

Vol 44, No. 4

July – August 2021

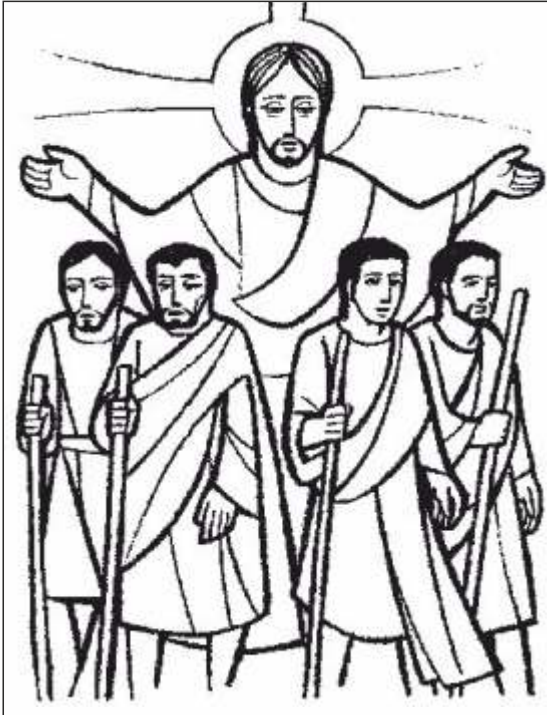
# PROCLAIM

A magazine for Missionary Animation

## Lay Ministry of Catechist



**“Go out to the whole world and PROCLAIM the GOOD NEWS to all creation”** Mark 16:15



6. The lay apostolate is unquestionably “secular”. It requires that the laity “*seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will*” (cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 31).

In their daily life, interwoven with family and social relationships, the laity come to realize that they “*are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth*” (ibid., 33).

We do well to remember, however, that in addition to this apostolate, “*the laity can be called in different ways to more immediate*

*cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy, like those men and women who helped the apostle Paul in the Gospel, working hard in the Lord*” (ibid.).

The role played by catechists is one specific form of service among others within the Christian community. Catechists are called first to be expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith as it develops through its different stages from the initial proclamation of the kerygma to the instruction that presents our new life in Christ and prepares for the sacraments of Christian initiation, and then to the ongoing formation that can allow each person to give an accounting of the hope within them (cf. 1 Pet 3:15).

At the same time, every catechist must be a witness to the faith, a teacher and mystagogue, a companion and pedagogue, who teaches for the Church. Only through prayer, study, and direct participation in the life of the community can they grow in this identity and the integrity and responsibility that it entails (cf. Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, 113).

- “*ANTIQUUM MINISTERIUM*” (*Instituting the Ministry of Catechist*)  
*Apostolic Letter by Pope Francis*

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

# PROCLAIM

## Editor:

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu

## Editorial Board:

Dr Thomas J DSouza

Mahesh Lobo

## Publisher:

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu

**National Director - Pontifical Mission Organizations**

## Printer:

James Arts Crafts

Sivakasi – 626189

☎ 9789774520

## Subscription rates: (six issues/year)

Inclusive of postal charges for  
Subscribers in India.

Annual: ₹ 150

3 years: ₹ 400

Annual bulk subscription

(i.e., 20 or more copies): ₹ 125

DONORS: ₹ 5000 (for 15 years)

## Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this magazine by  
writers do not necessarily reflect the views or  
policies of Pontifical Mission Organizations.

For private circulation only.

Content and Pictures used may have been  
sourced from the internet and from the public  
domain. In case of an inadvertent copy-right  
issue, kindly contact the NATIONAL  
DIRECTOR– PONTIFICAL MISSION  
ORGANIZATIONS at the contact  
information published.

## PONTIFICAL MISSION ORGANIZATIONS

No. 10, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cross, Ulsoor Road,  
Bangalore– 560042,  
Karnataka, INDIA.

Tel: +91 80 2558 5946

Email: pmorgbindia@gmail.com

Website: www.pmoindia.org

# Contents

(with Page Number)

- **From the DIRECTOR'S DESK** \_\_\_\_\_ (2)
- **Antiquum ministerium** \_\_\_\_\_ (3)
- **Nurturing disciples of Jesus** \_\_\_\_\_ (7)
- **Let us be a restorative generation:  
Pope** \_\_\_\_\_ (9)
- **Assumption of Mary in Revelation** \_\_\_\_\_ (11)
- **Barabbas changed his life** \_\_\_\_\_ (14)
- **St Joseph: Man in whom Heaven trusts** \_\_\_\_ (17)
- **SAINT OF THE MONTH**
  - St Otto of Bamberg** \_\_\_\_\_ (20)  
Feast Day: 2<sup>nd</sup> July
  - St Elizabeth Bichier** \_\_\_\_\_ (21)  
Feast Day: 26<sup>th</sup> August
- **STORY CORNER**
  - The good goatherd** \_\_\_\_\_ (23)
- **News Round-up** \_\_\_\_\_ (24)

## Advertisements:

We look forward to your support and thank you in advance for  
your advertisements which will aid some of our mission projects.

The rates per issue are listed below:

- **Colour Back Cover = Rs 8000**
- **Colour Inner (Front/Back) Cover = Rs 6000/5000**
- **Colour Inside (Full/Half) Page = Rs 4000/2000**
- **Black & White Inside (Full/Half) Page = Rs 2000/1000**



**"As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not  
use your freedom as a pretext for evil." – 1 Peter 2:16**



## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

# Ministry of Lay Catechist in Evangelization

Pope Francis issued a new *motu proprio* (Apostolic Letter) *Antiquum Ministerium* [AM] on 10 May 2021 on the liturgical memorial of St John of Avila - Priest and Doctor. The apostolic letter formally institutes the lay ministry of catechist in the Catholic Church. The lay ministry of catechist is not something new [AM #1]. Filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, lay people also have contributed heavily to evangelization. While we should gratefully remember the contribution of bishops, priests, deacons, men and women of consecrated life in evangelization, it is also equally important that we recognize the unsung heroes - the lay catechists. Pope Francis rightly writes in the apostolic letter that we cannot “forget the countless lay men and women who directly took part in the spread of the Gospel through catechetical instruction. Men and women of deep faith, authentic witnesses of holiness, who in some cases were also founders of Churches and eventually died as martyrs” [AM # 3]. In fact, Pope Francis has already established the importance of the catechists in *Evangelii Gaudium* and invited the pastors to recognize the contribution and the impact the lay catechist can create in the Church and in the society.



Instituting the ministry of lay catechist is not to take away of the role of the Bishop as the primary catechist or to undermine his role in the formation of the Christian community. The pope insists that we need to find out also lay people who feel called for the ministry of evangelisation. In his words: “recognition should be given to those lay men and women who feel called by virtue of their baptism to cooperate in the work of catechesis (cf. CIC can. 225; CCEO cans. 401 and 406)” [AM #5]. We not only recognize their contribution and the call, we also understand that the secular character [AM # 6] of the lay catechist can be very fruitful in the proclamation.

As stated earlier, the ministry of the lay catechist is not something new. We already have a form of lay catechists in our Church. The villages earlier had lay untrained catechists in the small churches. Their job was simply to lead the prayers in the church and help the people to pray and assist the priest when he comes for the celebration of the Holy Mass. In a sense this was an important ministry of catechising the people of the village. They were highly respected because such uneducated and untrained catechist knew the prayers by heart and helped others to pray. Some regions in our country had also prepared lay catechists with certain training in scripture and communication. The Pope says that such training should be taken seriously: “They should also receive suitable biblical, theological, pastoral and pedagogical formation to be competent communicators of the truth of the faith and they should have some prior experience of catechesis” [AM # 8].

By formally instituting the ministry of catechist, the Pope is asking the local bishops to seriously define the role of lay catechists and make use of them in the ministry. This announcement comes at a time where many of the western countries have fewer priests and there is a need for the Church to proclaim the good news. This is also important for our country where we have sufficient priests and religious, precisely because of the secular character it has; that is, the lay catechists can with their words and deeds be great models of the Gospel values in public spaces. They can be very effective in evangelization and help others to know Christ.

**Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu**  
**National Director (PMO-India)**



# Antiquum Ministerium

*Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis instituting the Ministry of Catechist, issued on 10 May 2021*



1. ... The service of catechesis may be traced back to those “teachers” mentioned by the Apostle in writing to the community of Corinth: “Some people God has designated in the Church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way” (1 Cor 12:28-31).

Saint Luke begins his Gospel by stating: “I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received” (Lk 1:3-4). The evangelist seems to be well aware that his writings

offer a specific form of instruction that can give firm assurance to those already baptized. The Apostle Paul, for his part, tells the Galatians that: “one who is being instructed in the word should share all good things with his instructor” (Gal 6:6). As is evident, this text provides yet another detail; it speaks of the communion of life as a sign of the fruitfulness of an authentic catechesis.

2. From the beginning, the Christian community was characterized by many different forms of ministry carried out by men and women who, obedient to the working of the Holy Spirit, devoted their lives to the building up of the Church. At times, the charisms that the Spirit constantly pours out on the baptized took on a visible and tangible form of immediate service to the Christian community, one recognized as an indispensable *diakonia* for the community. The Apostle Paul authoritatively attests to this when he states that “there are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit

the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy;

to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all



of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes” (1 Cor 12:4-11).

2. .... Within the broader charismatic tradition of the New Testament, then, we can see that certain baptized persons exercised the ministry of transmitting in a more organic and



stable form related to different situations in life the teaching of the apostles and evangelists (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 8). The Church wished to acknowledge this service as a concrete expression of a personal charism that contributed greatly to the exercise of her mission of evangelization. ....

3. The history of evangelization over the past two millennia clearly shows the effectiveness of the mission of catechists. Bishops, priests and deacons, together with many men and women in the consecrated life, devoted their lives to catechetical instruction so that the faith might be an effective support for the life of every human being. Some of them also gathered around themselves others of their brothers and sisters sharing the same charism, and founded religious orders wholly dedicated to catechesis.

Nor can we forget the countless lay men and women who directly took part in the spread of the Gospel through catechetical instruction. Men and women of deep faith, authentic witnesses of holiness, who in some cases were also founders of Churches and eventually died as martyrs. In our own day too, many competent and dedicated

catechists are community leaders in various parts of the world and carry out a mission invaluable for the transmission and growth of the faith. The long line of blessed, saints and martyrs who were catechists has significantly advanced the Church's mission and deserves to be recognized, for it represents a rich resource not only for catechesis but also for the entire history of Christian spirituality.

4. .... The Council Fathers repeatedly emphasized the great need for the lay faithful to be engaged directly, in the various ways their charism can be expressed, in the “*plantatio Ecclesiae*” and the development of the Christian community. “Worthy of praise too is that army of catechists, both men and women, to whom missionary work among the nations is so indebted, who imbued with an apostolic spirit make an outstanding and absolutely necessary contribution to the spread of the faith and the Church by their great work. In our days, when there are so few clerics to evangelize such great multitudes and to carry out the pastoral ministry, the role of catechists is of the highest importance” (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, 17).

Along with the important teaching of the Council, mention should be made of the constant interest of the Popes, the Synod of Bishops, the Episcopal Conferences and individual Bishops who, in recent decades have contributed to a significant renewal of catechesis. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, the *General Catechetical Directory*, the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the recent *Directory for Catechesis*, as well as the many national, regional and diocesan Catechisms, have confirmed the centrality of a catechesis that gives priority to the education and ongoing formation of believers.

5. Without prejudice to the Bishop's mission as the primary catechist in his Diocese, one which he shares with his presbyterate, or to the particular responsibility of parents for the Christian formation of their children (cf. CIC can. 774 §2;

CCEO can. 618), recognition should be given to those lay men and women who feel called by virtue of their baptism to cooperate in the work of catechesis (cf. CIC can. 225; CCEO cans. 401 and 406). This presence is all the more urgently needed today as a result of our increasing awareness of the need for evangelization in the contemporary world (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 163-168), and the rise of a globalized culture (cf. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 100, 138).

Awakening personal enthusiasm on the part of all the baptized and reviving the awareness of their call to carry out a proper mission in the community demands attentiveness to the voice of the Spirit, who is unfailingly present and fruitful (cf. CIC can. 774 §1; CCEO can. 617). Today, too, the Spirit is calling men and women to set out and encounter all those who are waiting to discover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Christian faith. It is the task of pastors to support them in this process and to enrich the life of the Christian community through the recognition of lay ministries capable of contributing to the transformation of society through the “penetration of Christian values into the social, political and economic sectors” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 102).

6. The lay apostolate is unquestionably “secular”. It requires that the laity “seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will” (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 31). In their daily life, interwoven with family and social relationships, the laity come to realize that they “are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth” (ibid., 33). We do well to remember, however, that in addition to this apostolate, “the laity can be called in different ways to more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy, like those men and women who helped the apostle Paul in the Gospel, working hard in the Lord” (ibid.)

The role played by catechists is one specific form of service among others within the Christian

community. Catechists are called first to be expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith as it develops through its different stages from the initial proclamation of the *kerygma* to the instruction that presents our new life in Christ and prepares for the sacraments of Christian initiation, and then to the ongoing formation that can allow each person to give an accounting of the hope within them (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15). At the same time, every catechist must be a witness to the faith, a teacher and mystagogue, a companion and pedagogue, who teaches for the Church. Only through prayer, study, and direct participation in the life of the community can they grow in this identity and the integrity and responsibility that it entails (cf. Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, 113).

7. With great foresight, Saint Paul VI issued the Apostolic Letter *Ministeria Quaedam* with the intention not only of adapting the ministries of Lector and Acolyte to changed historical circumstances (cf. Apostolic Letter *Spiritus*



*Domini*), but also of encouraging Episcopal Conferences to promote other ministries, including that of Catechist. “In addition to the ministries common to the entire Latin Church, nothing prevents Episcopal Conferences from asking the Apostolic See for the institution of others, which for particular reasons, they consider necessary or very useful in their own region. Among these are, for example, the offices of *Porter*, *Exorcist* and *Catechist*.” The same



pressing invitation is found in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*; in calling for a discernment of the present needs of the Christian community in faithful continuity with its origins, the Pope encouraged the development of new forms of ministry for a renewed pastoral activity. “Such ministries, apparently new but closely tied up with the Church's living experience down the centuries, such as that of catechists... are valuable for the establishment, life, and growth of the Church, and for her capacity to influence her surroundings and to reach those who are remote from her” (St Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 73).

.....

8. This ministry has a definite vocational aspect, as evidenced by the Rite of Institution, and consequently calls for due discernment on the part of the Bishop. It is in fact a stable form of service rendered to the local Church in accordance with pastoral needs identified by the local Ordinary, yet one carried out as a work of the laity, as demanded by the very nature of the ministry. It is fitting that those called to the instituted ministry of Catechist be men and women of deep faith and human maturity, active participants in the life of the Christian community, capable of welcoming others, being generous and living a life of fraternal communion. They should also receive suitable biblical, theological, pastoral and pedagogical formation to be competent communicators of the truth of the faith and they should have some prior experience of catechesis (cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 14; CIC can. 231 §1; CCEO can. 409 §1). It is essential that they be faithful co-workers with priests and

deacons, prepared to exercise their ministry wherever it may prove necessary, and motivated by true apostolic enthusiasm.

Therefore, after having taken all things into consideration, and by apostolic authority I establish the lay ministry of Catechist

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments will soon publish the Rite of Institution of the lay ministry of Catechist.

9. I invite the Episcopal Conferences to render effective the ministry of Catechist, determining the necessary process of formation and the normative criteria for admission to this ministry and devising the most appropriate forms for the service which these men and women will be called to exercise in conformity with the content of this Apostolic Letter.

10. The Synods of the Oriental Churches or the Assemblies of Hierarchs may adopt what is established here for their respective Churches *sui iuris*, in accordance with their particular law.

11. Bishops should make every effort to comply with the exhortation of the Council Fathers: “Pastors... know that they were not established by Christ to undertake by themselves the entire saving mission of the Church to the world. They appreciate, rather, that it is their exalted task to shepherd the faithful and at the same time acknowledge their ministries and charisms so that all in their separate ways, but of one mind, may cooperate in the common task” (*Lumen Gentium*, 30). May the discernment of the gifts that the Holy Spirit never fails to grant to the Church sustain their efforts to make the lay ministry of Catechist effective for the growth of their communities. .... ♦



# Nurturing disciples of Jesus

By Jem Sullivan

Pope Francis breathes new life into the ancient ministry of catechist in his apostolic letter *Antiquum Ministerium* (“Ancient Ministry”), released this morning by the Vatican, less than two weeks before Pentecost. Issued “*motu proprio*,” meaning the letter is signed by and



issued on the pope's own initiative, the brief papal document formalizes the lay ministry of a catechist for the universal Church. It also serves to introduce the Rite of Institution of the Lay Ministry of Catechist from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Just as lay ministers serve as lectors, cantors or extraordinary ministers of holy communion to support the liturgical life of the Church, now the lay ministry of catechist will be recognized formally as a vital support to the evangelizing mission of the Church. Catechists of today are linked to a long chain of faithful men and women who dedicate themselves to initiating, educating, accompanying and forming their brothers and sisters to grow in lifelong friendship with Jesus as members of Christ's body, the Church.

We know these dedicated men and women as catechists of children, teenagers, young adults and adults in our parishes. This papal initiative offers an opportunity to recognize, with gratitude and formational support, those catechists who serve in this esteemed ministry.

## The Church exists to evangelize

Arriving within a year of the Directory for Catechesis, which was released by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization last June, this papal letter embodies Pope Francis' desire to revitalize parishes with a fresh evangelizing impulse. Read

together with the Directory for Catechesis, the apostolic letter *Antiquum Ministerium* brings the theological and catechetical principles of the third catechetical directory into the heart of everyday parish life by establishing a formal ritual institution of the age-old lay ministry of catechist.

By elevating the lay ministry of catechist, Pope Francis affirms that the evangelizing mission to proclaim Jesus Christ is the sole reason for the Church's existence. In this way, Pope Francis gives concrete pastoral expression to Pope St. Paul VI's teaching that “evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners to God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 14).

The pope's initiative may also be viewed as a crowning moment in the Church's pastoral concern for a renewal of catechesis. Since the Second Vatican Council, this focus on catechetical renewal has resulted in the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the apostolic exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (“On Catechesis in Our Time”), three catechetical directories over five decades, and numerous national, regional and diocesan catechisms. A review of key themes in the 11 articles of *Antiquum Ministerium* reveals the pope's pastoral vision as he elevates the ministry of a catechist through a dedicated liturgical rite of the Church.

## Catechesis: An ancient ministry

*Antiquum Ministerium* begins by tracing the ministry of catechist to New Testament writings.

Several New Testament passages speak of “teachers of faith” whose specific form of instruction served to invite, initiate, accompany and educate those seeking to grow in friendship with Jesus Christ within the Christian community. From the beginning, the heart of the Church's catechetical efforts was the invitation to lifelong communion with Jesus Christ.

Since Pentecost, the ministry of catechist built up the faith of believers through an indispensable service, or *diakonia*, for the pastoral



care of the Christian community. Before the legalization of Christianity, the rapid spread of Christian faith in the first five centuries was due, in no small part, to the ministry of lay catechists serving in union with bishops, priests, deacons and religious.

For two millennia the Church has been blessed with “certain baptized persons who exercise the ministry of transmitting, in a more organic and stable form, related to different situations in life, the teaching of the apostles and evangelists” (*Antiquum Ministerium*, No. 2). The papal letter locates the ministry of catechist within the “many different forms of ministry carried out by men and women who, obedient to the working of the Holy Spirit, devote their lives to the building up of the Church.” This brings to mind St. Paul's image of the one Spirit given in a rich multiplicity of gifts and charisms, such as knowledge, faith, healing, mighty deeds, prophecy and discernment of spirits. Ordained and lay ministries are generous gifts of “but one and the same Spirit [who] produces all of these, distributing them

individually to each person as he wishes” (1 Cor 12:11).

Bishops, priests, deacons, men and women in consecrated religious life devoted their lives to catechetical instruction, accompaniment and formation in the Christian way of life. The letter makes special mention of those men and women whose apostolate took the form of religious orders singularly dedicated to catechesis.

### **Lay Catechists: the ‘saints next door.’**

Pope Francis highlights the distinctly “secular” character of lay ministries. He notes that catechists build up and strengthen the Christian community by being “expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the Faith as it develops through its different stages from the proclamation of the *kerygma* to the instruction that presents our new life in Christ and prepares for the sacraments of Christian initiation, and then to the ongoing formation that can allow each person to give an accounting of the hope within them” (*Antiquum Ministerium*, No. 6).

Through prayer, study and participation in community life, a lay catechist is called to be, at once, “a witness to the Faith, a teacher and mystagogue, a companion and pedagogue, who teaches for the Church” (*Antiquum Ministerium*, No. 6).

Catechesis is described in the Directory for Catechesis as the ministry that “makes the proclamation of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ continually resound in the heart of every person, so that life may be transformed. A dynamic and complex reality at the service of the Word of God, catechesis is accompaniment, education and formation in the faith and for the faith, an introduction to the celebration of the Mystery, illumination and interpretation of human life and history” (No. 55).

As catechists have done for 2,000 years, those who serve today as parish catechists offer a vital ministry that nurtures disciples of Jesus on their journeys of faith. In echoing the Church's witness to Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life, the ministry of a catechist is a living source of



# Let us be a restorative generation: Pope



## Committing to caring for our common home

Highlighting the importance of the UN Decade, Pope Francis noted that it invites us to make ten-year commitments to care for our common home by “supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration.”

Moreover, the Bible tells us that “we are all part of this gift of creation. We are a part of nature, not separated from it,” the Pope said, drawing inspiration from Psalm 19: 1 – 3.

Pope Francis has said that environmental degradation is “a clear outcome of economic dysfunction” and underlined the importance of urgent action in our collective response to the environmental crisis.

In a June 4 a message for the launching of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the pope underlined the importance of protecting the environment and reforming the global economy.

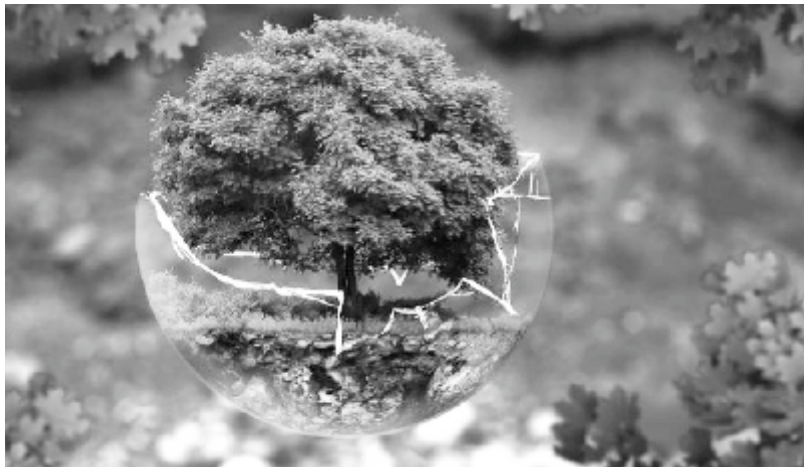
“This annual commemoration encourages us to remember that everything is interconnected,” said the Pope about World Environment Day. “A true concern for the environment ... needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society”.

The Pope’s words, addressed to UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen and FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu were delivered in a video message by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin on Friday.

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is a call for the protection and revival of ecosystems across the world for the benefit of humans and nature. The Decade runs from 2021 to 2030, which is the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals and the timeline scientists have said is the last chance to prevent catastrophic climate change. The call to act now.

Drawing attention to the environmental situation, Pope Francis lamented the “crisis leading to crisis” that we see.

“We see the destruction of nature, as well as a global pandemic leading to the death of millions of people. We see the unjust consequences of some



aspects of our current economic systems and numerous catastrophic climate crises that produce grave effects on human societies and even mass extinction of species.”

At the same time, “we risk floods, and hunger and severe consequences for ourselves and for future generations,” the Pope said, adding that “this is what many scientists tell us.”

To respond to this, Pope Francis stressed that “the current environmental situation calls us to act now with urgency to become ever more responsible stewards of creation and to restore the nature that we have been damaging and exploiting for too long.”

“We need to take care of each other, and of the weakest among us,” he urged, warning that continuing down this path of exploitation and destruction of humans and of nature is “unjust and unwise” and is what a responsible conscience would tell us.

“We have a responsibility to leave a habitable common home for our children and for future generations,” he insisted.

## Hope

Underlining the presence of hope in spite of the challenges entailed by the environmental situation, Pope Francis pointed at the needed freedom we have to “limit and direct technology” and put it at the service of another type of progress – one that is “healthier, more human, more social and more integral.”

He also went on to acknowledge the new engagement and commitment by several states and non-governmental actors in efforts aimed at

promoting integral ecology.

However, he stressed that integral ecology calls for a long-term vision that highlights the inseparability of “concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace” aimed at restoring ecological equilibrium, as well as harmony within ourselves, others, nature and God.

## Not much time left

Further impressing upon all the urgency of collective action, the Pope reiterated the warnings from scientists that we have the span of this decade to restore the ecosystem.

He added that the “warnings” that we are experiencing, including the Covid-19 pandemic and global warming, push us to take urgent action and expressed hope that the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) on climate change,

scheduled for Glasgow in November, will “help to give us the right answers to restore ecosystems.”

Stressing that “ecosystem degradation is a clear outcome of economic dysfunction”, the Pope underlined the need for “a deeper reflection on the meaning of the economy and its goals, as well as a profound and far-sighted revision of the current model of development, so as to correct its dysfunctions and deviations.”

“Restoring the nature we have damaged means, in the first place, restoring ourselves,” Pope Francis said.

Concluding, the Holy Father encouraged everyone to be “compassionate, creative and courageous” as we welcome the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and enjoined all to “take our proper place as a ‘Restoration Generation’.” ♦



# Assumption of Mary in Revelation

*(A reflection on Assumption of BVM compiled from different sources by Mahesh H. Lobo)*

Assumption of the Blessed Mother is not mentioned in the Bible and therefore it cannot be held as a Christian Belief, so argue most of our non-Catholic Christian brothers and sisters. It is true, it is not mentioned in the Bible and for that matter, 'Trinity', 'Rapture' is also not mentioned in the Bible.

## **Everything is not written in the Bible:**

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)*

*But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. John 21:25*

Like Immaculate Conception, Mary's Assumption is not explicitly recorded in the Scriptures but just like Immaculate Conception, the foundations of the Assumption are very much rooted in the scriptures. Most mysteriously this is recorded in the Revelation of John 12. Let us visit that vision and see how it correlates to the church's teaching on Mary's Assumption and Coronation. Rev 19:21-12:1

We know that the Ark of the Covenant was missing from Israel from 586 BC. This is the time Babylonians invaded Israel and destroyed the kingdom. 2 Maccabees 2:4-8 tells us that Prophet Jeremiah took it from the temple and hid it on Mount Nebo somewhere which no one knew. At that time Jeremiah told that God will reveal the Ark of the Covenant when God will gather his people



once again and shows His mercy. *"The place shall be unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. And then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will*

*appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated." It was also made clear that being possessed of wisdom Solomon offered sacrifice for the dedication and completion of the temple. Just as Moses prayed to the Lord, and fire came down from heaven and devoured the sacrifices, so also Solomon prayed, and the fire came down and consumed the whole burnt offerings" (2 Maccabees 2:7-10).*

In this prophecy, Jeremiah alluded to the first Exodus and as well as to the Kingdom and the Temple. Also he referred to the Glory of God appearing in a cloud – a symbol of the presence of Lord Yahweh during the time of Moses, again during the time of Solomon. So the return of the Ark is a sign that God's presence has returned to





Israel. It is a sign that He will dwell with his people. Israelites knew that if there is no Ark then there is no presence of God amidst them. Jeremiah had prophesized that God will come again to live with his people. In the book of Revelation, we find that, that time has finally come. All the images Jeremiah used are there. In John's revelation Ch. 11 – one can see the theophany – which refers to the appearance of God on Mount Sinai - Exodus 19:16-17 – Rev 11:15-19

Rev 11:19 in Greek, translated as flashes of lightening, peels of thunder as we find thunder and lightning in Exodus 19:16. The very loud noise in Exodus presented by John here loud trumpet blast just before the Ark of the Covenant appears. John beholds the heavy hailstorm in 11:19 as found in Exodus 9:24 - Heavy hailstorms God rained down on Pharaoh.

We must remember that when John wrote, there were no chapters and verse.

The current 11:19 and 12:1 followed one after the other. And what we see is a woman, and no ordinary woman

First, the woman of Revelation 12:1 is identified as Mary because she is the one who brought forth the male child who will rule the whole world with an iron rod (12:5). What John says in 12:1-2 is referring to Isaiah's prophecy of messiah's birth. (Isaiah 7:10-11,14) So both in Isaiah and Revelation, there is a sign high in the sky and woman gives birth to a son. Revelation 12 identifies Mary as Daughter of Zion, the queen bride of Israel and the Mother of the Church. Israel was often portrayed in the OT as a woman and a virgin daughter married to God in a covenant relationship. Prophet Isaiah too depicted Israel as daughter of Zion suffering in exile, waiting for

salvation. Isaiah was more specific that daughter of Zion will give birth to a male child and having more children.

All these are captured in Revelation as mother of the male child, pangs of birth delivery etc. In Revelation, John not only uses the OT daughter of Zion, but also uses the title queen bride of Israel. He describes her as clothed with sun, moon under her feet, - that speaks like Isaiah who told that Israel will be radiant like a queen bride. Is 60:19-20; Is 62:3-5

There is one more aspect we should look at: The great dragon that follows the woman: this is something that we should refer to the Gen 3:15 God's promise – the proto-evangelium.

In the first Gospel, we have a woman, a serpent and a promise of enmity between the two; Woman and her offspring and serpent and its offspring. We also have the promise that the woman's

offspring will defeat the serpent's offspring. Rev 12:3-17

There are three characters: a woman, her son and a dragon. The dragon is clearly identified as the ancient serpent - the devil who deceived the whole world. The identity of the serpent reveals to us the identity of the woman. If the dragon is the devil, then the woman must be the new Eve foretold in Genesis. The offspring must be the one who crushed the head of the serpent. All the characters foretold in Gen 3:15 are there in the battle in Rev 12. That is about the characters. Now about their parts: the serpent waiting to take revenge on the male child - there is the battle that commences with the birth of the male child. And during the battle the woman flees into the



wilderness a place specially prepared for her by God. After the defeat of the serpent, John sees that the woman is given eagle's wings to fly to a place already prepared where she will be nourished by God. Here John's language recalls Jesus words: John 14:1-3. The language of preparing a place is often used in the NT for depicting the private destiny God has prepared for his children. He prepares a place for the believers to sit at Christ's right hand. John's words further tell us about God's care of the people of Israel whom He had taken on eagle's wings, Exodus 16:4-6; and God nourished his people by bread from heaven, Exodus 16:4ff

All this gives the clear basis for church's teaching on Mary's Assumption. In Revelation 12 John sees the Ark of the Covenant in heaven. In that vision, the Ark of the Covenant is not made up of a chest of wood or gold, but a person, a woman made up of flesh and blood. This woman is the Daughter of Zion, gives birth to the long awaited Saviour, Jesus Christ. She is also the New Eve, as promised in Gen 3:15 who has total enmity with Satan and she is the Mother of the Church. She is also the mother of all the living. Her place has been prepared by God in Heaven. And to that place God has taken her up and in that place she is the Royal Queen where she is enthroned with 12 stars as her crown

The Scripture understanding forms the basis for Church's teaching on the dogma of Mary's Assumption. According to that teaching, Mary is the Daughter of Zion, the woman who gave birth to the world's Saviour, Jesus Christ. Because she is the New Eve, she is free from sin and its consequences. This is for us a long time separation of soul and body as we wait for the resurrection of the body at the end of time. Mary on the other hand

is taken up to heaven by God to be with her Son to the place prepared for her. In that place, as she is the Christ the King's mother, she sits on his right hand wearing the crown of Queen Mother.

We have two other instances in OT: Genesis 24 speaks about Enoch “walked with God, and he was not, for God took him”. The author of Hebrews clearly states this: 11:5



Another example is the great prophet Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind in a fiery chariot 2Kings 2:11 Many authors also hold that even Moses was taken up as he appeared with Elijah on Mount Tabor during the transfiguration. If God had taken his righteous servant to heaven, is it hard to believe that the Mother of Jesus Christ shared the same fate? Of course not!

At the close of *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII exhorts the faithful as follows:

This solemn proclamation and definition of the Assumption will contribute in no small way to the advantage of human society, since it redounds to the glory of the Most Blessed Trinity, to which the Blessed Mother of God was bound by such singular bonds. It is to be hoped that all the faithful will be stirred up to a stronger piety toward their heavenly Mother, and that the souls of all those who glory in the Christian name may be moved by the desire of sharing in the unity of Christ's Mystical Body and of increasing their love for her who in all things shows her motherly heart to the members of [Christ's] Body. . . . In this magnificent way, all may see clearly to what a lofty goal our bodies and souls are destined. Finally, it is our hope that belief in Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven will make our belief in our own resurrection stronger and render it more effective. ♦

## Barabbas changed his life

This actor from ‘The Passion of the Christ’ experienced a profound conversion while playing the role.

Anyone who has seen Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* remembers that terrible moment during Jesus’ trial before Pilate when the crowd chooses to free Barabbas instead of Jesus. We look at the bloody, bruised and broken face of Christ, which even in that condition radiates calm, peace, and beauty, and compare it to the vulgar and ugly face of Barabbas, a convicted murderer, full of defiance, vice, and *Joker*-like mania.

It’s an exaggeration, but it’s highly effective to convey the irrationality of the crowd’s choice. Yet even as Barabbas in the film is freed from his bonds, he meets Jesus’ eyes and stops for a moment, pierced by that gaze, before descending the stairs to the crowd.

They’re just actors in a scripted scene: Jim Caviezel in the role of Jesus, and Italian actor Pietro Sarubbi in the role of Barabbas (both wearing abundant makeup; Sarubbi is almost unrecognizable when seen outside of that role). But making the film was a transformative experience for both actors. Caviezel’s testimony has been widely shared and discussed, but Sarubbi was just as affected, despite spending just a few minutes on screen.

Here is the testimony of this actor and university professor, as he shared it with Aletea:

Today I’m a 58-year-old man. To tell the truth, I should say 59, but I’m not taking this year, 2020, into account because I haven’t really used it. I’m an actor and also a man who tries to live up to the Christian experience I have, and that requires a great effort in this world which is increasingly difficult to understand, and increasingly

disenchanted with beauty.

For about 20 years I’ve been teaching Film Craft at the Civica Film School in Milan, which started out as a simple professional training center but which, in the 50 years of its existence, has become—thanks to an excellent program started by Moratti—a university. There’s a three-year degree in Film Craft, and therefore, improperly, I find myself to be a university lecturer with very lively, curious, intelligent and very technically skilled students.

Even though it is a very secular field, for me it’s a small frontier of Christianity because it allows me to put myself to the test and to be at the service of giving that “extra” of beauty and total effectiveness which, in my opinion, Christian teachers possess. It’s that way of looking at people that allows you to see the eyes of Christ in the student who’s not studying, who has problems, or who is irresolute, and this

completely changes the relationship. This way of looking doesn’t go unnoticed, even for young people who are far from faith: It disconcerts them when they see beauty where they were told it shouldn’t be.

At the risk of boring those who already know me, I myself was thrown off balance by that look of which I was just speaking, and here I’m referring to my life-altering participation in Mel Gibson’s film *The Passion of the Christ*. While I was playing Barabbas, the Holy Spirit used one man to look at another man. Now it’s clear to me; it was perturbing and unsettling then.

Later on, I read Benedict XVI’s encyclical “*Deus Caritas Est*,” in which there’s a phrase that expresses very clearly what had also happened to me: The Lord encounters us ever anew, through the





eyes of the men and women who reflect his presence.

This is precisely God's method: to look at people through the eyes of other people. This explained what was inexplicable to me: I could not imagine that a simple actor playing Jesus could



look at me in a way that turned my soul upside-down. From that moment on there was a change in my personal, human, and professional life, because when you're captivated, you're captivated in every way.

I was very struck by a passage written by Bishop Nicola Lepori about St. Peter: "He met Simon and called him Peter, called him with a new name, making him new and leaving him as he was."

Conversion is exactly that: You're called to a new name and a new life while remaining who you are. And from that moment on an entirely human challenge begins, because there's no magic wand that transforms you; you remain exactly who you were, but you fall in love with Christ, and your life becomes an attempt to live up to that love. You remain with your sin and your smallness, but you're enriched by the hope that through prayer you can walk without fear in a new direction.

This conversion led me to leave the theater, nauseated by the superficiality and pettiness that was there, until a very dear friend from Ravenna told me that I really had to return to the theater and there, within the art, I had to be at work with the new gift that I was carrying within me. So, about 12

years ago I started this adventure of being involved in theater that was beautiful, enjoyable, funny, comic but also deep, and I started with a show about St. Peter.

Later I had the good fortune that the Commission for the Jubilee of Mercy got wind of my work and asked me to do a show for the Jubilee year on the theme of Mercy. After a little while studying and a little while investigating, I realized that St. Joseph was one of the most merciful, patient, and welcoming people, and I dedicated that show to him. Now, so to speak, St. Peter and St. Joseph are my battle horses. I have three new challenges in the pipeline: St. Augustine, Guareschi (the creator of Don Camillo) and St. Philip Neri. My path is that of smiling, and some have accused me in past years of being disrespectful because I speak of Jesus also through the perspective of laughter. I respond to these objections by saying that if we think, really, of 12 normal people like us who meet Jesus, it would not be strange to imagine them laughing, moving around, and jumping. Don Giussani said, "Given what you've learned and what you've found, you can't allow yourself to be sad."

Those who have a strong faith understand the immense value of light-heartedness; those who have a penitential faith, one of pain and not forgiveness, see a smile as something disrespectful. But we are children of a God who is



slow to anger and rich in forgiveness, so our prayer is the Our Father. Inside that prayer is found

everything about us and about me, because there's a Father who with enormous affection has given me many kicks and punches. Those who love you are worried about you, and so they come to slap you around.

With my students at school, I try to bring this way of looking that is of God, and I tell them that I'm not supposed to be nice as a teacher, but useful. I don't have to be a buddy or a companion, but a guardian and a nuisance. They have a little bit of trouble understanding this, but when I meet them on the set after school, they always repeat to me: "Prof, now I understand!" I'm moved when that happens, so to downplay it I answer with the words of

St. Augustine: "Late have I loved you ..." I mean that God, as Father, spares us nothing, and those who have converted as I have don't live in a magical bubble where everything is in place. Fatigue is still fatigue, even pain. We're spared nothing, but God has spared His Son nothing either; why should we insist on asking God, as if it were His duty, to take something away from us?

For me, who tends to talk too much, it's difficult to condense all this experience that I've told you about into a single word. I've thought about it and I think that the right word is docility. I happened to participate in spiritual exercises, and I was even a little bored, and annoyed by all the

people who were silent and obedient (I've always been a rebel!), and it was right there that I began my journey of docility, when I was struck by how Mary's docility was presented to us.

Thinking about it, my whole theatrical journey also has this theme in the background: St. Peter was a rough guy; I come from the south of Italy and I met many fishermen like him. He was irascible, ready to get into action, and since he met

Jesus he was continually invited to be docile. Peter had a hard time being as Jesus called him to be; St. John Paul II said that God made Jesus choose Peter as the the first Apostle, taking the worst of Capernaum, to give a strong signal to everyone, and to show that

holiness was for all. If Saint Peter made it, we too can make it.

St. Peter comes to surrender himself to Jesus with all the surrender of those three "Yeses," to which he responds to "Do you love me?" And another enormously docile "Yes" is that of St. Joseph. Everyone knows Mary's "yes," but few are familiar with Joseph's "yes," which is the "Yes" of everyday life, the one he pronounced throughout all the years he lived quietly with Mary and Jesus. His is the "yes" of all those who get up every morning and open themselves to life, prayer, vocation, and work.

----- Aleteia Aug 08, 2020 ♦

♦  
Continued from Page 8: *Nurturing disciples of Jesus*



Christian hope and a channel of the transformative power of God's grace so needed by so many in these challenging times.

Our globalized, digital age is marked by rising religious disaffiliation of the young and declining church membership. Now, as the Church

struggles through the impact and uncertainties of a global pandemic, Pope Francis' apostolic letter *Antiquum Ministerium* is a timely reminder of the timeless and transforming joy of the Gospel. It shines a bright light on the faith-filled and joyful ministry of lay catechists who are the "saints next door" serving on the frontlines of the New Evangelization.

Source: [Angelusnews.com](http://Angelusnews.com) ♦

# St Joseph: Man in whom Heaven trusts

By Alessandro De Carolis



Pope Francis's Letter "Patris corde" enriches Papal magisterium on the person of St Joseph. The Pope writes in *Patris corde* that he recites a nineteenth century prayer from a French prayer book through which he entrusts both "serious and troubling situations" to St Joseph. The

prayer ends thus: "Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain".

## A strong connection

The Pope's familiarity with the Saint already became known when he spoke in Manila about a habit he has of putting his concerns under a statue of the "sleeping Joseph" which he keeps in his study at Santa Marta.

In *Patris corde*, the Pope describes many of St Joseph's qualities as a true husband and father, the fiancé who "accepted Mary unconditionally" and the man in whom "Jesus saw the tender love of God".

## Pope Francis proclaims "Year of St Joseph"

With the Apostolic Letter "Patris corde" ("With a Father's Heart"), Pope Francis recalls the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. ...

## Papal names

Pope Francis's contribution is, so to speak, the last piece of the mosaic the Church has created throughout the centuries to express its admiration and to explain the merits of this great soul sculpted through silence.

Various Popes have also contributed to this narrative with heartfelt words and gestures. Beginning in the 15th century, Pope Sixtus V fixed 19 March as the date on which his feast is celebrated. From Pius IX on, and especially during the pontificates of the 20th century, the Church's magisterium cast new light on this man wrapped in shadow.

## Adding a name

Confirming Pope Benedict XVI's desire, Pope Francis decreed on 1 May 2013 that the name of St Joseph be added in Eucharistic Prayers II, III and IV. Before that, on 13 November 1962, Pope John XXIII had established that his name be inserted into the Roman Canon, alongside Mary's name and before those of the Apostles.

Pope John XXIII himself, wishing to entrust the Second Vatican Council to Jesus's earthly "daddy", wrote the Apostolic Letter *Le Voci* in 1961. In it, he included a sort of summary of devotion to St Joseph nurtured by his predecessors. Each new decree demonstrates an ever more deeply rooted ecclesial sense and awareness, which with Pius XII even touched civil life.



## Church grants plenary indulgence for the Year of St Joseph

The Apostolic Penitentiary issues a Decree



granting plenary indulgences for the year of St Joseph (8 December 2020 to 8 December 2021).

### The workers' saint

1 May 1955. It was a Sunday and a crowd of workers filled St Peter's Square. They were



members of ACLI (Italian Association of Christians Workers). Among the ranks of Italian Catholics, the Pope recognized those who were “disheartened”, those who complained about the lack of a Christian presence “in public life”, while socialist

ideologies seemed to be taking over. Pius XII's energetically recalled ACLI to their original identity so that they might be committed to “social peace”.

In the end, completely shifting gears, he gave them a “gift” which surprised and enthused those present:

*We are pleased to announce to you Our determination to establish -- and we in fact establish -- the liturgical feast of St Joseph the Worker, assigning to it the precise date of 1 May. Dear workers, are you happy about Our gift? We are certain that you are because the humble artisan of Nazareth not only personifies the dignity of the worker before God and the Holy Church, but he is also always the provident guardian of you and your families.*

### There can never be a “Pope Joseph”

Four years later, the Church was guided by a man who would have wanted to choose the name “Pope Joseph”. He decided against it, however, saying that it was not a name used by the popes. But his explanation betrays a nostalgia

and reveals Pope John XXIII's strong attachment to St Joseph.

His radio message on 1 May 1960, “Good Pope John” concluded with a prayer to St Joseph the Worker:

*Grant that those you protect understand that they are not alone in their work, but may they know how to find Jesus next to them, may they welcome Him with grace, and faithfully protect Him as you did. Grant that in every family, in every office, in every laboratory, wherever a Christian works, that they may all be sanctified in charity, in patience, in justice, trying to doing things well, so that the gifts of heavenly predilection might abundantly descend upon them.*

### A risk-taker

Even though Pope Paul VI's name was not Joseph, from 1963 to 1969 in particular, a year did not go by in which he did not celebrate Mass on the Solemnity of 19 March. Every homily he delivered on that occasion was a personal “portrait” of how fascinated he was by St Joseph's “complete submission and dedication” to his mission, of the man who was “timid perhaps”, but gifted “by a superhuman greatness that enchants”. Even though having a bride like Mary and a Son like Jesus made him a stranger among his peers, he did not retreat.

About this, Paul VI said in 1969:

*St Joseph was, therefore, a man who was*



*'committed', as they say now, to Mary, chosen from among all the women on earth and all of history, always his virgin bride, not physically his wife, and to Jesus, by virtue of legal, not natural, descent, his offspring. His were the burdens, the responsibilities, the risks, the little preoccupations of the small and singular holy family. His were the service, the work, the sacrifice, the penumbra of the evangelical scene in which we like to contemplate him. And certainly, not wrongly so, now that we know everything, we call him happy, blessed. This is the Gospel. In it, the values of human existence assume a different value than that which we are accustomed to appreciate: here that which is small becomes great.*

### **The sublime spouse**

In the 26 years of Pope John Paul's pontificate, there were an infinite number of occasions on which he spoke of St Joseph to whom he said he prayed intensely every day. He summarized this devotion in the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*, published on 15 August 1989, written 100 years after Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical *Quamquam Pluries*. In that document, Pope John Paul explores every aspect of St Joseph's life. Sensitive as he was to the vocation of Christian marriage, he offered it as a way of profoundly interpreting the relationship between the couple from Nazareth – “the grace of living together the charism of virginity and the gift of matrimony” – a theme he would pick up in a general audience in 1996, deconstructing a false myth:



*The difficulty of approaching the sublime mystery of their spousal communion has led some, since the second century, to attribute an advanced age to Joseph and to consider him as a guardian, instead of as Mary's husband. Rather, it is appropriate to suppose that he was not an elderly man, but that his interior perfection, a consequence of grace, led him to live his spousal relationship with Mary with virginal affection.*

### **Robust interiority**

There are no words left by the man for whom Matthew in his Gospel uses the term “just”, the Patron of the Universal Church, of workers and of an infinite number of cities, churches and places. All we have is silence.

His actions, therefore, must be understood as if they were words and thoughts. From that apparent absence, even Pope Benedict XVI extracted the wealth of a complete life, of a man in the background, whose silent example affects the growth of Jesus, the God-man:

*It is a silence thanks to which Joseph, in unison with Mary, watches over the Word of God. (...) A silence woven of constant prayer, a prayer of blessing of the Lord, of the adoration of his holy will and of unreserved entrustment to his providence. It is no exaggeration to think that it was precisely from his 'father' Joseph that Jesus learned - at the human level - that steadfast interiority which is a presupposition of authentic justice, the "superior justice" which he was one day to teach his disciples. ♦*

## SAINT OF THE MONTH - I

# St Otto of Bamberg

1060 – 30 June 1139

Feast Day: July 02

Bishop and Apostle of Pomerania! He was born of noble rank and ordained a priest sometime before the age of 30. He joined the service of Emperor Henry IV in 1090 and became his chancellor in 1101. He served Henry IV and his successor, Henry V, loyally, but he disapproved of the latter's disgraceful treatment of Pope Paschal.

However, Otto was not in favour of Henry's policies toward the Holy See, in particular his insistence of rights of investiture. In 1102 the emperor appointed and invested him as Bishop of Bamberg. In the conflict of investitures he sided chiefly in political matters with Henry IV, although he avoided taking sides openly. He refused to be consecrated by a schismatic bishop. Through ambassadors he declared his loyalty to the Holy See. In 1105 he joined the party of Henry V, went to Rome, and there on 13 May 1106 was consecrated bishop. He never became a partisan. In 1110-11 he accompanied Henry on his journey to Rome, but, like other noble characters, he disapproved of the disgraceful treatment of Pope Paschal. This is clear from the fact that he received the pallium from the Pope on 15 April 1111.

When the war broke out again, he did not desert Henry V, and in consequence was suspended by the papal party at the Synod in Fritzlar in 1118. At the Congress of Wurzburg in 1121 he strove hard for peace, which was concluded in 1122 at Worms. Meanwhile he had devoted himself



entirely to his diocese and as bishop had led a model, simple, and even a poor life. He increased the possessions of the Church by new acquisitions, recovered alienated dependencies, completed the Cathedral, and improved the Cathedral School, built castles and churches. In particular he favoured the monks, and founded over twenty monasteries in the Dioceses of Bamberg, Wurzburg, Ratisbon, Eichstatt, Halberstadt and Aquileia. He reformed other monasteries. Otto lived a poor and simple life, and was called the “Father

of the monks” for the concern he showed toward religious orders.

His greatest service was his missionary work among the Pomeranians. In the Peace with Poland in 1120 the latter had engaged to adopt Christianity. Attempts to convert them through Polish priests and through an Italian Bishop, Bernard, proved futile. Duke Boleslaus III then appealed to Otto, and it is due to Otto that the undertaking partook of a German character. Through an understanding with the pope, who appointed him legate, and the emperor and the princes, he started in May 1124, and travelled through Prague, Breslau, Posen, and Gnesen in East Pomerania, was received by the duke with great respect, and won over the people through his quiet yet firm attitude, his magnificent appearance, generous donations, and gentle, inspiring sermons. He converted Pyritz, Kammin, Stettin, Julin, and in



## SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

# St Elizabeth Bichier

05 July 1773 – 26 August 1838

Feast Day – 26 August

Joan Elizabeth Lucy Bichier des Ages (Jeanne-Elisabeth-Lucie Bichier des Ages) was born at La Blanc, France, in 1773. Elizabeth was the daughter of Antoine Bichier, the Seigneur of Ages and a public official, and Marie Augier de Moussac, whose father was a politician. She spent much of her childhood at the convent at Poitiers. In 1792, after the death of her father, Elizabeth took her mother to live in La Guimetière. Near their new home was a parish left in chaos because of the French Revolution, and Elizabeth dedicated herself to rebuilding the community. By then the French Revolution started and she was very much affected by this and she was just 16. In 1796, realizing that she needed to do something to defend the Church and keep the faith alive amidst the attacks of the revolutionaries, she decided to begin a ministry of teaching and serving the poor.

Then during the time of the French Revolution, Elizabeth's family lost everything they owned. This was because the republicans were taking property from the nobility.

But this intelligent young woman of nineteen studied law so that she could fight her family's case in court. Being a good lawyer, she won the case and was able to save her family. The village shoemaker exclaimed: "All you have to do now is marry a good republican!"

But Elizabeth had no intention of marrying anyone republican or noble. On the back of a



picture of Our Lady, she had written: "I dedicate and consecrate myself to Jesus and Mary forever."

Elizabeth became the centre of the local resistance to the Constitutional clergy. In 1797 she met André Fournet, a priest of nearby Maillé, who had continued his pastoral labours despite his refusal to take the oath supporting the civil constitution of the clergy. Fournet became her spiritual director and advised against her emigration to join the Trappistines. After her mother's death (1804), Elizabeth wore peasant clothing and gathered others to aid in her works. When Fournet presented her with a plan to establish a religious

congregation to care for the sick and to educate the poor of the district, Elizabeth entered the novitiate of the Carmelites at Poitiers to prepare for her new found responsibility. In 1805 Jeanne and five companions began the first community at La Guimetière. It moved closer to Maillé in 1806, and in 1811 to Rochefort. Jeanne made her religious profession in 1807.

In 1806, she established a religious congregation of women to care for the sick and aged, for the education of children and to offer reparation for the blasphemies and sacrileges committed against the Most Blessed Sacrament during the French Revolution.

The congregation was officially recognized by the bishop of Poitiers in 1816 and named "Daughters of the Cross of St Andrew."

This new order taught children and cared for the sick. Elizabeth would face any danger to help people. Once she found a tramp lying sick in a barn. She brought him to the convent hospital and did all she could for him until he died. The next morning the police chief came to tell her she could be arrested for sheltering a man who was a criminal. Elizabeth was unafraid. "I only did what you yourself would have done, sir," she said. "I found this poor sick man, and took care of him until he died. I am ready to tell the judge just what happened."

Of course, the saint's honesty and charity won her great respect. People admired her straight, clear answers.



At her suggestion, a community of men was formed into the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Betherran. By 1830, Elizabeth had opened over sixty convents. The order's co-founder, St Andrew Fournet, died in 1834. Elizabeth wrote to the sisters, "This is our greatest and most sad loss." In 1836, Elizabeth fell seriously ill. After ten days of intense suffering, she died on August 26. She was canonized in 1947 by Pope Pius XII.

**Source:** [www.divine-redeemer-sisters.org](http://www.divine-redeemer-sisters.org);  
<https://vitaesanctorum.wordpress.com>;  
[www.catholicnewsagency.com](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com);  
[encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopaedias](http://encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopaedias) ♦

---

*Continued from Page 20: St Otto of Bamberg*

nine places established eleven churches; 22,165 persons were baptized. Otto's strength was his holiness, quiet generosity, and gentle, inspiring sermons. The conversion of Pomerania was his greatest apostolic work. Many miracles were attributed to him throughout his two journeys, and many more after his death.

In 1125 he returned to Bamberg. He once more gave himself up to his duties as bishop and prince and performed them with great zeal. He kept out of all political turmoil. In the papal schism of 1130-31 he tried to remain neutral. The active, pious, clever bishop was greatly esteemed by the other princes and by Emperor Lothair. As heathen customs began to assert themselves again, he once more journeyed to Pomerania through Magdeburg and Havelberg about the year 1128. In the Diet of Usedom he gained over through his inspiring discourses all the



nobles of the land to Christendom. He then converted new communities, and led back those who had fallen away. Even after his return (in the same year) he was in constant communication with the Pomeranians and sent them priests from Bamberg.

Otto was called to his eternal reward on 30 June 1139. He was buried in the monastery of St Michael in Bamberg. Bishop Embrice of Wurzburg delivered the funeral oration and applied to Otto the words of Jeremias: "The Lord called thy name, a plentiful olive tree, fair, fruitful, and beautiful." On his mission journey he is reported to have worked many miracles. Many happened also at his tomb. In 1189 Otto was canonized by Clement III. In honour of his work, he is known as the Apostle of Pomerania.

**Source:** [www.catholic.org/saints](http://www.catholic.org/saints);  
[www.catholicnewsagency.com](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com);  
[www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org) ♦

*By Prof Dr Babu Philip*



In an Indian village, a good goatherd had a goat farm with over a hundred goats. He loved them and they adored him. They could recognise his call and respond by running to him and surrounding him. He used to feed them with love and care. When any goat had an injury, he used to nurse it with compassion.

One day he had to go to the town to buy essential articles for the farm. He fed the goats with affection, locked the gate of the farm, and left for the town. When he returned, he was shocked to find the door of the farm lying opened. Rushing into the farm, he found that all the goats were missing. Obviously, some thief had sneaked into the farm and stolen his dear goats. He ran out of the farm house and asked the villagers about the lost goats. No one could help him. They rushed through the road connecting the village to the town and enquired everywhere about the missing goats.

One person told that he had seen a truck full of goats proceeding from the village towards the town. They informed the police and rushed to the town. They found the truck full of goats parked near a hotel. The driver and his assistants were having their dinner in the hotel. They asked the driver, but he claimed that the goats were his own. By that time, the police also arrived there. The police questioned the driver but he was firm in his stand. The driver

asked the owner of the lost sheep whether he had any evidence to prove that the goats in the truck belonged to him.

The goatherd boldly told the driver and the police, "My goats can recognise me and my voice. I shall call them and if they respond by running to me, you can be sure that the goats are mine. Everyone agreed. They moved towards the truck. The police asked the driver to open the bars surrounding the truck. The goatherd called his flock in a loud and loving tone. Suddenly, all the goats jumped out of the truck and ran to him. They surrounded him and he patted them with affection. The police arrested the thieves and let the loving goatherd go to his farm with the recovered flock of goats. The villagers celebrated the victory and returned to their village jubilantly.



The Holy Bible describes Jesus as the Good Shepherd who loves his sheep - the whole humanity.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

(John 10:11). "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep". (John 10:14-15). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one

shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28).

**Courtesy: <http://christian.moral-stories.com> ♦**





# News Round-Up

## Twenty Catholic missionaries killed worldwide in 2020

Vatican City (CNA) --- Twenty Catholic missionaries were killed across the world in 2020, according to the information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Agenzia Fides. Those who lost their lives in service of the Church comprised eight priests, three religious women, one male religious, two seminarians, and six lay people.

As in previous years, the most deadly continents for Church workers were the Americas, where five priests and three lay people were killed this year, and Africa, where one priest, three female religious, one seminarian, and two lay people gave their lives.

The news agency explained that it used the term “missionary” to refer to “all the baptized engaged in the life of the Church who died in a violent way.”

Fides said: “... many pastoral workers lost their lives during attempted holdups and robberies, ferociously committed, in impoverished, degraded social contexts, where violence is the rule of life, the authority of the state was lacking or weakened by corruption and compromises and in the total lack of respect for life and for every human right.”

“None of them carried out striking feats or actions, but simply shared the same daily life as the majority of the population, bearing their evangelical witness as a sign of Christian hope.”

Among those killed in 2020, Fides highlighted the Nigerian seminarian Michael Nnadi, who was murdered after he was seized by gunmen from Good Shepherd Seminary in Kaduna on Jan. 8. It said that the 18-year-old was killed after he “continued to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ” to his kidnappers.

Others killed this year included Fr. Jozef Hollanders, O.M.I., who died during a robbery in South Africa; Sr. Henrietta Alokha, who was killed while trying to save students at a boarding school in Nigeria after a gas explosion; the sisters Lilliam Yunielka, 12, and Blanca Marlene González, 10, in Nicaragua; and Fr. Roberto Malgesini, who was killed in Como, Italy.

The information service also highlighted Church workers who had died while serving others amid the coronavirus pandemic.

“Priests are the second category after doctors who paid with their lives due to COVID in Europe,” it said. “According to a partial report by the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe, at least 400 priests died on the continent from the end of February to the end of September 2020 due to COVID.”

Fides said that, in addition to the 20 missionaries known to have been killed in 2020, there were probably others. “The provisional list compiled annually by Fides must therefore be added to the long list of many of whom there may never be news, who in every corner of the world suffer and even pay with their lives for their faith in Christ,” it said.

“As Pope Francis recalled during the general audience on April 29: ‘Today’s martyrs outnumber the martyrs of the first centuries. Let us express our closeness to these brothers and sisters. We are a single body and these Christians are the bleeding limbs of the body of Christ who is the Church.’” ♦

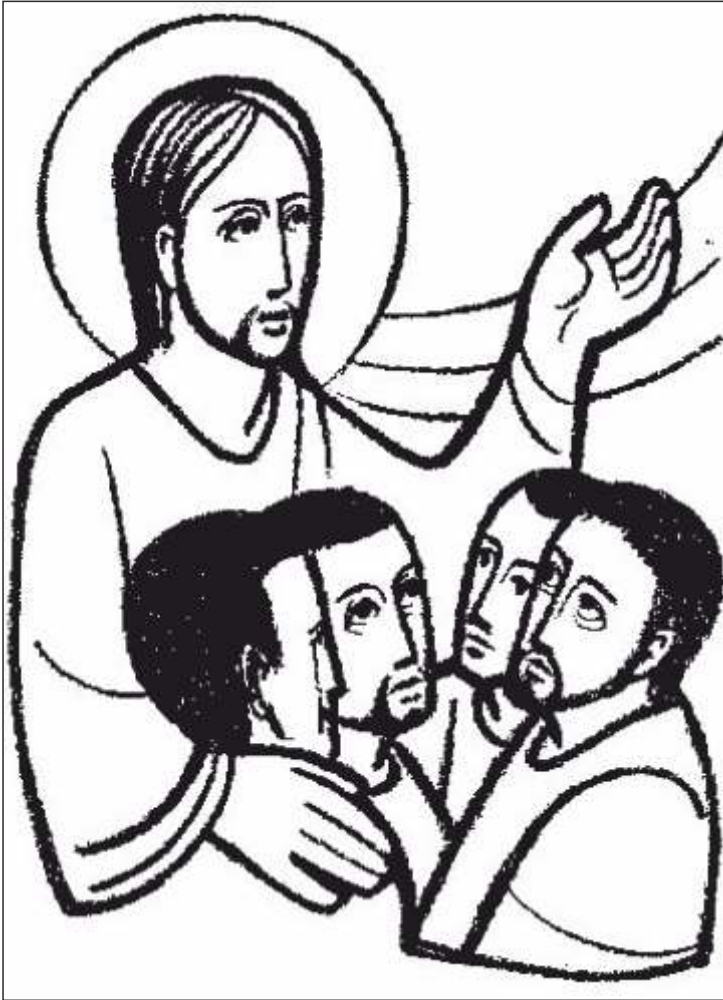
### **Holy Father's Prayer Intentions**

#### ***July 2021: Social friendship***

We pray that, in social, economic and political situations of conflict, we may be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship.

#### ***August 2021: Universal intention***

The Church Let us pray for the Church that She may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel.



The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments will soon publish the Rite of Institution of the lay ministry of Catechist.

9. I invite the Episcopal Conferences to render effective the ministry of Catechist, determining the necessary process of formation and the normative criteria for admission to this ministry and devising the most appropriate forms for the service which these men and women will be called to exercise in conformity with the content of this Apostolic Letter.

10. The Synods of the Oriental Churches or the Assemblies of Hierarchs may adopt what is established here for their respective Churches *sui iuris*, in accordance with their particular law.

11. Bishops should make every effort to comply with the exhortation of the Council Fathers: *"Pastors... know that they were not established by Christ to undertake by themselves the entire saving mission of the Church to the world. They appreciate, rather, that it is their exalted task to shepherd the faithful and at the same time acknowledge their ministries and charisms so that all in their separate ways, but of one mind, may cooperate in the common task"* (Lumen Gentium, 30). May the discernment of the gifts that the Holy Spirit never fails to grant to the Church sustain their efforts to make the lay ministry of Catechist effective for the growth of their communities.

- *"ANTIQUUM MINISTERIUM"* (Instituting the Ministry of Catechist)  
Apostolic Letter by Pope Francis

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

# Come! Make MISSION a MOVEMENT

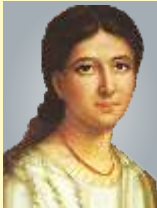


## Pontifical Mission Organizations

### works through **FOUR** Mission Societies

#### **PONTIFICAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH (PPF)**

was founded in 1822 by  
PAULINE MARIE  
JARICOT, in Lyon



**PROMOTES MISSIONARY  
ENTHUSIASM &  
PASTORAL CARE**

#### **PONTIFICAL SOCIETY OF SAINT PETER THE APOSTLE ( POSPA)**

was founded 1889 by  
JEANNE BIGARD, in Caen



**SERVES FORMATION OF  
APOSTOLIC PERSONNEL**

#### **PONTIFICAL SOCIETY OF MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATIONS (MCA)**

was founded in 1843 by  
BISHOP H E CHARLES DE  
FORBIN-JANSON, in Nancy



**FOSTERS "CHILDREN  
HELPING CHILDREN"**

#### **PONTIFICAL MISSIONARY UNION of the clergy, religious and the consecrated laity (PMU)**

was founded in 1916 by BL  
FR PAOLO MANNA, in Rome

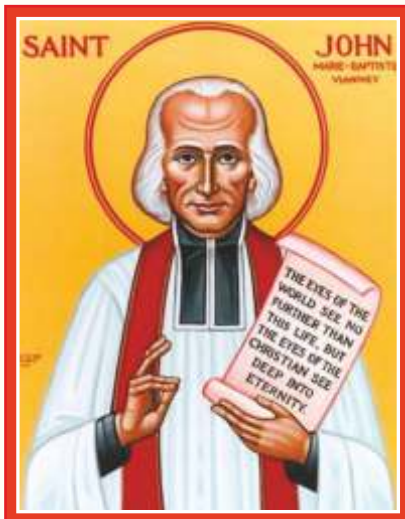


**ANIMATES TOWARDS  
MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP**

In 1922, Pope Pius XI proclaimed the first three Societies Pontifical.

In 1956, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the fourth one Pontifical.

*Let us continue to pray for those affected and suffering due to covid-19 pandemic*



**St. John Vianney**  
Feast Day: 4<sup>th</sup> August

#### **Prayer for Priests**

O Jesus, I pray for Your faithful and fervent priests; for Your unfaithful and tepid priests; for Your priests laboring at home or abroad in distant mission fields, for Your tempted priests; for Your lonely and desolate priests; for Your young priests, for Your dying priests; for the souls of Your priests in purgatory.

But above all, I recommend to You the priests dearest to me, the priests who baptized me; the priests who absolved me from my sins; the priests at whose Masses I assisted and who gave me Your Body and Blood in Holy Communion; the priests who taught and instructed me; all the priests to whom I am indebted in any other way [ especially...]. O Jesus, keep them all close to Your heart, and bless them abundantly in time and in eternity. Amen.

St. John Vianney, pray for us; obtain for us many and holy priests.

For more information contact:

**PONTIFICAL MISSION ORGANIZATIONS**

No. 10, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cross, Ulsoor Road, Bangalore – 560042, Karnataka, INDIA.

Tel: +91 80 2558 5946 Email: [pmorgbindia@gmail.com](mailto:pmorgbindia@gmail.com)

Website: [www.pmoindia.org](http://www.pmoindia.org) **App: Pontifical Mission India (Android/iOS)**

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