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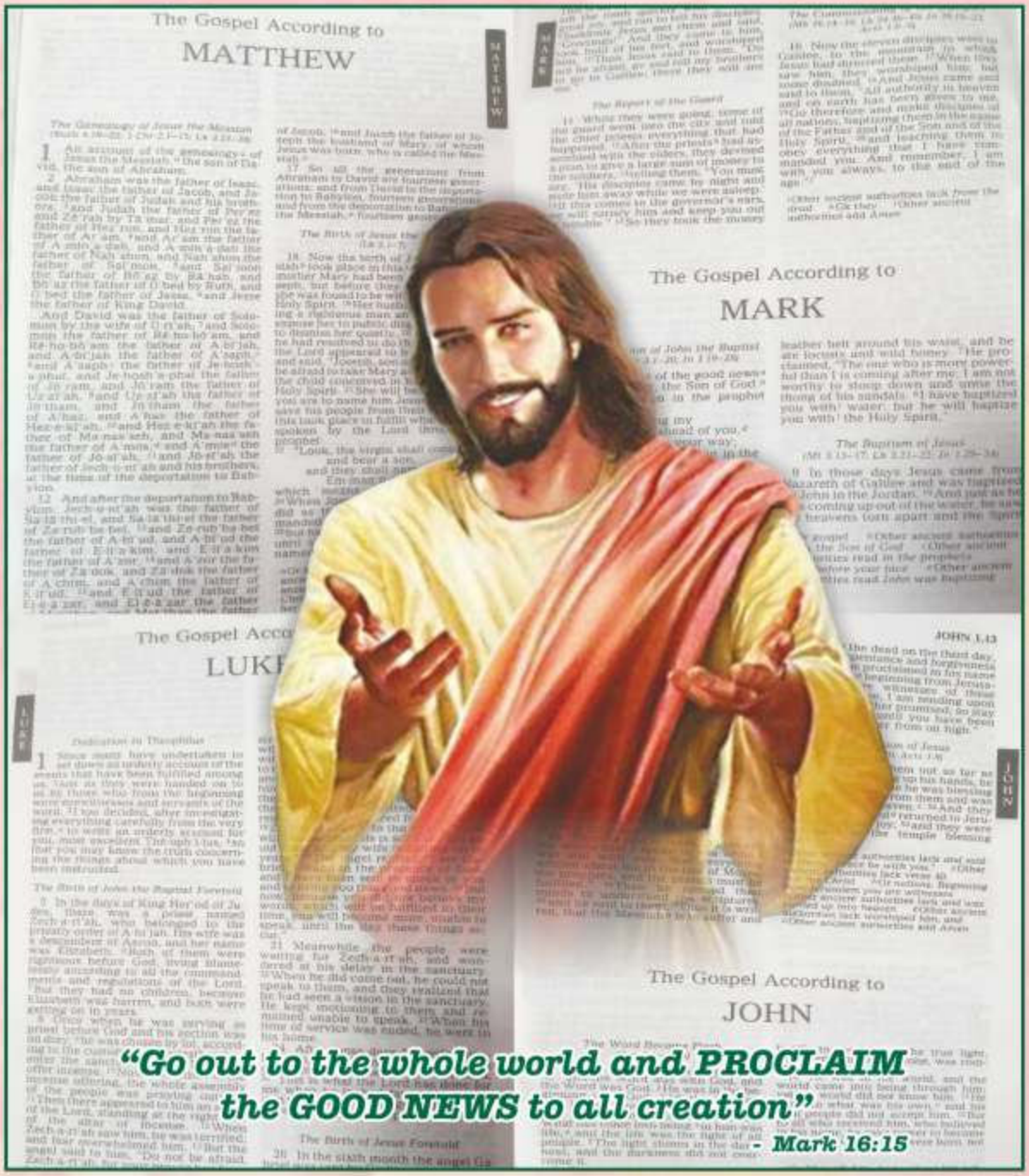
PROCLAIM

A magazine for Missionary Animation



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- Mark 16:15

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Lord Jesus said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.' – *Luke 8:21*

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Here am I, send me (Is 6:8)

The month of October is associated with the 'World Mission Sunday'. Last year, being the centenary year of the apostolic letter *Maximum Illud*, Pope Francis invited the Church to realize the joy of sharing the Gospel and its values, by celebrating October 2019 as Extraordinary Missionary Month [EMM]. The theme assigned last year was "baptized and sent". Every baptised is sent into the world that he/she may witness to the Gospel and joy that he/she has received. There could be no better fitting occasion than the pandemic situation that we are experiencing today to be real missionaries of the Gospel values by exercising our acts of mercy to the needy.

In continuity with last year's theme and to make every Christian realize that he/she ought to be ready to be sent into the world (Mt 28: 18-20), this year's theme for World Mission Day is chosen from the book of Isaiah "Here am I, Send me." The demand of the call has to be met enthusiastically, with great readiness, by the one who is sent. Pope Francis, in his message for World Mission Day 2020, says: "We are indeed frightened, disoriented and afraid. Pain and death make us experience our human frailty, but at the same time remind us of our deep desire for life and liberation from evil. In this context, the call to mission, the invitation to step out of ourselves for love of God and neighbour presents itself as an opportunity for sharing, service and intercessory prayer."

While the pandemic makes us suffer, we as Christians should see this situation as an opportunity to exhibit the love of God through our prayer, sharing and service. These three activities are closely associated with our missionary zeal. We need to pray for the missions and the young churches around the globe, we have to share our time, energy and money when possible, and we have to engage in works of charity to the needy around us.

The celebration of Mission Sunday reminds all of us that the character of the Church is missionary. Hence we celebrate the Mission Sunday even amidst this widespread anxiety. However it need not necessarily be held within the month of October this year. The local ordinary can set aside any Sunday as Mission Sunday as deemed appropriate to their regions when the situation would allow them to have a meaningful celebration.

Our Blessed Virgin Mother is the best example of the zeal to engage in acts of charity, taking the risk to run to a distant place to share with Elizabeth her time and energy and thus sharing the message of Joy. Hence the question that we should ask ourselves, as we celebrate this World Mission Day is: Am I ready to tell the Lord - "here I am, Lord, send me"?

Unless there is a personal love for the person of Jesus in our hearts, all our talk about 'Mission' will be just that, 'talk'. We might indeed engage in mission 'work', but it will be just a 'work' according to our fancies, with no love for the Lord in it, something that will enable us to derive some sort of self-satisfaction, or something to place on record.

So first, let us get our priorities right; first and foremost "cultivate "a love for our Lord, and then the zeal for mission will fill our hearts (Lk. 12: 49) and we will be shown what area of mission the Lord wants us to work in – that will be a true engagement in effective mission.

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
National Director (PMO-India)

Here am I, send me (Is 6:8)

Pope Francis' Message for Mission Sunday 2020

The World Mission Sunday is celebrated on 18 October 2020. In his message for World Mission Day 2020, the Holy Father stresses that the mission of the Church continues despite the Covid-19 pandemic: "In this year marked by the suffering and challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, the missionary journey of the whole Church continues in light of the words found in the account of the calling of the prophet Isaiah: 'Here am I, send me' (6:8)," the Holy Father says. "Understanding what God is saying to us at this time of pandemic also represents a challenge for the Church's mission. Illness, suffering, fear, and isolation challenge us." "... mission is a free and conscious response to God's call". He added that being able to discern that call depends on having a "personal relationship of love with Jesus present in his Church".

Following is the Holy Father's full message, provided by the Vatican:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish to express my gratitude to God for the commitment with which the Church throughout the world carried out the Extraordinary Missionary Month last October. I am convinced that it stimulated missionary conversion in many communities on the path indicated by the theme: "Baptized and Sent: the Church of Christ on Mission in the World".

In this year marked by the suffering and challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, the missionary journey of the whole Church continues in light of the words found in the account of the calling of the prophet Isaiah: "Here am I, send me" (6:8). This is the ever-new response to the Lord's question: "Whom shall I send?" (Ibid.).

This invitation from God's merciful heart challenges both the Church and humanity as a whole in the current world crisis. "Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other.

On this boat… are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying 'We are perishing' (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this" ('Meditation in Saint Peters Square', 27 March 2020). We are indeed frightened, disoriented and afraid. Pain and death make us experience our human frailty, but at the same time remind us of our deep desire for life and liberation from evil.

In this context, the call to mission, the invitation to step out of ourselves for love of God and neighbour presents itself as an opportunity for sharing, service and intercessory prayer. The mission that God entrusts to each one of us leads us from fear and introspection to a renewed realization that we find ourselves precisely when we give ourselves to others.

In the sacrifice of the cross, where the mission of Jesus is fully accomplished (cf. *Jn* 19:28-30), God shows us that his love is for each and every one of us (cf. *Jn* 19:26-27). He asks us to be personally willing to be sent, because he himself is Love, love that is always "on mission", always reaching out in order to give life. Out of his love for us, God the Father sent his Son Jesus (cf. *Jn* 3:16).

Jesus is the Father's Missionary: his life and ministry reveal his total obedience to the Father's will (cf. *Jn* 4:34; 6:38; 8:12-30; *Heb* 10:5-10).

Jesus, crucified and risen for us, draws us in turn into his mission of love, and with his Spirit which enlivens the Church, he makes us his disciples and sends us on a mission to the world and to its peoples.

"The mission, the 'Church on the move', is not a program, an enterprise to be carried out by sheer force of will. It is Christ who makes the Church go out of herself. In the mission of evangelization, you move because the Holy Spirit pushes you, and carries you" (Senza di Lui non possiamo fare nulla: Essere missionari oggi nel mondo. Una conversazione con Gianni Valente, Libreria Editrice Vaticana: San Paolo, 2019, 16-17).

God always loves us first and with this love comes to us and calls us. Our personal vocation comes from the fact that we are sons and daughters of God in the Church, his family, brothers, and sisters in that love that Jesus has shown us. All, however, have a human dignity founded on the divine invitation to be children of God and to become, in the sacrament of Baptism and in the freedom of faith, what they have always been in the heart of God.

Life itself, as a gift freely received, is implicitly an invitation to this gift of self: it is a seed which, in the baptized, will blossom as a response of love in marriage or in virginity for the kingdom of God. Human life is born of the love of God, grows in love and tends towards love. No one is excluded from the love of God, and in the holy sacrifice of Jesus his Son on the cross, God conquered sin and death (cf. *Rom* 8:31-39). For God, evil even sin becomes a challenge to respond with even greater love (cf. *Mt* 5:38-48; *Lk* 22:33-34). In the Paschal Mystery, divine mercy heals our wounded humanity and is poured out upon the whole universe.

The Church, the universal sacrament of God's love for the world, continues the mission of Jesus in history and sends us everywhere so that, through our witness of faith and the proclamation of the Gospel, God may continue to manifest his love and in this way touch and transform hearts, minds, bodies, societies, and cultures in every place and time.

Mission is a free and conscious response to God's call. Yet we discern this call only when we have a personal relationship of love with Jesus present in his Church.

Let us ask ourselves: are we prepared to welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to listen to the call to mission, whether in our life as married couples or as consecrated persons or those called to the ordained ministry and in all the everyday events of life? Are we willing to be sent forth at any time or place to witness to our faith in God the merciful Father, to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, to share the divine life of the Holy Spirit by building up the Church? Are we, like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, ready to be completely at the service of God's will (cf. *Lk* 1:38)?

This interior openness is essential if we are to say to God: "Here am I, Lord, send me" (cf. *Is* 6:8). And this, not in the abstract, but in this chapter of the life of the Church and of history.

Understanding what God is saying to us at this time of pandemic also represents a challenge for the Church's mission. Illness, suffering, fear, and isolation challenge us. The poverty of those who die alone, the abandoned, those who have lost their jobs and income, the homeless, and those who lack food challenge us.

Being forced to observe social distancing and to stay at home invites us to rediscover that we need social relationships as well as our communal relationship with God. Far from increasing

...Continued on Page 15

Our mission in the world (Mt 5: 13-16)

By Rick Ezell[k]

Introduction

When Jesus entered our world, he didn't box himself inside the four walls of the synagogue. He walked into the lives of all sorts of people. He mixed with sinners. He fraternized with outcasts. He touched the lepers. He associated with prostitutes. He dined with heathen. He scandalized the religious community by penetrating the world.

In order for Jesus to reach and rescue the world he had to penetrate it. Likewise, for us to impact and influence the world for Christ we must penetrate it.

As followers of Jesus, we are to live as God's ambassadors. We are his representatives, his messengers. We are on mission.

Jesus' strategy always involved believers going into the world, to penetrate the marketplace. Followers of Christ must recognize their ministry and mission of communicating God's love to people they come into contact each day.

The biblical mandate

It was this intentional mission strategy that Jesus had in mind when he said, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men. You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:13-16).

Let me highlight **three ideas** illustrated in Jesus' imagery of light that have direct bearing on our experiences in the marketplace.

1. Radiate Christ's love

Jesus made it absolutely clear that he wants his followers to radiate his love to those around them. That's why he talked about light. A tiny tungsten filament charged with electrical energy naturally radiates light and dispels darkness. It has no choice. We can't turn a light on and then tell it not to dispel darkness. The very nature of light is such that it must shatter the darkness around it.

In the same way, true Christians should, by their very nature, radiate something of the work of God in their lives to the people around them. We are the light of the world; we must, therefore, radiate that light and dispel darkness.

2. Don't refuse to shine

Jesus anticipated that some believers might choose to limit their candlepower, to refuse to shine their lights. He knew that they would feel safer securely hidden "under a bowl" (or in a stained glass sanctuary), where they cold bask in their anonymity and escape the accountability associated with "going public" with their faith. He anticipated this and forbade it. "Let your light shine!" he commanded. He did not,

and he does not now leave believers the option of letting their worlds remain in undisturbed blackness.

3. Spread Christ's influence

Jesus made it obvious that he wants us to spread his influence to every corner of this dark, fallen world. It's not enough that we simply take our lights out of hiding. He wants us to put them on a lamp stand where everyone can see them! God wants the light of his love to be held high so it can permeate every bit of darkness.

It is through the channels of our daily lives that God shines the light of his message of love.

How do we become agents of light?

II. The practical steps

The following practical steps can be implemented to communicate and model the love of Christ when you step outside the walls of the sanctuary and into your workplace.

1. Take on the 'unseen' Partner

Live as the psalmist who wrote, "I keep the LORD in mind always. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken" (Psa. 16:8). Before you go to work, take time to pray about your job. Pray for the people you'll be working with and those who you'll be serving. Remember, God is the "unseen Partner" in all of life. He is with us wherever we are. And we need his presence, especially in the marketplace.

Think about the meaning of these words from the 13t-century writer Meister Eckhart: "The kind of work we do does not make us holy, but we make it holy. . . . As we have the divine being within, we bless each task we do, be it eating or sleeping or watching, or any other [task]."

Being conscious of God's presence can have a profound impact on your job, and the people around you.

2. Transform your attitude

Work like the apostle Paul who wrote, "And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17). At your work, whatever it may be, have an attitude that reflects the positive nature of God's grace on your life.

Many jobs are boring. The marketplace is often a maze of nameless people. Sometimes good employees don't get recognized and promoted. The woes of layoffs and the threats of mergers and downsizing can be discouraging. But in the midst of less desirable circumstances our attitude can transform a boring, thankless job into a Christian ministry.

3. Realize your job is your mission field

Paul reminds us, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). "Why should I be ashamed of the gospel?" asks Paul. "It is the message of salvation, of life! It's powerful! It's the answer to man's greatest need!" And guess what? People in the marketplace are in the largest mission field in the world. You rub shoulders everyday with people who need the power and grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

What can we do in our work setting to minister and witness to those around us?

Let us list the people with whom we work that we will pray for. Let us begin praying for them each day. Let us begin each day by consecrating our work place. Let us dedicate it as a sanctuary to God. Let us make it a holy place where God is present and God can work, and, then, each day let us look for opportunities to minister, to serve, to help, to offer assistance. We may not be able to do everything, but we can do something.

*** Adapted for *Proclaim* by Dr Thomas J DSouza** ◆

Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith (PoPF)

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Jesus,

When **Pauline Marie Jaricot** began helping her brother Philéas who was preparing to leave as a student missionary to China, she was also learning of the struggles that our Church was going through. Living in France, she felt helpless, because she was also very ill. At 17, on recovering from her illness, she made a secret vow of chastity and a firm decision to channel all that she had into our Church's missionary activities. In 1817, she organised the first *'collection for the mission'* and from there began a movement that was to be proclaimed *'Pontifical'* by Holy Father Pope Pius XI later on in 1922.

Today, we know of this mission as the **Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the faith (PoPF),** associated with the famous **World Mission Sunday** celebrations, collecting contributions towards the **Universal Solidarity Fund**, in order to build and grow hurches and Church-facilities in new mission areas all over the world.

Pontifical Society of St Peter the Apostle (PoSPA)

In a similar way, we find another lay woman by name **Jeanne Bigard** answering a call from her local Church in France. Bishop Cousin was deeply inspired to train indigenous priests and he wished for them to take the Gospel to their respective nations. For this project he sought financial help from rich families as he wanted to build and support Seminaries in far-off mission lands. Jeanne and her mother Stephanie were already helping Bishop Cousin in this missionary activity when her father died. Selling off their property and earmarking the funds from them for the missions, she withdrew into a smaller two-bedroom apartment and began writing from there to as many Catholic Institutions and probable benefactors in order to organise prayers and a *'collection'* to help Bishop Cousin build a Japanese seminary.

Between 1889 and 1896 they became an *'Association of Lay persons'* who were totally involved in this passion for building and supporting seminaries and, in 1894, Jeanne printed the first *Manifesto* formally seeking such aid from all the Catholic faithful. In 1896, the *Board of Directors* released their first propaganda pamphlet and, from there, this journey for *'missions in mission lands'* became a worldwide *Pontifical'* Society certified by Pope Pius XI in 1922. Today, we know of this mission as the **Pontifical Society of St Peter the Apostle (PoSPA),** aiding the Universal Church through the building of

seminaries and formation houses, supporting the men and women religious together with their formators while working under the guidance of the local bishops and major superiors in different parts of the world.

Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood Associations (MCA)

Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson in France was greatly troubled and terribly upset each time he read of the news of children dying in China without having received their baptism. As he was unable to travel as a missionary to reach out to those children, he called Pauline Marie Jaricot and sought advice from her experiences with missionary activities. Together, they organised children from France to collectively send for the children in China, their prayer and material support, consistently and joyfully as their mission. *'One Hail Mary a day, one small coin a month'* was the first commitment made by children in 1843.

Years later this practise was christened as the *CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN* programme as it journeyed into the *'Pontifical'* route in 1922 as proclaimed by Pope Pius XI, aiding children in need all over the world.

Today, we know of this mission as the **Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood Associations (MCA)** wherein groups of children in MCA units come together to mobilise spiritual and material help for their counterparts in need, attesting their solidarity with the Universal mission of the Catholic Church.

Pontifical Missionary Union of Clergy, Religious and Consecrated Laity (PMU)

Father Paolo Manna PIME in Rome was convinced that the priests and religious had to be missionary in nature and that the missionary dimensions of priestly life, especially that of missionary animation of the clergy and laity, had to be enhanced in order to increase missionary vocations. He wanted an *'association of the clergy'* whose sole purpose would be to animate and instil missionary eagerness in the formators of communities. Through great preaching and publishing activities, he got ecclesiastics and lay persons involved in the missionary ideal while also challenging younger people to carry it out.

In 1916 this mission was approved as a Union by Pope Benedict XV and in a few years the zeal for this Society spread throughout the world.

The first *International Congress of the Union* in 1922 stated the need to teach *missiology* in seminaries. In his encyclical *Maximum Illud* in 1919, the Holy Father recommended its presence in all dioceses.

In 1956, Pope Pius XII proclaimed this Union as *'Pontifical'* and later renamed it as the **Pontifical Missionary Union of the Clergy, Men and Women Religious and the Consecrated Laity** as it is known today. With the grand centenary celebration of *Maximum Illud* in 2019 through the *Extraordinary Missionary Month (EMM) October 2019*, this Society has gained both in popularity and understanding, so much so that its importance now involves a close collaboration in missionary activities with the previous three Pontifical Mission Societies.

Nature and Charism of Pontifical Mission Societies

As a worldwide network of prayer and charity to support the works of evangelization and missionaries around the world, the four Pontifical Mission Societies are ever conscious that they are meant to be existing for the mission of the Universal Church at the service of the Holy Father involved in the missionary engagement of the entire people of God.

Each Pontifical Mission Society works for greater awareness and zeal for the *mission ad gentes* of all the baptised, through prayer, missionary animation, information, formation, co-operation and personal sacrifice. All our mission programmes are co-ordinated with utmost care so as to ensure solidarity and oneness among all local Churches, especially the young Churches in the mission lands.

SERVING GOD'S UNIVERSAL LOVE

To serve God's universal love in the most tangible format is in a way a challenge that we have embraced for the love of our Universal Church. We collect resources with a passion so as to improve and enhance some part of our local Church following International Statutes of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

Your sacrifices in the form of financial offerings have contributed towards new constructions, --- parish churches, chapels, presbyteries, multi-purpose halls, convents, etc. They have also helped, at least, partly repair and renovation projects, provided subsidies for evangelization works, maintenance of boarding schools, classrooms, education and medical assistance for the financially poor, while also improving basic amenities like drinking water facilities, sanitation etc.

Your prayers and financial assistance have also helped increase in vocations, provided support for religious institutions (Seminaries, Novitiates, Formation Houses, etc) and for publication of educational or faith propagation materials, even sustaining and enhancing animators, personnel etc.

Simply put, your contributions have helped daily sustenance (food, clothing and shelter) including maintenance (financial assistance, transportation and health requirements) of personnel involved in the missions all over our nation.

To you our gratitude ... In you our hope.

This year also, we have begun preparation for the World Mission Day events, keeping in mind the challenges of the corona virus and the Government regulations that go with it. We trust that we are ONE in our love and partnership with our Universal Church and that we will continue to exercise our commitment in the best way we can, through our prayerful and financial sacrifices.

Thanking you in anticipation and looking forward to another powerful and meaningful WORLD MISSION DAY 2020 with you and your loved ones, again.

God bless you all.

Fr Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu

National Director

Pontifical Mission Organizations INDIA. ◆

We are all entrusted to each other

Key Points on *Humana Communitas*

The Pontifical Academy for Life released a document on Wednesday, July 22, titled *Humana communitas* in the age of pandemic: Untimely meditations on life's rebirth.

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Academy, explained several key points within the document in the following written interview published in *Vatican News*.

Q: Let's explain the title: *Humana communitas* in the era of the pandemic. What does it mean?

Humana communitas is the title of the letter that Pope Francis sent to the Academy on January 6, 2019, on the 25th anniversary of its foundation. The Pope asks us to reflect on the relationships that unite the human community and create shared values, objectives, reciprocity.

This pandemic makes us extraordinarily aware of two things. On the one hand, it shows us how interdependent we all are: what happens somewhere on earth now involves the whole world. On the other hand, it aggravates inequalities: we are all in the same storm, but not on the same boat. Those with more fragile boats sink more easily.

The ethics of life goes global: will we try to save ourselves by moving further and further away from each other, or will the common vulnerability make us more human? We must answer this question and we must do it now: is the human being still a common responsibility?

Q: The subtitle says: outdated reflections on the rebirth of life. What does it mean?

"Outdated" is a word that comes from the philosophical tradition. Here we use it, with a little provocation, to indicate the urgency of finding a conception of community which, apparently, is no longer fashionable.

At a time when life seems suspended and we are struck by the death of loved ones and the loss of reference points for our society, we cannot limit ourselves to discussing the price of masks or the reopening date of schools. We will have to take the opportunity and find the courage to discuss better conditions to transform the market and education, instead. Does this sound like an exaggerated claim? Now, this is exactly what we mean by "out of date".

Q: The pandemic has shown the fragility of people and societies. It is a global crisis that affects the North and the South of the world and scientists still have no sure answers. Is this really a novelty?

The novelty is not so much in the emergence of an unknown virus. In fact, it could have been contained and defeated locally, significantly limiting the damage. The unprecedented fact is the speed and breadth with which it spread through the network of relations and transportation. New also is the role of the media, which decided how the awareness of the crisis had to spread: it has rightly been spoken of as an "infodemic".

The novelty, therefore, lies in the strange mixture of conformism and confusion induced by the reactions to the representation of danger in the era of "hyper-connected" societies: which are, however, also "hyper-individualistic". The weakness of the community, which should guarantee our support and protection in danger, leaves us exposed to our uncertainties and vulnerabilities.

Q: Political propaganda blames specific contexts and countries. But the reality is that we were unprepared. Why?

Of course, preparing for exceptional events is

a constant challenge for health systems. By preparedness, we mean getting ready to predict the problematic event and planning the possible response. This allows you to better deploy skills and resources, in a never-ending process of critical evaluation and progressive response capacity. Our capacity for intervention in the technical and management area deluded us that we could keep everything under control.

Instead, even in economically affluent societies, the pandemic has overwhelmed the efficiency of healthcare facilities and laboratories. It was difficult to become aware of the failure of our efficiency and recognize our limits.

Q: What relationship is there between Covid-19 and the exploitation of the planet's resources?

They are apparently two unrelated themes. It is one of the aspects of interdependence: phenomena pursued with specific and particular intents in the agricultural, industrial, tourism, and logistics fields add one to another and the effects of each one are amplified. Deforestation brings wild animals into contact with human habitats where intensive farming subjects livestock to the logic of industrial production. This is done to meet the demand for meat for export so that dishes for unbalanced and unsustainable diets can reach our dining tables.

All this facilitates the spillover of pathogenic micro-organisms from one species to another until they affect human beings.

Q: What have we learned about public health?

First of all, it is necessary to better balance the resources invested in disease prevention and those dedicated to treatment. This means focusing not only on hospitals but also on local networks, both for assistance and for health education. Furthermore, we understood that the health of everyone is closely related to the health of all. Responsible behaviour is needed not only to protect one's own well-being, but also that of others.

Q: What can be done to prevent the commercial exploitation of vaccines or to avoid disparities in health treatments among those living in richer and poorer countries?

Research must be regulated so that it does not respond only to political and economic interests (of a few), but it can be carried out with freedom and responsibility. For this reason, funding must be transparent and shared, so that the benefits can also be equally distributed.

Q: What about the world scenario? What role can be played by international organizations in a post-Covid-19 world?

The pandemic has shown that no country can proceed independently of others, not only for health reasons but also for economic reasons. Therefore, an organization supported by everyone, coordinating operations in the various phases of monitoring, containment, and treatment of

diseases, allowing a careful circulation of information, is essential.

The WHO seems indispensable, even if it certainly had some flaws: we must learn from its failures and improve its functioning. Only in this way can we put into effect the universal right to the highest levels of health care, as an expression of protection of the inalienable dignity of the human person.

Q: What is the role of the Christian community in this crisis?

The Christian community can help first of all to interpret the crisis not only as an organizational fact, which can be overcome by improving efficiency. It is a matter of understanding more deeply that uncertainty and fragility are constitutive dimensions of the human condition. This limitation must be respected and kept in mind in every development project, taking care of the vulnerability of others, because we are all entrusted to each other.

It is a conversion that asks to include and elaborate existentially and socially the experience of loss. Only starting from this awareness will it be possible to involve our conscience in a change that makes us responsibly supportive in a global fraternity.

Q: Interdependence, vulnerability, cooperation, solidarity, access to treatment are the keywords of this crisis. In other words: will we truly understand the value of life and the need to protect it, without ideological disputes?

This is a question that everyone must ask themselves and their community. There is no automatism that guarantees the transition from the factual interconnection (which we have experienced) to responsible solidarity (which implies an act of freedom). If there is no awakening of consciousness, we will just fix a few organizational problems, but everything will be like it used to be.

Instead, we need to rethink our models of development and coexistence, so that they are increasingly worthy of the human community. And therefore, they must be appropriate for the vulnerable people, not beyond their limits, as if they did not exist: within those limits, in fact, there are men, women, and children who deserve better care. All of them, not just ours.

If we open the doors to truly global threats to the human community, not even our own will be able to save themselves. So, here's the thing: from the "dry run" of this pandemic, we expect a burst of pride from the *Humana communitas*. It can make it if it wants to. ◆

Bioethics, death penalty, environment

Vatican's new directory for catechesis

By Jose Torres Jr.

The Vatican released on June 25, a new Catholic directory for catechesis that aims to guide the Church's evangelization efforts, especially on contemporary issues.

The updated "Directory for Catechesis," which was approved by Pope Francis in March, is a follow-up to the "General Catechetical Directory" of 1971 and the "General Directory for Catechesis" of 1997.

"[It] offers the fundamental theological-pastoral principles and some general orientations which are relevant for the practice of catechesis in our time," said Archbishop Rino Fisichella in the introduction.

The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, which is headed by Archbishop Fisichella, has been responsible for the preparation of the 300-page document.

The new directory aims to guide bishops, priests, religious, and lay Catholics involved in teaching the Catholic faith to the faithful.

The document provides fundamental elements for catechists to highlight in their teaching, including that "God is the initial and final reference of life, from his conception to natural death."

"The person is always unity of spirit and body; science is at the service of the person; life must be accepted in any condition, because it is redeemed by the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ," it adds.

Addressing contemporary issues

On more contemporary issues, the directory notes that catechists should promote education rooted in faith and Christian morality in the light of the teachings of the Church.

On bioethics, the directory emphasizes the difference between "therapeutic intervention and manipulation," especially when it leads to the risk of practicing eugenics.

The document also affirms God's creation of the human person as "male and female."

It notes that while the Church is aware of the personal complexity some people experience in the realm of gender and sexuality, "however, she is aware that, in a perspective of faith, sexuality is not only a physical datum, but is a personal reality, a value entrusted to the responsibility of the person."

On the issue of death penalty, the directory emphasizes the "intrinsic and inalienable dignity" of every human person.

On care for the common home, the directory references the need for "ecological conversion" in the face of accelerating and complex ecological problems.

"A catechesis sensitive to the protection of creation promotes a culture of attention paid both to the environment and to the people who live there," it states.

Vatican's new directory for catechesis addresses issues on bioethics, death penalty, environment It adds that part of environmental responsibility is responsibility and respect for other people by living a life of virtue free of consumerism.

The document also addresses the new challenges of the digital culture and the culture of globalization, citing the need for training in these areas because "they determine each other and produce phenomena that highlight a radical change in the existence of people."

"Catechesis, therefore, will have to make every effort to make the Church's teaching understood and to help to create a new culture," the

document states.

It says that every baptized person is a missionary who is called to find new ways of communicating the faith with commitment and responsibility.

The 300-page directory is divided into three parts divided with 12 chapters.

Catechists should be catechized

The first part titled "Catechesis in the evangelizing mission of the Church" speaks of the formation of catechists who must be "catechized before being catechists."

The guidelines say catechists are called to be vigilant in performing their specific task "so that absolute protection is guaranteed to every person, particularly to minors and vulnerable person."

The "process of catechesis," which forms the second part of the directory, underscores the importance of a "profound and effective communicative model" in catechism.

It proposes the use of art through the contemplation of beauty as a means of connecting with God and sacred music as a way of instilling the desire for God in the heart of people.

The guidelines also stress the role of the family, where people receive Christian education in a humble and compassionate manner.

The document says Christians are called to accompany others with closeness, listening, and understanding to be able restore hope and trust.

The directory also highlights the importance of "welcoming and recognizing" the differently-abled, recognizing them as "witnesses to the essential truths of human life" and are to be welcomed as a "great gift."

Catechesis should also focus on acceptance, trust and solidarity for migrants, who, far from their homeland, may experience a crisis of faith, it states.

Migrants are to be supported in the fight against prejudices and the serious dangers they may face, such as human trafficking, the document adds.

Preferential option for the poor

The directory says the faithful should understand "evangelical poverty" and promote a culture of fraternity and foster indignation against situations of misery and injustice suffered by the poor.

The directory calls attention to be given to prisons, describing them as an "authentic mission land."

Catechesis in Particular Churches

The third part of the directory is dedicated to catechesis in parishes, ecclesiastical movements, and other Church associations.

Parishes are highlighted as "examples of community apostolate," which should provide creative catechesis adapted to people's lived experience.

Other Church associations are also recognized as having "a great evangelizing capacity" that adds to the "Church's richness."

For Catholic schools, the directory proposes a movement from being "scholastic-institutions" to becoming "scholastic-communities" of faith with an educational project based on Gospel values.

It notes that teaching religion is distinct from, but complementary to, catechism, adding that "the religious factor is an existential dimension that should not be overlooked."

The directory affirms that "it is the right of parents and students" to receive integral formation that takes the teaching of religion into account.

Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue with Judaism and Islam is considered a special area for catechesis.

Catechesis must "encourage the desire for unity" in order for it to be a true instrument of evangelization.

It calls for a dialogue that combats anti-Semitism and promotes peace and justice with Judaism.

The directory calls for catechesis that can "deepen and strengthen the identity of believers," promoting their missionary impetus through witnessing as well as "friendly and cordial" dialogue.

Archbishop Fisichella said the guiding criterion for the writing of the new edition of the directory was deepening the Church's understanding of the role of catechesis in the area of evangelization.

Catechesis "needs to take on the very characteristics of evangelization," but without substituting it, the archbishop said at a press conference on June 25.

"In this relationship, the primacy belongs to evangelization not to catechesis," he said.

The directory's introduction states that each directory is in continuity with the Church's teachings, especially the documents of Vatican II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, papal encyclicals, and synods of bishops. ◆

Continued from Page 4: Here am I, send me (Is 6:8)

mistrust and indifference, this situation should make us even more attentive to our way of relating to others. And prayer, in which God touches and moves our hearts, should make us ever more open to the need of our brothers and sisters for dignity and freedom, as well as our responsibility to care for all creation.

The impossibility of gathering as a Church to celebrate the Eucharist has led us to share the experience of the many Christian communities that cannot celebrate Mass every Sunday. In all of this, God's question: "Whom shall I send?" is addressed once more to us and awaits a generous and convincing response: "Here am I, send me!" (*Is* 6:8). God continues to look for those whom he can send forth into the world and to the nations to bear witness to his love, his deliverance from sin and death, his liberation from evil (cf. *Mt* 9:35-38; *Lk* 10:1-12).

The celebration of World Mission Day is also an occasion for reaffirming how prayer, reflection, and the material help of your offerings are so many opportunities to participate actively in the mission of Jesus in his Church.

The charity expressed in the collections that take place during the liturgical celebrations of the third Sunday of October is aimed at supporting the missionary work carried out in my name by the Pontifical Mission Societies, in order to meet the spiritual and material needs of peoples and Churches throughout the world, for the salvation of all.

May the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization and Comforter of the Afflicted, missionary disciple of her Son Jesus, continue to intercede for us and sustain us.

- Rome, Saint John Lateran, 31 May 2020, Solemnity of Pentecost ◆

Pastoral conversion of parish communities

By JD Flynn (CNA)

The Congregation for Clergy has published new guidelines for the world's parishes, which aim to encourage parishes to think of themselves as missionary communities of evangelization.

The guidelines do not publish new norms or policies for parish life, but they do encourage Catholics to think prayerfully about what their parishes are, and what they're for.

Here are a few themes and takeaways:

The parish is mission

The guidelines offer parishes "a call to go out of themselves, offering instruments for reform, even structural, in a spirit of communion and collaboration, of encounter and closeness, of mercy and solicitude for the proclamation of the Gospel."

"Since its inception, the Parish is envisioned

as a response to a precise pastoral need, namely that of bringing the Gospel to the People through the proclamation of the faith and the celebration of the Sacraments," the document says.

To meet its mission, "a renewed vitality is required that favours the rediscovery of the vocation of the baptised as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a missionary of the Gospel." Especially in parts of the world where many people do not know or practice the faith, the document encourages parishes to discern how to think of themselves as missionary communities, and how to focus on proclaiming the Gospel to all who will hear.

The Eucharist and the poor should be central to parish life.

"The celebration of the Eucharistic mystery is 'the source and summit of the whole Christian life' and accordingly, the essential moment for building up the Parish community," the guidelines instruct.

The Mass should be the center of parish life, the document says, and the place from which the parish receives its mission. In the Mass, the parish "welcomes the living presence of the Crucified and Risen Lord, receiving the announcement of the entire mystery of salvation."

And, the document says, the poor should be invited to the heart of parish life.

"A 'sanctuary' open to all, the Parish, called to reach out to everyone, without exception, should remember that the poor and excluded must always have a privileged place in the heart of the Church," the document says.

"The Parish community evangelizes and is evangelized by the poor, discovering anew the call to preach the Word in all settings, whilst recalling the 'supreme law' of charity, by which we shall all be judged."

Territoriality matters, but can't be a limit.

Most parishes are defined by territory. With few exceptions, a parish is, properly speaking, the communion of the baptized within the limits of a certain territory, which is defined by the bishop. In the West, that concept has mostly been forgotten, Catholics tend to go to Mass at the parish where they feel most welcomed or fed, and despite encouragement from some bishops, many Sunday Massgoers don't know about parish boundaries.

The Congregation for Clergy's guidelines recognize that reality."Increased mobility and the digital culture have expanded the confines of existence," the guidelines state, "people are less associated today with a definite and immutable geographical context, and "digital culture has inevitably altered the concept of space, together with people's language and behaviour, especially

in younger generations."

But the document insists that territoriality matters. That "interpersonal relationships risk being dissolved into a virtual world without any commitment or responsibility towards one's neighbor."

The parish is not a self-selected or self-defined community, but a set of people with obligations to each other, and the guidelines warn against losing that sense.

Because the parish is intended to encourage in neighbors a sense of Christian responsibility for one another, the document is clear that parishes building plans for evangelization and missionary work must take into account "those who actually live within the territory. Every plan must be situated within the lived experience of a community and implanted in it without causing harm, with a necessary phase of prior consultation, and of progressive implementation and verification."

Still, the guidelines say, a parish's mission doesn't end at its territorial boundaries. In light of a changing world, "any pastoral action that is limited to the territory of the Parish is outdated."

In short, the guidelines urge Catholics to think of their parishes as a community, with obligations of neighbors to one another, who share a mission to proclaim the Gospel, together, beyond the limits of their own community.

Structures are for mission, but bureaucracy kills.

The guidelines emphasize that while the parish needs policies, programs, and structures to fulfill its mission, it must "avoid the risk of falling into an excessive and bureaucratic organisation of events and an offering of services that do not express the dynamic of evangelization."

To overcome a tendency towards bureaucratization and formalization of the Church's sacramental and catechetical life "conversion of structures, which the Church must undertake, requires a significant change in mentality and an interior renewal, especially among those entrusted with the responsibility of pastoral leadership."

The guidelines also urge dioceses to consider developing new structures and roles that can coordinate activity between parishes, especially those in close geographic proximity to each other.

Responsibility for the parish mission belongs to everyone, but each has a role to play.

The document emphasizes the co-responsibility of clergy, religious, and laity for the mission of the parish in the world. But the document also emphasizes that each person work for the Kingdom in the role to which he is called by baptism and vocation.

The guidelines emphasize that the parish pastor is entrusted with the full "care of souls" in the parish, a role unique to priests.

The document acknowledges a canonical provision that allows lay people to be entrusted

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Difference between crystals and relics

By Mary Rezac

To the outside viewer, crystals are pretty rocks. Perfectly curetted pictures of the pretty stones pepper the social media feeds of scores of millennials, as they have become increasingly popular on necklaces and as part of a "holistic", wellness-minded life. But, more than just a fashion statement, crystals are believed by some to have healing properties, related to their energy or vibrations.

The Catholic Church rejects all things associated with New Age beliefs, including the trendy crystals, as heretical and dangerous.

At the same time, the Catholic Church embraces the veneration of relics.

To the outside viewer, relics are likely strange at best, and morbid at worst.

Relics are pieces of the body, clothing or other objects that have a direct association with a saint or with Jesus Christ. They may be pieces of bone or vials of blood collected after a saint has died, or a piece of their cassock, a book they used, or items that have been touched to these things.

Relics are venerated, often with a touch or a kiss, for the sake of the worship of God, and to ask the prayers of those saints.

So why is it ok for Catholics to kiss a vial of St. John Paul II's blood and pray for his intercession, but not ok for Catholics to cure their negative energy by wearing a rock around their neck?

It's all about who you want to establish a relationship with, explained Fr. Jim Orr, the director of St. Anthony's Chapel in Pittsburgh, which is home to 5,000 relics.

"The importance of the relics is their association with the saint, because while the saints would be in the glory of heaven, their body is still their body, so it's that association that makes the relics important, and, if you will, creates the connection," Orr told CNA.

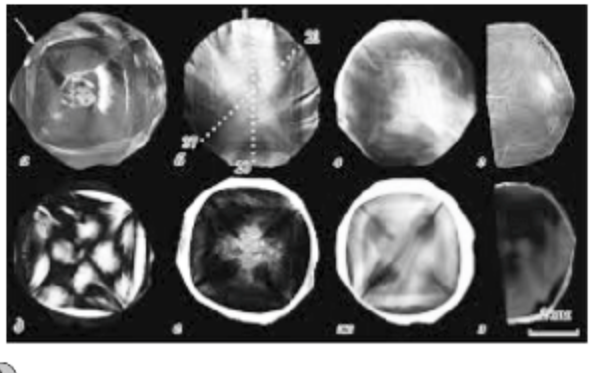
"When one venerates a relic, one is essentially making a connection with the saint in the glory of heaven. So what is going on spiritually is a kind of prayer to the saint, invoking their intercession."

What makes a saint holy or worthy of veneration is not some kind of "spiritual radioactivity," Orr noted, but their holiness, which is how well they loved God and neighbor.

"Holiness is the difference between the world and those who follow Jesus Christ, and it's a difference of behavior," Orr said.

"Look at God's great commandments: love God with all your heart, mind and soul, love your neighbor as yourself, love one another as I have loved you. This is how they will know you are my disciples, by your love for one another."

"And any of the great saints, if you look at them, (that love) is the characteristic of their lives.



So when we look at relics, or blessed or consecrated objects, it's about how they help us make the connection with those who have gone on into glory (in heaven)," he said.

In some ways, crystals are similar to relics, in that they are physical objects that can establish a spiritual connection. But it would be a mistake to think of them as anything but harmful, Orr said.

"It's far from harmless. This is thinly-veiled so-called witchcraft, which really is playing with demons," he said.

In the Vatican document "Jesus Christ: The bearer of the water of life", the Church teaches that all things associated with New Age beliefs, including crystals, must be rejected, as they claim to offer an alternative to the Word of God: "From the point of view of Christian faith, it is not possible to isolate some elements of New Age religiosity as acceptable to Christians, while rejecting others. Since the New Age movement makes much of a communication with nature, of cosmic knowledge of a universal good – thereby negating the revealed contents of Christian faith – it cannot be viewed as positive or innocuous."

Furthermore, the Catechism rejects New Age beliefs and the use of crystals: "All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone."

Father Gary Thomas, an exorcist for the Diocese of San Jose, told CNA that relics only obtain spiritual significance because they are associated with the saints. Saints are recognized as holy through the authority of the Church, which has its authority in God through apostolic succession, starting with the first Pope, St. Peter.

Crystals can have "perverted" spiritual energy through spells or pagan rituals that are performed with them, he said.

"Crystals can be used as conjuring objects for the demonic," Thomas told CNA. "I have had people come to me for deliverance who have been involved in the practice of using crystals for demonic musterings."

Orr, who has also been involved in exorcism ministry, said he too has seen people who have established connections with the demonic through their use of things like crystals.

"The demons go along until they can get their hooks into this person, and then they turn on them, and that's when we in the ministry see them, when they finally realize what they're dealing with, and they can't disassociate themselves from the demons," he said. That's when they come seeking the help of exorcists.

"So in that sense, that's how crystals are like relics. It's who you're creating a relationship with. The relics create a relationship with the saints and the glory of heaven; crystals create a relationship with demons."

----- *CNA/EWTN News* ♦

SAINT OF THE MONTH - I

St Pulcheria

399 – 453 **Feast Day: 10 September**

It is important that the Catholic religion must have holy priests, bishops, and popes. But often this is not enough. It is also necessary to have saints in the principal posts of the civil order.

The life of St. Pulcheria teaches us that the laypeople also have an important role to play in building Christian Civilization and defending the Church. The clergy, even with saints as pope and bishops, was not able by itself to extirpate the heresies of Nestorianism and Monophysism which the authority of saintly lay people in authority could do.

"Thanks to you, the scandals stimulated by the evil spirit were suppressed. Thanks to your efforts, the whole earth today is united in the confession of the same Faith."With these words, Pope St Leo the Great paid tribute to Empress Pulcheria, grand-daughter of Theodosius. She was baptized by St John Chrysostom in Constantinople and, while still very young, she made a vow of virginity along with her two younger sisters.

Pulcheria, the daughter of Byzantine Emperor Arcadius and Empress Eudoxia was born in 399. Her father died when she was 15, and she became regent of the empire on 4 July 414 until her younger brother Theodosius was old enough to rule. Pulcheria took special care of her brother's education, ensuring a strong religious background. She took a vow of chastity, and worked for religious reform and evangelization through the empire.

At age 20, Theodosius married Athenais, daughter of a pagan philosopher of Athens. His wife, who received the name Eudoxia when she was baptized, sought to weaken Pulcheria's influence over the Emperor. Eudoxia ended by persecuting her sister-in-law and favouring the heresy of Nestorius, while St Pulcheria supported St Cyril of Alexandria against the heretic. Pulcheria was removed from power and withdrew from the court.

In 441 Eudoxia was exiled because of her infidelity to the Emperor, and Pulcheria returned. Theodosius was supporting the heresy of the monk Eutyches, but Pulcheria convinced him to withdraw it and follow St Leo the Great.

In 450 Theodosius died. Pulcheria was again proclaimed Empress. One year later the Council of Chalcedon (451) – she assisted at its third session - condemned Monophysism, the heresy of Eutyches. In a letter to the Empress Pulcheria, St Leo credited her with overcoming the heresies of Nestorius and Euthyches.

On her return from exile, she found the Empire threatened by Attila. She agreed to marry General Marcian to maintain the stability of the Empire on the condition that he respects her vow of virginity. Together they governed the Empire. Marcian persecuted the Nestorians and followers of Eutyches, recalled the Catholic bishops who had been exiled by Theodosius, and kept Attila outside the boundaries of the Empire. St Pulcheria died in 453 at age 54.

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SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

St John Leonardi

1541 – 1609 **Feast Day: 09 October**

The 16-century Italian priest saw that humanity "stands in extreme need of Christ," Pope Benedict recalled. Thus, St. John Leonardi's apostolate proceeded in the knowledge that "there is no area that cannot be touched by his power; there is no evil that cannot find a remedy in him, no problem that is not resolved" in the person of Jesus Christ.

Born to middle-class parents during 1541 in the Tuscan region of Lucca, John (or Giovanni) Leonardi was the youngest of seven children. He enrolled at age 17 in courses to become a pharmacist, studied diligently for 10 years and became certified to practice the trade. But the young apothecary had long been interested in the priesthood, and soon turned to the study of theology to prepare for ordination.

Ordained in 1572, John soon became the spiritual director to a small group of young men looking to pursue vocations to the priesthood. They organized a communal form of life near a local church, and began the process that would lead to the formation of the present day Order of the Mother of God (also known as the Clerks Regular of the Mother of God).He saw orthodox preaching and good living by priests as the planks of the reform process that had just begun with the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

John was a priest who imbibed the best of the reform spirit of the Council of Trent. He saw that raising the standard of formation of the clergy would have its effect on the people. He also inspired the founding of the College of Propaganda Fide in Rome, where St Oliver Plunkett was educated and taught before he returned to Ireland.

He gathered a group of laymen about him to work in hospitals and prisons, became interested in the reforms proposed by the Council of Trent, and proposed a new congregation of secular priests. Great opposition to his proposal developed, but in 1583, his association (formally designated Clerks Regular of the Mother of God in 1621) was recognized by the bishop of Lucca with the approval of Pope Gregory XIII. John was aided by St Philip Neri and St Joseph Calasanctius, and in 1595 the congregation was confirmed by Pope Clement VIII, who appointed John to reform the monks of Vallombrosa and Monte Vergine. Though the bishop of Lucca supported him, there were many influential families in the city who resented his preaching and opposed him, forcing him into exile from his own city.

Civic leaders in Lucca opposed the formation of a new religious order, however, and acted to stop its formation. While ultimately ineffective, their efforts forced John Leonardi to spend most of the remainder of his life outside Lucca, with special exceptions granted by its government under the influence of the Pope.

In keeping with the spirit of the Catholic

Counter-Reformation launched by the Council of Trent, John Leonardi and his congregation of priests sought to deepen the knowledge and practice of the faith among clergy and lay Catholics. In a letter written to Pope Paul V during the early 17th century, he stressed the universal call to holiness of life for all members of the Church.

"As regards the remedies required by the Church as a whole, its reformation must be undertaken among high and low alike, among its leaders as well as its children," he told the Pope. But he believed that priority should be given to the formation of pastors, "so that reform begins among those from whom it should be communicated to others."

John went to Rome and was encouraged by his spiritual director, St Philip Neri, to send members of his congregation on the foreign missions. In 1603, together with the Spanish prelate G B Vives, he was responsible for a project to give seminary training for priests who would go on overseas missions. This later became the "College for the Propagation of the Faith" and still exists today. John died in Rome in 1609.

He died at the age of 68 in Rome on October 9, 1609, of plague contracted while he was ministering to the stricken. He was venerated for his miracles and religious fervour and is considered one of the founders of the College for the Propagation of the Faith. He was beatified on November 10, 1861, by Pope Pius IX and was canonized on April 17, 1938, by Pope Pius XI

Source: *www.catholic.org/saints; www.franciscanmedia.org/saint; www.catholicnewsagency.com/saint; www.catholicireland.net/saintoftheday* ◆

Continued from Page 20: St Pulcheria

Pulcheria stood by the Church and supported the lawful authority in safeguarding the true doctrine of the Church against heresies. She used her imperial throne and power to favour two saints, Pope St Leo and Patriarch of Alexandria St. Cyril.

St Pulcheria's first care was for the service of God. She consecrated herself as a virgin; she was the regent of her brother; she fought against the bad influence of her sister-in-law; she was exiled but did not abandon the good cause; she returned and helped it conquer. Her only concern was to make the cause of God victorious.

We should ask St Pulcheria for the grace to understand and make understood with renewed ardour our role as laymen in temporal society following the plan of Divine Providence. That is, to serve God and Holy Mother Church living in the temporal order and transforming it into a true Christendom.

Source: *www.traditioninaction.org/SOD; www.encyclopedia.com; https://catholicsaints.info* ◆

Continued from Page 17: Pastoral conversion of parish communities

with pastoral care in a parish because of a shortage of priests, but emphasizes that such a situation should be rare, and "a temporary and not a permanent measure," that can only be used when there is a true lack of priests.

"We are dealing here with an extraordinary form of entrusting pastoral care, due to the impossibility of appointing a Parish Priest or a Parish Administrator, which is not to be confused with the ordinary active cooperation of the lay faithful in assuming their responsibilities."

"Furthermore, it would be preferable to appoint one or more deacons over consecrated men and women or laypersons for directing this kind of pastoral care," the guidelines suggest.

The document takes care to urge against the "clericalization of the laity" so frequently warned about by Pope Francis, in which laity are urged to take up roles more typically occupied by priests.

At the same, the document says that laity are called to give their lives to the mission of the Gospel and the work of the Church.

Laity are called "to make a generous commitment to the service of the mission of evangelisation, first of all through the general witness of their daily lives, lived in conformity with the Gospel, in whatever environment they are in and at every level of responsibility; in a particular way, they are called to place themselves at the service of the Parish community."

The guidelines also encourage a vision of deacons as ministers of service, rather than as assistants to parish priests, and of religious men and women as contributors to the evangelizing mission of a parish through the witness of their religious consecration.

Outgoing dynamism.

The guidelines conclude with a call for "outgoing dynamism" that directs parishes toward an evangelizing mission, the task of the entire People of God, that walks through history as the "family of God" and that, in the synergy of its diverse members, labours for the growth of the entire ecclesial body.

It urges that "the Parish might rediscover itself as a fundamental place of evangelical proclamation, of the celebration of the Eucharist, a place of fraternity and charity, from which Christian witness can shine for the world." ◆

Six women lay experts appointed to Council for the Economy

Pope Francis has appointed thirteen new Members to the Vatican's Council for the Economy.

The Council is composed of fifteen Members, eight of whom are chosen from among cardinals and bishops; the other seven are experts of various nationalities. Of these seven lay experts, six are women.

These are the lay exerts whom the pope has appointed: Charlotte Kreuter-Kirchhof (Germany), Eva Castillo Sanz (Spain), Leslie Jane Ferrar (Geat Britain), Marija Kolak (Germany), Alberto Minali (Italy), Maria Concepción Osákar Garaicoechea (Spain), and Ruth Maria Kelly (Great Britain).

News Round-Up

World's largest crucifix in Michigan

The 28-ft tall statue is one of the most visited shrines in the Wolverine State.

Think of impressive crucifixes, and places like Rome or Jerusalem come to mind. Yet, the world's largest crucifix is found amidst the woods of a pristine forest in Michigan. The "Cross in the Woods" is the work of American sculptor Marshall Fredricks, who assembled the majestic wooden and bronze sculpture after being commissioned to create a much smaller piece (the original commission asked for a 6-ft tall crucifix).

Fredricks was asked to craft the crucifix by the parish of Indian River, a rural area that in 1946 was designated by Bishop Francis J. Haas of the Diocese of Grand Rapids as the place of worship for local parishioners who lived far away from the nearest church.

It took Fredricks four years to complete the majestic sculpture, weighing seven tons and measuring 28 feet. He particularly wanted to "give the face an expression of great peace and strength and offer encouragement to everyone who viewed the Cross."

After getting special permission from the Vatican to represent Christ without the crown of thorns, Fredricks sculpted Jesus' face in a peaceful expression that still inspires awe among visitors today.
Once the plaster model was completed, Fredericks asked Kristians-Kunst Metalstobori Foundry in Oslo, Norway, to cast it in bronze. The 7-ton statue was then shipped across the Atlantic, making it one of the heaviest sculptures ever to be shipped from Europe to the US.

The figure of Christ was then attached to the Crucifix at the Indian River Catholic Shrine in Indian River, Michigan, in 1959 using 13 bolts each 30-in long and 2-in thick. Since then, the tallest crucifix in the world has helped put rural Michigan onto the Catholic tourism map, attracting more than 300,000 visitors every year.

https://aleteia.org/2019/10/17/the-worlds-largest-crucifix-is-in-michigan ◆

Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

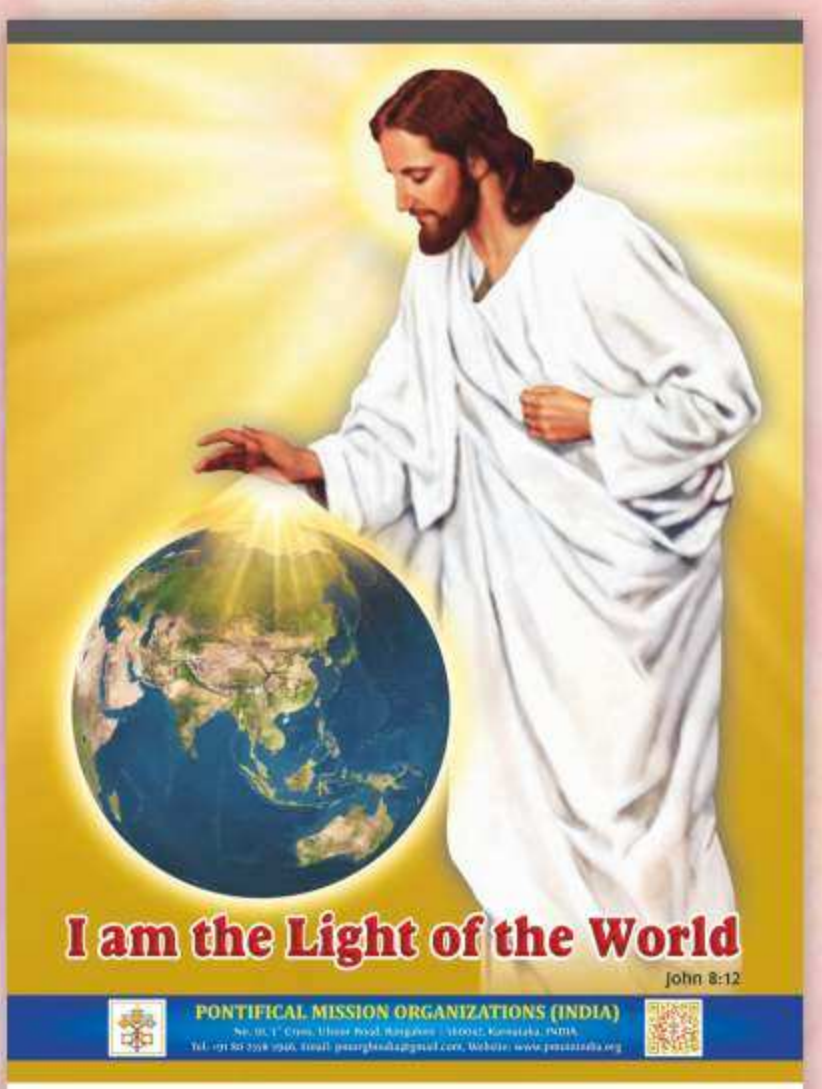
September 2020 : Respect for the Planet's Resources

We pray that the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner.

October 2020 : The Laity's Mission in the Church

We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church.

Did you collect your copy of our 2021 calendar?



Come! Make MISSION a MOVEMENT

ST MATTHEW – PATRON SAINT OF BANKERS, ACCOUNTANTS & TAX COLLECTORS

(Feast Day: 21st September)

O God, who with untold mercy were pleased to choose as an Apostle Saint Matthew, the tax collector, grant that, sustained by his example and intercession, we may merit to hold firm in following you. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

For more information contact us at:

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