

Homily on the occasion of the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Goan Association of New Jersey, September 24, 2016

Allow me to read a poem in Konkani by an eminent poet of Goa Dr. Manohar Rai Sardessai. He is a beloved son of Margao who gave Goa a golden expression through his lilting poems.

Sobit amchem Goem,

Sundor amchem Goem! – My beautiful Goa!

Rosall follachem – full of fruits

Pikall mollachem, - of ripe fruits

Lalit Kalanchem, Goem! (?)

Madd-maddianchem, - of palm trees and areca trees

Nohiam-dorianchem, - of rivers and ocean

Dudam-zorianchem, Goem! – of milky springs, Goa!

Fulam –fantiechem, - of flowers and branches of flowers

Tambdde matiechem – of red earth

Loknna chhatichem, Goem!

Porne kirtichem (?)

Torne xoktichem, - of youthful strength

Omor sfurtichem, - Goem ?

Meklleponnachem, - of freedom

Munisponnachem, - of humanness

Sopnn bhangarechem, Goem!- a golden dreans, Goa

We gather to celebrate a quarter century life of this community, which became a home to so many.

It was a long journey – but we made it.

It is an appropriate occasion for us to look at Jesus - the itinerant. He was on the move to *do good*. We are all itinerants walking the unknown paths trusting in the God who journeys with us. Wherever Jesus went he built communities which would *do good* among themselves who will come together to nurture each other, care for each other, to grow to the fullness of life.

Why an Association...

25 years in the life of an association is a milestone, and we look back on ourselves to reflect upon who we are, who we have become and who we could be. The parable of the talents offers us a poignant point of reference.

Like the family of Abraham we set ourselves on a long journey in search of a promise and presumably a satisfying promise. We toiled to accomplish that promise; for different people that promise is different. For some it may have been better economic opportunities, for others a different way of living, a different quality of life, and for still others to find that promise of education and human flourishing.

Who are we? We are not merely people whose roots are in a far distant land, filled with nostalgic sentiments, a piece of land highly romanticized to satisfy our own fantasies, with peculiar cuisine and exotic musical culture, and a language, which is still going through the throes of growth and at the same time pangs of its very existence. Our own Dianne Nunes smitten by the charming Goa, has adopted it as her extended home, allows her heart to speak:

Morning View

*Morning awakens the hills to arise
and life opens up to the beholders eyes.*

*As sunlight spills over the dew covered hills
This process will capture your heart till it stills.*

*For Goa breathes dawn to this new coming day
and kisses sweet memories on its journey this way.*

*For Goa, dear Goa, your treasures partake
most cherished of moments that bonds never break.*

*My Goa, our Goa, the beauty we see
implores all they wishes tread softly on thee.*

*This jewel set among us and placed from above,
let us honor your presence with the greatest of love.*

*As the cross in the distance reminds us be still
to reverence the masterpiece that shelters His will.*

Who are we? Above all we are people with deeply shared values – values of caring for each other – neighborhood and neighborliness is deeply ingrained in us, values of generosity and kindness; values of thinking big and beyond, - it understandable that those who grow up on a sea coast carry in them a compulsion to think beyond and thus big; they are entrenched in a spirit of adventure – always wanting to know what is

beyond the horizon. One of the profound values we share and make us special is the value of faith: faith in God, and faith in each other – in Konkani we say *amchoch to*. We congregate ourselves around those values – and an Association becomes the pre-eminent instrument to bring the *diaspora* – the scattered – together and to nurture those values, re-articulate them and build on those values a better future.

Thus: what have we become? The Goan Association of New Jersey in its website under “about us” states: *To promote social, cultural, educational and charitable activities, primarily for the good of its members and worthwhile causes in Goa, India as well as the community at large in New Jersey. To promote and reflect the long standing traditions of the largely Catholic membership of the Association. To co-operate with other organizations with similar objectives and foster friendly relations with all people.*

We surely have become better people. We have expanded our horizons, we have a richer understanding of what does it mean to be a neighbor in a world that is connected not only by physical boundaries, but webbed together in cyberspace, a world near and beyond; our generosity has expanded to wherever a need arises, and our caring is not just a random act, but well planned to have maximum and optimal impact, even though it may be limited in scope. Our acts of caring are organized and systematic guided by the Caring Committee of the Goan Association of NJ. This little institution – the Caring Committee - within the Association is the hub and the heart around which *we become*. With the generational turnover our traditions may morph into something else, but the value of caring is eternal; it may and will and must manifest in different ways in different times and in different places. Out of the caring comes the prayer gatherings, charity activities, card games, the picnics, the fun gatherings, the dances, all the fun things the Association organizes and we all joyfully congregate to partake; every one of these gatherings makes us better people in real but intangible ways. In this fast pace and demanding world it is easy to miss or neglect being caring, therefore we need the Association to remind us and to bring us together of who we are and who we are becoming, and what we could become.

The parable of the talent in the gospel passage we read this evening hold us accountable. We set on a journey, and after wandering in the desert for a little while, we acquired the promise – understandably in different degrees for different people. The talents flourished. What are we doing with them? How are they being used? This is the challenge for us: what can we become? It is the same drive that propels us for adventures – to look and to explore the beyond.

Let us keep alive the picture of Abraham along with his wife Sarah, his son Isaac, his extended family along with the sheep and camels, and what not – setting on this journey – it was not only a spiritual journey, but also a material journey to make a better and safe living. A journey riddled with anxieties, uncertainties, but yet full of hope.

Let us keep alive the image of Jesus – itinerant Jesus – Jesus on the move meeting new people and always *doing good*... While on our journey and while our talents have flourished – what can we become? I pray the Goan Association of NJ may be the bell that keeps tolling to bring us together around that well we call the CARING COMMITTEE.

Let me end with a poem... by my colleague in Goa Fr. Lino de Sa

Goem Mhojem Kurpechem - My grace-filled Goa

Goem mhojem kurpechem losloxit denneachem - My Goa is filled with grace and with bountiful gifts!

Llan zori suvaten vostumni bhorlolem - Although tiny in size, she is filled to the brim,

Goem mojem kurpechem. - My grace-filled Goa!

Panchveo sotreo maddancheo - Her green umbrellas of palm trees,

zhaddam-xetam devllamxallo - Her rice fields and groves, her temples and schools,

minna-khonni dongor nhoieo - Her mine fields and hills and rivers:

Goencheo heo girestkaio. Lo, the wealth of my Goa!

Goem mojem kurpechem - My Goa is filled with grace

losloxit denneachem - and with bountiful gifts!

Lhan zori soimachem - Although small in nature,

sonskrutai aslolem. - she is great in her culture

Goem mojem kurpechem.- My grace-filled Goa!

Mandde-dekhnni, dhulpodam - *Mandos, Dekhnnnis and Dulpods*

natkam-xigme ferieo-festam - The stage plays and the religious festivals, the feasts and the fairs,

Konknni bhaxa, ruchik mhonn'nneo - The Konkani language and its rich proverbs:

Goencheo heo vhovikaieo. - Lo, the greatness of Goa!

Goem mojem kurpechem - My Goa is filled with grace

losloxit denneachem. - and with bountiful gifts;

Bharotachea nitoll koplal – on India's unsoiled forehead,

Goem mhojem kukma tillo – My Goa is like the kumkum

sonvsarachea lal lal polear – on the mud-red cheek of the earth

sobaiecho kallo ti-bo. – A black beauty spot;

Goem mojem kurpechem mogall Goenkaranchem. My grace-filled Goa belongs to
love-filled Goans!

Once again our own Dianne Nunes, overtaken by the pangs of departure from the land that has smitten her, writes:

Leaving Goa

(Standing on the Goan shore needing to be alone as I was finding it hard to leave).

*The beauty, the warmth, the presence of Goa –
All whisper their call on your heart.*

*Gentle cool breezes through Nature's delights
All make this so hard to depart.*

*A smile, a sigh, the eyes that show love,
In the market, the curb, or a home.*

*A pureness shines bright, which will humble the might –
By the love and the warmth that is shown.*

*A farewell to Goa from the beach by the sea –
Leaves you breathless and longing for more.*

*But the call to return to a land far more pale –
Echoes your loss on the shore.*

*As the distance increases the space that is made;
The sadness will loosen its' hold.*

*For the lifeblood that has given this place its true name,
Has now become part of my soul.*

