

EPIPHANY OF  
THE LORD

8TH JAN 2011

# Messenger

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THE BAPTISM OF  
THE LORD

9TH JAN 2011

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## Closing celebrations for Tercentenary of Apostle of Sri Lanka, Bl. Joseph Vaz

Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney  
Fernando

**Blessed Joseph Vaz National Secretariat will hold a closing celebration for the Tercentenary of the Heavenly Birth of Blessed Joseph Vaz at diocesan and parish level on Sunday, January 15, 2012.**

**The celebrations will be held with the participation of Bishops of the respective dioceses.**

In the Archdiocese of Colombo, celebrations will be held at the Infant Jesus Church, Kalamulla with the participation of the Auxiliary Bishop elect, Msgr. Maxwell Silva as the chief celebrant.

A book providing liturgical material in all three languages published by the Archdiocesan, Committee of Bl. Joseph Vaz will be distributed to all parishes of the Archdiocese.

The celebration in Kandy will be held at the

National Shrine of Blessed Joseph Vaz, Ampitiya, on January 15th and on Saturday, January 14th an exhibition on Bl. Joseph Vaz will be held at the Shrine. Vespers service will also take place on Saturday.

As part of the celebrations the Diocese of Galle is to organise an exhibition and competition on Sunday, January 29th.

Celebrations in the Diocese of Chilaw will take place in Wattakkeliya and the Diocese of Kurunegala will hold its celebration on January 16th Monday at Maha Galgamuwa.

The celebration in the Anuradhapura Diocese will

be held at Pimaduwa Church which is dedicated to Bl. Joseph Vaz, while Badulla Diocese will hold a Retreat for priests and decide on the date for the celebration.

The rest of the dioceses will hold the celebrations on January 15.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Bl. Joseph Vaz Secretariat, His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, Bishop of Kandy requests the faithful to pray for the speedy canonization of Bl. Joseph Vaz, Apostle of Sri Lanka.

**Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernandopulle, Secretary**



## Leading artistes in special Passion Play

**On the lines of the famous Oberammergau Passion Play of Germany, several leading Sri Lankan film and teledrama artistes are preparing for a passion play to be staged during the Lenten period at St. Bruno's Church, grounds, in Kurunegala.**

The Passion Play which is a concept of Parish Priest of St. Bruno's Church, Rev. Fr. Stanley Pieris, will be produced by Prem Fernando and



directed by Peter Almeida. Picture shows screen idol Sanath Gunatillake lighting

the oil lamp to begin rehearsals. Also in the picture are Sandalankawe

Viharadhipathi, Yalgoda Anuruddha Thero, Sandalankawa Gangaramawasi, Karadagalle Samanaratana Thero.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of Very Rev. Fr. Piyal Janaka, (Episcopal Vicar, Diocese of Kurunegala) and National Director of Catechetics and Bible Apostolate.

(Text and Pic: Cecil Danicius)

## Over 1000 Christians targetted and killed in 2011

**The Vatican's news agency says more than two dozen priests, nuns and lay Catholics were killed worldwide in 2011. The Fides news agency announced that at least 26 Catholic Pastoral Workers were killed in violence this year.**

Latin America recorded the highest murder rate for pastoral workers for a third straight year, with 13 priests and two others killed in 2011. Six church workers were killed in Africa, four in Asia and one priest was murdered in Europe this year.

The news agency says 25 church workers were killed worldwide in 2010 compared to 37 in 2009.

Meanwhile over 1000 Christians have been targeted and murdered worldwide by Islamists in 2011.

## Christian Unity Week 18-25 January: Conversion of St. Paul

"I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their Word. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me." (John 17: 20-21)

## Pope to elevate new cardinals in February?

**Pope Benedict XVI will convene a consistory in February and elevate as many as 15 new members to the College of Cardinals, according to a report from the I Media news agency.**

Vatican-watchers have been expecting a consistory sometime in 2012. There are currently 192 cardinals, of whom 109 are below the age of 80 and thus eligible to participate in a papal election. Hence Pope Benedict could name 11 new cardinals without

breaching the limit of 120 cardinal-electors.

Several archbishops currently occupy leadership posts in the Roman Curia that are ordinarily reserved for cardinals; these prelates would be among the most likely candidates to receive red hats. The Italian daily *L'Espresso* offered a listing of the prelates most likely to be named cardinals. Although it is entirely speculative, the list does provide background on the prominent candidates.



Depicting the Epiphany of Christ following the traditional Kandyan wall painting style (oil on canvas).

By  
Marian Casiechetty  
nee David



## Congratulations!



We wish Anne Shalika Jayamanna, Staff Colombo Catholic Press and Dinesh Chandana Jayaruwan, who entered Holy Matrimony on 17 December 2011, a Very Happy Wedded Life.

May the love that brought you together, grow and mature with each passing year!

## Christmas get-together at Dehiowita Parish



Dehiowita St. Anthony's Church, Christmas get-together was held at the newly-constructed stage on Boxing day. There was a large gathering to witness various cultural activities.

The chief guest was Mr. Nilantha Gunasinghe, a businessman who being a Buddhist, supports all church activities. The events were organised by the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Piyal Fernando, assisted by Rev. Fr. Emil Danish Fernando, in charge of the Bulutota English Academy.

Picture shows the children being attracted by Santa Claus.

(Text & Pic. J. Antony)

## House for needy family



The Vincent De Paul Society, Parent Association and Youth Society, of Diyalagoda Parish recently constructed a house for a needy family of the Parish.

Picture shows Rev. Fr. Thusith Pradeep Fernando, Parish Priest Diyalagoda declaring open the house.

(Pic. D. Anselm Fernando)

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## 'Day for Sick and Elderly'

St. Gerard Majella (SVP) Conference of Kalamulla Parish held a 'Day for Sick and Elders' at Katurunda Convent Hall under the patronage of Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Maurice Namal Perera.

Holy Mass commenced at 9.00 a.m. with the participation of 60 sick and elderly persons, who were blessed during the Mass.

Refreshments were served soon after the Mass which was followed by a musical drama organised by the Church choir group with the assistance of the Parish Priest and Asst. Parish Priest.

Lunch was served to every one present and later, Prof. Anton Meemana delivered a speech pertaining to the charitable work of this Apostolate. Bags of provision items with textiles to the sick and the elderly were also distributed.

The day's programme ended with a prayer.

(Rufus Fernando)

## Christmas Carols by York International School



Christmas Carols presented by the York International School, Wattala, was held at St. Mary's Church, Nayakakanda, Hendala, under the patronage of the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunathilaka, Chairman of the School, Mr. Rohan Perera was also present.

(Pic. Nimal Perera)

## Annual Report 2010/11 of the Sri Lanka Movement for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

(Modified as at 2nd November 2011)

1) The spirit and commitment towards work for Justice and Peace from most of the office - bearers was a source of strength, in spite of financial and other difficulties encountered in carrying forward the objectives of the Movement.

2) The work mainly centered around problems and issues pertaining to both Sinhala and Tamil communities, particularly the marginalised in the country.

3) PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Programme of conscientisation of Presidential Candidates as to their duties and responsibilities was undertaken. Also, the legitimate grievances of the Catholic community, particularly in respect of fisheries, education and religious worship, were presented to the candidates. Steps were also taken to educate the voters as to their duties and responsibilities. Similar action was taken during the time of the General Election. Some of the above programmes of work were activated in collaboration with Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC.

4) REPRESENTATIONS TO LES-

SONS LEARNED AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Preparatory work in regard to the above was a major task undertaken by a special working unit which took a lot of pain and care in drafting appropriate representations keeping in line with the terms of reference of the Presidential Commission.

The Commission responded positively in regard to all matters presented by our delegation.

5) Problems encountered by the Archdiocese due to the inordinate delay in the appointment of additional Auxiliary Bishops were presented to the Apostolic Nuncio. The Apostolic concerns and services to the Catholic community, is a wider interest of the Movement, as the Archdiocese provides miscellaneous services to the majority of the Catholic population in Sri Lanka.

6) Widespread violence in the country, particularly, against children from the poorer sector of society was evident in the past years. A crime perpetrated on a child in the Matara District was especially shocking. We made representations

to the President and Minister of Education in this regard.

7) We are requesting the State Authorities, and Religious and Civil Society leaders for appropriate action to deal with the political violence which is mainly affecting the marginalised sector of our society.

8) In focusing attention to financial and other problems encountered during the last three years, we realised that closer understanding and active collaboration with the Episcopal Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development, is a requirement to achieve optimum progress in activating projects and programmes of the Movement. Towards this end, it is necessary to consider (i). Change the name to Sri Lanka Movement for Truth Justice and Reconciliation.

(ii) Appropriate amendments to be effected to the Constitution, in the process of re-organisation, and (iii). Appointment of trustworthy office-bearers who will be dedicated and committed to the tasks entrusted to them.

(Andrew Samaratunge)

## National Laity Commission Meeting

Meeting of the National Laity Commission was held at Lankarama, Balcombe Place, Borella, recently with the participation of Rt. Rev. Dr. Winston Fernando sss, Chairman, National Laity Commission and Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus Chandrasiri Perera, Vice Chairman.

Picture shows the meeting in progress. Also present were Rev. Fr. Tony Martyn, Mr. Nimal Perera and Mr. Shiran Maitri, National Treasurer (Laity Commission)

(Theobald Samaratunge)



## Confirmation Service by Apostolic Nuncio at Sacred Heart Church, Rajagiriya

On 22nd October 2011, His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio was welcomed by the Parish Priest and the Parishioners of Sacred Heart Church Rajagiriya for the Confirmation of 140 children of the parish. It was His Excellency's first Confirmation Service with the highest number of children present from the parish to receive this sacrament.

The Nuncio in his homily, said that these young people will be confirmed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who was often represented by tongues of fire. Just as fire gives light, warmth and security, it also purifies by burning off the impurities. The Holy Spirit burns away all that leads us away from Jesus and helps us to see the Risen Lord in our hearts and in our midst.

He challenged the young people to become saints and placed before them the example of Blessed

Chiara Luce Badano, a 20 year old girl, who in the midst of intense physical suffering, inspired all those who visited her, including the Bishops. She was declared blessed by the Holy Father last year. Being saints means living the life to the full, change the society and relationships." May you accept the gift of the Holy Spirit and share it with an open heart and change the world around you." said the Nuncio.

Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernandopulle the Episcopal Vicar of Colombo East and Very Rev. Fr. Leonard Ranasinghe OSB, the Conventual Prior of the Benedictine Fathers were also present at this ceremony.

The Benedictine Fathers presented a souvenir to His Excellency as it was his maiden Confirmation service.

(Rajagiriya Correspondent)



## Four New Priests to Congregation of the Rosarian

Four Deacons namely, Rev. Bro. S. Balendarn, Rev. Bro. S. Jebathasan, Rev. Bro. M. Pio Marisuthan and Rev. Bro. P. Venus Sebastian of the Congregation of the Rosarians will be ordained priests By His Lordship Most. Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundaranayagam Bishop of Jaffna, at the Cathedral of St. Mary, Jaffna on the 12th of January 2012 at 9.30 a.m.



**Bro. S. Balendran CR** is the son of Mr. Sebastianpillai Santhiapillai and Mrs. Santhiapillai Francisca of Navanthurai, Jaffna. He was born on 07th April 1979. He entered the Rosarian Minor Seminary in Jaffna in 1994 and com-

pleted his philosophical and theological studies at the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka. He was ordained a deacon on 06th August 2011. His first Eucharistic Celebration will be at St. Nicholas' Church, Navanthurai, Jaffna on 14th January 2012 at 8.30 am.



**Bro. P. Venus Sebastian CR** is the son of Mr. Anthonipillai Packiyanathan and Mrs. Packiyanathan Mary Matilda of Navanthurai, Jaffna. He was born on 18th September 1979. He entered the Rosarian Minor seminary in Jaffna in 1995 and completed his philosophical and theological studies at the National Seminary of Our

Lady of Lanka. He was ordained a deacon on 06th August 2011. His first Eucharistic Celebration will be at St. Mary's Church, Navanthurai, Jaffna on 16th January, 2012 at 8.30 am.



**Bro. M. S. Jebathasan CR** is the son of Mr. Alexander Sebamalai and Mrs. Mary Katpalangari of Navanthurai, Jaffna. He was born on 21st January 1980. He entered the Rosarian Minor Seminary in Jaffna in 1995 and completed his philosophical and theological studies at the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka. He was ordained a deacon on 06th August 2011. His first Eucharist Celebration will be at St.

Mary's Church, Navanthurai, Jaffna on 16th January, 2012 at 8.30 am.



**Bro. M. Pio Marisuthan CR** is the son of Mr. Anthonipillai Mariathas and Mrs. Mariathas Marthamma of Navanthurai, Jaffna. He was born on 03rd September 1980. He entered the Rosarian Minor Seminary in Jaffna in 1995 and completed his philosophical and theological studies at the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka. He was ordained a deacon on 06th August 2011. His first Eucharistic Celebration will be at St. Mary's Church, Navanthurai, Jaffna on 16th January, 2012 at 8.30 am.

**Rev. Fr. Samantha Cooray CR**

## The innocent vindicated

The Attorney General's Department had cleared Rev. Sr. Eliza of Prem Niwasa and the Institute of which she is the head, of any illegal activity on 15th December 2011. Yet the dust, the arrest and detention had caused has not yet settled down.

We, the Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Sri Lanka, as a collective body of leaders of all religious congregations, strongly condemn the manner in which the arrest and remand has been carried out, especially when other options had been there. We also equally condemn the irresponsible media that gave such adverse publicity even when full investigations have not been carried out.

While legal opinions seem clearly to point out that the arrest and remand was illegal and hence the NCPA acted in violation of the law of the land, one cannot but wonder whether there had been other reasons for acting in such a high handed manner. However, the fact that the incident

created such wide spread interest and in many cases outright condemnation clearly point to the fact how much the services of the Missionaries of Charity are being valued by the general public irrespective of narrow religious affiliations. True to the charisma of the founder of the Congregation, Blessed (Mother) Teresa, Sr. Eliza whole heartedly forgave the authorities of their illegal and indecent act, proving that an act of forgiveness when one is wronged is the Christian way.

The incident had proved, in the eyes of the law that the Sisters carry out much needed yeomen service to the people of Sri Lanka in full conformity of the law. As such services are carried out by many religious congregations, both men and women, in the country, we appeal to the concerned authorities that in carrying out their duties they respect the principal of natural justice, human rights and fundamental freedom.

**Fr. Jeyaraj Rasiah SJ**  
**President of the CMRS**

## Distribution of school items for deserving children



Distribution of school books and equipment for the children of low income families was held at Weliamuna, Hendala under the patronage of Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunathilaka, Parish Priest, St. Mary's Church Nayakakanda, Hendala recently.

Former Minister of Christian Affairs, John Amaratunge, Former Minister of Western Provincial Council, Lawrence Madiwala who sponsored the project and former member of Wattala Pradeshiya Saba, Charles Ranmuthu were also present.

**(Nimal Perera)**

## Pope stresses value of anointing on World Day of the Sick



VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Anointing of the sick is not a minor sacrament, said Pope Benedict XVI, but one that "deserves greater consideration today" because of its spiritual benefits to both minister and recipient.

The Pope's words appeared in a message for the 2012 World Day of the Sick, released by the Vatican on January 3. The day itself is celebrated annually Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Pope Benedict noted that the sacrament, formerly known as *extreme unction*, may be administered in "various human situations connected with illness, and not only when a person is at the end of his or her life."

Anointing with olive oil recalls the "double mystery of the Mount of Olives," the Pope said, as both the location of the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus confronted his passion, and the place where he ascended into heaven. Oil thus acts "as God's medicine ... offering strength and consolation, yet at the same time (pointing) beyond the moment of the illness toward the definitive healing, the resurrection."

Pope Benedict said that anointing of the sick is one of the Church's two "sacraments of healing," together with the "medicine of confession," penance.

When a sick person confesses sins to a priest, "a time of suffering, in which one could be tempted to abandon oneself to discouragement and hopelessness, can thus be transformed into a time of grace," the Pope said.

Both penance and the sacrament of the sick "have their natural completion in Eucharistic Communion," Pope Benedict said. "Received at a time of illness," Communion associates the "person who partakes of the body and blood of Christ to the offering that he made of himself to the Father for the salvation of all."

Accordingly, the Pope said, parishes should ensure that the elderly and the sick enjoy the "possibility of frequently receiving Holy Communion."

## SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus

NEW ADMISSIONS TO SUNDAY SCHOOL —







## EDITORIAL

8 January 2012

## The Church and the Signs of the Times

In his novel "The Brave New World" Aldous Huxley predicted that falsification would be the decisive element of modern life. So Secularism has gathered momentum in the Western World. The Church is denied its role as the proclaimer of the only truth. Instead it is argued that the State should be secular and that there is no single truth.

Truth is said is relative. What you believe is the truth is truth for you and what I believe as truth is truth for me. There is no difference. Some philosophies even say that man is not capable of knowing absolute truth. But viewed in this way man would not be capable of ethical values either. There is no objective or absolute moral code either. So they say there is nothing unethical about homosexuality or gay marriages or in abortion. In this set up what the majority may believe is what counts. But the world has seen the havoc caused by destructive majority ideologies like Nazism and Communism, all of which stood against the truth as proclaimed in Christianity. Secularists point to the wars fought in the name of religion and argue that banishing religion altogether from the State and even society is the best way to achieve tolerance of differences in society. It is true that Christians have proclaimed the truth in a manner which was intolerant and even brutal. But the Church which includes all Christians cannot fail to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ that he suffered and died for sinners, that our God is a God of Love who will forgive sinners if they believe in him and live according to his commandments. This is the great truth we are called upon to proclaim in love and charity but not in an intolerant spirit. God is Emmanuel and He will live in our hearts and minds and in the world at large if we live by his commandments.

Some think that after 2000 years, Christianity has played itself out just as other major cultures and religions in the history of civilization. If we look superficially at the prevailing practice of religion in the western world this may look so. But if we look at the world at large and even at the movements among the young in the West itself we note that Christianity is developing a new creativity based on genuine faith and service. Man is from time to time reverting to paganism because of his original sin. As St Augustine wrote, world history is a battle between the two forces of Love - love of self to the point of destroying the world and love of others to the point of renouncing oneself. The role of the Church is to produce a group of people, undoubtedly a minority who will stand for truth and justice and struggle against evil in the world. They will resist evil and condemn its manifestations. In this battle truth and justice will triumph however great the opposition. Dictators who oppose God and the spread of his teachings will fall. Faith includes history and God has sent signs from time to time in history to encourage us to believe that He is with us even unto the end of the world.

So what does 2012 hold for us? Last week the Washington Times newspaper carried an editorial with the caption "Being a Christian is a death sentence" and urged that America needs to give shelter to persecuted believers from Muslim lands. Christians are facing severe persecution in Nigeria, where bombs were exploded in five churches on Christmas night and over 40 persons were killed; in the Middle East in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and in Pakistan, not to mention China where only a local national Church is tolerated.

The famous Third prophecy of Fatima holds hope for us. It was not revealed until 2002. The text spoke of a bishop clothed in white collapsing and this was interpreted as the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II. But Pope Benedict has stated that the Fatima prophecy is not complete. The Church will continue to suffer but the eventual triumph of the Church is assured according to this prophecy. God will punish severely those who do not believe in him, those who despise him and those who did not have time for him. The prophetic message said, "I call upon all of you to come to my son Jesus Christ. God will help the world, but all of those who do not show fidelity and loyalty will be destroyed!"

So we should not be afraid for God is with us. Here in our own country we saw the bigoted hostility of our enemies in the arrest and remanding of the Sister Eliza of the Missionaries of Christ. We may have to face more such persecutions. But we know that God will triumph. But being Christian will not be enough unless we live the teachings of Our Lord.

## Catholic Church Unveils New Home for Ex-Episcopalians

Opening its doors more widely to disaffected Episcopalians, the Roman Catholic Church has established the equivalent of a nationwide diocese in the United States that former Episcopal priests and congregations can enter together as intact groups, the Vatican has announced.

Converts who join the new entity will be full-fledged Catholics, expected to show allegiance to the Pope and oppose contraception and abortion. But they will be allowed to preserve revered verses from the Book of Common Prayer. And, in what one Catholic leader called "an act of generosity," priests who are married will be exempted from the Catholic requirement of celibacy, though they may not become bishops.

The new grouping, called the *Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter*, will have its headquarters in Houston and be led by Jeffrey N. Steenson, a former Episcopal bishop and father of three who left the church in 2007 and became a Catholic priest in 2009, under an existing exemption for converting Anglicans. With the title of ordinary, Father Steenson will be a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and will report directly to the Vatican, church officials said.

Catholic leaders and some former Episcopalians are celebrating the announcement as a small but notable event in an often tortuous history of relations between the Vatican and the Anglican Church, which includes the Episcopalians, after their break in the 16th century.

The Episcopal Church is the main American branch of the Anglican Communion, a loose global body whose symbolic head is the Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the Church of England. It has been shaken by discord from conservatives who object to the ordination of female priests, the acceptance of bishops with homosexual partners and changes in the liturgy.

While it involved only a small fraction of the Episcopal Church in the United States, which has more than 7,000 priests and two million members, dozens of entire parishes have broken away to join alternative Anglican branches. Many do not want to become Catholics but a share of disaffected Episcopalians are

seeking to convert, something they say they have long dreamed about.

"I'm excited about the opportunity for those who, for the most part, are already with the Catholic Church in their hearts," Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, said in an interview. The cardinal supervised planning of the ordinariate.

Since the Vatican's grant of an exemption from celibacy in 1980, scores of Episcopal priests have joined the Catholic priesthood, remaining married. The new ordinariate will allow priests and their existing congregations to switch en masse, establishing new parishes with an Anglican flavor. Unmarried Anglican priests who join the ordinariate will not be allowed to marry later on.

So far, more than 100 priests and groups of members totaling more than 1,320, including six congregations of 70 or more, have asked to join the ordinariate, said Father Scott Hurd, a Catholic priest in Washington, D.C., and a former Episcopalian who helped design the new system.

Father Steenson said he expected more former Episcopalians to join after they saw how the new group operated. He said that he personally had always longed for closer ties with the Catholics, a feeling that only intensified as the Episcopal Church broke with tradition on female priests and acceptance of homosexuality, dividing the churches further. But he is also overjoyed to preserve elements of the Anglican liturgy, he said. The expectation is that this parallel structure will continue indefinitely.

When the Vatican authorized creation of these entities in 2009, some Anglican leaders, especially in England, expressed concern that it was trying to take advantage of their turmoil. In England, where a similar grouping was formed last year, about 60 priests and more than 1,000 members have joined so far. But Cardinal Wuerl and Father Hurd said that the system was developed in response to a growing demand.

"There have been Anglican groups requesting this for 30 years," Father Hurd said. "This is not an effort at poaching or sheep-stealing."

(Catholic News Service)

## The Point of Nothingness Absolute Poverty/Pure Truth

At the centre of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God in us. It is, so to speak, His name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence, as our sonship. It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely... I have no program for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.

(Thomas Merton)  
(Footprints Magazine)





# A marvel of Timing

(This is a true story. Only the names have been changed)

The 21st of March was a special day in our family circle. It was my birthday - and my second son's as well. It was also the day of the Summer Equinox, when day and night were equal.

That Saturday morning I reclined in my armchair in the verandah while my wife busied herself in the kitchen. It was my sixtieth birthday and my three sons who were all married and lived far away would come home for lunch. Their birthday cards had all arrived. My sister (who was a nun in a Convent in Negombo itself) would turn up too. As I sat there I thought of some of my past birthdays that had been memorable in some way or another.

My 21st birthday was quite memorable since it was on this day that I joined the Local Government Service by taking up duties in an Urban Council.

I also thought of my 25th birthday when God blessed me in a special manner. For my second son was born

on this very day! He was born in the very hour in which I had seen the light of day so many years ago! Thereafter the birthday became a double occasion.

My reminiscence were cut short when the gate opened and my sister came walking up the drive. She was accompanied by an elderly lady who was dressed in a saree. This lady carried a leather bag with some difficulty.

"It's so nice to see you!" I said, rising to my feet "Happy birthday, aiya!" she greeted me with a kiss. I looked inquiringly at the bag which her companion carried. "A birthday present for me?"

"It could be that," my sister replied enigmatically. At the sound of their voices my wife came out of the kitchen. She welcomed them cordially and we all walked into the hall and seated ourselves.

"Aiya, this lady is a housemaid employed in that American Engineer's house over there," my sister began. "Just as I was passing by that house on my way here, the

door opened and she came out of the house, carrying this bag with her. She introduced herself and asked me whether I would like to have some religious books absolutely free of charge. I was quite surprised. I inquired about the owner of the books and why he wanted to dispose of them."

"The owner is actually Mr. Webster's wife," the housemaid interrupted. "A little while ago she handed over this set of books to me and asked me to get rid of them or present them to somebody as she had no use for them. So I left the house carrying these books with me. The moment I came outdoor, I saw this Sister passing by. What better person to receive religious books than a nun, I thought to myself. So I spoke to her and asked her whether she would like to have them. She jumped at the idea. She said that she was on her way to your birthday and that being a book-lover you would like nothing better as a present. She invited me to come along with her."

"This is amazing!" I

remarked "I mean your coming out and bumping into her just as she passed by."

"God must have been behind that chance meeting," my sister said.

The housemaid took out the books and laid them on the dining table, and I began to examine them one by one. There were two or three versions of the Holy Bible, valuable.

Commentaries and other books on the Bible and two books on the end-time happenings. Most of the books were de-lux editions and were in almost mint condition. But one thing puzzled me. None of those books carried the owner's name written on them. At the sight of those priceless treasures, what happened to Pavlov's dogs also happened to me...

I thanked both of them and requested my sister to take for herself any books that she fancied. She contented herself with only three books out of the lot. And though we pressed them to stay for lunch, they

declined the invitation and left after partaking of some refreshments.

Had the housemaid left the house only five minutes earlier or late than she actually did, she would have missed my sister completely and the books wouldn't have reached me, I reflected. It was a miracle of timing and I am certain that the Lord was behind it all. For does not God's Word say that "It is not in man who walks to direct his steps?"

It was a birthday present sent to me by the Lord Himself, I felt, and in the very choice of the present there was an unmistakable message for me. Unquestionably it was the most splendid birthday present I had received in all those 59 years. I bowed my head and thanked the Lord from the bottom of my heart. And the glow of joy that the present of books ignited in me was to remain for many days to come....

Joe Jayasuriya

## The 'wow' factor

WOW!" said the new Duchess of Cambridge as she walked on to the balcony at Buckingham Palace. "Wow! Wow!" said Irish President Mary McAleese, as the Queen spoke in Gaelic at that historic State banquet in Dublin.

"Wow!" is an exclamation expressing Surprise and delight, ideal for well brought-up people since it contains nothing that can offend. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) tells us that the Word is Scottish, dating back to the sixteenth century. Aside from astonishment and admiration, it originally also expressed aversion, sorrow, commiseration and any kind of emphatic assertion.

By the end of the nineteenth century, 'Wow!' had spread as far as America, where the dedicated slang-truffier George Ade used it in his 1896 novel, *Artie*, the story of a young office worker in Chicago. Artie tells his friend, Miller, about a variety show he has just seen:

"The girls - Wow!" "Beauties, eh?"

Where 'Wow!' came from is anyone's guess. The *OED* suggests it might be related to another Scots exclamation, 'Vow!'; as in this example: "Hech me! but it's lang since I saw you, and vow! ye're grown gaudy and grand." "Vow" here is an elliptical version of "I vow": Unfortunately 'Vow!' is not recorded until nearly three centuries after "Wow!".

The golden age of exclamations has passed. People today

tend to use the obvious taboo words relating to bodily functions. If they don't do that, they might say "God!" or "Jesus!" or perhaps, if they're trying to be funny, "Jesus H. Christ!"; a variant supposedly in use since before 1850 and based on the Greek monogram IHS or IHC.

Taking the Lord's name in vain has not always been as prevalent as it is now. James I made swearing illegal, a prohibition that only fell into abeyance in the mid eighteenth century.

But it was frowned upon until late in the twentieth century. Hence we have a plethora of euphemistic or "minced" variants of the religious words. "God!" was replaced by "Goodness!" (Shakespeare), "Goodness gracious me!" (Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* of 1841), "Gosh!" (1757) and "Golly!"; noted by the naturalist Gilbert White in 1775 as being an "asseveration

much in use among our carters and lowest people'.

Even the schoolboy's enthusiastic "Cor!"; first recorded in 1931, is a corruption of "God!"; probably arriving via "Corblimey!" or "Gorblimey!" (1896), elliptical versions of "God blind me": "Gorblimey!" also gave us "Gordon Bennett!"; first recorded as an exclamation in a novel of 1937, the man in question being James Gordon Bennett, a world-famous journalist-turned playboy.

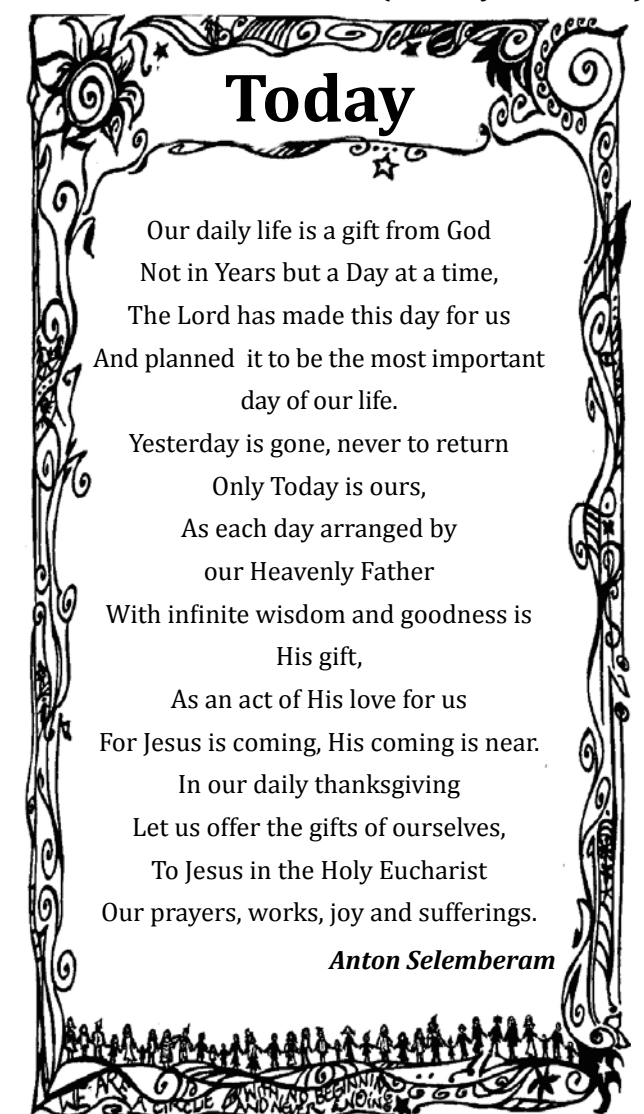
"Christ!" was modified to become "Crikey!" (first recorded in 1826) and "Cripes!" (1910), while "Jesus!" gave us two American exclamations, "Gee!" (from 1895) and "Jeepers!": Meanwhile, "Jehoshaphat!" or "Jumping Jehoshaphat!" (1866) may replace "Jesus!":

Other long-gone exclamations include "Lawks!" (1780s), "Lumme!" (1898) and "(Lord

Love-a-duck!" (1898), stemming from "Lord" and "Lord love me": And then there is a whole string of "Holy" "formations, including "Holy mackerel!" recorded (or invented) by George Ade in 1899, and possibly a euphemistic variant on "Holy Mary'.

Sadly, all these colourful expressions are going the way of the typewriter ribbon. Is anything replacing them? Recent dictionaries offer only Bart Simpson's "Ay Caramba!" (according to Wikipedia a minced version of a Spanish slang word for penis) and the excitable "omigod!"; first recorded in 1961 and now common in text-speak and online.

(Courtesy: The Tablet)







# Abortion



According to projected figures there are over 1000 abortions performed in Sri Lanka a day.

Though abortion is illegal there are many abortion clinics operating in different parts of the island. They are in the business of terminating pregnancies. Due to the illegality of the procedure many of these clinics are clandestine and unhygienic. There are lots of young females treated for the complications of septic abortions in the State hospitals in this country. There are no statistics of these victims.

In some countries such as the United Kingdom abortion is legally permitted for therapeutic reasons up to 24 weeks of pregnancy. The reasons include rape and incest. They also have included mental health reasons such as depression and anxiety caused by an unwanted pregnancy. In other words abortion is available on demand in any of the hos-

pitals or clinics run by the State-run National Health Service up to six months of pregnancy.

In the seventies I happened to attend a presentation of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta on abortion. There were many *gynaecologists*, *paediatricians*, moral theologians and news media personnel attending this



## Bits and Pieces

presentation. Her message was simple. She reiterated the moral teaching of the Catholic Church and said that abortion at any stage of foetal development is tantamount to murder of an innocent person who cannot defend himself/herself. She mentioned that there are many safe havens in Asia run by her congregation, Missionary Sisters

of Charity, for unwedded pregnant women or anyone who has an unplanned or an unwanted pregnancy.

She mentioned that there are tens of thousands of couples who are longing to adopt these babies.

She urged such mothers to visit her convents and go through their pregnancy till full term and voluntarily give their babies to these convents

### Madi

so that they can find a safe home for adoption. She appealed to the audience, "Give me these babies. I will find them a home." Today the same principle is carried out by her sisters in every part of the world to safeguard the life of the innocent victims of abortion.

Abortion is illegal in India. At the later stages of pregnancy a Cat Scan can detect the sex of the child in the womb. There were so many instances of abortion of female foetus, because the Indian par-

ents preferred to have a male child than a female. According to Indian law the medical professionals are legally prohibited to divulge the sex of the foetus before they are born.

Christians regarded abortion as a grievous crime as early as in the first century. *Didache*, an ancient first century Christian document says that abortion is tantamount to infanticide. The Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium* condemns abortion as murder of the innocent. Blessed Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* categorically condemns abortion as deliberate killing. "I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is deliberate killing of an innocent human being."

Based on these teachings of the Church, Catholic religious orders have established homes to help the victims of rape or incest and also to help the females who are having "unwanted or unplanned pregnancies." They help the mothers to carry the

child to full term. They safeguard the life of the innocent child. They have promised such women to keep their pregnancy secret. They give the mother the option of keeping the baby or giving the child for adoption after the birth.

These homes are part of the Christian tradition geared towards safeguarding innocent human lives as well as to help innocent victims of rape, incest and the women who are ignorant of human sexuality and reproduction. The non-Christian or State Organizations cannot understand the commitment and the dedication of these religious not only to safeguard innocent human lives but also to keep the anonymity of these mothers who are guiltless victims of a society devoid of religious ethics and moral values.

It is the duty of the State Organizations such as the Departments of Education and Health to teach the teenagers about human sexuality and reproduction. This has to be done before they fall into the traps of promiscuous sexual practices and premarital pregnancy.

## Why is the world as it is?

The world is you, and what you are the world is. Is this a conundrum, or a mere facetious statement or logical sophistry? You are the world. If you are ambitions, envious, cruel, hateful, self-seeking, violent and insensitive, you will find that the world is all this.

You are the repository of millions of ages of the accumulated consciousness of mankind. You have inherited the residue of the past and in fact you are conditioned by the past. You are also

conditioned by the priest, the politician, the religious institutions and their rites, rituals and ceremonies. You are conditioned by custom, by tradition, by the environment and the people around you. Can you break away from the hold of the past? You can.

The world becomes what it does. You become what you do. Marcus Aurelius, writes "Whatever befalls you is part of the destiny of the Universe, ordained for you from the beginning. All that befalls you is part of

the great web".

So beware, there is a great web that has entrapped you, and if you want to be free, you must, first be aware that you are in this web.

Also realise that we live in an illusory world, and all that we covet so valuable and important are in fact empty and devoid of substance. When these are seen, the illusion of the material world melts away. This is what is enshrined in the words of Jesus, "My Kingdom is not of this world." (Jn 8:36) "God spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24)

The true world is what of the spirit and when one realises this, "THE WORLD AS IT IS", is understood. The world as it is, is man made and not God made. The world of God has been supplanted by the world of man.

True, there are the mountains and the valleys, the meadows and the

### S. Jeganayagam

streams, the seas and the rivers, the forests and the flowers the animals and the birds, as God made them all. But man has spoiled them, by his greed, and violence and exploited and polluted - the beautiful and bounteous world of God. It truly is a mad brutal world.

The way out then is in giving up the material sense of existence for the spiritual consciousness, which is the essence of the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The great lesson, man has to learn, is the human experience of Jesus, who was betrayed by his disciple Judas, is not to trust man whose breath is in his nostrils, not to place any trust or faith in the material world, but to turn inwards into the world of the spirit.

For then, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is strayed on thee." (Is 26:3)

## Making Sunday Beautiful

Sunday is never complete without being a part of its celebration in my very own parish church.

Saying a hello or a friendly smile to that familiar face. A sense of belonging and closeness is felt within.

This is the place where memorable events have taken place in my life. Marriages and our children's baptisms to name a few. And now as I see my daughter doing the Reading at the podium in the Sanctuary.

How I thank My Lord.

Many of my dear friends opt for different churches instead of their own parish church. So called reasons being "It's lively and interesting."

Let's ask ourselves as to how we have contributed in making the service more meaningful.

It reminds me of the words of Mahatma Gandhi.

"You must be the change you wish to see in world" How very true. You and I can certainly make a difference. The so called boring serman would carry a message for you and me from the Lord.

So let's not be critical rather adopt a positive approach by making our own parish church a dwelling place for our Saviour by our participation.

Shiromi Thomas

### TAKE TIME FOR A MINUTE OF HUMOUR - SMILE!



"Once a poor young man, now has become a wealthy old man" said the Psychiatrist to the depressed man. "Silver in the hair, Gold in the teeth, Stones in the kidney, Sugar in the blood, Lead in the feet, Iron in the arteries, And an inexplicable supply of natural gas!" He never knew that he'd accumulated such a wealth.

Rev. Fr. Fraccid Anthony Fernando O.M.I.

## The Fourth Wise Man

*Long, long time ago*

*A man full of ego*

*Longed to see the king of all lands*

*So, planned to sail to far lands*

*Prompted by a shiny star*

*Wasted not a single hour*

*Only taking some stones precious*

*To be given to the king gracious*

*Tiresome journey*

*Weakened not his passion*

*Wearisome body*

*Told not 'No' to his mission*

*Among the nobles he searched*

*In mansions and places he sought*

*Among the wise and learned he searched*

*In learning centres he sought*

*Searched and searched again and again*

*All seemed but vain and vain*

*Nothing left but pain and pain*

*As many a grey hair he gained and gained*

*Evening of his life soon came*

*Leaving for him no more time*

*Soon he found himself in tiny cells*

*Caring for the people with decaying cells*

*For him came the day to say*

*Good bye to the world feeling gay*

*Deep down him full of dismay*

*For his failed dream remained to that day*

*Before he breathed his last*

*The king he searched came at last*

*No silver or gold was left now to offer*

*All that left was tears bitter*

*The king smiled and said in lower voice*

*Already you paid the homage to me*

*With your service to others in glee*

*For all that is done for them is done for me*

*Would you like to be the fourth wise man in the crib at this Christmas???*

Bro. Clariyan Fernando

4th Year Theology



# The story behind seasonal stamps

‘Christmas’ is a popular theme for thematic stamp collecting. In most countries around the world Christmas stamps are issued to mark the season and for the use of seasonal mail to be used in the posting of Christmas cards. The designs on these stamps vary from religious images of the Nativity, to secular images of Christmas trees, wreaths, Santa Claus etc.

The first Christmas stamp in the world is the Canadian map stamp of 1898 which bears an inscription ‘XMAS 1898’. The inspiration for this first stamp however is said to have been more by coincidence than by special design. This was actually issued to mark the inauguration of the Imperial Penny Postage rate. The Christmas connection was reported to have been the result of a quick thinking Postmaster William Mulock who had proposed that the stamp be issued on 9 November, to “honour the Prince” (meaning the Prince of Wales), but when Queen Victoria asked, “What

perseverance by stamp collector and enthusiast Rev. Fr. Noel Elmo Perera who later become the Bishop of Galle and Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis emeritus Archbishop of Colombo, who was at that time the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Colombo and in charge of Christian Cultural Affairs.

## *The first stamp with the Christmas connection (Canada), and the first stamp with a Nativity scene (Hungary)*

It is said that after getting approval for issuing of this first set of Christmas stamps, Bishop Elmo took upon himself the responsibility of looking for an artist to carry out this historic task. An art competition was held without satisfactory results. He was then informed of an 18-year-old artist seminarian Priyantha Silva who produced a fitting art work for the purpose. The seminarian who was later ordained a priest,



The 56 stamps to date have included the art of renown artists like David Paynter (1996), Sybil Wettasinghe (2001), Kala Booshana S.S. Silva (1993, 1994), Sri Lal Nanayakkara (1999, 2000) and the youngest stamp artist Minura Ranathunaga of Grade 1 Kingswood College, Kandy (2006).

They have marked important pilgrim shrines and churches like Our Lady of Madhu (1985), Our Lady of Matarra (1985), St. Anthony’s Wahakotte (2006) St. Mary’s Bolawatte (2004), Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes Kalaoya Anuradhapura (2011). St. Mary’s Cathedral, Galle (2008), St. Mary’s Cathedral, Badulla (2009), St. Mary’s Church, Kegalle (2010).

They have featured historic artefacts like the Nestorian Cross (1995), the Cross of Bl. Joseph Vaz at Galgamuwa (2005) and architectural monuments like St. James Church, Mutwal (2007), the Cathedral Church, Galle

Prince?” in a displeased manner, Mulock realized the danger, and answered “Why, the Prince of Peace, ma’am.”

Thereafter in 1937, Austria issued two ‘Christmas greeting stamps’ featuring the rose and zodiac signs. In 1939, Brazil issued four semi-postal stamps with designs featuring the three kings and a star, an angel and child, the Southern Cross and a child, and a mother and child. In

was at that time the youngest to design a stamp and went on to produce 12 more Christmas stamps for Sri Lanka. All these stamps that Fr. Priyantha Silva produced were focused on indigenization of Christian art or making Christian art in this case the nativity scene and related scenery look more Sri Lankan.

The design of the first set of Christmas stamps in 1980 showed the Holy Family and the Magi who came to visit the family on the birth of the infant Jesus. The theme

(2008) and one of the first churches depicting indigenized architecture St. Philip Neri’s Church, Katukurunda (2003).

They have commemorated illustrious Catholic priests like Rev. Fr. Jacome Gonsalvez and the Rt. Rev. Dr. Edmond Peiris (2004)

And they have celebrated church anniversaries like the 150th anniversary of the Anglican Diocese of Kurunegala and Colombo (1995).



1941 Hungary issued a semi-postal with an additional fees to pay for “soldiers’ Christmas”. The first stamps to depict the Nativity was the Hungary issue of 1943. These were all one-time issues, more like commemorative stamps than regular issues.

## In Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka the first Christmas stamps were issued in 1980 by the Philatelic Bureau of the Department of Posts of Sri Lanka. This was the result of years of negotiations and

beautifully coincided with the Church’s dedication of that year to the family. These stamps were unique because they indigenized the Christmas scenes with carefully selected local art motifs, colours, and other features which were introduced into the picture to give them a more local touch. The stamps bore the denominations of 35 and Rs. 3.75.

Thereafter Christmas stamps have been produced annually except on four years for various reasons. Today Christmas stamps have become an annual issue in the form of a souvenir sheet.

The stamps reproduced here were provided by stamp collectors Keerthi Sri Perera, Sanath Rohana Wickramasinghe and Bede Nihal Perera.





# Christmas tales of the Middle Ages

The word Christmas is derived from the Middle English usage "Christ's Mass," and central to the celebration of the Nativity was



the liturgical activity which had been established by the year 600, and did not change in the Middle Ages. In Medieval England there were, in fact, three Masses celebrated on Christmas Day.



The first and most characteristic was at midnight (the Angel's Mass), catching up the notion that the light of salvation appeared at the darkest moment of the darkest date in the very depth of winter. The second Christmas Mass came at dawn (the Shepherd's Mass), and the third during the day (the Mass of the Divine Word). The Season of Advent, the forty days of leading up to Christmas, was being observed in the Western Church by the year 500. St. Nicholas was a very popular medieval saint, and his

feast day came in Advent (6 December), but he did not play his part in Christmas as Santa Claus until after the Reformation.

Also important in the celebration of Christmas was the banquet, which necessarily varied in sumptuousness with the resources of the celebrants. Churches and houses were decorated with ivy, mistletoe, holly or anything green, which remained up until the eve of Candlemass. The gift-giving of the season was represented by the New Year Gift, which continued a tradition of Roman origin. The later Christmas present was not part of a Medieval Christmas.

The Christmas cycle of the mystery plays was a part of late Medieval urban entertainment in different parts of England. The Shepherd's Play from Wakefield would be a specific example. The leader of the carol-dance sang a verse of the carol, and a ring of dancers responded with the chorus. Carol-dances were often suggestive of their pagan ancestors where, for instance, holly and ivy had fertility associations with male and female. Further music for the celebration of the season was provided by the Latin hymns of the Church.

A medieval Christmas celebration was not over in a day, but continued until 6 January (the Egyptian winter solstice), the Feast of the Epiphany on the 12th day after Christmas Day. Epiphany celebrated the visit of the wise men, the Magi, around whom many layers of legend accumulated as they came to be conceptualized as three oriental kings who visited the infant Christ at Bethlehem in Judea. Epiphany also symbolized the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

The Monday after Epiphany was called Plough Monday, and it was then that ploughing began.

The day after Christmas recalled St. Stephen, the martyr mentioned in the New Testament book of Acts. The following day was that of John the Apostle and Evangelist (not to be confused with John the Baptist), and 28 December was Holy Innocents' Day or Childermas Day, commemorating the male children killed by Herod, who was king of the Jews when Jesus was born.



It was superstition that the day of the week upon which Holy Innocents' Day fell would be unlucky for the coming year.

There was no absolute standard about ending the Christmas season with Epiphany, and many carried it through to forty days after Christmas, the date of an ancient pagan festival on 2 February. This is now celebrated as Candlemas, or the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, or alternatively as the Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the

which were offered to the priest as part of the parochial duties of the faithful. Other candles were blessed and taken away by the faithful to be used for such things as giving comfort during thunder storms or while sick or even dying. Such candles were thus important for giving people a light of solace in the face of hostile forces and stressful events. And thus Candlemas was a closure for the long season commencing with Advent that drew Medieval Christians to concentrate on the miraculous gift to



Temple. In one of the most elaborate processions of the year, all parishioners came to Mass with a penny and a candle blessed before the procession, both of

humanity of Christ, and the promise of salvation, while leaving at the same time space for fun, feasting, and socializing.

*Sent by Anton Paaris*

*"I do not worship matter;  
I worship the creator of matter  
who became matter for my sake,  
who willed to take His abode in matter;  
who worked out my salvation  
through matter.  
Never will I cease honouring the matter  
which wrought my salvation.  
I honour it, but not as God."*

*(St. John of Damascus on the Holy Icons, i.16)*

To pray well we need to find the following for our lives:

a permanent place,  
a permanent time,  
a personal Bible,

and a notebook and pen in order to write what the Lord is talking to us on that day through the Word of God.







## The Experience of Beauty

**S**ome Memories are kneaded into our lives. These memories, re-appear with a smell, colour, or tone of voice that makes them as present to our minds as if we were living them again. A friend of mine recently wrote to me with one of those memories: It was an experience of beauty.

*I was in a dull hospital room painted cream and maroon, looking at a woman in a green shimmy. Her face was puffy, her body spread over the sheets, her wrist marked with a plastic hospital bracelet. She had suffered polio as a child, and carried the marks through her forty years of life. Then cancer had hit, twice. The day I visited was the first that she had eaten solid food since she had been interned, a week earlier, after a serious reaction to the medicine she was taking.*

*As I had come up in the elevator, I did not know what to expect. Of course I wanted to make her comfortable and to cheer her up. But what would I talk about? What would she say? What would she look like? And could I cope with that?*

*These doubts nagged me down the hospital corridor as I peered at the numbers on the doors. I finally came to hers, knocked, and walked in.*

*"Oh, what a nice surprise," she said, and invited me to sit down. And she began to tell me about her day. What she had for lunch: "I had peas today; they were well cooked ... just the way I like them." It was good to have peas. I haven't been eating for a fortnight." And then her view. She pointed to the window: "What a wonderful day it is outside. And I'm so lucky to have a view like this! God is good to me. Sometimes I see the birds winging their way across from one building to another, or to the trees that I know are down in the garden." I looked out the window. I could see a dash of sky that banged against another tall, concrete ward.*

*We talked for a little while longer. She grew tired; it was time for her to sleep. I went back to the elevator. I felt as though the ordi-*

*nary bleakness of life had suddenly refocused, and I had glimpsed the beauty of the tiny things of life: A drop of sky, a well-cooked pea. I wondered why I could not perceive the incredible wonder of life like her. And it's funny: On the way to the car, it seemed like the noise and rush suddenly blinded me to those moments of clarity.*

My friend asked herself why this woman could perceive beauty

more clearly than she did. She felt that she had seen the beauty of the world as it really was in that dull hospital room, and had been almost blinded, she wrote, when she entered back into ordinary life. It seems to me that this is a common experience. Why? Isn't our world looking for beauty? Doesn't the quest for the beautiful drive the plastic surgery industry, shopping sprees, and myriad diets?

Yes and no. Yes, because we all want to be beautiful, but no, because it seems that we do not know how to find true beauty in the world around us.

### The Experience of Beauty

Beauty, according to Josef Pieper, is "the glow of the true and good irradiating from every ordered state of being, and not in the patent significance of immediate sensual appeal." Pieper, then, sees beauty as the attraction of truth and goodness within an object or person.

This definition should be understood with the philosophical sense of truth and goodness. Truth is threefold. First is truth in being (existential truth)-an object has an essential nature and fulfills that nature-it is "true to its nature." Second, there is truth in words (logical truth): when we make an assertion about an object, we point to its participation in its specific essential nature. Third, there is truth in action (moral truth). In other words, an object behaves in accord with its essential nature.

Goodness is essentially the desirable, in a metaphysical sense: All things strive for, and thus desire, the good. The good for which all things strive is their fulfillment and completion, that is, their perfection. When we speak of goodness in a moral sense, we continue to have in mind the connection between goodness and being: A good action is one in which a person acts in accord with what he or she is meant to be as a perfected human person. Going back to Pieper's definition with an understanding of his terms, when he speaks of the glow of truth and goodness irradiating from every ordered state of being, he means that when a thing or person is what it is supposed to be, or behaves according to what is desirable for its nature in word and action, that thing or person is beautiful. It attracts us to itself.

This way of comprehending beauty encompasses all forms of the authentically beautiful. A person can be beautiful physically because of the "truth and goodness" of his or her proportions. And he or she can also be beautiful in his or her moral life, in other words, the truth and goodness of his or her acts and intentions. Internal beauty eventually is manifested on the external features of a person. If the external beauty is there, but the internal is lacking, the external is damaged or lost. In *The Portrait of Dorian Grey*, Oscar Wilde gives a compelling description of how vice destroys beauty.

However, beauty is not merely the smell of a heady blend of truth and goodness. Beauty, says the document concluding the Pontifical Council on Culture's 2006 Plenary Assembly, "means more than the truth or the good. To say that something is beautiful is not only to recognize it intelligible and therefore lovable, but also, in specifying our knowledge, it attracts us, or captures us with a ray capable of igniting marvel. Moreover, as it expresses a certain power of attraction, beauty tells forth reality itself in the perfection of its form." In other words, beauty reveals that a thing or person has become what it was made to be.

This reflection is true on the physical level of beauty: The more symmetry a face has, in other words, the more true to what it was made to be, the more beautiful it is. The perfection of the face makes it physically beautiful. On a moral

level, this holds even truer. Pope John Paul II, whose life was authentically given for others, lived in the truth of who he was in his words and actions, and he lived by goodness. His encounters with the faithful in World Youth Days, general audiences, and other large-scale events provoked deep emotion in all who met him, even as his body grew weaker. In the crowds around St. Peter's in the days following his death, I met many people who told me their experience of John Paul. They recalled his gaze. In his eyes, they had found gratitude, trust, and hope. They had felt that they were known and loved, personally. It was an experience of beauty.

So we can say that beauty shows the perfection of a desirable reality, both on a physical and moral scale. And beauty convinces us by the route of the heart. It attracts us to the goodness and truth that we have encountered in a thing or person. Therefore, learning to experience beauty becomes a bridge toward rediscovering truth and goodness.

How? Why does beauty capture us? Joseph Ratzinger, commenting on Plato's theory of beauty, answers this question: "Plato sees the encounter with beauty as the salutary emotional shock that snatches man out of himself and 'carries him away.' Man, he says, has lost the perfection that was originally intended for him. Now he is forever in pursuit of the healing primordial form. Memory and

longing set him searching, and beauty wrests him from the contentment of everyday life. It makes him suffer."

Ratzinger points out that beauty has an element of longing that reminds us of the perfection for which we were made. Our experience of beauty is like a scene from Lois Lowry's futuristic novel *The Giver*. The inhabitants of a sheltered, controlled community have lost the capacity to see colour. All is shades of grey. One day, however, the protagonist sees something different in an apple as he tosses it to a playmate. He glimpses its redness. He is mystified by the experience. He feels that he is seeing things the right way, the way they should be. He tries to repeat the experience: he steals the apple, takes it to his room, and passes it from one hand to another, hoping to see colour. But when he forces the conditions, he sees only grey. The apple's colour escapes him. As the novel progresses, however, the protagonist gradually learns to recognize colour. Lowry suggests that his recognition of the true colour and of beauty in his world comes, not from a forced experiment, but with growth in distinguishing right and wrong.

Perceiving beauty is like the flash of red in a world of grey.

Whether or not we see it, the glow of truth and goodness of a thing or person is present. However, our experience of beauty comes spontaneously. It gives us pleasure or joy when we recognize it. We try to hold on to it, but cannot

(Contd. on Pg. 15)

## Where's God's Kingdom?

Villages, towns, and countries have their boundaries for identity. Ages have passed, yet unexplained are the demarkation of God's Kingdom.

Parables are many which tell us about God's Kingdom but Where it will be nobody knows - though a field as a paradigm was told.

Goodness as its owner had sown seeds for grain, but sprouted. amidst them were weeds as seen Isn't it the work of the evil one?

'Don't pull them out', was His advice to the devout for Such act would defile you too Save them for repentance or final punishment

Time for repentance is God-given. Guide the weak in faith, the strong ones Let God's Kingdom come and remain Weeding the wicked and evil domain.

The earth we live in and all creations therein are God's Once lost and regained by Jesus Awaits His second coming for perfection.

Malcolm Fernando





## Rev. Fr. Marcus Rupesinghe OMI - A light extinguished

Rev. Fr. Marcus Rupesinghe OMI passed from here to eternity on the 18th of November 2011 after having chalked up 88 years and nine months. Sixty years of his life was dedicated to the service of the Lord as an ardent and devoted member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.



Early in life Fr. Rupe was employed and did a short stint in Government Service and worked in the Oil Control Department. It was then that the Lord took control of Fr. Rupe's life - lamp, oil, wick and all. He lived up to the Motto, 'Ardere et Lucere' To burn and to shine. Fr. Rupe not only did burn and shine, but he dazzled as an exemplary and holy Priest. It is ironical that the more Fr. Rupe preferred to be backstage, the more he came to the limelight.

Fr. Rupe served the Oblate Congregation in many capacities - as Provincial Treasurer, Superior, Formator and Chaplain. He obtained his Doctorate in Canon Law (DCL) at the Gregorian University.

He was much sought after and consulted by many, particularly by the hierarchy. Yet he was simple and unassuming. Surely and steadily, he grew in wisdom and age, and he grew old gracefully. The much infrequent physical ailments did not cause him anxiety. I had known Fr. Rupe for almost ten years. He was my constant guide, counsellor and confessor.

Fr. Rupe never categorized people as sinners, nor did he condemn them. To him, a penitent sinner was a potential Saint. At the time of his passing away, he was the Confessor and Chaplain to the Corpus Christi Carmel at Mattakkuliya. A much saddened Carmelite Nun commented: 'Now, we have a Saint in heaven'. I fully endorse that.

The Oblate Province in Sri Lanka has lost a Colossus. His demise creates a void that cannot be filled. We know that Fr. Rupe has given a good account of his stewardship to his Master. Farewell! Dear Fr. Rupe, in the sweet by and by, we shall meet on that Beautiful Shore.

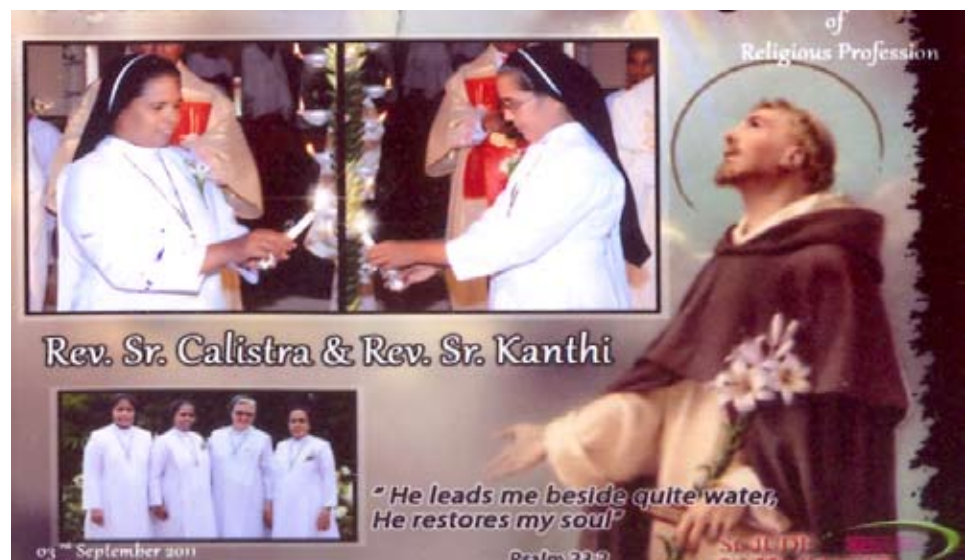
(Russel Fernando)

## The Silver Jubilee of Rev. Sisters Kanthi and Calistra

The Silver Jubilee celebrations of two Dominican Sisters, Rev. Sr. Kanthi, Principal of St. Anne's Balika School, Wattala and Rev. Sr. Calistra of Loyala College in Negombo, were held in 2011.

As a thanksgiving an Eucharistic celebration was held at St. John the Baptist Church in Nagoda, Kandana officiated by the Archbishop Emeritus Oswald Gomis. There were many priests, religious brothers and sisters as well as well wishers who graced the occasion.

Rev. Sr. Kanthi began her carrier as a teacher in Anuradhapura Alagollawa Maha Vidyalaya and Ragama Basilika Vidyalaya. She was then appointed Principal of



St. Anne's Balika Vidyalaya, Wattala. For the last eight years as Principal at Wattala she has been rendering a tireless service to improve the education of children and their well-being.

Sr. Calistra began her carrier as a teacher in Christ the King College, Pannipitiya and then at De Mazanod College, Kandana. Presently she is attached to Loyola College in

Negombo. Sr. Calistra also helps in the pastoral activity of the Nagoda Parish.

We appreciate the great service done by these two sisters. May God bless their good work!

### Thoughts of Blessed Mother Teresa. ..

"Man is unreasonable  
illogical and egocentric  
Never mind, love him.

If you do good, they,  
will say you did.  
it for egoistical reasons  
Never mind, do good.

If you realize your ideals you will  
find false friends and true enemies  
Never mind, realise them.

The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow  
Never mind, do good.

Honesty and sincerity make you vulnerable  
Never mind, be frank and honest.

What you have built up for years  
may be destroyed in a moment  
Never mind, forge ahead.

Give the world the best  
of you and they will despise you  
Never mind, give the best of you."

You see, in the final analysis, it is  
between you and God.

It was never between you and them anyway.

Sent by. Y. Amarasekera



## Humble thoughts of you, my dear father...

Every person may have the first memory of their parents which comes from his or her childhood and so do I. Now my mind flies to 1990, the day my father came back home from a visit to the UK. Since my mother said that Thaththi will be coming home, I was drawing a plane seated in the hall. Then at once I felt someone come behind and embrace me with loads of kisses. To see it was my beloved father and he was with a joyful face. For some reason this is the first moment which seems to strike my mind deeply when remembering my father.

"Thaththi." - This word is a very strong word for me. This personality played many roles throughout my life.

Though you are my biological father, you were my teacher, counselor, advisor, and friend and there were times I saw you like a hero Thaththi. Whenever I got discouraged or disappointed, you pushed me forward and when I met with difficulties, you always said, "Sigithi you should try hard and face the challenges in life if you want to achieve a good life." Like the many people in your work place I

also had the notion that you were a hard-hearted personality. But that was during my childhood. However, as I grow up I could see the warmth of your heart and the compassion and love combined with so many human qualities. At a glance you looked like hard as rock but internally you were a very humble personality.

I still can remember how much you and my mother worked hard and sacrificed your freedom for our happiness. Of course, you thought of other children too. Isn't that the simple reason why you catered to the education industry more than half of your lifetime? Giving knowledge to children was the core intention in your heart, which you could accomplish by the *Denuma Educational Institute* and also the *OKI International School* that you established. The children from financially disabled families, who were eager to learn and progress, became the focus of your eye. This was the only reason why you formed a welfare association called *Denuma Lamasarana*, in order to give a generous hand to those deserving children.

Wherever I go and



whomever I meet, I find they are only happy to talk positively about you, my father. There are people still mourning your sudden death. I can see this whether I go to the church, cemetery, temple or even your school.

Thaththi why I feel very sad and worried is that I didn't get a chance to treat you or even care for you as other parents who when they grow old need the assistance of their children. Sometimes a question arises in my mind whether I took life for granted and missed my duties to help you in your work. Nevertheless I pacify myself thinking that I can compensate if I work towards your mission. Although you had to stop by the 55th milestone of your life, you have earned enough especially a vast human base, so differ-

ent in many ways.

I still feel like you are alive Thaththi and it is not easy for me to come out of the shock that I felt due to your sudden death. Thaththi.... I'm still trying to make up my mind that you are away, especially when I see the amount of work you have done and the responsibilities you have left me. Again I can remember what you used to tell us whenever we ask you to reduce the workload that you were doing. You said, "Baba I am making the cake for you all and then after me you can nicely cut the cake and eat it."

Yes Thaththi .... Thank you very much for every drop of sweat you shed for us in order to give us the comforts in life and Thaththi ask God to give us the strength and guidance we need to follow the correct path in accomplishing your vision. There is no doubt and I am very sure about it that you are safe in God's hands, but still I would say,

Thaththi.....May you rest in peace!

Your Sigithi

(Denum Saparamadu)

## New Provincial Team for Salvatorian Sisters



Sr. Dulcie Fernando - Provincial Superior  
Sr. Nalini Fernando - Vicarress  
Sr. Grace Fernando - Councillor  
Sr. Shiroma Kurumbalapitiya, Councillor  
Sr. Patricia Sandana Saverey - Councillor

We wish them God's abundant blessings.  
**Salvatorian Sisters**

### What Lord Buddha would say

"If the Buddha were to judge the life and work of the Catholic nun Mother Teresa, he would tell us that her heart was on of loving-kindness, which turned into compassionate action, *Karuna*. Mother Teresa offered a free joy, the *Muditha*, and lived with equanimity, in *Upekkha*. She



was a manifestation of divinity that took on human form, because these four attributes are qualities of divinity".

- A.T. Ariyaratne



# For with God nothing is impossible -Lk.1:37

*Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Mt.19:26*

Sam Schmid, an Arizona college student believed to be brain dead and poised to be an organ donor, miraculously recovered just hours before doctors were considering taking him off life support.

Schmid, a junior and business major at the University of Arizona, hailing from a family of devout Catholics, was critically wounded in an October 19 five-car accident in Tucson.

The 21-year-old's brain injuries were so severe that the local hospital could not treat him. He was airlifted to the Barrow Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Phoenix, where specialists performed surgery for a life-threatening aneurysm.

As hospital officials began palliative care and broached the subject of organ donation with his family, Schmid began to respond, holding up two fingers on command. Today he is walking with the aid of a walker, and his speech, although slow, has improved.

Doctors say he will likely have a complete recovery. He even hopes to get a day pass from the hospital to celebrate the holidays with his large extended family.

"Nobody could ever give me a better Christmas present than this, ever, ever, ever," said his mother, Susan Regan, who is Vice-President of the Insurance Company Lovitt-Touche.

"I tell everyone,

if they want to call it a modern-day miracle, this is a miracle," said Regan, 59, and a Catholic. "I have friends who are atheists who have called me and said, 'I am going back to church.'"

Schmid's doctor, renowned neurosurgeon Dr. Robert Spetzler, agreed that his recovery was miraculous.

"I am dumbfounded with his incredible recovery in such a short time," said Spetzler. "His recovery was really remarkable considering the extent of his lethal injuries."

Hospital officials are crediting Spetzler with having a "hunch" that despite an initially dire prognosis, the young man would make it. But he said it was "reasonable" for others to consider withdrawing the patient from life support.

## \* A 'hunch'

"It looked like all the odds were stacked against him," said Spetzler, who has performed more than 6,000 such surgeries and trained the doctor who operated on Congressman Gabrielle Giffords after she was shot at the beginning of this year.

During surgery, Spetzler clipped the balloonlike aneurysm in the blood vessel -- "as if I were patching a tire," a procedure that eventually worked.

For days Schmid didn't seem to be responding, but what puzzled his doctor was that he did not



**A Physio Therapist (right) helps Sam Schmid walk back to his hospital room after a Press Conference at Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, on December 23, 2011.**

see fatal injuries on the MRI scan. So he decided to keep Schmid on life support longer.

"There was plenty wrong -- he had a hemorrhage, an aneurysm and a stroke from the part of the aneurysm," Spetzler said. "But he didn't have a blood clot in the most vital part of his brain, which we know he can't recover from. And he didn't have a massive stroke that would predict no chance of a useful existence."

So while the family was given a realistic picture of Schmid's poor chances for survival, Spetzler ordered one more MRI to see if the critical

areas of the brain had turned dark, indicating brain death.

"If not, we would hang on and keep him on support," he said. "But I didn't want to give the family false hope."

Schmid's mother said no one "specifically" asked if her son would be a donor, but they "subtly talk to you about quality of life."

"At some point, I knew we had to make some sort of decision, and I kept praying," said Regan.

The MRI came back with encouraging news during the day and by evening Schmid "in-

explicitly" followed the doctors' commands, holding up two fingers.

"It was like fireworks all going off at the same time," said Spetzler.

Today, Schmid his speech clear and sounding upbeat told ABCNews.com, "I feel fine. I'm in a wheelchair, but I am getting lots of help."

## \* No Memory of the Accident

Schmid said he remembers nothing of the accident nor coming around after being in an induced coma. "It wasn't until I woke up in rehab," he said. "But they told me about afterwards."

Schmid was returning from coaching basketball at his former Catholic school when a van swerved into his lane. The Jeep in which he was riding went airborne, hit a light pole and landed on its side.

Schmid's left hand and both of his femurs broke and required surgery. But the worst were the traumatic head injuries, which were complex and nearly always fatal.

All those involved say the support that Schmid got from family and friends and especially the care at Barrow may have made the difference. His brother John, a 24-year-old IT specialist, took a leave of absence from his job in Chicago to be at his brother's bedside.

"It seems like we were being led down a path to plan for the worst and that things were not

going to work out," said John Schmid. "The miracle, to put it bluntly, was that in a matter of seven days, we went from organ donation to rehab. What a roller coaster it was."

He said his brother's speech is slow, but he understands what others are saying. Sam Schmid's athleticism as a basketball coach and snowboard instructor probably helped, he said.

## \* Miraculous

"Honestly, I am at a loss for words," said John Schmid. "I am just so proud of Sam. He's got a strong constitution and he's very determined. But it's been quite an eye-opener for me a real learning curve. You can't take anything for granted."

## \* Sam Schmid's surgeon agrees.

"In a way, his recovery was truly miraculous," he said. "It's a great Christmas story."

Ever the scientist, Spetzler wasn't willing to speculate what a comatose patient hears. But he admits, "There are so many things we don't understand about the brain and what happens at the time someone is near death."

"The whole family was at his side during the day and at night hovering over him, then to see there was a chance after being ready to let go," he said. "But I am very much a big believer that positive thoughts and positive energy in a room can only help."

(Yahoo News)

## 'Enjoying the journey' by Anusha Atukorala.

### BOOK REVIEW by Therese Motha

Anusha Atukorala has an uncanny knack of seeing God's hand in the world around her. As she says in her introduction, God speaks to her in a myriad ways, nudging her through mundane events to see the wonder of creation. How many of us see things the way she does?

Do we stop to marvel at birdsong, or do we just take it for granted? Anusha stops to drool over clouds, and sees in them, the hand of the Maker.

Do we listen to the silence?

Reading her book makes one realize "Aren't we falling short of what God wants us to be?" "The author really makes one think.

Does my neighbour see me as one radiating the love of God?

Do we thank God for the blessings showered on us, which we take so much for granted?

To quote from the book, "The next time you won-

der if a little action is worth it, please be assured it is. A smile maybe just a smile, but it may make someone's day. A kind word may be just one word, but it might cheer up a lonely heart that was yearning for it. Yes a little something is always better than a little nothing. Let me not forget that if I am faithful in the little things, I can look forward to being trusted with larger responsibilities for His Kingdom."

I like the way she compares entering a warm shower to entering into God's loving presence. And again, when she says that standing at her kitchen window, she felt that it was almost like a sneak peak of heaven. In the humdrum activities of daily life, she sees God everywhere.

There is a lesson in this for all of us readers. Her words inspire us to place more trust upon a loving God. The book is an embodiment of this dictum I came across recently. "Reach for the moon. If you miss it, you'll still land among the stars."

Available at 'Back to the Bible' Bookshop, 120A, Dharmapala Mawatha, Col.07

## A Prayer for 2012

Lord, make me prudent at in planning

Courageous in taking risks.

Make me patient in suffering,

unassuming in prosperity.

Keep me Lord, attentive at prayer,

Temperate in food and drink,

Diligent in my work,

Firm in my good intentions

Thank you Father

attributed to Pope Clement XI



# IS GOD ENOUGH?

I have spent over 15 years battling with an addiction to sweets and desserts. I would reach out to overindulge when I felt rejected, depressed, angry or bored. I had tried to quit often and could even consider myself a professional quitter because I practiced quitting a few times. I had even abstained from eating my comfort foods for up to a period of 6 months.

Although I could consider myself a failure, I decided to concentrate instead on my successes. I had many successful weeks at quitting. I began to understand what my body went through each time I quit. The first few weeks would be tough, especially day five. As my body withdrew from the comfort food my emotions would actively look for a replacement of the fix that I was accustomed to. With nothing put in as a substitute I would find myself getting irritable. All of my buried issues would surface as well. Imagine me as a grumpy bear. I didn't even like hanging out with myself. On day nine my mood would begin to climb upwards, and I could see God put order in my life. My house would look more organized and I had more energy to accomplish my tasks. Sugar made me feel lazy.

Usually after 30 days I would experience great benefits in withdrawing from my addiction. During my Prayer time I seemed to be open to the mind of God and He would increase my gift of writing. The benefits really do outweigh the addiction but somehow something unexpected would come my way and

I would find myself back in the rut or reaching for sweets and desserts because they provided immediate comfort.

Luckily, God is patient. I quite often gave up on myself, but God never gave up on me. Over the last few years, instead of condemning myself I started to celebrate the days when I didn't eat sweets. Later I would find that even if I reached out for sweets, I would eat a lot less of it.

This time I decided to venture on a mission of abstaining from desserts and sweets for 1,000 days. I wanted to remove my biggest obstacle from God's work being done in my life. For the first few weeks I have to admit that I did substitute desserts with hot chocolate. During my Morning Prayer I started asking myself whether God was enough. I know intellectually that the answer was yes, but the way I live my life does not necessarily reflect that thought. I do make God part of my daily living but it's amazing how many things I allow to block in that relationship. If I start the morning with anything but my prayers, the day becomes so busy that I don't have time for prayers later. I decided I would reflect on the thought: Is God enough?

This is day 45, and I am committed to accomplishing my 1,000 day journey. This past Saturday I was at a Christian conference. One of the speakers was given a vision by Jesus. In the vision, Jesus had placed a necklace around each of the attendee's necks; then Jesus

left the room. While Jesus left the room each looked in a mirror and decided to remove the necklace that Jesus gave and replaced it with a necklace that they thought was better looking. On entering the room Jesus looked at each person and asked why they replaced the necklace. He asked all "Why am I not enough? Why do you keep replacing me with worldly things?" Of course that message spoke to my heart, especially since God had brought the thought of Him being enough to my mind the week prior.

I usually attend a conference at least once a year. This time God reminded us of the great love that He has for each one of us, as we worshipped Him in song, praise, prayer, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. God removed our worldly thoughts and replaced them with a heart of love. He drew me closer to Himself. I felt loved and safe.

God is enough. He is more than enough. Jesus loved us to death. The Father showed his great love for us by sacrificing His son; He watched His beloved Son suffer in agony so that we could be cleansed from our sins in order to dwell with the Father. The Father gives us His Holy Spirit to live in each one of us so that we can walk in His ways, learn to be holy and to be united to God. He is love. He is patience. He is mercy.

One of the speakers at the conference talked about the Prodigal Son and the elder brother. He said that if the elder



**Jesus asked:  
"Why do you  
keep replacing  
Me with  
worldly things?"**

brother knew the heart of the Father, he would have he pled his Father, find his brother. God wants His prodigal children to come home. He wants all of His children to be at home with Him and living in a daily love relationship with Him. I am going to live the theme "God is enough."

When things get tough and the unexpected happens. I am going to reach out for comfort again. But this time it will be in the arms of my God as I kneel down during my Morning Prayer.

*By: Barbara Mc Conville  
(Canadian Messenger)*

## Jesus Loves Us

I think Jesus is very happy with us because we prepared well to welcome Him on His birthday.  
On four Saturdays  
we met in Agnes Mawe's house.  
She is the mother of our unit.  
In the first week we lit one candle;  
in the second week two;  
third week we lit three candles  
and in the fourth week,  
four candles were lit.  
We prayed, discussed and sang hymns.  
We came to know Jesus better.  
I want to love Him more.  
Jesus bless us throughout the New Year.



**Trevor Jeremy Pate  
Grade 6  
St. Joseph's College,  
Grandpass**

**Parish:  
Our Lady of Lanka,  
Tewatte.**



## A Journey to Supuwath Arana

Fifty-two hours of unending journey to a peace zone  
Every minute of bonding with the unknown  
We never knew it was possible to reach such heights  
Hand in hand, our hearts beating as one  
All we asked from Him above was everlasting  
peace and unity  
Surrounded by different mother tongues  
Like lone wanderers in the desert searching for water  
We were overwhelmed with the change it caused us  
From students to leaders,  
From girls to women of tomorrow  
Were transformed  
We will forever tread on the path you showed us  
How could we leave anything but memories?  
For everything else from fun to spiritual nourishment  
is stored in a place  
In hearts where it will always stay

**Women's Youth Camp – 2011  
at Supuwath Arana, Seeduwa  
(10 -12 December 2011)**

**St. Lawrence's Convent, Colombo 6**





What it says ..... in  
the Readings

We saw his star as it rose and have  
come to do the Lord homage.  
(Mt. 2:2)

LITURGICAL - CALENDAR YEAR B	
8th Jan. - 15th Jan. 2012	
<b>Sun:</b>	<b>THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD</b> Is 60: 1-6, Eph. 3: 2-3a,5-6, Mt. 2: 1-12
<b>Mon:</b>	Feast of Baptism of the Lord Is. 55: 1-11 or 1 Jn.5: 1-9, Mk.1: 7-11
<b>Tue:</b>	1 Sam 1: 9-20, Mk. 1: 21-28
<b>Wed:</b>	1 Sam. 3:1-10, 19-20, Mk. 1: 29-39
<b>Thu:</b>	1 Sam. 4: 1-11, Mk. 1: 40-45
<b>Fri:</b>	1 Sam. 8: 4-7,10-22, Mk. 2: 1-12
<b>Sat:</b>	1 Sam. 9: 1-4, 17-19,10: 1, Mk. 2: 13-17
<b>Sun:</b>	<b>SECOND SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME</b> 1 Sam. 3: 3-10,19, 1 Cor. 6: 13-15,17-20, Jn. 1: 35-42

Prayer of the Faithful

Response: Guide us to thy perfect light.

For all Christians, that they may follow Christ unwaveringly, listening to his voice, and responding to his gentle call. We pray to the Lord.

**Response: Guide us to thy perfect light.**

For all the human family, that Christ may be the star that will guide us to the Father’s house, our eternal home where all our longings will be fulfilled. We pray to the Lord.

**Response: Guide us to thy perfect light.**

For those who are still searching that God will open their eyes to see, their minds to understand, and their hearts to love. We pray to the Lord.

**Response: Guide us to thy perfect light.**

God has revealed his glory and his love to us, may we meet Him face to face when our pilgrimage is ended. We pray to the Lord.

**Response: Guide us to thy perfect light.**

### The Experience.....

*Contd. from Pg. 9*

possess it or control it. That is part of the suffering of beauty. It "wrests us from the contentment of everyday life" because the experience of beauty does not belong to us. It is a promise and a reminder that we are made for an eternally beautiful world.

The story of the woman mentioned at the be-gining of this article, has the capacity to perceive beauty despite the limitations of her body, her hospital bed, and her view. The tiny beauties of her life are magnified and made sharper and brigher because he was able to focus on them as gifts. She was certain that her life had value and that the small joys she found were consolations from God, signs of God's companionship.

Another, more dramatic situation: Immaculee Ilibagiza, a young Tutsi in Rwanda, whose family has been brutally murdered, hides in the narrow bathroom of a Hutu's home with six other women. She remains there for three months. She has little food and no privacy. She must be silent all day, in case the other members of her protector's household discover her presence. The Hutu militia is searching for her. Sometimes they enter this house, since it was the last place that she was seen, and search it, calling out the evil they will do to her if they find her. Even her protector begins to doubt whether he should continue hiding them. He has been swayed by the constant propaganda he hears on the radios; he wonders if these Tutsis deserve a hiding place. It is a foul situation. But she finds beauty in it: not in her circumstances, but in the beauty that she is made for. She discovers that she is God's cherished daughter, made to

The Feast of Epiphany

First Reading. Is. 60: 1-6.
 The prophet here gives a ray of hope to the Israelites who live in exile. It is about that freedom which the Lord will bestow on them. They are promised a glorious Jerusalem. Other nations will come to them with wealth.

Second Reading. Eph. 3: 2-3a, 5-6.
 St. Paul tells the Gentiles of his own conversion and gives them the hope of a share in the kingdom of God which awaits them. He thereby wants to tell them that they are equal with the Jews in Christ.

Gospel. Mt. 2: 1-12.
 The wise men followed the star to Jerusalem and went to King Herod. The king inquired as to where the Child was born and wanted them to return and give him the news. He secretly wanted to kill the Child. The wise men having worshiped the Lord went along another way as directed in the dream.

Reflection.
 Today we celebrate the feast of Epiphany, the feast of the three kings. It is so called because the Gospel of the day tells us that three wise men or Megai came from the East to Jerusalem saying: "Where is He that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to adore Him." This feast is of significance. The Saviour is not restricted to the Jews alone but to the Gentiles as well. The Gentiles converts are in par with the Jews in the mystical body of Christ, the Church. Earlier the understanding was that salvation was only for the Chosen Race, the Jews. But now it is for all mankind. This is signified in the feast of Epiphany. When

the Lord revealed himself to the Gentiles.
 There are some who mix up and at times mess up the love of God and the love of the neighbour. Little knowing that thereby they place neighbour before God. At times prominence is given to love of neighbour over the worship of God. This is wrong. But this does not mean that we could neglect our neighbour. Some even refer to the feast of Epiphany and try to assert that there were four kings who left home to worship the Babe and one of them had stopped by the way side to show care and concern to a poor neighbour. This of course is a dream story.
 As a matter of fact when the Lord wants us; we simply have to walk to meet him leaving aside everything: Self, possessions, friends and neighbour. This happens in our vocations.
 The Lord calls some when they are young and others late. But some of us think that late vocations are best and tend to postpone the call when young. The Lord treats them as vocations ignored. They will not have the vocation any more when they are old. For God wants us from the moment and point of call. When Jesus called the Apostles they had to leave everything behind and follow him immediately. That's what he said to the young man who wanted to follow Him. He said, "Let the dead bury the dead. You go....., anyone who starts to plough and then looks back....." Therefore when we have to choose between God and man we have to choose God and only then in His name we have to choose man.
 Therefore we must not get carried away by different stories relating to the Epiphany specially those made up by men.

What the Lord wants to show is that salvation is not limited to a nation or a group but is open to all. It is open to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. Therefore, let us make every effort whether Jew or Gentile to sustain it in our lives.

**Aid Story.**

On the feast of Christ the King in 1939 Pope Pius XI consecrated in St. Peter's twelve new Bishops and sent them forth like the twelve Apostles to teach all the nations. They came from Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Mexico; there was also a Chinese, a converted Hindu and two Negroes, one from Uganda and one from Madagascar.It was the second month of the second Great War. Many nations of the world were fighting each other because they had thought too much about nations and races, and not enough about being one family.

The Holy Father spoke to the new Bishops, white, brown, yellow and black. "Christ took His title of King in the darkest days, when He stood a prisoner before Pilate. Happy are those nations which accept the reign of Christ and make their laws according to the Gospel, and live in justice and freedom. The present event will pass. The Catholic Church is not afraid of time. Mankind is divided by greed and hatred and jealousy, but the Church of God is for all peoples without distinction of colour or race. Go out and conquer the world not with armament but with the power of truth and love."

**Aid Story 2**

The Nativity play in one of the world Parliaments was not done for the last two years.

**Reason 1.**They could not find three Wise Men in there.

**2.** Couldn't find or bring in a Virgin in there.

**3.** Too many Asses, Rams and Bulls in there.

**Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos.**

be with him outside of the circumstances of time and place, and that she can, with him, forgive her family's murderers. She finds the beauty of her soul at peace with God.

These stories remind us that beauty is not found in circumstances or sensations, be they pleasant or squalid. It is found by going past the categories of pleasure and pain to discover who we are as human persons, and who we are made for. This, says Plato in the Symposium, is to step from sensation (beautiful bodies) to action (beautiful pursuits and practices) to principles (learning) until the person can reach "Beauty itself."

*To mount for that beauty's sake ever upwards, as by a flight of steps ... from all beautiful bodies ... to beautiful pursuits and practices, and from practices to beautiful learnings, so that from learnings he may come at last to that perfect learning ..... of that beauty itself, and may know at last that which is the perfection of beauty. There in life, and there alone, my dear Socrates ... is life worth living for man, while he contemplates Beauty itself.*

Practically speaking, how do we mount the steps toward beauty itself? First, says Plato, we let go of our attempt to force our experience of beauty through "beautiful bodies," through the impressions and phenomena that fill our lives. This does not mean that these impressions no longer touch us. It means that they touch us, but we are able to discover the fullness of what they are and what they mean in our lives. We judge them by their actions (pursuits and practices) and say this impression is good, truthful, according to what is desirable for me and for the person (or thing) it comes from. This leads us to "that perfect learning" of beauty: how it is a glow of the truth and goodness of a person or thing. For example, we see a painting. We are drawn to the colours, the shapes, to the contrast. The impression strikes us. Then we look at what is depicted in the painting and we ask: Is this respectful of the subject? Is this respectful of me? Here we come to see the action of the painter. And then, finally, we can come to the principle, "beautiful learning." We can judge: This is a truly beautiful painting. Or perhaps we have to say this is a beautifully arranged painting with a less than beautiful subject matter.

This is the education of our sense of beauty. Ideally, it should begin with children, because it is a slow process. But it is needed to discover the full sense of our humanity. As Plato says, only when we know how to find true beauty will "life [be] worth living."When we have begun to recognize beauty more spontaneously, it will begin to surprise us, to jump out at us and draw us immediately in to truth and goodness. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn said, when receiving the Nobel Prize for literature:

*So perhaps that ancient trinity of Truth, Goodness and Beauty is not simply an empty, faded formula as we thought in the days of our self-confident, materialistic youth. If the tops of these three trees converge, as the scholars maintained, but the too blatant, too direct stems of Truth and Goodness are crushed, cut down, not allowed through, then perhaps the fantastic, unpredictable, unexpected stems of Beauty will push through and soar to that very same place, and in so doing will fulfill the work of all three.*

The experience of beauty sometimes surprises. Sometimes it invades. But it always brings us a new clarity of vision so that we can see our lives in their true perspective.

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