

"Gleaned from
the classics"

By Johannus

*Hoc tempore
obsequium amicos,
veritas odium parit*
(From Terence)

These days flattery
wins friends but
truth yields hatred

Messenger

"REGISTERED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POSTS OF SRI LANKA UNDER NO. QD / 11 / NEWS / 2012"



**ST. MARK,
EVANGELIST**

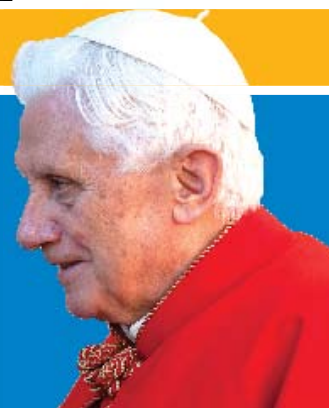
Feast:

25th April 2012

Sunday 22nd April 2012 Vol 143 No 16 16 Pages Rs: 20.00 Registered as a newspaper

*** On his birthday**

Pope reflects on 'final stage of life's journey'



"I am in the final stage of my life's journey and I do not know what awaits me," said the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, as he celebrated his 85th birthday on April 16 and affirmed that his faith in God gives him confidence for whatever lies in store.

As he celebrated Mass on his 85th birthday,

Pope Benedict XVI said, that three feasts on the liturgical calendar for that day have influenced his life: The feast of St. Bernadette, the feast of St. Benedict Joseph Labre, and Easter Sunday, which fell on April 17 in the year that he was born.

In 1927, when Joseph Ratzinger was born, April 16 was Holy Saturday. His mother

brought the newborn to the Easter Vigil. "On the day I was born, thanks to my parents, I was also reborn with the water of the Spirit," the Holy Father remarked.

Pope Benedict celebrated Mass in the Pauline Chapel of the apostolic palace on his birthday, with members of the College of Cardinals and visiting bishops from

his native Bavaria as concelebrants. In his homily he remarked, April 16, his birthday, was the feast of St. Bernadette Soubirous, to whom the Virgin Mary revealed the miraculous waters of Lourdes, the Pope said. "This little saint has always been a sign for me, showing me where the living water we need comes from, the water

which purifies and gives life," he said.

"St. Benedict Joseph Labre, was also on the liturgical calendar that day," the Pope continued. "Biological life is in itself a gift," he said, "yet it begs an important question. It becomes a true gift only if, together with that life, we are given a promise stronger than any misfortune that may

threaten us, if life is immersed in a power which guarantees that it is a good thing to be a man, and that the person is a benefit whatever the future may bring. In this way rebirth is associated with birth, the certainty that it is good to exist because the promise is greater than the threat."

(CNS)

World Day of Prayer for Vocations Sunday, 29th April 2012

The World Day of Prayer for Vocations will be celebrated in the Archdiocese of Colombo in all the parishes on 29th April, 2012 (Fourth Sunday in Easter - Good Shepherd Sunday), in collaboration with the Catholic National Commission for Seminaries, Clergy and Religious.

All Parish Priests are kindly requested to organize this Day of Prayer for Vocations in an effective manner, so that many young people will respond generously to God's call to serve him, as

Priests and Religious. Liturgy notes, Sunday School Lessons and other printed materials will be sent to all the parishes. You could invite groups like the Holy Childhood Society, YCS, Youth Groups, Junior Legion of Mary or Altar Servers' Association to help you to organize this day.

The Archdiocesan main celebration will be held at St. Lucia's Cathedral, Kotahena, with the participation of Minor Seminarians, some school children, parents and Vocation Directors. His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the

Archbishop of Colombo will preside at the Holy Eucharist which will be celebrated at 9.15 a.m.

Rev. Fr. J.D. Anthony Jayakody
Archdiocesan Director for
Promotion of Vocations

Archdiocesan Priestly Ordinations

**21st April 2012
at St. Lucia's
Cathedral, Kotahena. at
9.00 am, officiated by the
Archbishop of Colombo,
His Eminence Malcolm
Cardinal Ranjith.**

Small Christian Community Sunday



His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley Swampillai, as Bishop in-Charge of AsIPA, issuing message for Small Christian Community - (SCC) Sunday, which falls this Sunday (22), states that SCC are agents of evangelisation "enabling the community to take responsibility for sharing the mission of Christian hope with their neighbours..."

Full text on PG 9 >>>



'We are called and sent' Sri Lankan Missionaries

We have 270 Sri Lankan Missionaries working in 47 countries in the world. There was a time Sri Lanka was receiving missionaries from different countries. They

came here, leaving everything behind, and learnt our languages, and got accustomed to our cultures and customs. They were models for us. Our parents and grandparents admired

them for their missionary zeal. The Church in Sri Lanka benefited from their selfless service. These missionaries wanted to die in Sri Lanka and be buried here.

PG 2 >>>

"On a hill far away..."



Amidst a massive gathering of the faithful, numbering in their thousands, St. Bruno's Church, Tambakanda staged its passion play to commemorate the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. The play was conducted under the direction of Rev. Fr. Stanley Peiris, Parish Priest, Tambakanda. (Pic: Cecil Danicius)



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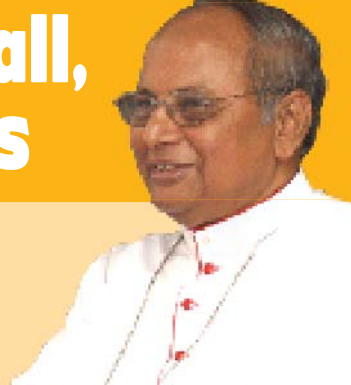
**'LOOK AT MY HANDS
AND FEET'**

Year of the Word of God

Religious leaders' call, to stop abductions



His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and Ven. Ittapane Dhammalankara Anunayake Thero, the Secretary General of the Congress of Religion, have jointly issued a statement calling for an end to the abductions and insecurity in the minds of the citizens of the country. The full texts follows:



It is not a secret that since the 1970's Governments, political parties, terror groups that took to arms, etc., dealt with persons who were of a different thinking and view point by abducting and making them disappear. And at times, the bodies of such persons were openly exhibited in public places too. In the 80's and 90's

this took a more serious turn. Even persons of differing political orientations or leaders of the underworld were made to disappear or eliminated in the process.

To these crimes could also be added those victims of the Sinhala or Tamil terrorist groups. It has to be accepted that there have been in general no proper

inquiries conducted into some of these political assassinations. Among those that were eliminated in this manner one could count different Tamil and Sinhala politicians. No proper investigation had been conducted into these crimes and those responsible adequately brought to justice. Of late too we have been

learning of abductions and disappearances of persons of the underworld who are no doubt a problem to the custodians of the law. Yet, no one should be allowed to take the law into their own hands. At times it is known that the threat of abduction seems to be directed also at people of differing political views.

PG 2 >>>

Leading artistes in Tambakanda Passion Play

For the first time a Passion Play was staged by a group of film and tele drama artistes on the lines of the Oberammergau Passion Play of Germany. The play was conducted at St. Bruno's Church grounds, in the Kurunegala Diocese.

Around 25 film and tele drama actors participated in the passion play including leading actors like Sanath Gunatillake who played the role of Pilate and Jeevan Kumaratunga who played the role of Jesus Christ.

The Passion Play was the concept of Rev. Fr. Stanley Peiris, Parish Priest, St. Bruno's Church, Tambakanda. The play



Bishop of Kurunegala lights the traditional oil lamp

was produced by Prem Fernando and directed by Peter Almeida. Picture shows

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera, the play. *Cecil Danicius* lighting the traditional oil

Lenten Family Day at Peralanda Parish



Lenten family day was held at Peralanda, St. Joseph's Church, under the guidance of the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Liyanage Patrick Perera OMI.

Many families from the parish gathered in fellowship. The main preacher for the day was Rev. Fr. Antony Jayantha.

C.R. Dickson Anthony

Kids say 'Happy New Year'



Sinhala New Year was celebrated at the Pre school of Holy Family Convent, Bopitiya. This was organised by Rev. Sr. Kamala. Picture shows a little winner receiving a prize.

S.K.J. Kurera

Remand Prison celebrates Women's Day



Women's day was celebrated at the Raja Veediya female ward of the Remand Prison, Kandy with more than 90 prisoners attending the event. The theme of the day was 'Protect the Female Child.' The chief guest at the celebration was Dr. Padma Alahakoon, Chief Doctor of the Pallekelle Indigenous Hospital. The event was organised by Superintendent of the Bogambara Prison, Tissa Jayasinghe, Chief Jailor, Mahanama and Nandani Rajanayake of the female ward.

A number of cultural items and handicrafts made by female prisoners was displayed at an exhibition held inside the prison. The items were sold to raise funds for the Prison Welfare Union.

Ven. Aluthgama Dhammananda Thero and Rev. Fr. Nandana Manatunga introduced a special event on the theme of "Respect the mother."

Family members of the remand female prisoners and sentenced prisoner were present at the event. A medical clinic was held, organised by the Kandy General Hospital.

Human Rights Office - Kandy

Religious leaders....

Contd. from Pg. 1

Such abductions and disappearances are caused also because of competition and hatred among rival underworld gangs.

Making a person disappear simply because he holds a different political view or is a gangster cannot be condoned in a democracy. Every such enforced disappearance of a person is an abuse of human dignity. No religious system would accept it. If a person has gone against the law of the land, he/she must be dealt with through the police or courts and any alternative course of action in such cases is unjust. Yet, today there seems to be people who think that such an alternative course of action is justifiable. This is a very serious situation.

These abductions and disappearances are not at all in keeping with our country's religious ethos. The environment of mayhem that began in the 1970's has aggravated so much to date, that some tend to think that such a practice is necessary in order to overcome it. Yet, it is clear that law and order in human society have to be maintained through principles of justice and fair play only. It is not in keeping with human dignity to act contrary to the above. We cannot accept such thinking at all. Therefore we call upon all those responsible and the general citizenry to ensure that such abductions and disappearances are stopped forthwith.

** Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith
Archbishop of Colombo*

*Most Ven, Ittapane Dhammalankara Anunayake Thero
Secretary General of the Congress of Religions*

Easter Service at Kurukulawa Parish

Rev. Fr. Shantha Sagara Hettiarachchi, celebrated Mass on Easter Sunday at St. Lazarus' Church, Kurukulawa.

Addressing the faithful Fr. Sagara said that the Resurrection of Jesus has a unique meaning to each Christian. It should reflect in our lives as it is the orbit of our faith.

Special Lenten meditations and Way of the Cross services were also held during Lent at the Church, organised by the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Prasad Ponnampuruma.

Padminie Nanayakkara

We are called....

Contd. from Pg. 1

In the 1960's when they were denied visas to continue their stay in Sri Lanka. The whole Church lamented and these missionaries who loved our country left in tears to other mission lands.

Now, the scene has changed. Sri Lanka is sending Missionaries to other countries. The Church in Sri Lanka has matured and many of our Religious Congregations have sent their members as missionaries to all the continents.

It is something we can be proud of. There are 52 missionaries in Pakistan belonging to 9 congregations.

The Little Sisters of the Poor have sent 29 missionaries to different parts of the world and they have only 21 in Sri Lanka.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (both Provinces together) have sent 34.

The two Provinces of Holy Family Sisters have sent 51 (Colombo 24 and Jaffna 27). The Religious of the Good Shepherd 23.

Sisters of the Holy Angels a Congregation begun in Sri Lanka has sent 22 Sisters to Australia and Kenya, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary 15, Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa) 14, Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel 13.

Our missionaries are in Pakistan, India, Japan, Bangladesh, South Korea, Philippines, Singapore, Jordan, Egypt, Mauritius, Tunisia, Algeria, Liberia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Holy Land, Cambodia, Albania, South Africa, Sudan, Kenya, Cameroon, Congo, Botswana, Uganda, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Rome, Ireland, UK, Italy, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Malta, Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus,

Poland, Lesotho, Namibia, Australia, New Zealand, USA, and Canada.

Another 22 Missionaries of different Congregations have served in an administrative capacity as General Councilors in different International Congregations. Presently we have 5 General Councilors in office Rev. Fr. Clement Waidyasekera OMI., Rev. Fr. Bertram Mack OSB, Rev. Bro. Michael De Wass FMS, Rev. Sr. Kumudini Dassanayake HF, Rev. Sr. Rani Fernando SDS and Rev. Fr. James Dunstan IVD as Director

General of Institute Voluntas Dei.

On God's own Mission to save souls



A three-member evaluation team appointed by the FMM Provincial Superior to visit various convents in the country in order to evaluate whether convents are serving to enhance the spiritual welfare of parishioners went on a fact-finding mission recently.

The team comprised Rev. Sr. Placida, Rev. Sr. Thushari and Rev. Sr. Goretti.

In their recent visit to the Dehiowita Convent, the team had a meeting with parishioners who informed them that various indigenous missions were involved in the ministry of communicating the Gospel among the poor Catholics and converting them.

The parishioners pointed out the need to formulate viable strategies to communicate to Catholics especially the marginalised estate Catholic community.

Text & pic: J. Antony

Waragoda Lenten Spiritual Retreat

"Towards a Renewal of Faith Through the Word of God." Lenten Spiritual Retreat organised by the Waragoda Legion of Mary for the second successful year was held recently at St. Paul's Church Waragoda, Kelaniya. Rev. Fr. Anton Jayananda, Rev. Fr. Indra Ratnasekera, Rev. Fr. Jude Bernard and Rev. Fr. Nuwan Buddika were among the preachers. This event was organised under the guidance of the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Gihan Redly Perera and Asst. Rev. Fr. Priyantha Asantha Fernando.

Clarence Leonard

Integral Education Centre, Ampitiya Award Ceremony 2012

The seventh Award Ceremony of the Integral Education Centre of the National Seminary, Ampitiya, was held on 25th March 2012. Eighty-eight students who successfully completed the general English Course of six months received certificates according to their performances. This year also marked the highest number of students of the Integral Education Centre.

Very Rev. Fr. Elmo Dias, the Rector of the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka graced the occasion as the chief guest. Addressing



the gathering Fr. Elmo Dias reiterated the indispensability of English in the fast moving world of today.

The evening programme was adorned with various items presented by the students, who were well trained by the National Seminary Brothers in the fields of music, dance, recitation, oratorical techniques and stage discipline. The whole programme was presented in English and that made a big difference in the lives of these youngsters.

Lenten Recollection at St. John the Baptist Church, Nagoda - Kandana

A large gathering of parishioners of St. John the Baptist Church, Nagoda, Kandana, witnessed an unique spiritual event organised by Rev. Fr. Ranjan Silva, the parish priest during Lent.

The whole programme was initiated by about fifteen priests on the invitation of Fr. Ranjan. They delivered inspiring sermons on the passion narrative of Jesus in relation to the way of the cross to create a different kind of religious atmosphere among the people. The choir also consisted of priests and nuns in order to bring solemnity and devotion.

The preaching touched on salient features that are a part of human life and that of Jesus like the dilemma of Pilate and Herod to give the verdict of crucifying Christ; everything starts in life with lot of happiness and enthusiasm whether it be a religious or married life; the carrying of the cross is left to each one; on Palm Sunday people rejoiced because of the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem and on Good Friday these very same people crucified Jesus on the Cross. These were some of the topics of the talks.

The service which lasted two and half hours, concluded with a Mass presided over by the Dean of the Wattala Deanery.

Tom de Silva

Pilgrimage to the Birth Place of Blessed Joseph Vaz

The National Joseph Vaz Secretariat's 21st Annual Pilgrimage to Goa, Mangalore, Bangalore, Mysore, Poondy, Vaillankanni and Chennai has been scheduled from 21st August to 1st September 2012. The entire package has been moderately priced, and prospective pilgrims are kindly requested to contact Mr. Roggy Corera at Bishop's House, 871, Peradeniya Road, Kandy. Telephone: 0776272351

*Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernandopulle
Secretary/National
Bl. Joseph Vaz Secretariat*

Maggonna celebrates the Resurrection



Feast of the Resurrection was celebrated at St. Mary's Church, Maggonna recently. The celebrant for the Festive Mass was Rev. Fr. Hemantha Udayakumar Perera. After Holy Mass the statue of the Resurrected Lord was carried in procession.

D. Anselm Fernando

Wattala St. Anthony's OBA - AGM

67th Annual General Meeting of St. Anthony's College, Wattala, OBA, will be held on 28th April 2012 (Saturday) at 4.30 p.m. at the College Hall followed by a fellowship dinner at Amanda Banquet Hall. For further details contact: Mr. John Emmanuel, General Secretary on 011-5743541. (CL)

Vocational Training Centre at Wadduwa

The Aquinas University College branch at Minden Vocational Training Centre, Holy Spirit Church, Wadduwa, will be declared open by His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo and Chancellor of Aquinas, on 22nd April.

The training centre will cater to Post O/L and A/L students in the Kalutara and Moratuwa deanery. The subjects conducted will be English and IT.

The project is funded by Minden Relief in Sri Lanka.



**Church in the
World**

"There must be something beyond science and technology"



Italian astronaut Roberto Vittori.

EWTN News/CNA

The Italian astronaut who spoke to Pope Benedict XVI from space says that being in orbit inspires deep contemplation and raises the mind and heart to God.

"It's the beauty," Roberto Vittori told CNA, "the beauty of the earth seen from space, the beauty of nature, the beauty of the blue planet," which show "there must be something beyond science and technology."

On 21 May 2011, 48-year-old Vittori was one of 12 astronauts on board the International Space Station who participated in the first ever Papal videoconference with outer space.

During the 18-minute conversation the Pope asked the Italian astronaut if "in the midst of your intense work and research" did he ever "stop to reflect like this or perhaps say a prayer to the Creator?" Vittori informed the Pope that "I do pray for me, for our families, for our future."

"A videoconference is something standard onboard the International Space Station," Vittori explained, but he added that "that videoconference nevertheless was special."

"That type of opportunity was perceived as special, not only for the technicality, for the beauty of the scenario, but also for the depth of the messages that were filtering through the radio from the Vatican."

A colonel in the Italian Air Force, Vittori was selected to be an astronaut in 1998 by the Italian Space Agency. He first journeyed into space in 2002 as part of a mission to the International Space Station. He has since twice returned, in 2005 and 2011. Last week on 23 Feb. he took part in a conference entitled "Space and God" which was co-organized by the Diocese of Rome.

He said the experience of being an astronaut "is so unique" that "when you're back and you try to think about what happened, it almost seems that it never happened. It seems surreal." He said space travel is an experience that "really captures your eyes and your heart."

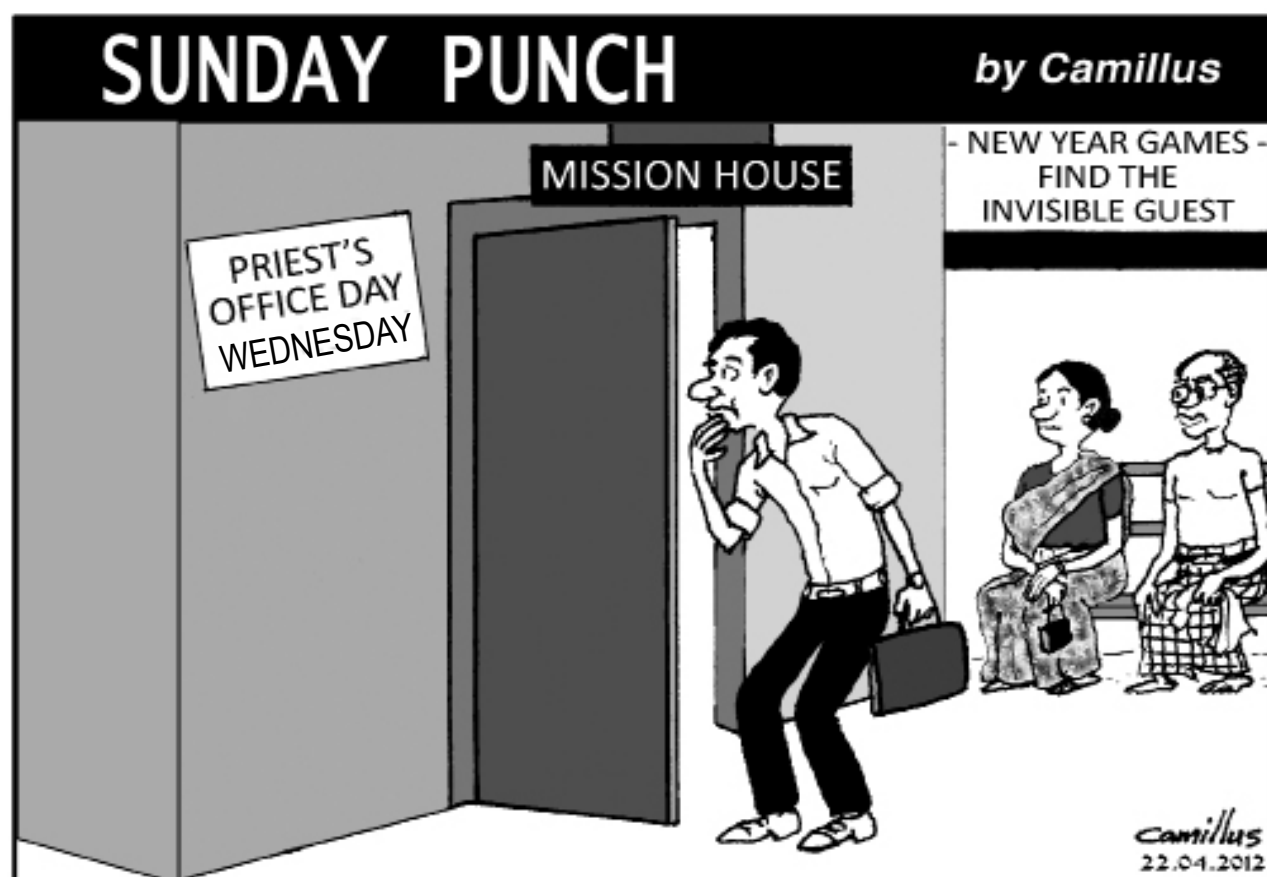
Before leaving on his 2011 mission, Vittori was given a special coin by Pope Benedict. It was engraved with Michelangelo's "Creation of Man" as depicted in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. During his Papal videoconference, Vittori used the coin to illustrate the effects of microgravity.

In Sept 2011 he and his fellow Italian astronaut Paolo Nespoli personally returned the coin to Pope Benedict at a special audience held at the papal summer residence of Castel Gandolfo.

"Space initially was an area of a competition, if not more, between Russia and the US," he said, "but today space is putting together many countries including Russia and the US." That is why he viewed "that particular journey of the coin from the Vatican to the Vatican" as symbolic of that co-operation.

At present Vittori, who is married with three children, is unsure if he will return to space for another mission or if he will opt for a more earth-bound job.

"I shall just have to wait and keep the faith," he said smiling.





EDITORIAL

22 April 2012

Why the Government should not relax the Anti-Abortion Law

The Government is toying with the idea of liberalizing abortion- apparently for women who have been raped. But this is a dangerous opening and it will lead to more and more demands for other circumstances for abortion like where the foetus indicates some deformity. It was the experience in the West where Anti-Abortion laws came to be relaxed on various special circumstances but ended up with women demanding the right to abort as their human right.

Abortion is one of the most difficult, controversial, and painful subjects in modern society. The principal controversy revolves around the questions of who makes the decision concerning abortion, the individual or the State; under what circumstances it may be done; and who is capable of making the decision.

There are probably as many reasons for abortion as there are women who have them. Some pregnancies result from rape or incest, and women who are victims of these assaults often seek abortion. Most women, however, decide to have an abortion because the pregnancy represents a problem in their lives. Some women may be too young or do not have a reliable partner with whom to raise a child. In the West, many young women in high school or college find themselves pregnant and must choose between continuing the education they need to survive economically and dropping out to have a baby. Young couples who are just starting their lives together and want children might prefer to become financially secure first to provide better care for their future children and seek abortion.

Sometimes people enter into a casual sexual relationship that leads to pregnancy with no prospect of marriage. Even if the sexual relationship is more than casual, abortion may be sought because a woman decides that the social status of the male is inappropriate. Several Western countries have relaxed the Anti-Abortion law and permitted abortion more or less on demand by the women.

The Catholic Church however regards human life as sacred and God given and that no person has the right to take it from him or her and this right is extended to the unborn baby as well. So the Church has been uncompromising in its stand. The Church rejects subjectivism in moral values. It is the idea that what is true and what seems moral to one person may not be true or moral for another person, i.e., truth and morality are relative. In contrast, objectivism is the philosophy that reality exists independent of human consciousness; that there is a core of moral values independent of what each person considers moral or not.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBC) has expressed its opposition to the proposed relaxation of laws pertaining to abortions in Sri Lanka and requested President Mahinda Rajapaksa and the government not to proceed with it. The Cardinal has observed that every life is considered a gift from God, that depriving the right to live is a violation of the teachings of all religions and is inconsistent with our culture. He observed that life begins from the date of conception and it is the duty of all to protect that life which is unable to voice its needs or fight to protect itself. He also noted that even with physical defects every child has the right to live and should be considered as a gift to society; that every child has hidden capacities and talents and it is the same even for differently-abled children.

He also stated that certain international groups with vested interests of the West are pressuring the government to relax the laws pertaining to abortions. He said that this is the first step in legalizing abortions. Commenting on the proposal to allow abortions in situations, such as, being raped during teen by a close relative, he noted that the unborn baby should not be punished for the crime since he or she is not the culprit.

The West which liberalized the Anti-Abortion Law is now reaping the results not only by way of a falling population unable to reproduce itself but also by way of a breakdown in the social fabric. The use of birth control pills and the easy availability of abortion have made women to lose their traditional inhibitions regarding sex. The decline is readily measurable in statistics on crime, fatherless children, broken trust, increase of divorce, broken families, teenage pregnancies and increase in single mothers who have to bring up children with no income, with reduced opportunities for them and their children, reduced outcomes from education for themselves and requiring State financial support to raise the children. There is not only a breakdown of family but of community as well, as pointed out by Francis Fukuyama in *"The Great Disruption."* So let us not blindly follow the West and the activists of the Feminist Movement in the name of women's rights.

The Divine Forsakenness and Rediscovery of Faith

Prof. Anton Meemana

*"Elai Elai lema Sebaqtani"**"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46, Mk.15:34)*

In uttering these words, while hanging on the cross, did Jesus give into absolute despair? Did he lose faith in God or stop believing in God and being faithful to God? Did he undergo a crisis in faith as many people, Christians as well as non-Christians, seem to imply? Did he die in doubt, in darkness; in theological obscurity? Was his life and death a total waste and a failure His mission a meaningless passion?

In trying to tackle these complex questions we must not forget the fact that in Judaism there is a long theological tradition of questioning God, even doubting Him, getting angry with Him, making serious complaints about God to God. All these had been part of their historical struggle with the living God. Let us take some representative examples from the Old Testament.

*"Or has thou utterly rejected us?"**Art thou exceedingly angry with us?" (Lam.5:22)**"I cry to thee and thou dost answer me**I stand, and thou dost not heed me**Thou hast turned cruel to me**With the might of thy hand thou**Dost persecute me" (Job30:20-21)**"Why dost thou stand afar off, O Lord**Why dost thou hide thyself in times**Of trouble?" (Ps10:1)*

Questioning God is an intrinsic act of faith not lack of faith or loss of faith. The ascent to faith is trodden through doubt, darkness, dryness and aridity. Those who have diligently watched the movie "Fiddler on the Roof" can amply attest to it.

In questioning, we do not lose but gain faith. Doubting helps us to recover, rediscover, and regain faith. Faith facilitates an interior light which grants us the capacity to comprehend many realities that were previously, comprehensible. Faith is a great illuminator. Faith is the enduring vision.

Jesus, in faithfully uttering those words, still bore witness to his faith in God. In actual fact, Jesus's faith, hope and love were perfect. As Thomas Merton points out, "The more perfect faith is, the darker it becomes."

Faith is absolute trust in God when everything looks hopeless, dark and sombre. Humanly speaking, when we have lost trust in everything then only we can begin to cultivate faith. Human life is absolutely impossible without faith. Christian faith has concrete historical consequences. Faith asks something of us concretely. Faith is never or politically or economically neutral. There is a value judgment in faith. Faith is never indifferent to human suffering. Faith is never passive, nor does it slumber. Faith always seeks and desires the greater good for all. Faith interrupts the status quo and demands greater credibility from it. Judgments born out of faith are the most accurate and objective because it does not serve any political ideologies but challenges them all. God does not desire suffering for the innocent. God wants to abolish all kinds of sufferings. Faith exposes ruthlessly and mercilessly the nakedness of every political ideology for what they really are. Faith is both a great asker and a seeker.

Faithless life is an aimless life. The depth of one's faith is the depth of one's commitment life. Faith is sustained Christian praxis. To have faith is to become faithful to God's commandments. The vision of faith is the most comprehensive vision for it harbours no ideological agenda or follows no party line. Faith is active all the time. Faith must radiate through one's character, lifestyle and relationships. Faith and character cannot be separated. Faith always seeks

and desires greater good for all. Faith yearns for greater clarity of vision about life. Faith makes distinctions and nuances. Faith clarifies but never confuses. Faith brings light and dispels darkness. Without faith, we become neurotic, narcissistic and cruel. Without faith one can hardly function as a normal human being. Lack of faith leads to lack of compassion, sympathy and empathy. One's conduct reveals one's faith and one's faith nourishes one's character and integrity.

Without the gift of faith, we cannot cultivate and sustain hope. Hope is faith directed towards future. One's hope is in proportion to one's faith. Faith leads us to hope and brings us hope even in hopeless situations. As we ought to grow in faith, we need also grow in hope. Faith and hope are intimately interlinked. Faith is not a static or a stagnant reality. It is dynamic and ever and forever active, giving life a sense of mission and purpose. As we grow older, we must also grow in faith. So that by the time we die, we die in faith. Facing one's death is also an act deep faith in God. True happiness in life comes from faith. The greater our faith, the less anxiety we have and the less our faith, the greater our anxiety and restlessness.

Faith purifies our intentions and brings a greater depth to one's conduct in life. Faith makes us treasure our friends and without the vision of faith, this world is too cruel, brutal, banal and broken to inhabit. In the midst of all the despair and growing anxiety, faith sustains our hope for a better tomorrow. Faith tells me that life is meaningful in spite of all the suffering, pain, difficulties and hardships.

Faith encourages me to love all even my enemies and appreciate even the little good my enemies possess. Nobody is totally evil or bad or malevolent in this world. Faith is never pessimistic about human nature. If my faith in others is too little, then my capacity to love them is seriously hampered.

We need to trust God more and more and in proportion we must also trust others. To have faith in God is also to have faith in the humanity's capacity to do good. Faith asks us the grand question; are we freely capable of loving a Hitler while condemning his evil deeds? Faith makes a distinction between a sinner and sins. It condemns the sins uncompromisingly while restoring and healing the humanity of the sinner.

Faith facilitates healing, wholeness and vitality in life. Faith cleanses our hearts and it is a great gift from God and therefore we must inspire people to ask for the same gift from God. God never disappoints people.

Faith purifies reason and is never an enemy of it. Faith is the most sensible thing on earth. Faith is never blind or bland. Faith is the most purified form of reason. Faith is the zenith of rationality. It brings greater clarity to human mind. Blind faith is not real Christian faith, but emotional immaturity. Faith is neither childish nor naive. It encourages us to trust the universe more and more for the right reasons and hence faith does no wrong to a neighbor. Faith challenges all sorts of evil and wrong perspectives about the universe.

Faith takes away our selfishness, our me-for-me mentality and ego centeredness. It destroys our bloated ego and restores humility which is our true identity. Faith whispers to me that truest part of my character is my humblest part. Without faith we cannot become a blessing to others.

To have faith is to become a person like Jesus. To sustain faith is to live like Jesus. Jesus was the happiest man ever on earth because He had the perfect faith. The deeper one's faith, the greater one's service to humanity. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta says that our task here is to be faithful not successful. Faithfulness means stability of the hearts. Only such people become loyal to their spouses, their professions, vocations, friends, country and convictions.

To take one's faith seriously is the beginning of a new life in God.

Mary Magdalene the Messenger of the Resurrection

After the death of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea obtained permission from Pontius Pilate the Governor to take over the body of Jesus. Together with his friend Nicodemus he quickly anointed the body of Jesus, placed the body in a tomb and covered it with a huge stone so that no one could get in. Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene were witness to all this. They then rushed home as the Sabbath was about to begin. Mary Magdalene was not satisfied with the quick anointing that had been done and spent the whole of the Sabbath getting the spices and the ointments ready to go back to the tomb on Sunday morning the first day of the week and give Jesus a decent burial.

Accordingly very early on Sunday morning while it was still dark and very misty Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James accompanied by Salome, left the city and walked towards the tomb. On the way they experienced an earthquake. They were carrying with them a large quantity of spices and ointments. They had one big worry and that was as to how they would be able to roll away the huge stone that had been placed at the entrance to the tomb. They walked on not knowing what they were going to do.

When they got to the tomb they were surprised to find that the stone had been rolled away. As they got closer they found an angel seated at the entrance to the tomb. The angel's

appearance was like lightning and his garments were white as snow. Addressing the women he said, "Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here He has risen just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Go quickly and tell his disciples. He is risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him."

Mary Magdalene was distraught and confused as she ran to Simon Peter and John and told them what happened adding, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have put Him."

On hearing all this Peter and John ran to the tomb and found it empty. The burial clothes were all there. John states at Chap. 20:9 "They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead." The two disciples returned home while Mary Magdalene stayed behind crying and looking for the Lord.

The angel asked Mary Magdalene why she was crying. She replied, "They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put Him." As she turned around she saw a man who asked her "Woman why are you crying. Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener Mary Magdalene replied, "Sir if you have carried Him away tell me where you have put Him and I will get Him."

The Supreme moment

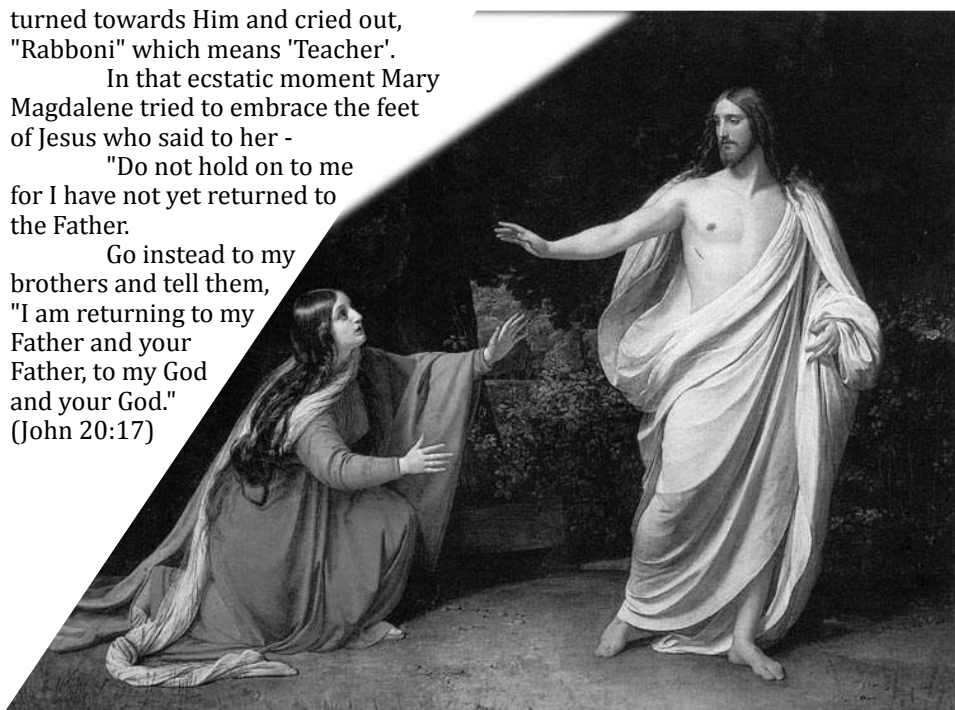
Jesus said to her, "Mary." Mary

turned towards Him and cried out, "Rabboni" which means 'Teacher'.

In that ecstatic moment Mary Magdalene tried to embrace the feet of Jesus who said to her -

"Do not hold on to me for I have not yet returned to the Father.

Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (John 20:17)



Mary Magdalene rushed to the disciples with the news "I have seen the Lord." And she told them that He had said these things to her.

Commenting on this meeting Bishop Fulton Sheen has said "Jesus had uttered 'Mary' and all heaven was in it. It was only one word that the Magdalene uttered 'Rabboni' and all earth was in it. After the mental midnight there was this dazzle, after hours of hopelessness the hope, after the search the discovery, after the loss the find. Magdalene was prepared to shed reverential tears over the grave: What

she was not prepared for was to see Him walking on the wings of the morning."

There are two important facts that emerge from the drama of the Resurrection -

(a) None of Christ's faithful disciples or followers expected the resurrection. It was only the enemies of Christ who expected it and

(b) It was given to Mary Magdalene, a fallen woman but a truly repentant sinner, to announce the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the sceptical disciples and to the world.

Truly Mary Magdalene was the Messenger of the Resurrection.

'So I Leave My Boats Behind' and 'The Fire Dance' - Peter in poetry and song

Singing that lovely song at Mass in All Saints' Church, Borella about Peter (the fisherman) and how he became the follower of Christ:

*So I leave my boats behind
On the dark Galilean shore
Set my heart upon the deep
Follow you again my Lord*

I was reminded about a similar poem, "The Fire Dance" by Patrick Fernando about Peter, standing alone by the fire in the High Priest's house, to which he had followed Christ being taken by the soldiers to be judged. This is the well known scene, which leads to Peter denying Jesus thrice and the cock crowing, and Peter suddenly realising his own self. In the poem by Patrick Fernando we are presented with a disturbed Peter, trying to figure out the past and the future, before the servant girl questions him and he denies Jesus.

Patrick Fernando was born in Kalutara on the west coast of Ceylon in 1931 and died in Colombo, the capital of Ceylon, which is thirty miles north of his birth place, at the age of fifty. During his lifetime, which included seventeen years of youth in the pre independence period and thirty-three years in the post-

colonial period, he witnessed an overthrow of cultural values, from the acceptance and admiration of western culture by the educated minority in Ceylon to the acceptance and admiration of a "national" cultural by a reconstituted elite. Though English poetry in Ceylon / Sri Lanka has been written by many others it is possible to think of Patrick Fernando as the best English language poet so far from our country. His best known poem is "The Fisherman Mourned by his Wife." He wrote for an international audience.

The first poem in Patrick Fernando's Selected Poems 1984 is titled "The Fire Dance" and is triggered off by a quotation from the New Testament: "And Simon Peter was standing and warming himself" (John 18:25). The poet expects the reader to be aware of the context of that quotation and so it must be a reader who, if not a Christian, is at least interested enough in western culture to acquaint himself with it. The scene is where Peter follows Jesus into the high priest's house, mixes with the crowd to watch what will take place, and eventually denies knowledge of him. These are Peter's thoughts:

*The fire never repeats itself-
always changing into
More impassioned movements:
now swirling low and thick Like
the eddies I saw in water fishing
in the starlight, now Stretching
in human form,
yellow red nailed fingers
Thin into vanishing.
Underneath her soft insistent
feet, the logs degenerate Into
ever deepening ash:
Cruel ballerina dancing upon
gathering pain.*

The image of the fire as a ballerina is certainly not indigenous, nor is suited to Peter's time and place. But it is original and the image is appropriate to the situation of Peter, whose pain is gathering with the onset of Christ's passion. The metaphor breaks the rules of time and place and does so triumphantly, justifying itself by its relevance:

In a sense Fernando's poem, which contemplates the thoughts of Peter as he gazed into the fire, trying to figure out the future and the meaning of the past, is a vision through which the poet seeks to make the presence of Christ alive to the reader. By presenting Peter as a normal human being, with his fears and his hopes, the reader (either a Christian or someone familiar with Christianity) who knows Peter's traditional role, eventually

becomes more attuned to the poem's vision. The poem seeks to convey the reality of Christ in the world, as reflected in the experience of Peter. But still, it's not only the high priest's vast aristocratic fire That can execute such forms of dance as these; Have I not gazed endlessly at fires we light on shore Burning centres of night-blossom, petalled with crouching Fishermen and huddling shadows? ...

The speaker re-describes from his point of view what the reader, familiar with the New Testament description, already knows but has not imagined. The thrill of the poem is the sense of recognition by the reader that these were also his intuitions about Peter, now being described by the poem's persona. Thus a major achievement of the poet is the management of tone, of the speaker's voice to give it credibility. He achieves this by presenting vivid pictures of the man reminiscing about his part. The poet switches to the problems of the present.

*But this is not the time for the
mind to strive to understand
what it cannot explain;*

*This is the time to be still, to
conceal my face and escape
detection and death.
So let me gaze deeper into the
puzzle of the fire ...*

*All round the shadows of Roman
soldiery flit against the wall
Like insects in a lighted room,
seeking for a place
Look how the fire's fingers inter-
lock and hands claps ...*

We are locked in Peter's mind, mesmerized by the images the poet weaves before us. It is time to share his disillusionment.

*And I can see the withered fin-
gers now unweave before these
startled eyes.
The illusion I wove; and all my
hopes of throne and power
Spilt in the backyard of my
shame,
And I, an idle cat who dreamt in
an empty afternoon.*

The words "split in the backyard of my shame" refer me to my own experience of how in Ceylonese homes, before the arrival of electric and gas cookers, we used to spilt firewood in our backyards to feed our kitchen fires.

(Contd. on Pg. 15)

A daily cup of tea, for a healthy heart and body ...

Studies have shown that a simple cup of tea can help improve heart (cardiovascular) health. The secret is in a class of compounds called flavonoids, found in your tea.

"The health benefits of tea are mainly derived from its antioxidant properties. Studies all over the world have shown that tea is very rich in a class of compounds called flavonoids. The most prominent effect of flavonoids is its anti-oxidant properties. Antioxidants have been found to reduce the risk of heart diseases, such as heart attacks," said Dr. Tissa Amarakoon, a senior lecturer at the Department of Chemistry at the University of Kelaniya and a former Deputy Director of the Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka.

The anti-oxidant properties in flavonoids work by reducing the oxidation of fat molecules in our bodies, thereby reducing fat deposits on walls of arteries that pump blood to the heart. Flavonoids also help in other ways. Many in-vitro studies that investigated the effects of flavonoids on relaxing isolated arteries, have confirmed the vasodilatory effects of flavonoids derived from foods such as wine, grape products, cocoa and tea. These in-vitro studies indicate that flavonoids help to

increase production of Nitrous Oxide (NO) that contributes towards the relaxation of blood vessels. This, relaxation of blood vessels makes it easier for the blood to flow through the body.

Studies have shown that black tea has a high percentage (82%) of anti-oxidant flavonoids. The USDA database on flavonoids content in selected foods (2003), shows that black tea has the highest flavonoid content out of foods such as apples, red onions, blue berries and dark chocolate. Black tea also contributes 60%-84% of dietary flavonoids in western populations.

However, the level of flavonoids in tea may change depending on the cultivar, or the variety of the tea plant, and climatic and soil factors. Leaf size of the tea, whether the tea is bagged or loose, brewing time of the tea and brewing methods, may also have an impact. The good news for those Sri Lankans who prefer their tea with milk is that the anti-oxidant benefits of tea are not shown to reduce when tea is consumed with milk and sugar. A good amount of flavonoids could be detected in milk teas indicating that milk does not cut down on the flavonoids present in tea due to chemical reactions.

Other studies have shown that

tea can induce alertness, together with calming properties. These properties are attributed to the two compounds, caffeine and theanine that are also found in tea. "The caffeine in tea contributes to making a person more alert. A substance called theanine, also found in tea, contributes to a calming effect" said Dr. Amarakoon. However, caffeine content in tea is much lower than in beverages such as coffee.

"Generally the content of caffeine in tea, is about half that of coffee. In Sri Lanka in tea for instance, the caffeine content in one cup of tea is about 40 mgs, which is a very moderate intake," explained Dr Amarakoon. Tea can also contribute to overall health because of its hydrating properties. Contrary to some beliefs that tea can cause dehydration, studies have shown that tea hydrates the body, which helps sustain the body's natural water balance. Because tea, on its own, without milk or sugar, is a zero calorie beverage, substituting a cup of plain tea for something heavier in calories, can also help you stay leaner, longer.

"In addition to its anti-oxidant properties, tea can also help in a sensible and balanced weight loss programme because tea is a zero calorie



beverage. Consuming tea, without sugar, will make it a healthy beverage that does not add to your daily caloric intake. Adding milk to the tea will also not significantly reduce the benefits you get from flavonoids, in terms of anti-oxidant properties", explained senior dietician Sigrid de Silva.

How you consume your tea may have an impact on the overall benefits derived from your cup of tea. However, in general, a plain, old fashioned cup of tea, can be a low cost investment for long term good health for you and your family.

Rev. Fr. Alvin Peter Fernando
(Courtesy: Among Ourselves, Diocese of Kandy)

Once in a lifetime moments

Man by birth is a selfish being. Man is by nature a person who goes after admiration and reputation. It is this tendency that drives him to be overly competitive to forge ahead of others.

In 1994, a photograph taken in Sudan by the South African photographer, Kevin Carter was chosen as the best photograph and it won the prestigious Pulitzer prize. However the story behind this photograph is not very pleasing, not something nice to hear. The photograph shows a Sudanese child, emaciated and hungry, is trying to go to the United Nations Food Distribution Centre which is about a kilometre away. An eagle is seen following him closely to satisfy its hunger. (you may access the internet for a view).

Kevin thought this was a rare moment and snapped the scene. But a few moments after



Kevin Carter

he photographed it, the eagle took the child away. Kevin submitted this photograph for the Pulitzer competition and won the prize in a lifetime. Yet

something was troubling his mind day and night. He was thinking, had he not taken this photograph, he could have gone to the rescue of the child by chasing the eagle away. This was worrying him so much that three months after he won the prize, he committed suicide.

There are certain moments in your life that come only once. To help a really needy person, to show gratitude to someone without whose help and advice you would have been a wreck, to write that important letter to someone to say sorry, to visit that sick person who meant so much to you. But you kept on procrastinating. Is it any use going for his funeral and paying him your respect when you didn't care to visit him when he was alive?

Opportunities to show the selfless facet of your personality may come only once in a way. If you are not quick enough to grab them, like Kevin Carter, you are bound to regret.

God sometimes hand picks us for special assignments for specific purposes. It is our human tendency to negate God's purpose and look for selfish motives. Jonas, who was instructed by God to go to Nineveh, preach to the people and save them is a case in point. However, although Jonas tried to have his way, God eventually had his way. What finally matters is the extent of our willingness to be an instrument in God's hands to achieve his purposes.

- Ananda Perera

TAKE TIME FOR A MINUTE OF HUMOUR - SMILE!



At St. Bridget's School, it was Sr. Superior's feast. The children of the Elementary School were lined up for lunch. Rev. Sr. Principal Lettered a note "Take only one, God is watching" and posted it on the large tray of apples which was at the head of the table. At the other end was a large tray of chocolate chip cookies. A girl wrote a note. "Take all you want, God is watching the apples" and posted it near the tray of cookies."

Rev. Fr. Fracced Anthony Fernando OMI



A CROSS

The Way 76

By Sirohmi Gunsekera

A NEW YEAR

"Catholics don't celebrate the Sinhala and Tamil New Year!" remarked Ishika. "Why not? It is a Sri Lankan festival," said Malik.

"We Christians celebrate Easter and that is enough," observed Ishika.

"Well, maybe you don't have to light the hearth at the auspicious time and partake of a meal. But in spirit, you can celebrate 'Avurudu' by feeling joyous inside." said Malik. "And what about observing the 'Nonagatha', the period of doing nothing before the dawn of the New Year? I think that it is an important time when you sit back and reflect on the Old Year. You can think back to the sins of Commission and Omission and cleanse your mind by repenting. Then you are ready for the New Year," chimed in Neela. "The New Year is a harvest festival when one gives thanks to the gods for a bountiful harvest of rice," said Malik.

"Yes, we must not forget that rice is the staple diet of Sri Lankans. Besides, the New Year is celebrated by Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hindus and is a unifying festival. Both communities light the hearth at the auspicious time and boil a new pot of milk and wait for it to overflow. Houses are decorated and there are other similar customs such as wearing new clothes and exchanging of gifts," said Neela.

"We are already in the Season of Easter which is a time of Renewal. Just as we welcome the Risen Lord we can celebrate 'Avurudu' in our minds and hearts and exchange warm greetings. That is one way of resolving the Ethnic Conflict in our beautiful country," Commented Malik.

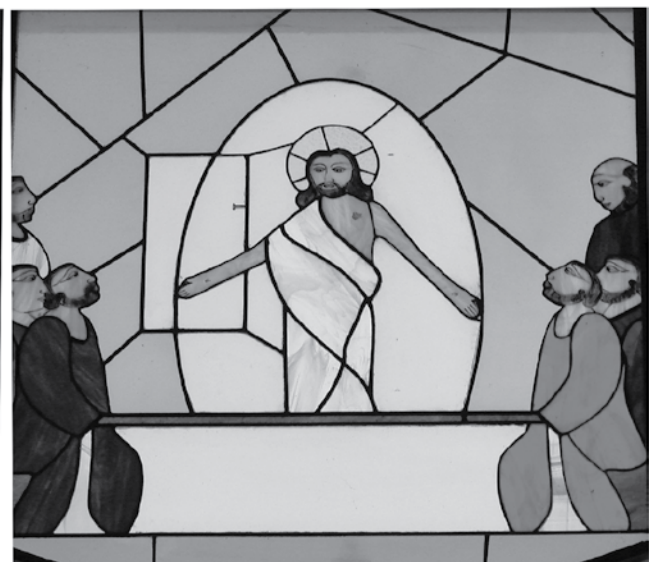
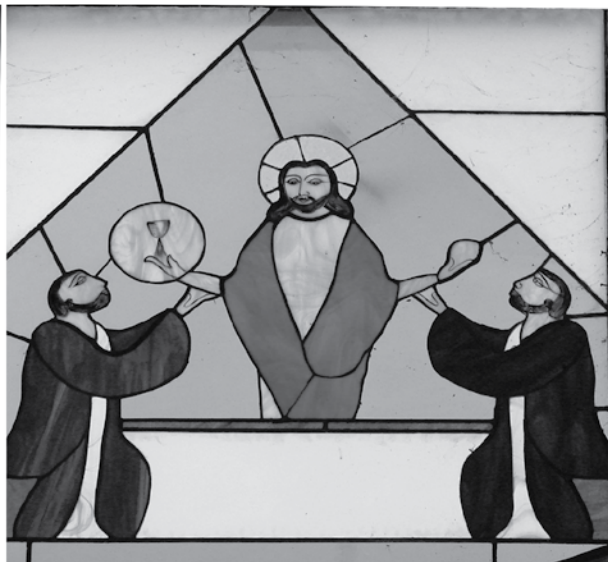
"Very well. This year we will clasp hands and wish 'A Happy New Year' by saying 'Suba Aluth Avuruddak Wewa' in Sinhala or 'Puththandu Vaalthukkal' in Tamil," said Neela.

Art & Architecture in Liturgy

Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

Via Lucis: The stations of light

The stained glass below depicts three of the 14 Stations of Light which forms the Way of the Light. The Way of Light (Via Lucis) celebrates the most joyful time in the Christian liturgical year, focusing on 14 events and appearances made by Jesus after his crucifixion in the fifty days from Easter (the Resurrection) to Pentecost. All 14 Stations of the Light can be seen done on stained glass at St. Jude's Church, Indigolla.



Raymond: 85 statues and still counting

Raymond Fernando has carved himself a special place in the world of Christian wood sculpture turning out 85 statues within the last sixteen years.

It seems that even though Raymond was born in the heart of the carpentry town of Moratuwa and inherited his father's family furniture business, his love for sculpting statues developed much later.

The first statue he sculptured was a 12 inch statue of Mother Mary carved out of the *Pahanakka* wood. This was a very special statue to Raymond's family since it was presented to

Fr. Tudor Wanigasekara, on the christening of his eldest daughter in 1976.

However it was almost twenty years after with the coincidental meeting of Mr. Christopher, that Raymond's life changed from a furniture businessman to the most sort after sculptor of wooden statues. Mr. Christopher was looking for someone to sculpt a statue of the Blessed Joseph Vaz for his church in Moratuwa. Raymond accepted the challenge and as the process began the two men experienced many miracles. It was also with this statue that Raymond began a new journey, going on to carve 13 more statues of Joseph Vaz and altogether 85 statues to date including that of Mother Mary, Jesus and the Saints. These statues included life size models to be taken on feast day processions, small statues used for blessing the faithful, statues for churches and homes,

To Raymond each statue is a very special creation, which starts with a deep commune with his Creator God. The selected piece of log is then brought to his work bench where it sits till Raymond researches on the image studying photos, sometimes preparing sketches, taking in to account every detail. It is during this tedious process that his friend Christopher becomes a pillar of strength praying with him, and encouraging him with gentle words till the statue takes its form and is complete. Having seen its pious transformation from a mere block of wood, often the two men take time to deliver the statue and take part in the religious ceremony organized for its blessing. "This kind of work cannot be done alone," Raymond says. "Apart from my family and friends there are others like Rev. Fr. Alex Dissanayake and Bishop Vianney Fernando who provide me with spiritual strength."

Raymond relates how Mr.

Christopher accompanied him with another friend Damien Fernando in 2008 to carry a 42" Joseph Vaz statue to the Mannar Bishop's House. "Three of us Damien, Christopher and I left Colombo by the 5.30 am bus carrying the newly sculpted statue and a letter from the church authorities in Mannar. Christopher bought four bus tickets, one for the statue of the Blessed Joseph Vaz.

When we reached and got down at the Mannar

Bus stand everyone there came

around us to admire

the statue,

some of them

identified

the statue

and started

to venerate it

thanking and

blessing us also.

during the war"

occasion two

statues of St. Lawrence a 42" and 18" were completed

and taken to St. Lawrence's Church, Talaimannar.

This was

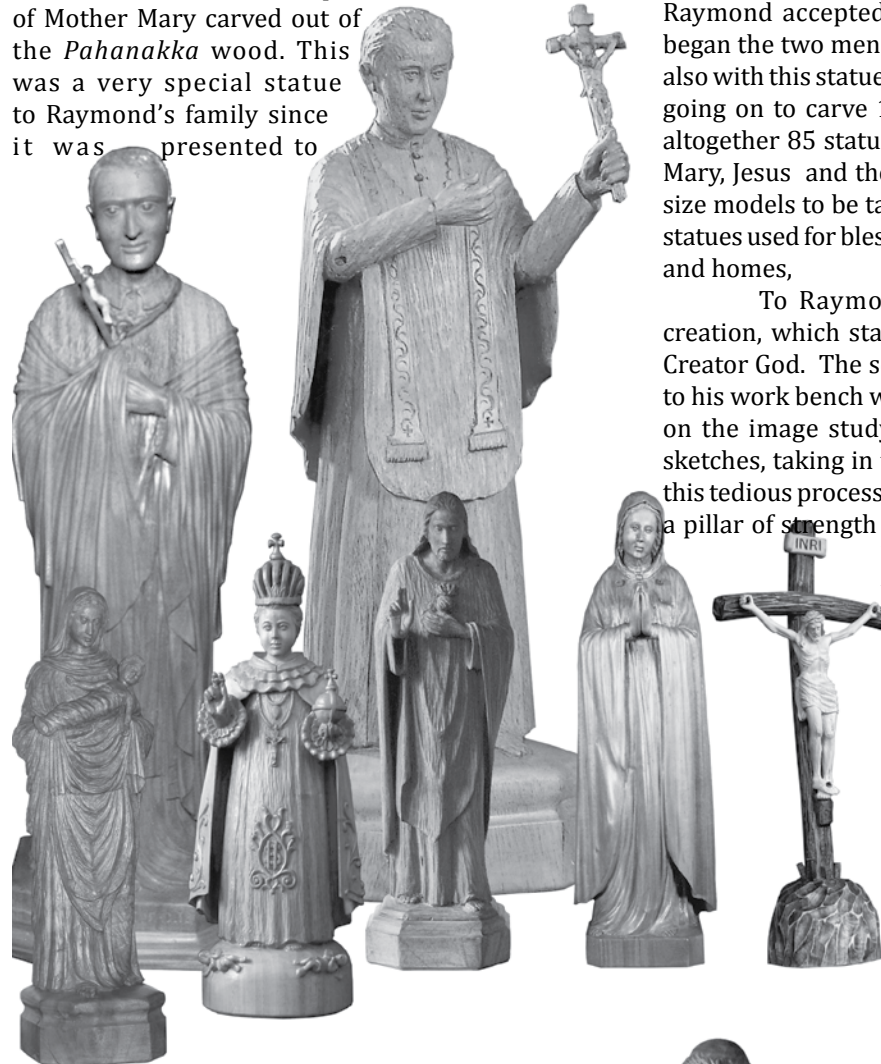
Similarly on an earlier

statues of St. Lawrence a 42" and 18" were completed and taken to St. Lawrence's Church, Talaimannar.

The most recent statue he carved was that of a 54" crucified Jesus for St. Charles Borromeo, Church Willorawatte. This crucifix is to be used for veneration after the Good Friday service. The statue most dear to his heart is the 34" statue of the Infant Jesus he made for the Infant Jesus Church in Slave Island. Two statues were done for this church, a 34" statue to be kept in the front of the church on the left of the sanctuary and a 15" statue to bless the faithful. The former statue which is an unusually beautiful one has been replaced recently.

Raymond usually uses mahogany wood for his statues and prefers them not to be painted. "Mahogany is a singular and light colour, easy to cut, is long lasting and gets more beautiful over the years," he says. After a statue is completed he polishes it lovingly. Thereafter the final touches are put before the final polishing. Raymond believes that even though a wooden sculpture is more difficult and more time taking, its beauty is unique and long lasting. "Its value cannot be quantified in money," he says and adds that without the blessing of his Creator God, his work would not be possible.

- KSF



The Lord Always Calls

The 'lectio divina' given by Benedict XVI, at the traditional meeting with the clergy of Rome for Lent.

The passage from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (4:1-16) is one of the great ecclesial texts of the New Testament. It begins with the author's introduction of himself: "I [Paul] therefore, a prisoner for the Lord" (v. 1). The Greek word *desmios* means "bound": Paul, like a criminal, is in chains, a prisoner for Christ and so he begins to be in communion with Christ's Passion. This is the first element in the way he presents himself: He speaks as a prisoner in chains, he speaks of being in communion with Christ's Passion and is thus also in communion with Christ's Resurrection, with his new life. When we speak we must always speak of being in communion with his Passion and hence accept our own "passion", our own sufferings and trials. In this sense they are truly proof of Christ's presence, proof that he is with us and that by being in communion with his Passion we are journeying on towards newness of life, towards Resurrection.

Therefore "bound" is first a word of the theology of the Cross, of the necessary communion of every evangelizer, of every pastor with the supreme Pastor, who redeemed us by "giving himself," suffering for our sake. Love is suffering, it is giving oneself, it is losing oneself and in this very way is fruitful. Yet, another aspect appears and shines through the external element of the chains, of freedom no longer present; namely, that the true chain which binds Paul to Christ is the bond of love. "A prisoner for love": A love that gives freedom, a love that enables him to make Christ's Message and Christ himself present. And for all of us too, this must be the ultimate chain that sets us free, bound to Christ by the chain of love. Thus we find freedom and the true path of life and, with Christ's love, we can also guide to this love which is joy and freedom, the people entrusted to our care.

And then he says I "beg you" (Eph 4:1); to exhort is his task, but this is not a moralistic warning. I beg from communion with Christ. It is ultimately Christ himself who begs, who invites with the love of a father and a mother. "Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (v. 1); in other words the first element: We have been called. I am not anonymous or meaningless in the world: There is a call, there is a voice that has called me, a voice that I follow. And my life must penetrate ever more deeply into the development of the call, following this

call, or better, to help others too so that they may hear the voice of the Lord who calls. A cause of great suffering to the Church today in Europe and in the West is the lack of priestly vocations, but the Lord always calls; it is listening that is lacking. We have heard his voice and must also pay attention to the Lord's voice on behalf of others, we must help make his call heard and thus ensure that it is accepted and that a path is opened to the vocation to be pastors with Christ.

St Paul goes back to this word "call" at the end of the first paragraph, and speaks of a vocation, a call that is to hope — the call itself is hope. In this way he demon-

strates the dimensions of the call: It is not only individual, the call is already a dialogical phenomenon, a phenomenon in the "we"; in the "I and you" and in the "us". "Called to the one hope." In this way we see the dimensions of the call; they are three.

hope is in the "we" of those who have hope, who love within hope with several virtues which constitute the very elements of journeying on together.

A call, ultimately, according to this text, to God. God is the aim; in the end we arrive simply in God and the whole of our journey is a journey towards God. However this journey to God is never isolated, it is never a journey solely in the "I", but it is a journey towards the future, toward the renewal of the world, and a journey in the "we" of those called who call others, who enable them to hear this call. Therefore the call is always also a vocation in the Church. Being faithful to the Lord's call entails discovering this "we" in which and for which we are called, as well as journeying on together to attain the necessary virtues. The "call" involves ecclesial-



"I am 'called...with a calling'. I would say that our first important call is Baptism...; the second important call is to be pastors in his service and we must listen ever more intently to this call so as to be able to call, or better, to help others too so that they may hear the voice of the Lord who calls"

ity, hence the vertical and horizontal dimensions which are inseparable from each other; it involves ecclesiality in the sense of letting ourselves be helped by the "we", and building this "we" of the Church. In this regard, St Paul illustrates the call with this aim: One God alone but in this direction towards the future;

The first is "with all lowliness" (Eph 4:2). I would like to reflect a little longer on this because it is a virtue that does not appear on the list of pre-Christian virtues. It is a new virtue, the virtue of the "sequela" of Christ. Let us think of chapter two of the Letter to the Philippians: Christ, being equal to God, humbled himself and accepted the form of a servant, obedient even to the Cross (cf. Phil 2:6-8). This is the path of humility taken by the Son which we must imitate. Following Christ means entering into this journey of humility.

The Greek text says *tapeinophrosyne* (Eph 4:2): Let us not think boastfully of ourselves, let us keep things in proportion. Humility. The opposite of humility is pride, the root of all sin. The pride which is arrogance, which above all claims power, appearance, making a good impression on others, being someone or something, does not seek to please God but to please itself, likes being accepted by others and, let us say, being venerated by others.

The "self" is the centre of the world: It is a matter of my proud, all-knowing self. Being Christian means overcoming this original temptation which is also the core of original sin: Being like God but without God; to be Christian is to be true, sincere and realistic. Humility is above all truth, living in truth, learning truth, learning that my smallness is actually greatness, because in this way I am important in the great web of God's history with humanity. Precisely by recognizing that I am a thought of God, in the building of his world, and that I am irreplaceable, in this very way,

in my littleness, and only in this way am I great. This is the beginning of being Christian: It is living truth. And only by living truth, the realism of my vocation for others, with others, in the Body of Christ do I live well.

Living against the truth is always living poorly. Let us live the truth! Let us learn this realism: Not to want to appear, but to want to please God and do what God has conceived of for me, and thus also accept the other.

Acceptance of the other, who may perhaps be greater than I, implies this very realism and love of the truth; it implies accepting myself as "a thought of God" just as I am, with my limitations and, in this way my greatness. Accepting myself and accepting the other go hand in hand: Only by accepting myself in the vast divine fabric, can I also accept others, who with me form the great symphony of the Church and of Creation. I think the small humiliations that we must contend with day after day are healthy, because they help each one to recognize his own truth and thus to be free from pride that is opposed to the truth and cannot make me either happy or good.

By accepting and learning this, by learning to accept my position in the Church, my small service is great in God's eyes. And this humility itself, this realism, sets us free. If I am arrogant, if I am proud, I always want to please and if I fail to do so I am wretched, I am unhappy and must constantly seek this satisfaction. When on the contrary I am humble, I dispose of the freedom to oppose a prevalent opinion, with thoughts of others, because humility gives me the ability to do so, the freedom of truth. And thus, I would say, we pray the Lord to help us, to help us truly build the community of the Church; may she grow, may we grow in a broad vision of God, of the "we," and be members of the Body of Christ, thus belonging in unity to the Son of God.

The second virtue — but let us be briefer — is "gentleness," says the Italian translation (Eph 4:2), in Greek it is *praus*, that is, "meekness", "patience"; and this too is a Christological virtue like humility, that is following Christ on this way of humility. Thus *praus*, being meek, being patient, is following Christ who says: Come to me, I am gentle and

"Being faithful to the Lord's call entails discovering this 'we' in which and for which we are called, as well as journeying on together to attain the necessary virtues. The 'call' involves ecclesiality, hence the vertical and horizontal dimensions"

voice and thereby finding the true way and guiding others on this path.

I am "called... with a calling". I would say that our first important call is Baptism, to be with Christ; the second important call is to be pastors in his service and we must listen ever more intently to this call so as to be able to

ing truth, learning that my smallness is actually greatness, because in this way I am important in the great web of God's history with humanity. Precisely by recognizing that I am a thought of God, in the building of his world, and that I am irreplaceable, in this very way,

(Contd. on Pg. 14)

SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SUNDAY: 22 APRIL 2012



The above Sunday is specially dedicated to the diffusion of the knowledge and practice of creating Small Christian Communities in every parish and every Diocese. This has been accepted as a National Priority by all the Bishops in 1996 as an effective instrument and approach for renewal of the Church in Sri Lanka.

The FABC has strongly supported the SCC and still continues to support as an Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) - under its Commission for Laity. Pope John Paul II had stated in *Redemptoris Missio*, para 51, "...in many countries SCC's have become centres for daily Catechesis and contextualised faith formation. They are agents of evangelisation...enabling the community to take responsibility for sharing the mission of Christian Hope with their neighbours..."

Through the SCC's we are able to bring about a change in the outlook of the Church. The Church becomes an outward looking and participatory Church; a sharing Church; a serving Church and a vibrant Church. Hence, it is known as a New Way of being Church.

We would invite the pastors and the people to give their maximum support and encouragement to bring about the much desired renewal in our local Churches, though the efforts to form, strengthen and sustain the SCC's in our local Churches is a demanding task. We have a National Team, who attend to regular formation of new communities and respond to calls from Diocesan Directors for help. They are at the disposal of Pastors and Bishops.

This Sunday's Readings are most appropriate for SCC's, because, the Risen Christ is in the midst of the apostles, explaining the mysteries of his life and mission: The "Emmaus experience" giving the SCC's a glimpse of His presence whenever they meet.

* **Bishop Kingsley Swampillai**,
Co-Chairman, National Commission for Laity &
Bishop In-Charge of AsIPA

"Through basic teachings of the Risen Lord let us cross over to mature faith....."

It is already 16 years since the process of Small Christian Communities based on (AsIPA), Asian Integral Pastoral Approach, giving impetus to the Church in Sri Lanka and moving towards a more participatory and Communion Church. With so many challenges this process of Small Communities seems to be going through the experience of Exodus and celebrating its National day on 22nd April. This Sunday, the third Sunday of Easter, all over the island the members of the Laity, Religious and Priests of Small Christian Communities will come together to celebrate the joy of encountering the Risen Lord in their own small communities in their day to day life.

"Go You are sent forth; following Jesus in Mission. Small Christian Communities Serving and Ministering" is the theme of this Year's Celebration. It is very true even today most of us fail to recognize the presence of the Risen Lord amidst us, just like the disciples who lived almost three years so closely to Jesus, couldn't recognize him on their way to Emmaus. It is evident that whatever we do both in a minor and major scale, and all the projects and activities done in the name of Jesus is futile unless we really make an effort to recognize and serve Jesus who lives among our neighbours. This is affirmed by the very words of Jesus himself and confirmed by the actions of disciple who were transformed by the power of the Risen Lord.

This is made clear in the Letter to the Hebrews in Chapter 6:1-3, that we have given more prominence to many useless activities due to the fact we are unable to know and understand Jesus properly.

Constantly evaluating these Key objectives and reviewing the progress made so far through the AsIPA method and planning the course of action for the future, every three years we have a General Assembly in one of the member countries. So the last General Assembly, the 5th General Assembly was held in Philippines, in 2009. It was at the last General Assembly, the venue for 6th General Assembly in 2012 was decided as Sri Lanka.

This Assembly is scheduled to be held from 18th to 24th October, at "Chintana Centre," Nainamadama, in the Chilaw Diocese. I take this opportunity to thank all those Bishops, Priests, Religious, and Laity who are tirelessly working hard to make this event a success.

Rev. Fr. Eric C. Fernando
National Director for Small Christian Communities.



Small Christian Communities

"These small communities are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a civilization of love..."
Redemptoris Missio, John Paul II, 1990

I. What is a Small Christian Community

A gathering of Christians who live in the neighbourhood. (usually 12-15)

This is done on a regular basis. (once a week every fortnight)

- * They center their lives on the word of God. (They read and pray over a passage of Scripture.)
- * They reflect and share the ways in which God is actively present to their life experiences.
- * They trustingly become a community knowing each other and supporting one another.
- * They participate in the activities of the parish as communities and put at the disposal of the parish their charisms which are discerned and recognized by the parish.
- * United with the other communities they become a leaven for the transformation of society.

It is an experience of the larger Church at the smaller level

II. What Small Christian Communities are not:

- **Bible study groups** - (need experts on exegesis etc.)
Although the Word of God is the foundation on which the Holy See is built.
- **Prayer groups**
Although prayer as relationship to God is the atmosphere in which the SCC - conducts its entire meeting.
- **Social action groups** (NGOs)
Though relationships, love and care are essential for SCCs.
- **Justice groups** - (Human Rights' movement)
Though they work to transform society, through witness of life.

.....
They are totally united to the local Church and Universal Church as part of the parish structure and thus prepare the faithful for ministries.
.....

III. How will this benefit my life?

- * Deepening of relationship with God and others in community - personally begin to encounter the Lord.
- * Challenge to grow as a person - without community - no freedom and salvation.
- * Deepening one's commitment to family, work, neighbourhood and community.

IV. How will the parish benefit?

1. Parishioners become more interested in Scripture Study. - Catechism and take seriously the call to discipleship.
2. More likely to assume parish responsibilities and be ready to enter lay ministries.
3. More involved in Evangelization and outreach.
4. Close link is established between the Parish priest and parishioners, even those who do not come regularly for Sunday Mass.

It is a participatory Church where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are recognized and activated, so that the Church may be built up and His mission realized and lovingly witness to the Risen Lord and reaches out to the people of other faiths and it serves as a prophetic sign of the Kingdom.

V. Who should join?

All who want to grow as persons of faith. Parish Priest must invite all to join a group and meaningfully live Christian lives.

Action flowing out of SCC meeting is essential for the growth of Individual and the Community.

Parish Core community PCC (Leadership)

is a group of approximately six to twelve parishioners who come together with the parish priest.

- To form community themselves
- To foster opportunities for developing the parish as a communion of communities.
- To ensure sound development and pastoral camp of these communities.
- To promote training of facilitators for gospel sharing.



The Process

Parish Core Community (with the PP)

Deanery Core Community (with the Coordinator)
(composed of 2 members from the parish Core Group)

- * Shepherding Parish Core Community (PCC) Coordinators
- * Networking among parishes
- * Connecting parishes with resources
- * Promoting the ongoing formation of parish leadership
- * Providing training

It is an option for a Parish?

(you may or may not take up)

It all depends on one's concept of a parish. If one considers the parish as a communion of Small Communities, it will not be an option - SCC programme will bring about a new relationship with the Pastor and those at the outer fringes of the parish through lay facilitators and animators. If one considers the parish only as a service station, related to the or only with the identity card of a family then SCC is an option, which one can act.

Leadership Training

Facilitators - to facilitate gospel sharing 7 steps, Group Response etc.

Animators - to conduct full training manual lessons

Core group - deeper meaning of training manual lessons and preparing own awareness programmes.

- Vision of SCCs - Pastoral visiting
Manual - C1/B7/A1/C6/A2/A4/B2/A5/D6
- B4/B7-ab/B1

To Teach is Not an Option

Most valuable materials the SCC can use are that help people to build communities and take in the neighbourhood, for getting involved in action

* Process would address the following deeds, action and care in my own life.

- * What does Jesus and the Church's call tell about how I am to respond.
- * What is God and spirit's action in our community, our Country and the World - and what is expected of me.

Jesus as Protagonist of Discipleship

*Total availability to the Father
Total dedication to the Mission*

Mary as disciple - *Fiat*

Apostles as Disciples

To be a disciple is not an individual adventure. It means joining a group

Tension arise and some want first places (Mk 10:38). Together in trial and error they come to realize what it means to follow, to drop behind HIM to be ready to go the way of the cross, to write themselves off, of any kind of importance, to spend their time only in the service of others. (Mk 8:2)



Colombo Catholic Press mobile book sales in the parishes

In keeping with the new spring time of the Archdiocese, there is a new thrust forward of the Colombo Catholic Press: Mobile Catholic Book Sales for the annual Church feasts and Sundays in Parishes right round the country has begun.

The Catholic Press thrust is in addition to the recent Press Week, revived by the Archbishop, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and Rev. Fr. Benedict Joseph, the National Director of Media Apostolate.

The Colombo Catholic Press has prepared a very special mobile van to take the Catholic Books to the site of the Church feasts and on Sundays to requesting parishes.

The Catholic Press has got back to the publication of Catholic books and pamphlets like in those days when the Press had the monopoly to publish the Catholic school text books for Catholic Schools till the government took up the duty of printing all text books including Catholic school text books. The Director of the Colombo Catholic Press, Rev. Fr. Rohan de Alwis has drawn up a gigantic plan to improve the Press and its apostolate. Cardinal Malcolm has given the first push in obtaining an ultra modern colour printing machine that is now in operation.

The book publication section of the Colombo Catholic Press is putting out a new series on each book of the Bible by Rev. Dr. Henry Silva and is priced very low at Rs.30 (per book of 46 pages). Fr. Henry Silva has the massive task of a new Sinhala translation of a Catholic Bible. He still remains the Joint Consultant of the Ceylon Bible Society and all the above mentioned recent Bible publications. Rev. Fr. Rohan de Alwis and Rev. Fr. Henry Silva have planned this series of publications on each book of the Bible. This is a historical venture of the

MEDIA NOTES

fr. ernest poruthota



Parishioners flock to the Colombo Catholic Press, Mobile Book Sales van.

Colombo Catholic Press.

The Catholic Press is not only putting out cheap publications on the Bible but is also selling a translation of Cardinal Ratzinger's (Pope Benedict XVI) book on Jesus of Nazareth (386 pages), by very Rev. Fr. Cyril Gamini Perera, for only Rs.250. It is a Catholic Press publication besides a list of Catholic books put out by the Press. There is wide choice to select and purchase from the recent Catholic publications of the Catholic Press when they are brought round to the series of church feasts that will begin after Easter, besides any Sunday Mass in any parish.

The 3rd Edition of the Birthday Book by D.C Jayasinghe providing the

choice and opportunity of selecting a native Catholic name for the new child born is sold at just Rs.100.

Popular radio preacher, Rev. Fr. Athanasius Samarasinghe's, *Sadaham Sithuwili* (Thought for the day) is priced at just Rs.100, and has 80 pages.

In view of the beatification of late Thomas Cardinal Cooray, a 136 page book of his life story with (52) black and white and never before published (40) colour photographs in all consisting (92) photographs is only Rs.200/-. Its 2nd print is just out.

Uncorrupt Bodies of Saints by Shiran Maithree, Sub-Editor of

the annual Catholic Press Week (later for a month). Cardinal Malcolm gave personal attention to revive it last year.

Mr. M.P. Nethasinghe used to go from parish to parish, selling Catholic books. This was also done by Rev. Fr. Joseph Jayasuriya, OMI.

Rev. Fr. W. L. A. Don Peter took upon himself to write a series of England's CTS (Catholic Truth Society) type of booklets and sell them very cheap. Fr. Don Peter wrote, distributed, and kept stocks of the CTS style booklets that he wrote. But later on he handed over the copyright of his CTS style booklets to Mr. Sirisumana Godage. Mr. Sirisumana Godage now publishes all the CTS type booklets of Fr. Don Peter, stocks them and distributes them.

When Mr. Godage met Cardinal Malcolm he assured him that he is prepared to publish five Catholic books every month at his cost and pay authors in cash or kind and also sell them, stock them and distribute them, as well. So far nearly 100 books (not only CTS style) both Sinhala and English books have been published by Godage Book Emporium for Rev. Fr. Don Peter Memorial Christian and Catholic Books Project.

Meanwhile His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis, continues with several reprints of his *Mahopadesaya* (Great Catechism), with the ancient question and answer methodology updated with scripture quotations. It will be the most popular Catholic Catechism till the National Seminary puts out (CCC), the Catechism of the Catholic Church of 1992, in view of the golden jubilee of the Kandy National Seminary (1955-2005). The Sinhala translation was undertaken by Rev. Fr. Alex Dasanayaka and Rev. Fr. Jayalath Balagalla OP is helping him.

100 years of Catholic Social Doctrine originally published by the Government Press at their cost as a souvenir of the visit of Pope Paul VI, as the first pope to visit Sri Lanka, on 4th Dec 1970 had a second volume published by Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC, by Rev. Fr. Oswald Firth OMI, then National Director of SEDEC. These two massive books have been made into three volumes and have been put out by Godage.

Plans are afoot for a revised translation of the Sinhala version to the 16 documents of the monumental Vatican II translated by Rev. Fr. D. J. Anthony OMI (in 1960), in view of the 50 years of Vatican II in 2012 (1962 October 11).

Rev. Fr. George Sigamoney, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC, is in the process of appealing to various funding agencies to have funds for the publication of Vatican II documents in Sinhala and with English (summary) as well.



point of view

Sacrament of confirmation - plea to revert

The Sacrament of Confirmation, unlike in years gone by was administered, this year in the students' parishes.

As it was held after a lapse of four years, boys and girls of varying ages in

large numbers received the Sacrament with the service presided over by the Bishop running into almost four hours. This included the distribution of certificates.

It was evident that most children were overcome by fatigue by the new exercise. Many a parent was bewildered by the switch to

the parish churches from the earlier practice where the students received the Sacrament through their respective schools with dignity and decorum.

This Sacrament, like in the past should be administered to students annually to avoid the unwieldy number of students of different age

groups receiving it together.

On behalf of other parents, I earnestly appeal to his Grace Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith to permit children to receive this Sacrament through their respective schools as the children would be better prepared.

D. Jansz

A tribute to a Silent Witness

Last Christmas we said goodbye to a silent lover of the Church from Marawila, namely, Mr. K. P. Neville de Silva who had held innumerable responsibilities in the Church activities in the parish and in the Diocese of Chilaw as well as at national level. He was a live wire during the National Pastoral Convention held in Colombo in 1995. A Sinhala document on the Laity was compiled and edited by him in 1998 under the aegis of Sri Lanka Catholic Union. Later on he was elected as the

President of the same. He passed away just three months ago on the eve of Christmas. He was only 67. It was a shock for all of us who used to see him very often riding a scooter like a young man. He had never shown any sign of sickness. He was hale and hearty, always with a smile on his face.

While waiting for surgery at a private nursing home he was very calm and quiet about his ailment and was full of joy. Like St Paul he said if God wants me to continue His work I

will gladly do so. But if He says it's enough and now come home I am ready to go. (Phil.1.21). He was least worried about the outcome of the surgery as both of his daughters were given in marriage to very good Catholics. And just when the world was getting ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus, Neville started his journey upwards leaving his loved ones bereaved for a little while. We say a little while because we know that we'll meet again very soon when we answer the call from above.

Neville was everything to everyone. He lived a very simple life and with his beloved wife he brought up his children, Manel and Nelum in the same way he learnt from his father, Mr. Francis de Silva a devout Catholic, a loyal and dedicated teacher and Principal of Marawila School. Neville was a valiant promoter of Natural Family Planning as he and his wife Rose were very active in the Weekend Encounters for married couples organized by the Diocesan Family Apostolate. Lately he has been involved with counseling students at Loyola College, Palangaturai. In addition

to all these activities one could see him almost every Tuesday evening at St. Anthony's Shrine, Kochchikade, counseling or catechizing would-be converts. His love for the Church was wonderful. He loved people because he loved God. Like St. Paul he would say that love of Christ urges us on - *Caritas Christi urget nos*. (2 Cor.5.14).

Among the distinguished visitors who came to pay their respects to the mortal remains of Neville and console the bereaved were His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis, many priests and

nuns from various dioceses and the Staff and students of Loyola College. Rev. Fr. Tony Martyn, the National Chaplain of the Cursillo Movement conducted a wake service as Mr. Neville de Silva was an ardent supporter of the Cursillo movement in Sri Lanka.

May the good Lord welcome Neville saying, "Well done good and faithful servant, you had been trustworthy in small matters. Now I'll entrust you with greater responsibilities. Come and join in your master's happiness." (Mt.25.23)

Rev. Fr. D.F. Medagoda

A NOVENA TO THE PATRON SAINT OF CANCER PATIENTS



With the patronage of Rev. Fr. Bob Rodrigo OMI, the Parish Priest, the Parish Community of St. Lawrence's Church, Wellawatte, inaugurated a Novena to St. Peregrine on Wednesday, 11th April 2012.

St. Peregrine, who is known as "the Wonder-worker for the Sick

and Diseased" and named as the universal Patron of those afflicted with cancer and running sores, was born in Italy around 1260. Being an ardent follower of an Anti-Papal movement, he worked hard to foster civil discord and opposition to Pope. But, later he was converted

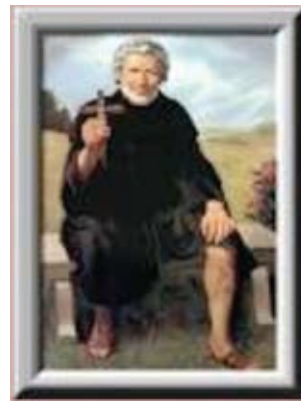
by the humility of St. Philip Benizi. After his conversion, he joined the Servites and devoted much of his time to a life of prayer, penance and caring of the sick. Meanwhile he developed cancer in one of his foot and was advised to amputate his leg by his doctor. But the night before the operation, while he was at prayer, he saw Jesus coming down from the cross and touching his leg. Following morning he was healed completely.

Hundred years after the death of this saintly priest, numerous miracles were reported and eventually he was canonized as the "Patron of the Cancer Patients" by Pope Benedict XIII in 1726.

With the growing number of cancer patients, and at the request of some devotees, the Parish Priest together with several others initiated this Novena to raise the devotion to this great Patron saint of Cancer Patients and deadly diseases.

The pictures show the inaugural service presided by Rev. Fr. Jude Angelo OMI, with the Parish Priest and the Asst. Parish Priest assisting, and a section of the congregation that attended the first Novena.

Rev. Fr. Sampath Perera OMI



NOVENA TO ST. PEREGRINE (Patron of People with Cancer)

**ST. LAWRENCE'S CHURCH,
WELLAWATTE**

Every Wednesday at 6.15 pm

"Answer for Cancer is Prayer"

Cancer is on the increase in our Island of Paradise. At the request of many Parishioners a Novena to St. Peregrine, Patron Saint of Cancer Patients, was launched on Wednesday 11th April 2012 at St. Lawrence's Church, Wellawatte. The Novena will continue each Wednesday at 6.15 pm. Trust in God...seek Him with all your heart...He WILL answer you.

**'Come and experience the Power of
this Saint of God'**

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
(Q12N0132)

Pioneering World Passion Play in Ballet Style With Artistic Performance
of Two Hundred Fifty Ballet Dancers on 3 Dramatic Theaters

The Dancing Poem of Jesus

അർച്ചനയോദധി
Tharakayano



Novel Dimension in Passion Play Tradition ~ ~ ~

**His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith
As Guest of Honour**

29th April at 6.30 pm

Kadol Kale Ground - Negombo

Free

Choreographer

Namal Weweldeniya

Music Director

Dr. Prabath Aloka

Stage Setting & Costumes

Ranil Fernando

Scripted By

Wijith Rohan (Senior Lecturer)

Coordination

Krisantha Warnakula

Production Management

Anura Primal / Janaka Krishantha

Spiritual Patronage

Rev. Fr. Darrel Coongne

Media Adviser

Rev. Fr. Benedict Joseph

Media Coordination

Meril Meepura / Ranjan De Mel

Presented By - Very Rev. Fr. Patrick Perera, Episcopal Vicar Colombo North And Organizing Committee

Pope Benedict stars in new children's book



Natalia Tsarkova with her book for Pope Benedict XVI's birthday.

Natalia Tsarkova, known as the "Michelangelo of the 21st century" for her work as the official papal portrait artist, gave Pope Benedict a special gift for his 85th birthday: A copy of her new children's book in which he is

the star. Tsarkova presented her book, titled "The Mystery of a Small Pond," to the Pope ahead of time – his birthday is April 16 – during a private audience at his summer residence of Castel Gandolfo.

The two main characters in the literary work of art are Pope Benedict and a small red fish.

In an interview with EWTN News, Tsarkova said she came up with

the story one afternoon while strolling through the gardens at Castel Gandolfo.

"While waiting in the fantastic and such spiritual atmosphere of the gardens, I got the idea to write a book and give it to the Holy Father for his 85th birthday," she said.

"It was like an inspiration that came from my heart. I had no trouble writing it because it came to me in a very spiritual way."

Tsarkova was born in Russia, was one of the most successful students at the Moscow Academy of Arts and is known for her portraits of numer-

ous celebrities.

A devout Orthodox Christian, she came to Rome more than twelve years ago. Although she planned to stay just a few months, her life changed forever in 2000 when she was asked to paint a portrait of Blessed John Paul II to mark his 80th birthday.

She said it took her two years to write "The Mystery of a Small Pond," in which she attempts to convey the love Benedict XVI has for nature.

The story is about a small red fish that swims in a pond at Castel Gandolfo during the summer.

The fish takes a liking to the Pope, who comes to visit it and feed it each day while he prays the Rosary.

At the end of the summer, a cat comes to the pond to tell the fish that the Pope is not coming back. The fish's father, seeing how saddened his son is by the news, tells him not to worry. "The man in white comes and goes each summer."

The book includes beautiful illustrations and is printed in medieval-style calligraphy.

The Vatican publisher Liberia Editrice Vaticana plans to trans-



Pope Benedict XVI

late the book into Spanish, English, German, Russian and Italian. Tsarkova said the book was very special to her "because it conveys a message of love and faith and can touch the hearts of children."

"I am very happy with the results," she said.

The Lord.....

lowly in heart (cf. Mt 11:29). This does not mean weakness. Christ can also be hard, if necessary, but always with a good heart, his goodness, his patience are always visible. In Sacred Scripture "the meek" is sometimes simply the name given to believers, to the little flock of the poor who, in every trial, remain humble and firm in communion with the Lord; seeking this meekness, which is the opposite of violence.

The third Beatitude. The Gospel according to St. Matthew says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Mt 5:5). It is not the violent who possess the earth, in the end it is the meek who remain. The great promise was made to them and so we must be truly sure of God's promise, of meekness that is stronger than violence. The contrast with violence is concealed in this term "meekness." Christians are not violent, they are against violence.

St. Paul continues: "With patience" (Eph 4:2): God is patient. Despite our weaknesses and our sins, he begins with us over and over again. He forgives me, even though he knows that tomorrow I shall once again lapse into sin; he distributes his gifts, even though he knows that we are often inadequate stewards. God is patient and great-hearted, he entrusts his goodness to us. And this patience, this generosity, are once again part of following Christ.

Lastly, "forbearing one another in love" (Eph 4:2); it seems to me that this ability to accept others stems precisely from this humility. The otherness of others is always a burden. Why is the other different? But this diversity itself, this otherness, is necessary to the beauty of God's symphony. And, with the humility with which I recognize my own limitations, my own otherness in the exchange with others, the burden that I am for others, I must become capable not only of tolerating the other but lovingly find in his very otherness also the riches of his being, as well as of the ideas and creativity of God.

All this therefore serves as an ecclesial virtue for building up the Body of Christ, which is the Spirit of Christ, so that it may once again become an example, a new Body, and grow. Then Paul actually says so, affirming that this whole variety of gifts, of temperaments, of being a person, serves to attain unity (cf. Eph 4:11-13).

All these virtues are also virtues of unity. For example, I find it highly significant that the first Letter after the New Testament, the First Letter of Clement,

should be addressed to a community, the Corinthians, which was divided and was suffering from its division (cf. PG 1, 201-328). In this Letter, the very word "humility" is a key word: the Corinthians are divided because they lack humility and the absence of humility destroys unity. Humility is a fundamental virtue of unity. Thus only in this way does the unity of the Body of Christ grow and we become really united and receive the riches and beauty of unity. It is therefore logical that the list of these virtues, which are ecclesial and Christological and virtues of unity, should move towards explicit unity: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph 4:5). One faith and one Baptism, as concrete realities of the Church which is under the one Lord.

Baptism and faith are inseparable. Baptism is the sacrament of faith and faith has a twofold aspect. It is a profoundly personal act: I know Christ, I encounter Christ and I put my trust in him. Let us think of the woman who touches the hem of his garment in the hope of being healed (cf. Mt 9:20-21); she entrusts herself totally and the Lord says: Your faith has made you well (cf. Mt 9:22). He also says to the lepers, to the only one who turns back: Your faith has made you well (cf. Lk 17:19). Thus faith is initially and especially a personal encounter, it is touching Christ's garment, being touched by Christ, being in touch with Christ, to trust in Christ, to have and to find Christ's love; and the key to truth, to universality, is Christ's love.

Yet for this very reason, because it is the key to the universality of the one Lord, this faith is not only a personal act of trust, but an act that has a content. The fides qua demands the fides quae, the content of faith, and Baptism expresses this content: The Trinitarian formula is the essential element of the Christians' creed. In itself it is a "yes" to Christ, and hence to the Trinitarian God, with this reality, with this content that unites me to this Lord, to this God, who has this Face: He lives as the Son of the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit and in the communion of the Body of Christ. This consequently seems to me to be very important: Faith has a content and it is not sufficient, it is not an element of unification unless this content of the one faith is lived and professed.

Therefore "The Year of Faith," the Year of Catechism — to be very practical — are linked inseparably. We shall renew the Council only by renewing the content — later summed up again — of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Contd. from Pg. 8

Customs and traditions are.....



Pope Paul VI Maha Vidyalaya in Halpe - Katana celebrated Sinhala - Tamil New Year in a grand scale. The celebrations were held at the school grounds with the children participating in various traditional customs of the New Year.

The picture shows the custom of visiting relations with sweetmeats. A group of children are seen taking a box of traditional sweets and visiting "Ne gam"

....what makes the New Year!



The picture shows Sinhala New Year celebrations at Andimulla (Primary) Mixed School in Andimulla - Katana. Mrs. Prem Rita Rajapakse, Principal of the school together with teachers, organised the event. Students are seen in the picture lighting the traditional oil lamp before the celebrations took place.

(Cecil Danicius)

HOLY CHILDHOOD SOCIETY

2012 අප්‍රිල් මාසයේදී හා සහතිකයෙන් පිරිසිදු වීමේ වර්ධනය සඳහා
A YEAR PLAN TO GROW IN LOVE OF GOD AND OTHERS
இறைவனில்லம் பிறருள்லம் வளர உதவும் அன்றி செயல் திட்டம்

A YEAR PLAN TO GROW IN LOVE OF GOD AND OTHERS - 2012 April

1. During the Lent season say sorry for your mistakes.
2. Offer a prayer for your sick friend or a classmate.
3. Join with all the children and play.
4. Talk to a child with whom you don't like to talk.



What it says in the Readings

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my own sheep and my own know me. (Jn. 10:14)

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR B 22nd April - 29th April 2012

SUN: THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts. 3: 13-15, 17-19, 1 Jn. 2: 1-5, Lk. 24: 35-48

Mon: Memorials of St. George, Martyr & St. Adalbert, Bishop & Martyr
Acts. 6: 8-15, Jn. 6: 22-29

Tue: Memorial of St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, Priest & Martyr
Acts. 7: 51-8, 1 a, Jn. 6: 30-35

Wed: Feast of St. Mark Evangelist
1 Pt 5: 5-14, Mk. 16: 15-20

Thu: Acts. 8: 26-40, Jn. 6: 44-51

Fri: Acts. 9: 1-20, Jn. 6: 52-59

Sat: Memorials of St. Peter Chanel & St. Louis M. Grignon de Montfort
Acts. 9: 31-42, 6: 60-69

**Sun: FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**
Acts. 4: 8-12, 1 Jn. 3: 1-2, Jn. 10: 11-18

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Response : Stay with us, Lord.

For the leaders of the Christian community: That the Risen Christ may sustain their faith, their courage, and their love. We ask in faith.

Response: Stay with us, Lord.

For the leaders of our country: That the Lord will help them to fulfil their responsibilities worthily and well. We ask in faith.

Response: Stay with us, Lord.

For the unemployed, and for all these who walk on the edge of despair: That they may find understanding and support. We ask in faith.

Response: Stay with us, Lord.

That we may experience the presence of the Risen Christ with us in all the realities of life, especially in the painful and dark parts. We ask in faith.

Response: Stay with us, Lord.

So I leave.....

Contd. from Pg. 5

Fernando combines this indigenous context with the thoughts in Peter's mind, basically performing the same "trick" as that he achieved in the image of the ballerina. Peter becomes our contemporary in nineteen hundred and fifty, when the poem was written. The scene of fishermen sitting round a fire on the beach combines New Testament echoes with actual scenes with which the poet, the author of "The Fisherman Mourned By His Wife," would have been familiar. It is a case of re-describing reality.

If we consider these metaphors in the context of the idea that the poet has to come back to his own experience after sharing the experience of another culture, we see

how imperceptibly the poet achieves this in a line such as "Split in the backyard of my shame." Another image, which combines the contemporary Ceylonese scene with the Biblical background occurs later: "Along the brook of Cedron the water carriers walk with cautious grace Talking wistfully of wine."

Women, in Ceylon, carrying pots of water on the heads, "walk with cautious grace" and this image merges into another of "talking wistfully of wine." Thus in a metaphor two cultures, the Biblical and the Ceylonese, are amalgamated. The process which I have analysed disproves the thesis that English as spoken and written by middle classes in Ceylon was a "language without metaphor" and could not be used with creative originality.

Echoes from T.S.Eliot are also there and become manifest in a line such as:

"And these and many more to mesmerize a dull restless mind "where Peter seems to be speaking in the accents of "Gerontion." But the poem has prepared us for this statement as much as Eliot's poem prepared us for the image of "Vacant shuttles weave the wind Thoughts of dull brain in a dry season."

Fernando shows how one could be imitative in technique and even in concept and yet be original in thought and expression.

In the foregoing discussion I have

have an intercessor in Jesus who sacrificed himself in expiation for our sins. Jesus who is raised from the dead continues to intercede for us before the Father. The necessary condition for Jesus' intercession for us is that we observe his commandments.

Gospel: Luke 24:35-48

Jesus appearing to his disciples after his Resurrection proves to them that it was he and not a ghost, by eating before them a piece of cooked fish. For the Jewish mind at that time, the reality of a living person had to be proved by the evidence of a physical body. He reminds them of the necessity of the Messiah to suffer and die in order to enter into the glory of the

resurrection, as evidenced by the Old Testament Scriptures (Isaiah 53: 1-12).

Reflection:

Those who encountered Jesus after his Resurrection had their lives completely changed. If our lives continue to be mediocre we have to ask ourselves whether we have ever had an encounter with the Risen Lord.

Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (1Timothy 2, 5). For him to mediate for us we ought to be linked with him, by observing his commandments, very specially, by loving others as he has loved us.

Do we need proofs, as Jesus' disciples expected, to believe that the Risen Lord is active in our lives? Do we live with this Faith?

Rev. Fr. Henry Silva

Resurrection is the Greatest Miracle

The Gospel (Lk. 24:35-48)

Prof. Anton Meemana

With the Resurrection of Christ, love is also resurrected not as a philosophical abstract or a theological concept but as an enfleshed reality, an incarnated reality. Love of Christ is full of flesh and blood, oozing with life but never dry or dead. (V. 39, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me, and see me, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have"). True love is never abstract but always concrete.

The power of love can never be defeated permanently, nor could it be eradicated totally by killing a person who truly loves. Death can, in no way, put an end to the power of love. The power of love is much more powerful and greater than the power of death. Jesus is exuberantly alive with love's full potential and significance.

God stood by Jesus, took his side. Jesus was right all along about the power of love and the forgiveness of sins. (V.47 "that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations")

God's unconditional love and forgiveness of our sins are the two sides of the same coin' With God there are neither crimes nor sins beyond forgiveness'

How are we to be convinced that God loves us and cares for us without reservations, restrictions, conditions and antecedents? Forgiveness is the very air we breathe and therefore we are all forgiven sinners through and through'

A forgiven sinner is no longer a sinner but a singer of God's wonderful deeds (*Magnalia Dei*) and grace.

Divine forgiveness resurrects in us our lost capacity to love. It restores in us our fractured freedom. Love of God floods in our hearts in and through divine forgiveness.

Now that God has no future independently of human

beings. God's life is necessarily tied up with us morals. Now human condition has become a resurrected reality, an accepted reality.

Resurrection of Christ is the ultimate divine acknowledgment of incarnated love.



Men of God: Icons of Christ

"(...) it is not what you do that is so important but what you are in our priestly commitment. Without a doubt, we must do many things and not succumb to laziness, but all our work will only bear fruit if it is an expression of what we are.

If what we do shows that we are deeply united to Christ, that we are instruments of Christ, a mouthpiece through which Christ speaks, a hand through which Christ acts: being is convincing and action is convincing only to the extent that this is truly the result and expression of what we are.

Pope Benedict XVI

(Most of the material in this article comes from Wilfrid Jayasuriya's Sri Lanka's Modern English Literature - A case study in literary theory. Facsimiles of the book can be ordered on Wilfredjayasuriya@yahoo.com)