

It is the first rose (hence the name Alpha) to bloom in my garden. It is a simple looking ordinary white rose and not very beautiful as roses go. It will definitely not win a prize at any spectacular Rose Show, but it is the first rose in my garden and hence it is very special.

The first of anything is always special. Not that the others are anything less but the first is always special. Like the first child or the first marriage in the family or the first love or the first anything

(first triumph, first award, first mistake....). Much, and even better may follow after that but the first is always special and one remembers it in a different way. Somewhere in the mansion of our memories is this big room for the special firsts! We go there now and then and nostalgically relive the joy and the pain and the inevitable growing up that followed from that first.

I still remember the very first telephone call I made to Uncle Fabian from a small booth on the pavement outside our Pushpa Bhavan building in Colaba. That was in 1963 and I was about 18 years old. (I made my second telephone call when I was 23 years old. I have improved since then but not very much!!) I was quite nervous and remember beginning the conversation saying "Look here, uncle, daddy says.....". (The "Look here..." was the way dad often began his occasional conversations with us!)

That and many other firsts are etched in my memory and will remain there for as long as I live.

I am sure you have your "firsts" too... your Alpha Roses. And more of these will come into your life as the years pass. May they be happy, memorable and may they add excitements and delights through all of your continuing growing up!

I remember the Alpha Rains of each monsoon season too. It hasn't been raining recently. Presuming that the rains were doing it for me, I carelessly neglected watering my garden some

inbetween days. Quite suddenly, much to my dismay, I noticed that some of the plants had started drying up. I got back to generously watering them. The next day morning, an hour after watering them, it rained quite a shower!! These things happen some times and one learns to smile and adjust.

The following night/early morning there was quite a downpour.... reason for celebration! Now the rains have gone away again.....

I will check the plants and water them as and when that is needed.

Meanwhile the filtered thumping beats of Malhar (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Aug.) music kept slipping through as though from a distance, into my counselling centre refuge. I am fortunate to have three doors between me and the wild frenzy outside... so I continued comfortably working, resting, doing what I wanted to be doing without being disturbed. When I had to walk through the noisy excitement to get to the Fathers' Quarters I used ear-plugs and breezed along blissfully! Like I said, one learns to smile and adjust.

The nice thing for me about Malhar was that I got a string of holidays during which I caught up on a number of other things. Besides "chilling out" and resting, of course.

Bonus holiday on Monday following Malhar(Ramzan Eid) so more happened!

Now we are back to post-Malhar academics and inbetweens ... and life goes on.... good thing too! Not much pressure at the counselling centre for testing.... so more good thing too...

Lots of exciting roses (alpha to omega) to you!

Best wishes from Father Terrence.