

Gratitude for Siloam

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow. -Melody Beattie

I believe that leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. It was not just academic classrooms, the whole process of Siloam was experiential, connected to living reality. Doing a course at Heart of life was an immense love mystery and came with a range of personal experiences. It linked between faith and life. Living and dying was the essence of the whole process. The mentors were absolutely committed and dedicated. They challenged me in many ways to discover myself, breaking into my insecurities and vulnerabilities which otherwise I wouldn't have known existed. They tried to peel me like an onion. Not that I have overcome my insecurities, but I am now able to name them and continue to work on them.

During our studies, there was much time allotted for prayer, reflection and sharing. It helped me to be myself as God wants me to be in this world.

When in Siloam in 2015, I was asked the important question, 'Who is God for me today?' I often ask that question again and again, almost every day. It continues to redefine my faith.

There are many different ways of loving God, who is unconditional, alive, dynamic, eternal and continues to evolve for me. I am able to listen better and learn more from my life than mere words.

After my Siloam year, I came back to India and worked in a remote mission. Here I realised that the very quality of life is based on my ability to absorb the best from the reality of where I am.

The place where I was appointed is probably the hottest region of India. When I landed there, the temperature was soaring around 50 degrees Celsius. I started sweating like crazy at 5am in the morning. The temperatures did not matter much to me,

but what goes on within mattered a lot. Often unattended, unrecognised wounds were more dangerous and unhealthy than external wounds. I also started to know a lot of people in that area. I was able to use whatever I gained in Siloam for the good of the community, which was very well received and appreciated. I learned that a contented mind is the greatest blessing a person can enjoy. One person who came to me for spiritual conversation commented that it helped him to move from limitedness to enlarge himself.

External fades away and internal lingers and echoes in the depth of our hearts. Heart of Life helped me to become a better leader and an attentive listening companion on the journey.

Earlier in my ministry, the catechesis mostly composed of moralism. But now it is more focused on listening to each other's wisdom, especially God's words of direction, something that burns within us.

As Rector of the seminary, I continue to accompany and nurture those who have a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, enabling them to believe in themselves and recognise and respect their God-given call.

I am grateful to Siloam, which continues to lift me and expand my horizons. Now I realise that every experience is a celebration.

Joshva Gopini msc

Spiritual Director, Seminary Rector
Bangalore, India