

CBCI OFFICE FOR DIALOGUE AND DESK FOR ECUMENISM
Biennial Report of for the years 2016 and 2017
Sr. Teresa Joseph, FMA

Bishop-in-Charge	Most Rev. Dr. Archbishop Felix Anthony Machado Bishop of Vasai
Member Bishops	Most Rev. Dr. Raphy Manjaly Bishop of Allahabad Most Rev. Dr. Archbishop Joseph Perumthottam Archbishop of Changanassery
Secretary	Sr. Dr. Teresa Joseph FMA

Introduction

Diversity is the prerequisite for dialogue. Only through our differences, tensions, and the possibility of confrontation and complementarity we can search for insight. Our common humanity is the one identity and the basis for our dialogue.¹ John S. Dunne, American theologian spoke of passing over and coming back as the spiritual adventure of our time. Pope Francis affirmed: “Finally, together with a clear sense of our own Christian identity, authentic dialogue also demands a capacity for empathy...In this sense, dialogue demands of us a truly contemplative spirit of openness and receptivity to the other. This capacity for empathy enables a true human dialogue in which words, ideas and questions arise from an experience of fraternity and shared humanity. It leads to a genuine encounter in which heart speaks to heart. We are enriched by the wisdom of the other and become open to travelling together the path to greater understanding, friendship and solidarity.”²

a) The report of our Office

Vision: Formation of Personnel to set dialogue on the solid ground of Catholic Teaching.

Mission:

- Training of personnel (all categories of people) Study days/Seminars
- Assisting the Regional Councils when requested
- Collaborating with the Regional Secretaries of Dialogue and Ecumenism
- Net-working at all levels
- Systematic encounters with believers of other religions
- Furthering the beginning and growth of ‘mini Assisi’ wherever possible
- Live-in seminars to equip those interested with skills for Peace research and conflict resolution
- Accompaniment of couples – especially mixed marriages
- Preparation of resource material

Specific Programs carried out over the past years:

- Seminars for Teachers/Parents and Students
- Training Young College Students to be Ambassadors of Peace and Harmony
- Live-in Seminars for Couples of Mixed Marriages
- Basic Courses on Interreligious dialogue for Teachers of all religions
- Interreligious Retreats for Teachers /Parents and Students
- Interreligious Camps for children and young people
- Visiting of Families and Counselling

¹Thubten Losel in M. Darrol Bryant and Frank Flinn, *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices From A New Frontier*, Paragon House, New York, 1989, ps. 194-196).

²Pope’s discourse to the bishops of Asia when he met them at Haemi shrine in Daejeon Diocese, South Korea, Vatican Radio, 2014-08-18.

“Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It is necessary to know how to lower the defenses, open the doors of your house and offer human warmth” affirmed Pope Francis. Our Office has taken care to diffuse the call of His Holiness Pope Francis to move to the peripheries, to live the Year of Mercy more radically and to reach out to families with love and compassion. The mandate of the CBCI 32 Plenary Assembly to move ahead in the Spirit of Inter-religious Dialogue which has become an urgent priority today did accompany our work and choices in the ongoing process of Response of the Church in India to the Present Day Challenges.

Training young college students to be Ambassadors of peace and Harmony

Program 1: Youth Fiesta 2016 - Silvasa, Daman Mission

This one day program on 23 April 2016 saw 500 youth and their mentors gathered at Our Lady of Piety Parish Silvassa from 9.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. Skits by the participants, music, song and dance, moments of prayer, adoration and praise and 4 modules prepared just for the young participants, were all harmoniously knit together to offer the young people a commendable Youth Fiesta 2016. The beautiful and ever relevant theme “With Jesus Be Merciful” was organized by *Fr. Dr. Sabby Mascarenhas* and his team. Sr. Teresa dealt with Module 3: Youth and Peer Group Pressure.

Program 2: Farewell Class X & Initiation into College, St. Joseph’s Convent School, and Bangalore

This special program was held on 24 April 2017 thanks to the collaboration of Fr. Vincent George Lobo, Secretary CBCI Office for Dialogue and Ecumenism Karnataka Region and Sr. Suma – Principal of the School. Sr. Teresa coordinated the program. goal setting, motivation and succeeding in Life through dialogue, building peace and harmony, You have received much from your School Life so Give Generously were some of the topics of the day.

Program 3: For Young Adivasi College Students Auxilium Youth Animation Centre, Dahanu

In nine blocks, with a team of resource persons, we offered the seminar on Peace and Harmony to the Young Adivasi Junior and Senior College Students frequenting the General Duty Assistant Course at Auxilium Youth Animation Centre. Dialogue, motivation, conflict resolution, peace, dignity of life and human rights are some of the topics covered. A small book in Marathi containing 35 Tips to enrich their life was gifted to each student on their Graduation Day.

Program 4: Ektava – Youngsters from various Colleges from Mumbai

02 October saw a number of youngsters and their animators gathered together at Don Bosco Matunga. Sr. Rosaline Pereira, Sr. Teresa, a team of animators and young people grabbed this opportunity to be part of the encounter by holding space for dialogue, meditation, healing, inter-faith harmony, conflict resolution etc. with a specific session by Sr. Teresa on Young People Ambassadors of the Golden Rule, Ambassadors of Peace and Harmony focusing on The Golden Rule in various Religions and a Gandhian Meditation in the perspective of the Golden Rule. There were 30 participants for this specific session and their three Songs and two dances enriched the program. This program was carried out with meetings with the core-group of eight young people.

Program 5: Youth for Peace - Sugyan Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Gulbarga

This was the first Youth Program for the Rural Youth and there were 80 Youth and 20 animators present. It was organized by our office in collaboration with Fr. Anil D'Sa, sdb, the Karnataka Regional Youth Director and Fr. Clevan Gomes, the Gulbarga Diocesan Youth Director. The presence of a number of working youth and their active participation helped many young college students present to think seriously about their future career. The Prayer moments indeed spurred on the participants belonging to various religions to perceive the love and goodness of God, Father and Mother of all Humanity. The camp fire, the invitation from the speakers to find ways and means to make the seminar experience a lived reality in their lives and the activities carried out during the seminar will help the youngsters to understand 'Peace' in the light of an ongoing process and to be ambassadors of peace. They will strive to make being at peace with self, others, God and nature an essential part of their being. The Participants requested to have a follow-up seminar in the coming year. The organizers and especially His Lordship Most. Rev. Robert Miranda, Bishop of Gulbarga wants this seminar to be a milestone that will lead to follow-up programs to make the youngsters committed to the task of promoting peace and harmony.

Seminar for Couples of Mixed Marriages

On 12 March 2017, at Our Lady of Fatima Church, Sewri, Mumbai thanks to the collaboration of Fr. Ryan Fernandes, Parish Priest and Mrs. Maria D'Souza, President, Parish Interreligious Cell and Coordinator of the seminar, we were able to meet with 17 couples. The seminar as one of the participants put it helped them to be at ease and feel comfortable within one's religion and to look positively at the partner's religion. Meetings with Parish Priests are carried out to organize seminars in Bombay and other places. On a regular basis, the secretary interacts with members of mixed marriage families and speak on topics like: dialogue, relationship and being realistic in daily life in spite of hectic schedules and distances that separate them from each other.

Two Basic Courses on inter-Religious Dialogue for Teachers of all Religions

Program 1: Two days Seminar for Teachers - Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), Delhi- 110006

On 10 -11 April 2017, The CBCI Office for Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism in collaboration with ISPCK Delhi organized this seminar for 20 Teachers from the Free Schools Programme of ISPCK for "Children from backgrounds as diverse as bonded labour, rag picking communities, migrant groups, sex workers and street kids." Rev. Dr. Ashish Amos, General Secretary/Director, ISPCK motivated the teachers and addressed them thrice during the seminar. Mrs. Ella Sonawane, Asst. General Secretary (Publishing & Mission), ISPCK contacted all the participants, coordinated the seminar and made arrangements with the Schools concerned. She also motivated the teachers during the seminar. Sr. Teresa dealt with class room management, teacher-student relationship, child psychology, a deeper understanding of inter-religious dialogue and a basic knowledge of the major religions of India in order to help the teachers to become effective messengers of dialogue, peace and harmony in the pluri-religious society.

Program 2: One day Seminar for Teachers – Auxilium High School, Dum Dum, Calcutta

A much thought about and well prepared atmosphere brought together almost 65 participants for the seminar on basic course in Interreligious Dialogue on 06 September 2017. Sr. Estherrani Abraham, Principal of Auxilium coordinated the seminar and Sr. Mary Ann Headmistress, Auxilium Park

Circus and her teachers participated. Sr. Teresa spoke on the thirst for the divine that is deep within every human person, respect for life that every religion upholds, the challenge to be instruments of peace and harmony, the urgency to strengthen relationships in the family, *Amoris Laetitia* and Pope Francis's message to the families, to fall in love with what they teach, teaching is a creative and fruitful mission, teacher, I think my mom looked like you, the need to advance culture etc.

Our special *thanks* to *Missio Munchen* and to all their generous benefactors for making the seminars for the young, for mixed marriage couples and for the teachers a reality.

Seminars for Class X Students

Seminars and orientation programs are used as strategy to introduce interreligious dialogue in Schools. From June 2016 - November 2017, the secretary offered seminars for Class X students addressing a total of 2057 students and 2065 students of Class VIII & IX in Jagmatha High School, Tirupati, Rosary School, Malvan, Sindhudurg, St. Mary's High School, Dahanu, Auxilium Oros, Mazzarello Kendra, Kasarkod, Maria Niketan High School, Chandur, St. Joseph's Secondary School, Secunderabad, National High School and Junior College, Bordi, Auxilium School Secunderabad, St. Mary Mazzarello School Ranchi, St. Mary School Kotnoor, St. Mary's School Gulbarga, Fatima High School, Hubli, St. Mary's High School, Hubli, Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Khanapur, St. Anthony's High School, Moregav, St. Joseph's High School, Whitefield etc. The Students received tips on dialogue, relationship, peace building and study methods.

Seminar for College Students

From June 2016-November 2017, the secretary gave sessions on study, motivation, dialogue, friendship, how to channelize youthful energies into productive action etc. for 1509 students of National Junior College, Bordi, Fatima Senior College, Hubli and Fatima Junior College, Hubli.

The secretary found great openness from the part of lay people who are running Educational Institutions. Our little experience has taught us that it is believers of other religions who are ever ready to welcome and open their doors for seminars and sessions. The collaboration from some of the regional and local secretaries is worth mentioning and our Karnataka Regional Secretary and the entire Karnataka Region deserves our special thanks. We are very grateful to Bishop Peter Machado of Belgaum diocese and Bishop Robert Michael Miranda of Gulbarga.

Study Seminar Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism

This National Seminar was jointly organized by the *CBCI Office for Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism* and the *Institute of Indian Culture: Post-Graduate Research Centre in Society, Culture and Religion*, on 21-22 March 2017 at the Institute of Indian Culture, Andheri. The theme was: *Immediate Emerging Situation Today and the Role of Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism*. Most Rev. Dr. Felix Anthony Machado, 23 participants hailing from Jammu to Kerala and Chennai to Odisha met, 5 of the participants were Regional Secretaries of dialogue and ecumenism and the rest were actively involved in the diocesan level for the same. His Grace Archbishop Felix set the tone for the two days seminar with his words of welcome: CBCI has given much importance for interreligious dialogue and has told us that ours is a number one office. We cannot be simple by standees; we can light a lamp and help our country. Interreligious dialogue is not an option. By promoting dialogue, we give witness he said. We are the face of the Country. At the moment, the main issue seems to be religion. You have come in such large numbers. We have a challenge before us: How can we help the Catholic Church and the Bishops in India? Interreligious Dialogue is one way in which our hope becomes real. Fr. Dr. S.M. Michael SVD, Secretary, Western Region and Resource person introduced

the theme of the Seminar: *Immediate Emerging Situation Today and the Role of Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism*. Fr. Dr. Joseph Mundananikkal SVD, our resource person offered the participants a solid critical analysis of the *Emerging Situation Today*. Pooling together experiences and knowledge the participants came up with suggestions on how we can continue to be the face of the Church in India. The proposals are varied in nature and need implementation in specific contexts and at different levels.

Seminar on Inter Religious Dialogue – Karnataka Region

This Seminar was very carefully and minutely prepared and implemented by Fr. George Vincent Lobo, KRCBC – Regional Secretary for Interreligious Dialogue in collaboration with Sr. Teresa Joseph fma from 26th - 27th October 2016 at KROSS, Bangalore for all the Diocesan & Deanery Secretaries for Inter Religious Dialogue and a few lay people of the Karnataka Region. The highlights of this seminar: Welcome - *Fr George Vincent Lobo*, Introduction to the Seminar Methodology – *Sr. Teresa*, Key-note Address – *Rev. Fr. Faustine Lucas Lobo – National Director PMO*, Practical Approach to IRD- *Fr. Dr. Jose Mathew Kuttianimattathil, sdb*, Inter-religious Dialogue (Leaders of different Religions), Video on IRD, The Church's heritage of Dialogue: *Nostra Aetate to Amoris Laetitia* – *Sr. Teresa*, Story - telling in IRD by Mr Shaji Mathew, Sharing and planning – moderated by Fr George & Sr. Teresa and Inter-religious prayer conducted by Inter Religious Harmony Movement, Bangalore.

Commission for Interreligious Dialogue along with Belgaum Diocese Board of Education organizes One Day Seminar for Teachers of Hubli and Darward

Friday 23 June, 09.30 a.m. – 4.00 p.m. at St. Mary's Primary Hall, Fatima High School Campus. Sr. Teresa was the resource person. Other speakers were Rev. Fr. Alwyn Sudhir, Secretary Belgaum Diocesan Board of Education, Rev. Fr. Menino Gonsalves, sj, Secretary for Interreligious Dialogue Belgaum Diocese, Rev. Fr. Michael Souza, Principal Fatima High School, Hubli and Director Interreligious Dialogue, Belgaum Diocese. 70 persons including Priests, Sisters and Teachers from two Colleges and seven Schools participated in the seminar.

Commission for Interreligious Dialogue along with Belgaum Diocese Board of Education organizes One Day Seminar for Teachers of Belgaum, Khanapur and other Schools

Wednesday 28 June, 09.30 a.m. – 3.15 p.m. at Divine Mercy High School Macche. Sr. Suneeta Rodrigues, Principal Divine Mercy School was the coordinator of the Seminar, and Sr. Teresa was the resource person. 44 participants including 3 Sisters and Teachers from 3 Schools participated.

We are ever grateful to *Aid to the Church in Need* for their generous funding for the above seminars.

Seminar for Teachers

From 2016- 2017, 81 teachers of Chandur, Secunderabad and Whitefield, were offered one day/two days of course on interreligious dialogue, spirituality, quality relationship, effective teacher-student, teacher-parent relationship, relationships in the family, *Amoris Laetitia*, the need for updating, the mission and vocation of a teacher etc.

Interreligious Retreats

During 2016-2017 scholastic years the secretary conducted three short recollections for teachers during seminars and a two day retreat for teachers. The response was amazing.

Year of Mercy

Prompted by the words of Pope Francis: “Today I ask you in the name of Christ and the Church, never tire of being merciful”, our Office made efforts to offer care to senior citizens, needy vendors, to the marginalized, cloth the needy, feed the famished and freely share time and talents with the less privileged. We offered sessions for 36 Sister media coordinators on the Church of Pope Francis and the Year of Mercy, for 300 youngsters who gathered to celebrate the ‘Mercy of God’ on Pope Francis: The Year of Mercy, Mother Teresa an Ambassador of Mercy and our response today. Participated in an Interfaith Meet organized by the Interreligious Cell of Our Lady of Dolours Parish Wadala, Bombay on the theme: ***Mercy beyond Boundaries*** and forwarded a report to Fides Asia News(24 August 2016, ASIA/INDIA - Mercy, beyond borders and barriers) and compeered the ***Mercy Musical Evening*** which saw 200 participants at Mazzarello Youth Welfare Centre Wadala. The secretary guided the Nandakal Parish team to plan an hour of ***Singing of the Mercies of the Lord*** to mark the conclusion of the Year of Mercy. Contributed articles on Mercy: The Parish Community of Dahanu Spreading the Fragrance of Love and Mercy in *Pieta*, 2016; Mary in the Year of Mercy in *the Examiner* Vol. 167 No. 20 - May 14 - May 20, 2016 and Missionary Disciples after the Heart of Jesus: Missionaries of Mercy in Daily Life in *Shantidoot*, Vol No. 06, Issue No. 03, October 2016, 14-15.

Amoris Laetitia

Interreligious dialogue flowers and blossoms in a family atmosphere. All family life is a “shepherding” in mercy opines Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* N.322. The secretary has taken maximum care to make known the contents of this document to those committed to pastoral care and accompaniment of people and to members of families irrespective of religion in Bombay, Scunderabad, Oros, Kalathur, Kasarkod, Goa etc. She wrote an article on “***Amoris Laetitia***“ in the Salesian Family Perspective for *M.M. Mumbai Voices* and has done a Review of “***Amoris Laetitia***“, in *Journal of The Henry Martyn Institute, Volume 35 &No.2, July-Dec 2016, 132-134.*

Visits to Adivasi families

The secretary visited families with another Sister in the villages of Kankradi, Dahanu and others, identified youngsters who are seeking jobs, who need skill training and higher education and accompanied them to find jobs, get admission into Colleges and to frequent skill training courses. She offered motivational sessions for Adivasi students in Sindoni and in Dahanu.

Catechesis, Catholic Social Teaching, Interreligious Dialogue

The secretary used every chance to present Jesus and His style of entering into dialogue with people, conducted sessions for Catechism Students and Catechists in Hubli, Dahanu, Wadala, Antop Hill etc. She animated retreats for Confirmation students and presented sessions for Religious and Laity in Vasai, Dahanu, Hubli, Kolkatta, etc. to contextualize and promote Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in India. Contributed articles on: Our Parish Pastoral Plan a Roadmap on our Pilgrimage and Advent: preparation for the Lord’s Second Coming.

In solidarity with CBCI Office for Scheduled Castes

On 10 March 2016, Sr. Teresa participated in the silent rally organized by the CBCI Office for Scheduled Castes at Jantar Mantar, together with other groups requesting equal rights for Scheduled Caste Muslims and Christians. She reviewed Building Inclusive Communities through Dalit

Empowerment papers and Statements on Dalit Christians, edited by: Fr. Cosmon Arockiaraj & Fr. Devasagayaraj and it is published in the Journal of the Henry Martyn Institute Volume 35, Number 1, January-June 2016, 124 -128. The CBCI Policy for Dalit Empowerment was presented to the Salesian Sisters of Bombay Province and copies of it were made available for each community.

Dialogue of Life at Grass root level

In the past two years, the secretary, together with a small team of collaborators had a number of meetings and dialogues with the fisher folks, young people, with shopkeepers and Auto Rickshaw drivers.

Vaishnavava – Christian Dialogue

3- 5 January 2016 - The Vaishnavava Christian Dialogue took place at ISKCON Tirupati. On 4 January, Sr. Teresa presented a paper on: “Prayer: Catholic Perspective.” Reported on the meet and it was published in *Asia Catholic News* update 12 January and in *Fides. Org*.

Vocation Sunday and Christian Unity

24 January 2016 –Sr. Teresa spoke during homily at St. Andrew’s Church Bandra at the 9.00 a.m. Eucharistic Celebration on her personal vocation story : “There are so many people in the world who are longing to hear about Jesus but they have no one to speak to them about Jesus...” vocations in general and on Apostle Paul and Christian Unity.

Street Kids

Cherishing the words of Pope Francis, The Church of Mercy, “A pastoral presence means walking with the People of God, walking in front of them, showing them the way, showing them the path; walking in their midst, to strengthen them in unity; walking behind them, to make sure no one gets left behind, but especially, never to lose the smell of the People of God in order to find new roads” the secretary motivated the street kids and had follow-up sessions at Auxilium Secunderabad, Navajeevana, Bholakpur, Auxilium Navjeevana Centre, Uppal for young at risk and in Bombay. On 24 October 2017 at MYWC Wadala, she gave a session on family, dialogue and respect for 250 teenage street kids who participated in the Dewali Damaka organized by Sr. Moksha fma and team of the Development Office.

Being in a Permanent State of Mission

Motivated by the strong appeal of Pope Francis: “Throughout the world, let us be ‘permanently in a state of mission’” (EG,25) and animated by the FMA, SDB Mission sectors, the secretary had sessions on Initial Proclamation and being in a permanent state of Mission for the Salesian Sisters: the novitiate community of Ranchi, Provincial communities of Kolkata and Mumbai, communities of Secunderabad, Wadala, Dahanu, Park Circus, Gobra and for 73 FMA Mumbai, participants of Triennial Evaluation Meet from 14-15 November 2017. During the Triennial Evaluation, she moderated the session on Missionaries of Hope and Joy.

UNESCO and Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, St. Andrew's College, Bandra

Sr. Teresa participated in the executive committee meetings, with Prof. Sharmilla Dhote accompanied 38 Students of the interreligious and intercultural group for a Praxis Field trip to Pune on 18 January 2016. She compered the International Symposium on the Relevance of Religion Today on 27 January 2016 and contributed an article on Religion and Media in the Era of Information Technology, in *Ethics and Society an International Journal Religions and Cultures for Peace and Harmony*, vol.5, 27 January 2016, 22-28. The International Symposium on Family and Nation Building was held on 11 February 2017. Sr Teresa gave an article on Peace a Universal Forum for Dialogue of Life among Believers, and edited the Journal with His Grace Archbishop Felix Machado and Dr. Marie Fernandes. Together with the core team prepared and was present when the NAAC Peer Team visited the Interreligious office. The team questioned on besides Academic course, seminars etc. how is this chair reaching out to the grassroots?

Seminar for Missionary Animation and Formation

The Seminar for Missionary Animation and Formation: Initial Proclamation and Salesian Mission was held at the *Meeting Center "Ban Than Phraphon" (Sam Phran – Thailand)* from 14 -20 August 2017. The *objectives* of this Seminar were to: *assimilate, understand, and study* the theme of Initial Proclamation, *have a shared understanding* of Initial Proclamation, and follow the concrete educative/pastoral Modality for coherence and consolidate the practice of Initial Proclamation of Jesus Christ in the various areas and sectors in the Provinces. On 16 August, Sr. Teresa offered a reflection on the letter of Don Bosco from Rome May 1884 and Initial Proclamation in the Asian context.

Asian Consultation of the Bishops' Commissions for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue

From October 16–20, 2017 at Camillian Pastoral Center, Bangkok, this Consultation was organized by His Grace Archbishop Felix Machado for Bishops in-charge and Secretaries of National Conferences. Sr. Teresa took part in this consultation, presented reports and was secretary of the Conference.

Prayer for Peace in India in communion with the Pope in Assisi

Our office prepared and circulated a Vigil Service for 20th September, 2016: Prayer for peace in India, in communion with the Pope in Assisi. This was published by the Mission department of the fma on the blog and face book <http://www.slideshare.net/maikeloes/prayer-for-peace-cbci-dialogue-sep20-sister-teresa-joseph>. Fides Asia News has also reported on it http://www.fides.org/en/news/60780ASIA_INDIA_Prayer_for_peace_in_India_in_communion_with_the_Pope_in_Assisi.

16 October – Day of Prayer for India

The Animation material for Sunday Liturgy and a Prayer Service which can be used for Adoration/Vigil Service for this day was prepared and circulated to as many Institutions and persons as possible.

Prayer for Youth Pastoral Planning Day

Prepared a Prayer Moment with an interreligious perspective on Family, Encounter and Tourism for a Sustainable Development to be circulated in the FMA Educational Institutions and others and it was much appreciated by the staff and students in various Schools.

Canonization of St. Teresa of Calcutta

The secretary animated a retreat for youngsters, participated in the Thanksgiving Eucharist at St. Mother Teresa Church Virar, Vasai on 4 September and on 5 September Feast of Mother Teresa at Our Lady of Dolours Parish Dahanu. In the evening she visited the Missionaries of Charity. Contributed the following articles: in *The Journal of the Henry Martyn Institute* (JHMI), Saint Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) *A grateful Indian Tribute*, for 3 Dahanu News papers - Mother Teresa: A Rich Heritage for Years to Cherish and Treasure,– in *Jainparivar* and Dahanu News, 5 September 2016, Mother Teresa an icon of Mercy in M.M. Mumbai Voices , July-September 2016, vol.6 No.17, 29-30 and Getting to know the ‘miners and explorers’ of Mother Teresa, 31-32.

Interreligious counselling

In the past years, a number of people (couples, youngsters, teachers and students) are directed to the secretary in desperate situations and they manage to come out successfully, reconciling with each other or beginning a new style of life. Students have performed exceptionally well individually and as a class.

A conscious move to the peripheries

The secretary made time for the Adivasi students who frequent the local schools to teach them English, study methods, gave them sessions on personality development and communication skills. She took sessions for 8 Adivasi Teachers of Village Education Program (VEP) on the significant role of a teacher in a village, teacher pupil personalized relationship, the need to be an effective reference point for the students, dialogue with the parents of the children etc.

Spirituality - sessions for MBA Students

In November 2016, the secretary took sessions at St. John Institute of Management and Research, Palghar for MBA Students on youth spirituality, giving a quality lift to daily life, spirituality in the work place, ethics and values in the corporate World, healthy relationships leading to lasting commitments in life etc.

Animation and Follow up of Interreligious Camp

These camps were organized by Mrs. Aisha Khan and Sr. Teresa offered 35 hours in April- May 2016 to 77 young people of all religions and dealt with dialogue, relationship, communication skills etc. and gave a half day seminar for the parents on parenting skills. In April 2017 the secretary offered 21 hours of sessions on personality development, basic skills for day today life, communication skills, dialogue with self, parents and others etc. to an interreligious group of 38 students at Dahanu. She counselled each student personally and met their parents. On 24 April at the concluding ceremony with a two hours creative program by the students, Sr. Teresa addressed the parents on the beauty of discovering the greatness of each child and the joy of accompanying them. Follow up meetings and accompaniment of families is done.

India Peace Centre Annual Board Meetings

As Trustee member, the secretary participated in the Annual Board Meetings of India Peace Centre (IPC) at Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi on 2 September 2016. On 12 September 2017, The Annual Board Meeting of IPC was held at CBCI Centre, New Delhi, Most Rev. Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas addressed the Board Members of IPC. The CBCI hosted this meeting.

ECUMENISM

Together for an Ecumenical Celebration of Christ

On 22 January the Ecumenical Sunday 2017, 9 Pastors and representatives from some of the Christian denominations of Dahanu gathered together with members of the Parish Council, Teacher's Association, Youth and Prayer *Group* for an Ecumenical Celebration of Christ at Our Lady of Dolours Parish Dahanu. Fr. Johnny Nigrel the Parish Priest, Mr. Valerian Rozario, Ecumenical Representative of the parish and Sr. Teresa Joseph fma, collaborated to make this venture a fruitful one. The meeting began at 9.00 a.m. and concluded by 11.00 a.m. Fr. Johnny welcomed all present, after a brief introduction, he invited the Pastors to introduce themselves and to offer a brief narration of their specific mission. Pastor Sandeep with his young choir led all into Praise and Worship. Mr. Valerian Rozario with the help of very informative video clippings introduced the participants into the history of the journey of the Church and the 500 Years of Reformation. Sr. Teresa traced out the unique contribution of the Popes in building up communion and presented the document: "From conflict to communion Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017" which is a significant step in our journey to full communion.

Study Seminar Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism

21-22 March 2017 Institute of Indian Culture, Andheri, Theme: *Immediate Emerging Situation Today and the Role of Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism*. Sufficient time was offered to the each participant to share on the Ecumenical Journey made in the diocese/region and to plan together for future initiatives at Parish, Diocesan, regional and CBCI level.

Indian Missional Conversation

A Source unknown affirms: "Because of our interfaith chat today, your faith has become as important to me as my faith is important to me." The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) organized the August 23-24, 2017 conversation to provide a common platform for Christian mission organizations in the country to study the theme of the Asia Mission Conference to be held mid-October in Myanmar. The meet was attended by around 100 delegates representing various groups of Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Protestant Churches. The Chotanagpur diocese of the Church of North India, the National Missionary Society of India and the India Missions Association also collaborated to conduct the conversation. Sr. Teresa led the participants into a short inaugural prayer and was one of the panel speakers at the Indian Missional Conversation held at Ranchi and spoke on the theme *Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia' from an Ecclesial perspective*. The Asia Mission Conference was organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) to mark its beginning 60 years ago at Yangon, Myanmar.

The secretary participated in:

The National Consultation organized by the CCBI Commission for Ecumenism on 08 November 2017 at Bishop's House, Vasai and prepared the report of the same as per request.

In the one day ecumenical seminar at NBCLC Bangalore, on Saturday, 29 April 2017 "Pilgrimage towards Unity: Transcending the barriers."

The secretary contributed an Article on the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* for HMI Journal and reviewed Books on Ecumenism in other journals too.

The Secretary participated in the following:

The 32 Plenary Assembly of CBCI: 2- 4 March 2016 - on 3 March in the afternoon she presented a power point highlighting the challenges for interreligious dialogue and ecumenism in the present world scenario with reference to the Church in India.

Year of the Consecrated: 5 March –in the evening at 4.30 p.m. the joint celebration of the Year of the Consecrated was jointly organized by the CRI Bangalore and the CBCI.

27–29 July 2016 –in the Catholic Council of India 13th General Body Meeting, Chai Training Centre, Medchal, Hyderabad and on 28 presented a brief report of CBCI Office for Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism.

1 August 2016 - in the Proclamation of the Decree of the elevation of the Shrine of St. Lawrence to the status of Basilica and its Dedication with a thanksgiving Eucharistic Celebration.

Jamboree 2016, Mission of Daman, “Let Children Come to me” 12th November 2016, 2701 children from Class III-IX, 550 Teachers, 31 Fathers and 41 Sisters met at Khanwel for Jamboree 2016 from their respective Parishes and Institutions. Fr. Seby Mascarenhas SFX the Mission Superior of Daman and his close collaborators used an interactive and participatory methodology which robed the heart of all present. She reported on it in <https://linksofcommunion.wordpress.com/2016/11/17/let-the-children-come-to-me-daman/>

19th October 2016 (afternoon): 4.30 p.m. in the Celebrations in connection with the Canonisation of Mother Teresa at VigyanBhavan, New Delhi.

19th October 2016 (evening) in the Farewell Dinner at the Apostolic Nunciature.

20th October 2016 at the CBCI Centre - Farewell to Apostolic Nuncio.

3 November 2016 the meeting of the Office-Bearers, Secretaries of CBCI Offices and Councils along with the Deputy Secretaries of the Regional Bishops’ Councils.

4 November 2016 – Participated in the Meeting at the CBCI Centre of the Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries with the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General to discuss issues of correspondence and other matters related to Secretarial work.

10 January 2017, a seminar organized by His Grace Archbishop Felix Machado for Religious at Jeevan Darshan Kendra Giriz. Dr. Ralph Martin who is the Founder of Charismatic Renewal and for 50 years accompanied the Charismatic Renewal was the resource person.

17-19 January 2017, South Asian Regional Conference “Climate Change Impacts on Vulnerable Groups & Women’s Perspectives”, Sarvodya St. Pius Campus, Aarey Road Goregaon, Mumbai at the invitation of Sr. Talisha SD and prepared the report of the entire Conference at the request of the organizers.

17-18 February 2017 in the follow up seminar with the Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries for updating our communication skills organized by the CBCI – Bishop Theodore and team.

The Golden Jubilee Celebrations and in the 3 day Seminars at NBCLC, Bangalore - Saturday, 29 April 2017 "Pilgrimage towards Unity: Transcending the barriers", Sunday, 30 April 2017 “Interreligious Dialogue: Seeking Truth and Doing Charity” and 1 May, To be Salt and light of the

Earth: A New Way of Being the Church. Besides moderating the session by Dr. Pushparajan, the secretary also computerized the reports of all the group works.

10 September 2017, *World Suicide Prevention Day*, Doctor Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Educators, Parents etc. in a Seminar: Suicide and the Challenge of Blue Whale at D Y Patil University Medical College, Nerul.

06 - 07 November 2017 – in the joint meeting at CBCI Centre, New Delhi.

b) The Challenges our Office faces in light of the chosen Theme

- To respond to the Immediate emerging socio-political Situation Today and the Role of Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism to pool together experiences and knowledge on how we can be the face of the Church in India.
- How to further dialogue process in the present political scenario?
- What step to take that our Church a pioneer in dialogue should carry on with its mission of dialogue?
- How to further patriotic spirit within our Institutions especially educational and health care ones?
- To ensure concerted and organized efforts in new media, to make our consumption of media to be positive, to look at alternative media, use powerful media, spent time on some daily media presence from a secular, democratic perspective
- To be proud of our Mother India and communicate it to all especially to the students who frequent our Educational Institutions teaching them basics for Nation Building.
- The Restructuring of the CBCI
- The challenge to get dialogue and ecumenism rubbed on to our being and doing in order to acknowledge its irreplaceable role today for nation building and global transformation.
- To have a research team to study the political wing of RSS
- Interreligious dialogue calls for strengthening one's religious identity and this is at the core of being in a "state of permanent mission". Encouraged and supported by a missionary outlook to be missionaries "24 hours out of 24."
- The mission asks us to be Missionary Disciples: to nurture an intimate relationship with Jesus, our personal encounter with Him, Bread and Word to warm our heart and leave without delay to wherever He will lead us...even to the least peripheries...
- Personal relationships are the missionary paths they are the places of encounter and proclamation
- Grasping the urgency of Jesus' missionary mandate: "Go into the whole world" and cherishing the rich heritage of religious pluralism in India characterized for strong religious identity the challenge is to bounce back in spite of religious persecutions and offer to the world the best our religion and communities can offer.
- Learning to respecting each other's differences and together journeying towards unity
- To recognize that diversity adds to the dignity to the communities engaging in dialogue.
- Today interreligious activities are almost near the top of the agenda of a number of religious institutions all over the world, this was triggered by the terrible attacks on the United States that have simply served to reinforce the widespread public perception that religion is linked to violence in some special way.
- The significant challenge facing us who work in the field of interreligious dialogue is how to sustain and transform this renewed interreligious energy and solidarity into a global grassroots interreligious movement for peace and justice.
- Challenges for deepening interreligious dialogue and solidarity:
 - The Challenge of Religious Pluralism
 - Lack of interreligious movements ability to transcend the extrinsic motivations on which interreligious solidarity is sought

- The challenge confronting the interreligious movement is the lack of its ability to transcend the extrinsic motivations on which interreligious solidarity is sought.
- Do we always need to wait for conflict and violence to overwhelm us before we feel the need to develop healthy interreligious and cross-cultural relationships?
- The question of language in both its literal and symbolic forms
- The interreligious encounter is not only *biased* by the language within which it occurs but also *conditioned* by a powerful symbolic language, specifically the predominant categories of thought within which it occurs.
- An approach that brings other ordinary people along in the interreligious ethos. Regularly interreligious dialogue takes place at the level of the top leadership.
 - The challenge for interreligious activists continues to be to find ways and means to bring the proverbial grassroots along in this interreligious culture.
- Lack of focus is another challenge. For an effective dialogue all parties must be clear on the conversation's goals.
- When people feel that they need to 'water down' or compromise their religious identity in order to fit in.
- Proselytizing, or attempting to convert others.
- Knowing our own religion first, so that we can contribute meaningfully to the dialogue
- Cultivating God-consciousness
- Recognizing that the common values in all religions encourages dialogue partners to pool their resources
- Respecting the human rights of everyone that strengthens the bond of brotherhood
- Courage to ignore the opposition of extremists who crave to maintain animosity between religions
- Channeling interreligious dialogue in the right direction
- Recognizing fundamentalisms as dialogue partners - fundamentalism studies is poised to make a major contribution to interreligious dialogue, relevance of global fundamentalism for interreligious dialogue.
- To comprehend Fundamentalism as religious identity and worldview - Fundamentalism is one way to be religious in the contemporary world.

c) **Plans and strategies for the future in light of the Theme**

Strategy in general involves setting goals, determining actions/objectives to reach the goals, and mobilizing resources to implement the actions. Max McKeown (2011) argues that "strategy is about shaping the future" and is the human attempt to get to "desirable ends with available means". As our Office acclimatizes to the present socio-political scenario, marked with growing violence, attacks and threat to peace and harmony, well aware that Jesus is with us always "United in Diversity for a Mission of Mercy and Witness" we look forward to establish networks of solidarity for an adequate response and pooling of resources.

"Culture is the vital space within which the human person comes face to face with the Gospel" affirmed Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Asia*, 21. A dynamic dialogue with the variety of cultures and religions of our country become the privileged place for the Church to present its faith in Jesus Christ conscious "that at the political level, evangelization means the promotion of Constitutional values of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity, which resonate closely to the values of the Reign of God in the world."

***"I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20):** "United in Diversity for a Mission of Mercy and Witness" - The triple dialogue with India's Cultures, Religions and the Poor have to be truly strengthened through wise discernment. The humble dialogue has to cut across the

Dialogue of Life, the Theological Dialogue, the Dialogue of Religious experience and the Dialogue of Common Action.

Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel (1Cor 9,16). Interreligious dialogue is strengthening one's own religious identity with openness to the other and in this regard the missionary dreams can be integrated effectively into our programs, committing ourselves to train various groups in new ways of evangelization. I dream of a new missionary era, I am mission, being in a permanent state of mission, "I dream of a 'missionary option' that is a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything" Pope Francis, EG, 27, falling in love with Jesus and making others fall in love with Him can inspire and guide the choice of content and method of new ways of evangelization. Pope Francis has expressed it so aptly: "Once again, it is our living faith in Christ which is our deepest identity; it is from this that our dialogue begins, and this that we are asked to share, sincerely, honestly and without pretence, in the dialogue of everyday life, in the dialogue of charity, and in those more formal opportunities which may present themselves."³

To introduce and support initiatives that expand shared perceptions among individuals of different religions, cultures, genders, and ethnicities.

To utilize an Interreligious and Intercultural Model for Dialogue and Peaceful coexistence in different parts of India and a strategy to overcome misunderstandings and stereotypes that affect relations between groups and within societies.

To encourage women and men to offer recommendations to decision-makers.

At institutional and individual level to offer dignity to everyone and to restore friendship and trust through our shared values

To create space to discuss the functions, rights and responsibilities of religious bodies in our country as religion is frequently perceived as a threat and cause for division.

Explore ways and means to deal with the discord among major religions, to promote continuous interreligious and interfaith relations emphasizing the importance of peace between religions and cultures.

Make unified efforts to address corruption and social problems, avoid the defamation of religions and religious symbols.

To facilitate Intercultural and Interfaith Understanding and Cooperation for Peace: to convene in 2018 a high-level dialogue on interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and national respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity bringing together with other similar initiatives in this area. This High-level Dialogue would be held in Delhi in August 2018 at the ministerial or highest possible level and there would also be an informal interactive hearing with representatives of civil society, including representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector to be chaired by the Resident Bishop of the CBCI and the Chairman Bishop and the member Bishops of Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism. Possible topics for the main focus of the event: (1) Challenges of Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation today and (2) Best practices and strategies for Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation, (3) Going Forward today in India fostering the theme: "United in Diversity for a Mission of Mercy and Witness."

To promote bold, responsible and well-informed interreligious dialogue at all levels of the Indian society. To undertake interreligious initiatives in order to prevent and transform communal or interreligious tensions, reduce threats of weapons, promote human development and true care of the earth.

³Pope's discourse to the bishops of Asia when he met them at Haemi shrine in Daejeon Diocese, South Korea, Vatican Radio, 2014-08-18.

To begin with the Christian heritage as our common ground and how to take forward dialogue among Christian Groups with due respect and implementation of the document *Christian Witness in a Multi Religious World...*

Encourage Educational Institutions: to make use of School Assembly as a platform for promoting interreligious harmony, Constitution of India and Patriotism. to set apart the celebration of major Festivals of different religions, National days, cultural feasts etc. for promoting interreligious harmony.

To initiate UN Week of Harmony especially at St. Andrew's College Bandra and in other educational Institutions that are opened to similar initiatives.

To ensure that Dialogue Commissions exist in every Diocese and representatives of all religions can plan together.

To form committees with priests, religious and laity for Interreligious dialogue.

To conduct orientation or training program at diocesan level for secretaries/volunteers/team. Make vision-mission objectives and action plans and policies in the Dioceses

Awareness of Interreligious Dialogue to be given to the Priests – the topic could be taken at the priestly meetings.

Promote higher studies on Ecumenism and Dialogue.

Twice in a year a course for those involved in dialogue

To form a local organizing committee including members of 6 religions considering gender equality

Regional and National forum & team to meet – political authority and ecclesiastical authority with our issues

Arrange awareness programs for all the denominations about ecumenism at the CBCI Level. The Document *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World...* is a very good one to be studied together.

To set up Ecumenical Dialogue Commission in every Diocese

One leader of the Catholic Church should coordinate with other Christian Churches.

To conduct common Retreats/Conventions Ecumenical Clergy Fellowships

To have Registered United Christian Forum at Regional and State level

United Christian Political front for promoting political leadership and bureaucrats among Christians

Evangelizing communication in Asia has to be ever more grounded on deep spirituality. St. John Paul II's travels to Asia confirmed his view "*that the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation. Unless the missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way*" (EA, 23, cf. RM, 91).

From January – March 2017, as part of a Project, we had a few ***Study Seminars on Interreligious Dialogue*** and particular care will be taken to focus on missionary discipleship, to understand "the preaching of the Gospel must not only be a source of consolation and strength but also a call to foster unity, charity, and healing in the life of the people. The unity we share and celebrate is born in

diversity - don't forget this, it's born of diversity. It values the differences between persons as a source of mutual enrichment and growth; it invites to rediscover one another together, in a culture of encounter and solidarity" Pope Francis in Myanmar.

In the formation of personnel for interreligious dialogue and ecumenism, bearing in mind the present socio-political scenario, we will focus more in the *diakonia of the truth* (John Paul II. Encyclical Letter, *Fides Et Ratio*, 2).⁴We will make special efforts: "With growing conviction we affirm courageously and proclaim with joy "Ecce natus est nobis Salvator mundi, Behold the Saviour of the World is born to us, born in Asia." John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 2.

From January – March 2017, as part of a Project, our office had a few seminars for young people Training Young College Students to Be Ambassadors of Peace and Harmony to empower them gradually to be a voice in the world constantly inviting humanity toward the path of nonviolence and the logic of peace.

Aware that the Church is a "field hospital", our Office will take particular care to heal wounds through concrete gestures and witness. Our renewed commitment to the ecumenical dialogue and interreligious collaboration can and must find a particular expression of the Church's healing ministry.

We will join hands with teachers and youngsters to work towards a proactive mission of peace, harmony and reconciliation. A mission that takes the form of dialogue, that builds up relationships marked by cordiality, and communion and to "reject every act of violence and hatred perpetrated in the name of religion" (Pope Francis). Continue to strengthen efforts to build bridges of dialogue with followers of other religions in weaving relations of peace, enabling reconciliation and harmonious living together.

The True Missionary is the Saint. "What is needed is the encouragement of a new "ardor for holiness" among missionaries and throughout the Christian community" (John Paul II, *RM*, 90). During seminars and sessions, special care will be taken to nurture a new ardour for holiness, transformed by the encounter with the Risen Lord like the two disciples of Emmaus to go in haste to proclaim the Good News and to allow ourselves to be transformed by the mission.

We will introduce especially the laity into a believers reading of the life and mission of Apostle Paul which helps to capture how fascinated by Christ he embraced his mission and how the mission in its turn has transformed him and his communities. A similar process has to take place even today in our communities and in our personal lives.

Make efforts to allow the Margins to speak to us today: The joy of announcing the Gospel today with and for those on the margins and peripheries will offer a new perspective to our being and operating. The more we are in touch with the Good News of Jesus and with our people on the peripheries, a life focused on essentials will become a natural part of our being.

⁴ John Paul II. Encyclical Letter, *Fides Et Ratio*, 2, "From the moment when, through the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life, the Church has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the world to proclaim that Jesus Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (*Jn*14:6). It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: the *diakonia of the truth*.¹ This mission on the one hand makes the believing community a partner in humanity's shared struggle to arrive at truth; ² and on the other hand it obliges the believing community to proclaim the certitudes arrived at, albeit with a sense that every truth attained is but a step towards that fullness of truth which will appear with the final Revelation of God..."

From the one big dream of being a Church in dialogue and solidarity to thousands of other dreams: The great dream of being a Church in dialogue and solidarity has to burst into thousands of new dreams depending on the enthusiasm and missionary fervour of each one with colours and touches that are totally different, but always centred on the one and great dream and prayer of Jesus “that they all may be one.”

From January – March 2017, as part of a Project, our office had a few Live-In Seminars for Couples of Mixed Marriages. From Vatican Second to Synod on Family 2014, the Church has spoken extensively on the role of the family, family as sanctuary of life etc. From documents to life the process of taking the contents of the documents to the people has to be done: sessions for mixed marriage couples, catechesis, adult faith formation, counselling, simply being there when the family needs us are all means to strengthen this process as the Church’s mission is to listen.⁵

From January – March 2017, as part of a Project, our office conducted Two Basic Courses on Interreligious Dialogue for Teachers of All Religions and will focus more on Journeying together, appreciating diversity, in continual search for the divine and making peace and nonviolence a way of life.

An Indian will rarely go in for syncretism. Every Indian is conscious of Religious pluralism and his/her Religious identity. It is precisely here that the Church in India and our Office for dialogue can continue to be a prophetic voice and the presence of action of few extremist groups and conflicting orientations should challenge us ever more to witness and proclamation. “A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him...A person, who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody” (EG 266).

Conclusion

Under the able guidance of His Grace Abp. Dr Felix Anthony Machado and with the help of Most Rev. Raphy Manjaly and Abp. Joseph Perumthottam, our office reaches out in dialogue and service. We are grateful to the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops for the support and collaboration. Special thanks to Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, SFX for the timely assistance to our office and to Monsgr. Joseph Chinnayyan for his always prompt response.

It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching opines St. Francis of Assisi. We are all interconnected. The poet Gwendolyn Brooks has put it eloquently: "We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond." We are in a Church that grows by attraction in the spirit of dialogues eloquently expressed by our Pope emeritus Benedict XVI: “It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction.’”

Sr. Teresa Joseph, FMA

⁵Pope Francis, “Church’s objective is not to proselytize...but to ‘listen to the needs, desires, disappointments, despair and hope’ of the people. The ideal of a missionary and poor Church, incarnated by Saint Francis 800 years ago, remains more than valid today, in order ‘to restore hope to the young, to help the elderly, to be open toward the future, and to spread love.’ The Church must ‘be poor among the poor... include the excluded and preach peace.’”