

# The Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

*Incorporating The  
Catholic Newsletter*



## The Banjul Conference



Inter-Territorial Catholic Bishops' Conference of The Gambia And Sierra Leone  
Held in Banjul, 24th to 30th January 2022



### Editorial Hint

**GAMBIA AT 57, HAVE WE SQUANDERED THE COVENANT OF HOPE  
BEQUEATHED TO US BY OUR FOUNDING FATHERS?**

At 57, We Have No Control Mechanism in Place to Check the Shylock Landlords, Cut-throat Foodstuff Sellers and their Outrageous Prices Which Are Killing the Poor Masses More Than the Lethal Coronavirus Can Even Do

Towards An Inclusive Synod - Synod on Synodality



# 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: Henry Gomez & Mam Gorr Peter Campbell

## Editorial Hint

## GAMBIA AT 57, HAVE WE SQUANDERED THE COVENANT OF HOPE BEQUEATHED TO US BY OUR FOUNDING FATHERS?

**A**t 57, we have no control mechanism in place to check the shylock landlords, cut-throat foodstuff sellers and their outrageous prices which are killing the poor masses more than the lethal Coronavirus can even do.

As our nation's Independence Day anniversary approaches, we are again hearing the usual exhortations to show patriotism that will be ushered by the raising of the national flag on our nation's 57<sup>th</sup> birthday. We should have no objections to this because we ought to be proud of our nation and flag, which are the symbols of our independence and sovereignty. At the same time, we should reflect seriously on how we have grown as a sovereign nation after 57 years. Are we truly free from religious bigotry and do we give due respect to adherents of faiths other than our own? Or are we still uptight and unforgiving when others do not see eye to eye with us over our religion? Do we truly have confidence in our intellectual maturity and mental strength to the extent that we are comfortable with criticisms and take them in our stride? Or, do we go into denial and become defensive or, worse, lash out and try to curtail freedom of speech?

Do we truly accept sections of our community who are different, temper justice with compassion towards them and accommodate them, so they feel accepted and are able to lead a meaningful life? Or, are we still chained by the inflexibility of hearts hardened by laws of our own design, thus alienating and condemning these people to a life of humiliation and suffering? Are we truly free from parochial passions and treat each fellow citizen as a Gambian, in his or her own right? Or, are we still not averse to exploiting tribe and religion for political expediency? Are we truly free in our practice of justice and equality for all? Or, do we still act mostly to please our political bosses? Are we truly free in the way we exercise judgment on people who have different political views and accept that they are entitled to their views and should be heard? Or, do we choose to conveniently brand them as traitors? Can we distinguish between loyalty to the nation and allegiance to the government of the day? Or do we condemn those who criticize the government of the day as traitors?

Do raise the national flag to celebrate our nation's independence, but please bear in mind that freedom not only means being free from the physical shackles of colonial rule, but also freeing the mind to embrace all that is good, fair and compassionate, and to reject all that is bad, corrupt and oppressive. This provokes the issue of the heartlessness of the landlords and foodstuff sellers in this country, who many now consider deadlier than Coronavirus and Omicron, respectively, for creating man-made sorrow and suffering among Gambians. Or, is the government to be blamed because of their passivity, mute indifference or cold complicity, when the masses are dying of joblessness, hunger, starvation, homelessness and frustration?

At 57, no citizen of this country should lack basic the things of life, such as food, shelter, healthcare, education, etc. Thus, the government of the day needs to checkmate these emerging horrific local viruses taking the forms of landlords and foodstuffs sellers. It will amount to an unblushing breakage of the covenants of hope bequeathed to us by our founding fathers, and which the government of the day, is bound to uphold.

## The Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

### 2022 APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

We have a small favor to ask. Many people are beginning to turn to the Diocese of Banjul Newsletter for vital, independent, and quality journalism. Therefore, readers around the world now need to support us financially. Thus, as 2022 begins, there's a New Year resolution we would like you to consider. 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, regardless of what they can afford to pay. 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.

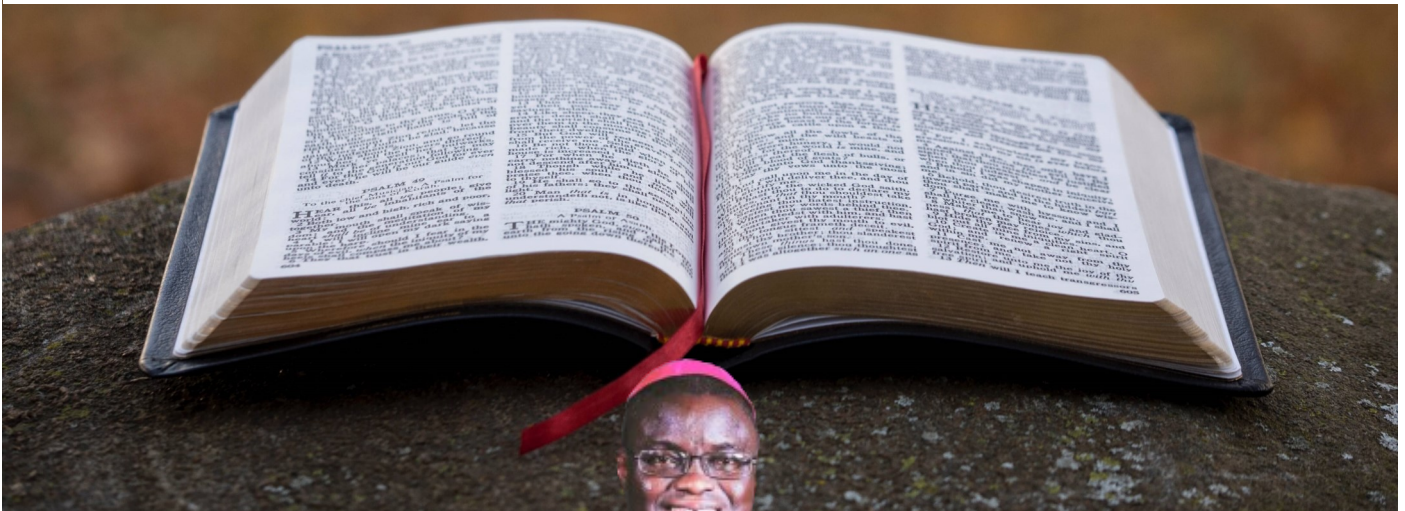
## NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE 2022

From Most Rev. Dr. Gabriel Mendy C.S.Sp.

Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Banjul, The Gambia.

# Our hope in God will not disappoint us

Rom. 5:5



Weeks ago, we celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem and God's fulfillment of his promise of a Savior for us. Our hope of a Savior we expected to save us from the forces of sin and evil was equally fulfilled by God. We should, therefore, have confidence in God's power to fulfill his word, accomplish his will, and save us from the forces of sin and evil through his Son Jesus Christ who is now present in our midst as God-with-us. Even at the beginning of this New Year with its uncertainties and challenges, we should renew our hope and trust in God's goodness, guidance, and faithfulness in our various vocations in life. So my New Year's message is: **Our Hope in God will not Disappoint us.**" These were St. Paul's words of exhortation to the Christian community in Rome in Rom. 5:5. He said to them in verse 3-5 "we should rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which he has given to us." God has already fulfilled our hope of a Savior with the birth of Jesus. So we have reason to believe that God will not fail or disappoint us in this New Year of 2022 based on our hope and trust in Him.

Every New Year, we have new hope and plans we want to achieve in our lives as individuals, a community of faith, and a nation. We hope for a better New Year that is more peaceful, healthy, successful, and prosperous than the

previous year. If we experienced misfortune, sickness, and disappointment the year before, we hope for good health, success, and progress in the New Year. We look forward to a year of blessing, favors, good health, and fulfilment in our lives. The whole world has seriously suffered for the past two years from the deadly effects of the Corona Virus pandemic that is still a danger to human life and activity. So, our hope for this New Year is obviously the eradication of this deadly pandemic so that we can experience good health and resume normal interaction and activity. Those who endured pain, disappointment, and hardship this past year also have

new hope for a more prosperous and comfortable life in the New Year. Others have new plans for the New Year they want to achieve, in order to realize their purpose and goal in life. Some of us plan to understand our faith more and grow in our knowledge and love of God, and be more committed and active in our Church and society. Many others want to advance their career, education, skills, and business, discover their vocation, or begin a new family life. So, our hope and plans are usually set in place in the New Year, but they may or may not be realized in the course of the year, for our hope and plans are not fully within our own power and ability to accomplish, without God's blessings and assistance.

Our human limitations and imperfections also affect our ability and determination to realize our plans, hope, and expectations in the New Year. They often prevent us from achieving our aspirations in life even when we have very good intentions. We still experience disappointment

in fulfilling our hopes and plans because the outcome does not completely depend on us alone. There are other factors that can prevent or enable us to achieve what we expect to accomplish in the New Year. Our personal hope and plans must, therefore, be grounded on our hope in God and our efforts to overcome our human limitations and imperfections, if we intend to succeed. Otherwise, we will not realize our human aspirations and expectations and we will not be fulfilled in our lives. If we even accomplish what we plan and hope for, Pope Benedict XVI, observed that “it becomes clear that they are not, in reality, the whole. It becomes evident that we have need of a hope that goes further. It becomes clear that only something infinite will suffice for us, something that will always be more than we can ever attain” He, therefore, concluded that “tomorrow's better world cannot be the proper and sufficient content of our hope.” We are not expected, therefore, to simply hope for a better life, a better future, and the fulfillment of our plans in the New Year. Our ultimate hope that is the foundation of all other hope and plans we have for ourselves should be our hope in God, our creator and source of life and strength.

As one of the theological virtues, hope in God is a divine gift we graciously received from God to enable us to trust God at all times, even without a cause or reason to do so. We cannot, in that sense, acquire hope in God on our own accord because it is a gift that God infused in our soul when became believers. So, it is not based on what we already know or perceive with our senses. Hope is God's free spiritual gift and St. Paul clearly affirmed in Rom. 8:24 that, “hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But, if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in nos 2090 would, therefore, define our hope in God as, “the confident expectation of divine blessings and the beatific vision of God, as well as the fear of offending God's love and incurring punishment.” This confident hope in God's goodness and purpose for us is what we need, in order to succeed and experience fulfilment in life. Such hope surpasses all other hopes, according to Pope Benedict XVI, because it is hope in God “who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain ... for God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety.”

We should, therefore, cherish and maintain our hope in God in the course of the New Year even in times of doubt and uncertainty. For it is our hope in God that St. Paul said in Rom.5:5 will never deceive or disappoint us. We can be disappointed by our personal plans and hope and other aspirations we have at heart due to our human imperfection.

But, God cannot disappoint us when we hope in him because God is always faithful, gracious, and with us in all our situations in life. So, we have no reason to lose hope and faith in God in the course of this New Year, even if we experience hardship and pain in our lives. We should, rather, in St. Paul's words in Rom. 12:12, rejoice in our hope, be patient in tribulation, and constant in prayer. Our hope in God should not, therefore, be compromised no matter our experience and condition in life. For it keeps us, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 1818 from discouragement; it sustains us during times of abandonment; and it opens up our hearts in expectation of eternal beatitude.” So we are encouraged in Heb. 10:23 to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised us is faithful. We, therefore, need to renew and strengthen our hope in God's goodness, blessings, protection, and deliverance in our various works of life.

Considering God's assistance throughout last year and his goodness in keeping us alive to witness another New Year, we should thank God for his guidance and protection and commend this year to his loving care and righteous judgment. For God alone knows what the New Year holds for us, and he alone is able to help us achieve our personal hope and plans. So, we should be convinced that our hope in God will not deceive or disappoint us, even if our condition in life is not what we expect. God will still support us and grant us our spiritual and material needs when we least expect. We have no reason, therefore, to be anxious and doubtful of what will happen to us in this New Year. Our future is safely in God's hands, so we should confidently look forward in faith and hope in God's power to sustain and guard us from all misfortune and danger. On this special day, we celebrate the feast of Mary, the Mother of God, we are invited to imitate her example of faith and hope in God's promises. She was specially chosen to be the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God and she fully believed that God's promises will be fulfilled and allowed God's will to be done in her life. We too should entrust ourselves to God and allow his plans for us to be fulfilled following the example of Mary. As the Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Banjul, I wish the priests, religious, and faithful of the Diocese, our Christian brothers and sisters, Muslims, believers of other faiths and their families and friends, Gambians at home and abroad, a healthy, peaceful, and prosperous New Year. May God bless and protect you all throughout this year of 2022.

*Your Servant in Christ,*

*Most Rev. Dr. Gabriel Mendy C.S.Sp.  
Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Banjul, The Gambia.*



**If you  
do one thing  
this fall ...**

Be part of the Synod  
process that will shape our  
local Church, with Synod  
small groups!

## Cover Story

# The Banjul Conference

Inter-Territorial Catholic Bishops' Conference of The Gambia And Sierra Leone (ITCABIC) held in Banjul, 24th to 30th January 2022



Territorial Catholic Bishops' Conference of The Gambia and Sierra Leone (ITCABIC). According to the report of the Vatican News, the Bishops, during the meeting, were very pleased with the situation report about the activities of the priests, religious and allied church functionaries in the participating dioceses and commended their resilience and innovativeness during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is not yet over. The encouragement of the West African Bishops to consecrated persons comes when the Church, throughout the world, is celebrating World Day for Consecrated Life, which falls on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2022.

**A** conference of bishops, which is sometimes called episcopal conference, is a grouping of all the Catholic bishops in a region or territory, who are empowered to make a limited number of decisions regarding policy for the whole region, and who are also encouraged to develop projects, initiatives, or apostolates together, if they judge that to be in the interests of the Church. Conferences of bishops are established by the Pope, and generally, but not always, follow the boundaries of a country. The first assembly of bishops to meet regularly, with its own legal structure and ecclesial leadership function, is the Swiss Bishops' Conference, which was founded in 1863. More than forty episcopal conferences existed before the Second Vatican Council. Their status was confirmed by the Second Vatican Council and further defined by Pope Paul VI's 1966 *motu proprio*, *Ecclesiae sanctae*.

Certain authority and tasks are assigned to episcopal conferences, particularly with regard to setting the liturgical norms for the Mass. Episcopal conferences receive their authority under universal law or particular mandates. In certain circumstances, as defined by canon law, the decisions of an episcopal conference are subject to ratification by the Holy See. Individual bishops do not relinquish their immediate authority for the governance of their respective dioceses to the conference. Thus, a bishops' conference can make rules setting the age for confirmation, setting the rules about what kind of clothes priests and deacons should wear, setting rules about fasting and abstinence, and setting certain financial and administrative standards. Also, in some areas of the world, a conference of bishops might include bishops of more than one country, such as in the case of The Gambia and Sierra Leone Bishops' Conference.

In the light of this background, Bishops of The Gambia and Sierra Leone met in Banjul from 24th to 30th January 2022 at the premises of The Gambia Pastoral Institute at Kairaba Avenue in the Kanifing Municipality of The Gambia. The meeting brought to the fore, the need to enhance and improve on pastoral activities and other development strategies in all the five dioceses of the Inter-

religious and lay faithful to be firm in the faith, hope and charity, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic and its attendant consequences. We are aware of your commitment, sacrifices and contributions in diverse ways to the mission of the Church. May the Gospel message find a home in your hearts and lead to the transformation of our communities," said the prelates.

In ordinary circumstances, regular pastoral programmes of the Church require the physical presence of a pastor or a religious sister. With the emphasis on distancing to prevent the spread of Covid-19, many pastoral workers initially found themselves at a disadvantage or loss. They have had to cope, by being more innovative in pastoral ministry. To continue providing pastoral care, many took to various communication technologies. Depending on availability, this was easier in areas where technologies abound than in rural and some deprived communities of Africa.

Throughout deliberations regarding the pastoral gains and challenges in dioceses, the Bishops said they are keenly "aware of the need to build upon existing pastoral efforts. Our wish is to develop concrete pathways that shape and facilitate improved pastoral activities," the Bishops said. Part of the reflections, by the Bishops, included: Practical administrative matters of the Conference; issues about major seminaries and formation; the Synodal Church; evangelization; the need for effective policies and strategies that safeguard minors and vulnerable adults.

## A Synod on Synodality: Consultations

The Bishops reviewed progress concerning consultations on the Synod convoked by Pope Francis for October 2023 in the Vatican.

"During our meeting, we discussed and shared our diocesan programmes on the Synod. Each diocese has developed structures that will ensure the participation of all the People of God in their ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In this regard, we call on all priests, religious and lay faithful, to fully participate in this synodal process so that nobody is left out. All opinions on this matter shall be given due consideration," the Bishops said.

**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 Meeting in Banjul,  
The Gambia from 24th to 30th January, 2022**

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**Preamble**

We, the Bishops of The Gambia and Sierra Leone, meeting at The Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI) in the Diocese of Banjul, from 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2022;

Cognizant of the need to enhance and improve on our pastoral activities and other development strategies in all the five dioceses of the Inter-Territorial Catholic Bishops' Conference of The Gambia and Sierra Leone (ITCABIC);

Mindful of the study session, discussions and deliberations regarding the pastoral gains and challenges highlighted by all the Bishops of Conference, as well as the hopes and aspirations for improved pastoral activities;

Noting the provisions of Canon Law and the teaching of the Magisterium that bind all dioceses of the Universal Church;

Aware of the need to build on existing pastoral efforts and to develop concrete pathways that shape and facilitate improved pastoral activities in our dioceses, we reflected on the following thematic areas namely, ITCABIC Administration, Seminaries of St. Kizito's and St. Paul's, the Synodal Church, Pastoral Agents of evangelization, Safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults, ITCABIC/RECOWA Commissions and the current situation of the Catholic Dioceses of The Gambia and Sierra Leone.

**Information and Call to Action**

As servant leaders of the churches within the Conference, we have agreed to share with all of you, our beloved People of God, the following:

**Annual Retreat:** Our annual plenary meeting always begins with a retreat. This year Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Sonko, Vicar General of the Diocese of Banjul, facilitated the retreat on the 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2022. The theme of the retreat was "*Called to be Servant Leaders and Renewal of the Resolutions made at Episcopal ordinations*".

**Study Session:** The annual retreat was followed by a study session on the 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2022, facilitated by Rev Fr. Samuel Udogbo, CSSp. The main theme of his presentation was "*The Churches Mission and Social Doctrine: How the African Church can be enriched by its Social Justice Gospel*".

**A Synod on Synodality:** The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has convoked the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023, with the theme, "*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*". It will be preceded by a two-year preparation at all levels in the Church from 2021 to 2023. During our meeting, we discussed and shared our diocesan programmes on the synod. Each diocese has developed structures that will ensure the participation of all the People of God in their Ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In this regard, we call on all Priests, Religious and Lay Faithful to fully participate in this synodal process, so that nobody is left out; all opinions on this matter shall be given due consideration.

**Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS):** The PMS consists of four societies: a) Pontifical Society of the Propagation of

Faith, b) Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle, c) Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood and d) Pontifical Missionary Union. The primary aim of these societies is to promote spirituality and missionary consciousness through animation. The PMS is also the development arm of the Vatican. Special collections are taken each year for the Propagation of Faith, St. Peter the Apostle and the Holy Childhood; the proceeds are sent to the PMS International Secretariat in Rome for redistribution to the poorer dioceses in the developing world, upon request by the Diocesan Bishops, within the framework of the required guidelines. We encourage all Priests, Religious, Catechists, Prayer Leaders and the Lay Faithful to fully participate in the activities of the PMS and to contribute generously to the annual special collections.

**Safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults:** We, the Bishops of ITCABIC, reiterate our commitment to protect and safeguard minors and vulnerable adults and to continue to support the necessary structures and mechanisms already established in our dioceses, in order to prevent and create the environment that would provide for their welfare and security.

**ITCABIC Executive:** At the expiration of the tenure of the current Executive, elections were conducted for the new officials of our Episcopal Conference. Most Rev. Natale Paganelli, SX, Apostolic Administrator of Makeni, was elected President, and Most Rev. Gabriel Mendy, CSSp, Bishop of Banjul was re-elected Vice President. The name of the Secretary General shall be announced later. We wish them well as they assume their office and we invite you to pray for them.

**Institution of Catechists:** According to the provisions of the Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis, *Antiquum Ministerium*, on instituting the ministry of Catechist, we discussed and agreed to intensify the training and formation of Catechists and to install those who qualify, according to the Rites provided for such ceremonies.

**Updates from the Dioceses:** We gave summary reports on our respective dioceses, in terms of pastoral agents, institutions, administration of sacraments and works of evangelization and charity. We also shared our reflections on the political and socio-economic realities of the various dioceses in our countries.

**Auditing of ITCABIC Institutions:** In order to strengthen the administration and management of the various offices and institutions of our Episcopal Conference, we have decided that management of and financial audits shall be conducted annually. The recommendations of the audit will help to ensure proper management and accountability for the resources.

**Seminaries:** We discussed the two ITCABIC Seminaries: St. Kizito's Pre-Major Seminary and St. Paul's Major Seminary. We are grateful to the Rectors and the members of the staff for their dedication towards the formation of our future priests. It was agreed that the curricula of our seminaries be reviewed and adapted to the context and realities of our local churches.

We noted, with gratitude to God, the rise in vocations to the priesthood this year. This increases the budgetary requirement to run the two seminaries. Rome sends directly to seminaries 20% of the charge per seminarian in favour of the dioceses in need of help. The seminary staff prepares the budgets each year to cover the running cost of the two seminaries. The subsidy received from Rome for that year is then deducted from the total budget of the Pre-Major and Major seminaries and the difference is divided by the number of seminarians of that particular academic

year. It is then the responsibility of each diocese to pay the difference. For example, this formation year, the difference for Major Seminary has been divided by the total number of seminarians and each diocese is to pay US\$ 1,700.00 (One thousand seven hundred United States Dollars) or its equivalent in the local currency of Sierra Leone, per seminarian. If a diocese has 10 seminarians then the bill will be US\$17,000.00 for that year. We, therefore, appeal to all parishioners, individuals, families and organizations, to donate generously to the training of their future priests.

On another note, the Bishops are on the verge of completing a two-storey hostel with 27 self-contained bedrooms at St. Paul's Major Seminary to provide suitable accommodation for the seminarians. The major seminary still needs more buildings for a library, additional classrooms, auditorium, etc. We continue to pray and to seek more resources to build up our major seminary to the expected standard.

We reiterated our commitment and decision to merge the programmes for priestly formation and administration of our Major Seminary with that of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Liberia (CABICOL). It is hoped that the formal merger will take place by mid-2023. The School of Philosophy will be in Liberia, the School of Theology in Sierra Leone and, in the near future, the Spiritual Year in The Gambia.

**Exhortation:** We continue to exhort our Priests, Religious and Lay Faithful to be firm in faith, hope and charity, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic and its

attendant consequences. We are aware of your commitment, sacrifices and contributions in diverse ways to the mission of the Church. May the Gospel message find a home in your hearts and lead to the transformation of our communities.

**Appreciation:** We express our thanks and appreciation to our dear brother, Most Rev. Gabriel Mendy, CSSp., Bishop of the Diocese of Banjul, the Priests, Religious and Lay Faithful of his diocese for their hospitality, prayers, generosity and sacrifice in support of our 2022 plenary meeting. Similarly, we extend our gratitude to the moderators of our retreat and study sessions and the Director and staff of The Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI). We pray that God may richly bless and reward all those who contributed to the success of our meeting.

**Venue of next plenary meeting:** At the end of our meeting, it was agreed that our next plenary assembly will be held in the Archdiocese of Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

**Invocation:** We invoke the intercession of Our Lady of the Assumption, the Patroness of the Diocese of Banjul, for God's blessings and protection on our respective dioceses and pastoral agents.

**Issued at Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral, Banjul, The Gambia, on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2022.**

*Signed:*

*Most Rev. Charles A. M. Campbell  
Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Bo  
President of Conference*

## The Church Globally



**I**n January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – a meeting called ‘Synod on Synodality’, was held at GPI. Many people, even many practicing Catholics, may find the name “Synod on Synodality” and its purpose puzzling. What is a synod in the first place? The word derives from an ancient Greek term that means “coming together” or “traveling together.” Ancient Christians developed a custom of local leaders coming together to pray and make decisions about matters affecting all the Christian communities in a region. They gathered in the faith that their prayers and discussions would reveal God’s will and the way to achieve it. These gatherings came to be called “synods” and began a tradition of regional synods for bishops, as well as larger ones called “ecumenical councils.” In principle, these were for all bishops around the world to discuss issues that were consequential for the whole church, but it is about journeying together, which happens through listening to one another in order to hear what God is saying to all of us. It is realizing that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone to help us walk forward together on our journey as the People of God.

Over time, as the power of the papacy grew, ecumenical councils continued to be called, but regional synods diminished in importance. After the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, such gatherings of Catholic bishops

## TRANSFORMING THE SYNOD

### Synod on Synodality



happened infrequently, and only with express permission of the Pope. Meanwhile, even ecumenical councils became rare – only two were held in 400 years. The most recent one, the Second Vatican Council or “Vatican II,” met from 1962 to 1965 and launched important changes in church law and structure. One of Vatican II’s goals was to revitalize the importance of bishops as heads of their local churches and emphasize their cooperation with one another. As a “college” under the leadership of the Pope, the bishops are mutually responsible for the governance of the whole church.

To assist this revitalization, Pope Paul VI created a permanent structure for a Synod of Bishops, with a secretariat in Rome and a General Assembly gathered regularly by the pope. Since 1967, the popes have brought this assembly together 18 times: 15 “Ordinary Assemblies” and three “Extraordinary,” in addition to a number of “Special Assemblies” involving particular regions of the world.

On October 10, 2021, Pope Francis formally opened a two-year process called “a synod on synodality,” officially known as “Synod 2021-2023: For a Synodal Church.” In brief, the process involves an expansion of an established



institution, called the “Synod of Bishops.” This means that bishops around the world will consult with everyone from parishioners to monks, nuns and Catholic universities before coming together for a discussion in 2023.

As a Church which listens, Pope Francis has shown special interest in the Synod of Bishops since the beginning of his papacy in 2013. The following year, he convened an “Extraordinary General Assembly,” outside the usual three-year cycle, on “the vocation and mission of the family”. The Assembly talked about controversial issues such as welcoming communion, couples living outside church-sanctioned marriages. These discussions continued into an “Ordinary Assembly” in 2015.

2015 also marked the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops established during Vatican II. At a ceremony for the anniversary, Francis gave a speech that laid out his views on “synodality. The word “synod,” he reminded the audience, is about cooperation.

“A synodal Church is a Church which listens,” he said, pointing out that mutual listening has been the goal of much of the church’s renewal since Vatican II.

“For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today and always, the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross,” Francis declared. Since then, Pope Francis has taken steps to give the church examples and a concrete framework for a more “synodal church.” In 2018, he issued new regulations that encourage much wider consultation with members and organizations of the church at all levels as part of the synod process. And in 2019, he followed up a “Special Assembly” for bishops of the Amazon region with “Querida Amazonia,” a kind of papal document known as an “exhortation.” Here, he took the unusual steps of recognizing the authority of the synod’s own final document and referring important structural and procedural changes to their continuing work in their home churches, rather than to intervention by the Vatican.



## Preparing for 2023

The current “Synod on Synodality”, such as the one held at GPI is the culmination of all this effort to bring a greater degree of openness, collaboration and mutual listening to the church. Unlike previous synods, this one officially begins in dioceses all over the world, with opportunities for mutual consultation at every level and among many different church organizations.

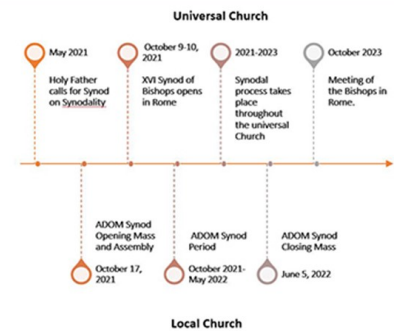
When the General Assembly meets in 2023, its task will be to prayerfully consider how to move forward as “a more synodal Church in the long-term” – a church that “journeys together.”

Since Vatican II, a new type of collaboration between laypeople and the clergy has happily come about in the Church. The spirit of readiness in which a great number of laypeople have offered themselves for the service of the Church must be counted among the best benefits of the Council. In this, there is a new experience of the fact that we are all the Church. It is about some aspects of the growth and the potential of collaborative ministry in the Church in our countries. It explores collaborative ministry in relation to our experience and needs, at local, diocesan and national level.

‘Collaborative ministry, is a term used to describe particular relationships, ways of working and patterns of ministry which bring together laypeople, religious, bishops and priests. These relationships and patterns are the practical implications of the vision of the Church expressed in the teaching of Vatican II and deepened in later documents. In part, they are a recovery of insights into the Church which have always been present in Catholic Tradition, but in another sense, they are new. They express what the Church is, and carry forward its mission in and for today's world.

## Synod Timeline

September  
2021-2023



## 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.**



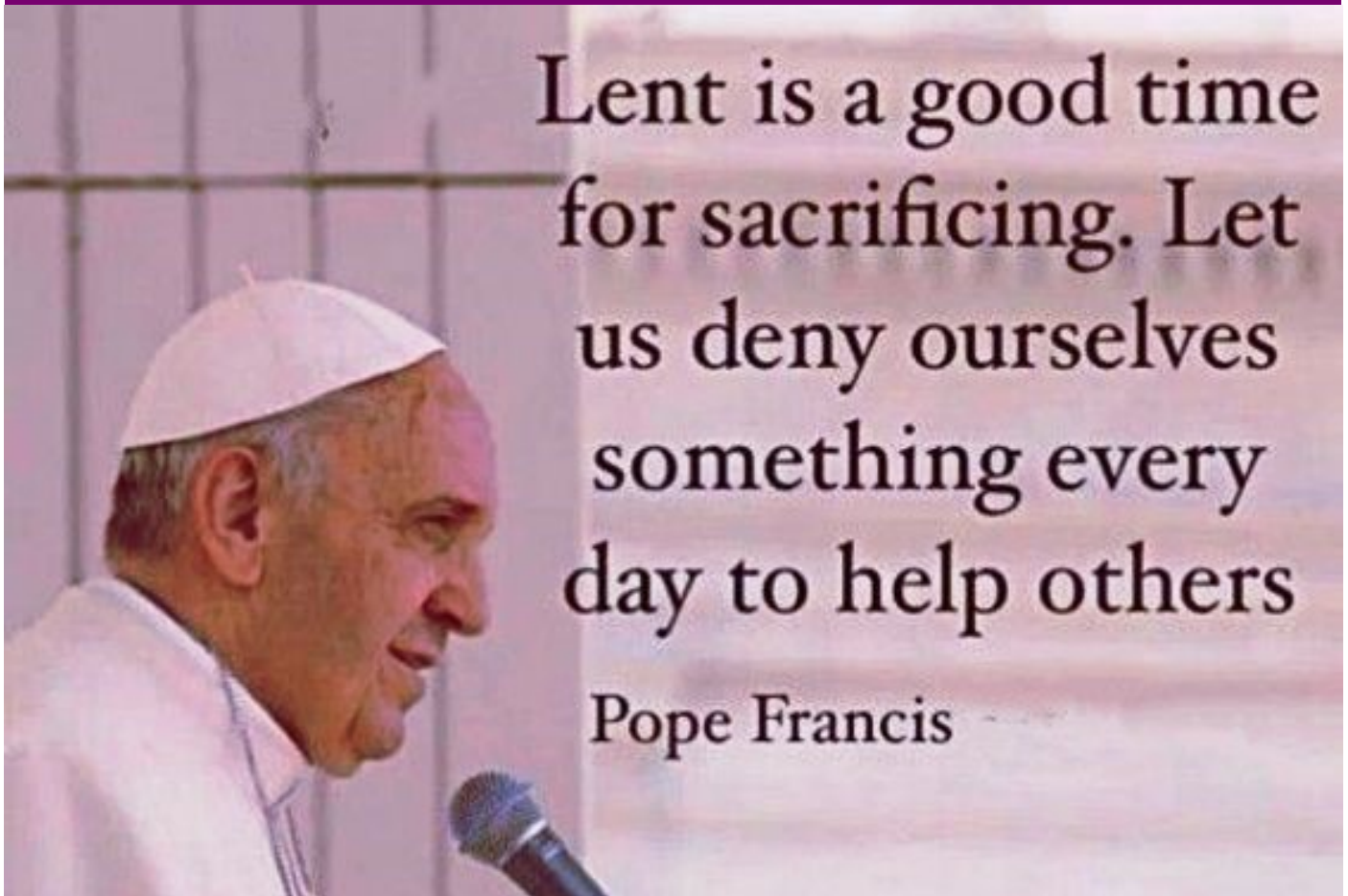
**All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.**

**AMEN.**



## Lenten Season 2022

# Our Lenten Journey and walk towards Easter



**T**he weather begins to change, calendars continue to turn, Christmas and New Year's celebrations drift further into the rearview mirror. All are signs that Lent is drawing near.

Lent 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 almsgiving. While Lent is often associated with the Catholic faith, many Christians—including Protestant and Orthodox—celebrate Lent.

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.

### Season of Lent

Like Advent, when we prepare for Jesus' birth at Christmas, Lent is also a liturgical season of preparation, as we 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—where we ask God for forgiveness—becomes more popular. The Stations of the Cross, a tradition often taking place on Friday nights during Lent, allow us to pray over the journey of Jesus' final hours. Weddings—and the big celebrations that accompany the wonderful sacrament—are less common during this time.

Lent is a good time for sacrificing. Let us deny ourselves something every day to help others

Pope Francis

More solemn songs replace celebratory hymns during Mass. Lent is far too important of a season to skip over or treat like any other time of the year.

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

Ashes can be distributed during Mass or separately, in shorter services specifically designed for giving out ashes.

### The Biblical Roots about Lent

Lent draws its inspiration from the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert.

During this time, the Gospels tell us that Jesus fasted as he resisted Satan's temptations before heading to Galilee to begin his public ministry.

*Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him. Matthew 4: 8-11*

### What to Give Up for Lent

As Ash Wednesday draws near, many Catholics often find themselves wondering what they ought to 'give up' for Lent.

Lenten sacrifices can be valuable if they help increase

our reliance on Jesus and if the void we create by giving something up opens up space in our hearts for God to fill.

As much as we consider something to abstain from during Lent, we ought to consider what we can commit to as well. What outside actions can we take to better ignite the flame of our faith within us?

### The Three Pillars: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving

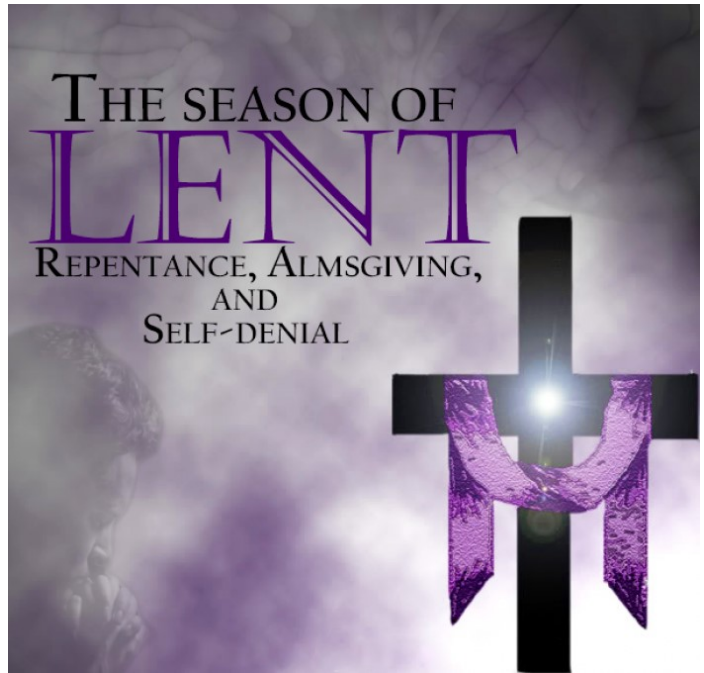
Three key pillars characterize the Lenten season: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (charity).

“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 especially important components to the observance of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Almsgiving reminds us of Jesus’ call to serve and connects us in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need.

Above all, Lent is a season of prayer. Deepening our relationship with God during Lent can give meaning to our fasting and strengthen our call to almsgiving.



### The 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.

Other changes to the liturgy have a greater impact on the experience at Mass during Lent.

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.

### 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 (and not to mention—the Passion reading.)

On Holy Thursday, Lent technically ends, as we celebrate the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. 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.) The period from Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday is known as the Triduum.



*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.*

### Perspective

### GAMBIA’S 2022 INDEPENDENCE POINT OF REFLECTION

Is the red-blue-green ‘abiku’ snatching the sacrificial pot at the crossroads, and smashed it on the bald head of the tall and bony herbalist? Or, is the old soldier called upon to help kill the roving hyena in the farmland ending up in the belly of the beast?

Is our plight as people akin to the case of Senegalese-born French midfielder Jean-Pierre Adams who underwent surgery for a knee injury in 1982, but hasn’t come out of coma over 39 years after due to negligence on the part of the surgeon that performed the surgery? For the unfortunate Adams, his surgeon carved him the pathway to eternal dungeon, so, has our leadership been messianic or are they just unblushingly breaking the covenants of hope they made to the Gambian people in 2016 and 2021, making the country worse than they met it?

In fact, what has been consistently lacking in our nation is the required leadership in our battle against mass suffering and poverty.

## PRAYERS FOR THESE WONDERFUL COUPLES THAT TOOK THEIR VOWS IN 2021 / 2022

Heavenly Father, you have created joy and gladness, pleasure and delight, love, peace and fellowship. Pour out the abundance of your blessing upon this couple in their new life together. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts and a crown upon their heads.



**Mr & Mrs Eric Ketter**

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. *LK. 10:27*



**Mr & Mrs  
Christopher Akapo**

*“Love is not weakness. It is strong.  
Only the sacrament of marriage can contain it”.*

## MARRIAGE IS A SPECIAL UNION WHICH TRIES THE BEST OF COUPLES

“A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers.” – *Robert Quillen*

“Coming together is a beginning;  
keeping together is progress;  
working together is success.” –  
*Henry Ford*

“Marriage is a commitment - a  
decision to do, all through life, that  
which will express your love for  
one’s spouse.” – *Herman H. Kieval*

“What greater thing is there for two  
human souls than to feel that they  
are joined for life to strengthen each  
other in all labor, to rest on each  
other in all sorrow, to minister to  
each other in all pain, to be one with  
each other in silent, unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting.” –  
*George Eliot*



**Mr & Mrs Edward Coker**



**Mr & Mrs  
Zaccheus Ndure**



**Mr & Mrs Jean Baptiste Assine**

“Love is the reason. Lifelong friendship is the gift. Kindness is the cause.  
Till death do us part is the length.”

# MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

## FOR THE 56th WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

### Listening with the ear of the heart



*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Last year we reflected on the need to “Come and See” in order to discover reality and be able to recount it beginning with experiencing events and meeting people. Continuing in this vein, I would now like to draw attention to another word, “listen”, which is decisive in the grammar of communication and a condition for genuine dialogue.

In fact, we are losing the ability to listen to those in front of us, both in the normal course of everyday relationships and when debating the most important issues of civil life. At the same time, listening is undergoing an important new development in the field of communication and information through the various podcasts and audio messages available that serve to confirm that listening is still essential in human communication.

A respected doctor, accustomed to treating the wounds of the soul, was once asked what the greatest need of human beings is. He replied: “The boundless desire to be heard”. A desire that often remains hidden, but that challenges anyone who is called upon to be an educator or formator, or who otherwise performs a communicative role: parents and teachers, pastors and pastoral workers, communication professionals and others who carry out social or political service.

#### Listening with the ear of the heart

From the pages of Scripture we learn that listening means not only the perception of sound, but is essentially linked to the dialogical relationship between God and humanity. “*Shema’ Israel - Hear, O Israel*” (*Dt 6:4*), the opening words of the first commandment of the Torah, is continually reiterated in the Bible, to the point that Saint Paul would affirm that “faith comes through listening” (cf. *Rom 10:17*). The initiative, in fact, is God’s, who speaks to us, and to whom we respond by listening to him. In the end, even this listening comes from his grace, as is the case with the newborn child who responds to the gaze and the voice of his or her mother and father. Among the five senses, the



**“Freely giving some of our own time to listen to people is the first act of charity.” The Vatican released Pope Francis’ message for the 56th World Communications Day on the theme “Listening with the heart”.  
Photo Credit by [Mikhail Nilov](#) from [Pexels](#)**

one favoured by God seems to be hearing, perhaps because it is less invasive, more discreet than sight, and therefore leaves the human being more free.

Listening corresponds to the humble style of God. It is the action that allows God to reveal himself as the One who, by speaking, creates man and woman in his image, and by listening recognizes them as his partners in dialogue. God loves humanity: that is why he addresses his word to them, and why he “inclines his ear” to listen to them.

On the contrary, human beings tend to flee the relationship, to turn their back and “close their ears” so they do not have to listen. The refusal to listen often ends up turning into aggression towards the other, as happened to those listening to the deacon Stephen who, covering their ears, all turned on him at once (cf. *Acts 7:57*).

On the one hand, then, God always reveals himself by communicating freely; and on the other hand, man and woman are asked to tune in, to be willing to listen. The Lord explicitly calls the human person to a covenant of love, so that they can fully become what they are: the image and likeness of God in his capacity to listen, to welcome, to give space to others. Fundamentally, listening is a dimension of love.

This is why Jesus calls his disciples to evaluate the quality of their listening. “Take heed then *how* you hear” (*Lk 8:18*): this is what he exhorts them to do after recounting the parable of the sower, making it understood that it is not enough simply to listen, but that it is necessary to listen well. Only those who receive the word with an “honest and good” heart and keep it faithfully bear the fruit of life and salvation (cf. *Lk 8:15*). It is only by paying attention to *whom* we listen, to *what* we listen, and to *how* we listen that we can grow in the art of communicating, the heart of which is not a theory or a technique, but the “openness of heart that makes closeness possible” (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 171).

We all have ears, but many times even those with perfect hearing are unable to hear another person. In fact, there is an interior deafness worse than the physical one. Indeed, listening concerns the whole person, not just the sense of hearing. The true seat of listening is the heart. Though he was very young, King Solomon proved himself wise because he asked the Lord to grant him a “listening heart” (cf. *1 Kings 3:9*). Saint Augustine used to encourage listening with the heart (*corde audire*), to receive words not outwardly through the ears, but spiritually in our hearts: “Do not have your heart in your ears, but your ears in your

heart”. [1] Saint Francis of Assisi exhorted his brothers to “incline the ear of the heart”. [2]

Therefore, when seeking true communication, the first type of listening to be rediscovered is listening to oneself, to one’s truest needs, those inscribed in each person’s inmost being. And we can only start by listening to what makes us unique in creation: the desire to be in relationship with others and with the Other. We are not made to live like atoms, but together.

### **Listening as a condition of good communication**

There is a kind of hearing that is not really listening, but its opposite: eavesdropping. In fact, eavesdropping and spying, exploiting others for our own interests, is an ever-present temptation that nowadays seems to have become more acute in the age of social networks. Rather, what specifically makes communication good and fully human is listening to the person in front of us, face to face, listening to the other person whom we approach with fair, confident, and honest openness.

The lack of listening, which we experience so often in daily life, is unfortunately also evident in public life, where, instead of listening to each other, we often “talk past one another”. This is a symptom of the fact that, rather than seeking the true and the good, consensus is sought; rather than listening, one pays attention to the audience. Good communication, instead, does not try to impress the public with a soundbite, with the aim of ridiculing the other person, but pays attention to the reasons of the other person and tries to grasp the complexity of reality. It is sad when, even in the Church, ideological alignments are formed and listening disappears, leaving sterile opposition in its wake.

In reality, in many dialogues we do not communicate at all. We are simply waiting for the other person to finish speaking in order to impose our point of view. In these situations, as philosopher Abraham Kaplan notes, [3] dialogue is a duologue: a monologue in two voices. In true communication, however, the “I” and the “you” are both “moving out”, reaching out to each other.

Listening is therefore the first indispensable ingredient of dialogue and good communication. Communication does not take place if listening has not taken place, and there is no good journalism without the ability to listen. In order to provide solid, balanced, and complete information, it is necessary to listen for a long time. To recount an event or describe an experience in news reporting, it is essential to know how to listen, to be ready to change one’s mind, to modify one’s initial assumptions.

It is only by putting aside monologues that the harmony of voices that is the guarantee of true communication can be achieved. Listening to several sources, “not stopping at the first tavern” — as the experts in the field teach us — ensures the reliability and seriousness of the information we transmit. Listening to several voices, listening to each other, even in the Church, among brothers and sisters, allows us to exercise the art of discernment, which always appears as the ability to orient ourselves in a symphony of voices.

But why face the exertion of listening? A great diplomat of the Holy See, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, used to speak of the “martyrdom of patience” needed to listen and be heard in negotiations with the most difficult parties, in order to obtain the greatest possible good in conditions of limited freedom. But even in less difficult situations, listening always requires the virtue of patience, together with the ability to allow oneself to be surprised by the truth, even if only a fragment of truth, in the person we are listening to. Only amazement enables knowledge. I think of

the infinite curiosity of the child who looks at the world around them with wide-open eyes. Listening with this frame of mind — the wonder of the child in the awareness of an adult — is always enriching because there will always be something, however small, that I can learn from the other person and allow to bear fruit in my own life.

The ability to listen to society is more valuable than ever in this time wounded by the long pandemic. So much previously accumulated mistrust towards “official information” has also caused an “infodemic”, within which the world of information is increasingly struggling to be credible and transparent. We need to lend an ear and listen profoundly, especially to the social unease heightened by the downturn or cessation of many economic activities.

The reality of forced migration is also a complex issue, and no one has a ready-made prescription for solving it. I repeat that, in order to overcome prejudices about migrants and to melt the hardness of our hearts, we should try to listen to their stories. Give each of them a name and a story. Many good journalists already do this. And many others would like to do it, if only they could. Let us encourage them! Let us listen to these stories! Everyone would then be free to support the migration policies they deem most appropriate for their own country. But in any case, we would have before our eyes not numbers, not dangerous invaders, but the faces and stories, gazes, expectations and sufferings of real men and women to listen to.

### **Listening to one another in the Church**

In the Church, too, there is a great need to listen to and to hear one another. It is the most precious and life-giving gift we can offer each other. “Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by him who is himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the word of God” [4]. Thus, the Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that the first service we owe to others in communion consists in listening to them. Whoever does not know how to listen to his brother or sister will soon no longer be able to listen to God either. [5]

The most important task in pastoral activity is the “apostolate of the ear” – to listen before speaking, as the Apostle James exhorts: “Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak” (1:19). Freely giving some of our own time to listen to people is the first act of charity.

A synodal process has just been launched. Let us pray that it will be a great opportunity to listen to one another. Communion, in fact, is not the result of strategies and programmes, but is built in mutual listening between brothers and sisters. As in a choir, unity does not require uniformity, monotony, but the plurality and variety of voices, polyphony. At the same time, each voice in the choir sings while listening to the other voices and in relation to the harmony of the whole. This harmony is conceived by the composer, but its realization depends on the symphony of each and every voice.

With the awareness that we participate in a communion that precedes and includes us, we can rediscover a symphonic Church, in which each person is able to sing with his or her own voice, welcoming the voices of others as a gift to manifest the harmony of the whole that the Holy Spirit composes.

*Rome,  
Saint John Lateran,  
24 January 2022,  
Memorial of Saint Francis de Sales.  
Franciscus*

## The Pope's Prayer Intentions

### February - *For religious sisters and consecrated women*

We pray for religious sisters and consecrated women; thanking them for their mission and their courage; may they continue to find new responses to the challenges of our times.

### March - *For a Christian response to bioethical challenges*

We pray for Christians facing new bioethical challenges; may they continue to defend the dignity of all human life with prayer and action.

### View Point

## Sanitation in the Kanifing Municipality



The author

By Philip Saine

**S**anitation is a significant responsibility of the Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC). This service involves the management of the various types of waste, including garbage, market and street refuse, construction and demolition waste. It is a

municipality service that is much concerned with the protection of the environment, thereby promoting good health and longevity amongst the citizenry.

For many years, the residents of Bakoteh and Manjai have been suffering and bitterly complained about the Bakoteh dumpsite. This site has been a source of pungent unbearable odor around the vicinity, ironically called the 'Bakoteh Perfume'. The dumpsite also poses serious public health hazards including periodical emission of thick smoke that affects visibility and road traffic movement. Respiratory, diarrheal and vector borne illnesses are of great concern to residents of Bakoteh. Both children and the elderly residing at SOS village, SOS Medical Clinic and school are most vulnerable and have registered numerous complaints to previous Mayors and related Ministries of State. Some of the other communities affected are Manjai Kunda, Dippa Kunda, London Corner, Sanchaba Sulay-Jobe, Kotu and Sukuta. Protests against the dumpsite were held repeatedly in the form of public manifestations and marches. Whilst some of the manifestations passed peacefully, others were either denied or violently stopped by the Police Intervention Unit (PIU).

Since the year 2020 however, the residents of these areas noticed improvement in their environment and living conditions. The KMC initiated a positive response to the issues lamented for several years by residents of Bakoteh. Garbage trucks have been brought in for periodic collection of waste. A permanent wall fence has been constructed concealing the awful eyesore, and simultaneously, providing security to prevent scavengers and illegal entry. The site has been provided with potable water for the washing of equipment, vehicles, and for the workers. These, together with the provision of street litter boxes and the construction of markets are positive

developments to which the Mayor of KMC should be commended. On the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at the Council's chamber, the Municipal Council disbursed over 500,000 dalasis to be shared among the 'Alkalos' of the Municipality. The cash amount was handed to them as commission for the year 2016/17.

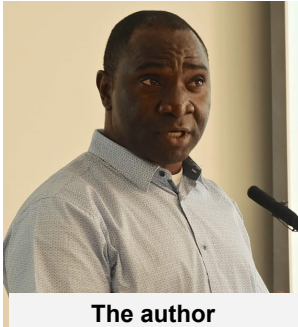
The council may now be viewed by many as being responsive to public concerns and to the protection and conservation of the human environment.

Much more action, however, is required to combat the breeding of house flies, mosquitoes and stray animals. Vector control must be practised at the disposal site and personnel provided with protective clothing, such as masks, safety boots, overalls and gloves. The collection of garbage from residential homes and markets should be much more regular; twice weekly collection should be aimed at. This is because kitchen wastes are mostly organic and putrefy at a high rate. Collection of glasses, such as bottles, should be emphasized due to the thousands of soda and beverage bottles being sold in 'non-returnable' bottles. These encourage stagnant water and the consequent breeding of mosquitoes.

Council should engage health educators who could effect change in public attitude as regards sanitation, keeping the environment clean and safe. Such health awareness programs should not be intermittent, but a continuous activity, using radio and TV. The KM management should also establish direct communication with residents to facilitate giving of useful messages promptly so as to create greater understanding and ensure cooperation of all residents. Already, many residents have an understanding of some of the challenges being encountered, such as the availability of vehicle and equipment spare parts and the frequency of their replacement, absenteeism amongst operation staff that results in failure to collect waste in a timely manner.

The final solution to the Bakoteh dumpsite is to relocate the facility away from residential areas, most especially densely populated areas. A properly chosen disposal site would have better access roads, more economical to operate and yields greater health benefits to society.





The author

## Youth in the Catholic Church

# Responsibility and engagement through pastoral awareness

### Introduction

**I**t is true that our society has become information rich such that people consider the planet earth as a global village. However, we must acknowledge that the revolution, in terms of information technology, has caused our society to become action poor. This is because the increase in information technology has caused people, especially the youth in our communities, to become impoverished, as regards responsible and productive action, or any action that tests and develops them.

As revealed to us by the Church, there is more in us than we know; perhaps, for the rest of our lives, if we come to realize or identify our capacities, we will be unwilling to settle for less. Thus, apart from caring for God's people and walking alongside them in their Christian formation, the pastoral ministries that the Church embarks on, equips all those involved to minister to the needs of the Church and communicate the gospel in contextually appropriate ways. This simply means that, justice is our Christian Catholic charity, and each baptized Catholic must engage with the gospel that promotes the good of every person.

On the other hand, a lot of youth consider educational experience as key to human development and as requisite to building the human society. Of course, education is a necessary tool designed to build the human person, but we must understand that the human person needs more than academic competency. From its experience of *Practical Theology*, which seeks in explicit and varied ways to enable the Christian practitioner to articulate faith, to speak of God, in practice, the Church encourages her members to engage in the different activities (through Church organizations, societies, pious groups and communities) designed to nurture confidence, responsibility, compassion, wisdom, innovation and collaboration in her members.

The Church focuses on specific social structures and individual initiatives within which God's continuing work of renewal and restitution become manifest; these may be found either inside or outside the life of the Church. As a result, we ought to believe that appropriate challenges beyond formal classrooms provide unique experiences for the development of character and compassion, so the Church's pastoral outreach must be seen by her members as a reservoir of universal knowledge from which human growth and development springs. That is, the Church promotes an all-round practical competency. Karl Barth summarizes this as "my whole theology, you see, is fundamentally a theology for pastors. It grew out of my own situation when I had to teach and preach and counsel a little. And I found that what I had learned in the university was of little help in this. So, I had to make fresh start and I tried to do this."

### Pastoral Ministry of the Church

Pastoral ministry is considered to be the responsibility of all the baptised. Understood in the broad sense of *helping others*, it is the responsibility of all Christians, but

Sacramental pastoral ministry is the administration of the sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony) which is reserved to consecrated priests except for Baptism (in an emergency, anyone can baptise) and marriage, where the spouses are the ministers and the priest is the witness.

Pastoral ministry was understood differently at different times in history, but the Second Vatican Council applied the word *pastoral* to a variety of situations involving care of souls. The objective of pastoral ministry, is to restore hope, faith and love in the hearts of God's followers. Most activities within the Church can be described as pastoral ministry. In pastoral ministry the minister helps to connect believers to Christ, the Church and their communities. Simply, it means bringing Christ's compassion to people in emotional, mental, physical or spiritual needs, as well as helping others to recognize their gifts and empowering them to use these gifts in the service of others.

Through its pastoral outreach, the Church supports affective human and social development by challenging her members to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are in line with the Church's social teaching. Of course, this is done in peoples' particular contexts, irrespective of the challenges posed by the different circumstances of people. This is an excellent way of supporting the development of the youth, who are expected to act as leaders, engage comfortably in activities that allow them develop new competencies, demonstrate resilience when faced with tough situations, and practice their social skills, beginning from their local communities to the wider society.

Together with parents and other men and women of goodwill, the Church's responsibility is to ensure that youth grow and learn through experiences that do not allow them feel overwhelmed by expectations or situations that are too demanding. The extent to which the Church wishes to engage with these ideals depends on its vision and educational aims. Thus, it is reasonable for parents to have the sole aim of developing their children in ways that leave them with good foundations on which the Church depends. That is to say, there is much that can be achieved if the orientation and practice of family life is worthwhile. Equally, community awareness and service should be prioritized, since much can be achieved through encouraging youth participation in activities offered in the local community.

It is common knowledge that responsibility involves cultivating wisdom, and what makes one responsible or a wise person is dependent on his or her emotional state and the actions taken based on positive personal values. In this case, we are fortunate that the social teaching of the Church, which must be transmitted through our pastoral outreach, creates the environment for acquiring the kind of wisdom that is contagious. For those who avail themselves are seen to be knowledgeable, creative and intelligent, and their capacity for good allows them to apply these qualities

responsibly, based on positive values learned from the Church, which are geared towards the common good. Undeniably, those affected make good choices both for themselves and those around them.

In his theory of successful intelligence, Robert Sternberg asserts: “Wisdom is not just about maximizing one’s own or someone else’s self-interest, but about balancing various self-interests (intra-personal) with the interests of others (interpersonal) and of other aspects of the context in which one lives (extra-personal), such as one’s city or country or environment.” Sternberg’s idea captures well the position of the Church with regards to acquiring good knowledge that leads to making good decisions and being compassionate and caring about others, and the community and society we live in. So, the initial school to start nurturing wisdom and responsibility is our homes, with the creation of a supporting parental teaching and learning environment and a clear codes of conduct slate. As usual, the most important first influences on a human person are the parents as role models. Consequently, the Church articulates well the home-grown value systems because they form the basis upon which the society functions; it helps us put these values into action by clearly saying what they mean.

### **Our Engagement with Social Sciences**

From the fact exposed, no one can challenge or argue that the Church is not meeting up to her responsibility. However, of great importance to mention is the need for the Church to apply more sociological imagination that focuses on the experience of people. What I advise here is that sociology and the social sciences are underutilised in the pastoral ministry of Catholic priests despite the Catholic Church’s openness to human sciences’ contributions to evangelisation after the Second Vatican Council. This is captured more clearly in the Encyclical of Pope John Paul II *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (the Social Concern), where he deals with the theme of development along two fundamental lines: the failed development of the developing world; and the meaning of, conditions and requirements for a development of a worthy person. In it, he incorporates and affirms the concepts of structural sin and an option for the poor. It emphasises the difference between progress and development, and insists that true development cannot be limited to the multiplication of goods and services, but must contribute to the fullness of being a human being.

In this way, the moral nature of real development is meant to be shown clearly. Since this follows from the Church’ doctrine aimed at guiding people’s behaviour, there is need for us to engage with sociological principles (mostly, the empirical scientific approaches as against the dominance of the individualist approaches) that will allow us see the more the need to commit ourselves to the social justice issues. Thus, the condemnation of evils and injustices is also part of our ministry of evangelization in the social field, which is an aspect of the Church’s prophetic role. But, it is important to note that our proclamation is

always more important than condemnation. So, genuine pastoral care must be based on a holistic and empirical assessment of the pastoral needs of parishioners by priests, using sociology and the social sciences before it prescribes a plan of action for pastoral care to accurately inculcate the Christian message in today’s technological culture.

### **Understanding our Pastoral Task**

As a community of faith, the Church must continue on her work of promoting meaningful, useful, structured and reflective community service emphasizing the broad learning dimensions- the physical, intellectual, environmental, vocational, social, emotional and spiritual health. However, our youth must learn to understand how actions are based on personal values, but it is essential to know that, engaging with their own values does not communicate their independence, as regards society’s common values, which help in developing a more sophisticated understanding of the individual as part of the community, developing a sense of responsibility for themselves and others, and an appreciation of the value and rewards of giving. At the heart of all good service, therefore, is reflection. Our youth need to think critically and creatively, individually and in groups, about what builds our society according to people’s expectations. The intention, as we know, is to equally benefit the providers and the recipients of the service that each expect from the source, which in this case is the Church. Also, it is important for our youth to understand that people from different backgrounds, in particular those less privileged, have something to give for the growth of our society.

Thus, we must endeavor to engage ideas that promote our good pastoral choices. These are: (i) every youth must develop a sense of wellbeing from helping others. (ii) The youth must engage in programmes that focus on physical and mental health benefits; they must see this as a life-long activity. (iii) The youth must realise that when the motivation is altruism the benefits are stronger than if it is obligation or duty. (iv) There must be an increase in social awareness, self-awareness and a sense of responsibility. (v) The youth must develop a sense of communication, collaboration, leadership and other intra and interpersonal skills. (vi) As stated in the preceding paragraph, the youth must understand the social issues that are relevant to their communities so they can develop a greater understanding of and appreciation for diversity. (vii) Amongst the youth, talents and skills must be celebrated. Recognizing individual’s accomplishments can be a good motivation factor, but only if each values their participation intrinsically rather than seeing it as an obligation that is imposed on them. The culture of the Church is evident; inclusiveness and the opportunity given to everyone to express their passions, personal goals and ambitions that contribute to creating a better world for all.

*Fr. Samuel Udogbo CSSp*

## **INTRODUCING THE DIOCESAN SYNOD COMMITTEE MEMBERS FORMED BY HIS LORDSHIP BISHOP GABRIEL MENDY CSSp**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Fr. David J. Jarju, Chairman - 9989789, djarju86@yahoo.com | 7. Ms. Marie Sambou – 3073906, marie.sambou002@gmail.com    |
| 2. Fr. Samuel Udogbo – 3802903, udogbosamuel@gmail.com        | 8. Mr. Besenty Gomez – 3884313, besenty@hotmail.com         |
| 3. Fr. Peter S. Lopez – 7006955, peterlopez60@hotmail.com     | 9. Mr. Gabriel Gomez- 7793179, nanjaafu@yahoo.co.uk         |
| 4. Sr. Sarian Gomez – 3400924, sarianpg2@gmail.com            | 10. Ms. Bernadette Fefegula – 7631681, fefegulabi@gmail.com |
| 5. Sr. Catherine Jarra – 7207039, sismcjarra@gmail.com        | 11. Mr. Simon V. P. Cole- 7878774, simoncole53.sc@gmail.com |
| 6. Mrs. Susan Waffa-Ogoo, 9794799                             |   |

## Weekday Celebration

## 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).

(We pray especially for the late Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary CSSp, episcopally ordained on this day in 1981 as Bishop of Banjul).

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# Anniversaries

## Gambia Christian

## February & March

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 in The Gambia of Fr James White.

**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.

**10th March, 2005:** Félix Oudiane presented his credentials as Senegalese Ambassador to the Holy See.

**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 for 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 Gambia and Archbishop of the Anglican Province of West Africa who had died suddenly on 22nd January.

**2nd March, 2014:** Celebration of Fr John Sharpe, CSSp.

**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

at Kunkujang - Mariama, his Golden Jubilee as priest

**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 since 1983 had been working in Kuntaur and Kaur.

**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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- 02 Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- 03 Cover your cough using the bend of your elbow or a tissue.
- 04 Avoid crowded places and close contact with anyone that has fever or cough.
- 05 Stay at home if you feel unwell.
- 06 If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early — but call first.
- 07 Get information from trusted sources.



## February and March

*Saviour of the world, by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.*

# Our Sunday Readings

**6<sup>th</sup> February, 2022**

***Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C***

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**1st Reading:** Isaiah 6:1-2A, 3-8  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 138:1-5, 7-8  
**2nd Reading:** 1 Corin. 15:1-11 *or* 1 Corin. 15:3-8, 11  
**Alleluia:** Matthew 4:19  
**Gospel:** Luke 5:1-11

**Homily Theme:** Put into Deep Water and Lower Your Nets – John 21:1-14, Luke 5:1-11

**Reflection:** “Put out into deep water...” There is great meaning to this little line. First of all, it’s important to note that the Apostles had fished all night long with no success. They were most likely disappointed at their lack of fish and were not all that ready to fish some more. But Jesus directs Simon to do so and he does it. The result is that they caught more fish than they thought they could handle. But the one piece of symbolic meaning we should not miss is that Jesus tells Simon to put out into the “deep” water. What does that mean? This passage is not only about the physical miracle of catching fish; rather, it’s much more about the mission of evangelizing souls and accomplishing the mission of God. And the symbolism of putting out into the deep water tells us that we must be all in and fully committed if we are to evangelize and spread the Word of God as we are called to do.

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**13<sup>th</sup> February, 2022**

***Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C***

**1st Reading:** Jeremiah 17:5-8  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 1:1-4 & 6  
**2nd Reading:** 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20  
**Alleluia:** Luke 6:23AB  
**Gospel:** Luke 6:17, 20-26

**Homily Theme:** The Beatitudes Explained – Luke 6:20-26, Matthew 5:1-12

**Reflection:** Blessed are you who are poor... Blessed are you who are now hungry... Blessed are you who are now weeping... Blessed are you when people hate you... Rejoice and leap for joy on that day!

When one reads these Beatitudes literally, one might get very confused because they seem not to auger well with our earthly beliefs and expectations. Jesus frames these Beatitudes such that they promise a glorious outcome at the end. He says that, if you persevere those hardships while Loving, Serving, Praising and Glorifying God, then you will be blessed with the promise at the end of each Beatitude.

**20<sup>th</sup> February, 2022**

***Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C***

**1st Reading:** 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13  
**2nd Reading:** 1 Corinthians 15:45-49  
**Alleluia:** John 13:34  
**Gospel:** Luke 6:27-38

**Homily Theme:** Love Your Enemies and Pray for Those Who Persecute and Mistreat You: Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-38

**Reflection:** Jesus said to his disciples: You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Love is our theme today. Love is the greatest commandment that Jesus left us. Today Jesus is giving us enough reasons why we should extend our love to our enemies. God is the creator of all that is here on earth. He is the same God who created those things we fear or hate like snakes, fierce wild animals and poisonous plants. He also created those people who persecute and hate us. Let us adhere today to Jesus’ call today to love our enemies because God loves them with the same measure He loves us. He doesn’t discriminate anybody. We too should follow God’s perfect example and extend our love to our adversaries and this great love will thaw the hatred in our enemies and we will all become children of our Heavenly Father.

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**27<sup>th</sup> February, 2022**

***Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C***

**1st Reading:** Sirach 27:4-7  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16  
**2nd Reading:** 1 Corinthians 15:54-58  
**Alleluia:** Philippians 2:15D, 16A  
**Gospel:** Luke 6:39-45

**Homily Theme:** Remove the Plank in Your Own Eye First – Luke 6:39-42 and Matthew 7:1-5

**Reflection:** The lesson we learn today is about the sin of pride. Pride makes us see the minor faults in others instead of seeing the serious faults that we obviously have. It covers us with a false mask such that we are unable to see ourselves in the light of truth, therefore, preventing us from seeing the log in our own eye. Jesus is keen to teach us this lesson because most of us tend to trivialise the very serious sins that we have and point out the small sins of others and make them seem more serious than they are.

Therefore, if you realize that you are judgemental and unfairly critical to those around you and especially those who are striving for holiness, you need to change for the better.

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### 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 First Sunday of Lent, Year C

**1st Reading:** Deuteronomy 26:4-10  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15  
**2nd Reading:** Romans 10:8-13  
**Verse before the Gospel:** Matthew 4:4B  
**Gospel:** Luke 4:1-13

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

**Reflection:** 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. 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. Overcoming temptation is like acing an exam, winning a contest, completing a difficult project or accomplishing some challenging feat.

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### 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 Second Sunday of Lent, Year C

**1st Reading:** Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14  
**2nd Reading:** Philippians 3:17-4:1 or Philippians 3:20-4:1  
**Verse before the Gospel:** Matthew 17:5  
**Gospel:** Luke 9:28B-36

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

**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. 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.

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### 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 Third Sunday of Lent, Year C

**1st Reading:** Exodus 3:1-8A, 13-15  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalms 103: 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11  
**2nd Reading:** 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12  
**Verse before the Gospel:** Matthew 4:17  
**Gospel:** Luke 13:1-9

**Homily Theme:** The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree – Luke 13:1-9

**Reflection:** Jesus told them this parable: “There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, ‘For three years now, I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?’ He said to him in reply, ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it. This is an image that reflects our souls many times. Often in life we can fall into a rut and our relationship with God and other struggles. As a result, our lives bear little or no good fruit. It's important to note that Jesus does not look at this fig tree and discard it as worthless. He is a God of second chances and He is committed to caring for this fig tree in such a way as to offer it every necessary opportunity to bear fruit. So it is with us. Jesus never just throws us away, regardless of how far we have strayed. He is always ready and willing to reach out to us in the ways we need, so that our lives can once again bear much fruit.

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### 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year C

**1st Reading:** Josiah 5:9A, 10-12  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalms 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7  
**2nd Reading:** 2 Corinthians 5:17-21  
**Verse before the Gospel:** Luke 15:18  
**Gospel:** Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

**Homily Theme:** Parable of the Prodigal Son – Lk. 15:1-32

**Reflection:** What a foolish and arrogant thing to say! Jesus was merciful, welcoming, forgiving and loving to those who were sinners. And the Pharisees and scribes complained about this as if Jesus were doing something wrong. From a perspective of the pure truth, however, the jealousy, envy, manipulation and deception of the scribes and Pharisees are clear. The “condemnation” they uttered against Jesus was no true condemnation at all. It was a fabrication and a twisting of the truth. The truth is that Jesus' kindness to those who were sinners was a living out of His countless virtues. He was understanding, merciful, compassionate, patient, forgiving and the like. He saw troubled hearts and reached out to them in their need, especially when He could tell they were sorry, open and humble.

\*\*\*\*\* *End* \*\*\*\*\*



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