

# Earth our Home

Reflections of the Bethany Sisters at the end of the Eco-Retreat at Tarumitra 24 Aug-2 Sept 2014



Archbishop William D'Souza SJ addressing the retreatants under the sprawling *Kadambh* tree in Tarumitra

## Holiday Time in his Creation

The Eco Retreat was a holiday time with the Lord for the 56 Bethany Sisters drawn from the Provinces all over the country and a couple of Sisters serving abroad who were on a furlough, a time away from home, to be in the lap of nature here at Tarumitra in Patna. The breath-taking experiences that were provided day after day all through the 8 days of retreat by Fr Robert Athickal SJ, were memorable ones. The excitement of the visit to the Ganges and the boat ride in the waters basking in the evening golden sun reflected in the waters has remained memorable. Thanks to Fr Robert for leading us to these experiences taking an extra mile most of the time and to all the staff of Tarumitra that journeyed with us!

**Sr M Assumpta BS**

Gen. Coordinator for Pastoral And Socio Medical Ministry

## My family is much bigger....!

"Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush afire with God; and only he who sees takes off his shoes; the rest sit round it and pluck blackberries". The words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning are very much true in my life too. As a Bethany Human Rights' Activist, I have spend my past 15 years, in planning, implementing and restoring the Human dignity of persons and women in particular. The ECO Retreat at Tarumitra made all a difference and widened my horizon of life. My family is much bigger than what I thought of.

We are part of the earth, for it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters, the birds, reptiles and the animals are our brothers. We are related to each other. We belong to ONE common family. We are related cousins to everything and everybody. We have varieties of cousins. All things are connected. Nature possesses great power and immensity. Nature presents a highly organic unity of structure and functions, a networked reality. It demonstrates the miracle of integration. The nature mirrors so well the nature of God.

The soul touching encounter of Ms Swetha Marandi, made me realise that in one day a human being breathes oxygen equivalent to 3 cylinders. In a day one uses Oxygen worth Rs 2,100/- and for a full year it is Rs. 7, 66,500/-. All this oxygen is derived free of cost from the surrounding trees.

I understand that each tree is a RESOURCE. I need to make it grow and teach people to care for the plant life. Let us respect the God of life present in this beautiful universe and be related to one another in a bond of love and connectedness. We are all bonded to one another. The universe is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects. In God's cathedral everything and everybody has a place to sing and dance.

**Sr Mariola BS.**

## MY LOVELY HOME

1. How lovely is your dwelling place Lord,  
In all the living things in this universe,  
It is fully soaked with your divine presence;  
Exalting all your glory and grandeur.

CH: Oh praise the Lord my soul,  
Oh Lord my God, how great you are

2. Being so simple and lovely,  
With integrity and abundance;  
Loving, caring and transparent  
Adapting and adopting you remain still.

CH: Oh praise the Lord my soul,  
Oh Lord my God, how great you are

3. Giving and receiving is your hallmark  
Connectedness is your identity  
Generous in sharing your resources  
Without counting the cost, never

CH: Oh praise the Lord my soul,  
Oh Lord my God, how great you are

4. On your lap oh Mother I heard a clarion call  
Be oriented towards the Eternal Sun  
And be a blessing for others as we do  
By giving life to all whom you meet in your journey.

CH: Oh praise the Lord my soul,  
Oh Lord my God, how great you are

**By Sr Lisieux and Priya Rose BS**

## GOLDEN MOMENTS

World is an assembly of many spiritualities. Everything is holy and divine. Of life living in relation to our home the Earth. Eco spirituality is a way God dwells everywhere and in everything. Creation is the primary look of God's revelation.

We have experienced Gods glory and love through His Creation. We became aware of "we become what we contemplate" this has happened to our lives. We had enough time to stare at the beauty of creation and we experienced our connectednesses to the Creation that we live in.

The awareness of the saying, "the more we are attached to many things the greater is our detachment". The words of Mother Marie Louis De Meester gave more meaning to our lives that is "Let your heart be so great and so generous that the whole world find a room

in it". We the sisters Living in North East accommodating different cultures, food habits, tradition, languages, and music gave us more meaning for our lives.

It was a beautiful moment to rest and to experience in the Cathedral of God . It has made us more nature friendly to see God in everything and to love every one.



**As part of the Eco-retreat the sisters spent an evening by the banks of the River Ganga**

## Creation from Alpha to Omega...

'The more and more I grow up, the less and less I see a difference adoration and research'. Says Dr Tehilard Chardin SJ. This is very much true in our lives. We keep growing up physically and spiritually at popular level, ascetical level and mystical level. We were trained in the popular level by our parents and later when we joined the Congregation in our initial formation. We felt that it was needed in that stage of life. Later as we grew up, we were guided to see God and experience Him as our very personal God and to have intimate relationships with Him by denying the bodily pleasures and in disciplining our bodies. We are to follow the rigid rules, practices and rituals within the four walls of our Institutions. 'To BE is Holy, to live be sacred' goes well in a mystic's life. A mystic is filled with God's compassion and friendliness. She/he opened to all. They reveal a compassionate face to others in the society in which they live.

In Tarumitra, we experienced the immense presence of the Creator in His creation i,e in the giant mighty trees, water ponds, birds, reptiles, the climbing creeper all over like wedding pendals and the lush green paddy fields. We saw, we touched and felt the love and respect that led us to experience God's real presence in the Lord's Cathedral on this dear Mother Earth.

We are delighted to realise that we are the cousins of this great planet and enjoy the fullness of life in the procession of Alpha and Omega. We are grateful to Rev Fr Robert the Director and his cooperative team at Tarumitra. We are greatly indebted to our General Coordinator Sr Assumpta for organizing this programme and journeying with us.

Let Tarumitra long live, grow, and prosper a hundred and hundreds of years to come.

**Sr Susan & Sr Lorna BS.**

'Creation is the primary book of God's revelation' says St Ireneus. Having lived years together amidst the ecological disconnections of our times, the Lord called us to be in Tarumitra which led us to recognize how glad we the 57 Bethanites were under His Cathedral cherishing the tremendous power and love from this mother earth. God reveals to us His beauty, immensity and integrity in the creation. Every part of the earth is sacred and it is part of us too. The mother earth worked whole year to give just flowers, fruits and all that we enjoy today. All that God created He found it very good, beautiful and sacred. There is nothing dirt because everything comes from this beautiful earth. There is right place for everything and there is bondedness across the globe.

The history of human being points towards the Big Bang that is the cosmic explosion which gave birth to galaxies, the star called Sun, and the earth, the birth of life and birth of human beings. Thus the universe is not a collection of objects but communion of subjects. In the words of Hildegard of Bingen "God covenants with the earth and entire creation. The earth forms not only the basic raw materials for the humankind but also the substance of the Incarnation of God's Son. Human beings think themselves as the crown of creation and it makes them to subjugate the earth rather than safeguarding it. According to Chief Seattle 'Human Beings did not weave the web of life, they are merely a strand in it. Whatever they do to the web, they do it to themselves.

Today the Creator is inviting us to look at God's work and He is asking us what has become of my land. What has become of my seas, skies? What has become of the work of my hands? And He holds us responsible by questioning us 'what have you done to the work of my hands?

We damage our mother earth by the pesticide we use to satisfy the greediness of wealth. By our pious religious practices which give way to self satisfaction under the disguise of spirituality. We need a spirituality that takes care of the earth. We need a culture of caring for the earth and feel the connectedness of cousinship. As Congregation aren't we also responsible for the crisis the earth faces today?

The days we spent in Tarumitra led us to open the eyes of heart and connect ourselves back to the Mother earth.

### Southern Province



**U.N Heroine and activist Shweta Marandi shared her concern for the planet in her presentation on saving electricity**

## TARUMITRA ECHOES....

We were awakened to the reality that God is alive and active right in the midst of creation. It was a delight to find God right here in our midst, in creation and in everything; the flora and the fauna, the galaxies and the stars, the sun and the moon, the river and the sandy shore, the blade of grass and the stone in a word in the animate and inanimate beings. It was amazing for each one of us to acknowledge His power, presence and might in everything and to stand still by Him as He stands by us in our lives ups and downs, in rain and in

shine, in joys and sorrows, in success and failures in health and in sickness and in life and in death.

This awareness evoked in us sentiments of overwhelming gratitude towards God and to make everything part and parcel of our lives. We were transported to the seventh Heaven and we experienced the bliss of seeing God face to face. We began to own the planet earth as Mother earth and to respect and revere it and to care for it. It is heartening to note that 'We were able to find God in everything and everything in God' like St Ignatius of Loyola. Those who have eyes to see, they would contemplate only the divine things and will not see anything profane in creation. We were greatly inspired by the life of St Francis of Assisi who could feel at home with the Cosmos and address everything as his 'Brother and Sister'. We were also enlightened by the words of Fr Thomas Berry "This universe is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects. Hence we have resolved to see this universe with awe and wonder as the handiwork of God and to live in awareness to find God in everything and everything in God and to do all that is within our power to save mother earth and its resources for the future generation. We are delighted to say that we have experienced the all permeating presence of God in and around TARUMITRA and His voice echoes and re-echoes beckoning everyone to praise and glorify God.

**Sr Esuria BS.**

## Eight days..

Being here in Traumitra during past 8 days was very meaningful. One

thing I am going to carry along with me is that to get attached to many cultures, nature, languages, music, food habits, people, and places. It is here that I realized that my heart has the capacity to absorb as many people, cultures, traditions, customs as possible. To get detached from one thing and get attached as many things as possible means to become what I love. It has change my outlook towards life.

I am a part of the nature. I came from earth, I live on this beautiful earth and one day I will go back and join my mother earth.

**Sr. Jessy Maria**

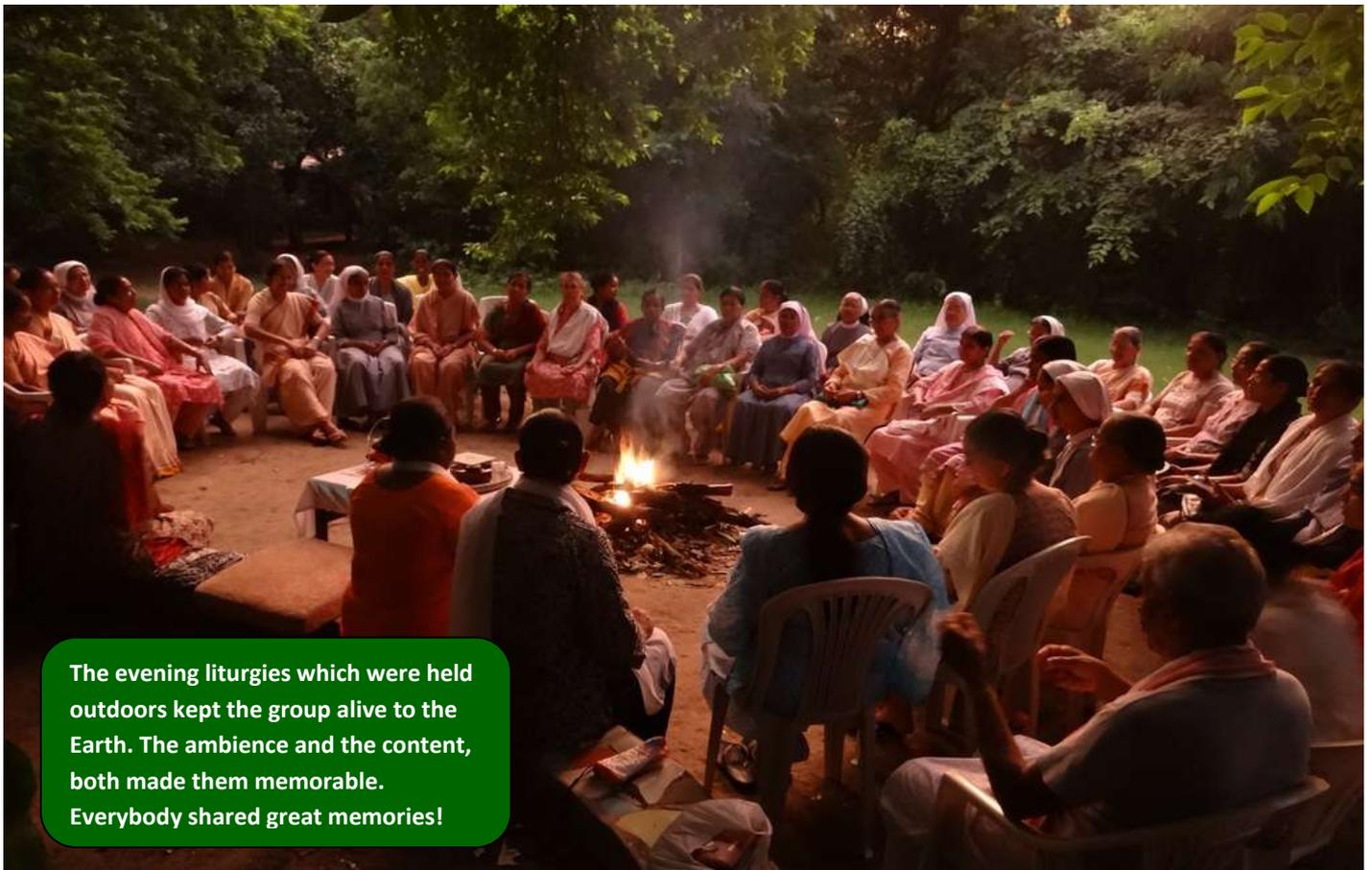
## Detachment?

As the sixth day dawned we were exposed afresh to a new reality as what is Detachment? It was a new way of understanding.

Detachment is attachment to many. If this universe is divine with his presence what shall we do? We found an answer i.e.

getting attached to many and not one or few!!!! Created in God's image we are capable of loving many.

We were remained of late Sr. Karuna a Holy Spirit sister, who was a member of the team of CRI, Delhi in charge of Social Work. She used to say "When we get attached and love many, we are filled with the creator" What a wonderful thought. We become what we love. We are familiar to meditate on the Gospel and love Jesus, to become like Him. So also if we love Mary we will be compassionate like her. The truth dawned on us that imitation and becoming is a daily process. Each moment we imitate people.



The evening liturgies which were held outdoors kept the group alive to the Earth. The ambience and the content, both made them memorable. Everybody shared great memories!

In spring the earth is dresses in luxuriantly and we observe all around the real spring at ' Tarumitra' we discovered that what we have we become hence we become what we contemplate upon. When we fall in love with the tree we become one with universe. Thus we realized that whatever fascinates us becomes an entry point to reach the creator of this great, wide, beautiful wonderful world

**Sr. Marie Therese**

## The Imminence of God

God dwells in the heart of everything, so enjoy everything with detachment... *Isha Upanishad.*

A realization of God dwells in everything brought home to us the sacredness of God's creation. Our attachment to diverse things in our surroundings created harmony within and around as a result the cultural differences vanished. As we are created in the image of God we have innate potentials to love God's creation. Its true that we become what we love, if we meditate and love Jesus we will come to be like Jesus. Imitation and becoming is a daily process as result we become like a changing rose.

Each evening during the Eucharistic celebration we witnessed the glimpse of the varieties of cultures. The realization that we are all cousins put as at ease in the company of each other. Open air mass in God's cathedral with a beautiful canopy above was an awesome experience of God's presence and grandeur on the lap of nature. We established affinity and relationship with trees plants fresh air, fire, open sky etc.

Relaxed time table made us to move around freely and get in touch with mother earth and its scenic beauty in Taru Mitra campus. The karma yoga in the evening instilled the spirit of collaboration. Indeed it was a holiday time with God in this beautiful part of the country TARU MITRA – me and my God, my cousins and Cosmos.

**Srs. Stella, Rose Margraet & Nailni**

**"The day will come when, after harnessing the ether, the winds, the tides, and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And, on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."**

Teilhard de Chardin SJ



**56 Sisters hailing from the whole country were represented at the Retreat sat for a group photo with Archbishop William along with Frs. Robert Athickal SJ (Director) Joe Parekattil SJ and Meloo SJ.**

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