

## **“SPICES” - 15<sup>th</sup> JAAI South Zone Alumni/Alumnae Congress:**

SPICES, the 15<sup>th</sup> JAAI – South Zone Alumni Congress was hosted by Andhra Province during 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> December 2017 in the elegant campus of Loyola Public School with the theme, “Jesuit Alumni/Alumnae Networking for Communal Harmony”. There were more than 300 Delegates from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Pondicherry. Most of the delegates were accommodated free of cost in the Boys’ Hostel at the School and all meals and refreshments were prepared and served at the Hostel Mess. There were mouth-watering local food items, excellent bakery products, cakes, and cookies from the School’s in-house bakery. The Conference was arranged at the open-air in the Central Quad of the School.

The Congress was inaugurated by Most Rev Dr Chinnabathini Bhagyaiah, Bishop of Guntur in the gracious presence of Rev Fr George Pattery SJ, Provincial of South Asia (POSA), Rev Fr PS Amalraj SJ, Provincial of Andhra Province, Rev Fr AXJ Bosco SJ, Superior of LPS, Rev Fr A Rex Angelo SJ, Province Co-ordinator for Alumni Commission, Rev Fr Uvari Antony SJ, Principal & Director of Alumni of LPS, Dr Devendra Singh, National President of JAAI, and Sri Chenthil Kumar, President of South Zone & Secretary, JAAI. After the cultural programmes presented by students of LPS, the Inaugural Session began with the Prayer Song and Welcome Dance followed by the Lighting of the Lamp and Sacred Readings from the Bible, the Koran, and the Gita. Fr A Rex Angelo SJ, the Chief Organiser, welcomed the gathering. In his inaugural address, the Bishop of Guntur spoke about the great inspiring and leading role played by the Jesuits in his diocese and elsewhere towards promotion of human values and excellence. Fr POSA, in his well-prepared address, spoke elaborately on ecological networking, networking to rebuild social fabric that is being ruptured, and networking with non-formal education. He reminded the delegates that “Happiness is a crazy mathematics; because it multiplies when you divide it; Jesuit heritage is crazy because it does not inherit for itself but for others.” Fr PS Amalraj, Provincial of Andhra and Dr Devender Singh, National President greeted the gathering with their inspiring and powerful messages. With the Vote of Thanks proposed by Fr Uvari Antony SJ, the Inaugural Session came to an end.

After coffee break, Dr Venkat Changavalli, eminent Management Consultant, Leadership Mentor & Senior Advisor to many State Governments on welfare schemes, delivered an inspiring and thought-provoking lecture on ‘Networking, a Critical Skill for Development’. After lunch break, Dr Devender Singh gave some inputs on ‘Communal Disharmony: Causes, Effects & Bailout’ with a lot of sharing of his personal experience and insights. Major Porres spoke on ‘Social Action for Communal Harmony’ during which, he elaborated on conscientising our alumni on the urgent need to donate one’s blood, eyes, and organs to others in need. After Tea, Volleyball & Football matches and a Tug of War were arranged among alumni teams, though some preferred swimming! There was a Happy Hour and Congress Dinner for delegates and all enjoyed themselves to the full with informal dancing by night.

Day II started with the GC Meeting of South Zone in which nominations for the SZ GC Body for 2017-2020 were made and elections of SZ Office Bearers were held. Sri GV Krishna Reddy, President, ALPS, Guntur was elected SZ President, Sri Pradeep Kumar Madhavan from Trivandrum as Vice-President, Dr Richard Gonzalves of Mangalore as Secretary, Dr Job Sudarshan from Vijayawada as Joint Secretary, and Mr Mani from Madurai as Treasurer. Besides, many from the four southern Provinces were nominated to the Executive Committee. After this, a Report on the WUJA Congress held at Cleveland, USA was presented by Dr Devendra Singh. During the subsequent sessions, reports from individual Alumni Associations from respective Provinces were shared. Post-lunch, a bus tour to Amravati Buddha Stupa, State Secretariat, and Mother Mary's Shrine at Gunadala was organised. The day closed with a campus tour of Andhra Loyola College and cultural programmes by MBA students and artistes from Kaladarshini at the Seminar Hall at ALIET followed by dinner hosted by Andhra Loyola Institutions. Fr Ravi Sekhar, Rector, welcomed the gathering. Most Rev Dr Polimera Jaya Rao, Bishop of Eluru was the Chief Guest who delivered an inspiring message. Fr Rex Angelo proposed the Vote of Thanks which was followed by a sumptuous dinner at ALIET premises, thanks to the meticulous arrangements made by Frs Francis Xavier, Thomas and Chiranjivi.

Day III witnessed the Change of Guard of South Zone. Sri Chenthil Kumar laid down his office as President of South Zone and handed over the reins to Sri Krishna Reddy for the next 3 years. As a Takeaway of the Congress, the organisers arranged a panel discussion with the theme: 'Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my Country awake!' Fr AXJ Bosco was the moderator and eminent personalities were on the panel: Sri Narendra, a journalist who spoke on 'Current Issues in Human Rights', Sri Aariz Mohammed, an expert in Indian Constitution who spoke on 'Our Fundamental Rights & Duties' and Mrs Leela Kumari, an activist & lawyer who spoke on 'Women's Rights & Women's Movements'. There was a lively discussion with many questions from the audience. Delegates expressed their joy of being together as a Jesuit Family for three days and shared their happiness and satisfaction over the meticulous arrangements and the organisation of the Congress which, they felt, was a very memorable Christmas gift! Indeed, it was a successful, well-arranged, well-attended Congress!

The LPS Community and especially Fr Bosco and Fr Uvari Antony deserve a huge applause for the wonderful arrangements at the venue and the generous transport facilities for the delegates. Fr Andrew and Sch Giri Prasad did a splendid job at the kitchen and the dining hall with their excellent catering skills in spite of the constant swelling of numbers all of a sudden! Fr Sunil's service to the delegates including Jesuits was praise-worthy for the skilful handling of accommodation. The gracious presence of several Jesuits in spite of the Christmas Vacation and the Province Meet at Secunderabad was a source of support and strength to the organisers. The local Alumni Association headed by Sri Krishna Reddy left no stone unturned to make this Congress a re-sounding success. The Province Alumni Commission deserves a 'Hat's off' for the several sessions of the meticulous planning and the fool-proof execution. Our sincere thanks to Fr PS Amalraj, our Provincial and the other three Provincials of South Zone along with Fr POSA and Fr Sunny Jacob, the National Advisor, for the grand backing to the organisers. In spite of the presence of the Hon'ble President of India in the city, there was no serious disruption to our event, for which the organisers were

ever grateful to God! Besides the usual gifts which included an attractive handbag and a packet of Andhra 'spices' to all delegates, there was a larger takeaway for all delegates: A passion to work towards networking for communal harmony as Jesuit alumni and alumnae – the true fruit of the Congress!

Fr A Rex Angelo SJ, Province Co-ordinator for Alumni Commission