



FEAST OF
ST. NICHOLAS
6 th December

Messenger

"Registered in the Department of Posts of Sri Lanka under No. QD / 17/ News / 2011"



OUR LADY OF
IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION
8 th December

Sunday 04 Dec 2011 Vol 141 No 48 16 Pages Rs: 20.00 Registered as a newspaper

Colombo gifted with two Auxiliary Bishops

The Apostolic Nunciature in Sri Lanka - Embassy of the Holy See - informed on 28th November 2011, that the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI has appointed Rev. Fr. Fidelis Lionel Emmanuel Fernando and Rev. Fr. Sampathawaduge Maxwell Granville Silva, as Auxiliary Bishops of the Archdiocese of Colombo.



BISHOP-ELECT EMMANUEL FERNANDO

was born on 20th May 1948 in Jaffna, but grew up in Colombo. After completing his studies at St. Benedict's College and at St. Aloysius' Minor Seminary, Colombo, he entered the National Seminary, Ampitiya (Kandy), where he studied Philosophy. He did his theological studies at the Pontifical *Urbaniana* University, in Rome, obtaining a Masters Degree in Moral Theology and received his Priestly ordination in the Vatican, from

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BISHOP-ELECT MAXWELL SILVA

was born on 27th September 1953, at Willorawatte, in the Archdiocese of Colombo. After completing his studies at St. Sebastian's College, Moratuwa, and at St. Aloysius' Minor Seminary, Colombo he entered the National Seminary, Ampitiya (Kandy), where he studied Philosophy and Theology. He obtained a Bachelor Degree and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Science of Education from the University of Kelaniya, as well as a Master of

(Continued on Pg. 2) »

DECLARATION OF YEAR OF THE WORD OF GOD

26th November 2011,
St. Lucia's Cathedral, Kotahena.



Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith

VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST
The Word became flesh

Dearly beloved Brethren,

May the Most Holy name of the Trinity, Father, Son and the Spirit be praised unto eternity!

The Most Holy Eucharist and the Word of God are for us disciples of Christ, gifts of the Most High that confirm us in His Love and are the visible and audible expression of that Love. They are thus most intimately related, the one being the voice and the other the person of His life giving Word. Our faith then can be renewed not only through the nourishment of His Body and Blood but also from the efficacious listening

(Continued on pg. 2) »

Cameron: If you persecute Christians you won't get aid

British Prime Minister, David Cameron has signalled a shift in emphasis in Britain's aid policy by announcing that countries that mistreat Christians and other religious minorities may have their aid withdrawn.

Speaking to the BBC presenter Andrew Marr recently about aid to countries with poor

human rights records, the Prime Minister said; "Britain is now one of the premier aid givers in the world. We want to see countries that receive our aid adhering to proper human rights.

He added: "British aid should have more strings attached, in terms of 'do you persecute people for their faith or their Christianity?'.....

(Catholic Herald)

Superior General of MC Sisters arrives in Sri Lanka Cardinal Malcolm welcomes her



Pic by: Rev. Fr. Sunil De Silva

Very Rev. Sr. Prema MC, Superior General of the Missionary Sisters of Charity (Mother Teresa's Sisters) arrived on 27th November in Sri Lanka, having heard that one of her Sisters, Sr. Eliza had been arrested by the Police and remanded in the Welikada Remand Prisons.

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo, received Sr. Prema at the Katunayake Airport.

His Eminence conveyed that the Sri Lankan Catholic Church is deeply concerned about the arrest of Rev.



SR. MARY ELIZA

Sr. Mary Eliza and the way the National Child Protection Authority and the Police have acted to find out information about "Prem Nivasa", situated at Rawatawatta, Moratuwa.

It is Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta who saw the face of Jesus in abandoned children, unwedded mothers and dying people. She looked after them in her homes.

This Mission that she started is now carried out all over the world. 'Prem Nivasa' is one of those homes that look after abandoned children and pregnant mothers.

Every conceived child has a right to be born into this world. The Catholic Church is not in favour of abortion. It is a mortal sin. So, homes like 'Prem Nivasa' look after these unwedded mothers and abandoned children and find solutions to their problems according to the existing rules and regulations in Sri Lanka.

There are nearly 760 Convents with 5040 Rev. Sisters of Mother Teresa serving in the whole world. Rev. Sr. Mary Eliza is the first MC Sister to be imprisoned.

(Continued on Pg. 2) »

News in Pictures

Relic of St. Don Bosco

● At Katana



Among a large, gathering of the faithful, the relic of St. John Bosco was brought to St. Francis Xavier's Church, Katana on November 28, 2011

Picture shows the Relic being received by the Parish Priest and Dean of Katana, Rev. Fr. Amila Gomez.

● At Payagala



Payagala mission warmly welcomed the Sacred Relic of St. Don Bosco at St. Joseph's Church, Payagala on 22nd November.

Picture shows the faithful paying their respects to the Holy Relic of the Patron saint of Youth.

(D. Anselm Fernando)

● At Wellawatte



The Colombo Archdiocese offered a golden opportunity to the Wellawatte Parish to receive the sacred relic of St. Don Bosco on 21st November 2011.

The life size relic of St. Don Bosco in a glass covered casket journeying to 130 countries, arrived at 9.05 a.m and was received by Rev.Fr. Bob Rodrigo OMI Parish Priest of St Lawrence's Church, Wellawatte with Rev.Fr Ramesh OMI assistant, along with a large number of parishioners at the main gate.

The life size embedded replica of St John Bosco in wax which was placed inside a beautifully designed glass covered casket on a trolley was off loaded from the covered container truck by the foreign who accompanied the pilgrim casket from Turin. The trolley carrying the replica was towed into the Church with much piety and devotion amidst tight security and protection provided by a team of senior parishioners and cottage leaders.

S.B. David

Bishop-elect Emmanuel...

Contd. from Pg. 1

His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, on 6 January 1973. After some years of pastoral ministry, he went to the USA for post-graduate studies and obtained a Doctorate in Theology from the Catholic University of Washington, D.C. The Bishop-elect has held the post of Professor of Theology and also of Rector at the National Seminary, and was Dean of the Moratuwa Area and Episcopal Vicar for the South in the Archdiocese of Colombo. He is presently the Episcopal Vicar for the Tamil Apostolate in the Archdiocese.

Annual Prize-Giving of Bopitiya, Ave Maria School of English and Music



The annual prize-giving of Ave Maria School of English and Music, Bopitiya, was held recently at the Muthuraja Organisation Hall of Bopitiya. The chief guest on the occasion was Rev. Fr. Dharshana Jayamanna, Vice Rector, Aquinas University College.

Several students who performed well obtained gold and silver medals and trophies.

Picture shows Fr. Dharshana presenting a medal to a student. A large gathering of parents and students were also present on the occasion.

Superior General.....

Contd. from Pg. 1

Rev. Sr. Mary Eliza is the first MC Sister to be imprisoned in the whole world, since Blessed Mother Teresa started the Congregation of Missionary Sisters of Charity, serving the poorest of the poor.

Mother Prema together with several other MC Sisters, Very Rev. Fr. Ivan Perera and Fr. Sunil De Silva visited Rev. Sr. Eliza at the Welikada prisons.

Declaration of...

Contd. from Pg. 1

we receive of the Word which lasts forever. Truly, the veneration of the Word of God does foster our Christian faith, just as the reception of the Eucharist strengthens it. The Word of God, which is "living and effective" [Heb 4.:12] is the very foundation of committed Christian living.

"Proclaim the Word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage all through patience and teaching" [2 Tim 4:2]. This admonition of St. Paul ought to inspire us to proclaim God's Word constantly and consistently. The Sacred Scriptures, inspired by God, are "useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction and for training in righteousness" [2 Tim 3:16]. For a spring of faith renewal, the Word has to be read, studied, prayed over, lived, celebrated in the Liturgy and shared with others.

"Towards a Renewal of Faith through the Word of God"

Dear Reverend Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear brethren in Jesus Christ,

I, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Colombo, therefore do solemnly declare, during this h year of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI with honour, praise, joy and humility in our filial hearts and gathered as members of Christ's Most Precious and Mystical Body, the Church, in this Archdiocese of Colombo, that from today, the first Sunday of Advent in the year of the Lord 2011, until the 10th day of October of the year of the Lord 2012, we will celebrate the Year of the Word of God in this our Ecclesial Community.

May the Divine Word accompany us in this our resolve and may the Most Holy Virgin Mother of God intercede for us.

His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith Archbishop of Colombo at St. Lucia's Cathedral, Kotahena on the 26th of November 2011

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Bishop-elect Maxwell...

Contd. from Pg. 1

Science in Sociology from the same University. He received his Priestly Ordination in Colombo on 25th July 1981. He was Assistant Parish Priest at Dalugama, Parish Priest at Thibbotugoda and at Mabola, while teaching at St. Joseph's College, Grandpass, and at the Basilica College, Ragama. Since 2001, he is the Rector of St. Thomas' College, Kotte.

Kitunu Magata Saviyak



Under the programme "Kitunu Magata Saviyak," a sum of Rs. 50,000/- was donated to St. Francis Xavier Church, Halpe by UNP, MP and Deputy leader, Sajith Premadasa.

Picture shows Rev. Fr. Amila Gomez, Katana Dean and Parish Priest receiving the documents pertaining to the donation.

First Holy Communion at Halpe Parish



Fifty two children belonging to St. Francis Xavier, Daham Pasala, Halpe received their First Holy Communion recently. Rev. Fr. Amila Gomez, Dean of Katana and Parish Priest of Halpe officiated at the ceremony.

Picture shows the First Holy Communicants with the Principal of the Daham Pasala, Rev. Fathers and Catechism teachers.

Statue of St. Nicholas unveiled



A life size statue of St. Nicholas, patron Saint of sick children and barren women was devoted by social worker and proprietor of Bopitiya Auto Enterprises, B. Jude F. Rodrigo recently.

The statue was blessed by Rev. Fr. Erington Silva and installed at Nugape junction last Sunday (27). Mr. Jude (centre) is seen with parishioners. In the background is the statue.

(S.K.J. Kurera)

Senior Citizens' Day at Kandy Cathedral

St. Anthony's Cathedral, Kandy celebrated Senior Citizens Day recently under the patronage of Rev. Fr. Ivan Jayasundera, Parish Priest and Rev. Fr. Gabriel Gunasekera, Asst. Parish Priest. Associated with them was Rev. Fr. Denzil Perera.

The day began with a concelebrated Mass by the three priests followed by several activities with the participation of the elders. The winners were awarded with prizes.

A fellowship lunch organised by the Ladies Union of the Parish was served to all.

The Parish Ladies Union, Youth and the Joseph Vaz Association, all shared in the organisation of the event.

(J.M. Seneviratne)

Christmas Articles

We invite you to send in your X'mas articles for publication before December 13, 2011.

St. Anthony's Daham Pasala celebrates 'Teachers' Day 2011'



The student leaders of the Moratuwa, Kadalana, St. Anthony's Daham Pasala in association with the Parents' Association, felicitated the Catechism teachers of the Daham Pasala, by holding a Teachers'

Day 2011, recently.

The chief guest on the occasion was Rev. Fr. Indra Ratnasiri Fernando, Archdiocesan Director, for Catechetics.

Picture shows Rev. Fr. La-

lith Perera, Parish Priest, lighting the oil lamp. Also in picture are Rev. Fr. Malintha Chaturanga, Asst. Parish Priest, the Daham Pasal Principal, teachers and students

Inaugural Kotte Deanery Christmas Carols and drama

The inaugural Inter-Parish Christmas Carol and Drama Competition 2011, was held within the Kotte Deanery, organized by the Education, Media and Cultural Committee of the Kotte Deanery Pastoral Council under the patronage of versatile musician/composer, Rev. Fr. Edmund Tillekeratne, Dean of the Kotte Deanery and Parish Priest of St. Joseph's Church, Nugegoda.

The following parishes in the Kotte Deanery participated in the competitions which were held under trilingual categories. St. Joseph's Church, Nugegoda, St. Thomas' Church, Kotte, Sacred Heart Church Rajagiriya, St. Padre Pio Shrine, Athurugiriya, Sacred Heart Church, Polhengoda (belonging to the Nugegoda Parish, St. John Dal Bastone Church, Thalagama and St. Anthony's Church, Boraesgamuwa of the Maharagama Parish.

The primary objective of this event was to promote fellowship and

goodwill among parishioners within the Deanery.

The eminent panel of judges for all competitions included renowned Sri Lankan artists.

The winners of these competitions will perform at the first ever Kotte Deanery Christmas

Carols and Drama to be held at St. Joseph's Church, Nugegoda on Sunday, 4th December 2011 at 6.00 p.m. under the patronage

of His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo.

Parishioners of the Kotte Deanery will participate in this first ever Christmas

fellowship which will also feature the awards ceremony for the Christmas carols and drama which were held recently.

All are welcome.
(Trevor Ludowyke)



Choir of St. Thomas Church, Kotte, the Winner of the Sinhala Category

Pablis takes his rest after serving 58 years at the National Seminary

Mr. K.W. Pablis, who served at the National Seminary, Ampitiya went to his eternal rest after serving 58 years at the seminary, from 1953-2011. The funeral took place at the Kandy General Cemetery.

A large crowd of Rev. Fathers, Rev. Brothers, staff and the Rector of the National Seminary, Very Rev. Fr. Elmo Dias, attended the funeral.



Church in the World

Creation is not man's property, Pope teaches as Advent begins

Advent offers a chance to remember that all things belong to God, Pope Benedict XVI told pilgrims in his Angelus address last Sunday (27).

"In reality, the true 'owner' of the world is not man but God," said the Pope to the thousands gathered in St. Peter's Square on the first Sunday of Advent.

The Pope reflected on the day's scripture reading in which the Prophet Isaiah tells God there is "none who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to cling to you; for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt."

"How can we not be impressed by this description?" asked Pope Benedict, who spoke of its relevance to today's world.

The prophet's description "seems to reflect certain views of the postmodern world where life becomes anonymous and horizontal," he said, "where God seems absent and man is the only master, as if he was the creator and director of everything: construction, employment, economy, transport, science, technology, everything seems to depend on man alone."

In such a world, the Pope indicated, God can even appear to have "withdrawn" when catastrophe strikes. It is for this reason, he said, that Jesus reminds believers to "be watchful" and "alert," in the day's Gospel reading.

The Pope said Christ's words were "a salutary reminder to us that life has not only the earthly dimension, but is looking forward to 'a beyond' as a seedling that sprouts from the earth and opens up to the sky."

Each person must be alert toward eternity, because he is "endowed with freedom and responsibility," and will "be called to account for how he has lived, how he used his abilities: if he kept them to themselves or put them to use for the benefit of his brothers and sisters."

While entering a new liturgical year and heading toward Christmas, the Pope said, "let us heed the message in today's Gospel by entering prayerfully into this holy season, so that we may be ready to greet Jesus Christ, who is God with us."

Happy Birthday!

Veteran newspaper Cartoonist Camillus Perera, celebrates his birthday on December 3, 2011 (Saturday).

The Messenger while wishing him a Happy Birthday, wishes him many more years of happy sketching!



Year of Word of God on 'Catholic Half Hour' Today

Catholic Half Hour, will broadcast a special program to mark the declaration of the Year of the Word of God in the Archdiocese of Colombo.

Rev. Fr. Daya Welikadarachchi, Director of Deva Dharma Niketanaya and Professor of Sacred Scripture at the National Seminary, Ampitiya and Aquinas College of Higher Education, will be featured in an interview with Trevor Ludowyke.

The program will be broadcast over the English National Service 95.6 FM, on Sunday 4th December 2011 at 8.00 p.m.

SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus





EDITORIAL

4 December 2011

Can we constructively criticize the abuse of human rights and still be patriotic

The LLRC Report is not out but from glimpses published in the press it seems that the LLRC has agreed with the UN Report that there are credible grounds to investigate alleged abuses during the last stage of the war.

Human Rights organizations both local and international have pointed out several human rights abuses that have taken place even outside the North and East and in the post war era as well 13 journalists have been killed. Last week there was an abduction of a businessman from Dematagoda. The previous week there was a similar abduction of a businessman from Nugegoda who was subsequently released as the abductors had realized that it was a case of mistaken identity.

Many people cite the charges against General Fonseka and the sentence imposed by a military tribunal as acts of political victimization. Several leading Buddhist monks have taken up his cause and recent news reports indicate that even the U.S Government considers General Fonseka to be a political prisoner.

Government politicians brand anybody who criticizes the handling of the last stage of the war and supports an investigation of human rights abuses by the UN as an unpatriotic act. But is this so?

Democracy is based on upholding the provisions of the Constitution which include banning torture, the maintenance of the Rule of Law and the freedom of speech and association. It is legitimate for people to stage peaceful protests against unjust actions of any party. The right to free speech means the right to criticize the government and also the opposition.

We can criticize our government and support our country at the same time. The government is not the same as the country. It is right for the UN to investigate abuses of power by errant leaders if they are not investigated by the institutions of the country itself. It is the government that popularized branding of its critics as bad patriots. The people have a right to oppose a war or torture or any other human rights abuses. How else can we keep our governments or any authority just, fair and honest? The President last week acknowledged the need for a strong opposition. It is in deed a crying need of the moment acknowledged by all patriotic people.

If we are not constructively critical of the government and even of the opposition, and instead accept all that they say and do, it is to be completely unpatriotic. A patriot is an honest patriot. Can patriotic citizens overlook any evil action and keep silent for fear of being branded as unpatriotic? That would mean that the people accept all the wrong doing of the government or of the opposition. In such situations any leader would assume that he or she is right.

In this Season of Advent, the Word of God reminds us of different aspects of the life of John the Baptist. He criticized King Herod for living in adultery with his brother's wife and he had to face imprisonment and death for exercising his right to criticize. Was John the Baptist wrong to criticize Herod? He incurred the wrath of the Pharisees, the Scribes and the Jewish High priests because he criticized their hypocritical actions.

Do we as followers of Our Lord keep silent when there is evil? We would not then deserve to be called his followers. Martyrdom does not only mean being killed for practicing one's faith and refusing to give it up. It also means living up to Christian values come what may. Those who suffer to uphold righteousness are no less martyrs than those who laid down their lives for the faith.

The Said and the Unsaid of the Bible Bible-Reading as Part of Testimony

- Prof. Anton Meemana

*"Love the Holy Scriptures, and wisdom will love you.
Love wisdom, and she will keep you safe. Honour wisdom,
and she will embrace you"*

- Saint Jerome

Reading and Reader of the Bible

What happens to us when we read the Bible? What, then, is going on in our deepest part of interiority? Can we live meaningfully and fully without reading the Bible? Can we keep our faith in God intact even if we do not receive anything in return? Can we truly love God without expecting anything in return? Can we glimpse the mind of God in reading the Bible? Is reading the Bible a waste of time? A useless undertaking? A hopeless enterprise? Would the world be better off without the Bible?

When we read the Bible, We are returning to our true homeland, our true Fatherland. The Bible makes us ceaselessly wonder about the deepest meaning of life, about the ultimate horizon and ground of life. The one who does not read the Bible has not grasped the profoundest meaning of life. The one who has not read it is the poorest of the poor and is spiritually malnourished and anorexic and misses the most of life.

The Bible is the book, the library, the tome, the volume, the university, the theologate, the seminary par excellence. As a book of truth, it is unmatched; as a book of candour, it is incomparable; as a book of beauty, unrivalled; and as a book of life, unparalleled. Sacred words are divine worlds.

The Word of God and Christian Spirituality

The Bible is a window to the Divine, to the Beyond, to the Sacred and to the Infinite, and one has to remain infinitely open to the endless possibilities it offers for the deepening, enriching and amplifying of our Christian spirituality and vision. Every letter of it has a Divine imprint, a sacred stamp and a mysterious mark.

The Bible is a sign-post to God and, hence, to read it lovingly is to find the Divine way. When we strive to find the Divine way. God also finds us on the way. The Bible has its own mysterious ways of surprising, transforming and shaking people out of their spiritual slumber. The surprisability of the Bible, the transformative potential of it is immense and vast as the sand of the earth and the stars of the night sky.

Once formed, transformed, renewed and recollected, every reader of the Bible bears witness to its truth, its power, its glory and its grandeur. We cultivate true Christian spirituality in the process of self-transcendence, in the going beyond of oneself, in the reaching out constantly towards the Unfathomable Mystery.

A lover of the Bible is a lover of God. To read the Bible is to fall in love with God. Bible-reading has a therapeutic function. Reading is healing. We live as good as we read. The Bible is a sanitarium, an hospice, an oasis.

Bible-reading is a mode of living, in actual fact, the most meaningful and fulfilling mode of human living. Reading enhances the zest for life, the passion and desire for a meaningful living. We live as fully as we read the Bible. To read is to believe what one reads. Reading is an act of faith, a leap in faith.

In opting for a Biblical mode of living, our innermost interior landscape becomes a self-sufficient universe unto itself where God's presence is intensely felt and glimpsed and where one needs nothing else, nothing more and nothing less than that very presence of God. The new person the Bible-reading facilitates to create is the flesh and blood bearer of its life-giving truth. The glory and grandeur of human beings is in their testimony to the Biblical truth. Testimony is our real Gethsemane. Testimony is the ultimate context, the ultimate justification for reading it. Context contains the content of the text.

Interior Renewal and Perpetual Holiness

The good we can bring about is in direct proportion to our interior renewal, our inward purification and growing holiness. The Bible cannot be adequately understood or interpreted apart from our growing holiness. Bible reading purifies our emotions and intentions. As one continues to read the Bible, one also grows in wisdom, love, humility and holiness. Reading is at the service of sanity and sanctity.

The reading of the Bible need be the most exciting hobby one can cultivate. It is the hobby par excellence. The thirst for reading and studying it is the deepest thirst for God. The Bible nourishes us in the literal sense of the word, but one needs the eye of faith to realize and recognize it.

At times, I honestly feel that all that one needs to live by is a little food and the Bible. Or maybe I am wrong, because the Bible itself becomes one's real food, one's real home, one's real shelter and hence one could live without even food. So, the Bible is the real Food City. Perhaps, one of the real solutions to our unrestrained consumerism and globalisation is reading the Bible.

Temptations as Means for Sanctification

The one who reads the Bible is also a lover of life. It makes us compassionate, sensitive, kind, magnanimous, deep and humane. It gives us a burning and bleeding heart. Bible-reading is a process of spiritual permutation and coagulation. It interrupts us, stirs us up, awakens us, pushes us, shakes us, in order to create us anew, again and again and from above. The true spiritual growth is in and through insecurities, disturbances, failures, pitfalls, interruptions and losses. Losses are grand lessons.

Interruptions are messages from God, disturbances are Divine revelations and failures are lessons from heaven. We must welcome them all, out of deep faith and infinite humility, with a very open heart. They all contribute tremendously to our personal synthesis and they shape, mould, form and carve us into the Divine image.

God is with us more intimately, closer to us than we are to ourselves. He is with us, ever present in all our struggles, failures, losses, and sufferings. The one who has not suffered, the one who has not failed, does not know anything about life and therefore about God. God loves us infinitely more than we ever love ourselves. God is the lover par excellence who restores, gives us back, our capacity to love. Not only does He love me but also makes me a lover like Him.

One can never love God enough. The more we love Him, the more we must strive to love Him for He has loved us first and given Himself to us utterly. So, the Bible is the Magna Carta of His love, Constitution of His kingdom and the Charter of His reign.

Discipleship and Ongoing Biblical Formation

Strictly speaking, there are no experts on the Bible but only perennial students and some students may be better than others and therefore they are considered as "experts." All our interpretations about the Bible are inadequate and ambiguous and in need of further corrections, purifications and modifications.

The truth of the Bible is not in its words or concepts but in the deepening interiority of the reader. That is, when we read the Bible, the transformation we undergo, topsy-turviness of our vision, the radial purification of our lives, is where we must keep our focus intact. The normativity lies not in the words but in the radical conversion one undergoes.

(Contd on Pg. 5)

Verbum Caro Factum Est Et Habitavit In Nobis

Rev. Fr. Hugo Palihawadana

Contd. from last week....

The Word of God and Jesus Christ

The Evangelist John in his Gospel very clearly tells us that the 'Logos' [Greek for 'Word'] that got conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit. This Word is the second person in the Holy Trinity. The Biblical man believes in a Monotheistic God in three persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. From the beginning of creation all the three persons were present. The Gospel of John 1:1-5 is very clear about it. It is the Word that came to the world as a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. John 1: 14 tells us that the WORD became a human being and full of Grace and Truth, and lived among us. In His ministry of teaching, preaching, healing, exorcising, forgiving, raising the dead and performing miracles. He did not use any material or mechanism, but only by the power of His Word. The four Gospels and other New Testament writings give witness to this fact. The Apostles who lived with Him during His public life are the witnesses of His Ministry. All the words that proceeded from Him were full of power and authority; Mark 1:22 tells, "The people who heard Him were amazedHe taught with authority. He had the power over evil spirits the evil spirits obeyed JESUS CHRIST. Mark 1: 27 says, "This man has authority to give orders to the evil spirits and they obey Him."

The words that were uttered by Jesus Christ had Divine power and authority because they were the words of the Father proceeded through the mouth of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. St. John is very clear about it. John 17: 8 says, "I gave the message that you gave me and they received it." It is very clear that Jesus always remains with the Father. They were inseparable. In spite of His busy apostolate He had enough time to be alone with the Father. He went to a lonely place or to a mountain early in the morning to be with the Father. Before choosing His Twelve Apostles.

Luke 6:12 says, "At that time Jesus went up a hill to pray and spent the whole night there praying to God." Jesus went up to the hill to pray to God. Jn 14: 11 Jesus tells, "Believe me when I say I am in the Father and the Father is in Me."

It is God alone who can forgive sins. In the ministry of Jesus before curing a person he always forgave the sins of the person concerned. Because of the faith of others Jesus forgave the sins of others Mark 2:10 "Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth. Finally we see even at the foot of the cross He forgives the repentant thief and promises him paradise LK 23:43. "I promise today you will be with me in Paradise" It is His Word that brought healing, forgiveness and eternal life to the people. Even today it is His Word that can bring true peace, harmony, joy and inner healing. Mt. 24: 35 says, "Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will never pass away."

The Word of God in the New Testament

The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles written by the Apostles to the various communities and the letters written to certain individuals are the main source of the ministry of the Apostles in the Early Church. They are full of teachings, instructions of Jesus Christ. Except St Paul all the other Apostles were called by Jesus Christ during His public ministry. In the Gospel of Mark 1:14-19, we see Jesus calling Simon (Peter) his brother Andrew and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John. Mk 2:13-14, we see Jesus calling Levi. Finally we are told that Jesus chooses twelve Apostles Mk 3:13-18. We find this in all the gospels. Mt 10:1-4; Lk 6:12-16. Luke says that Jesus spend the whole night in prayer before choosing the Apostles. These Apostles are the eye witness of the ministry of Jesus Christ. That is why they were burning with love for him and his teachings. They were ready to die for him. After his Resurrection and receiving the Holy Spirit, they could not wait, they went all over the World to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. They did not have any mate-

rial or any other proof to speak about Jesus Christ, not even any teaching material. They had only the words of Jesus Christ and personal experience to share with others. Where ever they went the content of their message was Jesus Christ and His kingdom of Peace, Love and Truth. They had to give witness to His Kingdom by their very lives.

The ministry of Jesus Christ has to be carried out till His second coming. So He gave all His powers of teaching, healing, exorcising and preaching to the Apostles. He also gave them the power to forgive sins. Jn 20:23 Jesus says, "If you forgive people's sins they are forgiven, if you don't forgive them they are not forgiven."

We see that it is to the Apostles, Jesus gave the missionary mandate he received from the Father. First he trained them during his life time on earth and he send them on missionary journeys. Mk 6:7-11; Mt.10:5-15; Lk 9:1-6. Jesus entrusts the Apostles and sends them on missions. Jesus strictly advises them to totally depend on divine providence and charity and generosity of the people. Finally we see the Risen Lord giving the Apostles the missionary mandate given to him by the Father. All the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles speak about this fact. Mk 16:14-18; Mt.28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6- 8. Here we see that Jesus asks the Apostles to carry out the mission of preaching repentance and forgiveness and the coming of his Kingdom to the whole world. He does not abandon them. He promises to be with them and send the Holy Spirit. So it is the Holy Spirit who leads, guides and governs the Church. The mission of Jesus has to be carried out till His second coming in Glory, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles started preaching and healing only after Pentecost, the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God and the Church

The Apostles are the foundation of the Church. The Church is built on them Mt.16:18. "And so I tell you Peter you are rock and on this rock foundation I will build my church." So it is believed that Peter is the true Vicar of Christ and the Pope is the successor of Peter. So we Catholics believe in Apostolic successions and we call ourselves the descendants of the Apostles. The Apostles were convinced that the preaching of the Word of God is a command given by God. Nobody could stop by doing that. Acts 5:29. We must obey God not man" Acts 16:10." God has called us to preach the Good News" Acts 10:42. "He (Jesus) commands us to preach the Gospel to the people."

St Paul who was not a follower of Christ during His life time had a very special call. He was a learned person, a strong believer of Judaism and was angry with the Christians. On his way to Damascus to destroy the Christians the Risen Lord in a very dramatic way gave the gift of faith. The conversion of St.Paul is given to us in Acts 9:1-19. St Paul who was Saul becomes the greatest missionary of the Church. Rom 1:1-5. Finally we see that St Paul tells us that he will receive God's curse instead of Blessing if he does not preach the Word of God. 1 Cor. 9:16.

So we see from the Early Church to this day over 2000 years the Church is continuing preaching the Word of God. This is not an easy task. In the Early Church the Apostles and the Church Fathers and so many missionaries were persecuted and killed. Even now the Church is attacked by so many people. There are so many obstacles and difficulties for the Church. It is the Word of God that is spread through the Church throughout the world. The Word of God continues its apostolate. No one can stop it. From the apostolic times to this day there are missionaries, priests, religious and lay faithful who are preaching the Word of God at times under very difficult situations. After the Second Vatican Council which opened a new Apostolic era in the Church the recent Popes went all over the world with the Word of God as the messages of Peace and Good Will. They opened the doors of the Church to the Christians and also to the non-Christians. They started dialogues and prayer meetings with people of good

will. Most of the missionary pilgrimages of the Popes brought Christians and non Christians closer to the Church.

The teachings of the Magisterium of the Church regarding the Word of God is given to us in some of the Encyclicals of the Popes. ' PROVIDENTISSIMUS DEUS' of Pope Leo XIII in 1883; SPIRITUS PARACLITUS of Pope Benedict XV in 1920; 'DIVINO AFFLANTE SPIRITU' of Pope Pius XII in 1943; 'DEI VERBUM' of Vatican II in 1965 and the latest document ' VERBUM DOMINI' of Pope Benedict XVI in 2008.

The supreme expression regarding the Word of God is found in NO. 21 of DEI VERBUM.

The Church has always venerated the Divine Scripture, just as she venerated the Body of Christ. From the table of both the Word of God and the Body of Christ, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful, the bread of life specially in the sacred liturgy."

The Document ' Verbum Domini' of the present Pope follows the Synod of Bishops which was held in 2008. The Synod Fathers spoke about the importance of the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church. Pope Benedict's Verbum Domini re-affirms that the origin of the Word is God himself. The Word of God continues to be alive and active in the mission of the Church. It is the duty and responsibility of the members of the Church to announce the Word of God in their life surrounding, wherever they live and work.

The present Holy Father has announced to the Universal Church the liturgical year of 2011 to 2012 to be the year of faith. In the Archdiocese of Colombo our Archbishop has announced that the new liturgical year as the year of the Word of God. So let us ask the Holy Spirit to shower his graces upon the Universal Church and the local Church. Like in the parable of the Sower Mk 4:3-8; Mt 13:1-9; Lk 8:11-15 that all Christians studying the Word of God, use it in our meditation and prayer life to bear fruit in our Christian lives and enrich our lives.

The said and.....

Contd. from Pg. 4

True life stems from deep within. Life flows from within and radiates from without and the word of God is the true light of our life in the midst of darkness. The one who does not read the Bible lives in total darkness, in total depravity.

One can never rest and say that one knows enough about the Bible. The more we learn, the more we have to unlearn and relearn. Learning is an ongoing and a self-correcting process. Learning is self-making, self-weaving and self-creating with the help of Divine grace.

When the Bible says something, it also unsays something. Every revelation is a revelation. When the Bible reveals, it also conceals. The deepest meaning of the Bible goes beyond what is immediately understood and grasped. The Bible is a book of endless understanding and infinite intelligibility.

Divine Revelation and Human Response

Reading is reaching out. To read is to reach out towards the Divine. Reading is also responding to the Divine Revelation. To read is to tread upon Divine traces and graces. Reading is also relying on God. Reading the Bible is a journey of deepening faith, growing and glowing hope and burning love amidst the encircling gloom and darkness. The Bible is the map and compass of our spiritual journey and the road map to heaven. We come to know Jesus by following Him and we come to follow Him by reading about Him. To read the Bible is to tread His path.

So, reading is a call to discipleship, an invitation to imitate the Master. We read the Bible in order to follow Jesus closely and to become a better disciple. A good student of the Bible is also a good disciple and ultimately, the real disciple is the true Biblical-expert, the true Bible scholar, the true Bible teacher and by the same token, a true Bible scholar is also a true disciple. Jesus became the Bible itself and to follow Him daily is to give flesh and blood to the timeless message of the Bible.



Contraception and Family Planning

Contraception: A problem?

What could be wrong with contraception? Many people are puzzled by the very thought that contraception could be morally wrong in any way. After all, doctors, the Government and secular society are constantly urging the use of contraception, which is seen as the only sensible, responsible way of preventing an unwanted pregnancy.

Most people are unaware that many forms of contraception work, or can work, by targeting an embryo, not just by preventing conception. For example, the Pill, if it does not prevent conception, can then work by preventing the child who is conceived from implanting in the womb. The same is true of the Morning-After Pill, and the IUD or 'coil'. Couples who learn this, and who are unwilling to risk the life of any child they may conceive, will often say that barrier contraception is the answer, since it does not carry this risk.

The Catholic perspective

But what does the Church say? The Church has always opposed contraception, from the very beginning. While abortion, and methods of 'birth control' which cause abortion, are obviously worse, the Church teaches that 'mere' contraception is also seriously wrong. And while non-Catholics may be genuinely unaware that there is anything wrong with contraception, Catholics who know the Church's teaching have a strong responsibility to listen to what the Church is saying in this area, and to try to understand it.

Arguments against contraception

Why is the Church opposed to contraception - even methods which do not cause abortion? To answer this question, we need to look at what sex and marriage are 'all about'. Marriage is not just a loving friendship: It

is a unique kind of friendship which creates the right environment in which to raise a child. Of course, some couples are infertile, or past the age of conceiving; however, marriage as an institution would not exist if there were no such thing as having children.

In the same way, the act which celebrates marriage - sexual intercourse - is 'about' children. Even if some particular act of intercourse cannot cause conception - say, because the woman is not fertile - it is still the kind of act which causes conception: A special act of bodily self-giving. It remains this kind of act providing it has a 'fertile structure', and the couple have done nothing deliberately to make it less fertile than it would otherwise be.

Openness to life

In authentic sex, the couple give themselves completely to each other, without holding back their fertility, or their permanent commitment. With contra-

ception, the couple hold back the very thing that sex and marriage are 'all about': Openness to life. Built into their sexual relations is unwillingness to accept a child, to the point of taking positive steps to close off that option. It is therefore not surprising that couples who use contraception find it harder to accept 'surprise' pregnancies: having actively tried to prevent sex from causing conception, they find it more difficult to welcome unconditionally the child they have conceived. For this reason, use of contraception will often increase, rather than decrease, use of abortion. The child conceived after failed contraception, or by those who normally use contraception, is all too often seen as a threat by the parents when the pregnancy is discovered.

Natural Family Planning

A very different approach to having children is Natural Family Planning (NFP). Here the couple do nothing to make the sexual act less fertile than it would otherwise be. Each sexual act is as fertile (or infertile) as that act would normally be at that time in the woman's menstrual cycle. The couple simply choose for intercourse those times of the month when conception is unlikely to occur - unless they are trying to conceive, in which case they choose 'fertile' days instead. In either case, they give themselves completely to each other, in a way that symbolically prepares them to accept each other, and any future child, in an unconditional way.

The Church has no objection to NFP, providing it is chosen for the right reasons. Children are a central part of marriage: The couple should be willing to cooperate with God in receiving the gift of new life, and should not avoid this opportunity without a good reason. Having said that, the Church also teaches that couples may have legitimate reasons for avoiding conception at a particular time. They may, for example, need to limit their families to the number of children they can properly care for, with the mental and physical resources they have. The Church invites couples to be both generous and responsible in their approach to having children.

Finding out more

Many people have heard that NFP 'does not work' - and indeed, some older methods of NFP, such as the so-called 'rhythm method', were sometimes unreliable. However, modern methods of NFP, such as the Billings and symptothermal methods, have a high success-rate and a strong scientific base. More importantly, NFP is good for couples: It promotes love, respect and communication between husband and wife, as well as preparing them to welcome any future children they may have. Couples who would like to hear more about these benefits - whether or not they have been using contraception in the past - should contact the addresses opposite for information on NFP. A decision not to use contraception can only be good for the couple who make it: Respect for the meaning of marital sex in God's plan will be richly rewarded.

- Catholic Truth Society

prayer for whom nothing is impossible.

Many days and months passed by, and it was fading away from my memory. But God moves in mysterious ways answering our prayers, and His ways are very different from our anticipations. The Holy Bible explains it well, Isaiah 55:8 "My thoughts," says the Lord "are not like yours, and my ways are different

from yours, as high as the heaven is above the earth".

I fervently believe that in situations like these we should focus our attention on the teaching of Jesus Christ's parables; like the father waited for the prodigal son to return God is always waiting for the sinners to come back to Him, and like the good shepherd he would be so happy to carry the lost sheep when found. Therefore by our words and deeds we should always try to lead others to Abba Father and Jesus who died on a cross to bring salvation to sinners.

Now whenever I glance at my wedding ring I think of the mercy of God, and thank and praise Him.

SHARMANI ALWIS

MERCY OF GOD

Saturday, the 10th of August was a bright sunny day and my husband was on leave He was attending to some gardening and I was busy with the house work, when I heard him calling me from our back garden. I thought he needed something from the house, but instead to my surprise

he kept on my palm the wedding ring that I lost about eleven months ago. When he was sweeping the garden he had seen a -piece of polythene and had pulled it up and the ring was just underneath it. A ring that I had on my finger from 1973 lost and found, the ecstasy and the happiness I experienced

can not be explained. It reminded me of the parables Jesus said about the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son.

The ring was loose on my finger and I tried to wear it on my right hand finger but it was tight and I got a skin irritation and ultimately I had to change it back. I re-

call the day that I noticed that the ring was missing, with heart felt sorrow my husband and I searched every possible place we could think of that it had fallen. We looked in the washroom, kitchen sinks, flower pots in the garden as we had doubts that it had fallen when I was applying manure to the plants. But our efforts were in vain and ended up in disappointment.

At times when our earthly wealth is tampered by robbery or is lost, I have got used to consoling myself with the words of Jesus, "Do not store up riches for you on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead store up riches in heaven." In this incident I was not concerned about the material value but it contained more of a spiritual value as well as a sentimental value. I have requested my wedding ring to be donated after my death for religious work, but now it was hindered. Finally I let it go and with trust in God, I left it in God's hands in

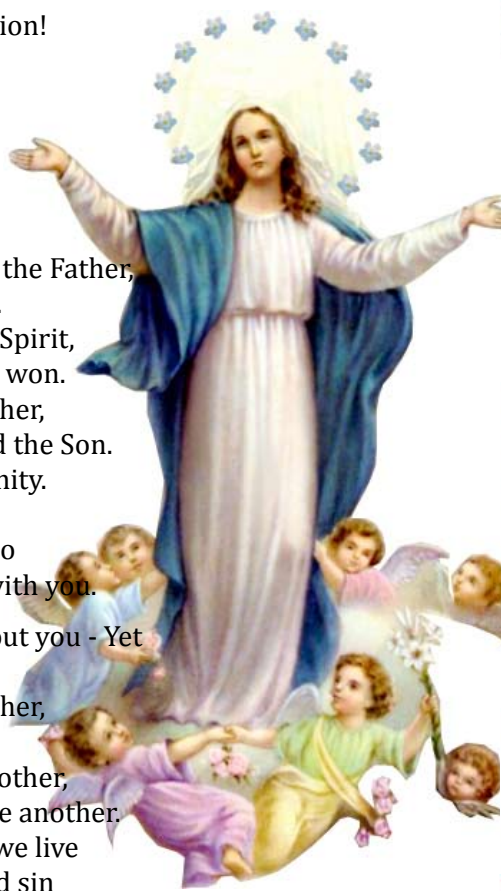
I am the Immaculate Conception

I am the Immaculate Conception!
Among women blessed
Mother you are an exception.

Teach us to be,
Holy like thee,
Ever with Jesus be happy.

Immaculate daughter of God the Father,
Mother of love of God the Son.
Most Holy Spouse of the Holy Spirit,
All their admiration You have won.
Celestial Rose of God the Father,
Understanding Mother of God the Son.
Lowly Temple of the Holy Trinity.
All our hearts you have won
Teach us to love God as you do
Ever to do His will together with you.

Christ could have come without you - Yet
On you God depended fully.
Now we rely on you dear Mother,
Completely.
Ever ready to help us, dear Mother,
Pray that we love God and one another.
Turn your eyes and see how we live
In this world full of crime and sin
Only you can help and your love give.
No one can stop, this world you will win.



Emilda S. Douglas

TAKE TIME FOR A MINUTE OF HUMOUR - SMILE!



you next year."

A young man called Udurawana was proposed to a girl. The girl said "I am, sir, one year elder to you." Udurawana said, "Oye! No problem, Chandra, I will marry

Rev. Fr. Fraccid Anthony Fernando O.M.I.

CPArts: Encouraging artists to be Ambassadors of Peace and Development

The Centre for Performing Arts or CPArts will celebrate its 46th Anniversary on 3rd December 2011.

On the 3rd of December each of the 20 CPArts centers island wide, will mark the day with inter religious and inter cultural ceremonies in addition to alms givings, tree-planting, blood donations, etc.

On the 4th December a national program will take place at Rambaikulam St Anthony's Centre, Vavuniya

the performing Arts, but Fine arts and Literature as well. It started a School of Fine Arts in Jaffna with more than 500 girls and boys and a dozen teachers who were experts in their fields. A magazine called Kala muham was launched with the purpose of developing the literary writing skills of the youth. In course of time, some of these youth won Sahithya awards for literature.

The youth and adults involved in this venture are becoming fully conscious of the transformative power

could be highlighted here: "Promoting peace, justice and equality among all communities; creating opportunities for intercultural exchange among Sri Lanka's regions; and identifying and encouraging artists to be ambassadors of peace and development."

CPArts well-planned interactive programs have resulted in interconnecting groups and individuals separated by language, religion, ethnicity and cultural attitudes and habits. This network of interconnectedness is consistent, uninterrupted and genuine. Relationship may arise and vanish under pressure. But CPArts interconnectedness has survived heavy storms and quakes and has continued to be resilient and resolute till the present day.

It has also built bridges of understanding, tolerance and amity among the different communities where its children, youth, women and artistes come from. It has generated attitudinal changes in certain areas, groups and individuals which may not be taken for granted under the present circumstances.



bringing the whole of the CPArts family together. They will evaluate past programs and discuss the future of the CPArts. Stage performances in Kandyan Dance, Bharatham and Folk Dance will also be staged.

CPArts is a Sri Lankan cultural organization that has consistently and to a certain extent effectively used creative arts as tools for bringing people of different cultural backgrounds together as members of one family. As such CPArts fosters the philosophy of humanism, creates a feeling of belonging, develops respect for "the other" and inculcates a sense of justice, fairplay, equality, reconciliation, peace and harmony.

CPArts was officially founded in 1965 in Urumpiray in the Jaffna Peninsula, as a Catholic parish theatre-group. It was then known then as *Thirumarak Kalamanram*. From the very beginning, members of this group consisting of young amateur actors, musicians and technicians came from all parts of the Diocese of Jaffna and from all strata of society overcoming barriers of caste, creed and social status.

The group was re-organized in the late eighties and took the additional name, Centre for performing Arts. It was at this juncture that the group's activities involved not only

of their arts-related activities. The mobilization of the youth for religious and social service was a visible and encouraging outcome.

Today, CP Arts is working island-wide in twenty places distributed in eighteen districts, in most of these CPArts Centres, there are children, youth, women and adults groups. Further CPArts has spread its centers internationally to London, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Australia, Canada.

Its vision has been defined as "A family of artistes, representing all Sri Lankan ethnicities and religions, that strives to inculcate the values of peace and tolerance".

A few important goals from the Mission statement

Truly a glorious evening



The Archdiocesan Choir show held on 27th Sunday at the Bishops' College Auditorium was a superb success. The CD of carols launched on the occasion titled '*Jesu Bilindu Ipaduneya*' or 'Christ the Saviour is born' is available for Rs. 300/= at Vibrations. The CD contains 12 carols - a touching tapestry of some of the best loved Sinhala and English Christmas melodies harmonized at their best.

Taking students beyond text books

An exhibition on six Sri Lankan industries showcased the hard work of thirty seven Grade five students of Our Lady of Victories Convent, Moratuwa. The six industries were: Agriculture, mining, fishing, carpentry, building, and garments. It was apparent that much work had gone into their efforts. Undoubtedly the enthusiasm of the class teacher had inflamed the students to do their best, supported by their parents. The exhibits showed that a substantive study had been undertaken on each industry which was finally compiled into six books. Ms. Milanka Anawaratne, the class teacher of the Grade said that her objective was to give the children a wide knowledge and not restrict them to the text books.



Sea shell crafts

At the 'Shilpi' exhibition held last November at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), I came across these beautiful Christmas tree decorations made with sea shells. The creators of these unique decorations were Saumya and Samantha, brother and sister of St. Rita's Road, Ratmalana. Sea shells were their passion and it was also the way they earned their living, selling exquisite sea shells and crafting ornaments and trinkets with it.

Emphasis on Christian unity:

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN PRAYER AND FELLOWSHIP

At the Ecumenical Advent -Christmas Service of Worship, Prayer, Song and Biblical Reflection



A large congregation of Clergy, Religious and Lay faithful belonging to the Catholic Church and other mainline Christian Churches gathered together on Monday last week at All Saints' Church, Borella for a United Ecumenical Advent-Christmas Service.

Jointly organized by the Catholic National Commission for Ecumenism and the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, the evening of prayer, song and Biblical reflection symbolized the revival of an ecumenical activity that was last held more than 15 years ago.

Delivering a special Christmas Message, Rt. Rev. Dhiloraj Canagasabay, Bishop of Colombo, Church of Ceylon, said that he was raised in a Methodist family, received his education under Catholic Jesuit Fathers and was later ordained as a Bishop of the Anglican Church. "We may belong to different denominations and different cultures," the Bishop said, "but in the power of the Holy Spirit we are united in the worship of the one God, our Heavenly Father. May we know, therefore, that we belong to that one King who comes, who came and who will come again."

Rev. Fr. Reid Shelton Fernando, Secretary of the Archdioc-

esan Commission for Ecumenism, welcomed the congregation and gave an introduction to the various initiatives taken by the Vatican and by the World Council of Churches to forge unity among Christians and promote dialogue with adherents of other faiths, especially the Holy Father's recent encounter with religious leaders in Assisi.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus Chandrasiri Perera, Bishop of Ratnapura and Chairman of the Catholic National Commission for Ecumenism (NCC) in his vote of thanks said that it was heartening to see the enthusiastic response of several Christian Churches to the invitation extended by the Catholic Church to participate in this Ecumenical program.

His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Spiteri, Apostolic Nuncio, was among the participants, along with Rev Charles Jansz, Chairman of the NCC, Rev. Ebenezer Joseph, General Secretary of the NCC, members of the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Anglican Churches as well as the Salvation Army, the Church of South India (CSI) and the Christian Reformed Church (previously known as Dutch Reformed Church). The combined choirs of All Saints Church and St. Luke's Church, Borella, were in attendance.

-Ainslie Joseph

Organized by:
The Catholic National
Commission
for Ecumenism & Inter
Religious Dialogue
19, Balcombe
Place - Colombo 8

The National Christian
Council of Sri Lanka
368/6, Baudhaloka
Mawatha - Colombo 7



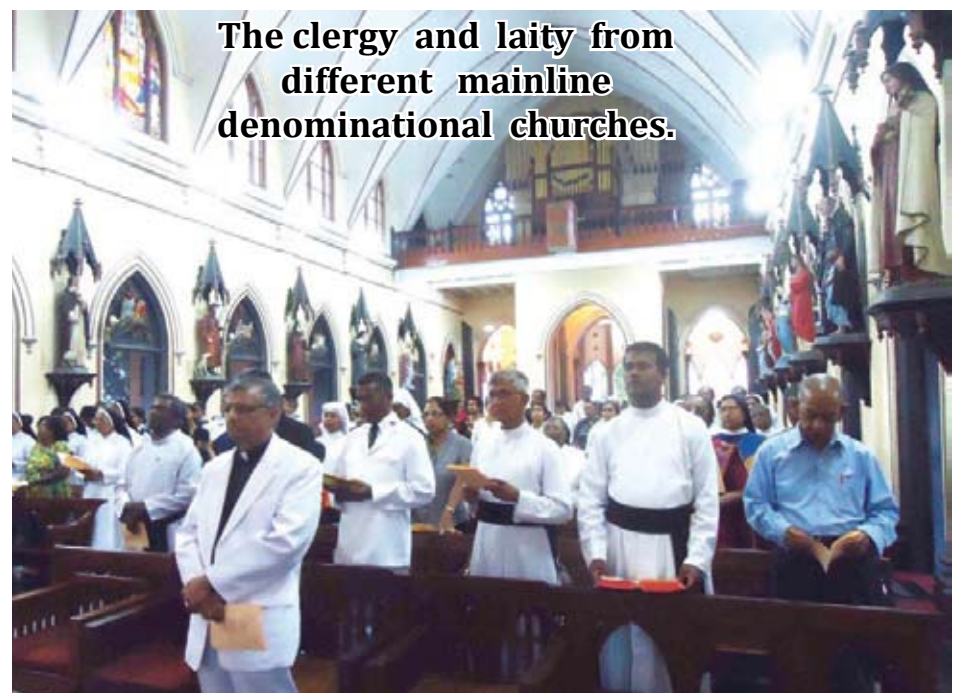
His Excellency Joseph Spiteri, Apostolic Nuncio welcomes the Anglican Bishop of Colombo, (Church of Ceylon)



Rev. Fr. Reid Shelton Fernando, Secretary - Archdiocesan Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, Rt. Rev. Dr. Ponniah Joseph, Auxiliary Bishop of Trinco-Batticaloa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus Chandrasiri Perera, Bishop of Ratnapura and Rev. Dr. A.W. Jebanesan, President - Methodist Church, representatives of the Christian Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church, Salvation Army, SL Baptist Sangamaya in fellowship before the Service.

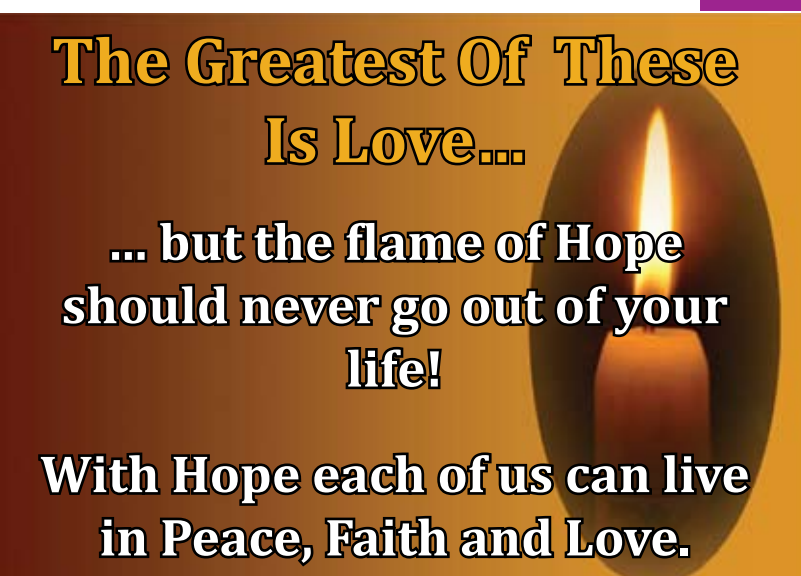
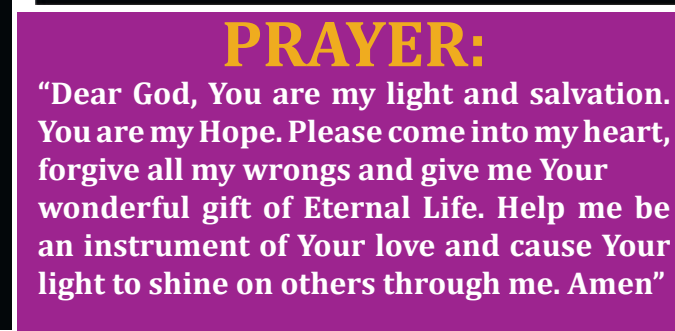
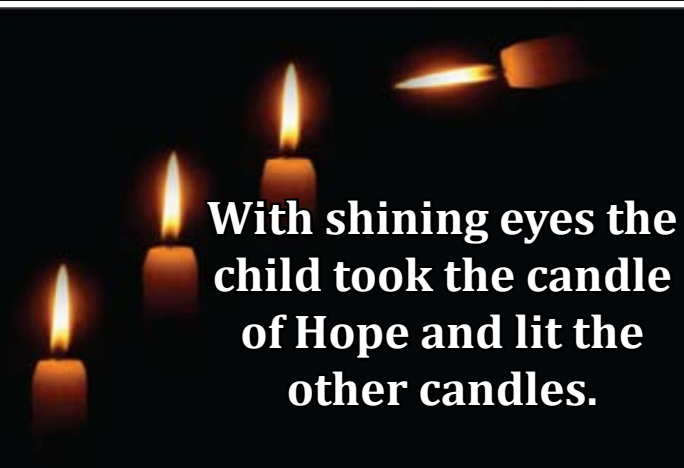
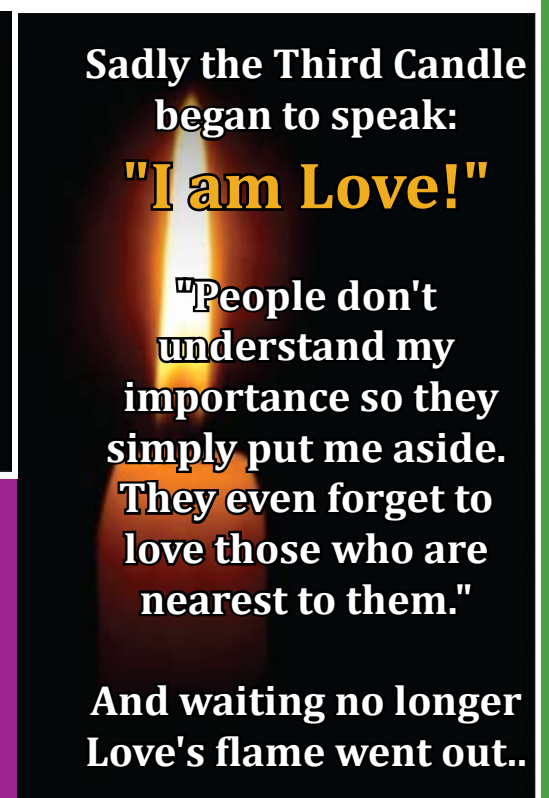
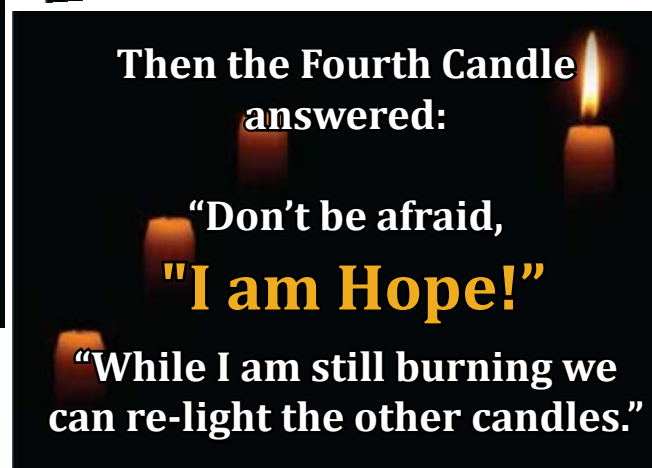
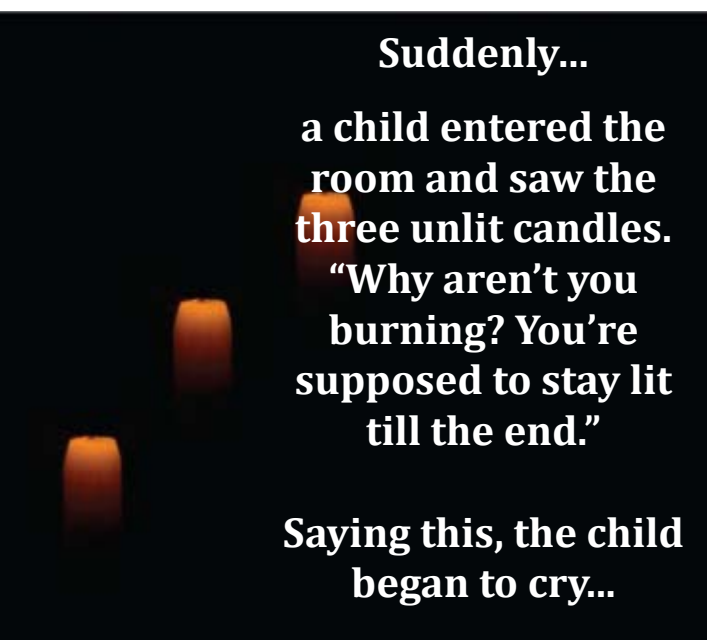
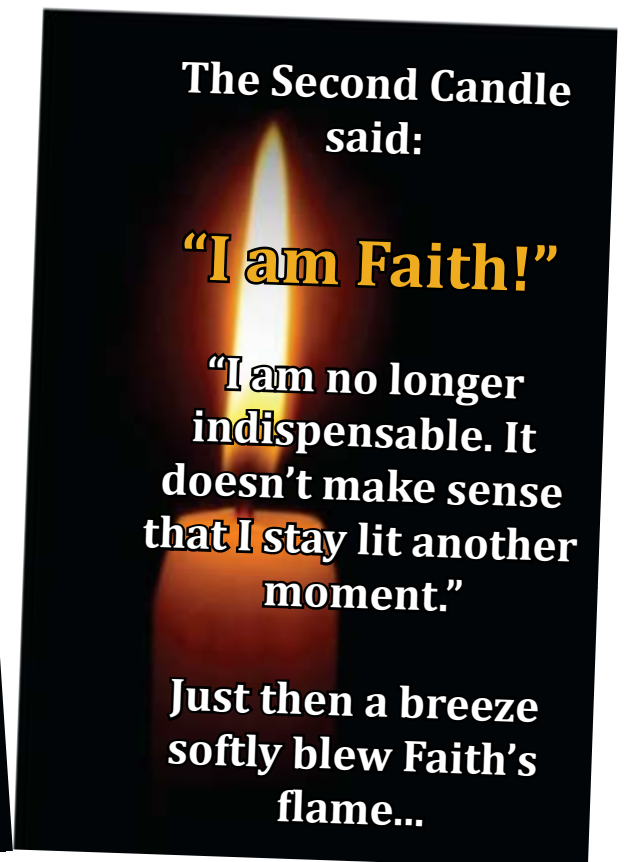
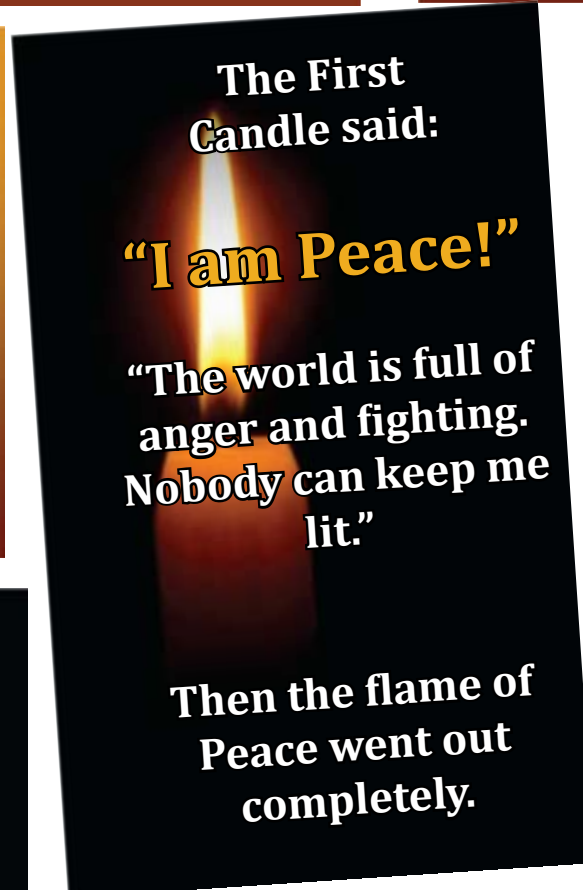
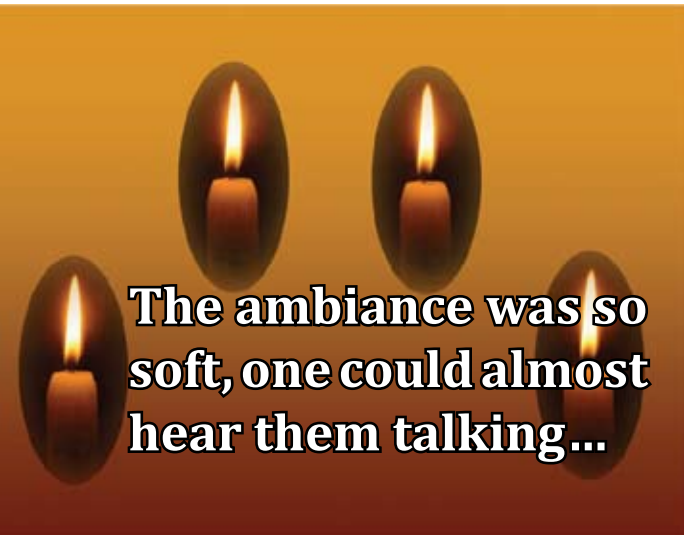


The Choirs of St. Luke's Church, Borella and All Saints' Church, Borella



The clergy and laity from different mainline denominational churches.

THE FOUR CANDLES



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

In the liturgical cycle of the Catholic Church, there is a feast on December 8, that of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Many mistake this feast with that of the conceiving of Jesus in Mary's virginal womb. Immaculate Conception of Mary is that Mary was conceived sans the original sin with which all others born to this world are afflicted, save St. John the Baptist who is the other, that was conceived without original sin or the sin of our first parents. Church history records this feast being kept in the Early Church. But it was in 1854 that ecclesiastical approval to the dogma was issued by His Holiness Pope Pius IX. Then four years later Mary herself declared that she is the Immaculate Conception to the seer at Lourdes, when the latter asked for her name.

Mary was sinless from her birth, while Jesus was sinless by virtue of His divinity. This feast is celebrated nine months prior to that of Mary's nativity. (September 8). It was by privilege that Mary was kept sinless. The controversy of this privilege began as early as the 12th century. The church in Lyons adopted it while Rome had not by then. St. Bernard (1193) is said to have remonstrated with the church of Lyons that the Mother of Jesus was not conceived immaculately, but may have been sanctified only while in the womb of her mother St. Anne, like the Baptizer. A predecessor of the present Pope His Holiness Benedict XIV declined to many and Switzerland did not. They argued that it had accept St. Bernard's opinion. In the following century no scripture base. It was then that Pope Pius IX declared St. Thomas held the view that Mary was sanctified into the world on 8th December 1854, that it is a truth the womb of her mother like John the Baptist, the same coming down from Apostolic times and hence should be view expressed by St. Bernard. His argument was that treated as an article of faith.

if she was immaculately conceived she would have not needed to be saved by her Son's death. This matter be- pared to Eve of Eden, the mother of the human race, came highly controversial that Pope Pius V in 1570 for- before the fall from grace. The doctrine that Mary in bade the discussion of this doctrine except at levels of some sense is the second Eve, is a commonplace of our assemblies of learned men. primitive theology. St. Iraneus urges the parallel be-

Pope Gregory XV went further banning any dis- tween Mary and Eve just as he insists on the parallel cussion on the subject except by Dominicans to whom he allowed to hold their view in 1622. Benedict XIV in 18th century wrote that the 'church inclines to the opinion of the Immaculate Conception, but the Apostolic See has not yet defined it as an article of faith. In 1849 Pope Pius IX wrote to the bishops of the world for their opinion. The Italian, Spanish, and the Portuguese bishops agreed with the Pope, but those of France, Ger-



By Lenard R Mahaarachchi

where he says, "Eve's knot of disobedience as untied by Mary's obedience. He further infers that she was never stained by sin. St. Ephrem said that "Truly it is thee and thy mother only, who are fair altogether." He also places first among the fallen, the infants who die in Baptismal innocence so that it must be freedom from original sin that he ascribes to Mary and not actual sin. St. Augustine held the view that, Mary being conceived in the ordinary way, must have been conceived in sin, as original sin passes from parents to children. England was the first country (in Europe) to keep this feast, and a council of London, attributes its inclusion to St. Anslem.. From there it passed to Normandy and Lyons.

This feast was established in the Church before the middle of the 14th century. Pope Sixtus IV, (a Franciscan) approved it and had a chapel erected (Sistine Chapel) in the 15th century, to honour the Immaculate Conception. He wrote a mass for the day while Pope Clement XI, made it a Holy Day of obligation. It was known as the feast of the "Conception of Mary, till Pope Pius IX changed it to the Immaculate Conception, but was celebrated on the 9th of December. The significance of this feast in our time is, as the Missal says, "Having decided from eternity to make Mary the Mother of the Word Incarnate, God willed that she should crush the head of the serpent, from the very moment of Her Conception. God as if covered Mary with a mantle of holiness and preserving her soul from all sin. This was to make her a worthy dwelling place for His Son." It is this feast that heralds the season of Christmas, which will terminate also with a feast of the Mother of Jesus, i.e. Candlemas, the feast of Mary's Presentation of Jesus at the temple. Let us not forget that it was Mary herself who identified Herself as "The Immaculate Conception."

ST. LUCY

(Virgin Martyr of Syracuse (283-304 AD.))

A baby born in the year 283 A.D. at Syracuse in Sicily to a rich, noble family where the father was of Roman origin and Eutychia, the mother belonging to the ancestry of Greeks was named Lucia. The name "Lucia" is the derivation of the root words "Lux or Lucis" in Latin meaning "Light or Clear." She lost her father at a tender age and thus made her upbringing to the onus of her mother Eutychia who was also inflicted with a loathsome haemorrhage for several years.

Young Lucia was subjected to the control of her mother and grew up with the Christian virtuous of piety and chastity. She was inspired by the life of yet another female model and virgin named Agatha of Catania (A town 50 miles from Syracuse) who suffered martyrdom 52 years back for the sake of Lord Jesus Christ. Agatha's renown impelled the young Lucia to accompany her sick stricken mother to the former's tomb site at Catania to pray for the cure of the unpleasant malady of her dear mother. All night

long Lucia and Eutychia prayed very earnestly to St. Agatha until they both were embraced in deep slumber. Suddenly in a vision, St. Agatha asserted to Lucia, "Soon you shall be the glory of Syracuse, as I am of Catania", and instantaneously Eutychia was restored to normalcy.

By then Lucia had decided and opted out to be married and chose to remain in a singular life that of a virgin in dedication to Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, on the contrary her mother had betrothed a pagan bridegroom to Lucia which was strongly opposed and turned down. Lucia also decided to make use of her patrimony and dowry to be distributed to the poor and needy of her vicinity. Revered as a Christian Virgin martyr by Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran Churches, her feast is celebrated on 13th December. In Scandinavian countries special festivities are held in her honour.

St. Lucy the Virgin Martyr renowned for her simplicity, modesty and chastity is a criterion for



J.A.R. Ranjith Fernando

the modern eyes of this era who willingly expose and exhibit their physiques. It is also pitiable to note that even some mothers and elders encourage such attitudes and turn a blind eye to suit themselves adjusted in these immodest social evils without a word of rebuke or correction.

Let St. Lucy the patroness of the blind be an eye opener and shed clear light on their ignorance and misdeeds and

then be reformed lest they be lost in spiritual blindness.

May St. Lucy being the patroness of the Cathedral of the Arch Diocese of Colombo at Kottahena and the Co-Patroness of the City of Colombo along with St. Lawrence intercede for all her faithful devotees to be showered with God's mighty blessings in abundance to experience a foretaste of the kingdom of God here on earth.

Advent - A time of Peace and Goodwill

*Another Advent approaches,
The Season of Good Cheer
A time when peace, joy and gladness
will fill our homes, with loved ones near and dear*

*We must remember the reason,
Why this season comes along,
Our blessed Redeemer and God
Our Lord and Saviour Jesus, was born.*

*He was laid down in a manger
As there was no room in the Inn
The reason we celebrate Christmas
Is to know His love for us from within.*

*He grew like you and me
Obedient to His Father above
Christmas will never be Christmas
If we don't bring cheer to those who need love.*

*So let's gather together and make hearts happy
As that's the meaning of love
To bring a smile to those in need
And blessings to our families will come from above*

*When families get together
And we remember loved ones gone before,
We relieve ourselves from knowing,
They celebrate Christmas with Our Saviour
forevermore*

*Wishing all our readers a Holy and Blessed
Christmas !*

Shirani David

GOSPEL

What it says in
the Readings

**Prepare a way for the Lord, make his
paths straight, and all mankind shall
see the salvation of God.**

(Lk. 3:4-6)

LITURGICAL - CALENDAR YEAR B 4th Dec. - 11th Dec. 2011

Sun: SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Is. 40:1-5,9-11, 2 Pt. 3: 8-14, Mk. 1: 1-8

Mon: Is. 35:1-10, Lk. 5: 17-26

Tue: Memorial of St. Nicholas, Bishop

Is. 40: 1-11, Mt. 18:12-14

Wed: Memorial of St. Ambrose, Bishop & Doctor

Is. 40:25-31, Mt. 11: 28-30

Thu: **Feast of Immaculate Conception of
the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Gen. 3: 2-15,20; Eph. 1: 3-6,11-12,

Lk. 1: 26-38

Fri: Memorial of St. John Diego Cuatlatatzin

Is. 48:17-19, Mt. 11: 16-19

Sat: Sir 48: 1-4,9-11, Mt. 17: 10-13

Sun: **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Is. 61: 1-2,10-11, 1 Th 5:16-24,

Jn. 1: 6-8,19-28

Second Sunday of Advent Aid Stories

Aid Story 1.

The writer Christopher Schmid tells of having seen in a church a very antique and eloquent picture.

It had five figures painted on it. In the foreground was seen an Emperor wearing a crown and carrying a scepter and underneath a sign read: "I rule everyone."

Next to it was the figure of the Pope wearing the tiara and the pastoral ring and beneath it was written: "I teach everyone."

The next figure was that of a soldier, carrying a sword and it said; "I defend everyone."

Next to it was a figure of a farmer pushing a plough, and the sign underneath read: "I feed everyone."

Finally there was a figure of a devil driving a wagon with the following legend at his feet; "I will take all to hell unless you do your duty well."

Aid Story 2.

A priest was preparing a dying old man for his long journey into the dark night. Whispering firmly, the priest said, "Denounce the devil! Let him know how little you think of his evil."

The dying man said nothing. The priest repeated his order. Still the dying man said nothing.

The Priest asked, "Why do you refuse to denounce the devil and his evil?"

The dying man said, until I know exactly where I am heading, I don't.

Think I ought to be aggravating NOBODY."

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

Prayer of the Faithful

Response: Lord hear our prayer.

That all those who believe in Christ may be saved from the blindness of materialism and self-sufficiency. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear us in your love.

That our political leaders may strive to level the mountains of in just ice and fill in the valleys of poverty so that we may have a more just society. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear our prayer.

That we may realise that Christ is always trying to come to us in the person of the one we are ignoring or excluding, in the person who is in need and in want. We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear our prayer.

That we may create a time and a space for Christ in our lives, so that he can come to us with His light, His healing, and His peace.

We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord hear our prayer.

The Second Sunday of Advent

1st Reading:

Is. 40: 1-5; 9-11

This text taken from the second part of the Book of Isaiah presents a message of consolation to the exiles in Babylon. It says that God had already forgiven them and made them return to their own land. This return from exile is described dramatically as God making a highway through the desert to lead them back to their land, like a shepherd leading his flock to the pastures. Hence seeing this, all nations will come to acknowledge God's mighty power and mercy towards man.

2nd Reading:

2 Peter 3: 8-14

St. Peter tells the first Christians that as the second coming of Christ could take place at a moment and in a manner we least expect we ought to prepare for it

by leading holy lives. Making use of the symbolic language of the Old Testament prophets the apostle describes the Day of the Lord's coming as a moment when everything that is evil will be done away with in order to give way to A new world of righteousness and peace.

Gospel: Mk. 1: 1-8

John the Baptist who prepares the way of the Lord is presented in terms of the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi. He prepares the way of the Lord by preaching a baptism unto repentance an pointing to Jesus who will baptise with the Holy Spirit. His simple way of life became a powerful means of getting his message across to the people. Thus many flocked to listen to him.

Reflection:

God's mercy is unfail-

ing towards sinners. In whatever sinful state we maybe we turn to God to be rehalutated as regards his relationship with us. This is the message of hope Prophet Isaiah brings to the exiles. Hence the best preparation for the coming of Christ is conversion to God.

Holy life consisting of our fulfilling of obligations toward God and fellowmen will enable us to be partners of a new world of Justice and righteousness envisaged at the Coming of Christ.

Just as John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord, we too by proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God and bearing witness to it in terms of our life are performing our Christian duty. We can effectively do it through a simple way of life.

*Archdiocesan Commission for the
Biblical Apostolate*

Humble Healer

Jesus, so precious
aviour and Healer
Truly present in the
Blessed Sacrament.

Patiently you wait
inside the tabernacle
In solitude.
With a heart full of gratitude
I kneel before You.

O, gentle Jesus
You are alone
For many hours a day.
Only the red lamp flame
With its golden flame
Keeps you company.

Jesus, can I become
A little drop of oil
Inside the lamp.
Though unworthy
I may then stay
Close to You
Day and night
In silent adoration.

Also Jesus, can I bring
the whole of humanity
and everyone gone before us
To worship You, and
seek Your mercy.

Yes, Lord and Master
Bless us all
With merciful forgiveness,
Your mighty healing, and
Your lasting peace,
Which leads all mankind
to salvation.

Yvonne Amarasekera



St. Francis Xavier Apostle of the Far East

Feast Day 3rd December

Born to Spanish parents of fame
Francis indulged himself in acts of shame
Leading a carefree life of youth
With ungodly attitudes and thoughts.

Ignatius Loyola, a Jesuit priest of God
Braved to enter into a dialogue
And made him realize the dignity of humans life
Convincing him of the instability of life.

"What doth it profit a man
If he gains the whole world
And suffers the loss of his own soul"
Were the inspiring words of Loyola.

Those admonishing words touched Francis' heart
And created a remarkable change of heart
Enthusiasm himself to be a holy priest
To preach the Word of God with immense zest.

His incorrupt body is a solid testimony
To the blessings he deserved
For his ministry so dedicated
To spread the kingdom of God Almighty.

He converted innumerable pagans to Faith.
And earned the title of Patron of Propagation of Faith
So, let's emulate his life of profound Faith
To commit ourselves for the propagation of Faith.

Leonard Wijesiri





Christmas Carols & Songs



Christmas is a festival of the heart, and it speaks from the heart of one individual to another. What better way then is there to do this than through the well-loved carols which convey the beautiful message of peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

1. Nativity Carols

Carols were first sung during pagan times, even by the Greeks and Romans. The Church banned carols from sacred services because of the influence of pagan customs, but outside the Church, Nativity carols began to flourish. Most of these carols were simple folk songs from humble country people. It was St. Francis of Assisi however who brought carols into the worship of the Church seven hundred years ago.

2. Creativity of St. Francis

He was looking for a way of presenting the concept of the Incarnation of God to his parish. On Christmas Eve he made a crib in a cave near a castle, and arranged to recreate the setting of that first Christmas night. The Pope gave St. Francis special permission to celebrate Midnight Mass. The Friars composed and sang new, joyful songs, much more akin to carols than hymns to accompany the tableau. Thus, the way was opened for the Church and carols to become reconciled.

3. Silent Night

The ever popular carol "Silent Night, Holy Night" was written by a parish priest Joseph Mohar, on Christmas Eve in



Advent of Grace and Hope

Last Sunday (November 27), we entered in to the first season of the liturgical calendar of the Church. - The Season of Advent.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary, describes Advent as, "arrival of important person or thing; coming or second coming of Christ." - The Greek word for Advent is *Parousia* while the Latin word is *Adventus*.

In theological terms the word Advent has a vast meaning but for us Advent is the season that heralds Christmas. - A time of joy and fulfillment; a time of family gatherings and doing things together. All are happy and hope fills the air.

For children Christmas means the Crib, Midnight Mass, Christmas tree and Santa Claus. It is indeed a busy time for kids, having to make the crib for the Christ child, decorating the tree, laying out presents and most of all to be dressed in your newest clothing and to go for the Midnight Mass.

While all this is alright we must remember that Christmas comes with a message and this message is what is important for us. It is a message that the angel brought to the shepherds that first Christmas night. - The message of Peace. "...on earth peace to those whom His favour rests." (Lk2:14). God's favour is His Grace.

So this Christmas let us be aware of the graceful qualities God has endowed us with. - Loving kindness, benignity, generosity, faithfulness, fidelity and His mercy and put them all into action. By bequeathing us with these qualities God has blessed us with His Grace and it is up to us to be aware of these beautiful gifts in this beautiful season of Advent and use it for the Glory of the Lord.

1818. Mice had gnawed the bellows of the church organ. Joseph Mohar was sadly troubled by the lack of music for Midnight

Mass, but when the organist Gruber heard the words, he set them to the lovely music now so familiar to all of us.

4. Inspired Carols

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing" was written by the Protestant writer Charles Wesley who was inspired to write this beautiful hymn as he walked to church on Christmas morning in 1730, when he heard the pealing of the bells.

"O Come All Ye Faithful" was written in Latin by St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan monk and has been translated into 120 languages.

5. Message of Joy & Peace

Carols break down all communication barriers - where young and old, rich and poor, and people of all nations gather together to celebrate the birth of the Saviour two thousand years ago. Today even the man in the street could be heard humming the tune of a carol or singing it in his own inimitable way. This is because of the message of joy and peace every carol conveys. It has also been said that even soldiers in the front line have sung Christmas carols even amidst heavy fighting, showing that in spite of war and violence, men still treasure and recall some beautiful things in life one of which is the singing of carols.

(Taken from a Christmas Publication)

With Jesus

I wandered through the darkness
The moon was covered by clouds.
I wandered what I'm doing in darkness
My heart filled with doubts.
Suddenly I thought of Jesus
The clouds moved away.
I was filled with Jesus
with Him I'll always stay.

Kushan Anuruddha Fernando
Creative House AELT
Ma-eliya Ja-Ela



Jesus is a present When He is present



*When I walk behind you Jesus
I'm in the past
When you walk behind me
I'm in the future
When I walk with you
I'm in the present
yes, Jesus you are a present
you are a GIFT*

Kalpani Chathurika Gomez
Active House AELT
Ma-eliya, Ja-Ela

An Afternoon in the Park

There once was a little boy who wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with Twinkies and a six-pack of root beer and he started his journey.

When he had gone about three blocks, he met an old woman. She was sitting in the park just staring at some pigeons. The boy sat down next to her and opened his suitcase. He was about to take a drink from his root beer when he noticed that the old lady looked hungry, so he offered her a Twinkie. She gratefully accepted it and smiled at him. Her smile was so pretty that the boy wanted

to see it again, so he offered her a root beer. Once again she smiled at him. The boy was delighted!

They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they never said a word.

As it grew dark, the boy realized how tired he was and he got up to leave, but before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the old woman and gave her a hug. She gave him her biggest smile ever.

When the boy opened the door to his own house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face.

She asked him, "What did you do today that made you so happy?"

He replied, "I had lunch with God." But before his mother could respond, he added, "You know what? She's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!"

Meanwhile, the old woman also radiant with joy, returned to her home.

Her son was stunned by the look of peace on her face and he asked, "Mother, what did you do today that made you so happy?"

She replied, "I ate Twinkies in the park with God." But before her son responded, she added, "You know, he's much younger than I expected."

