaigns launched by Indira Gandhi in the 1970s. In just one year 6.2 million vasectomies and mandatory tubal 2.5 ligatures were carried out.

With a current population of 1.2 billion people and 75 thousand newborns per day, India is preparing to become the most populous country in the world. According to the forecasts of the United Nations, by 2030, the South Asian giant will overtake China - whose birth rate is declining because of the one-child policy - touching 1.45 billion people. This figure, Pascoal Carvalho, a member of the *Pontifical Academy for Life* points out to *AsiaNews*, which reflects the existence, even today, of cultural values that encourage family and community survival. According to the Catholic doctor, the demographic picture presented by the UN matters to the pace and process of economic growth and development in India. It is then interesting to note, he points

out, that this baby boom is not caused by an increase in births, but rather by the sharply reduced rates of infant and child mortality. Despite the positive aspects arising from the current demographic profile, family planning policies for birth control are in place throughout the country. Among these, says Carvalho, even sterilizations [often forced, ed], that take us back to the black days experienced by the country in the 1970s. At the time, the government of Indira Gandhi promoted an aggressive and targeted sterilization program, which provided economic incentives for those who participated, but also mandatory vasectomies for men with two or more children.

However - he recalls - because of widespread corruption and abuses, however, many other men were tricked or forced to get the operation, and many women, too, were compelled to undergo much more dangerous sterilization procedures. In the course of one year, rough estimates state that eight million sterilisations were recorded: 6.2 million vasectomies and 2.05 million tubectomies, Dalits being particular targets.

Recently, one of the dispatches of *Wikileaks* revealed that in those years the government clamped down on Catholic organizations and the clergy, who tried to oppose the mandatory sterilization program. ■

## ► For Christian leader, Hindutva does not represent hope for India

by Nirmala Carvalho - Mumbai (AsiaNews)  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/For-Christian-leader,-Hindutva-does-not-represent-hope-for-India-28251.html>

For the head of the Hindu extremist group *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), the Hindu radical ideology is "the only way to change the country." President of the *Global Council of Indian Christians* (GCIC) says that Hindu extremists "have always opposed social equality". For him, support for the caste system goes against the positive change.

"The caste system and discrimination are the true face of Hindu ultra-nationalist forces. As long as there is discrimination, there can be no real development of society," said Sajan George, president of the *Global Council of Indian Christians* (GCIC). He spoke to *AsiaNews* to comment recent statements by Mohan Bhagwat, president of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), a Hindu fundamentalist organisation.

Commenting the appointment of Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi as *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) campaign manager in next year's parliamentary elections, Bhagwat said that "Hindutva is the only way to bring about change in the country."

According to Hindutva, Hinduism is a logical whole that brings together ethnic, cultural and political identities. On the basis of this, the RSS has carried out acts of violence and discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities in India.

"Hindutva advocates have always opposed social equality," the GCIC leader said. "How can they talk about change, if their doctrine promotes an ideology of uniformity? Or if they are the first supporters of the caste system, which is responsible for millions of Dalits living in pathetic conditions?" What is even worse, Sajan George said, is the "charade of justice at the expense Dalit Christians", who "suffer double discrimination".

In 1950, parliament adopted Article 3 of the *Constitution on Scheduled Caste and Tribes*. Under its provision, economic, educational and social rights and privileges were granted to Hindu Dalits. Eventually, in 1956 and 1990, the same status was granted to Buddhists and Sikhs, excluding Christians and Muslims. "The living conditions of Dalit Christians," George said, "are no different from those of the other scheduled castes."

The paradox is that they are denied the few extra benefits given to the country's scheduled castes on religious grounds, this in a country like India that is democratic and where state and religion are separate. ■



## Meditation

# DOOR: I STAND AND KNOCK

*O taste and see that the LORD is good. (Ps. 34:8)*

### Materials at hand

Sit near a door that you can examine closely, with a candle as a prayer focus.

### Centering

*Loving God, Creator of all that is.*

*Here I am, Today, in this place, with all the senses you have given me.*

*Help me to use them to come to experience you more deeply.*

*You are present everywhere around me; open me to know more of the many ways that your goodness surrounds me.*

*Thank you for this time to be with you and to listen to you.*

*Amen.*

### Savoring

Take a look at the door before you as though you are seeing it for the very first time.

Picture the doorway without the door in it and how different that space would seem.

Are there any distinctive features to this door that might set it apart from others, even other doors in the same room?

Is it painted or does it have a natural finish?

Is there any texture to the door or details other than the knob?

Before touching the door, predict what your fingers will find and see how well your hands remember what they probably touch quite often.

The knob is the part of the door you touch most often; what kind of knob is it?

Think of all the hands that have grasped that knob countless times, and think of how hard it

would be to open the door without it.

Examine the hinges; do they match the knob?

Think of the work these hinges do over and over again without our giving them a second thought.

The two parts of each hinge fit together with just the right balance between closeness and distance to allow the door to be

try to imagine the changes you would be experiencing as you open and close.

When the door is closed, there is a separation of space—outside and inside—which no longer exists in the same way when it is open.

Doors seem like simple inventions mechanically, but without them our lives might be quite different.



### Listening

Listen to one or more of these passages as you watch the candle play across the door.

"When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord." (John 20:19–20)

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am

solid and yet swing freely.

Notice the rest of the door frame, the strike plate where the latch meets the frame and the trim around the doorway, both just the right size and waiting to receive the door when it closes.

As you explore the door with your fingers as well as with your eyes, see if there are any places that you hadn't noticed before, from the latch on the edge of the door to the bottom or top edge of the door.

Now very slowly close and/or open the door, imagining as you do so that you are the door and

commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deut 6:4–9)

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be





seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matt 6:5-6)

"And he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, *Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.* And he answers from within, *Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.* I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." (Luke 11:5-10)

### Considering

The first thing that guests encounter when they come to our house or apartment is a door, and it's the same whenever we go to visit someone else.

Doors—and at times the gates to our gardens or yards—are powerful symbols as well as important devices.

They separate the outside from the inside, and although we rarely think of it, crossing over the threshold into a home is an important action for both guests and family members.

Not only is this threshold the place we welcome guests into our homes and our lives, it is the place where we leave each other and return again at the end of our day or the end of our travels.

Some families give each other a blessing, asking God to protect them before leaving the house at

the start of the day, since we're never completely sure that we'll all make it back safely at the end of the day.

There are many doors in our homes; how many are there in your house, and which is the most important one to you?

Why?

We don't know much about how doors were constructed throughout human history.

It seems quite likely that for much of human history doors were a luxury, something that the poor may not have had.

Doors can vary widely from flaps on tents to simple curtains of fabric or beads to massive woo-



den ones with elaborate carvings and precious metals.

But whatever their shape, their purpose is the same.

Doors are a symbol of privacy; they can be a means to feel safe from the outside world and from others, but the danger is that they can also be a way to shut others out of our lives.

### Responding

Doors can be important reminders to us of what comes into and goes out of each of us as well as our homes.

For example, two different passages in scripture use the image of a door to remind us to watch what we say.

Psalms 141 prays, "Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips." (Ps 141:3)

And the book of Sirach reminds us, "As you fence in your property with thorns, so make a door and a bolt for your mouth. As you lock up your silver and gold, so make balances and scales for your words." (Sir 28:24-25)

*Dear God, please help me to watch my comments so that they are always kind and fair.*

In the Apocalypse of St. John we find a striking image of God knocking on our door: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." (Apo 3:20)

This passage reminds us that we are the ones who decide how "open" to God our lives will be.

Do you want to "open the door" a bit further to God?

How, specifically?

Is there anyone else in your life that you keep waiting outside your "door"?

Why?

Would this be a good time to "invite him or her in?"

*Loving God of all our comings and goings, thank you for the gift of doors. Bless all those who make doors and locks and hinges and all those who build and design houses and buildings and their doors.*

*Bless abundantly all those who offer hospitality to others, whose door is always open to those in need. And please bless all those who are homeless or refugees, who are without a home or a door of their own. Help them find a place of welcome and a door open to their safety and hope. Please help me be more aware of the gift of doors and of what I'm keeping in and shutting out of my life, and help me be more and more "open" to you in my life. Amen. ■*

(According to K. Finley, *Savoring God*)

