

Why Pope Francis is so focused on Asia

"Following Francis" is a monthly blog on the latest happenings of Pope Francis. It is prepared exclusively for *The World Post* by Sébastien Maillard, Vatican Correspondent for *La Croix*, Rome.

ROME -- Pope Francis flew back on January 19, from the Philippines, ending a week-long trip to Asia that he had started in Sri Lanka. Last August, he travelled to Korea. He has not yet been to Africa, to North America nor back to his native Argentina and he has barely been to Europe outside Italy (except a one-day journey in Albania and four hours in Strasbourg). But he has chosen to visit the Far East twice in less than six months.

The official reason is that his predecessor did "not have time" to go to Asia. Invitations were pending. Jorge Bergoglio found time immediately.

There may be some personal reasons for this. When still a young Jesuit, he dreamt of becoming a missionary in Japan but his lung problem was considered too high a risk to allow him to leave Argentina. Now that he is over 78, he is willing to travel more than 14 hours from Manila - despite a tropical storm - to reach the former typhoon-devastated town of Tacloban and, in Sri Lanka, to make a two hour helicopter ride all the way to a Tamil zone severely hurt by the civil war, then fly back another two hours that same day.

Why is Francis expending so much effort to visit a country like Sri Lanka where Catholics represent only 6 percent of the population? Why did he invest so much time and energy in the Philippines where his Church already enjoys an overwhelming position, where 85



"At an inter-religious meeting in Colombo, he wore Hindu clothing that was offered to him."

percent of the hundred million inhabitants are Catholics?

"Asia is the future of the Church," Pope Francis said to the young Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, while receiving wild cheers from the crowd all along the streets.

On the very last day of his journey in the Philippines, he celebrated Holy Mass in front of 6 to 7 million people, setting a record in the history of Papal Mass rallies. He extolled Filipinos to evangelize Asia as their mission in life.

Jesuits have a special approach when it comes to evangelization in Asia. They have a long experience going back to Matteo Ricci - a Jesuit who tried to

evangelize China in the late 16th century and who is very dear to Pope Francis.

For a Jesuit like Bergoglio, the first duty of an evangelist is to respect and adopt the local culture and language, not impose from the outside. In Sri Lanka and in the Philippines, Pope Francis, who only speaks Spanish and Italian, made efforts to express himself in English, the most common language in both countries. At times, he asked the crowd permission to use Spanish - which was then translated into English - to speak from the heart and communicate more openly with the assembled crowds.

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Stalwart Sri Lankan Church Historian and Writer, meets the Holy Father

The centurion priest, Rev. Fr. Vito Perniola S.J. was rewarded for his work as a historian and writer when he met the Holy Father, Pope Francis on his visit to Sri Lanka. The Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith is also seen, showing his appreciation for the invaluable contribution made by Fr. Perniola to the Church in Sri Lanka. (Pic by: Clifford Murray)

Benedictine's Walk to Mark 150 Years

St. Benedict's College, Colombo celebrates 150 years this year. The College run by the De La Salle Community, was inaugurated in 1865. It is one of the oldest Catholic Private Institution in the country. "A Benedictine Walk" will be held on Saturday, February 7 to mark the event.



Holy Father's Prayer Intentions for February

Universal: Prisoners

That prisoners, especially the young, may be able to rebuild lives of dignity

For Evangelization: Separated Spouse

That married people who are separated may find welcome and support in the Christian community.

Feast of Our Lady of Lanka



Holy Mass at Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka on Sunday, February 8, at 7.30 a.m., presided by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo.

Minister of Christian Affairs assumes duties



Minister of Public Peace, Disaster Management and Christian Affairs, John Amaratunga assumed duties of the Christian Affairs Ministry at the Auditorium of Archbishop's House, Colombo last Monday morning. Here, the Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, wishes Mr. Amaratunga after assuming duties. Mrs. Hyacinth Amaratunga is also in the picture.

Nimal Perera

Release of 'Uduvap Mihira'



The release of the magazine '*Uduvap Mihira*' was held at Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Ja-ela.

Picture show Rev. Fr. Sagara Hettiarachchi, Editor, Gnanartha Pradeepaya who was the Chief Guest lighting the oil lamp at the commencement of the ceremony.

The first copy of the magazine which is published annually was presented to Fr. Sagara.

H.A. Caldera

Feast of the Immaculate Conception at Maggona



The annual Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Maggona was celebrated last month. The chief celebrant at the Festive Mass was Rev. Fr. Freddie Shanthi Kumar.

D.A.F.

True charity is profoundly divine and profoundly human: His Eminence

Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, was the Chief Celebrant at the Concelebrated Eucharistic Service held at the commencement of the 10th year tsunami remembrance event organised by Caritas Sri Lanka SEDEC recently.

The inauguration ceremony took place at the BMICH and the conference sessions were conducted in the SEDEC Auditorium for two days. Caritas delegates from four tsunami affected countries - India, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka - participated in

this program along with several funding Partners from the Caritas International Confederation.

Speaking about the charitable works of organizations like Caritas, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith in his homily said that they are

to be motivated by love; love of the Lord and love of all those whom we meet. "This love of God which overwhelms us has to be complemented with a love of our neighbour or rather has to make us reach out to all the others."

Anislie Joseph

Certificate Awarding Ceremony at Don Bosco Civil Engineering Institute Metiyagane

Thirty six students were awarded with the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Level 4 Certificates in Civil Engineering and 86 students who have successfully completed the computer based DynEd English training programme

were awarded certificates by the Hon. Niroshan Perera, Minister of Youth affairs recently, at the Premises of Don Bosco Civil Engineering Institute, Metiyagane. Rev. Fr. Dixon, the Vice Superior of the Salesian Vice Province of Sri Lanka graced

the occasion in the presence of the Salesian Community of Metiyagane.

The new Web Site of Don Bosco Civil Engineering Institute Metiyagane was declared open by the Minister.

170th Feast of St. Sebastian's Church, Diyalagoda



The 170th Annual Feast of St. Sebastian's Church, Diyalagoda was held recently. The Chief Celebrant at the Festive Mass was Rev. Fr. Thusith Pradeep Fernando, Parish Priest Balagala.

D. Anselm Fernando

Catholic MP to join Jesuit Refugee Service



Liberal Democrat MP and former Education Minister Sarah Teather is to join the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) as an advocacy adviser, the JRS has announced.

Teather, a Roman Catholic who has clashed with her party over issues including same-sex marriage, has said that she will leave Parliament at the next election after 12 years as MP for Brent Central.

In her new role at JRS, she will focus on education for refugee children in the Middle East and South Sudan.

VERBUM TV PROGRAM LINE-UP

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Pope Francis asks, "Do you discern God's will before making a decision?"

EWTN - Pope Francis dedicated his homily at Mass last Tuesday to the theme of obeying God's will, saying a Christian should have a heart like Mary, who was open and obedient to all that God asked of her.

"Do I pray that the Lord gives me the desire to do His will, or do I look for compromises because I'm afraid of God's will?" the Pope asked the attendees at the Holy Mass, held in the Chapel of the Vatican's Saint Martha guesthouse.

The Pontiff encouraged those present to pray in order "to know God's will for me and my life, concerning a decision

that I must take; the way in which we handle things ... there are so many things."

First, he said, there is the need to pray to know God's will, then to pray for the desire to do it, and finally when we have these things, we pray "for the third time, to follow it. To carry out that will, which is not my own, it is His will. And all this is not easy."

Pope Francis centered his homily on the day's First Reading from St. Paul's letter to the Hebrews, in which the apostle affirms that rather than seeking burnt offerings and sacrifices, God desires an obedient heart.

Adam and Eve's

act of disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden "brought evil to the whole of humanity," the Pope noted, saying their primary sin was that of not doing God's will.

There is no other path to heaven than obedience, he said, explaining that "it begins with Jesus in Heaven, in his desire to obey the Father. But here on earth it begins with Our Lady." When Mary told the Angel Gabriel, "Let it be done to me according to your word," she allowed God's will to be carried out through her and with her 'Yes' to God "our Lord began his journey amongst us."

However, follow-



ing God's will is "not easy," the Pontiff observed, noting how even Christ faced

temptations in the desert before beginning His public ministry, as well

as in the Garden of Olives before His passion and death.

Blessed Odoardo Focherini, the father of seven who saved 100 Jewish lives

EWTN - As Pope Francis tweeted on January 27 to observe the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, it is worth remembering Blessed Odoardo Focherini, who died a martyr to rescue Jews from Nazi persecution.

Last Tuesday marked the anniversary of the 1945 liberation by Soviet troops of the death camp where some 1.1 million people - the vast majority

of them Jews - were put to death by the Nazis.

"Auschwitz cries out with the pain of immense suffering and pleads for a future of respect, peace and encounter among peoples," Pope Francis tweeted.

When he was arrested over his involvement in the salvation of 100 Jews from a similar fate, Blessed Focherini was 37, had been married

14 years and had seven children.

Most of his children have only a vague memory of their father. On March 11, 1944, the day of his arrest, his eldest daughter Olga was 13.

Born in Carpi in 1907, Blessed Focherini worked with *L'Osservatore Romano* and was Managing Director of the Catholic newspaper *L'Avvenire d'Italia*.



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Why Pope...

Overall, he did everything he could in order not to behave as a European - which he is not. At an inter-religious meeting in Colombo, he wore Hindu clothing that was offered to him. He later entered a Buddhist Temple. The Holy Masses he headed used all of the local languages.

Pope Francis understands it is essential in Asia

for the Roman Catholic Church not to look too, well, Roman; not to be associated with a form of Westernization of the culture; not to be Eurocentric anymore.

This is why he prefers Asians, such as the Filipinos, to evangelize other areas of the continent and host training for other Asians rather than leave these tasks to outsiders from the West.

He is also opening up the central government of the Church to the whole of Asia and the Pacific, naming cardinals from countries of this region for the very first time, such as Myanmar or the Tonga Islands.

Whether Catholics stand as a minority, as almost everywhere in Asia, or whether they represent the vast majority, as in the Philippines, the Pope wants them to go out where they can contribute to the harmony of society. He wants them out building bridges between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, as in Sri Lanka. He wants them out helping the street children or typhoon survivors, as in the Philippines, where he warned the local clergy and bishops against the "danger of materialism and staying in their comfort zones." The Church must not grow by proselytization, but by attraction, he often says.

But making two journeys in a row throughout the whole continent (from Korea to the Philippines and Sri Lanka), Pope Francis also means to display that his Church deserves a place in Asia, even if only 3 percent of the total population of the whole region is known to be Christian.

He nonetheless wants Catholics to play a positive role as active, good-willing participants in the local society without threatening political powers.

Above all, this is an important message for China, which always remains on his mind. The Pontiff has carefully avoided meeting with the Dalai Lama, who was in Rome last December. China, which runs its own so-called "patriotic Church" for declared Catholics, remains a black hole in the Holy See's diplomatic ties.

But, as the Pope clearly understands, the future of the Catholic Church in Asia cannot omit China, where Christians (including Protestants) are estimated to be as many as 100 million people. Some predict that, by 2030, China could even become the first Christian country in the world.

That potential future is not lost on this Pope who is looking beyond the West and the European history of Catholicism to fulfill St. Peter's mission and build the Church.

SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus



MESSENGER

THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA

EDITORIAL

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Independence Day: Let's walk the talk

As we celebrate the 67th Independence Day on February 4, in this new era of good governance and social justice, we need to remember that when Jesus ascended to Heaven after His resurrection, the New Testament tells us the disciples were sad because He was going away. But Jesus told them they should not be sad because He was going away and He would send the Holy Spirit which would give them the power to totally transform themselves while turning the world upside down.

Similarly we also were sad when Pope Francis went away on January 15, after a spectacular and spell-binding visit which drew more than 2 million people - the largest ever crowd for any event in Sri Lanka's history.

But Jesus would tell us also not to be sad because, through Pope Francis He left behind a new Pentecost with the spirit of 'Abide in Love', the theme of the Pope's visit. This comes from John's Gospel where Jesus tells us that just as He abides in us we need to abide in Him so that we will bear much fruit. Jesus tells us that we will abide in Him or connect ourselves to Him when we obey the main commandments He gives us - "love one another as I love you" (John 15:12).

One of the main dimensions of love in action or walking the talk, as Pope Francis regularly says is getting involved in poverty alleviation. The solution to poverty is not more wealth but justice. Another major step for poverty alleviation is a commitment to a simple and humble lifestyle just as the Lord Jesus lived and as Pope Francis is living. We need to learn to be content with basic needs instead of desiring luxuries or extravagance.

As hundreds of billionaires and politicians met for the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos in Switzerland last week, the social justice movement Oxfam, reported that by next year 1% of the world's population would own more wealth than the other 99%. Demanding urgent action to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, Oxfam said the share of the world's wealth owned by the best-off 1% had increased from 44% in 2009 to 48% in 2014, while the least well-off 80%, currently owned just 5.5%. Oxfam, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, said that on current trends the richest 1% would own more than 50% of the world's wealth next year.

Oxfam International's Executive Director Winnie Byanyima one of the six co-chairs of this year's WEF, said the increased concentration of wealth seen since the deep recession of 2008-2009 was dangerous and needed to be reversed.

Pope Francis is among the world leaders warning that the rising inequality will destroy the world economy if left unchecked. He has urged that the structures of the globalised capitalist market economic system needs to be dismantled and a human face must be given to it to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth and resources.

It is inspiring that in Sri Lanka, the New Democratic Front (NDF) administration led by President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe is also giving top priority to poverty alleviation. Last Wednesday "the Maithripalanaya" government took a major step towards reducing the cost of living by slashing the price of petrol by Rs. 33 a litre, diesel by Rs. 16 and kerosene by Rs. 16. The Power and Energy Minister Patali Champika said these reductions were made by slashing taxes and promised there would be further reductions when a formula based on world market prices was worked out. At present, the world market price is less than 50 US dollars a barrel of crude oil, while last year it was more than 100 US dollars a barrel.

Further substantial relief including salary increases for all workers, other facilities and subsidies and a cut in the prices of ten essential items were announced when the new Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake presented an interim Budget on Thursday.

As the Bible says, the earth and all its resources belong to God. All the people are God's children and entitled to an equal share of the resources, that is God's will. The scandal of 1% comprising the rich and the ruling elite owning 99% of the wealth is a page from hell. We need to co-operate with God and Pope Francis in rebuilding a new earth and a new Sri Lanka of love, justice and equality, to mark Independence Day.

Reflection on National Independence

In the Light of the Message of Pope Francis

By Rev. Fr. Elmo Dias

We will celebrate the 67th National Day of Independence on February 4. For us Catholics it is also the Feast of Our Lady of Lanka, who protected the country from harm during the Second World War. This year's Independence Day is significant for another reason; as it is followed by the calm after a political whirlwind and a change of government and thereafter by the soothing and grace-filled visit of Pope Francis and Canonization of Blessed Joseph Vaz, the Apostle of Sri Lanka.

With many memories of many events that happened in the past few weeks and months, we may say even to decades and centuries, there are certain facts that come to the fore when we look at them in the light of faith in the God of history.

Second coming of Fr. Joseph Vaz

Fr. Joseph Vaz, whose canonization granted us the first Saint and Apostle of Sri Lanka and Pride of Goa, arrived from India in Ceylon under Dutch rule, when there was per-



secution of Catholics and a ban on the Catholic faith. Unknown, uncertain, disguised in fear of getting caught, from the Port of Mannar, he landed into an empty yet hostile area, in 1687. The Dutch army and its local secret services were looking for anyone who would stand for Catholic faith and most of all for the presence of any Catholic priest. But now after 328 years, in 2015, Joseph Vaz visits Sri Lanka once again, spiritually now, as a Saint, this time at Galle Face Green near the Colombo port to be welcomed by over a half million people in the presence of the Holy Father Pope Francis, number of Cardinals, and many Bishops, priests and religious; government leaders, hosts of local and foreign dignitaries; with the security provided for the occasion by the armed and police forces of the Sri Lankan Government. In the light of faith these are miracles; miracles that bear fruit after many years of genuine labour and toil in building God's kingdom silently and faithfully; miracles in history that show us that the power of God wins over any evil power and human obstacle; miracles to assure that Our Lady, Saint Joseph Vaz have not abandoned a people who suffered under a long war, suppression of justice and basic human freedoms; miracles that confirm the power of prayer of the innocent, suffering people.

Pope Francis: In Solidarity with Victims of War at Madhu

It is a fact that though Sri Lanka's 30 year war ended in 2009, the reconciliation and elimination of root causes of war are yet to take place. Therefore, the visit of Pope Francis to the Shrine of Madhu was of great significance, not only because it was the first ever visit of a Pope to the Shrine, but also it facilitated the visiting and blessing of a people who suffered immensely during the devastating thirty year war. "Sri Lanka for many years knew the horrors of



civil strife, and is now seeking to consolidate peace and to heal the scars of those years. It is no easy task to overcome the bitter legacy of injustices, hostility and mistrust left by the conflict. It can only be done by overcoming evil with good (cf. Rom 12:21) and by cultivating those virtues which foster reconciliation, solidarity and peace. The process of healing also needs to include the pursuit of truth, not for the sake of opening old wounds, but rather as a necessary means of promoting justice, healing and unity." These were the words the Holy Father spoke on arrival in Sri Lanka.

This surely is an invitation to examine our own Sri Lankan consciences and see whether we have truly and sincerely made an effort to bring about reconciliation and healing. Particularly as members of the Catholic Church, which Pope Francis presently heads, we need to sincerely "cultivate those virtues which foster reconciliation, solidarity and peace." Should we not need to motivate the political leaders to begin a "process of healing which includes the pursuit of truth, not for the sake of opening wounds" as Pope said, "but rather as a necessary means of promoting justice, healing and unity." He called for reconciliation and healing in our nation wounded by war, in every public utterance since his arrival on our beautiful island. It was the leitmotiv of his grace-filled visit.

National Day thoughts and feelings must embrace all peoples, particularly the suffering people, of a land. The Pope, becoming a Sri Lankan for a moment, said with lot of emotion, what we did not like to hear for a long time. It was so strikingly presented as observations of a person who loved this Resplendent Isle and its people. He said at the Madhu Shrine that, "There are families here today which suffered greatly in the long conflict which tore open the heart of Sri Lanka. Many people, from North and South alike, were killed in the terrible violence and bloodshed of those years. No Sri Lankan can forget the tragic events associated with this very place, or the sad day when the venerable statue of Mary, dating to the arrival of the earliest Christians in Sri Lanka, was taken away from her shrine." He reminded us of the pain and suffering we inflicted on each other, forgetting even of our common religious beliefs and faith experiences. "Just as her statue came back to her shrine of Madhu after the war, so we pray that all her Sri Lankan sons and daughters may come home to God in a renewed spirit of reconciliation and fellowship" was the Holy Fathers' wish and prayer for us. To come home to God needs courage, sincerity, repentance and forgiveness. He asked Our Lady at Madhu "to implore for us the grace of God's mercy" and "for the grace to make reparation for our sins and for all the evil which this land has known." This is no easy task he admitted, but it is only "in the light of the Cross" that we can come to

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Seeking God in silence following the example of St. Scholastica

Feast of St. Scholastica 10th of February

Benedictines remember St. Scholastica as she was being consecrated as the mother of Benedictine Nuns. More than that her life is a model of a discipleship of showing us how to translate the word and actions of Christ into our daily lives. St. Scholastica's life and virtue can inspire us to a deeper message that is more than simply history or biography. Her example issues a call challenging us to become virtuous, to live in faith and love. St. Benedict and his twin sister St. Scholastica were born into a wealthy family in Nursia. St. Benedict established a monastery in Montecassino in Rome. As well he inaugurated another monasterial way of life for the Nuns under the leadership of his own sister St. Scholastica.

St. Scholastica dedicated herself to God from her youth. She was strong, holy and prayerful. She is shown to be willing to assess situations in new ways and take risks. According to tradition every year St. Benedict and St. Scholastica used to meet outside the monastery for holy conversation and prayer. Once when they met each other at the latter part of the day St. Scholastica requested of her brother to stay with her and continue to speak of God, but St. Benedict rejected her request saying that he couldn't stay out of the monastery at that time. That day the weather was very

clear. St. Scholastica repeated the request from God directly instead of her brother. A fierce thunder and lightning occurred immediately in response to her prayer. Now St. Benedict was annoyed but St. Scholastica told him "I asked you but you were unwilling to listen to me, I asked my Lord and my God, He answered me." Then they remained the whole night speaking of heavenly things together. St. Scholastica was heard by God because of her affection towards Him. On the following day St. Benedict saw the pure soul of her sister going up to heaven in the form of a dove.

We are the sisters who follow the path of St. Scholastica, meeting God Almighty by prayer in silence. As St. Scholastica loved solitude we too live the prayerful solidarity of life in cloister. People who need divine help come and request for prayers. We are always interceding for the needs of the priests and religious. For our own living we make candles, vestments and things needed for first Holy Communion. There are lay people who join our Benedictine way of life, we call them 'Oblates.' They re-



cite yama Yaduma and they come to do the "Holy Hour" with us. We all pray together for the needs of the people. We live in a simple way as we try to glorify the Lord seeking Him as Mary of Bethany chose the better part opposing her sister Martha. Our cloistered monasterial life means to live in the world and being with God to bring the world to God.

*Benedictine Sisters
Nainamadama*

Contd. from Pg. 4

In the light of

understand "the evil we are capable of, and have even been a part of" and "experience true remorse and true repentance." It is only when this happens, he said, that "we can receive the grace to approach one another in true contrition, offering and seeking true forgiveness."

If the Holy Father was humble enough to go in search of the suffering and the abandoned (as done by Bishops of the Conference some moons ago) now it is our turn to make a genuine soul-searching in concrete terms by moving out from the ghettos of the South and the North "to come home to God" to meet a fellow brother and a sister from the North and the South. We owe it to God, to the Church and to the nation.

Political Winds of Change

This National Day celebration is organised by a new government under a new Executive President. Though the writer is least qualified to make expert political comments, being a citizen of a country gives us a sense of belonging to and a feeling for it. So let



us sincerely accept the fact, that the democratic traditions, values and customs that were inherited at and nurtured after Independence from the British, were being eroded, dramatically and systematically. Over the years, Executive Presidency became more and more authoritarian, divisive and self-centred and less and less democratic, uniting and benevolent. This fact I believe all can agree.

Looking at the national life from the point of view of religion alone, we see how religious extremists were given a free hand to disseminate disharmony and antipathy towards other religions. Where angels feared to tread, these sinister elements were displaying gymnastics. The country watched aghast! True national religious leaders were not consulted or simply ignored or even opposed on rebuilding the nation, healing the wounds of war and reconciling the fractured communities. A political leadership may win some religious men for their needs and keep them as yes-men for some time. But the real religious power lies in the hearts of the people, in the churches, temples, kovils and mosques. It is a power of faith in the divine and the supernatural. Sri Lankans are still a believing and a religious people and they do not generally mix religion and politics. That is what even amazed the visiting Pope. He said answering to a question by a journalist on his visit to a Buddhist temple, "Yesterday I saw something I never thought that I'd see...at the Shrine of the Madonna. It wasn't just Catholics they weren't even the majority. There were Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus. They all go there to pray and they say they receive graces. There's something in the people there that unites them..... it makes us understand the sense of inter-religiosity that is lived in Sri Lanka" A visiting religious leader like Pope Francis, who feels the pulse of the ordinary people and the smell of a nation, could see through within 48 hours, the secret that really keeps Sri Lanka together; what he saw, some political leaders failed to see even after many years of governing the people. It is true that history is written and enacted by human beings but for a believer there is an inspiration and a power that is divine, that can undo what is evil and confirm what is true, good and beautiful in history.

Towards an Unknown Future: To be Servant Leaders

After the gigantic gale of grace we received from 13-15 January 2015, let's move forward determined to rebuild our nation again. Independence Day should have a meaning to all Sri Lankans. If our leaders could emulate the example of Pope Francis in his simplicity and servant leadership then the people will

"The Holy Shroud - Why we Believe" Some Highlights of the Shroud Book

By Fr. Louis - Marie Navaratne, O.S.B

(Available in Catholic Bookshops, Claretian Bookshops & The Ceylon Bible Society Bookshop)

- * Complete texts and commentaries of Talks/ Messages on the Holy Shroud by all the recent Popes -Including Pope Francis, (pages 17-26; Appendix 2,3,4: pages 625 - 641, Pages 765-775)
- * The transfer of ownership of The Holy Shroud to the Pope in 1983. Presently Pope Francis is the legal owner (Pages 563 - 567)
- * Supportive evidence of the Gospel Truth of the Church's Faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (pages 94 - 147)
- * Scientific evidence pointing to the presence of Mary, the Mother of Jesus (and the holy women) at the burial of Christ, (pages 251 - 260)
- * Compelling article by Barrie Schwartz, (scientific photographer and author of the website www.shroud.com): "The Shroud of Turin changed my Life" (pages 618 - 624)
- * Credible, though still hypothetical, evidence on the truth of the Holy Shroud being also the Table Cloth of the Last Supper (the intimate connection between Shroud, The Last Supper, The Altar Cloth and the Corporal) (pages 148 - 190)
- * The Holy Shroud as the original source of Devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus; and the Face images of Christ (pages 40-66; 80-93; 406-412)
- * How the Shroud and its image can be used for Evangelization & Ecumenism (pages 191 -212)

Recommendations / Messages from

Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith (Colombo)
Bishop Joseph Vianney Fernando (imprimatur) (Kandy)
Bishop Cletus Perera, O.S.B. (Ratnapura)
Abbot General Michael Kelly, O.S.B. (Nihil Obstat) (Rome)
Con. Prior: Fr. Shamindra Jayawardene, O.S.B. (Kandy)
Con. Prior: Fr. Michael Green, O.S.B. (Oxford USA)
Superior: Fr. Bernard Schinn, O.S.B. (New Jersey, USA)
Late Fr. Leonard Ranasinghe, O.S.B.

Preface by - John Jackson, Ph.D (Physicist)
Rebecca Jackson, MBA (Textile Expert)
(Shroud Scientists and Directors, Turin Shroud Center Colorado - U.S.A.)

This book is also useful reading for pilgrimages to Turin this year. Where The Original Shroud will be displayed from 19 April- 24 June 2015.

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rally round them to work hard and build a strong and a developed nation. In our young people we have the talent, innovation and vision; in adults we have commitment, experience and tradition; we only need the genuine leaders who would put the country and its people first in order to tap these resources for the greater good of the country. As Vatican II Document "Church in the Modern World" taught, "It follows also that political authority, both in the community and in the representative bodies of the state, must always be exercised within the limits of the moral order and directed toward the common good—with a dynamic concept of that good—according to the juridical order legitimately established or due to be established. When authority is so exercised, citizens are bound in conscience to obey." (No.74) One may suggest as a good Independence Day resolution that Sri Lankans choose genuine leaders who respect moral order and diversity in the nation, when the opportunities open in the future.

To be a Re-awakened Church

As Catholics, invigorated by the spirit of Saint Joseph Vaz let us continue to commit ourselves to contribute to nation building, promote religious harmony, and actively become bridges that unite the nation. Let us thank God for Pope Francis who reiterated to us the urgent need to search for the truth, work for healing and reconciling our people divided on ethnic, religious and political lines. Let us rally round Our Lady of Lanka to whom His Holiness once again entrusted our Nation saying, "Today we thank her for protecting the people of Sri Lanka from so many dangers, past and present. Mary never forgot her children on this resplendent island. Just as she never left the side of her Son on the Cross, so she never left the side of her suffering Sri Lankan children."

When the children leave the nest ...

A father's blessing strengthens the houses of the children, but a mother's curse uproots their foundations (Si 3:9).

These days we commonly see in many families that children get educated and then they go abroad and work there, earning money and living there. We also see parents who are worried about the precarious nature of their children's jobs, their inadequate salary, and their marital problems. When I talked to 70 year old Mr. Tommy and his wife Lissy, I happened to think about a problem that is often ignored, or not taken seriously, by most people.

Mr. Tommy and his wife Lissy are quite unhappy and unenthusiastic today. The reason for their sorrow is neither poverty, nor lack of children, nor they being educated properly, nor lack of employment for them, nor the delay in their marriage. God gave them two healthy and diligent children. The daughter became a nurse; got married and currently she is in the UK with her husband. The boy chose the computer field. He got a job, got married and is living with his wife in the Gulf.



Initially they used to come every year during the annual vacation. But when they had children, their coming was reduced to once in two years or even three years. They have their reasons for that, which include problems in the work places, education of their children and such other things. Since Tommy has a hearing problem, the telephone won't help. In reality, the parents are lonely now. They want to see their children and grandchildren. They feel

In reality, the parents are lonely now. They want to see their children and grandchildren.

quite envious when they see their peers taking and bringing their grandchildren to school or walking and playing with them. In the past they were busy with their children's education, search for jobs and work related to their marriage. Now they feel they have nothing to do. For whom, why, should they live? There is a hollow, empty feeling!

The Empty Nest

When I heard the experience of this old couple I was reminded of the phenomenon called Empty Nest Syndrome by psychiatrists. In western countries adult children do not stay with their parents. Empty Nest Syndrome is the feeling of loneliness, emptiness and despair which parents feel when their grown up children go away from their nest, from their home. Since this is normal in western countries, parents there make themselves mentally ready to face such a situation. So, most par-

ents get reconciled to this inevitable truth. But in India the situation is quite different. Here the centre-point of the parents' life is children. For the sunset days of their life, most parents in India dream of a life which they can spend in the company of their loving children and grandchildren, partaking in their joys and sorrows, triumphs and tragedies. That is what they want - a life surrounded by their beloved ones. Parents here do not think of a style of life without their children and grandchildren, unlike in the west where they spend their old age indulging in their hobbies or doing things of their choice. Therefore the absence of children and grandchildren at the sunset days of their life causes loneliness, emptiness and sorrow.

Attitudes that have to be changed

How to bring some joy and enthusiasm to the lives of the people

who are in the same predicament like that of Tommy and Lissy? Can we say that the children who are working abroad should return home to make the life of their parents happy? Is it practical?

There is no other way except a change in the attitude of the people when circumstances of life change. It would be better for parents not to dream of spending their old age with their children and grandchildren partaking in their joys and sorrows. They should prepare themselves in advance with certain plans so that they can spend their old age meaningfully, creatively and happily. Here are some practical suggestions put forward by Psychologists.

1. Learn to make use of the modern communication facilities so that you can keep in touch with your children and grand children who live far away. There are revolutionary changes in modern communication

systems. You can talk to your dear ones seeing them. Don't think that you are too old to use these modern facilities. If you try a bit, you too can become an expert in their use. They are user-friendly and they are not hard to operate.

2. Establish more cordial relations with relatives, friends and neighbours. Partake in their affairs, joys and sorrows, with greater intensity and commitment. Instead of spending all the time at home, go out and take part in public activities, or visit families where you are welcome. This will reduce your loneliness and boredom.

3. There should be a schedule which will help you to spend your time meaningfully. There should be regular prayers. Household chores like cooking, cleaning, kitchen, gardening, taking care of the domestic animals etc. should keep you busy for quite some time. Physical exercises, watching TV, visiting the sick etc, could be included in your daily schedule. Avoid the situation where you feel there is nothing to be done.

4. Take up some leadership roles. There will definitely be opportunities to contribute your efforts in various social and spiritual services. Make use of your time, energy and talents for the benefit of the society, for doing good to others. It is good to accept some responsibility and do your best to carry it out. No person is meant solely for his/her family and children. Each person should realize that God wants each of us to be of use to others, even outside our immediate families. We should be guided with such a mission of benevolence.

(Courtesy: "Vachanolsavam")

A CROSS The way

By Sirohmi Gunasekera

New

So the Pope has come and gone, leaving behind memories of a scramble to Galle Face Green for the Holy Mass and Blessing. We also have a new Saint whom we can ask to intercede on our behalf.

"It is also a new year and we have a new Government. What do you think?" said Marie.

"Well, we can hope for new things in the New Year. It is already the end of January and the beginning of February. Are you going to celebrate Valentine's Day which falls on the fourteenth?" asked John.

"Well, I don't have a lover but I entrust everything to God's loving care. I know He looks after me and I can spare a thought on Valentine's Day for someone who needs a kind word or a hug," replied Marie.

"Yes, we should not limit Valentine's Day just for lovers. Every single one of us has known what love is if only for a short while. It may have been the cuddle of a mother when you were small or the kiss of a classmate while in school. Or it may have been the protective arm of a neighbour when you were crossing the road!" commented John.

"I think that we should celebrate love every day of the year and not confine ourselves to Valentine's Day! But there is no harm in giving a call and saying "Happy Valentine's Day" to someone you know who is in an Elders' Home. Or if you can afford it, buy some chocolates and distribute them to orphans or even your neighbour's little ones," said Marie.

"Let's have a new thought today," concluded John.

**The
MESSENGER
for EVERY
Catholic
Home**

136th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THE TENTH MARCH MADHU LENTEN FESTIVAL



The above feast will be celebrated at the "Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu"

by the parishioners of St. James Church, Mutwal and their associates on Tuesday 10th of March 2015.

Novenas commence on 6th March 2015.

Pilgrims who wish to reserve their houses, Please write to administrator, Madhu Shrine, Madhu.

before the 15th of February. T. Phone :- 0232280001 / 0233230248

Festive High Mass at 6.15 a.m.

Please Contact :

Mr. Mervyn Abeynayake
President.
Tel : 0115652918,
0716929643,
0771174606

Mr. Ashley Mendis
Secretary
Tel : 0777799466

Train Services are available from Colombo Fort to Madawachchiya -to Madhu Road. Further details contact Railway Inquiries. No. 0112434215, 0112421281

Art & Architecture in Liturgy

Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

The Church of Our Lady of the Gate of Heaven in Telheiras, Lisbon, Portugal also known as the Black Prince's Chapel goes down in history as the one and only building erected in Portugal by a member of a Sri Lankan royal family.

It is a fascinating Church with an even more fascinating history says Archt. Sagara Jayasinghe who first visited the site while on a tour in Portugal. He also



came across many chronicles and documentations on the political and religious affairs between Portugal and Sri Lanka. He says that the visit compelled him to undertake a study on the Church. Subsequently in 2014 as a beneficiary of the scholarship programme, Sagara Jayasinghe was able to engage in a research study about the history and architectural significance of the Church which resulted in his book: The Black Prince's Chapel.

The Church was built by Dom Joao, known as the Black Prince (identified in Portuguese texts as O Principe Negro) who was the last male heir of the old Kandyan dynasty in Sri Lanka. Dom Joao's ancestry can be traced back to the fall of the Kotte kingdom and the emergence of the Kandyan kingdom. He was

A Church built by a Sinhala Prince in Portugal



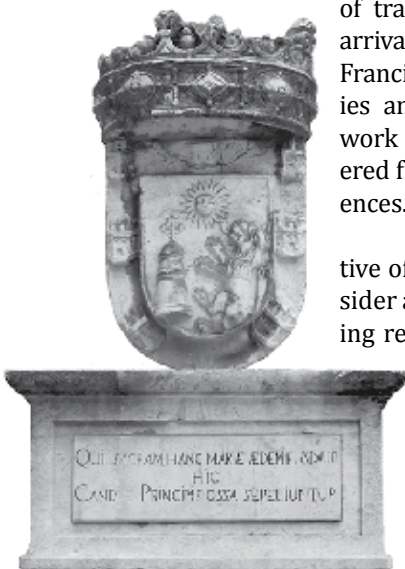
the son of Yamasinha Bandara who was placed on the throne of the Kandyan kingdom in 1592 by the Portuguese. After Yamasinha's sudden death his 12 year-old son Dom Joao, was proclaimed as the king. But due to political instability in the region, he was forced to leave the kingdom and seek protection from the Portuguese in Colombo. He was entrusted to the care of the Portuguese Franciscan missionaries. Subsequently, Dom Joao was sent to Goa, where he lived for fifteen years, later he was ordained as sub deacon priest, was called to Lisbon and finally settled down at Telheiras. Around 1625 he built this Church and a Convent in appreciation of what the Franciscans had done for him.

Jayasinghe writes that one of the objectives of his book is to trace Dom Joao's ancestry and through which reveal the political and religio-cultural background of ancient Sri Lanka and Portugal. The biography of Dom Joao is unique as it traces the political and cultural background of a bygone era. The book describes life in ancient Sri Lanka and Portugal, records the terms

of trade in the East, the arrival in the island of the Franciscans missionaries and their missionary work with evidence gathered from historical references.

Another objective of the book is to consider architecture as a living record and a positive

contribution of our transnational identity that had spread over four hundred years through the existence of the Church



of Our Lady of the Gate of Heaven, Telheiras. By studying the evolvement of architecture since its inception one can trace the socio cultural history and the interpretations of religious art and architecture as well as the interpretations made by a non-European in

a foreign land far away from his native Kingdom from the religious base of Christianity.

The book further highlights a historically unique situation in relation to the political and religio-cultural affairs of Sri Lanka and Portugal during the overseas expansions of 16th and 17th centuries.

It is interesting to note that this chapter in our church history has been very briefly if at all mentioned by historians like Don Peter, S.G. Perera and Paul Peiris. This then is the first comprehensive record we have of the life and times of Dom Joao.

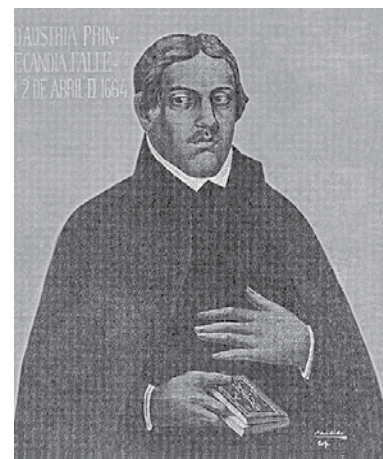
It is also the first time a formal document including a set of architecturally measured drawings have been made on the architectural style of the Church built by Dom Joao.

The book is available at Vijitha Yapa Publications.

About the author

The author Sagara Jayasinghe is a practicing architect and senior lecturer attached to the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Moratuwa. He has also served the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA) in diverse capacities. As an Associate Member of SLIA he has served SLIA as a member of its Board of Architectural Publications (BAP, 2008-to date), Editor of the "Vasthu" journal (2008-2012) and Chairman of the BAP's Graphics Committee (2012-to date).

Architect Jayasinghe's mind set is amply evidenced by the multifaceted nature of his creative enterprise. His authorship of two significant works on the art and architecture of Sri Lanka's ecclesiastical heritage notwithstanding, Sagara has won several design awards of excellence at the SLIA's Annual Sessions. These include the "Dulux Colour Award" (2006) for the creative use of colour in architecture and the prestigious "Young Architect of the Year Award" (2008). He is also a prolific writer who has won the SLIA's annual award for Architectural Publications in 2008 and 2013 respectively, whilst contributing regularly to both foreign and local journals on architecture.



Evolution of Sri Lanka's National Flag

It is time to hoist the National flag to mark Sri Lanka's 67th Independence Day.

The National Flag of Sri Lanka has been designed to represent the country and her people and is a rallying device that integrates the minority races with the majority race.

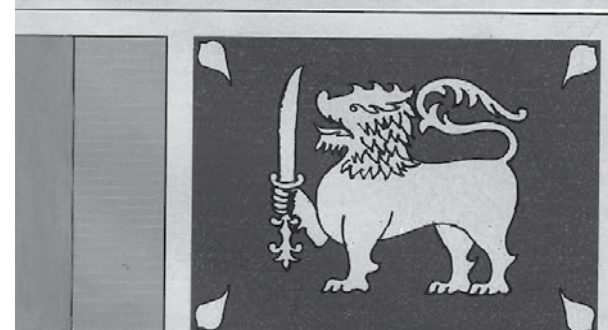
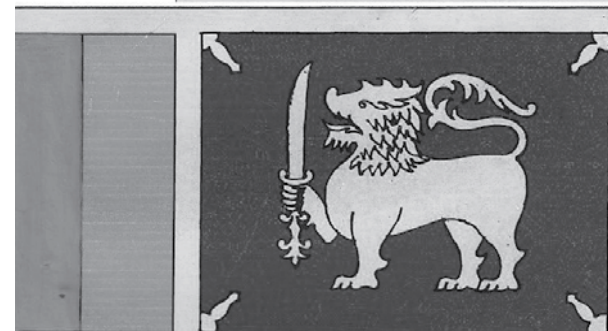
The Flag we see today has a long history. It is the forerunner of the Lion Flag which was the civil standard of the last king of Sri Lanka, Sri Wickrama Rajasingha. This flag was taken down on the signing of the Kandyan Convention in 1815, proclaiming King George III as King of Ceylon. Thereon the Lion Flag was replaced with the Union Flag. The Lion Flag was taken to England and kept at the Royal Hospital Chelsea and with time was forgotten by the Sri Lankan public. This flag depicted a yellow lion holding a sword in the right hand, facing the hoist, on a dark red background, with a yellow border, with four pinnacles of a Buddhist dagaba in the four corners.

Then, as the independence movement in Sri Lanka gained strength in the early 20th century, E. W. Perera of Kotte, a Christian and a prominent figure of the independence movement discovered the original Lion Flag kept at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea and brought it back to Ceylon. Thereafter with the help of D. R. Wijewardene, owner of the Sinhala newspaper 'Dinamina' a picture of it was published in a special edition of the Dinamina newspaper to mark 100 years since the end of Sri Lankan independence - awakening in the people a yearning for a National Flag representing their culture and land.

Thus on the 4th of February 1948 at the first Independence Day ceremony the first Prime Minister of Independent Ceylon Hon. D.S. Senanayake, hoisted the Lion Flag. This flag was the same design as the original Lion Flag taken down in 1815 and brought back from Chelsea.

Thereon the Hon. D.S.Senanayake, appointed a committee to advise the government on a design and formulation of a new national flag, following a lengthy debate about the national flag, in Parliament on 16th January 1948. The members of the Advisory Committee were Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (Chairman), Sir John Kotalawela, Mr. J.R. Jayewardene, Mr. T.B. Jayah, Dr. L.A. Rajapakse, Mr. G.G. Ponnambalam, Senator S. Nadesan, and Dr. Senarath Paranavithana (Secretary). As a proposal of this committee the Lion Flag was amended by adding two vertical stripes of green and orange of equal size to depict the other communities - Tamil, Muslim, Burger, Malay or other. The flag was illustrated by S.P.Charles under the direction of J.D.A. Perera, head of Government Art and Design College. This flag was hoisted for the first time on a flag post which was situated in front of the Parliament Building on 31 March 1951.

In 1972, when Sri Lanka became a Republic Government the National Flag was also amended including four Bo-leaves instead of the four pinnacles in the four corners of the deep red/maroon or crimson rectangle. The National Flag was thereon incorporated in Section 6 Second Schedule of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka of September 09 1978. The flag was also registered at the Sri Lanka Standard Institution under SLS 693 on 7th May 1985.



Journeying towards the Fifth Centenary of the birth of St. Teresa of Jesus (of Avila) - 28th March 2015

The Carmelite Order, world-wide is preparing for the fifth centenary of the birth of St. Teresa of Jesus, who is the foundress of the Discalced Carmelites. She corresponded to the graces showered on her by Our Lord, to fulfill this Herculean task, and was faithful to the charism, she received from Him, and which was unfolded to her in stages.

In God's Company Always!

"Come aside to a lonely place" said Jesus to his apostles. Some feel the call to devote themselves totally to being with Jesus in His prayer to the Father. A new apostolate opens out to them and prayer becomes an attractive and powerful means of serving the Church and all human-kind.

This experience became real in the life of St. Teresa. Having lived the life of a Carmelite, for about twenty years, she wanted to live in greater silence to search for the precious pearl called prayer, for friendship with the Lord. With a *determined determination*, St. Teresa, returned to the pure and profound experience of God, for she understood that without prayer, Carmel is nothing.

At the command of Our Lord, she founded the first monastery of the Discalced Carmelites, in Avila, Spain in 1562.

The life in Carmel is one of prayer and recollection.

The Divine Office is the Church's official prayer and the sisters recite it at intervals during the day. This is our obligation and privilege. In our two hours of personal prayer, each sister communes with the Lord, in the way the Spirit leads her.

Spiritual Reading too plays a vital role in the life of a Carmelite, as it assists her in her life of prayer. The Holy Scriptures, the writings of St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the 'philosopher Saint' - St. Teresa Benedicta, the biography of the youthful Saint - St. Teresa of the Andes, and a host of other Carmelite Saints provide a rich spiritual legacy for the 'thirsty' Carmelite. Needless to say, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and Saints of the Universal Church, also enrich her life. Other spiritual activities include sermons and retreats and talks on cassettes.

St. Teresa wanted her daughters to live an enclosed life, where they could "live alone with God alone," - in intimate friendship with Him and thus obtain graces for the Church and for the world. It is with the help of the Extern Sisters, that the enclosure is safeguarded. They are the "Guardian Angels" of the enclosure. They are members of the same family and strive to cultivate the Carmelite spirit of silence and recollection.

As one Family

It was with Divine inspiration and far-reaching foresight that St. Teresa wished that the contemplative life of silence and solitude of the Discalced Nuns goes hand-in-hand with a sisterly way of life. All the sisters participate in the re-



cital of the Divine Office, and take their meals and recreate together. Their practical love for the community and mutual collaboration helps them to fulfill the purpose for which God has brought them together - to live a life of prayer.

St. Teresa wanted every sister to be a sister to the other. She wrote: "All must be friends, all must love one another, all must be cherished and all must help one another." She wanted a joyful atmosphere to prevail in Carmel, an atmosphere that accords with the "sisterly style of life and recreation that we have in common." "Can one recreate inside the cloister?" St. Teresa gives the assurance that the Lord will give some the grace to provide recreation for the others. Her words have proved true not only in the 15 monasteries, she established, but in the 890 monasteries, existing today, in 98 countries.

All the sisters share in the domestic chores of the house - sweeping, cleaning, washing and cooking. There is work in the sewing rooms too, for we sew our own clothes. The sisters use their God-given talents to the full, and are adept at embroidery, painting, knitting etc. when time permits. There are some assignments, like cooking, for which the sisters take turns. St. Teresa asked the sisters to remember that the Lord walks "among the pots and pans!" Therefore, we see the sisters, not only praying together, but sharing their life, their energies and their talents and when it is essential, prayerfully and lovingly working together as a team.

Jesus came into our midst, seeking our love. In our community life, we show our love for Jesus, by accepting every "call" from the Lord. So, everything the sisters do, becomes an act of love: the recital of the Divine Office, watering the garden, washing the altar-linen, sweeping the cell of an elderly sister, and countless things to be done here and there, including the excited preparation for a feast day! All this is offered to God, Who accepts and blesses it, sanctifies it and pours this rich grace into a world desperately in need of it.

But we should also state that it is primarily in community life that the sacrificial element of our life emerges - the sacrifices imposed by always working and living daily in the same community and in the same surroundings, and

by persevering in fidelity to the monastic activities. *Is it possible to live like this?* Yes, when true sisterly love prevails, for it helps them to carry out one another's burdens, with determination, humility and a sense of humour!

The Carmelite nun is aware that it is the grace and power of the Lord, that enables her to keep unbroken faith with the Lord, remembering that she belongs to the Lord and to His Mystical Body, the Church. He has called her to Carmel, He upholds her and gives her His joy, strength and peace!

Apostolic out-reach!

When news reached St. Teresa, that the Lutherans and others were destroying Churches and treating the Blessed Sacrament with disrespect, she wept over it. She thought, if the Lord had many enemies, then, her sisters and she would be His friends. They will be faithful to Jesus and to the Church. With this intention firmly grounded in her mind and heart, she formed the College of Christ, centred on love for the Lord, and entered into the apostolic life, praying for the Holy Father, preachers and theologians, who defend the faith, for priests and for all mankind.

St. Teresa had an unexpected visitor one day (when she was in the first Discalced Monastery) - it was Padre Maldonado, who was returning from the Indies. He told her that many souls were being lost there, because there was no one to preach to them. This fact distressed her greatly. She wept before the Lord, and besought Him to remedy the situation. Jesus consoled her by saying, "Wait a little daughter, you will see great things." A few months later, there was another unexpected visitor - it was the Father General of the Carmelites. St. Teresa wrote in the Book of Foundations: "The Generals always resided in Rome and none ever came to Spain." He was very pleased with the prayerful, austere and simple life of the sisters, and requested her to found more monasteries of Discalced Carmelites. Thus God's promise to her was fulfilled - the 'great things' being the convents she founded in Spain for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls.

We perceive St. Teresa's love for souls. Though we don't leave the enclosure, like St. Teresa, we are missionaries



at heart, longing for souls to be saved by our prayer and sacrifice. Our love for Jesus and for our sisters, leads us to the love of souls that have to be saved. Our life is one of purely supernatural values and of faith, the firm belief put into daily practice that all the little things which make up our life, are of real apostolic value, for every Carmelite is a missionary at heart.

Our mission in Carmel is prayer. St. Teresa wanted the Carmelite Convents to be strongholds of prayer, where the sisters will fight the battles of the Church, with spiritual weapons, namely prayer and sacrifice.

Speaking of sacrifices, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, a faithful daughter of St. Teresa, wrote that she will scatter flowers, before the throne of God, as she was aware of her inability to preach the Gospel or shed her blood for Christ. These flowers, were the sacrifices she made. Now, she is not only the Patroness of the Missions, but also a Doctor of the Church!

St. Teresa, on her death-bed was glad to declare: "I die a daughter of the Church." Another daughter of hers, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, who died of a painful illness in 1906, at the age of 26 wrote, "I wish to spend my substance, drop by drop for the Church."

Do you wish to give all to Jesus - your life, your energy, your service, within the walls of the convent, or as an extern sister? Then please contact: Rev. Mother Prioress, Corpus Christi Carmel, 41 Farm Rd., Colombo 15.

Corpus Christ Carmel

*Is calling for you
Why do you tarry?
The time is nigh!*

*Souls are waiting
For your prayer.
Why not lend a hand?
The harvest is great!*

*Labourers we have few
And we need good ones.
May love for GOD ALONE,
Urge you to join us.*



Year of Consecrated Life - 2015

Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Sri Lanka (CMRS)
Religious Congregations in Sri Lanka

1



Society of Jesus - SJ



A knight in Spanish kingdom of Castile, Ignatius of Loyola was from a Basque noble family. During the battle between French and Spaniards in Pamplona, Ignatius sustained severe wounds. The French soldiers, seeing the valor and how gallantly Ignatius fought, decided to spare his life. While Ignatius was recuperating, he only was given the 'lives of saints' and 'life of Christ' as reading material. An incredible metanoia occurred in his life that in turn led him to found the Society of Jesus, popularly known as Jesuit order, to fight for the Church militant under the banner of the Cross. It is remarkable how God

is able to transform a person given to mundane attachments and seeking worldly fame and success to be a God-intoxicated man. Ignatius, following his conversion, made "the greater glory of God" the supreme norm of every action and prayer. This indicates the transfer of his allegiance from an earthly king to the Eternal King, pledging his unreserved and unstinted personal love to the Person of Jesus and an unquenchable desire to be counted as His close companion. It is no exaggeration that even to this day, adhering

to the Spiritual Exercises, Jesuits all over the world pray "to know Christ more clearly, to love him more dearly and to follow him more closely."

Ignatius greatly desired to share with others his God-experience. He wanted to teach people an easily adaptable way of discerning the promptings of the Spirit. Ignatius would have always wanted his companions to be soldiers of Christ, fighting and defending the Church under the banner of the Cross; to be willing to march even to hell for a heavenly cause. Jesuits jour-

neying the hems of geographical boundaries for the greater glory of God would often pause to ask;

What have I done for Christ?

What am I doing for Christ?

What will I do for Christ?

Fr. Jerome Nadal, SJ, the personal delegate of St. Ignatius, who has spoken extensively of the Jesuit practice, once said, "It is a special grace of the whole Society of Jesus to be contemplative not only in moments of seclusion but also in the midst of action, thus 'Finding God in all things'.

Following on the footsteps of St. Ignatius, every Jesuit at some point, has been moved by Christ's call: 'Come!

Follow me'. Therefore, as companions of Jesus, though deeply sinful, they are committed to make Jesus known in any given milieu they are sent to serve. Jesuits, spread around the world, gracefully acknowledge that as friends in the Lord, they are called to become, in increasing measure, men for and with others to ignite the world with love. Their deepest quest as companions of Jesus is to know and follow Him, bearing the cross so as to experience the resurrection.

Our Lady Of Lanka: The National Basilica, Tewatte

Richard Boyle

As you near the vehicle entrance to the National Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka at Tewatte you pass the breathtaking approach to the holy building for those on foot. This approach consists of a series of extensively wide flights of steps descending then ascending into the distance, encroached upon by large swathes of woodland. At the farthest end of the steps the Basilica stands, partly obscured by foliage. Yet it can be sufficiently observed to realise that its curious architectural elements are unfamiliar in Roman Catholicism.

Having descended the shallow steps and begun to appreciate the sylvan surroundings, you ascend and reach two statues flanking the steps; the former Archbishop of Colombo, Jean-Marie Masson, and his successor, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Thomas Cooray, both responsible for the existence of the Basilica. It all began when a shrine (a chapel) to Our Lady of Lourdes (the apparition of Mary Immaculate at Lourdes, France) was erected in 1911 and a grotto built in 1917. Then, in the 1930s, the chapel was enlarged to a church because Tewatte, as it was known, became a popular place of pilgrimage for the Catholics of the Colombo Archdiocese, although it shortly became multi-denominational, with Buddhists and Hindus from all parts of the island making devotion to Our Lady of Lanka.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, Archbishop Masson made a vow that if then Ceylon was protected from major conflict, he would build a Votive Basilica under the title Our Lady of Lanka. As it happened, Ceylon was indeed spared the worst. In 1946, a delighted Archbishop Masson obtained approval from Pope Pius XII for the construction of a basilica in honour of Our Lady of Lanka.

Unfortunately, Archbishop Masson died the following year, and his successor, Archbishop Thomas Cooray, took on the responsibility of ensuring his predecessor's vision was realised. This was advanced when, in 1948, Pope Pius XII established Mary Immaculate, to be known as Our Lady of Lanka, as the principal patroness of the island. The next vital step was the acquisition of an adjacent rubber estate on which to build the Basilica and provide ample

surrounding land to plant important Sri Lankan tree species such as the Na - the national tree - Kohomba and Kabook to provide shade for pilgrims and an atmosphere of serenity and sanctity.

The laying of the cornerstone took place on February 4, 1950, but the structure was not completed until 1974, a year after Pope Paul VI endowed Tewatte with the title of Minor Basilica. On February 6, 1974, the consecration of the Basilica and crowning of the statue of Our Lady of Lanka took place. Since then what is termed the National Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka has become an increasing magnet for pilgrims, especially for the Feast of Our Lady of Lanka in February, Children's Day in March, and the Feast and Blessing of the Sick in August. Indeed the volume of devotees who wished to stay for several days necessitated a camping area to be established, and later bungalows were built.



Pilgrims view of the approach to the National Basilica (Photography: Waruna Gomis)

One of the wondrous aspects of Sri Lanka's spiritual nature is the extraordinary multi-denominational pilgrimages that are made, from climbing a mountain, Sri Pada, to encountering the jungle at Kataragama. These are ancient pilgrimages, but there is one of modern origin, whose destination is not a far-flung place, but just outside Colombo and just as worthy. This article is taken from the Sri Lankan Serendib magazine



The Holy of Holies and the apse (above) with the life-size statue of Our Lady of Lanka (Pic: Waruna Gomis)

As you climb the last steps the eclectic nature of the architecture becomes visible: it takes its inspiration from Asian culture and religious buildings, a marvellous multi-denominational symbol designed by Fr. Heras and appreciated by Buddhist and Hindu devotees. The front view consists of six pillars that represent the country's dioceses during the Second World War. Above, set against circular glass pieced in an intriguing spider's web design, is a cross bearing the figure of Christ in bronze sculpted by the Sri Lankan artist,

Leila Peiris. The circular glass and the cross are themselves set in an early stupa design reminiscent of the entrance to certain Buddhist caves at Ajanta, India. On either side, twin towers rise, tapering towards the top where golden cupola-like bell enclosures are mounted, not unlike certain Hindu gopuram designs.

Before you venture inside, it's wise to tour the exterior of the Basilica to understand the context of the interior. The first aspect noticed is that it is cruciform in shape with a central dome, atop which

Contd. on Pg. 10

Welcome St. Joseph Vaz

We are a grateful people. Eighty years ago, the people of Wennappuwa built a school in honour of Father Joseph Vaz who had laboured hard to save and strengthen our faith running great risks and facing severe hazards, often in disguise.

Joseph Vaz College of Wennappuwa was declared open on September 3, 1934. The College will now be re-named as "St. Joseph Vaz College."

And 50 years later, the people of the Dalugama Parish, in Kelaniya, led by their Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Lawrence Perera, built a church at Makola in the Parish, in honour of Blessed Joseph Vaz. The property for the church was purchased by Fr. Lawrence, on September 2, 1992 in the face of stiff resistance from non-Christian Clergy and laity of the area, who took the matter to the courts. The

Letter

verdict was in favour of the church.

The Church of Blessed Joseph Vaz was blessed and declared open to the faithful on December 11, 1994. The Blessed Joseph Vaz Church at Makola, now in the Sapugaskanda Parish, will soon be "St. Joseph Vaz Church."

Not many Catholic Churches in the world are dedicated to non-Saints. But

Father Joseph Vaz and Padre Pio were exceptions. We in Sri Lanka devoutly chose Fr. Joseph Vaz as our own Apostle long ago. He will now be our Patron Saint. There will soon be many many male children bearing the name Joseph Vaz.

Let us all welcome St. Joseph Vaz into our homes because he is our own Apostle and the Patron Saint of our country.

Alfred Perera
Kelaniya

Catechism for the Youth
YOUCAT

Compiled by
Fr. Indra Ratnasiri Fernando,
Parish Priest, Nittambuwa

SECTION 11 (193)

The Seven Sacraments of the Church:

All sacraments are an encounter with Christ, who is himself the original sacrament. There are Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist). Sacraments of Healing (Reconciliation and Anointing) and Sacraments of service; mission (Matrimony and Holy Orders).

Baptism joins us with Christ, through Anointing, Christ heals, consoles.

Marriage – Christ promises his love. Holy Orders – priests have the privilege of forgiving.

Reconciliation – reconciles us with Christ.

Chapter one (1)

The Sacraments of Initiation:

The Sacrament of Baptism (194-202)

Baptism could be basically known as the way out of the kingdom of death into life, thus it is the gate way to the Kingdom of God. Through baptism one becomes a member of the Church, baptism unites us with Christ, it forgives us from the power of original and all personal sins.

The administration of the Sacrament:

- Classical form is the threefold immersion of the candidate in the water.

- Water is poured three times over the head of the candidate while words of the minister are uttered; "... I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Water symbolizes cleansing and new life; new life in Christ. The ceremony also includes the signs of anointing (OC/SC), the white garment and the paschal candle.

Anyone who is not yet baptized can be baptized. Faith is directly involved in the administration. Faith must be publicly professed at the moment of baptism. The Church has practiced Infant Baptism. Baptism is a grace, an undeserved gift of God who accepts us unconditionally. Infant Baptism presupposes that the parents will raise the baptized child in the faith.

Usually, a bishop/ a priest / a deacon can administer the Sacrament. At the danger of death any Christian can baptize by pouring water over the head of the recipient pronouncing the baptismal formula "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" even a non-Christian can administer, he or she should have the intention of doing what the Church does when she baptizes. Baptism is the only way to God and Salvation, yet it is to be noted that Christ died for all mankind. Therefore all who have had no opportunity to learn about Christ and faith, but seeks God sincerely and live in accordance with one's conscience finds salvation (baptism of desire). God has made salvation dependent on the sacraments, yet God is not dependent on His Sacraments.

"I have called you by name, you are mine" (Is.43/1). In this way, it is always fitting to have a name of a saint since a saint is an intimate friend of God.

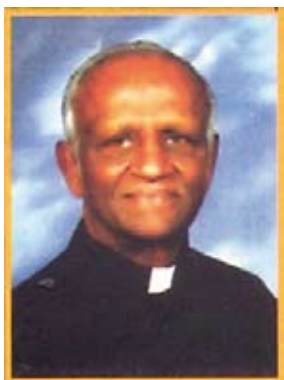
(To be contd)

Golden Jubilee of Priestly Ordination

Rev. Fr. Peter Fernando celebrated 50 years of priesthood on December 21, 2014. He was ordained in 1964.

Fr. Peter served in the parishes of Marawila, Nainamadama, Waikkala, Katupotha, Ambakadawila and Nikaweratiya before going abroad. He also functioned as Director of the Vithanika Technical Training Centre.

A Thanksgiving Mass was held on January 5 at Sacred Heart Church, Hettipola.



Rev. Fr. Peter Fernando

50th Anniversary Wishes



Mr. and Mrs. S.B. David of the Parish of Wellawatte celebrated their 50th anniversary on February 6. We wish them many more years of happy wedded life and God's blessings. Mr. David is also a correspondent to the 'Messenger' and our sister paper 'Gnana Oli'.

Ordination to Priesthood

Rev. Deacon Niroshan Jayakody hails from the Hiripitiya parish in the Diocese of Kurunegala. He is the son of Mr. Romulas Jayakody and Mrs. Patricia Mallawarachchi and was born on November, 14, 1984. He is an Old Boy of Ma-eliya Maha Vidyalaya and St. Anne's College Kurunegala.

Bro. Niroshan Jayakody entered St. Joseph Vaz Minor Seminary, Millawa in June 2003 and the Daham Sevana Seminary, Kalutara in 2006. The following year he entered the National Seminary in Kandy for his seminary formation. He was Ordained a deacon on October 19, 2014. As a Deacon he served at the Katupotha Parish. He will be ordained to priesthood by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Fernando at St. Anne's Cathedral, Kurunegala on Saturday, February 7.



Rev. Deacon
Niroshan Jayakody

Ordained to the Diaconate



Rev. Bro. Meththasinghe
Arachchige

He entered Joseph Vaz Minor Seminary, Millawa in 2003 and the Daham Sevana Seminary, Kalutara in 2005. He entered the National Seminary, Kandy in 2006 and completed his major seminary formation in 2013. He will be ordained to the Diaconate by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Fernando at St. Anne's Cathedral, Kurunegala on Saturday, February 7.

We wish them both God's blessings.

Rev. Bro. Meththasinghe Arachchige Sanjaya Pradeep Appuhamy hails from the Dunakadeniya Parish in the Diocese of Kurunegala. He is the son of Mr. Nelson Appuhamy and Mrs. Margaret Fernando and was born on October 3, 1984. He is an Old Boy of R.C. School Dunakadeniya and Dammissara National School in Nattandiya.

is enshrined on a pedestal and worshipped by all.

The Altar consists of an imposing block of undressed white stone. Magnificent is the crucifix designed by Rev. Fr. Priyanta Silva on the occasion of the visit of Pope John II in 1995. Note the altar railings. Cardinal Cooray wanted to include many species of the country's trees, thus the railings present astonishing variations of brown and black - teak, mahogany, iron-wood, jak, white and red sandalwood and many others.

The Holy of Holies contains a tabernacle that is a perfect replica of the Ark of the Covenant, with measurements taken from the Bible. The design of the two angels on either side is also based on Biblical description. Above hangs an ivory cross. Don't forget to descend into the beautiful

ly refurbished Blessed Sacrament Chapel, situated in the crypt where Cardinal Cooray is buried.

When you have absorbed what the Basilica has to offer, a visit to the nearby grotto is essential. It is not unlike the one at Lourdes, indeed it was meant to be a replica, created during the Basilica's construction as the granite rock was quarried to make into building blocks and completed in 1959. Once the grotto was completed, the ceremonies of the Blessing of the Sick and Children's Day began to be held there.

Finally, recommended is a visit to the Museum, which is Kandyan in design, complete with moonstone, which contains immensely valuable collections, from traditional carved figures to Cardinal Cooray's vestments.

Contd from Pg. 9

Our Lady of ...

is an imposing cross of the Eastern Oriental Church featuring three horizontal bars, and adjoining semi-circular roofs of the Basilica's extensions - surprisingly made of aluminum, and painted a tranquil blue. The granite walls of the Basilica are punctuated by large wooden doorways with ornate Indian architraves above. In between are 45 artistic faux bronze reliefs by Dr. Sarath Chandrasekera depicting the history of Christianity in Sri Lanka, which, besides being educational, enrich the appearance of the Basilica. Its worth seeing them in sequence.

When you enter the Basilica your gaze will be drawn upwards to the sky-blue, cloud-flecked apse, the backdrop for a life-

size statue of Our Lady of Lanka. Archbishop Cooray decided that the ideal representation was the statue of Our Lady of Fatima from Portugal, which toured the island in 1950. However, Our Lady of Lanka would have the infant Jesus in her arms and they would be pointing to each other, meaning "to Jesus through Mary". Furthermore, in Jesus' outstretched other hand there would be a rosary, later a golden one gifted by Pope Paul VI.

Two statues of Our Lady of Lanka based on such a design, one life-sized for the apse, the other smaller, were carved by Jose Thedim of Fatima, who had also carved Our Lady of Fatima. The smaller statue, which was taken to Rome to be blessed by Pope Pius XII,

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children. (Mt/11:25)

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR B 1st Feb. - 8th Feb. 2015

Sun: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Deut.18:15-20; 1 Cor.7:32-35; Mk.1:21-28
Mon: Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
Mal.3:1-4 or Heb.2:14-18; Lk.2:22-40
(or 22-32)
Tue: Memorial of St. Blaise, Bishop & Martyr and St. Ansgar, Bishop
Heb.12:1-4; Mk.5:21-43
Wed: Feast of Our Lady of Lanka
Is. 43:1-5; Acts.1:12-13, 2:1-2, 4-8, 11; Mt. 2:1, 2, 7-12
Thu: Memorial of St. Agatha, Virgin and Martyr
Heb.12:18, 19, 21-24; Mk. 6:7-13
Fri: Memorial of Ss. Paul Miki and Companions Martyrs
Heb.13:1-8; Mk. 6:14-29
Sat: Heb. 13:15-17, 20, 21; Mk. 6:30-34
Sun: FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
Job. 7:1-4, 6, 7; 1 Cor. 9:16-19, 22, 23; Mk. 1:29-39

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For the priests and ministers of the Church that they may practise in their own lives the values they preach to others. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who hold public office that their deeds may match their words and their promises. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Words can lift people up to heaven or plunge them down to hell: Let us pray for the victims of broken promises, especially for deserted wives and husbands. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Where words are as false and meaningless as smoke without fire let us pray that we may always speak with sincerity to one another.

We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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:

1Cor. 7: 32-35

St. Paul wants the Corinthian community to give undivided attention to the Lord. While the unmarried give full attention; the married too while they fulfill their marital duties should 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 they proclaim that Jesus is the Holy one 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 does not 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 also, He wants their undivided attention.

In the First Reading the Lord through the prophet promises the Israelites now turned faithful; a prophet. He promises to give him all power and the words to be proclaimed. He vows to hold answerable all those who do not listen to the prophet. He proclaims 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 that Jesus is the Holy one of God with the proclamation of the one who is possessed. But it was seen very clearly by the followers when Jesus proclaimed 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 His 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 1

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 a prince." She then glanced at a crucifix on the wall and read these words; "Je-

sus 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

Jesus and Satan were having an ongoing argument about who was better at the modern computer. It went on and God said "that's it!" and set up a test that will run up to two hours. God was the judge. So Satan and Jesus sat down and typed away. Jesus worked heavenly efficient and Satan was faster than hell. Ten minutes before their time the electricity went off. Finally the electricity came back. Satan started searching fanatically, screaming, "It's gone! It's all GONE!" I lost everything when the power went out!" Meanwhile Jesus quietly started printing out all his files. "Wait" Satan screamed. "That's not fair! He cheated! How come he has all his work and I don't have any?"

God just shrugged and said, "JESUS SAVES."

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

"What is this? A new teaching with authority He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him" (Mark 1,21-28)

1. Today's Gospel narrates Jesus' ministry on a Sabbath in the synagogue of Capernaum. There He teaches (ministry of the Word) and drives out an unclean spirit (ministry of exorcism). Let us now treat these two facets of the ministry of Jesus separately.

2. First, we find Jesus involved happily in the ministry of the Word. What does He teach? It is not specified.

How does Jesus teach? He teaches with authority. Prophets speak with authority received and so they use the words, "Thus says the Lord" or "The word of the Lord came to me saying ..." Rabbis and scribes would support what they teach appealing to earlier authorities, as 'Rabbi X said in the name of Rabbi Y'. Neither prophets nor scribes have a direct access to God.

But when Jesus speaks, God speaks. He is authority incarnate. Hence He speaks in such a way which none has done

before. Deuteronomy 18,15:18 predicted a prophet like Moses: "A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen." Now this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus the Great Prophet and Messiah.

What is the effect of Jesus' teaching? Listeners are astonished and alarmed. He makes an absolute claim on them. He earns reputation all over.

3. Jesus' Word, found in the Gospels, is so powerful and efficacious. It accomplishes what it signifies since the unclean spirit came out of the man at the command of Jesus. His Word can free and transform us today. Hence we need to give it our undivided attention.

4. Second, Jesus encounters an unclean spirit - a power which resists God's holiness. The latter interrogates the former, "What to us and to thee?" This is a Hebrew expression of hos-

tility and denial of common interest. The latter also addresses the former as "Jesus of Nazareth ... the Holy One of God." This reflects the notion that use of the precise name of an opposing spirit would guarantee mastery over him. So the unclean spirit tries to ward off Jesus' power which can destroy it. But He silences its cry and drives it off the man.

5. Why does Jesus silence the unclean spirit as "Quiet!"? Why does He hide His true identity revealed by devil? Why is this Messianic Secret? Jews have been expecting a political Messiah. If Jesus publicly claims He is the Messiah, they might have wrong expectations of Him.

6. How is this Messianic Secret significant to the Christians of Mark the Evangelist?

The Marcan community is a persecuted community. It is essential that this community of disciples understand the true

nature of the Messiahship of their Master. According to Mark, Jesus is the Messiah, who suffers and dies and then enters glory. Therefore the way of the cross is the way to glory. There is no other way. Indeed, it is on the cross that Jesus is publicly proclaimed true Messiah in Mark, "When the centurion who stood facing Him saw how He breathed his last he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15,39).

Miracles like the cure of a demoniac may give a false notion of the Messiahship, if wrongly understood, it may give a wrong notion of glory without the cross. Then the persecuted Marcan Christians, without accepting the persecution as a way to glory, may look for miracles to get out of suffering and may look for glory without suffering.

7. The days of Jesus - the first century AD - is marked with the presence of Jewish exorcists as evident in Matt 12,27 and Antiquities of the Jews (8,2.5 # 42-49)

by a Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus. Some miracle workers are in the business to make money from those who are gullible. They also use long and complicated rituals of exorcism.

But Jesus is never accused of profiting from the power to heal. He is never some sort of magician or money-seeking wonder worker. He utters a simple command, sometimes accompanied by a touch.

What does then Jesus mean by His exorcisms? Jesus sees His exorcisms as signs of liberation and hope. They destroy the evil power that causes sickness, death and natural disasters and make people experience the saving power of God in their lives.

8. Today we must continue what Jesus began. What is one way I am working to complete the war against evil that Jesus began?

Rev. Fr. Don Anton Saman Hettiarachchi

He Came, He Saw and Conquered Our Hearts



Without any hesitation any Sri Lankan can acclaim now, the tremendous success of the recently concluded Papal visit. Indeed, our loving nation was given a chance to experience a rare and blessed opportunity in experiencing the love of our beloved Holy Father, in the best of ways. This article will draw out a few points the Holy Father accomplished in his visit to Sri Lanka.

Unity within the state and the Church.

The moment His Holiness set foot on Sri Lanka the Head of State, His Excellency the President, the Prime Minister, and a few other government ministers were present to welcome him. After this warm welcome His Holiness had a state encounter with Mr. Sirisena, the newly elected President. The matters discussed between the two parties certainly strengthened the bond between the Church and Local state. This encounter surely will be the begin-

ning of a journey towards unity and co-operation, increasing the quality of faith of the faithful. In the past few decades many locals were victims of unstable political principals, which grew hatred instead of love among them. But, that dark era has reached its final limits. Furthermore this Papal visit will erase all faults and mistakes in the past, and help the locals to live in peace and most importantly abiding in love, travelling in the path towards holiness.

Inter- religious unity.

We, always and everywhere hear and witness the cruel and brutal torturing and severe persecutions of fanatic extremists. So many innocent souls lose their lives due to the ignorance of religious extremists. Though such crimes do not occur in our nation, during the recent times, so many were victims of mental torture and incorrect criticism due to misunderstanding. Not just one, but basically all four main faiths



in this nation are guilty for such offences some way or the other, but not as whole or common acceptance by the religious heads. The few who violate their own doctrine by persecuting other religions, never are to be considered human.

Nonetheless, this Papal encounter with various religious heads in the country, enabled them to discuss their views and helped them to understand each other very well. No matter whether Christian, Buddhist or even an atheist, what really matters is that we understand all races and religions, and by accepting the principle of universal brotherhood, peace and charity, fulfilling them by satisfying our spiritual doctrine for the common benefit, is really what we should accomplish. As stated this bonding of all faiths

surely will enhance all people in this country to work and live as one, promoting peace and love every day of our lives.

The saints we need is from our own nation.

We, until this year had no saints in the local Church. St. Joseph Vaz our apostle though being a native Indian, was basically our own patron. Yet, a local church with more than a five hundred years history, just having one saint is quite inadequate. His Holiness Pope Francis emphasizes on the call of a church towards universal holiness and saintly mission so many times, yet most of us neglect his heavenly message.

We as a stable church with a massive community certainly need many more saints. Yes, the canonization process may be tough but yet practising

what Pope Francis, St. Joseph Vaz and all saints, but most of all Jesus Christ himself did in his ministry simultaneously make us living saints every community wants. If we learn to abide in love, taking the Holy Father's message of peace during his visit as a guideline we too can be true saints and be witnesses of Christ. Let us pray harder and harder for this simple intercession to be fulfilled.

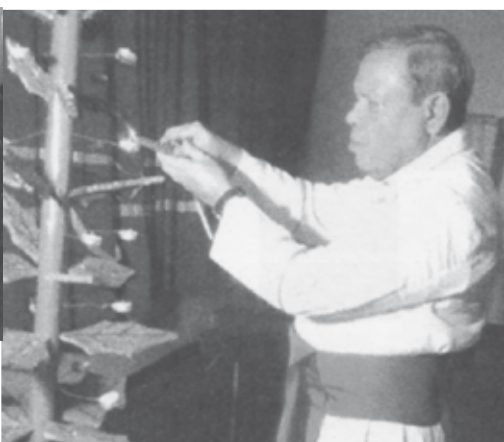
"We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, and spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace," Pope Francis

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

Oli Vila Sunday School Teachers



The annual Sunday School Teachers' Oli Vila was held in Batticaloa recently, presided over by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Ponniah Joseph, Bishop of Batticaloa. There were various events contributed by different parishes. In his message the Bishop



encouraged and showed his appreciation for the wonderful work that the teachers are rendering towards the children.

Courtesy: Ut Unum Sint

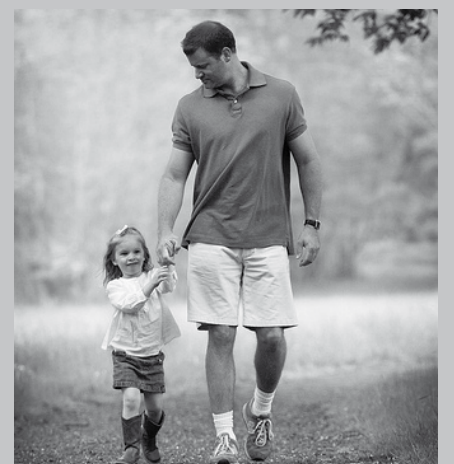
Golden Jubilee Celebration of Rev. Fr. L. K. Mariathan at Akkaraipattu

Golden Jubilee celebration of Rev. Fr. L. K. Mariathan took place recently. The Jubilee Mass was organized by the Parish Priest, Sisters and the parishioners. This was followed by an Agape at the Convent. In the evening the Parish Oli Vila was held and children were given various prizes for their annual performance. This was followed by a cultural program.

Courtesy: Ut Unum Sint



**A little girl was walking with her father along a country road,
The night was clear and the child was enthralled
by the splendour of the sky, all lit up with stars. After moments
of reflection she suddenly looked up to her father and said:
"Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful,
how wonderful the right side must be!" Anon**



Growing in Christ

All of us grow physically. We grow a little bigger daily. We do many things to grow physically. We breathe fresh air, eat and drink properly, exercise, rest and have social contact. By all these we grow. Similarly we take care of our body by cleaning it, applying ointments of various kinds. We do all these things to maintain a pinch of dust which lasts maximum 120 years. But have we realized that we are more than just a body and that our spirit will last for eternity?

It is our Heavenly Father's will for us to grow spiritually and become more and more like Jesus. But growing in Christ is not something that we can do on our own. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. Our job is to co-operate with the Holy Spirit and make sure that we are taking care of our spirit even as we take care of our body.

To grow physically we need to breathe and take in fresh air. Similarly to grow spiritually we need to pray as frequently as we breathe. If we stop breathing we will die physically. If we stop praying we will die spiritually because prayer is our life line with God. Prayer is simply communicating with God. And remember to offer God every part of your life; Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of the Lord. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! But I must not run on here, or my pen would never stop!

The next fact is nourishment. As we need food to nourish our physical body, we need the Holy Eucharist and the word to nourish our spiritual body. The Holy Eucharist is the real food and the real drink. (John 6:55) and the best spiritual nourishment one can ever have. When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, He nourishes us and strengthens us making us grow more

and more like Him. But we must surrender ourselves to Him.

Man does not live by bread alone, but..... by every word that proceed from the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

That means no one can grow stronger in Christ, without feeding on the Word daily. It is the food for our soul.

The next is exercise. We exercise to keep our body mechanism fit. In the same way, if we really want to grow in Christ we have to put into practice the things that we learnt from the Word.

We grow most while we are asleep. Likewise when we rest in God though on the outside it looks like nothing is happening, our relationship with God is actually growing. Resting in God means that you surrender your life to Him, believe and trust in Him.

Make sure to find time to be alone with God daily. Just sit quietly in His presence without doing anything, just loving Him and being loved by Him.

As we need good hygiene to grow properly, repentance and confession is essential to keep our spiritual life clean and healthy. We do this by admitting our sins, surrendering it to God and repenting from our heart. Then, the Blood of Jesus washes away our sins and makes us pure again, (1 Jn 1:7) - *(as pure as snow.)* But if we let the germs of anger, jealousy, sadness remain in our spirit, we will be spiritually sick.

We need fellowship to grow both physically and spiritually. The fellowship with other Christians will make us grow spiritually. You need to pray and to be prayed for by others. Encourage, support, and strength-



en each other in the same way. No one can see his own fruits. Therefore fellowship with others is essential.

In conclusion, spiritual growth is not instant and automatic. We will grow spiritually only if we want to grow, decide to grow, make an effort to grow and persist in growing. The reason that we are not mature in the Lord is that we just don't see the need to grow.

Growth involves making mistakes too. Every child learns to walk only after falling many times. So don't get discouraged when you fall. The important thing is that we get up when we fall, keep on trying and moving forward. The fault is not that we try and fail but we fail to try. Remember how far you have come not just how far you have to go. Let's consider every fiery trial as an opportunity to grow and rejoice. Praise the Lord!!!

Deven Atheesh
St. Joseph's Seminary, Kandy.

Benedictine Walk



St. Benedict's College, Colombo celebrates 150 years of its proud existence and service, in year 2015. The College which is run by the De La Salle Brother's community which was inaugurated in year 1865, is one of the oldest and leading Catholic Private Institutions in Sri Lanka.

Plans are a foot to celebrate this historical land mark of excellence through various activities. The most important and momentous event will be the 'Benedictine Walk' where the entire Benedictine Fraternity will take to the streets on the February 7, 2015, walking in and around the home of the college, Kotahena in a grand parade. This colourful parade will comprise of fun and entertaining activities and is expected to attract and be attended by a gathering of close to 7500 people. The walk will be followed by a Musical Extravaganza and a Grand Carnival held at the College Grounds which will be led by the country's leading Musical Bands

as Marians, Doctor and Voice. Print. There will be plenty of other activities lined up, as well.

It is indeed a great pleasure for the Walk Committee to invite and warmly welcome all the Reverend Fathers, Brothers, Old boys/Batches and all Past teachers attached to the Benedictine Fraternity to join in this Historical event.

For further inquiries and participation confirmation please contact:

- Mr. Randolph Perera (Co-Chairman - Benedictine Walk) Mob: 0777787187
- Mr. Gratien Fernando (Co-ordinator - Benedictine Walk) Mob: 0777368969
- Mr. Alston Rayen (Secretary - Benedictine Walk) Mob: 0775578971
- Mr. Harold Leon (Batches Co-ordinator - Benedictine Walk) Mob: 0777348049

Ode to the Pontiff

Shepherd of the flock dispersed throughout the world
Thy visit to this Asian land - the orient pearl
We hail! With prayerful obeisance, the Papal banner unfurl
Arise faithful of Lanka; greet Christ's representative on earth.

With one voice we acclaim the privilege on us bestowed
Blessed messenger of peace the shepherd to his fold
With reverence, loyalty and love we greet thee and enfold
Within our land's hospitality, its traditions of old.

This land of God's abundance, this land so richly blessed
This Land devoid of strife on its peaceful quest.
Missionary of peace in thy magnanimous zeal and zest
For peace; chose our resplendent isle;
chose to be our guest

A sharer in our hour of hope and peace
Thy prayers and blessings
Holy Father for unity replete
And so from North and South
from East and
West the faithful throng
We thank thee for the honour -
a joyous welcome.

By: Jeannette Chabrael

"World Cancer Day - 2015"

Healthy Life Choices

Early Detection

Treatment for All

Quality of Life

Not Beyond us

National Cancer Control Programme
Ministry of Health

English with Fun and Entertainment

Dear Readers,

In our 60th lesson we learnt a poem about courage, cohesive links and vocabulary items.

In this lesson you will learn a few inspirational quotes, two poems and a simple text on praying.

Comments made by our readers are very encouraging. Thanks for your efforts to make 'English with Fun and Entertainment' an interactive process.

God Bless You!

NJ

Activity 1: Read the inspirational quotes, learn the delicate shades of words and answer the questions?

What we are is God's **gift** to us.

What we **become** is our gift to God." (Louis Nizer)



Q (a). What's God's gift to us?

Q (b). What's our gift to God?

It is God who **arms** me with **strength** and **makes** my way perfect. Psalm 18:32

Q3. What does God arm you with?

Words with delicate shades of meaning

gift – talent / skill /genius

arms - equips / supports / ropes

makes –shapes/creates /builds

become - develop/ convert/turn into

strength - forte /strong /suit

perfect -faultless/flawless/impeccable

Activity 2: Read the two poems, recite them well and answer the two questions given? *These lines of Poetry* will inspire you, encourage you, and use them for reflection and meditation. You may also share the verses with others.

Who Shall We Help Today

Poet: John McLeod, © 1982

Who shall we help today, my friends,
Who shall we help today?
A poor-man passing in the road
A word to **ease** his way? (comfort)
A kindly thought, a friendly deed
A smile so freely given?
These are the treasures all may give
These are the keys to heaven!

Who shall we help today, my friends,
Who shall we help today?
A sad soul in **distress** perhaps? (anguish)
Kneel with that soul and pray;
Show him the love our Father showed
In the way His Son was given:
These are the gifts all have to give,
These are the keys to heaven!

Who shall we help today, my friends,
Who shall we help today?
The lame, the sick, all those in need?
So much that one can say
And do to help another's pain
In love's compassion given, (sympathy)
Yours is the gift of giving, friend,
Yours are the keys to heaven

Nearer In Service

Poet: John McLeod

Write these few words
And then put down the pen,
Briefly, I hope, before I write
again,(concisely)
Surely to find in days that are to be
Nearer in service my dear Lord to Thee!

Look to the light
And in your searching friend,
Know that His love will guide to
journey's end,
Open your eyes there is so much to see
Nearer in service, my dear Lord to Thee!

Into each heart
Let joy of living **spring**, (fountain)
And with a gentle word some kind-
ness bring,
Yours is the gift of giving, choice
quite free,
Nearer in service, my dear Lord to
Thee!

Who Shall we help today? Poem 1
Q(i) What are the keys to heaven?

Nearer in Service –Poem 2

Q (ii)What is spring in every heart?

Activity 3: Read the intellectual quotes and experience a sense of excitement

(i) An expenditure of words without income of ideas will lead to intellectual bankruptcy.

Ravi Zacha

(ii) Do not try to approach God with your thinking mind. It may only stimulate your intellectual ideas, activities, and beliefs. Try to approach God with your crying heart. It will awaken your soulful, spiritual consciousness. *Sri Chinm*

(iii) Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.
Albert Einstein

(iv) Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play. *Immanuel Kant*

(v) My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her. *George Washington*

Ref: /http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/intellectual.html#yuFBKekbKKWqe4Gk.99

Vocabulary – Study, the delicate shades of meaning

Faith – confidence, trust, conviction, reliance, believes, assurance, devotion

Blessed – holy, sacred, sanctified, hallowed, consecrated, revered, sacrosanct

Forgiving –merciful, pardoning, lenient, forbearing, magnanimous, sympathetic

Forgiveness- clemency ,mercy, pity, compassion, understanding, tolerance

Attitude –boldness, brashness, arrogance, insolence, defiance , approach, outlook

Gratitude –thankfulness, appreciation, gratefulness, acknowledgement

Whine – complaint, moan, cry drone hum, wail,

Whimper – sob, cry, whine, snivel, gripe, grumble

Activity 4 - Read the prayer and answer the questions in complete answers

Faith means trusting in advance

Dear Lord, I thank you for this day, I thank you for my being able to see and to hear this morning. I'm **blessed** because you are a **forgiving** God and an understanding God. You have done so much for me and you keep on blessing me.

Q 1 Why do you thank the Lord?



Forgive me this day for everything I have done, said or thought that was not pleasing to you. I ask now for your **forgiveness**. Please keep me safe from all danger and harm.

Q 2 Why does the speaker ask for forgiveness?

Help me to start this day with a new **attitude** and plenty of **gratitude**. Let me make the best of each and every day to clear my mind so that I can hear from you.

Q3 How does the writer want to start the day?

Please broaden my mind that I can accept all things. Let me not **whine** and **whimper** over things I have no control over. And give me the best response when I'm pushed beyond my limits.

Q4 The speaker does not want to whine or whimper over certain things. What are they?

I know that when I can't pray, you listen to my heart. Continue to use me to do your will. Continue to bless me that I may be a blessing to others. Keep me strong that I may help the weak... Keep me uplifted that I may have words of encouragement for others.

Q5 Why does the speaker ask Lord to bless him continuously?

I pray for those that are lost and can't find their way. I pray for those that are misjudged and misunderstood I pray for all my sisters and brothers. For each and every family member in their households, I pray for peace, love and joy in their homes; that they are out of debt and all their needs are met. I pray that every eye that reads this knows there is no problem, circumstance, or situation greater than God. Every battle is in your hands for you to fight. I pray that these words be received into the hearts of every eye that sees it in Jesus' name. Amen!

Q 6 Whom does the speaker pray for?

Answers –

Activity 1 – (a) God's gift to us is what we are.

(b) Our gift to God is what we become.

Activity 2 –

(i) A word, a kindly thought and a smile are the keys to the heaven.

(ii) The joy of living.

Activity 4

1- I thank God because he has done so much for me and he keeps on blessing me.

2. The speaker asks for forgiveness for whatever he has done, said or thought that was not pleasing to God.

3. The speaker wants to start the day with a new attitude and plenty of gratitude.

4. The speaker does not want to whine or whimper over the things he has no control.

5. The speaker asks the Lord to bless him that he may be a blessing to others.

6. The speaker prays for all his/her sisters and brothers and for each and every family member in their households,

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Compiled by Noel Jayamanne

Who should be a Christian

Everybody likes Jesus Christ. Only the devil and those who deny virtues can hate Jesus. Many people want to imitate Christ. Those who want to follow Jesus and those who believe that they are following Jesus should have a proper awareness, a conviction, about the life and the objective they aim to attain. Man has life at two levels - the life of the body God made from the earth, and the life of the soul that has to last forever.

Most of us work hard to nurture the life of the body which is mortal and destructible. However hard we might try, whatever precautions we might take, one day, sooner or later, we will lose our bodily life. The fact of the matter is that we hardly do anything for the life of our soul which is immortal and eternal. If we spend our entire life endeavouring to sustain our bodily life that will be certainly lost one day we will definitely prove ourselves fools of the number one order!

Who should follow Jesus? It is those who have the thirst to acquire eternal life rather than work for the bodily life that should follow Him. *"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me"* (Mt. 16:24). Those who want to follow Jesus, aiming eternal life, should accept the pain of giving up their mortal bodies and their momentary pleasures, and carry the cross of suffering. But unfortunately as we spend our time and energy in trying to protect our bodily life and make our circumstances conducive to a commutable and lavish style, we are unconsciously losing our life of the soul, to which we should have given greater attention. That is why Jesus taught us: *"Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life."* (Jn6:27).

After working hard for so long, have we gained anything that will be needed to ensure a life that will endure for eternity? *"What will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?"* (Mt 16:26).

We should realise that if we do not gain anything to ensure our eternal life, all our efforts will be simply futile *"Those who want to save their life for my sake will find it"* (Mt 16:25). Instead of working hard for our mundane life, we should seek and strive for eternal life.

Christian life aims at eternal life, life in Heaven. Only those who aim for this eternity will be entitled to be called Christians. The Father makes it very clear as to who can attain eternal life. *"All who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day"* (Jn 6:40).

For man to attain eternal life, the way and truth revealed by Heaven is Jesus, only Jesus. God became man, dwelt amongst us and taught us how to nurture the life of the soul and to make us keen on attaining the kingdom of God. To be a real Christian one has to look beyond the bounds of this mortal world, its glitter, glamour and glitz and should thirst for the salvation of his soul and work hard and in right earnest to attain it. The way for that consists of prayers, fasting and other virtuous acts. *"I am the bread of life"* (Jn 6:48). If the physical hunger is satisfied by worldly bread, the hunger of the soul is satisfied by the heavenly bread. Jesus said, *"Those who eat my flesh drink my blood have eternal life"* (Jn 6:54). It is made possible only through the Holy Eucharist.

Who should become good Christians? Those



who desire the salvation of the soul. The Christian way is prepared for those who want the growth of their souls to enable them to attain eternal life. The life and teachings of Jesus are appropriate for the soul's salvation. He wounded himself and shared his flesh and blood with us so that we too become heirs to heaven.

Courtesy : Vachanolsavam

Values and Moral Responsibility

Moral awareness is critical to living a fully integrated Christian life. Every action is the result of an intention, and intentions are formed by core values. Moral awareness involves allowing our core values to be formed, informed and transformed by sound doctrine and teaching. When we are able to maintain our core values in spite of the situation, we realise that our actions become integrated and we exhibit a life of integrity. Thus, all the various aspects of our lives serve as a witness to the Gospel, and the Gospel in turn sheds light on every aspect of our life.

True moral awareness involves constantly seeking to understand all that the Church teaches. This requires us to read, study, understand and apply moral teachings of the Church to every aspect of our life. Just because the Church says something doesn't mean it immediately impacts a person's core belief system. It isn't until one fully understands and accepts why a teaching is true and learns to apply it that they start to attain a rightly formed moral conscience - they become what they believe. A morally aware person strives to have a rightly formed conscience and defers to this conscience when faced with complex moral situations. One situation may

require the discernment of several different moral issues; therefore we need to be aware of what the church teaches in each area of moral teaching to better address the challenge at hand in the best possible way.

A morally aware person begins to have a fully integrated life where aspects of their life works together, towards a common goal - to do what is right, good, holy, and true. In other words, they act in accord with the will of God. And, once these core values are established in conjunction with a rightly formed moral conscience, they can begin to apply these values to any situation they encounter. They will know what the right thing to do is.

It is fair to say that being morally aware is a constant process. We need to have a keen sense of moral awareness and constantly increase our knowledge as situations arise. Tomorrow will present new moral questions, but if we keep informing and forming our moral awareness, and keep studying and listening to the Church, we can meet the challenges of tomorrow with integrity of heart. It is never easy, but as morally aware Catholics living fully integrated lives, we can begin to transform the world into members of the kingdom of God.

Courtesy : Vachanolsavam



Catholic numbers up but percentage down

The Catholic population of the world is on the up, with figures released by the Vatican in December showing that numbers have increased in all five continents, the Vatican Church Book of Statistics for 2012 reveals.

Vatican Radio reported that it puts the total number of Catholics in the world at 1,228,621,000 as of 31 December 2012, which represents a 15 million increase on 2011.

The Americas and Africa registered the biggest in-

creases followed by Asia, Europe and Oceania.

However, while numerically Catholics may have made some headway, their percentage of world population dropped by 0.01 per cent from 17.49 per cent in the previous year.

The total number of priests in the world increased by 895 to 414,313, but Europe once again registered the largest downturn in numbers for the second year in succession, showing a drop of 1,375, followed by the Americas which

lost 90 and Oceania 80.

However, Africa and Asia showed an increase of 1,076 and 1,364 respectively.

There was an overall decrease in the number of women religious worldwide, whose numbers dropped by 10,677 to 702,529.

Once again Africa and Asia showed increases, whilst Europe and the Americas showed the biggest decrease.

The hardest hit group was lay missionaries. Their numbers slumped by 19,234 to

362,488.

In the education sector, the Catholic Church runs 71,188 kindergartens, 95,246 primary schools and 43,783 secondary schools, while the number of charity and healthcare centres in the world run by the Church stands at 115,352.

However, 2014 was a tough year for Church workers. Fides reported that 26 pastoral workers were killed during the year, compared with 23 in 2013.

Tracey McClure reported for Fides that it has broadened

the scope of its annual report on priests and religious who died violent deaths to include Church lay personnel as well.

The report from the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples reveals that 17 priests, one brother, six sisters, a seminarian and one lay person were killed in 2014—mostly during robberies characterised by brutality and ferociousness, which Fides says indicates they stem from intolerance and economic and cultural poverty.

Courtesy: Sunday Examiner



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