

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Sai's Message: I Will Never Leave You	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	2
Who Was Jesus Christ?	John Behner	3
Realize God Through Love.....	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	13
Sathya Sai's Message to Children	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	17
The Walk.....	Sarah Sinclair	18
"I Am God, I Am God, I Am Not Different from God" ..	Susan Lawrence Caffrey (In Memoriam)	20
Faith: A Flower at His Feet (Book Excerpt)	Sonya Ki Tomlinson	21
Through the Eyes of a <i>Seva Dal</i> (Poem)	Satish K Dua	22
On the Passing of My Guru (Poem)	Fredrica R Halligan	26
Sai Service – Love in Action:		
Hurricane Sandy Initial Relief Efforts	USA Sai Organization, Region 2	27
Sai Community:		
Region 2 (Mid-Atlantic): Mid-Atlantic Region Holds 37th Annual Retreat.....	Edith Billups	32
Sai Young Adults: USA Young Adult Officer's Leadership Retreat	Retreat Publications Team	35
Announcements:		
New Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation	Dr Narendranath Reddy	40
Sathya Sai Newsletter USA – Transition to Paperless in 2013	Bob Bozzani	41
A Note from the Editor	Corinn Kintz	42
Prasanthi Council – Initiative by Sai Students in Prasanthi Nilayam.....		
.....	Dr Narendranath Reddy	43
Region 1 (Northeast) Website Launched.....	Region 1 Officers	43
Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center: Important Notice to All <i>Newsletter</i> Subscribers		44
New Arrivals.....		44

SAI'S MESSAGE

I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU



NOMATTER WHERE you go, always do your duty as you see it, and know that I will be there inside you, guiding you every step of the way.

In the years to come, you will experience me in many different manifestations of my form. You are my own, dearer than dear to me. I will protect you as the eyelids protect the eyes. I will never leave you, and you can never leave me.

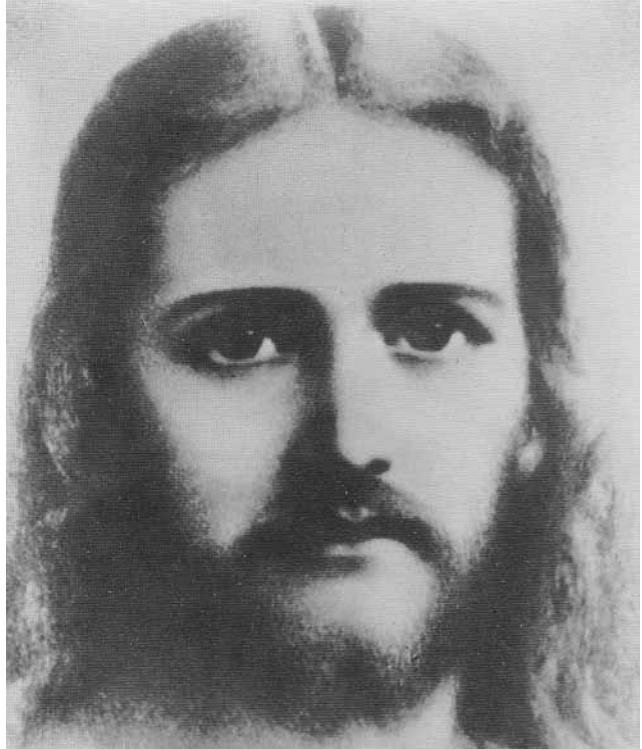
From this point on, do not hanker after anything. Do your duty with unwavering love, seeing all as God. Be patient. In time, everything will be given to you. Be happy. There is no need to worry about anything. Whatever is experienced, whatever happens, know that this Avatar has willed it so. There is no force on earth that can delay for an instant the mission for which this Avatar has come. You are all sacred souls, and you will have your parts to play in the unfolding drama of the new Golden Age, which is coming.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sanathana Sarathi, October 1996, back cover

Who Was Jesus Christ?

*What did he truly say,
and what did he not?*



WHAT BROUGHT ME TO our Lord Sri Sathya Sai Baba's physical presence 31 years ago was a search for the truth, and this search has been a characteristic of my mental make-up since I was very young. When I was in 7th grade, an essay contest was held at our church in Southern California on the topic, "Who is God?" I imagine the church elders were trying to elicit answers pertaining to the divinity of Jesus. My essay, however, was titled, "God Is Energy!" It is hard to believe, but I won second place, and they gave me a war bond worth \$25 as a prize. Of course,

God is also inertia, but I was just a kid looking for the truth.

God Is All – Activity and Inactivity!

So, what is the truth? Jesus conveyed profound teachings in a way that illiterate people could understand and remember easily. For instance, this is the way Jesus beautifully put across to his listeners the same idea, of God being both movement and inertia:

Jesus said, "If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?' say to them, 'We have come from the light, from the place where the light

came into being by itself, established [itself], and appeared in their image.'

"If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say, 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the living Father.'

"If they ask you, 'What is the evidence of your Father in you?' say to them, 'It is motion and rest.'" [Gospel of Thomas #50]

So, what I had written as a child about God being energy was partially correct! When my wife and I first heard about Sri Sathya Sai Baba, she asked me whether, if I had been living at the time of Christ, I would not have traveled to see and listen to him? In which case, wouldn't it be logical to travel to India and see Sathya Sai Baba and hear him, to see for ourselves if what we had been told was true? That is how we came and discovered that what we had heard was true indeed.

Jesus Christ – Who Was He?

Now let me share with you some observations made by Biblical scholars about just what Jesus Christ said and taught. First let us look at who Jesus Christ was, according to Sathya Sai Baba.

On September 7, 1996, in a discourse delivered to the students, Bhagawan Baba said that untruth, injustice, dishonesty, and disreputable conduct in the world create the circumstances for the advent of God or a divinely inspired saint or messiah, that these incarnations are either Purna Avatars (total manifestations of the Divine) or Amsa Avatars (partial manifestations), and that

this happens from time to time, not only in India, but in all countries.

Baba went on to explain:

At first, Jesus declared that he was a messenger of God. Then he declared, 'I am the son of God,' thereby proclaiming his right to a share in all the qualities of God. When he acquired all the qualities of the Divine, he announced, "I and my Father are One."

Baba further explained that each incarnation comes with powers that are necessary to the time and place of their advent. Jesus has been recognized for over 2,000 years as a divine master whose life was an example for all of us to follow.

How the Message of Jesus Has Been Convolutd

Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States and author of the American Declaration of Independence, wrote to his colleague John Adams, the 2nd president of the US, expressing his concern regarding the "corruption of Christianity." He had made a cut-and-pasted version of the gospels of the King James Bible, classifying the passages into those he felt could be attributed to Jesus, and those he was convinced were false.*

* Jefferson called his 46-page booklet of Jesus's words *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, noting that he considered the words of Jesus to be "the most benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man."



Mr John Behner

In his letter, Jefferson states, “In the New Testament, there is internal evidence that parts of it have proceeded from an extraordinary man, and that other portions are the fabric of very inferior minds. It is as easy to separate those parts as it is to pick out diamonds from a dunghill.”

Jesus used the metaphor of light to represent the consciousness of one’s true identity:

When thine eye is single, thy whole body shall be full of light. (Luke 11:34)

Jesus was reportedly opposed and crucified by those who ruled the temple – the priests and Pharisees. They viewed him as a threat to their privileged position. Jesus sought to liberate the Jews, not from the Romans but from their fear and domination by the priests. He emphasized love and the inner experience or communion with God rather than the law of the Old Testament. To his disciples, Jesus was not merely a teacher or rabbi but a God-man who remained an enigma to them.

The Revealing Findings of the “Jesus Seminar”

Doesn't much of all this sound just like what we have been experiencing at the feet of our Lord Sathya Sai Baba? So, when I discovered that a group of 150 Bible scholars, called the “Jesus Seminar,” had studied all the four generally-accepted gospels as well as the Gospel of Thomas, which was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1945, and they had reached an overwhelming agreement on what Christ said and what he didn't, I had something to test their work with. I thought their findings would have to be very similar to, or congruent with, the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba, because these are ageless truths that have been given to us, and they were stated also by Lord Krishna in the Gita and by many God-men who have lived in different ages.

These Bible scholars came from different churches and research centers, including universities. They published their findings in 1993, 1998, and 1999, which have shed light on what truly was the message of Jesus Christ. Surprisingly, their conclusions were that the Gospel of Thomas, which is not included in the traditional Bible, is the most authentic text available. It contains 114 sayings of Jesus, without commentary. Baba has told us that Matthew was a tax collector who visited the fishermen, and that he was the one who knew how to write and therefore put down what Jesus said.

The Gospel of Thomas – Jesus's Sayings

The Gospel of Thomas, however, as a gospel of wisdom, proclaims a distinct

message. Unlike the way Jesus is portrayed in some of the New Testament gospels, in the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus performs no miracles, reveals no fulfillment of prophecy, announces no apocalyptic kingdom about to disrupt the world order, and dies for no one's sins. But Jesus does reveal himself in the following sayings:

Whoever discovers the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death. (Thomas #1)

Let him who seeks not cease seeking until he finds; and when he finds he shall be disturbed; and having been disturbed he shall marvel, and he shall reign over the totality. (Thomas #2)

Become passers-by. (Thomas #42)

In other words, be a witness, unattached to the things of this world.

When Jesus realized, “The Father and I are One,” he could speak thus:

It is I who am the light above them all. It is I whom am the All. From me did the All come forth, and unto me did the All extend. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there. (Thomas #77)

Whoever drinks from my mouth [imbibes my teachings and practices them] will become like me. I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to that person. (Thomas #108)

Jesus saw some babies nursing and said to his followers, “These babies are like those who enter the kingdom of heaven.” They said to him, “Then shall we enter the kingdom of heaven as babies?” Jesus said to them, “When

you make the two into one, when you make the inner like the outer, and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male will not be male and the female not be female, then will you enter [the kingdom].” (Thomas #22)

This means we must transcend the pairs of opposites.

His followers said to him, “Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and they all spoke of you.” He said to them, “You have disregarded the living one who is in your presence and have spoken of the dead.” (Thomas #52)

Here, the “living one” refers to the Atma, the soul – not to Jesus personally but to the immortal divine presence that is in each one, for which the light is a metaphor. This is a good example of how Jesus spoke, sometimes in riddles, for those who were ready to listen.

His disciples questioned him, “Do you want us to fast? How should we pray? Shall we give alms? What diet should we observe?” Jesus said, “Do not tell lies, and do not do what you hate, because all things are disclosed before heaven, for there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and there is nothing covered that will remain undisclosed.” (Thomas #6)

Very clearly, here Jesus is referring to the law of cause and effect, divine omniscience, and the importance of living a moral life.

Jesus’s Most Potent Message

Love is the basis of Jesus’s teachings. This is evident in so many of his messages:

Do not resist an evil person. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. When someone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (Matthew 5:39–41; Luke 6:29)

Give to the one who begs from you and don’t turn away anyone who tries to borrow from you. (Matthew 5:42; Luke 6:30)

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27)

Be ye perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:36)

Remember the man who asked Jesus how he could enter the kingdom of heaven: Jesus told him to give up his riches and all his property, and then observed:

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25)

When I was still a boy, one of my aunts used to tell Bible stories to my sisters and me. I can remember questioning her as to how Lazarus could have been raised from the dead. I don’t know if I really believed the story until we came to know Swami.

In 1988, my wife had the good fortune to be present during the Dasara festival, when Swami brought Brigadier Bose back to life;

she witnessed this. Months later when I was talking to Mr Bose, he told me something funny: “When I went back to my room after the miraculous incident, my wife told me that Swami had brought someone back from death, but she was not in a position to see who it was. I said, “Yes, that’s true! It was me!”

Authentic Sayings of Jesus

Many sayings thought to be legitimate appear not only in the Gospel of Thomas but also in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. For example:

The followers said to Jesus, “Tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like,” and he said to them, “It is like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, but when it falls on prepared soil, it produces a large plant providing shelter for the birds of the air.” (Thomas #20; Matthew 13:31–32; Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19)

The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a lot of flour, and made it into large loaves. (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20–21; Thomas #96)

Listen to me all of you and try to understand. It is not what goes into you from the outside that can defile you; rather, that which comes out of your mouth will defile you. (Mark 7:14–15; Matthew 15:10–11; *reveal, Thomas #14.5)*

Do not worry about your life, what you are going to eat, about your body, or what you are going to wear. There is more to living than food and clothing, isn’t there? Take a look at the birds of the sky. They don’t plant

or harvest; they do not store up grain, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. How much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add one hour to his life? Don’t worry about clothes; the lilies neither toil nor spin. Yet let me tell you, even Solomon at the height of his glory was never dressed finer than one of them. If God clothes the grasses in the field that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, will he not clothe you? So, do not worry about what you will eat, drink, or wear. (Matthew 6:25–30; Luke 12:22–29; Thomas #36)

Timeless Tales With Deep Messages

The parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan are wonderful stories and very likely tales that were told by Jesus.

The Story of the Prodigal Son

Once there was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, “Give me my share of the property that is coming to me.” So the father divided his estate between his two sons. A few days later the younger son gathered up all his things and set out for a far away country, where he squandered away all his possessions.

Then came a famine to that land, and he was in dire need, so he hired himself out to a man who sent him to take care of some pigs. He was hungry but was not even offered a portion of what was thrown to the pigs. Then the son realized that even the hired hands at his father’s home were better off than he was. So he repented and resolved to go to his father and say, “Father, I don’t deserve

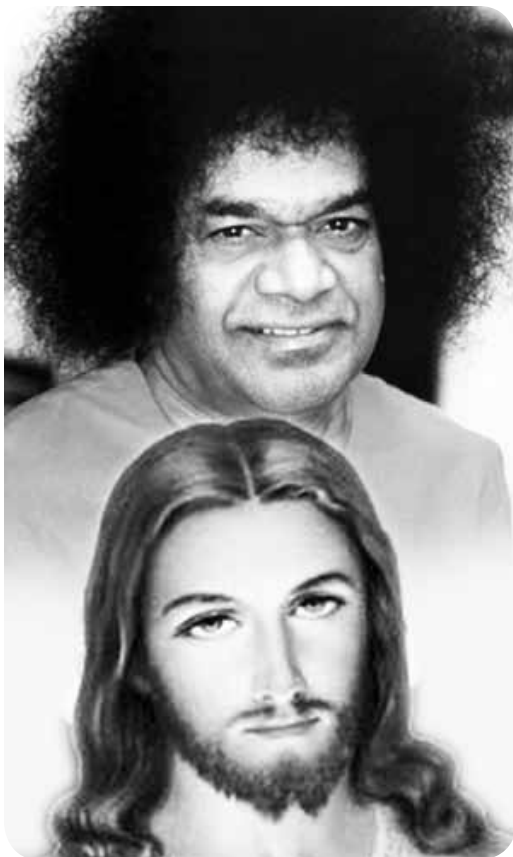
to be called a son of yours any longer; please treat me as one of your hired hands.” Thus he returned home.

But when his father saw him coming, he asked his servants to quickly bring the finest robe and put it on the son, and give him sandals for his feet and a ring for his finger. “We will have a feast to celebrate,” he said.

When the older brother came in from the field and heard all the festivities, he asked what it was all about. The servants told him that his brother had come home and his father was holding a celebration. The older one became angry and did not want to come inside.

His father went outside to reason with him. “My child, you are always by my side. Everything that is mine is yours. But we just have to celebrate and rejoice, because your brother, who was as dead, now has come back to life; he was lost and now is found!”
(Luke 15:11–32)

This story of forgiveness demonstrates an important truth. Each of us who follow Sai Baba have made many errors in our lives, yet Baba welcomes us back and asks us only not to repeat our mistakes. Just imagine how many of us have been saved from eternal damnation. It reminds me of my paternal grandfather, who was a pastor in the Free Methodist Church. In 1934, it was prohibited for pastors to go to the newly invented movies. But my grandpa out of curiosity decided to watch the first animated movie, Walt Disney’s *Snow White*. At the age of 68, he was removed from the church and denied



"The Father and I are One."

any pension for this terrible error. But Swami, unlike the church, must have forgiven him.

The Story of the Good Samaritan

The story of the Good Samaritan is another fascinating parable:

A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell victim to robbers. He was stripped, beaten, and left for dead. Within a short time a priest traveling that same way

saw him lying by the road and went out of his way to avoid him. Similarly, a Levite came by and crossed the road in avoidance.

But then a Samaritan came by and was moved with empathy. He washed the man's wounds and cared for him, putting him on his own animal and taking him to an inn to look after him. The next day he gave the innkeeper two silver coins and said, "Please look after his needs, and if there is any difference in the account, I will pay you when I come back this way." (Luke 10:30–35)

This parable overthrows the difference between “us” and “them,” since at that time the injured man needed care and it was not important what his religion or background was. The priest and Levite were among the privileged and scholarly class of Jews who had roles related to their religion, while Samaritans were looked down upon as outsiders and disliked by the Jews of Jerusalem. Yet neither the priest nor the Levite responded to the injured man's need, whereas the Samaritan responded compassionately. The point of this story compares with Baba's teaching that the whole of humanity is one family.

As Swami says:

No act of service is high or low; each act of compassion is equal in the eye of the Lord; it is the readiness with which it is done, the joy, the efficiency, the skill with which it is performed that matters. If you do not serve man, who is your kith and kin, who has the same feelings, impulses, and instincts as you, and whom

you can see alive before you, gladly accepting with a smile of gratitude, how then can you serve God, who is so different and distant, so potent and mysterious? Train yourselves to serve God by serving others, for God is installed in their hearts. Become aware that service to man is service to God. (Oct 4, 1967)

A Personal Example

Baba has given us all opportunities to be Good Samaritans. Once I had the chance to do such a thing. In 1984, we were traveling by taxi from Madurai to Kodaikanal. Two boys on a bicycle lost their balance in front of the taxi, and we hit them, even though the driver tried to avoid the accident. They were injured, but fortunately we had some *vibhuti* (holy ash), which we applied on their wounds.

We then put them in the taxi, and the driver went straight to a rural hospital. We waited while the doctor sewed up the wounds and until the two boys' family members arrived. When we went outside, our taxi and its Good Samaritan driver had disappeared.

We were informed that the driver had been taken to jail and the taxi impounded by the police. We went to the police station and got our suitcases from the taxi but were not allowed to see the driver. When we got to Kodaikanal, we wrote a letter to the judge explaining everything and asking for the driver to be released and given recognition for exemplary conduct.

We were told later that the judge had read our letter in court and dismissed the case against the good-hearted taxi driver.

What Jesus Did Not Say

I do not want to conclude without mentioning something about the words Jesus did *not* say. Among the scholars of the Jesus Seminar, there was an overwhelming consensus that the texts of the Gospel of John, the Epistles of Paul, the Book of Acts, and the Book of Revelation contained few words that could be attributed to Jesus.

Rather, most of the words were likely to be those of early church evangelists who taught that the person of Jesus was the message and the need to accept the person of Jesus as one's savior in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

According to Elaine Pagels, in her book, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*, an unknown scholar wrote the Book of John, probably in Ephesus (a city in what is now Turkey), at the end of the first century, in order to refute the Gospel of Thomas.

Thomas's gospel encourages one not so much to believe in Jesus as to seek to know God through one's own divinely given capacity, whereas the Gospel of John asks the reader to believe in Jesus in order to have one's sins forgiven. The latter was a compelling argument for the establishment of the Church, as it does not require any spiritual discipline.

John's gospel also differs from the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in many ways, especially in their descriptions of the final days of Jesus's life. John also calls Jesus *Lord* and *God*, titles Jesus did not give to himself in the other gospels. Also, the Gospel of John is the only one to present a

critical portrait of Thomas, by inventing the characterization, "doubting Thomas."

The Real Bible and Its Message Revealed by Baba

Our exposition would not be complete without mentioning what Baba stated at the time of materializing a miniature Bible on Christmas morning in 1996. He said:

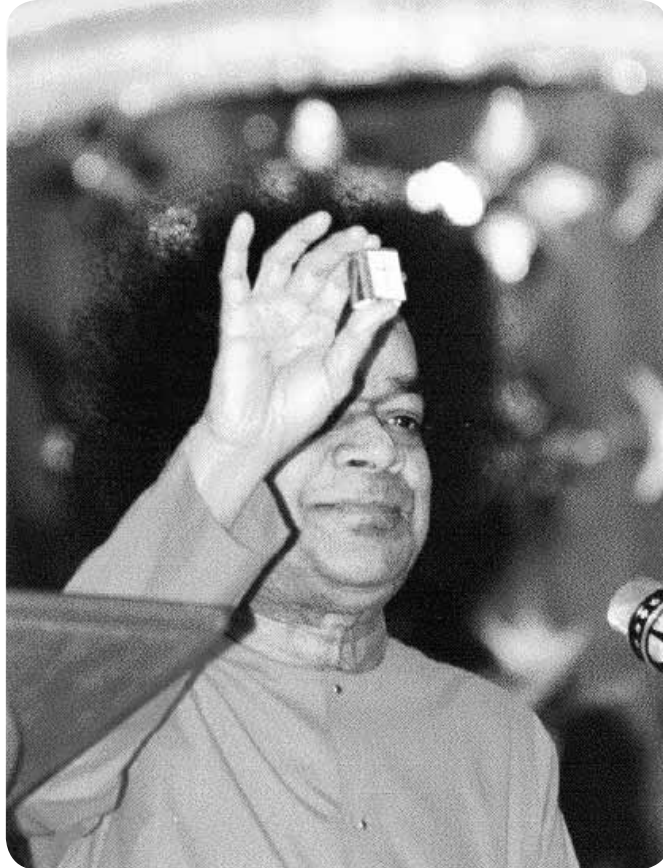
There is a book compiled in Britain around 1530 AD, containing all the information about Jesus gathered during the preceding centuries. The Russians condensed all the material in a small book that they preserved in a place on the Black Sea Coast.

Swami then produced this very book by a circular wave of his hand and continued:

*This is the book; you can see the cross on the cover page. This book was designed to demonstrate the common features of all religions. What is contained in this book is not to be found even in the Bible. It contains an entirely new account of the life of Jesus. . . . Inside this are bookmark threads that distinguish every faith by a verse relating to it.**

In this message, Baba made two important points: (1) the life of Jesus was different from what we know about him in the Bible, and (2) respect for all faiths was seen by the authors of this tiny Bible as an important part of understanding the teachings of Jesus, who showed his followers how to love everyone.

* For the full text of the discourse, see pages 13-17.



So, the next time we read the Bible or listen to someone quoting Jesus, we can use the touchstone of Baba's teachings to verify the truth.

In the end, this is my prayer to Baba: "Dear Swami, my gratitude is overflowing for your having given us all an opportunity to see so much of what Jesus really taught reflected in all of your teachings, and we pray that each of us may be able to put at least one of these lessons into practice." 🙏

—**John Behner**

San Salvador, El Salvador

Reprinted from http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_08/01DEC10/03-behner.htm.

Editor's Note: The opinions expressed in this article are of the author and lie outside the traditional view of Christianity held by some churches. The intent of this article is only to share additional insights into the Christian religion and to provide food for thought for all lovers of God as we celebrate the holy festival of Christmas.

Realize God Through Love

Jesus and All the Masters Taught the Omnipresence of God in All Beings

LIFE IN THIS PHENOMENAL WORLD is not permanent. Youth and wealth are not lasting. They are like passing clouds. Wife, children, and other relatives are liable to vanish like white mist, in a moment. In human life, righteous living and a good reputation are the two that are everlasting. In the history of mankind, various religions arose to promote the moral advancement, prosperity, and welfare of humanity.
(TELUGU POEM)

VAISHNAVITES HAVE esteemed Vishnu as the Supreme. Shaivites have given the highest place to Shambhu. The worshipers of Ganapathi accord the highest place to Ganesha; Saraswati is adored as the Supreme by the seekers of knowledge; Muslims regard Allah as the Supreme Lord. Christians hail Jesus as the Savior; Buddhists worship Buddha as the Supreme Enlightened One; Jains accord the highest place to Mahavira; Parsis adore Zoroaster; Sikhs consider Nanak as the Supreme teacher; and Baba devotees adore Sai as the Supreme. But the wise regard all of them as equal.

All religions should be revered equally, because God is one and the same God for all of them. God is Truth. He is Righteousness. He is Peace. He is the embodiment of Love.

The Common Essence of All Religions

Embodiments of Love! It is essential to realize and act on the basis that the purpose

of religion is to promote unity in diversity, to banish divisive tendencies, and to inspire human beings to lead ideal lives. The essence of all religions, the message of all scriptures, and the destination for all mankind is the same. But because of selfishness, narrow-mindedness, and concern for self-interest, religion is used as a pretext for promoting differences and conflicts.

All religions teach only what is good, [which can be seen] if they are studied intelligently. As a Telugu poem says, “If your mind is good, what religion can be bad?” Morality and integrity, righteousness and charity, truth and tradition, forbearance and nonviolence are basic tenets of all religions. These basic truths are common to all religions, but over the years men have forgotten these truths and fostered divisive tendencies instead of unity. As a result, respect for human values has gone. It is essential to recognize the divine unity, which suffuses all the diversity in human existence.

Seeing Jesus's acts of love and kindness,
people declared that he was a "Messenger of God."
Jesus constantly referred to God as "the Father."
Later he declared, "I and my Father are one."
Jesus dedicated his life to the propagation of faith in one God
who is common to all mankind.

The Life of Jesus

(Bhagawan gave a brief account of the Jewish concept of the creation of the cosmos and referred to Jesus as the son of Mary and Joseph). As the name and fame of Jesus spread, opposition to him developed among a sector of Jews. After his father's death, young Jesus considered it his duty to help his mother and revere her as divine. Jesus preached the primary obligation of everyone to show one's gratitude to one's parents.

Jesus came with his mother to Jerusalem when he was 11 years old. His mother was worried about Jesus's activities. He was critical of the ways of the Jews in the temple in Jerusalem. He came out against the harmful practices in the temple and preached the omnipresence of God in all living beings. He exhorted the people not to cause harm to anyone. What Jesus preached was in accord with the basic teachings of all religions.

He engaged himself in a mission of mercy to the sick and the poor. He offered food to the hungry. Seeing Jesus's acts of love and kindness, people declared that he was a "messenger of God."

Jesus constantly referred to God as "the Father." Later he declared, "I and my Father are one." Jesus dedicated his life to the propagation of faith in one God who is common to all mankind.

Men today celebrate the birthdays of great holy men but they do not follow the teachings of those masters. There is nothing great about the celebration of birthdays. People must resolve to uphold these masters' ideals and act up to their teachings.

A Unique Book

There is a book that was compiled in Britain around 1530 AD, containing all the information about Jesus that had been gathered during the preceding centuries. The Russians condensed all this material into a small book, which was preserved at a place on the Black Sea coast. (Swami produced the little book by a circular wave of his hand and held it before the audience).

This is the book. You can see the cross on the cover. The book was designed to demonstrate the common features of all religions. What is contained in this book is

**You must recognize the fact that the whole universe
is within you. You have all the powers in you. They are
derived from the Divine Spirit within you.**

not to be found even in the Bible. It contains an entirely new account of the life of Jesus.

It is not open to all to understand the ways of the Lord. To know about God, one has to develop godly feelings. In this book, there are bookmark threads that distinguish every faith by a verse relating to it. One page contains the verse from the Bhagavad Gita in which Krishna exhorts Arjuna to give up all beliefs and take sole refuge in Him, and assuring Arjuna that thereafter he would absolve Arjuna of all sins (cheers).

The essence of all creeds is one and the same. Man's primary duty is to surrender to God. "Surrender" means attaining the state in which the devotee feels he is one with God. This feeling arises out of the conviction that the same divinity is present in all. Bodies of human beings are varied like light bulbs, but the current passing through them is the same. The color of the bulbs or their wattage may vary, but the activating current is the same.

Follow the Conscience

This small book also contains the Vedic saying, "*Ekoham bahushyam* (I am One; may I become many)." The same God dwells in all beings. There is no justification for differences on the basis of religion. It is attachment to the body that accounts for religious differences. Do not regard the body

as permanent. It is a water bubble. The mind is a mad monkey. Don't follow either of them.

Follow the conscience. That is the main message contained in this little book. The culture of Bharat (India) has experienced this truth in the concept of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

Today people read all kinds of books and follow after all sorts of "great persons," but they do not inquire about what constitutes true greatness. Realize there is no one greater than each of you. You have not discovered the real truth about yourself. Like an elephant that does not know its own strength, a mahout with a goad is able to control it.

You must recognize the fact that the whole universe is within you. You have all the powers in you. They are derived from the Divine Spirit within you. It is this divinity that endows you with a free will. Forgetting the supreme power of the Spirit, people place their reliance on the powers of the body, the mind, and the intellect.

Love Binds All People

Embodiments of love! If you want to realize God, if you wish to experience the divinity within you, if you want to know your true Self, you have to develop pure, unsullied love. It is this love that binds all

people. This is described as the “bond of love” (*prema-pasham*).

Today there are numerous sects within Christianity, all of which are engaged in propagating their respective doctrines. While this preaching goes on, there is very little of practice in daily life.

Practice is most important. People may be entitled to propagate their creed, but that does not achieve anything lasting. Only practical example matters. When you practice what you preach, others will be inspired by your example. No one will care for the teaching of a person who does not practice what he preaches.

I have often told the students that of all forms of knowledge, the one that is most beneficial is practical knowledge, which is relevant to everyone. You have to act on the conviction that the same Divine Spirit dwells in one and all. Oblivious to this truth, man today is immersed in selfish pursuits. That selfishness is degrading man to the lowest levels. To develop true humanness, everyone has to foster the feeling of spiritual oneness. This sense of oneness constitutes true religion. “Religion” means “realization” of your true Self.

Develop the love of God. All other forms of love are not love at all but only fleeting and impermanent attachments. Man’s biggest folly is forgetting his divinity. All should realize that they come from God. All are children of God. Everyone should seek to get nearer and nearer to God. That is *sadhana* (spiritual discipline).

You must feel that God is *Hridayavasi* (the Indweller of the heart). You must develop compassion in the heart, because without compassion, your heart is only a stone. That is the message of Jesus – the message of love. Love is God; live in love. Start the day with love; spend the day with love; end the day with love. This is the way to God. Only the person who is filled with love will be dear to the Lord.

God Is Your Unfailing Friend

This little book contains the declaration, “*Yo madhbhaktah . . .*” (The one who is filled with love of God is dear to me),” as the Lord says in the Gita. God is your unfailing friend in weal and woe. You must acquire his friendship.

Many devotees from overseas are here today. They should be firm in their devotion, whatever changes in situation they may face. You may begin worshiping God with a specific form and name. But when you are faced with difficulties, you experience God as a helper. When you have some desires, you pray to God for fulfilling them. Then you are then a seeker of favors. In these different ways the devotee has to develop his relationship to God.

To illustrate how God responds to the prayers of devotees, I would relate the story of a rich man with four wives who expressed what they wanted him to get them during a trip abroad. The first wife, who was spiritually enlightened, prayed for his safe return. The second wife wanted him to bring her some sacred books.

The third wife, who was ailing, requested him to bring her some medicines. The fourth wife, who was a “modern,” asked him to get her saris and jewelry. The merchant, on his return, gave the last three wives what they wanted and stayed with the first wife, because she had no other desire except to have him back.

How God Responds to Devotees

God responds to devotees in the same manner. To those who aspire for wealth, he gives wealth. Those who seek knowledge, he will help them acquire it. Those who are ailing and who pray to God will get the relief they pray for. God builds hospitals for their treatment. Those who pray to God for oneness with God, will realize God. This is the way God responds to the four kinds of devotees.

Devotees should consider God alone as important and not other mundane desires. If you have God with you, all other things are gotten easily. So, God is your real wealth. Real health is God. Men should strive for God-realization, because they came from God and should go back to God.

There are devotees here today from many countries – Germany, Japan, and others. Whatever happiness you may have experienced here, you will have to go back to your countries when your money is exhausted or your visa expires. Your aim must be to acquire a permanent visa to stay here permanently. That is obtained by God’s grace. You can get it through love and love alone. When you have that love, your proximity to God is insured forever.

Embodiments of love! Love is in every one of you. Develop that love. Share it with others. When you have this love, there is no need for you to go in search of ashrams. Some foolish persons go on hopping from one ashram to another. This is sheer folly. There is no need to go anywhere. The Divine is in your heart. Adhere to one belief firmly. Do not change your faith from day to day. Follow one path with firm faith. That is the love principle. ☸

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
SSS 19:53, Dec 25, 1996

Sathya Sai’s Message to Children:

Dear children!

Revere your parents, elders, and teachers.

Be humble before their longer experience and deeper love.

Know what virtue (*dharma*) is, and follow it strictly.



—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
SSS 6:26, 1966

The Walk

Reflections from a Sai-lent Retreat in Charles Town, West Virginia

OH DIVINE ONE . . . I AM blessed to be here as I immerse myself in the journey and commit to THE WALK ever so closer to YOU.

I AM whelmed over by the emotion I carry.

As I journey forward on the path laid before me, I AM aware of the connection to SOURCE through Mother Earth, through all that is.

As I walk on, I AM somehow transported to a deep-seated emotion I have been carrying for what seems to be an eternity. I allow the feelings to bubble up, understanding that they were lost in the great abyss, submerged below, weighting me down, keeping me from feeling connected, prolonging separation.

What came to the surface as I made my descent: "Why do I choose to diverge from the teachings and continue to suffer?" I welcome the percolating energy to take many forms, transmuting the cells of my being. LET IT BEGIN . . .

The deeper I go, the more I see how, no matter what, I AM taken care of so sweetly. I witness my brothers and sisters looking out for me with their gentle spirit and watchful eye. Just like Sai Baba, they do not allow my path to be burdened. They lead the way, clearing the debris so I can move forward with ease. They take my hand and gently await my next step in self-realization as the path continues. I see in them YOU, and ultimately, ME, as I awaken from the DREAM, conscious of the LOVE THAT YOU-ARE-I-AM.

I come to this world born anew in your Holy Presence . . . to the clearing . . . I AM OUT OF THE WOODS. Resurrection awaits in the TRUTH that will set me free.

“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. . . . Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I shall live in the house of the Lord forever.” *

“If you hold MY staff you shall be victorious.”

The Walk helped me to see I AM not alone; I can choose to connect with Source so simply by taking a step in a new direction. It will always lead me Home; this I can trust.

Along the way I will have many experiences that will propel me further in the discovery of who I AM in my humanness, who I AM in my Godliness. It's all in accordance to the path I choose to take, in each moment, each breath.

AM I open to receive / give love in all circumstances? AM I living the teachings or trapped in illusion and fear?

The chaos has order in the ebb and flow of the universe's primordial rhythm. All of creation rests in this wave of coherency, anchoring the matrix of the universal heart . . . the one heartbeat that serves humanity in our beloved Sai. ☸



—Sarah Sinclair, March 17, 2012
New Hope, Pennsylvania

* Holy Bible, Psalm 23:4, 6

I Am God,

I Am God, I Am not different from God.

I Am the Infinite Supreme, the One Reality.

I Am Sat-Chit-Ananda Swarupa,

I Am OM TAT SAT OM.

I Am Love, I Am Truth, I Am Peace Eternally.

I Am Ever Pure Delight; I Am Always Full and Free.

Fear or grief can never touch me.

I Am OM TAT SAT OM. ❁



—Prayer taught by Sri Sathya Sai Baba,
Bhajan music by Susan Lawrence Caffrey,
1935–2012 (In Memoriam)

Faith: A Flower at His Feet



Book Excerpt from *Sai Rapture:
The Ecstatic Journey of a Modern Day Gopi*

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.*
—Holy Bible, Hebrews 11:1

SWAMI IS OUR UNFAILING support and anchor in life. With Baba's grace all things are possible.

In 2003, I had just returned from a six-month stay at Sathya Sai Baba's ashram in Puttaparthi, India. Although my ex-husband and I had divorced in 2001, there were still many financial ties between us that needed to be resolved. Until my return from India, I had been too emotionally upset to face these challenges clearly. My stay with Baba gave me the courage and strength that I needed to begin picking up the pieces of my life.

After the 2003 sojourn in India, I went directly to Palm Bay, Florida, where my parents lived. From there I started to address the financial baggage that had to be settled between my ex-husband and myself. First, we owned a house in common and property in Arkansas. Also, he was still in the house, and we had a joint checking account, as well as a lot of credit cards. It was really a terrible mess but something that had to be faced and straightened out. I stayed with my parents for six months.

During that time, I began looking for a lot in Palm Bay to build a home on. The prices of lots were astronomical and climbing daily.

I kept searching and couldn't find anything remotely reasonable. At one point I said to Swami, "Well, maybe you don't want me to live here," and surrendered my search.

Shortly after that inner conversation, a lot across from my parents' house sprang up for sale. It was a cleared, quarter-acre lot. I immediately called the owner and we arranged to meet. He wanted to sell the lot for \$11,500 – unheard of in this area, as most uncleared lots were selling for \$18,000–\$20,000! I jumped on it and, using a small personal savings, was able to purchase the lot.

My sister and her family encouraged me to look for builders. I found a good local builder and set about making plans to have my new home built. Meanwhile, the marital residence in Arkansas needed to be repaired and sold. I took a trip there to finish that business.

My ex-husband had always handled our bills and finances. When I started looking at our credit records, I realized we were in enormous credit card debt. I discussed this with him, and he said he couldn't help financially with any of this shared debt, because he had accumulated

Continued on page 24...

Through the Eyes of a Seva Dal

(Experienced on November 23, 2010)

AUSPICIOUS MOST, November 23rd
"2K-ten,"
Celebrating 85th year of Sai Advent;
Puttaparthi bejeweled in grandeur to beckon
Hordes of mankind to the momentous event.

Winding queues from the Kalyan Mandap,
Merging stream from Chitravati Road,
Cascading caravans never to end, up
Raising dust as they rode.

Directions all hailing Sai Avatar,
Invisible gods descending on earth,
Humanity all from near and far
Touching the soil to redeem their birth.

Flew some in skies across the seas,
Toiled some their miles on the rail,
To ambrosial sweetness like the bees,
Converging down through vale and dale.

Come some for a very first Darshan,
Some on pilgrimage of gratitude,
Some frequenting for adoration,
Some to entreat His servitude.

Hill View Stadium decked as heavenly resort,
Where to cross ocean of birth and death,
Shiploads anchor as a berthing port,
Unloading worries, easing breath.

As surging crowds swelled in space,
Hill View Stadium looked so small;
Seva dal cordoned all the place,
Making comfortable one and all.

All at once, it was calm and quiet,
Eyes glued on the north-side;
As golden chariot came in sight,
Sighed and rose the human tide.

Effulgence afloat of countless suns,
Emerged there the universal Lord,
Reverberating hills as if the guns
In reverent salutation roared.

The chariot glided by the passage,
Bhagawan blessing one and all;
As His throne geared up the stage,
Dwarf we, in spirits grew tall.

Devotees in multitude young and old,
On their toes, getting up to stand;
Surging mass difficult to hold;
Seva dal chained hand in hand.

An intrigued brother cooed, "Why, Sir,
You are facing only us –
And never ever move or stir
To look behind at Jesus."

Seva dal ventured, "I see Him in you all."
Yet even in saying, his conscience pricked.
These, Baba's words, but do you really call
On Him in all, or has your tongue tricked?

Sadly, madly, eyes now blurred
With tears, in his vision a unique show;
As at once his heart was churned,
The words now manifest in a curious glow:

*With transfixed stare he looked to front,
Seeing eyes dancing and brimming with joy;
Eyes distant he could not confront,
Eyes secure, sheltered as on a buoy.*

*Eyes misty and moist on reunion with
fondest kin,
Eyes soothed and caressed when pain is past.
Eyes of triumph in tempest on homing in,
Eyes wide in wonder cast.*

*Eyes sad and worn with care,
Imploring entreating for relief;
Eyes torn between hope and despair,
Expectant eyes firm in belief.*

*Eyes agonized and anxious,
Eyes ardent and appealing,
Eyes agitated and askance,
Eyes beckoning and beseeching.*

*Eyes panting with prayer,
Eyes coveting His Compassion,
Eyes seeking succor,
Eyes closed in contemplation.*

*Eyes marveled and amazed,
Mesmerized with Divine manifestation;
Eyes dazzled and dazed,
Eyes drenched in deep devotion.*

*Eyes calm and composed,
Eyes enthralled and enchanted;
Eyes cool in peace reposed,
Eyes with rare Darshan granted.*

*Eyes animated with awareness,
Eyes buoyant with benediction;
Eyes ecstatic with exuberance,
Eyes captured in conviction.*

*Eyes framed and fixed on form,
When stately eyes in supplication sat;
Eyes swimming on his charm,
Eyes in veneration without a bat.*

*Eyes inscrutable in length and breadth,
Dreamy yet discerning eyes;
Unfathomable eyes in quest of depth,
Silent yet expressive eyes.*

*Feasting eyes on nectarine sight,
Eyes satiated with what aspired;
Gleaming eyes with sanguine light,
Victorious eyes, to have acquired.*

*Grateful eyes, thanking for succor
In mental distress, material need;
Welcoming eyes, with a flower,
Eager now to do good deed.*

*Eyes engrossed in mental worship,
Eyes roaming His Precincts;
Eyes fantasizing His close kinship,
Nobler thoughts and instincts.*

*My eye saw in each eye
The mirror of his soul,
Soaked in the solemnity of Sathya Sai,
From its core to the whole.*

*Eyes galore, on right and left,
Eyes around, here and there,
Reflecting love to each one's depth,
Like a crystal chandelier.*

*Now in the gaze did I gauge,
How humbled is "I";
While eye registers true image,
"I" has me and my.*



*Eyes an express highway to heart direct,
Passing by the logical intellect,
So we can feel the pain of brother in
difficulty,
Act as Sai angel in hour of calamity.*

*Be an integral part
Of SSSVIP's noble intent;
Put in all your head and heart,
And volunteer without an indent.*

*The hungry ones you can feed,
Help those who stand in need;
Clothe those who in cold shiver;
To shelterless, be shelter giver.*

*To the torn, tormented with fear,
Worn with worry, those whom you hear;
Give words of solace and also cheer,
Help in kind with kindness dear.*

*And if seek your eyes compassion,
Return it with a passion;
Be forgiving, if forgiveness you seek;
Give in plenty, if plenty you eke.*

*The eye that sees God is and be
The same through which God sees me;
Seer and seen are one,
Other and another, none. ☸*

—Satish K Dua
Delhi, India

Continued from page 21 . . .

his own personal debt. So, since I was the primary credit card signer, it was all on me (and Baba).

I had another inner conversation with Sai. Laughing, I said, “Swami, well if I’m going to the poor house, it’s all right, as long as you are with me!” Not too long after this spiritual conversation, I received notification that a dear friend of mine from New York had passed away, leaving me a good sum of money. I went to NY and conducted his funeral arrangements. The inheritance I received from my friend was enough to pay off half the joint debt, freeing me to get my finances in better order. The only thing left was to sell the house in Arkansas.

Meanwhile, construction work on my new house in Florida was scheduled to begin, although there were a lot of delays due to building permits, etc. The Arkansas house was on the market, but weeks went by with no offers.

Then, in June 2004, Swami appeared to me in an exceptional and revealing dream. My ex-husband and I were with Swami, and Swami was answering our questions. My ex kept complaining that nothing was working out for him; he was going through hard times and couldn’t understand why.

He said to Sai, “I am totally focused on God, loving and serving, and I haven’t caused pain to anyone.”

Swami looked at me and said, “*No unseen pain.*” I replied, “Yes, Swami, he has caused me a lot of emotional pain.”

Then Swami turned his attention on me. He talked affectionately to me about a lot of things. I can’t remember all the details. I

remember he placed his hands over my eyes and said, “*Look, I am going to give you a whole new house, and a whole new life.*”

I could see a vision of a house and a partial view of the inside of the house. I lay my head on Swami’s holy chest, saying repeatedly how much I loved him.

He clasped me close and whispered in my ears, over and over, “*If you love me, say my name...*” I responded, bubbling with ecstasy, but the words were peculiarly difficult to pronounce. With great effort I exclaimed, “*Om Sai Ram! Om Sai Ram!*”

When I awoke, I felt as if I had been transported to the highest heavens. I felt reassured that the house would sell. But the testing wasn’t quite over yet.

Due to summer hurricanes, work on the Florida house was delayed and not completed for five more months, until November 2004.

At the end of October, the Arkansas house still was not sold. I went to visit a friend in North Carolina and remember walking downtown, feeling very concerned.

“Swami,” I said earnestly, “You told me you would give me a new home. I just need to have total faith!”

Shortly after this inner conversation, I saw a little gift shop and felt drawn to go in. An Indian sales lady approached me trying to get me to buy some dresses. I told her I had plenty of clothing from a trip to India and really didn’t need any more.

She asked, “Where did you go in India?”

When I mentioned Sai Baba’s ashram, she screamed, “Sai Ram!” and grabbed me, hugging me excitedly. As you can tell, she was also was a Sai devotee. I felt this was a good omen and that something really blessed was coming.

Sure enough, that same day I received a call from my realtor in Arkansas. An offer had been made on the house, and the buyer wanted to close in three weeks, on November 23 – Sai Baba’s birthday!

My house under construction in Florida was also set to close, on November 22, but I was able to delay its closing until November 29. The house in Arkansas indeed did sell on November 23, 2004. Needless to say, Swami made good on his promise. God is so great! ☸

— Sonya Ki Tomlinson
Palm Bay, Florida

Excerpted from *Sai Rapture: The Ecstatic Journey
of a Modern Day Gopi*,
by Sonya Ki Tomlinson, 2012



KEEP YOUR FAITH FIRM, irrespective of your desires being fulfilled. Preserve your faith carefully. Faith can work wonders. It can make a blind person see, a dumb person speak. Do not at all doubt the power of faith. Some incidents happening in this world may shake your faith in God. But if you hold on to your faith firmly, you can face any situation boldly.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba
SSS 17:13, May 20, 1984

On the Passing of My Guru

FORM OR FORMLESS;
What—or who—is divine?
“You are not the body,”
say the Gurus of India.
“Body is illusory.
Find the essence of who you truly are.”
I am not this wrinkled skin,
Not this arthritic back.
I am not the extra pounds
that outward fill my waist.
I am not my impulses, nor my desires.
I am not the body that perishes,
Nor the body that seems
to be alive right now!
Who am I?
Black or brown, white, red or yellow,
All are One in Humanity’s sprawl.
My Guru had dark skin,
an Afro halo.
Beloved by millions, He was “God” to us all.



Then one day, surprisingly, he left us.
“Remember me,” He whispered in my ear,
“but let me go!”
No longer in His body, He left us
adjusting to His formless, bodiless state.
He left us alone, devotees without His Form.
Being without body,
That is His Mahasamadhi,
His lesson to us now.
“My life is my message,”
He used to say.
Now He tells us,
“Your life is my message.”
His hands, His feet, His loving gaze,
His gift of love to humankind.
That’s who I am,
Who I must be.
Baba, I am Your body now.

—Fredrica R Halligan
Stamford, Connecticut

Hurricane Sandy: Initial Relief Efforts

Report of November 8, 2012



Homes destroyed in Breezy Point, New Jersey

SAI DEVOTEES OF THE MID-ATLANTIC Region offered their heartfelt gratitude to their beloved Sri Sathya Sai Baba, for keeping them safe during and after Hurricane Sandy, and also offered their humble support, love, and comfort to the people impacted by the hurricane.

Background

A rare hybrid of a hurricane merged with a powerful storm system in the North Atlantic to create an unprecedented super-storm, named Hurricane Sandy. Initially Hurricane Sandy created havoc in Jamaica, Cuba, and Bermuda, before unleashing its fury onto the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. The main brunt of the storm was felt in Region 2 (Mid-Atlantic

Region) of the USA Sri Sathya Sai Organization. The areas in the path of the storm were the states of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Connecticut, and parts of Washington DC, New York City, and Long Island.

The storm came up the East Coast on Monday, October 29, 2012, and within 24 hours left devastation and disaster unparalleled in the history of the region. The death toll in the US from the storm reached 106, with thousands of homes damaged, communities ravaged, and estimated recovery costs of tens of billions of dollars.

New Jersey, New York City, and Long Island were among the hardest hit, with storm-packed wind gusts reaching 90 mph, heavy rain, and

ocean storm surges compounded by high tides and a full moon. The wind uprooted thousands of trees, causing power outages in 90% of the communities, as well as major fires. The rain and ocean surge caused flooding in all the major rivers, and the overflow also flooded major tunnels and highways connecting the metropolitan New York area. In preparation for the storm, mandatory evacuations were ordered for low-lying areas; airports, subways, trains and highways were closed, and emergencies were declared in all the states impacted by the storm.

All along the state of New Jersey's 127-mile coastline, the storm affected communities rich and poor, from multimillion-dollar homes in Bay Head and Mantoloking to blue-collar bay front bungalows. Boardwalks were trashed, a roller coaster dumped into the ocean. The worst damage occurred nearest to the ocean, but winds and water wrecked homes several miles inland as well.

The famed New York City subway system was flooded, and several tunnels linking the city to neighboring communities. The community of Breezy Point in the Rockaways was totally wiped out by a raging fire caused by downed power lines and fanned by the high winds.

In the storm's wake, millions of people were left without electrical power and drinking water. Landline phone service was unavailable and mobile phone service was severely disrupted. Lack of power and lack of fuel delivery at gas stations left motorists waiting in line for hours.

Emergency shelters were soon opened, as well as warming centers for people to come and charge their phones and laptops. Food and water was distributed to the thousands left homeless by the storm.

As of November 7, 2012 (nine days after the storm), more than half-a-million people remained without power in the area. Various shelters were still open and food was being distributed. Repairs were going on everywhere, but people were experiencing a growing frustration. To make matters worse, on November 7, another wintry Nor'easter storm, with high winds, rain, and heavy snow caused more power outages and threatened to undo all the hard work and progress that had been achieved.

Initial Response

The Sathya Sai Organization's initial response to the storm began right away, at first by checking on Sai devotees, followed closely thereafter by serving and helping in the community. Some of these efforts are listed below:

1. The Regional Officers contacted all the Center Officers in the region to determine how the local Sai devotees were doing. Most of the centers reported back that the devotees were coping well under the circumstances. The biggest problem was the lack of electricity in people's homes. Power was gradually returning to residences, but the weather was turning cold, and nights were especially difficult. No injuries or widespread damage to property was reported. Despite the difficulties, most of the Sai family were in good spirits and thankful they had not experienced more extensive damage.

2. The Regional Service Coordinator, through an email to the Center Service Coordinators, asked them to be in touch with local devotees and tend to their needs as best as possible. Service Coordinators were also asked to stay in touch with local emergency management



Food distribution at a shelter in Newark, New Jersey



Clothing distribution at Queens College Shelter, Flushing, New York

authorities so that updates could be provided on a regular basis.

3. The Regional Officers began working very closely with the USA National Council President and National Service Coordinator to assist the region with involvement of other USA regions. A proposal was submitted to keep the relief effort moving forward.

4. A need was identified for focused communication and efficient handling of service projects. To facilitate this, we designated two people to be points of contact for service being provided on the ground.

5. With the help of Sai Young Adults in the impacted region, two locations were identified

where supplies and provisions could be delivered and stored. The initial locations were in devotees' basements and garages while warehouse-type storage space was sought.

6. Regular conference calls took place among regional officers and coordinators to provide updates on the current conditions, such as where service was needed, what provisions were required, and who was willing to help. A provisions-on-hand list was created and kept up to date.

7. A set of guidelines was created for Sai volunteers, under the watchwords, "Be Safe, Be Practical, and Be Local."

8. Most important, Sai devotees began serving actively in the community – providing food, water, clothing, blankets, smiles, and comfort to those impacted by the storm.

Sai Organization Volunteer Efforts

Volunteer activities that took place initially are listed below:

Queens College Shelter, Flushing, New York

About 500 residents were housed in this shelter, after being evacuated from homes affected by floods and fire. The shelter was set up by the city of New York, and Sai devotees from NYC helped by providing essential supplies and volunteering regularly.

A “divine moment” occurred when an elderly Afghani woman in the shelter was anxiously and desperately looking for someone who spoke Farsi, a Persian language spoken in Afghanistan. She wanted to convey that her family didn’t know of her well being in the shelter and would be looking for her. When Sai volunteers were approached for assistance, they directed the request to a fellow devotee from Afghanistan who was able to connect heart-to-heart with her; his research resulted in her reunion with family members in New York who indeed were looking for her and unsure of her well being.

American Legion, 209 Cross Bay Blvd, NY (Far Rockaway, Queens)

This location, run by local volunteers, became a hub where donations (food, clothes, supplies, etc.) could be received, sorted, and distributed. The volunteers also cooked and served hot meals. Residents living in the area could come in, take what they needed, and leave.

St Francis de Sales Parish, 219 Beach/129th Street, NY (Far Rockaway, Queens)

This church was converted into one of the city’s official nonperishable food, blanket, and water distribution locations, staffed with city workers, the National Guard, and local volunteers. The venue is huge, and hundreds of people showed up there daily to receive and sort donations. The depot was overflowing with clothes, blankets, and other supplies that poured in. Residents could come in and take what they needed. Volunteers cooked and served hot meals (outdoors).

Police Precinct, 95 Beach Street, NY (Far Rockaway, Queens)

This area looked like a war zone. The roads and streets were covered with sand. Many groups were there serving food and water. Some groups also distributed clothes, blankets, and so on. All activities took place outdoors.

25 Beach Street, NY (Far Rockaway, Queens)

After requesting permission for a location where the Sai Organization could set up and serve hot meals, NYC Councilman James Sanders Jr asked our group to serve this community. The folks here had to walk to Beach/59th Street daily to receive food and water. Soon about 600 meals were being served [daily].

Newark Shelter, North Jersey Devotees from New Jersey Sathya Sai Centers together packed more than 1,000 meals of baked ziti, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, bananas, and juice, for distribution at various shelters in northern New Jersey. Sai Center members also worked closely with Newark Central Ward Councilman Darrin Sharif to supply more than 20 trays of pasta to 15 state-run senior care facilities in Newark NJ.

Sathya Sai Baba Center of East Brunswick NJ

The center began collecting various items and delivering them to various shelters in northern and southern New Jersey. Some of the items collected included toiletry items (toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, etc), nonperishable canned foods, clothing, coats, blankets, and shoes.

Lakewood, South Jersey

Sai volunteers were requested to send pasta to other facilities not run by the state. These facilities had received very little help and were still without electricity. The Sai Center members helped make sandwiches and pack pasta, fruit juice, sandwiches, and fruit into bags, to make the meals easier to distribute. A few Sai devotees visited three different facilities to distribute about 1,000 bags of food.

Long Branch, Jersey Shore

A church from Newark, New Jersey, also requested Sai volunteers to provide pasta for about 100 people in Long Branch, a township on the New Jersey seashore. Soup, bread, pasta, clothing, toothpaste, toothbrushes, socks, soap, and scarves were distributed with the help of the Long Branch Township Police Department. Since only about 40 percent of the town had electricity, everyone enjoyed the hot food and expressed sincere gratitude for the food and supplies.

Next Steps

Sai devotees, as well as relief workers from local/federal government offices and other

organizations, did an admirable job supporting the community through this disaster. The situation was fluid, changing from day to day. It was expected that shelters would be consolidated, that power service would gradually be restored, that roads and tunnels would open up, and that gas shortages would ease.

The Sai groups, recognizing that rapid changes in needs could take place in any given community, expected to transition from a focus on immediate needs (food, shelter, clothing, warmth, etc.) to addressing medium-term needs such as supporting shelters, helping schools and school children get back to normal schedules, and assisting in the rebuilding of small communities.

In summary, the devotees of Region 2 felt grateful to have been kept safe and able to help make a difference in the community. A lot of effort and service with a smile was provided, and much more remained to be done. Sai Organization officers in Region 2 pledged to distribute updates to the USA Sathya Sai Organization as events and needs developed, praying to Sathya Sai to utilize them as his instruments in whatever manner he would deem appropriate.

—USA Region 2

Human life is God's gift. Make proper use of it by rendering service to society.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 33:07, April 5, 2000)

Mid-Atlantic Region – 37th Annual Retreat

THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION of the US Sathya Sai Organization held its 37th Annual Retreat in May 2012 at Camp Westmont nestled in the heart of the beautiful Pocono Mountains. The retreat drew over 950 Sai devotees to the annual Memorial Day weekend event held on 325 acres of rolling hills in Wayne County, Pennsylvania.

According to Regional President Prity Bhatt, “With abundant grace and blessings from our Lord, another memorable and joy-filled retreat was experienced by all. Swami provided many opportunities to experience his divine presence. We witnessed the retreat theme, “Why Fear When I Am Still Here!” unfolding in many ways. Over and over, he showed us that he has been with us, is with us, and will be with us.”

The retreat was a textbook lesson in living Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings through surrendering and working together in unity. “It is hard to fathom how everything came together,” noted Mrs Bhatt. “It was only made possible by His love and grace.”

Two weeks before the retreat, the chief architect for the devotional hall stage had fallen seriously ill, but a backup team quickly formed and pitched in to turn the camp’s basketball court into a beautiful sacred space.

“People worked day and night, and over and over, whenever a difficulty arose, Swami

did not allow us to despair,” said Mrs. Bhatt. “We felt his love and presence in many ways – warm greetings of *Sairam* upon entering the grounds, welcoming smiles at the registration or *seva* desk, listening to a favorite *bhajan*/song, or hearing a story/anecdote from one of the esteemed guest speakers resulting in an Aha! moment.”

Other transcendent moments included being transported to Prasanthi when looking at Swami’s picture on the devotion hall altar, finding peace when meditating in Swami’s room, learning a practical tip about Swami’s teachings in one of the workshops, being nourished by delicious *prasadam* in the dining hall, and being cared for during the medical/health camp.

A highlight of the retreat came in the form of heartfelt and touching speeches by the keynote speakers – Dr Narendranath Reddy and Dr Rupak and Mrs Sarojini Changkakoti. Each shared intimate stories about interacting with our dear Lord in their youth as a result of their families having served Swami for several generations.

Dr Reddy discussed the qualities and duties of a good devotee. He said, “Swami has said that following his teachings and his instructions will serve us better than meditation. Swami wants us to realize we are embodiments of the divine Atma, to

realize that our true nature is divinity, and to help others to realize this.” Other qualities included having faith in oneself, having faith in the scriptures, and having complete faith in God – “Faith is the foundation, and when there is true faith, there is love.”

The Changkakotis told very touching stories about having to put their faith into practice when, despite their devotion, stressful challenges would arise. Dr Rupak Changkakoti told a story about being asked by Swami to move to Canada, only to be unemployed for months while the fiber optics industry experienced a downturn.

Mrs Changkakoti captivated the audience with a story about being a young girl and demanding that Swami give her proof that her father was safe when word came that he had fallen ill in another city. Swami would indeed give a sign – filling her family’s prayer room with an exceedingly sweet fragrance and piles of *vibhuti* (holy ash).

Dr Changkakoti later delighted the audience with *bhajans* he had been asked to sing by Swami on several occasions, and those in the hall sang along. Mrs Changkakoti then led the audience in a powerful and heart-opening meditation.

Following lunch, attendees were treated to a thought-provoking talk by Professor Anantharaman, the recently-appointed media spokesperson for the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. He discussed the difficulties that arose following the Lord’s transition, when negative media was being disseminated.

A long-time professor at Swami’s university, Prof Anantharaman explained, “We did not

know how to deal with the media originally,” noting that Swami had not talked to the media in years. He stated that if Swami’s true message is to continue to flourish worldwide, “it must come through his devotees and students.”

The four-day retreat was blessed with perfect weather, and many devotees participated in the early morning devotional practices of *Omkar*, *Suprabhatam*, and *Nagarsankirtan* that ended with rousing devotional singing in front of “Swami’s room.”

Lovingly put together by teams from the Sathya Sai Centers of East Brunswick and Bridgewater, New Jersey, “Swami’s room” was a favorite spot for many who dropped in to meditate at the lotus feet of our dear Lord. According to South Bethesda Center president, Dr Sivakumar Sreenivasan, “The fact that one can experience His love no matter where you are and in what you do came true at the retreat. I was one among four team leads responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of Swami’s room during the retreat. What an opportunity! We took four-hour shifts at a time. It was incredibly fulfilling and something I looked forward to during the retreat. Never was there ever a feeling that I was missing a program while I was in Swami’s room. He also made sure that every petite desire was fulfilled.”

A variety of workshops and other activities were also available to take part in, including a workshop on the *jyoti* (light) meditation led by regional vice president Mr Douglas Gaum, a raw foods workshop taught by Mrs Ella Gurevich, and a quilt-making session

facilitated by the East Brunswick NJ Center members.

For culture lovers, the retreat featured a concert by the “Whistling Wizard,” Mr K Sivaprasad, who regaled the audience with a 90-minute presentation in which he whistled *bhajans* in a melodic, pure, flute-like tone. The YAs presented a play, “Children of Immortality,” delighting audience members with its high-quality acting and messages on Swami’s teachings. Other activities included rousing, gospel-tinged English *bhajans* with The Bailey Family, game time with the SSE children, and an evening campfire.

For many, the regional retreat is a long-standing annual event, for which they start preparing months ahead. Mr Rhajen Ghayal and his wife, Geeta, of the East Brunswick NJ center, said it was their 31st year of overseeing the kitchen activities, an enormous task that includes ordering food for all the meals, which are then prepared by various centers.

The couple starts working in April to buy all the items needed for each menu. The task calls for a great deal of organization, but Rajen is happy to do it because of the joy that goes into preparing the meals. “When individuals cut the vegetables, they sing beautiful *bhajans*, and all the food is charged up with God’s name,” he said. “Whether you are a Sai devotee or not, the food that is prepared in such a manner becomes charged with God’s name.”

Mrs Malini Ramnath, meal coordinator for the South Bethesda Center and a second-year attendee, agreed, saying that despite having a small panic attack upon realizing the enormity of the task, “I knew Swami would not ask me

to do this if I were not capable.” She found that once she outlined a menu that included a delicious sprout salad, cabbage curry, and bean burritos, volunteers were more than willing to help with the cutting, preparing, setting up, serving, and cleanup. “The meal would be possible only with the help of Swami and the team of volunteers he chooses to make that meal,” said Mrs Ramnath.

Those attending the retreat came from as far away as Canada, and many first-time attendees were impressed with how numerous volunteers worked together to carry out the various tasks. Mrs Sita Murthy of Mechanicsburg PA and her husband, Srivatsa, had learned about the retreat from their daughter, Amulya, who had attended a YA meeting. Sita noted, “This is our first retreat, and I really appreciate the way so many volunteers worked to put this together. I could really feel the Lord’s presence in Swami’s room. I really felt so much peace there.”

Trish Sneddon, a Pennsylvania resident, said that despite being a Sai devotee for 10 years, this was her first retreat. “It has been amazing and so much like a mini-Prasanthi Nilayam. The energy is clean and pure, and there is so much integrity and love. I really felt Swami’s presence.”

The retreat concluded on Monday with inspiring stories by some of Swami’s former students who are now living out his teachings through service in various careers. For Mrs Bhatt, the weekend was “exhilarating,” and she thanked all who added to its success. ☸

—Edith Billups
Gaithersburg, Maryland

USA Young Adult Officer's Leadership Retreat

Dallas, Texas, August 10–12, 2012

It is the privilege and duty of the young men and women to promote the welfare, progress, and peace of the world. Transform all your actions into sacred duties. Experience the love of the divine. That is the meaning of Swami's declaration, 'My life is my message.' Adhere to the ideals set before you by Swami.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba, July 16, 1997

ACKNOWLEDGING THE GRACE and love of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, officers of the USA Sathya Sai Young Adults (YAs), along with key YA advisors and guest speakers, met for an inspiring and energizing weekend in Dallas, Texas, from August 10-12, 2012.

Region 10 Officers and the Dallas Sai Center extended loving hospitality and support to host this second YA leadership event. More than 30 Young Adult Officers, with at least two officers from each region, attended the retreat held at the Wyndham Dallas Suites, Park Central.

The three principal objectives of the leadership retreat were:

Interaction: Prior, during, and post retreat

Information:

- Discussions of best practices
- Presentations on Sai Youth-led service initiatives and projects, by regional and national teams

- Review and clarification of Sai Organization guidelines
- National and zonal announcements

Inspiration:

- Guest speakers
- Discussions of Swami's teachings for youth and sharing of Sai experiences

A survey distributed prior to the leadership retreat provided all Young Adult officers a unique opportunity to be directly involved in every aspect of the retreat planning. Ranging from setting the agenda to its implementation, each delegate had an equal and vital contribution toward making the retreat meaningful and successful.

Highlights of the weekend included speakers, a review workshop, presentations on service initiatives, a study circle on Bhagawan's inaugural discourse of the 2nd World Youth Conference (1999), "Youth Should Transform the World," and attending a special public music concert by Sri Siva Prasad, the amazing and inspiring "Whistle Wizard."

Inspiring Speakers

Dr Phil Gosselin, Zone 1 Chair and Interim USA Central Council Coordinator. Despite travel delays and only a few hours of rest, Dr Gosselin was ready to be the first speaker of the retreat. Thought provoking, humorous, and inspiring, Dr Gosselin reminded us of our good fortune to serve in the Sai Organization and the unique opportunity for self-transformation and self-realization that it represents.

Dr Gosselin shared the story of Amarnath, a friend who had an intense desire to serve Swami. After repeatedly pleading with Swami for an opportunity to serve, Amarnath was given the duty of watering the plants in the ashram. Slowly but surely, Amarnath eventually became the key keeper of all the buildings in the ashram as well as of the Brindavan college – the lesson being that opportunities to serve are opportunities to be in constant contact with Swami.

During an interaction with Swami, Dr Gosselin heard a fellow devotee press Swami for an elaboration on the “Golden Age.” Swami smiled sweetly and replied, “18 to 30.” Dr Gosselin urged us to reflect on Swami’s expectations of the youth – the young adult years are truly the golden ones, and if the youth can transform themselves, then the entire world will transform.

Dr Gosselin concluded his talk with a personal request for the youth to reach out to older devotees to divulge their Swami experiences – and to document them, but even more important, to imbibe those experiences,

develop one-pointed devotion, and join each other in the love of Sai.

Dr Narendranath Reddy, Chairman, Prasanthi Council; Chairman, International Medical Foundation; President, Sathya Sai Baba Society of America. We were very fortunate to have Dr Reddy join us from his home in Los Angeles via Skype. Dr Reddy highlighted the noble qualities of a Sai leader and shared numerous practical tools drawn from his close interactions with Swami and his rich experiences of being an international Sai leader for several decades.

Dr Reddy began by reminding all of the incredible privilege of being present during the earthly career of the Sai Avatar. Dr Reddy was blessed to be Swami’s guest during a trip to Kodaikanal in 1994. During one of the sessions, Dr Reddy and Prof Sampath, then Vice Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai University, were seated at the divine lotus feet. Prof Sampath was overwhelmed by Swami’s love and compassion and remarked that he must have done a lot of good in the previous birth to be in the divine presence.

Swami immediately corrected him, saying that it was not merely Prof Sampath’s good merit but also the accumulated good merit of his ancestors from many generations that had bestowed upon him the rare privilege to be with Swami. Through this powerful revelation by Swami, Dr Reddy reminded us of our good fortune to be officers in the Sai Organization, a task for which Swami has been preparing us over many lifetimes.

Then Dr Reddy elaborated further on the credentials one must have to be an ideal messenger of Sai. Arjuna was chosen as one among five brothers to receive the sacred teachings of the Bhagavad Gita from Lord Krishna. What were the qualities of Arjuna that endeared him to Lord Krishna? They were: 1) complete faith in divinity, 2) concentration, and 3) fundamental discrimination – and the easiest way to practice fundamental discrimination is to ask if the contemplated action would please Swami. Dr Reddy elaborated on these three qualities with stories from Arjuna's life.

Next, Dr Reddy talked about the three A's of an ideal Sai leader: ability, availability, and affability. He emphasized that for a Sai leader to be effective, it is important to develop in equal measure the triple A's. Ability refers to the competency to perform in the required role. Not only ability, Sai leaders should be available or have the time to perform their duties in a diligent manner. Most important, the leaders must be affable, have a friendly disposition, and not be difficult to work with. Dr Reddy concluded his talk with several practical examples that helped us to understand on how we can practice Swami's teachings in our daily lives.

Dr Gnana Bhaskar Tenali, Sri Sathya Sai University alumnus and President, Sathya Sai Center of Palm Bay, Florida. Dr Tenali took us down memory lane by sharing several Sai stories and glories, each with a deep meaning and message for Sai Young Adults. "What is your name? Where are you

from? What did you have for breakfast? What is the menu for lunch? What grades did you get?" These were questions frequently posed by Swami to students and teachers of his college.

Dr Tenali asked the audience why an Avatar should pose such mundane questions instead of teaching them lessons on the great spiritual knowledge of which He is the Source! What was Swami trying to do? Dr Tenali shared that in his humble understanding, Swami was giving each an opportunity to develop kinship with Him. Swami wants us to know that God is very close to us. Whatever bothers us or makes us happy, we can share it with Him. And once we have developed that close connection, then no matter where we are, we will feel His presence in our own hearts. This connection will inspire us and transform us. This is true for all devotees of God, not just Bhagawan's students.

Dr Tenali reminded us that it is a great privilege to serve as an officer in the Sathya Sai Organization. Swami has said that you cannot be the Lord (Shankara), if you cannot be a servant (*kinkara*) first. Swami is an exemplar in this regard. He is always waiting to serve us. We should learn this important quality of servant leadership from Swami.

Dr Tenali concluded with an experience illustrating how Swami showers his grace on those who are humble and do not seek any recognition. One day in the bhajan hall, Swami asked the students if they thought Swami sees only those seated in the front row. Swami reminded them that He sees all, even those

who are not present in the mandir yet are doing their work with humility and devotion.

Dr Tenali strongly emphasized humility as a hallmark of an ideal Sai worker, which allows us to be further recipients of His immeasurable grace, thus sanctifying our lives.

Interaction through Workshops

The three workshops evolved from the principle that leadership is a by-product of divinity, and divinity is within. The workshop topics chosen from the pre-retreat survey were: 1) Motivating and Engaging Young Adults, 2) Ideal Messengers of Sai's Love, and 3) Ubuntu – Team Building.

Motivating and Engaging Young Adults

This workshop began with two inspiring videos, which demonstrated the power of being a good example and the strength and joy of journeying through this path "together." We then discussed the principles of motivation based on four I's: Identify, Interact, Involve, and Inspire. This was followed by case study on four important topics: Communication, Activities, Leadership, and Diversity.

The workshop concluded with small group discussions, in which each group was presented with a problem scenario and asked to brainstorm and apply the workshop principles to it. This interactive session helped us learn creative solutions from each other, and practical tips for facing some of the common challenges encountered by young adult officers.

Ideal Messengers of Sai's Love We started this workshop with an icebreaker to learn interesting and fun facts about our co-

Young Adult officers. The idea that Swami is the ultimate example of an ideal leader and the ideal messenger of love set the stage for interactive discussions on what "being" an ideal messenger of Sai's love means in relation to leadership and the Mahavakyas (great sayings) on leadership.

Following this, we were divided into four groups and given another set of challenge scenarios to enact. These scenarios presented unique opportunities for us to understand and practice what it means to be an ideal messenger of Sai's love. Each skit was highly entertaining, creative, and drove home the message in a powerful way. A surprise bonus was each delegate receiving an "academy award" for "Best Actor/Actress." Another highlight of this workshop was a quote that made a deep impact: "A leader should know his/her team members better than their own mothers would know them."

Ubuntu: Team Building The final workshop was on team building, invoking the African philosophy of Ubuntu, "I am what I am because of who we all are." The workshop facilitators led us through a process of team building ("Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing"), pointing out that the entire retreat was a great example of team building, with each delegate having a vital role to play.

This was followed by a highly competitive, fun, and insightful marshmallow game/experiment that helped to demonstrate how teams come together, the role of communication in an organization, and possible ways communication can break down. We all agreed that team building is an

ongoing process that requires constant and persistent effort by leaders.

A novel workshop follow-up technique consisted of a “pledge.” Each delegate was provided with a pre-printed letter format and envelope, for writing down key lessons from each workshop in the form of a pledge. After the retreat, our Dallas hosts mailed the letters to the delegates, which served as a positive and powerful reminder of the workshop experiences.

Information-Sharing on National and Regional Service Initiatives

A service presentation session allowed Young Adult leaders to share about Sai Youth-led national and regional initiatives and projects, to discuss best practices, and to present innovative ideas for the future. Descriptions of each project captured: (a) the motivation for initiating the project; (b) a brief overview of the project; (c) the impact on the served/empowered community; (d) the frequency of the project; and (e) challenges encountered and lessons learned.

Retreat Presentations Available Online

Thanks to the hard work and diligent efforts of the media and publications team, mp3 audio recordings of the speakers, workshop, and service presentations are now

available on the national Sai Young Adults’ website, www.saiyausa.net (scroll down on the website home page to reach the Leadership Retreat reports and links), and include the following:

- Retreat Report
- Service Project Presentation
- Talk 1: Aparna Murali
- Talk 2: Phil Gosselin
- Talk 3: Narendranath Reddy
- Talk 4: Gnana Bhaskar Tenali
- Talk 5: Dr Joe Phanuef
- Workshop 1: Motivating and Engaging Young Adults
- Workshop 2: Ideal Messengers of Sai’s Love
- Workshop 3: Team Building

Young Adults are lovingly encouraged to review the recordings to learn more about the inspiring messages, exciting discussions, and practical tips/strategies on leadership.

The YA officers also hope young adults will also engage in discussions with other young adults, family, friends, and co-workers on applying the principles of Sai leadership in our daily lives.

Young adults interested in organizing leadership retreats for their local YA groups are encouraged to contact their Regional YA Reps for information. 

—YA Leadership Retreat Publications Team





Announcements

New Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

DEAR SISTERS AND BROTHERS,
Greetings of Loving Sai Ram to all of you from Prashanthi Nilayam. We witnessed the glorious 87th birthday celebrations of our loving Lord Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in Prashanthi Nilayam. Devotees from around the world participated in the festivities and experienced the Divine Presence.

I would like to share an important announcement with all of you.

During the meeting of the directors of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation on November 24, 2012, in Prashanthi Nilayam, **Mr Gary Belz** was appointed as Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, effective November 24, 2012, by the unanimous decision of the directors of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation. He serves as a director of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and served as secretary of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation. Mr Belz owns and operates recording studios in Nashville, Memphis, and Los Angeles. He has served on many boards, including the Board of Regents of Columbia College of Chicago, the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Memphis, and several music industry associations. He was a founding member of the Clinton Global Initiative and was on the White House Task Force for South Asia during the Clinton years. He has been an ardent devotee of Swami for more than two decades and has been a member of the USA Council of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization. We pray to Swami to shower His choicest blessings on Mr Gary Belz and give him guidance and strength to discharge his new responsibilities for the highest good.

Dr Michael Goldstein, our past chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, has carried out his extensive duties over many years with an intense dedication to please our Lord Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Dr Goldstein remains an inspiration to devotees for his one-pointed focus on Swami. We thank him for all those years he was available to devotees around the world to help and guide them on many policies of the Sathya Sai International Organization. We all remember his intense love, dedication, and devotion to Swami and His Mission. We look forward to being the beneficiaries of his ongoing advice, insight, and wisdom.

Let us resolve to move forward in His Divine Mission and work in unity, with love and harmony. Let us practice His message of Love All and Serve All in our daily life and reach the summum bonum of life. ☸

Jai Sai Ram, with loving regards,

—**Dr Narendranath Reddy**

Chairman, Prashanthi Council

Director, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation



***Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* – Transition to Paperless in 2013**

DEAR SUBSCRIBERS OF THE SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER USA,
As President of the Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center, I am very pleased to announce that with the first issue of 2013, the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* will be published online, free of any cost to all who wish to receive it. Please note that at the end of the year, present prepaid subscribers will be receiving full refunds for any remaining prepaid issues.

Further, it makes me very happy and with pleasure to announce that Corinn Codye Kintz will be the editor and coordinator of the online publication. This final edition will be the last one to carry the name of Barbara Bozzani as editor. The *Newsletter* began in 1976 and Barbara became editor in 1978, when we lived in Arizona. In those years it was produced on 8½x11-inch typed pages that were duplicated and mailed to those who were interested. We had the blessings of Sathya Sai Baba himself giving directions to Barbara as to what the contents should include, as well as setting the subscription prices and how many issues per year to print.

In 2003, two full years before the 80th Birthday Celebrations of 2005, our beloved Swami instructed Barbara to prepare a special 80th Birthday Edition and explained to her what type of articles should be published. At that time we lived in the mountains, at Lake Arrowhead, California, which allowed her to spend as much time as necessary to complete this expanded edition. As her husband, it was a pleasure (but at times a little frustrating) to see her be so dedicated in her love of Swami and working many, many hours each day on this special edition. Each time we visited Prasanthi Nilayam during those two years, Swami would give her additional guidance for this special edition, which ended up being literally the largest edition ever published, in full color, at 156 full-size pages. I can personally say that Swami was pleased with the final edition, which, besides going out to subscribers, was distributed during the 85th Birthday celebrations at the bookstore in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Ironically enough, after that edition's publication, Barbara no longer continued to be an active part of the *Newsletter*, and it was then that Corinn, who had worked with Barbara as co-editor since about 2001, began coordinating the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA*. Several times thereafter I suggested to Swami that we should change the editor's name as published in the *Newsletter*, but each time he would not answer. This was confusing to me until I realized that the appropriate time would occur. Then I no longer asked him, and that time is now.

In this final printed issue, the new editor will describe how to sign up to receive and find the paperless issues online and other features going forward, including the makeup of the *Newsletter* team. We at the Sathya Sai Book Center of America hope you will enjoy the online editions, and to all, we wish you a very loving Sai Ram. ☸

—**Bob Bozzani**, President, Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center



A Note from the Editor

THE SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER USA's transition to a free, paperless format in 2013 is taking place with the loving assistance and cooperation of many:

The Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center in Tustin, California, maintains the mailing list for the *Newsletter*, which will now be an e-mail list. To subscribe (subscriptions are free), please go to the Book Center website at sathyasaibooksusa.org and register your e-mail address on the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* subscription page. Thereafter, you will receive e-mail announcements about new editions of the *Newsletter*. The announcement will include a link for reading or downloading each new issue.

Mrs Pru Kaufman, who produces and maintains the sathyasaibooksusa.org website for the Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center, has been instrumental in helping to design and implement the *Newsletter* web pages and new e-mail service. **Mr Steve Alderson**, who maintains the USA Sai Organization web page, us.sathyasai.org, has worked closely with us in linking with the *Newsletter* subscription page and in hosting our complete archive of past issues since 1976. The entire library of *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* will continue to be housed at us.sathyasai.org. **Dr David Gries**, who established and supervises the workings of the USA Sai Organization web page along with a number of other Sai Organization websites and servers, contributes important support and advice. **Dr Bill Harvey**, member of the Prasanthi Council and chair of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation Publications Committee, reviews the content of each issue prior to publication.

The contributions and support of the members of the **USA Central Council** are also appreciated, including the **regional presidents and officers**, in providing region-based stories and details of events and conferences to announce in our calendar. We also value the work of our wonderful **volunteers** and artists who assist us with editorial and graphic arts production.

Sathya Sai Newsletter USA features news and content from all wings of the USA Sai Organization (educational, devotional, spiritual, young adults, and organizational) as well as major announcements from the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, the Prasanthi Council, and the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. It goes without saying that the magazine's foundation rests in the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We also select inspiring, Sathya Sai-related content, including personal stories, poetry, and artwork from our many and valued contributors.

We look forward to producing the forthcoming issues in full color and with the ability to link to other web resources, including audio, video, and web pages, thus providing a stepping stone to integrated communications, news, and inspiration throughout the USA Sai Community. ☸

—**Corinn Kintz**, Editor

Kindly remember to go to sathyasaibookusa.org to register your e-mail to receive the *Newsletter*.

Prasanthi Council Announcement: Initiative by Sai Students in Prasanthi Nilayam

OM SRI SAI RAM. I am pleased to share about a blog titled “Sathya Sai with Students” that has been developed and maintained by the students of the Prasanthi Nilayam campus, created to share with students and devotees the precious experiences students had with Swami and the important lessons imparted by Bhagawan to his students.

The content uploaded on this blog is based on material from various books published by the Hostel Publications Division and blessed by Bhagawan over the years. This is to maintain the authenticity of the content and provide a proper source for every article/discourse/conversation.

In the first fortnight after the blog was opened, more than 17,000 people visited it from around the world. Readers can enter their e-mail address on the “Sathya Sai with Students” homepage to get updates every Thursday, with five new articles on the following themes:

- Discourses to Students
- Experiences of Students
- Conversations with Students
- Management Lessons for Students
- This Day That Age – Down the Memory Lane

To enjoy and share Bhagawan’s message, love, and the divine experiences of the students, kindly visit the “Sathya Sai with Students” blog page at: <http://www.sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.in/>. ☺

—Dr Narendranath Reddy
Chairman, Prasanthi Council
Director, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

Region 1 (Northeast) Website Launched

IN EARLY SEPTEMBER 2012, Brother Sathya Atreya, Region 1 (Northeastern USA) president, announced the establishment of a regional website: www.nesaicenters.org.

Using the website, info on Sathya Sai Centers in the region may be located under listings for each state. Other notable features include a Topic of the Month section with quotes, parables, and more; a discussion Forum; a Video of the Week; a Life Application section; and announcements of upcoming events such as one-day retreats, young adult regional retreats, and Sai-lent retreats.

President Atreya announced that the website would be a dynamic document, undergoing continuous improvements. ☺

—Region 1 Officers

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*Important Notice to All Newsletter Subscribers:



Sathya Sai Newsletter USA *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* is changing to a FREE, paperless, quarterly publication, beginning with our first issue in 2013. Please **register online now at SathyaSaiBooksUSA.org** to receive important email updates and notices of new editions as they become available.

(NOTE: This is the final print edition. Subscribers who have prepaid beyond December 2012 will receive prorated subscription refunds from the Book Center.)

Also available online: Browse our *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* archives (1976–2012)

Recent Arrivals: Books and CDs

Benedictory Addresses Contains 22 discourses by Sri Sathya Sai Baba as revered Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, delivered between 1981 and 2002, in which Bhagawan showers his students with the abundance of his love and blessings. Published by the SSSB Trust, India. Softcover, 250 pages. BI-011.....\$4.00

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