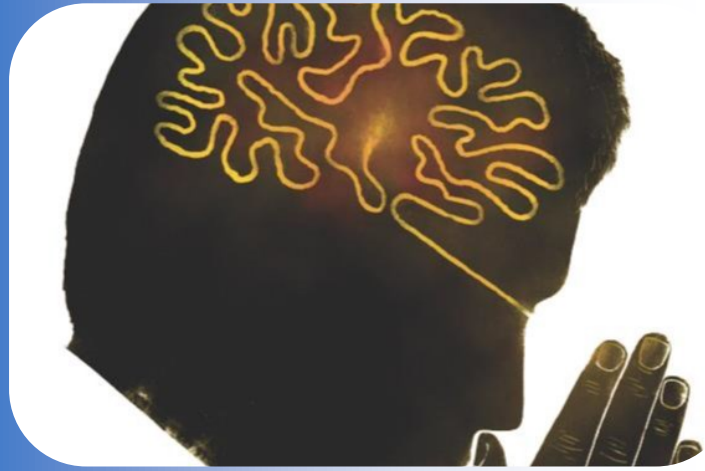


The Diocese of Banjul **NEWSLETTER**

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter



COVER STORY

**HOW FAITH AND
PRAYER BENEFIT THE
HUMAN BRAIN**

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FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY *'Locally called Sang Marie'*



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FLASHBACK PHOTO 2023

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DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER

Our Mission and Vision

We entertain, we encourage, and we enlighten. More so, Diocese of Banjul Newsletter gives you the tools you need to feed your faith life, nurture our society and relationships, care for your family, and bring the light of Christ to others. We connect with our readers through personal stories of triumphs and struggles, joys and challenges, and the lighter side of Christian living.

Dioocese of Banjul Newsletter is a source of support and encouragement for our society, especially those who love their faith, those who struggle with their faith, and those who long to learn more about the richness of Catholic tradition. More so, we strive to build a healthy society for the welfare of all.

Dioocese of Banjul Newsletter seeks the positive in the world and in our Church. It emphasizes those things that our society is doing right and well, as a means of inspiring and encouraging others to do the same. It is hope-filled, optimistic, and forward-looking. In the main, the newsletter moves our readers beyond inspiration and toward action, and gives them the information, tools, and resources they need to answer God’s call to holiness and bring the light of Christ to others.



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Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

SANG MARIE AND OUR DIVIDED NATION

As the annual celebration of Sang Marie approaches, we find ourselves at a critical juncture in our nation's history. This sacred day, which commemorates the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, holds profound significance for both Christians and Muslims in The Gambia. It is a day that transcends religious boundaries and serves as a powerful reminder of our shared values and common humanity. However, as we gather to celebrate this occasion this year, we must also confront the harsh realities of the divisions that plague our society. Our nation is characterized by deep economic disparities, political polarization, and social fragmentation. These divisions threaten to undermine the unity and progress we seek as a people. Yet, within the celebration of Sang Marie lies an opportunity to reflect on these challenges and to reaffirm our commitment to building a more just, inclusive, and united nation.

Economic Divisions: The Chasm Between Rich and Poor

The Gambia, like many countries, is grappling with significant economic inequality. The divide between the very rich and the very poor is stark and continues to widen. This economic chasm is evident in various aspects of daily life, from the quality of education and healthcare to access to basic amenities and opportunities for upward mobility. The wealthy enjoy privileges and luxuries that are far beyond the reach of the majority, creating a society where resources and opportunities are unevenly distributed. This disparity not only breeds resentment and frustration, but also perpetuates a cycle of poverty that is difficult to escape.

The implications of this economic divide are far-reaching. It affects the social cohesion of our society, as the growing gap between the haves and have-nots fosters feelings of exclusion and marginalization. The lack of access to quality education and healthcare for the poor limits their potential and perpetuates a cycle of deprivation. Additionally, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few stifles economic growth and innovation, as the majority are unable to participate fully in the economy. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of adequate social safety nets and policies aimed at reducing inequality. As a result, the economic divide not only hampers individual potential but also undermines the overall development of the nation.

Political Polarization: 'Ours' and 'Theirs'

In the political sphere, The Gambia is deeply polarized. The landscape is marked by a sharp division between 'ours' and 'theirs,' creating an environment where political discourse is dominated by partisanship and hostility. This polarization is not merely a reflection of differing political ideologies, but is often fueled by personal and group interests. It manifests in the form of intense rivalry between political parties, which can sometimes spill over into open conflict and violence. The political divide is further complicated by the influence of tribalism, an insidious force that exacerbates tensions and undermines the principle of national unity.

The consequences of political polarization are detrimental to the nation's progress. It creates an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, where constructive dialogue and cooperation are often sacrificed for the sake of political

gain. This environment stifles the development of inclusive policies and reforms, as decisions are often made based on partisan considerations rather than for the common good. The inability to engage in meaningful dialogue and compromise leads to a lack of effective governance, as the focus shifts from addressing the needs of the people to securing political power. Moreover, the entrenchment of tribalism in politics erodes the sense of national identity and unity, as individuals are often judged based on their ethnic background rather than their character and contributions.

Social Fragmentation: The Tribal and Cultural Divide

Socially, The Gambia is a mosaic of diverse cultures, languages, and traditions. While this diversity is a source of richness and strength, it also presents challenges in terms of fostering national unity. The implicit and explicit tribalism that exists within our society is a significant barrier to social cohesion. This form of discrimination manifests in various ways, from preferential treatment based on ethnic background to exclusion from opportunities and resources. The 'us' versus 'them' mentality, often reinforced by cultural stereotypes and prejudices, creates divisions that hinder the development of a truly inclusive society.

The implications of social fragmentation are profound. It limits the ability of individuals and communities to work together towards common goals and undermines the sense of belonging and solidarity that is essential for national development. The persistence of tribalism and cultural divisions also hampers the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. It creates an environment where individuals are often judged based on their ethnic or cultural background rather than their abilities and contributions. This situation not only limits personal and professional growth, but also perpetuates social inequalities and injustices.

The Irrelevance of Divisions to Our National Cause

Despite the reality of these divisions, they are ultimately irrelevant to the greater cause that we, as a nation, must pursue. The celebration of Sang Marie offers a powerful counter-narrative to the forces that seek to divide us. This day is a reminder of the values of compassion, love, and unity that transcend religious, ethnic, and social boundaries. It is a day that sees Gambians of all backgrounds come together in prayer, reflection, and celebration. The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, a figure revered in both Christianity and Islam, serves as a symbol of the shared spiritual heritage that binds us together.

The true essence of Sang Marie lies in its message of hope and reconciliation. It challenges us to rise above the divisions that separate us and to embrace our shared identity as Gambians. The economic disparities, political polarization, and social fragmentation that characterize our nation are not insurmountable barriers, but opportunities for growth and transformation. The pursuit of a just, equitable, and inclusive society is a cause that transcends individual and group interests. It is a collective endeavor that requires the participation and commitment of all citizens.

COVER STORY

HOW FAITH AND PRAYER BENEFIT THE HUMAN BRAIN

Seven minutes of worship every day will
change your brain



Engaging in some daily personal reflection and prayer profoundly benefits the brain by strengthening neural circuits that enhance social awareness and empathy. This practice fosters compassion and reduces negative emotions, leading to more empathetic and prosocial behavior. As a result, individuals become more attuned to the emotions and needs of others, promoting a sense of community and support.

In a recent study, Dr. Andrew Newberg, a prominent neuroscientist and physician known for his research in the field of Neurotheology, explores the relationship between the brain and religious experiences. He is a pioneer in studying the neurological basis of religious and spiritual experiences, using techniques such as brain imaging to understand how these experiences affect the brain and vice-versa, identified several things he discovered about the effect of religious contemplation on the human brain. First, engaging in 12 minutes of personal reflection and prayer each day makes a profound impact on our brain. It strengthens a unique neural circuit that specifically enhances our social awareness and empathy, and helps us love our neighbor by developing a heightened sense of compassion and subduing negative emotions. What is one of the most destructive feelings? Anger. What does anger do? It isolates us from other people. It cuts us off. It destroys community as we retract within ourselves.

The second is neuroplasticity: Our brain isn't fixed like a plastic mold, it's nimble. Scientists once thought our brain grows and develops for several years and then reaches a point where it begins to decay and slowly erode. But we now know that brains continue to develop as a result of the experiences and behaviors we engage in every day. For example, Newberg says we can have memories that continue to take on new forms simply by the way we repeat them to ourselves. They actually become independent of the things we're remembering.

Third, because our brain will constantly change, we need to be mindful of whether we're developing in good or destructive ways. The disciplines we engage in every day, every week, every year, fundamentally shape the destiny of our life, and we need to be aware of the extent to which our behavior affects our brain.

The fourth is that prayer and personal reflection help us maintain a healthy balance in life. Every one of us needs to spend a small portion of each day in personal prayer and

reflection. Everyone needs it. No matter how busy we are, we have to make space so we know our priorities and our values and can assess how well we are living up to them. We need to ask ourselves daily, "What adjustments do I need to make to develop my life with God?"

Newberg describes eight things we can do to positively shape our brains. He begins with the value of maintaining personal religious faith and adds spending time each day in prayer and personal reflection. Also important is talking to others and being part of a community. Aerobic exercise helps our brain develop as well. So does yawning, which Newberg says focuses our attention. Another activity is listening to 12 minutes of relaxing music every day. Staying intellectually active and becoming a lifelong learner also benefit the brain. Finally, he says smiling builds community. People who smile attract others; those who frown or show anger push people away. We all struggle at one time or another with this emotion, which Newberg describes as the most primal and difficult to control. Anger interrupts the functioning of our frontal lobes and causes us to lose the capacity for compassion and empathy. It also releases a cascade of neurochemicals that destroy the parts of the brain that control emotional reactions. In other words, anger causes us to lose our capacity to self-regulate, to make a measured response regardless of the stimulus. Interestingly, Evagrius identified mildness, or the capacity for self-restraint, as the godly virtue that corresponds with the deadly thought of anger.

When we intently and consistently focus on our spiritual values, we increase the blood flow to our frontal lobes and to our anterior cingulate, which causes the activity in the emotional centers of our brain to decrease. That helps us develop the capacity to make responses that maintain and even restore community. But conscious intention is the key. The more we focus on our inner values, the more we can take charge of our life.

Further advances in neuroscience and brain-imaging technology have also offered researchers a deeper look into the physiology of religious experiences. Like Richard Dawkins says, "Why do people believe in God when there isn't any evidence that God exists?" Well, probably, he's talking about a particular kind of evidence. And yes, maybe there isn't scientific evidence for it. But if you go to a church, you'll find people who have loads of evidence that God exists in their lives. It may not be evidence he is willing to accept, but nonetheless it's still evidence. But what does brain science add to age-old debates about the existence of God and the value of religion?

Worship?

The Oxford Dictionary explains: "Worship" will be defined as "Reverent honor and homage paid to God" or "to render religious reverence and homage." Worship is assumed to be the necessary consequence of a believer who has faith as defined in Hebrews 11:6; "he who comes to God must believe that He is".

David gives us a little clue about how to access all of the benefits of worship. Psalm 100:4 says: "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise." David is referencing God's temple in Jerusalem. The temple consisted of the temple, inner courts and outer courts. The temple is where God's presence dwelt back before Jesus.

Today, we are the temple and God lives in us so worship happens in our innermost part; our heart. Entering gates with thanksgiving refers to the outermost part of the Temple and the courts are the inner courts.

The Brain function and Worship

Liedke's thesis found that when we worship God, there is an increase in BDNF, which is a neurotransmitter that helps us grow healthy brain cells. Liedke notes: "Every morning, we wake up with 300 million more brain cells. When we worship, gamma waves are created in our brain that can actually help us feel the presence of God." Psalm 22:3 says that God inhabits the praises of his people and we actually get a physical boost as these gamma waves fire in our brains while we worship.

Liedke agrees that the Gamma waves do more than just make us feel better, they actually increase our intelligence, too. Research has shown that as you worship, you increase in wisdom and there's an increase in your capacity to understand the goodness of God. So your relationship with God deepens as you worship him. As you worship, your brain is comprehending wisdom from the living Word helping grow your capacity to understand that God absolutely adores you. Interestingly, just seven minutes of worship every day will change your brain.

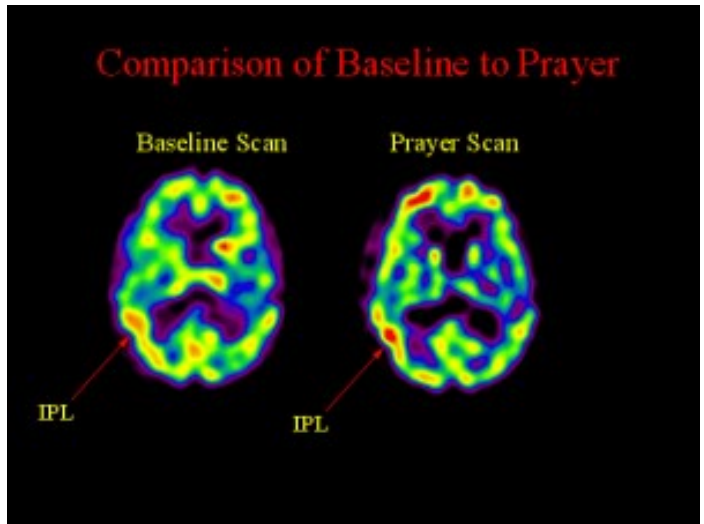
But this actually takes intentionality. When I think of worshippers in the Bible, the first person I think of is David. He danced and wrote 73 of the 150 Psalms in the Bible. David loved worship. In Psalm 27:6, David says, "At his sanctuary, I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy, singing and praising the Lord with music." Another version says, "I will bring him my offerings of praise" (Psalm 27:6 TPT). Did you notice that David said sacrifice? A sacrifice of praise.

This means that it won't always be easy to praise. Sometimes we won't feel like it or sometimes something in life will make it hard to praise God. Our parents get divorced. Our best friend moves away. Our family member has cancer. We feel anxious or depressed or lonely. In these moments, we, like David, give up a sacrifice of praise. We make a choice to worship. We make a choice to believe God is still good. Isaiah 61 talks about God giving us a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. If you are battling depression or anxiety or loneliness, God wants to take away your despair and clothe you with praise and joy.

Worship's effects on the brain

Krause and Hayward (2014) found religious music to promote a strong sense of connectedness with other people. Worship and prayer have a well-documented positive effect on both the person who engages in the prayer and worship, and the person who is the subject of prayer (Galton 2012). Another 2008 study by researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center of schoolchildren in Boston found that children with three or more years of musical instrument training performed better than those who didn't learn an instrument in auditory discrimination and fine motor skills. They also tested better on vocabulary and nonverbal reasoning, which involves understanding visual information. The interesting thing about this study is that you would naturally expect someone who is learning an instrument to develop fine motor skills, which they did. However, you wouldn't necessarily expect better vocabulary and nonverbal reasoning. It's amazing how the brain is wired and how music shapes the brain.

Andrew Newberg a radiologist who first began to study the effects of prayer on the individual using a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) conducted a study on



prayer and the brain effects. fMRI was a relatively new form of advanced imaging technology which is able to show detail unprecedented in prior imaging techniques, using the properties of the highly-oxygenated blood in the brain and is able to capture minute metabolic changes and extrapolate a detailed image of not only the physical location studied but also the metabolic characteristics of the same location (Logothetis, Pauls, Augath, Trinth, & Oeltermann, 2001).

Using a simple study design, he recruited patients from different faith traditions and directed them to spend twelve minutes a day in active prayer, a conversation with God and control group who did nothing. After obtaining a baseline fMRI, a repeat fMRI scan was obtained and differences in volume and metabolic activity were evaluated.

The startling finding shattered the previously believed myth that the brain would not grow in adulthood. A statistically significant increase in the volume of the cingulate cortex was observed and launched Newberg's career into the field of neurotheology (Newberg et al., 2003). Newberg's findings were startling and demonstrated actual quantifiable changes in brain volume and metabolism in two very distinct structures. The first structure was the cingulate cortex which increased demonstrably in volume and metabolic activity.

The second was another unexpected finding: the down regulation of the amygdala's fear response and subsequent decrease in the activation of the hypothalamus fight or flight mechanisms (Newberg, 2003). Since this hallmark finding, the images collected have brought understanding of the physiological benefits of prayer, which have been studied in the past. The main neurophysiologic benefits of worship and prayer can be summarized by Newberg's findings pertaining to the cingulate cortex and the amygdala.

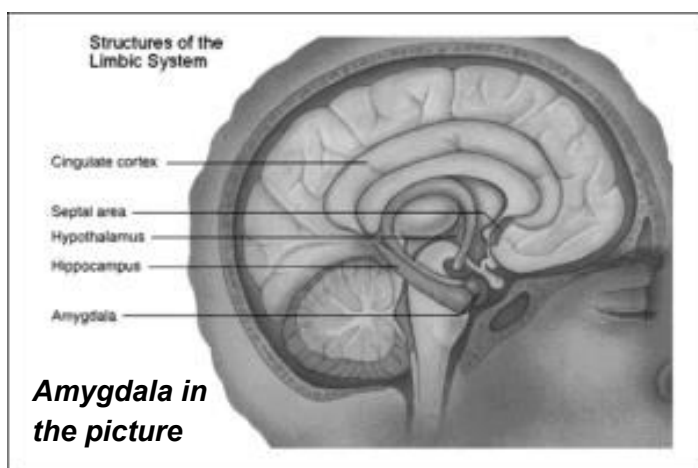
Worship and the Cingulate

An increase in the volume of the cingulate cortex or gyrus results in an increase in not only the capability, but also implementation of empathetic thinking and feeling. In essence, as the cingulate grows in volume and metabolic activity, you transform into a nicer, more forgiving and trustful person (Kuchan, 2007). Jesus' direction in Matthew 5:44 (King James) to "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" becomes a more attainable goal, if the person spends time in daily worship and prayer. John 13:34-35 (King James) states the believer should "love one another; as I have loved you" and

adds a demonstrable example of a follower of Jesus “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

When Christ describes the scene at the end of the world, He describes the actions of those He has come to save, Matthew 25:35 (King James) “For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:” these actions would be the direct result of a larger more active cingulate. The interesting component to this story is that this behavior has become so commonplace for the believer; he is incredulous and they question Jesus by asking, “then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?” Matthew 25:37 (King James). Which can only mean this empathy and love has become so ubiquitous in the life of the believer, the frontal lobe does not have to intention to act in this specific way. It has become the most prime directive overriding the self-preservation and self-awareness which is the default of the amygdala (Schjoedt, Stødkilde-Jørgensen, Geertz, & Roepstorff, 2009).

Worship and the Amygdala



Worship’s effects on the amygdala have also been well studied and demonstrates a wide range of effects as a result of the hypoactivation or down-regulation to the fight or flight mechanism (Boelens, Reeves, Replogle, & Koenig, 2010). This hypoactivation extends to the hypothalamus and the initiation of the fight or flight response. The result is a significant decrease in the deleterious effects of chronic fight or flight activation and the decrease in heart rate, blood pressure, blood glucose levels and serum markers of inflammation (Anderson & Nunnelle, 2016). This hypoactivation also has measurable psychic effects, measurable decreases in depression, anxiety, chronic pain and even posttraumatic stress have been identified and can be traced back to one daily action, worship (Simão, Caldeira, & Campos de Carvalho, 2016).

These findings have been so robust, that incorporating prayer as part of the treatment plan for pathologies ranging from anxiety/depressive disorders, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and disorders of chronic inflammation has been encouraged (Anderson & Nunnelle, 2016). This effect is most completely captured by 1 John 4:18 (King James) “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.” The hypoactivation of the amygdala results in a downregulation of the mesolimbic pathway for dopamine use and results in the mesocortical, and its subsequent activation of the frontal lobe and the eloquent process of attention and intention, as the default pathway for stimuli

interpretation (Peterson, Zhang, Hu, Chao, & Li, 2017). The result of this pathway becoming the default increases self-control, discipline and reactionary responses. Each stimulus is no longer interpreted from a self-preservation model, but relies on the cognizance of time, evaluation of cause and effect, empathy, moral/ethical evaluation and derives meaning from the actions of the individual (Van Elk & Aleman, 2016).

Take Home

In conclusion, science demonstrates the effect of worship especially on the brain which Liedke(2018) thesis found that when we worship God, there is an increase in BDNF, which is a neurotransmitter that helps us grow healthy brain cells. Additionally, Krause and Hayward (2014) found religious music to promote a strong sense of connectedness with other people. Finally, Worship and prayer have a well-documented positive effect on both the person who engages in the prayer and worship, and the person who is the subject of prayer (Galton, 2012).

On the other hand, Evagrius Ponticus, a prominent theologian and monk from the fourth century, explored the transformative effects of prayer and faith in Christian spirituality. His teachings focused on purifying the mind and soul through contemplative practices, which he believed aligned individuals with God’s will and combated sinful thoughts. Although Evagrius did not have knowledge of modern neuroscience, his insights into prayer and faith can be interpreted in light of contemporary understanding.

Evagrius emphasized that prayer clears the mind of distractions and sinful thoughts, leading to greater mental clarity. This aligns with modern findings that regular prayer and meditation can improve concentration and cognitive function of the human brain, fostering a state of calm and focus. His teachings also stressed emotional regulation, promoting virtues like humility and compassion. Today, studies indicate that prayer and meditation reduce stress, anxiety, and depression by promoting emotional stability and resilience.

Evagrius believed prayer opened the heart to God’s love, fostering compassion and empathy. Neuroscience supports this, showing that contemplative practices can enhance brain areas related to empathy and altruism, encouraging compassionate behavior. He taught that prayer strengthens the soul against negative thoughts and temptations, promoting spiritual and psychological resilience. Modern psychology affirms that meditation and mindfulness can mitigate negative thinking patterns, enhancing mental well-being.

Evagrius saw prayer as integrating spiritual beliefs with daily life, creating harmony between inner faith and outward actions. This integration fosters a coherent sense of self and purpose, crucial for mental and emotional health.

In summary, while Evagrius Ponticus did not discuss neuroscience, his teachings on prayer and faith resonate with modern understanding. They highlight how spiritual practices can benefit mental and emotional health by promoting clarity, emotional stability, empathy, resilience, and a sense of purpose in life.

Let us thus, try to spend time each day reflecting on Scripture and spending time in prayer each day as we continue to develop our life with God and shape our future in profound ways.

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

'Locally called Sangmarie'



Celebrated every year on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary commemorates the death of Mary and her bodily assumption into Heaven, before her body could begin to decay—a foretaste of our own bodily resurrection at the end of time. Because it signifies the Blessed Virgin's passing into eternal life, it is the most important of all Marian feasts, as well as being a Holy Day of Obligation.

History of the Assumption

The Feast of the Assumption is one of the oldest holy days in the Church, with accounts of celebrations going back to the sixth century. Christians in the East, both Catholic and Orthodox, refer to it as the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, or "the falling asleep of the Mother of God." The earliest printed reference to the belief that Mary's body was assumed into Heaven dates from the fourth century, in a document entitled "The Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God." The document is written in

the voice of the Apostle John, to whom Christ on the Cross had entrusted the care of His mother, and it recounts the death, laying in the tomb, and assumption of the Blessed Virgin. Tradition variously places Mary's death at Jerusalem or at Ephesus, where John was living.

An Official Belief

On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII, exercising papal infallibility, declared in an Apostolic constitution, known as the *Munificentissimus Deus*, that it is a dogma of the Church "that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." As a dogma, the Assumption is a required belief of all Catholics. Anyone who publicly dissents from the dogma, Pope Pius declared, "has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic Faith."



THE POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS 2024

AUGUST - For political leaders

We pray that political leaders be at the service of their own people, working for integral human development and for the common good, especially caring for the poor and those who have lost their jobs.

SEPTEMBER - For the cry of the Earth

We pray that each one of us will hear and take to heart the cry of the Earth and of victims of natural disasters and climatic change, and that all will undertake to personally care for the world in which we live.

INVESTING IN EDUCATION FOR A BETTER FUTURE

*At St. Paul's Nursery and Lower Basic School Graduation Ceremony
Kendinsaible Village, Kombo South on Friday, 5th July 2024*

*By John Savic Bass
Motivational Speaker, Finance Expert, and
Management Consultant*

Distinguished Guests, Esteemed Parents, Dedicated Teachers, and Our Bright Young Graduates, Good morning!

It is a profound honour and a heartfelt privilege to stand before you today at the graduation ceremony of St. Paul's Nursery and Lower Basic School. As someone who hails from this very community, today's occasion holds a special place in my heart. I am filled with immense pride and joy as I see the promising faces of our young graduates, ready to embark on the next phase of their educational journey.

Today, we gather under the inspiring theme: "Investing in Education for a Better Future." This theme resonates deeply with me, for I have seen firsthand the transformative power of education. It is not just a pathway to personal success but a cornerstone for building stronger communities and a more prosperous society. Like many others, let me share a story from my journey. Growing up in this community, I faced numerous challenges. Resources were scarce, opportunities limited, but one thing was always within reach—the unwavering belief that education could change my life. My parents, despite their modest means, invested everything they could in my education. They knew that education was the key to unlocking a world of possibilities. And they were right. Education opened doors I never knew existed. It provided me with the tools to navigate life's challenges, to dream bigger, and to achieve those dreams. Today, as I stand before you, I can say with conviction that investing in education has not only shaped my future but has also enabled me to contribute back to this community.

We have many illustrious examples that highlight the immense value of education from this community and beyond. Take Nelson Mandela, for instance. Mandela's journey from a small village in South Africa to becoming a global icon of peace and justice was fueled by his commitment to education. He believed that "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Mandela's life teaches us that through education, we can break down barriers, fight for justice, and transform societies. Bassirou Diomaye Faye's rise to become Senegal's—and the world's—youngest president is a testament to his unwavering dedication to learning. Growing up in a small village, Bassirou faced numerous challenges, but he never lost sight of the importance of education. His parents, recognizing the power of knowledge, invested every resource they had to ensure he

received a quality education. With relentless determination, Bassirou excelled in his studies, earning scholarships that allowed him to study at prestigious institutions. His educational journey equipped him with the skills, knowledge, and vision to address the challenges facing his country. At a young age, Bassirou understood that education was not just a path to personal success, but a means to uplift his community and nation. Bassirou's story is not an isolated example. Across Africa, we see countless individuals whose lives have been transformed by education. Consider the inspiring journey of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the former President of Liberia and Africa's first elected female head of state. Despite numerous obstacles, she pursued her education with tenacity, earning degrees from Harvard University. Her education empowered her to lead her country through difficult times, promoting peace, stability, and economic growth.

Closer to home, we have the incredible example of Fatou Bensouda from The Gambia, who became the first female Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Her dedication to education and justice has made her a prominent figure in international law, advocating for human rights and accountability. Fatou's achievements underscore the importance of education in breaking barriers and fostering global leadership. To our young graduates, today marks the beginning of a new chapter. Remember, your education is your most valuable asset. It is the foundation upon which you will build your dreams. Embrace it, nurture it, and let it guide you as you navigate the future. You are the future leaders, innovators, and change-makers of our community and beyond. Your education will enable you to overcome obstacles, to innovate, and to lead with integrity and compassion.

To the parents and teachers, your role in this journey cannot be overstated. Your support, dedication, and belief in the power of education have laid the groundwork for these children's success. Continue to inspire and guide them, for your influence will shape their future and, by extension, the future of our community.

In closing, let us reaffirm our commitment to investing in education. It is the most powerful tool we have to create a better future. By investing in the education of our children, we are investing in the prosperity and well-being of our entire community. Together, let us build a world where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to a brighter, more equitable future. Congratulations to all the graduates! The world awaits your brilliance and potential. Go forth and make your mark. May God bless you, bless your parent, and bless the Gambia. Thank you.

SANG MARIE AND OUR DIVIDED NATION

Cont'd from Page 3

Our Shared Responsibility

As citizens of The Gambia, we have a shared responsibility to address the divisions that threaten our national unity and progress. This responsibility is not limited to any one group, but extends to all sectors of society. Economically, we must work towards creating a more inclusive economy that provides opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their background. This involves implementing policies that promote equitable access to education, healthcare, and economic resources. It also requires the establishment of social safety nets that protect the most vulnerable members of society and promote social mobility.

Politically, we must strive to build a more inclusive and transparent political system. This involves fostering a culture of dialogue and compromise, where differing political views are respected and valued. It also requires addressing the root causes of political polarization, including the influence of tribalism and the concentration of power in the hands of a few. By promoting political inclusivity and accountability, we can create a governance system that serves the interests of all citizens. Socially, we must work towards breaking down the barriers of tribalism and cultural division. This involves promoting a culture of



respect and understanding, where individuals are valued for their character and contributions rather than their ethnic background. It also requires challenging stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. By fostering a sense of national identity and unity, we can create a society where all citizens feel a sense of belonging and are able to contribute to the nation's development.

A Call to Unity

Therefore, as we celebrate Sang Marie, we are reminded of the importance of unity in the face of division. The

challenges we face as a nation are significant, but they are not insurmountable. The celebration of Sang Marie offers a powerful reminder of our shared humanity and the values that bind us together. It is a call to rise above our differences and to work towards a common goal: the creation of a just, equitable, and inclusive Gambia. Let us use this occasion to reflect on our shared responsibilities as citizens and to reaffirm our commitment to building a nation where all citizens can thrive. May this Sang Marie be a time of reflection, renewal, and resolve as we strive to build a better Gambia for all.



ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI, PARISH

Kunkujang, Mariama, The Diocese of Banjul



Salesians of Don Bosco

FINANCIAL REPORT

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH FEAST, MAY 2024 ACCOUNT SUMMARY				
MAY, 2024	DONATION/CONTRIBUTIONS	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	REMARKS/BAL.
	TOTAL INCOME	395,016		
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		231,585	
	BALANCE			163,431
	BISHOP'S OFFICE 25%		40,860.00	

**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
PARISH FEAST TOOK PLACE
ON 25TH MAY, 2024**



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ST. CHARLES L'WANGA PARISH , FAJI-KUNDA	
PARISH FEAST INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT AS AT 9TH JUNE 2024 (ST.CHARLES L.B.S)	
INCOME(REVENUE)	GMD
ASHOBE SALES	213,700.00
FOOD & BEVERAGE SALES	610,349.00
PALM WINE SALES	26,420.00
MASS PROGRAMME SALES	15,050.00
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS	319,085.00
MASS COLLECTION	23,193.00
ADD GROUPS & COMMUNITIES CONTRIBUTIONS	
CATHOLIC WOMEN	5,000.00
TALLINGING COMMUNITY	5,000.00
ABUKO CENTRAL COMMUNITY	5,000.00
JOLA KUNDA COMMUNITY	5,000.00
BUNDUNG COMMUNITY	5,000.00
FAJI-KUNDA COMMUNITY	5,000.00
SINCHU WILLINGARA COMMUNITY	5,000.00
LARTRI-KUNDA COMMUNITY	5,000.00
ABUKO SANCHABA	5,000.00
JUNIOR CHOIR	15,000.00
SENIOR CHOIR	15,000.00
YOUTH GROUP	15,000.00
NIGERIAN COMMUNITY - FOOD SALES	20,025.00
SIERRA LEON COMMUNITY - FOOD SALES	14,850.00
TOTAL REVENUE	1 1,332,672.00
LESS EXPENSES	
ASHOBE PURCHASED	90,000.00
COST OF FOOD PREPARATION	194,100.00
COST OF PIGS	66,000.00
PALM WINE	18,000.00
DRINKS - SALES & RETURN COST	244,665.00
WINE	16,000.00
WATER	10,000.00
ICE	3,125.00
PRINTING - MASS PROGRAMME	10,000.00
TENTS	40,000.00
CHAIRS	27,500.00
TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTICS	19,200.00
FOOD BOWLS/CUPS/SPOONS ETC	20,150.00
RELIGIOUS REFRESHMENT	11,260.00
CASH POWER	1,500.00
ALTER - CLOTH	4,650.00
CHANGE	22,000.00
DECORATION	10,500.00
EVENT TAGS	2,800.00
CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT	4,000.00
DJ	15,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	2 830,450.00
INCOME SURPLUS (PROFIT)	3 502,222.00
MANY THANKS TO YOU THE PARISHIONERS, FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE PARISH FOR A SUCCESSFUL PARISH FEAST. MAY GOD REWARD YOU GENEROUSLY.	
25% 502,222 =125,555.5	



Daily Mass Readings

August & September

**1 August, 2024**

Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop, Religious Founder, Doctor
Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Jeremiah 18](#): 1-6

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 146](#): 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6ab

Alleluia: [Acts 16](#): 14b

Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 47-53

2 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Eusebius of Vercelli, Bishop/ Peter
Julian Eymard, Priest

First Reading: [Jeremiah 26](#): 1-9

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 69](#): 5, 8-10, 14

Alleluia: [First Peter 1](#): 25

Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 54-58

3 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed
Virgin Mary

First Reading: [Jeremiah 26](#): 11-16, 24

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 69](#): 15-16, 30-31, 33-34

Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 10

Gospel: [Matthew 14](#): 1-12

4 August, 2024

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Exodus 16](#): 2-4, 12-15

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 78](#): 3-4, 23-24, 25, 54

Second Reading: [Ephesians 4](#): 17, 20-24

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 4b

Gospel: [John 6](#): 24-35

5 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Dedication of the Basilica of Saint
Mary Major in Rome

First Reading: [Jeremiah 28](#): 1-17

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 29, 43, 79, 80, 95, 102

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 4b

Gospel: [Matthew 14](#): 13-21

6 August, 2024

Transfiguration of the Lord Feast

First Reading: [Daniel 7](#): 9-10, 13-14

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 97](#): 1-2, 5-6, 9

Second Reading: [Second Peter 1](#): 16-19

Alleluia: [Matthew 17](#): 5c

Gospel: [Mark 9](#): 2-10

7 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Sixtus II, Pope, Martyr, &
Companions, Martyrs/ Cajetan, Priest

First Reading: [Jeremiah 31](#): 1-7

Responsorial Psalm: [Jeremiah 31](#): 10, 11-12ab, 13

Alleluia: [Luke 7](#): 16

Gospel: [Matthew 15](#): 21-28

8 August, 2024

Dominic, Priest, Religious Founder Obligatory
Memorial

First Reading: [Jeremiah 31](#): 31-34

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 12-13, 14-15, 18-19

Alleluia: [Matthew 16](#): 18

Gospel: [Matthew 16](#): 13-23

9 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Teresa Benedicta of the Cross,
Virgin, Martyr

First Reading: [Nahum 2](#): 1, 3; 3: 1-3, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: [Deuteronomy 32](#): 35cd-36ab,
39abcd, 41

Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 10

Gospel: [Matthew 16](#): 24-28

10 August, 2024

Lawrence, Deacon, Martyr Feast

First Reading: [Second Corinthians 9](#): 6-10

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 112](#): 1-2, 5-6, 7-8, 9

Alleluia: [John 8](#): 12bc

Gospel: [John 12](#): 24-26

11 August, 2024

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [First Kings 19](#): 4-8

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Second Reading: [Ephesians 4](#): 30 – 5: 2

Alleluia: [John 6](#): 51

Gospel: [John 6](#): 41-51

12 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Jane Frances De Chantal, Married
Woman, Religious Founder

First Reading: [Ezekiel 1](#): 2-5, 24-28c

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 148](#): 1-2, 11-12, 13, 14

Alleluia: [Second Thessalonians 2](#): 14

Gospel: [Matthew 17](#): 22-27

13 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Pontian, Pope, Martyr, and
Hippolytus, Priest, Martyr

First Reading: [Ezekiel 2](#): 8 – 3: 4

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 14, 24, 72, 103, 111, 131

Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 29

Gospel: [Matthew 18](#): 1-5, 10, 12-14

14 August, 2024

Maximilian Mary Kolbe, Priest, Martyr Obligatory
Memorial

First Reading: [Ezekiel 9](#): 1-7; 10: 18-22

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 113](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Alleluia: [Second Corinthians 5](#): 19

Gospel: [Matthew 18](#): 15-20

15 August, 2024 – Vigil

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Solemnity/ Vigil

First Reading: [First Chronicles 15](#): 3-4, 15-16; 16: 1-2

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 132](#): 6-7, 9-10, 13-14

Second Reading: [First Corinthians 15](#): 54b-57

Alleluia: [Luke 11](#): 28

Gospel: [Luke 11](#): 27-28

15 August, 2024 – Day

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Solemnity/ Day

First Reading: [Revelation 11](#): 19a; 12: 1-6a, 10ab

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 45](#): 10, 11, 12, 16

Second Reading: [First Corinthians 15](#): 20-27

Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 39-56

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16 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Stephen of Hungary, Married Man
First Reading: [Ezekiel 16](#): 1-15, 60, 63 or 16: 59-63
Responsorial Psalm: [Isaiah 12](#): 2-3, 4bcd, 5-6
Alleluia: [First Thessalonians 2](#): 13
Gospel: [Matthew 19](#): 3-12

17 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary
First Reading: [Ezekiel 18](#): 1-10, 13b, 30-32
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 12-13, 14-15, 18-19
Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25
Gospel: [Matthew 19](#): 13-15

18 August, 2024

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
First Reading: [Proverbs 9](#): 1-6
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 2-3, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15
Second Reading: [Ephesians 5](#): 15-20
Alleluia: [John 6](#): 56
Gospel: [John 6](#): 51-58

19 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ John Eudes, Priest, Religious Founder
First Reading: [Ezekiel 24](#): 15-23
Responsorial Psalm: [Deuteronomy 32](#): 18-19, 20, 21
Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 3
Gospel: [Matthew 19](#): 16-22

20 August, 2024

Bernard, Abbot, Doctor Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [Ezekiel 28](#): 1-10
Responsorial Psalm: [Deuteronomy 32](#): 26-27ab, 27cd-28, 30, 35cd-36ab
Alleluia: [Second Corinthians 8](#): 9
Gospel: [Matthew 19](#): 23-30

21 August, 2024

Pius X, Pope Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [Ezekiel 34](#): 1-11
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 23](#): 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6
Alleluia: [Hebrews 4](#): 12
Gospel: [Matthew 20](#): 1-16

22 August, 2024

Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [Ezekiel 36](#): 23-28
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 12-13, 14-15, 18-19
Alleluia: [Psalms 95](#): 8
Gospel: [Matthew 22](#): 1-14

23 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Rose of Lima, Virgin
First Reading: [Ezekiel 37](#): 1-14
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 107](#): 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9
Alleluia: [Psalms 25](#): 4b, 5a
Gospel: [Matthew 22](#): 34-40

24 August, 2024

Bartholomew, Apostle Feast
First Reading: [Revelation 21](#): 9b-14
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 145](#): 10-11, 12-13, 17-18
Alleluia: [John 1](#): 49b
Gospel: [John 1](#): 45-51

25 August, 2024

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
First Reading: [Joshua 24](#): 1-2a, 15-17, 18b
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23
Second Reading: [Ephesians 5](#): 21-32 or [Ephesians 5](#): 2a, 25-32
Alleluia: [John 6](#): 63c, 68c
Gospel: [John 6](#): 60-69

26 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday
First Reading: [Second Thessalonians 1](#): 1-5, 11-12
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 96](#): 1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5
Alleluia: [John 10](#): 27
Gospel: [Matthew 23](#): 13-22

27 August, 2024

Monica, Married Woman Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [Second Thessalonians 2](#): 1-3a, 14-17
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 96](#): 10, 11-12, 13
Alleluia: [Hebrews 4](#): 12
Gospel: [Matthew 23](#): 23-26

28 August, 2024

Augustine, Bishop, Doctor Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [Second Thessalonians 3](#): 6-10, 16-18
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 128](#): 1-2, 4-5
Alleluia: [First John 2](#): 5
Gospel: [Matthew 23](#): 27-32

29 August, 2024

Martyrdom of John the Baptist Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [First Corinthians 1](#): 1-9
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 145](#): 2-3, 4-5, 6-7
Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 10
Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 17-29

30 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday
First Reading: [First Corinthians 1](#): 17-25
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 1-2, 4-5, 10-11
Alleluia: [Luke 21](#): 36
Gospel: [Matthew 25](#): 1-13

31 August, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary
First Reading: [First Corinthians 1](#): 26-31
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 12-13, 18-19, 20-21
Alleluia: [John 13](#): 34
Gospel: [Matthew 25](#): 14-30

1 September, 2024

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
First Reading: [Deuteronomy 4](#): 1-2, 6-8
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 15](#): 2-3, 3-4, 4-5
Second Reading: [James 1](#): 17-18, 21b-22, 27
Alleluia: [James 1](#): 18
Gospel: [Mark 7](#): 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

2 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Labor Day
First Reading: [First Corinthians 2](#): 1-5
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102
Alleluia: [Luke 4](#): 18
Gospel: [Luke 4](#): 16-30

3 September, 2024

Gregory the Great, Pope, Religious, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Corinthians 2](#): 10b-16

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 145](#): 8-9, 10-11, 12-13ab, 13cd-14

Alleluia: [Luke 7](#): 16

Gospel: [Luke 4](#): 31-37

4 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Corinthians 3](#): 1-9

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 12-13, 14-15, 20-21

Alleluia: [Luke 4](#): 18

Gospel: [Luke 4](#): 38-44

5 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Corinthians 3](#): 18-23

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 24](#): 1bc-2, 3-4ab, 5-6

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 19

Gospel: [Luke 5](#): 1-11

6 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Corinthians 4](#): 1-5

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 37](#): 3-4, 5-6, 27-28, 39-40

Alleluia: [John 8](#): 12

Gospel: [Luke 5](#): 33-39

7 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

First Reading: [First Corinthians 4](#): 6b-15

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 145](#): 17-18, 19-20, 21

Alleluia: [John 14](#): 6

Gospel: [Luke 6](#): 1-5

8 September, 2024

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Isaiah 35](#): 4-7a

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 146](#): 7, 8-9, 9-10

Second Reading: [James 2](#): 1-5

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 23

Gospel: [Mark 7](#): 31-37

9 September, 2024

Peter Claver, Priest, Religious, Missionary Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Corinthians 5](#): 1-8

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 5](#): 5-6, 7, 12

Alleluia: [John 10](#): 27

Gospel: [Luke 6](#): 6-11

10 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Corinthians 6](#): 1-11

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 149](#): 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6a and 9b

Alleluia: [John 15](#): 16

Gospel: [Luke 6](#): 12-19

11 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Corinthians 7](#): 25-31

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 45](#): 11-12, 14-15, 16-17

Alleluia: [Luke 6](#): 23ab

Gospel: [Luke 6](#): 20-26

12 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Holy Name of Mary

First Reading: [First Corinthians 8](#): 1b-7, 11-13

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 139](#): 1b-3, 13-14ab, 23-24

Alleluia: [First John 4](#): 12

Gospel: [Luke 6](#): 27-38

13 September, 2024

John Chrysostom, Bishop, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Corinthians 9](#): 16-19, 22b-27

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 84](#): 3, 4, 5-6, 12

Alleluia: [John 17](#): 17b, 17a

Gospel: [Luke 6](#): 39-42

14 September, 2024

Exaltation of the Holy Cross Feast

First Reading: [Numbers 21](#): 4b-9

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 78](#): 1bc-2, 34-35, 36-37, 38

Second Reading: [Philippians 2](#): 6-11

Gospel: [John 3](#): 13-17

15 September, 2024

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Isaiah 50](#): 5-9a

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 116](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

Second Reading: [James 2](#): 14-18

Alleluia: [Galatians 6](#): 14

Gospel: [Mark 8](#): 27-35

16 September, 2024

Cornelius, Pope, Martyr, and Cyprian, Bishop, Martyr Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Corinthians 11](#): 17-26, 33

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 40](#): 7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 17

Alleluia: [John 3](#): 16

Gospel: [Luke 7](#): 1-10

17 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Robert Bellarmine, Bishop, Religious, Doctor

First Reading: [First Corinthians 12](#): 12-14, 27-31a

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 100](#): 1b-2, 3, 4, 5

Alleluia: [Luke 7](#): 16

Gospel: [Luke 7](#): 11-17

18 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Corinthians 12](#): 31 – 13: 13

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 2-3, 4-5, 12 and 22

Alleluia: [John 6](#): 63c, 68c

Gospel: [Luke 7](#): 31-35

19 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Januarius, Bishop, Martyr

First Reading: [First Corinthians 15](#): 1-11

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 118](#): 1b-2, 16ab-17, 28

Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 28

Gospel: [Luke 7](#): 36-50

20 September, 2024

Andrew Kim Taegon, Priest, Martyr, Paul Chong Hasang, Catechist, Martyr, & Companions, Martyrs Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Corinthians 15](#): 12-20

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 17](#): 1bcd, 6-7, 8b and 15

Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25

Gospel: [Luke 8](#): 1-3

21 September, 2024

Matthew, Apostle, Evangelist Feast
First Reading: [Ephesians 4](#): 1-7, 11-13
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 2-3, 4-5
Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 9-13

22 September, 2024

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
First Reading: [Wisdom 2](#): 12, 17-20
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 54](#): 3-4, 5, 6 and 8
Second Reading: [James 3](#): 16 – 4: 3
Alleluia: [Second Thessalonians 2](#): 14
Gospel: [Mark 9](#): 30-37

23 September, 2024

Pio of Pietrelcina, Priest Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [Proverbs 3](#): 27-34
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 15](#): 2-3a, 3bc-4ab, 5
Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 16
Gospel: [Luke 8](#): 16-18

24 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday
First Reading: [Proverbs 21](#): 1-6, 10-13
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 1, 27, 30, 34, 35, 44
Alleluia: [Luke 11](#): 28
Gospel: [Luke 8](#): 19-21

25 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday
First Reading: [Proverbs 30](#): 5-9
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 29, 72, 89, 101, 104, 163
Alleluia: [Mark 1](#): 15
Gospel: [Luke 9](#): 1-6

26 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Cosmas and Damian, Martyrs
First Reading: [Ecclesiastes 1](#): 2-11

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 90](#): 3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 & 17bc
Alleluia: [John 14](#): 6
Gospel: [Luke 9](#): 7-9

27 September, 2024

Vincent De Paul, Priest, Religious Founder Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [Ecclesiastes 3](#): 1-11
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 144](#): 1b and 2abc, 3-4
Alleluia: [Mark 10](#): 45
Gospel: [Luke 9](#): 18-22

28 September, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary/ Wenceslaus, Martyr/ Lawrence Ruiz, Married Man, Martyr, & Companions, Martyrs
First Reading: [Ecclesiastes 11](#): 9 – 12: 8
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 90](#): 3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17
Alleluia: [Second Timothy 1](#): 10
Gospel: [Luke 9](#): 43b-45

29 September, 2024

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
First Reading: [Numbers 11](#): 25-29
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 8, 10, 12-13, 14
Second Reading: [James 5](#): 1-6
Alleluia: [John 17](#): 17b, 17a
Gospel: [Mark 9](#): 38-43, 45, 47-48

30 September, 2024

Jerome, Priest, Doctor Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: [Job 1](#): 6-22
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 17](#): 1bcd, 2-3, 6-7
Alleluia: [Mark 10](#): 45
Gospel: [Luke 9](#): 46-50

August & September

Gambian Christian



3rd September, 1949: Opening of St. Joseph's Infants' School, Banjul.

15th September, 1954: Death of Fr. John Meehan CSSp, who had served the Mission for 50 years, from 1908 to 1946.

21st September, 1957: Death in Nigeria of Daniel Joof, Gambian seminarian, who had spent six years studying for the priesthood.

14th August, 1961: Renovations to the clergy house at Bakau were completed.

1st August, 1964: The new primary school building at Lamin was opened.

4th August, 1967: Fr. Michael Flynn opened the mission house at Lamin.

1st September, 1968: Official opening of the new premises in Campama, Banjul of St. Augustine's High School, with late Fr. Michael Cleary (Bishop Emeritus) as Principal. Other Spiritan priests teaching at the school were Fr. Vincent Comer, Fr. John Hogan, Fr. Seán Little and Fr. Tom Tarmey.

6th September, 1973: Arrival of Fr. Joseph Gough to assist Fr. Pierre Sagna, Rector of the new Junior Seminary at Fajara. [Later, Fr. Sagna became Bishop of St. Louis du Sénégal, and Fr. Gough became Principal of St. Augustine's High School].

19th August, 1979: Fr John Hogan was appointed District Superior of the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) and Parish Priest at Bakau.

15th September, 1979: Sr. Madeleine Mendy, first Gambian vocation to the Presentation Sisters, took her final vows.

21st September, 1987: Blessing by the Vicar-General, Fr. Vincent Comer, of the Cluny Sisters' Convent at Barra.

5th August, 1999: Opening of St. Andrew's, Berending.

13th September, 2003: Death in Britain of Coleridge Wallace ('Sonnie') Cole, former Director of Education, WAEC Representative in London, and Headmaster of Marina International School, Fajara.

1st August, 2006: Fr. Joseph Karbo succeeded Sr Philomena Barry as Director of GPI.

11th August, 2006: Farewell at the Catholic Educational Secretariat to the Assistant Education Secretary, Br Milton Lawrence. He had worked in The Gambia since 1988, his posts including the headship of Our Lady of Fatima High School Bwiam.

28th August, 2006: The Presentation Sisters in The Gambia, who since 1968, had been attached to the Region of Senegal, were reconstituted as a mission linked to the Generalate of their Congregation in Rome.

8th August, 2007: Death of Sebastian Njie, Executive Director of the National Youth Service Scheme, Chairman of the Catholic Education Commission and Chairman of the Board of St Peter's Senior Secondary School, Lamin.

15th August, 2007 (Sang Marie): Bishop Ellison convened an Assembly for the Diocese of Banjul to be held from 30th March to 4th April, 2008.

20th August, 2007: Bishop Ellison appointed Fr. David Jimoh Jarju as Vicar-General of the Diocese of Banjul.

25th September, 2007: Death in Britain of Antoine Nicholas Tabbal ('CB'), prominent businessman.

18th-29th August, 2008: A course for new teachers was conducted by the Catholic Education Secretariat.

21st September, 2008: During tree-felling at St. Francis' Nursery School, Tranquil, the new D20,000 roof and newly acquired furniture were damaged.

22nd August, 2009: Fr. Michael Murray CSSp died in Dublin at the age of 64, after a protracted illness. During his service in the Diocese of Banjul, beginning in 1972, he was variously Parish Priest at Holy Spirit Banjul, chemistry master at St. Augustine's High School, Parish Priest at Basse, Vocations Director, and Director of the Junior Seminary.

8th September, 2009: Fr. Joseph Karbo blessed 'Nazareth', a grotto at the Presentation Sisters' compound in Brikama.

21st September, 2009: Death of Dermot Roach, Irish layman, who, since the 1990s, had helped many students. He worked at Fatima School, Bwiam before retiring to Kunkujang-Mariama.

5th August, 2010: The Blessed Sacrament Choir of Kanifing visited Dakar to give a concert and sing at the Cathedral.

17th September, 2010: Pupils of St. John Vianney's School, Bulock, took part in a live television link with

London as part of a programme in which Pope Benedict XVI, then visiting Britain, addressed Britain's school children.

24th September, 2010: A GPI workshop was held for priests and others on the forthcoming new English translation of the Mass.

15th September, 2011: Sr. Jeanne-Thérèse of the Cluny Sisters celebrated the golden jubilee of her profession.

During September, 2011: Three priests arrived to serve the diocese: Fr. Jean-Marie Faye, Fr. Job Addai CSSp and Fr. Frederick Agama CSSp.

10th August, 2013: St. Martha's Society celebrated its fortieth anniversary.

17th August, 2013: Bishop Robert Ellison, Fr. Jean-Noël Faye and Fr. Yenes Manneh took part in Sang Marie celebrations in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

10th September, 2013: Death of the long-serving catechist, 'OJ' – Matthew Jarjou.

21st - 28th September, 2013: The Knights of St Peter & St Paul hosted the Biennial Council Meeting of the International Alliance of Catholic Knights.

1st September, 2015: In retirement in Ireland, Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary CSSp celebrated his 90th birthday.

30th August, 2017: A fire at the Junior Seminary at Lamin, attributed to an electrical fault, caused considerable damage to the multi-purpose hall.

1st September, 2020: Death of Mr. George F. Gomez, fondly called Uncle George, in Banjul, The Gambia. He was born in Bathurst on September 17th, 1938. He was a practising Catholic Christian. He played key roles in the church, especially during mega events. He was a lover of sports from his teens and known well in the GNOC (Gambia National Olympic Committee) for his contribution to the sports.

6th September, 2021: Death of Rev. Fr. Emile Sambou in Banjul, The Gambia. The Vigil, mass and burial rites were done at St. Therese's Parish, Kanifing on 16th and 17th September, 2021 and interment at Banjul Cemetery.

19th September, 2022: Funeral and burial service of Queen Elizabeth II of England, age 96 at St. George's Chapel in Windsor. She died on September 8th, 2022.

30th September, 2022: Death of Uncle Henry Gomez, a dear colleague of GPI, who worked in the production unit for many years until his untimely death at the age of 69 years.

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Weekday Celebrations

August & September

**8th August: *St. Dominic***

DOMINIC was a Spaniard, born in 1170 in Castille. In 1196, he joined a religious community. On a visit to southern France, he gathered a group of preachers (Dominicans) to travel in barefoot poverty. In 1206, he founded a convent of sisters converted from heresy. He became a friend of St. Francis of Assisi, and in 1216, received approval for his order from Pope Honorius III. Dominic established theological schools at two of his houses. He died in 1221 and was canonised in 1234.

9th August***St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross***

ST. TERESA Benedicta of the Cross, also known as St Edith Stein, was born into a Jewish family at Breslau (then in Germany, now Wroclaw, Poland). From being an atheist, Edith was baptised in 1922. In 1934, she was received into the Carmelite Order. Although she moved from Germany to the Netherlands, Edith was arrested in 1942 and sent to Auschwitz concentration camp, where she died in the gas chamber. Edith was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1987 and canonised by him in 1998. Edith Stein is remembered for her attempts to use knowledge to promote peace and understanding in the face of hatred and war.

14th August: *St. Maximilian Kolbe, martyr*

ST. MAXIMILIAN Kolbe (born 1894) was a Polish Franciscan priest. Ordained in 1918, he founded the City of Mary Immaculate religious centre in 1927, becoming its Superior, as well as director of Poland's chief Catholic publishing house. He was arrested by the Nazi Gestapo in 1939, and again in 1941, on charges of helping Jews and the Polish underground resistance movement. He was imprisoned at Warsaw, then transferred to the extermination camp at Auschwitz. When a fellow inmate was condemned to death in reprisal for another prisoner's escape, Fr. Kolbe volunteered to take the condemned man's place. He was beatified by Pope Paul VI in 1971 and canonised in 1982 by Pope John Paul II, who declared him 'patron saint of our difficult [20th] century'.

21st August: *St. Pius X, pope*

POPE Pius X was born Guiseppe Sarto in Lombardy, Italy, the second of 10 children of a postman. After a poverty stricken childhood, he was granted a seminary scholarship and was ordained in 1858. He helped the sick in the cholera plague that swept northern Italy in the early 1870s and struggled to bring religious instruction to young people who did not have the opportunity to attend Catholic schools. In 1884, Pope Leo XIII appointed him Bishop of Mantua, and in 1893, Cardinal Patriarch of Venice. Patriarch Sarto avoided political involvement and devoted himself to social work. After Leo's death in 1903, he was elected Pope, taking the name Pius X. His pontificate was

notable for his implacable opposition to 'modernism'. But in other ways, Pius was a reformer. He restructured the Roman Curia and established seminaries. Pius died in August 1911. He was beatified by Pius XII in 1952 and canonised in 1954.

27th August: *St. Monica, matron*

MONICA, a fifth-century saint, is regarded as a model mother. She devoted her life to her son Augustine, guiding him towards his conversion, as related in Augustine's *Confessione* (autobiography). Monica died on her way home to North Africa, a few days after her son had been baptised by St. Ambrose.

28th August: *St. Augustine of Hippo, doctor*

AUGUSTINE taught rhetoric in Carthage (near modern Tunis). After moving to Milan, he converted to Christianity and returned to Africa to pursue a contemplative life. In 396, he was made Bishop of Hippo (now Annaba, in Algeria), a post he held until his death in 430. Augustine's writings have had great influence until this day. They include the *Confessione*, 'The City of God', and sundry theological works.

3rd September***St. Gregory the Great, pope & doctor***

GREGORY lived from 540 to 604, a period notable for the expansion of the Church. He came from a rich family, but abandoned a career in politics, and gave away his possessions to become a monk. He founded monasteries and represented successive popes in Constantinople before being invited to become Pope himself. Gregory was a great administrator. He wrote theological works, insisted on priestly celibacy, reformed the calendar and the liturgy, and established choir schools where 'Gregorian chant' was taught.

5th September: *St. Teresa of Calcutta, religious*

TERESA (born in Albania in 1910) founded the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta in 1950. For over 45 years, she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned and dying, while guiding the Missionaries of Charity's expansion, first throughout India, and then in other countries. By the 1970s, Mother Teresa was internationally famed as an advocate for the poor and helpless. In 1979, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 1980, India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna. After her death in 1997, Teresa was beatified by Pope John Paul II and canonised by Pope Francis. The Missionaries of Charity have worked in The Gambia since 1994.



13th September: St. John Chrysostom, doctor

JOHN was born in 347 at Antioch, Syria. After brilliant studies, he became a hermit. When his health gave way, he returned to Antioch, was ordained, and as a preacher, won many converts. 'Chrysostom' means 'golden mouthed'. He angered the rich by his concern for the poor, and was banished to Armenia. He later died on the way to a more distant exile on the Black Sea.

20th September**St. Andrew Kim Tae-gon, martyr of Korea**

CATHOLICISM took root in Korea in the late 18th century. When French missionaries arrived in 1830, they found that Catholicism was already being practised. Kim Tae-gon's father was martyred for being a Catholic. Kim - or Andrew—was baptised when he was 15, and ordained nine years later in Shanghai, China. He returned to Korea as the first Korean priest, at a time when thousands of Christians were being persecuted. In 1846, aged 25, Fr. Tae-gon was beheaded near Seoul. His last words were, 'Become Christians if you want to be happy after death...' In May 1994, during a visit to Korea, Pope John Paul II, now St. John Paul II, canonised Andrew Kim Tae-gon and 103 other Korean martyrs.

23rd September**St. Pius of Pietrelcina ('Padre Pio') priest**

PIO was born in southern Italy in 1887. Until he was 10, he worked on his family's farm, attending Mass and saying the rosary daily. His father went to the USA to pay for Pio to be tutored and enter the Capuchin Order. Pio was ordained in 1910. After the First World War, he became spiritual director at the mountain friary, where he lived

until his death. Pio suffered poor health, and believed that the love of God was inseparable from suffering. In September 1968, he died. In 2002 he was canonised by Pope John Paul II (now St. John Paul II).

27th September: St. Vincent de Paul, priest

VINCENT was of peasant stock. Captured by pirates, he spent two years in Tunis as a slave. After his escape, he devoted his life to succouring the poor. He founded the Congregation of Mission Priests (called Lazarists, after the Church of St. Lazare in Paris). He died in 1660 and was canonised in 1737. Vincent is patron of charitable work and societies.

30th September: St. Jerome, doctor

JEROME was born around 341 in Venetia, Italy. He travelled throughout France and became a monk. After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he retired to the Syrian desert, where he lived as a hermit. He returned to Rome in 382 as secretary to Pope Damasus, who ordered him to produce the standard Latin text of the Bible (the Vulgate, or 'People's Bible') from Hebrew and Greek sources. Jerome spent over 15 years on the task. He died in 420 and was buried in Jerusalem. The Council of Trent (1545-63) revised the Vulgate and declared it the approved text for Catholic use. (The English translation most often used in our present-day Missal is the Jerusalem Bible, though other translations may be used.)

*Omnes sancti et sanctae Domini,
intercedete pro nobis.*

**All holy men and women of God,
intercede for us.**

THE GUEST'S SPEAKER SPEECH AT THE GRADUATION CEREMONY OF ST. FRANCIS SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL - KUNKUJANG MARIAMA

By Mrs Ida Ceesay

*Principal, Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed graduates,
staff, and honored guests,*

When Mahatma Gandhi said: "I do regard spinning and weaving as a necessary part of any national system of education," he was referring to technical and vocational skill education. It is both an honor and a privilege to stand before you today as the guest speaker on this momentous occasion, the graduation ceremony for these remarkable senior secondary school students. As we gather here, I am reminded of the immense potential that radiates from this room, a potential that will shape the future of our beloved nation, The Gambia. As you look back on your years within these walls, remember that education is not confined to textbooks and classrooms alone. It extends far beyond—the friendships forged, the challenges overcome, and the resilience cultivated. You have not merely learned facts; you have imbibed wisdom, compassion, and the spirit of inquiry.

Today, I want to emphasize the transformative power of skills training, especially in a developing country like ours. While academic knowledge provides the foundation, practical skills are the tools that allow you to build your dreams. Consider technical skills as the tangible abilities, the craftsmanship of a carpenter, the precision of a mechanic, the delicacy of a chef. These skills empower you to create, repair, and innovate, and innovation is the base of all development. TVET equips you with practical skills that directly translate into employability. In a rapidly changing job market, having hands-on expertise is invaluable. Whether you choose to become an electrician, a web developer, a carpenter, or an automotive technician, TVET prepares you for real-world challenges.

Dear graduates, in concluding my speech, I enjoin you to embrace the promise of TVET. Be curious, hands-on, and committed to excellence. Remember that your skills will shape our nation's destiny. As you step into the next phase of your journey, carry the torch of TVET with pride.

Congratulations, and may your paths be illuminated by knowledge, resilience, and purpose. Thank you.

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August & September

Saviour of the world, by Your Cross and
Resurrection You have set us free.

Our Sunday Readings

4th August, 2024

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54

2nd Reading: Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

Alleluia: Matthew 4:4B **Gospel:** John 6:24-35

Homily Theme: I Am The Bread of Life; Whoever Comes To Me Will Never Hunger – John 6:30-35

Verse of the Day Reflection: Jesus uses these very natural human experiences to teach us about Himself. He uses natural hunger and thirst to teach us that we long to be satisfied spiritually. And there is only one way to satiate these spiritual longings... through Him. It is a good spiritual practice to reflect upon your natural longings as an analogy for your spiritual longings. Naturally speaking, we regularly get hungry and thirsty. We eat and drink, but several hours later we hunger and thirst again. This is a cycle we cannot avoid. Our body continually craves food and drink. The same is true on a spiritual level. We cannot pray once and satisfy our spiritual longings forever. We cannot simply believe in Jesus and then be satisfied forever. Why? Because prayer and unity with Jesus is something that must take place daily throughout your day. The Eucharist offers insights into this hunger and thirst in that it provides us with our “daily” food. It is a gift that we must daily seek. Some of the Sacraments are given to us only once (Baptism and Confirmation). But the Eucharist is a gift that we must continually consume and long for. The fact that we must continually go to Mass and receive the Eucharist tells us that our Christian life is not something that can be fulfilled by one definitive decision. Rather, it’s something that needs daily nourishment and fulfillment. Reflect, today, upon these natural longings you have for food and drink to continually remind yourself of your much deeper spiritual longing for Christ. Praying to Him, listening to Him and receiving Him into your soul is the food that satisfies like nothing else. Jesus is the true Bread of Life and your true Spiritual Drink. He is what you are made for. Let Him satisfy your deepest desires in life!

Prayer: Lord, I do long for You. I long to be satisfied. Help me to turn to You at all times and in all things. Help me to always remember that You are what I need and You alone satisfy. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen.

11th August, 2024

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: 1 Kings 19:4-8

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

2nd Readings: Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Alleluia: John 6:51

Gospel: John 6:41-51

Homily Theme: No One Can Come To Me Unless Drawn By My Father – John 6:44-51

Verse of the Day Reflection: The initial part of Jesus’ statement, “No one can come to me unless,” holds significant importance. It implies that developing a belief in Jesus, nurturing that belief, and strengthening our love for God cannot be accomplished independently. Acknowledging and embracing faith is a reaction to the impact of God’s involvement in our lives. Comprehending this concept is crucial to foster a genuine bond with Christ because it indicates that we must permit God to initiate the first move in the relationship. Once we permit God to take the lead, we are accountable for responding appropriately. Therefore, our primary responsibility is to attune ourselves to His subtle “wooing.” This takes the form of gentle invitations through grace, urging us to surrender ourselves more fully and entirely to Him on a daily basis. Amidst the bustle of our world, it is simple to become sidetracked by the numerous clamoring voices vying for our attention. Take a moment today to ponder how attentively you listen to God. Set aside a few minutes or more of quietness today, close your eyes, and listen. Listen to God communicating with you. When He beckons you, respond to Him with great generosity. This is the optimal decision you can make every day!

Let us Pray: Dear God, I pray that you pull me towards you, bring me nearer, and guide me to distinguish your voice. As I listen to your summons, help me to answer with abundant generosity. I surrender my life to you, dear Lord, and ask for your assistance in desiring you more deeply. Jesus, I have faith in you. Amen.

18th August, 2024

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: Proverbs 9:1-6

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

2nd Reading: Ephesians 5:15-20

Alleluia: John 6:56 **Gospel:** John 6:51-58

Homily Theme: Whoever Eats My Flesh and Drinks My Blood Has Eternal Life – John 6:51-59

Verse of the Day Reflection: Undoubtedly, this passage not only provides insight into the significance of the Holy Eucharist but also demonstrates Jesus’ capacity to proclaim the truth with clarity and unwavering conviction. Jesus encountered opposition and reproach, with some individuals expressing discontent and questioning His statements. However, Jesus adopted a contrasting approach. He did not succumb to the criticism leveled at Him by others. It is truly uplifting to witness how Jesus,

when confronted with disparaging remarks from others, answered with even greater poise and conviction. He strengthened His proclamation about the Eucharist being His Body and Blood by declaring, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you do not have life within you.” This exemplifies a man of unparalleled confidence, conviction, and fortitude. Although Jesus is divine, it is still inspiring to see His unwavering strength and it demonstrates the strength that we are all called to possess in this world. The world we inhabit is fraught with opposition to the truth. We need to understand that as we draw closer to God, surrender to Him and boldly proclaim His truth, the world will increasingly try to pull us away. To face challenges in our faith, we can look to the example of Jesus and follow His lead. When we feel that our faith is being threatened or tested, we should use it as an opportunity to strengthen our resolve and become even more devoted to God. Consider your response when your faith is challenged. Do you give in to fear and allow criticism to weaken your faith? Or do you follow the example of Jesus and stand firm in your convictions, even when facing opposition? Take time to reflect on this today and choose to strengthen your resolve to follow Christ, even in the face of persecution. By imitating His strength and conviction, you can become a powerful instrument of God’s grace and mercy.

Let us Pray: Dear Lord, grant me the fortitude of Your conviction. Illuminate my purpose and enable me to serve You with resolute dedication in all circumstances. May I never falter when confronted with life’s obstacles but instead, reinforce my determination to serve You wholeheartedly. Jesus, I adore You. Amen.

25th August, 2024

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: Joshua 24:1-2A, 15-17, 18B
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34:2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21
2nd Reading: Ephesians 5:21-32
 or Ephesians 5:2A, 25-32
Alleluia: John 6:63C, 68C **Gospel:** John 6:60-69

Homily Theme: Jesus, You Are The Holy One of God – John 6:60-69

Verse of the Day Reflection: Peter’s response to Jesus is commendable. This story’s context is fascinating and reveals the profound discourse that Jesus had just delivered on the Holy Eucharist. Jesus made it clear that His flesh is actual food and His blood is actual drink. He said that unless you eat His flesh and drink His blood, you will have no life in you. Many people abandoned Jesus after He taught about the Eucharist, returning to their old ways and no longer following Him. This suggests that His teachings on the subject were hard for many to comprehend and accept. After Jesus taught about the Eucharist and many of His followers left Him because they found His teaching difficult to accept, He did not change His words. Surprisingly, He even asked His Apostles if they wanted to leave as well. Jesus poses a significant question to His Apostles, which has a crucial meaning. He asks them directly if they want to leave Him, granting them complete freedom to decide. Jesus does not coerce them into believing what He has just taught. They have the freedom to choose whether to accept or reject it. This freedom allows them to strengthen their faith in Jesus in a radical

way. They understood that just because many others chose not to accept Jesus’ words, it did not mean they should do the same. Peter’s response demonstrates his unwavering faith in Jesus despite the challenging situation. He acknowledges that although many have left Him and His teachings are difficult, they have come to believe in Jesus so deeply that abandoning Him would be unwise. Peter reaffirms his commitment to following Jesus, even if it is not the popular choice. Consider today how deeply committed you are to Jesus. Remember that you have the freedom to either follow Him or turn away from Him. However, if you choose to follow Him, don’t do it half-heartedly. Understand that Jesus’ teachings are powerful, difficult, and require great dedication. He desires you to have unwavering faith and devotion to Him. Only Jesus has the words of eternal life, and we must receive and accept His words with complete conviction.

Let us Pray: Dear Lord, I acknowledge that there is no other way I can go if I do not follow You. You are the only One whom I trust and choose to believe in. Please help me to fully embrace all that You have taught and enable me to choose You without reservation each day of my life. I declare my love for You, Jesus. Amen.

1st September, 2024

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 4-5
2nd Reading: James 1:17-18, 21B-22, 27
Alleluia: James 1:18 **Gospel:** Mark 7:1-8,14-15, 21-23

Homily Theme: The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes – Mark 7:1-13

Verse of the Day Reflection: Once again, Jesus spoke the hard truth that the Pharisees needed to hear. He told them directly that they were hypocrites and that they were the ones of whom Isaiah spoke in the quoted passage. It most certainly was a tense scene. Let’s look more clearly at the actual quote from Isaiah. It says four things: *This people honors me with their lips. *Their hearts are far from me. *They worship in vain. *They present their own human laws as if they were God’s. So what is the key message we should take from this simple facts. First, the will of God must take hold of our lives and become the basis and foundation of everything. His will, His law, His precepts are our rock foundation. God has established His truth as the basis of human life and we must strive to humbly embrace His law. His law includes all publicly revealed teachings of our faith, found in Scripture and in the Church, and it includes all that we hear God speaking to us in our own lives. The Pharisees, in their lack of humility, could not see these truths. Instead, they held onto their own ideas and convictions alone. God chastised them harshly for this out of love. Secondly, we should realize that when we embrace the divine law, and His particular will for our lives, we will be pure of heart and will be freed to love Him with outward expressions. We will worship Him from our hearts and this will flow through our words and actions. But this will never happen if we do not start with His divine law. Reflect, today, upon whether or not you are willing to humbly embrace all of the truths that God has revealed and whether you are willing to make them the

foundation of your life. If you do this, all else will flow forth in love and worship.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love Your holy and divine law. Help me to embrace it with my whole heart. I do believe in You and in all that You have spoken through the ages. I believe in what You speak to my heart regarding my own life. Give me the grace to embrace Your holy will and, in that embrace, to be transformed both interiorly and exteriorly. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen.

8th September, 2024

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: Isaiah 35:4-7A

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

2nd Reading: James 2:1-5

Alleluia: Matthew 4:23

Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

Homily Theme: Jesus Looked up to Heaven and said to Him, “Ephphatha!” (that is, “Be opened!”) – Mark 7:31-37

Verse of the Day Reflection: How often do you hear Jesus say this to you? “Ephphatha! Be opened!” Or how often do you hear Him speak to you with such authority? Did Jesus say this only because this man was physically deaf and He wanted to physically cure him? Or is there a deeper significance? By healing this man unable to hear physical sounds, Jesus was revealing something to us about what He wants to do for us. Jesus is giving us a clear and deeper message in this healing. Certainly there are many messages we can take from this passage. Let’s look at one. The message is in Jesus’ command: “Be opened!” These are powerful words commanding action. They are not optional words. These two little words reveal the fact that Jesus has made up His mind to act. They reveal that He is not hesitant in the least in this choice. He has made up His mind and has spoken His will. And this action, on His part, is what makes a difference. He does have all-power and He is not afraid to exercise this authority when He wants to. Most importantly, He wants to exercise His authority when it will bring about the greatest good in our lives. It should give us great comfort in the sense that we can trust that this all-powerful God is all-powerful and is in control. If He is even in control of the natural world (physical hearing), then He is most certainly in control of the spiritual world, too. He is able to do all things good. Reflect, today, upon these two little words. Let this holy and divine authority of Jesus take control over your life. Let Him command you. His commands are perfect love and mercy.

Prayer: Lord, I do trust You and I know that You can do all things. I know that You desire to have perfect authority in my life. Help me to turn my life fully over to You and to trust You enough to direct and to command every action of my life. Jesus, I fully trust in You! Amen.

15th September, 2024

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: Isaiah 50:5-9A

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

2nd Reading: James 2:14-18

Alleluia: Galatians 6:14

Gospel: Mark 8:27-35

Homily Theme: Get Behind Me, Satan! You are an Obstacle to Me – Matthew 16:13-23, Mark 8:27-33

Verse of the Day Reflection: On 6th August we celebrated the feast of The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ on the high mountain. The transfiguration was preceded by several events where Jesus started seeing that the faith of His disciples had started to dwindle. One of the events that made the disciples to have doubts if Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for was this one: Jesus had gone to the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples who do people say He was. They gave Him the answer and when He asked them who do they think He is, Simon Peter said: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Upon saying this Jesus bestowed on Him the mantle to lead the Church. Immediately after giving Peter the Keys to Heaven, He started saying that He will be persecuted and Killed by elders and scribes. This was a shocker to the disciples because, in their human thinking, they thought that the Messiah could not be killed or even die. They knew that Jesus had all the powers on earth to avoid that death. So when Jesus said that He must die then they started having doubts about Jesus being the real Messiah. Their faith in Jesus started dwindling. When Jesus, Peter, James, and John descended from the mountain, they met the other disciples trying to drive a demon out of a boy, but they were unable. Jesus told them that they were unable to drive it out because their faith in Him had started to fade. Events that had been prophesied before by the prophets. Events that would culminate in our salvation. Then here was Peter trying to tell Jesus that He would never let that happen, what has already been planned in Heaven. Jesus got upset and told him, “Get behind me Satan You are an obstacle to me” because what He was saying was not in tandem with what was already planned in Heaven. Let us, therefore, have unwavering faith in Jesus because we are lucky to know that He is indeed the messiah who came to save us from our sins.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, we believe that You are our Lord and Saviour. We pray that You rekindle our faith and trust in You so that we may continue with the work that You have commanded us to do. Amen.

22nd September, 2024

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 54:3-4, 5, 6 AND 8

2nd Reading: James 3:16-4:3

Alleluia: 2 Thessalonians 2:14 **Gospel:** Mark 9:30-37

Homily Theme: Whoever Becomes Humble Like this Child is the Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven – Matthew 18:1-14, Mark 9:30-37, Luke 9:46-50

Verse of the Day Reflection: Jesus tells us that if we want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven we must turn and become like little children. So let’s ask ourselves, Who are little children?

1. Little children are those innocent people who are ready to be taught. They will sit patiently beside you and attentively listen to what you have to say. Jesus wants us to behave likewise towards Him and His teachings.

2. Little children do not have preconceived opinions about something. They have no prejudice or bias towards a subject. They see something for what it is as opposed to how, in their opinion, it should be like. Therefore, Jesus tells us to accept Him, His teachings and His Kingdom as He teaches.

3. When you compare us grown-ups and little children, you will notice that grown-ups' hearts, minds, bodies and souls have been tainted by the hustles and bustles of this evil world. Grown-ups tend to think bad things about others as opposed to children who always have good thoughts about others unless told otherwise by us grown-ups. They are very innocent and to them, love for others comes first and this is manifested well when you see them playing together regardless of their race, tribe, religion, social status etc. This changes when prejudice is forced into them by us grown-ups.

4. The humility of little children is always very overwhelming. They serve everybody regardless of their race, tribe, religion, social status etc. They do not discriminate against anybody. They are just adorable.

Let's, therefore, change our behaviour and become childlike so that we can be regarded as the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us embrace humility, peace, and love for one another and we will become like little children both in heart and soul. Jesus also warns us that their Guardian Angels have more favour in the eyes of God. Therefore we should never despise them. We should always come to their aid when a needy situation arises. Jesus says, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father."

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, we would like to become childlike so that we can enter Your Kingdom. Purify our hearts, thoughts and actions to become like those of little children and thus become the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus, I love you. Amen.

29th September, 2024

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

1st Reading: Numbers 11:25-29

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14

2nd Reading: James 5:1-6

Alleluia: John 17:17B, 17A **Gospel:** Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

Homily Theme: If Your Right-Hand Causes You to Sin, Cut it Off – Matthew 5:27-32, Mark 9:41-50

Verse of the Day Reflection: Today, Jesus is teaching us about what is of most importance in our lives. He says it is inheriting the Kingdom of God. Everything that Jesus teaches us is usually intended to have one outcome; that on the last day we shall inherit the Kingdom of God, where, with the Communion of Angels and Saints, we will be praising God forever. Jesus is insisting that we should not let any other thing in this world distract us from having the Everlasting Life. In our verse today, Jesus says that if it is the things we hold dear in our hearts that will make us lose the Kingdom of God, then let them go! If it is our parents, keep off them! If it is money or material wealth, throw it away or give to the poor! If it is a job, quit! If it is a business, close it! For it is better to be poor than live the rest of your after-life burning and gnashing your teeth in the fiery Gehenna. When Jesus talks about gouging out our eyes and cutting off our hands, He doesn't literally mean that but means shedding off someone or something that may lead you into sin. You can shed off bad habits like adultery, drunkenness, gambling, idolatry etc. They are fun and feel good when doing them but they ultimately lead us into sin. Let us today resolve to identify those things that lead us into sin and shed them off, although mostly, we feel we cannot do without them. Jesus says they are not at all important. What is most important is making sure we inherit the Kingdom of God.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to identify the negative distractions in our lives that can make us lose the Kingdom of God. Help us to shun them and give us the strength to avoid falling back into their tempting invitations. Jesus, I love you. Amen.



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KNOWING THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW IN CONTEXT

CONT'D FROM LAST EDITION (JUNE & JULY)

by Rev. Fr.
Gabou Secka

For Allison and Davies, this Israel-Jesus comparison has a wider implication for the assembly of God's people, the Church. Jesus, the personification of obedient Israel, repeats the experience of Israel of old: having passed through the waters, he enters the desert to suffer a time of testing (Deut 8:2). The signification:

“Mt 4:1–11 leads through 4:12–17 to 4:18–22, this last being the calling of the first disciples; and this means that the baptism and temptation of Jesus inaugurated the renewal of the people of God. Just as Israel was born in the first exodus, so is the church born in a second exodus. By repeating or recapitulating in his own person the exodus and the events thereafter, the Son of God brings a new people into being.”

The first characteristic of man gleaned from Sacred Scriptures is that man is created in the image of God. This image or likeness is something that corresponds to God and is meant to do so. In His image the Creator wills to find His partner, His echo, and His honor. He wills to be present Himself upon earth, His image meant to represent Him and to act in His name. In His image He can Himself be encountered, and His goodness experienced. It is the honor of man that he is counted worthy of this relationship.

Man's origin and end is his Creator and, through an ever-increasing spiral of self-transcendence, seeks to find unity with God and fullness of his being through an opening to God. Yet, the faults and foibles of his humanity have become his undoing, the diminutiveness of his being born of the moments when, in yielding to temptations to err, he forgets his transcendent background. It is from this backdrop that Jesus' temptation experience provides answer to this most familiar human plight. No other man has perfectly performed the human role in this God-man relationship as Jesus has done. In him, the human purpose is redefined and the image of God perfectly represented. If he can so represent humanity to God and vice-versa, then he can as well be the model for all men. In him, man's vocation at creation finds fruition. As Goetz puts it, there is a relationship between the believer and Christ. Man must become like Christ in order to benefit by Christ's work carried out in his name and in virtue. He must imitate the ideal man. Fullness of man is therefore fullness in Christ.

The idea of man as made in the image of God demands, therefore, a deliberate transcending of the fallible self. And Jesus' three dimensional contest with Satan

allows man an opportunity not only to return to the bedrock of his initial vocation, but to also appraise its nature: demands and worth. The praxis of Jesus' example is humanly: he retreats in solitude, fasts, prays, and relentlessly meets Satan head-on; finally, and victoriously, he orders him (Satan) away. His perseverance in the harsh environment of the desert, coupled with basic human deprivations, heralds a Christian theology of suffering and sets the pace for the rigors of his ultimate moment of perilous trial – the drama of the passion (Mt 26-27). The core of this theology is unmistakably clear: faithfulness and obedience to the word and will of the Creator is faithfulness to our first call. All who thread this path, like Jesus, find fullness of being, sharing in Jesus' sonship, and the reward of divine favor. The contrary purports man's eternal loss. To put it poetically, and retrospectively, it is either Paradise lost-paradise gained, or paradise lost *in aeternum*. In this light, Jesus' actions in the temptation narrative is said to underscore the theme of soteriology.

Mt has been described, and rightly so, as the Gospel of the kingdom. But what does the expression *h' basileia, a tou/ qeou*/ really mean, and how is the theme “the kingdom of God” reflected in the Gospel? Furthermore, what is Jesus' attitude to the “kingdom of God?” What may we make of his proclamation of this kingdom?

The notion of God as king, and as having a kingdom, goes back to OT times. We find “timeless” and “dynamic” statements about God's kingdom in OT texts (2 Kgs 19:14-19; Isa 37: 14-16; Ps 47:9; 99:1); and there is a theocentric notion of the kingdom of God in the post-exilic period (Ps 47; 93; 96-99).

In Mt the phrase “the kingdom of God” expresses the ultimate sovereignty of God over His world, wherein His creatures should serve the King. It describes the realm in which His kingly rule is acknowledged, and points to a future when God will be all in all, and His will shall be done on earth as in heaven. Thus Matthew speaks of the kingdom as imminent (10:23; 16:28); judgmental (8:11-12; 19:28); invaluable, something to be sought (6:33); people enter into it (5:20; 7:21); it is seized and suffers violence (11:12). The preaching of the kingdom means precisely the same as Jesus' appeal to people to repent (18:3), believe (18:6), and offer him their total allegiance. From this perspective the character of the kingdom is very radical, evoking fundamental change in believers

That the meaning of “the kingdom of God” transcends the present and the material is also to be found in the temptations: God's kingdom means much more than earthly rule and authority (Mt 4:8-9); it also means service and worship of God alone (4:10). The nature of the kingdom offered to Jesus by the devil runs contrary to the

character of the kingdom of God. In Mt, Jesus makes it plain that there is a determined enemy of God and his kingly rule: Satan. A strong counterpoint runs through the Gospel. Satan is totally opposed to the kingdom of God (6:13; 11:12; 12:24–29; 13:39). Satan, the tempter, the devil, the enemy, the evil one, Beelzebub, the ruler of this age – he is called by all those names – is the implacable foe of the kingdom of God. He assails Jesus constantly (e.g. 4:1–11; 16:23).

Finally, Mt gives us demands of the kingdom of God. Entry is one condition of the kingdom. The other is ethics. Once we enter in, we are reckoned to be sheep, not wolves (7:15; 10:16); wheat, not weeds (13:24–30); sheep, not goats (25:33); good trees, not bad (7:16–20). New birth leads to new behavior; new life leads to a new lifestyle. We must face the cost of the ethics of the kingdom. We cannot love God and materialism (6:24). In particular, we must care for the poor and the powerless who are called blessed by the King (5:3ff.).

In addition to religious interpretation of the kingdom of God, some scholars have endeavored to discuss the implications of the kingdom of God from a social perspective, by applying social concepts and theories of conflict to the socio-political realities of first century Israel, and with particular focus on the relationships between marginalized Jews and their Roman imperialists. Jesus' attitude to the kingdom of God has been explained with some level of variance among scholars. Even though there is common agreement that his proclamation of a "kingdom" in the context of Roman imperialism and elitism was revolutionary, not everyone is prepared to accept that apocalyptic writings provide the proper setting for understanding Jesus' use of the image. Crossan, among others, proposes a typology of the kingdom of God in Jewish usage contemporary with Jesus and makes a distinction between sapiential and apocalyptic modes for the understanding of the kingdom of God. The apocalyptic kingdom is futuristic, dependent on the overpowering action of God to restore justice and peace on earth – the type of understanding he associates with millennial prophets and, possibly, messianic claimants. The sapiential kingdom, on the other hand, looks to the present rather than the future and imagines how one could live, here and now, within an already or always available divine dominion. One enters that kingdom by being good and just – by virtue. Crossan opts for a sapiential rather than an apocalyptic understanding of Jesus' preaching on the kingdom. For Crossan, Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and his attitude toward same portrays a Cynicism that is revolutionary. It portrays Jesus as a Galilean Cynic who is seen as engaging in a form of social protest. Crossan does examine the various forms of Jewish protest against Roman rule, which could be deemed to be apocalyptically motivated, but in discussing Jesus' attitude to the kingdom of God he locates Jesus in the quadrant formed by sapiential and peasant. Jesus' "parables and aphorisms" describe "a here and now kingdom of the nobodies and the destitute ... of mustard, darnel, and leaven ... a kingdom performed rather than just proclaimed." In other words, Crossan's option leads one to perceive Jesus' vision as inspired, not by millennial dreams but by Cynic notions of being detached and free from any outside influences that might control one's life. In its extreme form, such an idea could give rise to counter-cultural movements that pose a threat to society itself.

Richard Horsley takes a different position in developing his position of a revolutionary Jesus in the context of Roman imperialism and social conflicts.

Discussing the kingdom of God within the conflicting orientations of functionalism, Horsley makes it clear that the Jesus movement held that it was necessary (and imminently inevitable) to replace the established order with a new society of justice and love: "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" (6:10). But for functionalism, society is something *over* people into which they fit or should be made to fit; it assumes a defensive posture towards reality. Hence, Horsley challenges what he describes as synthetic and theologically driven notions of apocalypse that describe "end-time" scenarios or cosmic catastrophes, and focuses instead on the symbolic nature of apocalyptic language within specific social and historical circumstances. For Horsley, Jesus' ministry must be understood within the context of the spiral of violence that dominated first-century Judean society as a result of the presence of imperial structures and their repressive attitudes towards the little traditions of the Jewish peasantry. The symbol of the kingdom of God as employed by Jesus signified God's victory over evil forces, a conception that was shared with standard Jewish apocalyptic traditions. The poor and the oppressed would be vindicated, the wicked and the unjust punished and a new Israel constituted, in which egalitarian social relations would be operative and the institutions of oppression, both Roman and Jewish, would come under God's judgments. He uses a social theory of conflict in order to expose the structural sources of alienation in terms of control of the resources by the elite in Roman Palestine, thus giving rise to deep-seated resentment and social unrest.

I prefer a middle position between these two views. Crossan's option for a sapiential, as opposed to an apocalyptic understanding of the kingdom (from a social perspective), seems somewhat arbitrary, and the revolutionary potential of the Cynic hypothesis among Galilean peasants is not very convincing, any more than is the suggestion of a Cynic-like Jesus, whose motivation is only marginally, if at all, inspired by radical strands of his own Jewish tradition. Yet, his "here and now" depiction of the kingdom is in partial agreement with matthean theology on the kingdom of God. On the other hand, Horsley's account seems more convincing in its broad outline, and his depiction of Judean society as conflictual is agreeable. But it must be noted that "applying contemporary Marxist-inspired theories to ancient societies may be problematic, especially when a purely materialist analysis ignores the role of religious belief in discussions of the social and economic causes of exploitation. In Mt, however, the use of the phrase *h' basileia tou qeou* elicits both present and eschatological understandings; on the one hand the kingdom is eternal and timeless, God's perpetual sovereignty over His world, His standing claim on people's allegiance. But in another sense it was brought in by Jesus. Matthew is clear on this matter: the kingdom has both a present manifestation and a future consummation (4:17; 11:11; 24–25; 16:28; 20:21). Theissen and Merz confirm this holistic understanding thus:

"The Jesus tradition contains both future and present statements about the kingdom of God. Those who regard a 'non-eschatological Jesus' as historical must dispute the future statements; those who accept only the 'apocalyptic Jesus' must dispute the present statements. Nowadays both series of sayings are usually accepted as authentic."

KNOWING THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW IN CONTEXT:

CONT'D FROM PAGE 23

It is necessary to address what is perhaps the basic theological argument or point of contention among scholars regarding this pericope – an argument which persists even today. The argument is sprung from the following questions: Was it possible for Jesus to be tempted (in the full sense of the word) as all men are, or not? This question implies another relevant question: was it possible for Jesus to sin or not? These questions are not only troubling but also require sober, theological reflections. Our response will not only identify the drift of this final chapter, but will equally contribute significantly to the theological analysis of the text, and the global vision as well.

The NT presents Jesus as truly human. From his incarnation to his tireless healing and serving of common people, his life is marked with a profound connection to humanity. Perhaps nothing so reminds us of this fact than the perspectives on Jesus as seen through the eyes of his detractors, whether in Galilee, Jerusalem or his hometown Nazareth. Jesus is seen as a blasphemer (Mt 9:3; Mk 2:7; Lk 5:21), a deceiver of Israel (Mt 27:63), as demon-possessed (Jn 7:20) or an agent of Beelzebub's kingdom (Mt 12:24; Mk 3:22). He is also declared mad (Jn 10:20), an evildoer (Jn 18:30) and a perverter of the nation of Israel (Lk 23:2). People accuse him of bearing false witness (Jn 8:13) and of trying to persuade people not to pay taxes (Lk 23:2). For the apparent sin of socializing with sinners he is called a glutton and a drunkard (Lk 7:34). Finally, his own hometown dismisses him as only a carpenter's son (Mt 13:54–57).

A similar testimony to that which is given in the Gospels is found in the remainder of the apostolic writings of the NT. For example, Paul speaks of Christ's humanity in Gal 4:4: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law." And in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost Peter said of Christ: "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). In accord with these attestations to Jesus' humanity Moltmann writes: "in the New Testament the question, 'what is man?' points to the one man Jesus of Nazareth, of whose life and death the Gospels tell us. It is said of him who died on the cross ... 'Ecce Homo! Behold the man!'"

Jesus is equally presented as truly divine in the NT. He is the One begotten by the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:20; Lk 1:34-35; 3:23), the co-eternal and pre-existent *logos* who is identical with God (Jn 1:1-18). In fact, Jesus himself would later claim to live on the divine plane (Jn 8:58), and add that he and the Father are one (Jn 10:30). Deity is ascribed to Jesus in Col 1:15–17: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together." He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev 22:13). Matthew himself presents Jesus as one of the three divine persons of the Trinity (Mt 28:19).

The hypostatic union welds together both divine and human natures in an inseparable bond within the one person of Jesus without altering his essence. There is never a question of conflict between the two, never any

confusion in their relations, never any schism in the unitary personal action; but he is obviously considered and presented as one, composite indeed, but undivided personality. The text of the temptations, directly or indirectly, recognizes and addresses this unity of both natures in Jesus (e.g. Jesus is said to have been hungry after his fast [4:2], and he is at the same time referred to as "the Son of God," a designation that will fall within Christian concept of God as Trinitarian [4:3,6]; again, verses four and ten clearly differentiate between Jesus' humanity and God's divinity, yet verse seven seems ambiguous, suggesting that Jesus, who is being tempted, is also divine). In summary, this theology of the hypostatic union is indispensable for wholesome reflections on the temptation narratives.

3.5.3

Is Jesus Christ impeccable? We are not asking: is he sinless? This is generally admitted. The holiness, however, of the God-man is more than sinlessness. The question is: is he unable to sin (*non potest peccare*)? Is he not only able to overcome temptation, but also unable to be overcome by it? Or is he *potest non peccare*, i.e., able not to sin? This would mean that even though he demonstrated the ability to overcome the temptations and Satan, there is the possibility that he could have sinned.

What significance does Jesus being *non potest peccare* or *potest non peccare* have for our understanding of the temptations? After all, the Lord Jesus Christ did not sin and, in fact, remained sinless; so what is the difference whether he was *posse non peccare* or *non posse peccare*? Actually, the difference between these two views poses significant difficulties for a theological appraisal of our pericope. It brings under scrutiny basic Christian doctrines about God and Jesus Christ.

First, since the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8), whatever attributes were true of him during his earthly existence must also be true in his pre-incarnate state, as well as in his present state of glory. Therefore any possibility that he could sin has ramifications for the eternal character of God.

Second, the Incarnation, and the hypostatic union, are all influenced by one's understanding of the question concerning the impeccability of Jesus Christ. If Christ could sin, then deity was capable of sinning.

Third, if the Lord Jesus Christ is not impeccable, one can begin to question the temptation accounts of the Lord in the wilderness. If it is possible that he could sin or be overcome by temptation, what assurance does one have that these temptations were not just self-induced lustful thoughts within his human intellect, and not attacks by Satan?

From the above, it becomes clear that the question of the impeccability of Jesus Christ also has implications for biblical inerrancy and integrity.

Those who believe Christ was capable of sinning seek to support their view from his humanity. Among others, Hodge argues that "this sinlessness of our Lord, however, does not amount to absolute impeccability. It was not a *non potest peccare*. If he was a true man he must have been capable of sinning." He intimates further that "if from the constitution of his person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then his temptation was unreal and without effect, and he cannot sympathize with his people."

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