



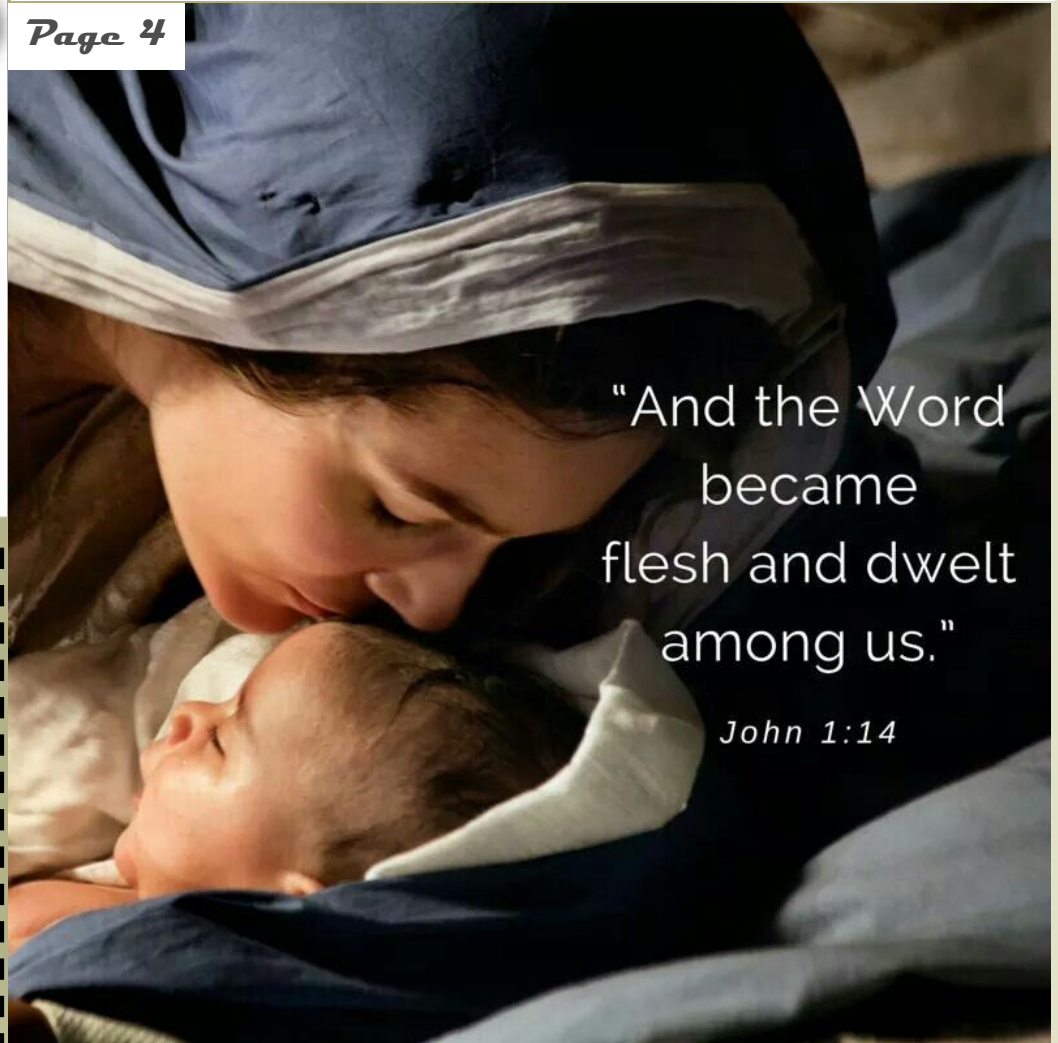
The Diocese of Banjul **NEWSLETTER**

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter



True Meaning of Christmas **A Call for Justice and Reconciliation** **in The Gambia**

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"And the Word
became
flesh and dwelt
among us."

John 1:14

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KUNKUJANG PILGRIMAGE

***37th Annual Pilgrimage to the
Shrine of Our Lady Queen of
Peace***

Saturday, 13th December, 2025

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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.

Diocese 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.

Diocese 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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THE DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

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**Wishing all our readers A Happy
Christmas & Prosperous New Year.**

EDITORIAL HINT

BETRAYAL OF OUR NATION AND THE PEOPLE

A Lamentation from Christian-Muslim Perspectives

Jesus was not born in a palace, a government compound, or a capital city (Jerusalem), but in a marginalized Roman province (Judea), in a humble stable in the small town of Bethlehem. This is a direct political statement: true authority and salvation do not originate from imperial centers or political elites, but from the periphery and the marginalized. The first visitors to the Christ child were not Roman governors or high priests, but poor shepherds, the lowest rung of the social ladder, and then the Magi (wise men/kings) from distant lands. This teaches that true leadership (represented by the kings who traveled far and bowed down) must be characterized by humility and service, recognizing that ultimate authority belongs to the vulnerable and to the Almighty.

In the quiet, solemn spaces of contemplation, whether in the humble tabernacle of a village church or the bustling marketplace of Serrekunda, the soul of a nation is judged not merely by its GDP or the grandeur of its new buildings, but by the moral integrity of its governance. The preamble to our national life, deeply rooted in faith and community, rests on a profound, dual covenant: a pledge of service to the people and an acknowledgment of ultimate accountability to the Creator.

The Holy Scripture reminds us to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. Yet, this often-cited dictum is fundamentally misunderstood if we do not first recognize that Caesar himself owed his very authority to a higher source in whom he trusted. In the Islamic tradition, this concept is known as Amana; the trust or moral responsibility placed upon human beings, particularly those in leadership. As the Holy Quran asserts: "Indeed, Allah orders you to render trusts (Amana) to whom they are due..." (Quran 4:58). The power wielded by public servants, from the highest echelons of government to the local ward councilor, is not a personal possession to be exploited, but a solemn trust, a divine mandate to uphold the Common Good.

Tragically, in the current Gambian landscape, the evidence suggests that this sacred trust has been consistently and cynically betrayed. What we witness today is not governance but an embarrassment, marked by a distinct lack of fidelity to the citizenry and a disturbing detachment from the ethical standards demanded by God and conscience, to leadership attachment and fidelity to their pockets at the expense of the citizens. For a nation that emerged from the shadows of dictatorship with a promise of democratic renewal, the failure to translate this hope into tangible, ethical leadership represents not just a political crisis, but a moral and spiritual emergency that the Church, alongside our Muslim brethren, cannot ignore.

The current misrule in The Gambia is not merely a political failure but a severe moral and spiritual crisis, founded upon a profound betrayal of the sacred trust, or Amana, placed in public servants. Authority is a divine mandate to uphold the Common Good and (Justice), principles affirmed by both Catholic Social Teaching and the Islamic tradition, which demands the rendering of trusts to whom they are due (Quran 4:58). This betrayal is

tragically visible in the collapse of basic services. The chronic instability and corruption within the National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC) have resulted in frequent, hours-long power outages across the Greater Banjul Area and upcountry, creating a moral injury that cripples healthcare, education, and small businesses. This disregard for the welfare of the people violates the principles of Subsidiarity and Solidarity, ignoring the demand for absolute impartiality as mandated by Quran 4:135.

Furthermore, the nation's commitment to justice is compromised by the slow, partial, and opaque implementation of the TRRC recommendations. The failure to prosecute those deemed most responsible and the perceived protection of political figures demonstrate that impunity is still negotiable, showing profound disrespect to the victims of the former regime. This lack of accountability defies the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which warns that past nations were ruined when justice was applied selectively, sparing the powerful while punishing the weak.

Fiscal management is equally compromised. Public servants, who are meant to be Khalifa (stewards of God on Earth), fail to provide honest stewardship. The nation is plagued by runaway national debt and a lack of transparency, with National Audit Office reports often met with political evasion. Large contracts and infrastructure projects lack proper public scrutiny. This fiscal misrule is an act of theft and Fasad (spreading corruption) against the Common Good, directly contributing to joblessness, impassable roads in areas like Basse and Soma, and shortages of life-saving medication, in direct contradiction to Quran 11:85, which condemns corruption and the deprivation of people's rights.

The most agonizing consequence of this systemic failure is the persistent exodus of young Gambians risking their lives on the perilous "Backway" migration route. This mass movement is a painful, tangible indictment of a leadership that has failed to overcome corruption and create economic opportunity, demonstrating a failure to nurture human dignity at home.

The Church, through its Prophetic Voice, demands an urgent moral conversion in governance, translated into concrete actions: Full transparency of contracts and national debt; Swift justice through the unconditional implementation of the TRRC recommendations; Prioritizing the vulnerable by ensuring reliable funding for health and utility services; and Upholding civil liberties.

Our leaders face a double accountability: to the electorate in this world, and to God on the Day of Judgment, and the crisis will persist until this ultimate fidelity is honored.

*The Holy Scripture reminds us
to render unto Caesar
what is Caesar's.*

COVER STORY

True Meaning of Christmas

A Call for Justice and Reconciliation in The Gambia

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). In this simple way, the Beloved Disciple summarized the greatest event in history. His modest words sum up the rich and unfathomable essence of the mystery commemorated each December 25th. From the obscurity of the darkness of paganism, the dawn of our salvation appeared. He, who had been foretold by the prophets, the expectation of nations, became man.

On the night in which Jesus came into the world, an atmosphere of peace and joy hovered over Bethlehem. Nature seemed to rejoice, while, inside an inhospitable stable, a holy couple contemplated their newborn Son.

His Mother, the Mother of mothers, conceived without original sin, a perfect creature, in whom the Creator deposited every grace. At her side is St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse, a just man whose love of God, integrity, and wisdom made him worthy of such an august wife. And the Child whom they contemplate is God Himself, assumed our nature to give the greatest possible proof of His love for humanity.

Imagine the holiness that would have enveloped that humble place! The setting in which the Divine Infant was born must have been so imbued with the supernatural that, had someone entered the stable by chance, he would have become enraptured by grace.

This is what happened with the shepherds. After receiving the news from the Angels, they ran toward the stable, where they found the King of the Universe lying upon a bed of straw. Stupefied by the grandeur of the scene, which they beheld with the eyes of faith, they felt impelled to prostrate in adoration. What an extraordinary gift they received; that of being the first to contemplate the Creator of Heaven and Earth made man, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger!

Considering the awe-inspiring natural phenomena that accompanied God’s interventions in the Old Testament, the division of the sea, smoke from the mountain, and fire from Heaven, which reduced cities to ashes, the humility and discretion with which Christ came into the world are surprising.

On Christmas, would it not have been more in keeping with divine grandeur, that magnificent signs in Heaven and on earth mark the happening? At the very least, could not Jesus have been born in a magnificent palace with the greatest rulers on earth convoked to pay Him homage? For this to have taken place, a simple act of His will would have sufficed.

But, no, the Word preferred the grotto to a palace; He wanted to be adored by poor shepherds instead of great lords; He warmed Himself with straw, and the breath of animals, instead of with sumptuous coverings and the heat of a flaming brazier. And He did not want to order the cold to spare Him. In a sublime paradox, infinite Majesty presented Himself as a model of humility.

Despite these poor trappings, the Child was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Within Him was the

realization of the hypostatic union of divine and human nature, as the renowned Father Boulenger explains: “Union is the state of two things that are joined together. It can be realized either in nature, as, for example, when body and soul unite to form one single human nature or in the person, when two natures unite in the same person.

And after the union, these two natures remained perfectly integral and distinct in the Person of Christ, who is not human, but divine. This is why He is called God-Man.

However, why did the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity become incarnate in such an inferior nature? Our first parents were created in the earthly paradise in a state of original innocence; therefore, in justice and holiness. Furthermore, in His infinite goodness, God conferred on Adam three types of gifts: the natural, so that all the properties of body and soul were perfectly ordained to reach their natural end; the supernatural, sanctifying grace, a participation in the very life of God and the predestination to the vision of God in eternal blessedness; and the preternatural, such as infused knowledge, the dominion over the passions and immortality, which constitute the gift of integrity.

Alongside these enormous benefits, man was faced with a trial. He was called to fulfil the divine law in an exemplary manner, guided by the demands of the natural law engraved in his heart, and respecting the only specific norm that God had given him: the prohibition to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in the center of the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen 2:9-17).

Sacred Scripture tells us how the serpent tempted Eve and how our first parents fell and were expelled from Paradise (cf. Gen 3:1-23). As a consequence of sin, many of these privileges were withdrawn. However, God, in His infinite mercy, continued to give them the natural privileges, as the learned Father Tanqueray describes: “He was content to deprive them of the special privileges that He had conferred upon them; that is, the gift of integrity and habitual grace, but left them with their nature and the natural privileges. The will was certainly weakened, if we compare it to what it was like with the gift of integrity, but it is not evident that it was weaker than it had been in the natural state.”

Original sin opened an insurmountable abyss between God and men. The gates of Heaven were closed, and contingent man could only offer God imperfect reparation for the offence committed. And the Son offered Himself to the Father and “became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8), restoring to man the grace lost by sin. With ineffable generosity, the Creator Himself became a creature to settle our debt.



But why did Jesus want to suffer the contempt of His contemporaries and the torments of the Passion? Being hypostatically united to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, any gesture of His human nature could have redeemed all of humanity. A simple act of Christ's will would have sufficed to obtain from God the pardon of all our sins.

However, once again, we encounter a sublime paradox. With the example of His Life and Passion, Jesus wanted to teach us that, in this valley of tears, true glory can only be born of pain. And as the Father desired the greatest possible degree of glory for His Son, He permitted that He endure the ultimate extremes of suffering.

"The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). Even in the manger of Bethlehem, our Saviour was aware that He had come into the world to expiate our sins. For this reason, in many nativity scenes, the Divine Infant is presented to us with arms open in the form of a cross. During His entire life, from Bethlehem to Golgotha, Jesus continually advanced toward the Supreme Sacrifice that would bring Him to the apex of glory.

Could there be anyone weaker than a child, any dwelling simpler than a grotto, and any crib poorer than a manger? Yet, the Child whom we contemplate resting on straw in the grotto of Bethlehem would completely change the course of earthly events.

Austrian historian John Baptist Weiss affirms: "Christ is the center of historic events. The ancient world awaited Him; the modern and future world repose upon Him. The Redemption of humanity by Christ is the greatest feat of universal history; His Life, the noblest and most beautiful monument that humanity possesses; His doctrine, the measure by which everything is evaluated."

Christ was the man promised to Adam after his fall, the Messiah foretold over centuries by the prophets. Reality, however, transcended all human imaginings: who could have thought that He would be God Himself incarnate? Jesus' coming into the world not only opened the gates of Heaven and brought us salvation, but it also renewed the face of the earth. St. Thomas states that Our Lord desired baptism, among other reasons, to sanctify the waters. The same occurred with the other elements: the earth was sanctified by the touch of His divine feet; the air, because He breathed it, and fire burned with greater intensity and purity. We can affirm with certainty that our world was forever changed after the Creator Himself became man and lived in it.

It is not by chance that the years are counted from the birth of Christ. He truly divides history into two. Before He came, humanity was one way; after, it was entirely another. There are two histories. We could almost say that there are two universes!

Socio-Political Message of Christmas

If the theological message of Christmas is the radical humility of God, the King of the Universe choosing a stable and a manger, then the political message is the non-negotiable dignity of every human being, especially the discarded. The Incarnation is not merely a historical event; it is a foundational challenge to how we structure power, economy, and society in the here and now.

From Humility to Accountability: Because God chose to enter the world as a powerless, vulnerable child, He places the highest value on the least protected. This directly confronts the mindset of self-serving power that afflicts The Gambia. If authority is a divine trust (Amana), then the political elite are judged by the quality of life they secure for the poorest citizens, not by the wealth they accumulate. The manger demands transparent governance and accountability from all elected and appointed officials.

From Bethlehem to Banjul: The setting of Christ's birth under an imperial census, far from the capital, in an ordinary, unregarded place, sanctifies the periphery. For The Gambia, this means that the nation's well-being must be measured not in the opulent compounds of the capital but in the remote communities struggling with access to clean water, reliable electricity (NAWEC), and functioning health centers. It is a call to actively practice Subsidiarity, ensuring that resources and decision-making authority are vested closest to the people who need them most.

From Rejection to Reconciliation: The political implication of "Peace on Earth" confronts the legacy of division and historical injustice. True peace cannot exist where injustice remains unaddressed. The commitment to implementing the findings of the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC) is, therefore, a profoundly Christian (and Gambian) act; it is an effort to root the peace of the Nativity in the soil of truth and accountability. It is the difficult work of forgiveness that follows the necessary work of justice.

The Dignity of the Youth: Finally, the Christmas child is the ultimate rejection of exclusion. This mandate must fuel our response to the "Backway" crisis. When the youth—the potential of the nation—feel so excluded by unemployment and lack of opportunity that they risk death on irregular migration routes, it signals a grave social betrayal. The political message of Christmas demands that we collectively invest in dignified work, education, and futures for our young people, affirming their worth and ensuring that opportunity is built for them here at home.

Christmas thus becomes a mirror reflecting the nation's soul. It is a powerful invitation to move beyond mere celebration and embrace the radical, transforming work of building a Gambian society truly worthy of the God who became poor for our sake. The Socio-Political Message is not an option; it is the Incarnational Imperative.

The Pope's Prayer Intentions

December 2025 : For Christians in areas of conflict

Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation, and hope.

January 2026: For prayer with the Word of God

Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

CHRISTMAS WREATH



The wreath symbolises truths of Jewish and Christian traditions. The circle, without beginning or end, suggests the God who was, who is, and who will be for ever. The greenery suggests life. The lighting of the candles – one the first week, two in the second week, and so on – suggests the gradual unfolding of God's saving plan for mankind. A good time for the family to pray by the Advent wreath is just before the evening meal.

Here are simple prayers you may use. You may prefer to use your own words.

Blessing the wreath

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

First week: one purple candle is lit.

God of Abraham and Sarah, and all the patriarchs of old, you are our Father, too. Your love is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of David. Help us in preparing to celebrate His birth, to make our hearts ready for Your Holy Spirit to make His home among us. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the Light that is coming into the world.

Lord Jesus, Light of the world, born in David's city of Bethlehem, born like him to be a King, be born in our hearts this Christmas, and be born in our hearts today.

Suggested readings: Isaiah 7:10-14. Isaiah 11:1-10. Matthew 1:18-24. Luke 1:26-38.

Second week: two purple candles are lit.

God our Father, You spoke to the prophets of a Saviour who would bring everlasting peace. You helped them to spread the joyful message of His coming kingdom. Help

us, as we prepare to celebrate our Saviour's birth, to share with those around us, the good news of Your power and love. We ask this through Jesus the Lord, the Light who is coming into the world.

Lord Jesus, Light of the world, the prophets said You would bring peace and save Your people in trouble. Give peace to our hearts at Christmas time and show all the world, God's love.

Suggested readings: Isaiah 2:1-5. Micah 5:2. Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11, Matthew 3:1-6.

Third week: two purple candles and the rose-coloured candle are lit.

God our Father, You gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age a son called John. He grew up strong in spirit, prepared the people for the coming of the Lord, and baptised them in the River Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us who have been baptised into Christ to be ready to welcome Him in our hearts, and to grow strong in faith by the power of the Spirit. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the Light who is coming into the world.

Lord Jesus, Light of the world, John told the people to prepare, for You were very near. As Christmas grows closer, day by day, help us to be ready to welcome You now.

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

Fourth week: all four candles are lit.

God our Father, the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that she was to be the mother of Your Son. Though Mary was afraid, she responded to Your call with joy. Help us, whom You have called to serve You, to share like Mary, in Your great work of bringing to our world Your love and healing. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the Light who is coming into the world.

Jesus Christ, Light of the world, blessed is Gabriel who brought good news; and blessed is Mary, Your mother and ours. Bless Your Church preparing for Christmas, and bless us Your children who long for your coming.

Suggested readings: Isaiah 52:7-10. Malachi 3:1-5. Romans 8:18-25. Revelation 21:1-4.



NOTICE FROM KIDS FOR CHRIST

Kids for Christ, under the umbrella of Radio Veritas (Gambia Pastoral Institute), is delighted to announce the annual Kids Christmas Fun Day, taking place on 26th December 2025 from 10am to 6pm. This exciting program brings together children from various churches and communities for a full day of learning, fun, and Christmas celebration. Activities will include games, arts and crafts, Bible trivia, and engaging lessons on the true meaning of Christmas. The aim is to help our children grow in confidence, character, and Christian values as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to register their children early at a fee of D200 to secure their participation. Lunch will be served for free. Dress code a touch of Christmas colors.

For more information, please contact our office at 3783711 or 7006955.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin Mary takes place in Advent, as an invitation to contemplate the image of Mary, full of grace, before contemplating the whole mystery of Bethlehem.

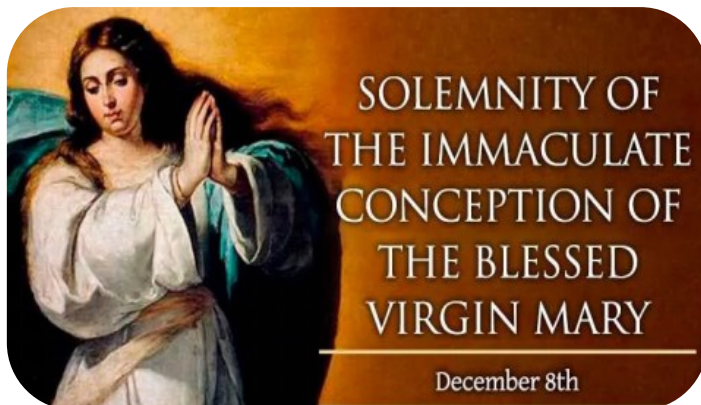
On 8 December 1854, Pope Pius IX issued 'Ineffabilis Deus', in which he dogmatized the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; that Mary because of the merits of Christ, was preserved from all sin; a unique mystery which harmonizes her exemption from Original sin with the absolute necessity that every human creature has the redemption offered by Jesus Christ. She was preserved from sin; she was pre-redeemed. The bull reads: "For the honor of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, for the glory and ornament of the Virgin God bearer, for the exaltation of the catholic faith and the growth of the Christian religion, by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own, we declare, pronounce, and define the doctrine which holds that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary at the first instant of her conception was by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in consideration of the merits of Christ Jesus, the Savior of the human race, preserved immune from every stain of original guilt; that this was revealed by God and, therefore, is firmly and constantly to be believed by all of the faithful."

How could the pure and holy Son of Man be borne in a corrupted vessel, that is to say Mary's womb? St. Paul had said 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans, 3:23), if Mary had never suffered from the stain of Original Sin, then in what sense did she need to be saved, and how did St. Paul's teaching apply to her? God bestowed on Mary a great and unique gift: not only was she to carry the Son of God, but she was held pure from the moment she came into existence. We might wonder: God might choose to preserve Mary from Original Sin, but if He did that, then in what way did she need to be saved? Surely if she never contracted the guilt of sin, she had nothing to atone for. We might dare to say that Christ's redemptive sacrifice made little difference to her. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote towards the end of his life, commenting on the Archangel Gabriel's salutation, 'For she (the Blessed Virgin) was most pure in the matter of fault and incurred neither original nor mental nor venial sin.'

The Blessed Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, was preserved in Grace, by the merits of Jesus's death, from every sin, original, mental, and venial, so that she might be the pure and unblemished vessel of the Son's entry into the world.

For the Claretians, heirs of the spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret, Mary Immaculate is, above all, the victorious, the New Eve and the enemy of the serpent, fighting against the underworld enemy, the great ally in battle against evil in all its forms. On this day, the Religious of Mary Immaculate (Claretian Missionary Sisters) celebrate their principal feast day.

The first indications of this celebration go back to the 7th century, in the East, on the basis of a tradition that claimed the faith that the Mother of the Lord was free from any stain of sin. In the West, by contrast, the feast began to be celebrated in an official capacity in 1476, as it appears in the Roman Liturgical calendar. Some centuries earlier, theologians were arguing the issue of Mary being free from



any stain of original sin. For the Christian people, this conviction was a prerogative granted by God to the Mother of His Son.

Mary is the first to be redeemed, the first believer, the first sanctified and glorified of the Church. The greatness of Mary has much to do with the entire community of believers. It would be wrong to imagine the Immaculate only or primarily as an exceptional case, as a completely different condition and isolated from the rest of humanity or of the Church. According to Scripture, any event that occurred in time is a realization of the divine plan of salvation by the merciful love and wisdom of the Father "before the creation of the world" (Eph. 1:4).

Also, the Immaculate Conception is part of the salvific plan of God. This is why the greatness of Mary, which has its starting point in the mystery of her Immaculate Conception, is not an exclusive grace belonging only to her, but reaches in some way to every Christian. It is the ideal of the whole Church. We were reminded of this in the Second Vatican Council: "Mary is the purest image of what the Church is and is anxious and yearns to be" (SC 103). That is precisely why the liturgy presents today the Immaculate Mary as "beginning and image of the Church," as is sung in the preface of this solemnity.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception falls within the time of Advent, and becomes a source of hope for the whole Church when preparing to receive He who is to come and bless everyone with all kinds of spiritual and celestial gifts (cf. Eph 1: 3). In fact, Mary, full of grace, as called the angel (Lk 1: 28), reminds us that God also chose us in the person of Jesus to be holy and blameless before Him in love, which is to give praise for his glory (cf. Eph 1:12-13). In the biblical texts of this liturgical solemnity, which offers us a daily liturgy during the Season of Advent, we find a solid basis in tune with the centuries-old tradition of the Church; the understanding of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and to promote and develop the devotion to the Mother of the Lord. The Word of God helps us to frame this figure in the overall vision of the Christian mystery, to place it in harmony with the various elements of the history of salvation, and to behold above all, along with one's living center, His Son, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Mary Immaculate is above all, the Victorious, the new Eve and enemy of the serpent, for she fights against the infernal enemy, the great ally of the battle against evil in all its forms. That is the charismatic sense; the apostolic plan which the mystery of the Immaculate holds for us.

THE DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER

APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

We have a small favor to ask. Many people are beginning to turn to the Diocese of Banjul Newsletter for vital, independent, and quality journalism. Therefore, readers around the world now need to support us financially.

We would like to invite you to join the myriad of readers who have taken the step to support us financially – keeping us open to all, and fiercely independent. Since 2021, this support assisted in sustaining our work in diverse spheres. It enabled diligent, fact-checked, authoritative journalism to thrive in an era of falsehood, sensation, hype and breathtaking misinformation and misconception. In 2025, we are still active and striving for the best.

With no shareholders or billionaire owner, we can set our own agenda and provide trustworthy journalism that's free from commercial and political influence, offering a counterweight to the spread of misinformation. When it's never mattered more, we can investigate and challenge without fear or favour.

Unlike many others, Banjul Newsletter journalism is available for everyone to read, we do this because we believe in information equality. While others commoditize information, we seek to democratize it. Greater numbers of people can keep track of societal issues, understand their impact, and become inspired to take meaningful action.

If there were ever a time to join us, it is now. Every contribution, however big or small, powers our journalism and sustains our future. Support the Banjul Newsletter for as little as any amount. **Thank you.**

REMEMBERING ROY DAVID SOMERS: "Requiem Aeternam."



A Tribute to a Remarkable Soul

It's hard to put into words the impact ROY DAVID SOMERS had on all of us, especially as a family in The Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI). We can go on and on, but we will make it short to describe an incredible personality we worked with.

He was a source of inspiration, a pillar of strength, and a true elderly friend to us and many others. His laughter was contagious, his wisdom and love profound.

While we feel the void of his absence, we honor his memory by carrying forward the values he stood for. He was greatness personified. His contribution to the GPI and the Diocese was immeasurable, especially guiding us in the Newsletter production.

He made everybody happy; he mentored a good number of us into greatness and made all of us great too. Thank God for a life well spent.

David was intelligent, discerning, attentive, and full of knowledge. He showed so much compassion and displayed a lot of humility, so much that every one of us seeks to emulate him.

His loving memory will ever remain a monument in our hearts. Good night.

May his soul rest in peace. We thank God for crossing With David paths on earth.

From GPI Family

A Letter showing gratitude, just before his demise

Dear Fr. Lopez

As I prepare to return to Lamin Wayoto, I write to express my appreciation of the comfort I've enjoyed at GPI. I'm as well physically as I'm ever likely to be, so my return is overdue.

I have been well looked-after here, and I do appreciate the care with which GPI is managed, particularly the garden - an oasis of calm in a bustling neighbourhood.

I have often felt lonely and wish I had opportunity to offer to others my speaking and writing abilities. You will be well-experienced, in your pastoral work, with the frustrations felt by the elderly. But there remains much to be thankful for.

I hold everyone at GPI in my prayers.

Thank - you, indeed.

From David Somers

Tribute to Pierre Simon Walter Shyngle

Veteran Public Health Officer, 1939 — 2025



By Philip Saine

Pierre Simon Walter Shyngle was a mentor, teacher and a friend profoundly respected. He was a man of distinguished career and dedicated servant of the nation.

Pierre Shyngle excelled in mathematics during his school days. Surrounded by siblings that were knowledgeable in the practice of Medical and

Health motivated him to become a Public Health Superintendent. He became the first trained and certified Gambian Health Educator. He was an outstanding Public Health Lecturer and most distinguished in practical work, Detection and Abatement of Public Health Nuisances and Veterinary Public Health.

- P.S.W. Shyngle proudly exhibited these certificates:
- Meat & Other Foods Diploma, London College, 1967
- Royal Society of Public Health West Africa – Dip
- Health Education Dip London

P.S.W. Shyngle also had leisure time to himself. He was an all-rounder individual and distinguished himself in various sports activities such as football and cricket. Pierre was a Grandmaster Kite designer and maker. He was famous in flying giant kites, locally known as '**NOSE**', in the Crab Island neighborhood.

Known for his rigor, passion, principles and mentorship, Pierre Shyngle paved the way for generations of Gambian Public Health Officers and Veterinary Public Health Officers. Together with Late Dawda Jagne, they established The School of Public Health (SPH) in 1968 at Marina Parade in Banjul occupying a residential quarters of past British colonial administrators.

Mr. Shyngle, as he was respectfully called, was a brother and friend, always joking and laughing with his students. His students adopted calling each other '*Rattus rattus*, *Rattus Norvegicus*, and *Mus musculus*'. These are generic and scientific names pronounced in his lecture classes. He was pivotal in arranging periodical joint work with international institutions in research, namely the International Development Research Center (IDRC) of Canada. P.S.W. led periodical student exchange visits between SPH and Aarhus University in Denmark. Mr. Shyngle was exceptionally good in these subjects:

Inspection and Report Writing, Sea Port & Air Port Health and Practical Meat Inspection.

Mr. Shyngle, the highly valued Public Health Lecturer, transitioned from the Medical and Health to the Department of Veterinary Services. He was a resource person in the relocation of the Banjul Abattoir to Abuko Central Abattoir and commenced the training of Gambian Veterinary Public Health Officers, Department of Livestock Services. P.S.W. exhibited a passion for Butchery.

Pierre Simon Walter was a symbol of enthusiastic, energetic and practical professional. He operated a Butchery '*Njuke Ngozi Butchery*' to practice his reputable knowledge and skills. There he trained some of his dedicated students in Hygienic Food Handling and Meat Retail Cuts (*Beef, Pork, Mutton and Poultry*). His vision and enthusiasm inspired him to expand his business. In January 1986, he started operating '*Njuke Ngozi Meat Center and Restaurant*' at '*Kerr Gorgi Pierre*' in Bakau Newtown. This was an ambitious project, well planned and executed. It served as a model hygienic food establishment. On Monday, 29 November, 1993, President Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, the 1st President of the Republic of The Gambia, visited the center in the midst of several Gambian entrepreneurs.

P.S.W. was a man par excellence and a highly sociable person. He had strong Catholic orientation. He socialized with the people of faith and fostered this relationship by arranging Sunday meals with his friends and international students. His wife, Late Elizabeth Theresa Shyngle (*Auntie Elsie*) had always joyously attended to P.S.W. and his associates. December 23 was an anticipated day of Shyngle's wedding anniversary and his friends traditionally gathered at his Fajara residence to celebrate the occasion; these were days never forgotten.

Pierre Shyngle was a Founder Member of the Knights of St. Peter & St. Paul, inaugurated in June 1989. His background knowledge in Building Science and Technology enabled his participation in the construction of the Headquarters at Bertil Harding Highway/OIC Highway. He was a passionate and tireless Knight who rose to the position of a Patron Knight. Indeed, he was a Noble Knight who regularly and punctually attended all the meetings and functions until his health started failing him.

Pierre Simon Walter Shyngle was a gentleman, highly principled and a renowned entrepreneur in the food industry. May his services to the Gambia be rewarded in eternity. AMEN.

CONTACT THE GPI COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

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TRIBUTE TO A CHILDHOOD FRIEND JOHN BIOKU BROWN

(COMMONLY CALLED J.B. BY HIS COMRADES, THE CASUALS) - 1952-2025



By Philip Saine

When we look at J.B. we see a man with deep faith and highly sociable. He grew up at **Forster Kunda (Kerr Forster) 3 Ingram Street, Banjul**. The Boys of Banjul/Bathurst then, in early ages of 10-15yrs. pride d themselves in belonging to one of the vibrant social clubs in existence all over the city. The clubs served as grooming houses for future

civilians, heads of families and heads of departments. They wrote constitutions, setup goals and objectives, stipulate violations and penalties deemed necessary and elected an executive committee.

The clubs developed characters and democratic principles. They would rival each other; create competitive sporting activities, arts, music and dance. John Brown (J.B.) was a founder member of the **Casuals Social Club** with headquarters at New Primet Street.

Very early in life J.B. Brown identified and developed his technical potentials. He started training as an Electrician under **Jeng's Electrical Company** and then he worked with **Gambia Electrical Company**. He operated tirelessly with several establishments and individuals including Sammy Lie Mboge, Sunwing Hotel, Standard Bank etc. His entrepreneurial spirit led him to establish his own Electrical Company from which he lived a well-invested and admirable life. He became a renowned electrical installation wizard. John Brown raised an adorable family who gave themselves unconditionally to all people. This was the faith built in J. B. Brown.

John Bioku Brown was a steadfast Catholic. He was present at the St. Kizeto's Church opening in June 1992 and consecration in November 1999. He patronized all Feast Day Celebrations. He attended Sunday Masses regularly and would be amongst the last worshippers to leave the church as he found it necessary to do extra prayers and meditation to the Virgin Mary. His wife, Mrs.

Mary Philisteh Brown and beloved children were supportive in his accomplishments.

J.B. Brown - A true and sincere person. He was a great, kind, humanistic and loyal friend. Members of the Casuals Social Club mourn his loss because he was a strong pillar and binding glue within the membership. He portrayed a positive image of the club; showed loyalty and passion. John Brown loved music particularly Salsa and Hunting Dance music which always compel him to move energetically onto the dance floor. J. B. equally loved Kite Flying and cherished good food and drink. He alone knew the location and contact for each Casuals' member after our dispersal from Banjul. He visited all the members and initiated continuous social interactions.

The last group event J.B. hosted was on 21 April 2025. He had good foresights. He advised that each member came along with his children who would form the next generation of The Casuals Social Club. At this gathering John Brown (J.B.) introduced himself to the oldest among the children present urging them to come together; he symbolically was handing over the baton from the older generation to the younger ones.

The legacy of John Bioku Brown serves as a reminder that with determination and hard work, individuals can make a significant difference in their communities. J. B's remarkable story offers valuable lessons in dedication, perseverance, and the pursuit of excellence. This tribute is The Casuals' testimony of great love and respect bestowed onto him as well as to honour his exemplary and most fulfilling life.

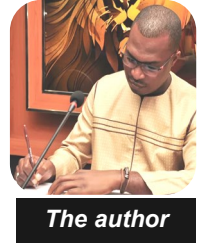
As we remember J.B. let us not focus on the loss but on the productive life, he lived, the love he shared, and the great legacy he leaves behind. We also remember and pray for our deceased members: **Badou Drammeh, Baboucarr Mbye Joof, Tijan Manneh, Amadou (Ams) Jobe and Bunja Dibba.**

May the Holy Spirit give J.B.'s beloved family the strength, understanding and patience to overcome their loss!

*May John Brown enjoy the favour of the Lord!
May his memory be a Blessing! Amen*

Rest in peace our brother!

An advertisement for Karlilu.com Food Service. The top part features the logo, which is a green circle with a white 'K' inside, followed by the text 'karlilu.com' in a bold, sans-serif font, and 'FOOD SERVICE' in a smaller, green, sans-serif font below it. Below the logo, there is a photograph of a bowl of food, which appears to be a salad or a stir-fry with chicken, and a bag of onions. The text 'Simple Instant & Secured' is written in green above the food. The word 'CHICKEN' is written in red above the bowl, and 'ONIONS' is written in red above the bag. The word 'RICE' is written in red above the bag. At the bottom, the text 'Get them on karlilu.com' is written in white on a green background. On the right side, there is a text box with a background image of a globe, containing the following text: 'Karlilu is a business platform that helps people in the diaspora be able to conduct business transactions (purchase goods and services) back home and on the other end provide a global market access to local businesses especially in developing economies. The conduit to bridge the distance gap to home and market or business access.'



The author

When a Government Loses Its National Conscience

Every nation possesses a soul — that unseen moral compass that guides its leaders, inspires its citizens, and defines its destiny. When that soul is corrupted or lost, the state begins to decay from within. The philosopher Thomas Jefferson once warned, “When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty.” In the Gambia of today, one cannot but ask: has our government lost its national conscience?

Over time and space, The Gambia — once hailed as the “Smiling Coast of Africa” — has transformed into an aberration of what a nation should be. The moral fibre that once held the country together seems to be fraying. The government, rather than embodying the ideals of justice, fairness, and service to the people, has become a machinery driven by selfish ambition, material gain, and political arrogance. What we now witness is a system that thrives on mediocrity, deception, and insensitivity to the plight of ordinary Gambians.

A government that once promised transformation now appears to have lost its moral bearings. The spirit of patriotism and public service has given way to greed and personal enrichment. Projects and policies that should uplift the people are now tools for political patronage and self-preservation. The government’s conscience — that inner voice that whispers what is right and wrong — has been silenced by the din of corruption, nepotism, and propaganda.

The Erosion of Moral Governance

At the heart of every successful nation lies moral leadership — leaders who feel the pulse of their people and act in the best interest of all. The late Nelson Mandela said, “A leader is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.” Sadly, the Gambian leadership today seems far removed from this wisdom. Instead of leading with empathy and humility, it rules with indifference and pride.

Consider the state of public services in The Gambia. Hospitals are in dire conditions, schools are underfunded, roads are deteriorating, and the youth — once the nation’s greatest hope — roam the streets unemployed and disillusioned. The government, rather than addressing these fundamental challenges, engages in cosmetic projects meant to impress rather than impact. Policies are announced with fanfare but implemented with mediocrity. Committees are set up, reports are written, but nothing changes. The conscience of governance — accountability — has been traded for political convenience.

Even more troubling is the normalization of corruption and the celebration of mediocrity. When those who loot the national treasury are rewarded with promotions or protected by political alliances, it sends a dangerous message to society: that integrity no longer matters. The Gambia’s current political atmosphere reeks of hypocrisy. Ministers and public officials who should embody public trust have turned governance into a private business. The people’s welfare has become secondary to the quest for power and wealth.

When the People Suffer and the State Feigns Ignorance

A government that has lost its national conscience no longer feels the pain of its people. It becomes deaf to the cries of the oppressed and blind to the poverty that engulfs its citizens. As Victor Hugo once said, “He who opens a school door, closes a prison.” Yet in today’s Gambia, the opposite seems true. The education sector is neglected, while unemployment and crime rise steadily. The government has become numb to the sufferings of its citizens — a dangerous sign that the moral compass of governance has broken.

Go to the local markets of Serekunda, Brikama, or Farafenni, and you will see the face of a forgotten people. Prices of basic commodities have skyrocketed, transport costs are unbearable, and yet salaries remain stagnant. Civil servants, teachers, and health workers are struggling to make ends meet. The government, instead of cushioning the people, keeps introducing new taxes and levies that further strangle the common man. What conscience remains in a government that burdens its poor while its officials live in affluence?

Equally disheartening is the widening gap between the government and the governed. The promises of transparency and accountability that ushered in the new dispensation have vanished into thin air. What we now witness is a government that thrives on propaganda — a system more concerned with image than impact. Policies are not guided by the interest of the people but by political survival. It is as if the rulers have forgotten that power is a trust, not a trophy.

The Loss of Institutional Integrity

Institutions are the conscience of a democracy. When they fail, the nation drifts into moral and political chaos. The Gambian civil service, once respected for its professionalism, has become an instrument of political manipulation. Appointments are no longer based on merit but on loyalty and tribe. The judiciary, which should stand as the last hope of the common man, is increasingly perceived as compromised or slow. The legislature, instead of being a voice of the people, often acts as an echo chamber for the executive.

Such institutional decay breeds hopelessness and distrust. When the people lose faith in their institutions, they lose faith in the state itself. The Gambia, sadly, is treading that dangerous path. The national conscience — once rooted in values of honesty, service, and integrity — is being replaced by opportunism and moral indifference. As the late Chinua Achebe observed, “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.” The same can now be said of The Gambia.

The Cost of a Lost Conscience

When a government loses its national conscience, the consequences are profound and far-reaching. The social fabric weakens. The youth, unable to see a future in their homeland, take to the perilous journey across the Mediterranean in search of hope. Families are torn apart. Crime and moral decadence rise. The country becomes a

playground for corruption and exploitation. The people begin to lose faith not only in their government but also in the idea of their nation.

The loss of national conscience also leads to a decline in patriotism. When people see that honesty no longer pays and that corruption is rewarded, they lose the incentive to be good citizens. The moral order collapses. Public trust, once broken, is difficult to restore. The Gambia today stands at that crossroads. The people are disillusioned, the economy is fragile, and the future seems uncertain.

It is not enough for a government to build roads or inaugurate projects. True development is measured by how much the government uplifts the human spirit — how it protects the vulnerable, empowers the weak, and restores dignity to its citizens. A nation without moral direction cannot prosper, no matter how many international conferences it attends or how many loans it secures.

The Way Back to Conscience

Yet, all hope is not lost. The Gambia can still find its moral compass if its leaders are willing to listen — not with their ears, but with their hearts. The government must reawaken its sense of responsibility and moral duty to the people. Governance must once again be guided by conscience, not convenience. Policies must reflect empathy, not ego. Leadership must be rooted in humility, not hubris.

The fight for national conscience begins with truth. The government must be honest with itself and with the people. It must admit where it has failed and commit to

reform. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” If that is true, then The Gambia must begin to rethink how it treats its own citizens — not as subjects to be exploited but as partners in development.

Civil society, the media, the clergy, and ordinary citizens all have a role to play in this moral rebirth. The conscience of a nation is not the property of government alone; it belongs to every Gambian who desires a better future. Silence in the face of injustice is complicity. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Conclusion

The Gambia today stands at a moral crossroad. The path of conscience leads to renewal, progress, and justice. The path of moral decay leads to collapse and despair. The choice is ours — and the time to act is now. A government that has lost its national conscience must either rediscover it or risk losing the nation altogether. For when the government ceases to feel, to care, and to serve, the people will eventually rise to reclaim their destiny.

As history teaches, no government can endure for long when it stands on the ruins of its own morality. The Gambia must therefore rise again — not through political slogans or hollow promises, but through a rebirth of conscience, integrity, and humanity. Only then can we truly say we are a nation that smiles again — not because of pretense, but because our soul and conscience have been restored.



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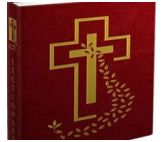
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Daily Mass Readings

December 2025 & January 2026

**1 December, 2025 – Monday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 4](#): 2-6Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 122](#): 1-2, 3-4b, 4cd-5, 6-7, 8-9Alleluia: [Psalms 80](#): 4Gospel: [Matthew 8](#): 5-11**2 December, 2025 – Tuesday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 11](#): 1-10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 72](#): 1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17Gospel: [Luke 10](#): 21-24**3 December, 2025 – Wednesday**

Francis Xavier, Priest, Missionary Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Isaiah 25](#): 6-10aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalms 23](#): 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6Gospel: [Matthew 15](#): 29-37**4 December, 2025 – Thursday**

Advent Weekday/ John of Damascus, Priest, Religious, Doctor

First Reading: [Isaiah 26](#): 1-6Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 118](#): 1 and 8-9, 19-21, 25-27aAlleluia: [Isaiah 55](#): 6Gospel: [Matthew 7](#): 21, 24-27**5 December, 2025 – Friday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 29](#): 17-24Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 27](#): 1, 4, 13-14Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 27-31**6 December, 2025 – Saturday**

Advent Weekday/ Nicholas, Bishop

First Reading: [Isaiah 30](#): 19-21, 23-26Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 147](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6Alleluia: [Isaiah 33](#): 22Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 35 – 10: 1, 5a, 6-8**7 December, 2025 – Sunday**

Second Sunday of Advent

First Reading: [Isaiah 11](#): 1-10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 72](#): 1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17Second Reading: [Romans 15](#): 4-9Alleluia: [Luke 3](#): 4, 6Gospel: [Matthew 3](#): 1-12**8 December, 2025 – Monday**

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Solemnity, Holy Day of Obligation

First Reading: [Genesis 3](#): 9-15, 20Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 98](#): 1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4Second Reading: [Ephesians 1](#): 3-6, 11-12Alleluia: [Luke 1](#): 28Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 26-38**9 December, 2025 – Tuesday**

Advent Weekday/ Juan Diego, Hermit

First Reading: [Isaiah 40](#): 1-11Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 96](#): 1-2, 3 and 10ac, 11-12, 13Gospel: [Matthew 18](#): 12-14**10 December, 2025 – Wednesday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 40](#): 25-31Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 103](#): 1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10Gospel: [Matthew 11](#): 28-30**11 December, 2025 – Thursday**

Advent Weekday/ Damasus I, Pope

First Reading: [Isaiah 41](#): 13-20Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 145](#): 1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13abAlleluia: [Isaiah 45](#): 8Gospel: [Matthew 11](#): 11-15**12 December, 2025 – Friday**

Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast

First Reading: [Zechariah 2](#): 14-17 or [Revelation 11](#): 19a; 12: 1-6a, 10abResponsorial Psalm: [Judith 13](#): 18bcde, 19Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 26-38 or [Luke 1](#): 39-47**13 December, 2025 – Saturday**

Lucy, Virgin, Martyr Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Sirach 48](#): 1-4, 9-11Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 80](#): 2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19Alleluia: [Luke 3](#): 4, 6Gospel: [Matthew 17](#): 9a, 10-13**14 December, 2025 – Sunday**

Third Sunday of Advent

First Reading: [Isaiah 35](#): 1-6a, 10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 146](#): 6-7, 8-9a, 9bc-10Second Reading: [James 5](#): 7-10Alleluia: [Isaiah 61](#): 1Gospel: [Matthew 11](#): 2-11**15 December, 2025 – Monday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Numbers 24](#): 2-7, 15-17Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 25](#): 4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9Alleluia: [Psalms 85](#): 8Gospel: [Matthew 21](#): 23-27**16 December 2025 – Tuesday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Zephaniah 3](#): 1-2, 9-13Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 34](#): 2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 and 23Gospel: [Matthew 21](#): 28-32**17 December, 2025 – Wednesday**

Advent Weekday (O Sapientia)

First Reading: [Genesis 49](#): 2, 8-10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 72](#): 1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17Gospel: [Matthew 1](#): 1-17**18 December, 2025 – Thursday**

Advent Weekday (O Adonai)

First Reading: [Jeremiah 23](#): 5-8Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 72](#): 1-2, 12-13, 18-19Gospel: [Matthew 1](#): 18-25

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19 December, 2025 – Friday

Advent Weekday (O Radix Jesse)

First Reading: [Judges 13](#): 2-7, 24-25a

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 71](#): 3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17

Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 5-25

20 December, 2025 – Saturday

Advent Weekday (O Clavis David)

First Reading: [Isaiah 7](#): 10-14

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

Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 26-38

21 December, 2025 – Sunday

Fourth Sunday of Advent (O Oriens)

First Reading: [Isaiah 7](#): 10-14

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

Second Reading: [Romans 1](#): 1-7

Alleluia: [Matthew 1](#): 23

Gospel: [Matthew 1](#): 18-24

22 December, 2025 – Monday

Advent Weekday (O Rex Gentium)

First Reading: [First Samuel 1](#): 24-28

Responsorial Psalm: [First Samuel 2](#): 1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd

Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 46-56

23 December, 2025 – Tuesday

Advent Weekday (O Emmanuel)/ John of Kanty, Priest

First Reading: [Malachi 3](#): 1-4, [4](#): 5-6

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 25](#): 4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14

Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 57-66

24 December, 2025 – Wednesday

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Second Samuel 7](#): 1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 89](#): 2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29

Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 67-79

25 December, 2025 – Thursday

The Nativity of the Lord Solemnity – Vigil

First Reading: [Isaiah 62](#): 1-5

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 89](#): 4-5, 16-17, 27, 29

Second Reading: [Acts 13](#): 16-17, 22-25

Gospel: [Matthew 1](#): 1-25

25 December, 2025 – Thursday

The Nativity of the Lord Solemnity – Midnight

First Reading: [Isaiah 9](#): 1-6

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 96](#): 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13

Second Reading: [Titus 2](#): 11-14

Alleluia: [Luke 2](#): 10-11

Gospel: [Luke 2](#): 1-14

25 December, 2025 – Thursday

The Nativity of the Lord Solemnity – Dawn

First Reading: [Isaiah 62](#): 11-12

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 97](#): 1, 6, 11-12

Second Reading: [Titus 3](#): 4-7

Alleluia: [Luke 2](#): 14

Gospel: [Luke 2](#): 15-20

25 December, 2025 – Thursday

The Nativity of the Lord Solemnity – Day

First Reading: [Isaiah 52](#): 7-10

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 98](#): 1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6

Second Reading: [Hebrews 1](#): 1-6

Gospel: [John 1](#): 1-18

26 December, 2025 – Friday

Stephen, Protomartyr Feast

First Reading: [Acts 6](#): 8-10; 7: 54-59

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 31](#): 3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17

Alleluia: [Psalms 118](#): 26a, 27a

Gospel: [Matthew 10](#): 17-22

27 December, 2025 – Saturday

John, Apostle, Evangelist Feast

First Reading: [First John 1](#): 1-4

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 97](#): 1-2, 5-6, 11-12

Gospel: [John 20](#): 1a and 2-8

28 December, 2025 – Sunday

Holy Family Feast

First Reading: [Sirach 3](#): 2-6, 12-14

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 128](#): 1-2, 3, 4-5

Second Reading: [Colossians 3](#): 12-21 or [Colossians 3](#): 12-17

Alleluia: [Colossians 3](#): 15a, 16a

Gospel: [Matthew 2](#): 13-15, 19-23

29 December, 2025 – Monday

Christmas Weekday/ Thomas Becket, Bishop, Martyr

First Reading: [First John 2](#): 3-11

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 96](#): 1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6

Alleluia: [Luke 2](#): 32

Gospel: [Luke 2](#): 22-35

30 December, 2025 – Tuesday

Christmas Weekday

First Reading: [First John 2](#): 12-17

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 96](#): 7-8a, 8b-9, 10

Gospel: [Luke 2](#): 36-40

31 December, 2025 – Wednesday

Christmas Weekday/ Sylvester I, Pope

First Reading: [First John 2](#): 18-21

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 96](#): 1-2, 11-12, 13

Alleluia: [John 1](#): 14a, 12a

Gospel: [John 1](#): 1-18

1 January, 2026 – Thursday

Mary, Mother of God Solemnity (Octave of Christmas).

Holy day of Obligation.

First Reading: [Numbers 6](#): 22-27

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 67](#): 2-3, 5, 6, 8

Second Reading: [Galatians 4](#): 4-7

Alleluia: [Hebrews 1](#): 1-2

Gospel: [Luke 2](#): 16-21

2 January 2026 – Friday

Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops,

Doctors Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First John 2](#): 22-28

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 98](#): 1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4

Alleluia: [Hebrews 1](#): 1-2

Gospel: [John 1](#): 19-28

3 January 2026 – Saturday

Christmas Weekday/ Holy Name of Jesus

First Reading: [First John 2](#): 29 – 3: 6

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 98](#): 1, 3cd-4, 5-6

Alleluia: [John 1](#): 14a, 12a

Gospel: [John 1](#): 29-34

4 January, 2026 – Sunday

Epiphany of the Lord Solemnity

First Reading: [Isaiah 60](#): 1-6

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 72](#): 1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

Second Reading: [Ephesians 3](#): 2-3a, 5-6

Alleluia: [Matthew 2](#): 2

Gospel: [Matthew 2](#): 1-12

5 January, 2026 – Monday

John Neumann, Bishop Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First John 3](#): 22 – 4: 6

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 2](#): 7bc-8, 10-11

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 23

Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 12-17, 23-25

6 January, 2026 – Tuesday

Christmas Weekday/ André Bessette, Religious

First Reading: [First John 4](#): 7-10

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 72](#): 1-2, 3-4, 7-8

Alleluia: [Luke 4](#): 18

Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 34-44

7 January, 2026 – Wednesday

Christmas Weekday/ Raymond of Peñafort, Priest

First Reading: [First John 4](#): 11-18

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 72](#): 1-2, 10, 12-13

Alleluia: [First Timothy 3](#): 16

Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 45-52

8 January, 2026 – Thursday

Christmas Weekday

First Reading: [First John 4](#): 19 – 5: 4

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 72](#): 1-2, 14 and 15bc, 17

Alleluia: [Luke 4](#): 18

Gospel: [Luke 4](#): 14-22

9 January, 2026 – Friday

Christmas Weekday

First Reading: [First John 5](#): 5-13

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 147](#): 12-13, 14-15, 19-20

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 23

Gospel: [Luke 5](#): 12-16

10 January, 2026 – Saturday

Christmas Weekday

First Reading: [First John 5](#): 14-21

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

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 16

Gospel: [John 3](#): 22-30

11 January, 2026 – Sunday

Baptism of the Lord Feast

First Reading: [Isaiah 42](#): 1-4, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 29](#): 1-2, 3-4, 9-10

Second Reading: [Acts 10](#): 34-38

Alleluia: [Mark 9](#): 7

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

12 January, 2026 – Monday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Samuel 1](#): 1-8

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 116](#): 12-13, 14-16, 18-19

Alleluia: [Mark 1](#): 15

Gospel: [Mark 1](#): 14-20

13 January, 2026 – Tuesday

Ordinary Weekday/ Hilary, Bishop, Doctor

First Reading: [First Samuel 1](#): 9-20

Responsorial Psalm: [First Samuel 2](#): 1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd

Alleluia: [First Thessalonians 2](#): 13

Gospel: [Mark 1](#): 21-28

14 January, 2026 – Wednesday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Samuel 3](#): 1-10, 19-20

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 40](#): 2 and 5, 7-8a, 8b-9, 10

Alleluia: [John 10](#): 27

Gospel: [Mark 1](#): 29-39

15 January, 2026 – Thursday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Samuel 4](#): 1-11

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 44](#): 10-11, 14-15, 24-25

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 23

Gospel: [Mark 1](#): 40-45

16 January, 2026 – Friday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Samuel 8](#): 4-7, 10-22a

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 89](#): 16-17, 18-19

Alleluia: [Luke 7](#): 16

Gospel: [Mark 2](#): 1-12

17 January, 2026 – Saturday

Anthony, Abbot Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Samuel 9](#): 1-4, 17-19; 10: 1

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 21](#): 2-3, 4-5, 6-7

Alleluia: [Luke 4](#): 18

Gospel: [Mark 2](#): 13-17

18 January, 2026 – Sunday

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Isaiah 49](#): 3, 5-6

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 40](#): 2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

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

Alleluia: [John 1](#): 14a, 12a

Gospel: [John 1](#): 29-34

19 January, 2026 – Monday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Samuel 15](#): 16-23

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 50](#): 8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23

Alleluia: [Hebrews 4](#): 12

Gospel: [Mark 2](#): 18-22

20 January, 2026 – Tuesday

Ordinary Weekday/ Fabian, Pope, Martyr/ Sebastian, Martyr

First Reading: [First Samuel 16](#): 1-13

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 89](#): 20, 21-22, 27-28

Alleluia: [Ephesians 1](#): 17-18

Gospel: [Mark 2](#): 23-28

21 January, 2026 – Wednesday

Agnes, Virgin, Martyr Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Samuel 17](#): 32-33, 37, 40-51

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 144](#): 1b, 2, 9-10

As we continued the season: "Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, whose entry into our world we celebrate all the way through. Fill our hearts with the peace that only He provides. Amen."

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 23
Gospel: [Mark 3](#): 1-6

22 January, 2026 – Thursday

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Samuel 18](#): 6-9; 19: 1-7

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 56](#): 2-3, 9-10a, 10b-12, 13-14

Alleluia: [Second Timothy 1](#): 10

Gospel: [Mark 3](#): 7-12

23 January, 2026 – Friday

Ordinary Weekday/ Vincent of Saragossa, deacon, Martyr/ Marianne Cope, Virgin

First Reading: [First Samuel 24](#): 3-21

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 57](#): 2, 3-4, 6 and 11

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

Gospel: [Mark 3](#): 13-19

24 January, 2026 – Saturday

Francis De Sales, Bishop, Religious Founder, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Second Samuel 1](#): 1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 80](#): 2-3, 5-7

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

Gospel: [Mark 3](#): 20-21

25 January, 2026 – Sunday

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Isaiah 8](#): 23 – 9: 3

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 27](#): 1, 4, 13-14

Second Reading: [First Corinthians 1](#): 10-13, 17

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 23

Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 12-23 or [Matthew 4](#): 12-17

26 January, 2026 – Monday

Timothy and Titus, Bishops Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Second Timothy 1](#): 1-8 or [Titus 1](#): 1-5

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 96](#): 1-2a, 2b-3, 7-8a, 10

Alleluia: [Second Timothy 1](#): 10

Gospel: [Mark 3](#): 22-30

27 January, 2026 – Tuesday

Ordinary Weekday/ Angela Merici, Virgin, Religious Founder

First Reading: [Second Samuel 6](#): 12b-15, 17-19

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 24](#): 7, 8, 9, 10

Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25

Gospel: [Mark 3](#): 31-35

28 January, 2026 – Wednesday

Thomas Aquinas, Priest, Religious, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Second Samuel 7](#): 4-17

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 89](#): 4-5, 27-28, 29-30

Gospel: [Mark 4](#): 1-20

29 January, 2026 – Thursday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Second Samuel 7](#): 18-19, 24-29

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 132](#): 1-2, 3-5, 11, 12, 13-14

Alleluia: [Psalms 119](#): 105

Gospel: [Mark 4](#): 21-25

30 January, 2026 – Friday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Second Samuel 11](#): 1-4a, 5-10a, 13-17

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 51](#): 3-4, 5-6a, 6bcd-7, 10-11

Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25

Gospel: [Mark 4](#): 26-34

31 January, 2026 – Saturday

This exciting program brings together children from various churches and communities for a full day of learning, fun, and Christmas celebration. The aim is to help our children grow in confidence, character, and Christian values as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.



A festive poster for 'Boxing Day Fun'. At the top left is the 'RADIO VERITAS' logo. The main title 'BOXING DAY' is in large, red, stylized letters, with 'fun' in a black script font below it. To the right, two children wearing Santa hats are shown with joyful expressions. Below the title, the date 'Fri. DEC. 26, 2025' and location 'GPI Grounds' are listed. At the bottom, a dark green banner contains the text 'To Register or Support 700 6955 or 378 3711' and 'Registration: D200 Only'. A yellow banner in the bottom right corner says 'DRESSCODE A touch of Christmas colors'.



December & January

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

14th January, 1972: Presentation of Mary Sisters 'Shalom Retreat Centre' was established.

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

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

3rd January, 1978: Opening of Christ the King, Darsilami.

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

5th December, 1987: First pilgrimage to Kunkujang Mariama.

21st January, 1989: Ordination at Kanifing of Fr. Anthony Sonko.

28th December, 1989: The second pastoral assembly opened at St. Peter's Technical High School, Lamin and included participation of the laity.

1st January, 1995: Death in Ireland of Fr. Michael Flynn.

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

31st December, 1999: The death of Bishop Michael Maloney C.S.Sp.

29th December, 2005: Abbé Blaise Malou and a group from Balandine, Casamance, began a 4-day visit to Fatima Parish, Bwiam.

During January 2007: 'Working with the poor' was the focus of a 10-day meeting at Shalom of 43 Presentation Sisters from 10 countries.

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

17th January, 2010: Blessed Sacrament, Kanifing Estate, became an independent parish.

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

29th December, 2012: Sr. Calixte Thomas left for India, her home country, after many years in educational work in The Gambia.

3rd January, 2014: Bishop Robert Ellison received the keys of Centenary House, the new commercial building at Kairaba Avenue.

24th January, 2015: Ordination of Fr. James Mendy and Fr. Tanislas Ndecky.

14th January, 2021: Death of Thomas Gregory George Senghore 'TGG', a renowned Gambian Catholic.

20th January, 2021: First Christian radio, Radio Veritas, inaugurated in The Gambia at GPI.

23rd - 30th January, 2022: The ITCABIC Bishop's Conference took place in GPI. The conference comprised of 5 Bishops, 4 from Sierra Leone and our own Bishop, 2 secretaries, 2 rectors, 4 and the Nuncio.

During December, 1823: Arrival of Hannah Kilham and English Quaker missionaries, who opened an agricultural centre at Bakau and a girls' school in Banjul.

18th January, 1848: Arrival of Fr. Ronarc'h from France, and Fr. Warlop from Belgium, to begin the Catholic mission.

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

9th January, 1881: Death, from pneumonia, of Fr. Samba, first Gambian priest. He had been ordained in 1869.

3rd December, 1887: Fr. Massart died while saying the Last Gospel at the conclusion of Mass.

12th January, 1920: The SS Afrique, en route to Dakar from Bordeaux, sank at sea. Among the 563 who perished were Bishop Jalabert of Dakar and 18 missionaries.

19th December, 1931: Last entry in French in the Mission Journal, the Mission having been declared self-governing.

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

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

15th January, 1936: Fr. Harold Whiteside inaugurated Bwiam mission.

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

16th December, 1952: Departure of Fr. Coughlin after four years in The Gambia.

3rd December, 1953: Arrival from Nigeria of Fr. Michael Frawley to be Principal of St. Augustine's High School, Banjul, where he remained for 7 years.

24th December, 1954: Arrival of Fr. Michael Flynn.

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

24th December, 1957: Fr. Michael Moloney was appointed first Bishop of Banjul; the announcement was not made locally until 12 days later.

10th January, 1962: Arrival of Fr. Vincent Comer CSSp.

8th January, 1964: Bishop Moloney blessed St Martin's Church, Kartong.

13th January, 1965: Bishop Moloney returned at the end of Vatican II.

The Editor and Staff of The Diocese of Banjul Newsletter wish everyone a Happy and Holy Christmas with also a prosperous New Year.

Weekday Celebrations

December & January



3rd December, Feast Day *St. Francis Xavier, priest*

FRANCIS was born in Spain on 7th April, 1506. In Paris, he met Ignatius Loyola and became one of the first Jesuits. He was ordained in 1537, and in 1542, embarked on a three-year mission to India, and also established missions in Malaysia. In 1549, he went to Japan, and in 1551 returned to India. He died on 3 December, 1552, suffering from fever on the island of Sancian (Shangchuan, off the Chinese coast) as he attempted to secure entrance to the country, then closed to foreigners. Francis is believed to have baptised about 30,000 converts. His success was partly due to his adaptation of Christianity to local cultures. In 1927, he was named patron of all missions.



7th December, Feast Day *St. Ambrose, doctor of the Church*

AMBROSE is one of the four great Latin Doctors of the Church (the others being Augustine, Jerome and Gregory). He was born in Trier (in modern-day Italy) in 339 and became a celebrated lawyer. When the bishopric of Milan fell vacant around 374, he was acclaimed bishop – though still a catechumen, and not yet baptised. Ambrose's statesmanship and theological skills enabled him to convert many pagans. He combated Arianism (the heresy which denies the Holy Trinity). He imposed a public penance on the Emperor Theodosius I for condoning a massacre. He converted and baptised St. Augustine. Ambrose died in 397. His bishop's throne may still be seen in Milan.

8th December, Feast day *The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

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

26th December, Feast Day *St. Stephen, first Christian martyr*

LIKE his Master, Jesus, Stephen was unjustly condemned by the religious authorities. And like Jesus, before his agonising death, Stephen prayed that his persecutors might be forgiven. He was granted a vision of the risen Christ. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Coming immediately after Christmas Day, St. Stephen's Day reminds us that the Babe of Bethlehem was born to suffer and to die. (See Acts, chapters 6 and 7).

2nd January, Feast Day *St. Basil & St. Gregory Nazianzen, doctors of the Church*

BASIL and Gregory were close friends and great figures of the Eastern Church in the 4th century. Basil had a brilliant academic career, but longed for a life of solitude. After extensive travels, he gave away most of his possessions and devoted himself to founding religious communities, writing an austere 'rule' which is still observed today.

Gregory was Bishop of Constantinople (now Istanbul). Because of his great learning, he was known as 'Gregory the Theologian'. Gregory eventually retired and returned to his monastery. He summed up his life and Basil's thus: 'Our great concern, our great name, was to be Christians, and to be called Christians.'

28th January, Feast Day *St. Thomas Aquinas, doctor of the Church*

BORN in Aquino, Sicily, in 1225, Thomas studied in Naples and taught in Paris. He integrated the teaching of the Greek philosopher Aristotle into Christian thought, asserting that the theologian starts with faith and proceeds through reason. He died in 1274. In 1567, he was named a Doctor of the Church, and in 1879 was proclaimed by Pope Leo XIII as a champion of orthodoxy. Thomas wrote more than 80 works. He is pre-eminent as a writer of liturgical texts, which combine clarity with beauty. Gambian Catholics are familiar with Thomas' Benediction hymns, O salutaris Hostia ('O saving Victim') and Tantum ergo sacramentum (Therefore, we before him bending').



Our Religious Obligations

KUNKUJANG PILGRIMAGE 37th Annual Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace



The act of pilgrimage

On this day, large numbers of Catholics and others, converge at Kunkujang Mariama, The Gambia for the pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace, held annually, mostly on the Saturdays, nearest to the Immaculate Conception. This year's pilgrimage holds on 13th December, 2025

In Senegal, since 1888, a pilgrimage to Our Lady's shrine at Poponguine at Pentecost has been held on Senegal's Petite Côte. Around 1986, a group of lay people suggested to Bishop Cleary that a Marian shrine should, likewise, be established in The Gambia.

It was eventually decided to locate the shrine at Kunkujang. Organising the first pilgrimage was a tremendous challenge.

After the first pilgrimage in 1987, it was realised that extended facilities were needed. Bishop Cleary provided a D50,000 loan. The Presentation Sisters there after helped identify a new site for the grotto.

Fr. John Sharpe described the shrine committee of those days as indefatigable.

The Shrine Church at Kunkujang, opened by Bishop Ellison in February 2007 and costing more than D200,000 seats 1,200.

The church features murals by Eleanor Yates, an American artist Fr. Sharpe met by chance in Ireland.

In recent years, in addition to the December pilgrimage, a second pilgrimage to Kunkujang Mariama takes place on the first Saturday of Lent.

ATTENDING EVERY SUNDAY MASS AND HOLY DAY

At Christmas, many Catholics who have been slack at attending Sunday Mass, would like to receive Communion.

For them, and for all Catholics, here are reminders below:

- To remain in good standing in the Church, all Catholics must attend Mass every Sunday and Holy

day of Obligation, unless they are genuinely unable to do so.

- All Catholics must receive Holy Communion at least once a year, during Easter Time – though they are encouraged to receive Communion more frequently.

- Holy Communion may only be received at Mass by Catholics, who are in a state of grace with respect to attendance at every Sunday Mass, and in every basic moral regard.

- If you have not been regular at Sunday Mass, or are aware of any grave sin, you must make confession before a priest and receive absolution. Then - and only then - may you receive Holy Communion, in faith and with joy.

Would you like to say Morning and Evening Prayer every day in company with priests and Lay-people throughout the world? **Go to Universalis.com website**

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December 2025 & January 2026

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



Our Sunday Readings

7th December, 2025
Second Sunday of Advent, Year A

1st Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17
2nd Reading: Romans 15:4-9
Alleluia: Luke 3:4, 6
Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

Homily Theme: Repent For The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand! – Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-6

Verse of the Day Reflections: On this, the Second Sunday of Advent, we are given the person of St. John the Baptist to ponder. What a gift he is! Jesus Himself stated that “among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11). What a compliment! What is it that made John so great? We can point to two things in particular. The first has to do with his calling and the second has to do with his virtue. First of all, John was great because he was the transition from the Old Testament Prophets to the New Testament. He was the bridge that prepared for the new life to come. His unique mission makes him truly great. But John was great not only because of his unique calling, but he was also great because of the virtue he had in his life. And it is this gift that is worth pondering for our own inspiration more than any other. The particular virtue that John had was that of humility. He saw himself as nothing other than a “voice of one crying out in the desert.” And the Word he spoke was Jesus. John acknowledged that he was not even worthy to stoop down and untie the sandal straps of Jesus (Mark 1:7). He was praised by many and followed by many and yet he continuously said of Jesus that “He must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30). John was not in it for praise and honour; rather, his mission was to point everyone to the Savior of the world. He could have sought the honor and praise of many and he would have certainly received it. They may have even made him king. But John was more than willing to fulfill his mission and then submit himself to the cruel sword of his executioner. His humility was such that he was focused only on Jesus and desired only to point to Him.

Reflect, today, upon this humility in your own life. Do you tend to point to yourself or to Christ? Do you seek the praise of others or do you humbly point all praise and glory to God? Humility is the path that St. John the Baptist took and it's the path we must strive for each and every day.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the gift of St. John the Baptist. May his witness of humility inspire me in my Christian walk. Help me, Lord, to always point others to You rather than to myself. Jesus, I love You. Amen.

14th December, 2025
Third Sunday of Advent, Year A

1st Reading: Isaiah 35:1-6A, 10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10
2nd Reading: James 5:7-10
Alleluia: Isaiah 61:1
Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

Homily Theme: Blessed is the One Who Takes No Offense at Jesus – Luke 7:18-23

Verse of the Day Reflections: Jesus speaks here of those who are “blind, lame, lepers, deaf, dead and poor.” Each one of these people are identified as being blessed by the ministry of Jesus. As we continue to get closer to Christmas we must continue to look at our weakness. We must see how we, too, are blind, lame, a leper, etc. Of course these physical ailments point to something much deeper. They point to the spiritual ailments that we all encounter. Jesus also says something quite interesting. He says, “And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.” Why would we be offended by Jesus? What is this all about? Jesus is perfectly direct and honest. In fact, He obviously speaks nothing but pure truth. The hard part is that, at times, the truth can hurt. We can go through life thinking that we are healthy and well, spiritually speaking, and as a result, we can tend to think that we do not need the truth Jesus came to preach. In that case, when we are confronted with our sin or any truth we struggle with, we can be offended by Christ.

Reflect, today, upon how completely open you are to the full truth of the Gospel. Are you ready and willing to listen to everything Jesus proclaims? Are you ready and willing to accept the full Gospel in your life? Let Advent be a time when you deepen your resolve to listen and heed all that our Lord wants to say to you. And if you see yourself “offended” in any way, know that the area of offense is most likely the area you need to work on the most.

Prayer: Lord, help me in the Advent season to continue to prepare my heart for You. Help me to listen to Your Word and to heed all that You have to say. May I follow You in all things and above all things and never be offended by Your Word. Jesus, I love You. Amen.



21st December, 2025
Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A

1st Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
2nd Reading: Romans 1:1-7
Alleluia: Matthew 1:23
Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

Homily Theme: Joseph, Do Not Be Afraid To Take Mary as Your Wife – Matthew 1:18-25

Verse of the Day Reflections Saint Joseph is a man that we know little about, but think about the importance of his role in salvation history. He was entrusted with the Son of God as his little child. Joseph was faced with the perplexing news of Mary's pregnancy, he initially plans to divorce her quietly. At first, he was confused about how Mary could have gotten pregnant, but upon receiving the words of the angel in a dream revealing the divine origin of Mary's child, he accepted this Child as his own and cared for Him with a father's love. Joseph's obedience to God's message demonstrates a deep trust in the divine plan and a willingness to embrace the unconventional. It's significant to note that Saint Joseph embraced the Christ Child because of a dream. But was it only a dream? We all have many dreams and some of them are strange and nonsensical. So why did Saint Joseph rely upon the authenticity of this dream? The answer to this question is quite simple. Even though the dream he had was just that – a dream, it was also accompanied by the gift of faith. Joseph knew, with a certainty beyond human reason, that the voice of God had spoken to him and he responded with generous faith. We may not have dreams through which God speaks to us in the form of an angel, but God does speak to us all day long. He speaks directly to our minds and hearts, and also through the care and mediation of countless hosts of angels in various ways. The angels of God are constantly bringing us divine messages and inspiration. The question is whether or not we are listening. Listening to the voice of God, through the mediation of the angels, is not about us seeing or hearing the angels speak, literally. Rather, it's a matter of discerning this language of love spoken to us and calling us to faith. Listen in the silence of your heart, this day, and allow yourself to follow the glorious witness of Saint Joseph as he responded to our Lord's will with perfect faith and trust.

Prayer: Lord, I long to hear Your sweet voice. I long to know all that You command of me and all that You inspire me to embrace in life. Give me the grace I need, to follow every inspiration in life so that I may fulfil Your perfect and holy will. Jesus, I love You. Amen.

28th December, 2025
Feast of the Holy Family of
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Year A

1st Reading: Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5
2nd Reading: Colossians 3:12-21 or Colossians 3:12-17
Alleluia: Colossians 3:15A, 16A
Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Homily Theme: The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Verse of the Day Reflections: On this, Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, we honor the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In honoring them, we also honor all families, big or small. And in honoring all families, we honour the family of God, the Church. But most especially, we focus in on the hidden, day-to-day life of the Holy Family of Nazareth. What was it like to live day in and day out in the household of St. Joseph? What was it like to have Jesus as a son, Mary as a wife and mother, and Joseph as a father and husband? Their home would have certainly been a sacred place and a dwelling of true peace and unity. But it would have also been so much more. The family home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph would have been, in numerous ways, just like any other home. They would have related together, talked, had fun, disagreed, worked, eaten, dealt with problems, and encountered everything else that makes up daily family life. Of course, the virtues of Jesus and Mary were perfect, and St. Joseph was a truly "just man." Therefore, the overriding characteristic of their home would have been love. But with that said, their family would not have been exempt from the daily toil, hurt, and challenges that face most families. For example, they would have encountered the death of loved ones, St. Joseph most likely died prior to Jesus' public ministry. They would have encountered misunderstandings and gossip from others. This is significant because it reveals God's love for family life. The Father allowed His Divine Son to live this life and, as a result, elevated family life to a place within the Trinity. The holiness of the Holy Family reveals to us that every family is invited to share in God's divine life and to encounter ordinary daily life with grace and virtue.

Reflect, today, upon your own family life. Some families are strong in virtue, and some struggle with basic communication. Some are faithful day in and day out, some are broken and deeply wounded. Surrender yourself and your family, this day, and invite the Triune God to make your family a holy family.

Prayer: Lord, I do offer myself to You this day and in doing so I offer You my family. I offer every relationship, be it good or difficult, and I offer every challenge we face. Please come and sanctify my family, making it holy in imitation of your family in Nazareth. Jesus, I love You. Amen

4th January, 2026
The Epiphany of the Lord

1st Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13
2nd Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3A, 5-6
Alleluia: Matthew 2:2
Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Homily Theme: The Epiphany of the Lord – Matthew 2:1-12

Verse of the Day Reflections: "Epiphany" means manifestation. The "Epiphany of the Lord" is Jesus' manifestation not only to these three Magi from the East, but it's also a symbolic but real manifestation of Christ to the whole world. These Magi, travelling from a foreign and non-Jewish nation, reveal that Jesus came for all people and all are called to adore Him. These Magi were "wise men" who studied the stars and were aware of the Jewish belief

that a Messiah was coming. They would have been versed in much of the wisdom of the day and would have been intrigued by the Jewish belief in the Messiah. God used what they were familiar with to call them to adore Christ. He used a star. They understood the stars and when they saw this new and unique star over Bethlehem they realized that something special was happening. So the first lesson we take from this for our own lives is that God will use what is familiar to us to call us to Himself. Look for the “star” that God is using to call you. It’s closer than you may think. A second thing to note is that the Magi fell prostrate before the Christ Child. They laid their lives down before Him in complete surrender and adoration. They set a perfect example for us. If these astrologers from a foreign land could come and adore Christ in such a profound way, we must do the same. Lastly, the Magi bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These three gifts, presented to our Lord, show that they acknowledged this Child as the Divine King who would die to save us from sin. Gold is for a King, frankincense is a burnt offering to God, and myrrh is used for one who would die. Thus, their adoration is grounded in the truth of who this Child is.

Reflect, today, upon these Magi and see them as a symbol of what you are called to do. You are called from the foreign place of this world to seek out the Messiah.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and adore You. I lay my life before You and surrender all. You are my Divine King and Savior. My life is Yours. (Pray three times and then prostrate yourself before the Lord) Jesus, I love You. Amen.

11th January, 2026 The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Year A

1st Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 Or Isaiah 55:1-11

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 Or Isaiah 12:2-3, 4BCD, 5-6

2nd Reading: Acts 10:34-38 or 1 John 5:1-9

Alleluia: Mark 9:7

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

Homily Theme: This is My Beloved Son With Whom I Am Well Pleased – Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:7-11

Verse of the Day Reflections: Today’s Feast marks the conclusion of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It’s a feast of transition from Jesus’ hidden life to that of His public ministry. It also echoes the theme of the Epiphany in that the Baptism of the Lord is another manifestation announcing Jesus’ divinity to all of His first followers and to the disciples of John the Baptist. First of all, it needs to be pointed out that Jesus did not need the baptism of John. John was baptizing as a call to and sign of interior repentance. Jesus had no need to repent. But, nonetheless, He comes to John. John resists at first but Jesus insists. Why did He receive baptism? First, by accepting the baptism of John, Jesus affirms all that John has said and done and affirms his sacred role of preparing the way for Jesus and for a new era of grace. Therefore, the Baptism of Jesus acts as a bridge between the Old Testament prophets (of which John was the last) and the New Testament era of grace and truth. Second, it has been said that when Jesus entered the waters of baptism, He was not baptized by the waters, rather, His Baptism was one in

which all the created waters of this world were, in a sense, “baptized” by Him. By entering into the waters, Jesus sanctified water and poured forth His grace making all water the future source of salvation. Third, the Baptism of Jesus was an epiphany. It was a moment of manifestation. As He emerged from the waters, “Heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from Heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” This manifestation of the sonship and divinity of Jesus took place in a physical, audible, and visible form so that all present would know, without question, that Jesus was the Son of the Father. Thus, His baptism is a way in which the Father introduced His Son and His Son’s mission to the world. As we prepare to begin Ordinary Time, reflect, today, upon these words of the Father at the Baptism of Jesus. Hear the Father speaking to You about the divinity of His Son. Turn your eyes to Jesus and prepare yourself to follow Him and to heed every word He speaks. He was sent into this world to draw us to the Father, allow Him to fulfill that mission in your own life.

Prayer: Lord, I believe that You are the Son of the Eternal Father and the Savior of the World. I believe that You have brought about a new era of grace and truth and that I am called to follow You wherever You lead. As we begin this liturgical season of Ordinary Time, may it be a time of extraordinary grace in which I daily heed Your voice. Jesus, I love You. Amen.

18th January, 2026 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

1st Reading: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Alleluia: John 1:14A, 12A

Gospel: John 1:29-34

Homily Theme: Lamb of God Who Takes Away the Sin of the World – John 1:29-34

Verse of the Day Reflections: Wow, the insight that St John the Baptist had regarding Jesus is quite inspiring, mysterious, and amazing. He sees Jesus coming toward him and he immediately states three revealed truths about Jesus: Jesus is the Lamb of God; Jesus ranks ahead of John; Jesus existed before John. How would John know all of this? What was the source of such profound statements about Jesus? Most likely John would have studied the Scriptures of the time and would have known the many statements about the coming Messiah spoken by the prophets of old. He would have known the Psalms and the Books of Wisdom. But, first and foremost, John would have known what he knew by the gift of faith. He would have had true spiritual insight granted by God. This fact reveals not only the greatness of John and the depth of his faith, it also reveals the ideal we must strive for in life. We must strive to daily walk by authentic spiritual insight granted by God. It’s not so much that we must live, day by day, in some sort of an evident and prophetic and mystical state. It’s not that we should expect to have superior knowledge over others. But we should be open to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit so as to gain a knowledge and understanding of life that is beyond what mere human reason can acquire by its own effort. John was clearly filled

with Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Fortitude, Reverence and Wonder. These Gifts of the Spirit gave him the ability to live a life sustained by the grace of God. John knew things and understood things that only God could reveal. Commit yourself, this day, to an imitation of John's deep faith and be open to all that God wants to speak to you.

Prayer: My precious Lord Jesus, give me insight and wisdom so that I may know You and believe in You. Help me, each and every day, to discover more fully the great and awe-inspiring mystery of who You are. I love You, my Lord, and I pray that I may come to know and love You all the more. Jesus, I love You. Amen.

25th January, 2026

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

1st Reading: Isaiah 8:23-9:3

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Alleluia: Matthew 4:23

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23 or Matthew 4:12-17

Homily Theme: I Will Make You Fishers of Men – Mark 1:14-20, Matthew 4:18-22

Verse of the Day Reflections: Christmas season is now completed and we enter into the First Week of Ordinary Time. It's time to return to the "ordinary" of life. But is the

Christian life ordinary? Is there anything truly "ordinary" about following Jesus? Today's Gospel reveals the extraordinary and radical call from Jesus to follow Him. Simon and Andrew are the two who respond to the call in this passage, but their response is also an invitation to all of us to step out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary. This passage especially reveals two things: *the immediate response of these Apostles, and *their complete response. They clearly did not hold back or hesitate in responding to the invitation from Jesus to follow Him. What about you? Do you hear Jesus calling you? Do you hear Him speak to you, calling you to come after Him? Hopefully, as our Lord speaks to each one of us, we will respond immediately and in a complete way. Hopefully, we will not hesitate to embrace the glorious calling we each have been given.

Reflect, today, upon the fact that you, too, have been called to an extraordinary life of grace which requires total abandonment and commitment. You have been called to respond immediately and freely to Jesus' invitation. As you begin this liturgical season of Ordinary Time, jump into the extraordinary life of grace and embrace it with your whole heart.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and thank You for the extraordinary life of grace You have called me to live. Help me to respond to Your invitation with complete submission of my mind and will. Jesus, I love You. Amen.

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ADVENT - HE IS COMING AGAIN

BY FR. GABOU SECKA



In Advent, Christians relive a dual impulse of the Spirit; On the one hand, they raise their eyes towards the final destination of their pilgrimage through history, which is the glorious return of the Lord Jesus; on the other, remembering with emotion his birth in Bethlehem. They kneel before the crib. The hope of Christians is turned to the future but remains firmly rooted in an event of the past. In the fullness of time, the Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary: “Born of a woman, born under the law, as the Apostle Paul writes (Ga 4:4).

We are reminded in Advent to overcome our natural diffidence, that God “comes”; He comes to be with us in every situation of ours, he comes to dwell among us, to live with us and within us; He comes to fill the gaps that divide and separate us; He comes to reconcile us with Him and with one another. He comes into human history to knock at the door of every man and every woman of good will, to bring to individuals, families and peoples the gift of brotherhood, harmony and peace. We remain in watchful and active waiting, nourished by prayer and by effective commitment to love.

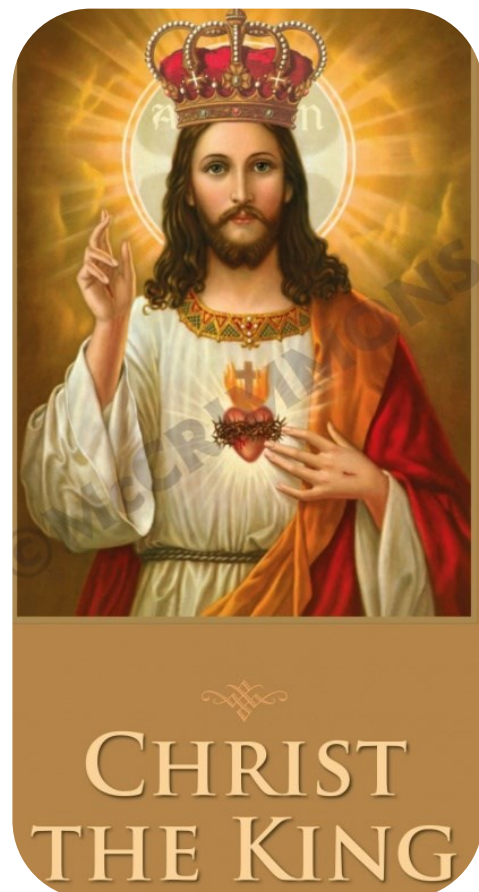
We also contemplate on the glorious coming of Christ. At that time, the Apostles asked the Lord when he spoke about his return. Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall be cold

(Matt. 24:3–12).

It is well to look back to the days of Christ’s humiliation, suffering and death — there to see the awful, infinite price He had to pay for our redemption. However, the first coming of the Lord Jesus was but the first step in a series of events which will culminate in the crowning of this King Jesus with a crown of authority — not a crown of thorns. Then He will sit on the throne, not hang on the Cross.

Nothing is more certain than the personal, bodily return of the Lord Jesus to this earth. Scripture has much more to say concerning His second coming than His first.

We believe in the imminent personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only hope of this war-torn world. The word *imminent* has been much misunderstood. When we speak of His imminent return many people think we mean the *immediate* return of the Lord. By *imminent* we mean that Jesus *may* come at any time. His second coming is an undated event as far as God’s revelation is concerned. We do not know *when* He is coming, but we do know that He *is* coming and *may* come at any time. The term “immediate coming” implies that He will come immediately or at some date which is determined. Therefore, remember that while we look for Him constantly and He may come at any time, should also be alive in our thoughts in Advent. It is not just commemorating his birth but also expecting his second coming.



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