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# PROCLAIM

A magazine for Missionary Animation



*Saint Devasahayam*  
**First Indian Lay Martyr**

# Saint Devasahayam



- Name** : Nilakandan
- Born** : 1712, Nattalam Village, Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu, India
- Parents** : Vasudevan Namputhiri & Devaki Amma
- Trained in** : Languages – Tamil, Malayalam & Sanskrit  
Art of Warfare, Archery, Varmasastra & use of weapons of war
- Career** : Soldier,  
Official in the Nilakandaswamy Temple,  
Palace official working in the King's treasury,  
Person-in-charge of Accounts, Udayagiri Fort

**Family** : Wife – Bhargaviammal

**Christianity** : Introduced - 1744  
Baptized - as Devasahayam (Tamil version of Lazarus)  
on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1745  
by Fr. Giovanni Battista Buttari SJ,  
at Holy Family Chapel, Vadakkankulam

**Christian Life** : Converted - Wife Bhargaviamma as Gnanapoo (Tamil version of Theresa)  
- some Soldiers and others  
- some of his companions in military

Moved freely with low caste people & Table fellowships Proclaimed

**Arrested** : 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1749

**Tortures** : Put in a narrow prison, like an oven  
Paraded shamefully for 16 days  
Paraded on a buffalo with hands tied behind and sitting backward  
Beaten in public with tamarind & thorny sticks  
Chilly powder was smeared over the tear opened flesh  
Made to stand in the hot sun

**Miracle** : When he was refused water, Prayed to God weeping & hit the rock with his elbow, which gave forth water that he could drink

**Martyrdom** : 14th January 1752, at Kattadi Malai  
Fired three shots and found him still alive, they fired two more shots and he died pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary.

**Beatification** : 02nd December 2012  
Declared Martyr and Blessed  
at the Diocese of Kottar in Nagarcoil

**Canonization** : Pope Francis approved Blessed Devasagayam for Canonization on 21st February 2020

Canonization on 15th May 2022 at Vatican

# PROCLAIM

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## St Damien De Veuster

3 Jan 1840 – 15 Apr 1889 (Feast Day: 10 May)

Priest & Missionary

# First lay missionary martyr in India

The Indian Church is jubilant as Blessed Devasahayam will be officially declared the first Indian lay saint, martyred in Tamil Nadu.

Devasahayam, whose original name is Neelam/Neelakandan, was born on 23 April 1712 in a village called Nattalam in the present Kanyakumari District. He was a Hindu by birth and was touched by the Gospel and decided on his own to follow the Gospel. He worked in the palace of Travancore. He received the good news from Captain De Lannoy, originally a Dutch naval officer who happened to work under the king of Travancore. The friendship between Neelakandan and De Lannoy helped them to exchange ideas of their faith as well. Neelakandan was totally shattered by the financial losses he had incurred. On this occasion he learned from De Lannoy the story of Job whose faith in God astonished him. It is after this that he decided to become a strong Christian. He received baptism on 14 May 1745, changing his name to Devasahayam which means “God is my help”.



Orthodox Hindu leaders were disturbed with his conversion and “false charges of treason and espionage were brought against him and he was divested of his post in the royal administration.” He was arrested and tortured and was deported from Travancore and was left in the forests of Aralvaimozhi and he was shot dead there on 14 January 1752.

Devasahayam was declared 'Blessed' on 2 December 2012 in St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Kottar, where his body is buried. Along with five founders of religious orders and Blessed Charles de Focauld, he will be canonised on 15 May 2022 by Pope Francis in St Peter's Square, Rome.

Devasahayam had neither physical proximity with Jesus nor interacted with the Risen Lord. He came to believe in the Lord by hearing about him. This means that physical proximity is not a necessity for someone to become a missionary and a martyr; it is enough that one has a profound experience of Christ.

Devasahayam lived in an unfriendly non-Christian culture and was a Hindu who received baptism at a later stage. He could have easily gone back to his religion when tortured, yet he was very firm in his faith and died for the truth. Though he was a Catholic only for 7 years, he had stood fast in his faith which was so strong that he has preached Christ by his life and has inspired thousands. That is why we could say that he is a missionary martyr.

A martyr need not be an apostle, cardinal, bishop, priest or religious to become a saint. Anyone who has received baptism (by desire or actual) can become a martyr. The pope has been insisting on how the laity has the duty to minister and administer the church. The official recognition of Devasahayam as a saint reiterates that a lay person too has the duty to withstand trials and profess one's faith and become a missionary martyr. Martyrdom is not for a select few. Everyone in the Church has the duty to proclaim and, if needed, to sacrifice one's life for Christ.

Earlier this year, Pope Francis had announced the conferral of ministries of catechist, lector and acolyte on lay persons. Now a lay saint from India is about to be recognized by the Church and canonized. May the inclusion of the laity and their enormous contribution and their participation in the Church bring many more people into the active ministry and inspire them to participate in the mission of the Church.

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



# Devasahayam: from melancholy to holiness

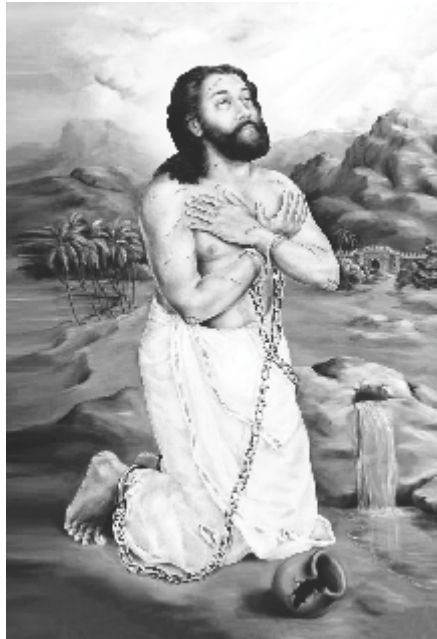
*By Merlin Ambrose*

## Introduction

All the souls in heaven are saints, considered part of what is called, in Catholic terms, the Communion of Saints. However, among these saints, some have been officially recognized, by virtue of canonization, as an example for the rest of us to follow. The Church assures the faithful that these people are in heaven, and invites us to ask for their intercession before the Throne of God, even as we are encouraged to follow in their footsteps here on earth. These canonized saints are our big brothers and sisters in the faith, so to speak, the saints who are referred to with the title “Saint” in their names. To add pride to the Indian Catholic Church, Devasahayam, a Hindu converted to Christianity in the 18th century, who took the name Lazarus after embracing Christianity, will become the first Indian layman to be conferred sainthood. Pope Francis will canonise Blessed Devasahayam, together with six other Blesseds, during a Canonization Mass in St Peter's Basilica in Vatican on May 15, 2022.

## A brief sketch of early life

Devasahayam was born in 1712 in the village of Nattalam in the present district of Kanyakumari. His father was Vasudevan Namputhiri, a Brahmin, and his mother Devaki Amma of the Nair Caste. His name was Nilam, also expanded as Nilakandan, both being two forms of the same name of the Hindu God Siva. Because of the tradition of marumakkalthayam, which followed a matrilineal tradition of inheritance, the children were identified by the caste of the mother. Therefore, Nilam was also considered to be



of the Nair caste, which was considered a high caste, next only to the Brahmin caste. The Nair caste was a belligerent tribe and most of the soldiers of the king of Travancore came from that caste. To this caste belonged almost all nobles and the king himself and the king's family.

As a youth of the Nair caste Nilakandan was trained in the art of warfare, together with the study of the languages Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit. Besides the languages, Nilakandan was taught archery, varmasastra and the use of weapons of war.

Nilakandan started his career as a soldier. He did very well in that profession and excelled his fellow soldiers in maturity of judgment and firmness of mind. Later on he was also an official in the Nilakandaswamy Temple at Padmanabhapuram. He was a palace official, working in the king's treasury. This job later brought him to the Udayagiri fort as one in charge of accounts, while the modernization of the fort was in progress under the efficient leadership of Eustache de Lannoy between the years 1741 and 1745. Nilakandan was the paymaster to the construction labourers of the fort. Nilakandan married Bhargaviammal, a woman from a traditional family, belonging to his own caste, of the village of Mek kodu, near Eraniel.



## The road to conversion

Eustachius De Lannoy, originally a Dutch naval officer, arrived with a Dutch naval force at Colachel in 1741 sent by the Dutch East India Company, or Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), with the objective of instituting a trading post for the company at Kolachal. The company was the world's first joint-stock company and was the largest multinational company. It was a very rich corporation and had its own naval fleet to protect its trade and maritime establishments. The Dutch force had to engage Travancore Army. However, it was defeated at the Battle of Colachel by the Travancore army, and De Lannoy and a few other Dutch soldiers were captured and imprisoned. De Lannoy subsequently earned the trust of the king, Maharaja Marthanda Varma, who made him an officer in the Travancore military. De Lannoy went on to become the commander of the Travancore armed forces, winning many battles. King Marthanda Varma was pleased with that and he appointed De Lannoy successor to Duijvenschot as Venattu Kapittan (Captain of Venad). One day De Lannoy observed Nilakandan



to be extremely sad and enquired about the cause of his excessive melancholy. Nilakandan then shared with De Lannoy the story about the losses he had incurred owing to the death of his bullocks. That was in 1744.

### Baptism

Eustache De Lannoy was a staunch believer and he narrated to Nilakandan the story of Job in the Old Testament, who was a personification of unconditional trust in God in the face of unbearable tragedies. Nilakandan listened to him with great consolation. He was impressed by Job's sense of absolute confidence in God. The ongoing discussions between both convinced Nilakandan of the truths of Christian faith and he decided to get baptized. De Lannoy sent Nilakandan with a letter to Fr Giovanni Battista Buttari, SJ, who was the head of the Neman Mission and was residing at Vadakkankulam.

There was a reason why the Colonel sent his friend Nilakandan to a Jesuit Mission in Vadakkankulam, which was outside the kingdom of Travancore. Uppermost in the mind of De Lannoy was the Travancore Government's blanket ban on new conversions to Christianity. Except for the fisher people along the coast and in the interior hamlets, who had all already embraced Christianity, nobody could newly become a Christian. Fr Buttari listened to him and told him to pursue a period of catechumenate. This he did, because he was aware that Nilakandan belonged to a noble caste and it was dangerous if the king knew about his conversion to the Christian faith. During





the period of catechumenate which extended for a good nine months, Nilakandan stayed often at Vadakkankulam. By becoming Christian, a person of higher caste would lose his social status and would be considered equal to other Christians, who were considered to be the lowest of people. Nilakandan's identification with them would mean a downward mobility in all respects --- socially, economically and even politically.

Finally Fr Buttari, finding in him not only the desire to be baptized but also a zeal to shed his blood for faith, consented to baptize Nilakandan. It took place on 14th May 1745. He was then 32 years of age. The ancient chapel of the Holy Family at Vadakkankulam in which the baptism was celebrated, still has an inscription about the event of the “sacrament of regeneration”. At baptism Nilakandan was given the name Devasahayam. It was the Tamil rendering of the biblical name Lazarus.

### Life and work after baptism

Devasahayam felt his first and foremost duty to make the same baptismal transformation take effect in his own wife. Both of them went to Vadakkankulam, and Bhargaviamma was baptized and given the name Gnanapoo the Tamil rendering of Theresa. It was reported to the king and the king was surprised to hear that Nilakandan had become a Christian. Devasahayam succeeded in converting some soldiers and others. He also won over to the faith in Christ some of his companions in the military.

Devasahayam stopped attending the religious rituals conducted on a regular basis in the temple attached to the palace. Instead he frequented Catholic churches for Sacraments. Secondly, imbibed by the same faith, and following the example of Christ, he moved freely on terms of equality with the so-called low caste people. Table fellowship, the praxis of Jesus centuries ago, is the best expression of equality among human beings. Devasahayam chatted and ate with people of all castes and communities. Thirdly, strengthened by the grace of God and prompted by the Spirit of Christ, he announced the Gospel to others and argued against the superstitions and injustices perpetrated by the Brahmins and the ruling class.

He declined to accept the “prasadam” (“sacred” food from temple) offered by a Brahmin priest. He spoke strongly against the priests who had been called in by his relatives to conduct a “pooja” (worship) in his home at Nattalam in reparation for the sin of forsaking the religion of the ancients.

Planning to have Devasahayam arrested, tortured and put to death, the Dalava and the Secretary forged many false accusations also against him. They went immediately to the King and accused Devasahayam of influencing the Heir apparent to donate the land for the construction of the church. They impressed upon the King of the need to stop Devasahayam and put an end to the influence of Christians. They warned the king that if Devasahayam was not stopped, the region of the king would disappear. At this, the king ordered the arrest of Devasahayam. This planned representation of the King's secretary together with that of that Brahmin, were done in secret. But some good friends of Devasahayam brought it to his knowledge and warned him to keep himself safe. He did not lose courage. He considered it cowardice to flee from the court and continued to live courageously carrying out the duties of a good Christian. Finally Devasahayam



was arrested on 23rd of February 1749, almost four years after his baptism. Devasahayam was brought before the king. The king told Devasahayam to renounce the Christian faith and threatened him with cruel punishment if he refused to give up his new faith. Devasahayam, who had great regard for the King, replied politely to the king and asserted his firm resolve to stick to the faith.

### **Tortures, sentences and martyrdom**

Devasahayam was put in a narrow prison, as small as an oven: just 5 palms high, 1 cubit broad and a little more than 1 cubit long. The next day the king pronounced a death sentence on Devasahayam. The sentence made him happy that he had the grace of martyrdom. He was taken ceremonially to the place of execution. But the order was revoked by another order of the king, because some soothsayers had warned that great calamity would befall the kingdom if Devasahayam were to be put to death. Adorned with a garland of eruku (calotropis gigantea), accompanied by beating of drums, Devasahayam was paraded on foot through the capital in a shameful manner for 16 days. Devasahayam was paraded on a buffalo with hands tied behind and sitting backward. It was a shameful South Indian way of treatment meted out to persons to be punished. All along the way some people mocked at him and cursed him. Often he was beaten in public with tamarind stick and with thorny sticks in such a way as to tear open his flesh and powdered chilly was smeared over the wounds and all over the body. He was thus made to stand in the hot sun. Devasahayam bore all these sufferings with patience and joy. The Christians were levied special taxes. Some Christians refused to pay them. Devasahayam was accused that he had instigated their disobedience to king's orders. Therefore there was a second sentence to death. Devasahayam was happy to hear about the sentence. But to his great disappointment, this sentence, too was revoked. There was a custom in the Kingdom of Travancore of those times by which the prisoners were taken from one place to another, from one local official to another.

Devasahayam too was paraded from place to place, especially through villages where there were some conversions to Catholic faith, as warning against future conversions. Devasahayam was brought to a small place called Puliyoorkurichy where he was placed on a rock. He was overcome by thirst and being refused water to drink he prayed to God weeping, and hit the rock with his elbow, which gave forth water in a miraculous way so that he could drink.

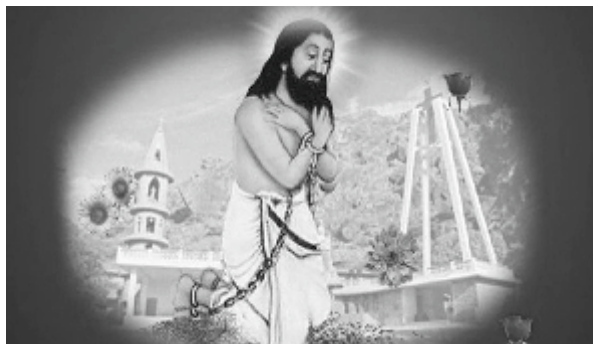


The last prison of Devasahayam before his valiant death was at Aralvaimozhy, at the gate of the kingdom on the east confines. Devasahayam was brought to that place so that people might not know where he was. It is there that prisoners could be put to death in secret. Ramayyan Dalava, (prime minister) and Singaram Annavi (the Secretary), who had demanded the imprisonment and torture of Devasahayam, were disappointed and worried that Christianity might spread more if Devasahayam was allowed to live any longer. Therefore, they planned to kill him. At the midnight on 14th January 1752, as he lay in a restless state of prayer and sleep, Devasahayam was awakened by the soldiers and ordered to come out to another place, Kattadimalai. Here they had planned to set Devasahayam on a medium size hillock and shoot him down from the ground.



# Devasahayam: model for christian living

*By V Maria Alphonse*



Pope Francis will canonize martyr Devasahayam (1712 – 1752) --- original name, Nilakanta Pillai -- - an exemplary layperson, on May 15, 2022.

## Conversion out of conviction

An official in the court of Marthanda Varma, the King of Travancore, Devasahayam showed immense interest in learning the tenets of the Catholic faith. His mentor, Captain Eustachius De Lannoy, a Dutch Naval Commander, instructed him in the Catholic faith. Devasahayam received the name Lazar at his baptism from Fr Giovanni Battista Buttari SJ in 1745 at Vadakkankulam, now in the Diocese of Thoothukudi.

The conversion of Devasahayam was looked down upon; he was ostracized by the royal court. But nothing could deter Devasahayam from his firm faith in Jesus Christ. He was ready to face any persecution for his faith commitment. His torture included whipping daily with eighty stripes, rubbing pepper in his wounds and nostrils, exposing his wounded body to the sun and drinking contaminated water. However, he boldly bore every form of punishment for the sake of his newfound faith.

In 1752, the king decided to deport him from Travancore to Aralvaimozhy, a forsaken hillside within the territory of the Pandya kingdom. In a way, he was let free in the hills near Aralvaimozhy, where he spent

time in prayerful reflection. People from the adjacent villages visited the holy man to seek his blessings. On January 14, 1752, Devasahayam succumbed to bullet injuries at the foot of Kattadimalai, as a result of the conspiracy by people inimical to Christians.

His decomposed body was carried to the Church at Kottar and was interred near the altar. People of all faiths visited his tomb and experienced his miraculous interventions.

## Popular even before formal recognition

Even before the formal recognition from the official Church, common people venerated Devasahayam as a saint. His popularity was evident from the number of people choosing Devasahayam (Grace of God) as their baptismal name. Though his original and baptismal names were unfamiliar, Devasahayam continues to be his distinctive mark of identity because of the favours received through his intercession. As his canonization takes place in a few days from now, it is fitting to reflect on his faith journey and draw inspiration from his conversion and martyrdom.

## Search for meaning

Folk narrations present Nilakanta Pillai as deeply devoted to his household deities. He was faithful to his religious obligations and royal duties. Though much respected, he seemed to have experienced a deep emptiness within. Probably, it was at this dark night of the soul, he encountered





the caring Dutch Naval Commander, Captain Eustachius De Lannoy. The encounter between them definitely was not intended for conversion. In all probability, the meeting cleared the mind of Nilakanta Pillai and filled his heart with meaning and purpose. The clarity of the foreigner and his friendly accompaniment must have opened up the heart of young Nilakantan to see, understand and accept reality. Though not for proselytising, the examples cited by the captain from his Holy Bible must have sowed the seed of Christianity in the ever searching soul of Nilakanta Pillai.

A sincere person, searching for meaning, is the fertile soil for planting the Christian faith. Otherwise, it would remain rootless, shallow and empty. Devasahayam teaches us to search constantly for meaning and purpose in life, the first step towards accepting the Gospel. His never-ending search, which ultimately lead to his martyrdom, becomes the focal point of our own faith.

### Real and ritual conversion

Without a sincere search for meaning, no faith instruction can effect a real conversion. Therefore, even before his ritual conversion to Christianity, Nilakantan underwent a genuine personal change of heart – total openness to life and its manifold possibilities. Anchoring life on lofty ideals, Nilakanta Pillai began to see the person of Jesus as his anchoring point. It was no more was an idea or concept,

but a person. Consequently, his faith became a dynamic commitment to the person, the vision and mission of Jesus. Eventually, this was the cause for his conversion, persecution and death.

Martyrdom is the price a person pays for his faith. In the case of Devasahayam, personal conversion preceded ritual conversion. Ritual conversion, the official acceptance given by the Church, is the outcome of his personal conversion – discernment to be part of the Christian community and decision for a lifelong faith commitment. For faith to be solidly founded, a spontaneous change from within is an essential requirement. True faith is not an ascent to a set of dogmas but an internal experience of the divine dwelling within. The need today for the Christian community is to make their faith experiential and not mere intellectual ascent to revealed truths.

### Solidarity with the outcastes

Members of the Christian community, during the time of Devasahayam, belonged mostly to the lower castes and outcastes. Devasahayam knew that if he ever chose to be Christian, he had to mingle with such people. Knowing well the implication of conversion, Devasahayam made a deliberate choice to be with the ordinary people. He had to relinquish not only his upper caste





mentality but also his professional status as an official in the royal household. This was not an easy decision! But for his genuine faith experience, it would not have been possible for Devasahayam to transcend the barriers of caste and class. Belonging to the Nair community, supposed to be a superior caste, and being an official, which brought status and power, Nilakantan decided to be with the Christians, most of whom were at the lower rung of social order.

In a caste-ridden Indian Christian community, the layperson saint, Devashayam, stands as a towering model for casteless Christianity. As an authentic witness to Christ, he

broke the binding shackles of his caste identity and class-consciousness. It is a fitting tribute to the Martyr to have removed the caste title “Pillai” from his name. At baptism, all the members of the Church, as a sign of conversion, promise to give up their caste identity, affinity and superiority. Going beyond this promise, each one makes a vow to not only treat the members of the socially discriminated castes as equals but also work for their emancipation and inclusion.

### **A challenge to the Indian Church**

The Indian Church, rightfully takes pride in the canonization of Devasahayam, the first layperson from the country to attain sainthood. He, who deliberately gave up his caste identity and class affinity, reminds the Church of the prevailing caste discrimination. Therefore, it is imperative that the Church sets an agenda to liberate herself from the shackles of caste, which is a counter witness to the Gospel actively lived by Martyr Devasahayam, who tread a lonely path to align himself with the poor and the marginalized, who formed the major portion of the Catholic population then. Every step taken to get the Church rid of her caste divisions would be the worthy tribute to Martyr Devasahayam. ♦

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### ***Continued from Page 6: Devasahayam: from melancholy to holiness***

Their urging him to walk quickly was in vain. They then fashioned a strong stick and passed it in between his thighs and carried him like a hanging animal to Kattadi Malai. As they reached the venue of execution he begged for time to pray. He was given the time and he prayed for a quarter of an hour, commending himself to God. The rock on which he knelt and said his last prayer still bears the marks of his elbows and knee. Devasahayam stood there ready to give his life for the faith in Christ. They took aim from another rocky place nearby and shot at him. Three shots were fired at him, and the muskets failed to render him dead. The guards checked to see if he had died; seeing life in him still, they fired two more shots and

Devasahayam died pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. This death occurred in the 40th year of his life.

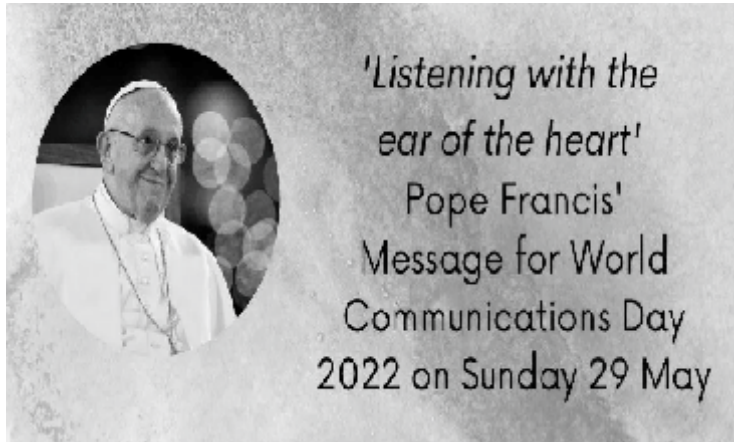
### **Beatification; path cleared for canonization**

Devasahayam was declared a Martyr and Blessed on December 2, 2012, at a solemn ceremony held in the Diocese of Kottar at Nagercoil. The Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Angelo Cardinal Amato, presided at the function as Delegate of Pope Benedict XVI. On 21-02-2020, Pope Francis accepted the proposal of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and has approved Blessed Devasahayam for canonization, which will take place on 15 May 2022. ♦



# Listening: a condition for genuine dialogue

*[Pope Francis' message for the 56th World Communications Day, 29 May 2022]*



On the one hand, then, God always reveals himself by communicating freely; and on the other hand, man and woman are asked to tune in, to be willing to listen. The Lord explicitly calls the human person to a covenant of love, so that they can fully become what they are: the image and likeness of God in his capacity to listen, to welcome, to give space to others. Fundamentally, listening is a dimension of love.

## Listening with the ear of the heart

From the pages of Scripture we learn that listening means not only the perception of sound, but is essentially linked to the dialogical relationship between God and humanity. “Shema' Israel - Hear, O Israel” (Deut 6:4), the opening words of the first commandment of the Torah, is continually reiterated in the Bible, to the point that Saint Paul would affirm that “faith comes through listening” (cf. Rom 10:17). The initiative, in fact, is God's, who speaks to us, and to whom we respond by listening to him.....

Listening corresponds to the humble style of God. It is the action that allows God to reveal himself as the One who, by speaking, creates man and woman in his image, and by listening recognizes them as his partners in dialogue. God loves humanity: that is why he addresses his word to them, and why he “inclines his ear” to listen to them.

On the contrary, human beings tend to flee the relationship, to turn their back and “close their ears” so they do not have to listen. The refusal to listen often ends up turning into aggression towards the other, as happened to those listening to the deacon Stephen who, covering their ears, all turned on him at once (cf. Acts 7:57).

This is why Jesus calls his disciples to evaluate the quality of their listening. “Take heed then how you hear” (Lk 8:18): this is what he exhorts them to do after recounting the parable of the sower, making it understood that it is not enough simply to listen, but that it is necessary to listen well. .... It is only by paying attention to whom we listen, to what we listen, and to how we listen that we can grow in the art of communicating, the heart of which is not a theory or a technique, but the “openness of heart that makes closeness possible” (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 171).

We all have ears, but many times even those with perfect hearing are unable to hear another





person. In fact, there is an interior deafness worse than the physical one. Indeed, listening concerns the whole person, not just the sense of hearing. The true seat of listening is the heart. Though he was very young, King Solomon proved himself wise because he asked the Lord to grant him a “listening heart” (cf. 1 Kings 3:9). Saint Augustine used to encourage listening with the heart (*corde audire*), to receive words not outwardly through the ears, but spiritually in our hearts: “Do not have your heart in your ears, but your ears in your heart”. Saint Francis of Assisi exhorted his brothers to “incline the ear of the heart”.[2]

Therefore, when seeking true communication, the first type of listening to be rediscovered is listening to oneself, to one's truest needs, those inscribed in each person's inmost being. And we can only start by listening to what makes us unique in creation: the desire to be in relationship with others and with the Other. We are not made to live like atoms, but together.

### **Listening as a condition of good communication**

There is a kind of hearing that is not really listening, but its opposite: eavesdropping. In fact, eavesdropping and spying, exploiting others for our own interests, is an ever-present temptation that nowadays seems to have become more acute in the age of social networks. Rather, what specifically makes communication good and fully human is listening to the person in front of us, face to face, listening to the other person whom we approach with fair, confident, and honest openness.

The lack of listening, which we experience so often in daily life, is unfortunately also evident in public life, where, instead of listening to each other, we often “talk past one another”. This is a symptom of the fact that, rather than seeking the true and the good, consensus is sought; rather than listening, one pays attention to the audience. Good communication, instead, does not try to impress the public with a

soundbite, with the aim of ridiculing the other person, but pays attention to the reasons of the other person and tries to grasp the complexity of reality. It is sad when, even in the Church, ideological alignments are formed and listening disappears, leaving sterile opposition in its wake.

In reality, in many dialogues we do not communicate at all. We are simply waiting for the other person to finish speaking in order to impose our point of view. In these situations, as philosopher Abraham Kaplan notes, dialogue is a duologue: a monologue in two voices. In true communication, however, the “I” and the “you” are both “moving out”, reaching out to each other.

Listening is therefore the first indispensable ingredient of dialogue and good communication. Communication does not take place if listening has not taken place, and there is no good journalism without the ability to listen. In order to provide solid, balanced, and complete information, it is necessary to listen for a long time. To recount an event or describe an experience in news reporting, it is essential to know how to listen, to be ready to change one's mind, to modify one's initial assumptions.

It is only by putting aside monologues that the harmony of voices that is the guarantee of true communication can be achieved. Listening to several sources, “not stopping at the first tavern” — as the experts in the field teach us — ensures the reliability and seriousness of the information we transmit. Listening to several voices, listening to



each other, even in the Church, among brothers and sisters, allows us to exercise the art of discernment, which always appears as the ability to orient ourselves in a symphony of voices.

But why face the exertion of listening? A great diplomat of the Holy See, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, used to speak of the “martyrdom of patience” needed to listen and be heard in negotiations with the most difficult parties, in order to obtain the greatest possible good in conditions of limited freedom. But even in less difficult situations, listening always requires the virtue of patience, together with the ability to allow oneself to be surprised by the truth, even if only a fragment of truth, in the person we are listening to. Only amazement enables knowledge. ....

The ability to listen to society is more valuable than ever in this time wounded by the long pandemic. So much previously accumulated mistrust towards “official information” has also caused an “infodemic”, within which the world of information is increasingly struggling to be credible and transparent. We need to lend an ear and listen profoundly, especially to the social unease heightened by the downturn or cessation of many economic activities.

The reality of forced migration is also a complex issue, and no one has a ready-made



prescription for solving it. I repeat that, in order to overcome prejudices about migrants and to melt the hardness of our hearts, we should try to listen to their stories. Give each of them a name and a story. Many good journalists already do this. And many others would like to do it, if only they could. Let us encourage them! Let us listen to these stories! Everyone would then be free to support the migration policies they deem most appropriate for their own country. But in any case, we would have before our eyes not numbers, not dangerous invaders, but the faces and stories, gazes, expectations and sufferings of real men and women to listen to.

### **Listening to one another in the Church**

In the Church, too, there is a great need to listen to ... one another. .... “Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by him who is himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the word of God”. Thus, the Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that the first service we owe to others in communion consists in listening to them. Whoever does not know how to listen to his brother or sister will soon no longer be able to listen to God either.

The most important task in pastoral activity is the “apostolate of the ear”—to listen



# Praedicate Evangelium

*Apostolic Constitution on Roman Curia*



On the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Pope Francis promulgated the new Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia, entitled "Praedicate evangelium". The text, which governs the Roman Curia, will enter into force on 5 June 2022, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

The Constitution marks the outcome of a lengthy listening process that began with the General Congregations that preceded the Conclave of 2013. The new Constitution replaces "Pastor bonus", which Pope St. John Paul II promulgated on 28 June 1988 and in force since 1 March 1989 and consisting of 250 articles.

On Monday, 21 March at 11:30 a.m., Praedicate evangelium will be presented at the Holy See Press Office by Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Bishop Marco Mellino, Secretary of the Council of Cardinals, and Jesuit Father Gianfranco Ghirlanda, canonist and emeritus professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

The text, as mentioned, is the result of lengthy collegial work, which took its cue from the 2013 pre-conclave meetings, and involved the Council of Cardinals with meetings from October 2013 to last February, taking place under the guidance of Pope Francis and

with various contributions from the local Churches around the world.

## **Evangelization-focused Curia**

It should be noted that the new Constitution calls for a path of reform that has already been almost entirely implemented over the past nine years, through the mergers and adjustments that have taken place and have led to the creation of new dicasteries.

The text emphasizes that "the Roman Curia is composed of the Secretariat of State, the Dicasteries and the Offices, all of which are legally equal."

Among the most significant developments in this regard contained in the document is the unification into the Dicastery for Evangelization of the former Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization. The two heads of these offices both become pro-prefects, because the prefecture of this new department is reserved to the Pope. In fact, the Constitution reads: "The Dicastery for Evangelization is presided over directly by the Roman Pontiff."

## **Charity toward the poor and marginalized**

The Dicastery for the Service of Charity, represented by the Office of Papal Charities, is then





established, which thus assumes a more significant role in the Curia.

"The Dicastery for the Service of Charity, also called the Apostolic Elemosineria, is a unique expression of mercy and, beginning with the option for the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized, carries out around the world the



work of assistance and help to them in the name of the Roman Pontiff, who in cases of particular privation or other necessity, personally arranges for the aid to be given."

The Apostolic Constitution begins by presenting in the following order: the Dicasteries for Evangelization, the Doctrine of the Faith, and the Service of Charity.

Another unification concerns the Commission for the Protection of Minors, which becomes part of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, continuing to operate with its own norms and having its own president and secretary.

### **Missionary disciples**

A fundamental part of the document is that which regards general principles. The preamble recalls that every Christian is a missionary disciple.

Fundamental among the general principles is the designation that everyone – including the lay faithful – can be appointed to roles of government in the Roman Curia by virtue of the vicarious power of the Successor of Peter.

"Every Christian, by virtue of Baptism, is a missionary disciple to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus. One cannot fail to take this into account in the updating of the Curia, whose reform, therefore, must provide for the involvement of laymen and women, even in roles of government and responsibility."

### **At service of Pope and local Churches.**

The Constitution also underscores that the Curia is an instrument at the service of the Bishop of Rome also for the benefit of the universal Church and therefore of the episcopates and local Churches.

"The Roman Curia does not place itself between the Pope and the Bishops; rather, it places itself at the service of both in ways that are proper to the nature of each."

Another significant point concerns spirituality: the members of the Roman Curia are also "missionary disciples."

Synodality in particular is highlighted as an ordinary way of working for the Roman Curia, a path already in place, and to be developed more and more.

### **Term limit for clerics and religious**

Other aspects contained in the document include emphasizing the definition of the Secretariat of State as "papal secretariat", the transfer of the Curia Personnel Office to the Secretariat for the Economy (SPE), and the





## Be guides to holiness, witnesses of forgiveness



Francis addressed around 800 priests and seminarians at the end of an annual course on the seal of confession and the internal forum, which is an extra-sacramental form of secrecy, or confidentiality, applied to spiritual direction.

The course, in its 32nd edition, was held in person and online. It was organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary, the office of the Roman Curia responsible for issues related to the sacrament of confession, indulgences, and the internal forum.

### Priests should guide penitent to holiness

CNA - Pope Francis told hundreds of priests and seminarians on Friday that when priests are hearing confessions, they should strive to accompany penitents along the path to greater holiness.

“The confessor always has as his goal the universal call to holiness, and to accompany discreetly to it,” the pope said on March 25, speaking about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, when a penitent Catholic discloses his or her sins to a priest or bishop, who acts *in persona Christi*, Latin for “in the person of Christ,” to grant God’s pardon and forgiveness.

“To accompany means to take care of the other person, walking together with him or her,” he continued. “It is not enough to indicate a goal, if you are not willing to walk even a stretch of road together.”

“However brief the confessional interview may be, from a few details you can understand the needs of the brother or sister: we are called to respond to them, accompanying them above all to the understanding and acceptance of God’s will, which is always the way of the greatest good, the way of joy and peace,” the pope stated.

“Dear brothers, I thank the Lord with you for the ministry which you carry out, or which will soon be entrusted to you — for there are [transitional] deacons here — a ministry at the service of the sanctification of the faithful People of God,” Pope Francis said.

He reminded priests that though they are ministers of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they should also receive the graces of the sacrament themselves. “You go to ask forgiveness for your sins, do you not? This is very healthy. It is good for us confessors to do so,” he said.

Francis also advised priests to “inhabit” the confessional, always being ready to welcome, listen, and accompany those who come to seek God’s forgiveness. Everyone needs forgiveness, he



said, “that is, to feel that they are loved as children by God the Father.”

“The words we say: 'I absolve you of your sins' also mean 'you, brother, sister, are precious, you are precious to God; it is good that you are there.' And this is a most powerful medicine for the soul, and also for the psyche of everyone,” he said.

### **Priests must bear witness to Christ's forgiveness**

Vatican News - The staff and seminarians of the Pontifical Teutonic (German) College met with Pope Francis on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the papal election of Pope Adrian VI, who was the last Pope “from the Germanic world” before Benedict XVI.

Born in Utrecht in what is now the Netherlands and then a part of the Holy Roman Empire, the future Pope Adrian VI acted as tutor to the future Emperor Charles V.

He was elected to the papacy as a compromise candidate between the rival French and Spanish factions of cardinals, and served as Pope and ruler of the Papal States for less than two years.

### **Ministry of reconciliation**

Speaking to the German seminarians, Pope Francis recalled the pontificate of Adrian VI and the legacy he left during his brief reign in 1522 to 1523.

*“He sought to promote above all reconciliation in the Church and the world, putting into practice the words of St. Paul according to*

*which God entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to the Apostles.”*

Pope Adrian VI's pontificate was marked by the Protestant Reformation and the threat of further Ottoman conquests in the east.

Pope Francis noted that his predecessor made an effort to reconcile with Lutherans, and even publicly asked forgiveness for the sins of members of the Roman Curia, which had led to turmoil in the Church.



He also sought détente between the French and Spanish rulers to fend off the threat posed by Ottoman forces.

### **Faith filled with joy and dedication**

Despite Adrian VI's best efforts, noted Pope Francis, his premature death kept him from fulfilling any of these projects.

“However, his witness as a fearless and tireless worker for faith, justice, and peace remain fixed in the Church's memory,” he said.

The Pope held up that example for German seminarians even today, saying it offers motivation for their own vocation as servants of Christ.

“May the Lord sustain your ministry, and lead you to a faith that is ever more rooted in His love, lived with joy and dedication. Considering his care





for promoting agreement and reconciliation, I urge you to follow his path especially as ministers of the Sacrament of Penance.”

### **Forgiving and merciful in personal relationships**

Pope Francis concluded his remarks to members of the German College by reminding them of the need to listen to confessions “with love, wisdom, and much mercy”.

“This is important,” he added off-the-cuff. “The task of the confessor is to forgive, not torture. Be merciful, great forgivers, which is how the Church wants you to be.”

He said all good servants of the forgiveness of Christ must know how to “forgive others, be merciful in his relationships, and be a man of peace and communion.” ♦

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### ***Continued from Page 12: Listening: a condition for genuine dialogue***

before speaking, as the Apostle James exhorts: “Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak” (1:19). Freely giving some of our own time to listen to people is the first act of charity.

A synodal process has just been launched. Let us pray that it will be a great opportunity to listen to one another. Communion, in fact, is not the result of strategies and programmes, but is built in mutual listening between brothers and sisters. As in a choir, unity does not require uniformity, monotony, but the plurality and variety of voices, polyphony. At the same time, each voice

in the choir sings while listening to the other voices and in relation to the harmony of the whole. This harmony is conceived by the composer, but its realization depends on the symphony of each and every voice.

With the awareness that we participate in a communion that precedes and includes us, we can rediscover a symphonic Church, in which each person is able to sing with his or her own voice, welcoming the voices of others as a gift to manifest the harmony of the whole that the Holy Spirit composes. ♦

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### ***Continued from Page 14: Praedicate Evangelium***

indication that the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA) must carry out its work through the instrumental activity of the Institute for the Works of Religion.

The Constitution also establishes that for clerics and religious serving in the Roman Curia, the mandate is for five years and may be renewed for a second five-year term, at the end of which they return to their dioceses and communities of origin.

“As a rule, after five years, clerical Officials and members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life who have served in curial institutions and offices return to pastoral care in their diocese/parish, or in the Institutes or Societies to which they belong. Should the Superiors of the Roman Curia deem it opportune, the service may be extended for another period of five years.”

----- vaticannews.va 19.03.2022 ♦



# Why did our Lady of Fatima mention only Russia?

*By Philip Kosloski*



For many young people born during the last 30 years, it can seem strange that Our Lady of Fatima specifically mentions the conversion of Russia. Until recently, there wasn't any particular reason in the last 30 years why Russia should be singled out among all the nations. However, when put into historical context, the reason behind Our Lady's appeal to Russia begins to make more sense.

During World War I, the people of Russia were starving and their economy was in shambles. Their army was no match for Germany and led to enormous casualties. This increased animosity towards the government and a desire for a solution.

Rioting erupted in Russia, including what is now called the "February Revolution" (Russia at the time used the Julian Calendar). It took place on March 8, 1917, and led to the abdication of Czar Nicholas II on March 15, 1917.

It was the beginning of an even greater movement, as it facilitated Vladimir Lenin's rise to power. Lenin was a disciple of Karl Marx and was ready to introduce his own version of Marxism in Russia, beginning with a socialist revolution.



## CONSECRATION OF RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

To the  
Immaculate Heart of Mary  
Friday, March 25, 2022  
Solemnity of the  
Annunciation

His version of communism would devastate Russia for decades to come and would spread to many other countries throughout the world.

For example, in 1921 China adopted communism, directly influenced by the revolution that occurred in Russia.

When Our Lady of Fatima appeared on May 13, 1917, the world was aware of the February Revolution, but not of the communist rise to power that would grip the world.

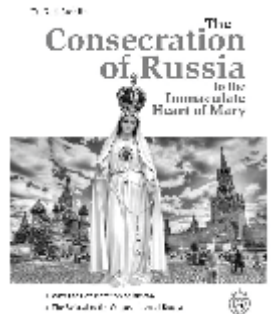
It wasn't until Our Lady appeared on July 13, 1917, that she spoke to the children at Fatima about Russia.

"To prevent [another World War], I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and the Communion of reparation on the first Saturdays.

"If people attend to my requests, Russia will be converted and the world will have peace. If not, she [Russia] will scatter her errors throughout the world, provoking wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, and various nations will be destroyed.

"In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me; it will be converted, and a certain period of peace will be granted to the world. In Portugal the dogmas of the Faith will always be kept."

The little children at Fatima could have never thought of the damage the Russian government and its communist philosophy could inflict upon the world.





Emilia Fernandez

## A martyr of the rosary



This pregnant woman who died in a prison in Spain, became a Martyr of the Rosary

Emilia Fernandez a martyr of the Rosary.

Emilia Fernandez, a pregnant woman who found her faith in a Spanish prison during the Civil War (1936-1939), refused to give up the name of her catechist to her persecutors, and became a modern promoter of the Rosary.

“Emilia is a martyr of suffering, because she died some 10 days after giving birth for lack of medical attention, clutching her rosary. She had a chance to apostatize, to betray the one who taught her the faith, but she did not. She's an example,” Spanish historian Martin Ibarra told Catholic News Agency.

Emilia became the first Romani – or Gypsy – woman to be beatified by the Catholic Church. “Emilia's life until she turned 24 was normal for an Andalusian Gypsy woman,” Ibarra said. “She devoted herself to her family and to her work as a basket maker. She was and honest, hard-working Gypsy woman.”

Emilia was imprisoned with her husband Juan Cortes, after they tried to

scape from Juan being forced to join the Socialist army.

Emilia was pregnant when she was sent to prison, but did not receive any additional care. Officials assigned her the same insufficient food ration as the rest of the female prisoners. Emilia “carried her pregnancy in the prison under terrible conditions, and suffered a lot from hunger,” Ibarra said.

But it was in prison where she discovered her faith.

“Even though she had been baptized, she never set foot in a church. It was especially through the rosary that her catechist Dolores del Olmo taught her,” Ibarra recounted.

Even if it was officially forbidden, female prisoners prayed every afternoon. Emilia wanted to know more about her faith and she asked Dolores del Olmo to explain it to her. That's when she realized that she belonged to the Church, and she learned the 'Our Father,' the 'Hail Mary' and the 'Glory Be'.

According to Ibarra, the warden for the women's prison, Dolores Salmerón, knew that Emilia and the other prisoners were praying. She offered the woman more food and offered to



## SAINT OF THE MONTH - I

# St Peter Nolasco

1189 – 1256

Feast Day - 9 May

Peter was born at Mas-des-Saintes-Puelles, near Castelnaudary, France, in 1189. He was of a noble family and from his youth was noted for his piety, almsgiving, and charity. Having given all his possessions to the poor, he took a vow of virginity and, to avoid communication with the Albigenses, went to Barcelona. He took part in the Crusades against the Albigensians in southern France. Later he became tutor to King James I of Aragon and settled in Barcelona and became a friend of Saint Raymond of Penafort. He used his large inheritance to ransom Christians held prisoner by the Moors.

At that time the Moors were masters of a great part of the Iberian Peninsula, and many Christians were detained there and cruelly persecuted on account of the Faith. Peter ransomed many of these and in doing so consumed all his patrimony. After mature deliberation, moved also by a heavenly vision, he resolved to found a religious order, similar to that established a few years earlier by St John de Matha and St. Felix de Valois, whose chief object would be the redemption of Christian slaves. In this he was encouraged by St Raymond Penafort and James I, King of Aragon, who, it seems, had been favoured with the same inspiration. The institute was called Mercedarians and was solemnly approved by Gregory IX, in 1230. Its members were bound by a special vow to employ all their substance for the redemption of captive Christians, and if necessary, to remain in captivity in their stead.

At first most of these religious were laymen as was Peter himself. Twice Peter



went to Africa to serve as a captive, and it was reported that during one journey to Granada and Valencia he won the release from Moorish jails of some four hundred captive Christians. In imitation of our Redeemer, he devoted himself to the ransom of his brethren; he made himself a prisoner to procure them their liberty; and remained in exile, that they might once more enjoy the happiness of

home. His devotedness was blessed by God. He founded a new Religious Order in the Church, composed of generous-hearted men, who, for six hundred years, prayed, toiled, and spent their lives, in obtaining the blessing of liberty to countless Captives, who would else have led their whole lives in chains, exposed to the imminent danger of losing their faith. Our Lord rewarded St Peter Nolasco by calling him to heaven, at that very hour, wherein, twelve hundred years before, himself had been born in Bethlehem. It was on Christmas Night that the Redeemer of Captives was united to Jesus, the Redeemer of Humankind. Peter's last hymn on earth was the Psalm 111: and as his faltering voice uttered the words: "He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant for ever", his soul took its flight to heaven. He was canonized by Pope Urban VIII in 1628.

The Mercedarians spread through France, England, Germany, and Portugal. From Spain they provided a major missionary presence in the New World. Their concerns today, when there are not so many captives to be ransomed, are mostly with prisoners and those in need of education. They have a considerable presence in the USA and South America, and also in Italy and Rwanda.

-----[www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org);  
[www.catholic.org/saints](http://www.catholic.org/saints);  
[www.christianapostles.com](http://www.christianapostles.com);  
[www.catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com](http://www.catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com)/♦



## SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

# St Juliana Falconieri

1270–1341

Feast Day : June 19

Juliana Falconieri was born of wealthy Florentine family in 1270. The family was rich not only materially but also in Christian faith, which had already led Alessio Falconieri, Juliana's uncle, to give up everything and consecrate himself to God. Juliana was fascinated by her uncle's vocation as one of the founders of the Servants of Mary (the Servites). When she was very young her father died, and thus she was raised by mother and her uncle Alessio.



given to contemplation and charitable works. On Wednesdays and Fridays they fasted completely, while on Saturdays they contented themselves with bread and water. The Mantellate became a common sight in Florence. They were known, too, for promoting peace in a city marked by deadly vendettas. Their sacrifices were offered for an end to the hatred that plagued the population.

St Juliana, who guided the community until her death, was able to offer additional sufferings. For many

Although she was a beautiful young woman, she rejected all offers of marriage. Until her mother's death she remained in her parents' house, where she followed the rule given her by St Philip Benitius, her spiritual guide, practicing perfect chastity, strict mortification, severe penance, zealous prayer, and works of Christian charity. She



became a Servite Tertiary a year later, although she continued to live at home until 1304 when her mother died. Immediately thereafter Juliana gathered together a group of women dedicated to prayer and good works. Later she drew up a rule of life and was appointed superior of

the group. Since her rule was approved by Pope Martin V one hundred and twenty years later, she is considered to be the founder of the Servite nuns.

Juliana and her friends were distinguished by the dark cloaks they wore in imitation of the Servites, and from this choice of dress were known as the "Mantellate." Eventually, they became the female branch of the Servants of Mary, the Sisters of the Third Order of Servites. Their lives were

years she was afflicted with a stomach ailment that made it difficult to eat solid food. Over time, it became impossible for her to swallow even the little food necessary to sustain her life.

It soon became clear that her life was drawing to a close. But because of her illness and constant vomiting, she was unable to receive Holy Communion for the dying. When the priest came to give her last rites, Juliana asked him to spread a corporal on her chest, and place the Blessed Sacrament there. After a short time, the Sacred Host disappeared, and Juliana went to her eternal reward on 12 June 1341. As her sisters prepared her for burial, they discovered the image of the Cross, similar to the one on the host, had appeared on Juliana's body. This was widely acclaimed as a Eucharistic miracle, and the story became part of the liturgical account of her life. Since her death, the Mantellate have included this symbol of the Cross on their religious habit.

Juliana Falconieri was beatified on 26 July 1678 by Pope Innocent XI and canonized on 16 June 1737 by Pope Clement XII.

-----[www.vaticannews.va](http://www.vaticannews.va);

[www.catholic.org/saints](http://www.catholic.org/saints); [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org);

[www.catholicsaints.info](http://www.catholicsaints.info) ♦



*Continued from Page 18: Why did our Lady of Fatima mention only Russia?*



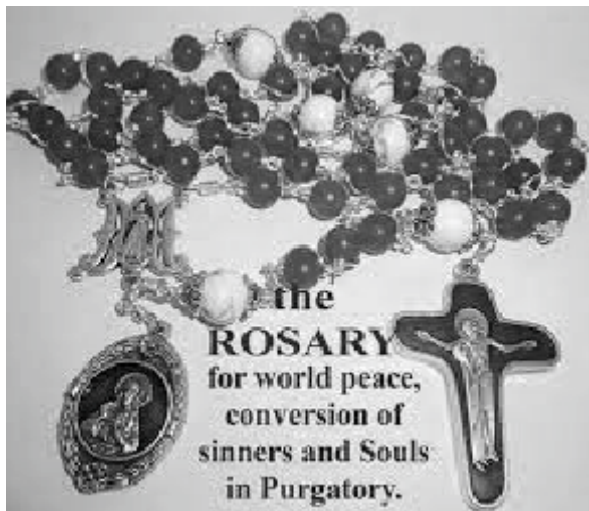
## **The Pope With The Bishops**

Yet, that is exactly what happened as World War II shattered lives and ushered in a new reign of terror under the Soviet Union.

The good news is that the future is not set in stone and we can influence the world for the better, beginning with Our Lady's call to, "penance, penance, penance!"

----- [aleteia.org](http://aleteia.org) 14.03.2022 ♦

*Continued from Page 19: A martyr of the rosary*



led her to love Jesus Christ more.

According to the historian, Emilia "died from her sufferings, for being faithful to her faith, for bringing a life into the world and did not give in to her jailer's desire that she apostatize." For Ibarra, Emilia "teaches us with her life that God is at our side, especially in the midst of difficulties. Emilia went to prison hardly knowing the faith and when she died, she did so as a friend of God and a martyr of the rosary. That is beautiful."

She was beatified in a group of martyrs from Almeria, Spain on March 25, 2017. The group included cathedral dean Father Jose Alvarez-Benavides y de la Torre and 114 companion martyrs: 95 priests, 20 laymen and two women, including Emilia.

Emilia is the first Romani woman to be beatified. The first male Gypsy blessed, Ceferino Giménez Malla, known as El Pelé, was beatified by Saint John Paul II in 1997. He died in the religious persecution of the Spanish Civil War for protecting a priest. Before his persecutors shot him, he held a rosary in his hand and cried out "Long live Christ the King!"

Ibarra characterized both Emilia and Ceferino as "martyrs of the rosary" because both of them refused to stop praying it.

"This demonstrates that the Virgin leads us to God. For those two martyrs, she was the Gate of Heaven," he said.

----- [Catholicnewsagency.com](http://Catholicnewsagency.com) ♦

release her and her husband on one condition: to reveal the name of whoever taught her to pray.

Knowing that the catechist would end up in jail, Emilia refused to betray her. She was punished with solitary confinement.

A few months later, Emilia gave birth. "Between the cries and sobs, her catechist was saying prayers which Emilia repeated, although she could not continue because of the pain," Ibarra added.

Dolores del Olmo, her catechist, baptized Emilia's newborn daughter with the name Angeles ("Angels," a common name for female Spaniards.) The new mother died 10 days later. Ibarra is the author of the book "Emilia, the Basket Maker, Martyr of the Rosary," which tells of her life and death. He said that Emilia's devotion to the rosary



There was a large Ashram in a remote place where elderly gurus and their disciples lived together. It was like a training centre for the new entrants, functioned like a novitiate. They followed a very strict discipline. Time allotted for prayer and meditation, for labour and field work, rest and leisure. Everyone, from the oldest to the youngest was required to fall in line and follow the routine. At the sunset they all used to gather in the meditation hall for quiet long silent meditation.

It so happened that when they sat for prayer-meditation, from nowhere a kitten came into the hall and started playing, pulling and jumping as usually kittens do. So the Head-Guru asked the youngest disciple to tie it and then untie it after the meditation. Even though the cat was released, it took a liking and stayed in the Ashram. Again the same story! When they came for the evening meditation, the cat would also come in and disturb them. So the Head-Guru asked the youngest disciple, as a routine responsibility, to tie/untie the cat before/after the meditation starts.



The routine of the Ashram went on. The cat was tied by the youngest disciple before the meditation commenced and was released after the meditation. The cat too got used to this disciple and abided by the discipline of the Ashram, allowing itself to be leashed and then being freed after the conclusion of the meditation.

Years rolled by. The Head-Guru passed away and a new Guru was chosen. But the leashing of the cat before the evening meditation continued. After many years (they say, cat has 12 lives), the cat too died. Now there was a real issue in the Ashram. The

evening meditation cannot be commenced without first leashing the cat. They held a meeting, discussed about it, and from the nearby village procured a small cat so that the cat could be leashed before the meditation. Thus the cat became an integral part of the evening meditation and a permanent member of the Ashram. They were all happy in following faithfully Guru's orders that the cat is to be leashed before the evening meditation begins.



Centuries passed and some of the Ashram members started writing learned treatises and scholarly articles about the liturgical significance of tying up a cat while the evening prayers, meditation is performed.

### Moral of the story

Every traditional practice has a beginning and a context. It starts at a particular place and time to resolve a particular situation. Later on it is followed blindly without questioning the context or the situation why and when this practice began. It becomes a tradition and everybody follows it without questioning. If someone goes against it, he/she is considered a rebel.

Each time the guru sat for worship with his students the ashram cat would come in to distract them, so he ordered them to tie it when the ashram was at prayer. After the guru died the cat continued to be tied at worship time. And when the cat expired, another cat was brought into the ashram to make sure that the guru's orders were faithfully observed at worship time. Centuries passed and learned treatises were written by the guru's scholarly disciples on the liturgical significance of tying up a cat while worship is performed.

(The original short story is from *The Song of the Bird* by Anthony de Mello, S.J. – This is an enlarged version) ♦

# News Round-Up

## Bangalore archbishop dares govt to probe Christian schools

Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore challenged the provincial government to inquire into how many students studying in Christian schools have converted to Christianity in the past 100 years. He was reacting to the Karnataka government ordering a probe into the century-old Clarence High School in the state capital Bengaluru for allegedly insisting on carrying or studying the Bible as part of the curriculum. Archbishop Machado said if the probe finds any of the charges related to religious conversion or compulsory study of the Bible as true in the past 100 years, he will take action in the matter. ♦

## Catholic hermit nun needs support in old age

An aging Catholic nun, who adopted Hindu ascetic life during the movement for inculturation of the Indian Church some five decades ago, now lives under the care of a parish priest in western India. Sister Prasanna Devi lived alone in a hut-like hermitage in a forest around the sacred hill of Girnar in Junagadh district of Gujarat known for its Jain and Hindu temples dating back to centuries, from 1974 until September 2014 when she had a fall that caused her to move out of the forest. Father Vinod Kanat, parish priest of St. Ann's Catholic Church, located six kilometers away and falling under Rajkot Diocese, to the annex of the church Sr Prasanna is not part of any religious congregation, but according to Father Kanat, she is a canonically legitimate religious, having taken her vows before Bishop Gregory Karotemprel of Rajkot on March 27, 1997. Because of her advanced age, Sister Prasanna Devi cannot speak coherently. Her memory too is failing and she's unable to manage her daily routine on her own, Father Kanat said.

Sr Prasanna had opted for the Hindu form of ascetic life influenced by the inculturation movement sweeping across India at the time. It advocated adapting Indian sociocultural aspects in practicing the Catholic faith. In the decades following the Vatican II council, several Catholic priests supported what later came to be called the Christian Ashram movement that favored renunciation and living a monastic life like Indian *sanyasis*. Sister Prasanna Devi was around 40 when she set up her own hermitage inside the forest and began to live alone, clad in a saffron-colored cloth, a sign of renunciation akin to Hindu ascetics. She was born in 1934 as the eldest among three children of Joseph and Mariamma Kunnapallil in Karimannur Parish of Kerala. Not sure of her future plans after the 10th grade, she remained at home for around a few years, spending time on church activities.

She finally decided to become a nun and joined the Order of the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart at the age of 22, but had to leave the congregation after five years as the order's only house in India closed. Thereafter, she traveled around India, visiting Hindu temples and monasteries among other things, and finally decided to opt for an ascetic life. Over the years, she found many followers, mostly Hindus and Jains from the vicinity. ♦

## Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

### May 2022 : For faith-filled young people

We pray for all young people, called to live life to the fullest; may they see in Mary's life the way to listen, the depth of discernment, the courage that faith generates, and the dedication to service.

### June 2022 : For families

We pray for Christian families around the world; may they embody and experience unconditional love and advance in holiness in their daily lives.





**BLESSED FATHER PAOLO MANNA**  
(1872-1952)

Missionary in Burma (Myanmar)  
Superior General of the P.I.M.E.  
Founder of the Pontifical Missionary Union

Blessed Father Paolo Manna was born in Avellino on January 16, 1872.

On May 19, 1894 he was ordained a priest in the cathedral of Milan.

On September 27, 1895 departed for the mission of Toungoo in Eastern Burma. He worked there for a total of ten years with two short repatriations until 1907, when his illness forced him to come back to Italy for good.

Beginning in 1909, through writing and a variety of other activities, he dedicated all his energy for the next forty years to fostering missionary zeal among the clergy and the faithful.

In 1916 founded the Missionary Union of the Clergy on which Pius XII bestowed the title of “*Pontifical*” in 1956.

By 1909 he became the director of *Le Missioni Cattoliche*; and in 1914 he launched *Propaganda Missionaria* – a popular broadsheet with a large circulation; in 1919 he started *Italia Missionaria* for young people.

In an effort to foster the missionary vocations in Southern Italy, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith asked Father Manna to establish a seminary for foreign missions. He opened Sacred Heart Seminary at Ducenta in the province of Caserta – a foundation he had long encouraged and promoted.

In 1924 was elected Superior General of the Institute of Foreign Missions of Milan. In 1926 at the instigation of Pope Pius XI the Institute united with the Missionary Seminary of Rome to form the Pontifical Institute for the Foreign Missions (P.I.M.E.).

The P.I.M.E. General Assembly of 1934 gave him mandate to establish the Society of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate. He played a primary role in the foundation of this institute in 1936. From 1937 to 1941 Father Manna was in charge of the International Secretariat for the Missionary Union of the Clergy.

Father Paolo Manna died in Naples on September 15, 1952. His remains were laid to rest at Ducenta, “*his seminary*”. On December 13, 1990 Pope John Paul II visited his tomb.

His Beatification Cause began in Naples in 1971 and concluded in Rome on April 24, 2001 with a Papal Decree on a miracle attributed to the intercession of the Servant of God.



# ST PETER'S PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE

## DEPARTMENT OF MISSIOLOGY

### BANGALORE

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- To prepare efficient Secretaries for Commissions of CBCI, CCBI and Regional Episcopal Conferences such as Commission for Proclamation (CCBI), Commission for Interreligious Dialogue (CBCI), Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (CBCI), Commission for Small Christian Communities (CCBI), Commission for Ecology (CCBI)
- To form experts, researchers and formators.
- To prepare professors for Seminaries, Ecclesiastical Institutes and Formation Houses.
- To prepare efficient co-ordinators of the Pastoral Centres.
- To form effective pastors to ably head various commissions of the Pastoral Centres.

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- For Licentiate in Missiology  
Bachelor Degree in Theology or equivalent Christian U. G. Studies
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Licentiate in Missiology or equivalent Christian P. G. Studies

#### Professors

Dr Antony Lawrence  
Dr Stany C. Fernandes  
Dr Simon Pinto  
Dr P V Antony  
Dr Sr Stancy, SMI  
Dr Yann Vagneux, MEP  
Dr Jerry Rosario, SJ

Prof. Dr Lucien Legrand, MEP  
Prof. Dr Michael Amaladoss, SJ  
Prof. Dr Felix Wilfred  
Prof. Dr Jacob Parappally, MSFS  
Prof. Dr Maria Arul Raja, SJ  
Prof. Dr S. M. Michael, SVD  
Dr Victor Edwin, SJ

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