



# The Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

*Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter*

**COVER  
STORY**

## GOOD MORAL CHARACTER

The first essential point in human-beings

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## Our Season of Lent 2023

# LENT Season

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40 Days



**L**ent is one of the five seasons of the Catholic liturgical calendar, along with Advent, Christmas, Easter and Ordinary Time.

## EDITORIAL

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### Beef for Catholics: Rediscovering Sunday as 'The Day of Joy'

This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24).



It took place on 21st  
January, 2023

**General  
health and  
safety  
training for  
hospitality  
staff in GPI  
and Priest  
house-help staff**

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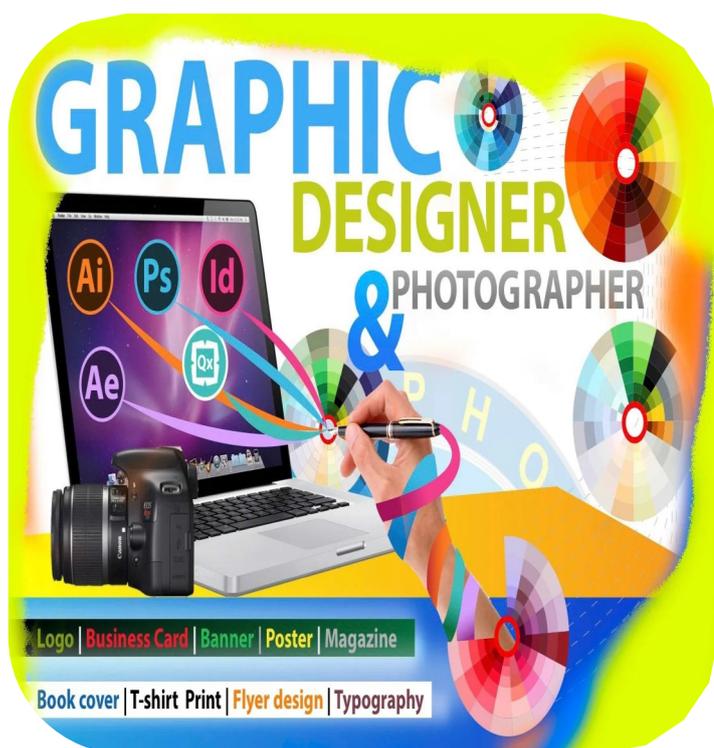
# DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER

## *Our Mission and Vision*

**W**e 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.

**D**ioocese 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.

**D**ioocese 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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 Telephone: 4394847 / 7783349 / 7011564 - Email: info@gpi.gm  
 Editors: Fr. Peter S. Lopez / Dr. Burang Goree-Ndiaye  
 Editorial Consultant: Mr. Joseph Akagha      Layout: Betty Quacoo  
 Production: Mam Gorr Peter Campbell, Baboucarr Ceesay  
 & Marie Sireh Manga

## EDITORIAL HINT

**Beef for Catholics: Rediscovering Sunday as ‘The Day of Joy’**

This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (*Psalm 118:24*).

**W**hen we follow the Lord’s ways, we find joy. It takes deliberate action, and maybe even planning, to live this way and to tame our schedules each week. Sunday observances are a necessary discipline of all disciples or followers of Jesus. Such discipline brings joy. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it (*Psalm 118:24, RSV*). Sunday, the “Lord’s Day,” is the principal day for the celebration of the Eucharist because it is the day of the Resurrection. It is the pre-eminent day of the liturgical assembly, the day of the Christian family, and the day of joy and rest from work.

Four elements characterize the Lord’s Day: the celebration of Mass, Christian family, joy, and rest from work. Attending Mass on Sundays is obvious. It’s not only a Precept of the Church, but it follows the Third Commandment to “Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy” (*Exodus 20:8*).

Sunday Eucharist is the great feast handed down to us from the apostles. We gather for the Word of God and to partake of Holy Communion. There, “the whole community of the faithful encounters the risen Lord who invites them to his banquet” We go to meet the Lord! To prepare to attend Mass with the appropriate joy, it helps one to visualize his or her personal meeting with Jesus. When we recall the Resurrection accounts of Mary Magdalene and the apostles meeting the risen Jesus for the first time since Good Friday, what joy must have flooded their souls! That is a cue for how one might better prepare to meet Christ in the Eucharist. Also, the second Sunday element regards the experience of Christian family. St. John Chrysostom said this about Mass attendance: “You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests” Thus, this day calls us beyond our families of origin to the family of God into which we are baptized. Sunday worship is “a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church” We cannot live the Christian life in a vacuum. We must maintain contact and connection; making friends and getting involved in parish life makes Sundays more fruitful.

The Catechism has more to say about Sunday being a day of joy. On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God, the joy proper to the Lord’s Day, the performance of the works of mercy, and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body. Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of Sunday rest. The faithful should see to it that legitimate excuses do not lead to habits prejudicial to religion, family life, and health. Joy is connected to worship and merciful service and relaxation! Here we note Sundays being recommended for works of mercy. Imagine our world if more of us, myself included, intentionally performed a work of mercy each Sunday, or even one Sunday a month? We would become harbingers of joy. Another element is rest. Taken from God’s model of initiating a Sabbath rest after the six days of Creation (see *Genesis 2:2*). Acute pressures exist to make Sunday just another day of the week to work, shop, exercise, pay bills, clear the grass, and catch up. What joy awaits us when we allow ourselves to rest in meaningful ways on a regular basis!

**THE DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER****APPEAL FOR SUPPORT**

**W**e 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. In 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 2022, we will be no less active.

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.

***If you can, please consider supporting us with a regular amount each month. Thank you.***

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## COVER STORY

**GOOD MORAL CHARACTER**

The first essential point in human-beings

A Christian must always be dressed modestly. Whether male or female, Jesus Christ must be revealed in your dressing. How we dress our bodies is so much important to God because the body is God's temple; it is the dwelling place of God. *1 Cor 3:16*. Do you know that you are God's temple and God's spirit dwells in you? If the body is God's temple, His temple must be dressed appropriately to His standards.

**M**oral decadence is a path to self-destruction because only societies that maintain high moral standards can preserve their economic, social, and cultural well-being. Moral decadence is an issue as old as society itself. We are greatly concerned about the decadence of moral life in our today's society. And as true Muslims and Christians, we have been told that morals, such as decency and self-respect, among others, are some of the characteristics which God has commanded us to do. Thus, at every point in our history, we continue to discuss the problems of moral decay and depravity. Though moral decadence among youths has been majorly blamed on parents, for lack of proper upbringing of their kids, and the media, for exposing some critical scenes capable of polluting innocent minds, experts have noted that government should not be left out as one of the culprits. Our investigations revealed that parental carelessness, peer influence, watching immoral films, bad examples from parents, unregulated media landscape where media content is not censored, and poverty, were contributing to the causes of moral decadence.

Any society that is not morally sound is bound to witness all sorts of social menace. Moral values are found in our religions, culture and traditions, yet some of our people, for one reason or the other, are not that religious. They consider our indigenous culture outdated and our traditions barbaric. Therefore, they queue up to embrace westernization in its totality; abandoning our indigenous culture and tradition entirely, thereby losing their identity.

Now that the issue has reached an alarming crescendo, and as it is the tradition in our dear country whenever an issue of this nature arises, we point accusing fingers and play the blame game instead of brainstorming on how best to tackle the problem. Some blame the parents, some point accusing fingers at the media while others believe it is the youth who are responsible for their behavior or misbehavior. Whichever of them you think is responsible, you may be right, and as well be wrong, for the following reasons. Parents are responsible for training their children and teaching them decency, compassion, respect, as well as acceptable do's and don'ts in line with societal values and religious dictates. As such, they become responsible for the action or inaction, behavior and attitudes of their children towards others, from childhood to maturity. If a child behaves well, people conclude that the child is from a

**SAY NO TO INDECENT EXPOSURE**

disciplined home and if he/she behaves otherwise, people fault the parents for not properly training the child. You hear people complain "didn't your parents teach you this?" or "didn't your parents teach you that?" The unfortunate thing now is that, parents abandon these responsibilities. For example, in working class families, the fathers and mothers go to work in the morning when the children are going to school. The mother will not come back home till 5pm and

the father till 9pm. Hence, these children come back from school and have the whole house to themselves. They do whatever they like, with whatever they like and however they like. This is not because they are alone, but because the house-help was instructed by madam and 'Oga' to play nice with the kids. Should she do otherwise, she stands the risk of getting fired. Or maybe, there was no such instruction, but she herself wasn't trained properly. So, what is she going to teach them? Imagine asking someone to give what they never had!

Now let us examine the media. The role of the media in society is to inform, educate, entertain and serve as the watch-dog of the society. Unfortunately, it is no longer so. The entertainment industry, for example through music videos, movies and some publications has successfully polluted the minds of the youth and promoted indecent dressing, excessive drinking of alcohol and other dangerous intoxicants, smoking, and jamborees, among others. Some of our youth now model their lives like their favorite actors, actresses, musicians, models and the like. As the hypodermic needle theory and the bullet theory of mass communication imply, all the media needs to do is to send a message and the receivers will respond accordingly. These youth, therefore, dress, talk, walk, and misbehave like their unworthy role models, with the highest sense of justification. This may include not paying attention to school or drop out of school, and, worst of all dedicating their most productive stage of life to temporary fun. What a folly! For those who blame the youth, here is your score. Some children are good liars and perfect pretenders. They act and behave like saints in the house and become demons the moment they step out of it. It is universally believed that once a child is 18 years of age, he or she can think and make decisions, discern between truth and false, right and wrong, good and bad and so on. But the truth is, they still need guidance and counselling of the old, in order to avoid making ill-conceived decisions, the repercussion of which may not be faced by the individual alone. The time for

blame game is over, and each and every one concerned should take up their responsibilities. Parents, no matter how busy you may be, find time to train your children to be the good children you want. The media should be socially responsible to the society and promote morals and values found in our indigenous culture and traditions. The youth need reorientation, and these includes, decency, compassion, respect, tolerance and understanding. Above all, it must be understood that training the youth is a collective responsibility of members of the society. If you train only your children, my untrained children who are their friends and go to school, mosque or church, play and socialize with can spoil your trained children. By joining hands together, we can achieve a morally sound society that we can be proud to call home.

It is difficult to imagine an older person who does not judge or blame younger generations for being unethical, immoral, or decadent. In the eyes of older generations, adolescents and young adults are too aggressive, too ignorant, and too violent. Unfortunately, moral decadence is not merely a problem of generations. It is an objective reality. No one will deny the fact that society has dramatically transformed. Life in the second decade of the 21st century differs from the way it used to be a century ago. Violence has become rampant. Sexual immorality, sexual harassment and corruption have become an everyday occurrence. Money and material well-being are priority goals for millions of people, who would easily give up their moral principles for financial gain or authority. This moral decadence has adverse effects on society, because it changes cultural, moral, and social norms and sets new, but lower, standards for appropriate behaviors. It promotes public acceptance of violence, justifies discrimination and injustice, and limits opportunities for social development that are so important to keep societies flourishing. Morality is no longer the standard of excellence in our society. A growing number of people act and behave as if moral standards and ethical principles do not exist. It does not matter if it is an ordinary worker or a government official; moral decay is a collective reality. That is, everyone has his or her stake in the process which affects everyone.

**How does moral decadence look?** Signs and symptoms may vary across communities. However, this phenomenon has several characteristics. For instance, it is the growing acceptance of corruption in our various life facets, even in our government, and violence in our society. Our society is becoming less sensitive to the pain and sorrows caused by violence. More people resort to violence to solve their personal, social, economic, or emotional problems. Political and financial corruption is yet another sign of moral decadence. Our politics has become dirty. Politicians and figures of authority would willingly give up even their core moral principles, when such actions promise significant material, political, or social returns. Financial corruption is also an issue. In a morally decadent society, violence, corruption, sexual harassment, and discrimination are also prevalent. In a society full of moral compromise, even the most ethical and committed person feels the damaging effects of moral depravity. The most serious is probably the growing acceptance of lower moral standards in society. People no longer care about immorality, violence, discrimination, harassment, or conflicts. They are just too busy doing their everyday work to show their commitment, or try to defend higher moral ideals. Even when they fall victim to moral decadence, they may not be in a position to defend their interests or seek justice. It is not uncommon for violence and corruption to go

unpunished. It is also common to treat victims as offenders, and vice versa. Moral decadence lowers standards of moral behavior and creates new, but lower, criteria for ethics and justice. Putting it simply, people are no longer required to act morally or ethically. Society no longer expects its members to preserve their commitment to the very basic moral norms. Moral decadence creates a general sense of cynicism. People no longer expect each other to be noble. They no longer expect each other to be honest. The society in which we live today is being guided by cultural norms and values. But the trend is that, some of these values are gradually fading away, because of the lack of morality. Things such as rape, homosexuality, sleeping with someone's wife, a father impregnating his son's wife, dishonesty, disrespect to elders, among others, are all becoming common in present day Gambia. Sadly, these are issues that should have no ground in our society, as they are immoral and absurd, to say the least.

On the part of our mothers, it looks like we are fast moving away from the days when a mother is that decently dressed woman that all the young ladies in the neighborhood love to emulate. Today, it is all about selfie and nudity. In this morally decadent society, people have but to comply with new and lower standards and moral norms. And this is not the worst part of the story. Compliance and collectivism; people do not want to look different or stand out against the crowd, trying to defend their moral principles. They do not want to go against the moral tide, because it translates into joblessness, isolation, exclusion, and public shaming. They are not ready to fight against the system of moral decadence and decay. As a result, a given society is choosing a path of moral self-destruction. At the end, it will be an immoral and deeply degenerated society, because only continuous moral development can keep societies flourishing.

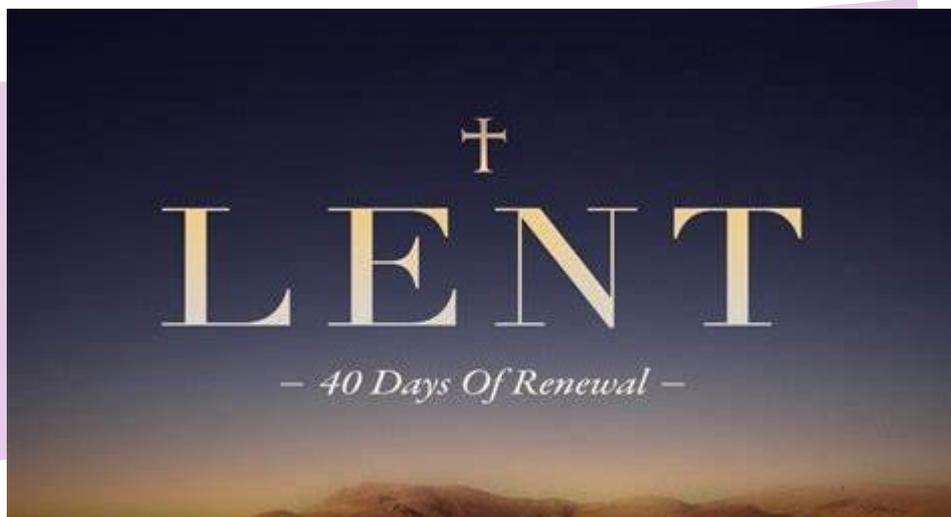
As a very religious people, Gambians should be able to manifest a good degree of moral acts, through good manners and dress code. However, it is very disheartening that many people, especially young boys and girls, are now deviating from traditional dress code which dictates coverage all sensitive parts of the body. Based on what they learn, especially from their peers, the media, internet and even from some of the parents, our young males are now in the habit of exposing their buttocks, locally known as 'yutal or check down'. The parents and government, as well as religious leaders of our society, must act now before it is too late. The direction that most of our youngsters are taking is very wrong. In many cases, their mothers will see them going out in such an odd fashion and will wish them a safe journey or even tell them "to have a nice day."

Indecent dressing is the major cause of the various assault and sexual harassment recorded in the society, over time. Our ladies dress half-naked to occasions, all in the name of fashion, which is contrary to the perception about African women. However, some welcome developments are taking place in some parts of the world, especially in Zambia, which we as a people should emulate. African Governments can work with the police taking up the role to arrest those found wanting especially loitering around public places which will set some example that will be a way forward.

In conclusion, moral decadence is an overarching reality, a symptom of moral decay whose effects of moral decadence on society are pervasive. A morally decadent society is no longer sensitive to the issues of decency, violence, injustice, discrimination, sexual harassment or fairness. It no longer reacts to political or social corruption.

*Author: Mr Joseph Akagha*

# Season of Lent 2023



## Introduction

**L**ent is one of the five seasons of the Catholic liturgical calendar, along with Advent, Christmas, Easter, and Ordinary Time.

It precedes Easter and is a solemn period centered on prayer, fasting, and alms giving. While Lent is often associated with the Catholic faith, many Christians—including Protestant and Orthodox—observe it.

There is no better time to reconnect with or deepen one's faith than Lent. During this time, we can draw closer to God as we prepare for the joyous celebration of Christ's resurrection at Easter.

Like Advent, when we prepare for Jesus's birth at Christmas, Lent is also a liturgical season of preparation, as we get ready for Easter—the Church's greatest celebration.

And just like our weather seasons have unique characteristics, so too do seasons within the Church.

In contrast to Advent and Easter, Lent is more solemn. The sacrament of reconciliation—when we ask God for forgiveness—becomes more popular. The Stations of the Cross, a tradition often taking place on Fridays during Lent, allow us to pray with Jesus in his final hours. Weddings and the big celebrations that accompany this wonderful sacrament, are less common during this time.

More solemn songs replace celebratory hymns during Mass. Singing our most joyful hymns during Lent would be like throwing an outdoor pool party in the dead of winter: It just doesn't fit the season.

Lent is far too important a season to skip over or treat like any other time of the year.

The first day of Lent is always Ash Wednesday, in which we use ashes on our forehead, in the shape of a cross, to remember our own mortality and begin our journey of penance.

## Prayer, Fasting and Alms giving: The Three Pillars

Three key pillars characterize the Lenten season: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (charity).

The USCCB tells us that during Lent, “we seek the Lord in prayer by reading Sacred Scripture; we serve by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting.”

While most Catholics are familiar with “no meat on Fridays” during Lent, fasting and abstinence are important components throughout Lent. This may look like giving up things like gossip, your favorite coffee order, or forgoing music in the car and replacing it with prayer.

Alms giving reminds us of Jesus's call to serve and connects us in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need and lastly, prayer.

## Liturgical Changes

Purple (or violet) is the color of the Lenten season and this is reflected in the vestments (chasuble) that a priest wears for most of Lent, starting on Ash Wednesday.

The “Gloria in Excelsis,” normally sung in a celebratory manner, is omitted, as is the “Alleluia” normally sung before the Gospel. “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of Endless Glory” often serves as the replacement.

These are subtle reminders to us that we are in the desert with Jesus, inviting God to work in us during this time of sacrifice.

## Preparing for Holy Week and Easter

Lent includes Palm Sunday, which presents its own unique liturgy, featuring a procession of the congregation into the church along with, of course, the distribution of palms. It is during this service that the entire Passion story is read aloud, as we begin Holy Week.

Lent technically ends on Holy Thursday, as we celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper, remembering Jesus's final meal with his disciples in which he institutes the Eucharist. Following this Mass, the altar and worship space are stripped bare, and the Blessed Sacrament is processed out from the altar to a chapel.

The next day is Good Friday, the only day of the year when Mass is not celebrated (though communion is distributed at some services). Holy Saturday, the day of waiting for the joy of the Resurrection, completes what is known as the Triduum: the three days leading up to Easter Sunday.

**NB:** *The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is an assembly of the hierarchy of bishops who jointly exercise pastoral functions on behalf of the Christian faithful of the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands. They Promote the Common Good which the Church offers Humankind.*



# 2023 Annual Priest Retreat

8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2023



**T**he Annual Retreat for Priests of the Diocese of Banjul started on Sunday of the Epiphany and ended on Friday of that week at the Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI). The retreat preacher was Rev. Fr. Andrews Obeng SVD from Ghana, who guided the priests on the theme: *The Priest, Servant of God's mercy and compassion.*

### Why are priests required to go on a yearly retreat?

A yearly retreat is required by canon law and imitates Jesus' own example of prayer before public ministry. Canon law is very clear in its requirements of a yearly retreat for priests, religious and even seminarians. Religious are to faithfully observe the period of annual retreat (Can. 663 §5). Priests are equally bound to make time for spiritual retreats according to the prescripts of particular law (Can. 276 §2). Each year, seminarians are to make a spiritual retreat (Can. 246 §5).

### Why is that?

If a priest takes time away from his parish, isn't he abandoning his flock?

Jesus himself spent much time away from his flock, even making a spiritual retreat for 40 days before his public

ministry.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days. (Luke 4:1-3)

Jesus repeatedly took time away from his ministry to pray in solitude, giving us an example to follow. Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard in *The Soul of the Apostolate* illustrates this principle with a powerful image.

"If you are wise, you will be reservoirs and not channels ... The channels let the water flow away, and do not retain a drop. But the reservoir is first filled, and then, without emptying itself, pours out its overflow, which is ever renewed over the fields which it waters." Chautard firmly believed that in order for priests (or anyone else, for that matter) to give themselves to others, they must first be filled. Otherwise, priests and religious risk becoming channels and burning out, with no water for themselves. Retreats are important. And our spiritual leaders need to make time for themselves to be recharged.

This requirement for priests is also a signal for the laity. They also need to recharge their spiritual batteries, especially if they are parents. Without time for solitude and prayer, they risk not only their own soul, but the souls of those they care for.

*The Diocese of Banjul Newsletter Reminds the faithful of their Lenten Obligation. Journey and pray that God will help each of us along the road.*

## The Pope's Prayer Intentions 2023

### February - For parishes

We pray that parishes, placing communion at the center, may increasingly become communities of faith, fraternity and welcome towards those most in need.

### March - For victims of abuse

We pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering.

#### PERSPECTIVE

By Andrew Sylva - [andrewsylva1982@gmail.com](mailto:andrewsylva1982@gmail.com)



The author

## Repositioning The Gambia for Sustainable Development

**W**hen nations thrive and prosper in line with the aspiration of the people, and its founding fathers, it becomes a thing of pride to them and a source of reference, for other nations, who may have emulated the tasking routes taken to such an enviable height. However, when nations regress, they become a nightmare to the leadership and source of worry to its people. It's based on these realizations that every nation that will be worthy of its future, as well as its reputation must continuously strive to ensure the growth and survival of such a country, and to take proactive actions to cater for generations unborn.

The growth, survival and greatness of The Gambia, through well planned and effective sustainable development, is thus of paramount importance toward the realization of better life and future for its ever-loving and hardworking people. Much as the survival and growth of The Gambia is of paramount importance to every concerned stakeholder, the need to find durable solutions becomes much more of importance; the greater urgency to execute the solution through a political will becomes more imperative.

The consciousness must make the people realize that a lot of work needed to be done and, therefore, all hands must be on deck, as the nation unfolds the opportunities to launch her to greatness and prosperity.

The Gambia, with its capital in Banjul, is the smallest country in mainland Africa, surrounded by Senegal, except for its western coast on the Atlantic Ocean. Steeped in the dual influences of the British and the Portuguese, its political and economic development and evolution had indeed, come a long way; in spite of daunting challenges, here and there, in the process of nation-building.

Since its independence in 1965 till date, the destinies of over a million citizens have fallen under the leadership of leaders such as of Sir Dawda Jawara, Yahya Jammeh and the incumbent, Adama Barrow, who became the country's third President in January 2017, after defeating Jammeh in the December 2016 elections. The past is gone but the current President of The Gambia should try to write his name on the sands of time by taking practical steps to develop the country. A visionary leader develops ability to predict and anticipate the future. These qualities will trigger sustainability in every aspect. He/She is effective in manifesting his or her vision because he/she creates

specific, achievable goals, initiates actions and enlists the participation of all the people.

In this regard, sustainable leadership is a process of influence that delivers direction, alignment and commitment, and aims to address social, environmental, political and economic issues to create a better country.

While The Gambia's economy is dominated by farming, fishing, and tourism, that ought to have helped boost her GDP, poverty still remains widespread and endemic, to the point where 48.6% of the population lives in poverty and 70% higher in the rural areas. To get out of this chronic poverty, it becomes imperative to rejig her policy initiatives towards repositioning her economy, with keener attention to her sustainable development agenda and goals.

Since her independence on February 18, 1965 till today, with such an ample year, The Gambia as a nation ought to have developed past the present level of crawling where most of the negative indices of development are not inspiring enough to motivate investments and engender growth and development.

Gambians are desirous of developing their beloved country and all efforts and strategies that will make it, sustainability leadership is **a process of influence that delivers direction, alignment and commitment, and aims to address social, environmental and economic issues to create a better country.**

The Gambia must change her developing strategy to be able to positively impact her desired economic outlook, the one that is justifiably resilient to buoy the economy of the state.

The sustainable development of The Gambia is impacted by her macroeconomic and financial development; its development and determination to boost it must be the key occupation of all stakeholder in the country.

Looking at the macroeconomic trajectory of The Gambia, in 2021, it was a boom year as her economic witnessed a robust rebound to 5.5% after it overcame the 0.2 % Covid-19 pandemic-induced contractions, until the construction, trade and tourism sector of her economy helped in the rebounded growths. The better and more prosperous her economy the easier it becomes for her to meet and execute all her sustainable development agenda, that will go a long way to complementing the recent economic growth and squarely addressed the issues of

chronic poverty that continues to demean the lives of her people.

High energy prices must be taken into factor and carefully addressed; this will help mitigate galloping inflation that continues to spike up amidst efforts to redress it. Repositioning The Gambia for sustainable development, must be a function of higher spending on health, education and infrastructures and reduce our impact on the natural environment. It must also be a function of striving to reduce public debt as well as provision of subsidy to the impoverished household across the nation. The financial sector must continue to remain liquid, profitable, and well capitalized in this bid.

The projected growth for her economy is at 5.8% in 2023, this is quite ambitious, yet attainable; it must however be powered by effective investments in the agriculture, transport, energy, tourism, finance, and the digital economy sectors, in spite of downside risks of climate disasters, and debt vulnerabilities.

Sustainable development is a development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, that is every motivation that must form the keel of the new push for the development of The Gambia. That is the surest way to achieve a better and more sustainable future in view of the non-sustainability of other highlighted options above. These remains the key to addressing the challenges of poverty, inequality, climate change, peace and justice as well as environmental degradations.

Today, the drive for economic growth in The Gambia has resulted in problems such as environmental degradation and social disparities. Consequently, Sustainable development is the way out as it practically prescribes for a more balanced approach to growth that progresses development across three underlying pillars: social inclusion, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.

The Gambia has been lacking in the implementations of her sustainable development initiative, the fact that its implementations have not made the desired impacts call for a finetune of strategies and outmoded policies. It must do this with a focus on education, her economy, agriculture, health and technology with the determination to boost it as a complimentary input for the larger economic base.

The period between 2017 to 2019 saw a renewed attempts to impacts the sustainable development of The Gambia, hence the introduction of the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia (MSDG), the pilot phase which was implemented from August 2017 to December 2018, during which a Gambian Diaspora Strategy (GDS) was developed and incorporated in the country's National Development Plan.

The overall goal of the MSDG project was to enhance the role of The Gambian diaspora in national development, as the Eighth Region of the country. While its specific goals were to create a fully operational service delivery to Gambia Diaspora Directorate (GDD), and to expand and enhance diaspora participation in Gambian development policy and practice.

Despite these impacts, the realization that the economy of The Gambia is still weak, clearly underscore the facts that its sustainable development must be pragmatically repositioned, taking into priority the key sectors already mentioned in this piece.

To reposition The Gambia for sustainable development, the government in power must among other policies; restores good governance, respect for human rights, the rule

of law, and empowering citizens through decentralization and local governance; stabilize her economy, diversify the economy, stimulating growth, and transforming the economy. The present leadership must with greater determination invests more in their people through improved education and health services, and building a caring society.

Government must continue to invest and fund technical education and technological innovations; The true and clear facts is that the significance of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in the quest for sustainable development cannot be overemphasized as it is considered a viable avenue to introduce significant and lasting positive change in any nation.

It must also not abandon her agricultural sector as well; it must put in place policies and programmes to modernize her agriculture and fisheries for sustained economic growth, food and nutritional security and poverty reduction; The Gambia continues to face escalating food and nutrition deficits, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). As in most African countries, improved agriculture practices ensure food security, while agriculture itself is a prime source, without mechanization, productivity and efficiency have historically been very low. The Gambians must to go "Back to the Land" so that we can consume what we produce; take centre-stage and utilise the country's economic growth potentials.

The private sector be incentivized to invest in mechanization of agriculture in The Gambia through tax waivers and smart subsidies among others. Successful mechanization will be key to tackling significant challenges in rural communities, from food insecurity to rampant rural unemployment.

Economically, the leadership in The Gambia needs to build her infrastructure and restore energy services to power her economy; it must strive to promote an inclusive and culture-centred tourism for sustainable growth. It must also make the private sector the engine of growth, transformation, and job creation. Tax incentives remain attractive and a core platform toward effective repositioning of The Gambia for sustainable development, hence the need to transform her tax administration through technology. The technology and social activities should both be managed and improved to make way for a new era of growth and development.

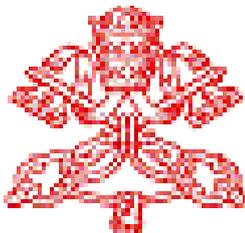
Finally, the government should strive to Build a more inclusive and resilient Gambia from the grassroots, one of the surest ways to do so is to build strong Youth Empowerment networks and community centres across the country to ensure financial sustainability, youth empowerment, and a vibrant capacity to develop, especially for those in the rural parts of the country.

Adama Barrow should be seen doing the work and not seen talking the talk. A visionary and a sustainability leader can look ahead and see into the future, and build a system that will ensure his country continues to thrive and remain strong for the foreseeable future.

**A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way,  
and shows the way.**

\*\*\*\*\*

***Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into  
reality – Warren G. Bennis***



# SECRETARIA GENERALIS SYNODI

## Brief FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

*Continued from last December & January issue*

### The Working Document for the Continental Stage

The document for the Continental Stage is a text of about 43 pages. After the table of contents, **the introduction** (n. 1-14) is followed by four chapters: 1) The experience of the synodal process (n. 15-24); 2) **Listening to the Scriptures** (n. 25-28); 3) **Towards a missionary synodal Church** (n. 29-97) - the largest chapter, which is in turn divided into sub-chapters: 3.1) Listening that becomes welcoming (n. 32-40); 3.2) Sisters and brothers for the mission (n. 41-56); 3.3) Communion, participation and co-responsibility (n. 57-70); 3.4) Synodality takes shape (n. 71-87); 3.5) Synodal life and liturgy (n. 88-97); 4) **Next steps** (n. 98-109)

#### Introduction (n. 1-14)

The introduction aims to offer key ideas for a correct understanding of **what the Document for the Continental Stage is and what it is not**.

As an example, note the following: "The DCS will be understandable and useful only if it is read with the eyes of the disciple, who recognizes it as a testimony to the path of conversion toward a synodal Church. This means, a Church that learns from listening how to renew its evangelizing mission in the light of the signs of the times, to continue offering humanity a way of being and living in which all can feel included as protagonists."

The "Introduction" concludes with a prayer of praise for "the joy experienced by those who decided to set out" and a plea to "enter these pages as on 'holy ground.'"

#### Chapter One (n. 15-24)

The first chapter offers, in the light of faith, a **narrative - not a chronicle** - of the experience of synodality lived so far in the consultation of the People of God in the local Churches along with the discernment of the Pastors in the Bishops' Conferences: it traces the outline of this discernment, presents the difficulties encountered as well as the most significant fruits gathered, identifying the cornerstones of that which constitutes an authentic collective experience of the Christian faith.

Although **it does not provide a definition of synodality** in the strict sense, it expresses the shared sense of the experience of synodality lived by those who took part in it. What emerges is a profound **re-appropriation of the common dignity of all the baptised**, the authentic pillar of a synodal Church and the theological foundation of that unity, which is able to resist the tendency towards homogenization, in order to continue to enhance the diversity of vocations and charisms that the Spirit pours out on the faithful with unpredictable abundance.

#### Chapter Two (n. 25-28)

The second chapter presents a biblical image: that of **the tent** with which Isaiah Chapter 54 (v. 2-3) opens: "Enlarge the space for your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly; lengthen your ropes and make firm your stakes. For you shall spread abroad to the right and to the left; Your descendants shall dispossess the nations and shall people the desolate cities." The image of the tent offers an

interpretive key for the contents of the DCS in light of the Word, placing these contents in the arc of God's promise that becomes a vocation for his People and his Church: "Enlarge the space of your tent!"

*\*The graphics of the paginated DCS are intended to refer to the image of the prophet Isaiah's Tent.*

#### Chapter Three (n. 29-97)

While in chapter two the image of the tent is the space for communion, a place for participation and a basis for mission, chapter three articulates the main expressions of the synodal journey together with the fruits of listening to the People of God. It does so by grouping them around **five generative tensions** that intertwine with one another:

1) **listening as openness to welcome** beginning with a **desire for radical inclusion** — no one excluded! — to be understood in a perspective of communion with our sisters and brothers and with our common Father. Listening appears here not as merely an instrumentalising action, but as an action capable of assuming the basic attitude of God who listens to his people; as an action capable of following the Lord, whom the Gospels constantly present as listening to those He meets along the roads of the Holy Land. In this **sense, listening is already missional and a proclamation**;

2) **the outgoing impetus towards mission**. This is a mission that Catholics recognise must be carried out in the company of their brothers and sisters of other confessions and in dialogue with believers of other religions, transforming human actions of care into authentically spiritual experiences that proclaim the face of a God who loves, to the point of giving his own life, so that we may have it in abundance;

3) **the taking on of a style based on the participation** — which also means a shared responsibility — of all the baptised, stemming from our common baptismal dignity, in the commitment to carry out the Church's one mission;

4) the construction of **concrete possibilities** for living communion, participation and mission through structures and institutions inhabited by people adequately formed and sustained by a vibrant spirituality;

5) the **liturgy**, in particular the **Eucharistic** liturgy, source and summit of Christian life, which brings the community together, making communion tangible, allows the exercise of participation and nourishes with the Word and the Sacraments the impetus towards mission.

#### Chapter Four (n. 98-109)

Lastly, the fourth chapter looks toward the future by drawing on two perspectives, both of which are indispensable to our proceeding along the way: a spiritual perspective, which envisages the horizon of synodal missionary conversion, and a methodological perspective that offers next steps for the Continental Stage, that is, the restitution of the text to the entire People of God, the involvement of the particular Churches through their bishops, and the involvement of the Episcopal Conferences in view of the celebration of the Continental Assemblies.

### Brief Talking-Points / Messages

The basic message could be taken from the Biblical image in chapter 2: **How might we be a Church that enlarges its space?**

- ◆ **The message of the Synod is simple:** we are learning to walk together and to sit with one another to break the one bread, so that everyone can find their place. **Everyone is called to take part in this journey, no one is excluded.** We feel called to this, so that we can credibly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to all peoples. This is the road we seek to continue along, on the Continental Stage, as well.
- ◆ The meetings and dialogues experienced give a sense of the synodal journey, the purpose of which is not to produce documents, but to open horizons of hope for the fulfilment of the Church's mission.
- ◆ Reading the summaries tells us that for those who participated: 1) **synodality has ceased to be an abstract concept** and has taken on the face of a concrete experience; they have savoured the taste of it and want to continue to do so; 2) the experience of listening to each other starting from listening to the Word of God **has reawakened in the lay faithful** the idea, and the **desire, to involve themselves in the life of the Church**, in its engagement in the contemporary world and in its pastoral action in the field; 3) many communities have already understood **synodality as an invitation to listen to those who feel exiled from the Church**. People are asking for the Church to be a refuge for the wounded and broken, not an institution for the perfect; 4) Many emphasised that this was the first time the Church had asked for their opinion and they wish **to continue this journey**;
- ◆ On a global level, **participation exceeded all expectations**. Despite the fact that not all the faithful, not even all those attending Sunday Mass, participated in the first phase of the synod process, we are witnessing an involvement of the faithful, groups and dioceses that is **unprecedented in the history of the Church**. It is a historical fact without equal.
- ◆ It is important to remember that **the time of listening and discernment is not yet over**. Listening and discernment are still at the heart of the Continental Stage.
- ◆ **One key** to understanding the synodal process as a whole, and in particular the Continental Stage and the DCS that constitutes its working document, **is the relationship of 'interdependence' that exists between the Universal Church and the Particular Church** (the individual Christian communities of a circumscribed territory, led by a bishop, and "in which and from which subsists the one and only Catholic Church" (CIC 368; Communio Notio n.7). This Continental Stage was inserted precisely **to emphasise the dialogical movement** between the universal Church and the particular Churches, through an act of **RESTITUTION** to the People of God of their discernment.
- ◆ **The vision of a Church capable of radical inclusion.** Widening the tent requires welcoming others into it, making room for their diversity. It therefore entails a readiness to die to self out of love, finding oneself in and through relationship with Christ and one's neighbour. \
- ◆ The synod path has brought out a series of tensions (global-local, truth of faith and that of mercy, co-responsibility in governance and structures of participation, transparency, formation). We must not be afraid of these tensions, but articulate them in a process of constant communal discernment, thus harnessing them as a source of energy so that they do not become destructive.
- ◆ **With respect to governance:** one is invited to follow Jesus, returning to his style and way of exercising power and authority as a means of offering healing, reconciliation and liberation. *The experience [...] has helped to rediscover the co-responsibility that comes from baptismal dignity and has revealed the possibility of overcoming a vision of the Church built around the ordained ministry in order to move towards a Church that is 'all ministerial', which is a communion of different charisms and ministries"*.
- ◆ **Regarding the priest-laity relationship: The tone of the summaries is not anticlerical.** Many express deep appreciation and affection for priests. They give voice to the desire for better trained, better accompanied and less isolated priests. They also point to the importance of ridding the Church of clericalism, seen as a form of spiritual impoverishment, which affects ordained ministers and laity alike.
- ◆ A synodal church does not subsist without **'synodal spirituality'**, i.e. without special attention to the interiority and formation of the consciences of its faithful.



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INSTITUTE ON MANY PROJECTS  
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## General health and safety training for hospitality staff in GPI and Priest house-help staff



**A** one-day intensive training programme on food safety, hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practices of food handlers within the Catholic Diocese of Banjul was held at the GPI, organised and sponsored by Solmic Catering Services.

The aim of the training was mainly to create and increase awareness on food safety and hygiene and to instil how to cook healthy meals for our priests.

### The intensive training was in three segments:

**Part one** - Two professionals: Mr Habib Mbye and Mr Musa Jawara dilated on health safety & wellbeing. All fifteen participants showed profound interest during that interactive session.

**Part two** - deliberated on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the food handlers towards their employers the priests in the diocese.

**A third proficient:** Mrs Michelle Jarra introduced & demonstrated simple healthy dishes.

At the end of the day, each participant received a certificate of participation.

In her vote of thanks, Mrs Elizabeth Prieria thanked Health Safety & Wellbeing Solutions for the commendable exposition, and Mrs Michelle Jarra of Solmic Catering Services for co-ordinating and making a presentation. She promised, on behalf of the participants, to take heed of the

advice received and assured that changes will be made accordingly.



One of the participant's certificate



## Daily Mass Readings

## February &amp; March

**Wednesday, 1 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Hebrews 12](#): 4-7, 11-15Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 103](#): 1-2, 13-14, 17-18aAlleluia: [John 10](#): 27Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 1-6**Thursday, 2 February, 2023**

Presentation of the Lord Feast

First Reading: [Malachi 3](#): 1-4Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 24](#): 7, 8, 9, 10Second Reading: [Hebrews 2](#): 14-18Alleluia: [Luke 2](#): 32Gospel: [Luke 2](#): 22-40 or [Luke 2](#): 22-32**Friday, 3 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday / Blaise, Bishop, Martyr/ Ansgar, Bishop, Missionary

First Reading: [Hebrews 13](#): 1-8Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 27](#): 1, 3, 5, 8b-9abcAlleluia: [Luke 8](#): 15Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 14-29**Saturday, 4 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

First Reading: [Hebrews 13](#): 15-17, 20-21Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 23](#): 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6Alleluia: [John 10](#): 27Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 30-34**Sunday, 5 February, 2023**

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Isaiah 58](#): 7-10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 112](#): 4-5, 6-7, 8-9Second Reading: [First Corinthians 2](#): 1-5Alleluia: [John 8](#): 12Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 13-16**Monday, 6 February, 2023**Paul Miki, Priest, Martyr & Companions, Martyrs  
Obligatory MemorialFirst Reading: [Genesis 1](#): 1-19Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 104](#): 1-2a, 5-6, 10 and 12, 24 and 35cAlleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 23Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 53-56**Tuesday, 7 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 1](#): 20 – 2: 4aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalms 8](#): 4-5, 6-7, 8-9Alleluia: [Psalms 119](#): 36, 29bGospel: [Mark 7](#): 1-13**Wednesday, 8 February, 2023**Ordinary Weekday/ Jerome Emiliani, Priest, Religious  
Founder/ Josephine Bakhita, VirginFirst Reading: [Genesis 2](#): 4b-9, 15-17Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 104](#): 1-2a, 27-28, 29bc-30Alleluia: [John 17](#): 17b, 17aGospel: [Mark 7](#): 14-23**Thursday, 9 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 2](#): 18-25Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 128](#): 1-2, 3, 4-5Alleluia: [James 1](#): 21bcGospel: [Mark 7](#): 24-30**Friday, 10 February, 2023**

Scholastica, Virgin, Religious Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Genesis 3](#): 1-8Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 32](#): 1-2, 5, 6, 7Alleluia: [Acts 16](#): 14bGospel: [Mark 7](#): 31-37**Saturday, 11 February, 2023**Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary/ Our Lady of LourdesFirst Reading: [Genesis 3](#): 9-24Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 90](#): 2, 3-4abc, 5-6, 12-13Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 4bGospel: [Mark 8](#): 1-10**Sunday, 12 February, 2023**

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Sirach 15](#): 15-20Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34Second Reading: [First Corinthians 2](#): 6-10Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 17-37**Monday, 13 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 4](#): 1-15, 25Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 50](#): 1 and 8, 16bc-17, 20-21Alleluia: [John 14](#): 6Gospel: [Mark 8](#): 11-13**Tuesday, 14 February, 2023**

Cyril and Methodius, Bishops Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Genesis 6](#): 5-8; 7: 1-5, 10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 29](#): 1a and 2, 3ac-4, 3b and 9c-10Alleluia: [John 14](#): 23Gospel: [Mark 8](#): 14-21**Wednesday, 15 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 8](#): 6-13, 20-22Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 116](#): 12-13, 14-15, 18-19Alleluia: [Ephesians 1](#): 17-18Gospel: [Mark 8](#): 22-26**Thursday, 16 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 9](#): 1-13Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 102](#): 16-18, 19-21, 29 and 22-23Alleluia: [John 6](#): 63c, 68cGospel: [Mark 8](#): 27-33**Friday, 17 February, 2023**Ordinary Weekday/ Seven Founders of the Order of  
Servites, ReligiousFirst Reading: [Genesis 11](#): 1-9Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 10-11, 12-13, 14-15Alleluia: [John 15](#): 15bGospel: [Mark 8](#): 34 – 9:1

**Saturday, 18 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

First Reading: [Hebrews 11](#): 1-7

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 145](#): 2-3, 4-5, 10-11

Alleluia: [Mark 9](#): 7

Gospel: [Mark 9](#): 2-13

**Sunday, 19 February, 2023**

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Leviticus 19](#): 1-2, 17-18

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 103](#): 1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10, 12-13

Second Reading: [First Corinthians 3](#): 16-23

Alleluia: [First John 2](#): 5

Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 38-48

**Monday, 20 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Sirach 1](#): 1-10

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 93](#): 1ab, 1cd-2, 5

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

Gospel: [Mark 9](#): 14-29

**Tuesday, 21 February, 2023**

Ordinary Weekday/ Peter Damian, Bishop, Doctor

First Reading: [Sirach 2](#): 1-11

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 37](#): 3-4, 18-19, 27-28, 39-40

Alleluia: [Galatians 6](#): 14

Gospel: [Mark 9](#): 30-37

**Wednesday, 22 February, 2023**

Ash Wednesday, Begin Lenten Preparation for the Easter Triduum, Not a Holy Day of Obligation, Day of Fast (Ages 18-59) and Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and up)

First Reading: [Joel 2](#): 12-18

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 51](#): 3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17

Second Reading: [Second Corinthians 5](#): 20 – 6:2

Verse before the Gospel: [Psalm 95](#): 8

Gospel: [Matthew 6](#): 1-6, 16-18

**Thursday, 23 February, 2023**

Thursday after Ash Wednesday/ Polycarp, Bishop, Martyr

First Reading: [Deuteronomy 30](#): 15-20

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

Verse before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 17

Gospel: [Luke 9](#): 22-25

**Friday, 24 February, 2023**

Friday after Ash Wednesday, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and up)

First Reading: [Isaiah 58](#): 1-9a

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19

Verse before the Gospel: [Amos 5](#): 14

Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 14-15

**Saturday, 25 February, 2023**

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

First Reading: [Isaiah 58](#): 9b-14

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 86](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Verse before the Gospel: [Ezekiel 33](#): 11

Gospel: [Luke 5](#): 27-32

**Sunday, 26 February, 2023**

First Sunday of Lent

First Reading: [Genesis 2](#): 7-9; 3: 1-7

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17

Second Reading: [Romans 5](#): 12-19 or 5: 12, 17-19

Verse before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 4b

Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 1-11

**Monday, 27 February, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Leviticus 19](#): 1-2, 11-18

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 8, 9, 10, 15

Verse before the Gospel: [Second Corinthians 6](#): 2b

Gospel: [Matthew 25](#): 31-46

**Tuesday, 28 February, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 55](#): 10-11

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19

Verse before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 4b

Gospel: [Matthew 6](#): 7-15

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**Wednesday, 1 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Jonah 3](#): 1-10

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 12-13, 18-19

Verse before the Gospel: [Joel 2](#): 12-13

Gospel: [Luke 11](#): 29-32

**Thursday, 2 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Esther](#) 12, 14-16, 23-25

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 138](#): 1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8

Verse before the Gospel: [Psalms 51](#): 12a, 14a

Gospel: [Matthew 7](#): 7-12

**Friday, 3 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday/ Katharine Drexel, Virgin, Religious Founder, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and up)

First Reading: [Ezekiel 18](#): 21-28

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 130](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Verse before the Gospel: [Ezekiel 18](#): 31

Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 20-26

**Saturday, 4 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday/ Casimir

First Reading: [Deuteronomy 26](#): 16-19

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 1-2, 4-5, 7-8

Verse before the Gospel: [Second Corinthians 6](#): 2b

Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 43-48

**Sunday, 5 March, 2023**

Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading: [Genesis 12](#): 1-4a

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

Second Reading: [Second Timothy 1](#): 8b-10

Verse before the Gospel: [Matthew 17](#): 5

Gospel: [Matthew 17](#): 1-9

**Monday, 6 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Daniel 9](#): 4b-10

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 79](#): 8, 9, 11 and 13

Verse before the Gospel: [John 6](#): 63c, 68c

Gospel: [Luke 6](#): 36-38

**Tuesday, 7 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday/ Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs

First Reading: [Isaiah 1](#): 10, 16-20

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

Verse before the Gospel: [Ezekiel 18](#): 31

Gospel: [Matthew 23](#): 1-12

**Wednesday, 8 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday/ John of God, Religious Founder

First Reading: [Jeremiah 18](#): 18-20Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 31](#): 5-6, 14, 15-16Verse before the Gospel: [John 8](#): 12Gospel: [Matthew 20](#): 17-28**Thursday, 9 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday/ Frances of Rome, Married Woman, Religious Founder

First Reading: [Jeremiah 17](#): 5-10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 1](#): 1-2, 3, 4 and 6Verse before the Gospel: [Luke 8](#): 15Gospel: [Luke 16](#): 19-31**Friday, 10 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and up)

First Reading: [Genesis 37](#): 3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 105](#): 16-17, 18-19, 20-21Verse before the Gospel: [John 3](#): 16Gospel: [Matthew 21](#): 33-43, 45-46**Saturday, 11 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Micah 7](#): 14-15, 18-20Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 103](#): 1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12Verse before the Gospel: [Luke 15](#): 18Gospel: [Luke 15](#): 1-3, 11-32**Sunday, 12 March, 2023**

Third Sunday of Lent, First Scrutiny of the Elect

First Reading: [Exodus 17](#): 3-7Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 95](#): 1-2, 6-7, 8-9Second Reading: [Romans 5](#): 1-2, 5-8Verse before the Gospel: [John 4](#): 42, 15Gospel: [John 4](#): 5-42**Monday, 13 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Second Kings 5](#): 1-15Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 42](#): 2, 3; 43: 3, 4Verse before the Gospel: [Psalm 130](#): 5, 7Gospel: [Luke 4](#): 24-30**Tuesday, 14 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Daniel 3](#): 25, 34-43Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 25](#): 4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9Verse before the Gospel: [Joel 2](#): 12-13Gospel: [Matthew 18](#): 21-35**Wednesday, 15 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Deuteronomy 4](#): 1, 5-9Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 147](#): 12-13, 15-16, 19-20Verse before the Gospel: [John 6](#): 63c, 68cGospel: [Matthew 5](#): 17-19**Thursday, 16 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Jeremiah 7](#): 23-28Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 95](#): 1-2, 6-7, 8-9Verse before the Gospel: [Joel 2](#): 12-13Gospel: [Luke 11](#): 14-23**Friday, 17 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday/ Patrick, Bishop, Missionary, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and up)

First Reading: [Hosea 14](#): 2-10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 81](#): 6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14 and 17Verse before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 17Gospel: [Mark 12](#): 28-34**Saturday, 18 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday/ Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop, Doctor

First Reading: [Hosea 6](#): 1-6Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 18-19, 20-21abVerse before the Gospel: [Psalm 95](#): 8Gospel: [Luke 18](#): 9-14**Sunday, 19 March, 2023**

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Second Scrutiny of the Elect

First Reading: [First Samuel 16](#): 1, 6-7, 10-13Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 23](#): 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6Second Reading: [Ephesians 5](#): 8-14Verse before the Gospel: [John 8](#): 12Gospel: [John 9](#): 1-41**Monday, 20 March, 2023**

Joseph, Husband of Mary, Solemnity

First Reading: [Second Samuel 7](#): 4-5a, 12-14a, 16Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 89](#): 2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29Second Reading: [Romans 4](#): 13, 16-18, 22Verse before the Gospel: [Psalm 84](#): 5Gospel: [Matthew 1](#): 16, 18-21, 24 or [Luke 2](#): 41-51a**Tuesday, 21 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Ezekiel 47](#): 1-9, 12Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 46](#): 2-3, 5-6, 8-9Verse before the Gospel: [Psalm 51](#): 12a, 14aGospel: [John 5](#): 1-16**Wednesday, 22 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 49](#): 8-15Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 145](#): 8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18Verse before the Gospel: [John 11](#): 25a, 26Gospel: [John 5](#): 17-30**Thursday, 23 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday/ Toribio De Mogrovejo, Bishop

First Reading: [Exodus 32](#): 7-14Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 106](#): 19-20, 21-22, 23Verse before the Gospel: [John 3](#): 16Gospel: [John 5](#): 31-47**Friday, 24 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and up)

First Reading: [Wisdom 2](#): 1a, 12-22Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23Verse before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 4bGospel: [John 7](#): 1-2, 10, 25-30**Saturday, 25 March, 2023**

Annunciation of the Lord, Solemnity

First Reading: [Isaiah 7](#): 10-14; 8: 10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 40](#): 7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 11Second Reading: [Hebrews 10](#): 4-10Verse before the Gospel: [John 1](#): 14abGospel: [Luke 1](#): 26-38

**Sunday, 26 March, 2023**

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Third Scrutiny of the Elect  
 First Reading: [Ezekiel 37](#): 12-14  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 130](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8  
 Second Reading: [Romans 8](#): 8-11  
 Verse before the Gospel: [John 11](#): 25a, 26  
 Gospel: [John 11](#): 1-45

**Monday, 27 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday  
 First Reading: [Daniel 13](#): 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62  
 or [Daniel 13](#): 41c-62  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 23](#): 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6  
 Verse before the Gospel: [Ezekiel 33](#): 11      Gospel: [John 8](#): 1-11

**Tuesday, 28 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday  
 First Reading: [Numbers 21](#): 4-9  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 102](#): 2-3, 16-18, 19-21  
 Gospel: [John 8](#): 21-30

**Wednesday, 29 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday  
 First Reading: [Daniel 3](#): 14-20, 91-92, 95  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Daniel 3](#): 52, 53, 54, 55, 56  
 Verse before the Gospel: [Luke 8](#): 15      Gospel: [John 8](#): 31-42

**Thursday, 30 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday  
 First Reading: [Genesis 17](#): 3-9  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 105](#): 4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
 Verse before the Gospel: [Psalms 95](#): 8      Gospel: [John 8](#): 51-59

**Friday, 31 March, 2023**

Lenten Weekday, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and up)  
 First Reading: [Jeremiah 20](#): 10-13  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 18](#): 2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7  
 Verse before the Gospel: [John 6](#): 63c, 68c  
 Gospel: [John 10](#): 31-42

**PARISH/CHURCH FEASTS (HARVEST) CALENDAR 2022/2023**

NAME OF PARISH	DATE	VENUE
St. Therese's Parish	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2023	Kanifing
Blessed Sacrament Parish	19 <sup>th</sup> February 2023-Africana Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> September 2023 Choir Concert 5 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 Parish Feast	Kanifing Estate
Christ The King Parish	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	Darsilami
Cathedral of our Lady	29 <sup>th</sup> October 2023	Banjul
Holy Spirit Parish	3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2023	Banjul
Resurrection Parish	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	Brikama
St. Anthony Parish	18 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 - Parish Concert 17 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	Kololi
St. Charles Lwanga Parish	4 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	Fajikunda
Mary Mother of God Parish	10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	Soma
St. Michael's Parish	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2023	Ngongon
Our Lady of Fatima		Bwiam
Holy Cross Church	19 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	Brusubi
St. Kizito's Parish	Parish Feast - 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2023 3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2023 - Parish Concert	Bakoteh
St. Peter's Parish		Lamin
St. Francis Parish	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2023	Kunkujang Mariama
St. Martin's Parish		Kartong
St. Joseph's Parish	6 May 2023	Basse
Our Lady Star of the Sea		Bakau
Sacred Heart Parish		Bansang
St. John the Baptist	23 <sup>rd</sup> , 24 <sup>th</sup> and 25 June 2023	Farafenni
Spiritual Thanksgiving and Harvest		Holy Family Parish
Association of Diocesan Priests Thanksgiving and Harvest		St. Therese's school grounds
DYC Youth Cross		Kunkujang Mariama
Youth Night of Glory		
Jeune Esperance (Women's Weekend of Prayer)		Gambia
Divine Mercy Church -		Brufut
Pilgrimage of Reconciliation	Second Saturday in Lent (4 <sup>th</sup> March 2023)	Kunkujang Mariama

# Anniversaries

Gambian Christian

## February & March

**10th February, 1876:** Departure for Senegal of Fr. Jean Lacombe, who had spent 12 years in Gambia, 10 of them as Superior.

**19th March, 1886:** Death at the age of 47 of Brother Florentine Matthews, who had taught in Banjul for 23 years.

**24th March, 1911:** Death in Dakar from yellow fever of Brother André, who taught in the boys' school in Banjul with the Superior, Fr. John Meehan.

**15th March, 1914:** Consecration of the rebuilt church in Hagan Street by Bishop Hyacinth Jalabert.

**11th March, 1934:** Fr. Harold Whiteside celebrated the first Mass in Old Jeshwang in a hut used for catechism classes.

**2nd February, 1947:** Ordination as Anglican deacon of the Revd John Colley Faye, who served on the Legislative Council and the Executive Council between 1947 and 1957.

**18th February, 1947:** Opening of the Convent at Basse with Sr. Lawrence and Sr. Brigid in charge of the school.

**6th February, 1949:** The Superior, Fr. Matthew Farelly CSSp, celebrated the first Mass, outdoors, in Lamin.

**20th February, 1955:** Marriage at St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church, Basse, of David Jawara (later, President of The Gambia) and Augusta Hannah Mahoney.

**8th March, 1955:** Opening of the Catholic primary school at Sambang, Upper River Division.

**26th February, 1959:** Arrival of Fr. Geoghehan and Fr. Thomas Tarmey.

**10th February, 1960:** Arrival of Fr. Seán Little.

**February, 1962:** Completion of the tower at the Cathedral.

**16th March, 1966:** In response to liturgical reforms instituted by the Second Vatican Council, the high altar in the Cathedral was moved forward so that Mass could be celebrated facing the people.

**March, 1966:** The Gambia Christian Council was founded, made up of the three main-line churches – Anglican, Catholic and Methodist. Affiliate members include the YMCA, YWCA, the Baptist Mission, YWAM and over 50 evangelical churches.

**February, 1975:** Fr. Michael Flynn became Parish Priest at Star of the Sea, Bakau. He was the first District Superior of the Holy Ghost Fathers to live in the priests' house at Bakau.

**5th February, 1976:** The House of Representatives approved the new constitution of the St. Anthony of Padua Society, thus making it a registered society. Its predecessor, the St. Anthony of Padua Friendly Society, had been founded in 1907.

**24th-27th February, 1979:** Bishop Moloney hosted the Bishops' Conference of The Gambia, Liberia & Sierra Leone.

**27th March, 1979:** Alhaji Baboucarr Ousman Semega-Janneh presented his credentials to Pope John Paul II as The Gambia's first Ambassador to the Holy See.

**29th February, 1980:** Archbishop Johannes Dyba presented his credentials to President Jawara as first Papal Nuncio to The Gambia.

**4th February, 1981:** Funeral in Banjul, following her

death in Britain, of Augusta Mahoney, former wife of Sir Dawda Jawara.

**15th February, 1981:** It was announced that Fr. Michael Cleary was to become Second Bishop of Banjul in succession to Bishop Michael Moloney (*who had resigned due to ill health*).

**25th March, 1981:** (Feast of the Annunciation) Consecration of Bishop Michael Cleary at St Augustine's High School, Banjul.

**23rd February, 1992:** Visit of Pope John Paul II to The Gambia.

**28th February, 1996:** Death of Fr. James White in The Gambia.

**27th March, 1997:** Opening of St. Joseph's Church, Jarjil.

**31st March, 2001:** Death in Britain of the last Governor and first Governor-General of The Gambia, Sir John Paul.

**21st February, 2003:** Bishop Cleary returned from a visit to Rome.

**2nd February, 2006:** Death in Ireland of Fr Myles Fay.

**30th March, 2008:** Opening of the Diocesan Assembly.

**2nd – 4th March, 2009:** A group of young Piarist priests from Senegal met at GPI as part of their formation permanente. The Piarists work in Dakar, Oussouye and Sokone.

**6th March, 2009:** A talk on 'The Gambia, our homeland' was given at GPI by T.G.G. Senghore, regarded as historian of the Catholics in The Gambia.

**18th February, 2010:** Death, aged 50, of Francis Kenneth Balucan, Head of St Therese's Upper Basic School, Kanifing.

**8th March, 2010:** Death, aged 86, of Dr. Samuel Palmer. His funeral was at St. Mary's Anglican Cathedral and was attended by his close friend, Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary, along with Bishop Ellison and other Catholic clergy.

**6th February, 2011:** The youth group of the Christian Community of Latrikunda (CCLK) celebrated its 10th anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Therese, Kanifing. The parent group of CCLK was formed in 1997.

**4th March, 2011:** The Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy celebrated their order's 50th year in The Gambia at a Mass in Holy Rosary, Lamin.

**15th March, 2011:** Imam Baba Leigh of Kanifing addressed a meeting at GPI of priests, sisters and catechists.

**During February, 2012:** Fr. Tommy Conray, Chaplain of Gorey Community School, Ireland, paid his tenth annual fortnight's visit to The Gambia, accompanied by a group of pupils.

**3rd February, 2013:** Fr. Pius Gidi and his parishioners celebrated the 8th anniversary of Holy Cross Church, Brusubi.

**1st March, 2013:** Fr. Joseph Gough, Principal of St. Augustine's High School Banjul in the late 70s and early 80s, finally left, after a series of long annual visits, during which he had given substantial aid to sports endeavours in this country.

**21st February, 2014:** Funeral at the Independence Stadium, Bakau of the Most Revd. Tilewa Johnson, Bishop of The Gambia and Archbishop of the Anglican Province of West Africa, who had died suddenly on 22nd January.

**2nd March, 2014:** Celebration at Kunkujang-Mariama of the Golden Jubilee of Fr. John Sharpe, CSSp.

**24th February - 2nd March, 2014:** Fr. Peter S. Lopez, Director of GPI, attended a meeting in Rome of SIGNIS, the Catholic Lay Organisation for professionals working in radio, television and other media.

**19th March, 2014:** Bishop Ellison blessed the new premises at Lamin Wayoto of Holy Rosary Nursery School.

**24th January, 2015:** Rejoicing at Lamin and throughout the diocese of the priestly ordination by Bishop Robert Ellison of two young Gambian deacons, James Mendy and Tanislas Ndecky.

**2nd February, 2015:** Death of John Sambou, oldest catechist of the diocese, who had been working in Kuntaur and Kaur since 1983.

**22nd February, 2015:** Bishop Robert Ellison attended the enthronement in the Cathedral of Notre Dame des Victoires, Dakar, of the newly-appointed Archbishop of Dakar, the Most Revd. Benjamin Ndiaye, who had

succeeded Cardinal Théodore Adrien Sarr.

**13th March, 2015:** A farewell Mass for Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary was offered by Bishop Ellison at St. Therese's Church, Kanifing.

**21st March, 2017:** Death in Dublin of Fr. Joseph Gough, who had served in The Gambia from 1972 to 1983. He was successively teacher and Principal of St. Augustine's High School. In later years, he became an honorary Gambian citizen, raising funds for sports, and until 2013, visited this country regularly.

**3rd February, 2018 (St. Blaise):** Episcopal Ordination of the Most Revd Dr Gabriel Mendy CSSp as Fourth Bishop of Banjul, at the Independence Stadium, Bakau.

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## **Catechist Annual Retreat At GPI**

**From 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2023**

**The retreat director Rev. Fr. Richard Mansal reflected with them on these three areas:**

- 1. Catechists spirituality and personal formation.**
- 2. The need to teach the truth.**
- 3. Setting hearts aflame**

# **Group pix**

## Weekday Celebrations

## February &amp; March

**6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY****ST. PAUL MIKI & HIS COMPANION, MARTYRS**

PAUL Miki was born around 1562, educated by Jesuits, then joined the Society of Jesus. The Japanese government feared the influence of the Jesuits. Miki and others were imprisoned. He and fellow Catholic prisoners were forced to walk 966 kilometres from Kyoto to Nagasaki, the city with the most Christian converts. There, on 5th February, 1597, Miki was crucified. From the cross, he assured his executioners that he forgave them. Alongside Paul Miki, died two other Jesuits, and 23 others, known collectively as the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Japan, canonised by Pope Pius IX in 1862. *(In 1945, the Second World War was brought to a close when the USA dropped a nuclear bomb on Nagasaki.)*

**8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY****ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA, RELIGIOUS**

JOSEPHINE was born around 1869 in Darfur, Sudan. At the age of nine, she was kidnapped. Working as a slave for the mother of a general, she was flogged every day, and bore 144 scars throughout her life. In 1882, she was bought by the Italian consul, who took her to Italy. Bakhita came to know a totally different kind of 'master': Jesus Christ. 'I am definitively loved, and whatever happens to me, I am awaited by this Love.' In January 1890, she was baptised and confirmed and received her first Communion. In December 1896, she took vows in the Canossian Sisters, and thereafter, journeyed round Italy to promote the mission. She died in 1947, and was canonised in 2000.

**11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY****OUR LADY OF LOURDES**

IN 1858, the Immaculate Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, near Lourdes in France. Through this poor girl, Mary called sinners to repentance, and there arose in the Church a marvellous spirit of prayer and charity, especially in helping the poor and the sick. This day is observed as World Day for the Sick.

**22<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY****THE CHAIR OF ST. PETER**

THE FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF ST. PETER has been kept in Rome since the 4th century. It invites us to give thanks for our unity with the Pope and with Catholics throughout the world, and to pray for the preservation and strengthening of this unity.

**17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH****ST. PATRICK, BISHOP**

PATRICK was born in Wales in the 390s. He was taken as a slave to Ireland, but after six years, escaped to Gaul (presentday France). Having been ordained, he returned to Ireland, founding the Diocese of Armagh and spending the rest of his life preaching the Christian faith. He is the principal patron of Ireland.

**19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH****ST. JOSEPH**

JOSEPH was the husband of the Virgin Mary, with whom he lived in chastity. He was descended from the House of David (Matthew 1:15; Luke 2:14). Joseph is described in many English translations of the Bible as a carpenter, though the original Greek calls him a tekton (craftsman). Because the family could only offer two doves at the presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2: 22-39), Joseph is thought of as a poor man. He is revered as a model of poverty, chastity and obedience, patron of priests and religious, and as a model father and artisan.

**25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH****THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD**

ST. LUKE'S account of the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary (Luke 1:26-38) and her acceptance of God's role for her, 'Be it done unto me according to your word,' is unforgettable.

Mary's acceptance was the prelude to Christ's birth, ministry, passion and resurrection. It prefigured Christ's own acceptance of the Father's will in the 'agony in the garden' (Luke 22:39-44).

**SYNOD PRAYER**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us,

make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. **Amen.**



February &amp; March

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

# Our Sunday Readings

**February 5, 2023**
**Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**
**1st Reading:** Isaiah 58:7-10

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

**2nd Reading:** 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

**Alleluia:** John 8:12

**Gospel:** Matthew 5:13-16

**Homily Theme:** You are the Light of the World – Matthew 5:13-16

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”*

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** Indeed, we are the Light of the World and also the Salt of the World. Jesus tells us that we should become the light of the world. What does He mean? The light illuminates a space or a place so that we can see, judge and act. In the absence of light, we can't do anything tangible.

For us to become the Light of the World as Jesus commands, we are supposed to first, possess the virtues of Christ, hear His teachings and follow Him. Secondly, become good examples to others in an open manner, by exhibiting all good things that Christ taught us. So, today let our good deeds become visible to everyone, so that God can be glorified in our work and love for others. Let us become good role models to others, and glory and honour will be to the Almighty God.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, You have commanded us to become the Light of the World and Salt of the Earth. Give us strength, courage and humility, so that we can become perfect examples to others and bring them closer to You. Amen.

**February 12, 2023**
**Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**
**1st Reading:** Sirach 15:15-20

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

**2nd Reading:** 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

**Alleluia:** Matthew 11:25

**Gospel:** Matthew 5:17-37 or Matthew 5:20-22A, 27-28, 33-34A, 37

**Homily Theme:** I have Come not to Abolish but to Fulfil the Law – Matthew 5:17-19

**Jesus said to his disciples:** *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. Therefore, whoever breaks one of*

*the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so, will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments, will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.”*

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** During the time of Jesus, most of the disciples who had begun to follow Jesus thought that He was the ruler who would come and abolish the punitive Laws of Moses and bring about a new world order. Others thought that Jesus would come to negate most of the things that had been prophesied before. But alas! Jesus clarifies with His statement ‘I have Come not to Abolish but to Fulfil the Law’ that He was not on an earthly mission but on a Godly and Heavenly mission.

This was a revelation that the God-sent prophets, who had prophesied about Jesus, were actually right, and all that they had proclaimed would come to pass. Now, Jesus simplifies all these commandments and prophecies into two commandments namely: 1. You shall Love the Lord Your God with all Your Heart, Soul and Mind and 2. You shall Love your Neighbour as Yourself. Let's heed to Jesus' call to be obedient, first and foremost, to the two greatest commandments and also the teachings of Christ, so that we can have a high place reserved for us in Heaven.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, give us the passion to obey Your commandments and teach them to others. Help us to continually become the Light and Salt of the World, so that our actions and deeds may become good examples that glorify the Name of our Lord. Amen.

**February 19, 2023**
**Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**
**1st Reading:** Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

**2nd Reading:** 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

**Alleluia:** 1 John 2:5

**Gospel:** Matthew 5:38-48

**Homily Theme:** An Eye for an Eye and a Tooth for a Tooth – Matthew 5:38-48

**Jesus said to his disciples:** *“You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well.”*

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** Today, Jesus Christ has a very important lesson for us. It is a lesson that most of us find hard to understand and practice in normal, every day-to-day life. Imagine someone maliciously punching you hard on the cheek, and instead of defending yourself and responding in kind, you turn and advice him/her to hit you again on the other side!

Our verse of the day today is teaching us exactly that, not on the face value of it, but it teaches us that two wrongs don't make a right. Have you ever realized that when someone wrongs you and you tell him/her that you leave the punishment to the Lord, he/she reflects consciously for a few seconds before responding? Then begins to retort back at you in fear of being regarded as a loser. If you respond in kind to him/her, more anger and hatred begins to build up and can spiral out of proportion. At this point, you are supposed to use more positive talk with love to the person. This love will begin to thaw his/her hatred, temper or bad attitude.

Let us today embrace love in all our actions, communications, judgements and thoughts because love conquers all evil. Let us not try to solve evil with evil because, as Jesus says, the whole world will be full of evil. Let us counter evil with good and, as we all know, good will always prevail over evil.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, You have commanded us to refrain from solving evil with evil. Fill our hearts with Your love, so that we can spread this love throughout the world to annihilate all evil. Amen.

### February 26, 2023 First Sunday of Lent, Year A

**1st Reading:** Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

**2nd Reading:** Romans 5:12-19 or Romans 5:12, 17-19

**Verse before the Gospel:** Matthew 4:4B

**Gospel:** Matthew 4:1-11

**Homily Theme:** Jesus is Tempted By The Devil in the Desert – Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-15, Luke 4:1-13

*At that time, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards, he was hungry.*

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** Is temptation good? Certainly, it's not a sin to be tempted! Otherwise, our Lord could never have been tempted Himself. But, He was. And so are we. As we enter into the first full week of Lent, we are given the opportunity to ponder the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert. Temptation is never from God. But God does permit us to be tempted. Not so that we fall, but so that we grow in holiness. Temptation forces us to rise up and make a choice, either for God or for the temptation. Though mercy and forgiveness are always offered when we fail, the blessings that await those who overcome temptation are numerous. Let's look at five clear "blessings" that can come from enduring the temptations of the evil one. Ponder these carefully and slowly:

1. First, enduring a temptation and conquering it helps us see the strength of God in our lives.

2. Second, temptation humbles us, stripping away our pride and our struggle of thinking we are self-reliant and self-made.

3. Third, there is great value in completely rejecting the devil. This not only robs him of his ongoing power to deceive us, but it also clarifies our vision of who he is, so that we can continue to reject him and his works.

4. Fourth, overcoming temptation, clearly and definitively, strengthens us in every virtue.

5. Fifth, the devil would not tempt us if he were not concerned about our holiness. Thus, we should see temptation as a sign that the evil one is losing hold of our

lives.

Reflect, today, upon Jesus facing the devil in the desert after spending 40 days of fasting. He faced every temptation of the evil one, so as to assure us that if we but unite ourselves completely to Him in His human nature, we also will have His strength to overcome anything and everything the vile devil throws our way.

**Prayer:** My dear Lord, after spending 40 days of fasting and prayer in the dry and hot desert, You allowed Yourself to be tempted by the evil one. The devil attacked You with all he had, and You easily, quickly and definitively defeated him, rejecting his lies and deceptions. Give me the grace I need to overcome every temptation I encounter and to rely completely upon You, without reserve. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen.

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### March 5, 2023 Second Sunday of Lent, Year A

**1st Reading:** Genesis 12:1-4A

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

**2nd Reading:** 2 Timothy 1:8B-10

**Verse before the Gospel:** Matthew 17:5

**Gospel:** Matthew 17:1-9

**Homily Theme:** The Transfiguration of Jesus on the Mountain

*Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them.*

*Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."*

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** The transfiguration of Jesus Christ was a very powerful moment in the course of His earthly ministry, when the divine nature and glory, which He possessed prior to coming to earth in the human body, was manifested in front of the three disciples, Peter James and John.

Jesus was transformed into a form that nothing on earth could make dirty. It was a form that we can call heavenly. We also see that He was communicating with Elijah and Moses, people we know are in heaven. So, why was the transfiguration important to Jesus and to the apostles?

God Himself took the form of man and came down to earth as His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. So, after Jesus began to gather His disciples for His ministry, He performed many miracles in front of them and the disciples also performed miracles in His name. He told them that He was the Messiah and that He came from God. This is why during the transfiguration, a cloud came, casting a shadow over them and from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." God Himself reassured the apostles that Jesus was indeed His beloved Son.

After this powerful transfiguration, they all descended to the bottom of the mountain and found the rest trying, but in vain, to drive a demon out of a man. Jesus confirms their wavering faith in Him by telling them that their dwindling faith is the cause of their inability to drive out demons. Let us, therefore, have an unwavering faith in Jesus because we are lucky to know that He is indeed the messiah who came

to save us from our sins.

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

### March 12, 2023 Third Sunday of Lent, Year A

**1st Reading:** Exodus 17:3-7

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

**2nd Reading:** Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

**Verse before the Gospel:** John 4:42, 15

**Gospel:** John 4:5-42 or John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

**Homily Theme:** Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well – John 4:5-42

*A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.)*

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** This is the story of a woman who encountered Jesus at the well. She comes to the well in the middle of the noon-day heat, so as to avoid the other women of her town, for fear of encountering their judgment upon her, for she was a sinful woman.

The first thing to note is the very fact of Jesus speaking to her, touched her. She was a Samaritan woman and Jesus was a Jewish man. Jewish men did not speak to Samaritan women. But, there was something more that Jesus said that deeply affected her. As the woman herself tells us, He "told me everything I have done."

But here was Jesus. He knew all about her but wanted to give her Living Water, nonetheless. He wanted to satiate the thirst that she was feeling in her soul. As He spoke to her, and as she experienced His gentleness and acceptance, that thirst began to be quenched. Interestingly, the woman went away and "left her water jar" by the well. She never actually got the water she came for. Or did she? Symbolically, this act of leaving the water jar at the well is a sign that her thirst was quenched by this encounter with Jesus. She was no longer thirsty, at least spiritually speaking. Jesus, the Living Water, satiated her.

Reflect, today, upon the undeniable thirst that is within you. Once you are aware of it, make the conscious choice to let Jesus satiate it with Living Water. If you do this, you too will leave the many "jars" behind that never satisfy for very long.

**Prayer:** Lord, You are the Living Water that my soul needs. May I meet You in the heat of my day, in the trials of life, and in my shame and guilt. May I encounter Your love, gentleness and acceptance in these moments, and may that Love become the source of my new life in You. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen.

### March 19, 2023 Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year A

**1st Reading:** 1 Samuel 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6

**2nd Reading:** Ephesians 5:8-14

**Verse before the Gospel:** John 8:12

**Gospel:** John 9:1-41 or John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

**Homily Theme:** Jesus Heals a Man Blind From Birth – John 9:1-41

*As Jesus passed by He saw a man blind from birth. When He had said this, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" – which means Sent. So, he went and washed, and came back able to see.*

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** Who was this man? Interestingly, he does not have a name. He is only referred to as the "man blind from birth." This is significant in the Gospel of John because the lack of a name is also seen, for example, in the story of "the woman at the well." The fact that there is no name indicates that we should see ourselves in this story.

"Blindness" is our inability to see the hand of God at work all around us. We struggle to see the daily miracles of God's grace alive in our lives, and alive in the lives of others. So, the first thing we should do with this Scripture, is strive to see our lack of sight. How He heals this man is also significant. He uses His own spit to make mud and smear it on this man's eyes, which is not immediately that appealing. But, it does reveal something quite significant to us. Namely, it reveals the fact that Jesus can use something exceptionally ordinary as a source of His divine grace!

In fact, the more ordinary the activity, the more we should strive to see God at work. And when we do "see" Him at work in the ordinary activities of life, we will be healed of our spiritual blindness.

Reflect, today, upon this act of Jesus and allow our Lord to smear His spit and dirt on your eyes. Allow Him to give you the gift of spiritual sight. And as you begin to see His presence in your life, you will be amazed at the beauty you behold.

**Prayer:** Lord, I want to see. Help me to be healed of my blindness. Help me to see You at work in every ordinary activity of my life. Help me to see Your divine grace in the smallest events of my day. And as I see You alive and active, fill my heart with gratitude for this vision. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen

### March 26, 2023 Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year A

**1st Reading:** Ezekiel 37:12-14

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

**2nd Reading:** Romans 8:8-11

**Verse Before the Gospel:** John 11:25A, 26

**Gospel:** John 11:1-45 or John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

**Homily Theme:** I Am the Resurrection and the Life; Whoever Believes in Me will Live – John 11:25-27

*Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and anyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** This statement above by Jesus is very perplexing. A person of this world, who does not know God or Jesus, will find it difficult to fathom the meaning of this statement. But, a person who knows God and Christ, will understand perfectly what this is all about. Martha knew too well about the resurrection of the dead, that is why she told Jesus, "I know he [Lazarus] will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." But Jesus then taught

us about the different resurrection and life that He is. Jesus is not interested so much on our short-lived physical life but the everlasting life that our souls will enjoy after our physical death.

Let us, therefore, realise today that Jesus Christ came to teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven, so that He can raise us from the death we are in. Let us put into practice the teachings of Christ, so that we can continue knowing God, loving him, serving and praising Him. By doing so, Jesus guarantees us everlasting life after our physical death.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, we believe that You are the resurrection and life. We ask You to grant us strength to push through the challenges of this world, without giving in to the temptations of the evil one. May You, during the last day, raise us to the new heavenly life, where we will praise You, The Holy Spirit and our Heavenly Father, in communion with the Angels and Saints. Amen.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT



*Seeing is believing.  
The foot steps of Jesus Christ.*

The National Catholic Pilgrimage Committee is pleased to inform you that Air Travel and Tours Agency Limited in collaboration with Fly Travel Agency Ltd. will take intending pilgrims to Two Nations Christian (Holy Land) or (Holy Sites) in Israel and Jordan from 15th October to 30th October, 2023.

The two weeks Spiritual package includes:  
Air fares, Hotel Accommodation (Half Board),  
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For more information, please contact:  
Fr. Peter Lopez, 7006955; Mary Owens Adams, 7790298 & Elizabeth Joof-Mendy, 9300007.



**INTER-TERRITORIAL CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE GAMBIA AND SIERRA LEONE**

Santanno House  
10 Howe Street  
Freetown, Sierra Leone  
[itcabic71@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:itcabic71@yahoo.co.uk)  
(+232) 79979066  
(+232) 30234271

**Communiqué of ITCABIC Plenary Assembly in Freetown, Sierra Leone  
From 22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

**Preamble:**

We, the Bishops of The Gambia and Sierra Leone, held our annual Assembly at Javouhey House, Freetown in the Archdiocese of Freetown, from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023:

In order to enhance and improve our pastoral activities and address emerging concerns and challenges in all the five Dioceses of the Inter-Territorial Catholic Bishops' Conference of The Gambia and Sierra Leone (ITCABIC);

Inspired and directed by our retreat and study sessions, discussions and deliberations regarding the pastoral gains and challenges highlighted by all the Bishops of the Conference, as well as the hopes and aspirations for improved pastoral activities;

In accordance with the provisions of Canon Law and the teaching of the Magisterium that bind all the Dioceses of the Universal Church;

Bearing in mind, the need to build on existing pastoral efforts to develop concrete pathways that shape and facilitate improved pastoral activities in our dioceses, we deliberated on the following thematic areas: Synod on Synodality, Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS), ITCABIC Institutions, Pastoral Agents of Evangelization, Liturgical Observations, and Concerns, Guidelines for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, and the current situations in The Gambia and Sierra Leone.

**Information and Call to Action**

As servant leaders of the Catholic Church in our Conference, we are humbled and gracious to God as we present the following information to you:

1. **Annual Retreat:** Following the footsteps of Jesus who spent his time in prayer before he accomplished his mission, our annual plenary meetings always begin with prayer and retreat. This year's retreat on 23<sup>rd</sup> January was conducted by Rev. Fr. Francis Tommy, the Spiritual Director of St. Paul's Major Seminary. The theme for our reflection was: "You did not choose me. I chose you and commissioned you to go out and bear fruit; fruit that will last." (Jn.15:16). We were, accordingly, invited to reflect on the sacred nature of our episcopal ministry as custodians of the Church's faith, unity, catholicity, and apostolicity in spite of our unworthiness.
2. **Study Session:** Our retreat was followed by the Study Session on 24<sup>th</sup> January that was facilitated by Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Joseph Kamanda, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Freetown, lecturer and chaplain to Fourah Bay College. He reviewed the 2022 Post-Plenary Assembly Report of the Dicastery for Inter-Religious Dialogue, titled, "Inter-Religious dialogue and Conviviality". Finally, he invited us to identify the key contradictory forces in our local churches that impede conviviality and possible ways of promoting Inter-Religious dialogue in our particular contexts.
3. **Address of the Apostolic Nuncio:**  
His Excellency, Archbishop Walter Erbi expressed his immense gratitude for the cordial reception he experienced in our midst, and he assured us of the Holy Father Pope Francis' closeness and solicitude to our Episcopal Conference. He noted that he is fully available with an open mind and heart and is also committed to cooperate with us to accomplish the mission of the Church and enable us fulfil our role of true pastoral leadership.
4. **Synod on Synodality**  
We express our sincere gratitude to all the priests, religious, and lay faithful who actively participated in the Synodal process at the Diocesan level. Each Diocese successfully submitted its Synthesis Report to our Secretariat and our Conference's Synthesis Report was sent to the General Synod Secretariat in Rome. The document for the Continental Phase of the Synod is now available for each Diocese to study its content and present its contribution to the Conference's

representatives who will be attending SECAM<sup>1</sup> meeting in Addis Ababa. This meeting is scheduled for the 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in preparation for the Synod of Bishops on Synodality. The first phase of this Synod will be in October 2023 while the second phase will be in October, 2024. In both phases, the Synod of Bishops will begin with an Ecumenical Prayer Vigil in St. Peter's Square followed by a three day retreat, in order to, experience the Synod as a true ecumenical event and a renewed Pentecost.

5. **Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS):** On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2022, Pauline Jaricot was beatified in her birthplace in Lyon, France. She dedicated her entire life to support the Church's mission through prayer, devotion, and the service of the poor. For that reason, she founded the Society for the Propagation of the Faith that celebrated its bicentenary anniversary last year. This Society and the Pontifical Society of St. Peter, the Apostle, Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood, and Pontifical Missionary Union constitute the Pontifical Mission Societies. They respectively participate in the Church's mission through prayer, spirituality, promotion of missionary awareness and initiatives, and financial contribution to support the pastoral needs of the local churches around the world.

We are very grateful to our National and Diocesan PMS Directors, the priests, religious, and lay faithful who support and promote the goals of these four Pontifical Mission Societies in our Dioceses. However, we encourage more effective PMS animation and formation in our parishes, schools, and institutions, because the future of the PMS requires "the full involvement of the lay faithful. They should be helped to have a deeper understanding of their own missionary nature, so that they too can be missionary animators." (President of P.M.S.)

6. **ITCABIC Institutions:** We devoted enough time of our meeting to discuss the different services, needs, developments, and challenges of our ITCABIC Institutions. We received reports from the competent authorities appointed to oversee these Institutions and we in turn presented recommendations for their effective and sustainable administration.

7. **Seminaries:** The self-reliant initiatives and projects introduced in St. Paul's Major Seminary in Freetown and in St. Kizito's Pre-Major Seminary in Kenema are highly commendable. We encouraged their respective rectors to continue these initiatives and instill in our seminarians the spirit and practice of contributing towards their upkeep and needs even when they are ordained

<sup>1</sup> Symposium of Episcopal Conferences for Africa and Madagascar

priests. This will greatly reduce their financial dependence on others and the Diocese to provide their basic needs.

We urge all the rectors, formators, and staff in our seminaries to promote and maintain a wholistic formation for our seminarians. That includes their spiritual, human, intellectual, and pastoral formation. The process of discernment and accompaniment should also be fostered for the success of our seminarians' formation. On our part, we are committed to support and facilitate the merger of St. Paul's Major Seminary in Freetown and St. Paul's Major Seminary in Gbarnga, Liberia and also invest in the training of formators from our Dioceses. We are extremely grateful for the commitment, dedication, and sacrifice of the formators in our seminaries.

8. **Secretariat and Website:** We welcome our new Secretary General, Rev. Fr. Dominic Arnold Johnson to our Secretariat and we wish him a successful and fulfilling term of office. Our Secretariat will regularly update our website that is operated by Verbum Networks. When it is fully functional, current and relevant information and events of our Conference and individual Dioceses will be provided at [www.cbcs/gm.org](http://www.cbcs/gm.org). We intend to continue printing the hard copies of our liturgical ordo and also upload its content on this website for easy access.

9. **Liturgical Observations and Concerns:** We acknowledge the observations and concerns presented to us by ITCABIC Liturgical Commission. In most parishes, thanksgiving celebrations, feasts, and anniversaries of parish organizations, groups, couples, and families have overshadowed the liturgical season and Sunday Mass of the year. They are even given more prominence on major feast days and solemnities of the Church. Secondly, the choirs often perform as an orchestra instead of animating the liturgy for all. This prevents the faithful from actively participating in the liturgy. We therefore, approve the Liturgical Commission's proposal to conduct a workshop in The Gambia and Sierra Leone to facilitate the training of liturgical trainers. This will correct some of the abuses and misconceptions about the celebration of our liturgy. In due course, an RCIA Manual will also be produced for catechists in our Conference. This will provide comprehensive material for instruction on the Sacraments of Christian Initiation.

10. **Guidelines for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults:** We renew our commitment to protect and safeguard minors and vulnerable adults and to continue to update and support the necessary structures, policies, and mechanisms already established in our Dioceses, in order to create a conducive environment that will prevent abuses.

## THE SIERRA LEONE CONFERENCE Inter-Territorial Catholic Bishops' Conference of The Gambia and Sierra Leone (ITCABIC)

22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2023

Flashback photo in Banjul, The Gambia  
- 2022 conference



11. **Updates from the Dioceses:** As a Conference, we presented our annual summary reports on the local churches under our pastoral care. Our reports included pastoral agents, parishes, institutions, administration of sacraments and works of evangelization, education, charity, ecumenical and inter religious dialogue. We equally considered the current political, socio-economic, and religious realities and challenges that adversely affect the hopes and aspirations of our people in our two countries.

12. **Exhortation:** Considering the negative impact of the Covid - 19 pandemic on our nations, the rise in cost of living and basic commodities, high rate of unemployment among our youth, and other social problems, we exhort our priests, religious, catechists, and lay faithful to uphold their faith, hope, and charity in these challenging times. We acknowledge and appreciate your dedication, self-sacrifice, and contributions to the mission of the Church, and we pray that God will grant you the resources, blessings, and security necessary for you to continue to bear witness to his love, mercy, and compassion in our communities.

13. **Appreciation:** At the end of our plenary meeting, we heartily express our appreciation to our dear brother, Most Rev. Edward Tamba Charles, the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Freetown, the priests, religious, and lay faithful of his Archdiocese for their hospitality, prayers, generosity, and sacrifice in support of our 2023 assembly. Our gratitude is also extended to the moderators of our retreat and study sessions, the Cluny sisters and staff of Javouhey House in Leicester. We pray that God may richly bless and reward all those who contributed in diverse ways to the success of our meeting.

14. **Venue for next Plenary Assembly:** We finally agreed that our next plenary meeting will be held in the Catholic Diocese of Bo, Sierra Leone from 21<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2024.

15. **Invocation:** We invoke the intercession of St. Edward, the patron saint of the Archdiocese of Freetown for God's blessings, protection, and guidance on our respective Dioceses, pastoral agents, and families.

Issued at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Freetown, Sierra Leone on the 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2023.

✠ *Natalie Paganelli* ✠  
Most Rev. Natalie Paganelli ✠  
President of Conference (ITCABIC)

