



Feast of St. Joseph
March 19



MESSENGER

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67th Archdiocesan Children's Day

His Eminence in Dialogue-Homily with Children

"BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER"



Text: Trevor Ludowyke Pix: Shanith Fernando

The Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith addressing children at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lanka in Tewatte, reminded the children that they not only have an earthly mother but a loving and caring Spiritual

Mother as well. The dialogue-homily of His Eminence was a novel feature at the 67th Archdiocesan Children's Day Celebration, held last Saturday March 7. In answer to a question posed by a child who came up on stage during the homily, with an FM mike in

hand and asked "Your Eminence, what message can we take home to our parents from the Children's Day at Tewatte?" the Archbishop said, "My dear children, when you go home today, I want you to tell your parents that you have a Spiritual Mother who loves and cares

for you. She is none other than the Mother of Jesus." The theme of this year's Children's Day was 'A joyful child in a Christian family is with Mother Mary'. Addressing the large gathering of children from the Archdiocese,

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FATHER ANSELM: Something beautiful for God

Rev. Fr. Joseph Anselm Florian de Croos, the priest with the green hands and a nature lover who made something beautiful for God wherever he served, passed away on Tuesday, March 10, 2015.



Rev. Fr. Anselm de Croos

His mortal remains was brought to St. Thomas' Church, Kotte, on Wednesday, March 11, for the faithful to pay their respects, thereafter the remains was transferred to the Sacred Heart Chapel at the Archbishop's House, Borella on Thursday, where a large number of priests groomed by him and many whose life he had touched made their final farewell. The funeral service was held at the Archbishop's House, Colombo before he was laid to rest at the Catholic Section of General Cemetery, Borella.

Fr. Anselm, known and admired for his silent, simple and humble contribution to the Kingdom of God and the People was ordained on February 3, 1958. He was born on May 4, 1933 in Negombo to Joseph Emmanuel Croos and Mary Florenca and was educated at Maris Stella College, Negombo. His many appointments included Director Eymard Seminary, Haputale, Spiritual Director at the National Seminary, Ampitiya, Rector and later Spiritual Director, Daham Sevana, Kalutara, Parish Priest at Tudella, Welihena, Kandawala, Episcopal Vicar for Kalutara Region, Spiritual Director of St. Aloysius Seminary, Borella, Staff member of St. Joseph's College, Maradana and many others.

Fr. Anselm who moulded hundreds of Seminarians and priests as Spiritual Director at the National Seminary at Ampitiya in Kandy and at the Daham Sevana, Kalutara was apparently inspired by the beautiful song;

*"Each time I touch a rose petal and feel the sweet fragrance it brings,
I know there is a God up in the heaven; no human could create such things,
The sunset in its golden splendour, such colours no artist can match,
I know when I look on this beauty; each page in the Bible is true,
No picture or painting can capture the beauty of any of these,
The handwork of God is revealed in the sunset, the flowers, the trees."*

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New Administrator, St. Philip Neri's Church, Pettah

Rev. Fr. Louiston Fernando, SSS assumed duties as Administrator, St. Philip Neri's Church, Pettah and Superior of the Colombo Community of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers last Sunday. Fr. Louiston, who hails from Waikkala was ordained as a priest in the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament on September 16, 1995.



rippuwa, Halgashena, and Kottapitiya.

He has worked in different capacities, as Assistant, Parish Priest, Formator and Director in many missions, namely, Matale, Bandi-

A member of the Provincial Council of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation, his last appointment was as Parish Priest of Our Lady of Holy Rosary, Bandirippuwa.

Libyan Martyrs among Coptic Church Saints

Just a week after their barbaric slaughter, the Coptic Pope Tawadros II, decided to have the names of the 21 martyrs beheaded by the Islamic State in Libya simply because they were Christian, inserted in the Synaxarium, the Oriental Church's equivalent to the Roman Martyrology.

Tawadros, also established that their martyrdom will be commemorated on the 8th Amshir of the Coptic calendar, or February 15th of the Gregorian calendar. The commemoration falls on the feast day of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple.

President Al Sisi of Egypt, announced that he will give authorisation for a church to be built in honour of the 21 men in Minya, the city where they were from and the city where most churches were destroyed in summer of 2014.

Presbyteral Meeting of the Archdiocese

Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcom Cardinal Ranjith, presided at the first Presbyteral Meeting for the year 2015, at the Auditorium of the Archbishop's House, Colombo on Monday, March 9.

Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernandopulle on Fr. Anselm de Croos ...

He is one who loved us all. He had a personality beyond compare; a spiritual giant who shared his life unsparingly. Whose warm empathized ways made troubled hearts stop to think and mend their ways. Whose gentle distinct words of encouragement made all those who came into his life never forget him. He had touched hearts of thousands of people more particularly seminarians and priests and he has become a spiritual strength to them all. His charming smile and haughty laugh made his presence felt wherever he went and whoever he met.

He being a nature lover had a "Croos Uyana" or a garden of flowers wherever he had been. Your little flowers too are waiting to see you and listen to your gentle voice. They and we all miss you dear Father! Now what we have to say is; Dear Father Croos, continue to pray for us, till we meet you one day.

Please send in your
Articles for the
Easter Issue.



Pope Francis: "Without mercy, theology risks becoming ideology"

"Without mercy our theology, our right, our pastoral care runs the risk of collapsing into bureaucratic pettiness or ideology." The Pope wrote this in a letter to the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Mario Polli. The letter, dated March 3, was sent on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Argentina.

"The anniversary," Francis points out, "coincides with that of fifty years from the closing of the Second Vatican Council, which was an update, a re-reading of the Gospel in the perspective of contemporary culture.

It produced an irreversible movement of renewal that comes from the Gospel. And now, we must go forward. How, then, do we go forward? Teaching and studying theology means living on a frontier, one in which the Gospel meets the needs of the people which should be proclaimed in an understandable and meaningful way."

Pope Francis went on to warn: "We must guard against a theology that is exhausted in academic dispute or watching humanity from a glass castle. You learn to live: theology and holiness are inseparable. The theology that developed is therefore rooted and

based on Revelation, on tradition, but also accompanies the cultural and social processes, in particular the difficult transitions," the Pope adds. "At this time theology must also take responsibility for conflicts: Not only those that we experience within the Church, but also those that concern the whole world and those which you live on the streets of Latin America."

"Theology," the Pope explains, "is an expression of a Church which is a 'field hospital,' which lives its mission of salvation and healing in the world. Mercy is not just a pastoral attitude but it is the very

substance of the Gospel of Jesus. I encourage you to study how the various disciplines - the dogmatic, morality, spirituality, law and so on - may reflect the centrality of mercy. Without mercy our theology, our right, our pastoral care runs the risk of collapsing into bureaucratic pettiness or ideology, which of itself wants to tame the mystery."

"Who then is the student of theology that the Catholic University is called to form?" Pope Francis concluded by saying that he or she is "certainly not a theologian but a 'museum' that accumulates data and information on Revelation without really



knowing what to do with it. Nor is he/she a passive onlooker on history. The theologian formed at a Catholic University is a person able to build humanity around him, to

transmit the divine Christian truth in a truly human dimension and not an intellectual without talent, an ethicist without kindness or a sacred bureaucrat."

A Holy Week Choral Presentation with Reflections

Presented by St. Cecilia's Choir of St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10

For the sixth consecutive year, St. Cecilia's Choir of St. Joseph's College will present the much awaited choral event for the Holy Week at the school Chapel at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday April, 1 2015. Also participating in the event will be the award winning choir of Good Shepherd Convent, Kotahena, Maris Stella College, chorale and the Old Joes Choir, who recently won the much coveted world championship honours in Latvia.

The event will musically bring to fore, the final days of Christ on earth commencing with His defiant entry into the much troubled city of Jerusalem. The programme will flow to commemorate His poignant Last Supper, the betrayal in Gethsamane, thereafter, His abduction in the dead of night, the torture, the Way of the Cross, the crucifix-

ion, agony and death on the cross. The presentation will conclude with the depiction of the Lord's glorious resurrection.

The programme will commence with Palm Sunday chant Pueri Hebraeorum followed by the majestic chorus Lauda Jerusalem. St. Cecilia's Choir of St. Joseph's College who have performed in Jerusalem and Rome with distinction will continue with "The King is coming," William Byrd's Ave Verum Corpus, Ubi Caritas, (to mark Christ's washing of His disciples feet), "Gethsamane" Kallariye (Sinhala) and Mozart's priceless piece Lacrymosa. Thereafter the sweet voices of Good Shepherd Convent Choir will sing "Above all Power," "On a Hill Far Away" and "Tears in Heaven."

The lads of Maris Stella College will enter

then to recite 'Softly and Tenderly,' the enchanting hymn "ANIMA CHRISTI, and the popular Sinhala composition KURUSAYEDI.

Thereafter the Old Joes will make their appearance to vocalize the melancholy Marian Hymn, STABAT MATER followed by the spiritual "Were you There" and conclude their segment with the harmonious "LUX AETERNA."

The choir of St. Joseph's College will re-enter to commence the Easter segment with the congregational hymn, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" thereafter REGINA COEL LAETARE and proceed to sing the Handel's composition from MESSIAH, "Worthy is the Lamb."

The mood changing modern song "Prayer" with its Italian and English mix will give the programme a modern touch.



Then the combined choirs numbering over 250 singers will lead the Tamil Easter Hymn "Euthan Navil" and conclude the event with Handel's awesome work the Hallelujah chorus. An orchestral assembly will accompany the choirs.

The congregation will be presented with a lot of reflections and will receive a short message from His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith on the theme UBI CARITAS - WHERE THERE IS LOVE.

All are cordially invited for the presentation which is free of charge.

Anniversary of Episcopal Ordination (2003)



His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera

Prayer-filled Best Wishes
(March 18)

Ad Multos Annos Vivat!

Father Anselm...

Contd. from Pg. 1

So, wherever he went at the National Seminary, at St. Joseph's College, Colombo or elsewhere, he personally planted and nurtured beautiful gardens of flowers, trees in matching colours to demonstrate the handiwork of God.

Fr. Anselm was a regular writer to the 'Messenger', in fact a very looked-forward to contributor, which with his love for nature and the environment, he was able to put in prose and verse and he enjoyed it. He always had time for his flock to guide and nurture them to embrace kingdom values.

Therefore the 'Messenger' while expressing a personal note of condolence to the family and priest friends of Fr. Anselm, thank God for the life and work of this extraordinary human being.

We hope and pray that he has found eternal life in that sweet by and by where we never shall die, where we never grow old with no more suffering and no more pain.

'General Introduction to Pentateuch'

The Faculty of Theology of Aquinas University College, Colombo, 8 will be commencing a new short course on Saturday, March, 21, 2015 on the above theme. The course will span for four consecutive Saturdays. Contact: 077 6692686/0718342319

AC Superior General on visit to Sri Lanka



Rev. Sr. Susheela, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Apostolic Carmel is currently on a visit to Sri Lanka. Sister Susheela, who arrived in the country on March 2, served in various capacities as an Educationist, Provincial Superior of the Eastern Province in India, Regional Superior in Kenya before she took up the office as God's Elect. Her friendly visit to the Sri Lankan Province will include visiting all the Convents in Sri Lanka in order to empower every Sister in the Province. Sr. Susheela will be in Sri Lanka till March 28.

Lenten Reflection

"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing-- grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.



Church in the Modern World

Mystery surrounds offer to sell Michelangelo documents stolen from the Vatican

ROME - A man approached Cardinal Angelo Comastri, Prefect of the Fabric of St. Peter, with an odd proposition: Would the Cardinal be interested in two documents written by the hand of Michelangelo, the Renaissance master?

Not only were the documents of historical significance, the man noted, they had also been reported stolen in 1997 from an archive in St. Peter's Basilica, behind the high walls of the Vatican itself. Now, the documents could be returned - for a price.

The Cardinal refused. The Swiss Guards were notified. An investigation was begun.

"Clearly," declared *Il Messaggero*, the Italian newspaper that broke the story last Sunday, "it was someone who had inside knowledge of the place."

In fact, not much is clear. Cardinal Comastri declined to comment. Officials at the Vatican archive also de-

murred. And while Fr. Federico Lombardi, the Vatican Spokesman, confirmed the basic facts of the case, he refrained from discussing the most intriguing details: Who is the mystery man who approached the Cardinal? Is he a former Vatican employee, as *Messaggero* reported? What should be deduced from the reported asking price of 100,000 Euros (about \$109,000)? Why did the documents suddenly emerge 18 years after disappearing?

The Vatican, besides being the world's smallest sovereign State and the administrative and spiritual centre of the Roman Catholic Church, is also in possession of one of the world's greatest art collections and largest troves of historical documents.

The archival documents span 12 centuries and are stored in shelves that, if placed in a single line, would stretch for more than 50 miles.

The missing Michelan-

gelo documents were stored inside a smaller archive, housed in St. Peter's Basilica, under the supervision of the Fabric of St. Peter, the Vatican office that oversees the Basilica. Many of the documents in this archive were collected from the different artists and architects involved in the construction of the Basilica, which began in 1506 and was completed in 1626.

Michelangelo, the passionate Tuscan whose creative genius helped define Renaissance art, is widely known for painting the astonishing frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. But he played a much wider role at St. Peter's, working as chief architect of the construction project during the final years of his life and playing a significant role in erecting the Basilica's famed dome.

It is unclear which of Michelangelo's documents were stolen. One is a letter written by the artist, but neither the recip-



ient nor the contents of the note are known. The other is a document that bears his signature.

Asked if the stolen artifacts were planning documents for the Basilica, Father Lombardi said, "It would be logical, given the collection of documents on the Basilica's construction, but I have not seen the documents myself."

The two Michelangelo documents were first reported missing in 1997, by Sister Tere-

sa Todaro, then the archivist for Fabric of St. Peter. It is unclear if the theft occurred the same year or earlier.

It is also unclear whether, as the years passed, the succession of cardinals who ran the Vatican office were made aware that documents were missing.

The Italian police confirmed that the Vatican filed a theft report last Saturday.

The New York Times

Nuns in Burma encourage empowerment of women



A community of women religious held a workshop in Burma's largest city over the weekend to mark International Women's Day, exploring sex inequality and women's rights in the southeast Asian nation

also known as Myanmar.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd's workshop was held March 6-7 in Yangon and focused on the ways in which forms of violence against women threatens holistic human development and hinders Burma's growth.

According to Sr. Elizabeth Joseph, RGS, the reason the community of Good Shepherd nuns took up the challenge of celebrating International Women's Day was "to empower women's potentials under our care, and to help them realize their dignity and value, because women in Burma are oppressed in many ways."

67th Archdiocesan ...

Contd. from Pg. 1

His Eminence explained to the young ones, "Just as you talk freely with your own mothers when you come home from school and relate all what happened that day or break the good news of your examination results or other achievements in school, so too, you must talk to your Spiritual Mother, Mary and tell her all that you do or want to do or anything that bothers you. Being a loving and caring Mother, she will listen to your prayers."

His Eminence told them that the way to talk to our Spiritual Mother is through the recitation of the Rosary. "That is why it is important for us to recite the Rosary everyday with

our families because the recitation of the rosary is our means of Mother," he said.

He went on to explain to them that it was at the foot of the cross on Calvary, when Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Apostle John, stood beside in great sorrow, that Jesus told His mother "Behold your son" and asked Mary to take John as her own son. To John, Jesus said "Behold your Mother" and asked John to take Mary as his own mother and from that day onwards Mary stayed with John. Since then, Mary has become our mother, Mary is your mother. So you have two mothers. First, you have

your earthly mother and secondly you have a Spiritual Mother, in heaven.

The dialogue homilies between students and Concelebrant Bishops in trilingual format was part of the novelty introduced at this year's Archdiocesan Children's Day.

Several thousands of children from Sunday Schools and Colleges and Convents in the Archdiocese flock Spiritual Mother to spend the day at her feet in prayer. His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith who graced the occasion as the Chief Celebrant and the Auxiliary Bishops of Colombo, Their Lordships Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva and Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando were seen mingling freely with the children after the Holy Mass, talking to many of them and inquiring about their spiritual welfare and answering questions. This was yet another welcome feature of Children's Day this year. Children rushed towards their Bishops with glee and flocked around talking, laughing and enjoying the company of their shepherds.

Perhaps this welcome gesture on the part of the Bishops was undoubtedly a result of the Pontifical osmosis of our Holy Father Pope Francis whose love for children and his humility before humankind, be they big or small, has captured the hearts of one and all.

The day's proceedings commenced with the recitation of the Holy Rosary by the children in all three languages, at the site of the Old Grotto

followed by a colourful procession to the Basilica Shrine, carrying the beautifully decorated statue of our Blessed Mother. The children carrying colourful banners depicting the theme of the day and proudly bearing their Sunday School or college flags marched in the procession, reciting the Rosary and singing hymns.

On arriving at the venue of the Eucharistic Celebration, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith was accorded a warm welcome by the students, who presented a sheaf of beetle and worshipped their elders, in keeping with the custom of our motherland.

A banner competition was also held at the conclusion of the day's proceedings and prizes were awarded to the best three banners which depicted the theme of the day. Concluding his dialogue homily during the Holy Eucharist His Eminence wanted the children to make a solemn promise to their Spiritual Mother. Those who promised to call their parents daily to recite the rosary were asked to demonstrate their willingness to do so, by a show of hands. Surprise, Surprise all hands went up and one could only pray and hope that these children will keep their solemn promise and more importantly that their parents will take a lesson from their innocent children, who are now confident that they indeed have a Spiritual Mother who loves and cares for them.

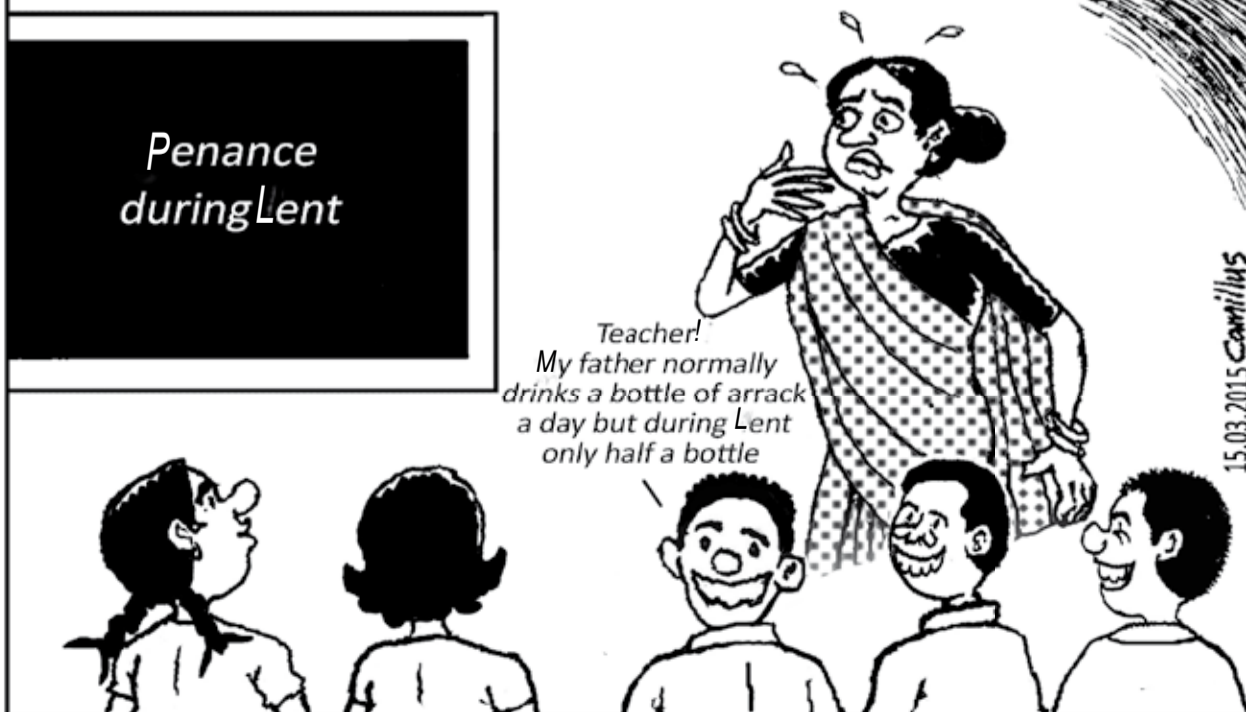
SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus

Penance during Lent

Teacher!
My father normally drinks a bottle of arrack a day but during Lent only half a bottle

15.03.2015 Camillus



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Abide in Love

As we move into the fifth week of Lent the Sunday Mass readings last week gave us a deep insight on the Ten Commandments. The Decalogue is outlined in 21 versus of Exodus chapter 20 and God and Moses introduce them by reminding the Jewish people to remember what God had done for them.

One of the main spiritual and psychological ailments of the world is our tendency to forget. When somebody hurts or harms us we often remember it for years if not decades. But our selfish and sinful human nature regularly makes us forget the blessings and graces God has given us in a merciful way. We also tend to forget the good things that people do for us and break relationships with them over a small issue. For instance most of us have heard the beautiful song about how our mothers turned their blood into milk to feed and nourish us, the sleepless nights and the suffering that our mothers and fathers go through to give us love, healthcare, education and other needs in life.

Its tragic, especially in this modern era to see young adults when they get big jobs and high places in society, forgetting their parents and the years of selfless, sacrificial feet-washing service to the children. Tragically, in an increasing number of cases parents are conveniently confined to elders' homes where they remain lonely and abandoned with the children visiting them once or twice a month. In some other instances the parents are asked to look after grand children and they do so in love though sometimes they are old and feeble. This also is often forgotten and taken for granted by today's young people.

That is why Moses is telling the Israeli people to remember and never to forget how God intervened directly to liberate them from slavery in Egypt where they were forced to work seven days a week to make red dust and were not paid for it. God heard the cry of His people and He intervened to liberate them from the horrible slavery and take them to a promised land from where, through them He would proclaim His unfailing, unending and ever merciful love to all people of all nations.

In the Second Commandment we are told that we should not take the name of God in vain. Some believe this only means not saying "My God" or "O My God" when something goes wrong. The Commandment has a deeper meaning especially in the spiritual realm. If we are doing Christian work like preaching or conducting healing services and seeking popularity or complements, then we are using the name of God in vain and robbing the glory from Him.

In the Third Commandment the Lord tells us to keep the Sabbath holy. The Jewish religious leaders concocted several rules and regulations for the Sabbath but Jesus blatantly, openly and regularly broke most of those regulations. He even encouraged His disciples to do so and Catholic Bible scholars say that is one of the main reasons why the Jewish religious leaders wanted to get Him crucified. Today's Sabbath which we mark, not as the Jews do on Saturday but on Sunday, we are called upon to remember the Lord and devote the day to His spiritual work though the work we do on other days also becomes spiritual when we do it according to God's will and kingdom values of loving, sacrificial service with integrity, honesty and accountability.

While the first three Commandments relate to the relationship between God and us the other seven relate to how we experience God's love and give it to others. That is why the Lord Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments into one main commandment when he said "Love one another as I love you" (John 15:12). The Lord tells us just as He lives and abide in us we need to live and abide in Him. This will happen when we love one another as He loves us.

UN reports can help achieve Pope Francis's call for pursuit of truth in Sri Lanka



As soon as he landed at the Airport in Sri Lanka, Pope Francis stressed the importance of "the pursuit of truth, not for the sake of opening old wounds, but rather, as a necessary means of promoting justice, healing and unity." As Catholics, we believe that the "Truth will set us free." Seeking truth is a major challenge after decades of war and will need multiple approaches.

One such opportunity is through the investigative report of the United Nations, which was set up to investigate allegations of serious human rights violations and related crime by both parties to the conflict and establish the facts and circumstances of alleged violations and of the crimes perpetrated, with a view to avoiding impunity and ensuring accountability.

Sadly, some Sri Lankans, appear to be wanting to throw away this opportunity, ignoring the truth seeking dimension of the process. The Sri Lankan government, other governments, NGOs, media, diaspora has different interests in terms of this process. But we must not forget that for many Sri

Lankans, especially Tamils, this is a deeply personal and emotional issue — searching for truth and acknowledgment about what happened to their mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, and even extended families and the entire community. Some Christians, including Church leaders, have been at the forefront of contributing and advocating for this UN report. They have done so in the face of grave reprisals and amidst great difficulty. It is their stories that are likely to be primarily featured in the report.

During a peaceful protest in Jaffna on February 24, there were passionate pleas by victims of the war and violence and their family members to publish the report on time, expressing their lack of confidence in a domestic process. The Catholic Bishop of Mannar, Catholic priests and religious were part of this.

Report

The member countries of the UN's Human Rights Council had asked the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to undertake the investigation and present a comprehensive report in March 2015, but this has now been deferred to September 2015, based on a request by the new Sri Lankan government. According to High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, one of the reasons justifying a deferral was "clear commitments" from the Sri Lankan government to co-operate with his office "on a range of important human rights issues." These commitments were detailed in a letter Sri Lanka's new Foreign Minister, Mangala Samaraweera, sent to the High Commissioner.

The tone of the letter from the new government is indeed conciliatory compared to the aggressive and downright insulting and rejectionist approach of the previous government. It promises co-operation and engagement with the UN, including invitations to UN officials to visit Sri Lanka. But the Foreign Minister's letter avoids saying anything directly related to the UN investigation and thus, it appears that the new Sri Lankan Government could follow the previous regime in not co-operating and rejecting the UN investigation. First, the letter does not state that Sri Lankans are free to co-operate with the UN investigation and gave no assurances that there will be no reprisals for any individuals or groups who do so. Secondly, the letter says nothing about inviting the UN investigation team to Sri Lanka and creating an enabling environment for such a visit. Thirdly, there is nothing contained in the letter about the Sri Lankan Government sharing information and co-operating with the investigation. In this context, it will be challenging to realise "the possibility that important new information may emerge which will strengthen the report," which was the second reason the High Commissioner gave for justifying his request to defer the report's release.

The new government perhaps thinks that co-

operating with the UN investigation would be suicidal for the parliamentary elections expected to be held in June or July. Another reason for reluctance may be the fact that very senior figures in the present government could also be implicated in serious abuses in the final UN report. The newly elected President, Maithripala Sirisena, has claimed to be the acting defense minister during the final weeks of the war and the army commander during the last years of the war is now a key political ally of the new government. The new President has declared that he will not co-operate with UN processes for wartime accountability and some of his key ministers have reiterated this.

"The history of failed or obstructed domestic human rights inquiries in Sri Lanka," as the UN High Commissioner himself has noted, is a major reason why

many victims and their families do not have confidence in a domestic process. The Catholic Bishop of Mannar, who had been at the forefront of meeting, discussing and making detailed submissions to domestic bodies such as the LLRC, President, Ministers etc., has also noted this.

Current Environment

The current environment in Sri Lanka feels less repressive than it was under Mahinda Rajapaksa's regime. There have been several positive actions such as the passing of the Victim and Witness Protection and Assistance Act, consultations on the Right to Information Act and the appointment of civilian governors in the North and East. But at the same time, a gazette notification has been issued calling on armed forces to maintain law and order throughout the country, as well as extending a controversial law allowing police to arrest and detain people for up to 48 hours without a warrant in cases where serious crimes are suspected.

January Elections

In voting for change in Sri Lanka's January elections, large numbers of Sinhalese voters rejected the anti-UN and anti-West propaganda of the extremist Sinhalese nationalist and Buddhist fundamentalist groups. Large numbers of Tamils also voted for the new president, despite Sirisena's categorical rejection of international accountability processes.

It is important to address few myths propagated by some who advocate ignoring and not co-operation with the present UN investigation. The UN investigation covers allegations of violations and abuses by both parties - the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) - as has been the case with the previous UN report by the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts, related to accountability in Sri Lanka. Also, UN processes in relation to accountability in Sri Lanka have so far been fact-finding and investigative. The present investigative team's mandate does not allow it to engage in any actions to prosecute anyone, serve warrants, leave alone taking anyone to the electric chair! In any case, the death penalty and electric chair are non-existent in the international justice system. It is unlikely that there will be an international tribunal for Sri Lanka or that Sri Lanka will be taken up at the International Criminal Court.

So a key challenge for all those genuinely interested in truth seeking and accountability in Sri Lanka is to see how the findings of this investigative report can inform any future process - domestic or international or both - and any truth and reconciliation initiatives. International involvement alone will never bring reconciliation and democracy to Sri Lanka in the long term. But ruling out any international involvement, particularly in today's transitional stage, is not wise. Accountability is the responsibility of both Sri Lankans and the international community. We should not let either wash their hands of this.

Contd. on Pg. 14

Holy Face - A Lenten Poetical

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

Before Pilate Jesus stands
In gentleness and forbearance
Loving will vicarious suffering
His face implies a tragic beginning



JESUS IS LADEN WITH THE CROSS

A face uplifted in oblation
Features of Sacrifice on his countenance
His face befits a lion in pride
Inviting expression let others make guide



JESUS FALLS UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THE CROSS

Face of perfection in moral integrity
In fatigue and exhaustion simplicity
A face sanctified resembling salvation
A face carrying the Cross to destination.



JESUS MEETS HIS BLESSED MOTHER

A face of deeper anguish
When exaltation most wish
Jesus now reads Mother's eyes
Bringing anguish and surprise



SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS TO CARRY THE CROSS

A face of momentary relief seen
Perhaps anxiety guilt sorrow unseen
Towards Simon surprise and gratitude
A face of hope lingers in bold attitude.



VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Face of Jesus reacted to morbidity
In embarrassment and awareness of sanity
A face of fear amidst soldiers present
A unique cloth imprint became evident



JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

A face of human fragility weak
Shame lack of strength betterment seek
Face of desperation one given up hope
Face of determination violence cope



JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

His face enlight suggesting surprise
Their sympathy brings relief disguised
An awkward face dignity bound
Self respect in such company found.



JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME

Face of Jesus bring weariness
Face droops seeking kindness
Eyes and Mouth no strength to close
Face shows will to sacrifice most.



JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

His face showed mental suffering
An instinctive shame for original sin
Eyes uplifting sin so unsullied
Naked yet innocence defy the bullies



JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Face of fear calm expectation
Grief, anguish, pain, denunciation
Hope for survival dressed His face
Going beyond a fixed gaze.



JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Face calm, dignified exhausted
Changing expressions hope accepted
Deep anguish changes to contentment
As hope gives strength and expectation



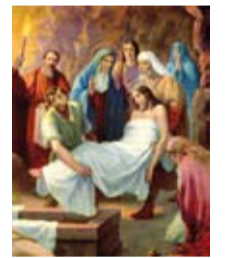
JESUS IS PLACED IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS

A lifeless face changing colour
Majesty of holiness the face cover
Innocence, calm, sleep expression
Brings an aura holy and significant



JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

A face of rest implies death
Retained composure silence set
A breathing face even unseen
Resembles humanity yet the king



- By Miran Perera

Rejection and lack of support

Actions speak louder than words. A short drama can be much more powerful than a thousand written words. Many of the prophets of ancient times carried out symbolic actions or told stories to get their message across.

Jesus also took this approach. In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a story about people turning the temple, which is the house of God, into a house of thieves.

The gospels show clearly that Jesus was rejected by all kinds of people. Many ordinary people followed Him, but then they turned away from Him. The religious leaders rejected Him.

Even one of His own closest disciples rejected Him. Surely Jesus understood what was happening and felt re-

jected and alone, without support.

St. John records that Jesus had to rely on Himself and His relationship with the Father.

Rejection and lack of support are real experiences. Rejection by another human being can really hurt deeply. If we experience rejection and lack of support, it can be a temptation to give up following Jesus closely.

Because we are human, we relate to others: if other people reject our faithfulness, then we can be tempted to give up on Jesus; if other people do not support us in faith, then we can be tempted to give up on Jesus.

However, we can learn from Jesus. We can accept that other people may reject our fidelity and not support us. Then we learn to rely on the love

and support of the Father and the invigorating life of the Holy Spirit, rather than on other people.

This can be hard, because we crave acceptance from others. It can be especially hard for those who have a bad self-image or low self-esteem.

A poor self-image can hinder faith. It can be hard to learn to rely on the rich love and support that comes from God.

Rejection and lack of support can even be an excuse for not following Jesus. We hear people say things like, "The teacher at my Catholic school was rude to me in 1953 and so no-one in my family has been near the Church since."

This kind of excuse would be funny, except that for some people it has become the excuse that shapes their lives.

By their own choice they remain trapped in 1953, never wanting to free themselves to follow Jesus more closely.

Actions do speak louder than words. The greatest action of all was that of Jesus in accepting the journey to His suffering and death, in the sure hope of the resurrection. This gives us hope.

Jesus' death and resurrection is not merely a symbol, but it does symbolise the great love which God has for us.

The loving support of God outweighs lack of support from other human beings.

As we journey with Jesus to Easter, we find a love which is patient, kind, gentle, never jealous, and a love that never gives up on you and me.

Sunday Examiner

Crucified - Why Jesus

A Judgement

Unjust

convicted

Shameless Pilate

World witness

Repeated

Execution

Why Jesus

The innocent

A fashion

Or trend

so replace

Non to Jesus

Perhaps then

The World

Was sinless

Miran Perera



Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM)



Year of the Consecrated Life - 2015

Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Sri Lanka (CMRS)

Religious Congregations in Sri Lanka 7



The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary is an international congregation of religious women. Our charism includes five aspects which are well-integrated: (i) *Self-offering* like Jesus who gave himself totally to the plan of God; (ii) *Eucharistic*, called to be bread broken for a new world; (iii) *Marian* living her values and attitudes; (iv) Sent on *universal mission*, within the country or outside; (v) We follow the way of *Francis of Assisi*. The logo symbolises all these elements of our charism.

Our Foundress, Helene de Chappotin was born in France in 1839, the youngest of five children. When Helene was 21, she entered a Poor Clare Monastery. Here she encountered the spirit of St. Francis, the poor man of Assisi and this experience marked her for life. Poor health did not allow her to continue the life of the Poor Clares. In 1864, guided by her spiritual director, she entered the newly-founded Society of Marie Reparatrice, where she took the name, Mary of the Passion.

As a Novice, in 1865 Mary of the Passion was sent to India as a missionary. After a short time, she was chosen to assume responsibility for the mission, which she accomplished with extraordinary vision for twelve years, a fruitful and grace-filled missionary work. However, unforeseen circumstances and a series of events led her to leave the Marie Reparatrice Congregation. But her one great desire did not leave her – and this was to spread the love of Christ to the whole world. This was also God's plan for her. It was revealed to her progressively.

In late 1876, she went to Rome, seeking light from Pope Pius IX. Torn between anxiety and hope, Mary of the Passion and her companions prayed, while waiting for the situation to be clarified. On January 6, 1877, the Feast of the Epiphany, the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, Pope Pius IX authorized the foundation of the Missionaries of Mary especially dedicated to the Missions. In 1882, this Institute became part of the Franciscan Family. Sisters of different cultural and national backgrounds soon began to join this Congregation in large numbers. Even during her time, we had spread far and wide and communities everywhere were international and lived according to her vision of unity in diversity. Universality and Internationality became distinguishing characteristics of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

Today we are 79 nationalities in 75 countries, organised into 49 provinces throughout the five continents. We are disposable for Universal Mission, ready to leave our countries or to remain there, according to the calls of mission, in order, "to go anywhere and to anyone to announce the Good News of salvation, sent in priority to those to whom Christ has not yet been revealed and to those to whom the Church is least present, giving preference to the poorest" (Cons. Art. 4).

The history of our province of Sri Lanka begins with the arrival of six Sisters for the foundation on March 9, 1886, that of Our Lady of Victories, Moratuwa. Bishop Bonjean OMI presented the needs of the Catholics in Moratuwa to our Foundress herself, Blessed Mary of the Passion. Convinced of the needs,

the Foundress responded to the invitation to send the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) to this island which was commonly referred to as the Pearl of the Indian Ocean. On March 25, 1886, our mission was initiated with an English-medium school, followed by a request from the Government to send Nursing Sisters to the General Hospital in Colombo. Other foundations soon followed, schools (English, Sinhala and Tamil medium), staffing General hospitals and Leper Hospitals, Orphanages, Work rooms (Sewing Centres), always with the main objective of manifesting God's love.

Our ministries throughout the world are varied. Here in our own country, when the FMMs were asked to leave the hospitals, we were working in the general hospitals in Colombo, Mannar and in the leper hospitals in Hendala and Mantivu (Batticaloa). 120 FMM Nursing Sisters left our country in 1964 to continue to manifest God's love and presence in other countries.

In Sri Lanka, today, we are in 17 communities in 9 dioceses. The evolution of our ministries was in the plan of God: Most of the sisters were obliged to leave our institutions and reach out to the people – poor, rich and marginalised – in their own respective contexts. According to our charism, like Jesus we reach out to anyone in need and as St. Paul says, "Being all things to all people" making no distinctions whatsoever. In Sri Lanka, we went through the same evolution where community life-styles, mission and ministries are concerned. The following are some of the present ministries:

- Integral Education is one of our priorities. (Both formal and non-formal education of all races and religions in private/semi-private schools, government schools teachers);
- Integral Formation Centre for girls from rural areas/villages;
- Self-help projects and boarding schools for under privileged;
- The Estate Apostolate (tea plantations);
- Rehabilitation of IDPs and other forms of addicts;
- Promoting the dignity of refugees/asylum-seekers from Pakistan;
- Counselling/psycho-therapy, (including war trauma counselling)
- Ministries with the farmers, fishermen, Hansen patients and prisoners.

Both young and old, are actively involved in the educational, social, pastoral and catechetical fields in all the parishes where we are inserted. Today – like Yesterday, our vocation is expressed in multiple ways: manifesting the newness of the Gospel with passion, daring, risks and commitment for social justice and eco-justice. It becomes a face, a word, a meeting, a dialogue, a presence, an outstretched hand. It is peace and reconciliation, offering and gift, consecration and contemplative prayer. God sends us to those who are still waiting for the manifestation of Christ's face; to those whose faces are lined by suffering, destitution, rejection, and exclusion.

Saints and Martyrs



St. Hermine and her Companions
7 Martyrs of China
They were massacred on July 9, 1900.
On October 1, in the year 2000, they were Canonized with numerous other Chinese Martyrs.



Bl. Maria Assunta

Maria Assunta Pallotta was born on August 20, 1878 in Italy. At the age of 20, she left her small village and became a **Franciscan Missionary of Mary**. She was beatified on November 7, 1954: it was the Church's seal on a simple, humble and poor life, penetrated by Love.



Bl. Mary of the Passion

FOUNDRESS of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

Beatified:
October 20, 2002

Living Together

A few weeks ago I attended a church wedding where the homily carried a very important and salient message about marriage. The priest started his short sermon with a story.



Once there was a beautiful princess who was the apple of the eyes of the King and the Queen. All the subjects loved her for her beauty, charm and graciousness. One day she surprised her parents as well as the citizens by announcing that she is deeply in love with a slave, the gardener of the palace. The parents, relations, counselors and psychiatrists of the palace as well as the kingdom tried to advise her of her wrong decision. But no one could dissuade the princess from her decision.

After months and months of persuasion the King and Queen gave up. They consulted the cabinet of ministers. After months of discussion and persuasion the Prime Minister presented a plan to the royal parents. Reluctantly they agreed to his plan. His plan was to lock the lovers up in a room for one month. Food, drinks and all the facilities were available to them. The couple in love agreed to this plan since it is tantamount to accepting their decision to marry each other.

The couple was locked up in a comfortable room in the palace for a month. On the tenth day there was a big knock on the one and only door of the room. The ministers and the king refused to open the door because the couple had another twenty or more days to go. Due to constant thuds on the door that disturbed the normal activities of the palace, the King consulted the cabinet and opened the door. The princess ran out of the room, fell down at the feet of her father, apologised for making a wrong decision and said that they could not live together even for another minute.

The moral of the story is that it is easy to love a person who is far away from you. But when you start living together, as in the case of marriage, they begin to see the real nature of each other and their love turns into hatred and repulsion. John Grey, a psychologist wrote a book in 1993 which has gone into many prints and been translated into many languages, which shows that men and women think, feel and act differently. The title of the book is, "Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus."

In a marriage two People from two planets with a distance of about 350 million kilometers between them, are trying to get married, live together, have children, look after them and live as a family till one of the partners die. This is an almost impossible proposition. But it happens every day in our planet earth. Every minute in their lives the man and woman in marriage have to go through a constant struggle to understand each other's feelings, decisions and acts. They have to negotiate, discuss, and listen to each other's opinions before they make any decisions.

In his bestselling book "Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus," John Grey writes, "Men and women differ in all areas of their lives. Not only do men and women communicate differently, but they think, feel, perceive, react, respond, love, need and appreciate differently. They seem to be from different planets."

Marriage is the will of God for man and woman. In Genesis after creating human beings, God tells man and woman, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" Christ sublimated this union into the Sacrament of Matrimony. The Church promises the married couples the grace and strength to persevere in their union of marriage.

Pope Francis who was the eldest of five brothers and sisters has 16 nephews and nieces. The pope says, "I always advise newly-weds to argue as much as you want. If the plates fly, let them. But never end the day without making peace. Never!" In another instance Pope Francis says, "It isn't necessary to call the United Nations to come to one's home to make peace. A small gesture, a caress, a hello is sufficient! And until tomorrow and tomorrow is another day!"

The experts on family life say that if we marry just for the pleasures of marital life such as sex, our delusion will be unraveled very soon. Pope Francis said that family life is a journey filled with challenges and difficulties. It is not a bed of roses. Conflicts and difficulties are a part of our normal day to day life. Let us start the day with a "Thank you" and end the day with, "I am sorry" or vice versa. In Pope Francis's words, "It is a journey full of challenges, difficult times and also with its conflicts, but that is life."



Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

When Amal heard that Pope Francis was scheduled to visit Sri Lanka in January 2015, it became his dream to provide the presiding chair and other furniture for the Holy Mass to be celebrated at Galle Face Green. He approached his parish priest with a proposal and was told to get in touch with the priest in charge of the altar structure and décor for the Holy Mass - Rev. Fr. Priyantha Silva. However when he got through, he was told that the furniture had already been assigned to several people except the eight foot cross which was to be hung over the presiding chair. Some what disappointed Amal undertook to do the cross.



But not long after, in a peculiar twist of fate,

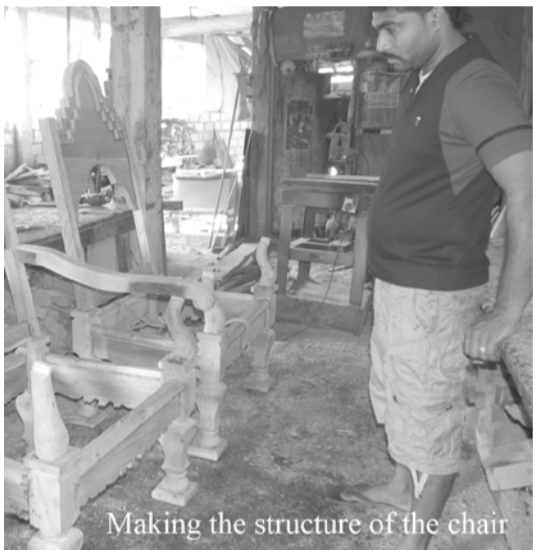
Making a Chair befitting the Holy Father

Painted in ivory and embellished in gold to match the presiding chair, behind and over which it will be hung. Absolutely no publicity was given to all this work and very few persons knew that in the backrooms of Amal's workshop there stood three chairs and an eight foot cross slowly and surely taking shape. Many persons specializing in the different aspects of the craft took part in the making of the chair. The structural work of the chair was done by Nilanka Silva. The carving by Dharmasena Peris. Cushioning by Amila Prasad. Spray painting by Wasantha Fernando. Gold work hand painting by two sisters from the Kadalana Art Centre - Cherrri Fernando and Sulakshani Fernando. All were enthusiastic about the work they did amidst great constraints in time, due to Christmas, New year and the Presidential elections falling one after another. Finally the last touches of gold painting was completed and the chairs were ready to be transported to Galle Face Green.

It was late evening and dark when the lorry arrived at Galle Face Green carrying the chairs and the cross from Kadalana. The chairs were carried to a backroom of the altar stage at Galle Face Green. Here from among the two chair designs one would be selected as the presiding chair for the Holy Mass by the Papal Master of Ceremonies of the Vatican Team. The grand-



ose chair with the lion head carvings and the chair with less carvings stood side by side and the Papal Master of Ceremonies was invited to make his selection. The simpler chair of the two, was his choice in keeping with the spirituality and simple ways of Pope Francis. This is the chair we saw on which the Holy Father sat during the Eucharistic Celebration on the 14th of January at Galle Face Green.



Making the structure of the chair



Carving the decorative motifs



Spray painting



Cushioning



The end

he received a phone call asking if he would also like to undertake the presiding chair. This would be the chair that the Holy Father would sit on during the Holy Mass of the Canonization of Blessed Joseph Vaz at Galle Face Green. Amal agreed without any hesitation. His dream had

come true! Amal says he was more than thrilled to undertake the work. "In the furniture industry making a chair for the Holy Father is the highest honour and blessing that could befall a person and his, business", says Amal. "It is the wish of all furniture makers in my industry and it is the highest accolade that can be awarded to a furniture business. That is why so many people came forward to make it", he explained.

Work had to begin quickly since it was already end of November. Three chairs were to be made all in teakwood. Two chairs were to be of the same design while the third was a more grandiose design with carvings of lion head motifs on the arms of the chair. The chairs were to be spray painted in ivory and embellished in gold. "All three chairs were designed by Rev. Fr. Priyantha Silva. As such when work commenced on the three chairs it was almost mid December" says Amal. But in the meanwhile he had selected and purchased the best teak logs which were duly sized and kiln dried and made ready for the structural work. Certain measurements given by the Vatican were taken into account and slowly the chairs began to take shape in the back woods of Kadalana's timber yards. Amal recalls that he made many trips to Colombo - at least fifteen times with the templates of the chairs to meet with Fr. Priyantha Silva and discuss the progress of the chair. Samples of the carvings were taken to him from time to time for inspection and perfection.

At the same time in another part of Amal's workshop an eight foot cross was also taking shape. This too was made of teakwood and would be spray

The Journey of Lent

Take up your cross and follow Jesus, and you will enter eternal life. If you die with Him, you will also live with Him, and if you share His suffering, you will also share His glory.



Renewing Our Lives on the Lenten Journey reminds us that if we focus too much on what we give up we may miss the message of what God wants to give us during this grace-filled time. Lent can be a wonderful time in our spiritual growth, presenting through Lenten prayer and preparation, a deeper commitment to a way of life rooted in our baptism.

The Stations of the Cross shown here are from St. Anthony's Church Pasaiyoor Jaffna. This beautiful church was damaged during the war. Today the church has been renovated and rebuilt and stands majestic - a beacon of hope to its neighbourhood. The paintings of the Stations of the Cross shown here were badly damaged during the war. Most had to be re-painted completely or heavily re-touched. A very few originals can be seen possibly in the station numbers 2, 5, 10, 13.

The traditional passion play statue shown here is from St. Mary's Church Kayts Jaffna.



Saint James (Senior)

James, the brother of John is the son of Zebedee and Salome. He is a distant relative of Jesus. He is named James, the Senior in order to recognise him from the other James (Junior) who is the son of Alpheus. James, the Junior was the Bishop of Jerusalem. He was named Junior, may be because he was short in stature or because he was young in age. James senior was tall and fat. It is said that James senior is twelve years elder to Jesus. At the same time he is very much older than his brother John. Some people believe that his mother Salome is a relative of Blessed Virgin Mary.

It is said that Salome is a daughter of a Jewish Priest. She was a pious lady. Later she followed Jesus and after His death it was Salome who went with Mary Magadalen to anoint Jesus with sweet spices in the early hours of Easter Sunday.

James was a born Galilean, and was a fisherman by profession. He, with his brother, John and his father, Zebedee were fishing in the sea close to Bethsaida.

The whole family lived there. During that time Peter too lived there. Having chosen Peter and his brother Andrew as

disciples, Jesus was walking with them by the side of the Lake Genesareth. Jesus saw two brothers, James and John with their father Zebedee casting their nets. Jesus called them. They at once left their boat, nets and their father and followed Jesus. From usual conversations with Peter, their fellow countryman James would have already known Jesus as Christ. It would have been the reason for James to take a quick action of following Jesus, immediately after His call. Zebedee and his wife would have given their full consent to this call from God to their two sons.

On the orders of Jesus when Peter and Andrew cast their net into the deep sea and had a very big catch, it was James and John who came to their support to bring this heavy catch to the shore. Although they were following Jesus and were in the service of the Lord, they did not abandon their fishing trade and their family.

In the year 31AD when Jesus was healing Peter's mother-in-law and when He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, James too was there. At the selection of the Apostles, Jesus entered the names of James and John and called them *Boan-*

erges, which means 'sons of thunder.' This may be because they were zealous and enthusiastic. Once when Jesus was not permitted to enter a city of the Samaritans, James and John requested Jesus to send a rain of fire to burn the city. But our Saviour explained to them that we can conquer only with the weapons of meekness, mildness, gentleness and patience. Jesus seems to have granted special gifts to Peter, John and James. These three were fortunate to have been with Jesus at His Transfiguration, at the raising of Jairus' daughter from dead and also at His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Only these three were noticeable at these events. These three are also considered the best friends of Jesus.

One day Salome, the mother of James and John, asked, when Jesus were to establish His Kingdom, whether her two sons would get positions on either side of Him. At this young age in their missionary life, the evil spirit of pride is attempting to tempt them. It could be that these two sons of Zebedee spoke through the mouth of their mother. Answering them Jesus said they themselves do not know what they are asking for. He further said that key positions in His

Kingdom can be had only to the most humble and the most patient. In reply to their question Jesus asked them whether they could drink of the cup of His passion. Whether they understood or not they just replied that they could drink of the cup of His passion. Even if they could drink the same, Jesus said that giving positions in His Kingdom solely belongs to His Father only.

It is not known from any of the early writers where James preached the Gospel after the Ascension of Jesus. Some say he preached in Judea and Samaria. With the stoning of St. Stephen to death in the year 30AD James seems to have left Judea. After returning in ten years James too was martyred. Some say he preached to the twelve tribes of Judea. One Baronius mentions in his book that James preached for sometime in Spain. Several ancient books, tradition and the lives of saints affirm this.

St. Epiphanius mentions in his book that St. James was a bachelor, and his life was full of notifications and sacrifice and that he never consumed meat or fish. He wore only one coat and one simple linen cloth. James also gets included into the list of martyrs within the first ten years. Among the

Apostles, St. James is the first martyr.

Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great in order to keep the Jewish nation for ever on his side and please them he began persecuting the Christians. St. James was the first among these martyrs, during this persecution. In the year 42AD St. James

was beheaded. St. Clement of Alexandria and the ancient writer Eusebius mention in their books that St. James bore up his suffering and harassments so patiently and so courageously, his complainant was so sympathetic and was repenting for his misdeed. He himself publicly professed that he too was a Christian, was ordered to be beheaded along with St. James. When both were led to the executioner's gallows, he asked pardon from the Apostle. James turned to him and said "Peace be unto you." Saying the same he embraced and kissed him. In a short time both were beheaded. First the body of St. James was buried in Jerusalem. Later his disciples took the body to Spain. His body was buried at El Padron, a place known as Iria Flavia.



At the beginning of the 9th century, the relics were recovered and taken to a place known as Compostella (Spain). At the start this place was known as "The place of St. James." Many pilgrims go to venerate his body kept in the Cathedral. This became a famous shrine and a public place of veneration for the pilgrims. Many are the miracles happening here, through the intercession of St. James. Many ancient writers say that at this place St. James visibly defended the Christian army against the Muslims. The patron Saint of Spain is St. James.

The symbol of St. James is shown as three shells.

(Feast July 25)

D.C. Jayasinghe
(To be Contd.)

THE FRANCISCANS AND THE GENERAL BAPTISMS

(All that is described under the General Baptism so far have been handed down by De Gubernatis; what follows is from the pen of P. Trindade. Both are found in VP PP II 330-337)

The Franciscans, the first religious body that came to the island of Ceylon, objected to the coming of the Jesuits. They had obtained from the king of Portugal the right of monopoly in the apostolate in Ceylon. And they did their best to prevent the Jesuits from coming in. They had obtained the monopoly when the territory of the island open to them was very limited. With the death of Rajasingha, king of Sitavaka, in 1593, most of the island, with the exception of the kingdom of Kandy and of the kingdom of Jaffna, fell into the hands of the Portuguese. The Franciscans realized that they would need more personnel and in 1595 they retained in Ceylon all the new missionaries that came from Portugal. Thus in 1595 we find forty one Franciscans in Ceylon that is in Colombo, Mannar, Mantota, Island of Crows and Puttalam. Of these 41 Franciscans only six were preachers and confessors. Among the rest there were two students, two lay brothers. The rest 31 of them were just priests who could celebrate Mass, teach catechism to small children, and hear some confessions, if by chance anyone asked for it.

The previous history of the Franciscans in Ceylon, the miserable state of religion and morality in Colombo and

Kotte when in 1552 Fr Emmanuel Morais S.J., came to preach the jubilee; and again the religious and moral state of Colombo in 1566 when Bishop Temudo came for his pastoral visitation, is an eloquent testimony to the fact that there was no preaching either in Kotte or in Colombo.

Now in 1595 and onwards it was no longer the limited town of Colombo and surroundings, but most of the island of Ceylon that needed spiritual help in sound preaching of the word of God. Most of the Franciscans were not preachers.

Further the Franciscans did not take the trouble of learning the language of the people, Tamil or Sinhala. The Bishop of Cochin and of Ceylon, himself a Franciscan, in 1601 said that out of forty Franciscans only one knew the language of the people. This must have been Fr Antonio de S. Thome who was born in India near Madras and must have been able to learn Tamil from childhood.

The opposition of the Franciscans to other religious coming to Ceylon may not have arisen from a pure motive. Then some remark came from Rome affecting their reputation.

In Rome somebody had clearly mentioned that he had never heard of the Franciscans making any conversions.

This criticism reached Goa, the headquarters of the Franciscans in the east. A general baptism was organized in Goa.

In February 1610 Fra Francisco Negrao O.F.M., who had been born in India, organized a general baptism in Ceylon and sent an account of it to Rome. Here are his own words.

"As soon as I reached one of the churches of our friars I got them to assemble in my presence all the gentiles of the neighbouring places. Then I asked one of our friars to preach to them in a loud voice on the falsity of their idols and on the truth of our divine faith. The preacher was Fra Antonio de S. Thome [born near Madras].

"At the end of the sermon I asked the same Father to enquire in a loud voice who were the pagans who acknowledging their false beliefs and admiring the truth and divinity of our religion, wanted to be baptized. Then they were invited to remain in the church, for there I would catechize them in the articles of our religion and teach them how they should observe the commandments of God and of our Holy Mother the Church. But those who remained obstinate in their errors and did not want to become Catholics,



History of
Catholic
Church in
Sri Lanka

Rev. Fr. Vito Perniola, S.J.

could freely go back home for I did not want that anyone should become a Catholic against his own will. But it was wonderful to see how nearly all answered in a loud voice that they were freely choosing to become Catholics and professing from that moment they would have no other God but Jesus Christ since the Father, had preached to them, and had shown that the idols, they had adored so far, were demons.

"Then I used to praise them for having chosen the religion of Christ and encouraged them to accept the mild yoke of his divine love. I went on questioning them if they renounced all their idols with their idolatries and superstitions. They did everything with their whole mind and heart, going so far as to renounce with a loud voice and hold

Contd. on Pg. 14

Closer and Closer!

As we draw closer to the 5th centenary of the birth of St. Teresa of Jesus (of Avila) who is the Foundress of the Discalced Carmelites, you may wonder, where her greatness lies.

In the history of spirituality, St. Teresa is unanimously considered as a teacher of prayer. St. Teresa's well-known definition of prayer, "a friendly frequent solitary converse with One Whom we know loves us" demonstrates to us that for her prayer is a dialogue, a response of love to a God, Who is love. Love, as we all know is connected to the heart, so she presents her teaching in practical terms, when she wrote, "Prayer is not thinking much, but loving much."

As prayer is thus the foundation of our life, daily the Carmelite communities, including us, the Sisters of Corpus Christi Carmel, Mattakkuliya, gather together to celebrate the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the official prayer of the Church. Each day we spend one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening in personal prayer. However, prayer is not confined to these specific times, but it overflows into our life in Carmel.

St. Teresa

St. Teresa, or our Holy Mother, as Carmelites love to call her, turned to God spontaneously whenever the need arose. In her writings, we often notice that she suddenly breaks into a prayer, because God was so close to her and she felt she had to communicate with Him. To praise God, or thank Him did not constitute a digression for her, but something imperative! "O my Lord, how abundantly do You manifest Your power!" "O my Jesus, how much a soul can do when ablaze with Your love!" St. Teresa's writings are replete with similar statements or paragraphs.

St. Teresa advises her daughters: "Avoid being bashful with God...speak with Him as with a Father, a Brother...He will teach you what you must do to please Him...Do you suppose that, because we cannot hear Him, He is silent? He speaks clearly to the heart, when we beg Him from our hearts to do so."

To help the Sisters in their life of prayer, on-going formation is vital, therefore talks and retreats are organised. A well-equipped library is available for the Sisters' spiritual reading and they can also listen to talks on CD's, which assist them in their spiritual formation. These exercises help each Sister in her desire to make every moment of the day, a communion with God and to continue in her heart the prayer of silent adoration, even though she is occupied with other tasks. St. Teresa wrote, "Even in the midst of occupations, we must withdraw within ourselves, al-

though it may be for only a moment."

Our Holy Mother, knew a Christ, who walks always at her side, sharing her daily occupations. He was her friend, who could say to her, "Why are you disturbed, little sinner? Am I not your God?" St. Teresa too, could be equally friendly with Him. On one of her many journeys, when St. Teresa and the Sisters fell into a stream, she complained to the Lord: "Why did you let this happen?" Our Lord told her, "That is how I treat my friends" and St. Teresa retorted, "That is why You have so few!" Therefore we see that friendship with Christ was St. Teresa's way of prayer. She knew that friendship demands fidelity or else it will fade away. It is a project for life, not just a matter of set times. God, our Friend, wants to give Himself to us totally. He therefore needs a total self-gift from us too!

Very Rev. Fr. Saverio Cannistra, the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, in his message for the inauguration of the 5th Centenary, on October 15, 2014, wrote: "St. Teresa did not boast about her experiences for her own sake, but instead gave it to us, so we can also enter into her fullness of life and joy, which we otherwise would not know and would remain prisoners of the world."

But why are the Sisters here, in the Convent you may ask, if their prayer life is only for the sake of friendship with the Lord? The small Carmelite praying communities are fortresses of prayer, where the sisters live in harmony and pray and do penance (can be interior and exterior) for the welfare of the Church. The Sisters plead with God for the intentions of the Pope, the hierarchy, priests, religious, missionaries, lay apostles, seminarians, the laity and all mankind. From their Convents, St. Teresa wanted her daughters to fight the Church's battles with spiritual weapons, especially prayer.

Service of the Church

St. Teresa, the Foundress of the Discalced Carmelites, directed the prayer, retirement and entire life of the Discalced Carmelite, towards the service of the Church - so much so that if their prayers, their sacrifices and their life are not at the service of the Church, they do not fulfill the purpose for which God has brought them together.

Again you may ask, but why are they enclosed? The rule of enclosure enables the Sister to follow a close union with God. St. Theodore the Studite said: "For God alone, is her gaze reserved, God alone is the object of her desire, to God alone is she devoted, the worship of God alone absorbs her attention."

'Venite Seorsum'- a document from the Sacred Congregation for Religious states: "In solitude, where they are devoted to prayer, contemplatives are

never forgetful of their brothers. If they have withdrawn from frequent contact with their fellow men, it is not because they were seeking themselves or their own comfort, but because they were intent on sharing to a more universal degree the fatigue, the misery and the hopes of all mankind.

These women, seated at the Lord's feet and listening to His teaching (Lk.10:39) in silence and withdrawal, seek and savour the things that are above, where their lives are hidden with Christ in God." Is St. Teresa's teaching on prayer evangelical, is another query you may pose? It is truly evangelical, because on reading Chapters 14-17 of St. John, we see that it is taught by Jesus Himself! "Remain in my love." (Jn. 15) "I am the vine, you are the branches." (Jn. 15) "If anyone loves me, He will keep my word and my Father will love Him and we shall come to him and make our home with him." (Jn. 14) - to name a few. St. Teresa wrote in "The Interior Castle" that the path to divine intimacy is communion with Jesus Christ, and in the "Way of Perfection" she counsels her readers "Fix your eyes on Your Spouse." Prayer is definitely transformative for good, that is why we have enemies of prayer that include our fallen nature, the flesh, the world and the devil. So St. Teresa has given some prerequisites for prayer: The first is love for one another. This means love, forbearance and service of those around us - not just projects!

The second is detachment - a matter of not allowing ourselves to be held captive by material possessions that we seek for our pleasure or power alone.

The third is humility. Jesus said "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart. The closer we come to Him, the better we learn this great lesson. Jesus is drawn to the humble soul, for it is open to God. One who is full of herself, has no need of God.

Therefore if we keep trying to please God during the day, by practicing the love, detachment and humility, St. Teresa is trying to teach us, then we are making our preparations for the time allotted to prayer.

In addition to these prerequisites for prayer, one who wishes to lead a life of prayer, should have a good conscience and be poor in spirit.

At a General Audience in February 2011, Pope Benedict XVI said, "Prayer does not mean wasting time, but rather



"It is when we are trying to bring God into our lives, through the practice of virtue, that He can come close to us in prayer"

discovering the very essence of our life: God's love." In this catechesis, on St. Teresa of Avila, he said: "St. Teresa is a true teacher of Christian life for the faithful. She teaches us to be witnesses of God, of His presence and of His action. She teaches us truly to feel this thirst for God that exists in the depths of our hearts, this desire to see God, to seek God, to be in conversation with Him and to be His friends.

This is the friendship we all need, that we must seek anew, day after day. May the example of this Saint, profoundly contemplative and effectively active, spur us too every day to dedicate the right time to prayer, to this openness to God, to this journey, in order to seek God, to see Him, to discover His friendship and so to find true life; indeed many of us should truly say: "I am not alive, I am not truly alive, because I do not live the essence of my life."

Pope Benedict XVI concluded his catechesis by saying

"Let nothing disturb you, Nothing affright you. All things are passing, God never changes, Patient endurance, attains to all things. Who God possesses in nothing is wanting, God alone suffices"
-St. Teresa of Jesus

that it is in prayer that we learn from God, an ardent love for Him, for His Church, and practical charity for our brothers and sisters.

St. Teresa, a faithful and loving daughter of the Church, would have been greatly delighted indeed, when she heard these words, from the Sovereign Pontiff, which ratify her views on prayer.

St. Teresa of Jesus

How many Carmelites are there, all over the world?

"The Discalced Carmelites are spread throughout the world. According to the last statistics (2012) we have 3,994 friars, including those in training."

"The Discalced Carmelite nuns, hidden in the silence of their monasteries and apparently unknown by the world, are present all over the globe. According to the latest statistics (2013), the nuns reach the considerable number of 11,500 (thus being the most important female Cloister Order in the Catholic world). The number of Secular Carmelites in the world - 25,407 (according to the statistics of 2012). The number of countries in which they are present- 75

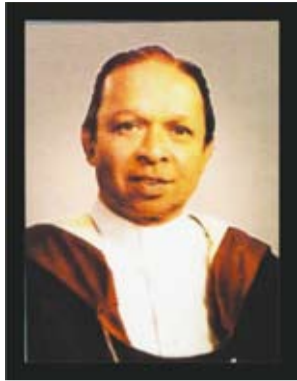
God loves him and so do we

Very Rev. Fr. Stanley Abeysekera celebrated his 80th birthday on February 3.

Exactly eighty years ago on this very day in 1935, Mr. and Mrs. Don John Abeysekera gave birth to their second child who was called Don Bernard Stanley Abeysekera. As active parishioners of the parish of Rilaula, Kandana young Stanley attended the parish Roman Catholic School, where he received his primary education. To pursue his secondary education he was admitted to De Mazenod College, Kandana. As a clever student in his academics he received a double promotion from Grade 6 to Grade 8.

His call to serve the Lord in His vineyard as a priest came to him during this time. Being a genius in mathematics, gave him the potential and strength to fulfil his future ministry in the field of education.

Young Stanley Abeysekera successfully passed the Senior School Certificate (SSC) exam as a young seminarian at St. Aloysius Seminary, Borella. Later, to pursue in his Advanced Level education he was admitted to St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10 under the Rectorship of Rev. Fr. Peter Alcantara Pillai OMI.



The young seminarian was so gifted that he offered Mathematics both at the London and local A/L examinations. Both of which he passed with flying colours.

In 1957, he obtained a Second Class Upper Division Pass in the BSc Degree of the University of London. That very year he entered the National Seminary in Ampitiya and was ordained a priest six years later on December 21, 1963 by His Eminence the late Thomas Cardinal Cooray OMI.

St. Joseph's College, Colombo

His first appointment as priest was to serve his Alma mater St. Joseph's College, Colombo in May 1964. There he served as the Prefect of Boarders and as an O/L teacher in his favourite subject, Mathematics. His next appointment was



In Persona Christi

as a teacher to St. John Bosco's College, Hanwella in 1968 and St. Thomas's College, Kotte in 1969, where he was appointed Rector in a short time. He was also appointed parish priest of Kotte in 1974. In 1978, he obtained a Master's Degree in Education, from the University of London. Subsequently he completed his Doctorate in Education in 1982.

On his return to Sri Lanka he was appointed as the 10th Rector of his long-loved alma mater St. Joseph's College. Under his administration the image and reputation of St. Joseph's College went from strength to strength. A two-storied building was constructed in 1987 which accommodated the kitchen, stores and boarder's refectory

in the ground floor and the Grade Six section in the upper floor. This was followed by a three-storey building for the Advanced Level students, which was declared open by another Old Boy, the late President R. Premadasa.

A well-equipped office room for the rector, a computer centre, a radio station and a new canteen were constructed during Fr. Stanley's tenure. Fr. Stanley was also keen on improving the architectural beauty of the college and was responsible for the renovation of the chapel and the improvement of the gardens. The giant sports complex was the brain child of Fr. Stanley, which was later renamed as Rev. Dr. Stanley Abeysekera sports complex

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

cum auditorium.

The Enderamulla Branch of St. Joseph's College was created during Rev. Dr. Stanley's Rectorship. Under his valuable guidance the school witnessed many achievements in the fields of academics and extra-curriculum. He was able to achieve these milestones due to his excellent vision and foresight, and his administrative capabilities. He was also instrumental for the grand success of the College Centenary Year in 1996. After thirteen years of dedicated service as Rector of his alma mater Fr. Stanley bade farewell to St. Joseph's the same year, 1996.

Missionary Work

After his retirement he proceeded to Luciana, USA. where he was engaged in missionary work. After his arrival in Sri Lanka he was appointed parish priest of Nugegoda and Kollupitiya. Due to his failing eyesight he had to relieve some of his duties. And in the year 2006 Fr. Stanley was re-appointed to St. Joseph's College where he engaged in counselling and teaching life edu-

cation. He, since his early days would never fail to end his reflections, sermons saying "God Loves you and so do I."

On December 21, 2013 Rev. Fr. Stanley Abeysekera celebrated fifty years of sacerdotal service in the Lord's Vineyard at St. Joseph's College chapel.

We pray that the good Lord shower his abundant blessing upon him and good health to continue his saintly ministry.

*"Nearer to God, nearer to all
None will remain nearer to his fall
Neath our patron forms true Joes,
Never has he wanted the Joes to be foes.*

*Staff and students together we band,
Stand by our rector in our land,
Stalwarts' name you'd have ciphered
STANLEY! Fore fold and fore gone verses,
Sing to you we, "God loves you and so do we,
Now and forever"*

(THE BLUE AND WHITE
2000 EDITION)

Initiation and ministries at St. John Mary Vianney Seminary



On the 3rd of March, marking an important milestone in the seminary formation three of our brothers were initiated to Diaconate and Priesthood. Two brothers were granted the ministries of Lector and Acolyte.

The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by His eminence, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Arch-



bishop of Colombo. During his sermon, he illustrated the mysterious nature of the priestly vocation. Quoting from the lives of St Joseph Vaz and St. John Paul II, He mentioned all of them were human beings like us and they were of human frailties, but God transformed them to wonderful human beings. The only method for



a successful priestly journey is the total dependence on the Lord, stressed the Cardinal.

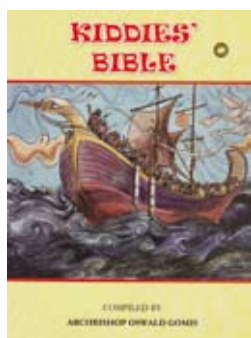
The day's occasion was graced by the parents of the seminarians, priests and religious, members of the academic staff and well wishers.

D.U.P.S Ranasinghe



Kiddies' Bible

Latest contribution to the faith of our children.



Most Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis, Archbishop Emeritus of Colombo, has compiled and published the "Kiddies' Bible" especially meant for Faith Formation of the very young.

Written in Poetic form, with easy to remember verses and colour pictures.. "Kiddies' Bible takes the child from the story of creation in the Old Testament to the first martyr Stephen in the new Testament and the first Christians.

Priced at Rs. 150/- it will no doubt be a valuable addition to the faith formation of many a tiny tot.

Parents' Prayer for Their Children

O God the Father of mankind, who hast given unto us these children, and committed them to our charge to bring them up for Thee and to prepare them for eternal life: help us with Thy heavenly grace, that we may be able to fulfil this most sacred duty and stewardship. Teach us both what to give and what to withhold; when to reprove and when to forbear; make us to be gentle, yet firm; considerate and watchful; and deliver us equally from the weakness of indulgence, and the excess of severity; and grant that, both by word and example, we may be careful to lead them in the ways of wisdom and true piety, so that at last we may, with them, be admitted to the unspeakable joys of our true home in heaven, in the company of the blessed Angels and Saints. Amen.

O Heavenly Father, we commend our children to Thy care. Be Thou their God and Father; and mercifully supply whatever is lacking in us through frailty or negligence. Strengthen them to overcome the corruptions of the world, whether from within or without; and deliver them from the secret snares of the enemy. Pour Thy grace into their hearts, and strengthen and multiply in them the gifts of Thy Holy Spirit, that they may daily grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and so, faithfully serving Thee here, may come to rejoice in Thy presence hereafter. Amen.

God Answers Prayer

The Franciscan.....

Contd. from Pg. 8

as abomination those idols and even to spit on those very idols, holding them as demons and professing that they had no other God than Christ. In this they showed so much readiness and said all those words with such joy of soul that we were not able to hide the happiness we experienced at the admirable change wrought by the power of God, and our eyes shed abundant tears.

"After putting them those questions, I enjoined the Father to catechize them in a loud voice and in their language declaring to them chiefly the mystery of the Blessed Trinity in a way that was most suited to their understanding. And then I questioned them if they believed in the great mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. All, men and women, replied loudly "we believe it without any doubt". After this, the Father who was my interpreter, questioned them if they believed that article. All replied in a loud voice: "We firmly believe it and have no doubts about it".

"Then the same Father explained to them the ten commandments of God and the five precepts of the Church and how they had to keep them.

"When this instruction was over, I told them that to receive the grace of Baptism they had to be sorry for all their acts of idolatry and for all their sins committed against God from their childhood up to that moment and make a firm resolution not to commit those sins again. They all replied that they repented having offended God with their idolatries and their past sins for which they asked God for pardon promising not to

go back to their idolatries nor to sin against Him.

"When all these explanations and questions were over, the Friars who were the parish priests of the neighbouring churches, who had brought those people there, immediately started preparing some tables and altar ornaments, with all that was necessary for such general baptisms. On the tables they placed the Holy Oils, Holy Water, Stoles and Surplices to be used by the Fathers of the parish churches. While all these things were being made ready, the catechumens used to go to the jungle and the forest to bring flowers like roses and sweet smelling leaves, of which there is an abundance in the forests of the island. With those flowers they made crowns and coronets, coifs and other head ornaments, placing them on their heads and on those of their wives and children.

Palm in hands, they came back to the church with great rejoicing and feasting, carrying drums and other instruments, group by group. In church I arranged them in such a way as to place the men and the boys in two or three or four rows according to the number of those who had to receive baptism. The women and the girls were on the other side in the same formation. The distance from one another was two cubits. To each person was given in writing the new name of baptism so that afterwards it could be entered in the baptismal register by each parish priest.

When all were thus in order, the Friars sang the Veni Creator Spiritus in a loud voice together with

the verse and the final prayer and with the prayer to Our Lady and to our Holy Father, and all this with many tears and sobs. Then dressed in surplice, stole and cope, I began the ceremony of administering baptism to some catechumens who were with me in the main chapel of the church. The parish priests who were there, did the same with the other catechumens. Thus the ceremonies of baptism were performed in an orderly fashion and in a short time.

When all had received baptism, I gathered together all the neophytes and asked the same Father, my interpreter, to give them a spiritual instruction exhorting them to persevere in the Faith which they had received at baptism and exhorted them to observe the Law of God. Then all took their way home, leaving me and the parish priests. Going out of the church, they were heard to say in a loud voice these textual words: "Devils, devils, till now you have deceived us, obliging us to adore you as gods. There is no other God than Christ. He is the only Lord of heaven and earth. Him alone do we adore as God and not those we have found out to be devils. Henceforward you have no dominion over us. We are in God's house" They said this all together, jumping for joy.

They left us filled with consolation and with tears in our eyes. We never cease to thank God, seeing that His omnipotent arm had wrought such marvels in those neophytes whom He had snatched from the hands of the demons.

Trindade gives the place and the date of the general baptism and the number of those baptized.

Town	Date	Number of baptisms
Balapitiya	27 & 28 March	653
	30 March	125
Madampe	29 May	400
Meepe	7 & 8 June	850
Weligama	13-14 June	408
	22 June	155
Meepe	24 June	190
Galle	29 June	168
Madampe	30 June	208
Balapitiya	1 July	420
Alutgama	4 July	265
Maggona	5 July	250
Alutgama	7 July	212
Balapitiya	8 July	306
Alutgama	9 July	127
Alutgama	9 July (Inhabitants of Beruwala)	127
Alutgama	11 July	201
	12 July	
	: 13 July	434
	:14 July	
Kalutara	?	297
Matara	19 July	335
Halpe	18 August	155
Kelaniya	28 August	300
	: 31 August	225
Navagamuwa	1 September	109
Panadura	20 September	600

If 7420 were baptized with such a short preparation and with, perhaps, no follow up, it is not strange if many of them went back to Buddhism just as easily as they had accepted to be baptized.

The First Provincial Council of Goa held in June 1568 in decrees 7,8 & 9 speaks of the serious preparation for baptism, a preparation that would require some time, though it does not fix the time.(VP PP II 417-8)

The Third Provincial Council of Goa held in June 1585 comes back to the instruction before Baptism in decree 26: "Experience has shown that it is necessary to fix a certain length of time for such an in-

struction. Therefore this Council decrees that the gentiles ... of the country should not be baptized unless they have been taught catechism for twenty days in keeping with the common law, except

for cases of extreme necessity which may demand the immediate administration of baptism. In the case of other infidels, the decree of the first Council shall be observed. (VP PP II 119-120).



UN reports can....

Contd. from Pg. 4

The investigative report may polarize Sri Lankan society and is sensitive. But the long-term answer to this is not to run away from this reality or postpone it, but to engage objectively with local populations, particularly rural Sinhala-Buddhist communities. Not doing so could push some Tamils and Sinhalese towards more extreme measures and demands.

Now that the report has been deferred,

victims and their families will have to wait. The high commissioner and member states of the UN's Human Rights Council, who agreed to the deferral, have an obligation to strengthen the Report.

The Sri Lankan Government must also tell its position on the UN investigation to Sri Lankan citizens and others. Church groups, politicians, journalists and civil society activists should take advantage of the less repressive environment to

engage with the report objectively, including local populations who may oppose it. The debate about whether follow-up steps to the UN investigation should be purely domestic, purely international or both, must be discussed internationally. But this is a debate that should happen primarily in Sri Lanka. Catholics can play an important role in ensuring this conversation happens and shedding Christian perspective on it.

God loved the world so much that he gave his only son; everyone who believes in him has eternal life. (Jn. 3:16)

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR B
15th March - 22nd March 2015

Sun: FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
2 Chr. 36:14-16,19-23; Eph. 2:4-10;
Jn. 3:14-21
Mon: Is. 65:17-21; Jn. 4:43-54
Tue: Ez. 47:1-9,12; Jn. 5:1-16
Wed: Is. 49:8-15; Jn. 5:17-30
Thu: Feast of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Bl. Virgin Mary
2 Sam 7: 4-5a, 12-14a,16;
Rom. 4:13,16-18,22; Mt. 1:16,17-21,24a
Fri: Wis. 2:1,12-22; Jn. 7:1-2,10,25-30
Sat: Jer. 11:18-20; Jn. 7:40-53
Sun: FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 5:7-9; Jn. 12:20-33

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Crucified Jesus, cleanse me from sin, in your precious blood, wash me clean.

For the followers of Jesus; that they may shun the darkness of sin and walk in the light of truth and goodness. We pray in faith.

Response: Crucified Jesus, cleanse me from sin, in your precious blood, wash me clean.

For all those holding public office; that the light of truth and justice may shine in their words and actions. We pray in faith.

Response: Crucified Jesus, cleanse me from sin, in your precious blood, wash me clean.

That the light of Christ may shine gently on the sick, the lonely and those who are going astray. We pray in faith.

Response: Crucified Jesus, cleanse me from sin, in your precious blood, wash me clean.

That the words and deeds of Christ may be a lamp for our steps and a light for our path. We pray in faith.

Response: Crucified Jesus, cleanse me from sin, in your precious blood, wash me clean.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

First Reading:

2Chr 36: 14-16, 19-23.

The whole of Israel was living in sin and as a result they were destroyed and taken into exile. This they believed happened under the guidance of God. But later God's merciful love saved them from exile.

Second Reading

Eph. 2: 4-10.

St. Paul speaks to the Ephesians about the merciful love of God. For it is the grace of God which they received by faith that saved them; it is a gift of God. Hence out of gratitude they are to perform good works.

Gospel: Jn. 3: 14-21.

Jesus firmly tells Nicodemus that He has to die in order to save mankind. As it was necessary to lift up the serpent during the time of Moses, it was also necessary that Jesus be raised on the Cross in order to save man. Hence all people are to be brought to the light from darkness.

Reflection.

We prepare ourselves to celebrate the suffering, death and the resurrection of our Lord. The Fourth Sunday of Lent speaks to us about the merciful love of God that has gone all its way to save sinful man. And what is important for us is that this will continue to pour

out its grace even today in order to save us. Therefore as we see this mercifulness of God; let us also try to see the depth of the sinfulness of the sinner whom God saves; so that the real mercy of God may be seen. In today's context there is no sinner who could not be saved by the mercy of God. Hence we are called for a deeper evaluation of our life and for a true repentance in order that; we too would be among the saved.

In today's First Reading we come across the hopeless situation of the Israelites. The whole community including the priest and elders were exceedingly unfaithful. They followed all the abominations of the nation and polluted the house of the Lord. As a result they were destroyed and taken into exile. But still this was done not according to human plans but according to the divine. Though it is God who condemned them it is God Himself who, out of love, influenced the new king to free them. This He did out of His merciful love.

The Israelites at one time rebelled against God. As a result, God allowed serpents to sting them. When they realised their fault and repented God got Moses to lift a bronze serpent on a pole to cure the poisoned. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of Himself being raised on

the Cross in order to save the sinful mankind. This also is a merciful action of God to bring those who live in darkness to the light.

By the time St. Paul wrote his letter, Jesus had offered His life and salvation was assured for those who repent and lived a spotless life. This calls for repentance and guidance for a spotless life and has to be the continuation of the salvific work of Jesus. And it is handed over to us by our baptism. This, too, is a merciful act of God.

Therefore let us not be discouraged or too quick to condemn this world which is worse now than then. To this world which is full of cheating and stealing, violence and crime, let us bring salvation by putting into action God's merciful love. First of all, let us feel this love within us and then let us share it with others.

Aid Story 1.

A child is playing at the edge of a swamp when he suddenly slips and falls into the mud. Here, sinking down, he rolls over without being able to get out, and cries out for help. His mother sees him and what does the mother do? Does she perhaps push him further into the swamp even if it was out of his own fault

that he fell in? Oh, no she pulls him out, tenderly embraces him, dries his tears, wipes off the mud and loves him all the more. It is not that the mother loves mud in which her son fell, but because in spite of everything, he is still her son. God does the same with the sinner.

Aid Story 2.

A homeless man, down on his luck, went into a Catholic Church that was known for its rather, "Uppity" social reputation. Spotting the man's dirty clothes, the usherer stopped him outside the Church door and asked if he needed help. The man told them, "I was praying and the Lord told me to come to this church."

The usherer suggested that the man go away and pray some more and he might get a different answer.

The following Sunday the man returned and the usherer again stopped him at the door. "Well did you get a different answer?" he asked him.

"Yes, I did," said the man. "I told the Lord that you don't want me here, but the Lord said, 'keep trying, son, I've been trying to get into that Church for years and I haven't made it either.'"

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" (John 3,14-21)

1. The Gospel of this Sunday bears the theme of God's love towards humanity – the nucleic cause of the Paschal Mystery. God loved (Greek: *agapao*) the world. What is the nature of this divine love? It is *agape* – the highest and most perfect kind of love, a beneficent attitude of appreciation resulting from a conscious evaluation and choice. It is because of this supreme and sublime love that He gave Jesus to the world.

2. When did God give Jesus? He gave Him as a gift in the Incarnation; He gave Him over to death in the Crucifixion. So Jesus, born at Bethlehem and crucified in Jerusalem, is God-given-gift to the world.

3. What did God expect from giving Jesus to the world? He gave Him not to condemn or judge the world but to save the world and to offer it life eternal. The very name 'Jesus' means 'YHWH saves.' Hence the divine purpose is to save through His Son.

4. What does Jesus' coming provoke? It results in judgement: "Whoever believes in Him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (3,18).

But who judges? There are evils that surround us. Who is responsible for them? Are they results of God's vindictive action as Judge? People condemn themselves by turning from the light. "... but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed" (3,19-20). We judge ourselves by choosing the darkness that creates pain and division in us and others. Nevertheless God still intends to save us through His Son. Here lies the fact and beauty of God's love.

5. What sort of world did God love? In the Gospel of John, 'the world' (Greek: *kosmos*) means those opposed, rebellious and disobedient to God. Hence God loved a world which is inimical to Him. This serves as a model of Christian love. When the American Civil War (1861-1865) was in progress leaving over 600,000 combatants dead and, when the South had rebelled against the North on the question of slavery, someone asked Abraham Lincoln the first Republican President who opposed the expansion of slavery into US territories: "When this war is over and, when the South has been subdued and conquered and, has come

back into the Union, how are you going to treat these rebellious Southerners, what are you going to do to them?" Back came Lincoln's answer; "I am going to treat them as if they had never been away."

6. God's love is infinite. Once a little girl asked her father; "Daddy, you said that God loves us. How much does He love us?" "More than anybody," replied the father. "Daddy, does God love us as much as Mommy loves us?" Looking out over the ocean, the father answered, "Yes. Look. Look in that direction. God's love extends farther than that." Pointing in the opposite direction over endless miles of ocean, he said, "Look the other way. God's love is greater than that." Pointing at the sky he said, "God's love is taller than that" and down at the ocean, "God's love is deeper than that." The little girl said, "Daddy, isn't it wonderful that we are standing out here in the middle of it?" Yes, we all stand in the midst of God's love that is infinite.

7. God's love is infinitely generous. Without keeping Jesus safe and sound, He



gave Him to the world for its salvation through birth and death. But what limits do we put on our love? Do caste and creed limit our love? Do we love only the rich, classy or influential people of our society? Do we, as priests and people, appreciate only graduates and professionals? In natural disasters like Tsunami, the Universal Church loved the victims regardless of their caste or creed. The Church helped the kovil as well as the temple. Isn't it wonderful?

**Rev. Fr. Don Anton
Saman Hettiarachchi**



Our false image and forgiveness

When we are with people or mixing with friends and relations, we usually carry a false image. This is not something we do intentionally but just to keep ourselves abreast with the society we live in, as the image we carry has an impact on the society we move in.

When we come before God, we cannot put on an image. His light pierces through us to reveal what lies at the depths of our being - when the heart is open, many emotions surface.

King David, anointed by God is on record committing sins of adultery and murder. But he continued to sit on the throne as though nothing had happened. People trusted him and met him to solve their problems and he made all decisions as usual. He pretended that all was well. But within his heart there was a great disturbance. The Lord sent Prophet Nathan to him. He spoke to him, the word of God. David experienced the presence of God. Only then he could face up to the gravity of his sin. He cried out, "Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight" (Ps .51:4). He repented heavily. The self-confident fisherman, Simon Peter, when he came into the presence of Jesus was overwhelmed. He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "I am a sinful man, O lord" (Lk 5:8). His burden of sin was lifted and he was restored to a higher mission in that very moment.

Pretending to ignore our sinfulness and at the

same time fearfully hiding it from others, is a burdensome way of living. Our heart is crying out all the time to be understood, forgiven and liberated. The journey of grace for this is exactly what repentance is. Jesus offers forgiveness and salvation. He invites us to feel the loving and merciful presence of God so that we may be set free. A new dimension emerges in our experience of repentance. We are led to a life of transformation. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, confessing our sins to Him, we are transformed. The inner attitudes, the visions, the powers now governing us are all changed. One becomes altogether a new person.

As the Bible records, Zacchaeus was a terrible sinner. At one point he just wanted to see Jesus. When he placed himself before the Lord Jesus, everything was changed in him. The powers of evil were defeated. Zacchaeus declared, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone anything I restore it fourfold" (Lk 19:8). In his vision money lost its value. His heart was freely committed to Jesus. Till that moment the poor did not mean anything to him.

Importance of repentance is more clearly explained through the Old and New Testament very prominently. God saved people of Nineveh because they accepted Prophet Jonah's warning and the King ordered all people to repent sincerely and the King himself took part in it seriously. The nation was saved. In the New Testament, the evangelist John explains the story about



the woman who was caught committing adultery (Jn 8). This woman was seen as a real evil factor in the society. But in the merciful presence of Jesus, she experienced the liberation.

The condemned thief who recognised Jesus, when he was hanging on the cross became a saint overnight because of his repentance at the eleventh hour. He confessed his sins when he declared to the thief on the other side of Jesus, "we deserve our punishment; we are sinners." He turned to Jesus and prayed for salvation, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42).

If Adam and Eve had repented sincerely, instead of arguing and blaming each other, God's loving creation, made in his own image would have been free of sin today and this earth would have been an extension of God's Paradise.

Marcus Gunasekera

Sacrament of Reconciliation

* A Practical Examination of Conscience through the Ten Commandments



The Fifth Commandment

"Thou shalt not kill"

Commands: Safeguarding of one's own life and bodily welfare and that of others.

Forbids: Unjust killing, suicide, abortion, sterilisation, duelling, endangering life and limb of self and others.

- > Did I easily get angry or lose my temper?
- > Was I envious or jealous of another?
- > Did I injure or take the life of anyone? Was I ever reckless in driving?
- > Was I an occasion for others to sin with my conversations. 'green' jokes. way of dressing, invitation to attend certain shows, reading harmful books or magazines, help-

ing them to steal. etc?

- > Did I try to repair the scandal done?
- > How many persons did I lead to sin? What sin?
- > Did I neglect my health? Did I ever attempt to take my life?
- > Have I mutilated myself or another?
- > Did I get drunk or take prohibited drugs (marijuana, heroin) ?
- > Did I eat or drink more than sufficient allowing myself to get carried away by gluttony?
- > Did I consent or actively take part in direct sterilisation ('ligation, vasectomy, etc.)? Do I realise that this will have a permanent effect on my married life and that I will have to answer to God for it's consequences.

- > Did I consent, recommend, advise or actively take part in an abortion? Am I aware that the Church's teaching prohibit abortion? Do I realise that this is a very grave crime?
- > Did I harm anyone with my words or actions?
- > When someone offends me, do I desire revenge, harbour enmity, hatred or ill-feelings?
- > Do I ask pardon whenever I offend anyone?
- > Do I insult or tease others?

Next week Sixth Commandment

School Cricket



Catholic Schoolboys Perform Well

Sri Lanka Youth cap and prolific batsman Avishka Fernando of St. Sebastian's College, Moratuwa passed the 1000 Runs for this season. He did this in his 11th match against Wesley College and scored 39 to complete 1000 run mark. Up to now Avishka has scored 3 centuries and 4 half centuries with a top score of 165 against St. Anne's College, Kurunegala. Avishka became under 17 Schoolboy Cricketer of the year 2014.

Speedster Geethal Fernando of St. Benedict's College performed a rare bowling feat against De Mazenod College. He took four wickets in four consecutive balls in De Mazenod's first innings.

Aravinda Akurugoda of St. Joseph's College is another schoolboy cricketer who performs well. His best performance was 106 against St. Benedict's College and 7 for 14 against De Mazenod College.

Season's best partnership was recorded when St. Peter's played against St. Benedict's, St. Peter's scored 306 for 7 wkts with Lakshina Rodrigo and Sachin Dalpathadu adding 206 for the 5th wkt. Lakshin's knock of 132 was a fine innings.

Christopher Ranasinghe

Explanation of God

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way He doesn't have to

take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times beside bed-

time. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because He hears everything, there must be a terrible lot of noise in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere

which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting His time by going over your mom and dad's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.'

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work, like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired

of Him preaching to them and they crucified Him. But He was good and kind, like His father and He told His father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said 'OK'. And God did not let Jesus stay in the grave, but raised Him from the dead

His dad (God) appreciated everything that He had done and all His hard work on earth

so He told Him he didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So He did. And now He helps His dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones He can take care of Himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important.

8-year-old author (An email)

"Gather the Children unto you"



The 67th Children's Day in the Archdiocese of Colombo, was held on March 7, 2015 at the Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka, Tewatta, Ragama. The Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith presided at the Eucharistic Celebration.

Dinusha Sandaruwan



English with Fun and Entertainment

Dear Readers,

In today's lesson which is our 67th let's learn more collective nouns, do reading comprehension tasks based on two Lenten prayers, Christ's House and a TKT task.

Your suggestions to improve our lessons are much appreciated.

God Bless You!

NJ

Activity 1- Read the Lenten prayers. Use delicate shades of words to understand them. Use them in your Lenten reflection

- prayer** - plea, request, supplication, appeal
- plans** - strategies, devices, policies, ideas
- mind** - observance, notice, awareness
- surrender** - submission, capitulation, yield
- will** - spirit, life force, preference, liking
- Amen** - yes, agreed, you said it,



Lent is a season of penance, reflection, and fasting which prepares us for Christ's Resurrection

- spiritual - mystical, divine, transcendental
- renewal - rekindling, regeneration, rebirth
- deprivation - denial, removal, withdrawal
- motivate - inspire, stimulate, persuade
- grace - refinement, elegance, charm



Activity 2 - Learn more collective nouns -

a catch of fish.	a team of horses.
an army of ants.	a troop of lions.
a flight of birds.	a zoo of wild animals.
4.a flock of birds	a pack of wolves.
5.a haul of fish	a litter of puppies/kittens
6.a flock of sheep	a swarm of bees/ants/rats/flies.
7.a herd of deer/cattle /elephants/goats/buffaloes	a team of horses/ducks/oxen.
8.a hive of bees.	a murder of crows.
9.a litter of cubs.	a kennel of dogs.
10.a host of sparrows.	a pack of hounds.

Activity 3 - Read about Jesus' House and answer the questions



British researcher may have found Jesus' house
Tue 03 Mar 2015 by Aaron James
Professor Ken Dark from Reading University has been exploring the whereabouts of Jesus' house since 2006. He says a book written by an ancient Irish monk called Adomnam, which describes where Jesus' house was, fits with the house that he's found today in Nazareth. Adomnan wrote a book called De Locis Sanctis in 670. The details in the book are based on an earlier pilgrimage to Nazareth by a bishop called Arculf, from the pre-Germanic empire of Frankia.

De Loctis Sanctis says Jesus' house is located between two tombs, and below a church.

The house that Professor Dark's found cut into a limestone hillside, directly beneath the Sisters of Nazareth Convent.

Mr. Dark says there's evidence that two tombs are in the Convent's crypt, which corresponds with the claims in De Loctis Sanctis and suggests the house could have been the one Jesus lived in.

The book also mentions that the Church of Annunciation is in Nazareth; this church is located across the road from the Convent, providing further evidence the house could have been Christ's.

Professor Dark told Premier's News Hour: "Here, we have a structure that may very well have been associated with Jesus. A good case can be made for that. "Of course we can't prove that, but it's also impossible to say, no he didn't."

- Q 1. What has Professor Ken Dark been doing since 2006?
- Q 2. Who is the Irish monk who wrote a book about Jesus' House
- Q 3. According to De Loctis Sanctis where is Jesus' house located ?

Activity 4 -TKT -Task 2007 adapted slightly - Match the underlined words/ groups of words in the text with language items listed. There is one extra option.

Language Items

- A. Word with affix
- B. Idiom
- C. Compound adjective
- D. Connector
- E. Phrasal verb
- F. Compound noun
- G. Word family

Text

My father is quite different from me- he's a bit (1) old fashioned. He is very traditional. He always wears (2) a suit, a tie and leather shoes, listens to the radio and plays cricket. But the worst thing is that he's got no sense of humour and that really (3) gets on my nerves. I also get the impression that he thinks I am pretty (4) worthless, which doesn't help our relationship. We rarely see each other these days. He sometimes (5) calls in and we go out together. But we usually argue which (6) bus stop to walk to or which bus to take and silly things like that.

Activity 3 - Answer

- 1.He has been exploring the whereabouts of Jesus' House.
- 2. An ancient Irish monk called Adomnam wrote a book about Jesus' House
- 3. It is located between two tombs, and below a church.

Activity 4 Answers - 1 -C 2 - G, 3- B, 4 -A 5-E 6- F

Contact us on: 071 8004580
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Contrition

We can say that the matter required for the sacrament of reconciliation is a sinner. Those who have no need of repentance have no need for this sacrament. This sinner - to be more precise - is a contrite sinner, one who seeks to turn away from sin and hear again the good news of redemption. For the celebration of the sacrament, then, the sinner's contribution is sins and contrition. To be contrite means to be sorry for the sins about to be confessed. In order to be genuine, contrition must be accompanied by a purpose of amendment. This means a firm intention not to commit the same sins again. It seems reasonable that this should be so: if I am genuinely sorry about a particular way of behaving or about something I have done or have failed to do, then I will want to be free of it in the future.

Much has been written about 'contrition' and those who received catechetical instruction at an earlier period will have had the difference between imperfect and perfect contrition explained to them. The 'act of perfect contrition' is an elusive thing. It means

that we are contrite - sorry - about our sins for no reason other than the offence those sins offer to the love and goodness of God. Imperfect contrition (sometimes called attrition) means sorrow for our sins for some reason less than the love of God: because we fear the punishments that come with sinning, for example. Part of the 'preferential bias for the sinner' that has guided the development of the sacrament is the Church's acceptance that imperfect contrition is sufficient for the celebration of reconciliation.

The reason for this acceptance is because the Church knows that 'perfect contrition' is a gift of God's grace and not something we can generate from within our own resources. Imperfect contrition means we are turning back towards home, beginning the journey back to reconciliation with God. It was a combination of ordinary deprivation and disillusionment that brought the prodigal son to his senses and made him think of returning home (Luke 15: 14-19). God continues to use ordinary events and disillusionment that brought the prodigal son to his senses and made him think of returning home (Luke 15: 14-19). God continues to use ordinary events and our responses to them to sow the seeds of humiliation, failure or embarrassment is enough to generate Imperfect contrition and from that, perfect contrition may be born.

The contrite sinner is expected then to make a good confession. This means as full a confession of serious sins as is humanly possible. In preparation for the sacrament of reconciliation we are asked to 'call to mind our sins' and to do it at much greater length than we do at the beginning of Mass. We are asked to remember. For Saint John of the Cross, memory is the seat of hope. Hope is born in memory and flourishes with remembrance. This is a very interesting link and very relevant for this sacrament.

In speaking as he does about memory, John of the Cross stands in a long tradition. Many philosophers and theologians had already written about this theme. John of the Cross used a division of the powers of the soul that he learned from Saint Augustine of Hippo. For Augustine the essential powers or capacities of the human being are mind, memory and will. In his work The Ascent of Mount Carmel, John of the Cross then placed the central Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity within these powers of the human soul. Faith is the best possible use of the mind, hope is the best possible use of the memory and charity is the best possible use of the will.

Courtesy:
Reconciliation: The Mercy of Christ

“ALOKAYANO”

Kotte's Passion Play with a difference

Historical evidence confirms that with the arrival of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka in 1505, Kotte Sri Jayawardanapura became the cradle of Catholicism. Incidentally, the 16th century bell found in a historic belfry at Kayman's Gate in Pettah, was originally mounted on the belfry of that Catholic Church in Kotte, now relocated on the hill of Pitakotte and renamed as St. Thomas' Church, Kotte. With the arrival of the Dutch in Sri Lanka, the original Catholic Church at Kotte was demolished and the bell was relocated at Kayman's Gate in Pettah.

The bell bears on it the inscription "AVE GRATIA PLENA DOMINUS TECUM BENEDICTA TU IN MULIERIBUS" meaning 'Hail full of grace the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women', which in itself is evidence that it belongs to the Catholics who had a great devotion to the Blessed Mother. The parish community of St. Thomas' Kotte is well known for their devotion to the Blessed Mother even today, a fact corroborated by the annual celebration of the May feast felicitating the Mother of God which is preceded by a month-long daily recitation of the Holy Rosary in their homes culminating in a colourful procession along the decorated streets of Kotte bearing the life-size statue of the Blessed Mother upon an illuminated, floral-decked chariot.

Flame of Faith

St. Thomas' Church, Kotte has certainly kept the flame of Catholic faith aglow and was also the nerve centre of the Cause of the Beatification and Canonization of the first Saint of Sri Lanka St. Joseph Vaz, as its Secretary was the Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernandopulle, Episcopal Vicar of Colombo South Region and Parish Priest of St. Thomas' Church,

Kotte. Jubilant on being the centre for the promotion of the Cause of Canonization of our first Saint and greatly inspired by the pioneering effort of St. Joseph Vaz, who introduced the staging of the passion play in the Vanni in 1706, the parish community of St. Thomas', Kotte, has decided to give leadership to stage the first ever passion play in Colombo, as a tribute to St. Joseph Vaz and as an act of gratitude to God for giving Sri Lanka our first Saint. In doing so, versatile talents in the Colombo region too has been tapped to make this event a memorable one.

Aptly named '*Alokayano*', which could be translated as "Christ our Light" the passion play will be staged in an outdoor setting on the sprawling play grounds of St. Thomas' College, Kotte, behind the Parish Church and could accommodate a crowd as large as five to eight thousand, if not more. Indeed, large crowds are expected to attend this mega event in the Colombo region.

The cast numbering over two hundred and fifty, featuring parishioners of St. Thomas' Church, Kotte and a few selected talent from the Colombo region have been working hard attending stage drama workshops on a daily basis under the watchful eye of its Choreography Director Mr. Sunil Costa.

The team working behind the scene include award-winning screen actress Veena Jayakody, a devout parishioner of St. Thomas' Church, Kotte who will play the role of Mary Magdalene and popular actor Jihan Srikanth Appuhamy, as Jesus Christ, Ajantha Alahakoone, Art Director, Milroy Dharmarathne also a parishioner of Kotte as Music Director with Kasun Liyanage and Nuwan Liyanage as music and lyric composers. Anthony Adolphus and Anjalie Jayasinghe, both parishioners of Kotte will lead the vo-



cals backed by a sixty-member choir which is currently undergoing extensive training. The script has been written by Sunil Costa and Ajith Mendis under the guidance of versatile stage drama script writer, Very Rev Fr. Cyril Gamini Fernando, National Director for Social Communications. Costumes and make up will be professionally handled by renowned make-up artiste Mr. Wasantha Vittachi while the stage designing will be under the direction of Senior Professor Sunanda Sagara Jayasinghe of the University of Moratuwa.

The creative department will be manned by Ruwan Malith Peiris, Jihan Srikanth Appuhamy and Nuwan Liyanage. The Executive Producer of '*Alokayano*' is Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernandopulle, Parish Priest of St. Thomas' Church, Kotte while the Production Coordinator is Rev. Fr. Sachitha Kelum Jayalath, Assistant Parish Priest, St. Thomas' Church, Kotte.

The roles of Jesus Christ, Mary, Peter, Judas, Pilate, Annas and John the Baptist to name a few have already been assigned and the emerging talent in

these individuals is outstanding to say the least.

Production

'*Alokayano*' is a passion play with a difference. The production will utilize modern sound and lighting techniques to highlight the unique role of Jesus Christ in redeeming humankind through His passion, death and resurrection. Seeing is believing! '*Alokayano*' will be staged on Palm Sunday evening 29th March at 6.30 p.m. at St. Thomas' College Grounds, Kotte.

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith will grace the occasion as Chief Guest while His Excellency Pierre Nguyen Van Tot, Apostolic Nuncio in Sri Lanka will be among the Guests of Honour. Entrance is free of charge, as this is not a stage drama, but a para liturgical presentation of the Paschal Mystery of Christ which will set the stage for a meaningful celebration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ during Holy Week.

(Text: Trevor Ludowyke
Pix: Shanith Fernando)

You can Achieve Success



Success is the accomplishment and fulfillment of whatever one chooses to undertake and is the ultimate goal in life. The more we study and reflect on the lives of successful people, the more we recognise and accept the truth that

the secret of their success was their indomitable will power. Will power is the strength or force of determination of the mind that drives us to achieve what we set out to do.

Success is not thrust upon us by an act of providence. Success is the result of ceaseless toiling, sweating, searching and praying for the means to succeed. Unfailing effort and a keen sense of perseverance are the common grounds on which success is built.

In order to prove the above comments, I would like to share with you a courageous story about a paralytic child who turned out to be a running machine, the fastest woman on the earth.

An attack of Polio left Wilma Rudolph paralyzed at the age of four. She had to wear a brace and her doctors said she would never put leg on the earth. But her mother encouraged. "**with ability and faith in God you could achieve anything you wanted.**"

At the age of nine, Wilma put her brace away and took the first step her doctor had said she never would. "I want to be the fastest woman on track on this earth" she wished. At the age of 13 she entered her race and came last, and then her second... third... and fourth... and came always last until a day when came in first. At the age of 15, her coach at the Tennessee State University, put fire

into her, '**with your spirit nobody can stop what you want to be**', besides, I will help you" he promised.

The day came when Wilma was at the Olympics. Wilma beat Jutta Heine the best of the best in the 100 meters race, 200 meters race and the 400 meters really and made history winning three gold medals. A paralytic child turned out to be a running machine - the fastest woman on the earth in the 1960 Olympics.

When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it" (Henry Ford).

W. V. H. Kingsley Fernando