

# I AM BECAUSE YOU ARE.....

Dear

The Christmas Season is around .....we come to greet you with the message of Christmas to fill your hearts and homes.....

We are asking ourselves this question.....what does Christmas mean in today's context??

How can we bring Jesus to the torn humanity grappling with evictions, unemployment, hunger, unjust wages...

Loneliness, lack of opportunities for livelihood, disrobing of dignity, abuse of every form, homelessness, dissent not acceptable, land grab.....

Standing in solidarity with people on the margins....bringing their voices from the periphery to center stage, advocating on their behalf....empowering them to demand their rights....

Offering our services in collaboration with St. Xavier's being compassionate to the students and staff...leaven in the dough...

This is the unfolding of the Christmas story in Patna....



with Blessings for Christmas and 2019

# Goan nun honoured for promoting constitutional values

Presentation Sister Dorothy Fernandes was among 70 people who were honoured for promoting democratic and republic characteristics of the Indian Constitution. The award, titled Neelkanth Samman, was presented to her for the exceptional work she does for the people

MELISSA PACHECO



Constitution Day, Sr Dorothy received the award 'Neelkanth Samman' at the Neelkanth Hall in New Delhi. The day marks the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Indian Constitution.

Sister Dorothy Fernandes was among the 70 people who were honoured for promoting democratic and republic qualities of the Constitution of India, and the only Christian. "I was honoured for the award I've received because this is not just for me, it is for Christianity, my congregation, my team who supported me," Sr Dorothy says.

An educationist by profession, Sr Dorothy uprooted the social concerns around her and ventured an enter called to get out of her comfort zone in order to help the needy. "Real education is outside the classrooms," she believes. With this in mind and with the permission of her superior, Sr Dorothy went out to a tribal region called Surulhoda in Madhya Pradesh and lived a life like the 'Gonds'. Sharing her experience there, she says, "I stayed there for two years and they were the best years of my religious life. We lived simple lives in mud houses and ate meagrely, due to which my health began to deteriorate." She then moved to Delhi, working for the good of the slums there, before then getting transferred to Patna.

Sr Dorothy works with a group of youngsters from Bihar, all non-Catholics, in her NGO called 'Ashray Abhayan' which means 'campaigning for shelter'. She heads this group and has done amazing works in Bihar especially in its capital, Patna. "I was horrified to see the slum areas in Patna, the way the people were living in such an undignified area," she states. She took the responsibility to teach social justice and women empowerment to the people living there. "People do not know their Fundamental Rights and that is why they do not know when the government violates them," she says. The only thing that

is important for the people is that Sister wants her fellow citizens to know the importance of the Constitution and says that there is a need to safeguard it.

Ex-Chief Minister of Bihar, Jagan Ranwarshi, was a great support to Sr Dorothy and her organisation. "He helped me throughout his 2-month tenure and also after that, he supported my works as we held rallies, protests and conferences to raise the issues that the suppressed people were facing," she informs.

Due to the public response, she held another rally on September 25 this year (2018), which was considered the biggest rally they ever had. It was held to raise sensitivity among the government leaders, and to stop evictions of the people living there for the development of the city into a smart city.

"She believes that people should be educated in the right way, since they are illiterate, they are deprived of their constitutional rights. "I empower people through democracy and follow the principle of Educate, Organise, Agitate," she expresses. "Giving the people back their lost voice is what Sr Dorothy does portraying Christ truly. Making the use of a two-step approach to empower people, Sister explains. "First, we educate them in terms of their rights. Second, we give them social security, which includes giving them recognition with regard to their economic status, family, government identity proofs, services and much more."

Apart from that, she has opened up centres for children of workers working on construction sites, and other places including the slum children. "About 260 students come to these schools to study after they get their primary education here, we make sure they continue their studies further." Sr Dorothy shares. For women and young girls, six skill learning centres exist where they are taught sewing. "At the end of their course, they are given a certificate and a machine," she adds.

In a blessed and proud moment for Goa, Sister Dorothy Fernandes, belonging to the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (PBVM), St. Teresa Convent, Vasco and St. Pius X Convent, Orlim, was recognised for her wondrous work reflecting Christ. On November 26, 2018, which is celebrated as