



“My God and I”

4 Pg



Visit of Assens Boys' Choir

6 Pg



155 Years of Our Lady of Lourdes

9 Pg

# Messenger



February

ASH WEDNESDAY 13

"REGISTERED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POSTS OF SRI LANKA UNDER NO. QD / 50 / NEWS / 2013"

Sunday February 10, 2013 Vol 144 No 05 16 Pages Rs: 25.00 Registered as a newspaper

## MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE BENEDICT XVI FOR LENT 2013



# “Believing in charity calls forth charity”

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

The celebration of Lent, in the context of the ‘Year of Faith’, offers us a valuable opportunity to meditate on the relationship between faith and charity: Between believing in God – the God of Jesus Christ – and love, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and which guides us on the path of devotion to God and others.

### 1. Faith as a response to the Love of God

In my first Encyclical, I offered some thoughts on the close

relationship between the Theological virtues of faith and charity. Setting out from Saint John’s fundamental assertion: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us” (1 Jn 4:16), I observed that “being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction ... Since God has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere ‘command’; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us” (*Deus Caritas*

*Est*, 1). Faith is this personal adherence – which involves all our faculties – to the revelation of God’s gratuitous and “passionate” love for us, fully revealed in Jesus Christ.

The encounter with God who is Love engages not only the heart but also the intellect: “Acknowledgement of the living God is one path towards love, and the ‘yes’ of our will to His will unites our intellect, will and sentiments in the all-embracing act of love. But this process is always open-ended; love is never ‘finished’

(CONTD ON PG. 2)

## His Eminence at 110th Ann. of Holy Family Convent, Bambalapitiya “Catholic schools should bring children to God”

**The** Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith presided at High Mass last Friday, as a Celebration of Thanksgiving for eleven decades of fidelity, solidarity and finesse of Holy Family Convent, Bambalapitiya.

Addressing the large gathering of students, teachers, parents, Rev. Sisters, Rev. Fathers and distinguished guests present, His Eminence in his homily focused on the significance of Catholic education and the importance it gives in developing the spiritual wellbeing of the child and said, “This is what the Holy Family Sisters are trying to do and we are grateful for it.”

The Holy Family Order of Bordeaux, he said was the outcome of the French Revolution, a time of highest secularism when religion was banned and priests and nuns were executed at the guillotine. Churches were turned into barns and cinema halls and “man was without God.” However futility



His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith

led to the destruction of the revolution and the

ones who decapitated others, finally became the decapitated.

“The man who walks without God fails, he goes to his own destruction,” the Archbishop observed and stated that this was why people like St. John Vianney (Curé d’Ars) worked for the restoration of God’s Kingdom on earth and bringing about a radical spiritual transformation in their

(CONTD ON PG. 2)

### Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of His Lordship



Rt. Rev. Dr. Bishop Marius Joseph Peiris

**Ad Multos Annos Vivat!**

(February 3, 2001)

### First Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of Their Lordships



Rt. Rev. Dr. Bishop Emmanuel Fernando



Rt. Rev. Dr. Bishop Maxwell Silva

We wish our Auxiliary Bishops **Ad Multos Annos Vivat!**

On Their First Anniversary (February 11, 2012)

### Thanksgiving Mass for New Dty. Minister of Fisheries

A Thanks giving Mass will be held at St. Mary’s Church, Grand Street, Negombo on the appointment of Hon. Sarath Kumara Gunaratne as Deputy Minister of Fisheries, on Tuesday, February 12 at 6.00 p.m.

The Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith will be the Chief Celebrant at the Holy Mass.



Hon. Sarath Kumara Gunaratne

### Colombo Southern Regional Pilgrimage to Madhu



**His** Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith initiates a pilgrimage to Madhu as yet

another event in this ‘Year of Faith’. All Parishes in the Deaneries of Colombo North, Colombo Central, Colombo South, Kotte, Moratuwa and Kalutara are expected to participate in this pilgrimage from May, 24 to 26, 2013. Preliminary meetings of Deans, Deanery representatives, Archdiocesan and Regional co-ordinators were held to discuss the arrangements.

His Eminence will preside over all Liturgical Services and Rev. Fr. Francis Senanayake will be preaching in Sinhala, Rev. Fr.

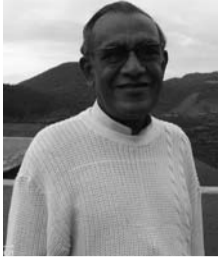
Justin Chawkan SSS in English and Rev. Fr. Stany Anthony OMI in Tamil. During this pilgrimage there will be separate sessions for married couples, youth, YCS and children on the theme of ‘Year of Faith’. A candlelit procession to the grotto is also intended.

Rev. Fr. Emilianuspillai, the Administrator of Madhu Shrine will be making the necessary arrangements to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims from Colombo Southern Region. For detailed arrangements there will be a committee meeting with two representatives from each Parish, which will be chaired by His Eminence on Saturday, March 9, at 10.00 a.m. at the Jubilee Hall, Archbishop’s House, Borella.

**Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernandopulle**  
Episcopal Vicar  
Colombo Southern Region



## Rev. Fr. Nicholas Fernando called to rest



Rev. Fr. Nicholas Fernando, Parish Priest of Christ the King Church, Mahena, Warakapola, former Vicar General of the Diocese of Ratnapura was called to Eternal Rest in the Lord on Saturday, February 3, 2013.

Fr. Nicholas Fernando was born on August 31, 1938 in Dalatura, Ja-ela, to the devout Catholic family of the late Mr.M.Sebastian Fernando and the late Mrs.Alice Silva.

He had served in the parishes of Galle, Kaha-watta, Rakwana, Uttuwankande, Embilipitiya, Kegalle, Elpitiya, Matara, Dehigahapitiya, Ratnapura, Balangoda and lastly Mahena.

His burial took place after the Requiem Mass on Wednesday at the Dalatura R.C.Church.

J. Antony

## "Believing in charity..."

Contd. from Pg. 1

and complete" (ibid., 17). Hence, for all Christians, and especially for "charity workers," there is a need for faith, for "that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbour will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love" (ibid., 31a). Christians are people who have been conquered by Christ's love and accordingly, under the influence of that love - "*Caritas Christi urget nos*" (2 Cor. 5:14) - they are profoundly open to loving their neighbour in concrete ways (cf. ibid., 33).

This attitude arises primarily from the consciousness of being loved, forgiven, and even served by the Lord, who bends down to wash the feet of the Apostles and offers himself on the Cross to draw humanity into God's love.

"Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sake and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love! ... Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light - and in the end, the only light - that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working" (ibid., 39). All this helps us to understand that the principal distinguishing mark of Christians is precisely "love grounded in and shaped by faith" (ibid., 7).

### 2. Charity as life in faith

The entire Christian life is a response to God's love. The first response is precisely faith as the acceptance, filled with wonder and gratitude, of the unprecedented divine initiative that precedes us and summons us. And the "yes" of faith marks the beginning of a radiant story of friendship with the Lord, which fills and gives full meaning to our whole life. But it is not enough for God that we simply accept his gratuitous love. Not only does he love us, but he wants to draw us to himself, to transform us in such a profound way as to bring us to say with Saint Paul: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (cf. Gal 2:20).

When we make room for the love of God, then we become like him, sharing in his own charity. If we open ourselves to his love, we allow him to live in us and to bring us to love with him, in him and like him; only then does our faith become truly "active through love" (Gal 5:6); only then does he abide in us (cf. 1 Jn 4:12).

Faith is knowing the truth and adhering to it (cf. 1 Tim 2:4); charity is "walking" in the truth (cf. Eph 4:15). Through faith we enter into friendship with the Lord, through charity this friendship is lived and cultivated (cf. Jn 15:14ff). Faith causes us to embrace the commandment of our Lord and Master; charity gives us the happiness of putting it into practice (cf. Jn 13:13-17). In faith we are begotten as children of God (cf. Jn 1:12ff); charity causes us to persevere concretely in our divine sonship, bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22). Faith enables us to recognize the gifts that the good and generous God has entrusted to us; charity makes them fruitful (cf. Mt 25:14-30).

### 3. The indissoluble interrelation of faith and charity

In light of the above, it is clear that we can never separate, let alone oppose, faith and charity. These two theological virtues are intimately linked, and it is misleading to posit a contrast or "dialectic" between them. On the one hand, it would be too one-sided to place a strong emphasis on the priority and decisiveness of

## Selection Test for Diploma in Catholic Education and Teacher Training

Applications will be called for the selection test which is a requirement for the permanent appointment of the teachers who are in employment on contract basis in Catholic Private Schools and to follow the Diploma in Catholic Education and Teacher training.

Applications can be obtained from the relevant private school principals. Please post the filled application forms recommended by the principal to 'Catholic Education Office, Archbishop's House, Colombo 08', together with a money order of Rs. 300/- payable at Maradana post office.

Final date of receiving applications will be February 23, 2013.

**Archdiocesan Director of Education and General Manager of Catholic Private Schools**

faith and to undervalue and almost despise concrete works of charity, reducing them to a vague humanitarianism. On the other hand, though, it is equally unhelpful to overstate the primacy of charity and the activity it generates, as if works could take the place of faith. For a healthy spiritual life, it is necessary to avoid both fideism and moral activism.

The Christian life consists in continuously scaling the mountain to meet God and then coming back down, bearing the love and strength drawn from him, so as to serve our brothers and sisters with God's own love. In Sacred Scripture, we see how the zeal of the Apostles to proclaim the Gospel and awaken people's faith is closely related to their charitable concern to be of service to the poor (cf. Acts 6:1-4). Essentially, everything proceeds from Love and tends towards Love. God's gratuitous love is made known to us through the proclamation of the Gospel. If we welcome it with faith, we receive the first and indispensable contact with the Divine, capable of making us "fall in love with Love," and then we dwell within this Love, we grow in it and we joyfully communicate it to others.

### 4. Priority of faith, primacy of charity

Like any gift of God, faith and charity have their origin in the action of one and the same Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 13), the Spirit within us that cries out "Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6), and makes us say: "Jesus is Lord!" (1 Cor 12:3) and "Maranatha!" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20).

The relationship between these two virtues resembles that between the two fundamental sacraments of the Church: Baptism and Eucharist. Baptism (sacramentum fidei) precedes the Eucharist (sacramentum caritatis), but is ordered to it, the Eucharist being the fullness of the Christian journey. In a similar way, faith precedes charity, but faith is genuine only if crowned by charity. Everything begins from the humble acceptance of faith ("knowing that one is loved by God"), but has to arrive at the truth of charity ("knowing how to love God and neighbour"), which remains for ever, as the fulfilment of all the virtues (cf. 1 Cor 13:13).

Dear brothers and sisters, in this season of Lent, as we prepare to celebrate the event of the Cross and Resurrection - in which the love of God redeemed the world and shone its light upon history - I express my wish that all of you may spend this precious time rekindling your faith in Jesus Christ, so as to enter with him into the dynamics of love for the Father and for every brother and sister that we encounter in our lives. For this intention, I raise my prayer to God, and I invoke the Lord's blessing upon each individual and upon every community!

**BENEDICTUS PP. XVI**

## "Catholic schools..."

Contd. from Pg. 1

surrounding and the world.

"Today we are surrounded by high flung secularism which destroys the human and says there is no need for a God. In the West religion is a private matter. On the other side we see religious fundamentalism which kills to protect religion. This is the other side of secularism," the Archbishop explained.

Religion, he said should reach out to one another and help in transforming society. "We should not 'absolutise' religion," the Archbishop announced.

The name 'Holy Family', he said means 'holy'. He called upon all Familiars to live a life that would lead to sainthood. "The pride of the school is to make saints and children you are our greatest treasure and every one of you can become a saint. Every child who comes to Holy Family should be holy. So succeed in becoming a saint for the Church and for God and we will protect you. So take the challenge and live," he encouraged the young blood.

## Helping Patients at Cancer Hospital



In keeping with the Christmas spirit Parishioners of St. Mary's Church Maharagama, once again carried out one of their main projects towards the inmates of the Cancer Hospital at Maharagama.

With the generosity of parishioners here and abroad, the Church was able to donate a thousand rupees to each patient irrespective of religion. A total of 800 patients received the money on Christmas day which was followed by Holy Mass.

Many inmates hailing from distant places in the country have no contact with their families, for weeks mainly due to the financial difficulties. The Cancer Hospital project helps such patients by assisting in their needs.

Niroshi Dilhari

Advising that the best time to discover one's special talents was while at school, the Archbishop said that the capacity to achieve one's goal was the sky.

Quoting from Roman 7:19, he said that St. Paul tells us that though man wants to do good yet he does what is not good and which leads to sin. "Sin leads to death and the shackles of death cannot be liberated unless God helps us to rise above all human weakness. The apostles were weak people and behaved like people of the world. They did not even allow the children to come to Jesus. (Matthew 19:14). This was because each had their own ambition and some had visions of sitting at the right or left hand of Christ. So for them it was a wonder what the master was doing with children and they rebuked the children which led Jesus to say "Let the children come to me and do not forbid them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

"This is how a school should also look at the children. Any school that forgets this is not giving the correct formation to the child. They should know that children should be brought to God," His Eminence advised.

"The purpose of education is not merely to get qualifications. There are those with the best of qualifications but behave like fools. Studies and academic excellence won't make good human beings. Academic qualifications won't give you the spiritual formation you need. Education should be the formation of interior fullness of the child as a special child of God. Each child should be seen as a different human being. Even if they are twins they are different.

"To ask what you are is important than to say what you can do. What you can give to others is what matters. This is what President John F. Kennedy told the American people, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country."

"We must be childlike in every way. Only those who are childlike can enter the kingdom of heaven. Even if a child is born in to swampy muddy waters still it is a flower. It is like the flower that opens out and blooms in these waters and it is we who have to help this flower to bloom. Like the flower, in God's presence this child blooms. Education is spiritual and if you muddle the child with secularism you deprive the child of the full potential of education," His Eminence explained.

After Holy Mass His Eminence blessed and declared open the new computer lab of the primary school.

### St. Euphrasia's Home Nayakakanda

We appeal to you, to be generous in your contributions towards our Flag Day in aid of young girls and women who receive rehabilitation in our institution St. Euphrasia's Home, Nayakakanda. Your generosity will help to bring a ray of hope to their lives.

**Flag Day - a Sacrifice on Ash Wednesday  
February 13, 2013.**

**SPECIAL LECTURE ON  
"Faith Without Charity Bears no Fruit"**  
(1 Cor. 13:13), (Jas 2: 14-18).

will be delivered by  
**His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando,**  
Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo.

On February 12, 2013 from 4.00 to 6.15p.m  
at 130, De La Salle Street Colombo 15  
**Rev. Brother Emmanuel FSC**  
**ISFA Director - 0777-682-989**



## LENTEN MESSAGES

# "Growing as a faith community to love and respect life"



The Lenten Theme for 2013 chosen by the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka is "Growing as a faith community to love and respect life." We believe that this theme is especially timely and relevant at a time when the dignity of life is being devalued and diminished day by day, as seen from the happenings around us. Indeed, this theme

calls us to reflect deeply on the value of life itself which is God's precious gift to us.

As Christians, we believe that from the very beginning of creation, man was the highest form of life ever created and that man was made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). In His boundless love, God created them as man and woman and invited them to live in love and grow in faith. Yet, in their disobedience they betrayed that faith and not only ruptured the bond between God and man and between man and man but also brought sin to this world. Jesus Christ came into this world to atone for all the sins committed from that day onwards

and laid down His life for all mankind, thereby bringing salvation to all of us.

Therefore, during the 40 days of Lent, we Christians contemplate on the loving sacrifice of Jesus which redeemed this world. It was this limitless, unconditional love of Jesus and His deep faith in His Father who sent Him that led Jesus to the cross.

Love is the basis of our life and it is sustained by faith. Therefore, it is our duty as Christians to turn into life's reality the words of Jesus: "He who believes in me, even though he be dead, shall live" (John 11:25).

During this season of grace when which we meditate on the Passion, the Death and the

Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we are invited to deepen our life of love and our life of faith, to uphold the dignity of life itself and to experience God in our day to day lives.

For, by sacrificing His life on the Cross for all mankind, Christ has shown us the true meaning of eternal and life-giving love. He who was God emptied Himself of His divinity and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8). Greater love than this has not been seen on this earth. It was because of this same self-giving love that Jesus Christ, who had lived and shared His love among His disciples, was ultimately betrayed by one of them and had to

go through much suffering which culminated in His death on the Cross.

We hear on a daily basis the blatant disregard for the dignity of life, be it crimes perpetrated on children or adults. Therefore, during this season of Lent we are called upon to reflect on the importance of building respect for one's own dignity as well as for the dignity of others.

If Christ is not within me, I cannot show love and respect for others. Thus, even for the slightest reason I may resort to instant and harsh decisions. Even though I may have tried to find Christ through the many rituals and spiritual exercises which we engage in today, such attempts will not bear fruit if there is no inner faith and a genuine

yearning. The Lord invites us, therefore, to begin Lent by "rending your heart, and not your garment, and turning unto the Lord your God" (Joel 2:13).

Especially at this time when we are in the 'Year of Faith' declared by the Church, let us resolve to proclaim the Lord Jesus and to invite Him into our inner lives. Instead of confining ourselves to external rituals, let us contribute to building a community of love and faith through respect for the dignity of others and inner conversion. May it be the beginning of a new life for each and every one of us.

**Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera**  
Chairman, Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development

## "Spiritual transformation through Lenten acts"

Earnest, persistent faith brings us in touch with God's grace and His power. May we also become a people who believe earnestly. May we also become a people who believe persistently. And when we feel our faith waning or when we find ourselves doubting, may we humbly cry out to the Lord: "I do believe, help my unbelief." (Mark 9: 24)

Faith is the key to unlocking all the richness and blessings of the covenant: Faith that He is a good God who loves us, faith that we can trust Him with our lives, faith that we will never turn His back on us, faith that He will forgive us, faith that His deepest desire is to help us in every possible way to make His ways our ways.

The Lenten Theme for 2013, "Growing as a faith community to love and respect life," invites us to deepen our faith and amend our ways during this season of Lent. We need to reflect and discover new ways of proclaiming this message in order to penetrate into the hearts and minds of everyone and awaken a thirst for the fulfillment which only Christ can bring about. Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness and love and respect life.

Indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord's invitation, to adhere to his word and become his own.

After many years of bitter experiences that we went through due to war, violence, injustice, exploitation and abuse of human dignity, it is more appropriate to reflect and ask ourselves where we stand with our



own conviction, at present in our society, where dignity of life is being devalued and diminished day by day in all what is happenings around us. What we need now is to aspire to a greater sense of human values and gift of a new life and freedom in Christ. As we prepare ourselves to experience this paschal mystery of Christ, the Risen Lord demands that His children be the signs of hope and promise of life.

Therefore our Lenten acts of repentance, change of attitudes should achieve a spiritual transformation in our lives with genuine love, and respect for life to enhance the dignity of life. We will have the opportunity to profess our faith in the Risen Lord in our hearts, in our homes and among our families, so that everyone may feel a strong need to know better and to transmit to future generations the faith of all times.

Therefore, that our belief may recognise the responsibility to provide an authentic companionship of faith, to become a neighbour to those who seek the reasons for and explanations of our Catholic beliefs in their utter helplessness and hopelessness, to seek the light of faith in Christ, the new evangelization tends to make our sense of personal identity to grow in relation to our sense of belonging to Christ our Lord and to our neighbour at all times.

Let us entrust this time of grace to the Mother of God, to shape us and inspire us to proclaim her "blessed because she believed" (Lk 1:45).

**Rev. Fr. George Sigamoney**  
National Director - Caritas Sri Lanka. SEDEC

## St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10 felicitates new Chief Justice



St. Joseph's College, Colombo organised a reception to felicitate the new Chief Justice Mohan Pieris P.C. at his alma mater on January 31, 2013. The reception was preceded by Holy Mass and a Thanksgiving Service. This event was organised by Rev. Fr. Sylvester Ranasinghe, Rector, as President of the Council of Management of the Old Boys' Union. It was attended by a large number of distinguished Old Josephians including classmates, friends and well wishers. Picture shows a memento being presented to the New Chief Justice.

*Josephian Media Unit*



### Church in the World

#### Ignore 'prophets of doom' predicting end of religious life' Holy Father

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI asked nuns, brothers and priests not to listen to the "prophets of doom" who say that consecrated life has no future or that it has no meaning in today's world.

"Do not join the prophets of doom who proclaim the end or the lack of meaning of consecrated life in today's church; rather clothe yourselves with Jesus Christ and put on the armor of light ... remaining awake and vigilant," Pope Benedict told consecrated virgins and men and women who belong to religious orders.

Pope Benedict XVI celebrated Mass with the religious on February 2, (Saturday), marking the feast of the Presentation of the Lord and the World Day for Consecrated Life.

The special Mass also marked the 'Year of Faith'. With thousands of consecrated men and women filling St. Peter's Basilica, the Holy Father said he wanted to ask three things of the world's religious during the 'Year of Faith'.

## SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus

ASH WEDNESDAY



TURN YOUR BACK



Camillus  
10.02.2013



THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA  
**Messenger**  
NO. 144

EDITORIAL

February 10, 2013

## Where have all the penitents gone?

Father Mychal Judge was Chaplain to the New York firefighters at the World Trade Centre on 9/11, where he heard confessions of the conscious injured, and gave the last rites and general absolution to the dying. Then he himself was killed by falling masonry. His story ennobled the role of the Catholic priest as confessor. But this role has been in decline for quite some time, for the faithful have abandoned confession throughout the Catholic world.

Nobody has analysed the reasons for this. Perhaps there should be a survey to ascertain the reasons for this decline. There may have been doubts arising from the debates and discussions during the Vatican Council II in the 1960's. Perhaps the influence of Protestant teachings may have influenced our Catholics. The Church's sexual-abuse scandals may also have also taken their toll. But such scandals do not invalidate the Sacrament and it is time for people to return to the confessional more actively beginning this Lenten season. Here is what the Bible says and on which statements the Church justifies the practice of confession to a priest.

"And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:17-19). In these words Jesus Christ gave the Church the authority to interpret His teachings. If Christ had not established a teaching, living, apostolic church then how could we properly understand the doctrines of the Bible? 2 Peter 1:20 says, "Know this first of all, that no one can explain by himself a prophecy in the Scriptures. For no prophetic message ever came just from the will of man but men were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God." So can there be room for personal interpretation of the Scriptures? And even the Ethiopian eunuch on his way to Damascus while trying to interpret Scripture asks for Philip's help (who is ordained as a priest in Acts 6:5). Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied "How can I unless someone instructs me?" (Acts 8:30-31). It is thus the Church that has the authority to properly teach the Doctrines of Faith for our salvation. This is why we are Catholics and not merely because we happen to have been born to Catholic parents. Because without the Church how can anyone be sure that Christ's teachings are being properly preserved. Acts 6:1-6 also shows the establishment of the priesthood under the Apostles of the Church.

Most Catholics are perhaps not staying away from the Confessional because they doubt the teachings of the Church regarding confession. Perhaps they are too busy pre-occupied with other things or they take their religion too lightly. Attending Mass on Sundays is not enough. The Church requires people to make their confession at least once a year. But the Church also teaches the need for regular confession and says people who are not in a state of grace and who have committed mortal sins should refrain from receiving Holy Communion without making a confession. Some Protestants argue that only Jesus Christ can forgive sins and not any priest. But the Bible records Christ's institution of the Sacrament following his Resurrection from the dead when he first appeared to the assembly of apostles (John 20:19-23):

After His crucifixion and death Jesus appeared to His disciples and said to them "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Christ gave His first priests, the apostles, the authority to forgive and retain sins. It was His intention that all sin be forgiven through the Church by oral confession of sins to the priests. Of course this does not mean that God will not forgive sins if people who do not know the Catholic teaching confess directly to God. But for us Catholics who accept the interpretations of the Church it is necessary to confess our sins to the priests so that our sins can be forgiven or retained. Psychologists say there is a cathartic effect when a person acknowledges his mistakes and confesses them to another. In fact they themselves seek to find out what the person is hiding in his subconscious.

## My God and I

My parents were Roman Catholics, hence I was born into a Catholic family. When I was about one week old I was Baptised a Roman Catholic, in which Sacrament I had no say. My parents took me for Sunday Mass every Sunday of the year...here again I had no choice. It only inculcated in me the habit of going for Sunday Mass.....which I still practice. There is this misconception that those who go to Sunday Mass are good Catholics. I was educated at Catholic schools, where I was taught that God exists. I did not question this concept. I took it for granted. I was quite content with this way of life. In this context I am a Catholic more by circumstances than by conviction. Therefore I am not a good Catholic.

Do I really believe that there is a God? Statistics indicate that 94 percent of us human beings believe that there is a God, and I belong to that 94 percent. If there is no God, if there is no life after death, then to me there is no purpose in life here on earth. There is no purpose in trying to do what is right, if after death there is no "accountability" for my actions on earth. I therefore accept that there is a God.

Why do 94 percent of the human race believe that there is a God? Surely they cannot be wrong. To my mind it is because we humans do not know what the future holds for us.....we are subject to situations that are beyond our control. When we are in such situations we look up to a being Superior to us for assistance....because of my frailty I must have a God. Therefore one reason why we humans believe in God is to seek assistance in situations beyond our control. I now have a very satisfactory way of life. I lead my normal life, and in the event of any adverse situation which is beyond my control, I have a reliable "insurance cover".....my God. The premium I pay for this insurance cover is to lead a good life, and when I have a calamity I go to God with my insurance cover for assistance, and then there is this "catch 22" situation,..... God tells me that my policy does not cover my calamity, because in the small print at the very bottom of my policy is a clause which states..."if it conforms to God's plan...if it is for my good."

All my life I have done my best to faithfully pay my insurance premium. What do I do now?....change my Insurance Company? Can I blame God because I did not read the small print?.....should God have told me about the small print before I insured with Him? .....has my God failed me? Am I with the wrong Insurance Company? This is a very serious situation between my God and me.

When my God does not answer my prayer, I am disappointed, but more I am distressed, because this brings into question my belief that my God exists. Where is my God in my time of need? A question I cannot answer at that moment of time, except refer to catch 22.... that my prayer was not answered because..... it is not for my good.... what assurance, what proof do I have that it is not for my good. The answer to this question is vital in relation to my belief that my God exists.

The proof, the assurance I am looking for is available, if only I would take the



trouble to look for it.....I wish to relate one of the many instances in my life that provided the proof I was looking for. My first love in my college days was soccer, and it was my ambition that one day I would be able to play for "All Ceylon Schools"....and hence when my father was transferred to Kandy I sought admission at St. Anthony's College. But for good reasons the Rector refused me admission. I was very disappointed. I sought God's intervention but God nor the Rector changed the decision. I was very disappointed, my God had let me down. I was admitted to St. Sylvester's College. Approximately an year later the Sind Muslim College Pakistan Soccer Team toured Ceylon and played three matches, one against All Ceylon Schools. The Ceylon Football Association called for nominations from schools for selection. St. Anthony's College were not registered with the Ceylon Football Association and therefore were not eligible to nominate their players. I was nominated from St. Sylvester's College and I was selected to represent All Ceylon Schools. If I had "my way" and was admitted to St. Anthony's my ambition would not have been realised but thanks to the fact that "God had his way" my dream was realized. My God kept me waiting for over an year before he answered my prayer. Many such instances in my life provide me the "proof" I require that my God exists, and that it is best to accept "His way."

The best example I have of the catch 22 theory is Jesus Christ. Just before His crucifixion Jesus asked His Father to "take this cup from me." There is no human being who did the will of God better than Jesus and therefore He had the right to request that the bitter cup be taken away. But God did not grant His request. Had God granted His request there would have been no crucifixion, and without the crucifixion, there would have been no Resurrection and without a Resurrection there would be no Christianity. But God did it his way, and Jesus accepted God's way and therefore today I am a Roman Catholic by conviction-conviction that my God exists and He gives me what is best for me.

Tony Dirckze

## "Remain in me"

Having Loved you with an everlasting Love  
Having called you and you are mine  
Seeing your face and I long for you  
I will bring you with your light and peace.  
  
Loving you gives me happiness  
Calling by your name is wonderful

Seeking your company and waiting for you  
I will embrace you with my care and love.

I have loved you with all my heart  
I am with you till the end of my life  
Seeking your life and longing for your love  
I will give you the joy and hope.

Rev. Sr. A Christina Lourdes (H.F)



# The Problem of Abortion and God's Promise of Life

## (Part II)

Part I appeared in the issue of December 16, 2012)

In the previous article I elaborated using the birth stories of Isaac, Moses and Samuel that birth (or conception) has been presented by the scriptures within the context of God's promise.

The question that we need to ask in view of the problem of abortion is, *is the gift of human life a blessing or a curse? Further, can the appearance of human life at times be a burden, and if so, has God lied to us when He gave His first blessing of all to Adam and Eve to 'be fruitful and multiply'?*

This is a serious question. If the answer to these two questions is yes, then we may need to rethink our dogmas and probably rewrite them, because abortion can be justified on the fact that human life could be a curse at times and has to be terminated; because it would mean that God had indeed lied to us (I would touch on this again at the end of this article). The problem at hand then is not merely 'abortion' but also the 'truthfulness of God Himself'.

As we saw in the previous article, in the Bible the appearance of human life has been always depicted as a blessing; a blessing that fulfils God's promise to man. The Bible teaches us then that human life (and hence conception and birth of human life) is a blessing. This blessing is always a 'gratuitous gift of God' to us. In the scriptures human life appears as a 'gift'. Accepting this gift of life is a moral question that is put to the test by the problem of abortion.

In this second part of our reflection let us consider the births of the first children, Cain, Abel and Seth and the fulfilment of God's promise definitively in the birth of Jesus. Following this will be reflection to the current topic of abortion.

### • The birth of the first children: Cain, Abel and Seth

The first point that one has to make regarding the birth of Cain is that it happened after Adam and Eve had sinned against God. It would have seemed that God would not fulfil His original promise inscribed in the act of generation. On the contrary, He indeed fulfils it through the birth of Cain. The words of Eve at Cain's birth is of particular importance to understand the true sense of conceiving a child: *"I have produced a man with the help of the Lord"* (Gen 4:1). The birth is proclaimed by Eve to be a 'gift' and a 'gift from God' and not from Adam. The ownership of the first birth is given to God and not to man. So is the 'sense' of each birth. This birth was the first fulfilment of the promise and it was considered a 'blessing', in spite of the sin they committed against God. Therefore, the blessing and the promise of God inscribed in the act of generation is stronger than the act of sin and this blessing will never be retracted from it. What comes to the fore in the act of generation is the transcendent act of another, of God Himself. In the biblical sense, the first exultation of Eve (Gen 4:1) could have another important meaning. She exclaims with joy at the birth of Cain that she has been given a 'man'. Who is this 'man'? The word 'man' here is ambiguous. It would usually refer to Cain, her child (and the biblical scholars agree on that). But why

the use of the word 'man' and not the word 'child' or 'son'? It is no coincidence at all. However, the word 'man' (*ish* in Hebrew) is never used for a new born child but rather for an adult male. This exclamation brings to focus Adam's exclamation at the creation of Eve and called her 'woman' (*ishshah* in Hebrew). Hence, this exclamation of Eve at the birth of Cain indirectly refers to Adam. In this singular act is manifested not only the child, but also man, woman and God Himself. This exclamation has the form of 'recognition' – that is, Eve recognised God's act in the act of Generation, which also, as we saw, put Adam in a new light as if Adam and Eve have been born again at the birth of Cain. It is this 'recognition' of each other in the act of generation that man (both male and female) decides for his relationship with God as the origin of man woman, of every fertility and of every love.

This also brings forth another important aspect. The phenomenon of generation, with all other actions associated with it – that is, acts like sexual union between man and woman, conceiving a child and raising a child – is a 'relational' phenomenon. It not only involves husband and wife, but involves the child and ultimately God as well. That is why sexual union could never be thought of without reference to God – therefore without His nuptial blessing – and without reference to the possibility of generating a child, in this way the Holy Scriptures have already spelt out in a beautiful way and in the form of a 'blessing' the evils of pre marital sex and evils of contracepted sexual unions. The former separates the Author of life from sexual union, thereby making it a 'worldly' phenomenon that closes the sexual act in itself, and the latter separates the union from the blessing of a child, substituting it with a lie – that the appearance/conception of human life is a burden or a curse.

The birth of Abel, the second child of Adam and Eve, was strangely too silent, without any exclamations, as if to anticipate the tragedy that would later befall him at the hands of his brother Cain. Such silence is no coincidence. It reveals another facet of the phenomenon of life: Human life is 'vanity' (Ecclesiastes 1:2) and a 'puff of breath' (Psalm 144:4). This expression of life, in the Biblical sense, reveals to us the true passivity of the experience of life: Many things are beyond our control, or still better, cannot be controlled. It is true of each conception too. It is a gift, outside their control. That is why the gift of a child is never a right of the parents but a gift from God.

In the context of the murder of Abel by Cain, it would seem that a case has been build insurmountably to overrule the original blessing inscribed in the act of generation. This blessing was first marred by the fall of Adam and Eve and then by the death of Abel. However, at the birth of Seth, their third child, the silence associated with the birth of Abel is broken by another exultation by Adam (*"God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him"* Gen 4:25) this time mentioning all the three names, Cain, Abel and Seth. This third birth, however, is different, since it came after the trials of the fall and the murder. But the blessing of God inscribed in the birth of child overshadows such calamity. The idea of such a blessing will continue to resonate till Chapter II of the Book of Genesis with different genealogies, which are proofs

of the fulfilment of God's blessing. In spite of every sin (even as grievous as murder), the blessing of God inscribed in the birth/conception of a child will be manifested nonetheless. This will later reflect in the genealogy of the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17).

### • Jesus' birth and His identity as the Son

From the first letters of St. Paul to the four Gospels, the New Testament makes sure to point out that the Incarnation of Jesus was the definitive fulfilment of God's promise. The blessing inscribed in the phenomenon of generation is brought to fulfilment in the birth of the 'Son of God'. This filial identity of Jesus with God is stressed twice in the account of the Annunciation (*"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High"* Lk 1:33; *"therefore the child to be born will be Holy; he will be called Son of God"* Lk 1:35). The identity of Jesus is not only associated with his actual birth but also with His conception. He is also the 'son of Mary' from conception (angel Gabriel announced just that-*"And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus"* Lk 1:31). The beauty of such an identity is that it is a 'relational identity'. Jesus is not just a 'Son' but a 'Son of ...', that is, 'Son of God' and 'Son of Mary'. His identity is related to somebody else. Jesus' birth is the definitive fulfilment of God's promise inscribed in the gift of life. All other births are a participation of this fulfilment and therefore each appearance of life as a gift (be it conception or birth) is a reminder of that blessing. In this sense birth (or conceiving of it) always originates from a filial relationship with God and with parents. Every human birth is not a simple birth of something, but a birth of someone.

Applied to the human embryo, the appearance of a child in the womb goes beyond any difficulties the mother or father or others undergo and presents to us the blessing of God. This human life is not a simple biological life without an identity, but a child who is called a 'son' or a 'daughter'. When Jesus was conceived he was already the 'Son of God'. However, His birth gave us also the supreme example of how a birth could present itself as a challenge to the parents. Mary was not married and she herself expressed the anxiety, *"How can this be, since I am a virgin?"* (Lk 1:34). But let us remember that with difficulties God's reassurance is also given; *"Do not be afraid, Mary"* (Lk 1:30) or *"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit"* (Mt 1:20). Do not our births share the same anxieties? The anxieties never take God's blessing away from it. Whatever the circumstances be, God, who can bring good from evil, gifts us children as a blessing. The evil can never overshadow it.

The temptation in fact is to think that at times certain conceptions (such as abnormal foetuses, conceptions from rapes, foetuses suffering from diseases or even unexpected conceptions to a large family) can be a curse. Then the logical conclusion is that at these times the appearance of human life is not a blessing. Since such an idea is contrary to scriptural data, one has to conclude that God has lied to us. Isn't this the first temptation of all? Let's go into some detail.

When God created all that is necessary for the sustenance of Adam and Eve and asked them to eat from any tree but from the tree He called 'the



tree of the knowledge of good and evil' because if they did so God said, *"you shall die"* (Gen 2:17). Adam and Eve had only to 'believe' in God's word (and his providence) because they had all they needed. Then Satan tempted Adam and Eve using the same words that God used but this time with a twist (isn't this what the fundamentalists do?). Satan put the idea that God had 'lied' to them since, contrary to what God said, by eating from the tree of good and evil they will come to no harm; hence Satan said, *"you will not die"* (Gen 3:4). Satan's temptation was not simply to make them eat from the forbidden tree but rather to make them (dis)believe that God had lied to them.

The temptation is repeated at each instance when the parents (or others) decide to terminate a pregnancy. To think that 'God's first blessing of all (to be fruitful and multiply) was a lie' is this temptation. When a child presents itself to us (be it from a rape, or as a deformed foetus, etc.), it doesn't come alone, it comes enfleshed, or still better, incarnated, with God's blessing. As we could see now, procured abortion is not only a grave sin simply because it murders a person but also because it professes publicly that 'God had lied to us', that 'human life is not a blessing' but a curse and a burden at times. The scriptures clearly advises us all to be faithful to God's Word, even when the truth of that word is at times blurred. The fact is that God never lies and that only 'truth will set us free' (Jn 8:32).

Rev. Fr. B. Anselm Shiran  
S.T.L. (Milan) in Moral Theology  
Parish Priest-Mattumagala

## Premature Baby

Just born  
In flesh  
To love  
Compassion  
Selfless  
Mary bless  
Infant  
Innocence  
Now breathe  
God's will  
Flow blood  
In desire  
Grow up  
Be strong  
Live  
Witness  
Jesus in life  
Mother Mary  
Gives care  
Warm protection  
Until faith  
Completes  
Baby's journey

Miran Perera



# Visit to Sri Lanka of Assens Boys' Choir, Denmark

Assens Boys' Choir possessing a proud record of 152 years' history will be arriving in Sri Lanka to present a series of concerts to be organised by St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10.

The 42-member choral ensemble consists of boy Sopranos and Altos with young men in the Bass and Tenor categories. They have admirably performed in USA, Czech Republic, France, Brazil etc, to large audiences.

### The Programme of Concerts

• They will present their first concert of sacred songs at St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10 at 5.30 pm on Sunday, February 17, 2013. It will be under the title "Anno Fidei" 'Year of Faith'. The equally famous St. Cecilia's Choir of St. Joseph's College will also provide a segment of clas-

sical sacred songs. The final part will be a combined presentation of classical/polyphonic compositions by the Danish and Sri Lankan Singers

• The Assens' Choir will sing at Maris Stella College, Negombo on Monday, February 18, at 5.30 pm. Presenting a local segment at this concert will be, Maris Stella College and Ave Maria Convent. Here too the final part will involve all local choirs in a combined presentation together with the Assens Boys' Choir.

• The visitors will present a choral concert at Trinity College Kandy at 5.30 pm on Wednesday, February 20. Here too, the Kandy Choirs' involvement is anticipated.

The next event will be in Nuwara Eliya at the Catholic Parish Church on Thursday February 21, at 4.00 pm, where a popular Sri Lankan choir too is expected to perform.

• The grand final concert will take place at 5.30 pm on Sunday, February 24, at St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10,

which the organisers are expecting to make a memorable "Festival of Choirs." The Assens' Choir of Denmark will be featured separately first. Thereafter they will join the local Catholic School choirs of over 500 singers in a magnificent choral finale.

The organisers, St. Cecilia's Choir of St. Joseph's College and management of the St. Joseph's College are making every effort

to make the visit of the Assens Boys' Choir – an unforgettable event which will give a great boost for promoting classical choral music in the country. Undoubtedly the keen and discerning music lovers of western music in Sri Lanka will be fortunate to enjoy a repertoire of serious yet melodious compositions from the great classical masters, in February 2013.

**Francis D'Almeida**  
Choral Director



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



An angry woman telephoned the grocer "I sent my darling son to get three pounds of ripe red grapes but you sent me only two pounds." "Madam, I know my scales are accurate, have you weighed your darling son?"

**Rev. Fr. Fracced Anthony Fernando OMI**

### Thoughts that haunt me

The Panchatantra is a collection of Indian fables or stories that contains lessons about living wisely. The Sanskrit 'pancha-tantra' means five chapters. Each of the five chapters contains a variety of stories told within a single frame story. The following story was told when a king asked a learned Brahman or Hindu priest to educate his three foolish sons. The Brahman teachers the boys with stories that are instructive as well as entertaining. The Panchatantra is intended as a 'textbook on the wise conduct of life.' The fables were collected around 200 B.C.

### The Lion Makers

There were four friendly Brahmans. Three of them were learned but lacked common sense. The other was not learned but had sense. One day they met for consultation. "What is the use of attainments if one does not travel, win the favour of kings and acquire money? Whatever we do, let us all travel."

When they had gone a little way, the eldest said, "One of us, the fourth, is a stupid person, he has no learning but only sense. Nobody gains the attention without scholarship or great learning. Therefore we will not share our earnings with him. Let him turn back and go home."

The second said, "My friend, you lack learning, please go home." However the third said, "No, this is not correct, we have been together since we were boys. So come along." They continued their journey. While they were traveling

## The Panchatantra



through a forest, they found some bones of an animal. One of them said, "A good opportunity to test our knowledge. Here lies some kind of animal. Let us bring it to life with the knowledge we have gathered."

The first said, "I know how to assemble the skeleton." The second said, "I can supply the skin, the flesh and blood." The third said, "I can give it life." So the first put the bones together, the second gave it skin, flesh and blood and the third was going to give it life. The fourth said, "Don't do it, this is a lion, if you give it life, it will kill us all."

"You fool," said the others, "do you want to consider our great learning as nothing and worthless?" "In that case," said the fourth, "wait a moment while I climb this tree."

The lion was brought to

life. It rose up and killed all three. The man who climbed the tree, waited till the lion had gone and got down the tree and made his escape.

"Scholarship is less than sense. Therefore seek intelligence Senseless scholars in their pride made a lion; then they died."

(Scholarship means academic achievement or book knowledge)

The moral: Book learning alone will not help you. Learn from experience, through the advice of parents, teachers and men of wisdom.

Albert Einstein, the great scientist once said, 'Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learnt in school.'

**Ananda Perera**



## A CROSS The way 103

By Sirohmi Gunsekera  
**Afraid**

"I pray desperately but I don't know if God hears me," confessed Manela to her best friend Shirin.

"Are you asking God to do things for you like making your problems disappear?" asked Shirin.

"Well, yes. I suppose so," replied Manela.

"You must understand that as we live we will have problems. It is our attitude to problems that must change So we must change. Consider them a challenge and ask God to give you the strength to cope," advised Shirin.

"We must try not to change other people. Perhaps we should simply leave the bad people for God to handle. If they hurt us, we should simply offer it up to God and simply let the hurt go away," said Manela.

"So what about justice?" chimed in Lola.

"Vengeance is mine. I will repay," said the Lord quoted Shirin, adding, "Sometimes, our desire for justice may lead us on the wrong path."

"Even if we try to remedy the faults of others, we may end up doing the wrong thing ourselves. So let us try to cope with whatever comes our way and try to act with a clear conscience," said Lola

"Yes, we must always listen to the little voice inside telling us what is right or wrong," said Manela, adding, "Then perhaps we don't have to pray so hard. Perhaps we should just let go and let God take over our lives. Then we don't have to feel so sinful and be afraid of punishment."

"I know. Most Catholics pray, often mechanically, and then spend their days in fear of the wrath of God," said Lola, adding, "That is the Old Testament idea of an Avenging God taking an eye for an eye. After Jesus came and died for our sins, we have an understanding of a Compassionate and All-Merciful God who is our Father, Mother and best friend!"

### WORD OF GOD

Now Available on the Internet!

Website: [http://www.aquinas.lk/word\\_of\\_god.php](http://www.aquinas.lk/word_of_god.php)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/WOG2013>

Twitter: @WordOfGod2013



- Daily Reflections
- Sunday Reflections
- Biblical Exegesis
- Research Articles
- Questions & Responses
- Biblical Courses
- Miscellaneous

"For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ"  
~ St. Jerome

### AQUINAS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE Faculty of Theology



"The web is contributing to the development of new and more complex intellectual and spiritual horizons, new forms of shared awareness."

In this field too we are called to proclaim our faith that Christ is God, the Saviour of humanity and of history, the one in whom all things find their fulfilment."

Pope Benedict XVI,  
World Day of Social Communications, 2011.





# Art & Architecture in Liturgy

Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando



## Welcome to His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith 110th Anniversary Celebration of Holy Family Convent - Bambalapitiya HFC 1903 - 2013 HFC



Arrival of His Eminence



Led by the School Office Bearers



Guard of Honour by the teachers



College School Hewisi Band



College Western Band



Primary School Hewisi Band



Welcoming everyone



Declaring the 110th Anniversary



Lighting the Anniversary candle



Concelebrating the Anniversary High Mass



Section of the School Children



Blessing the new Primary Computer room



Parents and well-wishers



Cutting the Anniversary cake



Performance by the Primary School



Choir

Performance by the Sinhala Choir



Rhythmic fusion between the Up-country, Low-country and the Bharathadances



The School Choir



# God Comes to Meet Man

## CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



CCCB

men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. And furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation, he manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning." He invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice.

**55•** This revelation was not broken off by our first parents' sin. "After the fall, (God) buoyed them up with the hope of salvation, by promising redemption; and he has never ceased to show his solicitude for the human race. For he wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing."

father's house, and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations." "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

**60•** The people descended from Abraham would be the trustee of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church. They would be the root onto which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe.

**61•** The patriarchs, prophets and certain other Old Testament figures have been and always will be honoured as saints in all the Church's liturgical traditions.

### God forms His people Israel

**62•** After the patriarchs, God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He established with them the covenant of Mount Sinai and, through Moses, gave them his law so that they would recognise him and serve him as the one living and true God, the provident Father and just judge, and so that they would look for the promised Saviour.

**63•** Israel is the priestly people of God, "called by the name of the LORD," and "the first to hear the Word of God," the people of "elder brethren" in the faith of Abraham.

**64•** Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting Covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts. The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the People of God, purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which will include all the nations. Above all, the poor and humble of the Lord will bear this hope. Such holy women as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Judith and Esther kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation. The purest figure among them is Mary.

### III. Christ Jesus — "Mediator and Fullness of All Revelation"

#### God has said everything in His Word

**65•** "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son." Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1-2:

In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word — and he has no more to say... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation

would be guilty not only of foolish behaviour but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

#### There will be no further Revelation

**66•** "The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

**67•** Throughout the ages, there have been so-called "private" revelations, some of which have been recognised by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.

Christian faith cannot accept "revelations" that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such "revelations."

#### IN BRIEF

**68** *By love, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, superabundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life.*

**69** *God has revealed himself to man by gradually communicating his own mystery in deeds and in words.*

**70** *Beyond the witness to himself that God gives in created things, he manifested himself to our first parents, spoke to them and, after the fall, promised them salvation (cf Gen 3:15) and offered them his covenant.*

**71** *God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and with all living beings (cf Gen 9:16). It will remain in force as long as the world lasts.*

**72** *God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity.*

**73** *God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant for ever: The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him.*

(Excerpts from  
*Catechism of the Catholic Church*)

#### ARTICLE I

## The Revelation of God

### I. God Reveals His "Plan of Loving Goodness"

**51•** "It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature."

**52•** God, who "dwells in unapproachable light," wants to communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son. By revealing himself God wishes to make them capable or responding to him, and of knowing him, and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity.

**53•** The divine plan of Revelation is realised simultaneously "by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other" and shed light on each other. It involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons repeatedly speaks of this divine pedagogy using the image of God and man becoming accustomed to one another: The Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man, according to the Father's pleasure.

### II. The Stages of Revelation In the beginning God makes Himself known

**54•** "God, who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides

Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death.... Again and again you offered a covenant to man.

#### The Covenant with Noah

**56•** After the unity of the human race was shattered by sin God at once sought to have humanity part by part. The Covenant with Noah after the flood gives expression to the principle of the divine economy toward the "nations," in other words, toward men grouped "in their lands, each with [its] own language, by their families, in their nations."

**57•** This state of division into many nations, each entrusted by divine providence to the guardianship of angels, is at once cosmic, social and religious. It is intended to limit the pride of fallen humanity, united only in its perverse ambition to forge its own unity as at Babel. But, because of sin, both polytheism and the idolatry of the nation and of its rulers constantly threaten this provisional economy with the perversion of paganism.

**58•** The Covenant with Noah remains in force during the times of the Gentiles, until the universal proclamation of the Gospel. The Bible venerates several great figures among the Gentiles: Abel the just, the king-priest Melchisedek — a figure of Christ — and the upright "Noah, Daniel, and Job." Scripture thus expresses the "heights of sanctity that can be reached by those who live according to the Covenant of Noah, waiting for Christ to "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."

#### God chooses Abraham

**59•** In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his



# A Timeless 155 Years with Our Blessed Virgin Mary

Lourdes, is a quiet little village in the lower most part, of the South of France that lies at the foot of the Pyrenees Mountains. Today millions of pilgrims or visitors come here to pray, each in their own languages, but back then, it was just another ordinary, poor little town. She was yet another poor, sick, and illiterate girl when God decided to change it forever.

On February 11, 1858, Bernadette Soubirious' mother tells her that there was no firewood left in the house. So, Bernadette and her sister leave with a neighbour friend to the River Gave, to gather wood.

It is here, near the grotto of Massabielle, in the opening of the rock amidst a cloud, that little Bernadette who was then on her own, sees a Lady whom she describes as a "young girl, sixteen, or seventeen years old, who wore a white dress, with her hair covered in a long white veil. On top of each of her bare feet was a pale yellow rose, the same colour as her rosary beads." This Lady is said to have motioned Bernadette to come nearer in a motherly manner, when Bernadette is said to have knelt down, made the sign of the cross after Our Lady and recited the Rosary. As Bernadette prays the Rosary, the Lady passes the beads of her Rosary between her fingers, but remains silent. However, she does recite the Gloria's with her. The apparitions continue for 16 more days and on February 18, the day of the third apparition, Bernadette asks Our Lady her name. To this the Lady replies, "It is not necessary. Would you be kind enough to come here for fifteen days?" Bernadette promises to, and Our Lady responds "I also promise to make you happy, not in this world, but the next."

During these days Our Lady entrusts her earnest concerns about the world to this little girl. St. Bernadette says that many times Our Lady had become deeply saddened and asked her to, "Pray for sinners." In the apparitions that follow Our Lady tells Bernadette to tell the parish priest to erect a sanctuary in this place and that people should come here in procession. When the parish priest hears this, he asks Bernadette to ask Our Lady for a miracle. To this request Our Lady merely smiles and says "Penance, Penance, Penance," and asks her to kiss the ground for the conversion of sinners and tells her to, "Go and drink and wash your face at the fountain and eat the grass there," and points to the grotto. Seeing no fountain, she sees Mary giving a new sign and starts to dig down into the dirt with her hands and successfully digs a hole. Suddenly through the rocks, water appears and rapidly fills the hole. Mixed with swampy dirt, Bernadette tries to drink it three times and throws it away, but in the end she drinks and washes her face with it.

As the days pass, the water loses its murkiness and becomes clearer. Since that day up till now, these waters have produced countless miracles and healing, all spiritually, physically and mentally. Doctors, who examine these cures, have no choice but to call it the intervention of God. Eventually, the last day of the apparition arrives, March 25, the feast of the Annunciation. The Blessed Virgin Mary appears brighter than ever, in front of a multitude of people at this solemnity. Bernadette asks Our Lady her name once again.

At this Our Virgin separates her folded hands and lifts

them up towards heaven along with her head. Then once again uniting her hands in front of her chest and more brilliant than the light that surrounds her, directs her gaze to heaven and says, "I am the Immaculate Conception". Little Bernadette hearing these words for the first time, repeats them all the way to the rectory until she sees the parish priest and blurts the words out. The priest is surprised to hear her speaking about a dogma that the then Pope had proclaimed only a year ago and had no choice but to believe that it was really the Blessed Virgin Mary who had manifested herself here in Lourdes to this poor, illiterate girl, here out of all the places and all people, and eat the grass there."

The main significance of these apparitions is the appreciation from heaven of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. She presents herself as a model of purity for the world so much in need of this virtue.

In Lourdes the cold wind whistles through the trees near the grotto and touches and blows over the clear waters of the River Gave. The statue that is in place where Our Lady initially appeared is a beautiful remembrance of the Blessed Virgin who appeared that day in the most unlikely of places, in that then cold, dark, dirty cave. Just as she the Queen of Heaven spoke to Bernadette then from heart to heart, she too speaks to us in the same way. She calls us to her amidst all our troubles, despair and problems. Unlike, the queens we see here on earth, she is a Queen that is not far from us at all. Instead she is so close to us that she comes to our side whenever we call upon her.

With a history of 155 years, Lourdes tells us of a time-

less incident where God chose to open a fountain of graces for all mankind. This fountain has flowed on and grows with time. It is a message of hope and life for all mankind in a world that seeks to destroy life.

In Lourdes we see three actions being done. Some touch the rock, others burn a candle or wash in the waters of the spring or drink it. These three actions are not superstitious. Instead they sum up the whole message of Lourdes. To wash and drink at the springs reminds us of the water at Baptism that washed away our sin. It reminds us of God's love, of the water that flowed from the pierced side of Christ on that first Good Friday. By washing from the spring we say, "Lord, look at how I need your love. Look at how, so often, I do not see what is important. Just as life is impossible without water so my life has no meaning without you."

When we light a candle, it signifies the light. It is a small and weak flame that could be blown off with a gust of wind. However, this flame lights up the night. It reminds us of the candle we received during Baptism calling us to our Catholic faith.

Last, but not least, we touch or lean on the walls of the grotto or the rock. In Hebrew, the word "rock" means God alone. In life we lean on or touch something strong when we have no more strength to go on and to regain the strength needed to go on. So this action is often followed up by a prayer which goes, "Lord, see my life, my despair, my lack of faith. I don't always know where I am. Come to my help. In this world that is always on the move, where all is in a hurry, a great hurry, do not permit me, Lord, to stray from the right path. Lord, I trust in



you. I believe in you, you are my rock."

Finally, we pray in front of the grotto. All these actions direct us to this one manifold expression of faith and love. Prayer. Be silent and enter into prayer. She asks us to take our most powerful weapon in our hand, the Rosary and recite it while deeply contemplating on the sacred mysteries of Our Lord's life, that simple, yet powerful prayer that links heaven and earth. Allow yourself to be guided by Our Lady to meet Christ. So just like Our Blessed Mother once said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to thy will," and St. Bernadette who without any hesitation, shame or fear carried out her mission on earth. We too will be able to listen to Mary when she says, as she once said in Cana, "Do whatever he tells you." So that in the end we will be of spirit to say "Speak Lord for your servant is listening" and allow him to carry out his amazing will and wondrous design in your life and give that inner peace and happiness you have been so longing for and which you will only find in God.

Matthew Chanka

## Looking beyond Asian Church Leaders' 40-Year Journey

By Hector Welgampola

Asia experienced an epiphany well ahead of last Christmas, when Vietnam welcomed Catholic cardinals and archbishops from 22 Asian countries. If some of the visiting Asian Church magi saw a symbolic glow in the yellow star of the country's flag, the Vietnam Communist Party leader's January 22, visit with Pope Benedict XVI kindled further hope.

Just as Nguen Phu Trong's visit was the first time a top Vietnamese Communist leader met with a pope, the December 11-16 plenary assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) was the first such event in a communist country. Assembly host, Cardinal John Baptist Pham Minh Man of Ho Chi Minh City described it as "a miracle." The event had been set earlier for mid-November, almost coinciding with the anniversary of Vietnam's re-entry ban on then Ho Chi Minh City coadjutor Archbishop (later cardinal) Francis Xavier Nguen van Thuen on November 11, 1982.

And 30 years later, with Car-

dinal Van Thuan now on the path to sainthood, some 70 Asian cardinals and bishops were allowed entry to Vietnam. Evidently, both Church and State have moved on since then, although some diplomatic hang-ups still continue. Whether this may or may not meet curial criteria as the awaited miracle for Venerable Van Thuan's beatification, a Chinese cardinal attending the assembly asked fellow bishops to pray for a not-unrelated miracle. "I hope one day that the FABC assembly can take place in Mainland China," Chinese Cardinal John Tong Hon of Hong Kong told fellow Church leaders.

The Asian Bishop's 10th plenary assembly marked yet another stage in the FABC's staggered 40-year-long epiphany. Born amid the post-Vatican II euphoria, in 1972 the FABC set up its headquarters in Hong Kong, then a British colony. Asian bishops were well aware that the colony would soon reintegrate with the Chinese Mainland, two FABC founding fathers told me in the 1980s. Cardinals Thomas Cooray of Sri Lanka and Stephen Kim-sou-Hwan of Korea were among the pioneering trio, the other being Indonesian

Cardinal Justinio Dharmojuwono, who had obtained Pope Paul VI's approval to set up the FABC. According to Cardinal Kim, during the 1970 papal visit to Asia they had been encouraged by overtures Pope Paul made from Hong Kong to "all Chinese people wherever they may be."

The unitive elements of liberative love preached in Asia by Pope Paul made a lasting impact. Cardinal Kim explained how despite the division of his own nation as North and South, the Korean Church was able to remain undivided. While being head of South Korea's Seoul Archdiocese, the Cardinal continued to be administrator of the apostolic jurisdiction of the North Korean capital Pyongyang. Seoul's Myondong Cathedral became a national symbol of the Christian community's engagement in a people's struggle. The magnanimity he nurtured bore fruit at the recent FABC Assembly when Bishop Peter Kang U-il of Cheju apologised to the Vietnamese people for Korean war crimes.

In the aftermath of papal documents "Octogesima Adveniens" and "Justice in the World", the Church had began

to speak a new language. Though often blamed for a one-step-forward but two-steps-backward diplomacy, the Church tried to play a unitive role in mainstream life and activities of several Asian nations. Development, justice and human rights came to stay as a new face of Christian witness. Such witness was not easy particularly in nations politically divided in the aftermath of colonialism and communism. As communities living scattered throughout the Asian diaspora, the "little flock" strived to contribute to integral development even in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

In some countries the Church frustrated traditionalists with courageous action. For example, the Indian Church's support for Dalits as well as the election of Cardinal Telespore Toppo, a Tribal, as Bishops' Conference head were prophetic moves. In other circumstances, local churches languished in mere token action amid political or ethnic crises in countries such as Vietnam, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Contd. on Pg. 15



# Our Own Miraculous Mother of Lourdes

A dream we all share is a pilgrimage to the miraculous Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France. I was blessed to fulfill my own dream. In that spiritual experience I stood confirmed in my belief that Mother of Lourdes is also very much alive among us here in our own country in that small church in Tewatte, Ragama. The church dwarfed in size by the neighbourhood Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka. Having reached three scores and ten in age my reminiscence of visits to our own Lady of Lourdes Church in Tewatte runs back to my early childhood days when living in the Colombo City, for family elders were then involved in business at the Port prior to nationalization.

A devout Catholic family with enormous Marian faith and as a unit we were in the habit of attending morning mass on first Saturday of the month at the Tewatte church rarely missing out of the habit that became a tradition. Travelling by steam train, Ragama was the third stop from Maradana Railway Station with Kelaniya and Hunupitya being the other two. We arrive at the Church the previous evening with my grandmother and small me enjoying the ride in the "Thirikkele" the main mode of transport from the station to the church with a huge "bathmala" and baggage for the night stay. Others in the family who are all sadly no more walk the distance on the roadway lined with "veralu" trees and shrubs. There were very few houses for it was a barren looking dry area. Closing on the church the functioning rubber factory was a relief site of activity because of the deafening silence around with nothing but the rubber tree jungle. Having settled ourselves beside a pillar inside the church, usually the second pillar on the left for we always were beaten to the first pillar by faithfuls arriving earlier, it was early dinner with the darkness rushing in. We anxiously await the sacristan with the Petromax lamp to provide some lighting. Torch lights we carry are for emergency use. Grandmother leads the prayers beginning with the Rosary running into many decades which I thought was endless at that time

and which went on till the Petromax lamp dimmed itself as if saying enough. Cool breeze in total darkness and a blissful silence at the feet of the miraculous Statue of Our Lady was a powerful prayer by itself. We always had the feeling that the Blessed Mother was benignly looking down on us. Morning Mass in heavy dew at the old open air Grotto now dismantled was celebrated in Latin by the bearded French Priest the Architect of the Basilica which then was at foundation stage. The Mission House was behind the Church now occupied by Providence Nuns. After mass the most looked forward to function was the bath with the miraculous water of the Holy Well the elixir for all illnesses physical and otherwise as believed and proven to us. Sickness not receptive to medicine was cured by the Blessed Mother with the water of the Holy Well. There were umpteen instances of miraculous cures too numerous to recall. However one standout instance which had no other rational explanation will never be erased from my memory where a young fair beautiful Hindu girl in her teens named Raneer was diagnosed very late by doctors to be suffering from an incurable cancer. She was rapidly deteriorating physically to mere skin and bones unable to gulp even a spoonful of water. Her family was closely known to us and our offer to help the dying girl with prayers at the feet of Our Lady of Lourdes at Tewatte was readily accepted by them perhaps as a last resort. In fact the parents in secret had been preparing for her burial expected to happen any moment. With the Priest's permission my aunt was brave enough to carry the dying girl, with her mother to the feet of Our Mother. On the first night a kind looking Lady with her head covered had appeared to the mother of the dying girl in a



dream and instructed her to instantly feed her daughter with water drawn from the Holy Well. The girl did gulp a spoonful of water brought and the rest is miraculous history.

The girl and her mother did spend three months in the Church with permission. Her recovery confounded the doctors. She married and became a mother. Her entire family became converts and her brother Jaya became a lay preacher of the Gospel. They lived in Mutwal when I last met them many years ago. This is just one such miracle I was a witness to and personally have known so many who were blessed with such favours by Our Mother in Tewatte. The gathering at the Church of families on every first Saturday of the month is ample testimony of blessings they have received. The Church remains the same in size but is internally modernized to meet the changing times when Holy Mass is celebrated. It is with great emotion that I see the small statute of Our Lady of Lourdes high above the altar where She was through all those years of nostalgic memories. May She remain there for generations to come Blessing all those who come to Her feet in Faith and sincere Devotion.

**Adolf Silva**  
Nagoda, Kandana

## Letters to the Editor ...

### A priest par-excellence

Many of the younger generation may not know that our national anthem 'Sri Lanka Matha' (originally 'Namo Namo Matha') was written in 1940 by Ananda Samarakoon as a tribute to Sri Lanka, expressing sentiments of freedom,



**Rev. Fr. Marcelline Jayakody**

unity and independence. The song became popular and was chosen to be sung at the first Independence Celebrations held on February 4, 1948. Since the composer, Ananda Samarakoon had gone abroad at that time, Rev. Fr. Marcelline Jayakody OMI was invited by the then Minister of Finance, J. R. Jayawardene to train the students of Museaus College to sing at this historic event. Fr. Jayakody rose to the occasion, trained the choir and presented the song. It was acclaimed by all and it went a long way towards making 'Namo Namo Matha' our national anthem in 1951.

In 1983 Fr. Marcelline Jayakody was given the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award. The Citation for the Award said that in electing Fr. Jayakody to receive the Award, the Board of Trustees 'recognised his enriching his country's world of song and music with spiritual and human rejoicing'.

Fr. Jayakody was also at one time the Editor of the Gnanartha Pradeepaya and it was he who designed the front page masthead which is still carried by the paper.

**Ainslie Joseph**

The 'Indian Link' a community newspaper in Melbourne, Australia, in its November 2012 publication reported the bringing of the sacred relic, the arm of the Saint Francis Xavier to South Australia and Victoria in October 2012.

It said that the Christians of Goan origin in Australia came in large numbers to welcome the relic of St. Francis Xavier which is usually venerated at the Church of Jesus in Rome since it was detached from the body of the Saint in 1614. It further reported that the Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, His Grace Peter Comensoli who co-ordinated the Australian leg of the tour of the relic was quoted as saying in the Australian media that

## Venerating St. Francis Xavier



it is "very rare" for the relic of the arm to leave Rome and it is that with which St. Francis Xavier baptised many thousands of people.

The report further stated that after the death, the Saint's body was brought to Goa to honour his wish to be buried there and that Goans have reciprocated their

love in abundance and his relics have been preserved in the Mausoleum at the BOM JESUS Basilica at Goa. For the Catholic community of the entire world the Basilica has become a place of pilgrimage for veneration at least once a year.

While reading, I was reminded of the bringing of the sacred relics of St. Don Bosco to Sri

Lanka last year. May we be fortunate to venerate the sacred relics of St. Francis Xavier too. The majority Sri Lankan Catholic community may not be able to visit Goa and venerate St. Francis Xavier. It would be a significant experience to witness and venerate with piety, prayer and reverence the sacred relics of St. Francis Xavier considering the life and ministry of the Saint who is very popular in our country.

May I therefore, kindly request the Church Authorities to explore the possibility of bringing the sacred relics of St. Francis Xavier to Sri Lanka.

**Vivian Fernando**  
Melbourne

## Towards curtailing mixed marriages

It was reported recently that the Catholics population is dwindling slowly but steadily. One of the reasons adduced was 'Mixed Marriages'.

In most mixed marriages, the Catholic partner gradually 'cools down' in faith and practice. It is only in a few marriages where the partners have known each other for sometime, that the 'Faith' holds on. It was also reported that the divorce rate among Catholics is also on the increase. This is mainly due to the fact that many got married, for the sake of getting married to 'whoever comes their way'.

Present day parents are confronted with many problems regarding their children. Finding a school, thereafter employment and finally finding a suitable Catholic partner are the main wor-

ries. Unlike buying a vehicle or a house, which one could dispose of it not satisfied, marriage is for lifetime. Marriage has now become a 'gamble'. Many parents are now desperate, 'please find a partner, any race, any religion,' is the plea.

The 'demand' and the 'supply' are both available but unfortunately there is no 'avenue' for the two to meet. Both the 'Catholic Messenger' and the 'Gnanartha Pradeepaya' are rendering a yeomen service through 'matrimonials'. Nevertheless due to the fact that the 'addresses' are spread across the country and since expenses involved in frequent travel are high, they are inconvenient to the average family. It is also not easy to make inquiries about a family in a distant area. The demand is from Parishes closer to home.

The Church is presently involved in many social activities helping the laymen. It would be of immense help to the 'desperate' parents, if 'Matrimonial Data Banks' are established in every Deanery. Catholic parents could then avail themselves of this 'facility' to find a suitable Catholic partner for their children without much inconvenience.

It does not in anyway suggest that the Church should play the part of a marriage broker. It only requires maintaining personnel data to be made available to parents for selection. A few nuns and a few selected senior laymen from the Deanery could form a committee to maintain the 'data'. The Church would then be fulfilling a great service to the most urgent problem of many parents and also to curtail mixed marriage, divorce and separation.

**Neomal Perera**



# Our Lady, Regina Pacis: Queen of Peace

The title of the Blessed Virgin as "Our Lady of Peace" used to be commemorated on the January 24, in the old calendar. It is still celebrated as a Memorial of the Blessed Virgin in some countries. Incidentally, the commemoration of the World Day of Peace is linked to the festivity of the Divine Motherhood. It coincides with the Feast of the Maternity of Our Lady on January 1.

Every time we pray the Holy Rosary, one of the invocations of the Litany invokes her as the "Queen of Peace." Through this Marian invocation, the Most Holy Virgin is presented to us as the dispenser of this lasting interior peace promised by Christ to his disciples. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27).

Wishing a person peace was, and still is, the usual form of greeting among Jews and Arabs. "Shalom" is a typical salutation among the Hebrews since time immemorial. The longing for peace is so deeply engraved in their hearts that their main city, Jerusalem, was named etymologically from the word "peace" or "shalom," ("saalem").

"Peace" was the greeting Jesus used, and which the Apostles continued to use, as we can see from their letters (cf. 1 Pet 1:3; 3 Jn 15; Rom 1:7; etc.). The Church still uses it in the Liturgy: For example, before Communion the celebrant wishes those present peace, a condition for worthily sharing in the Holy Sacrifice (cf. Mt 5:23) and also a fruit of that Sacrifice.

On our Lord's lips this common greeting acquires its deepest meaning; peace is one of the great messianic gifts (cf. Is 9:7; 48:18; Mic 5:5; Mt 10:22; Lk 2:14; 19:38). The peace which Jesus gives us completely transcends the peace of the world (cf. note on Mt 10:34-37), which can be superficial and misleading and compatible with injustice.

The peace of Christ is, above all, reconciliation with God and reconciliation of men with one another; it is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22-23); it is "serenity

of mind, tranquility of soul, simplicity of heart, a bond of love, a union of charity: No one can inherit God if he does not keep his testament of peace, or live in unity with Christ if he is separated from Christianity" (St Augustine, *De verbis Domini serm.*, 58).

Mary brought Jesus to the world by conceiving Him in her womb. And "Christ 'is our peace' (Eph 2:14). Today, now and forever He repeats to us: 'My peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you'... Never before in the history of mankind has peace been so much talked about and so ardently desired as in our day... And yet again and again, one can see how peace is undermined and destroyed... Peace is the result of many converging attitudes and realities; it is the product of moral concerns, of ethical principles based on the Gospel message and fortified by it.

"In his message for the 1971 Day of Peace, my revered predecessor, that pilgrim for peace, Paul VI, said: "True peace must be founded upon justice, upon a sense of the untouchable dignity of man, upon the recognition of an indelible and happy equality between men, upon the basic principle of human brotherhood, that is, of the respect and true love to each man, because he is man'. This same message I affirmed in Mexico and in Poland. I reaffirm it here in Ireland. Every human being has inalienable rights that must be respected. Each human community — ethnic, historical, cultural or religious — has rights which must be respected.

"Peace is threatened every time one of these rights is violated. The moral law, guardian of human rights, protector of the dignity of man, cannot be set aside by any person or group, or by the State itself, for any cause, not even for security or in the interests of law and order. The law of God stands in judgment over all reasons of State. As long as injustices exist in any of the areas that touch upon the dignity of the human person, be it in the political, social or economic field, be it in the cultural or religious sphere, true peace will not exist... Peace cannot be established by violence, peace can never flourish in a climate of

terror, intimidation and death. It is Jesus himself who said: 'All who take the sword will perish by the sword' (Mt 26:52). This is the Word of God, and it commands this generation of violent men to desist from hatred and violence and to repent" (John Paul II, Homily at Drogheda, September 29, 1979).

The yearning for peace is universal, because God himself has sown it in human hearts. Peace! This great, heartfelt aspiration of every man and every woman is built day after day by the contribution of all and by treasuring the wonderful heritage passed down to us by the Second Vatican Council with the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which says, among other things, that humanity will not succeed in "the establishment of a truly human world for all men over the entire earth, unless everyone devotes himself to the cause of true peace with renewed vigour" (n. 77).

If peace is the aspiration of every person of good will, for Christ's disciples it is a permanent mandate that involves all; it is a demanding mission that impels them to announce and witness to "the Gospel of Peace," proclaiming that recognition of God's full truth is an indispensable pre-condition for the consolidation of the truth of peace.

May this awareness continue to grow so that every Christian community becomes the "leaven" of a humanity renewed by love.

"And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Lk 2: 19). The Holy Father notes that first day of the year is placed under the sign of a woman, Mary. The Evangelist Luke describes her as the silent Virgin who listens constantly to the eternal Word, who lives in the Word of God. Mary treasures in her heart the words that come from God and, piecing them together as in a mosaic, learns to understand them.

Thus, Pope Benedict XVI encourages us, "Let us too, at her school, learn to become attentive and docile disciples of the Lord. With her motherly help, let us commit ourselves to working enthusiastically in the "workshop" of peace, following Christ, the Prince

of Peace.

But "When a man forgets his eternal destiny, and when the horizons of his life are limited by his earthly existence, he is content with a fictitious peace, with a mere outward appearance of tranquility. All he asks is the illusory security of attaining the greatest possible material well-being with the least effort. In this way he builds an imperfect and unstable peace, since it is not rooted in the dignity of the human person, a person made in the image and likeness of God and called to his divine sonship. You must never be content with these substitutes for peace, for their fruit produces the most bitter disillusionment. Jesus Christ emphasised this when he said to his disciples shortly before his ascension into heaven: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give it to you (John 14:27).

"There are thus two kinds of peace: That which men can make for themselves alone, and that which is the gift of God; ... that which is imposed by force of arms and that which is born in the heart. The former is fragile and insecure; it can be called a mere appearance of peace, for it is founded on fear and mistrust. The latter, on the contrary, is a strong and durable peace, and being founded on justice and love, it permeates the heart. It is a gift God gives to those who love his Law (cf Ps 119:1 65) (John Paul II, Address to UNIV-86, Rome, March 24, 1986).

We put this struggle to fulfil God's law under the protection of Our Lady of Peace. We ask that she obtain victory for us from her Son, and that a wave of true peace spreads through the entire world as a consequence of the greater effort by Christians to correspond to Divine Grace.

However, if we truly wish peace to reign in the world today, each of us should have that inner peace inside our souls. Peace is nothing else but tranquility of order. When there is order there is peace. Our life and everything in this world is ordained to God. Whenever, this right order of things is disrupted, there are tensions both in the personal as well as in

the level of society or of a nation and the family of nations, as a whole. Hence, the greatest disorder is sin and it is the source of the greatest turmoil.

Every time we offend God, we lose our interior peace. So, let us return to the Lord as many times as necessary. If at any time we are ashamed of the particular faults we commit, Our Blessed Mother will be our first line of support. Little by little through her motherly intercession she will make the road of life easier for us to travel. When a child strays from the yard, what attentive mother would ever refuse to help the little one return to the safety of home? And so it is with Our Lady and us.

"The Mother of God; who sought for her Son so anxiously when He was lost through no fault of her own and experienced such great joy in finding him again, will help us retrace our steps and put right whatever may be necessary when because of our carelessness or our sins we have been unable to recognize Christ. With her help we will know the happiness of holding him in our arms once more, and telling him we will never lose him again (St. Josemaria Escrivá, Friends of God, 278).

Let us invoke our Mother then, 'Holy Mary, Refuge of Sinners



and our strength, grant us the grace to seek your help whenever we stray from the love of your Son, even in small ways. Help us to increase the contribution we have for our own personal sins and for the sins of others!

Holy Mary is the Queen of Peace, and thus the Church invokes her.

So when your soul or your family are troubled, or things go wrong at work, in society or between nations, cry out to her without ceasing. Call to her by this title: "Regina pacis, Queen of peace, pray for us. Have you at least tried it when you have lost your calm? You will be surprised at its immediate effect.

Mary is the faithful Mother who stands fearlessly beside the cross as her Son sheds His blood for our salvation and reconciles all things to Himself in peace (Preface, Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace).

**Rev. Fr. Daniel Icatlo**

## BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE LOURDES WILLIAM (NEE D'ALMEIDA)



12th February

Please pray in thanksgiving for the life of Lourdes, for all the love she gave and for all the many good ways through which she touched the lives of others. May Lourdes be found worthy of the gift of eternal life.

Lovingly and prayerfully remembered by Joe, Jerome, Victoria, Lucy, Regina, Francis, Jacinta, Benildus, Hilary, Xavier, Dominic, Assunta, Peter and family members (N5768)



## Annual Inter-House Sports Meet of St. Lawrence's Convent



Rev. Fr. Ranjith Madurawela, The General Manager of Catholic Private Schools and the Archdiocesan Director of Education was the Chief Guest at the 48th Annual Inter House Sports Meet 2013 held on the January 18, 2013.

In an era of globalization and modern technology, sports and games too play an important role in today's developed world, in terms of recreation, leadership, skills and competency. This is exactly what the 48th Annual Inter-House Sports Meet of St. Lawrence's Convent left behind on the January 18, 2013. The event was held at St. Peter's College Grounds with the presence of Chief Guest, Rev. Fr. Ranjith Madurawela; General Manager of Catholic Private Schools and Arch-

diocesan Director of Education, alongside our school's Principal Rev. Sr. Chandrika Perera, Vice Principal Mrs. Marietta De Silva, Superior Rev. Sr. Antoinette Maria and other invitees.

The students assembled under the four Houses Lorretto, Lourdes, Lisieux and Lima led by respective House and Games Captains. Lisieux became the second runners-up, Lourdes the runners-up and Lorretto, were over-all champions of this year's Annual Sports Meet.

The entire event was supported by the co-ordination and the tireless efforts of students and teachers. Much credit goes out to the Prefect of Games Ms. Deepa Disanayake, Asst. Prefect of Games Ms. Prasadi Perera, Athletic Coach, Mr. J.W. Wimalaratne and Mr. M.D.P. Jeewantha. The event was further coordinated with the help of our Sports Captain Elina De Silva, Head Prefect Natasha Perera and the entire Prefect body of 2013.

*Renushi Ubeyratne - Student*

## Talent from Tewatte



H. Kavindu Nisheshene of Our Lady of Lourdes Tewatte, Parish, is a promising young cricketer.

He played for his school St. Peter's College Gampaha, in the Under 13 team and took six wickets, proving his ability with the ball.

## A faith experience

The Holy Mass strengthens us. The message of the word broken and the Holy Eucharist which we receive lovingly nourishes us, increases our Faith.

The people whom I meet on my way to and from church greet me pleasantly. I too greet them with a smile.

On January 28, when I was returning after Mass the drivers in the trishaw park called out to me and showed me a man, sitting on the way side. "Madam we don't know who he is and where he is from. He says that he cannot remember anything. Madam tell your God to help him.."

I kept the cross of my Rosary on his head and asked his name. He said "Gamini." Then I prayed St. Faustina's prayer with faith. "O Jesus may your pure and healthy blood circulate in Gamini's weak unhealthy organism, his weak unhealthy body and may vigorous life flow once again, if it is truly Your Holy Will." I closed my eyes tight and softly whispered to the Lord "Lord all these drivers are non-Catholic but they believe that you can do something. I too fully believe the same Lord. Do something for your own Glory."

I assured the drivers that Gamini will recover soon. I was really on my way to say the Rosary with two elderly ladies. I told them about Gamini and we prayed for him.

On the following day, the drivers greeted me very cheerful and said, "after you left we gave him some tea and found out where he lived and took him home...."

Your faith is shown in action. Your actions make others act and believe.

*Strong in Faith,  
Sees the Invisible,  
Believes the Incredible,  
Receives the Impossible.*

*Emilda S. Douglas*

## Move On

*[Thoughts for Independence Day]*

To restore peace in our land  
We need a united stand  
So Lankans all to the fore  
Lend a hand.  
Let's move on in our quest  
With dedication and zest  
Be a guide, move on through the land.



Lead on, move on  
With new vision inborn  
Lead on to horizons new  
With commitment and zeal  
Your mission fulfill  
Lead on and fresh spirit instill

There's peace to restore  
And goodwill to bestow  
Quality of life to improve  
Hapless folk out there  
Reaching out with a prayer  
That we befriend, house, clothe and sorrows share.

Lend a hand to the youth  
Let their lives bear fruit  
Help them follow, help them lead and aspire high  
The youth of today, tomorrow lead the way  
Our nation's wealth, its resource and pride.

Then on to new paths  
Unexplored vistas  
That's where to lead with vision replete.  
The environs the thrust, conservations' a 'must'  
This heritage we hold in trust.

So on to fresh fields and pastures new  
Striking out and blazing a trail  
Fresh vigour expend  
As on a new vision bent  
Resolution, dedication, prevail.

*Jeannette Cabraal*



## Mary

When we follow you  
we will not go astray.

When we pray to your  
we will not despair.

When we think of you  
we will not err.

When we hold you  
we will not fail.

When we approach you  
we will not fear.

When She leads us  
we will not be fatigued

When She favours us  
we will arrive safely

She keeps her Son  
from striking us

She keeps our virtues  
from escaping us.

She keeps our merits  
from being destroyed

She keeps our graces  
from being lost.

*A. Desmond Croos*



Children who are to enter Grade one, before stepping into their new classroom, are blessed by the Parish Priest of Ja-elathura.

## Man's plea to Nature

What's this - a one on one?  
Man is ready with his gun.  
Why is nature against us now?  
We only melted a little snow.

The waters rise, against us high,  
No place to run, no place to hide,  
We lacked a place to burst our bombs,  
And the corals brought more notes in lumps.

And could we stop our indifference,  
Which is better, oxygen or money?  
Oh nature! don't fight please understand,  
Because we all know, you're stronger than man.

*Carryle Ferreira*



### What it says ..... in the Readings

**I call you friends, says the Lord, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. (Jn 15:15)**

#### LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR C 10th Feb. - 17th Feb. 2013

**Sun: 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Is. 6:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:1-11;  
Lk. 5:1-11

**Mon: Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes**

Gen. 1:1-19; Mk. 6:53-56

**Tue: Gen. 1:20- 2:4a; Mk. 7:1-13**

**Wed: Ash Wednesday**

Joel 2:12-18; 2 Cor. 5:20-6:2;  
Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18

**Thu: Deut. 30:15-20; Lk. 9:22-25**

**Fri: Is. 58:1-9a; Mk. 9:14, 15**

**Sat: Is. 58:9b-14; Lk. 5:27-32**

**Sun: First Sunday of Lent**

Deut. 26:4-10; Rom. 10:8-13;  
Lk. 4:1-13

### PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

For the leaders of the Church that they may challenge all the people of God to grow in holiness of life. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

For all those who hold public office that they may bring all their talents and energies to serving those for whom they work. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

For all those who suffer from an inferiority complex and who have a low opinion of themselves that they may find the acceptance which will help them to believe in themselves. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

That we may face up to and accept our sins and weaknesses, but not be satisfied until we have tried to overcome them. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

By Hector Welgampola

Asia experienced an epiphany well ahead of last Christmas, when Vietnam welcomed Catholic cardinals and archbishops from 22 Asian countries. If some of the visiting Asian Church magi saw a symbolic glow in the yellow star of the country's flag, the Vietnam Communist Party leader's January 22, visit with Pope Benedict XVI kindled further hope.

Just as Nguen Phu Trong's visit was the first time a top Vietnamese Communist leader met with a pope, the December 11-16 plenary assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) was the first such event in a communist country. Assembly host, Cardinal John Baptist Pham Minh Man of Ho Chi Minh City described it as "a miracle." The event had been set earlier for mid-November, almost coinciding with the anniversary of Vietnam's re-entry ban on then Ho Chi Minh City coadjutor Archbishop (later cardinal) Francis Xavier Nguen van Thuen on November 11, 1982.

And 30 years later, with Cardinal Van Thuan now on the path to sainthood, some 70 Asian cardinals and bishops were allowed entry to Vietnam. Evidently, both Church and State have moved on since then, although

some diplomatic hang-ups still continue. Whether this may or may not meet curial criteria as the awaited miracle for Venerable Van Thuan's beatification, a Chinese cardinal attending the assembly asked fellow bishops to pray for a not-unrelated miracle. "I hope one day that the FABC assembly can take place in Mainland China," Chinese Cardinal John Tong Hon of Hong Kong told fellow Church leaders.

The Asian Bishop's 10th plenary assembly marked yet another stage in the FABC's staggered 40-year-long epiphany. Born amid the post-Vatican II euphoria, in 1972 the FABC set up its headquarters in Hong Kong, then a British colony. Asian bishops were well aware that the colony would soon reintegrate with the Chinese Mainland, two FABC founding fathers told me in the 1980s. Cardinals Thomas Cooray of Sri Lanka and Stephen Kim-sou-Hwan of Korea were among the pioneering trio, the other being Indonesian Cardinal Justinio Dharmojuwono, who had obtained Pope Paul VI's approval to set up the FABC. According to Cardinal Kim, during the 1970 papal visit to Asia they had been encouraged by overtures Pope Paul made from Hong Kong to "all Chinese people wherever they may be."

The unitive elements of

## Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**First Reading:**

Is. 6: 1-8

The Reading describes the call of Isaiah. It is addressed directly to him. As he is weak and sinful the Lord purifies him so as to make him worthy.

**Second Reading:**

1Cor.15: 1-11

St. Paul reminds the Corinthian community the purpose for which Christ became man. He became man in order to save the sinful mankind. He then reveals his own call. Though he had persecuted the Church, God now calls him to serve Him.

**Gospel:**

Lk. 5: 1-11

The Reading recalls the call of Peter and of his other followers. Jesus preaches from the boat and then performs the miracle of the catch of fishes. Peter requests the Lord to depart from him as he is a sinful man, Nevertheless it is he that the Lord makes an Apostle.

**Reflection.**

In the last few Sundays we saw how the Lord calls every one of us to serve Him in our own little way. For this reason

we were asked to respect one another as God calls people to serve Him in different ways according to their talents. There are different talents but it is the same Spirit. Last Sunday we were reminded of our prophetic call and how it should be exercised in a spirit of true love.

Today's readings show us how God calls even the sinful and the weak to serve Him. He not only just calls the sinful and the weak but even makes them powerful in order to serve Him. He calls them that they bear witness to Him with great faith, trusting on First Reading prophet Isaiah receives a vision from God. In this vision God calls him to be a prophet. But Isaiah expresses his weakness saying that he is with unclean lips and that he dwells in the midst of people with unclean lips. But the Lord cleanses him with a burning coal and gets him to serve Him. Then the prophet willingly dedicates his life to serve Him.

In the Second Reading St. Paul reminds his followers that Christ came not only to save the sinful man, but even reveals how God called him to serve Him even though

he had persecuted the Church. Though St. Paul himself accepts the fact that he is weak and sinful as he had persecuted the Church. God nevertheless called him in order that he bears witness to Him in a very strong way. His experience of the Lord in his conversion makes him a strong and a powerful witness of God.

In the Gospel when Jesus called Peter and others to be His Apostles, we see Peter accepting his weakness and his sinfulness, but nevertheless the Lord calls him to be an Apostle. Christ says. "Do not be afraid, henceforth you will be catching men." And with those words the Lord makes Peter strong and later we see how he and other disciples followed Him.

Therefore let us not fail to serve the Lord just because we feel weak. He will give us the necessary courage and strength to bear witness to Him. In the same manner that He strengthened the prophets and the Apostles. He will also make us strong in the call that He has given us. What we should do is to bear witness to Him with our heart and soul.

**Aid Story**

Just outside the fence that enclosed a beautiful Rose garden grew an apparently a worthless Brier bush. One day the brier felt a spade moving around it. Sure enough the gardener was digging around and lifting it up. Thought the Brier: "Wonder why he is doing that; I am worthless." Into the garden the owner took the Brier and planted it in a beautiful bed of Roses. "Oh my", thought the Brier, "What a mistake. I don't fit with these Roses at all."

But next morning the gardener came with a sharp knife, made a slit in the Brier, and grafted on a branch of a Rose bush. Came summer that Brier was bearing beautiful Roses. Under the breath the gardener was muttering; "your beauty! Little Brier does not come from you but what I put into you."

By grace we have been grafted on to the Body of Christ, as it were. His life has begun to course through our life. If we work with that divine life in us we also will bear Christ like blossoms, Christ like fruit.

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

## Lent: An Invitation for a Radical Change of Heart!

Lent begins with the realisation that we all are sinners and in need of God's pardon, mercy and love. "Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping and mourning. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God" (Joel 2:1-2). This is, undoubtedly, a season of grace which calls for a radical change of one's heart. Very often we approach Lent as the season only to give up something. For example, those of us who have got used to the habit of smoking, may give it up during these forty days, but as soon as the Lent is over, smug with success, may start it again, perhaps even more to catch up for the loss too. So what good has Lent done to such individuals? Has it contributed in any way for the true meaning of Lent, a radical change of heart?

Lent is a privileged time of grace offered to us to become better. It challenges us to nail our self-wills so as to die to ourselves in order to live the life of Christ in a more authentic and dynamic way. In this process, the good news of hope we have is that Our Lord has gone before us and not only given us a perfect example to follow, but ac-



companies us all along the journey, showering upon us His abundant graces in our struggle all throughout this blessed season for conversion. This gives us hope never to give up or lose heart. Instead, it pushes us to try all the more intensely to persevere.

Our Lord faced the temptations in the desert and was victorious, and it is only in His victory, we have our own. Our victory in and with the Lord is not very much a matter of being faithful to a set formula of "do's and don'ts" of life. But it is a time to allow ourselves to have a change of heart and realise that we are free to love and serve Our Saviour. This inner

freedom is the desired victory that one can have in his or her life through a sincere observance of Lent. This Lent invites us to ask ourselves the question: What is that one thing that is keeping me from being the person that Jesus Christ wants me to be? In this regard, let us pick just one, but make it real. Then, that one thing has to be the centre of our Lenten struggle. It has to be that one thing we fast from, that we struggle against and that we try to cast out from our lives. If each and every Lent in our lives is taken this way, how good and fruitful would it be in relation to our inner journey with the Lord? Will it not have a lasting impact in our lives each year in our call to holiness and discipleship?

Therefore, as we begin this season of Lent, let us be firmly determined to give meaning to it by our own way of handling it in order to turn a new leaf in our lives with the grace of God without turning back and carry out that conversion experience in Him Who strengthens us!

Rev. Fr. Eymard Fernando  
Sacred Heart Church,  
Hettipola