



OPENING OF THE MUSEUM

Jan 13



CHRISTIAN UNITY WEEK

Jan 18 to 25



HOLY CHILDHOOD SUNDAY

Jan 27

# Messenger

"REGISTERED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POSTS OF SRI LANKA UNDER NO. QD / 50 / NEWS / 2013"

Sunday January 13, 2013 Vol 144 No 02 16 Pages Rs: 25.00 Registered as a newspaper



We wish all Hindu Religious, a Very Happy Thai Pongal!

## 'PREM NIVASA' AGLOW WITH LUMINARIES



His Excellency, President Mahinda Rajapaksa together with the Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith made a visit to 'Prem Nivasa', Rawatawatte for Christmas. Many diplomats from various political bodies were present including Hon. Minister Jeewan Kumaranatunga, Hon. Saman Lal Fernando (Mayor of Moratuwa), and Mrs. Anoma Dissanayake (Chairperson for the National Child Protection Authority). Rev. Fr. Tyronne Perera (Parish Priest) and Rev. Fr. Kasun

Fernando (Assistant Parish Priest) together with many Religious, were also present at the occasion.

His Excellency distributed gifts to the mentally and physically disabled children of the home, whilst appreciating the humble services of 'Prem Nivasa' and the Sisters of the 'Missionaries of Charity' founded by Mother Teresa. His Eminence also inspected the construction in progress for the new building of the orphanage prior to concluding the visit.

Chirantha Ranmal

### Presentation of 'Mini Udana'



The Christmas edition of 'Mini Udana' was presented to the Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo, Rt. Rev. Dr. Marius Peiris recently, by the Editor, Dehigahapitiyage Joseph Jayasiri Fernando of the Diocese of Ratnapura.

### SERVICE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

"What does God require of us?" (Micah 6:6-8) is the theme of the trilingual Christian Unity Service to be held on Sunday January 20, 2013 at 5 pm at the (Anglican) Christ Church, Mutwal. It is jointly organized by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka and the Catholic National Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue. The homilies on this occasion will be preached by Very Rev Fr Daya Shelton Welikadarachchi, Archdiocesan Episcopal Vicar (Sinhala) and Rev Fr Reginald Lucian OMI, Parish Priest of St Anthony's Church, Dematagoda (Tamil)

ALL ARE WELCOME!

"Gleaned from the classics"  
Mens bona regnum possidet  
(from Seneca)  
A good mind possesses a kingdom.

### ANNUAL FEAST OF THE HEAVENLY BIRTH OF BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ - 16 JANUARY 2013

Programme for the islandwide celebrations

CHILAW DIOCESE  
13th January 2013

07.30 - BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ SHRINE - WATTAKALLIYA

KURUNEGALA DIOCESE  
14th January 2013

08.00 - BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ SHRINE - GALGAMUWA

16th January 2013

17.30 - ST. MARY'S CHURCH - PITIPANA (NEGOMBO)

GALLE DIOCESE

09.00 - ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL - GALLE

MANNAR DIOCESE

05.45 - ST. SEBASTIAN'S CATHEDRAL - MANNAR

(Contd on pg. 2)

### SRI LANKA LOOSES A TRUE CRICKETING FRIEND



TONY GREIG

Dr. Elmo Rodrigopulle reporting from Australia.

The sudden passing away of Anthony William Greig, popularly known as Tony, shocked the entire cricket world and especially Sri Lanka.  
(Contd on pg. 10)

### Cyclonic disturbance in Haputale and Haldumulla



The cyclonic disaster which occurred on January 5, caused serious damage to the Haputale and Haldumulla region. It affected St. Sebastian's Church, the mission house and parish hall, the pre-school building and about 400 houses of the area.

Many of the displaced are being housed at the Church. The Bishop of Badulla, Rt. Rev. Dr. Winston Fernando is seen consoling the victims in the presence of Rev. Fr. Titus Fonseka, Parish Priest, and Rev. Fr. Neil Fernando.

Correspondent from Badulla

### Memorial Mass



Memorial Requiem Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice, will be offered for the repose of the soul of His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. L.R. Anthony, Bishop of Trincomalee & Batticaloa by chief celebrant Rev. Fr. Jero Selvanayagam (Rector St. Patrick's College-Jaffna) on Saturday January 19, 2013 at 9.00 a.m. at

St Lawrence's Church Wellawatte, Colombo-6. After Holy Mass the congregation is invited by the parishioners of St Sebastian Church, Karampon, for light refreshments at the Church premises. Your presence and prayers will be much appreciated.

S.B. David

## President of the Sri Lanka Medical Association

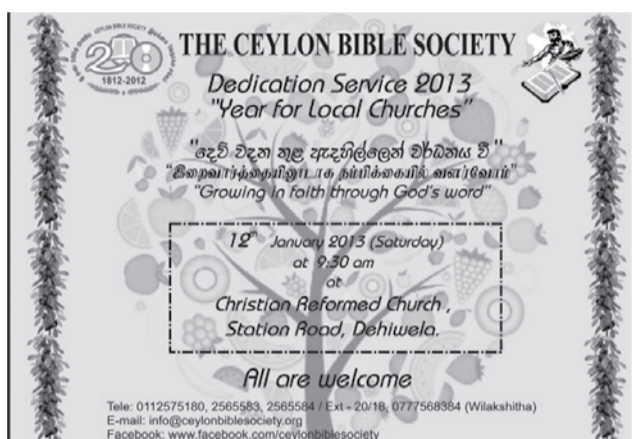


Dr. B.J.C. Perera an active member of the Catholic Doctors' Guild

was recently elected to the prestigious post of President of the Sri Lanka Medical Association. This 125 year old premier professional medical association in the country consists of specialist and non specialist doctors as members. We offer our congratulations and best wishes to Dr. Perera for the daunting task he has undertaken. He requests all Catholic doctors to become members of the association.

**Maxie Fernandopulle**

## "Growing in Faith through God's Word" An Interdenominational Dedication Service 2013



"Growing in faith through God's Word" the annual interdenominational dedication service organized by the CEYLON BIBLE SOCIETY to mark the 'Year of Local Churches' will be held on Saturday January 12, 2013 at the Christian Reformed Church, Station Road, Dehiwela commencing 9.30 a.m. The Most Rev. Dr. F.L. Emmanuel Fernando, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo will deliver a message on the 'Year of Faith' of the Catholic Church. A message will also be shared by Rev. C.N. Jansz, the President of the Christian Reformed Church. All are welcome.

**Trevor Ludowyke**

## Lunawa SVP pilgrimage to Madhu and Talawila



With the kind consent and approval of the Parish Priest Rawatawatte, Rev. Fr. Tyrone Perera and his assistant Rev. Fr. Kasun Fernando, the Lunawa Ss. Peter & Paul's, Conference of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, organized a pilgrimage to the shrines of Madhu and Talawila, for thirty very deserving and needy parishioners of Lunawa, free of charge.

The pilgrims were taken to the "Kurusa Palliya" and the "Kale Palliya" for veneration. Spending a night out at St. Francis Xavier's Church, Pesale, they met the Tamil speaking people in the parish and had the opportunity of

participating with them at Sunday Mass at the Pesale Church.

This initial attempt could be considered as the first ever project launched by the Lunawa SVP Conference to deepen

the prayer life, veneration and spirituality of the less privileged persons in the society, thereby bringing them more closer to Christ and His Church.

The resident priest at Lunawa. Rev. Fr. Ernest Poruthota not only contributed, but also appreciated the involvement of the Lunawa SVP'ers in the execution of this project and suggested that it be made an annual feature.

**Vivian Silva**

## Annual Feast of the.....

Contd. from Pg. 1

**KANDY DIOCESE**  
20th January 2013 - 07.30 - BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ SHRINE - AMPITIYA

**JAFFNA DIOCESE**  
20th January 2013 - 08.00 - JAFFNA FORT SHRINE - JAFFNA

**TRINCOMALEE DIOCESE**  
20th January 2013 - 07.30 - BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ SHRINE - THANNEAMUNNAI

**BATTICALOA DIOCESE**  
20th January 2013 - CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF PRESENTATION - THANDAVANYLEY

## The Divine Visitation

Laying greater emphasis on one of the central articles of Faith during the 'Year of Faith' as declared by the Holy Father, namely the Mystery of the Incarnation, a grace-filled evening of Christmas Carols and a Nativity play titled "The Divine Visitation" was presented by St. Nicholas' International College, Colombo and was held on December 12, 2012 at St. Paul's Milagiriya Parish Hall with the participation of Rev. Fr. Justin Chawhan s.s.s., Superior of the Blessed Sacrament Community at St. Philip Neri's Church Pettah as Chief Guest.

Delivering a special Christmas message during the carol service Fr. Justin said that Jesus was born in a stable and was laid in a manger, a receptacle meant for animal food. He said that it was significant that the evangelist Luke who



gives us the infancy narratives deliberately mentions on three occasions within the narrative that Jesus was laid in a 'manger'. This deliberate mention of the word 'manger' suggests therefore that the evangelist wanted the readers to realize that Jesus is our 'Food' from heaven; a typical reference to the Eucharist.

The Senior College Choir trained by versatile choir conductor and voice trainer Mr. Francis Almeida, and the elementary students took part in this event while

a Nativity Scene depicting the birth of Christ was also play-acted by the students. The program featured traditional Christmas carols including the Advent Peace Canon, Jesu Redemptor Ominium, The King is Coming, the Conventry Carol, Namo Mariyane, the song of the Annunciation and many more as well as a sing-along of popular carols together with the students, staff, parents and invitees.

**Text : Francisca Ludowyke**  
**Pict: Siddath Ramanayake**

## Maiden 'Novena to St. Anne' at Wattala



The very first 'St. Anne's Novena' at St. Anne's Church, Wattala was held grandly on January 4, 2013. Here Rev. Fr. Basil Wickramainghe, Parish Priest of the Church and Rev. Fr. Krishan Jayashantha, Assistant Parish Priest are seen with the statue of St. Anne before the Novena. Malinga Jayawardana, President of St. Anne's Society, Sunil Visidagama, Secretary, Marcus Fernando, Treasurer and other members are also in the picture.

The Novena will be held every Friday at 6.00 p.m. and is organised by the St. Anne's Society.

**Nimal Perera**

## Announcement regarding houses and shelters at Madhu Camp

Pilgrims who wish to reserve houses for the various feasts should send their applications in the following manner:

1. The envelope containing the application must be marked "Request for house" along with the date of the feast (eg: "Request for house 2nd February") on the top left hand corner. No postcards, telegrams or telegraphic money orders will be accepted
2. Applications are accepted as follows:
  - i. For the feast on 2nd February - from 2nd to 15th January
  - ii. For the (Negombo) feasts on 10th & 15th March, Easter and 19th May - from 2nd January to 10th February
  - iii. For the feast on 2nd July - from 1st to 31st May
  - iv. For the feasts on 15th August and 8th September - from 1st to 30th June

- v. For the feast on 6th October - from 3rd to 30th July
- vi. For the feasts on 8th December and 1st January - from 10th to 30th September

3. NOTE: The number of houses available are limited but the requests are increasing every year. Therefore, we are unable to accommodate all the requests. As such, applications will not be accepted after the respective closing dates. Also, please note not to write outside the relevant periods and not to call over at Madhu for this purpose.

All correspondence to be addressed to The Administrator, Madhu Church P.O, Madhu.

**Fr S Emilianuspillai**  
**Administrator**  
**Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu**

**BADULLA DIOCESE**  
20th January 2013 - 08.00 - BALAKETUWA

**ANURADHAPURA DIOCESE**  
20th January 2013 - BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ SHRINE - THEMADDU

**RATNAPURA DIOCESE**  
20th January 2013 - 08.00 - BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ CHURCH - ATH OYA

**COLOMBO DIOCESE : 20th January - 2013**  
08.30 - OUR LADY OF SORROWS CHURCH - PALLANSENSA  
08.00 - BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ CHURCH - MAKOLA  
08.00 - HOLY ROSARY CHURCH - WAGA (KANDEWATTE)  
08.00 - BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ CHURCH - MODERA (MORATUWA)  
07.30 - B.J.V DEVA DHARMA NIKETHANYA - SHANTI NIVASA - MODERA  
08.00 - INFANT JESUS CHURCH - KALAMULLA (KALUTARA)  
All parish churches in the Colombo Diocese will celebrate the Feast on the 20th January 2013

## Sri Lanka Scout Association, President meets His Eminence



The President of the Sri Lanka Scout Association, Leonard Albert, his wife and family, some from overseas, were given an audience with His Eminence, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith at his office on January 3, 2013. Here the Cardinal poses for a photograph with the extended family.

### NOTICE

On several occasions, it has been brought to my notice by the faithful concerning the misuse of the term "Brother" prefixed to the names of lay people in public, especially in the different Catholic Movements in the Archdiocese.

It is hereby notified that the title Rev. Father, Rev. Brother, Rev. Sister or Father, Brother and Sister as a title is attributed only to persons who have taken religious vows, ordained ministers, consecrated religious or major seminarians, and only such persons are entitled to hold these titles officially. Any titles such as Brother, Sister or Father, held by lay persons, are not officially recognized by the Church or does not connote any particular office within the Church.

*Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith*

\* Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith  
Archbishop of Colombo



## Daham Pasal benefits by 'Writer's Workshop'

A 'Writer's Workshop' for children of the Daham Pasala of St. Michael's Church, Nagoda, Kalutara was conducted recently by Mr. Kumara Nayanjith, the Assistant Editor of 'Lama Pradeepaya.'

The event was organised by Rev. Fr. Nirmal Malaka Silva, Parish Priest, together with Rev. Sr. Mary Merium and the staff members of the Daham Pasala.



### SPECIAL NOTICE

**The meeting of the Archdiocesan Commission for Justice Peace, Human Development & Integrity of Creation**

The meeting of the Archdiocesan Commission for Justice Peace, Human Development & Integrity of Creation, presided over by His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith is scheduled for January 28, 2013, (Monday) at 4:00pm at the Jubilee Hall of Archbishops House, Colombo -08. All members are kindly requested to attend the first meeting of the year 2013.

*Rev. Fr. Rohan de Alwis - Secretary*  
TP - 071 - 8624236

### ARCHDIOCESAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME (AELT POST O/L) 2013

The next residential AELT programme for the post O/L students of 2012 will be held at John Paul II Centre, Maeliya, Ja-Ela from January to March 2013.

Together with the AELT we offer a Diploma in Computer Applications (DICA) and Certificate in Graphic Designing (CIGD) with a recognized certificate from leading University Lectures in the resource pool.

Applications are now available at Rs.100/= per copy. Closing date for applications will be January 20, 2013. You can also obtain applications by sending a money order through the Ja-Ela post office with a self-addressed, stamped long envelop addressed to "Rev. Fr. Director, John Paul II Centre, Maeliya, Ja-Ela." Tel: 011-2236251.



### Praise and Worship to Our Lady of Lanka

Our Lady of Lanka, Association of Wennappuwa celebrated a service of praise and worship, presided by Archbishop Emeritus, His Grace Oswald Gomis. Beside him is Fr. Priya Jayamanne. This was organised for the 29th year in succession.

*H.A. Caldera*

## SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus



### Church in the World

#### Holy Father address diplomatic corps Worries at gap between rich and poor



VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Benedict XVI urged world leaders last Monday (7) to try to reduce the growing gap between the rich and the poor in regions such as Europe as they reform their economies.

The Pontiff also used his annual New Year's speech at the Vatican to diplomats to press concerns he had raised in his Christmas Day message; calling for an end to Syria's civil war and its growing death toll, including many innocent civilians.

He said he hopes Jerusalem will one day become "a city of peace and not of division."

Regarding Europe's economic crisis, the Pontiff urged the EU to make "far-sighted" and "difficult" policy decisions favoring growth of the region as a whole. "Alone, certain countries may perhaps advance more quickly, but together all will certainly go further," he said.

In addition to issues such as bond market yields and interest rates, world leaders should focus on "the increasing differences between those few who grow ever richer and the many who grow hopelessly poorer," Benedict said, promoting the Catholic church's social teaching, which advocates special attention to the needy.

The financial crisis took root, he said, "because profit was all too often made absolute, to the detriment of labor, and because of unrestrained ventures in the financial areas of the economy, rather than attending to the real economy."

He urged people to resist the temptations for "short-term interests" at the expense of the common good.

Pope Benedict also revisited one of his most pressing worries of late: the use of religion as a pretext for violence. He said "baneful religious fanaticism" has produced many victims. Repeating what he had said in his Christmas message, Christians in several parts of the globe have been the targets of such attacks, especially in Nigeria.

THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA  
**Messenger**  
SINCE 1988

EDITORIAL

January 13, 2013

## Extra -legal use of force is evil

The Encyclopaedia Britannica Online defines terrorism generally as "the systematic use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective". The encyclopedia adds that "[Establishment terrorism, often called state or state-sponsored terrorism, is employed by governments - or more often by factions within governments - against that government's citizens, against factions within the government, or against foreign governments or groups." As David Hume the philosopher argued, when in "society, ruffians remote from the protection of laws and government operate with impunity, the conventions of justice are suspended."

The public is unable to decide who is behind the acts of political terrorism that are currently taking place. In the light of recent happenings, we get the impression that the police have ceased to be the police of the people and have become the police of some unknown evildoers. The war ended over three years ago but such criminal behavior is still continuing.

The rule of law is seriously undermined by such acts of terrorism and a situation of lawlessness could emerge unless such crimes are stamped out by bringing their perpetrators to book. A foreign tourist woman was sexually assaulted in Hambantota by a politician. Several politicians have resorted to extra-legal force, showing that political terrorism can spill over to terrorism against women as well.

When the victims belong to a minority community, political terrorism tends to be dubbed as acts of State Terrorism at least in the perception of those of the International Community who are committed to the protection of Human Rights. Surely it is not in the interests of any ruler in a democracy or even a flawed democracy, to resort to such acts of terrorism for they will de-stabilize society and create a failed state.

Muslim organizations have referred to the use of Facebook and hate websites to incite hatred against them. Similarly some Christian groups have been targeted by Buddhist extremist organizations.

Last week we were told that the Prison Chapel where Catholic religious services are being held for the Catholic prisoners, was to be closed down, although this has been denied by official sources. Small isolated Christian groups have been subject to assault and verbal abuse. If there are allegations against any particular ethnic or religious community those who make the allegations should be called upon to prove them or withdraw them. If there are credible allegations they should be investigated impartially.

The Supreme Court has now ruled that the rights of persons cannot be infringed except under the law. The Authorities should stamp out terrorism and all forms of extra-legal force.

# Born to Reveal God's Love

## Jesus, the Revealer of God's love

Jesus was born to reveal God's unconditional compassionate love to humankind. What really motivated God to send Jesus to the world, is God's own love for His creatures. Love by nature tends to show itself without remaining buried within. God who created human beings could not simply keep His love for them within His inner self. Hence, God demonstrated His love by sending Jesus as His great gift so that we may experience God's own love through Jesus. St. John, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus, was able to write in his gospel, "Yes, God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost but may have eternal life." (Jn 3:16).

## St. John's Testimony

What made St. John arrive at the above-mentioned conclusion, namely to write that Jesus is the human revelation of God's love? John joined Jesus' Movement when Jesus appeared on the shores of Galilee. He attended a wedding feast at Cana, where he saw Jesus transform water into wine. He was one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus, John was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and sat at Jesus' right hand at the Last Supper. He noticed Jesus' spirit of humility and service when Jesus washed the feet of His Apostles. John was at the foot of the Cross on Calvary when Jesus was dying and heard Him telling His mother Mary, "Behold, your son," pointing to John. John was the first Apostle to visit the empty tomb. Hence, having closely associated with Jesus from the outset of Jesus' Ministry until He rose from the dead, and having shared the love of Jesus so much, John could also write to his Christian community what he had personally experienced. "God's love for us was revealed when God sent into the world His only Son so that we could have life through Him. This is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us, when He sent His Son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away" (1 Jn 4:7 - 10). Having understood the significance of Jesus during His Ministry of compassion for the sick, the lost and the disturbed, John could declare that Jesus was God's gift to humankind.

## Jesus, the Beloved Son of God

At His baptism, Jesus experienced God's intimacy in a very special way. He became aware of His identity as the "Beloved Son of God," whom He called Father. Jesus revealed the God of Abraham, the God of

Moses as a loving Father.

In the Gospels, scholars tell us, the word "Father" for God occurs in the lips of Jesus nearly 170 times. All four Gospels report unanimously without hesitation that Jesus constantly addressed God as "My Father." In so doing, Jesus used the Aramaic form "Abba." To call God Abba, is one of the most outstanding characteristics of Jesus of Nazareth. The original roots in Aramaic do not specify a gender and could be translated "divine parent." To the Jewish mind, Abba expresses accurately the most intimate and personal relationship anyone could think of. By using this word Jesus communicated His filial relationship.

## Vocation of a Christian

As the Father could not keep His love for humankind within Himself but showed it in and through Jesus, Jesus too became kindled by His Father's love to reveal to His followers what He had personally experienced. Hence John who remembered some of the unforgettable sayings of Jesus stated, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Love one another as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are My disciples" (Jn 15:9, 12-13; 13:34-35). Loving one another becomes the basic quality of a Christian because that is what Jesus expects from His followers till the end of time. It should not be just a proclaimed quality but a quality that is lived.

Today the illiterate, the ignorant, the sick, those who are struggling to survive as persons, the sinners and the victims of oppression need the loving care and concern of the followers of Jesus Christ. Our vocation as Christians is also to know where such persons live. Besides, what is needed is personal and group sensitivity and response. We must be like the good Samaritan in the Gospel. He responded to the need of the victim of oppression. "If a man who was rich enough in the world's goods saw that one of his brothers was in need, but closed his heart to him, could the love of God be living in him. Our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active" (1 Jn 3:17-18). The followers of Jesus Christ of the first centuries AD heard the people say, "See how these Christians love one another."

Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI

## Apostleship of Prayer - January

### Daily Offering

*God, our Father, I offer you my day.*

I offer you my prayers, thoughts, words, actions, joys and sufferings in union with Your Son Jesus Christ, who continues to offer Himself in the Eucharist for the salvation of the world.

May the Holy Spirit, who guided Jesus, be my guide and my strength today, so that I may bear witness to Your love. With Mary, the mother of our Lord and of the Church, I pray especially for this month's intentions as proposed by the Holy Father...

That in this 'Year of Faith' Christians may deepen their knowledge of the mystery of Christ and witness joyfully to the gift of faith in Him.

That the Christian communities of the Middle East, often discriminated against, may receive from the Holy Spirit the strength of fidelity and perseverance.

### New Beginnings

*(James S. Hewett,)*

London businessman Lindsay Clegg told the story of a warehouse property he was selling. The

building had been empty for months and needed repairs. Vandals had damaged the doors, smashed the windows, and strewn trash all over the place.

As he showed a prospective buyer the property, he took pains to say that he would replace the broken windows, bring in a crew to correct any structural damage, and clean out the garbage.

The buyer said, "Forget about the repairs. When I buy this place, I'm going to build something completely different. I don't want the building; I want the site."

That's God's message to us! Compared with the renovation God has in mind, our efforts to improve our own lives are as trivial as sweeping a warehouse slated for the wrecking ball.

When we become God's, the old life is over. He makes all things new. All He wants is the site and the permission to build. There are still some trying to "reform," but God offers "redemption." All we have to do is give Him the "property" and he will do the necessary "building."



### Happy New Year!

Your love, God, is my song, and I'll sing it! I'm forever telling everyone how faithful You are. I'll never quit telling the story of Your love. . . (Psalm 89:1-2)

"The best perfection is to do ordinary things in a perfect manner. Constant fidelity in little things is a great and heroic virtue."

### St. Bonaventure

*The 'Year of Faith' is a "summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, One Saviour of the World" (Porta Fidei 6)*

World day of Peace, 1st January 2013

# "Blessed are the peace makers"! But whither peace in Sri Lanka?

Rev. Fr. Vimal Tirimanna, CSSR

The 1st of January is the World Day of Peace. Since 1968, successive Popes, beginning with Pope Paul VI have issued special messages to mark this day dedicated to world peace. Each of these annual papal messages has a special theme, normally an important aspect of peace in the world. Anyone who combs through the corpus of these special papal messages cannot fail to find some eternal truths on peace-building which are universally valid, irrespective of the diverse world religious beliefs and political ideologies. This is mainly because the underlying principles of these papal messages are based on human reason or common sense; they address "all humans of goodwill". This year's theme of world peace day message is taken directly from the well-known Sermon on the Mount of Jesus Christ: "Blessed are the Peace Makers" (Mt.5: 9). At the very beginning of this year's Peace Day message, Pope Benedict XVI highlights the innate longing for peace which is found in every human being when he states: "... the many different efforts at peacemaking which abound in our world testify to mankind's innate vocation to peace. In every person the desire for peace is an essential aspiration which coincides in a certain way with the desire for a full, happy and successful human life. In other words, the desire for peace corresponds to a fundamental moral principle, namely, the duty and right to integral social and communitarian development, which is part of God's plan for mankind. Man is made for peace which is God's gift". Later in the same message, the Pope goes on to point out that while peace is the gift of God, we humans, too, have our role to play in achieving peace, i.e., by being peace-makers. Peace is then, both God's gift and also human task, i.e., peace-building has both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

This year 2013 also marks the fifty years of the much celebrated encyclical of good Pope John XXIII which was entitled "Peace on Earth" popularly known as *Pacem in Terris* which was issued in 1963 at a time when the entire world was hoping against hope for peace. It was a time when the then two rival world super-powers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union were locked in a fierce cold war, threatening world peace. It was also the time when some independent nations, including Sri Lanka, were trying to steer themselves away from the two power blocks and have their own non-aligned movement. Although today, the world, taken as a whole, certainly is a better place to live than then, still there are fierce battles and wars that are enraptured with violence and terror, in various corners of the world, especially in Syria, Libya, Gaza, Iraq, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo,.....etc. While most of the violence and terror unleashed in such places need to see an end as soon as possible, one cannot forget other places in our world which have a lot of potential for violence and terror, beneath what appears to be peace. Sri Lanka certainly would qualify to be one such place. Although the curse of LTTE terrorism was successfully eradicated militarily, nearly four years ago, thanks to the courageous single-minded political leadership of President



Mahinda Rajapakse, unfortunately most of the causes or the factors that gave birth to such terror are still not addressed with the same courage and single-mindedness. Still worse, there are some new factors/causes (that could pave the way for the eruption of violence/terror anew) created during the past couple of years since the eradication of LTTE terrorism, militarily.

Needless to say that at the beginning of each year, among the many dreams and aspirations of various peoples all over the world, the theme of peace often tops the list. We Sri Lankans who went through some thirty long years of terrorism and violence certainly are well aware of the preciousness of the gift of peace. Our longing for a lasting peace still seems to be hanging at the end of a thin thread of uncertainty. It is in this precise sense that the writer wishes to jot down the following thoughts at the beginning of this new year, in the context of contemporary Sri Lanka, taking some of the insights from this year's papal message for the World Day of Peace.

## **Lasting Peace in Sri Lanka: An Utopian Dream?**

Peace is not an utopian dream, says the Pope in his message. Unfortunately, the way the government is procrastinating a concrete, constructive solution to the Tamil question, a lasting peace for us Sri Lankans, seems to be becoming more and more unreal, almost utopian! The apparent reluctance even to implement the concrete proposals of government's own Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) discourages most of us who are genuinely interested in a lasting peace in our dear motherland. What inhibits the government from implementing at least the basic recommendations of the LLRC is a mystery, and unfortunately it only goes on to confirm the very allegation which our Tamil leaders have been repeating endlessly, namely, that the Sri Lankan governments are not genuinely interested in searching for a just, long-lasting political solution to the national question. This is unfortunate, because such pessimistic attitudes (especially in the minds of the minorities) stalls any efforts towards a durable peace. Moreover, such reluctance on the part of the government also tacitly invites foreign

interference (under the guise of protecting the rights of the minorities!) in our strictly internal affairs.

As the writer has been saying repeatedly, it is only President Rajapakse and his present government that is fully capable of finding and implementing a lasting solution, if at all, for our national question. There has been no other Executive President who had been so popular as the present President is (he has become almost a populist leader in Sri Lanka, as election after election has so amply demonstrated), and there has been no government under the present Constitution (and it is very unlikely that there will ever be such a government within the same Constitution!) that has such a massive majority in parliament, and also, popular grassroot support. Moreover, the present government consists of a coalition of political parties that represents almost all hues and views of the local political spectrum, and this is an added advantage that the President enjoys in implementing a political solution that would encompass all peoples of Sri Lanka, both ethnic/religious majorities and minorities. Our President, in other words, is the only one at this moment of our history who can unite our nation and give it a promising future, given the political clout he single-handedly wields at the moment. Hence, there is no doubt that this is the moment, the *kairos* moment, to implement a political solution that would keep all of us in Sri Lanka as one nation. If we miss this moment, this opportunity, the writer is more than sure that Sri Lanka will return not only to political chaos but also to violence and terrorism in the not distant future. On their part, the people of Sri Lanka have repeatedly given their unreserved mandate to the President precisely to seek a political solution to the national question and to implement it. Will our President oblige and cease this historic opportunity at least during this new year 2013? Given his invincible political position at the moment, whether lasting peace in Sri Lanka would remain a mere utopian dream invariably depends on him and his decisions, alone. In this sense, Mahinda Rajapakse will be judged by history **either** as the great Statesman who not only defeated the curse of LTTE terrorism but also united our nation and led it to a lasting peace in the spirit of true

patriotic service or as the one who only gave leadership to the military annihilation of the ruthless LTTE terrorism but then, got enraptured with the vice of hubris, and so, did nothing to consolidate the peace that ensued except to assure his own political survival. The sad but realistic truth is that not only his fate in history but also that of the entire nation, depends on the decisions he would be making at this critical juncture of our history. Whether a lasting peace in Sri Lanka would become a reality or a mere utopian dream will also rest on the same decisions.

## **Threats to Justice are threats to Peace**

Ever since the military defeat of the ruthless LTTE terrorism, there is the complacent feeling in some quarters in Sri Lanka (especially among quite a number of government ministers and members of parliament) that peace in full, in all its senses, has returned to our dear island. True, today, we have a sense of peace compared to not long ago, in the sense, we do not fear any more bomb-blasts; today we have freedom of movement to any part of our country and most of our citizens enjoy the dividends of the military victory over the LTTE. But is the mere absence of war, or for that matter, is the mere absence of LTTE terrorism equal to peace? Is the 'peace' that we enjoy now a long-lasting peace? Long ago, the great St. Augustine defined the basis of peace as the *tranquillitas ordinis*. That is the maintenance of a tranquil order or social harmony which according to him was the sole role of a State or of a ruler. Unfortunately, the recent happenings in Sri Lanka fly in the face of such a definition of peace. The law and order situation in our country seems to be going from bad to worse each passing day and no one seems to be bothered or responsible about this pathetic situation. Only those in the ruling party elite seem to be eligible to enjoy the benefits of any law and order (if at all), and still worse, that law and order seem to be interpreted according to their whims and fancies. The bizarre incident of a government minister driving on the wrong side of a main road in Colombo and the eventual 'drama' of thuggery that ensued in broad daylight last week, as reported in *The Island* news paper a couple of days ago, is a case in point. Many other recent happenings also imply that the rulers and their henchmen are swollen with the incurable vice of hubris and so, consider themselves above and beyond any Sri Lankan law merely because they are in power! In other words, the ruling elite seem to be "more equal" before the law than others! This, undoubtedly is a very disturbing factor when it comes to building a culture of peace (based on justice) in our country.

Justice is the stepping stone to peace, but the sense of justice in Sri Lanka during the year we are winding up has been gradually eroding, giving the impression again that only the government, its ministers and MP's, and their henchmen have the right to enjoy the benefits of any sense of justice. What pains any conscientious citizen with regard to recent events is the glaring fact of the silence of those in authority in the face of blatant violations

(Contd. on Pg. 13)

# Some guidelines to prevent abortion

by Dr. Maxie Fernandopulle

I am happy that due to the directives of the Bishops' Conference led by His Eminence, the Family Apostolate Movement has motivated the parish priests to carry out propaganda explaining the sinister nature of abortion.

But the more important need is to take some constructive steps to prevent abortion. To achieve this objective it is important for us to educate our women about the dangers and sinister consequences of abortion. There is a 10% chance of the woman dying following an abortion. Pelvic inflammation leading to persistent lower abdominal pain, perforations of the womb and the intestines, lesser chance of getting pregnant in future, birth of underweight babies are other consequences of an

abortion.

But the most serious consequence is the psychiatric ill effects following abortion. Flashback and repeated re-living of the violent event is often experienced. Sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, suicidal feelings are other ill effects. She may resort to alcohol or drugs to cope with symptoms. These should be explained to all vulnerable groups and the youth.

We should be aware of the target groups to whom these messages are directed at. 75% of those resorting to abortion are married women



between the ages of 20 and 30 years and not unmarried teenagers. Some of the others are garment factory workers, sex workers and displaced women. Educating our youth and married women in reproductive health and family planning were found to be lacking in those who resorted to abortion. 73% of those who resorted to abortion did not practice any family planning method or used a method with a high failure rate like the rhythm or the withdrawal

method.

It is useful for us who try to prevent abortion to appreciate why women resort to abortion. Surveys have revealed that one third of mothers who resorted to abortion said their last child was too young. 23% each said that they have completed their family or economic hardships. Foreign employment was the reason given by 10 to 13%. Being unmarried was only 4 to 7% and rape was only 0.5%. 8% said the living children were too old, to get pregnant again. Another disadvantage of abortion is that it is financially expensive. The average cost both direct and indirect incurred for obtaining and managing the complications amount to Rs. 46,176. Indirect cost borne by a woman is Rs. 5,541.

The important practical steps are to educate our people on the above and make available a safe and an effective family planning method for Catholic married couples to practise in their married life. The safe period which is acceptable to the teachings of the church has a failure rate which may be as high as 15%. So the only method is the Billing's ovulation (mucus) method. This is passingly mentioned at our pre cana conferences held for a few weeks for couples to be married. This alone can be ineffective with drastic consequences. Young women who are looking at marriage should be educated at least six months prior by qualified doctors with detailed explanation on how to chart their monthly cycles.

They should

come back to the doctor with notes on their cycles and understand how the Billing's method can be correctly practised which if carried out correctly, has a success rate of 97%. But unfortunately this is not taught in the state sector, nor is it promoted by the hierarchy, the clergy, the Parish Priest or the lay Catholic leaders. The nuns who visit homes, and church association who are in contact with married couples should inform the married couples about natural family planning. The Parish Priest should make use of the services of Catholic doctors to educate these couples.

Let us all make a valiant effort to put the above facts into practise.

## Miraculous Medal: A Sign of Our Lady's Love and Protection

Very many of us have got used to the Devotion of wearing the Miraculous Medal. You may sometimes not be aware of the fact that it is really the Medal of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. It is Our Lady's request made to St. Catherine Laboure during an apparition to have the Miraculous Medal struck. Here is the story behind it.

Catherine Laboure was born on May 2, 1806 to the Laboure family living about 200 miles south of Paris. Catherine was the third youngest of ten children. When she was nine years old, her mother died. Then she turned to Our Lady, her Heavenly Mother, for consolation. One day she was seen standing on a chair embracing the family statue and saying, "From now on you will be my mother." Some time afterwards her elder sister entered the Daughters of Charity. Catherine rose early morning each day and walked two miles to the next village for daily morning Mass since there was no priest in their parish church. She prayed in their local church every evening.

One night she dreamt she was in a church and a priest was saying Holy Mass. Still in her dream, after Holy Mass she went to see a sick person and the priest was in that house too. He said, "It is good to look after the sick" and he also said that though she would go away from him, she would come back to him later because God had special plans for her. Sometime later, Catherine visited a convent of the Daughters of Charity, the



St. Catherine Labouré

congregation her sister had entered. On the wall of the parlour she saw a picture and realized it was the priest in her dream, St. Vincent de Paul, who had founded the Daughters of Charity 200 years before.

At the age of twenty one she asked her father's permission to enter the Daughters of Charity. He refused but relented a few years later and in January 1830 she joined the congregation. A few months after she entered, she was moved to the congregation's mother house in a street called rue du Bac in Paris to begin her training. Late at night on July 18, the eve of the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, she was wakened by a little child whom she took to be her Guardian Angel who led her to the Convent Chapel where Our Lady appeared to her at midnight. Our Lady sat on the priest's chair for two hours and invited Catherine to kneel beside her. She gave Catherine a message for herself and all the world, "Come to the foot of this Altar. There graces will be poured out for all who ask for them." Our Lady told her that God had a special mission for her but did not tell her what it was.

Later that year, on November 27, she received a second apparition of Our Lady when she was praying in the

convent chapel in the evening. Our Lady was standing on a globe with Her foot crushing the head of a serpent and there were rays of light coming from gems on her fingers. Our Lady said, "Behold the symbol of graces that I will shower down on all who ask me for them." An oval frame surrounded Our Lady and Catherine could read this prayer in gold lettering on the oval frame, "O Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to thee." Those of you who wear the Miraculous Medal know that this is the image on the front of the Medal. The frame turned and Catherine could see a cross with a large M, representing Mary, beneath it. Beneath the cross were two hearts, one surrounded with thorns which Catherine understood to represent Jesus, and the other heart was pierced by a sword which Catherine took to represent Mary recalling the words of Simeon in the Temple to Our Lady that a sword of sorrow would pierce her soul (Lk. 2:35). Those of you who wear the Miraculous Medal know that this is the image on the rear of the Medal. Catherine was told to have a Medal struck according to this model. Our Lady said that those who wear the Medal properly blessed and repeat the prayer, "O Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to thee" will have an abundance of graces. Following Our Lady's request, Catherine told no one but her spiritual director about these apparitions. He went to the Archbishop of Paris who allowed the Medal to be struck.

Originally it was known as the Medal of the Immaculate Conception but so many cures and miracles were attributed to it that it was subsequently called the Miraculous Medal.

In 1831, the year after her apparitions, Catherine was appointed to another convent.



No one knew which Daughter of Charity had received these apparitions of Our Lady although Catherine was suspected because of her piety. In 1876 she felt her life was drawing to a close and she told the mother superior of the Daughters of Charity that she was the sister who received the apparitions. When she died the sisters released the news that the sister who had seen Our Lady had died, and though unknown throughout her life, she then became the most talked about person. In 1933, as part of the Canonization process her body was exhumed and found to be in perfect preservation and was removed to the convent in the rue du Bac where it may now be seen behind glass in the spot where she received the request from Our Lady for the Medal. In 1947, Pope Pius XII declared her to be St. Catherine Laboure and called her the

'Saint of Silence'.

At the time Our Lady appeared to Catherine in 1830, the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, although widely believed, was not a defined dogma of faith. Pope Pius IX is thought to have been influenced by the apparitions to Catherine in the rue du Bac when he decided to consult with the Church if the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady should be declared a dogma. He received overwhelming support and on December 8, 1854 declared Our Lady to have been free from sin from the moment of her conception, understood in a preventive sense. Four years later in 1858, Our Lady appeared to Bernadette at Lourdes and when asked who she was she replied, "I am the Immaculate Conception." So the apparitions in the rue du Bac in 1830 and the Miraculous Medal prepared the way for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception to be proclaimed in 1854 and the apparition at Lourdes in 1858 confirmed it.

Every day in our lives, we have to face the struggle of overcoming temptation and sin. Therefore let us turn to Our Lady on our knees having the Rosary in our hands asking Her maternal help to overcome all temptation and sin in our lives, believing the fact that She can't say "can't" because She is the Mother of God and She will not say "no" because She is Our Mother.

*O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee!*

Rev. Fr. Eymard Fernando



**Art  
& Architecture  
in Liturgy**

Compiled by: Kishani S. Fernando

It was the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December. After Sunday evening mass we drove around aimlessly through some of Colombo's illuminated streets. As we circled Lipton circus we were surprised to see a thorana on Dharmapala Mawatha. Yes it was actually a thorana or pandol with its many coloured twinkling lights that is usually seen during Vesak and Poson. But this was different it was a thorana telling the story of Christmas. We stopped our vehicle and sat down on some chairs that had been put together for those who wished to stop awhile and enjoy the thorana.

The thorana was designed in the shape of a star, with its six limbs showcasing six scenes from the life of Jesus. In the centre a video continued to play the story of Jesus. There was a brief narration introducing the story which was followed by a short video which played to the popular song composed by Mark Alan Lowry, Mary did you Know?.

The whole concept was inspiring and the words of the song touching. It was wonderful to sit there under Colombo's night sky and watch the thorana

This 48 feet tall thorana was the country's very first Christmas thorana or pandol, initiated by the Back to the Bible, a Christian interdenominational movement.

## The First Christmas Thorana in Sri Lanka

"Last year we held street dramas to tell the story of Christmas and the reason for choosing a thorana or pandol this year is because it is a culturally familiar to Sri Lankans", said the Managing Director of Back to the Bible, Mayukha Perera.

"We are trying to use a familiar form of communication to share an unfamiliar message the true reason for celebrating Christmas, which is the Birth of Jesus who was God the creator of the world choosing to come to earth in the form of a human being to live among us as one of us, to love us and to serve us and eventually to die for us, in order to forgive us of the wrong we have done, and set us free from guilt and shame.

We want to let the people of our country know that

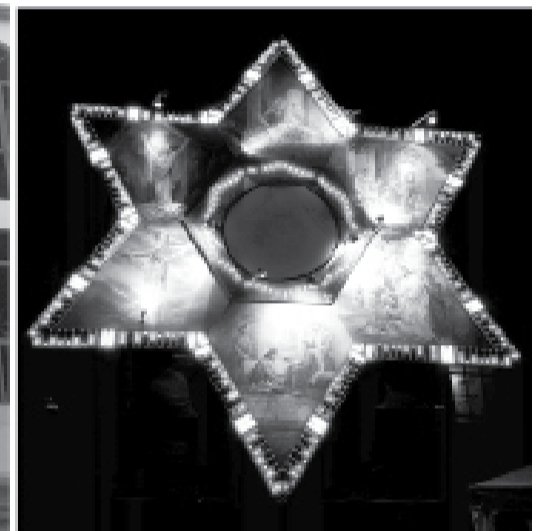
Christmas is not about Christmas trees and Santa and shopping and eating. But about God's love for all human beings. Hopefully, because of the means we used, people will be able to understand and benefit from it," he added.

Mr. Perera feels this pandol symbolizes a more Sri Lankan way of celebrating Christmas.

And from where did this idea spring? The idea was initiated by a staff member of Back to the Bible but the complete creation of the pandal, which stood in front of their office premises at Dharmapala Mawatha near Town Hall, Colombo 07, had been a combined effort. Once the idea was confirmed, they contacted a group who design Vesak pandols and had it made.

The thorana has indeed been a brilliant success in communicating the message of Christmas to the people, in a day and time when Christmas is increasingly dubbed as X'mas, and Santa Claus is portrayed on bill boards and banners advertising real estate, washing machines and fast foods.

The Thorana was activated on the December 17, 2012 and continued till December 26, from 6pm to 10 pm each evening.



## Reveling the mystery of the Man God

This Sunday the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Baptism of Our Lord, bringing to an end the season of Christmas. The Church recalls Our Lord's second manifestation or epiphany which occurred on the occasion of His baptism in the Jordan. Jesus descended into the River to sanctify its waters and to give them the power to beget sons of God. The event takes on the importance of a second creation in which the entire Trinity intervenes. At his baptism He conferred upon the water the power of the true Baptism which would remove all the sins of the world: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sin of the world".

This incident has been frozen into many art forms all over the world to remind the faithful of its great significance. Here we present four pictures depicting this moment in art from our local churches. At left we see the world famous painting by Richard Gabriel which forms the backdrop to the baptistery at the Dalugama church. At the centre we see an ancient painting on the ceiling of the sanctuary at St. John the Baptist church Mutwal. At right we see the marble carving that forms the top portion of the baptistery at the Grand Street church Negombo. The painting of the Lamb of God is from HFC chapel Bambalapitiya.



# Goa pilgrimage

Having read news clipping about a pilgrimage to sacred shrines in India, I joined same to experience travel for the first time overseas and to see these places. After visiting many shrines in some of the major cities, we were finally due to visit Goa which to our organizers was the prime destination. To me it was just another shrine to be seen. But I must now confess that it became a spiritual experience that has kindled my faith to realize and appreciate the commitments that has been made by those involved in the protection and nurturing of our faith during the dark periods of the Dutch persecution. Our pilgrimage to Goa started with a minor setback. A member of our group realized that she had left one of her bags back at the night stop. Fortunately, the coach that brought us to the station was still there and our leader rushed back and brought it seconds before the train left for Goa.

The train journey was enjoyable; especially after we made friends with a retired lady teacher who showed such warmth that she offered to take us shopping in Goa town in the evening and also was a Good Samaritan to one of our pilgrims who her money. We parted ways when we got off at Vasco Da Gama railway station. At the station to meet us was Rev. Fr. Eremito Rebello, the Rector of the Blessed Joseph Vaz Shrine. He welcomed us all with a bag full of sweets and also distributed the programme that he had planned out for us for the next couple of days. We were taken to Pilai Seminary where we were going to stay for the duration of our visit. In the evening, we went to Vasco Town for shopping and we were met by our friend in the train who had come with her husband and grandson and two of us were taken in their vehicle for a short tour of the area. We parted with an invitation to them to visit our county in the near future. We were joined by Rev. Fr. Eremito at dinner who spoke to us in general about the life and times of Blessed Joseph Vaz and on the efforts that are been taken to obtain his canonization. This made me inquisitive to know more and with this thought we proceeded to the Seminary for our night.

The following day, we left by coach to the Church of St. John the Baptist where Blessed Joseph Vas was baptized. The baptismal font was still there in an alcove with hand painted pictures depicting important episodes of his life, hung on the walls. Our spiritual journey and education of Blessed Joseph Vaz began here with Mass concelebrated by Rev. Fr. Balagalla, Fr. Clifford and Fr. Jun who were part of our batch of pilgrims. This was followed by a visit to the maternal home of Blessed Joseph Vas at Pulwaddo, Benaulim, Goa, where He was born. Since Rev. Fr. Eremito and our tour leaders were personally known to the present co-owners of the house, we were permitted to enter the house where Blessed Joseph Vaz was born. Unfortunately, we could not view the inside of the room where his bed and cradle are still kept. Since the house is now owned by co-owners and its future status is uncertain - a plot of land in front of the property has been marked out with a plinth to commemorate the site.

From there, we proceeded to Holy Trinity Church. In this church there is a statue of Blessed Virgin Mary called Our Lady of Miracles. There is a

belief that this is the statue that was in a church in Sri Lanka at Narahenpitiya, in a place called Liveramentu, where there was a well cut in a square shape with steps leading down to the water which had miraculous healing powers. (There is a place in Colombo called Liveramentu presently a cemetery, and workers there have confirmed that there was such a well) Our tour leader narrated this story. A servant girl had to take lunch to her master every day. She had to pass this well on her way and used to drink water from this well. One day the plate fell off her hand and the lunch spilled and she started to cry. Then a lady spoke to her and inquired as to the reason she was crying, then the lady gave her lunch and told her to take it to her master. The master who had the lunch, commented on the tasty food and inquired if it was from his home, and said that his wife could not cook so well. Although the servant insisted that it was from his wife. The master coming back home inquired from his wife. After much questioning, the servant narrated the sequence of events and led them to the well, where the scattered lunch was still to be seen. It is believed that it was the Blessed Mother who gave the servant girl the lunch. The entire morning session saw Fr. Eremito doing the honour of explaining the significance of



*Blessed Joseph Vaz Shrine Sanctuary at Sancoale*

the places we were taken to.

On the third day, we left by coach in our Sunday best to the Blessed Joseph Vaz Shrine Sanctuary at Sancoale for Mass. On the arrival of Archbishop Patriarch of Goa His Lordship Rev. Fr. Filipe Neir Ferrao our youngest pilgrim greeted him with a bouquet of flowers. All of us pilgrims were then conducted in procession to the church. Holy Mass was concelebrated by the Archbishop, Rev. Fr. Eremito, Rev. Fr. Jayalath Balagalla, Rev. Fr. Clifford and Rev. Fr. Jun. We participated in the readings, the prayers of the faithful, the offertory procession, and the singing. The Church had a hanging which depicted the religious ties between Goa and Sri Lanka themed SON OF GOA - APOSTLE OF SRI LANKA. In his homily, the archbishop spoke about the role of the Holy Son of Goa who went through great difficulty and risk to His life for nearly ten years to save and revive the faith of the persecuted church in Sri Lanka. He also emphasized on the love and care that Blessed Joseph Vas demonstrated toward the poor and those who were sick. His lordship appealed to the pilgrims to emulate the Apostle so that this world will be a better place to live in. At the end of the Mass Rev. Fr. Jayalath Balagalla thanked the Archbishop for his words of encouragements.

After Mass all the pilgrims were given tokens of Blessed Joseph Vaz by his Lordship, who thereafter mingled and spoke with all the pilgrims. We were touched by His Lordship's fatherly attitude towards us, and his words stirred in many of us the need to know more about Blessed Joseph Vaz. This event was also covered by the local media. Afterwards we visited the parental home of Blessed Joseph Vaz where He spent his youth. Here, we saw the room with the altar niche in the wall in front of which He used to spend time praying. We also saw the Miraculous Cross, which He used during his lifetime in Sri Lanka. In accordance with His wish just before death, this Cross was sent to Goa. We also saw the Jak tree that was near the room. It is said that He used to get out of His room when the main doors of the house are closed, by scaling down a branch of the tree that was close to His bedroom window, and walk to the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary to visit and pray before the Blessed Eucharist at night.

Next we visited the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Cortalium, which was closest to His paternal home. He is known to have prayed there often, and it is also recorded, that at night the locked doors of this church miraculously open when he goes to pray there. We considered it a blessing to be able to visit and see these places. Fr. Eremito in his narrations of the importance and significance of the places, emphasized on the saintliness of Blessed Joseph Vaz even at that tender age, and He was referred to as "Little Saint" by the people of the village. Then we visited the old church of Our Lady of Health. This was the church where Blessed Joseph Vaz received His First Holy Communion, where He celebrated His First Mass and where He wrote the "letter of Bondage to the Virgin Mother of God" on 5th August 1677. He offered Himself to the Virgin Mother as a slave to do as She liked with Him, He totally dedicated Himself to Her, and this is manifested in the fact that almost all churches that were built by him was dedicated to the Blessed Mother. This is also the church at which He left His shoes and walked away barefoot and continued his ministry thereafter barefooted. This church has nothing more than its original facade standing, and it is whitewashed annually by a wealthy merchant. The story connected to the destroyed church is that the people residing in the surrounding area, used to cause trouble to the resident priest of the church, and the priest could not carry out his duties. Then a very pious priest was sent to minister to the people, but the troublemakers convinced a woman to go to the priest and create a commotion, falsely accusing the priest of molesting her, thereupon the villages set upon the priest, and despite his pleas of innocence, was subjected to harassment.

Later, the priest, having prayed that night at the altar, took the Holy Eucharist and made his way from the church. Subsequently it is said that this church was destroyed by rains of fire, plague and illness affected the entire village were almost everyone died, and since there were no more room in the cemetery, the dead had to be buried all over the village, Floods were caused by a cloudburst over the village causing



much disaster to the village. After the collapse of the church, the big brass bell that hung on the church was robbed, and was taken away in a boat by the robbers across the river, but midway the boat sank with the bell and the robbers. While Fr. Eremito was narrating these incidents we experienced a slight drizzle. Since it was almost midday, we got back to the Shrine Sanctuary to have lunch which the parishioners had prepared for us. Thereafter we got back to the Seminary and visited the Ven. Fr. Angelo burial site and the museum.

On the fourth and final day in Goa, we went to Bon Jesu Cathedral, where, we had the rare privilege of celebrating Mass at the foot of the altar where the body of St. Francis Xavier was kept in a glass coffin. Mass was concelebrated by Fr. Balagalla, Rev. Fr. Clifford and Rev. Fr. Jun. Thereafter, we witnessed the Sound and Light show at the Cathedral depicting the story of salvation. Then we visited St. Peter's Church, where we saw the statue of our Lady of Miracles, which was originally at Sillalae, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Our group was treated to snacks, cake and soft drinks by the generous parishioners of the church. The warmth and brotherly love shown by the People of Goa, reinforced in us the qualities of love and care, that was said to have been practiced by Blessed Joseph Vaz. Then we made our next stop at the Oratory started by Blessed Joseph Vaz which is now in a ruined state. But restoration and rebuilding is underway and it is programmed to be completed by the year 2014. Fr. Eremito distributed pictures of the Mass with the Archbishop. It was a very touching moment for us, to bid farewell to Fr. Eremito who was almost a fellow pilgrim. Then we made our way to the seminary, packed our bags and got back to the railway station for our departure from Goa. We were treated with such hospitality everywhere we went. The environment in Goa was so much like home, and the people also looked so much like us, that we felt like we were at home. It was like home away from home. We learnt so much about Blessed Joseph Vaz that visiting the places of His roots, has kindled the desire to know more and make us participants in the process of His canonization. This was Rev. Fr. Eremito's request to us. The many disclosures that were made during the visit, awakened in us, the debt we owe to this great Son of Goa for His life and service to our Country and us Catholics. I was fortunate to be a pilgrim to the land of Blessed Joseph Vaz

*Anjelo Lovendhal*



# The grave site of Blessed Joseph Vaz

January 16, 2013 marks the 302nd death anniversary of Blessed Joseph Vaz. He died in Kandy and was buried behind his Church. Kandy is a small city surrounded by hills and it is strange that to date, the exact location of his grave remains a mystery. Many are the Church historians who have "laboured" to discover his grave but all of them have drawn a blank up to this day. To mention just a few, the late Fr. S.G. Perera SJ, the late Fr. Quintus Perera, the late Fr. Don Peter and in recent times Fr. Vito Perniola SJ, Fr. Linus Kurukularatchy and Dr. Nihal Karunaratne who has done extensive research on the town of Kandy.

At this juncture, it would be appropriate to turn the pages of history to the early years following his burial. A rumour had spread throughout Kandy that the Portuguese Catholics, while fleeing from Kandy under Royal patronage in fear of Dutch attacks had

taken with them the exhumed body of Blessed Joseph Vaz towards the Wahacotte area. King Narendrasinghe a close friend and confidante of Blessed Joseph Vaz was angered by this rumour and ordered his courtiers to open up the grave and check on the veracity of these rumours. This was done and the king was informed that they had seen the shoes of Blessed Joseph Vaz and had thus closed the grave. It is a well established fact that Blessed Joseph Vaz never wore shoes from the day of his ordination. Would Fr. Jacome Gonsalves and his fellow Goan priests have prepared his body for burial with shoes on? The Portuguese custom of burial without shoes, but only with socks prevails among us to this day. The only plausible explanation is, that fearing the wrath of the king and to pacify him they had made up this story. On the other hand, the Goan Fathers may have prepared his body for burial with shoes on, as a special

mark of respect? The answer to this vital question is still "open". The writer is of the opinion that the body was not there when the grave was "opened."

After the death of King Narendrasinghe, King Sri Vijaya Rajasinghe, the first Nayakkar King of Kandy succeeded him. The second exodus of Catholics from Kandy northwards, occurred during this reign for fear of Dutch attacks under Governor Van Eck. It is also possible that the remains of the Blessed Apostle may have been taken away during this exodus?

Assuming that the remains were taken away, where could they have been deposited? In and around the Madhu shrine there prevails an oral tradition of a "Sammanasu Swami" an angelic priest who ministered to the Catholic flock. This priest is none other than Blessed Joseph Vaz who on an earlier occasion had encountered a cobra which was about to attack him. He blessed the cobra with his cruci-

fix and gave a command never to attack a Catholic priest. To date, during this fairly long period of almost 325 years, that command still holds good, for no Catholic priest has died of snakebite poisoning in Sri Lanka. Oral tradition also speaks of the curative properties of the earth dug out from the "pit" within the Madhu Shrine. It specifically emphasizes that this is used for snakebite cures and not other ailments as such. This practice is prevalent to this day. There is no evidence of the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Madhu being ever buried near this "pit." On the contrary, there is ample evidence of the statue being concealed on a tree when the Dutch troops were marching towards Madhu on their way to Mannar. How then did this "pit" originate within the Shrine premises? With the emphasis on snakebite cures and with Blessed Joseph Vaz having blessed the cobra in the vicinity, could this "pit" have any connection with Blessed Joseph Vaz? Or could it be that



his remains lay somewhere in the vicinity? The answer to this appears to be anybody's guess.

Looking back to his grave in Kandy, all efforts to trace it have proved futile. Could this be a silent signal from the Blessed Apostle that his remains no longer lie in Kandy? If so, are we searching for a treasure which no longer exists in Kandy? With divine assistance, only time will tell.

*Roggy Corera from Australia*

## God's concealment is His Manifestation

As the Church celebrates the liturgical feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, we glance back at the three kings from the East. They were docile to the course of a star, followed the way until they found the Child Jesus, the Savior of all men, in the arms of His Most Holy Mother.

The Feast of the Epiphany offers us a great wealth of ideas and experiences. For one, it is a sign of the universality of the Church. It is opening to the gift of God (faith). It is, likewise, a handing over and giving to God (religion). Furthermore, it is the obedience to the guide of God until we find Him. Epiphany is the "manifestation" of Christ to the peoples who are represented by the Magi, mysterious figures who came from the East. We celebrate Christ, the destination of the pilgrimage of peoples in search of salvation, affirmed Pope Benedict XVI (Homily, January 6, 2007).

The prophet Isaiah was inspired by God to contemplate Jerusalem as a beacon of light which guides all the peoples on their journey through the darkness and fog of the earth. "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears His glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance (Is 60:1-3)."

The glory of the Lord shines on the Holy City and attracts first of all His own children, displaced and dispersed, but also, at the same time, the pagan nations who come to Zion from all sides as to a common homeland, enriching it with their goods (cf. *ibid.* v. 1-6). The Preface of the Solemnity of Epiphany prays: "Today, you revealed in Christ your eternal plan of salvation and showed him as the light of all peoples". Reflecting on these words, the Holy Father said, "Twenty centuries have passed since that mystery was revealed

and brought about in Christ, but it has not yet reached fulfillment. My beloved predecessor, John Paul II, began his Encyclical on the Church's mission by writing: "As the second Millennium after Christ's Coming draws to an end, an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning" (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 1).

A number of spontaneous questions arise in the hearts of believers: "in what sense is Christ still the lumen gentium, the Light of the peoples, today? What point - if one can so describe it - has the universal journey of the peoples toward God reached? Is it in a phase of progress or of regression? And further: who are the Magi today? How, thinking of today's world, should we interpret these mysterious figures of the Gospel?"

To answer these questions, I would like to return to what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council said in this regard. And I am pleased to add that immediately after the Council, the Servant of God, Paul VI, on March 26 1967, dedicated to the development of the peoples, his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*.

As we restudy the Second Vatican Council teachings during this 'Year of Faith', the Holy Father pointed out that the Council was truly stirred by the longing to proclaim Christ, the Light of the world, to contemporary humanity. In the heart of the Church, from the summit of her hierarchy, emerged the impelling desire, awakened by the Spirit, for a new epiphany of Christ in the world, a world that the modern epoch had profoundly transformed and that, for the first time in history, found itself facing the challenge of a global civilization in which the centre could no longer be Europe or even what we call the West and the North of the world.

It is noticeable in the Liturgy of the Christmas season how this verse of Psalm 98[97] frequently recurs as a refrain: "The Lord has made His salvation known: in the sight of the nations

He has revealed His justice" (v. 2). Pope Benedict XVI believes that these are words that the Church uses to emphasize the "epiphanic" dimension of the Incarnation: the Son of God becoming human, His entry into history, is the crowning point of God's revelation of Himself to Israel and to all the peoples. In the Child of Bethlehem, God revealed Himself in the humility of the "human form", in the "form of a slave", indeed, of one who died on a cross (cf. Phil 2: 6-8). This is the Christian paradox.

"Indeed, this very concealment constitutes the most eloquent "manifestation" of God. The humility, poverty, even the ignominy of the Passion enable us to know what God is truly like. The Face of the Son faithfully reveals that of the Father. This is why the mystery of Christmas is, so to speak, an entire "epiphany."

The manifestation to the Magi does not add something foreign to God's design but unveils a perennial and constitutive dimension of it, namely, that "in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are now coheirs... members of the same body and sharers of the promise through... the Gospel (Eph 3: 6)."

"At a superficial glance, God's faithfulness to Israel and his manifestation to the peoples could seem divergent aspects; they are actually two sides of the same coin. In fact, according to the Scriptures, it is precisely by remaining faithful to his Covenant of love with the people of Israel that God also reveals his glory to other peoples. "Grace and Fidelity" (cf. Ps 89[88]: 2), "Mercy and Truth" (cf. Ps 85[84]: 11), are the content of God's glory, they are His "name", destined to be known and sanctified by people of every language and nation.

However, this "content" is inseparable from the "method" that God chose to reveal himself, that is, absolute fidelity to the Covenant that reaches its culmination in Christ. The Lord Jesus, at the same time and inseparably, is

"a light revealing to the Gentiles the glory of your people Israel" (Lk 2: 32), as the elderly Simeon was to exclaim, inspired by God, taking the Child in his arms when His parents presented Him at the temple. The light that enlightens the peoples - the light of the Epiphany - shines out from the glory of Israel - the glory of the Messiah born, in accordance with the Scriptures, in Bethlehem, "the city of David" (cf. Lk 2: 4).

The Magi worshipped a simple Child in the arms of His Mother Mary, because in Him they recognized the source of the twofold light that had guided them: the light of the star and the light of the Scriptures. In Him they recognized the King of the Jews, the glory of Israel, but also the King of all the peoples (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 2007).

How moving it is to contemplate this God of ours who loves man so much that he gave us His only Son to die for our sins! Jesus' divinity is hidden beneath His humanity, yet without diminishing in any way His divine splendor. God conceals Himself precisely to manifest Himself to us.

Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), because "the fullness of the divinity incarnate resides in Him" (Col. 2:9). By the unaided use of reason man can work out that God exists, but he could never, on his own, have grasped the essence of God: in this sense God is said to be invisible (cf. St Thomas, Commentary on Col, ad loc.). This is why it is said in St John's Gospel that "no one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18).

God's revelation in Sacred Scripture tells us that man was created "in the image of God" (Gen 1:26). However, only the second person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son, is the perfect image and likeness of the Father. "The image [likeness] of a thing may be found in something else in two ways; in one way it is found in something of the same specific nature—as the image of

(Contd. on Pg. 13)

## \* APPRECIATION

# Rev. Father Noel Perera of St. Joseph's, 100th Birth Anniversary

BY MILINDA PERERA 13C3

Where do I begin to tell the story of a great man, a great man of God, who served the Lord in his vineyard for over fifty years?

On January 26, 2012, when the Rector of St. Joseph's College, Fr. Sylvester Ranasinghe, declared open the Fr. Noel Perera Memorial Hall in the Primary School, these sentiments were echoed by him in the brief speech he made.

As a young boy, I had always heard the name Fr. Uncle, Fr. Noel, whenever members of our family met, and invariably, if there were old Josephians present, they would talk reverently of this priest, who had made them to be what they are today.

When I entered St Joseph's College, Fr. Noel was no more in the land of the living, but many were the teachers who had known him or heard of him. Those teachers who knew my father would refer to me as Fr. Noel's nephew's son - and I always wondered why?

Fr. Noel was born on December 13, 1912 at Molligoda, Wadduwa to Martha Agalawatte and Gonaduwege Don Louis Perera. Though his mother died when he was only five years old, he had all the love and affection of his brothers and sister as he hailed from a large family. He was my grandfather's brother. As a boy, Fr. Noel grew up in Moratuwa, where his father was the principal of the Sinhala School, and had his education at St. Sebastian's College.

He was ordained to the priesthood as a Missionary Apostolate on October 28, 1938 and was sent to St. Joseph's College the very same year, during the Rectorship of Rev Fr. LeGoc, and remained in the tutorial staff till September 4, 1972. During this period, he served as the Principal of the Primary School, Acting Rector, Vice Rector, Prefect of Boarders, Head of the Guild of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and continued to serve College as its Spiritual Director from 1985 till his demise on January



Fr. Noel Perera

29, 1997. He had also served as the Principal of Gonsalves College Pamunugama, and as the Parish Priest of Mt. Lavinia, and Lunupokuna Modera for brief periods.

I had heard of Fr. Noel as a strict disciplinarian, who had viewed each child as a unique child of God, and that all his actions were tempered with loving kindness to mould the child as a useful citizen. He was said to be impartial in all his dealings, and always believed that justice need not only be done but seem to be done.

During his period, the charac-

ter formation of boys through games, sports, social activities, drama and concert reached a very high standard.

He had a very cordial relationship with parents and could not be influenced by any, as he believed that all children are equal. He knew the art of refusing without displeasing. He was a father to the boarders, a friend to the priests and teachers, and a guide to the students.

He is said to have had a great sense of humour and wit, which I believe Fr. Sylvester would bear testimony to. He knew how to move with kings yet did not lose the common touch, and had the unique ability of remembering each student's name as well as his parent's. In the hearts of parents who knew his attachment to the College, Fr. Noel has become the symbol of the school. Fr. Noel of St. Joseph's, is no doubt in a fitting tribute to him, the Doyen of St Joseph's.

The College, in addition to naming the Primary Hall,

have also dedicated the Primary Library in his name, and unveiled his portrait during the stewardship of Fr. Stanley Abeysekera, in honour of his services, and commitment to College. They would be inspirations for generations of students to emulate the values of St. Joseph's, to be diligent and conscientious in their student duties.

Yes, he was a great priest, a giant of a man, and his footprints in the sand cannot be erased and continue to remain over time and bear testimony to his devotion to St Joseph's.

I a third generation Josephian, can now understand, what people said about Fr. Noel. We are dwarfs in relation to Fr. Noel and realize how difficult it is to walk in the shadow of such a great priest, whose 100th birth anniversary fell on December 13, 2012.

'Fr. Noel of St. Joseph's', a rare son of the soil, was an educationist, disciplinarian and a devout priest.

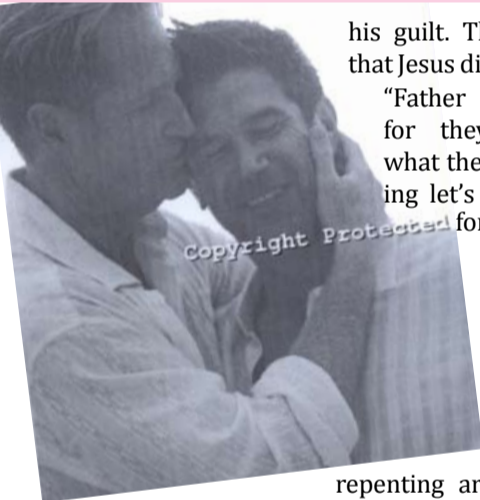
(Courtesy: Ceylon Today)

## 'Sorry,' seems to be the easiest

Sorry! seems to be a sword spelt out to communicate one's regret. The way it is expressed and how it is delivered, gives it lucid meaning and determines its degree of sincerity. It might be the flimsiest of mistakes or the most grievous of them all. The retaliation by the offended and the victimised are simmered by a singular expression, "I am sorry".

How should it be done. The best way possible is to confront the affected and the agitated face to face. It would be a tuff task that needs a lot of will power, since it needs to counteract fear and embarrassment. The other alternative is to pen your words of apology. Written words carry more weight, which could prove very effective at times, than words expressed verbally. Tending one's apology over the phone seems easy and superficial, but by a 'SMS' would be absurd, a ridiculous means of laundering oneself. When you accidentally or casually bump into a person whom you have offended, you are reluctantly compelled to blurt out 'sorry' - but is this a genuine apology? Invariably it is more to save face and overcome ones guilt, than to express regret in the true sense of the word.

When an apology should be done is determined by prudence and discretion. When an offensive act is committed, when hurt still lingers on,



then an immediate word of apology may not yield the expected results. When everything seems subsided and the heat and tension defused, then would be the ideal time set, to tender an apology.

Although Jesus did not use or recommend the word 'sorry', He emphasized the outcome of it, which is peace and harmony. Love your enemy, begins with this word 'sorry'. If the offender does not have the humility to accept his or her mistake, or the will power to say 'sorry', it is up to the offended to take a step forward. A shake of hands, followed by the words 'lets forget it' or 'let's be friends' would mean fullfledged diplomacy and noble behaviour. It is nobler than saying 'sorry'. The ones who say sorry at random are common. Many are prompted though heard instinct. The ones who take the initiative to say 'let's forget it' are rare. The person who suffered pain, forgives the offender who does not acknowledge

his guilt. The very thing that Jesus did on the cross.

"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." By saying let's forget it, you forgive them, although they know what they did was wrong. This is because, the ones who refrain from

repenting are yet to find meaning and purpose, in that word 'sorry'.

One might not say 'sorry' or the other might not say 'let's forget it', but their gestures and actions reveal apology and cordiality. For instance a Christmas card at Christmas or a birthday card on ones birthday, means more than a wish. Visiting you at hospital or attending a funeral of your dear departed, carries more weight, than a feeble oral expression of an apology.

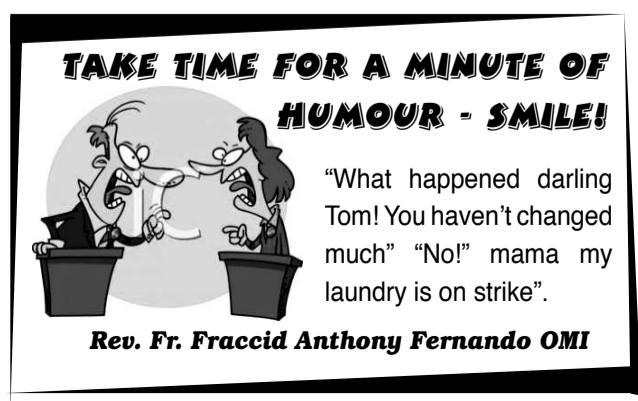
More than saying 'sorry' or 'let's forget it', the act of being a peace maker, is the noblest virtue that is pleasing to God, since it wins people to Him. That

helps the forgiver and the forgiven to walk up to the altar with an offering, rather than turn around and rush in search of one's enemies.

Associated with both parties, there are those who add fuel to fire while others sow seeds of animosity. Some do it to pledge their pretentious loyalty and allegiance while others tend to fish in trouble waters.

Not to comply with what Jesus had recommended is sin, and to do exactly the opposite is ruthlessness added on to sin. To carry tales, to make adverse impressions and to suggest harsh and derogative opinions, go directly against the law of love. To live that way shortens ones life of happiness and lengthens the life of misery. After all if we are to rejoice with the Lord, we got to rejoice with others too. Thus all have to be friends. Make use of the word 'sorry' with meaning and purpose, with utmost sincerity. It would be the 'password' to peaceful living, pleasing to God.

RodeZo



(Contd from Pg 1)

### Sri Lanka cricket loses . . .



He was diagnosed with cancer recently, but died suddenly of cardiac arrest. I was in Melbourne when the announcement of his death flashed on 'Breaking News' on Channel Nine, for which Greig was a cricket commentator since giving up the game. I had known Greig since the time

he brought the England team to Sri Lanka when Sri Lanka was not a test playing nation. When he became commentator for Ten Sports, he once invited me to come into the TV box for an interview.

Greig had a special liking for Sri Lanka and its cricket. He went into ecstasy watching the devastating manner in which Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharne smashed the opposing bowlers and described them as electrifying. It was Greig who tagged Kaluwitharne 'Little Kalu'. Greig was named Ambassador for Sri Lanka's tourism during the 2012 World Cup co-hosted in Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh. When he visits Sri Lanka, and it was very often, his favourite fruit was the pineapple. He would munch into it with glee and recommend it to all his foreign friends and commentators.

Greig was born in South Africa, but could not play for his country because of the inhuman apartheid existing at that time and with his immense cricketing talent moved to England where he played county cricket for Sussex. He played with success and the captaincy of England was not long in coming. During that era also playing for Sussex was Sri Lankan born Gehan Mendis as an opening batsman and making big runs.

Greig opined that Mendis should open batting for England. But the England selectors of that time went for home grown openers and Mendis missed out. Greig was disappointed. Another story told about Greig was this. Sir Don Bradman and Garfield Sobers were waiting at the Adelaide airport to welcome another cricketer, when Greig not knowing and not having met the great Don before had asked whether Don had anything to do with cricket. Bradman being the modest man that he was said - 'a little'. Sobers then told him that he (Greig) was talking to the great Don Bradman. Greig stood stunned and apologized profusely to Don Bradman. His knowledge of the game was unbelievable and he maintained a deep passion for it. The establishment did not like him when he joined Kerry Packer and started World Series Cricket which started better wages for the players. Greig played 58 Test matches and 22 one-day internationals from 1972 to '77 and was England's captain from 1975 to '77.

# Blessed are the.....

Contd. from Pg. 5

committed, intimidations forced on, or insults hurled at the basic legal institutions and administration of justice in the country. The deaf, blind and dumb attitude of the leaders of the government with regard to gross violations of law and order is quite disturbing, and surely would sow seeds of unrest in our society in the long run. The utterly indifferent attitude to the daylight murder of one of its own strongmen, former member of Parliament Bharatha Lakshman Premachandra, allegedly by a powerful government member of parliament; still worse indifference (and thus, an apparent approval!) to the unjust antics of a self-appointed government political heavy-weight in Kelaniya who seems to be the law and order himself practically for all purposes; the indifference of ruling elite to the alleged threatening of the magistrate in Mannar by a prominent government minister over the phone; the gross violations of natural justice in the impeachment process against the Chief Justice (whom the government itself nominated disregarding the very "disqualifications" which now the government is hurling against her); the death threats against judges who give verdicts that are not palatable to the rulers; the very recent incident of firing of bullets at the residence of the President of the Sri Lanka Bar Association, ....etc. are all signs of ill-omen against the basic sense of justice in the country. Equally disturbing is the way the State-controlled media keep on highlighting only the alleged wrongs of one side (a side that is always favourable to the government) of controversial issues. A case in point is the way a State-controlled English daily newspaper keeps on reporting the on-going debate on the impeachment process of

the Chief Justice, often with elements of slander and calumny. The open disrespect evinced at the high office of Chief Justice of our country (irrespective of the fact whether the one who holds that office is guilty of the alleged wrong-doings or not) with the shameless distortions and manipulations of facts by such State-controlled newspapers is certainly an open threat to the judicial independence. When justice is so glaringly at stake as illustrated in the few concrete cases mentioned above, we cannot even dream of a durable peace. One can of course understand the existence of such socio-political chaos when they invariably take place in a country where there is a politically unstable government or where there is anarchy, but in our country when we have one of the most stable governments in our post-Independent history, this is simply unthinkable and unacceptable. The only possible explanation seems to be the irresponsibility or the utter callousness of the political leadership, with regard to the common good of the country.

## Being Peace-Makers

In a socio-politically chaotic situation as ours at the moment, every conscientious citizen has the duty to demand from the authorities to restore the fundamentals of justice in our Sri Lankan society. For after all, justice is the stepping-stone to peace. Our religious leaders (representing all the major religions of the island) have made so many appeals in this regard to the present government in recent times, but there seems to be no positive response, thus far. However, they (together with other community leaders) need to continue to persuade the government to give the legitimate due of every citizen, namely, the fundamentals of

natural justice in the form of respect on the part of the government for the law and order of the country. Respect for and the protection of the legal system and the institutions of justice are also the pre-requisites for day to day peace in the country, for which the religious (and other community) leaders need to clamour continuously till they are restored to normalcy. It is only after restoring this foundation of peace that one can realistically talk of peace-building in our country. In fact, in his message, the Pope goes on to appeal: "..... one can infer that each person and every community, whether religious, civil, educational or cultural, is called to work for peace. Peace is principally the attainment of the common good in society at its different levels, primary and intermediary, national, international and global. Precisely for this reason it can be said that the paths which lead to the attainment of the common good are also the paths that must be followed in the pursuit of peace".

According to the cherished Catholic Social Doctrine, the concept of 'common good' connotes not only the good of each and every citizen/community in a given society, but also the good of the society as a whole. Accordingly, governments exist solely for this purpose, i.e., for the promotion of common good, understood in the above sense. Since peace based on justice is the longing of every human being, in our Sri Lankan context this would entail that the government has the primary onus of making sure that all citizens and communities (whether they belong to majorities or minorities) are assured of their legitimate due, their fundamental rights to be human beings irrespective of their religion or ethnicity or political affinity. This is another essential pre-requisite for a lasting peace in our country, i.e., to make sure that there is a sense of equality among all our citizens and communities. No

one could be above or beyond the law of the country.

By attending to such basic pre-requisites of peace, the government needs to give the lead (as required by the LLRC) in creating a context for peace-making. It is only then that the rest of the citizens will be motivated to realistically function as peace-makers and work towards a culture of peace.

## Building a Culture of Peace

In this year's message, the Pope also says: "Acts of peacemaking converge for the achievement of the common good; they create interest in peace and cultivate peace. Thoughts, words and gestures of peace create a mentality and a culture of peace, and a respectful, honest and cordial atmosphere. There is a need, then, to teach people to love one another, to cultivate peace and to live with goodwill rather than mere tolerance. A fundamental encouragement to this is 'to say no to revenge, to recognize injustices, to accept apologies without looking for them, and finally, to forgive', in such a way that mistakes and offences can be acknowledged in truth, so as to move forward together towards reconciliation. This requires the growth of a pedagogy of pardon".

As the Pope says: "Thoughts, words and gestures of peace create a mentality and a culture of peace". In other words, mere words or eloquent speeches that exhort for peace, or verbal assurances that our political leadership always respects the law of the country, are not sufficient; rather, the very thoughts, words and gestures of our leaders need to clearly indicate that they are genuinely interested in upholding the law and order of the country, and thus, that they are basically committed for a lasting peace. Or else, the agenda for peace also could be hijacked for political advantage, as it seems to be happening of

late! It is not sufficient to harp on peace with mere lip service when it is politically opportune to do so, but the genuine desires for peace need to be seen in concrete attitudes and action by those responsible for making and implementing political decisions. We, as a nation longing for a lasting peace after thirty long years of ruthless LTTE terrorism, are tired of hearing never-ending lip-service by our political leadership (for a political solution in our country), ever since the end of the war against terrorism, some four years ago. The basics for peace in our country have been well documented and spelt out by the LLRC recommendations which are nothing but a re-echoing (in concrete terms within our Sri Lankan context) of what the Pope declares in general terms: "to say no to revenge, to recognize injustices, to accept apologies without looking for them, and finally, to forgive, in such a way that mistakes and offences can be acknowledged in truth, so as to move forward together towards reconciliation". In other words, anyone genuinely interested in building a culture of peace in our country (especially, the government, as the main agent of peace-building), cannot remain in the lofty ivory towers of their egoistic, opportunistic political gimmicks and rhetorics, but has to touch the lived concrete reality of ordinary day to day living, by doing their best towards the implementation of the LLRC recommendations, which are the basic, indispensable building-blocks for a lasting peace in our country. If this could be achieved during this New Year 2013, well then, Sri Lanka would certainly be moving towards a lasting peace! For this, all citizens, beginning with the government, need to be genuine peace-makers not by mere opportunistic talking but by putting into practice conscientiously what they are expected to. *Blessed are the genuine Peacemakers!*

# God's concealment...

Contd. from Pg. 9

the king is found in his son; in another way it is found in something of a different nature, as the king's image on the coin (*Navarre Bible, Captivity Epistles*).

In the first sense the Son is the image of the Father; in the second sense man is called the image of God; and therefore in order to express the imperfect character of the divine image in man, man is not simply called 'the image' but is referred to as being 'according to the image', whereby is expressed a certain movement or tendency to perfection. But it cannot be said that the Son of God is 'according to the image', because he is the perfect image of the Father" (S.Th., I, q. 35, a. 2 ad 3).

And so, "for something to be truly an image, it has to proceed from another as similar to it in species, or at least in some aspect of the species" (S.Th., I, q. 35, a. 1, c.) To say that the Son is "image of the invisible God" means that the Father and the Son are one-in-substance—that is, both possess the same divine nature—with the nuance that the Son proceeds from the Father. It also conveys the fact that they are two distinct persons, for no one is the image of himself. The supreme revelation of God is that effected by the Son of God through his Incarnation. He is the only one who can say, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). His sacred humanity, therefore, reflects the

perfections of God, which he possesses by virtue of the hypostatic union—the union of divine nature and human nature which occurs in his person, which is divine. The second Person of the Trinity restored man to his original dignity. The image of God, imperfect though it be, which there is in every man and woman, was blurred by Adam's sin; but it was restored in Christ: God's true self-image takes on a nature the same as ours, and thanks to the redemption wrought by his death, we obtain forgiveness of sins (Col 1:14).

Jesus Christ is the "first-born of all creation" by virtue of the hypostatic union. He is, of course, prior to all creation, for he proceeds eternally from the Father by generation. This the Church has always believed, and it proclaims it in the Creed: "born of the Father before time began ..., begotten, not made, of one being [consubstantial] with the Father" (*Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*).

In Jewish culture, the first-born was first in honor and in law. When the Apostle calls Jesus "the first-born of all creation", he is referring to the fact that Christ has pre-eminence and headship over all created things, because not only does he pre-date them but they were all created "through Him" and "for Him" (op. cit., *Captivity Epistles*, Col. 1:16).

Jesus Christ, who is Mediator between God and men, has therefore, made a "bridge" by being Himself "Way, Truth and Life" (Jn. 14:6) for the entire human-kind and for the sanctity of each one of us. Through Him, we go to the Father:

That was why He assured us, "If you knew Me,

you would also know the Father... Whoever sees Me sees also the Father (Jn 14: 7, 9)."

"Filled with amazement, we have contemplated during recent days this great manifestation of divine compassion. Let us never cease to be amazed!" says Msgr. Javier Echevarria. "You must look at the Child in the manger. He is our Love. Look at Him, realizing that the whole thing is a mystery. We need to accept this mystery on faith and use our faith to explore it very deeply (Lk 1:35)."

"Therefore, besides imitating the shepherds who went with haste to the stable, we can consider the example of the Magi, whom we will recall on the upcoming solemnity of the Epiphany. Thanks to their humble faith, those men overcame the obstacles they encountered on their long journey. God enlightened their hearts so that, by the light of a star, they could discover the announcement of the Messiah's birth. They were docile, and this availability to do what God wanted led them to Bethlehem. There, on entering the place where the Holy Family was staying, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh (Lk 1:38; Pastoral Letter, January 2013)."

In our prayers these days, we ask that, like the Kings from the East, we may allow ourselves to be guided obediently in the path to holiness until we may be able to contemplate face to face the splendor of the glorified Jesus.

Rev. Fr. Daniel Icatlo

# Nursery school concert St. Mary's Pre-school - Welivita



The Nursery school concert of St. Mary's Pre-school, Welivita was held at the school hall recently. The chief guest on this occasion was Rev. Fr. Daya Welikadaarachchi. Rev. Sister Marie Sumudu Ratnayake, Principal of the Pre-school is also in the picture.

M. Joe Paaris

## God's purpose behind your problems

**Life is a series of problem-solving opportunities.**

The problems you face will either defeat you or develop you depending on how you respond to them.

### 1. God uses problems to DIRECT you

Sometimes God must light a fire under you to get you moving. Problems often point us in a new direction and motivate us to change. Is God trying to get your attention? Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways. (Proverbs 20:30)

### 2. God uses problems to INSPECT you

People are like tea bags... if you want to know what's inside them, just drop them into hot water! Has God ever tested your faith with a problem? What do problems reveal about you? "When you have many kinds of troubles, you should be full of joy, because you know that these troubles test your faith, and this will give you patience." (James 1:2-3)

### 3. God uses problems to CORRECT you

Some lessons we learn only through pain and failure. It's likely that as a child

your parents told you not to touch a hot stove. But you probably learned by being burned. Sometimes we only learn the value of something - health, money, a relationship - by losing it. "It was good for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn your decrees" (Psalm 119:71-72)

### 4. God uses problems to PROTECT you

A problem can be a blessing in disguise if it prevents you from being harmed by something more serious. Last year a friend was fired for refusing to do something unethical that his boss had asked him to do. His unemployment was a problem - but it saved him from being convicted and sent to prison a year later when management's actions were eventually discovered. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good..." (Genesis 50:20)

### 5. God uses problems to PERFECT you

Problems, when re-



sponded to correctly, are character builders. God is far more interested in your character than your comfort. Your relationship to God and your character are the only two things you're going to take with you into eternity. "We can rejoice when we run into problems...they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady." (Romans 5:3-4)

## Facts of Life

- What makes me Love is my Faith
- What Empowers me ..... Spirit
- What keeps me Human ..... Religion
- What makes me Sincere ..... Principles
- What makes me Honest ..... Integrity
- What makes me Sympathetic ..... Selflessness
- What makes me Beautiful ..... Morals
- What Sustains my mind ..... Purity
- What Teaches me all lessons ..... Mistakes
- What lifts my head High ..... Pride not Arrogance
- What makes me Competent ..... Confidence
- What makes me Victorious ..... Courage
- What makes me Sensual ..... Insatiable Essence
- What makes me Weak and Guilty ..... Bad Habits
- What makes me what I Am ..... Qualities and a Merciful heart

Francis Roland Irugalbandara

## Oh Lord... May I see

The stars in the sky shine beautiful and bright  
The songs from heaven break through the night  
In a cold and dark manger a child is born  
To save the world, to save us all.  
Cuddled up on hay, the babe's asleep  
Whilst astonished shepherds with their sheep  
Who heard the good news the angels bring  
Come forth to see the Christ our King.  
Three wise men from lands afar  
Knowing the news of this newborn  
Bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh  
To offer to our king and our redeemer.  
All curled up in cozy beds  
The sleeping world has not seen yet  
That God's promise to redeem the world  
Is being fulfilled with This Child's Birth.  
The world doth wait for the Messiah  
To come to them through the rich and royal  
Here He is in a poor rugged manger  
Where the world would never have expected.  
Oh, this Christmas may I see  
That Jesus, thou art come to me  
Not through the ones with wealth and comfort  
But those in need, in pain and hunger.

Nimesha Jayamanne  
Grade 11 - St. Lawrence's Convent, Col. 6

## "God's Holy Word"

Dear Lord, grant us a strong desire  
To look within your word each day,  
And help us to keep it in our heart  
Lest from its truth our feet would stray.

Lord, by the Holy Spirit grant that we  
In word and deed may honest be,  
All falsehood we would cast aside  
From you dear Jesus, we cannot hide.

God's word was given for our good  
And we are to obey,  
Not choose the parts that we like best  
Than to live in our own way.

Anton Selemberam

## Our Living God is Always Near - Ever by our side

After Jesus crucifixion that day;  
His followers lived in fear the Bible say  
His disciples assembled in a locked room  
In fear of the Jews in great gloom.  
Enwrapped in fear they did wait;  
Unable to think what would be their fate.

Suddenly Jesus stood before them that day  
"Peace be with You," He did say  
A week later He did come again  
Through locked doors not in vain,  
Doubting Thomas was present that time  
He cleared his doubt and turned out fine  
In what ever room you may be  
In a bed room, drawing room or any other you see  
There hope, trust and power to drive away the gloom,

When Jesus is in the room  
When in the midst of life with its problems  
Bent with our toils and burdens we bear  
Wonderful thought and deep consolations;  
Jesus is always there."

Norma Perera

What it says ..... in  
the Readings

The heavens opened and the Father's voice  
resounded: 'This is my Son, the Beloved.  
Listen to him.' (Mk. 9:8)

## JANUARY 2013

1 -T- MARY, MOTHER OF GOD	Nm 6:22-27	Gal 4:4-7 Lk 2:16-21
2-W-S. Basil the Great	1 Jn 2:22-28	Jn 1:19-28
3 -T- Holy Name of Jesus	1 Jn 2:29-3:6	Jn 1:29-34
4 -F- S. Elizabeth Ann Seton,	1 Jn 3:7-10	Jn 1:35-42
5 -S- S. John Neumann, bp M	1 Jn 3:11-21	Jn 1:43-51
6 -S- EPIPHANY OF THE LORD	Is 60:1-6/Eph 3:2-3a. 5-6	Mt 2:1-12
7 -M- S. Raymond of Penafort, p	1 Jn 3:22 - 4:6/	Mt 4:12-17.23-25
8- T- (S. Thorfin)	1 Jn 4: 7-10	Mk 6:34-44
9- W-	1 Jn 4:11-18	Mk 6:45-52
10 -T-(S. William)	1 Jn 4:19-5:4	Lk 4:14-22
11 -F-(S. Paulinus)	1 Jn 5:5-13	Lk 5:12-16
12- S-(S. Jatiyana)	1 Jn 5:14-21	Jn 3:22-30
13 -S- BAPTISM OF THE LORD	Is 40:1-5.9-11/Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7	Lk 3:15-16.21-22
14 -M- Ordinary Weekdays -S. Matilda	Heb 1:1-6	Mk 1:14-20
15 -T- (S. Paul the Hermit)	Heb 2:5-12	Mk 1:21-28
16 -W- BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ	Heb 2:14-18	Mk 1:29-39
17 -T-S. Anthony, ab M	Heb 3:7-14	Mk 1:40-45
18 -F-(S. Prisca)	Heb 4:1-5.11	Mk 2:1-12
19- S-(Bl. James Sales & Co.)	Heb 4:12-16	Mk 2:13-17
20 -S- SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME/Is	62:1-5 1 Cor 12:4-11	Jn 2:1-11
21 -M- S. Agnes, v, mt	Heb 5:1-10	Mk 2:18-22
22 -T- S. Vincent of Saragossa, d, mt	Heb 6:10-20	Mk 2:23-28
23-W-(S. Ildefonsus)	Heb 7:1-3.15-17	Mk 3:1-6
24 -T-S. Francis de Sales, bp, rf, dr	Heb 7:25-8:6	Mk 3:7-12
25 -F- Conversion of Paul, ap F	Acts 22:3-16	Mk 16:15-18
26 -S-Ss. Timothy and Titus, bps	2Tm 1:1-8	Mk 3:20-21
27 -S- THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME/Neh	8:2-4a.5-6.8-10/1Cor 12:12-30	Lk 1:14; 4:14-21
28 -M- S. Thomas Aquinas, p, r, dr	Heb 9:15.24-28	Mk 3:22-30
29 -T- (S. Gildas)	Heb 10:1-10	Mk 3:31-35
30 -W- (S. Martina)	Heb 10:11-18	Mk 4:1-20
31 -T-S. John Bosco, p, rf	Heb 10:19-25	Mk 4:21-25

## Christian Unity Week



This is an annual 8-day period observed from January 18, to the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, January 25, during which Christians of various denominations come together in prayer for the restoration of full unity among all Christian peoples of the world.

This observance began in 1908 with the "Church Unity Octave", an experiment started by Lewis Thomas Wattson (1863-1940), an Episcopalian, at Graymoor, New York, to encourage Anglicans and Catholics to pray together for unity in response to Jesus' plea to the Father: "I pray that they may all be one, Father!" (Jn 17:21a). Almost as tangible proof of the efficacy of this prayerful exercise, Wattson, together with the Society of the Atonement (a branch of the Third Order Regular of Francis) founded by him on October 7, 1898 entered the Catholic Church on October 30, 1909.

On December 27, 1909 Pope St. Pius X blessed Wattson, now Fr Paul James Francis Wattson, SA, and the Unity Octave.

Later, Pope Benedict XV, through his apostolic letter, *Romanorum Pontificum*, dated February 25, 1916 extended the observance of the Octave to the entire Church.

In 1935, Abbe Paul Couturier (d.1953) of Lyons, France, rechristened the Octave as "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity", thus causing it to shed its heavily Catholic "return to the Roman Church" flavour. Since the formation of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in 1948, the octave has been sponsored by the "Faith and Order Commission" of the WCC.

The problem of unity is the problem of the whole Church. Therefore, since the publication of the Decree on Ecumenism by Vatican II in the 1960s, all Catholics are encouraged to participate in this one unified observance of prayer on the part of all Christians of the world. The goal—that "there will be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16b), precisely because Jesus died in order to gather into one body all the scattered people of God" (Jn 11:52b)

**Reflection:** "Unity cannot but be the fruit of a conversion to Christ, who is Head of the Body which is the Church .... We must ask ourselves ceaselessly how ...the various dimensions of our efforts at Christian living and our ecumenical path manifest the search for unity with regard to conversion to Christ.... The example of Paul of Tarsus, who became Saint Paul. ... lets us see ....that conversion, hence unity, is possible "to God", even if it may seem impossible "to men" (Pope John Paul II).

## The Baptism of the Lord

### Reflection

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus. This feast in-

vites all of us to look into our own baptisms. Unfortunately for many of us baptism has become just another ceremony. Many of us do not know what really happens to us at baptism. All we know is that the original sin carried into our lives from birth and all other sins committed up to the time of baptism are forgiven. Apart from these we are confronted with a threefold mission or vocation. In other words we are called to be priests, prophets and kings (servants).

The main function of a priest is to worship. The priests are to offer sacrifices to the Lord. Through the Eucharist, through our personal and community prayers, novenas...etc., we are to offer our whole life as a sacrifice to the Lord. For this reason our lives should be unblemished and spotless.

The main duty of

a prophet is to proclaim the Good News. He is to proclaim the message of the Lord no matter how difficult it is, whether it is to a king or the people, whether it be acceptable or not to the listeners. If it is the message of the Lord, the prophet is bound to preach it. Therefore whenever it comes to the proclamation of the message of the Lord whether by word or deed we exercise the prophetic role of our baptism.

Then comes the kingship in our baptism. Some do not call this kingship; because their only image of a king is that he reigns. They prefer to call this role as that of a servant or servant what is expected from our baptismal role is service to the community. It calls for responsible living. While we live in this

world we come across lots



of responsibilities which we have to fulfil. As followers of Christ we have to fulfil these responsibilities in a Christian manner. Therefore by our very baptism we are bound to fulfil all our duties towards the community.

Hence it is quite clear that, in baptism we are called to be priests, prophets and kings. But in this threefold mission some will be called to be priests, some prophets and some others kings and still some others a mixture of them, depending on God's call.

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

## St Francis de Sales - January 24

Bishop Confessor Doctor of the Church (1567-1622)

### Patron Saint of all Writers



widespread success of these labours and the evident holiness of his life now led to his being appointed Bishop-Coadjutor in 1599. Though only 32 years old, Francis had singularly impressed Pope Clement VIII, who had him personally examined in the presence of his Cardinals.

Bishop de Granier died in 1602 and was succeeded by Francis who now entered upon what was to be 20 years of a most exemplary episcopate. His household, food and dress were, at his insistence, reduced to the simplest, so as to enable him the better to succour the poor and the needy. With unsparing zeal he visited even the most outlying parishes, which were difficult of access in their Alpine seclusion. He preached wherever he went, heard confessions, reformed religious communities, formulated simple language catechetical instruction for both the young and old, as well as held annual synods for his clergy. On the latter he particularly impressed the value of short, straightforward and unadorned sermons, based on the maxim "the more you say, the less people will remember" and "in order to speak well, we need only to love well!" Simultaneously, Francis carried on voluminous correspondence, even finding time to write such masterpieces of spiritual guidance as his *Introduction to Devout Life*, *Treatise on the Love of God and Spiritual Conferences*. Whereas the last two were addressed to the Sisters of the Visitation Order, which he and St Jane Frances de Chantal had founded in 1610, his *Introduction* was written particularly for lay people. It is as clear and pertinent today as when first composed. Francis considered it "a heresy to maintain that there existed any state of life which could be incompatible with piety."

The eldest of 13 children, St. Francis was born on August 21, 1567 to the aristocratic Francis de Boisy and Frances de Sionnaz at the castle of Sales in the Duchy of Savoy, France. At 25 he obtained his doctorate in law at Padua, but the very next year he refused a senatorship and gave up law and, instead, went on to become a Priest, despite his father's vehement opposition.

The province of Le Chablais on the south shore of Lake Geneva had just been re-conquered by the Duke of Savoy, a Catholic, after having been held for some 50 years by the Protestant city of Berne, and now Francis, together with his cousin, the Canon Louis de Sales, volunteered to win its Calvinist inhabitants back to the faith. He set forth the Church's principles in the famous "Controversies", hand-copied leaflets of which he would slip under house doors or paste up on walls.

More and more people gradually came to hear his preaching and were converted, as much by his incomparable kindness and simplicity, his patience and sympathy, as his irrefutable and lucid arguments. "You will catch more flies with one spoonful of honey than with a hundred barrels of vinegar," he was known say. During four years filled with hardships, undergone while constantly wandering through the district, repeatedly at the peril of his life, Francis succeeded in converting over 70,000 Calvinists, and in the end had the joy of seeing all churches re-opened to Catholic worship. The

Francis died on December 28, 1622 and was beatified in January 1662 by Alexander VII and canonized by the same Pope in 1665. On November 16, 1877, St Francis de Sales was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius IX and Patron of all Writers by Pius XI on January 26, 1923.

**Reflection:** "A judicious silence is always better than a truth spoken without charity" (St Francis de Sales).