

SOLA Community

India Link



DECEMBER 2009

VOL. XVI NO. 3

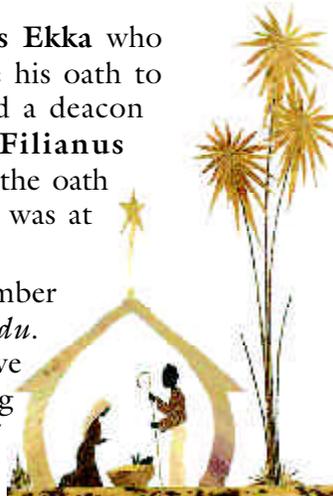
EDITORIAL

Greetings to all of our readers. We hope that all of you are preparing for the Birthday of our Lord and Savior, **Jesus Christ; Happy Birthday Jesus!** We need to remember that this is the birthday of **Jesus Christ**, and not an excuse to follow the “wisdom” of the market place and the merchants who live there.

Congratulations are in order for **Filianus Ekka** who is from **Chhattishgarh**. **Filianus** made his oath to SOLA on 9 Oct., and he was ordained a deacon on the 10th. Next year we will see **Filianus** ordained a priest. Representing India at the oath ceremony were **Fr. Hans Pfeiffer** who was at SOLA a few years ago and **Fr. Binu**.

Since we mention Africa, we also remember **Robin Leveil** who is from *Tamil Nadu*. In the last edition of INDIA LINK, we introduced Robin to you. He is doing fine in Burkina Faso novitiate with 27 other young men. **Robin** sends his greetings to our readers.

Also in Africa is **Fr. Sabu Puthenpurackal** who is from Kerala. Ethiopia is where **Fr. Sabu** is doing similar work as **Fr. Leo** and **Fr. Martin**. **Fr. Sabu**



reports that two Ethiopians are ready for Philosophy next year. I was surprised to read that **Fr. Sabu** has a three month vocation touring program. No details were given, but this seems like a lot of work.

Benjamin Baby writes to us. He is enjoying life in Ghana, and he has much contact with the Muslim community. What caught my attention was **Benjamin's** diet: “dog, cat, rat, snail and crocodile...and I [**Benjamin**] am enjoying all of them [the listed animals].” **Benjamin's**

advice with regard to his diet is, “So my friends don't get offended we have to have a [universal] stomach in order to survive...”

Cont. on page 2

AFRICA DAY



The stage and the audience



Kenyan Sisters singing and dancing

Cont. from page 1

EDITOR- *Dear Readers, Any comments on Benjamin's diet?*

In this edition of INDIA LINK, we give you an explanation of **Africa Day**. Why does this day hold so much importance for us? Read INDIA LINK and discover the reason.

Knowledge of oneself is so important in life. How has God gifted us and in what ways can we proclaim the Good News? **Sr. Maria Kuriakose, FMM**, helped our students to move closer to knowing themselves better, and **Dominic Shiby, 1st** year student from Kerala, gives us his reaction to **Sr. Maria's** workshop.

Remembering Africa does not mean that we forget our own country of India. We have holidays in India and we remember them at SOLA. So we have a brief explanation of: *Onam* and *Nayakhani* with some photos of these festivities.

In this Christmas edition of INDIA LINK, we start informing you of some of the places where the SOLA student assist members of the Bangalore Community (more information in further editions).

In this issue we tell you about *St. Martha's Hospital* and *St. Joseph's Home for the Elderly and the Poor*.

Did you ever wonder how SOLA got its start? To help answer this question we have an interview with **Mr. Mathew Kuruvilla**. *Dear Reader, What do you think of Mr. Kuruvilla's idea that he shared in his interview; that is, being a part of a lay group that would support SOLA (See our address on page 6)?*

The **SABS novices** (our next door neighbors) said, "good-bye" and we report on this event. We had an "hello" as well from the **M.S.S. for the Deaf in Kerala**.

What might the future of SOLA look like? We give you some background on the future of SOLA with information on our **Aspirants** in Carmelaram.

Recently **The SOLA community India, India** met with a group of **SOLA Community** who traveled from **The Philippines**. We discussed a number of topics that touch our lives as **SOLA members** and more specifically our vocation apostolate in **India** and in **The Philippines**. We shared some of what took place during that meeting, 26-27 October.

Africa Day

(see photos on page 1)

Africa Day, which is usually celebrated on *Mission Sunday* in October, is a commemoration of our **Founder Cardinal Lavigerie** who was one of the champions for ending the slave trade in Africa. *Mission Sunday* reminds us that we are all missionaries to proclaim the Good News. For SOLA our emphasis, but not exclusively so, is for Africa.

Our Africa Day began a little slow. In contrast to the usual sunny days in many parts of Africa for most of the year, we had some rain here but this was concentrated in the

morning. When our program commenced, we only had a little drizzle; however, this did not dampen our spirits!

Fr. Martin began our evening celebration with a prayer service. This was followed by some entertainment: *play, dances, and songs* by both **our SOLA students** as well as some of **our invited guests**. The meal that followed was enjoyed by one and all. For us at SOLA, this celebration is not only a chance to reaffirm our commitment to the African people but also to have our friends and **Aspirants** celebrate this commitment with us.

Know Thyself

Along with the rest of the SOLA students, I received valuable information on personal awareness, or knowing ourselves better. The one who helped us in this regard of knowing ourselves better was **Sister Maria Kuriakose, FMM**. She gave us something called the *Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator (MBTI)*. From *MBTI* and **Sr. Maria's** explanation, we learned something called "*personal awareness*."

Personal awareness is knowing how we see life around us, what gives us energy and how we judge situations that we are involved. In knowing this about ourselves can help us to live a better life and understand others better.

This personal knowledge has also helped me to know why my neighbor acts as s/he does. As a result I am more patient and understanding towards others when I am in a situation that I do not understand or that I find disturbing.

I have also learned to communicate more with others. Since others cannot read my mind, I need to share my thoughts and reactions with my neighbor.

Living with others - I have never lived in community with others; that is, sharing a similar life with age mates who were initially strangers to me. We share rooms together in dorms; we eat in the same dining hall; we recreate together as well as study and pray together. From my time spent with **Sr. Maria**, I have come to understand better how to live in community here in Bommasandra and take this knowledge with me when I go to Africa. Actually what I have learned will help me regardless of whether I live in Africa or India or anywhere else. I hope others have this same opportunity to learn about themselves as I have had. The results for them can be as it has been for me; I am living a better life, and I am happy about myself.

Dominic Shiby, 1st year student from Kerala

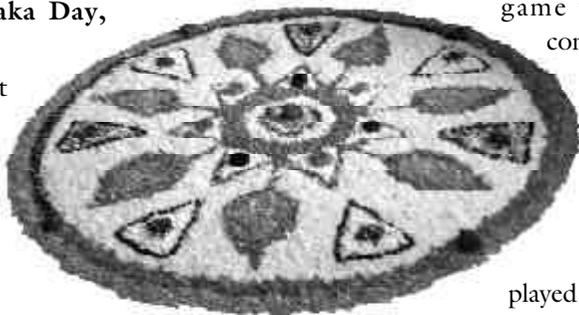
Onam

Regional celebrations are given importance in our SOLA community. Every year we celebrate: **Onam Ponkal, Nayakani, Karnataka Day,** etc.

Onam is the biggest festival of Kerala. This festival falls during the **Malayali** month of **Chingam** and marks the homecoming of **King Mahabali**. **Onam** celebration lasts ten days, and it is linked to many elements of Kerala's culture and tradition.

Onakalikal (*games*) of which **Pookalam** (*flower mat*) is one part. Every celebration has some thanksgiving, and Fr. Biju was the main celebrant at mass. This was followed by **Onasadya** (*meal*). **Onakalikal**, Prayer, and **Onasadya** are the main features of **Onam**.

Unlike other years, this year **Onam** celebration was more joyful and traditional due to our studies. We celebrated **Onam** on November 4th. All were enthusiastic to make the celebration in a more possible manner. The full co-operation of staff made the celebration grand. We started preparing for **Onasadya** the previous night with the help of SABS Sisters who are our next door neighbours. The celebration continued the next day. Everyone was actively



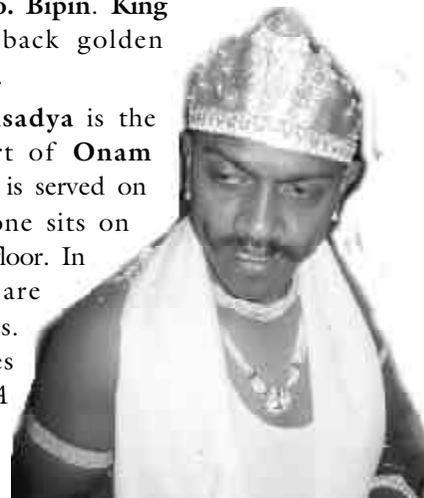
HAPPY
ONAM

involved in preparing. On the 4th, at 2 in the afternoon, we started our celebration with **Onakalikal** (*games*). The first game was **Pookalam** (*flower mats*). There were three competitors, and Britto, the name of one group, claimed first prize. A tug of war was another game that we played. Festival comes into its fullness when it is connected with prayer. Our prayer was a mass in **Syro Malabar Qurbana**. This was celebrated by our own member of staff, **Fr. Biju, M.S.T.**

Following our mass we welcomed **King Mahabali** played by our own **Bro. Bipin**. **King Mahabali** brought back golden memories of ages past.

After the mass, **Onasadya** is the most impressive part of **Onam** celebration. This meal is served on banana leaves. Everyone sits on mats which are on the floor. In **Onasadya**, there are thirteen essential dishes.

These delicious dishes were prepared by **SOLA students**, our next door neighbours, **the SABS Sisters**, and our neighbors. Following this delicious meal, we bid farewell to our guests, but the memories of friendship shared will remain with us.



Jisho George, 3rd Year student from Kerala

Nayakhani

SOLA community celebrated with the people of the north who have a wonderful way of praising God. It is a feast called **Nayakhani** (Hindu- *Naya* means "new" and *Khani* means "to eat" or "the meal to share"). This feast honors God for the good harvest He has given to us, and **Nayakhani** is celebrated in the month of October. This year the 9th of October was the occasion for our feast. This feast of the harvest is, naturally, one also of joy and happiness. In the early afternoon, we celebrated by having a football game among ourselves. (*See Photo*)

At SOLA we began the evening celebration of **Nayakhani** by a mass at six. The main celebrant was Fr. Leo. At the mass the offertory procession included not only the usual gifts of wine and hosts but also all kinds of fruits and vegetables that we received from The Lord via our garden and the market.

Following the mass we went to the dining hall. There we did the traditional dance where we expressed our joy again for God's gifts to us. The dance was followed by a sumptuous

meal which was enjoyed by one and all. After thanking God for the food on our table, we thanked God for the gift of our neighbor who celebrated with us. **Nayakhani** was appreciated by all present.

Edward Minj, 1st Year student from Assam



Candidates pose before playing Foot Ball Nayakhani day.

St. Martha's Hospital

Besides studying at Suvidya College or Marianist College, what do the SOLA students do? This is an excellent question. In addition to studies, the SOLA students do voluntary work in the local community. Since they will eventually bring the Good News to the people somewhere in **Africa**, they need to start understanding what this will entail now, and incorporate this into their studies.

Recently I visited **St. Martha's Hospital** in Majestic, Bangalore with **Rijo George**. **St. Martha Hospital** was begun 125 years ago by the **Sisters of the Good Shepherd**. The twenty acres of land for this hospital was given to the Sisters by the then **Maharaja of Mysore, Chamaraja Wodeyar X**. The **Maharaja** knew that the medical needs of his people were not being met and so the Sisters' presence filled a void.

Today there is room for 543 patients in this hospital and visiting the sick and the infirmed are part of the care services that the Sisters provide. We, at SOLA, are happy to join with these Sisters in helping the sick by

providing for the spiritual needs of the patients who are undergoing medical treatment.

Rijo George, a 2nd year student, whose family lives in **Karnataka**, visits the sick. He listens to the patients' needs and tries to be with them in their illness. **Rijo** always prays with not only the patient, but also for the family of the one who is sick. In visiting the sick, **Rijo**, in his own way, is proclaiming the Good News to his brothers and sisters who share the same Father in Heaven. **Rijo** is a winner too. He has discovered the truth of which St. Paul spoke when St. Paul quoted Jesus as saying, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving." Acts.20:35b.



St. Joseph's Home for the Poor and Elderly

In the heart of Bangalore is **St. Joseph's Home for the Poor and the Elderly**. This facility houses one hundred and forty elderly people (seventy men and seventy women). The different areas of the house are divided into small apartments with three or four persons to each apartment. The different apartments have the name of a saint. Our students worked in St. Andrew's apartment the Saturday that I visited St. Joseph's.

I was surprised to hear that St. Joseph's is one home among the thirteen in India where the **Little Sisters of the Poor** serve almost one thousand elderly in a caring atmosphere. Along with food and lodging, the Sisters also provide health care in a family type environment.

Assisting the Sisters in caring are some of the students from SOLA. Our students provide a variety of services depending on what the need is for that day. Just recently I visited St. Joseph's and Motilal, a 2nd year student from **Orissa**, and Sajeev, a 3rd year student from **Kerala**, who did some weeding in one of the specious gardens that occupy St. Joseph's.



Motilal and Sajeev tending Garden

From their training here at SOLA our students are very good at washing and drying dishes. No doubt the Sisters, who live in community themselves, knew that our students would have no trouble in working in the kitchen. As a matter of fact, after working in the garden, they dried the dishes. Prior to this task in the kitchen, the three of us served food to the people who were seated at their four person tables.

Other tasks that our students have done is cleaning up rooms, and visiting the elderly.

Everyone likes to have

someone to listen to him/her, and so our students are always willing to provide this ministry of Care. On other occasions our students have played the role of barber and given a shave to some of the men.

After our assisting the Sisters, they provided us with a delicious lunch and then we returned to SOLA satisfied that we had brought some sunshine into the lives of others.

Interview with Mr. Mathew Kuruvilla



ED- *Mr. Kuruvilla, how did you come into contact with SOLA?*

I was introduced to SOLA by **Fr. Mathew [Pathilchirayil]**. He came to visit me, and he asked for my assistance in buying some land. He wanted my advice because I was the oldest Catholic residence of his parish. Then the property was bought. Then he asked me if I would be interested in helping him to teach English to the young men so I left my job and got myself involved with this.

Later **Fr. Mathew** asked if I could teach these new-comers social skills of living in community, behavior in the dorms, the dining hall, the playground, and that type of thing. Fr. Mathew also asked me to take up some administrative work. I also helped to prepare the vocation material. This material was eventually published in THE HERALD in Kolkata, THE EXAMINER in Mumbai, THE NEW LEADER, and one more paper in Tamil Nadu.

I was then asked by **Fr. Mathew** to draw up files on students from all the papers that came into the Vocation Office. I knew a little bit of Malayalam and some Tamil and I would translate some of the letters that came to the Vocation Director. He also wanted me to keep him informed of all those who were writing to him and my responses to their letters. When Fr. Mathew went away and **Fr. Andre** came, I put all of this information into his hands.

ED – *Was Frs. Jaya and Leo your former pupils?*

MR. KURUVILLA -Yes, Sabu, Biju John, Binu, Jaya, Leo and the last one was Filianus, who is preparing to be ordained a priest. I was at SOLA for about 8-9 years with SOLA. I think I started in 1993 or 94 onwards.

ED - *When did you start to work at SOLA?*

MR. KURUVILLA - I started in 1993 up to around 2001 then I left, then they called me for another two years. I left when the MST arrived here.

ED- *What language was used among yourselves at SOLA?*

MR. KURUVILLA - Among ourselves we [the staff] agreed

to always use English as the common language since the students were coming from various parts of India. I was very strict about this. Division comes about if people communicate in a language that the others do not understand; community building suffers.

ED- *You mentioned something in passing to me once to the effect that lay people could help SOLA. Would you like to enlarge on that?*

MR. KURUVILLA - A group of lay supporters can do things that the priests/brothers might have some difficulty doing. For example in dealings with the government (passports, letters from the police about a student's character that some African governments require before granting a visa). We could lighten the load of the priests, for example doing accounts, even part-time work.

Priests are needed and although the task might not be that big, [help from the lay people] it lightens the load of the priests.

Lay people could do things like editing the LINK with the SOLA fathers overall in charge. Proof reading is very important for THE INDIA LINK. A retired lay person who knows accounts could do the accounting work, etc.

ED- *Dealing with the government would really be appreciated.*

MR. KURUVILLA - I have helped in the past. Fr. Helmut asked me to help Leo [Fr. Leo Laurence] gets his passport. Leo needed a letter from the police. I got the letter from the police because I know them, and they know me. I just explained that Leo was a student of mine and of good character. The police gave me the letter. There was no problem.

Dear Reader, What do you think of Mr. Kuruvilla's idea that he shared in his interview; that is, being a part of a lay group that would support SOLA ? (See our address on last page)

ED-I thank Mr. Kuruvilla for his time and his sharing. There is much food for thought in what he has said.

SOLA bids farewell to the SABS Novices



A week prior to their departure, SOLA invited our next door neighbors, the SABS Novices to a farewell. We wanted to say “good-bye” to the Sisters as they pass from one stage of their journey and begin a new one.

During our time together, we learned that the nineteen novices are from six different States in India. Coming from a variety of backgrounds is a challenge as well as a learning experience. We at SOLA live with members from different parts of the world and this too is an enriching experience as we share our common love to proclaim the Good News together as do the SABS novices.

Ratnakar Mohanayak, a second year student, was our Master of Ceremonies. He brought our visitors to the recreation room where Fr. Leo taught us all a song in Kiswahili (official languages of Tanzania, Africa). After our singing together, we went to the dining hall for some cake and soft drinks. The Sisters’ farewell gift to us was their singing. This singing was different from what we are usually accustomed to. Hand movement accompanied the Sisters’ singing. It was easy to follow along and join in the festivities as the Sisters sang.

In life good things come to an end, and so did our party. After one and a half, we parted. The time had gone so fast! As the Sisters left, they wished us well and promised to pray for us, and we pledged to do the same for them.

Visit by M.S.S. for the Deaf



On Sunday the 27th of September, SOLA had the surprise visit of some members of **M.S.S for the Deaf**. The 22 young ladies, 7 young men, 5 members of staff, and 3 Sisters are in Bangalore on a study tour. All of these hearing - impaired students are in plus two with computer science as one subject. All are optimistic to pass their examination and continue onto further studies, B.Sc. in Computer Science. However some have expressed an interest in studying tailoring when they complete their studies with the Sisters.

The group made their train trip from Kerela in 12 hours. They arrived just in time for mass. While **Fr. Leo** gave his homily, with his visual aids, **Sr. Dhanya Francis** signed for the students from M.S.S. After our Eucharistic celebration together, we had a cup a tea and some biscuits.

While having tea and some biscuits we had the opportunity to learn a few phrases in sign language, “*good morning*” “*good night*” “*thank you*”, “*I love you*” and one that is always handy with the bashful, “*Don’t be shy!*” A great time was had by all.

Dear Readers, what do you like or what would you like to hear more about in INDIA LINK? Send us your suggestions.

INDIA LINK,

**SOLA Study House, P.O. Box 1,
Bommasandra Ind. Est. P.O., Bangalore - 560 099.**

Ph(080) 2783 3175

Cell: 0944 953 9322/0900 149 4213

w-mail: solastudyhouse@yahoo.in

WEB: www.solastudyhouse.weebly.com

Aspirants, Carmelaram 2009-2010



There are fourteen **Aspirants** at Carmelaram. They are there to know something of the life of SOLA as well as to live this type of life. Is living in community versus living alone, like the diocesan clergy do, for him?

SOLA pray together twice a day, morning and evening. They eat together, work together, and recreate together. Mutual support is what our founder, **Cardinal Charles Lavigerie**, thought would be good for the mission as well as the ones who were trying to live their apostolic life.

There is an added bonus for SOLA. Living in an international, inter-racial, and intercultural environment sends a message to one and all that people from diverse backgrounds and countries can live together in peace.

Living in community is not the life for everyone. Carmelaram is an experience that will help our **Aspirants** discern if SOLA is the place for them.

In addition to their time together living in community, they are also helped to polish their skills in English. English and French are the two official languages of the SOLA because these two languages are spoken in most African countries as a result of the former colonial occupation.

This year we are happy to announce that SOLA has a mixture of Aspirants from six different states. They are from: *Orissa*, four; *Jharkhand*, three; *Chhattisgarh* and *Kerala* both have two each and one each from *Gujarat* and *Andhra Pradesh*. If all of these young men find living in community to their liking, and their skills in English are good, then next year they will go to SOLA in Bommasandra. We, the staff, of INDIA LINK wish them well on their quest.

Pre-Capitular Meeting, Bangalore, INDIA

Our four SOLA Fathers from Cebu in The Philippines were given a warm welcome upon their arrival in Bangalore on 19 October. This is the first visit for: Emmanuel Lengaigne (France), Bernard Monteron (The Philippines), Thomas Schwiedessen (Germany), and Charlie Timoney (Ireland). Another first, and an historical first at that, was this **Pre-Capitular** took place in Asia! A **Pre-Capitular** is a meeting that takes place before a **Chapter** (A **Chapter** takes place every six years) in which representatives from all SOLA members express their views about our SOLA society and where we need to go in the next six years; we also elect the Superior General and his four councilors at **The Chapter**.

We were most fortunate to have **Fr. David Fleming, SM** as our moderator for this two-day meeting, 26-27 October. We are so thankful that the General Council encouraged us to have this **Pre-Capitular** meeting in Asia.

Prior to our meeting The Philippine four plus Martin Gernier and Tom Reilly viewed some of the historic riches of India (Cor de Visser and Leo Laurence remained at home to “keep the fires burning” for our 20 students.).

We visited **Mysore** and the massive palace of the famous **Sultan Tipu** whom the British fought and defeated (To claim victory, the British needed three tries plus the betrayal of the Sultan’s generals). Charlie Timoney was surprised to see that the many cast iron columns, which supported the massive roof, were made in Glasgow, Scotland.

Our travels ended and we were back to reality and the purpose of our meeting. The time in and out of our meeting was well spent. We had the chance to share our experiences on **vocation animation** (how to inform young men about SOLA) and how we go about **formation** (study program to become a SOLA member). Some, but not all, of the high points were: opening up to Asian life, cultures and religions are important contributions for the evolving self-understanding of our Society in living with different cultures under one roof; we observe that we still have a sharp focus on Africa without excluding where we are missioned (**The Philippines**, and **India**); because of the small number of formators, teamwork and community are emphasized; the international makeup of our



*Front Row - Left to right:
Emmanuel Lengaigne, Tom Reilly, Leo Laurence
and Thomas Schwiedessen.*

*Back Row - Left to right:
Our Moderator Fr. David Fleming, SM, Bernard Monteron,
Martin Grenier, Charlie Timoney and Cor de Visser*

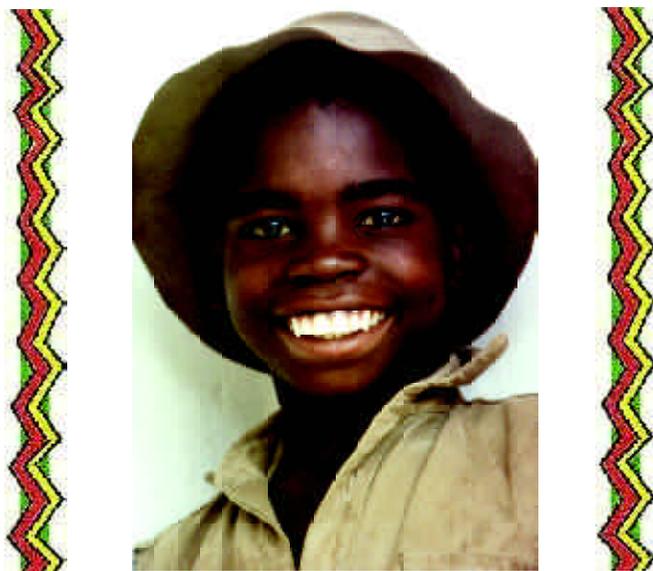
different communities was seen as a big plus where division exists between peoples in the countries where we are living; follow-up on our students in the different stages of their formation was seen as not only natural, but also necessary.

At the beginning of our meeting, Bernard Monteron was our choice to represent The Asian Delegation at the 2010 Chapter next May, 2010. We are optimistic that Bernard will convey our views to the other **Capitulants** (those attending **The Chapter**).

On 29 October, our meeting ended but we are committed to continue our journeying together in mutual support for our apostolate of preparing young men for work in Africa and for “be[ing] Apostles and nothing but Apostles.”



AFRICA IS CALLING YOU!



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

For information on joining SOLA
(Society of Our Lady of Africa) write/phone
THE VOCATION PROMOTER
SOLA Study House
P.O. Box 1
Bommansandra Ind. Est. PO
Bangalore 560099
Ph: (080) 2783 3175
Email solastudyhouse@yahoo.in
Website: www.solastudyhouse.weebly.com
Cell: 0944 953 9322
0900 149 4213

Edited by : Fr. Tom Reilly for Lavigerie (S.O.L.A. Study House), BANGALORE 560 099 India.

Phone: 080-2783 3175 Cell: 9449539322 e-mail: solastudyhouse@yahoo.in

Printed at WQ. Judge Press, 97 Residency Road, Bangalore - 560 025 Phone 22211168

PRIVATE USE ONLY