



'Light for the Blind'

St Joseph's Hospices

Helping the Blind and Dying Destitute of South India

UK Registered Charity No.1085698

2023 Newsletter

Christmas Message of Bishop Marcus

As the Christmas season approaches, I am pleased to have this opportunity to express my esteem for Fr Thomas and all the staff, trustees and supporters of Light for the Blind.

We are bombarded with images on our news and social media feeds of our brothers and sisters living in desperate poverty and unimaginable conditions. We read their stories of unspeakable suffering and fear. So often our hearts are hardened to their suffering and we look away, or we simply feel powerless to help and again we look away. However, God, in His great goodness, chose to insert Himself into vulnerable humanity as a tiny baby born to a lowly couple away from home on an arduous journey. Our Lady and St Joseph knew suffering and persecution as they sought to protect the vulnerable infant Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus Christ never looks away from our suffering and hardships. Let us, in our turn, never cease to look to the Child Jesus born in Bethlehem as the source of our hope for an end to human suffering and for our inspiration in serving the vulnerable with love. I give thanks for the work of Light for the Blind, and all its supporters as you all strive to bring that same hope and love to the vulnerable people in your care.

As patron of the charity, I wish to invoke the blessing of God upon all who support the work of Light for the Blind. I pray that the infant Jesus, the Light of the World, may bless all your efforts in the service of the poor and vulnerable. I wish you, your families and loved ones, a very happy and holy Christmas

May you and your family enjoy a very happy and holy Christmas.

+ Marcus Stock

✠ Rt Rev Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds



Mark Wilkins, our treasurer, visited India in March 2023 - he writes:-

I visited the Hospices in Paleswaram, Dindigul, and Pondicherry this year, and was glad to meet the staff and some patients. The situation in March when I was there:

Pondicherry – about 90 patients with Celine running the Hospice

Dindigul – 260 patients with Fr. Sebastian is managing this, our first hospice

Paleswaram – about 250 – with Jancy and Fr. Thomas running the Hospice

Tamabaram is a transit hospice, allowing patients from Chennai to recover a little more before an arduous journey to the main Chennai hospice in Paleswaram.



Fr Sebastian Blesses a patient

The hospices are all running smoothly caring for more and more patients. Developments include new backup generators at Paleswaram and Pondicherry. It was marvellous to see the care provided by carers and Jesuit Seminarians to the patients.

I attended a very dignified multi-faith burial whilst at Paleswaram. I was very moved to see the care of the staff and patients being involved. A lovely if sad experience.

Our hospices, take care of the really desperate cases, and by doing this we are helping the dying and destitute, but also taking pressure off the poor families and their elderly relatives in India.

There is spare land within the Hospice boundary at Paleswaram, making an opportunity to gift the land to other charities, and strengthen links with the community.

The DeMontford order is now a real partner in the support of the hospices. A well-respected member of the order (Fr. Sebastian) is managing Dindigul hospice, and seminarians are coming to work and see how it is God's work to look after the poor and destitute. It is marvellous to see this partnership develop. In addition, the local community are involved in providing donations of money, food and clothing.



Patients prepare food



Fr Thomas talks to a neighbour

Patrons: Rt Revd Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds and William Dalrymple, historian and distinguished author

Profile of Roja and Deva



Roja on her wedding day

Roja ('Rose' in Tamil) and her husband Deva, have been working in our Hospices since 2012. They were married in 2018 and a year later were blessed with a son, David. I'm pleased to say their second child is due in four months. Roja, a qualified nurse, is a senior supervisor in our Paleswaram Hospice as well as administering to the needs of patients, while her husband Deva doubles up as a driver and patient carer. He is a true 'Jack of all Trades' filling in wherever support is required. Both are invaluable to the smooth operation of the Hospice and are much appreciated for their dedication and happy smiling disposition as they serve. Like all other marriages of our staff, theirs was a 'love marriage' at whose wedding our trustee Peter Hendricks attended during his visit in 2018.



Roja Deva and David

Considering almost 99% for all marriages in India are "arranged", those in our Hospices are 100% "love marriages", and all of them very successful as well. In fact, it's a family affair with Roja's mum working as a cook in Paleswaram and her dad working there as well as a carer and gardener. Deva's siblings Prakasi, Jothi, Celine and Jancy also are valuable members of our family team, as too was his youngest sister Monisha, before she married and left. The success of all our five Hospices is due to the commitment, loyalty and hard work of these young loving couples who make up the vital 'middle management' without whom we simply could not operate. We thank you for your prayers for all our lovely staff.

Fr Thomas

Message from Fr Thomas

My dear friends,

I'm so sorry I missed seeing you all this year due to my reoccurrence of heart problems, but was enormously lifted by your kind messages and prayers. It's twenty-eight years since my quadruple heart by-pass operation, and following a number of subsequent corrective procedures, I'm pleased to report that I'm fit and well and back to work, although at a slower pace. Fortunately, I have a wonderful senior team to rely on to take up much of the load, including Roja and her husband Deva who we feature this year.

As you know, our work is ceaseless and unremitting given the huge numbers needing our care and compassion. Our merciful vocation to undertake God's work to alleviate their suffering and distress is our life's mission, which we do willingly and with love and compassion. I cannot thank you enough for your continued support. Your contributions make a massive difference to what we can achieve – God bless you all.

Christmas is a time of peace and joy, a celebration of the birth of Our Lord Jesus, when we traditionally exchange presents. Your generous gifts bring succour, hope and relief to our fellow men and women, and the dream of recovery and rehabilitation back to their communities. Each helpless, sick and destitute patient is a special human being, loved by God, and nurtured by you in kind. I wish each of you, our lovely supporters and benefactors, all your families and our dedicated trustees, all the blessings of Christmas and all good health and good wishes for the new year.

A note from our Treasurer:

There are many ways that you can support "Light for the Blind" finances.

Electronic banking, "JustGiving" details available on the website, or providing a one-off donation, set up a regular standing order, initiating local fund-raising activities, leaving a legacy in your will, donate by cheque or completing a Gift Aid form (if a taxpayer).

Please send cheques made payable "Light for the Blind" and post to:

Mark Wilkins, Treasurer

1 Highgate Croft, Cononley, Keighley, BD20 8JQ

Email : light.4.the.blind@gmail.com

Web: www.lightfortheblind.org.uk

Or Telephone Shiela Margreaves 07967 485 967

[Please remember if you are no longer a tax payer to contact the treasurer to amend your details.](#)

Note: Trustees visiting India do so at their own expense.

Trustees: Chair, Sheila Margreaves: Secretary, Peter Hendricks: Treasurer, Mark Wilkins: Peter Dodd, Amanda Potts, Paul Tierney and Rodney Mearns are most grateful for all our generous donors, without whom Fr Thomas and his dedicated staff would be unable to provide this vital service and care for the dying destitute.

Patrons: Rt Revd Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds and William Dalrymple, historian and distinguished author