

"You abandoned yourself completely to God's call and thus became a well-spring of the goodness..."



Messenger

"REGISTERED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POSTS OF SRI LANKA

UNDER NO. QD / 50 / NEWS / 2013"

Sunday, December 15, 2013 Vol 144 No 49 20 Pages Rs: 25.00 Registered as a newspaper

His Eminence: We reject all forms of foreign intervention in our internal affairs



Pic: Ajith Perera



"Towards the reconciliation and rebuilding of our nation," a Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL) was released this week to

coincide with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady.

Welcoming media representatives to a Press Conference held in this connection at the CBCSL Secretariat in Borella,

President of the CBCSL His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, stated that the Catholic Bishops have, from time to time, issued such communiqués to the Catholic faithful in this country for their

reflection and guidance. It was 29 years ago, in 1984, that a Pastoral Letter was issued, titled *"Towards rebuilding of the Sri Lankan nation."*

His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis,

Secretary General of the CBCSL noted that the last Pastoral Letter highlighted several areas of concern and also made pertinent proposals to ameliorate the conditions created by the burning social

issues of that time. Some of these proposals were acted upon but many remained unimplemented or went unheeded. Today, the Bishops are again

(Contd on Pg. 03) >>>



Patronal Feast

Prayerful wishes to His Grace Most. Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis Archbishop Emeritus December 12.

Ad Multos Annos!

Christmas Events

Two very special events have been organised by the Archdiocese to share with others the spirit and the joy of the season of goodwill and cheer.

'Joy to the World', is a Christmas Concert organised by the Blessed Joseph Vaz Trust and will be held on Saturday December 14, at the BMICH. The proceeds of the concert will be used for projects of the poor and the needy. Rev. Fathers especially in the city of Colombo and in the suburbs are called upon



to support this concert.

'Heart to Heart', a gathering of children in a fun filled Catholic Youth Day Camp, will take place at St. Joseph's College, Colombo on December 15 and is organised by the Colombo Region.

(Contd on Pg. 02) >>>

Nuncio opens new Art Gallery for Jaffna



'Kalaithuthu Kalamuttram' of the Centre for Performing Arts was declared open by His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Spiteri, recently. It is the first Art Gallery of its kind in Jaffna.

A prayer service was held the evening before at the end of which the Gallery was blessed. Religious dignitaries of Christian and other religions including academics and artistes graced the opening ceremony. In two big halls

of the new gallery, paintings and sculptures were put on display and some of the paintings by Sinhala artistes were exhibited together with a film about paintings.

Rev. Dr. N.M. Saveri, Director of the Centre for Performing Arts delivering the Vote of Thanks, expressed gratitude to all benefactors, the artistes and well-wishers for the support extended to the Centre. The ceremony was

(Contd on Pg. 03) >>>

Water-wells for North

To share the joy of the Christmas Season with the people of the North, the National Christian Workers' Movement has decided to build drinking water wells in the North. As an initial project, St. Theresa's Church, Mulliaweli of the Kulamurippu Parish in the Jaffna Diocese has been identified.

Theobald Samarantunga

'University Christmas Chariot 2013'

'University Christmas Chariot 2013', will be a novel move by the University Catholic Students' Movement, of the Colombo Region for Christmas this month. The University Christmas Chariot will get on the streets of Colombo on Saturday, December 21, from 4.00 pm onwards.

A carol chariot of 20 singers will assemble at St. Lawrence's Church, Wellawatte at 4 pm and proceed along the Galle Road singing carols. The climax will be a stage show at the Galle Face Green, from 7.00 pm to 8.30 pm with 40 carol singers performing.

After the grand carol show at the Galle Face Green the mobile carol chariot will progress along the streets of Colombo singing the traditional seasonal favourites.

The Movement requests students past and present and all those interested to assemble with their vehicles at St. Lawrence's Church, Wellawatte by 3.45 pm and join the chariot procession.

Contact: Rev. Fr. Saman Maximus Tel: 077 344 7333 Marius Suranjan - Tel: 071 611 3464



St. Mary's Church, Avissawella celebrates 150 Years



The Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith who was the chief celebrant at the 150th Church Feast of St. Mary's, Avissawella, is seen, being conducted to the Church. *J. Anthony*

Meeting of Bl. Joseph Vaz, National Committee



A meeting of the Blessed Joseph Vaz National Committee was held recently, at Balcombe Place under the

Chairmanship of His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, Bishop of Kandy. *Theobald Samarantunga*

Christmas in 'Little Rome'

Rev. Fathers and members of the Meegamuwa *Catholika Sasanarakshaka Balamandalaya*, with the help of government institutions will celebrate Christmas this year giving focus to the cultural heritage of Negombo.

The celebrations will be held on December 20, 21 and 22, at the Negombo Kadol Uyana Grounds.

Competitions for the best carol singing, crib and Christmas tree will be held together with band displays and a Christmas play titled "*Rajatun Kattuwa*."

All are welcome! *Catholika Sasanarakshaka Balamandalaya*

Meeting of National Council of St. Vincent de Paul Society



A meeting of the National Council of St. Vincent de Paul Society was held at Paul VI Centre recently, presided over by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Norbert Andradi OMI, Chairman, National Laity Commission. A celebrated Holy Mass was held after the meeting.

Pic T. Samarantunga

'Bible Sunday' at Peralanda Parish



'Bible Sunday' was held at the Peralanda Parish recently under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Don Anton Saman Hettiarachchi, Director, Archdiocesan Bible Apostolate.

C.R. Dickson Antony

Lectures at Institute of Spiritual Formation of Asia

The Institute of Spiritual Formation of Asia (ISFA) will hold a series of lectures conducted by renowned Scripture Scholar, Rev. Fr. Dudley Perera, OMI, every Wednesday from 4.00 pm. to 6.15 pm, beginning January 22 to April 9, 2014. The subjects for the lectures will be; The Laws, The Prophets and The Writings of the Old Testament.

The Institute will also hold lectures on the Gospel of St. John and the Synoptic Gospels from September 3 to December 3, 2014, every Wednesday from 4.00 pm to 6.15 pm. All lectures will be conducted by Rev. Fr. Dudley Perera, OMI.

For details please contact, Ms. Vivienne Fernando, Programme Coordinator, ISFA, 130, De La Salle Street, Colombo 15. Telephone; 011 2527136; Email: isfabjm@yahoo.com

Welcoming a son of Peralanda



Parishioners of Peralanda together with their Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Patrick Perera OMI, welcomed Rev. Bro. Roshan Dias FSC, a son of the Peralanda Parish who took his Final Vows recently. *C.R.D. Anthony*

'Alcoholics Anonymous' opens at Delatura



A prayer service was held prior to the opening of the 'Alcoholics Anonymous' centre at Delatura, Bopitiya for the benefit of victims of alcohol and their families. *S.K.J. Kurera*

Church Feasts

The Annual Feast of St. Mary's Church, Eldeniya in Kadawatha Parish will be celebrated on Sunday December 14. Festive Mass at 8.30 am. Vespers Service on previous day at 7 pm.

Christmas events....

Contd. from Pg. 1

The programme will be choreographed by Mr. Francis D'Almeida, Mrs. Priyanthi Seneviratne Van Dort and Mr. Trevor Ludowyke under the direction of Rev. Fr. Felician Ranjith Perera, Parish Priest, all Saints' Church, Borella. Parishes in the Colombo region are requested to send their children for this vacation programme.

Requiem Mass for deceased



A Requiem Mass was held by the Dharmaratna Janapadaya, Diyalagoda for the deceased Rev. Fathers and Rev. Brothers of St. Vincent's Home, Maggona.

Holy Mass was presided by Rev. Fr. Noel Mervyn with Rev. Fr. Thusith Pradeep Fernando, Parish Priest Diyalagoda. After the Mass dry rations were distributed to poor families. *D. Anselm Fernando*



Church in the Modern World

Pope Francis on Nelson Mandela: An Example for Generations of South Africans

VATICAN CITY, (Zenit.org) - In a telegram to President Jacob Zuma of South Africa, Pope Francis expressed his condolences to former President Nelson Mandela, who passed away at the age of 95.

"It was with sadness that I learned of the death of former President Nelson Mandela, and I send prayerful condolences to all the Mandela family, to the members of the government and to all the people of South Africa," the Pope wrote in his tribute to the former President, who was affectionately known by South Africans as 'Madiba', his



tribal name.

Recalling Mandela's efforts in promoting the human dignity of all South African's, the Pope expressed his hope that his example will "inspire generations of South Africans to put justice and

the common good at the forefront of their political aspirations."

Concluding his telegram, the Holy Father invoked the "divine gifts of peace and prosperity" to the people of South Africa.

Vatican launches global campaign to fight 'scandal' of hunger

VATICAN CITY, (CNA/EWTN News) - Caritas Internationalis has initiated their first global campaign to eradicate hunger, promoting the basic human right to food, and encouraging fraternal solidarity in ensuring that everyone has enough.

At the launching of the campaign, Pope Francis stated, "I am happy to announce to you the launch of a campaign against global hunger by our very own 'Caritas Internationalis' and to tell you that I intend to give my full support."

The Pope highlighted that the work of Caritas, the relief agency

of the Church, "is at the heart of the mission of the Church and of Her attention towards all those who suffer because of the scandal of hunger."

"We are in front of a global scandal of around one billion people who still suffer from hunger today," the Pope explained, stating that "we cannot look the other way and pretend this does not exist."

"The food available in the world is enough to feed everyone. The parable of the multiplication of the loaves and fish teaches us exactly this: That if there is the will, what we have never ends.



Caritas specifically chose to launch the campaign, entitled 'One human family, food for all', on December 10, to correspond with Human Rights' Day, as the initiative is based on our right to have adequate and nutritious food in order to live a dignified life.

Feasts celebrated at the Madhu Shrine

January 1 st	The Feast of Mary Mother of God
February 2 nd	The Presentation of the Lord
March 10 th	The Feast Celebrated by Mutuwal Parish
March 15 th	The Feast celebrated by Pamunugama Parishioners

Holy Week

Sunday of May 1 st	The Feast celebrated by Waikkala Parishioners
May 19 th	The Feast celebrated by Negombo People
June 2 nd	The Feast celebrated by Godella Parish
July 2 nd	Feast of Our Lady of Madhu
August 15 th	The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
September 8 th	The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Saturday of October 1 st	The Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary
December 8 th	The Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

For all the above Feasts celebrated at Madhu Shrine the following instructions are forwarded. As it is, the due period, given below for the applications to receive houses, will be strictly observed.

FEAST

DUE PERIOD TO APPLY FOR HOUSES

January 1 st	November 1 st to December 15 th
February 2 nd	December 1 st to January 15 th
March 10 th & March Festival 15 th	January 1 st to February 15 th

Holy Week

May 1 st	February 1 st to March 15 th
May 19 th	
July 2 nd	March 15 th to May 31 st
August 15 th	May 1 st to June 30 th
September 8 th	June 30 th to July 30 th
Saturday of October 1 st	July 15 th to August 30 th
December 8 th	October 1 st to October 30 th

We will not accept any applications after the said date.

Rev. Fr. Administrator
Madhu Shrine

Nuncio opens...

Contd. from Pg. 1

followed by a fellowship lunch for all visitors and artistes. His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundaranaygam, Bishop of Jaffna, Srilasiri Somasundara Paramachariya Swamikal of Nallur Adheenam, Venerable M. Sri Vimala Thero of Sri Naga Vihara Jaffna, Moulavi Masmooth Muhamathia Jumma Maggith, graced the occasion.

Kishani Fernando

His Eminence....

Contd. from Pg. 1

responding to the present situation and placing before the people many important matters for their elucidation. This, the Bishops have done after deep study of the vital issues that engage our attention and thus need to be addressed in a responsible manner if we are to move forward as a united nation. The biblical basis for the current Pastoral Letter is derived from Jesus' own words: "If anyone wishes to be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Holy Mother the Church teaches us the importance of being alive to the realities surrounding us, since that is the way to give true witness to our faith.

His Eminence added that in 1984 the Bishops had pointed out that unless we as citizens of this country learn to settle issues among ourselves through dialogue and in a spirit of magnanimity, foreign interference was sure to arise.

Observing that current trends have borne out the validity of the Bishops' fears and the substance of their warnings, His Eminence said that we must firmly stand against all forms of meddling by other countries in our internal affairs. At the same time, of course, we must remain genuinely committed to resolving our problems using our own means.

"We can find a decent way out of our problems," the Cardinal said. "We have the intelligence, the capacity and the spiritual strength for it, backed by a common religious heritage. Apart from that, we are also aware of what foreign interventions have done in other countries. There, the problems in those countries still remain unresolved. So, it is up to us to learn to coexist as brothers and sisters. It is only then that we can ward off any overtures by outside parties."

Ainslie Joseph

SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus



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EDITORIAL

December 15, 2013

Christmas is a time of waiting

Christmas is approaching and from the first of December we hear Christmas songs like "Jingle Bells." The TV stations show Christmas trees and Santa Claus. Children in western countries send letters to Santa Claus asking Santa to bring the gifts they want. Christmas is a time of waiting. What are we waiting for? We expect our children who are away from us or who are abroad to come home for Christmas. We look forward to seeing them. We spruce up our homes, whitewashing and painting them.

The Bible refers to two characters who were waiting for the Saviour. They are Simeon and Anna. They are referred to in Luke's Gospel. They do not appear in any nativity scenes or in any Christmas cards, but they had a role to play in the first Christmas pageant. Both these individuals were waiting for something - actually, they were waiting for someone. Luke 2:25. "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon Him." Israel had lost its independence and was under the dictatorial Roman rule. The people were not happy and were expecting God to send a Messiah who would deliver them from the Roman rule. Many people in the world are in similar situations where they are subject to cruel political leaders who rule them with an iron hand. They have lost their fundamental rights of free speech and free assembly and the right to practice their religion freely. Many Christians are subject to persecution.

Verse 26 shows us that Simeon had good reason for his hope and anticipation: "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ. We as Christians know that evil will not triumph permanently. He (God) will pull down the proud and uplift the downtrodden; he will feed the hungry and the rich he will send away hungry. We know that the Kingdom of God will be ushered in with the Second Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ. But nobody knows the time when this would happen. But we believe that God's Kingdom will come.

Already there are some unbelievable things happening in the world. Iran is engaging in negotiations with the USA with regard to giving up nuclear weapons. The USA is steering clear of interventions in the Middle East. The monopoly that the Arab nations of the Middle East had over oil is being eroded with the discovery of shale gas and the invention of the technology for extracting oil from shale. The Bible says that in the last days there will be earthquakes and natural disasters. Are not we witnessing more of such natural disasters? We all struggle with loneliness, emptiness, insecurity, even desperation.

The Holy Spirit prompted Simeon to go to the Temple courts at just the right time on just the right day that Joseph and Mary were bringing their infant to the Temple. When Simeon looked at the Baby Jesus, now about six weeks old, he knew that God's promise had been kept. Here was Immanuel, "God with Us," to make everything right and to eliminate rejection, fear, and loneliness."

The other Christmas character waiting with expectation was Anna. After her husband had died, she had dedicated herself to fasting and praying in the Temple. In fact, the Bible says that she never left the temple but worshipped day and night. What was she expecting? Forgiveness of God. Don't all of us need God's forgiveness. Mankind has a sinful nature. Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden and humans have been sinning against God ever since.

As believers, our relationship with God is restored, but what about our relationship with our fellow human beings? The Bible states that when someone hurts us, we are under an obligation to God to forgive that person. Jesus is very clear on this point: Matthew 6:14-15
For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Refusing to forgive is a sin. If we receive forgiveness from God, we must give it to others who hurt us. We cannot hold grudges or seek revenge. Forgiveness means releasing the other from blame, leaving the event in God's hands, and making up with those with whom we are at enmity.

TOWARDS RECONCILIATION AND REBUILDING OF OUR NATION

PASTORAL LETTER ISSUED BY THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF SRI LANKA

1. The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially of those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts", declared the opening words of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council, echoing the concern the Church in the modern era faces in its mission; of witnessing to the redeeming love of God for humanity. It is this same concern which moves us, the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, to address all men and women of goodwill and very specially the Catholic community in Sri Lanka, discerning, reflecting and resolving to act on the different challenges that stem from the perennial message of the Gospel, the Good News announced by Christ, in the present day realities of our motherland. We are aware that as disciples we are called upon by Jesus, Our Lord and Master, to be "the salt of the earth" [Mt. 5: 13] and the "light of the World" [Mt. 5:14]. Yet it is our common experience that even though made in the very image and likeness of God we too are subject to sin and the attraction to evil. It is this which makes us all the more resolved to rise up to this call and to be of some service to our beloved motherland and its people in the joyful yet courageous witness of our faith. This we wish to do in all humility and in solidarity with all our other fellow citizens whose religious traditions too offer us a rich background for common action and commitment.

PART 1 - The Dignity of Man and Woman

2. The Sacred Scriptures do tell us that human life is of a nobility which reflects God's own very image, [cfr. Gen. 1:26] that it is God's own breath which man received at creation [Gen. 2:7] and that he was placed at the pinnacle of all creation. And so that Psalmist sings "what is man that Thou are mindful of him or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour: Thou hast set him over the works of Thy hands, Thou hast subjected all things under his feet" [Ps. 8:4-6].

Yet, inspite of such glory, human nature unfortunately rebelled against God abusing its freedom and experienced the destructive force of evil and death which muddled its life. The Second Vatican Council teaches that because of this abuse of freedom "man is split within himself. As a result, all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness. Indeed, man finds that by himself he is incapable of battling the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as though he is bound by chains" [GS.13]. This ongoing struggle between good and evil is something we experience individually as well as collectively be it at the local or at the global level. It continues to cause pain and suffering as well as death and destruction at every stage of human history.

3. As Christians, that notwithstanding, we believe that God did not leave humanity in this state of subjugation to the overwhelming force of evil but did come on earth in the person of His only begotten Son Jesus who in a sheer act of love and self offering died on the Cross redeeming us from this misery and showing us the way to true freedom and fulfillment and the way to overcome evil and the power of death surrounding us. Commenting on this self-offering of Jesus, Pope Benedict XVI stated: "His death on the Cross is the culmination of the turning of God against Himself in which He gives Himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form" [Deus Caritas Est. 12]. For God, even though He is a God of justice, loves humanity immensely and thus cannot but be merciful. And so, this freeing of mankind from slavery to self through God's total self giving on the Cross is the very path to true freedom and nobility; the way of the Cross.

4. For, Jesus did say so when He defined what it is to be His disciple: "If anyone wishes to be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" [Mc 8:34]. What Jesus wanted His disciples to do was to give up the love of self and to discover in this way the liberating and ennobling love of God and

the commitment to work zealously for the creation of a new world of love through the opening out of our hearts to all our fellow human beings and indeed to all of creation. In this manner the community of disciples, the Church is called upon to be the Sacrament of salvation to all humanity. It has to do so, by not only celebrating but also living faithfully its call to give witness to the values of the Kingdom of God, such as self denial and mercifulness, patience, tolerance and love which are the true ingredients of a transformation towards integral freedom and progress as well as true prosperity, justice and peace. Jesus called this a conversion from sin to the ways of the Kingdom of God [cfr. Mc. 1: 15].

5. For the Sacred Scriptures do tell us that God created mankind not just for a solitary life but for community. As *Gaudium et Spes* taught "God did not create man as a solitary being. For from the beginning "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion. For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential." [G.S. 12]. Indeed the essential call of Jesus to His disciples, to deny self, accept the sacrifices of each day with joy and follow Him and His own example of life were meant to create a world based on true love and freedom for all. "You have heard it said you shall love your neighbour and shall hate your enemy? But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you" [Mt. 5:43-44]. And Jesus did show how to love selflessly by not only dying on the Cross but also praying for those who nailed Him to that Cross "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" [Lc. 23:34]. The desire to be merciful and to forgive and forget evil committed by others is the highest expression of this freedom and dignity to which we are called.

6. The Sacred responsibility of us Christians then is to work for the betterment of humanity as a whole, which calling comes to us from the very life, teaching, the loving death and the glorious resurrection of Christ. And so, we cannot but be totally committed to the well being of all mankind and indeed of all creation. As disciples of Christ we belong to Him and become part of His very mission - ennobling and sanctifying human life - in every era and working to create "the new heavens and the new earth" [2 Peter 3:13]. Such sanctification of humanity and creation is achieved through our constant struggle against personal and societal attraction to sin and evil and the inborn human instinct to dominate others and our commitment to ennobling humanity. It is in this way that we can restore all things to their perennial beauty and to their God given glory.

The Second Vatican Council spoke of this struggle of man caught between the attraction for evil and the summons to a higher and nobler way of life when it stated that "as a weak and sinful being, man often does what he would not and fails to do what he would" [GS. 10]

7. In this struggle against selfishness and evil we are indeed called upon to join hands with all our fellow citizens and the best of what their own religious and cultural traditions offer. It is a service of love for humanity which we as Christians need to render with selfless zeal. The words we thus address our own co-jourmers in life in this our beautiful homeland and all our fellow Christians, with goodwill to all, constitute a call to create and work for a true civilization of love, freedom, nobility and integral development with justice and fairness for all.

It is in this sense that we wish to reflect on the present situation of our country, Sri Lanka, calling upon all concerned to work towards the needed changes or improvements to what is happening and has happened in the recent past, especially since the Pastoral Letter issued by our Conference on 10th June 1984 entitled "towards the re-building of the Sri Lankan nation....." We do so also with utmost humility wishing only the well being of all and the prosperity and progress of our beloved motherland and with no vested interests whatsoever.

Contd. on Pg. (XVIII)

Mary Woman of the Eucharist

Rev. Fr. William Evans
Liyonarachchi
National Seminary, Kandy

On October 16, 2002, the Holy Father John Paul II surprised the whole Church by proclaiming the *Year of the Rosary*. That was to be had from October 2002 to October 2003. In connection with that, he issued an Apostolic Letter titled *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (on the Most Holy Rosary). It was an exhortation to contemplate the face of Christ at the school and in union with our Blessed Mother.

In the midst of the *Year of the Rosary*, on Holy Thursday in 2003, Pope John Paul II issued his fourteenth encyclical letter entitled, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. He wrote this with the intention of shedding light on the mystery of the Eucharist and its inseparable and vital relation to the Church.

Then on the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ in June 2004 during the 150th anniversary of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father announced that a *Year of the Eucharist* would begin that October for the whole Church.

On October 7, 2004 the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, he issued an apostolic letter for the *Year of the Eucharist* entitled, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*.

In both these documents the Holy Father refers to Mary as Woman of the Eucharist:

"In the midst of the *Year of the Rosary*, I issued the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, with the intention of shedding light on the mystery of the Eucharist in its inseparable and vital relation to the Church. I urged all the faithful to celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice with due reverence, offering to Jesus present in the Eucharist, both within and outside Mass, the worship demanded by so great a mystery. Above all, I suggested once again the need for a Eucharistic spirituality and pointed to Mary, "Woman of the Eucharist, as its model" [*MANE NOBISCUM DOMINE* No. 10].

In this article I will attempt to explain how Blessed Virgin Mary becomes the Woman of the Eucharist.

AT THE SCHOOL OF MARY

The concept of Mary as *Woman of the Eucharist* is a very unfamiliar theme. But it is a theme which needs to be looked into. The connection between Mary and the Eucharist is the bond between mother and son. It is a profound relationship.

Mothers are the best teachers of their children. They know their children from the womb. They nurse them, bathe them, comfort them and listen to them. They know them better than anyone else. Christian tradition teaches through the Incarnation that God wanted to

have a mother, and so the Eternal Word became flesh through the Virgin Mary. She dedicated herself totally to his care. Jesus Christ has given her to his followers from the Cross to be their mother. He commanded them, in the person of the Beloved Disciple, to behold Mary as their mother and to take her into their home (Jn 19:25-27). As she taught her Son, so she now teaches his followers, the Church, about her Son. One of the things that Mary teaches the Church concerns the proper disposition its members must possess in their relationship to the Holy Eucharist.

In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul II, himself a devotee of Mary addresses the relationship between the Virgin Mary and the Holy Eucharist in chapter six entitled, "At the School of Mary, Woman of the Eucharist." The Virgin Mary's "lesson plan" for her children is the Paschal Mystery of Jesus her Son. As Pope John Paul II states in *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Mary "teaches us by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as she offers us the incomparable example of her pilgrimage of faith." (No. 14) Her life can be seen a paradigm for the true "Eucharistic" disciple.

MOTHER

Mary's every intervention in history is maternal. The essence of her personality is captured by the word 'Mother'. All her other privileges - the Immaculate Conception, her perpetual virginity, Assumption, Queenship, Co-redemption, Mediation of all graces - flow from Our Lady's divine maternity.

The Blessed Virgin is Mother of God and our Mother in virtue of her free conception of the Incarnate Word (cf. Lk 1:38). At the Annunciation Mary becomes Mother of Jesus Christ and simultaneously Mother of all who will be 'born anew' through her divine Son (cf. Jn 3:3). Nazareth is at one and the same time the scene of the incarnation of God's Son and of the birth of the Church. There Mary becomes Mother of the *Totus Christus* ('the whole Christ' -St Augustine), Head and members.

As with all good mothers, Mary always seeks union with her children so as to create union among her children. Mary seeks us out so as to unite us to Jesus. Thus true devotion to Mary is always profoundly Christological. The role of Mary in the divine plan for the salvation of the world is to give Jesus to the world. Surely the most effective way of giving Jesus to each individual and to the Christian Community is through the Eucharist.

At Cana of Galilee Jesus performed His first 'sign' at the instigation of His Mother, for His 'hour' had not yet come (cf. Jn 2:4). And what a beautiful

and happy miracle that was: Gallons of water turned into finest wine! Cures, exorcisms, prophecies, even resurrections all figure among the Lord's miracles. But how touching that His first miracle is basically all about a party, a celebration of human romance! That's Catholic! And that's motherly!

The result of this 'Marian' miracle is the benefit of each and all of Mary's children: The newly-weds are spared great embarrassment, the steward of the feast is saved from professional disgrace, the wedding-guests enjoy more and better wine, Christ manifests His glory 'and his disciples believed in him' (Jn 2:11). It is a 'win-win-win' situation at Cana of Galilee. Our Mother gets her way and all her children rejoice.

At the Last Supper Jesus said, "Do this in memory of me." Mary also invites to obey him without hesitation: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). With the same maternal concern which she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say to us: "Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If he was able to change water into wine, he can also turn bread and wine into his body and blood."

WOMAN OF THE EUCHARIST

Our Lady always leads us to the Eucharist. The Body and Blood of Christ which become present on the altar are the Body and Blood formed of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35). St. Josemaria preached: I know that in some way the Blessed Virgin is there [at Mass], because of her intimate relationship with the most Blessed Trinity and because she is the Mother of Christ, of his flesh and blood - the Mother of Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man. Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary most holy, not through the intervention of man, but by the power of the Holy Spirit alone. In his veins runs the blood of his Mother, the blood that is offered in the sacrifice of the redemption, on Calvary and in the Mass' (Christ is passing by, 89).

The Eucharistic Sacrifice is the one saving Sacrifice of Calvary made present now in a sacramental (unbloody) way. Mary's loving stance at the foot of the Cross is therefore somehow actualized in every celebration of Mass. The body offered in sacrifice and now present in the sacramental signs of bread and wine is the same body that she conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Pope Benedict XVI teaches:

Mary, present on Calvary beneath the Cross, is also present with the Church and as Mother of the Church in each one of our Eucharistic Celebrations (cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 57). No one better than

she, therefore, can teach us to understand and live Holy Mass with faith and love, uniting ourselves with Christ's redeeming sacrifice (Angelus, September 11, 2005).

The Jesus whom we receive into our bodies and souls in Holy Communion is the same Jesus who became present in the body and soul of Mary when she conceived Him virginally. For all these reasons, St. Josemaria was surely right to refer to the Mass as 'the principal Marian devotion'.

MARY AND THE EUCHARIST

"If we wish to discover in all its richness the profound relationship between the Church and the Eucharist, we cannot neglect Mary, Mother and model of the Church...Mary can guide us toward this most holy sacrament because she herself has a profound relationship with it." [*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*]

At the center of our Catholic Faith is the belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Unfortunately, we often lose sight of or don't appreciate the profound blessing that we have been granted. If we desire to become better Catholics and improve our relationship with the Lord, we must deepen our love for the Eucharist. How can we do so? One of the best and most underutilized ways is to turn to the Mother of Jesus, Mary. By getting to know her and studying her life, we can grow closer to Our Lord who is fully present in the Eucharist. In his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Blessed Pope John Paul II devotes an entire chapter to Mary, "Woman of the Eucharist". Let's examine some of his thoughts on how Our Lady can help us better understand the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

MARY'S FIAT

At the Annunciation, Mary's consent was one of the most important moments in the history of salvation and particularly in the unfolding of the Eucharistic mystery. We call that moment her "*fiat*" - "Be it done unto me according to your word."

When the Angel Gabriel asks Mary to be the Mother of God, she answers with a resounding yes -- and that yes allows something wonderful to happen. Christ becomes man -- the Word becomes flesh. On Calvary, Mary stood there in silence and in silence repeated her fiat, her yes to God, and the Church is born from the pierced heart of our Savior.

What would have happened had Mary said no to God's invitation? Would we still be awaiting a Messiah? Mary is the New Eve. The first Eve said no to God and changed the course of history. Mary,



the New Eve, has said yes and put the human family back on track.

The Holy Father has a beautiful paragraph where he relates Mary's fiat ... and the "Amen" which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived "through the Holy Spirit" was "the Son of God." In continuity with Mary's faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the One whom she conceived through the Holy Spirit was the Son of God and Son of Mary. We are asked to believe that Jesus is present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.

For when we say yes to the Host, we are saying, "I believe in Jesus Christ who at this moment is coming into my heart." Body of Christ, Amen. Body of Christ, Yes. Body of Christ, Fiat. How important a little word can be when it expresses the grandeur of faith and love.

The Holy Father also draws heavily from the mystery of the visitation in delineating Mary's relationship with the Eucharist. He says that Mary anticipated in the mystery of the Incarnation the Church's Eucharistic faith. What do we mean by this anticipation? At the moment of the incarnation, Mary anticipated what happens for us faithful at every Eucharist: i.e. Christ becomes present for us, under the species of bread and wine, so that we may receive him into our own being. Mary went to see her elderly cousin Elizabeth, whom everyone said was sterile but who instead had reached the sixth month of a pregnancy given to her by God (cf. Lk 1: 36), carrying in her womb the recently conceived Jesus. She was a young girl but she was not afraid, for God was with her, within her.

In a certain way we can say that her journey was — we like to emphasize in this Year of Faith — the first "Eucharistic procession" in history.

When, at the visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became in some way a "tabernacle" -- the first tabernacle in history -- in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and voice of Mary.

(Contd. on Pg. 9)



Printed and electronic media highlighted reasons for the corruption in the health care sector of our country. They pointed out that our health care sector is dominated by the transnational drug manufacturers. They "bribe" consultants by giving them tickets to attend international conferences and even holidays in exclusive resorts. The prescribing physicians are indebted to these drug companies to prescribe medications manufactured by them.

We are all aware of the long hours the consultants work to treat patients. Many of them do their eight hours of full service in the public sector hospitals and spend four to six more hours seeing patients in the private hospitals. None of the private hospitals can survive if the govern-

ment places restrictions on these public sector physicians and surgeons working extra hours in the private hospitals.

With this type of work load and stress it is not a wonder that some physicians and surgeons treat patients in an extremely rude manner. After seeing physically ill men and women for more than ten hours a day, we cannot expect any normal human being to treat their patients as other human beings. It is at this point that they take their patients as a means to earn an extra income to sustain their upper middle class life style.

We read a news item that the Government Medical Officers' Association is training the future doctors who are in the last stages of their medical school curriculum to become more patient-friendly and better care givers. This

association comprising of 15,000 doctors should also give a compulsory annual refresher course to their existing members who have forgotten their Hippocratic Oath and day-to-day normal human courtesies.

A survey of the Hospital Industry of Sri Lanka done by JB Securities (Pvt) Ltd, shows that there is a growing demand for private hospital care in the island. They attribute this to the poor performance of the State sector health care centres which account for the bulk of the hospital care infrastructure of this country. The public hospitals offer a high quantity of care at the expense of quality care. Lack of personalized service, over-crowding, impolite and rude staff, minimal sanitary facilities, long waiting lists for elective surgeries and medical procedures, extremely restricted visiting hours

and sporadic stoppage of services due to trade union action are some of the complaints about public sector hospitals.

The private hospitals of our country are dependent on the medical and surgical specialists who are working in the public sector hospitals and because of this they are concentrated in areas close to public hospitals. The patients are more physician-centred than hospital-centred. They select a hospital for care, solely because a physician that they want to -contact is working in that particular hospital.

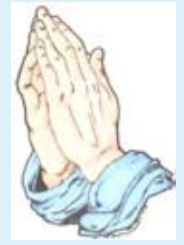
Because of this physician-centric approach of the patients the doctors have a big say in the running and administration of these private sector hospitals. Private hospitals have to pay up to 45-55% of the charges from the patients to the surgeons who perform



surgical operations and 15-20% of the hospital charges to the treating physicians. The hospitals earn low margin incomes because of the dominance of the physicians in the hospital sector. The hospital administration has to keep the specialists to visit their hospitals for consultation and treatment, if not the clients will seek the care of the physicians at rival healthcare centres.

The above data show that while our public sector healthcare services are controlled by the whims and fancies of the politicians, the private sector healthcare is controlled by the physicians and surgeons. It is high time that the administrators of healthcare realize that it has to be essentially patient-centred.

Psalm 91 helped me!



Here is a miraculous escape I had a few Sundays back As usual I was going for Sunday School in our parish. The classes are held in the parish hall situated behind the Church on a coconut land. I had my umbrella open and I was going towards the Parish Hall. I saw another teacher who had come earlier standing at the entrance to the Hall watching me coming. Suddenly I heard a noise and something fell near my right foot and at the same time something else fell near my left foot. I stood still. ... and behold two coconuts had fallen and I was in the middle. I was speechless, but prayed and thanked God Almighty for being beside me and protecting me. The teacher who was standing near the entrance to the Hall told me that when she saw the coconuts falling her hands went up to her head and she closed her eyes. After the nuts fell I looked up to see whether anyone was plucking coconuts. No. The nuts had just fallen. I read. Psalm 91 daily. God Almighty and Blessed Mother protected me. Thanks and Praise you God Almighty.

Mrs. Maryanne Perera

The Christmas Pageants

My first Christmas concert at the town school was not an event lived midst familiar neighbours and families. The program, instead, was prepared somewhere in the dark rooms of that cavernous school. Not, once was I aware of someone learning lines, for a play, or practising steps for a drill. No, the Christmas concert was hidden and brought out on display the designated night of the Christmas concert.

I would not have known there was to be a concert, if Sister Ellen had not asked me to be Mary for the Nativity Scene in the Pageant. Yes, I would accept to be Mary. After all, Sister Ellen was my favourite teacher, and my name is Mary.

One afternoon at the end of a school day, Sister singled out the boy to be St. Joseph and guided both of us to the stage. I did not know the boy very well, for I was that new shy girl, and boarders didn't mix too much with the town kids. Sister told us where to stand and when to kneel. I was amazed at the size of that stage, of the wonderful way Sister could pull the curtains open, and close them. I don't remember looking at that boy once! That was it! We were ready for the Nativity Scene. This was the night before the real night.

Hmmm, I thought. There sure isn't much to that. Back at the country school we had to learn to keep quiet, how to block a sneeze, how to refrain from giggling, and how to keep our eyes downcast. That was challenging, because we so much wanted to catch our parents' attention from out there in the crowd. But here in the town school that apparently was not important.

The night for the Christmas concert came to pass. The hall filled with men laughing and smiling, with women wearing glittering Christmas corsages on their coat lapels, all eager for an evening of entertainment. Those corsages fascinated me. Nobody wore a corsage to our program back in the country. At home, Dad gave our mother bouquets of Saskatoon blossoms in the spring and clusters of ripe chokecherries in the fall, but I never saw a sparkling corsage, neither at home or at our school. This was certainly a whole new world for me.

The pageant was the last item on the program. The choir gathered at the side of the huge stage. Dressed in a long white gown and a blue mantle, I moved out onto the stage along with St. Joseph draped in a brown blanket, his face hidden behind a scruffy beard. St. Joseph and I had finally spoken to each other ... We snickered nervously as we settled around the wooden manger. Occasionally, St. Joseph spat out pieces of his beard, saying, "Let's get this trip over with."

Three grunting shepherds and a couple of fluttery angels clustered nearby. I turned to look at the scene forming around me. Someone told me to look down, not around! Someone else brought up a real live baby and placed it in the cradle. That was my first inkling there would be a live baby with us.

"That's my brother," St. Joseph whispered. He leaned over to tickle the baby. Good Grief! I thought. What have I gotten myself into? Suddenly, that stage became an acre of territory, compared to the handkerchief-sized stage we had back home. A ball of panic formed in my stom-

ach. I breathed in slowly like my mother taught me to do whenever I felt overwhelmed. Those heavy magic curtains slowly opened, and the people hushed. The hall became silent and filled with suspense.

I clasped my hands and looked down at the cooing baby. He was a good baby. Someone, behind me began reading the nativity story from St. Luke. The choir sang, the baby laughed out loud and kicked vigorously. I kept my eyes downward, for there was no one out there in the crowd of interest to me.

The reader stopped. The angels waved their wings. The choir burst forth with the beautiful words of *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. Somewhere out to the left of the stage, coloured lights spewed up high and fell all around us. A fire!

I grabbed that cooing baby, wrapped him in my long gown, rushed off the stage, and dashed down the hallway, down the stairs and out the front door. I did exactly what we were taught to do in the town school fire drills. Suddenly, my teacher was there. The baby's mother was there. St. Joseph was there. He grabbed the baby from my arms. The Principal stood there with a stern puzzled look glued on her face.

"Whatever happened to you, Mary?" Sister Ellen asked over the boisterous howls of that frightened baby.

"I thought the stage took fire!" I blurted between gulps of tears and gasps for air. "I saw flames. I grabbed the baby and got out of there."

The Christmas concert was over. Eventually, St. Joseph and I returned to backstage, while someone explained to the

audience. St. Joseph, his real name was Oscar, consoled me while I tearfully folded up the costumes and put them away in a trunk. "I can't go back out there with the rest of the pageant people," I moaned through salty lips.

"My mother thinks you did OK. She's not at all mad at you. First time I ever saw Old Elly get so excited. The Principal looked like she swallowed a whole jar of dill pickles," he chuckled.

He hurled the scraggly beard into a box on the floor.

"We did OK tonight, for ole St. Martin," he laughed while giving the box a shove with his foot.

Then he headed back into the auditorium to console his little brother. Eventually, I joined the others gathered in a dressing room near the stage.

Of course, all those adults had their own explanations. Not one of them owned up to not telling me about the fireworks. And I didn't tell them, if they had, I would not have known what fireworks were. Anyhow, before I came to St. Martin, I attended a school where there was no electricity. If the twomantled Coleman gas lamp flared up out of control, we were taught to pick up a young one and move fast out of the building.

I did just that. I lived through other transfers and learned to take nothing for granted and to ask questions, until I am satisfied. These experiences have become the precious stones of wisdom that enrich my spiritual life today.

(Courtesy: Canadian Messenger)

Art & Architecture in Liturgy

Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

"A Cathedral is an eloquent testimony to what can be achieved when artistic inspiration collaborate harmoniously with deep Christian faith." As such its story is always interesting.

St. Lucia's Cathedral is the first Cathedral Church of Colombo and is a landmark of the City. Its handsome Romanesque features, elaborate Corinthian pillars, arches, windows, balconies, beeralu cement fences, grills, pediments, statues of saints and its domes will never disappoint you.



Enter St. Lucia's Cathedral and you are overwhelmed by its sheer proportions, its dignified arches, its graceful vaults and the grandeur of its Corinthian pillars. Take time to look around and admire and understand the carvings on the marble altars, stories of the stained glasses, characters in the paintings, statues of saints and the commemorative plaques to the early missionary fathers.

Why Kotahena?

The locality which then was essentially a fishing hamlet was then known as *Kottan chena* after the groves of *Kottan* trees, in the jungle that covered this hillock.

According to Church records worship at this site goes back to a date in the 1760s, when a small thatched hut built by the early mission fathers served as a church for the faithful. Gradually the building was replaced with larger and more grandeur constructions during which process in 1838 it was elevated to the status of a Cathedral, and the centre of Catholic worship in the City of Colombo. The Cathedral is dedicated to St. Lucia co-patroness with St. Lawrence of the city of Colombo. Thus the Cathedral stands tall, dominating Kotahena's sky-scape.

Building begins

The Cathedral as it presently stands is the design of Bishop Hillarion Sillani and Fr. Stanislaus Tabarrani, a pair described to have been infused by a Holy optimism and a prophetic spirit in their vision of building a majestic structure suitable for the worship of God. Their dream was to build a replica of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Bishop Sillani in fact, in a letter addressed to Rome dated 1874, requested a photograph of the Basilica and instructions on how to construct the lantern that crowns the main dome of the building. To carry out his dream Bishop Sillani engaged the services of a master mason Anthony Pillai Tittara- to guide and supervise the workmen. The Cathedral was completed in thirty years in 1902.



Paintings

Above the sanctuary is the main brick built double walled dome. The domed ceiling is decorated with four medallions painted in the shades of brown on canvas fitted into oval frames that grace the top four corners. These are the only paintings in the Cathedral and are

St. Lucia's – Colombo's First Cathedral

of the evangelists: Mathew, Mark, Luke and John who were responsible for the four Gospels written under their names. The paintings were done by a local artist Gabriel Perera.

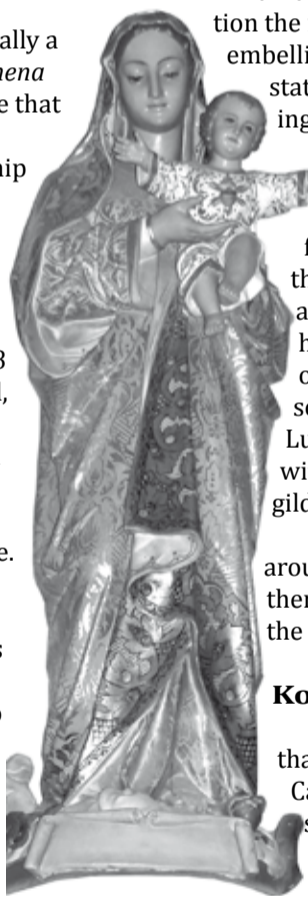
Stained glass and marble

High up on the back wall of the sanctuary, taking pride of place amongst other stained glass, is a glass depicting a reproduction of the Bartolome Murillo's world famous painting of the Immaculate Conception (here taken as the Assumption). Sighted in the correct lighting it is an exquisite piece.

The many altars found here are of marble, beautifully trimmed with miniature pillars, pilasters, and geometrical designs while on some of their paneling are carved the Last Supper, the betrayal of Jesus, the Assumption of Mary, Apparition of Jesus, Apparition of Mary etc. The altars are set with Tabernacles. The one in the inner sanctuary is made in the shape of the lantern that crowns the dome while the one in the outer sanctuary is carved with the good shepherd. The

other tabernacles fixed on to the side altars are carved with Christian symbolism. A marble plaque on the left of the main altar has a Latin inscription giving details of the dedication of the Archdiocese of Colombo to Our Lady of Assumption. This may explain the stained glass window in the chancel being fittingly referred to as representing the Assumption of our Lady.

It must not be forgotten to mention the marble baptistery heavily embellished with angels and with a statue of John the Baptist crowning its apex.



'Cathedra'

On the left side on a marble platform is the *'cathedra'* or the grandiose throne of the Bishop. Every Bishop has a Cathedral which in simpler terms is his church. And here he has his chair or throne on which he presides at solemn functions. The *'cathedra'* at St. Lucia's is beautifully carved in wood with Christian symbolism and tastefully gilded.

The polished wooden altar rails around the sanctuary keep to the same theme of decoration as in the design on the *'cathedra'*.

Kotahena's Lady and Lucia

Many are the beautiful and larger than life size statues, that decorate the Cathedral and adorn its sub altars sometimes framed by baroque pillars. Primary amongst them is the statue of the lovely Lucia holding her eyes in a saucer. It is said that the Saint who was from a wealthy Sicilian family and dedicated to God's service, preferred to remove her beautiful eyes than consent to a unwelcome suitor. She was one of the earliest Christian saints to achieve popularity, having a widespread following before the 5th century.

Another interesting statue was that of the statue titled as 'Our Lady of Kotahena'. The dark faced Madonna carrying the Baby Jesus had features of unusual beauty. It is said that this statue was an award winner at the Universal Exhibition in Paris.

Underground Crypt

Under the sanctuary is the underground crypt, heavily arched with stout pillars and paved with clay tiles. The crypt had been re-opened recently and has been used for Good Friday services. Here on a funeral bier at the centre of the crypt the Body of Jesus (statue) is laid to rest affording an opportunity for the congregation to pay their respects as done at funerals. On the side, is a reliquary an ornate carved wooden box of sizable proportions. Here a collection of relics of the



saints which the Missionary Fathers had collected had once been deposited.

Meet Anthony Thomas and others

The Cathedral has four bells, which were cast in a foundry in France. It is recorded that the bells were purchased with the nucleus fund of the jubilee purse gifted to Fr. Constantine Chonavel OMI, who celebrated the Golden jubilee of his ordination on the April 11, 1902 in the Parish of Kotahena. The bells arrived in Colombo on November 5, 1903 and were duly baptized at a grand ceremony of nearly two hours.

An interesting Church record sets out the procedure of

the christening of the Church bells. The bells were duly christened at 4.30 pm on December 13, 1903 by His Grace Most Rev. Dr. Melizan, Archbishop of Colombo, on the feast day of St. Lucia. A huge teak wood beam, supported on strong wooden frames was placed longitudinally along the nave of the Church

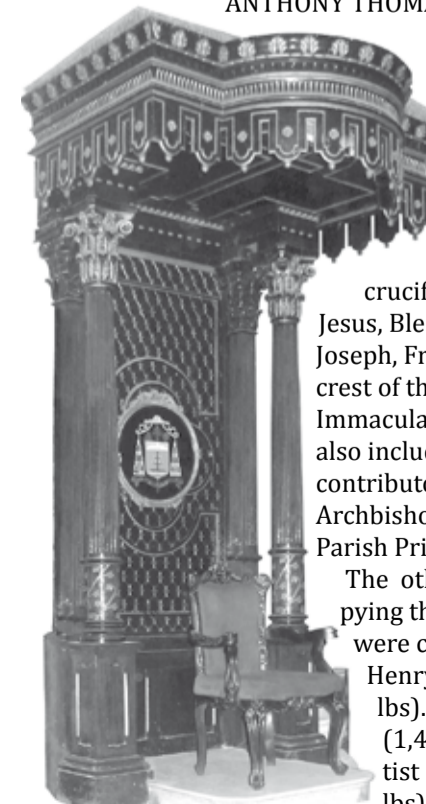
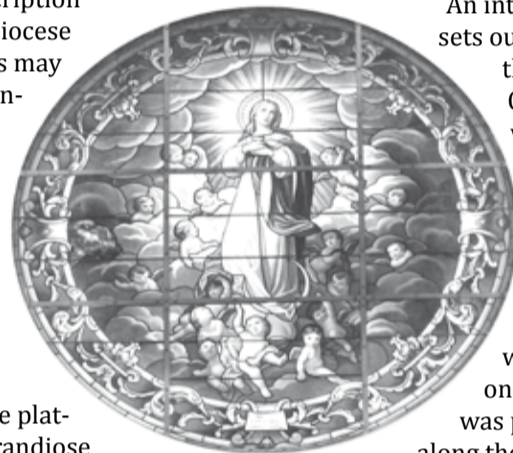
and the four bells were suspended from it. A raised dais was built alongside the bells for the officiating prelate to perform the necessary rites. Each bell had its sponsors who stood beside it. The wooden frames and the main beam were covered in white tied with green ribbons, lace, and gold paper. The Bells were dressed for the occasion in white satin robes edged with lace and embroidery. Burning incense and other aromatics were placed under each bell. The bells were ceremonially washed with salt water and anointed four times with the Oil of Chrism and named. When this was done His Grace sounded each bell once, and this act was repeated by the sponsors, the clergy, and the religious present. All four bells are engraved with the Crucifixion and the likeness of Fr. Chonavel. The name of the foundry is inscribed on each bell, Georges & Francisque Paccard. Founders - A - Annecy - Le- Veux Hte Savoie France 1903.

The largest bell at 4,300 lbs was christened ANTHONY THOMAS and stands alone

in the right tower, amidst a contraption of pulleys and rope. It is engraved with delicate floral wreaths, cherubs, figures of the disciples, the

crucifixion, sacred Heart of Jesus, Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, Fr. Chonavel and the crest of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The inscriptions also include the names of the contributory donors, the Pope, Archbishop of Colombo and the Parish Priest of the time.

The other three bells occupying the left Bell tower and were christened Constant Henry Lucia Emilia (2000 lbs), Francis Theresa (1,400 lbs) and Jean Baptist Edward Anna (950 lbs).



MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES 2014



Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our societies are experiencing, in an unprecedented way, processes of mutual interdependence and interaction on the global level. While not lacking problematic or negative elements, these processes are aimed at improving the living conditions of the human family, not only economically, but politically and culturally as well. Each individual is a part of humanity and, with the entire family of peoples, shares the hope of a better future. This consideration inspired the theme I have chosen for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees this year: *Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World*.

In our changing world, the growing phenomenon of human mobility emerges, to use the words of Pope Benedict XVI, as a "sign of the times" (cf. Message for the 2006 World Day of Migrants and Refugees). While it is true that migrations often reveal failures and shortcomings on the part of States and the international community, they also point to the aspiration of humanity to enjoy a unity marked by respect for differences, by attitudes of acceptance and hospitality which enable an equitable sharing of the world's goods and by the protection and the advancement of the dignity and centrality of each human being. From the Christian standpoint, the reality of migration, like other human realities, points to the tension between the beauty of creation, marked by Grace and the Redemption, and the mystery of sin. Solidarity, acceptance, and signs of fraternity and understanding exist side by side with rejection, discrimination, trafficking and exploitation, suffering and death. Particularly disturbing are those situations where migration is not only involuntary, but actually set in motion by various forms of human trafficking and enslavement. Nowadays, "slave labour" is common coin! Yet despite the problems, risks and difficulties to be faced, great numbers of migrants and refugees continue to be inspired by confidence and hope; in their hearts they long for a better future, not only for themselves but for their families and those closest to them.

What is involved in the creation of "a better world?" The expression does not allude naively to abstract notions or unattainable ideals; rather, it aims at an authentic and integral development, at efforts to



provide dignified living conditions for everyone, at finding just responses to the needs of individuals and families, and at ensuring that God's gift of creation is respected, safeguarded and cultivated. The Venerable Paul VI described the aspirations of people today in this way: "To secure a sure food supply, cures for diseases and steady employment... to exercise greater personal responsibility; to do more, to learn more, and have more, in order to be more" (*Populorum Progressio*, 6).

Our hearts do desire something "more." Beyond greater knowledge or possessions, they want to "be" more. Development cannot be reduced to economic growth alone, often attained without a thought for the poor and the vulnerable. A better world will come about only if attention is first paid to individuals; if human promotion is integral, taking account of every dimension



of the person, including the spiritual; if no one is neglected, including the poor, the sick, prisoners, the needy and the stranger (cf. Mt 25:31-46); if we can prove capable of leaving behind a throwaway culture and embracing one of encounter and acceptance.

Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more.

The sheer number of people migrating from one continent to another, or shifting places within their own countries and geographical areas, is striking. Contemporary movements of migration represent the largest movement of individuals, if not of peoples, in history. As the Church accompanies migrants and refugees on their journey, she seeks to understand the causes of migration, but she also works to overcome its negative effects, and to maximize its positive influence on the communities of origin, transit and destination. While encouraging the development of a better world, we cannot remain silent about the scandal of poverty in its various forms. Violence, exploitation, discrimination, marginalization, restrictive approaches to fundamental freedoms, whether of individuals or of groups: These are some of the chief elements of poverty which need to be overcome. Often these are precisely the elements which mark migratory movements, thus linking migration to poverty. Fleeing from situations of extreme poverty or persecution in the hope of a better future, or simply to save their own lives, millions of persons choose to migrate. Despite their hopes and expectations, they often encounter mistrust, rejection and exclusion, to say nothing of tragedies and disas-

ters which offend their human dignity.

The reality of migration, given its new dimensions in our age of globalization, needs to be approached and managed in a new, equitable and effective manner; more than anything, this calls for international cooperation and a spirit of profound solidarity and compassion. Cooperation at different levels is critical, including the broad adoption of policies and rules aimed at protecting and promoting the human person. Pope Benedict XVI sketched the parameters of such policies, stating that

they "should set out from close collaboration between the migrants' countries of origin and their countries of destination; they should be accompanied by adequate international norms able to coordinate different legislative systems with a view to safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 62).

Working together for a better world requires that countries help one another, in a spirit of willingness and trust, without raising insurmountable barriers. A good synergy can be a source of encouragement to government leaders as they confront socioeconomic imbalances and an unregulated globalization, which are among some of the causes of migration movements in which individuals are more victims than protagonists. No country can singlehandedly face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon, which is now so widespread that it affects every continent in the twofold movement of immigration and emigration.

It must also be emphasized that such cooperation begins with the efforts of each country to create better economic and social conditions at home, so that emigration will not be the only option left for those who seek peace, justice, security and full respect of their human dignity. The creation of opportunities for employment in the local economies will also avoid the separation of families and ensure that individuals and groups enjoy conditions of stability and serenity.

Finally, in considering the situation of migrants and refugees, I would point to yet another element in building a better world, namely, the elimination of prejudices and presuppositions in the approach to migration. Not infrequently, the arrival of migrants, displaced persons, asylum-seekers and refugees gives rise to suspicion and hostility. There is a fear that society will become less secure, that identity and culture will be lost, that competition for jobs will become stiffer and even that criminal activity will increase. The communications media have a role of great responsibility in this regard: It is up to them, in fact, to break down stereotypes and to offer correct information in reporting the errors of a few as well as the honesty, rectitude and goodness of the majority. A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is

needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world. The communications media are themselves called to embrace this "conversion of attitudes" and to promote this change in the way migrants and refugees are treated.

I think of how even the Holy Family of Nazareth experienced initial rejection: Mary "gave birth to her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Lk 2:7). Jesus, Mary and Joseph knew what it meant to leave their own country and become migrants: Threatened by Herod's lust for power, they were forced to take flight and seek refuge in Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-14). But the maternal heart of Mary and the compassionate heart of Joseph, the Protector of the Holy Family, never doubted that God would always be with them. Through their intercession, may that same firm certainty dwell in the heart of every migrant and refugee.

The Church, responding to Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations", is called to be the People of God which embraces all peoples and brings to them the proclamation of the Gospel, for the face of each person bears the mark of the face of Christ! Here we find the deepest foundation of the dignity of the human person, which must always be respected and safeguarded. It is less the criteria of efficiency, productivity, social class, or ethnic or religious belonging which ground that personal dignity, so much as the fact of being created in God's own image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-27) and, even more so, being children of God. Every human being is a child of God! He or she bears the image of Christ! We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, a more perfect democracy, a more united country, a more fraternal world and a more open and evangelical Christian

Contd. on Pg. 9

Message by the Chairman of the Catholic National Commission for Migrants and Refugees of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka for the World day of Migrants and refugees -2014



The World day of Migrants and Refugees, falls on January 19, 2014. Yet it will be celebrated in Sri Lanka on December 18, 2013. The theme chosen by the Holy Father is "Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World!"

The Department of Census and Statistics has published a preliminary report in 2012. The Census covered the whole of Sri Lanka, after 30 years. Migration is a movement of population within countries or between countries. Migration within countries has been towards urban areas. International migration is mainly to the Middle East and European countries. These are due to many factors such as to seek employment, for educational and for resettlement purposes.

Among these reasons, more atten-



pendence by the colonial powers to countries which were under their rule migration assumed greater proportions. From the 1950's onwards the educated classes in the eastern countries migrated to the western world to further their education and to settle down. Whereas in Eastern European countries

journey via Christmas Islands, to Australia to illegally seek refuge.

Migration of women to the Middle East is recognized as a major source of foreign exchange flowing into the country. Apart from official statements and records from migrants and their families there are many hidden and bitter stories of truths undisclosed and hidden facts about the misery, sufferings and the inhuman and cruel ways they have been subjected to. In recent years there has been an upsurge of sexual abuse, harassment and killing of migrant women workers serving as domestics in the Middle East. Some of these women who underwent cruelties are Sri Lankans. As a nation we should live in dignity and respect making the people aware of the dangers and the repercussions of migration especially on family life.

The theme chosen by the Holy Father

Francis is extremely relevant: Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World. Migrations reveal the failures on the part of States and the International Community

person.

Pope Francis says "Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity." Poverty and persecution, mistrust, rejection and exclusion of people offend their human dignity, in a globalized world. The poor are becoming poorer. The rich are becoming richer. The real aim of globalization is to create a better world. To achieve this aim, countries should help one another. There should be cooperation among peoples and States to create better human and socio economic conditions. A better world will come about only if human promotion is integral which includes the spiritual dimension

created in the very image and likeness of God. God who became man, Jesus together with Mary and Joseph had to seek refuge in Egypt. The Holy Family never doubted that God would always be with them. Thus the Pope invites that migration can offer possibilities for a new evangelization.

Finally, we should become more aware of this problem, which pertains to Sri Lanka. The Holy Family in their migrant journey was looking for God in their vulnerability. On this special day marked for migrants and refugees, we should extend a



tion needs to be given to those who migrate for reasons of employment and resettlement. Almost 30 percent of our people have migrated looking for greener pastures abroad.

Migration is a historical fact. After the two World Wars and the granting of political inde-

under the Soviet Bloc, migrations were mostly to the United States, Canada, UK, and Western Europe. From the 1970s Sri Lankan migration to Italy and the Middle East increased by tens of thousands. At the present time there are the boat people undertaking a hazardous



that they should work for the dignity and centrality of each human person. In spite of hardships and difficulties, migrants, refugees are looking for a better future for themselves and their families. The Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church clearly emphasizes the dignity and nobility of the human

of man. There should be a change of attitude towards migrants, refugees from one of indifference to one of acceptance, thus helping to build a culture of a just and fraternal world.

The Holy Family experienced a situation of refugees in their flight into Egypt. Man is

helping hand and be supportive in assisting them in their needs.

Let us pray for a just and free society where human beings everywhere are treated with dignity and respect.

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera

Mary woman...

Contd. from Pg. 5
COMMUNION

The Virgin Mary also desires her children to be well nourished. For that reason, she teaches them to receive him frequently in Holy Communion. It is commonly accepted that after the Ascension of Jesus, Mary participated with the early Christian community in the "Breaking of the Bread."

Mary was not present at the Last Supper; yet in Acts we see her at the heart of the community helping those first Christians to persevere in prayer.

The Holy Father affirms that Mary must have been present at the Eucharistic celebrations of the first generation of Christians, who were devoted to the Mass which they called "the breaking of the Bread," later called Eucharist (which means "thanksgiving"). Just like us, participating in the mass, Mary must have been present for

the daily mass with the disciples.

Can we imagine the contemplation of the Blessed Virgin Mary when the Eucharistic Jesus was elevated before her eyes? What must the Blessed Mother have felt as she heard from the mouth of John, Peter, James and other Apostles, the words spoken at the Last Supper: "This is my Body...this is my Blood..."? It is the same body which she had conceived in her womb. It is the same blood she gave to the Word who became man. Can we try to understand the love and adoration of the Heart of Mary for her Eucharistic Son?

The first two names for the Mass come from Jesus' Eucharistic gestures of breaking the bread and blessing the bread. Receiving her Son eucharistically must have been a great source of consolation for the Virgin Mary. He who was the fruit of her womb has become for the Church the Bread of Life.

CONCLUSION

Arnold of Chartres, a disciple of St.

Bernard, states, "There were really two altars on Calvary. One was in Mary's heart, the other in Christ's body. He sacrificed his flesh, Mary her soul" (Arnold of Chartres, De Septum verbis Domini in cruce, 3: PL 189, 1694. This is a text quoted by John Paul II in his catechesis on Marian Coredeemption on October 25, 1995).

So intimate and permanent was the bond of love between Jesus and Mary, from whose Immaculate body Christ came, that we can proclaim with St. Augustine that the flesh of Jesus is the flesh of Mary and that their hearts are one (cf. Sermon 174, 7). It reminds me of the movie The Passion of the Christ, when the Blessed Mother, approaching Jesus at the foot of the Cross, told Him, "Flesh of my flesh, Heart of my Heart!"

(This is an extract from a lecture given by the writer at the Aquinas University College, Colombo, as part of a programme conducted by the Faculty of Theology on Mary in the Living Tradition)

Message of His Holiness....

Contd. from Pg. 8

community. Migration can offer possibilities for a new evangelization, open vistas for the growth of a new humanity foreshadowed in the paschal mystery: A humanity for which every foreign country is a homeland and every homeland is a foreign country.

Dear migrants and refugees! Never lose the hope that you too are facing a more secure future, that on your journey you will encounter an outstretched hand, and that you can experience fraternal solidarity and the warmth of friendship! To all of you, and to those who have devoted their lives and their efforts to helping you, I give the assurance of my prayers and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

**From the Vatican,
August 5, 2013
Pope Francis**

*Rev. Fr. Michael Rodrigo OMI

Priest, Hero and Martyr of the Poor

He was often seen, clad in pure snow white, walking briskly the short distance between the Oblate Scholasticate and the National Seminary, Ampitiya, hugging a stack of books and notes for the classes where he so loved to impart the knowledge he acquired in Rome, Paris and in daily life with the students and people. Though very busy in numerous new projects, he never missed an occasion to listen to a worker in the seminary gardens, help solve an interacting problem in the community and take time to discuss life situations with scholastics and seminarians in a very positive manner.

In the Methodology and Liturgy classes he taught, he was a conscientious teacher and a disciplinarian. Should he observe a little sign of impertinence in the class,

he would quip, smilingly of course, "Beware, there are two ways to be popular, but alas. one is very cheap!"

Long before the computers appeared, he taught his students the methods to "computerize" diverse information on square cards classified in alphabetical order. His liturgical innovations thrilled many in the two seminaries. Long before the renewal movement of the Vatican Council, he was a proponent of the vernacular Mass in the Scholasticate.

Father Michael Rodrigo OMI lived his priestly life to the full, before our eyes, in the full sense of the word, following his Master, by being very close to the scholastics and seminarians, by being at the behest of neighbouring villagers and remote farmers

and peasants in their daily tolls and sufferings. We also have often witnessed him in the role, of the Good Samaritan: He would never miss his presence at the sick-bed of a fellow priest, to utter a few soothing words, to say a healing prayer and leave behind a little part of his meagre resources with the sick person.

On an invitation from the then Bishop of Badulla, Rt. Rev. Dr. Leo Nanayakkara, Fr. Mike, as we all affectionately called him, moved to *Sewaka Sevana*, the House of Formation in Bandarawela to help out in forming a service-bound, outreach-minded indigenous ministers and ministries. This was in renouncement of an offer from a leading French Catholic University, Institut Catholique de



Paris, for a prestigious professorial position with a sure promise of Parisian high living and fame.

After fulfilling his task with dedication and to the best of his ability at *Sewaka Sevana*, he proceeded to live out his ultimate ideal, to be a minister of Christ to the poor. He chose the rural village of Alukalawita, in Buttala, in Wellassa region, set up his house there, named it *Suba Seth Gedara*, and lived with the poor people of the place, experiencing their lot as part of his

own life. He "learnt," in his own words, "at their feet, patience, tolerance, acceptance of suffering and belief in solidarity." These were a few of the '*sara dharmas*' of rural life. In return, he showed them, slowly and surely, through his life, the practice of the love commandment (Matthew 19:19), involving dialogue and love of the neighbour as one's self. He was a striking witness to God's love through the love of his neighbour.

This was no easy task. It involved all the conditions of a costly discipleship. Fr. Mike knew this and he was all prepared for this. As he put it in his own words, he would be the oil and the Lord, the flame and, both would burn unto death, because death is life.

So, he lived among the poor and weak, as one of them, and carried the cross of life with

them, as the Lord did, facing bravely the challenges and fighting the evil of the society firmly unto the ultimate sacrifice, paying the price with his life. People of all faiths respected him, found knowledge, solace and hope with him and valued his witness among them immensely.

This is why, every year, in the month of November, people here and abroad come together, without any difference of religion, to commemorate his death with tears and gratitude, calling him a hero, proclaiming him a martyr and wishing him declared a saint.

May the Lord, who gave much to the poor and to us through him, also give us a grateful heart to thank Him for Fr. Mike, by emulating his precious witness, though perhaps in a smaller way, in our own life.

S. Dharmasena.

Appreciation

God called him in His time

Rev. Fr. Lucian Fernando passed away peacefully at the Home for Elders in Colombo on November 9, 2013. It was Mr. C. Pathmanathan, a classmate of Fr. Lucian who telephoned in the wee hours from Batticaloa to share the sad news with me domiciled in Canada.

Fr. Lucian was a member of the 1953 - SSC 'Arts Class' which has carved a niche in the annals of St. Benedict's College, Colombo, the premier educational institution of the De La Salle Brothers in Sri Lanka.

It was in February this year when I was invited by C. Pathmanathan, a member of the '53 class and a former Benedictine teacher, to join in the 60th anniversary celebrations of the group, as a honorary member having been in the 1954 - SSC 'Arts' class. The celebrations which marked a milestone in this group of alumni was held at the Home for Elders where Fr. Lucian was an inmate well cared for by the ministering Rev. Sisters and support staff.

Fr. Lucian perched on a wheel chair was in his usual jovial mood teaming up with his erstwhile classmates unmindful of his physical handicap. I recount Fr. Lucian singing '*Dilhani*' and other perennial favourites and entertaining us in his unassuming manner interspersed with slots of good humour and cama-



Rev. Fr. Lucian Fernando raderie.

Fr. Lucian and his younger brother the late Fr. Terrence were ordained to the Sacred Priesthood by their maternal uncle His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Edmund Peiris, the first Bishop of Chilaw at the Cathedral in 1963 and the Golden Jubilee celebrations were due this year. However Fr. Terrence, a Professor attached to the National Seminary in Kandy succumbed to a fatal heart attack, a few years ago which left elder brother, Fr. Lucian in a state of shock and deep dismay from which he never recovered and later on was rescued from a serious medical mishap in the nick of time and taken care of very well by the ministering Rev. Sisters in the salubrious environs of the Home for Elders where he was loved by the staff and inmates.

Fr. Lucian and his brothers Hervin, Merrill, Russel and late Fr. Terrence were boarders at St. Benedict's during the 1940's and 50's. It was an unparalleled joy for the devout parents when two of their sons joined the Priesthood to serve the Lord. Fr. Lucian served as the Vicar General of the

Diocese of Kurunegala under Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Peiris at the time of his sudden illness.

All plans were in place for the Golden Jubilee Mass of Fr. Lucian on December 21, 2013 but the Lord had in His own design decided to call him to eternal glory. The members of the '53 class were awaiting this milestone celebrations.

The anniversary celebrations in February concluded with Bede Perumal intoning an emotional melody which we never envisioned would be a farewell to our well loved Fr. Lucian who is now in God's Heavenly abode in perfect peace.

I am reminded of the quote "It is not what you gather but what you scatter that tells what kind of life you have lived." In this backdrop Fr. Lucian was blessed with a cheerful disposition who radiated love and caring to all those around him during his sojourn on earth.

Farewell Fr. Lucian until we meet beyond the sunset!

Eric Motha

Fr. Boniface Bastiansz OMI: An intrepid Oblate Missionary

Fr. Boniface Bastiansz, OMI, (affectionately called Fr. Bonie) who passed away on May 10, 2013 from this world into the loving embrace of God who created him and sanctified him, led a life of simplicity with an Oblate missionary spirituality rooted in the love of God.

I had known him as a good friend. He imitated Jesus by loving the faithful entrusted to his pastoral care and manifesting compassion for the poor and the neglected. He took much interest in fostering the Catholic Christian faith and promoting social concern. Though he had a small motor bicycle for use in other mission posts, he refused to have a vehicle while serving in the Parish of Rakwana in the Diocese of Ratnapura but used public transport to meet the parishioners living in the estates.

As a formator in the Oblate Pre-Novitiate, Maggona, where he served for nearly 8 years, Fr. Boniface collaborated with the Superiors and Directors, accompanying the candidates in their journey of faith, with meticulous care, discipline and frugal living. He loved nature and maintained a beautiful natural environment. He continued to help the formees in Oblate spirituality.

Fr. Boniface was an Oblate who did opt to go to difficult and demanding mission stations of Nilaveli (Trincomalee), Toppuwa (Kochchikade) and Rakwana and laid solid foundations for the growth of faith in Jesus Christ, Christian solidarity and became also a trainer of young priests in pastoral

and missionary endeavours. He ministered to the sick in the Colombo Group of Hospitals in 1978 and served at St. Anthony's Shrine, Kochchikade for nearly 5 years (1980-1985). After nearly 8 years of service as an Oblate Formator, when he was offered an opportunity for special studies abroad, he preferred to serve, at the request of the Archbishop, in the Parish of Toppuwa, which needed special pastoral care at that time

In 1990, he participated in the one-year programme on the charism and apostolate of St. Eugene de Mazenod, the Founder of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in Aix, France, and in 1994, he went to assist in the ongoing programme for an international group of Oblates in Aix.

Fr. Boniface was born on June 5, 1947 in Ampitiya. He studied at St. Mary's College, Ampitiya. He entered the Oblate Novitiate at Bandarawela on September 3, 1973, made his profession of vows as an Oblate in 1974 and pronounced his Final Vows in 1977 at the Oblate Scholasticate, Ampitiya. He continued his Oblate formation in the Oblate Scholasticate while pursuing his philosophical and theological studies at the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka, Ampitiya. He was ordained as a ministerial priest on July 19, 1978.

Fr. Boniface drew his spiritual energy for his life and ministry from his personal prayer-life, personal discipline and Eucharistic Celebration.

Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI

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HUMAN RIGHTS

December 10

The Value of Human Rights

152. *The movement towards the identification and proclamation of human rights is one of the most significant attempts to respond effectively to the inescapable demands of human dignity.*³⁰² The Church sees in these rights the extraordinary opportunity that our modern times offer, through the affirmation of these rights, for more effectively recognizing human dignity and universally promoting it as a characteristic inscribed by God the Creator in his creature.³⁰³ The Church's Magisterium has not failed to note the positive value of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, which Pope John Paul II defined as "a true milestone on the path of humanity's moral progress."³⁰⁴

153. *In fact, the roots of human rights are to be found in the dignity that belongs to each human being.*³⁰⁵ This dignity, inherent in human life and equal in every person, is perceived and understood first of all by reason. The natural foundation of rights appears all the more solid when, in light of the supernatural, it is considered that human dignity, after having been given by God and having been profoundly wounded by sin, was taken on and redeemed by Jesus Christ in his incarnation, death and resurrection.³⁰⁶

*The ultimate source of human rights is not found in the mere will of human beings,*³⁰⁷ *in the reality of the State, in public powers, but in man himself and in God his Creator.* These rights are "universal,

inviolable, inalienable."³⁰⁸ Universal because they are present in all human beings, without exception of time, place or subject. *Inviolable* insofar as "they are inherent in the human person and in human dignity."³⁰⁹ and because "it would be vain to proclaim rights, if at the same time everything were not done to ensure the duty of respecting them by all people, everywhere, and for all people."³¹⁰ *Inalienable* insofar as "no one can legitimately deprive another person, whoever they may be, of these rights, since this would do violence to their nature."³¹¹

154. *Human rights are to be defended not only individually but also as a whole: protecting them only partially would imply a kind of failure to recognize them.* They correspond to the demands of human dignity and entail, in the first place, the fulfilment of the essential needs of the person in the material and spiritual spheres. "These rights apply to every stage of life and to every political, social, economic and cultural situation. Together they form a single whole, directed unambiguously towards the promotion of every aspect of the good of both the person and society ... The integral promotion of every category of human rights is the true guarantee of full respect for each individual right."³¹² Universality and indivisibility are distinctive characteristics of human rights: they are "two guiding principles which at the same time demand that human rights be rooted in each culture and that their juridical profile be strengthened so as to ensure that they are fully observed."³¹³ (Source: *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*)

(The following is an excerpt from the Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, released on December 8, 2013)

Human Rights

21. With increasing political control over peoples' lives and the disastrous basis on which constitution making has been carried out in Sri Lanka there has been a gradual but sure increase in the violation of fundamental rights of people. Due to inherent weaknesses appearing in the constitutions of 1972 and 1978 specially through the removal of constitutional safeguards guaranteeing equality which were enshrined in the earlier constitution, carried out to satisfy the hunger for power and supremacy of some sectors of our society and its political leaders, the basic rights enshrined in the International Human Rights Charter have continued to be eroded in the past forty years or so. The draconian laws like the PTA and the continuous use of emergency or special powers to face up to the challenge of overcoming different politically motivated conflicts have worsened the situation. The thirty year war as well as the rebellions of 1971 and 1988-89 are some such situations. Abductions and disappearances have been one of the worst forms of such violations that have taken place from the 1971 conflict even upto recent times. Accountability too has suffered much. Different Governments have been in place during this period and the reports of the commissions appointed to investigate cases of assassinations and disappearances of people have not seen the light of day. The local human rights commission has, so to say, no teeth or sufficient independent authority to act on these cases and has lost its effectivity in bringing to book those who have engaged themselves in such acts of violence.

Accountability issues affecting the war in the North, the July 1983 riots and the conflicts that exploded in the South in 1971 and 1988-89 resulting in excesses on both sides of the divide each time, need to be sufficiently addressed. For example, an alarming number of assassinations of political leaders and media and civil society personnel in these past 40 years have not been seriously inquired into. We do not understand why such inquiries were not put in place which would surely have helped clear the doubts. Such acts of violence have happened during the terms of different Governments. We also do not understand the inordinate delays in the publication of the reports of such inquiries. Reluctance to study these and other issues courageously and honestly could only strengthen the hands of those who keep on denigrating our motherland, here and overseas.

It is our conviction that a stronger and effective national body as well as programmes of formation of the general public on fundamental rights and their inalienable value should be priorities for Sri Lanka. Our country stands to gain by a more pro-active and open mindset in this matter and it would help restore the rule of law. If the Constitution of the land and the structures that guarantee the fundamental rights of the individuals and of all communities are not effective, it is inevitable that resort will be made to international fora, which would be a serious threat to the sovereignty of the country.

22. A constitutional council which would approve the appointment of some of the statutory office bearers or propose names for such appointments to the executive and interprets the compatibility of laws to be presented in Parliament with the constitution of the country or the existing basic laws, is a necessity for a truly transparent and credible democracy. Sri Lanka too should make constitutional provisions for such a statutory body.

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Just 5 months ago, my daughter and I joined them again on a tour to Rome, Lourdes and Paris. With the new Holy Father's Blessings, we moved to Assisi and Padua, prayed at Our Lady's Feet - the Rosa Mystica, spent 3 days at Lourdes where we got the great opportunity to recite the Hail Mary in Sinhala, and then moving to Nevers and Paris.

Both tours included the maximum number of places as promised, too many to mention, and some fascinating surprises not disclosed in the itinerary, with the best possible

accommodation and breaks in between. The facilities provided surprised me so much that I asked the Managing Director of Guiding Star "How do you do this?" His reply, most unexpected, was, "I don't look for much profit. I feel it is my calling to take people to these holy places and I feel extremely happy to see them praying."

My own spiritual experience was incomparable and lasting.

Thank you Guiding Star!

Dr. Margaret, Piliyandala.

Contact now: 0719 098 098 / 0717 884 343



(N5113)

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring Good News to the poor.

Is. 61:1)



Third Sunday in Advent

First Reading:

Is. 35: 1- 6a, 10

The Prophet invites the Israelites to be filled with joy as the Lord would rescue them from exile. And, he also foresees the situation of the Israelites. There will be joy, new life and new hope. Therefore they are asked to be strong.

Second Reading:

James 5:7-10

St. James invites the Christian Community to be patient and to await the Second Coming of Christ. They are requested to take as an example the Prophet who endured suffering in order to face life.

Gospel. Mt. 11: 2-11

The disciples of John the Baptist are sent to enquire about Jesus. Jesus points out to them the works that he has performed so that John himself would judge as to who Jesus is. And Jesus seems to be proud about them.

Reflection

Today's Readings

invite us to be filled with joy as the Coming of the Lord is at hand. For people who are living in expectation they serve as a beacon of light to be patient and enduring until the Coming of the Lord. They also prepare us to recognize the Lord through the signs of the times so that we will not miss him once he comes.

In the First Reading we see that the Israelites were in exile. The prophetic message of deliverance brings them joy and happiness. The hope of a new situation or world order brings in still more joy and happiness. People must live in hope and endure suffering, for the Lord would one day rescue them from the bondage of slavery. The new situation will be the time of the Lord and in that situation the blind will see, the deaf hear and dumb speak. Speaking of this the Reading says "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall

flee away."

The Second Coming prepares the people for the Second Coming of Christ. It says that Coming of the Lord is at hand. But it wants them to live in peace, harmony and good will instead of grumbling against one another. It advises them to take the sufferings and the patience of the prophets as an example.

The Gospel is about John the Baptist who wishes to know about Jesus; whether Jesus is true Messiah, Jesus only refers to the different signs that he had performed and John has to judge whether he is the true Messiah. Therefore there is a need to be alert so that we will be able to recognize the Lord from the signs and wonders that are performed by Him. This leaves us with a grave responsibility of preparing the world to recognize Him when He comes. In that way John the Baptist was the greatest born among women and we too could be great only if we could secure a place in heaven. So there is hope for all of us. At the Second Coming of the Lord if only we could be living a life worthy of the Lord, and of His kingdom then



we could live in all joy and happiness, in the life after.

Aid Story.

Little Miriam and her father were crossing a narrow bridge over a river. Fearing for his child, Miriam's father said to her, "Sweetheart, please hold my hand so that you don't fall into the river." Miriam said, "No, daddy! You hold my hand," Puzzled, her father asked: "What is the difference?" "There's a big difference," replied Miriam. "If I hold your hand and something happens to me, I may let go of your hand, but if you hold my hand, I'm sure that no matter what happens, you'll never let go of my hand."

**YEAR OF MARY -
A ROSARY A DAY KEEPS
THE DEVIL AWAY.**

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

For the Pope and the bishops: That they may faithfully watch over the flock of Christ, taking special care of the weak and the discouraged. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

For all leaders: That they may not glory in the limelight of their office but rather seek to help and serve other people. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

That the dying may experience the loving presence of Christ with them as they near the end of life's pilgrimage. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

That we may do our work and carry out our duties faithfully and unselfishly. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

The 17th Asian Liturgy Forum held in Hong Kong

This Forum was opened by the bishop of the host city for the event, John Cardinal Tong Hon, who welcomed delegates to Hong Kong at a dinner held on the opening night, October 21, at the Caritas Community Hall in Central.

Cardinal Tong quoted from the statement produced at the last gathering held in Mira, Malaysia, in 2012, saying that over the past 50 years since the Vatican II document on liturgy, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, was published, Catholic people have received spiritual and pastoral inspiration that helps them to participate consciously and actively in the liturgy.

He noted that there is an intrinsic interconnection between pastoral work and the liturgy, as the pastoral dimension is the summit to which the liturgy aspires and liturgy is the font from which pastoral inspiration grows.

He stressed that good, dynamic liturgy needs good pastoral formation and through the grace given to the Church the last 50 years has seen this revitalised.

Eighty participants from the 16 countries or districts present for the forum were asked to give a greeting in their own tongue, which reflected the vast variety of languages used in the liturgy across Asia, as well as cultural differences that are their hallmark and are a big challenge to the Church in its development of its liturgical expression. The Sri Lankan delegation comprised Rev. Fr. Cecil Joy and Rev. Fr. Ignatius Varnakulasingham, National Director for Liturgy.

Bishop Anthony Lee, from Mira in Malaysia, the Chairperson of the forum, described the gathering for the annual event as a family affair. He welcomed familiar faces back to the gathering and new faces as well, inviting them to enjoy the spirit of sharing and support for each other.

He said that the choice of the pastoral dimension of the liturgy as the theme for the forum highlights the intrinsic link between the two, as Cardinal Tong had pointed out, noting that the choice of this theme was the last contribution the Filipino Benedictine, Father Anscar Chupungco, who had been the inspiration of the group for many years, made before he died suddenly on January 9 this year.

In referring to Hong Kong's Fragrant Harbour, he said that he hopes and prays that its fragrance will

embrace the forum meeting and spread throughout the liturgies of Asia, as Catholic life is built on the liturgy, where Jesus is present.

Students from the Little Flower Catholic Primary School in Shatin presented an energetic Lion Dance, in a traditional Chinese opening of the event.

Cardinal Tong and Bishop Lee were invited to dot the 'Eye of the Lions', a ceremony that brings life and imbues the spirit of fruitfulness into an undertaking.

The opening dinner was followed by solemn evening prayer in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception presided over by Cardinal Tong, who invited the gathering to sing as a bride singing to her bridegroom.

He said, "It is through the liturgy of the Church that the faithful renew themselves and carry the presence of Christ to others."

He added that from a social point of view, it is a way of going deeper into life and breaking all fetters, a way of recognising the real me.

He called on the gathering to pray that this would enlighten them during their weeklong deliberations and experiences, saying that there is a particular joy in having people from so many cultures and different places together.

He quoted Confucius as saying, "It is delightful to have friends who think alike coming from afar and to share their goals and ideas of common concerns."

While liturgy is fundamentally a communication through sign and symbol, Cardinal Tong quoted from the biblical story of the resurrected Jesus meeting the disciples on the road to Emmaus, saying that Jesus quoted all the passages from the scriptures that related to himself and they recognised him in the breaking of bread.

Although the *lingua franca* of the forum is English, the solemn evening prayer was celebrated in English, Cantonese and Putonghua, with a throwback to the traditional with the singing of the Kyrie in Greek, and the Lord's Prayer and *Salve Regina* in Latin. Participating delegates forwarded their reports on the following themes:

- 1) Pastoral adaptation of the Liturgical books, the Roman Missal
- 2) Liturgical formation of both pastors and faithful



3) Promotion of active participation by the assembly

4) Lay Liturgical Ministries

On October 23rd the participants had the opportunity of visit-

ing the modern churches in Hong Kong.

Previous gatherings of the forum have been held mostly in the Philippines and Indonesia, but Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, Brunei and Singapore have also taken a turn in hosting it. The Forum concluded with Holy Mass at the Rosary Parish Church in Tsimshatsui on October 24, finishing as it began, with a shared meal.

On the next issue the statistics of the Diocese of Hong Kong will be published.

(Source: Sunday Examiner Hong Kong)

Reported by Fr. Ignatius Varnakulasingham

National Director
Liturgy and Culture

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR A
15th Dec. - 22nd Dec. 2013

Sun:	3rd Sunday of Advent Is. 35:1-6,10; Jas. 5:7-10; Mt. 11:2-11
Mon:	Num 24:2-7,15-17; Mt. 21:23-27
Tue:	Gen 49:2, 8-10; Mt. 1:1-17
Wed:	World Migrants' Day Jer. 23:5-8; Mt. 1: 18-24
Thu:	Jdg 13:2-7,24,25; Lk. 1:5-25
Fri:	Is. 7:10-14; Lk. 1:26-38
Sat:	Memorial of St. Peter Canisius, Priest & Doctor Song 2:8-14 or Zeph 3:14-18; Lk. 1:39-45
Sun:	4th Sunday of Advent Is 7: 10-14; Rom 1:1-7; Mt 1: 18-24

Young World

University Catholic Students' Movement, Colombo Region Proudly presents

University Christmas Chariot 2013

Come And Enjoy Christmas
at the Galle Face



Starting from
St. Lawrence Church, Wellawatta
at 4.00 p.m.

Arrival at
Galle Face
around 7.00 p.m.

join with us with your vehicles
on the way to Galle Face
On 21st Of December 2013

Year end celebrations at St. Anthony's Sunday School

St. Anthony's Sunday School, Dalupotha, will hold its annual year end celebrations on Monday, December 16 at 1.30 p.m. at the Church Grounds.

The chief guest on the occasion will be Mr. Kumara Nayanajith of the *Gnanarthapradepaya*.

Prageeth Shiroman

Prize-giving at Nayakakanda English Catechism School



The Annual Prize-giving of the English Catechism School of St. Mary's Church, Nayakakanda was held recently with a special Holy Mass celebrated by Rev.

Fr. Augustine Fernandopulle.

One of the highlights of the day's ceremony was a Christmas play enacted by the middle school children titled, "Do they know it's

Christmas?" bringing home the real Spirit of the Advent Season.

The day's proceedings concluded with a thanksgiving prayer led by Rev. Fr. Mahendra

Gunatilaka, Parish Priest Nayakakanda. Also present was Rev. Fr. Chanaka Prabath who is in charge of the Catechism classes of the Parish.

"Heart to Heart" - Catholic Youth Camp December 15 - St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10

A Fun-filled Catholic Youth Day Camp

Set Your Hearts Aglow

- "Lift Up Your Hearts" Animated by Priyanthi Seneviratne VanDort
- "Raise Your Voices" Animated by Francis D' Almeida
- "Hearts on Fire" Animated by Vinnette Perera
- "The Burning Bush" Animated by Trevor Ludowyke
- "Cross Over" Animated by Uchitha Illangasinghe

On Sunday
15th December 2013
At St. Joseph's College,
Colombo 10

For Info:
Trevor on 0777-570071
Rozaine on 0773-688329
Wijitha: gocanada@sltnet.lk

Organized by the Archdiocese of Colombo
(For Colombo North, South, Central and Kotte Regions)

N. B. Rush with your applications
before 15th December 2013

ing committee has made elaborate arrangements utilizing the resourceful expertise of experienced youth animators to make this youth day camp an enjoyable and fruitful experience for young ones between ages 14-20. The day's programme will include the following among others;

- "Raise Your Voices" - a vocal rejuvenation session - by Mr. Francis Almeida
- "Hearts on Fire" - Interactive session on youth relationships - by Ms. Vinnette Perera
- "Lift up your Hearts" - An Experience of Anointed Music - by Ms. Priyanthi Seneviratne VanDort
- "The Burning Bush" - a fun-filled Biblical encounter - by Mr. Trevor Ludowyke
- "Cross Over" - Outdoor fun Adventure activities - Mr. Uchitha Illangasinghe (Sethsarana)
- "Youth Christmas Carols" - conducted by Mr. Francis Almeida and Ms. Priyanthi Seneviratne VanDort

Registrations should be made through Parish Priests or Principals of Catholic Schools in the Colombo North, Colombo South, Colombo Central, and Kotte Deaneries. A special Secretariat has been established at All Saints' Church, Borella to coordinate this programme.

For more details contact Mr. Wijitha Ariyaratne - gocanada@sltnet.lk

Mr. Trevor Ludowyke - 0777-570071 or
Mrs. Rozanne Avory - 0773688329

Heart to Heart Secretariat
C/O, Parish Priest, All Saints' Church, Borella.
Tel: +94-11-2693051

"Heart to Heart" - a Fun-filled Catholic Youth Day Camp will be held on Sunday, December 15, at St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10, organized by the Archdiocese of Colombo. This programme will be open to youth from the Catholic Schools and Parishes in Colombo North, Colombo South, Colombo Central, and Kotte Deaneries.

The concept behind this programme which

has been initiated by His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo, is to enable Catholic youth to interact with one another in an atmosphere of fellowship leading to a spiritual rejuvenation and to enjoy their school vacation in a fruitful manner.

The Steering Committee consisting of clergy and laity will be chaired by Rev. Fr. Felician Ranjith Perera, Parish Priest, All Saints' Church, Borella. The organiz-

"Think carefully before you promise an offering to God. You might regret it later"

Proverbs- 20:25

TOWARDS THE RECONCILIATION

Contd. from Pg. (4)

PART II: Sri Lanka, A Moment for Learning

8. Sri Lanka is at the cross roads of a possible new beginning after a disastrous 30-year conflict which did bring much suffering and pain to all our people of every race and religion, the effects of which are still being felt and causes the emergence of many new challenges. In post independence Sri Lanka a resurgence of nationalism by a legitimate desire to redress peacefully, historical wrongs done especially to the Sinhala Buddhist majority under the long colonial rule resulted unfortunately in the failure to address issues affecting the Tamil speaking minority for no fault of theirs. This situation led to repeated communal violence and finally rebellion and open warfare between the two parties of the Divide. The repeated failure of our political leaders, both Sinhala and Tamil, to be magnanimous towards the other community led to the accentuation of the conflict. A political will to settle outstanding issues and to search for a new national identity on the basis of the philosophy of unity in diversity was not to be found. Often times we did not hold out sufficiently our religious beliefs as indicators on the basis of which solutions to the problems that arose could have been found, and so, missed an opportunity. As it was once mentioned by one of our elder statesman, Dr. Colvin R De Silva: "Two languages one nation; one language two nations." This preference accorded to the Sinhala language and culture over the culture of the other minorities severely strained national unity. The sad result of all of that was a violent conflict which cost the loss of thousands of lives, the destruction of property, displacement of entire communities, economic stagnation and the wastage of a huge amount of resources of the country on a meaningless war.

9. In their Pastoral letter of 1984 the Bishops did state that "the different peoples of this country can form one modern nation inspired by the best in all our religions and cultures" [P3]. Infact the Bishops warned that "conflict and division will be harmful to all, will invite foreign intervention, making all groups lose not only freedom but also our civilized and human way of living" [ibid]. This, exactly is what happened.

Unity in Diversity

10. It is our view that even though the war ended the terror activities of the LTTE, a satisfactory political solution to the issues facing the Tamil Community in the North is yet to be found and a sense of simmering unease which continues to prevail needs to be addressed with a sense of urgency. It is true that all races and religions in this country need to live in harmony and peace with one another. Indeed in some areas like the South and the hill country this trend is laudably visible. But that does not necessarily connote that integration requires abandonment of one's traditional territories or their organized colonization by others. Peace can also mean different racial and religious groups living in their own traditional areas of residence and still identifying themselves as part of one country. While it is true that anybody should be allowed to move in or move away from a given area in any part of the country, there is nothing essentially wrong if someone were to claim a given area as his or her own traditional habitation.

The Muslim Community, for that matter, has lived in harmony with others in all these areas. Both options are possible. Human life could be very much linked to a given territory or occupational orientation which helps to cultivate a series of relationships and these become part of one's identity. Besides, such identity can be achieved in a mixed setting too. Neither of these options need be a cause of worry or fear. Once again the guiding principle in all of this should be "unity in diversity".

11. And so, we feel that considering the North and East as the area in which traditionally the Tamil Community has lived can be accepted and the administration through democratic structures of this area by their own leaders need not be considered a hindrance to peace and integration or unity. It has to be a two way track too which welcomes others while being linked to one another through family and other ties. What would cause a nagging sense of irritation on the Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim Communities at that would be any attempt to change radically and substantially the ethnic composition of any area through organized colonization. Unfortunately the introduction of a large number of administrative and security personnel who have come from the other areas into the North and East seems to have been understood as that kind of attempted colonization by the Government. We feel that this policy could be counterproductive to true integration and unity and should be changed. If not, it could only lead to further tension and future violence. Such intermingling indeed should take place, but in a gradual and natural way as has happened in some areas in the South already.

A New Beginning

12. In this sense, the proposals made by the Lessons Learnt Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) on the gradual integration of the different communities in the country as a whole, and in the North and East in particular, should be taken seriously.

It is important that in this matter, in order to achieve such integration the policy of trilingualism be introduced vigorously and all school going children and youth be encouraged and incentivized to study not only their own mother tongue at school but also the other major language of Sri Lanka in addition to the link language - English. It is also our conviction that trilingual capability should be made a necessary condition for the conferring of university degrees on graduates. Besides that, it is also necessary to ensure that the provisions of the National Languages Act are further strengthened and the public and private sector employment, especially in those positions that deal with people's day to day lives, is opened only to those who have mastered the three languages.

13. The Catholic Bishops sincerely believe that given the time period already lapsed after the end of the war, meaningful steps need to be taken to ease the political climate in the North and East, which would permit the early return to normal life of the war affected people. Delay and procrastination would only lead to irresolvable blocks to peace and good neighbourliness in these areas.

Among the steps we urge our political leadership to urgently implement are:

a) The appointment of civilian

Governors for the Northern and Eastern provinces, ensuring that there be no political interference on the freedom and responsibility of the people in this area to Govern themselves, as the other provinces do,

b) We commend the Government for holding the Provincial Council elections for the North and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) for the positive gesture of willingness to collaborate with the Central Government. And we therefore call upon both parties to continue to work together for the restoration of true peace and unity in the Country while safeguarding the principles of justice and truth as well as the prosperity and social progress of the people in this area.

c) We appeal to the Government to limit the activities of the security forces to the areas of internal or external security and related issues only,

d) Expediting and streamlining the process of re-settlement of the internally displaced people of all races and religions in their original habitats and returning to them the original places of their residence and employment. Meaningful and expeditious steps need to be taken to help them reconstruct their own houses and get back to the trade in which they were originally engaged, especially in the agricultural and fisheries sectors. While appreciating the efforts of the Government in matters like the re-construction of roads, hospitals, schools and other infrastructure such as power and water supply we call upon them to expedite the resettlement of the people as an even greater priority. In this matter the Indian sponsored Housing Construction Programme should be expeditiously implemented. Paying adequate compensation to the IDP's for the loss of house and property in their areas should also be seriously considered. Special programmes for the war widows and orphans, the war-disabled should be put in place.

e) Being open to the idea of an honest and sincere assessment of what happened and what caused the conflict is also important. We feel that issues of accountability on disappearances and any cases on the violation of fundamental rights need to be courageously looked into and if there is any wrongdoing by anyone such should be rectified in the interests of justice. People of all races should be allowed to commemorate their dead ones and correct information on the war dead of both the soldiers and the rebels needs to be diffused. A special commemoration day celebrated both in the North and in the South to remember all those who died in the war, Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim or others, would help ease tension and the traumas of the past.

f) Any detainees held in prison on suspicion of being involved in terror activities should either be prosecuted or released expeditiously. We appreciate the fact that many such detainees have already been rehabilitated. This we state because we are aware of a significant number of prisoners being still held without proper trial and their case inordinately delayed. This kind of situation is a cause of much suffering to their families. Laws that permit the free use of detention merely on suspicion or torture should either be repealed or relaxed as the war situation is now officially over. Laws such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and the emergency special regulations need to be repealed. Structures for the protection of human rights such as the Human Rights Commission (HRC) should be strengthened constitutionally. All forms

of torture, abduction and disappearance of people should be banned and the provisions of the convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or Act 22 of 1994 on the prohibition of torture should be carefully observed.

g) It is also necessary to search for the whereabouts of all missing persons and where such persons are confirmed to be untraceable, "death certificates" should be issued to their families so that they may carry on with their lives after a suitable period of mourning and a scheme to pay some reasonable compensation to them should be established.

h) Without procrastinating any further the Government and the Tamil political parties should commence a dialogue in order to seek a politically acceptable yet workable solution for the problems affecting the people in North and East. Such a solution, we feel, should be on the basis of an effective and strong devolution of power to the provinces. We call upon the TNA to be flexible in this matter even agreeing to a process of stage by stage devolution with legal binding if necessary. As for the East, a solution that is acceptable to all communities, i.e. the Tamils, the Sinhalese, the Muslims and others, living in this area should be worked out. Whatever that solution be, it must ensure that a social, economic and cultural module which respects the dignity, the absolute equality and the unity of hearts is realized within this area as well as in the rest of the country. Any discriminatory approach which poses a threat to true progress and freedom should be willfully rejected.

i) Most of these proposals are indeed found in the final report of the LLRC, the commission which studied issues of reconciliation in the aftermath of the war. The LLRC was truly a national process and as such it is our own analysis of the situation with suggestions for true healing. And so, procrastination in this matter would only lead to frustration and despair among the affected parties, the consequent internationalization of an essentially local issue, instability and perhaps a return to violence which would be most unfortunate. The Government should take these proposals seriously and take steps to implement them with a sense of urgency and responsibility. A time frame should also be decided for such implementation. The publication and diffusion of the report in the public media and in the local languages and providing all the necessary authority to those responsible for the implementation of these proposals should be speedily and effectively done.

Educating the public periodically on progress achieved in this matter would also be a way in which credibility on the process can be established.

The Constitution

14. In this light it is our firm belief that Sri Lanka should shed off all those clauses or conditions in its constitution that could be interpreted or read to justify different forms of discrimination against its people. Discriminating practices only create suspicion and division.

Indeed we are convinced that the present constitution which was initially introduced in 1978 and amended already 18 times and tends to absolutize power in the hands of just one person, the holder of the office of President, is not compatible with the requirements of a democratic State

Contd. on Pg. (XIX)

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and so should either be abandoned and a new constitution adopted or totally amended with sufficient checks and balances on the authority of the Executive. The proper interpretation of the laws pertaining to the judiciary and the legislature as well as their relationship to the Executive should be well defined in the latter case. The recent impeachment debate on the Chief Justice has shown how much the actual constitution is weak and flawed and needs a thorough revision, or a total replacement. In the making or revision of a constitution the principle of a two thirds majority vote in parliament alone is weak and insufficient. And so, a broader consensus among civil society and religious leaders as well as the different ethnic or political groups should be sought and the constitution so drawn up should be approved not only by such a two thirds majority in parliament but also by the people at a referendum held absolutely devoid of all political interference. A constitution that ensures the principle of unity in diversity is that which would truly help the country to heal its past wounds and to move forward in unity towards peace, justice and prosperity. Devolution of power to the provinces or the regions should also be considered important in seeking unity of hearts and providing a constitutional framework for such unity. Fear of accepting diversity is harmful to true unity. We call upon our leaders to be magnanimous and open to devolution especially if the constitution upholds the office of the executive presidency.

The Independence of the Judiciary

15. In this exercise the independence of the Judiciary should be preserved and defended at all cost. The Judiciary which has the sacred role of interpreting and applying the meaning of a given law should be totally free from interference by the other stake holders of power, the legislature and the executive. The contention that the Legislature is above the Judiciary is seriously flawed and is untenable. It is true that the Legislature draws up or approves laws which enter into the statute books of a country but it is the Judiciary that applies such laws to a given context. And its independence is the guarantor of true justice. The Legislature should not assume the role of both framing the laws and then interpreting them which is an invasion of the role of the judiciary. Besides, no one should be placed above the laws of the country and no immunity from prosecution for anyone should be permitted in the Constitution as that would hinder any citizen from challenging any undemocratic or illegal actions of the executive. The cardinal principle in this matter should be that absolutely no one is above the law. All those who are elected to power are at the service of the people and are firmly bound to follow the laws of the country in an exemplary manner. The legislature should not usurp the role of the judiciary and if the constitution allows for that, such authority should be removed.

The Independent Commissions

16. It is our firm conviction that in order to further strengthen the rule of law and Justice in Sri Lanka, constitutional provision should be made for a totally independent Elections Commission, Police Commission, Public Service Commission, Bribery and Corruption Commission and the Human Rights Commission as well as

a Constitutional Council. These will ensure a totally transparent form of Governance which a true democracy demands. This country has suffered much in the last few decades from political interference in these areas of public life casting serious doubts on the credibility and fairness of the public service.

17. The Elections Commission should have total independence of action at all times especially during elections as the past record of Sri Lanka on this matter has left much to be desired. Once elections are declared officially in a given area or nationally in the matter of the Presidential or general elections or even local Government elections, the incumbent office holders whether it be the President, the Prime Minister and his or her Government, the Provincial or Pradeshiya Councils or Municipal Councils should cease their administration and an alternative Council of independent state officials like the Chief Justice, the Speaker of Parliament and the Elections Commissioner as well as the IGP and the Secretary of Defence, the Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs should take over the administration of the State or the Governor of a given province or the Secretary of a Pradeshiya Sabha of a given area or the Municipal Commissioner should take over the care of these bodies and man the day to day administration until the newly elected office bearers take their respective oaths and are installed in office. This alone would ensure a free and fair election. The elections should be conducted in every case, freely without violence and above all allowing for total independence from State or other political manipulations. During this interim period the normal administrative matters should be handled by that caretaker administration or caretaker Government. The people should be allowed the fullest freedom to exercise their sacred duty and democratic right. If this principle is not maintained strictly the rule of law itself would suffer. The need for an independent elections commission is absolutely vital not only in order to ensure the credibility and the moral authority of the elected persons but also as a requirement of justice and fairplay. The Machiavellian principle of "might is right" should be shunned altogether in this matter.

18. The Police Commission should ensure that all the officials in the service of peace, justice and the fair implementation of such justice to all, carry on with their duties impartially, honestly and in keeping with their dignity and that there be no political interference in this service, keeping upto the highest standards of fairplay for everybody. This Commission should also ensure that elections are conducted freely and fairly rendering vital assistance to the Elections Commission in this matter. Police officials should be adequately compensated, rewarded and promoted strictly on merit and on the principle of efficiency, people friendly attitudes and fairness. All law enforcement authorities should be free of corruption or abuse of power and any person resorting to such behaviour be brought to justice and dealt with according to the law of the land. No political or other interference should be allowed to tarnish the role of this all important component of a true democracy.

19. The role played by the Public Service in any country determines not only the efficient functioning of its system of Government and Administration but also ensures its smooth running and people friendly attitudes. It also enhances transparency and public trust. Political interference in the public service of-

tentimes renders it a stumbling block to progress, kills efficiency and initiative, leads to corruption and lethargy and scuttles appreciation of service and promotions on the basis of merit.

We call upon our political leadership to take steps to ensure that the dignity of this all important component of public life is maintained, rendering it the subject of an independent commission.

20. One of the disastrous consequences of political bungling in this country, in its post independence history, has been the gradually increasing and endemic orientation towards corruption in all strata of political life and in the public service. This has become even worse with the introduction of free market policies. All efforts to stem the tide in this national malaise had been weakened largely by political interference and the watering down of the structures that could effectively control and completely eradicate this cancer.

There was a time when even members of Parliament found guilty of corruption were removed from office but this process too had been reduced to ineffectivity through the different constitutions introduced lately. Political interference has destroyed the credibility even of the existing structures for the eradication of corruption. And so it is necessary that a sufficiently strengthened Bribery and Corruption eradication commission be established in Sri Lanka. It should be guaranteed freedom from political and other interference, be established with the necessary legal and punitive authority in order to eradicate this malaise nationally and should also be called upon to carry out a nationwide campaign against corruption at all levels.

Refer Human Rights (No. 21-22) Page. 14

PART III: The Open Market Economy

23. The open market economy introduced in the late seventies has brought with it indeed some improvements to the standards of life of the people on the whole. This can be seen in the increasing use of modern technology and successes of human endeavour in all spheres of life especially in the areas of communication, education, economic life, standards of life style and greater participation in public life by the people. Sri Lanka has improved its quality of life on the whole in this regard.

24. Yet, the open market economy has also caused many negative effects, such as increased consumerism, waste, secularization of life and its inherent values, an increasing sense of individualism, moral and spiritual degradation, serious threats to family life and increasing recourse to phenomena such as divorce, birth control and abortion, drug and alcohol addiction especially among the youth, commercialization of almost every aspect of life, corruption, the underworld, breakdown of law and order and violence and above all the increasing gap between the rich and the poor and the marginalization of many types of people whose life becomes unbearably difficult. The open market economy has also intensified the debt situation of the country. Successive Governments have continued and even increased the ratio of borrowing, that Sri Lanka has now become a debt servicing country without a proper vision or plan for economic freedom. The result of all of that

is the tremendous financial burdens that are being heaped on the vast majority of the people of this country. Development is indeed much needed yet it should not be achieved at the cost of leaving even the future generations in debt to the international and national money lending institutions.

25. Even though exact statistics may vary and maybe disputed, malnutrition does exist in Sri Lanka. There are many families who just cannot manage even one proper meal a day. And among the working classes there are many who are unable to ensure decent living standards for their families. The living conditions especially of the plantation workers and the fishermen need to be improved and urgent attention should be given to this. Trade Union action has been at times put down ruthlessly and since most of the Unions are politically controlled the workers have remained subservient to their political masters and muted in spite of the many difficulties they have to wade through. Among special categories of such workers are those in the Economic Processing or Free Trade Zones and the Estate workers. The status of the fishermen and the daily paid labourers is even more difficult. Poverty also has made hundreds and thousands of our people to seek better prospects overseas and most of these engage in menial jobs. Sadly such categories of workers are increasingly subjected to inhuman treatment and exploitation by their foreign masters. This has become a new form of slavery. The Government should through negotiations with such foreign Governments ensure that the sons and daughters of Mother Lanka are treated with dignity whatever their work be and that job agencies, local and foreign, are monitored to prevent them exploiting our workers for measly profit.

Poverty also seems to strike those who do white collar jobs. Many of these families find it difficult to make ends meet each month on their salary day. The gap between the rich and the poor tends to widen in this scenario in the pursuance of the actual economic policies.

Besides, the choice to move ahead rather ambitiously in the areas of tourism and of the modernization of industries as well as certain mega development projects like the construction or expansion of airports, harbours and projects connected with urbanization and infrastructure is commendable indeed. Yet, these should not hurt and disturb or cause large scale displacement of people out of their areas and their means of employment or damage to the environment. We are particularly concerned about the situation facing our fishermen, especially those who have been engaged in this activity over many decades in the Islands off Kalpitiya. The drive to provide greater facilities in this area for tourism is causing much consternation among them. Their concerns too should be attended to.

26. The different systems tried out in the past by different Governments to help the poor and those in real need have all been failures due to the fact that such help has been heavily politicized. Schemes such as *Jana Saviya* and *Samurdhi* have been, by and large, run by politically motivated administrations and have, often enough, ended up in discriminatory practices and have not been able to cushion the ill effects of the economic, free for all, on the poor. The latest of these, the *Divi Naguma* scheme too runs the risk of being an instrument of the present Government for its own political posturing. The Government should strive to help the poorer sector of the country without any discrimination by protecting them *Contd. on Pg. (XX)*

Contd. from Pg. (XIX)

from the ill effects of the open market system which often protects only "the haves." This latest scheme should preferably be totally freed from political interference.

27. The free market type of economy often opens the way to moral degradation for it tends to exalt individualism and give a wrong interpretation to freedom. It also places money and profit at the helm of everything. Thus spiritual and moral values get relegated to the backyard. Everything becomes a matter of profit and earthly happiness which, as we know, does not really last and often causes greed and anxiety. It also tends to weaken the moral conscience of humanity leading to a confusion on what is really good or what is really evil. It is clear that the moral conscience of a nation cannot be left to the free fall of the open economy and should be protected and safeguarded as a priority.

28. And, true development is not just a journey towards wealth and prosperity without the development of the inner life of man – his conscience, his relationship with the others and with God or the religious principles he believes in. Blessed Pope John Paul II stated so; "Development must not be understood solely in economic terms, but in a way that is fully human, it is not only a question of raising all peoples to the level currently enjoyed by the richest countries, but rather building up a more decent life through united labour, of concretely enhancing every individual's dignity and creativity as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation, and thus to God's call" [Centesimus Annus 29].

29. Thus it is necessary that ethics and spiritual values be sufficiently insisted upon in our pursuit of material development and prosperity. The state should encourage such a process of adequate spiritualization of Sri Lankan society. The support of the religious and civil society leaders and their guidance should be obtained in this kind of process. In this light it is also necessary to ensure that freedom be not interpreted to mean, space to do anything one wishes for oneself. Such evils which militate against the sacredness of life such as violence, the activities of the underground, pornography and abortion should not be tolerated. These demean human dignity. True development, it must be always remembered, "consists in the priority of ethics over technology, the primacy of the person over things and in the superiority of spirit over matter" [Pope John Paul II: *Redemptor Hominis* 16].

30. It is also because man is not just an object of development. He is the master of this process of development, its true subject. Thus the dignity of man stands at the base of all development. For as, the Sacred Scriptures stated, man's unending dignity stems from the fact that he was created by God, in His own image and likeness, carries God's own breath in him, has been redeemed from sin through the sacrificial death of His only begotten Son and is called to a totally ennobling and glorified eternal existence in communion with God. Thus each human being is more important and valuable than all the rest of creation. This dignity, he carries within himself, irrespective of all differences.

Pluralism

31. It is for this same reason that pluralism which adorns the social fabric of our nation needs to be accepted, respected and safeguarded. No one is

essentially more important than the others. Acceptance and learning to associate such differences positively in the pursuit of prosperity is important. Pluralism which is inclusive is the healthy way to build unity and prosperity in any given society. Sri Lanka is no exception to such a vision. And so, it is the responsibility of the State and of all citizens to respect, protect and enhance the different cultures and religions of this nation allowing these to co-exist peacefully and find their own sense of balance in the bigger picture.

32. And so, all forms of divisive thinking or of hegemony and dominion either in any given area or in the nation as a whole should be shunned. It is our firm conviction, especially in the light of the tragedy that struck us in the past 30 years, that Sri Lanka should learn to seek unity in diversity and never be allowed to slide back into an era of suspicion and hate as that could once again lead us to destruction. Some of the present trends of certain extremist racial or religious groups instigating hate and suspicion within the public in Sri Lanka against others should be firmly put down by the Government. We appeal to all concerned to be extremely cautious in this matter and to refuse to be drawn into such hate campaigns easily. It is only mutual acceptance, respect and trust that would ensure peace and prosperity for all and avoid further disaster.

33. Last but not least, a true democracy necessarily connotes a strong and sturdy media. It means the recognition of the right to information on the part of the people as well as the duty of the Media to provide such information to them as truthfully and as responsibly as possible. And so, media freedom should be accorded the highest consideration by the State as well as by all our citizens. Recent trends however are worrying in that we have heard of assaults, abductions and attacks on journalists as well as attacks on media institutions themselves. We call upon the Government to be more vigilant in this matter and to curb such activities of certain unruly elements.

34. The concerns we have voiced above are those that have been the result of our own reflection in the light of not only the message of the Sacred Scriptures and the social teachings of the Church, but also of our own interactions and common sharing with leaders of other religious persuasions as well as of civil society leaders in Sri Lanka. We have sought to share these concerns with all our fellow citizens and specifically with our brethren in the faith out of a genuine love for our beloved motherland Sri Lanka and her future progress and prosperity as well as unity. We do so with utmost humility and in no way do we wish to gain anything for ourselves but only to be of some service to all our fellow citizens.

Indeed, we assure all that along with them and with God's help we too as fellow citizens will work to make this nation the pearl of the East and the joy of the nations.

PART IV: Conclusion

35. And finally, beloved brethren in Jesus, the Lord told us: You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet. 'You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in people's sight,

so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven" (Mathew 5:13-16).

36. On the day of our baptism, each one of us was presented with salt and a candle, to instil in us the call to be the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world'. This, except in cases of adult baptism, was done on our behalf by our God-parents. However at the Sacrament of Confirmation, each one of us was invited to make a conscious commitment to the believing community and the society at large. In the introduction to the Rite of Confirmation it is stated: "By the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit". We are also invited to the table of the Lord as a peace loving community ready to sacrifice oneself for the good of others following the example of Jesus who gave the new commandment of "love one another as I have loved you" [Jn. 13:34-45].

37. And so, as a believing community imbued with the strength of the Spirit, let us reaffirm our faith in the God of history who continues to labour along side of us and resolve to do all what we can to continue to spread the values of the Kingdom. Let us work to safeguard the moral and spiritual wealth of our motherland without being slavish to the pursuit of material well being, especially becoming conscious and responding to the needs of the poor and the marginalized in the consumerist and secular economic set up that has emerged lately in Sri Lanka.

38. Let us safeguard by all means the dignity and right of every human being, including the unborn. As God has created us all equal with diverse talents and gifts and continue to preserve us all, let us collaborate with God in preserving the dignity and the rights of all and especially of life.

39. As Christian people let us eschew all forms of violence and hatred and promote a culture of peace and reconciliation where all peoples of our

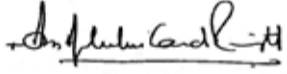

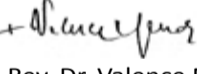
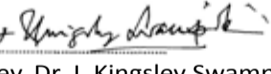
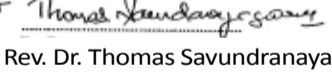
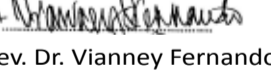
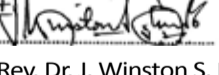
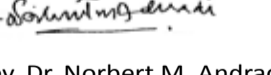
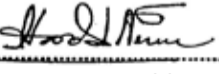

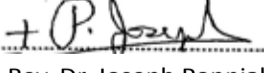
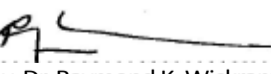

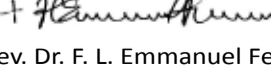
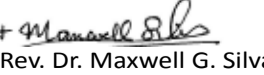
land can live with dignity and honour. As a civilized nation let us strive to settle all disputes by peaceful means of negotiation and better understanding of the points of views of others.

40. Owning our own personal and collective sins of omission and commission let us publicly ask pardon at services in churches and seek remedial action. Visits from the parishioners in the north and the south can be organized in small numbers to pray together and to seek practical ways of being neighbours, to each other, in the Gospel's sense of the word. We need to be forgiven by each other and let us walk with each other to build anew the face of the earth with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

41. Let us, as Christians called upon to follow the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who out of His unending love for mankind became the finest expression of God's infinite mercy for humanity, commit our lives totally for the creation of a just and fair society in Sri Lanka which is based on mutual respect, love, joy, harmony and peace. Let us work unceasingly and in union with all our brothers and sisters of the other religious traditions for a truly spiritual and noble transformation of this country into a haven of brotherhood and true progress and prosperity for all.

42. We pray unceasingly to Mary, our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Lanka to protect this nation from any further racial or religious conflicts, as she interceded so powerfully for it during the Second World War, and protected it from being drawn into that disaster. May Blessed Joseph Vaz, the Apostle of Sri Lanka pray for his beloved adoptive land and obtain for all our Sri Lankan people true peace and joy which flows so generously from the pierced heart of Jesus, a heart filled with love for us.

**Given On: 8th December 2013
On the feast day of:
The Solemnity of the Immaculate
Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

	
✧ His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith President of the C.B.C.S.L. Archbishop of Colombo.	✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph Vice President of the C.B.C.S.L. Bishop of Mannar.
	
✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis Secretary General of the C.B.C.S.L. Bishop of Chilaw	✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. J. Kingsley Swampillai Bishop of Trincomalee
	
✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam Bishop of Jaffna	✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando Bishop of Kandy
	
✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. J. Winston S. Fernando, S.S.S Bishop of Badulla.	✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Norbert M. Andradi, O.M.I Bishop of Anuradhapura
	
✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold A. Perera Bishop of Kurunegala	✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus C. Perera, O.S.B Bishop of Rathnapura
	
✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah Bishop of Batticaloa	✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond K. Wickramasinghe Bishop of Galle
	
✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Marius Peiris Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo	✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. F. L. Emmanuel Fernando Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo
	
✧ Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell G. Silva Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo	