

The Missionary Oblate



No. 59

Jan. - Jun. 2021

This issue of *the Missionary Oblate* is gratefully
and affectionately dedicated to the memory of

Bishop Victor Gnanapragasam OMI,
the Bishop of Quetta, Pakistan.



An intrepid missionary, innovative Bishop,
much loved Pastor and Shepherd
who passed away into the bosom of his Creator
on 12 December, 2020

The Missionary Oblate

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Authors are responsible for the views expressed
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Editorial

BEWARE OF COVID-19 VIRUS AND OTHER “VIRUSES”

The countries which gloried in money power, weapon power and prestige have been made powerless and humiliated by Covid-19 virus. Since efforts are being made to discover and invent new vaccines to counteract Covid-19 pandemic and also to cure the sick and heal the depressed and the disturbed, Pope Francis has appealed to the governments and organisations not to forget the poor and the vulnerable when distributing the new vaccines when they are available.

While appreciating the efforts that are being made by the governments including the Sri Lankan, to cure the sick and the afflicted, it is also necessary to employ the necessary strategies and methods to prevent the outbreak of new diseases. Although we know where the Covid-19 virus originated, yet we do not know what really caused this virus. Hence we are compelled now to take good care to prevent deaths caused by other “viruses” (diseases) in Sri Lanka.

For example: Thousands of our people are dying due to hunger, under-nourishment and sicknesses caused by unemployment or under-employment. Destruction of forests and mangroves will cause loss of oxygen and more of heat waves and thereby affect the health of our people. Polluting the ocean, the lagoon, reservoirs and rivers cause unemployment, sicknesses and death. Senior Professor Athula Senaratne of the Faculty of Geological Studies in Peradeniya University has pointed that research over the last three decades

had clearly indicated that the Muthurajawela wetland was unfit for development activity and any attempt to meddle with its environmental conditions would result in disastrous consequences affecting human life (*Daily Mirror*, 12 January, 2020). Producing and consuming drugs and fast foods will also pave the way for many new diseases and deaths. Use of chemical fertilisers is already causing chronic kidney disease and deaths in many areas in Sri Lanka.

Many innocent people are also dying daily on our roads due to reckless driving of many individuals. While efforts are being made in Sri Lanka to save the animals e.g the elephants and tigers, some parents in Sri Lanka are killing their own children conceived in the wombs.

Emmanuel Fernando, OMI

DOES POPE FRANCIS APPROVE GAY “MARRIAGES”?

Introduction

The latest propaganda campaign (thanks mainly to fake news) to tarnish the image of Pope Francis and to distort his teachings is the wide-spread rumour that he supports marriages of homosexuals. Social media news items with attractive if not provocative titles such as “Pope Francis backs same-sex civil marriages”, “Pope Francis approves gay marriages”,...etc. went viral in many of the internet web-sites, social and other media messages that criss-crossed the world in the month of October 2020.¹ In this article, first of all, we intend to probe into this issue seriously and check the veracity of such social media messages. Thereafter, we hope to highlight the crucial role which the contemporary social media and other parties with vested interests play in distorting the truth in the form of what is now known now as ‘fake news’. Finally, we will point out why the received tradition of divine revelation would not allow the Church to change her teachings on what are now popularly known as “homosexual marriages”.

What did Pope Francis really say?

¹ See for example, Jacob Harowitz and Natalie Kitroeff, “Pope Francis’ Views on Same-Sex Civil Unions were cut from a 2019 Vatican Interview”, *New York Times*, 21st October 2020 available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/21/world/europe/pope-francis-same-sex-civil-unions.html> (Last accessed on 19th October 2020).

Ever since his election as Pope in 2013, Pope Francis has categorically stated that the Catholic understanding of marriage is exclusively reserved to heterosexual marriages. For example, in *Amoris Laetitia* he writes:

Christian marriage, as a reflection of the union between Christ and his Church, is fully realized in the union between a man and a woman who give themselves to each other in a free, faithful and exclusive love, who belong to each other until death and are open to the transmission of life, and are consecrated by the sacrament, which grants them the grace to become a domestic church and a leaven of new life for society.²

In the same passage, he does not hesitate to state that “some forms of union radically contradict this ideal”³ which surely is a reference to homosexual unions among others because later in the same document, the Pope clearly states that homosexual unions can in no way be put on par with heterosexual marriages:

In discussing the dignity and mission of the family, the Synod Fathers observed that, “as for proposals to place unions between homosexual persons on the same level as marriage, there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in

² Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), No:292. Hereafter, this document will be referred to as AL.

³ Ibid.

any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family".⁴

In the same document, he also condemns all sorts of undue influences brought on the Church community by external pressures by interested parties to accept such unions as "marriages" when he writes:

It is unacceptable "that local Churches should be subjected to pressure in this matter and that international bodies should make financial aid to poor countries dependent on the introduction of laws to establish 'marriage' between persons of the same sex".⁵

However, in the same vein, the present Pope has been eloquent in defending homosexuals and their rights as human persons with their inherent God-given dignity. This is nothing but a continuation of the teachings of his immediate predecessors such as Benedict XVI and John Paul II. Thus, in his post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation he says:

The Church makes her own the attitude of the Lord Jesus, who offers his boundless love to each person without exception. During the Synod, we discussed the situation of families whose members include persons who experience same-sex attraction, a situation not easy either for parents or for children. We would like before all else to reaffirm that every

⁴ Ibid., No:251.

⁵ Ibid.

person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while ‘every sign of unjust discrimination’ is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence.⁶

Thus, in his official teachings, the Pope while not hesitating at all to point out that in no way could their civil unions be put on par with heterosexual marriages, also does not hesitate to defend the fundamental human rights of homosexual persons. In other words, such unions can never be called “marriages”, according to the present Pope.

However, at this year’s Film Festival in Rome a short documentary on Pope Francis named “Francesco” was released, and it was in that documentary that Pope Francis repeated his appeal that the homosexual persons need to be legally protected. In that film, he says that certain legal provisions are now called for, to protect the already existing civil unions of gay persons so that they and their fundamental human rights would be protected. Referring to the civil unions of homosexual persons, the Pope said: “What we have to have is a civil union law – that way, they are legally covered. I supported that”.⁷ Unfortunately, these informal words of the Pope (which can never be counted as part of the official magisterial teachings in any sense whatsoever) created “a global media firestorm”.⁸ The important question to be asked

⁶ Ibid., No:250.

⁷ Christopher Lamb, “Walking with Freedom”, *The Tablet*, 31st October 2020, 8

⁸ Ibid.

at this juncture is: did the Pope say anything contrary to the official Catholic teaching?

To begin with, the above-mentioned humane appeal of the Pope (on behalf of homosexual persons) is very much in harmony with Catholic Social Doctrine (CSD) if one were to keep in mind the prevalent tendencies of homophobia and the consequent harassment which the homosexual persons have to constantly undergo in some parts of the world, even today. In fact, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* had already said in 2004:

Human rights are to be defended not only individually but also as a whole: protecting them only partially would imply a kind of failure to recognize them. They correspond to the demands of human dignity and entail, in the first place, the fulfilment of the essential needs of the person in the material and spiritual spheres. “These rights apply to every stage of life and to every political, social, economic and cultural situation. Together they form a single whole, directed unambiguously towards the promotion of every aspect of the good of both the person and society ... The integral promotion of every category of human rights is the true guarantee of full respect for each individual right”.⁹

⁹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005, No:154, 85.

Anyone who believes in the inherent human dignity of every human being (as taught by the CSD), has no other option but to uphold the rights of every human being irrespective of his/her particular sexual orientation. A person cannot be reduced to his/her sexual orientation alone, namely, whether he/she is heterosexual or homosexual. A person is much more than his/her sexual orientation as the letter of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in 1986 which was signed by its Prefect, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI (and approved by the then Pope John Paul II during a special audience granted to Cardinal Ratzinger) says:

The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Every one living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties, but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental Identity: the creature of God, and by grace, his child and heir to eternal life.¹⁰

¹⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons", 1986, No:3, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia//congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html (Last accessed on 30th October 2020).

In other words, in the eyes of the official magisterium of the Church every human person is worthy of respect that is due to his/her God-given human dignity. Pope Francis in the above-mentioned documentary has highlighted just that. It was this particular statement that has been taken out of context and used (abused?) by those rumour-mongers to propagate the falsehood or the “fake news” that the Pope now backs same-sex marriages.

Given the past experience (especially in the aftermath of the present Pope’s election to office), we need to keep in mind that two powerful lobbies could well be behind such propaganda to distort what Pope Francis really said in this documentary, obviously for their own advantage. First, the pro-homosexual lobbies, especially in the developed Western world would love to forcefully put such distorted views into the Pope’s mouth simply to show that the Church – thanks to the present Pope – approves gay marriages. In fact, for a few decades now, they had been clamouring to get the world and the Church recognize their homosexual unions as “marriages”. Quite a number of Western countries, in fact, have succumbed to such pressures of homosexual lobbies, and have legalized the so-called “homosexual marriages” while a vast majority of Asian and African countries which still preserve their ancient cultural and religious values have vehemently and valiantly resisted such pressures.

Ironically, the second lobby that would love to propagate such distorted views consists of disgruntled and frustrated Catholics within the Church itself – including a few influential Cardinals and Bishops – who do not approve the

style of the present papacy. Most of them resist the reforms which Pope Francis has brought about basing himself on the solid magisterial teachings of the Second Vatican Council. They would never miss any and every opportunity to tarnish the image of the present Pope. One of the classic illustrations of such a smear campaign within the Church is the way they resisted and propagated distorted views and half-truths about the present Pope's teaching on the pastoral care of the divorced and remarried Catholics. Basing himself exclusively on what the two successive Synods of Bishops in Rome in 2014 and 2015 taught with regard to remarried Catholics, Pope Francis in his *Amoris Laetitia* advises the pastors to make a careful personal and pastoral discernment of the concrete situations of such remarried Catholics, and then to see whether some of such Catholics who are not guilty of destroying their first valid marriages could approach the sacraments, including the Eucharist. This is nothing new in papal teachings¹¹, but rather is a development of what his two immediate predecessors themselves had already recommended. They recommended a careful pastoral discernment of the cases of all remarried Catholics, instead of simply judging all of them to be living in serious sin.¹² Pope Francis has reached the conclusion (based on the premises given by Pope John Paul II which were repeated by Benedict XVI) that after a serious personal and pastoral discernment,

¹¹ Neither is this practice new if one recalls how the CDF itself recommended (in 1973 and in 1976) what is traditionally known as "the Internal Forum solution" as a sane pastoral practice with regard to the divorced and remarried Catholics.

¹² Cf., Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), No:84; Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), No:29.

some remarried Catholics in their properly formed conscience may decide to receive sacraments. In no way, was it a blanket permission for any and every remarried Catholic to receive the sacraments, according to his/her whims and fancies. But the opponents of Pope Francis within the Church (though they are a minority, a vociferous and influential minority at that!) gleefully spread the distorted interpretation of AL that the Pope now allows all divorced and remarried Catholics to receive the sacraments! In other words, their accusation was that in AL the present Pope had drastically changed, and thus, violated the cherished Catholic doctrine on the prohibition of remarried Catholics receiving sacraments. Anyone who has some intelligence and common sense who reads AL (especially its Chapter Eight where this issue is explicitly dealt with) will realize without much difficulty that what the Pope calls for is to discern pastorally the possibility of some of such Catholics (who are not guilty of being morally responsible for violating their first valid sacramental marriage) receiving the sacraments, but unfortunately, as surveys have pointed out, a vast majority of those unjust critics of AL have not even read it at least once.

The Role of Fake News in Distorting what the Pope really said

There is no denying that modern electronic gadgets and means of communications have enabled all human beings to live better lives. Social media is no exception to this. This is something praiseworthy because such media enable us to know what exactly is going on in the world around us as soon as various events occur. However, those who do not go the extra step to verify what they receive via any and every source

of modern social media, consider such messages as unchangeable ‘gospel truth’. Since a vast majority of today’s world (especially the younger generations) generally do not have the habit of reading (especially newspapers most of which have news based on recognized, authoritative news sources) and verifying things, this becomes an acute social and ethical problem today. Their uncritical over-dependence on such news has enabled social media to have a deep dent into contemporary social ethos. As a result, a vast majority of the contemporary recipients of social media have become simply gullible of whatever they receive as news irrespective of the doubtful and erroneous sources of such “news”. This has become such a problem today not only in the secular world but also within the Church so much so that now many have begun to speak of “fake news” with regard to false or distorted news to do with the world or the Church. By this contemporary popular term “fake news” is meant any news that is untrue but presented as really true news. Often, such news is presented with the aim of damaging the good name or the reputation of a person or a collective entity, or to hoodwink customers of goods via untrue advertisements. Such news has no basis in fact but are presented as being factually accurate. With the ever-developing technology, today, the diffusion of fake news has increased with the rise of social media, especially the Facebook News Feed. The wide exchange of SMS messages through smartphones, I-pads and I-phones has also contributed to the rapid spread of fake news in our present world. Since those agents or sources of fake news often remain anonymous, it is difficult to prosecute them for libel. The propagators of fake news take full advantage of this legal *lacuna*. Consequently, as long as there is an ever-ready, uncritical, gullible audience, they have a field day in achieving their petty, narrow-minded, selfish goals, namely, the tarnishing of a good name of a person or distorting true reality. With regard to the controversy involving what Pope

Francis is alleged to have said in the above-mentioned documentary, both these factors have been at play, namely, the existence of a gullible audience and malicious agents, which eventually had made the spread of the distortion of what he really said quite easy. As the recent statement of clarification issued by the Vatican Secretariat of State pointed out, what the Pope is portrayed as having said in the above-mentioned documentary, was in fact to do with “an interview, more than a year ago” during which the “Pope responded to two different questions in two different moments, which in the mentioned documentary, were edited and published as just one answer without due contextualization, which has generated confusion”.¹³ In his response to the first question, Pope Francis “made a pastoral reference about the need, within the family, that a daughter or son with homosexual orientation never be discriminated”.¹⁴ It was in referring to them that he said: “homosexual persons have the right to be in the family; they are children of God, they have the right to a family. No one can be thrown out of the family or have his/her life made impossible because of it.”¹⁵ This statement needs to be taken in the particular pastoral context of a family which has a son or daughter whose orientation is homosexual. We need to imagine the social and moral crisis into which such a family is all of a sudden dragged into. It is one thing to condemn homosexual activity but it is another thing to empathize with a family that has discovered that one of its members is homosexual. Such ecclesial empathy which was already expressed by the two Synods of Bishops that preceded

¹³ Larissa I. Lopez and Anita Bourdin, “Letter of Vatican on Pope’s Words in Documentary ‘Francis’: Pastoral Clarification willed by Francis”, *Zenit Daily News Dispatch* (English), 2nd November 2020.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

AL in 2014 and 2015, was expressed again by the Pope when he wrote in 2016:

During the Synod, we discussed the situation of families whose members include persons who experience same-sex attraction, a situation not easy either for parents or for children. We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while ‘every sign of unjust discrimination’ is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence. Such families should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God’s will in their lives.¹⁶

The next question of the interview (on which the above-mentioned documentary was based) was to do with a change to a local civil law enacted in his native Argentina some ten years ago (while he was the Cardinal Archbishop of the Argentine capital Buenos Aires) to which the Pope responded that he had then “spoken of the right of homosexual persons to have certain legal coverage”, and went on to state: “What we have to have is a law of civil coexistence; they have the right to be covered legally. I defended that”.¹⁷ As we shall see in what follows, these statements of the Pope are very much in harmony with the official Catholic moral teachings that had been taught much before Francis was elected to be the Bishop of Rome.

¹⁶ AL, No:250.

¹⁷ Ibid.

But unfortunately, keeping to popular contemporary trend, most of those Catholics who were scandalized by the fake news on what the Pope really said preferred to simply rely on those short crispy news items they received through modern electronic media, especially on social media, rather than watching the documentary itself or verifying what his statements really meant from reliable and authentic sources. They preferred to be blown along the popular and sensational waves of fake news about the Pope's stand on homosexual persons. Hence the enormous confusion and scandal created, especially among the believers, by that documentary itself, and also by the bizarre interpretations given to what the Pope said therein. They never took the trouble to check what exactly has the Church been officially teaching on the pastoral care of the homosexual persons all along and whether the present Pope was continuing such teachings or not. Instead, they preferred to be gullible of all that the social media propagated, thus, falling easy prey to fake news and their creators. This is how even in the secular world, often, the good name of many a world leader and their political careers have been ruined by such fake news. But among the religious leaders, Pope Francis has become a regular target of fake news of contemporary social media, especially with regard to his teachings on marriage and sexual ethics. What we witnessed recently on the distortion of what he really said about the need for civil legal protection of homosexual persons is just one such instance.

The Church's consistent teaching on the so-called "Homosexual Marriages"

From time immemorial, the Catholic Church has condemned homosexuality as not compatible with God's creative design for humanity. Human sexual activity, according to the Catholic belief, has been instituted by God the Creator as something to be between a male and a female. Basing herself on divine revelation (especially on the model given in the Book of Genesis), the Church has insisted that God's intention was hetero-sexual activity and never homo-sexual activity. This revealed truth has got so entrenched in the Catholic belief that it has become an essential characteristic of Catholic identity itself, i.e., to insist on heterosexual rather than homosexual activity. History of the Church is replete with instances when not only homosexual activity but those homosexuals engaged in such activity were ostracized, and at times, even punished with severe penalties, including, death. This ecclesial attitude was very much in harmony with the secular attitude of the times when not much was known about the complex phenomenon of homosexuality which has existed among human beings for millennia. However, with the ongoing scientific discoveries of the meaning and genesis of the reality of human sexuality, thanks mainly to human sciences, such as anthropology, psychology and sociology, today, the world has a better understanding of homosexuality, though not a full understanding yet. For example, no one, not even scientists, can trace the real origins of homosexuality. That is to say, the question whether a person is homosexual at his/her birth itself (due to his/her genes and biological make-up) or whether the person acquires this tendency later in life is not yet satisfactorily answered. Today, the magisterium itself very prudently distances itself from giving a definitive response to this complicated but all-important question. Thus, in the

Catechism we read: “Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained”.¹⁸

In view of the scientific discoveries as well as the vital questions not yet answered with regard to the phenomenon of homosexuality, the official Catholic magisterium gave a solid teaching in 1975 when the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued a document entitled *Persona Humana*. In this document, among other matters, the Catholic Church for the first time in her history made an official distinction between a homosexual orientation of a person and his/her homosexual acts.¹⁹ In this radically new Catholic teaching, what is meant mainly was that since the genesis of homosexual orientation is not known definitively, it has to be tolerated for the document states that they “must certainly be treated with understanding”.²⁰ In other words, we need to accept those with such orientations as human persons who also have their basic human dignity. However, the same document in no uncertain terms maintained that homosexual acts are never to be tolerated, calling such acts as “intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of”.²¹ This was a revolutionary teaching with regard to the Church’s attitude towards the enigmatic phenomenon of homosexuality

¹⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), No:2357.

¹⁹ Cf., Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana* (1975), No:8, available at http://m.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html (Last accessed on 30th October 2020).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

if one were to compare and contrast it with her absolutely intolerable attitude towards the whole phenomenon of homosexuality in the past centuries. Here, what is to be highlighted is the ecclesial acceptance of those with homosexual tendencies also as human persons who have their own human dignity, with the rights and obligations that follow from such dignity. All the official documents of the Church, including papal statements since then, have consistently upheld this official Catholic stand. For example, the above-mentioned Pastoral Letter of the CDF (signed by Cardinal Ratzinger, future Pope Benedict XVI) addressed to all the Bishops of the world while repeating the important distinction between the homosexual orientation and homosexual activities²², went on to state:

It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law.²³

²² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons", 1986, No:3, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia//congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html (Last accessed on 30th October 2020).

²³ Ibid., No:10.

A few years later, the *Catechism* summed up the official Church teaching in this regard as follows:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.²⁴

From all these official magisterial teachings it should be clear to the reader that much before the election of Pope Francis in 2013, the official Church had been already consistently calling for a halt against all unjust discrimination of homosexual persons which often results from what is known as “homophobia” (that is, “irrational fear or hatred of homosexual persons”).²⁵

Situating the Pope’s Statement in its Proper Context

It is within this contemporary ecclesial attitude towards homosexuality that we need to situate what Pope Francis is alleged to have stated in that documentary film referred to at the beginning of this article. In no way has he advocated homosexual “marriages” as such, not even their civil marriages. A careful analysis of what he said would reveal that he is at pains to find a way out to protect homosexual

²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), No:2358.

²⁵ Cf., Gerald D. Coleman, *Homosexuality: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice*, Mahwah (NY): Paulist Press, 1995, 134-143.

persons (who are also human beings with dignity as the magisterium had already been teaching) from all sorts of attacks and discrimination (mainly due to homophobia) both physical, psychological and otherwise, simply because of their sexual orientation.²⁶ In other words, the mere fact that someone is homosexual is no reason for any discrimination against him/her. In view of the fact that homosexual persons are vulnerable socially in many a society even in our contemporary world, and consequently, they are the potential victims of discrimination and violence, the Pope clearly points out the need for civil laws that would ensure their protection, including civil laws for those homosexuals who have entered into civil unions. In the misinterpreted documentary, the Pontiff is talking about enacting civil laws to ensure the protection of the already existing homosexual civil unions which would continue to exist, whether we in the Church like them or not. Nowhere has he mentioned that such unions are “marriages” in the eyes of the Catholic Church. Of course, the homosexuals and those lobbying for them would love to call such unions as “marriages”. But neither Pope Francis nor the Church can afford to do so, simply because as already mentioned, Catholic faith has consistently upheld that God intended only heterosexual activity and not homosexual activity, as we read in Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-25 which in fact form the proto-type of marriage for the rest of the Bible. Accordingly, the rich concept of “marriage” has its real meaning only in heterosexual marriages. Or else, we will have

²⁶ Cf., For a description of discrimination against homosexual persons, see Gerald D. Coleman, *Human Sexuality: An All-embracing Gift*, New York: Alba House, 1992, 260-269.

to either change the relevant texts in the Book of Genesis or remove them from the Bible!

It is not only the Church but also human civilization (in all parts of the world) with their accompanying cultural and religious attitudes which had for millennia reserved the term “marriage” for a union between a man and a woman. The term ‘marriage’ in its universal usage has had an inherent meaning everywhere among human beings down through the ages, namely that it is exclusively to do with a male and a female.²⁷ As the well-known American moral theologian Coleman correctly insists: “To allow a man to ‘marry’ a man or a woman to ‘marry’ a woman is to deny the inherent procreative nature of marriage and therefore change its very definition. It not only changes the definition, it essentially voids it”.²⁸

This is part of the accumulated common belief of humanity, and it was challenged only very recently thanks mainly to the homosexual lobbies and some human rights activists in the developed Western part of the world. We need to stress here that honouring the dignity of homosexuals cannot be achieved by simply calling their own homosexual unions “marriages”! One may call such unions by any other term (of course without damaging their basic human dignity) but not by the term “marriage” which had been traditionally, universally and exclusively reserved for heterosexual unions in all languages

²⁷ Of course, there have been (and there still are) polygamous and polyandrous marriages in some cultures, but all such marriages were to do with heterosexuality, exclusively.

²⁸ Gerald Coleman, *Homosexuality: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice*, Mahwah (NY): Paulist Press, 1995, 122.

and cultures all over the world from time immemorial. This, in succinct form, is also the Catholic stance with regard to the clamours to call homosexual unions (including civil homosexual unions) as “marriages”. Such clamours seem to erroneously consider the concept of “marriage” as a mere social convention which automatically bestows social equality on persons who enter into it. That’s why Pope Francis could categorically state that “the sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment”.²⁹ This is the cherished Catholic belief, and in no way has the Pope deviated from this cherished belief of the Catholic Church.

Conclusion

In a sense the recent distortions of what Pope Francis really said and meant in the above-mentioned documentary is a timely reminder for all of us – Catholics and non-Catholics alike – to be extremely cautious in believing whatever the social media communicate. At a time when “fake news” is so predominant with regard to all spheres of human existence as it is today, such a caution is indispensable.

At the same time, one needs to realize that no Pope or any other Catholic authority has the competence to alter divine revelation with regard to the fundamental tenets of Catholic understanding of human sexuality, in our case in this article, with regard to what God intended in creating human sexuality. To be sure, divine revelation does not require that homosexual persons be condemned inhumanly as it has been done in

²⁹ AL, No:72.

history (at times even with the tacit approval of the Church), but according to the judgment of the magisterium, it certainly requires that the homosexual acts be condemned as a distortion of what God intended in his creative design for humanity. This Catholic distinction between homosexual persons and their acts is a good ethical rule of thumb in any discussion on Catholic attitudes towards the complex phenomenon of homosexuality.

Moreover, as we saw above, since 1975, the Church has endeavoured to protect the dignity and fundamental rights of homosexual persons, too. What Pope Francis has said in the documentary is not just a repetition of what the magisterium has already been teaching for decades but it is also an application of that teaching into our contemporary reality, namely, to highlight the need to enact civil laws to protect homosexuals as persons belonging to the one human family. That is to say that there is nothing new or revolutionary in what the Pope says in the documentary. As such, it is obvious that only those who had been ignorant of the already existing Catholic magisterial teachings on homosexual persons would be pathetically vulnerable to be badly scandalized, and thus, be victims of the deliberate malicious smear campaigns against the present Pope when his teachings on homosexual persons are twisted and distorted in order to achieve the narrow-minded petty goals of those who propagate such fake news.

Last but not least, in our common human civilization (in spite of its geographical, cultural and ethnic diversities of evolution) the term “marriage” has been universally and

exclusively reserved for heterosexual unions. That's why the Church opposes the mis-use of this age-old sacred term to refer to homosexual unions. But this does not mean that the Church discriminates against the homosexual persons. Rather, since 1975, the Church has joined so many other secular movements in championing the basic human rights of such persons. This is precisely what Pope Francis has done in that documentary when he called for legal protection of homosexual persons, including the protection of their already existing civil unions. As a believing Catholic (believing in the Church's stand since 1975) and as the head of the Church, he couldn't do otherwise.

Vimal Tirimanna, CSsR

Courtesy: *Living Faith*, Dec., 2020

In his new book *Let Us Dream*, the Pope shares a very personal vision of a fairer world in the aftermath of Covid. In one of the most moving passages, he describes coming to see that the call to live in friendship with God and our neighbour is inseparably bound up with care for our environment / By POPE FRANCIS

The greening of a Pope

FOR A LONG time we carried on thinking we could be healthy in a world that was sick. But the crisis has brought home how important it is to work for a healthy world.

The world is God's gift to us. The biblical story of Creation has a constant refrain: "And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:12). Good means bountiful, life-giving and beautiful. Beauty is the entryway to ecological awareness. When I listen to Haydn's *The Creation*, I am transported into the glory of God in the beauty of created things. At the end, in the long duet of Adam and Eve, you meet a man and a woman enraptured by the beauty they have been given. Beauty, like Creation itself, is a pure gift, a sign of the God who overflows with love for us.

If someone who loves you gives you a beautiful and valuable gift, how do you handle it? To treat it with contempt is to treat the giver with contempt. If you value it, you admire it, look after it; you do not disdain it; you respect it and are grateful. The damage to our planet stems from the loss of this awareness of gratitude. We have grown used to owning, but too little to thanking. My own awareness of this truth began to

take root during a meeting of the bishops of Latin America at the shrine of Aparecida, Brazil, in May 2007. I was on the committee drafting the concluding document of the meeting, and at first I was a bit annoyed that the Brazilians and bishops from other countries wanted so much in there on Amazonia. It struck me as excessive.

Last year, I called a special synod on Amazonia.

What happened between these two moments? After Aparecida, I started to see news stories: for example, the government of a well-known island in the South Pacific bought lands in Samoa to transfer its population there, because in 20 years' time the island will be under water. Another time, a missionary in the Pacific told me of when he was travelling by boat and saw a tree sticking up from the water. He asked: was that tree planted in the sea? The man steering the boat told him: no, that was once an island.

AND SO, THROUGH many encounters, dialogues and anecdotes like these my eyes were opened. It was like an awakening. In the night you see nothing, but little by little dawn breaks and you see the day. That was my process: serene and calm, through information I gradually became aware of, until I became convinced of the seriousness of the thing. What were particularly helpful were the writings of Patriarch Bartholomew on this topic. It was a concern that I began to talk about to others, which helped. In sharing concerns, we began to see horizons and limits. That's how my ecological awareness came about. I saw that it was of God, because it was a spiritual experience of the sort St Ignatius describes as like drops on a sponge: gentle, silent, but

insistent. Slowly, like day-break, an ecological vision began growing in me. I started to see the harmonious unity of humanity and nature, and how humanity's fate is inseparably bound up with that of our common home. It's an awareness, not an ideology. There are green movements that turn the ecological experience into ideology, but ecological awareness is just that: awareness, not ideology. It's being conscious of what's at stake in the fate of humanity. After my election as Pope, I asked experts on climate and environmental science to assemble the best available data on the state of our planet. Then I asked some theologians to reflect on that data, in dialogue with experts in the field from across the world. Theologians and scientists put their heads together until they reached a synthesis.

WHILE THIS was being worked on, in 2014 I went to Strasbourg in France to address the Council of Europe. President François Hollande sent his environment minister, who was at that time Ségolène Royal, to receive me. While we chatted at the airport, she said she had learned I was preparing an encyclical letter on care of the environment. I told her about it, and she said: please publish it before the meeting of heads of state that was due to take place in Paris in December 2015. She wanted that meeting to turn out well. And it did, even though some later took fright and withdrew their support for its conclusions. It is important that the Church makes its voice heard in this vital, necessary process: our faith demands it.

Laudato Si' is not a green encyclical. It's a social encyclical. The green and the social go hand in hand. The fate of Creation

is tied to the fate of all humanity. When I give audiences in St Peter's Square, I greet the three or four rows of sick people who are there. Particularly in the case of the children, I ask: "What does he or she have?" I would say about 40 per cent of the time it's "unusual sicknesses" caused by some neglect of the environment: the irresponsible use of waste, the reckless deployment of pesticides that are continually being developed.

All these things, among others, end up making people ill, and mortgaging the future of the generations to come. Often the doctors just don't know how to treat these illnesses. If it's an unusual sickness they have a fair idea where it comes from, but because it doesn't affect a large number of sufferers, it's not profitable for the laboratories to develop medicines.

YOU CAN'T EAT an apple these days without peeling it first in case it does you harm. Doctors advise others not to give their kids chicken from factory farms until they're four years old, because they've been fattened with hormones and can make the kids unbalanced. So this is not an ideological thing. It's a dangerous reality. Humanity is getting ever sicker along with our common home, with our environment, with Creation.

A year ago I met fishermen from the Italian town of San Benedetto del Tronto who told me of the tons of plastic they had fished up from the sea. Theirs is a fleet of small boats, crews of no more than maybe six or seven on board each one. This year they came to see me again and told me they had hauled up 24 tons of garbage of which about half – that's 12 tons – was plastic. They've taken it upon themselves as a kind of mission not to throw it back in the water. So along with the

fish, they gather the plastic and separate it on the boats which cost money, of course.

Laudato Si' links the scientific consensus on the destruction of the environment with our self-forgetting, our rejection of who we are as creatures of a loving Creator, living inside his Creation but at odds with it. It's the sadness of a humanity rich in know-how but lacking the inner security of knowing ourselves as creatures of God's love, a knowledge expressed in our simultaneous respect for God, for each other, and for Creation.

To talk about Creation, you need poetry and beauty. Along with beauty is harmony, the sense of harmony that we abandon when we narrow our focus on to some areas at the expense of others. Existence becomes lopsided when we focus on the technical and the abstract, and lose our roots in the natural world. When we neglect Mother Earth, we lose not just what we need to survive but the wisdom to live together well.

A humanity impatient with the limits that nature teaches is a humanity that has failed to master the power of technology. In other words, technology has ceased to be our instrument and has become our overlord. It has changed our mindset. How? We become more intolerant of limits: if it can be done, and it is profitable, we see no reason why it shouldn't be done. We begin to believe in power, confusing it with progress, such that whatever boosts our control is seen as beneficial.

OUR SIN LIES in failing to recognise value, in wanting to possess and exploit that which we do not value as a gift. Sin

always has this same root of possessiveness, of enrichment at the expense of other people and Creation itself. The sin is in exploiting what must not be exploited, in extracting wealth (power or satisfaction) from where it should not be taken. Sin is a rejection of the limits that love requires.

That's why I spoke in *Laudato Si'* of a distorted mindset known as the "technocratic paradigm". It is a mindset that despises the limit that another's value imposes. I made the case there that an ecological conversion is necessary not only to save humanity from destroying nature, but from destroying itself. I called for an "integral ecology", an ecology that is about much more than caring for nature; it's about caring for each other as fellow creatures of a loving God, and all that this implies.

In other words, if you think abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty are acceptable, your heart will find it hard to care about the contamination of rivers and the destruction of the rainforest. And the reverse is also true. So even while people will argue strenuously that these issues are different in moral terms, as long as they insist that abortion is justified but not desertification, or that euthanasia is wrong but polluted rivers are the price to pay for economic progress, we will remain stuck in the same lack of integrity that put us where we are now.

I think Covid-19 is making this apparent, for those with eyes to see. This is a time for integrity, for exposing the selective morality of ideology and to embrace the full implications of what it means to be children of God. That is why I think the future we are called to build has to begin with an integral

ecology, an ecology that takes seriously the cultural and ethical deterioration that goes hand in hand with our ecological crisis.

An extract from Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future by Pope Francis in conversation with Austen Ivereigh, published by Simon & Schuster at £10.99 (Tablet price £9.89).

Courtesy: *The Tablet*, 5 Dec. 2020

“To kill in the name of God is a great sacrilege.”

-Pope Francis.

“May no one use religion as a pretext for actions against human dignity and against the fundamental right of every man and woman, above all to the right of life and the right of everyone to religious freedom.”

-Pope Francis

A REFLECTION ON CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

(The homily delivered by **Gerard de Rosairo, OMI**
on the occasion of the installation of
James Jayasinghe, OMI as Vicar Provincial
of the Oblate Province of Colombo, on 07. 01.2021)

Dear brother Oblates, we have gathered on this occasion, when Fr. James joins the leadership team of our Province as Vicar Provincial, to thank God for what God has been to us and pray for God's blessings on the members of the Provincial Leadership Team. Let me share with you a few reflections, in the light of today's Proclamation of the Word of God (Lk. 4:14-22), to enhance our understanding of Christian leadership and collaborate with the Provincial Leadership Team.

In today's Gospel we meet Jesus, animated and accompanied by the Spirit of God the Father, returning to Galilee and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Then, He goes to Nazareth, where he was brought up. On the Sabbath day, as it was customary, He goes to the synagogue to be with the people and participate in the celebration. He rises to read the Scriptures and chooses the text from Prophet Isaiah (Is. 61: 1-2).

The Text speaks of the Poor, Prisoners, Oppressed and the Blind. The text reflects, in fact, the situation of the people in Galilee, in the time of Jesus. In the Name of God, Jesus takes a stand to defend the Life of the people, restore their life with the Words of Isaiah. He wants to reconstruct the Community, the clan, which is segregated in two fold ways, that of the

Politics of Herod Antipas and the official religion, in such a way that it may, once again, be the expression of their faith in God.

Jesus defines His mission, thus, to His people less favored, having a **Sense of Mission**. He possesses this Sense of Mission being with and among the people, being sensitive to the way in which God is Present in His cultures and Traditions, wanting to respond to the needs of the people, witnessing to the Values of the Kingdom of God, through Presence, Solidarity, Sharing and Word. This Sense of Mission experienced by Jesus is His authority; by means of it He gains a Vision and sets His Goal.

Christian Leadership emerges from such Jesus' experience. We have the need to gain such a Sense of Mission of God. It is imperative!

Then, it is with this Sense of Mission in Him, Jesus calls a few to share in it and collaborate with Him in the Mission. How does he facilitate and guide them? He tells them "There is a large harvest but few workers to gather it in, pray to the Owner of the harvest that He will send out workers to gather in". But then the situation is not safe and secure. They have to go, 'like lambs among wolves' (Lk. 10: 1-2).

Further, Jesus tells them "Take a good look at the fields, the crops are ready to be harvested... I have sent you to reap a harvest in a field where you do not work, others have worked there and you profit forth from their work" (Jn.4:35-38).

Christian Leadership is to animate others in such a way so that they also get a Sense of Mission, looking at the field, with awareness of others who have worked before and to move towards the Goal of Mission, the Kingdom of God.

Jesus journeys with the selected and invites Peter, the would-be Leader of the Community of Jesus, to have sacrificial and self-emptying Love to take care of the Flock (Mk. 8:34; Jn. 21:15-17). He challenges John and James to ‘drink from the Cup He drinks and to be baptized in the way He must be baptized’ (Mk. 10:38). He tells all others, would be followers, that they must be Servants, not being anxious of becoming great (Mk.9:36).

Jesus goes with His men to the territories where the gentiles live (Mk. 7:1..., Jn. 4:1...) and makes them appreciate their Faith that is greater than the faith of the selected people; for Jesus, wherever people are open to the transcendent and want to respond to the needy, there is the kingdom of God. Jesus wants them to come out of their clannish mentality and respond to God’s Mission.

It is important to point out that the Leadership is different from management. The role of the Leadership involves calling others to have the necessary attitudinal change in them. Christian Leadership needs others.

It was in 1818, Eugene de Mazenod instructed his men “to limit their scope of their zeal for the time being to the poor of the country side and others but to have the ambition to embrace the vast expanse of the whole earth”. He is known to have a ‘heart’ larger than the world, for the Mission of God.

For the Founder, Jesus is the Model of Authority. He, in fact, bears in his mind the model of Jesus, washing the feet of His disciples, setting an example for them (Jn. 13: 14 – 15; CC. 71). In the same CC 71, we are told of the need “to foster a way of life based on faith and on a deeply shared love of Christ.”

A leader’s important role is to provide clear and competing direction to the members, motivate them for a way of life demanded for the Mission and to act towards achieving a common goal. Leaders provide momentum, sharing and celebrating progress towards achieving goal, setting new targets and providing needed resources.

Let me wind up this reflection with a wish and an assurance of prayers. “To succeed in the Mission of God, one must have single-minded devotion to the goal, the Kingdom of God... If one is dedicated and passionate about what one does, everyone can rise above their circumstances.” God bless you!

IDENTIFYING AND RESOLVING LONELINESS IN PRIESTLY LIFE

(A lecture delivered by **Chrishantha Jayalath, OMI** at the seminar on Ongoing Formation of the Oblates engaged in Parish Ministry, on 19 January 2021 at Gerard House, 40, Farm Road, Mattakkuliya, Colombo 15)

Loneliness is the experience of being disconnected with others and of being deprived of love and thereby feeling sad and anxious. As priests, we recognize that loneliness is not unique to the priests since we know that there are many joyful and well-adjusted married men and women who also experience loneliness. We recognize that to feel lonely doesn't mean being abnormal; it can be a temporary experience. Loneliness is a negative experience. "Yahweh God said, 'it is not right that the man should be alone' (Gen 2:18). God is love. God does not want human beings to experience loneliness. God desires companionship for human beings. God said, "Let us make man in our own image.... "God created humankind in God's own image, male and female God created them" (Gen 1:26-27).

Loneliness is one of the most painful human experiences because it has the potential to disable the priests, the lay faithful and the Consecrated persons. Adults have difficulty serving the Lord with gladness when painful wounds of loneliness fester within them.

We can overcome loneliness by entering into solitude, namely by going into the innermost being of oneself and since it gives

us an opportunity to be with ourselves and concentrate on the image of God found within us.

Reasons for Loneliness

- Many priests may suffer from severe loneliness due to deep-seated disappointments experienced in relationships during childhood and adolescence. They may not be aware of the actual origin of their difficulties because they may have unconsciously used their intellects as defense mechanisms. Thus childhood and adolescent loneliness can emerge suddenly in adult life. Those who experience such pain mistakenly think that their sadness is exclusively due to their adult life experiences or commitments. They tend to ignore or deny severe emotional disappointments of their past. Priests may also attribute their pain of loneliness to their major negative life experiences in the past, without sufficient awareness of the true causes of such pain. There are some priests who may have been very lonely due to lack of gentle and joyful female-love from the time of their childhood. Such an inner emptiness can be the result of having mothers who had difficulty in communicating affectionately. In adult life, a priest with such a woundedness may mistakenly attribute his loneliness solely to a lack of not having an affectionate woman at his side.
- Priests, who also may not have been aesthetically gifted as young boys and, who may have experienced repeated male rejection for many years, may believe erroneously that only an ongoing homosexual relationship can give them the acceptance and male-

wholeness for which they have always yearned. Some priests feel isolated because they have not been treated as special persons in their families or in the priesthood.

Multiple factors in adult life predispose priests to loneliness

- Unfortunately in countless number of mission houses, the priests do not live together enjoying unity.
- Priests losing close priest-friends who have left the active ministry. Such experiences may lead to a fear of becoming vulnerable to friendship.
- Some priests are lonely because they do not trust their brother-priests. This is the result of hurt-feelings experienced at different stages of life and also in the rectory.
- Some fear that close interpersonal relationships may result in more stress and pain. A lack of understanding of the critical importance of ongoing friendship with brother-priests can produce loneliness.
- Excessive sense of responsibility for activities in the parish / institution.
- A major source of loneliness in many associate/assistant pastors arises because the pastors do not involve them in important decisions. As a result, often they feel excluded and isolated.
- Excessive anger, criticism or sarcasm in priests make others to avoid them.

Since loneliness is one of the most painful human experiences, we priests are driven consciously or unconsciously to escape its pain. For such a purpose, many

priests seek a type of consolation, emotional companionship or warmth.

Symptoms of loneliness

Loneliness produces numerous physical, emotional, intellectual and behavioural symptoms. Research studies have shown that loneliness seems to have a very specific effect on the immune system. Particularly affected are the T cells which play a critical role in human ability to fight infections. These studies have shown that those who are lonely, regardless of age, have a significant impairment in the functioning of their T cells. Loneliness often results in a feeling of physical fatigue or weakness and in acute or chronic pain for which no organic cause can be found. Common sources for such pain are the head, the neck, the stomach and the colon.

Emotional symptoms connected with loneliness include insomnia, lack of enthusiasm, chronic tiredness, an inner emptiness void, lack of joy and severe depressions. Many priests report feelings of restlessness or nervousness in the evening when they are alone in their rooms. This is one of the most frequent manifestations of loneliness among priests.

The intellectual difficulties seen with loneliness are a decreased ability to concentrate, to remember and to make decisions, impaired judgment and a false belief of being unlovable. The behavioural symptoms include a tendency to avoid people or to constantly be with people superficially. Decreased communication, excessive dependency, avoidance of the mission house and various types of compulsive behaviours such as drinking, excessive eating or smoking, compulsive masturbation and homosexual or heterosexual

acting out. These are attempts to fill the inner emptiness arising from various stages of life.

Finally, loneliness can cast a cloud over the spiritual life of a priest, resulting in a loss of his ability to pray and a sense of his being disconnected with God's love. If, on the natural level, one does not experience love from others, it becomes very difficult to enjoy receiving divine love.

Fortunately, the woundedness of loneliness can be healed no matter how long it may have been present in the life of a priest. It can be completely eliminated from the lives of priests by taking certain steps on the natural level and on the spiritual level. In order to overcome loneliness, the first step is to stop denying and to start recognizing and understanding how loneliness has touched a person's life at different developmental stages. For many, this is not an easy task.

(To be continued in the next issue of *the Missionary Oblate*, July-Dec.,2021).

Heard at the seminar on the Ongoing formation of Oblates engaged in Parish Ministry.

“The importance of the availability and sensitivity of the presbyter (priest engaged in parish ministry) to the needs and pains of the people”.

CLERICALISM IN THE CHURCH

Clericalism is the superiority complex that is associated with one's clerical garb. Pedophile is not the only form of abuse issuing from clericalism. Clerical ambition for power has damaged the whole Church's authority. It started in the early Church (cf St. John's 3rd letter). St. Peter speaks of bishops who are greedy for both power and money (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Clericalism springs from a distorted image of ministers and their ministries that has crept into our catechesis and formation program in seminaries. Ordination doesn't mean being raised to a higher rung in the ecclesiastical ladder of power and domination.

Images of power and prestige eclipsing the image of humble service are the cause of and conveyer of clericalism. At the last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of the apostles and persuaded them to become one another's servants (Jn 13: 13-17). Jesus said among the gentiles, they "lord it over one another, but among you, it shall not be so" (Mt 20:20 ff).

A person is ordained to be the servant (minister) of the people as Jesus exhorted his immediate disciples (Lk 22:24-32). Succumbing to the Gentile culture, Church leaders have acquired the habit of wielding power and gradually lost the art of exercising authority and the image of servanthood. Fully conscious of one's fragility and sinfulness, one needs to be humble enough to serve rather than to be served, following the example of Jesus as well as responding to the request of Jesus to be humble servants (Lk 22:26-27). . Authority springs from authenticity which is a reflection of one's credibility.

One is credible when s/he is faithful and seen to be faithful to one's calling.

We lament with Pope Francis that clerical ambition for power has damaged the whole Church's authority. 'Power' is what Mammon offers its slaves whereas 'authority' or credibility is a 'grace' that God bestows only on power-renouncers dedicated to serving the powerless.

One of the several root causes of clerical hunger for power today's Church is a grave theological confusion of the notion of 'priesthood'.

Ordained as Presbyter in the Church to serve

In the Document, "*Presbyterium Ordinis*" of the Second Vatican Council, the term 'priest', understood in the cultic sense (one offering sacrifice to God), is applied to all the baptized while the person ordained to lead the priestly community is referred to as 'presbyter'. The same Document employed the word presbyter to indicate a 'community leader' (a pastor) and the word *sacerdos* to designate a 'person offering a sacrifice', i.e., 'a cultic priest'. The same Council's Document, "*Lumen Gentium*" calls the whole Church or the People of God a *communitas sacerdotalis*, "a community of (cultic) priests", i.e., a community celebrating the Eucharist with the Presbyter (a priest among priests) presiding at the celebration as their ordained (i.e., legitimate) community leader. The same is true of a Bishop (*episcopus*, Greek for "overseer"), originally a synonym for presbyter and never as someone higher in rank than a presbyter until the second century).

Purpose of Presbyterian ordination

The purpose of the presbyterial ordination is not the celebration of the Eucharist, which, rather, is a right the ordained already share with all God's People. That is why Canon Six of the Council of Chalcedon anathematized *ordinatio absoluta* – a technical term for ordaining presbyters only for celebrating Mass. Presbyters (who are already priests by baptism) are ordained primarily to guide (to shepherd) Christian community which is essentially a community of priests. As community leaders, the ordained presbyters preside over their communities also during the liturgy. It is therefore strange that the newly ordained presbyters announce the date of celebrating their “first Mass” (which they might have done so many times since their baptism). What is really new is that they are presiding over the Eucharistic assembly for the first time as presbyter (leader) of a Christian Community. **They are ordained “presbyters” or servant leaders to exercise pastoral leadership in a shepherdic way.**

Who effects the miracle of the species during Eucharist?

Thanks to the Second Vatican Council's recovery of the original meanings of presbyter and the (cultic) priest, there was a tendency, in the post-conciliar decades, a tendency to abandon the phrase “words of consecration” as misleading and to replace it by other formulae such as *verba Domini* (Lord's words) or *narratio coenae* (narration of the Supper), both of which recall the context of the sacramental celebration rather than invest the celebrant's words with a divine power. Many Eastern Churches treat the whole canon (ending in the

Great Amen) as one unit and thus they have avoided the theological insinuation of the phrase “words of consecration”.

In every canon, the Presbyter clearly invites the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*) to graciously effect this miracle of the species into the Body and Blood of Christ. Therefore the miraculous change takes place through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. On 11 January 2001, CDF Prefect Cardinal Ratsinger with the approval of Pope John Paul II confirmed the sacramental validity of the ancient Chaldean Anaphora which clearly omits the so-called “Words of the Institution”.

Even today we hear preachers proclaiming during the so-called “first Mass” of the newly ordained presbyters, that the newly ordained is elevated with supernatural power since even Christ obeys him at his words. **The so-called “first Mass” is a misnomer for what actually happens, namely that the newly ordained presbyter is presiding over the Eucharistic assembly as a presbyter (i.e. as a servant leader) for the first time.**

(**N.B.** This article, almost verbatim, is based entirely on the Book, *“Leadership Crisis in the Church”* by Aloysius Pieris, SJ, Tulana Jubilee Publications, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2019)

Emmanuel Fernando, OMI

“Crisis of faith in the West is the visible fruit of the self-seeking clericalism of their pastors as well as their bookish theology which is ineffective and spiritually sterile” (Aloysius Pieris, SJ.)

Life of Obedience and Silent Prayer

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

AS SALT AND LIGHT

Aloysius Pieris, s.j

(Homily delivered at the Nuptial Mass of Rushika and Byanke (at St Teresa's Church, Colombo 5, on 24th September 2015) on the *theme* that the couple themselves had chosen as **the motto of their marital life** (which they identified as their *vocation*) and also on the Scripture *readings* they had selected as providing them with the **essence of their ministry in the church** (which they identified as their *mission*).

Dear Rushie, Biyanke and all of you gathered around them I am at a loss for words today as I witness this unusually homely wedding. I am stunned to silence by the absence of pomp and pageantry, by the stark simplicity in dress and demeanor, by the rare blend of seriousness and serenity, with no superficial splendor stealing away the sacramental sanctity of this solemn moment of grace. This is genuine worship; this is authentic fellowship; this is a model Christian wedding.

And yet I feel driven by a Spirit-inspired impulse to burst out into words, at the risk of being verbose and loquacious because ---- because.....listen to me..... because this is the very first time in my ministerial life that I am called to solemnize a marital commitment that was preceded by a prolonged process of prayerful preparation and marked by a meticulous monitoring of messages from the mighty Master and Maker of us all, so that what happens before our eyes here at this moment is a discerningly determined act of *obedience* to the divine Word. On hearing this joyful news from your own lips, 'my soul magnified the Lord and my spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour' (Lk 1:46).

Hence a homily is redundant. Besides, both of you have experienced the painful pricks of the thorns and thistles

that had paved your paths before you met each other and you know too well that the mystery of marriage is a Jesus-experience, that is, a matter of death and resurrection. For the Lord Jesus has declared that the greatest love consists in giving one's life for the beloved (Jn 15:13). You both are now prepared to die for each other and rise as one person; there is no other way for two persons to become one flesh, as the Lord has commanded (Mt 19:5).

Our Buddhist relations attending this ceremony will confirm this teaching of Christ by reminding us of what the Buddha has taught those couples who claimed to love each other. *Guyham acikkhati* (one shares one's secrets with the other); *guyham parigūhati*, (and guards each other's secrets); *āpadāsu na vijahati* (no running away in times of crisis);, *jīvitamp'assatthāya pariccattaṃ hoti* (each has sacrificed his or her life for the other). They are two dead beings constituting one living person, a new creation.

With this brief introduction, let me come straight to the *Scripture readings which you have chosen* for today and which you would like to share with this congregation through me. I see in them *two key words* with which you yourselves have spelled out *your vocation* and *your mission* as a married couple: joyful **obedience** as your "*vocation*"; and incessant **prayer** as your "*mission*".

In the first readings that you have selected for today, Prophet Jeremiah refers to the love-relationship between God and us as a marriage covenant, not a commercial agreement between mutually exploiting businessmen. Our covenant

relationship with God does not make us 'instruments' in God's hands, as many thoughtless preachers unfortunately interpret; God and we are co-partners of equal status, or

synergoi as the Greek Orthodox church teaches. For love is an equalizer. Married partners are equal in status. *So are God and we* in our covenantal love. God treats us as equals, respects our free will, forgives us when we err, shares his secrets with us and *obeys us* when we pray as *we obey him* when he speaks to us. For in the bible, the verb “to obey” is the same as the verb to “hear” (*šama’* in Hebrew and *hypakoē* in Greek). Why? Because “God’s word,” *dābar* is not just music for us to enjoy, but always a *request*, an *appeal* and even a *command*; God’s Word expresses God’s Will..... so that to “hear the Word” is to “obey a command”.

Since God and we are equal partners on a mission, *synergoi*, when the Lord says “Hear O Israel” **we obey God**; and when we say “Hear us O Lord”, **God obeys us**. Mutual listening or hearing and mutual obedience characterizes our marriage-covenant with God; and so is your marriage-covenant with God and with each other: mutual listening, which means mutual obedience. This as you have revealed to me, is your vocation: **obedience**. I am certain, therefore, that your choice of the word ‘obedience’ as describing your vocation has the Holy Spirit as its inspirer and the Holy Writ as the foundation.

Let me now come to the Gospel reading you have chosen for today. In the First Reading your **vocation**” was spelt out as **OBEDIENCE**; in the Gospel Reading we hear your “**mission**” declared to be one of serving the community as **SALT** and **LIGHT**, two metaphors much misapprehended and misinterpreted.

To illustrate the evangelical thrust of these two symbols, **salt and light**, I resorted to an experiment which worked well for a group of Protestant Students from the theological College of Lanka in Pilimalawa some years ago.

When they came to the hall where we had the bible lesson -- and it was 7.00 pm--I had lit and hung a five hundred candlepower bulb at eye level. They came and sat with eyes half closed, very uncomfortable and with question marks on their faces. The **light** blinded their sight. Then I distributed to them “munchee” biscuits which I had soaked for one hour in thick **salt** water and had made into small balls. I distributed them and asked them to eat as a symbol of solidarity.

They all started making faces at one another with their eyes half-closed for the glaring light and with their mouths twitching, unable to spit out the saline contents. Their embarrassment was visible and even audible. Then I asked one of them to read that day’s gospel which was the very text that was read today; he shaded his eyes with one hand while holding the gospel in the other..... and gestured to me that he could not see the text clearly due to the offensively glaring light. As arranged earlier, I raised the 500-candlepower bulb to a considerable height by means of a pulley. They understood the gospel passage before they read it. I am sure you too got my point, or rather the point that Jesus was driving into our minds and hearts when he spelt our mission as that of ‘salt’ and ‘light’. It is this: **Salt and light fail in their mission if they attract attention to themselves.** During a meal, if the salt is either wanting or excessive, somebody will surely mention that word; if the word ‘salt’ is never mentioned during a meal, the salt has lived up to its vocation. So is light; if it seeks to be the focus, it hurts your sight. Its vocation is to reveal what is hidden not to steal our attention.

Rushie, Biyanke, you are “salt” because you are called to bring the *taste of the Lord* by refraining from drawing attention to yourselves; your life should be a “light” that illuminates the glory of the Father in heaven, says the Lord, rather than become the limelight.

You are already engaged in this great mission of hidden service; as highly talented individuals, your mission in the Community of the Risen Lord is to **add taste and light**, *while remaining yourselves unnoticed, working behind the scenes*. This mission is the silent life of prayer, changing the lives of others without you being seen or heard, bringing meaning and purpose into wavering souls and illuminating their paths that they may see the Father's glory and turn to him. Your mission is a secret prayerful presence in the lives of others; a lamp unto their feet, a beacon that exposes rough seas that lie ahead of them; indeed, an unostentatiously effective apostolate.

Dear Biance and Rushie, we see that you have recognized that your marriage is more than just living together as husband and wife; you have accepted that this *vocation* to obedience as well as the silent and self-effacing *mission* supporting the community through a life of prayer are the defining elements of your conjugal life.

However, you know well as I do, that this is all a pipe dream unless the Holy Spirit who inspired you to embrace this vocation and mission descend upon you and *empower you* to accomplish that same Spirit's mandate. Hence I have this suggestion to make to you and the whole congregation: Before you make these promises in the presence of the Lord and God's People, I summon you Biance and Rushie to

kneel down with heads inclined, while the congregation will sing the hymn invoking the Holy Spirit to descend upon you and anoint you. Now the presbyters, the nuns and all the faithful please stand up, and if possible assemble around this couple and *with arms raised over them* and pleading that the

Holy Spirit possess them anew and confirm them in their marital commitment as well as in their *vocation to obedience* and in their *mission* to a life of **prayer**.

Speaking at the Synod of Bishops in 2019, **Pope Francis** said: *“It is therefore necessary, on the one hand, to decisively overcome the scourge of clericalism. Listening and leaving aside stereotypes are powerful antidotes to the risk of clericalism, to which an assembly such as this is inevitably exposed, despite our intentions. Clericalism arises from an elitist and exclusivist vision of vocation that interprets the ministry received as a power to be exercised rather than as a free and generous service to be given. This leads us to believe that we belong to a group that has all the answers and no longer needs to listen or learn anything. Clericalism is a perversion and is the root of many evils in the Church: we must humbly ask forgiveness for this and above all create the condition so that it is not repeated.”.*

ලුක් තුමා දිව්‍ය බිලිඳු ජේසුගේ උපත ගැන ඉඟිකරන නව දැක්ම ජොහාන් තුමා “දිව්‍ය බිලිඳුන් ජේසුගේ විපත තුළ විමුක්තිවාදී අර්ථකථනයකට භාජනය කළ වගයි. ඇලෝසියස් පීරිස් ජේ.නි. පියනම

2019 වසර නත්තල් රෑ පූජාවට “තුලන” ආයතනයේදී රැස්වුණු
පිරිසකට ඉංග්‍රීසි බසින් කළ දේශනයේ සිංහල අනුවාදයකි.

(1) ශීත කාලේද? වසන්ත සමයේද?

දෙසැම්බර් 25 නත්තල් දිනය ලෙස යොදාගත් ආදි කිතුනුවෝ පවා එදින ජේසුගේ උපන්දිනය නොවන බව දැන සිටියහ. කිතුනුවරොයි රෝමාණු පාලකයෝ දෙසැම්බර් 25 වන දා Winter Solstice හෙවත් ශිශිර සූර්ය නිවාත්තිය සිදුවෙන හෙයින් සූර්යවන්දනාව සඳහා එදින වෙන්කළහ. බයිබලය ද විමුක්තිදායක දේවපුත්‍රයාණන්ගේ පැමිණීම සුවදායක රැස් විහිදන නව හිරු උදාවක් ලෙස පෙන්වා දී තිබුණ නිසා (මලාකි 4:2) කිතුනුවෝ ද ජේසුගේ උපතින් සිදුවූ “අරුණෝදය” (ලුක් 1:78) මෙතෙහිකිරීම සඳහා එම දවසම උපයෝගී කරගත්හ. මෙම තීරණය විශ්වයේ නිර්මාතෘන් ඇදැහූ කිතුනු සුළුතරය නිර්මිතයන් වැඳ පිදූ බහුතරය වෙත එල්ල කළ නිහඩ අභියෝගයක් ද තමන්ගේ ම ඇදහිල්ල සවිමත් කිරීමට ගත් ප්‍රයත්නයක් ද විය.

තවද, ක්‍රිස්තුන්පත්තිය එවන් කාලවකවානුවක සිදු නොවූ බවට සාධකයක් ලුක් තුමා අපට වක්‍රාණුකූලව සපයා දී ඇත. ඒ මෙයයි. බෙත්ලෙහම අසල සිටි එඬේරුන්ට ජේසුගේ උපත පිළිබඳ ආරංචිය ලැබුණේ ඔවුන් බැටළුවන් රැජාමේ බලාගනිමින් සිටි විටකැයි එතුමා පැහැදිලිව සඳහන් කර ඇත (ලුක් 2:8). වසරක ශීතතම දවස දෙසැම්බර් 25 නිසා එවැනි දවසක බැටළුවන් සමග රාත්‍රිය එළිමහනේ ගත කරන්නට එඬේරුන්ට හැකියාවක් නොතිබුණු බව පැහැදිලිය.

අනික් අතට ඇතැම් ග්‍රන්ථධරයන්ගේ මතයට අනුව එඬේරුන්ට බැටළු රැල්ත් සමග නිදිමරන්නට සිදුවුණේ වසන්ත සමයේ අප්‍රේල් හෝ ඊට ආසන්න කාල වකවානුවකය. ඊට හේතුව ලෙස ඔවුන්

දක්වන්නේ බොහෝ විට බැටළු අම්මලා පැටව් ප්‍රසූත කළේ එම කාලයේදී බවය. තවද බැටළු දෙනකට පැටව් ඉපදෙන විට එඬේරුන්ගේ මැදිහත්වීම අත්‍යවශ්‍ය හෙයින් එවන් කාලයක එඬේරුන් සිටියේ ඉතා අවදියෙනි. මෙම සතුන්ගේ පාද එළහරක් ආදීන්ගේ මෙන් දිග නොවූ නිසා උන් බිම ඇලවුනායින් පසු නැවත නැගිටීමට අපහසුවක් දැනුනොත් එයින් ඇතිවෙන අවදානම් තත්වයෙන් මිදීමට මිනිස් ශ්‍රමය අවශ්‍ය බව දැන සිටි එඬේරු දිවා රැ සෝදිසියෙන් සිටීමට හුරුපුරුදු වී සිටියහ. මෙසේ කිතු උපත ගැන ආරංචිය මහ රැ ලැබෙනවිට ඔවුන් අවදිව එළිමහනේ සිටිබව නිශ්චිත වේ. මෙයින් ගම්‍ය වන්නේ කිතු උපත වසන්ත සමයේ ----ඒ කියන්නේ පාස්කු මාසයේ---- සිදු වූවක් බව නොවේද?

(2) එඬේරු, දෙව්මැදුර සහ පාස්කු බැටළුවා
 ජෙරුසලෙම් පල්ලියේ සෑම වසන්තයේම සිදුකරනලද පාස්කු මංගල්‍යයේ කොටසකි බැටළුපෝතක යාගය. ඒ සඳහා කුළුණු පල්ලියට "පාස්කු බැටළු පැටව්" සැපයීමේ කාර්යභාරය ඉෂ්ට කළේ බෙනෙලෙහෙම් ගම්මානයට ආසන්නව ජීවත්වුණු එඬේරුන් බවද, වාර්ෂික පාස්කු උළෙලට සහභාගී වනු සඳහා ජෙරුසලෙම් පල්ලියට එන වන්දනාකරුවන් මෙම එඬේරුන්ගෙන් යාගයට සුදුසු බැටළු පැටව් මිලට ගැනීමේ සම්ප්‍රදායක් තිබුණු බව ද, ඉතිහාසඥයෝ අනුමාන කරති.

බෙන්ලෙහෙම සහ ඊට ආසන්නව පිහිටි එඬේර ගම්මානවල පදිංචිව සිටි ජනයා ජෙරුසලෙම් දේව මන්දිරය කරා ගමන්කරන්නට වැයකළේ සුළු කාලයකි. එහෙත් එඬේරු දෙව්මැදුර අසුරුකළෝ නම් නොවූහ. තණබිම් සොයමින් තැනින් තැන යමින් අහිකුන්ටක ජීවිතයක් ගතකළ නිසා සමාජයෙන් කොන්කරනලද ජනකොටසක් වූ සේම දෙව්මැදුරේ වත්පිළිවෙත්වලට සහභාගිවීමට ද පවුලක් තුළ සිදුකළයුතු දෛනික වතාවත් වල නියැලීමටද අපොහොසොත් වූ නිසා පවිකාර හැත්තක් සේ තුවිලි කරනලද ජුදා පිරිසක් ද වූහ. එහෙත් වැඳුම් පිදුම් අකුරට ඉටුකළ ශ්‍රද්ධාවන්තයෝ පාස්කු යාගය සඳහා බැටළු පැටව් මිලට ගත්තේ මොවුන්ගෙන් හැර වෙන කාගෙන්ද?

මෙහිදී තවත් සැලකියයුත්තක් ගැන අවධානය යොමුකළමනාය. කෙතරම් පූජාර්භ (හෙවත් යාගයට සුදුසු) බැටළුපැටවකු වුවත්, එම සත්වයා පිදියමනා ද නැද්ද යන්න තීරණය කළේ පවිකාරයන් ලෙස සැලකුණු එඬේරුන් නොව, පල්ලිය තුල දේව සේවයේ නියුක්තව සිටි පූජක තුමා බව තී, ඒ සඳහා පූජකතෙම කරන පරීක්ෂණය අදියර තුනකින් යුක්ත වූ බවත් සියල්ලෝ දැන සිටියහ. තුන් වතාවක් ම සත්වයාගේ පාරිශුද්ධත්වය පූජකතුමා විසින්

තහවුරු කරනු ලැබුවායින් පසුවයි, එම සතා ලේවැගිරීමකින් යුත් යාගයට පාත්‍ර වන්නේ.

මෙන්න මෙතනදී තමයි ජොහාන්ගේ ශුභාරංචිපොත අප මෙතෙක් නුදුටු තැනකට අපව තල්ලුකරන්නේ; නත්තලේ පාස්කු හරය එළිදරවු කරන්නේ.

(3) යාවේ නොඅදහන්නකුගේ මුවින් හෙළිවූ දෙව් වදන

සියවසර ගණනාවක් තිස්සේ පුදාජනයා දැකගැනීමට පුලපුලා සිටියේ “පූජක-එඬේරෙකි”; එහෙත් එම පූජක එඬේරා “පූජනීය බැටළුවකු” සේ දිවි පිදූ විමුක්තිදයකයාණන් බව අනාවරණය වන්නේ ජොහාන්ගේ ශුභාරංචි පොතෙහිය. මන්ද ස්නාවක ජොහාන් තුමා ජේසුව “ලොවේ පව් හරින බැටළු පෝතකයා” ලෙස සිය ශ්‍රාවකයන්ට හඳුන්වාදුන් බව සඳහන් කරන්නේත් මෙම සිව්වැනි සුපුවත්ලේඛක ජොහාන් ය. එපමණක් නොව එම සත්‍යය රංගනාත්මකව ඉදිරිපත් කිරීමට ද මෙම ශුභාරංචි පොතේ කථිකතුමා සමත් වී ඇත (18:38-19:6). එම රැඟුම සඳහා තෝරාගත් වේදිකාව වූයේ පිලාත් නමැති රෝමානු විනිසිකරුවාගේ මන්දිරයේ මිදුලය. කාලය පුදා සම්ප්‍රදායට අනුව වසන්ත මාසයේ පාස්කු බැටළුවා පූජකෙරෙහි සිතුවා දවසකි.

මෙහිදී පිලාත් තුන් වරක් “මම මොහු තුළ වරදක් නොදකිමි” ප්‍රසිද්ධියේ ප්‍රකාශකොට (ජොහාන් 18:38; 19: 4 සහ 6) තුන්වන අවස්ථාවේදී මෙසේ ද පැවසුවේය : “නුඹලාම මොහු රැගෙනගොස් කුරුසියේ මරණයට පත්කරපල්ලා; මම මොහු තුළ කිසිම වරදක් නොදකිමි” (19:6).

මෙම නිගමනය රෝමානු නීතියට අනුව අසාධාරණ නින්දාවකි: “මොහු අහිංසකයා; එනිසා මොහුව මරාපල්ලා”. එහෙත් බයිබලිය දැක්මට අනුව මෙය දිවැසිවරුන්ගේ අනාවැකියක් (යෙසයා, 53) ඉෂ්ට වීමකි: “මොහුගේ අක්ලිෂ්ට පරිසුද්ධභාවය තුන් වරක් තහවුරු කර මොහු විමුක්තිජනක යාගයට අතිශයින් සුදුසු පාස්කු බැටළුවෙකැයි මා තීරණය කළ නිසා දැන් නුඹලා ඔහුව පාපක්ෂමාව සඳහා පූජාකරපල්ලා.”

පූජකයා පල්ලියේ පිදියයුතු නිර්මල පාස්කු බැටළුවකු ගැන දුන් නින්දාව රෝමානු නඩුකාරයා පුදාජනනාව ඉදිරිපිට ජේසු ගැන සැලකළ බවයි ජොහාන් අපට පෙන්වාදෙන්නේ. පූජකයන් ජේසු පවිකාරයකු ලෙස හංවඩු ගසද්දී මිසදිටියකු සේ හෙළාදකිනු ලද පිලාත් ජේසු පව් සෝදන බැටළුවා බව ඉගිකරමින් ගතානුගතික පාස්කු බැටළු යාගය සිදුකළ එම සිතුවා දවස ඇත්තෙන්ම ප්‍රථම සැබෑ පාස්කු පූජාව පිදුණු දිනය බව සහතික කළේ දේව සුසුමාණන්ගේ ආනුභාවයෙන් මිස ප්‍රකෘති ඥාණයෙන් නොව.

මෙය සුප්‍රචිතලෙඛක ජොහාන්ගේ අටුවාවෙන් අපට ලැබෙන ආලෝකයකි.

4. නත්තල එඬේරුන්ගේ බැටළුවන්ගේ පාස්කුමගුල

යාවේ දෙව්දාණෝ දේවජනතාවගේ එඬේරාණෝය. එම සත්‍යය සියවසර ගණනාවක් තිස්සේ සංකේත්වත් කරමින් පාස්කු බැටළුවන් සැපයූ බේත්ලෙහෙම අසල සිටි එඬේරුන්ට පමණයි යාවේ එඬේරාණන්ගෙන් නත්තල් පණිවිඩය ලැබුණේ. එම එඬේරගම්මාන වලට නුදුරින් පිහිටි බේත්ලෙහෙමේ ගෙයක පිළිකන්නේ මහෝත්තම එඬේරාණන්ගේ ආනුභාවයෙන් උපන් පාස්කු බැටළුපැටවා බැහැරැකීමේ භාග්‍යය ලත් වෙනත් ජන කොටසක් දේව ජනතාව අතර නොවූහ. ජෙරුසලේම් පල්ලිය වර්ජනය කළ මොවුන්ට දේව බැටළු පොව්වා නිදාසිටි ගව ඔරුව සැබෑ දේවමන්දිරය විය. කිතුනු සංඝයෝ අනුරුව වූ මරිය මවුතුමියට ද ජේසු ගැන මෙනෙහිකළමනා දෙයක් යාවේ දෙව්දුන් එළිදරව් කළේ මෙම එඬේරුන්ගේ වදන්වලිනි (ලූක් 2:18). මිදුම්කරු දෙව්දුන් අනාවරණය වෙන්නේ මෙවන් පිරිසකට හා මොවුන් ඇසුරුකරන්නට නොවේද?

ආගමිකයන් විසින් ශාරීරිකව හා ආධ්‍යාත්මිකව අපවිත්‍ර යැයි කොන්කරනලද එඬේර ජනතාවට තිරිසනුන්ගේ මලමුත්‍රාදියෙන් අපවිත්‍ර වූ ස්ථානයක පාස්කු බැටළුවා සේ ඉපදුනු එඬේරාණන් වැදපුදා ගැනීමට ආරාධනා කළ යාවේ දෙව්දුන් සුරසේනාවන්ගේ ගීත නාද මැද්දේ අනාවරණ කළේ නත්තල් ප්‍රීතිය පාස්කු ජයග්‍රහණය ලෙස විදිය හැක්කේ කෙබඳු තැනකද, කෙබඳු කෙනෙකුටද, කෙබඳු ආකාරයකටද යන්න නොවේද? [නිමි]

ඇය

හිලා විකුමසිංහ මියගේ ගීතයට ඇහුම්කන් දීමෙන් අනතුරුව ඉන් ප්‍රකාශිත තමන්ට ඇසුණ හා දැනුණ දේ පිළිබඳව අදහස් ඉදිරිපත් කිරීමට ආරාධනා කිරීම.

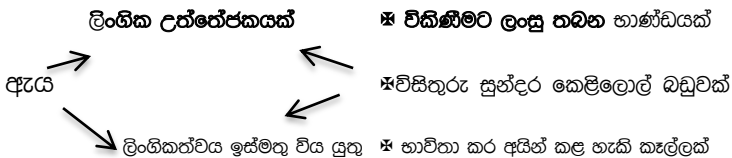
ගීතය - බෝධියේ විහාරයේ - පිදු පියුම් වැනි වූ
බාලිකා ලොව මැලවුනදා - මුළු ලොවටම රැ වෙනවා

මල් පොහොට්ටු මා හදේ සුරංගනා පොකුණේ
මල් වරම් ලැබ පිපෙන තුරා ඔබ හටුවෙන් සිඳිනු වීපා

පිවිතේ කියා - සිනා සිසි ඉන්නා
වී සිනා මා බොඳ කර දී - උණු කඳුළක් කරනු වීපා

ස්ත්‍රිය / කාන්තාව / ළඳ ආදී වචනවලින් කියනා ගැහැණිය ඉතා ආශාවෙන් කරනා ඉල්ලීමක්, ආයාචනයක්, කුමටද? පීචිතය අගයන්නට, පීචිතය අකාලයේ මියඳෙන්නට නොදී පිපෙන්නට ඉඩ හරින්නට, කඳුලට වඩා සිහහව පීචිතයට උරුම කරදෙන්නට, නමුත් අද ලෝකයේ සෑම අතින්ම අසාධාරණයට, අපහරණයට, දූෂණයට, අවතක්සේරුවට ලක්වන්නේ කාන්තාවයි.

ලෝක මිම්ම අනුව :-



ඇයගේ හැසිරීම - ලාලිතය විය යුතුයි. සුකුමාල විය යුතුයි.
 කතාව - මුදු මොලොක් ධවන් විය යුතුයි. කාරුණික විය යුතුයි.
 හඳවතින්ම නගින තැන්පත් ගති පැවතුම් තිබිය යුතුයි.
 ඇඳුම - විහිත හා ඔබ්බ විය යුතුයි. Modest & Chaste

1 පෙළුම 3:2 උච්ඡාන දෙයට නිවැරදි අර්ථකතනය දෙමින් විග්‍රහ කර බලමු.

පුරුෂ පක්ෂයට විතුමා පවසන්නේ “දුබල පක්ෂය නිසා ගෞරව කරන්න” යනුවෙනි. කාන්තාව දුබලද? කොයි අතින්ද? මතුපිට අර්ථකතනයට වඩා අභ්‍යන්තර අරුතට අපි ඇහුම්කන් දිය යුතුයි. 1 පෙළුම 3:7 පවසනුයේ මන්ද ඔබ හා සමඟ ඔවුහුද දෙවියන් වහන්සේගේ නොමිලයේ දෙන දීමනාව වූ පීචිතයට හවුල් උරුමක්කාරයෝ වන්නාහුය. එසේ නම් කාන්තාව දුර්වල වන්නේ කෙසේද?

පවුල තුළ :

ලෝකය විවාහය දකින්නේ සුළු කොට, ඕනෑම අයෙකු සමඟ ඕනෑම වේලාවක් එක් වීමට හා වෙන් වීමට හැකියි. ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ දිනකට දික්කසාදවීම් 400ක් පමණ ධව කියැවේ ?

උත්පත්ති 2:18 මිනිසා තනිව යිටීම යුද්ධ ඇත. ඔහුට යුද්ධ කාකාරියක වනා දෙන්නෙමි.

සහකාරිය පසුව මෙහෙකාරිය, අවසානයේ වහලියක වීම.

පවුල් පීචිතය තනිව ගෙනයාමට සිදු වීම.

දරුවන් ඒක පාර්ශව ලෙස ඇති දැඩි කිරීමට වීම.

ආර්ථිකයට උර දීම.

අවම වැටුපකින් ඉහල සේවා කාලයක්.

ලිංගික අපයෝජනය, අපහරණය, ලිංගික අල්ලස

පීඩනය, ස්වාමියාගේ තාඩන පීඩනයට යට වීම.

සළෙලුන්ගේ මන දොළ පිනවීමට ඇඟ විකිණීම.....

1 Cor 11:3 ස්ත්‍රියගේ ප්‍රධානියා පුරුෂයා බවත්, පුරුෂයාගේ ප්‍රධානියා ක්‍රිස්තුස් වහන්සේ බවත්, එතුමන්ගේ ප්‍රදානියා දෙවියන් වහන්සේ බව. එසේ නම් දේව සමානකමට මවනු ලැබූ පුරුෂයා හා ගෞරවය සමානාත්මතාවයෙන් යුක්තයි.

Gal 3:28 මනාව ඔප්පු කරයි.

සභාව කුළ :-

ඉතා කණගාටුදායකයි.

සභා ඉතිහාසයේ කාන්තාව දූත මෙහෙවර සඳහා අසීමිත කාර්යභාරයක් ඉටු කළ බව.

කාලයාගේ අනෙකුත් කාන්තා නියෝජනය පසෙකට තල්ලු විය. ශු. පාවුළු තුමා පවසන්නේ කාන්තාව නිශ්ශබ්දව සිටිය යුතු බවයි. එදා සාමජය තුළ එසේ වුවත් අද අපි වෙනස් විය යුතුයි. ගෞරවයක සතු සත්‍යයතා, වටිනාකම්, තලෙන්තු, සභාවේ කටයුතු දූත මෙහෙවර සඳහා යොදා ගත යුතුයි. දෙවියන් මැවූ කාන්තාව සභාවට අවශ්‍ය වන්නේ මිසමේ පල්ලියේ සංක්‍රිස්තියන් වීමට, ඉටිපහන් විකිණීමට, කාණික්ක ගණන් කිරීමටද?

පැවිදි කාන්තාවට හිමි තැන කුමක්ද? කතිකාවක් තිබිය යුතුයි. සභාවේ තනතුරුවලට වඩා චින්තන පෙරළියක් තිබිය යුතුයි. නව ආරයකට පවතින ආර්ථික, දේශපාලනික, සාමාජික, සංස්කෘතික, අධ්‍යාපනික, සෞඛ්‍ය මෙන්ම ආගමික අනුකූලව දූත මෙහෙවර වෙනස් කර ඉදිරියට යා යුතුයි.

ගීතය :-

ප්‍රදුනේ.... // ඔබේ දූස දැක ගත්තෙමි සැදූ කලෙක ප්‍රදුනේ //
දෙනේ දහස් අත ගත්තද සැමියෙකු නැති ප්‍රදුනේ
නෑයෙක් නෑකම් නොකියන වීදි සරන ප්‍රදුනේ.....

තෙල් මල් ගෙන දෝත පුරා මුහි කුටියට පියවන

ඔබේ දූෂ දැක ගත්තෙමි සැදූ කළෙක ප්‍රඥනේ..//
බුදුන් දැක නිවන් දුකිමැයි දෙවිරම යන පාර අසන
ඔබද පටාවාරාවකි, ඔබද කිසාගෝතමියකි..

පිරිමින්ගේ පාප කඳට දෝෂ විඳින ප්‍රඥනේ...
අඳුරේ පව් කරන දනා විලිය රවන ප්‍රඥනේ...
ලැම පමණක් ලොවට පෙනෙන - ලය නොපෙනෙන ලඳුනේ....
කුහුඹුවෙකුට වරදක් නැති වරදකාර ප්‍රඥනේ.....

Fratelli Tutti - අංක 08

It is my desire that, in this our time.....

each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all..

- ***Pope Francis.***

Sr. Sriyani Rodrigo HF

VIEW FROM ROME

Christopher Lamb

You need to go back to 1939 to understand Pope Francis' response to last week's violent attack on Capitol Hill in Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. . "Violence is always self-destructive. Nothing is gained with violence and so much is lost," said the Pope, speaking from the Apostolic Palace four days after a group of President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the heart of American democracy.

This was not just a generic condemnation of violence. Francis' remarks echoed a speech given by Pope Pius XII seven days before the Second World War broke out: "Nothing is lost with peace, everything is lost with war." Alberto Melloni, a respected church historian, told me Francis' choice of words was deliberate. "He decided to use a sentence from the magisterium on war, and not on social order. This seems to me a very significant alert to the US bishops and to public opinion."

Francis has often talked about the parallels between today and the 1930s. Last October, when meeting Pedro Sánchez, the prime minister of Spain, he spoke of *Sindrome of 1933* by Siegmund Ginzberg, which describes Germany following the collapse of the Weimar Republic. And in his new book, *Let Us Dream*, the Pope talks about "rallies where populist leaders excite and harangue crowds, channeling their resentments and hatreds against imagined enemies to distract from the real problems". His words take on a prophetic character in light of the events on 6 January.

The Argentine Pope's decision to cite Pius XII shows he had been thinking long and hard about the Capitol Hill riots, and his experience of living under a military junta in his homeland

during the 1970s and 1980s gives him a special perspective on the rise of protofascism. Throughout the Trump presidency, Francis' papacy has acted as something of a counterweight. While the president talked of building walls to keep out new arrivals, the Pope talked about building bridges.

Francis wants the Church in the US to be on the right side of history, and to stand with the poor and the oppressed. His decision to appoint Wilton Gregory, the first black Archbishop of Washington, D.C., in 2019 and then make him a cardinal after a summer of racial tension is part of the strategy. The election of President Joe Biden, a practicing Catholic who pledges to heal divisions, is another sign of hope.

The pro-Trump movement is deeply linked to those opposed to the Francis pontificate. The hierarchy – and the US Church – is divided and uncertain. In a video posted to his Twitter account last Sunday, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York City, who has been a public flatterer of Trump, said: “The man who should be a voice of reason and encouraging us to law and order and civility and unity, namely the President, seemed to be the one who was stoking these flames.”

This is why Francis sees the situation as so serious. Violence often begets more violence. Last Sunday, the Pope called on leaders across the country to “promote national reconciliation” while safeguarding “the democratic values of society”. He’s trying to send the Church a message, although some Catholics are still choosing not to listen.

Sometimes it’s those reforms that appear to change very little, which change things the most. The Pope’s amendment to canon law to institute women officially as lectors and acolytes comes under this category. In practice, Francis is simply

codifying something happening in parishes across the world. Women already read at Mass (lectors), and female altar servers (acolytes) have been around for decades.

And yet the change sets a precedent and lays the groundwork for future reforms. “This is the first official document in modern times to allow women across the altar rail during the Mass,” Phyllis Zagano, an academic who has spent years researching the role of women in the Church, told me. So what about reinstituting female deacons? Last April, the Pope rebooted a commission to look at the subject, after bishops at the Amazon synod called for deaconesses. The first meeting is not scheduled to take place until September. Meanwhile, Francis has indicated that he is unlikely to push through female deacons until there is more consensus. But if his commission offers a compelling case, who knows what the next steps might be?

Preparations are underway for the first papal visit to Iraq on 5-8 March. The phrase from Jesus in Matthew 23:8 “**You are all brothers**” has been chosen as the official motto for the trip, words that also refer to the title of the Pope’s recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. But the Pope has now cast doubt over whether the trip can take place due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Pope was due to get vaccinated against Covid this week, which will make foreign travel less risky for him. But as he explained in an interview with Italian TV station Canale 5 on Sunday: “In good conscience, I can’t be the cause of gatherings of people, right? Now I don’t know if the trip to Iraq can take place.”

Francis has been grounded in the Vatican for more than a year. “Life has changed,” he told the Canale 5 interviewer.

Courtesy: *The Tablet*, 16 January 2021

REACTION OF THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY IN USA

Catholic leaders, like all Americans, came to terms with the attack on the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. on 6 January 2021. One woman, Ashli Babbitt, 35 and a Police officer, named as Brian Sicknick, 42 were among the five person who died during the attack on the Capitol.

The shock and outrage of the politicians' reactions has been mirrored by Catholic Church leaders. **President of the US bishops' Conference Archbishop José Gómez** said: "I join people of good will in condemning the violence today at the United States Capitol. This is not who we are as Americans ... The peaceful transition of power is one of the hallmarks of this great nation. In this troubling moment, we must recommit ourselves to the values and principles of our democracy. This is not who we are as Americans ... The peaceful transition of power is one of the hallmarks of this great nation. In this troubling moment, we must recommit ourselves to the values and principles of our democracy and come together as one nation under God. I entrust all of us to the heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Washington's archbishop, Cardinal Wilton Gregory, said: "Together, we must intentionally pause and pray for peace in this critical moment. The divisive tone that has so dominated our national conversations must change. Those who resort to inflammatory rhetoric must accept some responsibility for inciting the increasing violence in our nation. " **Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich** said: "What has been unfolding at the Capitol today should shock the conscience of any patriotic American and any faithful Catholic. The eyes of the world look on in horror as we suffer this national disgrace. For many months we have witnessed the deliberate erosion of the norms

of our system of government ... May our elected officials heed the counsel of their better angels to stand up for the Constitution they swore to defend, to speak the truth, and to recognise threats to democracy, no matter their source.”

POPE FRANCIS’ REACTION

Pope Francis said he was “astounded” at the disorder in the USA capital on January 6, 2021, and added that **“even in the most mature societies there’s always something that doesn’t work, people who take a way that’s against the community, against democracy, against the common good.”**

Source: *The Tablet*, 16 January 2021

“Let no one consider themselves to be the ‘the armour’ of God while planning and carrying out acts of violence and oppression.”

- Pope Francis

BISHOP VICTOR GNANAPRAGASAM, OMI

(An Oblate Missionary with the missionary enthusiasm and dynamism of St. Paul and the first Sri Lankan Oblate who became a Bishop of a diocese outside Sri Lanka)

Joined the Oblates

Bishop Victor Gnanapragasam, OMI, born to a Tamil Catholic family at Pasaiyoor, Jaffna, was one who from his early days possessed a great love for Jesus Christ. In an article written by him on 22 October, 2013, as Bishop of Quetta, Pakistan, **he mentions that his mother wanted him to join the Oblates (Kurusu swami in Tamil), when he had made known to her his desire to become a priest.** From the day he was admitted for Oblate accompaniment (formation) and training at the Oblate Juniorate, and later at the Oblate Novitiate and at the Oblate Scholasticate, young Victor's desire to become a missionary outside Sri Lanka began to grow especially when Oblate Missionaries from European countries visited the Oblate Houses of formation.

I for one met Bishop Victor at our Oblate Scholasticate, Ampitiya, Kandy in 1960. He was one, who always related with the other Oblate Scholastics (Seminarians, both the Sinhalese and the Tamils) with much ease cheerfully, and was also able to work with them for the betterment of the Oblate community.

Put his hands to the plough

Ordained on 21 December, 1966, and after fifteen years of missionary activities under trying conditions in places such as

Nilaveli mission in the Trincomalee-Batticaloa diocese and in the preaching ministry in Sri Lanka, Victor, a young Oblate missionary, was sent to Pakistan by the then Oblate Provincial, Fr. Lucien Schmitt on 19 May 1973. When the news about Victor's transfer for evangelization in Pakistan had begun to spread, one of the Sri Lankan senior Oblates had told him, **“since you know three languages you could offer the services of three priests in Sri Lanka and if you go to Pakistan, you would be serving the people with one language.”** Since he was convinced regarding his call from God to serve in a foreign country, he did not want to look back after putting his hands to the plough.

Mission with many challenges

Setting his feet in Pakistan as a missionary meant, facing new missionary challenges. Victor, the young Oblate missionary, had to get acquainted not only with the vagaries of weather patterns (very hot / very cold) in Pakistan but also with food, language, Islamic religious culture and sanitary conditions. He had to spend time learning Urdu in order to serve the people in Pakistan.

Having become acclimatized to the way of life in Pakistan, this young Oblate had served as the parish Presbyter (priest) in the diocese of Faisalabad (1977-79), in Khanewal (the diocese of Multan) 1980-1985), as the Animator of the Delegation (1980-1982), Parish Presbyter of Gojra (1982-86; 1992-1993), Parish Presbyter of Toba Tek Singh (1987-1989), Accompanier (formator) at the Oblate Scholasticate, Karachi (1993-1997), first Councillor of the Oblate Delegation (1993-

2001), Apostolic Prefect of Quetta (Dec., 2001) and was consecrated Bishop of Quetta on 16 July, 2010).

Updating and Renewal

During his missionary life and ministry in Pakistan (1973-2020), Bishop Victor had opportunities to equip himself with new knowledge, new apostolic skills and renewal of his consecrated life. He went to Manila (1977-1979) to follow a Course of Youth Ministry and to Kent, UK for a renewal programme and also to Angelcum, Rome for studies in Spirituality (1989-1992).

An Intrepid Oblate: with a Vision and a Mission.

As the chief Animator (Superior) of the Oblate Delegation of Pakistan, Victor, the Oblate intrepid missionary was much concerned regarding the future Oblate missionary presence and apostolate in Pakistan. Realising the importance and the need for initial accompaniment and training of the candidates in Pakistan with a strong spirit of community, he invited me to visit Pakistan in 1999, when I was involved in the Oblate accompaniment and training in Sri Lanka. My visit to Pakistan in December 1999 helped me to meet the Oblate seminarians in the Juniorate in Multan and in the Scholasticate in Karachi and also visit their families. Joseph Alex, OMI and Thyagan Fonseka, OMI who were involved in the training of the students at the Juniorate in Multan assisted me very much to meet the families of the Oblate Seminarians in many places. The experience I gained, by meeting the candidates in the Oblate Houses of formation, visits to the families and meeting with their parents, brothers and sisters

and also my sharing with the Oblate Delegation Superior and the accompaniers (formators) in Pakistan, helped very much to agree on the great importance of shared Oblate vision-mission and community life during the years of formation of the candidates. Such a consensus I was able to share also with the Oblates involved in the accompaniment of the candidates in Sri Lanka since candidates from Pakistan were sent for accompaniment and training in the Oblate way of life and ministry in Sri Lanka. Hence I can say that Bishop Victor Gnanapragasam had tried to lay a solid foundation for the Oblate way of life and ministry in Pakistan to meet the emerging new missionary challenges in Pakistan innovatively.

The fragrance of the dedicated missionary life and services of Missionary Oblate Victor soon began to attract the attention of the Major Oblate Leaders and of the Catholic Hierarchy in Pakistan. He was consecrated Bishop at St. Patrick's Cathedral on 16 July 2010 by the Apostolic Nuncio to Pakistan Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana. Already in 1982, the Oblates had accepted a mission in Quetta for the first time and they were taking care of the Catholics who were very much scattered in Baluchistan, the largest Province in Pakistan. Quetta is the capital of Baluchistan.

Bishop of Quetta in solidarity with the people

Accepting to be a Missionary Bishop in Quetta meant trusting in God's providential care and protection, to live and serve the people in an area noted for severe weather conditions (it is called the "Hot Spot" of Pakistan) and for never-ending suicide bombings, violence and at times discrimination. It is also a desert area controlled by Pakistan military. On several

occasions, Bishop Victor escaped bomb blasts. Like St. Paul, the passionate lover of Christ, Bishop Victor too was ready to face missionary challenges for the love of Christ and the Reign of God. On 12 December 2013, at 10.30pm he sustained injuries as a result of suicidal bombing that took place in the vicinity of the Bishop's House, due to electoral violence after the elections in Pakistan. He wrote, **"I thanked God that it happened at night; if this blast has taken place during the day with around 7000 children attending classes in the three schools under the vicariate, there would have been a lot of casualties; I shudder to even think of it"** (cf his article).

Bishop Victor served the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta during the war in neighbouring Afghanistan, which was one of the biggest challenges during his episcopal ministry. As his Vicariate covers vast desert mountainous areas which are controlled not only by the Pakistani military but also by Balochi rebels, it always requires careful movements of priests, most of the time risking their own lives. In spite of all those challenges, he was always close to his flock, often visiting them and made every effort to attend to their spiritual, pastoral and material needs. In the past, although he suffered cardiac problems, despite his ailments, he continued to attend to the needs of his Vicariate.

Though initially Bishop Victor felt helpless, depressed and discouraged, his helplessness had made him to identify with the people and be in solidarity with them (cf his article written by him). Not minding the pain involved in the missionary tasks, Bishop Victor, like St. Paul, looked always to the future

with faith in the Lord who had called him to be an Oblate Missionary of Mary Immaculate.

As Bishop of Quetta, Victor had understood the importance of education for the children and of catechesis for both children and adults. Hence he supported a well-coordinated system of education undertaken by the Consecrated Religious and also the ministry of the lay catechists who were of great assistance in the socio-pastoral care of the Catholics.

In the article he wrote on 22 October, 2013 (Forty years of his missionary activities in Pakistan), Bishop Victor mentioned his first impressions: 1. Christians were the poorest lot in Pakistan, 2. Christians were illiterate and employed in menial works and heavily indebted to the landlords or brick kiln owners, 3. Bribery and corruption was rampant, 4. Though the Christians were poor, they were very pleasant, humble and hospitable, 5. Though discriminated by the majority community, the faith of the Christians was very strong.

Joy with the Missionary Vocation

After forty years of his presence in Pakistan Bishop Victor Gnanapragasam OMI could write, *“Now, our Christians are more educated in the religious and secular field; they have better jobs, both in the Government and private sector; economically they are much better off; they have more self confidence and feel that they are well accepted by most of the people of the majority community; they keenly participate in politics and get involved enthusiastically in activities of national interest. Now they feel they have an identity that*

makes them strong and confident enough to assert their rights and challenge the Government and the majority community when injustice is done to them. On the whole, there is a tremendous progress in the lives of our Christians from what they were forty years ago and I feel happy to see the growth of our Christians in Pakistan in various fields of life leading to a better future.”

*“ In spite of the problems I had to face, I would say that from day one I was happy with my missionary call to Pakistan and jumped into the fray with full of enthusiasm. I love the people of Pakistan and in turn they shower on me their love and affection. I am certain that the words of Jesus is being fulfilled in my life: **“I assure you that anyone who leaves home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will receive much more in this present age and eternal life in the age to come”** (Lk. 18:29). I have received much more than I have sacrificed and I am thankful to God for his kindness and Mary, our Mother, for her maternal protection. I am waiting for the second part of the above-mentioned verse to be fulfilled **“and eternal life in the age to come”**.*

Bishop Victor has left behind a rich legacy to the people of Pakistan, especially to the poor, to the local Church, to the Oblate Delegation of Pakistan, to the Oblate Province of Colombo and to the Oblate Congregation.

Bishop Victor Gnanapragasam, OMI died of a heart attack on 12 December 2020. But his memory will linger in the poor, in the local Church, in the Oblate Delegation of Pakistan and in the Oblate Province of Colombo and in the Oblate Congregation as they remember with much love and joy the sacred words of the Scripture: ***“What no eye has seen and no***

ear has heard, what the mind of people cannot visualise; all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor. 2:9).

P.S

I used to communicate with Bishop Victor and inquire about his health and his missionary activities. A few days before his death, I had sent him a copy of *the Missionary Oblate journal (July-Dec.,2020)*. Appreciating the contents, he congratulated me also for continuing to edit and publish the journal for many years. Whenever he visited Sri Lanka, I had opportunities to meet him. I also used to accompany him whenever he visited his mother at Faustina Villa, Nainamadama, where Apostolic Carmel Sisters were taking good care of her. When his mother passed away on 31 January 2011 in the convent at Nainamadama, Bishop Victor could not come for the funeral. I presided at the Eucharistic celebration and delivered the panegyric. When he visited Sri Lanka in 2018, he went to thank the Apostolic Carmel Sisters at Nainamadama for the compassionate love, concern and care shown for his mother.

Emmanuel Fernando, OMI

ANNUNCIATION OF THE ANGEL TO MARY IN THE GOSPEL AND IN THE KORAN

Here is the full text of Pope Francis' homily on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul delivered on June 29, 2020 at the Basilica of St. Peter.

In Lebanon, the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord has been proclaimed a National Day since 2010. In recent years there have been many initiatives in which Christians and Muslims share together, on the occasion of this feast, acts of veneration towards the Virgin Mary. Sunni Sheikh Mohamad Nokkari, who teaches in the faculty of law in Beirut, Dubai, and Strasbourg, wanted to further national reconciliation and inter-communal friendship, by raising the profile of the Virgin Mary, who is a point of reference for both Christians and Muslims.

The choice of date to have Christians and Muslims celebrate Mary fell on the feast of the Annunciation, also because the Annunciation of the Angel to Mary is narrated both in the Gospel and in the Koran. Mary is the only woman mentioned by name in the Koran 34 times (while Mary's name appears in the Gospels 19 times). The first Islamic-Christian celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation was hosted in the Lebanese sanctuary of Our Lady of Jamhour, in 2007.

Political leaders were impressed by the initiative, and in 2010 Prime Minister Saad Hariri proclaimed March 25 a national holiday, the day on which the Annunciation is celebrated.

Courtesy: **Zenith**

How is God's forgiveness related to human forgiveness?

John Fuellenbach, SVD says: "Almost all scholars agree that the phrase "as we forgive" should not be taken as a comparison, as if God would forgive us in the measure that we forgive. The parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Mt 18:23-35) suggests quite clearly that God's forgiveness precedes human forgiveness. God first forgives and expects us to forgive one another. The parable implies that human forgiveness is a consequence of God's prior action" (cf *The Kingdom of God*, p 290)

John Fuellenbach continues: "Mt 6: 14-15 looks like a comparison, meaning human forgiveness precedes God's forgiveness; only human forgiveness makes God's forgiveness possible. This text seems to be totally inconsistent with the parable of the Unmerciful Servant. It can be reconciled if we keep in mind that God's forgiveness always precedes human forgiveness and that human forgiveness is a consequence of God's forgiveness."

J. Jeremias (in *The Lord's Prayer*, p 27-28) translates Luke's words back into Aramaic: "As we also herewith forgive our debtors." The meaning then is: "We are ready to pass on to others the forgiveness which we have received. Grant us, dear Father, the gift of the age of salvation, thy forgiveness, so that, in the strength of received forgiveness we might forgive those who have wronged us."

W.E.F

Pope Francis approved changes to the wording of the Lord's Prayer

“Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.”

CONSECRATED LIFE

- *“Consecrated life, not only gives witness to the reality of God, it is also a way of life that contradicts the values of the world namely worldliness” (Albert Nolan OP).*
- *“It is a prophetic witness because it speaks out like the prophets when others remain silent. Prophetic because it transcends the culture of sex, culture of money and culture of individualism. Witness of Religious life is that another world is possible. There is an alternative, a way of life to remind people that a world of love, justice and peace and joy is possible” (Albert Nolan OP).*

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES OF LECTOR AND ACOLYTE

Apostolic Letter issued “Motu Proprio” Spiritus Domini by Pope Francis Modifying Canon 230 #1 of the Code of Canon Law regarding access of women to the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte

The Spirit of the Lord Jesus, the perennial source of the Church's life and mission, distributes to the members of the People of God the gifts that enable each one, in a different way, to contribute to the building up of the Church and to the proclamation of the Gospel. These charisms, called ministries because they are publicly recognised and instituted by the Church, are made available to the community and its mission in a stable form.

In some cases this ministerial contribution has its origin in a specific sacrament, Holy Orders. Other tasks, throughout history, have been instituted in the Church and entrusted through a non-sacramental liturgical rite to individual members of the faithful, by virtue of a particular form of exercise of the baptismal priesthood, and in aid of the specific ministry of bishops, priests and deacons.

Following a venerable tradition, the reception of “lay ministries”, which Saint Paul VI regulated in the Motu Proprio *Ministeria quaedam* (17 August 1972), preceded in a preparatory manner the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, although such ministries were conferred on other suitable male faithful.

A number of Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops have highlighted the need to deepen the subject doctrinally, so that

it may respond to the nature of the aforementioned charisms and the needs of the times, offering appropriate support to the role of evangelisation that is incumbent upon the ecclesial community.

Accepting these recommendations, a doctrinal development has taken place in recent years which has highlighted how certain ministries instituted by the Church are based on the common condition of being baptised and the regal priesthood received in the Sacrament of Baptism; they are essentially distinct from the ordained ministry received in the Sacrament of Orders. A consolidated practice in the Latin Church has also confirmed, in fact, that these lay ministries, since they are based on the Sacrament of Baptism, may be entrusted to all suitable faithful, whether male or female, in accordance with what is already implicitly provided for by Canon 230 § 2.

Consequently, after having heard the opinion of the competent Dicasteries, I have decided to modify canon 230 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law. I therefore decree that canon 230 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law shall in future have the following wording:

“Lay persons of suitable age and with the gifts determined by decree of the Episcopal Conference may be permanently assigned, by means of the established liturgical rite, to the ministries of lectors and acolytes; however, the conferment of such a role does not entitle them to support or remuneration from the Church”.

I also order the amendment of the other provisions having the force of law which refer to this canon.

I order that the provisions of this Apostolic Letter in the form of a Motu Proprio have firm and stable effect, notwithstanding

anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, and to be promulgated by publication in *L'Osservatore Romano*, coming into force on the same day, and then published in the official commentary of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the tenth day of January in the year 2021, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the ninth of my Pontificate.

Francis

UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS OF OUR TOILERS

1. THE FARMERS

There are two main problems which affect the livelihood of many families engaged in cultivation of paddy, vegetables and fruits in Sri Lanka, namely rural indebtedness and the Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).

Floods and droughts cause poverty of the farmers (cultivators) But when nature provides good weather and credit facilities from the government, they have a good harvest and expect fair price for their produce. But they generally spend the money lavishly on consumer items expecting abundance during the next harvest. But sometimes nature decides otherwise. Hence the farmers are compelled to pawn their jewellery or borrow money from the money-lenders and from the banks and pay the interest. Some money- lenders charge exorbitant rates of interest.

Rural indebtedness has become a major economic problem among the farmers. It has got institutionalized in many farmer-families. Therefore there is an urgent need to educate the farmers to liberate themselves from this institutionalized way of life so that they and their children can hope to enjoy a better quality of life. In this endeavour, the government and community organisations can also provide opportunities and facilities by appointing competent officers to create awareness of the problems and find suitable solutions by organizing thrift societies.

Medical research conducted in Sri Lanka has shown that many families engaged in cultivation have become victims of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). For example, a survey conducted in the schools in the north Central Province had discovered that 10 % of the 5000 school children are suffering due to CKD in the district of Anuradhapura. This disease has been caused by excessive use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and weedicides for the cultivation of paddy, vegetables and fruits during the past several years and also through occupational exposure of the agricultural communities to herbicides. Non-availability of safe water for drinking and for the preparation of food is one of the main problems affecting vast majority of the people living in the North Central Province (NCP).

Dialysis is given to kidney patients in the hospitals but many patients are unable to find money to obtain this help due to poverty. Many families therefore are compelled to pawn their jewellery and mortgage their property.

2. THE FISHERMEN

The continuous intrusion of the South Indian Fishermen into Sri Lankan waters, crossing the international Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), using Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing methods, especially hi-tech bottom trawling which comb our sea bed, destroying also our marine resources and fishing gear of our Sri Lankan fishermen, goes on undeterred. Bilateral meetings at the highest level between Sri Lanka and India have been held several times but to date, the issue remains unresolved.

Our fishermen feel powerless to resist or prevent the movement of more than 300 big Indian trawlers poaching as close as 500 meters to our coastline. As a result, our Sri Lankan fisher-families, especially in the Northern Province, are made to suffer the consequences. Some have become unemployed or under-employed and they are unable also to assure quality education for their children. In this situation, they are compelled to pawn their jewellery to buy nets destroyed by the Indian trawlers and to educate their children.

Already in 2013, Bishop Rayappu Joseph had said: “Our fishermen have done all they can to urge the government to take action against this blatant robbery of our livelihood. They have taken a defiant stand against poaching by the Indians but to no avail. He said he had even raised this matter on numerous occasions at the Bishops’ Conference”(*Daily Mirror*, 12.10. 2013). Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda who hails from the Northern Province of Sri Lanka has already understood the plight of the fisher-families in the North and has said that a joint mechanism has been proposed to address the issue. I hope he will be able to arrive at a just solution on behalf of our fisher-families and our country without procrastinating.

Senior Professor of the Faculty of Geological Studies in Peradeniya University Athula Senaratne has warned (*Daily Mirror*, 12, January, 2021) that any development activity in the Muthurajawela wetland would result in serious consequences affecting human life because arsenic contents mixed with other minerals if exposed to air would dilute in water and cause extensive pollution of underground water

resources. He has pointed out that research over the last three decades has clearly indicated that the Muthurajawela wetland was unfit for development activity and that any attempt to meddle with its environmental conditions would result in disastrous consequences.

Any move to implement projects in **Muthurajawala** will lead to the depletion of the natural resources in the Negombo lagoon and thereby deprive the livelihood of people living in more than eleven villages.

Devani Jayatilake, Gampaha District Forest Officer on February 10, 2020 spoke daringly of **the importance of mangroves in the Negombo lagoon for preservation of oxygen** for the survival of human and infra-human beings and also for the livelihood of the people engaged in fishing in the Negombo lagoon and saved the mangroves from being destroyed on the advice of incompetent persons. Her competence, love for mother-nature and concern for people saved the beauty of the Negombo lagoon and the livelihood of the people.

Bishops and Consecrated Religious are sending priests and Sisters abroad to be available for the socio-pastoral ministries of our Catholic expatriate workers. Why is such an availability of an active resident priest for the socio-pastoral care and guidance is still denied to more than 600 Catholic fisher-families, living and laboring for their livelihood in the Island of Baththalangunduwa (off Kalpitiya),?

THE ESTATE WORKERS

The estate workers need to improve their physical quality of life (PQL) in order to be healthy human beings and continue to toil and contribute to the Gross National Product (GNP) of Sri Lanka. Such a desired goal cannot be achieved right now with their meager earnings (Rs 750/- per day). As reported in the editorial of *Daily Mirror* on October 14, quoting UNICEF, more than 40 per cent of children under the age of five on the estates are stunted. Under-nourishment will cause sickness and sicknesses will cause deaths. To get over this vicious circle, the government must raise the daily wage of every tea estate worker, not forgetting their untiring efforts which account for 12 % of the total export earnings of Sri Lanka (*Daily Mirror*, November 13, 2020). Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse in his budget speech had proposed a daily wage of Rs 1000/- for estate workers from January 2021.

There is a rich Biblical Tradition which underlies the Church's insistence that it is a "grave injustice" to "refuse to pay wage" or to refuse to give a just wage" in due time and in due proportion to the work done(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no 302), Bishop Raymond Wickramasinghe, the Bishop of the diocese of Galle, as a religious leader voiced his concern over the prevailing social issues of the plantation community and called upon the decision makers to listen to the just demand of the plantation workers for the long awaited wage increase and other social needs.

Every tea estate worker and his/her family have also an inalienable right to lead a life worthy of human dignity and in

solidarity with other people. For this purpose, the tea estate worker needs a family wage, better housing, sanitary and medical facilities. The children need quality education in order to feel socially esteemed, be better integrated and contribute to the progress of Sri Lanka. For this purpose, the Trade Unions and other Welfare Organisations must continue to find better strategies in order to enable the tea estate workers to become also architects of their own progress.

Emmanuel Fernando, OMI

“ I see clearly that the thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. The Church sometimes has locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules. The most important thing is the first proclamation: Jesus Christ has saved you.” – **Pope Francis**

Breath God's Jewel

The breath holds you,
It's your shield million worth
The breath of God may shine on you like the sun
Endowed with a true gift, we are short of breath
Wearing masks,
Expensive and mandatory,
Life moves on
Uncertainty lurking
Into the future unknown.

The world is in desperation
An unseen tiny creature,
Shook the earth planet
People gasping for breath
To keep oneself alive before
The virus hits us.

It is said 'God helps those who help themselves'
Constant reminders to be safe and secure
Taking health guidelines and precautions,
To ward off the virus,

Time is flying, years come to an end,
Pain envelopes everyone on the globe
It has become a long and constant companion
We seek answers elsewhere
Pain intensifies instead,
What have we done to deserve this?
We cry out in anguish 'Lord, you breathed your spirit into us
And renew the face of the earth
Give us a healthy life
The breath of God, Holy Spirit, the giver of life'.

Sr. Malar Louis, HF

Book Review

TILL THE MOUNTAINS DISAPPEAR **the Story of St. Joseph's College**

“Colligite ne pereant” (Gather / collect lest they perish). **Avishka Mario Senewiratne**, an old boy of St. Joseph's College, Colombo, has made tremendous effort to collect important historical facts regarding his Alma Mater and published a book, ***TILL THE MOUNTAINS DISAPPEAR***, the story of St. Joseph's College, Colombo. I admire and appreciate his genuine love which he has manifested through his book for this prestigious college in Sri Lanka, founded by the Missionary Oblate Bishop Christopher Bonjean, the first Archbishop of Colombo, to promote education of children rooted in virtuous living.

The book reveals the foundational innovative vision and mission of the College initially by Oblate educators, supported by their community life and also the names of unforgettable Oblate Rectors of St. Joseph's College who had done pioneering work setting the college on the path of educational excellence. Names of Oblate Frs. Maurice Legoc and Peter Pillai, who were Rectors of St. Joseph's College, have become also household names in Sri Lanka.

Avishka Mario Senewiratne mentions the name of Fr. Stanley Abeysekara, the Rector (1983- 1996) of St. Joseph's College, Colombo, as the one who first wanted to initiate research into the foundational spirit of the College and its continuity and publish a book. Finding in Avishka Mario Senewiratne, an ardent Old boy and lover of the College with a similar desire

to unearth the documents, do research and publish a book on St. Joseph's College, Fr. Stanley Abeysekara had encouraged him to undertake the arduous task of the research regarding the College and publish a book.

The author has not failed to mention the untiring dedicated services of the Rectors, the teachers and the good quality of life of many old boys.

***TILL THE MOUNTAINS DISAPPEAR* is a book to be read by Rectors, Principals, teachers and students who are interested in promoting genuine values, skills and virtues through the education of children.**

Emmanuel Fernando,OMI

