



Reflections

Our call to care

OVER the last 11 years my annual visit back to India has become more of a working holiday than a time of rest and relaxation.

I do manage, at least to some extent, to keep my academic and priestly engagements under control but I struggle with my obsessive and compulsive nature of engaging with local charities.

Mother Teresa once said, 'Give, but give until it hurts'. My bank balance runs closer to zero each

time I return from India; in 2016, I had to borrow money to give away. The noise within me becomes louder when silent avoidance is observed at the face of sheer poverty and desperation.

India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and yet 10 per cent of its total population is still living in extreme poverty. This is historically considered to be a huge improvement if compared to the 1920s under British colonial rule, when famines and diseases

killed millions of people.

It is a familiar and common scene for the wealthy to live, without any inhibition, in an intimidating mansion while their servants lead lives of impoverishment. Both the rich and the poor seem to have accepted their economic status as their irreversible fate, and get on with life, at least outwardly, without displaying feelings of discomfort. Such an extreme situation does cause pain to the conscientious and egalitarian population. It

becomes harder to turn a blind eye to the inevitable reality and enjoy a good meal, let alone rest and relaxation.

As I board the flight after my time in India, I used to tell myself that I will find more rest and relaxation in Britain but as soon as I return, I find myself getting involved with my parishioners struggles and concerns.

I don't know what happens to my rest and relaxation when I am engaged in local charitable activi-

ties, but as Abraham Lincoln once said, 'To ease another's heartache is to forget one's own'.

As Christians we have a duty of care to 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute, to speak up and judge fairly, to defend the rights of the poor and needy' (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Darline Joseph Marianathan
St Boniface Okehampton
Holy Family Chagford