



ST. PATRICK
17th March

Messenger

"Gleaned from the classics"
By Johannus

Justicia non novit patrem nec matrem, solum veritatem spectat.

(from Cicero)

Justice knows neither father or mother, it regards truth only

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Cardinal addresses 64th Children's Day at Tewatta

"Our Lord can perform miracles"

(From the Archdiocesan Website)

The Archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, addressing children at the 64th Children's Day, held on Saturday (3) at the Basilica grounds at Tewatta, invited the children to respond to the call of God and unite with Him "as the Gospel tells us today."

Quoting from the Scripture passage Jn 15:5, 'I am the vine. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing', the Archbishop told the large gathering of

children, "The Lord is calling you like he called the great saints to respond to His call and unite yourself with Him. Our Lord can perform miracles in your life," he said at the Eucharistic celebration held to mark the day.

The Archbishop presided at Eucharistic celebration together with the two newly consecrated Auxiliaries, Their Lordships, Bishop Emmanuel Fernando and Bishop Maxwell Silva. His Grace the Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Marcus Fernando, Archbishop

Emeritus Oswald Gomis, the Episcopal Vicars, Rev. Fr. Indra Fernando Director of Catechetics, Rev. Fr. Manokumaran (in charge of the Tamil Catechetics), several priests and religious, children from Schools, Colleges and Sunday Schools and their teachers participated at the colourful celebrations held to mark Children's Day.

A beautiful drama directed by Very Rev. Fr. Cyril Gamini Fernando, Episcopal Vicar (Colombo) Southern Region and Rev. Fr. Prasad Harshana, was staged by
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Film and TV actress Nita Fernando, takes the role of Mother Mary at the drama held to mark Children's Day. (Pic: Pradeep Roshan)

President grants fuel subsidy to fishermen



President Mahinda Rajapaksa after a discussion held at Temple Trees last week with the Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Bishop of Chilaw, His Lordship Valence Mendis and other representatives, directed the authorities to increase

the fuel subsidy for the fishing community affected by the fuel hike. The fuel subsidy for multi-day fishing trawlers was increased from 2,500 litres to 2,600 litres while the kerosene subsidy was increased from 250 litres to 350 litres a month. The

President also decided to remove the tax on the import of fishing implements. He said that no one was allowed to import fish. The President who had listened to the grievances of the fishing community, ordered the authorities to see that

their produce was purchased at a stable price. He was of the view that such a move would boost the economy of small scale fishermen. He observed that oil prices may further soar in the world market in the future and the
(Continued on Pg. 2) »

Pilgrims' Rest from Peoples' Bank to St. Anne's National Shrine - Talawila

A Pilgrims' Rest constructed for the use of the devotees at St. Anne's National Shrine, Talawila sponsored by the Peoples' Bank was declared open by Rt. Rev. Dr. Devsritha Valence Mendis, Bishop of Chilaw.

The Pilgrims' Rest consisting of six housing units was constructed at a cost of over Rs. 5 million, as a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative in connection with the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Bank. Reverend Fathers of the area along with Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson Perera, Administrator St. Anne's

National Shrine, Talawila, Rev. Fr. Sylvester Jayakody, Principal, St. Benedict's College, Kandy, W. Karunajeewa - Chairman, Peoples' Bank, Dr. D.J.D. Jayakody, Ms. Lakshmi Sangakkara, Ms. Vishaka Amarasekare - Directors of Peoples' Bank, N. Vasanthakumar-CEO/General Manager, Peoples' Bank, Ms. Srimala Arsaculratne, President, Christian Guild/DGM, Yohan Soza, Clive Fonseka, Boniface Silva Deputy General Managers, Sunil de Saram - Asst. General Manager and T.G. Karunaratne - Regional Manager
(Continued on Pg. 2) »

Katchativu: Where the two shall meet

The annual feast of St. Anthony's Church, Katchativu, was celebrated with deep devotion and unity last Sunday (4), with the participation of well over 8000 pilgrims, both from India and Sri Lanka.

At this year's feast a considerable number of Indian priests and nuns were seen. An estimate of over 4000 Indian pilgrims was reported to have participated at the feast. They had come in



mechanised boats. The hoisting of the flagpole took place on 3rd of March (Saturday) and the Festive Mass was held on 4th March at 6.30 p.m. officiated by Vicar General, Very Rev. Fr.

Justin B. Gnanapragasam. The Sri Lanka Northern Naval Command provided all essential facilities for the smooth conduct of the feast. The provision of food, water and sanitary facilities was

taken care of by the Navy. One unique feature of the feast were the number of stalls that had come up in the Island. The Indians had put up stalls where they sold sarees and textiles, sought after by the Sri Lankans and the Sri Lankans sold palm leaf sugar and milk powder, which are rare for the Indians.

The feast was conducted with the help and supervision of the Sri Lanka Armed Forces based in the North.

One Hundredth Novena to St. Anthony



St. Anne's Church, Wattala marked its 100th Novena with Holy Mass and the distribution of dry rations to low-income group families, organised by the St. Anne's Society, Wattala. Picture shows Rev. Fr. Ruban Lesley Parish Priest, St. Anne's Church, Wattala distributing the dry rations.

(Nimal Perera)



YEAR OF THE WORD OF GOD

"I am the Resurrection and the Life"

Jn 11:25

News in Pictures

Daya Seva Samithiya, Nayakakanda celebrates 34th anniversary



The 34th anniversary of Daya Seva Samithiya Nayakakanda, was held under the patronage of Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunathilaka, parish priest of St. Mary's Church, Nayakakanda recently. Here a member of the Samithiya welcomes Fr. Gunathilaka. President of the Samithiya, Cyril Silva and some members are also in the picture. *(Pic. Nimal Perera)*

Annual Feast of the Church of Our Lady of Madhu, Suduwella



The annual feast of Our Lady of Madhu, Church Suduwella, was celebrated recently. The chief celebrant was Rev. Fr. Srinath Manoj Perera, Deputy Procurator General Archbishop's House, Colombo.

Picture shows Fr. Srinath receiving the offering. *(S.K.J. Kurera)*

SVP Society at Gurugalla



A branch of the SVP was inaugurated at St. Francis Xavier's Church, Gurugalla, Ratnapura.

The following are the office bearers:

President: Kusal de Mel
Secretary: Iroshani Ganegama
Treasurer: Anita Perera
Vice President: Niroshan Mathew
Asst. Secretary: Gayan Sugith

Picture shows the blessing of the new office bearers by the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Christopher Corera. *(Theobald Samaratinga)*

Colombo Commitium (Sinhala) Way of the Cross on March 17th

The 'Way of the Cross' organised by the Colombo Commitium (Sinhala) will be held on 17th March 2012 at St. Anne's Church, Wattala at 8.00 am., followed by Holy Mass.

All Legionaries and the faithful are cordially invited to participate on this day.

Rev. Fr. Ponsius Ronnie Perera
Director Senatus of Sri Lanka and Archdiocesan Chaplain for Legion of Mary.

Called to Eternal Rest

Rev. Bro. Michael Robert FSC, was called to eternal rest in the Lord on Monday, 5 March 2012.

Seventy Six-year-old, Bro. Michael was an exemplary Lasallian who took a deep interest in moulding the younger generation.

He served as Administrator and teacher at St. Benedict's College, Kotahena, St. Mary's College, Chilaw and St. Sebastian's College, Moratuwa. He also served a major period (1959 - 1969) at De Mazenod College, Kandana. He was again at De Mazenod from year 2000, till his death. His mortal remains were buried on 7 March 2012 at the Madampitiya, Cemetery, Catholic section. *(Nihal Shantha)*



Blood Donation Campaign



To mark the second anniversary of the Katana Madampella St. James Three Wheel Society, a blood donation campaign was organised at the Minu-pahala Madampella School Hall near St. James Church. Picture shows Rev. Fr. Laknath Cooray, parish priest of Madampella with the members of the three wheel society. *(Pic. Cecil Danicius)*

A pilgrim.....

Contd.. from Pg. 1

Puttalam, staff members, pensioners and families participated.

The function was organised by the Peoples' Bank Christian Guild and the Puttalam Regional Office.

Medical Camp at 'Family Seminar'



A two-day 'Family' seminar was held at the Holy Trinity Church, Duwana in the Pallansena parish, under the aegis of the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Jayantha Nimal recently.

The Seminar was conducted by Rev. Fr. Julian Patrick Perera, the National Director, Family Service Organization.

A Dental and Medical clinic was also held on the same day by the St. Joseph's Health Donation Society, Duwana. More than 80 patients attended the medical camp. *(Mervyn de Costa)*

President grant....

Contd. from Pg. 1

government was left with no other option than introducing subsidies to vital sectors liable to be affected by the fuel hike.

He said that agricultural and educational sectors were also functioning on subsidies.

President Rajapaksa directed the IGP to take stern action against fishermen using illegal methods of fishing.

Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Minister Rajitha Senaratne said that loans had been granted to the fishing community at a low interest rate.

Present on the occasion were Very Rev. Fr. Patrick Perera, Episcopal Vicar Colombo Northern Region, Rev. Fr. Lester Nonis, Chaplain to the fishermen, together with Ministers Milroy Fernando, Basil Rajapaksa, Rajitha Senaratne, Felix Perera, Neomal Perera, Sarath Kumara Gunaratne and Parliamentarian Dr. Sudharsani Fernando.

National Catholic Deaf Day

The National Catholic Deaf Day celebrations will be held at Our Lady of Lanka Basilica, Tewatta, Ragama on 18th March 2012 at 9.00 a.m.

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera, Bishop of Kurunegala, will officiate at Holy Mass. Rev. Fr. Sudath Silva, Chaplain of the Deaf. Rev. Sr. Jacintha Jayasinghe P.H. Patroness of St. Joseph's Past Pupils' Welfare Association of the Deaf and Rev. Sr. Damayanthie PH, will assist at Holy Mass in sign language. All are welcome!

(St. Joseph's Past Pupils' Welfare Association of the Deaf - Ragama.)

In aid of Church building fund



In aid of the Halpe St. Francis Xavier's Church building fund, Halpe parishioners cooked and sold packs of breakfast. Here members of the Legion of Mary are seen selling rice packets to the parishioners who attended the Holy Mass.

Retreat

Meerigama Retreat at Tambakanda



Holy Rosary Church in Meerigama held their annual Lenten retreat at the Tambakanda Calvary Shrine recently. It was conducted by Rev. Fr. Anura Sri Kamal and was followed by Holy Mass.

A group photo was taken after the retreat.

(Pic. Cecil Danicius)

Kurunegala Diocese Lenten Retreat

On their 2012 theme "Suffering, Death and Resurrection," the Kurunegala Diocese will hold its Lenten Retreat on 31st March at 9.00 a.m. at Sandalanka - Tambakande Calvary Shrine, under the patronage of Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera, Bishop of Kurunegala. Rev. Fr. Stanley Peiris Parish Priest of Tambakanda has organized this Lenten programme with the help of parishioners. *(Cecil Danicius)*

Clarification

At the Episcopal Ordination of His Lordship Auxiliary Bishop, Emmanuel Fernando and His Lordship Auxiliary Bishop, Maxwell Silva, held on 11th February 2012, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo presided as the Principal Consecrator together with His Lordship, Bishop Kingsley Swampillai and His Lordship, Bishop Harold Anthony Perera as the Co-Consecrators.

'Cross of Honour' - highest Papal honour conferred to layman

His Eminence, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo, awarded the Cross of Honour – "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" to Mr. T.A. Fernando in recognition of his active service among the Catholic Community in India.

The 'Cross of Honour' is the highest medal awarded to the laity by the Papacy.

Mr. Fernando, who was one time a contributor to the *Catholic Messenger*, has also contributed to many Catholic publications in India on various topics pertaining to the Church. He has also addressed many topics related to Indian Church History and conducted wide research on St. Francis Xavier's life and work on the Pearl Fishery coast of India.

This award was presented to him on the initiation of the Bishop of Tutucorin, Most Rev. Dr. Yvon Ambrose on 26 February, 2012 at



Mr. Fernando receives the Papal Honour at the Hands of His Eminence

Good Shepherd Convent Hall, Kottayam. Bishop Ambrose had wanted Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith to confer the medal to Mr. Fernando.

Mr. Fernando had come to Sri Lanka for the Episcopal Ordination of His Lordship the Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo Emmanuel Fernando.



Church in the World

Pope Pius XII's Letters from the Vatican

The Jewish New Yorker Gary Krupp who has made it his life's work to clear the name of Pope Pius XII is welcoming the first public display of letters from the Vatican Archives that suggest the wartime pontiff helped many Jews escape Nazi persecution.



Pope Pius XII (1939 to 1958)

The archived letters are featured as part of the "Lux in Arcana" exhibition, which opened last week in Rome. It showcases 100 articles from the Vatican's Secret Archives to celebrate its 400th anniversary.

To date, documents relating to the 1939-58 papacy of Pope Pius XII have remained unpublished. In recent decades his critics have accused him of indifference to the plight of the Jewish people during the Second World War.

The new exhibition features several documents outlining his efforts to assist Jews in Italy. They reveal that in 1941 the Pope sent a high-ranking Vatican official to inspect the welfare of Jews being held in seven internment camps in southern Italy. One year later, a rabbi who was being held in one of the camps wrote a long letter to Pope Pius thanking him for sending aid to the prisoners, including clothes for the interned children.

Finally, in 1944, former detainees wrote to express their gratitude to the Pope for his "keen and paternal interest" towards their "physical, spiritual and moral wellbeing" during their detainment. They also credited him with saving them from deportation to Poland in 1942.

Gary Krupp said these wartime documents merely reflect the "thousands of pages of documents from the war years that have been available for years in individual diocesan archives throughout Europe."

Those documents, he said, show how "the Pope acted firmly and directly while the Vatican was surrounded by hostile forces, infiltrated by spies, (and) without an army to protect them."

Krupp himself has seen letters documenting how the Vatican sent money to support Jews in Austria, Romania and France. At present, his foundation's website has over 46,000 similar documents in support of Pope Pius XII. "For example, we have posted on line documents proving the Pope's direct action to stop the arrests of October 16, 1943, thereby saving an estimated 12,000 Jews in Rome," he said.

Vatican Secret Archives opens

The "Lux in Arcana" exhibit at Rome's Capitoline Museum was created to celebrate the 400th anniversary



of the Vatican's Secret Archives and includes notable items such as the 1521 decree from Pope Leo X excommunicating German monk Martin Luther.

The display also features a 1530 petition asking Pope Clement VIII to annul Henry VIII of England's marriage to Catherine of Aragon and an 1887 letter from a North American Indian chief – written on a strip of bark – addressing Pope Leo XIII as the "Grand Master of Prayers."



Church in the World

The Church must combat lies and deceit, in herself and in the World

VATICAN CITY, (VIS) - This year's meditations during the Lenten spiritual retreat of the Holy Father and the Roman Curia are being guided by Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, Archbishop of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, who is focusing on the theme of "the communion of Christians with God". Beginning with the sign of the cross, the cardinal has been reflecting upon God as light, truth, mercy and loving guide, before turning to consider love of the world, lack of faith in Christ and the sin of priests.

The sign of the cross is much more than a habit, it is an "act whereby we add the splendour of knowledge and the dynamism of freedom to our every action". It is a sign which means "sacrifice for love. It is death for resurrection". Therefore, it implies the rejection of vanity, prestige, possession and domination, and the consecration of our activity to Christ.

In the context of his meditations upon God as the way, truth and life, Cardinal Monsengwo Pasinya made reference to some of the most dramatic events of our times, such as war, genocide, political violence, abortion and all forms of manipulation of human beings. He also invited his listeners not to remain indifferent "to repression and man's exploitation of man", and not to lower their guard, "even if the mystery of sin is beyond us".

"We must walk in the light", the cardinal said. "In other words, we must choose to abandon sin" and let the Truth transform our lives via a journey of conver-

sion. Understanding God as truth is particularly important for people "who have no awareness of their own sins, for people who have lost the sense of sin because they no longer pose themselves the problem of God", and for people who do no longer possess moral criteria and confuse good and evil. This tendency is related to "religious indifference which affirms that all religions are alike but which, in reality, is seeking a lax morality".

Our Lord can.....

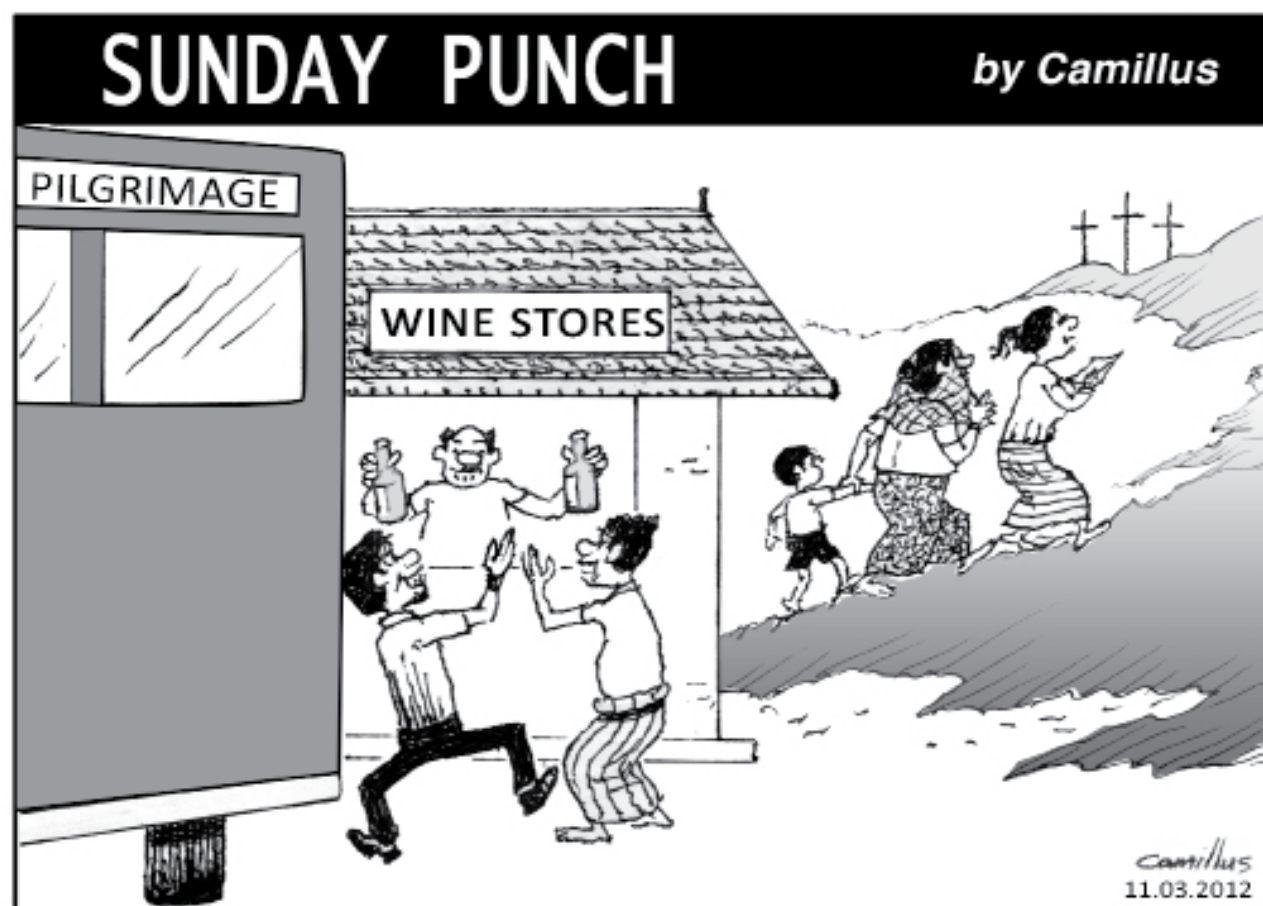
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pupils of All Saints' College, Borella, at the beginning of the programme, based on the theme for the day, "O Mother Mary, You are the handmaid of the Word and we are your children."

The Archbishop further told the children that they should learn lessons from the life of Our Blessed Mother "as you saw in the drama and to accept the will of God in your life."

The day was a memorable one for many children present as they went around the Basilica to take a glimpse at the historical engravings designed and installed around the Basilica by His Grace the Archbishop Emeritus Oswald Gomis and also to see the new exhibition hall of Blessed Joseph Vaz.

In parallel with the Children's Day, the different Religious Congregations also made available information about their Congregations in different places assigned to them.



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EDITORIAL

11 March 2012

A new Education Act is needed

There have been many important changes in the structure of the schools' system since the last Education Act of 1938 was passed. These changes have still to be recognized by the law. The regulatory structure of any field of government activity is contained in a statute and this has the advantage that the actors in the field including the relevant Ministry and the school managements know their respective rights and duties.

Some of these changes include the establishment of private fee levying schools, the system of a) grant-aided schools which finance part of their expenses, teach the national curriculum and prepare students for the national examinations, b) fee levying international schools, which finance all their expenditure, teach foreign curricula and prepare students for foreign examination, and c) non-fee levying assisted schools which teach the national curriculum and prepare students for national examinations but where there is cost-sharing between the state and the schools with the government paying teacher salaries and the schools bearing the capital expenditures. These arrangements should be recognized in the law. The establishment and respective roles of School Development Societies and the management could also benefit from a law.

We are one of the first countries to establish free education in our schools system and in State universities. But free education was introduced to provide equal access to education for those who could not afford to pay for the education of their children. The education in the government established vernacular schools was made free by the British colonial authorities. But the quality of education in the English medium denominational schools was above those in the vernacular schools. Education has become a means to achieve higher incomes and raise the social status in a society which was still semi feudal. The immediate effect of the State take-over of the denominational schools was to level down rather than level up although the establishment of central schools by the state did provide a substitute for the denominational schools. But with the change-over to Swabasha the rationale for the two different systems was undermined and the state had to provide the same benefits to teachers in both types of schools.

Although the cost of free education was affordable at the time it was introduced, it escalated with the increase in population and the take-over of the denominational schools. But thanks to the efforts of past students of these former English medium schools they managed to maintain their quality while the other State schools struggled to obtain funds to improve their schools.

The World Bank in its Development Policy review of 2004 pointed out the challenges faced by the government to increase the quality of education in the schools. The government tax revenue cannot be increased significantly without undermining the private sector. Nor can the government raise the indirect taxes without causing hardship to the poor. Although the government has increased the money allocated for education it has not been able to maintain public spending on education in real terms. The annual increase in allocation for education has been wiped out by inflation. Since the government cannot change this situation the World Bank recommended increasing private sector participation in providing education. It would increase the resources invested in education.

Since the private fee levying schools will be attended by upper income families it would release more public funds for the poorer families in the less prestigious schools. Many of these schools do not have laboratories or facilities for teaching English which are both needed if they are to provide a quality education and their students to compete with others from the prestigious schools for the better paying jobs and opportunities. The latter are in the urban centres far away from the areas of domicile of the children. The growing middle class, who can afford to pay, clamour to get their children admitted to the prestigious schools in the urban centres. But the number of places for admission is very limited. These Schools cannot expand beyond their optimum capacity. New schools of good quality have to be established and the State does not have the money to set apart for the purpose given the other demands on the state budget.

The Church has been in the field of education since the Middle Ages. It established schools long before the State entered the scene, although its scope was not universal since it lacked the resources to do so. In fact education for all is possible only in modern times after the Industrial Revolution. For the Church, education is not merely to impart knowledge for worldly purposes but also for building up children's character for their spiritual mission in life.

Creating a favourable environment for private investment in education requires a new Education Act which recognizes the new institutions and establishes their role in the scheme of things in education.

Saints and Sinners on the Way to Calvary

Faced with the horror of the crucifixion of the Son of God, and the horror of much that goes on in our world today, even very close to us in our own country and our own streets, we may well feel totally helpless, and close to despair - but for a Christian, despair is not permissible.

The gospel tells us of a group of woman who followed Christ during his public life and 'ministered to him out of their own resources.' How relieved his mother must have been to know that someone ensured that he did get fed and cared for! It seems that these same women were with him in Jerusalem at the end, and followed him even to Calvary, 'bewailing and lamenting him.'

There was little else they could do - as women - but even that implied considerable physical and moral courage, in the presence of an hysterically hostile crowd and a detachment of fairly brutal Roman soldiers. Moreover they stayed within sight of the cross, though women were probably kept away from the actual act of crucifixion, and finally prepared ointments and spices to anoint his body.

They followed him to the bitter end, and this suggests more than just one physical following along the road; it looks more like discipleship in the fullest sense - they were surely moved by something more than pity or simple human affection.

This view has found expression in an old Christian tradition which does not come from the scriptures, but originates in a fourth century writing known as *Acts of Pilate*, which may well embody reliable traditions going back to the second century.

It tells the story of a woman in the crowd who, like Zaccheus in the canonical gospels, was so anxious to see Jesus that she pushed her way to the front. On seeing him close up, she was so deeply moved that she wiped his bloody face with her veil which thereafter bore the imprint of his features, an obvious echo of the story of the sinful woman who anointed his feet. The name of this woman Veronica - only gets into the story in a 12th century British repetition of it, by the chronicler Gerald of Wales, who points out the obvious pun: Veronica comes from vera icon - true image. Another 12th century writer, Matthew Paris, underlines the obvious; she was called Veronica because she became in herself a true image of Christ, who tells us that the disciple must become like her master.

And there was another who followed Christ in the most literal sense, Simon of Cyrene. Christ had said, when Peter challenged him about the prophecy of his suffering, 'If anyone would come after me he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' Simon did exactly that, not initially of his own free choice. The gospel tells us that, as a passer-by, he was forced by the soldiers to carry the

cross behind Jesus.

He was a visitor coming in from the country, presumably in Jerusalem for the Passover. Cyrene, a district on the north coast of Africa, is one of the places mentioned by Peter in his first sermon on Pentecost recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, as a region whose natives in Jerusalem on that occasion heard the apostles speaking in their own mother-tongue. St Mark's gospel identifies him as the father of Alexander and Rufus - apparently figures well known to the community for which he was writing. This would suggest that even though Simon was originally press-ganged by the Roman soldiers he, or at least his family, did subsequently come to faith in Christ. We don't know what his immediate reaction was, but the experience must have been fairly shattering: Physically painful and tiring; probably shameful and embarrassing to be thus associated with a condemned criminal; certainly humiliating for a Jew to be pushed around by Roman soldiers; perhaps frightening and even dangerous to be thus closely and forcibly associated with what was considered a potential revolt. If he had come up to Jerusalem for the Passover, he might well be regretting his conscientious fulfilment of religious duties! We have no evidence that he was granted immediate faith in Christ. It was probably no clearer to him than anyone else at the time what was really going on. According to the first chapter of Acts, the apostles themselves were still asking uncomprehending, silly questions right up to the Ascension. But there is no evidence either of Simon refusing or protesting, or even wilting under the burden. All we know is that he did it.

Sometimes that sort of uncomprehending endurance is asked of us. Sometimes to do the right thing is all we can achieve. We don't understand it, we don't like it, we may even feel we don't believe in it, but we still do it. Christ knows all too well how hard it is to govern our emotions, our wayward hearts and rebellious minds witness his own agony in Gethsemane, when he sweated blood, but did manage to say 'Thy will be done.'

And that endurance, that acceptance of God's will, even with gritted teeth, metaphorically (if not actually) kicking and screaming, *will* bring grace, blessing and reward, even if we cannot perceive this at the time.

(Cecily Boulding OP - Spirituality)



Why I became an anti-abortionist

By Dr. Rupa Wickramaratne

I have been an ardent anti-abortionist for well-nigh forty years. It happened this way. In the mid-nineteen-seventies, I had completed my Ph.D. research in Genetics at Imperial College of the University of London and moved on to Cambridge University on a post-doctoral fellowship. One weekend a friend visited me and on the Sunday morning, as she got ready to return to London after Mass, she invited me to accompany her to an anti-abortion rally at Trafalgar Square. As I had no other commitments for the afternoon, I agreed. Until then, I had accepted that abortion was wrong, just as I had accepted that the earth was spherical or that the sun was the centre of the solar system, not giving it much thought, and so had no strong feelings about it.

A foetus is not a wart

On our way to join the very sober and disciplined procession of anti-abortionists, all dressed in white, wending their way to the Square, bearing white flowers, we noticed pro-abortionists accosting people, trying to win them over to their way of thinking. Two young women approached us, stating vehemently that abortion was no different from getting rid of a wart. The foetus was merely a growth in the mother's body, just like a wart, they said and it was quite permissible to remove it. Stopped in our tracks, I was aghast. Could it be possible that modern, educated young women were so ignorant? Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of biology must surely know that each foetus is the product of union of sperm and ovum, and is therefore unique. It is in no way comparable to a wart or to a few cells sloughed off from the skin, which would necessarily have the same genetic composition as the parent individual. My friend introduced herself to these two pro-abortionists as a nurse and told them I was a geneticist. I then proceeded to explain to them the miraculous biological phenomenon of sexual reproduction. As I keep telling my students, the best way to learn is to teach and as we continued the discussion, explaining to them the facts and countering their arguments, I became more and more convinced that abortion was not only wrong but a crime, because abortion is the destruction of a human foetus and therefore the denial to life of an individual, and that is very definitely murder.

When life begins

In April 1976, travelling to London from Cambridge, I got myself a copy of the *London Times* to read on the train. A letter to the Editor caught my eye. Juliet Cheetham, a sociologist from the University of Oxford, in a letter entitled "Catholic Church and Abortion" declared that '... the time has surely come for Catholics to air publicly their doubts about, or dissent from, the Church's teaching on abortion...' I asked some English friends, also Catholics, why they didn't reply. They were amused at my naivete, remarking that there was no point attempting it, as ordinary people (like us) didn't stand a chance of having a letter to the Editor published in that prestigious journal.

This did not deter me. I had been born and raised a Catholic and now, convinced that abortion was a crime, felt compelled to air my views. I believed it necessary to establish that

abortion was the destruction of a new individual and now realized that not everyone was aware of this basic fact. Within a week, my letter, together with one from the Headmaster of Downside School, was published under the heading: "Catholic Church attitude to Abortion". I was a geneticist from the University of Cambridge and like Mrs. Cheetham, a Catholic woman, so we were well-matched. My letter was as follows:

"Sir, Mrs. Juliet Cheetham declares that '... the time has surely come for Catholics to air publicly their doubts about, or dissent from, the Church's teaching on abortion...&c' (letter April 17). Then surely the time has also come for people to bravely voice their agreement with that Church's stand on so controversial a matter as abortion. As one who is engaged in scientific research in Genetics, I find no reason to dissent from the Church's view, having had the opportunity to consider the subject in great scientific detail.

I think the point at which human life begins is crucial to any discussion on abortion. There are two moments in time which have often been used to mark the existence of a new human being, namely the moment of conception and the moment of birth. Although the moment of birth is a convenient landmark, the moment of conception is biologically a more accurate definition of the beginning of a new life. The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of birth control as "methods of preventing undesired sexual conception" and of birth itself, as amongst other things, "bringing forth of offspring", "coming into this world", "origin" and "beginning" suggests that there is a certain amount of confusion over the words, birth and conception.

For those to whom the word genetics is unfamiliar (and there are many), genetics is the study of hereditary characters or inborn characteristics, and inborn characteristics are determined at the moment of conception. All material a human being inherits from his parents is contained in two cells, the egg and the sperm. But although the egg and sperm contain all the hereditary potentialities of a future child a new individual is not brought into being until the moment of conception.

Nuclear fusion of the egg and sperm is the ultimate process in fertilization and in a normal pregnancy the fertilized egg moves to the uterus, becomes embedded in the uterine wall and remains there for the nine months of prenatal development. To say that human life begins at some arbitrary stage during the nine months seems to me illogical. If life were to begin at the completion of the nine month period, then premature babies would be less human than those carried to term; by a similar argument infants would be less human than adolescents, adolescents less human than adults, and this is nonsense. If life began at the moment of "natural birth" what of all those babies resulting from induced labours and Caesarian operations? So the most reasonable point for the beginning of human life does seem to be at conception, with birth being merely a further stage in development of that life.

While lawyers, medical research workers and scientists in such disciplines as genetics, cytology and biochemistry still discuss the ethics of suppressing unborn children who might

have genetic defects, it seems to me callous, to say the least, that so many legalized abortions are carried out on foetuses which are very probably completely normal, merely because they are unwanted. In conclusion, I would like to point out that legalizing something makes it lawful and therefore permissible in that State or country but this does not necessarily make it morally right." This was the start of my writing against abortion and it certainly created a stir.

Each day, as the mail came in, my colleagues were surprised and impressed by the voluminous fan mail (and small amount of hate mail) I received. The letters came not only from within the UK but also from places as far-flung as Austria, Luxembourg, Sweden and Sicily, and even the US; they came from different classes of people such as the Abbot of a Monastery and School, a Professor of Civil Law, professionals, housewives and even a retired shop floor worker. Various institutions and organizations such as the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), the Catholic Chaplaincy at Gower Street, London and the Abbey in Rhode Island, USA, sought permission to quote me or invited me to speak. Mrs. Cheetham, herself, wrote to me expressing interest and agreement with my views. There were also other letters to the Editor, making reference to our correspondence. It all made for an interesting interlude to our research schedule.

The abortion battle in Sri Lanka

I returned to Sri Lanka in June that year and by 1979, was again embroiled in the abortion battle, this time with one of the foremost paediatricians of the time, Professor C.C. De Silva, who felt there was an urgent need to liberalize abortion. But that is another story. Suffice it to say that after a protracted correspondence in the *Ceylon Daily News* for over a period of three months (I had three articles published), this paper carried a news item entitled: "No change in our abortion laws", which stated that the Health Minister, Mr. Gamini Jayasuriya said that the government was not considering making any changes to the present abortion laws of the country.

There were several other instances when proposals were made to legalize or liberalize abortion. For instance, Dr. K Nadesan, in 1990, in the *Daily News*; this was countered adequately by Professor L.J.M Cooray of Macquarie University, Sydney, in March 1991. In 1995, Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam in an article in *The Island* on the proposed amendments to the Penal Code declared that the abortion laws were in urgent need of reform. This was challenged by Dr. Vinoth Ramachandra in his well-argued and cogent response. He accomplished a tremendous hatchet job. I haven't felt the need to join in these spirited discussions except when the government was reportedly considering such liberalization or when those arguing against abortion seemed in need of support.

Abortion raised its ugly head again in 2002, when there was news that The Women's Affairs Ministry was considering revival of proposals to amend the Penal Code and explore the possibility of legalizing abortion on a selective basis. There were a host of articles, this time in *The Island*, and I could not but help join in the fray. My half-page article entitled: "A word of caution

about abortion" was published in *The Island's Saturday Magazine* of 6 April 2002. On 4 May that year, a news item in the *Daily News* entitled: "No Government decision on abortion" stated that the Interior Minister John Amaratunga, who was also the Minister of Christian Affairs assures that the government had not taken any decision regarding legalizing abortion, even on a limited basis.

In February 2004, the National Committee on Women published a draft Bill on Women's Rights and Eshan Dias, in a full page article in the *Sunday Leader* dealt effectively with the grave implications of this Bill and its attempts to legalize abortion in Sri Lanka. And so the story goes on.... But there is a strong case against abortion, made stronger with the passage of time, as one sees the ill-effects of legalized abortion in other countries and how the expectations of the pro-abortionists who complained of social unrest, delinquency and deprivation and offered abortion as a panacea for these ills, have not been realized. Those who promote liberalization/legalization of abortion promise, at the very least, a reduction in the number of illegal abortions, a reduction in the number of maternal deaths from abortion and a reduction in the illegitimacy rate. However, no such decreases are apparent from the statistics available from other countries. It is essential that Sri Lanka looks at the global situation and learns from the mistakes of other countries which have gone before us rather than follow blindly in their footsteps.

Recommended action

In conclusion, I would state that we need to rediscover the basic traditional values such as love, compassion and the sanctity of life which are often lost sight of in debates such as this. The four major world religions represented in Sri Lanka, namely Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam all cherish these values and they must be instilled into the next generation so that the country has a caring population with a respect for human life and a sense of care and concern for one another. The social ills must be studied and a solution found to the prevailing problems but abortion itself is a problem and can never be a solution. Rather than attempting anything as negative as liberalizing the abortion laws, the Ministry of Women's Affairs could undertake more positive action such as establishing a unit to help women with problem pregnancies. They could offer advice about finance, housing, social security and medical problems. They could also offer unmarried mothers accommodation and both emotional and financial support during pregnancy. Victims of rape and incest need kindness, protection and reassurance. The building up of the personal relationships required to provide this is much harder and less lucrative than performing abortion but would be of much greater benefit. All this will naturally require additional funds but so will liberalized abortion if it is to be made available cost-free to the poor and downtrodden.

They could call for volunteers to assist in setting up the proposed unit to help women cope with problem pregnancies, as an alternative to abortion. I, for one, would be glad to offer my services. This approach to the abortion problem is the only way - endeavouring to preserve the life of the child whilst meeting the needs of the mother.



Marriage in the Original Covenant

The Original Promise: Redemption from Sin

The sins of men are finite; the love of God, infinite. So, while Adam and Eve avoided God after the original sin, God continued to walk in the Garden, in search of them (Gn 3:8). God loved them not less, but even more, and he immediately promised them a way of reconciliation with him.

Adam and Eve would fulfill their dual mission of procreation and governance on earth in the way of suffering that they had chosen; God would continue to 'build them a house,' and one of their descendants would overcome the lying serpent who had led them away from the truth. That descendant - in

his created human nature - would be Jesus, truth himself.

The Old Testament is the story of God's fidelity to this promise, to his plan of love and to his original blessing. Within this plan, over the course of salvation history, God's chosen people gradually grew to appreciate the dignity of natural marriage. The woman rejoiced, when she gave birth (Gen 4:1), that God was beginning to fulfill his promise. Her child, like every child, represented our eventual triumph, with God,

over death. After this first child's birth, Adam began to call her. "Eve," "mother of all the living."

God made a covenant with his people in the desert, after bringing them out of slavery in Egypt. This slavery was above all spiritual, for they had long forgotten the God of their fathers. In the desert, God restored the relationship he once had with Adam, who 'walked' with God, by sharing with them his intimate name, YahWeH, "I Am Who Am." God, the source of our very existence, is also the one who



is always with us, who still wishes 'to walk' with us, even after we have failed 'to walk' with him.

(To be continued next week)
(Courtesy: Marriage Together in Christ - Catholic Truth Society)

A true story on the miracles of saying Psalm 91

My husband and I travel a lot out of Colombo to our estate. My beloved mother, the late Antoinette Rajakariar told me to say Psalm 91 every morning as we leave home, which we do. As usual, we left on our journey and reached our destination. As I entered our home and was facing the Sacred Heart, I tripped on the strap of the bag I was carrying and fell down. It was a bad fall. I looked at Jesus and recited Psalm 91. I was worried if I would get up. Praise the Lord, Jesus helped me and saved me. I went slowly

and sat down and rubbed my favourite balm on both my knees. After a while I was able to walk and do my normal work. This I think is a miracle of Psalm 91 as I could have hurt myself badly.

On another occasion I was walking when it was dark with a torch in my hand. I heard an unusual sound and flashed my torch, when I saw a snake, which would

"For he has charged his angels to guard you wherever you go, to lift you on their hands for fear you should strike your foot against the stone"

(Ps:9:11-12)



have stung me if I had trod on it. This too I say I was saved by reciting daily the Psalm 91.

I thought I must share my experiences and thank the good Lord for protecting me on both occasions. Thank you Jesus!

Shirani David

Greedy Gertrude and Stubborn Tim

"Fanny, you have to marry Tim. He is rich. He will look after you very well," said Gertrude to her daughter. "Mama, but he is stubborn. You know he never had his father's love. Everyone just hates him," replied Fanny. "Well, if you don't marry him I will not talk to you again. And I will not write anything in your name," answered Gertrude vehemently.

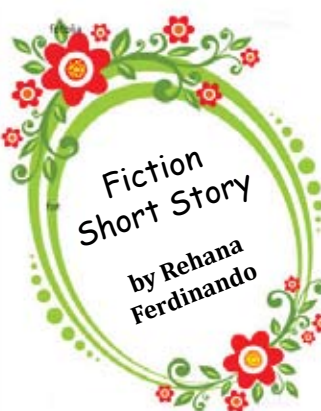
Fearing the loss of her mother's love and the loss of her possessions, Fanny decided to marry Tim. Tim's father was an alcoholic who spent much time at casinos and pubs. He seldom had time for Tim and his mother. So, Tim grew up to be a disobedient boy.

Fanny married Tim in the early 1990's and lived in a wealth of comfort with their little daughter Rosy. The ball rolled from Gertrude to Fanny. Now, money became Fanny's only means of measuring people. Fanny

began to move with the high society.

Rosy was 10-years-old when everything changed in her life. "Madam, your husband has been very naughty these days. He is right now sipping coffee and flirting with another lady at the Minutes Coffee Stop," said an unknown caller who rang up Fanny one evening. Fanny at first did not believe it. But, the calls continued. So, one day she decided to go to the Minutes Coffee Stop herself. As Fanny stepped into the Coffee shop she caught her husband red handed. Fanny's world collapsed in front of her eyes. Her smart, rich and handsome husband was now flirting with another. Endless tears began pouring down her eyes. She couldn't believe her eyes. She became a green-eyed monster when she saw her husband flirting with another. She recalled memories of that red letter day in 1990.

Guilty Tim admitted his weakness and pleaded forgiveness. Fanny was perplexed. Should I divorce him? Or should I forgive him and accept him back to my life for Rosy's sake, she thought. She decided to go ahead with her second thought. Years went by and Tim did not change. But, Fanny continued to be a good wife hiding her sorrow.



Rosy was now 15-years-old. Clubbing became her sole interest. Fanny tried hard to advice Rosy. But, Rosy asked Fanny to correct her father instead. Rosy's stubbornness was now overwhelming.

Soon, Rosy started a relationship with Mark Gilbert whom she met at the Club on Friday nights. As young as 17, Rosy decided to run away as she knew her mother wouldn't grant her the consent to have a relationship at such a young age. So Rosy dexterously executed a plan to run away with Mark. One evening as Fanny left to church, Rosy crept from her house. Only a letter did she leave behind for Fanny.

Once Fanny returned home that evening she began to search for Rosy. "Rosy where are you?" asked Fanny, who was now searching for Rosy high and low. Rosy was no where to be found. Fanny's temper rose at the point of looking for her daughter who was now her sole companion.

Fanny ran up the steps to Rosy's room, shut the doors, cuddled the pillow and began to weep. She could not control her sobs. As she moved to the corner of the bed she found an envelope. It said, "Mother, I have been in a relationship with Mark. I know you will not approve of this as I am only 17. So, we decided to run away. He says he can look after me."

The only person Fanny thought would remain in her life was Rosy. But, Rosy too had now forsaken her. Fanny had to go through life without the love of her darling daughter. Hence, Tim's stubbornness passed on to Rosy.

Who was to be blamed for the misery Fanny went through? Is it Gertrude? Was it Gertrude's fault to have given Fanny in marriage to Tim because of her greed for wealth? Or was it Tim's stubborn nature?



By Sirohmi Gunesequera

Forgiving

"It's so easy to say 'Let's forgive and forget'. But I just cannot forgive my brother Yohan who took the house left to me by my father. It's many years ago but I still remember because that was the house in which we grew up. I was the only girl so Daddy left the house for me. But my younger brother got hold of a lawyer and forged the deeds and took the house. I don't want to take him to court because that would be washing our dirty linen in public," revealed Brenda.

"You are still carrying the hurt and the hate within you, aren't you?" asked her friend Nilhan, adding, "You must not let other people and what they do colour your outlook on life. Just think of the words of Jesus as he was dying on the Cross ... He forgave his enemies and actually said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." So maybe your brother was carried away by greed.

"I know that he has a problem with his wife who nags him so, maybe he is trying to find ways to overcome his unhappiness. Maybe his conscience is pricking him which is why he sent me a Christmas card," said Brenda.

"There you are. You should accept the olive branch he has extended. After all, you have a roof over your head and we must remember that when we die we don't take any of our belongings with us," observed Nilhan.

"That is true. I will pray hard to forgive my brother. After all, even Jesus said that if you come with an offering and have something in your heart against your brother, you should first go and reconcile yourself with your brother and then come to the altar with the offering," remarked Brenda.

"Let us pray for the strength to forgive and forget ..." said Nilhan.

TAKE TIME FOR A MINUTE OF HUMOUR - SMILE!



"A middle-aged widow once asked a bachelor in public to guess how old she was. He took time to think. The widow on an impulse said, "Am

I old as all that?" "Not at all, Madam. I want to make you ten years younger, because of your make up or to make you ten years older because of your wisdom."

Rev. Fr. Fracxid Anthony Fernando OMI



During this month we will continue our journey to the cross with our acts of penitence.

We will reflect on our mortality (*"Remember man thou art dust"*) and the shortness of life (*"and to dust thou shall return"*). We will heed the call, "Now is the acceptable time, now is *"the day of salvation"*" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Just like Our Lord's earthly life every moment of our lives is leading up to the last moment when we will either go to God or suffer damnation.



This week's Way of the Cross is from the Seminary Chapel of Our Lady of Lanka, Ampitiya, Kandy. The rectangular wooden blocks were carved by a seminarian at the time. It is an excellent work of wood art bringing to life the Passion of our Lord. The features and emotions have been carved with sensitivity to inspire deep reflection in the devotee on the Way of the Cross.

Lent, in wood sculpture

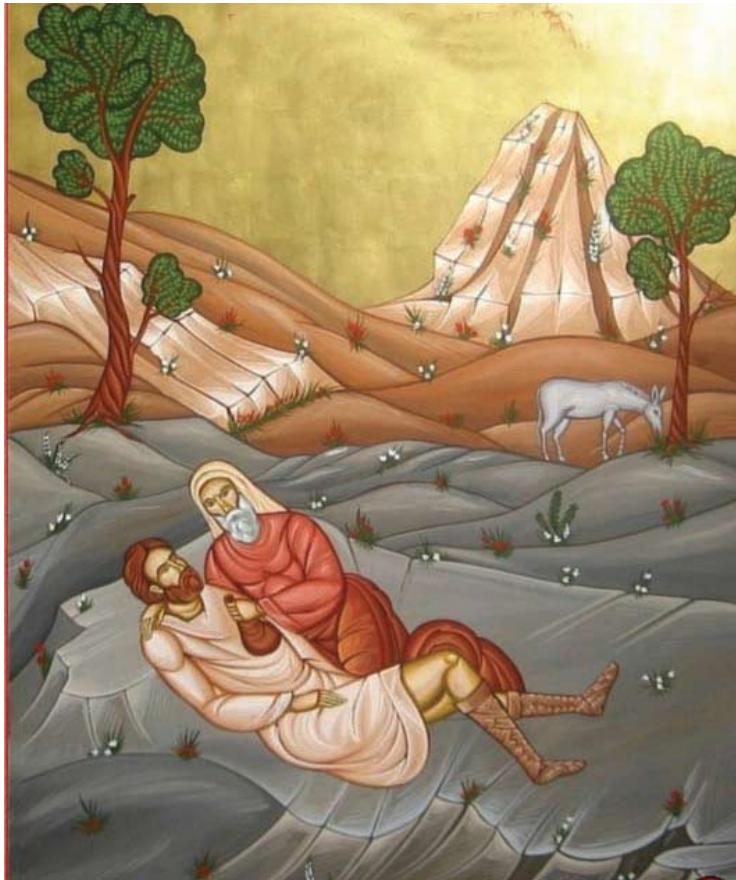


Hearing the cry of the poor

Message for Lent 2012

"We should never be incapable of 'showing mercy' towards those who suffer. Our hearts should never be so wrapped up in our affairs and problems that they fail to hear the cry of the poor," the Pope wrote in his Message for Lent 2012 on the theme: "Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works."

(Heb 10:24)



The Good Samaritan in an icon of the Byzantine studio of Nicusor Dumitru

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Lenten season offers us once again an opportunity to reflect upon the very heart of Christian life: Charity. This is a favourable time to renew our journey of faith, both as individuals and as a community, with the help of the word of God and the sacraments. This journey is one marked by prayer and sharing, silence and fasting, in anticipation of the joy of Easter.

This year I would like to propose a few thoughts in the light of a brief biblical passage drawn from the *Letter to the Hebrews*: "Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works." These words are part of a passage in which the sacred author exhorts us to trust in Jesus Christ as the High Priest who has won us forgiveness and opened up a pathway to God. Embracing Christ bears fruit in a life structured by the three theological virtues: It means approaching the Lord "sincere in heart and filled with faith" (v. 22), keeping firm "in the hope we profess" (v. 23) and ever mindful of living a life of "love and good works" (v. 24) together with our brothers and sisters. The author states that to sustain this life shaped by the Gospel it is important to participate in the liturgy and community prayer, mindful of the eschatological goal of full communion in God (v. 25). Here I would like to reflect on verse 24, which offers a succinct, valuable and ever timely teaching on the three aspects of Christian life: Concern for others, reciprocity and personal holiness.

1. "Let us be concerned for each other": Responsibility towards our brothers and sisters.

This first aspect is an invita-

tion to be "concerned": The Greek verb used here is *katanoein*, which means to scrutinize, to be attentive, to observe carefully and take stock of something. We come across this word in the Gospel when Jesus invites the disciples to "think of" the ravens that, without striving, are at the centre of the solicitous and caring Divine Providence (cf. Lk 12:24), and to "observe" the plank in our own eye before looking at the splinter in that of our brother (cf. Lk 6:41). In another verse of the *Letter to the Hebrews*, we find the encouragement to "turn your minds to Jesus" (3:1), the Apostle and High Priest of our faith. So the verb which introduces our



exhortation tells us to look at others, first of all at Jesus, to be concerned for one another, and not to remain isolated and indifferent to the fate of our brothers and sisters. All too often, however, our attitude is just the opposite: An indifference and disinterest born of selfishness and masked as a respect for "privacy." Today too, the Lord's voice

summons all of us to be concerned for one another. Even today God asks us to be "guardians" of our brothers and sisters (Gen 4:9), to establish relationships based on mutual consideration and attentiveness to the *well-being*, the *integral well-being* of others. The great commandment of love for one 'another demands that we acknowledge our responsibility towards those who, like ourselves, are creatures and children of God. Being brothers and sisters in humanity and, in many cases, also in faith, should help us to recognize in others a true *alter ego*, infinitely loved by the Lord. If we cultivate this way of

seeing others as our brothers and sisters, solidarity, justice, mercy and compassion will naturally well up in our hearts. The Servant of God, Pope Paul VI stated that the world today is suffering above all from a lack of brotherhood: "Human society is sorely ill. The cause is not so much the depletion of natural resources, nor their monopolistic control by a privileged few; it is rather the weakening of brotherly ties between individuals and nations" (*Populorum Progressio*, 66).

Concern for others entails desiring what is good for them from every point of view: Physical, moral and spiri-

for the good of others, in the hope that they too will become receptive to goodness and its demands. Concern for others means being aware of their needs. Sacred Scripture warns us of the danger that our hearts can become hardened by a sort of "spiritual anesthesia" which numbs us to the suffering of others. The Evangelist Luke relates two of Jesus' parables by way of example. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite "pass by," indifferent to the presence of the man stripped and beaten by the robbers (cf. Lk 10:30-32). In that of Dives and Lazarus, the rich man is heedless of the poverty of Lazarus, who is starving to death at his very door (cf. Lk 16:19).

Both parables show examples of the opposite of "being concerned," of looking upon others with love and compassion. What hinders this humane and loving gaze towards our brothers and sisters? Often it is the possession of material riches and a sense of sufficiency, but it can also be the tendency to put our own interests and problems above all else. We should never be incapable of "showing mercy" towards those who suffer. Our hearts should never be so wrapped up in our affairs and problems that they fail to hear the cry of the poor. Humbleness of heart and the personal experience of suffering can awaken within us a sense of compassion and empathy. "The upright understands the cause of the weak, the wicked has not the wit to understand it" (Prov 29:7). We can then understand the beatitude of "those who mourn" (Mt 5:5), those who in effect are capable of looking beyond themselves and feeling compassion for the suffering of others. Reaching out to others and opening our hearts to their needs can become an opportunity for salvation and blessedness.

"Being concerned for each other" also entails being concerned for their spiritual well-being. Here I would like to mention an aspect of the Christian life, which I believe has been quite forgotten: *fraternal correction in view of eternal salvation*. Today, in general, we are very sensitive to the idea of charity and caring about the physical and material well-being of others, but almost completely silent about our spiritual responsibility towards our brothers and sisters. This was not the case in the early Church or in those communities that are truly mature in faith, those which are concerned not only for the physical health of their brothers and sisters, but also for their spiritual health and ultimate destiny. The Scriptures tell us: "Rebuke the wise and he will love you for it. Be open with the wise, he grows wiser still, teach the upright, he will gain yet more" (Prov.9:8ff). Christ himself commands us to admonish a brother who is committing sin (cf. Mt 18:15). The verb used to express fraternal correction - *elenchein* - is the same used to indicate the prophetic mission of Christians to speak out against a generation indulging in evil (cf. Eph 5:11). The

tual. Contemporary culture seems to have lost the sense of good and evil, yet there is a real need to reaffirm that good does exist and will prevail, because God is "generous and acts generously" (Ps 119:68). The good is whatever gives, protects and promotes life, brotherhood and communion. Responsibility towards others thus means desiring and working

Church's tradition has included "admonishing sinners" among the spiritual works of mercy. It is important to recover this dimension of Christian charity. We must not remain silent before evil. I am thinking of all those Christians who, out of human regard or purely personal convenience, adapt to the prevailing mentality, rather than warning their brothers and sisters against ways of thinking and acting that are contrary to the truth and that do not follow the path of goodness. Christian admonishment, for its part, is never motivated by a spirit of accusation or recrimination. It is always moved by love and mercy, and springs from genuine concern for the good of the other. As the Apostle Paul says: "If one of you is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should set that person right in a spirit of gentleness; and watch yourselves that you are not put to the test in the same way" (Gal. 6:1). In a world pervaded by individualism, it is essential to rediscover the importance of fraternal correction, so that together we may journey towards holiness. Scripture tells us that even "the upright falls seven times" (Prov 24:16); all of us are weak and imperfect (cf. 1 Jn 1:8). It is a great service, then, to help others and allow them to help us, so that we can be open to the whole truth about ourselves, improve our lives and walk more uprightly in the Lord's ways. There will always be a need for a gaze which loves and admonishes, which knows and understands, which discerns and forgives (cf. Lk 22:61), as God has done and continues to do with each of us.

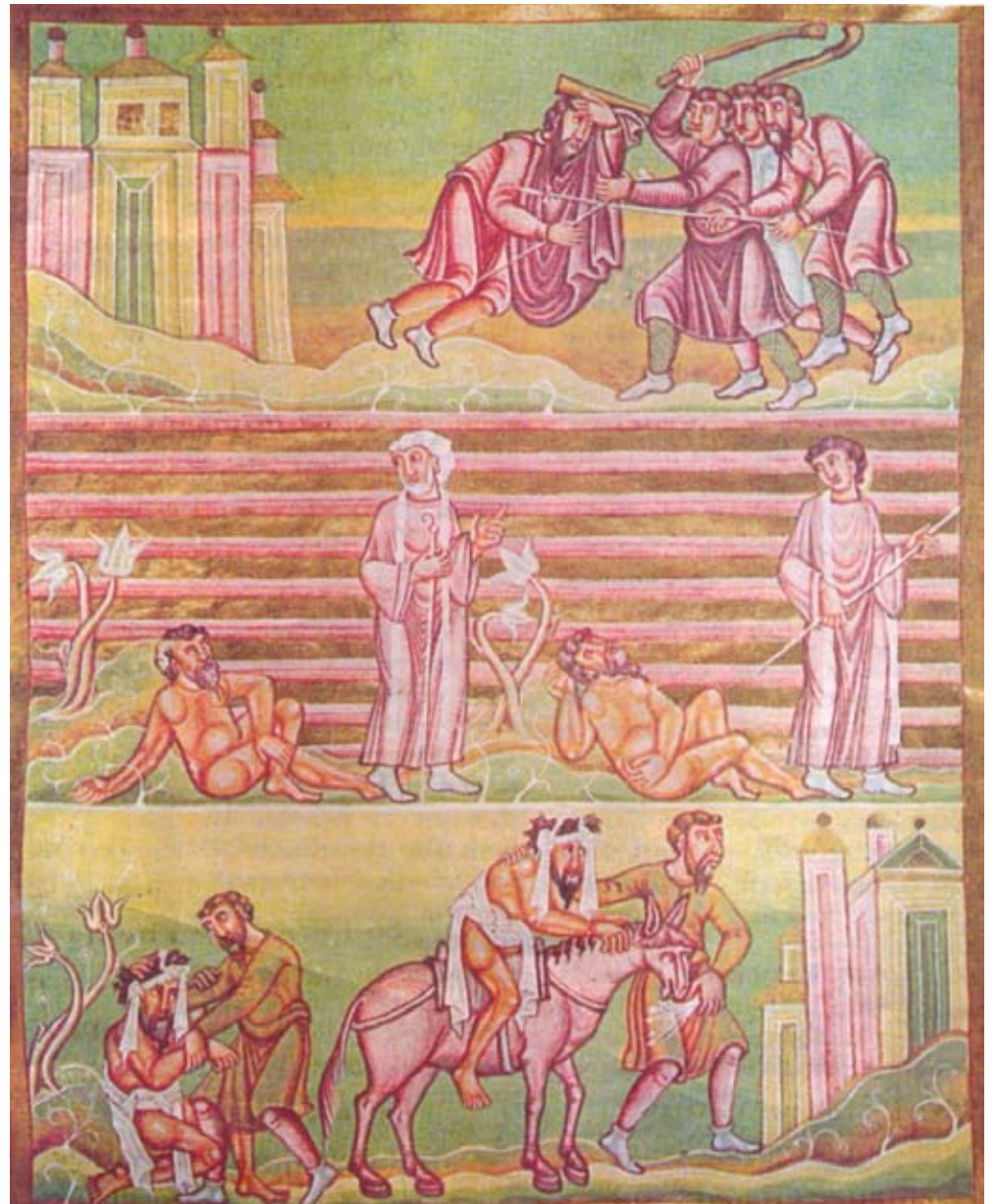
2. "Being concerned for each other": The gift of reciprocity.

This "custody" of others is in contrast to a mentality that, by reducing life exclusively to its earthly dimension,

This means that the other is part of me, and that his or her life, his or her salvation, concern my own life and salvation. Here we touch upon a profound aspect of communion: Our existence is related to that of others, for better or for worse. Both our sins and our acts of love have a social dimension. This reciprocity is seen in the Church, the mystical body of Christ: The community constantly does penance and asks for the forgiveness of the sins of its members, but also unfailingly rejoices in the examples of virtue and charity present in her midst. As Saint Paul says: "Each part should be equally concerned for each other" (1 Cor 12:25), for we all form one body. Acts of charity towards our brothers and sisters - as expressed by almsgiving, a practice which, together with prayer and fasting, it typical of Lent - is rooted in this common belonging. Christians can also express their membership in the one body which is the Church through concrete concern for the poorest of the poor. Concern for one another likewise means acknowledging the good that the Lord is doing in others and giving thanks for the wonders of grace that Almighty God in his goodness continuously accomplishes in his children. When Christians perceive the Holy spirit at work in others, they cannot but rejoice and give glory to the heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:16).

3. "To stir a response in love and good works": Walking together in holiness.

These words of the *Letter to the Hebrews* (10:24) urges us to reflect on the universal call to holiness, the continuing journey of the spiritual life as we aspire to the greater spiritual gifts and to an ever more sublime and fruitful charity (cf. 1 Cor. 12:31-13:13). Being concerned for one another should



The "Parable of the Good Samaritan." Miniature of the Codex Aureus, 11th century, in the Library of the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Madrid

brightness growing to the fullness of day" (Prov 4:18), makes us live each day as an anticipation of the eternal day awaiting us in God. The time granted us in this life is precious for discerning and performing good works in the love of God. In this way the church herself continuously grows towards the full

maturity of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13). Our exhortation to encourage one another to attain the fullness of love and good works is situated in this dynamic prospect of growth.

Sadly, there is always the temptation to become lukewarm, to quench the Spirit, to refuse to invest the talents we have received, for our own good and for the good of others

(cf. Mt. 25:25ff). All of us have received spiritual or material riches meant to be used for the fulfilment of God's plan, for the good of the Church and for our personal salvation (cf Lk 12: 21b; 1 Tim 6:18). The spiritual masters remind us that in the life of faith those who do not advance inevitably regress. Dear brothers and sisters, let us accept the invitation, today as timely as ever, to aim for the "high standard of ordinary Christian living" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 31). The wisdom of the Church in recognizing and proclaiming certain outstanding Christians as Blessed and as Saints is also meant to inspire others to imitate their virtues. Saint Paul exhorts us to "anticipate one another in showing honour" (Rom 12:10).

In a world which demands of Christians a renewed witness of love and fidelity to the Lord, may all of us feel the urgent need to anticipate one another in charity, service and good works (cf. Heb 6:10). This appeal is particularly pressing in this holy season of preparation for Easter. As I offer my prayerful good wishes for a blessed and fruitful Lenten period, I entrust all of you to the intercession of the Mary Ever Virgin and cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican 3 November 2011 Pope Benedict XVI)

(Courtesy: L'Osservatore Romano)

"Today, in general, we are very sensitive to the idea of charity and caring about the physical and material well-being of others, but almost completely silent about our spiritual responsibility towards our brothers and sisters"

fails to see it in an eschatological perspective and accepts any moral choice in the name of personal freedom. A society like ours can become blind to physical sufferings and to the spiritual and moral demands of life. This must not be the case in the Christian community! The Apostle Paul encourages us to seek "the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another" (Rom 14:19), for our neighbour's good, "so that we support one another" (15:2), seeking not personal gain but rather "the advantage of everybody else, so that they may be saved." (1 Cor 10:33). This mutual correction and encouragement in a spirit of humility and charity must be part of the life of the Christian community.

The Lord's disciples, united with him through the Eucharist, live in a fellowship that binds them one to another as members of a single body.

spur us to an increasingly effective love which, "like the light of dawn, its



Activists of a soup kitchen deliver food in Athens (AFP)



Ash Wednesday is a powerful and, in many ways a beautiful occasion. Not only does Ash Wednesday signify our mortality, but it also provides us a powerful reminder of who we are as Catholics. The ashen crosses on our foreheads also reflect our ownership by God; that we also form an integral and valuable member of His flock.

In "modern" countries the Catholic Church is struggling with numbers. This is a fact of reality that Australia's Cardinal George Pell often rues about. The Catholic faith is the biggest religion in Australia (about a quarter of all Australians are registered as Catholic), which

includes a membership of no less than 5.5 million people. But, due to numerous reasons, including ease of life, lack of strong roots, the impact of technology, "modernization," alternate philosophies, and the awful presence of atheism, many Australian Catholics fail to practice the faith on a regular and ongoing basis. This statistic is true for many countries today, even the most traditional Catholic societies worldwide, including Mexicans, Polish and the like struggle to fill their churches sufficiently for Mass.

But all is not lost. Despite the very low levels of true participation presently in the life of the Catholic Church, several people, believe that many lapsed Catholics will return back to the fold in the

To which culture do you truly belong to ?

John Fernando

not-so-distant future. You see, the earthly things in life, like money and technology, have clearly exhibited their pitfalls. We, in our lifetime, have witnessed the mighty economies of the world crumble before our own eyes. Some of the economic powerhouses, such as the United States and the European Union, are experiencing severe economic crises. High levels of debt, low levels of corporate ethics, compounded with poor financial discipline have caused these major problems.

"Modern" technology too has its dark side. The numerous wars that have been fought in the past, and those still being fought worldwide, use weapons of destructive capability that are nightmarish. Even modern machines, like \$300 million commercial aircraft fall out of the sky occasionally due to technical failures, killing hundreds of people.

In light of what the world has to offer, it is very clear that our sure hope and trust must be entrusted to God, Who alone is capable of perfection. And in His perfection, in unison

with His immense love for us, He is offering us the perfect answer - salvation through Jesus Christ. This salvation is brought home very effectively by the life, culture and tradition of this beautiful organisation, which we call the Catholic Church.

Often, people ask me as to which country and culture I belong to. I, without hesitation, say that my culture is the "Catholic Culture." For me, my citizenship too rests with the Catholic Church, and eventually what the Church will transform for me in personal experience - that of heaven in eternal life. It is sad that we need to carry passports around the world, and so many people (including refugees) have suffered innumerable sorrows as a result of the world's political boundaries. God did not create political boundaries and the concept of nationhood. That is a human phenomenon.

I believe it is vitally important that we, as Catholics, truly appreciate and express gratitude to the fact that we belong to this most wonderful organisation. Where else would we have the benefit of such

beautiful sacraments as reconciliation, the Eucharist and so on? It is therefore incumbent upon us to do everything we can individually to promote, strengthen and defend our faith. We also need to always pray for our priests, nuns and all other people who work for the Church too. Their levels of sacrifice are heroic and inspiring. They are people who swim against the tide of the world, which is so often bent on chasing money, wealth and social popularity and acceptance.

I hope this whole period of Lent provides you with the opportunity to draw intimately closer to God, through Jesus Christ. Remember that in the weekend after Easter Sunday we have the beautiful Feast of Divine Mercy. This, more than most other divine characteristics, define Jesus Christ - his forgiveness of our multitude of sins, and His love for the sinner.

May God bless you all abundantly!

Tips for a better Lent based on Psalm 100 (101).

Rev. Fr. Bob Rodrigo OMI

Lent is soon awaited and it is a period of grace to turn to God and to become Godlier and truly Christian. It is an opportunity that any Christian should not miss if one desires to be beneficiaries of God. On the face value, this psalm offers us some valuable insights as to what we should do during the period of Lent, for traditionally we would be indulging in many forms of penance like doing Way of the Cross; refraining from smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages; avoiding sugar in our cups of tea, making Lenten pilgrimages to shrines and calvaries, far and near. They in themselves are helpful. But this psalm provides one with food for thought and elevates our minds to another important dimension as to what else a person could do.

The following are some of the insights the psalmist comes up with:

1. 'I will walk with blameless heart ...'

This gives one an idea that there should not be any facet in one's life that would bring one blame. It suggests that one should be above board in every aspect of life. There is no room for anyone to blame one on any count.

2. "I will not set before my eyes whatever is base."

This is an invitation to rise above our human tendencies, not taking into consideration, that at times when we meet with challenges in life, the tendency is to sink in the mire of human thinking, forgetting God and our Christian calling. Some time we act as mere humans.

3. "I will hate the ways of the crooked they shall be not my friends The wicked I disown."

In the name of friendship, our association with others is not sifted and our friendship with others has no positive outcome. There is nothing good that one can learn from such friendships, they are mere friends who have no therapeutic influence on others. Neither we learn from others nor do others learn from us. Such friendships have no value. One hardly wants to speak out to the depth of the heart of a wicked person. In another form it could be said that one does not want to confront the ways of the crooked, nor want to rock the boat. This calls for much courage which one may lack.

4. "The man who slanders his neighbour in secret I will bring to silence."

St. James has a good teaching in his writings.

He tells us that our tongue is like the rudder of a ship and such a rudder can alter direction. We slander with our tongues; takes goodness of others; tarnish images of others; draw a

wrong picture of others because of reasons like prejudice and - personal likes and dislikes. Such acts are not God's likes. The psalmist suggests that this human tendency or habit needs curbing. Hence it offers us a challenge.

5. "The man of proud looks and haughty heart I will not endure."

God loves the humble and whose hearts have no malice. One tends to show the little one has; thinks no end of oneself; tends to down trodden others and domineer others and make others subservient. Human dignity is thus laid off; thus this psalm opens wide our eyes to break down barriers of caste, creed and race, and to consider all equal and that all are brothers and sisters. The little wealth one is blessed with some time causes us to have an advantage over others which God shuns. "Be like little children" is God's teaching.

6. "He who walks in the way of perfection shall be my friend."

This summarizes what God would wish for us. He wants us to grow in internal and inward perfection, ridding ourselves of our weaknesses. One who does so, will find God's love and grace surrounding him.

7. A liar, God abhors. "No man who utters lies shall stand before my eyes."

This calls us to be sincere and truthful in our daily living. How many promises we make that we do not carry out? How many do we prey upon? How many do we mesmerize with false promises for our own gain?

Once again we begin to make sacrifices for the sake of our Lord to share in his passion. It is Lent. But what He likes most is not the 'burnt offerings' but a "contrite heart." It is easy for us to offer Him "burnt offerings" for it is painless and does not inflict any pain. But to touch our lives and the core of our lives - the elements that have gone unattended and have taken deep roots in our lives and which are disdained by God should form the core of our sacrifice during Lent. And this psalm offers much food for thought on what we could sacrifice.



The light of our home has faded away

15th of March 2012 marks the first death anniversary of your sad and untimely demise, recalling fragrant memories of you darling Nimalka.

The light of our home faded away bringing grief and misery to family, relations and friends far and near but the sweet memories shall linger in our hearts though we neither see nor hear you.

You were born in Kandy, had your primary education at Holy Family Convent, Kalutara and ended up at Holy Family Convent, Bambalapitiya, achieving the unique distinction of been selected to the Dental Faculty, Peradeniya in the year 1994.

You were well known in your dental field and among colleagues as a dedicate quiet student, a loving personality and a loyal friend. After passing out as a Dental Surgeon you assumed duties at the Moratuwa Medical Centre, Katubedda, where you stood for duty and compassion till the very end of your life. You were loyal, committed and ready to make any sacrifice for your noble profession. During your short stay in this world you were able to brighten many peoples' lives with love, friendship and care.

As my youngest child, you were at the beck and call of every fam-



Dr. Nimalka Cooray Wijewarnasooriya

ily member. You were such an affectionate and loving wife to your husband Anoj and dedicated mother to your only son who was just eight-years-old then.

I believe you having a "Golden Heart" which must have prompted you to

lend financial aid to many university students discreetly. No wonder! You achieved in your short span of life what many of us could not achieve in a life time.

We lost a beautiful young doctor with many capabilities and profound qualities. Your colleagues lost a sincere friend and Sri Lanka lost a fine dedicated and talented physician.

I thank you for all the good deeds and joy brought to us. Till we meet again to hug and kiss your lovely face! May you rest in Peace.

"Amma"
Alexandra
Wijewarnasooriya

Gethsemani

By Jeannette Cabraal

The evening shadows lengthened, enveloping the garden of Gethsemani in its all encompassing shroud of gathering gloom. The slanting rays of the declining sun now a tinge of pink, a deep rose, even purplish, flickered in and out of the branches of the Olive trees that grew in profusion there.

The Nazarene entered the garden, with slow painful strides, clad in his long seamless woven robe. A soothing breeze wafted across touching his shoulder length hair causing a wisp of hair to blow across his forehead. An indefinable sadness lined his face. His knot of apostles straggled behind, whispering, muttering. On reaching a grassy knoll he bade his apostles rest for a while. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay ye here and watch with me." The whispering mumbling group nodded approval and lagged behind. They seemed so unsure of themselves. But they were glad for this respite and gathering their robes about them they quickly settled down on this grassy bank under a canopy of branches.

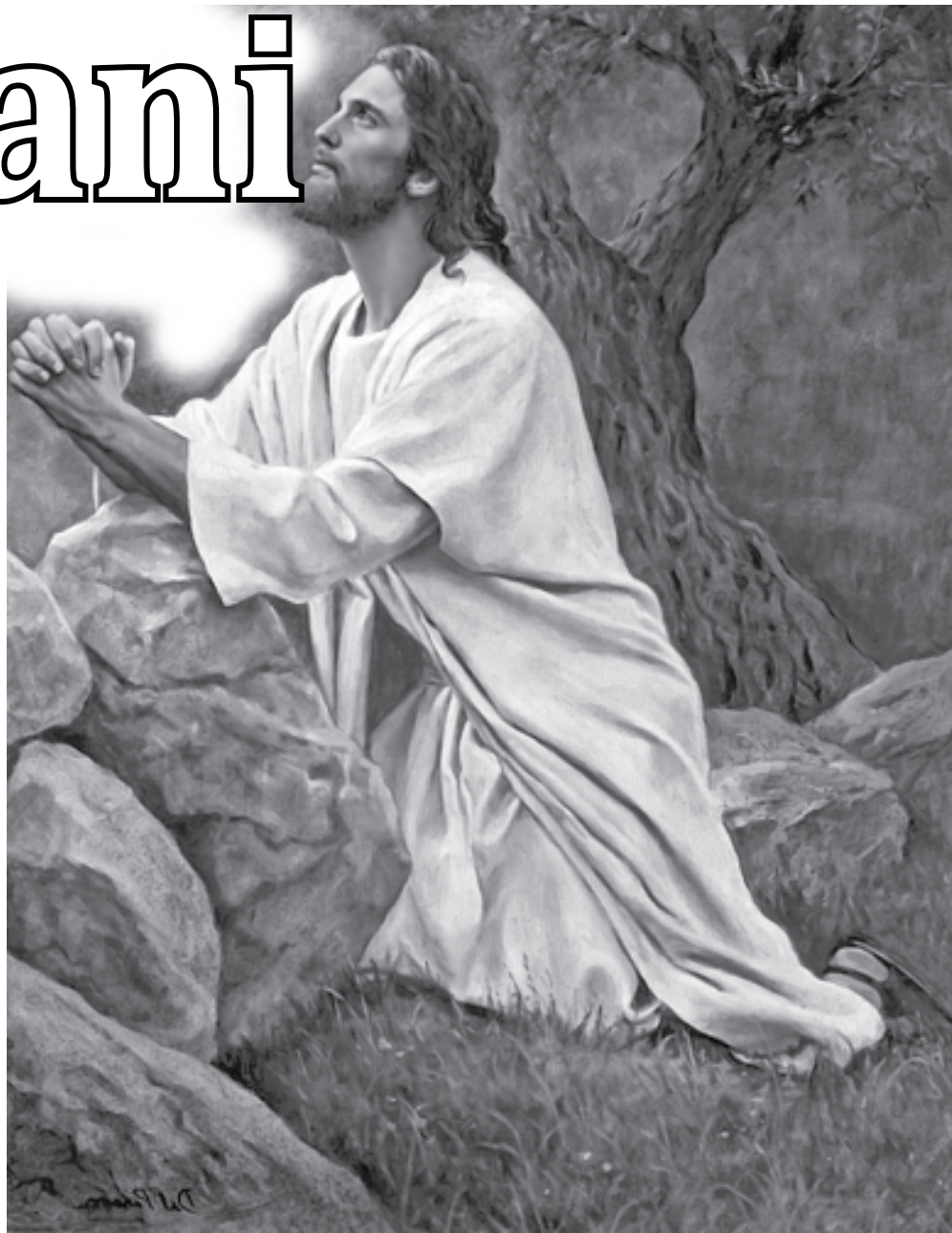
The Nazarene walked on contemplatively. An overwhelming sense of foreboding overcame him. Espying a rock he walked up to it and kneeling, cupped his head in his hands and gave himself up to his agony. Man He was and He suffered as a man. Sweat streamed from his brow as he cried out in a prayer of agony as he pictured what was in store for Him. He was destined to suffer. "Father if it be possible let this chalice pass from me," He prayed, tormented, as beads of perspiration, agonized drops of blood gathered on his brow. He prayed humanly, visualizing the horror of it all. The crimson sunset infiltrated through the branches of the trees casting a ruddy glow.

And through all this agony, his companions slumbered on blissfully. He arose and went to them. He needed their companionship in this dark hour. "Could you not watch one little hour with me?" the poignant reprimand escaped his lips. He went back to pray again; that this bitter cup of pain and suffering pass him by. But No! He was destined to drink it. Not a sip, but to drink it to the very dregs. His hair clamped to His scalp; His robe clinging to His skin drenched in sweat. He went through His agony once more. In a husky voice of deep resignation He breathed the words "Not my will but thine my father"

It was dark. A torch lit up a corner of the garden then several more. They were like search lights and caught up the malicious faces of a motley crowd that peered into the garden. He knew this was it! His mission had to be accomplished. Humanly he sought a little comfort in this hour of dire need. He sought His apostles. They slumbered on! "Sleep on" He whispered huskily. He had to go it alone-he knew it. The crowd

approached, peering into the gathering gloom. One slipped out of the crowd came up to him and gave him the kiss of betrayal. Identifying the Nazarene to the unruly crowd. The Nazarene turned on him one long, penetrating look, a look of pity and forgiveness as the words "Judas dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" were wrenched from his very soul. That look spoke volumes of love, tenderness, pardon and regret. That piercing, pitying look that seemed to penetrate the very depths of Judas' soul.

Judas could not confront that look - that indefinable look. He flung down the thirty



***He went back to pray again;
that this bitter cup of pain and
suffering pass Him by.***

But No!

***He was destined to drink it.
Not a sip, but to drink it
to the very dregs.***

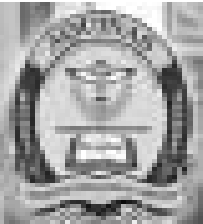
***His hair clamped to His scalp;
his robe clinging to his skin
drenched in sweat He went
through His agony once more.***

***In a husky voice of deep
resignation He breathed
the words***

***"Not my will but thine
my Father"***

pieces of silver for which he had betrayed his master with a kiss. That look of mercy and compassion he could not fathom he could not erase. He fled, fled, away from that look, full of compunction for his betrayal, to hang himself on a nearby tree. And the Nazarene was led on with jeers, buffeted, spat upon. His companions, his faithful followers, sleep banished with the ensuing confusion followed at a discreet distance, puzzled, curious, afraid, perhaps ashamed to be identified with him. The Nazarene walked on calmly, bearing the scoffs and jeers walked away to his death on the morrow. This great Man of destiny, to be flogged like a common criminal, to be nailed to a cross as was customary for criminals, to hang between two thieves. His woven seamless robe to be torn from him and tossed about. In place of it a mockery of a purple cloak to match a crown of thorns.

*"Kings wear robes of gold and gathers
Soon their glory fades away
But the King of Kings in heaven
Wore a woven robe that day
It was woven by his mother
Blessed faith in every thread
He who wore it lives forever
He has risen from the dead."*



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- Principles of Business Taxation

Course Commencement

15th March 2012
(Thursdays 5.30pm to 7.30pm)

1st April 2012
(Sundays 10.30am to 11.30am)

Course Fee
Rs. 29,500/=
(pay in installments)

(Q11N5152)

Spring Cleaning

Theme: *Jesus cleanses the temple.*

Scripture: *"In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" John 2:14-16 (NIV).*

April is such a wonderful time of the year. The temperature begins to warm and the world begins to take on a fresh new look. The trees start to put on leaves, the grass begins to turn green, and the flowers start to bloom. It is spring. Everything is beautiful! There are other things too. There is Easter and the Aluth Avurudda.

Look at all of this stuff I brought with me this morning. I have a mop, a pail, sponges, floor cleaner, window cleaner, paper towels, and dust cloths. It looks like I am getting ready to clean the house. Spring is a good time to give your house a good going over and get rid of a lot of junk that you don't need.

Do you know that Jesus also did some spring cleaning?

It was time for the annual Passover celebration, so Jesus travelled to Jerusalem. When he arrived



in Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple. He couldn't believe his eyes. There in the temple area he saw people who were selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices in the temple. There were tables set up for money changers so that people could change their money to pay their temple taxes. It looked more like a carnival than a house of worship.

Jesus did not like what he saw. He was so angry that he made a whip from some rope and he drove the cattle and sheep and those who were selling them from the temple. He went to the tables of the money changers and turned

them over, scattering coins all over the temple floor. To the ones who were selling the doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market place." Yes, I would say that Jesus did some spring cleaning in the temple that day!

As we think about Jesus cleansing the temple, we should also think about some other cleaning that needs to be done. We are in a season called Lent. At first, the word Lent meant 'the season of spring'. But it has now become much more than that. It is a time to look inside ourselves and see if there is anything in us that needs to be cleaned-up or changed. Are there some areas of your life where Jesus needs to do some 'spring cleaning'? I know there are in mine!

Dear Jesus, forgive us when we do wrong and make us clean. Amen.

(Internet)

A GOOD TEACHER

A good teacher is one,
Who teaches with love and care

A good teacher is one who corrects,
and her knowledge share.

A good teacher makes the children grow,
Instead of making them slow,

A good teacher is one who makes
things smoothly flow,

A good teacher makes,
children work, fast or slow,

A good teacher gives the students Joy,
every lesson the students enjoy.

A good teacher is one,
who says, "Things can be done,"

A good teacher teaches and
students study - yet have great fun.

A good teacher makes children.
walk right

A good teacher makes the students
happy and bright.



Shahen Madurawala
Creative House 1
AELT Maeliya, Jaela

Lenten Programme 2012 at St. Lawrence's Convent Col. 06.



A Lenten programme was held at St. Lawrence's Convent Colombo 06 recently for the students from Grades 8 and upwards.

The programme was conducted by Rev. Fr. Prasad Harshana who enriched the students with meditation and morals.

Renushi Ubeyratne

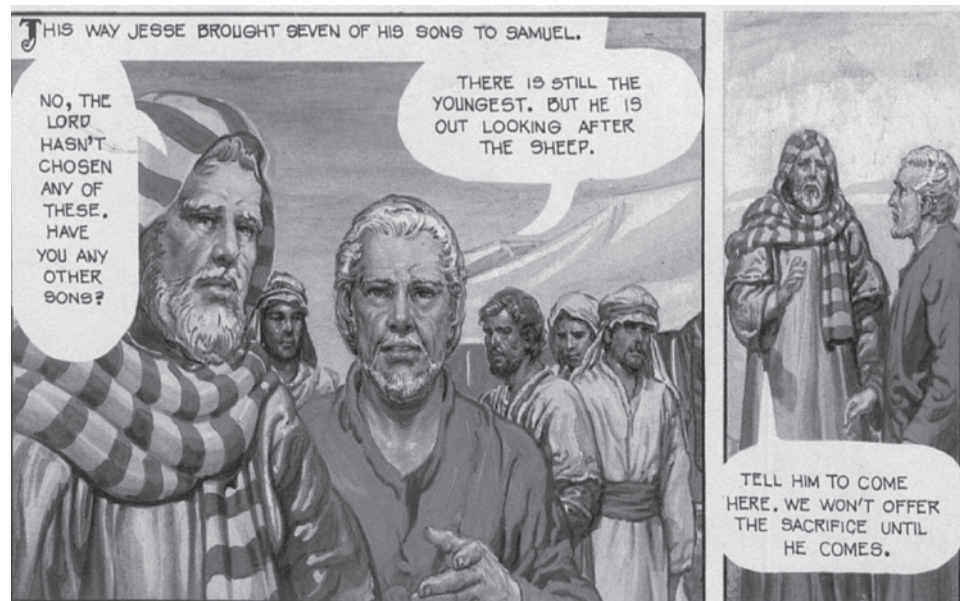
MARIS STELLA COLLEGE PRIMARY INTER-HOUSE SPORTS MEET



The annual Inter House Sports and Athletic Meet (Primary Section) of Maris Stella College, Negombo was held recently at the College Grounds.

Picture shows the Chief Guest Mr. Peterson Fernando (Group Captain of Sri Lanka Air Force) and Mrs. Fernando. accompanied by the Principal of College, Rev. Br. S. Alwis and Maris Stella Branch (Kadirana) Principal Rev. Br. Clinton Perera, been taken in procession to the College pavillion.

G.B. H. Livera.



What it says in the Readings

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord, whoever believes in me will never die. (Jn. 11:25.26)

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR B 11th March - 18th March 2012

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Ex. 20: 1-17 (or 1-3,7-8,12-17),

1 Cor. 1: 22-25, Jn. 2: 13-25

Mon: 2 Kgs. 5:1-15a, Lk. 4: 24-30

Tue: Dan. 3: 25,34-43, Mt.18: 21-35

Wed: Deut. 4: 1,5-9, Mt. 5: 17-19

Thu: Jer. 7: 23-28, Lk. 11: 14-23

Fri: Hos. 14: 2-10, Mk. 12: 28-34

Sat: Memoir of St. Patrick, Bishop
Hos. 6: 1-6, Lk. 18: 9-14

Sun: FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

2 Chr. 36: 14-16,19-23, Eph. 2: 4-10,
Jn. 14-21

The Third Sunday of Lent

Theme:

Proclamation of the means of Salvation.

1st Reading:

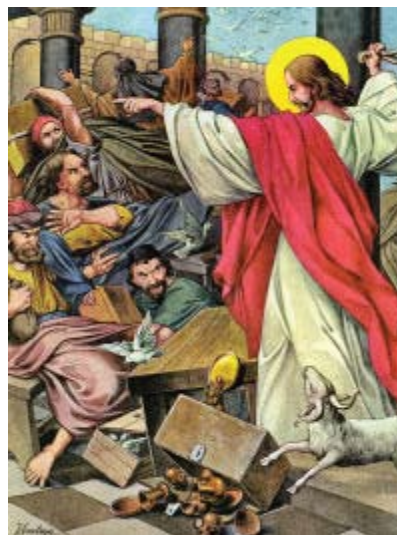
Exodus 20: 1-17

After liberating the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Lord brought them across the desert in order to make them his people by means of the Covenant at Sinai. Their existence as a people was based on the decalogue (Ten Commandments) which included their obligations towards God and the neighbour. God declared the covenant relationship with them as well as their way of Salvation, on condition that they fulfil these obligations. The morality and spirituality for Israelites preached by the prophets was also based on the decalogue.

2nd Reading:

1 Corinthians 1: 22-25

According to St. Paul, salvation comes from Christ who was crucified for our sake. He says that preaching this to Greeks who always sought wisdom an absurdity



and to the Jews it was a scandal. How a criminal who had been executed according the existing law could become a saviour was a puzzling question to the Greeks. At the same time, the Jews could hardly imagine that Massiah who was to come from the royal line of David could end up as a suffering Messiah. St. Paul insists that God's wisdom, namely his plan of salvation, is exactly this. Hence we are under obligation to preach this plan of God's salvation.

Gospel: John 2: 13-25

Surprising his opponents who challenged his authority in cleansing the temple, Jesus replies, "Destroy this temple and I will build it up in three days". Thus he made a veiled proclamation of his Death and Resurrection which brought salvation to man. Although the meeting place between God and man was considered as the temple, at that time, with the New Covenant, Christ becomes the temple or the meeting place between God and man, for he is the only mediator between God and man.

Reflection: We can have communion with God only if we observe his commandments which express his will. This is our way to salvation.

We have to proclaim the Gospel bearing witness to it before others even if it means a challenge and a scandal. Isn't it our obligation?

In order to live a new life in Christ we have to do away with our faults and make sacrifices for the good of others. Isn't it the best way to observe Lent?

Rev. Fr. Henry Silva

The Season of Lent and our Role as Christians

Introduction:

Ash Wednesday opens the Season of Lent with the annual ritual of the distribution of Holy Ashes in the form of a cross uttering the words "Dust thou art - and to Dust thou shall return." As these words penetrate deep into our souls we are revived and strengthened to cope with the various rituals to survive the Lenten period of 40 days getting nearer and nearer to the Lord contemplating on the passion of Christ - the vigorous sufferings of Our Lord Jesus. The '40 concept' derives from the sacred scriptures.

* Flood during the time of Noah (Gen. 7:4)

* Moses coming from Sinai (Ex.24:18)

* People of Israel were in the desert for forty years (Dt.29:5)

* Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days (Mk.1:13)

The Lenten period on a very melancholy and low note leads us on - one step at time from the Garden of Gethsemane, high up to Mount Calvary - where our Lord Jesus gave up His life to save us all and open the gates of Heaven to us all. However, the Liturgical year has been so wonderfully planned to end the Season with the majestic Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. A glorious incident of rejoicing. Hosanna to the Lord - Alleluia, the Lord is Risen. Lent is preparing for Easter. Hence the Lenten Season begins with the distribution of Holy Ashes and ends with the mysterious but ecstatic Resurrection on Easter Sunday. "Let us rejoice for the Lord has risen to give us eternal life."

In the course of this

period of Lent, the Church prepares the faithful emphasizing on the importance of vivid religious exercises such as fasting, prayer, stations of the cross retreats or seminars and the like. These rituals are accomplished with great enthusiasm during this period.

Prayer - as we Christians know and believe is speaking to God. Building up a rapport with God, a relationship between our Heavenly Father and us, his devoted and faithful children. During the Lenten Season we should spend a few extra moments with the Lord making amendments mending up fences for the mistakes we have done. We should try to rationalize the fact that the weight of the crosses, we bear from time to time are trivial in comparison to the weight borne by our Lord on the road to Calvary. We should ask the Lord to help us at least to minimize the number of offences rather than to try total exhaustion. The Lord is aware of our weaknesses. We should continuously implore for his help and guidance.
*Yes - Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

Fasting is also an act of mortification. It is a profitable exercise that should be practiced by all the faithful who are eligible and fit to do so. The Holy Bible states that our Lord Jesus Christ fasted and prayed for 40 days.

As a result of this gesture our Lord Jesus gathered strength and courage to pursue with the paschal mystery inspite of all the hardships. Fasting is depriving one's self from the normal routine of life basically the intake of meals. The Church allows just one full meal for the day. This venture enables us to feel the pain of hunger link it to the sufferings of the Lord and further combine it to the pain of hunger experienced by the less fortunate folk. Such incidents should inculcate in us a melting heart towards the less fortunate and increase our love towards our neighbours.

Fasting necessarily need not be controlling our food habits and vices coherent to us, like for example excessive desire for clothes, cosmetics, indulging in entertainments such as the cinema and television. Similar luxurious desires should be given way to help the needy and the poor. In the long run the result of mortification leads to the love of our neighbour. The sacrifices we make increases our love towards others and thus please our Lord. The Lord says, "Whatever you do to the least of my brother, that you do unto me." Further the Lord says, "When I was hungry, thirsty, homeless, weary, sick - aged you cared

for me - Now enter into the home of my Father."

The Stations of the Cross are a very devout and enhancing exercise that knits us very closely with the passion of Christ. From station to station we trudge along carrying the cross with our Lord and experiencing the nefarious activities of the cruel Jews incurred on our Lord Jesus. This activity helps us to detest and abhor sin. While participating on this rigid journey let us exult in one voice, "Jesus Lord I ask for mercy - Let me not implore in vain, All my sins I now detest them - Never will sin again."

Last but not the least of the activities is the participation by listening attentively and absorbing the contents of the homilies presented through seminars and retreats during this Holy Season. The manner in which the ministers deliver the precepts to the faithful is highly commendable. They link the passion of Christ to our daily routine of life so miraculously that we are taken up from this earthly abode and carried directly to the foot of the Cross. We should all endeavour to participate in this activity and cry out loudly'



I surrender all - To Thee my Blessed Saviour I surrender all."

Conclusion:

In weighing the pros and cons of the Lenten Season let us resolve to spend Lent in 2012 in a very fruitful manner. Let it be a challenge to the life we're spent so far and let every sacrifice great or small make the Lord happy. The Lord awaits our arrival with open arms. We should march forward step by step and ultimately reach the foot of the cross and cling tightly to it by the end of the 40th day and Rejoice.

*Rev. Fr. Indra R. Fernando
Archdiocesan Apostolate For
Catechetics*

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Hear us Lord, we ask of you.

For the Pope and the bishops: That they may teach God's people to walk in his commandments in a spirit of love and freedom. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Hear us Lord, we ask of you.

For all governments: That they may respect the laws of God in all their decisions. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Hear us Lord, we ask of you.

For those who are walking in the darkness of error and sin: That they may discover the light of Christ's truth and love. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Hear us Lord, we ask of you.

That when we examine our lives we may use no yardstick other than the teachings of Christ our Good Shepherd. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Hear us Lord, we ask of you.