



OUR LADY OF LANKA
4TH FEB 2012

Messenger

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YEAR OF WORD OF GOD

Heavenly Father you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to simple people.

Colossians 3:12-21

Sunday 29th Jan 2012 Vol 143 No 05 16 Pages Rs: 20.00 Registered as a newspaper

Catholic contribution to SL freedom struggle unique



the Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, has stressed the importance of justice and truth leading to peace and trust among the various communities.

Below we give excerpts of the Message:

Sri Lanka will celebrate its 64th Independence Day on the 4th of February, 2012. This is a joyful occasion to

all Sri Lankans and the Catholic Church to join hands with all patriotic Sri Lankans to share the glory of the occasion.

We thank God for giving us a beautiful land full of natural resources with its fauna and flora.

The challenge before us, the people of this God-given beautiful land is to build a united Sri Lanka with all the variety and diversity it unfolds.

The time is opportune to act with wisdom and courage for a united Sri Lanka. It is the need of the hour to launch a plan of action based on justice and truth leading to peace and trust among the various communities.

It is crystal clear from an objective study of Sri Lanka and the history of the Catholic Church in the country, that the Catholic contribution to

the freedom struggle is unique. Our united struggle overcoming petty mindedness of certain sectors of the society gave us victory. It is with great pride and joy that we mention the Catholic contribution to our national freedom struggle.

The time is appropriate to move from a culture of violence to a

(Continued on Pg. 2) >>

In a message released to mark the 64th independence celebrations of Sri Lanka,

WORLD LEPROSY DAY

World Leprosy Day 2012

Transformation

29th January 2012

Firm as 'Rock' for 90 years



Wednesday 18th January 2012, marked the 90th Anniversary of the founding of St. Peter's College, Colombo 04. A Holy Mass of Thanksgiving commenced the Year of Celebration. Members of the Peterite

Family, both living and dead, who had lent a heart and lent a hand to build up this "Rock of Education" were remembered with gratitude during this Holy Mass.

A short history of the College was given in

the Introduction prior to the Holy Mass. Long years ago, Rev. Fr. Maurice Le Goc OMI, Rector of St. Joseph's College, Maradana had a vision. His dream was to open a branch school of St. Joseph's in the southern suburbs of Colombo. His

dream became a reality on Wednesday January 1st 1922, when St. Joseph's College, Colombo South was ceremoniously declared open in Bambalapitiya. It was blessed by His Grace the Archbishop of Colombo, Most Rev. Dr. J. M. Masson OMI and declared open by Mr. E. Evans, Acting Director of Education. The Railway Department made special arrangements to transport students from St. Joseph's College, Maradana for the occasion. A total number of 204 students were admitted on that day.

The Chief Celebrant at the Thanksgiving Eucharistic Celebration was His Grace. Archbishop Emeritus of Colombo, Most. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando, whose first appointment as a young priest of God was to

(Continued on Pg. 2) >>

A Seminarian should possess:

"Integrity, maturity, asceticism, constancy and heroic fidelity," says the Holy Father



Pope Benedict XVI greets a seminarian during the Mass for Seminarians.

Pope Benedict XVI advised the seminarians of his diocese that it takes "integrity, maturity, asceticism, constancy and heroic fidelity" to be a good seminarian and become a great young priest.

As Bishop of Rome, the Pope addressed the students and staff of the Almo Collegio Capranica, one of the oldest seminaries of Rome, last week in the Vatican's Clementine Hall.

(Continued on Pg. 2) >>

Ruby Priestly Anniversary



(PIX by: Rev. Fr. Saman Maximus)

His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Marius Pieris, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo celebrated 40 years in his priestly vocation, together with Frs. Edward Revelpulle, Raymond Samarakoon and Noel Dias. A Thanksgiving Mass was celebrated on Wednesday, 25th January 2012, the day of the Conversion of St. Paul, at Evening Star, Havelock Town.

In lighter vein Bishop Marius remarked that this 40th anniversary coincided with the release 40 years ago in 1972, of the well-known Sinhala film, "Hathara Denama Surayo" and the four priestly 'Surayos' were still going strong in the Lord.

Rev. Fr. Neville Joe assumes office as Monsignor

The Holy See appointed Rev. Fr. Joseph Neville Perera as Chaplain to the Holy Father recently in recognition of his uninterrupted service for 20 years as the National Co-ordinator of the Sri Lankan immigrant Catholics working in Italy. The special ceremony for conferring this honorary office was presided over by His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, and held at St. Mary's Church, Internetto, Rome.

Chaplaincy to the Holy Father popularly known as the post of "Monsignor" is generally

Rev. Fr. Dennington Subasinghe - Reporting from Rome



conferred on persons by the Holy Father in appreciation of ecclesial service to the people of God in various realms of apo-mission. They are called to be of service to

the Holy Father by office. It is a calling to work closely within the Holy See in her evangelizing mission in the world.

His Eminence, addressing the faithful in



the homily during the special Eucharist of thanksgiving, said that these titles and offices, rather than entitle one to honours and privileges embody a deeper calling within the one common baptismal calling to shoulder the Cross of Christ in a profound manner.

(Continued on Pg. 2) >>

"Day by Day with the Lord"



A copy of Arundathy Gunawardena's second gift book titled *Day by Day with the Lord* was handed over to His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo recently. The book has been published by Godage Publishers. (cmessenger)

In honour of St. Sebastian



The St. Sebastian's statue erected at Kurukulawa Pahala Watta, St. Sebastian Mawatha completed 15 years.

To mark the occasion the welfare society of the Parish organised various events with the guidance of the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Prasad Ponnampereuma.

Picture shows the statue been taken in procession down the streets. (H.A. Caldera)

Firm as.....

Contd. from Pg. 1

St. Peter's College, Colombo 4. During his address, he told the boys that they were fortunate to be Peterites and advised them to make the best use of their stay at College.

Another special feature of the Eucharistic Celebration was the fact that, around the altar were Peterites who had answered the call of God to serve Him in the Priesthood. An inspiring homily was preached by Rev. Fr. Kalana Peiris, also an Old Boy.

To mark this significant day in the history of their Alma Mater, ninety students chosen from the Primary to the Advanced Level classes carried lamps to be placed along an iron structure shaped "90", at the foot of the altar. Dry rations were also collected to be distributed among the families of the Peterite band of workers.

Today, true to the name of our dear Patron, St. Peter, the "Rock", we have stood firm as a rock for the last 90 years and are steadily marching towards Excellence under the guidance of our tenth Rector, Rev. Fr. Travis Jude Gabriel.

Ninety years is a long period of time and God Almighty has certainly walked with us all the way. It has no doubt been a long, long walk. We have created history in the field of Education as a leading Catholic Institute of Education in Sri Lanka. During these 90 years, we have produced men of great calibre in every possible sphere. The Blue, White and Gold has indeed fluttered high and brought immense pride and glory to St. Peter's in diverse avenues of education.

The Eucharistic Celebration was followed by a General Assembly. The Rector, Rev. Fr. Travis Gabriel while addressing the gathering, reminded the boys about their responsibilities as Peterites. He also reiterated the fact that they were lucky to be part of the great Peterite Family. He remembered with gratitude all the Past Rectors who had done a great service in the years past and all who had contributed in diverse ways towards the upliftment of St. Peter's. Mr. Geoffrey Alagaratnam, a distinguished Peterite who is a leading lawyer and President's Counsel, also addressed the gathering. In his erudite speech, he urged the students to

CARITAS HELPS RESETTLED FAMILIES IN MANNAR DISTRICT



Many families returning to Musali Division in Mannar District are benefitting from a project funded by Misereor Germany and implemented by Valvuthayam under the direction of Rev Fr S. Jeyabalan, Director and the overall guidance of Caritas Mannar. These families were displaced in 2007 as a result of military advancement in that area.

Rev. Fr. Neville....

Contd. from Pg. 1

Christ, who came down among us to fulfil a mission entrusted to him by God, found, as he inaugurated his mission, that he too could not execute the task without help on the part of others. The calling of his disciples on the seaside takes place in this context and it is the poor fishermen, under-educated and uncultured, whom he chose to collaborate with this divine task.

All that God wants of us in our willingness and readiness to be open to His action of the spirit in our lives, his Eminence emphasized. The Cardinal referred to Fr. Neville Joe's tireless efforts in building up communities of the faithful travelling the length and breadth of Italy at a time when Sri Lankan immigrants lacked spiritual and pastoral leadership in the country. The new office is conferred on him by the Holy See with a view to deepening his endeavours to provide for the communities.

excel in whatever they do and thus bring honour and fame to their Alma Mater. All in all, it was a beautiful day, a day on which each one of us thanked God Almighty for

making us a unique part of this great and wonderful Peterite family!

Looking forward to our Centenary Year in 2022! (Imojen Mel)

Integrity, maturity.... Contd. from Pg. 1

The Seminary celebrated its 555th anniversary on Jan. 21, the Feast of St. Anges of Rome.

Pope Benedict explained that seminary life must be founded on "a solid spiritual life animated by an intense relationship with God, as individuals and in the community, with a particular care for liturgical celebrations and frequent recourse to the sacraments."

And once ordained, he added, priestly life "requires an ever-increasing thirst for sanctity, a clear 'Senses Ecclesiae' and an openness to fraternity without exclusion or bias."

"Part of a priest's journey of sanctity," he proposed, "is his decision to develop, with God's help, his own intellect, his own commitment: An authentic and solid personal

Catholic.... Contd. from Pg. 1

society where the rule of law reigns supreme; where we need to act with maturity and not according to our whims and fancies.

With these in mind, may the 64th Independence day lead us on to build a prosperous and peaceful Sri Lanka.



ours such as water pumps for cultivation. Dairy farming was encouraged through the distribution of cows and goats.

149 youth were given vocational training in fields such as masonry, electrical wiring, beauty culture, sewing and motor-

cycle repairing. They were provided with tool kits at the end of the training.

Psychosocial support was also given to 500 individuals while another 150 persons benefitted from group counselling.

Carits Communication Unit

Prize-giving at Sacred Heart, Sunday School



The annual prize-giving of the Sacred Heart Sunday School at Mattumagala, Ragama was held recently.

Picture shows Rev. Frs. Roggy Perera, Parish Priest, Mattumagala, Mahesh Chrisantha, Asst. Parish Priest, Kandana and Rev. Fr. Nishal Ranatunga with the three children who welcomed them.

(H.A. Caldera)

Vocation Camp for Post GCE O/L Students



A Vocation Camp was held at St. Joseph's Minor Seminary Poornawatte, Kandy recently. Fifteen youth who had sat for the GCE O/L Examination in 2011 participated in the programme. His Lordship Bishop Vianney Fernando delivering the inaugural address spoke on, "Vocation to the Priesthood."

Very Rev. Fr. Milroy Fonseka, the Vicar General of the diocese, conducted the holy hour.

10th YEAR REMEMBRANCE



M. N. JAYALATH PERERA
Died : 29 - 01 - 2002

"Ten long years have passed away
Sweet memories will never fade away
Deep in our hearts you'll always stay
Rest in peace forever we Pray"

Fondly remembered by his loving wife, children, sons-in-law & grand children (N2986)

Mission is not limited to the clergy alone: Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera

"It is our paramount duty to preach the good news to the whole world, whether we are clergy or laymen, we are called to live in accordance to the good words preached by our Saviour Jesus Christ," said His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera, Bishop of Kurunegala, when he declared open the 'Kithu Mina' Hall at St. Bruno's Church, Tambakanda, to mark the 25th anniversary of the Kurunegala diocese.

His Lordship said that, "Mission is a vocation and is not just limited to the clergy, but open even to the laity. It is a mission which we received at our baptism."

Tambakanda is a well-known Calvary Shrine. Even though visited by many pilgrims, the shrine lacked basic facilities for the welfare of the people.

His Lordship commended the work done by the Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Stanley Pieris and the parish community whose efforts have brought many benefits to the Shrine.



The funds received from generous donors have been utilised to complete the requirements of the shrine for the benefit of the pilgrims.

"If you help the parish priest, you are helping the bishop to carry out his diocesan missionary plan. So let us all join hands and

push our boats into the deep sea to 'fishes of men.'" catch," the Bishop told his flock.

Rev. Fr. Linus Kurukularachi, Parish Priest, Matiyangama was also present.

(Text & Pic. Cecil Danicisu)



Church in the World

Bishops praise Pope's warning about US religious freedom threats

Pope Benedict's concern about the threats to freedom of religion in the United States caused several US bishops to be "thankful and encouraged."

"Pope Benedict spoke eloquently and powerfully on the threats to the Church's moral witness in public life," Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan of New York, said.

Pope Benedict XVI last week told a group of US bishops from the Mid-Atlantic States about his "particular concern" over attempts to limit "that most cherished of American freedoms, the freedom of religion."

Many of you have pointed out that concerted efforts have been made to deny the right of conscientious objection on the part of Catholic individuals and institutions with regard to cooperation in intrinsically evil practices," he said. "Others have spoken to me of a worrying tendency to reduce religious freedom to mere freedom of worship without

guarantees of respect for freedom of conscience."

The Pope's words came the day before the Obama administration announced that a federal mandate requiring free contraceptives in insurance plans would not exempt many religious groups and institutions, including many Catholic institutions.

Good manners at Mass

A priest in Mexico City is recommending Catholics to turn off their cell phones, dress appropriately and arrive on time in order to participate more fully in the Mass.

In an article titled, "Good Manners in God's House," published by the Archdiocese of Mexico City's News Service on Jan. 16, Father Sergio Roman said Mexican Catholics should remember where they are when they attend Mass on Sundays.

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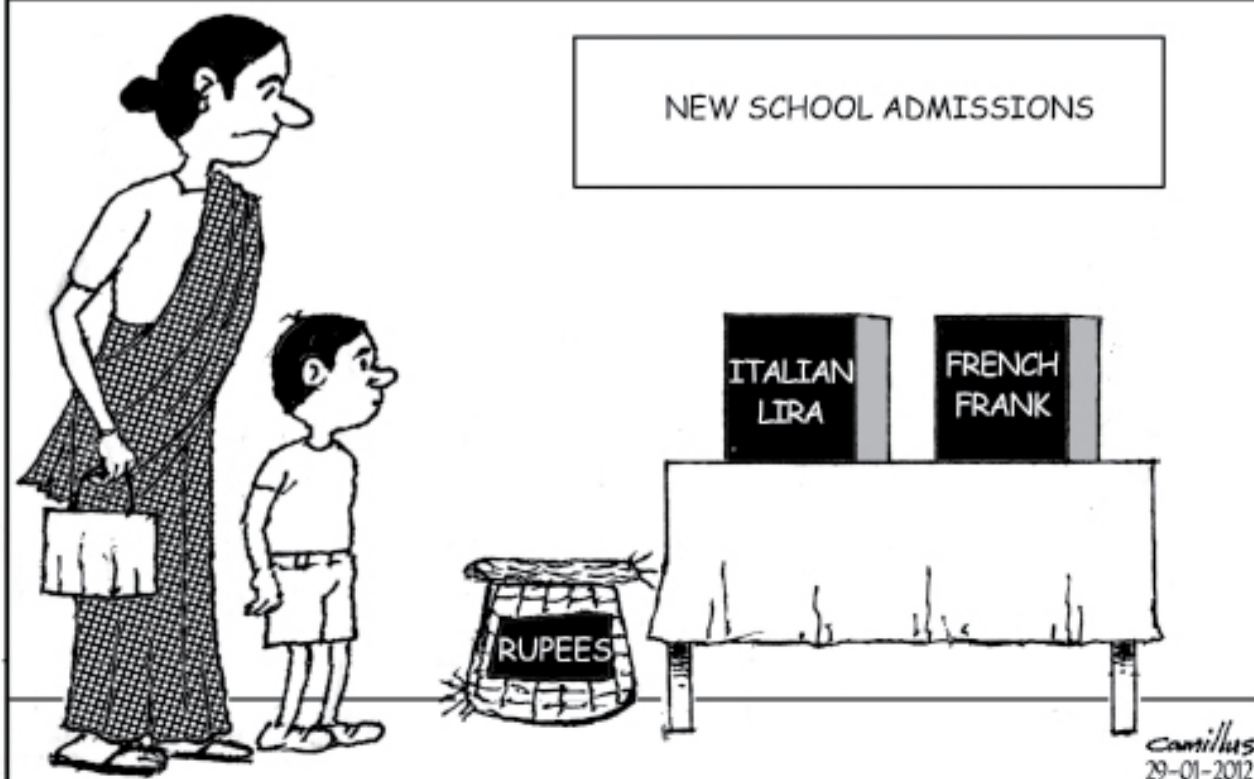
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SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus



The Church of the Patron Saint of Journalists

The Church of St. Francis of Sales of Dalugama, in Kelaniya is celebrating its annual feast for the 147th time today, January 29. The Church was built in 1865 when Sri Lanka was Ceylon under the British. Soon the church will be 150.

The Parish of Dalugama has been at one time or other home for five Bishops and so many priests and nuns, up to now.

Bishop Oswald Gomis, as a young Priest of the Dalugama Parish at that time, came often to Dalugama to say the Sunday Mass. Late Bishop W. Don Sylvester was a long time resident of Dalugama, living within sight of the Church, before he joined the seminary. Bishop Raymond Pieris was Parish Priest of Dalugama from 1969 to 1971; and Bishop Harold Anthony Perera came to Dalugama as Assistant Parish Priest in 1980. His immediate successor as Assistant Parish Priest was Rev. Fr. Maxwell Silva - the new Bishop - elect. He came in 1981.

The Parishioners had built nine churches in different areas of the Parish, which included a Church at Peliyagoda for Our Lady, a Church at Pamunuwila for St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse, a Church at Mabima for St. Joachim, her father and a church at Pilapitiya for St. Anne, her mother.

And it is nearly twenty years now since a church was built at Makola (at that time in the Dalugama Parish) for Blessed Joseph Vaz.

All those dedications were the choices of the Parishioners, except their Patron Saint, St. Francis of Sales. He was a gift from God to them.

The statue of St. Francis of Sales that was enthroned at the new Church at Dalugama in 1865 had a long and interesting history.

Yet unconfirmed history says that the statue

was originally in a Church at Kurunegala. Due to hostilities and persecutions by the Dutch rulers the Catholic elders had gone into hiding and had hidden the statue in a well at Biyanwila just two miles away from Dalugama.

When the Dutch invaders had withdrawn, yielding place to the British, the hidden statue had been recovered after a child had seen the statue in the well.

A powerful village chieftain in Dalugama who had prayed to the saint to save his wife from a sudden physical misadventure, had kept the statue in his custody until the present site was located.

Although not too many churches are dedicated to him locally, St. Francis of Sales is regarded widely and named officially by the Church as the Patron Saint of Journalists. He was a Doctor of the Church a great preacher and a powerful defender of the Heavenly Father. Once with his penetrating eloquence and convincing knowledge he was able to convert some 70,000 non-believers and opponents to the Faith.

Like St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Teresa of Avila and like St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis of Sales was also a prolific writer. Here are some of his moving observations:

"If someone, in hatred, were to pluck my left eye, I would look kindly at him with my right eye. And if he plucked that one out too, I would still have my heart with which to look at him."

"If your heart wanders or is distracted, place it in the Lord's presence."

"Do not fear God who wishes you no harm. Love him a great deal, who wishes you so much good."

"Make sickness itself a prayer."

"Patience is needed by everyone, but first of all with ourselves."

(Alfred Perera)

First Holy Communion at Polwatte Church

First Holy Communion Service was held at the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Polwatte in the Burulapitiya Parish.



Picture shows the First Holy Communicants with Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Subash Chaminda OMI in a photo session after the service, with the catechists, Rev. Sr. Thilini and Rev. Sr. Violet.

(Saman C. Perera)

THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF BIR LAKKA
Messenger
SINCE 1964

EDITORIAL

29 January 2012

The Criminalization of Politicians and the Politicization of Criminals

The criminalization of politicians and the politicization of criminals is now an accepted phenomenon in our political system. Almost from 1952 politicians have used muscle power to intimidate political rivals in their election campaigns. Politicians are thriving today on the basis of muscle power provided by criminals. Once the political aspect joins the criminal elements the nexus becomes extremely dangerous. Many politicians use these thugs and criminals to gain a vote bank, and if they are unable to win a particular caste or village of voters they intimidate and induce fear in them to stay away from the polling booths on the day of the election. They then resort to impersonation and vote rigging. The common people who constitute the voters are too reluctant to take measures against the criminal activities of politicians.

For the last 40 years, not a single election has been conducted peacefully without the use of money or muscle power and violence. Sometimes rival candidates get assaulted and suffer destruction of their vehicles and party offices. All these acts of lawlessness and violence have become possible because of the links many politicians have with criminal/anti-social elements. Some of the criminals they are linked to are members of the underworld, the drug mafia and the illicit distillers or bootleggers. An underground supply chain has come into being for the import and sale of narcotics drugs whose kingpins are the acolytes of the politicians. These criminals are ensured a guarantee of both immunity and impunity by a politicized Police and Justice department.

The elections to Parliament and Provincial and Local Authorities are very expensive and it is a widely accepted fact that huge election expenditure is the root cause for corruption resorted to by the elected representatives after they get into power. A candidate has to spend millions of rupees to get elected and even if he gets elected, the total salary he gets during his tenure as an MP will be meager compared to his election expenses. How can he bridge the gap between his income and sunken expenses? Publicly through donations and secretly through illegal means. Where is this money to come from? Only criminal activity can generate such large sums of untaxed funds or black money. That is why there are criminals in politics. They have money and muscle, so they win and help others in their party win as well. The worst part of the picture is that a "criminal record" becomes an essential qualification for entry into politics. Politics is not a social service anymore; but a lucrative profession or business.

Why do political parties select criminals and other notorious anti-social characters to stand for election? The most important factor, which determines the selection of party candidates, is the "win ability" of the candidate. Hence more and more persons with money and a criminal background are getting nomination from the political parties. These criminal elements think that they can escape punishment by becoming a Member of Parliament or a Member of a local body or at least their acolytes. A person with criminal background entering politics will demand his pound of flesh from the party in power to which he has extended support. Gaining leverage on those wielding power has become the road to immunity from the law. Opposition MPs cross over to the government side to avoid criminal charges or convictions. The politicization of the Police and the Attorney General's Department if not the Judiciary ensures that they enjoy immunity from the law for any criminal act.

Apart from seeking protection from the criminal cases going against them, the criminal politico or acolyte will also want a share from the developmental schemes going on in their areas. Thus the government funds meant for the poor go into the pockets of these people. This problem must attract the attention of all public spirited citizens, the clergy, the government and political parties.

Our attention is drawn to the words of Christ to the Pharisees and Herodians who came to entrap him in his talk. "Render to Caesar what is due to Caesar and to God what is God's"....*render to the politicians what is due and to the criminals the whip.*

From a Homily by Saint John Chrysostom on Ss. Timothy and Titus

Feast - January 26

Saints Timothy and Titus were disciples and assistants of the Apostle Paul.

Timothy had charge of the Church at Ephesus and Titus of the Church in Crete. The letters written to them are called the pastoral epistles, for they contain excellent admonitions for the instruction of both pastors and laity.

I have fought the good fight

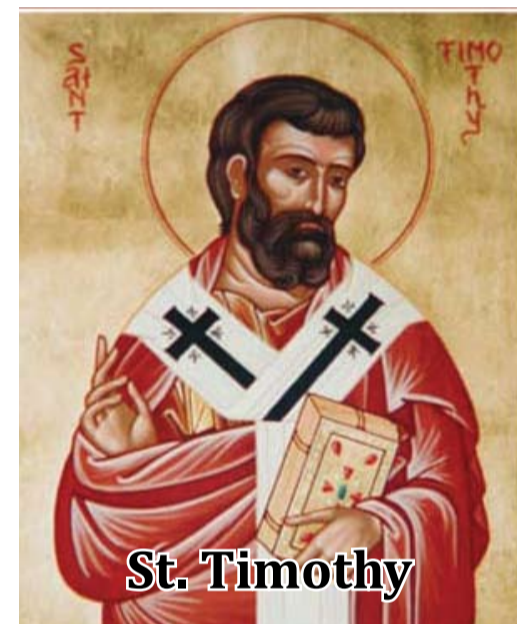
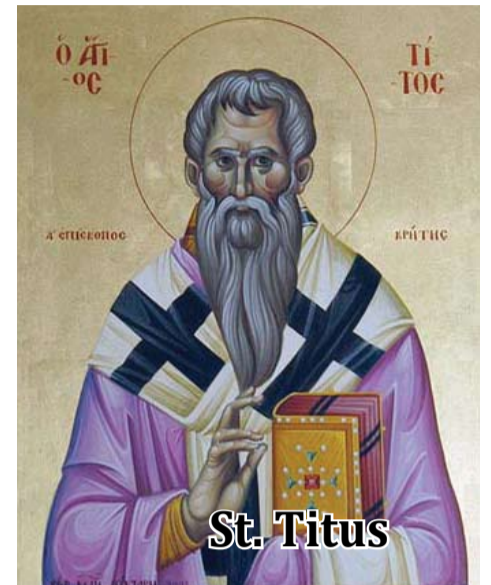
Though housed in a narrow prison, Paul dwelt in heaven. He accepted beatings and wounds more readily than others reach out for rewards. Sufferings he loved as much as prizes; indeed he regarded them as his prizes, and therefore called them grace or gift. Reflect on what this means. To depart and be with Christ was certainly a reward, while remaining in the flesh meant struggle. Yet such was his longing for Christ that he wanted to defer his reward and remain amid the fight; those were his priorities.

Now, to be separated from the company of Christ meant struggle and pain for Paul; in fact, it was a greater affliction than any struggle or pain would be. On the other hand, to be with Christ was a matchless reward. Yet, for the sake of Christ Paul chose the separation.

But, you may say: "Because of Christ, Paul found all this pleasant." I cannot deny that, for he derived intense pleasure from what saddens us. I need not think only of perils and ships. It was true even of the intense sorrow that made him cry out. Who is weak that I do not share the weakness? Who is scandalized that I am not consumed with indignation?

I urge you not simply to admire but also to imitate this splendid example of virtue, for, if we do, we can share his crown as well.

Are you surprised at my saying that if you have Paul's merits, you will share that same reward? Then listen to Paul himself: *I have fought the good fight, I have run the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth a crown of justice awaits me, and the Lord, who is a just judge, will give it to me on that day and not to me alone, but to those who desire his coming.* You see how



he calls all to share the same glory?

Now, since the same crown of glory is offered to all, let us eagerly strive to become worthy of these promised blessings.

In thinking of Paul we should not consider only his noble and lofty virtues or the strong and ready will that disposed him for such great graces. We should also realize that he shares our nature in every respect. If we do, then even what is very difficult will seem to us easy and light; We shall work hard during the short time we have on earth and someday we shall wear the incorruptible, immortal crown. This we shall do by the grace and mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all glory and power belongs now and always through endless ages. Amen.

Timothy was with Paul in Rome during the latter's house arrest. At some period Timothy himself was in prison (Hebrews 13:23). Paul installed him as his representative at the Church of Ephesus.

Timothy was comparatively young for the work he was doing. ("Let no one have contempt for your youth," Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:12a). Several references seem to indicate that he was timid. And one of Paul's most frequently quoted lines was addressed to him: "Stop drinking only water, but have a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses." (1 Timothy 5:23)

When Paul was having trouble with the community at Corinth, **Titus** was the bearer of Paul's severe letter and was successful in smoothing things out. Paul writes he was strengthened not only by the arrival of Titus but also "by the encouragement with which he was encouraged in regard to you, as he told us of your yearning, your lament, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.... And his heart goes out to you all the more, as he remembers the obedience of all of you, when you received him with fear and trembling" (2 Corinthians 7:7a, 15).

The Story of Jonah - the fugitive prophet

One of the most intriguing stories in the pages of the Bible is the tale of Jonah, the runaway prophet. Jonah, is commanded by God to go to the great city of Nineveh and tell the people that God is going to destroy them in forty days. Jonah believes that because God is merciful, the City will not be destroyed - hence he will look a buffoon after his all-to-be-wiped-out speeches. If this is Jonah's first mission, it is also his first refusal: Instead of going to Nineveh, he decides to go to Spain on a runaway package holiday. At least in Spain no one will laugh at him for being a failure.

Jonah makes the mistake of thinking he can travel out of God's reach, but he is in for a wet surprise. He buys his ticket, boards ship, and settles down to sleep for the voyage. There is a great storm and the ship threatens to break up. While all the sailors are busy praying and throwing cargo overboard, Jonah is fast asleep. The captain orders him to get up and pray, and when Jonah sees how close disaster is for everyone, he admits that he is the cause and tells the sailors to throw him overboard. Since tossing passengers overboard is not a permissible pastime for sailors, they are reluctant to oblige; but when the seas grow rougher, they change their mind. With Jonah overboard, there is calm again.

And then Jonah, who is not famous for keeping his mouth shut, meets a whale, not famous for keeping its jaws shut. The image is clear; Jonah is taken into the depths to be born again. If the hero is to pass onwards he must first pass inwards. Something in Jonah has to give, something in Jonah has to die. Illumination will come only after the experience of annihilation. So God sends Jonah on a renewal course for three days.

Another Chance

Jonah has the opportunity to repent. He is out of his element, he is in the depths, he must face himself and what is asked of him. He prays, he reflects, he remembers; and then he promises to fulfil the word of God. When



that happens, he is delivered out of the depths and the blubber-bus deposits him on land. When Jonah is back in his element, the word of God is addressed to him a second time: "Up! Go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to them as I told you to."

Jonah obeys. He goes into the City and tells the people that all of them will be destroyed in forty days. There is no ambiguity about his message; it is proclaimed as certain. Everyone pays attention. The king and his ministers command the people to renounce their evil behaviour: "Who knows, God may yet repent and turn from his furious anger?" (RSV) They hope that if they repent, so too will God.

God repents when the people repent. Everyone is overjoyed. All except one. While the people rejoice, Jonah leaves the City. To sulk. As he had suspected from the beginning, God has a controlling habit of forgiveness. He argues again with God: "That was why I fled ... I knew that you were a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness and mercy, relenting from evil." He asks God to take his life. He has been put to shame. The prophet has been proved a failure.

Jonah decides to sit in the hot sun until he dies. But God causes a tree to grow, to shade his prophet. Jonah feels better. But God causes the tree to die, and then Jonah feels sorry for the tree. God has the last word: He asks Jonah

why he is sorry for the tree. Should God not feel sorry for Nineveh, where many thousands of people live?

Repentance

With that question from God, the story of Jonah comes to an end. Jonah is obsessed with being right and he is willing to see all the people perish to be proved right. But the Prophet has to learn that the point of prophecy is not accuracy but repentance. True, Jonah has been made to look foolish; but his foolishness is much less important than people's repentance. He has to learn that it is never too late to repent, and that it is always good when the 'give-them hell prophet' is proved wrong.

The story of Jonah holds out hope for all of us. In the story everyone repents: Jonah himself, the people of Nineveh, even God. The good news is that no one is tied to a planned fate, no one is doomed to embrace disaster. By choosing to repent we can change our lives. Repentance is good news because it means that nothing is settled, nothing is sealed. Punishment that has been planned can always be cancelled. Things can change. If God can begin again, so we can begin again and again and again.

That is Gospel. That is good news. And repentance need not be a crusty, grouchy affair. As Jonah experienced himself, you can still have a whale of a time!

MY ETERNAL FRIEND

I have never seen Him,
But I'm trying to see him in myself.
Though the light keeps growing dim
He says "I'm in yourself."

I will find Him someday,
He has promised me that.
But I will have to wait a long day,
Until I achieve that.

His dark eyes will twinkle,
Like the thousand stars in heaven's skies.
Eternal love, his face shall sparkle,
Each time I fall on my way, He sighs.

He has wisdom,
That no man knows.
He owns a great kingdom,
Where every good man shall go.

But I know He is more glorious,
His image, an image of love victorious.
It is not a lie,
When I say these are facts I cannot deny.

He is far greater than anyone,
And above us all.
He is inviting me to join Him,
And I shall obey His call.

He is my sole advisor,
My major dream,
He's always, always by my side,
When I feel like a scream!

He sacrificed His life for me,
Crucified on the cross.
He gave us heaven's key,
But now it is covered with moss.

He gave us His own body and blood,
Gave us eternal life.
But we of the Earth,
Pierced him with a knife.

He was the Word,
And the Word was made flesh.
He has undying love,
For our herd.

I cannot repay what he has done for me,
But I'm trying my best,
Trying hard to see,
Till I achieve eternal rest.

He will come down once more,
On Judgement Day,
Where justice shall be done,
No matter what they say.

This poem is dedicated to you Lord Jesus,
My whole life and being,
My guiding light;
But most of all, my Eternal Friend.

(Sachika Saparamadu)

The Book of Jonah

The Book of Jonah is unlike other prophetic books of the Bible in that it is a narrative, describing the adventures of a prophet who tried to disobey God's command. God told him to go to Nineveh, the capital of the great empire of Assyria, Israel's deadly enemy. But Jonah did not want to go there with God's message, because he was convinced that God would not carry out his threat to destroy the City. After a series of dramatic events, he reluctantly obeyed, and finally sulked when his message of doom did not come true.

The Book portrays God's absolute sovereignty over his creation. But above all it portrays God as a God of love and mercy, who would rather forgive and save even the enemies of his people, than punish and destroy them.

1. 1-2

One day the Lord spoke to Jonah son of Amittai. He said, "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and speak out against it; I am aware how wicked its people are."



Jonah started through the city, and after walking a whole day, he proclaimed, "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed!"



4.6

Then the Lord God made a plant grow up over Jonah to give him some shade, so that he would be more comfortable, Jonah was extremely pleased with the plant.



1.3

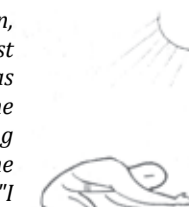
Jonah, however, set out in the opposite direction in order to get away from the Lord. He went to Joppa, where he found a ship about to go to Spain. He paid his fare and went aboard with the crew to sail to Spain, where he would be away from the Lord.



The sailors were terrified and cried out for help, each one to his own god. Then, in order to lessen the dangers, they threw the cargo overboard. Meanwhile, Jonah had gone below and was lying in the ship's hold, sound asleep.

4.8

After the sun had risen, God sent a hot east wind, and Jonah was about to faint from the heat of the sun beating down on his head. So he wished he were dead. "I am better off dead than alive." He said.





Marriage in the Original Cov-

Building a House for Man

God formed the woman, we read in the second creation account of the Book of Genesis, by 'building' her from a rib taken from Adam's side. The Old Testament expression, 'to build a house' for someone, means to provide that person with descendants (cf. Gn 16:2; Ps 127:1,3; Dt 25:9; 2 S 7:11, 27). It is always, ultimately, God himself who builds this kind of a house for man.

Animals, when they reproduce, do not need God's creative assistance; there is enough material causality in a male and a female animal to account entirely for the new animal that comes to be. Human beings, however, are spiritual as well as material, and yet a man and a woman contribute only what is material to-

ward the birth of a new child; they contribute the material conditions necessary for human life to begin.

It is not true, however, that the man and woman contribute the 'body,' while God contributes the 'soul.'

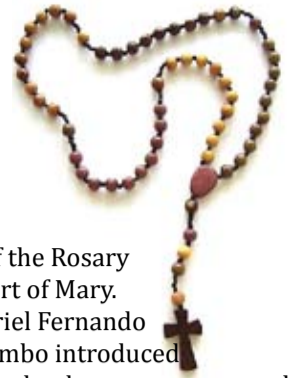
Actually, it is the soul, created by God, that gives both existence and life to the body. The human body is not a pre-existent container into which a soul is poured by God; it would be far better to say, in fact, that the body is the material *expression* of the soul. The human parents do, however, still contribute something of the *individuality* of the child, for the new child created by God is really *their* child, too, with specific



traits inherited from them. Animals re-produce; people *pro-cre-ate*- that is, people *assist at an act of creation*.

Continued next week
(Courtesy: *Marriage Together in Christ Catholic Truth Society*)

The Universal Living Rosary



Can you offer one decade of the Rosary for the triumph of the Heart of Mary.

In 1980 late Mrs. Muriel Fernando of No.2 Mudaliyar Road, Negombo introduced this beautiful devotion. Several others too promoted this devotion of the 'Living Rosary' in Sri Lanka.

In 2002 a delegation headed by Bro. Joseph Roch. National Animator for India met the then Archbishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis, to reorganise this devotion.

Rev. Fr. Ignatius Prasad, Rector Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Chennai, also the Spiritual Director of the Living Rosary, India, met His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and Rev. Fr. Udayadas at Archbishop's House, Borella to discuss and brief them on this devotion.

There are several promoters in different localities, who work for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but Rev. Fr. Udayadas is the Animator for Sri Lanka.

If you wish to be a member please write to Rev. Fr. Udayadas: 071 8563646 **Emilda Douglas**

Founder of the Christian Family Movement (CFM)

Percy Aloysius Silva of the Christian Family Movement of Sri Lanka answered the call of his Divine Master and left to receive his Eternal Reward on 3rd December, 2011 at the age of 76 years.

Although a young worker then, Percy Silva served as an animator of the Young Christian Students' (YCS) Movement in the Negombo District and he was selected as one of the Sri Lankan delegates to the first ever YCS Asian Seminar held in Sri Lanka in the year 1961. Thereafter he joined the YCW Cell at the Moratuwa Parish as he hails from the Lunawa Church.

Since his marriage in 1962 with Agnes Perera (Co-founder of YCS) who was involved in the Youth Apostolate among the girl students and teachers, together as a couple with 8 other newly married couples founded the first CFM Cell at 'Christu Nivasaya', Negombo, on 1st April, 1967, with Rev. Fr. Ernest Poruthota as their Spiritual Animator. Two years

prior to the inauguration of the CFM these prospective couples participated in their first ever (Pre-Cana) Preparation for Marriage Conference, conducted by the then Youth Apostolate Chaplain for Negombo and Katana Districts, Rev. Fr. Siri Oscar Abayaratne, on 13th April, 1965 at Ave Maria Convent, Negombo.

Depending purely on the Sacred Inspiration of the Holy Gospel and the vision and mission entrusted to the lay members of God's people pertaining to the family milieu by late Cardinal Joseph Cardijn as the basic method and approach of the CFM and with the ready co-operation and initiative of the CFM Leader Couples, the Movement was implanted in many parishes in the Archdiocese of Colombo and several other dioceses in Sri Lanka.

Due to Percy Silva's close connections with the CFM International Founder Couple, Patrick and Patricia Crowley of Chicago, USA. He was in-



Percy Silva

strumental in getting the CFM of Sri Lanka affiliated to the International Confederation of the Christian Family Movements (ICCFM) in the year 1969. The indefatigable efforts of Percy Agnes Silva together with the CFM National Executive Committee led to the calling up of the first CFM National Convention in the year 1973 with the participation of Most. Rev. Dr. Anthony de Saram, the then Bishop of Galle and the Episcopal Chairman of the Lay Apostolate as the chief guest.

Percy and Agnes Silva, founder couple of the CFM of Sri Lanka represented the Movement at the

(FAMILIA - 74), the World Assembly of the Family, organized by the International Confederation of the Christian Family Movements (ICCFM) and the Family Office of the World Council of Churches (WCC) under the theme "Family Power" held at the University of Dar-es-Salaam in the Republic of Tanzania, East Africa in June, 1974, as a prelude to the UN Population Conference to be held in Bucharest, Romania in August, 1974.

On 31st July 1978 Percy Silva with his team of key CFMers had the unique opportunity of meeting the then new incumbent Archbishop of Colombo, Most Rev. Dr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando and place before him the activities carried out by the CFM in the Archdiocese of Colombo

This momentous meeting gave the CFMers present, new vigour and vitality: When His Grace the Archbishop expressed that "You all are doing hard work at the moment, I expect you to do still harder." With this

mandate, His Grace went further and appointed Rev. Fr. Joseph Perera, OMI, then Parish Priest of Bolletha, as the First Official Chaplain of the CFM of the Archdiocese of Colombo with effect from 1st March 1978. This was an appointment made exclusively for the CFM and he was not a Co-ordinator of the Family Apostolate.

Responding to the appeal of Percy Silva and his team of key CFMers Most Rev. Dr. Frank Marcus Fernando, the then Bishop of Chilaw was gracious enough to appoint Rev. Fr. Alexis Dasanayake as the CFM Chaplain of the Diocese of Chilaw in the year 1978.

In 1977 Percy and Agnes Silva represented CFM Sri Lanka at the 4th General Assembly of the (ICCFM) held at the Ateneo University, Manila, Philippines in Nov. Dec. 1977 and the couple had the unique opportunity of meeting His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin of Manila.

In March 1981 Percy Silva with late R.S. Perera, a Member of the CFM National Executive Committee who was employed as the Chief Health Education Officer of the Health Education Division, Health Department of the Municipality of Colombo, visited India to follow an intensive Course on (Natural Family Planning- NFP Development) conducted by the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. With the education they thus received, they

Vivian Silva

wrote and published the book in Sinhala language for the benefit of the would-be couples on the method of Natural Fertility of Birth as opposed to the artificial means of Birth Control which was disseminated amongst thousands of prospective couples attending the CFM Pre-Cana Conferences for well over 40 years. So many non-Catholic couples also benefitted.

Percy Silva played a very active role in the preparatory work as well as in the conduct of the 4th Asian Continental Conference of the CFM CFSM, first ever to be held in Sri Lanka in August 1997, coinciding with the 30th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Christian Family Movement (CFM) in Sri Lanka.

His life long commitment devolved on the re-christianisation of couples and families. It needs to be emphasised that in spite of the involvements in numerous family activities, Percy Silva was a Cancer Patient, suffering from a glandular-cancer for the last 31 years.

Miraculously by the abundant Grace of God he was served and survived to continue the Family Apostolate through the CFM which he and his wife initiated and founded with 8 other Young Catholic Couples as a very small Cell in the year 1967.



A CROSS

The Way 67

By Sirohmi Gunesequera

In Common

"Oh dear, the children are sick and my husband has lost his job. I feel overwhelmed by everything," exclaimed Ayesha.

"Have you thought of praying about your situation?" asked her friend Mary.

"Well, I am a Muslim and we are supposed to pray every day. But to tell you the truth, I simply recite my prayers and don't think about it," confessed Ayesha.

"Well, there are many Catholics who do the same thing. Do you know that Muslims and Catholics (Christians) share a lot in common because we both believe in one God or Allah?" said Mary.

"Yes, we are called 'People of the Book' because both Muslims and Christians have a holy book.

Christians read the holy Bible and Muslims read the holy Quran or Koran." replied Ayesha.

"So why don't you pray to the God you believe in to help you through your troubles?" suggested Mary, adding, "I don't mean just textbook prayers but really talking to God. Just say, 'God, I am in difficulty. Do please help me.'"

"Thank you. I will try. I like the fact that you respect my religion just as I respect yours," remarked Ayesha.

"Yes, gone are the days when people tried by force to convert others. After the Second Vatican Council, it was decreed that even non-Christians could be witnesses to God's presence among us. So it is better to follow the religion you are born into and to do it well," observed Mary.

"That is true. Most of us simply follow the religion of our parents and that may be one reason why we are not devout for we mechanically repeat the prayers we have learnt from birth," said Ayesha.

"It is good to think over our prayers and mean what we say. Take time to reflect and then the prayer is really meaningful to us." said Mary.

"If only all Christians and Muslims were as friendly and understanding as we are..." sighed Ayesha.

TAKE TIME FOR A MINUTE OF HUMOUR - SMILE!

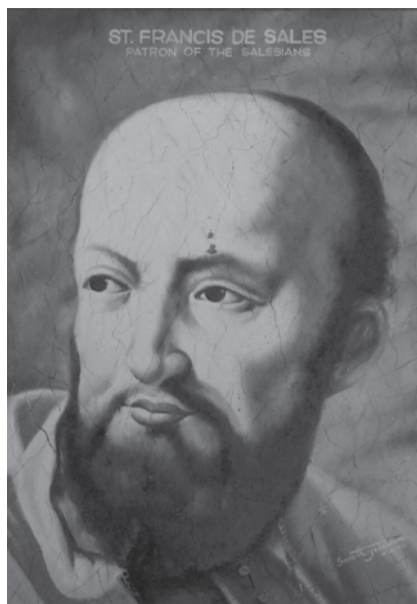
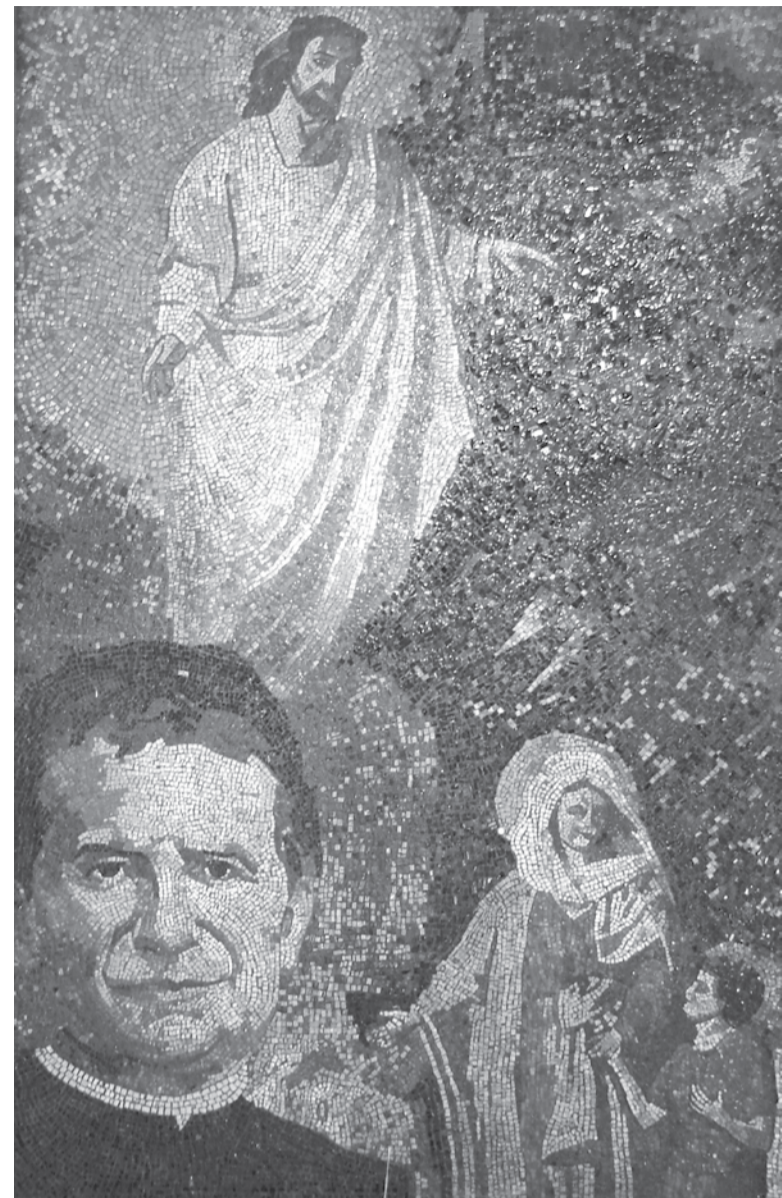


The teacher to little Bruno who could not remember the grace after meals. "What did your daddy say yesterday after his dinner?"

Bruno: "He yawned and said, Oh my, I will burst."

Rev. Fr. Fracfid Anthony Fernando OMI

St. John Bosco: Teacher and father to the young



St. Francis de Sales

St. John Bosco's lifework was the welfare of young boys and girls, hence his title, "Apostle of Youth." He had no formal system or theory of education. His methods centered on persuasion, authentic religiosity, and love for young people. He was an enlightened educator and innovator. Gifted as he was as an educator and a leader, Don Bosco formulated a system of education based on "reason, religion and kindness." In spite of the criticism and violent attacks of the anti-clericals, he conducted workshops for the tradesmen and

manual labourers, schools of arts and sciences for young workers, and schools of the liberal arts for those preparing for the priesthood.

In 1868 there were 800 students involved in this educational system. To ensure the continuation of his work, Don Bosco founded the Society of St. Francis de Sales which was to become known as the Salesians, approved in 1869. Also, with the help of Sister Mary Dominic Mazzarello, he founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Auxiliatrix.

Pope John Paul II named him "teacher and father to the young."

The picture above shows the large mosaic that decorates the chapel of the Don Bosco Provincial House at Dungalpitiya. The painting of St. Francis de Sales is by Sarath Yatawara and is at the Don Bosco Boys' town,

Art & Architecture in Liturgy

Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

Patron Saint of Schools and Sacred Theology



St. Thomas ranks among the greatest writers and theologians of all time. He nevertheless remained modest, a perfect model of childlike simplicity and goodness. He was mild in word and kind in deed. The goodness of his heart shone in his face, no one could look upon him and remain disconsolate. His most important work, the *Summa Theologiae*, an explanation and summary of the entire body of Catholic teaching, has been standard for centuries, even to our own day. At the Council of Trent it was consulted after the Bible. A precious memento has been left to us in the Office of Corpus Christi. He is the Patron Saint of schools and of sacred theology. The painting shown here are by

Richard Gabriel at St. Theresa's Church, Thimbirigasyaya. The above painting is part of a panel showing a combination of theologians and philosophers.



St. Sebastian and the dengue epidemic



Historically St. Sebastian has been widely venerated in our country as a protector against plagues and pestilences. Today the dengue epidemic is ravaging our country. Why not we implore the intercession of St. Sebastian against this epidemic?

The pictures here show how the streets of Moratuwa were decorated to host the procession in honour of the Saint last week on 20th January. There was no distinction between people as they united; the rich the poor, the Buddhist the Christian, the Sinhalese the Tamil, as Moratuwa vibrated to intercessions to St. Sebastian and thousands thronged the streets to bow their heads and raise their voices in supplication as the procession bearing the image of the Saint passed along the streets, to the thundering ovations of fire works.

Missionary Childhood Sunday - 29th January 2012

"We are the Little Missionaries of Our Land!"

(This message is especially for the elders and parents on Holy Childhood Sunday 2012)

"The Mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion. As the Second Millennium after Christ's Coming draws to an end, an overall view of the human race shows that this Mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves whole heartedly to its Service." (Introduction by Blessed Pope John Paul II of the Encyclical - Redemptoris Missio or the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate).



Pope Paul VI in his encyclical - "Evangelii Nuntiandi" or Evangelization in the Modern World, very clearly states that, "The Church exists in order to evangelize." That is, the Mission proper to the Church is Evangelization. In this sense, all those who believe, accept and follow Christ the Redeemer are Missionaries. Therefore, let us all - Priests, Religious, the Laity, the old and the young, the youth and even children become Lord Jesus' disciples or His Missionaries. He needs all of us to proclaim to the whole world, the Good News of Salvation, the Good News of the Kingdom and the Good News of God the Father. Therefore, let us all join hands with Jesus' Little Missionaries and carry on the Mission of Our Lord Jesus.

"Let the little children come to me. Do not hinder them" (Mark 10:14). This is the Lord's invitation - the Lord's command. He needs the children also to build up His kingdom. In the 3rd Chapter of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity of the 2nd Vatican Council, it is stated very clearly - "Children also have their own Apostolic work to do. In their own way, they can be true living witnesses to Christ among their companions." Yes, Christ Jesus needs even little children to be His Missionaries. They too have a part to play in the Church of Christ Jesus.

It was in the year 1843 that Mgr. Charles de Forbin Janson, the Bishop of Nancy, in France, began the Missionary Childhood Society on the Theme - "Children helping Children." Yet, as we have it today in Sri Lanka, it was Fr. Malcolm Ranjith, the then National Director - PMS - Now the Chief Shepherd of the Archdiocese of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, who began the Holy Childhood Society in 1987. Accordingly, the year 2012 is a very significant year for all our Little Missionaries, for it is their Silver Jubilee Year.

The Theme chosen for this year's Holy Childhood Sunday and also for the entire year is - "We are the Little Missionaries of Our Land"! It is also fitting to remind ourselves here, the purpose of the Holy Childhood Association - That is: To know Jesus, to live Jesus and to introduce Jesus to others.

Therefore, during this Jubilee Year, let us encourage and send our children close to Jesus, who alone can make their lives meaningful and fruitful. Let us help them to realize that they are Jesus' missionaries. Recognizing that Jesus needs all the Children of our locality, of our village and also of our Parish, let us lead all our children to become members of the Holy Childhood Society of the Parish. Let us also remember that together with them, we are also called to become Missionaries and be the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World.

Dear Children, realizing that Jesus needs all of you and that Jesus is inviting all of you to be His Missionaries be very, very active Missionaries throughout this whole year!

Yes, -"We are the Little Missionaries of Our Land!"

May Lord Jesus Bless you and May Our Mother protect you!

Fr. Reginald Saparamadu
National Director
Holy Childhood Association

සම මර්මය ඉරැදිදා HOLY CHILDHOOD SUNDAY திருமணி அறையடி தாய் 2012.01.29

"පුටි පුටි දමිදනයේ ලක් දෙරණේ"
"We are the Little Missionaries of our country"
"எமது நாட்டின் சின்னஞ்சிறு மறைதாதர்கள் நாமே!"

25
1987 - 2012
25 th Anniversary
25வது ஆண்டு திருநாள்

සම මර්මය දිවයින සංගම්, 19 මැදුල්ලි පොළ, කොළඹ 08
பாப்பாறை அறையடிப் சபைகள், 19 மீடில்லாட் திட்டம், கொழும்பு 08
Pontifical Mission Societies, Balcombe Place, Colombo-08, Sri Lanka
Tel / Fax : 011-2685673 email : ndpms@sltnet.lk
Web : www.pontificalmissionlk.org

The Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood



Founded in Nancy, France in 1843 by Bishop Charles de Forbin, to awaken in every Catholic child a strong sense of commitment to Jesus Christ and a zeal for the spread of the Good News everywhere by deepening their faith, living it faithfully and sharing their resources joyfully, bringing together all children in worldwide fraternity.



Sri Lanka celebrates the 25th Anniversary of Holy Childhood

The Holy Childhood Society has existed over 60 years in Sri Lanka but was confined to a few Catholic Schools in the Island. After the Asian Regional Meeting of the National Directors of these Societies in Bangkok in the year 1986, a decision was taken to broad base this movement in Sri Lanka in order to make it more relevant and effective in the Sri Lankan context.

- To assist all Catholic children in Sri Lanka towards a deeper and stronger experience of their faith through a spiritual communion with Christ.
- To awaken a strong sense of mission in them, enabling them to proclaim their faith boldly and authentically.
- To guide them in such a way as to make them experience the universality, urging them to transcend all barriers of caste, race, colour or language.

- To assist them in achieving a deep concern for the needs of the universal mission of the church to the point of giving their lives generously. To spread the gospel, even through religious or priestly vocation.

- To enkindle in them a great love for the poor, the suffering, the oppressed and all who represent the suffering face of Christ today.

- To assist them to develop a greater spirit of missionary co-operation, in the worldwide Church.

The Society is present in every diocese in Sri Lanka and there are well over 78,000 enrolled members and many more who are to be enrolled. By giving a true Christian and Missionary formation to the children even from their very tender age, the Society could render a great service to the future generations of children. It also would help, to protect our children from being corrupted at a very young age by the selfish, irreligious values of modern society. Besides they could be trained, not only to think of their own spiritual or material needs but also to the needs of other children.

Contributions to Holy Childhood Sunday for the year 2011

Diocese	Collection
Anuradhapura	53,177.00
Badulla	36,935.00
Chilaw	415,626.00
Colombo	1,509,708.00
Galle	42,601.00
Jaffna	202,149.00
Kandy	254,384.00
Kurunegala	179,905.00
Mannar	153,782.00
Ratnapura	78,500.00
Trincomalee/Batticaloa	112,735.00
Total	3,039,502.00

Rev.Fr. Reginald Saparamadu

National Director
Pontifical Mission Societies,
No.19, Balcombe Place, Colombo-8
Tel/Fax: 011 -2685673
E-mail: ndpms@sltnet.lk
Website: www.pontificalmissionlk.org

Our growth over the years

Training & Formation of Holy Childhood Animators

1987

2012



Our first group of Animators



St. Thomas Aquinas

Feast day: January 28

Died: 1274

St. Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor of the Church, patron of all universities and of students.

In 1243, at the age of seventeen, he joined the Dominicans of Naples. Some members of his family resorted to all manner of means over a two-year period to break his constancy. They even went so far as to send an impure woman to tempt him. But all their efforts were in vain and St. Thomas persevered in his vocation. As a reward for his fidelity, God conferred upon him the gift of perfect chastity, which has merited for him the title of the "Angelic Doctor".

After making his profession at Naples, he studied at Cologne under the celebrated St. Albert the Great. Here he was nicknamed the "dumb ox" because of his silent ways and huge size, but he was really a brilliant student.

At Paris he was honored with the friendship of the King, Louis IX, with whom he fre-

quently dined. In 1261, Urban IV called him to Rome where he was appointed to teach, but he positively declined to accept any ecclesiastical dignity. St. Thomas not only wrote (his writings filled twenty hefty tomes characterized by brilliance of thought and lucidity of language), but he preached often and with greatest fruit. Clement IV offered him the archbishopric of Naples which he also refused. He left the great monument of his learning, the "Summa Theologica."

St. Thomas was one of the greatest and most influential theologians of all time.



St. John Bosco

Feast day 31st January

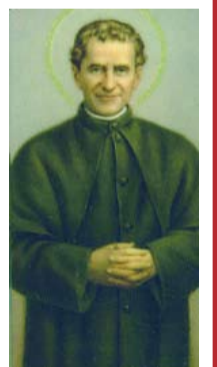
He was born and bred in Piedmont Sans a silver spoon in mouth. So, he enthused himself in the prime of youth To be near and dear to the destitute.

He toiled and moiled in pursuit of downtrodden Bearing a great influence on poor children. He achieved immense satisfaction in his action Inspite of the most fierce opposition.

His future was revealed in a vision Which persuaded him to initiate his new mission. So, he opted to be ordained a priest of God To work in a spirit of divine charity to children worldwide.

God guided him to found Salatian Fathers' Congregation Which flourishes serving God and man His kind heart was all out to help man To enhance the glory of God's creation.

His prime motive was to stabilize a God-centred life of youth Providing education, occupation and guidance To tread on the righteous path So, let's emulate St. John Bosco's life of sacrifice To aid the poorest of the poor among us.



(Leonard Wijesiri)

90 years of service of the Apostolic Carmel in Sri Lanka

Trincomalee, which is in the Northern part of the Eastern Province has its own history and beauty. It is bounded in the North by the Yan Oya, the districts of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa in the West and by the Verugal Ganga in the South. Nature has endowed the region with a beauty and grace that has not been excelled by man. The beaches are famous spots not only for tourists but for Sri Lankans too. The rising sun is a breath-taking sight for the early morn beach goers.

This historical spot became more historical to the Apostolic Carmel Sisters since it became the cradle which they have kept rocking gently and firmly for the past 90 years. God's ways are unfathomable, marvelous and creative. The Cluny sisters of French origin were missionaries in Sri Lanka for many years and they were very successful in Batticaloa and Trincomalee. They were called back to Paris since they lacked personnel to continue their good and devoted missionary work. During this era before they left the Island the Bishop of Trincomalee Rev. Dr. Gaston Robichez S.J made a firm request to Rev. Mother Aloysia, then Superior General of the Apostolic Carmel in India,

Mangalore, to take up their mission. The matter was taken for deliberation and discernment. One of the best and supportive comment surely inspired by God was "Our very Name 'Apostolic Carmel' calls for it." Her humble reply was "God grant we may know his holy will and then use our poor efforts to do it."

Leaving behind the boats on familiar shores following the Mater's voice, four sisters set out to land on another shore, and Sisters Lourdes, Cresence, Clare and Justine arrived on the 5th of February in 1922 from India - Mangalore on eagle's wings putting their trust solely in God. Such was the indomitable courage of missionaries who nurtured our early education in Sri Lanka.

"The town of Trincomalee waited curiously mingled with expectation, to see who these Carmelites were who were going to replace their French educators and surely there were no disappointments, as the four comely figures made their first appearance, with the bloom of youth still upon them. It is said that at the sight of Mother Lourdes, brought the exclamation: "isn't she really our Mother of Lourdes." [The AC. Symphony vol.1]

Before these pioneers arrived the way was

prepared by none other than the Superior General herself. She played the role of the precursor by arriving on the 24th of January 1922, accompanied by two Sisters. They reached Danushkody on the south east of the Indian peninsula by train. There was more than an hour's crossing by sea before they could reach the shores of Ceylon. After journeying through sea and land they reached Trincomalee St. Joseph's Convent, an old Dutch building. They received a warm welcome from mothers Felix and Xavier, Sisters of Cluny who had been waiting to hand over their mission. There were two schools one for English and the other where the medium was Tamil, an industrial school and an orphanage too. The second foundation was opened three months later on the 16th May 1922.

From then onwards with the grace of God the Apostolic Carmel Sisters were able to strengthen and widen their roots in this Island. At present we serve in nine dioceses of Sri Lanka enlightening the minds of children through education. Being faithful to our Christ, i.e. A deep experience of God's all-sufficing love through prayer and contemplation,



we share this love with all specially through education and other works of mercy. We are ever grateful to our Servant of God, Mother Veronica of the Passion, who founded the Order in 1868 in France, Bayonne and who was originally an English lady. Once on her way to India from France by ship she landed in Galle (before she founded the AC Congregation). After 90 years of our presence God invited us to open a Convent in Galle, it was realized on the 5th of December 2010. We consider it as a gift.

At the beginning Sri Lanka was constituted as a sort of a region with Mother Innocence [an Indian] as the delegate. Late Sr. Maude too served as a delegate. After many years it became a Province in 1974. Sr. Innocencia AC hailing from the hill country, rocked the cradle as the first elected Provincial Superior.

There had been five Provincial Superiors after her and at present Sr. Carmella is guiding the Province of Sri Lanka as the 6th in line which has 39 convents and there are a good number of sisters teaching in schools from North to South and East to West. The Sri Lanka Province was able to go across the sea and open three convents in Pakistan where they educate the poor Catholics, in 9 schools. The Province has sent forth missionaries to Kuwait, Kenya, and Bahrain too to educate the needy children

During the time of school take over in 1960 - 1961, the Sisters too had to face many challenges, after which the Sisters have Holy Cross College, Gampaha now as a semi Government School which is under the care of the Apostolic Carmel Sisters. The sisters try to uplift the teaching profession to bring light hope and love to all. The AC Sisters have been in the field of education for 40 years before the take over of schools and now we complete 50 years of dedicated committed service in the same field. After the take over. God

Sr. Sunitha A.C

has taken us through fire and water but we were not consumed or drowned because His all sufficing love sustained us. Glory to Him.

The Sisters are also educating the children through girl's homes, boarding houses, needle work centers. We give necessary primary education in pre schools and a day care centre. Last but not the least is the Home of Compassion where the less fortunate elderly men and women receive God's all-sufficing love through the compassionate love of the Sisters.

Non formal education, prison ministry, pastoral work, ministry with estate workers, catechetics, empowerment of women, health ministry, are the jewels that adorn the garland of Apostolic Carmel Charism.

After having experienced God's merciful love for 90 full years we look forward to experience His generous blessings in our field of Education and other works of Mercy.

May God's all sufficing Love penetrate into every heart and make our mission fruitful.

Parishioners of Ja-Ela get set to Celebrate 2000th Sorrowful Novena

It is 40 years since the inauguration of the Sorrowful Novena of Our Blessed Mother, at the Ja-Ela Church. The 2000th Novena falls on the first Friday of the month of May dedicated to Virgin Mary, i.e. on the 4th of May, 2012.

The Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Gregory Jayanatha Fernando, together with the members of the Parish Pastoral Council are engaged in organising the activities of this day to make

it memorable.

This Novena Devotion commenced on the first Friday in Lent, in the year 1973, March 09th. This was the brain child of the then Parish Priest Rev. Fr. K. William Perera O.M.I. This was highly appreciated by the parishioners including the neighbourhood parishes.

The past and the present Parish Priests have rendered a great service in the fulfilment of the aspi-

rations of promoting this Novena Devotion at large. The enthusiasm of the Novena participants are praise worthy. Their endeavour to participate and pay homage to Our Lady of Sorrows, as her children is commendable.

Rev. Fr. Gregory Jayanatha, as the Parish Priest is making a great effort to renovate the Church to give it an impressive look and is looking forward for the generous help

L.S. Nelson Fernando

and financial assistance of the parishioners and the devotees at large for this purpose.

Some have already paid heed to the request made by him and he is confident that the generous support of the parishioners, devotees and especially those in foreign employment will help him to make it a reality.

A Humanitarian Mission of Love

In the recent past much has been said about the Missionaries of Charity who are working in many countries across the globe including countries which are unfavourable to Catholics.

At this stage it would be fitting to consider their services in India, our nearest neighbour from where these Missionaries originated, being founded by the late Mother Teresa in Kolkata.

Kolkata is the capital of the Indian State of West Bengal, which was ruled by the Communist Party of India for a fairly long period. The Chief Minister, the late Jyoti Basu had been in office for successive terms and it was in this background that these Missionaries of Charity came into existence and their services were well recognised and assisted by the Communist controlled State government of West Bengal.

On her return from Norway, having been awarded the coveted Nobel Peace Prize, Mother Teresa was welcomed to the Kolkata International Airport by the Chief Minister Tyoti-Basu and his Cabinet colleagues. In

due course he went a step further and accorded a civic reception to Mother Teresa in recognition of her having won the prestigious award.

The Central government of India on its part honoured Mother Teresa for having brought fame to India. Meanwhile, the Indian Airlines Corporation gifted her with annual Air Tickets valid for travel any number of times from any Airport to any Airport within India. Thus was the treatment our neighbour meted out to her and this was strengthened by the recent statement made by His Excellency, the High Commissioner for India in Sri Lanka, when he said that if these missionaries are not wanted in Sri Lanka "India is prepared to welcome them."

Thus, one can clearly observe India's attitude to these Missionaries (including that of the Communist controlled State of West Bengal) and compare it with what Sri Lanka had to offer to these missionaries working at "Prem-Nivasa" at Rawattawatte in Moratuwa?

Roggy Corera

My favourite sister, Daisybelle de Mel

The picture of you holding me in your arm
Suggests your wish to protect me from harm
You were a young maiden of thirteen years then
I, just an infant of three months and ten
You tended me throughout my growing years
Saved me from canings and consequent tears
Reminding me of allotted tasks to do
For this and your loyalty, I loved you.

Sometimes we shared our secrets at night
You and I, we never, ever would fight.
It was a joy your special sister to be
It helped you too, as it did to me.

You searched with loving eyes what I read,
New friends I found and those whom I shed.
You seemed to be like a "little mummy"
It's no wonder I trusted you totally.

You were always there when I needed you most
When after a "Caesar" a cancer I'd host!
Overnight with prayer, a touch of the hand
You spurred my spirit and I'd understand!

As you lay unconscious in the cold ICU
Softly I sang hymns and prayed as you'd do;
Siblings urged "Rest" reluctantly I kissed
A "send-off" on wings of a hymn I missed!

Written with love, on behalf of all her family members

(Noelyn Fernando)

THE BODY LANGUAGE OF PRAYER

Fr. Dr. Varghese Parappuram V.C

Moses lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights (Deut 9:18) Scientific studies have proved that about 70% of the human communications takes place through body language. Only 30% is verbal communication. 100% of the communication of small children and people unable to talk is done through body language. Body language can mean crying, laughter, gestures facial expressions, eye movements and also the way one sits, stand and lies down.

Prayer is the relation and interaction with God. Therefore, in prayers body language is of paramount significance. Prayer becomes perfect when we judiciously combine the words, the mind and the body language. In prayers we ought to make body language that is conducive to signify piety. Kneeling down folding the hands, bowing, prostrating and gazing heavenward to signify the presence of God and stretching our hands in manner of supplication are all appropriate body language for prayers.

In the Bible are many examples where people pray making use of body languages that are apt to enhance piety. Before his passion and crucifixion, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane with a heavy heart. Matthew says Jesus *threw himself to the ground* (26:39). Mark says, *"He threw himself on the ground* (14:35). Luke says, Jesus *knelt down* (22:41). All these indicate that Jesus, overwhelmed with great sorrow and pain, prostrated himself before his Father and prayed.

There is nothing demeaning or belittling about praying with tears in one's eyes. We read that Jesus prayed crying loudly. As he was lying on the cross, Jesus cried with a loud voice, *Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani, that is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mt. 27:46: Mk 15:34)

In the Old Testament also we can see how body language is made use of in prayers. When Hannah was deeply distressed as she had no children, she prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly (1 Sam 1:10). *Hannah was praying silently: Only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard* (1 Sam 1:13) When the Israelites made the image of the calf and worshipped it in the wilderness, Moses lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights (Deut 9:18). In the Book of Exodus we read how Moses prayed stretching out his hands. When Joshua and others were battling with Amalek and his people, Moses went up the hill and held up his hand. Although his hands grew weary, he held his hands up for the entire day. As result of the prayers of Moses, Joshua was able to defeat Amalek and his people (Exo 17:12).

When Solomon built the beautiful temple in Jerusalem, during its consecrating, he *stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven* (1 Kings 8:22). David, father of Solomon, gave thanks and praise to the Lord for the blessings he received by using another type of body language. When the Ark of God was taken out

in a procession, *David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals* (2 Sam 6:5)

When people approached Jesus to get various things done they used appropriate kinds of body language. Matthew points out that a leper came to him and knelt before him (8:2), Mark says the leper came to him begging him on knees (1:40). Luke says the leper bowed with his face to the ground and begged him (5:12). The tax collector, overcome by remorse, "Was beating his breast" while praying (Lk 18:13). Jairus, the leader of the synagogue, fell at the feet of Jesus and begged him to cure his daughter (Mk 5:22; Lk 8:41). When Stephen, the first martyr of the Early Church was being killed by stoning, he knelt down and prayed with a loud voice to forgive his killers (Acts 7:60)

In the light of the above illustrations, let us try to find out how our prayers can be made more pious and meaningful by using the possibilities of various types of body language. Words alone are not sufficient for an ideal prayer. It is when words, mind and body combine together appropriately, a prayer becomes perfect. The Church has given directives regarding the appropriate body language to be used during common prayers like the Holy Mass. We just have to follow those directives. When old age or diseases prevent some people from adapting the body language specified, they can follow the body language appropriate to the situation. But such people should ensure that they do not create any problems for others taking part in the acts of worship. They may move to one side of the church so that their body language does not become a distraction for others. Praying with folded hands is indicative of piety.

When we pray alone at home or in a church, we can choose a body language that we feel appropriate, provided it enhances the mood and efficacy of our prayers. When we pray intensely for some special intentions, it is good to prostrate on the ground, just like Jesus did while praying at Gethsemane. We can also pray by stretching our hands, gazing heavenwards, as did Moses and Solomon. In ordinary circumstances, we can pray kneeling down, with folded hands and eyes closed. When we pray with a lot of pain and disappointment in our hearts, there is no shame if tears flow from our eyes or even if we cry loudly. It will be considered the most sincere prayers coming from the bottom of our hearts. Didn't Jesus pray on the cross crying loudly? When the sinful woman washed the feet of Jesus it was an ideal prayer (Lk 7:38). In appropriate circumstances we can also sing, clap and dance to praise God as did David before the Ark of God.

In some African countries, during the Holy Mass, people sing and dance in praise of God. When things don't happen the way we want and at the time we expect or when we are overwhelmed by sorrow,



we might feel some kind of resentment towards God. Even this would be considered as prayers. Resentment happens where there is love and close relationship. Prophet Jonah was angry with God when the bush that gave him shade over his head withered. *But God said to Jonah, 'It is right for you to be angry about the bush? And he said, 'Yes angry enough to die* (Jonah 4:9) In fact the anger of Jonah was considered a prayer by God.

It is also good to pray in the traditional Indian style in which one sits on the ground, with legs folded and keeping the palm upwards on the knees.

When we pray sitting in this posture, being assisted by 'pranayama', connecting the name of Jesus with our breath, each cell of our mind and body gets filled with name and spirit of Jesus.

There are postures which are utterly alien or even repugnant to the spirit of prayers, Standing erect with hands folded defiantly across one's stomach or hands held together at the back, or sitting in a careless fashion is not appropriate for prayers. Such postures indicate arrogance, distance and lack of interest. By keeping away from the congregation, one seems to declare that he is different from them and he does not want to be considered one among them.

Retreat masters are often fond of speaking about the prayer of a poor farmer, who was illiterate. When the parish priest noticed that this man used to pray for long periods in the church, he one day, out of curiosity, asked him what kind of prayers he was saying for such long periods. The poor farmer said, "Jesus looks at me and I look at Jesus. That is all." Can there be a better body language?

(Courtesy: Vachanolsavam)

'And in the trails of the Good Shepherd'



At the dawn of the new school year, St. Lawrence's Convent, Colombo 6 celebrated the welcome ceremony of new entrants to school. The ceremony

was held on 12th January 2012, with 105 new students and their parents. The freshers were offered beetle leaves and welcomed by the post Grade

1 students,

The dignity of the day was enhanced by the graceful presence of His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio of Sri Lanka,

His Excellency Dr. Joseph Spiteri, as the chief guest. His Excellency blessed the children and offered the prayer service followed by his inspirational speech to the gathering.

Rev. Sr. Principal, in her speech emphasized the role of parents with regard to education of their children. She said that relationship with the school should be one of

co-operation and not of interference.

Picture shows the new students worshipping Sr. Principal and His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio, with beetle leaves.

The Philosophy of Confucius

Confucius was a philosopher in ancient China, about 500 BC. His main idea was that people could achieve peace by doing their duty, and cooperating with society. If people rebelled, and everyone tried to do his or her own thing, then the world would be full of fighting and unhappiness.

So people should obey the law, and do what the emperor and government officials told them to do. Also, people should do their duty to their parents and take good care of their children, and people should also do their duty to their ancestors and to the gods. At the same time, the government should do its duty to the people, and not abuse them or ask too much

from them. The emperor should be cooperative and helpful to the people, just as the people were helpful and cooperative to him.

The Chinese government did not take to him while he was alive because Confucius wanted to make government officials behave better, but after Confucius died, later emperors of China did use many of his ideas. Of course they mainly liked the idea that people should obey the government, and they weren't so interested in the idea that the government should help the people!

Confucius believed in a society is built on rules. People should respect these rules just as students should respect

their teachers, children should respect their parents and young people should respect the elderly. Without discipline the social structure would collapse.

Here's an example of a story people told about Confucius:

A student Zi Lu, they say, asked Confucius, "When we hear a good idea, should we start to do it right away?" Confucius told him no. "First, you should always ask someone with more experience." Later on another student named Ran You asked Confucius the same question. But this time Confucius said, "Yes, of course you should do it right away." There was another student who had heard both of these conversations and was very confused. He asked Confucius why he had

answered the same question in two different ways?

"Ran You has a hard time making a decision," Confucius said. "So I encouraged him to be bolder. Zi Lu sometimes decides things too quickly. So I reminded him to be careful. Naturally different people should get different answers."

The birthday of Confucius is celebrated as teacher's day on September 28 by Chinese all over the world. Confucius is considered as one of the most important philosophers of the East, the greatest of teachers, educators and the founder of Confucianism. Confucius was born in 551 B.C., the same time as the Greek philosopher Socrates and the Siddharta Guatama. Buddha.



Confucius' theories and principles have influenced the way the Chinese government has run the country for the past 2000 years.

Confucianism is composed of 3 main philosophies:

1. Love and caring
2. Sympathy and Tolerance
3. Respect the law

(Internet)

The Love of Our God

Let God's love
fill our whole life.
Let it fall softly
in quiet moments
that bring us peace.
Let it sparkle everywhere
as we share
its hope and beauty.
Let it warm every corner
of our world.



Grace Remona David
Grade - 9
Sacred Heart Church, Rattota

IN RECOGNITION OF THE CHILDREN



The Holy Childhood Society of the Mattugama Parish organised programmes for children to mark Holy Childhood day. Picture Shows little sulali Fernando receiving Holy Childhood a trophy from Rev. Fr. Indrajith Perera, Director Liturgy, for the best dance performance.

H. A. Caldera

A YEAR PLAN TO GROW IN LOVE OF GOD AND OTHERS - 2012

February

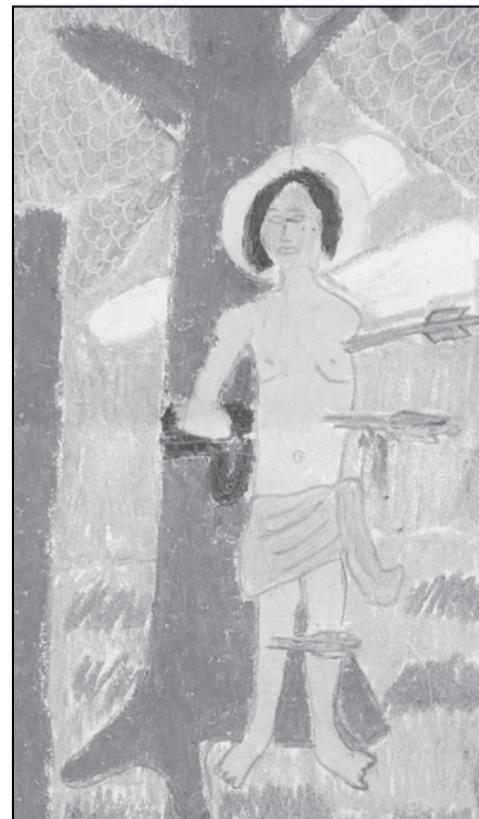
1. Say a thanksgiving prayer to Jesus before going to bed.
2. Collect part of your pocket money and give it to a poor friend.
3. Help your mother to do the house work.
4. Draw a picture of God's beautiful creation.

St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10 emerge Under 12 Badminton Champions



Standing (from left) Mrs. Annet Perera (Teacher - in - charge), Manuja Masinghe, Didula Sahabandu (Coach), Sheran Fernando (Vice-Captain), Chanuka Weerasinghe (Captain), Bevindu Dassanayake, Denelka Mahaliyana, Inesh Perera (Assitant Coach), Manodya Ubeseckara, Rev. Fr. Sylvester Ranasinghe (Rector)

St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10 emerged Boys' 'C' Division Champions at the All Island Inter School Badminton Championship 2011, conducted by the Sri Lanka School Badminton Association held at Richmond College, Galle.



Trevor
Jeremy
Pate.

Grade 7

St. Joseph
College
Colombo
04

Parish of
Our Lady
of Lourdes
Tewatte

What it says in
the Readings

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children. (Mk. 1:25)

LITURGICAL - CALENDAR YEAR B
29th Jan. - 5th Feb. 2012

**Sun: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
HOLYCHILDHOOD SUNDAY**
Deut 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 7: 32-35,
Mk. 1: 21-28
Mon: 2 Sam 15: 13-14,30:16,5-13,
Mk. 5: 1-20
Tue: Memorial of St. John Bosco, Priest
2 Sam 18: 9-10, 14:24-25,30:19:3, Mk. 5: 21-43
Wed: 2 Sam 24:2,9-19, Mk. 6: 1-6
Thu: Feast of The Presentation of the Lord
Mal 3:1-4 or Heb 2: 14-18, Lk. 2: 22-40,
(or 22-32)
Fri: Memorials of St. Blaise, Bishop & Martyr
& St. Ansgar, Bishop
Sir 47:2-11, Mk. 6: 14-29
Sat: Feast of Our Lady of Lanka
Is. 43:1-3,5, 19-13, Acts. 1, 12-13,2,1-2,4-8,11,
Mt. 2: 1-2,7-12
Sun: FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Job 7:1-4,6-7, 1 Cor. 9: 16-19,22-23,
Mk. 1: 29-39

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Lord hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray for our Holy Father Pope Benedict the XVI, Bishops, Priests and Religious that through prayer they may become instruments in Your hand to bring to You the people entrusted to their care. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, with grateful hearts we praise You for Your presence with us and all the blessing granted us throughout these past 25 years. Bless us and grant us Your grace to be little missionaries of our country. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray for His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith who started the Holy Childhood Society in Sri Lanka as it is today. May Your Divine Spirit be upon him to do Your Holy Will at all times. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray for our little brothers and sisters who are homeless. Protect them from all harm. Keep them close to You. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear our prayer

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Holy Childhood Sunday

First Reading. Deut. 18: 15-20.

The Prophet of God gives to the Israelites the message about the new prophet who will be sent by God. These prophets have to be always faithful to the Lord.

Second Reading. 1 Cor. 7: 32-35.

St. Paul wants the Corinthian community to give undivided attention to the Lord. While the unmarried give full attention; the married should, while they full fill their marital duties, give their undivided attention to the Lord.

Gospel. Mk. 1: 21-28.

Jesus' power and authority that was seen at his teaching is proved by the possessed when he proclaims that Jesus is the Holy one of God.

Introduction.

Today is Holy Childhood Sunday. The normal understanding of missionaries is that they are Priests or Religious, Nuns or Brothers. But later on the Laymen too were recognized as missionaries. But with the coming up of Holy Childhood Associations the children too began to show their abilities so as to become missionaries for the Lord. Therefore now the church too recognized them as missionaries. There are arrears that neither the Priests nor Religious or for that matter even lay adults could not step in. Arrears like the class rooms, tuition classes, play grounds, other playing places....etc. In those arrears it is the children themselves that have to handle situations as missionaries. Even some matters and arrears that are ignored or neglected by the ignorant or the foolish adults are to be some times handled by children by way of advising them. It could be even their own parents.

Children who are almost like married to cartoons, pokémon cards, benton cards, TV games, phone games, computer games.... etc. are to give undivided attention to God as Baptized Holy Children of God.

Reflection.

The Lord wants full attention and a total commitment from all His faithful, so that they too like Him would be full of authority and power. He doesn't want anybody to drift away from Him but to be attached to Him. He wants those who have other commitments to be faithful to their calls and life's responsibilities but he wants their undivided attention.

In the first reading the Lord through the prophet promises the Israelites who are now turned faithful, a prophet. He promises to give him all the power and the words to be proclaimed. He vows to hold answerable all those who do not listen to the prophet. He proclaimed death to those prophets who proclaim their own messages instead of His and also to those who speak on behalf of other gods.

In the second reading St. Paul taking the unmarried as an example tells the married too to give undivided attention to the Lord while they remain faithful to their marital duties.

In the Gospel it is quite evident with the proclamation of the one who is possessed that Jesus is the Holy One of God. But it was seen very clearly the followers when Jesus proclaims the Good News. For, He did it with full power and authority.

It shows very clearly that the Lord wants us to be full of power and authority as followers. He wants us to be dedicated and

give our total attention to Him and Him alone. For this reason we should not be selfish or serving any other gods, or the world,

Aid Story.

One day a young woman full of arrogant thoughts was walking in her well-furnished living room, after having denied her hand to several young men. Looking with smug complacency at the natural gifts the Creator had freely given her, she mused, "I will give my heart only to a king or prince." She then glanced at a Crucifix on the wall and read these words: "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews."

God touched her heart. She gave up her finery and promised to have no husband other than her crowned king with thorns. And thereby she became an ardent spreader of the Good News of the Lord.

Aid Story 2.

A man and his young son went to church, and when they came out the father was complaining that the service was too long, the preacher was not good, and the singing was off-key.

Finally the little boy said, "Daddy, I thought it was pretty good for only a dollar."

Aid Story 3.

Two little boys were walking home from religious education class after hearing a story about the Devil. One boy said, "What do you think about all this Satan stuff?"

The other replied, "Well, you know how Santa Claus turned out. It's probably just your Dad and Mum."

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

The God Delusion

I was prompted to write this reflection on reading my good friend Dr. Carlo Fonseka's piece 'In Praise of Richard Dawkins' in *The Island* on 20 January. I will be the first to accept that Dr. Carlo, like anybody else is entitled to his opinion on Darwin and Dawkins. He ends his article, a gushing paean to Dawkins book on a very emotionally personalistic note. Paradoxically while professing atheism Dr. Carlo makes Dawkins almost a God - "no more lucid explainer of the riddles of existence than Dawkins ever breather - why we exist, why we are here and what life is all about." That is almost a textbook definition of God! I am wondering what Dawkins himself would say to that.

Be that as it may, *The God Delusion* has been a hugely popular book ever since its publication in 2006. It is an outright attack on religious belief, particularly Christian theistic belief, offering atheistic materialism as a more meaningful

alternative. It is certainly a palatable dish for the humanist materialism widely prevalent in the West, and the dressing with which Dawkins presents it is very tempting; the populist, almost flamboyant, presentation is certainly appealing. But the critical question is what is the substance behind the dressing, behind the popular appeal.

It is not difficult for an intelligent reader to discover, in a careful reading, that many of Dawkins arguments against religion and for atheism as an alternative, does not hold water. In fact the eminent Oxford mathematician John Lennox went so far as to say that *The God Delusion* has strengthened his faith, such was the weakness of its arguments, in a debate with Dawkins at Oxford university's Museum of Natural History, in October 2008. The book has also provoked a number of refutational responses from well-known philosophers, theologians and scientists. I will mention at least five of them: (1). *Faith and its Critics* by David Fergus-

son (2). *Darwin's Angel* by John Cornwell (3). *The Dawkins Delusion: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* by Alister McGrath and Joanna Mcgrath (4). *Why, There Almost Certainly Is a God* by Keith Ward (5). *Reason, Faith and Revolution* by Terry Eagleton.

Though there are differences of emphasis in the critiques of the book by the above-mentioned authors, all of them agree that there are distortions and misrepresentations of faith and religious beliefs unpardonable in a man of his scientific credentials. This "straw man" approach facilitates his purpose of rubbing religion but at the expense of philosophical rigour. They also point to his specious arguments to "prove" that the methodology of science must necessarily lead to atheism. His selective and partisan use of both theological and scientific scholarship is another



weakness. Dawkins arguments carry force not so much through unbiased and dispassionate analysis as by the use of forceful rhetoric. And with regard to the citation of sources it is curious that the authority most cited by Dawkins is Dawkins himself.

Fr. Mervyn Fernando
(Courtesy: *The Island*)