

"Gleaned from the classics"
By Johannus

O quam contempta res est homo nise supra humana surrexerit.
(from Seneca)

Oh what a contemptible work is man unless he rises above human concerns.

Messenger



THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

26th March 2012

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

Sunday 25th March 2012 Vol 143 No 13 16 Pages Rs: 20.00 Registered as a newspaper

Vicar General of Ratnapura



Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus C. Perera OSB, Bishop of Ratnapura, has appointed Very Rev. Fr. Damian Fernando as the New Vicar General of the Diocese of

(Contd on Pg. 2) >>>

Regional Episcopal Vicars



Very Rev. Fr. Cyril Gamini Fernando
Episcopal Vicar for Colombo East Region



Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernandopulle
Episcopal Vicar for Colombo South Region



Very Rev. Fr. Patrick Perera
Episcopal Vicar for Colombo North Region. (Negombo Sub Region)



Very Rev. Fr. Shanthikumar Weliwita
Episcopal Vicar for Colombo North Region. (Ja-ela Sub Region)

A new pastoral outreach for the Archdiocese

The Commission for Structural Adjustments appointed by the Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, to finalise a new programme of pastoral outreach in the Archdiocese, that would allow more room for local level planning and programming and sharing of resources, presented its final report to the Archbishop, on Monday (19), at the Presbyteral meeting held at the Joseph Vaz Centre, Borella.

The report was presented by Rev. Fr. Leo Perera as Chairman of the Structural Adjustment Committee. The adjustments are said to come into effect with the new transfers to be announced in April after the ordination of the new priests.

In his address to the priests serving in the Archdiocese of Colombo before the presentation of the report, the Cardinal also



touched on the following topics:

Decentralisation: His Eminence stating the reason for the decentralisation said that this would include the creation of a New Missionary Region in Colombo East,

consisting of existing parishes plus the new mission parish of Kethhena, Kalutara. This would have three deaneries namely, Gurubavila, Gampaha and Burulapitiya. His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo will oversee this area with Very Rev. Fr. Cyril Gamini Fernando assisting him as the Episcopal Vicar.

The same would happen in the two regions of Negombo and Ja-ela which would be overseen by His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo. There would be two Episcopal Vicars helping him in this area. They are Very Rev. Fr. Patrick Perera and Very Rev. Fr. Shanthikumar Weliwita.

His Eminence said that in the face of nagging pastoral problems "we need to intensify our efforts and reach out to

(Contd on Pg. 2) >>>

Pope sets up criminal inquiry into Vatican leaks

Pope Benedict XVI has taken the unusual step of setting up an internal, criminal investigation to identify the source of damaging leaks of compromising Vatican documents.

The inquiry will seek to punish the insiders who leaked the papers, whom the Vatican hierarchy regards as "disloyal and cowardly."

Pope Benedict XVI had been "hurt" by the leaks, said Archbishop Angelo Becciu, the Vatican's Deputy Secretary of State and third most powerful Vatican figure, in an interview with *L'Osservatore Romano*, the City State's daily newspaper.

The investigation will be conducted by a tri-

bunal and will probe all departments in the Vatican administration.

The investigation will draw on an inquiry already opened by the Vatican's own police force, the Gendarmerie, into how the leaks happened.

The Pope also decided to launch a special commission into the affair, composed of cardinals whom he had chosen personally, in order to re-establish "trust" within the Holy See.

Please see pages 8 & 9

for full report on the Archdiocesan Commission for Structural Adjustments

Archdiocesan Lenten Fund 2012

Archdiocesan Lenten Fund 2012 will be utilized to establish a special fund for the "Protection of Life and to Ensure Children's Right to Life."

Since the number of abortions are on the increase all over the country specially in

the Archdiocese, the main aim of this fund will be to help in every way possible the mothers to protect their unborn children and give birth to them.

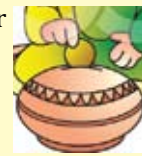
Seth Sarana Caritas Colombo will launch a programme to educate our people and to persuade them to

contribute for this special fund.

Your generous contributions are welcome.

* Lenten Collection 2011 (Archdiocesan Poor Relief Fund) Rs: 3,498,684.58

(Contd on Pg. 2) >>>



Aquinas Day and Walk - 2012

Aquinas University College will celebrate its annual Aquinas Day and Aquinas Walk - 2012, today, Sunday, 25th March at the College premises in Borella.

The two new Auxiliary Bishops of Colombo, Their Lordships, Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando and Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell

de Silva, two distinguished alumni, will be the Guests of Honour.

This year's theme, "Aquinas youth with academic excellence blaze new trails," will be the inspiring thought for students, lecturers and staff of the College to focus on the Aquinas Diamond Jubilee Celebrations to be held in 2014.

The walk will start from the College premises at 8.30 am after Holy Mass which will be at 7.00 am at the College Chapel.

The procession with banners, floats and bands will proceed down Borella-Maradana

(Contd on Pg. 2) >>>

Bright stars of Loyola College, Negombo



G.L. Samodha Silva



Himal N. Perera



Ruwan Sudharshana



Janith L. Fernando



Isuru S. Fernando

Twenty-nine students of Loyola College, Negombo brought pride and honour to their Alma Mater by securing outstanding results at last

year's (2011) Advanced Level Examination and being successful in getting University admissions for 2012.

For the first time

in the school's history a student, G.L. Samodha Kelmi de Silva, has been selected to the Medical Faculty from the biology stream. Four other

selected to the Faculty of Engineering.

From both streams another eleven students have obtained the required results to join Universities

to do degrees in Physical Science and another thirteen students have been selected in the categories of Commerce and Arts.

The School takes pride in the achievements of these students and in a brochure released states,

"This achievement is absolutely an encouragement and a

(Contd on Pg. 2) >>>



YEAR OF THE WORD OF GOD "A pure heart create in me, O God."

Urgent remedial action required says SLMTJR

The Sri Lanka Movement for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation (SLMTJR) has expressed concern regarding the present situation in the country and has urged the relevant authorities and

the Congress of Religious for "Urgent relief needed for the poorest sector of our society."

The SLMTJR has in a press release highlighted the factors that have directly or indirectly

contributed to the current situation, namely, the unbearable cost-of-living, wanton wastage of meagre resources and corruption, the ever-increasing crime rate and the non implementation of rele-

vant recommendations of the LLRC, among others.

The release also states that the steady increase of fuel prices, particularly that of kerosene had affected the fishing and farming communi-

ties. The fuel adjustment charge had only worsened the living conditions of the poor.

Hence the Movement requests that an appeal should be made to

the relevant authorities to waive off the increase in the price of kerosene oil and the fuel adjustment charge on the 30 units consumption sector.

St. Anne's Church, Talawila holds Lenten Feast in Jubilee Year



The National Shrine of St. Anne's Church, Talawila, which is due to celebrate its 250th Jubilee in August this year, held its Lenten Feast recently presided over by His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Devsritha Valence Mendis, Bishop of Chilaw.

The Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo, His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando also participated on the occasion.

Picture shows Auxiliary Bishop Emmanuel Fernando, blessing the crowd with the statue of St. Anne.

(Pic. H.A. Caldera)

Text: C.R. Dickson Anthony)

Bright stars..... Contd. from Pg. 1

a motivating factor for all students in the school, to be determined to perform better at all examinations."

The brochure states that the results obtained by the students of Loyola College speak of the high standards achieved by the school within a short period of time and attributes it to the dedication and commitment of the Staff, the Rector Rev. Fr. Trevor Martin and the support extend led by parents and well-wishers of the School.

Given below is the statistical information of the GCE, A/L (Level) Examination held in August 2011

Maths and Biology Streams	% of Passes
Physics	95%
Com. Mathematics	91%
Chemistry	90%
Biology	78%
Commerce and Arts Streams	% of Passes
Economics	100%
Catholicism	100%
Business studies	95.74%
Sinhala	92%
Logic	77%

District Rank (Gampaha District)

G.L. Samodha Kelmi De Silva	36	Medical
Hemal Nissanka Perera	54	Engineering
Ruwan Sudharshana	58	Engineering
Janith Lahiru Fernando	66	Engineering
Isuru Suraj Fernando	86	Engineering

Aquinas Day.....Contd. from Pg. 1

Road via Dean's Road, Fatima Church Junction, Lipton Circus (Eye Hospital Junction), Ward Place and Borella Cross Road before returning to the College around 11.30 am.

Aquinas University College is a non-profit-making institute, which was granted Degree Awarding

Kalutara District Daham Pasal Lenten Programme

A Lenten programme was held by the Kalutara District Daham Pasal students studying in Grades 4 to Grade 11. The programme was organized by Rev. Fr. Hemantha Udaya Kumar Perera, Director of Daham Pasal and the teachers.

Picture shows Fr. Hemantha addressing students at the Calvary Shrine.

(Pic. D. Anselm Fernando)



A New Pastoral.....

Contd. from Pg. 1

individual Catholics in the true spirit of Christ, the Good Shepherd who out of love for the flock laid down His life for them."

Kindness and Gentleness: His Eminence requested the Archdiocesan priests to devoutly celebrate the Eucharist. "Then more faithful and committed you will be towards your people. If you celebrate that Eucharist each day lovingly, you will understand how much and how intensely you should love the people you are sent to."

He said, the Eucharist was thus the Sacramental fountain or source as well as the fullest realization of pastoral charity. "In it the priest, in imitation of Christ, the High Priest, offers his own life and its many sacrifices and joys as an act of salvific self donation for the people and draws inspiration and strength for his continued faithfulness to the mission - that of loving the community to which he is sent without counting the cost," the Cardinal said.

Lay Mission Institute: In this regard His Eminence said, "The Archdiocese, in order to enhance the participation of the laity in its mission has decided to establish the Lay Missionaries Institute. It will call for volunteers and after having trained those selected, give them the Mission Cross at a solemn ceremony to be held at the Cathedral and send them in groups to work in far flung outstations, especially in the missionary region. The training centre for this project will be manned by a competent priest director and will be situated at the premises of the former Holy Family Convent at Pamunugama. They will work in the above mentioned group of parishes Catechizing the people, bringing back the lost ones and helping the parish priests in reaching out to the Catholics cut off by distances. Periodic evaluations of their work will be carried out.

"They will be chosen from those who would apply and would consecrate themselves to live a life of chastity, poverty and obedience as well as an intense prayer life and service to the remotest communities and will take temporary promises or permanent promises. They will basically remain lay.

"Soon an advertisement over the Catholic papers would be published calling for applications. Kindly direct any persons of good standing and love for the Church who would be willing to take up this voluntary service, to the Director of the project who will be named with the new transfers, said the Cardinal.

Please see pages 8 and 9 for full report on the Commission for Structural Adjustments

Status by the University Grants Commission in 2005 by Gazette Notification under the Universities Act, No.16 of 1978 as last amended by Act No.1 of 1995 in accordance with paragraph (2) of Article 44 of the Constitution.

A raffle draw has been organized with a band new car as the first prize among several other prizes, in aid of the proposed New Building Fund, in preparation for the Diamond Jubilee in 2014.

NOTICE

The Colombo Catholic Press will be closed for Easter and New Year Holidays from April 5th to 15th.

The Director

Colombo Commitium (Sinhala) holds Way of the Cross



The Colombo Commitium (Sinhala) held its Way of the Cross at St. Anne's Church, Wattala on 17th March (Sunday).

All Legionaries of the Archdiocese of Colombo and the faithful participated.

The Way of the Cross was followed by Holy Mass, presided by Rev. Fr. Ponsius Ronnie Perera, Chaplain for the Legion of Mary.

Rev. Frs. Indrajith Perera and Geetali Annesley were also present.

(H.A. Caldera)

Archdiocesan

Contd. from Pg. 1

Lenten Fund 2012

This year collection will be utilized:

1. Awareness Programme
2. Counseling
3. To support Centres

(Managed by Good Shepherd Sisters and Charity Sisters - Blessed Mother Theresa)

Vicar General.....

Contd. from Pg. 1

Ratnapura with effect from 1st March 2012. Fr. Damian succeeds Very Rev. Fr. Nicholas Fernando, who held the office for eight years and wished to be relieved of it due to health reasons.

Fr. Damian was ordained a priest on 19th August 1978 and is a priest with a wealth of experience in several apostolic and administrative fields.

He had been already administrator and Vicar General in the Diocese of Ratnapura from 2002 to 2006, and was the National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-Sedec from 2001 to 2009. He has served as Parish Priest at Gurugalla, Keerapathdeniya, Deniyaya, Elpitiya and Yatiyantota; and as Dean of the Southern Province and later as Dean of the Kegalle Deanery. He has also served as the Diocesan Director of the Youth Apostolate and LAKRIVI.

St. Mary's Tamil School, Bambalapitiya celebrates 80 years

His Lordship Bishop Emmanuel Fernando presided at the solemn Eucharistic celebration together with other priests, on the occasion of the 80th Anniversary of St. Mary's Tamil School, Bambalapitiya on 16th March 2012 at St. Mary's Church, Bambalapitiya.

Preaching at the Eucharistic celebration, His Lordship Bishop Emmanuel appealed to the students to not only to make achievements in studies, but also to pursue in a life of sanctity, learning the lessons from the lives of great saints.

Mentioning St. Therese of Lisieux who was born in Alençon, Normandy in France on January 2, 1873 and died at the young age of twenty-four, His Lordship said that at such a young age she had spent almost the last ten years of her life in a cloistered Carmelite convent.

"She didn't begin a religious order or go on missions or do any great or extraordinary work but she did write a journal of her life at the request of her religious superiors in the convent, which was published after her death and is entitled 'Story of a Soul'.

"She has become famous because of her spirituality called 'The Little Way' and also because of the many miracles and favours



A traditional Tamil welcome to His Lordship

attributed to her.

"St. Thérèse writes beautifully about receiving her First Holy Communion on May 8th 1884, "Ah! How sweet was that first kiss of Jesus! It was a kiss of love; I felt that I was loved, and I said: "I love You, and I give myself to You forever!"

Although St. Thérèse frequently calls herself a 'little flower' in the Story of a Soul, her strong personality is revealed here. St. Thérèse reminds us that we can all aspire to sainthood by doing the ordinary things extraordinarily well," His Lordship said.

St. Mary's Tamil Mixed

School was started with twelve students in 1905 within the premises of St. Mary's Church, Bambalapitiya. From 1940 onwards the school was conducted in the Sinhala and Tamil streams under two Principals. This arrangement has since been formalized and there are now two schools - St. Mary's Tamil Vidyalayam and St. Mary's Sinhalese School. These schools have been built on property belonging to St. Mary's Church. Although these schools are now government schools, their connection with St. Mary's Church, Bambalapitiya still continues.

(Rev. Fr. Sunil De Silva)

Two-Day Lenten Retreat at Aquinas University College

A two-day Lenten retreat will be held at the Cardinal Cooray Auditorium, Aquinas University College, Borella on 30 and 31 March 2012.

The retreat will begin on Friday (30) with a lecture on the theme, "Holy Week: It's Liturgical Significance," from 4.30pm to 6.30 pm., by Rev. Fr. Indrajith Perera and on Saturday (31), from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm, Rev. Fr. Don Anton Saman Hettiarachchi will lecture on the theme, "The cries of the Crucified Messiah" and "The seven last words of Jesus on the cross"

All are Welcome. Please bring your Bible.

Fatima Church Parish Community presents 'Closer to Christ'



The Fatima Parish Community along with the Choro Calibre Youth Choir will present "Closer to Jesus" a Lenten spiritual journey with hymns, prayers and reflection on 30th March 2012, at Fatima Church, Maradana from 6.30 pm onwards.

Guest performances by renowned singers Francis D'Almeida, Mariazelle Goonathileke and Rienzy Pereira.

All are welcome!



Church in the World

Perfume created for Pope Benedict XVI



Pope Benedict XVI, a lover of hats

After Sarah Jessica Parker, Eva Mendez and Katy Perry comes the Pope - a signature eau de cologne has been created for the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics.

The scent has been created by an Italian perfumer who has previously worked with Sting, Madonna and King Juan Carlos of Spain.

While celebrities often choose decidedly racy names for their perfumes - 'Midnight Fantasy' by Britney Spears and the distinctly unholy 'Diavolo' for Antonio Banderas, the name of Pope Benedict XVI's cologne is likely to be more demure, judging by precedent.

Silvana Casoli, the Italian 'nose' who recently created the scent, previously came up with two other colognes called 'Water of Hope' and 'Water of Faith', but they were for the use of the Roman Catholic Church in general whereas this one will be worn only by the Pope.

Unlike celebrity perfumes adorned with pictures of breathless Hollywood starlets, this one will not be available to buy.

The cologne is meant to reflect the German pontiff's love of the forests and animals in his native Bavaria, as well as peace and tranquillity. It is infused with lemon tree blossom and the smell of Spring grass.

Ms Casoli, from Reggio Emilia in northern Italy, said it was hard to come up with a scent that faithfully reflected the Pope's personality and theological outlook, and she nearly pulled out of the project.

"Then I realised that an essence like this had to have at its core something pure and clean, recalling the idea of peace," she told *Il Messagero* newspaper.

"I thought of the smells the Pope would smell when praying at the Grotto of Lourdes," she said.

Communique Concerning the Society of St. Pius X

Given below is the text of a communique relating to the Society of St. Pius X, released by the Holy See Press Office.

"During the meeting of 14 September 2011 between Cardinal William Levada, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and president of the Pontifical Commission 'Ecclesia Dei', and Bishop Bernard Fellay, superior general of the Society of St. Pius X, the latter was presented with a Doctrinal Preamble, accompanied by a Preliminary Note, as a fundamental basis for achieving full reconciliation with the Apostolic See. This defined certain doctrinal principles and criteria for the interpretation Catholic doctrine, which are necessary to ensure faithfulness to the Church Magisterium and 'sentire cum Ecclesia'.

"The response of the Society of St. Pius X to the aforesaid Doctrinal Preamble, which arrived in January 2012, was examined by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith before being submitted to the Holy Father for his judgement. Pursuant to the decision made by Pope Benedict XVI, Bishop Fellay was, in a letter informed of the evaluation of his response. The letter states that the position he expressed is not sufficient to overcome the doctrinal problems which lie at the foundation of the rift between the Holy See and the Society of St. Pius X.

"At the end of the meeting, moved by concern to avoid an ecclesial rupture of painful and incalculable consequences, the superior general of the Society of St. Pius X was invited to clarify his position in order to be able to heal the existing rift, as is the desire of Pope Benedict XVI".

[Vatican News Information -16.03.2012]

SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus



THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA
Messenger
 SINCE 1869

EDITORIAL

25 March 2012

A Truth Commission will help to heal the wounds of war

Significant social trauma was caused by the war especially during its last stages. So when a conflict is over it is generally accepted that the victims should be in a position to know what happened to their kith and kin who disappeared in the course of the war. There are many civilians who have disappeared and whose relations do not know whether they are still alive or what happened to them. It is not only the Tamil victims who should know the truth. The LLRC recommended that a full investigation be conducted to ascertain the truth about the killing of the six hundred policemen.

We are still in the phase of transitional justice. Transitional justice requires truth telling at a minimum. The integrity of the law may well require that those who broke the law should be punished. But transitional justice requires that truth must be told and accepted by the victims of the conflict. The victims should know what happened so that they can be reconciled to their losses. There must also be redress for the victims, particularly the civilians. In Timor Leste, reconciliation was sought between victims and perpetrators. In Peru, it was aimed at dignifying victims. In Sri Lanka it could be a way of consolidating the peace.

But in Argentina, it set the stage for criminal prosecution and criminal justice sector reforms. What is needed in Sri Lanka is truth telling and institutional reforms. While it is true that the integrity of the law requires the punishment of the transgressors of the law, yet the larger objective of peace and reconciliation between the two ethnic communities would require more a recognition of the truth about the victims sufferings rather than a judicial inquiry into the commission of offences during the war.

The LLRC recommendations are aimed at resolving the grievances of the several communities but we regret that these recommendations and even its previous interim recommendations have not been implemented. If the Government is serious about building a single nation incorporating the Tamil people of the North and East, then these recommendations must be implemented speedily. Some of them like the demilitarization of the North or the disarming of the vigilante groups should not take time. But they are still to be implemented. The Government must realize that procrastination and delay only undermines its credibility. "Dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay institutionalized deception. Their lies were directed to both the victims, as well as their surviving family members."

Argentina's "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo," demanded to know what happened to loved ones. We had a similar Mothers Movement after the JVP uprising. The UN Human Rights Commission codified the "right to truth" in its 2005 resolution, which obligated the State to investigate human rights violations, inform individuals of the fate of missing or forcibly displaced relatives, provide information on official investigations, provide "mortal remains," and disclose the identity of violators."

Truth Commissions could also provide an overarching narrative of the conflict sorting out the truth from hearsay and exaggerated versions put out by interested parties on either side. Truth Commissions are essentially victim-centered. But it requires rigorous testing of witnesses to ascertain the truth. The Government has agreed at Geneva to pass the Witness Protection Bill prepared several years ago. Such witness protection is very necessary to ascertain the truth through a process of examination and cross examination as in a judicial trial. But such a Truth Commission must have independence both financial and operational independence. The objective need not be to launch prosecution but to ascertain the truth. The South African Truth Commission allowed persons to confess and seek pardon from the victims. There is much to say for such a Commission to be an alternative to prosecutions.

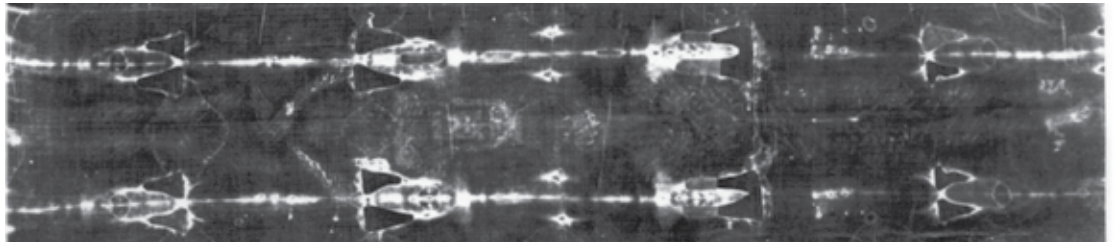
It is true that the International Human Rights bodies are seeking to prosecute those who have committed war crimes. But peace and reconciliation should not be sacrificed for the sake of retributive justice. Some governments may create a Truth Commission to ascertain the truth while others may seek to defer action, deflect criticism, and undermine justice. What is required in our post war conflict situation is to rebuild the nation- a single nation built on consent of the Tamil people who had waged war to obtain a separate State for themselves.

Both sides have committed numerous heinous offences during the protracted conflict and it may be best to forgive and forget rather than seek retributive justice. We can seek to convince the International community that we do not want them to go into war crimes and prosecutions if we have made peace with ourselves and got reconciled. The LLRC Recommendations are a good compromise and should be implemented to do so.

Lent and the Holy Shroud

(Some help from the Holy Shroud to inspire us during the Season of Lent)

By Fr. Louis-Marie Navaratne O.S.B., S.T.p. (Rome)



More often than not, the faithful lay people are a source of great inspiration to us, the clergy and religious. Not just by their life-example, but also by the thought provoking questions they sometimes ask. For instance, at one of the recent Shroud Conferences, some people posed this question to me: "Father, how can we use the Holy Shroud and its Image to help us to get more spiritual benefit during the upcoming Season of Lent?" Well, hopefully what follows, will be of help to many more people than just those who asked the above question.

I often tell my listeners at the monthly Shroud Conferences: *The Holy Shroud with its Image of Jesus is valid for all seasons!* But, it is obvious that it should be especially inspirational for the Season of Lent. Even a cursory glance at the Lord's Body, laid out on the Shroud (Cloth) - as He lay buried in the tomb is sufficient to evoke the memory of His passion and death. Lent is a time in which we need to try and "make a U-Turn" (if I may borrow a phrase from a recent homily by a priest-friend). And what could encourage us better or inspire us best, than to focus on what the Lord has done for us by laying down His life on the Cross and shedding His precious Blood to deliver us from sin and evil?

Before I proceed with my "Shroud-Inspirations for Lent", let me point out something important to keep in mind, right from the start. It is that the Image of Jesus on the Shroud does not only point to the Lord's passion and death, but also to His resurrection. As for some implications the Shroud and its Image have regarding the resurrection, we will consider at the end of this article. Still, it cannot be helped that throughout this article there would be references made to both the "negative" and "positive" dimensions of Christ's "Paschal Mystery" (the "dying" and "rising"). Yes, this amazing "modern parable" or this "Icon of Christ" points to both, the darkness of the reality of suffering and death, and the glorious light of the resurrection.

"Words of Wisdom" from the Popes:

Out of the many recent Conferences I have given on the Holy Shroud, one was entirely on the "Teachings of the Popes": In the section of my Notes regarding *"The Shroud & Its Veneration by Popes through the Centuries"*, I mentioned at least 29 Popes, who have been involved in encouraging devotion and love for the Holy Shroud - particularly in the context of the Liturgy. The Holy Fathers granted many indulgences (Papal Blessings) in connection with the veneration of the Holy Shroud and the celebration of its annual Feast (*In 1506, Pope Julius* instituted the Feast of the Holy Shroud with its proper Mass and office, appropriately assigned to May 4, the day which followed the finding of the True Cross). All this was, in order to foster greater love for our Divine Redeemer and to encourage people to do penance for the offenses committed against God and His commandments.

Here, I will limit my sharing only to the words of Blessed John Paul II and His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. In their Homilies ("Meditations" or "Reflections") given in Turin at the Shroud Expositions of 1998 (Sunday: 24th May) and 2010 (Sunday: 2nd May) respectively, we have a whole wellspring of inspirations for Lent and beyond! Having re-read both their "Homilies": I felt a great desire to share with everyone something of the soul-searching and life-transforming words spoken

by the two Popes in connection with the Holy Shroud.

Homily (Meditation) of Blessed John Paul II

In the opening lines of his Homily, Blessed John Paul II refers to the Holy Shroud as "one of the most unsettling signs of the Redeemer's suffering love" - meaning to say, the "most awesome", "most thought provoking" or "most sorrowful signs"! He calls it the "precious Linen" or the "sacred Linen", which helps us to understand better God's love for us in Jesus and evokes the "believer's loving attention and complete willingness to follow the Lord." The Shroud is, according to the Pope "a challenge to our intelligence." While entrusting to the scientists to perform their task of continued investigations, the Pope reiterates the fact that tradition has held to the truth of the Holy Shroud as having "wrapped the body of our Redeemer after he had been taken down from the cross." For those who believe, the Shroud is "a mirror of the Gospel" which reflects all that the Gospels report on the passion and death of Jesus. It is a "unique sign" that points to Jesus, the Word of God, which "invites us to pattern our lives on the life of the One who gave himself for us."

Blessed John Paul II further describes the Shroud as "the image of human suffering" depicting the imprint of the tortured body of the Crucified One. Here, the Holy Father enumerates the various situations of modern society which plunges millions upon millions of human beings into poverty, war, degradation, exploitation, hardship and humiliation. It is impossible, he says, for anyone of us to stand before the Shroud and not be moved by the tragic situation of our many brothers and sisters. So, the Shroud is truly "an image of God's love" and at the same time, "an image of human sin". While it becomes a tangible expression of the immensity of the Father's love which led Him to give up (Greek: *'paradidomai'*) His Only Beloved Son for our sake (In. 3:16), it also underlines the deep relationship between suffering and sin - "the sins of every human being." When we contemplate the Shroud Image, it helps us to become free of all selfishness and pride. As the Pope puts it, by means of the Shroud, the Word of God has continued through the centuries, to speak, to whisper in our ears: "believe in God's love, the greatest treasure given to humanity, and flee from sin, the greatest misfortune in history."

In this 1998 Turin Homily, Blessed John Paul II leads us even deeper into the contemplation of the mystery hidden in the Holy Shroud, when he says that this burial cloth is also "an image of powerlessness." He is, of course, connecting the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, who embraced the reality of death as the final means of liberating humanity from the grip of sin and suffering. It is truly terrible to think that "not even the Son of God withstood the power of death"; but, He did this willingly, subjecting Himself to this form of "total powerlessness", so that all of us might share in His victory and His resurrection and immortal life. Adding a final phrase to his explanation of the spiritual meaning of the Shroud, the Pope calls it "an image of silence." But, this tragic silence of death, through a "total immersion in God's eternal present," brings us to triumph over every power of evil.

(Contd. on Pg. 5)

(Contd. from Pg. 4)

In his final greeting to the faithful who gathered in Turin for the Exposition, Blessed John Paul II commends the pilgrims for "coming to see" the Shroud, which he proclaims again as the "Icon of Christ" - "this tragic and enlightening sign of the Passion, which proclaims the Redeemer's love." The Pope prays to the Holy Spirit for all of us so that we may see Our Lord and Saviour Jesus through the Shroud. And then, if we accept the message of the Shroud and make it the "decisive inspiration of our lives", he says, the Shroud "becomes an invitation to face every experience, including that of suffering and extreme helplessness, with the attitude of those who believe that God's merciful love overcomes every form of poverty, limitation, and temptation to despair."

Homily (Meditation) of Pope Benedict XVI

In his turn, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI also, on 2nd May, 2010, leads us in a profound meditation on the Holy Shroud. He humbly says that he had been looking forward to be able to stand before the Holy Shroud - "this extraordinary Icon"; and that he was experiencing the Pilgrimage "with special intensity". The reason for that, He points out, is because he was there as the 'Successor of Peter' and therefore, was carrying the whole Church and the whole of humanity in his heart! He bases his reflections on the subtitle of the Solemn Exposition: "The Mystery of Holy Saturday". He calls the Shroud "the Icon of Holy Saturday".

He begins this meditation by confirming that the Holy Shroud of Turin corresponds "in every way to what the Gospels tell us to Jesus"; and continues to enumerate what the Evangelist St. Mark writes regarding the passion story (Mk. 15:42-46). While mentioning that even the other Evangelists are in agreement with St. Mark, Pope Benedict underlines the fact that the Turin Shroud shows us an image depicting the Body of Jesus as it lay inside the tomb; and as for the time-frame, it was "chronologically brief (about a day and a half), but immense, infinite in its value and in its significance."

In connecting the Holy Shroud with the theme of Holy Saturday, the Pope draws a powerful correlation between what happened at the event of Christ's Passion and the spirituality of contemporary humanity. The "death of God" or "the concealment of God", the Pope seems to say, in its existentialist or modern philosophical sense, parallels the faith of the Christian tradition. This age of ours "has become increasingly a Holy Saturday." The darkness that characterizes Holy Saturday is a challenge to all believers; and all of us "have something to do with this darkness." But, turning our attention to the Holy Shroud, and its amazing qualities, the Holy Father, offers a dramatic lesson on the Passion of Jesus. Just as the Shroud being a 'photographic' document, contains both a "positive" and a "negative" quality, so too, the death of the Son of God, poses a "totally positive" dimension. To put it in the Pope's own words: "the darkest mystery of faith is at the same time the most luminous sign of a never-ending hope." The Holy Shroud speaks to us about that "unique and unrepeatable interval in history", that "moment" between death and resurrection, in which Jesus Christ shared

our dying." He was the Only One who passed through this "no man's land" (Holy Saturday) "with the signs of his Passion for man's sake: *Passio Christi. Passio hominis.*"

Pope Benedict at this point takes all of us on a spiritual roller coaster as it were, on a contemplative journey, into the very depths of the mystery of Holy Saturday - offering us the truest meaning of the Holy Shroud. God, madeMan, he says, enters into the realm of the most extreme and absolute solitude in order to lead us to cross over into the realm of love. Just as on Holy Saturday, love penetrated the extreme darkness of death in the tomb; a voice resounded in the midst of absolute human loneliness; and a hand stretched forth to take ours, to lead us through this ultimate solitude. Yes, the Holy Shroud stands for the truth that: "Human beings live because they are loved; and if love even penetrated the realm of death, then life also even reached there. In the hour of supreme solitude we shall never be alone: *Passio Christi. Passio hominis.*"

Continuing to stand before the Holy Shroud and his eyes fixed on "this sacred Cloth", the Holy Father completes his meditation by a final insight into the Shroud being a perfect symbol of the mystery of Holy Saturday. He goes on to say that, if so many thousands upon thousands of people wish to venerate the Holy Shroud, it is because they see the light, the "light of the Resurrection" that shines from it - and not just the darkness of death. No doubt, people see the Death of Jesus very clearly on the Shroud, but they also are aware of the Resurrection, which brings "the victory of life over death, of love over hatred." We cannot miss the Holy Father's heartfelt conviction when he proclaims: "This is the power of the Shroud ..." and proceeds to point particularly to the face of the "Man of sorrows" on the Shroud; and from this face "a solemn majesty shines, a paradoxical lordship." Not just the face, but also the hands, feet, side and the whole body of the man on the Shroud seem to speak in a language which is heard in silence; and this language is of blood: "The Shroud is an Icon written in blood; the blood of a man who was scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified and whose right side was pierced Every trace of blood speaks of love and of life Especially that huge stain near his rib, made by the blood and water that flowed copiously It is like a spring that murmurs in the silence, and we can hear it, we can listen to it in the silence of Holy Saturday."

Pope Benedict's parting words, accompanied by his papal blessing was directed not only to the immense crowds of pilgrims who had come to Turin, but also to the millions around the world who were participating in the solemn veneration of the Holy Shroud - through the miracle of modern communication! No one could doubt the Holy Father's keen desire and his special effort to impress the Image of the Shroud in everyone's mind and heart:

Dear Friends, let us always praise the Lord for his faithful and merciful love. When we leave this holy place, may we carry in our eyes the Image of the Shroud, may we carry in our hearts this word of love and praise God with a life full of faith, hope and charity. Thank you."

A Sense of Humour and Virtue

In the history of spirituality, there grew up devotions to Holy Face of Christ, the Sacred Heart, the precious Blood, the Shoulder which carried the cross. On the Wednesday of Easter at Mass, we find Christ meeting two men on their way to Emmaus. If I were to invent a devotion based upon these passages Scripture (Lk 24: 13-35), I would call it a devotion the "straight face" or the "deadpan of Christ." It seems as if the Lord is playing a "tease" on these two known disciples, and we only know that one of them is called Clopas. It is a kind of tease because at the very end, the two are so surprised and obviously filled with joy when they recognize him "in the breaking of the bread." Perhaps they did not recognize him because he was now existing with a risen body, and so did not look like himself. If one travels to Ravenna, there in many Churches, the Lord is portrayed without a beard and symbolically looking very young, all hinting at least to his resurrected body.

Most teases are often practical jokes meant to demean someone, show one's superiority but to delight the person making fun of someone else. But there also can be innocent teases often done by men to indirectly praise another by saying the opposite of his talent to force his friend to tease back. It is a moment of masculine "play."

We have seen that the life of virtue is somewhat of a struggle, and often requires virtue beyond what is reasonable. Putting order into one's emotional life can be most difficult. Living in family, marital life or community life can be very demanding. Hence the need arises for diversion, called recreation, play and a species of play, humour or mirth. Without this aspect in one's life, virtue can become not a joy but a great cause for discouragement leading to a heavy heart. Without the delight of play and humour, each and all can become so serious that its pain can lead one to give up the process of growing in perfection on all levels, moral as well as infused virtues. As one grows in the spiritual life, then the need for diversion does not cease but its length may not be as necessary, whether vacations to a beach or to more simple recreations of playing a game or conversing for an hour with friends.

Being able to tell a funny story is not inimical to the serious pursuit of holiness. Even St. Theresa of Avila was to have said that she did not want sad saints in her community. Humour and its attendant laughter then are great aids to joy, which cannot be manufactured or willed.

Calling humour an aspect of beauty does mean that it signals transcendence like Bach, Mozart, -Michelangelo or a Gerald Manley Hopkins. It is beautiful in a different way from other arts and is more "down to earth" or incarnational. Truly moral humour points to human absurdities,

either to poke fun at the errors of life or to reform attitudes that are false or unrealistic. The aesthetic experience of humour is in the line of all the arts, being verbal and intellectual causing the delight, not of moving tears such as Beach's Passion of St. Matthew, but simply laughter and sometimes so strong that it produces its own tears of a different kind of joy.

Humour then like all of life's desires and pleasures, joys and sorrows needs to be well ordered by reason to allay the ordinary sorrows and trials of daily life to season it with a deeper perspective than simply being difficult. Virtuous humour gives hope and helps one take the difficulties of life in stride. Being - overburdened and unable to laugh creates situations where anger, self-hatred, worry and anxiety begin to rule rather than being overcome. Humour alone cannot do all of the allaying. It takes prayer and divine love to keep on the path of holiness. But humour can aid in the process, which in turn makes prayer possible. In that sense humour is necessary for salvation as an assistant to the other virtues. It aids in the process of bringing equilibrium and balance to the human spirit.

Does God have a sense of humour? There is humour in God but in a way we cannot understand. If is a potential perfection in us, it must be in God supereminently. What that means is impossible to thorn until we see the One-in-Three. We can defi-



nitely say that God causes humour but is not surprised by a joke because he is all knowing of the past, present, and the future.

Will there be laughter in heaven? It would seem so a *per accidens* way, that is, in a secondary way because the joy of the beatific vision will not cancel out other joys. It will not be the laughter of weakness making fun but a sense of victory over sin and death. And if the angels are given ideas from God over periods of eternity, it would seem the same can happen to us, which will mean those more advanced may be able in a secondary way to make up jokes to entertain other human beings.

In a song arranged by Ralph Vaughn Williams (All People that on Earth Do Dwell, OLD HUNDREDTH), there is a line which puts a finish to this short study: All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell, Come we before him, and rejoice. (Courtesy: Book of A Thomistic Theological Perspective - Basil Cole, OP)



Life span Calculator

The North Eastern Mutual Insurance Company has produced a life span calculator which has thirteen points that predict a person's life expectancy. Since the records were kept women have outlived men and if you are a woman you have a better chance of living longer than men. In fact, women live 10% longer than men.

This may be because of male hormone testosterone that leads to aggressive behaviour which increases the chances of accidents, risk-taking and violence. Anger and aggressiveness also produces an excessive amount of cortisol and epinephrine which raises your blood pressure and heart rate which are detrimental to your health. Testosterone also decreases HDL, good

cholesterol levels and the female hormone estrogen increases HDL levels.

Another way to calculate your longevity factor is by measuring your Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is measured by dividing your weight in kilograms with the square of your height in meters. The equation is: $\text{Weight in KG} / \text{Height in meters}^2$. The normal BMI is between 18 to 25. BMI of 25 to 30 is regarded as overweight and above 30 is regarded as obese. Obesity can lead to premature death, high blood pressure, strokes, diabetes, cancer and debilitating diseases such as arthritis. Medical professionals suggest that you keep your BMI within normal range for longevity.

Smoking is categorically harmful to your



Bits and Pieces

Madi

lungs and heart, two important organs of the body. Smoking can cause lung cancer, respiratory and neurological diseases. It can ultimately lead to premature dementia. Taking excessive amounts of alcohol and recreational drugs such as cocaine, opioids and marijuana can lead to neurological diseases. These also can lead people to risky behaviour such as driving while intoxicated, or aggressive behaviour which can jeopardize one's life as well as the lives of others.

Wearing seat

belts, keeping to posted speed limits and adhering to traffic regulations while driving or travelling in a vehicle can prolong your life by avoiding fatal and life-threatening accidents. Regular visits to the physician also have been pinpointed as a factor that will help your longevity. Timely detection of diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol levels can lead to prompt treatment and preventing disastrous chronic diseases.

Another factor that can prolong your life

is regular exercise. This will lead to both physical as well as mental health. You can reap the benefits of physical activity by walking or jogging or going to a gymnasium or a swimming pool for routine exercises at least for 30 minutes, four to five times a week.

Stress is one of the factors discussed in the life-span-calculator. Mental stress cannot be avoided in modern day life. Stress itself may not be directly detrimental to health. The adverse or therapeutic results of stress depend on how you handle it in your life's situations. If you

have developed therapeutic stress-coping mechanisms, stress can make you stronger. If the person is not able to cope with stress it can lead to mental as well as psycho-somatic illnesses.

In spite of modern advances of health science, human beings cannot live forever. But looking after your body and mind, regular exercises, keeping regular health checks with a qualified physician and keeping away from toxins such as drugs, alcohol and tobacco can give you not only a longer life but also a high quality of life.

Every little thing you do can turn into a mas-

In all what you do, whom do you try to please? Do you try to please your loved ones or do you try to please someone from whom you expect favours and monetary benefits in-return? In the final analysis, from whom should you get the credit for a job well done?

The famous artist Michelangelo was called to Rome by Pope Julius the 2nd to work on a painting project. Michelangelo wanted to refuse the work, because it was to paint a dozen

pictures on the ceiling of a small chapel in the Vatican. He was a trained painter no doubt, but his true passion was sculpture. As he was almost forced to do the job, he reluctantly accepted it.

Michelangelo's rivals hoped he would not do a good job because painting was not what he was famous for. But after he accepted the work, he put his heart and soul into it. Although he was asked to draw the 12 Apostles, he did much more, he also drew 400 figures and 9 scenes from the book of Genesis.

For four long years, he lay on his back painting the now famous Sistine Chapel's ceiling. His neck, shoulders, back ached. Paint got into his eyes. His vi-

Thoughts that haunt me

Ananda Perera

sion was damaged. Later he would call these years the "tortured years" that made him feel old.

Finally a masterpiece was created. Many famous artists copied his style.

What made Michelangelo not give up and

give his best under the very difficult circumstances? One day, when he was working, someone approached him and told him, "No one will ever see this corner of this small chapel." His reply was simple. "God will see."

So, give your best. Turn every little thing you do into a 'Masterpiece.' Whatever you do has to be accounted for before the Lord on the date of your final reckoning. Should you not be proud of a performance like that of St. Paul who claimed, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the last judge, will reward me on that day?"

days?" observed Pamela.

"Also we must go by the words of Jesus who said, 'When you are fasting, do not go about with a long face, drawing attention to your fast.' He said that even when doing Charity, the right hand must not know what the left hand is doing. God the Father who sees in secret, knows what you are doing and that is enough. In that manner, your sacrifice is really worth it," opined Sheila.

"People who have regular meals can think of giving up meat on a regular basis," remarked Pamela, adding, "Those who do their own marketing and cooking can look for alternatives like soyameat or chickpeas."

"Food is not the only pleasure. Those who are married can think of abstaining from sex. That is hard, especially if you are newly married. But both parties must agree to it and not impose it on the partner," said Pamela.

"If you are bad-tempered, you could make up your mind to control your temper during Lent. Now that is really difficult. When you feel yourself getting worked up, just take a deep breath and count up to twenty *before* you say a word or lift a hand. Quick, take a walk or a shower, or punch a cushion to let off steam. That's what I do," shared Malik.



A CROSS

The Way 73

By Sirohmi Gunsekera

Giving Up

"Lent is a time when you should give up pleasures, things you enjoy doing," proclaimed Malik.

"Yes, the easiest thing is to give up eating sweets or chocolates, if that's what you like. But it's hard to continue it for over a month," commented Sheila.

"Or you could abstain from eating meat, if that's what you really enjoy," said Malik. "I know people who really prefer to eat fish so for them, giving up meat is not a real sacrifice," said Sheila.

"The truth is that many Catholics simply go by the book even when it comes to Fasting and Abstinence. A true Christian must really ask himself or herself, "What is it that I really enjoy? What pleasure can I give up and can I truly sacrifice it for forty

AN UNBORN CHILD'S PRAYER

Lord I am afraid to be born
I do not wish to see
the light of day;
I can hear and feel
many things that
happen outside,
Even though I am safely ensconced in my
mother's womb.
How I enjoy my stay within-my mother,
I feel so cushioned.
When she laughs I too laugh
When she cries I too cry,
And when she bounces I too bounce.
Oh! It is such fun.
But anxiety fills my heart when I think of
the day
I would be born
My mother of course is counting the days,
To see me her bundle of joy
And hold me close to her heart.
The things I hear weakens my pulse,
The 'white-vans' people being abducted,
All the cheatings, swindlings and extortions
I do not know what these things are
But from the apprehensive whispers I hear
I guess they are outrageously vicious.
When I grow up will these people
Make use of me to do wrong?
To carry out their evil purposes
And if I don't comply, will they torture me?
Or lock me up somewhere or kill me?
Make me disappear without trace;
If such a thing happens to me,
My parents will be inconsolable
And fated to endless sadness.
Therefore dear Lord
I am afraid to be born.

Angela Perera

TAKE TIME FOR A MINUTE OF HUMOUR - SMILE!



"At the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, Aaya Madonna was pushing a pram with a baby and the child was trying to jump off the pram, when she shouted, "Diploma, Diploma."

A professor from Peradeniya University, doing the usual walk at that time, came running towards her "Did you call me? "No sir! Our Lokumahattaya sent podinona to England to get a diploma. This is the diploma she got."

Rev. Fr. Fracxid Anthony Fernando OMI

He who loves his life loses it," this is a truth stated by Christ at the solemn moment when he was speaking of the purpose of his own painful death. We can, we know, lose the eternal life Christ won for us if we are too attached to our transitory, earthly life. If we

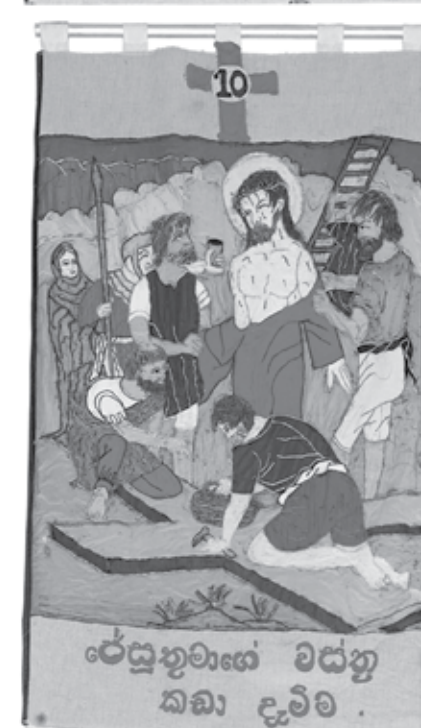


Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

A Way of the Cross appliqued

love our own comforts, pleasures, temporal gains, our own worldly will, more than we love our unending, happy future, then we are loving our earthly lives wrongly, and we are gravely risking the loss of the future, true life. We can use the things of this life which God gives us, and still be close followers of Christ. The lawful possession of the goods of this world, the enjoyment of the licit pleasures of life, are allowed to the fervent Christian. If these possessions and pleasures are accepted with Christian gratitude, they will become stepping-stones that will help us across the river of life to our everlasting home beyond.

The cloth banners shown here hangs in the chapel of the Don Bosco Boys' Home at Pamunugama. The banners are stitched and appliqued in bright colours.



If you have information on any Christian art work specially that of the Way of the Cross please contact us on 0777489510.

THE COMMISSION FOR STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENTS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF COLOMBO - STAGE II

1. Preamble:

A Brief History

The Structural Adjustment process is not a mere pastoral option taken hurriedly. It began with the approval at the Presbyteral meeting of March 2010 when the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan (APP) was given the green light by the clergy of the Archdiocese. Prior to it there was a questionnaire drafted which was discussed at deanery level and by other groupings and the final report was introduced to the Priests.

After an evaluation in March 2011 it was pointed out that nothing much had moved in the right direction and it was agreed that some structures have to be changed and the need for regionalisation was felt. Thus a new Committee was formed under the leadership of Very Rev. Fr. Elmo Dias. That committee consulted widely, contacting the Deaneries, Colleges, Religious and Laity and submitted its report in October 2011. After discussing this at regional level at that Presbyteral meeting, an expanded committee was formed and entrusted with the task of drawing up a practical plan for the Structural adjustments which would be viable and sustainable.

2. Scope:

The Mandate of the Commission at Stage II was: Concentrating on the 2 Regions earmarked for the first initiative, viz Colombo-North and Colombo East (missionary region):-

- I. to study the Deaneries involved (existing or new),
- II. to look at the parishes in need of restructuring for better and more personal pastoral care,
- III. to identify Centers which are more accessible and are more suitable from which to launch a renewed pastoral and missionary thrust,
- IV. to identify the priorities for the region and the need for regional coordinators according to these priorities.
- V. to consider the financial impact (viability, sustainability) of any new divisions envisaged
- VI. to make concrete, practical suggestions/proposals based on the above findings.

3. Method:

The Commission for Structural Adjustments took as its point of departure:

- A. The very comprehensive Interim Report prepared by Very Rev Fr. Elmo Dias and his Team
- B. The reports and suggestions of the four (4) Regional level discussions at the Presbyteral meeting on the 24th and 25th Oct 2011.
- C. Discussions at the meetings of the two regions selected as the pilot areas and chaired by His Eminence, viz: Colombo East (Missionary region) and

Colombo North (Negombo region)

D. Discussions at the Gampaha and Gurubavila Deanery meetings plus meetings with the Horana and Matugama Parish Priests

E. Consultations with EVs, Deans and other experienced personages of these two areas.

4. Some Relevant Points:

While making the following proposals based on the wide ranging discussions held, certain relevant aspects should also be mentioned.

i. Although all existing -regions accepted the need for structural adjustments it was unanimously expressed that changes should be adequately prepared and phased out over a period of time. Therefore it seemed better to start with one or two regions and apostolates and evaluate the result/developments.

ii. There is a strong expectation that the active presence of the Auxiliaries should be felt in the regions, particularly in the mission areas in order to encourage the workers in the vineyard. At the Presbyteral meeting this was understood as one of the reasons for the whole exercise of regionalisation. Perhaps after the heavy backlog of Confirmations and other ceremonial functions eases up, this expectation can be addressed.

iii. The point of whether it is necessary to increase the number of EVs or instead, enhance the role of the Deans which has been mentioned often, was also discussed, since the Deanery is a more homogenous unit and the Deans have a clear standing in Canon Law. It was also expressed that the EVs were transferable and their terms could be for a limited period, eg: Five years, as in the past.

iv. While the division of Parishes and re-adjusting of deaneries may seem necessary in some cases, division of Parishes is a very serious matter and should be for the greater good of Christ's faithful, whether implemented in the short term or the long term. Therefore although many proposal regarding creating new parishes came up as seen in the Report of Fr. Elmo Dias (pages 14 - 17), and also in our consultations, only a limited number have been recommended at the start.

v. Care must also be taken that division will not lead to fragmentation, weakening of the traditional Catholic blocs, isolation of priests who will more and more be called upon to work alone and financial instability of the new places causing greater strain on central finances. In many cases teamwork in parishes with more priests in order to extend the range of Pastoral activity (and not to create more free time), can be a viable alternative which has many advantages.

vi. It is also important to keep in touch with any developments in the civil divisions and boundaries within which the parishes, deaneries and regions exist and operate.

vii. The principle component of the paradigm shift emphasises the **pastoral approach of the priest to the faithful and encouraging their responsibility as the lay faithful in the Mission** of the Church, helping this concept to move from an empty cliché to a vibrant reality.

5. The Report of the Second Stage was presented to His Eminence by the Re-structuring Committee on Thursday the 9th February 2012

His Eminence stated at the outset that his intention was to devote himself more to Pastoral Visitation and developing the contact with the priests which was one of his primary responsibilities. To this end he had already scheduled a series of encounters with priests according to the ordination groups at Tewatte.

During the discussion it was pointed out that there is an underlying expectation that the active presence of the Auxiliaries should be felt in the regions, particularly in the mission areas in order to encourage the workers in the vineyard. At the Presbyteral meeting this was understood as one of the reasons for the whole exercise of regionalisation and restructuring.

The detailed re designing of deaneries and parishes as suggested by the study group were then discussed at some length.

With the appropriate changes being made, the Proposals were presented to the Council of Priests (COP) on Monday 12th March as follows:

6. Proposals subsequent to the Discussion

COLOMBO NORTH REGION

The Deanery of Negombo to be strengthened to coincide with the Municipal boundaries in order to present a vibrant Catholic presence. It is a big area and needs to have a more concerted and effective pastoral approach in order to develop the committed participation of the faithful. This is also equivalent to the area of the "Sasana Sanvardhana Mandalaya" which has been established and which is now functioning very effectively.

(A) Deanery of Negombo The parishes are:

- Grand Street, Sea Street, Kadolkelle, Tillanduwa, St. Peter's, Duwa, Pitipana with Talahena-Bassiyawatte as a quasi parish, Periyamulla, Dalupotha, Kattuwa, Palagathurai,

Pallansena, Katuwapitiya Bolawalana, Kurana, Kimbulapitiya. (16 parishes) - Negombo as a center also provides for easy access and facility in dealing with civil authorities as it coincides with the Municipal demarcations.

(B) Katana Deanery

Halpe, Kandawela, Madampella, Kongodamulla, Welihena, Batepola, Toppu (7 parishes) - Possible new centers to be thought of because the area would be extensive.

(C) Seeduwa Deanery

Seeduwa, Katunayake, Raddolugama, Liyanagemulla Future possibility of Andiambalama & Kovinna with a possible Center as it is a gateway to the airport and the FTZ.

EV 1. The above three deaneries of Negombo, Katana and Seeduwa under one EV will have 27 parishes.

(D) Tudella Deanery

Tudella, Kanuwana, Kotugoda, Delature, Kepungoda, Pamunugama, Bopitiya, Dehiyagatha, Ja-Ela. (9 Parishes) - Bopitiya is growing as a central town and there is the possibility of land being offered for a new Church.

(E) Deanery of Kandana

Kandana, Nagoda, Weligampitiya, Wewela, Batagama, Bollate, Hapugoda, Uswetakeiyawa (8 parishes) - The future possibility of Maeliya, Thunpeliya, and Bandigoda becoming a parish.

(F) Deanery of Ragama

Ragama, Dalugama, Kadawatha, Kurukulawa, Kirimetiyyagara, Kelaniya, Peralanda, Tewatte, Sapugaskanda (9 parishes) - almost the same as existing Deanery.

(G) Deanery of Wattala

Wattala, Mabile, Matthumagala, Enderamulla, Nayakakanda, Palliyawatte 2 new parishes of Kerawalapitiya, and Balagala - it will be 8 parishes.

EV 2 : There would be 4 Deaneries with 33 parishes. It is suggested to have an EV for this part of Colombo North Region with the Kelani river and the Dandugam Oya as boundaries roughly.

The basic Proposals for the Region are as follows:

1. An Auxiliary Bishop to be assigned to the Region. While the Chief Pastor has the overall authority that the Auxiliary Bishops be given the opportunity to exercise a role.
2. If necessary there will be two EVs to assist pastoral and administrative functions and carry on the coordination and to help make pastoral options. To make changes in the deaneries enhancing the importance of Negombo.

3. To make changes in the deaneries as suggested above with new parishes only as deemed necessary for the time being.

4. Sub-regional teams should be formed with the Auxiliary Bishop, EV(s), Deans and Regional coordinators to meet regularly, prayerfully discern the particular needs of the region and develop the steps for a more concerted pastoral approach. **The follow up action of this report depends on the effective functioning of this Council.**

5. The new Parishes envisaged are - Talahena- Bassiyawatte (quasi parish). Kerawalapitiya and Balagala.

6. Full time regional coordinators to be appointed by His Eminence for the apostolates mentioned in the preliminary discussions viz: Catechetics and Family/Youth.

7. To involve the of Laity and Religious in this endeavour.

8. To develop the role of the Deans according to the powers given in the Canon Law.

8. Summary of the Discussion II

COLOMBO EAST (MISSIONARY) REGION

This region has two natural divisions into sub regions taking the Kelani River as a general boundary. Thus the sub-regions of Colombo East North and South of the Kelani River. With 2 existing Deaneries in the Northern half and one in the Southern section.

Deaneries

A. Gampaha Deanery : Parishes

Nittambuwa, Gampaha, Miriswatte, Moragoda, Midellawita, Tibbotugoda, Weliveriya, Makewita (8 Parishes) plus the Indigolla shrine

B. Burulapitiya Deanery: Parishes

Mirigama, Burulapitiya, Kamaragoda, Yatiyana (4 Parishes) - Suggested new parish of Divulapitiya taking Divulapitiya from Batepola, Navagama from Mirigama, Pethiyagoda from Kamaragoda and areas of Nittambuwa. The resources of Dev Arana at Polwatte and St. Peter's Branch School at Udugampola are possible assets. Attention can be paid to FTZ workers from this area.

(Contd from Pg. 8)

C. Gurubavila Deanery : Parishes

Matugama, Horana, Avissawella, Kaluaggala, Tharala, Waga, Welivita (8 parishes) - Matugama and Horana taken to this area from Kalutara Deanery and a new Parish of Weboda with Keth hena and Nagoda between the two, to reach out to the estate sector.

(Contd. on Pg. 9)

Proposals for this Region are as follows:

- An Auxiliary Bishop to be assigned to the Region. While the Chief Pastor has the overall authority that the Auxiliary Bishops be given the opportunity to exercise a role.
- Sub-regional teams should be formed with the Auxiliary Bishop, EV(s), Deans and Regional coordinators to meet regularly, prayerfully discern the particular needs of the region and develop the steps for a more concerted pastoral approach. **The follow up action of this report depends on the effective functioning of this Council.**
- The new Parishes** envisaged the new Parish of Weboda, the absorption of Matugama and Horana as a special sub-unit.
- The development of the new Centres of Neluwattuduwa, Bandaragama and the Residence at Piliyandala. Other divisions needed in the future will be the responsibility of the regional team.

General Needs

- Hospital Chaplain for the Govt. and Private Hospitals in Gampaha.**
- Centres for Tuition Vocational training/English.**

9. Centres / Residences

In the Negombo EV sector -

- Cardinal Cooray Centre,
- Muruthana in the Toppuwa Parish and
- Duwana in the Pallansena Parish

In the Ja-Ela EV sector -

- Galwetiya
- Kanuwana Centre

Colombo East EV Region, North of Kelani river-

- Indigolla
- Yakkaduwa St. Helena's
- Pugoda Mission House

Colombo East, South of Kelani River

- Piliyandala House (suitable for EV)
- Building at Neluwattuduwa
- New Centre at Bandaragama (also suitable base for Tamil-speaking priest and Mission team.

It was felt that land should be obtained at Meepe as a priority.

10. Finances

- Finances for the Apostolates should be primarily obtained through sharing the allocations given to the Archdiocesan Directors. (The Catechetical Director has already made provision for this).
- The FT Coordinators themselves will need maintenance of priest, cook and driver as well as salaries, fuel and vehicle maintenance.

Suggestions:

- The Centre to maintain the vehicles and also provide a reasonable fuel allowance.
- Certain Deaneries be requested to make a monthly contribution from the 5 % deanery funds for the Missions eg: Wattala; Colombo North; Colombo South and Colombo Centre.

Affluent Parishes can also make such contributions.

Any shortfall will have to be met by a mission fund at the Centre.

Concrete figures will be provided as soon as possible.

#The Regional Team of Auxiliary Bishop, EVs, Deans and Coordinators should meet as early as possible to work out the particular needs and short term focus (preferably after the Presbyteral Meeting on 19th).

A REFLECTION

Dear Fathers, It is important that all of us make this project our very own. Some may feel this is being imposed from the top, some may be disappointed that this is not solving all the problems and needs, over night and yet others may feel there was not enough consultation. Consultations can take place at each new step but at some stage decisions have to be made. What we need is Faith in the Lord and the courage to take risks. Not to remain safely on familiar shores but to launch out into the deep, as Blessed Pope John Paul II reminded us. This is a long term plan and what you have before you are the initial steps. We may not know what lies ahead but what we do know is that the Lord is with us every step of the way. So let us leave our doubts, fears and scepticism aside and join hands to cooperate with our Chief Pastor to go forward even if it is just one day at a time. And if we fail or fall let us evaluate and try again.

On the practical level we must realise that there are missionary areas even within our traditional established Catholic areas. These need a fresh missionary/pastoral approach. Some areas like Nilasirigama, Suduwella etc, in the Tudella deanery which are developing townships can even be places where an approach like the healing ministry could be the pastoral approach to be adopted. Such places can be entrusted to priests engaged in this ministry to be developed in a non-traditional way.

In the Missionary areas the life witness of Lay Catholics is crucial and so the development of lay apostles and lay missionary teams should have priority. Catholics living in these areas should be strengthened in their social and civil contact with their fellowmen in these areas so that they will witness by their presence and involvement. It is sad to see that often an active Catholic is seen as one involved in Church work rather than one who is making Christ present in the socio/civil life of the town or village. We should also be sensitive to the feelings of our non Christian neighbours by a witness of loving compassion rather than triumphalism.

Where do we go from here?

It is important that the Regional Teams start working as soon as possible so that the proposed changes can be put in place and the future steps be discerned. This has been mentioned as crucial in the proposals enumerated above

Concluding Remarks:

This report was compiled with the participation of many priests who took part in the various discussions and consultations mentioned at the outset as evidenced by the different redactional styles. While attempting to be as faithful as possible to the mandate given, the report emphasises on the practical aspects and thus should be read with the Interim Report of Fr. Elmo Dias in mind. Not all those recommendations have been followed nor do some of them tally as the views of priests have changed in some instances. However it has many projections for the future and since many of the proposals in this paper also need to be worked out in the long term, they will complement each other.

The Missionary region still seems very vast and some attempt has been made to provide a picture of delimitation which will facilitate the work of the priests of those areas as well as ensure that the faithful can be better served. It has to be emphasised that manpower must be made available generously, not only in the form of vigorous and dedicated young priests but also pastoral workers both religious and lay. Financial resources for the work of the apostolate, for lands and buildings etc should also be foreseen so that the pastoral worker (priest or religious or lay) does not have to spend his/her energies in the search for finances.

The Committee meetings were held with a sense of purpose and enthusiasm since the importance of the task was understood. Among the draw backs was the difficulty for all the committee members to meet together at any given time due to various absences from Colombo or from the country at different moments. The members encountered a certain sense of scepticism and disillusionment among the priests caused by remarks by responsible persons indicating that changes might not take place as expected. However there is also a feeling of expectant hope in the air.

We hope that our report will contribute in some way to the progress of the restructuring of the Archdiocese in order to more effectively spread the Kingdom of God.

Thanks

We thank all the laity and the clergy who gave their time and talents and shared their valuable ideas and experiences with us personally and during the different discussions held. We also thank Your Eminence for having entrusted this task to us and placing your confidence in us. We pray for the Lord's continued blessings on this our beloved Archdiocese of Colombo and for the intercession of Our Blessed Mother to guide its progress.

Members of the Commission

Very. Rev. Fr. Ivan Perera EV
Rev. Fr. Reid Shelton Fernando
Rev. Fr. Santha Sagara Hettiarachchi
Rev. Fr. Edrich Rodrigo
Rev. Fr. Chrispin Leo
Rev. Fr. Alexius Benedict
Rev. Fr. Ciswan de Croos
Rev. Fr. Leo Perera (Chairman)

Colombo 19th March 2012.

Time to Let Go



Lent is a good time for downsizing our lives. It is a time for stripping ourselves of the barnacles of vanity, getting rid of the illusions and pretense that prevent us from wholeheartedly living the Gospel. Most of all, it is a time for letting the Word of God wash out our hearts so that we may hear what the Lord is asking of us and respond with love.

We may feel that we have already downsized. Maybe we have been forced to do so because of job loss, health issues, old age and the inevitable stress and tension that are part of life. Nevertheless, it is often the small things that hold us back. "Catch the little foxes that destroy the vines," (Song of Songs). They nibble away with their sharp teeth and wreak destruction. An old hurt we cannot let go; a resentment at seeing others prosper while we wilt; a sluggishness in responding to our difficult neighbour with kindness. What is it that is destroying your vines?

When Jesus, weak and hungry after his long fast, was tempted in the desert, He drew strength from the Scriptures. Money, power, glory - the devil urged him to choose. As someone has noted, Jesus was tempted to be less than deeply human, to be a kind of Superman and escape the troubles of life. But He chose, deliberately chose, not the power or riches of his Godly state but to experience the vulnerability, the fragility of what it is to be one of us. "He emptied

Himself ... He humbled Himself ... " Paul wrote (Phil 2:7). He chose the downward journey which led to the Cross.

This is the road we walk when we follow Jesus, a way of diminishment, of letting go, of downsizing. Of course we resist, we look for another way, a way where, like the Pharisee, we can fast and pray and keep the rules - and sink

"This is the road we walk when we follow Jesus, a way of diminishment, of letting go, of downsizing."

into a kind of spiritual coma, untouched by the searing grace of Christ.

"Repent," Jesus said at the beginning of his ministry. "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). Here is the best Lenten programme we can undertake - to take time each day to sit with the gospel, listen to His word and look at our lives through His eyes. With the Holy Spirit to guide us we will come to know and love the Lord more deeply and our hearts will be changed. "The Kingdom is at hand" (Mk 1:15)

(Far East Magazine)

A Reader's Feedback

As an appreciation and also as a general feedback let me publish this short account about recent editorials of the 'Catholic Messenger'.

"The Criminalization of Politicians and the Politicization of Criminals" on 29th Jan. 2012 and "Uphold the right of peaceful protest by Civil Society Groups" on 12th February 2012, are really great.

To us members of the public, who have to see and hear day in and day out nothing but the praises of our rulers, such editorials are a treat. They give the truth, and the very truth about the situation in the country today. The unfortunate fact, however, is that being a religious paper it is read only by a limited number. At the same time, even regretfully, we have to contend with the fact that the fate of our country is not decided by those who read and comprehend such messages.

It was just a few weeks back that Rev. Bro. Asitha, Deacon attached to Fatima Church Battaramulla, in his Sunday homily, drew the attention of the faithful to a poster on the churchboard that read "The world suffers a lot not because of the violence of bad people but because of the silence of good people."

So the Messenger deserves the appreciation of its readers for not being silent on vital issues even at the risk of being labelled as traitors.

Such appreciation is further confirmed by Bryan Landsberger with his article titled "The Pope the Jews and the Nazis" appearing on page 5 of the Messenger of 26th Feb. which is repeated below for the benefit of those who missed it.

"A tribute by the renowned Physicist Albert Einstein, a Jew and an agnostic states "Being a lover of freedom when the Nazi revolution came in Germany I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities were immediately silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom, but they like the universities were silenced. Only the church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing the truth. I never had any special interest in the church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual and moral freedom."

Neville Anthony Perera

President of the 'Vehicle Importers' Association of Lanka'

At the General Meeting of the Vehicle Importers' Association held recently at Hotel Galadari, Colombo. Mr. Sampath Merenchige a Director of the Group of Companies of M/s Wasana Trading Lanka (Pvt) Ltd was elected President.



Sampath Merenchige

Mr. Sampath is very sympathetic and understanding towards the poor and needy. He is simple and ready to assist both the Buddhists and Catholics of Nagoda, Kandana, both temples and churches as well. Mr. Sampath is outspoken in the face of injustice and stands out for the truth.

The people of Nagoda, Kandana while congratulating Mr. Sampath on this achievement, wishes him long life and good health.

Holy Cross - The Symbol of Love and Forgiveness

A few months back the universal Church celebrated the feast of Christmas, a joyful event in the Christian calendar. This is the season of Lent, and Christians are called to meditate on Jesus' passion, death and the resurrection and rally round the Holy Cross on which He sacrificed His life to redeem humanity.

When we gaze at the Crucifix, it reminds of His merciful love towards us sinners and how He most lovingly with a burning thirst for us invites to look at His tortured and lacerated body which caused excruciating pain and suffering with blood trickling down from the wounds inflicted on Him. In great anguish and sorrow He appeals to us to transform our lives through the Holy Cross, this grace-filled symbol of Love, Forgiveness and Divine Power, which He took

up in obedience to the will of God to impress upon us the consequence and slavery of sin.

This divine Saviour very truly loved us, and He revealed this unfathomable love, first through His humble and lowly birth in the stable, secondly, through His public life on earth and lastly, through His sufferings and sorrowful death on a Cross effacing all our sins, and He wants us to give up worldly desires and all attachments which may hinder our eternal journey to live with Him in glory.

For over 2000 years the Holy Cross has been an integral part in the Christian Church. On every Good Friday, we Christians reverently genuflect and venerate this Holy Cross to show our love and gratitude to Him, who died to save us from eternal damnation. We make the sign with the Cross, and in our



human way of speaking we often use the expression "Cross" for the painful things we have to bear, but even with all our crosses and difficulties, we should be prepared to seek the will of God, by uniting with Our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We have Crucifixes in our homes and some ignorantly use or display this Holy Icon as an ornament and that is why Blessed John Paul II, during his pontificate repeatedly urged the faithful to "defend and not to defile the Holy Cross."

"The Cross is my portion. It is also my sweet rest and support. I could not be happy without my Cross. The only way I have to show my gratitude to God is in the Cross." (Words from Saint Mary Mackilloph of the cross)

During this holy season of Lent, we Christians have to follow Jesus in His sorrowful journey to Calvary with our own crosses and to finally share in His resurrection. - ALLELUIA

Michael Pieris

Lazarus Perinpanayagam a parishioner of St. Jude's Church, Mathegoda, an explanter and now a British Council qualified lecturer in IELTS at Crown Business College, Colombo 6 aged 74, was the oldest runner in the 5.5 kms run organised by the Rotaractors of Colombo uptown in aid of the Institute of Cancer, Maharagama. He was an all round sportsman at St. Patrick's College, Jaffna and St. Joseph's College, Colombo. He captained the athletic team at St. Patrick's College in 1954, and

Run for their lives

later at St. Joseph's, he represented his school in Athletics, Basketball and won Soccer colours in 1957.

After leaving school he captained the All Jaffna Soccer Team in 1961 and played rugby and Soccer for Uva Province in 1963. He played veterans' soccer for the Old Josephian Sports Club until 1990 and since then he had been taking part in almost all the veterans' running and walking competitions. His grandson



Lazarus Perinpanayagam

Ravin Antonio aged 13, an outstanding athlete and under 13 Rugger Captain of St. Joseph's College, Colombo also completed the run.

Soccer Peri as he is popularly known keeps fit by daily exercise, jogging and walking. A Rotarian for 30 years, past Assistant Governor district 3220 and a great Social Worker believes in the Rotary Motto "service above self."

N. Nicholas

Lawyer turned La Sallian academic takes charge of St. Benedict's College, Kotahena

The delightfully youthful La Sallian - Rev. Bro. Janaka Fonseka recently assumed the onerous responsibility as the Director of the 146-year-old St. Benedict's College, Kotahena. Armed with LLB degree from the University of Colombo and a Master's Degree in Education from the prestigious Australian Catholic University, Bro. Janaka also lays claim as an Advocate of the Supreme



Bro. Janaka Fonseka

Court of Sri Lanka.

However, as a

clergyman dedicated to the precepts of the De La Salle Congregation he will plead and advocate for qualitatively higher level of academic excellence at St. Benedict's College.

Being an Old Benedictine himself from 1981- 1985, Rev. Bro. Janaka served as the Primary Principal of the school for several years and proved himself to be a turnaround specialist making the sec-

tion a model for the entire College.

His vision for the school in his own words; "It will be essentially a Benedictine - La Sallian vision encompassing the three key pillars - faith, community and service."

His mission would make each student become an exemplary Christian and a worthy citizen of Sri Lanka in a globalized world.

Francis D' Almeida

Sheperdians bid adieu to a dear teacher

A pillar of strength of Good Shepherd Balika Maha Vidyalaya, Nayakakanda has collapsed with the untimely demise of our

dear vice principal and loving teacher, Mrs. K.D.A. Sriyakanthi Perera. The Shepherdian family of Good Shepherd Balika Maha Vidyalaya was privileged to have this exceptional personality for 35 years. Her entire professional life was devoted to the service

of her own school where she had her education from Montessori to secondary education.

She was a devout Catholic who always sought the will of God. She regarded her school as a holy place in which the blessings of God were abundant. She strongly believed that unity of the academic family was essential for the progress of the school, hence she organized retreats for the



Mrs. K.D.A. Sriyakanthi spiritual development of the students specially dur-

ing Lent. The annual educational trips for students and the staff were fine examples of her organizing and management capabilities

Her way of thinking was exceptional and always sought the best for her students. The newly opened playground is a proof to her dedication, sacrifice and endurance. She made optimum use of her knowledge of mathematics, not only to

teach maths but also to win hearts. The popularity, reputation and affection she was held in, was demonstrated by the large gathering of both present and past pupils, teachers, colleagues and parents who gathered to pay their last respects to her at Good Shepherd Balika Maha Vidyalaya.

Dear teacher, you were a strict disciplinarian who needed to see your

school at its best. You were very stern outwardly but a very loving and gentle mother to your flock.

Dear teacher, though you are gone, we feel happy as we are sure you enjoy eternal peace in God.

Principal and the Staff
Good Shepherd Balika
Maha Vidyalaya,
Nayakakanda

LENT, TODAY'S SIGNS AND HOLINESS

**Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI
Dev Arana, Polwatta.**

Has the painful cry of the people, manifested through protests and death, against the sudden skyrocketing price-hike of essential goods, reveal a special message for us, Catholic Christians during this holy season of Lent?

Reading the signs of the times is an essential dimension of the teachings of Jesus Christ (Mt. 16:1-4). Hence, as individuals and as groups, we are called by the Spirit of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ to read today's signs, namely the painful cries, the open and silent protests and the deaths. Don't we understand that these signs reveal what people want: To be treated as persons with dignity and rights and not to be considered as objects to be abused / or destroyed.

We, Catholic Christians, believe human nature of every human being has been raised to a degree beyond compare in the Incarnation of Jesus. Human beings are so precious in the sight of God that He loved them and sent His Son Jesus to be their Saviour (Jn. 3:16-17). We profess that Jesus came for us and for our salvation. Salvation means total

health (of body, psyche and spirit). Jesus Himself said that He came to give us abundant life (Jn. 10:10)

DOING GOOD HASTENS DEATH

In Jesus, people saw a person who was fully alive, sensitive and responsive to human suffering. With His loving-kindness, He identified Himself with the masses. In the Holy Bible, we read how God had anointed Jesus with His Holy Spirit to go about doing good (Acts. 10:38). Jesus went about respecting people, feeding the hungry, curing the sick, healing the wounded, consoling and comforting the disturbed, driving out the evil spirits, and forgiving the sinners. He told His listeners to follow His example.

Doing good to others hastened the death of Jesus. It will be the same for His followers. Death will come in different ways. It can come in an instant or as a gradual process in the form of discrimination, oppression, victimization, exclusion, false accusations etc.

SPIRITUALITY OF COMPASSION NEEDED

The prophets of OT and Jesus Himself as prophet and Saviour wanted

worship of God and justice-love to be inter-related. Therefore our worship of God and liturgical celebration must manifest the values and attitudes of Jesus who had compassion for the suffering people. In the Eucharist, we remember, proclaim and celebrate the compassionate love of Jesus that led to His Passion, Death and Resurrection. So mere embellishment of church buildings, multiplying rituals and devotions, constructing way-side chapels and doing the Way of the Cross will not cause openness and sensitivity of the human hearts since these external activities often promote religiosity and not Christian spirituality of the human hearts since these external activities often promote religiosity and not Christian spirituality that embodies worship that includes union with God and union with the people-in-need. Quoting prophet Hosea, Jesus told the pharisees, "Go and learn the meaning of the words: What I want is mercy, not sacrifice" (Mt. 9:13;12:7).

Compassion means an intense visceral empathy with suffering of another person that derives one into passionate action to rectify the cause (s) of the suffering. It is caring with personal

attentiveness as we find in the parable of the Good Samaritan..... Compassion means being with people who feel unloved. God of Jesus is not only " God FOR us but God - WITH us" in order to share our joys and sorrows

COMPASSION IS HOLINESS

Lent is a time for repentance, conversion, renewal and holiness. For renewal and holiness to take place, we need to grow in compassionate love manifested in and through Jesus Christ (Lk. 6:36). Like Jesus we too need to reach out compassionately to categories of people who still feel marginalized and excluded. In our diocesan parishes and villages, and are struggling to live lives worthy of human dignity and equality. Enabling such people with our God-given resources to rise from their less human conditions to more human conditions is the missionary vocation of every Christian. May the season of Lent inspire us to undergo the needed conversion of hearts to reach out beyond man-made boundaries with compassionate love to the various categories of people still struggling to realize their dignity and equality. Compassion is the supreme sign of holiness.

A remarkable day for the Viannians



"Harvest is rich, but workers are few. Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest" (St. Lukc 10:2)

According to the Catholic custom, of formation for the Priesthood, a person must begin his long journey from the Seminary. As a youngster he goes through the formation with the guidance of Rev. Fr. Rector and the staff of the Seminary and with the help of his Spiritual Director. When the candidate is suitable at some stage of this journey, the Church authorities are ready to grant him different faculties leading him to the candidacy to the Holy Orders, Those faculties are called Intitiation, Lector, Acolyte, Diaconate and finally the Priesthood.

The 6th of March was a great day for St. John

Mary Vianney Seminary, Mattakkuliya in its academic calendar. Four Seminararians were initiated for the process of the candidacy to Holy Orders and two brothers were conferred as Lectors and four brothers were conferred as Acolytes by the hands of Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando, the Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo, at the Seminary Chapel.

As the Seminararians warmly welcomed the Auxiliary Bishop on his first arrival to the Seminary after his Episcopal Ordination. Rev. Bro. Chamil Sameera, the Dean of the Seminary delivered the welcome speech. In his speech he highly appreciated the great services His Lordship has already rendered as a priest for the last 40 years to the Archdiocese of Colombo and wished

him success in his new appointment. His Lordship presided over the Eucharist Celebration and in his homily he reminded that God calls each one of us for a certain purpose. As Christians it is our duty to respond to it with reverence through our effort and commitment. He also pointed out the importance of the Rite of Initiation and of the other ministries respectively.

After the Eucharistic Celebration, His Lordship thanked Rev. Fr. Rector for inviting him to confer the ministries. He highly appreciated the good work that Fr. Rector had done to bring the Seminary to a high standard in the knowledge of Liturgy and Singing and in the quality of Seminary formation.

Rev. Bro. Niroshan Perera, the Vice Dean of the Seminary delivered the vote of thanks at the function. Rev. Fr. Lawrence Ramanayake, the Spiritual Director was also present at the function. The function was well organised under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Victor Silva, the Rector of the Seminary.

By Bro. Harsha Rajakaruna.

"Manobhawa" a Children's Art Exhibition

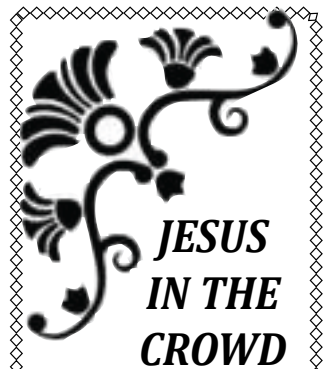


"MANOBHAWA" an art exhibition displaying the talents of many young artists and inventors of St. Lawrence's Convent, Colombo 6 was held from 15th to 17th March 2012, at the school's main hall. The exhibition not only comprised of many breath taking paintings but also displayed the various new inventions created and designed by the students of the Young inventors Club of the school.

Rev. Fr. Ranjith Madurawala, Archdiocesan Director of Education and General Manager of Catholic Private schools. (w.p) was the chief guest on this day. There were parents, well wishes and students of invited schools who witnessed the exhibition.

The students owe much gratitude to the Principal, Rev. Sr. Mary Chandrika Perera and teachers in charge, Mrs. Mangala Ratnayake and Miss Kanchana Gunaratne for their guidance and support given for the success of this event.

Renushi Ubeyratne



Lost
Weary
Faint
Abandoned
Solitude mind
Searched
That someone
One who cared
The throng
Made deceived
Trampled now
Crushed again
Soul searched
One among
Them many
It's clear
Someone
Embraced
Gave solace
Freed
The Seeker
Comforted
It's Jesus
Among us

Miran Perera



HFC, Kalutara holds 78th Inter-House Sports Meet

The 78th Inter-House Sports Meet of Holy family Convent, Kalutara, was held recently at the Holy Cross College, Kalutara grounds.

The Chief Guest on the occasion was the Director General of Sport and Skills Development of the Ministry of Higher Education, Sunil Gunawardena.

The Guest of Honour was Dr.(Mrs) Stella Fernando, Cousultant Anaesthetist of Asiri Hospital, Colombo.

Leonid House won the championship for the third consecutive year.

Prabathi Sachintha



Lent - A Season of Giving

Traditionally, the Church has suggested three primary ways to help us observe Lent; prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Of the three, fasting is perhaps the least practiced by us all. Yet if fasting is understood as more than just deprivation of food, it can be a source of significant spiritual growth. Fasting can in fact incorporate or include the other two Lenten practices of almsgiving and prayer. Fasting during Lent could be redirecting a certain amount of time or depriving ourselves of certain specific behaviour and actions, of money, of harmful thoughts or words or anything that might influence the way we give our hearts to God.

There are some basic questions that can guide us in our choice of how to fast:

* *What would help me to be more at peace?*

* *Whom do I most need to love better?*

* *What is lacking in my relationship with God?*

* *How and when do I give service to others?*

* *What am I doing to help alleviate the world's suffering?*

After spending time with these questions, listen for what is the most urgent or challenging. Make a choice of some type of fasting.

The choice for each week may vary. Here are some suggestions for fasting:

Fasting from words

We can fast from words of criticism and negativity. We can omit gossip from our conversation. We can replace our harsh nagging voices with words that deliberately offer gratitude and affirmation to another.

ANGER MANAGEMENT - A LENTEN EXERCISE

Anger is one of the seven capital or deadly sins, as most of us memorized once upon a time. They are called 'capital' sins because these seven predispositions stand at the trailhead of wrongdoing as sin motivators. Since anger has been identified as leading us down the road to spiritual ruin, most of us seek to avoid it as a potential occasion of sin.

On the averaged day, I get mad at something or someone. Often the object of my anger is myself: For my inattention leading to a burned supper, say, or for forgetting to return an important phone call. At this stage, the emotion probably rises only to the point of frustration or irritation.

But on particularly stressful days, a series of minor irritations might lead to one big explosion if I haven't monitored my need for rest or have allowed anxiety to creep up too high unaddressed.

This is the kind of anger we are each responsible for. As willful beings, we are partial to having things our way. Feeling crossed by others, our own folly, or by circumstances makes us well, cross. If we allow to become compulsive as the default response to inevitable frustrations of the will, then it does indeed become a deadly sin. Such anger kills off the charity, kindness, compassion, and self-control that are the natural fruits of a life of virtue.

What can I do at home or at work to be gentler with myself and others? Identify one more specific ways in which you might be prepared to temper the impulse to anger by substituting the spirit of compassion or self-reflection.

er. We can choose to have words of kindness in our thoughts instead of angry hostile ones. We can give our words a sound of cheerfulness and deprive ourselves of words of

self-pity and irritability.

Fasting from set behaviours

We can fast from apathy and indifference by deliberately choosing to be involved in an issue that promotes justice for others. We can omit self-centeredness and focus on reaching out to someone else at least once each day.

Fasting from one's own time.

Time is perhaps, a more precious commodity for some of us than food. By reading less of the daily newspaper (even by just not reading the ads.), we can have more time for those things we intended to do (call someone, write that letter, pay a visit). By limiting our shopping to groceries during Lent we can have the needed time for prayer each day, or for some quality reading. (We will also have extra money to support organizations for charity and justice). By viewing less TV or none at all we can participate in church programs or give service to others that we might not have time for otherwise.

Fasting is not meant to take the joy out of our lives. If anything fasting can restore a deeper sense of satisfactions with life.

We must remember always that we do not do our spiritual growing alone; it is always through the grace of God.

Courtesy 'Manhu'
(Newsletter) St. Philip Neri's
Church, Pettah

HEAVEN'S GROCERY STORE

*As I was walking down life's highway
Many years ago*

*I came upon a sign that read ...
Heaven's Grocery Store..*

*When I got a little closer, the doors
swung open wide*

*And when I came to myself, I was
standing inside ..*

*I saw a host of Angels, they were
standing everywhere*

*One handed me a basket and said:
'My child shop with care ..*

*'Everything a human needed was
in that grocery store*

*And what you could not carry, you
could come back for more*

*First I got some **Patience**. Love was
in that same row.*

*Further down was **Understanding**, you
need that everywhere you go ..*

*I got a box or two of **Wisdom and Faith**
a bag or two.*

*And **Charity** of course I would need
some of that too ..*

*I couldn't miss the Holy Ghost, It was
all over the place.*

*And then some **Strength and Courage** to
help me run this race.*

*My basket was getting full but I remembered
I needed **Grace**,*

*And then I chose **Salvation** for Salvation
was for free*

*I tried to get enough of that to do for
you and me..*

*Then I started to the counter to pay
my grocery bill,*

*For I thought I had everything to
do the Master's Will*

*As I went up the aisle I saw **Prayer**
and put that in,*

*For I knew when I stepped outside I
would run into sin.*

***Peace and Joy** were plentiful, the last
things on the shelf.*

*Song and Praise were hanging near, so
I just helped myself.*

*Then I said to the angel 'Now how much
do I owe?'*

*He smiled and said, 'Just take them
everywhere you go.'*

*Again I asked, 'Really now, how much
do I owe?'*

*'My child' he said, 'God paid your bill a
long long time ago.'*

(Holy Trinity Community
Newsletter - March 2012)



What it says in the Readings

If a man serves me, says the Lord, he must follow me; wherever I am, my servant will be there too. (Jn. 12:26)

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR B 25th March - 1st April 2012

SUN: FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jer. 31: 31-34, Hebr. 5: 7-9,

Jn. 12: 20-33

Mon: The Annunciation of the Lord
Is. 7: 10-14, 8-10, Hebr. 10: 4-10,
Lk. 1: 26-38

Tue: Num. 21: 4-9, Jn. 8: 21-30

Wed: Dan 3: 14-20, 91-92, 95, Jn. 8: 31-42

Thu: Gen. 17: 3-9, Jn 8: 51-59

Fri: Jer 20: 10-13,

Jn 10: 31-42

Sat: Ez. 37:21-28, Jn. 11: 45-56

Sun: PALM SUNDAY

Is. 50: 4-7, Phil 2: 6-11,

Mk. 14: 1-15, 47

"I Thirst for You"

GUIDED MEDITATION

The divine words, "I thirst," first spoken on Calvary, still echo throughout every time and place. God still speaks them in the empty space, the dark and lonely place in every human heart.

"Jesus is thirsting for us right now... Do we listen to Him saying, 'I thirst for your love?'... Do we really hear Him... He is saying it right now."

- Mother Teresa

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. 3: 20)

It is true. I stand at the door of your heart, day and night. Even when you are not listening, even when you doubt it could be me, I am there. I await even the smallest sign of your response, even the slightest hint of invitation that will allow me to enter.

I want you to know that whenever you invite me, I come. Always, without fail. Silent and unseen I come, but with infinite power and love, bringing the many gifts of my Father. I come with my mercy, with my desire to forgive and heal you, and with a love for you beyond your comprehension - a love every bit as great as the love I myself have received from the Father. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (Jn 15:9). I come longing to console you and give you strength, to lift you up and bind your wounds. I bring you my light, to dispel your darkness and all your doubts. I come with my power, that I might carry you and all of your burdens; with my grace, to touch your heart and transform your life; and my peace I give to still your soul.

I know you through and through. I know everything about you. The very hairs of your head I have numbered. Nothing in your life is unimportant to me. I have followed you through the years, and I have always loved you, even in your wanderings. I know every one of your problems; I know your needs, your fears, and your worries. I hear your every whispered prayer, always. Even when it seems I am silent, I am ever at work in your life to bless you and protect you.

Every movement of your heart I follow, and your every thought. I know all your pain, your struggles and trials, your failures and heartaches. And yes, I know all your sins. But I tell you again that I love you, and not for what you have or haven't done. I love you for you; I love you because you are. I love you for the beauty and dignity my Father gave you, creating you in his own image. It is a dignity you have forgotten, a beauty you have tarnished by ego and sin. But I love you as you are, infinitely, completely, without reserve; and I have shed my blood to win you back. If you only ask me with faith, my grace will touch all that needs changing in your life, and I will give you the strength to free yourself from sin and from all that binds and burdens you, and from all that takes you away from me.

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

Theme: Salvation through obedience to God.

1st Reading: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

This is the clearest reference to a New Covenant in the Old Testament. The reason for a New Covenant was the possibility of breaking the laws of the Sinai Covenant, which were written on two tablets of stone, away from the interior of man. Hence God is said to inscribe his law, the expression of his will, in the human heart. Thus connecting God's will with the interior of the human person the obeying of covenant laws become easier for man. Constant forgiveness is assured in order to continue in the covenant relationship.

2nd Reading: Hebr. 5: 7-9

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews says that Christ, through his suffering fulfilled God's plan of salvation, for man. Although he was God's Son, through his suffering and obedience to God's will opened for us the way to salvation, at the same time, being an example of obedience for us.

Gospel: John 12: 20-23

When Jesus was informed that some Greeks had to meet him he was immediately reminded of his cruel death that united the Jews and the Gentiles as one people of God. He being deeply troubled within himself, asked God, as in the Garden of Gethsemane, to save him from that painful reality. He resigned himself to God's will. The

Gospel of John repeatedly affirms that Jesus came to do the will of his Father.

Reflection:

When one feels the difficulty of observing God's commandments one has to question oneself whether one has correctly understood the contents and the purpose of the commandments. By doing so these become close and relevant to us.

Seeking God's will in suffering, as Christ has done, is a necessary part of Christian living.

Suffering is a disturbing and discouraging experience. Do you realize that there is saving aspect in it?

Rev. Fr. Henry Silva



I know what is in your heart. I know your loneliness and all your hurts: the rejections, the judgments, the humiliations. I carried it all before you. And I carried it all for you so that you might share my strength and my victory. I know especially

your need for love, how you thirst to be accepted and appreciated, loved and cherished. But how often have you thirsted in vain, seeking that love outside of me - I who am its Source - striving to fill the emptiness inside you with passing pleasures, and often with the even greater emptiness of sin. Do you thirst for love? "If any one thirst, let him come to me ..." Jn. 7:37). I will satisfy your desire for love beyond your dreams. Do you thirst to be appreciated and cherished? I cherish you more than you can imagine, to the point of leaving heaven for you, and of dying on a cross to make you one with me.

Don't you realize that your thirst for love is a thirst for me, I who am Love? I am myself the answer to your deepest desires.

I THIRST FOR YOU .. Yes, that is the only way to describe my love for you: I thirst to love you and to be loved by you - that is how precious you are to me.

- Come to me, and I will fill your heart and heal your wounds. I will make you a new creation, and give you peace in all your trials.
- You must never doubt my mercy, my acceptance of you, my desire to forgive, my longing to bless you and live my life in you.
- If you feel unimportant in the eyes of the world, that matters not at all. For me, there is no one more important than you.
- Open to me, come to me, thirst for me, give me your life - and I will prove to you how important you are to my heart.

Don't you realize that my Father already has a perfect plan to transform your life, beginning from this moment? Trust in me. Ask me every day to enter and take charge of your life - and I will. I promise you before my Father in heaven that I will work miracles

in your life. Why would I do this? Because I thirst for you. All I ask is that you entrust yourself to me completely. I will do all the rest.

Even now I behold the place my Father has prepared for you in my kingdom. Remember that you are a pilgrim in this life, on a journey home. The things of this world can never satisfy you, nor bring the peace you seek. All that you have sought outside of me has only left you more empty, so do not cling to material things. Above all, do not run from me when you fall. Come to me without delay. When you give me your sins, you give me the joy of being your Saviour. There is nothing I cannot forgive and heal. So come now, and unburden your soul.

No matter how far you may wander, no matter how often you forget me, no matter how many crosses you may bear in this life, there is one thing I want you to always remember, one thing that will never change: *I thirst for you* - just as you are. You don't need to change to believe in my love, for it will be your belief in my love that will change you. You forget me, and yet I am seeking you every moment of the day, standing at the door of your heart and knocking. Do you find this hard to believe? Then look at the cross - look at my heart that was pierced for you. Have you not understood my cross? Then listen again to the words I spoke there, for they tell you clearly why I endured all this for you: "I thirst" (Jn. 19:28). Yes, I thirst for you - as the rest of the psalm-verse I was reciting says of me: "I looked for pity, but there was none" (Ps 69:20). All your life I have been looking for your love - I have never stopped seeking to love you and to be loved by you. You have tried many other things in your search for happiness. Why not try opening your heart to me, right now, more than you ever have before?

Whenever you do open the door of your heart, whenever you come close enough, you will hear me say to you again and again, not in mere human words but in spirit:

No matter what you have done, I love you for your own sake. Come to me with your misery and your sins, with your troubles and needs, and with all your longing to be loved. I stand at the door of your heart and knock. Open to me, for I thirst for you.

"Jesus is God, therefore His love, His Thirst, is infinite. He the Creator of the universe, asked for the love of His creatures."

"He thirsts for our love "
"These words: 'I thirst' - do they echo in our souls?"

Today Jesus had His arms extended to embrace you. Today Jesus' Heart was opened to receive you. Were you there?"
(Mother Teresa)

(Taken from the book, Mother Teresa's Secret Fire - by Joseph Langford)

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Lord graciously hear us.

For Christians; that they may realize that it is by giving that we receive, it is by forgiving that we are forgiven; it is by dying that we are born to eternal life. Lord hear us.

Response: Lord graciously hear us.

For all those who hold positions of responsibility; that they may set aside their personal aims and ambitions and work unselfishly for justice and peace. Lord hear us.

Response: Lord graciously hear us.

For those who live only for themselves and whose spirit is suffocating under layers of pretence and vanity. Lord hear us.

Response: Lord graciously hear us.

That we may never forget, that each of us carry within us a divine spark which makes us capable of higher things such as acts of generosity and self-sacrifice. Lord hear us.

Response: Lord graciously hear us.