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PROCLAIM

A magazine for Missionary Animation



**"I can"
must become
"we can together"
- Pope Francis**

"Go out to the whole world and PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS to all creation" Mark 16:15



MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD DAY – 9th Feb 2020

Little missionaries, “I am with you always...” – Matthew 28:20

“In JESUS, I am with you”



“For JESUS, I am with you”



“Through JESUS, I am with you”



“With JESUS, I am with you”



All for the glory of God, forever and ever...

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Jesus rebuked the wind and ordered the sea, "Quiet now! Be still!" The wind dropped and there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to them, "Why are you so frightened? Do you still have no faith?"

- Mark 4:39-40

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Mission Children

We have begun yet another new year, which brings more opportunities to us to explore how we could proclaim the Good news to others in different and creative ways. May the Lord of the missions inspire us to be an inspiration to others with our witnessing life.

The role of children in the Christian life and creative mission is primordial for several reasons. Their faith inspires the elders to deepen their faith. The children become teachers who instruct us how to be deeply rooted in God with their prayers and laughter. The role of elders in shaping the faith of the children is also essential since childhood is the right time to catechise children in understanding the different roles of Christians. The childhood is the best time to get rooted in faith. It is this learning that will leave a lasting impact on children in their life.



On a general note, we miss instructing our children to be missionaries in their life. Mostly we teach them how they ought to be in the future rather than how they ought to be now. But they are not products manufactured to live only for the future; they are persons who should be taught to live in the present. What Pope Francis said about the Youth is also applicable to children: “we cannot just say that young people are the future of our world. They are its present; even now, they are helping to enrich it” [No. 64, *Christus Vivit - To Young People and to the Entire People of God*].

I would like to share with you a very touching experience of a priest friend of mine with Alice, a Fourth Standard girl studying in his parish school. On Ash Wednesday last year, he distributed small dumb boxes with a big symbol of the cross sketched on it for the season of lent to be kept in every family so that the members may put in the coins as a sign of sacrifice the purpose of helping the poor. The box was to be brought back to the church on Good Friday. This little Alice went to see the parish priest from the school with her bag on her shoulders. As she extended both her hands together to receive the box from the parish priest, he told her, “Turn around and I shall place it in your bag. Otherwise when you carry this, the whole market would be staring at you.” Wanting to carry the dumb box with the symbol of the cross with both her hands, she told the priest, “At least this way, let them know that I am a Christian,” and she walked off proudly with the box in her hands.

A little girl's courage to let others know that she was a Christian is a daring act of her missionary zeal. She did not want to wait to preach Christ and become a missionary when she would become an adult. She is a missionary 'now.' Children are our best teachers. If we instruct them properly they teach us more.

Many countries around the globe celebrate Missionary Childhood Day on the 6th of January, the day of Epiphany. In India, we celebrate it in the month of February. The purpose of the day is to make children aware of the missionary activities and the status of children in mission countries. The children are motivated to pray at their young age and begin to help other children in need. Thus they may become persons of charity and mission.

Let us realise the potential of children and help them to lead a witnessing life.

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
National Director (PMO-India)

Every war is a form of fratricide

The 53rd World Day of Peace will be observed on 1 January 2020.

Pope Francis' message for the 53rd World Day of Peace, *Peace as a journey of hope: dialogue, reconciliation and ecological conversion*, describes peace as a journey of hope to be undertaken in a spirit of dialogue, reconciliation and ecological conversion.

The Pope begins by saying that hope puts us on the path to peace, while “mistrust and fear weaken relationships and increase the risk of violence.” He urges us to be artisans of peace, open to dialogue in a spirit of reconciliation, on a journey of ecological conversion that leads to a “new way of looking at life.”

Hope keeps us moving forward

Describing peace as “a great and precious value, the object of our hope and the aspiration of the entire human family”, Pope Francis says it is a goal towards which to strive in spite of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

He recalls the scars of war and conflict borne in “the memory and in the flesh” of humanity, and says they “affect especially the poor and the vulnerable,” perpetrating humiliation and exclusion, sorrow and injustice.

Fraternity, an innate vocation of humanity

“Entire nations – the Message reads - find it difficult to break free of the chains of exploitation and corruption that fuel hatred and violence. Even today, dignity, physical integrity, freedom, including religious freedom, communal solidarity and hope in the future are denied to great numbers of men and women, young and old.”

“Every war,” the Pope says, “is a form of fratricide that destroys the human family's innate vocation to brotherhood.”

Peace and stability incompatible with fear of the other

War, the Pope notes, “often begins with the inability to accept the diversity of others, which then fosters attitudes of aggrandizement and domination born of selfishness and pride, hatred and the desire to caricature, exclude and even destroy the other”.

Referring to his recent visit to Japan and his call for the elimination of nuclear weapons, Pope Francis emphasizes that “peace and international stability are incompatible with attempts to build upon the fear of mutual destruction or the threat of total

annihilation.”

They can be achieved, he says, only on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation. Fraternity generates dialogue and trust

A part of the message is dedicated to the issue of mistrust and fear which, the Pope says “weaken relationships and increase the risk of violence, creating a vicious circle that can never lead to a relationship of peace.”

“Even nuclear deterrence can only produce the illusion of security,” he says.

The only way to break down the current dynamic of distrust, the Pope continues, is by pursuing “a genuine fraternity based on our common origin from God and exercised in dialogue and mutual trust.”

The desire for peace, he reiterates, “lies deep within the human heart, and we should not resign ourselves to seeking anything less than this.”

The memory of the past for a future of peace

Pope Francis describes memory as the horizon of hope: “Many times, in the darkness of wars and conflicts, the remembrance of even a small gesture of solidarity received can lead to



courageous and even heroic decisions. It can unleash new energies and kindle new hope in individuals and communities.”

Recalling his moving meeting with the *Hibakusha*, the survivors of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who still bear witness to the horror of the past in order to ensure and build a more fair and fraternal future, the Pope describes memory as "the fruit of experience, to serve as the basis and inspiration for present and future decisions to promote peace.”

The challenge of overcoming personal and political interests

“Setting out on a journey of peace,” Pope Francis says, “is a challenge made all the more complex because the interests at stake in relationships between people, communities and nations, are numerous and conflicting”.

Hence he appeals to “people's moral conscience and to personal and political will,” because “peace emerges from the depths of the human heart and political will must always be renewed, so that new ways can be found to reconcile and unite individuals and communities.”

Artisans of peace

In the final part of the Message Pope Francis reminds us that peace is something that must be built up continually, and that it is a journey to be made together in constant pursuit of the common good.

“The world does not need empty words but convinced witnesses, peacemakers who are open to a dialogue that rejects exclusion or manipulation,” he says.

In fact, he elaborates, “we cannot truly achieve peace without a convinced dialogue between men and women who seek the truth beyond ideologies and differing opinions,” to the point even of “seeing in an enemy the face of a brother or sister.”

The peace process, he explains, requires patience, commitment and creativity. It must be

built, step by step, opening the way to a shared hope that is stronger than the desire for vengeance.

Recognizing each other as brothers and sisters

Pope Francis goes on to urge all men and women of goodwill to “renounce the desire to dominate others” and exhorts us to learn to look at each other “as persons, sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters”. Only by choosing the path of respect, he says, “can we break the spiral of vengeance and set out on the journey of hope”.

Learning “to live in forgiveness, we grow in our capacity to become men and women of peace,” he says, noting that true peace can only be obtained through a more just

economic system, “marked by quotas of gratuitousness and communion”.

Ecological conversion: a new way of looking at life

Recalling his Encyclical Letter, “*Laudato si'*”, the Pope invokes an ecological conversion as a constructive and just response to “the consequences of our hostility towards others, our lack of respect for our common home or our abusive exploitation of natural resources – seen only as a source of immediate profit, regardless of local communities, the common good and nature itself.”

He says the journey undertaken by the recent Synod on the Amazon moves us to commit to the renewal of “a peaceful relationship between communities and the land, between present and past, between experience and hope”.

The Pope describes it as “a journey made of listening and contemplation of the world that God has given us as a gift to make our common home.”

“The ecological conversion for which we are appealing will lead us to a new way of looking at life, as we consider the generosity of the Creator who has given us the earth and called us to a share in joy and moderation,” he writes. The Pope notes that for Christians, it requires that “the effects of



Admirabile Signum

Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter on significance of Christmas crèche

Pope Francis has written an Apostolic Letter on the meaning and importance of the nativity scene. He signed the Letter during his visit on Sunday afternoon to the Italian town of Greccio.

Greccio is the mountain village where Saint Francis of Assisi created the first crib scene in 1223 to commemorate the birth of Jesus. Pope Francis returned to the town on Sunday to deliver his Apostolic Letter entitled, “Admirabile signum”.

An enchanting image

The Latin title of the Letter refers to the “enchanting image” of the Christmas crèche, one that “never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder”, writes the Pope. “The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God”, he says.

A living Gospel

“The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture”, continues Pope Francis. Contemplating the Christmas story is like setting out on a spiritual journey, “drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman.” So great is His love for us, writes the Pope, “that He became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with Him.”

A family tradition

The Pope hopes this Letter will encourage the family tradition of preparing the nativity scene, “but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares.” Praising the imagination and creativity that goes into these small masterpieces, Pope Francis says he hopes this custom will never be lost



“and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.”

The Gospel origin of the crèche

Pope Francis recalls the origin of the Christmas crèche as related in the Gospels. “Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in

the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal Himself as ‘the bread come down from heaven.’” The nativity scene “evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus' life and brings them close to our own daily lives”, writes the Pope.

Saint Francis' crèche in Greccio

Pope Francis takes us back to the Italian town of Greccio, which Saint Francis visited in the year 1223. The caves he saw there reminded him of the



countryside of Bethlehem. On 25 December, friars and local people came together, bringing flowers and torches, writes the Pope. “When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey.” A priest celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, “showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist.”

The start of the tradition

This is how our tradition began, continues



Pope Francis, “with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.” With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization, he writes. His teaching continues today “to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith.”

A sign of God's tender love

Pope Francis explains that the Christmas crèche moves us so deeply because it shows God's tender love. From the time of its Franciscan origins, “the nativity scene has invited us to 'feel' and 'touch' the poverty that God's Son took upon Himself in the Incarnation”, writes the Pope. “It asks us to meet Him and serve Him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need.”

The meaning of the crèche elements

Pope Francis reflects on the meaning behind the elements that make up the nativity scene. He begins with the background of “a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night.” We think of when we have experienced the darkness of night, he says, yet even then, God does not abandon us. “His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering.”

The landscape

The Pope then writes about the landscapes that often include ancient ruins or buildings. He explains how these ruins are “the visible sign of

fallen humanity, of everything that inevitably falls into ruin, decays and disappoints.” This scenic setting tells us that Jesus has come “to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendour.”

The shepherds

Turning to the shepherds, Pope Francis writes that, “unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation.” The shepherds respond to God “who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet Him with love, gratitude and awe”, he adds.

The poor and the lowly

The presence of the poor and the lowly, continues the Pope, is a reminder that “God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of His love and who ask Him to draw near to them.” From the manger, “Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.”

Everyday holiness

Then there are the figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, writes Pope Francis, “from the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way.”

Mary and Joseph

The Pope then focuses on the figures of Mary and Joseph.

“Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows Him to every visitor”, he writes. “In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey His word and to put it into practice. Saint Joseph stands by her side, “protecting the Child and His Mother.” Joseph is the guardian, the just

man, who “entrusted himself always to God's will.”

The Infant Jesus

But it is when we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, that the nativity scene comes alive, says Pope Francis. “It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way He wished to reveal the greatness of His love: by smiling and opening His arms to all.” The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, “but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life.”

The Three Kings

As the Feast of Epiphany approaches, we add the Three Kings to the Christmas crèche. Their presence reminds us of every Christian's responsibility to spread the Gospel, writes Pope Francis. “The Magi teach us that people can come to Christ by a very long route”, but returning home, they tell others of this amazing encounter with the Messiah, “thus initiating the spread of the Gospel among the nations.”

Transmitting the faith

The memories of standing before the



Christmas crèche when we were children should remind us “of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren”, says Pope Francis. It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged, “what matters is that it speaks to our lives.”

The Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith, concludes Pope Francis. “Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with Him.”

----- *Vatican News* ♦

Continued from Page 4: Every war is a form of fratricide



their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.”

We obtain all that we hope for

In the last chapter of his Message, the Pope says “The journey of reconciliation calls for patience and trust. Peace will not be obtained unless it is hoped for.”

He stresses that it is necessary to believe in the possibility of peace, inspired by God's love for

each one of us, that is “liberating, limitless, gratuitous and tireless”.

His invitation is to overcome fears that are at the roots of conflict, to promote a culture of encounter, to give life to universal fraternity, as we tread a Christian path sustained by the sacrament of Reconciliation, which “requires us to set aside every act of violence in thought, word and deed, whether against our neighbours or against God's creation”.

“The grace of God our Father,” Pope Francis concludes, “is bestowed as unconditional love. Having received His forgiveness in Christ, we can set out to offer that peace to the men and women of our time. Day by day, the Holy Spirit prompts in us ways of thinking and speaking that can make us artisans of justice and peace”.

----- *By Linda Bordoni: Vatican News* ♦

The Lord bless us and keep us!

By Fr Albert Lakra

A story is told that at the beginning of a new year, a high school principal posted his teachers' New Year's resolutions on the bulletin board.

As the teachers gathered around the bulletin board, a great commotion started. One of the teachers was complaining. "Why weren't my resolutions posted?" She was throwing such a temper tantrum that the principal hurried to his office to see if he had overlooked her resolutions. Sure enough, he had mislaid them on his desk. As he read her resolutions he was astounded. This teacher's first resolution was not to let little things upset her in the New Year.

Or, how about this one...A son called his parents to wish them 'A Happy New Year' and when his Dad answered the phone, he asked his dad, "Well Dad, what's your New Year's resolution?" His dad replied, "To make your mother as happy as I can all year," When his mom got on the phone he asked her the same question and she replied, "To see that your dad keeps his New Year's resolution."



threshold of a "New Year" and a "New Beginning." Here we are in a month named after the Roman god Janus, an appropriate personification of the start of the new year. The one special thing about the god Janus is he is two-faced. He has a face looking to the past and a face looking to the future at the same time. That is why the god Janus became the symbol of New Year where we look at the past and give thanks for that. We look to the future and gather our hopes for that.

So, today as we get rid of an old year and look forward to a new one, we all try to be a little like Janus. This is indeed a time to reflect and think about what the past year that has just ended has brought and what the new year lying right ahead of us could bring. The beginning of a new year provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the special gift of time:

We recall the events of the previous year and express our gratitude to God for all the good things that have happened, all the while being aware that there have also been sad and painful experiences and perhaps sinful realities for which we feel sorry, and also the missed opportunities for which we regret. It is a time to reflect, to stop and analyze, to take stock of our priorities, values, pursuits, and goals. Through soul searching questions we find that a review of the past year naturally leads to setting goals and



Well, we too often make resolutions when the New Year comes. Sometimes we are able to keep them, other times we may be a failure. But that should never discourage us. We all must have "a new beginning for a new year."

Today is 1st January and we stand on the

Mary, Mother of God

By Mahesh H Lobo

Mamma! Ma.... Mother! This is a beautiful word in any language which evokes great feeling of reverence, devotion and emotional sentiments. It is said that it is the child's first legible word! The word "Mamma" brings to one's mind varied and rich memories. Mother is placed on pedestal and revered. In Indian culture, mother occupies an important role in everyday life. Before beginning anything new or important, one seeks mother's blessings by touching her feet. Mother is considered as life bearer without whom you or I could not be in this world.

It is fitting therefore to begin a New Year as God's gift of time to us by invoking Mother's blessings. The Church presents to us today Mary as Mother of God and calls all the catholic community to accept her as their mother and revere her as God's Mother.

The Almighty God could have chosen a different way to appear in this world, but in His Wisdom, He chose a simple woman to be His mother when He wanted to enter this world assuming human nature. He chose Mary of Nazareth to be His mother and from the Cross, He gave her as our Mother. Isn't it then meaningful and fitting to touch her feet as we begin the New Year? The Church in fact does just that by celebrating on the first day of the Year, the solemnity: Mary, Mother of God.

God's Mother? How can this be? God has no



beginning and no end. So, if God was born, then he would have had a beginning! So how can Mary be the mother of God? What the Bible has to say? In the book of Genesis we read: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters (1:1-2). The Evangelist John starts his gospel: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the

beginning with God; (1:1-2) and in verse 14 he says: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

The Word – who was with God, the Word himself being God became flesh and to become flesh, he chose a woman to receive this Word in her womb, and give birth to the Word after nine months as a babe of Bethlehem. This was possible because with God nothing is impossible. His power overshadowed Mary as Luke puts in 1:35 And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

So, the Eternal God, who is Spirit, assuming human nature to be one with us, had a beginning in history and this happened with his birth as a babe born to Mary. Thus Mary becomes the Mother of Incarnate Word who is God, who has neither the beginning nor end. The Eternal Now enters the history of time with a beginning and an end. Thus Mary becomes the Mother of that Eternal Now, Word which was in the beginning. Therefore Mary truly becomes the Mother of Jesus who is the Word Incarnate, the eternal Word, the one Who has neither the beginning nor an end.

Secondly, by stating Mary as the Mother of



God, the Church in no way is divinizing Mary, rather the Church is asserting that the one who was born to her is divine – God Himself – that is, Jesus is truly God. (One who sees me sees the Father – Jesus had told this to Philip when he wanted to see the Father. “I and Father are One” – a clear statement by Jesus that He is part of the God-head), Mary still remains a mortal, like you and me, but without sin because her election to be the Mother of God. Elizabeth, when Mary visited her, filled with the Holy Spirit exclaims: And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord (God) should come to me? (Luke 1:43). Elizabeth truly recognizes the role of Mary and acknowledges publicly that Mary is the Mother of God. She further declares her: Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!

By stating and affirming Mary is the Mother of God, the Church presents Mary as God-bearer. She brought the All Holy, All Powerful, All knowing Infinite God whom we cannot see nor can we behold His glory, to this world in flesh and blood. Therefore she becomes the chosen vessel of God bearing the Word in her womb for nine months and deliver Him to the world in flesh and blood so that we can see Him, behold Him and relate to Him. Truly blessed is She!

Yet, the Church recognizes her unique God-given role but doesn't offer worship to Mary which is reserved and set apart to God alone – to the Trinity: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Mary is offered highest form of reverence – because Mary herself, filled with the Holy Spirit exclaims: Henceforth all generations will call me blessed!

Mary's role is to bring the Supreme God into this world in flesh and blood. She became the chosen instrument of God to reach us in a tangible way. Surely, when we honor and revere her and seek her intercession, she will bring the Word made flesh to us too.

Secondly this feast reminds us that we are



called to be God-bearers everyday of 2020 and everyday of our life. We have to receive the Word of God into our lives, into our hearts and provide flesh and blood to this Word of God in our life through our words and action. The more we become God-bearers, the more we become like our Mother and God becomes tangible to us and through us to others.

The doctrine of the Church

Based on these references in the New Testament and on the traditional belief of the early Church, the Council of Ephesus affirmed in AD 431 that Mary was truly the Mother of God because "according to the flesh" she gave birth to Jesus, who was truly God from the first moment of His conception by Mary. Twenty years later, in AD 451, the Council of Chalcedon affirmed the Motherhood of Mary as a dogma, an official doctrine of the Holy Catholic Church. Since Jesus is God and Mary is his mother, she is the Mother of God, Mother of the Messiah and the Mother of Christ our Divine Savior. We also learn from the Holy Scriptures and Tradition that God filled the mother of His only Son with



all celestial graces, freed her at the moment of her conception from original sin, allowed her to play an active role in the redemptive work of Jesus, and finally took her to heaven, body and soul, after her death. As He was dying on the cross, Jesus gave us the precious gift of His own mother to be our heavenly Mother.

(Material support from Catechism of the Catholic Church) ♦

Promoting digital child dignity

In a major address on Sunday, 14 November 2019, Pope Francis contextualizes the “scourge” of abuse, and appeals for an “all-out battle against the abuse of minors, both sexually and in other areas.”



families”. Citing the best data available – “in my opinion,” he said, still partial” – the Pope said the “first truth that emerges” is that “those who perpetrate *abuse* that is acts of physical, sexual, or emotional violence, are primarily *parents, relatives, husbands of child brides, coaches, and teachers*”.

“The time has come, then, to work together to eradicate the evil” of child abuse, Pope Francis said, in a speech delivered at the close of the final Mass for the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church. “The time has come to find a correct equilibrium of all values in play and to provide uniform directives for the Church, avoiding the two extremes of a *'justicialism'* provoked by guilt for past errors and media pressure, and a *defensiveness* that fails to confront the causes and effects of these grave crimes”.

Speaking to church leaders, primarily the presidents of the world's episcopal conferences, the Holy Father said, “the Church's aim will be to hear, watch over, protect, and care for abused, exploited, and forgotten children, wherever they are”. To achieve that goal, he continued, “the Church must rise above the ideological disputes and journalistic practices that often exploit, for various interests, the very tragedy experienced by little ones”.



A global context

Pope Francis began his address by putting the sexual abuse of children in a global context. The work of the Meeting, he said, “has made us realize once again that the gravity of the scourge of sexual abuse of minors is, and historically has been, a widespread phenomenon in all cultures and societies”. Even today, he said, it is difficult to get a true idea of “the real extent of the phenomenon”, since sexual abuse is often not reported, “particularly the great number committed within

The Pope concludes, “we are thus facing a universal problem, tragically present almost everywhere, and affecting everyone”. “Yet we need to be clear”, he continues, “that while gravely affecting our societies as a whole, this evil is in no way less monstrous when it takes place within the Church”. Indeed, “the brutality of this worldwide phenomenon becomes all the more grave and scandalous in the Church, for it is utterly incompatible with her moral authority and ethical credibility”.

The Church, Pope Francis says, “feels called to combat this evil that strikes at the very heart of her mission, which is to preach the Gospel to the little ones and to protect them from ravenous wolves”. He insists, “if in the Church there should emerge even a single case of abuse – which already in itself represents an atrocity – that case will be faced with the utmost seriousness”.

Pope Francis notes that the phenomenon of the sexual abuse of minors cannot be understood without considering “power”, “since it is always the result of an abuse of power” which is also present “in other forms of abuse”, such as “child soldiers, child prostitutes, starving children”, trafficking victims, “child victims of war, refugee children, aborted children, and so many others”.

A manifestation of the spirit of evil

But, the Pope continues, “Before all this



cruelty, all this idolatrous sacrifice of children to the god of power, money, pride and arrogance, empirical explanations alone are not sufficient”.

While empirical explanations can provide an explanation, they are “incapable of giving us a meaning”. So, he asks, “what would be the existential 'meaning' of this criminal phenomenon”. “In the light of its human breadth and depth, it is none other than the present-day manifestation of the spirit of evil”. He warns that “if we fail to take account of this dimension, we will remain far from the truth and lack real solutions”.

Pope Francis says that “Just as we must take every practical measure that common sense, the sciences and society offer us, neither must we lose sight of this reality; we need to take up the spiritual means that the Lord himself teaches us: humiliation, self-accusation, prayer and penance”. This, he says, “is the only way to overcome the spirit of evil”.

Looking to “best practices” formulated under the guidance of the World Health Organization, as well as the work of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and the contributions made by the “Protection of Minors” Meeting, Pope Francis said the Church going forward will concentrate in particular on eight aspects of the crisis: protection of children, impeccable seriousness, genuine purification, formation, strengthening and reviewing guidelines by Episcopal Conferences, accompaniment of those who have been abused, the digital world, and sexual tourism”.

Notably, Pope Francis reiterated his commitment that “the Church will spare no effort to do all that is necessary to bring to justice *whosoever* has committed such crimes. The



Church will never seek to hush up or not take seriously any case” of abuse of minors.

The Holy Father also thanked all priests and consecrated persons “who serve the Lord faithfully and totally”, despite the “shameful conduct of some of their confreres”; as well as the “majority of priests who are not only faithful to their celibacy, but spend themselves in a ministry today made even more difficult by the scandals of the few (but always too many of their confreres”. He thanked, too, the faithful, who “who are well aware of the goodness of their pastors, and who continue to pray for them and to support them”.

Opportunity for purification

Finally, the Pope stressed the importance of “turning this evil into an opportunity for purification”. Quoting Edith Stein, St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Pope Francis said, “Surely, the decisive events of history of the world have been essentially influenced by souls about whom the history books remain silent”. The “holy, faithful People of God”, he explained, “in its daily silence, in many forms and ways continues to demonstrate and attest with 'stubborn' hope that the Lord never abandons but sustains the constant and, in so many cases, painful devotion of his children”.

“The best results and the most effective resolution that we can offer to the victims, to the People of Holy Mother Church and to the entire world”, the Pope said, “are the commitment to personal and collective conversion, the humility of learning, listening, assisting and protecting the most vulnerable”.

An all-out battle against abuse

And he concluded his address with his “heartfelt appeal for an all-out battle against the abuse of minors both sexually and in other areas, on the part of all authorities and individuals, for we are dealing with abominable crimes that must be erased from the face of the earth: this is demanded by all the many victims hidden in families and in the various settings of our societies”.

----- *Vatican News* ♦

The treasure of Church

Here is the English translation provided by the Vatican of Pope Francis' homily during the mass in the Vatican Basilica on World Day of the Poor, November 17, 2019.



In today's Gospel, Jesus astounds both his contemporaries and us. While every else was praising the magnificent temple in Jerusalem, Jesus tells them that “one stone” will not be left “upon another” (*Lk* 21:6). Why does he speak these words about so sacred an institution, which was not merely a building but a unique religious symbol, a house for God and for the believing people? Why does he prophesy that the firm certitude of the people of God would collapse? Why, ultimately, does the Lord let our certitudes collapse when our world has fewer and fewer of them?

Let us look for answers in the words of Jesus. He tells us that *almost* everything will pass away. Almost everything, but not *everything*. On this next to last Sunday in Ordinary Time, he explains that what will collapse and pass away are the *penultimate* things, not the ultimate ones: the temple, not God; kingdoms and human events, not humanity itself. The penultimate things, which often appear definitive but are not, pass away. They are majestic realities like our temples, and terrifying ones like earthquakes; they are signs in heaven and wars on the earth (cf vv 10f).

To us, these are front-page news, but the Lord puts them on the second page. That which will never pass away remains on the front page: the living God, infinitely greater than any temple we build for him, and the human person, our neighbor, who is worth more than all the news reports of the

world. So, to help us realize what really counts in life, Jesus warns us about two temptations.

The first is the temptation of haste, of the *right now*. For Jesus, we must not follow those who tell us that the end is coming immediately, that “the time is at hand” (v. 8). That is, we must not follow the alarmists who fuel fear of others and of the future, for fear paralyzes the heart and mind.

Yet how often do we let ourselves be seduced by a frantic desire to know *everything right now*, by the itch of curiosity, by the latest sensational or scandalous news, by lurid stories, by the screaming those who shout loudest and angriest, by those who tell us it is “now or never”. This haste, this *everything right now*, does not come from God. If we get worked up about the *right now*, we forget what remains *forever*: we follow the passing clouds and lose sight of the sky.

Drawn by the latest outcry, we no longer find time for God or for our brother and sister living next door. How true this is today! In the frenzy of



running, of achieving everything right now, anyone left behind is viewed as a nuisance. And considered disposable. How many elderly, unborn, disabled and poor persons are considered useless. We go our way in haste, without worrying that gaps are increasing, that the greed of a few is adding to the poverty of many others.

As an antidote to haste, Jesus today proposes

to each of us *perseverance*. “By your endurance, you will gain your lives” (v. 19). Perseverance entails moving forward each day with our eyes fixed on what does not pass away: the Lord and our neighbor. This is why perseverance is the gift of God that preserves all his other gifts (cf. SAINT AUGUSTINE, *De Dono Perseverantiae*, 2.4). Let us ask that each of us, and all of us as Church, may persevere in the good and not lose sight of what really counts.

There is a second illusion that Jesus wants to spare us. He says: “Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ Do not go after them” (v. 8). It is the *temptation of self-centredness*.

Christians, since we do not seek the *right now* but the *forever*, are not concerned with the *me* but with the *you*. Christians, that is, do not follow the siren song of their whims, but rather the call of love, the voice of Jesus. How is Jesus' voice discerned? “Many will come in my name”, the Lord says, but they are not to be followed: wearing the label “Christian” or “Catholic” is not enough to belong to Jesus. We need to speak the same language as Jesus: that of love, *the language of the you*. Those who speak the language of Jesus are not the ones who say *I*, but rather the ones who step out of themselves.

And yet how often, even when we do good, does the *hypocrisy of the self* take over? I do good so that I can be considered good; I give in order to receive in turn; I offer help so that I can win the friendship of some important person. That is how the *language of the self* speaks. The word of God, however, spurs us to a “genuine love” (*Rom* 12:9), to give to those who cannot repay us (cf. *Lk* 14:14), to serve others without seeking anything in return (cf. *Lk* 6:35). So let us ask ourselves: “Do I help someone who has nothing to give me in return? Do I, a Christian, have at least one poor person as a friend?”

The poor are valuable in the eyes of God



because they do not speak the language of the self: they do not support themselves on their own, by their own strength; they need someone to take them by the hand. The poor remind us how we should live the Gospel: like beggars reaching out to God. The presence of the poor makes us breathe the fresh air of the Gospel, where the poor in spirit are blessed (cf. *Mt* 5:3). Instead of feeling annoyed when they knock on our doors, let us welcome their

cry for help as a summons to go out of ourselves, to welcome them with God's own loving gaze. How beautiful it would be if the poor could occupy in our hearts the place they have in the heart of God! Standing with the poor, serving the poor, we see things as Jesus does; we see what remains and



what passes away.

Let us return to our initial questions. Amid so many penultimate and passing realities, the Lord wants to remind us today of what is ultimate, what will remain forever. It is love, for “God is love” (*1 Jn* 4:8). The poor person who begs for my love leads me straight to God. The poor facilitate our access to heaven: this is why the sense of the faith of God's People has viewed them as the *gatekeepers of heaven*. Even now, they are our treasure, the treasure of the Church. For the poor reveal to us the riches that never grow old, that unite heaven and earth, the riches for which life is truly worth living: the riches of love. ♦

Belonging and participating

Pope Francis' message for International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3rd December 2019.

The theme this year is "The future is accessible".



On the occasion of the *International Day of Persons with Disabilities*, we renew our gaze of faith, which sees in each brother and sister the presence of Christ Himself, Who considers every gesture of love towards one of His least brothers to have been made to Himself (cf. Gospel of Matthew 25: 40). On this occasion, I would like to recall how today the promotion of the right to participation plays a central role in combating discrimination and promoting the culture of encounter and quality of life.

Great progress has been made towards people with disabilities in the medical and welfare fields, but still today we see the presence of the throwaway culture, and many of them feel that they exist without belonging and without participating. All this calls not only for the rights of people with disabilities and their families to be protected, but it also exhorts us to make the world more human by removing everything that prevents them from having full citizenship, the obstacles of prejudice, and by promoting the accessibility of places and

quality of life, taking into account of all the dimensions of the human being.

It is necessary to care for and accompany persons with disabilities in every condition of life, also making use of current technologies but without regarding them as absolute; with strength and tenderness, to take on board situations of marginalization; and to make way alongside them and to “anoint” them with dignity for an active participation in the civil and ecclesial community. It is a demanding, even tiring journey, which will increasingly contribute to forming consciences capable of recognizing that each one of us is a unique and unrepeatable person.

And let us not forget the many “hidden exiles”, who live within our homes, our families, our societies (cf. *Angelus*, 29 December 2013; *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 12 January 2015). I think of people of every age, especially the

elderly who, also due to disabilities, are at times considered a burden, a “cumbrous presence”, and risk being discarded, of being denied concrete job prospects for the construction of their future.

We are called to recognize in every person with disabilities, even with complex and grave disabilities, a unique contribution to the common good through his or her own original life story. To acknowledge the dignity of each person, well aware that this does not depend on the functionality of the five senses (cf. *Discussion with the participants in the*



Sacrament of Holy Orders

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By Fr Dr S Joseph Lionel



The characteristic of the Twelve is already clear in the lifetime of Jesus, namely their intimate connection with the saving mission of Christ. They carry out the command of the Lord. Their words and actions have the power and authority of His ministry

behind them.

The early Church lived in a constant awareness that it was the Body of Christ. It was understood in two aspects, namely their intimate communion with the Lord and one another (*koinonia*). Their Christian life was centered in living the Paschal mystery through the communal celebration of the Eucharist and martyrdom.

The Apostles celebrated Eucharist, taught the sacred precepts, and led them in fellowship. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The increase in the number of believers presupposes that the apostles were not alone in this mission. It implies that they were helped by co-workers who later came to be known as “elders.”

1. Ecclesiastical Offices

The initial stages lacked precise terms to mean ecclesiastical offices. It was a movement of the Spirit that these various ecclesiastical offices emerged in the early Church. The intimate connection between the office in the Church and the mission of Christ was maintained after his Ascension by faith in the Risen Lord. It continued in the abiding presence of the Risen Lord in the Church and through the Confirmation of the mission in the events of Pentecost.

The increasing number of believers opened the way for new ministries that supported the apostles. These new ministries received their authority from the apostles. Their legitimacy depended on the apostles. Thus emerged college of the “elders” (πρεσβύτεροι – Presbyteroi – which gives the English “priest”), within which the office of their president or head developed (ἐπίσκοπος – episcopos – English “bishop”). The third office too appeared that of the deacons (διάκονοι – diakonoi). We will briefly discuss these offices one by one.

2. Subsequent Development

During the sub-apostolic period, the external differentiation in the ecclesiastical office crystallized firmly. The terminology and thought of the NT especially the letter to the Hebrews are reflected in the various early Christian writings.

For example, Ignatius of Antioch offered the prayers of the community before God like the high-priest. He distinguished between the bishop, priest, and deacon. In his letter to Smyrnians he wrote, “Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he ordains...is not lawful either to baptize or to hold an agape without the bishop.” He already developed a theology of the episcopal office. The writings of Ignatius present bishop as a source of unity for the community. Bishop is also the visible representative of Jesus Christ, who is every church’s “unseen bishop.”

A theology of priesthood also developed which appears for the first time in the writings of St. Clement of Alexandria. Its more firm and clear development can be seen in the writings of Tertullian and Eusebius, and the *Apostolic Tradition* attributed to Hippolytus. Origen also speaks about the common priesthood of the Christians as they offer themselves in their daily



lives, following the example of Christ their Head. The *Didache* calls priests, prophets. It also bears witness to the eminent position of visiting leaders who were also considered proper “celebrants” for the Eucharist.

Several Fathers of the fourth century such as Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Ambrose and Jerome taught on the priesthood which contributed towards the conceptualization of the theology and ministry of priests. John Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood* provides first systematic theological treatment on priesthood where he indicates that all priests including those outside monasteries are to be celibate. Gregory of Nyssa in his work *On Virginity* recommends that priests must abstain from marriage. Jerome compared bishops, priests, and deacons to Aaron, his sons, and the Levites. Augustine defended the perpetuity of Orders against Donatists. He argued that Orders, like Baptism have permanent character. Therefore, when schismatic priests were received, they need not be ordained again. He also maintained that ordination is valid irrespective of one's faults. The efficacy of the Church's sacraments thus flows directly from Christ and not from the ordained themselves.

During the early period of Christianity, the theology of Holy Order was focused mainly on the office of the bishop. In the liturgy of consecration, during which he was accepted into an *ordo episcoporum*, the Church prayed that he might receive the gracious assistance of God to enable him to fulfill his tasks.

Three main duties were assigned to him: proclamation, liturgy, and leadership of the community. Certain tasks were assigned to him in order to preserve unity in the Church. Especially after fourth century, bishop was seen as the one who could make visible and perceptible the One, that is Jesus Christ, who is always invisibly present, for the sake of strengthening and faithfully preserving the faith handed on by the apostles. When his service was theologially interpreted as



priestly, the “grace of priesthood” was seen to be primarily realized in the bishop. From the fourth century there was a tendency to focus on the spiritual “ability” of the officeholders which eventually led to accept the theological equality of bishops and priests.

The concept of “ability” gave way for the concept of “power” in the later theological development. For example, the scholastics viewed that the important power of the ecclesiastical office is related to sacraments; since the priest, through his ordination, possessed an unsurpassable power with respect to the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation, it could not be further increased by episcopal ordination. In this background, Peter Lombard (d. 1160) taught that episcopal ordination was not a sacrament, whereas the ordination of a priest was. The special character of the episcopal office was seen, instead, as relating to jurisdiction (“pastoral power”). Thus with regard to priests, one spoke of a *potestas in corpus eucharisticum* and with regard to bishops of *potestas in corpus mysticum*. Hence it came to be spoken of as power of ordination and power of jurisdiction. Therefore, a priest can only give absolution in the sacrament of reconciliation if the power granted them at ordination has also been jurisdictionally “conferred on” them.

In the Western Church the bishop remained the minister of Confirmation in ordinary cases. But in particular, he was and is the minister of holy orders. Only a bishop may ordain priests and deacons, and in the normal instance several bishops acting together are required for the consecration of a bishop. The earliest form of ordination rite developed in these historical and theological contexts. Therefore, our next task is to make a brief survey of the primitive accounts of the ordination rites.

2.4. Important Decisions Regarding Ordination Rite

In the year 601 the official teaching of the Church maintained the validity of orders conferred

SAINT OF THE MONTH - I

St Raymond of Penafort

1175 – 1275

Feast Day: 07 January

Raymond was born in Peñafort in Catalonia and was related to the Counts of Barcelona and the kings of Aragon. He advanced quickly in his studies, showing such a gift for philosophy that he was appointed to teach the subject in Barcelona by age 20. As a teacher, the young man worked to harmonize reason with the profession and practice of Catholic faith and morals. This included a notable concern for the poor and suffering.

Around age 30 the Spanish scholar went to study secular and Church law at Bologna in Italy. He earned his doctorate and taught there until 1219, when the Bishop of Barcelona gave him an official position in the diocese.

In 1222 Raymond joined the Dominican friars, having come to know the founder Dominic Guzman in the months previous to the latter's death. The Dominicans asked him to put together a collection of cases of conscience for the instruction of confessors and moralists, a *Summa casuum conscientiae*, which became an authoritative work. He also exercised an apostolate of preaching, instructing and hearing confessions, becoming confessor to King James of Aragon. Through the advice given at the declaration of the nullity of James's first marriage, he became known to the papal legate who encouraged him to preach a holy war against the Moors and in this he was quite



successful.

Once he went with King James to the Island of Majorca to preach about Jesus. King James was a man of great qualities, but he let himself be ruled by passions. There on the Island, too, he was giving a bad example. The Saint commanded him to send the woman away. The King said he would, but he did not keep his promise. So Raymond decided to leave the Island. The King declared he would punish any ship captain who

brought the Saint back to Barcelona. Putting all his trust in God, Raymond spread his cloak upon the water, tied up one corner of it to a stick for a sail, made the Sign of the Cross, stepped onto the cloak, and sailed along for six hours until he reached Barcelona. This miracle moved the King. He was sorry for what he had done and became a true follower of Raymond.

Pope Gregory IX (1227-41) had come to hear of Raymond and called him to Rome in 1230, appointing him papal penitentiary and his personal confessor. Gregory had Raymond edit a collection of conciliar and papal decrees which the Pope published (1234) as the *Decretals* and were the forerunner of the *Code of Canon Law*. Raymond still gave much of his time generously to the poor.

Named by the pope in 1235 as archbishop of Tarragona, Raymond declined the appointment. He

SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

St Milburga

Death: 23 February 727

Feast Day: February 23

Milburga was the daughter of King Merewald of Magonset and his wife, Ermenburga (alias Aebbe of Minster-in-Thanel). Milburga (or Milburgh) was born in the latter half of the seventh century. The family was devout and completely devoted to Christ, and all three sisters – Milburga, Mildred and Mildgytha – were canonized as saints.

It was common place in Anglo-Saxon England for royal women to use their wealth and influence to support the Church and promote learning. They were involved in founding (and running) abbeys, in education, in patronage of sacred art, and in care for the poor and sick.

It was not unusual for these royal women to marry, raise their children, and then retire to a nunnery or to some other form of consecrated life, and this is precisely what Ermenburga did. Milburga was keen to follow in her mother's footsteps and enlisted the support of her father Merewald and of her uncle Wulfhere (who happened to be King of Mercia). She established a monastery at Wenlock (in modern-day Shropshire), of which she became the second abbess, being consecrated by St Theodore of Canterbury.

Milburga's abbey was intended to reflect



and represent the beauty of the human soul redeemed and graced by God. Milburga in effect created a foretaste of heaven, in icon of God's new creation, in which the surpassing perfection of the fruit in the orchards, of the flowers in the gardens, and, in short, of the entire physical environment, was so charged with intimations of redemption and renewal that it possessed a sacramental quality.

However, Milburga did not shut herself up within this living, breathing icon of the new creation, but regularly went forth into the wild and

dangerous world beyond the abbey walls to bring conversion and consolation to the abandoned souls who inhabited the remote fastnesses of the Mercian countryside.

On one occasion, while engaged upon works of mercy, she encountered a young prince, who, wishing to marry her, sent his soldiers to seize her. In an episode which recalls the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites, she fled across a stream called the Corve which then swelled up to the size of a small river, thereby frustrating the pursuing soldiers.

Like many Anglo-Saxon saints, Milburga had a tremendous affinity with the natural world – an affinity which found expression not only in the arrangements of the abbey gardens which teemed with herbs and flowers and birds (with which Milburga had a special and

mysterious relationship), but also in a love of country people and country life in general.

She used to visit the surrounding villages, treating the ailments of the country-dwellers (probably with herbs), and occasionally effecting miraculous cures, and was known for her gentleness and kindness, her sanctity of life, and her ability to levitate.

A poor widow came to her in her oratory, bringing the body of her little dead son. Throwing herself at the feet of the abbess, she besought her to raise the child to life. "You must be mad!" exclaimed Milburga, "How can I raise your child? Go and bury him and submit to the bereavement sent to you by God!". "No," said the sorrowing mother, "I will not leave you till you give me back my son!" The abbess prayed over the little corpse and, while doing so, she suddenly appeared to the poor supplicant to be raised from the earth and surrounded by lovely flames – the living emblem of the fervour of her prayer. Within a

few minutes, the child had recovered.

After her death she was buried near the altar of the abbey, but,

in the wake of the destruction of the church by Danish invaders, the exact location of her mortal remains was unknown. However, after the re-founding of Wenlock Abbey by Cluniac monks from La-Charité-sur-Loire in 1079, her tomb was discovered and opened up, giving forth a heavenly fragrance which recalled the sensory paradise of the old monastery garden.

Source: <https://stmilburgas.org/st-milburga>; <https://saintsandblesseds.wordpress.com> ♦



Continued from Page 18: St Raymond of Penafort

returned to Spain in 1236. He didn't get to enjoy his peace long, however, because when he was 63 he was elected by his fellow Dominicans to be the head (Master General) of the whole Order succeeding Jordan of Saxony quite suddenly as the latter died by shipwreck on returning from the Holy Land. Raymond worked hard, visited on foot all the Dominicans, reorganized their constitutions and managed to put through a provision that a master general be allowed to resign. When the new constitutions were accepted, Raymond, then 65, resigned.

He then spent the latter years of his life as a director of souls and confessor, but his main aim at this time was to promote the evangelization of



Muslims and Jews. To secure this, he developed higher schools for the study and teaching of Arabic and Hebrew. A contemporary of Thomas Aquinas, he inspired the theologian to write the "Summa Contra Gentiles" (1261-64) for the conversion of non-Catholics. At least 10,000 Muslims reportedly converted as a result of Raymond's evangelistic labors.

Raymond died in 1275 and was buried in the cathedral of Barcelona. He was canonized by Clement VIII in 1601 and is the patron saint of canon lawyers.

Source: www.catholicnewsagency.com/saint; www.catholic.org/saints; www.catholicireland.net; <http://faith.nd.edu>; www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/saints ♦

Continued from Page 8: The Lord bless us and keep us!

resolutions for the New Year.

But most of all we joyfully celebrate the promise of a new set of months with new opportunities and happiness, and we try to be hopeful in spite of uncertainties and unknown threats lying ahead. New Year Day therefore is a day to pray for God's blessings upon each one of us as we proceed in the new year with fresh resolutions. Yes, it is God's blessing we all need on this first day of the new year.

In the First Reading of today, we have an example of Levitical blessing, which Moses instructs his brother Aaron:

"The LORD bless you and keep you!

*The LORD let his face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you!*

*The LORD look upon you kindly and
give you peace!"*

This blessing has passed the test of time.



Originating with the chosen people, this blessing has been pronounced for three millennia and we can still employ this whenever we want to pray for God's blessing. What a beautiful thing it is to have God's blessing to go forward with "A NEW BEGINNING FOR A NEW YEAR!"

----- *Fr Albert Lakra's Blog at*
<http://albee2012.blogspot.com> ♦

Continued from Page 15: Belonging and participating



Convention of the CEI on disability, 11 June 2016). This conversion is taught by the Gospel. It is necessary to develop antibodies against a culture that considers some lives to be "League A" and others "League B": this is a social sin! To have the courage to give a voice to those who are discriminated against for their condition of disability, since unfortunately in some countries, still today, they are not recognized as persons of equal dignity, as brothers and sisters in humanity.

Indeed, making good laws and breaking

down physical barriers is important, but it is not enough, if the mentality does not change, if we do not overcome a widespread culture that continues to produce inequalities, preventing people with disabilities from actively participating in ordinary life.

In recent years inclusive processes have been put in place and implemented, but this is still not enough, as prejudices generate, in addition to physical barriers, also limits to access to education for all, to employment and to participation. A person with disabilities, in order to build himself up, needs not only to exist but also to belong to a community.

I encourage all those who work with people with disabilities to continue with this important service and commitment, which determines the degree of civilization of a nation. And I pray that each person may feel the paternal gaze of God, who affirms his full dignity and the unconditional value of his life.♦

The gift beyond imagination

A story of the gift of love



The gift was simple...the gift was small... But the promise it held was larger than life!

What made it so special was that it was a gift from Mary Em's grandmother. Gram had wrapped it in a beautiful scrap of red silk scarf.

Mary Em rushed to open it, but when the gift fell out, she just looked at it. It was just a seed – a tiny black seed. Why did Gram leave her a seed before she died?

Mary Em was eight, and her Gram had said she would be leaving soon on a trip to Heaven. Gram assured her that before she left, she would leave her a special gift...a gift beyond imagination.

The little girl clung to the promise of the gift as she saw her grandmother begin to fade away. The cancer had made her so thin and frail, but Gram still smiled and said Jesus would be traveling with her on this trip.

Even now, two weeks after Gram had left on her “new journey”, as she had called it, Mary Em clung to the promise. But a seed...? What had Gram been thinking? Tears of disappointment began to drip down Mary Em's face. She had hoped for more. But what was there left to do now, except to plant the tiny seed.

An old clay pot was found behind the shed and filled with chilled spring dirt. She placed the seed deep into the soil as she thought of Gram. Two long months had passed and oh, how she still missed her! New tears of sadness and grief slid down her cheeks gently watering the seed's new resting place.



As the days and weeks passed, Mary Em cared for the seed. She placed the pot in a sunny spot, watered it, and waited. As she waited, she remembered...Gram's smile, the fun they had baking cookies together, the way Gram pushed her high into the air on the swing until squeals of delight escaped her lips. As she remembered, she didn't feel as sad anymore.

Finally about a week into summer, the tiny plant poked its head above the soil and drank in the rays of sunlight. Every day it grew taller and stronger as Mary Em cared for it. The small plant quickly grew and soon bloomed into a beautiful red poppy – just like the ones Gram had grown in her garden!

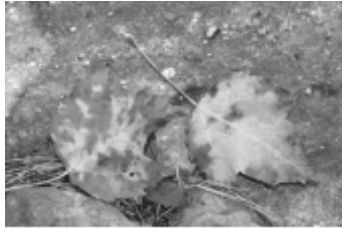
Mary Em loved to wake up to the little flower every morning. It was like hearing Gram say “I love you” each and every day. But then one morning, the poppy began to droop and hang its head. Mary Em watered it more and moved it to a sunnier spot. In spite of all her efforts though, the little poppy shriveled and died. Mary Em couldn't bear to throw it away. She just left it there on her window sill. Now it brought sad thoughts – thoughts of Gram's sickness and death.

Many weeks later, the air began to chill and the leaves began to tumble off the trees. Winter was on its way. Mary Em decided it was time to throw out the remains of the little poppy. As she did though, tiny black specks began to fall. They were seeds!

That is when Mary Em remembered what Gram had said – “Winter may come, but



that just means Spring is on its way.” With this thought, Mary Em began to smile. She now understood that Gram’s spring had come in Heaven! She also realized the preciousness of Gram’s gift. The real gift was a lesson about life, a lesson about Christ – wrapped in the red scarf of His love, the seed of our life continues to live even after death and leaves even more seeds behind to be planted in the hearts of others. Truly He is the gift “beyond imagination.”



Note to the reader about "The Gift":

The seed of God's love was once wrapped in a draping of red...His Son's blood. Even when

Jesus appeared to be dead and buried, life was born anew as the Father raised Him from the dead. The Bible says in 1 John 5:12, “He who has the Son, has

the life; he who does not have the Son of God, does not have the life.” Just like a flower, our earthly bodies will

shrivel and die, but because of God's gift life will go on for us, and the seeds we have planted in this life will be left - seeds of memories, seeds of love, seeds of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which hold eternal life – a gift truly beyond imagination.

A note from the author: *A dream of mine is to write inspirational stories that will touch lives with the love of God. This is one I wrote last summer; I hope you enjoyed it! Thanks for reading!*

Susan

Source: www.creativebiblestudy.com/thegift.html ♦



Continued from Page 17: Sacrament of Holy Orders

by heretics, schismatics, and even simonists. The Council of Florence (1439) in its decree on the Armenians stated that “the sixth sacrament is that of Order....The ordinary minister of this sacrament is the bishop. The effect is an increase of grace so that one may be a suitable minister [at the altar]”. The consecration of bishop is not even mentioned here.

Martin Luther and the Protestant reformers emphasized the common priesthood of all believers and refused to accept orders and sacrament. According the Reformers, through Baptism every believer is ordained to be priests and bishops. The leaders are appointed only to maintain public order. The Council of Trent opposed these views of the Reformers and defended the existence of a visible, external priesthood. The Council's teachings are found in four chapters, and eight

canons from the twenty-third session in 1563.

The renewal movements of the twentieth century have contributed, particularly through a wealth of biblical and patristic studies and research into the history of liturgy, to a revision of the main emphases in the theology of orders. These efforts were reflected in the documents of Vatican II, both in the path-breaking constitution on the liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, and especially in *Lumen Gentium*. While preserving earlier teaching, Vatican II sought to broaden the point of view to shift the points of emphasis, and thus renew both theology and praxis. Vatican II presents a clear understanding on the common and ministerial priesthood. With this brief historical survey as background, now let us study the ordination rite after Vatican II. ♦



News Round-Up

Cardinal Tagle Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

The Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, Luis Antonio Tagle, is the new Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Vatican News reported. The appointment of Pope Francis was announced Sunday, December 8, 2019. The current Prefect, Fernando Filoni, assumes the post of Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher in place of Cardinal Edwin Frederick O'Brien, who resigned in April 2019 and turned 80.

With the nomination of Cardinal Tagle, an Asian cardinal returned to the leadership of Propaganda Fide (the ancient name of the important department for evangelization, which is also responsible for Episcopal nominations in mission lands), after the years of Indian Cardinal Ivan Dias (2006-2011). Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle, born on June 21, 1957, in Manila to a

Catholic family – his father of Tagalog ethnicity and his mother of Chinese origin – was ordained priest in 1982. He studied in the United States where he obtained his doctorate in theology with a thesis on the evolution of the notion of Episcopal collegiality since the Second Vatican Council. He spent seven years in Rome to deepen his studies and in 1997 joined the International Theological Commission.

After having been parish priest of the cathedral of Imus, at the age of 44 he was nominated bishop of that diocese by Saint John Paul II in October 2001. He dedicated himself in particular to youth ministry and inaugurated the first meeting of young Asians in Imus. On October 13, 2011, Benedict XVI appointed him Metropolitan Archbishop of Manila and thirteen months later, in November 2012, during the last consistory of the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI he received the cardinal's hat.

ition to leading the diocese of the Philippine metropolis, Tagle is also president of Caritas Internationalis and the Catholic Biblical Federation. ♦



Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

January 2019

Promotion of World Peace: We pray that Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.

February 2019

Listen to the Migrants' Cries: We pray that the cries of our migrant brothers and sisters, victims of criminal trafficking, may be heard and considered.

Come! Make Mission a MOVEMENT!



PRAYER:

Oh Almighty God, *Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara* lived a holy life in your presence and became your pleasing servant through continuous meditation, prayer and service to the Holy Church. Mercifully look upon us who seek refuge in the patronage of this holy servant of yours.

Oh Lord, we beseech you to cure the sick, console the sorrowful, bless the couples without children, grant students the gift of knowledge, provide shelter to those in economic hardships, preserve the priests and religious in holiness, and establish peace and joy in our families. We pray that You call children from our homes for the service of the Holy Church.

Accept our prayers and bless us through Saint Kuriakose Elias, your humble servant and our beloved patron. † In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

(Feast Day: 3rd January – Syro Malabar; 18th February - Latin)

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