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# MESSENGER

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## Vatican issues details of Holy Year of Mercy

VATICAN (CNS) - During a recent news conference at the Vatican, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation, unveiled the official prayer, logo, calendar of events and other details of the special Holy Year of Mercy, which will be celebrated from December 8, 2015 until November 20, 2016.

He explained that the motto, "Merciful Like the Father" serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example

of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure.

One way the Holy Father wants to show the Church's maternal solicitude is to send out missionaries of mercy - specially selected priests who have been granted the authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See, the Pope wrote in 'The Face of Mercy' (*Misericordiae Vultus*), the document

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## Canonization of Mother Teresa

Vatican spokesman Fr. Federico Lombardi sj, has said that Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta could be canonized during the upcoming Jubilee for Mercy, although he clarified that no concrete plans have been made.



Fr. Lombardi told EWTN News last week, that the possible canonization of Mother Teresa during the Holy Year of Mercy is a working hypothesis.

"There is no official date but you can say that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints is studying the cause."

When asked if there was a second miracle attributed to

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# Pope tells Italian Bishops to stop ordering the faithful

VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis has told Bishops to strongly denounce corruption and to act more like pastors than "pilots" telling the faithful what to do.

Pope Francis' strong words were aimed at members of the Italian Bishops' Conference, who opened their annual meeting at the Vatican last Monday. Pope Francis, who is also the Bishop of Rome, urged his Bishops to be more Christ-like in showing humility, compassion, mercy and wisdom.

He told them not to shy away from denouncing the "diffuse mentality" of public and private corruption that

impoverished families, honest workers and retirees, while marginalizing the neediest and depriving young people of hope. Italy is rife with corruption scandals and its youth unemployment rate stands at 43 percent.

The Holy Father asked the Bishops to reinforce the indispensable role of ordinary folk in their dioceses. "In reality, lay people who have an authentic Christian formation shouldn't need a bishop-pilot, or a Monsignor-pilot, or clerical input to assume their responsibilities at every level, from political to social, economic to legislative," he said.

"Rather, what they all need is a Bishop Pastor!"

He lamented that often official Church documents are too heavy on doctrine and theory "as if our orientation isn't aimed at our people and country but rather students and specialists."

Pope Francis also complained that the Church often organises conferences where the same voices are heard over and over, an apparent reference to the practice of hosting only like-minded speakers at Church-sponsored academic conferences.

The Holy Father said such a practice



drugs the community, homogenizing choices, opinions and people. He urged bishops to instead go where the Holy Spirit

asks them to go.

During their meeting from May 18-21, the Bishops discussed how their faithful had received Pope

Francis' Apostolic Exhortation 'Evangelii Gaudium' (The Joy of the Gospel), and look at ways to implement its teaching.

## First Asian to head Caritas Internationalis

VATICAN CITY - Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, 57, is the new President of Caritas Internationalis. The Confederation's 20th Assembly which has been meeting



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle over the past few days in Rome, elected him as successor to Honduran

Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga who leaves his post after eight years of service and assured his successor of his full support. Cardinal Tagle is the first Asian to be assigned this role, which he will hold for a period of four years.

Tagle, whose election to the post was thought highly probable in recent

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## Golden and Silver Years

### A Programme of Appreciation for Priests and Religious Ordained between 1955-1967

The above programme conducted by the Catholic National Commission for Seminaries, Clergy and Religious will be held at the National Seminary, Ampitiya in Kandy from Tuesday July 21 to Thursday July 23, 2015.

This programme will be for Priests and Religious ordained between the years 1955 to 1967.

Rev. Fr. William Evans,  
Vice-Rector,  
Co-ordinator



He sent us the Paraclete, the Father of the poor,  
Comforter of the afflicted, Light of hearts, Sanctifier of souls...

# Pope Francis meets with Cursillos in Christianity movement

VATICAN RADIO - Pope Francis recently greeted the Cursillos in Christianity Movement who are in Rome for their European meeting and who are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the group in Italy.

Cursillos in Christianity is a Catholic movement that was founded by a group of laymen in 1944 in Majorca, Spain. The charism of the Cursillo focuses on giving Christian lay people the tools needed to become effective Christian leaders over the course of a three-day weekend. They in turn are asked to take what they have learned, back out into the world.

In his prepared remarks the Pope told the estimated 7,000 Cursillistas



gathered in the Paul VI Hall that they were called to build on the charism that the Lord has entrusted to them.

He said the pioneers of the movement were authentic missionaries and did not hesitate to take the initiative and bravely approach people, to help them on their journey of faith. The Holy

Father urged those present to follow their example and the infinite love of Christ that frees and transforms lives.

"I encourage you to go beyond, faithful to your charism! To keep alive the zeal, the fire of the Spirit that always compels the followers of Christ to reach those on the peripheries, to step

out of their comfort zone and have the courage to reach all the suburbs that need the light of the Gospel," he said.

Pope Francis finally urged the participants to help the men and women of today to discover the beauty of faith and a life of grace, but in a way that is guided by humility.

## Urgently in need of a kidney donor

A young, 35-year-old male patient suffering from end stage renal failure urgently needs a kidney transplant for his survival.

His blood group is B positive and is looking for a donor whose blood group is "B" or "O".

Please be kind enough to help him regards his urgency. Please contact : 0772738461  
Dhammika Karunanayake

## Batticaloa Bishop meets Director of Kolpin Society



The National Board of Directors of the Kolpin Society of Sri Lanka paid a courtesy call on His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah, Bishop of Batticaloa recently.

Picture show the Board in a group photograph with the Bishop.

A. Gabriel

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## Vatican issues details...

officially proclaiming the Holy Year of Mercy.

Archbishop Fisichella explained that priests would be chosen on the basis of their ability to preach well - especially on the theme of mercy - and be good confessors, meaning they are able to express God's love and not make the confessional, in the words of Pope Francis, like a torture chamber.

The priests will also have to be patient and have an understanding of human fragility," the Archbishop said.

The Archbishop said that bishops can recommend priests from their own dioceses to serve as missionaries of mercy to the Pontifical Council - which is organising events - while priests can, themselves, submit a request to serve.

He said that when a priest volunteers, the council will confer with his bishop to ensure his suitability for this ministry and that he has approval to serve temporarily as a missionary of mercy.

He emphasised the importance of living the Holy Year as a true pilgrimage.

"We will ask pilgrims to make a journey on foot, preparing themselves to pass through the Holy Door in a spirit of faith and devotion," he said.

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## Canonization of...

Mother Teresa's intercession, the spokesman said, "The cause is in the process."

An Italian Cardinal heading one of the Vatican dicasteries who preferred to remain anonymous said that the canonization was brought up during a Monday meeting between Pope Francis and the heads of various

More than a dozen different jubilee celebrations will be scheduled in 2016, such as a jubilee for consecrated men and women on February 2 to close the Year of Consecrated Life; one for the Roman Curia on February 22; another for those devoted to the spirituality of Divine Mercy on April 3, Divine Mercy Sunday; along with separate jubilees for teenagers, deacons, priests, the sick and disabled, and catechists.

A jubilee for workers and volunteers of mercy will be celebrated on the feast day of Blessed Mother Teresa of Kolkata on September 5 and a jubilee for prisoners on November 6.

The Vatican is asking bishops and priests around the world to conduct similar symbolic gestures of communion with Pope Francis and his vision of reaching out to those on the margins said Archbishop Fisichella.

"As a concrete sign of the Pope's charitable love, effective measures will be taken to meet real needs in the world that will express mercy through tangible assistance," he said.

The Pontifical Council also distributed copies of the Holy Year prayer and logo.

The logo, designed by Jesuit Father Marko Rupnik, shows one of Jesus' eyes merged with a man's to show how "Christ sees with the eyes of Adam and Adam with the eyes of Christ," explained Archbishop Fisichella.

dicasteries in the Roman Curia.

According to the Cardinal, the Vatican's Prefect of the Congregation of the Causes for Saints, Cardinal Angelo Amato, suggested September 4, 2016 - which is being observed as a jubilee day for workers and volunteers of mercy - to the others as a possible canonization date, since it is close to September 5, Mother Teresa's feast day and the anniversary of her death.

## Palestinian nuns canonized by Pope become first Arabic-speaking Catholic Saints

VATICAN CITY - Two Palestinian nuns have been canonized as saints at the Vatican last Sunday amid signs of warming relations between the Catholic Church and the Palestinian Authority under Pope Francis.

The Pope conferred sainthood on Marie Alphonsine Ghattas and Mariam Baouardy Haddad, who were both born in Ottoman-ruled Palestine, in a Holy Mass at St Peter's Square attended by Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority leader and other leading Palestinian officials.

An estimated 2,000 pilgrims from the region, some waving Palestinian flags, were on hand for the canonisation of the first saints from the Holy Land since the early years of Christianity.

The ceremony followed a meeting between Pope Francis - who visited both Israel and the occupied

West Bank a year ago - and Mr Abbas at the Vatican last Saturday.

The ceremony comes days after the Vatican confirmed it had concluded a treaty which effectively recognises Palestinian statehood, prompting criticism from Israel, which says such recognition preempts essential peace negotiations.

The treaty - which has yet to be signed - states that the Vatican has switched its diplomatic relations from the Palestine Liberation Organisation to the State of Palestine, thus giving further impetus to growing international calls to recognise a Palestinian State.

While the sanctification of the two 19th century nuns is intended to be a purely religious, Mr. Abbas hailed the canonization it as a landmark in the Palestinian struggle for political recognition.

## Anniversary of Peralanda Christian Family Movement



The Peralanda Christian Family Movement commemorated their 15th Anniversary with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at St. Joseph's Church, Peralanda with the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Liyanage Patrick Perera, OMI officiating.

Rev. Fr. Shanthikumar Weliwita, Episcopal Vicar (Ja-ela region) who was instrumental in inaugurating the Movement, was also present.

Picture shows one of the Movement's initiating couples Dickson and Iranganie Antony joining in to cut the anniversary cake, with other members of the movement in the background.

Pic: Tekny Silva

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## First Asian to head...

days, was chosen instead of the other candidate, the Archbishop of Cyprus, Joseph Soueiph.

Tagle was born in Manila on June 21, 1957, was ordained a priest in 1982 and earned a licence in Sacred Theology in 1987 and a doctorate with summa cum laude in 1991, with a dissertation on Episcopal collegiality in the doctrine and practice of Paul VI, under the supervision of the theologian Joseph Komonchak. He was a member of the editorial committee of the Institute for Religious Sciences of Bologna, involved in drafting the history of the Second Vatican Council. In 2001 he was appointed Bishop of Imus and was appointed Archbishop of Manila by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011. In 2012 Joseph Ratzinger created him a Cardinal.

The Caritas Assembly elected Alexander Bodmann from Austria as the organisation's new Treasurer and confirmed Michel Roy as Secretary General.

CATHOLIC PRESS WEBSITE

www.colombocatholicpress.com

Email: cmmessenger2014@yahoo.com

cmessenger@slnet.lk / pradeepaya@slnet.lk

Telephone: 2695984, 2678106, 4899611 Fax: 2692586



## Church in the Modern World

# Seminar on how to serve Holy Mass with heart and skill

**HONG KONG (Mabuhay):** A liturgical seminar was organised by the chaplaincy for Filipinos recently to boost the confidence of those involved in various ministries during the Holy Mass.

The seminar, held at Holy Family Parish, Choi Hung, was joined by over 400 people from different ministries including altar servers, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, choir members and ushers. The morning session focussed on the principles and the theological meaning of different parts of the Holy Mass.

Father Alfredo Rollon, Chaplain to Filipinos, said it is important for members of various ministries to look around and know what is going on during a Mass, in order to facilitate better participation of the congregation.

"We should see ourselves as part of the celebration, and members of the body of the Church as a whole," he said.

He emphasised that the danger of focussing only

on one's ministry is that people may fail to coordinate with other ministries and make mistakes and one mistake will usually lead to another. Father Rollon encouraged those present to make a detailed outline of the Mass beforehand.

He said as a Eucharistic Celebration, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is "the heart and the summit of the Church's life," all people involved should work for perfection. He further explained that does not mean people should feel stressful, but they should do their best out of their own resources. The priest added that a Mass is for the faithful to join their own sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to that of Jesus Christ on the cross. "We are embraced by Christ in this way," he said.

Father Rollon also shared the difficulties of being fully involved in a Mass. "Some of us play an intellectual game

at Mass by finding fault with the way the Mass is celebrated," he said. He explained that the meaning of joining a Holy Mass is lost when people look at the Mass from the point of view of an outsider, like the way they see a drama or a movie instead of participating in it or encountering Jesus Christ. He believes the graces the Lord brings to us during a Mass can be missed if, for example, some people keep looking for amusing homilies from priests.

Another difficulty, according to Father Rollon, is that participants are preoccupied with their own issues. "Some of us block our hearts to our Lord when we show up at Mass filled with desires that have nothing to do with God. If that's the case, we are only nominally showing up, because our thoughts are someplace else," he said.

He noted that people cannot realise that the Communion with God is what their



heart really desires. Moreover, as God is present in the Holy Mass, they cannot tell God that "they have something more important to do right now."

Father Rollon went on to explain the meaning and the points to notice in different parts of the Holy Mass, such as the opening rite, the penitential rite, the Gloria, the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the

Eucharist.

Father Jay Flandez of the Filipino chaplaincy said the seminar is to let various communities have a common understanding about different parts of the Holy Mass so that they can have a more or less unified style while serving the Mass.

He also hopes that the spirituality of the Holy Mass servers can be strengthened.

## Europe needs Christians to speak with one voice, says Pope Francis

**VATICAN CITY (CNS):** Christians in Europe find themselves before new and decisive challenges to which we can respond effectively only by speaking with one voice," Pope Francis told members of a joint committee representing the Catholic Council of European Bishops' Conferences and the Ecumenical, Conference of European Churches. He cited the challenge of legislation which, in the name of a poorly interpreted principle of tolerance, ends up preventing citizens from freely expressing and practicing their religious convictions in a peaceful and legitimate way.

He said that a united voice is needed in helping the continent's nations and people respond to the

needs of the poor, particularly the dramatic and often tragic migration of thousands of people fleeing war, persecution and poverty.

Meeting the two organisations on May 7, the Pope said that their collaboration gives great hope for the overcoming of divisions among Christians, even while recognising that the path to full and visible communion among all believers in Christ is still long that although the ecumenical task is difficult, it is an integral part of the process of reconciliation and communion which the Lord asks of us and helps us accomplish so that it would be lived in charity and truth.

Pope Francis said the witness of Christianity is harmed when

the Churches and ecclesial communions of Europe present different visions on important anthropological and ethical questions. The only solution, he added, is common reflection in the light of the Sacred Scriptures and our shared tradition.

He said Christian communities have an obligation to collaborate to promote solidarity and acceptance. Europe's Christians are called to intercede with their prayers and to work actively to promote dialogue and peace in the conflicts underway.

"Only by looking together toward the Lord Jesus Christ, will Christians find common responses to the questions modern society is asking us," the Pope said.

## French town to remove statue of St. John Paul II

**VATICAN (CNS):** The administrative court of Rennes, France, told authorities in the town of Ploermel to remove its statue of St. John Paul II.

The court took issue with the public display of the statue under a cross in a public square claiming it violated the separation of Church and State, as well as the constitutional principle of *laïcité*— non interference of government in religious matters and of religious non-involvement in government affairs, according to a *Vatican Radio* report recently.

The 8.8 metre tall bronze statue depicts St. John Paul praying under an arch that supports a cross. The late Pope's famous words from his papal inauguration in 1978, "Do not be afraid," are inscribed on it.

Ploermel Mayor, Patrick Le Diffon, said he would appeal the court order because it wasn't for the man of the Church, but for the man of the state that the monument was dedicated in a public square.

When the statue was unveiled in 2006, the Mayor at the time, Paul Anselin, said that St. John Paul was a giant of the 20th century who participated in the fall of the Iron Curtain.

## UN condemns Execution of eight convicts

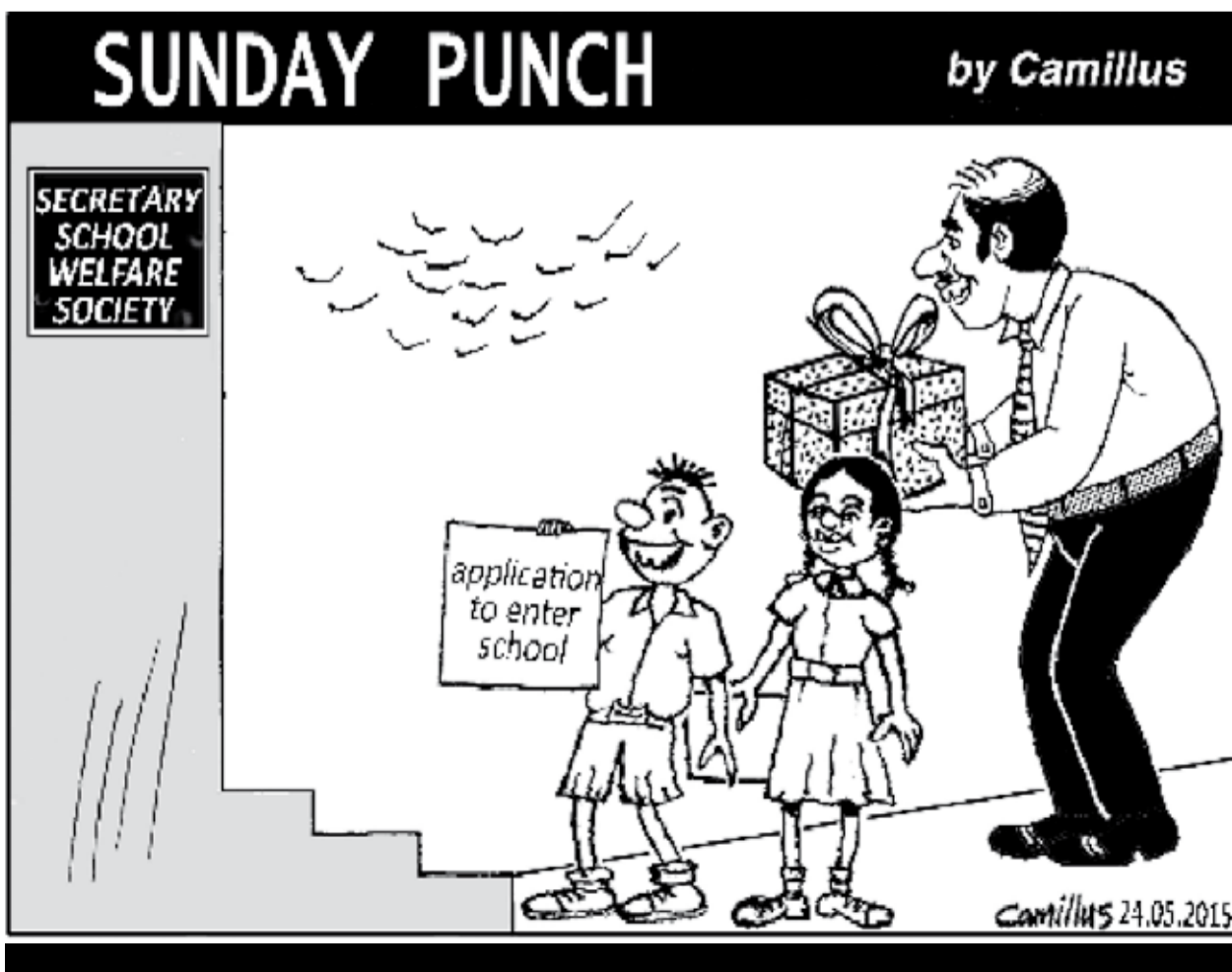
**JAKARTA (AsiaNews):** While people in the Philippines celebrated with street parties and prayer vigils after the Indonesian government granted temporary reprieve to spare the life of Mary Jane Veloso, the execution of eight other convicts on April 29 was slammed by the United Nations and the governments concerned.

In the early hours of the night, the eight convicted reportedly faced the gallows singing in unison "Amazing Grace." They refused to be blindfolded and sang until the firing squad opened fire.

Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, expressed deep regret over the executions.

In an official statement, Ban Ki-moon said that there is no place in the 21st century for the death penalty and made an urgent appeal to Indonesia to spare the other prisoners on death row.

In response, Jakarta defended its line of zero tolerance against drug trafficking, and insisted that the shootings are part of this policy.



SINCE FEBRUARY 1869

# MESSENGER

THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA

EDITORIAL  
Email: cmessenger2014@yahoo.com  
Telephone: 011 2695984

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## Prosperity Gospel cannot bring a Pentecost

We celebrated last Sunday the Feast of the Ascension – the epic point of the three-dimensional climax of the mission of Jesus.

The Bible tells us He was raised on the Cross, He was raised from the dead and then raised to heaven to sit at the right hand of God and be the King of kings and Lord of Lords. With Jesus in Him and through Him we also are called to be children of God, an eternal identity, and heirs of the kingdom, an eternal inheritance unlike our worldly identities or inheritances that end in the grave.

In the afterglow of that important event, we celebrate on Sunday May 24 the Feast of the Pentecost – the birthday of the Church and since we all are part of the Church it is also our eternal birthday.

Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, written by Evangelist Luke, who is identified by Paul as the 'Beloved Physician' Colossians 4:14, is known as the Pentecost Chapter. There are two dimensions of Pentecost and both are important but unfortunately there appears to be a trend today to highlight the first dimension and sideline the second.

Before going to be with God as the king of everyone and all things, Jesus had promised the still sad and fearful apostles that when He sends them the Holy Spirit, they will receive power (Acts 1:8). As promised, we see the manifestation of this power in Acts 2.

The once-cowardly Peter speaks out boldly proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah and working great miracles and signs. With his first sermon some 3000 people were converted, with people of different races and languages understanding His message in their own language.

In Acts 2: 42-45, there is another dimension of Pentecost. The passage says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."

In Acts 3, 4, 5 and other chapters, we see Peter and the other disciples working great wonders and signs. In Acts 3 we read of Peter and John going to the Temple when a poor crippled man at the gate asks them for a few coins. Peter tells him, "Silver and gold I have none but in the name of Jesus Christ get up and walk." The crippled man not only walks but also starts dancing near the table, posing a major problem for the religious leaders who had demanded a crucifixion of Jesus.

We are told that even when Peter's shadow fell on people they were healed. On this Pentecost day we need to reflect on why such wonders and signs are not happening as regularly and in the spectacular manner they did in the Early Church. Is it because we are overplaying the first dimension of Pentecost while we do not have the courage or faith to obey the commands of Jesus, "If you want to be my disciple, deny yourself, take up your cross and come follow me."

Unfortunately, in the West and even in Third World countries like Sri Lanka, the Prosperity Gospel appears to be more attractive than the real Gospel. Jesus left everything behind to do the will of the Father. The early disciples did the same thing but in this modern era we delude ourselves into thinking we could worship both God and money.

There appears to be a trend among some charismatic group members, caught up in some euphoria or emotional high point to believe they are super spiritual. This is counter-productive for us and for others. But we all need to remember what the Lord did in the Holy Eucharist which is now our highest act of worship. He told the Father, "Take me, bless me, break me and give me to others." Similarly, after we receive Holy Communion at Mass we also need to say, "Lord take me, bless me, break me and give me to others." It is more blessed to give than to receive. If we have behaved like grabbers, receiving, receiving and receiving, then Pentecost is a time for repentance and a turnaround whereby instead of grabbing we begin to give and give, to die to ourselves, take up our cross and follow the Lord.

# Seeking a soul-mate in the struggle against climate change



UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, addressing the April 28 Vatican summit on the moral dimensions of climate change and its impact on the poor. At left is Italy's President, Sergio Mattarella.

VATICAN (CNS): Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) and some climate scientists are banking on Pope Francis to be a unifying moral force to get the world on board in the fight against global warming.

Mr. Ban spoke at the Vatican on April 28 during an international gathering on the moral dimensions of climate change and sustainable development sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Religions for Peace.

He told reporters, "The reason I'm coming to the Pope" is that "I need the moral support and spiritual support of religious leaders."

While previous popes have spoken strongly against harming the earth and its inhabitants, one world-renowned atmospheric scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan, said Pope Francis will "save the day."

He noted that Pope Benedict XVI, who has been lauded as the 'Green Pope' for his attention to taking care of creation, "made some amazingly helpful statements on the environment" during his eight-year pontificate.

However, Ramanathan, who in the 1970s helped discover that pollutants and other gases, in addition to carbon dioxide, were contributing to the greenhouse effect, said that Pope Francis would be "the saviour on the environment."

In his opinion this Pope "has transcended Catholic religion and he has transcended Christianity. People of different followings, different nations admire this Pope, they listen to his words so he has a global reach."

Mr. Ban has been hoping to tap into that global reach with his invitation to Pope Francis to address the UN General Assembly in New York on September 25 and by calling on religious leaders to work with governments and science on climate change.

The UN Secretary General along with experts promoting a united global response to global warming believe policies, regulations, new technologies and cost incentives are not going to be enough to get industrialised nations to radically reduce their carbon footprint.

Ramanathan, who attended the Vatican gathering as a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, said, "We have to change our attitude toward each other and our attitude toward nature. So it has gone beyond the grasp of science and beyond the grasp of leaders of nations. It is now in the hands of religious leaders."

The Secretary General also pointed out that change will depend on wealthy nations and communities shifting away from an economy based on overconsumption and exclusion.

"To transform our economies, however, we must first transform our thinking and our values," he said.

The message is one that the Catholic

Church has been proclaiming for decades.

Pope Francis' stance, like that of his predecessors, has always been a moral one. The Church does not propose or endorse specific policies or programmes, but it lays out the Gospel vision to guide people and policy makers so they will respond to problems more ethically.

In fact, the Pope's much anticipated encyclical on the environment will not be a white paper about capping carbon emissions, but a pastoral plea to cap greed and short-term gains at the expense of the planet and other people.

However the Pope's outspoken criticism of "an economy that kills" and the "negligence and inaction" in response to climate change has critics worried that he is straying beyond his spiritual role.

Christopher Monckton, British political adviser who was with the delegation of the Chicago-based Heartland Institute to the climate summit said, "It is not the business of the Church to stray from faith and morals" and wander into "the playground" of policy.

The institute, which advocates free-market policies, insisted that Pope Francis should not be "lending his moral authority to the politicized" and what they consider unscientific, agenda of the United Nations. However, Peter Cardinal Turkson, who helped draw up the first draft of the Pope's encyclical, said during the summit that the Church was not there to confirm or deny what science is saying about climate change.

"But bishops on the Pacific islands tell us "how much of the land is now under sea water. Is that not a concern?" asked the Cardinal, who is head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

"We cannot confirm the data being presented by some of the world's top scientists," he said, "but we can say how human life is supported (or not) by policies based on science."

The Cardinal said that as clergy, "We went to the seminary to save souls, but it is also important that we look at the garden where these souls live and what should be done to care, cultivate and pass it on to future generations."

Other members of the Heartland delegation objected to the Vatican cooperating with organizations and individuals who promote population control in ways that clearly violate Church teaching.

Cardinal Turkson responded by saying "the Second Vatican Council invited us to a new way to minister to the world, as imperfect and sinful as it may be, by finding common ground and working with others whenever possible to serve humanity."

Rather than religion losing its soul by opening its doors to global policymakers and experts, the UN Secretary General's call for religious leaders to remind people of their sacred duty to care for human dignity and nature indicates that they are looking for a soul mate in religion.

# Christian Unity: Anglican, Roman Catholic Relations

Rev. Fr. Vimal Tirimanna, CSsR

Member, Catholic delegation of ARCIC-III

The 'Ordo' (or "the guideline book for the liturgical year") annually indicates eight days in the month of January as "the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity." This year's 'Ordo' too, thus, has highlighted in bold letters 17th to 24th January as the 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.' Usually, this week is kept from 18th to 25th January, or an octave closer to that set of dates. The reasons for this specific set of dates is that the ancient feast of the 'Chair of St. Peter' was on 18th January while even today the feast of the 'Conversion of St. Paul' falls on 25th January. Since both St. Peter and Paul are considered the two leading pillars of Christianity, these dates have their symbolic value for Christian unity.

This custom of assigning a week of prayer for the unity of all those who believe in Jesus Christ was mooted first by Fr. Paul Wattson, the co-founder of the Graymoor Franciscan Friars and it was first celebrated in 1908. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was officially accepted in the Catholic Church by Pope Pius X in 1909. His immediate successor Pope Benedict XV encouraged its observance throughout the Roman Catholic Church in 1916 and successive Popes to date have actively encouraged it. In spite of such official papal encouragement, unfortunately, this Week of Prayer is rarely observed seriously in our Catholic churches, especially in the local level, i.e., in our parishes and dioceses all over the world. Neither does it feature prominently in the formation programs of clergy, religious or laity.

## What is Christian Unity?

Ever since the Early Christian communities, there have been various divisions of the one Christian fold established by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Of course, most of those divisions were due to various heresies and schisms, and also at times, due to personal misunderstandings of those who led the respective Churches. In the course of history, some of the heretical and schismatic groups have disappeared with time, but some others who separated from the Catholic Church have survived the passage of time, with their own beliefs and ways of follow-

ing the Gospels.

When the first serious Christian division took place between the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Latin) Churches, it was due to what is popularly known as "the Great Schism" of 1054, over what is known in theological circles as "the filioque issue". The next serious rupture within the Latin Church was in the 16th century, with the Protestant Revolution. Historical circumstances led to further divisions within those separated Christian groups themselves. Some of these separated brethren not only have huge numbers of followers all over the world, but they also have conserved some of the fundamental ecclesial elements of the Early Christian Church. The most fundamental ecclesial element common to most of these groups is the baptism that is signified through the pouring of water in the name of the Holy Trinity. Besides, they all follow the same four Gospels that render the Words and Deeds of Jesus Christ and consider Him as the Son of God who became human, who suffered, died and rose again on the third day. They also believe in the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the body and the final coming of Jesus to judge the living and the dead. Such Christian groups are usually called by the popular name "the mainline Churches" in contrast to the evangelical and fundamentalist Christian sects. The Greek Orthodox Church, the Anglican Communion of Churches, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church, the Lutheran Church, the Methodist Church,.....etc., are considered such "mainline Churches," and their baptism is considered valid by the Catholic Church. But, some important theological and doctrinal differences keep even these "mainline Churches" separated from one another. Writing in 1994 about the differences of the different Christian Churches, Timothy G. McCarthy had this to say:

The Christian churches hardly honour one another. They are deeply divided over identity, mission, authority, theology, interreligious dialogue, the role of women, moral issues, and other issues.

Unfortunately, such divisions among the



**"While Popes of the 20th century prior to the Vatican II, such as Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI and Pius XII gave their fullest approval to promote Ecumenism, it was Pope John XXIII who created the Secretariat for Christian Unity in the Vatican in June 1960"**

mainline Churches and further divisions within themselves, have created a scandalous impression to the rest of the world; in fact, it is a counter-witness to what Jesus prayed in His prayer at the Last Supper: "Father, I pray that they may be one.....so that the world may believe that you sent me" [Jn 17:21-22]. Moreover, such divisions among Christians tend to portray as unconvincing the one message of Jesus Christ given to the world through His apostles.

That is why since the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, there have arisen various movements within the mainline Churches (including the Roman Catholic Church) that call for Christian unity, the main expected result of which is what is known as "Ecumenism.". In popular parlance, 'Ecumenism' would mean "the quest by Christians for full visible unity of all followers of Jesus Christ." According to the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), it means "the holy task of reconciling all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ" (*Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR), No:24). One needs to note here that according to the Vatican II Fathers, this is not an ordinary task, but a "holy" task. In other words, it has to be at the top of the agenda of every Catholic. That is to say, even in ordinary, local levels, Catholics are invited to promote Christian unity, in emulating their leaders, both past and present. According to the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, in fact, there are certain areas in

lived reality in which the universal magisterium has left a lot of room for their local counterparts (especially the diocesan bishops and the local Episcopal Conferences) to make their own autonomous decisions with regard to ecumenical affairs.

While Popes of the 20th century prior to the Vatican II, such as Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI, and Pius XII gave their fullest approval to promote Ecumenism, it was Pope John XXIII who created the Secretariat for Christian Unity in the Vatican in June 1960 (which later evolved into what is known today as the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity). The main task assigned to this office at that time by the same Pope was to invite leaders of mainline Christian Churches as official observers to the Second Vatican Council and promoting inter-church dialogues. Thus, Vatican II, with the participation of these Christian leaders as observers became literally (in the above sense) an "Ecumenical" Council. In fact, Ecumenism, acknowledged as one of "the signs of the times" (UR, No:4), was one of the main purposes of the very convoking of the Vatican II (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No:1). The Council gave a great boost to such Ecumenism within the Catholic Church when it solemnly declared that "the churches of the East, as much as those of the West, fully enjoy the right, and are duty bound, to govern themselves" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (OE), No:5; Cfr., UR, No:16). The Council Fathers also affirmed

the validity of the Eastern and Western traditions of Christianity (OE, No:3), and the importance of preserving the spiritual heritage of the East (Cfr., UR, Nos:14-15).

In 1964, from 5th to 6th January, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople (Orthodox Church) created history when they met in Jerusalem in a common pilgrimage, praying together that "this meeting may be the sign and prelude of things to come for the glory of God and the illumination of his faithful people". On 7th December 1965, the day before the conclusion of Vatican II, these two leaders created history again when they mutually lifted the excommunications of 1054, pronounced by their respective predecessors against each other. This was the initiation of great "revolutions" in the sphere of Ecumenism, and to-date, the successive post-Vatican II Popes, namely, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis, have done everything possible and necessary for the promotion of Christian Unity among all the mainline Christian Churches. They have not only officially taught the importance of Ecumenism, but also through their prophetic gestures have manifested the importance of the promotion of such Unity as an essential part of Jesus' message to the world.

## Anglican, Roman Catholic Relations

On 26th March 1966, Pope Paul VI met Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury (of the Anglican Communion), and both announced their intention "to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a series of dialogues that, founded on the gospels and the ancient common tradition,

may lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed." In 1968, a document called the "Malta Report" issued by these two mainline Churches noted that there were large areas of agreement between the two Churches and three areas of disagreement, namely, the Eucharist, the ministry of Ordination, and the authority in the Church (the role of Papacy). To further study these areas of disagreement, both Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey appointed the first Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission popularly known as "ARCIC-I," in 1970. It consisted of bishops and theologians of both the Churches, and issued quite a few important documents for reflection in the respective Churches. Twelve years later, ARCIC-I published its "Final Report." In it, the bishops and theologians (of ARCIC-I) pointed out that they had reached "substantial agreement" on major doctrinal issues concerning the three major areas of disagreement between the two Churches: the Eucharist, Ordination and Authority. But the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in Rome while praising ARCIC-I's basic achievements also pointed out that on some issues of the Report they had serious reservations. In order to achieve further progress and clarifications on the issues concerned, Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie of Canterbury appointed ARCIC-II, in 1982. This Commission issued some of the most-celebrated theological documents, such as "Salvation and the Church" (1986), "Church as Communion" (1990), "Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church" (1993), "The Gift of Authority: Authority III" (1999) and "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ" (2004).

(To be Contd. next week)

# Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help



## Year of the Consecrated Life - 2015

Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Sri Lanka (CMRS)

### Religious Congregations in Sri Lanka 15



#### Our Spirituality:

It is an on-going God consciousness, lived out like Mother Mary, through a simple way of life with fortitude, trusting in Divine Providence, responding relevantly to the signs of the times with compassionate love.

In keeping with our Charism and being guided by our Spirituality, Perpetual Help Sisters are now engaged in various ministries here in Sri Lanka, in Cyprus and Israel.

In Sri Lanka today, we are in 15 communities in four Dioceses. Our Novitiate is in Periyamulla and the Candidacy and Pre-Novitiate in Kochchikade, Negombo.

#### The following are some of the present activities in Sri Lanka

- Education of the children with special needs
- After care of the past pupils of the School at Ragama
- Care of the aged and the sick, nursing
- Catechetical and Pastoral work
- Pre-School, Montessori education
- Formal education
- Youth apostolate
- Personal and family counseling
- Self-help projects – Sewing Centre run by the Hearing Impaired adults
- Crèche
- Home for needy girls
- Availability in communities of presence, open to needy people; intercessory prayer

#### Missionary Sisters in Cyprus and Israel

- Priority is to look after the spiritual needs of the Sri Lankan migrants
- Liturgy is planned by the Liturgy committees
- Gatherings, group meetings, evening prayer groups in their own apartments, Catechism
- Provide shelter for girls who have problems with their jobs or any other emergencies
- Help them find jobs or in their needs
- Provide legal assistance free of charge through volunteer Lawyers
- Personal guidance through counseling
- Above all **MINISTRY OF PRESENCE.**

**Our inspiration** also comes from the icon of our Mother of Perpetual Help, whose patronage we have experienced in abundance. This miraculous icon to be found in Rome today, and so very popular throughout the world, is truly a meditation or prayer in itself. Mother Mary is the source of courage and strength to her Son Jesus as He foresees His Passion and death... shown by the instruments carried by angels Gabriel and Michael. Every detail of the icon is so meaningful. It is to this Mother, who is ever ready to help us, that we can go in our own times of trial and trouble. It is before this Mother that we intercede for all those who come to us especially through our new Ministry of Intercessory Prayer. She offers to us Jesus her Son as our Saviour and wishes we bring this message to others. In every community we have a daily prayer to this our Mother, make the Novena on Wednesdays and celebrate her feast on June 27th. In our own discipleship we are aware that this Mother can lead us best of all to her Son, so that we can be true missionaries spreading the Gospel of Joy.

#### Perpetual Help Convent

Periyamulla  
Negombo.  
031-2238343  
www.perpetualhelp.org

The Congregation of Perpetual Help Sisters was founded by Miss Johanna Francisca Maximiliana Amerlinck, born on the 23rd October 1733, in the Town of Courtrai in Belgium. Though she came from a noble, wealthy family, abandoned everything in the service of the poor. This was possible for her as she trusted Mother Mary, perpetually helping her in all her needs.

**FORTITER ET EFFICACITER – FORTITUDE AND EFFICACY** being her motto and trusting in Divine Providence, she stepped out of her comfort zone to start the first “House of Charity” in 1768.

Being aware of and listening to the signs of the times, she was sensitive to the movement of the Spirit, which led her to reach out to the poor, especially to women and children, joyfully giving herself in loving service to them.

Then came the old ladies of the town, who had no one to care for them – them she housed and looked after. The girls who were exposed to dangers found protection and security in boarding houses. They too underwent a process of education, learning to sew, to make lace and they were also taught to save their earnings to be able to help their families when in need. Her followers were twelve in number and so banded themselves to form the nucleus of a Congregation. In 1810, the flame of her life, ebbed away only to follow across the seas.

The first missionary Sisters from the Mother House in Courtrai came over to Ceylon in 1929, at the request of the, then Archbishop of Colombo, Mgr. Coudert, OMI to attend on the Tuberculosis patients in Ragama Chest Hospital.

In 1935, these Sisters extended their services to persons with special needs (hearing impaired and visually impaired – Deaf & Blind) in a school they began in Ragama.

In 1955 Novitiate was started in Periyamulla, Negombo giving an opportunity to local girls to follow in the foot-steps of Mother Amerlinck.

June 06th, 1982 was a red letter day as the Sisters became a Local Diocesan Congregation under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Colombo, Nicholas Marcus Fernando with our own local Superior General.

The Generalate is now in Periyamulla. A new and difficult step began, where we drafted our own Constitution drawn up with the help of experts and the consultation of the Sisters. A specific feature of this Constitution is its attempt to “localize Religious Life” adapted to our own culture, with emphasis on the traditional and other faith values of our people. At our seventh General Chapter in 2013, we re-formulated our Charism and Spirituality, as our guiding flame and star for the future into new unknown horizons.

#### Our Charism:

Trusting in Divine Providence, living out the compassionate love of God in simplicity and fortitude.

## Catechism for the Youth

# YOUCAT

Compiled by  
Fr. Indra Ratnasiri Fernando,



#### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT:

Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.

For the people of Israel, the Sabbath was the great sign of God, the Creator. The seventh day of the creation is remembered on Sabbath, “rested, and was refreshed” (Ex. 31:17). Thus, it calls the second great commemoration; the liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The Sabbath is a feast of human freedom. We find in the sacred scriptures that even Jesus observed the Sabbath, but deals with it in liberal ways; “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”.

The celebration of the Sabbath is held on Sunday because Jesus Christ rose from the dead on a Sunday; the Lord's Day.

Hence, the Sunday for Christians is enveloped with three essentials aspects:

1. The creation of the World.
2. Eighth day of the creation... the world was made new in Christ.
3. Man's eternal rest in God.

#### Chapter two

#### THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT:

Honour your father and your mother.

At first, our physical parents are given the first place, at the same time, those whom we owe our life, our well-being, our security and our faith are also honourably mentioned. All of them are God-given grace-filled persons who love us. A man and a woman who have entered into the married life are specially invited to be partakers of God's creation.

Thus, “family is the primordial image of communion, the unique school of the living in relationships. Family is also the domestic church.” Yet, it is fitting to mention that man's most important relationship is the one he has with God; this has priority over all human relationships, even family relationships.

#### THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT:

You shall not kill.

Taking one's own life is a mortal sin. No human being is allowed at all to do so. God alone is Lord over life and death. Murder is forbidden, even the abortion from the moment of conception and euthanasia of the sick and even the dying are forbidden. God-given human life is God's own property, thus, it is sacred from the first moment of its existence and not under the control of any human being (Jer. 1:5). Strictly speaking, even embryos are human beings, because human life begins with the fusion of a sperm cell and an egg.

The Commandment applies to both physical and spiritual integrity, thus, it thoroughly advises us not to impose violence against one's own body. Hence, anyone who participates in an abortion, forces a woman to undergo an abortion, advises her to do so, is automatically excommunicated.

“God creates out of nothing. Wonderful, you say. Yes to be sure, but he does what is still more wonderful. He makes saints out of sinners”

- Sören Kierkegaard



by: Kishani S. Fernando

The 'Kithu Dana Pubuduwa' is not a society or an organization - it is a journey with the Lord. "No human founder, no special agent or aid from a foreign country, no precise date." This is how the initiator of the Kithu Dana Pubuduwa, Fr. Siri Oscar Abayaratne describes the beginning of the Pubuduwa that is challenging and changing the lives of thousands of people specially those enslaved in poverty. It was "A sovereign act of God sans human initiative, planning or programming". "It just happened!".

Seven years ago I was privileged to meet Fr. Oscar in his mud hut or Kuti at the Shri Prasansaramaya the mother house of the 'Kithu Dana Pubuduwa.' It was the first time

I met him and he greeted me with a wide smile - a smile that made me wonder whether we had met before.

A few days ago I spoke to Ranjana Kaviratne the present lay leader of the National Prophetic Assembly of the Kithu Dana Pubuduwa. She says that the Kithu Dana Pubuduwa is the first Catholic Revival Movement in Asia, followed by India and the Philippines. "God



Pubuduwa at a public rally calling for the 19th Amendment.



The Congregation holding lighted candles as the Bishops and Priests pray for a refilling of the Holy Spirit.

## Pilgrimage to Goa (Part IV)

### Morning train to Goa

From Mangalore we took the morning train to Goa. It took us about 8 hours to reach Goa. We passed many railway stations, green paddy fields, wide rivers and mountains. The train also went through several long tunnels. In one railway station we saw a highly dressed up little girl who looked like a child bride. On the train we met India's famous eunuchs or hijras. There was also a man possessed by an evil spirit.



# "Lord if we can only have a touch of your love"

chose this small island with a mere 6% Catholic population and our Swami-thatha to be the first Charismatic leader," she says.

Mrs Kaviratne, a shipping company director who let go of her lucrative job to make herself available for God's work, says the 'Kithu Dana Pubuduwa' is unique when compared to other Charismatic Renewal Movements in the world. In addition to bringing people to a close and deep personal relationship with the Lord, the Pubuduwa seeks to carry the love of Jesus to the country by getting actively involved in social justice issues. It seeks to be a prophetic voice. It seeks unity in diversity with other religions of our country and it seeks to show solidarity by respecting their customs and traditions. The foremost goal in the Pubuduwa mission is spiritual growth, meaning a growth in the personal rela-



Rev. Fr. Siri Oscar Abayaratne

Mrs. Kaviratne says "Swami-thatha is a great inspiration to all in the Pubuduwa, He lives the Word he preaches and preaches the Word he lives. His focus is to unite with the poor, the down-trodden, widowed, and other suffering people of our country." She recalls a recent discussion she had with him, when Swamy-thatha had asked her: What is the percentage of the people in this country that have a bed to sleep on? Then why am I sleeping on a bed? Then thoughtfully answering his own question he had said "But I cannot get up from the floor now, my hands and legs are not strong. So I am told by those who look after me to sleep on a bed".

tionship with the Lord. And a deep desire to do God's will in all things. The Pubuduwa encourages people to live a simple life of *Alpekshathavaya*, as Pope Francis and President Maithripala Sirisena are doing today. The sudu mudu or simple weddings, simple burials, simple clothing and simple meals are some of the ways promoted and practiced. The teaching and meanings behind these concepts are given at the Pubuduwa meetings but no one is forced to follow these options.

It is also Swami-thatha's intention, that the Kithu Dana Pubuduwa should get involved not in party politics but in politics which means 'desha palanaya' - good governance, accountability, transparency and the Rule of Law. To quote Fr. Oscar himself: "There is however, a difference between religion and politics. It must be stated quite categorically that the Church is not a political party. It has no political policy or a political blue-print. It presents no political manifesto, but it has to stand for what is right and oppose what is wrong if a particular situation so demands, it has to challenge



Fr. Oscar joining Buddhist monks in a march for social justice

injustice, it has to condemn even though such a challenge to political power may bring the deprivation of cherished privileges, or even persecution" - New Man November 1994.

Fr. Oscar has written many articles on good governance and social issues to the media. He has courageously supported the truth. In particular he has openly challenged the notorious 18th amendment which gave absolute power to the Executive President. Following in his footsteps the Kithu Dana Pubuduwa met both the candidates of the Presidential election before the election and handed over a written document stating the urgent need of abolishing the 18th Amendment and implementing the 19th Amendment to substantially reduce the powers of the Executive Presidency. At the same time the Pubuduwa also took part in non stop prayer campaigns for a fair and peaceful election.

Presently Fr. Oscar at 83, lives a quiet life given to prayer and meditation in his kuti. Sometimes he takes part in the less tedious activities of the Movement. This year too he has given the theme for the Pentecost Rally which will take place on Saturday night. The theme this year is "Lord if we can only have a touch of your love".

### Goa at last

When we reached Goa railway station we were taken to the Pilar Seminary where we were to put up for the rest of our stay in India. Rooms were allotted and we were given time to take a shower and clean up.

That evening we went to the Church of Our Lady of Hope in Candolim, where Rev. Fr. Robin Rodrigues the author of '207 stories of St. Joseph Vaz', was the Parish Priest. This is a very old church originally built in 1560 but rebuilt and remodeled in 1661. Inside the church was very beautiful. The Altarpiece behind the altar table was painted in gold. The main statue in the middle of the altarpiece was of Our Lady of Hope. The statue showed mother Mary holding baby Jesus with one hand and the other hand resting on an anchor. There were also huge murals made up with blue and white porcelain tiles showing Bible scenes.

We were warmly welcomed by the Priests and the Parishioners. Then we had a Mass. During the Mass Uncle Raymond Fernando presented a statue of St. Joseph Vaz (see picture). He had cut it himself out of Mahogany in his work shop in Moratuwa. He carried it all the way to India in a wooden box specially made for it.

At the end of the Mass we Sri Lankans sang the hymn dedicated to St. Joseph Vaz in Sinhala and the Goans sang their hymn in Konkani. After Mass we were invited to a delicious dinner and party.

Devmini Fernando. Grade 6

# Salvation history presented in Cantonese Opera

HONG KONG (SE): A Chinese Opera presenting the history of salvation was staged by *Bonfire*, a group of lay-people, at the Hong Koag Academy for Performing Arts from April 17-19. The work was a blend of Cantonese Opera, drama and modern stage technology.

Before the first show on April 17, John Cardinal Tong Hon, the Bishop of Hong Kong, commended *Bonfire* for gathering a group of devoted, faithful professional artistes who used their talents to present the Christian message of God's love and the history of salvation through the medium of Cantonese Opera. He encouraged them to continue to give witness to the work of Jesus Christ anytime and by any means.

The Cardinal also expressed his hope that *Bonfire* would be able to perform the opera overseas.

Lucia Yeung Yi-

lai, the show's producer, explained that it took the team six years to prepare for the Opera and that over 100 actors were involved. The new technology of video mapping was also utilised for special effects on stage.

Yeung said that gate receipts of around \$330,000 from the first show were donated to the Salt and Light Preservation Centre for the conservation of Yim Tin Tsai village in Sai Kung. She expressed confidence that the island can act as an oasis amid the hustle and bustle of the city. A ceremony was held in which a cheque was presented to a representative of the centre.

Father Matthew Chan Hung-kee, the spiritual advisor of the team, explained that the Opera conveys the culture of Christianity with the dramatic effect of Cantonese operas.

He believes that the performance gives ac-



tors and members of the production team a fresh and new way to deepen people's faith.

Chan Kam-wing, the script-writer and lyricist, said the Opera shows that Jesus belongs

to the whole world and that traditional Lingnan arts can embrace different elements and enrich the power of the performance.

Father Juan Arcos Soto, a first-timer at

a Cantonese opera, said it could help non-believers understand the meaning of salvation. He expressed his appreciation of the Chinese elements in the presentation of the story.

Sister Carmela

Pamei said she was impressed by the stage sets, which were created with computer graphic effects and she noted that the production made good use of advanced technology.

## PENTECOST SUNDAY: GOSPEL MEDITATION (Jn. 20:19 - 23) - Year B

Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost. The disciples are portrayed in the Gospel story hiding behind closed doors for fear of the 'Jews'. We begin our meditation. I am there too, among them. Now, in the Johannine Gospel, the 'Jews' are the implacable enemies of Jesus. The image of the disciples hiding behind closed doors, evokes the scenario of the enemy prowling the streets like a pack of bloodhounds, sniffing out the followers of Jesus. Then the Lord appears among us and says, 'Peace to you'. I am happy to see the Lord again. After all, did he not say 'I call you friends'. So, I talk brashly - in a rude, and patronizing way, as if I know better, "Lord, I believe that you are risen and alive. But other than that, nothing seems to have changed."

We are still hiding behind closed doors, for fear of the Jews. Worse still, being a foreigner, I have no place to hide. I know of no place to run. Lord, please do not get me wrong. You are indeed risen, but it has not dispelled my fears or solved my immediate problems'. Jesus looks at me, and then turns and shows everyone his hands and his side. He says, "Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you". Whatever be my shortcomings, I believe in the word of Jesus. So, I ask myself "What does the Lord mean by this"? On earlier occasions too, he had asked us to be of good cheer and glad of heart. But how can we, when the enemy till lurks outside! As I thus ponder, I remember, how after the footwashing - Jesus said, "let not your hearts be troubled, trust in God and trust in me" (Jn. 14:1). On two other occasions too, after the footwashing, he promised us peace: first he urged us not to be troubled of heart (Jn. 14:27), then he claimed he has conquered the world (Jn. 16:33). Yet I feel frustrated because despite all his assurances the ground situation has not changed. I am a simple person and I need simple answers.

Now the Lord turns to me and says, 'Do you know why I showed you my hands and feet? Not only



to prove that it is truly me, but also to show you that though crucified, I am still able to overcome limitations that human circumstances impose. Crucified I was, but am I not here with you? Were not the doors shut, but has that kept me away from you"? I choke back tears of remorse. The Lord says, "I know you love me. Hence, so to speak, 'you expect the world from me'. Fear not. I have conquered the world. It lays at my feet. But now I have something very important to say to you. For Israel of old, Pentecost - celebration of the harvest - had become the celebration marking the conclusion of the Covenant on Mt Sinai. In wind

and fire, God made his presence known to the people and then gave them the gift of the Ten Commandments. Thus the work of liberation, begun with the Exodus from Egypt, was thus brought to fulfillment. For human freedom is always a shared freedom - an ordered harmony of freedom that reveals to each person his or her limits. In this way the gift of the Law on Mt. Sinai became the foundation of true liberty. Israel fully became a people, through the Covenant with God on Mt Sinai.

The wind and fire, which enveloped you as you were gathered in the Upper Room, becomes a further development of the event of Mt. Sinai and gives it new fullness. Now your message will be understood by everyone. Overcoming the "breach" begun in Babel - the confusion of hearts, putting us one against the other - the Spirit opens borders. The People of God who were on Mt Sinai, now becomes enlarged to include all nations. The new People of God is my Church, and it derives from all peoples. The Church is catholic from her beginning. This is her deepest essence. Do not leave my Church which I have dedicated to my mother (CCC - art. 9, para. 6, no. 963). I am the head of my body, the Church (Col. 1:18). Abide in my body, abide in my Church".

Rev. Fr. Nilindra Gunasekera, sss

## 'Queen of the May'



The beautiful month of May  
When Nature's bounty abounds  
Flowers of varying hues  
Spread their fragrance around  
Orange-tipped white Sepalika  
Jasmine, Vathu Sudu  
Cascading creamy Ehela  
Velvety Araliya blooms.

A month dedicated to a Beautiful Lady  
The Virgin Mother of God  
Our Mediatrix who pleads for us  
Before the throne of God  
Then gather blossoms sweet and fragrant  
To place before her shrine  
Entwine wreaths and garlands  
To honour our Mother Divine

Garlands of tri-coloured roses  
Those of the Rosary  
The crimson the blood-red roses  
Of the Sorrowful Mysteries  
The white, shroud like the Glorious  
Reminiscent of triumph over death  
The yellow resplendent the Joyful  
Like the star over Bethlehem's shed.

Jeannette Cabraal



# Saint Matthew

**T**wo evangelists introduce Matthew with the name "Levi." Both names, Matthew and Levi belong to the tribe of Judea. Matthew received the name Levi long before Our Lord chose him as an apostle. It can be said that he had added the name Matthew later. He would have done so in order to show that he had left his job as tax collector and is now a "New Man." St. Mark says that Matthew is a son of Alpheus. But when the Gospel mentions other sons of Alpheus as James (Junior), Jude, Simeon, Joseph there is no mention of Matthew or Levi as a son of Alpheus. Thereafter Matthew cannot however be recognised as a son of Alpheus. By birth Matthew was a Galilean; and by profession he was a publican, meaning a tax collector for the Romans.

## Tax Collectors

The Jews regarded the tax-collectors as very base and despicable kind of people. They thought these tax collectors were the enemies of the grace of natural freedom given to them by God. They also considered them vile and infamous since they were constantly having transactions and conversations with the so called heretics. They also thought these tax collectors were conspiring with the Romans to make their people slaves. Therefore the Jews completely despised these tax collectors. The Jews treat the houses and properties, the money and the belongings of these tax collectors as the treasures of public enemies. They expelled them from their religious rites and rituals, divine adorations and from their synagogues. They discarded them from

all social affairs.

The ancient writer Tertulian seems to be wrong when he says that those appointed to this despicable job are not the Jews but the Gentiles (Non-Jews) only. St. Jerome, gathering facts from various places in the Gospels, tells us that Matthew, though a tax collector himself, was truly a Judean. Matthew's main job was to collect tariff for goods going up and down Lake Genesareth or Tiberias and also to receive the tax from those travelling to and fro along the waters. It is mentioned in the Hebrew documents that Publican means "The Master of the travel document." St. Mark mentions that Matthew's tariff or tax office was situated by the side of the Lake. Matthew used to sit here and collect taxes.

It was when Matthew was seated and attending to his duties as tax collector in his office by Lake Genesareth Jesus spoke to him and said "Come, follow me." Matthew was a rich person. He was engaged in a job that brought him a lot income and profit. He was also an intelligent person. He knew well, by giving his consent to Our Lord's calling he would be at a great financial loss. But he left everything, sacrificed all he had and showed his full agreement with the desire to be a disciple of Jesus.

Matthew cannot be a person who was not so unaccustomed to Jesus' teaching. Matthew's tariff-office was near Capernaum and his home would also have been in that city. Our Lord lived for a long time, preached and performed miracles in this city of Capernaum. With this itself Matthew would have gained a good ap-

preciation and an acquaintance with Jesus. Because of this, Jesus' words of the call "Come, follow me" would have penetrated Matthew's mind and heart. St. Jerome says that the radiance of love and glory that show in the face of Jesus seems to have penetrated and created a great attachment in the heart of Matthew. "The external call by word of Jesus had enlivened him internally and instantaneously with an invisible grace" says St. Bede.

## Conversion

At the very first call this Apostle rescinding all the worldly bindings and casting away his treasures, wealth, temporal affairs, amusements and livelihood, in one mind followed Jesus. His conversion was a honest one. A complete one. There was no delay or re-thinking in it. Even for a moment he did not lose the God-given grace. He did not turn back after putting his hand to the plough. With one great determination, devotion, zeal and enthusiasm he was firm till the end. It is said that Matthew never came back to his tax office. He had thought that it was a somewhat dangerous livelihood and would often be a devil's temptation for greed.

The Evangelists Mark and Luke thinking it is a "sin" or a "disgrace" to mention about Matthew as a tax collector, name him only as a Levi. So says St. Jerom and St. Chrysostom. They also say that in order to show the greatness of the Divine Mercy in making a tax collector an Apostle, He Himself mentions him as Matthew. The calling by the term "Levi" for "Matthew" by Mark and Luke helps us

to understand how a converted sinner be accepted to the Christian society.

In order not to show his displeasure for his change from a tax collector to a follower of Christ and also to show that it is the greatest joy that he had received, Matthew invited Jesus and His other disciples to a sumptuous lunch at his house. For this lunch Matthew invited his other friends specially those who were engaged in his former job. Matthew thought to himself that a meeting with Jesus would change the mindset of his friends. At this stage the Pharisees scurrilously spoke about Jesus having table fellowship with the tax collector and sinners. Our Lord knowing their evil minds showed them that He came to this world for the sinners and not for the just. He further told them that a physician is needed only for a patient and not for a healthy person.

It was in the second year of Jesus' public life that Matthew received his calling as a Apostle of Our Lord. Till the Apostles separated themselves to preach in various countries Matthew preached in Judea and the surrounding countries for a few years. The ancient writers Eusebius and St. Epiphanius mention that on the invitation by the first Christian Jews, Matthew wrote his Gospel including the life history of Our Redeemer a few years prior to this. St. Epiphanius further says that the other Apostles had almost pleased Matthew to write this Gospel.

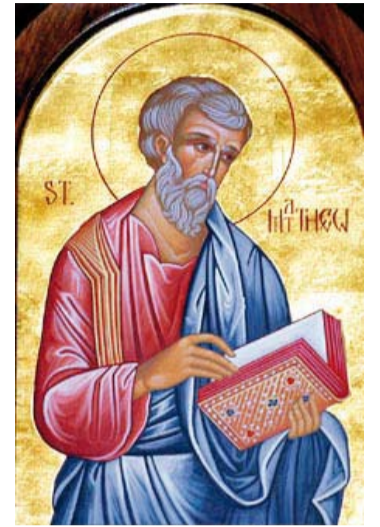
It is said that there is another evidence to the fact that Matthew had written this Gospel prior to other three Gospels before the Apostles

separated themselves and journeyed to other countries to preach. St. Bartholomew the Apostle, when going to India had taken with him a copy of this Gospel in India. It had been found in later years. There is not the least evidence at any occasion to the fact that Jesus had ordered any Apostle to write His life story.

## Gospel

St. Matthew wrote his Gospel specially to please the first Christians in Palestine. Through these Gospels Jesus preaches to us today also as He had done in Galilee. Matthew shows in details in his Gospel the words of Jesus. From Chapter 5 to Chapter 14 Matthew in this Gospel shows a different style different to the other three Gospels. In the life story, in the miracles and in the times of the sermons this fact is very evident. Matthew correctly shows Jesus' successive human lineage from generation to generation. He also correctly shows how the promise made by God to Abraham and David that the Messiah would be born from their seed, would be truly fulfilled. Matthew at the very start of his Gospel presents the catalogue of the first unbroken human races and includes in it the name of Jesus Christ. This is very good testimony for the Jews to believe in our Lord.

Matthew preached very much in Judea and carried the Good News of Jesus to the unruly savages of the Eastern World. He dedicated his life to prayer and meditation. He took simple food and lived a spartan life. He never devoured



meat or fish. His food was tender leaves, plants, roots yam, seeds and fruits. He preached in Ethiopia, that is in the parts of Eastern and Southern Asia. St. Paulinus says he completed his work in Pathia. Venantius Fortunatus says that he was martyred in Nadabar, a town in that vicinity. It is not mentioned whether he was burnt alive or stoned to death or beheaded. According to the opinion of writer Dorateus, St. Matthew had been buried in Hierapolis in Pathia with all solemnity. His, relics had been brought to the West and placed in a church dedicated to his name in Solerno.

When mention is made about the four Evangelists namely Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, four mysterious figures are connected to their names. These four mysterious figures are man, lion, calf and eagle. St. Augustine connects the figure lion to St. Matthew because it was he who explained the royal celebrity of Christ Jesus.

The symbol of St. Matthew is shown with a few money wallets. This perhaps reminds us about the job St. Matthew did before he was called by Jesus.

**(Feast September 21)**

*D.C. Jayasinghe*

## Standing against the throw away culture

Pope St. John Paul II promulgated his encyclical, the Gospel of Life (*Evangelium Vitae*), on March 15, 1995, the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. At the time, the encyclical was the Church's declaration of war on the culture of death, as manifested by the tendency of society to accept abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment; striking out at the spreading consumerist attitude of disposing of lives deemed inconvenient or invalid.

Twenty years down the line, we realise how visionary and priceless a masterpiece the Gospel of Life is—challenging worldly confusion and reaffirming divine supremacy on matters related to life, especially as the Church is now in a period of discernment with the ongoing Synod on the Family.

On March 24 this year, the Pontifical Council for Family organised a prayer vigil to mark the two decades since the encyclical came out and Pope Francis has said there is a "great need for prayer, prayer which is full of love for the family and for life."

The Pope's concern is genuine as pressure is mounting from the secular world. Never before has the institution of the family consisting of a biological father mother and children come under fire like today. The demands that the Church be practical in a changing world have been gathering momentum and are challenging its stand on the absolute principles of life and family. However, the family is a divinely ordered structure and the authority to begin and end life rests in the hands of God.

One big danger that confronts the Church today is the incorrect understanding of scientific advancement of humanity. It has wrested a number of decisions that were considered to be part of God's 'To Do list' and shifted them to the human 'To Do list.' Most things related to life now appear to fall under the purview of human judgment: when to begin a life (contraceptives), when to end it (abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment), even the characteristics of the progeny (pre-designed by modern reproductive medical practices).

Pope Francis calls this attitude a dangerous "throw away culture."

In this confusion of science and ethics, where is God and what is His role? This is where the Synod on Family gains significance.

Though the encyclical gives clarity on the stance of the Church about the beginning and end of life, society seems neither convinced nor amused! It argues that we do not have sufficient scriptural or natural order arguments to prove that every sexual act between husband and wife must be open to life. The Synod has placed before us a number of valid points for our reflection. It urges people to better understand the human body and its reproductive system, and that there may be more rational and compassionate ways of dealing with sexual ethics.

Whatever position the Synod takes on the pastoral challenges facing the family, it will have to be in accordance with the mind of Jesus, the Master who challenged many rules of society to bring outcasts and sinners into His fold. It will have to resist the temptation to stick to rigid, Pharisaical, orthodoxy which will keep many people out of the Church.

*Courtesy: Sunday Examiner*

## APPRECIATION

## Fr. Bob the Preacher, Pastor and Counselor

Life and Ministry of Fr. Bob Rodrigo, OMI has had a great impact on my life as a religious priest, to be more accurate religious parish priest.

My beloved father who too enjoys the Bliss of God with Fr. Bob was a great admirer of Bob the preacher. When I was studying Theology in India, my father used to post the homilies delivered by Fr. Bob during the Eucharist at Fatima Church. My father used to write the sermon he heard at noon Mass and post it to me the same day. That showed how much my father was touched by the preaching of Fr. Bob. He always reminded me of how to preach the Word of God which touches human life rather than trying to impress the congregation with fairy tales. As a priest I too loved listening to Bob's inspiring sermons. I am very sure that after a homily of Bob I had some points to reflect upon, some insights to be truly human. St. Irenaeus would say: A person fully human and fully alive is the glory of God.

I had the blessing to work with Fr. Bob when I was in "Nirmala" - the Jesuit house at Clifford Place in Bambalapitiya. He was the Dean of the Colombo South Deanery based at Wellawatta. He asked me to coordi-



nate the youth of the deanery which I did with great joy; with deep respect for Fr. Bob. There I encountered Bob the pastor. He was very creative and gave me much freedom to be creative in responding to the needs of the youth of Colombo South, a multi-linguistic and multi-racial group. We had many programs for the youth in various fields but with the sole objective of making our youth more integrated and wholesome. Fr. Bob was very cooperative, supportive and understanding. I truly experienced Fr. Bob - a senior pastor with a very young heart, the main reason that he was close to the youth. To be precise the young ones were closer to him.

I gained a lot by listening and discussing with Bob the Counselor. He listened so attentively and as an effective counselor, a word or two from him afforded an ample opportunity to connect to past memories and re-live God's intervention in one's history. I have experienced disturbed couples, worried parents and anxious persons getting back home with a relaxed face and even with a genuine smile after a chat with Fr. Bob. He had the capacity, the talent and the ability to enable others to be "themselves."

Dear Fr. Bob, in short I have seen the sparks of divinity within you; glimpses of Jesus the Pastor shine through your dark face and fragile life. May you intercede for us especially for me to be a true shepherd like unto Jesus! Thank you, Fr. Bob.

Rev. Fr. Lasantha de Abrew, sj

## Britto Motha: Adieu to my Daddy No. 2

I have known and loved 'this dad' of mine for the last 25 years. My thoughts are crowded with memories of special moments. Britto Motha and Mrs. Therese Motha became my second set of parents the very day I set eyes on them. The caring and sharing interactions they had with me the first day of our meeting remains the same to date. They never were any different to my parents. They made many a sacrifice to make my life comfortable.

I feel nostalgic when thinking of the good old days I have spent in the care of this gentleman. Dad was blessed to have shared 66 years of marital bliss with his, 'the best friend'. He celebrated his 90th birthday in the presence of a large gathering with the special anointing of his Creator.

Daddy number 2 was too gentle and soft spoken. He was very meek and mild that one would never imagine that he had such an immense command in life. His leadership

and guidance was sought by all who knew him. His many social involvements speak to his gigantic personality that was thus hidden within his unassuming personality.

Dad chose to befriend the lowly and the down trodden. He was a friend to the paper seller, the street vendor and the trishaw drivers. Dad never entered a premise without placing a grateful pat on the security guard who opened doors for him. He was often seen sharing jokes with

the janitors who came to help in the household chores. He was fond of gardening and he never let the gardener to work in isolation.

The last time I met Dad was at the birthday celebration of Sharmini. Had I known that it would be the last time I would be meeting this gentle giant on earth, I may have chosen to remain in his cupped palms for a few more extra minutes...., I remain till I meet you and our loved ones in that well-maintained garden.

Niranjali Ramiah Motha

## Dear Rev. Father Jude Sharman

A true shepherd you've been  
To the sheep entrusted to your care  
Comforted you, those in distress  
With eyes raised up to God  
Pleaded to heal those in pain,  
And soothed troubled minds.  
Long hours you spent  
Consoling both young and old.  
Your time you spent fruitfully,  
Guiding, leading us to God's feet.  
A change of heart you've wrought in many.  
Your labours in God's vineyard  
Not in vain have been.  
A rich harvest awaits you,  
Not here, on this Earth  
But in a celestial world.  
The good you are doing,  
And will do, will help you  
Reap a rich harvest,  
That will keep on multiplying.  
We of the Dalugama parish  
Forever, remember you  
In our prayers you'll be.  
Sure, God will bless you,  
And good health give  
To carry on your good work  
Wherever you go.

Gladys Abeywickrama

## The power of a letter

Most of you know John Wayne as an actor. You may not know what happened to him before he died. This is that story!

Evangelist, Robert Schuller's teenage daughter Cindy was in a motorcycle accident and had to have her leg amputated. John Wayne is a big fan of Robert Schuller. He heard Dr. Schuller say on one of his programs that his daughter had been in an accident and had to have her leg amputated. John Wayne wrote a note to her saying, "Dear Cindy, Sorry to hear about your accident. Hope you will be alright" signed: John Wayne. The note was delivered to her and she decided she wanted to write John Wayne a note in reply. She wrote:

Dear Mr. Wayne, I got your note. Thanks for writing to me. I like you very much. I am going to be alright because Jesus is going to help me. "Because I cannot imagine Heaven being complete without John Wayne being there. I hope, if you don't know Jesus, that you will give your heart to Jesus right now. See you in Heaven." And she signed her name.

She had just put that letter in an envelope, sealed it, and written across the front of it "John Wayne" when a visitor came into her room to see her. He asked her, "What are you doing?" she said, "I just wrote a letter to John Wayne, but I don't know how to get it to him. He said, "That's funny, I am going to have dinner with John Wayne tonight at the Newport Club down at Newport Beach. Give it to me and I will give it to him."

She gave him the letter and he put it in his coat pocket, and left. There were twelve of them that night sitting around the table for dinner at the Newport Club. John Wayne was seated at the end of the table and the guy took the letter out and said, "Hey Duke, I was in Schuller's daughter's room today and she wanted me to give this letter to you. John Wayne opened it and read the letter. After a little while he was crying. One of them asked, "Hey Duke what is the matter?" He said, "I want to read you this letter." Then he read the letter to them. At the end he began to weep. Thereafter he pointed to the man who delivered the letter to him and said, "You tell that little girl that right now, in this club, right here, John Wayne gives his heart to Jesus Christ and I will see her in Heaven."

Three weeks later John Wayne died. You never know how your witness to another will affect their eternity!

Cyril D. Perera

"Now there was a great wind, so strong, that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks to pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind there was an earthquake but the Lord was not in the earthquake and after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire THE SOUND OF SHEER SILENCE" (1 Kgs. 19, 12, 13).

The impact of this silence was so awe-inspiring, that Elijah who was hiding inside the cave, wrapped his mantle around him and came out. He had felt the power of silence. Do we feel it? In this age of supersonic sounds electronic media and the incessant click of laptops, do we even for a moment think of the importance of silence? The world holds oratorical power in great esteem, but in striking contrast to this view, when Jesus Christ was brought before the Sanhedrin to be judged, He maintained a dignified silence in the face of vile accusations and His accusers were unnerved and amazed at the power of His silence. In silence too did He bear that rugged cross of shame and ignominy in submission to the inexorable will of His Father, without a single word of reproach to His tormentors.

## The Power of Silence



It is recorded in many instances in the Holy Bible that Our Blessed Mother Mary, when faced with difficult situations, pondered and treasured everything in her heart without resorting to superfluous words. She knew the power of silence. And in the Scriptures, no words have ever been attributed to, as spoken by St. Joseph. He fulfilled God's plan for the Holy Family in the power of silence. When Jesus wanted to pray, He went up a mountain by Himself and communed with His Father throughout the silence of the night and when He came down, it is written that He was full of power, and in the strength of this power, He

worked many miracles. Everyone who even touched His garments were healed of every illness. Such is the power of silent prayer. The lifting up of your heart and mind to God in sincere silent prayer, must surely find a response from the heavenly realm. Rather than the heaping up of empty boastful phrases as in the case of the Pharisee, who stood up in the Temple to pray, the tax-collector did not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but pleaded in all humility for the mercy of God, and his prayer was answered.

The old adage still rings true, that speech is silver and silence is gold.

Marie Peiris

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.*

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR B  
24th May 31 - May 2015

Sun:	PENTECOST SUNDAY Acts. 2:1-11; 1 Cor.12:3-7,12,13 or Gal.5:16-25; Jn.20:19-23 or Jn.15:26,27,16:12-15
Mon:	Memorials of St. Bede the Venerable Priest & Doctor, St. Gregory VII Pope and St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, Virgin Sir 17:20-28; Mk. 10:17-27
Tue:	Memorial of St. Philip Neri Priest Sir 35:1-15; Mk. 10:28-31
Wed:	Memorial of St. Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop Sir 36:1,2,5,6,13-19; Mk. 10:32-45
Thu:	Sir.42:15-26; Mk.10:46-52
Fri:	Sir 44:1,9-13; Mk.11:11-25
Sat:	Sir 51:17-27; Mk.11:27-33
Sun:	THE MOST HOLY TRINITY Deut.4:32-34,39-40; Rom.8:14-17; Mt. 28:16-20

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

*Response: Lord hear our prayer.*

For the Christian community: That it may enjoy the gifts of unity, love, and peace; and that they may share them in the society they live.

We pray to the Lord.

*Response: Lord hear our prayer.*

For those who have never belonged to the flock of Christ, and for those who have cut themselves off from it, that they may hear the gentle voice of Christ. We pray to the Lord.

*Response: Lord hear our prayer.*

That, like the apostles on Pentecost Day, the Holy Spirit may help us to profess our faith openly and fearlessly by word and deed in the world.

We pray to the Lord.

*Response: Lord hear our prayer.*

# Pentecost Sunday

**First Reading:**

**Acts. 2: 1-11.**

The incident of the descent of the Holy Spirit is given. On the day of the Pentecost the Spirit descended upon the Apostles and the Apostles began to speak in tongues. People from different states gathered to witness this incident and found the Apostles speaking in their own language.

**Second Reading:**

**1 Cor. 12: 3-7, 12,13.**

There is only one spirit that is Holy. There are variety of gifts that are given by the Spirit but there is only one Spirit, like in the body there are many parts; by one spirit we are all baptized into one body.

**Gospel. Jn. 20: 19-23.**

Jesus' first appearance after His resurrection is given. Here Jesus confers the Holy Spirit on the Apostles in order that they may forgive the sins of the people.

**Reflection.**

Today is Pentecost Sunday and we celebrate the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. With the descent of the Holy Spirit the Apostles began to speak in tongues. It is a clear sign of the universality of His doctrine. The people began to understand everything that was spoken in their own language. It is the sign of the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit.

We see the Apostles hiding in the Upper Room, afraid of the high priest and the soldiers... etc. After some time suddenly the Apostles are preaching openly, fearlessly and with much courage. The question arises as to what happened in between. Probably they had received the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus who promised to send an advocate once He ascends into heaven has kept His promise. As a result we have the Holy Spirit with us to guide us through our lives. The Holy Spirit is here to guide, direct, govern and to protect us in our day to day lives. And it is an encouragement for us to live a faithful life in the Lord.

People who are raised up or those who go up often tend to look down on those who are below. It is very rarely that a person who is raised or a person who is promoted looks at the people who are below. Christ was raised up on the cross of oppression, suffering and death. But, He never looks down on those who are below. He looks at them and simply said, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do." When He went up to heaven He never looked down on the people. Instead He looked at them and saw to it that the Holy Spirit is sent as an advocate in order to help them in their daily struggle.

It is this life exam-

ple and it is this love that the Lord wants us to preach and teach to the world. It is to be done both in word and deed. And the Spirit is given to us in order to help and guide us in this task.

Therefore, on this day of the feast of Pentecost let us begin our life anew and be humble enough to serve the Lord in all humility and love our neighbour in all sincerity.

**Aid Story.**

A Swedish author relates that on a warm summer afternoon a noisy discussion took place among the inhabitants of the forest regarding the frightening problem - The meaning of life. "Living is singing," warbled a nightingale and started to trill. "What do you mean singing?" said a mole. "Living is a constant struggle against darkness that is what life is." "Absolutely not," said a rainbow hued butterfly, "Joy and happiness, that's life." "You are wrong," replied diligent bee, "Life is work." "That is true, sighed an ant, "It is more work than joy." From up above was heard an Eagle's voice, "Life is liberty and soaring in the wild blue yonder." Then some plants took part in the conversation. The tall pine tree said the



Eagle was right. A hardy wild flower was of the same opinion as the Ant and Rose and the Iris concurred with the butterfly. A cloud spoke up, "Life is tears and more tears." The river shouted as they went by, "Life is just an unending stream." As the discussion was coming to an end the Pentecost bell started to ring, and proclaimed to the forest. "True life is Peace and Joy, strength and Happiness, courage and fidelity and purity that blossoms in man through the power of the Holy Spirit."

**Aid Story2.**

A lady went to a jeweller to have her watch fixed. He disappeared into the back of the store and soon returned with it running perfectly. Surprised, she asked how he could fix it so soon. He told her it only needed a new battery. "Battery? Battery?" she replied. "Nobody said anything about a battery. I've been winding it every morning!"

*Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos*

## "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20,19-23)

1. Today the Risen Lord breathes on His disciples. This brings us back to the very beginning of the Bible. In Genesis 2,7 we see how God moulds man like a potter. He breathes on him and infuses in him the spirit of life: "The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being." The breath of life makes the lifeless form, a man full of life. Man's life thus comes from the breath of God.

2. The dramatic act of breathing reminds us also of the revivification of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37. The dry bones symbolize the People of Judah living in exile in Babylonia. They lament, 'Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off.' The Prophet who is living among these exilic people prophecy. At his prophecy, the spirit comes into the dry bones and they become alive in the valley. The exilic people are given the hope of return to the Promised Land. The exilic People of Judah, the dry bones in the valley of Babylonia, regain their life from the spirit of God.

3. Today's Gospel passage carries us to the Easter night in Jerusalem. There we see some frightened disciples, who have

locked themselves up and been reduced to dry bones or lifeless clay. Then the Risen Lord appears to them through shut doors. He commissions them formally and breathes on them saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Yes, He gifts them the Holy Spirit. It is a real gift of the Spirit, as made clear at the Second Council of Constantinople (553) - against the blasphemy of Theodore who said that Jesus did not give them the Holy Spirit but only breathed on them figuratively. The Spirit of the glorified Jesus revivifies these ten disciples. It creates them anew and gives them a new spiritual life.

4. We, baptized and confirmed Christians, have already been breathed on. We have already received the Holy Spirit. During Confirmation classes, our catechists taught us much about the Holy Spirit. We answered correctly when they questioned anything about the Holy Spirit. The Rite of Confirmation was over. Is the presence of the Holy Spirit also over along with it? Do we at least think about His perennial presence within us?

This story illustrates the power of the Holy Spirit. A tanker was beached on shore. People made all day efforts to return the huge vessel to the water but they met with no success. Finally the

captain told them to stop; he went to his cabin and waited. When the tide came in that night the waters lifted the thousand ton tanker off the beach and carried it, light as a feather, back into the deep. Similarly the Holy Spirit infuses us with power. In what ways do I expect Him to be revealed in my life? What role does He play in my life? Do I pray to Him constantly?

5. The Cross and the Switchblade (written in 1962) tells the true story of Rev. David Wiker-son's work with young derelicts like drug addicts and gangsters in New York City. One first hand report in the book comes from a heroin user named Joe. He says, "The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, they told me. When I thought of comfort, I thought of a bottle of wine and a dozen goof balls. But these guys were talking about comfort from heaven where I could feel clean later. I got to wanting this ... I cried to God for help and that's when he [the Holy Spirit] came ... I did not want any more drugs. I loved everybody. For the first time in my life I felt clean."

Let us hence be sensitive to the powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit-



it. Let the "rivers of living water" (the Holy Spirit in the language of John 7,37-39) flow from within us as well. These "rivers" can cleanse our old self and enrich our weary, barren hearts. These "rivers" may heal our depressed hearts and accompany our lonely life to its glorified end. Hence let us allow the Spirit, "rivers of living water", to flood into our lives craving for renewal.

*Rev. Fr. Don Anton Saman Hettiarachchi*

# Call her to your assistance



*"When I find myself in times of trouble,  
Mother Mary comes to me"*

The above verse quoted from the famous song "Let it be" by the Beatles is quite relevant to the present situations of our lives. We, who lose faith in God and dwell in the path of evil, gradually cause our downfall. Why do we do wicked deeds against the Lord's will? If God is controlling each one of us, why is He bringing evil towards our lives and watching us be slaves of evil? Throughout the centuries these questions have been subjected to discussion, but never had been proved. Only God knows the answers for them, for His plan is so divine and perfect.

Being slaves of evil, each one of us weep to God, interceding His mercy and grace. But, we continue to burn with evil rather than rejecting it. Nonetheless the plan of God was so great that He gave us a person

who would always show us the right way and guiding us internally. Mary, Mother of God and the Holy Church is always available for our needs and intercessions. She surpasses all so called goddesses and worldly creatures for she humbled herself and was found blessed in the sight of God. Thus, God wants each one of us to consider His mother - blessed and intercede her during the needful times.

The connection of man and Mary surpasses the Wi-Fi connection as she is always waiting for us. We as human beings fall short of the Glory of God and start to lead miserable lives, being unpleasant to all. Yet, the Blessed Mother out of all, comes to us and consoles us till we regain our strength. Mary does not wait for others to intercede to her, but stays with us every day of our lives. This fact has been proved throughout the ages, when many and so many people professed their testimonies, as Mother Mary came towards them, when they really needed her guidance.

God, through Mary helps each one of us to understand what the Kingdom of God really is. Mary in my perspective is perhaps a fountain of all qualifications to enter the divine paradise of God. Though Mary has been subjected to high criticism and insult by religious extremists, she always forgives them and is ready to lend them a hand when they plead for mercy. She teaches us so many things by the way she lived, thus we can call Mary a school of Holiness. We, who lose hope, lead our lives in a weird and miserable state. Full of stress and pumped with depression we may feel that we lost everything. However, the Mother of God, will never let these poor children of God go astray.

Throughout the majestic history of the Church our faithful have benefited by the prayers offered to Mary. The novenas, rosaries we offer to Mary, the special

feasts and the days of obligation of Mary are perhaps the principle devotion methods to Mary. Yet, it may be fair to acclaim that the devotion to Mary has been subjected to an unfortunate deviation. Sadly, many of our traditional Catholics, who profess to be strong in faith, never recite the prayers with a sense of understanding. Just as the Pharisees prayed with empty words our faithful pray senselessly. Some parishes world-wide, organise grand novenas and feasts to Mary, by collecting tons of funds from people. This is where deviation towards evilness surpasses true devotion to Mary. In my regard the best way to be strong devoted Marian followers is to imitate her in each part of our lives. Henceforth the world may be in a much better state. If there are plenty of people imitating the role of Mary and is ready to help the poor and the depressed ones, we can proudly say we are true devotees of Mary.

This will certainly help us to accomplish the true objective of the month of May. God will not mind how many dozens of rosaries you offered but how many times you were like the Blessed Mother to others. Keeping this fact in our mind let us pray that God will keep us strong in faith and bear witness to God's divinity through true Marian imitation and devotion.

*"O sinner, be not discouraged, but have recourse to Mary in all your necessities. Call her to your assistance, for such is the divine Will that she should help in every kind of necessity."*

--Saint Basil the Great

**Avishka Mario Senewiratne**  
St. Joseph's College,  
Colombo 10.

## A dash of lemon in hot water



Trying to cut coffee out of your morning? A cup of hot water with fresh lemon juice is an ideal alternative that many nutritionists drink every day - and it is not just because of its tangy flavour! Here are four compelling reasons to make this quick

concoction part of your morning ritual.

**1. It helps you detox every day:** While lemons may seem quite acidic, they are a surprisingly good source of an alkaline food that can help balance your body's pH; internist and doctor of integrative medicine Dr. Frank Lipman is a big proponent of a hot water with lemon habit, since the combination wakes up your liver and flushes out nasty toxins.

**2. It wakes up your digestive tract:** This simple yet powerful beverage stimulates your gastrointestinal tract - improving your body's ability to absorb nutrients all day and helping food pass through your system with ease.

**3. It supports weight loss:** Lemon juice contains pectin, a soluble fibre that has been shown to aid in weight-loss struggles. And if you have been sipping on a cup of

tea loaded with sugar or honey every morning, this beverage will slash calories from your daily diet.

**4. It soothes an upset tummy:** When you go to bed on a full stomach, pesky heartburn or a bloated belly can get in the way of your morning. Hot water cleanses your system, while the flavonoids from lemon juice may help reduce acidity in your stomach, so you feel like yourself sooner.

### Lucid Intervals



A florist handed his new assistant the phone and asked him to take down the instructions from the customer and fill the order. "The ribbon must be white," said the woman on the phone, "with gold letters reading 'Rest in peace' on both sides and, if you can squeeze it in, 'We shall Meet in Heaven.'"

When the floral tribute reached the home of the deceased, it caused quite a sensation. The inscription read: 'REST IN PEACE ON BOTH SIDES! IF YOU CAN SQUEEZE IN, WE SHALL MEET IN HEAVEN!'

....

That Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who is not.

....

At the girl's college, dates were permitted only on Saturday night. One young man showed up on a Tuesday evening, explaining to an older woman in the lobby of the dorm that it was imperative he see a certain young lady immediately.

"I want to surprise her. You see, I'm her brother."  
"Oh, she'll be surprised, all right," said the woman. "But think of how! I feel. I'm her mother."

## A Moment of Faith

This morning a story literally dropped in my lap. No famous people. No exciting setting. Simply a moment in time that allowed me to view something beautiful, something that touched me more than anything I have ever written.

It happened while I was visiting my mother in the hospital. I noticed the elderly woman in the next bed. My mother said that she no longer seems aware of the world around her. The nurses and doctors talk to her, but there is no sign of a response. Her children visit, but she remains oblivious of their presence.

Today her grandson came. He stayed but a moment, but it was enough.

"Hello Baba, He said, just as though she were awake. "I love you and I'm sorry you

are so sick. Remember the fun we had when I was little? I would stay with you and Grandpa and you'd give me fresh apple pie for breakfast. You said it was an old New England custom forgotten by most. And remember how we would walk and find wild flowers to bring home?"

"I have a daughter of my own now and Baba, I'm doing my best to raise her to be exactly like you."

The young man kissed her cheek and left.

I looked toward the old woman and could hardly believe what I saw. She lifted an ancient wrinkled hand and made the Sign of the Cross. Then in a feeble voice she whispered. "I'm ready now" A second in time - and I knew what faith was all about.

Courtesy: Liguorian

## A CROSS The Way

By Sirohmi Gunasekera

### Gossip

"I have some juicy news for you. Our boss' wife Mallika is carrying on with her husband's best friend Amal. What do you think of that?" chortled Cheryl.

"How do you know?" asked her friend Nihal curiously.

"Well, I heard it from Amal's neighbour Julian. He had seen Mallika talking animatedly to Amal in the garden," said Cheryl.

"That's not proof of an affair. You must be careful before you jump to conclusions that so and so is sleeping with another man," said Nihal who was a lawyer.

"Well, I guess I jumped the gun because I don't like her. In fact, I have always been jealous of Mallika who is both pretty and dresses well," said Cheryl.

"There you are! Just think of the harm you would have caused by spreading a rumour like that. Mallika may have had a legitimate reason to talk to Amal. I think that you should first fight your jealous instinct. Offer it up to God and pray that you will be cured of your jealousy. In fact, you should train your mind to think of something positive like your father hugging you when you were small when you think of something bad like Gossip," suggested Nihal.

"But everyone gossips. Some think it is only women but in actual fact, men gossip as well especially about VIPs," chimed in Manel.

"The newspapers and television also carry juicy news items especially about celebrities. Think of the shocking way they talk about film stars and even politicians!" said Nihal.

"Maybe they too pander to the jealousy and envy aroused by the good looking and the rich and famous," said Cheryl.

"Let's all pray to think and talk positive," said Nihal.

# Young World

## Leadership Programme at Diyalagoda Parish



Students from Grades 8 to 11 in Diyalagoda and Halkandawila participated in a one-day leadership programme held at Nimala Maria Daham Piyasa, Maggona National Calvary Shrine, recently. This was conducted by Caritas Sethsarana, animators.

The programme was organised by Rev. Fr. Dinesh Keerthisinghe, Parish Priest Diyalagoda with Daham Pasa teachers.

*D. Anselm Fernando*

## Programme on Pasan for students



A pasan group from Wennappuwa conducted a programme for students who will be receiving their First Holy Communion and those receiving Confirmation from the Nattandiya Parish. Rev. Fr. Sujaan Nishantha, the new Assistant Parish Priest is seen addressing the students.

*Shriyanganie Felicia*

## Bak Maha Sports Meet



Parishioners of St. Jude's Church, Halkandawila, held their Bak Maha sports meet recently. The Parish Priest of Diyalagoda, Rev. Fr. Dinesh Keerthisinghe is seen here lighting the oil lamp.

*D. A. F*

## Battle of the Beach "2"



The annual Elle Big Match of Katukurunda, Roman Catholic Maha Vidiyalaya and Maggona St. Mary's Vidyalaya was held recently at the Maggona Uswella Beach Grounds. The match was won by Katukurunda Maha Viyalaya and was organised by Past Pupils' Unions of Katukurunda and Maggona. Picture shows the prayer service before the match

*D. A. F*

## Inter house Sports Meet



The Annual Inter-house sport meet of Ave Maria Convent, Bolawalana, Negombo was held under the patronage of Rev. Fr. Anthony Human Pinto, Director of Don Bosco Institute, Negombo.

*T. Sunil Fernando*

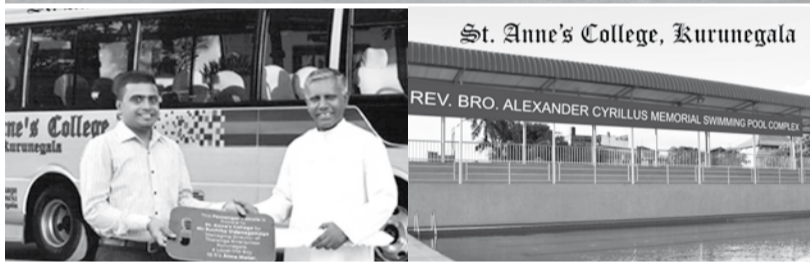
## Development activities at St. Anne's, Kurunegala



His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera, Bishop of Kurunegala recently declared open the Sports Pavilion at St. Anne's College, Kurunegala in memory of the Late Rev. Bro. Denzil Mendis, while the Swimming Pool Pavilion dedicated to the memory of Late Rev. Bro. Alexander Cyrillus was declared open by Rev. Bro. Denzil Perera FSC, Provincial Visitor of the De La Salle Brothers in Sri Lanka.

Meantime, a Past Pupil of the School Ruchika Vidanagama, Managing Director of Tharanga Enterprises (Pvt) Ltd, donated a passenger vehicle to the School. His gift was accepted by Rev. Bro. A.E. Tarcisius, Principal of the School.

*Ainslie Joseph-*



## NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS - 2015



St. Benedict's College, Kandy celebrated the Sinhala and Tamil New Year recently with great pomp and pageantry. Both the Tamil and Sinhala customs and traditions were observed to the letter. Ven. Dr. Etipola Mangala Thera of the Dalugola Buddhist Temple in Ampitiya and Swami Krishnamoorthi of the Hindu Kovil in Talathuoya graced the occasion.

Rev. Fr. Clement Gnanapragasam OSB, Rector of the College spoke on the idea of forming an inter cultur-

al society in Sri Lanka. After the cultural ceremony the traditional New Year games were held. All the children were clad in sarong and shirt. The staff too was dressed in their traditional New Year dress. The staff and the parents took much interest to organise the event. It was indeed an educative and enjoyable New Year celebration at St. Benedict's College in Kandy.

*Rector*

## Schools Twenty-Twenty Champions



St. Benedict's College, Colombo emerged champions at the All-Island Schools' Twenty-Twenty Cricket Tournament, held recently.

*Ashen S. Senarathna*

# English with Fun and Entertainment

**Dear Readers,**

In today's lesson which is our 75th, let's learn some beautiful quotations about the Rosary and learn some grammar points, try to solve some riddles and do a comprehension task on an anecdote about 'the whole world stinks'.

Your suggestions to improve our lessons are much appreciated.

God Bless You!

*NJ*


**Activity 2-**

Can you sort out these riddles. They are funny but entertaining

- Q 1: What do you call a ghost's mom and dad? A 1:
- Q 2: What did the blanket say to the bed? A 2:
- Q 3: What do you call a group of men waiting for a haircut? A 3:
- Q 4: What do you call a funny mountain? A 4:
- Q 5: What kind of driver never gets a parking ticket? A 5:
- Q 6: What can you serve but never eat? A 6:
- Q 7: I can run but not walk, have a mouth but can't talk, and a bed, but I do not sleep. What am I? A: 7.

source: <http://www.jokes4us.com/miscellaneousjokes/cleanjokes.html>


**Activity 1 -** Let's learn some grammar points analyzing the Inspirational quotes below



**St. Pio**

**"The Rosary is the Weapon" .~St. Pio**

Grammar point - The above quotation is a simple sentence. This is called a clause in simple sentence analysis. The clause elements are subject, verb, object, adverbial, and complement. The pattern of this simple sentence is Subject + Verb + Complement.  
( S + V + C ) The Rosary (Subject) is ( Verb ) the weapon (Complement )




**Pope John XXIII**

The Rosary is a magnificent and universal prayer for the needs of the Church, the nations and the entire world - **Pope John XXIII**

Grammar point - This is a simple sentence with a prepositional phrase governed by 'for' For whom is the Rosary a magnificent and universal prayer.


The sentence Pattern - S = V + C + Prepositional Phrase



**Saint Louis de Montfort**

**"Never will anyone who says his Rosary every day be led astray. This is a statement that I would gladly sign with my blood.~" Saint Louis de Montfort**

Grammar point - This is a very rare kind of a sentence which begins with the negative particle 'never' + future simple passive.  
Never will anyone be led astray who says his rosary every day. This is a complex sentence and the subordinate clause is 'who says his rosary' and the main clause is- anyone will never be led astray. The word order is changed for emphasis




**Blessed Pope Piux IX**

**"If I had an army to say the Rosary, I could conquer the world" Blessed Pope Piux IX**

**Grammar point**  
The above inspirational quote is a conditional clause. The condition is made with If + Simple Past and the result is future past with the modal could.

The structure "If I had ..... + I could ....."




**Blessed Alan de la Roche**

**"When you say your Rosary, the angels rejoice, the Blessed Trinity delights in it, my Son finds joy in it too, and I myself am happier than you can possibly guess". Revelation to Blessed Alan de la Roche**

Grammar point: The structure of the above quotation is a complex compound sentence. The subordinate clause in the sentence is " When you say your rosary" and the main clauses are (i) The angels rejoice (ii) the blessed Trinity delights in it (iii) my Son finds joy in it  
And is the coordinating conjunction (iv) main clause I myself am happier than you can possibly guess.

**Activity 3 -**

Read the text and answer the questions - The Whole World Stinks



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One Sunday afternoon, a cranky grandfather was visiting his family. As he lay down to take a nap, his grandson decided to have a little fun by putting Limburger cheese on Grandfather's mustache. Soon, grandpa awoke with a snort and charged out of the bedroom saying, "This room stinks." Through the house he went, finding every room smelling the same. Desperately he made his way outside only to find that "the whole world stinks!"

So it is when we fill our minds with negativism. Everything we experience and everybody we encounter will carry the scent we hold in our mind.

(i)What is the point that many wise men and philosophers are in unanimous agreement?

(ii) What does the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius say about man's life?


(iii)What did the grandson do ?

(iv) What did the grandfather do when he awoke?

(v) Find a single word from the text for the words (a) undisputed (b) views (c) snuffle (d) smells ( e) pessimism

**Activity 4 Riddles -** Can you solve this riddle?

Mary is 4 years old. Her sister Jane is half her age. Now Mary is 40, how old is Jane?



**Activity 5 -** Read the riddle and find the password

A man worked at a high security institution. The man tried to log into his computer and the computer denied the password. He then remembered that the passwords to the computers were reset every month for security reasons. He called his boss for his new password.

The man said, "Boss, my old password is out of date."

The boss said, "Yes, it is. The new password is different, but if you listen closely you will be able to figure out the new one. Your new password has the same amount of letters as the old one, and four of the letters are the same."

The man then logged into his computer with no trouble. What was the new password? What was his old?

**Activity 2 - answers:** A 1: Transparents A 2: Don't worry, I've got you covered!  
A: 3 A barbercue A 4: hill-arious A 5: A screw driver A 6: A volleyball.  
A: 7 A River.

**Activity 3 -** (i)That people become what they think about (ii) The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius says that a man's life is what his point of view make of it.(iii) His grandson decided to have a little fun by putting Limburger cheese on Grandfather's mustache (iv) Soon, grandpa awoke with a snort and charged out of the bedroom saying, "This room stinks." Through the house he went, finding every room smelling the same. Desperately he made his way outside only to find that "the whole world stinks!" (v) a - unanimous (b) thoughts (c) snort (d) stinks ( e) negativism Answer - 4 A 38, Because Mary is 2 years older than her sister if she is 4 and her sister is 2 Answer 5- Old password 'out of date' New password 'different'

# What is the Christian Celebration of Pentecost all about?

This Sunday, Christians across the world will celebrate Pentecost. In fact, not all Christians recognize this but it is generally honoured in liturgical churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Eastern Orthodox, etc.), in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and in many other Protestant churches as well. Pentecost is not as well-known or as popular as the Christmas and Easter, though it commemorates a watershed event in Christian history. In many ways, Pentecost is the birthday of the church.

## What is Pentecost?

For Christians, Pentecost commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit on the early followers of Jesus. Before the events of the first Pentecost, which came a few weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection, there were followers of Jesus, but no movement that could be meaningfully called "the church." Thus, from a historical point of view, Pentecost is the day on which the Church was started. This is also true from a spiritual perspective, since the Spirit brings the Church into existence and enlivens it. Thus Pentecost is the Church's birthday.

## What does the word 'Pentecost' mean?

The English word 'Pentecost' is a transliteration of the Greek word *pentekostos*, which means 'fifty'. It comes from the ancient Christian expression *pentekoste hemera*, which means "fiftieth day."

But Christians did not invent the phrase "fiftieth day." Rather, they borrowed it from Greek-speaking Jews



who used the phrase to refer to a Jewish holiday. It was known as the Festival of Weeks, or, more simply, Weeks (*Shavuot* in Hebrew). This name comes from an expression in *Leviticus 23:16*, which instructs people to count seven weeks or "fifty days" from the end of Passover to the beginning of the next holiday (*pentekonta hemeras* in the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture).

*Shavuot* was the second great feast in Israel's yearly cycle of holy days. It was originally a harvest festival (*Exod 23:16*), but, in time, turned into a day to commemorate the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. This day became especially significant for Christians because, seven weeks after the resurrection of Jesus, during the Jewish celebration of *Shavuot*/Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon his first followers, thus empowering them for their mission and

gathering them together as a church.

## What actually happened on that day of Pentecost?

This event is recorded in the New Testament book known as *The Acts of the Apostles*. Chapter 2 begins, "And when the day of Pentecost [ten hemerantes *pentekostes*] had come, [the first followers of Jesus] were all together in one place" (2:1). All of a sudden, a sound came from heaven, like a strong wind, filling the house where the people had gathered. Something like tongues of fire rested on their heads. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak" (2:4). (Notice the tongues of fire on the heads of the people in the painting by Restout.)

The languages spoken by the early Christians were intelligible (not other worldly) and were heard by thousands of Jewish pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate *Shavuot*. The content of the miraculous messages had to do with God's mighty works (2:11). Many who heard these messages in their own languages were amazed, though others thought the Christians were just drunk (2:12).

At some point, Peter, one of the leading followers of Jesus, stood up and preached his first sermon. He interpreted the events of that morning in light of a prophecy of the Hebrew prophet Joel. In that text, God promised to pour out his Spirit on all flesh, empowering diverse people to exercise divine power. This would be a sign of the coming "day of the

Lord" (*Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32*).

Peter went on to explain that Jesus had been raised and had poured out the Spirit in fulfillment of God's promise through Joel (2:32-33). When the crowd asked what they should do, Peter urged them to turn their lives around and be baptized in the name of Jesus. Then they would be forgiven and would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:37-39). Acts reports that about 3,000 people were added to the church that day (2:41). Not a bad response to Peter's first sermon!

## Should we believe that all of this actually happened?

If you are one who believes the Bible is God's inerrant or infallible Word, you will take for granted the truthfulness of the account in Acts. But if you're uncertain about biblical authority, then you might wonder if the account in Acts is to be trusted.

In fact, some scholars have questioned the historicity of Acts 2. They observe that this event appears in the New Testament only in Acts, and that it describes miraculous events that are beyond the scope of historical inquiry. These scholars tend to view Pentecost as a powerful metaphor for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Early Church, rather than as an event that gave birth to the Church.

Whether we believe the biblical account of Pentecost, has everything to do with our estimation of the historical trustworthiness of Acts of the Apostles and the possibility of miraculous events actually happening.

## The perils of giving without thinking



As has often been the case when western missionaries try to respond to a need, the priest relied upon his mission society and friends in Europe to fund the activity.

That worked until he was transferred to another diocese and his funding connections moved with him. His failure to plan for the day when he would no longer be around to provide funds for the schools meant they had to close.

This case is not unique. In fact, it is sadly common among projects begun by west-

ern missionaries in Asia.

Immediate needs and the energy involved in meeting them often lead project founders to postpone work on self-sufficiency until an activity is up and running.

Of course, sometimes missionaries also act out of their own psychological need to be a sort of Santa Claus or a control freak—the source of all largesse and administration, so they unconsciously see other sources of funds and other potential leaders as competition.

In any case, unless

plans and steps toward sustainability of finances, personnel and administration are part of the activity from the very start, the day when a project can survive without its founder will seldom come.

Of course, most projects are started in places where people do not have the resources to support a necessary work. If they had those resources, the project would probably be unnecessary in the first place. So, outside help in the form of funds and personnel are essential if the service is to ever take place.

That is where the ancient example of St. Paul comes into play. Paul collected funds from the various Churches he organised and then sent or brought the proceeds to the poor Church in Jerusalem. What Paul and the other Churches were doing was not simply providing financial support, they were expressing their unity, their communion with their fellow Christians in Jerusalem.

When Christians in other countries send aid to Church-

es in poor countries, they are not merely making bank transfers. They are (or should be) affirming their communion with their brothers and sisters in other lands.

And the money should be received with that same sense of communion, though it too seldom is. The Churches of Europe and North America (especially Germany and the United States of America) are too often seen as little more than banks.

Part of the fault lies with missionaries who came to Asia from the west. They called upon their home Churches to support their work as they supported their going overseas in the first place. And that support came.

However, the missionaries seem to have forgotten or never thought to include in their efforts to form local Churches the understanding that one day those Churches would also have to become giving Churches at home and abroad.

So, although the local Church was unable to support

those schools in Bangladesh, why did they have to rely only upon Italian largesse to function? Where were the Chinese, Filipino, Thai and other Asian Catholics who could easily support more of the Church's services in their own countries as well as throughout the continent?

As Churches in the west find themselves, for various reasons, less able to be as generous as in the past, the Catholics of Asia must develop a stronger sense of communion with their less fortunate sisters and brothers.

As individuals and as Churches they must emulate the Pauline communities and the western communities that helped bring the Churches of Asia to the point where they can and must take fuller responsibility for the life of the Church.

Those who wish to serve the poor must use their heads as well as their hearts lest they simply set up future disappointment and even damage the evangelisation efforts of the Church. (SE)



## MATRIMONIAL



### **Bride**

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