

PROCLAIM

A magazine for Missionary Animation



***... No place for
them in the INN.***

Lk. 2:7



Wishing you all

a Joyful
Christmas

&

a Prosperous
New Year
2023



**PONTIFICAL MISSION
ORGANIZATIONS (INDIA)**

No. 10, 3rd Cross, Ulsoor Road, Bangalore - 560 042, Karnataka, INDIA



080 2558 5946 / 4146 8634



pmorgbindia@gmail.com



www.pmoindia.org



PMI-INDIA

PROCLAIM

Editor:

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu

Editorial Board:

Dr Thomas J DSouza

Maresh 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

PB 4216, No. 10, 3rd Cross,

Ulsoor Road, Bangalore - 560042,
Karnataka, INDIA.

Tel: +91 80 2558 5946 / 4146 8634

Email: pmorgbindia@gmail.com

Website: www.pmoindia.org

Contents

(with Page Number)

- From the DIRECTOR'S DESK _____ (2)
- Going another way at Christmas _____ (3)
- Listening to God's voice? _____ (4)
- 10 truths about purgatory _____ (6)
- An overview of the Second Vatican Council _____ (8)
- Let the laity assume their baptism: Pope ____ (12)
- New step in Christian-Muslim dialogue ____ (13)
- Synodality and evangelising mission _____ (15)
- SAINT OF THE MONTH
 - St Agnes of Assisi _____ (18)
Feast Day: 16th Novenmer
 - St John Kanty _____ (19)
Feast Day: 23rd December
- STORY CORNER
 - A different kind of Christmas _____ (21)
 - Vatican's Diwali message _____ (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



Saint John of the Cross

24 Jun 1542 - 14 Dec 1591

(Feast Day: 14 December)

Priest, Confessor & Doctor of the Church

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

The Inn-Keeper and the Barn-Keeper

God is born and lives amidst us (John 1: 14) and is called Emmanuel - ie: God with us (Mt 1: 23). The continuous presence of the Lord was made possible historically two thousand years ago. What a wonderful and joyful event!

A king is born in a palace, a rich man in a bungalow, a poor man in a hut, and a homeless in a street. If God is born, where would he be born? In the Church, Temple, Palace? Jesus the son of God was not born in any of the places mentioned. He was born in a place that we probably least expect – the cattle shed. God is born in a barn.

We could learn new lessons about Christmas and its significance if we reflect on the First Christmas. Every character can teach us something to ponder over and inspire us. Let us recall the narrative. St Joseph and the Blessed Mother were looking for a place and they were refused a place in the inn and she gave birth to Jesus and placed him in a manger. "... She gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2: 7).

The inn keeper refused a place not out of hatred or unwillingness, but because there was no room. He did not know that the Blessed mother is carrying the Son of God. However, had he been a compassionate person, he could have found a place for the pregnant woman; even if there were no guest rooms, he could have given his room, even for rent. But he did not show mercy. That is why Fulton J Sheen wrote "When finally the scrolls of history are completed down to the last word of time, the saddest line of all will be, 'There was no room in the inn,'" because he refused a place for God.

Though the narrative does not say about the barn-keeper, we can understand that the barn could not have been without a keeper, otherwise it could have been occupied by many more people who were looking for a place to stay (since many had come to Bethlehem to register their names). The barn-keeper must have been a compassionate person to have permitted a pregnant woman - the Blessed Mother – to stay in the barn, a place that can keep the family warm. God is born where there is compassion. He does not need a guest room or a palace. He is born because there was compassion, mercy and love in the barn keeper.

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it," proclaims Psalm 24: 1. Therefore God could decide to be born anywhere, but he chose to be born in a barn because there was love – love meets love.

The inn-keeper was economics-oriented or legalistic that he could not find a place for a woman in need. The barn-keeper was a person of compassion; therefore he could find a place. Only a person capable of human love can understand the love of God. God came down to the world that all may understand the love of God. He is born where there is capacity to understand what love is. The barn-keeper might have been forgotten or might not be remembered by the human community – but the Lord acknowledges his love by being born there. The best way then to celebrate Christmas meaningfully would be to become a person of compassion, showing mercy to the needy.

Let us therefore, as followers of Jesus, resolve to speak the language of love in our life and show compassion to the needy and God will be born again in our life.

Merry Christmas!



Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
National Director (PMO-India)

Going another way at Christmas

By Yesu Karunanidhi

In the Gospel of Matthew, the Magi story is part of the infancy narrative. And Matthew alone records it. At the end of the story the evangelist writes, “they went another way” (Mt 2:12).

What is the meaning of this verse in the Magi story? And how does it refer to the entire salvation history? And what inspirations do we derive from this for our Christmas this year? Let us address these queries here.

1. The Magi going another way

‘Where is the one who is born king of the Jews?’ (Mt 2:2) – the wise men from the East coming to Jerusalem ask this question.

Matthew does not record to whom this question was posed. In a way this question is posed to us the readers, and each of us in our hearts, has to answer this.

The question frightens Herod the Great, the king. The frightened king, having consulted his court scholars, calls the wise men and instructs them to inform him after visiting the child. The wise men look for the king, while Herod tells that he looks for the child.

The wise men depart from Herod. They are happy that the star that they followed reappears. They fall on the ground before the child, and they present gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When they were about to return their way to Herod they are warned in a dream not to go that way.

As a result, they take another way. The knees that bent before the child can't bend before Herod. The eyes that saw the sun of righteousness can't see the darkness of evil. The hands that touched the king of the Jews can't shake the hands that hold a sword. Hence, another way.

Another way was possible for them, because they responded to the dream, because they looked for it, because they chose to go in it.

2. God going another way

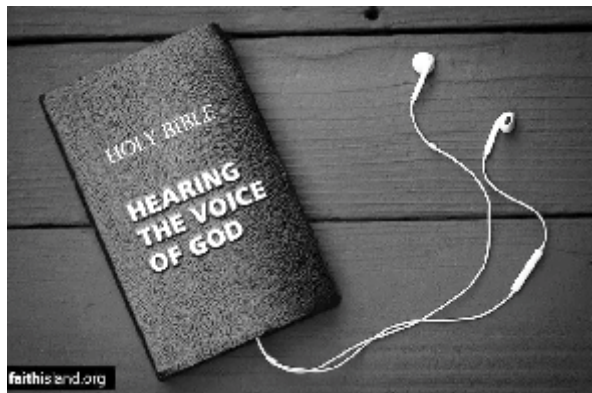
The taking of another way by the Magi kindles anger in Herod. He goes by his own way of killing the innocent in an attempt to eliminate the newborn king. But he did not know that God saved the child in another way.

The God of the Bible goes always another way. When there was chaos in the beginning, God goes another way to create the world (cf. Gen 1:1). When the nations of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia were the superpowers of the world, God went another way to choose Israel, an insignificant nation (cf. Deut 7:6). He established covenant with Abraham and blessed him with land, and progeny (cf. Gen 17:4). He showed his steadfast love to Isaac and Jacob. When the people were held as slaves



Listening to God's voice?

By Francesca Pollio Fenton



Discernment is hard. How do we know if the voice we're listening to is God's, or our own?

The Alluring Voice of God: Forming Daily Encounters (Liguori Publications, 2021) by Carrell Jamilano strives to offer individuals practical tips on how to hear the voice of God among all the noise of their daily lives. The engaging read offers guidance for those seeking to develop a more intimate relationship with God.

As a spiritual director and former director of young-adult ministry, Jamilano was inspired to write this book with the goal to answer the tough questions she frequently received from the young Catholics she ministered to.

In an interview with CNA, Jamilano explained that she “wanted to give these individuals a practical resource that would help them better hear God's voice in their everyday lives.”

“It includes how to develop a more intimate relationship with God providing step-by-step guidance at the end of every chapter,” she added.

So, how do we develop that intimate relationship with God and recognize His will?

In the journey of discerning God's will for each of our lives, we must first recognize

the different ways in which God speaks. Jamilano offers 5 ways through which God speaks: prayer, sacred scripture, silence, tradition, and non-traditional means.

1. Prayer

Jamilano writes in the book that “prayer is the conduit through which we develop a personal and living relationship with Abba, our heavenly Father.” It's personal, involves our whole heart, and it's a conversation with God requiring us to both speak and listen. Additionally, she advises to invoke the Holy Spirit as you pray. “The Holy Spirit is a friend and advocate who leads us, already working on our behalf to make us more receptive to God's voice,” she says.

2. Sacred Scripture

Distinguishing God's voice is an important part of discernment. Jamilano expresses that “taking the time to get to know God by reading Scripture is vital to understanding which voice is his.” Many examples are given of individuals who receive clarity through spending time with the Word of God. Prayers are answered and insight is gained into who we are and what God has intended for us.

3. Silence

In the busyness of our lives, it can be challenging to sit down in silence. When we pray, we tend to do all the talking. However, how many



times do you stop and sit in silence? Jamilano emphasizes the importance of removing all distractions and giving God our full attention. She says, “When we are silent, we acknowledge God's presence, and we give him the opportunity to respond to our prayers” and adds that “silence amplifies our inner voice.” This inner voice, Jamilano explains, is the Holy Spirit which, when we spend moments in silence, helps us to begin to notice where the Holy Spirit is calling us and realize what God is calling us to do.

4. Tradition

In the book, Catholic tradition is defined as, “all the practices that have been given to us by our predecessors through apostolic succession,” including all the prayers and teachings that unite Catholics. Therefore, Jamilano makes the point that the Mass, the sacraments, and our traditional prayers are all ways in which God can speak to us.

5. Non-traditional Means

Jamilano describes non-traditional means as “the unexpected ways God chooses to speak to us.” Examples include other people, music, a tv show or movie, art, nature, and even in the ordinary tasks of the day.

How to Discern

Now that we are familiar with the different ways in which we can hear God's voice speak to us, the process of discerning becomes possible.

“Discernment is a process of uncovering God's will about a significant decision in our life,” she defines in the book. These are the five tips she offers for discernment.



A. Spend time in sacred silence

Allowing yourself to spend time in the presence of the Lord and simply listen “enables us to confront the inner stirrings of our hearts.”

B. Seek wisdom

According to the author, some of the best sources include scripture, tradition, nature, people, and non-traditional means.

C. Listen to your heart

Reflect on your several choices, pray, and allow your heart to lead you.

D. Test the call

Be encouraged to “take a leap of faith and live out the call” after spending time in prayer, seeking wisdom and listening to your heart.

E. Choose love

Equipped with the tools to talk and listen to God, Jamilano said that she hopes her book “will help youth, young adults, and all those desiring a more intimate relationship with God to experience a profound encounter with Him and set this world aflame!”

“The message I hope readers will get from “The Alluring Voice of God” is not only that God hears our prayers, but also responds to each and every one of them out of undying love for us,” she said. “God is with us, and He desires to be part of every area of our life. He hears us, He thirsts for us, and He loves us!”

----- www.catholicnewsagency.com ♦

10 truths about purgatory



Does purgatory still exist? Even though we don't hear about it as much as in earlier times, Catholics do believe in purgatory. It is a matter of faith, supported by the Bible and tradition, clarified at the Council of Florence in 1439 and the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and explained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Here is what we know about purgatory.

1. Purgatory exists

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states there are three states of the church, those who are living on earth, those who are in purgatory and those who are in heaven with God.

2. It is not a second chance

The soul is already saved. Purgatory is a place to pay off debts for sins that were forgiven but for which sufficient penance had not been done on earth.

3. It is not an actual place

Blessed John Paul II said in an Aug. 4, 1999 general audience that purgatory was a state of being: "The term does not indicate a place, but a condition of existence." Pope Benedict XVI said in a Jan. 12, 2011 general audience, "This is purgatory, an interior fire."

4. Purgatory is not punishment but God's mercy

"Few people can say they are prepared to stand before God," says Susan Tassone, author of "Prayers, Promises, and Devotions for the Holy Souls in Purgatory" (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012).

"If we didn't have purgatory there would be very few people in heaven, because it would be heaven or hell. It is his mercy that allows us to prepare to be with him in heaven."

5. Our prayers for the souls in purgatory help them achieve heaven

"The doctrine of purgatory recalls how radically we take love of neighbor," says Sulpician Father Gladstone Stevens, vice rector and dean at St. Patrick's Seminary & University, Menlo Park. "The obligation to pray for each other does not cease when biological life ends. God wants us to always pray for each other, work for each other's redemption."

6. Souls in purgatory can intercede for those on earth but cannot pray for themselves

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (958) states: "... the church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; ... Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective."

7. God does not send souls to purgatory – each soul sends itself to purgatory

Once a soul sees itself with the light of God, it realizes it cannot stay in his presence until all



imperfections are wiped away. “The soul chooses,” Tassone says.

8. There is no fire in purgatory

But each soul is aflame with the pain of being separated from God and with the desire to be purified so it can be in the beatific vision. Each soul also feels joy knowing it will one day be with God, Father Stevens and Tassone say.

9. There is a special day and month to pray for the souls in purgatory

Nov. 2 or All Souls' Day is the day set aside and November is the month in the liturgical calendar to pray especially for all the souls who are in purgatory. Nov. 2 is called “The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed,” but the church asks us to pray always for each other, including for the souls in purgatory.

10. Prayers for souls in purgatory always count

Pope Benedict says in his encyclical “Spe Salve” (“On Christian Hope”), regarding the souls of the dead, “... in the communion of souls simple terrestrial time is superseded. It is never too late to touch the heart of another, nor is it ever in vain.”

There is no place or region in the afterlife for the saved except heaven. Well, this may be true. The Church teaches that purgatory is the final purification, but not that it occurs in any special region in the afterlife. Just as we do not know how time works in the afterlife—meaning that purgatory may take no time—we also do not know how space works in the afterlife, especially for un-embodied souls—meaning purgatory may not take place in any special location.

The final purification may take place in the immediate presence of God (to the extent that

God's presence may be described in spatial terms). In fact, in his book on eschatology, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger describes purgatory as a fiery, transforming encounter with Christ and his love:

“Purgatory is not, as Tertullian thought, some kind of supra-worldly concentration camp where one is forced to undergo punishments in a more or less arbitrary fashion. Rather it is the inwardly necessary process of transformation in which a person becomes capable of Christ, capable of God [i.e., capable of full unity with Christ and God] and thus capable of unity with the whole communion of saints.

Simply to look at people with any degree of realism at all is to grasp the necessity of such a process. It does not replace grace by works, but allows the former to achieve its full victory precisely as grace. What actually saves is the full assent of faith. But in most of us, that basic option is buried under a great deal of wood, hay and straw. Only with difficulty can it peer out from behind the latticework of an egoism we are powerless to pull

down with our own hands. Man is the recipient of the divine mercy, yet this does not exonerate him from the need to be transformed. Encounter with the Lord is this transformation. It is the fire that burns away our dross and re-forms us to be vessels of eternal joy.”



Thus according to Ratzinger's way of explaining the doctrine, as we are drawn out of this life and into direct union with Jesus, his fiery love and holiness burns away all the dross and impurities in our souls and makes us fit for life in the glorious, overwhelming light of God's presence and holiness.

Source: www.cal-catholic.com ♦

An overview of the Second Vatican Council

By Lisa Zengarini



Pope John XXIII opened Vatican II by delivering his famous 'Gaudet Mater Ecclesiae' speech, in which he indicated the main purpose of the Council.

The Second Vatican Council marked a milestone in Church history, setting off a process of deep transformation within the Church itself, and in its relations with the modern world, other Christian Churches and non-Christian religions. The process is still ongoing.

The 21st Ecumenical Council in Church history

Vatican II was the 21st ecumenical council to be convened in the Church's bimillennial history, and gathered nearly a century after Pope Pius IX convoked Vatican I (1869-70) which defined the dogmas of papal infallibility and the primacy of papal jurisdiction.

Pope St. John XXIII announced the convocation on 25 January 1959 only three months after his election to the Petrine ministry in October 1958, as he addressed the cardinals gathered in the in Benedictine Monastery of St. Paul in Rome.

Offering the modern world the "medicine of mercy"

In his unexpected announcement, Pope John explained that his decision was born from the ascertainment of the

spiritual impoverishment of modern society resulting from the deep social and political transformations it had been undergoing over the previous decades, which demanded a new response from the Church. He also mentioned the centuries-old divisions in the Christian family.

In his first Encyclical '*Ad Petri Cathedram*', on 29 June 1959, and at a preparatory meeting on the next day, the late Pope further clarified that the Council was meant primarily to revitalize the Christian faith in an increasingly secularized world, to give new vigour to the Catholic Church's mission, and to adapt Church practices to new circumstances.

Pope John wanted a pastoral Council and one of renovation, so that the Catholic teachings could be better understood and accepted in 20th-century society. As he said at the opening speech of the Council, while preserving the integrity of its doctrine, the Church wanted to offer the modern world the "medicine of mercy", and not severe condemnations.

Four sessions and 169 General Congregations

The Vatican II solemnly opened on 11 October 1962 in St. Peter's Basilica, after over three years of preparations. The Council met in four sessions between 1962 and 1965 each lasting between 8 and 12 weeks, in the autumn of each of



the four years, for a total of 169 General Congregations. It was shortly interrupted after Pope John's death on 3 June 1963, and resumed after Pope Pope VI's election, on 11 June that year. It closed on 8 December 1965.

Non-Catholic observers invited to attend

Between 2,000 and 2,500 Catholic cardinals, patriarchs and bishops from all over the world, assisted by 460 theological experts (periti), attended each session. For the first time Protestants, Orthodox and other non-Catholic observers were invited to assist. 42 lay and religious listeners, men and women, also attended.

16 documents

Overall, the Council issued 16 documents, including four Constitutions (on the Church's structure and nature, on divine Revelation, on the Church in the modern world, and on the liturgy,); nine Decrees (on the Church and the media, ecumenism, Eastern Catholic Churches, bishops, priestly formation, religious life, the laity, priestly ministry and missionary activity. Three Declarations (on non-Christian religions, Christian education and religious freedom were also issued.



The four Constitutions:

'Lumen Gentium'

One of the most important documents produced by Vatican II is the Dogmatic Constitution 'Lumen Gentium' on the Church's structure and nature. It presents the Church as a Mystery and a Communion of baptized believers (the "People of God") who are called to holiness and who each have specific roles and responsibilities. It reaffirms the

missionary character of the Church and confirms the collegiality of the Episcopate "with and under the successor of St. Peter". It establishes, among other things, the faculty for the local Episcopates to restore the permanent diaconate for married men. The role of the laity and their participation in the life and mission of the Church is also emphasized, while the vocation to religious life is considered in relation to the spiritual life of the whole Church.

'Dei Verbum'

The Dogmatic Constitution 'Dei Verbum' on Divine Revelation is another fundamental document of the Council. Its purpose is to spell out the Church's understanding of the nature of Revelation, that is, the process whereby God

communicates with human beings. It is especially relevant for ecumenism, as it touches on questions about Scripture, tradition and the teaching authority of the Church.

'Sacrosanctum Concilium'

The Constitution 'Sacrosanctum Concilium' on the Sacred Liturgy is remembered by many for having allowed vernacular languages in the liturgy, or for having emphasized the importance of community prayer recognizing the value and richness of the various rites in the Church according to the different traditions.



‘Gaudium et Spes’

The Pastoral Constitution 'Gaudium et Spes' on the Church in the Modern World, called on the Church to engage in dialogue with contemporary society and its problems, bringing church teaching and moral values to bear on a world too often torn by hatred, war and injustice. The document acknowledged that science and culture have things to teach the Church, but also said the Church has a mission to sanctify the world around it.

Landmark changes in the Church, in ecumenical and inter-religious relations

In the years after Vatican II the Church witnessed several landmark changes:

- The new Roman Missal was issued in 1970, with a new cycle of readings designed to offer a richer selection of Scripture. The liturgical calendar was simplified. The rites for sacraments were revised, emphasizing the communal aspects of their celebration. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was revived and reformed. As the changes took places, active liturgical participation increased dramatically in many local church communities.
- Lay ministries multiplied. Lay readers and lay ministers of Communion appeared during Mass. Laity were represented on parish



councils and diocesan boards, and lay men and women, many with theology degrees, replaced clerics in a number of administrative church positions.

- Throughout the church, there was a renewed attention to Scriptures, in liturgy and in individual spirituality.
- Eastern Catholic churches were encouraged to return to their own traditions, ending a period of Latinization and opening a new appreciation of variety within the universal church.
- Ecumenism flourished, in formal dialogue between Catholic officials and other Christian churches, and in prayer and fellowship encounters at the local level.
- After the council acknowledged the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, dialogue also began with other religions.
- Religious life changed dramatically, as religious orders adopted Vatican norms and rewrote their own constitutions, taking a new look at issues of authority, community and identity.
- The council restored the permanent diaconate as a ministry and allowed married men to be ordained deacons. Today, there are more than 29,000 permanent deacons around the world.
- The council's teaching that the pope and bishops together form a single collegial body led to a new appreciation for bishops and bishops' conferences. The Synod of Bishops

was formed to meet regularly and advise the pope.

- Theology was revitalized, especially moral theology, which focused increasingly on biblical sources and the individual conscience, and less on church law or authority.
- The council underlined the church's solidarity with humanity instead of its separation from the secular world, and this led to a mushrooming of social and charitable activities. Church leaders spoke frequently about the church's identification with the poor and suffering, and

the pope became a strong human rights advocate.

At the same time, the church experienced some worrisome developments, including a dramatic drop in vocations and an increase in the number of priests and religious seeking laicization. Mass attendance fell in many places, many Catholics abandoned the sacrament of penance, and dissent on certain teachings, such as birth control, was widespread.

Main sources: *CNS and L'Osservatore Romano*
Source: www.vaticannews.va ♦

Continued from Page 3: Going another way at Christmas

in Egypt and when they raised their voices to God, He liberated them and walked them across the Red Sea (cf. Exod 14-15). For forty years he made them wander in the wilderness. Instead of the regular way God walked them another way because He wanted to teach them His ways. He guided them through judges, priests, prophets, and kings. The prophets warned the people when they went the wrong way. Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, came to be born as a child in swaddling clothes (cf. Jn 14:6). When the messianic expectation was held high in the royal palaces and the temple premises, God chose another way to send His only begotten son. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, working of the miracles, choice of the apostles led people

another way – way of mercy, compassion, and love. The way leads us to the new heaven and the new earth (cf. Rev 21).

3. We going another way

At Christmas we are invited to go another way.

The markets invite to celebrate Christmas; they want us to buy, to keep, and to possess. Let us remind ourselves of another way, i.e., to give away, and to distribute. There is an alternative way to the way of anger, fear, low self-esteem, and guilt: another way of acceptance, faith, self-esteem, and forgiveness. When we are tempted to walk along the shortcuts, let us strive for another way that involves sacrifice and self-discipline.

How do we identify the other way? By listening to the inner voice, that speaks to us, by understanding the signs, and by surrendering to God.

Saint Devasahayam, the martyr of our soil, chose the other way, and that led him to martyrdom. Blessed Pauline Jaricot, who founded the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, chose the other way, and that led her to the love for mission.

Going another way is possible always, and in all ways! ♦



Let the laity assume their baptism: Pope

Pope Francis has urged the Catholic bishops of Asia to authentically embrace their mission as a Church for the poor and young people, always in dialogue.

The Holy Father offered this encouragement in a video message sent to members of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), gathered in Bangkok, Thailand, on 12-30 October.

Now a 'true community'

In his message, the Pope recalled the origins of the Church in Asia, and his predecessor Pope St Paul VI's visit to Asia in 1970, where - Pope Francis suggested - he found a continent of mainly young people, home to many cultures and religions.

The bishops at the time, Pope Francis said, "noted that the masses were awakening from fatalism to a life worthy of man; even the young people were awakening; they were idealistic, aware, worried, impatient and restless; culturally diverse societies were awakening to become a true community of peoples."

"This meant that the Church in Asia was called to be more authentically the Church of the poor, the Church of the young, and a Church in dialogue with Asian brothers and sisters of other confessions."



Fraternity, exchanging ideas

At the same time, Pope Francis looked to the future, urging Asia's Bishops to look to the future, and try to discern what the Holy Spirit is asking them today.

"You will come together now," he said in his video message, "and I wish in some way to accompany you in the work of fraternity and exchange of ideas that you will carry out." What Holy Spirit is saying to Church in Asia

"It is important that the Regional Conferences meet with a certain assiduity, in doing so the Church is forming; it is strengthening on the way, and the fundamental question is: what is the Spirit saying to the Churches in Asia?"

And this, the Pope continued, "is what you have to answer."

Importance of laity

The Pope also dedicated some special words to laypeople.

"May the laity assume their baptism, their function as lay people, and respect the singularity of each one, because the universal Church is not the uniform Church; no, it is universal, respecting the particularity of each Church."

Source: www.vaticannews.va ♦

New step in Christian-Muslim dialogue

Pope Francis has said that his trip to the Gulf kingdom of Bahrain was a new step on the journey to create “fraternal alliances” between Christians and Muslims.

The pope spoke about his Nov. 3–6 visit to Bahrain, a small, overwhelmingly Muslim country in the Persian Gulf, during his weekly public audience in St Peter's Square Nov 9. “The journey to Bahrain should not be seen as an isolated episode,” he said. “It was part of a process initiated by St. John Paul II when he went to Morocco.”

This is why, he continued, “the first visit of a pope in Bahrain represents a new step on the journey between Christian and Muslim believers — not to confuse things or water down the faith, but to create fraternal alliances in the name of our Father Abraham, who was a pilgrim on earth under the merciful gaze of the one God of Heaven, the God of peace.”

“And why do I say that dialogue does not water down [the faith]?” Francis said. “Because to dialogue you have to have your own identity, you have to start from your identity. If you do not have identity, you cannot dialogue, because you do not understand what you are either.” The motto of Pope Francis' visit to Bahrain was “Peace on earth to people of goodwill.” The trip included encounters with government officials, Muslim leaders, and the small Catholic community, including a Mass with around 30,000 people in Bahrain's national soccer stadium.

The small Christian minority in Bahrain is mostly made up of immigrants, especially from India and the Philippines.

More than 70% of the total population — 1.5 million — is Muslim, while there are only about 161,000 Catholics living in the country, according

to 2020 Vatican statistics. Pope Francis said that it was “marvellous” to see the many Christian immigrants in Bahrain. “The brothers and sisters in the faith, whom I met in Bahrain, truly live 'on a journey,’” he said. “For the most part, they are immigrant laborers who, far from home, discover their roots in the People of God and their family within the larger family of the Church. And they move ahead joyfully, in

the certainty that the hope of God does not disappoint.”

The pope pointed out that the Kingdom of Bahrain is an archipelago of 33 islands, which “helps us understand that it is not necessary to live by isolating ourselves, but by coming closer” — something which aids peace.

He said “dialogue is the 'oxygen of peace,’” not only in a nation but also in a family: Dialogue can help bring peace to a husband and wife who are fighting, for example. Throughout his visit to Bahrain, Francis said, he heard several times the desire to increase encounters and strengthen the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the country. He recalled a custom in that part of the world to place one's hand on the heart when greeting another person. “I did this too,” he said, “to make room inside me for the person I was meeting.”

“For without this welcome, dialogue remains empty, illusory, it remains on the level of an idea rather than reality,” he said.



Francis encouraged Catholics to have “open hearts,” not closed, hard hearts, and said he would like to transmit the “genuine, simple, and beautiful joy” of the Christian priests, religious, and lay people he met in Bahrain.

Muslim-Catholic collaboration for peace

On Friday, Nov 4, Pope Francis met with Muslim leaders in the Gulf-kingdom of Bahrain with a message that Catholics and Muslims alike are called to work to promote peace in the world.

Speaking at the Grand Mosque on the grounds of Bahrain's Sakhir Palace, the pope told the Muslim Council of Elders that he wanted to “journey together in the spirit of Francis of Assisi.”

“God is the source of peace. May he enable us to be 'channels of his peace' everywhere,” Pope Francis said.

The pope added: “The God of peace never brings about war, never incites hatred, never supports violence. We, who believe in him, are called to promote peace with tools of peace, such as encounter, patient negotiations and dialogue, which is the oxygen of peaceful coexistence.”

The Muslim Council of Elders is an international group founded in the United Arab Emirates in 2014 to work together to promote peace, principles of tolerance, address sources of conflict within Muslim communities, and “bring the Islamic nation together,” according to its website.

The council's board members include Nigerian Sheik Ibrahim Ibn Saleh al-Hussaini; Jordanian Prince Ghazi bin Mohammed bin Talal; Grand Mufti of Azerbaijan Sheik Allahshükür Hummat Pashazade; and Abdallah bin Bayyah, an



influential Islamic scholar who teaches in Saudi Arabia.

Pope Francis told the council: “We who are descended from Abraham, the father of peoples in faith, cannot be concerned merely with those who are 'our own' but, as we grow more and more united, we must speak to the entire human community, to all who dwell on this earth.”

Before the meeting at the mosque, Pope Francis spoke privately with Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, a leading Sunni cleric and the grand imam of Al-Azhar in Cairo.

Pope Francis and al-Tayeb jointly signed a document on human fraternity in Abu Dhabi in 2019 during the pope's first trip to the Arabian Peninsula. The two have met several times since, including on Pope Francis' most recent trip to Kazakhstan.

During the meeting, Pope Francis gave the grand imam a sculpture of an olive tree, signifying peace. He commended al-Tayeb for his “courage” in speaking about dialogue among Muslims at Bahrain's interfaith summit.

Al-Tayeb and Francis both issued calls for peace in Ukraine in their speeches on Friday morning at Bahrain's conference on East-West dialogue in the presence of other religious leaders, including the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I.

Pope Francis made a “heartfelt appeal for an end to the war in Ukraine and the start of serious negotiations for peace.” The pope called on “the great religions” to be “a conscience of peace for our world.”

----- Catholic News Agency ♦



Synodality and evangelising mission

By Jino Jonis

Origin of the Synod in the Catholic Church and why the Synod?

On October 17, 2020, in his 'Address' at the ceremony commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the institution of the 'Synod of Bishops', Pope Francis said: "From the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome, I sought to enhance the Synod, which is one of the most *precious legacies* of the Second Vatican Council." As the Second Vatican Council was drawing to a close, on Sept 15, 1965, seeking to promote the *precious legacy* of the Council, St Pope Paul VI issued a *Motu Proprio Apostolica Sollicitudo*, which stated:

"The Ecumenical Council gave us the idea of permanently establishing a special Council of bishops, with the aim of providing for a continuance after the Council of the *great abundance of benefits* that We have been so happy to see flow to the Christian people during the time of the Council as a result of Our close collaboration with the bishops"

This "great abundance of benefits" has nourished Holy Mother, the Church, for more than five decades through the various Synods of Bishops after the Council. Now, to ensure that the gains and gifts of Synods are truly shared by all God's people, in his Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio* of September 15, 2018, Pope Francis wrote:

"The Synod of Bishops must increasingly become a privileged instrument for *listening to the People of God*: For the Synod Fathers we ask the Holy Spirit first of all for the *gift of listening: to listen to God*, that with him we may hear the cry of the people; *to listen to the people* until breathing in the desire to which God calls us."

His convoking of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023 on the theme "*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*" aims at fostering this "mutual listening".

Jesus and his community and the *Ekklesia* in the New Testament

Jesus calls his community a "little flock" (Lk 12:32) and sees it as the "faithful remnant" spoken by the prophets as those who in the "last days" are to receive the salvation promised to Israel (Is 10:20ff; Jer 31:7). Jesus' community, unlike other Jewish community, is an open community, not a closed one of the "pious" and the "respectable". It reaches out to the needy and the poor (Lk 6:20ff) and to the socially outcast (Mk 2:15) and to the religiously ignorant, the "little" ones (Mt 11:25).

So it is a community of truth, love and service. It looks on office as an occasion for service, not as a symbol of status or an instrument of power, for it always has before its eyes the overwhelming example of its Master, Jesus, who came "not to be served but to serve" (Mk 10:45). In the early centuries, the Church community continued with the same identity and uniqueness. The apostles also tried their best to keep the original uniqueness of the Jesus community. Paul affirms the fundamental equality of all believers: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Gal 3:27) Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." (1Cor 12:4-7)



How did the early Church choose its identity and unique character?

The pastoral letters attest to the fact that already in the New Testament period, the Jesus' community began to lose its original identity – the ideal of equality in gender, race, and class (Gal 3: 28).

(Aloysius Pieris) “For the householder in the church of the pastorals is rewarded for being male, prosperous, respectable and a competent household manager.” That accounts for what we hold: “The equality and mutuality of his followers which Jesus taught and encouraged and which was amply evidenced in the gospel narratives was by this time a dim memory and a discarded reality.” (Aloysius Pieris) Besides, as our common knowledge tells us, when Christianity came to the Roman Empire, it eventually became an imperialized Christianity and has, as Pieris and Bosch contend, continued to be so to our times.



Reformation, the council of Trent, colonialism and the missionary expansion, the enlightenment, and secularization affected the self-understanding of the Church. The Church, divided on confessional lines, and dominated by exaltation of papal authority turned out to be the Church of the modern age. It was taken for a perfect society. The idea of local Church was totally lost. But such an image of the Church with hierarchical structures was not fully accepted by the Second Vatican Council.



A new vision of Mission developing in the writings of Pope Francis

Authority was interpreted in terms of power. Authority is a service of coordination, consensus and community building. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis emphasizes that "the people of God are sanctified by virtue of this anointing, which they do without fail in their confession of faith" (119). All those who have received it, whatever their position in the Church, or their level of faith formation, are subject to evangelization, and it is not enough to imagine an evangelization plan carried out by

professionals, but the rest believers will be passive recipients.” Leader is an animator or coordinator. He is not there to exercise power or authority over others. He is only there to coordinate everyone in the church. The Pope is not alone superior to the Church but is called to the Church of Rome as one of the baptized within the Church, as Bishop of Bishops within the Bishops' Order, and at the same time as Peter's successor

and lovingly governs the Church of Rome. He presides over all churches.

St John Chrysostom said, "Church and Synod are synonymous." For the Church is nothing less than the 'travelling together' of the flock of God to meet Christ the Lord along the course of history. On the contrary, in the Church every person needs to "humble" himself in order to serve his brothers and sisters on the way. In the service of God's people, each bishop, as part of the flock

entrusted to him, becomes a Vicar Christi, a representative of Jesus, who prostrated himself at the Last Supper to wash the apostles' feet. By this expression we get to the core of the mysteries of the Church and receive the revelation we need to understand our hierarchical ministry.

What happened when he first appeared on the balcony --- how he came out and introduced himself to the people gathered there, dressed without the elaborate papal paraphernalia, the humble smile and the simple *buona sera*, his request that the people bless him and pray for him (unprecedented for a bishop to bow to the people of God and ask them for their blessings and prayers) – gestures reaffirming the bishop's fundamental relationship with the community in which he was baptized, bishop of Rome rather than designated pope, etc. --- all sent a larger and clearer message home. Thus, all of the first papal apparitions were unique and marked an entirely new approach to the papacy.

Pope Francis's "synthesis" with a distinctive meaning

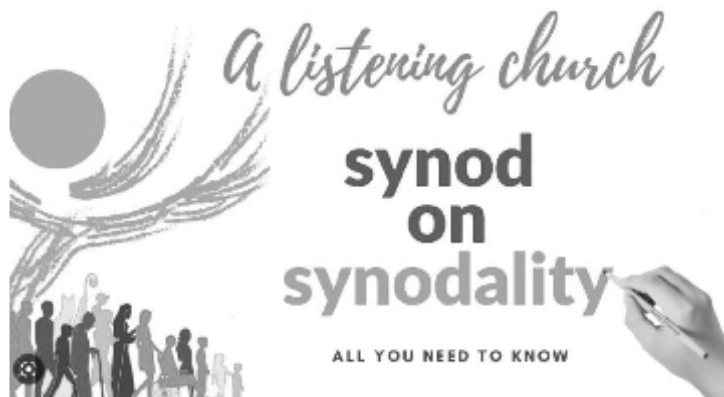
In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis offers us his “synthesis”. This is an important and distinctive feature of the document. Pope Francis makes a heart-to-heart communication, offering us his “synthesis”, as he calls it (EG 143). Pope's use



of the term synthesis has a distinctive meaning. By synthesis, what he means is: offering to others that – the love of Christ – which one has concretely encountered. In other words, he means to say that Christians should not be reading off mere doctrines from a well-drafted sermon notes. “Synthesis is something that includes but goes beyond a set of intellectual ideas. It is something like an integrated and embodied personal presentation of the Christian faith.”

This is what Christians are called to offer to the world in their evangelization ministry. It is your treasure, your own expression of her encounter with the love of God. Sharing your synthesis, your treasures, with the world in a deeper and more comprehensible way is only possible if it takes a concrete form, and they are communicated in newer forms.. To be precise, the pope emphasizes

the need for a contextualized church, a genuine local church. The Synthesis of St. Francis highlights the churches of the poor, the churches on the streets, the pilgrims who hear and speak, the people of God struggling to break down the barriers that unnecessarily exclude others. As this becomes a natural focus, we need innovative ways to share our integration. There is no point in evangelizing in a creative way unless it emphasizes the specific (local) nature of the Church. ♦



SAINT OF THE MONTH - I

St Agnes of Assisi

1197 - 1253

Feast Day - November 16

Agnes is the younger sister of St Clare. She was born at Assisi in 1197. She was the younger daughter of Count Favorino Scifi. Her saintly mother, Blessed Hortulana, belonged to the noble family of the Fiumi, and her cousin Rufino was one of the celebrated "Three Companions" of St Francis Assisi. Agnes's childhood was passed between her father's palace in the city and his castle of Sasso Rosso on Mount Subasio. On 18 March 1212, her eldest sister Clare, moved by the preaching and example of St Francis, had left her father's home to follow the way of life taught by the Saint. Sixteen days later Agnes too left home to join her elder sister, being resolved to share her sister's life of poverty and penance.

At this step the fury of Count Favorino knew no bounds. He sent his brother Monaldo, with several relatives and some armed followers, to bring her either by persuasion or by force. Monaldo, beside himself with rage, drew his sword to strike the young girl, but his arm dropped, withered and useless, by his side; others dragged Agnes out of the monastery by the hair, striking her, and even kicking her repeatedly. Presently St Clare came to the rescue, and all of a sudden Agnes's body became so heavy that the soldiers having tried in vain to carry her off dropped her, half dead, in a field near the monastery. Overcome by a spiritual power against which physical force

availed not, Agnes's relatives were obliged to withdraw and to allow her to remain with St Clare. St Francis, who was overjoyed at Agnes's heroic resistance to the entreaties and threats of her pursuers, presently cut off her hair and gave her the habit of poverty.



Soon after he established the two sisters at St Damian's, in a small rude dwelling adjoining the humble sanctuary which he had helped to rebuild with his own hands. There several other noble ladies of Assisi joined Clare and Agnes, and thus began the Order of the Poor Ladies of St Damian's, or Poor Clares, as these Franciscan nuns afterwards came to be called. From the outset of her religious life, Agnes was distinguished for such an eminent degree of virtue that her companions declared she seemed to have discovered a new road to perfection known only to herself.

St Francis soon recognized the rich treasure of virtue hidden in this privileged soul. When a new convent of Poor Clares was to be founded at Florence in 1221, St Francis sent Agnes, despite her youth, to act as superior there. Later he sent her also to Mantua and to several other cities in northern Italy to establish additional houses of the order.

Wherever she went, she edified everybody by her holy life. Many devout young women

SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

St John Kanty

1390 - 1473

Feast Day : December 23

John Kanty, or John Cantius, is an obscure saint, but St Pope John Paul II had deep and lifelong devotion to this professor saint. Only 13 miles from the Holy Father's own birthplace, John was born in the small southern Polish town of Kenty on June 24, 1390. At the age of 23, he registered for studies at the Jagiellonian University, located in the not too distant city of Krakow—then, the capital of the Polish Kingdom. Enrolled in the Department of Liberal Arts, John became a doctor of philosophy in 1418. During the following three years, he undertook further studies in preparation for the priesthood, while supporting himself by conducting philosophy classes at the university.

Immediately following ordination, he accepted a position as rector at the prestigious school of the Canons Regular of the Most Holy Sepulchre in Miechow. That such a school would offer him this position at his relatively young age was evidence of John's exceptional intellect and talents. It was there in conducting formation classes for the young novices that he became firmly grounded in the writings and spirituality of St Augustine.

In 1429, a position became vacant in the Philosophy Department at the Jagiellonian University. John quickly returned to Krakow for the job, taking up residence at the university where he remained until his death. He also began studies

in theology and after 13 long years of study intertwined with teaching and administrative duties as head of the Philosophy Department, he finally received his doctorate. Later, after the death of his mentor, the eminent theologian Benedykt Hesse, John assumed directorship of the university's Theology Department.



As most learned men of his day, John spent many of his free hours hand-copying manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures, theological tracts, and other scholarly works. Although only 26 volumes have survived to our time, their total of over 18,000 pages is a testament to his exceptional industriousness.

During the course of his life in Krakow, John became well known among the city's residents for his generosity and compassion toward the poor, always sacrificing his own needs in order to help those less fortunate. He felt a special affinity toward needy students at the university, helping to care for their spiritual, physical, and academic needs. Whether it was in the classroom or in the pulpit, everyone knew him as a staunch defender of the faith and enemy of heretics.

By the time the Master from Kenty died on December 24, 1473, the people of Krakow already considered him a very holy man. That this opinion was wholly justified can be evidenced by the numerous favours and miracles attributed to John's

intercession beginning immediately after his death. Before long, John from Kenty became known widely throughout Europe, drawing pilgrims from many countries to his tomb in the university's Collegiate Church of St Anne.

Despite this, the process for his beatification did not begin until 150 years later. Finally, in 1676, Pope Clement XIII declared him a saint. Throughout his many years in Krakow, our philosopher Pontiff (St Pope John Paul II) drew much inspiration at the grave of his patron saint of learning. It was no surprise, therefore, that during his 1997 pilgrimage to Poland, he once more prayed at the saint's tomb.



There, during a special gathering with professors from the Jagiellonian —both his and St John's alma mater— he alluded to the Master from Kenty when he stated: “Knowledge and wisdom seek a covenant with holiness.”

When Saint John Kanty's feast day was first inserted into the Roman Catholic Calendar of Saints in 1770, it was initially assigned to October 20, but in 1969 it was moved to December 23, the day before the anniversary of

his death, which occurred on Christmas Eve 1473.

**Source: www.saintjohnkanty.com;
www.franciscanmedia.org;
www.catholicreadings.org ♦**

Continued from Page 18: St Agnes of Assisi



renounced the world in order to consecrate themselves to God in monastic seclusion under her direction. She had the gift of infusing the Franciscan spirit into them, both by word and by example.

S a i n t
Agnes of Assisi was favoured with many extraordinary

graces by God. In the great fervour of her devotion she was often raised above the earth, and once our

Lord appeared to her in the form of an infant. From Holy Thursday until Holy Saturday she was once so rapt in the contemplation of the sufferings of Christ that she was under the impression she had spent an hour in this mystical state.

When Saint Clare of Assisi was about to die, she sent for Agnes to assist her in her final days. In her last moments Clare addressed her sister in these words, "My beloved sister, it is the will of God that I go, but be comforted, you will soon come and re-join me with our Lord."

Three months later Agnes followed her sister to eternity. It was on November 16, 1253. The body of Saint Agnes of Assisi rests in Assisi in a side chapel of the church of St Clare. Numerous miracles occurred at her tomb, and in 1753 Pope Benedict XIV canonized her.

**Source: www.catholic.org;
www.newadvent.com;
www.catholicreadings.org ♦**

A different kind of Christmas



Martha had tried to ignore the approach of Christmas. She would have kept it almost entirely out of her thoughts if Jed had not come eagerly into the cabin one day, stomping the snow from his cold feet as he said in an excited voice, "Martha, we're going to have a Christmas tree this year, anyway. I spotted a cedar on that rise out south of the wheat field, over near the Norton's place. It's a scrubby thing, but it will do since we can't get a pine. Maybe Christmas will be a little different here, but it will still be the kind of Christmas we used to have."

As she shook her head, Martha noticed that Daniel glanced quickly up from the corner where he was playing, patiently tying together some sticks with bits of string left over from the quilt she had tied a few days earlier. She drew Jed as far away from the boy as possible.

"I don't want a tree," she said. "We won't be celebrating Christmas. Even a tree couldn't make it the kind of Christmas we used to have."

"Martha, we've got to do something for the boy at least. Children set such store by Christmas."

"Don't you think I know? All those years fixing things for Maybelle and Stellie. I know all about the kids and Christmas." She stopped and drew a deep breath, glancing over to see that Daniel was occupied and not listening. "But I can't do those things for him. It would be like a knife in the heart, fixing a tree and baking cookies and making things for another woman's child when my own girls are back there on that prairie."

"Martha, Martha," Jed said softly. "It's been almost a year and a half. That's over, and Danny needs you. He needs a Christmas like he remembers."

She turned her back to his pleading face. "I can't," she said.

Jed touched her shoulder gently, "I know how hard it is for you, Martha. But think of the boy." He turned and went back out into the snowy weather.

Think of the boy. Why should she think of him, when her own children, her two blue-eyed, golden-curved daughters, had been left beside the trail back there on that endless, empty prairie? The boy came to her not because she wanted him, but



because she couldn't say “no” to the bishop back in Salt Lake City last April before they came to settle in this valley.

Bishop Clay had brought Daniel to her and Jed one day and said, “I want you to care for this lad. His mother died on the trek last summer and his pa passed away last week. He needs a good home.”

Jed had gripped the bishop's hand and with tears in his eyes, thanked him, but Martha had turned away from the sight of the thin, ragged, six-year old boy who stood before them, not fast enough, however, to miss the sudden brief smile he flashed at her. A smile that should have caught her heart and opened it wide. Her heart was closed, though, locked tightly around the memory of her two gentle little girls. She didn't want a noisy, rowdy boy hanging around, disturbing those memories, filling the cabin with a boy's loud games.

Yet she had taken him, because she felt she had no choice. Faced with the bishop's request—more of an order, really—and Jed's obvious joy, she couldn't refuse.

He came with them out to this new valley west of the Salt Lake settlement and had proved himself a great help to Jed, despite his young age. Sometimes Martha felt pity for him, but she didn't love him. With Jed it was different. He had



accepted Daniel immediately as his own son and enjoyed having a boy with him. They had a special relationship.

Daniel mentioned Christmas only once. One day it was too cold and snowy to play outside and he had been humming softly to himself as he played in his corner. Suddenly, he looked up at Martha and asked, “Can you sing, Aunt Martha?”

Martha paused and straightened up from the table where she was kneading bread. She used to sing for her girls all the time. “No, I can't, Daniel,” she said. “Not any more.”

“My mother used to sing a pretty song at Christmas,” he said. “I wish I could remember it.”

On the day before Christmas, Jed went through the deep snow to do some chores for Brother Norton, who was ill. Daniel was alone outside most of the day, although he made several rather furtive trips in and out of the cabin. On one trip, he took the sticks he had been tying together.

Toward evening, Martha went out to the stable to milk Rosie, since Jed had not yet returned. As she approached, she saw there was light inside. Opening the door softly, she peered within. Daniel had lit the barn lantern, and with its glow, he knelt in the straw by Rosie's stall. In front of him were the sticks he had tied together, which



Martha recognized now as a crude cradle. It held Stellie's rag doll, all wrapped up in the white shawl Martha kept in her trunk. Her first impulse was to rush in and snatch it, but she stopped because the scene was strangely beautiful in the soft light from the lantern. Rosie and the two sheep stood close by, watching Daniel. He seemed to be addressing them when he spoke.

"The shepherds came following the star," he was saying. "And they found the baby Jesus who had been born in a stable." He paused for a moment, then went on. "And his mother loved him."

Martha felt suddenly that she couldn't breathe. Another mother, another day, had loved her boy, and had told him the beautiful story of the Christ Child with such love that he hadn't forgotten it, young as he was, and she, Martha, had failed that mother.

In the silence she began to sing. "Silent night," she sang. "Holy night."

"That's the one," he whispered. "That's the song that my mother used to sing to me."

Martha ran forward and gathered the boy into her arms. He responded immediately, clasping his arms tightly around her.



"Danny," she said, sitting on the edge of Rosie's manger, "let's go in and get the cabin ready for Christmas. Maybe it isn't too late for Jed—for Pa to get that tree. It might be a little different kind of Christmas, but it will still be a little like the Christmases we used to know."

"Do you mind it being different?" asked Daniel. "I mean with a boy instead of your girls?"

Martha wondered how long it would take her to make up to him for the hurt she had inflicted these many months. "No," she said. "After all, the Baby Jesus was a boy."

"That's right," he said wonderingly.

She set him down on the floor and put her arm around his shoulders.

"Merry Christmas," she said. "Merry Christmas, Danny."

He looked up at her with a smile that did not fade quickly away this time, a sweet smile full of love he had been waiting to give her.

"Merry Christmas," he said, and then added softly, "Mother."

Source:

<https://christmasstories.org/a-different-kind-of-christmas/> ♦



Vatican's Diwali message

The Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue released a message for the feast of Deepavali which this year fell on October 24. The Vatican's message, signed by Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot and Msgr Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage, respectively Prefect and Secretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, sends “joyous greetings and best wishes” to all Hindus.

“May this festival of lights give you the grace and happiness to enkindle,” it reads, “besides yours, the lives of everyone in your families, communities and in the larger society.”

The message goes on to note the troubling increase in “instances of tensions, conflicts and violence in different parts of the world on the basis of religious, cultural, ethnic, racial and linguistic identities and supremacies.”

Given these problems, the Vatican's message stresses, the way forward is “conviviality”, defined as “the ability to live in the midst of others with their individualities, diversities and differences in a spirit of respect, love and trust.”

Conviviality can be built “through personal encounters and dialogue, in mutual listening and learning”, and leads to “co-responsibility”, or the recognition of “the transcendental dignity of every human person and his or her legitimate rights.”

The document ends with an appeal to readers of all religions: “May we, Christians and Hindus, joining hands with those of all other religious traditions and people of good will, promote ... the spirit of conviviality and co-responsibility to transform this world into a secure home for everyone to live in with peace and joy!” ♦

Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

November 2022: For children who suffer

We pray for children who are suffering, especially those who are homeless, orphans, and victims of war; may they be guaranteed access to education and the opportunity to experience family affection.

December 2022: For volunteer not-for-profit organisations

We pray that volunteer non-profit organisations committed to human development find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation.

Holy Childhood Association

An example of the spearhead work in the diocese of Mysore, in the southern state of Karnataka.



During his tenure as Diocesan Director for Evangelization, Rev Fr Stanislaus Manickam initiated a stormy journey throughout the diocese of Mysore in order to create the Holy Childhood Association in all the parishes. After consulting all the parish priests on a mutually suitable date for his visit, he sent a formal communication to all the parishes and visited them as per schedule.



During his visit he celebrated the Holy Eucharist with the parishioners, educated them regarding the Holy Childhood, gathered the children, instructed and trained them about their involvement, created an association in the parish or village he visited, and also awarded the certificate of membership in Holy Childhood.

All the 90 parishes in the diocese of Mysore have been visited since 13th February 2022 and about 40 new Holy Childhood Associations have been created with more than 3,000 children as young missionaries.

Pontifical Mission Organizations - India extends its hearty congratulations to
Rev Fr Stanislaus Manickam for his tireless effort in creating many
Holy Childhood Associations in the parishes of the Diocese of Mysore.

PONTIFICAL SOCIETY OF THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH (POPF)

was founded in 1822, at Lyon, France

by **Blessed Pauline Marie Jaricot**

Involves every baptized person in cooperating in the work of
Evangelization and in Supporting young Churches



PONTIFICAL SOCIETY OF THE MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD (MCA)

was founded in 1843, Nancy, France

by **Bishop Charles Auguste of Forbin Janson**

Children Pray for Children; Children Evangelize Children;
and Children Help Children

PONTIFICAL SOCIETY OF SAINT PETER THE APOSTLE (POSPA)

was founded in 1889, at Caen, France

by **Jeanne Bigard**

Supports Vocations to the Priesthood and
Consecrated Life in Mission territories



PONTIFICAL MISSIONARY UNION (PMU)

was founded in 1916, at Rome

by **Blessed Fr. Paolo Manna PIME**

Forms Christians in Missionary
Commitment of their Faith



PONTIFICAL MISSION ORGANIZATIONS (INDIA)

No. 10, 3rd Cross, Ulsoor Road, Bangalore - 560 042, Karnataka, INDIA



080 2558 5946 / 4146 8634



pmorgbindia@gmail.com



www.pmaindia.org



PMI-INDIA