

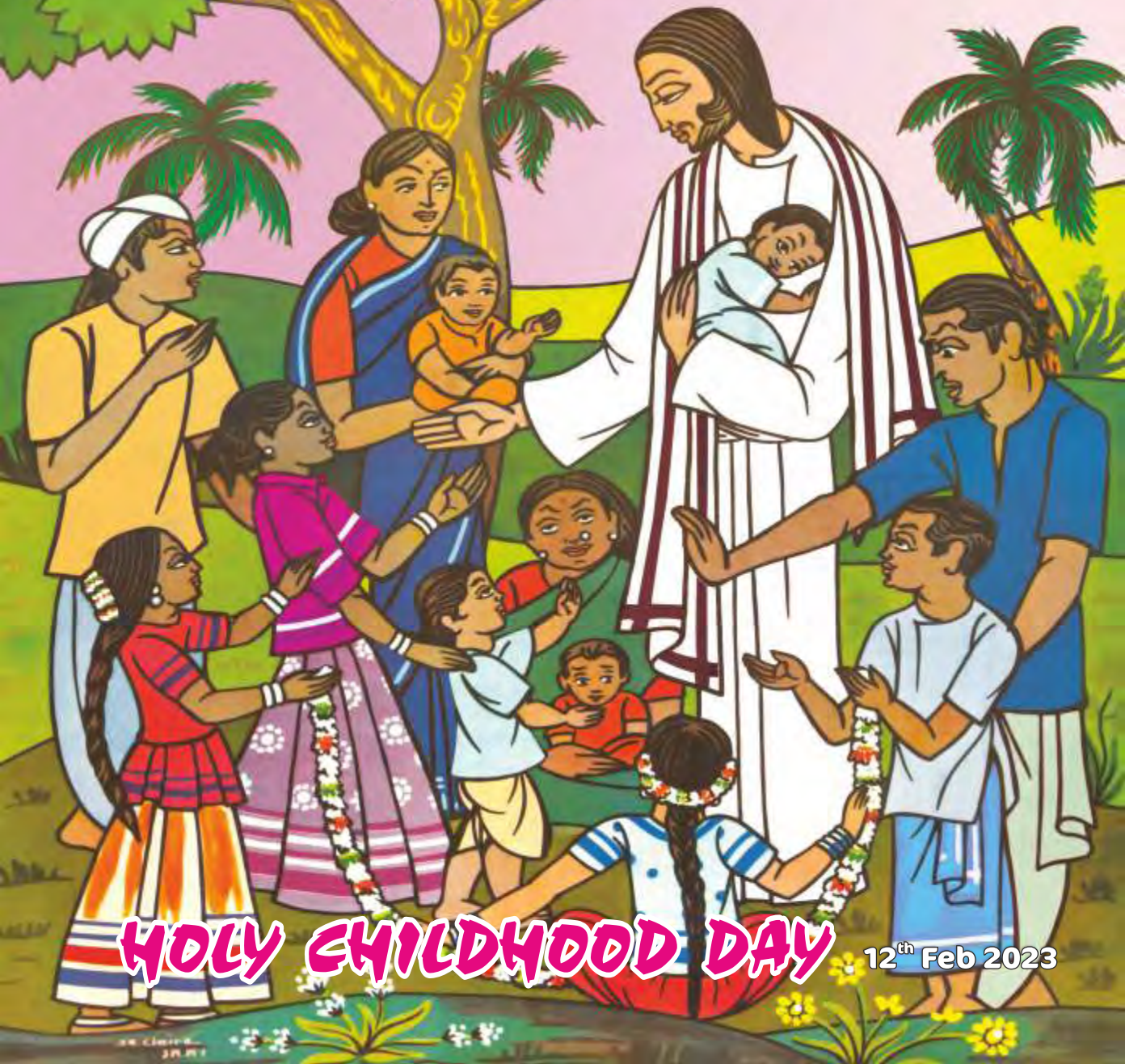
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PROCLAIM

A magazine for Missionary Animation

To live in Communion



HOLY CHILDHOOD DAY

12th Feb 2023

**Pontifical Mission Organizations (PMO)
&
Commission for Evangelization, CCBI**

*Wish you all
a very Happy & Prosperous
New Year 2023 !*



THE CHILDREN'S PRAYER

THE CHILDREN'S PRAYER

O Infant Jesus,
model of Holy Childhood,
Grant to all the children of the world
to grow up in a family
like the Holy Family of Nazareth.



Like You,
may they rejoice in love and affection
of parents and relatives.
May they receive human and religious education
in order to grow in wisdom, maturity and grace
in the presence of God
and with human community.

Allow them to be dully accompanied
by loving adults,
so that they be worthily prepared
to take their role in the Church and in society.
We ask You through the intercession of
the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.

Amen.



(Courtesy: PMS - Togo)

PROCLAIM

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St Josephine Bakhita

c. 1869-08 February 1947

(Feast: February 08)

Patron Saint of Sudan & Human-Trafficking Survivors

Let us live in communion

Who are the future of the Church? Who would be the vibrant members of the Church? The response to the question depends on one's age, position, or perspective. For example, elderly people might think that they are the only group that are regular to the Church, and therefore they will be the vibrant members of the Church in the future. Middle aged people might think that they never miss the Church on Obligatory days and their offerings, and therefore they are the future of the Church. Many of us would think that the youth are the future of the Church. Yes! They are. They all are, but we all miss the obvious category - the Children, but unfortunately we don't train them properly and we don't listen to them sufficiently.



If the future of the Church are children, they ought to be better taken care of. If they are not, the Church will not be. Actually, the unnoticed vibrant members of the Church are the Children. Remember, the first martyrs of the Church are children murdered by Herod (Mt 2: 16). We could even say that the church is built on the blood of the children. That is why Jesus says “Let the little Children come to me” (Mk 10: 14).

It is true that they are baptized, prepared to receive the most holy Eucharist and are brought to the church for Confirmation. But then we forget them. I am not pessimistic. I understand that there are lots of efforts made both officially and privately by the interested parish priests and other members of the Church to creatively instruct the children. While all these efforts have to be continued, we need to still focus on children to make them active members of the Church and to be the true disciples of Jesus.

The classes offered in the church are not sufficient for the children to properly understand the doctrines. The children are to be taught and trained well in Christian faith at home. Home is the cradle of faith. When I write about instilling the faith, it is not simply about learning the doctrines but helping them to live like true Christians and exercising their responsibilities. The example of the parents plays a major role in teaching the children about their responsibilities. The parents have to be regular for the Church, to be there on time, to switch off the mobile in the Church, offering their share for the maintenance of the Church, giving a small amount to the children to offer their share, praying at home with children, exercising acts of mercy and love, etc. All this can inspire the children to be deeply rooted in Christian faith and practice.

Paying attention to children not only enhances their faith, but helps our own faith as well. Here is an anecdote that might capture how listening to children can inspire us. A mother, troubled by the thunder and lightning, rushes to the school, thinking that her child might have been terrified by thunder and lightning. When she reaches the school, to her surprise, she finds the child looking at the sky, watching the lightning with a smile. The mother asks the child: “Aren't you afraid when there is lightning and thunder? Why are you smiling?” The child replies: “Why should I be afraid when God is taking a picture of me? I want to look good, that is why I am smiling when there is a flash from the sky.”

Children's perspectives can deepen our faith as well. That is why the Lord says: “Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it” (Mk 10: 15).

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
National Director (PMO-India)

No one can be saved alone

Pope Francis' message for World Day of Peace 2023

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (1 Thess 5:1-2).

1. With these words, the Apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonian community to remain steadfast, their hearts and feet firmly planted and their gaze fixed on the world around them and the events of history, even as they awaited the Lord's return. When tragic events seem to overwhelm our lives, and we feel plunged into a dark and difficult maelstrom of injustice and suffering, we are likewise called to keep our hearts open to hope and to trust in God, who makes himself present, accompanies us with tenderness, sustains us in our weariness and, above all, guides our path. For this reason, Saint Paul constantly exhorts the community to be vigilant, seeking goodness, justice and truth: "So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober" (5:6). His words are an invitation to remain alert and not to withdraw into fear, sorrow or resignation, or to yield to distraction or discouragement. Instead, we should be like sentinels keeping watch and ready to glimpse the first light of dawn, even at the darkest hour.

2. Covid-19 plunged us into a dark night. It destabilized our daily lives, upset our plans and routines, and disrupted the apparent tranquillity of even the most affluent societies. It generated disorientation and suffering and caused the death of great numbers of our brothers and sisters.

Amid a whirlwind of unexpected challenges and facing a situation confusing even from a

scientific standpoint, the world's healthcare workers mobilized to relieve immense suffering and to seek possible remedies. At the same time, political authorities had to take measures to organize and manage efforts to respond to the emergency.

In addition to its physical aspects, Covid-19 led to a general malaise in many individuals and families; the long periods of isolation and the various restrictions on freedom contributed to this malaise, with significant long-term effects.

Nor can we overlook the fractures in our social and economic order that the pandemic exposed, and the contradictions and inequalities that it brought to the fore. It threatened the job security of many individuals

and aggravated the ever-increasing problem of loneliness in our societies, particularly on the part of the poor and those in need. We need but think of the millions of informal workers in many parts of the world left without a job and without any support during the time of the lockdown.

Only rarely do individuals and societies achieve progress in conditions that generate such feelings of despondency and bitterness, which weaken efforts to ensure peace while provoking social conflict, frustration and various forms of violence. Indeed, the pandemic seems to have upset even the most peaceful parts of our world, and exposed any number of forms of fragility.



3. Three years later, the time is right to question, learn, grow and allow ourselves to be transformed as individuals and as communities; this is a privileged moment to prepare for “the day of the Lord”. I have already observed on a number of occasions that we never emerge the same from times of crisis: we emerge either better or worse. Today we are being asked: What did we learn from the pandemic? What new paths should we follow to cast off the shackles of our old habits, to be better prepared, to dare new things? What signs of life and hope can we see, to help us move forward and try to make our world a better place?

Certainly, after directly experiencing the fragility of our own lives and the world around us, we can say that the greatest lesson we learned from Covid-19 was the realization that we all need one another. That our greatest and yet most fragile treasure is our shared humanity as brothers and sisters, children of God. And that none of us can be saved alone. Consequently, we urgently need to join together in seeking and promoting the universal values that can guide the growth of this human fraternity. We also learned that the trust we put in progress, technology and the effects of globalization was not only excessive, but turned into an individualistic and idolatrous intoxication, compromising the very promise of justice, harmony and peace that we so ardently sought. In our fast-paced world, the widespread problems of inequality, injustice, poverty and marginalization continue to fuel unrest and conflict, and generate violence and even wars.

The pandemic brought all this to the fore, yet it also had its positive effects. These include a chastened return to humility, a rethinking of certain consumeristic excesses, and a renewed sense of solidarity that has made us more sensitive to the suffering of others and more responsive to their needs. We can also think of the efforts, which in



some cases proved truly heroic, made by all those people who worked tirelessly to help everyone emerge from the crisis and its turmoil as best they could.

This experience has made us all the more aware of the need for everyone, including peoples and nations, to restore the word “together” to a central place. For it is together, in fraternity and solidarity, that we build peace, ensure justice and emerge from the greatest disasters. Indeed, the most effective responses to the pandemic came



from social groups, public and private institutions, and international organizations that put aside their particular interests and joined forces to meet the challenges. Only the peace that comes from a fraternal and disinterested love can help us overcome personal,

societal and global crises.

4. Even so, at the very moment when we dared to hope that the darkest hours of the Covid-19 pandemic were over, a terrible new disaster befell humanity. We witnessed the onslaught of another scourge: another war, to some extent like that of Covid-19, but driven by culpable human decisions. The war in Ukraine is reaping innocent victims and spreading insecurity, not only among those directly affected, but in a widespread and indiscriminate way for everyone, also for those who, even thousands of kilometres away, suffer its collateral effects – we need but think of grain shortages and fuel prices.

Clearly, this is not the post-Covid era we had hoped for or expected. This war, together with all the other conflicts around the globe, represents a setback for the whole of humanity and not merely for the parties directly involved. While a vaccine has been found for Covid-19, suitable solutions have not yet been found for the war. Certainly, the virus of war is more difficult to overcome than the viruses that compromise our bodies, because it comes, not from outside of us, but from within the human heart corrupted by sin (cf. Gospel of Mark 7:17-23).

5. What then is being asked of us? First of all, to let our hearts be changed by our experience of the crisis, to let God, at this time in history, transform our customary criteria for viewing the world around us. We can no longer think exclusively of carving out space for our personal or national interests; instead, we must think in terms of the common good, recognizing that we belong to a greater community, and opening our minds and hearts to universal human fraternity. We cannot continue to focus simply on preserving ourselves; rather, the time has come for all of us to endeavour to heal our society and our planet, to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world, and to commit ourselves seriously to pursuing a good that is truly common.

In order to do this, and to live better lives after the Covid-19 emergency, we cannot ignore one fundamental fact, namely that the many moral, social, political and economic crises we are experiencing are all interconnected, and what

we see as isolated problems are actually causes and effects of one another. Consequently, we are called to confront the challenges of our world in a spirit of responsibility and compassion. We must revisit the issue of ensuring public health for all. We must promote actions that enhance peace and put an end to the conflicts and wars that continue to spawn poverty and death. We urgently need to join in caring for our common home and in implementing clear and effective measures to combat climate change. We need to battle the virus of inequality and to ensure food and

dignified labour for all, supporting those who lack even a minimum wage and find themselves in great difficulty. The scandal of entire peoples starving remains an open wound. We also need to develop suitable policies for welcoming and integrating migrants and those whom our societies discard. Only by

responding generously to these situations, with an altruism inspired by God's infinite and merciful love, will we be able to build a new world and contribute to the extension of his kingdom, which is a kingdom of love, justice and peace.

In sharing these reflections, it is my hope that in the coming New Year we can journey together, valuing the lessons that history has to teach us. I offer my best wishes to Heads of State and Government, to Heads of International Organizations, and to the leaders of the different religions. To all men and women of good will I express my prayerful trust that, as artisans of peace, they may work, day by day, to make this a good year! May Mary Immaculate, Mother of Jesus and Queen of Peace, intercede for us and for the whole world. ♦



Closeness, poverty and concreteness

Pope Francis' homily for Christmas 2022



What does this night still have to say to our lives? Two thousand years after the birth of Jesus, after so many Christmases spent amid decorations and gifts, after so much consumerism that has packaged the mystery we celebrate, there is a danger. We know many things about Christmas, but we forget its real meaning. So how do we rediscover the meaning of Christmas? First of all, where do we go to find it? The Gospel of Jesus' birth appears to have been written precisely for this purpose: to take us by the hand and lead us where God would have us go.

It starts with a situation not unlike our own: everyone is bustling about, getting ready for an important event, the great census, which called for much preparation. In that sense, the atmosphere was very much like our modern celebration of Christmas. Yet the Gospel has little to do with that worldly scenario; it quickly shifts our gaze to something else, which it considers more important. It is a small and apparently insignificant detail that it nonetheless mentions three times, always in relation to the central figures in the narrative. First, Mary places Jesus “in a manger” (Lk 2:7); then the angels tell the shepherds about “a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” (v. 12); and finally, the shepherds, who find “the child lying in

the manger” (v. 16). In order to rediscover the meaning of Christmas, we need to look to the manger. Yet why is the manger so important? Because it is the sign, and not by chance, of Christ's coming into this world. It is how he announces his coming. It is the way God is born in history, so that history itself can be reborn. What then does the Lord tell us? Through the manger, three things, at least: closeness, poverty and concreteness.

Closeness. The manger serves as a feeding trough, to enable food to be consumed more quickly. In this way, it can symbolize one aspect of our humanity: our greed for consumption. While animals feed in their stalls, men and women in our world, in their hunger for wealth and power, consume even their neighbors, their brothers and sisters. How many wars have we seen! And in how many places, even today, are human dignity and freedom treated with contempt! As always, the principal victims of this human greed are the weak and the vulnerable. This Christmas too, as in the case of Jesus, a world ravenous for money, ravenous for power and ravenous for pleasure does not make room for the little ones, for so many unborn, poor and forgotten children. I think above all of the children devoured by war, poverty and injustice. Yet those are the very places to which Jesus comes, a child in the manger of rejection and refusal. In him, the Child of Bethlehem, every child is present. And we ourselves are invited to



view life, politics and history through the eyes of children.

In the manger of rejection and discomfort, God makes himself present. He comes there because there we see the problem of our humanity: the indifference produced by the greedy rush to possess and consume. There, in that manger, Christ is born, and there we discover his closeness to us. He comes there, to a feeding trough, in order to become our food. God is no father who devours his children, but the Father who, in Jesus, makes us his children and feeds us with his tender love. He comes to touch our hearts and to tell us that love alone is the power that changes the course of history. He does not remain distant and mighty, but draws near to us in humility; leaving his throne in heaven, he lets himself be laid in a manger.

Dear brother, dear sister, tonight God is drawing near to you, because you are important to him. From the manger, as food for your life, he tells you: "If you feel consumed by events, if you are devoured by a sense of guilt and inadequacy, if you hunger for justice, I, your God, am with you. I know what you are experiencing, for I experienced it myself in that manger. I know your weaknesses, your failings and your history. I was born in order to tell you that I am, and always will be, close to you". The Christmas manger, the first message of the divine Child, tells us that God is with us, he loves us and he seeks us. So take heart! Do not



allow yourself to be overcome by fear, resignation or discouragement. God was born in a manger so that you could be reborn in the very place where you thought you had hit rock bottom. There is no evil, there is no sin, from which Jesus does not want to save you. And he can. Christmas means that God is close to us: let confidence be reborn!

The manger of Bethlehem speaks to us not only of closeness, but also of poverty. Around the manger there is very little: hay and straw, a few animals, little else. People were warm in the inn, but not here in the coldness of a stable. Yet that is where Jesus was born. The manger reminds us that he was surrounded by nothing but love: Mary, Joseph and the shepherds; all poor people, united by affection and amazement, not by wealth and great expectations. The poverty of the manger thus

shows us where the true riches in life are to be found: not in money and power, but in relationships and persons.

And the first person, the greatest wealth, is Jesus himself. Yet do we want to stand at his side? Do we draw close to him? Do we love his poverty? Or do we prefer to remain comfortably ensconced in our own interests and concerns?



Above all, do we visit him where he is to be found, namely in the poor mangers of our world? For that is where he is present. We are called to be a Church that worships a Jesus who is poor and that serves him in the poor. As a saintly bishop once said: “The Church supports and blesses efforts to change the structures of injustice, and sets down but one condition: that social, economic and political change truly benefit the poor” (O.A. ROMERO, Pastoral Message for the New Year, 1 January 1980). Certainly, it is not easy to leave the comfortable warmth of worldliness to embrace the stark beauty of the grotto of Bethlehem, but let us remember that it is not truly Christmas without the poor. Without the poor, we can celebrate Christmas, but not the birth of Jesus. Dear brothers, dear sisters, at Christmas God is poor: let charity be reborn!

We now come to our last point: the manger speaks to us of concreteness. Indeed, a child lying in a manger presents us with a scene that is striking, even crude. It reminds us that God truly became flesh. As a result, all our theories, our fine thoughts and our pious sentiments are no longer enough. Jesus was born poor, lived poor and died poor; he did not so much talk about poverty as live it, to the very end, for our sake. From the manger to the cross, his love for us was always palpable, concrete. From birth to death, the carpenter's son embraced the roughness of the wood, the harshness of our existence. He did not love us only in words; he loved us with utter seriousness!



Consequently, Jesus is not satisfied with appearances. He who took on our flesh wants more than simply good intentions. He who was born in the manger, demands a concrete faith, made up of adoration and charity, not empty words and superficiality. He who lay naked in the manger and hung naked on the cross, asks us for truth, he asks us to go to the bare reality of things, and to lay at the foot of the manger all our excuses, our justifications and our hypocrisies. Tenderly wrapped in swaddling clothes by Mary, he wants us to be clothed in love. God does not want appearances but concreteness. May we not let this Christmas pass without doing something good, brothers and sisters. Since it is his celebration, his birthday, let us give him the gifts he finds pleasing! At Christmas, God is concrete: in his name let us help a little hope to be born anew in those who feel hopeless!



Jesus we behold you lying in the manger. We see you as close, ever at our side: thank you Lord! We see you as poor, in order to teach us that true wealth does not reside in things but in persons, and above all in the poor: forgive us, if we have failed to acknowledge and serve you in them. We see you as concrete, because your love for us is palpable. Help us to give flesh and life to our faith. Amen.

----- Catholic News Agency, 26 December 2022 ♦

Child is best teacher for synodal journey

By Merlin Rengith Ambrose

We often view children as helpless beings that need our guidance, protection, assistance, and

“fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: “It’s useless” or “We’ve always done it this way”.



advice. We tend to think that they need to learn a lot from the so-called adults. But in my experience, it is often the other way around. Our children become our greatest and best teachers for our synodal journey.

Why don't we, instead of focusing on turning children into adults, making them as smart, as analytical and as prosaic beings as we ourselves are, learn from them to be spontaneous, synodal, creative, and free?

1. Open-Mindedness

A little child does not care if you are 40 years older than they are and play a very important role in a multi-milliondollar company. If they find you interesting enough or decide to share their observations, they will walk right up to you and say whatever they feel like saying.

We find children's spontaneity and absence of stereotypes endearing and sometimes even shocking, as our actions are often dictated by social rules, expectations, feelings of inferiority, superiority, and fears.

Learn from children to approach every situation with an open mind and simplicity and you will make friends wherever you go. Pope Francis challenged everyone to be “prepared for the adventure of the synodal journey” instead of being

2. Trust in the Universe

My friend's son recently had an accident. He was racing on a cool new 3-wheel bike, imagining himself the best racer of all time and trying to manoeuvre the wriggly streets by their house.

Passing the final part of the track, a tiny bridge, he lost control of his bike and rode right into a swimming pool. When his scared dad pulled him out of the pool, the first thing he saw was the beaming face of his son. “Dad, that was amazing!” Talk about complete trust in the Universe and the absence of fear about what could have happened! I am not saying we should be reckless, but sometimes it helps to remember that God watches over us, guides us, and protects us from harm. It is good to believe in the universe that the world will be better if it imbibes the spirit of synodality. Let us



take risks to change the world and make it more synodal and know for sure that the Good Lord is there to watch over us and help us to attain this end.

3. Ability to Dream BIG

Fortunately, kids are not afraid to dream big. When we are young, we dream about being famous movie stars, flying into space, or buying an ice cream store. But as we get older and more experienced, we let ourselves dream less and less often.

We set goals that we know we are capable of achieving to avoid disappointment and failure. As a result, we settle for a life way below our potential. We are given so many unique talents and skills, let us use them! Let us not be afraid to aim for goals that are worth attaining! Let our imagination run free and let us dream BIG! Let our dream of making the world more synodal not be watered down by our fears and preoccupations.

4. Forgiveness

Have you ever seen kids fighting each other? They push each other and smack each other, then one of them cries and 30 seconds later they are happily playing together again. Now think about someone pushing you out of the way without saying sorry.

The chances are that a week later you still remember this incident and play revengeful scenarios in your head. Do not waste your mental energy on something that you cannot change. Instead, find the strength to forgive and move on with your life! As we walk together to realize the vision of making the Church more synodal, let us get rid of hateful wounds and focus on the positivity of the Divine grace.

5. Being Fully Present

Children's life experience is too short for them to dwell on their past and they feel no need to worry about the future. They live in the moment, having loads of fun doing silly simple things or observing the world around them. And when they cry, nothing in the world exists, but what has upset them. But soon they return to being happy again, their sadness forgotten. One of the best exercises to learn mindfulness is observing little children play, or better yet — join the game!

Let us be present in the present! Let us live the present! Our dream of making the world more synodal should not make us turn deaf ears to the calls of challenges of present realities.

6. Ability to Enjoy Themselves

Kids care very little about what other people might think about them. Once I caught my 4-year-old niece trying out her new dress in front of a mirror. She was singing a song she had made up on the spot and dancing. She could not have cared less that I was watching her. She was not worried about singing off-key or looking goofy when she danced. She was just having a great time and enjoying herself. It got me thinking that as adults we often take ourselves too seriously, even when no one is watching.



Whatever we do and wherever we are, a part of us is constantly worried about 'what do we look like' and 'what will other people say'. And while certain situations demand that we act like responsible and reasonable adults, it is also important not to lose our childlike ability to enjoy ourselves and have fun. Let us enjoy each other in our synodal journey. Everyone has something to teach us in order to make us better.

7. Self-confidence

If you asked a bunch of five-year-olds “who can sing?” most hands would shoot up. Now imagine asking the same question to a group of adults. How many of them would raise their hands? One? Two? None?

Unlike us, adults, children do not have critical thinking and consequently, do not question their abilities. They just assume that they are great at whatever they do! No matter if you are 10 or 90, learn to hush your inner critique and do not let self-doubts dictate to you what you can or cannot do!



Let us believe in ourselves that we are capable of becoming synodal. It is not something unattainable.

8. Creativity

Have you ever noticed how a child can make a game out of about everything they see? A dinner table becomes a house, an ordinary table becomes an altar for them to imitate priests, a stick picked up from the street turns into a sword, and a mother's scarf turns into Spiderman's cape. It is harder for us, adults to be as creative, as our rationality, stereotyped feelings, prejudices, and a range of pre-established concepts block our creativity and 'outside of the box' thinking. Whether you need to generate new ideas or find an original solution to a complex problem, leave your baggage of knowledge behind and think about how an 8-year-old would look at the same situation or problem. You will be surprised by the results!



Many say, “we have always done like this”. Boxed thinking makes our eyes blind. Let us open the windows of our minds, letting the fresh air come in. As Pope St Paul gave a clarion call, *Novus habitus mentis* is necessary. A mind with a new disposition is the need of the hour. A “New mentality” or a “new mind” is necessary.

9. Sense of Discovery

If you have children of your own then you know that there is the stage when they start asking “Why?” about everything: “Why is the sky blue?”, “Why do birds fly?”, “Why do you have to go to work?”



For a child, everything is interesting, exciting, and worth discovering. And for us, grown-ups, such questions often seem annoying. A snowflake melting on the hand is no longer wonderful and touching a dog's soft fur is no longer exciting and fun. But the truth is that no matter how old we are, there is still so much more to admire, explore, and learn about this world.

Try to see even ordinary objects through the eyes of a little child and you will forget the word “boring” once and for all! Children always regard every day as a new world so they started every day with smiles, energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity to explore the world. May our minds question those deep-seated practices which are diametrically opposed to the realization of the synodality in the Church.

10. Children are Naturally Synodal

Look at any group of children from various ethnicities, religions, communities, etc. They don't seem to know they're from different backgrounds and are supposed to hate each other they are just friends. The 15 silhouettes depict a pilgrim Church on the move. The bright colours signify the joy and enthusiasm with which the People of God set out – young and old, men and women, singles, couples, families, children of all ages, persons with disabilities, clergy, religious and lay persons. The Bishop walks not in front of his flock, but among his sheep, with children leading the way. This refers to Jesus' words, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children”. (Matthew 11:25)

Isn't this a good lesson for adults that we are in need of a better understanding of each other through day-to-day interactions? Children can contribute to the whole world: how? Let us ask ourselves how children see the world. And the answer will guide us on the right path to living a life of Synodality, Peace, Love, and Joy. May the Child Jesus continue to bless and help us to become people with the hearts of Children. ♦

Witnessing Christian mission in Indian context

By Fr Kulandai Yesu Raja

Introduction

India has been acclaimed as a land of religions and spirituality. All major religions of the world co-existed in this land for centuries in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance. The witness to the Gospel is a common witness for the people of God, that is: the Church, and therefore requires working together in the mission of the Church. On the one hand, there is the need to witness together for the global Christian community, on the other, this global community is fragmented, identified and located in different contexts of social, economic and political realities. It is not that much easy but not impossible. The present moment is a time of great promise because of globalisation, technological advancement, growth in communication facilities and internet. People have come closer and become more interdependent. Yet, at the same time, increased violence, a growing forgetfulness of God, and consequent feelings of fear and insecurity have become a reality in the world over, particularly in India. Furthermore, such phenomena as religious fanaticism and terrorism threaten our future hopes. In this situation, we have to rediscover the meaning of the Christian mission in the emerging context in India through

witnessing life which may lead us to witnessing mission.

Witnessing Mission in Multi-Religious Context

In the multi-religious context of India, Evangelisation has a mutually complementary



double process: Communion with Christ, in which the Church and the people of different faiths and ideologies share their experience of their ultimate values, and an exchange of brotherly and sisterly praxis of concerns for fuller and authentic human life. So we need to respect followers of other religions as co-pilgrims. Pope John Paul II wrote his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990): “There is a situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger churches as well, where entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and His Gospel” (RM 33). The call for the witnessing mission in our context was foretold by John Paul II. It is not only a call; it is more than that. It should be a cry of every Christian as missionary in present context. There is an urgent need of inclusivism envisioned by Vatican Council II which holds the stand that new inclusivist framework still holds that

**“Faith comes by
hearing, and
hearing by the
word of God.”**

Romans 10:17



salvation is only through Christ and the Church, and views whatever goodness or truth inherent within other religions and their adherents as finding their true fulfilment in Christ (Lumen Gentium 16). This act will ensure the witnessing mission in our context for Jesus Christ who embraced whole humanity (Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles) as one flock.

Challenges for Witnessing Mission in India

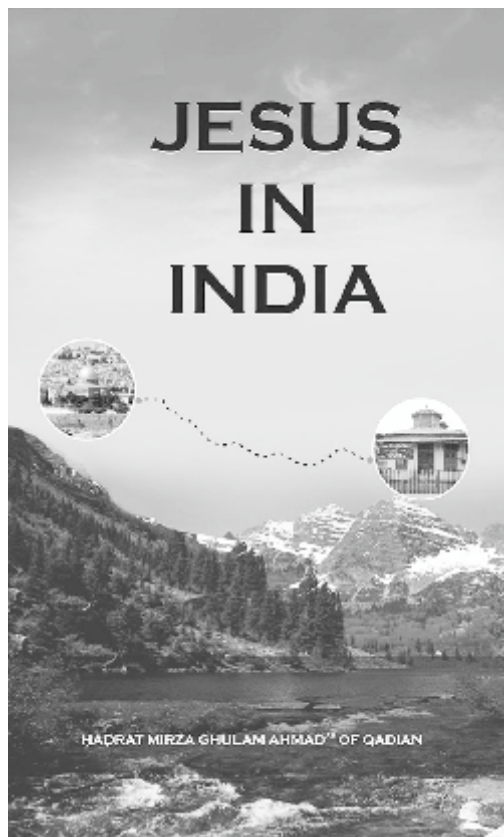
Secular Climate: It seems that a climate which is becoming more and more secular (secularism) has affected the Christian churches in India, more than people of other religious traditions (i.e. Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs). Perhaps it is because Christians are more focused on the material world. The social structures of the past that supported them in their faith, as well as their family life, are now losing their impact. Most importantly Christian educational institutions were started in the past by missionaries to educate the poor and uplift the needy but in the present context most of the educational institutions are like business centres and corporate sectors which are regulated merely for earning profit out of them. The primary intention of missionaries of the past was to propagate Christ's value and virtues through these institutions by educating the poor and the needy but the intention of the past is lost and witnessing attitude in our ministry is totally forgotten. Secular motives are becoming norms and rules for most of the Christian institutions, instead of growing in Christ-centred values we grow in world-centred values where our mission and vision are hidden and deserted. This is

one of the great challenges for us to be witnesses for Christ in our context. There is an urgent need to take a stand that our mission should be exemplary and witnessing; it should not be a business of secular world.

Religious Climate: Another important challenge in our Indian context is that a growing number of Catholics are leaving the Church to join Protestant sects, as they fail to experience community in the Church and are not put sufficiently into contact with the Word of God. The youth feel disgusted with the routine and the

ritualistic worship they attend. This is somehow a tragic situation, because it acts as a counter-witness in the world today and more and more young people allow themselves to be led astray. Priests, religious and laity are called to live an exemplary Christian life to make the liturgy alive and help the faithful more active in the celebrations but when the faithful don't receive what they expect from the Catholic Church they are drawn towards protestant churches. Priests and religious of Catholic Church must engage themselves as active pastors for souls but the declining interest in preaching the Gospel and the robotic way of conducting liturgy have become routine

for some priests and religious. This is one of the reasons for losing the faithful in the Catholic Church. This robotic system of conducting liturgy will not lead us to witness Jesus Christ in our context. There is need for renovation and rejuvenation to continue the same spirit of the missionaries of the past with ignited spirit of Christ.



Amidst these challenges, there is a call to us to embrace the new missionary style or pedagogy for the active witnessing life in Indian context. This new missionary pedagogy is centred first on the authentic character of the message, not only on the explanation of doctrines and religious observances. It is based on the humble witnessing of authentic Christians and the personal experience of the Father's love, salvation in Christ and the power of the Spirit. Paul VI insisted very much on this non-negotiable requirement of evangelisation, when he said: "Today, people listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses" (EN 80).

It is an invitation to proclaim Christ and His Good News in the language of today or in ways that can be understood by the people of today in Indian context. Jesus went out to meet people in the temple, in the synagogues as well as on the roads and in their houses. He proclaimed His Gospel in simple and direct ways, confirming what He said with messianic signs: "He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and illness among the people" (Mt 4.23). Thus, following the example of Christ, the witnessing mission may be possible in three stages: the inculturation of the message, the proclamation of the Word of God and being true witnesses to the gospel in words and actions.

Witness through Dialogue: The missionaries and evangelizers of today in India have also to learn how to function within a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. They should be able to inspire Christians to live their faith in that context. Such a conviction requires that the new evangelisation be carried out in dialogue with other religious traditions, while safeguarding our fundamental religious convictions and avoiding a polemical approach to the social issues of today. Another main understanding to be kept in the mind is the words of Indian Theologian Amaladoss:



"that by calling the people to repent, Jesus is not asking them to leave Judaism and join the Church, but to turn to God by turning away from Satan and Mammon". It means that the purpose of evangelisation is not only for salvation of souls, but also for the creation of a new earth and to give a new direction for human history.

To conclude

As the Church is missionary by her very nature (LG 1; AG 2) it becomes an intrinsic dimension of the whole Church's life. Church in India has to take into consideration two important factors for witnessing mission: 1) Firstly, there is a need to be conscious of being a community of the disciples of Jesus Christ. 2) Secondly, take into serious consideration the social, political, religious, cultural and economic realities of India. Most significantly Church has a significant role to play in God's continuing mission of humanising humanity and mending the whole of creation to carry out the witnessing mission of Christ. The witnessing mission is possible on Indian soil when we care for the needy and the poor, building up solidarity, giving dignity and hope, and making all brothers and sisters, so that we can all meaningfully pray together the Our Father, and find out what God has been doing throughout the ages and history, and to discover all those who have carried this tradition. Hence witnessing Christian mission in Indian context in this present era is challenging but not impossible. ♦

Women cannot be ordained priests: Pope

(CNA) In an interview published in America Magazine, Pope Francis unequivocally stated that women cannot be ordained as priests but emphasized the important role they have to play in the life of the Church.

“And why can a woman not enter ordained ministry? It is because the Petrine principle has no place for that,” the pope said.

“The ministerial dimension, we can say, is that of the Petrine church. I am using a category of theologians. The Petrine principle is that of ministry,” the Holy Father said.

A theology of the ‘Marian principle’

The pope explained that there is another “theological” way in which women play a vital role in Church life.

The dignity of women, he said, reflected the spousal nature of the Church, which he called the “Marian principle.”

“The way is not only [ordained] ministry. The Church is woman. The Church is a spouse. We have not developed a theology of women that reflects this,” Pope Francis said.

“The Petrine principle is that of ministry. But there is another principle that is still more important, about which we do not speak, that is the Marian principle, which is the principle of

femininity (*femineidad*) in the Church, of the woman in the Church, where the Church sees a mirror of



herself because she is a woman and a spouse.

Pope Francis noted that a theology of the Marian principle needs to be developed further.

“Therefore, that the woman does not enter into the ministerial life is not a deprivation. No. Your place is that which is much more important

and which we have yet to develop, the catechesis about women in the way of the Marian principle,” he said.

A third way: the administrative way

Pope Francis said that in addition to the Petrine and the Marian principles, there is another function of the Body of Christ that is particularly suited to women: the “administrative way.”

“There is a third way: the administrative way. The ministerial way, the ecclesial way, let us say, Marian, and the administrative way, which is not a theological thing, it is something of normal administration. And, in this aspect, I believe we have to give more space to women,” Pope Francis said.

The Holy Father then pointed to the women he has appointed, noting that women generally do a “better” job managing things.

“Here in the Vatican, the places where we have put women are functioning better. For example, in the Council for the Economy, where there are six cardinals and six laypersons. Two years ago, I appointed five women among the six laypersons, and that was a revolution. The deputy governor of the Vatican is a woman. When a woman enters politics or manages things, generally she does better. Many economists are women, and they are renewing the economy in a constructive way,” he said.

He then shared two anecdotes about what he called the “nose” (olfato) of women, who have shown themselves to be keen judges of character in evaluating candidates for the priesthood.

“The woman is a mother and sees the mystery of the Church more clearly than we men. For this reason, the advice of a woman is very important, and the decision of a woman is better,” he said.



Ordination of women and the Synod on Synodality

Ahead of next year's Synod on Synodality, participants in the German Catholic Church's Synodal Way voted to approve text calling for the ordination of women priests. The document, titled "Women in Ministries and Offices in the Church," said: "It is not the participation of women in all Church ministries and offices that requires justification, but the exclusion of women from sacramental office."

Then in September, a document on sexuality was narrowly blocked after failing to get support



from two-thirds of the German bishops. That document called for changes to the Church's teaching on homosexuality, bisexuality, gender identity, and masturbation.

Pope Francis has on several occasions made public his concerns about the German Synodal Way, and his clear enunciation of the Church's position on the ordination of women follows his Nov. 17 ad limina meeting with German bishops over their controversial synodal process.

Following that meeting, the German Bishops' Conference president, Bishop Georg Bätzing, told journalists that there was no departure from Catholicism intended. Instead, he said, supporters of the Synodal Way wanted to remain Catholic, "but we want to be Catholic in a different way."

In a statement released Thursday, the Vatican published concerns raised by two leading cardinals who met with the German bishops.

The main concern is one of union with the Church, explained Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Dicastery of Bishops.

"Several authoritative critics of the current orientation of the Synodal Way in Germany speak openly of a latent schism that the proposal of your texts threatens to entrench in its present form," he wrote.

The Synodal Way — which is not a synod — risked being not about achieving pastoral innovations but attempting a "transformation of the Church," Ouellet warned in his statement, published in German by CNA Deutsch.

Ouellet said the Synodal Way's suggestions "hurt the communion of the Church," sowing "doubt and confusion among the people of God."

Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, raised five concerns with the German bishops, including the Synodal Way's approach to sexuality, power and structure in the Church, and the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Women in important positions in the Roman Curia

The Holy See Press Office has made three new appointments, which have to do with the incorporation of more women in different organizations of the Roman Curia.

The Number 2 in the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology

Dr Raffaella Giuliani is the new Secretary of the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology. According to the new Constitution Praedicate Evangelium on the Roman Curia (n. 245), "The Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology has the task to study, preserve, protect and value the Christian catacombs of Italy, in which the testimonies of faith and art of the first Christian communities continue transmitting their profound message to pilgrims and visitors."

Mrs Giuliani also forms part of the Pontifical Academy for the Cult of Martyrs. She is a lay woman of Roman origin, and married. In the past,

Revelation: it's meaning and need

By Fr Antony Netikat, CM

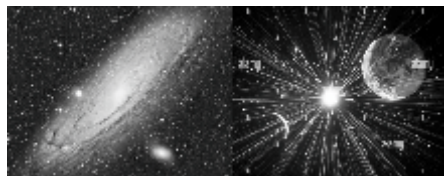
What is revelation?

The word revelation is derived from Greek. It means 'unveiling'. This involves a divine act by which God communicates to man certain divine truths which the latter could never discover on his own. In other words, revelation is the manifestation of God and of his divine will through words Or/and deeds. This includes truths that are to be believed and commandments that are to be obeyed to attain salvation.

Do we require revelation to discover and comprehend God?

Man, with his God-given gift of intellect and reason, is capable of discovering the existence of God and of understanding, to some extent, his divine attributes. But no created intellect, however sharp, can ever comprehend God fully as he is. Only an infinite being can ever comprehend another infinite being. In other words, since man is finite and God is infinite, he can never ever comprehend him as he is. In short, to comprehend an infinite being like God, man himself has to be infinite being, which is absurd. "Can you find the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?" It is higher than heaven --- What can you do? Deeper than Sheol --- what can you know..." (Job 11: 7-11)

All what we can discover with our limited intellect is that God exists and that he has s o m e attributes



such as omnipotence, omnipresence, justice, goodness, consistency etc. Beyond this, we can go no further unless the almighty chooses to reveal something of himself to us. In other words, our knowledge of Gd is very limited, not to say, imperfect. It stands to the credit of the Rishis and Sanyasis of India who had discovered the

existence of God centuries ago. One even wonders how these Hindu Munis went a step further and even evolved the concepts of the Holy Trinity/Trimurthy.

St Thomas Aquinas describes five methods of discovering the existence of God by human intellect. Two of these are :



i) Cause and Effect: Everything that exists has to be explained through someone who has brought it into existence. A train that runs should have an engine made by an intelligent being. That someone has been born from his parents and these parents from some others, till we finally come to one being who creates others but who himself is not the product of another. Such a one is God. This is the conclusion derived from rational think.

ii) Harmony in the universe : Millions of stars and planets revolve and rotate in the universe without accidents or incidents. This presupposes a supreme intellect that controls them from erratic or wayward movements and guides them harmoniously along their trajectory this being is called God. We are painfully aware of the innumerable accidents that occur in the sky, on earth and in the oceans in spite of the constant vigilance of innumerable traffic policemen , control towers and modern technology. Such accidents and incidents are not found in creation. However, though human reasoning can lead us to the existence of God, we need the support of divine revelation to understand more his nature and attributes, and even his divine plans for us.

(to be continued)

**Courtesy: Asian Trading Corporation,
Bangalore ♦**

SAINT OF THE MONTH - I

St Marguerite Bourgeoys

1620 - 1700

Feast Day - January 12

“God closes a door and then opens a window,” people sometimes say when dealing with their own disappointment or someone else's. That was certainly true in Marguerite's case. Children from European as well as Native American backgrounds in the 17th-century Canada benefited from her great zeal and unshakable trust in God's providence.

Marguerite Bourgeoys was born on Good Friday of 1620 during a period of both colonial expansion and religious strife for Europe. She was the seventh of thirteen children born into the middle-class household of Abraham Bourgeoys, a candle-maker, and Guillemette Gamier, in the north-eastern province of Champagne in France.

By her own account, Marguerite had been “very light-hearted and well-liked by the other girls” while growing up. Her turn toward God's calling began in 1640, not long after her mother's death. On Oct 7 of that year, during a procession honouring Our Lady of the Rosary, Marguerite had a mystical experience involving a statue of the



Virgin Mary at Notre-Dame Abbey.

At the age of 20 she believed that she was called to religious life. Her applications to the Carmelites and Poor Clares were unsuccessful. A priest friend suggested that perhaps God had other plans for her.



In 1654, the governor of the French settlement in Canada visited his sister, an Augustinian canoness in Troyes. Marguerite belonged to a sodality connected to that convent. The stories of hardships and dangers in Montreal that made other people shiver had awakened a call from God in her to serve the Native Americans and settlers who endured this adversity. She met with the governor of what was then called Ville Marie and convinced him

she was the person he was looking for to help start a school for the children of Montreal.

When she arrived in Ville Marie, as it was called then, the colony numbered 200 people with a hospital and a Jesuit mission chapel. She found that few children survived to school age. She helped the remarkable Jeanne Mance, who ran the hospital, to change this tragedy. When she finally had children to teach, she had to set up school in a stable.

Soon after starting a school, she realized her need for co-workers. Returning to Troyes, she recruited a friend, Catherine Crolo, and two other young women. In 1667, they added classes at their school for Indian children. A second trip to France three years later resulted in six more young women and a letter from King Louis XIV, authorizing the school. The church hierarchy, however, showed reluctance toward a women's order with no cloistered nuns. The bishop exerted pressure on her to be part of a cloistered congregation or to start one. So she was not ready to surrender to the bishop. There was too much at stake. She reminded him that the Ursulines,, because they were cloistered, could not go out and teach, as her Sisters had done. The poor and uneducated would not and

SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

St Callistus Caravario

1903 - 1930

Feast Day : February 25

St Callistus Caravario is a 20th-century martyr, having offered his life to spread the faith in China. He was a shining light from the dawn to sunset of his life, completely dedicated to the ideal of a holy priesthood and crowned by martyrdom at the age of twenty-six years and nine months.

Callistus Caravario was born at Cuorné in Canavese, in the province of Turin to a working class family on June 18, 1903. From his earliest years, everyone thought of him as an excellent child for his meek and reflective nature. He seemed naturally inclined to prayer and loved his mother very much, as witnessed by the many letters he wrote. At five years of age, he and his family moved to Turin close to the Porta Nuova Oratory. From a tender age Callistus was attracted to the ideal of the priesthood, and this grew in the Salesian setting in Turin: the St Joseph's Oratory, then primary school as a boarder at Saint John the Evangelist's and secondary schooling at the Oratory in Valdocco.

He was amongst the first in his class at school, and served Mass each morning. On the advice of Fr SanteGarelli, the Rector of the Oratory, he entered the Novitiate and became a Salesian. On 19 September 1919 he took his religious vows in Don Bosco's Congregation. He then completed Classics at the Valsalice High School in Turin where he also looked after the founder's burial plot (1919-23). In 1922, Bishop Louis Versiglia was in Turin and spoke of the missions to the Brothers. Callistus told him: "Bishop, you will see me in China."

Fr Sante left for China and Callistus insisted so much, that after a short time, he followed him there. He kept his word. His mother told Fr Sante: "I am willing to leave my son in Don Bosco's hands." "With all the affection I am capable of," Callistus would write, "thank you Lord, for having given me such a good mother." And in October 1924, at 21 years of age, cleric Caravario left as a missionary for China. He was in Shanghai for three years (1924-27) and for two years in Timor (1927-29) as an assistant and catechist for orphaned and abandoned boys there. "Mother, here is news that will make you happy: This morning I gave my first catechism lesson in Chinese."

Meanwhile he was studying theology. Over the four years of his theological studies (1925-29) the ideal of the priesthood filled his whole being. The 82 letters he wrote to his mother over this time are overflowing with this yearning: to be a priest, a holy priest and to lead souls to God; we can see his love of God in these letters, his readiness to do anything for God, including the supreme sacrifice of his life: "By now your Callistus is no longer yours. He must be completely the Lord's, completely dedicated to his service! ... Will my priesthood be short or long? I do not know, but what is important is that I do it well and that when I present myself to the Lord I can say that with his help I have made use of the graces he has given me." During his time in Timor, to the thirst he had for holiness he added the ardent desire to sacrifice his life for the salvation of souls. He had a pre-



sentiment of his coming martyrdom. He would present himself to the Lord as a priest of just eight months, a year later.

On May 18, 1929, he returned to Shiuchow, where bishop Versiglia ordained him priest and entrusted him with the mission at Linchow. In a short time, he had visited all the families and earned the sympathy of the school children. Meanwhile in China, the political situation had become very tense, especially for Christians and foreign missionaries. Persecutions began.

On February 13, 1930, Fr. Callistus was in Shiuchow to accompany the bishop on his pastoral visit to the Linchow mission. Some young boys and girls went with them; they had been studying in Shiuchow. On February 25, a group of Bolshevik pirates stopped the bishop's boat, wanting to take the girls. Bishop Versiglia and Fr. Callistus stopped them. The missionaries were bound, then dragged into a thicket. One of the bandits said: "We need to destroy the Catholic Church". Bishop Luigi and Fr



Callistus understood that the hour had come for witnessing to their faith in Christ. They were calm. They began praying in a loud voice, on their knees, their eyes raised to heaven. Five rifle shots interrupted their ecstatic praise. The women, in tears, had to follow their aggressors, while the men were forced to leave without looking back. The martyrs' remains were collected and buried at Shiu-Chow, then disinterred and thrown away.

In 1976 Pope Paul VI declared Bishop Versiglia and Fr Caravario to be martyrs; on 15 May 1983 John Paul II beatified them, and on 01 October 2000 proclaimed them saints along with another 120

Source:

<https://salesianmissions.org>;

<https://faith.nd.edu>; www.catholic.org ♦

Continued from Page 18: St Marguerite Bourgeoys

could not travel to a Quebec cloister over miles of frontier at the risk of their lives.

Though the teaching sisters often lived in huts and suffered other hardships, the order grew. They did not dedicate themselves solely to teaching children, but also set up schools where they taught new immigrants how to survive in their surroundings. As the order expanded, Marguerite passed leadership on to one of the sisters.

The Congregation of Notre Dame was established in 1676 but its members did not make formal religious profession until 1698 when their Rule and constitutions were approved.

Marguerite established a school for Indian girls in Montreal. At the age of 69, she walked from Montreal to Quebec in response to the bishop's

request to establish a community of her sisters in that city.

During the last two years of her life, the foundress – known by then as Sister Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament – retired to pray in solitude. On the last day of 1699, after a young member of the community became sick, Sister Marguerite prayed to God to suffer in her place. The young woman recovered, while the aged foundress suffered for twelve days and died Jan 12, 1700. St Pope John Paul II canonized Marguerite Bourgeoys in 1982, as the first woman saint of the Catholic Church in Canada.

Source: www.franciscanmedia.org;

www.catholic.org;

www.catholicnewsagency.com ♦

How I saved a stranger from taking her own life

Sometimes one simple sentence is all it can take.

By Catriona Harvey-enner



When 32-year-old Neena arrived at work one day in 2015, she had no idea it would become one of the most memorable days she would experience. Neena works as part of the train dispatch team at the busy Birmingham New Street train station, a transport hub for thousands of passengers every day.

But while going about her duties around the station, she spotted a young woman at the far end of one of the platforms. What grabbed Neena's attention was the fact she was standing on the very edge of the platform - and she wasn't moving.

"There was no interaction with anyone. She was very still and her gaze was fixated," recalled Neena. "Her focal point remained the same for a long time; she was staring at the tracks."

Concerned, Neena's instinct told her something didn't seem right.

"I watched her for a moment and realised I had to make a call on whether I would go and speak to her. I didn't want to make the situation worse," she said. Neena decided to go and talk to the girl, and it's a good job she did.

"As I approached her, I turned my radio down and took off my high vis jacket because I didn't want to make her any more upset or to draw attention to her. I didn't know what I was

going to say at the time, I just knew that I had to say something. Anything."

'Hello, my name's Neena, how are you?' Neena said to the woman as she went to stand next to her, but she didn't get a response. The girl continued to ignore Neena, making no eye contact and maintaining her gaze on the tracks.

Worried she was about to jump, Neena tried another approach. "I noticed she had her makeup done really nicely, so I commented on it and told her I love watching YouTube tutorials," Neena told *Cosmopolitan* UK. "It sounds silly, but I just wanted to make some kind of conversation."

Still getting no reply from the young woman, Neena persisted with her one-sided conversation, while subtly signaling to her colleagues that there was an issue. As it turned out, one of her co-workers had already spotted what was going on, and had called the British Transport Police for assistance as well as calling the signal box to ask them to turn it off.



'There's just you and me here' Neena said eventually to the girl on the platform edge. 'I just need to you to know that you can trust me and that I'm only here to help you. I want to know that you're alright.'

"At that moment she just burst into tears," recalled Neena. "I remember it so clearly. She said to me, 'I'm not okay'."

Then the young woman started to become frantic. "She went into panic mode, it was so sad. I told her not to worry about anyone else, just to look at me, and that we could go somewhere private, away from the station to have a cup of tea if she needed to. But she was panicking and crying so much."

In between sobs, Neena managed to make out that the woman had lost her father. "She said she wasn't dealing with it very well," said the station worker.

From there, Neena managed to gently coax the suicidal woman away from the platform edge, over to the middle of the platform where the British



Transport Police took over. Afterwards, Neena made attempts to check she was okay, but the police weren't able to share any further details because of confidentiality.

Neena doesn't know the name of the girl she spok to that day, but she knows her actions possbly contributed towards saving her life.

"To think that you could potentially have saved someone's life is hard to digest," Neena told *Cosmopolitan UK*. "There's always a fear there that you might make the situation worse, but you have to try to say something because there's very little you could do to upset anyone more.

"People just want to know that you care. It can make such a difference. I think that's so powerful."

(Neena is working on 'Small Talk Saves Lives' campaign which has been launched by the rail industry in partnership with Samaritans and the British Transport Police.)

Source: www.cosmopolitan.com/uk ♦



♦ *Continued from Page 16: Women cannot be ordained priests: Pope* ♦

she was Inspector of Rome's catacombs. She is the author of several academic studies on the Roman catacombs.

The Number 3 of the Dicastery for Culture and Education

Arriving at the Dicastery –which after the reform of the Roman Curia fused culture and education in the new “Dicastery for Education and Culture”– as its new Under-Secretary is Dr Antonella Sciarrone Alibrandi who is a member of

the Faculty of Banking, Financial and Insurance Sciences of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, one of Italy's most prestigious Catholic Universities.

Consultant to Dicastery for the Clergy

Finally, a nun is appointed as Consultant to the Dicastery concerned with the world's priests. She is Sister Lidia González Rodríguez, FMH Dr Chiara D' Urbano and Professor Rosalba Erminia Paola Manes are added to her as consultants. ♦

Digital Disciple: Carlo Acutis and the Eucharist

Carlo Acutis slid his books into his backpack when he heard the parish priest knocking at the door. The hoodie-clad teenager had just finished teaching his first catechism class by himself. “Father Antonio, I ... I don't know what to do!” Carlo asked for advice. “These kids don't love the Mass like I do! How do I help them understand the beauty of the Mass?”

Placing his hand on Carlo's shoulder, the priest pointed him to a picture of a church hanging on the wall. It was San Francesco in Lanciano, Italy.

“Inside it is a Eucharistic miracle that reminds me why every Mass is a miracle, even when it may seem boring,” the priest explained, referring to a miracle where the Eucharistic host visibly transformed into flesh and blood at Mass.

So begins “Digital Disciple: Carlo Acutis and the Eucharist” — a new comic book that tells the story of Blessed Carlo Acutis, a young millennial who used his knowledge of computers and technology to document the world's Eucharistic miracles online and draw people closer to God.

“Meet Carlo, an Italian fifteen-year-old computer geek who loved superheroes and video games, but most of all, the Holy Eucharist,” the book's description reads. Inspired by that love, Carlo completed a Eucharistic miracle display and website before he died in 2006 from leukemia. He was 15.

The comic book rewinds time to tell the story of a seemingly ordinary teenager with an

extraordinary devotion to God. Published by Voyage Comics and the Augustine Institute, the book's pages burst with color and movement, inviting readers to walk with Carlo.

“[I] simply put myself into Carlo's shoes and wrote the comic book through his eyes,” Philip Kosloski, the writer of the new book, told CNA.

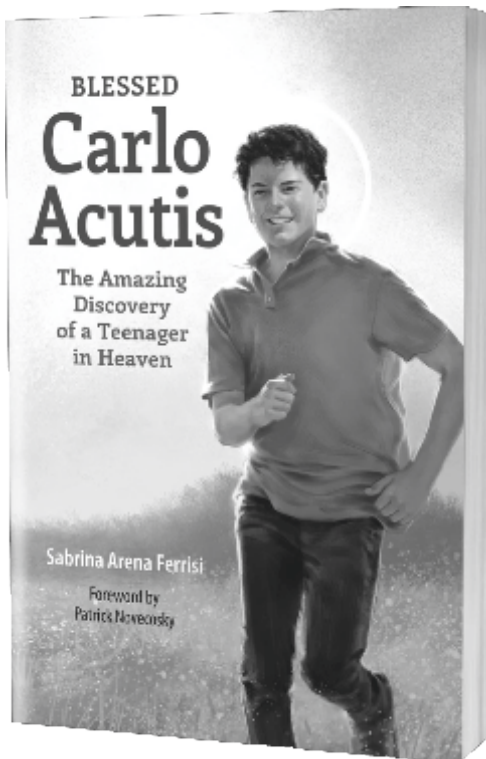
The 36-year-old, who currently lives in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, revealed his inspiration for the project.

“When I first heard of him a few years ago, I was fascinated by him and his life,” Kosloski said of Carlo. “He had a deep devotion to the Eucharist as a teenager and was blown away by Eucharistic miracles.”

Carlo had also impacted his life on a more personal level. “I had a similar experience as a teenager when I learned about Eucharistic miracles and I saw the panels he created that were touring the United States several years ago, though at the time I didn't know they were by him,” he said.

In 2018, Kosloski founded Voyage Comics & Publishing with the mission to create exceptional entertainment, informed by Catholic values, that inspires people to live a heroic life. To prepare for his latest project, Kosloski said that he read every book he could find — and even contacted the Acutis' secretary in Italy.

“The family had a chance to look over the script and they gave the 'green light,’” he said. The comic book depicts Carlo as a relatable teenager: a video game enthusiast, a caretaker of animals and the environment, a soccer player, and an admirer of



superheroes. But he also stands out as someone who defends classmates with disabilities against bullies, helps the homeless and the poor, attends daily Mass, and lives by the motto “The Eucharist is my highway to heaven.”

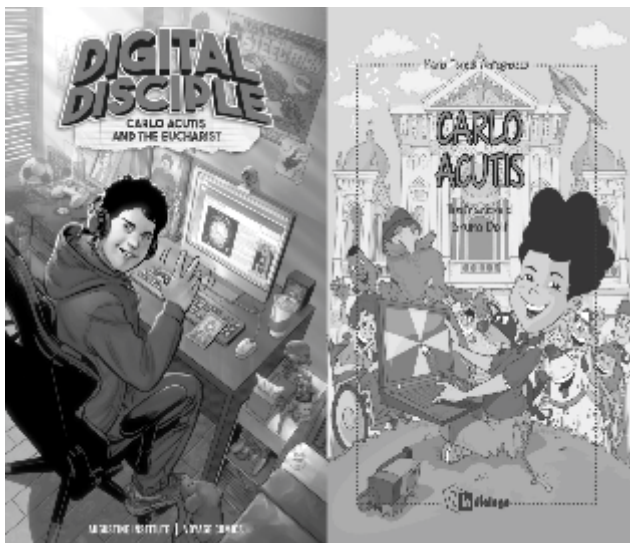
In other words, a superhero worthy of a comic book. Available for shipping in November, the book took roughly four to five months to produce. Kosloski said he had the help of experienced artists, such as Jay David Ramos.

He called Ramos, the book's colorist, “a rising star at Marvel Comics.” “He is a devout Catholic, originally from the Philippines, who is living in California and is a full-time comic book artist,” Kosloski said. “He has been part of the Voyage Comics team for the past few years and is always eager to color the lives of 'superhero' saints, taking a break from his normal work.”

Kosloski's favorite scene in the book, he said, is a section that focuses on Acutis' experience playing video games. “It is based off a real event in



his life where he saw his friends get overly frustrated with video games,” he said. “He learned that video games need to be moderated and [that] was part of the reason why he limited himself to one hour of video games a week.”



For his part, Kosloski hoped that the book would speak to both Catholic and non-Catholic readers. “I hope Catholics will see an enthusiastic teenager in the pursuit of the truth,” he said. “He found the truth behind the Eucharist and couldn't contain his excitement at what he found. He had to spread his love, hoping the entire world would come to see the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.”

“For non-Catholics, I hope they see a teenager on fire with Christ's love,” he added. “He not only shared his love of the Eucharist but also served the poor and cared for what Pope Francis would call our, 'common home.'”

He concluded: “His life shows that God can work through anyone, no matter their age.”

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Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

January 2023: For educators

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.

February 2023: For parishes

We pray that parishes, placing communion at the centre, may increasingly become communities of faith, fraternity and welcome towards those most in need.

PONTIFICAL SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD



HISTORY: In the mid-nineteenth century, a French bishop, **H. E. Charles de Forbin-Janson** was upset by the news coming from **China** about the **children who were dying without having received Baptism**. Regretting that he could not personally leave as a missionary, he asked for advice from Pauline Jaricot, the foundress of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Their exchange of ideas was enlightening and Bishop de Forbin-Janson got the idea to involve the children of France so that through prayer and material cooperation, they could help the Chinese children of their same age. **“One Hail Mary a day, one small coin a month”** was the commitment made by every child from the first moment. It was on **May 19th 1843** and through this initiative the seed was

sown from which the Society germinated. Years later, the motto would be coined, **“CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN”**, which sums up well the founder's intuition and the Society's charisma.

In a short time, many countries joined in the initiative and the Society spread from France to Belgium, Spain, Italy and many other nations. In the first months of the foundation of the HC, the Christian community realised the missionary power of the children, which was a big surprise among the priests and bishops in seeing the real welcome extended by the children to this missionary work which puts them at the centre of the Church and the world.

On May 3, 1922, mindful of the Society's great contribution to the missions for nearly eighty years, Pope Pius XI made it his own and recognized it as Pontifical. On December 4, **1950**, Pope Pius XII created the **World Day of the Holy Childhood**, and declared the day of the Epiphany as the date for its celebration, but leaving each nation free to adapt the date to local needs.

Spirituality of Holy Childhood: He called it Holy Childhood because he wanted his children's missionary movement to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who became a child. Christian children are called to work for the salvation of children who do not know Jesus, in honour of and in imitation of the Holy Childhood of Our Lord Jesus. From the first rules edited by the founder, it is evident that:

- the association is placed under the protection of the Child Jesus;
- the Virgin Mary is the principal protector of the association, along with the guardian angels;
- all the baptised children can be members of the association.
- the association is structured in groups of 12 in honour of the 12 years of the infancy of Jesus, imitating him in the following aspects: simplicity, silence, the joy of living, his total availability, his trust in Mary and the docility toward his foster father, and the desire to work on the things of his Father;
- the children are admitted from a tender age till they receive Holy Communion.

According to the charism of the Association, the formative itinerary must give the children a new awareness. With baptism, the child becomes a bearer of Divine grace in which it finds the fullness of the Spirit. Baptism is a generous gift that belongs to the individual but the abundance of grace that derives from it belongs to the universality of the brothers and sisters to whom we are united by the same Father God. For this reason was initiated the Association because Mons. De Forbin Janson could not accept that millions of children would remain outside of the true source of life. The missionary work is born out of baptism and it not just about the adults. The children, in as much children, are missionaries through their prayer and small sacrifices, always in wait of the time when they can themselves become missionaries in the fullness of the term, making the gift of their lives when they are adults.

The Bishop of Nancy, thanks to the Association, returned to the children a privileged place of sanctification: the infancy of the Son of God.



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