

Cardinal Oswald Gracias shows solidarity with the earthquake Victims

Card. Oswald Gracias, president of the Indian Bishops Conference, has sent a message to *AsiaNews* of solidarity for all those affected by the tragic earthquake in Abruzzo. Cardinal Gracias, in his student days in Italy, visited L'Aquila and recalls the "warmth and vivacity" of the people there. In this time of "crisis and suffering", the prelate prays that "the new life of Easter" is a "source of hope and encouragement" in reconstruction.

"It is a matter of immense sorrow that L'Aquila has been struck by an earthquake; the Church in India sends her condolences to the Bishop of L'Aquila and to the people who have been affected. I entrust those victims who perished in this terrible calamity to the infinite mercy of our Loving Father, and I implore divine consolation for the injured and those who suffer and the homeless. The Church in India prays for the victims, that our compassionate Father gives them strength in these times of suffering and crises."

Our prayers are also for all engaged in the relief efforts, upon whom I invoke the divine gifts of wisdom and strength. At such moments, they need courage, organisational skills and motivation to help these people; our solidarity is with the relief workers and the Caritas aid personnel. The Church in India is willing to help with whatever assistance may be required for this humanitarian emergency."

POWER TO LEAD - 2009

Power to Lead 2009 – a unique programme for the Catholic who wants to make a difference! Combining scriptural insights into the leadership qualities of Jesus and God's loving plans for every individual, along with sound workable management principles, this course motivated all the participants to develop their God-given potential, to fulfil their call to leadership and excellence.

The six-month course with two live-ins, spread over alternate Sundays at Goregaon Seminary, was truly a community experience. All the participants were focussed and passionate about personal growth, eager to make their social contribution and develop their entrepreneurial skills. Inputs on relevant topics like Public Speaking, Leadership techniques, Creative Thinking, Time Management, Effective Delegation, Team Building, introspective questionnaires and the lives and qualities of biblical and secular Leaders were discussed at length by resource persons from the corporate world. Group discussions and movies on leadership made the sessions more interesting, as well as taking stock of the current socio-political challenges that confront India. The core team of Dr R B Smarta, Ruth D'Souza, Fr

Harry Vaz, Fr Keith D'Souza and Fr Roland Fialho were supportive and dedicated throughout, as was the team of 23 resource persons.

The course required the participants to present three projects, the first being a Life Audit and personal vision-mission statement. The second involved chalking out a feasible parish/community project complete with Strategic Thinking, and the third was a project in the commercial sector. All in all, it was an enriching journey with a caring, accepting group of like-minded people; an experience to cherish for a lifetime.

Registrations for the next course (September 2009 till March 2010) will soon begin. To apply contact powertolead@gmail.com or call 2666 6611/44. Website: www.powertolead.net

Nicky Gumbel of Alpha visits Mumbai

The Alpha course is meant for anyone and everyone, especially those who would like to explore the Christian faith more deeply, and/or share the same with others. The basic thrust of the Alpha course is to communicate the essentials of the Christian faith, with its understanding of God the Father, of Jesus Christ - His incarnation, death and resurrection, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Since the course is parish-based, those coming to a new faith in Christ, along with those coming back, are able to proceed on their faith journey within the same parish.

Nicky Gumbel, the pioneer of the Alpha course will be in Mumbai to speak on 'Transformation and Evangelisation of Society' and meet the clergy, religious, lay leaders and all Alpha participants of the Catholic Church on April 23, 2009, at Birla Auditorium, New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400020, from 5.30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

To collect passes, please call 98200 80705.

Women's Day Celebrations At Matunga

As slogans of *mahila shakti* rent the air, it was clear that a new chapter had begun in the ever-evolving history of the Don Bosco Matunga campus. Over 600 women, all belonging to Self Help Groups from the slum communities of Antop Hill, Wadala, Matunga, Mahim, Dharavi, and from the villages of Virar and Naigaon, gathered at Matunga on Sunday, March 8, for the celebration of International Women's Day.

Ms Surekha Pednekar, Development Office staff, warmly welcomed the entire gathering. Fr Edwin D'Souza, Rector of Provincial House and Chief Guest for the occasion, expressed his hope that future Women's Day celebrations would see the Matunga grounds filled with women. He also encouraged them to keep striving for the development of their own communities.