



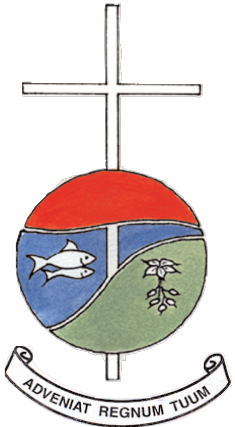
Wounding the Church and wounding Christ
*Pope Francis on the sad divisions
between Christians*



Volume 38 No 6

DECEMBER 2014 / JANUARY 2015

D50



Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter



O come, O come, Emmanuel

Advent and the
preparation for Christmas



Reflections, prayers & readings for all the
Sundays in December and January



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4. Banjul Lemman Street	6868806	23. Lamin Village Opp Galp	6868815
5. Bansang	6969915	24. Latrikunda Sabiji	6868847
6. Basse Santa Su	6868839	25. London Corner	6868807
7. Basse Highway	6969865	26. Old Jeshwang	6868831
8. Brikama Nyambai	6968874	27. Old Yundum Market	6868843
9. Brikama Hawla Kunda	6868810	28. Sanyang	6868824
10. Brusubi Mini Market	6868819	29. Sayer Jobe Avenue	6868808
11. Brusubi Galp Station	6969873	30. Serrekunda Bartess	6868836
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By way of introduction

A beautiful time to rediscover God's love



THIS YEAR, once again, I've had the opportunity of leading thirty-one Gambian pilgrims to the Holy Land for our annual pilgrimage. We stayed in Bethlehem for seven days. For those making the pilgrimage for the first time, staying at the birthplace of Jesus was a dream come true. We celebrated one of our Sunday Masses at one of the oldest surviving churches in the world: the Church of the Nativity, near the place where it is believed that Mary gave birth to Jesus. Around 160 AD, Justin Martyr wrote that Jesus had been born in a cave in this part of Bethlehem.

We used the Christmas Day readings and sang carols. After the Mass, one pilgrim said to me, 'It is as if every day is Christmas in Bethlehem.' She was right in a sense, because every day is a reminder of how God became man to share our human condition, giving us the opportunity to share in God's life as well.

At Christmas we celebrate a wonderful mystery, though most people don't realise it. The mystery is about the infinite love of God who called each one of us into existence out of love for us, and who sent Christ to give us definitive proof of his love and his desire to draw us close to him.

Do you believe that God loves us, that God wants a close personal, loving relationship with each one of us, and calls us to come closer and closer to him?

God is seeking us, and we are seeking God. The birth of Christ should be proof enough that God is seeking us. Our response to this remarkable love of God should be for us to seek God in return.

We can seek him by praising him for the beauty and splendour of creation, by being grateful for the marvel and mystery of our own humanity, and for our countless blessings, especially in the love we share within our family. We can seek God by taking time to pause from the many things that occupy our day and focus for a few moments on what is really going on deep within us.

Christmas is a beautiful time to rediscover God's love for us and our great desire for God.

Whilst in Bethlehem this year with the Gambian pilgrims, I felt deep within myself great thankfulness for the many blessings that we receive in the Diocese of Banjul. We spend a great deal of time lamenting the things we don't have and can't do, when instead we could spend that time blessing God for his manifold gifts and blessings.

Let this Christmas be a time of thanksgiving for us all. Christmas is a time of love. God loved us enough to send his Son to be our Sacrifice. Jesus loved us enough to be that Sacrifice. And now God wants us to love Jesus enough to sacrifice our will to him.

Fr Peter S. Lopez

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Stand by for another New Year!

A NEW liturgical year is just beginning. It runs from the First Sunday in Advent (30th November 2014) until Saturday 28th December 2015.

The liturgical year is a great gift to the Church. Its colour, drama, variety and patterns enliven a journey which is never quite the same from one year to another.

As disciples of Christ and members of his Church we are all invited to join this journey, Sunday by Sunday and day by day. Christ is at the centre of the liturgical year, which we celebrate in prayer, song and reading the Scriptures.

The journey we're about to embark on will carry us through the mysteries of our faith with Christ, Mary and the saints.

Times and seasons

The liturgical year is made up of five seasons and 'Ordinary Time'.

The five seasons are:

- Advent (this year, 30th November to 24th December)
 - Christmas Time (this year, 25th December to 11th January)
 - Lent (this year, 18th February to 2nd April)
 - The Easter (or Paschal) Triduum (this year, 2nd to 5th April)
 - Easter Time (this year, 5th April to 24th May)

Advent celebrates Christ's coming, and **Christmas** his birth.

Lent is a penitential season preparing us for Easter.

The three days of the **Easter Triduum** are the climax of the year, commemorating Christ's institution of the Mass, his passion and death, and his resurrection.

Easter Time - the longest season of the year - continues the joyful celebration of the resurrection until Pentecost.

'**Ordinary Time**' refers to all the days of the year which are outside the five special seasons. 'Ordinary' does not mean plain or featureless, but refers to Sundays and weekdays taken in order.

Sundays – always special

Throughout the year, regardless of season or Ordinary Time, every Sunday is special.

Sunday celebrates Christ's resurrection, when the faithful gather at Mass as a family.

Everyone should go to Mass on Sundays. Not to do so without good reason is a grave sin. Every Sunday we are invited, if we are in a state of grace, to receive Christ in Holy Communion.

When as Catholics we come together on the fifty-two or fifty-three Sundays of the year, we are presented with the whole of the 'mystery of salvation'. In Advent we hear of the expectations of the coming of the long-awaited Messiah. At Christmas we rejoice in his birth. In Lent we are called upon to renew our membership of the Church, given in baptism and renewed at Easter, when we cry 'Alleluia' in celebration of Christ's triumph over sin and death.

Then there are the ordinary Sundays, when we journey with Christ, as it were, in Galilee and Jerusalem, as he teaches and heals.



Our heavenly friends

Punctuating the seasons and Ordinary Time are the feasts of the saints.

Some of these feasts are called '**solemnities**'. Like Sundays, solemnities are great days of rejoicing. Examples are St Joseph (Thursday 19th March), the Assumption (Saturday 15th August) and All Saints (Sunday 1st November).

In addition, each parish has its own solemnity in honour of its title or patron saint.

Some solemnities are '**holy days of obligation**', when everyone should attend Mass, just as we do on Sundays.

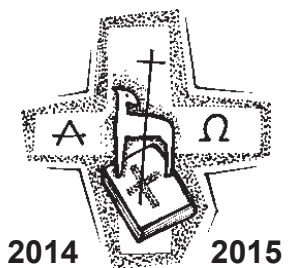
Next in order of celebration are **feasts**, when we sing the *Gloria in excelsis* at Mass in thanksgiving for the apostles, martyrs and other renowned saints.



Then there are **memorials** - days when we rejoice with those who have 'done God's will throughout the ages'. Solemnities and feasts have special readings at Mass. But in most cases memorials don't interrupt our working through the course of weekday readings at Mass (this year is 'Year 1'). The saints we celebrate on memorials are living examples of how to enable the Word of God to bear fruit in our lives.

Some memorials are 'optional' - that is, they may be celebrated at the discretion of the priest.

Let us pray that all of us - priests and people - may draw inspiration and strength from our journey with Christ, Mary and the saints throughout the liturgical year 2014-2015.



*Lord Jesus, grant that as we seek you day by day throughout the liturgical year we may grow ever closer to you - the Way, the Truth and the Life.
Strengthen us to witness to your Saving Name wherever we are, in all the circumstances of our lives.
Amen.*

Religious celebrations 2015



Catholic

Epiphany Sunday 4th January
Ash Wednesday 18th February
Palm Sunday 29th March
Easter Sunday 5th April
Ascension Day Thursday 14th May
Pentecost Sunday 24th May
Corpus Christi Sunday 7th June

Orthodox Lent begins Monday 23rd February
Orthodox Easter Sunday 12th April

Jewish

Pesach (Passover) Friday 3rd – Saturday 11th April
Yom Kippur (Atonement) Tue 22nd - Wed 23rd September

Muslim (approximate dates)

Milad-al-Nabi (Prophet's Birthday) Saturday 3rd January
Ramadan begins Thursday 18th June
Lailat-al-Qadr ('Night of Power') Monday 13th July
Eid-al-Fitr (*Koriteh*) Friday 17th July
Eid-al-Adha (*Tobaski*) Wednesday 23rd September
Al-Hijira (Islamic New Year) Wednesday 14th October
Milad-al-Nabi Monday 21st December



Pious practices

GAMBIAN Catholics have recently been on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Egypt, and on Saturday 6th December many Catholics and others will make their way to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace at Kunkujang Mariama

What is a pilgrimage?

A **PILGRIMAGE** is a journey to a shrine to gain divine help or as an act of penance, thanksgiving or devotion.

The visit of the wise men from the East to the Infant Jesus in Bethlehem is a New Testament example of a pilgrimage. Many centuries earlier, as recounted in the Old Testament, Moses led the Jewish people through the desert on a 40-year journey to the Promised Land.

In mediæval times, Christian pilgrims stayed in hospices. On their return journey they wore on their hats the badge of the shrine they'd visited. The chief attractions were Rome, the Holy Land and Santiago de Compostela (the shrine of St James in Spain). But there were hundreds of other pilgrimage sites in Europe, including that of St Francis of Assisi in Italy and of St Thomas à Becket in Canterbury, England.

More recent shrines include Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico (1531) Lourdes, France (1855) and Fatima, Portugal (1917).

The first pilgrimage to Popoguine, on the Petite Côte of Senegal, 70 kilometres south of Dakar, took place at Pentecost in 1888. In 1992 the shrine was visited by St John Paul II.

The first pilgrimage to the Gambian National Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace took place in December 1987.

Before the destruction of the Temple, Jewish people were obliged to visit Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, especially during festivals. Nowadays they visit the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem's Old City, which is the only remnant of the Temple.

The pilgrimage or *hajj* to Mecca is one of the Five Pillars of Islam which all Muslims who have the opportunity and means are obliged to undertake. Other holy places for Muslims are the *Al Quds* Mount and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Thus Jerusalem is a holy city for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Adherents of many other religions make pilgrimages, including Hindus and Buddhists.



Here & there

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE

Recalling a Christian minister, educationalist and pioneer politician



THE ANGLICAN priest, educationalist and pioneer politician J.C. Faye is to be commemorated in the second week of December, almost 30 years after his death.

The commemorative programme includes a thanksgiving service at 9 am on Sunday 7th December at St Mary's Anglican Cathedral, Banjul, followed by a parade led by the scout band to the J.C Faye Memorial School.

There will be a press conference on Wednesday 9th December. The launching of *The Very Reverend J.C. Faye, His Life and Times*, a biography by Dr Jeggan C. Senghor, will take place at the SunSwing Beach Resort, Cape Point at 5.30 pm on Friday 12th December.

On Saturday 13th December a book-launch party will be held from 4 pm at Relax Sahel, during which ashobi will be on sale.

Public-spirited career

John Colley Faye was born in 1907 of a Serer father and a Wolof mother. He attended the Methodist Boys' High School in Banjul before becoming a teacher in the early 1930s. Following training in England at the University of Southampton, he was appointed Headmaster of St Mary's Anglican School Banjul in 1939.

In 1942 he became the first Headmaster of the recently-established Anglican mission school at Kristikunda in the Upper River Region, and two years later assumed full control of the mission.

In February 1947 J.C. Faye became the first Gambian to be ordained an Anglican deacon. After serving his curacy at Kristikunda he returned to Banjul in 1949 as curate at St Mary's Anglican Cathedral.

It was in recognition of his educational work, which had brought him an MBE, that in November 1947, J.C. Faye was appointed to the Executive Council by the Governor, Sir Andrew Wright, on the recommendation of the Commissioner of the URR.

Political activist

Having already served on the Banjul Advisory Town Council in the early 1940s, J.C. Faye became involved again in local politics following his return from Kristikunda to Banjul.

He pioneered the Motor Drivers' and Mechanics' Union. In 1951 the Gambia Democratic Party was formed, with J.C. Faye as leader. He headed the poll in the 1951 Legislative Council Election and was appointed a 'member of the government'. In the 1954 election he was re-elected. He pressed vigorously for constitutional changes.

By the 1960 election J.C. Faye had become leader of the DCA – the Democratic Congress Alliance, an amalgamation of two political parties. A new constitution meant that citizens in the Protectorate had been given voting rights for the first time. J. C. Faye was unsuccessful in the election (standing in Kombo West). In the 1962 election, when the DCA entered into a pact against the United Party with the PPP, he was again unsuccessful.

J.C. Faye was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1973, and thereafter concentrated on his many fruitful educational and church activities until his death in December 1985.

St Kizito, St Therese and St Peter in song

THE MUSICAL talents of choirs from three parishes have recently attracted appreciative audiences at public concerts.

On 31st October in the Jaama Hall at the Kairaba Beach Hotel the Senior Choir of St Therese's Kanifing presented their annual spiritual and cultural concert.

The following Friday, 7th November, choirs from St Kizito's Church Bakoteh gave their tenth public concert in the Penchami Hall at the Paradise Suites Hotel.

The Father Farrell Hall Kanifing was the venue on Friday 21st November for a concert by the choir of St Peter's Lamin.

St Therese

Eighteen pieces in local languages featured in the concert by the St Therese Senior Choir. Their concert at the Jaama Hall was followed by a commercial dance at the Father Farrell Hall Kanifing.

St Therese's Church and Parish is the largest in the diocese, but it was some years before a permanent choir was formed. The present formation dates from 1984. There are about 90 members. They play a full part in the liturgy and encourage the congregation to participate in song; and choir members play an active role in Church affairs.

The choirmasters are Alphonse Augustine Joh, Sang Charlie Gaye, Jean Benoit Ndiaga Ndiaye and Felix Ndaw.

St Kizito

At their concert, after an entrance song in Swahili, the St Kizito singers launched into a varied programme in Wolof, Manjago and other local languages.

St Kizito's Senior Choir was formed when the church opened in June 1992. The first choirmaster was Pierre Monty Mendy, who introduced Augustine Diouf from Senegal, with whom the choir has grown from strength the strength.

The choir has given concerts at the Fr Farrell Hall, the Jaama Hall at Kairaba Beach Hotel, as well as in Senegal at Dakar, Thiès, Oussouye and St Louis. The choir has links with other church choirs in The Gambia as well as with *Chorale Bruno Serge* of Thiès and *Chorale Mère Thérèse de Calcutta* of Ziguinchor.

The President of the Senior Choir is Pedro Gomez, with Diminga Tamba as Secretary. The Senior Choir has around fifty members, and the Junior Choir around forty.

EBOLA - Be aware! Be alert!

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Well done!

A message from Bishop ROBERT ELLISON on the Centenary Celebrations



THE CELEBRATIONS for the Centenary of our Cathedral have come and gone. For many of you it involved a lot of hard work and commitment, especially as we faced the final great climax of *Sang Marie* 2014.

A special word of gratitude is due to the members of the Centenary Committee for the way in which they kept the process and the implementation of the various events moving right up to the end.

For all of us it was a most memorable occasion due to the meticulous preparations of the committee as well as the exceptional attendance of our Catholic community across the entire diocese, along with other friends and visitors - despite the heavy rain with its special blessings!

All of us can thank God and Our Lady Assumed into Heaven for granting us the privilege of having had the experience to live through this very special moment in the history of our diocese and the Cathedral Church.

As I look back on the five months of celebration, starting with the appropriate opening Liturgy of Reconciliation in Kunkujang Mariama on 14th March and ending with the grand finale on the Solemnity of Our Lady of the Assumption on 15th August, I ask myself, should we make an effort to evaluate the impact of the centenary event on our personal lives? In the lives of our communities? All that was so positive from many angles; what could have been better, or what may have been forgotten?

There could also be some items from the Centenary event that we need to follow up on – for example, the proposed museum, and a good record of the events that took place to be stored in the diocesan archives.

It is often said, ‘We had the experience, but failed to learn from our mistakes.’ We can grow in our lives both as individuals as well as a community when we are able to stand back from the intense work that was done so as to learn for the future.

Arising from this great celebration was, I think, our awareness of all that we have received from our forefathers in the faith going back to the year 1914. This should encourage us to consolidate our own faith to be able to transmit it to our children and families for the world they have to face in time to come. It is encouraging to know that the special evangelisation programme just launched by the GPI has attracted a large number of participants.

The end of our centenary year almost overlaps with the recent Synod of Bishops on the subject of Marriage and Family Life. It is a most sensitive topic that is being addressed by our Catholic Church. We are part of this ongoing discussion between the lay faithful and our church leaders. Never before in the history of our Church has there been a coming together of a number of lay faithful with bishops and other observers, along with the Pope.

Two principles were made clear at the end of this first part of the Synod on Marriage and Family Life: respect for the Church’s teaching on marriage, and compassion for those who sincerely struggle to live these ideals step-by-step.

+ Robert P. Ellison CSSp
Bishop of Banjul

3rd November 2014

When Christians and Muslims are members of the same family...

‘THE FAMILY as an agent of Inter-Religious Dialogue’ was the theme at the Second Congress of the Regional Union of Priests in West Africa (RUPWA) held in Dakar from Monday 3rd to Friday 7th November.

Three clergy from the Diocese of Banjul - Fr Anthony Gabisi, Fr Yenes Manneh and Fr Peter S. Lopez - joined brother priests from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Togo and Senegal.

The Apostolic Nuncio to Senegal, Msgr Luiz Mariano Monte Mayor, pointed out that that many West African families include members of differing faiths; and that having both Christians and Muslims in the same family enhances inter-religious dialogue and promotes respect, love and harmony.

The Bishop in charge of clergy in West Africa, Msgr Jean-Noël Diouf, Bishop of Tambacounda, quoted *Nostra Aetate*, issued by Pope Paul VI in October 1965 on the



relation of the Catholic Church with non-Christian religions:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions.

She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many respects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.

Present at the opening ceremony of the congress was the Senegalese Minister of Public Works, Mme Vivienne Bampassy.

Gambians in the Holy Land



THIRTY-ONE Gambian pilgrims returned on Wednesday 22nd October from a two-week pilgrimage to the Holy Land which included a trip to Mount Sinai in Egypt. They visited and prayed at sites associated with Jesus' birth, ministry and passion, as well as places recalling his mother Mary, John the Baptist and the prophets of the Old Testament.

The pilgrimage was packed with experiences, only some of which can be mentioned here.

After changing planes at Brussels, the pilgrims arrived at Ben Gurion Airport, Tel-Aviv, on Thursday 9th October before travelling to Nazareth and exploring the town the following day, including visits to the Basilica of the Annunciation and Mary's Well.

Jesus' first miracle

The pilgrims continued to Cana, where Jesus performed his first miracle, and Mount Tabor, where he was transfigured.

The pilgrims visitors visited the Baha'i shrine at Haifa, with a breathtaking view over the town. They went on to Mount Carmel and the monument to the prophet Elijah.

The third day featured a cruise on the Sea of Galilee and a visit to Capernaum, where Jesus called his first disciples and exercised much of his ministry.

On the fourth day, Sunday 12th October, the pilgrims left Nazareth to travel southwards through the Jordan Valley and along the Dead Sea to Taba, crossing into Egypt and transferring to the St Catherine's Monastery. The following day they climbed Mount Sinai.

Birthplace of John the Baptist

In Bethlehem, Mass at the Church of the Nativity was the highlight of the fifth day; and on the sixth day the pilgrims went on to the City of David and Jerusalem, where they visited the museum and transferred to Ein Kerem, birthplace of John the Baptist, where they attended Mass at the Church of the Visitation and visited the beautiful Convent of the Sisters of Zion.

Thursday 16th October was spent in Jerusalem, taking in the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane, the Church of the Agony, the Church of the Ascension and the Church of the Pater Noster.

From the Church of St Anne the pilgrims followed the *Via Dolorosa*, the path trodden by Jesus on his way to crucifixion, to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. They prayed at the Wailing Wall (all that is left of the Temple, and a most holy site for Jews) and saw the exterior of Temple Mount, the Muslim shrine.

The following day, after Mass at Bethany, the pilgrims visited the site of the tomb of Lazarus before going on to Jericho and Elisha's Spring and a Greek Orthodox monastery.

On Saturday 18th October the pilgrims bathed in the Dead Sea, in the afternoon returning to Jerusalem to the Church of St Peter, finishing the day on Mount Zion and visiting the Cenacle (the room of the Last Supper) and the tomb of King David.

Jaffa

Sunday 19th and Monday 20th October were 'free' days in Bethlehem; and on Tuesday the pilgrims visited the White City, a Unesco heritage site, and the ancient city of Jaffa. Early the next morning they embarked at Tel Aviv for return flights to Brussels and Banjul, arriving at 5.25 pm, a fortnight to the day and almost to the hour from when they had set out on their eventful and spiritual pilgrimage.

This was the 12th Gambian pilgrimage to the Holy Land organised by the National Pilgrimage Committee. Fr Peter S. Lopez was leading the pilgrims for the seventh time. Other leaders have been Fr Anthony Gabisi, Fr Peter Gomez, Fr Joseph Carl Gomez and Fr Yenes Manneh.

** See page 5: What is a pilgrimage?*

The annual pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace at Kunkujang Mariama will take place on Saturday 6th December

OBITUARY

Death of political activist and devoted Catholic

SANG Marie Sylva, regular member of the congregation at Holy Spirit Church Banjul for many years, died aged 58 on 17th October.

Mr Sylva ran his own enterprise, Bassen Construction, and was an APRC activist, becoming the party's chair Chairperson for Banjul Central. President Jammeh invested him as an Officer of the Order of the Republic of The Gambia (ORG).



Sang Marie Sylva, youngest son of Samuel Louis Pierre Sylva and Therese Amul Yakar Sylva (nee Bassen), was born in Banjul in July 1956. He attended St John's Infants' School and St Augustine's primary and secondary schools.

In 1971 he became an apprentice welder at the Apollo Workshop, and several years later worked as a welder in the maintenance department of Gambia River Transport (GRT).

In the early 80s he enrolled at the newly-founded Gambia Technical Training Institution (GTTI), and after three years was awarded a certificate and diploma in welding fabrication and construction engineering.

Mr Sylva's funeral was held at Holy Spirit on Monday 27th October, followed by interment at Banjul Cemetery.

He is survived by two daughters, Anna and Madeleine, and four sons, Samuel, Sebastian, Paul and Joseph.

Rejoicing as four young Gambians make their first profession



FOUR young Gambians made their first profession of vows as Sisters of the Presentation of Mary at a joyful Eucharist celebrated by the Vicar-General, Fr Emile Sambou, on Saturday 15th November.

• **Marie Bass** was born in Banjul in February 1991 and attended St Therese's schools before proceeding to Archdeacon George Senior Secondary School. Her parish priest helped her to encounter the Presentation Sisters, and she was received as a pre-postulant in February 2010. As a novice she was assigned to Serrekunda and Banjul, and has taught with Missionary Childhood, Friends of Marie Rivier and First Communion classes.

• **Marie Noel Gomez** was born in 1990 in Guediawaye, Dakar. She attended the Presentation of Mary nursery, lower basic and upper basic schools in Brikama before going on to St Joseph's Senior Secondary School. At an early age she was inspired by the Presentation Sisters who prepared her for First Communion, and in the Marie Rivier group. She was attached to the Juniorate in Serrekunda from 2007 to 2010 while still attending school. On completing Grade 12 she asked to join the Sisters, enjoying community and apostolic experiences in various communities. She was a pre-postulant in Banjul, and Kunkujang Mariama as a novice.

Candlelight procession to open Year of Consecrated Life

A CANDLELIGHT procession in Kanifing from St Therese's school to the church followed by an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament will inaugurate the Year of Consecrated Life on Saturday 29th November.

Pope Francis has instituted the Year of Consecrated Life to be celebrated throughout the Catholic Church from 30th November 2014 to 2nd February 2016.

In the Diocese of Banjul, events will include an opening Mass on Saturday 6th December during the pilgrimage to Kunkujang Mariama, and radio and television programmes about vocations in mid-January.

Later events include workshops on the consecrated life led by Sr Madeline SJC on Monday 2nd February; on Feminine Religious led by St Cecilia from Togo on Friday 24th April; and on *Perfecte Caritas* on Friday 8th May.

A symposium is among events to follow, along with a retreat for religious and a Fatima procession.

• **Ajuwa Cecilia MacCauley** was born in 1989. Her interest in the religious life began at St Joseph's Senior Secondary School and grew stronger at the Presentation Girls' Vocational School. She was received as a pre-postulant in February 2010, and in October 2011 began her postulancy and was sent to Brikama for three-months' apostolic experience, teaching with the Friends of Marie Rivier. During her novitiate, which she began in October 2012, she taught at Rivier Nursery School and Sunday School.

• **Therese Joof** was born in April 1991 in Kerr Mbuguma, North Bank Region, and educated at Chamen Lower School, Essau Upper Basic School and St Peter's Secondary School. Lamin. Therese came into contact with the Presentation Sisters through her parish priest, and stayed at the Rivier Home, London Corner for four years. After completing senior secondary school, she asked to begin formation as a religious sister. She served her pre-postulancy at the Serrekunda community for a year, teaching in Rivier Nursery School. As a postulant, she underwent missionary experience for three months with the Banjul community.

She began her novitiate in October 2012, and after completing her canonical year spent six months with the Brikama community. Therese was active in teaching the catechism; and she served with the Friends of Marie Rivier and missionary childhood.



Sisters from Senegal: Les Filles du Saint Coeur de Marie have come to work at Darsilami. On 19th October Bishop Ellison blessed their convent.

In brief...

Bishop Robert Ellison celebrated Mass on Sunday 24th November - Christ the King - in Bansang, at the conclusion of his eight-day visit to parishes in the Provinces.

Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary has recently returned from a break in Ireland.

Remembrance Sunday on 9th November was marked at the Cenotaph in July 22nd Square Banjul by a parade, prayers and the laying of wreaths, led by the Vice President. On Tuesday 11th November, prayers were offered at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Fajara. Christian prayers were led by the Anglican Vicar-General.

The clergy of the diocese are to take part in their annual retreat at Shalom, Fajara, in early January.



Getting ready for Christmas

DO you know the old rhyme? 'Christmas comes but once a year, and when it comes it brings good cheer.'

Here are some tips for enjoying a happy family Christmas.

THERE'S something missing if a child sees Christmas only in terms of presents, parties and extra-special food. What about Jesus? Aren't we going to invite him into our homes as our principal guest? Do talk to your children about the meaning of Christmas.

OUR religion is not one of make-belief. Don't encourage children to fantasise about Father Christmas. He's a made-up character paraded by those who exploit Christmas commercially and those who organise Christmas parties.

It's never too early to tell children that the central figure at Christmas is not so-called Father Christmas, but CHRIST. (The genuine, original Santa Claus, by the way, was St Nicholas, a 4th-century Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor.)



CHOOSE Christmas presents thoughtfully, trying to find ones that will be useful or give pleasure to each recipient. For children, don't choose toys and novelties they will tire of in a few hours or days. And don't encourage children to expect to be showered with expensive presents. It's your love and good cheer that children should most value at Christmas.

DON'T spend more on Christmas than you can afford. Your children may want you to spend more than their friends' families, but don't forget that when Christmas is over you will have bills that must be paid and purchases you can't avoid.

CHRISTMAS is known as a time of peace. What better time to 'make up' with anyone, in or beyond the family, with whom you've not been on good terms?

AT CHRISTMAS the poor and lonely may feel forgotten. Think of ways you can bring some of the joy of Christmas to friends and neighbours who are hard-up and alone.

PREPARE Christmas cakes and puddings well in advance of Christmas. Involve your children in the mixing of the ingredients - even the youngest ones (under supervision!)

YOU will probably eat and drink much more at Christmas than you usually do. Try not to eat so much that you feel exhausted. Take some exercise over the Christmas period - even if it's only a walk!



MOST Christian families decorate their houses for Christmas, perhaps including a Christmas tree and lights. There's a good choice in shops, and some decorations may be made at home, preferably by the children.

* Shops want us to spend a lot, so they put up decorations well before Christmas. But in your own household, if you want Christmas to be a time of joy, especially for your children, don't put up decorations until Christmas Eve.

An exception is the Advent wreath. If you have one in your home, it should be displayed from Sunday 30th November (*see page 11*)

* Ensure that decorations are securely fixed and cannot cause fire. Decorations you buy in shops should be labelled 'non-flammable'.

* Don't leave lit candles unattended, and don't place candles in a draught or near curtains or other hangings.

* Children enjoy blowing up balloons, but balloons aren't a good choice as decorations, because they shrink and collapse within a day or two.

* Turn off decorative lights if no one is in the house.

WHEN should you take down your decorations? Some say Twelfth Night, Tuesday 6th January, the traditional last night of Christmastide. Others may prefer Sunday 4th January, when we celebrate the Epiphany. Or even Sunday 11th January, the feast of the Lord's Baptism, which the Church nowadays regards as the last day of Christmas Time. Whatever you decide, put your Christmas decorations away carefully so that you can use them again next year.



The Editor & Staff
of the Newsletter wish all our Readers
a Most Happy and Holy Christmas

Go easy!



MEDICAL opinion is that one glass of red wine a day is generally good for the health. But drinking too much alcohol, whether beer, wine or spirits, is bad. So everyone needs to know just how dangerous over-drinking is.

Heavy drinking causes absence from work as well as traffic accidents, domestic violence, other violent crimes, marital breakdown, child abuse and sexual assault.

Young people who drink too much alcohol are likely to experiment with other drugs.

Pregnant women may damage the mental and physical development of their unborn children.

Heavy drinkers often spend more on alcohol than they and their family can afford.

If you drink heavily you risk damaging your liver and developing disorders such as high blood pressure, coronary heart disease and stroke.

Many heavy drinkers suffer from digestive disorders and cancer of the mouth, tongue, pharynx, larynx or oesophagus.

Those who over-indulge tend not to eat a balanced diet and to suffer nutritional disorders.

Long-term heavy drinking leads to the impairment of the intellect and physical mobility.

Go easy on consuming alcohol not just at Christmas but throughout the year.

See your doctor if you know you drink too much, and never kid yourself or others that you are keeping within safe limits if you know that you are not.

** If you're going to a party where there's likely to be lots of alcohol, don't be shy to say that you prefer to stick to soft drinks. If you'd like something stronger, don't mix different sorts of alcoholic drinks: stick to just beer, or whatever you prefer, but in moderation. You can intersperse alcohol with soft drinks; and before and after your party take a long drink of water.*



Question Box

A 'BORN-AGAIN' friend tells me that Christians shouldn't celebrate Christ's birth on 25th December, because nowhere in the Bible is it stated that he was born on that day.

THAT CHRIST was the Son of God and Saviour of mankind is the message of all four Gospels. But only two of them - Matthew and Luke - say anything about his birth; and they make no mention of the day, nor even the month or year when it took place.

Luke does mention that just before Christ's birth, Joseph travelled with Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered in a census: 'In those days, a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration, and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.' (Luke 2:1-3)

Although we number each year 'AD' (*Anno Domini* - the Year of the Lord) scholars calculate that Christ was not born in the year AD 1, but up to six years earlier. (King Herod the Great, mentioned in Matthew 2:1, died in 4 BC.)

In the early Church the celebration of Christ's birth wasn't considered a major festival, and wasn't assigned a common date.

In AD 323, after centuries of persecution in the Roman Empire, Christianity was legalised. Christians no longer had to worship in secret: they could celebrate their festivals openly. It made sense to have an agreed Christian calendar across the empire so that all Christians could celebrate together.

Pope Julius I (AD 337-352) chose 25th December as the date to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord (which came to be known as Christmas). He chose this date as an attempt to Christianise pagan festivities around the winter solstice and the New Year.

The date caught on, and the feast became widely accepted. By AD 529, 25th December had become a civil holiday.

By AD 567 all twelve days from 25th December to the Epiphany were public holidays, making Christmastide the longest holiday of the year.

Your 'born-again' friend is right. Nowhere in the Bible is it stated that Jesus was born on 25th December. But, in fact, Christians make no claim that Christ was born on that date. They merely agree on 25th December as a common date to celebrate his birth.



Do you know?

- 1 Which young man was greatly loved by David?
- 2 Name the Cardinal Archbishop of Dakar.
- 3 What do the letters MMXV stand for?
- 4 To whom did Jesus say, 'Feed my lambs'?
- 5 What does the symbol on the right signify?



Answers on page 25

Life, light and longing

MOST Christians are happy that they share Christmas with millions throughout the world for whom 'Christ' and 'Mass' have little meaning.

Isn't it good that at Christmas countless families come together to share gifts, good food, goodwill and best wishes? And Christmas is widely appreciated as a time of peace - peace which the world so sorely needs.

But for Christians, Christmas means much more.

So joyful a feast needs forethought - much more than buying presents and saving up for festive food and parties.

Our season of preparation for a really Christian Christmas we call ADVENT.

What is Advent?

Advent is the opening season of the Church's year. The name 'Advent' means 'coming'. Advent is a season of waiting and of expectation.

It involves penitence, too: we Christians seek the washing away of sin as we prepare anew to welcome Christ into our hearts as he was welcomed by Mary and Joseph at his birth in Bethlehem.

We also contemplate the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time. We think of death, judgment, hell and heaven.

Themes and preoccupations

Advent is rich in themes. It has some of the feel of Lent, because Christmas needs to be more than party time. We should feel that Christ has been truly born in our hearts and in the way we live.

Properly observed, Advent prepares us to celebrate a Christmas that is not only happy but truly blessed.

Advent Sunday readings

The Mass readings for the First Sunday in Advent (30th November) point to Christ's Second Coming.

The readings on the Second and Third Sundays (7th and 14th December) proclaim the prophecies of Christ's coming - in particular, those of John the Baptist.

On Wednesday 17th December we begin the second part of Advent, what might be called the 'count-down to Christmas'. The readings on the Fourth and last Sunday (21st December) concern the events before Christ's birth - above all, the appearance to Mary of the angel Gabriel.

Mary's solemnity

One solemnity falls during Advent: Monday 8th December, the Immaculate Conception of Mary. In our diocese the nearest Saturday (this year, 6th December) is devoted to a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace at Kunkujang Mariama.

How did Advent develop?

In early centuries, the churches in the East celebrated both the birth and the baptism of Jesus on 6th January. It became a major occasion for baptisms, which led to a preparatory period of fasting and instruction.

During the fourth century the Eastern churches followed the West and adopted 25th December as the Feast of the Nativity. Although this was no longer a day for baptisms, the Eastern churches kept their

tradition of penitential preparation. The practice spread to the northern and western regions of the Church, where it fitted well with their emphasis on the final coming of Christ, calling for self-examination and spiritual readiness.

To this day, Orthodox Christians observe their ancient fast from meat from 15th November until 24th December.

In the Church centred in Rome it was a different story. Advent entailed a festive preparation for the birth of Christ. In the 6th century Pope Gregory established the beginnings of our Advent by creating special Masses for the four Sundays before Christmas Day. The two traditions eventually merged into the way we observe Advent today. Fasting has fallen away in the West, but we still feel a subtle and fruitful tension.

Nicholas and Lucy

Advent and Christmas are closely linked, and several cultural customs apply to both seasons.

The feast of St Nicholas, from whom we get our notions about 'Santa Claus', falls on Saturday 6th December.

The minor feast of St Lucy, or Lucia, on Saturday 13th December, provides an opportunity to celebrate the light of Christ.

Lucy, whose name derives from *lux* (Latin for 'light'), was martyred in Italy in AD 304. Devoted to Christ, she gave her entire dowry to the poor, enraging the man she was to marry by arrangement.

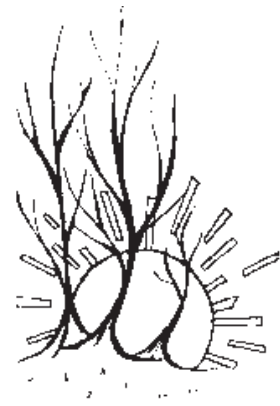
He denounced her to the governor, who had her killed by the sword after the failure of attempts to burn her alive. Lucy is honoured in Scandinavia as the 'Queen of Light'. A daughter in the home wears a crown of candles and goes from room to room wakening the family and bringing them 'Lucia buns', baked with saffron.

Two Advent traditions - the Advent wreath (*page 14*) and the Great 'O' Antiphons (*page 15*) - open for us the themes of death and life, darkness and light, doubt and longing.

Advent customs at Mass

During Advent the colour at the altar and of the priest's vestments is the same as in Lent: purple or violet. Traditionally, altars and shrines are not decorated with flowers, and musical instruments are not used (except on the Third Sunday, 14th December, when flowers, musical instruments and rose-coloured vestments are permitted).

This restraint during Advent makes the light, colour and sounds of Christmas all the more joyful.





CHILDREN'S PAGE



The angel visits Mary

COLOUR THE PICTURE, THEN FILL IN THE MISSING LETTERS BELOW

One day, an a_____ appeared to a young virgin who lived in a small t_____ called N_____.

The virgin's name was M_____. The angel told her, 'Behold, you shall bear a s____ whom you will call J_____. He will be the s_____ of the world.'

The coming light



IT'S difficult for Gambians to imagine cold, pre-Christian Germany. There, in the dark winter, pagans made wreaths and lit bonfires to express their longing for spring and the coming of new light and life. When Christianity came to Germany, people continued this custom by making wreaths and lighting candles to celebrate the Advent hope in Christ. By the 16th century Catholics and Protestants alike were making Advent wreaths, and the custom has since spread to many parts of the world, including The Gambia.

The **wreath** is a circle which has no beginning or end. It symbolises the God who was, who is, and will be for ever.
The **greenery** symbolises life.

The lighting of the **candles** - one the first week, two the second week, and so on - symbolises the progressive revelation of God's saving plan for mankind.

By lighting a new candle each week, we signify our hope in the coming light of Christ.
Lighting the Advent wreath in our homes and churches enacts our faith in John's testimony,
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it (John 1:5)

Making the wreath

Making an Advent wreath is simple. It provides a focus for family prayer which will involve the children.

To make the wreath you need some sort of circular framework on which to fix greenery; four candle-holders; and four candles.

Fresh greenery is best, but as it withers you will need to renew it. If you prefer shop-bought artificial greenery, make sure it is inflammable.

Traditionally, three of the candles are purple (or blue) and the fourth is pink. But candles of any colour may be used. Some wreaths have an additional white or gold candle in the middle to be lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Don't allow candles to burn down into the candle-holders. Don't place candles near curtains or anything that could catch alight. Don't allow small children to touch the wreath.

Here are some prayers and readings to help you - but you may devise prayers of your own.

A prayer of blessing

O GOD, by whose Word all things are made holy, bless this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of the Light of the World, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

First week (one purple candle is lit)

GOD of Abraham and all the patriarchs of old, we acknowledge you as our Father. Your love is revealed to us in Jesus Christ your Son, and Son of David. Help us to prepare to celebrate his birth.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, Light of the World. Amen.

Hail Mary. Our Father.

Suggested readings: Isaiah 7: 10-14. Isaiah 11: 1-10. Matthew 1: 18-24.

Second Week (two purple candles are lit)

GOD our Father, you spoke to the prophets of old of a Saviour who would bring everlasting peace. Help us as we prepare to celebrate our Saviour's birth to share with those around us the good news of your love.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, Light of the World. Amen.

Hail Mary. Our Father.

Suggested readings: Isaiah 2: 1-5. Micah 5: 2. Matthew 2: 1-2. Matthew 3: 1-6.

Third week (two purple candles & the pink candle are lit)

GOD our Father, you gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age a son called John. As John the Baptist, he spoke to his people of the coming of Jesus and baptised them in the River Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us who have been baptised into Christ to welcome him into our hearts and grow strong in the faith.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, Light of the World. Amen.

Hail Mary. Our Father.

Suggested readings: Malachi 3: 1-5. Romans 8: 18-25. Luke 1: 5-17.

Fourth week (all four candles are lit)

GOD our Father, the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that she was to be the mother of your Son, and she responded with joy. Help us, like Mary, to share in your work of salvation by showing others your love and healing.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, Light of the World. Amen.

Hail Mary. Our Father.

Suggested readings: Isaiah 52: 7-10. Luke 1: 26-38. Revelation 21: 1-4.

May our Lord Jesus Christ
illumine our lives this coming Christmas

Lighten our darkness, O Lord

The Great Advent Antiphons come from the Old Testament. They reflect the Hebrew people's yearning for the coming of the Messiah. For us, too, they are a call for Christ to come among us.



O Wisdom



O Adonai



O Root
of Jesse



O Key
of David



O Rising
Sun



O King of
the Nations



O Emmanuel

SINCE the 7th century, as Advent draws to a close, the Great Advent Antiphons have been recited daily at Evening Prayer before and after the Song of Mary (the *Magnificat*).

Each antiphon addresses God with a Biblical name, and concludes with a call for the coming of the Saviour.

The antiphons feature in the hymn, 'O come, O come, Emmanuel'. *In the days leading up to Christmas, why not use the Great Advent Antiphons in your private prayers?*

Wednesday 17th December

O WISDOM, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High. You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner. O come to teach us the way of truth.

O Sapientia, quae ex ore Altissimi produisti, attingens a fine usque ad finem fortiter, suaviterque disponens omnia. Veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae.

Readings: Ecclesiasticus 24:1-9. 1 Corinthians 1: 1-13

Thursday 18th December

O ADONAI and Leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in a burning bush, and on Sinai gave him the Law: come to redeem us with outstretched arm.

O Adonai et Dux Domus Israel, qui Moyse in igne flammae rubi apparuisti et ei Sina Legem dedisti: veni ad reimendum nos in brachio extento.

Readings: Exodus 3: 1-6. Acts 7: 20-36

Friday 19th December

O ROOT of Jesse, you stand as a sign for the people. Kings stand silent before you, whom the nations will worship. Come to set us free, and do not delay.

O Radix Jesse, qui stas in signum populorum, sine quem continebunt reges os suum, quem gentes deprecabuntur: veni et liberandum nos, jam noli tardare.

Readings: Isaiah 11: 1-10. Romans 15: 7-13

Saturday 20th December

O KEY of David and Sceptre of the House of Israel, what you open, no one can close; and what you close, no one can open. Come to lead the captive from prison, seated in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O Clavis David et Sceptrum Domus Israel, qui aperis et nemo claudit; claudis et nemo aperuit: veni, et educ vincitum de domo carceris, sedentem in tenebris et umbra mortis.

Readings: Isaiah 22: 20-33. Revelation 3: 7-13

Fourth Sunday in Advent: 21st December

O RISING SUN, splendour of eternal light and Sun of Justice: come and shine on those seated in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O ORIENS, splendor lux aeternae et sol justitiae: veni et illumine sedentes in tenebris et et umbra mortis.

Readings: Numbers 24: 15b-19. Revelation 22: 10-21

Monday 22nd December

O KING of the Nations, whom all the people desire: you are the Keystone which makes all one. Come and save mankind whom you formed from clay.

O REX gentium, et desideratus earum, lapsique angularis qui facis utroque unum: veni et salva hominem qui tu limo formasti.

Readings: Jeremiah 30: 7-11a. Acts 4: 1-12

Tuesday 23rd December

O EMMANUEL, our King and our Judge, the One awaited by the gentiles, and their Saviour: Come and save us, Lord our God

O Emmanuel, Rex et Legifer noster; exspectatio gentium at Salvator arum: veni et salvandum nos, Domine Deus noster.

Readings: Isaiah 7: 10-14. Matthew 1: 18-23

Lord Jesus,
teach us the way of truth and set us free

Would you like to say **Morning** and **Evening Prayer** every day, in company with priests and lay-people throughout the world?



Go to **Universalis** website and click on Morning Prayer, or Mass, or Vespers – as you wish – and you will find the complete Office

Et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us

Sunday Reflections

Reflections, readings and prayers for all the Sundays between
the 1st Sunday of Advent and the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
and for Christmas Day and New Year's Day



STAY AWAKE

30th November

1st Sunday of Advent

AN exciting new beginning: this is the very first day of Advent and the very beginning of our new liturgical year.

The Prophet Isaiah declares, 'Lord, you are our Father; we the clay, you the potter.' We are in God's hands, come what may, and Christ tells us in today's Gospel, 'What I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

As Advent progresses, we need to be in a state of readiness: not simply to rejoice at the celebration of Christ's birth, but to pray that he will be born anew in our hearts, and that we may truly yearn for the establishment of his Kingdom for all eternity.

St Paul has words of encouragement for us: 'You are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed, and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day... because God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ - and God is faithful.'

The Gloria in excelsis is not said or sung on Sundays in Advent.

Collect

GRANT your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forward to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming; so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom...

Readings: Isaiah 63: 16-17; 64: 1, 3-8. Psalm 79: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19. Response: God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved. 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your saving help.

Gospel: Mark 13: 33-37

Prayer over the Offerings

ACCEPT, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make, gathered from among your gifts to us, and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below gain for us the prize of eternal redemption...

Preface

...for he assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh, and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago, and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, that, when he comes again in glory and majesty and all is at last made manifest, we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which we dare to hope...

Prayer after Communion

MAY these mysteries, O Lord, in which we have participated, profit us, we pray; for even now, as we walk among passing things, you teach us by them to love the things of heaven, and hold fast to what endures...

7th December

2nd Sunday of Advent

ON this day, and next Sunday, the dominant figure in our readings, apart from Jesus Christ himself, is St John the Baptist.

John, the Lord's herald, joins the Old Testament to the New. He was the last of the prophets, and the only one to encounter and salute Jesus in person.

Many years before, Isaiah had prophesied: 'A voice cries, "Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord!"' In the Gospel, Mark quotes this passage from Isaiah and goes on to say, 'And so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness... [saying] "Someone is following me..."'

Who was that 'someone'? None other than the longed-for Saviour of all mankind. Mark's very first words in the Gospel are, 'The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' No words could be more simple or direct.

Christ is the Son of God. His life among us on earth and in today's Church joins heaven to earth. This Advent, let us take the Word of God to our hearts and resolve to live day by day according to the loving plan of God.

The Gloria in excelsis is not said or sung on Sundays in Advent.

Collect

ALMIGHTY and merciful God, may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son, but may our learning of heavenly wisdom gain us admittance to his company...

Readings: Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11, Psalm 84: 9-14. Response: Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your saving help. 2 Peter 3: 8-14.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight, and all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

Gospel: Mark 1: 1-8

Prayer over the Offerings

BE pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and offerings, and, since we have no merits to plead our cause, come, we pray, to our rescue with the protection of your mercy...

Preface

...for he assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh, and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago, and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, that, when he comes again in glory and majesty and all is at last made manifest, we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which we dare to hope...

PREPARE A WAY FOR THE LORD

Prayer after Communion

REPLENISHED by the food of spiritual nourishment, we humbly beseech you, O Lord, that, through our partaking in this mystery, you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth and hold firm to the things of heaven...

14th December
3rd Sunday of Advent

The witness



‘A MAN came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, a witness to the light.’ In today’s readings we think again about John the Baptist: this time, in a reading from the Gospel of St John the Evangelist.

John the Baptist appeared as a witness before our Lord began his own ministry. John was convinced that Christ’s coming was ‘Good News’, and quoted Isaiah. When John’s hearers asked who he was, John simply pointed to the One coming after him.

What about us? We are privileged to know much more than the testimony of John the Baptist. We have the Gospels, the saints and the sacraments to remind us daily that Christ is our Saviour. We have opportunities in the Christian family and in The Gambia in general to witness to Christ by our way of life. May we quietly but insistently show others that we are disciples of the Lord of Life, and - like John the Baptist - purveyors of Good News.

Today is known as Gaudete Sunday, from the opening of the entrance antiphon, Gaudete in Domino semper (Rejoice in the Lord always). Rose-coloured vestments may be used instead of purple.

The Gloria in excelsis is not said or sung on Sundays in Advent.

Collect

O GOD, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and great rejoicing...

Readings: Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11. Cantic: Luke 1: 46-50, 53-54. Response: My soul rejoices in my God. Thessalonians 5: 16-24

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.

Gospel: John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray, be offered to you unceasingly, to complete what was begun in sacred mystery, and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work...

Preface

...for he assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh, and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago, and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, that, when he comes again in glory and majesty and all is at last made manifest, we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which we dare to hope...

Prayer after Communion

WE implore your mercy, Lord, that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults and prepare us for the coming feasts...

21st December
4th Sunday of Advent

Born of the house of David

LAST Wednesday, 17th December, was the start of the second part of Advent, what we might call the lead-in to Christmas.

In today’s First Reading the Lord tells David that he will not be the one to build the house of God - the Temple - in Jerusalem. Yet we know that David’s own house - that is, his family and lineage - were in course of time to provide something infinitely more precious

than a building. From the house of David was born Jesus (the Greek form of ‘Joshua’, which means ‘God saves’). We dwell in Christ as our living temple, the Word made flesh.

No passage in the Gospels is better loved than Luke’s account of the appearance of Gabriel to Mary. He tells her that the Son to be born to her will inherit the throne of her ancestor David and that his reign will have no end. ‘How can this be?’ Mary asks. Gabriel assures Mary that the Holy Spirit will descend upon her and that her Son will be called ‘Son of God’.

Mary says ‘yes’ to the angel’s message. And so should we. Let our Christmas not just be ‘yes’ to family get-togethers, parties and gifts, but ‘yes’ to the Son of God.

The Gloria in excelsis is not said or sung on Sundays in Advent.

Collect

POUR forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of your Christ your Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection...

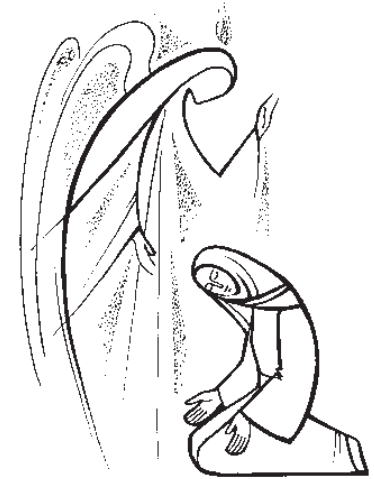
Readings: Samuel 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14, 16. Psalm 88: 2-5, 27, 29. Response: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord. Romans 16: 25-27.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me.

Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY the Holy Spirit, O Lord, sanctify these gifts laid upon your altar, just as he filled with power the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary...



Preface

...for all the oracles of the prophets foretold him, the Virgin Mother longed for him with love beyond all telling, John the Baptist sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came. It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise...

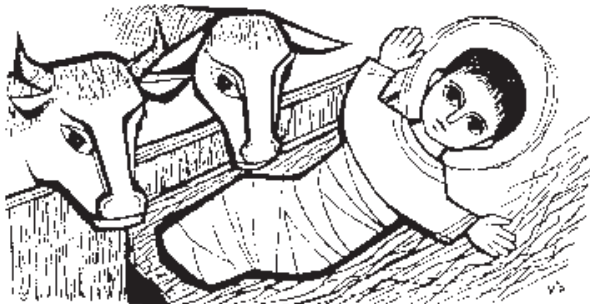
Prayer after Communion

HAVING received this pledge of eternal redemption, we pray, almighty God, that, as the feast day of our salvation draws ever nearer, so we may press forward all the more eagerly to the worthy celebration of the mystery of your Son's Nativity...

Thursday 25th December

Nativity of the Lord

Christmas Day: Holyday of Obligation



The Church provides four Masses for Christmas:

- **Mass of the Vigil** (Wednesday evening)
- **Mass of Midnight**
- **Mass of the Dawn** (early on Christmas Day)
- **Mass of the Day**

The colour for Christmas Time is white or gold.

MASS OF THE VIGIL**Collect**

O GOD, who gladden us year by year as we wait in hope for our redemption, grant that, just as we joyfully welcome your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer, we may also merit to face him confidently when he comes again as our Judge...

Readings: Isaiah 62: 1-5. Psalm 88: 4-5, 16-17, 27-29. Response: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord. Acts 13: 16-17, 22-25.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... Tomorrow there will be an end to the sin of the world, and the Saviour of the world will be our King.

Gospel: Matthew 1: (1-17) 18-25.

During the creed, all kneel at the words, 'and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate...'

Prayer over the Offerings

AS we look forward, O Lord, to the coming festivities, may we serve you all the more eagerly for knowing that in them you make manifest the beginnings of our redemption...

Preface: the priest may use any one of the three Prefaces for Christmas (see bottom of the next page)

Prayer after Communion

GRANT, O Lord, we pray, that we may draw new vigour from celebrating the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son, by whose heavenly mystery we receive both food and drink...

MASS OF MIDNIGHT**Collect**

O GOD, who have made this most sacred night radiant with the splendour of the true light, grant, we pray, that we who have known the mysteries of his light on earth, may also delight in his gladness in heaven...

Readings: Isaiah 9: 1-7. Psalm 95, 1-3, 11-13. Response: Today a saviour has been born to us; he is Christ the Lord. Titus 2: 11-14.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...I bring you news of great joy: today a saviour has been born to us, Christ the Lord.

Gospel: Luke 2: 1-14.

During the creed, all kneel at the words, 'and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate...'

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY the oblation of this day's feast be pleasing to you, O Lord, we pray, that through this most holy exchange we may be found in the likeness of Christ in whom our nature is united to you...

Preface: the priest may use any one of the three Prefaces for Christmas (see box at the bottom of the next page)

Prayer after Communion

GRANT us, we pray, O Lord our God, that we, who are gladdened by participation in our Redeemer's Nativity, may through an honourable way of life become worthy of union with him...

MASS OF THE DAWN**Collect**

GRANT, we pray, almighty God, that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of your incarnate Word, the light of faith, which illumines our minds, may also shine through in our deeds...

Readings: Isaiah 62: 11-12. Psalm 96: 1-6, 11-12. Response: This day new light will shine upon the earth: the Lord is born for us. Titus 3: 4-7.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to men who enjoy his favour.

Gospel: Luke 2: 15-20.

During the creed, all kneel at the words, 'and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate...'

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY our offerings be worthy, we pray, O Lord, of the mysteries of the Nativity this day, that, just as Christ was born a man and also shone forth as God, so these earthly gifts may bestow on us what is divine...

Preface: the priest may use any one of the three Prefaces for Christmas (see bottom of next page)

Prayer after Communion

GRANT us, Lord, as we honour with joyful devotion the Nativity of your Son, that we may come to know with fullness of faith the hidden depths of this mystery, and to love them ever more and more....





MASS OF THE DAY

And the Word was made flesh...

THE GOSPEL readings for the three earlier Masses of Christmas (last evening, last night and early this morning) gave us accounts from Matthew and Luke of the birth of Christ. But St John's Gospel begins in a very different way.

John doesn't tell us how Mary and Joseph experienced the birth of Jesus; instead, he declares what the birth of Jesus means for the whole world. Jesus is 'the Word' who existed 'in the beginning' and is Life and Light.

All the Old Testament is a preparation for Christ, as was the testimony of John the Baptist. But not everyone among Jesus' contemporaries, the Jews, saw him

as the Light of the world. Neither does everyone in today's world. The Kingdom of God has to contend with the darkness of sin, indifference and ignorance. May the light of Christ as proclaimed in the Gospel dispel our doubts, invigorate our hopes, and show us and the whole world the way to the Father. We can make no better New Year resolution than to show in every aspect of our lives that we are Christ's missionaries of light and love.

Collect

O GOD, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and still more wonderfully restored it, grant, we pray, that we may share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity...

Readings: Isaiah 52: 7-10. Psalm 97: 1-6. Response: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God. Hebrews 1: 1-6.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... A hallowed day has dawned upon us. Come, you nations, worship the Lord.

Gospel: John 1: 1-18 (or John 1: 1-5, 9-14)

During the creed, all kneel at the words, 'and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate...'

Prayer over the Offerings

MAKE acceptable, O God, our offerings on this solemn day, when you manifested the reconciliation that makes us wholly pleasing in your sight, and inaugurated for us the fullness of divine worship...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the three Prefaces for Christmas (see below)*

Prayer after Communion

GRANT, O merciful God, that just as the Saviour of the world, born this day, is the author of divine generation for us, so he may be the giver even of immortality...

Sunday 28th December

The Holy Family

Everything we pray for

WHAT do the Gospels tell us about Jesus as a child, an adolescent and a young man?

Of the four Gospels, only two - Matthew and Luke - tell us about his birth. Matthew goes on to speak of the flight of Mary and Joseph and their Child to Egypt. And Luke (as we hear in today's Gospel reading) says that when Jesus was twelve years old his parents took him to the great Temple in



Jerusalem. There, the boy Jesus talked with the teachers before returning with his mother and foster-father to Nazareth, where he was 'obedient to them' and increased 'in wisdom and in years and in divine favour' (Luke 2: 41-52).

No Gospel says anything else about Jesus' childhood, let alone his adolescence and young manhood. So these are sometimes called Christ's 'hidden years'. They cannot have been empty years. It was part of the Divine plan that the Son of God for most of his earthly life should live, just like us, in an 'ordinary' family. He was truly 'one of us'.

Did Jesus live with his parents until he began his public ministry at about the age of 30? Did he practise his foster-father's craft? Jesus was sinless, but he fully shared our human condition. We may be sure that he prayed frequently to his heavenly Father. Whatever family difficulties there may have been, we may be sure that the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph was one of mutual love and care - the model for every other human family that ever has been or will be.

Collect

O GOD, who were pleased to give us the shining example of the Holy Family, graciously grant that we may imitate them in practising the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity, and so, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal awards...

Prefaces for Christmas

Preface I

...for in the mystery of the Word made flesh a new light of your glory has shone upon the eyes of our mind, so that, as we recognise in him God made visible, we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible...

Preface II

... for on the feast of this awe-filled mystery, though invisible in his own divine nature, he has appeared visibly in ours; and begotten before all ages, he has begun to exist in time; so that, raising up in himself all that was cast down, he might restore unity to all creation and call straying humanity back to the heavenly Kingdom...

Preface III

...for through him the holy exchange that restores our life has shone forth today in splendour: and when our frailty is assumed by your Word not only does humanity receive unending honour but by this wondrous union we, too, are made eternal...

Readings: Genesis 15: 1-6; 21: 1-3. Psalm 104: 1-6, 8-9.
 Response: He, the Lord, is our God. He remembers his covenant for ever. Hebrews 11: 8, 11-12, 17-19.

or **Alternative Readings:** Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 3: 3-7, 14-17. Psalm 122: 1-5. Response: O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways!

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

Gospel: Luke 2: 22-40

Prayer over the Gifts

WE offer you, Lord, the sacrifice of reconciliation, humbly asking that, through the intercession of the Virgin Mother of God and St Joseph, you may establish our families firmly in your grace and in your peace...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the three Prefaces for Christmas (see bottom of the opposite page)*

Prayer after Communion

BRING those you refresh through this heavenly Sacrament, most merciful Father, to imitate constantly the example of the Holy Family, so that, after the trials of this world, we may share their company for ever...

Thursday 1st January

Mary, Mother of God

Holyday of Obligation

*God's Mother,
 God's peace*



TODAY is the eighth day after Christmas. In Jewish tradition, on the eighth day after a boy's birth his mother would take him to be circumcised and give him his name.

This is proclaimed in today's Gospel reading,

and for centuries the first day of January was celebrated as the Feast of the Circumcision or the Holy Name of Jesus.

But now the Church gives this feast the title, 'Mary, Mother of God'. There is no contradiction. In becoming man, Jesus became subject to every aspect of the human condition. Like us, he needed his mother to feed him and take care of him. And Mary, we may be sure, fulfilled the role of mother fully and faithfully. She conformed to her people's traditions by having Jesus circumcised on the eighth day; and on the fortieth day she presented him in the Temple (a feast we shall celebrate on Monday 2nd February, 40 days after Christmas Day).

From the early days of the Church Mary was given the Greek title *Theotokus*, or Mother of God. This title honours Mary as the most blessed of all women. But more importantly, the title tells us that Mary's Son is divine - true God and true man. No wonder the angels sang, 'Glory be to God in the highest heavens, and on earth, peace to men of goodwill!' We need to feel that peace in our hearts, practise it in our lives, and pray for peace in The Gambia and in all the world.

Collect

O GOD, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we may experience the intercession of her through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life, our Lord Jesus Christ your Son...

Readings: Numbers 6: 22-27. Psalm 66: 2-3, 5- 6, 8. Response: O God, be gracious and bless us. Galatians 4: 4-7.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...At various times in the past, and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

Gospel: Luke 2: 16-21

Prayer over the Offerings

O GOD, who in your kindness begin all good things and bring them to fulfilment, grant to us, who find joy in the Solemnity of the holy Mother of God, that, just as we glory in the beginnings of your grace, so one day we may rejoice in its completion...

Preface

...for by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit she conceived your Only Begotten Son, and without losing the glory of virginity, brought forth into the world the eternal Light, Jesus Christ our Lord...

Prayer after Communion

WE have received this heavenly Sacrament with joy, O Lord; grant, we pray, that it may lead us to eternal life, for we rejoice to proclaim the blessed ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of your Son and Mother of the Church...

Sunday 4th January

The Epiphany of the Lord



Seeing and believing

THE EPIPHANY, or the showing-forth of Jesus as Son of God, is one of the Church's earliest feasts. It's considerably older than Christmas. Indeed, among some Eastern churches Christ's birth is celebrated on this day. But in the Western Church we think principally today of the pilgrim visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus, as recounted in Matthew's Gospel. These men weren't Jews. They came from afar. They recognised the Baby in the manger as a king, a priest and a divinely-appointed victim. They worshipped him.

Matthew's narrative is simple, but rich in symbolism. The wise men's long, difficult journey stands for the yearning and struggle of all mankind to seek and find light and meaning in life. That the wise men weren't Jews illustrates that Christ is the Saviour of all peoples, wherever they come from. The wise men offer gold for a king, frankincense for a priest and myrrh for the anointing of a body. These gifts symbolise why we, too, worship him: he is our King, our High Priest,

and the sacrificial Victim who saves us.

After finding Jesus, the wise men returned to their country by another way, so as to avoid King Herod.

Our joy in our Saviour does not make us forgetful or immune to the danger that Herod represents. But if we recognise in Jesus what the wise men were looking for, we know we have found the royal road to human fulfilment - and we will not allow the snares of the world to divert us.

Are we willing, like the wise men, to set ourselves to seek and find Christ? And when we find him, to worship him? We cannot offer him gold, frankincense or myrrh. But we can offer him our hearts.

MASS OF THE VIGIL (SATURDAY EVENING)



Collect

MAY the splendour of your majesty, O Lord, we pray, shed its light upon our hearts, that we may pass through the shadows of this world and reach the brightness of our eternal home...

Readings: Isaiah 60: 1-6. Psalm 71: 1-2, 7-8, 10-13. Response: All nations shall

fall prostrate before you, O Lord. Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... We saw his star as it rose, and have come to do the Lord homage.

Gospel: Matthew 2: 1-12

Prayer over the Offerings

ACCEPT, we pray, O Lord, our offerings in honour of the appearing of your Only Begotten Son and the first fruits of the nations, that to you praise may be rendered and eternal salvation be ours...

Preface

...for today you have revealed the mystery of our salvation in Christ as a light for the nations, and, when he appeared in our mortal nature, you made us new by the glory of his immortal nature...

Prayer after Communion

RENEWED by sacred nourishment, we implore your mercy, O Lord, that the star of your justice may always shine bright in our minds and that our true treasure may ever consist in our confession of you...

MASS OF EPIPHANY SUNDAY

Collect

O GOD, who on this day revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations by the guidance of a star, grant in your mercy that we, who know you already by faith, may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory...

Readings: Isaiah 60: 1-6. Psalm 71: 1-2, 7-8, 10-13. Response: All nations shall fall prostrate before you, O Lord. Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... We saw his star as it rose, and have come to do the Lord homage.

Gospel: Matthew 2: 1-12

Prayer over the Offerings

LOOK with favour, Lord, we pray, on these gifts of your Church, in which are offered now, not gold or frankincense or myrrh, but he who by them is proclaimed, sacrificed and received, Jesus Christ...

Preface

...for today you have revealed the mystery of our salvation in Christ as a light for the nations, and, when he appeared in our mortal nature, you made us new by the glory of his immortal nature...

Prayer after Communion

Go before us with heavenly light, O Lord, always and everywhere, that we may perceive with clear sight and revere with true affection the mystery in which you have willed us to participate...

Sunday 11th January

The Baptism of the Lord

My Son, the Beloved

'MY chosen, in whom my soul delights... a light to the nations'.

These prophetic words from Isaiah chapter 42 (today's alternative first reading) proclaim God's 'chosen one'. They perfectly evoke what we Christians believe about Jesus.

In today's 2nd alternative reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter reminds us that Jesus is 'Lord of all', and that at his baptism he was anointed by God 'with the Holy Spirit and with power'.

Baptism is the 'mystical washing away of sins' by which each of us is admitted to the Church. This gives rise to the question, Why, as related in today's Gospel, does Jesus ask John to baptise him? Jesus has no sin. Moreover, he is the actual Founder of the Church.

The answer seems to be that Jesus seeks baptism as a public sign that he is about to begin his ministry of teaching, healing and witness to the Father's love. Jesus' ministry is to be one of service and persuasion rather than coercion or browbeating. There is no one like Jesus: he is our Lord, but he is also our servant.

In today's Gospel reading we see the Holy Trinity in action: God the Father, whose voice is heard; God the Son, who submits to baptism; and God the Holy Spirit, who descends upon Jesus.

Collect

ALMIGHTY ever-living God, who, when Christ had been baptised in the River Jordan and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him solemnly declared him your beloved Son, grant that your children by adoption, reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, may always be well-pleasing to you...

or

O GOD, whose Only Begotten Son has appeared in our very flesh, grant, we pray, that we may be inwardly transformed through him who we recognise as outwardly like ourselves...



Readings: Isaiah 55: 1-11. Psalm 12: 2-6. Response: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 1 John 5: 1-9.

or Alternative Readings: Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7. Psalm 28: 1-4, 9-10. Response: The Lord will bless his people with peace. Acts 10: 34-38.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said, This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Gospel: Mark 1: 7-11

Prayer over the Offerings

ACCEPT, O Lord, the offerings we have brought to honour the revealing of your beloved Son, so that the oblation of your faithful may be transformed into the sacrifice of him who will in his compassion to wash away the sins of the world...

Preface

...for in the waters of the Jordan you revealed with signs and wonders a new Baptism, so that through the voice that came down from heaven we might come to believe in your Word dwelling among us, and by the Spirit's descending in the likeness of a dove we may know that Christ your Servant has been anointed with the oil of gladness and sent to bring the good news to the poor...

Prayer after Communion

NOURISHED with these sacred gifts, we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord, that, faithfully listening to your Only Begotten Son, we may be your children in name and in truth...

The Baptism of the Lord is the last day of Christmas Time

18th January

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time



Answering God's call

ORDINARY Time has begun, and at Sunday Mass until Lent (which begins on 18th February) we shall follow Christ in the early days of his public ministry, seeking to learn from him as his first hearers did.

This is Year B in the Sunday lectionary, the year of the Gospel of St Mark. But we begin Ordinary Time with St John's Gospel and his account of John the Baptist hailing Jesus as the Lamb of God. To the Jews, a lamb signified sacrifice. We should remember that invaluable as Christ's teaching and healing were, his primary purpose on earth was to offer himself on the cross as the sacrificial lamb for the sin of all mankind. His entire ministry pointed to this.

In today's Gospel reading, Andrew is attracted to Christ and takes his brother Simon to him; and they accept Jesus' invitation to join him.

This response to God's call is foreshadowed in the First Reading, when the boy Samuel is called by name. We too, if we are worthy of the name 'disciple', should respond to God's call. True faith is a call to follow the Lamb of God. The priest at Mass, holding high the sacred Host, declares, *Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi. Beati qui ad cenam Agni vocati sunt* - 'Behold the Lamb of God - behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.'

This is a call to worship, and a call to participate in the life and mission of Christ.

The colour for Ordinary Time is green

Collect

ALMIGHTY ever-living God, who govern all things both in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the pleading of your people, and bestow your peace on our times...

Readings: 1 Samuel 3: 3-10, 19. Psalm 39: 2, 4, 7-10. Response: Here I am, Lord! I come to do your will. 1 Corinthians 6: 13-15, 17-20,

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...Speak, Lord, your servant is listening: you have the message of eternal life.

Gospel: John 1: 35-42

Prayer over the Offerings

GRANT us, O Lord, we pray, that we may participate worthily in these mysteries, for whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated the work of our redemption is accomplished...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the eight Prefaces provided for use in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

POUR on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love, and in your kindness make those you have nourished by this one heavenly Bread one in mind and heart...

Today begins the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Some churches may prefer the Mass for Christian Unity rather than the prayers and readings above. See pages 26, 27 and 32.

25th January

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time



Forgiveness for all who repent

THE BOOK of Jonah is one of the shortest in the Bible. It concerns everyone's need of repentance and forgiveness.

The pagan people of Nineveh responded to God's message, brought by Jonah, that they should repent. And because they did indeed repent, God did not destroy their city. Instead, he forgave them. This is a foretaste of the message of the New Testament: that God in Christ reaches out to save the people of all the world, if they hear his call and repent.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee by calling Andrew and Peter, James and John. His message is as simple as that of John the Baptist: 'The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

Until time ends, men and women will need to hear the call of Jesus, to accept him, to repent and to live the life of the Gospel. So we should endeavour to pass on the Good News to our neighbours. They'll only take note, of course, if they see that we ourselves have embraced the Gospel and are living a life of grace.

Collect

ALMIGHTY ever-living God, direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your beloved Son we may abound in good works...

Readings: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10. Psalm 24: 4-9. Response: Lord, let me know your ways. 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...The Kingdom of God is close at hand; believe the Good News.

Gospel: Mark 1: 14-20.

Prayer over the Offerings

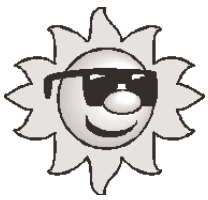
ACCEPT our offerings, O Lord, we pray, and in sanctifying them grant that they may profit us for salvation...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the eight Prefaces provided for use in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

GRANT, we pray, almighty God, that, receiving the grace by which you bring us to new life, we may always glory in your gift...

This Sunday is the final day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Fee moi Gambia

Danger on two wheels

EVERY day I notice young men and boys riding bicycles that are too big or too small for them.

And cyclists who show off by riding without their hands on the handlebars. And those who ride on the wrong side of the road. And those who use earphones while riding. And those who make no hand signals when they want to turn left or right.

I note, too, that most such cyclists seem serenely unaware that they are a danger to themselves and to others.

How can we persuade them to ride more responsibly?

Incidentally, why have so few women and girls taken to cycling?

Dear Sisters

GOOD news: the arrival in our country of Filles du Saint Cœur de Marie to work at Darsilami.

Catholic sisters have worked among us since well before the arrival of priests in 1848: notably Blessed Anne-Marie Javouhey, who served in the hospital in Banjul. The street running down the side of the hospital is named after her.

Many years later, in 1869, there was an appalling outbreak of cholera, which entered the country via Georgetown (as Janjanbureh was then called) wreaking death as it made its way to Banjul, where a quarter of the population lost their lives – about 30 to 35 people a day.

The first Gambian Methodist minister, the Revd Mr Clement, lost his father, his brother, his brother's wife and a servant all in one day. Among the heroes of that dreadful time, when all normal activities ceased, were French-speaking Catholic sisters, who were fearless and tireless in helping the suffering. The Governor afterwards sent them a letter thanking them in the name of all the inhabitants of Banjul for all they had done.

And so it has continued. Reverend sisters in their various Orders have long served among us. We owe them tremendous thanks for their prayers and their unsparing work, especially in the fields of health and education.

Only too common...

IMAGINE the following scenario. It will, unfortunately, be familiar to you. A young man has a wife, small children and other dependents, and must pay for rice and rent every month, besides other unavoidable expenses. Unfortunately, his boss usually pays him late. The young man has to beg for what is due to him. Yet the boss has a fine house, a fine car, sends his children to private schools and quite often travels overseas.

Doesn't every boss have a moral duty to look after his staff - on whom he depends for his profit and his comfort? 'The labourer deserves his wages.' (Luke 10: 7; Matthew 10: 10)

New beginnings

ADVENT now begins, and in a month's time we'll begin the year 2015. Both invite us to make good resolutions about our membership of the Church or life generally.

Almost all of us could pray more regularly; most of us could do more for others; many of us could eat and drink more healthily. Yet I can't recall anyone, a year ago, telling me what resolutions they'd made, let alone saying since whether they'd lived up to their resolutions.

Perhaps the best time to make resolutions is not at New Year but at the beginning of every day. The Christian can make a 'fresh start' whenever he asks God for grace. That way, the passage of time is marked by growth, not stagnation.

Missionary zeal

RECENTLY I was gratified to hear a Gambian berating an expatriate who intended to cut down some palm trees on his property. 'It has taken twenty years for those trees to reach their present beauty,' he declared, 'but it'll take only twenty minutes to kill them off.' He spoke of the palm tree as one the glories of The Gambia. 'And it can grow right next to your house without disturbing its foundations.'

The man spoke with missionary zeal about the importance of keeping The Gambia green, of reversing as far as possible the unthinking destruction of tree cover that went on for so many years (I think, not so bad in recent years).

This poses a question: how many trees have you and I planted this past rainy season? Or even how many smaller plants? We and our country could all benefit from some of the same missionary zeal!

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Jesus said to her: 'Give me to drink'

THE WEEK of Prayer for Christian Unity will be observed throughout the northern hemisphere from Sunday 18th to Sunday 25th January.

As the *Newsletter* goes to press, we have no details of arrangements made locally by the Gambia Christian Council.

Each year the theme for Unity Week, as agreed by the Vatican and the World Council of Churches, is chosen by Christians in a particular country.

Offering water

For January 2015 the material has been selected by Christians in Brazil.



The theme is 'Give me to drink' (John 4: 7), words of Jesus to a woman of Samaria (John 4:1-42).

'Whoever drinks of this water keeps coming back,' says a Brazilian proverb, always used when a visitor leaves. The Biblical gesture of offering water to whoever arrives as a way of welcoming (Matthew 10:42) is used everywhere in Brazil.

In John chapter 4, Jesus is a foreigner who arrives tired and thirsty. He needs help, and asks for water.

The woman is in her own land; the well belongs to her people and her tradition. She owns the bucket, and she is the one who has access to the water. But she, too, is thirsty.

Jesus and the woman meet, and their encounter offers an opportunity for each of them.

Jesus does not cease to be Jewish because he drinks from the water offered by the Samaritan woman. And the Samaritan remains who she is while embracing the way of Jesus.

'Give me to drink' means that both Jesus and the Samaritan ask for what they need from each other.

'Give me to drink' shows us that individuals, communities, cultures and religions and need each other.



Brazil: Christian but increasingly violent

Brazil is the largest country in South America. Geographically and in population it is the fifth largest country in the world.

Brazil is known as very religious, where a certain warmth characterises relations between social classes and ethnic groups. But the country is living through a time of growing intolerance and high levels of violence, especially against minorities and the old, poor and vulnerable.

Increasingly, some Christian groups are adopting a competitive attitude towards one another. They compete for media attention. They vie with each other for members and funds.

Pope Francis pointed to this kind of situation when he wrote: 'Spiritual worldliness leads some Christians to war with other Christians who stand in the way of their quest for power, prestige, pleasure and economic security.'

Traditional Christian confessions have experienced a reduction or stagnation in the number of their members.

This has encouraged the idea that a dynamic church has many members; and there is a tendency among some sectors of traditional churches to distance themselves from the search for the visible unity of the Christian Church.

'Market-driven' Christianity

Market-driven Christianity is investing in party politics. Some Christian sects have even created their own political parties.

The 2010 census shows that 86.8 per cent of Brazilians identify themselves as Christian. But this high rate of Christian affiliation does not seem to translate into non-violent attitudes and respect for human dignity.

Answers to 'Do you know?' (page 11)

- 1 King Saul's son, Jonathan. See 1 Samuel 20:17
- 2 His Eminence Cardinal Adrien-Théodore Sarr
- 3 The year 2015 in Roman numerals (M = 1,000. X = 10. V = 5.)
- 4 The apostle Peter: see John 21:15-19
- 5 The Star of David: a Jewish symbol composed of two overlaid equilateral triangles to form a six-pointed star. It appears on

synagogues, tombstones and the flag of Israel. An ancient sign not much used by Jews before the Middle Ages, it was popularised as a protection against evil spirits. Jews in Prague adopted it as an official symbol, and its use became widespread in the 17th century. Though it has neither Biblical nor Talmudic authority, the Star of David became a nearly universal emblem of Judaism in the 19th century. The Nazis' use of it to identify Jews and persecute them invested the Star of David with the symbolism of martyrdom.



The thousand-year rift

CHRISTIAN faith and practice have often been damaged by political, nationalistic and power-seeking interests, as by ignorance, prejudice, pride and fear.

A full thousand years ago - in 1014 - the Christian world was rent by the Great Schism between the Orthodox of the East and the Roman Church of the West - and this rift persists this day.

In the truncated Church six centuries afterwards, the Protestant Reformation led to doctrinal differences which further divided Western Christians.

The 16th-century Catholic - Protestant divide still handicaps the Christian community. In our own country, the mainstream Christian churches - Catholic, Anglican and Methodist - now enjoy cordial relations. But continuing doctrinal differences and practices still prevent Catholics from sharing the sacraments of their highly-respected non-Catholic brothers and sisters.

Christ's own prayer

All Christians of all denominations should surely heed Christ's prayer for his followers: 'Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, that they may be one, as we are one.' (John 17: 11; see also John 17: 20-21)

Yet some Christians are not really concerned. They feel quite comfortable in their own church. They are not curious or bothered about what others believe, or how others worship.

Early strains

Some of the first strains between the Christians are referred to in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul.

In the early Church there were fierce disagreements - even violence - over doctrine.

Eventually, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church established the creeds, which proclaim the relation between Father, Son and Spirit.

Divided Christian communities need to grow in mutual appreciation and understanding.

We should undoubtedly deepen our knowledge of the history and teachings of our own Church.

The witness of all Christians must be to Christ himself, who wants us to be one with him as he is one with the Father, 'so that the world may believe'.

Only in this way will the world increasingly come to see that Christ's Gospel is a Gospel of truth, unity and love - with relevance for everyone.

Who are the Orthodox?

THERE are an estimated 225-300 million Christians in the Eastern Orthodox Church, making them the largest Christian body after the Roman Catholic Church. Most Orthodox Christians live in Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East and the Balkans.

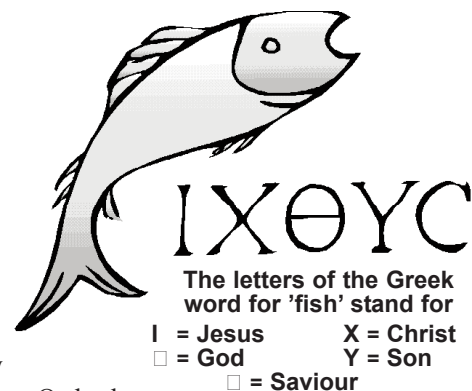
Until AD 1054 Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism were branches of the same body. Divisions between these two branches of Christendom had long existed and were constantly increasing. The widening schism was caused by

complex cultural, political and religious divergencies.

In AD 1054 a formal split occurred when Pope Leo IX excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, who in turn excommunicated the Pope.

A thousand years later, the two churches remain divided.

The Eastern Orthodox are a fellowship of self-governing churches, each governed by a bishop.



The honorary title of first among Orthodox bishops is given to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople; but the Patriarch does not exercise the same authority as the Pope.

The Orthodox churches claim to be a theologically-unified communion of churches, taking the Scriptures, as interpreted by the seven ecumenical councils, as their sole authority, with Christ as the head of the Church.

The word 'orthodox' means 'right believing'. It was traditionally used to signify the true religion that faithfully follows the beliefs and practices defined by the first seven ecumenical councils (dating back to the first ten centuries). Orthodox Christianity claims to have fully preserved the traditions and doctrines of the original Christian church established by the apostles.

Of all the churches outside the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox are the nearest in doctrine and sacraments.



'Wounding the Church and wounding Christ'

and theological concepts, pastoral differences, political motives and self-interest to the point of clashing due to resentments and personal ambition'.

Pride and selfishness

One thing is certain, the Pope continued: 'In one way or another, behind these lacerations there is always pride and selfishness, which are the cause of every disagreement and make us intolerant, incapable of listening and accepting those who have a view or a position that is different from ours.'

What can Christians do today in light of so many divisions, the Pope asked. Will people be resigned to the current state of affairs and give up, be indifferent, 'or will we firmly believe that one can and must walk in the direction of reconciliation and full communion?'

Full communion, the Pope declared, is 'everyone being able to participate together in the Body and Blood of Christ'.

'Be open to dialogue'

Catholics are called to pray for Christian unity, to be open to 'dialogue and encounter', to welcome what is 'valid and positive that is offered us even from those who think differently from us or who pose a different position.'

The Pope said that it was 'painful' to see so many divisions among Christians when they all believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Feeling part of the same Christian family

The Pope continued that focusing on what unites Christians and not what divides them involves 'adhering to the truth, together with the ability to forgive, feeling a part of the same Christian family' and working together in charity, helping others.

Let theologians debate and discuss the issues at hand and 'seek the theological truth, because it is a duty,' he added. 'But we, we will walk together, praying for one another, doing charitable work; and that is how we will build communion by walking together.'

AT a general audience not long ago, Pope Francis revealed that 70 years ago he had made his first Communion.

'They say that you shouldn't talk about personal things, but I can't resist the temptation. Today I am so thankful to the Lord because 70 years ago I made my first Communion... Let us all thank the Lord for our Baptism; let all of us thank him for our first Communion.'

The Pope revealed this personal detail to underline what it means to enter into communion with the Catholic Church and to seek communion with Christians who belong to other confessions or traditions.

This theme of Christian unity was part of the series of audience talks the Pope has been giving on the nature of the Church.

The Pope lamented the long history of divisions among Christians, saying such separations 'wound the Church and wound Christ', whose desire is 'that they may all be one, so that the world may believe.'

People's efforts to share the Gospel message will be 'much more credible' when all Christians show they are 'able to live in communion and love each other,' the Pope declared.

'Serious and painful divisions'

The Pope pointed out that unity was already under threat while Jesus was still with his disciples. They argued among themselves about who was better and who was more important. Francis stressed that 'the Church is tempted by evil, which tries to divide her, and has been marked unfortunately by serious and painful divisions... Some breaks have lasted so long it's hard to recall all the reasons for the separation to begin with and to find possible solutions.'

The reasons Christian communities are divided, the Pope said, include differences in 'dogmatic and moral principles

Reminder

MANY Catholics who are careless about Sunday Mass will want to attend Midnight Mass at Christmas. For them, and for others, here's a crucial reminder.

To remain in good standing in the Church, all Catholics should take part in the Mass every Sunday and all Holydays of Obligation.

Everyone - Catholic or otherwise - is welcome to attend Mass. But Holy Communion may be received only by Catholics, and they must be in a state of grace.

If you are aware of any grave sin, you must make confession before a priest and receive absolution. Then you may receive Holy Communion in good faith and with joy.



from beyond the diocese



A Syrian child in a refugee camp

Nuncio calls on UN to prevent 'possible new genocides'

POINTING to 'grave violations and abuses' committed by ISIS militants in the Middle East, Archbishop Auza, the Vatican's Nuncio to the United Nations, has called on UN agencies to take action 'to prevent possible new genocides and to assist the increasing number of refugees'.

The archbishop heads the Vatican's Permanent Observer Mission to the UN. He said that the Holy See 'appeals in particular for the protection of ethnic and religious groups, including the Christian communities who are specifically targeted and victimised because of their ethnic origins and religious beliefs'.

Archbishop Auza made his comments during a debate on the situation in the Middle East.

He declared that the escalation of terrorism around the globe should be a catalyst for all nations to realise they have a responsibility 'to protect people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and all forms of unjust aggression'.

He asserted that every religious leader in the entire Middle East and around the world must promote inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, denounce 'every use of religion to justify violence' and educate people about the need for mutual respect.

Palestine and Israel: the Vatican's view

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian situation, the nuncio said that the Vatican has long supported a 'two-state solution'. Israel and Palestine, with the support of the UN and of the international community, 'must work towards the final objective, which is the realisation of the right of the Palestinians to have their own state, sovereign and independent, and the right of the Israelis to peace and security'.

'Horrible situation' in Syria

Regarding the 'horrible situation in Syria' the archbishop said that the Vatican 'urgently calls on all parties to stop the massive violations of international humanitarian law and fundamental human rights, and on the international community to help the parties find a solution.'

'No aspect of family life excluded from God's love'

POPE Francis has told Catholic leaders in Malawi that to build their nation they must focus on the families of the faithful.

'It is in the family, with its unique capacity to form each member, particularly the young, into persons of love, sacrifice, commitment and fidelity, that the Church and society in Malawi will find the resources necessary to renew and build up a culture of solidarity,' the Pope said.

The Pope was addressing the bishops on 6th November after meeting each of them during their *ad limina* visit to the Vatican, which bishops make periodically to report on the status of their dioceses. While Malawi faces huge economic and development problems, the Pope said, its people hold fast to their commitment to family life. Francis emphasised, 'There is no aspect of family life - childhood and youth; friendship, engagement and marriage; spousal intimacy, fidelity and love; inter-personal relations and support - which is excluded from the healing and strengthening touch of God's love, communicated through the Gospels and taught by the Church.'

Liberian priest: spread of ebola is leaving people trapped



A LIBERIAN priest has said that the spread of ebola has left citizens isolated: 'They can't even go to church.'

Fr McDonald Nah, from the Archdiocese of Monrovia, is studying educational administration at St Louis University in the USA. He said that people in Liberia have been isolated by ebola, especially those in proximity to someone who has died from the virus.

'People can't even go to church,' he told the *St Louis Review*. 'Usually in Liberia, when someone is sick, people go to visit. But they can't visit them at all. It has created something they have never seen before. I was in Liberia during the civil war, and apart from people dying, we could visit. You could go places. But with this situation, you can't at all.'

Lifting of emergency

In mid-November the Liberian President lifted the state of emergency she had imposed in August, because the rate of reported ebola infections in Liberia has decreased.

But ebola rates in parts of Sierra Leone are still rising.

Cuba allows building of new church

CUBA has allowed the construction of the first new Catholic church in 55 years.

The 200-seat church, funded by Catholics in Florida, will be built in Sandino, a citrus- and coffee-growing town in the far-western province of Pinar del Rio.

'The construction of a church is a clear demonstration of a new phase, of an improvement, in relations between the church and the state,' said Enrique Lopez Oliva, Professor in the History of Religions at the University of Havana.

The Catholic Church had tense relations with what was an officially atheist government for many years after the 1959 revolution; but relations began to improve before St John Paul II's visit in 1998.

The government has revived the Christmas holiday and begun allowing Masses to be broadcast. It has also dropped a ban on Church membership for Communist Party members.



Francis hails Benedict XVI

POPE Francis praised his predecessor as a 'great pope' when he unveiled a bronze bust of Benedict XVI at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on 27th October.

Francis declared: 'Benedict XVI [was] a great Pope: great for the power and penetration of his intellect, great for his significant contribution to theology, great for his love for the Church and of human beings, great for his virtue and piety.' Earlier, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI joined 50,000 pilgrims in St Peter's Square on Sunday 28th September. It was his third public appearance since he resigned in 2012.

Pope Francis embraced 87-year-old Benedict, and the crowds applauded as he told them that having Benedict close by is like having 'the wise grandfather at home'.

Muslims and Catholics agree on the need to serve young people

MUSLIMS and Catholics have acknowledged many examples across the world of active Catholic-Muslim collaboration in charitable, educational and relief efforts.

The third seminar of the Catholic-Muslim Forum in Rome considered 'Working Together to Serve Others', including joint service to young people and inter-religious dialogue.

The Muslim delegation was led by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Professor of Islamic Studies at the George Washington University, and the Catholic delegation by Cardinal

Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.

Participants acknowledged that they were meeting at a time of severe tension and conflict in the world, and this underlined the vital need for enhanced service and co-operation. They unanimously condemned oppression and acts of terrorism against innocent persons, the desecration of sacred places and the destruction of the cultural heritage - declaring that it is never acceptable to use religion to justify such acts or to conflate such acts with religion.

Participants agreed that education in the family, school, university, church or mosque is of the utmost importance to promote a well-rounded identity and respect for others. Curriculums and textbooks should present an objective and respectful image of religions and cultures.

Participants also stressed the importance of inter-religious dialogue to overcome prejudice, distortions and inappropriate generalisations which damage peaceful relationships. They agreed that dialogue should lead to action, particularly among young people. Christians and Muslims should multiply opportunities for encounter and co-operation on joint projects for the common good.

Welcome for Francis in Sri Lanka and the Philippines

THE ARCHBISHOP of Manila has declared that the Pope's forthcoming visit to the Philippines will be a blessing for everyone in the country, 'particularly the poor'.

The Pope will arrive in the Philippines on Thursday 15th January after spending two days in Sri Lanka, where he is still trying to promote reconciliation after the bloody conflict from 1983 to 2009 that claimed thousands of lives.

In Sri Lanka the Pope will canonise Blessed Joseph Vaz, an Indian missionary credited with reviving the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka almost single-handedly during persecution by the Dutch colonial authorities in the 17th century.

Buddhists in Sri Lanka make up almost 70 per cent of the population, and Christians only 6 per cent.

On Friday 16th January, his first full day in the Philippines, the Pope will meet families from all 86 dioceses and call on President Benigno Aquino. He will also celebrate Mass for priests and religious at Manila Cathedral.

Guinean is the second African to head a Vatican congregation



POPE Francis has named Cardinal Robert Sarah as the new Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. He is the second West African to hold this post, the first being Cardinal Francis Arinze, who served from 2002-2008.

Cardinal Sarah, 69, from Guinea Conakry, is currently President of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*.

In October Cardinal Sarah spoke at a meeting of priests and seminarians attending the *Populus Summorum Pontificum* pilgrimage in Rome, which each year brings faithful from around the world who are devoted to the Tridentine Mass.



Church and family

Reports from the Extraordinary Synod on the Family
Rome, 15th - 19th October 2014

Lively, controversial Synod on the family

CRUCIAL aspects of the family were discussed at the lively and controversial Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family held at the Vatican from 5th to 19th October.

Taking part were presidents of bishops' conferences and heads of Eastern Catholic churches. Discussion grew heated after the delivery of a mid-term report that used strikingly conciliatory language towards people with ways of life contrary to Church teaching, including divorced and civilly-remarried Catholics, cohabitating couples and those in same-sex unions.

But summaries of working group discussions showed that a majority of synod members wanted the final document to be clearer about Church doctrine and to give more attention to families whose lives exemplify Catholic teaching.

The final report featured many citations of Scripture, references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the teachings of Pope Paul VI, St John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

In his opening address, Pope Francis said that participants should speak their minds and not be afraid to offend him. The faithful must not keep things back because they might worry, 'What will the Pope think?'

Welcome for 'frank exchanges'

At the end of the synod the Pope said he welcomed members' frank expressions of disagreement. 'Personally, I would have been very worried and saddened if there hadn't been these temptations and these animated discussions, if everybody had agreed or remained silent in a false and quietistic peace.'

He added, 'So many commentators or people who talk imagined they saw the Church quarrelling, one part against the other, even doubting the Holy Spirit, the true promoter and guarantor of unity and harmony in the Church.'

'Temptations'

Pope Francis assured the synod that the unity of the Church was not in danger, but warned the bishops against several temptations that he said had been present during the proceedings.



One temptation was 'hostile rigidity' that seeks refuge in the letter of the law, 'in the certainty of what we know, and not of what we must still learn and achieve'.

Such a temptation, the Pope said, is characteristic of the 'zealous, the scrupulous, the attentive and - today - of the so-called traditionalists and also of intellectuals'.

Another temptation, the Pope said, was that of 'destructive do-goodism, which in the name of a misguided mercy binds up wounds without first treating and medicating them; that treats symptoms and not causes and roots. It is the temptation of do-gooders, of the timorous and also of the so-called progressives and liberals.'

'Now the real work begins!'

The results of the extraordinary synod will form the basis of the working document for the larger World Synod of Bishops meeting from 4th to 25th October 2015 on the theme 'Jesus Christ reveals the mystery and vocation of the family'.

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, President of the US Conference of Bishops, commented afterwards that he was grateful that clarifications and the deepening of scriptural and theological reflection 'shone consistently' through the synod's final report.

He added: 'Now the real work begins!'

'We must not fail couples whose marriages are in difficulty'

WHEN Catholics see couples who are patient, kind, never jealous or rude, they 'behold the beauty and simplicity and strength of married love,' but the Church also must learn to help and to heal those whose dreams for life-long love have been shattered, said Archbishop Philip Tartaglia of Glasgow, Scotland.

Speaking at the Synod on the Family, the archbishop said: 'We must have compassion for the pain and laceration of the human hearts caught up in separation, betrayal and divorce.'

He quoted 1 Corinthians 13:4-8: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.'

Archbishop Tartaglia said that those about to be married should read this passage and think, 'That's so beautiful. I want my love, our love, to be like that: patient and kind, trusting,

enduring, faithful, lasting for ever.'

'In a family,' the archbishop continued, 'there is every opportunity to be patient and kind and excusing and trusting. There is every opportunity to renew faithfulness to one another by laughing together, crying together, supporting one another, saying sorry to one another, giving one another the benefit of the doubt, embracing one another, being happy for each other, just knowing the right word at the right time.'

When marriages fall apart...

But when marriages fall apart, the archbishop said, 'love is the first casualty', hatred can take root and division becomes the most obvious characteristic of the relationship. 'Children's peace of heart is shattered and they find themselves both loving and hating their parents at the same time.'

The Catholic Church is called to be present in those

situations, too, and to show them that despite their experience love is a reality, he said. 'St Paul's words encourage us to find a way to uphold God's holy purpose in marriage and in the family while also upholding those for whom that purpose has become almost impossible to attain,' Archbishop Tartaglia added.

He concluded: 'In times of distress and misfortune people still instinctively turn to the Church for hope and consolation and inspiration. We must not fail them.'



**Archbishop Tartaglia:
In the family there
is every opportunity
to be patient
and kind...**

Francis speaks of the role of the Pope and the bishops

In his final address to the synod, the Pope said:

I HAVE heard with appreciation speeches full of faith, pastoral and doctrinal zeal, wisdom, courage and *parrhesia* [Greek for 'freedom of speech']. What was set before us was the good of the Church, of families and the 'supreme law': the 'good of souls'.

And this always without putting into question the fundamental truths of the sacrament of marriage: the indissolubility, unity, faithfulness, fruitfulness and openness to life.

This is the Church, the vineyard of the Lord, the fertile Mother and the caring Teacher who is not afraid to pour oil and wine on people's wounds, who doesn't judge or categorise people.

This is the Church, One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and composed of sinners needful of God's mercy - the Church, the bride of Christ who seeks to be faithful to her spouse and her doctrine.

Open and not afraid

It is the Church that is not afraid to eat and drink with prostitutes and publicans. The Church that is open to receive the needy and penitent - not only the just or those who believe they are perfect. The Church is not ashamed of the fallen brother, pretending not to see him, but feels obliged to lift him up, encourage him and accompany him toward an encounter with her Spouse in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Many commentators have imagined that they see a disputatious Church, where one part is against the other, doubting even the Holy Spirit, the true promoter and guarantor of unity and harmony, the Holy Spirit who throughout history has always guided the barque, through her ministers - even when the sea was rough and choppy, and the ministers unfaithful and sinners.

As I told you from the beginning of the Synod, it was necessary to live through all this with tranquillity, with interior peace, so that the Synod would take place *cum Petro* and *sub Petro* [with Peter and under Peter]. And the presence of the Pope is the guarantee of it all.

We will speak a little about the Pope in relation to the bishops.



'The fundamental truths of the sacrament of marriage are indissolubility, unity, faithfulness, fruitfulness and openness to life'

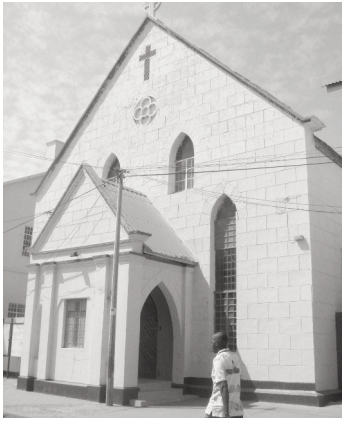
The duty of the Pope is that of guaranteeing the unity of the Church; that of reminding the faithful of their duty to faithfully follow the Gospel of Christ; that of reminding the pastors that their first duty is to nourish the flock that the Lord has entrusted to them, and seek to welcome with fatherly care and mercy, and without false fears, the lost sheep...

Not masters, but servants

So, the Church is Christ's - she is his bride - and all the bishops, in communion with the Successor of Peter, have the task and duty of guarding her and serving her, not as masters but as servants.

In this context, the Pope is not the supreme lord but rather the supreme servant - the 'servant of the servants of God'; the guarantor of the obedience and conformity of the Church to the will of God, to the Gospel of Christ and to the Tradition of the Church, putting aside every personal whim, despite being - by the will of Christ himself - the supreme Pastor and Teacher of all the faithful and despite enjoying supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church.

Abridged from the Pope's final address to the synod



Gambian Christian anniversaries

December and January

180 YEARS AGO

In Banjul on 3rd December 1834 the foundation stone of Wesley Methodist Church was laid. It is the oldest church in Banjul.

The Methodists had begun their mission in 1824, and had already built a church in Janjanbureh.

For twenty years the Methodist Mission was the only active Christian body in this country.



During December 1823: Arrival from England of Hannah Kilham with a group of Quaker missionaries. They opened an agricultural centre at Bakau and a girls' school in Banjul, but soon left, handing their school to the Methodist Mission.

18th January 1848: Arrival of Fr Ronarc'h, a French priest, and Fr Warlop, a Belgian, to begin a Catholic mission.

26th December 1873. Blessing by Bishop Durët of Dakar of the new school in Hagan Street (Daniel Goddard Street)

29th December 1875: Death of Bishop Durët.

9th January 1881: Death in Banjul from pneumonia of Fr Gabriel Samba, first Gambian priest, ordained in 1869.

3rd December 1887: Fr Massart died at the altar.

8th December 1894 (120 years ago): First use of the high altar sent from Chevilly, Paris, by the Holy Ghost Fathers.

During December 1902: Consecration of St Mary's (now the Anglican Cathedral) by Bishop Taylor-Smith of Freetown

10th January 1913: Birth of Fr Matthew Farrelly CSSp, whose long ministry was to encompass The Gambia, Rome and New York.

12th January 1920:

En route for Dakar, the *SS Afrique* sank at sea. Among the 563 who perished were Bishop François Jalabert and 18 missionaries.



19th December 1931: Last entry in French in the *Mission Journal*. Subsequent entries were in English, the Mission having been declared *sui juris* (self-governing).

10th January 1932: Fr John Meehan was named first Ecclesiastical Superior of the self-governing Mission.

21st December 1933: Fr Doody, taken ill travelling from Ireland to Banjul, died while returning on the same boat that had brought him.

15th January 1935 (80 years ago): Fr Harold Whiteside took up residence at the new mission station in Bwiam.

7th January 1939: The first marriage at Bwiam was that of the catechist, Joseph Richards.

1st December 1948: Opening of St Therese's Elementary School Kanifing, with 114 pupils.

16th December 1952: Departure of Fr Coughlin, who made the wall painting formerly at Star of the Sea, Bakau.

3rd December 1953: Arrival from Port Harcourt, Nigeria, of Fr Michael Frawley to become Principal of St Augustine's High School Banjul, where he was to remain for seven years.

30th January 1954: Fathers Frawley, Costelloe and Cleary moved into the house at Hagan Street bequeathed by Joseph Beigh.

24th December 1954 (60 years ago): Arrival of Fr Michael Flynn, who said Christmas Mass the following day.

1st January 1956: Opening of the convent at Kanifing with Mother Angela, Sr Magdalene and Sr Anne-Marie in residence, all teaching at St Therese's School.

24th December 1957: Fr Michael Moloney (*right*) was appointed first Bishop of Banjul. The local announcement was made 12 days later. Fr Moloney was consecrated in Dublin on 4th May 1958.



8th January 1964: Opening of St Martin's Kartong.

13th January 1966: Bishop Moloney returned from Rome following the close of the Second Vatican Council.

25th December 1968: The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Mariani, opened Holy Spirit Church Banjul.

1st January 1974: Arrival of Fr Philip Crowe.

21st January 1977: Fr Edward Grimes became first Director of the Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI).

16th December 1977: Opening in Banjul of the Diocesan Development Office (now CaDO).

3rd January 1978: Opening of Christ the King Dasilami.

3rd January 1978: The Gambia Christian Council called on President Jawara, thus inaugurating an annual event.

30th December 1985: The first pastoral assembly for clergy and religious opened at Shalom, Fajara.

5th December 1987: First pilgrimage to Kunkujang.

21st January 1989: Ordination of Fr Anthony Sonko.

28th December 1989: The second pastoral assembly opened at St Peter's Technical High School, Lamin, when clergy and religious were joined by representatives of the laity.

11th January 1990: Bishop Cleary unveiled a plaque in the Cathedral to the memory of Rene Blain.

31st December 1991: Death in Ireland of Bishop Michael Moloney.

1st January 1995 (20 years ago): Death in Ireland of Fr Michael Flynn. He had first arrived in The Gambia 40 years before.

9th January 1998: Death in Banjul of Mrs E. Senghore, aged 113 years.

8th December 2003: Opening of the new Christ Church (Anglican) Serrekunda.

19th December 2006: Death of the Very Revd Philippe Champetier de Ribes OSB, former Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey at Kerr Moussa, Senegal.

January 2007: Working with the poor was the focus of a meeting at Fajara of 43 Presentation Sisters from 10 countries.

19th January 2008: Alhaji Cherno Alieu Mass Kah, Imam Ratib of Banjul, visited Bishop Ellison at the Cathedral.

17th January 2010: Blessed Sacrament Church became an independent parish, with Fr Peter Lopez as first Parish Priest.

26th December 2007: Death in Suffolk, England, of Sir Philip Bridges, former Chief Justice of The Gambia (*right*). He was a stalwart of St Paul's Anglican Church Fajara.



12th December 2010: Sr Josephine of Senegal and Sr Mary of Ghana took their final vows as Marist Sisters.

During December 2010: Sr Calixte Thomas and Sr Teresa Mundow joined Cluny sisters from all over Africa at a meeting in Dakar to discuss the implementation of recommendations made by the Synod of African Bishops that had taken place in Rome.

29th December 2012: Sr Calixte Thomas of the Cluny Sisters (*right*) left for India, her home country, after serving the diocese for many years in educational administration.



23rd January 2013: The Catholic Education Secretariat and the British NGO EdAid opened a bookshop in Kairaba Avenue.

3rd January 2014: Bishop Robert Ellison officially received the keys of Centenary House, the commercial building erected for the Diocese of Banjul in Kairaba Avenue.

22nd January 2014: Sudden death of Archbishop Tilewa Johnson (*right*), sixth Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Gambia.



Since October 2012 he had also been Archbishop of the Anglican Province of West Africa.

Some weekday celebrations

Wednesday 3rd December: St Francis Xavier *patron of missions*

FRANCIS was born in Spain in 1506. In Paris he met Ignatius Loyola and became one of the first Jesuits. He was ordained in 1537 and in 1542 embarked on a three-year mission to India, and also established missions in Malaysia. In 1549 he went to Japan, and in 1551 returned to India and died while trying to secure entry to China. Francis is believed to have baptised about 30,000 converts. His success was partly due to his adaptation of Christianity to local cultures. In 1927 he was named patron of all missions.

Monday 8th December: Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

THE DOCTRINE of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed as infallible by Pope Pius IX in 1854. It teaches that Mary, Mother of Christ, was conceived without sin: she was 'full of grace'. She received God's grace from the first moment of her existence, and spent her earthly life in a perfect relationship with him. He filled her with grace so that she would be worthy to become Mother of God. Mary is perceived as the perfect example of the redeeming action of God's grace; she was only able to receive this grace because Christ would later redeem all humanity through his death on the cross.

Saturday 17th January: St Antony of Egypt *abbot*

ANTONY was born at Memphis, Egypt, in 251. When he was 20 he sold all he possessed and began a solitary life in the desert, where he was joined by others. He is known as the father of monasticism. He died in 356.

Saturday 24th January: St Francis de Sales *bishop and doctor*

FRANCIS, born in 1597 at Annecy, France, was a spell-binding preacher, famed for his skill in spiritual direction, and an accomplished writer. As Bishop of Geneva from 1602 he did much to counter-act Protestantism. He died in 1622 and was canonised in 1664. Francis is the patron saint of the blind and of journalists and writers.

Wednesday 28th January: St Thomas Aquinas *doctor*

BORN in Aquino, Sicily, in 1224-5, Thomas studied in Naples and taught in Paris. He integrated the teaching of the Greek philosopher Aristotle into Christian thought, asserting that the theologian starts with faith and proceeds through reason. He died in 1274. In 1567 he was named a Doctor of the Church, and in 1879 was proclaimed by Pope Leo XIII as a champion of orthodoxy. Thomas wrote more than 80 works. He is pre-eminent as a writer of liturgical texts which combine clarity with beauty. Gambian Catholics are familiar with Thomas' Benediction hymns, *O salutaris Hostia* ('O saving Victim') and *Tantum ergo sacramentum* (Therefore, we before him bending').



Saturday 31st January: St John Bosco *priest*

JOHN BOSCO was born in a poor family in Piedmont, northern Italy, in 1815, at a time of famine. His education didn't start until he was 15. After ordination he dedicated his life to disadvantaged young people. He stressed the need for encouragement in the classroom rather than punishment. John Bosco founded the Society of St Francis de Sales – the Salesians. During his lifetime he accumulated great influence, not least in his writings. He died in 1888, and was canonised by Pope Pius XI in 1934.

Daily Mass Readings



December 2014 & January 2015

Sunday readings Year B Weekday readings Year 1

Memorials in brackets are optional

SUN 29th Nov Mon 1st Dec Tue 2nd Wed 3rd Thu 4th Fri 5th Sat 6th	Isaiah 63: 16-17, 19; 64: 2-7. Psalm 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19. 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9. Mark 13: 33-37 Isaiah 2: 1-5. Psalm 122: 1-9. Matthew 8: 5-11 Isaiah 11: 1-10. Psalm 72: 1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17. Luke 10: 21-24 Isaiah 25: 6-10. Psalm 23: 1-6. Matthew 15: 29-27 Isaiah 26: 1-6. Psalm 118: 1, 8-9, 19-21, 26-27 Isaiah 29: 17-24. Psalm 27: 1, 4, 13-14. Matthew 9: 27-31 Isaiah 30: 19-21, 23-26. Psalm 147: 1-6. Matthew 9: 35 – 10: 1, 5-8.	1st SUNDAY of ADVENT St Francis Xavier (St John Damascene) <i>abstinence</i> (St Nicholas)
SUN 7th MON 8th Tue 9th Wed 10th Thu 11th Fri 12th Sat 13th	Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11. Psalm 85: 9-14. 2 Peter 3: 8-14. Mark 1: 1-8. Genesis 3: 9-15, 20. Psalm 98: 1-4. Ephesians 1: 3-6, 11-12. Luke 1: 26-38 Isaiah 40: 1-11. Psalm 96: 1-3, 10-13. Matthew 18: 12-14 Isaiah 40: 25-31. Psalm 103: 1-4, 8, 10. Matthew 11: 28-30. Isaiah 41: 13-20. Psalm 145: 1, 9-13. Matthew 11: 11-15 Isaiah 48: 17-19. Psalm 1: 1-4, 6. Matthew 11: 11-15 Sirach 48: 1-4, 9-11. Psalm 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19. Matthew 17: 9, 10-13	2nd SUNDAY of ADVENT THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (St Juan Diego Cuauhtlatatzin) (St Damasus) (Our Lady of Guadalupe) <i>abstinence</i> (St Lucy)
SUN 14th Mon 15th Tue 16th Wed 17th Thu 18th Fri 19th Sat 20th	Isaiah 61: 1-2. Cantic: Luke 1: 46-48, 49-50, 53-54. 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24. John 1: 6-8, 19-28 Numbers 24: 2-7, 15-17. Psalm 25: 4-9. Matthew 21: 23-27. Zephaniah 3: 1-2, 9-13. Psalm 34: 2-3, 6-7, 17-19, 23. Matthew 21: 28-32 Genesis 49: 2, 8-10. Psalm 72: 1-4, 7-8, 17. Matthew 1: 18-25 Jeremiah 23: Psalm 72: 1-2, 12-13, 18-19. Matthew 1: 18-25 Judges 13: 2-7, 24-25. Psalm 71: 3-6, 16-17. Luke 1: 5-25 Isaiah 7: 10-14. Psalm 24: 1-6. Luke 1: 26-38	3rd SUNDAY of ADVENT <i>O Sapientia</i> <i>O Adonai</i> <i>O Radix - abstinence</i> <i>O Clavis</i>
SUN 21st Mon 22nd Tue 23rd Wed 24th FRI 25th Friday 26th Sat 27th	2 Samuel 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14, 16. Ps 89: 2-5, 27, 29. Romans 16: 25-27. Luke 1: 26-38 1 Samuel 1: 24-28. Cantic: 1 Samuel 2: 1, 4-8. Luke 1: 46-58 Malachi 3: 1-4, 23-24. Psalm 25: 4-5, 8-10, 14. Luke 1: 57-66 <i>Morning Mass:</i> 2 Samuel 2: 1-5, 8-12, 14. Psalm 89: 2-5, 27, 29. Luke 1: 67-79 For readings at the four Masses of the Nativity (Christmas) pages 18 & 19 Acts 6: 8-10; 7: 54-59. Psalm 31: 3-4, 6, 8, 16-17. Matthew 10: 17-22 1 John 1-4. Psalm 97: 1-2, 5-6, 11-12. John 20: 1-8.	4th SUNDAY of ADVENT <i>O Oriens</i> <i>O Rex</i> (St John of Kanty) <i>O Emmanuel</i> <i>Evening Mass: page 18</i> NATIVITY of THE LORD St STEPHEN St JOHN, EVANGELIST
SUN 28th Mon 29th Tue 30th Wed 31st THU 1st Jan Fri 2nd Sat 3rd	Genesis 15: 1-6; 21: 1-3 <i>or</i> Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14. Psalm 105: 1-6, 8-9 <i>or</i> Psalm 128: 1-5. Colossians 3: 12-21 <i>or</i> Hebrews 11: 8, 11-12, 17-19. Luke 2: 22-40 1 John 2: 3-11. Psalm 96: 1-3, 5-6. Luke 2: 22-35 1 John 2: 12-17. Psalm 96: 7-10. Luke 2: 36-40 1 John 2: 18-21. Psalm 96: 1-2, 11-13. John 1: 1-18 Numbers 6: 22-27. Psalm 67: 7-10. Galatians 4: 4-7. Luke 2: 16-21 1 John 2: 22-28. Psalm 98: 1-4. John 1: 19-28 1 John 2: 29 – 3: 6. Psalm 98: 1, 3-6. John 1: 29-34	THE HOLY FAMILY (St Thomas Becket) MARY, MOTHER of GOD St Basil the Great & St Gregory Nazianzen <i>abstinence</i>
SUN 4th Mon 5th Tue 6th Wed 7th Thu 8th Fri 9th Sat 10th	Isaiah 60: 1-6. Psalm 72: 1-2, 7-8, 10-13. Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6. Matthew 2: 1-12 1 John 3: 22 – 4: 6. Psalm 2: 7-8, 10-12. Matthew 4: 12-17, 23-25 1 John 4: 7-10. Psalm 72: 1-4, 7-8. Mark 6: 34-44 1 John 4: 11-18. Psalm 72; 1-2, 10, 12-13. Mark 6: 45-52 1 John 4: 19 – 5: 4. Psalm 72: 1-2, 14-15, 17. Luke 4: 14-22 1 John 5: 5-13. Psalm 147: 12-15, 19-20. Luke 5: 12-16 1 John 5: 14-21. Psalm 149: 1-6, 9. John 3: 22-30	EPIPHANY of THE LORD (St Raymond of Penyafort) <i>abstinence</i>
SUN 11th Mon 12th Tue 13th Wed 14th Thu 15th Fri 16th Sat 17th	Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7 <i>or</i> Isaiah 55: 1-11. Psalm 29: 1-4, 9-10 <i>or</i> Isaiah 12: 1-6. Acts 10: 34-38 <i>or</i> 1 John 5: 1-9. Mark 1: 7-11 End of Christmas Time: Ordinary Time ('the green season') begins Hebrews 1: 1-6. Psalm 97: 1-2, 6-7, 9. Mark 1: 14-20 Hebrews 2: 5-12. Psalm 8: 2, 5-9. Mark 1: 21-28 Hebrews 2: 14-18. Psalm 105: 1-4, 6-9. Mark 1: 29-39. Hebrews 3: 7-14. Psalm 95: 6-11. Mark 1: 40-45 Hebrews 4: 1-5, 11. Psalm 78: 3-4, 6-8. Mark 2: 1-12 Hebrews 4: 12-16. Psalm 19: 8=10, 15. Mark 2: 13-17	BAPTISM of THE LORD (St Hilary) <i>abstinence</i> St Anthony of Egypt
SUN 18th Mon 19th Tue 20th Wed 21st Thu 22nd Fri 23rd Sat 24th	1 Samuel 3: 3-10, 19. Psalm 40: 2, 4, 7-10. 1 Corinthians 6: 13-15, 17-20. John 1: 35-42. Hebrews 5: 1-10. Psalm 110: 1-4. Mark 2: 18-22 Hebrews 6: 10-20. Psalm 111: 1-2, 4-5, 9-10. Mark 2: 23-28 Hebrews 7: 1-3, 15-17. Psalm 110: 1-4. Mark 3: 1-6 St Agnes Hebrews 7: 25 – 8: 6. Psalm 40: 7-10, 17. Mark 3: 7-12 Hebrews 8: 6-13. Psalm 85: 8, 10-14. Mark 3: 13-19 Hebrews 9: 2-3, 11-14. Psalm 47: 2-3, 6-9. Mark 3: 20-21	2nd SUNDAY of YEAR (St Sebastian) (St Vincent) <i>abstinence</i> St Francis de Sales
SUN 25th Mon 26th Tue 27th Wed 28th Thu 29th Fri 30th Sat 31st	Jonah 3: 1-5, 10. Psalm 25: 4-9. 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31. Mark 1: 14-20 2 Timothy 1: 1-8 <i>or</i> Titus 1: 1-5. Psalm 96: 1-3, 7-8, 10. Mark 3: 22-30 Hebrews 10: 1-10. Psalm 40: 2, 4, 7-8, 10. Mark 3: 31-35 Hebrews 10: 11-18. Psalm 110: 1-4. Mark 4: 1-20. Hebrews 10: 19-25. Psalm 24: 1-6. Mark 4: 21-25 Hebrews 10: 32-39. Psalm 37: 3-6, 23-24, 39-40. Mark 4: 26-34 Hebrews 11: 1-2, 8-19. Cantic: Luke 1: 69-75. Mark 4: 35-41	3rd SUNDAY of YEAR St Timothy & St Titus (St Angela Merici) St Thomas Aquinas <i>abstinence</i> St John Bosco



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Venite adoremus

*Adeste fideles læti triumphantes,
Venite, venite in Bethlehem.
Natum videte
Regem angelorum:
Venite adoremus (thrice)
Dominum.*

*Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine
Gestant puellæ viscera
Deum verum, genitum non factum.
Venite adoremus (thrice)
Dominum.*

*Cantet nuncio, chorus angelorum;
Cantet nunc aula cælestium,
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Venite adoremus (thrice)
Dominum.*

*Ergo qui natus die hodierna.
Jesu, tibi sit gloria,
Patris aeterni Verbum caro factum.
Venite adoremus (thrice)
Dominum.*

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him
Born the King of angels:
O come, let us adore him, (thrice)
Christ the Lord.

God of God, light of light,
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created:
O come, let us adore him, (thrice)
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, glory in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, (thrice)
Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore him, (thrice)
Christ the Lord.