



**ST. MATTHIAS**  
14th May

# Messenger



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## Towards Reconciliation and Peace-building in Sri Lanka

**In a statement to the Press signed by members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka, the CBCSL laments that the recommendations of the Interim Report of the LLRC, issued almost a year ago has been disregarded by the government**

Hence the CBCSL affirms that the "government should take effective and definitive measures to implement the recommendations of the said commission, without further delay."

It also calls upon the Opposition and all its Constituents to lend its

support to the government.

*Full text follows:*

Much has been spoken in the recent past, both at international and local levels, concerning our beloved Motherland, Sri Lanka, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka too feels duty bound to express its own views, hopes and fears on what appears to be the focus of everyone's attention; the aftermath of the 30-year war and the need to progress towards reconciliation, harmony, peace and unity. We are also aware of the fact that the decisions taken now

will have far reaching consequences for the future, for better or for worse. Therefore it is only logical that as citizens of this country, and part of its religious leadership we feel deeply about the situation. We have thought it our obligation in conscience and also in obedience to the mandate given by the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matthew 5: 13-14), to place before our people and our political leadership what we consider best for the future well-being of our Motherland, especially in the context of the present



predicaments and challenges facing the country. We as a nation need to take a good look at what happened in the immediate past and the concerns expressed by different parties to the conflict and others and take some bold decisions which would help generate a new, vigorous and prosperous as well as

truly democratic Sri Lanka, where everyone feels happy to be part of.

In other words a new chapter has to be opened which is animated by a definite decision to get over, the mistakes of the past especially that of erasing memories of violence and the protracted war that took a heavy toll of human lives and wounded psyche of the nation. There is a strong need for a true spirit of reconciliation and peace with justice for the people. And we are conscious, also by the principles of our religious heritage, that such reconciliation will bear

fruit only if the parties concerned come to the table (of dialogue) with an open and "Conciliatory spirit," namely, a spirit of accountability and openness which respects the truth, to admit one's faults and mistakes in a spirit of regret and repentance and seek to rectify that which has not been correct. Only that will guarantee the presence of a true spirit of give and take and a sense of empathy and understanding indispensable in providing a satisfactory solution to the problems that had arisen.

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### 10th Anniversary of Bl. Sacrament Chapel

**1**0th anniversary of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Trincomalee was held recently. His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley Swampillai, presided at Holy Mass with Rev. Fr. George Dissanayake and Rev. Fr. Johnpillai.

Rev. Fr. George Dissanayake, the Parish Priest of St. Mary's Cathedral also conducted a charismatic healing and prayer service. The service ended with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

This is the first Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament to be inaugurated in the Diocese of Trincomalee/Batticaloa.



### Legion of Mary looks at contextual factors

A conference of Spiritual Directors of the Legion of Mary is to be held in August this year.

The event will be presided over by His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus Chandrasiri Perera OSB, as the Bishop in Charge of the Legion of

Mary, and co-ordinated by Rev. Fr. Ponsious Perera, National Spiritual Director, and assisted by the Senatus.

In the first week of the month, the Legion of Mary office bearers of the Sinhala, Tamil and English-speaking Councils, directly affiliated to the Senatus of Sri Lanka, met in Conference at the Retreat House, Tewatte, to discuss in depth, their calling as legionaries in the context of present realities.

Some of the suggestions that

emerged at the plenary discussion was that a Legion Day and Rosary Rally be held in Jaffna, in October, this year. The rally would begin from the parish of St. Anne's Church, Pandianthalvu where the First Legion Praesidium was started in 1936. The officers of the Jaffna Commitium will discuss this with the Bishop of Jaffna, His Lordship Thomas Savundranayagam.

Other suggestions put forward were, to utilise visits to homes, hospitals and institutions by the legionaries with the understanding of building a community of love; to share Christ's message of love with people of other faiths, by organising interfaith groups and to work very closely with and under the guidance of the ecclesiastical authority.

Newton Fernando

### US called to address rise in global religious persecution

**H**uman rights advocates warned that the US government is failing to recognize the religious nature of violent conflicts in countries around the world, calling for more stringent US foreign policy.

Persecution of religious minorities cannot be ignored because "lives are in the balance," said Carl Moeller, President and CEO of Open Doors USA, an organization that works to serve persecuted Christians worldwide.

He was joined by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, Director of Interfaith Affairs for the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, who warned of the "growing scourge" of religious-based oppression.

Persecution of Christians in the country is "driven by Islamic extremism," especially the group Boko Haram, which is committed to completely eliminating all Christians from the country, he said.

Moeller called on President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney make religious freedom an important part of political discussions in the upcoming year.

"This is not a political football," he said. "These are lives at stake." (CNS/EWTN)

### Golden Jubilee of Junior Seminary, Kandy

Golden Jubilee of St. Joseph's Junior Seminary, Poornawatte, Kandy was celebrated on May 1st 2012.

Some of the past students of the Seminary participated in the thanksgiving Holy Mass which was presided over by His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, Bishop of Kandy.



**Jn: 15: 12**

*'Love one another, as I have loved you'.*

### Silver Jubilee of Kurunegala Diocese

**O**n May 15th 1987, Pope Paul II, erected the Catholic Diocese of Kurunegala and appointed Very Rev. Fr. Raymond Anthony Leopold Peiris of the Archdiocese of Colombo as the First Bishop of the New Diocese.

A Eucharistic Celebration presided by His Ex. Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Spitteri will be held at the Bishop's House, Kurunegala followed by a fellowship lunch.

### Sixth AsIPA General Assembly in Sri Lanka

**T**he Sixth AsIPA General Assembly will be held in Nainamadama, from 18th to 24th October 2012, jointly organized by the AsIPA desk of the Office of Laity and Family of the FABC and AsIPA National Team of Sri Lanka, states a release from the National S.C.C.s Co-ordinating Secretariat.

The theme of the Assembly is "Go you are sent forth" (Mt 10:5) following Jesus in mission: Small Christian Communities Serving



and Ministering. This Theme flows from the previous 5th AsIPA General Assembly held in Philippines in 2009, "Do this in memory of me." (Lk 22:9) Bread Broken and Word Shared in SCCs/ BECs and is related to the theme of the Synod of

Bishops' on "the New Evangelization and the Transmission of the Faith" this year.

Total participants number 165 from all South Asian countries and the Exposure Programme during the Assembly will cover around 25 parishes from three dioceses, namely Chilaw, Kurunegala and Colombo.

There will be some exposure visits to other Dioceses after the Assembly upon request by the participants.

National Director SSC (AsIPA) Sri Lanka

## Nayakkanda Parish visits family of 'Hasalaka Weeraya'



A group of Catholics from the Nayakkanda Parish, led by former Provincial Councillor, Lawrence Madiwela, visited the home of war hero Corporal Gamini Kularatne, (Hasalaka Weeraya),

recently and met his mother and other family members.

Picture shows Mr. Madiwela handing over a gift package sent by His Excellency, President Mahinda Rajapaksa to

Gamini's mother.

Mr. Madiwela, had when he was a housing Minister in the Western Provincial, helped with cash and kind to build the present house for the family of Gamini Kularatne.

*Nimal Perera*

## United Youth Club Dansala



United Youth Club of Asokarama Mawatha, Balagala, Hendala held their annual Vesak Dansala on Vesak Poya Day.

This year the Dansala served hot Nescafe to the people.

Rev. Fr. S.D. Anthony is seen lighting the traditional oil lamp before the opening of Dansala.

*Nimal Perera*

## Blessing of Statue of St. John at Kalutara



Rev. Fr. Chrishantha Kumara, Parish Priest Kalutara, blessed and declared open for worship, the new statue of St. John at Kalutara North.

The statue was donated by Mrs. Cynthia Cooray, a parishioner of Kalutara.

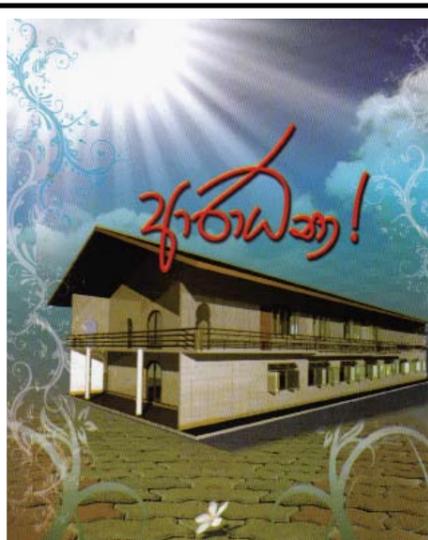
*Pic. D. Anselm Fernando*

## The Recitation of Twenty Decades of "The Holy Rosary"

The recitation of "The Holy Rosary" (20 decades) will be conducted at 12 noon on 13th, May in English, at St. Mary's Church, Negombo for "Maria Rosa Mystica."

Assuredly, this prayer session is usually conducted monthly at 12 noon on the 13th, and is performed in a disciplined manner to please "The Blessed Lady" and hence the conductor's advice to the participants is, not to get involved in chatting and gossiping during the prayer session. Therefore, please be present at 11.50 a.m.

*Anthony G.V. Peries*



Seeduwa St. Mary's Church gets a three-storied Daham Pasal Building, with a Service Centre. The grand opening will be on the 18th of May at 5.00 p.m.

Special invitees are His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and Hon. Basil Rajapaksa.

*Rev. Fr. Basil Wickramasinghe  
Parish Priest*

## Workshop on Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP)



As a move in the direction of building community resilience and self-reliance in the face of disaster, the CBDP signifies a shift from relief to preparedness or from disaster response to disaster mitigation.

In keeping with this a 4-day Workshop was held in Hambantota in the latter part of April 2012 to familiarize around 70 Diocesan participants on Save and Rescue methods. It was preceded by an awareness session on Global Warming and Climate Change Adaptation.

This entire programme was designed in collaboration with Senior

Professors of the University of Colombo who are authorities on the subject of Global Warming and Climate Change Adaptation as well as with the Disaster Management Centre of the Government of Sri Lanka, the Life Saving Association of Hambantota and the St. John's Ambulance Association whose officers are well versed with Save and Rescue methods, First Aid and so on.

Caritas Asia was the main supporter of this programme which was a highly rewarding experience for all the participants.

*Ainslie Joseph*

## Vesak Dansala by Deepaloka Association

Deepaloka Welfare Association, Balagala, Hendala, held their annual Vesak Dansala in Balagala on Vesak Poya Day.

Rev. Fr. S.D. Anthony of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Balagala, is seen blessing the cooked food before the opening of the Dansala.

Also in the picture are Rev. Fr. Shiran Dassa,



Asst. Priest Nayakkanda Parish, Meryl Wickremasinghe, President of the Association, Trewin Jayawardena, Treasurer and Lawrence Madiwela, ex-Provincial Councillor who is also a member of the Deepaloka Association.

*Nimal Perera*

## St. Vincent's Pre School Sports Meet



The Annual Sport Meet of St. Vincent's Pre School, Diyalagoda Dharumaratna Janapadaya, was held at the Pre School grounds recently.

Picture shows Chief Guest Rev. Bro. Anthony Marcus, Director of St. John

Bosco Boys' Home, Diyalagoda, Maggona, and Rev. Bro. John Gilbert OMI, Director of the Pre School, lighting the traditional oil lamp. A dance performed by the kiddies is seen in the picture.

*Pic. D. Anselm Fernando*

## Parish Pastoral visit of His Lordship Valence Mendis

In view of the Chilaw Diocesan Convention 2012, His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis is on a Parish Pastoral visit of his Diocese. Here His Lordship is seen at Our Lady of Lourdes, Shrine, Nattandiya.

Rev. Fr. Peter Upali, Parish Priest is also in the picture. *Jude Nimal Bernard*



## Towards Reconciliation

(Contd. from Pg. 1)

The LLRC Report itself is very explicit in this regard: "Seeds of reconciliation can take root only if there is forgiveness and compassion. Leaders on all sides should reach out to each other in humility and make a joint declaration, extending an apology to innocent citizens who fell victims to this conflict as a result of the collective failure of the political leadership on all sides to prevent such a conflict from emerging again. Religious leaders and civil society should work towards it and emphasize the healing impact it would have on the entire process of reconciliation" (8.303).

The immediate issue we have to deal with is the recent decision of the Human Rights' Council of the UN regarding Sri Lanka, in Geneva. Much has been written or spoken about this in the local press, by individuals and organizations, from different perspectives. All things considered we, do not think that the Geneva decision is a serious setback to the country. The main thrust of that decision is that the government implement the recommendations of the LLRC Report, the report of a Commission it appointed to study and propose what steps should be taken to achieve a true spirit of post-conflict reconciliation in Sri Lanka. By doing so the government can, on the one hand, obviate in a large measure the accusations which seem to be leveled against the country in the Geneva Resolution and on the other hand, remove many current obstacle towards ensuring a Sri Lanka that is a well-governed, a truly democratic society in which all its ethnic communities feel equally at home and all its citizens enjoy the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the rule of law. Following such a

course of action, that is, by implementing the proposals of the LLRC Report, we are only taking steps to put right shortcomings in our socio-political order as perceived by a group of our own people of eminent standing. The fact that the LLRC Report has been well received by and large, by our people makes the task much easier for the government.

The key issue before the government and the people is indicated by the name of the Commission itself namely, reconciliation. The specific recommendation of the Commission deal with measures which will lead either directly or indirectly, to reconciliation and national well-being by uprooting or mitigating the social evils such as the breakdown of the law and order, bribery and corruption, violence, abductions, the politicization of public life, etc., which presently bedeviled the country. All these are with a view to a definitive political solution to the national question which will address comprehensively the grievances of the minority communities with justice to the rights of the majority community as well while forging a true Sri Lankan identity.

In this regard it is our firm conviction that the government should take effective and definitive measures to implement the recommendations of the said Commission without further delay. The Report itself laments that the recommendations of its Interim Report issued almost a year earlier had been disregarded. In fact we feel that if the government had taken prompt action on the recommendations of that Interim Report, the "Geneva Intervention" could have been averted. Be that as it may, it is now quite clear that the way out of the impasse we find ourselves in, socially, economically, politically and internationally, is for the government, to take firm and determined steps to implement the rec-

ommendations of the Report in a prioritized plan of action placed before the people.

A start should be made without delay, beginning with, those which are more easily implemented on a short-term and long-term basis. The only way to ensure that this happens effectively and speedily is for the government to set up an impartial and an independent monitoring mechanism as proposed by the Report to oversee such implementation. A mere technical working committee made up of ministry officials and headed by government politicians would not be effective. We wish to therefore urge the government to move in the matter with determination and courage so that any further international intervention could be avoided. It is our belief that for any effective results to emerge, such courage and statesmanship is needed now.

We also call upon the opposition and all its constituents to lend its support to the government in this task of implementing the LLRC Report placing the common good of the country before motives of petty, partisan and power-hungry politics which had been the bane of Sri Lanka from its Independence, creating the predicament she is in today; preventing her from rising to the greatness she is clearly capable of.

Committed as we are to the well-being of our Motherland and all its peoples, we pledge our support to the Government and our political leaders in their endeavours to work towards a true reconciliation among the various peoples of our land and thereby paving the way for Sri Lanka to become a truly noble society, united, forward looking and modern. This will ensure that all the different races and religions of our country would contribute generously towards its future progress, with justice, peace and true unity in diversity.

May God Bless Our Motherland and all her people with much prosperity.

### Donation from 'Kithunu Magata Saviyak' project



Mr. Sajith Premadasa, Deputy leader of UNP and Member of Parliament for Hambantota district, donated Rs. 50,000/- to Rev. Fr. Dinesh Priyashantha Fernando, Parish Priest of Kattuwa St. Francis Salis Church. Members of Western Provincial Council Miss Rose Fernando, lawyer, Mr. Sirantha Ameresekara, Mrs. Ravi Jeevananda and Nishantha Fernando and members of parish pastoral council were also present.

Text & photo by Cecil Danicius

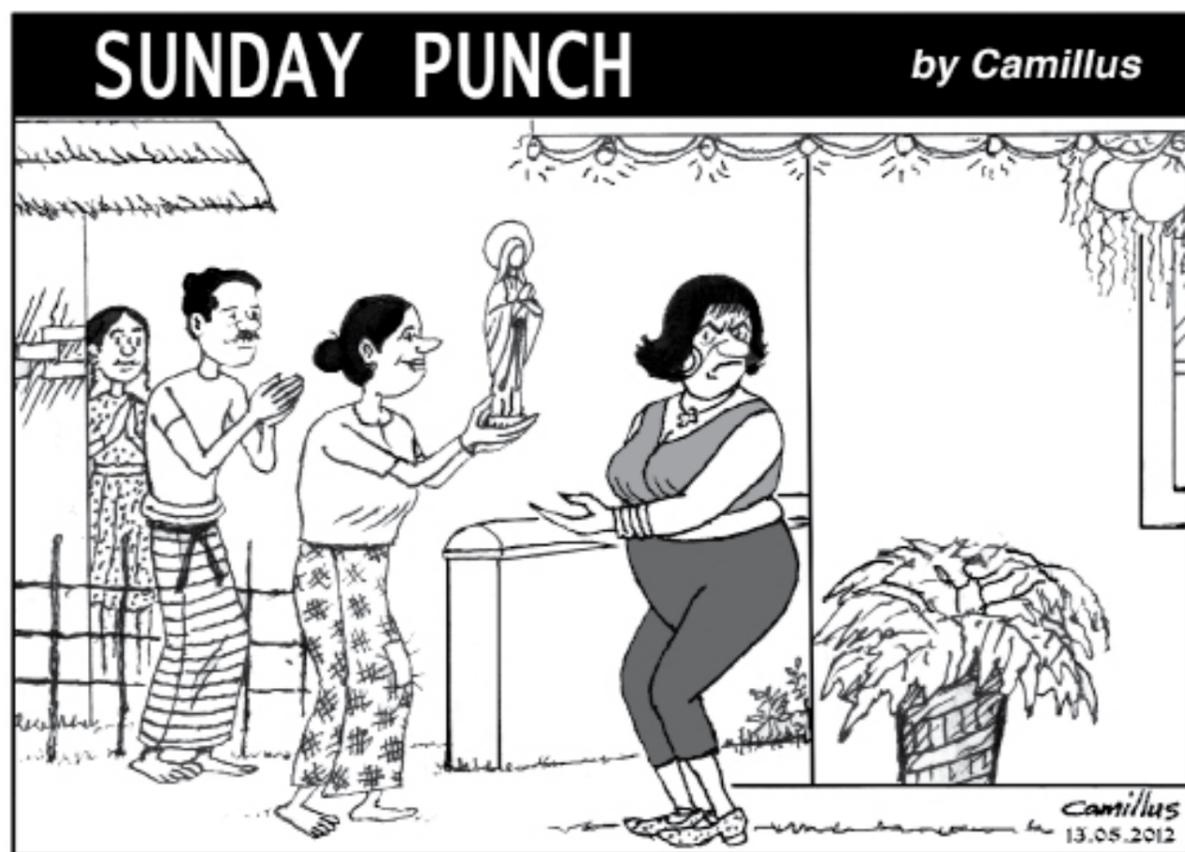
### 'Sithsevana' Voluntary Service Centre, Toppuwa, moves house



The 'Sithsevana' voluntary service centre, moved in to a new house in Toppuwa, located near St. Philip Neri's Church, Toppuwa. The house warming and blessings were conducted with the participation of Rev. Fr. Kirul Jayanath Silva, Assistant Parish Priest of Toppuwa and Rev. A. Devendra, Chief Priest of Toppuwa Hindu Kovil.

Mr. Nishantha Nandasiri Herath O.I.C. of Kochchikade and member of Katana Pradeshiya Sabha, Setian Croospulle (lawyer) were also present.

Pic by Cecil Danicius



*His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith,*

Archbishop of Colombo

*+ Norbert M. Andradi OMI*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Norbert M. Andradi, OMI  
Bishop of Anuradhapura

*+ Vianney Fernando*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando  
Bishop of Kandy

*+ Kingsley Swampillai*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley Swampillai,  
Bishop of Trincomalee-Batticaloa

*+ Rayappu Joseph*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph,  
Bishop of Mannar

*+ Winston Fernando SSS*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Winston Fernando SSS,  
Bishop of Badulla

*+ Harold Anthony Perera*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera,  
Catholic Bishop of Kurunegala

*+ Valence Mendis*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis,  
Bishop of Chilaw

*+ Cletus Perera*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus Perera, OSB  
Bishop of Ratnapura

*+ Raymond Wickremasinghe*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickremasinghe  
Bishop of Galle

*+ Ponniah Joseph*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Ponniah Joseph,  
Auxiliary Bishop of Trincomalee-Batticaloa

*+ Emmanuel Fernando*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando,  
Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo

*+ Maxwell Silva*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva,  
Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo

THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA  
**Messenger**  
 NIKSI 1984

**EDITORIAL**

**13 May 2012**

## Christian Faith and Society

There are almost 2 billion Catholics in the world. But is the world better or worse because of them or are they no different from the rest of society?

Jesus said many are called but few are chosen. He gave us several parables about those who will be saved and they will not include those who merely call "Lord, Lord but don't practice his word. We of course all believe in Our Lord and don't fail to call him "Lord." But is faith alone enough? But each time Jesus forgave the sinner he admonished him or her to go and sin no more. He also said that if we want to be his disciples we must take up the cross and follow him. The life of the Christian is not going to be easy. The prosperity gospels preached by some sects is not in the spirit of the words of Jesus. Salvation lies in the cross. Jesus when he preached his words encountered opposition from the religious and political establishment. It is the same for us today. But we must have a total commitment to the Word of God. It is not enough to practice devotions. It is not enough to merely be a regular worshipper at Sunday Mass. We need to bear witness to the Word of God by our conduct. Example is better than precept and if we can follow the Word of God in our lives we can bear witness to the Word of God. All of us can't be preachers of the Word of God. But all of us are required to show by example that we are Christians who follow the words of Jesus. It is not piety or ceremonial practice that constitutes Christianity. It is active commitment to the Word of God and by bearing witness by our conduct in society. As Jesus said we must worship God in "spirit and in truth."

There is instead a widespread desire among our Catholics to be like every one else in society. But our faith grows from roots which are extremely different from those of the pleasure oriented societies of the West which passes for modernity. Ordination of women, legal recognition of same sex marriages and other practices are being championed in the name of modernization.

The Holy Father Pope Benedict the XVI has pointed out in his book "Light of the World" that some priests and religious have gone off the rails and that there is no Catholic profile in many western countries. What has gone wrong inquired the Pope? He said it has to do with the forces of disintegration that are present in the human soul. An additional factor is the urge to win public acceptance. But he says that we still have a chance to shape things independently. But we have to be courageous and be guided by the Holy Spirit. We must stand for truth and justice not for ourselves but for all members of our society. We cannot like the Levite pass by on the other side of the road to avoid seeing the man fallen on the road. We should care for our brothers and sisters not only for their material needs but also for their hunger for justice. Many Catholics are generous with their money. But we cannot overlook the needs of justice. There are of course many people who want to change the world. We engage in political moralism. The Communists wanted to change society through force. We fault our politicians but do nothing to correct them. We vote for those who are dishonest and who are thugs and criminals, merely because they happen to belong to the party we favour.

Some who are intellectually oriented even among priests and religious seek to modernize Christianity with doctrines like Liberation Theology or Christian Socialism. New issues crop even in the Church which demand an answer, such as the ordination of women. As Pope Benedict XVI has pointed out, we need to ask what constitutes the essentials of Christianity what are those practices which are only expressions of a certain period in human and church history. To find out what are the essentials we must constantly return to the Gospels and read and re-read their teachings. We always need to manifest our faith before society not to assert our power but to give example to society. A new intolerance is spreading as seen from the aggressiveness of some supporters of nationalist political parties and we must pray to God that such intolerance will not engulf us. Jesus warned us that there would be opposition to the practice of his word and asked us to be courageous in the face of persecution. He even warned us of severe persecution for three years. Let us prepare ourselves through prayer and sacrifice to face whatever opposition we face.

## "Woman"

By Rev. Fr. Anselm de Croos

"Woman" what a strange way to address a mother. Jesus called his mother, woman twice, once at Cana and the other at Calvary. We are almost scandalised and shocked that Jesus would call Mary, his mother by the title woman and yet it is but by the masterly use of the word woman, taking into consideration the revelation of the Old Testament, that the Lord ingeniously inserts Mary into the very vortex of the drama of redemption and reveals her preeminent place in the plan of salvation.

At the very dawn of creation when because of the sin of Adam and Eve, our first parents, humanity had lost all hope of salvation, God in His infinite mercy and goodness gave the assurance of victory to humanity over the devil with this cryptic prophecy. "I shall put enmity between you and the woman, her seed shall crush your head." This was the first intimation of hope when the battle lines were drawn between good and evil and the relentless war between the devil and the woman was proclaimed. This was the first good news heard by fallen humanity.

The second scene was at the visitation when Mary was prophetically acclaimed by Elizabeth as blessed among women, the storyline now moves to Cana in Galilee. There at the marriage feast with which the evangelist John describes the situation of fallen humanity and its redemption, the human family is symbolized by marriage and the wedding feast where the wine had failed because of sin. Mary notices this lack of joy in the human family and tells her son "they have no wine" Jesus' enigmatic answer was, "woman my hour is not yet come." Yet as a symbol of what he will do when his hour comes at the request of Mary, he would change water into wine and give back in abundance the joy to the hu-

man family. Mary takes the cue and tells the workers, "Do whatever tell you" and there is excellent wine in abundance and as a result the disciples believed in him.

The location now moves to the passion of Jesus where he exclaims at the Last Supper, "My hour is come" and so at the battlefield of Calvary when the devil finally is conquered, again from the mouth of the dying Jesus the mysterious word woman is heard. When he looked at Mary and said, "Woman behold your son." We expect a mother seeing her son in excruciating pain and hanging



on the cross to be overcome with grief. But not Mary. The Gospel tells us what a heroic woman she was, the queen of martyrs expressed so succinctly by the evangelist "there, stood by the cross, Mary his mother." Thus by standing at the foot of the cross and being an integral part of the sacrifice, Mary becomes the mother of all redeemed and victorious humanity.

The drama of redemption does not end there but has as its final crowning in Chapter 12 in the Book of Revelation. "There is a sign in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars." The sun the moon and the stars symbolise the whole of the redeemed creation. The promise given in the Garden of Eden that humanity will achieve victory over the devil and evil is complete and Mary's predominant place in the plan of redemption is revealed.

## Make the right choice - Obey the Spirit's voice

Before leaving us on that Ascension Day  
 Jesus promised to send a gift our way  
 It's no other than the Holy Spirit to guide  
 Us, lead us, help and with us abide  
 In whatever walk of life you be  
 Lawyer, doctor, or a higher or lower post you see  
 He is ready to help us always - one and all  
 Pay heed to His prompting lest we fall  
 He may nudge us and make us feel  
 Someone needs our aid and the best way to deal  
 He reminds us that we should pray  
 For one experiencing a crisis: Thus lead, lead him the correct way  
 The Holy Spirit who dwells within us now  
 Teaches, comforts, guides us with truth somehow  
 For sending us the Holy Spirit let's thank and praises sing  
 To Jesus Christ, our Lord Saviour and King  
 "Holy Spirit help us now  
 Your inner prompting gift and clear  
 And help us know your still small voice  
 So that we may make God's will our choice."

*Norma Perera*



## Does God's silence speak?

### YEAR OF THE WORD

In this Year of the Word, when many are taking a fresh interest in the Scriptures and discovering its hidden riches, the post-synodal document of Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* is of great value. These reflections are the result of a study of the document made together by Religious sisters and lay persons.

The Prologue of St. John's Gospel sets the ambience for an understanding of the Word of God which existed from the beginning of time and became Incarnate in human flesh. God has constantly been in dialogue with man. The means of this dialogue and communication are very well defined in *Verbum Domini*. First and foremost we believe in a Trinitarian God who is in a dialogue of love and unity as Father, Son and Spirit. We too are called to this same fullness of love and unity in communion and dialogue with God, with his

creation and with one another. Therefore, the question "Does God's silence speak?" or, "Does God's Word take the form of silence?" begs reflection.

Some valuable insights are offered in the same document to fathom this mystery. Before looking at it, let us quickly glance through the varied ways in which God speaks to his people, then and now.

#### God's Word is expressed in multiple ways:

*Through nature* - The very first book of the Bible reminds us of the communion between God and Nature. The mere Word of God brings forth created things which show forth to us His glory. Nature therefore speaks God's Word and in today's world with hardly a moment to "stop and stare" we need to find time to discover God in Nature.

*Through the creation of human beings* -

God, by the breath of his mouth forms mankind to

be the steward of this creation. He is endowed with the higher gifts of reason, freedom and conscience so that he experiences an "inner call to do good and avoid evil." Our call is to glorify God by being "fully alive" ourselves and bringing life to others.

*Through events in the OT* -

God's Word is an active Word that effects what it promises. And so begins the journey of Abraham to a new destiny, the saving of Israel from slavery in Egypt, victory in battle, anointing of kings, prophets, etc. These are God's deeds in the life of a people and can very well manifest to us a God who is interested in our lives too.

*Through people* -

God also speaks to us, even today, through various personages of the Old and New Testaments as we listen to their messages and also receive courage and comfort from their experiences of life with which we can often identify. They become for us role-models of faith and discipleship.

*Through the Church*

To which the Word was "consigned" in a definitive way and through her living Tradition of Apostolic origin, which has enabled her to grow over the last 2000 years.

#### Through Jesus, the WORD

Over and above these many ways, God's Word comes to us loudest and clearest in Jesus His Son. Jesus is God's definitive Word given to all mankind in the fullness of time. God's Word becomes flesh in order to be one with all flesh and to raise it from its sinful state to a glorious state of eternal life. God who spoke his Word through people and events and nature, is manifest

in human flesh. God's self-manifestation and self-revelation is now through the words and deeds of Jesus, his Son. If one sees Jesus, one has seen the Father. If one listens to Jesus, one hears the Father and learns what the Father wishes to teach. Jesus gathers in himself all of creation, all mankind and all of history.

#### And also through silence

This is a very striking note in the document *Verbum Domini*, in which the Biblical message or Word of God is described as a "symphony," as it is manifest in varied ways. Besides being visible, audible and tangible, God's Word is expressed also in **SILENCE**. God's silence adds another dimension to his spoken Word. In other words, we need to know and experience, some times at least in our lives, the God of SILENCE. In such moments, one has to check not one's hearing for any loss, but probe the depths of one's heart to feel the heart-beat of God in the silence. This painful silence is often a sacred time of growth. Using our hindsight, looking back days or years later, one realizes that these moments of silence were truly moments of God's deep and caring presence in our lives. Such moments become stepping stones or a springboard into the future, for we know it is the same God who is with us, though he seems present or absent at different times in our lives. He will never abandon us for sure. This was also the experience of Jesus and so why should it not be ours? Jesus on the cross, in his most trying moments, called out through the depths of his humanness: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Why is God silent? Has God exhausted all he has got to say to his faithful Son Jesus? Why this absence

or distance? The document says, "The Word is muted; it becomes mortal silence," before the "word of the cross" (1 Cor. 1.18). Yet, at the end, Jesus is able very lovingly to commend his life into his Abba's hands, acknowledging him once more as the Only one to whom his life can be offered. And Jesus is raised gloriously by the Father and exalted for ever in heaven, for a life lived in love and laid down in obedience.

It is good for us to reflect deeply on this WORD that comes through the SILENCE in our own lives. It will be rare to find an individual who has not asked the same "WHY?" as Jesus. Many who have loved and listened to God's Word, who have pondered and prayed upon it, relished studying and re-discovering it, will still face situations in which they face a seemingly very silent God. They have tried to lead good lives and yet the question arises; "Why, Lord?" "Why me?" It is also not God's way of punishing bad people or teaching them a lesson. Strangely enough, many times in the Psalms and other Biblical texts, and in real life, we see that bad things happen to average good people while the wicked seem to prosper. Then, we too are tempted to ask even on their behalf, "Why?" Maybe the question is wrongly asked. Perhaps it should be, "Why not?" Then we are able to confront this silence and abandon ourselves into a loving Father's hands. It is said, "When we ask God for silver, he sometimes delays, but sends the answer wrapped in gold." When we ask the question, "Why?" it may seem God is absent from our lives but we shall receive his answer not in "words" but in the gold of silence. And that too, in HIS time, not ours... We learn to graciously accept the SILENCE as *VERBUM DOMINI*.

Sr. Cynthia Mendis



### Walter Rupesinghe

Once again the month of May is with us. It is a month dedicated to our blessed Lady whom we affectionately call the "Queen of May".

May is the time when the May flower tree is in full bloom with riotous clusters of sparkling red flowers signifying nature's tribute to the Queen of May.

From our young days my mother taught her brood of children the importance of making Mother Mary an integral part of our spiritual life because she was the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. She stressed the fact that Mother Mary was the fourth most important person in the divine hierarchy next to the Heavenly Father, Jesus our Saviour and the Holy Spirit. She was therefore a powerful mediatrix. She read out to us what the apostle John had written about her in the Book of Revelation.

## Mother Mary - Queen of May

"A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head" (Revelation 12:1)

She recalled how the Angel Gabriel appeared to a very virtuous young woman in a humble home in the lowly town of Nazareth in Galilee and told her that she had found favour with God and that she had been chosen to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God who was coming into this world to redeem mankind from its sins. She accepted this enormous responsibility with resignation to the Holy will. In her capacity as the mother of Jesus she went through moments of fear and anxiety but she kept everything pondering in her heart and nurtured her divine Son to manhood and the many challenges He had to face during his public ministry. She was the Mother of Sorrows whose heart was pierced as she stood at the foot of Calvary's rugged cross watching her beloved Son dying in agony.

Before His death Jesus entrusted His mother to the care of John His favourite disciple saying "Woman behold thy Son" and to John "Behold thy Mother." From that moment the Blessed Virgin became the mother of all mankind and all of us sinners could

have recourse to Her. Our mother was an ardent devotee of Mother Mary and exhorted us to live very close to Her. During the month of May we joined her in our daily devotions to our Lady and encouraged our neighbours to do the same. It was soul stirring for us to hear the recital of the rosary and the singing of hymns every evening in May and there was an infectious spiritual glow all around us.

Our mother died while we were still young but what we had learnt at her feet was indelibly inscribed in our memories. The month of May devotions became an essential element in our daily programme.

What we must remember is that in the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are privileged to have a very powerful, understanding and compassionate Mother to whom we can go with our problems. Her compassionate nature was eloquently manifested at a wedding in Cana of Galilee when the hosts were thoroughly embarrassed because they had run short of wine and were wondering what to do. Noticing their discomfiture Mother Mary intervened with her divine son who turned water into the finest wine in Israel and saved the day for them. This was the first miracle that was performed by Jesus and that

too at the behest of His mother. Her compassion has run like a golden thread down the centuries bringing succour to all who have gone to Her in their hour of need.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the readers that at all the Marian apparitions whether at Lourdes, Fatima or elsewhere Mother Mary has exhorted the faithful to recite the rosary as often as possible to save a morally decadent world from certain destructions. Not only should we carry the rosary in our pockets or handbags but we should recite it as often as we could. The rosary must be an essential component of our month of May devotions.

We should not forget the Novenas held in our churches during the month of May and do everything possible to attend them even at some inconvenience to ourselves. Our Lady will surely reward us for that.

At a time when our beautiful country is facing several burning issues politically and economically and living conditions are becoming more and more difficult, I fervently appeal to every Catholic home to organise its own month of May devotions and beg of our blessed Lady to succour us in our time of need.

Mother Mary Queen of May, pray for us who have recourse to Thee!

# Pain Management

Our readers would have experienced some pain during their lives. It could be pain related to an injury or a headache resulting from life's stresses and tensions. It may be a pain emanating from the chest radiating to the neck and the arms which is caused by cardiac arrest. It may be the pain of childbirth. There are a few suffering from ongoing joint-pains related to severe arthritis or pain related to cancer or pain from lower back injury.

Pain sensation is caused by sensory neurons which take messages to the brain which in turn causes immobility and rest that are needed for healing. The best medication for injury is immobilization and rest. That is the principle behind the use of casts and slings in immobilizing the injured or fractured joints and limbs. Resting and immobilizing promotes

healing as well as relieves acute pain. Physicians also recommend applying warm (heating pads) and cold compresses (ice) to the injured area to relieve pain.

We also use over-the-counter pain medications (analgesics) to relieve pain. Panadol and other acetaminophen-related medications are very popular in our country, as analgesics. Aspirin-related medications too are popular in some places. Non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as Motrin and Brufen too are prescribed and used for fairly severe pain. These pain-relievers help in getting rid of acute pain. Though easily available over-the-counter without prescriptions, these medications have severe side effects. They should not be taken for more than three to five days without a physician's advice.

We hear of horror



tales of liver and kidney failure caused by analgesics containing acetaminophen. The NSAIDs and Aspirin can lead to severe gastric side effects such as gastric and duodenal ulcers and gastric bleeding. Pharmaceutical researchers have found a new pain relieving drug that does not belong to any of the above categories. Research on animals proved beyond doubt that these new analgesics called Cox 2 inhibitors have very low liver or gastric side effect profile. They thought that

Cox 2 inhibitors are going to be the new state of the art in the pain medication. But unfortunately after a few years of use, patients have developed severe cardiac (angina, myocardial infarctions) and vascular problems (strokes) from these drugs. This new analgesic had to be taken off the market in many countries. If prescribed today, the patients have to be monitored regularly for cardiac and vascular side effects.

If there is no relief with the above

measures and medications, stronger opioid (morphine) based medications such as Pethidine and Demerol are prescribed. These could be administered orally, rectally (via suppositories), through skin patch or intra-muscularly and intravenously (injections). This is the last resort for pain management. This type of medication has the propensity for addiction, tolerance and chemical dependency. These are used for pain associated with severe arthritis,

cancer and terminal care treatment in hospices. Besides these, physicians also use, anti-depressants and anti-convulsing drugs for pain relief. The Chinese art of acupuncture, transcendental meditation and relaxation therapy too are used to relieve chronic pain.

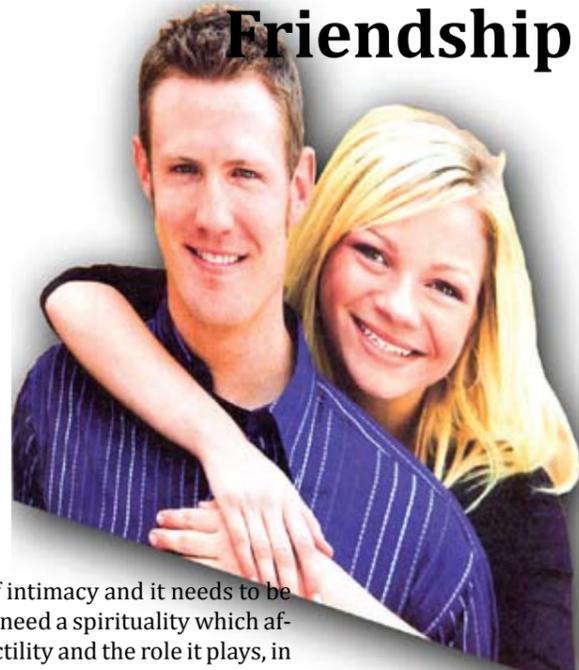
Pain is a positive reaction triggered by the nerve cells alerting a person of tissue injury, stress or illness. We are fortunate that we have pain sensation because we can take steps to seek the cause of pain and treat it. But there are some people among us who are deprived of pain sensation because of neurological damage to their nerve cells. Such is the case with patients suffering from leprosy or diabetic neuropathy. They have lost their pain sensation. They can lose parts of their bodies because they do not feel any injury or tissue damage. This can lead to gangrene because they are not aware of physical damage to their body tissues.

**Sexuality and tactility:** Touch is essential to being human, involving the whole realm of non-verbal communication. Shaking hands, holding hands while walking, touching the feet, embracing, kissing, etc. are ways of communicating one's feeling towards the other.

Through words we communicate only 7%, through tone 38% and non-verbally (through touch, gestures, posture, etc) 55%. Sometimes when we say 'yes', it may mean 'no'. Certainly the suspicious attitude towards eroticism and sensuality led to a non-touch or anti-touch asceticism within Christian tradition.

Touch is a means of intimacy and it needs to be rescued from negativity. We need a spirituality which affirms the value of human tactility and the role it plays, in our affective and emotional lives. We need to affirm the significance of touch for interpersonal growth. Touch gives reassurance and security. Some form of asthma is due to lack of early tactile stimulation. Putting one's arm around an asthmatic when he/she is having an attack can help to alleviate the attack. We are also aware of the need for body contact during intensified period of stress. Taking anyone's hand during stress or holding him or her tightly reduces anxiety. Body contact is important in establishing a healthy affective relationship. We have a natural tendency to hold babies and children which are necessary for their emotional growth. Relationships grow when there is an increasing experience of the warmth of the other's body. But some consider it vulgar. In western countries elders are not expected to hold children because of the fear of sexual abuse.

## Sexuality and Friendship



**Intimacy and Friendship:** Cultivation of friendship is part of the adventure of life. Intimacy in human living is important for personal growth, self-esteem and for a feeling that life is worth-living. It is the highest possible interpersonal experience of oneness with the other, because intimacy is very important. It is necessary to learn how to be friends with one another. In Jesus' life too there were friendship and intimacy: "I call you friends" (In 15: 15). Jesus had friendship with Martha, Mary and Lazarus. If this is a positive thrust to be a healthy human, it must be tempered to respect personal needs for companionship, rest and

recreation. Education in friendship is one of the needs of humankind today.

**Friendship and Jealousy:** Jealousy is another factor we have to face in interpersonal relationships. It comes because of making comparisons and due to inferiority, hypersensitivity, wanting to be the centre of attention, etc. We need to admit it, not to be ashamed of it and not to deny it. If hostility, anger and jealousy are faced, intimacy is more likely to develop.

**Intimacy and Lust:** We must distinguish between intimacy and lust. The need for intimacy is not the same as the need for touch or the need for genital sex, although they are often experienced as the same. The worlds of intimacy and tactility are open to everyone. Intimacy needs touch and touch leads to intimacy, although they are not the same. Touch can lead to genitality but need not. Emotional and sexual fulfilments are necessary for everyone. The goal of Psychosexual development is the mature capacity to love. Sexual desire is not love in itself nor is it sufficient for intimacy. Love requires more from two people than mere sexual attraction. But for mature love, sexual desires need to be integrated into our relationships.

(Courtesy Asian Journal for Priests & Religious) May 2012



## A CROSS

The Way 78

By Sirohmi Gunsekera

### Vesak

"There is much excitement about Vesak just as much as we get worked up about Christmas," remarked Laila.

"I know. Buddhists make families of Vesak lanterns comprising one big lantern surrounded by several small ones. The whole family plays an active role in cutting, chopping and pasting the white, red, blue and yellow kite paper to make the lantern," said Preethi.

"Buddhism is the religion of the majority in sunny Sri Lanka and it is Buddhist tolerance that has enabled other religions to flourish in this country. So you come across a Christian church built cheek by jowl next to a Buddhist temple or a Hindu kovil or Muslim mosque," commented Laila.

"Yes. Sri Lanka is a rare example of a small country where there are adherents to four orthodox religions. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity co-exist peacefully by and large. Of course, there are small groups of extremists amid all four religions and they try to cause trouble by stirring the waters of fundamentalism," observed Preethi.

"We must be careful about what we say and do and we must always be sensitive especially when we talk and act with people of other faiths," opined Laila.

"Yes, we must not leave room for misunderstanding. Besides, it is now fifty years since "Vatican Two" or the Second Vatican Council when the Church accepted that non Christians too could be witnesses and that you can follow the path to Salvation by remaining a good Buddhist, a good Hindu and a good Muslim, apart from being a good Christian," said Preethi.

"I know. We must ask ourselves humbly whether we are good Christians. Remember the words of the well-known author who said that the world is in such a sorry state because Christianity has never been practiced," commented Laila.

"We must also remind ourselves that even a Hindu like Mahatma Gandhi praised the "Beatitudes" and said that is true Christianity for "Blessed are the meek for they shall see God," said Preethi.

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



It's strange isn't it, a twenty rupee bill seems like a large amount when you put it to the church collection box, but yet it's such a small amount when you go shopping.

Rev. Fr. Fracfid Anthony Fernando OMI



Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

Some of us may have heard of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Miracles - Jaffna. The history of the image and the church to which it belonged has been recorded by Fr. Fernao De Queyroz in Chapters 8 to 11 of the 4<sup>th</sup> Book of his Conquest of Ceylon (translated by S.G. Perera), and retold to us by Rt. Rev. Dr. Edmund Peiris OMI, in his book *Marian Devotion in Ceylon* (1948). The latter concludes that the real progress of the Church of Jaffna begins with the marvellous happenings in connection with the image of Our Lady of Miracles.

In the early years of the 17th century, a priest Friar Francisco de S. Antonio brought from Cochin, a piece of wood on which had been begun to carve out an image of the Wonder Worker St. Anthony. When he arrived in Jaffna he changed his mind and handing the piece of wood to a non Christian statuary named Anacoti and asked him to sculpt an image of Our Lady of Victory with it.

On 25th May 1614, while Anacoti was working on the image of Our Lady on the piece of wood in his house, a non Christian named Engabao visited him. In order to entertain him he left the work and without any reflection he sat on the image and it threw him with great force to the ground in the presence of several persons there. Angry and ashamed, he rose and sat on the same image again and was thrown much further with greater force.

A similar incident is also recorded to have happened to his daughter, Angea a few days afterwards. Angea while chewing betel spat out the remnant and some fell on the image. She was sharply rebuked by her father who ordered her to clean it immediately. But when she approached the image she was thrown on the ground far away senseless.

Soon news of the image of Our Lady spread and many visited it. From among the people who came from abroad to the statuary's house was one Philippe de Prado, a native of Cochin. He was much troubled by pains in his stomach and was lame on one foot because on the way from Cochin a large thorn had run into his foot. Prostrating himself at the feet of the blessed image he besought a remedy for his ailments and he asked Anacoti for a chip of wood which he put into his mouth. Immediately he found himself cured of his stomach pain and the large thorn came out to the amazement of those present.

On the 12th of June a Catholic named Christouao came to the statuary's house with his little daughter. The girl was suffering great pain in her eyes - matter and blood coming out of them and she had lost her sight. The father prostrated himself before the image beseeching on behalf of his daughter. At once the girl was cured and she got back her sight.

A number of miracles took place in the house of the statuary, who deeply shaken went to Fr. Francisco and begged him to remove the statue from his house. Thereupon a solemn procession was arranged and the image which was very soon to become famous as 'Our Lady of Miracles' was carried to the local church of Our Lady of Victory. On the way to the church too many miracles were recorded. Fr. De Queyroz, the Portuguese historian bears testimony to several of these wonders.

One such miracle reports King Sangili. On the 24th of July, preparations were made led by the religious to convey the image with all solemnity from the house of Anacoti to the local church. Information was then received that King Sankili had posted armed men to prevent the procession from passing his palace. Much disturbed it was decided that two Portuguese gentlemen go to explain the matter to the King. It is reported that after hearing them the King was grieved by the order he had issued and sent word to the Fathers that they may not only come by the King's street but that he himself if necessary will accompany the procession with his people. When the procession did arrive at the palace there were the king, queen and the children on a balcony and the streets were filled by an innumerable crowd of people who afterwards were converted to Christianity. The statue was then placed in the church on a well decked table and invoked under the title of Our Lady of Miracles. Crowds gathered and kissed her feet and obtained innumerable favours. Afterwards the religious placed it on the altar where it continued to work fresh wonders.

It is reported that the fame of the miracles and the

## Where is this miraculous image?



respect with which the people of Jaffna held the image made them declare the miraculous image of Our Lady of Miracles their patroness. And with time a magnificent church befitting the miraculous image was built by the Franciscan Friar Pedro de Betancor. The image was brought to the new church on the feast of Ss. Simon and Jude when the Portuguese in Jaffna celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Victory.

In the new church the miracles did not cease. Fr. De Queyroz describes in detail the abating of the storm and tidal wave that swept the Jaffna Peninsula on 20 February 1627, on the intercession of Our Lady of Miracles. So fierce was the onrush of the water hurtled from mountain like waves that the doors and walls of the houses that stood in the way simply crumpled up and collapsed, he writes. Finally De Oliveyra the Portuguese General also a devoted servant of Our Lady of Miracles ran into the Church. The tiles of the Church were scattered and thrown about like dried leaves. The building itself received a severe shaking three times. Falling at the feet of the image De Oliveyra besieged her intercession performing penance and praying. And wonderful as it seems those present saw Our Lady draw the child whom she held in her arms closer. And a miracle happened in the sight of all, the water subsided gradually without further damage, and the wind and rain abated.

The image continued to be the object of great veneration in Jaffna till the Dutch captured Jaffna on 24th June 1658, and the Portuguese were taken prisoners and exiled. It is recorded that some of those exiled managed to smuggle the miraculous image to Batavia for safety from the desecration of the Dutch. Some years later it was taken to a church in old Goa where a special confraternity called the Confraternity of Our Lady of Miracles was formed to look after it. It was later kept at the Church of St. Pedro, Piedade, just across the bridge of Linhares at the old Goa end.

After the defeat of the Portuguese the Church of Our Lady of Miracles in Jaffna was reformed by the Dutch for Protestant services. The site of the Church has been identified to have been inside the Jaffna Fort. Today a new church dedicated to Our Lady of Miracles stands in Jaffna constructed recently.

Of the two bells that belonged to the original Church, each bearing the inscription '*Nossa Senhora dos Milagres Jaffnapatao 1648*', it was reported that one used to hang on the vestry of the Reformed Church while the other was at St. Michael's Anglican, Church, Polwatte, Colombo.

I was more than surprised to find quite by accident one of the bells at the Anglican Cathedral of Christ the Living Saviour, Colombo. A note affixed there attests to this fact stating that this "bell cast in 1648 first hung in the Portuguese Church of Our Lady of Miracles. The Dutch hung it in the belfry of the Jaffna Fort and it later came into the possession of the Presbyterian Consistory Mr. T.S. Grigson of George Stewart and Company who bought it for Rs. 200/- and presented it to St. Michael's Polwatte where after two centuries of secular use or neglect it again called Christians to worship until the year 2001 it cracked and had to be replaced". The inscription '*Nossa Senhora dos Milagres de Jafna Patao*'. It is still legible.

The reproduction of the image of Our Lady of Miracles seen here was taken from a photo published in the book - *Marian Devotion in Ceylon* by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Edmund Peiris, after his visit to Goa in 1931 in the company of the Fr. S. Gnanapraakasari OMI. He records that the image was kept in a glass case on the side altar. He further reports that in the same Church there were 6 pictures painted in oil colours depicting certain scenes from the history of the statue. Each scene described suitably at the foot of the picture. Two of these descriptions we reproduce here. Picture I: the image appeared so bright and beautiful on Christmas Day during the *Te Deum Laudamus* that it seemed to have been painted in gilt that very moment and it so remained till the end of the whole ceremony assuming its former appearance after wards as the painting shows. (refer Quyroz pg 685) Picture 3: Legend: Early on Easter morning before the eyes of all the moon diverting from her natural course accompanied the charola (feretory) of Our Lady and the Blessed Sacrament through the streets five or six paces ahead till the charola of Our Lady returned to the Church in the year 1622."

If you have any information on this story we welcome you to share it with our readership. Where is the image now? Does anyone have a photo of the image taken in colour recently? How big is the image? Please contact 0777 489510.



## World Press Freedom Day (May 3<sup>rd</sup>)



In May 1789, Louis XVI summoned to Versailles a full meeting of the "Estates General," writes Jeffery Archer in his novel "The Fourth Estate." "The First Estate consisted of three hundred nobles. The Second Estate, three hundred clergy. The Third Estate, six hundred commoners. Some years later, after the French Revolution, Edmund Burke, looking up at the Press Gallery of the House of Commons said, "Yonder sits the Fourth Estate, and they are more important than them all."

Today, the Fourth Estate is the public press, referred to as a collective, encompassing photographers, journalists, television broadcasters, and radio announcers. Today, in view of the dynamics of communications technology - we speak of "freedom of communication": An expression that refers to every person's right to exercise both the freedom of expression and the freedom to access information.

(Courtesy: Daily News - 3 May)

The Media fraternities around the world today celebrate the Press Freedom Day with the universal hope that, media will have strength to transform societies. Sri Lanka however has a long way to go given the number of 'brutalities and red-tape that have stood between the journalists and the public. Ranked 163 in the Press Freedom Index 2011/2012 released (by the Reporters without Borders) ours is a steep climb uphill. Every pen is raised by the people for the people; every foot that is raised to trample the pen, is to trample the people.

(Courtesy: Daily Mirror)

## Origins of May devotion to Mary

By Lenard R Mahaarachchi

Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, occupies the second place after Jesus where Catholic devotion is concerned. There are feasts in honour of her almost in every month of the year. But May and October are special Marian months. The year commences with a feast of Mary, that of her Motherhood (Theotokos). It is interesting to see how May became a special Marian month. The genesis of Marian devotion goes back to the 13th century. As Mary is Mediatrix between Jesus and us, it is little wonder that she is venerated so much in Catholic liturgy. But she has been honored much earlier may be as early as 5th century. The ancient pagans of Rome who converted to Christianity continued their devotion to goddess Venus even after becoming Christians. To disturb this trend the Pope of the time is said to have introduced Mary to their worship due to which they refrained from paying honour to Venus. But May devotions came much later.

The month of May which heralded the joyous season of Spring was conspicuous with the blooming of flowers everywhere. In ancient Rome, a festival called "Floralia" was celebrated as early as 250 BC to honour goddess "Flora". The Germans and the Celts copied it in the middle ages. This continued in Europe till the 13th century and Catholics in Italy, Spain, and England converted up it to a Marian feast. The cult spread to confraternities and sodalities and monasteries where a statue of Mary was decorated and prayers said throughout the month of May. May devotions did not have church approval till Pope Pius VII in a Brief dated 21. March 1815 recognized the devotions. For the Englishmen, it was an Italian named Dr. Gentili who promoted the May devotions. In the 18th century an Italian priest called Hanibal Dionisi, who initiated the devotion to Mary from the 1st of May till 31st. With His Holiness Pope Pius VII intro-

ducing indulgences for the devotion, it spread to Belgium, Austria and Switzerland. May devotions to the Mother of Jesus improved with time spreading to guilds and parishes where canticles were sung in front of a statue of Mother Mary. The evening exercise came to be called Laude or Laudesi. When it took roots in Europe the singing of "Salve Regina" became special. The French called it "Salut" while devotees in England and Germany it was known as 'Salve'.

The month of May was associated with ancient festivals before the Christian era. In England for example, May was marled by the making of garlands and nose-gays of flowers and the planting of a kind of tree called Maypole. In France the fest was called Mai while the Germans called it Maibaum. Maio was how it was known in Italy. It was special to the young women with the climax being the selection of May Queen. It may have been this festival that was subsequently Christianized to honour of Mary. There were kings, laymen and saints who promoted the devotion. King Alphonsus (1284), Henry Suzo (1366) and St. Charles Borromeo are famous among those who honored the other of Christ in May. Today the Marian month of May has a Marian feast as a fitting finale to the 5th month of the year, that of Mary's Visitation which was earlier kept on 2nd July.

Mary has the distinction of having a feast celebrated almost every month of the Liturgical year. While the new year starts with Mary's Motherhood, in February is celebrated Her Purification feast on 2nd. 25th March (9 months to X'mas) recalls her Annunciation. In June the feast of Her Immaculate Heart is kept, while August 15th is her Assumption. Her birthday is kept on 8th September, while October is fully Marian. On November 21st the church keeps a feast for her Presentation in the Temple. December 8th is the greatest of all Mary's feasts, that of the Immaculate Conception. Of all

these the newest feast that of her Motherhood on January 1st needs explanation. In pristine times the Octave of Christmas was kept as a Marian feast, being the Octave of Christmas. In the 7th century it was kept in France and Spain. But it was celebrated in the East much earlier, as the feast of the Mother of God, Ever Virgin. In 1334 the feast took a new name, that of the Circumcision of the Lord. Later in 1570 Pope Pius V, changed the title to the feast of "Circumcision of the One and Only Lord. "This fest came to Europe via Portugal.

To make up for the loss of the Marian character of the feast, pope Pius XI in 1931 reintroduced the feast of the Motherhood of Mary for 11th October. After the changes following the 2nd Vatican council, Pope Paul VI brought back the feast of Motherhood of Mary and re fixed it to the first January. So at last, the feast of Mary's "Theotokos" which has an ancient historical base since the proclamation of it at the council of Nicaea in 413 AD, staged a come back to herald all Marian feasts in the year.

Anti Marians need to know that Mary was called "Blessed" not by men but by an angel of God at the annunciation. (Lk 1/28) while her cousin Elizabeth added that the "Fruit of her womb (Jesus) is also blessed, which is the reason she is called 'Blessed Virgin Mother' She is the only Mother who is a virgin in spite of her maternity. God had given her an added privilege that of her conception immaculately. If God Himself chose Mary to be the Mother of His Son, Jesus, what has anti Marians to argue about her sacredness. Mary the only Mediatrix of earthlings before the Almighty, will remain blessed till the sun and moon last, whatever qualms anti Marians will have.

When wicked men blaspheme her, Marian devotees will bless her name.

(Contd from last week)

## Baptism in the Economy of Salvation

### Prefigurations of Baptism in the Old Covenant

1217 In the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, during the blessing of the baptismal water, the Church solemnly commemorates the great events in salvation history that already prefigured the mystery of Baptism:

Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs, which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power.

In Baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol of the grace you give us in this sacrament.

1218 Since the beginning of the world, water, so humble and wonderful a creature, has been the source of life and fruitfulness. Sacred Scripture sees it as "overshadowed" by the Spirit of God.

At the very dawn of creation your Spirit breathed on the waters, making them the wellspring of all holiness.

1219 The Church has seen in Noah's ark a prefiguring of salvation by Baptism, for by it "a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water."

The waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of Baptism, that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness.

1220 If water springing up from the earth symbolizes life, the water of the sea is a symbol of death and so can represent the mystery of the cross. By this symbolism Baptism signifies communion with Christ's death.

1221 But above all, the crossing of the Red Sea, literally the liberation of Israel from slavery of Egypt, announces the liberation wrought by Baptism.

You freed the children of Abraham from the slavery of Pharaoh, bringing them dry-shod through

the waters of the Red Sea, to be an image of the people set free in Baptism.

1222 Finally, Baptism is prefigured in the crossing of the Jordan River by which the people of God received the gift of the land promised to Abraham's descendants, an image of eternal life. The promise of this blessed inheritance is fulfilled in the New Covenant.

### Christ's Baptism

1223 All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus. He begins his public life after having himself baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan. After his resurrection Christ gives this mission to his apostles: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

1224 Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, in for sinners, in order to "fulfill all righteousness." Jesus' gesture is a manifestation of his self-emptying. The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the revealed Jesus as his "beloved Son."

1225 In his Passover Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism. He already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a "Baptism" with which he had to be baptized. The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life. From then on, it is possible "to be born of water Spirit" in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

See where you are baptized, see where Baptism comes from, if not from the cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: He died for you.

In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved.

### Baptism in the Church

1226 From the very day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy Baptism. Indeed St. Peter declares to the crowd astounded by his preaching. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The apostles and their collaborators offer Baptism to anyone who believed in Jesus: Jews, God-fearing pagans. Always, Baptism is seen as connected with faith: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household," St. Paul declared his jailer in Philippi. And the narrative continues, the jailer "was baptized at once with all his family."

1227 According to the Apostle Paul, the believer enters through Baptism into communion with Christ's death, is buried with him, and rises with him:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

The baptized have "put on Christ." Through the Holy Spirit, Baptism is a bath that purifies, justifies and sanctifies.

1228 Hence Baptism is a bath of water in which the "impressible seed" of the Word of God produces its life-giving effect. St. Augustine says of Baptism: "The word is brought to the material element, and it becomes a sacrament."

(Catechism of the Catholic Church)  
To be contd)

# Some Observations about Symbols and Metaphors

Since the Second Vatican Council and its resolution to translate the liturgy into the vernaculars, a whole corpus of rites has been rendered into English. Interestingly, this has been accomplished without any coherent methodology or philosophy. Principles or guidelines for translating have of course been discovered, articulated and refined, but as yet the wider ramifications of the Council's resolution have either to be realized or articulated. Present preoccupations remain with the praxis of translating: How to remain faithful to the Latin and how to reconcile that adage with the equally important task of constructing a literate celebratory language in English.

In English, it is possible to describe the kingdom, to articulate even the possibility of its realization, but because the language does not inherently carry symbolism, the element of inevitability is not present. The future can be perceived, psychologically, but there is no necessity about its being actualized; such necessity cannot be conveyed in English, and English consciousness does not expect it to be conveyed. Indeed such a consciousness presumes disjunction between the present and the future. In English

a typology will apply in the future only by metaphor and comparison with the present; just as, in the middle section of this article, it worked with the past by comparison and the use of memory. Typology in English does not work as it does in the Latin where a succession (not a series) of events brings reality to greater and greater realization, so that the events of *figurae* are surface manifestations of the deeper reality always continuing. English typology works by metaphor and illustration in which the future is contingently described, but certainly does not involve an inevitable realization. English of its nature lacks the necessity of the Latin.

Such a conclusion has severe repercussions in the field of liturgical theology. The eschatological nature of the Eucharist is important; yet if in the ontological Latin the Eucharist is a celebration of the present which incorporates the past and also the future, then the hope of the eschaton is inherent in the Eucharist and the Eucharist celebrates not only its coming but also the inevitability of its coming. Equally the Eucharist incorporates the faithful into Christ's continuing presence which is continuously being realized and will be fully realized only when he comes in

all his glory at the eschaton. The Latin inherently carries this just as the Eucharist inherently celebrates it.

Some, indeed most present-day Catholics, will of course continue to uphold the ontological even where the Eucharist is celebrated in English. But over the longer term it will be interesting to see whether such a belief can be sustained, for the nature of the English language and consciousness runs contrary to such symbolism. Because the English language and consciousness are not inherently ontological, a eucharistic celebration in English cannot celebrate the inevitability of the eschaton's coming. It can certainly celebrate that it will come, but because in English there is an inherent disjunction between the present and the future, it cannot celebrate that it must come. English can describe the eschaton but the eschaton as an ontological symbol, ever-occurring towards perfection, is not inherent in the language. There is no ontological symbol because there is a disjunction between the now and the what-is-to-come.

So the Eucharist in English can recall the past, can celebrate the past as now and can also imply a future which is hopeful. But this is a different

faith: It depends upon an individual's psychological perception and is rather more wishful than hopeful for it does not inherently encompass the future. An individual can of course believe in the eschaton and his faith may give him certainty that it will come. He may also choose to see the Eucharist as celebrating this hope. But not every individual need do that, for the natural basis of the language merely celebrates the present and compares it with the past or the future.

One can ask a most disturbing question. Were those who during the Vatican Council voted to translate the liturgy into English in fact aware either of these native traits in English or of the vast gulf which separates the Latin use of ontological symbolism and the native English abhorrence of it? It could well be that the very act itself of translating the liturgy into English, in undermining the ontology of symbols, is undermining even the traditional ontology of eucharistic transubstantiation. Historical precedent, at least, so indicates.

*(Courtesy: Book of Worship)  
Extract from Some Observations  
about Symbols and Metaphors by  
Keneth J. Larsen  
Volume 54, May 1980)*

## The Smile of the Buddha: Are you Awake?

*(A challenging piece of wisdom for to day)*

Some time shortly after his enlightenment, the Buddha was travelling in North India, as the story goes, walking down the road when some people passed him. They said he was a very handsome and charismatic man, and I am sure he exuded very good vibrations after his enlightenment. They stopped and asked, "What are you? Are you some kind of deva, an angel?" He said, "No." And they asked, "Are you some kind of a Brahma God?" He said "No." "Well, are you some kind of a magician?" and he said, "No." And they asked, "Are you a man?" He said, "No." "Then exactly what are you?" He replied, "I am awake."

What does it mean to be awake? What does it mean to awaken in the spiritual sense? And what does it mean to awaken in the worldly sense, or as they say in Islam, to praise Allah and tie your camel to the post? To begin to awaken means to be able to see the world from more than our limited, individual perspective - that of this one human life, of who I am, what I want, my job, my country, my love life, my spiritual development. To begin to awaken is to know that it is possible to go beyond what we take to be ourselves and what we know of the world. Though there is a lot of talk about spiritual growth these days, it does not usually happen by accident. Instead, awakening comes through training, practice, and through the fruit of spiritual disciplines of different kinds. With them it becomes possible to change our habitual and limited way of seeing ourselves, where we are going, and how attached we are to the people

nearest to us. We can actually learn to see the world in some greater, more universal sense.

I recently travelled to Bodh Gaya, the seat of the Buddha's enlightenment in Bihar state. At that time the Dalai Lama was there teaching under the Bodhi tree. He was surrounded by Tibetan lamas and nuns and a large number of pilgrims from Ladakh, Nepal, and Tibet. He said, "You all think you are so fortunate. Here you have come to Bodh Gaya, the holy spot of the Buddha's awakening. You're here with the great lamas and the Dalai lama himself. You are able to hear the teachings, and apply them in a full way in your life with real commitment from your heart, with your whole being, will it help you at all. You must put them into practice." Good words will not help. They are nice, but remain a little reminder until something else distracts us. So the first point is knowing that awakening is possible, and second is recognizing that we actually have to do it, that it is not just a theoretical good idea.

The third point is that even when we grow in compassion, love, and understanding, even when we awaken, it is still hard. People somehow have the idea that with more consciousness, things get easier. They do in some ways, but in many ways, perhaps, they become more difficult.

I spent some time with Mother Theresa in Calcutta, partly to work on a TV and radio programme on spiritual and social action for the US Mother Teresa had been interviewed by another person before us who said, "Well, it's all well and good for you,

you're a nun and you live a celibate and simple life, but this spiritual practice is difficult for us who are in the world, who have families and so forth." She said, "No, no. I am married too," and she showed the ring she wears, the ring of her marriage to Jesus, the symbolic marriage of a nun. Then she paused and smiled and said, "And He can be very difficult!"

It is really important to remember that if we undertake some transformation in ourselves, it requires discipline, time, and it is difficult. To awaken means to touch, to open to all the parts of ourselves, which is all the parts of the world. It means to awaken to joy, light, bliss, universal understanding, and higher consciousness - many lovely transpersonal things. And it is also to awaken to darkness, sorrow, misery, despair and suffering. To awaken really means to see what is true: If people think that becoming conscious means somehow just joy and bliss, they are going in the wrong direction.

I was in Calcutta where a hundred thousand people sleep on the streets and their beds are burlap bags on the concrete. It gets cold in the cold season - no shelter, rains in the monsoon. They may have a little stand where they sell beedis, Indian cigarettes, or pan, the beetlenut mixture, or shoelaces - there must be a thousand shoelace vendors on the streets in Calcutta - and they try to make enough pennies a day so they can get enough rice to eat. We interviewed a rickshaw driver, sixty years old, who is still pulling a rickshaw. He said that he supported ten people in his family, and if he got sick for more than a week as he did last year, then they ran out of money and went hungry.

There is tremendous poverty here in India, tremendous suffering. There are all kinds of diseases - leprosy, dysentery, tuberculosis - for which people cannot afford medicine. There is also much hunger. In Bihar, India's poorest state, new schools are being built for thousands of village children who have been so malnourished that they cannot learn well. Not just India, but Bangladesh, Somalia, Africa and Cambodia have tremendous poverty. I just came through Thailand and visited the refugee camps. They are still full.

So you want to awaken. It means to look at what is ugly and painful as well as what is joyful and beautiful, to open your eyes to anything in the world. It is painful for all of us, because the amount of suffering in the world is staggering. When we think about it, we start to close off. In the streets of Bombay, when beggars come up to the car window and say, "Please, money for food," it is hard to look at them. At the next traffic light another beggar comes. The Buddha looked, and he said, "I am only interested in one question, and that is the question of sorrow in the world and its end. I want to know the source of suffering and bondage and I want to know what is freedom from suffering, from sorrow."

In a letter to the *Boston Globe* last fall, George Wald, Nobel prize winning biologist from Harvard University wrote of the need for love in reply to controversy about Nobel prize winners having sperm banks. A feminist had written to say that female Nobel laureates should have egg banks as well. Wald replied, "Of course, you are absolutely right, Pauline. It takes an egg as well as a sperm to start a Nobel laureate

and say all that you want of fathers, their contribution to conception is rather small." He went on, "But I hope you are not really thinking of an egg bank....I am sure you are more intelligent than that because Nobel laureates aside, although there is not much difficulty in creating an egg bank, think of the trouble.

Think of a man so vain as to insist on getting a superior egg from an egg bank. He fertilizes it. And when it is fertilized, where does he go with it? To his wife? 'Here dear,' you can hear him saying, "I just got this superior egg from an egg bank and fertilized it myself. Will you take care of it?" "I have got eggs of my own to worry about," she says. "You know what you can do with your superior egg, go rent a womb. And while you are at it, you better rent a room, too." You see, Wald wrote, "it just will not work. The truth is that what one really needs is not Nobel laureates, but love. How do you think one gets to be a Nobel laureate? Wanting love, that is how. Wanting it so bad one works all the time and ends up a Nobel laureate. It is a consolation prize. What matters is love. Forget sperm banks and egg banks. Banks and love are incompatible. If you do not know that, you do not know bankers. So just practice loving. Love a Russian; you would be surprised how easy it is and how it will brighten up your morning. Love whales, love an Iranian, try a Vietnamese. Here, there, everywhere. When you get really good you could even try an American politician." *(Jack Kornfield, excerpted from Ch.10 of Ancient Wisdom & Modern Science, edited by Stanislaw Grof)*

*(Courtesy: The Enlightened Life - Subodhi March 2012)*

# Faith, Science & 'The God Delusion' of Dawkins

Rev. Fr. Mervyn Fernando's contribution to the debate on the subject as published in *The Island* on, January 2012.



Rev. Fr. Mervyn Fernando

Reading Smriti Daniel's interview with Richard Dawkins, in the *Sunday Times* of January 22, 2012, prompted me to re-visit Dawkins most popular and most controversial book *The God Delusion*. The book was a gift to me from a youthful friend abroad, and on the front

fly-leaf I read, "Dearest Uncle Father, I haven't read it yet but will get to it. I want to know what you think." So this will be in part a response to that request.

*The God Delusion* has been a hugely popular book ever since its publication in 2006. It is an outright and aggressive attack on religious belief, particularly Christian theistic belief, offering atheistic materialism as a more meaningful alternative. It is certainly a palatable dish for the humanistic materialism widely prevalent in the West, and the dressing with which Dawkins presents it is very tempting; the populist, almost flamboyant, presentation is very mind-catching. But the critical question is, what is the substance behind the dressing, behind the attractive, appealing wrapping.

It is not difficult for an intelligent reader to discover, in a careful reading, that many of Dawkins' arguments against religion and for atheism as an alternative, do not hold water. In fact the eminent Oxford mathematician John Lennox went so far as to say that *The God Delusion* has strengthened his faith, such was the weakness of its arguments, in a debate with Dawkins at Oxford University's Museum of Natural History, in October 2008. The book has also provoked a number of refutational responses from well-known philosophers, theologians and scientists. I will list some of them: (1) *Faith and its Critics Conversation*, by David Fergusson (2) *Darwin's Angel* by John Cornwell (3) *The Dawkins Delusion: Atheist Fundamentalisms and the Denial of the Divine*, by Alister McGrath and Joanna McGrath (4) *Why There. Almost Certainly is a God* by Keith Ward and, (5) *Reason, Faith and Revolution*, by Terry Eagleton.

Though there are differences of emphases in the critiques of the book by the above-mentioned authors, all of them agree: that there are distortions and misrepresentations of faith and religious beliefs, unpardonable in a man of his scientific credentials; that this "straw man" approach facilitates his purpose of rubbishing religion but at the expense of philosophical rigour. Terry Eagleton, for example, began a review of *The God Delusion* in the *London Review of Books*, thus, "Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose

only knowledge of the subject is the *Book of British Birds*, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on Theology." Other reviewers too find Dawkins' understanding of religion extremely inadequate. They also point to his specious arguments to "prove" that the methodology of science must necessarily lead to atheism. Dawkins himself surely knows dozens, if not hundreds, of respected top flight scientists who are believers and Church-goers.

William D. Phillips, the co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Prize in Physics writing on the subject of "Science, Religion and Reality" says, "There is a pervasive myth in our society that being a scientist is incompatible with being a person of faith. It simply isn't true. Most of the physicists I know are persons of faith, and most of these people are quite conventional in both their science and in their understanding of their faith. So what is all the fuss about?" The selective and partisan use of both - theological and scientific scholarship is another weakness of *The God Delusion*. Dawkins' arguments carry force not so much through unbiased and dispassionate analysis as by the use of forceful rhetoric. And with regard to the citation of sources it is curious that, in a supposedly scientific work, the authority most cited by Dawkins is Dawkins himself, as John Cornwell points out.

McGrath, an Oxford academician like Dawkins, is forthright in his rebuttal: That Dawkins has abandoned even the pretense of rigorous evidence-based scholarship for anecdotal arguments, quotations taken out of context, discarding any serious engagement with primary sources. It is more a propaganda tract than a credible defence of atheism. As such it is hard to discount the impression, as McGrath says, that *The God Delusion* is more designed to reassure atheists whose faith is faltering than to engage fairly or rigorously with religious believers or others seeking after truth. The book has undoubtedly achieved that objective.

(Courtesy: *The Enlightened Life*)  
Subodhi March 2012

## Sixth Death Anniversary In loving remembrance of REV. SR. MARY EUGENE R.G.S. Days may pass and fade away

In fond remembrance, love and affection of our dearest Rev. Sr. Mary Eugene RGS., by your everloving student, Rita Suraweera and husband Bernard with all our children of "Maria Sevena" Bopitiya, Pamunugama, not forgetting your loving nephew of India Father Sanjay Vincent CSSR.



## TO MY DEAR MOTHER

We should thank God for sending His lovely angel as our mother. You turned your blood into milk and fed us with love and care. You are a great product of Good Shepherd Convent and A marvellous product of the University of Peradeniya You guided us always. You taught us how to be patient, How to solve our day to day problems How to be good citizens. As both you and father were Government servants, You were a good example for everyone in knowing how to handle their income carefully. Even without obtaining a small loan from others You and father earned money to give us a decent education. You worked hard to make us succeed in our education Because of your dedication we passed our exams. You gave up your valuable job for our future Thank you mother for sacrificing your whole life for us If you were not with us, we would not have been able to achieve our targets in life. Now you are a Sexagenarian, But You always helped akka to become a good wife and aiya to be a success in life. You still think that I am your little daughter (*Badapissi*) and help me every day. You brought sunshine to father's life and who was fedup with darkness from his childhood. You are a loving grandmother for your grand daughters. You are a great mother-in-law that one can ever have.

You are an unforgettable friend to your friends You became an obedient daughter to your parents. You are a loving sister, though your brother never recognizes how valuable you are. You are a loving pet owner for our dog and cat. And finally you are a kind loving angel of our God. You represent Mother Mary! You are our shadow We cannot live without your help Don't think that we don't love you. We do not hug you, sitting on your lap as we did in our childhood.

Some times we don't show you our love We all are lucky to have you with us So, mother we need you in our future. Specially I need you, as the youngest

Take our breath ..... and live with us for a long years And forgive us for every thing! We have hurt you by saying stupid things. Sorry for everything! All these things happen because we love you! We pray for you! We wish you a happy, healthy & long life!

We Love You Always!  
God protect you every second!  
May God Bless You Amma!

M. ISHARA NISHALI PAARIS

## Relaxing Abortion laws is to pave the way for Murder and Permissiveness

The head of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith had in a press conference urged the Government of Sri Lanka not to proceed with the intended amendments to the Abortion Act as he calls abortion "the murder of the voiceless, defenseless and innocent human lives".

Linda Van Schagen reacting to this statement says that while she cannot refute what Cardinal says still she believes that abortion is a woman's choice particularly when she has been raped, has no economic means to sup-

port the child she is bearing a deformed foetus, or has been duped into having premarital sex by a wily boy friend or already married person.

We regret to disagree with her reasons. Life begins at the moment of conception or the fertilization of the ovum (the female egg) by the sperm. There are two lives when a woman gets pregnant. We have to respect and safeguard both lives equally as one has no right over the other. Any interference with the fertilized ovum is

a murder'. Just because a woman gets pregnant by incest or rape the innocent baby or foetus cannot be aborted. Killing of an innocent human being cannot be left to the woman's choice as they have their rights to live.

The solution for rape or incest is to have stringent rules, regulations and punishments that would work as a deterrent to wily boys and perverse



people. Economic reasons cannot justify the killing of innocent people. It is for the society to have systems and structures that go for equal distribution of wealth assuring the basic needs to everybody. If we go through history we see how differently-abled people have contributed to music and culture, joy and happiness to people through various talents they possess. There are so-called handicapped children who have kept families together and promoted love and concern among people. So let us look at the whole picture in a realistic and global manner.

We too vehemently condemn rape and incest. We have to educate these people and mete out suitable punishments. Married people also have become very selfish and irresponsible. Many have forgotten that married life demands give and take, forgiveness and tolerance, understanding and gut level communication. Woman's right to her own body is inalienable. However in marriage they come to some agreement to give up some of those rights for love and marital stability. Today more than ever we need to accompany couples to be faithful to

one another as the media very often go against these values. Vatican still holds on to moral principles and values with regard to contraception and abortion.

Today not only priests but also many right thinking people including Doctors, Psychologists, Sociologists and Lawyers do condemn abortion. There are other religious leaders who are against abortion. So let us not promote abortion as it would lead to many abuses, permissiveness and murder.

Rev. Fr. W.D.G. Chrispin Leo  
Spiritual Director of  
Catholic Doctors' Guild

# May the Month of Mary



## Marialis Cultus

On February 2, 1974, Pope Paul VI published an Apostolic Exhortation on Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary entitled *Marialis Cultus* ("Marian Devotion"). It is one of the most important documents of his pontificate and of the whole Marian Magisterium of the Roman Pontiffs. The document sets forth the reasons and the means for devotion to Mary in a manner attuned to the needs of the mentality and custom of our age. To do

so, it draws upon the liturgical reforms of Vatican II and the great psychological and socio-cultural changes that have overtaken the world.

Part One deals with devotion to Mary in the revised Liturgy in the unfolding of the various seasons of the Liturgical year and in the special celebrations in honour of Mary (Feasts and Memorials), both universal and particular. In the Eucharistic Prayer,

the theological and spiritual richness of the prayers, readings, hymns, and the like in the Sacramentary, Lectionary, Liturgy of the Hours, and Ritual.

It speaks of the spiritual attitude with which the Church celebrates and lives the Divine Mysteries, taking as her Model Mary, who is the attentive Virgin, the Virgin in prayer, the Virgin Mother and the Virgin presenting offerings in perfect union with Christ. An with the Church as a whole, individual Christians are also called to imitate Mary in piety, spiritual life, and worship.

Part Two sets forth the reasons, norms, and means for the renewal of Marian devotion. It grounds them all on the Biblical patristic, conciliar, and theological Magisterium of Christian Tradition.

First it illustrates the Trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesial basis of Marian devotion and gives a valuable passage on Mary and the Holy Spirit. It then adds four orientations for the devotion itself. It should be Biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological in harmony with the best Tradition of the Church and with the most genuine needs of today's spirituality.

The month of May is the "month that the piety of the faithful is especially dedicated to Our Blessed Lady," and it is the occasion for a "moving tribute

of faith and love that Catholics in every part of the world pay to the Queen of Heaven. During this month Christians, both in Church and in the privacy of the home, offer up to Mary from their hearts an especially fervent and loving homage of prayer and veneration. In this month, too, the benefits of God's mercy come down to us from her throne in greater abundance" (Paul VI: Encyclical *Mense Maio*: On the Month of May, no. 1).

The Christian custom of dedicating the month of May to the Blessed Virgin arose at the end of the 13th century. In this way, the Church was able to Christianize the secular feasts that were wont to take place at that time. In the 16th century, books appeared and fostered this devotion.

The practice became especially popular among the members of the Jesuit Order - by 1700 it took hold among their students at the Roman College and a bit later it was publicly practiced in the Gesu Church in Rome. From there it spread to the Church.

The practice was granted a partial indulgence by Pius VII in 1815 and a plenary indulgence by Pius IX in 1859. With the complete revision of indulgences in 1966 and the decreased emphasis on specific indulgences, it no longer carries an indulgence; however, it certainly falls within the category of the First General Grant of Indulgences.

This pious practice has

been especially recommended by the Popes. Pius XII made frequent reference to it and in his great Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy (*Mediator Dei*) characterized it as one of "other exercises of piety that although not strictly belonging to the Sacred Liturgy, are nevertheless of special importance and dignity, and may be considered in a certain way to be an addition to the liturgical cult: They have been approved and praised over and over again by the Apostolic See and by the Bishops" (no. 182).

In his 1965 Encyclical, *Mense Maio*, Paul VI used the Month of Mary devotion as a means of obtaining prayers for peace. He urged the faithful to make use of this practice, which is "gladdening and consoling" and by which the Blessed Virgin Mary is honoured and the Christian people are enriched with spiritual gifts" (no. 2).

There are no official prayers or rites for this practice. Many churches have a daily recitation of the Rosary in public or some other prayers in honour of Mary, including the crowning of Our Lady's statue. For private use, one can follow the format of a liturgy of the Word: Entrance chant, opening prayer, Scripture reading, and brief reflection or homily, with a concluding prayer of invocation. The only necessary element is that Mary be honoured in a special way.

Courtesy : Koinonia

## Mary, the Mother of Jesus

The reasons for the universal love of Mary, says Archbishop Fulton Sheen, is to be found in four instincts deeply embedded in the human heart: Affection for the beautiful, admiration for purity, reverence for a Queen and love of a mother. All these come to focus in Mary.

After the great 'Fall', of our first parents, Adam and Eve, Mary becomes the first person to have a unique and unrepeatable kind of union with God. She is announced as the 'Woman' who will conquer, as the virgin who will conceive. This was the first announcement of a saviour. The first 'woman' Eve, made a choice that brought evil consequences to all of humanity.

In remaking or redeeming man, Mary

is given the choice for man's restoration. We move from the holiness of the Old Testament to the New Testament in which the angel Gabriel announces to Mary (the new woman), that she is full of grace and has found favour with God. She is to bring forth a male child and who shall be called Jesus, meaning the saviour. It was by a woman that man fell from grace, it would be through a woman that man would be redeemed. This was the second Announcement and its fulfillment depended on Mary's acceptance of the Divine Will. Like our first parents, Adam and Eve, Mary had perfect freedom to say 'Yes' or 'No' in her great 'Fiat': "Be it done unto me according to thy word." Her Divine Son, was fully willed in

mind and body, and she conceived. Without this freedom, Sheen tells us, turning to God would be like the sunflower turning towards the sun.

Once again to quote Sheen "In this relationship between God and Mary, is something like the relations between rain and the earth. Rain falls from heaven, but the earth produces. Divinity comes from Heaven, the human nature of Jesus comes from Mary. God willed to take on human nature through a virgin while conserving the virginity of his Mother, and showing precisely that He is the Word of God. Mary renounce maternity, and yet found it in her virginity, as the closed garden through which no one should pass except the Light of the world, Who would break noth-

ing in coming - anymore than light breaks the window by coming into the room".

The Church has proclaimed two dogmas for the purity of Mary - one the purity of soul in the Immaculate Conception, the other the purity of the body in the Assumption. Imperfection of life comes from sin, it follows that the creature preserved from Original Sin by a singular grace, is immune from bodily corruption.

The Virgin Mary shared in her own way in the Redemption of the world. She had no room in the Inn when she became the Mother of Jesus in Bethlehem. Standing beneath the Cross of Jesus, He made her love all men as He loved them. From the cross Jesus saw his mother and his be-



loved disciple John.

He first spoke to his mother. He does not call her mother, but 'Woman'. If he had called her mother, she would have been just his mother and no one else. In order to indicate a new relationship by which his mother becomes the mother of all mankind, he gave her the title, 'Woman', He said, Woman this is your

son," and to John, "this is your Mother".

Thus, Mary became the mother of the New Living. In this new motherhood, Mary has the whole world for her other children born not of the flesh, but of her spirit. This answers the question did Mary have other children?

Bryan Landsberger,

## Way of Life for the Young Catholic

### HOW TO PRAY

#### Five ways of praying

At some stage in your spiritual life, you will want to make a bit more time for prayer each day. If you leave it to chance, it probably won't happen. The best way is to set aside a short time for prayer, at a particular time in the day, and stick to that time. Sometimes we feel like it, sometimes we don't. What matters is simply to be there, with the Lord. If one time doesn't work. Then try another; and gradually God will help you to find a routine that suits you. But what do we do in that time? Here are five suggestions:

#### 1. 'Formal' Prayers -

There are many prayers in the Bible and in the Christian tradition that we can use in our own personal prayer. For example: The Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, the Creeds, the Morning Offering, an Act of Contrition, the Psalms, the well known prayers composed by the saints. It is good to have a book that contains different prayers we can use. These prayers help us to enter into the depths of Christian prayer. They take us beyond our own personal concerns, or help us to express concerns we didn't know we had. The important thing is to pray them with sincerity, with attention, with our whole heart and mind and not just to rush through them.

#### 2. Talking to God

Talk to him, in your own words, as you would to a close friend or a loving parent. Be completely honest, and natural. Tell him what you are thinking and feeling. Tell him your hopes and your fears and your worries. Ask him to help you and those you care for. Entrust your intentions to him. Pray for the needs of the Church and of the world. He always listens to us. And he always answers us in some way - even if that answer may be difficult to hear or to understand.

#### 3. Sacred Scripture

God speaks to us through the Bible, and his Son, Jesus is present with us as we read and meditate on his Holy Word. There are many ways of using the Bible in personal prayer: We can read through one of the books of the Bible; we can turn to our favourite passages; we can choose a certain story of a parable or a psalm. Here is one method, which is a form of '*lectio divina*' (holy reading): Choose a short passage (perhaps from one of Gospels; perhaps the reading from Mass for that day); read it slowly; then have some time to think and pray about it. What strikes you? What interests you? What seems relevant to your life? Then read the passage again slowly. Have another time to think and reflect. And finally, talk to God about what you are thinking and feeling, and ask his help in your life. If this method is useful, you could work through one of the gospels taking another passage each day. It is also useful to use a Catholic commentary or Bible guide (like 'Bible Alive') to help us understand the passages.

#### 4. The Rosary

Praying the rosary keeps us close to God and to Our Lady, and keeps us rooted in the central truths of our Christian faith. When we say the individual prayers, we lift our hearts and minds to God. As we meditate on the mysteries of the rosary, we remember the life of Christ and of his Blessed Mother. Mary herself, in many apparitions, has asked us to pray the rosary, and promised that we will receive great graces if we do. Praying the rosary has kept the faith of many individuals and families alive, and helped their lives to be transformed. It is traditional to try and pray five decades each day. But some people find this too hard. Why not try and pray one decade each day (1 Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, 1 Glory be), and make this a part of your daily prayer. It will make such a difference to

your life and faith.

#### 5. Silence

We can end up 'doing' and 'saying' a lot in our prayer time, but we also need some time of silence, so we can listen to our own hearts, so we can listen to God, and so we can simply be in his presence and appreciate who he is. Silence is hard, because we fidget, and our minds and hearts get easily distracted. But it doesn't matter if we get a bit distracted. What matters is that we make a bit of space for the Lord, and try and be still before him, and rest our hearts in him. We might feel peaceful or agitated or bored, but at least we have given him this space, and tried to let go of our busyness and noise. If we make a little time for silent prayer each day, then the Lord will help us to become more sensitive to his presence, and our prayer will become deeper and more intimate.

If you are not sure how to use your time of prayer, why not try the following: Set aside perhaps 15 minutes to pray in the morning. Close the door of your room. Keep some 'sacred space' in your room where you have a crucifix, some holy pictures, some holy water, and perhaps a candle. Kneel here. Begin by making the Sign of the Cross, and then pray some formal prayers, such as the Morning Offering, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be. Then have a few moments talking to God in your own words, telling him all that is on your mind and heart, and asking for his help. Then have five minutes reflecting on a passage of the Bible - sit down if it helps you to be comfortable. Then have a few moments of silence. And finish by praying one decade of the Rosary. Don't rush or force anything. If you drop one thing, and spend more time on another, that is fine. The important thing is just to pray, and a structure is only something to help us get going.

Fr. Stephen Wang

## Kiddies enjoy New Year Games



Pix by J. Antony

Yatiyantota Good Shepherd Montessori Hous, held its New Year celebrations at the school premises, organised by the Principal Rev. Sr. Marie Lourdes and her staff. Picture shows the kiddies engaging in a flower stringing competition.

## BEAUTIFUL FRIENDS

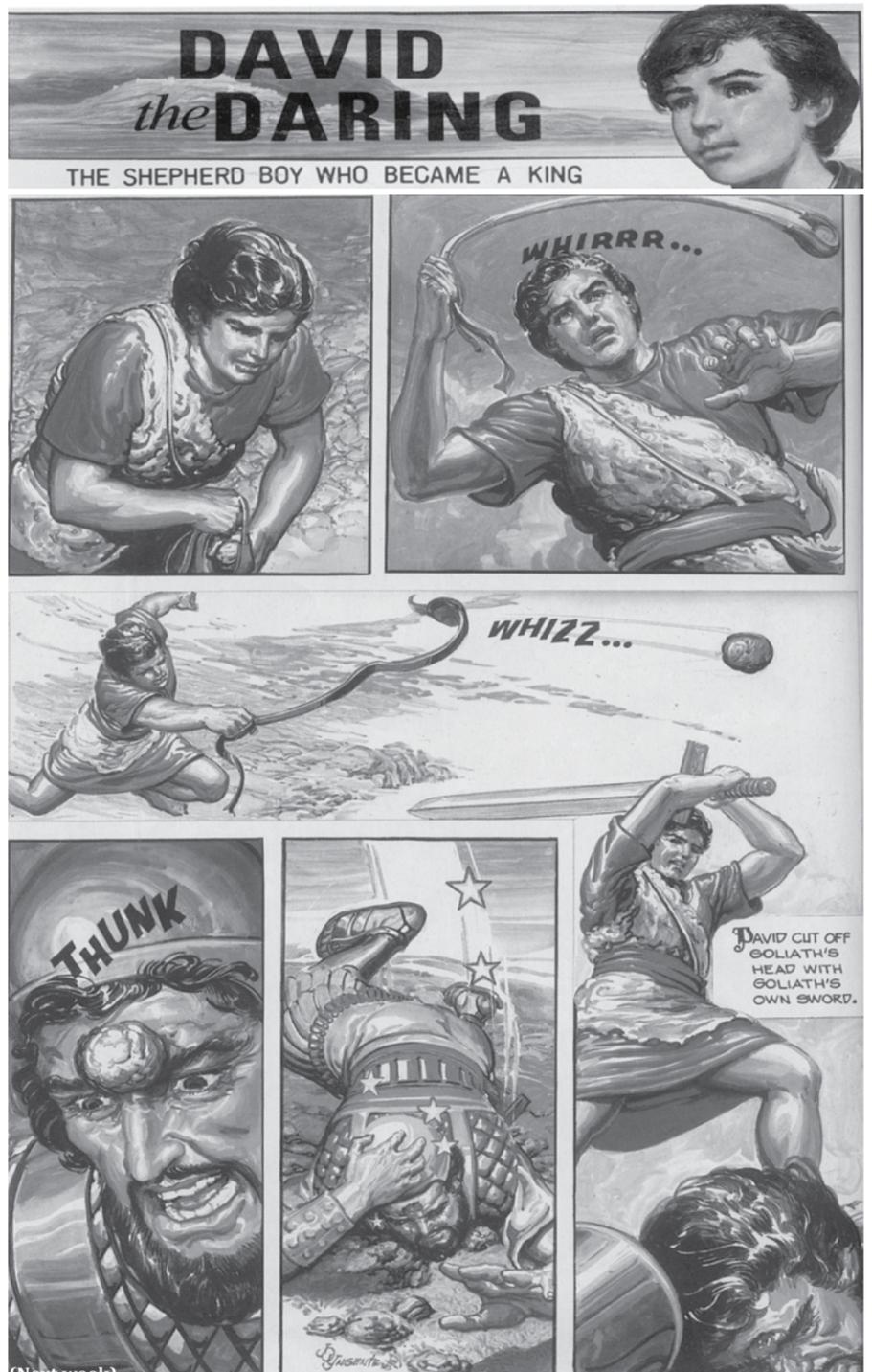
Friends make life more beautiful  
In many different ways  
With smiles of warm affection  
With words of living praise

A friend is an ANGEL....  
God gives us in a way  
With looks of trust and tenderness  
And moments of deep sharing

And Countless little gestures  
With honesty and tactfulness  
In the things they say and do  
So, friends make life more meaningful  
If they are special friends forever.



Umeshi Nishadani



(Next week)

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

Jesus said: "If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him. (Jn. 14:23)

## Our Lady of Fatima - May 13



On 13 May 1917, in that third year of the First World War which was to cost eight million lives, important events were taking place simultaneously — in Russia, communistic, atheistic Bolshevism was being organized under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky who had just arrived in St. Petersburg; in the neighbourhood of the little Portuguese town of Fatima, the Mother of God

herself deigned to appear in the first of six apparitions to three children, to make through them one final appeal to our materialistic, war-torn world.

"In a spirit of sacrifice to our Lord, are you willing to accept everything he may send you as reparation for the sins by which his majesty is offended, as a means for convert all sinners, and as atonement for the blasphemies offered to the Immaculate Heart of Mary?" A simple "yes" being their reply, she urged: "Then pray the Rosary often and devoutly, for the peace of the world!" "Recite the Rosary daily, and after the Gloria Patri of each decade add: *O my Jesus, forgive us our sins! Save us from the fires of hell! Lead all souls to heaven, especially those who most need thy mercy!*"

And on 13 October, she declared: "I am the Lady of the Holy Rosary! I have come to ask all humankind to do penance and to ask pardon for its sins! Do not add to the countless outrages by which our Lord is already so offended, especially by sins of impurity."

## St. Matthias - May 14

Apostle and Martyr (1st century)

St. Matthias had been one of our Lord's disciples from the time of his Baptism in the Jordan, and, after the Ascension of our Lord, he was chosen by lot to fill the place left vacant among the 12 Apostles through the betrayal and suicide of Judas Iscariot. That is all we know with certainty about this saint from the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles (1:23-26): "And they (apostles) appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And praying, they said: You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which of these two you have chosen to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas has by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place. And they gave them lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles".

According to one tradition, he preached Christianity in Judaea (modern Israel) and Ethiopia where he was crucified, but others hold that he was beheaded at Jerusalem.

St. Matthias is patron of tailors, carpenters and reformed cobolics, and is invoked against smallpox.



# The Sixth Sunday of Easter

## Choosing to love

### Being chosen

Before people go for a job interview they usually spruce themselves up, dust themselves down, then check with their family or friends if they look all right. Minor adjustments are made, assurances of "not to worry" are urged. On the way to the interview the hopefuls might even whisper a telegram to St. Jude, traditional patron of hopeless cases. Resumes have already been sent on ahead, advance notice of past accomplishments that are supported by important signatories. The gaps have been covered as well as could be truthfully managed. All these reports now lie on the table in the interview room. Dry throats are watered, moist palms are rubbed, nervousness is covered with a ready smile. The interview begins. The agenda is themselves.

People go through all this anxiety and strain in the hope that they will be selected for the job. The prospect of failure and rejection is real, but the strenuous hope of being chosen gives them courage to face the probing questions. To be chosen is to be picked out, opted for, preferred, taken on. All this makes the risk of refusal worthwhile.

It is only when applicants are chosen for a job that they are free to take it or leave it. Before acceptance they are in no position to *choose* the job that is advertised. In applying they declare that they want the position; but wishes aren't choices. Only after acceptance have they the actual *power* to choose the job or not. That is why people forced by circumstances into a course of action always say, "But I had no choice in the matter." *Real choice presupposes the freedom and the power to commit oneself.*

### Choosing to give ourselves

In everything that he did Jesus kept on choosing to love. He did not choose *once* upon a time; he chose to love at all times. It drained him. That self-giving quality of divine love is one that can be seen in the lives of many people. One doctor saw it in a way that he can never forget. As a young medical student he watched an unusual operation in a London hospital:

It was the first time that this particular brain operation had been carried out in this country. It was performed by one of our leading surgeons upon a young man of great promise for whom, after an accident, there seemed to be no other remedy. It was an operation of the greatest delicacy, in which a small error would have had fatal consequences. In the outcome

the operation was a triumph: But it involved seven hours of intense and uninterrupted concentration on the part of the surgeon. When it was over, a nurse had to take him by the hand, and lead him from the operating theatre like a blind man or a little child.

That kind of self-giving and concentration on the needs of another reflect something of the quality of God's love in Jesus. Jesus hopes that we will choose to keep on giving ourselves in love, even when the giving hurts, even when we feel we have nothing left but our exhausted presence. But it's that kind of love that mirrors God's kind of love. As Jesus said himself, the love that costs nothing can be managed by anyone, for everything is on credit. The bill for authentic love is the giving of the self, the communication of the self, the handing over of the self.

We have to admit that few of us have the freedom or the power to accomplish this. We can only choose to try, confident that our struggle is backed by God's love. Somewhere in the struggle we can hear the voice of God cheering us on.

## PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

**Response : Lord, hear us in your love.**

For all Christians: That they may banish the winter of apathy and selfishness and show the kind of love for one another that followers of Christ should. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Response : Lord, hear us in your love.**

For all those who have power and who hold positions of authority: That they may banish from their hearts all spiteful and rejecting attitudes, and work to ensure justice for all their brothers and sisters. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Response : Lord, hear us in your love.**

For those who are unable to love, either because they have never known love or because they have been very badly hurt. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Response : Lord, hear us in your love.**

That those who are deprived of peace and justice especially in our country: May see the end of hostility and violence through the cooperation of those of good will. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Response : Lord, hear us in your love.**

## St. Simon Stock - May 16

Confessor (c. 1165 - 1265)

This native of Kent, England (born at Ayelsford), received his nickname, "Simon of the Stock" from the legend that at the age of 12 he started living as a hermit in the hollow of a great oak tree and continued to do so for 63 years! He was known as an itinerant preacher, until he joined the Carmelite Order in 1240 soon after its introduction into England, driven out of Jerusalem by the Moslems.

In 1247 he was elected 6th General of the Order at whose spread he laboured with much zeal and success despite his advanced age. Houses were opened for the training of young Carmelites in the great University cities of the time, viz., Cambridge, Oxford, Paris and Bologna; the rule of the Order was also modified so as to make the former hermits into mendicant friars. An ancient Carmelite tradition relates that Our Lady appeared

to St Simon on 16 July 1251, and presented him with the Brown Scapular to which she attached the well known privilege, i.e., "This shall be the privilege for you and for all Carmelites, that anyone dying in this habit, shall be saved." Thus to him is ascribed the spread of the scapular devotion.

Simon Stock died on 16 May 1265 at Bordeaux. Though never formally canonized, his relics have long been venerated as those of a saint in the Cathedral at Bordeaux and in the Carmelite Monastery at Aylesford, England.

**Reflection:** "From the first till the last, every grace has passed and will pass through Mary. Just as she prayed to the Holy Spirit to come upon the apostles, she will do for all till the end of the world" (Blessed James Alberione).



### LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR B 13th May - 20th May 2012

#### SUN: SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Act. 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48,  
1Jn. 4: 7-10, Jn. 15: 9-17

#### Mon: Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle

Act 1: 15-17, 20-26, Jn. 15: 9-17

#### Tue: Act. 16: 22-34, Jn. 16: 5-11

#### Wed: Act. 17: 15, 22-18, 1, Jn. 16: 12-15

#### Thu: Act. 18: 1-8, Jn. 16: 16-20

#### Fri: Memorial of St. John I, Pope and Martyr

Act. 18: 9-18, Jn. 16: 20-23

#### Sat: Act. 18: 23-28, Jn. 16: 23-28

#### Sun: THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Act. 1: 1-11, Eph. 1: 17-23 or

Eph. 4: 1-13, Mk. 16: 15-20