



BE A GOOD CHRISTIAN... A TRUE CHRISTIAN... A BETTER CHRISTIAN

This is the season in which Christians celebrate Easter – Jesus' resurrection from the dead after his crucifixion. What is the significance of this celebration, not only for Christians but for all people everywhere? How have the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba illuminated the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in the lives of Christians who have come to know him? These two questions have prompted this cover story.

To fully appreciate the story of Easter, we must start with the fact that Jesus was born into the culture and religion of the Jewish people over 2,000 years ago. According to the first book in the Jewish Holy Scriptures, humanity was originally created by God in a state of purity and blissful intimacy with God:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." So God created man in his own image... male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number... I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food..." God saw all that he had made, and it was very good . (Genesis 1:26-30)



Jesus as the Good Shepherd

This state was known as "the Garden of Eden." But man developed ego and self-will, and "fell" from grace and purity and was sent out of the Garden. God promised to send the Jewish people an "Anointed One" ("Christ" in Greek or "Messiah" in Hebrew, the language of the Jews) to save humanity from this plight. Christians believe that Jesus was this "Anointed One", the "Christ" sent by God.

Since the name "Jesus" is Greek for the Hebrew name Joshua, which means "the Lord saves," he became known as Jesus Christ – "the anointed one who saves," who would restore humanity to its original state of purity and intimacy with God.

Jesus was born of a virgin, Mary, in very humble surroundings near their capital city of Jerusalem. He had a distinct mission, which Sathya Sai Baba describes this way:

Jesus was to shatter the darkness that had enveloped the world... to spread the light of love in the heart of man and councils of humanity. (24 December 1972)

In order to carry out his redemptive mission, Jesus had to correct mistaken ways of thinking, which he did through teachings such as:

You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evil person. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I tell you, Love your

try to be like Jesus. Jesus was a person whose only joy was in spreading Divine love, offering Divine love, receiving Divine love and living on Divine love. Jesus was a supremely pure and sacred person.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December 1979)

enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
(Matthew 5:38-39, 43-44)

Jesus gave spiritual teachings and performed many miraculous healings for the people of his time, as Sathya Sai Baba relates:

Jesus taught simple, practical lessons in spiritual advancement for the good of mankind. He manifested Divine powers to instil faith in the validity of his teachings. He marked out the path that can confer on man the sweet nectar of Divine bliss (ananda). He exhorted people by precept and example to cultivate the virtues of charity, compassion, forbearance, love and faith. These are not separate and distinct qualities; they are only the many facets of the Divine in man, which he has to recognise and develop. (24 December 1972)

In the course of his ministry and miracles, even raising people from the dead, certain religious and political leaders felt challenged and threatened by Jesus' popularity. Sai Baba tells us:

Jesus was the epitome of compassion and the refuge of the poor, needy and forlorn. But, many people tried to create troubles for Jesus, since they did not like his sacred teachings and activities. Their hatred for Jesus increased day by day. Even the priests turned against Jesus as they became jealous of his growing popularity. Many people out of jealousy laid obstacles in his path and even tried to kill him. (25 December 2000)

Jesus foretold what was to happen to him – that he would be crucified and then rise from the dead on the third day. After three years of ministry, Jesus was going to Jerusalem for an upcoming Jewish holy festival, the Passover Feast, and a great crowd heard that he was coming:

They took palm branches and went out to meet him shouting, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”(John 12:13)



Cross manifested by Sathya Sai Baba for John Hislop

Christ sacrificed his life for the sake of those who put their faith in him. He propagated the truth that service is God, that sacrifice is God. Even if you falter in the adoration of God, do not falter in the service of the living God. Be ready to sacrifice even your life for the sake of God.

The spirit of sacrifice is essential. To speak about devotion without a spirit of sacrifice is meaningless. If the name of Jesus is glorified all over the world today, it is because of his boundless love. He served the lowly and the lost, and in the end, he offered his life itself as a sacrifice .

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December: 1970, 1998, 1993)

On the next afternoon, which was a Friday, Jesus was put to death by hanging on a cross. (In the centuries to follow, Christians called this day Good Friday.) Yet, he forgave all, even those who were nailing him to the cross. As Sathya Sai Baba elaborates:

Jesus wished well for those who insulted and injured him. He knew that God wills all. So, even on the cross he bore no ill-will towards any one and he exhorted those with him to treat all as instruments of God's Will. (25 December 1982)

On the Thursday evening before the Passover Feast, Jesus met with his disciples for the Last Supper, knowing that the time had come for him to undergo suffering on behalf of humanity's estrangement from God (going all the way back to the time of the Garden of Eden).

That night, while praying in a garden, he was taken into custody to appear before a Jewish tribunal and eventually before the Roman ruling authorities of the region. Sathya Sai Baba reports what happened:

Jesus' critics complained to the head priest against him. They tempted one of his disciples with 30 silver pieces, to betray him into their hands. The disciple who was most loved, Judas by name, decided to work against the Master, yielding to the low temptation of a few pieces of silver. Greed for money is a demon that gets hold of the weak.

Jesus' critics told the Roman ruler that Jesus was attempting to assert himself as king and so he should be punished for treason. The priest knew that Jesus was speaking the truth, but he did not support him in order to safeguard his own position. Their insistences made the Governor order his crucifixion. (25 December 1978, 23 November 1979, 25 December 2001)

On the following Sunday morning, his closest women disciples came to his tomb, whose entrance had been sealed by a large, round stone. When they arrived, the stone had been rolled away and they were met by an angel dressed in a white robe, who told them:

Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. (Matthew 28:5-6)

Jesus had risen from the dead, on what later became known as Easter morning.

The name "Easter" comes from the name of a pagan goddess of Spring who had been celebrated around the same time of year as the Jewish Passover and the anniversary of Jesus' resurrection. Eventually, the early Christians borrowed that name to help turn the pagan celebration into a Christian holiday.

Also read - [The Story of Easter](#), a supplement to the cover story.



Mary recognises Jesus outside the Tomb

Jesus teaches infinite love and compassion. To resurrect love and compassion, you must kill jealousy and selfishness, and purify your hearts. Speak sweetly; shed comfort with every glance of yours. Do not be slaves to your sensual desires. Dedicate your hand to the service of mankind. Earn the true mercy of Jesus. Follow the path shown by him.

(25 December 1979)

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS' RESURRECTION FOR CHRISTIANS AND FOR THOSE OF OTHER FAITHS?

For a Christian, the resurrection of Jesus is essential to knowing that Jesus was Divine and that his teachings were Divine. St. Paul – whom Sai Baba said "was originally an inveterate critic of Jesus, (but) was transformed by Christ's love into the greatest apostle of Jesus and the first propagator of the Christian faith" – stated the importance of Jesus' resurrection to Christians in a letter to an early Christian community:

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, our preaching is useless and so is your faith... (and) you are still in your sins. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:15, 17, 20)

Sathya Sai Baba gives a poignant understanding of the significance of this "resurrection" and the lessons we can all learn from it, no matter what our religion:

What is the resurrection, really? It is the revelation of the divinity inherent in man. That is the result of contact with the Godhead; that can come only after years of contrition. Man is led into the wrong belief that the accumulation of material possessions will endow him with joy and calm. But Divine Love (Prema) alone can give that everlasting joy. Divine Love alone will remove anger and envy and hatred. (28 February 1964)

Jesus' physical resurrection points back to the early days of Jesus' ministry when he spoke of *our* need to be resurrected and reborn in a different way – in the knowledge and direct experience of God:

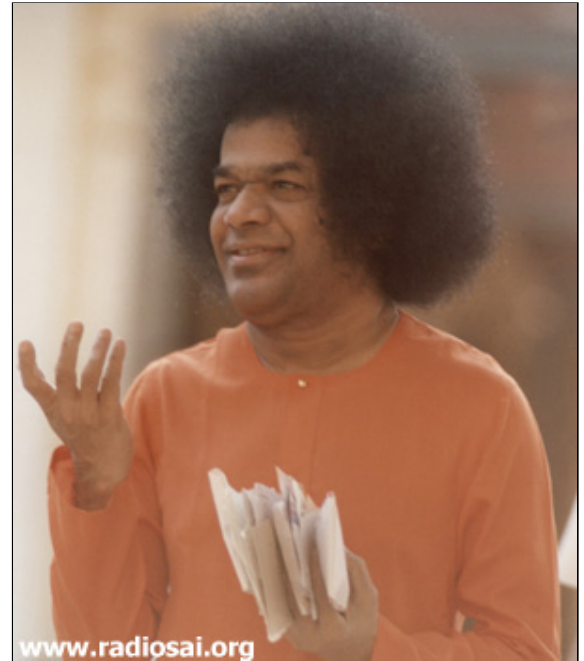
I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. (Jesus – John 3: 3, 6)

It is this same "rebirth of spirit" that many Christians have experienced as a result of coming to know Sathya Sai Baba. In fact, this rebirth of spirit has been experienced by followers of all faiths as they have responded to Sathya Sai Baba's consistent urging that each of us should deepen our faith and sincerely practise our chosen religion or spiritual path:

Each should practise his own religion sincerely. A Christian should be a good Christian. A Hindu should be a good Hindu. A Muslim should be a good Muslim. Let each one be a true practitioner of his religion. (14 April 1996)

A Muslim should become a true Muslim. A Christian should become a true Christian. A Hindu should become a true Hindu. You should have full faith in your religion and lead an ideal life. (4 September 1998)

A Hindu should become a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim. (19 November 1999)



“Be a good Christian. Be a true Christian. Be a better Christian.” What does that really mean in light of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead after his crucifixion? Many people who were brought up in the Christian religion have experienced a time when their beliefs faded in importance in their lives, or they doubted and questioned what they were taught in childhood. Many have felt a need to search for a deeper understanding of what Jesus taught and how it applies to their lives today.

We have collected stories of eight men and women from Christian backgrounds throughout the world, showing us how their knowledge and love of Jesus Christ has been *resurrected*, *reborn*, or *renewed* through their association with Sathya Sai Baba. They share with us how they have discovered a closer relationship with Jesus, a more profound appreciation of who Jesus was, and a deeper practice of what Jesus taught. Each story brings to life teachings of Jesus that can apply to us all, no matter what our faith might be.

Our first story is from Harry Geurts, guest faculty member of Western music in the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning since 1996, and previously Vice President of the Sathya Sai Organisation in the Netherlands. Growing up immersed in an atmosphere of Christian service, the personal pain he experienced while contemplating Christ’s suffering on the cross often overshadowed his celebration of Christ’s resurrection, until he gained a profound insight from Sathya Sai Baba.

IN GOD THERE IS NO SUFFERING

Harry Geurts – The Netherlands

I grew up in a Roman Catholic family. People in my grandfather’s generation had bought a building in Rotterdam for the St. Vincentius Union (also known around the world as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul), which gives many services to the poor. I was born and grew up in that house and my grandfather and father took care of the house.

I never knew anything else. We had a big statue of St. Vincentius there, and all I knew were people who were always talking about Jesus. I went to church and learned to play the piano there.

All of my schooling was at Catholic schools with only boys. So I have never gone to a school with girls. I have also only been in choirs with boys and men, no girls or women. Even now I am teaching here at the Sathya Sai Institute with only boys.

I have always had a love for Jesus. Because I was active in the choir and I was appointed to sing in the front, we always sang the Christmas songs and all of the Jesus songs. The director of the choir looked after us because we were the leading voices. You cannot sing without love and there was always a loving atmosphere – love was always in our singing. So the spiritual foundation was laid.

When I was 13, I started my own band. And when my voice broke, I left the choir and that is when I came to the world. I had an idea of becoming a priest before then, but then I saw so many nice girls that I decided not to become a



St. Vincent de Paul

Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic organisation, leads women and men to join together to grow

priest.

When I was in my 20's I became very depressed and disappointed by the world, and I thought that Jesus must be in the world, but I couldn't see him. I was just beginning to peep into the world at that time. I saw so many things and I thought, "Oh my God, is this it?" So I was frightened, although my music profession became my therapy.

During the road of life, I got into my job and career and wanted to make it, which I did both as a musician and an educator. I had a nice house, nice car, and nice family.

In 1989, I went to a healer and while I was sitting in the waiting room I saw a photo of Swami. The lady pointed out to me that this was Sathya Sai Baba, but I didn't know anything. In 1992, I came to know Sai Baba more as I began to read John Hislop's book, "My Baba and I." Then, in 1994, I attended a session on Sathya Sai education. I was very curious to meet devotees and wanted to know what they were like. After coming to know many of them a new world opened for me.

Even though I had accomplished everything, I was not content and I knew this was not the last thing I was to do in life. Then, one thing after another happened, and one day in 1995 it all collapsed, including my marriage.

I had gotten so involved with my profession that I had no relationship with Jesus and I forgot to be a human being. I wasn't a human being; I was a musician. So all of this was necessary to get me back.

spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are needy and suffering in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

(Society of St. Vincent de Paul)

All religions and scriptures agree that going to the aid of fellow-beings in times of need and saving them from distressing situations is the greatest virtue of a person. What Jesus preached was in accord with these basic teachings of all religions. Seeing his acts of love and kindness, people declared that he was a "messenger of God." Give happiness to those who are suffering and consider every activity as God's work .

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 Dec 1982, 1996, 1998)

Wherever you may be, go into the society and render social service in all possible ways, with faith in God and in a selfless spirit. The fulfilment of human life consists in the service that man renders, without any thought of return, in an attitude of selflessness. Service rendered in this spirit sheds light in the dark interior of man; it widens the heart and purifies the impulses and confers lasting bliss (ananda).

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 Dec 1970, 1989)

One year after the big collapse in my life, I received an invitation to go to India to play in the symphony orchestra at the ashram during Gurupoomima in 1996.



Front and Back of the cross materialised by Baba for Harry Guerts

When Jesus reached the stage of unity with God, he had no suffering at all. He was blissful and was prepared for anything. Even at the time of crucifixion, Jesus was smiling, because he realised that he was not the body. Body is bound to perish, but the in-dweller has no birth and death. Truly speaking, the in-dweller is God Himself. Jesus understood that his body was merely a vesture, and that God was the in-dweller.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December 1998)

God takes upon Himself the pain and sorrow of the world in order to prepare the hearts of men for love! But, when you look at the truth squarely in the face, you will know that in God there is no "suffering" and that you too have no reason to suffer! The entire world is the play of love! You suffer on account of love. It is love, love, right through – there is no reason for sorrow or pain or

This was the beginning of everything for me. Swami was like mother and father for me. First like mother and then later like father. He called me for interviews and spoke to me and healed my leg.

I prayed to Swami to see Jesus as he was. One day he asked me to give a talk, and after the talk he made a chain for me with a cross. This signified to me a new start in my relationship with Jesus.

Last year, the students asked me to participate in a Good Friday programme, to talk about my experience with Jesus. At that programme, I told about how I was always in tears as a young boy during the week leading up to Jesus' crucifixion.

On Good Friday, I was always in agony looking at my watch, thinking about the time that Jesus died. I always died somehow myself; it was terrible for me.

Even though Palm Sunday celebrations started joyously and we were very happy as we gave fruit to all the elderly houses, it would end in this very agonizing time on Good Friday.

Then I told how in 1992, I had read in John Hislop's book where Swami said that Jesus did not suffer at the crucifixion – and Swami said the same thing at Christmas in 1998.

I grew up with such agony around seeing Jesus on the cross. I had no other view. And then Swami said that Jesus did not suffer. It turned everything around for me and it took time for me to really realise it, because it had been so impressed on my mind.

I cannot describe my feeling; it is such an emotional thing for me when I realised that Jesus did not suffer.

Yes, Jesus did take on the world karma in those days and he died, but this is the same thing that Swami is doing now. Swami knows what he is doing, just like Jesus knew when he sent Judas away to betray him.

suffering!**(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December 1970)**

I concluded my short speech with a question to Swami, "Please Swami tell us more about the life of Jesus." I wasn't expecting that he would stand up and give a discourse, but I wanted to know more.

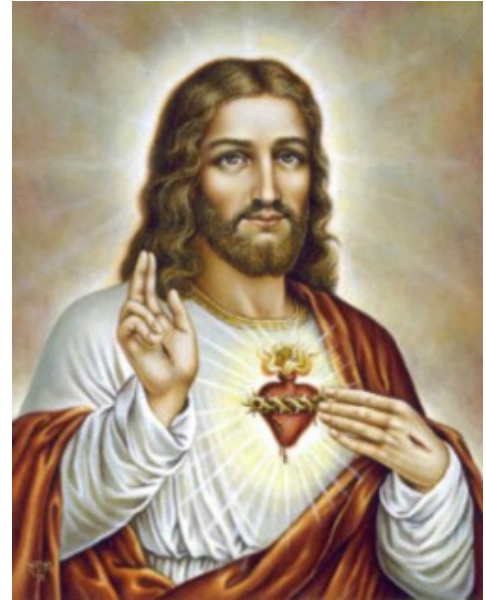
Months later when I returned to the Netherlands I went to the Sai Center and Luc Courtois let me know that the book he had written about Swami's teachings about Jesus had come out on Good Friday.

I took this book with me the next time I came to the ashram and read it twice. I then presented it to Swami for His blessings and he said, "Very, very happy."

One thing I have learned by being with Swami is how to calm myself down when someone is against me. I can now take time to see them with love, this is very important to me. I have a tendency of wanting to overreact and argue back.

I now see that there is really no enemy; the only enemy is myself. Every person is just a mirror for us. To understand the love that Swami and Jesus talk about takes time. So I am trying to understand this love.

To see Swami as the father of Jesus is to me the most logical thread between Jesus and Swami. For me, Jesus has always been like a friend. This is the same for me with Swami. Last year I felt that Swami had become my friend. The moment I met Swami I realised that His voice has always been there and has always guided me in my life.



Icon of Jesus and the sacred heart

Sharing Harry Geurt's love for Jesus is Father Charles Ogada, a Roman Catholic priest. For him, such love brings us all alive in our oneness with God and with our neighbours.

During an interview with Radio Sai's host Dr. Venkataraman, Father Ogada shared how his experiences with Sathya Sai Baba helped him take his priestly vows more deeply, and to live a life of intimacy with God.

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

(Jesus – Luke 6:27-28, 31)

I have called you friends, for everything I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

(Jesus – John 15:15)

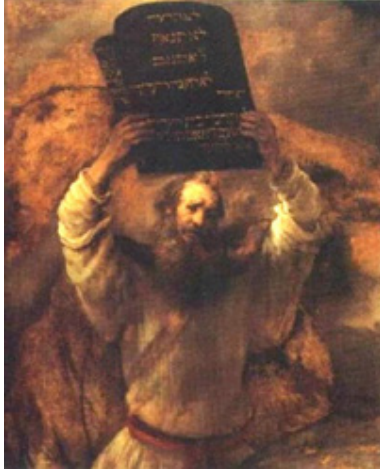
LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART**Father Charles Ogada – Nigeria**

I was first introduced to Sathya Sai Baba by a priest who was a lecturer at the seminary I was attending. He gave me the book "Sai Baba: the Man of Miracles" by Howard Murphet to read. I wasn't so struck by the miracles themselves, but realised that they were signals to a higher reality. To me that higher reality is the One that pervades all things, God Himself, the unseen that is behind the seen. The miracles are different, they are things in the hand, but there is a hand holding it. This really pushed me into an inner inquiry about that reality.

As a Catholic priest I had thought about this before, but not in this context. Before this it was an intellectual thinking; now it became a passion. This was an eye-opening in my life – the fruit was ripe to fall. I was really drawn into a search of inner inquiry about these realities.

In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 12 verse 29, a young scribe who was a teacher of the Jewish law came to Jesus and asked him a question, "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus looked at him and replied from the Old Testament, "Listen Israel, the Lord your God is one, there is no other. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. There is no other commandment greater than this."

When I came to Baba's teachings, I discovered what this meant. For example, the first call Jesus made was, "Listen Israel." It was a call to silence, to the sound of OM. The other one is that the Lord is one; there is no other reality. All of the other



Moses and the 10 Commandments

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

(Moses – Deuteronomy 6:5)

Love your neighbour as yourself.

(Moses – Leviticus 19:18)

One of the Pharisees, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

(Jesus – Matthew 22:37-40)

The heart of Jesus was pure and calm. Hence it is honoured as sacred. We must make our hearts sacred so that either we merge in Jesus or Jesus merges in us. When we merge, it is called devotion (bhakti); to say Jesus awakened in us is the path of wisdom (jnana).

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December 1984)

From my own experiences with Baba, I have also learned that the meaning of the vow of poverty we take is to act without ego. Poverty is being above praise and blame, above success and failure, establishing yourself in the equanimity of spirit. Because of Baba I can now live this kind of life in full awareness.

There is no contradiction for me between the teachings of Jesus Christ and Baba. When I began to read the Bible in light of Swami's teachings, I found a lot of new meaning, a lot of things that I never expected like these insights.

I believe that there are so many problems in the world because of ignorance, because of the lack of spiritual inquiry. We are inquiring about the objective world, but not spirituality.

What Africa needs now is Baba. The problems in Africa are not poverty or wars; the problem in Africa is spirituality. When we know God and we know that we are God and everyone else is God, then all these wars and poverty will go.

When I know that the same spirit is in others that I have within myself, when I realise that oneness, then there is no room for me to harm you.

Baba has given us many practical steps to begin solving these problems in Africa, like education. This is the greatest - taking the young people and starting when they are small to train them in the path of human values and

things are illusions; they are non-existent.

And to love this One with all your heart, that is bhakti yoga, with all your mind that is jnana yoga, and with all your strength is karma yoga. And to love your neighbour as yourself is to realise that the same Self in others is the same Self (Atma) in you.

In one of Baba's Telegu poems from Sai Gems, he said,

"I am telling you once and for all in one sentence: the one quintessential teaching of all scriptures is that you should firmly feel your identity with the One and the same Self (Atma) that is present in all beings."

This is the same sermon that Jesus Christ gave to that young man who asked him for a summary of all the scriptures.

I have never had any doubts about the Divinity of Baba. It is because I feel that my connection with Baba is not just this incarnation; that I have come across him before. For me Baba is love; that is how I know his Divinity. Love is unity; love arises from the realization of oneness. The greatest oneness is to realise the oneness with God. That is the greatest love.

One experience with Baba that has really influenced me was during my first interview. I am a Catholic priest and I belong to a congregation where we take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

I was sitting in the general interview room and Baba called me aside and whispered to me, "How are your wives?" I was taken aback and thought, "Oh my God." I said, "Baba I don't have any wives." I then remained silent and he began talking to other people.

After a while he again asked me the same question. I kept quiet because I knew he was up to something. Later on in a subsequent interview he said to me, "Sometimes you want to marry, sometimes you don't want to marry. You are mine."

My experiences with Baba have made me live the life of intimacy and to take the vows more deeply. For example, there is a lot of talk about celibacy now. The problem is not with the priests; the problem is that they are expected to live a life without being taught how to live that life.

So life is like a suppression for them. Baba teaches us how to transform the lower energy into a higher energy so it becomes a flow and you can begin to live life in full without thinking that celibacy is a punishment. This experience has helped me gradually step-by-step to move into a whole new view of life.



Jesus with his twelve disciples before His crucifixion

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the

spirituality. Another part is that although the African man is a very religious man, he still needs spiritual nourishment to satisfy his hunger. Self-less service without any ego does this.

Just as Divine love brings about the experience of oneness with God, it also awakens the awareness of the Divinity in one and all. This was the discovery not only of Father Ogada, but also Bernice Mead, National Coordinator of the "Education in Human Values" programme in the USA. During her interview with Dr. Venkataraman of Radio Sai, she tells us how, through Sathya Sai Baba's presence in her life, she transformed her fundamentalist Christian background into a broad understanding that we are all Divine.

same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

(Jesus – Luke 22:19-20)

Jesus said that the bread taken in the "last supper" was his flesh, and the wine, his blood. He meant that all beings alive with flesh and blood are to be treated as he himself and that no distinction should be made of friend or foe, we or they. Every body is his body, sustained by the bread; every drop of blood flowing in the veins of every living being is his, animated by the activity that the wine imparted to it. That is to say, every man is Divine and has to be revered as such.

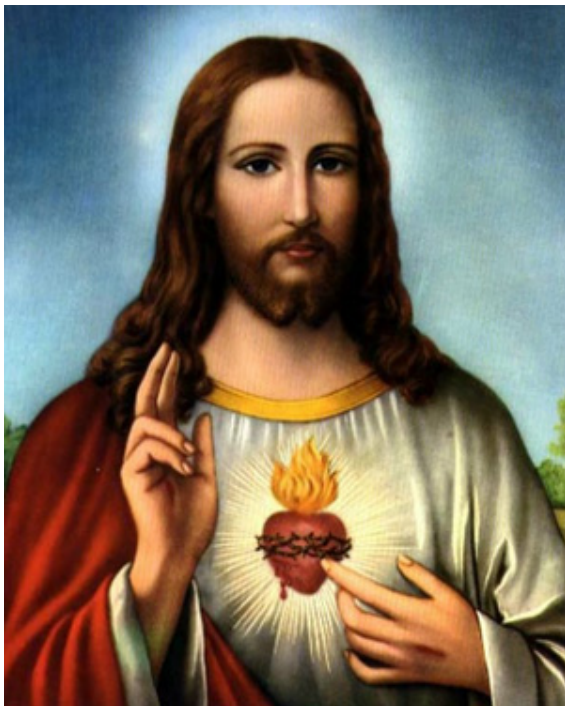
(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December 1978)

YOU ARE GOD, ALL ARE GOD

Bernice Mead – USA

I found out about Swami in 1977 and made my first pilgrimage in 1978. I am a very atypical devotee because I come from a large farm family in mid-America with 11 children and was raised as a fundamentalist Christian. When I met my husband he wasn't interested in organised religion and so we began to search for truth. We first went to more liberated Christian churches but could not find what we were looking for there. So we started taking meditation classes.

I had been taught all my life that Jesus was the only way. And not only was Jesus the only way, but the church that I attended was the only church. I questioned this from the time I was a teenager. It seemed unreal to me that everyone who loved God could not have a chance to be with God. So I wanted to know the truth and what this was all about. Could it possibly be that the little fundamentalist church I was going to was the truth, the only truth?



A devotional painting depicting the sacred heart of Jesus

I and the Father are one. I am in My Father and you are in Me and I am in you.

(Jesus – John 10:30 ; 14:20)

You are in God and God is in you. Understand this truth and act accordingly. You should be able to say with conviction that you are the spark of the Divine. You should say with courage and conviction that God is everywhere. You must fill yourself with the feeling that God is in you, beside you, around you, and with you wherever you go.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 15 Jan 2000, 25 Dec 1985)

I had just had my first child and I was going through post-partum depression, so I was really searching for something besides what I had. Eventually, I heard about a meeting to be held by a man who had been to Sai Baba and who was going to tell about his experiences.

I went because my husband wanted to go, but I didn't think that I would hear anything of relevance. We were both captivated by his stories, which were only telling about his experiences. We spent the whole evening there. We smelled a sweet jasmine right away; we thought it must have been incense, but it wasn't. When we left that evening around 11pm, we felt excited and took three books with us. One of them was the "Holy Man and the Psychiatrist" by Samuel Sandweiss.

I read the book and right away I wanted to come to India. I felt so drawn and so much in love with Sai Baba. I wanted to know who he was and whether he was for real. Even though I am still mystified by him, I love him dearly.

Back in 1978, coming to the ashram was very difficult. The weather was hot and humid, the food was bothering me, and there were 14 of us in the flat that I stayed in. I still had a lot of doubts and there was a time when I wasn't sure if I was in the right place.

Swami called all of the Westerners into the mandir and gave us a discourse. Then he came around and gave each of us little packets of vibhuti. I said to him, "Thank you." That afternoon I wrote him a letter and went early to darshan so I could get the first row. He came and took my letter and said, "Thank you" to me. So my first words to him were thank you and his first words to me were thank you in return. This made me very happy.

During my second trip in 1979, I had to go alone after all of my friends had come home. One morning while sitting under his window where he lived in the mandir at the time, I had this thought, "What if he isn't who he says he is? What if he is the anti-Christ?" I didn't know where these thoughts were coming from because I had been so happy and so thrilled at being there.

I got up and went back to my room where I wept and wept. While I was there I prayed very hard, I prayed to this God that I had prayed to all my life, somewhere out there in space. I decided that I should also pray to Jesus and so I brought Jesus into the prayer also. When I went to darshan, Swami called me for an interview, which was a fulfilment of my dream. He talked to me about all of the doubts I had had in my mind that morning.

There was a part of me that knew that he knew all that I was experiencing – but to experience that was another thing. He said to me, “I hear all of the prayers, I even hear the prayers to Jesus.” So I knew that he was telling me that he had been with me that morning and knew that I had prayed to Jesus. Then he made me candy. My earthly father owned a grocery store and used to bring me candy when I was a child. This was like my earthly father giving me something so I would feel better. I had been crying all morning, and I was like a child at his feet, so captivated and so much in love.

The one lesson of Swami’s that I find most important is that we are God, we are all God. Elsie Cowan was a very good friend of mine and she used to say all the time, “You are God. You are God. You are no different than God.” And God is love, so love and God are synonymous. To me this is the richest and the best teaching.

I have had wonderful experiences with children where I have learned the lesson that we are all God. When I taught kindergarten with six-year-old children we would have a few minutes each day of quiet time.

One day a sweet little boy wanted to share what he had experienced that day during the quiet time. He said, “I saw God.” I asked him if he could tell us what God looked like and he said, “Yes, yes” and he put his hands over his head and said, “He had a lot of black hair and a blue business suit.”

One day while I was walking in a park, a little five-year-old came up to me on his bicycle and said, “Please go home with me I want you to meet my parents.” He kept asking me to go home with him so I could meet his parents.

I didn’t know this boy, he just came out of the blue while I was on my afternoon walk. I told him, “I can’t go home with you today, but I’ll come this way tomorrow and I promise I’ll go home with you tomorrow.”

But he kept begging me, “Please, oh please.” He was such a cute little mischievous kid, so I said to him, “Say, do you know Baba?” I don’t even know why I said this; it was out of the blue. He jumped off of his bicycle and said, “Yes, I do! He’s Jesus Christ and all his angels!” He got back on his bicycle and rode off and I never saw him again.

I am the national coordinator of the EHV programme in the USA , and I travel through the states giving teacher training classes.

In 1979 I started one of the first Bal Vikas children’s classes in southern California. We would sing a lot of songs and began to learn bhajans.

We all learned and grew together. One time I had a little boy who was quite precocious and he gave his school teachers difficulty in the classroom. After he had attended Bal Vikas for a year, his school teacher told me, “I don’t know what you’re doing, but whatever you are doing, keep it up. I have seen such a wonderful change in this child this year.”

These are the kinds of experiences I have had with children where for some moment in time they knew. God has had wonderful fun with me through children.

Through children, God revealed to Bernice many new insights about the nature of God. But William Miller – guest faculty member in the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning’s MBA programme since 1999, and co-author of *Human Values at Work* – had to transcend some deeply in-grained childhood beliefs in order to “see the Light” and “be the Light.”

I AM IN THE LIGHT, THE LIGHT IS IN ME, I AND THE LIGHT ARE ONE

William Miller – USA



Christmas morning concert at Prasanthi Nilayam

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

(Jesus – Matthew 19:14)

Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

(Jesus – Matthew 18:3-4)

You must take shelter in the Divine principle to escape from the storms of life. You will be welcomed by the Divine only when, as Jesus said, you become like a child. They have the sense of wonder, fresh and free; they have the simple, sincere eagerness to know; they have reverence towards knowledge and power. Christ treated the children with tenderness, and advised all the grownups to become like children, so that they may be saved.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 23 May 1967, 22 Nov 1969, 23 April 1967)

As I look back on my upbringing, I was “very Roman Catholic” – even co-president of my parish’s teen youth organisation when I was 17.

I was disciplined and respectful in my relations with girls and elders – wanting to be known as a good person, and to me the ten commandments were the perfect “measuring stick” to determine if I was being good. I particularly strived to be a peaceful person, not ever wanting to hurt anyone.

But this determination did not come from a positive love for God and others; rather it was based in a self-dislike and self-criticism which I wanted to overcome.

My experience of life and being a Christian was coloured by a strong belief that my nature, particularly as a male, was “selfish, hedonistic, and environmentally destructive” – and that my job as a Christian was to overcome my nature. God was “out there” or “up there” – distant, judging, punishing, loving you only if you were good.

After going to college in the mid 1960’s, I found myself becoming “agnostic”, neither believing nor disbelieving in God. I just didn’t know. While I enjoyed being with friends and the priest at my university’s Catholic centre, I fell away from the Catholic religion.

I felt attracted to Zen Buddhism as a practical “substitute” to nurture my inner growth, particularly as author Alan Watts introduced it to the West. In fact, it was his book “Myth and Ritual in Christianity” that first renewed my appreciation for the spirit of Jesus’ teachings. In 1982, a deeper level of spirituality began to stir within me.

I found myself saying the word “Divine” without consciously thinking about it ahead of time. A new joy began to well up inside of me and I would make up little songs such as “Divine love, expressing through me, always draws to me all that I need.”

The night just before Easter Sunday that year, I “accidentally” (are there any coincidences or accidents?) came across a film on TV called “The Lost Years of Jesus”, produced by Richard Bock.

I watched the entire film, but when near the end it showed this Indian guru named Sathya Sai Baba, I paid little attention. Only later did I realise that Easter weekend was my first semi-aware contact with Baba.

Later that year, a good friend was reading “Man of Miracles” by Howard Murphet, chronicling many early experiences with Sai Baba. I had never ever sought an India spiritual teacher, but I asked to borrow the book.

Halfway through reading it, I thought, “This is very, very difficult to believe, that such a person is walking the earth – but if it’s true, I don’t want to look back in 40 years and say that I missed my chance!” I knew inside that I should go see for myself, and I travelled to India seven weeks later.

My first day at Prasanthi Nilayam was the last day of a ten-day festival called Dasara. At one point during the morning function, Sai Baba went around and sprinkled everyone with blessed, holy water. I thought, “As a Catholic, this is very familiar” and I felt more at home. Then he gave a discourse.

I could understand very little of the translation into English, given the interpreter’s different accent, but a few words rang crystal clear – they were the words I most needed to hear: “When you realise that God is inside you, then the more you go into yourself, the closer to God you become... and the distance between your will and God’s will likewise begins to diminish.”



Mother Mary and Jesus
"Tender Loving Kindness" Icon

There was a huge halo of splendour illuminating the sky over the village when Christ was born. This meant that he who was to overcome the darkness of evil and ignorance, had taken birth and that he will spread the light of love in the heart of man and councils of humanity.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 24 December 1972)

When we read the Bible, we look at Christ as an ideal figure who proclaimed truth to the world. The moment the story of Christ’s birth to the Virgin Mary is revealed, all those who follow Christianity rightly feel very proud, and feel that this mysterious birth is the result of some Divine power and that Mary was a very sacred woman.

(Sathya Sai Baba – Summer Showers 1974)

Like the fragrance in the bud of a flower, Jesus’ Divinity was evident from his boyhood. ...Jesus displayed such sacred qualities as compassion, love and sacrifice. The inspiration for this came from his mother Mary, who taught him such good qualities as truth, kindness, compassion and justice.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December: 1991, 1994)

When the discourse was over, I walked out of the auditorium stunned and dizzy – I actually had to lean against a tree. While I had been slowly rooting out of my psyche the childhood belief that God was distant and my very nature was sinful, Sai Baba's words were like the hammer blow that finally split the rock. I had been opened up, healed, and reborn onto a spiritual path that ultimately led me back to a new relationship with Jesus and Christianity.

Ever since I was a 13-year-old attending the Catholic Jesuit High School, I participated once a year in some kind of spiritual retreat. In college and afterwards, these retreats took the form of "human potential" seminars. Now, I made India my annual retreat. I could tell right away that being around Sathya Sai Baba would be the most nourishing way I could find to grow spiritually.

Each year when I would come for 10 to 14 days, on my annual work vacation, I would select a book to bring as my core spiritual reading. In the mid-1980's, I read the books of two 16th century Spanish Christian mystics: St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. Both spoke about the "marriage" of the soul with God, and that the fundamental message of Jesus was the path of Divine love.

The hours waiting for Sai Baba to emerge from his residence to give *Darshan* were often exquisite times for me to ponder and pursue a new understanding of who Jesus was – through the experience of these two saints who devoted their entire lives to love and know Jesus, and to follow the path he laid down for us.

Sai Baba often spoke of three stages of spiritual growth: "I am in the Light," "The Light is in Me," and "I and the Light are One." St. John of the Cross spoke of spiritual growth in terms of putting a log on a fire: at first, the fire has to heat up the log; then the log begins to emit flames, but only with the helpful heat of the coals; finally, the log is fully ablaze so that there is no distinguishing the "log" from the rest of the fire. I saw that Sai Baba and St. John of the Cross were describing the same three stages. And when Sai Baba explained how Jesus' life showed us these same stages – as "Messenger of God," "Son of God," and "I and the Father are One" – my faith grew that Jesus really could be a model to inspire and guide my spiritual growth.



Statue of John of the Cross in a chapel in Fontiveros, Spain

When Jesus proclaimed that he was the messenger of God, he also wanted to emphasise that everyone is a messenger of God and has to speak, act and think like one. This is the true spiritual discipline of selfless work, prayer, service to humanity and meditation.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December 1978)

When spiritual progress is furthered Jesus asserted that each one can recognise all as sons of God, children of God, brothers and sisters of oneself. When you lead a life of purity and morality, you are entitled to regard yourselves as "sons of God." God is the embodiment of love and you should not do anything that is contrary to the love that God represents.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 December 1978, 1984)

Finally, when knowledge ripens into wisdom and the goal of spiritual wisdom is reached, each one realises, "I and my Father are one," just as Jesus ultimately declared. Jesus and his Father were one. You and God are also one and you can be aware of it. You must take note of this oneness. You must proclaim your oneness and not your diversity.

(Baba – 25 December: 1978, 1997,1984)

Later, when I read, as if for the first time, Jesus saying, "I am in the Father and you are in Me and I am in You," I directly experienced that I could travel the pathway with Jesus through these stages, ultimately ending with knowing our union with God. Thus, for me, Jesus' life and teachings, and the life and teachings of Sai Baba, became mirror reflections of each other. And when I read Jesus' words about a baptism by fire – "I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptised, and how greatly and sorely I am urged on until it is accomplished!"— I could rejoice, rather than be afraid, that this baptism of fire would ultimately turn this William-log into a heart ablaze with Divine love.

However, the idea that this journey could end with the experience that "God and I are one" – was quite difficult for me to "warm up to." My upbringing said that this was blasphemy, the statement of an ego-out-of-control. But then, Sai Baba led me back to my Christian tradition where "union with God" was the ultimate aim of every mystic.

Jesus: ...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I have given the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. (John 17:21, 23)

St. Paul : He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:17)

St. John : God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)

St. Teresa of Avila : The Lord appears in the centre of the soul, not in an imaginative vision... One can say no more than that the soul, I mean the spirit, is made one with God.



A sculpture of the ecstasy of St. Teresa of Avila

Maximus the Confessor: *When a human being gives himself entirely to God's love and is united with him by grace, he penetrates entirely into God and becomes God, without losing his identity.*

Angelus of Silesius: *Fire melts and makes One; if you rejoin Origin, your spirit with God's will be melted in One.*

St. Catherine of Genoa: *I am so... submerged in His immense love... my being is God, not by simple participation, but by a true transformation of my being! My Me is God, nor do I recognise any other Me except my God Himself.*

Meister Eckhart: *God gives birth to the Son as you, as me, as each one of us. As many beings – as many gods in God. In my soul, God not only gives birth to me as his son, he gives birth to me as himself, and himself in me. I find this divine birth that God and I are the same... Here, in my own soul, the greatest of all miracles has taken place – God has returned to God!*

I also began to see how other teachings of Sai Baba were alive and well in the Christian tradition. For example, he has often said that the most effective means of spiritual growth is repetition or singing of the names of God, thus promoting a continuous awareness of God's presence.

When I read the book, "Way of a Pilgrim" – written in the late 1800's by a Russian who constantly recited the "Jesus Prayer" ("Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me") – I could only smile in recognition of what Sai Baba's advice could mean for a Christian.

Yet all of this has been just the beginning. My journey with Sai Baba and Jesus, which started (at least in my own awareness) one Easter weekend in 1982, continues forward – my own version of what it means to experience "heaven on earth."

Just as William had to overcome early childhood beliefs, in order to love Jesus and himself, Sylvia Alden – choir director for the Prasanthi Christmas adult choir – struggled with beliefs about Jesus that she was taught as a child. She had a healing experience of Divine love in the presence of Sathya Sai Baba that helped her understand how she could live a Christ-like life.

GOD IS PURE LOVE

Sylvia Alden – USA

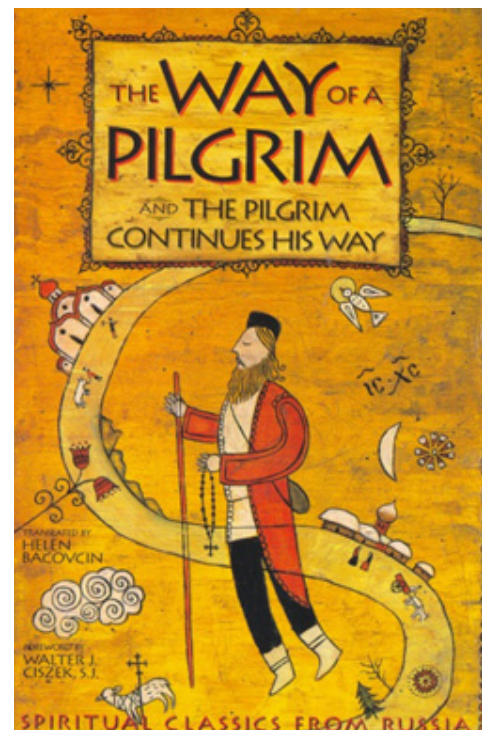
I was brought up on a farm in the mid-western part of the United States during the time after the Great Depression and that which preceded the Second World War. Many were struggling to recover from the depression and the fear of the war was strong in our rural community.

My maternal grandparents became born-again Christians and my paternal grandfather was a Congregational minister. Their concept of Jesus, and by extension of God, was of Divine beings one could never expect to please. One could only fear and obey. Love was not emphasized.

As a child, these grandparents and their religious beliefs had a marked and indelible impression on me. My parents also followed these teachings and I wanted very much to please them all. Somehow, I always fell short of the mark.

Jesus became someone who knew everything I did and was marking it down so that come the Day of Judgment, he could tell God all the bad things I had done.

As I was not the most perfectly behaved child, Jesus had a lot on his list. He became someone to fear and dislike. I wondered how Jesus could be so wonderful if he would tell on a little kid.



The prayer of the heart provided me with such delights that I doubted if there were anyone happier than I on earth. ...all that was around me appeared to me in a delightful form, and all prompted me to love God and to thank him – people, trees, plants, animals, everything was akin to me. On all, I found the impress of the name of Jesus Christ.

(The Way of a Pilgrim)

There can be no better panacea for our suffering than chanting the Lord's name ("namasmarana"). No greater or more potent weapon can even be there to help man surmount his obstacles. When the mind is engaged in the recital of God's Glory and the names of God, there can be no temptation to stray into the rake's highway of insane desire. It will be of

As part of the religious training that was given to me by my parents and grandparents, I was taught that unless one became a born-again Christian one would be condemned to hell's fire and damnation for all of eternity. There was no other choice.

considerable help to establish the feeling of the constant presence of God, within you and without. Let each and every cell of your body be filled with His Divine Name. Nothing else can give you the bliss, courage, and strength that you derive from namasmarana.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 16 May 2002, 19 Oct 1969, 14 April 2002)

It was extremely confusing to me that the same Jesus who was held up to love people so much that he was willing to be crucified would also condemn those who had never even heard his name. As I reached my teenage years, I struggled to put these teachings into some semblance of logic that I could fully accept. I went to church, sang in the choir, read my Bible, and acted "as if" I truly believed the sermons I heard. The one positive was the music.

I loved the hymns that spoke of the love and glory of God. I drew comfort from the music. I convinced others that I was a good Christian. I felt like a hypocrite because my actions were lip service only.

My actions were just for show. I still could not accept the idea that a person who loved Buddha or some other form of God would be headed for hell.

When I married and had children, I was firm in the conviction that my children would not grow up in fear of God. I wanted them to be free of the judgment of the beliefs of others. I doubted that if God/Jesus existed, they really cared what we did. Why else would babies die, people fight in wars, and good people suffer?

As much as I attempted to push God to the back of the closet, He refused to stay there. He showed Himself to me in music and nature.

I loved nature in all its many forms and music was my healing place. The yearning for the Supreme Being that created this beautiful universe and populated it with people of such diversity and beauty grew.

I was searching for what would ring as truth within my heart, a truth that I could share with my children which would allow them to love others irrespective of their religious convictions.

I began to study Eastern religions, starting with the teachings of Aurobindo. His teachings touched a place within that caused the door of my heart to crack open a bit.

I first heard of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in 1972. "Nice," I thought. "There is another saint like Aurobindo." I continued to read and study the wisdom of many Indian saints. Peace was growing in my heart. I studied meditation and even had the temerity to teach meditation classes.

In 1978, I made my first journey to the Beloved Divine Feet of Swami. He looked at me and I knew that He knew everything I had ever said or done, would ever say or do.

And miracle of all miracles, He loved me. He was all that I had ever thought God should or could be – love, pure love. There would never be condemnation or exclusion from Him.

My heart was full to overflowing. God was here on this earth and I had seen Him, talked with Him, felt His touch and I was free from fear and doubt. Joy is too small of a word or concept to express my feelings. I was truly home.

Swami's teachings are universal. They allowed me to look more objectively at the teachings of the Christian religion. His discourses on the life of Jesus brought the real Jesus to life for me. I could now read the Bible with an openness that was lacking before.

The actual sayings of Jesus reflected Swami's words. I sang the hymns and drew great joy and comfort, especially when I knew that those words were describing my Dearest Lord.

I no longer closed my mind to the tenets of Christianity. Rather, my understanding of Christianity was enlarged to be defined as living a Christ-like life. Jesus lived a life of love, forgiveness and complete surrender to God. I now realise that those who condemn others' beliefs



Baba blessing the Christmas adult choir programme with Sylvia Alden

Sai Baba says that Divine love has three qualities – changeless, selfless, and fearless:

Love knows only to give, not to receive. Love does not seek anything in return. Such Love is free from fear. These are the basic features of true Love.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 12 July 1988)

Jesus exemplified these three qualities of Divine love throughout his life...

Changeless :

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

(Jesus – Matthew 5:44)

Selfless :

I am among you as one who serves. Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.

(Jesus – Luke 22:27 and Matthew 20:26 -27)

Fearless :

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

(Jesus – John 15:13)

don't really reflect the teachings of Jesus.



Christmas choir at Prasanthi Nilayam

You should sing God's name with love. You will see the manifestation of Divinity with your physical eyes when you sing His glory with all love. Many noble souls merged in God through love.

It is the tongue that tastes the delicacy and it is the heart that tastes love. The taste of love is peerless. It is sweeter than even nectar. Love alone can match love. God is love, love is God. Live in love. Whatever you sing, sing with love. God sees your feelings, not the rhythm or tune. If your feelings are pure, God will take care of everything.

Scatter the seeds of Love in dreary, desert hearts. Then, sprouts of Love will make wastes green with joy, blossoms of Love will make the air fragrant, rivers of Love will murmur along the valleys, and every bird, beast, and child will sing the song of Love.

Emerge from devotional singing with a greater measure of Love!

(Sathya Sai Baba – 14 Mar 1999 , 14 April 1999, 4 october 1970 , 23 July 1971)

I offer my complete gratitude and overwhelming love to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, my dearest and most beloved Swami. He has given me a life sweeter than I could have ever dreamed of. By His Grace, He is truly my very best friend.

Sylvia experienced a breakthrough in her life, but it was one she had been seeking since her teenage years. For Victor Kanu, co-founder of The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education, the breakthrough came much more as a surprise. During his interview with Radio Sai, hosted by Dr. Venkataraman, Victor tells how Sathya Sai Baba transformed his life into one of selfless service, just as Jesus taught his disciples.

HANDS THAT HELP ARE HOLIER THAN LIPS THAN PRAY

Victor Kanu – Zambia

I started my career as a schoolteacher and headmaster of a large Roman Catholic Primary school in Lunsar, Sierra Leone, before proceeding to Oxford University in England for further studies in philosophy, politics and economics. After that I became my country's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. It was after that that I came in contact with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in a miraculous way. This was in 1975.

I was living a very high life, being a High Commissioner; the booze was a regular thing. In a dream two angels took me to an unknown place which I later discovered to be Prasanthi Nilayam itself. They left me at the main gate of the ashram, where I met all of the religions of the world including my African ancestors. When I woke up, of course it brought about a tremendous change in me that I could not explain how or why it happened. The things I used to do, like going to the parlour and smoking, gradually faded away. This is how Baba first called me. This was an extraordinary turning point in my life and also a transformation point.

I began to take spiritual matters rather seriously. Even though I had been

The love that Swami embodies and showers on us all allowed me to revisit my early upbringing. I came to realise that the God/Jesus that I had feared and denied was nothing but the extension of my family's fear and their need to make sense of a world that was lacking love.

Further, their love for me took the form of needing me to be like them, to believe like them and to ensure my going to heaven with them. They didn't want me to burn in hell for eternity.

When I could look at their beliefs from this perspective, I was able to understand them and their actions. My fear and distrust of Jesus receded. My family continued in their beliefs and saw my love for Swami as an indication that I was certainly on my way to hell.

I felt sorry that they were not able to see what I saw in Him. I had felt pure selfless love the likes of which I could not have imagined. It saddened me that they were not able to join me in this glorious journey.

I don't just believe any more – I know that our Beloved Bhagawan is indeed the Father of Jesus as He is the father and mother of all. I also know that since the passing of my parents and grandparents, they will have had the opportunity to see and know Swami as I see and know Him as the embodiment of total love and compassion, the supreme one who created and sustains all. This brings me great comfort and allows me to let go of the sadness that was a large part of my younger life.

What relationship do I have with Jesus now? I see him as an older brother who exemplified complete surrender to God. I look at his dedication to God and am humbled. I no longer think he will give God a list of my misdeeds.

I am grateful that Jesus taught and lived the way of love. I am comfortable with the understanding that for some people Jesus is the only way, just as I am comfortable with the understanding that there is a religion that is suitable for all at whatever stage of spiritual life they may be. My perception of Jesus and what he exemplified has freed me – by his example of unconditional love and obedience – to completely open my heart to his father.

brought up as a Christian I had stopped going to church. But after this experience I began going to church and reading the Bible. And I became interested in Western philosophy.

I have never seen a contradiction in going to my Christian church and following Sathya Sai Baba. In fact, the more I came to know Baba, the better I became as a Christian. I gradually loved Jesus Christ more so than ever before and I understood the Bible more so as a result of my contact with Baba.

Although Baba has immense power and immense influence, he tells people to stay where they are, be a good Christian, be a good Muslim. This is in agreement with his teachings that there is only one religion, the religion of love. He says he has come to water the roots of all religions, not to uproot them, but to freshen them up.

When I finished my job as High Commissioner, Mrs. Kanu and I engaged ourselves in teaching with the Inner London Education Authority. This is what brought about our active contact with Sathya Sai Baba. In 1980 we came to Puttaparthi to attend the first overseas Bal Vikas teachers training course; we were among the first to be trained on Swami's "Education in Human Values" (EHV) programme. It was an eye-opener after that course. We liked the programme so much that we felt this was the answer for Africa. So we started implementing it in the London schools and gradually our interest in returning back to Africa grew. We saw that this was the programme that could transform, unite and also integrate Africa.



The Miracle School - Sathya Sai School
in Ndola, Zambia

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" If you want to enter life, obey the commandments. "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

(Jesus – Matthew 19: 16-17, 20-22)

We had visited Zambia very briefly to conduct a workshop; that was all. We knew no one there except a few devotees. When we came to Baba in 1987, he placed his hands on our heads and said, "Go to Zambia and spread my message of love. Build a school. Spread my message through education and help the people." So it was Baba who chose Zambia for us.



Mother Teresa (1910 - 1997)

"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" I will tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

(Jesus – Matthew 25:37, 39-40)

"We all long for heaven where God is, but we have it in our power to be in heaven with Him at this very moment. But being happy with Him now means: loving as He loves, helping as He helps, giving as He gives, serving as He serves, rescuing as He rescues, being with Him 24 hours, touching Him in his distressing disguise. "

(Mother Teresa)

I remember during that interview that my wife was brave enough to ask Baba, "How about funding?" Swami said sell your house; if that is not enough borrow from the banks. We were delighted when he said this to us.

Being brought up as Christians, we remembered the story in the Bible where a rich man went to Jesus and said, "Oh Lord I've done this and I've done that, what else can I do to enter into the kingdom of God?" And Jesus said, "Sell all that you have and give it to the poor and follow me." After Jesus said that, the man ran away.

We didn't want to run away. We were so thrilled that Sathya Sai Baba, whom we believed to be God incarnate, gave us this test and we did exactly what he told us to do.

We were not afraid at all. The country was new to us. But we remembered the stories of other disciples who had gone to distant lands, the Lord was with them and that was all we needed. We knew that Baba was with us throughout.

When he told us to go to Zambia, he did not tell us we would not face difficulties. Difficulties are a part of life and when you are doing God's work you face even more difficulties and more tests. We enjoyed every bit of them; we knew this was the Lord testing us.

Our school in Zambia is called a "Miracle School", first because of its location. The school is in a disadvantaged area of Ndola with very poor infrastructure, very poor roads. We could have built it in the middle of the city, but I sent Mrs. Kanu to ask Baba where to build it and he said to go to a poor area and start with a boy's school. We started the primary school and collected the dropouts as our first students.

This was all part of the Divine plan. When these students took their first national tests, they had top scores. The nation was stunned. How can a school that is located in a village among poor children do so well?

This was the first time in the education of Zambia that they had ever experienced this. So their results were outstanding, their character improved,

In the Bible, it is recorded that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. When they asked him why he was doing so, Jesus answered: "I am washing your feet as your servant, so that you may learn to serve the world." Love must be manifested as service to others and that service must take the form of food for the hungry, solace for the forlorn, and consolation for the sick and the suffering. Jesus wore himself out in such service to humanity.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 25 Dec 1984, 1981)

There are so many testimonies from the parents and from the children. There are boys who never used to study who now began to tell the others to study; they would give others' advice. When we opened the school in 1992, there was only one family who could afford to bring their son in a car, but after this our school started attracting good students. Today we have 30-40 vehicles, including Land-Cruisers, coming from town to bring their children. Five years ago we started a separate school for girls. Many of our students have gone to universities and are now involved in teaching. Many are engaged in the police forces.

When we first came to Ndola, we worked on Saturday and opened the school on Saturday. Today, all of the schools are open on Saturday. From this the people came to know that part of our success was due to hard work. Work is worship, commitment. Now all of the boys and girls in Ndola take their studies much more seriously than ever before. We are also very much involved in community work.

In surrendering to Jesus' message to "sell all you have and come follow me," Victor has dedicated his life in selfless service to the education of poor children. Debra Miller, co-author of *Human Values at Work* and co-compiler of the *Be Like Jesus* book, likewise experienced a time of surrender, one that led her to a deeper knowledge of the universal purity of Jesus' teachings.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS WITHIN

Debra Miller – USA

I grew up in mid-America where my mother was a devoted Christian and made sure that my four siblings and I were active in all of the church activities.

I loved going to our Southern Baptist church and wanted all of my friends to go to church. I played the piano at the church, and my mother taught the children's classes and sang in the choir.

Because I had always talked to God personally even from a young age, I had never felt comfortable with the idea that God was a punishing Father and that I had to live a strict life for fear of his wrath. In my early 20's I wanted to explore the world and became disillusioned with the attitudes of the people in our church. I decided to leave the church and focus on my college and career.

I was doing very well in my career and had a lot of worldly success to my credit when, in my early 30's, I had a deep spiritual awakening of the heart while at my brother's marriage. In what seemed like the twinkling of an eye, I had an experience of God's Divine love that changed the course of my life. It was like I experienced what Jesus meant when he said the kingdom of God is within us, in our hearts.

Still apprehensive about getting re-involved with the Christian religion, I began to seek the meaning of spirituality and how to comprehend and live God's will in my daily life. I first pursued metaphysical, new age teachings; and while they opened my mind and heart to new levels of awareness, I felt I needed more.

I then spent many years practising the Buddhist Vipassana meditation where I would go into silence for 10 days at a time. It was in practising this meditation that I discovered how much I loved spiritual teachings that were universal, rather than the more narrow teachings that I had grown up with.

In 1999, I met my husband. After we married, he brought me to India to have Sathya Sai Baba's *Darshan*. The moment I saw Swami enter the portal of the Sai Kulwant hall, I had the same experience of God's Divine love that I had had 12 years earlier at my brother's marriage.

they became good boys in a short period of time.

This also made a tremendous impact on their families. In one instance, a boy insisted that his father take him to school early in the morning. After dropping the boy to school, the father would report to work.

Within six months the father got a promotion because he was now the first person to show up for work. There was another man who was a managing director who also dropped off his boy and started going to the office early. The late attendance of his employees reduced.



Jesus teaching the "Parable of the Sower"

The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, "Here it is", or "There it is", because the kingdom of God is within you.

(Jesus – Luke 17:20-21)

God is love dwelling in your hearts. So the kingdom of heaven is within you. Only then the sense of spiritual oneness of all mankind can be experienced. Out of that sense of unity will be born the love of God. This love will generate pure bliss in the heart that is boundless, indescribable and everlasting.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 17 July 1997, 25 December 1987, 25 December 1994)



Christmas children's drama at Prasanthi Nilayam

Two thousand years ago, when narrow pride and thick ignorance defiled mankind, Jesus came as the embodiment of love and compassion and lived among men, holding forth the highest ideals of life. He was a master born with a purpose, the mission of restoring love, charity and compassion in the hearts of man. He had no attachment to the self, nor paid any heed to joy or sorrow, loss or gain. He had a heart that responded to the call of anguish, and he went about the land preaching the lessons of love. His life was a libation for the upliftment of humanity. Jesus transformed many sinners into saints.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 24 December 1980, 25 December 1978, 25 December 1998)

That night when I laid down to go to sleep, I asked Swami if he would give to humanity a book that would explain the life and teachings of Jesus, just like he had done with Krishna in the *Gita Vahini*, a book he wrote through a series of articles for the *Sanatana Sarathi* magazine many years ago. I had a longing to know the truth about Jesus and I had so many questions. I felt that Swami was the only one who could really explain that truth to me and answer my questions.

The next morning I wrote a letter to Swami and then explained to my husband what I was feeling. He felt the same longing as I. We both signed the letter and he took it to *Darshan* where Swami came to him and readily accepted the letter with a smile. We had no idea what would unfold after Swami took the letter, but we had the full faith that he would somehow answer our prayer.

Months passed, and my husband began writing a series of scripture-based essays about Jesus' teachings that would begin the process of answering the questions that my sister-in-law had asked. I was still not very interested in spending that much focus on the Bible and so I hoped that I could simply edit his essays and not have to get too involved.

One day when Swami was giving a discourse I felt that he was guiding me to stay home from *Darshan*, although at the time I didn't know why or how long it would last. The next morning I said good-bye to my husband as he left for *Darshan* and then settled in a chair and asked Swami what he wanted.

His guidance was to focus on the Jesus essays my husband had begun. Over the next week, I began to delve deeply into Jesus' teachings. Using Swami's teachings to guide us, my husband and I began to discover new ways of understanding what Jesus meant.

One morning while I was alone and quietly working on an essay, I heard

I knew in that moment, from direct experience, that Swami was God incarnate, here to establish the kingdom of divine love within every heart and all of society.

In the year 2000, my husband and I sold or gave away our personal belongings, left our home in the USA and moved to live in the ashram. We initially immersed ourselves in Swami's teachings and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

We began to devote ourselves to Swami's work, first by writing a programme with another couple from Denmark on Swami's human values for working people.

After moving to India, my sister-in-law, who is a strong Christian with an open mind, began to ask me questions about how Sai Baba's teachings correlated with Jesus' teachings.

I honestly did not know how to answer her questions – once I had left my Christian upbringing, I had no wish to return to the *Bible*.

My husband, however, was very excited about her questions, as he had found his Christian upbringing had come alive for him after he began following Swami's teachings in 1982.

So we began to read and study the Bible in the evenings and began reading a book we had on the teachings of Christian saints and mystics over the last 2,000 years.

In those early days, I lamented that I would much rather be studying the *Bhagavad Gita* or *Dhammapada* than the Bible, but I could intuitively feel Swami prompting us to continue our study and our talks together.

One evening when we were looking at a particularly confusing statement Jesus had made, my husband related it to Swami's teachings and was able to explain it in a simple way. I was amazed.

I said to him, "I could get really excited about studying the Bible if we could rewrite it from this universal perspective based on Swami's teachings."



Baba blessing the "Be Like Jesus" manuscript on Christmas morning

Christ sacrificed his life for the sake of those who put their faith in him. The birthday of Jesus must be celebrated by all mankind, for such Divine personalities who are born with a purpose

Swami's voice speak to me, which was very rare, as I usually only received impressions in my mind and had to use my heart and conscience to figure out how to interpret them. But the voice was clear and indisputable: "I've already said everything I need to say about Jesus, and I will show you how to put it together."

I was stunned, and yet the clarity of the words and the impression that was left on my heart and mind was undeniable. I knew that Swami was giving my husband and me the assignment to be his instruments to compile his words about Jesus' life and teachings into the book I had prayed for.

I had no idea where to begin, but Swami guided me every step of the way. He chose every word and every expression exactly as he wanted it to be. In many ways the experience, which lasted five months, was like being in another time and reality. It was as if my husband and I were living, breathing and experiencing what it was like to sit at Jesus' feet and have him tell us first hand who he was and the truth of his teachings.

On a practical level, Swami first guided me to compile all of the Christmas discourses into one Word file that I could go through and select text from. As I went through each Christmas discourse, word by word, he showed me by a distinct inner impression which text to extract and how to begin putting the text together in specific groupings. As I was going through this process, Swami also identified key words that I would later use in order to find teachings he had given about Jesus or Christianity in other discourses. These were words such as: Jesus, Christ, Messiah, Saviour, cross, crucify, Mary, etc. It was also clear to me that he only wanted his words from published discourses to be used; we were not to use any other sources where devotees were reporting what Swami had told them about Jesus.



St. Nino Cross in the 6th century Jvari Church in Mtskheta, Georgia

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

(Jesus – Luke 9:23)

The Christian cross is a symbol for the elimination of the ego. Let us pay attention to the sacrifice that Jesus made while free, out of his own volition: he sacrificed his happiness, prosperity, comfort, safety and position; he braved the enmity of the powerful; he renounced the "ego," which is the toughest thing to get rid of. You too have undertaken this birth for this very mission: the mission of crucifying the ego on the cross of compassion . Crucify it and be free.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 22 November 2000, 24 December 1972, 07 January 1971, November 1970)

The ego has to sacrifice itself so that man's divine nature can manifest itself. "Mine" is death; "not mine" is immortality. The golden key of non-attachment opens the lock which keeps the door to heaven shut. "Give up; I shall fill the gap" says Jesus.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 24 November 1967)

I had never known this distinction before. I couldn't wait to run home and see if this is why Swami told me not to change the word. Upon

(karana-janmas) belong to the whole human race. They should not be confined to a single country or community.

(Sathya Sai Baba 25 December 1978)

It is therefore appropriate that the birthday of Jesus, who felt the need to save mankind and who strove to achieve it, is celebrated. But, the celebration must take the form of adhering to the teachings, being loyal to the principles, practising the disciplines, and experiencing the awareness of the Divine that he sought to arouse. The day must be dedicated to the purification of one's passions and emotions through meditation on the virtues and values that Jesus held forth.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 24 December 1972, 25 December 1982)

Once all of his discourse passages were extracted, Swami began to show me how he wanted them to flow in sequence throughout the book and how to integrate them in those instances where he had told the same story with different nuances in different discourses. Throughout this time period, I was having many intimate experiences with Swami as I asked him question after question and he responded with answers to each one.

I had often heard the young men from Swami's university speak about how Swami attends to every detail of their lives and projects. I experienced this same level of Swami attending to every detail of this book, even making sure the grammar was consistent between the translations of the 60's and 70's and those of the 80's and 90's. Furthermore, instead of simply giving us a book to read about Jesus, he gave us the direct experience.

One experience I had was when I was reviewing a full draft of the book and noticed that in the English translation of Swami's discourses they had used the word "treason" instead of "blasphemy" to describe the accusation the Jews made against Jesus. I talked this over with my husband and asked for Swami's guidance to which I felt he approved of us changing the translated word from "treason" to "blasphemy."

After we had completed the transcript, received Swami's blessing of it on Christmas morning 2003, and turned it over to the Sri Sathya Sai Book Trust, we were documenting all of the discourse references when I found another place in the book where the word treason was used.

At first my mind reacted and I felt frustrated that I had not done a full search of the book and replaced it everywhere. But I immediately felt Swami's prompting inside and sat down quietly to ask him if it was okay for us to change the word. I clearly received a "no". I was totally confused. It seemed incorrect to me, and I even argued in my mind to Swami that it should be changed.

Several days later we were speaking to a gentleman from the Book Trust, and my husband was explaining some Christian history about Jesus that I had never learned when I was growing up.

He explained that when the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy against God, it was not a crime that he could be crucified for. So they took him to the Roman officials and told them that Jesus was asserting himself as the King of the Jews and therefore he should be crucified for treason against the Roman Empire.

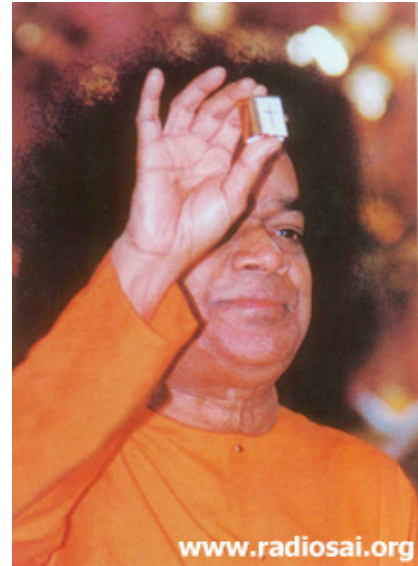
checking the book, I found that when Swami had approved of the word blasphemy, it was in reference to the Jews; when he had disapproved of changing the word treason, it was in reference to the Romans.

Swami answered my every question about Jesus in a simple, clear way. He affirmed that Jesus was a Divine incarnation, a master born with a purpose to awaken humanity spiritually. He affirmed that Jesus' life showed us the path to liberation, and that the path he taught, through both his example and teachings, could lead us to full enlightenment.

He clarified how Jesus always pointed the people to God and not to himself, and that he taught that we are all Divine, children of God, and that God is one. From this experience and with the presence of Swami, I have been able to continue to embrace and delve deeply into Jesus' teachings to understand the underlying purity that is universal to all of humanity.

I can now honestly embrace my Christian upbringing and understand its purpose and meaning in this "Kali-yuga" age of materialism, disillusionment, and violence – something I never dreamed would happen.

Debra came to appreciate how Jesus' life and teachings could enlighten us all and give meaning to our lives. Peter Phipps, author of *Sathya Sai Baba and Jesus Christ: A Gospel for the Golden Age*, had a dramatic experience of the power and love of Jesus in transforming even the most tragic of circumstances. From this experience, and his devotion to Sathya Sai Baba, he has embraced his mission of preparing Christians for the Second Coming of Christ.



Baba holding a materialised miniature Bible

FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

Peter Phipps – New Zealand

(Excerpts from Chapter 1: My Personal Transformation – *Sathya Sai Baba and Jesus Christ: A Gospel for the Golden Age*)

My origins are within a fairly traditional Christian setting, having been raised as an Anglican, confirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, and having struggled with my faith for years.

At one stage I had applied for admission to Holy Orders (Anglican terminology for ordination as a priest), and came within six weeks of admission to theological college before a letter from my vicar to the bishop led to an abandonment of these plans.

However, I maintained my interest, and continued to study theology and comparative religions. My faith waxed and waned over the years. I felt compelled to believe in God as a logical probability, but had little sense of a personal relationship with the Deity. I believed in a Creator, but not the Personal Guide, Friend and Heavenly Father whom I have now come to know.

I qualified as a psychologist in the early 1960's and worked in the prison system, the New Zealand Army and private practice before I joined The Salvation Army as a salaried employee. I still believed in a Creator, but could find little evidence that He (or She) took a personal interest in what we do, any more than the force of gravity distinguishes between one person and another.

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

(Jesus – John 5:24)

Bring to mind the words Jesus uttered, the advice he offered, the warnings he gave, and decide to direct your daily lives along the path he laid down. Have sacred vision. Speak good words. Hear only what is good. Entertain noble thoughts. There is no greater spiritual practice than this. This was the teaching of Jesus.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 24 December 1980, 25 December 2001)

Then my life and belief system changed, literally between one day and the next. In 1990, a man gunned down 13 people. I was one of a team of three on a Crisis Intervention Team sent into the area to counsel the victims. We were part of a Victim's Task Force established for that purpose.

Thus began the most harrowing and spiritual two and a half days of my life. We counselled over 100 people between us, as victims told us their story and received affirmation for their feelings. We saw victory over tragedy



15 meter statue of Jesus at Prasanthi Nilayam
in Hill View Stadium

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

(Jesus – Matthew 6:33, 7:7)

Jesus Christ said, "Ask, it shall be given; call, it will be answered; knock, it shall be opened." But, are we asking, calling and knocking? Yes. We are asking, we are calling, we are knocking at the door. But, whom are we asking? Whom are we calling? At whose door are we knocking?

(Sathya Sai Baba – 21 October 1982)

You are not asking for everlasting bliss; you ask only for short-lived material pleasures. So, you do not get all that you ask for. You do not ask for the indispensable! You do not pray for the peace that knows no break. If you did, the boon would be granted. Knock at the door of your own heart. God, the resident, will come into view. Believe that He resides in you and turn your eyes inward.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 21 October 1982)

In search of the deeper truths I started in a bookshop dealing in esoteric texts. My intention was to sift through everything I could find no matter what the origin and use my discrimination to sort out the truth from the bizarre. I had had such a taste of Jesus that I was confident of knowing the difference. In the bookshop, one text nearly leaped into my hand.

I saw it on the shelf, a book called "The Jesus Mystery" by Richard and Janet Bock. My hand grew very warm when I reached for it, and I was confident it would help me.

The book stated that Jesus is written as "Issa" in Tibet and "Isa" in Indian languages, and means "Divine Mother". The same term can also be written as "Sai". The book then suggested that Sathya Sai Baba, a modern spiritual teacher

again and again.

We have accepted such violence in Beirut or Northern Ireland and have become immunised to it. I now know that such horror affects real people who also weep. The world does not have to be so unloving and hateful. The team learned that with love all things seem possible.

I have the sense that this Earth could be Paradise if only we loved one another. The gospel seems so practical, so "here and now", so non-mystical. Heaven does not have to be in another plane or in another place; we already have it, if we only knew it.

All of us on the team felt that we were operating with a power beyond our own. The energy available to us was phenomenal! We knew that others were praying for us and thinking about us, and this helped.

The power seemed mightier than that available at most times. I felt that the power of Christ was available to use directly, and it contained wisdom, power, love and caring.

On the second morning, I woke up with the thought that the easy way of working, using (or being used by) a Higher Power, was the way that Jesus must have worked. The whole Christian story made sense at a higher level than before.

We saw people turn around from a state of confusion and shock to positive action. Some people have told us we were wonderful – but we do not feel at all wonderful, rather that we have access to a wonderful power which we may rightly call the Holy Spirit. What we feel is the great privilege to have been of use to others and to the Lord.

On the way home after the events described above, I thanked God in my heart for the help He provided, and I got a very clear reply: "I am greater than you know; seek Me out and find Me." This message implied that there was the possibility of finding the source of the message, and so I determined to explore and find the Source.

I had had the sense for a long time that Jesus was not fully revealed in the teachings of the churches or in the Gospels of the New Testament. Somehow the essence of the Man and the Revelation of the God seemed a bit misty.

in India, is the prophesied returned Lord come to save mankind from the present crisis.

The name "Baba" is said to be the same as "Abba", which Jesus used when addressing the Father. It seemed important for me to meet this Sathya Sai Baba if possible and so I joined a trip to India to spend some time at His ashram. If He really is the Lord returned to earth, I wanted to check first-hand for myself.

My experience in India was right out of Biblical times. To see subsistence farming as Jesus would have seen it, herds of goats foraging for food on poor soil, primitive irrigation techniques as used thousands of years ago, and real desert communities was somehow exciting in its novelty.

Assembled for Christmas celebration were 20,000 people from all countries in the world and most of the world's faiths. The trip was essentially a spiritual pilgrimage, and we learned a lot about Sai Baba's teachings through study of His books, lectures for foreign visitors, discussion with others and hearing His discourses.

At the ashram one heard constantly about miracles performed, people healed and extraordinary phenomena. I saw Sai Baba manifesting vibhuthi (sacred ash with healing and spiritual properties) with a wave of His hand several times.

I came away convinced that Sathya Sai Baba is the Lord as prophesied in Chapter 19 of the Book of Revelation. Sai Baba says that he has not come to create a new religion, but to revive the old ones, "to make a Christian a better Christian, a Moslem a better Moslem, and a Hindu a better Hindu".

He will not disturb anyone in their faith, but confirm them in what they already have. He returns again and again to the theme that developing love for God and our neighbours is our fundamental task as humans. He uses many of the terms and phrases Jesus did, and is closer to the teachings of Jesus than to any other spiritual teacher I have encountered.



God announces His name as I AM to the Hebrew leader Moses

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

(Exodus 3:14, 15)

For this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the Truth.

(Jesus – John 18:37)

That which remains changeless is referred to as Sat (Being). Sat is Truth. This Sat is within you. Truth is God. God is Truth. God is the very form of Truth.

(Sathya Sai Baba – 15 February 1999 , 01 January 1991 , 04 September 1994)

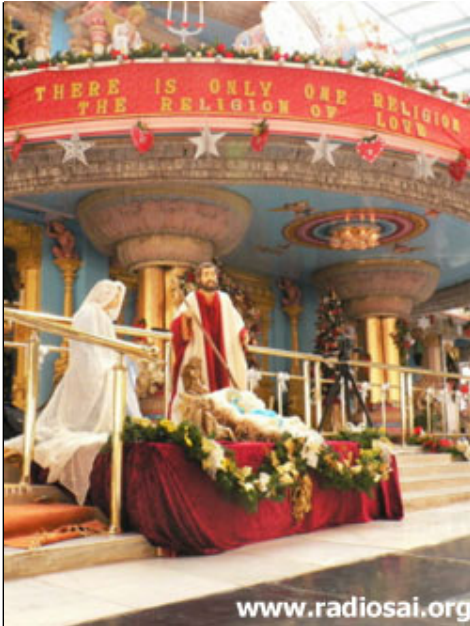
I have found Christ to be indeed greater than I know. I am closely involved with my own church and am working to be a lay reader. I believe I have a great understanding of Christ, and that I have actually been in His physical presence. The mission that I feel I am being called to undertake is to help Christians prepare for the acceptance of the Second Coming.

I preach Christ in the form which Christians know Him, but from the perspective of His teachings in the current age. The message is essentially as Jesus gave us in the Sermon on the Mount and stresses the Unity of all Creation, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

IN CLOSING...

As we reflect upon the significance of Easter – not just for Christians but for people of every faith – we are again reminded of Sathya Sai Baba's words from the opening of this story:

What is the resurrection, really? It is the revelation of the divinity inherent in man. (28 February 1964)



Christmas morning at Prasanthi Nilayam

What was the key that Jesus gave the world to realise our inherent divinity? His message is contained in one word: Love.

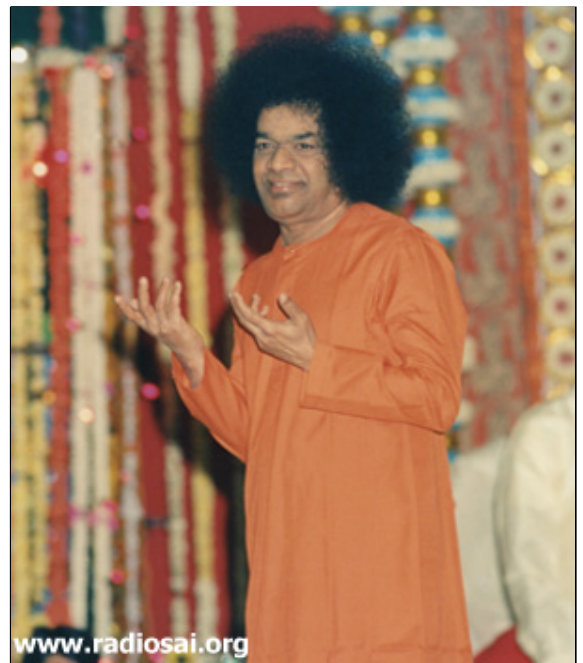
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37, 40)

While the message of love, this commandment of love, may seem difficult to live up to in our daily lives, from it springs the promise of resurrecting humanity from the trials and perils it faces today – replacing selfishness with selflessness, animosity with unity, religious tension with spiritual respect, and personal estrangement with a renewed experience of the presence of God. As Sathya Sai Baba reminds us:

The followers of Jesus have broken into schisms on various counts; but the life of Christ is a lesson of unity. He taught people that there was only one God and all were His children. Recognise in each being, in each man, a brother, the child of God, and ignore all limiting thoughts and prejudices based on status, colour, class, nativity and caste. (24 December 1972, 25 December 2001, 01 March 1974)

Jesus showed the path to unity and never gave scope for multiplicity. He always said that all were Divine. In terms of physical form, human beings appear different; in terms of the Spirit they are all one. This is the truth propagated by Christianity. (25 December: 2001, 1991)

The foremost need today is for everyone to realise that God is One. This is what Jesus proclaimed. God is and can be only One, not more! There is only one God and He is omnipresent! There is only one religion, the religion of love. There is only one language, the language of the heart. The followers of every religion, in their own way and style, call upon the One God who is omnipresent. It is the same God who confers upon all mankind, health, prosperity, peace and happiness. (25 December: 1994, 1970, 1978)



Each person we have met in this cover story has experienced an awakening of this “oneness of God” and our collective “oneness in God.” This is not surprising, since the lives of both Jesus and Sathya Sai Baba have embodied this fundamental message of life – thus turning the hearts and minds of people everywhere towards knowing the changeless nature of God, the loving presence of God in their lives, and the truth of their own inherent Divinity as children of God.

The influence of Sathya Sai Baba in the lives of countless Christians has led to a resurrection of their relationship with Jesus, a rebirth of appreciating who Jesus was, and a renewal of their sincere practice of what Jesus taught. The result has been, time and again, lives fulfilled as good Christians, true Christians, better Christians.

- Heart2Heart Team



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