



# PROCLAIM

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A Magazine for Missionary Animation



**... then**



**... now**

**'there was no place  
for him in the inn ...'**

As we reflect on the inn's lack of room for Him, let's ensure there is always room for kindness, love, and hope in our lives during this Christmas and the New Year ahead.



## The Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven,  
may the faith you have gifted us in  
your son Jesus Christ, our brother,  
and the flame of charity  
kindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,  
reawaken in us, the blessed hope  
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us  
into diligent cultivators of the evangelical seeds  
that make humanity and the cosmos rise  
unto the confident expectation  
of the new heavens and the new earth,  
when with the powers of Evil overcome,  
your glory shall be manifested eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee  
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,  
the yearning for heavenly treasures  
and pour over all the earth  
the joy and peace  
of our Redeemer.

To you God blessed in eternity,  
be praise and glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

*Franciscus*

*To be recited from 26 November 2023, Solemnity of Christ the King.*





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## PROCLAIM

### Editor & Publisher

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu  
National Director  
Pontifical Mission Organizations

### Editorial Board

Dr Thomas J DSouza  
Mahesh Lobo

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### PONTIFICAL MISSION ORGANIZATIONS

PB 4216, No. 10, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cross,  
Ulsoor Road, Bangalore - 560042,  
Karnataka, INDIA.  
Tel: +91 80 2558 5946 / 4146 8634  
Email: pmorgbindia@gmail.com  
Website: www.pmaindia.org

## **Celebrating the Seasons of Souls, Saints, and the Saviour: A Time for Reflection and Renewal**

As the days grow shorter and the air turns cooler, we find ourselves at the crossroads of three significant events in the Christian calendar: All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, and the upcoming Christmas season. These occasions invite us to pause, reflect, and renew our spiritual connections.



**All Saints' Day:** This day, celebrated on November 1, calls us to remember and honour the saints – those exceptional individuals who've left an indelible mark on the world through their devotion and selflessness. As we contemplate their lives, let us not only pay tribute to their extraordinary faith but also draw inspiration to live more compassionate and virtuous lives ourselves. In a world often marred by division and strife, the lives of the saints serve as beacons of hope, reminding us that goodness and grace can shine even in the darkest of times.

**All Souls' Day:** On November 2, we turn our hearts to All Souls' Day, a day dedicated to remembering and praying for our departed loved ones. It's a time to acknowledge the impermanence of life and to honour the memories of those who have gone before us.

**The Approach of Christmas:** With these days of remembrance behind us, our attention turns toward the upcoming Christmas season, a time of celebration and joy. The birth of Jesus, the Saviour, is at the core of the Christmas story. This season reminds us that amidst the hustle and bustle, we should cherish the profound message of love, hope, and redemption. It is a time for giving, for nurturing connections, and for sharing the light of kindness with one another. In the birth of the Christ Child, we find the ultimate symbol of new beginnings and a fresh start for humanity.

As we journey from All Saints' Day through All Souls' Day and into the Christmas season, let us carry the lessons of remembrance, gratitude, and love with us. Let's look beyond the surface, beyond the commercialization, and focus on the deeper significance of these moments. Whether through acts of charity, moments of prayer, or spending quality time with family and friends, we can infuse the holiday season with the true spirit of compassion and goodwill.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem there was no place for him in the inn. And amidst the war cries in Bethlehem, he will have no place there today as well. The external conflicts we have are the mirror images of the inner conflicts that we have. We pray that Jesus the Prince of Peace will fill our hearts with peace, serenity, and hope.

May this season be a time of reflection, renewal, and reconnection, reminding us of the enduring power of faith, love, and the human spirit.

Wishing you all a blessed and meaningful journey through these seasons of the soul.

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



# MAGISTERIAL TEACHINGS ON ALL SOULS DAY, FUNERAL, AND CREMATION

Rev. Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose

(Professor of Canon Law at St. Peter's Pontifical Seminary, Bangalore

Executive Secretary of the Commission for Canon Law in the CCBI)

merlinrengith@gmail.com

## 1. Introduction

The Church is made up of both the living faithful on earth and those who have passed away. Saints in Heaven and faithful souls in Purgatory are included in the latter category. Just as on 1 November, we honour those who are with God, on 2 November, we celebrate a Commemoration of all the faithful departed (*Commemoratio omnium fidelium defunctorum*). Also known as All Souls Day, on this day we honour them for their fidelity in life, as well as pray for them since they are being purified before entering the all Holy Presence of God. As Book of Revelation 21:27 says of the Heavenly Jerusalem, "... nothing unclean shall enter in." Hence, as we commemorate all souls, we turn our eyes to those men and women who have gone before us in death but died before being fully purified of every venial sin and all of sin's effects. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains it this way: "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death, they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned." (CCC1030–1031).

## 2. Origin of All Souls Day and the Theological Basis

It was an early practice of the Church to remember the departed during the Mass. Their

names were engraved on tablets as part of this process. A version of this is in every Mass today, in the prayer for the faithful departed in Christ known as the Memento of the Dead, as well as in the practice of offering Mass for individuals. A special day began to be observed in some monasteries in the 6th century, and by the 10th century, the celebration had spread to dioceses, with some places fixing it to the 2nd of November. In the 13th century, Rome adopted this date. In accordance with Catholic doctrine, the actions of the faithful on earth can contribute to the purification of the souls in purgatory. Its teaching is based also on the



practice of prayer for the dead mentioned as far back as 2 Maccabees 12:42–46. The theological basis for the feast is the doctrine that the souls which, on departing from the body, are not perfectly cleansed from venial sins, or have not fully atoned for past transgressions, are debarred from the Beatific Vision, and that the faithful on earth can help them by prayers, alms, deeds and especially by the sacrifice of the Mass.

### 3. Twofold Focus of All Souls Day

The first and foremost purpose of the commemoration of All Souls Day is a call to prayer for those who have died and are being purified in final preparation for their entrance into the Beatific Vision. Even though God does not require our prayers, it is His divine will that we participate in the distribution of His grace. It is for this reason that He chooses to solicit our prayers and subsequently answer them, thereby making us active instruments of His purifying grace so desperately needed in both this world and Purgatory. As we pray for those in Purgatory, especially on All Souls Day, we can be assured that God lavishes upon them everything for their complete purification. We should be aware that the Mass, and our participation in the Mass, is particularly powerful and is the ideal means of opening the floodgates of mercy for our loved ones who have died but have not been redeemed. We must take our duty of praying for these “poor souls” very seriously. Western culture is characterized by a common secular heresy which claims that a good person immediately goes to Heaven after death or becomes an angel. There are many souls who remain unprayed for because of this well-intentioned, but erroneous belief. There are souls who depend on our prayers because God wishes for us to pray for them and to participate in their purification lovingly. Prayers should be offered fervently for the souls of those deceased.

As a second focus on All Souls Day, it is important to consider our own souls. This commemoration reminds us of the importance of our ongoing conversion. All of us are called to be saints (*Gaudete et Exsultate*). We should strive to become a living saint in life rather than wait to be fully purified in Purgatory. Becoming a saint today requires not only a lot from us, it requires everything. Absolutely everything! To become a saint here and now requires us to diligently seek out and destroy every sinful attachment within our souls. Continually seeking God's mercy, confessing our sins, receiving forgiveness, and then radically reshaping our lives is what this means. This is no small task!

### 4. Funeral and Mother Church

During the Christian's earthly pilgrimage, Holy Mother Church has borne him sacramentally in her womb and accompanies him/her at the end of the journey to surrender him/her to the Father. She offers to the Father, in Christ, the child of his grace, and she commits to the earth, in hope, the seed of the body that will rise in glory (CCC 1683; 1 Cor 15: 42-44). Even though a Christian funeral confers neither a sacrament nor a sacramental on the deceased, who has passed beyond the sacramental economy, it is, however, a liturgical celebration of the whole Church, which celebrates funeral rites in order to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life that has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just. Through Christian funeral rites, the Mother Church prays for the spiritual support of the dead, honours their bodies and brings comfort of hope to the living (canon 1176 §2). Canon 1176 of the 1983 Code prescribes funerals as a right of the faithful and an obligation of the Church which lies in the Christian communion.

#### 4.1 Constitution of Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

According to the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), funeral rites fully express the paschal character of Christian death, and may be adapted to incorporate local traditions and customs from different parts of the world. Expressing paschal character in the funeral rite is to assist the dead in his/her final journey and to console the living with hope (SC nos. 81 & 335). Death for believers is referred to as the participation in the paschal mystery which is initiated in the sacrament of Baptism. It will also enable a person to participate in the life of Christ and His resurrection in the life after.

#### 4.2 *Ordo exsequiarum*

*Ordo exsequiarum*, published by the then Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, is the Latin typical edition of the *Order of Christian Funerals*. This became one of the main sources for the laws on funeral rites in the 1983 Code. It was to replace the old rite and brought about

reform and specific directives in the funeral rites. This new funeral rite makes the same points, as already expressed in SC nos. 81 and 335, that the paschal character of Christian death is to be stressed and it should be accommodated according to the circumstances and traditions found in various regions.

## 5. Funerals in the Code of Canon Law



Ten canons of the 1983 Code (canons 1176-1185) were devoted to the law of Christian burial as opposed to forty canons in the 1917 Code. Of these, three canons (Canons 1183-1185) deal with those persons afforded and those denied ecclesiastical funeral rites. The 1983 Code is more pastoral as it recognizes the rights of all Catholics and minimizes the penalties imposed. It duly recognizes, with due regard to the funeral rites, the Christian sentiments of respect for life.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church upheld the burial of the body and prohibited cremation and if someone chose cremation then it was considered to be a crime (canon 1203 of the 1917 Code); whereas today the law does not forbid the cremation unless it is chosen for a reason that is contrary to the teachings of the Church (canon 1176 §3 of the 1983 Code). Present-day liturgical norms provide appropriate funeral rites for both burial and cremation. Most importantly the Church today is more merciful towards the dead as well as the mourners for not penalizing them for the choices, they make in their lives. It is good,

therefore, to examine what the Code illustrates about the rights of Christ's faithful to Christian Funeral rites, and on what grounds these rights are denied to them.

### 5.1 Right of Christ's Faithful to Christian Funeral Rites

As canon 213 says that Christ's faithful have a right to be assisted from the spiritual good of the Church, they are to be pastorally cared for (canon 519) by the parish priest, which also entails conducting the funerals (canon 530). This pastoral care reflects that they be assisted right from their birth till their final journey, *i.e.*, death. Thus, they have a right to Christian funeral rites, and it's a right and not a privilege. Canon 1176 §§1, 2 reads that Christ's faithful who have died are to be given a Christian funeral, *i.e.*, particularly for the spiritual support of the dead by honouring their bodies, which are destined to share in the resurrection and everlasting life; it also tries to bring solace of hope to the mourners.

This funeral rite comprises three stages: i) the vigil, ii) the funeral liturgy, and iii) the rite of burial. Christ's faithful have a right to these three services. Moreover, as this is the right of the Christ's faithful, the Eucharistic celebration is encouraged as long as there are no problems or at least a memorial mass could be celebrated according to the convenience of the family and the priest of the place.

### 5.2 The Teaching of the Church on Cremation

However, the recent legislation (canon 1176 §3 of the 1983 Code), which incorporated the recommendations of Instruction on cremation of the dead, *Piam et constantem* (1963) of the Supreme Sacred Congregation of Holy Office earnestly encourages the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead and does not forbid cremation unless it is chosen for the reasons contrary to the Christian teachings and beliefs. *Piam et constantem* states that the Church does not object to cremation where there is an upright motive based on serious reasons. Cremation is neither bad nor in



contradiction to Christian dogma, nor in opposition to religion. The Church prefers that the funeral liturgy be celebrated with the body present before it is sent for cremation (of course when it is not chosen for anti-Christian motives). These teachings of Instruction on cremation of the dead, *Piam et constantem* were later incorporated in canons 1176 and 1184, 2° of the 1983 Code. In such cases, care must be taken that there is no place for any scandal for the faithful and the rite is carried out with due respect for the remains of the dead and for the mourners. One more important factor to be noted is that the faithful must be catechized that they are not to request that their ashes be scattered after the cremation or conserved in someone's house. However, the funeral mass may be celebrated after the cremation in the presence of the remains. It must be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. Regarding these considerations, on 15 August 2016, the then Congregation for Doctrine of Faith, published an Instruction on Cremation, *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* which provided various prescriptions. It states:

The conservation of ashes in the home is not allowed. Only in the event of serious and exceptional circumstances, depending on local cultural conditions, the Ordinary, in agreement with the Episcopal Conference or the Synod of Bishops of the Eastern Churches, can grant permission for the conservation of the ashes in the home. The ashes, however, cannot be divided among the various families and respect and adequate storage conditions must always be ensured.

However, they cannot be denied a funeral for making this request, unless any particular law states so. Thus, the 1983 Code appreciated burial and never denied cremation, unless it is chosen to prove the anti-Christian feelings.

## 6. Conclusion

Although All Souls Day is not a holy day of obligation, attending mass on this day is a good idea. We should also spend some time praying for the souls of our loved ones, as well as those who do not have anyone to pray for them. On this day, it is a tradition among our people to

make a visit to the graves of our deceased ancestors, both to pray at the place where their bodies await the general resurrection, and to leave some sort of mark of reverence, such as flowers to make their graves look more attractive. In the second Eucharistic prayer in the Missal, the priest asks God on behalf of everyone: "Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in your mercy: welcome them into the light of your face." The Holy Sacrifice of the Altar is the most valuable sacrifice we can offer to God. To ensure that these souls reach heaven as quickly as possible, the Catholic Church allows priests to celebrate Holy Mass three times on All Souls Day. 1) for a specific intention, 2) for all the faithful departed and 3) for the Holy Father's intentions. This faculty was conceded by Pope Benedict XV in *Incruentum altaris* (1915) and it was never revoked. Therefore, all the priests can make use of this privilege and pray for the holy souls in purgatory. The devotion of the Christian people finds in pious practices such as the holy rosary, responses for the dead and works of penance, a true path of prayer to intercede for the deceased.

Communion with the whole Church, and in this case with the deceased, means that "our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them but also of making their intercession for us effective." The saints have been great promoters of this mutual help. St. Alphonsus Liguori says that we can believe that "God makes our prayers known to the souls in purgatory. And thus, since they are so filled with charity, surely, we can ask them to intercede for us." St. Therese of the Child Jesus frequently had recourse to their help, and after receiving it felt deeply indebted: "My God, I beg you to pay the debt I have contracted with the souls in purgatory." St. Jose Maria also relied greatly on their help: "At the beginning, I felt the company of the souls in purgatory very strongly. I felt them as if they were tugging me by the cassock, asking me to pray for them and to ask them for their intercession. Since then, due to the great services they have done for me, I like to preach about and foster in souls this reality: my good friends the souls in purgatory." ♦



## On “The Diary of a Country Priest”

Maria Dhanaraj Thivayarajan SAC

### 1. Profile:

“The Diary of a Country Priest” is a novel written by French author Georges Bernanos and published in 1936. The story is presented in the form of a diary written by a young, unnamed country priest who is the protagonist. On the surface, it looks like a simple tale of an ordinary young Catholic priest and his priestly mission in a parish in the rural France. But, that is only the deception. What is behind this simple tale is a narration of many spiritual struggles. It is here Bernanos proves to be more than a simple storyteller.

### 2. Setting:

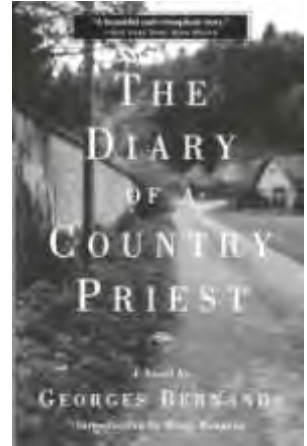
The novel is set in a small French village in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The country priest is assigned to a parish in this village.

### 3. Plot:

The novel begins with the newly appointed country priest arriving at his parish. He is a devout and idealistic young man, but he faces numerous challenges in his role as a priest. The village is filled with skeptical and unkind parishioners who mock and mistreat him. The priest struggles with illness and poverty, and he also grapples with doubts about his faith and his effectiveness as a clergyman. Despite his difficulties, the priest remains committed to his calling and continues to serve his parishioners with compassion and dedication. He reaches out to various villagers, offering them spiritual guidance and solace. One of the central figures in the novel is Mlle. Chantal, a wealthy but troubled woman with whom the priest forms a unique and spiritually significant connection.

As the diary progresses, the priest's health deteriorates, and he becomes progressively weaker. He faces various moral and spiritual crises, including feelings of inadequacy and a sense of abandonment by God. However, he continues to carry out his duties, including

celebrating Mass and administering the sacraments. The novel culminates in a profound spiritual experience for the priest, which provides him with a sense of peace and redemption. Tragically, shortly after this experience, he dies alone and is found in his room.



### 4. Themes:

- *Spiritual Struggle:* The novel explores the spiritual and emotional struggles of the young priest as he confronts doubt, suffering, and the indifference of his parishioners.
- *Isolation:* The priest's isolation and loneliness are recurring themes. He is often isolated from his parishioners, who view him with suspicion, and he also experiences a sense of isolation from God.
- *Suffering and Sacrifice:* The priest's suffering and self-sacrifice are central to the story. Despite his physical and emotional pain, he continues to fulfil his priestly duties.
- *Redemption and Grace:* The priest's spiritual experiences near the end of his life suggest themes of redemption and divine grace.
- *Support and Guidance:* Priests need other priests, especially the senior priests, to mentor and to guide them.

### 5. End Note and Appreciation:

“The Diary of a Country Priest” is a powerful exploration of faith, prayer, meaning of life, eternal life, death, theological virtues such as faith, hope, and charity, doubt, clerical celibacy, devotion to Our Lady, and the

challenges faced by a young clergyman in a challenging and unforgiving environment. It is a poignant and deeply philosophical work that delves into the inner life of the priest as he grapples with the complexities of his vocation and his relationship with God. The novel asks existential questions such as, Is God always present in our lives? Or do we find grace everywhere and every time? The question of loneliness and priests; the question of celibacy and priests; priest's devotion to Our Lady? All these issues, struggles, doubts are analysed in a sublime way.

The author has the attention of Popes. Pope Francis quoted two paragraphs from Bernanos's *Diary of a Country Priest*. He noted that the novel roughly follows the life of St. Jean Vianney. Bernanos's words, the Pope implies, beautifully capture how God's mercy has all unexpectedly worked through the country priest's sickness. In 2017, Pope Francis gave an Angelus address on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Much of the address was an exploration of the meaning of "full of grace." To illustrate his points, he cited the same section of Bernanos's *Diary of a Country Priest* that John Paul II had referenced nearly thirty-five years earlier. Mary "is always youthful, she is 'younger than sin,' she is 'the youngest of humankind.'"

## 6. Notable Quotes

'All is grace.'

'The great thing is to give thanks for everything. He who has learned this knows what it means to live ... He has penetrated the whole mystery of life: giving thanks for everything.'



'The most virtuous will never be as virtuous as the one who is not virtuous and does not pretend to be.'

'The air of this world is the air of death. To breathe it is to begin to die.'

'It is not always right to confide in God; one must sometimes overcome Him.'

'One can adore without believing, and in fact one does.'

'There is no cure for pride; there is none for the pride of being humble.'

'The wish to pray is a prayer in itself.'

'But I shall give less thought to the future, I shall work in the present. I feel such work is within my power. For I only succeed in small things, and when I am tried by anxiety, I am bound to say it is the small joys that release me.'

'Our habits are our friends. Even our bad habits.'

'Hope is despair, overcome.'

'I have no ambition to change my nature, I merely intend to conquer my dislikes.'

'To believe in God is not to look away from the world; it is to believe in God and to take our stand on the world, to speak about God and to speak about the world.'

Bernanos was a devout Catholic and he wanted to be a priest. Thankfully, after a short period of time in seminary, he thought it was not his calling and so came out of seminary. He remained a devout Catholic and became a great writer. Surely, God knew what Bernanos was called for and Bernanos responded to that call.

\* This series discovers the portrayal of clergy in various literary classics. The objective is to make these literary works relevant to our times, and to see our present concerns in the light of these works.

[Fr. Maria Dhanaraj Thivayarajan SAC is a Pallottine priest of Tamil Nadu Province. Currently he is tutoring at Madurai Kamaraj University on Folkloristics. He can be contacted at [antondhanam@gmail.com](mailto:antondhanam@gmail.com).] ♦

# JUBILEE 2025: PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Meaning - Purpose - Preparation - Participation

*Fr. Yesu Karunanidhi*



Our Holy Mother Church has just now completed the First Session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod for a Synodal Church 2021-2024. We now have another celebration around the corner, Jubilee 2025, an ordinary Jubilee marking 2025 years of Jesus' birth. The present article explores (i) the meaning of Jubilee 2025, (ii) its purpose, (iii) our preparation for the Jubilee in 2023 and 2024, and (iv) our participation in the celebrations.

## **I. Meaning of Jubilee 2025**

### **1. Jubilee in the Bible**

Etymologically, the word 'jubilee' comes from the Hebrew word '*yobel*' (= ram's horn) which was used as a trumpet to announce the beginning of the 50th year, i.e., the completion of 49 years (7 times 7 years). According to Lev 25:8-13 the celebration of the jubilee year entails release of slaves, forgiveness of debts, repatriation of property. In other words, jubilee is understood as four R's: Rest (the land is given rest); Review (an inventory of life, livestock, personnel, and land is taken); Restore (setting the societal clock back to zero); and Reconcile (aligning our relationships right with God and one another). The 'holy year' which the Prophet Isaiah (cf. Isa 61; See Also Lk 4) speaks of also alludes to jubilee. Here, the holy year is understood as the year of recalling and announcing God's favour and mercy. From the biblical point of view, celebration of a jubilee

makes us retrospect the past (liberation), live in the present (consolation), and set our vision on the future (moving forward). Besides, jubilee is the celebration of time, and since it is the celebration of time it is a gift from God. That is why we pray at the Easter Vigil: 'all times belong to him and all ages.'

### **2. Jubilees in History**

The first ordinary jubilee year ('holy year') was announced in 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII. Initially, ordinary jubilee was celebrated once in 100 years; Pope Clement VI in 1343 began to celebrate it every 50 years; in 1470 Pope Paul II made it every 25 years. There have also been 'extraordinary' holy years: in 1933 Pope Pius XI celebrated 1900th anniversary of the Redemption (based on this, some charismatic groups propagate 2033 as the jubilee of the Great Mission Command, but the Church has not officially endorsed it); in 2015 Pope Francis proclaimed the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. The previous ordinary jubilee was the Great Jubilee 2000, for which we had three years of preparation: 1997 (God the Son), 1998 (God the Holy Spirit), and 1999 (God the Father). Jubilee events entail entering the holy door, undertaking pilgrimages, and obtaining indulgences.

### **3. Jubilee 2025: Motto and Logo**

'Pilgrims of Hope' is the motto of the celebrations of ordinary Jubilee 2023. In the letter to Msgr. Rino Fisichella, announcing the preparation for the jubilee celebrations, our Holy Father Pope Francis underscores the importance of hope in Christian life amidst uncertainties and hardships created by the pandemic and wars. He writes: "we must fan the flame of hope ... the forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust ... that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, 'Pilgrims of Hope'" (cf. <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/giubileo-2025.html>, accessed on 11 Aug 2023)



The logo for the Jubilee 2025, which was designed by Giacomo Trivisani (selected from among 294 entries from 48 countries) shows four figures in four colours representing the entire humanity hailing from the four corners of the earth. They embrace each other in solidarity and fraternity. The figure at the front holds fast to the cross, which gives us hope. The rough waves under the figures represent the present context of the world which is marked by turmoil and troubles. The lower part of the cross has been elongated and turned into the shape of an anchor which is a symbol of hope. The image illustrates the pilgrim's journey not as an individual effort, but as a collective enterprise. At the bottom of the logo lies the motto of the Jubilee Year 2025: *'Peregrinantes in Spem'* ('Pilgrims of Hope').

#### 4. Characteristics of the Jubilee

The Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World, which coordinates the celebrations, spells out seven characteristics of the Jubilee: (i) Pilgrimage (journey, crossing of boundaries, going across the fields, with other journeying companions); (ii) Holy Door (powerful sign, four Roman Basilicas, Jesus is the Door, journey to the interior of a church); (iii) Reconciliation (placing God at the centre of our lives, restoration of social justice, confession); (iv) Prayer (being open to God's presence and his offer of love); (v) Liturgy (public prayer of the Church, summit and font, opening of the door); (vi) Profession of faith (identity of the baptized person, Apostolic Creed, Nicene Creed); and (vii) Indulgences (experience of God's mercy, offering up sufferings).

### II. Purpose

The purpose of the jubilee is threefold: (i) To celebrate Jesus. In the jubilee year we primarily celebrate Jesus, the incarnate Son of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. We commemorate his birth, life, teaching, ministry, passion, death, and resurrection. We take conscious and fruitful efforts 'to know him more clearly, to love him more dearly, and to follow him more nearly.' (ii) To celebrate the Church, which is our Mother and Teacher. We renew our

commitment to our Holy Catholic Church by owing our communion and contribution. And (iii) To celebrate us. We celebrate each one of us, with unique gifts and charisms, vocations and ministries, lifestyles, and values. The Jubilee 2025 invites us to 'remember' God, to 'review' our relation to God and God's Church, and to 'restore' our relationships with God and God's people. Celebration of Jesus, Church, and us happens in the context of our synodal journey in communion, mission, and participation.

### III. Preparation for Jubilee 2025

There are two years of preparation for the Jubilee 2025: (i) 2023 as Year of the Council (Year of Learning); (ii) 2024 as Year of Prayer. The Holy Father wishes that the four Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council be studied to obtain direction and guidance for God's people.

#### (i) 2023 - Year of the Council

In the Year of the Learning of the Council we are asked to read the four Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council, to understand the general themes of the Council, and to explore Jesus, the Church, and our lives in the world today.

a. *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, promulgated on 18 Nov 1965, addresses the relationship between divine revelation, as found in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, and the life of the Church. The document has six chapters: (i) Revelation; (2) Tradition; (3) Inspiration; (4) Old Testament; (5) New Testament; and (6) Use of Scripture in the Church.

b. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, promulgated on 4 Dec 1963, emphasizes the primary role of the liturgy in the life of the Church. It states that the liturgy is the source and summit of the Church's activity, through which the faithful are brought into contact with the mystery of Christ. The document divides into seven chapters: (1) General principles for the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy; (2) The most sacred mystery of the Eucharist; (3) The other sacraments and the sacramentals; (4) The divine office; (5) The



liturgical year; (6) Sacred music; and (7) Sacred art and sacred furnishings.

c. *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, promulgated on 21 Nov 1964, in its eight chapters describes the Church as it exists and as it longs to be: (1) The mystery of the Church; (2) On the people of God; (3) On the hierarchical structure of the Church and in particular on the episcopate; (4) The laity; (5) The universal call to holiness in the Church; (6) Religious; (7) The eschatological nature of the pilgrim Church and its union with the Church in heaven; and (8) The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

d. *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, promulgated on 7 Dec 1965, announces the duty of the People of God to scrutinize the “signs of the times” in light of the Gospel. After an introductory statement on the situation of human persons in the modern world, the document under two broad headings deals with various themes: Part I: The Church and Human Person's Calling (The dignity of the human person, The community of humankind, Human person's activity throughout the world, The role of the Church in the modern world); Part II: Some Problems of Special Urgency (Fostering the nobility of marriage and the family, The proper development of culture, Economic and social life, The life of the political community, The fostering of peace and the promotion of a community of nations).

The Dicastery of Evangelization has brought forth 35 booklets giving background information to the Second Vatican Council and to the Four Constitutions.

The other documents of the Council are: Declarations: *Gravissimum Educationis* (on Christian education); *Nostra Aetate* (on Church's relation to non-Christian religions); *Dignitatis Humanae* (on religious freedom); Decrees: *Ad Gentes* (on Church's mission activity); *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (on the ministry and life of priests); *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (on the apostolate of the laity);

*Optatam Totius* (on priestly training); *Perfectae Caritatis* (on the adaptation and renewal of religious life); *Christus Dominus* (on the pastoral office of bishops); *Unitatis Redintegratio* (on ecumenism); *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite); and *Inter Mirifica* (on the media of social communications).

## (ii) 2024 - Year of Prayer

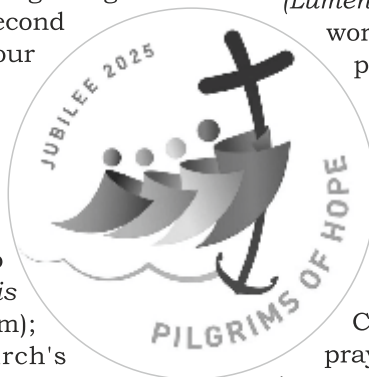
In preparation for the Jubilee 2025, the Dioceses are invited to promote the importance of individual and communal prayer. The Dicastery has published 9 notebooks on prayer. In this year we are called to pray with the Universal Church, in the Local Churches, for the entire humanity. We may reflect on prayer in Christian life, sacraments, sacramentals, pious practices, and popular devotions as well.

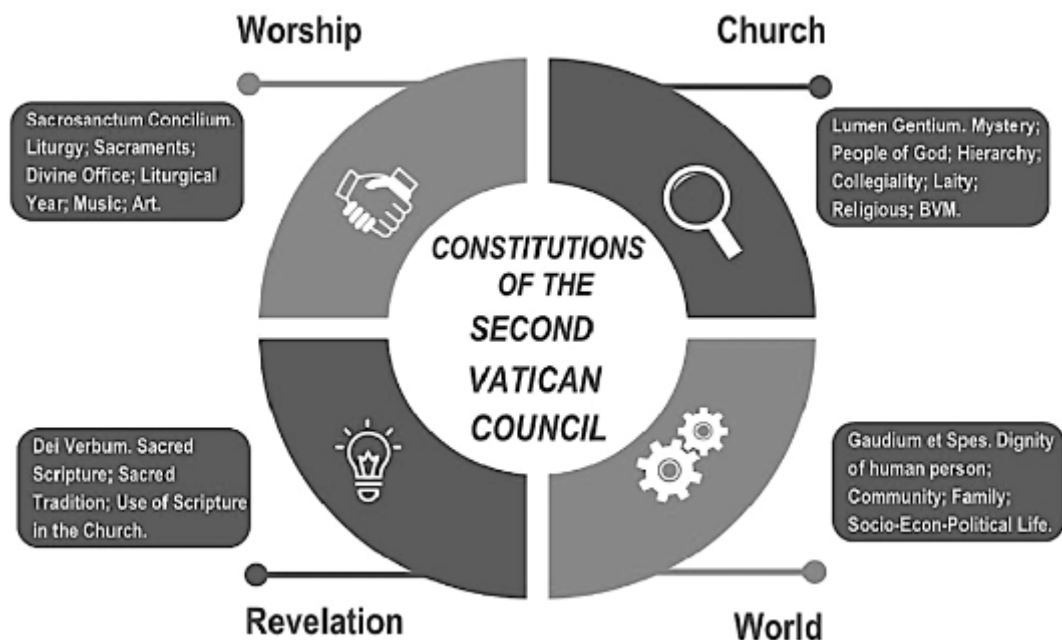
## (iii) 2025 - Year of Jubilee

In the Jubilee Year we shall enter the Holy Doors of the four Major Basilicas (Saints Peter and Paul, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul outside the walls). We may also enter the doors for hope, lighting a ray of hope in prisons, homes for the elderly and the dying destitute, hospitals, and refugee camps.

## IV. Our Participation

(i) Three Years to Go(d): In 2023, let us understand the context and content of the Second Vatican Council, and let us celebrate our Christian identity, life, and mission rooted in the word of God (*Dei Verbum*), expressed in the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), redefined (*Lumen Gentium*), and experienced in the world today (*Gaudium et Spes*). As one people of God with different ecclesial vocations, let us learn these Dogmatic Constitutions through retreats, seminars, workshops, and novenas, and be enlightened on our synodal journey. In 2024, let us be united to each other in prayer; pray for each other in the Church and the world; let our prayers be rooted in faith, expectant in hope, and enlivened in love; understand prayers in the Bible, traditional prayers of the Church, prayers to Mary and the saints; let us





adopt prayer as a way of life. Let us be united to the prayer of the Church, pray with the Psalms, explore the treasures of the Fathers of the Church, and meaningfully pray in liturgical and paraliturgical celebrations.

**(ii) Integrating with the Synodal Journey:** The preparatory years (2023-2024) could offer time for revisiting the Documents sent from Rome for the Synod for a Synodal Church (*The Preparatory Document, Vademecum, Document for the Continental Stage, and the Instrumentum Laboris*), and the Documents sent to Rome (the Synthesis of the local Church; the Synthesis of the Episcopal Conference; the Documents of the Continental Assemblies and the Digital Synod). We may identify our priorities and begin to create calls to action. The ecclesial, pastoral, academic, liturgical, social, and cultural dimensions of synodality could be researched. And, we be rooted in communion, be focused on mission, and be generous in participation.

**(iii) From Missionaries of Mercy to Pilgrims of Hope:** Our Holy Father Pope Francis instituted Missionaries of Mercy in the extraordinary jubilee year of mercy. These were

the ministers who proclaimed God's mercy, and received people in confession. Now, we all are pilgrims of hope. Mercy and hope are two sides of the same coin. A person who has experienced God's mercy keep his / her life aflame in hope.

**(iv) *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Evangelii Gaudium*:** These apostolic exhortations respectively written by Pope Saint Paul VI and Pope Francis hold evangelization as the top priority of the Church. The joy of the experience of the Risen Lord must be the propelling force for evangelization, re-evangelization, and new evangelization. Jubilee 2025 shall serve as an occasion to renew our engagement with evangelization, which is not expanding of territories, but witnessing to God's mercy.

The Ordinary Jubilee 2025, an integral part of the synodal journey, invites us to be pilgrims of hope, givers of hope, and livers of hope.

[Rev. Dr. Yesu Karunanidhi, Secretary to the CCBI Commission for Bible, is the National Coordinator for Jubilee 2025. He can be contacted at [indiaforjubilee2025@gmail.com](mailto:indiaforjubilee2025@gmail.com)] ♦

# Indian riot martyrs' beatification process gets Vatican nod

By Bijay Kumar Minj

(published October 26, 2023.

Courtesy: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/>

indian-riot-martyrs-beatification-process-gets-vatican-nod/103055,  
accessed on 27 October 2023)

Catholics in an eastern Indian archdiocese that witnessed the worst-ever anti-Christian riots in 2008 have thanked the Vatican for allowing them to start the beatification process of 35 martyrs from the indigenous tribal community.

Archbishop John Barwa of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar hailed the Vatican's move in an Oct. 25 circular addressed to his Catholics, the majority of them tribal people. The prelate informed them that the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints has granted the *Nihil Obstat* (no objection) to commencing the beatification of the martyrs named Kanteshwar Digal and Companions.

"Indeed, this is a momentous occasion in the life of our archdiocese and the Church in Odisha state and India at large," he said. Barwa said that "the life of Servant of God Kanteshwar Digal and Companions has been a source of great inspiration" to the Christians in the nation. The 24 men and 11 women, all tribal

Catholics, remained unwavering in their faith during the 2008 Kandhamal riots.

The unabated violence, which commenced on Aug. 23, 2008, in India's eastern tribal belt, lasted for more than seven weeks. It left around 100 people dead, some 300 churches destroyed and rendered more than 56,000 people homeless. Digal, a family man and a catechist in the parish of Sankarakhole, was killed at the age of 53 on Sept. 25, 2008. His body was thrown into a river.

Archbishop John Barwa said the martyrs "left an indelible mark on our spiritual journey" through their ultimate sacrifice. The Oct. 2 decision from the Vatican was communicated to Indian Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli on Oct. 15.

The archdiocese will now start the beatification process by collecting testimonies before submitting them for approval to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. ♦



# ***Laudate Deum* ('Praise God')**

## Summary and Reflections

Fr. Yesu Karunanidhi

### **Profile of the Document**

*Laudate Deum* ('Praise God'): on care for the poor and Earth' is the sixth Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis (the other five being *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Amoris Laetitia* [post-synodal], *Gaudete et Exsultate*, *Christus Vivit* [post-synodal], and *Querida Amazonia* [post-synodal]), published on 4 October 2023, on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, whose name Cardinal Bergoglio has taken for his pontificate. Pope Francis calls this document as a supplement to *Laudato Si'*, his second encyclical, on care for our common home, released in 2015. The document, which is addressed to all people of good will on the climate crisis, has 73 paragraphs and is divided into 6 sections.

### **Summary**

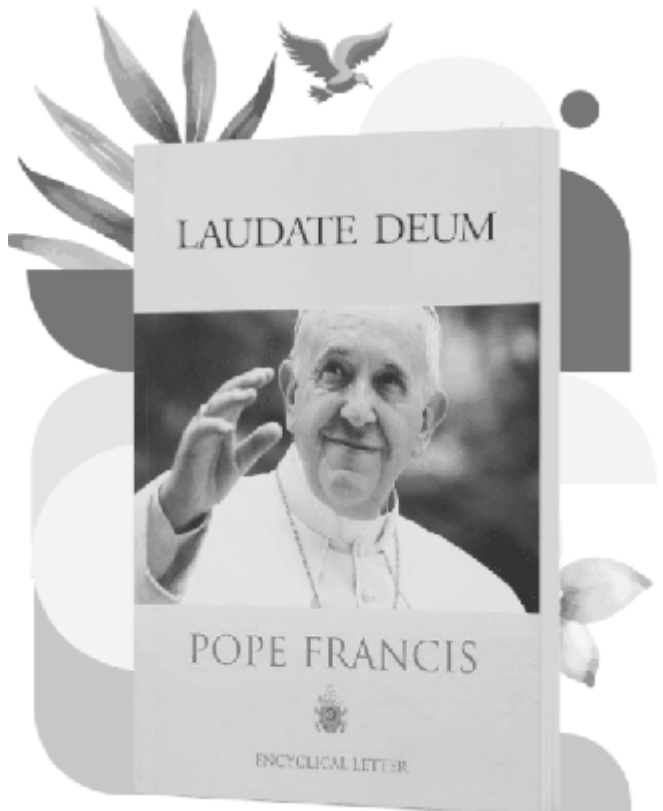
The apostolic exhortation opens with the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, "Praise God for all his creatures." I would say that this is the one-liner that sums up the entire document. Here, human persons form part of 'God's creatures,' it is their creatureliness that propels them to care for the poor and Earth. Pope Francis intelligently brackets the document with the same line when he closes: "Praise God' is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies." Pope Francis decries human person's every attempt replace God with himself / herself.

The Introduction (nn. 1-4) spells out the scope and the context of the apostolic exhortation. Our Holy Father states that as human persons and nature are knit together, the concerns of human persons affect that of nature.

The First Section, 'The Global Climate Crisis' (nn. 5-19), by way of pointing out the signs of climate change which are increasingly evident, corrects the

misunderstanding of those who say that Earth will take care of itself (cf. n. 6), and cancels the assumption that everything is the fault of the poor (cf. n. 9). Pope Francis calls climate change as 'anthropic' (n. 11), i.e., caused by human persons. The section contains a warning that 'some effects of the climate crisis are irreversible' (cf. n. 15). Pope Francis concludes with two of his oft-repeated convictions: 'everything is connected,' and 'no one is saved alone' (cf. n. 19).

In the Second Section, 'A Growing Technocratic Paradigm' (nn. 20-33), the Pontiff, acknowledging the latest technological innovations including Artificial Intelligence, spells out how the technocratic paradigm feeds upon itself (cf. n. 21) and has destroyed healthy and harmonious relationship with the nature (cf. n. 27). The natural resources are not





# LAUDATO SI'

On Care For Our Common Home

24th May 2015



## WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME

Scientific consensus is clear: our common home is being transformed by the activities of humankind. This includes climate change, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, and other threats.



## THE GOSPEL OF CREATION

For generations, the Bible has been a source of inspiration and guidance for many people. It teaches us that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and that we have a responsibility to care for the world around us.



## THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Human activities are the primary cause of the ecological crisis. This includes the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and the overuse of land and water resources. We must take action to address these issues and protect our common home.



## INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

Integral ecology is a holistic approach to environmental care. It recognizes that the environment is interconnected with human society, and that we must address both the physical and spiritual aspects of the crisis. This includes promoting sustainable development, social justice, and the protection of the vulnerable.



## Lines of Approach and Action

Apply the principles of integral ecology to all areas of life. This includes the economy, politics, education, and culture. We must promote sustainable development, social justice, and the protection of the vulnerable. We must also promote the spiritual and moral dimensions of the crisis, and the need for a new paradigm of development.



## ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY

Ecological education is a key component of integral ecology. It teaches us about the interconnectedness of all life, and the importance of caring for the environment. It also promotes spiritual and moral values, and the need for a new paradigm of development. We must promote ecological education in all schools and communities.



# LAUDATE DEUM

To All People of Good Will  
on the Climate Crisis

04th October 2023



## THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS

Human activities are the primary cause of the global climate crisis. This includes the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and the overuse of land and water resources. We must take action to address these issues and protect our common home.



## A GROWING TECHNOCRATIC PARADIGM

The growing technocratic paradigm is a major factor in the global climate crisis. It promotes the use of technology to solve problems, without considering the social and environmental impacts. We must promote a more holistic approach to development, one that considers the needs of all people and the health of the planet.



## THE WEAKNESS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

The weakness of international politics is a major factor in the global climate crisis. It prevents us from taking effective action to address the crisis. We must promote a more unified and effective international system, one that can address the needs of all people and the health of the planet.



## CLIMATE CONFERENCES: PROGRESS AND FAILURES

Climate conferences have been held for many years, but they have failed to produce effective action. We must promote a more unified and effective international system, one that can address the needs of all people and the health of the planet.



## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM COP28 IN DUBAI?

The COP28 conference in Dubai is expected to be a landmark event. It will bring together leaders from all over the world to discuss the climate crisis and to agree on a plan of action. We must promote a more unified and effective international system, one that can address the needs of all people and the health of the planet.



## SPIRITUAL MOTIVATIONS

Spiritual motivations are a key factor in addressing the climate crisis. They remind us of our responsibility to care for the world around us, and the need for a new paradigm of development. We must promote spiritual and moral values, and the need for a new paradigm of development.



courtesy]<https://www.jcfj.ie/2023/10/04/laudate-deum-summary/>

celebrated as gifts but are consumed and exploited (cf. n. 22). Human persons, in their quest to assert their power over nature, treat it as a 'mere setting' in which we develop our lives and our projects (cf. n. 25). The Holy Father exhorts, "Human beings must be recognized as a part of nature. Human life, intelligence and freedom are elements of the nature that enriches our planet, part of its internal workings and its equilibrium" (cf. n. 26). The developmental projects that promise potential economic growth, employment and human promotion turn to be displacement of people and poor living conditions. Momentary excitement raised by the money, the mentality of maximum gain at minimal cost (n. 31), the concept of meritocracy that lauds everything as 'merited' by human persons (n. 32) have later consequences on the children who would ask, "What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my time on this earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?" (n. 33).

The Third Section on 'The Weakness of International Politics' (nn. 34-43) how the present-day politics that rests on power squanders the global crises, by fostering greater individualism, less integration and increased freedom for the truly powerful (cf. n. 36). Pope Francis says that unless citizens control political power – national, regional, and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment (cf. n. 38). He aspires to have this multipolar world (cf. n. 42) creates spaces for conversation, consultation, arbitration, conflict resolution and supervision, and, in the end, a sort of increased 'democratization' in the global context (cf. n. 43).

In the Fourth Section, 'Climate Conferences: Progress and Failures' (nn. 44-52), the document enumerates the Conference of the Parties (COP) convoked in the recent past that seem to have failed to keep their promises, and in the fifth section, 'COP28 in Dubai' (nn. 53-60) our expectations for a green and clean Earth.

The Last Section (nn. 61-73), 'spiritual motivations', makes us view the climate crisis

with a faith vision, which implies that there are multiple interconnected relationships among all creatures. Further, Pope Francis, invites us to journey in communion and commitment, by taking baby steps at personal, family, and community levels, by realizing in the depths of our being that we are interconnected, and we need to respect everyone including Earth affirming their dignity.

The apostolic exhortation ends with a warning that if human persons claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies.

## Reflection

*Laudate Deum* captures the entire debate on climate crisis in a capsule and presents it as a point of no return. In *Laudate Si* adopted an outside-in approach to environmental crisis, whereas here the approach is inside-out. For, the Holy Father sees the crisis as emerging from the heart of human persons, which seeks to take God's place. The present document brings international politics, and global initiatives to question, and makes the leaders soul-search to find out where they are in their attempts to protect Earth.

In 2013, when Pope Francis assumed his pontificate on the feast of Saint Joseph, Spouse of Mary, he presented Joseph with an image of a custodian. In fact, 'custodian' is the image of the Holy Father. Through his encyclical *Laudato Si'* he pictured himself as the custodian of common home, and through *Fratelli Tutti*, as the protector of vulnerable human persons, and now at *Laudate Deum*, he reiterates the same, calling every one of us to be a custodian. As the Church has embarked on the final phase of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod for a Synodal Church, it is high time that we joined hands with Earth, embracing her with empathy.

[The author, *Rev. Dr. Yesu Karunanidhi*, is a priest of the Archdiocese of Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India. At present he serves as the Executive Secretary to the Commission of the Bible, Conference of Catholic Bishops of India. He can be contacted at [yesu@live.in](mailto:yesu@live.in)] ♦

# Highlights of the Message of his Holiness Pope Francis for the 2023 World Day of the Poor

19 November 2023, Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor” (Tob 4:7)

Tobit, in his time of trial, discovers his own poverty, which enables him to recognize others who are poor. He is faithful to God's law and keeps the commandments, but for him this is not enough. He can show practical concern for the poor because he has personally known what it is to be poor. His advice to Tobias thus becomes his true testament: “Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor” (4:7). In a word, whenever we encounter a poor person, we cannot look away, for that would prevent us from encountering the face of the Lord Jesus. Let us carefully consider his words: “from anyone who is poor”. Everyone is our neighbour. Regardless of the colour of their skin, their social standing, the place from which they came, if I myself am poor, I can recognize my brothers or sisters in need of my help. We are called to acknowledge every poor person and every form of poverty, abandoning the indifference and the banal excuses we make to protect our illusory well-being.

We are living in times that are not particularly sensitive to the needs of the poor. The pressure to adopt an affluent lifestyle increases, while the voices of those dwelling in poverty tend to go unheard. We are inclined to neglect anything that varies from the model of life set before the younger generation, those who are most vulnerable to the cultural changes now taking place. We disregard anything that is unpleasant or causes suffering, and exalt physical qualities as if they were the primary goal in life. Virtual reality is overtaking real life, and increasingly the two worlds blend into one. The poor become a film clip that can affect us for a moment, yet when we encounter them in flesh and blood on our streets, we are annoyed and

look the other way. Haste, by now the daily companion of our lives, prevents us from stopping to help care for others. The parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25-37) is not simply a story from the past; it continues to challenge each of us in the here and now of our daily lives. It is easy to delegate charity to others, yet the calling of every Christian is to become personally involved.

we must once more acknowledge new forms of poverty, as well as those described earlier. I think in particular of peoples caught up in situations of war, and especially children



deprived of the serene present and a dignified future. We should never grow accustomed to such situations. Let us persevere in every effort to foster peace as a gift of the risen Lord and the fruit of a commitment to justice and dialogue.

Nor can we ignore those forms of speculation in various sectors, which have led to dramatic price increases that further impoverish many families. Earnings are quickly spent, forcing sacrifices that compromise the dignity of every person. If a family has to choose between food for nourishment and medical care, then we need to pay attention to the voices of those who uphold the right to both goods in the name of the dignity of the human person.

When speaking of the poor, it is easy to fall into rhetorical excess. It is also an insidious temptation to remain at the level of statistics and numbers. The poor are persons; they have faces, stories, hearts and souls. They are our brothers and sisters, with good points and bad, like all of us, and it is important to enter into a

**...Continued on Page 19**

# Preach it Like the Pope

## **Homily Notes from Pope Francis, Christ the King**

On the cross, we see a single phrase: “This is the King of the Jews” (Lk 23:38). That is Jesus' title: he is a king. Yet as we gaze upon him, our idea of a king is turned upside down ... Only by entering into his embrace do we understand: we come to realize that God went to this extreme, even to the paradox of the cross, in order to embrace every one of us, no matter how far distant we may be from him: he embraces our death, our pain, our poverty, our weakness. He embraced all of it. He became a slave so that each of us could become a son. By his becoming a slave, he purchased our sonship ... Brothers and sisters, once we have gazed upon him, what can we do? Today's Gospel sets before us two paths: faced with Jesus, there are those who become onlookers and others who get involved. [2022]

## **Homily Notes from Pope Francis, Immaculate Conception**

The Gospel of today's Solemnity introduces us into the home of Mary to recount the Annunciation (cf. Lk 1:26-38). The angel Gabriel greets the Virgin like this: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” (v. 28). He does not call her by her name, Mary, but with a new name, that she did not know: full of grace. Full of grace, and therefore free from sin, is the name God gives her and that we celebrate today ... But let us think of Mary's wonder: only then did she discover her truest identity. Indeed, by calling her by that name, God reveals her greatest secret to her, which was previously unknown to her. Something similar can also happen to us. In what sense? In the sense that we sinners have also received an initial gift that has filled our lives, a good greater than anything else: we have received an original grace. We talk a lot about original sin, but we have also received an original grace, of which often we are unaware. [Angelus, 2022]

## **Homily Notes from Pope Francis, The Nativity of the Lord**

In order to rediscover the meaning of Christmas, we need to look to the manger. Yet why is the manger so important? Because it is the sign, and not by chance, of Christ's coming into this world. It is how he announces his coming. It is the way God is born in history, so that history itself can be reborn. What then does the manger tell us? It tells us three things, at least: closeness, poverty and concreteness. [2022]

In the darkness, a light shines. An angel appears, the glory of the Lord shines around the shepherds and finally the message awaited for centuries is heard: “To you is born this day a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:11). The angel goes on to say something surprising. He tells the shepherds how to find the God who has come down to earth: “This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger” (v. 12). That is the sign: a child, a baby lying in the dire poverty of a manger. No more bright lights or choirs of angels. Only a child. Nothing else, even as Isaiah had foretold: “unto us a child is born” (Is 9:6) ... The Gospel emphasizes this contrast. It relates the birth of Jesus beginning with Caesar Augustus, who orders the census of the whole world: it presents the first Emperor in all his grandeur. Yet immediately thereafter it brings us to Bethlehem, where there is no grandeur at all: just a poor child wrapped in swaddling clothes, with shepherds standing by. That is where God is, in littleness. This is the message: God does not rise up in grandeur, but lowers himself into littleness. Littleness is the path that he chose to draw near to us, to touch our hearts, to save us and to bring us back to what really matters ... So then, dear brothers and sisters, let us return to Bethlehem, let us return to the origins: to the essentials of faith, to our first love, to adoration and charity. Let us look at the Magi who make their pilgrim way, and as a synodal Church, a journeying Church, let us go to



Bethlehem, where God is in man and man in God. [2021]

### **Homily Notes from Pope Francis, Solemnity of Mary Mother of God**

Let us be guided by the people we meet in today's Gospel, who were the first to see the Mother and Child: the shepherds of Bethlehem. They were poor people and perhaps somewhat uncouth, and that night they were working. Yet they, not the learned or the powerful, were the first to recognize God among us, the God who became poor and loves to be with the poor. The Gospel emphasizes two very simple things that the shepherds did: things simple but not always easy. They went and saw. Two actions: Going and seeing ... Going and seeing. Today the Lord has come among us and the Holy Mother of God sets him before our eyes. Let us rediscover in the enthusiasm of going and the wonder of seeing the secret that can make this year truly "new", and thus overcome the weariness of being stuck or the false peace of seduction. [2023]

The shepherds found "Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger" (Lk 2:16). For the shepherds, the manger was a joyful sign: it was the confirmation of the message they had heard from the angel (cf. v. 12), the place where they found the Saviour. It is also the proof of

God's closeness to them, for he was born in a manger, an object they know well, as a sign of his closeness and familiarity. The manger is also a joyful sign for us. Jesus touches our hearts by being born in littleness and poverty; he fills us with love, not fear. The manger foretells the One who makes himself food for us. His poverty is good news for everyone, especially the marginalized, the rejected and those who do not count in the eyes of the world. For that is how God comes: not on a fast track, and lacking even a cradle! That is what is beautiful about seeing him there, laid in a manger ... Let us learn from the Mother of God how to have that same attitude: to keep and to ponder. Because we may well have to endure certain "scandals of the manger". We hope that everything will be all right and then, like a bolt from the blue, an unexpected problem arises. Our expectations clash painfully with reality. That can also happen in the life of faith, when the joy of the Gospel is put to the test in troubling situations. Today the Mother of God teaches us to draw profit from this clash. She shows us that it is necessary: it is the narrow path to achieve the goal, the cross, without which there can be no resurrection. Like the pangs of childbirth, it begets a more mature faith. [2022]

*courtesy: [www.vatican.va/homilies](http://www.vatican.va/homilies) ♦*

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### ***Continued from Page 17: Highlights of the Message of his Holiness Pope Francis for the 2023 World Day of the Poor***

personal relation with each of them.

The Book of Tobit teaches us to be realistic and practical in whatever we do with and for the poor. This is a matter of justice; it requires us to seek out and find one another, in order to foster the harmony needed for the community to feel itself as such. Caring for the poor is more than simply a matter of a hasty hand-out; it calls for reestablishing the just interpersonal relationships that poverty harms. In this way, "not turning our face away from anyone who is poor" leads us to enjoy the benefits of mercy and charity that give meaning and value to our entire Christian life.

May our concern for the poor always be marked by Gospel realism. Our sharing should meet the concrete needs of the other, rather

than being just a means of ridding ourselves of superfluous goods. Here too, Spirit-led discernment is demanded, in order to recognize the genuine needs of our brothers and sisters and not our own personal hopes and aspirations. What the poor need is certainly our humanity, our hearts open to love. Let us never forget that "we are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them" (Evangeli Gaudium, 198). Faith teaches us that every poor person is a son or daughter of God and that Christ is present in them. "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). ♦

# Vatican releases Synod on Synodality report proposing larger role for laity in Church

*By Courtney Mares, Vatican City, Oct 28, 2023*

The Vatican released the Synod on Synodality's "synthesis report" on Saturday night outlining key proposals discussed during the nearly monthlong assembly's confidential conversations.

The highly anticipated text was approved paragraph by paragraph on Oct. 28 by a vote of 344 synod delegates, which for the first time included women and other non-bishops as voting members.

The document, the synthesis of the assembly's work from Oct. 4–29, proposes a "synodal Church" that implements synodality throughout Church governance, theology, mission, and discernment of doctrine and pastoral issues.

The 42-page text, released by the Vatican in Italian, covers 20 topics from "the dignity of women" to "the bishop of Rome in the College of Bishops." For each topic, "convergences," "matters for consideration," and "proposals" are outlined.

More than 80 proposals were approved in the synod vote, including establishing a new "baptismal ministry of listening and accompaniment," initiating discernment processes regarding the decentralization of the Church, and strengthening the Council of Cardinals into a "synodal council at the service of the Petrine ministry."

Other proposals include giving lectors a preaching ministry "in appropriate contexts," implementing structures and processes to increase the accountability of bishops in matters of economic administration, supporting "digital missionaries," and promoting "initiatives that enable shared discernment of controversial, doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues in the light of the word of God, Church teaching, theological reflection, and valuing synodal experience."

The document also encourages churches to experiment with "conversation in the spirit"—the listening-and-reflection method the synod's delegates have used in their deliberations this month — and forms of discernment in the life of the Church. It calls for the implementation of "the exercise of synodality at regional, national, and continental levels."

Absent from the summary report are definitive conclusions on same-sex blessings, women's ordination, and a handful of other hot-button topics that have drawn the lion's share of media attention during this year's assembly.

Throughout the document, areas of disagreement among the synod participants are listed as "matters of consideration." Among them are women's access to diaconal ministry, priestly celibacy, "Eucharistic hospitality" for interfaith couples, and assigning the handling of abuse cases to another body instead of the bishops.

Written by "experts" invited to attend the synod and overseen by a commission of 13 synod delegates, the text says it aims to be "a tool at the service of ongoing discernment." It is divided into three main sections on the elements of a synodal Church, participation in mission, and processes that enable dialogue with the world.

Vatican spokesman Paolo Ruffini said that more than 1,000 amendments were submitted by synod delegates to the original draft of the report after it was presented to the assembly on Wednesday.

Voting on the text took place on Saturday night with each paragraph requiring the approval of two-thirds of the members present for inclusion in the final report.

Every paragraph was approved in the voting process. A paragraph describing "uncertainties surrounding the theology of the

***...Continued on Page 21***

*Proclaim. Nov - Dec 2023*

# 'The Phenomenon' is baptized at age 46: Soccer great Ronaldo Nazario embraces Catholic faith

By Diego Lopez Marina;  
www.catholicnewsagency.com Sep 13, 2023

Tuesday was a special day for Ronaldo Luís Nazario da Lima, the Brazilian and world soccer legend nicknamed “O Fenômeno” (“The Phenomenon”), who at the age of 46 took a significant step in his life of faith by receiving the sacrament of baptism.

After the ceremony at São José (St. Joseph) Parish located in the Jardim Europa neighborhood on São Paulo's west side, Nazario, two-time world champion with the Brazilian team, shared his experience on social media, highlighting the importance of the momentous moment in his life: “Today is a very special day. I was baptized!”

“The Christian faith has always been a fundamental part of my life, since I was little, although I had not yet been baptized. With the sacrament I feel truly regenerated as a child of God, in a new, more conscious and deeper way,” the Brazilian star wrote on his Instagram account Sept. 12.



In his message, Nazario also renewed his commitment to “follow the path of good, of my own free will, believing in the love of Jesus, in supportive love.”

Accompanying the message, the former soccer player from the Barcelona, Real Madrid, Inter Milan, and other teams, shared several images from his baptism including his godparents Amilcar and Malu.

On this important day, Nazario also thanked the priests Fábio de Melo and Dom Oswaldo as well as São José church.



In June 2022, Nazario demonstrated his growing closeness to the Catholic faith by fulfilling his promise to make the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage on a bicycle.

“I thought about a thousand things during the Camino, but I was grateful for many things that we have achieved with Valladolid,” said the former soccer player who is also president of the Valladolid club.

The various starting points of the Camino de Santiago all end at the tomb of the Apostle James in the Santiago de Compostela cathedral in Spain. ♦

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**Continued from Page 20: Vatican releases Synod on Synodality report proposing larger role for laity in Church**

diaconal ministry” and calling for more reflection on women's access to the diaconate received the most negative votes.

“Rather than saying that the Church has a mission, we affirm that the Church is mission,” the document says. “The exercise of co-responsibility is essential for synodality and is necessary at all levels of the Church,” it adds.

The text is the culmination of days of discussion by 365 synod delegates during the

16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops after years of consultation at local, national, and regional levels since the global synod process was launched in 2021. It lays the foundation for the second Synod on Synodality assembly that will take place in October 2024.

The 2023 synod assembly will come to its formal conclusion on Oct. 29 when Pope Francis offers the closing Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.

Source: catholicnewsagency.com ♦

# ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

287 - 305, Feast Day: November 25

According to the popular tradition, Catherine, the young saint, was born of a patrician pagan family of Alexandria, Egypt around 287. At that time, Alexandria was one of the finest cities in the world, and a centre of learning and culture as well as faith. Christian tradition states she was of noble birth, possibly a princess. As a member of the nobility, she was also educated and was an avid scholar.

There are no surviving primary sources attesting to her existence, but the fact that her memory, and the stories about her, have been kept alive - and handed down in the tradition - certainly confirm her existence, and her life of heroic virtue and holiness.

It is said that a vision of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus spurred her conversion, and the story has inspired works of art which depict her decision to live as a virginal "spouse of Christ."

The Emperor Maxentius ruled Egypt during Catherine's brief lifetime, a period when multiple co-emperors jointly governed the Roman Empire. During this time, just before the Emperor Constantine's embrace and legalization of Christianity, the Church was growing but also attracting persecution.

When Maxentius began his persecution, Catherine, then a beautiful young girl went to him and rebuked him boldly for his cruelty. He could not answer her arguments against his pagan gods, and summoned fifty philosophers to confute her. They all confessed themselves won over by her reasoning, and were thereupon burned to death by the enraged Emperor. He then tried to seduce Catherine with an offer of a consort's crown, and when she indignantly refused him, he had her beaten and imprisoned. The Emperor went off to inspect his military forces, and when he got back he discovered that his wife Faustina and a high official, one Porphyrius, had been visiting Catherine and had been converted, along with the soldiers of the guard.

Unable to defeat her rhetorically or to intimidate her into giving up her belief, the emperor ordered her to be tortured and imprisoned. Catherine was arrested and scourged. Despite the torture, she did not abandon her faith. Word of her arrest and the power of her faith quickly spread and over 200 people visited her. Following her imprisonment, Maxentius made a final attempt to persuade the beautiful Catherine to abandon her faith by proposing marriage to her. This would have made her a powerful empress. Catherine refused, saying she was married to Jesus Christ and that her virginity was dedicated to him.

The emperor angrily ordered her to be executed on a breaking wheel. The breaking wheel is an ancient form of torture where a person's limbs are threaded among the spokes and their bones are shattered by an executioner with a heavy rod. It is a brutal punishment that results in a slow and painful death, normally reserved for the worst criminals.

When Catherine was presented before the wheel, she touched it and a miracle occurred that caused the wheel to shatter. Unable to torture her to death, the emperor simply ordered her beheaded.

One account claimed that angels took her body to Mt. Sinai. In the sixth century, the Emperor Justinian ordered a monastery established in her name at the bottom of Mount Sinai. The monastery, Saint Catherine's, remains to this day and is one of the oldest in the world.

Ironically, or perhaps appropriately – given both her embrace of virginity, and her "mystic marriage" to Christ – young women in many Western European countries were once known to seek her intercession in finding their husbands.

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



# NEW-BORN AND ALL HIS FAMILY TO BE BEATIFIED

The new-born child is considered a martyr by the Church, dying out of hatred of the Faith (*odium fidei*) in Marcowa, a small Polish town on the border with Ukraine.



SEPTEMBER 05, 2023 (ZENIT News).-

The entire Ulm family, including the new-born baby, will be beatified on Sunday, September 10, in Poland. The Nazis murdered this Catholic family for giving shelter to several Jews persecuted by Nazism. At the moment of the murder, the baby was still in his mother's womb, but was born shortly before dying.

Wiktorina Ulm, his mother, was in the seventh month of her pregnancy. A witness saw her body placed in a coffin, noting the head and chest of the baby issuing from her womb. Others said that his small head could be seen between his mother's thighs.

The Church is beatifying the new-born child also pointing out that he received a Baptism of blood. Pope Francis was told about this family during his pilgrimage to Poland in 2016. During an audience in 2018, he praised the family as an "example of fidelity to God and to His Commandments of love of neighbour and respect for human dignity."

The Ulms were very humble farmers. The family included the father, Josef, 44 and the mother, Wiktorina, 32, who was in the seventh

month of her pregnancy; Stasia, 7; Basia, 6; Wladziu, 5; Franio, 4; Antos, 3; and Marysua, 2.

The new-born child is considered a martyr by the Church dying out of hatred of the Faith (*odium fidei*) in Marcowa, a small Polish town on the border with Ukraine. Father Witold Burda, Postulator of the Cause of Beatification and priest of the Archdiocese of Przemyśl of the Latins, explained it thus to Vatican Radio: "The Church is full of theological arguments that have helped us to demonstrate to theologians of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints that, even a new-born child, without Baptism or a name, can be considered a martyr for the faith of Christ.

According to Yad Vashem the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, the couple witnessed the execution of the Jews taken from their houses in the summer of 1942. The Police found a Jewish family of six members sheltered in the Ulms' house, together with two sisters of another Jewish family, hiding in the farm attic. The German Police discovered the Jews in the farm possibly due to a hate complaint. They shot the Jews and then murdered Josef and Wiktorina, pregnant, and their children.

Father Burda said about the martyrs that they were "Spouses who built their life on solid foundations of faith. Every year thousands of pilgrims go to their tomb. The Ulms implemented the parable of the Good Samaritan as a commitment of Christian life.

On the arrival of the Nazi Police, Wiktorina had the first contractions due to the tension, although she was murdered immediately. The baby was able to be born but also died. The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints made this clear through a communication received by ZENIT on Tuesday, September 5. The note specifies three things: '1. At the moment of the

murder, Mrs Wiktorla Ulm was in an advanced state of gestation of her seventh child; 2. That child was given birth at the moment of his mother's martyrdom. 3. Hence he was added to the number of children who were also martyred. In fact, in the martyrdom of his parents he received the Baptism of blood."

A research book written by Polish priest Pawel Rytel-Andrianik and Italian journalist Manuela Tulli, entitled "They Also Killed

Children. The Ulms, the Martyr Family that Helped the Jews" [*Tambien Mataron Niños. Gli Ulma, la Famiglia Martire che Aiuto gli Ebrei*] testimony of the power of the Word of God in defense of all. The beatification of the unborn baby calls for reflection on the value of life, including unborn life.

The Beatification ceremony will be presided over by Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. ♦

## Mission Sunday Celebrations in India

Mission Sunday 2023 was organised in collaboration by the Catholic Sabha Bondel Unit, St Vincent DePaul (SVP), and the Carmelite Sisters (AC). [[https://daijiworld.ap-south-1.linodeobjects.com/Linode/images3/arun\\_301023\\_meena3.jpg](https://daijiworld.ap-south-1.linodeobjects.com/Linode/images3/arun_301023_meena3.jpg)]



### THE PRAYER INTENTIONS OF THE HOLY FATHER FOR THE YEAR 2024

**January:** *For the Gift of Diversity in the Church*

Let us pray that the Spirit help us recognize the gift of different charisms within the Christian community, and to discover the richness of different ritual traditions in the heart of the Catholic Church.

**February:** *For the Terminally Ill*

Let us pray that the sick who are in the final stages of life, and their families, receive the necessary medical and human care and accompaniment.





**ST PETER'S PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE, BENGALURU**

NO. 61, 8th CROSS, MALLESWARAM WEST POST, BENGALURU-560058 | PH: 080-23467205

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#10, 3rd CROSS, ULSOOR RD, SIVANCHETTI GARDENS, BENGALURU, KARNATAKA 560042



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Fr Antony Lawrence  
President,  
St Peter's Pontifical Institute,  
Bengaluru

Fr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu  
Director,  
Pontifical Mission Organisations,  
India



**At this Christmas and New Year**

**May** we close the doors for hatred,  
injustice and indifference.

&

**May** we open the doors for love,  
justice and responsibility.

**Rev. Dr. Ambrose Pitchaimuthu**  
**National Director**



#10, 3rd Cross, Ulsoor Road, Bengaluru 560 042  
Karnataka, INDIA



+91 94443 06664



pmorgbindia@gmail.com



www.pmoindia.org