

Easter Experience

5 Pg

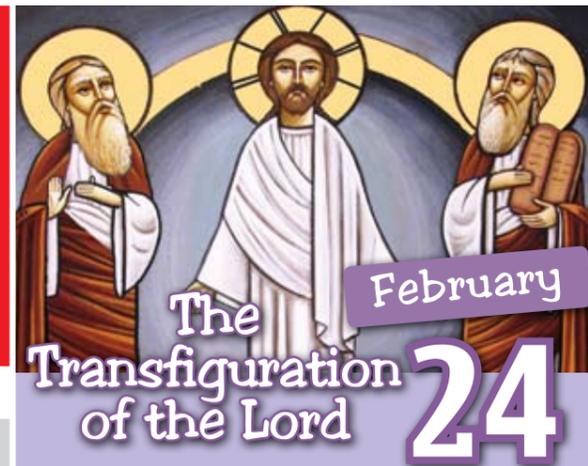
Renunciation of Office

7 Pg

Where there is Love...

8 Pg

Messenger



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TO ALL THE FAITHFUL

Our attention has been drawn through media reports to the recent practice, among Catholic politicians and persons appointed to high public office, of visiting non-Catholic shrines and places of worship and seeking the blessings of non-Catholic religious dignitaries before assuming duties of their new office or position.

There are similar reports that when Catholic politicians or eminent persons in public life die, their funeral ceremonies are conducted not only according to Catholic practice but that non-Catholic funeral rites or practices are also performed in addition. These non-Catholic practices invariably are performed to win the favour of the non-Catholic public and constitute a way of obtaining cheap political mileage. Such a

practice however is not followed by our non-Catholic politicians and celebrities who remain faithful to the traditions of their religions.

While it is true that those who hold public office owe a duty to all the people and must serve all members of the public irrespective of their religious affiliation, they should not, while carrying out their official functions or after their demise, acknowledge any forms of worship, veneration or honour which are contrary to the Catholic beliefs and teachings or are incompatible.

Religion is a matter of individual personal conviction and a person cannot honestly hold convictions of different religions at the same time. Doing this would be unbecoming of Christians and

means attempting to use religion for one's own self pursuits such as obtaining political advantage. It is also an insult not only to one's own religion but to all religions in general. It is beneath one's dignity to use religion for such a purpose; it is hypocritical and a devaluation of all religions.

Catholics who engage in political or public life are like every other Catholic, obliged to follow the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian way of life. Although Catholic leaders in public life must serve everyone equally and without favour, yet he or she is required to act according to the conscience and the beliefs of his faith. It is only by doing so that one can bear witness to one's own religion.

I therefore appeal to all those engaged in leadership roles in the political, social or public life, to pay attention to this matter, becoming true to the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ and to honestly and zealously follow the practices of the Christian way of life.

If such persons do not do so, but instead continue to engage in rites and practices of other religions as a habit, it is the moral obligation of the faithful to refrain from proposing or appointing such persons to public office in the future.

+ His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith
President - Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka

• His Eminence makes Pastoral Visit to All Saints' Church, Borella

'As Christians we are challenged to take up the Cross'

"What is the relation between God and humanity?" - was the question posed by the Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith to the parish community of All Saints' Church, Borella when he made his pastoral visit to the Church last

Sunday.

His Eminence who presided at High Mass answered the question himself, by making references to the Greek Philosopher Plato, who had said that he saw no way for the world of God to enter into the realm of the human. For him

God was far too powerful to enter into the mortal world because he saw the world of man as an illusion or reflection of the Divine World.

"Even the Jews felt the same way. They considered it a heresy to say that God became man. For the Jews this power-

ful, Almighty God cannot be encased in a human body. It was the same with the Muslims. Islam

says God cannot become man," the Archbishop pointed out.

It was only

Christianity, he said which showed to the world that God did become man.

Contd on Pg.2 (See also Pg.7)



Wattala Parish welcomes Angelo Matthews



Angelo Matthews, the newly appointed National Cricket Captain, was welcomed by Rev. Fr. Basil Wickremasinghe at the Parish of Wattala. Angelo, who is a parishioner and a regular devotee of St. Anne's Church, Wattala was hosted by the parish community at Sunday Service recently.

Rev. Fr. Basil Wickremasinghe, the Parish Priest in his address commented, that Angelo's gesture in making the sign of the cross in front of the spectators, could be described as an act of great witnessing value and as a loyal attempt to reveal his identity as a Catholic. On behalf of the parishioners and the cricket loving public, he was wished all success and God's choicest blessings.

Cardinal Felicitates Advanced Level Students

On the request of the Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, students belonging to Catholic, private and vested schools, from the Archdiocese of Colombo, who obtained 3A's at the recently released A/L results, were summoned to be felicitated. Each student received a personally endorsed Certificate of Excellence, from His Eminence, in the presence of their principals, and a gathering of priests, religious and teachers.

His Eminence and His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo awarded certificates to 400 students. (Contd on Pg.2)



Loyola College, Negombo excels in A/L results

* Second in the Gampaha District

Loyola College, Negombo, performed extremely well at the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination held in August 2012. Two students have passed the exam with flying colours in Physical and Biological Sciences. Miss. Anne Umesha Perera having obtained 3 A's in

(Contd on Pg.2)



Gayan Sanjeewa Fernando



Anne Umesha Perera

"Gleaned from the classics"

Memoria Est
Thesaurus Omnium
Rerum
(from Cicero)
Memory is the
treasury and guardian
of all things

As Christians we are.....

Contd. from Pg. 1



His Eminence with some parishioners of All Saints' Church, Borella

This was the greatest revelation of Christianity and the reference is there in the Gospel of John, Chapter 1:14, "...And the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us."

His Eminence noted that, "The most singular, act of trust and faith in humanity that God showed us was by being born among us and dying for us a terrible death. This he did for he loved us," and added that for the Jews the Messiah dying on

a cross was a scandal as they could not accept the Messiah being crucified.

He said that Christ himself has said in John 10:30, "My Father and I are One," and in John Chapter 8 he speaks of the "Father who sent Me."

Therefore, His Eminence said that God has gone against his own nature to become man and live among us. There is nothing impossible for God just as the Angel declared to Mary in Luke 1:37.

It is this living together with Christ that we celebrate during Lent," he said.

The Archbishop went on to state that in his very first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI, has said that the "Radical expression of God's love is that he died for us." That is why Christianity is a religion of hope and joy and not a religion of fatalism, he said.

He encouraged the faithful to fill their lives

with hope and faith which is the basic optimism of Christianity and explained that as Christians we are challenged to take up the cross and find happiness in self-denial, for that was what Christ wanted us to do in Matthew 16:24.

"Therefore," "in this Season of Lent let us be filled with Divine Love and renounce all forms of selfishness and be a good Christian who can smile through his or her tears," His concluded.

Interreligious Service to remember the dead

Following a decision by the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development, interreligious services have been held in several dioceses to remember those who died during the 30 years of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

Caritas Colombo Seth Sarana conducted such a service recently at St John's Parish Hall, Mutwal attended by nearly 375 Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims.

In Badulla, a group of nearly 275 Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims gathered on December 3, 2012 at USCOD Hall for a service, followed by 25 youth



donating blood to the Badulla General Hospital and nutritious food items being distributed among 100 cancer patients.

In Jaffna, around 260 Chris-

tians and Hindus attended a service at HUDEC Hall on December 5, 2012.

Ainsley Joseph

Special Spiritual Programme

In view of the "Year of Faith" the Catechetical Centre at Kandy, organised a Recollection programme under the guidance of the Diocesan Director Rev.Fr.Timothy Gnanapragasam, for all

Catechists in the Diocese at Wahacotte, on 18th and 19th of January, There were over 200 Sinhala and Tamil Catechists, including a few religious who attended this programme.

The first day's programme was conducted by a team from the Community of the Risen Lord, Colombo and the second day's programme was conducted by Rev.Fr.Darrel Coonghe of "Supuwath Arana" Seeduwa

The participants were deeply touched by the two programmes. Rev Fr.Yovan Pittchi O.S.B Administrator of the Shrine and Catechetical Coordinator Matale Vicariate had made all the necessary arrangements.

Loyola College...

Contd. From Pg. 1

Biological Science has been placed second in the Gampaha District and 22nd in the All-Island rankings.

Master Gayan Sanjeeva Fernando who also obtained 3 A's in the Physical Science section has been placed 2nd in the Gampaha District and 48th in the Island rankings while Miss. Sashrika Britto

has been placed 10th in the Gampaha District.

Miss. Subhashi Bhagya Marcelline obtained 2A's and a B and has qualified 60th in the Gampaha District in Biological Science. She too becomes eligible to enter Medical Faculty.

Loyola College thereby fields two students of six eligible for Medical Faculty, and one student of twenty from the Maths

stream qualifying for entry too the Faculty of Engineering

In the Commerce stream of the 35 students who sat the exam four students have obtained 3 A's and are eligible to join the relevant universities.

The Arts stream produced two students with the required qualifications for entrance out of the 32 who sat the exam. Over all this year, around

15 students excelled for further academic education.

While the Maths stream was initiated in 2000, the Science stream commenced only in 2005 and the remarkable results achieved over this short span of time, indicates the explicit of the educational development at Loyola College.

Dr. Nimal Lucas wins seven medals

Dr. Nimal Lucas, a Council Member of the Guild of St Luke, Saints Cosmas and Damian and a former captain of the Sri Lanka National Table Tennis Team (1966-1971), won three gold medals and four silver medals in table tennis at the New Zealand Masters' Games held in Wanganui, New



Zealand from February 4- 10, 2013.

He won gold medals in the over 70 men's singles, over 70 men's doubles and over 65 men's doubles events. He won silver medals in the over 55 team event, over 45 team event, over 70 mixed doubles and over 55 men's singles.

As Dr. Lucas was the sole participant from Sri Lanka, he was partnered by New Zealand players in the doubles and team events.

SPECIAL LECTURE

A special lecture will be delivered on 'Celebration of the Faith in the Liturgy especially in the Eucharist' by Rev. Father Justin Chawkan, SSS on February 26, 2013, from 4.00 to 6.15p.m at the Institute of Spiritual Formation of Asia (ISFA) - 130, De La Salle Street, Colombo 15.

*Rev. Brother Emmanuel FSC
Director
0777-682-989*

Awarding of Certificates



Awarding of certificates to students who followed the Vocational Training courses at the John Amaratunga Foundation was held under the patronage of His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo at the Pradeshiya Sabha Hall, Kerawalapitiya, Hendala recently.

Nimal Perera

Cardinal Felicitates...

(Contd from Pg. 1)

Addressing them His Eminence said, "You have been brilliant in grasping the subject matter to get good results, likewise take to heart and mind the roots that fostered you. Remember God who helped you, your parents, your teachers and all who were associated with you towards your success. Grow into a fully fledged integral person and groom yourself to be of service to all mankind."

This event of felicitation was organised by the Catholic Education Office headed by Rev. Fr. Ranjith Madurawela, Archdiocesan Director of Education and General Manager of Catholic Private Schools.

Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

The 146th annual feast of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Polgahawela will be celebrated on Sunday February 24, with Festive High Mass presided by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera, Bishop of Kurunegala as the Chief Celebrant.

Vespers will be sung the previous day at 7.30 pm presided over by Very Rev. Fr. Piyal Janaka Fernando, Episcopal Vicar of the Archdiocese and National Director of Catechetics and Bible Apostolate.

This is the Church in which His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith was baptized in 1947. In recent years, His Eminence came to be known as "the Cardinal from Polgahawela" because he was born in that town.

Pope's brother says the Pope will not be a 'full retiree'

CNA/EWTN - Pope Benedict XVI's older brother explained that the Pontiff's decision to resign is good for the Body of Christ because he had become too weak to carry out his ministry.

"It is a beneficial decision for the Church," said 89-year-old Msgr. Georg Ratzinger in an interview with the Spanish daily ABC, published on February 17.

"He no longer has the strength," Msgr. Ratzinger observed. "He is going through the natural process of ageing, like I am as well."

He said that the Holy Father had cited his advanced age in informing him that he planned to resign.

"My brother wants more peace for his old age," he explained. "As you get older, your strength begins to fade."

"In addition, he has had to confront difficult tasks, which he has done as much as he can," the Pope's brother said. "It was simply

a decision that was made. It's the natural course of life and nobody escapes from it."

Asked how he thinks the Holy Father will be remembered, Msgr. Ratzinger said he hopes his brother will be seen "as a Pope who strove to deepen and spread the faith of the Church with all of his strength," as well as someone who provided "an example of a life of belief guided by the Faith."

He added that Catholics should "thank God for having entrusted the last few years to a good Pope and pray that he will send us another good leader of the Church." In an impromptu press conference shortly after the Holy Father announced his resignation on February 11, Msgr. Ratzinger said that his brother "is not to be a full-time retiree."



Pope Benedict and his brother

Even once he steps down at the end of the month and moves into a former monastery on the Vatican grounds, Pope Benedict is "not going to sit around waiting for the day to end," he explained.

He added that he hopes to have more one-on-one time with his brother in the future, hopefully at Benedict XVI's new residence.

"They'll probably have a room there for me," he said, discounting any possibility of the Pope returning to Germany in the near future.

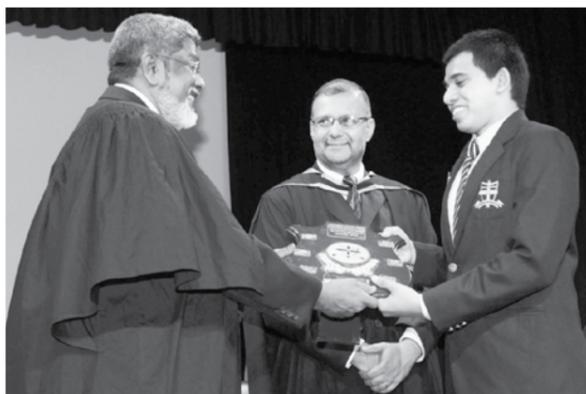
Annual Prize giving of Nicholas' International College

The annual prize-giving of St. Nicholas' International College was held recently at the College. The Chief Guest was Mr. Yusuf Noordeen the Director of the English Service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, a veteran broadcaster and educationist who was accorded a warm welcome by the Principal and prefects of the College.

Addressing the students at the ceremony Mr. Noordeen quoted from Shakespeare "One man in his time plays many parts" and said that we as members of society have to play many roles but it was important to balance these roles in order to become well rounded persons. He encouraged

the students to explore their creativity and to love and respect others so that they in return would be loved and respected in society. He related to the students a simple story about a skilful woodcutter who earned great profits for his employer using his razor sharp axe but later succumbed to failure owing to his lack of attention to sharpen the axe. This he said could happen to anyone who fails to give sufficient attention to sharpen one's own skills and knowledge; a lesson never to be forgotten by any student or adult for that matter.

Presenting the Annual Report of the College for the year 2011/2012 the Principal



Mr. Nirajan Fernando outlined the achievements of the students at the Cambridge and Edexcel international examinations and other academic and non-academic programmes of the college. The distribution of awards was interspersed by a choral presentation by the Se-

nior College Choir trained by versatile voice trainer Mr. Francis de Almeida. The Vote of Thanks was delivered by the Deputy Head Prefect of the College, Zaahil Ahmed A. Zaroook.

Text Francisca Ludowyke,
Pic. by Siddath

Emergency Unit to handle religious tensions

The Police Department has set up a new Emergency Unit to handle complaints related to religious tensions, in the wake of a rise in such incidents in recent times. The Unit situated at Police Headquarters and coming under the purview of Senior DIG Mr Gamini Navaratne commenced operations on February 9, 2013 and will function round the clock. Complaints could be reported via the 24-hour hotlines 0113182904 and 0113188753 or to Fax No. 0112423944.

Ainslie Joseph



From the Vatican

An "authoritative moral leader" during global economic crisis

VATICAN RADIO - Pope Benedict's pontificate has coincided with a global economic crisis that has seen poverty rates soaring in many countries around the world. The Catholic-inspired development agency Progressio says the Pope has been "an authoritative moral leader" during this time of crisis and singles out the clear message contained in his Social Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*.

Daniel Hale, Progressio's Head of Campaigns, describes Pope Benedict as "unswerving in his commitment to speaking out on behalf of some of the very poorest people in the world. He says the Pope has "taken a very clear view on the morality" of development issues and has been "a phenomenal advocate" in this field.

Cloistered nun believes monastic life will extend Pope's reach

The Holy Father's decision to dedicate himself to a life of prayer will enable him to impact people who might not have listened to him while he was Pope, according to a cloistered Dominican nun.



"When he lives this monastic lifestyle, his prayers will reach those who maybe were unbelievers during his papacy," said Mother Maria Angelica.

"I'm absolutely sure of this, of the value of his prayer and of his silence. And it will reach the whole world, even where it wasn't previously able to reach," she told EWTN News recently at the Dominican monastery of *Santa Maria del Rosario*.

The cloistered Dominican nun also reflected on how the Pope will be living a life similar to her own.

"For us it is something great and beautiful because we will feel him even closer than when he was Pope, because it is an extraordinary greatness to know that he is following our same lifestyle."

Sadness at Pope's resignation

After meeting the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI on Thursday, priests from the Diocese of Rome said they are sad he is retiring and that he was a great gift to the Church.

In keeping with his academic gifts, Pope Benedict spent his final meeting with the priests of his Diocese sharing his thoughts about participating in Vatican II and how he understands it.

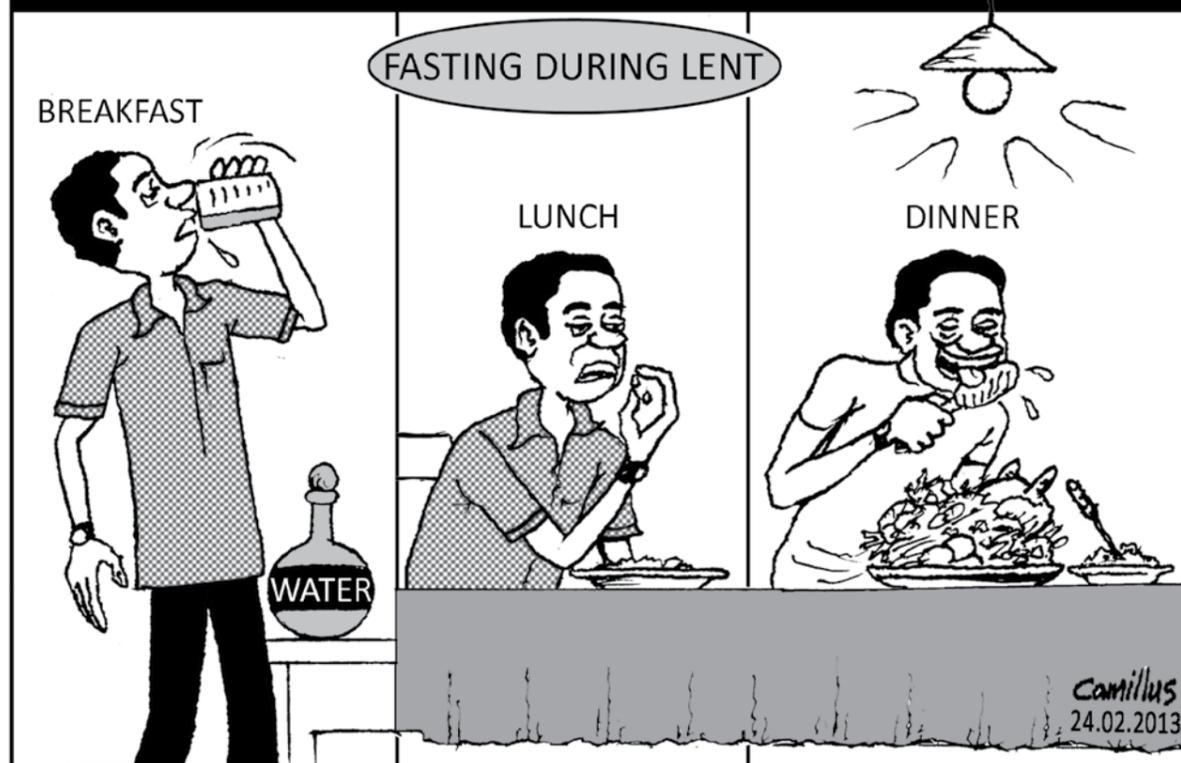
"He's been a man who has had a wonderful influence in terms of the need to understand our faith," one priest originally from Africa said.

Another Tanzanian priest studying in Rome said Pope Benedict has greatly influenced his priesthood and his life.

"His spiritual life has influenced me as a priest because he was a real father and indicated that you celebrate Mass with full attention, allowing people to participate fully in the Liturgy and for them to recognize the coming of God in the Consecration," said Father Patrick Tibangayuka, who is studying for his PhD in Philosophy.

SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus



THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA
Messenger

EDITORIAL

February 24, 2013

The Challenges to the new Pope and the Church

The announcement of the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI came on the anniversary of the first Apparition of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes and is only the second resignation in the history of the Papacy. The institutional Church is the oldest institution in the world with an unbroken history of over 2000 years. But now commentators are questioning the future of the Catholic Church. They refer to child abuse scandals among priests which have occurred in several Catholic countries and improprieties in the Vatican financial statements.

Pope Benedict battled with child abuse by priests and the many problems posed by secularism. He did his best to tackle these problems but felt that he was too old to carry forward these burdens of his office. He said in his resignation address that *"in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the Barque of St Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary. Strength which has in the past few months deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognise my incapacity adequately to fulfill the Ministry entrusted to me"*

There is no doubt that we are on the threshold of stirring times for the Church. Some are referring to the Prophecies at Fatima and still others quote prophets and question the future of the Catholic Church even saying that the Church might see a Schism. But we know that the Church was established by Jesus who said that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. But God wants a Holy Church, a Church which will bear witness to his teachings.

The Evangelical Catholicism being born today is the result of a process of deep reform in the Church that began with the Vatican Council II. We must pray that further reforms will be in accordance with the Will of God. The Church includes both the clergy and the laity and hence the duty to be holy applies to all of us. We have to turn away from all types of sin. But evil has undoubtedly increased in recent years. The world has turned away from God and as Our Lady told the children at Fatima we must repent or there will be great sufferings in the world. There will be sufferings for the institutional Church, for priests, nuns and the Pope himself. But we know that prayer and sacrifice will stave off many such perils. We saw how the Communist Empire which had lasted 70 years collapsed without a single shot being fired.

But a greater peril has arisen with secularism taking over the entire Western Christian world, with same sex marriages and abortions being legalised. Many Christians no longer practice the faith and churches are being closed. The world's Catholics in Africa, Asia and Latin America now outnumber those in the West where the institutional Church traditionally held sway. Rev. Fr. Mervyn Fernando has referred to a new Catholic Evangelism for the Church. The reforms of Vatican Council II have been intended to prepare the Church for a renewed and revitalized missionary vocation in the 21st century.

"Lukewarm Catholicism has no future; submitting to the transforming fire of the Holy Spirit is no longer optional," writes George Weigel in his new book, *Evangelical Catholicism*. We live in a time when "religious faith, commitment to a religious community, and a religiously informed morality can no longer be taken for granted.... Evangelical Catholicism calls the entire Church to holiness for the sake of mission." This certainly asks for a lot. But Our Lord insisted that if we are His true followers we must be totally committed to Him. There is no room for half hearted lukewarm Catholics, who merely go to Church on Sundays but do not put practice Christ's teaching about love to one's neighbour.

"When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" [Luke 18.8]. The question comes straight from the Gospels, and the late Rev. Fr. Richard John Neuhaus argued that this was the question "that anyone, pope or layperson, would understand to be the most urgent" question facing the Church now. What would the Son of Man find if He comes now? The Son of Man, coming as the Risen Lord returning in glory, would find the usual human confusion, in the midst of which he'd also find a lot of faith: Some of it full of sheer heroism, like the faith of persecuted Christians in Islamic lands and in China; all of it struggling against the usual enemies — the world, the flesh, and the devil. A new Pope is to be elected next month. Let us all pray that the Cardinals will be moved by the Holy Spirit to make the right decision.

Interview with the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Open to the question of God

A world open to dialogue on the question of God. This is how Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, imagines the scenario that is unfolding at the beginning of this year. He also reinforced his impression by underlining - in an interview he granted to our paper - the timeliness of the debate between Christianity and secularism, echoed in many books and international journals. This point inspired the Cardinal to reassert the importance of the work the Dicastery has carried out in the past year, reflecting in particular on the various aspects of dialogue with the Muslim world.

What characterized the Pontifical Council's activity during 2012?

Certainly the appointment of a new Secretary and a new Undersecretary constitute important changes for the Dicastery. As regards the development of our mission, we essentially sought to remain faithful to the duty assigned to us by the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, which decrees that the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue must "foster various kinds of relations with the followers of other religions" and "promote appropriate studies and conferences to develop mutual information and esteem, so that human dignity and the spiritual and moral riches of people may continue to grow" without forgetting "the formation of those who engage in this kind of dialogue". Even if part of the world's population - above all in the West - is de facto secularized, no one can deny that God remains an ever timely topic. Suffice it is to think of the impressive number of books and magazines - which I see displayed, for example, on the kiosks in airports - on which the word "God" appears. Therefore there is a whole world open to this type of dialogue.

What was the greatest task in the year which recently ended?

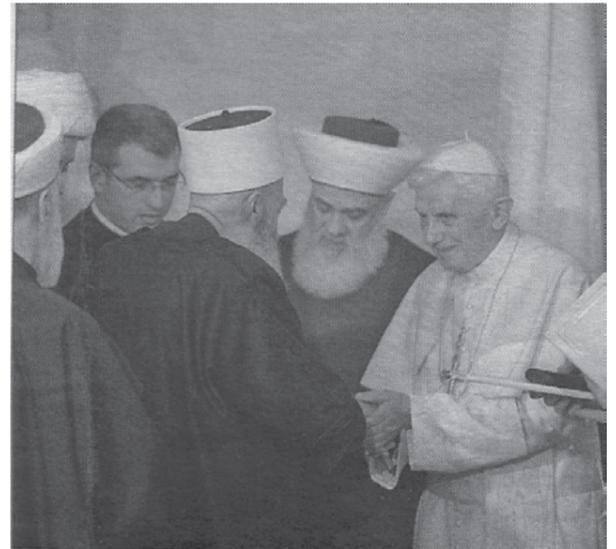
Dialogue with Muslims. Unfortunately, some deviant minorities, who exploit religion to justify the use of violence or seek to impose Islamic law by force on all without distinction, are a danger not only to their societies but also to the whole world. They hinder the dialogue between religions. It suffices here to remember the fate of several Christian communities in countries such as Pakistan and Nigeria. No one and no cause can justify such excesses. It is regrettable that the burden of integralism risks causing the religious and spiritual dimension of Islam to be forgotten.

How is dialogue with other religions proceeding?

Among the most significant experiences in recent months, one cannot fail to mention the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue which was inaugurated in Vienna on November 26 of last year. Although this centre was desired and financed for several years by Saudi Arabia, it is a broader NGO - founded by Saudi Arabia together with Austria and Spain - in which the Holy See stands as a founding observer. It forms a good channel for dialogue which we hope will not only foster a better reciprocal knowledge among believers, but will also be a suitable place to denounce the circumstances where freedom of conscience and of religion are not adequately respected and defended.

This has also been a year in which you have made some important journeys.

I would say that in this sense the visit to Nigeria last May was particularly significant. I was able to observe that the Nigerians want to live together, regardless of the differences



The Pope with Muslim religious leaders during his Visit to Lebanon (September 15, 2012)

between the North and the South. I remember an emotional visit to a technical school, located in a region where the majority are Muslims. This school is run by a Catholic priest and accommodates youth who work with wood. The atmosphere and the relationship between the young people were proof to me that inter-religious dialogue contributes to the common good. They show that notwithstanding the dramatic nature of certain situations, it is possible to live and work together! Unfortunately, there are other situations which are less encouraging. I think of Egypt, for example: a country in complete transformation. Even this year the dialogue with Al Azhar was suspended at the decision of our Muslim partners. As for us, we continue to reiterate that our doors are always open to a sincere and respectful dialogue.

What do you mean in this case by a sincere and respectful dialogue?

That we must always have before us the lofty spiritual dimension of each religion. The most important thing is to prevent that the sociological or political characteristics cause us to forget this dimension. I often notice that many Catholics, even if they long to dialogue with other believers, are discouraged by what happens around them. It is hard to forget, for example, that every five minutes a Christian is killed for the Faith. We must, of course, in any case unambiguously denounce such savagery. Having said this, a situation of this kind can be a spur for believers to deepen their own convictions and to witness that, in the midst of so much violence, that all religions favour fraternal relations. It is in this sense that all religions are an asset for the common good. The Catholic Church, for her part, remains active in the dialogue among religions, not only with Muslims but also with the believers in oriental and traditional religions. The *ad limina* visits of the bishops, who gladly come to share with us their initiatives, are a final proof of the earnestness of such a commitment.

What does the 'Year of Faith' mean in the perspective of interreligious dialogue?

During the 'Year of Faith' we shall undertake to strengthen our Christian faith so as to know its content better and to propose with words and deeds the message of Jesus Christ. Since we are at the beginning of a new year, and thus at the time for exchange of greetings, I make my own the Holy Father's wish, expressed to the Roman Curia with the words of Jesus: "Come, and you will see!" We shall pray to the Lord that the Church, notwithstanding her own hardships, become ever more recognizable as His dwelling place. We pray that we may witness ever better and even more convincingly that "we have found the One for whom the whole world is waiting, Jesus Christ, true Son of God and true man."

(L'Osservatore Romano)

Easter - Experience through the Lenten Preparation

As it is obvious that the Season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and it continues for 40 days, this is the time for us to prepare for the "most sacred celebration of the Easter Triduum."

Lent has been always penitential in nature. We are invited to turn away from our attachments to material things and everyday pleasure and examine our relationship with God and others. Each Sunday through the readings from the Scriptures, we are further invited to recall the important themes of Jesus' life and mission.

The colour of the Season of Lent as it is purple and which embraces a sound penitential preparation. Hence, as the Season of Advent, Lent too is a season of preparation; preparation for a meaningful Easter-Experience.

The Easter Triduum

On the evening of Holy Thursday, we begin the Triduum with a celebration of the Lord's Supper to commemorate the meal Jesus had with His own apostles the night before He died. It is called the Triduum because it takes place in the period of three days, beginning with the feast of the Lord's Supper on the evening of Holy Thursday and continues until evening prayer on Easter Sunday. At each celebration we retell the story of an important event in

the life of Jesus and we are to relive the great mystery of our salvation from sin and death. The Commemoration of the Lord's Supper indeed renders very im-



portant reminders for each Christian to be more and more authentic in our dealings with others. Jesus Himself reminded us with His own great example how to be humble and service-oriented with a genuine attitude. Our dealings at varying opportunities are to be pondered over in this regard; The foot-washing ceremony during the liturgy recalls Jesus' Message of Service. Sometimes this would be a challenge since the tendency in this secularised society is to be served and treated well. Holy Thursday is very important for us because two Sacraments have been gifted to us by Jesus Himself as channels of the Divine Grace. The Most Holy Eucharist and the Ministerial Priesthood have been instituted in order to be nurtured in the Lord Himself. After Holy Communion, it

is traditional to have a time set aside for the faithful to pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

Praying means a lot at this moment. The rapport Jesus had with His Heavenly Father is recalled and specially the agony Jesus experienced as a human being at the Garden of Olives is also reminded. "Thy will be done" would be the model of life of each Christian. God's will has to be lived all the time. In accordance with the Sacred Scriptures, the sole quest of Jesus was to be obedient to the Will of His Father in Heaven. His Abba experience very well reveals this reality.

On Good Friday afternoon we celebrate the Lord's Passion. We read the story from the Gospel of Jesus's Trial and Execution, His suffering from sins. As a part of our liturgy we venerate the Cross with a bow, a touch of a kiss to honour this most sacred sign of our Salvation. Veneration of the Holy Cross is not to be restricted to Good Friday alone. This veneration has to be a part and parcel of the Christian existence. In respecting and honouring others undoubtedly lies the foundation to our authentic way of life. The words of St. Paul to Philippians can be very well quoted in this relation "...Consider others better than yourself..." (2:3-11).

On the evening of Holy Saturday, we celebrate the Easter-Vigil, the most important liturgy of the year. The priest blesses new fire and lights the Paschal Candle which represents Christ, the Light of the World. The priest car-

ries the Paschal Candle into a darkened church where the light spreads to all in the Assembly. The Baptismal Water is blessed and the catechumens are baptized and confirmed. We sing "Alleluia," for the Risen Lord has filled us with new life and renewed our faith.

During the day on Easter Sunday, the Church calls all Catholics to worship at Mass to celebrate their faith and rejoice in the Salvation of the world through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Easter Time

The Easter Season begins on Easter Sunday and continues for seven weeks until Pentecost Sunday. The Feast of Pentecost usually celebrates the Coming of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples and is the birthday of the Church. During the season, we recall the appearances of Jesus Christ to His disciples after the Resurrection. A major Feast during this season is Ascension.

We are an Easter people. We have a great Hope in the Resurrected Lord. We have a great Journey, Journey to Eternity; Eternal Banquet will be our reward as intimate followers of the Lord.

Are we in a situation to say that we are genuine and frank in our Christian vocation and identity?

Hence, the baptismal vocation can be kept in mind always very specially when we are tempted to be self-centred.

Rev. Fr. Indra Ratnasiri Fernando

Share your faith - during the 'Year of Faith' The Most Important Book in My Life

There are many ways one can encounter our Risen Saviour, and each one of us have had a different experience. Since this is the 'Year of Faith' it will be appropriate if we can share our own personal story of faith whereby we can strengthen one another's faith and make our loving Saviour known and loved by bringing others to Him. Indeed, it will be good to read how our Religious got their calling to follow the Master in a special way -like the disciples who responded to Jesus' call. And, not only the Religious, but the Laity too, and it is the duty of every baptized Christian to witness for Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So let us light up our darkened world of sin with our faith stories!

My own faith came about through many factors which helped me to grow in my faith. Firstly, I will relate about the Holy Bible which is the most important Book in my life. Looking back on my life, I am truly happy I was not born into a Catholic family! Reason? I would be like most Catholics not knowing the Scriptures!! Baptized as an Anglican, I derived my religious training as a little girl in the Methodist Sunday School where I learnt the Scriptures, and also at the Scripture classes in school which was taught as a subject. However, I must mention that my faith began at home by the example of my dear mother.

Before I speak about her, I'd like to share with you this appropriate story: Four pastors were discussing the merits of the various translations of the Bible. One liked a particular version best because of its simple beautiful English. Another preferred a more scholarly edition because it was closer to the original

Hebrew and Greek. Still another liked a contemporary version because of its up-to-date vocabulary.

The fourth minister was silent for a moment, then said, "I like my mother's translation best." Surprised, the other three men said they didn't know his mother had translated the Bible. "Yes," he replied, "She translated it into life, and it was the most convincing translation I ever saw."

This is the way our life should be, and who knows we may be the only Bible that men may read! To go back to my childhood days, I can still recall how my mother used to get up extra early in order to read the Bible and say her prayers before she woke us up for our coffee. However, I never followed her habit except when I did my Nursing at the Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore (India). The only time I could read a few passages from the Bible was before I went on duty, and so I also made it a point to get up earlier to attend the Chapel Service every morning. Besides our work, we had lectures to attend and had to study every evening - under supervision! So I had to forget about relaxing and reading the Bible in the evening, but I used to recall what I had read during the course of the day and this gave me immense strength and courage, and also guidance since I was away from home at the early age of sixteen. The work was strenuous and I found it difficult and wanted to leave - since I had not done a stroke of work at home! But, I carried on - with the advice and encouragement of my dear father - and I knew I was not alone for I felt Jesus was always with me.

In almost every Protestant home, the Bible is of utmost importance, and I remember how my mother used to read it aloud to us and pray - no novenas, but her own prayers. I can still recall with a smile - though several years ago - Rev. Fr. Fernandopulle at St. Mary's Church, Dehiwela saying, "God has already heard all the prayers of the Saints, and now He wants to hear ours!" After all, we should be able to pray to Jesus like a friend and take all our troubles and cares to Him for He is always, always ever ready to help us, and we should pray for others too. The Bible touches our hearts in different ways. (Matthew 16:26), "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" These are the words that influenced my mum, and made her realize that all what the world offers is of no avail and following Jesus should be our goal, and from my early age my parents taught me that Jesus should be the most important Person in my life.

To me, it was the first Bible verse I had to memorize at Sunday School that revealed to me God's immense love to give us Jesus, and in order to have eternal life we should believe in Him. And so, from a very early age - by the grace of God - I believed in Jesus. (John 3:16), "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Never in my life have I doubted the Scriptures, and truly believe it is the Word of God - and I can say with absolute certainty that Jesus is 'The True and Living Saviour of the World'.

Every Sunday we were given a Scripture verse to memorize - I wish the same could be done by our Catholics! We should take to heart the words of St. Jerome, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." So, it is obvious if we do not know Christ, how can we give Him to others? In the past, Catholics were not encouraged to read the Bible - only to hear the Word of God at Holy Mass - but now things have changed. Listen to what Pope Benedict XVI says in recalling his own personal search 'for the face of the Lord', "It is important for us to appreciate how the face of the Lord is not only to be found in the Eucharist or in prayer, but it is also especially present in the Bible."

Psalm 23 is my favourite Psalm and I always picture myself as the little sheep being carried in the Good Shepherd's arms, (vs 4) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: For Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." My daily Psalms 91 and 112 also assure me of God's never failing care and protection from all harm and danger. Many, many years ago I had written on the front page of my Bible - now faded - the words from Psalm 119:105, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." For me, the best time to read the Bible is in the evening when I can relax after my work is done - so I can read and meditate on what I have read. I must also mention that next to the Bible I find The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis very inspirational. "It is one of the most moving narratives of intimate Christian experience ever written," (Harry Emerson Fosdick -1953).

May God's grace enable us to share our own faith experiences!

Lilian Ferdinands



Dona Catherina: The Catholic Queen



Bits & Pieces
Madi

There was a Catholic King at the end of the Kotte kingdom - Don Juan Dharmapala. He was such a devoted Catholic that he did not want the kingdom to go into the hands of any nonCatholic and he bequeathed it in writing to the hands of the Portuguese.

Karalliyadde Bandara was the King of Kande Udarata (Kandy) during this time. When King Rajasinghe of Seetawaka invaded Senkadagala (Kandy) in 1582, the King with his family fled to Trincomalee, into the safe hands of the Portuguese. Then King Karalliyadde Bandara died of small pox, entrusting his infant daughter to the custody of the Portuguese. As the daughter of the former king, Kusumasana Devi, was the legitimate heir to the throne. She gave up her former name, Kusumasana Devi and took the name of Dona Catherina and was baptized a Catholic.

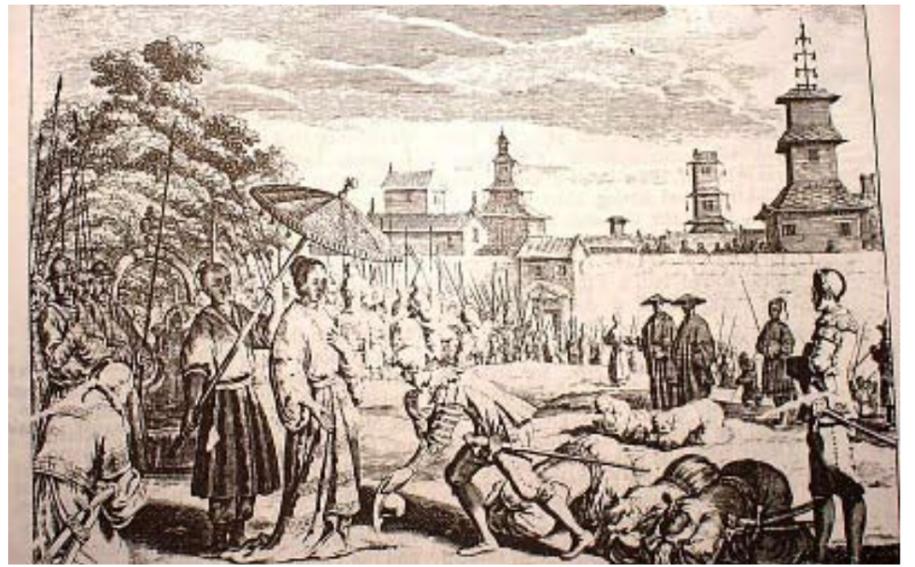
She was brought up

by Catholic nuns in Mannar who taught her the Portuguese language, the fundamentals of Christianity, all the arts and strategies of state craft, western manners and diplomacy. Historians think that the intention of the Portuguese was to make her marry a Portuguese prince and put them on the throne of Senkadagala so that they could bring Kande Udarata under their domain.

The Portuguese who had conquered almost all of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon wanted to bring Kande Udarata under their rule. They marched against and defeated the then Kandyan King Vimaladharmasuriya and enthroned Dona Catherina as the Queen of Kandy in 1594.

The ousted King Vimaladharmasuriya formerly sought the refuge of the Portuguese when his father was killed by Rajasinghe of Seetawaka. He was brought up and tutored in warfare by the Portuguese. He was even baptized as a Catholic under the name of Don Juan of Austria. He gathered local troops and routed the Portuguese army and married the legitimate heir to the throne, Dona Catherina and consolidated his position as the ruler of Kande Udarata.

Dona Catherina was only fifteen years old when she got married. She remained a good Catholic and attended religious services regularly. She had one son, Maha Astana and two daughters from Vimaladharmasuriya.



During this time the Portuguese harassed the Kandyan kingdom and the King sought Dutch help to oust the Portuguese. The first Dutch envoy who visited the Kandyan palace, Joris van Spilbergen, was surprised to find that both the King and the Queen spoke fluent Portuguese and they wore Western attire and dined like Westerners.

King Vimaladharmasuriya died in 1605 and his brother Senarath ascended the throne of Kandy. To

consolidate his power he married the widow of his brother, Dona Catherina. She was about twenty five-years-old at this time. Senarath had other children from other marriages and he wanted to make sure one of his sons became the heir to the throne. Senarath got the son of Vimaladharmasuriya and Dona Catherina, Maha Astana killed on the pretext of a drowning accident. Dona Catherina so incensed by losing her son and the heir to the throne even contemplated escaping to the hands of the Portuguese with her daughters. But her attempts failed and she died of a broken heart

in 1613.

The irony of it is that the viharas and the irrigation tanks destroyed by King Rajasinghe and the Portuguese were renovated. The Upasampada (higher ordination) among the Buddhist clergy was restored by bringing Buddhist priests from abroad. A temple was built in the centre of Senkadagala to enshrine the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Lord Buddha and the Dalada Perahara was introduced to Kandy during the reign of Vimaladharmasuriya and Dona Catherina who were baptized as Catholics by the Portuguese.

Transfiguration

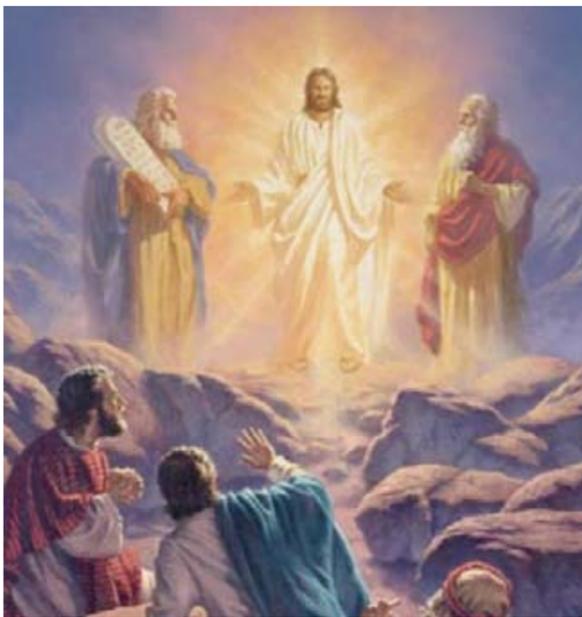
Today's Gospel narrative of the Transfiguration is like an announcement or foreshadowing of the future glory. The setting on the mountain is presented as the point where human nature meets God: The meeting place for the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus Himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth.

The Transfiguration not only supports the identity of Jesus as the Son of God (as in His Baptism) but the admonition "Listen to Him" identifies Him as the Messenger and Spokesman of God. The significance of this identification is enhanced by the presence of two key Old Testament figures, Elijah the Prophet and Moses the Law Giver. It indicates to the apostles that Jesus is the voice of God and instead of Elijah or Moses, He should be listened to, surpassing the laws of Moses by virtue of His filial relationship with God.

The Transfiguration also echoes the teaching of Jesus that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Although Moses had died and Elijah had been taken up to heaven centuries before, they now live in the presence of the Son of God, implying that the same return to life can apply to all who have faith and face death.

The conduct of the three intimate disciples is rather humiliating. They fall asleep. They will repeat this same disappointing behaviour in the Garden of Gethsamane too. Peter makes a rather childish exhortation about building earthly tents for the heavenly beings.

The Transfiguration has a two fold significance. Jesus had taken the decision to go to Jerusalem to face crucifixion. He had to be absolutely certain whether He was on God's chosen path. On the mountain top He received a double confirmation. Moses and Elijah were with Jesus. Moses was the supreme law-giver of Israel. Elijah was the greatest of the prophets. With these two



great figures accompanying Jesus, it meant that the greatest of the law-givers and the greatest of the prophets endorsed Jesus' action of facing crucifixion. It meant that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's saving plan.

The Transfiguration was also God's confirmation for Jesus to undertake the journey of the cross when God's voice commanded, "This is My beloved Son, My chosen One, listen to Him."

The Gospel account recounts that the three apostles "woke up and saw his glory." In life we miss so much because our minds are

asleep. What makes our minds take a cosy nap? There is the tendency to follow the path of least resistance. We are averse to change. We prefer the comfort and luxury of a life without challenges, inconveniences or setbacks.

There is prejudice which blocks our minds from exploring and venturing into untrodden areas. When a new idea storms the mind, we hit the snooze button. We dampen our spirit which cries out for adventure. We entertain the fear to 'launch out into the deep,' the fear of spiritual risk-taking to make our lives more meaningful and God-centred.

It was Jesus' intent to strengthen the sagging morale of the disciples through the Transfiguration. Jesus had told His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to die. They could not understand the messianic role Jesus was executing. The Transfiguration brought them closer to an awakening, an awareness of the purpose and meaning of the Son of God taking human form.

Thoughts that haunt me



A CROSS
The way 105

By Sirohmi Gunesequera

Prayer

"Did you know that the Pope is resigning on February 28, 2013?" asked Renuka in disbelief.

"I know. It is quite a shock. We are so used to this hierarchical system with the Pope at the head," commented her brother Amal.

"Anyway, it should not make a difference to us. You and I should just continue to pray and lead our normal lives."

"Yes, we should pray too for the Pontiff for it must have been hard for him to come to this decision," said Amal.

"We must all pray very hard for him and his successor. I hope that the Cardinals will be able to choose a suitable person," said Renuka.

"We all have our own problems and often talk to God about them. Isn't that what prayer is? So let the worldwide Church open its heart in prayer during these hard times when the Roman Catholics transit their Pope," said Malkanthi.

"We can go to our local priest who will keep us informed of the thinking of the Church. Meanwhile, we must not forget that this is the Season of Lent. We should pray and fast and give up goodies," said Renuka.

"We must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. He went to the desert and prayed and fasted for forty days and forty nights. That was when the devil came and tempted Him. So we too should learn to resist temptation and ask God for the strength to do so," said Malkanthi.

"Our temptations may be small but we must learn not to speculate or gossip about the Holy See. Perhaps we should think of giving up sweets for Lent. Then we can concentrate on that and just pray for a good leader of the flock," said Amal.

Ananda Perera

Renouncement of Office by the Pope

By Rev. Fr. Freely Muthukudarachchi

Pope Benedict XVI's announcement of his planned renunciation of the Papal Office came as a surprise to many in the world on the morning of Monday, February 11, the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Holy Father addressing the cardinals gathered for the consistory of the Canonization of three saints declared after prayerful consideration the following *Declaratio* regarding his renouncement.

"I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering. For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is."

The reason behind the renouncement of the Papal Office, he says comes after much prayer and reflection. *"After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry."*

Pope's who renounced the Papal Office

This is the first time in history for the last six centuries, a Pope has renounced the Papal office. It was in 1415, at the verge of a Schism in the Church of Rome that Pope Gregory XII renounced the throne in order to bring about peace in the Church. The other claimant to the throne at the time, one in Avignon, was called Benedict XIII.

Pope Gregory XII was elected to the See of Rome in 1406 and took possession of the Cathedral of the Diocese of Rome, St. John Lateran Basilica. At this time the other claimant Benedict XIII was in Avignon in France. But before the Conclave which elected the legitimate Pope Gregory XII, the cardinals had considered the causes for the Schism and promised an oath which bound each of them, if elected Pope, to hold oneself ready to renounce the Pontificate, so as to bring an end to the Schism. During this time, a new claimant was elected by a few cardinals in a hasty conclave in Pisa, who took the name John XXIII. He convoked a council in Constance in order to resolve the conflict about the true successor. In 1415 John XXIII was declared deposed and was condemned for his scandalous behaviour by the same council which even placed papal authority subject to the authority of the council. However, Pope Gregory XII convoked the council anew and rejected all the sessions convoked by John XXIII and its teachings.

In order to bring unity in the Church, Pope Gregory voluntarily submitted the declaration of his renunciation to the Council of Constance which he convoked, as sole true Pope, in the following words through a proxy, Carlo Malatesta "... renuncio et cedo ... et resigno ... in hac sacrosancta synodo et



Pope Celestine V

universali concilio, sanctam Romanam et universalem ecclesiam repraesentante." The Council approved the Pope's renunciation "The Most Holy General Synod of Constance, legitimately assembled in the Holy Spirit, representing the universal Catholic Church, accepts, approves and commends, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the cession renunciation and resignation made on behalf of the Lord who was called Gregory XII in his obedience, by the magnificent and powerful Lord Charles Malatesta, here present, his irrevocable procurator for this business, of the right, title and possession that he had, or may have had, in regard to the papacy."

After, Gregory XII had submitted his written renunciation in July 1415 and in recognition of his dignified manner of behaviour, the Council requested him to become the Bishop of Santa Rufina at Porto. Subsequently, he signed the official documents simply "Angelo Cardinal Corraro." Papal clamant Benedict XIII was deposed by the Council of Constance. However, a new successor to the Papacy was not elected for two years until the death of Pope Gregory XII. After the renounced Pope passed away on October 18, 1417 the cardinals legitimately elected the new Pope Martin V, as successor of Pope Gregory XII on November 11, 1417.

(When in 1958 Cardinal Roncalli was elected Pope, he took the name John, saying it was because his father's name was John. Thus he became Pope John XXIII, the legitimate enumeration of succession of Popes with the name, John, because earlier in 1415, an antipope also took the name John XXIII which was not valid).

Earlier in 1294, Pope Celestine V, voluntarily renounced the Pontificate at Naples, on December 13, 1294. In resigning, Pope Celestine stated the following reasons in his formula of renunciation: "We, Celestine, Pope V, moved by legitimate reasons, that is to say, for the sake of humility, of a better life and an unspotted conscience, of weakness of body and of want of knowledge, the malignity of the people, and personal infirmity, to recover the tranquility and consolation of our former life, do freely and voluntarily renounce the pontificate, the place, the dignity, occupation, and honours of which we expressly renounce, and we give full and free faculty to the College of Cardinals canonically to elect a pastor of the Universal Church."

He has been a Benedictine monk first and later was the founder of the Celestines and Prior of the Order at the time of his elevation to the papal throne. He took back his former name Peter of Morronne and retired into the hermitage of Majella and devoted



Pope Gregory XII

himself to perpetual prayer and uninterrupted mortification. After his renunciation, the Holy See was vacant for ten days. The law that was observed for the Papal renouncement was promulgated by Pope Gregory X (1271-1276) and was confirmed by Pope Celestine V, which required that a Conclave should not be commenced until nine days after the renunciation.

When Pope Celestine V was elected to the Papacy he was 79 years of age and renounced it after four months. While he was still alive in the monastery, a new Pope was elected on December 24, 1294. After two years, Pope Celestine V passed away in 1296 and was canonized a saint in 1313. Thus it was for the first time in Church history that a new Pope was in the Papacy still during the lifetime of the renounced Pope (December 1294 to May 1296). The second instance of another Pope during the lifetime of the renounced Pope will happen after the Conclave between March 15, and 20, 2013 elects a new Pope.

Canon Law on Papal Renouncement

The provisions in the current legislation on Papal renouncement is given in Canon 332 §2 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law. *"If it happens that the Roman Pontiff renounces his office, it is required for validity that the renunciation is made freely and properly manifested but not that it is accepted by anyone."* However, some may say that, keeping in line with the above legislation, the College of Cardinals must be informed of the renouncement, which the Holy Father did in the Consistory of Cardinals on February 11.

The legislation on Papal election and renouncement has undergone a series of revisions under many Popes of the last century. In the 1917 Code of Canon law, in Canon 221 there was provision for the Roman Pontiff to renounce his office. *"Si contingat ut Romanus Pontifex renuntiet, ad eiusdem renuntiationis validatem non est necessaria Cardinalium aliorumve acceptatio,"* which means, If it should occur that the Roman Pontiff decides to renounce his office, it is not necessary for the validity of the renunciation that the Cardinals or any other persons accept the renouncement.

Pope Pius XII by his Apostolic Constitution *Vacantis Apostolicae Sedis* in 1945 revised the procedure for papal elections which was in effect promulgated by Pope Pius X. It was further revised by Pope John XXIII in 1962 by his *Motu Proprio, Summi Pontificis Electio*. In 1975 Pope Paul VI issued an Apostolic

Constitution, *Romano Pontifici Elegendo*, further revising the procedure for papal elections. Most recent law with regard to Papal election was issued by Pope John Paul II in 1996 by the Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis* which abrogated all Constitutions and Orders issued in this regard by previous Roman Pontiffs. Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 issued new norms revising only in part the Apostolic Constitution of Pope John Paul II reinstating the traditional norms for the majority required to elect the Pope (UDG Art. 72, 73 & 74). Following the Papal renouncement on February 28, the norms which will be followed by the Cardinals to elect the Roman Pontiff will be taken from Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis*. However, there are no norms issued by any Pope with regard to the procedure to be followed in the event of the renouncement of office by the Roman Pontiff or incapacitated permanently by mental or physical illness except in Canon 332 which gives provision for renouncement to be freely submitted and duly manifested.

Resignation from Office - Cardinal Bishops and Priests

The general norms on resignation from an office is given in Canon 187 which says, anyone responsible for oneself can resign from an ecclesiastical office for a just cause. There are several reasons which could be given as just causes, such as the good of the Church, the good of the office or the good of the individual.

In order to resign from an office one should be capable of making such a decision or be in a sound mind. When someone has been incapacitated by a severe cause such as contracting Alzheimer's disease, gone into a coma, suffered from a mentally disabling stroke or severe psychological illness that person is not capable of resigning from office.

In the Church, there are other offices from which one can resign or which Canon Law states that resignation can be presented by the office holder. If a cardinal or a bishop is resigning from office, it should be presented to the Holy Father. The cardinals who preside over dicasteries and other permanent institutes of the Roman Curia and Vatican City and who have completed the seventy fifth-year-of-age are asked to submit their resignation from office to the Roman Pontiff who will see to the matter after considering the circumstances (Canon 354). Pope Paul VI introduced that when cardinals reach the age of eighty, that their membership in the curial congregations are terminated automatically (*Ingravescentem aetatem*) and they also lose their voting rights and will no longer be electors at a Conclave (*Universi Dominici Gregis*).

Concerning the resignation of bishops there are two circumstances in which a bishop is requested to resign from office. A diocesan bishop who has completed the seventy fifth-year-of-age is requested to present his resignation from office to the Supreme Pontiff, who will make provision after he has examined all the circumstances. This speaks

(Contd on Pg. 10)

'Where there is Love, there is Faith'

Years ago the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the Catholic Academy of Bavaria, his hometown in Germany, on "Why I am still in the Church," and perhaps on these lines His Eminence, the Archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith presently making his pastoral visits to parishes in the Archdiocese of Colombo, has a topic for the 'Year of Faith'; "Why I am happy to be a Catholic."

Last Sunday the Archbishop visited one of the most beautiful and revered Churches in the Archdiocese, All Saints' Church, Borella and after Holy Mass, His Eminence spoke to the parishioners about his journey in the Catholic Church. Referring to his talk as a Catechesis, His Eminence spoke in point form to stress his message.

► The Church founded by Jesus Christ

I am happy to be a part of the Church founded by Jesus Christ on the foundation of the Apostles. The Catholic Church is the solid foundation of Saints Peter and Paul and the Apostles and this is the longest story of God's love for me expressed through these human beings. Christ's own words to St. Peter when He instituted the Church were, *'Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my church'* (Matthew 16:18). I am happy to be a part of this apostolic faith.

► A Church filled with Human Beings

The Catholic Church is a Church filled with human beings of various nationalities, races, castes but we are all not holy. We are all sinners, be it the clergy or the lay faithful. I may be the Archbishop but I have to make my confession every week as I am also sinful. Yet the Catholic Church is not only sinful but saintly as well. It shows to the world a human drama, the story of humanity's real struggle to live and I am happy to be a part of that struggle as it helps me to grow.

► A Symbol of Love

The Church is a symbol of love for me. She symbolises an old mother with all her wrinkles and one who loves me. Throughout the centuries there are many things the Church did and which are not worthy of us but we have produced living saints. The most beautiful flowers bloom in the mud and just like that in this Church with all its sins, we have beautiful flowers that bloomed. - Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Maxmilian Kolbe, who was a Polish Conventual Franciscan Friar who volunteered to die in place of a stranger at the Auschwitz concentration camp. When Fr. Maxmillian Kolbe was canonized the children of the man whom he saved were present at the Vatican. So the Catholic Church is a Church full of Saints and these Saints are powerful instruments of conversion. I am happy to belong to this Communion of Saints.

► The Presence of Jesus Christ

I belong to a Church where Jesus is present in person. In Matthew 28:28-30, Jesus says, *"I will be with you till the end of time."* The Church is human and it is weak and Jesus said he will be with this Church. Presently the Church is preparing to select a new pope. We should not worry about this because Jesus is with the Church and He will guide us.



"The Catholic Church is a Church filled with human beings of various nationalities, races, castes but we are all not holy. We are all sinners, be it the clergy or the faithful. I may be the Archbishop but I have to make my confession every week as I am also sinful. Yet the Catholic Church is not only sinful but saintly as well. It shows to the world a human drama, the story of humanity's real struggle to live and I am happy to be a part of that struggle as it helps me to grow."

► Links me with Spiritual Faith and Grace

Though we live on earth, the Catholic Church links us with the victorious souls in heaven who make up the Communion of Saints. Through these saints we are spiritually connected to the universal community of brothers and sisters in heaven. With all the saints who are listed in the Martyrology there are also millions of saints whose names are not written in this catalogue and we can pray to them as they may be our own parents, grandparents or relatives. So it is very important that we pray to them and invoke their blessings. The etymology of the name 'Catholic' comes from the Greek word *Katholikos* meaning universal - a church without limits - which takes me beyond language and social status and this is another reason why I am happy to be a Catholic.

► Opportunity to refashion my options

Through the Sacrament of Penance, the Church gives me the opportunity to take positive steps in my life. This Sacrament is a great blessing and gives me the opportunity to unburden myself by going to a priest and saying, "Father, I have sinned." Through the priest the Church absolves my sins and my soul is joyfully liberated and I can breathe once again as I am free of my sins. Many people go to a psychiatrist for this. Through the Sacrament of Penance I am able to restart my life and enter a life of fullness. The Scripture tells us about the Prodigal Son and the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant and Christ Himself tells us to forgive seventy times seven. *"I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven"* (Matthew 18:22).

► The Eucharist

Pope John Paul II said that *'the Eucharist is a Piece of Heaven on Earth'*. St. Paul said that the Eucharist is the manifestation of the wounded Body of Christ. Through this Eucharist, Jesus wants to be part of me and I tell Him, "Lord take me to You, give me eternity. Take me to heaven." - It is the Catholic Church that gives me the Lord and I believe in Christ's presence when the words of consecration are offered by the priest. Through the Eucharist, Christ wants to help me in my journey of faith.

► The Word of God

The Word of God is revealed continuously in the Catholic Church. It speaks to me and enters into a dialogue with me. The Word of God and the Sacraments are like two parallel lines. I was fortunate to study the Sacred Scripture in the Holy Land in Jerusalem and I learnt how the Jews worship and love the Word of God. The Word of God is dense with content and taking one verse you can make a long reflection. The Bible is a living experience and it comes with all the negativity of human life. I can get a rich experience of what God tells me within the portals of the Catholic Church, through the Word of God.

► Mother Mary

The Catholic Church tells me I have a Heavenly Mother. Jesus loved His Mother and He knew she loved Him so much and so He gave His mother as a gift to us. (John 19:26) From this day onwards the Mother of Jesus became the Mother of the Church. Some people fault the Catholic Church and say that we worship Mary. The Protestants termed it Mariolatry but we venerate her as the Mother of God. Through the Sacred Scripture we see that Mother Mary had tremendous power over her Son. At the Wedding Feast of Cana, He did what she told Him to. She was there with the apostles' right throughout after the death of Jesus. She accompanied the first community of Christians. So I love Mary because Jesus gave her to me.

Winding up his Catechesis, His Eminence advised the faithful not to leave the Church for flimsy reasons. The Church may be sinful but it is full of saints like the stars which lead fishermen to their homes in the night. So too the Saints help us in our journey as Christians. So cherish your faith and stand firm in your convictions.

In answer to a question on how one defines faith, His Eminence said, *"Where there is love, there is faith. If God loves you and you love Him, you don't have to worry about anything."*

Life and Times of Pope Benedict XVI

By Rear Admiral Shemal Fernando, RSP, USP, MSc

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI stunned the world on February 11, 2013 by declaring that he will renounce the ministry as the Successor of Saint Peter from February 28, 2013 at 2000 hours, becoming the first Pope in nearly 600 years to resign from the office. In a short and precise but carefully worded statement, he stressed that after having repeatedly examined his conscience before God, he came to the certainty that his strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry. He further said that he was well aware that his ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering.

Just before his election to the Chair of Peter as the 265th Chief Shepherd of the Roman Catholic Church on April 19, 2005, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was identified as one of the most influential people in the world by the renowned "Time" magazine. Yet, at the Mass of Papal Installation, he asked, "Now, at this moment, weak servant of God that I am, I must assume this enormous task, which truly exceeds all human capacity. How will I be able to do it?"

Throughout the 8-year pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI has attracted enormous masses of people from all over the world to Saint Peter's Basilica for his numerous public encounters. The number of pilgrims who have participated in the Liturgical Celebrations, Wednesday General Audiences and Sunday Angelus with the Holy Father in the Eternal City is greater than that recorded for these types of gatherings in the pontificates of his predecessors.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was not only the key adviser of Pope John Paul II of revered memory for over 20 years as his Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith but also the most revered prelate, scholar, theologian, teacher and Catholic author of our time having spoken on everything from sexual consumerism, private revelation and the "crisis of faith," to human rights, marriage, the priesthood and the future of the world.

Yet, the depth, candor and humble servitude of the Holy Father will likely be his lasting hallmark. In his book titled, "Jesus of Nazareth," the first published as the Pope, he describes his personal search for the face of Jesus. He says: "I wanted to portray the Jesus of the Gospels as the real, 'historical' Jesus in the strict sense of the word....I believe that this Jesus - the Jesus of the Gospels - is a historically plausible and convincing figure."

Early Life

In 1957, under the renowned professor Gottlieb Sohngen, he qualified for University teaching with a dissertation on: "The Theology of History in St Bonaventure."

Ratzinger became widely known during the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965 when at the age of 35, he was appointed as the Chief Theological Advisor to Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joseph Frings. His intense scientific activity led him to important positions at the German Bishops' Conference and the International

Theological Commission.

Archbishop and Cardinal

On March 25, 1977, Pope Paul VI named him Archbishop of Munich and Freising and received his Episcopal ordination on May 28, the same year. He was the first Diocesan priest for 80 years to take on the pastoral governance of the great Bavarian Archdiocese. He chose as his Episcopal motto a phrase from 3 John 8: "Fellow Worker in the Truth".

On June 27, 1977, he was elevated a Cardinal by Pope Paul VI, with the titular church of St. Mary of Consolation in Tiburtina. In 1978, he took part in the Conclave of August which elected John Paul I, who named him his Special Envoy to the III International Mariological Congress celebrated in Ecuador from 16 to 24 September. In the month of October of the same year he took part in the Conclave that elected Pope John Paul II.

In 1980, he was named by Pope John Paul II to chair the Special Synod on the Laity on the theme: "Mission of the Christian Family in the world of today," and was Delegate President of the VI Ordinary General Assembly of 1983 on "Reconciliation and Penance in the mission of the Church".

On November 25, 1981, Pope John Paul II summoned Cardinal Ratzinger to Rome and named him the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and President of the International Theological Commission. The Holy Father elevated him to the Order of Bishops assigning to him the Suburbicarian See of Velletri-Segni on April 5, 1993.

On November 6, 1998, Pope John Paul II approved the election of Cardinal Ratzinger as Vice-Dean of the College of Cardinals, submitted by the Cardinals of the Order of Bishops. On November 30, 2002, the Holy Father approved his election as Dean of the College of Cardinals; together with this office he was entrusted with the Suburbicarian See of Ostia.

Election as the Pope

As the Dean of the College of Cardinals, he presided over the College's deliberations in General Congregation during the Vacancy of the Holy See, after the death of Pope John Paul II on April 2, 2005. In the same capacity, he presided at the Solemn Funeral Mass for Pope John Paul II on April 8, 2005 in St. Peter's Square, and the Mass for the Election of the Supreme Pontiff celebrated by the College of Cardinals on April 18, 2005.

That afternoon the Cardinals inaugurated the Conclave for the election of the successor to St. Peter, under the presidency of Cardinal Ratzinger at the Sistine Chapel. The single vote that afternoon produced no election. In the morning of April 19, 2005, two ballots of the Conclave produced no election. However, on the first ballot of the afternoon, the fourth of the Conclave, Cardinal Ratzinger was elected. On April 24, 2005, he celebrated the Mass for the Inauguration of his Pontificate in St. Peter's Square, receiving the Pallium and the Fisherman's Ring at that Liturgical Celebration.

Audience with the Pope

I had the rare honour and



bleeding to meet the Holy Father on November 17, 2010 in the Holy City of Vatican along with my wife. We were touched, inspired and encouraged by his words, "Sri Lanka is a beautiful country and I love your country so much". It was a few days before the Papal Consistory that elevated the Archbishop of Colombo as a Cardinal and when we thanked the Pontiff for the blessing bestowed on Sri Lanka, he quipped, "Cardinal Ranjith has worked tirelessly for the Church and conveyed his Apostolic blessings on His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and all Sri Lankans".

It was indeed an unforgettable moment in our lives and we treasure very much the gifts we received from the Holy Father during the audience. He is a Pope who will be remembered as a man who appreciated the humanity of everyone he met. He is someone who gives you his complete attention when you meet him. It is that sense of humanity and openness that he gave to everyone that he will be remembered for.

Pope Benedict XVI has given the Church stability. He was very much an authoritarian figure and he was immensely trusted by the Church. It was with a heavy heart but complete understanding that Catholics all over the world learned of the Pope's declaration of his decision to lay down the ministry as the Head of the Roman Catholic Church, an office which he has held with great dignity, insight and courage. He has indeed left a very personal signature as a thinker and also as a shepherd.

Publications

His many publications are spread out over a number of years and constitute a point of reference for many people especially for those interested in entering deeper into the study of theology. His best-selling books include: *The Ratzinger Report* (1985); *Salt of the Earth* (1996); *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (2000); *God and the World* (2002); *God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life* (2003). Special mention should be made of his "Introduction to Christianity" (1968) - a collection of University lectures on the Apostolic Creed and "Dogma and Preaching" (1973) - an anthology of essays, sermons and reflections.

His address to the Catholic Academy of Bavaria on "Why I am still in the Church" had a wide resonance; in it he stated with his usual clarity: "One can only be a Christian in the Church, not beside the Church." On the occasion

of his 70th birthday the volume "At the School of Truth" was published, containing articles by several authors on different aspects of his personality and production.

Doctorates

He has received numerous "Honoris Causa" Doctorates, in 1984 from the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota; in 1986 from the Catholic University of Lima; in 1987 from the Catholic University of Eichstatt; in 1988 from the Catholic University of Lublin; in 1998 from the University of Navarre; in 1999 from the Libera University Maria of Rome and in 2000 from the Faculty of Theology of the University of Wroclaw in Poland.

Pastimes

An accomplished pianist who loves Mozart and Beethoven, Ratzinger used to visit the peaceful halls of St. Michael's Seminary in Regensburg to stay in the bishop's apartment and enjoy playing the grand piano in the seminary's main hall. He also loves walking through downtown Traunstein, meeting and greeting people. Traunstein is where Ratzinger went through the harrowing years of Nazi rule and World War II.

Ratzinger as a priest had repeatedly stated that he would like to retire to a Bavarian village and dedicate himself to writing books, but as a Cardinal, he told friends that he was ready to "Accept any charge God placed on him." On election as the Pope he said, "...the Cardinals have elected me, a simple and humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord. I am comforted by the fact that the Lord knows how to work and act even with insufficient instruments....".

I like to end this article with the following words of Pope's speech announcing his planned resignation, "Dear Brothers, I thank you most sincerely for all the love and work with which you have supported me in my ministry and I ask pardon for all my defects. And now, let us entrust the Holy Church to the care of Our Supreme Pastor, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and implore his holy Mother Mary, so that she may assist the Cardinal Fathers with her maternal solicitude, in electing a new Supreme Pontiff. With regard to myself, I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer".

She was a walking encyclopaedia

Elsie Selvaratnam was born in Mannar Sri Lanka in 1924 and we lost her at the grand age of 87. She was the eldest of 4 siblings, the deceased Mahendren and Thiagam, and Saras, affectionately known as Chinna. She attended the Holy Family Convent in Jaffna, and at the tender age of 18 she married the late Joseph Selvaratnam a charming superintendent from the Police Force. She gave the gift of life to six well groomed children Marie, Joe, Jude, Gerry, Tim (pappa), Sue and Amirthi. She left nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Family and friends were always her priority, she enjoyed looking after them and most importantly filling their stomach with all manner of delicious food. Whenever we went to visit her in America she would make sure that there was a fresh



Elsie Selvaratnam

caramel pudding waiting for me in the fridge.

During her life time she encountered many trials and tribulations, she lost her son Jude at the age of 10 and in 1984 following the burning down of the family home and the constant worry that their life was in danger, appachie, grandda-da and aunty Amirthi had to uproot from a well established life in Sri Lanka and start a new life in the

cold and unknown place of Huntington, USA.

Despite these hurdles Appachie took it all in her stride, with her faith, unselfishness and kindness she once again created a life for the family in Huntington. It was not long after this chapter started that she lost her beloved husband to cancer in 1988. As well as a husband he was a beloved father and grandfather. His death was a great loss for the whole family but this did not hold Appachi back. Her strength and faith again played a very important part in the healing process.

During her many visits to the UK, I remembered how Appachie liked

to socialize with all her friends and family. As far as she was concerned, everyone was related to her, hence we grew to accept the many, unexpected visitors at home following daily mass attendance. Having her around was like having a walking encyclopaedia and a historian rolled into one. She was widely read and knowledgeable about most subjects, but she also knew all the gossip and latest information about all our family and friends and took great pride in explaining all the connection to all the grandchildren. Her famous words when you questioned her was "what child they are related to us they are family"

Selina Selvaratnam

Renouncement of Office ...

(Contd from Pg. 7)

of a voluntary retirement of all bishops at the age seventy five. The second instance is when a diocesan bishop has become less able to fulfill his office because of ill health or some other grave cause is earnestly requested to present his resignation from office (para. § 2) The same applies to the auxiliary and coadjutor bishops (Canon 403).

Concerning the resignation of parish priests, it is to be submitted to the diocesan bishop. When a pastor has completed seventy five-years-of-age, he is requested to submit his resignation from office to the diocesan bishop who is to decide to accept it or differ it after he has considered all the circumstances of the person and the place (Canon 538).

In these instances it is mentioned that resignation must be made to the authority to whom, it pertains to make provision of the office in question (Canon 189). It further says that a resignation which requires acceptance lacks all force if it is not accepted within three months; one which does not require acceptance takes effect when it has been communicated by the one resigning according to the norm of law. In the present event of the Holy Father's renouncement of office, it will take effect on February 28, at 8.00 p.m. as it has been already communicated to the College of Cardinals.

New title - Pope Emeritus

According to Canon 402, a retired bishop retains the title of Emeritus of his diocese and can retain a place of residence in that diocese if he so desires, unless in certain cases the Apostolic See provides otherwise because of special circumstances. Concerning parish priests it is mentioned that diocesan bishop must provide suitable support and housing for a retired pastor.

The Vatican spokesman Father Lombardi in briefing the news agencies mentioned that the Holy Father would go to Castelgandolfo, the Papal summer residence immediately after leaving office and following that he will live in a former cloistered monastery inside the Vatican. He also mentioned that the Pope would not participate in the upcoming Conclave. According to the norm of law, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger will be able to retain his title as Bishop (Pope) Emeritus of Rome or Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

It is said that the Holy Father read the Latin text of the *Declaratio*, his declaration of renouncement of office written in his own hand, speaking in a firm, calm voice, while those present listened to him in an almost unreal silence. It was Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the former Secretary of State and the present Dean of the College of Cardinals who rose up to the moment and responded to the Holy Father.

"Now, let me say, on behalf of this apostolic college—the College of Cardinals—on behalf of your beloved collaborators, allow me to say that we are closer than ever to you, as we have been during these almost eight luminous years of your pontificate. On 19 April 2005, if I remember correctly, at the end of the Conclave I asked ... 'Do you accept your canonical election as Supreme Pontiff?' And you did not hesitate, although moved with emotion, to answer that you accepted, trusting in the Lord's Grace and the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church. Like Mary on that day she gave her 'yes'; and your luminous Pontificate began, following in the wake of continuity, in that continuity with your 265 predecessors in the Chair of Peter, over two thousand years of history from the Apostle Peter, the humble Galilean fisherman, to the great popes of the last century from St. Pius X to Blessed John Paul II.

"Holy Father, before 28 February, the day that, as you have said, you wish to place the word 'end' to your pontifical service, conducted with so much love and so humbly, before 28 February, we will be able to better express our feelings. We are near to you, Holy Father, and we ask you to bless us."

The Holy Father has taken a timely decision, taking into consideration the noble and magnanimous mission of the Church which requires a great deal of courage and strength when facing the pressures of the modern world and giving leadership to the Holy Catholic Church. I am sure during his retirement in a cloistered monastery inside the Vatican, he will create a spiritual power house which will generate an enormous volume of power of prayer for the whole Church.

"With regard to myself, I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer," Pope Benedict XVI said.

OBITUARY



STELLA WINIFRED SWARIS beloved wife of the late J.B.C. Swaris (High Court Judge). Loving mother of Manjula (Australia) and Kishanie. Mother-in-law of Lalith and Chithral, precious grandmother of Imeshie, Dushan, Shevon, Devmini and Erandi and Kanchana. Sister of the late Patricia, late Victorine, late Lanni, the late Joe and Fred. Passed away peacefully. Burial took place at St. Sebastian's Church, Moratuwa on Sunday 18th. The family members thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral sent floral tributes and condolence messages. No. 10, Fernando Place, Moratuwa.

APPRECIATION

"Our Mother Was The Heart Of Our Home"

*"Our Mother was the heart of our home
Her presence was a comfort and strength
She blessed our lives in so many ways
Through the selfless service she gave*

And as we remember the gift of her life

All the ways she cared for our family

We honour her love and her sacrifice

A dedication that was clear for all to see

Building memories for a family she loved

As children we knew we could count on her

And we knew how very blessed we were

To have a Mother as wonderful as this

There is so much that our Mother meant to us

Only in our family can her true influence be known

For she loved us with all her soul ...

throughout a lifetime

Mother was truly the heart of our home!

*Remembered affectionately with deep love and
gratitude,*

Your everloving children

Neluka, Premil & Mahima

10 ways to fast for Lent

Fasting is a path to peace and happiness. Self-denial leads to a greater sense of wholeness. That is why Christians have fasted for thousands of years. Many Christians today are creative about fasting and Lent can be a time of shedding whatever is standing between you and God. Here are some creative ways of fasting which you can try.

Fast from Media - You can fast from TV. That means you, lose tele-dramas, news, films etc. Chances are, you know what your media addiction is.

Fast from People - Fast from social events. Keep your days to yourself and God. Devote to silence, prayer, reflection and study.

Fast from Lust and Bad Thoughts - Lent is a time of utter consecration to God (1 Cor. 7:5). Think of good people, deeds, services and relationships.

Fast from Money - Time to think of your relationship to all material things, chiefly cash. Fast from money by living only in what you need. Reflect and pray a lot about your financial practices. When Easter comes you will have more money but this practice will redefine your relationship to money.

Fast from Food - Choose a meal to give up food in your daily routine and dedicate the time to God.

Fast from Reading - Stay away from non-essential internet reading, emails and books. Instead give your mind to God. Let your mind rest and experience silence. When your fast is done, you will have learned to read in new ways.

Fast from Waste - Reduce your own waste. This means being careful about how you use everything so that almost nothing is wasted. As a result you may redefine how you move through and use the world.

Fast from Talking and Texting - You may fast from people but may communicate through phone or by texting messages. So take a break from unnecessary communication. Do not talk or text just because you have nothing else to do. Replace that time with mindfulness to God, your surroundings and yourself. This will open up the communication lines with God.

Fast from Multitasking -It is overloading our minds and actions with plans and activities. Allow yourself to do one thing at a time. Let go something that is bad. Set your priorities. Put time in God's hands by doing only one thing at a time and reminding yourself that you are simplifying for Him.

Fast from Speeding - You may love to drive fast. Yet remember you may endanger someone on the road. Instead limit your speed, enjoy your ride, be comfortable and polite. This will bring about a good attitude in you.

Let us try this during this Lent and improve our personality.

Stepping down, is it weakness or humility?

In the local cricketing arena, captains of the calibre of Arjuna Ranatunge, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardena were humble enough to step down and continue under the captaincy of another. This was because they possibly felt the heavy burden of captaincy weighing them down and interfering with their performance. It was also because they were convinced that they could do better and contribute much more towards the success of the team as specialized players, than as a confused and worried captain. In plain and simple terms, they stepped down in the best interest of the team and the sportsmanship of cricket. This has now come to be a regular feature in the cricketing world.

Sensible actions precipitate as a practice and a frequent practice qualifies as a norm. Acting differently is not wrong, but it raises the brows of many, since it apparently seems an abstract way of behaviour to some. Many invariably raise the question why. A bit of more logic and sense would provide them with the answer. It may not be conventional and traditional, but yet if it keeps within the ambit of the rule and the law, then why not permit and accept it.

To act against convention and tradition is not revolutionary. Some do it for valid reasons, which others follow suit. Some others without grasping the inner and hidden meaning tend to criticize blindly. However many are conveniently compelled to use the same beaten track and do not wish to deviate from the usual practice and trend. Thus a stagnant and a narrow minded attitude may not welcome a sweeping change.

At times a change may result in going astray from customary methods and practice as well. For instance a bride is taken up the aisle to the altar by her father. In the absence of one, an uncle or a brother may step in. Have you ever seen it being done by both parents or solely by a mother? Even if it happens, what is so scandalous about it? Burials are seldom done on Tuesdays and Fridays. Choosing these two days crossing public opinion, should in no way trigger the critics any more.



The accepted trend is that the vice-captain is promoted as the captain and an assistant is elevated to chief in command. This is how the line of authority works, but it does not have to be the same always. One might be appointed or elected to a designation for a specified period. Therein one has to step down after the lapse of the stipulated time frame or at the age of retirement. How many clamour and strive to extend their stay by influence or by other means of force.

On the contrary, if a person who could go on holding office till the end without any limitation or restriction,

decides to step down prematurely, that move surprises all. It may erupt many questions, since it is a phenomenal occurrence. This selfless and honourable act attracts a great deal of praise and admiration. It happened 600 years ago when Pope Gregory XII renounced the papacy and it will recur once more with Pope Benedict XVI.

This creates a precedence not to hold on to an office, ailing on a sick bed but to honourably give away to another. Pope Benedict did it, obviously for the betterment of the Universal Catholic Church.

What a glorious and exemplary precedence this would create. Many would uphold and applaud this gesture and hope it continues as a norm or at least as a tradition in the future. This could provide a choice for the authority who holds the office of Peter, not to be taxed in spite of an unhealthy body and a weary mind.

After assuming office as the Pontiff in April 2005, Pope Benedict from the outset brought forth many changes. Led by the Spirit, many pronouncements were made and carried out. The best inspirational move he made was to break new grounds, in deciding to step down from his office of authority. It simply is an exemplary act of emptying at the appropriate time. Pope Benedict would have definitely felt that more justice would be served towards the Church by a healthier Pontiff than himself. This evidently shows the humility of the Holy Father in accepting the reality and his utmost loyalty towards the Church at large.

'Give up' and 're-nounce' are the key words pronounced and dictated by the doctrine of faith we follow. Even the ones who teach and preach find it not that easy, to put it into practice. Only the ones who have a deep sense of spirituality may succeed. Jesus did it by giving up His life for us. Pope Benedict too is likely to follow suit by giving up authority and stepping down gracefully. It truly will be a humble step forward and a giant step in the annals of the Universal Church.

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Felicitations for the Advanced Level Students of St. Lawrence's Convent



St. Lawrence's Convent, Col 06 held a felicitation ceremony on February 12, 2013 for the many students who showed exceptional performance including 3rd place in the all island rankings at the G.C.E (A/L) examination 2012. This programme had many activities including the presentation of awards and prizes to the students including Miss Hiruni Bolonne who was ranked 3rd. Sharing of experiences by the students and the offering of words of appreciation by the principal, a teacher and distinguished guests concluded the ceremony.

Nimesha Jayamanne

At least a hour

Why not give me one hour
Share my mercy given with power
Love infinite was only my honour
Given to all leaving no horror.

True Presence is always sure to be felt
Only our experience will vouch the truth by itself
So let's remain with God and share with all
Let me offer them to answer His call

One hour I truly embrace with so much pleasure
So why not you offer it at your leisure
Rightly matters what you gain that cannot measure
A Precious treasure to encounter in life for ever.

God's agony and passion was an example to all
Love and compassion was the sacrifice
common to all

Dying on the Cross He remembered all big and small
Pleading for forgiveness was made as His final
call.

Francis

"Challenge of Living"

I "recall" the journey of my life in "muddy water."
Experiencing the "crisis" even "calamities"....
Realizing an active life moving through trouble.
My life slowly started "having depth" and
"making sense."

When I face conflicts within me
It reminds of the "suffering of the servant"
Pain and confusion overwhelmed me,
"Shaping" of my life "moulding" loaded...

"Letting the self still"
I find the treasure within me
It 'orients' me as a "turning point of my life"
I approach the "welcoming hands" of "His Love"

With the experience of the "challenges of living"
Making "flashes back" of my life
I integrate my "whole life" to "be with Him"
He "empowers" me to live "according to His Love"

"The plans, the pains, the joys the sorrow and
the very diverse experiences of my life"
As it comes through in my daily living

Sr. A. Christina Lourdes (H.F.)

A tribute paid to a Professor by a student

Way back in the 1950's, before the second Vatican Council was convoked by the truly inspired vision and the remarkably keen foresight of good Pope John the XXIII, the venerable, the ever ancient, and ever new Latin language was the medium of instruction in the National Seminary in Kandy.

Our Professor of Psychology that particular time, was none other than Fr. Michael Rodrigo OMI of revered and fond memory who subsequently became the victim of a ruthless and senseless killing for trying so valiantly to foster and promote social justice among the people of a very remote area of the country, who were both materially poor and socially backwards.

One of the principles he enunciated with a great deal of panache and the facility he had with the Latin language was:

"Nihil est in intellectus quod non prius fuerit in sensu."

For those of us whose acquaintance with the language is still far from rusty, the meaning of the sentence is crystal clear and totally meaningful.

"There is nothing in the intellect, which was not previously in the senses."

This short poem was inspired by that psychology principle and is lovingly dedicated to the memory of this great and intrepid teacher whose student I was so immensely proud, privileged and to be a part of. His tall, thin, lanky, bony and frail frame belied the brilliant head he carried on his shoulders.

Through the webbed window,
Of my abode tiny, I bestow,
On knees humbly bended low,
A prayer for the beauty below.

Overwhelmed by the senses five,
So clear, sharp and all sensitive,
Peaceful, quiet but yet alive,
See in all these, the hand divine.

Your beauty dazzling is all around me,
In graceful shapes and yet so free,
To eyes wonderful a blessing be,
For beholding the marvel of a tree.

In the chirping of birds and babbling brooks,
A blessing for ears is given for these,
For breezes that rustle the trees.
The music of the heart provides the keys.

Purple, white and red are the flowers,
Fit enough to be given to lovers,
Full measure always to the givers,
Aroma to inhale he truly empowers.
The tongue is for tasting they say,
Truly amazing and always that way,
For the noisy or silent gift that lay,
A bunch of thanks I sing now and pray.

The primal touch of his hands so life giving,
Is felt this day in ways most loving,
For all these to continue, he more than willing,
To him a paean of praise I chant in thanksgiving.

Rev. Fr. Joe Paul Fernando

Points for Reflection

PERSONALITY

- * Don't compare your life to others; You have no idea what their journey is all about.
- * Don't have negative thoughts of things you cannot control. Instead invest your energy in the positive present moment.
- * Don't overdo; keep your limits.
- * Don't take yourself so seriously; no one else does
- * Don't waste your precious energy on gossip
- * Dream more while you are awake
- * Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need..
- * Forget issues of the past. Don't remind your partner of his/her mistakes of the past. That will ruin your present happiness.
- * Life is too short to waste time hating anyone. Don't hate others.
- * Make peace with your past so it won't spoil the present.
- * No one is in charge of your happiness except you.
- * Realize that life is a school and you are here to learn. Problems are simply part of the curriculum that appear and fade away like algebra class but the lessons you learn will last a lifetime.
- * Smile and laugh more
- * You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.

COMMUNITY

- * Call your family often.
- * Each day give something good to others.
- * Forgive everyone for everything
- * Spend time with people over the age of 70 & under the age of 6
- * Try to make at least three people smile each day
- * What other people think of you is none of your business
- * Your job will not take care of you when you are sick. Your family and friends will. Stay in touch.

LIFE

- * Put GOD first in anything and everything that you think, say and do.
- * GOD heals everything
- * Do the right things
- * However good or bad a situation is, it will change
- * No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up
- * The best is yet to come.

Ash Wednesday

The forerunner of the Lenten season

Symbolic reminder

Of man's mortality

Of death's inevitability.

The return to dust and ashes

From whence he sprung.

A clarion call for repentance

Arise man from your torpid state

The symbolic ashes seem to say.

Repent- it's never too late.

From the fetters of sin be free

"Do not ask for whom the bell tolls

It tolls for thee".

Jeannette Cabraal

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What it says in the Readings

From the bright cloud, the Father's voice was heard; 'This is My Son, the Beloved. Listen to Him!'

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR C 24th Feb. - March 3 2013

Sun: Second Sunday of Lent

Gen. 15:5-12,17,18;

Phil 3: 17 4:1 (or 3:20-4:1); Lk. 9:28b-36

Mon: Dan. 9:4B-10; LK. 6:36-38

Tue: Is. 1:10, 16-20; Mt. 23:1-12

Wed: Jer.18: 18-20; Mt. 20:17-28

Thu: Jer.17:5-10; Lk. 16:19-31

Fri: Gen.37:3-4,12-13a,17b-28; Mt.21:33-43,45-46

Sat: Mic7:14-15,18-20;Lk.15:1-3,11-31

Sun: Third Sunday of Lent

Ex. 3: 1-8a,13-15; 1 Cor.10:1-6,10-12;

Lk. 13:1-9

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Lord hear us in your love.

For the Pope and the bishops: that they may sustain the people of God in faith, hope and love. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear us in your love.

For all those who exercise authority that the Lord may watch over them and help them to fulfil their responsibilities worthily and well. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear us in your love.

For all the sick and the handicapped that they may get the courage and strength they need so as to bear their cross with dignity. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear us in your love.

For each of us the followers of Jesus: that we may listen to his words and put them into practice in our daily lives. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear us in your love.

St. Polycarp February 23

Bishop Martyr, Apostolic Father of the Church (2nd century)

St. Polycarp was converted and instructed by St. John the Evangelist. He must have been some 37 years-old when that aged Apostle consecrated him Bishop of Smyrna (in Turkey) shortly before his banishment to Patmos. Polycarp proved himself a saintly and very able administrator in the face of poverty and constant persecution by the Jews. In 155 when he was probably 86, he undertook a journey to Rome to consult with Pope St. Anicetus about the vexing question of the Easter date. This meeting did not resolve the controversy, but the Pope did permit the venerable Bishop to continue in his Eastern tradition, which regarded the 14th day of the month of Nisan as the day on which Our Lord arose from the dead, and that day was celebrated regardless of whether it fell on a Sunday or a weekday.

Polycarp had hardly returned to his See when—under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius—a fierce persecution of Christians broke out. Upon the entreaties of the faithful he concealed himself on the outskirts

of the city, but a slave revealed, under torture, his hiding place. Brought before the judgement seat of the proconsul, he was urged to swear by the genius of Caesar and to curse Christ, but he calmly made this famous reply: "Eighty-six years have I served Him, and never did He fail me! How could I now blaspheme my King and Saviour? I am a Christian!"

Condemned to be burned alive, Polycarp's hands were tied behind his back in the stadium at Smyrna, and while he continued to praise the Blessed Trinity and to thank the Lord for permitting him to drink of his chalice, great heaps of fagots were piled up around him. The executioner awaited with awe the termination of his prayers and did not apply the torch until after the "Amen". But as the flames shot up all around, the saintly figure, so says the circular sent around by the



Church of Smyrna to all the brotherhoods of the holy and universal Church to acquaint them with the ongoing persecution, was found unscathed! He was thus instantly dispatched with a spear and his body burned (c. 155/161-169).

The genuine "acts" that have come down to us, describing how the holy Bishop, like the Good Shepherd, laid down his life for the sheep of his flock

at Smyrna, is one of the earliest existing detailed record of Christian martyrdom; it is a proof that the ancient Church approved and fostered the veneration of the Saints and of their relics. St Polycarp is invoked against earache.

Reflection: : I bless you for judging me worthy of this day, this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs I may share the cup of Christ, your anointed one, and so rise again to eternal life in soul and body, immortal through the power of the Holy Spirit. May I be received among the martyrs in your presence as a rich and pleasing sacrifice" (St Polycarp).

First Reading:

Gen. 15: 5-12, 17-18

God makes a covenant with Abraham. Abraham who did not have even a child of his own is promised numerous descendants as the stars in the sky. Abraham only has to trust and be dependent on God.

Second Reading:

Phil. 3: 17- 4:1

St. Paul wants all Philippians to imitate him and await the Lord, unlike the others whose only object is worship of the world. St. Paul awaits the second coming of Christ. He wants his converts to do the same.

Gospel: Lk. 9: 28-36

The story is about the Transfiguration of Lord Jesus. On the mountain while Peter, James and John were watching, Moses and Elijah appear in a cloud and speak to Jesus. At the end, the heavens open and a voice says. "This is My Son, My chosen; listen to Him.

Reflection

Today's readings invites us to place all our trust and hope in the Lord. Accordingly, we ought from time to time compare and discuss our life with the Lord, listen to Him and surrender ourselves to Him. Then we will never go astray. For the Lord begins from where we stop and He takes up from where we have given up. For what is impossible to us is pos-

sible to Him, and what is unknown to us is known to Him. Hence it is advisable that we be united with the Lord always and everywhere. That is why we should place all our trust and hope in the Lord.

In the First Reading God does what is impossible. To Abraham who does not have a child, God promises descendants as numerous as the stars in the heaven. God in His own, makes a covenant with him. In the covenant He not only promises descendants but also the land from the River of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates. Abraham has been lucky to have placed all his trust, hope and faith in God.

In the Second Reading St. Paul is challenged by all sorts of evil prevailing in this world. Around him he sees many worshipping the world. Of them he says, "Their end is destruction, their God is the belly, and they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things." But St. Paul kept his faith in the Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. For it is in and through Jesus that one day our bodies would change like unto the glorious Body of Christ. This is definite in the case of those who place all their trust and hope in the Lord. Therefore St. Paul wants all Philippians to imitate him in following the Lord.

In the Gospel Jesus who was so attached to the Father, goes to Mount Tabor to find out whether what He was

about to do, the offering His life - was in accordance with His Father's wish.

We are reflecting on this episode at a time when the Church is being accused of using mediators in the worship of God. The question often posed is; why do we not talk to God direct? In the Transfiguration story we see Jesus speaking with two mediators Moses and Elijah, before offering His life on the Cross. But none has questioned as to why He did not talk to God His Father direct? He should have done so because He is the Son of God. But, then, why He used mediators? If He did, why not we?

Jesus during His mission had many opportunities to offer up His life. At times He was righteous, and at other times He was just. At times they wanted to destroy Him because He was speaking against the religious laws and practices and at other times He was speaking against injustice in the society. Had He offered up His life then He could have become a hero and His followers would have worshipped Him as an idol. But in all these instances He slipped and escaped. May be that it was not the right time. This time He wanted to make sure that it was in keeping with the Will of the Father. Therefore He went up to the mountain to discuss it with the representatives, Moses and Elijah, who also representing the Law and Prophets.

This also gave hope and prepared the Apostles to face the great event that was awaiting their Master. Though this could be seen as a defeat in the human sense the glimpse of the glory at the Transfiguration showed them the true victory and the glory that was awaiting Him.

That is the reason why we should be united with the Lord and should always place our trust and hope and faith in the Lord. For united with Him we will be victorious.

Aid Story

The harbour of Liverpool, England can be extremely tempestuous at times. On one occasion a fierce gale was blowing. The wind was so strong and the waters so choppy that it was impossible to follow the usual practice of taking an experienced pilot on board to navigate ships into the harbour. However a pilot boat appeared out of the mist, sailing slowly up the pass. On it was a huge sign: "FOLLOW ME" The man at the wheel was an experienced pilot in those parts. The helmsmen of the other ships steered their craft in his wake. Each one kept his eye on the lead ship and thus every boat, large and small, got safely into the harbour.

In the storms of life, in the uncertainties of choosing our path, we also have a Supreme Pilot, Jesus who has told us; "FOLLOW ME" If we keep our eyes on Him, we will make it to the harbour of God safely and securely.

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

Sunday Rhythm Second Sunday of Lent

Jesus prayed...His face was changed...

Peter and His companions were heavy with sleep
"Master, it is wonderful for us to be here: So let us make three tents..."

A voice came from the cloud...

Disciples were afraid....

After the voice had spoken...Jesus was found alone.

The disciples kept silent and told no one...

Richest Blessing -...He went up to the mountain to pray.

Richest Result - ...His face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning.

To Think - Am I a person who is praying to God alone...? Could I allocate a time for God amidst my busy and competitive schedule?

To Pray - Dear Lord, help me to remain in You and Your love, every moment. Amen.

To Act - As we experience God personally, we must be able to share that experience with others without stagnation

Rev. Fr. S. Randil Fernando OMI