



Most solemn and sudden departure

4 Pg



From God's point of view

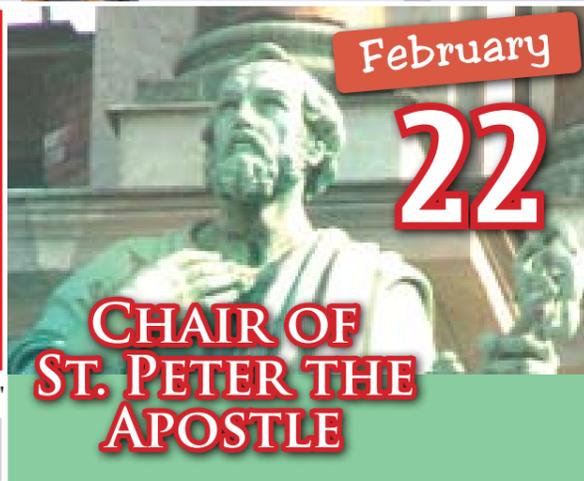
9 Pg



Do parents deserve to suffer

14 Pg

Messenger



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Pope Benedict XVI hands in his resignation

In a move that shocked the Catholic Church and the world, Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation after just eight short years of service, as the head of the Holy Catholic Church and leader of over one billion Roman Catholics worldwide.

His Holiness Benedict XVI, made headlines when he took office on April 19, 2005, after the death of Pope John Paul II, and surprisingly, many of them were attributed to his strong pro-environmental stance. In many instances, he used traditional Catholic principles to advance progressive causes, including the pressing need to address climate change.

At the age of 85, the German-born Pontiff, also recognised politically as Head of the State of Vatican, set a precedent by being the first pope to join the social media, by opening a Twitter account last year and gaining more than 1.5 million followers in less than three months.

We give below the full text of the Holy Father's declaration taken from the Vatican Radio website

Dear Brothers,

I have convoked you to this Consistory, not only for the three canonisations, but also to communicate to you a decision of great importance for the life of the Church. After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine Ministry.

I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering. However, in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes

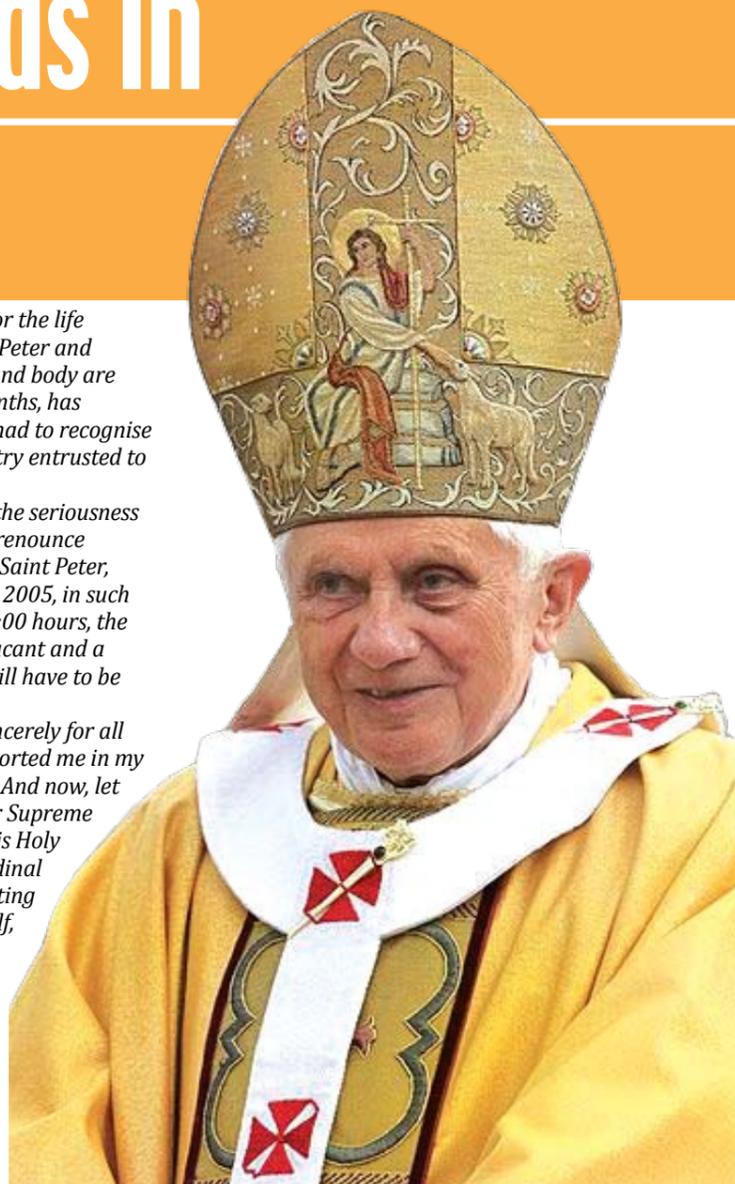
and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the Bark of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognise my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me.

For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is.

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

Benedictus PP XVI

From the Vatican, 10 February 2013



"Spiritual warfare in our Church and Society"



Rev. Fr. Benedict Joseph

National Director for the Commission for Social Communication, Rev. Fr. Benedict Joseph presiding at High Mass on the occasion of the 177th anniversary of St. Mary's Church, Dehiwela observed that a secular form of Catholicism was slowly replacing the passionate, enduring faith many of us received from our parents. Describing it as "social religion," Fr. Benedict, who was also the former Parish Priest of St. Mary's Church, Dehiwela noted that it invites people to have a casual relationship with the Catholic Church.

Excerpts of the Homily follow:

For some time now, there has been a secular Catholicism which has been slowly replacing the passionate, strong and enduring faith that many of us received from our parents. Secular Catholicism is more a social religion than a religion that comes from a deeply seated

(CONTD ON PG. 2)

PRAYERS FOR THE HOLY FATHER AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

We request the Catholic public to kindly pray for the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI and for the Church. We would also like to bring to the notice of the faithful that news items have been broadcast, or have appeared in Sri Lanka, mentioning names of possible Cardinal candidates for the Papacy in the announced forthcoming Conclave and these seem to have been drawn from some international media sources.

It is to be clarified that the election of a Pope is always the responsibility of the **College of Cardinals** only, and it takes place within the four walls of the **Conclave**. There is no possibility for any prior nomination of candidates. As such, what has appeared is pure speculation, and has no basis of truth whatsoever.

Rev. Fr. Benedict Joseph
Spokesperson, Archdiocese of Colombo

National Seminary Philosophate Launches Website

The new website of the Department of Philosophy of the National Seminary, Kandy was launched recently by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo, prior to the feast of Our Lady of Lanka, the Patroness of the Seminary.

His Lordship Bishop Emmanuel presided over the Solemn Vespers Service and His Lordship Raymond Wickramasinghe, Bishop of Galle presided as the Chief Celebrant at

the Solemn Eucharistic Celebration.

The National Seminary Philosophate was set up in the year 2000 to emphasise the need for a more personalized formation to the priesthood. According to the 2012/13 Academic Calendar of the Seminary, the Department of Philosophy has a total of 123 students. You can visit us on www.philosophatekandy.org

Bro. Shalindra Kotikawatte
2nd Year Philosophy



A THOUGHT - YEAR OF FAITH



"Repent and Believe in the Gospel!"
These were words expressed on Ash Wednesday. When the sign of the cross was marked on you If you said - "yes"
Then start this Lenten period With a genuine confession.
That is the best start towards preparation.

New Rector for St. Anthony's College, Kandy

The premier Catholic Scholastic Citadel in the Central Province St. Anthony's College, Kandy was blessed with a new Rector recently.

A prominent Catholic School for boys in the island St. Anthony's College installed Rev. Fr. Henry Wijeratne OSB who took over from Rev. Fr. Titus Rodrigo who retired this year. St Anthony's College takes pride in having a long succession of eminent and renowned OSB priests as Rectors who took the College to greater heights in education.

Undoubtedly all those who love and cherish this illustrious school wish the new Rector a successful and peaceful tenure.

Miran Perera

Newly appointed Daham Pasal Prefects



Newly appointed Prefects of St. Sebastian's Daham Pasala Diyalagoda, took oaths for the Year 2013 recently. The celebrant on this occasion was Rev. Fr. Thusith Pradeep Fernando, Parish Priest of Diyalagoda.

Picture shows, the Prefects with Rev. Fr. Thusith and Daham Pasal Principal, Rev. Sr. Mary Preethika in a group photograph.

D. Anselm Fernando

Centenary Year in Pitipana Parish



The Centenary Jubilee Year of St Mary's Church, Pitipana, Negombo was declared at the recent church feast held on February 3, ahead of the grand jubilee to be celebrated in February 2014.

According to the Parish Priest, Rev Fr Sarath Nimal Abeysiriwardene, a programme of activities has been drawn up for the Jubilee Year, including family visitations and spiritual exercises such as retreats. Renovation work on the church edifice and construction of a parapet wall around the cemetery are among the plans as well.

Way back in the 17th century, the Portuguese had built a small church in Pitipana. In later years, a theatre for the Passion Play ('Pasca Mandapaya') had also been constructed. In fact, it is believed that Pitipana was one of the first places in Sri Lanka to stage Passion Plays. The present Church was built between 1885 and 1914 and consecrated by Archbishop Christopher Bonjean.

A. Joseph

Hearty Congratulations!

The All-Island singing competition in three categories, organised by the Royal Institute of Western Music and Speech was held at the Auditorium of Bishop's College, Colombo, recently. St. Joseph's Oblate Junior Seminary, 26, Green Path, Kohuwala, Nugegoda was adjudged the first runner up from the Senior Category.

Rev. Fr. Maximus Fernando

Program for Young Religious



A program for simple professed young religious Brothers and Nuns took place at Eymard Campbell Retreat House in Hanwella. This program was organised by the Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Sri Lanka.

Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI conducted the program and he presented an inspiring reflection on the theme "Revisiting Vatican II."

Rev. Bro. Priyanjana Perera TOR

Praesidium of Our Lady Queen of Universe, Wattala celebrates 3000th Novena



The 3000th meeting (1945-2013) of the Praesidium of Our Lady Queen of the Universe in the Wattala Parish was held recently. A special thanksgiving Mass to mark this great moment was held at St. Anne's Church, Wattala on Saturday February 9. Here the members of the Praesidium are seen with the Parish Priest of the Church Rev. Fr. Basil Wickramasinghe and Assistant Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Krishan Jayashantha.

Nimal Perera

"Spiritual warfare...."

Contd. from Pg. 1

faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It invites people to have a casual relationship with the Catholic Church. A Church, Jesus founded for us as a gift for all ages.

Secular Catholics are casual about many things. They are casual about Church attendance, casual about the importance of a prayer life, casual about the commandments, casual about authentic church teaching and casual in the ways they pass faith on to their children.

It doesn't seem to be so bad when we hear the word casual. Yet, it is bad because when one generation falls in the trap, the generations that follow have even less faith or no faith at all and the Church is diminished. So why is this important enough to take time and space in my homily today?

The answer is simple. There is spiritual warfare going on in our Church and in our society and as faithful Catholics, you and I ought to know about it.

There is a violent tendency in certain quarters of society to belittle the true relevance of religion, relevance of faith, belief in God and the traditional way of Christian living. As one instance, a question is posed what is so great about Christianity? In his book, Dinesh De Souza warns about a new atheism that is infecting our society as a whole. He says the atheist strategy can be described in this way. Let the religious people breed them and we will educate them to despise their parents' beliefs. When we were studying for our priesthood yesterday the aethists were just a handful. Today's aethists are a legion and they have an agenda. They even go to the extent of raising the question how much do we regard children as being the property of their parents. It is one thing to say people should be free to believe whatever they like but should they be free to impose their beliefs on their children? Also some of them say parents don't own their children the way slave owners own slaves but are rather their stewards and guardians and ought to be held accountable by outsiders. In all this, what has been said essentially is that outsiders do have a right to interfere over the right of parents. Indeed a dangerous proposition. Therefore dear brothers and

"To maintain peace one needs clean heart"

- Bishop of Ratnapura



"The ethnicity of a child comes into focus only after his birth. A child is labelled into an ethnic group and he/she grows in the ethnic identify of his/her parents. This ethnicity of a child is what creates divisions in society and which becomes an impediment to ethnic harmony." So said the Bishop of Ratnapura, His Lordship Cletus Chandrasiri Perera OSB, addressing an inter-religious meeting held at Caritas Sethmini Centre at Eheliyagoda.

Referring to the 30-year war that took many lives and made a large number disabled, His Lordship said that though we try to avoid war, sometimes it is inevitable. "To fight a war you need destructive weapons but to maintain peace you need a clean heart," he said Moulavi Farook of the Eheliyagoda Mosque, Ven. Rangegama Wimalasiri Thero and Shri Arun Sharma of the Hindu Kovil were among the other religious dignitaries who spoke.

J. Anthony

sisters, in a world which is oscillating, we celebrate the Feast of Purification. We need to be cautious. The Holy Family together with Simeon and Anna stand against this disturbing background of modern society. What we read in the Bible reflects the true vibrations that affect our lives in the world around us. Their simplicity, their loyalty to God, their faithfulness to their vocation stand so strong amidst all, in this turbulent world.

If we are caught up in turbulence in midair, what we need to do is to absorb all the tremors in quiet and solitude. We will be able to attain the right vibrations for our well being. Here the presence of God is the solution against all these odds.

A little boy wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his backpack with sandwiches and a six-pack of lemonades and started his journey.

When he had gone about three blocks, he met an old man sitting on a bench in the park staring at some pigeons. The boy sat down next to him and opened his backpack. He was about to take a drink from his lemonade when he noticed that the old man looked hungry, so he offered him a sandwich.

The old man gratefully accepted it and smiled at the little boy. His smile was so pretty that the boy wanted to see it again. So he offered him a lemonade.

Again, the old man smiled at him. The boy was delighted!

They sat there all afternoon eating, drinking and smiling and they never said a word. As it grew dark, the little boy realised how tired he was and he got up to leave. But before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around, and ran back to the old man and gave him a hug. The old man gave the little boy his biggest smile ever.

When the boy opened the door to his house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face. She asked him, what did you do today that made you so happy? He replied, I had lunch with God. But before his mother could respond, he added, You know what? He has the most beautiful smile I've ever seen.

Meanwhile, the old man, also radiant with joy, returned to his home. His son was stunned by the look of peace on his face and asked, Dad, what did you do today that made you so happy?

He replied, I ate sandwiches in the park with God. Before his son responded, he added, You know, God's much younger than I expected.

Too often we undermine the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.

Remember, we don't know what God looks like. People come into our lives for a reason, a season or a lifetime. Embrace all equally.

A global cultural ecumenism is taking place, says Rev. Fr. Mervyn Fernando

"As population density increases, people are coming closer and closer to each other. Communication, too, has brought us closer. Therefore, we are exposed to each other and forced to interact," said Rev. Dr. Mervyn Fernando, Director of SUBODHI Institute, Piliyandala in a talk he recently delivered titled 'Dialogue among religions - a challenge of our times' at a meeting organized by the Christian Alliance for Social Action (CASA) and held at the SEDEC Auditorium in Borella.

"The new situation makes a huge difference in our mentality

and impacts on our human consciousness," Fr. Mervyn said and asked: Is this new situation threatening and are we suspicious of what will happen?

Answering the question himself, Fr. Mervyn said that the new situation actually demands us to dialogue, not because we want to but because we have to. "This can result in conflict because people are different and the 'other' is unknown. Yet, it is a challenge to rise to a greater humanity. How do I learn to look at myself through the eyes of the other? In other words, how do I

learn to be a human on a larger scale than ever before? The answer is to empathise with people because people are different. In so doing so, I enrich myself. I have to reach out to others, even in the midst of fears of loss of identity. For instance, I have to understand Buddhism from a Buddhist's point of view. In fact, by studying Buddhism I understand my Catholicism better. Pushing for such cross-cultural and cross-religious empathy does not mean I have to lose my identity. Contrarily, my own identity gets enriched."

Pointing out that ecumenism can and



must be promoted even through the arts, the sciences, culture, dancing, music, philosophy and so on, Fr. Mervyn said that "in this way, we can try to enter into the contemporary richness of our human experience."

Ainslie Joseph

Rev. Fr. Eymard Dalpatadu OMI, releases "Sevane Kurusiye"

Rev. Fr. Eymard Dalpatadu OMI, who is well-known as a versatile preacher, got his reflections translated into lyrics to produce his first music CD under the title "Sevane Kurusiye" (In the shade of the Cross).

The CD was launched in a ceremony held at the St. Joseph's Juniorate Auditorium, Kohuwala, on February 3, 2013, in the graceful presence of His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva, Auxiliary

Bishop of Colombo, as the chief guest and Very Rev. Fr. Rohan Silva OMI, the Provincial of the Oblate Province of Colombo, as the guest of honour.

Mr. Mahinda Namal, the guest speaker, appreciated Fr. Eymard for basing his lyrics on the Word of God, for making a clear distinction between hymns and songs and for the thoughtful and clinical selection of words. Professional singers in the stature of Ivor Denis, Neela



Wikramasinghe, Rodney Warnakula and Rev. Fr

Anton Jayananda added an extra lustre to this evening with their melodious voices.

This CD created platform for some of the seminarians of St. Joseph's Juniorate, very specially the talented singer Alanka Bandara, to make their debut in the field of music. This composition of hymns based on the Scripture is sure to be a supportive accompaniment in the sacred liturgy.

Rev. Fr. Roshan Fernando

Importance of family in the 'Year of Faith'

In keeping with the 'Year of Faith' a Family Day was conducted recently at St. Mary's Church, Yatiyantota, after Holy Mass.

The programme was organised by Parish Priest of Yatiyantota Rev. Fr. K. Devaraja along with the members of the Parish Council. The chief guest on the occasion was former Director of the Catechetical Centre Rev. Fr. Paul Fernando.

After the singing of the National Anthem in Sinhalese and Tamil, Fr. Paul Fernando addressing



the audience stressed the importance of living in love and in peace. Catholic families should be able to surrender the life of illusion and fol-

low the path of truth. They should be an example to their neighbours, and not forget that their children will imitate their life style, one day.

The love and affection shown in the first year of their marriage should be continued and all problems should be resolved with love, Catholic families should help the parishes and the diocese to make the 'Year of Faith' a year of victory, he said.

J. A.



Church in the World

Pope: Youth condition and culture, inescapable point of reference for Pastoral Outreach

Vatican City, (VIS) - Pope Benedict XVI last week received participants in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture, which has the theme of "Emerging Youth Cultures". The Pope expressed his hopes that their work will be fruitful and contribute to "the Church's work in the lives of young people, which is a complex and articulated reality that can no longer be understood from within a homogeneous cultural basis but only in a horizon ... that is made up of a plurality of viewpoints, perspectives, and strategies."

The Pope then spoke of the "widespread climate of instability" that is affecting the cultural, political, and economic areas, noting in the latter, the difficulty of young persons to find employment and which has psychological and relational repercussions. Even the religious dimension, the experience of faith and membership in the Church are often lived from an individualistic and emotional perspective."

'Helping vocations to grow'

Vatican City, 7 (VIS) - "Education is always fundamental for the truth to grow," the Pope said to members of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Charles Borromeo during an audience that took place in the Vatican.

The Fraternity is a Society of Apostolic Life born from the Communion and Liberation movement. "I knew the faith, the joy, the strength and wealth of ideas, and the creativity of the faith" of the founder of Communion and Liberation, Don Luigi Giussani," the Holy Father said.

shas done a great job as an educator. Today, education is always fundamental for the truth to grow, so that our being as children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ might grow."

Feast of Our Lady of Velankanni celebrated at Maggona



The third anniversary of Our Lady of Velankanni was celebrated at "Gladys Watta" Munhena Road, Maggona on February 4.

Picture shows Rev. Fr. Jude Asanka TOR being accompanied to the Novena by Rev. Fr. Ishan Prameena, Parish Priest, Maggona.

D.A. Fernando

Catechist Training Programme (English Medium)

A Training programme for English Catechists of the Archdiocese will commence in March 2013 under the auspices of the Apostolate for Catechetics of the Archdiocese of Colombo. Lectures will be held at the Jubilee Hall, Archbishop's House Colombo and an outstation venue to be confirmed in due course, on Saturdays from 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon. The course will be for a duration of approximately 10 months at the end of which a Catechist Certificate would be awarded to successful candidates. English Catechists of the Archdiocese are kindly requested to contact their Parish Priests to obtain the Application Form. Duly completed Application Forms should be forwarded to the regional coordinators of the Sunday School in their respective regions. Entries close on March 2, 2013.

Rev. Fr. Indra Fernando

Catechetical Director, Archdiocese of Colombo

SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus



THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA
Messenger
SINCE 1948

EDITORIAL

February 17, 2013

A most solemn and sudden departure -Pope Benedict XVI

Primus inter pares
- First amongst equals

In a world that is often caught up in personal gratification and furthering one's own interests, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI's sudden resignation is a mark of selfless humility and courage. As with the manner in which he assumed the See of Saint Peter, his departure, too, reflects his deep commitment to God's will and love of Christ.

Despite the sense of shock and disbelief, which the Pontiff's announcement of resignation has created worldwide, many of his well wishers commend him for his heroic gesture. Many more people praise his untiring efforts over many decades in furthering God's kingdom on earth, through the Catholic Church.

The age-old aphorism, "*Cometh the hour, cometh the man,*" rings true for our Holy Father. For in his sixty or more years of unflinching service to the Lord, he has helped unify and strengthen the Catholic Church worldwide. He gave the correct perspective to the Second Vatican Council and carried forward the vision of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II. His uncompromising respect and adherence to the true Christian virtues are shining examples of his integrity.

By any standards, Pope Benedict XVI will be remembered as a man of great genius and unflinching dedication. Whether it is for his erudite writings, which embody remarkable wisdom and insight that is nothing short of the Divine, to his passion for playing the piano or propagating the true values of our faith, he will be sorely missed by his Christian fraternity worldwide.

Anyone who has had the opportunity to read and

familiarise with his first encyclical as pope – the 16,000-word *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) – will no doubt appreciate his colossal contribution to the Church and the betterment of humanity. As with the announcement of his resignation a few days ago, he surprised the world with *Deus Caritas Est* several years ago. Whilst many 'experts' predicted a dry work of archaic theology, he produced a masterpiece, a rich tapestry of theosophical and literary brilliance. That was an early glimpse of this most beautiful man who would lead our Church and its one billion or more brothers and sisters for the better part of a decade.

The fact that he presided as pontiff during difficult times stands as a testament to his greatness. With his trademark humility and complete dedication to Christ, he has bravely guided the "Bark of Peter" through tumultuous torrents inflicted upon it. His crusade against secularism, materialism and consumerism is the foundation of his papacy. We, as Catholics, have been blessed to have a pontiff as him in these dark nights of the Church, where secularism and atheism have often bared their snarling teeth against the teachings of Christ.

Such is the greatness of Pope Benedict XVI that even British Prime Minister David Cameron has on more than one occasion praised the Pontiff for reintroducing some sense of the spiritual and divine back to his country; a country in the depths of moral and spiritual dissolution. Such is the greatness of his office and person that even a highly secular world leader as Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia, has given honour to him by citing his Christ-like humility and grace.

Amongst the many world leaders who have expressed their gratitude, the Jewish Chief Rabbi stated that Pope Benedict XVI had worked tirelessly towards establishing good relations between Catholics and the Jews.

Pope Benedict XVI was the perfect person for the papacy at the right time. In a world seemingly gone insane, where nations spend disproportionately on weapons of war (\$1,500 billion on arms and less than \$15 billion on charity), where unbridled economic and financial greed are encouraged and glorified, the Holy Father personified Christ in all His humility. The Pontiff's love for his Church, his deep desire to engender internal reforms, his tireless efforts to strengthen the faith of his followers, and his constant messages of love, charity and em-

pathy are as counter-culture as Christ was in his day. Here was a pontiff who did not wish to appease the whims of a whimsical world; nay, here was a shepherd who guided his flock superbly through the vagaries of a cynical era.

For us Sri Lankans, Pope Benedict XVI is a dear friend and keen supporter. He has publicly wished for peace in our island and has taken a keen interest in its spiritual and socio-economic wellbeing. As Catholics the best we can do to honour him is to pray for his constant wellbeing. It may also hold us in good-stead if each of us could endeavour to read the many brilliant works of his and his sublime homilies, which can open floodgates of grace and mercy from the Lord into our lives.

As Pope Benedict XVI retires into a world of relative obscurity and contemplative prayer, let us all keep him in our hearts and prayers. Let us always remember the quiet, gentle and humble manner in which this most wonderful of senior pastors in our Church so courageously and selflessly led us through troubled times. He deserves nothing but the best, for he gave the very best of himself. With the grace and blessings from God our Father, Pope Benedict XVI helped keep our Church safe from the myriad attacks she faced both internally and externally.

Let us take his constant message of the eight years of his pontificate to the whole world. A message that forms the fundamental truth of our existence: The love of Christ and His Mother for all God's creation. Let us honour Pope Benedict XVI's work and ministry by seeking to evangelise and bring the Good News of God to those who need to hear it. Let us, as with Pope Benedict XVI, be Christ unto the world.

A few beautiful words from Pope Benedict XVI, reflecting our relationship with Christ:

"Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to Him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation....When we give ourselves to Him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life."

By decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary

Indulgences for the 21st World Day of the Sick

DECREE: *Special Indulgences for the World Day of the Sick*

Redemption was brought about through the Holy Cross of Christ, that is, through his Passion. All human suffering, in truth, can share in the redemptive suffering of the Lord. In fact, St. Paul the Apostle said: "I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the Church" (Col 1:24).

In this 'Year of Faith', dedicated especially to the profession of the true faith and to its correct interpretation, it is worth remembering the luminous teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the Christian idea of suffering and the brethren's participation in it: "Since the works of charity and mercy express the most striking testimony of the Christian life, apostolic formation should lead

also to the performance of these works so that the faithful may learn from childhood on to have compassion for their brethren and to be generous in helping those in need" (Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 31 c).

Thus, motivated by the desire that the annual celebration of the World Day of the Sick, this year particularly solemn, is proving to be an ever more effective catechesis on the salvific meaning of suffering and further sensitizes those who, in various capacities, work to serve people who are suffering in body and soul. The Holy Father chose the Good Samaritan as the theme for the 21st World Day of the Sick celebrated from February 7-11 2013: "Go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37), which teaches doing good for those suffering and doing good with one's own suffering (cf. Ap.Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, 30)

In order that the faithful might prepare themselves spiritually in the best way possible for the event, His Holiness Benedict XVI, at the Audience granted to the Cardinal Major Penitentiary and the Regent of the Apostolic Penitentiary on January 18, graciously offered the gift of Indulgences in accordance with the following disposition, so that members of the faithful who are truly repentant and motivated by love, following the example of the Good Samaritan, may put themselves at the service of the brethren with a spirit of faith and a merciful heart, and, if they in turn fall ill, that they may endure the suffering and adversity of life, raising their soul

to God with humble trust and offering a visible witness of faith through the Gospel of suffering:

A. The *Plenary Indulgence*, which a member of the faithful with a truly repentant and contrite heart will be able to obtain once a day, on the usual conditions (Sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion, prayers for the Holy Father's intentions).

(Contd. on Pg. 9)



'Our Lady of Lourdes' - Mary is truly Our Mother

We commemorated once again the apparition of our Lady at Lourdes on February 11. Barely four years had passed since the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady appeared to a pious young girl named Bernadette, who was gathering wood by the shores of the Gave River. Our Lady would manifest once more than she is really our Mother who cares for us and watches over us from Heaven.

Lourdes is a village in France where Our Blessed Mother appeared eighteen times to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. Her messages to Bernadette are ageless and relevant even to this very day.

Bernadette Soubirous was born on January 7, 1844. She was the first child of Francois Soubirous and Louise Soubirous (Casterot). Her father was a miller who provided a comfortable living for his family. Bernadette had six brothers and two sisters. Only three of her siblings lived beyond the age of ten. These losses bonded the family together in strength and love. Bernadette once said that she had never heard her parents quarrel. The family was always at peace. This solid family foundation left Bernadette emotionally balanced in times of trouble and when faced with poverty and illnesses which were to come.

Apparently, a series of events which began in 1854 were of such proportions that they radically changed their lives. To begin with, Bernadette's father was falsely accused of stealing two sacks of flour and was imprisoned for many days. There was a drought which lasted for two years and drastically affected the wheat harvest and work at the mill. And finally, the steam mills that resulted from the Industrial Revolution put Francois' mill out of business, and he was out of work. The family was reduced to living in a one-room dwelling called the *Cachot*, which was formerly used as a jail.

To top it all, during this same period Bernadette contracted cholera. The high fevers caused her to suffer physically for the rest of her life. She suffered emotionally also. She felt the heart ache of being excluded as people pointed to her family as the ones who live in the *Cachot*. Her physical illnesses prevented her from going to school.

At age 14 she spoke only the dialect of Lourdes. She was unable to read or write or speak French, and the Catechism was taught in French only. She went to Mass, but she was not allowed to receive Holy Communion with her friends. Sometimes Bernadette's only comfort was her mother's love. Later, Fr. Pomian prepared Bernadette for First Holy Communion. There was something about Bernadette that moved the Hosts of Heavenly Hearts. She was blessed with eighteen divine apparitions, that changed the world forever and ensured that Bernadette will never be forgotten (Victor Cembellin, *Story of Saint Bernadette & Our Lady of Lourdes*).

First Appearance

The Blessed Virgin's first apparition occurred on February 11, 1858. After dinner on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday, Bernadette's mother told her children that there was no more wood in the house. Bernadette and her sister, Toinette, and a neighbour friend, Jeanne Abadie, went to the River

Gave to gather wood. They had to cross a canal of cold water. Fearing that she would have an asthma attack, Bernadette stayed on the bank, and the other two girls crossed the stream and picked up wood under the grotto until they disappeared along the Gave.

Suddenly, out of the blue, Bernadette heard a great noise like the sound of a storm, but nothing was moving. She was frightened and stood straight up, loosing all power of speech and thought. She turned her head towards the Grotto of Massabielle and saw in the opening of the rock a rosebush, one only, moving as if it were very windy.

Almost at the same time, there came out of the interior of the Grotto a golden-coloured cloud, and soon afterwards, a Lady, young and beautiful exceedingly beautiful, the likes of whom she had never seen, came and placed herself at the entrance of the opening above the rosebush. She looked at Bernadette and immediately smiled and signaled her to advance, in a way that a mother motions her child to come near. Bernadette took out her Rosary and knelt before the Lady, who also had a Rosary on her right arm. When Bernadette tried to begin saying the Rosary by making the sign of the cross, her arm was paralyzed. It was only after the Lady had made the sign of the cross herself that Bernadette was able to do the same. As Bernadette prayed the Rosary, the Lady passed the beads of her Rosary between her fingers, but remained silent. She did recite the Gloria with her, however. When the recitation of the Rosary was finished, the Lady returned to the interior of the rock and the golden cloud disappeared with her.

Unable to contain her joy, Bernadette told her sister of the extraordinary things that had happened to her at the Grotto, asking her to keep it a secret. Throughout the day the image of the Lady remained in her mind. In the evening at the family prayer Bernadette was troubled and began to cry. When her mother asked what was the matter, her sister told her everything. Bernadette's mother told her that these were illusions, and forbade her to return to Massabielle.

Bernadette's extraordinary experience that day was so overwhelming that she could not sleep that night. The face of the Lady, so good and so gracious, returned incessantly to her memory. It was useless to recall what her mother had said because she did not believe that she had been deceived. Her conviction of this was unshakable. She went on to describe the Beautiful Lady in detail:

"She has the appearance of a young girl of sixteen or seventeen. She is dressed in a white robe, girdled at the waist with a blue ribbon which flows down all around it. A yoke closes it in graceful pleats at the base of the neck.

"The sleeves are long and tight-fitting. She wears upon her head a veil which is also white. This veil gives just a glimpse of her hair and then falls down at the back below her waist.

"Her feet are bare but covered by the last folds of her robe except at the point where a yellow rose shines upon each of them. She holds on her right arm a rosary of white beads with a chain of gold shining like the two roses on her feet."

On Sunday, February 14, 1858 Bernadette's mother allowed her to return to the grotto. The Blessed appeared for the second time. The three little girls started out, armed with a vial of holy water. If what their elders said was true, they might need this to ward off malign influences. Instead of throwing the water at the Lady, Bernadette poured the water quietly on the ground. Then she turned and told her companion that, judging by the Beautiful Lady's smile, She was pleased by this action.

The Beautiful Lady asked Bernadette to pray for the conversion of sinners repeatedly on her apparitions. Her motherly heart overflows with longing for all men to be saved and reach eternal happiness in heaven.

During the sixteenth apparition, which occurred on the Feast of the Annunciation, the Beautiful Lady revealed her identity to Bernadette: *"Que soy era Immaculado Conception,"* I am the Immaculate Conception. Bernadette was not sure what this name meant, but people who needed no explanation flocked to Lourdes in greater numbers than ever before. Baron Massy, a local official, ordered Bernadette to be examined by three more physicians. They found her to be physically and mentally sound (ibid.)

We, Christians, celebrate the feasts of Mother Mary since children rejoice together with their earthly mothers. But feeling the joy on Mary's feasts is not the sole purpose of these commemorations. Above all, Marian feasts constitute a calling for us to respond to her motherly care and love for each one of us, as well as, to imitate her virtues. Her only concern is to bring us closer to her Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, there are lots of lessons we could learn from meditation on the events surrounding her apparitions.

The Humble of Heart

Our Lady chooses those who are humble in the eyes of men as visionaries of her apparitions. Notice that Mary didn't appear to a community of monks in a monastery. Nor did she ask a group of priests and bishops to do sacrifices in reparation for sin and to console her Immaculate Heart. Instead, she gave her heavenly message to an uneducated peasant girl.

This was the unlikely and unexpected way God in His Providence reminded humanity of the importance of praying for the conversion of sinners. We, too, should have an authentic concern to lead souls to conversion from sin. The first sinner we need to convert is definitely not somebody else but we ourselves. There can be no closeness to Mary and Jesus unless one makes an act of reparation and penances for one's sins and faults.

In her apparition at Lourdes, the Immaculate Virgin wanted to shine forth to show once again her motherly love. In our prayer, therefore, we ask ourselves as did the inspired author, Who is this that comes like the breaking of the dawn, beautiful like the moon, splendid like the sun, formidable as an army in array? Our hearts, full of faith, convince us that this Lady is our Mother; such a tremendous gift to us in God's mercy. This is what the Church tells us using the words of Isaiah: As a mother comforts a child, so I shall comfort you... At the sight your heart will rejoice, and

your limbs regain vigour like the grass. To his servants Yahweh will reveal his hand.

Devotion to our Lady has grown among faithful Christians for ages and has taken the form of many old and new customs practised with great love. We must love Our Lady more than we love our earthly mothers. Let us treat her as someone who is alive because she is truly alive and watches over each one of us from heaven as if each were her only child. Christians must act as *'domestici Dei'* (Eph 2:19), as members of God's household.

We are God's family because Christ won our filiation to the Father, and because, while hanging on the Cross, He willed to make us children of His mother as well. He gave us His Mother to be ours: "Woman, behold, your son. Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home (Jn 19:26)." Since then, faithful to the divine purpose for which she was born, Mary continues to spend herself in the service of men, who are all called to be brothers of her Son Jesus. The Mother of God is also truly the Mother of men.

The Virgin Mary's motherhood is the basis for our love and our filial devotion. By appearing at Lourdes, our Lady wanted to show how much she loves us. She reminds us that she lives close to each of us, and that we have a wonderful mother in heaven who is aware of the slightest gesture and the smallest need or request of her children.

Nothing moves us to love as much as the awareness of being loved. Today, in a very special way, we experience the meaning of this. If we look at our own life and see how God's mercy has shown itself, we can each find many reasons for feeling that Mary is our mother in a very special way. Considering the great love that the Virgin Mary has shown in blessings she showers on us, we want to ask the Lord to teach us to deal with Mary as He Himself did, with the same affection and with the same attention, with a filial piety that increases day by day.

Mary wants us to talk to her, to come to her, to let ourselves be consoled and cared for. She wants us to ask her for a thousand things each day, just as small children do. She told the shepherd girl at Lourdes to say the Rosary for several weeks, and all the people who came to the Grotto were to pray it with her. Our Lady expects this sign of affection. It is the conversation of small children who repeat the same words tirelessly to their mother, because they love her.

How generous are we in honoring our Mother in Heaven with details of devotion? Let us overcome our stinginess and calculating attitude, loving our Lady with all our heart's capacity for loving. Perhaps, we could pray the Holy Rosary with more frequency if we are not praying it daily yet. And if we already do, maybe, we could meditate more deeply into the mysteries of the Rosary as we pray on them. Since love demands expressing it with deeds, do we try to offer short prayers to Mother Mary, making use of her images as reminders.

Our Lady of Lourdes, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, pray for us!

Rev. Fr. Daniel Icatlo



The Temptations of Jesus

Thoughts that haunt me



Today's Gospel account deals with the temptations of Jesus in the desert. It is the spirit who leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. At first sight, this appears strange. God exposing His Son to the blows of Satan. But is it not to battle the one whom John calls 'the prince of the world' that the Son of Man came to earth?

Satan attempts to tie the noose around Jesus with a catchy conditional. "If you are the Son of God...." Satan was saying, "Will God permit you, His Son, to suffer hunger? Has not all power been given to you? How will men believe you if you do not show them the signs from heaven which are supposed to signal your coming? Do you not know that this world belongs to me and that I do what I want with it? Without compromise with me, you know well that all your efforts are doomed to failure!"

Jesus did not argue or discuss with the adversary. Jesus attacked him with the all-powerful weapon of the Word of God. There is here a basic lesson

for all of us. Jesus was so nourished by this word that in the hour of temptation, it sprang naturally to His lips. How much more necessary this is for us! To every "If you....," Jesus replied, "God says..."

The first temptation shows Jesus being weakened by hunger, that basic urge of every human being. He truly embraced our condition. He knew hunger and poverty as he was born with it. He was

the Son of Man 'who had nowhere to lay His head.' (Lk. 9: 58). He refused to save Himself and later be submitted to the mockery of those who watched Him die. His total commitment into the hands of His Father will be considered only weakness and defeat in the eyes of the world. But in this way He became the authentic brother of all those who are deprived of the basic necessities of life, of all the rejected of the world. Thus truly, will He one day

be able to say that food or drink given or refused to a hungry person is given or refused to Him.

The second temptation reminds us that scripture, depending on how one uses it, may be either the instrument of God or the instrument of the devil. To try to force God to reveal Himself by some spectacular act, is not the language of faith, but of unbelief and impatience. This is to "tempt God." When the Pharisees later demand signs from Jesus which would be proof of His Messiah-ship, they will be refused. (Matt. 16: 1-4)

The third temptation was to attract the people through sensations. Jesus says, "No, the power of God is not for cheap, theatrical performances."

Bread, miracles, power - are not these what false messiahs in every age offer to win the confidence of the crowds? The temptations Jesus was tested with, will be met by Him throughout His earthly mission: When the crowds

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

At Lourdes you appeared to a young rustic maid She gazed on your beauty and homage she paid Enraptured she fell on her knees at your feet Pure Immaculate Virgin Most gentle and sweet

Chorus

Ave Maria, Ave Maria Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria

Attired in white gown and white veil there you stood In Massabielle in a cave in the wood A rosary hung on your slender white hand On each foot was a rose, round your waist a blue band

To Bernadette gently a message you gave The Rosary-prayer has the power to save Do penance and say this dear Rosary-prayer I will bless you and keep you in my loving care You caused limpid water to flow from a spring You said, "Use this water great cures it will bring" Through ages your blessings for us ne'er did cease. Dearest Lady of Lourdes give us healing and peace.

Rita Irene Fernando

it were the first stage of the ministry which is to follow. One cannot "Enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods," said Jesus, "unless he first binds the strong man" (Mt. 12-29).

see in Him only a healer (Mk.1:35-39); when they want to make Him king (John 6:14-15); when His own disciples reject with horror the prediction of the death on a cross. (Matt.16: 21-23)

This initial encounter with the adversary is as

Ananda Perera

Ash Wednesday

When we are reminded Of God's saving grace With ash on our foreheads, We bow down our heads Dear Lord forgive us. By the Blood that You shed. To open for us heaven's closed door To teach us to love all men As you do. To teach us forgiveness, to teach us to pray For charity and unity at the foot of the cross. When the priest signs your forehead With ashes today. Remember your beginning remember your end. Ashes to ash, dust to dust. There only remains love Of the Lord whom we trust.



Clivee Taylor

Healing Power of the Lemon Fruit

The water added to the lemon juice should be lukewarm, or as hot as you can tolerate.

- **Boosts your immune system:** Lemons are high in vitamin C, which is great for fighting colds. They are high in potassium, which stimulates brain and nerve function. Potassium also helps control blood pressure.
- **Balances pH:** Drink lemon water everyday. It will reduce your body's overall acidity. Lemon is one of the most alkaline foods around. Yes, lemon has citric acid but it does not create acidity in the body once metabolized.
- **Helps with weight loss:** Lemons are high in pectin fibre, which helps fight hunger cravings. It also has been shown that people who maintain a more alkaline diet lose weight faster.
- **Aids digestion:** Lemon juice helps flush out unwanted materials. It encourages the liver to produce bile which is an acid required for digestion. Efficient digestion reduces heartburn and constipation.
- **Is a diuretic:** Lemons increase the rate of urination in the body, which helps purify it. Toxins



are, therefore, released at a faster rate which helps keep your urinary tract healthy.

- **Clears skin:** The vitamin C component helps decrease wrinkles and blemishes. Lemon water purges toxins from the blood which helps keep skin clear as well. It can actually be applied directly to scars to help reduce their appearance.
- **Freshens breath:** Not only this, but it can help relieve tooth pain and gingivitis. The citric acid can erode tooth enamel, so you should monitor this.
- **Relieves respiratory problems:** Warm lemon water helps get rid of chest infections and halts those pesky coughs. It is thought to be helpful to people with asthma and allergies too.
- **Keeps you zen:** Vitamin C is one of the first things depleted when you subject your mind and body to stress. As mentioned previously, lemons are chock full of vitamin C.
- **Helps kick the coffee habit:** After I have a glass of hot lemon water, I actually don't have a craving for coffee in the morning.

Tip: Drink your warm lemon water in coffee cups that has coffee or tea stains. The lemon water will help remove them.

Tip: Grind the used lemon rinds in your garbage disposal to help deodorize it.

The car screeched to a halt and Asela the driver yelled in exasperation, "Can't you look where you are going?"

Irma, the middle-aged woman was carrying two parcels and looked all hot and bothered. She stood stock still in the middle of the road. A policeman walked up to her and firmly helped her along to the other side of the road. She scurried along clutching her parcels.

Asela meanwhile had restarted his car but the policeman came up to him and blocked him. "I understand that you are in a hurry but you must learn to be patient on the highway," he told Asela.

"But there was no pedestrian crossing and she was going so slowly," protested Asela.

"What if she was your mother?" said the police-



A CROSS The Way 104

By Sirohmi Gunsekera

Seeing

man, adding, "Would you have been so impatient then?"

"I suppose not," retorted Asela in a surly voice. "Can I go now," he asked.

The policeman waved him on and then went in search of Irma. He found her wending her way along the

pavement and said gently, "You must be more careful especially when you are crossing the road. Do you have to carry so many parcels? Perhaps you should do two trips if you don't live too far away."

Irma responded to the kind note in his voice and said, "I am sorry. Sometimes I forget that I am no longer young and sprightly. Maybe I should think of how much I can carry and do more than one trip. It's just that I am scared of the traffic."

"You should go in search of a Pedestrian Crossing if you want to cross the road. Even then, you must wait for the cars to stop before you cross," he told her.

Maybe you and I too should be kind like the thoughtful policeman for, "There is none so blind as he who will not see..."



The Story behind the National Basilica of Lanka

With its distinguished pillared portico, impressive façade window, characteristic towers, vaulted ceilings, domes, granite walls pediments and floors, the National Basilica in Tewatte Ragama is Sri Lanka's only Basilica and the largest and most popular Catholic Church.

A birth of a Basilica

The idea of a National Basilica for Sri Lanka was conceived to fulfill a vow invoking the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Sri Lanka during World War II. The vow was made on 26 May 1940, by the Archbishop of Colombo at that time Most Rev. Dr. Jean-Marie Masson OMI, who prayed that if Sri Lanka was spared from the ravages of World War II, a Basilica would be built and dedicated to the title of "Our Lady of Lanka."

After the War, in thanksgiving for the protection received, Archbishop Masson obtained the requisite approval from Pope Pius XII for the construction of a Basilica in honour of Our Lady of Lanka. The vow was carried to its completion by Cardinal Thomas Cooray who succeeded Archbishop Masson as the Archbishop of Colombo.

The site identified for the construction of the Basilica in Tewatte, Ragama, was a land called Orange Hill Estate which was purchased by the Church when the rubber plantation there was affected by disease and the estate was put up for sale. It was adjoining an already existing popular shrine with a small church, a holy well and a grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, which is now part of the Basilica premises and is referred to as the old Church and grotto.

There were two architectural plans considered for the construction of the National Basilica. One was presented by the Sri Lankan architect Valentine Gunasekera in the lines of the Santa Sophia in Istanbul as this was thought to be the closest to oriental architecture. The other was a plan sent in by one Fr. Heras, who proposed the architectural elements of an Indian Temple. This latter plan was accepted and construction began.

On February 6, 1974 the Basilica was completed, dedicated and the statue of Our Lady crowned as "Our Lady of Lanka".

What is a Basilica

The term 'basilica' was originally used to describe a Roman public building, usually a court of justice. After the Roman Empire became officially Christian, the term referred specifically to a large or important church given special ceremonial rites by the Pope. By the end of 2008 there were 1,584 basilicas worldwide (four classified as "major," the remainder as "minor").

The grand entrance

The grand entrance or the gate-way to the Basilica is through a series of wide steps descending then ascending which has to be experienced by foot. A separate road for vehicles, circle this main entrance. At the top of the steps on either side are two statues of Archbishop Masson and Thomas Cardinal Cooray, the two men responsible for the Basilica. This main entrance is positioned in such a way as to give the pilgrim his first peek of the grandeur of the Basilica framed through the trees and foliage that surround it. As the pilgrim keeps walking forward the building gradually reveals itself in its full majesty, till the pilgrim stands beneath its vast edifice at its main entrance, and once again climbs a series of steps leading into the Basilica.

Symbolic architecture

The Basilica's architectural details are not without meaning. The twin towers on either side of the front porch stands for the two great commandments of Christianity: The love of God and the love of our neighbour.

The six granite pillars of the front porch, represented the six dioceses of the Catholic Church at that time divided for administrative purposes. The six diocese of Colombo,

Chilaw, Galle, Jaffna, Kandy and Trincomalee are said to have sponsored the cost of each pillar.

Over the front porch and inside the main oriental arch a large circular glass window forms the backdrop for the cross with the bronze Christ. The figure of Christ was sculptured by renowned bronze artist Mrs. Leila Peiris, after much study of the anatomy of Christ crucified. It is said that the features of the face of the Christ was taken from the famous shroud of Turin which Christians believe to be the original Shroud in which the Body of Christ was wrapped.

An ariel view of the Basilica shows the building to be constructed in the shape of a cross with vaulted rooflines spreading in four directions and the main dome at its centre. The huge main dome is hidden from the front view and can only be admired from the sides. An aluminum cross, designed according to the Greek oriental cross having three

in Our Lady's arms with Our Lady pointing to Jesus and Jesus pointing to Our Lady, a meaning interpreted to read "to Jesus through Mary." Also Jesus holds the Rosary in one hand. This Rosary was replaced by the golden Rosary gifted by Pope Paul VI, on his visit to Lanka in 1970. A star on the breast of the infant Jesus is symbolic of the star of the Orient.

There is branch of a Na tree or local iron wood with three flowers at the base of the statue to give it a Sri Lankan touch, even though at that time the Na had not been declared the national tree of Lanka.

History in Bronze

Recently a series of large bronze tablets have been fixed on the outer wall of the Basilica, recording the beginning of Christianity, how it spread to Sri Lanka and the subsequent history of the Catholic Church of Sri Lanka.

The tablets were sculptured by Dr. Sarath Chandrajeewa under the guidance of Archbishop Emeritus His Grace, Oswald Gomis.

The Gardens

Around the Basilica there are many buildings and land marks which have an interesting story.

The grotto was originally the site of a large rock and it is from here that the granite for the construction of the Basilica was quarried. This rock was then blasted and hewn to its present replica of the grotto of Lourdes. Near the altar is enshrined a piece of rock from the original grotto in Lourdes. The new grotto was completed and blessed in 1959.

The lake in the premises was built after the Cardinal who was a water diviner found the spring which began under the main altar of the Basilica

and ended at the far end of the grotto. This was made into the lake, with the assistance of Mr. Kahawita and Rev. Fr. Anselm Croos who was also a water diviner.

The Cardinal who was also a botanist and a lover of trees planted the land with a variety of rare and useful trees including Na, Kohomba, Maruta, Kumbuk, Kattakumanjal, Amherstia Nobilis a tree named after the lady Amherst wife of the Governor of Burma, varieties of Cassia and varieties of Mahogany.

Heritage Centre

The Heritage Centre or Museum was designed by Fr. Anselm Croos with a mix and blend of several local architectural features. It houses an extensive collection of Church art and artifacts that tells the story of Church history in Sri Lanka.

Power houses of prayer

Cardinal Cooray was keen to build a spiritual environ around the Basilica and for this reason he invited Religious Congregations of contemplative life and other to make their homes around the Basilica.

The Poor Clare's Convent came in 1955 initially occupying an old railway compartment for their dormitory.

The Rosarians Convent followed in 1957 occupying an old house that had originally been a dispensary.

The Providence Sisters were given the original mission house and they took care of the Retreat House in the premises.

The Sisters of Mary Immaculate were the last to establish themselves in 2003. They occupy the former rubber factory which has now been refurbished.

In addition to these are the residences of Archbishop Emeritus Most Rev. Dr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando and Archbishop Emeritus Most Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis, and Piya Sevana Home for the retired priests.

Feasts

On February 4, on Sri Lanka's Independence Day the Basilica celebrates the feast of "Our Lady of Lanka" to whose honour the National Basilica, is dedicated. The annual Blessing of the Sick draws vast crowds and many miraculous cures are reported. Other feasts and ceremonies include Children's day, Youth rallies and the usual Liturgical Church feasts like Christmas and Easter.



horizontal bars and resting on a triple pedestal crowns the main dome.

Lofty interiors

The vaulted ceilings, pillared halls and lofty interiors stretch generously on four sides from the altar in the centre. The main altar comprises of a beautiful block of undressed white stone brought from a quarry in Kirimetiyyagara. This was thought to contrast with the dressed stone that formed the pediments and walls around. Unfortunately the natural rough edges of the altar have been smoothed by an inexperienced hand.

Behind the main altar is the Sanctuary containing the Holy of Holies containing a tabernacle with two angels on either side. This was made according to a picture taken from the Bible depicting the perfect replica of the Jewish Ark of the Covenant symbolizing the presence of God. The Ivory Cross that hangs over the tabernacle is a gift from the Parish of Puttalam believed to have been hand carved locally during the time of Fr. Joseph Vaz. (17th century) On either side of the tabernacle are two large elephant tusks.

The door to this sanctuary is of the ceremonial Kandyan period design made out of rosewood felled from a trees that grew in the National Seminary in Ampitiya. The initial curtains that were hung here were made from the first silk produced by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd at Maha Halpe, who were famous for their silk farm.

The altar railing here is symbolic of the arboreal culture of Sri Lanka, including a variety of timber in different shades and colors i.e. teak, mahogany, iron wood, jak, white and red sandal wood etc.

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel is situated in the crypt underground. It is also here in the silence of this large hall that Cardinal Cooray lies buried and in whose honor a statue stands.

Our Lady of Lanka

The statue of "Our Lady of Lanka" designed for the Basilica takes the lineaments of the statue of "Our Lady of Fatima" from Portugal. It was carved by one Thedim of Fatima the same sculptor who carved the statue of "Our Lady of Fatima" that toured Sri Lanka during that time. However the statue differed in that it had the Infant Jesus

God Comes to Meet Man

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



CCCB

ARTICLE 2

The Transmission of Divine Revelation

74 God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth": That is, of Christ Jesus. Christ must be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this revelation may reach to the ends of the earth:

God graciously arranged that the things he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, and be transmitted to all generations.

I. The Apostolic Tradition

75. "Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the Most High God is summed up, commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets, and which He fulfilled in His own person and promulgated with His own lips. In preaching the Gospel, they were to communicate the gifts of God to all men. This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline."

In the apostolic preaching...

76. In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on in two ways: *orally* "by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received — whether from the lips of Christ, from His way of life and His works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit"; *in writing* "by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing."

.....continued in apostolic succession

77. "In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority.'" Indeed, "the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time."

78. This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called

Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. Through Tradition, "the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes." "The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and her prayer."

79. The Father's self-communication made through his Word in the Holy Spirit, remains present and active in the Church: "God, who spoke in the past, continues to converse with the Spouse of his beloved Son. And the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the Church - and through her in the world - leads believers to the full truth, and makes the Word of Christ dwell in them in all its richness."

II. The Relationship between Tradition and Sacred Scripture

One common source...

80. "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal." Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the Mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with His own "always, to the close of the age."

...two distinct modes of transmission

81. "Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."

"And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching."

82. As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."

Apostolic Tradition and Ecclesial Traditions

83. The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus' teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition.

Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even

abandoned under the guidance of the Church's magisterium.

III. The Interpretation of the Heritage of Faith

The heritage of faith entrusted to the whole of the Church

84. The apostles entrusted the "Sacred deposit" of the faith (*the depositum fidei*), contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to the whole of the Church. "By adhering to [this heritage] the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. So, in maintaining, practising and professing the faith that has been handed on, there should be a remarkable harmony between the bishops and the faithful."

The Magisterium of the Church

85. "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

86. "Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith."

87. Mindful of Christ's words to his apostles: "He who hears you, hears me," the faithful receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them in different forms.

The dogmas of the Faith

88. The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes truths contained in divine Revelation or having a necessary connection with them, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith.

89. There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith.

90. The mutual connections between dogmas, and their coherence, can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the Mystery of Christ. "In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian Faith."

The supernatural sense of faith

91. All the faithful share in under-

standing and handing on revealed truth. They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them and guides them into all truth.

92. "The whole body of the faithful... cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of faith (*sensus fidei*) on the part of the whole people, when, 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful', they manifest universal consent in matters of faith and morals."

93. "By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*Magisterium*)... receives... the faith, once for all delivered to the saints.... The People unfailingly to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life."

Growth in understanding the faith

94. Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith is able to grow in the life of the Church:

— "through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts"; it is in particular "theological research [which] deepens knowledge of revealed truth."

— "from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which [believers] experience," the Sacred Scriptures "grow with the one who reads them."

— "from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth."

95. "It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."

IN BRIEF

96. *What Christ entrusted to the apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.*

97. *"Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God" (DV10) in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.*

98. *"The Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes" (DV8/1).*

99. *Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith, the People of God as a whole never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply and to live more fully from the gift of Divine Revelation.*

100. *The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the Bishops in communion with him.*

(Excerpts from Catechism of the Catholic Church)

To the Pontifical Council 'Cor Unum' on the occasion of their Plenary Meeting

From God's point of view

Christians who work in charitable institutions must adhere "to God's point of view", to his plan for man, without letting themselves be enmeshed by the negative trends caused by manipulative ideologies that tend to affirm "the absolutization of man," the Holy Father said. He was speaking to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council 'Cor Unum' last month in the Vatican's Clementine Hall. The following is a translation of **Pope Benedict XVI's Discourse**, which was given in Italian.

I welcome you with affection and with joy on the occasion of the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum." I thank the President, Robert Cardinal Sarah, for his words and I offer my cordial greeting to each one of you, extending it in spirit to everyone working in the service of the Church's charity. With my recent *Motu Proprio Intima Ecclesiae Natura* I wanted to reassert the ecclesial significance of your work. Your witness can open the door of faith to many persons who seek the love of Christ. In this way, during the 'Year of Faith' the theme "Charity, new ethics and Christian anthropology," which you are examining, reflects the strong connection between love and truth, or, if one prefers, between faith and charity. The entire Christian ethos receives its meaning from faith as an "encounter" with the love of Christ, who offers a new horizon and impresses on life its decisive direction, (cf. Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 1). Christian love finds its foundation and form in faith. By encountering God and experiencing his love we learn "to live no longer" for ourselves but for him, and, with him, for others" (*ibid.*, n. 33).

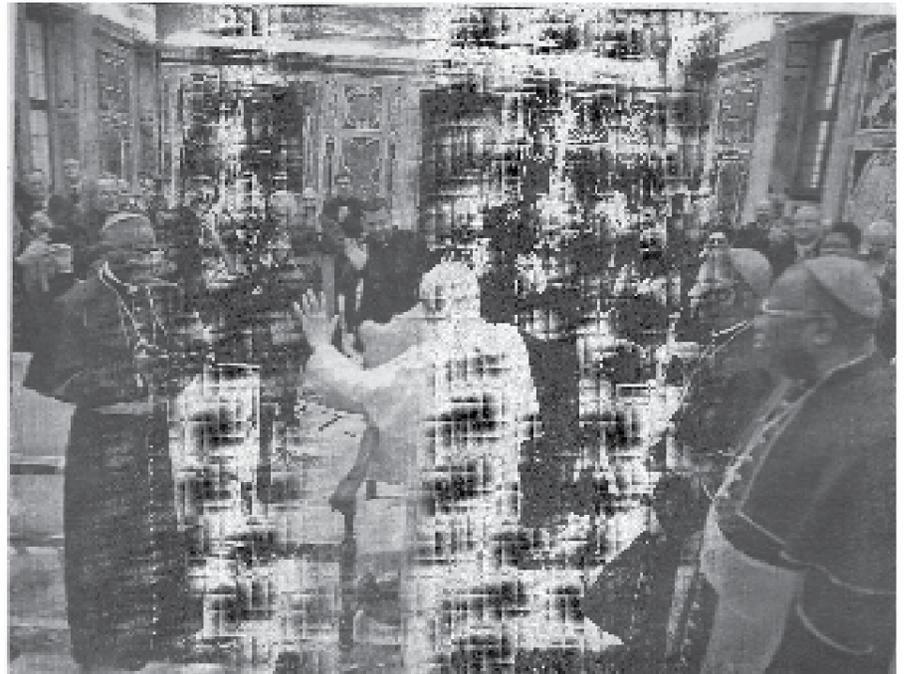
Starting from this dynamic relationship between faith and charity, I would like to reflect on one point that recalls the prophetic dimension that faith instils in charity. Believing adherence to the Gospel impresses on charity its specifically, Christian form and constitutes the principle of its discernment. Christians, in particular those who work in charities, must allow themselves to be guided by the principles of faith, through which we adhere to "God's

point of view," to his plan for each one of us (cf. *Cantus in Veritate*, n. 1). This new outlook on the world and on man offered by faith also provides the correct criterion for evaluating expressions of charity in today's context.

In every age, when man has not sought such a plan he has fallen prey to cultural temptations that have in the end enslaved him. In recent centuries, ideologies that praised the cult of nation, race and social class have proved to be real idolatries; and the same could be said of reckless capitalism with its worship of profit that results in crisis, inequality and poverty. People today share more and more a common feeling about the inalienable dignity of every human being and about our reciprocal and interdependent responsibility for it; and this is to the advantage of true civilization, the civilization of love. However, unfortunately, our time also knows the shadows that hide God's plan.

I am referring above all to the tragic anthropological reduction that repropounds the age-old hedonistic materialism, but to which a "technological Prometheism" is added. From this union of the materialistic vision of man and the great development of technology a fundamentally atheist anthropology emerges. It presupposes that man is reduced to autonomous functions, the mind to the brain, human history to a destiny of self-realization. All this disregards God, His properly spiritual dimension and the horizon of the afterlife. In the perspective of a human being deprived of his soul and consequently of a personal relationship with his Creator, what is technically possible becomes morally licit, every experiment is acceptable, every demographic policy permitted, every manipulation legitimized. The most dangerous snare of this current of thought is in fact the absolutization of man: Man wants to be *absolutus*, freed from every bond and from every natural constitution. He claims to be independent and thinks that his happiness lies in his own self-affirmation.

"Man calls his nature into question.... From now on there is only the abstract human being, who chooses for himself what his nature is to be" (*Dis-*



course to the Roman Curia, December 21, 2012; *ORE* January 3, 2013, p. 6). This is a radical denial of the nature of the creature and child in man, which ends in tragic loneliness.

Faith and healthy Christian discernment therefore lead us to pay prophetic attention to this ethical problem and to its underlying mentality. The just collaboration with international bodies in the field of development and human advancement must not make us close our eyes to these grave ideologies. It is the duty of pastors of the Church to be "pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15) - to put the Catholic faithful and every person of good will and right reason on guard against the trend of these ideologies. It is a negative trend for humankind, although it may be disguised by good feelings in the name of alleged progress, alleged rights, or an alleged humanism. In the face of this anthropological reduction, what is the task expected of every Christian and especially of you who are engaged in charitable activities. and therefore, in direct contact with many other social agents? We must of course exercise critical vigilance and, at times, refuse funding and partnerships that, directly or indirectly, foster actions and projects that are contrary to Christian anthropology. But the Church is always committed

positively to the advancement of human beings according to God's design, in the integrity of their dignity, with respect for their two-fold - vertical and horizontal - dimensions. The action for development of Church bodies also strives for this. The Christian vision of man is, in fact, a great "yes" to the dignity of persons called to an intimate filial communion of humility and faithfulness. The human being is not a self-sufficient individual nor an anonymous element in the group. Rather he is a unique and unrepeatable person, intrinsically ordered to relationships and sociability. Thus the Church reaffirms her great "yes" to the dignity and beauty of marriage as an expression of the faithful and generous bond between man and woman, and her no to "gender" philosophies, because the reciprocity between male and female is an expression of the beauty of nature willed by the Creator.

Dear friends, I thank you for your commitment to promote humanity, in fidelity to their true dignity. In the face of the challenge of the times, we know that the answer is the encounter with Christ. In Him men and women can totally fulfil their personal good and the common good. I encourage you to continue with joy and generosity, as I warmly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

(*L'Osservatore Romano*)

Indulgences for...

Contd. from Pg. 4

The faithful in public hospitals or in any private home who charitably assist and care for the sick, like the Good Samaritan, who are prevented by their service from participating in the ceremonies mentioned above, will obtain the same gift of a Plenary Indulgence, if, on those days, they generously devote their charitable assistance to the sick for at least a few hours, as if they were tending Christ the Lord Himself (cf. Mt. 25:40); and recite the Our Father, the Creed and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, in a spirit of total detachment from any inclination to sin and with the determination to fulfil as soon as possible the conditions required for obtaining the Plenary Indulgence.

Finally, the members of the faithful who due to sickness, advanced age or other such reasons, are prevented from taking part in the above-mentioned ceremonies, will obtain the Plenary Indulgence provided that, in a spirit of total detachment from any

inclination to sin, with the intention of fulfilling the usual conditions as soon as possible, they take part in spirit in the sacred functions on the specific days particularly while the liturgical celebrations and the Message of the Supreme Pontiff are being broadcast via television and radio, devoutly pray for all the sick and offer their physical and spiritual suffering to God through the Virgin Mary, *Salus Infirmorum*.

B. The *Partial Indulgence* for all the faithful every time they address the merciful God with a contrite heart on the above-mentioned days, devout prayers for the sick in spirit during the *Year of Faith*.

This Decree is effective for this occasion. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary.
Given in Rome at the offices of the Apostolic Penitentiary on January 25, 2013, on the Feast of the Conversion of the Apostle St Paul, day closing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Cardinal **MANUEL MONTEIRO DE CASTRO** Major Penitentiary
Mons. **KRZYSZTOF NYKIEL** Regent
(Courtesy: *L'Osservatore Romano*)

O Deus Ego Amo Te

O God, I love thee, I love thee -
Not out of hope of heaven for me
Nor fearing not to love and be
In the everlasting burning.
Thou, thou, my Jesus, after me
Didst reach thine arms out dying,
For my sake sufferedst nails and lance,
Mocked and marred countenance,
Sorrows passing number,
Sweat and care and cumber,
Yea and death, and this for me,
And thou couldst see me sinning:
Then I, why should not I love thee,
Jesus, so much in love with me?
Not for heaven's sake; not to be
Out of hell by loving thee;
Not for any gains I see;
But just the way that thou didst me
I do love and I will love thee;
What must I love thee, Lord, for then?
For being my king and God. Amen.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Tribute to Rev. Sr. Margaret Mary Fernando scjm

Rev. Sr. Margaret Mary was born in 1927 to a devout Catholic family. She entered religious life in 1947 and made her religious profession in 1951. She was one of those who were blessed to celebrate the diamond jubilee of her religious profession in 2011.

She was a perfect and accurate mathematics teacher. She formed the students in the way of discipline. She taught at the convent of Child Jesus for long years.

Sr. Margaret was appointed as superior at Ratnapura Convent in 1972. There after she served as superior in different communities until her retirement and then she requested to come to the Home for Elders in Kegalle. She was a caring superior and animated the communities toward its vision.

She has served the province in many different capacities. As provincial bursar, provincial



Rev. Sr. Margaret Mary

councilor, junior mistress, directress of recruitment team and head of the province retreat team.

As provincial bursar she served for twelve long years and assisted the provincial bursar for another twelve years directing the province towards self sufficiency. She never had the modern technology that we have today, but she was perfect and accurate in her calculations.

As the provincial councilor she played a great role in assisting the provincial.

She was a very valiant woman of great

courage and deep commitment. Her untiring service will be remembered by the province with grateful hearts. As the directress of the recruitment team she worked hard and diligently to call the disciples to follow the Lord. She organized the team in such a way that they were able to work throughout the year without much difficulty.

She was a person who found her satiation in God. Her deep union with God inspired her to engage herself in many charitable works. As she was a God seeker the province chose her and appointed her to be the head of the retreat team. She formed the province retreat team and was responsible for giving the annual retreats on charism. In fact she was heavily involved in defining the charism of the congregation. She was also one of the sisters who loved the Message given to the congregation through Mother Hostia. Her favorite line in the message was

“you are called not to do great things but to disappear.” She tried to live this and impart it to all the sisters.

Sr. Margaret Mary having completed her mission returns now to the giver of life. The Gospel passage, vine and branches, being her favorite passage reminds us that if we constantly remain united to the great vine, the giver of life; we will have life within and bear much fruit; fruits that will last. Those of us who shared life with Sr. Margaret Mary have witnessed that this is true

As we wish goodbye to her, we rejoice with her in her union with the giver of life and ask Sr. Margaret Mary, all the faithful departed and saints to intercede for us who are left behind, so that we may be faithful to the commandment of the giver of life to remain united to Him.

Sr. Sandamalie Kurera scjm
St. Mary's Convent,
Matara

General Directory for Catechesis

The General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) has been gifted in order to re-establish and revitalise the goals of Evangelization and the process of Catechesis. GDC further embraces its goals for the active participation of every Catholic.

The following guidelines are fully developed in the GDC and Catechists are encouraged to be fruitful in the mission entrusted to them.

1. Catechesis is an essential moment in the process of evangelization. It is a gradual process, it is the task of the catechist to lead the people to a greater understanding that they are a part of the believing and worshipping community (GDC 47,63,146,156).
2. The sole aim of the process of catechesis is to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful expression within the context of the culture and faith-filled expression of the local Christian community (GDC 63,65,66).
3. The task of the process of catechesis could be listed as follows
 - Promoting knowledge of the faith.
 - Educating for an active liturgical participation.
 - Helping people to be morally sound.
 - Teaching prayer.
 - Providing with some kind of understanding of community life and missionary activity (GDC 85-87).
4. The Primary source for the teaching of the Church is the Scripture together with the Tradition as presented in the Teaching of the Magisterium (GDC 120-128).
5. Catechesis is taking a place in the Christian community (GDC 20, 158, 159, 168).
6. The baptismal catechumenate is the model for all catechesis, liturgical catechesis is an essential part of the catechetical process (GDC 68, 71, 90).
7. Catechesis incorporates Faith sharing in the family and encourages reflections on Sunday Readings (GDC 226,255).
8. The Gospel, proclaimed in the catechetical process, could be perceived as Good News which, embodies the message of Salvation (GDC 30, 95-97).
9. The Divine Design is revealed through numerous events and words. Catechesis finds language capable of communicating the Word of God in various circumstances related to the life-situation of the people (GDC 38, 109, 146).
10. The formation of catechists is a process of empowering catechists to communicate the Gospel Message, hence, the role of the catechist may become an effective witness, a credible teacher and skillful Faith-Educator (GDC 235-237).

To my mother on her birthday

On March 1, last year, I lost the most cheerful and lovable lady in my life, my dearest mother, Esme Abeyaratne. She was a very kind, honest and caring lady, dearly loved and highly respected by all her relatives and friends.

When I was informed by the medical specialist towards the end of August 2012 that there was no hope of a recovery, I watched her day-after-day slipping away into the final darkness of death. That experience is engraved in my memory. I was shaken and begged the Lord to cure her. Why this nasty sickness? When she could have done so much more to our family, for whom she was a rock.

Dearest Amma, you were the most adorable, precious, sweet and loving mother a daughter could ever have. You are the best gift I ever got in my life. I am always thankful to God for making me the luckiest child by giving me an awesome mom

like you. You were my only consolation and the greatest blessing in my life. When I needed hope and inspiration you were always there for me. Thank you for the wonderful and generous sacrifices you made for me. These are our loving greetings to you, Amma, on your birthday which falls on February 20.

“Dearest Lord, put your arms around her and grant her the fullness of life and joy in heaven and keep her with you as it is her first birthday away from home. A birthday spent in heaven means, a birthday spent with the Lord.”

We miss you in so many ways. We miss your immense love, so much. You will be in our hearts as long as we live. We thank you for sharing your life with us and for all the guidance, love, care and comforts you gave us and for all that you left behind to make our lives beautiful. You were there through all the storms of



Esme Abeyaratne

life. You gave us a sturdy hand to hold in times of stress and strife. You had the gentlest touch that soothed our wounds and ailments. You were sent to us as a special gift from above. The warmth of your hug is a memory that will last forever with us. We cannot send you a birthday card; we cannot touch your hand; but God will take our greetings to the one we love so much. No day dawns, no day ends without a thought of you.

I wish you eternal happiness with Jesus. May Angels, Saints and all in heaven celebrate your birthday and the

Heavenly Choirs will sing “Happy Birthday” to you. We all send our birthday wishes through the Lord in prayer.

O Merciful Jesus, look with compassion on the soul of your daughter, whom you called from this life so suddenly, a captive soul in purgatory, have mercy on the soul of thy servant Esme. Bring her from the shadows of evil to the bright throne of Heaven. Lord, you know that she loved you in this life and was faithful to you till the end. Take her Lord, into your Heavenly Kingdom and grant her the eternal life that you promised to your faithful ones. Heavenly Father, let our love and prayers open unto her the gates of your Eternal Home where we shall love her forever. O God in your kindness have mercy on the soul of our Esme, forgive her sins and grant her to see the brightness of your everlasting Glory. Amen.

From your ever loving daughter, Shivoli

St. Mary's College, Negombo pays tribute to Past Pupils



St. Mary's College - Negombo paid tribute to the past students, who are Rev. Priests, Brothers and retired teachers. Archbishop Emeritus, Rt. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Marcus a distinguished Old Boy presided at the Eucharistic Celebration, which was concelebrated by many priests who passed through the portals of St. Mary's College. To assemble at St. Mary's Church once more, was an enriching experience, which brought a lot of nostalgic memories.

Lent - A Season to Repent

The season of Lent brings back to mind, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who came to free us from our sins, and live a life that's right.

Life has its ups and downs, we know, yet we trust Him, and move along to guide us, and live a pleasing life and refrain from doing wrong,



God sent His only Son to us to lead us on life's way When our life on earth is over, We must strive to meet Him one day

Shirani David

Do parents deserve to suffer?

The A/L results have just been released and it also releases the tension of many students, who were in anticipation for a period of five months or more. It also soothes the anxiety of many of their parents too. All students who had tasted success give credit to their Alma Mater and more so to their parents as well. The teachers have been the guiding force towards their success, while the parents have been the propelling force behind their achievements.



For every parent, the birth of their child brings happiness and also a promise for the future. The anticipated promise of success in the future, largely depends on the child's academic performance. It is for this reason, that parents clamour to get their child admitted to the most prestigious school in town and provide the best possible education. Rational and sensible parent consider their child's education as an investment. A treasure which brings stability and a ray of hope to them, during the twilight stages of their lives.

Every parent without exception persuades and encourages their child to study. Thus they do their best in providing them every possible facility to do so. The child's academic achievements are obviously a preconceived victory for many a parent. Similarly the child's failure or academic downfall, is a disappointment to them as well. Yet these parents strive to do the very best in catalyzing their children to do better, instead of condemning them. The end result would be either a triumphant entry to the university or a defeated withdrawal from studies, to seek employment. In both instances the parents are made to keep their fingers crossed, till such time their child qualifies as a graduate or till the child finds gainful employment.

The parents who were delighted to have their children gaining entrance to the universities, subsequently tend to panic, when ever interruptions occur during their university career. The brainy ones at times tend to act irrationally, letting emotions get the better of their intelligence. The herd instinct, could force many into the misguided fold and even the innocent fall prey to it. A flimsy issue of injustice is enough cause to take away their focus on studies. The ones who suffer the most are the parents of these students.

The children who bow out from their academic career and whileaway time unemployed, are a cause of worry for

the parents. Although children are in no way pronounced as a burden, the struggle in life to make ends meet make it obvious, that it is so. An unemployed youth at home, weighs heavy responsibility on parents. The unoccupied child making no effort to seek employment and the ones not being committed to their place of work, jeopardize the parents, who suffer the most.

It raises a question that every child should answer. Do your parents deserve to suffer because of you?

It is a period during which a child is vulnerable to be inflicted with a faith crisis. The atheistic attitude of inquiry of the existence of God and contesting one's dependency on Him, may cause a worry to the parents. The child distancing from religious activity and spiritual devotion, would be a cause of contention. This possibly would bring about disharmony and unpleasantness at home. The child who rejects God, without discrimination could reject parents as well. This would be the worry that ruffles the parents. How best could they find a remedy to it. Attempting to contest and convince children would

lead to arguments and could make them adamant. To pray for a change of heart would be the best choice available. Thus the ones who suffer the most are the parents.

When the child's attitude changes, movements seem secretive and the company of friends unknown, parents foresee danger. The shady behavioral pattern is sniffed fishy by the parents, which make them nervous and worried. To confront and to make an inquiry could cause unpleasantness. Mother Mary too experienced the same in the life of Jesus. His movements were so unpredictable, but she knew for sure, that it was to do the will of the Father that Jesus strived for. Our parents do not have that consolation. Many debate within themselves to find reasons to respond to their unanswered questions. Where has he gone? What is he doing? This dilemma makes parents suffer.

The parents cannot detach themselves from the responsibility by saying, I have provided them with education, I have found them a job and I have propped them up to stand on their own feet, should I do more? Whether or not your son or daughter is a God fearing, loving and caring gentleman or lady, matters much in the final analysis. If it is not, a change of



heart is what is needed the most. It could be bought about only through the influence of the Creator. Pray to God, that your son or daughter would be a child of God and remain the same throughout. May the ones who have gone astray come back to God and to you. As in the parable of the 'prodigal son', the father waited patient-

ly till his son came back. All parents should pray without ceasing, and wait patiently till they come back to you and to God, as Monica did in the case of Augustine.

At the outset most parents pray to conceive. Then from the time of conception, they pray for a safe confinement. As and when the child falls sick, they resort to prayer. At the age of four they pray for school admission. From then onwards the child prays with them.

At decisive turning points in life, like O/L and A/L examinations, the parents pray on behalf of their children and this continues till the end. At the end of the day, only the prayerful parents have the consolation and benefit of gainful children. If it does not happen according to plan, the ones who suffer the most are the parents. It raises a question that every child should answer. Do your parents deserve to suffer because of you?

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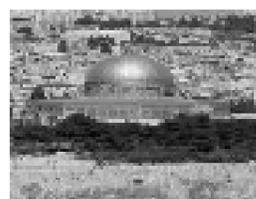
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EX. 418

(Q12N5956)

Under the caring wings they came for shelter



A warm welcome ceremony had been organized at St. Lawrence's Convent in order to greet the new batch of Grade one students, who came under her wings for the year 2013. They entered the school gates hand in hand with their lov-

ing parents, who symbolically gave their little children into the loving care of the Lawrentian School Family.

The ceremony was conducted following a spiritual service which was offered by the Chief Guest of the occasion, Rev. Fr. Bob

Rodrigo, the Parish Priest of St. Lawrence's Church.

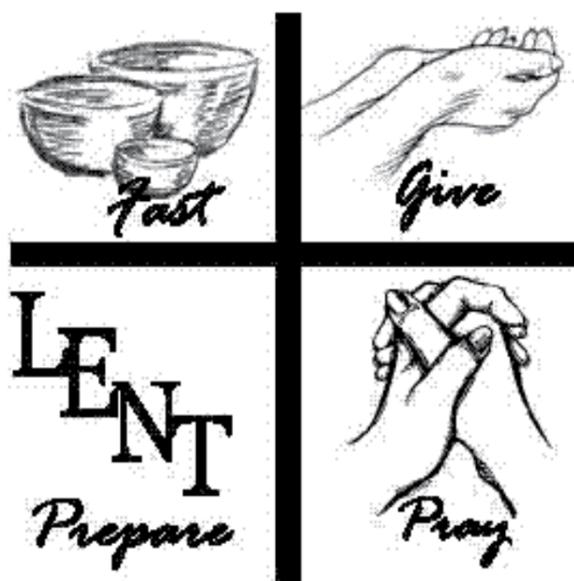
The programme consisted of music and drama, which was thoroughly enjoyed by the little ones. Rev. Fr. Bob blessed the new students and addressed the parents with an inspirational speech. Rev. Sr. Principal too voiced her sincere wishes towards the new members.

After the batch photograph with the Chief Guest, Rev. Sr. Principal, Rev. Sr. Superior, President of the PTA and their class teachers, the new comers were blessed and other gifted with flowers by the Grade Two students.

Sherline

A students view

What Lent really means to me.....



"Lent" as we all know is a period of Forty days before EASTER. And EASTER is the biggest plus most important feast for all Christian's around the world. The period of Lent is a good preparation for it. It's a time of prayer, penance and charity. During Lent we should pray that we may become faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Penance plays a major role during the period of Lent. That is repairing the damage we have done to others and especially to ourselves by doing wrong. We have to repent for sin. We must be sorry for what we have done wrong and not only that but we must also make a determined decision not to commit sin again, and must make a good confession.

We must give alms and do other charitable work; like looking after the sick beeding the poor who have no food to eat at all and providing clothes to people who have almost nothing to wear. You too may face many difficulties

in doing so but think about people who have nothing at all.... Knowing the fact that it's hard to do much and still you willingly wanting to help, that right there is what Lent really means.

It is not just showing other people what you can do, or what you do for others, it's what you do secretly and humbly that counts the most! We must also try our very best to become holy, and to be holy one must follow the path of Jesus; thinking of others and sacrificing, praying for others, helping others, caring and sharing with others.

I myself have gone through pain but I am really happy to offer it all to Jesus with a widely open heart, especially during this Lent season.

I am also very happy to have known at least the slightest bit of what kind of pain that Jesus went through, but unlike me He went through loads of tragic pain to save the sinners. I can feel close to Him by gladly offering

my pain and sorrow. I also want to be with the people who are in need of some kind of sympathy; not only sympathize but also DO something for them that will make both me and them happy. For example I will forego a meal or two to feed a hungry person, I will use my clothes carefully so that I can give it in a good condition after my using to somebody who has no proper clothes to wear. And I will most definitely pray to Jesus to take care of all the poor and suffering. I'm also very thankful to Ggod for all the good things He has bestowed upon me.

I am attending a really good Catholic Convent which has many good Rev. Sister's and teachers. I have very good friends too and most of all I have been blessed with an amazing family who have been with

me through my ups and downs. Therefore I have many things to thank God for. In a way I can think like Jesus and forgive my enemies like He forgave them, love my companions like He loved his disciples. It is not wrong to imitate Jesus cause only then can we become holy and peaceful. We have to help others and commit ourselves to the needy and still not forget that all these should be done willingly and in secret; not for the sake of showing people and gaining credit. Therefore by following Jesus and your heart as I have, we can all celebrate EASTER in a more meaningful manner.

*Nimasha Fernando
Grade 10
St. Lawrence's Convent
Colombo 06*

Rizana



Don't cry for me Sri Lanka
We never meant to let each other
down

I paid the dear price of my life
Blunder and ignorance cost my
young life.

My execution would not be in vain
If saner views prevail.

If the travails
Of other migrant workers are appeased
If the exodus ceased.
My family's retrieved
From its wallowing poverty relieved
My purpose achieved.

Don't weep for me my countrymen
Wanton tears of regret

The deed's done, but all's not lost.
Let me be the timely reminder.

Desist from this craving,
For pasturing on greener soil

For the dazzling shackless,
For the illusory pot of gold.

May stringent remedial measures immediately operate
Spare! Oh spare! Other migrant workers
My Fate!

Jeannette Cabraal

83RD BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE



MRS. RITA PERERA

Given to us: 22.02.1930

Entered into Eternal Glory: 30.01.2013

*"Our thoughts are with you always...
No one can ever take your place...
Rest in Almighty God's loving care...
Till in Heaven we meet someday."*

A Memorial Service to celebrate the life of Mrs. Rita Perera will be held on Thursdays 21.02.2013 at Holy Family Convent, Chapel, Galle Road, Bambalapitiya at 5.30 p.m. The presence of friends and relations will be very much appreciated.

Wilfred, his children Susith & Kshama, Sidath & Sandra, Sampatha & Naomal and grand children Tehasha, Sadhani, Sarath, Sahan, Shaluki, Naveen & Eranga.

11, Bambalapitiya Terrace, Colombo 4.
(N 5976)

You may drink from this fount of love

O come to the fountain of Love, Come to My Most Sacred Heart,
To My Holy Wounds. They are truly the pledge of My Love for you,
and this Love never ceases. Just as in My

Godhead I will always be,

so too My Love exists from eternity to eternity.

I have offered up this Love for you with My life,

so that it might belong forever to you. In My

Sacred Wounds it is the

treasury of graces with which I communicate myself,

drop by drop, through My Precious Blood,

in order to strengthen, heal and sanctify you.

My yearning is so immense that it would

gladly give even the last drop

of life to you, so as to rescue even the very last sinner.

You may drink deeply from this Fountain of Love.

You may ask for and share with others

My precious Gifts of Love;

for I want the whole world to experience healing

from the Ocean of Mercy that is My Love,

and Rredemption through My Holy Wounds.

Rienzie Ivan Perera

What it says in the Readings

Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.
(Mt. 4:4)

LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR C 17th Feb. - 24th Feb. 2013

Sun: First Sunday of Lent

Deut. 26:4-10; Rom. 10:8-13;
Lk. 4:1-13

Mon: Lev. 19:1-2,11-18; Mt. 25:31-46

Tue: Is. 55:10-11; Mt. 6: 7-15

Wed: Jona 3:1-10; Lk. 11:29-32

Thu: Est. 4:17n. Vul 14:3-5,12-14;
Mt. 7:7-12

Fri: Feast of Chair of St. Peter, the
Apostle

1 Pet. 5: 1-4; Mt. 16: 13-19

Sat: Deut. 26:16-19; Mt. 5: 43-48

Sun: Second Sunday of Lent

Gen. 15:5-12,17,18;
Phil 3: 17 4:1 (or 3:20-4:1); Lk. 9:28b-36

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Response: Put a steadfast spirit within us, O Lord

That we may be delivered from the worship of material things which swallow up all thought of God and spiritual things. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Put a steadfast spirit within us, O Lord

That we may not hunger after popularity and our own glory. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Put a steadfast spirit within us, O Lord

That we may have a spirit of self-denial, to be faithful in what we have decided to give up this Lent. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Put a steadfast spirit within us, O Lord

That we may seek reconciliation with anyone from whom we are presently estranged. Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Put a steadfast spirit within us, O Lord

First Reading:

Deut. 26:4-10

Moses tells his people to offer thanksgiving sacrifices to the Lord for the great works he had done to them in Egypt. He shows them how God had answered their prayer and rescued them from bondage in Egypt and gave them the Promised Land.

Second Reading:

Rom.10: 8-13.

St. Paul reminds the Jews of the deep union they should have with the Word and the Scriptures. It should be their very life if they are to be saved.

Gospel: Lk. 4:1-13.

The Gospel relates the Temptations of Jesus. Soon after His Baptism, Jesus was taken to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He was tempted in three ways.

Reflection.

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. During this season we are being prepared in a very special way to repent for our sins and to believe in the Lord in order that we may experience and share in the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of the Lord. There has to be a constant struggle in our day to day life, to experience the salvation which Jesus gained for us through His suffering, Death and Resurrection because the devil

is at work all day long to snatch us away from the Lord.

The Lord is fully aware of this and besides He knows that we need His grace to fight evil. He is aware of this because He too was tempted by the devil. Therefore through today's liturgy He reminds us that in our life's struggle against evil, God and His Scriptures are there to guide, help and protect us and it also wants us to constantly seek their help to save ourselves from the evil one. This has to be a life-long process. One is not saved, or protected merely through Baptism.

This is very clear in the temptation story of Jesus. As soon as Jesus was baptized He was led to the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. He lived there for forty days and then was tempted by the devil. If Jesus allowed Himself to be tempted soon after His baptism it is quite evident that the evil one will tempt each and every one of us too. We see Jesus tempted in three important but weak aspects in the life of man. The devil used all means to put Him down. First we have Jesus starved for forty days in the wilderness. Therefore He is hungry. He also has the power to create things out of nothing. But in the first temptation it is to create out of something. Bread out of stone. It is to make use of His power

to satisfy His own hunger and need. The evil one will tempt all of us too to use our power to satisfy our hunger and needs. Next it is the world. Jesus is shown the whole world and the devil wants the Lord to worship him. But Jesus says, "It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." We must realise that we worship the devil whenever we make use of his power to gain the things of the world.

In these first two temptations Jesus was quoting scripture and was finding refuge in it. But in the third the devil himself quotes scripture to tempt Jesus. Even devil quotes Scripture; the devil quotes Psalm 91: 11-12 to tempt Jesus, to test the promises and the power of God. We also test the power and promise of God when we present our intentions and then begin to question whether there is a God simply because we have not got what we have asked. The Lord overcomes these temptations because of the deep union he has with the Father and the Scriptures. He was united with them through constant prayer and reflection.

Therefore let us too seek the Lord's help. In the First Reading we saw that God answered the prayers of the Israelites and rescued them from Egypt. Let us endeavor

to quite often read the Scriptures so that we will find refuge in it as we are reminded in the Second Reading.

Aid Story.

In the olden days of bitter struggle between Scotland and England Robert Bruce was a heroic leader among the Scottish soldiers. A price was on his head. While pursuing Bruce, the English hit upon the plan of tracking him down with bloodhounds. Soon Bruce and his companion heard the deep baying of the hounds and guessed what it meant. "We are lost." Companion exclaimed. "The English have unslashed the hounds, and they are on our trail."

"We are not lost yet," replied Bruce. "They will not catch us. There is a river not far from here. We will swim it and the dogs will lose the scent." As Bruce had planned, when the dogs came to the water's edge they lost the trail. The Scottish hero and his companion escaped.

Sin and temptation pursues us like dogs of the enemy. There is one sure means of escape and that is Christ. We should plunge into the stream of Prayer, Scripture, Holy Communion and the Grace of Christ flowing to us by means of the Seven Sacraments. By these we can overcome and escape even the worst temptations.

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

Blessed Francisco and Jacinta Marto -February 20

The Seers of Fatima (1908-1919, 1910-1920)

It was the 13th of May in the year 1917. Away from the fertile regions of Fatima, a village some 110 miles north of the city of Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, stood the little known Cova da Iria where there took place an event that was to change forever the lives of three youngsters from Aljustrel who were shepherding their flock. Having first satiated their hunger, they had just about concluded the recitation of the rosary when, of a sudden that bright sunny morning a powerful flash of lightning tore through the sky, bathing them in an astonishingly dazzling glow and revealing to them a resplendent figure — a young maiden, the Virgin Mother of God!

Ten-year-old Lucia de Jesus and her two cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto were the three seers of that beatific vision and were to be recipients of the same for the next five months, a rendezvous they maintained uninterruptedly, except for August 13 when they were taken away for cross-questioning by the Mayor of Villa Nova de Ourem, under whose jurisdiction Fatima fell. An unexpected apparition, however, followed on August 19 while they grazed their flock in the "dos Valinhos."

The trio was asked by Mary

to learn to read and write; they were also asked to pray the rosary for peace in the world and the end of the war that was raging then, as well as to pray for the Pope, for sinners and for the conversion of Russia. It was Mary herself who had assured them of heaven, with the warning that they would each have to suffer much. She asked that the Rosary be recited regularly and that the world be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart. And, as promised by her, they did indeed experience the strengthening power of God's grace in their lives until the end, enabling them to fulfil all that was expected of them by Mary.

Doubt and suspicion, beatings and imprisonment were their lot until, eventually, no less than 90,000 people virtually witnessed the miracle of the sun and all else that accompanied the last apparition of Mary at Fatima. A remarkable change came over the children. They became kinder in their attitude towards all they came in contact with and were easily moved by the sufferings of their visits to the Eucharistic Lord increased in frequency and fervour, paving the way for their much-awaited union with Him, the Lord of their life, of all life. Francisco, who was born on June 11, 1908, was called to his reward on April 4, 1919 at Aljustrel; Jacinta, born on March 11, 1910, passed away to hers on February 20, 1920 at Lisbon. Lucia de Jesus lives on today as Sr. Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart.

The mortal remains of

Jacinta were taken from the family tomb of Baron Alvaiazeze in Ourem on September 12, 1935 and placed near those of Francisco in the parish cemetery. Later, on May 1, 1951, they were transferred to a specially prepared tomb in the side chapel to the left of the main altar of the Basilica at the Cova da Iria. The mortal remains of Francisco were solemnly transferred on March 13, 1952 to the Chapel on the right of the main altar in the same Basilica.

The process for the beatification of Francisco and Jacinta which commenced in 1952, concluded in 1979. The final documentation having been presented to the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on February 15, 1988, Francisco and Jacinta were declared "Venerabi on May 13, 1989 and beatified in the Jubilee Year 2000.

To the glory of God, while devotion to Our Lady of Fatima registers a steady increase in every respect, thanks to the unwavering faith of the three children, Lucy, Francisco and Jacinta, her Shrine at the Cova da Iria continues to draw people by the million, year after year, into the healing embrace of the Lonfi love.

Reflection: "Having been crowned by the Most Holy Trinity from heaven, Mary fulfils for us Christians the roles of Mother Teacher and Queen. On our part, we want to be good children diligent disciples and docile subjects" (Blessed James Alberione)

SUNDAY- RHYTHM FIRST WEEK IN LENT SEASON

- Devil -** "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf."
Jesus - "...Man does not live on bread alone."
Devil - "...Worship me, then it shall be yours."
Jesus - "You must worship the Lord your God, and serve Him alone."
Devil - "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here..."
Jesus - "You must not put the Lord your God to the test."
- Richest blessing -** Filled with the Holy Spirit, and ... Jesus was led by the Spirit through the wilderness.
- Richest result -** Having exhausted all these ways of tempting Jesus, the devil left Him.
- To Think -** When you are in God, He always guards and guides you. Are you in God or somebody else...?
- To Act -** Face the temptations with the Holy Spirit and RETURN to God.
- To Pray -** Dear Lord, my Strength, help me to choose your Way and encourage me to preach your Way through my words and deeds. Amen.

Rev. Fr. Randil Fernando OMI