

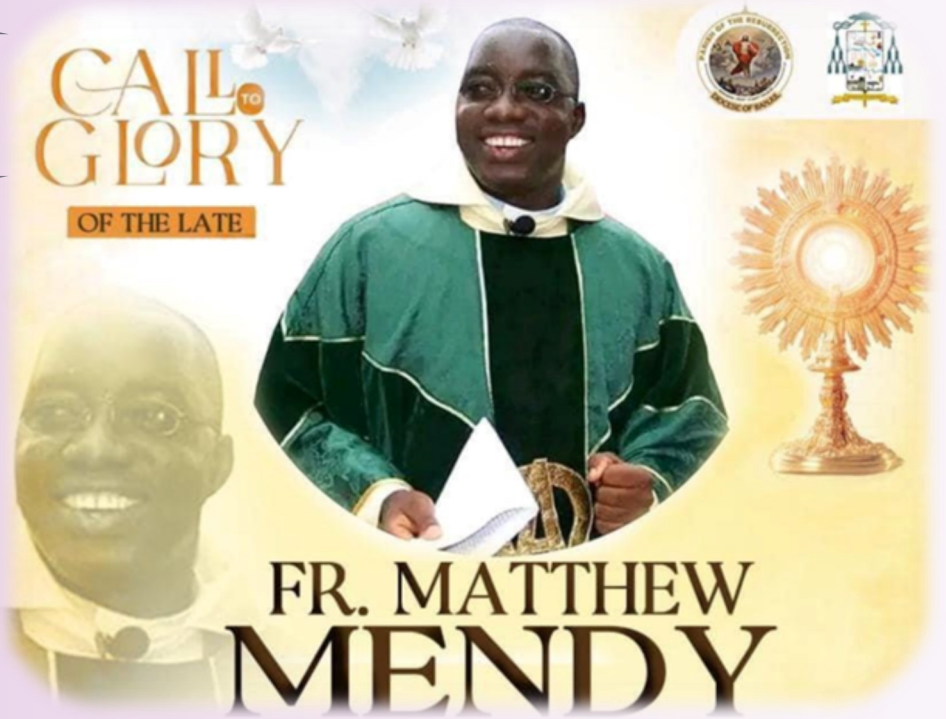
The Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

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A PAINFUL EXIT

Reflecting on the
Life and Death of
Rev. Fr. Matthew
Mendy



Our Season of Lent 2024



Lent for the year 2024 starts on **Wednesday, February 14th** and ends on **Thursday, March 28** with evening mass on Holy Thursday.

Lent is a Christian annual period that starts on Ash Wednesday lasting for 40 days (not including Sundays) representing the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness. This 40 day period for Christians is a time to reflect, fast, and give penance in preparation for the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday.

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Pathetic Living Conditions in Gambian Prison

DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER

Our Mission and Vision

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

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

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



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EDITORIAL HINT

**A PRISON IS A CORRECTIONAL CENTER,
NOT DEATH TRAP****Pathetic Living Conditions in Gambian Prisons**

“It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.” – Nelson Mandela

S ometime ago, some tourists visited the Central Prison at Mile 2, on the outskirts of the capital city of Banjul, and described it as a “stopover on the road to hell.” Such a description can be considered an exaggeration, but it raises eyebrows as to how bad things are in the country’s main correctional center.

Ordinary citizens, whose relatives are inmates at Mile 2 -- as the place is commonly called -- constantly bemoan the deplorable, degrading and inhumane conditions under which prisoners live. Present conditions at Mile 2 cannot be compared to what obtained in pre-independence days, and during the reign of the late President Jawara, who was a champion of human rights. With the coming into power of Yahya Jammeh as President, the prison system deteriorated and has since been suffering from total neglect and deprivation of basic facilities needed for decent living of inmates.

Truly speaking, Mile 2 is not fit for purpose. It is congested and overflowing with inmates, most of whom are first-time offenders or petty criminals, who should have been spared prison time. It has recently been disclosed that the inflow of prisoners into our prisons, particularly the Remand Wing at Mile 2, cannot be contained. Prison overcrowding has serious effects on inmates, such as poor healthcare, lack of needed resources, poor meals, and increased rates of violence, and can pose a threat to social stability. Therefore, the situation has to be urgently addressed.

There is ample evidence that health facilities or services in our prisons are appalling. Overcrowding has led to inmates sometimes having to sleep on bare, damp or cold cell floors, or out in the open. Poorly ventilated cells, without ceiling fans, make them unbearably hot and uncomfortable for inmates during the summer months, when outdoor temperatures can be extreme and debilitating.

Prisoners are humans, who should be provided dignified living conditions, in spite of their liberties being curtailed. They should not be kept in inhumane and degrading conditions. Since the Barrow Government has decided not to build any more prisons, those financial and material resources which would have been used for such expansion, should be applied to the improvement of existing facilities to make them more conducive and wholesome.

One way of decongesting our prisons is for Government to effect a systematic release of minor offenders, after studying their individual cases. Alternatively, a special rehabilitation program could be instituted for this group, which will enable them acquire skills that can serve the communities in which they live, and the society at large, and enhance their dignity as humans.

In some advanced countries, the concept of imprisonment is undergoing drastic reform, with law-breakers no longer having to be incarcerated, but are allowed to live in a conducive, open environment which makes it possible to interact with their families. It is time for the authorities to put in place measures that will enable prisoners to live like humans and not as animals, and for them to regain their dignity and enjoy their human rights.

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

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

We would like to invite you to join the myriad of readers who have taken the step to support us financially -- keeping us open to all, and fiercely independent. In 2021, this support assisted in sustaining our work in diverse spheres. It enabled diligent, fact-checked, authoritative journalism to thrive in an era of falsehood, sensation, hype and breathtaking misinformation and misconception. In 2022, we will be no less active.

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

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

If there were ever a time to join us, it is now.

Every contribution, however big or small, powers our journalism and sustains our future. Support the Banjul Newsletter for as little as any amount.

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

COVER STORY

A PAINFUL EXIT: Reflecting on the Life and Death of Rev. Fr. Matthew Mendy



The loss of a Catholic priest, a young one for that matter, sends shockwaves among the Catholic community, and leaves an indelible mark on the hearts of those who knew and loved him. **The death of Rev. Fr. Matthew Ambrose Mendy is one such poignant moment that has left a void in the lives of many.** His demise is a painful reminder of the impermanence of life and the profound impact that a single individual can have on a community.

Rev. Fr. Matthew Ambrose Mendy was born on October 25, 1984, in the village of Kitty in the Western Region of The Gambia, to the late Ambrose Mendy and Rose Mendy, who is still living.

In his early school going years, Mathew was educated at St. James's Primary School, from September 1993 to June 1998, and Presentation of Mary Primary School, from September 1998 to June 2000, both in Kitty. He received post-primary education at St. Therese's Junior Secondary School, Kanifing, and St. Peter's Senior Secondary School, Lamin, consecutively, from 1998 to 2003. He completed his schooling with the attainment of the West African Secondary School Certificate [WASSC] issued by the West African Examination Council [WAEC].

Young Mathew's undiluted love for God and his unshakeable faith in Jesus Christ and His Church, inspired him to pursue the priesthood, a journey he embarked on in 2005. His priestly formation was received from St. Paul's Major Seminary in Freetown, Sierra Leone, an affiliate of the Urban University in Rome. After completing his study of Philosophy and the humanities, he undertook the requisite one-year pastoral experience in his home Diocese of Banjul, from 2009 to 2010. He then pursued the study of Theology from 2010-2011, earning a Bachelor's degree [with Honors], thus qualifying him to be ordained Deacon in 2011. At the age of 28, on November 10, 2012, Mathew's ambition of becoming a priest was realized with his ordination to the priesthood, together with Aime Joseph Colley, by then Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Banjul, His Lordship, Robert Ellison, CSSp on the grounds of his *alma mater*, St. Peter's Secondary School. His ordination ceremony was both momentous and historic, as it attracted a huge crowd of religious and temporal dignitaries, which included Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Ganda of Sierra Leone, and 50 priests from The Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ireland and Italy. During the event, a seemingly supernatural thing happened: It rained, at a time of year that was usually dry. On the event, Rev. Fr. Edu Gomez wrote in an article in the *Point Newspaper* of November 21, 2012, titled, **"Two more Gambian clerics ordained for The Catholic Church"**:

"A spectacular incident happened during the ordination rite. When the Bishop began praying over the candidates, the rain came down from the sky. Everyone marveled at this, to which some people remarked that it was a miracle and others called it showers of blessing. The surprising aspect of the event was that there was no expectation of rain and secondly it only rained in Lamin and nowhere else. With great awe and surprise, the congregation accepted the rain as special

blessings coming from God to everyone".

According to another source: "Everyone was astonished at the supernatural phenomenon. The whole villages of Lamin and Banjulinding were dry. No rainfall was seen, except the rainfall around the ordination grounds at St. Peter's School. It was a miracle and a blessed and exciting moment to be remembered."

Following his ordination, Fr. Matthew served as an Assistant Parish Priest at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Bwiam, from December 2012 to September 2014. He then served as Parish Priest at St. Martin's Parish, Kartong, from October 2014 to September 2015, and thereafter, at St. Michael's Parish, Njongon, from 2015 to 2019. Fr. Matthew pursued postgraduate studies in Canon Law, making him the first Gambian and first priest to qualify as a Canon Lawyer. Returning from his studies, he was assigned Parish Priest at the Church of the Resurrection in Brikama, a position he served in until his passing on January 15, 2024, after a brief illness. Rev. Fr. Matthew Mendy was not only a priest; he was a beacon of hope, a guiding light, and a source of inspiration for countless individuals. Born with a compassionate heart and an unwavering commitment to serving others, he dedicated his life to the principles of love, kindness, and spirituality. His sermons resonated with a sense of wisdom that transcended the boundaries of religion, touching the souls of those who sought solace and guidance. In his role as a spiritual leader, Father Mendy exhibited a rare combination of humility and strength. He was approachable, compassionate, and always willing to lend a listening ear to those in need. Whether within the confines of the church or out in the community, he embraced his pastoral duties with genuine enthusiasm and a desire to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

The pain of Father Mendy's demise is not limited to the religious community but extends to the broader society that benefited from his selfless service. His involvement in charitable endeavors, community outreach programs, and educational initiatives, has left an enduring legacy that goes beyond the walls of the church. The news of his death has left a void that will be challenging to fill, as he was not just a clergyman but a friend, a mentor, and a pillar of strength. As we grapple with the painful reality of Father Mendy's passing and grieve, it is essential to reflect on the lessons he leaves behind by his words and actions. His life should teach us about the transformative power of compassion, the significance of service to others, and the profound impact that an individual can have on the collective consciousness of a community. In mourning his loss, we must also celebrate the life he lived and the positive changes he brought to the lives of those he interacted with.

The death of Reverend Father Matthew Mendy is undeniably a painful exit, at the prime of his life, only 39 years of age. May his legacy endure in the memories of those whose lives he touched, and serve as a reminder of the power of compassion, love, and selfless service, and may we carry forward the torch of his benevolent spirit in our daily lives. **May his soul rest in peace.**

The Pope's Prayer Intentions 2024

FEBRUARY - For the terminally ill

We pray that those with a terminal illness, and their families, receive the necessary physical and spiritual care and accompaniment.

MARCH - For the new martyrs

We pray that those who risk their lives for the Gospel in various parts of the world inflame the Church with their courage and missionary enthusiasm.



NEW YEAR MESSAGE 2024

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

**GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES
AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH
YOU (1Thess. 5:18, Phil., 4:9)**

The end of the year and beginning of a New Year is a unique moment in our lives as believers and members of Christ's Body, the Church. We reflect on our past experience in life and we look forward in hope to the future. At the same time, we thank God for his blessings and protection and we pray that he will grant us a prosperous, peaceful, and healthy New Year that will renew and strengthen our faith and life on earth. We also make resolutions and promises to God, in order to, overcome our failures and weakness in our relationship with God and one another. But we do not fully know what will happen in the New Year whether it will be good for us or not. We, therefore, have doubts, uncertainties, and plans at the beginning of the New Year as a result of our human limitations and experiences. We even imagine the possibilities and incidents that will happen in our lives but we generally do not know what the future holds for us. So, we wonder about our future and obligations in the New Year. Considering our fears and uncertainties, hopes and expectations, doubts and questions at this moment, I will focus my New Year's Message on St. Paul's exhortation in 1Thess. 5:18 that we should, "give thanks to God in all circumstances for this is the will of God for us in Christ Jesus." If we give thanks to God at all times whether in times of joy or sorrow, success or failure, peace or instability, the God of peace will also be with us (Phil. 4:9).

In his letters to the local churches he established during this missionary journeys, St. Paul always expressed gratitude and thanksgiving to God for what God has done for him; for enabling him to preach the message of the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. He expressed his gratitude to God in 1Cor. 1:1-4 and Phil. 1:1-4 for his special vocation as a servant of Christ and his fellowship in spirit with the members of the Church. So, he appreciated God's divine grace, blessings, and assistance in his life and ministry in the local churches. The members of the churches were equally encouraged in the same spirit to offer their gratitude and thanksgiving to God for his gifts, mercy, compassion, and salvation in Christ Jesus. He

instructed the faithful in Eph. 4:20, "to sing psalms and spiritual songs and make music to the Lord with all their hearts and always give thanks in the name of Jesus Christ to God, the Father for everything." They were also invited in Col. 4:2 to persevere in prayer, be grateful to God, and beseech God to open a door for St. Paul to preach the mystery of Christ in his captivity as a prisoner of Christ. But he was more emphatic and persistent in 1Thess. 5:18 that they should constantly pray and give thanks to God in all circumstances. They were, consequently, required to offer their prayers of thanksgiving to God at all times regardless of their situation and condition in life. Every occasion and situation was, in that case, a moment to offer their prayers of thanksgiving to God for his gifts, mercy, and goodness. So, their gratitude was unconditional and independent of their experience and circumstance in life.

The obligation of the faithful to offer thanksgiving to God at all times and in all circumstances was, in that regard, a principle of life St. Paul required them to obey irrespective of their condition and experience in life. This principle is equally important for us in this New Year. We should express our gratitude to God in all circumstances for our vocation, life, qualities, and prospects in life. Our gratitude to God should not, therefore, be limited to what is useful and beneficial to us. We should be grateful to God even if we do not gain or experience in the course of the New Year what we expected, deserved, and desired in our lives. So, the idea and practice of offering thanksgiving to God only when we experienced or received God's blessing, protection, and assistance in answer to our prayers is not in accordance with St. Paul's preaching and teaching on thanksgiving. We should always, as St. Paul said, give thanks to God in all circumstances both in good and bad times; in times of joy and sorrow. So, we should not expect God to grant our prayers, needs, and plans in the New Year before we offer our thanksgiving to him. Nor should we wait until we are successful, rich, and comfortable in the New Year before we express our gratitude to God. Our thanksgiving to God should always be spontaneous,

unconditional, and continuous in appreciation of our identity and existence in life.

Throughout this New Year, we should thank God for our life and health, faith and gifts, vocation and status in life, blessings and challenges, success and failure, pain and suffering. Our life and health are not our own provisions but God's precious gifts to us. We should, therefore, give thanks to God at all times and in all circumstances for our existence no matter our experience and misfortunes in life. God is also the source of our faith, as well as, our spiritual and human gifts, and vocation. We are obliged, for that reason, to always thank God for these sacred gifts we received at our baptism, confirmation, consecration, and ordination. His abundant blessings to us should also be acknowledged and appreciated when we experience God's favors, goodness, and assistance. For God's blessing is defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 1078-79, as a divine and life-giving action of our heavenly Father that is both a word and a gift ... From the beginning until the end of time, the whole of God's work of creation and redemption is a blessing. When we experience failure, pain, and suffering, we should also offer our prayers of thanksgiving to God for enabling us to participate in Christ's suffering. This may be difficult to appreciate but our faith in God's providence and wisdom should enable us to acknowledge his goodness even in our disappointment and suffering in life. The psalmist still expressed his gratitude to God in Ps. 41:1-3 in his poverty and sickness. He said, God delivered, protected, and kept him alive; he sustained him on his sickbed, and he healed him of all his infirmities. St. Paul also affirmed in Rom. 5:3-5 that we should bear our sufferings because suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and our hope does not disappoint us. We should not, therefore, consider our failure and suffering in life as a worthless experience.

Whatever our situation and experience is in this New Year, we should offer our thanksgiving to God in the Eucharist we celebrate, our daily prayers, offerings, acts of charity, and selfless service to God and humanity. We have different options to thank God in both word and deed. So, it is not too demanding and costly to fulfill our obligation of thanksgiving to God for his providence, mercy, assistance, and guidance. Each and every one of us should be grateful to God if we cherish his generosity in our lives. We can offer the Eucharist in thanksgiving to God. For, the Eucharist is not just the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood that we celebrate as a memorial of his sacrifice and death on the cross. The Eucharist is also, as stated in CCC nos. 1359, a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving to God for creation and salvation in Christ Jesus. It is, therefore, appropriate and highly recommended for Catholics to request Mass as their form of thanksgiving to God for his blessings, protection, and assistance. Our prayers, offerings, and acts of charity can also be our gratitude to God. What we present to God should, therefore, be proper, precious, and worthy of God's goodness, gifts, and deliverance. We should not, for that reason, underestimate the gifts and offerings we present to God. If we dedicate ourselves at the service of God and humanity without counting the cost, our service can also be our offering of thanksgiving to God. Our work and life of witness can also be our gratitude to God for his wonders and blessings.

If we thank God at all times and in all circumstances, we will experience God's peace, goodness, and rewards. We will gain more from God if we offer and express our thanksgiving to God in the Eucharist, in prayer, and our service to God and humanity. We should not, therefore, assume that our acts of thanksgiving benefit God more than us. For, the Church clearly affirms in the fourth Preface of the weekday Mass that, "our prayer of thanksgiving adds nothing to God but profits us for our salvation." We should, therefore, appreciate this fact and be willing to fulfill our obligation to thank God at all times. The Samaritan man who returned to express his gratitude to Jesus in Lk. 17:11-19 was rewarded for his gratitude. Jesus assured him that his faith has healed him. The other nine who never thanked Jesus were not only ungrateful; they never attained the blessing and wholistic healing of the Samaritan. We will also experience God's peace, blessings, and assurance in our lives if we give thanks to God at all times and in all circumstances during this New Year. Our conscience will not trouble us if we express our gratitude to God. We will be at peace with ourselves and the God of peace will also be with us in our homes and place of work. The importance of offering our prayers and thanksgiving to God should, therefore, be fully understood at this point in time. If we experience joy or disappointment at any time, the God of peace will still be with us.

We always thank God on New Year's Day for what he has done for us in the past year and his love in enabling us to witness another year in our lives. So, many believers and members of the Church often celebrate New Year's Day as a day of thanksgiving and gratitude to God than the feast of Mary, Mother of God. Both celebrations can be observed on New Year's Day because they are not contradictory. But we should not only express our thanksgiving to God on New Year's Day. We are required and encouraged by St. Paul in 1Thess. 5:18 to always give thanks to God in all circumstances throughout this New Year and the God of peace will be with us in our homes, places of work, and society (Phil. 4:9). Our gratitude and thanksgiving to God should not, therefore, be limited to a particular occasion or be conditioned by our position or situation in life. We should always and at all times offer our prayers and acts of gratitude to God on account of our faith in his goodness, mercy, and guidance. For, we have many reasons to thank God in spite of our fears, hopes, expectations, and experience in life. We should equally be inspired and motivated by this New Year's message to cultivate the spirit of gratitude and be more eager and willing to offer our gifts and service in thanksgiving to God. As the Bishop of the Diocese of Banjul, I wish the priests, deacons, religious, seminarians, and all the lay faithful of the Diocese, our Christian brothers and sisters in Christ, Muslim believers, believers of other faiths, people of goodwill, and all Gambians at home and abroad a blessed, peaceful, healthy, successful, and prosperous New Year. May God hear our prayers, accept our offerings of thanksgiving, deliver us from all evil, and grant our needs through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Your Servant in Christ,

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

KAADU DUNDA GI - The Living Word

Every Sunday at 12:00hrs on GRTS. Keep up-to-date with your Diocese! Visit: www.banjuldiocese.com

Season of Lent 2024



The 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.

Where does Lent come from? Lent draws its inspiration from the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert.

The Gospels tell us that after his baptism, Jesus fasted in the desert and then was tempted by the devil. He resisted these temptations and then went 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

Liturgical Changes

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

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

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

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 alms giving. While Lent is often associated with the Catholic faith, many Christians—including Protestant and Orthodox—observe it.

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

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

celebration.

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

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

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

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

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

Prayer, Fasting and Alms giving: The Three Pillars

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

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

Preparing for Holy Week and Easter

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

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

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

Clergy on Retreat

7th to 12th January, 2024



The Annual Retreat for Priests of the Diocese of Banjul started on Sunday of the Epiphany and ended on Friday of that week at the Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI). The retreat preacher was Fr. Chidube Joseph Chukwu S.J.

Priest retreat are an opportunity for priests to reflect on their mission and ministry. The Retreat Preacher gave

two talks, the first a short one in the morning after which we discussed and reflected in our different groups. In the evening, we gave a report about the fruits of our reflection from selected scripture passages.

All in all, it was a very good retreat, guided by an excellent Jesuit Priest, and very refreshing to see brother priests and share their company.

SR. CHRISTINE JATTA FROM THE SISTERS OF THE PRESENTATION OF MARY TOOK HER FIRST PROFESSION ON SATURDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2024 AT SHALOM RETREAT CENTRE



SR. CHRISTINE (M) FLANKED BY HER SISTERS



A HAPPY CONGREGATION WITNESSING A SOLEMN CEREMONY

The Diocese of Banjul Newsletter wish the Christian community a blessed Lenten Season as we journey towards Easter.

PILGRIMAGE

THIRTY-FIFTH ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF PEACE, KUNKUJANG MARIAMA

On Saturday, 9 December, 2023, The Diocese of Banjul celebrated the 35th Annual Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Kunkujang. On the eve of the pilgrimage, the Catholic Diocesan Youth Committee held a 'Walk' from Tanji Bridge to Kunkujang-Mariama, a distance of 8.1 km. The theme for the walk was *'Journeying with Mary towards a Synodal Church.'* It was a worthy activity because Mary deserves every walk to the Shrine.

The 35th Annual Pilgrimage was a prayerful, all-day celebration that attracted an unmatched large crowd and was unique in many ways because of the following:

Fr John (*Jackie*) Sharpe CSSp, a renowned apostle of The Gambia, a giant evangelist and a principal Co-founder of the Shrine, appeared in person. He first arrived in The Gambia in the year 1965 and after completion of his missionary service returned home to Ireland in 2009. Some remembered him as a Priest, others a Teacher and still to others more as a Health Worker.

Fr. Sharpe travelled to The Gambia to witness the occasion. (*He remarked passionately that his body is in Ireland but his soul is in The Gambia*). Fr. Jackie Sharpe is eloquent in local languages namely: Wolof and Mandiango and is on record saying that he hopes to be buried in The Gambia and to have a traditional Mandiango funeral. (*The Clare Champion 'Bush priest on walkabout in Bodyke' 7/7/2014*).

His Excellency President Adama Barrow, in pursuance to his government's continued support for religious co-existence, sent the Governor of West Coast Region to represent him in this event. The Governor presented a significant support contribution, from His Excellency, towards the Shrine's development.

A Food Court was made available by a sub-committee of the Shrine committee and financed by various parishes and individuals.

The Shrine Committee announced the implementation of a masterplan for the development of the Shrine. This plan includes developing a Retreat Centre. The Shrine Committee also appealed to pilgrims inviting pledges for the procurement of building materials for the realization of the masterplan. Bishop Gabriel laid the foundation stone for a new hostel to accommodate more pilgrims to stay overnight on retreats and prayers.

In attendance on the occasion were several dignitaries that included: Rt.



Reverend St. Arist Kodjo Baiden, *Anglican Bishop of The Gambia*, Reverend Gabriel Allen of the *Methodist Mission*, Ousman Jallow Bojang, *Governor West Coast Region* and Prof. Pierre Gomez, *Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology*.

Since its inception in 1987, Kunkujang Mariama has undergone ambitious developmental work and has accomplished the erection of a perimeter fence wall enclosing the Shrine, Sanctuary, Pavilion and Hospitality facilities. The annual pilgrimage to the shrine has become a well-anticipated activity attracting people all throughout the Diocese of Banjul and beyond.

The 35 Annual Pilgrimage started with an Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (*O Salutaris Hostia*), and then Stations of the Holy Cross (*Yon U Krua Ba*) and finally Celebration of the Holy Mass.

His Lordship, Bishop Gabriel Mendy CSSp was the Chief Celebrant for the Holy Mass and he gave a sermon to an unprecedented huge crowd of worshippers and distinguished guests.

In his Sermon, Bishop Gabriel highlighted the address to Mary by the Arch Angel Gabriel who assured her that she won God's favor. God preserved Mary from original and actual sin from all ages. Another favor that Mary received was her Immaculate Conception, which was the reason for the annual pilgrimage to Kunkujang *Luke Ch. 1 Vs 49*.

God is Almighty and can do whatever He wants. Indeed God has shown his power to do great and exceptional things for some figures; He does the impossibilities for example: Enoch never died *Gen: 5: Vs 22-24*

Moses died on the mountain in the presence of God who buried him. Nobody has seen the tomb of Moses *Deuteronomy Ch. 34 Vs 5-6*

God took Elijah the prophet alive into heaven. *2 Kings Ch.2 Vs 11-12*

Lazarus, the poor man with sores, died and was taken to heaven *Luke Ch. 16 Vs 19*

When Adam and Eve sinned, Our Savior Jesus Christ had to come and according to Catholic teachings, Mary was the first human redeemed by the life and death of Jesus Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 493*). God redeemed Mary in a more exalted manner. It may however be recalled that the repentant thief at the cross was taken to paradise when Christ promised- 'Today you will be with me in paradise'.

Statement of St. Augustine a church



Father, theologian and philosopher – Saint Augustine believed that God does not save a person who consciously and deliberately does not want to be saved. God does not save us against our will.

Man has the ability to make a choice - God created Man in His likeness and gave him the ability to make a choice. The only time Man had not the ability to make a choice was at his creation. God endowed us with the freedom and capacity to choose; it is a natural gift to humankind. God reveals His plan for us and allows us to choose and bear responsibility. Man chooses between Salvation and Condemnation. Therefore, Man has the ability to choose between Good & Evil, Peace & Violence, Life & Death, and between Love & Hatred. This freedom to choose, however, goes together with responsibility. God allows us to choose and bear responsibility.

Adam and Eve misused and abused the gift to choose and in addition failed to bear responsibility for their error of judgement/choice. Late Saint John Paul II echoed this in his statement where he said; 'Freedom is not only the ability to choose but the power to do what do do'.

Freedom & Responsibility - The peace we may have is consequent to the choices we make and responsibility we assume. We are not free to do whatever with impunity; e.g., crime and spread of falsehood, lies, insults, carefree and recklessness, double standards and injustice. We need genuine peace for a harmonious coexistence. Bishop Gabriel concluded in prayer:



May God enable us to resist the evil one in the temptation to misuse our freedom

May God enable us to use our freedom in accordance with His will/plan.

May we have peace in our families, communities and in our country at large.

The Congregation Responded:

Amen! Amen! Amen!

There after the worshipers moved on to the Shrine, that is located in a hallowed space and environment quite conducive for Christian meditation, spiritual growth and prayer. Earlier in the day, several priests were available for the sacrament of reconciliation. The believers thanked God for giving them another opportunity to perform

this pilgrimage and, each with a lighted candle, entered into deep devotion honoring and praying to Mary. The serenity of the environment, bright lights and fragrance from the burning candles enhanced the prayers. The peace felt was beyond description.

Each year people have been gathering in this Shrine for worship, thanksgiving and honoring Mary. Many go to seek divine intervention and give testimonies for prayers answered in the previous year(s). The pilgrimage is increasing in popularity.

May the Shrine of Our Lady of Peace ever remain with us; Amen! *'Tagas len Mariama Hek-bi Amul Gaka; Magal Len Turam Marie, Mariama'*. 'Mary, Help of Christians Pray for Us!'

PERSPECTIVE

By Andrew Sylva - andrewsylva1982@gmail.com



The author

Migration and Economic Development: *The Impact of the Gambian Diaspora*

In an increasingly globalized world and the increase incidences of migration of people, mostly from their areas of residence to other parts of the world, has had and continue to have multidimensional impacts. Such impacts have been an aspect of keener focus in other to be able to extract the benefits of such an adventures and experiences.

No doubt, the impacts of migration on the African countries is seen from the prism of its economic impacts and the general development of the concerned countries, such as the case with the Gambia.

It has become a veritable experience that has thrusted a profound social and economic transformation across many countries, with its obvious effect on the quality of life and standard of living. Particularly for citizens who travelled to an economically prosperous country and has the ability to earn income and remit some hard foreign currency back home to their country of origin.

For The Gambia as a nation, some of its citizens have over the years been migrating abroad to a greener pasture as widely known. While many of them literally passed through the proverbial eyes of the needle to get to their destination country (ies), the subsequent gains and empowerment quickly compensates for the pains and troubles of migration. Thus, their activities abroad have had

profound impacts on the overall life and living in their home country, here; which is The Gambia.

No doubt, and from available statistics and the generally improved economy of these tiny countries, migration of the citizens has positively impacted The Gambian society and will continue to do so for a very long time to come. While, these effects can be controversial and debatable from the perspectives of actors or observers, the visible evidence of such, only goes further to justify such a process to an extent.

Today, the economic impact of migration have been too visible to motivate further engagement in such a process, the aspects of helping to depopulate the labour market of the country of migration, the impacts of helping to swell and palliate the public purse of largely hungry citizens through their remittances, and the visible social and economic growth, accrued by the acts and activities, all lend greater credence to the reality and facts that indeed, migration had and will continue to have benefits on the country source of migration.

Migration and economic development of the Gambia as a nation has had the inputs of the Gambian Diaspora, for they have become qualified professionals who engage their skills to work abroad and send dollars back home. While the country yearns for

such qualified professional to boost their manpower base, the attractive pay checks abroad seem to have dulled patriotism for quest for survival and economic well-being.

Today, international migration in The Gambia has far-reaching effects in the country, so much so that the living standards of most Gambians has considerably and significantly improved and will continue to be so, if the flow of remittance from Diasporan Gambians continues to fester.

Ndey Sowe, writing on a column in Foroyaa newspaper (Serrekunda), writing on Gambia: Diaspora Remittance in 2022 Stands at U.S.\$712 Million, noted that there are an estimated 140,000 Gambians living abroad, and their remittances accounted for over 60 per cent of the country's GDP, which is indeed considerable.

Even though this represents a contraction of 8% relative to the previous year, it is significant to the economy that had seen contractions and vulnerabilities in the past years. The contraction is partly due to increased utilization of informal sectors or channels to send money, because of Covid restrictions globally or higher transfer charges by formal channels. As a result, some of the remittances were not captured in the formal system in our official statistics, as noted by Dr. Jallow, First Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of The Gambia outlined.

Sowe also observed that the 2022 official diaspora remittances decreased when compared to the year 2021, which had increased to an unprecedented level of \$773.7 million, from \$589.81 million in 2020, recording an increase of 31.3%. The 2021 remittance volume was equivalent to D40.65 billion, which represented 62.9% of the country's annual GDP. In 2018, total remittance represented \$277 million, with 18% growth in 2019 which was \$328 million, or 31% of the GDP. This statistic clearly underscores the increasing relevance of the Diaspora remittances to the economic development of the country.

Remittances evidently provide the most direct and immediate benefits to the people who receive them, many of whom, the World Bank has established, are amongst the poorest members of society. Even the blind on the street of The Gambia actually feels the soothing impacts of the Diasporan funds from The Gambians and in their prayers wish for more of such funds; the more the better and merrier for them. As they remit, the recipients became gradually lifted out of the valley and shadow of poverty, as they remit, it increases and diversifies household incomes, providing a well-fed and contented families and in the process provide an insurance against risk and factors an extended family care which is high in The Gambia.

It also enables family members to benefit from educational and training opportunities and provide a source of capital for the establishment of small businesses, so no one can stop the citizen from joining the train of emigration to prosperous foreign nations for better life, where the pasture is greener and flourishing!

Noting it has helped to boost piety and religious fervor in The Gambia as the oiling money from the Diaspora remittances. Today, many close family members and spiritual leaders of those Gambians abroad had at one time or the other received funds that enable them to embark on the holy journey to perform pilgrimage to the holy land in Makkah and Madinah as well as in Jerusalem, the as they case may be for Gambian Christians. It has also enabled others to boost the culinary and tourism appetite, with available funds to travel to exotic nations.

It will continue to gladden the hearts of Gambians to develop their country, it will even be more pleasing to realize that such development can speed up through the transforming powers of the remittances, which now play an essential role in sustaining The Gambia's national and local economies.

This is not peculiar to the Gambians alone, for remittances provides an important source of foreign exchange to it, boost the capacity of their financial sector and also help to attract subsequent investments. It is necessary to posit here that huge capital outlay

through foreign remittances encourages Direct Foreign Investments (DFI).

Migration as a process has had and continue to have both positive and negative impacts on both host and origin countries. On the positive side, we have seen how migration led to increased cultural diversity, boosting shared beliefs, values and traditions and evolution of a whole new market of products and services that were not available in the host country prior to the arrival of migrants to a host country. Migration can be negative impacts for the migrants themselves, for example, there have been a significant loss of cultural norms, as they enter a host country that has a completely different way of societal living than their country of origin. Most Gambian immigrants have been a culturalized in their host countries by adopting very different European / Asian/ American cultures and life styles. It leads to brain drain of the highly professional class, most skilled intelligentsia and best educated human resources or skilled workers of The Gambia.

Brain drains affect the origin countries in many ways. On the most obvious level, it lowers the human capital of the country and produces a shortage of high skilled labour, thereby reducing productivity. Migration also creates spaces for discrimination and segregation, language barriers and problems of adaptability and acclimatization to the temperate weather of Europe and America. Some unsuspecting Gambians have become victims of unscrupulous agents who extort money from them in a bid to help them pass through the 'Back Way', as is fondly called in The Gambia. In some extreme scenario, some Gambians have died in the process, which portends a huge loss for the country.

On the other hand, migration, especially when it is irregular, can also endanger the migrant's health through increased sanitary risks (dangerous travel conditions, violence, prostitution, living irregularly). Young Gambian men and women risk everything, including their lives, to take on the perilous trip across dozens of borders and the treacherous waves of the Mediterranean Sea in search of a better life in the North. Some die along the way, some are turned back and some who finished the journey realize that life may not be easier across the frontiers.

Migration can be and is definitely a potential source of abuse and disregard for human rights and freedoms of vulnerable groups such as immigrants and minorities in instances or cases where those rights would seem to be in conflict with the political and development agenda of a given polity or with the selfish interest of an employer. At the same time, poorly governed- migration is a cause of great suffering. It forces people into the cruel realm of traffickers, where they face exploitation, abuse, and even death. It undermines trust in governance and institutions, inflames social tensions, and corrodes our common humanity.

It is not only the diaspora funds that has contributed to the economic development of the Gambia, for some Gambians who return to the country after their overseas education and skill training have contributed immensely to the overall development of Gambia's socio-political and economic sector. Education is one of the key drivers for internal migration in The Gambia. To a lesser extent, young Gambians migrate to the United Kingdom and the United States for their higher education and therefore contribute to the intellectual development of migrants, but also to the economic and social development of their environment through increased human capital.

The gains from migration are larger for the younger migrant because they have a longer lifetime ahead of them to benefit from the extra income; hence the present discounted gains from migration are higher. The migration also impact on the health sector of The Gambia, the remittances from the migrants helps to increase access to better health care and better living conditions. At the community level, migration can have a positive impact when returnees spread good health practices, when the diaspora builds hospitals or clinics, when migrants send remittances to pay for health care or when they invite relatives to receive better health care

abroad. Nonetheless, the loss of health-care professionals such as Nurses, Doctors and other health workers through migration can challenge the overall health-care system and delivery.

On the other hand, the loss of health-care professionals through migration has challenge the overall health-care system in The Gambia. The proportion of Nurses in The Gambia is 3.2/10,000 population which is below the WHO's minimum threshold of 23 doctors, nurses and midwives per 10,000 population, yet many of them are still migrating abroad in drove.

Traditionally migration in West Africa is considered as a largely male phenomenon, with women mostly following men, this trend has changed and more women are getting involved on daily basis. For many, women continue to take on more responsibilities as the new heads of households, accessing roles from which they might have been previously excluded.

Recognition of the positive impacts of remittances on the economies of developing countries is important and must be promoted and all the stakeholders need to work to maintain the status quo as well as tapping the transforming potentials of the development partners. In this context, the governments of sending countries must adopt sound exchange rate, money transfer, monetary and economic policies, and facilitate the provision of banking facilities that enable the safe and timely transfer of migrants' funds. They should also promote the conditions necessary to increase domestic savings and channel them into productive investment and usage.

For as long as Gambians migrate to other more prosperous countries and get Diaspora remittances back home, the nation is bound to continue to experience development in all ramification, particularly, economically.

Yet, every nation is determined to grow and develop along with the blueprint it has set for itself, hence the need to change the status quo, yet, taking into consideration, the fact that no matter how developed The Gambia is, it cannot live in isolation or independent of other countries of the world.

Countries can grow economically, when there is an increase in capital goods, labour force, technology, and human capital; all these contribute to economic growth, if they are well harnessed. Economic growth is commonly measured in terms of the increase in aggregated market value of additional goods and services produced, using estimates such as GDP, and diaspora funds have

been very impactful in the process for The Gambia.

Migration helps countries to grow as native and immigrant workers bring to the labour market a diverse set of skills, which complement each other and increase productivity. It also boosts the health and educational sector through their expertise.

When it comes to Migration, whether regular or irregular, every development partner has a role to play. Development is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of progress, including economic, social, and human development within a society. Development partners are organisations including countries that provide financial, technical, and humanitarian assistance to promote development in a particular country. It has a legal duty to act in the partnership's best interests, as well as the best interest of the other partners, hence the need to work to protect the rights of the migrant by making away with stringent and obnoxious laws that restrict or limit international movement across the borders.

Hence the need to compel the development partners about the harsh and inhuman rules that restrict and undermines migration, in spite of its enormous countries, mostly, to many African countries. The nation of the Gambia continues to grow at her own pace and trying to leap-frog her development in all ramifications, particularly, economically, every policy inputs and programmes that will continue to support such a lofty vision must be robustly supported and sustainably funded and maintained.

We must continue to encourage regular migration, within the positive sphere of promoting collective positive humanity. We must work in unison, concert and coalition against any international laws and statutes that undermines the global free movement of all, irrespective of the countries and stations in life. We must identify and mitigate all challenges that limit positive migration, and by so doing, it will not only contribute to global harmony, but help to promote global equality and solidarity that will starve off every negative manifestation of poverty and underdevelopment, arising from lack of adequate socio-economic opportunities. Migration is a fact of life and a force for good. It promotes the exchange of knowledge and ideas and contributes to economic growth. It enables millions of people to pursue opportunities and improve their lives. *For migration and migrants, you can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.*

Daily Mass Readings

1 February 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Kings 2](#): 1-4, 10-12

Responsorial Psalm: [First Chronicles 29](#): 10, 11ab, 11d-12a, 12bcd

Alleluia: [Mark 1](#): 15

Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 7-13

2 February, 2024

Presentation of the Lord Feast

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

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

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

Alleluia: [Luke 2](#): 32

Gospel: [Luke 2](#): 22-40 or [Luke 2](#): 22-32

3 February, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary/ Blaise, Bishop, Martyr/ Ansgar, Bishop, Missionary

First Reading: [First Kings 3](#): 4-13

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

Alleluia: [John 10](#): 27

February & March

Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 30-34

4 February, 2024

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 147](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Second Reading: [First Corinthians 9](#): 16-19, 22-23

Alleluia: [Matthew 8](#): 17

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

5 February, 2024

Agatha, Virgin, Martyr Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Kings 8](#): 1-7, 9-13

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 132](#): 6-7, 8-10

Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 23

Gospel: [Mark 6](#): 53-56

6 February, 2024

Paul Miki, Priest, Martyr, & Companions, Martyrs Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Kings 8](#): 22-23, 27-30

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 84](#): 3, 4, 5 and 10, 11



Alleluia: [Psalm 119](#): 36, 29b
 Gospel: [Mark 7](#): 1-13

7 February, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Kings 10](#): 1-10
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 37](#): 5-6, 30-31, 39-40
 Alleluia: [John 17](#): 17b, 17a
 Gospel: [Mark 7](#): 14-23

8 February, 2024

Ordinary Weekday/ Jerome Emiliani, Priest, Religious Founder/ Josephine Bakhita, Virgin

First Reading: [First Kings 11](#): 4-13
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 106](#): 3-4, 35-36, 37 and 40
 Alleluia: [James 1](#): 21bc
 Gospel: [Mark 7](#): 24-30

9 February, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [First Kings 11](#): 29-32; 12: 19
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 81](#): 10-11ab, 12-13, 14-15
 Alleluia: [Acts 16](#): 14b
 Gospel: [Mark 7](#): 31-37

10 February, 2024

Scholastica, Virgin, Religious Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [First Kings 12](#): 26-32; 13: 33-34
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 106](#): 6-7ab, 19-20, 21-22
 Alleluia: [Matthew 4](#): 4b
 Gospel: [Mark 8](#): 1-10

11 February, 2024

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Leviticus 13](#): 1-2, 44-46
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 32](#): 1-2, 5, 11
 Second Reading: [First Corinthians 10](#): 31 – 11: 1
 Alleluia: [Luke 7](#): 16
 Gospel: [Mark 1](#): 40-45

12 February, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [James 1](#): 1-11
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 67, 68, 71, 72, 75, 76
 Alleluia: [John 14](#): 6
 Gospel: [Mark 8](#): 11-13

13 February, 2024

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [James 1](#): 12-18
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 94](#): 12-13a, 14-15, 18-19
 Alleluia: [John 14](#): 23
 Gospel: [Mark 8](#): 14-21

14 February, 2024

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

First Reading: [Joel 2](#): 12-18
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 & 17
 Second Reading: [Second Corinthians 5](#): 20 – 6:2
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Psalms 95](#): 8
 Gospel: [Matthew 6](#): 1-6, 16-18

15 February, 2024

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

First Reading: [Deuteronomy 30](#): 15-20
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 1](#): 1-2, 3, 4 and 6

Verse Before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 17
 Gospel: [Luke 9](#): 22-25

16 February, 2024

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

First Reading: [Isaiah 58](#): 1-9a
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Amos 5](#): 14
 Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 14-15

17 February, 2024

Saturday after Ash Wednesday/ Seven Founders of the Order of Servites, Religious Founder

First Reading: [Isaiah 58](#): 9b-14
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 86](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Ezekiel 33](#): 11
 Gospel: [Luke 5](#): 27-32

18 February, 2024

First Sunday of Lent

First Reading: [Genesis 9](#): 8-15
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 25](#): 4-5, 6-7, 8-9
 Second Reading: [First Peter 3](#): 18-22
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 4b
 Gospel: [Mark 1](#): 12-15

19 February, 2024

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Leviticus 19](#): 1-2, 11-18
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 8, 9, 10, 15
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Second Corinthians 6](#): 2b
 Gospel: [Matthew 25](#): 31-46

20 February, 2024

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 55](#): 10-11
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 4b
 Gospel: [Matthew 6](#): 7-15

21 February, 2024

Lenten Weekday/ Peter Damian, Bishop, Doctor

First Reading: [Jonah 3](#): 1-10
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 12-13, 18-19
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Joel 2](#): 12-13
 Gospel: [Luke 11](#): 29-32

22 February, 2024

Chair of Peter, Apostle Feast

First Reading: [First Peter 5](#): 1-4
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 23](#): 1-3a, 4, 5, 6
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Matthew 16](#): 18
 Gospel: [Matthew 16](#): 13-19

23 February, 2024

Lenten Weekday/ Polycarp, Bishop, Martyr, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and Up)

First Reading: [Ezekiel 18](#): 21-28
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 130](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Ezekiel 18](#): 31
 Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 20-26

24 February, 2024 - Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Deuteronomy 26](#): 16-19
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 1-2, 4-5, 7-8
 Verse Before the Gospel: [Second Corinthians 6](#): 2b
 Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 43-48

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25 February, 2024

Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading: [Genesis 22](#): 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 116](#): 10, 15, 16-17, 18-19
Second Reading: [Romans 8](#): 31b-34
Verse Before the Gospel: [Matthew 17](#): 5
Gospel: [Mark 9](#): 2-10

26 February, 2024

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Daniel 9](#): 4b-10
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 79](#): 8, 9, 11 and 13
Verse Before the Gospel: [John 6](#): 63c, 68c
Gospel: [Luke 6](#): 36-38

27 February, 2024

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 1](#): 10, 16-20
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 50](#): 8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23
Verse Before the Gospel: [Ezekiel 18](#): 31
Gospel: [Matthew 23](#): 1-12

28 February, 2024

Lenten Weekday

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

29 February, 2024

Lenten Weekday

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

1 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 & Up)

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

2 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday

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

3 March, 2024 – Scrutiny

Third Sunday of Lent, First Scrutiny of the Elect/ Scrutiny

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

3 March, 2024 – Lenten

Third Sunday of Lent, First Scrutiny of the Elect/ Lenten

First Reading: [Exodus 20](#): 1-17
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 8, 9, 10, 11
Second Reading: [First Corinthians 1](#): 22-25
Verse Before the Gospel: [John 3](#): 16
Gospel: [John 2](#): 13-25

4 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday/ Casimir

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

5 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday

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

6 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday

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

7 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday/ Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs

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

8 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday/ John of God, Religious Founder, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and Up)

First Reading: [Hosea 14](#): 2-10
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 81](#): 6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14 & 17
Verse Before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 17
Gospel: [Mark 12](#): 28-34

9 March, 2024

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

First Reading: [Hosea 6](#): 1-6
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab
Verse Before the Gospel: [Psalm 95](#): 8
Gospel: [Luke 18](#): 9-14

10 March 2024 – Scrutiny

Fourth Sunday Of Lent, Second Scrutiny of the Elect/ Scrutiny

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

10 March, 2024 – Lenten

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Second Scrutiny of the Elect/ Lenten

First Reading: [Second Chronicles 36](#): 14-16, 19-23
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 137](#): 1-2, 3, 4-5, 6
Second Reading: [Ephesians 2](#): 4-10
Verse Before the Gospel: [John 3](#): 16
Gospel: [John 3](#): 14-21

11 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 65](#): 17-21
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 30](#): 2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a & 13b
Verse Before the Gospel: [Amos 5](#): 14
Gospel: [John 4](#): 43-54

12 March, 2024 - Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Ezekiel 47](#): 1-9, 12
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 46](#): 2-3, 5-6, 8-9

Verse Before the Gospel: [Psalm 51](#): 12a, 14a
Gospel: [John 5](#): 1-16

13 March, 2024 - Lenten Weekday

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

14 March, 2024 - Lenten Weekday

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

15 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday, Day of Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 & Up)
First Reading: [Wisdom 2](#): 1a, 12-22
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23
Verse Before the Gospel: [Matthew 4](#): 4b
Gospel: [John 7](#): 1-2, 10, 25-30

16 March, 2024 - Lenten Weekday

First Reading: [Jeremiah 11](#): 18-20
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 7](#): 2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12
Verse Before the Gospel: [Luke 8](#): 15
Gospel: [John 7](#): 40-53

17 March, 2024 – Scrutiny

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

17 March, 2024 – Lenten

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Third Scrutiny of the Elect/ Lenten
First Reading: [Jeremiah 31](#): 31-34
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 51](#): 3-4, 12-13, 14-15
Second Reading: [Hebrews 5](#): 7-9
Verse Before the Gospel: [John 12](#): 26
Gospel: [John 12](#): 20-33

18 March, 2024

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

19 March, 2024

Joseph, Husband of Mary Solemnity
First Reading: [Second Samuel 7](#): 4-5a, 12-14a, 16
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 89](#): 2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29
Second Reading: [Romans 4](#): 13, 16-18, 22
Verse Before the Gospel: [Psalm 84](#): 5
Gospel: [Matthew 1](#): 16, 18-21, 24 or [Luke 2](#): 41-51a

20 March, 2024

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

21 March, 2024

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

22 March, 2024

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

23 March, 2024

Lenten Weekday/ Toribio De Mogrovejo, Bishop
First Reading: [Ezekiel 37](#): 21-28
Responsorial Psalm: [Jeremiah 31](#): 10, 11-12, 13
Verse Before the Gospel: [Ezekiel 18](#): 31
Gospel: [John 11](#): 45-56

24 March, 2024

Palm Sunday of the Lord' Solemnity Passion
Procession: [Mark 11](#): 1-10 or [John 12](#): 12-16
First Reading: [Isaiah 50](#): 4-7
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 22](#): 8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24
Second Reading: [Philippians 2](#): 6-11
Verse Before the Gospel: [Philippians 2](#): 8-9
Gospel: [Mark 14](#): 1 – 15: 47

25 March, 2024

Monday of Holy Week
First Reading: [Isaiah 42](#): 1-7
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 27](#): 1, 2, 3, 13-14
Gospel: [John 12](#): 1-11

26 March, 2024

Tuesday of Holy Week
First Reading: [Isaiah 49](#): 1-6
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 71](#): 1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15 & 17
Gospel: [John 13](#): 21-33, 36-38

27 March, 2024

Wednesday of Holy Week
First Reading: [Isaiah 50](#): 4-9a
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 69](#): 8-10, 21-22, 31 and 33-34
Gospel: [Matthew 26](#): 14-25

28 March, 2024

Holy Thursday, At Evening, Begin Easter Triduum of the Lord' Solemnity Passion, Death and Resurrection
First Reading: [Exodus 12](#): 1-8, 11-14
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 116](#): 12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18
Second Reading: [First Corinthians 11](#): 23-26
Verse Before the Gospel: [John 13](#): 34
Gospel: [John 13](#): 1-15

29 March, 2024

Good Friday, Day of Fast (Ages 18-59) and Abstinence from Meat (Age 14 and Up)
First Reading: [Isaiah 52](#): 13 – 53: 12
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 31](#): 2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25
Second Reading: [Hebrews 4](#): 14-16; 5: 7-9
Verse Before the Gospel: [Philippians 2](#): 8-9
Gospel: [John 18](#): 1 – 19: 42

30 March, 2024 - Holy Saturday

First Reading: [Genesis 1](#): 1 – 2: 2 or 1: 1, 26-31a
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 104](#): 1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35 or [Psalms 33](#): 4-5, 6-7, 12-13, 20 and 22
Second Reading: [Genesis 22](#): 1-18 or 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 16](#): 5, 8, 9-10, 11
Third Reading: [Exodus 14](#): 15 – 15: 1
Responsorial Psalm: [Exodus 15](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18
Fourth Reading: [Isaiah 54](#): 5-14
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 30](#): 2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13
Fifth Reading: [Isaiah 55](#): 1-11
Responsorial Psalm: [Isaiah 12](#): 2-3, 4, 5-6
Sixth Reading: [Baruch 3](#): 9-15, 32 – 4: 4
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 8, 9, 10, 11
Seventh Reading: [Ezekiel 36](#): 16-17a, 18-28

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 42](#): 3, 5; 43: 3, 4 or [Isaiah 12](#): 2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 or [Psalm 51](#): 12-13, 14-15, 18-19
Epistle Reading: [Romans 6](#): 3-11
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 118](#): 1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Gospel: [Mark 16](#): 1-7

31 March, 2024

Easter Sunday, The Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

First Reading: [Acts 10](#): 34a, 37-43
Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 118](#): 1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Second Reading: [Colossians 3](#): 1-4 or [First Corinthians 5](#): 6b-8
Alleluia: [First Corinthians 5](#): 7b-8a
Gospel: [John 20](#): 1-9 or [Mark 16](#): 1-7 or, at an afternoon or evening Mass, [Luke 24](#): 13-35

Gambian Christian

February & March



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4th February, 1981: Funeral in Banjul, following her death in Britain, of Augusta Mahoney, former wife of Sir Dawda Jawara.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2nd February, 2024: Mass and Burial Rites of the late Fr. Matthew Mendy at the St. Therese’s Parish, Kanifing. Interment took place at the Banjul Cemetery and condolences was received at the St. Augustine’s Hall in Banjul, where thousands of the faithful gathered to pay their last respect and condolences to the Catholic Diocese of Banjul.

**Weekday
Celebrations**

SAINTS

**February
&
March**

6TH 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.)*

8TH 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.

**11TH 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.

**22ND 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.

**17TH 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.

**19TH 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.

**25TH 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).

February & March

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



Our Sunday Readings

**4th February, 2024
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**

1st Reading: Job 7:1-4, 6-7
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23
Alleluia: Matthew 8:17
Gospel: Mark 1:29-39

Homily Theme: Why Did Jesus Come to Earth?

Verse of the Day Reflection: After the Fall of man in Adam and Eve, which we see how man was banished from the unconditional God's Grace and Providence to conditional providence. *"Then the Lord God said: See! The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil! Now, what if he also reaches out his hand to take fruit from the tree of life, and eats of it and lives forever? The Lord God, therefore, banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he had been taken. He expelled the man, stationing the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life. – Genesis 3:22-23*

Satan was the genesis of man's misery. After being banished by God from the Heavenly Kingdom, he set forth in quest to build his earthly kingdom whose characteristics

are the exact opposite of what is practised in God's Kingdom. God sent Jesus Christ to earth (His only begotten Son). As you can see in Matthew 1:21, "Jesus Christ came to earth to save us from our sins. "This is for the reason that after repenting to Jesus, we will be saved from our sins and therefore be clean and pristine before we go before God on our last day.

Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" – John 6:38. Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. – John 12:44-45

When God sent His Son Jesus Christ to earth, He sent Him as the Way, the truth and the Life. In John 14:6 Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Unlike the prophets who were just messengers, Jesus sums up everything you need to enter the Heavenly Kingdom. Therefore Jesus, from His many teachings, was sent to make sure that while we are here on earth we don't get trapped by satan and end up in the fiery Gehennah. Jesus wants us to return to Heaven our original home by all means.

**11th February, 2024
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**

1st Reading: Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11
2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1
Alleluia: Luke 7:16
Gospel: Mark 1:40-45

Homily Theme: Lord If You Wish You Can Make Me Clean – Matthew 8:1-4, Luke 5:12-16, Mark 1:40-45

Verse of the Day Reflections: An amazing miracle takes place and Jesus simply tells the one healed to “tell no one.” Why does Jesus say this? First, we should start by reflecting upon what Jesus did. By cleansing this leper He restored this man’s entire life to him. He was living as an outcast, separated from the community; his leprosy, in a sense, took everything from him. But he had faith in Jesus and presented himself to the care and mercy of God. The result was that he was made whole and restored to full health. Jesus often would tell those who were healed to tell no one. One reason for this was that Jesus’ acts of love and mercy were not done for His own benefit, rather, they were done out of love. Jesus loved this leper and wanted to offer Him this precious gift of healing. He did it out of compassion and, in return, only wanted the man’s gratitude. He did not need to make this a public spectacle, He only wanted the man to be grateful. The same is true with us. We need to know that God loves us so much that He wants to lift our heavy burdens and heal our weaknesses simply because He loves us. He doesn’t do it first because it will benefit Him, rather, He does it out of love for us. Reflect, today, on your motivation for the acts of kindness you do. Pray that you also can desire to act in hidden ways in imitation of our divine Lord.

Prayer: Lord, may I grow in love for others and express that love in a pure way. May I never be motivated by a desire for vain praise. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen.

**18th February, 2024
First Sunday of Lent, Year B**

1st Reading: Genesis 9:8-15
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9
2nd Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22
Verse Before the Gospel: Matthew 4:4B
Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

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

Verse of the Day Reflection: Is temptation good? Certainly, it’s not a sin to be tempted. Otherwise, our Lord could never have been tempted Himself. But He was. And so are we. As we enter into the first full week of Lent, we are given the opportunity to ponder the story of Jesus’ temptation in the desert.

Temptation is never from God. But God does permit us to be tempted. Not so that we fall, but so that we grow in holiness. Temptation forces us to rise up and make a choice either for God or for the temptation. Though mercy and forgiveness are always offered when we fail, the blessings that await those who overcome temptation are numerous. Jesus’ temptation did not increase His holiness, but it did afford Him the opportunity to manifest His

perfection within His human nature. Overcoming temptation is like acing an exam, winning a contest, completing a difficult project or accomplishing some challenging feat. We should take great joy in overcoming temptation in our lives, realizing that this strengthens us to the core of our being. Reflect, today, upon Jesus facing the devil in the desert after spending 40 days of fasting. He faced every temptation of the evil one so as to assure us that if we but unite ourselves completely to Him in His human nature, so we also will have His strength to overcome anything and everything the vile devil throws our way.

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

**25th February, 2024
Second Sunday of Lent, Year B**

1st Reading: Genesis 22:1-2, 9A, 10-13, 15-18
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19
2nd Reading: Romans 8:31B-34
Verse Before the Gospel: Matthew 17:5
Gospel: Mark 9:2-10

Homily Theme: The Transfiguration of Jesus on the Mountain – Mark 9:2-10 and Matthew 17:1-9

Verse of the Day Reflection: The Transfiguration of Jesus on the Mountain was a very powerful moment in the course of His earthly ministry when the divine nature and glory, which He possessed prior to coming to earth in the human body, was manifested in front of the three disciples Peter James and John. Jesus was transformed into a form that nothing on earth could make dirty. It was a form that we can call heavenly. We also see that He was communicating with Elijah and Moses, people we know are in heaven. **So, why was the transfiguration important to Jesus and to the apostles?** God Himself took the form of man and came down to earth as His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. So, after Jesus began to gather His disciples for His ministry, He performed many miracles in front of them and the disciples also performed miracles in His name. He told them that He was the Messiah and that He came from God. This is why during the transfiguration, a cloud came, casting a shadow over them, and from the cloud came a voice, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” God Himself reassured the apostles that Jesus was indeed His beloved Son whom He had sent down to earth and that they should listen to Him. Let us, therefore, have unwavering faith in Jesus because we are lucky to know that He is indeed the Messiah who came to save us from our sins.

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

**3rd March, 2024
Third Sunday of Lent, Year B**

1st Reading: Exodus 20:1-17 or Exodus 20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11
2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25
Verse Before the Gospel: John 3:16
Gospel: John 2:13-25

Homily Theme: My House Shall Be a House of Prayer – Luke 19:45-48, John 2:13-16, Mark 11:15-16

Verse of the Day Reflection: This passage reveals not only something that Jesus did long ago, it also reveals something that He desires to do today. Additionally, He desires to do this in two ways: He desires to root out all evil within the temple of our world, and He desires to root out all evil in the temple of our hearts. In regard to the first point, it is clear that the evil and ambition of many throughout history have seeped into our Church and world. This is nothing new. Everyone has most likely encountered some sort of hurt from those within the Church itself, from society, and even from family. Jesus does not promise perfection from those we encounter every day, but He does promise to vigorously go after evil and root it out. As for the second and most important point, we should see this passage as a lesson for our own souls. Each soul is a temple that should be set aside solely for the glory of God and the fulfillment of His holy will. Therefore, this passage is fulfilled today if we allow our Lord to enter and see the evil and filth within our own souls. This may not be easy to do and will require true humility and surrender, but the end result will be cleansing and purification by our Lord. Reflect, today, upon the fact that Jesus desires to bring about purification in many ways. He desires to purify the Church as a whole, each society and community, your own family, and especially your own soul.

Prayer: Lord, I do pray for the purification of our world, our Church, our families, and most especially my own soul. I invite You to come to me this day to reveal to me what it is that grieves You the most. I invite You to root out, in my heart, all that is displeasing to You. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen.

**10th March, 2024
St. John Ogilvie – Feast Day
Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B**

1st Reading: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6
2nd Reading: Ephesians 2:4-10
Verse Before the Gospel: John 3:16
Gospel: John 3:14-21

Homily Theme: The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up – John 3:13-21

Verse of the Day Reflection: It is from today's passage that we get the command from Jesus to always 'lift up the Son of Man' by the way of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Cross can have different meanings and interpretations from person to person. To Christians, it has a spiritual meaning but for the secular and historical people, it has a tragic and awful meaning. From the secular and historical perspective, the bad and awful meaning attached to the cross is derived from the story that goes; a long time

ago there was a man who was very popular and was loved and hated by many in equal measure. Those who hated this man planned and executed his brutal crucifixion. We the Christians perceive the Cross, not from a secular point of view, but from a divine perspective. We believe that Jesus Christ was lifted up on the Cross for all to see. We believe that He died a horrible death on the Cross to atone for our sins. Jesus, ultimately became victorious for He defeated death on that Cross and rose from the dead. So, whenever we see the Cross, we see a victorious and glorious throne that deserves to be exalted all the time. Therefore, today, let us spend some time gazing upon the Cross of Christ in our crucifixes. With faith, in that crucifix, you will see the answer to your problems. Ask Jesus for the solution to your problems for He says, "Ask and you will get, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened for you."

Prayer: Dear Lord, always give me the grace to gaze upon your Cross. May You help me to experience the victory You won for me on the Cross. May I receive your help all the times I seek it when I look at You. Amen.

**17th March, 2024
St. Theodore of Rome – Feast Day
Fifth Sunday of Lent**

1st Reading: Jeremiah 31: 31-34
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 51: 3-4, 12-13, 14-15
2nd Reading: Hebrews 5: 7-9
Verse Before the Gospel: John 12: 26
Gospel: John 12: 20-33

Homily Theme: Whoever Hates His Life in This World Will Preserve it for Eternal Life – Matthew 10:37-39; Mark 8:34-38; John 12:22-26

Verse of the Day Reflection: Jesus insists that we be of service to Him. This is because God created us so that we can serve Him. God did not just think of creating you without some work cut out for you to do. Therefore, if you are alive and kicking then it means there is some work that God still needs you to do. Christ gives us the criteria through which we will accomplish the task assigned to us by God in a manner acceptable and pleasing to Him. This is by first denying ourselves then following Jesus. He insists that for you to serve Him, you must first follow Him and for you to follow Him, you must first accept His teachings and abide by them. Another ingredient for you to follow Jesus is that you have to lose your worldly and sinful life so that, in the new holy life, you can efficiently perform your God-given duties.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, we submit ourselves to You. We choose to follow You and serve You with all our strengths. Help us to leave our sinful past and change to a new life that is pleasing and productive to You. Amen.

**24th March, 2024
PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORDS PASSION
Year B**

At the Procession With Palms – Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11
At the Mass – 1st Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24
2nd Reading: Philippians 2:6-11
Verse Before the Gospel: Philippians 2:8-9
Gospel: Matthew 26:14-27:66

Homily Theme - Palm Sunday: Jesus Enters Jerusalem in Jubilation for His Passion and Cross – Matthew 21:1-11

Verse of the Day Reflection: The passage, Matthew 21:1-11, teaches us that Jesus is the promised Messiah and king, but that his kingdom is not of this world. Jesus came to serve and save, and his arrival should not only bring us joy and hope, but also challenge us to rethink our assumptions about power, authority, and the nature of God’s kingdom. **Jesus is humble:** Jesus did not come to Jerusalem on a war horse, but on a donkey. This was a humble mode of transportation, which demonstrated Jesus’ servant-leadership and willingness to identify with the common people. This shows that Jesus was not interested in earthly power or prestige, but was focused on serving and saving others. **Jesus is worthy of worship:** The people threw their cloaks and palm branches on the ground as a sign of respect and honor for Jesus. This was a way of showing that Jesus was worthy of their worship and adoration. **Jesus is a source of joy:** The crowds who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem were filled with joy and excitement. They recognized that Jesus was a source of hope and salvation, and they celebrated his arrival. **Jesus is the King of Peace:** The people shouted, “Hosanna!” which means “save us.” They were looking for a king who would save them from Roman oppression. However, Jesus came as a different kind of king, one who would bring peace to their hearts and souls. **Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy:** The events of this passage were prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on a donkey was foretold in Zechariah 9:9, and the people’s shouts of “Hosanna!” were taken from Psalm 118:25-26.

31st March, 2024 – EASTER SUNDAY
The Resurrection of the Lord

1st Reading: Acts 10:34A, 37-43
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6B-8
Alleluia: 1 Corinthians 5:7B-8A
Gospel: John 20:1-9

Homily Theme: Jesus Christ Resurrects from the Dead, Let Us Celebrate the Risen Lord.

Let us Pray, Dear Lord, on this joyous Easter, I pray that you will help me to hold on to your resurrection and find strength in it. May you transform every burden and difficulty in my life into a source of joy, as only you can. Please fill my heart with your joy and let it guide me through all the challenges I may face. Amen.

Verse of the Day Reflection: The Exsultet is a hymn sung at the beginning of Mass in darkness during the Easter Vigil, with the church only lit by candles. It celebrates Christ’s victory over sin and death, and includes a particularly beautiful part expressing joy which states: What a truly necessary sin Adam committed, which has been entirely destroyed by the Death of Christ! How fortunate was that transgression which earned for us such an immense and magnificent Redeemer! This statement may seem unusual at first because it presents the idea that Adam’s sin, which brought about the fall of humanity, was necessary and even something to be happy about. However, the statement goes on to clarify that this sin, despite being the cause of so much suffering, ultimately led to the coming of Christ and his redemptive sacrifice, which is seen as a great good. The reason Easter is significant is because God, through His infinite wisdom and love, transformed sin and its result (death) into a way to save the world. This means that God turned the very things that separated humanity from Him into the means to bring us closer to Him. While it may be difficult to fully grasp, it is worth reflecting on the idea that without Adam’s sin, there would be no need for Jesus Christ to come into the world. During Easter, it is important to hold fast to our risen Lord and to embrace the reality of His resurrection. We should strive to remain connected to Jesus who is alive and active, and to the transformative power of His resurrection. There are numerous ways to maintain this connection. One approach is to find joy in all aspects of our lives, even in the midst of adversity. Just as Christ persevered and ultimately emerged victorious, we too can find hope and joy in the power of His resurrection. It is God’s desire for us to experience the joy of Easter in our lives, and to begin living in that joy even now. So, let us embrace the Easter season with open hearts and minds, and rejoice in the triumph of Jesus over sin and death.

Happy Easter!

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.





KNOWING THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW IN CONTEXT

By Rev. Fr. Gabou Secka

What is the place of Mt 4:1-11 in the Gospel of Matthew? What are the relevant observations as we seek to establish consistency between the part and the whole? The structure of the Gospel helps us to situate our text aptly. One incontestable fact about the structure of the Gospel of Matthew is this: the Gospel's narrative portions follow a rough chronological sequence – birth, baptism, ministry in Galilee, journey to Jerusalem, passion, death and resurrection, and the final post-resurrection scene in Galilee – and into this sequence large sections of teaching material have regularly been inserted. In the Pentateuchal five-book theory/structure, the chiasmic outline, and the traditional three-category structural division of the Gospel, Mt 4:1-11 emerges as a bridge between the baptism of Jesus, on one hand and the beginning of his public ministry, on the other hand. But more than a bridge, it finds consistency with the introduction as well as the main body of the Gospel.

How does our pericope relate to its immediate context: the baptism of Jesus (3:13b-17) which precedes it, on the one hand, and the beginning of the Galilean ministry (4:12-25) which succeeds, it on the other hand? The literary structure reveals that within a narrative frame (vv.1-2 and v.11) we have a narrative with three parts. “Spirit” (v.1) and “Son of God” (vv.3 and 6) provide the connection with the preceding pericope. This is the same “Spirit,” and the identical “Son” addressed by God, at the baptism of Jesus.

There is probably a chronological gap between vv. 11 and 12 which Matthew made no attempt to fill. John's ministry continues, but no role is ascribed to Jesus for this period. More details about John's arrest (and subsequent execution) are held back until 14:1–12. In Matthew's schematization Jesus has already moved on from John, so one cannot readily fill the gap with continued involvement with the Baptist. Further private preparation for his coming role probably provides the most satisfactory imaginative fit, but since verse 12 is designed to provide closure by functioning as the other bracket to 3:13, it is probably best not to fill the gap. Jesus' withdrawal in v. 12 is clearly a getting away from the area in which John had been operating. The framework of arrival and departure is a further small encouragement to read 3:13–17 and 4:1–11

(12) closely together. Despite the prudent withdrawal it will soon be evident that there has been a

Our pericope also finds synchronicity with the larger context within which it is situated, that is, the entire Gospel of Matthew and the rest of Sacred Scriptures. There are certain techniques proper to an oral style of composition that have been identified in Matthew's Gospel. Through the use of these techniques Matthew brings together the materials he had at hand into a unified and artistic whole. These same techniques are also employed by scholars to illustrate the connections and links between our pericope and the rest of Christian Scriptures. One such technique which this study employs to demonstrate the relationship between our text and its remote context is the one identified by C. Lohr as the technique of “foreshadowing” and “retrospection.” The employment of this technique is also noted by B. Przybylski in his writings: “Matthew not only uses the technique of foreshadowing in this limited way but in a major way ... Matthew 3:13-4:11 is a single unit which is used to forecast what is to come.”

In the “foreshadowing” aspect of this technique a text is identified as alluding to an event yet to come. Lohr explains the use of this literary device in the three temptations of Jesus. The first temptation (4:2-4) foreshadows the narratives of the feeding of the five thousand (14:13-21) and the feeding of the four thousand (15:32-39). Since Jesus refused to perform the miracle of the bread for personal gain in the story of the temptations, the possibility is left open that he may perform such a miracle for other reasons. He may yet show that he is the Son of God. The unfulfilled temptation of Jesus to satisfy his hunger through the miracle of turning stones into bread alludes to and prepares the reader for the realized miracles of the multiplication of loaves in the two feeding narratives.

The account of the second temptation (4:5-7) foreshadows the transfiguration narrative (17:1-13). Mt 17:1-13 shows that through the intervention of God and not the devil, the messianic glory of Jesus is exhibited. Accordingly, that voice from the cloud saying: “this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (17:5) gives the answer to the devil's taunt in Mt 4:6: “if you are the Son of God.” Conclusively, there is a

thematic foreshadowing from 4:5-7 to 17:1-13. Both texts support the christological interpretation of our pericope since they deal with a messianic epiphany. But they also support the anthropological dimension: man is not directed to himself but to God. The glory of self-seeking is insignificant.

In the same way the third temptation (4:8-10) foreshadows the conclusion of the Gospel (Mt 28:16-20). All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Jesus by the Father (28:18). The rejection-of-power event of the third temptation foreshadows and prepares the reader for the confirmation of power and authority given to Jesus by God at the end of his public ministry.

Retrospection is defined as a technique by which the later stages of a narrative are related to what has gone before. This aspect of the technique seeks to demonstrate how the text under study is related to other texts and narratives to be found in its remote context, with particular references to antecedent narratives.

A. Farrer and J. Jeremias intimate that Jesus' fast of forty days and nights (4:2) is retrospective of Moses' which also lasted for "forty days and forty nights" (Deut 9:9,18); hence, a Moses-Christ typology.

Interestingly, Moses' fasting was associated with a mountain setting (e.g. Deut 9:9); he also received a revelation from God on a mountain (Ex 24:1,12). This mountain setting was therefore closely associated with the Mosaic tradition. The redactional insertion of "mountain" in Mt 4: 8 should be understood within the above context.

Then there are those who elicit a portrait of Jesus as the new Israel. D. Stanley and others observe marked similarities between Satan's three tests of Jesus and God's triple trial of Israel in the desert, indicating that Jesus' "forty days and forty nights" more obviously serves as a reminder of Israel's "forty years" of privation and testing.

Structurally, Mt 4:1-11 is generally analyzed in this fashion:

- Introduction (4:1-2)
- The first temptation (4:3-4)
- The second temptation (4:5-7)
- The third temptation (4:8-10)
- Conclusion (4:11)

Some features of this text and its structure are worthy of note:

These three tests/temptations (vv. 3,6,9) fall in one and the same literary scheme: a question-and-answer confrontation wherein the tempter provokes Jesus. They are ordered to provoke the mission of Jesus:

To change stones into bread (v. 3) – Jesus as miracle worker.

To throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple and be saved from the fall by angels of God (v. 6) – Jesus as the glorious "Son of God."

To prostrate himself and adore the tempter so that all the kingdoms of the world may be given him (vv. 8-9) – Jesus as the all-powerful "Son of God" and universal king.

This could also be labeled a "scriptural confrontation" since both Jesus and the tempter make use of OT scriptures in support of their argument.

The triads pervade the text to an extent that you cannot miss or ignore them:

- Three temptations from the tempter
- Three responses from Jesus
- Three settings and three different moments or times
- Three OT quotes from Jesus (vv. 4,7,10)

A triple use of to,te, an important adverb in this text While some have interpreted this proliferation of the use of the number three in relation to Jesus' three-day

descent into the nether world and the defeat of Satan and death in the passion narratives (chapters 26-28), others see in it perfection – of Jesus and of the Word of the Scriptures which he quotes and represents

(a) The phrase "eiv ui`o.j ei= tou/ qeou/" (vv. 3,6).

(b) The two-time use of the verb paralamba,nw to report Jesus' movement to the scenes of the second and third temptations.

Another literary point of note is the change in time and place. The reader is transported from the "time" and "place" of the baptism to a new "time" and to a new "place." The ven de. tai/j h`me,raij evkei,naij (in those days) of 3:1 which denotes the "time" of the baptism becomes to,te (then) in 4:1, indicating both a change in period and a progression from one moment of narrative to another. Also, from the Jordan river (3:13), the scene of the baptism, the reader is taken to the desert, the scene of the first temptation.

The Greek "to,te" is an adverb of time. Found at the beginning of the narrative (4:1), "to,te" surfaces again in 4:5 and 4:11; this adverb serves as an important indicator in our text, appearing at the beginning of each of the divisions within the literary structure: at the introduction and first temptation when taken together, at the beginning of the second temptation, and finally at the beginning of the conclusion. The adverb is Matthew's "favorite connective," used as joints to link segments of the text, and to demonstrate internal fluidity. At the beginning of the third temptation, "to,te" is replaced by another adverb of time, "pa,lin," which conveys a similar meaning of "again" or "accordingly." The use of these adverbs is therefore a literary device which serves as a marker for the different times and changes in settings associated with the different temptations, and equally shows the progressivity of Jesus' trials.

The adverbial link also makes connection with what immediately succeeds our pericope. This very short passage (4:12-17) begins Jesus' public ministry and verse 17 closes the interwoven tapestry with the adverbial phrase "avpo, to,te" (4:17), which is translated as "from then" or "from that time." It introduces the period and marks the moment of the very first words of Jesus at the onset of his public ministry: "metanoiei/te\ h;ggiken ga.r h` basilei,a tw/n ouvranw/n" "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Moreover, the message that Jesus begins to preach is an exact parallel to the message of John the Baptist in 3:2. We therefore see, intriguingly, a link between the ministries of Jesus and John, intricately woven in this segment of Matthew's narrative.

From the geographical dynamics of our text, three locations emerge: (a) "wilderness" (v.1), (b) "the pinnacle of the temple" (v.5), and (c) "a very high mountain" (v.8). Are these places real? May we put them in a historical and geographical context? Scholars like W. Beare argue that the very high mountain from which all the kingdoms of the world can be exposed to view is not to be found in Palestine or anywhere on earth. The temple exists, of course, but are we to suppose that Jesus is magically carried about, transported by Satan, first to the angle of the temple in Jerusalem, and then to a very high mountain? Beare intimates that the wilderness is probably no more to be taken literally than the mountain peak, the pinnacle of the temple, and the transportation from place to place. He concludes by saying that "it would be absurd to think of the discussion between Jesus and the devil as the record of an actual conversation, begun in the wilderness, continued on a pinnacle of the temple, and finished on a mountain top." Accordingly, N. Taylor opines:

“Irrespective of how these may be reflected in the Temptation Narrative, this story at the commencement of Jesus’ ministry ... is the literary creation of church tradition, and is shaped more by christology and Christian experience than by historical reminiscence. The canonical temptations are paradigmatic rather than biographical.”

It is my position that while the geographical and historical details of the temptations of Jesus is a point for consideration, the veracity of the embedded message of this pericope must not depend on them completely. Difficulties in ascertaining these details do not in any way reduce the quality of the revealed word of God contained therein. Tradition has always been a source of faith material.

The story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness appears in all three synoptic Gospels (Mk 1:12-13; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13), and the account of Mk is noted for its brevity and harshness. It is believed that Matthew combined Mk’s account, from which he derived mu.the account given in Q.

They are agreed that:

A. Chronologically, Jesus’ testing followed immediately after his baptism. This is expressed by two adverbs of time and one conjunction, used at the very beginning of the narratives. Mk uses the adverb *euwqu,j* which is translated as “immediately,” “straightaway” (1:12); Mt uses *to,te* (4:1); and Lk uses a conjunction, *de,,* which is translated as “then,” “now” (4:1).

B. The “Spirit” was responsible for Jesus’ move into the wilderness (Mk 1:12; Mt 4:1; Lk 4:1).

C. Jesus was “tempted” by “Satan” or the “devil” (Mk 1:13; Mt 4:1; Lk 4:2).

D. The opening setting is the “wilderness” (Mk 1:12; Mt 4:1; Lk 4:2).

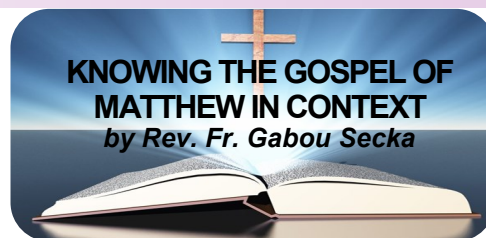
E. Jesus spent “forty days” in the wilderness (Mk 1:13; Mt 4:2; Lk 4:2).

F. Jesus emerged victorious from the wilderness temptations, a report that is seen more clearly in

There are some very clear contrasts between the synoptic Gospels. The first contrast is taken from the first sentence of each version. Who is the subject? In Mt and Lk the subject is Jesus, even though led by the Spirit. Mk does not mention the name “Jesus” at all. Rather, the Spirit is the subject. Contrastively, while in Lk Jesus is in partnership with the Spirit, in Mk he is having something done to him (cf. Mk 1:12; Lk 4:1). Mt has a middle position between Mk and Lk (cf. Mt 4:1).

The second contrast can be captured in this question: “led” (Mt 4:1; Lk 4:1) or “driven” (Mk 1:12)? This contrast is accentuated by Mk’s choice of verb, *evkba,llei* which is present indicative active and third person singular of the verb *evkba,llw*, which means “to drive out,” “to expel,” “to eject.” The mood of the verb is the historical present. Hence, in Mk, the Spirit “drove” or “ejected” Jesus into the wilderness. Mt and Lk, on the other hand, use the verbs *avna,gw* (Mt 4:1) and *a;gw* (Lk 4:1), both of them meaning “to lead up” or “to lead.” Hence, in Mt and Lk Jesus “was led” into the wilderness by the Spirit. When we consider the intimacy expressed earlier between Jesus and the Spirit at his baptism in all three narratives, Mk’s choice of verb at the beginning of the temptation narrative seems to introduce a different perspective, and is in strong contrast with the context.

The third contrast is related to the “forty days” report of Jesus’ stay in the wilderness (Mk 1:13; Mt 4:2; Lk 4:2); Mt adds “forty nights” (Mt 4:2). Both Mt and Lk report that



Jesus did not eat during those “forty days.” Mt uses the word “fasted” (4:2) and Lk’s equivalent is “he ate nothing” (4:2) – a sure reference to fasting. In Mk, however, the period is solely linked to the duration of Jesus’ stay in the wilderness. The difference in emphasis helps the reader of Mt and Lk to focus on Jesus’ spirituality, while the focus of the reader of Mk is Jesus’ perseverance through exposure in an unfriendly environment. Moreover, Mk and Lk seem to agree that Jesus’ temptation happened concomitantly with his forty-day fast. Matthew’s Gospel clearly puts the temptation after the period of fasting (4:2-3).

The words used to designate Jesus’ adversary is another point of contrast. Mt and Lk use the word *dia,boloj* (Mt 4:1,5,8,11; Lk 4:2,3,6,13); Mk (and again Mt) use the word *sata,n* (Mk 1:13; Mt 4:10); and, finally, the substantiated participle, *peira,zwn*, is used exclusively in Mt 4:3. The contrast here is purely semantic since the meanings of these words refer to the same diabolic adversary.

If Matthew and Luke actually used Mk as a source, then we have to say that they saw no significance in reporting Mk’s “wild beasts,” (1:13). This could also mean that they had their own sources for the temptation narratives which did not include animals.

In Mt and Mk there is the presence of “angels” at the end of Jesus’ temptations, and the purpose of their presence is stated (Mt 4:11; 1:13). Lk has no account of these angels. Finally, it is noteworthy that only Mt states that Jesus went into the wilderness with the express purpose of challenging Satan, as it were, on his own grounds. The use of the verb *peirasqh,nai*, the infinitive of purpose, is unique to Mt.

There is a perceived relativity between Mt and Lk. They are longer narratives which present us with the prospect of a detailed critique; also, they are found to be in more related forms.

The terms of the debate between Jesus and Satan are virtually the same in the two versions, though the order is changed for the second and third temptations. It is generally assumed that Luke reversed Mt’s order to make Jerusalem the place of the climatic test in accord with the temple theme of Lk-Acts. But Donaldson argues that Mt’s sequence is not necessarily original. In fact, he suggests that a natural progression in a Palestinian setting would be desert-mountain-temple, considering the importance of the temple. Thus, Lk’s most dramatic temptation has in view divine aid for the Son of God in the capital city. All the same, Mt’s sequence has a significance of its own. Several scholars contend that its arrangement produces in reverse order Jesus’ quotations of Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, 13, so that the first Gospel is seen to follow the sequence of events in Exodus: the provision of manna in the wilderness (Ex 16), the testing at Massah (Ex 17), and the worship of the golden calf (Ex 32). In Mt there is also an upward spatial progression: wilderness - pinnacle of the temple - a very high mountain. This progression corresponds to the dramatic tension that reaches a climax in the third temptation. Both narratives have more points of convergence than divergence.