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April

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Vocation Sunday

Messenger

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'Pray the Lord of harvest to send labourers into His harvest'

Mt.9:38

In 1963 Pope Paul VI designated Good Shepherd Sunday as 'World Day of Prayer for Vocations' and this year we mark the milestone of fifty years. Vocations Sunday falls every fourth Sunday of Easter and its objective is to "honour the vocations of all Christians given at Baptism."

Rev. Fr. J.D. Anthony, Episcopal Vicar (Formations and Vocations) has in his message for 'World Day of Prayer for Vocations' said that

This Saturday April 20, twelve deacons of the Archdiocese of Colombo will be ordained priests by the Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith. The Ordination Ceremony will take place at St. Lucia's Cathedral, Kotahena at 9.00 a.m.

it is the family that provides a rich soil for seeds of Priestly and Religious Vocations and "among those who contribute

to the pastoral care of vocations, the family stands as the primary and most important of all."

In his message Fr. Anthony has also asked parents to let their children see and hear their dependence on God in all circumstances whether in times of happiness or sorrow.

"Teach them the values like selflessness, generosity, honesty and listen to the voice of God, so that children may willingly accept what God wants them to be in the future," Fr. Anthony states.

Calling on the

children, Fr. Anthony cautions them regarding the superfluous options the world offers and asks them to "stay close to Jesus to cultivate a desire for what is truly worthy, that is, service to others in the imitation of Jesus."

"There is nothing more beautiful and worthy than to know Jesus, to love Him and to serve Him," the Episcopal Vicar says in encouragement.

SVP Flag Day

The Archdiocesan Central Council of St. Vincent de Paul Society, will hold its 'Flag Day' on April 28, Sunday with the blessings of His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith.

The flag day will be held in all the 26 SVP Conferences in the Archdiocese. The proceeds while being used for the benefit of the poor and invalids, repair of houses and also to help students who need financial assistance to continue their studies, will also be used for the activities of the respective conferences under the direction of Rev. Fr. Leo Perera, National Director and Rev. Fr. Rohan de Awis, Archdiocesan Director and Mrs. Leonie Fernando, the National President of the Society.

A MOVE AHEAD BY ST. PETER'S COLLEGE, UDUGAMPOLA



Under the directive given by the Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Primary Section of St. Peter's College, Udugampola, which was hitherto functioning at the premises of Holy Cross Church, Gampaha, will now be shifted to the main school.

In order to accommodate the primary school, a four-storey building has been constructed in the main school premises. The

building will be blessed and declared open on Wednesday, April 24 by His Eminence.

St. Peter's College, Udugampola is a branch school of St. Peter's College, Bambalapitiya and was a concept of Archbishop Emeritus Oswald Gomis who was at that time an Auxiliary Bishop. The school started as an upper school at Holy Cross Church, Gampaha and later shifted to its own building at Udugampola. With the shift of the

upper school, the primary school was started in the Church premises.

The Udugampola School started with only 46 children and its first principal was Rev. Fr. Siri Cooray. After his demise Rev. Fr. Anton Ranjith took over. The School today has 1000 children (primary and upper) and has the Arts, Science, Maths and Commerce streams.

The Principal of the Upper School is

(CONTD ON PG. 2)

EPISCOPAL APPOINTMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF SRI LANKA FROM 2013-2016

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith
President

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph

Vice President

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Valence Mendis

Secretary General

PERMANENT COUNCIL

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Valence Mendis

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera

FINANCE COMMITTEE

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. J. Winston S. Fernando, S.S.S. (Chairman)

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Granville Silva (Vice-Chairman)

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah

Catholic National Commission for Education, Catechetics & Bible Apostolate

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Granville Silva (Chairman)

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah (Vice-Chairman)

Catholic National Commission for Missionary Activity

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus C. Perera, O.S.B. (Chairman)

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah (Vice-Chairman)

(CONTD ON PG. 3)

Recruitment of graduates to fill vacancies of National Schools

The Secretary to the Ministry of Education has called for applications to recruit graduates to fill vacancies of National Schools in the Government Gazette of April 12, 2013. According to the gazette notification vacancies exist for subjects in Arts,

Commerce and the Science streams in Sinhala, Tamil and English mediums of National Schools.

Those who have obtained a degree from a university, recognized by the University Grants Commission and those who have passed six subjects with three credits including

the mother tongue and Mathematics in less than two sittings at the G.C.E. O/L examination and passes in three subjects at the G.C.E. A/L examination at one sitting, are eligible to apply.

Applications have to be sent to the Department of Examinations on or before

May 3, 2013. Further information can be obtained from the relevant gazette notification or from the Archdiocesan Catholic Education Office.

**Rev. Fr. Ranjith Madurawala
General Manager
Catholic Private Schools W.P**

Catholic School students excel in Ordinary Level examinations

Many students of Catholic Schools who sat for the recent GCE 'O' Level examination have produced outstanding results. Details will be carried next week.

Priestly ministry should shape our life:

Bishop of Ratnapura



"Our priestly ministry should shape our life and hold us to be fuller human beings and Christians" said the Bishop of Ratnapura, Rt. Rev. Dr. Cl-etus Chandrasiri Perera OSB delivering his homily at St. Theresa's Church, Dehigahapitiya recently. The Bishop was assisted by Rev. Fr. Damian Fernando and Rev. Fr. Tensin Perera at the

Chrism Mass celebrated in connection with the blessing of oil, in the presence of priests from the Diocese.

The Bishop said priests should be committed to serve the needy taking a leaf from the life of Mother Teresa and never think of attaining personal gains and wealth. The lay people value and respect priesthood in the priest.

As priests we should learn a positive lesson from any negative criticism hurled at us.

J. Antony

Ekamutu: Fifty years of dedicated Service

A Thanksgiving Mass was celebrated to commemorate 50 years of service of the Ekamutu Society recently.

The Holy Mass was celebrated at Ekamutu Hall, Hendala by Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatillake, Parish Priest Nayakakanda, and Rev. Fr. Shiran Dassa, Assistant Parish Priest, in the presence of a large gathering of well-wishers and parishioners.

Picture shows Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatillake presenting an Insurance Policy to a young student of the Free Ekamuttu Pre School.

The policy is sponsored by Mr. Jude Menerapitiya, Chairman Ekamutu Society, Mr. J.I. Antony is also in the picture.

Thilina Alahakoon



Maggonna celebrates Feast of Divine Mercy

The Feast of Divine Mercy was celebrated at St. Mary's Church, Maggonna recently.

The Festive Mass was officiated by Rev. Fr. Ishan Prameena Kannangara, Parish Priest of Maggonna.

and was followed by a solemn procession with the statue of Divine Mercy.

D. Anselm Fernando



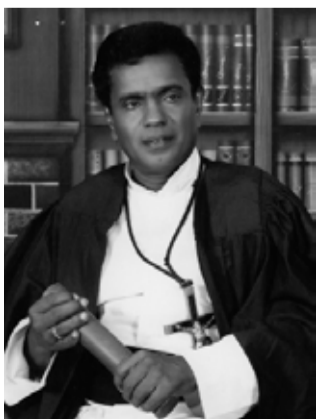
Post Graduate Diploma in Education

Rev. Fr. Newman Muthuthamby obtained his Post Graduate Diploma in Education from the Open University of Colombo at the convocation held at the BMICH recently.

Rev. Fr. Newman has obtained his BA Degree at the Jaffna University, the BA Degree from the Urbanian University - Rome and his MA in Christian Studies from the Madras University - India.

He is presently the Parish Priest of Galgamuwa and a teacher at the Galgamuwa Muslim Vidyalaya.

Peter Singho



Donor needed for Kidney Patient



Mrs. Eresha Mendis is a Senior Lecturer of the University of Peradeniya, who is undergoing treatment for kidney failure and in need of a transplant.

She is urgently in need of a donor with an A+ (positive) blood group. Eresha is the mother of a 4-year old daughter.

A move ahead...

Contd. from Pg. 1

Rev. Fr. Chaminda Wanigasekera and the Priest-in-Charge of the primary is Rev. Fr. Pradeep Kumar.

The School owes its gratitude to the founder Rectors, Rev. Fr. Joe Wickremesinghe and Rev. Fr. Felician Ranjith Perera for their dedication and commitment for the upliftment of the school and for the present Rector, Rev. Fr. Travis Gabriel.

Wattala St. Anthony's OBA -AGM

The 68th Annual General Meeting of St. Anthony's College, Wattala OBA will be held on April 27, 2013 Saturday at 4.30 p.m. at the College Hall followed by a fellowship dinner at Dulab Family Restaurant, Hendala. For further details contact Mr. John Emmanuel (President) on 011-5743541 or Mr. Lakshan Dinuka (General Secretary) on 0771073303

Clarence Leonard

Feast of St. Joseph



In an era where customs and rituals are slowly dying out the hoisting of the flag is maintained in every village and parish in the Catholic Church. But it is very unusual, but significant when St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10, prepared themselves to celebrate the feast of their Patron, St. Joseph, by hoisting a very colourful flag eight days before the Feast.

It was a combination of students, teachers,

clerical staff and all the employees who got together, and immediately after the flag was fluttering atop the flag post, everybody participated in a meal of milk rice with the traditional lunumiris.

Each section of the school (primary, middle school and upper school) partook in a Novena in the Chapel with Rev. Fr. Jeevantha Peiris as the preacher. The chief celebrant at the Feast was Rev. Fr. Mahendra Goonetilleke,

Parish Priest of Nayakakanda. Fr. Mahendra in his homily emphasised that a deep study of the life of St. Joseph was very essential in school, especially in a period like this.

The entire celebration was organised under the guidance of the Rector, Rev. Fr. Sylvester Ranasinghe and the days were very meaningful and special to all belonging to this institution.

J.P.S. de Silva

Donations to Deaf and Dumb School, Ragama



The parishioners of Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic Church, Ragama, donated dry rations to St. Joseph's Deaf and Dumb School, Ragama recently.

Picture shows members of the English Youth Liturgy Committee handing over dry rations on behalf of

the parishioners, to the Principal of the School in the presence of Rev. Fr. Dinesh Keerthisinghe, Asst. Parish Priest, together with Rev. Sisters and children of the English Sunday School.

Parish Priest

'Aluth Avurudhu' at St. Nicholas' International Negombo



The Primary section of St. Nicholas' International School, Negombo celebrated the Sinhala and Tamil New Year recently. The Chief Guest

on the occasion was film and tele-drama actress Maureen Charuni. The Guests of Honour were Rev. Fr. Jude Nicholas and Rev. Sr. Marie Garlit.

Picture shows the guests being accompanied to the venue by the Principal, Lalith Fernando and members of the staff.

Anton Jayasuriya

May God Bless You Father Perniola!



Rev. Fr. Vito Perniola S.J. celebrated his 100th birthday on April 10, 2013 and presided at the Eucharistic Celebration at St. Mary's Church, Bambalapitiya.

His Excellency Archbishop Joseph Spiteri the Apostolic Nuncio

in Sri Lanka, His Grace, the Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Marcus Fernando, His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando – Bishop of Kandy, Msgr. Renato Kucic, Charge d'Affaires, Apostolic Nunciature in Sri Lanka, Rev. Fr. Jeyaraj, SJ Provin-

cial Superior of the Jesuits, Rev. Fr. Tyrone SJ and several other priests concelebrated the Eucharistic Celebration.

A distinguished gathering of diplomats, priests, religious and laity were present.

Rev. Fr. Sunil de Silva

Three-Hour 'Agony of Jesus' at Wadduwa



A service of three-hour 'Agony of Jesus' was held at the Wadduwa Parish on Good Friday, under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Jude Fonseka, Parish Priest.

The service included the seven words of Jesus from the Cross with parishioners depicting various dimensions of what took place on Good Friday in drama form.

The script for the play was written by Ereshan Perera who also directed the play. He was assisted by Padmakumara Fernando.

Kumara Nayanajith

Episcopal Appointments... Contd. from Pg. 1

Catholic National Commission for Liturgy & Culture
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando (Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah (Vice-Chairman)

Catholic National Commission for Seminaries, Clergy, Religious & Secular Institutes

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith (Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Norbert M. Andradi, O.M.I. (Vice-Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. F. Lionel Emmanuel Fernando (Vice-Chairman)

Catholic National Commission for Social Communications

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe (Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. F. Lionel Emmanuel Fernando (Vice-Chairman)

Catholic National Commission for Laity

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Norbert M. Andradi, O.M.I. (Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus C. Perera, O.S.B. (Vice-Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. F. Lionel Emmanuel Fernando (Vice-Chairman)

Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace & Human Development

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando (Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph (Vice-Chairman)

Catholic National Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue & Ecumenism

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. F. Lionel Emmanuel Fernando (Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus C. Perera, O.S.B. (Vice-Chairman)

Catholic National Commission for Migrants, Health, Tourism & Prisons

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony Perera (Chairman)
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. F. Lionel Emmanuel Fernando (Vice-Chairman)

Public Relations

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith

Consultant for Moral Theology & Canon Law

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Norbert M. Andradi, O.M.I.

Missio Scholarship Board

Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus C. Perera, OSB - Chairman
Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah - Vice Chairman

Bishops' Institute for Orientation Studies (BIOS)

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. D. Valence Mendis (Bishop-in-Charge)
Rev. Fr. Tony Martyn (Director)

Joseph Vaz Secretariat

His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando

Joseph Vaz Trust Fund

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith



From the Vatican

Pope Francis appoints Advisors for Curia reform

(ZENITH NEWS) In a communique released by the Vatican Secretariat of State, Holy Father Pope Francis has established a group of eight cardinals from around the world to advise him in the government of the Universal Church, as well as "to study a plan for revising the Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia, 'Pastor Bonus'."

The establishment of the group follows a suggestion that was made during the General Congregations prior to the Conclave that elected Pope Francis as Supreme Pontiff.

The group of Cardinals consists of:

1. Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, President of the Governorate of Vatican City State;
2. Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz Ossa, Archbishop Emeritus of Santiago de Chile, Chile;
3. Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, India;

4. Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Germany;
5. Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, Archbishop of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo;
6. Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Boston, USA;
7. Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia;
8. Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, S.D.B., Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, who will serve as coordinator; and Bishop Marcello Semeraro of Albano, Italy, who will serve as secretary.

Following the communique, the Holy See Press Office stated that the announcement shows the Holy Father's attentiveness to the suggestions made by the College of Cardinals, "his closest collaborators."

"It is a group, not a commission, committee, or council. The group has no legislative power and its main function is to advise the Pope. The group will not in any way interfere in the normal functions of the Roman Curia, which helps the Pope in the daily governance of the Church," the statement by the Holy See Press Office said.

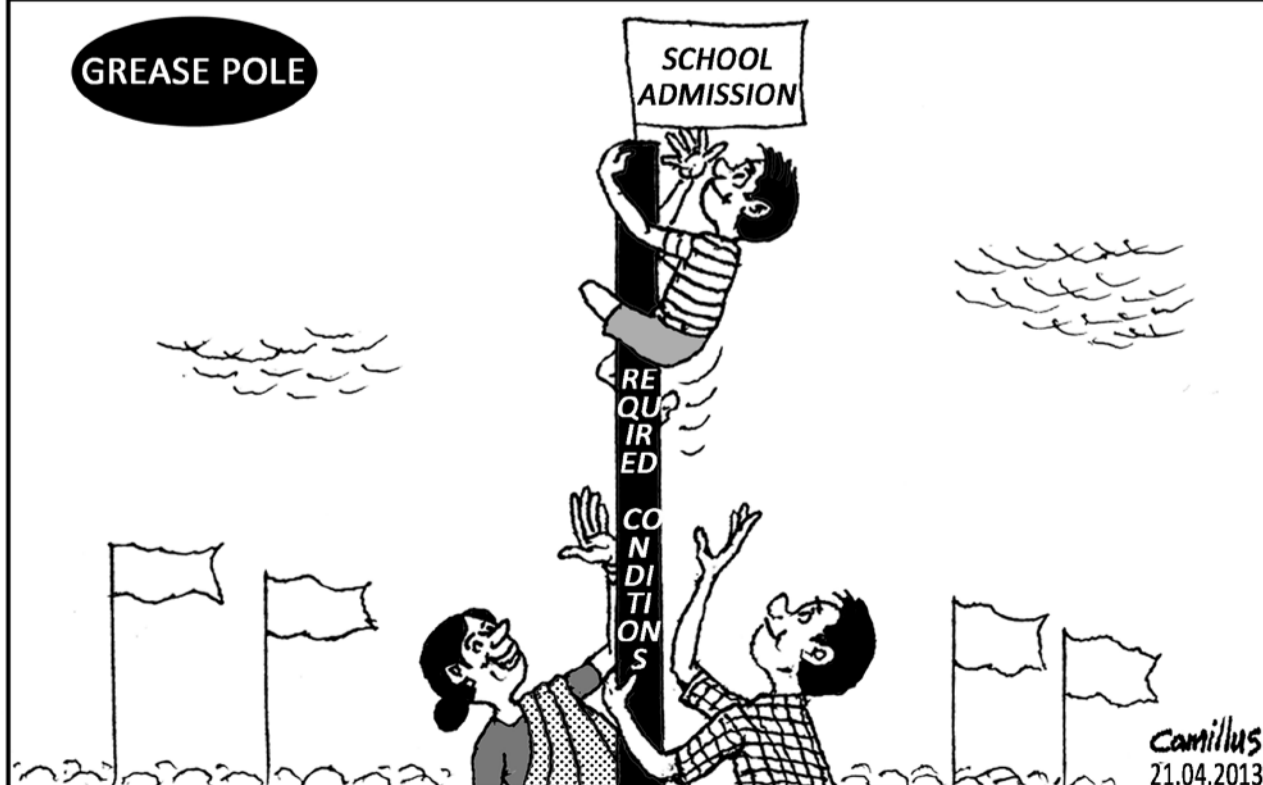
According to the Secretariat of State's communique, the group's first meeting has been scheduled for October 1-3, 2013.

Archdiocesan Website

SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus

GREASE POLE



The Realm of Modern Sports

In today's world sport has become a religion. And unfortunately, religion has been turned into sport in some places (especially by the numerous secular media agencies globally, when they decide to fire salvo after salvo of unjustifiable dirt at Church).

Saint Paul often describes the good Christian as an athlete who is running determinedly to finish the race. Sports, in general, has done many good things and borne much good fruit worldwide. For example, sports can make people healthier, have character, more empathetic (especially those in team sports), more understanding, stronger, happier, and the list goes on.

Sports can also build character, which is vital in today's world. It can also be a platform for Christians to promote their faith and even evangelise to the masses. However, the commercialisation of sports brings with it myriad issues. While extending our hearty congratulations and blessings, we hope and pray that our newly appointed Sri Lankan Cricket Board ably led by Jayantha Dharmadasa and his colleagues will address these issues to raise Sri Lankan cricket to greater heights.

The long and short answer to professionalising sports, hence paying participants a wage, is a good thing. Every worker deserves his keep. The Holy Bible clearly states that a worker deserves his wages. The problem lies not in whether a player should be paid or not, but how much should they be paid? Does a golfer who puts a ball in a tiny hole in the ground deserve a \$15 million pay cheque when a housewife with seven children or a parish priest or a nun might do twice as much hard work for hardly any of the recognition or financial benefits?

The current Indian Premier League (IPL) offers an interesting dynamic at many different levels. In a vast nation of well over a billion people, where most earn a wage of \$1 per day, is it justifiable to pay a few hundred professional cricketers the equivalent of \$15,000 per day on average? Is a single professional cricketer worth the remunerative value of 15,000 fellow patriots?

In the context of Sri Lanka's cricketers playing the IPL, it is a good thing. As Kumar Sangakkara recently said, it is good for the game and for restoring the strained ties between India and Sri Lanka. Despite the issues and boycott in Chennai, Sri Lankan cricketers should and must play in India. This will help maintain the levels of respect that millions, or even a billion, Indians have for our team and its individual players. Cricket is one sport that Sri Lanka has excelled in, and with relatively good character. Many non-Sri Lankans are fans of our team. If Sri Lankan cricketers stay away from the IPL, they would be severing one of the primary arteries of friendship and cooperation between the two neighbours. The players will also need to ignore any contradictory voices from within Sri Lanka, because many of these have vested interests or are voices of envy.

It is in the best interests of all that Sri Lankan players play and contribute to the burgeoning IPL and towards international cricket. It is the right thing to do. Sri Lanka is one of a tribe of over 200 countries, which can easily be lost in the collective crowd of nations. We excel in the sport of cricket and it would be ridiculous to jeopardise our contributions to world and regional cricket.

Christianity is a very practical religion, despite its very high moral and spiritual standards. Christ always made sure the practical side of things, such as feeding, healing and comforting people were first taken care of, along with preaching the Word. We too, need to be moral and practical in today's world; basic commonsense needs to be applied in most cases, as with the current IPL scenario. Never destroy or damage something that is good, or brings much joy and sustenance to many people.

"The Sweet Christ on Earth"

"*Il dolce Cristo in terra*" ("the sweet Christ on earth"), was St. Catherine of Sienna's way of calling the Pope expressing her great love for the Vicar of Christ. It was in the Lent of 1380 that this saintly mystic vowed to go every morning in St. Peter's to keep company to the Bridegroom, stopping in front of the mosaic designed by Giotto for the ancient Basilica, depicting the ship of the Church among the storms of the storm. And the saint continued to urge the Pope: "Stand upon the ship of the Holy Church" (Letter 357).

In an interview with the Spanish Newspaper *La Razon*, the Bishop Prelate Msgr. Javier Echevarria commented on what struck him most in the words of the new Roman Pontiff. "Christ is the centre," the Pope told the journalists in the audience on March 16. "This reminded me of what Saint Josemaria so often said: 'We have to speak about Christ, and not about ourselves.' This is what is truly essential. Pope Francis also spoke about the action of the Holy Spirit. That's the key for interpreting the recent Conclave and the Church's entire history: The viewpoint of faith."

Holy Father is the Vicar of Christ. Etymologically, vice is a preposition derived from the ablative form of the Latin word vicis, meaning 'change.' In English we understand to mean 'instead of' or 'as a substitute for.' The noun vicar in turn stems from the same root referring to 'a deputy.' The expression Vicar of Christ thus indicates the vary nature of the Papacy as an office whose subject acts as Christ's alter ego on earth. He is no less than the visible Christ on earth.

Upon the election of Pope Francis, world leaders were quick to welcome the new Catholic leader. Argentine President Cristina Fernández was among the first to congratulate the new Catholic leader. British PM David Cameron said Wednesday was "a momentous day for the 1.2 billion Catholics around the world." In a statement, US President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle, too, offered their best wishes to the new Pope.

Obama added: "As a champion of the poor and the most vulnerable among us, he carries forth the message of love and compassion that has inspired the world for more than two thousand years—that in each other we see the face of God. As the first pope from the Americas, his selection also speaks to the strength and vitality of a region that is increasingly shaping our world, and alongside millions of Hispanic Americans, those of us in the United States share the joy of this historic day."

Whatever views one may espouse on religion, "it is hard to deny that the events of the past two months have been of major significance, as the leadership of the Church which is home to one sixth of the world's population has changed hands in an almost unprecedented manner. This is evidenced not least by reactions of the 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide, but also in the tangible political shockwaves generated by the election of a non-European pope, the repercussions of which promise to be felt widely" (Luke Wilkinson, Article: '*Habemus papam!*' or 'Why I am not a Protestant').

Mr. Wilkinson grew up attending a Baptist Church with his family in South West London. By the time he came to study at University College London, he gently drifted away from religious education towards things he found more interesting to do, such as sports. During the summer holidays before his third and final year, a series of events conspired to lead him back towards his childhood faith, perhaps the most significant of which was finding himself a place to live in the Catholic student residence called Netherhall House. Despite his background, the image of Pope Francis does not cease to impress him.

The first public act of the Holy Father seems to be a 'mission statement' for him. Though the Church "throughout the world is at a crossroads moment, and the greatest challenge facing us is not the scandal of child abuse or the defence of traditional marriage, though the former has caused much hurt to many people and the latter has generated great controversy, and both issues continue to need addressing. The biggest challenge Christians must face is the shocking level of poverty and injustice in our world, two things that God throughout the Bible and throughout history has mandated Christians with alleviating, though we have not always taken this part of our faith very seriously. "As a Jesuit, Francis has lived under a vow

of poverty, where even as the high-ranking Cardinal of Argentina he chose to live in a simple apartment, commuting by bus to his office every day and spending much time with the poor and outcast. This humility has clearly marked his walk with God so far, and shows all signs of continuing to do so. He set the tone for how he will lead the Catholic Church in his very first act as pontiff by asking the gathered crowds in St. Peter's Square to pray that God would bless him in order that he might bless his people (ibid.)."

The journalist, José Beltrán, observed that bit by bit we are getting to know more details about the Holy Father's life: How he used to travel by bus, and lived in a small apartment in Buenos Aires.... he asked Msgr. Echevarria whether those small everyday gestures can help change the minds of those who have a stereotyped image of priests, cardinals, and of the Church in general.

The Prelate replied that "his austerity is a common note of recent popes (with some different external manifestations), and also of the great majority of priests, who have the minimum they need to live on, and many don't even have that much. As you said, we are talking about a stereotype. I remember a cardinal who came to the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. In the time between activities, at 5 in the afternoon, there was a coffee break. While drinking the coffee he said: "Tonight I'm not going to have dinner, since I don't have anyone to help prepare dinner for me." This isn't always the case, but many more examples could be given here.

"The lack of material goods, Saint Bernard said, is not in itself a virtue; rather this virtue entails loving poverty, which is also shown by these small deeds of self-denial. This disposition also finds expression in knowing how to do without superfluous possessions and in being detached from what one has. Certainly, as Saint Josemaria said, poverty is one of our treasures in this world, and he pointed to the example of parents of a large family who, in lovingly striving to support their family, joyfully renounce so many personal items.

In other words, the Christian poverty ought to be seen as a virtue needed to love (as Jesus taught us), and as part of charity. At the same time, the Prelate added, "we have to do everything possible to alleviate the suffering caused by personal and social injustices, and I see it as only natural that sometimes we become impatient on confronting so many injustices we would like to remedy."

We learned that Cardinal Bergoglio's motto was '*Miserando et eligendo*'. That phrase was taken from a text from the Venerable Bede that we read each year in the Liturgy of the Hours. It is a commentary on the call of Matthew. Jesus had compassion, mercy, and also called His disciples to follow Him. The vocation is a proof of love: It springs from the divine heart filled with mercy. Saint Bede comments that Jesus looked at people "with the internal look of His heart more than with His bodily eyes."

As St Josemaria used to say, reminding all of us that we are called to holiness: "May I see with your eyes, my Christ, dear Jesus." The urgent need to evangelize, always present in the Church, involves an invitation to look at people, at everyone, with apostolic vision, with mercy and affection, with the desire to help them receive the great gift of knowing Christ and His love (Msg Echevarria, op. cit.). During a catechetical trip to Buenos Aires in 1974, St Josemaria said "when you work and help your friends, your colleagues, your neighbours, in such a way that they don't notice it, you are curing them; you are Christ who heals, you are Christ who lives alongside others without turning up your nose at those in need of health, as can happen to us as well some day."

All of that also means carrying and loving the cross, which Pope Francis also spoke about in his first Homily. And as Cardinal Bergoglio said in his Homily in the Chrism Mass last year, we need to have "patience with people" when we teach and explain and listen, and always pray to the Holy Spirit for grace (Msgr Echevarria, op.cit.).

Finally, the joy the whole Christendom feels over the new "Sweet Christ on Earth" must be translated into reaffirming to the new Roman Pontiff complete adherence to his person and ministry. Through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, we now express to him our unconditional reverence and obedience.

Rev.Fr. Daniel Icatlo JCD

Message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Christ's invitation to follow Him by the gift of one's own life

Today, the Universal Church celebrates the 50th World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Pope Paul VI instituted this Day of Prayer to God the Father, asking Him to continue to send workers for His Church. In the years since, successive Pontiffs have called on the Universal Church to gather on the 4th Sunday of Easter to reflect and pray for the gift of Vocations. This year, being the 'Year of Faith', Holy Father invites us to reflect on the theme: *Vocations as a sign of hope founded in faith.*

The Church has chosen the most appropriate day to celebrate the Vocations Sunday, the Good Shepherd Sunday. The image of the Good Shepherd is the most suitable image we can think of to express the love of God. In the Old Testament this image appears on several occasions to express God's closeness to His People and His unconditional love and concern for them. In Jesus we find the image of the Good Shepherd in its supreme sense. Jesus, before departing from this world to His Father, entrusted this Ministry of shepherding the flock to the Apostles and His successors.

Just as he did during His earthly existence, today too, Jesus continues to say "come, follow me" (Mk. 10:21). Therefore the invitation is, especially, extended to young people to respond to the call of the Good Shepherd who, "when he saw the crowds, had compas-

sion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd", and went on to say, "The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest" (Mt.9:36-38).

The concern for vocations, therefore, is the continuation of the mission of Jesus. The responsibility of promoting vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life rests on the shoulders of every member in the Community. It should be at the centre of prayer and pastoral action of the Church. It is important to encourage and support those who show clear signs of a call to Priesthood and Religious Life. They must be made to feel the warmth of the whole community, their accompaniment in prayer and encouragement.

Vocations are born out of the experience of a personal encounter with God. Therefore, it is essential that the community help children and young people at every level of family, parish, school and associations to grow into a genuine relationship with the Lord.

Among those who contribute to the pastoral care of vocations, family stands as the primary and the most important. Vocations are first and foremost the fruits of contact with God in the Christian families. It is the family that provides a rich soil for the seeds of Priestly and Religious Vocations. Families animated by the spirit of faith and love become capable of helping

children to welcome generously the call to Priesthood and to Religious Life. Parents influence and inspire vocations.

Dear parents, let your children see and hear your dependence on God in all circumstances, in times of happiness and sorrow. Teach them values like selflessness, generosity, honesty and listen to the voice of God, so that children may willingly accept what God wants them to be in future. Remember that when a child enters the Seminary, his place at home is taken by Christ Himself. Every parent, undoubtedly, would like to see that most beautiful sight of his Priest-son offering the Holy Sacrifice at the altar taking the place of Christ.

Dear children, there is nothing more beautiful and worthy than to know Jesus, to love Him and to serve Him. The world offers you many superficial options, but stay close to Jesus to cultivate a desire for what is truly worthy, that is, service to others in the imitation of Jesus. God has a special plan



for you and let God unfold it for you.

Let us continue to pray for vocations, so that God will inspire many more to serve in His vineyard as Priests and Religious. Let us invoke the help of our Mother Mary, that by the example of her own acceptance of God's plan and her powerful intercession, young people will be more and more open to saying "yes" to the Lord who is constantly calling new labourers to His harvest.

*Very Rev. Fr. J. D. Anthony Jayakody
Episcopal Vicar Formation & Vocations,
Archdiocese of Colombo*

Christ is Alive-Meet Him

For Christians the Resurrection of Jesus is the central focus of Faith life. It is for today's Christian more than a faith statement in a world where there are more questions than answers, it is a challenge to live out our Christian Faith life to its fullest. The Resurrection provides the answer.

For us Christians no other person nor other event or feast can ever take the place of Jesus' Resurrection. So like St. Paul we have to go on reflecting and exploring the significance and relevance of the tremendous event in our own lives. Hence we could say "I want to know Him I want to experience the power of His resurrection" (Ph3:10).

Christianity began with the Resurrection and without it there would be no Christianity. Many Christians tend to think of Christ in terms of His miracles, His teachings and sermons. But the greatest miracle He experienced was His death and Resurrection when He overcame sin and death.

We as Christians are unique in that we can claim our founder was never vanquished by death but was resurrected to live among His followers. This living Christ invites us to participate in His victory and the new life.

Some of us have a great

desire to partake of this new life but may not know how to get connected to this life. Paul provides the answer that we could find it in the Holy Spirit "And if the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from among the dead is within you. He who raised Christ from among the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies. Yes He will do it through His Spirit who dwells within you" (Rom 8: 11).

When the Spirit brings us to this state, the Resurrection could be a continuous living event in our Christian life. Although sin has no more hold on us we will continue to experience the normal realities of life, its calamities and tragedies as well as its joys and happiness. The difference would be that now we would face such realities in a new way fixing our gaze on the triumphant Jesus on the Cross, the Resurrected Lord. We would no longer look at them as consequences of God's anger and punishment but rather as moments of



tremendous grace challenging us to change our lives. Resentment, frustration, and depression would not form part of our lives vocabulary.

All such experiences can confirm that we are no longer a defeated people, for when God is still with us who can be against us. (Rom 8:3). We can make every such event a life transforming experience for we can stand firm just as Jesus did on the cross and allow the grace of His death and Resurrection to flow freely into our lives.

*(Allenson de Silva
Courtesy: Footprints)*



Humankind

God created humankind in His own image
God saw everything that He had made and indeed,
"It was very good"

See.....!

My dear brothers and sisters!
How much God has done to make us fulfilled!
He made everything for our good
For our "happiness"

We, people destroy "God's plan,"

To realise our own

In the Bible, we see God as "Creator."

Everything He made was good!

Can we see likewise ?

No, no we cannot

As we are "Killers of Nature"

We are "Killers of Animals"

We are "Killers of Humankind"

We somehow try to control God

But that will never be

We, people only "Lose our lives"

Mercy! Lord, for we have sinned

Listen to our "Pleading"!

Sr. A.C.L. (H.F.)

The Vanity of Worldly Riches

One day, the father of a very wealthy family, took his son on a trip to the village to show his son how poor people live. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. On return from their trip, the father asked the son, "How was the trip? Did you see how poor people live?"

"Oh yeah," said the son. "So tell me, what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father. The son answered, "I realised that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of the garden, and they have a small stream that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden, and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon. We have a whole piece of land to live on, and they have fields that stretch for so many miles. We have servants who serve us, but they serve



others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us. They have their friends, the whole village to protect them.

The boy's father was listening. "Thanks dad," the son said, "for showing me how poor we are."

We often consider richness in terms of financial resources, acquisition of movable and immovable assets, savings and bank balances. However, this form of wealth can easily lure us away from

the lasting riches that Christ advocates us to gather during our life span: Riches gathered through the accumulation of spiritual blessings, self-sacrifice, enrichment of the lives of those who hunger for care and human warmth. We do not live on the principle of providing what people need to live, rather on the creation of demand. Our economy is not concerned with meeting people's needs but to stimulate people's greed. We live convinced that life does

Thoughts that haunt me

consist in abundance of possessions.

In 'Loka Vagga,' the Lord Buddha says that this world is a bubble and what we expected to find is not there. It is because the world we live in, is full of man made imitations. A great majority of us succumb to wrong values. We strongly believe money can buy everything: There are short cuts to knowledge and learning: Noise is more soothing than silence. We forget the fact that we are put on this earth for a short span for a much nobler purpose, the purpose of winning eternal life by following the supreme example set by Our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

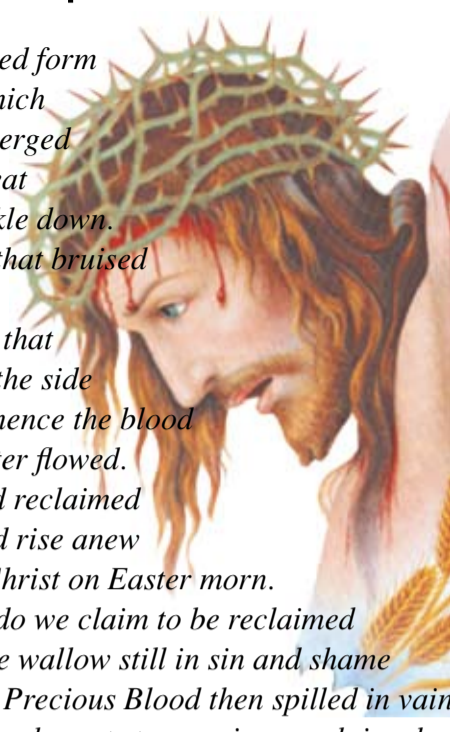
"But seek first His kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Mt. 6: 33)

Ananda Perera

Redemption

A mangled form
From which
Blood merged
with sweat
Did trickle down.
Thongs that bruised
the flesh
A sword that
pierced the side
From whence the blood
and water flowed.
By blood reclaimed
We could rise anew
As did Christ on Easter morn.
Ah! but do we claim to be reclaimed
Or do we wallow still in sin and shame
Was His Precious Blood then spilled in vain
For man who opts to remain unreclaimed.

Jeannette Cabraal



Doctor - Patient

Relationship



Only the truth that in life we have spoken
Only the seed that on earth we have sown.
These shall pass onwards when we are forgotten
Fruits of the harvest and what we have done - 'Bonar'

I am 76-years-old and have been a doctor for the past 48 years. I see an extremely sad relationship between today's doctors and their patients. I was told by my ancestors that if you fail to become the king of the land, be a physician. People look up to us and trust us with their lives. So if one is a doctor, responsibility and honesty is an absolute must.

I know we have to earn a living from our profession but it has to be done with honesty, giving time for the patient to describe his illness so that we gather all the information of the signs and symptoms followed by a proper examination and tentative diagnosis. Instead of immediately ordering a gamut of tests at terrible costs for the poor patient, we should not sacrifice our knowledge and ability to a machine. Doctors should have time to listen and explain to the patient, not summararily discharge them for the next.

Sri Lanka is the only country where we have free medical education and it is from the tax, people have paid. It is not only the rich, but even a beggar has paid tax for sugar in his cup of tea, flour in the bread, and dhal in the curry because everything that is imported is taxed; though not visible even the poorest pay for it. So they have all paid for us to become doctors. We are duty bound to look after them honestly and kindly.

Another sad practice I have come to know is that the consultants do not do their daily ward rounds in many wards. The consultants in my time never missed a ward round in the morning and often in the evening too. So the juniors could learn very well from them as medical studies is an apprentice course in many ways. How can the juniors get a proper training unless supervised and shown how they could do various procedures. The result will be more and more poorly trained doctors.

Drugs are another serious problem. Every one writes one or two antibiotics even for a simple cold and cough. The drug importers often bring mainly antibiotics some of which are of dubious efficacy. There are drugs for gastritis (prozoles) drugs for high blood pressure and cholesterol breaking down ones and also anti-diabetics of which some do not have any action at all. Surely doctors have brains; let's get together and help our own people.

Let us be honest!

Dr. Cynthia Jayasuriya.

Brian Tracy is a leading authority on development of human potential in the United States of America. He addresses audiences of tens of thousands of people at a time. He speaks to 250,000 people a year and has written over 25 books. His latest book, 'Eat that Frog' is an international best seller and it has sold over 500,000 copies.

Brian Tracy has found this title from an ancient quotation, "If the first thing you have to do when you wake up in the morning is eat a live frog, then nothing worse can happen for the rest of the day." The moral is to do the worst thing that you have to do first and the rest of the activities that you have to do are going to be easy.

He is the author who was responsible for introducing Pareto's 80/20 Principle to the USA. This principle was

Eat that Frog

founded by an Italian economist named Vilfredo Pareto who lived in the 18th century. He found that all economic activity revolves around this 80/20 principle. 20% of your activities will account for 80% of your results. 20% of your customers will give you 80% of your profits. The rest will give you only 20 percent of your profits.

This 80/20 principle could also be applied to our daily tasks. If we have ten things to do on our to-do-list today there may be one or two things (20%) that are the most important. They may be the most difficult tasks, like eating a live frog. But once these difficult things have been accomplished, the rest of the tasks will be easily fulfilled.

I know of a director of an organization,



who took over a business establishment that was running at a loss. He did a feasibility study and found that his business was over-staffed. After consulting management experts in the business field he realized that he has to retrench about 30 persons from his staff. This was a difficult task for a new and a young manager. But he "ate the frog." He went through industrial action and labour tribunals and at the end managed to retrench the extra employees and made the organization a profitable venture.

Brian Tracy talks about motivating ourselves not to postpone important decisions that we have to make. "Just thinking about starting and finishing an important task motivates you and helps you to overcome procrastination. Time management is really life management and personal management. It is really taking control of the sequence of events. Time management is

having control over what you do next. And you are always free to choose the task that you will do next. Your ability to choose between the important and unimportant is the key determination of your success in life and work."

The most important task may be the more difficult task such as eating a live frog. If you force yourself to do the hardest tasks, the rest of the duties will be easy to perform. These important tasks may be our duties towards our family, relationships, career or life. It may be getting rid of addictions in your life: Addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling, money and wealth. These may be holding you back from success in life. People make New Year resolutions. Some people make Lenten resolutions. It is not late to make your resolution to do first the most difficult but most important tasks of your life; even if it means eating that frog.

TAKE TIME FOR A MINUTE OF HUMOUR - SMILE!



Bob took his dog to a vet "Doctor, I think my dog is dead." Putting it on the table, the vet came back with a cat. The cat sniffed the dog's ears, his nose and walked all over him. The vet finally said, "Yep! Your dog is dead." Then he gave him a bill for 535 (dollars); 35 for the office and 500 for the cat scan.

Rev. Fr. Fracxid Anthony Fernando OMI



& Architecture
in Liturgy

Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

Mary's sublime moment of glory

Trinity, to consent to become the Mother of God. We have heard the story so many times its glory sometimes fails us. The feast marks the most sublime moment in the history of time, the moment when the Second Divine Person of the Most Holy Trinity assumed human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This year the Church celebrated the feast of the Annunciation on April 8.

dreaming of marriage, raising a family, teaching children the Jewish laws and traditions. The artists would have undoubtedly given much thought to the renditions they were called upon to make.

We produce here some masterpieces found in our local churches. Left to right: Part of a painting at St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Kandy, Richard Gabriel's oil on a wall fitted into a medallion at St. Theresa's Church, Thimbrigasyaya, Dharmasena's indigenized painting showing Mary dressed in the local saree at the Seminary or Our Lady of Lanka, Ampitiya, Kandy, painting of N.S. Godamanne on the high vaulted ceiling at St. Mary's Church, Grand Street, Negombo, stained glass plaque by Nalini Jayasuriya, painting at the St. Anthony's Cathedral, Kandy, stained glass window at All Saints Church, Borella, painting of Mary's submission to the will of the Father also by Nalini Jayasuriya, stained glass window at Pitipana Church, Negombo, a print at St. Mary's Church, Bambalapitiya.

Tradition, which has come down from the apostolic ages, tells us that the great mystery of the Incarnation was achieved at the hour of midnight, when the Most Holy Virgin was alone and absorbed in prayer, that the Archangel Gabriel appeared before her, and asked her, in the name of the Blessed

For centuries, artists have attempted to picture Mary at this moment and have adopted a variety of devout settings: Surrounded by angels, dressed in red velvet or standing amid tapestries and silver candles. But sometimes we might feel that these beautiful paintings rob the reality of the situation. We wonder might not Mary have walked barefooted, cooking, attending to the chores around the house and leading a simple life. Might not she have been a young woman of deep faith, probably



Thomas Cardinal Cooray OMI, - a model Evangelizer



The Servant of God, Thomas Benjamin Cardinal Cooray whose cause is now being prepared at the level of the Archdiocese of Colombo was an Oblate of Mary Immaculate. As such, he belonged to the missionary congregation that was founded by St. Eugène de Mazenod, who himself was a missionary bishop. As founder, he dared to trust in divine providence and send the first batch of four French Oblates in 1847 to begin the oblate mission in Sri Lanka as a result of Bishop Orazio Bettachini, the then Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna, who went all the way to Marseilles to beg at his feet to ask for urgent assistance to care for the Church in Sri Lanka.

Young Benjamin Cooray after having completed his University degree joined this missionary congregation, making his first vows in 1925. He was then sent to Rome for his priestly and missionary training and after ordination in 1929 returned to serve the oblate vicariate in Sri Lanka: First a teacher at St. Joseph's College, then as warden of the University hostel for Catholic students and later as Superior of the Oblate Scholasticate where he was responsible for nine long years for the missionary training of young men who contemplated becoming Oblate (OMI) priests. It was at this time, that he was nominated Coadjutor to Archbishop Jean-Marie Masson OMI, consecrated in 1945 at the age of 44 and later succeeded him in 1947. He retired in 1976 having shepherded the Archdiocese for 30 long years and presided over the Sri Lankan Bishops' Conference as well. One could easily witness to his simple missionary zeal and love for the poor in all the phases of his saintly life as a seminarian in Rome, a priest in early ministry and later as the sixth Archbishop of the See of Colombo and first Sri Lankan Cardinal.

Missionary Zeal

As the Superior of the Oblate Scholasticate, he was forming young men to become oblate missionaries according to the mind and charisma of Bishop Eugène de Mazenod. That was his preoccupation. While he himself lived an exemplary life as a missionary oblate in the community, he animated the entire student body in the way of the life-style of the Missionary Oblates. His talks, conferences were geared to animate them in the pursuit of the Oblate charism which is to leave nothing undared to establish the Reign of Christ and to opt always to work for and with the poor in evangelizing them.

Such was the scriptural inspiration he drew from the famous missionary text of Luke 4:18-19 where Jesus claims to have come to fulfill the 800-year old prophesy of Isaiah which said: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, to evangelize the poor he has sent me andto declare the Year of the Lord' favour."

We must not forget that Sri Lanka was considered in the 1940's, and even now, as a missionary country and among missionaries were Oblates from France, Holland, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom who continued to come to work here in schools, parishes and charitable institutions. To have elected Fr. Benjamin Cooray OMI reflects therefore the general missionary hopes of the Church as such. It was with this missionary zeal that he began to work in the diocese now entrusted to him. It has been said that his elevation to the rank of Cardinal by Pope Paul VI in February 1965 was seen manifestly as a gesture of appreciation and recognition of the pioneering missionary work accomplished by the Oblates in this country for more than a century: its crowning glory. It is also significant that Bishop Eugène de Mazenod, the Oblate founder, referred to Sri Lanka (Ceylon at that time) as the most beautiful country in the world and at the same time as the most beautiful and promising mission that Oblates had the privilege of serving. He in fact had dreamt of the entire island being evangelized and was every ready to send fresh supplies of missionaries, if there was need.

Archbishop Cooray without any doubt was led by the Oblate charism of blazing new trails in carrying forward the work of evangelization, not only within the Archdiocesan boundaries, but he had even crossed borders reaching the remote areas of Anuradhapura, a historical seat of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Thanks to his personal interest in this mission district, carved out of Jaffna and Trinco-Batticaloa dioceses and entrusted to the local Oblates, it has grown to be a full-fledged diocese today from the originally small rural Catholic communities, like that of Kāgama which he nursed with such care and has now blossomed into a full-blown diocese since 1982. A third bishop, an Oblate, is now its chief shepherd.

Vatican II

Archbishop Cooray attended all the sessions of Vatican II which was the major Catholic event in the last century and continuing to inspire and sustain the missionary

spirit of today's Church. Its theology and missionary vision are becoming more and more relevant and demanding today when socio-cultural and political-religious challenges seem to confront not only the values enshrined in the Christian faith, but even all religions in principle. The two main preoccupations and later commitments of Vatican II were Renewal and the Updating of the Church. Archbishop Cooray who actively took part both in preparatory and in the 4-year sessions of the Council together with the entire contingent of the Sri Lankan Bishops absorbed well and clearly the vision of Vatican II for the Church of the future. He saw how, the centre of the Catholic Church was slowly shifting to the third-world Christian countries and the minority Churches in the non-Christian lands. Already during the Council, he had joined a group of Asian Bishops to discuss the possibility of a grouping of the Asian Bishops' conferences for a more effective insertion of the Gospel in the Asian lands and for more incisive efforts of evangelization. And so, the Federation of Asian Bishops (FABC) was born.

Asia is a continent which is one-third of today's humanity but paradoxically, it is a continent of manifest poverty though rich in ancient cultures and many of today's living religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and many other indigenous ones. The Asians had to take this local situation in hand and respond as modern missionaries with modern approaches. And so eventually, after attending many of FABC Plenaries and Institutes beginning in 1972, he was overjoyed in his retirement years to see the emphasis on dialogue as the most effective and workable form of evangelizing the cultures, religions and the poor of Asia. It was a clear crowning of his initial dreams as a pioneering founder-member.

Post Independence Church

Within Sri Lanka itself, he was engaged in leading a post-Independence Church. He had to contend with very difficult issues such as the rising Buddhist nationalism, the violent insurrection of the frustrated youth in 1971 and a new political era that emerged with the 1972 Constitution. Besides, he began to see the need of fostering an indigenous clergy to care for the Church in these vitally changing socio-cultural and political scenarios. A major event of priestly formation was the inauguration of the present National Seminary

in Ampitya in 1955 with its administration and formation curricula being entrusted to the Oblates. The staff for this overwhelmingly crucial and important institution was drawn from the best of professors and formators from USA and Europe with the reins progressively being passed on to Sri Lankan Oblate formators. The negotiations for this venture had directly been between Roman authorities in the Vatican and the Oblate General Administration. Structures of reform were later introduced in 1972 with the seminary administration vested in the local bishops' conference.

Cardinal Cooray having understood well the orientations of Vatican II regarding the Church and the secular world began the institute of SEDEC for social animation and humanitarian work. He opened an institute for the media apostolate to integrate social communications to the apostolate of evangelization. He felt the importance of a well-informed and formed laity and raised the giant edifice of Paul VI centre right in the heart of the City of Colombo at its busiest intersection to house and co-ordinate all the lay apostolates of the Archdiocese. One cannot forget his sharing of the Canon Cardinal's vision for the workers and the launching of the YCW also in the heart of Colombo. He believed in integral formation and the need for vocational training of youth and thus began the Radio Lab in Kotahena for the benefit of poor youth.

The centre of St. Vincent's Home, Maggona for the rehabilitation of youth and their vocational/spiritual formation was revamped and entrusted to the care of the Oblates. Its old boys are faring well in life today. A similar centre of the Diyagala Boys Town run by the Christian brothers continues its incomparable work. One of Cardinal's main concerns was the spiritual development of the various categories of the faithful. The Retreat House of Tawatte, an ideal oasis for quiet, contemplation and spiritual renewal next to the imposing Basilica that he completed, was begun to cater to this indispensable dimension of creating an evangelized Church of priests, religious and laity. A sad fall-out of the schools take-over of the mid-sixties was the threat to Christian formation and religion-teaching affecting Catholic children particularly

in government schools. While he took care to keep some very good Catholic schools which had to be managed under much constraint, he opened a centre for training religion teachers in parishes and schools at Tammita, which today has a broad-based spectrum of educational activities as well. All these show how sensitive he has been to his pastoral duties of fostering faith and safeguarding Catholic life traditions within his fold.

Authentic Evangelizer

It has been accepted even by the foreign press that Cardinal Cooray maintained excellent relations both with the State authorities and the Buddhist Clergy and institutions and was very sensitive to the causes of preserving interreligious harmony and ethnic unity. One Sri Lanka with a Sri Lankan identity for all was ever his prayer and ideal for his motherland. He was looked upon as a personality of the highest integrity that earned everyone's respect. He was a person committed to peace, brotherhood, justice in all matters, spirituality and a champion of non-violence. He desired a Sri Lankan Church that is truly close to the culture of the people, a religious community deeply adhering to its religious and moral tenets and one through which the country can be served. All these, as one can perceive, are values of the kingdom that the Church strives to build and diffuse in the interest of spreading the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which in simple words is evangelization.

As a priest, bishop and Cardinal, the servant of God Thomas Cooray was not only a loving and kind shepherd to the flock, but in many ways an authentic evangelizer and an apostle of the Gospel. He can truly be emulated with greater appreciation as we prepare for the 25th anniversary of his heavenly birth in December 2013. The Servant of God, Cardinal Cooray is undoubtedly a perfect missionary son of St. Eugène de Mazenod, to whose missionary congregation he lived faithful to the end.

Rev. Fr. Leopold Ratnasekera OMI

Bl. Joseph Vaz - His early years and Ministry in India

April 21, 2013, marks the 361st Birth Anniversary of Blessed Joseph Vaz. Born in his maternal home in Benaulim, South Goa, he was baptised a week later at the Church of St. John the Baptist also in Benaulim. The Baptismal Font built in solicit granite is to be seen to this day. A day after his birth, his father Christopher Vaz having seen a bright star shining in the noonday sky wrote thus in his diary. "This son of mine will one day be great" and great he became. His entire life of fifty nine years could be divided into two equal parts. The first thirty years in India followed by the remaining twenty-nine years in Sri Lanka. We shall now reflect on the highlights of the first part-his life in India.

In course of time the Vaz family moved to the village of Sancoale from where the boy Joseph commenced his primary schooling. At school he was loved by both his teacher and school-mates alike. He would never hurt anyone either by word or deed and thus grew up as a model student. From his early years he imbibed a great devotion to Mother Mary. He always wore the Rosary around his neck and would recite it on his way to and from school. Once back from school, unlike other children of his age, he would not head towards the playground. Instead, he would help his mother with her daily household chores such as marketing, cleaning the house and fetching water for the household from a nearby spring which exists to this day. The water from this spring is well known for its curative properties, especially for those suffering from various skin ailments. As a result of helping his mother every evening, he could hardly find any time for visiting his parish church in Cortalim for silent prayer.

In those days it was customary that all churches would shut their doors with nightfall. However, young Joseph approached his parish priest and sought permission to have the church open for an extra hour or two. This was refused and faced with no other option, Joseph would jump out of his room through the window while the entire Vaz household was fast asleep and head towards the church in total darkness as there were no street lights at that time. There, he would kneel on the steps leading to the front door of the Church and pray in the silence of the night. The huge doors of this Church would miraculously be flung open and a voice from behind would beckon Joseph to proceed to the Altar, but obedient as he was to his parish priest he would refuse to walk in. As a result, it is said that two Angels would carry him and leave him at the Altar rails from where he prayed into the wee hours of the morning after which would hurry back home and enter his room through the same window before the Vaz family rises up in the morning. Such was his piety at so tender an age. The huge doors of this church are intact to this day and have not been replaced through the last three centuries.

A Priest

Having fared well in his examinations, Joseph answered the Lord's call and entered the Seminary and was ordained a priest. The very next day after his ordination, on August 5, the feast of Our Lady of Snows, he visited the

Church of Our Lady of Snows in Sancoale. Here at the Altar he wrote his now famous Letter of Bondage to Mother Mary offering himself as a Perpetual Slave of Mother Mary and that she makes use of him as she desires. Having signed this Letter, he removed his shoes and left them beneath the Altar. From then onwards till he died in Kandy he never wore any footwear, traversing through hills slopes and jungles always barefooted.

As a young priest he was appointed to a small parish in Goa and was entrusted with the task of visiting houses which he did every evening. One evening he encountered a heavy storm and took shelter in the verandah of a nearby house. On seeing him the inmates beckoned him to come in and he reluctantly obliged. The storm continued and with nightfall, the inmates convinced him to stay over for the night. The next morning before he left, he inquired from the couple as to what they wished to have from him as he was highly impressed by their hospitality. The couple replied that God had blessed them with almost everything they needed but though married for ten years they had no children. Fr. Vaz blessed them and assured them that next year they would be blessed with a child. On this very day the following year, the couple were blessed with a son whom they named Joseph. Ever since, Blessed Joseph Vaz has come to stay as the patron of childless couples for many are those who had recourse to him in prayer and were blessed with children.

Blessed Joseph Vaz founded the Oratorian Order in Goa and became its first Superior. In course of time the Oratorian Order supplied priests to Sri Lanka for nearly 130 years after the demise of Blessed Joseph Vaz. However, Divine Providence led him out of Goa and he ministered to the faithful in Kanara - present Mangalore and further South in Kerala. In Mangalore, he effected mass conversions from among the Hindus and Muslims and this prompted them to plot against him.

One evening at dusk, he was led up the Mudippu hill on the pretext of a sick call in order to be killed. Sensing danger to his life he knelt on solid rock and prayed to God that he be spared for his intended mission in Sri Lanka. Immediately a thunder bolt struck the area and his would be assassins fled the scene in fright, leaving him all alone. From the spot where

his knees touched the ground, two springs of water emerged and these exist to this day, having never run dry. While Pope John Paul II was reading the official proclamation of Blessed Joseph Vaz at the Galle Face Green in Colombo, these two springs gushed out water as a fountain and subsided after about ten minutes. At that time two Bishops and a number of priests were concelebrating Holy Mass in the Shrine and this event was witnessed by thousands of pilgrims who had gathered here for the occasion.

Mission in Ceylon

Like many saints in the history of the Church, Blessed Joseph Vaz's ministry in Kanara ran into troubled waters. His Superiors misunderstood him and became suspicious of his intentions. At this stage the Jesuit Fathers, with whom he was staying in Kanara, had seen him in Ecstasy, almost hanging in the air on several occasions while he was in deep prayer. This was reported to his superiors after which no action was taken against him. At about this time he came to know of the plight of the Catholics in Ceylon under the Dutch regime. His eye now turned towards Ceylon - the land of his dreams. With this end in view, he wished to study Tamil and this led him to Tuticorin in the far South where he mastered the Tamil Language. From then onwards he was waiting for an opportunity to "slip" into Ceylon. He requested many of his fellow priests to join him but none of them obliged as the Dutch had issued an "Order" in Ceylon that all Catholic priests should quit the Island under pain of death. As such he became isolated and decided to enter Ceylon all by himself. Hence he applied to the Dutch Governor of Tuticorin to enter Ceylon as a layman and this was immediately refused. That same night this Governor died of a heart attack



and Blessed Joseph Vaz applied once again to the acting Governor to enter Ceylon by boat as a coolie. This was granted and the Lord opened the door in 1682 for Blessed Joseph Vaz to enter Sri Lanka not only to fan the flames of an almost extinct Catholicism but also to "raise" it to unimaginable heights within a period of twenty-nine years and thereby lay a solid foundation for today's Catholic Church in Sri Lanka.

On this his 361st birth Anniversary, Catholics in Sri Lanka bow in gratitude to this man of God, son of Goa and Apostle of Sri Lanka and prayerfully awaits the day when he will be raised to the Altar.

On behalf of the National Joseph Vaz Secretariat, the writer has organised annual pilgrimages to Goa during the past twenty-one years. Among others the places visited include Benaulim, Sancoale, Cortalim Church, the spring, Blessed Joseph Vaz's room, the Oratory, Church of Our Lady of Snows, St. Francis Xavier's remains and the Mudippu Hill where stands today a beautiful Shrine dedicated to Blessed Joseph Vaz.

This year's pilgrimage is scheduled for mid August and readers are most welcome to join same.

Roggy Corera

At the foot of the Cross, the Rugged Cross

Rushed I, O Lord
All the way to Calvary
Treading the path you had swayed through
Carrying a Cross, a heavy Rugged Cross
Having heard
Of the pardon you had granted
To the thief on to your right
Also nailed to his wooden cross
Forgiving his sins and awarding
Paradise for his remorse
I too longed
To gain in abundance
Your love for me and pardon for my sins
But, Alas! Only to find you
Not on the Cross, the Rugged Cross!

Am I late O Lord,
Or, am I condemned and prior destined?
Have I missed to be a Magdalene,
Or the thief you canonised in Calvary?
Crumbled in desolation
I look up again and again, with hope
To the Cross, the empty Cross
Hark! There I feel on my cheek
Moistened with my tears so cold
A drop rolling down with warmth
Permeating a fragrance, a celestial fragrance
Only flowers, flowers of the Heavens

Unknown to humans bequeath
A divine ecstasy fills my heart
And a spring-breeze tenderness
Pervades my soul
Reminding me of the fulfilment
Manna that came from Heaven gave!
Light I feel
The heaviness of the sin-ache
Gone off my senses
Is it a trance? Nay, it's real, indeed real!
Know I now
Where from the drop had come
That's the last drop of Blood
What my Lord had preserved
To cleanse me,
Knowing well much ahead
That I too would
Rush with remorse, tear-rolled remorse
For His pardon graced in Love!

I now walk down Calvary,
Blessed and Resurrected
My heart and soul
Filled with Divine Love
Hoping to see my Risen Lord
In glory, all glory
On the day of Easter, the Holy Easter!

Tharcus S. Fernando

Friendship, the most desirable of all goods: Thomas Aquinas on 'Charity as Friendship'

A book by Rev. Fr. Ajith Wellington, OMI and Rev. Fr. Richard Wolak, OMI

Only a person who could sustain and maintain great friendships could write adequately about friendship. This book is, to a greater extent, a collaborative effort which is born out of a friendship in philosophical apprenticeship between Fr. Ajith Wellington, OMI and Fr. Richard Wolak, OMI. A friendship has finally and filially given birth to this book and in reciprocity, the book has also further strengthened and cemented that friendship. This is an ample proof that true friendship bear fruits, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

A good philosopher always makes distinctions in order to clarify how certain insights are arrived at. Understanding something coherently and articulating it comprehensively is a hallmark of a great philosophical spirit. This is very much needed in the light of the contemporary Sri Lankan tendency to be opinionated about anything and everything. Human beings ought to become intelligent not gossipy or opinionated.

In trying to reach up to the mind of Saint Thomas Aquinas, one also begins to understand oneself with greater clarity. When Fr. Ajith writes and teaches about St. Thomas, he truly becomes himself. Making some fine and refined philosophical nuances, Fr. Ajith leads us through the thickets of Thomistic philosophical tapestry.

The best in Thomism is best for all peoples regardless of their religious background. A retrieval of Thomistic heritage is beneficial for everybody – Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Saint Thomas enjoyed deep supernatural pleasure in continuous learning, reflecting, teaching and writing and shared with us the fruits of his intellectual labour. Whatever is not shared is lost forever. What he understood contemplatively, he lived out actively. Theory and practice were not two separate departments in his life but they were organically and coherently blended and bonded.

In his life time, Saint Thomas formed deep and life-long friendships (for instance, with Reginald of Piperno, William of Moerbeke, etc.), befriended Aristotelian heritage, wrote and encouraged oth-

ers to become good friends for their friends. His friendship with Aristotle's philosophy led to a better understanding of God's friendship with us.

You can befriend this book and then it will also befriend you in return and offer you continuous spiritual nourishment. Reading a book about friendship is to form an intimate friendship with that book. So this book will make you a better friend and train you to form better friendships.

This highly nuanced and technically sophisticated study is distributed amongst five main sections.

In Chapter one, Fr. Ajith reflects about the influence of Aristotle's logical and epistemological structure on St. Thomas' brilliant analysis of the human person as a "compound whose substance is both spiritual and corporeal" (p.18).

To love one's friends is to love oneself as another. When you have become a better friend to your friends, you will have also encouraged them to become better friends to their friends and therefore true friendships are contagious. Life without friends (could there really be such a life?) is an empty life, and aimless life and a useless life. The quality of human life is largely dependent upon the quality of our friendships. The one who truly loves one's friends truly loves oneself too.

Instead of controlling, dominating, manipulating and cajoling a friendship, you should humbly allow it to guide you, deepen you, enrich you, purify you and empower you. Friendship is one's true home. In and through friends, one finds oneself, one finds one's real abode. With friends, one is at home with oneself and when this happens, one also begins to live in God. In actual fact, God helps me to cultivate myself authentically and to find myself divinely and deeply. Only then could I become a blessing to my friends.

As he points out further; "The human being is unique. because he does not belong to the world of purely intellectual beings, nor does he belong to the world of purely material beings. He in fact, occupies the boundary between the purely intellectual and purely material, by the very fact that he has a living body, a body



animated by a rational soul which also contains the faculties or the powers of the sensitive and vegetative souls. Thus, because the human being is an "embodied soul" or a "living body" (a body animated by a rational soul), passions are an integral part of his nature, as they are of the nature of all animals. This is because of the body, the material component, which is the equipment for sensitive or animal life. (pp.20-21).

In the same chapter, there is a dazzling exposition on love as *amor* and its multiple manifestations.

"Love of friendship sees the other (the person loved) as another self. St. Thomas states that our love of friendship for another is an extension of one's love for oneself. One's love for oneself is absolutely basic and primary, and it can be considered as the foundation and archetype of all friendly relations. The extension of one's love for oneself to the other becomes natural and easy when the other, considered as another self, possesses actually our same qualities and excellences, for the love springs from the precise points of agreement. The idea of similitude is best understood in this context, because friendship is not a one way thing, rather it is mutual benevolence, or love of friendship reciprocated." (pp.37-38). Chapter two focuses on different types of virtues and their relation to love as '*caritas*'.

Friendship is a reflection on how God works in our lives. Friendship is the good par excellence that continues to connect

us to God; the way to good God is in and through good friends. When God becomes one's true friend, one becomes a true friend of everybody. One cannot be a good friend of God and not befriend other human beings.

Falling in love with God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our might, with all our mind and with all our integrity is the ultimate fulfillment of human life. In loving God, we also begin to love those whom God loves and without loving them the way God loves them, we cannot love God.

Let us listen to our brilliant author again; "Friendship, on the other hand, is only possible with people similar to ourselves and those to whom we are bound by good will. St. Thomas, in the *sed contra*, quotes the words of Jesus "I will not now call you servants ... but my friends". The reason the Lord called his apostles "friends" is, according to St. Thomas, purely and simply his *caritas*. Thus *caritas*, as given by Jesus to his disciples, proves to be friendship. (p. 110). Chapter three discusses at length the concept of *communicatio*.

A friend of God, although it is God who makes us his friends, is necessarily a friend of everybody. Human love is not on the same level as Divine love but at the same time, we cannot grasp something of Divine love without an experience of human friendships. God does not bypass or shortcircuit human relationships but works in and through them. God perfects human

Reviewed by Prof. Anton Meemana

friendships. When two people become friends, God is there in the midst of them, ever active and ever encouraging them. As Fr. Ajith discusses; "Thus, there exists a friendship between God and man, and this friendship is made possible by the initiative of God, the superior one, to share his happiness with man, the inferior partner. Therefore, St. Thomas is able to affirm that between God and man there exists a type of friendship because they do have something in common. This *communicatio* removes the disparity that exists between God and man to same measure, and brings about some kind of similitude, and thereby provides the necessary foundation upon which the friendship between these two unlikely partners is founded." (p. 137).

Chapter four elaborates in the complexity of *amicitia*.

According to Albert Einstein, there is only one ultimate question to be asked; that is, 'Is the universe a friendly place?' Everything else in life depends upon how we are going to understand and answer that grand question. Every question we ask is ultimately a question about God. The ultimate ground of all our questioning is our innate and intrinsic yearning to know God. God wants us to ask more and more questions, even about God Himself.

"Benevolence is the first step towards friendship. In fact, friendship adds something to a one-sided love of benevolence, a society of two in their love. What becomes evident in this whole activity is that there can be no friendship until and unless the love of benevolence is consciously reciprocated by the other. Implicit in this discussion is the fact that love of friendship that we extend to another anticipates and seeks a reaction, namely, to love with love of friendship is to will to be loved with love of friendship. Otherwise it remains love of benevolence and never friendship. So, the friendship without any doubt implies reciprocity of well-washings of two subjects." (p. 188).

Human life aims at happiness and a friendship

becomes most promising, most enriching, and most nourishing when it has no hidden agenda. The complete flourishing of friendship happens when it is for its own sake and not for any utilitarian or calculative purpose.

In Chapter five, Fr. Richard Wolak has philosophically and philosophically accomplished a virtuoso performance on the parable of the Good Samaritan. His analysis sounds very practical simply because it is philosophically and exegetically very solid and deep. Real practically is never anti-intellectual. Theory is the highest form of practice. This quite inadequate and mistaken dichotomy between theory and practice is not a valid concept at all. One cannot be profoundly practical unless one tries to grasp things theoretically. Theory means, more than anything else, proper understanding, adequate understanding, objective understanding. It also means a closest approximation of truth.

Theory also means objectivity to the best of human intelligence and judgement. The most practical man is the most theoretical man and a deeply theoretical man is also a profoundly practical man. A deeply theoretical man is also a theological man and that man par excellence in history is Saint Thomas Aquinas. The ultimate theory is theology and therefore the ultimate practice is also theology. Christian praxis is knowledge born out of deep contemplation and deep contemplation is the ultimate Christian praxis. We live as good as we think, or better, as good as we contemplate.

Loving one's neighbour is to treat another as myself, that is, to feel what another person deeply feels and to act meaningfully as if it is I myself who is suffering, who is in agony, who is in torment. Each one of us is called to become a good Samaritan to the one who is beaten up, left behind, marginalised and abandoned, to be dear and near to the one who is in dire need.

Real love is hard work, apparent Sisyphean labour, and endless toil. Loving requires the best in us, makes us magnanimous, courageous and generous

(Contd on pg. 14)

♦ *Reactions to the Pontiff's election by International Organisations and Governments*

Pope Francis before the world

In the statements by international organizations and Governments around the world following the election of Pope Francis, among the most recurrent themes are; dialogue, peace and attention to the poor.

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization, said: "I look forward to continuing cooperation between the United Nations and the Holy See under the wise leadership" of Pope Francis. "In the Americas Pope Francis's election has stirred enthusiasm and hope, as various leaders, have said. Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner expressed her hope of good results for "justice, equality, brotherhood and peace in the world."

President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, whose country has the largest number of Catholics in the world, congratulated Pope Francis, the Catholic Church and the Argentine people. She highlighted the election of the first Latin-American Pope to whom Brazil looks forward to offering hospitality for the World Youth Day in July. President Raul Castro of Cuba was, among the first Latin

American Heads of State to send the new Pope "cordial congratulations for the pontificate."

Barack Obama described Pope Francis as "a champion of the poor and the most vulnerable among us. Those of us in the United States share the joy of this historic day," said the President of the United States of America, according to whom his selection as the first pope from the Americas also shows the strength and vitality of a region that is increasingly shaping our world. "I look forward to working with His Holiness to advance peace, security and dignity for our fellow human beings, regardless of their faith," Mr Obama said.

According to the German Chancellor Angela Merkel many people expect Pope Francis to be "not only a guide in matters of faith, but also with regard to peace, justice and the safeguard of creation."

President Francois Hollande of France stressed that the Church stands before the important mission of facing the challenges of the world, adding: "Faithful to her history and to the universal principles of freedom,

equality and brotherhood on the basis of her actions in the world," France "will pursue her dialogue with the Church, with the same confidence in the Holy See that she has always had."

For David Cameron, the British Prime Ministry "the election of Pope Francis marks an important day for the 1.2 billion Catholics in the world." Then "warm congratulations upon the election of Pope Francis to succeed in the Apostolic See" were expressed by President Mariano Rajoy of the Spanish Government.

Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Italian Republic, wrote that the Italian people share in the new Pope's election "in a special way and on their behalf, interpreting the common, profound sentiment, I address my warmest and most sincere congratulations to you." "The extraordinary moral and cultural legacy of Catholicism," the Head of the Italian State continued, "is indissolubly interwoven with our 2,000-year-old history and with the moral values Italy recognizes as its own. This shared spiritual wealth is intrinsic in the figure of St. Francis of Assisi, Patron of Italy,



whom you have chosen, Your Holiness, to inspire you in taking on the new Pontificate."

An official message sent to the Pope from the Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti reads: "The Italian people gather round you, your Holiness, welcoming you with affection and joy, full of hope and trust." Monti added: "The Italians, linked to the Argentine people by a special history, recognize themselves today in the name of their Patron, the Saint of Assisi, united to the whole world in the search for justice and peace."

In reporting the news of Pope Francis' election, Xinhua, the press

service of China, described him as a "strong supporter of assistance to the poor." President Vladimir Putin of Russia sent a congratulatory telegram in which he said he was convinced that cooperation between Russia and the Vatican would continue to develop successfully and wished the Pontiff "fruitful activity for strengthening peace and for furthering the dialogue between civi-

lization and the religious denominations."

A public message of congratulations to Pope Francis was broadcast on March 14, by Shimon Peres, the Head of the State of Israel, in which he mentioned that the new Pope succeeds a Pontiff "who did much to develop relations with us: These relations are now at their best."

(L'Osservatore Romano)



Matrimonial Data Banks at Deanery Level

I am sure that thousands of parents across the country would raise both hands to endorse wholeheartedly the suggestion made by Neomal Perera, that Matrimonial Data Banks should be established in every Deanery, in his letter 'Towards curtailing mixed marriages' (Messenger 10th February) This is really a 'Holy Spirit inspired' suggestion - the urgent need of the day.

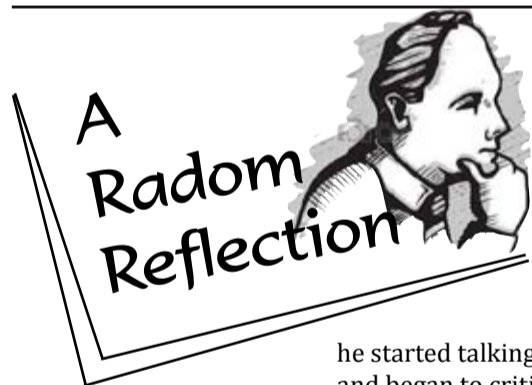
As Neomal Perera rightly points out, today's parents are really desperate with unmarried children at home. So as he says they get married to 'who ever comes on their way, any race any religion. Thereafter a few months or years later 'separation' comes along. This often happens in mixed marriages because there is no 'turning to God Almighty' by both husband and wife when problems prop-up.

Neomal is correct when he says that both the 'demand' and the 'supply' are available, but that there is no 'avenue' for them to meet. So the Church could step in and make available the 'avenue' as one of its services to the laity to safeguard their faith. This service could be an extension of the services already rendered through the Family Services arm of the Church. There are counselling services for couples already functioning. There should also be a service to help form Catholic couples.

There are hundreds of middle and lower income group parents who cannot afford 'matrimonial advertisements' and also regular long distance travel. They are all in search of 'partners' closer home, for convenience of regular contact.

I pray and hope that both the hierarchy and the clergy would give this 'Spirit inspired' suggestion their urgent attention realising the gravity of the problem faced by desperate parents with aging children at home and which would definitely be a great boon to them. It will also as Neomal points out, curtail mixed marriages and even separation and help form good Catholic families who would be ever grateful to the Church for their union.

Stanley Perera



Criticism is the subject of most conversations when people meet and talk or discuss in the market place, in buses and trains, at home, on the road or in public places. Some people enjoy criticising others. This chronic problem in society is generally taken for granted.

Once I was travelling by train to the Peradeniya University to give a lecture and got in to a semi express train from Ragama. Due to some activity upcountry that day I could not get a seat even in the second class. A gentleman who got in at the Veyangoda Station came and stood very close to me. Since I did not know him we did not speak to each other but before arriving at Polgahawela we happened to start talking and the moment he knew that I was a good listener

he started talking freely and began to criticise the present government and politicians. Although I had a principle of just not criticising others, I was patiently listening to him with an occasional 'Yes' or 'No' as he was after all a stranger to me. After some time I had to tell him that it is useless trying to criticise others as there is always something bad in any ruling government and politician. It is better that as individuals each of us try to correct ourselves thereby setting a good example to others which will gradually correct the society.

During the conversation I came to know that he was a station master. He had by now stopped his criticism and was quiet for a while. He also had a friend who was seated in the next compartment. We reached Polgahawela and a big

Example is better than precept

crowd got in to the train. The crowd came rushing and we got trampled and pushed a little. Then my neighbour had no patience and told me "See how this crowd is behaving? They have no sense of manners or etiquette towards others" and started criticising the present society. Quickly I reminded him that we should simply stop criticising others, and try to set a good example so that people seeing us will learn from us and imitate us. The station master stopped talking and was looking at me in a strange manner. We reached Kdugannawa when a seat fell vacant close to my neighbour's friend, who was seated in the adjoining compartment. His friend called him and offered him the vacant seat. The station master smiled at me and went and sat in the next compartment. The train started to move again. Occasionally I took a glance at the two friends who

were talking to each other in the adjoining compartment. Whenever I looked at them I noticed that they were looking at me and the moment their eyes met mine they stopped talking. I presumed that the station master was telling his friend about me. Within minutes the station master called me and asked me to take his seat. I refused as both of us were standing throughout the journey and I was surprised as to why he offered me the seat, which he himself had got after standing for so long. The station master insisted that I should sit and I was more or less compelled to do so.

Lesson: It did not take much time for the station master to realise that good example is better than precept and that we can never correct the society by just criticising them and that one should set an example instead of just preaching.

Damascene Abeysekera

The word 'spirit' has different meanings as implied in the scriptures. In the Greek and Hebrew languages which are relevant to scripture, this word primarily means 'breath' or 'wind'. The English term 'Spirit' essentially refers to God as a superhuman incorporeal being and also to the Holy Spirit who functions as the Spirit of God. It also means a person's disposition towards his faith.

The spirit of a human is his soul. Different from animals, who have no soul, the human soul receives something of the Spirit or the breath of God. Scripture says: "Then Yahweh God formed Man, dust drawn from the clay, and breathed into his nostrils a breath of life and Man became alive with breath." (Gen 2:7)

The human soul consists of both the human spirit and the spirit of God as breath and does not die with the death of the body. Scripture affirms: "before the dust returns to the earth from which it came and the Spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecl 12:7). The New Testament teaching on the destiny of the hu-

man soul is that the sinful soul will not find favour with God and will not return to God. To lose God at death is damnation. (Matt 10, 28)

The existence of the Spirit of God is known from Scriptures throughout the Bible. Genesis 1: 1-2 tells us: "In the beginning, when God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth had no form and was void; darkness was over the deep and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters." To believe in the Spirit of God is to believe that in God there is a third person called the Holy Spirit who proceeds from God and his Son and possesses the same Divine nature and substance with them.

An instance of the work of the Spirit of God can be seen from a text in the Book of Numbers 11, 24-25: "Moses then went out and told the people what Yahweh had said. He assembled seventy men from among the elders and placed them round about the Tent. Yahweh came down in the cloud



and spoke to him. He took some of the Spirit that was upon him and put it on the seventy elders. Now when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But this they did not do again." The first awareness that the Israelites had of the Spirit of God came to them through the deeds of the prophets.

The prophets were those persons who knew something of God's secrets, with whom God had shared some of His wisdom, and who on certain occasions possessed

an irritable power. By the way the prophets acted, the Israelites came to understand that God communicated his Spirit like a violent and sudden wind.

In the same chapter verses 26-27 read:

"Two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad, the name of the other Medad. However, the Spirit came on them for they were among those who were registered through they had not gone out to the Tent. As they prophesied inside the camp, a young man ran

spiritual benefit.

A text in Acts 8: 14 speaks of Baptism of the Spirit: "Now when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. They went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not as yet come down upon any of them since they had only been Baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. So Peter and John laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit." Baptism of water is the renewal of the individual through faith, while the laying of hands expresses the transmission of the Spirit in an uninterrupted way, beginning with those who received it at Pentecost.

The Spirit whom we receive helps us to worship God in truth. Our prayers would mean nothing if not motivated by simplicity, truthfulness and purity of Spirit. The Spirit of God cannot be communicated except to those who seek the truth and live according to truth in a sinful and corrupt world.

E.M. Aldons

Compassion - gift and call of the woman

This vocation to love is inseparable from another specific gift of the woman: A sensitivity for the suffering of others, and a willingness to join in that suffering. In his encyclical on suffering, called *Salvifici dolores*, John Paul II included a major section on the call for *compassion* in the face of suffering. He is clear that every single person whether man or woman - has a solemn obligation to live compassion. But the woman, in virtue of

her gifts, can be a special "witness" to this virtue, helping men to develop compassion within themselves. This is one of the ways that the complementarity between male and female becomes fruitful.

Suffering is a great mystery - we could say that in a way it is the greatest puzzle of human life. It has no natural resolution, and is in itself unbearable. But there is a kind of solution to the mystery, insofar something wonderful happens

"The woman's vocation to an intimate and deeply personal love goes along with her ability to be in this deeply consoling way with and for the one who suffers"

because of suffering. A new intensity of love comes into being, which changes suffering, if not taking it away, surrounding it with its opposite: a deep consolation and even happiness. John Paul II writes, "... We could say that suffering, which is present under so many different forms in our human world, is also present in order to *unleash love in the human person*, that unselfish gift of one's 'I' on behalf of other people, especially those who suffer."

To be compassionate does not simply mean to do something that takes away or makes

the suffering easier; in most cases, We are not able to do that. Compassion is a "suffering with" the one who suffers. What a consolation, when someone in the dark loneliness of suffering suddenly finds with him in that dark place a sensitive heart - a heart that is hurting because he is hurting, and suffering with him, Out of love! As Mother Teresa said, 'suffering is unbearable only when one suffers alone.'

The woman's vocation to an intimate and deeply personal love goes along with her ability to be in this deeply consoling way with and for the one who suffers.

In her receptivity of the other, in her great sensitivity of heart, the woman is able to be a witness to the need for courage in remaining vulnerable to the pain of another; she is a witness to the call for selflessness in taking on another's wounds.

(Courtesy: CTS Publications)

Friendship, the most

(Contd from Pg.10)

like the good Samaritan. To love is to risk, to love deeply is to risk more courageously and therefore only the brave can love.

Love is an ongoing decision, a decision that requires continuous renewal and resolution, followed by commitment. Love dispels hatred, prejudice and darkness and compels and propels us towards meaningful action for the orphan, the marginalised, the widow, the prisoner, the stranger and the beggar.

One can draw much inspiration from the grand themes evoked in this admirable study. Here one insight has been clarified, amplified, magnified and strengthened with the help of another insight. Indeed, the complexity of friendship requires a sophisticated mode of thinking and understanding and the book has done precisely that.

Reading a good book is a great service to humanity and there is no substitute whatsoever for the habit of reading. Reading is a form of therapeutic activity. It is the spiritually healthiest food for the human soul. A nation that does not read good books is a nation that has no soul, no authenticity, no depth and no substance; it is a lost and loose nation.

Is this not the contemporary predicament in Sri Lanka?

Faith

*Faith is a gift of light
And it makes our crosses light
In darkness too it is our light
Thank God for the gift of light
He will make us radiate His light*

Emilda Douglas



May Jesus be seen through Me

*What made the disciples leave their nets?
What made Zacchaeus leave all his wealth?
What made Mary Magdalene humble herself at His feet?
What made the Rich Young Man disturbed inwardly?
What made Matthew leave all the money he had collected?
What made the cripple walk?
What made the blind see?
What ? What ?? What ???*

*Nothing else but,
His gentle voice
His loving gaze
His loving touch
Which changed everything.*

*So then, what made me
What I am
Nothing else but His precious blood
Shed for me on Mount Calvary.
Thats where I received life
Thats where I began my life.*

*Receiving such life in abundance
What should my response be?
There's nothing to think TWICE
I'm called to,
"Love OTHERS as He Loved Me"
I'm called to be another Jesus.*

*Let my kind words
Let my loving touch
Let my listening ear
Let my forgiving heart
Reveal Jesus Through Me to all*

Sr. M. Riana A.C



What it says in the Readings

I am the Good Shepherd, says the Lord; I know my own sheep and my own know me.
(Jn. 10:14)

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR C 21st April - 28th April 2013

Sun: Fourth Sunday of Easter
World Day of Prayer for Vocations
Ac 13:14, 43-52; Rev. 7:9, 14b-17;
Jn. 10: 27-30

Mon: Ac 11: 1-18; Jn. 10:1-10

Tue: Ac 11:19-26; Jn. 10:22-30

Wed: Memorial of St. Fidelis of
Sigmaringen, Priest & Martyr
Ac 12:24-14:5a; Jn. 12:44-50

Thu: Feast of St. Mark Evangelist
1 Pt. 5:5-14; Mk. 16:15-20

Fri: Ac 13:26-33; Jn. 14:1-6

Sat: Ac 13:44-52; Jn. 14:7-14

Sun: Fifth Sunday of Easter
National Laity Sunday
Ac 14:21b-27; Rev. 21:1-5a;
Jn. 13:31-35

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Yes, the Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want.

To Christ our Good Shepherd: That He may touch our hearts of stone and change them into hearts of flesh and blood, capable of loving as He loves. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Yes, the Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want.

For all those in positions of authority, and especially for doctors and nurses: That the Lord may fill them with a strong and unselfish love to work for the good of all people, but especially the weak and the wounded. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Yes, the Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want.

That each of us, wherever we are and no matter what our state in life, may strive to be people who love and care for others. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Yes, the Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want.

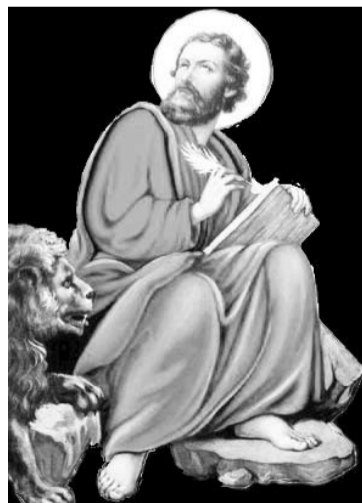
For sixteen newly ordained priests and for many more vocations in the vineyard of the Lord; that Christ the Good Shepherd may guide them and open new avenues for the greater Kingdom of God. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Yes, the Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want.

Feast of St. Mark - April 25

It is generally agreed that the Mark mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles is identical with the Mark referred to by St. Peter in his first Epistle 5:3 and by St. Paul in Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24. He was the son of Mary, a prominent member of the Christian community at Jerusalem an old friend of St. Peter's, in whose house the brethren accustomed would assemble. We first hear of Mark when Paul Barnabas take him along to Antioch in the year 46 and then on the first apostolic journey to Cyprus. Here Mark separated himself from Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem on account of certain disagreements.

Paul refused to have Mark as his companion on his second missionary journey. This caused Barnabas



First Reading:
Acts: 13: 14, 43-52

Taking over the mission from the Lord, Paul and Barnabas preach to the Jews. The leaders reject them but they go out to preach to the Gentiles. They are highly taken up by the Gentiles but the Jews incite them to drive the Apostles out.

Second Reading:
Rev. 7:9. 14-17

St. John in his vision sees the crowd before the Lord's throne. They are washed clean by the blood of the Lamb, and are saved by God. They will not suffer for; God will look after them.

Gospel: Jn:10: 27-30

Jesus assures His followers of His care, concern and protection for them. In the story the Lord is the Shepherd and His followers are the sheep. The sheep know and follow Him; the Lord in return protects them and gives them eternal life.

Reflection.

The Risen Lord who gave His Apostles the mission to spread the Good News to the nations; today assures them His care and protection. This care and protection is extended not only for this world but even for life after. What we need is to faithfully follow Him. To those who are faithful and who follow Him, Christ promises eternal life and protection also. He will never leave them. This is the message that the Lord gives to us through the Readings.

Like the two Apostles in the First Reading we are called to spread the Good News with courage and also bravely. This Good News is not only for the Jews but even to the Gentiles. Though the Apostles were persecuted for spreading the Good News they did not give up their mission but went to another area to preach and they were filled both with joy and with the Spirit. This is what the Risen Lord wants them to do and this is what the Risen Lord expects of us too.

To the faithful and to those who follow Him He promises numerous gifts. To those who remain faithful He promises full protection, guidance and eternal life. Regarding this He states in the Gospel; "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." He also promises God's protection as flowing from the same faithfulness. He show this when he says, "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." This is the greatest reward which every human being should long for. It will be ours if we are faithful to the Lord and follow Him in word and in deed.

Those rewards are not limited to this world. They even extend to life after. That is what John sees in the vision. A great multitude, standing before the throne and before the Lord. They are washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. They are blessed with the presence of God. Of them John says "He who sits upon the throne will

bas also to separate himself from Paul. Paul went on his way, while Barnabas and Mark once more went to Cyprus. But soon after Mark and Paul resolved their differences and became friends again. Around 60, Mark was in Rome with the great apostle, preparing to return to the Churches of Asia Minor, where he had become well known in the interim through his own apostolic labours. It appears that he also evangelized the region of Aquileia at the northern extremity of the Adriatic whence the inhabitants fled some 400 years later at Attila's approach and founded the famous lagoon city of Venice. Mark is considered a great Patron Saint of the city, his body having been stolen from Alexandria, Egypt, by Venetian soldiers in 815; and in Venice it has rested ever since under the high altar of the magnificent Basilica named after him.

Mark seems to have gone to Egypt from Aquileia and there founded the See of Alexandria. In 61 Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus, asking him to bring Mark with him to Rome, and it was while Mark was in the Eternal City that he wrote his vivid Gospel account which is a faithful record of the oral teaching of St. Peter, for whom he seems to have acted as secretary and interpreter. An ancient tradition claims that this second Gospel was, at the request of the Roman Christians, originally written in Greek. St. Mark is Patron of notaries and is invoked against lightning and hail.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.



shelter them with presence, they shall hunger no more neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat, for the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Therefore let us take up His mission with all faithfulness and follow Him to the presence of the Father.

Aid Story.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem..... How often would I gather thy children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but thou wouldst not!

Mathew 23:37.

Anyone who has ever observed a flock of chicken will see the beauty and appropriateness of Christ's comparison. Here is a hen with twenty chickens. There are several others with twelve or fifteen apiece. Tirelessly the hen seeks food for her little flock, when she comes upon a juicy worm in her scratching she gives it to the little ones. In caring for them, she seems to forget herself. She knows the moment when they are tired, and then she seeks a corner or a patch of shade, out of the wind and the sun, and settles down, spreading out their wings. One after another the chicks creeps in under to nestle. The cluck of the mother and the cheeps of the babes make a domestic symphony.

Christ compared His loving care, His selfless concern to that of a mother hen. It is for us to stay close to that care.

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

Sunday Rhythm - Fourth Sunday of Easter

Jesus: "The sheep, listen to my voice..."

Jesus: "I know them..."

Jesus: "...they follow me."

Jesus: "I give them eternal life."

Jesus: "they will never be lost."

Jesus: "...no one will ever steal them from me."

Richest Blessing: The Father who gave them to me is greater than any one....

Richest Result: The Father and I are ONE

TO THINK: Do you feel that you are special before God...? or Do you value your life in order to remain in God's bosom and to continue His mission ...?

TO PRAY: Dear God of Trinity, strengthen me to listen to you attentively, to know You well and to follow You closely. Amen.

TO ACT: Let us make sure that we will remain in His work and let us be cautious of not being lost from God's flock. With His help, let us lead everybody to the Pen of God's Salvation.

Rev. Fr. S. Randil Fernando OMI

IT STILL BEGINS WITH THE WORD

Evangelization in the Digital Age

Words are important. They are the building blocks of human relationships. Human beings use words to communicate their very selves. Words open us to the mystery of other people, breaking through human isolation and enabling community. Words are like stones or bricks. At their most positive, words construct the foundations for human community and friendship. Words build up, affirm the good, challenge to conversion, and call us to be authentic, loving, life-giving people.

But just like stones and bricks, words can also be used as weapons that wound, tear down, and destroy. They can provoke hatred and discrimination, spread gossip, and declare war.

Words matter. A speech by Hitler provoked people to participate in acts of unspeakable horror. A sermon by Pope John XXIII encouraged people to act with incredible generosity. Saint Alphonsus Liguori wrote that God became human to converse with us like a friend.

Saint John the Evangelist begins his Gospel with "In the beginning was the Word." The Book of Genesis emphasises the creative power of the Word of God as God speaks and Creation comes to be. God spoke through prophets and proverbs, chroniclers and kings to the people of Israel. And the New Testament opens with the Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us, revealing our human and Divine Saviour.

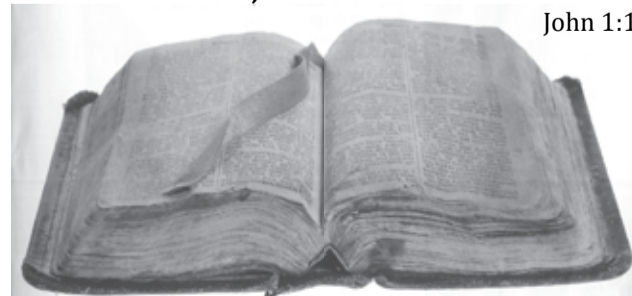
'And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us'

The most important word in God's communication with humanity is a person: Jesus Christ. In and through Him, the blessed Trinity is revealed God's very self. This Word is living, active, and present among us today and every day. Jesus and His message are the content of our evangelisation as Christ communicates God's life, love, and redemption.

The New Testament developed out of the oral tradition of the early Christian communities. This tradition was founded on the life and preaching of Jesus and enriched by the experience and wisdom of the evangelists, apostles, and community. But it's important to remember that Jesus Christ is the definitive Word of God—the Word we long to communicate to others.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'

John 1:1



Importance of the Written Word

God's people have a long tradition of listening to and proclaiming God's Word. Believers in Jesus Christ stem from a strong oral tradition—God communicated through prophets and religious leaders many years before the Word of God was written.

The written Word was received by the community after years of listening, living, praying, and discussing. It reflected the community's understanding of its relationship with the living God, and it became a stable reference point in this communication. This was especially important as historical and cultural situations evolved—the printed Word could be kept, protected, prayed, repeated faithfully, critically analyzed, and evaluated. The people of God were to "remember" and be faithful while God continued to communicate with and accompany them.

Communication

Initially, most people could not read or write. As the written word developed, its place in society gradually grew more important. But books were written and copied by hand, and parchment and paper were expensive. Only the privileged few were able to conserve copies of the written word.

This changed dramatically with the development of the printing press. Mass production of books, leaflets, and newspapers caused a revolution in communication, in the process of education, and even in the methods of evangelisation: Ordinary people could now get a copy of the Bible.

Today, We are living through another period of communication evolution that could have a great impact on society and on our task of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

For some, this age of computers, blogs, Wikipedia, Google, and e-books represents a new and unfamiliar world and is a source of anxiety. We are experiencing a revolution even greater than the one instigated by the printing press. This revolution will ultimately change our way of relating to society.

Information can be shared almost simultaneously, without paper and practically without cost. Millions of people have access to this new technology. Publishing is shifting from words on paper to words on computer, phones, tablets, and other instruments not yet conceived.

Advantages and Risks

This new world of universal access to information and communication has obvious advantages. In Africa, small rural classrooms can be connected to vast libraries and educational resources. In isolated villages in Burkina Faso and in regions with no other reliable form of communication, cell phones are used not only for telephone calls, but also for news bulletins. In Vietnam, people now have access to newscasts and different world views that offer possibilities beyond the ideology approved by a repressive government.

With an iPad or e-book, it is possible to create and use a library at a fraction of the cost and with greater access than past generations ever dreamed. Today's youth are as comfortable getting news on their phones or through social networking as other generations were listening to the radio or reading the morning newspaper. Readers can engage in dialogues and respond immediately to the information they receive.

Many young men and women communicate regularly with peers crossing geographical, cultural, and even language frontiers. This offers enormous opportu-

nities for new efforts to communicate the Gospel—even the Holy Father has a Twitter account. Do a browser search for Jesus Christ, and within one second you will find 209,000,000 pages dedicated to him.

The revolution is not without its challenges and risks. For example, not everything on the Internet is of equal quality. Much of the content is not well thought out or in accord with the Gospels. Therefore, it is critical to discern the value and importance of the written word as a stable reference point to help us sift through the Internet and social media.

Another problem is that not everyone has equal access to the technology. In Cuba, high-speed Internet is not easily available to ordinary people. Without access to this digital revolution, whole cultures can be left behind.

The instant nature of this communication poses a different kind of challenge. People often publish books, articles, and blogs without taking time for critical reflection and editing. This is particularly harmful because readers continue to think that if information has been published, it must be true. But without sufficient pre-publication verification, incorrect information can be stated as unquestioned truth—and malicious falsehoods can be published.

Guiding Principles for Evangelisation

As disciples of Jesus Christ, who came to preach the Good News to the poor, do we see this paradigm shift in communication and technology as an opportunity to be grasped or a danger to be criticised and condemned?

The printing press was initially criticised, yet it made the Word of God accessible to a far wider audience.

Can we do the same with this new technology, which confuses and even frightens some of us? I believe we can; in fact, I am convinced we must.

Here are three guiding principles for using technology to evangelise effectively:

First, at least for now, this type of communication and information technology cannot completely replace the printed word. Access is not yet universal, and we are still learning how to use it. Printed Bibles, prayer books, theology texts, and other books, magazines, and bulletins will continue to serve an essential role in our ongoing faith formation, our lives of prayerful union with God, and the work of evangelisation.

Second, remember that the means of communication should not affect quality of content. The written word still requires critical reflection and dialogue. When well-written blogs are creative, spontaneous, informative, and helpful, they invite us into a world of experience often unmarked by the interpretation and reflection of others. That is the nature of blogs and one reason they appeal to us. But they alone are not sufficient. Many blogs are undigested reflections on experience.

The third principle is our commitment to the Word made flesh. How does our communication in an electronic age reflect Jesus Christ and His gospel as Good News for men and women living today? Values and unchanging principles are universal. It is always important to measure the content of our communication in the light of the Gospel and the message of Jesus Christ.

Like Mary in Luke's Gospel, we must learn to treasure the Good News and carefully ponder it in our hearts. Written words invite readers into a dialogue that takes time to process. When the written word is shaped by serious reflection, it becomes a stable reference point for subsequent generations seeking the right path.

One great benefit of contemporary communication is that it enables us to invite others into the same process of pondering and gratitude. When technology is used well and guided wisely, it can be a powerful instrument, effective in engaging and sharing in evangelisation.

Courtesy- Liguorian



Use your time wisely!



"The present moment, or this actual existence from whom do I hold it? From God. It is He who called me from nothing into being. It is He who has preserved my existence from one instant to another, and who is preserving it at this present moment"

The greater number of mankind employ their time badly; many others are perfectly embarrassed by their time and do not know how to employ it. Their sole object is to fritter it away, to pass it agreeably to themselves, or at least without feeling themselves wearied and bored.

Do they succeed in this? No. Experience teaches us that those people who are greedy for pleasure are soon satiated with it, and that disgust, weariness, and idleness soon render them unbearable, even to themselves. But unfortunately, when they have acquired this experience, it is very rarely that they profit by it: The bad habits are formed; it would cost too much to adopt good ones. They continue to live as they have lived, although they no longer flatter themselves with the hope of happiness they once confidently expected. Woe to those who abuse and misuse their time! One day they will regret having acted so, but then their regrets will be in vain.

Our use of time will determine our eternity

What is time, with regard to myself? It is my present and actual existence. Past time, or

and perhaps never will arrive. It does not depend on me; I cannot count on it; and the most powerful monarch in the world cannot make sure of one single instant of life.

No one is ignorant of these two simple truths, but very few draw from them the conclusions they ought to draw.

It is true and certain that I have only the present moment, which cannot be divided, which nothing can fix, not even thought, and which is passing away with a rapidity that nothing can equal.

The present moment, or this actual existence from whom do I hold it? From God. It is He who called me from nothing into being. It is He who has preserved my existence from one instant to another, and Who is preserving it at this present moment. Will He preserve it for me in the moment that shall immediately follow this one? I do not know; and nothing in the world can give

me the assurance of it.

Why has time been given to me? So that by it I may merit a happy eternity. I shall live forever: Faith teaches me this; my reason even assures me of another life. The desire of immortality is implanted in the depths of my heart, and this desire, which God Himself has planted there, can never be frustrated on its object.

I am, then, born for eternity, but this eternity will be happy or wretched according to the use I make of time. If I sincerely repent of the bad use of time I have made in the past, if I am beginning to make a good use of it, if I persevere in this good use until the moment comes when time shall cease for me, I shall be eternally happy. If I have made a bad use of time, and since neither the past or the future is in my own power, it is quite true to say that my eternity depends always on the present moment.

Courtesy- "fidelity"

Freedom in everyday life



For years they had been master and slave, but later the slave was emancipated. Some years after the emancipation of the slave, the master met him by chance. Looking at the rags he was wearing and the shack in which he lived, the master asked his earlier slave, "How is your situation now? Didn't you have enough to eat and a decent place to live in when you were in my service? Did you have any lack of anything at that time?" The erstwhile slave replied, "It is true that when I was your slave I had enough to eat, and good clothes to wear and a good place to stay. But now I don't have enough food; I don't have enough clothes; and since I don't have a permanent job I can't even feed my children properly. When it rains, the roof of my shack leaks and there is water on the floor."

As the earlier slave was enumerating his woes, the master interrupted him, "Why don't you then once again become my slave?" With a smile on his face, the earlier slave replied, "No, please. Even though I do not have enough food and clothes, I am free. It is this freedom that is most important to me. **It was he who created humankind in the beginning, and he left them in the power of their own free choice** (Sir. 15:14)

God created man free in the paradise. Man was given full freedom for everything. He lived freely even amidst the birds and animals of the place. But soon he lost his sense of responsibility and obedience and plunged headlong into disobedience, becoming slaves to sin. Then they lost their paradise. **Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom** (2 Cor 3:17) They did not understand this.

Freedom consists of not denying the opportunity to exercise our freewill. The highest freedom entails in loving one's neighbour as he loves himself, It is people who live according to the will of God that experience real freedom. Harming others for selfish needs and desires is sin. The world may be full of vices. But if we are virtuous, we are free before God. **You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another** (Gal 5:13)

Mahatma Gandhi discovered a new and humane way for liberating a people that had been subjugated to tyranny and exploitation. Using 'ahimsa' he put his method into practice with diligence and vigour. In today's world we see all kinds of evil like violence, greed for power and immorality. But Gandhi through his 'ahimsa' exhibited a greater moral power than all these iniquities. He was able to present his principles by living it. In his case, precepts and practices went hand in hand. He was able to sow the seeds of morality among the people through the example of his own life. Gandhiji rightly said, "My life is my message."

Courtesy- Vachanolsavam

The Healer

I have changed my life pattern for you!
I have denied 'everything' I liked...
Because of 'your faithfulness'.

Yes, I need to see things from 'your eyes'
Yes, I want to love the poor, powerless and
hated from 'your Heart'

Gratitude brings Blessings
It is always possible
To thank for all the Blessings...
'Tis Gratitude becomes "My Habit"

Every breath I breathe is filled
with thankfulness when I realise,
Jesus Christ who Blesses me
Is "The Giver" and "the Healer" for my life.

Sr. A. Christina Lourdes (HF)



Taking responsibility in the electronic 'Forwarding' Chain

Tanya Ferdinandusz

For many of us, the bulk of our in-boxes may consist of 'forwards'—messages sent to us by someone, who got it from someone else, who received it from yet another someone, to whom it was sent by still another someone... And frequently, we ourselves become another link in the 'forwarding' chain, by the deceptively simple action of clicking 'forward' and 'send.'

With advancements in technology, with 'better' and faster modes of communication, the parameters and protocols that held true in conventional modes of communication may not always be relevant. But this cannot be taken to mean that there are no boundaries; it simply means we have to figure out and set appropriate boundaries in hitherto uncharted territory. The protocols may differ for electronic communications—for instance, letter-writing conventions dictate a particular placing of the address, use of the correct form of address etc. With email, informality seems to be the norm; with the growing use of mobile phones, use of shortened forms (u, TC, 2moro etc) have gained a measure of acceptance. That's fine. New wine demands new wineskins.

GOOD 'EMAIL ETIQUETTE'

A recent email (an useful 'forward'!) offered simple tips to make electronic communication safer—for example, delete email addresses that appear in the body of the message; use 'blind copy' for adding email addresses; check the validity of petitions, virus alerts, etc. before forwarding these, and so on. This kind of good 'email etiquette' is essential in order to minimize the risk of viruses and junk mail as well as to protect people's privacy. But an even more important issue, with which I have been grappling for some time now, is this: Just because our email packages provide an incredibly easy and instant means of forwarding not just one, but many messages to

many people, at the simple press of a button, is it always RIGHT to do so? Is it the RESPONSIBLE thing to do?

WHEN THE MESSAGE IS SUSPECT...

The technology is fantastic for disseminating important truths that someone has shared in a creative and memorable way, for alerting great numbers of people to crucial issues and concerns in a timely manner, for encouraging people through inspirational stories. But what if the message is suspect? What if the message, either explicitly or implicitly, undermines the values and beliefs we subscribe to as followers of Christ? What if the message is in fact contrary or contradictory to the truths taught in the Scriptures?

RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION

Responsible communication demands that we ask ourselves a few questions BEFORE we hit that 'forward' button; for example:

- Have I read the message carefully and critically? (Sometimes, the forward button is pressed even without reading the content!)
- Would I actually choose to send a copy of this message to this particular person (or people) via snail mail?
- Assuming I had the capability and the time, would I really write (or speak) such a message myself?

Just because we are not the originator of the message, this does not mean we can absolve ourselves of all responsibility for the message. To hit the forward button is to make the choice to become a link in the forwarding chain—and so to share a measure of responsibility in relation to those to whom we forward the message and perhaps even to others who are added to the forwarding chain thereafter.

'ROMANS 14'-TYPE RESPONSIBILITY

We must sometimes ask: Is this message appropriate for everyone on my mailing list?

"It is worse to forward a message that claims to be Christian but is really contrary to Scripture, than to pass on a message which is not in any way 'Christian' or which may even be contrary to Christianity, but makes no claim to be otherwise"

When sharing something verbally, don't we exercise restraint depending on our audience—for example, the presence of children? Certainly, it is quicker and easier to add a whole group of recipients with one smooth, practised movement of the mouse; it takes a few more precious minutes and a fraction more brain power to sift through the list and thoughtfully add or omit names. But this screening or filtering is not an optional extra—it is our clear responsibility as Christians! In Romans 14, Paul commands the 'stronger' in faith to be sensitive and thoughtful in relation to the 'weaker' in faith. He exhorts the Christians in Rome to "resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another" (Romans 14:13b). An email message which serves as thought-provoking meat for a mature Christian may prove to be the cause of gagging in bewilderment for a less mature believer. For want of a few extra moments to run through a list of email addresses, will we be responsible for putting a 'stumbling block' in the way of another?

Not all of us are capable of writing clearly, concisely and creatively. But it is safe to assume that all of us who have an email account can certainly

read! Rather than randomly forwarding messages to the four corners of the earth, let's take the time to read carefully and evaluate critically to see whether the message will enlighten and encourage or confuse and mislead. A word of caution: Just because the message comes from a regular source, this does not automatically make it reliable. Each message has to be evaluated on its own merits. Let's also choose our recipients thoughtfully; and for times when we are unsure, a wise and safe guideline might be: If in doubt, DON'T (forward)!

'CARELESS WORDS' IN CYBERSPACE

People tend to place great weight on the printed word. And these days, more and more people are doing more and more of their reading on-line. Thoughtful, careful, and prayerful discernment has as great a part to play in our electronic communications as in our spoken or written communications. Jesus warned,

"I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter" (Mathew 12:36).

It seems reasonable to assume that this warning encompasses our electronic communications—extending to every careless word that goes forth from our computers out into cyberspace...

In many ways, I believe it is worse to forward a message that claims to be Christian but is really contrary to Scripture, than to pass on a message which is not in any way 'Christian' or which may even be contrary to Christianity, but makes no claim to be otherwise. For example, think about a 'forward' that superstitiously insists that all you have to do is say a particular prayer (sometimes prescribing 3 times or 9 times) and your request ("no matter how impossible") will be granted... or a message which selectively quotes Scripture verses to promote a 'pros-



perity gospel' which insists that we can be wealthy or healthy if only we follow the prescribed steps... By forwarding such messages, we disseminate distortions of the Scriptural message and undermine basic doctrines of our faith. Such messages are more likely to mislead other readers because they purport to be 'Christian' and because, despite the distortions, they often contain grains of truth. Forwarding such messages might even be termed 'counter-witnessing.'

So, we are called to be discerning email users. Yes, it takes time. Yes, it takes effort. But whoever said being a Christian was easy or quick?

Email is instant; but it takes time and effort to mature in faith. Email is easy; but acting responsibly is often not. Email is convenient; but doing the right thing seldom is.

I am by no means anti-forwards. They are a great way to share great messages with great numbers with great speed, with great effect and with great ease! But the reverse also holds true—flawed messages, which convey false ideas, can be shared with equally great negative effects.

Paul writes,

"Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29)

Do the words in our email forwards 'give grace' to those who read them? As long as they do, let's keep clicking on 'forward'! If they don't, let's hit the delete key instead.

If you agree, and share these concerns, then... PLEASE FORWARD!

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