



# The Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

*Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter*

**COVER STORY**

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**HER EXCELLENCY DR. FATOU BENSOU DA  
PRESENTED HER LETTERS OF CREDENCE TO  
HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS**



**EDITORIAL**

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**GENEROSITY AND  
MEANNESS**

**EPISCOPAL  
CONSECRATION OF THE  
BISHOP OF MAKENI DIOCESE**

**MOST. REV. DR.  
BOB JOHN H.  
KOROMA**

13TH MAY 2023

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# DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER

## *Our Mission and Vision*

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

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

**D**iocese 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

# Generosity and Meanness

**T**here's a story in Buddhist about a previous life of Shariputra, when he was approached by a Brahmin, who asked him for his eye. Shariputra dug out his left eye and gave it to the Brahmin. The Brahmin said, no, he needed the right eye. Shariputra just thought, I should have asked first. He then dug out his other eye and gave it to the Brahmin. The Brahmin took it, smelled it and threw it on the ground saying it was smelly. Shariputra didn't get mad, but concluded that saving others was hard, and that he would just concentrate on his own awakening, backsliding into the Hinayana.

We need to be reminded about a similar trending reality in our society, and to be invited to act rightly and accordingly. It is the truth about the generosity of a section of our Gambian society, and the attendant reciprocation with meanness, by some of us. What is generosity? Generosity amounts to sharing life's gifts. It has wide arms. Although generosity does not necessarily beget generosity, it does spread goodwill, redistribute advantages, and create openings for change for the better. We could not have survived without the generosity of spirit, open-hearted sharing, and true giving of some people or group.

In fact, the origin, of the word generosity is from the Latin word meaning of noble birth. 'True generosity is the quality of giving good things to others, freely and open-heartedly. Generosity is both an individual and a social act. When we are generous, we are contributing in some way to others. The act of generosity contributes to a stronger social network that may be small and near, or distant and large. Generosity is, therefore, a disposition to do well towards others, and it takes more time and effort than a polite-thank you', which is an expression of gratitude it may at times receive.

Beyond evangelization, the central essence of Christianity or the Church in Gambian society, since its advent about 300 years ago, is to play a valued role in our communities; an act of generosity to help strengthen our communities and help emancipate them from the erstwhile darkness to become stronger. Yet, as many times as possible, we as a people have failed to show gratitude for such preferential treatment from the Church. We have severally failed to give this great Benefactor (the Church) the response it deserves. We should all be aware, and always be reminded, of the immense loving care the Church has shown towards our society for centuries, up to the present day. Such a unique "preferential treatment" demands an adequate response; a response that has sometimes been given in the manner of abuse and ingratitude.

All of us, in fact, both leaders of this nation and individual citizens, have been the beneficiaries of the Church's generous love and comfort. All of us in this nation are like the Church's vineyard. All of us are stewards, for whom the Church has done so much: people to whom it has entrusted a lot, and from whom it expects abundant gratitude. The Church has, directly or indirectly, bequeathed something to each and every one of us in The Gambia. And yet, where are we now? How have we

responded to the Church's generous and gratuitous magnanimity towards us as a nation, as a community and as individuals? Is it with gratitude or meanness?

What is meanness? It is the first cousin of ingratitude! Today, the benevolent Church in The Gambia is under siege. In recent times, the attack and unspeakable violence against the Catholic Church in Bakau on this Easter Sunday; the dragging of Christian schools to court by some individuals living on the magnanimity of the Church and its institutions and the current senseless and vulgar belligerence against Christianity in this our country, by most of whom were groomed in Catholic educational institutions, smacks of outright meanness. It amounts to, one biting the finger that feeds him or her.

These acts depict meanness as reward for the Church's timeless generosity towards Gambians. It amounts to an act of outright primitiveness in a modern world, that anchors hugely on give and take. and thrives largely on the benefactor-beneficiary connection. It is a behavior that is reminiscent of the manner of life of the barbarians of the stone-age. It is grossly uncivilized.

It should be learned by all in The Gambia that, we will be diminished as a society without the generosity of the Church, and this ought to be appreciated and expressed by everyone, through the sheer act of gratitude rather than a reciprocation through meanness and a demeaning belligerence. As a matter of fact, in valuing both gratitude and generosity, it is clear that the gratitude which Christianity expects from Gambians is relatively easy and simple, but generosity, which Christianity doles out to the society, is one that takes work. It is more demanding and active. The Christian generosity enhances the wellbeing of our society. We should always be grateful to be on the receiving end of someone's goodwill, gift or extra effort. From the leaders of this nation to the least person, there is absolutely no person that has not benefitted from the generosity and magnanimity of the Christians!

However, if you use resources on others who cannot be thankful, you don't actually improve their lives. It would seem to be unwise to spend precious resources on such a person or community. From a behavioral perspective, it is pointless to reward poor behavior. If a dog bites you and you give it a treat, it learns nothing. If you know a person to be thankless, why perpetuate or enable that mindset to continue? It is better to have them struggle and figure it out on their own, until they see the effort needed and feel thankful to be the recipient of generosity.

Ungrateful people are perhaps those most in need of generosity, and the law of karma cum natural justice or retribution relates that, when once you bite the finger that feeds you, for eternity, you will never receive any kind gesture, either from the human or divine domains, unless you make the necessary amendments! This is why ingratitude is a vice. If it is by a nation, it is a national vice, and if it is by an individual, it is a personal vice. Ingratitude is more fatal if it is practised at the national level, because that nation stands to lose all its benevolent friends across the globe.

## COVER STORY

# HER EXCELLENCY DR. FATOU BENSOU DA PRESENTED HER LETTERS OF CREDENCE TO HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS



*Saturday 13th of May 2023*

**H**er Excellency Dr. Fatou Bensouda presented Her Letters of Credence to His Holiness Pope Francis at the Vatican Apostolic Palace, accrediting her as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of The Gambia to The Holy See, with residence in London.

Following the presentation of her Letters, Her Excellency the Ambassador conveyed warm greetings and best wishes from His Excellency President Adama Barrow and the people of the Republic of The Gambia to His Holiness Pope Francis. The Ambassador further stressed

The Gambia's readiness and desire to deepen ties of cooperation with The Holy See.

The Holy Pope welcomed the Ambassador and conveyed his greetings to His Excellency President Adama Barrow, assured Her Excellency the Ambassador of remembrance in his prayers for the President of the Republic, as he carries out his service to the Gambian people.

The Pope concluded by stressing that The Holy See, in conformity with its nature and particular mission, strives to protect the inviolable dignity of each person, promote the common good, and foster human fraternity amongst all peoples.

# The Diocese of Makeni, Sierra Leone has a new Bishop

**T**he representative of the Holy Father in Sierra Leone has advised the new Bishop of the country's Catholic Diocese of Makeni to view his Episcopal consecration as a humble service to the people of God and not a call to "honor."

In his homily during the Episcopal Ordination of Mons. Bob John Hassan Koroma, Archbishop Walter Erbi also urged the new Bishop to be "a faithful servant, a faithful steward, moderator and guardian of the mysteries of Christ."

"Consider that you are chosen from among men and appointed on their behalf for those things that pertain to God," Archbishop Erbi said during the Saturday, May 13 event, adding, "The title of Bishop is one of service, not of honor, and therefore, a Bishop should strive to benefit others rather than Lord it over them."

The Apostolic Nuncio in Sierra Leone, who also represents the Holy Father in Liberia and The Gambia, also urged the new Bishop to be "a father to this Church, the Church of God in Makeni."

"You are asked now to share with your Church the joy of having been blessed with the gift of paternity for her, and with fatherly care, to serve her and all her children," the Italian-born 55-year-old Archbishop said.

He encouraged the new Sierra Leonean Bishop to "preach the word in season and out of season, reprove with all patience and sound teachings as you pray and offer sacrifice for the people committed to your care."

"Devote yourself wholeheartedly to seeking every kind of grace for them, from the fullness of Christ's holiness," Archbishop Erbi said.

He continued, "In the Church, you be a faithful servant, a faithful steward, moderator and guardian of the mysteries of Christ. Since you are chosen by the Father to rule over His family, be mindful always of the Good Shepherd who



knows His sheep and is known by them and who did not hesitate to lay down His life for them."

"With the charity of a father and brother, love all whom God places in your care, especially the Priests and Deacons who are your co-workers in the Ministry of Christ, but also the poor and the weak, immigrants and strangers," the representative of the Holy Father in Sierra Leone said.

Msgr. Bob John Hassan Koroma was born on 17 November, 1971 in Kamabai, Sierra Leone.

He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Makeni on 25 April, 1999.

He holds a licentiate in sacred scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, and a doctorate in biblical theology from the Pontifical Urban University of Rome.

He has held the following offices: collaborator with Vatican Radio; professor of sacred scripture and dean of studies in Saint Paul's Major Seminary in Freetown (2008-2014); collaborator at *Saint Catherine of Siena* and *Little Compton and Saint Madeleine* in Tiverton, United States of America (2005-2013); parish priest of *Immaculate Conception* in Magburaka and professor at the diocesan University of Makeni (2015); since 2015, vicar general of the diocese of Makeni and, since 2016, administrator of the Cathedral.

## Diocese of Makeni

The Diocese of Makeni is a diocese in the Ecclesiastical province of Freetown, Sierra Leone. There are approximately 100,000 Catholics in the Diocese, representing approximately four percent of the total population.

## The Pope's Prayer Intentions 2023

### June - For the abolition of torture

We pray that the international community may commit in a concrete way to ensuring the abolition of torture and guarantee support to victims and their families.

### July - For a Eucharistic life

We pray that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters.





# The Veil Issue In The Gambia

The Veil Civil Suit in The Gambia initiated by 'Concerned Citizens' came as a surprise to many, but never the less, does not surprise Gambians who are versed with their disturbing agenda. At this stage of Gambian development, it would have been thought that 'Concerned Citizens', rather than striving for the wearing of veils in schools, should have spent time and energy to upgrade standards of education, provision of appropriate school learning materials, devising ways to improve on school transportation, improving on school performance and examination results. These would have been most ideal tenets for contest by an honest and concerned citizen.

It is apparent that the veil issue harmonizes well with the attempt to pursue the 'Islamic State' agenda started under ex-President Jammeh on his invitation of the controversial preacher, Zakir Naik, and the illegal declaration of The Gambia an Islamic State in breach of the Constitution (*Dec. 2015 Brufut Declaration of The Gambia as an Islamic State*). This was followed by lobbyists, during the consultation process of the failed 2020 Draft Constitution, seeking that non-Muslim parties be subjected to the jurisdiction of the Sharia in total disregard for the religious rights of Christians, and also the refusal to entrench 'Clause 10' of the same draft constitution, leaving an open door for subsequent erosion of all other sources of Gambian law but Shariah. All these are constantly being reinforced by numerous pronouncements provocatively emphasizing that The Gambia is a Muslim majority and therefore a 'Muslim country'. This statement is erroneously premised on personal conviction that The Gambia is an 'Islamic State'.

Dictatorship of the majority could have happened the world-over except in little Gambia. Despite its small population, The Gambia being the tiniest has equal voting rights at the United Nations (UN), in West Africa and equal membership in the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS). The Gambia rightfully challenged the Myanmar Government's mistreatment of the Rohingya minority ethnic group at the International Court of Justice. The notion of dictatorship of the majority, therefore, should have never been conceived in The Gambia.

These attitudes are similar in intent to the video recording aired on GTTV and circulated on social

media, in which the Alkalo of Babylon village (*July 2021*) publicly declared having denied, and would continue to deny the resident Christian community building a place of worship (*i.e. church*) and would not allocate them land for such a purpose.

Then followed the attack on two churches: The Grace of God Ministry, (*Tallinding 7th April, 2023*) and Star of the Sea Church (*Bakau 9th April, 2023*).

Some Muslims in The Gambia give Christian names to their children and some Christians too give Muslim names to their children. There are intermarriages and deep family ties. These are partly responsible for the mutual understanding and respect for each other. This, however, is being eroded and there is strong belief that this is due to intruders who have infiltrated our society recently and who have no understanding of the dynamics that kept communities tightly together. All who live in the country, particularly in Greater Banjul, must be aware and vigilant of such infiltration into society, and be ready to repel them by prayer and understanding, as we owe it to ourselves and future generations to maintain our traditional beliefs, ways of life and patriotism.

There is need to identify and isolate both homegrown and foreign-based extremist ideology. The Gambia can and should learn from what has been happening in Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria and organizations like Al Qa'ada, Al Shabab and Boko Haram. It is **One Gambia** that we inherited from our parents and grandparents. We should cherish what we have and firmly believe in it. The Gambia can be a wonderful place to live in. May we remain steadfast and filled with love for our country and its people.



## A QUESTION MANY ASK

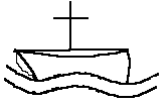
### I know I'm supposed to witness for Christ, but how can I do so?

There are, probably, more times than you realise when you can speak plainly about what you believe. But you are right that, on many occasions, making reference to religion won't help you or the Church. You do, however, have one clear duty: that is, to witness by the way you live.

If you always speak the truth, behave honourably, and try to be generous and helpful to others, you're living a

Christian life. And it's likely that some of your friends, even if you don't often refer directly to your faith, will attribute your behaviour to the Christian religion you profess.

Pope Benedict put it like this: 'A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God, and when it is better to say nothing and let love alone speak. He knows that God's presence is felt at the very time when the only thing we do is to love.' (Pope Benedict's first encyclical letter, *Deus caritas est*)



# THE GAMBIA CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

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**TREASURER: *Rev. Fr. John H. Fullah***

**GENERAL SECRETARY:**  
***Rev. Fr. Moses Drammeh***

## PRESS RELEASE FROM THE GAMBIA CHRISTIAN COUNCIL (GCC)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Fellow Gambians and all those residing in The Gambia.

Greetings in the name of our Risen and victorious Lord, Jesus Christ. We continue to shout Alleluia, Alleluia especially in our beloved nation.

The Bishops and Other Members of The Gambia Christian Council (GCC) are aware of recent religious tensions triggered by the veil issue in our faith-based schools and other educational institutions and the varied and divisive rhetoric expressed about the Christian faith. We appreciate the maturity, patience and understanding demonstrated during this period and urge you to continue praying in accordance with 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 16 to 22.

The Gambia Christian Council commends the leadership demonstrated by the Minister of Religious Affairs and the members of the National Security Council in initiating an inter religious dialogue and advocating for a toning down of the rhetoric of certain actors who are commenting on behalf of their communities of faith.

The Christian Council is also aware of derogatory, unhealthy, and ill informed-pronouncements made by Mr. Momodou Sabally, the campaign manager of one of the leading political parties in our nation. These may be his personal views or those of his party. We expect the national executive of his party to dissociate the party from such unacceptable views. Consequently, we condemn in no uncertain terms those unscrupulous individuals' derogatory comments, made in order to capitalize on this issue to score points they feel would favour their affiliations, political or religious and in the process drive a

wedge between our communities who have lived in peace and harmony for centuries.

We are of the conviction that all good and responsible people living in The Gambia embrace peace, mutual tolerance and unity rather than the contrary. We stand consistent with our heritage and Jesus' message of Justice, Peace and Truth.

Our faith-based schools owned by the Churches, as well as other educational institutions, have been taken to court. **We have responded to the summons and are determined to defend the claim robustly and effectively to a logical and legal conclusion based on the Law and our Christian values, rooted in our Lord Jesus Christ.**

We cannot continue to push this and other matters under the carpet. We do not want a resurgence of such issues jeopardizing our quest for national development and brighter future for The Gambia.

Finally, we encourage everyone in The Gambia to continue nurturing the Peace and cohesiveness we are known for in our beloved country.

**FOR THE GAMBIA OUR HOME LAND  
 WE STRIVE AND WORK AND PRAY  
 THAT ALL MAY LIVE IN UNITY  
 FREEDOM AND PEACE EACH DAY.**

God bless the Republic of The Gambia. God bless you all.

**DATED: 10<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023**

*Congratulations*  
 ON YOUR  
 ANNIVERSARY  
 OF PRIESTHOOD



**During June and July, the following priests serving in the Diocese would celebrate the anniversaries of their priestly ordination:**

23rd June, 2001	-	Fr. Gabriel Secka
5th July, 1964	-	Fr. John Sharpe CSSp
8th July, 2005	-	Fr. Michael Gomez CSSp
July 2005	-	Fr. Peter Jammeh CSSp
15th July, 2000	-	Fr. Peter Steven Lopez

*Your faithful ministry to the people of God is inspiring. May you be blessed with health and happiness all the days of your life.*



## Rebranding The Gambia Using A Strategic Diplomatic Approach

**The aspirations of many nations all over the world (The Gambia inclusive) is to grow, progress and excel in all the fields of human endeavor, and in leaps and bound. Many nations of the world desire the exemplary growth in the manner of Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, the Rwandan African development venture, as well as many other very advanced nations on the world. Hence, the drive for greatness and excellence by many nations of the world, The Gambia inclusive.**

For each of these nations that becomes great, it is a product of strategic planning and very hard work and resilience, as part of the component factors. It is also a combination of factors such as leadership vision, economic influence, knowledge, political influence, strong international alliances and strong military power, great magnanimity, great vision and great compassion for the citizenry. So, every nation that becomes great had been forged in vision, actualized by credible leadership and sustained by uncommon resilience, for their own good and for world peace, harmony and happiness in broader perspective. Thus, the continued existence and relevance of The Gambia is a clear indication that the country is moving towards positive pedestals of growth and development.

The journey of development of The Gambia, from the period of evolution in the late 15th century till date has been an undulating political topsy turvy, with ups and downs and hopes and disappointments, yet, it continues to shoulder on. It started with the Portuguese, continued with the arrival of Europeans and their departures, paving ways for Gambians. Its history is closely tied to that of neighbouring Senegal, since it was only in the late 19th century that a distinction was made between Senegal and The Gambia; until that time the region is often referred to as Senegambia. In 1900 Britain imposed indirect rule on the interior, or protectorate (established in 1894), dividing it into 35 chiefdoms, each with its own chief. The real power was concentrated in the British governor and his staff at Bathurst until The Gambia became a republic on April 24, 1970. Consequently, the first president, Sir Dawda Jawara, head of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), was returned in all elections after 1972. He was in power for almost three decades (1965-1994), where the people enjoyed a thriving democracy, at a time when countries in West Africa were experiencing coups.

Jawara's leadership drove the Gambia development under serious economic problems, in spite of the series of austerity measures and reforms that was put in place to ensure more disciplined fiscal and monetary policy. Bad harvests and falling peanut prices further compounded the harsh economic plight of its people, to the advancement of the opposition parties and the first bloodless coup by group of young army officers led by Capt. (later Col.) Yahya Jammeh in July 1994, justifying it by citing the corruption and mismanagement of Jawara and the PPP. Jammeh's administration sought to reposition The Gambia for growth and greatness, but was encumbered by cases of maladministration, iron-fisted rule, religion hegemony, corruption and toxic international relations with many

other countries of the world. Thus, contributing to foist a negative global perception on the Gambia. The Gambia enters its darkest chapter of history under Jammeh's brutality. **You can never hide from your past but you can redress the actions and inactions of the past.** The damages caused by the Jammeh leadership to the Gambia and the need to reposition the country to overcome it, remain the key motivation toward rebranding of the country. For that is the surest ways to renew the investment confidence of the global community in the country and signal a new dawn in her wellness and economy. Adama Barrow hopeful governance, was supported to send Jammeh out of power and stop the mockery which his leadership style has invited upon the Gambia Barrow was declared the winner of the December 1 election, taking about 46 percent of the vote; Jammeh came in second, with about 37 percent. Even more surprising was Jammeh's gracious concession to Barrow before taking the inglorious ways of past sit tight African leader, as he vehemently refused to cede power to Barrow.

On January 19 Jammeh still refused to step down, and Barrow was sworn in as president in neighbouring Senegal. Later that day, with Jammeh still refusing to hand over power to Barrow, ECOWAS troops moved across the border into The Gambia. Their advance was halted before reaching Jammeh in order to allow one last attempt by mediators to convince him to change his mind. They were successful: Jammeh agreed to step down and left the country late on January 21. Barrow returned to The Gambia on January 26, 2017, and was greeted with crowds of cheering supporters. After 22 years of fragmented leadership and brutal dictatorship, Gambia voted for democracy. Now back home and with Jammeh out of the country, Barrow's focus was on the daunting tasks of implementing the democratic reforms promised during his campaign as well as restoring political stability and working to improve the country's economy, this efforts were geared towards breathing a new life in to the nation and a practical steps of pragmatic rebranding.

Consequently, that December, two Acts passed by the National Assembly supported some of those goals. He established the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC), which was mandated to compile a record of the human rights abuses that had occurred under Jammeh's rule and to promote healing and reconciliation. The other act created the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), which was tasked with reviewing the current constitution, from 1997, and drafting a new one; members were appointed to the commission and began work the next year. This briefly summarizes the Gambia evolution from devastating dictatorship to democracy and a very promising future and hope. The leadership impacts and achievements of the successive leadership in the Gambia was done with the purpose of actually repositioning it for development and greatness, thus, each leader contributes his quota to national development in his own unique ways. The long duration of leadership of Yahya Jammeh, provided him with the grace to have made greater impacts than Jawara, but less likely impact Adama



Barrow, for he had done much in the relatively short term in power and may be better than Jammeh in the long run. Their (past leaders) impacts had been in the areas of reform and development of infrastructure and the economy.

This is more obvious under the leadership of Adama Barrow, with his robust reforms and pragmatic developments, with manifestation in the economy of The Gambia. For instance, in 2022, the economic growth of the Gambia reached 4.3%, driving improved agriculture production due to a relatively good rainy season, increased government consumption, and high infrastructure spending driven by the preparation for the Organization for the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) conference. Though there was a case of increase in poverty from 18.4% in 2021, to 20.3% in 2022 using the international poverty line of \$2.15 (in 2017 PPPs), due largely due to weaker growth in per capita GDP, and high prices eroding the purchasing power of households. The Adama Barrow's leaders have put in place effective mechanism to address it and reposition the country for positive image and amiable branding perceptions. No doubt, there are clear indications that the Gambia is thriving as a nation and provides a case of positive narrations of development of African countries. Yet, with these positive hopes comes the series of challenges that has continue to inundate it and almost snuffing life out of it and making it a wailing coast instead of a smiling one. This has contributed to negatively rebranding the nation and become sore points that drive investors away. Their poverty, insecurity, economic downturn and tourism extinct. Today, armed robbery, especially of wealthy business owners, has reportedly become common and banditry and murder are rampant in urban and rural Gambia, seemingly with few criminal justice consequences.

Despite the abundance of natural and human resources, the Republic of The Gambia remains one of the poorest countries in Africa today, which according to a recent World Bank nearly 60% of Gambia's population falls below the overall poverty line with 40% below the food poverty line. The illiteracy rate remains high; it has a literacy rate of about 55% for the total population with the female literacy rate hovering around 47%. Drought remains a major natural hazard in Gambia today with about 30% drop in annual rainfall within the last 30 years. This hurts agricultural production, and also causes scarcity of drinking water and water for domestic purposes in several areas across the country. Deforestation which leads to soil erosion and desertification worsens the problem in most areas.

Lower remittances and high inflation have continued to drag down private sector demand, with dire consequences on her livelihood. Despite positive GDP growth, rising food prices undermine the pace of poverty reduction and may be so for a long time until the Barrow leadership responses to change it for the better. Just like in most other African countries today, corruption and poor governance continue to tear The Gambia apart, but with the hope of a better leadership from Adama Barrow; Despite the numerous challenges, many Gambians remain optimistic especially with Adama Barrow as president. These challenges is affecting the positive images of the Gambia-resulting in low tourist inbounds, low investment drive and all manners of negative perception that gives it a negative positioning in the global perception index-hence the need for a renewed rebranding of the Gambia

Rebranding is an attempt as a people to take conscious steps at redefining our nation, re-examining our values and character, and rededicating ourselves to the ideals of our founding fathers. Branding is the process of creating a

strong emotional sentiment and positive perception of a country, its people or expectations in the mind of the people of other countries of the world by combining such elements as logo, design, mission statement, and a consistent theme throughout all marketing communications. Rebranding is the process of changing the corporate image or name of a country and such process should resonate with its people, its culture and traditions and its history and beliefs to give a better representation of the country via its name as a well thought out strategic moves that aim to improve the global image of such country. Brymer suggests that although rebranding principles apply equally to nation brands as they do to commercial/corporate brands, the method may differ. According to him, nation branding requires an integrated policy that represents a country in a coordinated and repetitive way that brings about differentiation. Albert posits that nation branding differs from commercial/corporate branding because the parameters for the former are far more intricate, and they take considerable time to manifest, stating the parameters to include domestic, social, economic, and political well-being. Therefore, rebranding a nation without proper governance is like putting the cart in front of the "social transformation" horse.

For us to appreciate the need for the rebranding of The Gambia, using a strategic diplomatic approach, we can learn for the recent case of rebranding in Turkey. Recently, Turkey for multiple reasons as a country rebranded and changed its name to Türkiye. There were many reasons behind this move. One such reason was recognition. Normally when one searches for the word 'Turkey' on the internet, a large bird that is served as a traditional delicacy in North America during the festival of Thanksgiving appears. Moreover, the word 'Turkey' was degraded in the Cambridge dictionary and defined as a 'stupid person' or 'something that fails badly'. Rebranding however isn't always connected with a country altering its name. Bulgaria rebranded itself and retained its name. Rebranding isn't a new trend that countries have been recently adopting. There have been numerous countries that have rebranded themselves and changed their names in the past for various reasons. In 1935, Persian was changed to Iran, while in 1972, Ceylon change to Sri Lanka to cut off its British influence. Rebranding doesn't necessarily improve the country's brand value unless there are some definitive factors. Thus, the big goal behind rebranding a country is to create awareness and curiosity about that country for investors, potential tourists, migrated workers and residents. The clear fact is that branding of a country impacts the country and its citizens and its culture globally hence, should be dictated from some historic event rather than just a marketing push. From a tourism standpoint, a nation's branding changes the perception one has for the country, which can be positive or negative. This can significantly impact the tourism and culture of the nation as done for The Gambia in the past. Yes, the country indeed requires a pragmatic and strategic rebranding; creating new global perceptions that will use its culture, history and tourism potentials to drive the emotion and perception of the world to its advantage as the new preferred destinations, in spite of the challenges there. The fact is that the evolution and sustenance of a country brand for The Gambia as an emerging and attractive nation is quite overdue as nations compete for global attention affection on the ever shrinking global landscape. **You have to find what sparks a light in you so that you in your own way can illuminate the world** – Oprah Winfrey

**To be continued next issue**

# MARY'S PERPETUAL VIRGINITY

**M**ary was chosen by God, even before she was born, to be a Virgin and Mother of our Saviour Jesus Christ [Isaiah 7:14]. Whereupon, she was freed from original sin, at the moment of her conception [Pope Pius IX, 1854]. The aforesaid, being the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, is in conformity with the Holy nature of God and sine qua non for Mary to be the Mother of God. The second Vatican Council explains that Jesus did not diminish Mary's Virginal integrity but somewhat sanctified it [Lumen Gentium, 57]. Thus Mary was anointed, set apart by God to be a virgin ad infinitum and Mother of God.

Being traditionally the daughter of Sts. Anne and Joachim, the birth of the blessed virgin Mary ended the transient misfortune of her parents: it took them many years to have a child; born in Jerusalem, Mary was presented in the Temple and took the vow of virginity, hence fulfilling the will of God and the Prophecy of Isaiah [Isaiah 7:14]. Through the special grace of God, Mary never sinned and remained a virgin throughout her entire life on earth [Lumen Gentium, 56]. Matthew reinforces the virginity of the blessed virgin Mary in these words: "So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to do. But he had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son" [Matthew 1:24-25].

Mary is bestowed the title of hyperdulia: the holiest of all creatures [St. Thomas Aquinas]. Mary is exalted above all angels and human beings by divine grace [Catholic Online, 2022]; however, she is honoured and not worshipped. In the annunciation, the archangel Gabriel said to Mary: "Hail Mary, full of grace, The Lord is with thee" [Luke 1:28, Confraternity Version]. During the annunciation, the angel elucidates to Mary that she would have a child by the power of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God" [Luke 1:35].

The Church Fathers have taught and emphasized on one of the overarching truth about the blessed virgin: Virgin Mary "conceived as virgin, gave birth as virgin and stayed virgin forever" [Saint Augustine of Hippo]. Mary's eternal virginity is by the grace and will of God; Mary, being the new Eve, [Lumen Gentium, 63; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 975] had only Jesus Christ (Immanuel) as



progeny, and by extension, Mary is the spiritual mother of the whole human race [Lumen Gentium, 54]. As declared in the second Vatican Council, "The glorious ever Virgin Mary" [Lumen Gentium, 52], only married to Joseph while remaining a Virgin forever, and had no child other than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The quotation in the Gospel of Saint Matthew that reads: "Jesus was still talking to the people when his mother and brothers arrived" [Matthew 12:46], does not suggest that Mary had other children; the implication of the said brothers of Jesus is: the cousins of Jesus. Similarly, "Isn't Mary his mother, and aren't James, Joseph, Simon and Judas his brothers'?" [Matthew 13:55]. Again, the phrase: his brothers, implies his cousins. Indeed, as believers in Christ, we are all his brothers, and not necessarily from the same womb: "Whoever does what my Father in heaven wants him to do is my brother, my sister and my mother" [Matthew 12:50].

In the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, Mary is ascribed as: Holy Virgin of Virgins, Mother most pure, Queen of Virgins, Mother most chaste, Mother undefiled [Saint Anthony's Treasury]. The aforementioned attributes of the Blessed Virgin underscore and stress her eternal Virginity. The catechism of the Catholic Church teaches in regard to the ever Virgin Mary: "In giving birth, you kept your virginity" [Catechism of the Catholic Church, 966]. Furthermore, Mary's perpetual virginity had been revealed to prophet Ezekiel in the subsequent Divine words: "and the Lord said to me, 'This gate will stay closed and will never be opened. No human being is allowed to use it, because I, the Lord God of Israel, have entered through it. It is to remain closed' " [Ezekiel 44:2].

*BY: PHILIP ANTHONY SYLVA*

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## POEMS

## DO DONKEY'S CRY?

These gentle creatures always with a straight face, do their hearts get broken when they are beaten so they can carry heavy loads? Do they get tired from being over laden as they go to and fro on endless journeys, resting at night, so as to start the whole process all over again? Do they know love? Do they know affection? Do they long to be understood and known unconditionally? Do they talk, and if they could, what would they say to us?

## A DONKEY'S PRAYER

*“ Dear Lord, it's me again, the one who is told and is not allowed to tell.*

*The one who is sent with heavy loads, yet those who send, refuse to lift a finger. The one who is beaten at will, and bears the hatred and projection of disgruntled beings, who refuse to fight with people their own size.*

*Lord, may they never see my tears, for they just don't seem to care.*

*They have even put me in blinders, the idea is to focus on the journey and not to get distracted by the long blades of grass that I pass along the way, as I carry on with tireless occupations.*

*Lord, may you tell me “thank you” once in a while,*

*for they will always see me for my faults and will never have anything kind to say, just abuses and whips.*

*Lord I thank you for choosing a donkey when going to Jerusalem.*

*That's the whole point. YOU CHOOSE ME! that disregarded, insulted, dirty beast of burden....*

*you honored me by gently riding on my back, yet the paradox is that it felt like you were the one carrying me the whole time.*

*Thank you for honoring me and thanking me in this way.*

*I was smiling from ear to ear,*

*that was a journey I never wanted to end.....*

*yes, every donkey has it's day..*

*especially when it is a chosen donkey.”*

A Donkey is the only animal in the world with a cross on its back, Jesus the Messiah came into Jerusalem on the cross and he also left Jerusalem with a cross. Coincidence? I don't think so. Thank you Jesus for taking ALL our sins on You!



*‘The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.’*

*N.I.V bible Isaiah 35.7*

## THE LITTLE GRAIN OF SAND

I am just a grain of sand along the coastal sea shore. I bask under the glory of a majestic sunset, I blend along billions of other sand particles, not sure I matter. Do I really make a difference? Am I not just like any other? The wind often blows with vigorous force, pushing me up into a high whirlwind, then I am tossed up with many other tiny debris, and moved to a different part of the seashore. I am often moved from place to place, making me uncertain of where to call my home.

I am used to being trampled on by many passersby's who casually tread upon me unaware of my discomfort. Sometimes children build sand castles, and just for a moment, I imagine what it must be like to live in my very own palace. My wonderings are often short lived, since the children kick me off and then I am back to being that dusty invisible sand particle that I have always been.

One day, I noticed the ground shaking, a bulldozer was collecting sand for a construction site nearby, I waited to be picked, anxious and excited that I would finally contribute to being part of a majestic building. I felt myself being hoisted up into the air, and just as I about to settle myself amongst the rest, I was thrown down.

The construction workers had started building a wall, and had collected heaps of sand. Some they kept, others they discarded into the sea. I was part of the discarded ones and I helplessly watched myself drown, I didn't know how to swim. All my life, I had been along the coastal sunny shores, this was new territory for me.

Finally, I settled on a hard surface at the bottom of the sea, and I felt myself still sinking deeper and deeper. I was surrounded in darkness. It matched the sadness I felt within me. *Surely this must be the end*, I muttered to myself. *Is this how I die? Completely erased from the universe without a trace, shall I not leave a mark behind? Will I never be remembered?* With large tear drops rolling uncontrollably down my cheeks, I sat still. It was all I could do under the circumstances. I was motionless for what seemed like hours, days, months and then years.

My waiting days were sometimes torturous and confusing. I didn't always know what was happening, all I knew was that I was not dead, but I still kept wondering what the purpose of my life was. I then resolved to stop fighting myself by wallowing in self-pity, and I surrendered myself to the universe. I resigned within me that whatever will be, will eventually come to pass. Then I noticed something happening that took me completely by surprise.

I realized I was encased in an enclosure, a protected soft enclosure and every once in a while, a thick smooth covering would wrap me and cover me with a floral substance that would cause me to grow a little and move from my original position. I wasn't sure what was happening yet, but I felt safe and protected.

After a while, I was large enough, and the enclosure began to slightly open itself. I had outgrown my protected enclosure. A deep sea diver came and held me up and exclaimed *‘Do you know how much you are worth?’* I stuttered *“ I...I.... I am not sure, I am just a grain of sand, like all others.”*



Gently with an affection and tenderness that I had never known, the diver lovingly removed me from the enclosure of the oyster he named Pinctada. I had been covered by a substance called Nacre and had been transformed into a beautiful, big, shinny, round pearl. He held me lovingly at the palm of his hand and whispered'

*"You are mine! I was the one who flung you into the unknown, so you could realize your fullest potential."*

I was in tears, I couldn't believe what was happening to me, I looked at him rather confused. He continued

*'My precious, you are more than a grain of sand. I loved you as tiny particle and I love you in your transformed magnificence. I saw your pearl potential even when you were a little grain of sand and I flung you into the unknown so that you may realize who you truly are '*

"Then who am I?" I queried. He gently answered

*'You, my dear, are in many ways like all others, and then in other ways, you are like some others, but always remember, that you are definitely like no other, in this vast universe.'*

To this very day, I continue to hold the paradox of my life within me. Though I am this shinny beautiful pearl, I still remain to be a little grain of sand that is like no other.



## THE THIRST

We are all thirsting, for that which quenches our inner longing

We think we know where to find this water  
Yet we drink and our hearts are not satiated

And so we search, amidst muddy puddles  
Contented that contaminated water will satisfy us.

We boil it, recycle it, reuse it  
Yet alas, it remains contaminated

I long for the living water  
I long to draw from the streams that never run dry  
And so I close my eyes and drink

I allow my deep thirst to be quenched  
I allow my dehydrated self to be detoxified  
From all the impure water I have partaken  
I take long slow sips, and swallow hard

I can feel myself being rejuvenated  
I can feel my energy coming back to me  
I can feel my bones spring up to life  
I am renewed  
I have tasted the living water  
I want nothing else.



## Let Us Pray For Plenty Of Rain

*In a little while, the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. (1 Kings 18:45)*

By June/July, the rainy season should be well underway. Many Gambians who live in the urban area regard some aspects of the rains as a nuisance. But we should all pray fervently with our farmers that this year's rains may be more abundant than last year's, when the rains were insufficient.

### ***When the rains do start....***

\* Don't forget to plant a tree or two, together with shrubs and bushes. There's no excuse not to, if you have the opportunity.

\* Check your tyres. Check your brakes. Make sure your windscreen wipers can do their job. Above all, drive with extra patience and consideration for others.

\* The cost of corrugated roofing sheets escalates in the rainy season. Conduct a roof check-up, as soon as possible: before the first downpour!

\* The rains bring more flies, mosquitoes and other

unwelcome creatures. Keep your compound as clean as you can. If you don't already use impregnated bed-nets, consider whether you should do so. Despite your precautions, malaria is most likely to strike at this time of year. Keep malaria treatment tablets in the house: they're especially valuable if malaria strikes during the night or if you can't readily get to a clinic or pharmacy.

\* Don't buy the cheapest of umbrellas – in strong wind they will turn inside-out!

\* Keep your house and rooms well-aired.

\* Use durable shoes fit for the rainy season, especially pay attention to the children.

*O GOD, in whom we live and move and have our being, grant us sufficient rain; so that, being supplied with what sustains us in this present life, we may seek more confidently what sustains us for eternity...*

## Daily Mass Readings

## June &amp; July

**1 June, 2023 – Thursday**

Justin, Martyr Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Sirach 42](#): 15-25Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9Alleluia: [John 8](#): 12Gospel: [Mark 10](#): 46-52**2 June, 2023 – Friday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Marcellinus and Peter, Martyrs

First Reading: [Sirach 44](#): 1, 9-13Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 149](#): 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6a and 9bAlleluia: [John 15](#): 16Gospel: [Mark 11](#): 11-26**3 June, 2023 – Saturday**

Charles Lwanga &amp; Companions, Martyrs Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Sirach 51](#): 12cd-20Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 8, 9, 10, 11Alleluia: [Colossians 3](#): 16a, 17cGospel: [Mark 11](#): 27-33**4 June, 2023 – Sunday**

The Holy Trinity Solemnity

First Reading: [Exodus 34](#): 4b-6, 8-9Responsorial Psalm: [Daniel 3](#): 52, 53, 54, 55, 56Second Reading: [Second Corinthians 13](#): 11-13Alleluia: [Revelation 1](#): 8Gospel: [John 3](#): 16-18**5 June, 2023 – Monday**

Boniface, Bishop, Martyr Obligatory Memorial (Ninth Week in Ordinary Time)

First Reading: [Tobit 1](#): 3; [2](#): 1a-8Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 112](#): 1b-2, 3b-4, 5-6Alleluia: [Revelation 1](#): 5abGospel: [Mark 12](#): 1-12**6 June, 2023 – Tuesday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Norbert, Bishop, Religious Founder

First Reading: [Tobit 2](#): 9-14Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 112](#): 1-2, 7-8, 9Alleluia: [Ephesians 1](#): 17-18Gospel: [Mark 12](#): 13-17**7 June, 2023 – Wednesday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Tobit 3](#): 1-11a, 16-17aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalm 25](#): 2-3, 4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9Alleluia: [John 11](#): 25a, 26Gospel: [Mark 12](#): 18-27**8 June, 2023 – Thursday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Tobit 6](#): 10-11; 7: 1bcde, 9-17; 8: 4-9aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalms 128](#): 1-2, 3, 4-5Alleluia: [Second Timothy 1](#): 10Gospel: [Mark 12](#): 28-34**9 June, 2023 – Friday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Ephrem of Syria, Deacon, Doctor

First Reading: [Tobit 11](#): 5-17Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 146](#): 1b-2, 6c-7, 8-9a, 9bc-10Alleluia: [John 14](#): 23Gospel: [Mark 12](#): 35-37**10 June, 2023 – Saturday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

First Reading: [Tobit 12](#): 1, 5-15, 20Responsorial Psalm: [Tobit 13](#): 2, 6efgh, 7, 8Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 3Gospel: [Mark 12](#): 38-44**11 June, 2023 – Sunday**

The Body and Blood of Christ Solemnity

First Reading: [Deuteronomy 8](#): 2-3, 14b-16aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalm 147](#): 12-13, 14-15, 19-20Second Reading: [First Corinthians 10](#): 16-17Alleluia: [John 6](#): 51Gospel: [John 6](#): 51-58**12 June, 2023 – Monday**

Ordinary Weekday (Tenth Week in Ordinary Time)

First Reading: [Second Corinthians 1](#): 1-7Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 12aGospel: [Matthew 5](#): 1-12**13 June, 2023 – Tuesday**

Anthony of Padua, Priest, Religious, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Second Corinthians 1](#): 18-22Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 16Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 13-16**14 June, 2023 – Wednesday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Second Corinthians 3](#): 4-11Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 99](#): 5, 6, 7, 8, 9Alleluia: [Psalms 25](#): 4b, 5aGospel: [Matthew 5](#): 17-19**15 June, 2023 – Thursday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Second Corinthians 3](#): 15 – 4: 1, 3-6Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 85](#): 9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14Alleluia: [John 13](#): 34Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 20-26**16 June, 2023 – Friday**

Sacred Heart of Jesus Solemnity

First Reading: [Deuteronomy 7](#): 6-11Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 103](#): 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 10Second Reading: [First John 4](#): 7-16Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 29aGospel: [Matthew 11](#): 25-30**17 June, 2023 – Saturday**

Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Second Corinthians 5](#): 14-21Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 103](#): 1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12Alleluia: [Luke 2](#): 19Gospel: [Luke 2](#): 41-51**18 June, 2023 – Sunday**

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Exodus 19](#): 2-6aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalm 100](#): 1-2, 3, 5

Second Reading: [Romans 5](#): 6-11  
 Alleluia: [Mark 1](#): 15  
 Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 36 – [10](#): 8

**19 June, 2023 – Monday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Romuald, Abbot  
 First Reading: [Second Corinthians 6](#): 1-10  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 98](#): 1, 2b, 3ab, 3cd-4  
 Alleluia: [Psalms 119](#): 105  
 Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 38-42

**20 June, 2023 – Tuesday**

Ordinary Weekday  
 First Reading: [Second Corinthians 8](#): 1-9  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 146](#): 2, 5-6ab, 6c-7, 8-9a  
 Alleluia: [John 13](#): 34  
 Gospel: [Matthew 5](#): 43-48

**21 June, 2023 – Wednesday**

Aloysius Gonzaga, Religious Obligatory Memorial  
 First Reading: [Second Corinthians 9](#): 6-11  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 112](#): 1bc-2, 3-4, 9  
 Alleluia: [John 14](#): 23  
 Gospel: [Matthew 6](#): 1-6, 16-18

**22 June, 2023 – Thursday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Paulinus of Nola, Bishop/ John Fisher, Bishop, Martyr, and Thomas More, Married Man, Martyr  
 First Reading: [Second Corinthians 11](#): 1-11  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 111](#): 1b-2, 3-4, 7-8  
 Alleluia: [Romans 8](#): 15bc  
 Gospel: [Matthew 6](#): 7-15

**23 June, 2023 – Friday**

Ordinary Weekday  
 First Reading: [Second Corinthians 11](#): 18, 21-30  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 2-3, 4-5, 6-7  
 Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 3  
 Gospel: [Matthew 6](#): 19-23

**24 June, 2023 – Saturday – Vigil**

Nativity of John the Baptist Solemnity/ Vigil  
 First Reading: [Jeremiah 1](#): 4-10  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 71](#): 1-2, 3-4a, 5-6ab, 15ab and 17  
 Second Reading: [First Peter 1](#): 8-12  
 Alleluia: [John 1](#): 7; [Luke 1](#): 17  
 Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 5-17

**24 June, 2023 – Saturday – Day**

Nativity of John the Baptist Solemnity/ Day  
 First Reading: [Isaiah 49](#): 1-6  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 139](#): 1b-3, 13-14ab, 14c-15  
 Second Reading: [Acts 13](#): 22-26  
 Alleluia: [Luke 1](#): 76  
 Gospel: [Luke 1](#): 57-66, 80

**25 June, 2023 – Sunday**

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
 First Reading: [Jeremiah 20](#): 10-13  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 69](#): 8-10, 14, 17, 33-35  
 Second Reading: [Romans 5](#): 12-15  
 Alleluia: [John 15](#): 26b, 27a  
 Gospel: [Matthew 10](#): 26-33

**26 June, 2023 – Monday**

Ordinary Weekday  
 First Reading: [Genesis 12](#): 1-9

Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 12-13, 18-19, 20 and 22  
 Alleluia: [Hebrews 4](#): 12  
 Gospel: [Matthew 7](#): 1-5

**27 June, 2023 – Tuesday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop, Doctor  
 First Reading: [Genesis 13](#): 2, 5-18  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 15](#): 2-3a, 3bc-4ab, 5  
 Alleluia: [John 8](#): 12  
 Gospel: [Matthew 7](#): 6, 12-14

**28 June, 2023 – Wednesday**

Irenaeus, Bishop, Martyr Obligatory Memorial  
 First Reading: [Genesis 15](#): 1-12, 17-18  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 105](#): 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8-9  
 Alleluia: [John 15](#): 4a, 5b  
 Gospel: [Matthew 7](#): 15-20

**29 June, 2023 – Thursday – Vigil**

Peter and Paul, Apostles Solemnity/ Vigil  
 First Reading: [Acts 3](#): 1-10  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 2-3, 4-5  
 Second Reading: [Galatians 1](#): 11-20  
 Alleluia: [John 21](#): 17  
 Gospel: [John 21](#): 15-19

**29 June, 2023 – Thursday – Day**

Peter and Paul, Apostles Solemnity/ Day  
 First Reading: [Acts 12](#): 1-11  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
 Second Reading: [Second Timothy 4](#): 6-8, 17-18  
 Alleluia: [Matthew 16](#): 18  
 Gospel: [Matthew 16](#): 13-19

**30 June, 2023 – Friday**

Ordinary Weekday/ First Martyrs of the Church of Rome  
 First Reading: [Genesis 17](#): 1, 9-10, 15-22  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 128](#): 1-2, 3, 4-5  
 Alleluia: [Matthew 8](#): 17  
 Gospel: [Matthew 8](#): 1-4

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**JULY 2023****1 July, 2023 – Saturday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary/ Blessed Junipero Serra, Priest, Religious, Missionary  
 First Reading: [Genesis 18](#): 1-15  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Luke 1](#): 46-47, 48-49, 50 and 53, 54-55  
 Alleluia: [Matthew 8](#): 17  
 Gospel: [Matthew 8](#): 5-17

**2 July, 2023 – Sunday**

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
 First Reading: [Second Kings 4](#): 8-11, 14-16a  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 89](#): 2-3, 16-17, 18-19  
 Second Reading: [Romans 6](#): 3-4, 8-11  
 Alleluia: [First Peter 2](#): 9  
 Gospel: [Matthew 10](#): 37-42

**3 July, 2023 – Monday**

Thomas, Apostle Feast  
 First Reading: [Ephesians 2](#): 19-22  
 Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 117](#): 1bc, 2  
 Alleluia: [John 20](#): 29  
 Gospel: [John 20](#): 24-29



**4 July, 2023 – Tuesday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 19](#): 15-29Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 26](#): 2-3, 9-10, 11-12Alleluia: [Psalm 130](#): 5Gospel: [Matthew 8](#): 23-27**5 July, 2023 – Wednesday**Ordinary Weekday/ Elizabeth of Portugal, Married Woman/  
Anthony Mary Zaccaria, Priest, Religious FounderFirst Reading: [Genesis 21](#): 5, 8-20aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalm 34](#): 7-8, 10-11, 12-13Alleluia: [James 1](#): 18Gospel: [Matthew 8](#): 28-34**6 July, 2023 – Thursday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Maria Goretti, Virgin, Martyr

First Reading: [Genesis 22](#): 1b-19Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 115](#): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9Alleluia: [Second Corinthians 5](#): 19Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 1-8**7 July, 2023 – Friday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 23](#): 1-4, 19; 24: 1-8, 62-67Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 106](#): 1b-2, 3-4a, 4b-5Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 28Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 9-13**8 July, 2023 – Saturday**Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed  
Virgin MaryFirst Reading: [Genesis 27](#): 1-5, 15-29Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 135](#): 1b-2, 3-4, 5-6Alleluia: [John 10](#): 27Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 14-17**9 July, 2023 – Sunday**

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Zechariah 9](#): 9-10Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 145](#): 1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14Second Reading: [Romans 8](#): 9, 11-13Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25Gospel: [Matthew 11](#): 25-30**10 July, 2023 – Monday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 28](#): 10-22aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalm 91](#): 1-2, 3-4, 14-15abAlleluia: [Second Timothy 1](#): 10Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 18-26**11 July, 2023 – Tuesday**

Benedict, Abbot, Religious Founder Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Genesis 32](#): 23-33Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 17](#): 1b, 2-3, 6-7ab, 8b and 15Alleluia: [John 10](#): 14Gospel: [Matthew 9](#): 32-38**12 July, 2023 – Wednesday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Genesis 41](#): 55-57; 42: 5-7a, 17-24aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalm 33](#): 2-3, 10-11, 18-19Alleluia: [Mark 1](#): 15Gospel: [Matthew 10](#): 1-7**13 July, 2023 – Thursday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Henry, Married Man

First Reading: [Genesis 44](#): 18-21, 23b-29; 45: 1-5Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 105](#): 16-17, 18-19, 20-21Alleluia: [Mark 1](#): 15Gospel: [Matthew 10](#): 7-15**14 July, 2023 – Friday**

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Genesis 46](#): 1-7, 28-30Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 37](#): 3-4, 18-19, 27-28, 39-40Alleluia: [John 16](#): 13a, [14](#): 26dGospel: [Matthew 10](#): 16-23**15 July, 2023 – Saturday**

Bonaventure, Bishop, Religious, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Genesis 49](#): 29-32; 50: 15-26aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalm 105](#): 1-2, 3-4, 6-7Alleluia: [First Peter 4](#): 14Gospel: [Matthew 10](#): 24-33**16 July, 2023 – Sunday**

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Isaiah 55](#): 10-11Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 65](#): 10, 11, 12-13, 14Second Reading: [Romans 8](#): 18-23Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 1-23**17 July, 2023 – Monday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Exodus 1](#): 8-14, 22Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 124](#): 1b-3, 4-6, 7-8Alleluia: [Matthew 5](#): 10Gospel: [Matthew 10](#): 34 – 11: 1**18 July, 2023 – Tuesday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Camillus De Lellis, Priest

First Reading: [Exodus 2](#): 1-15aResponsorial Psalm: [Psalm 69](#): 3, 14, 30-31, 33-34Alleluia: [Psalms 95](#): 8Gospel: [Matthew 11](#): 20-24**19 July, 2023 – Wednesday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Exodus 3](#): 1-6, 9-12Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 103](#): 1b-2, 3-4, 6-7Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25Gospel: [Matthew 11](#): 25-27**20 July, 2023 – Thursday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Apollinarius, Bishop, Martyr

First Reading: [Exodus 3](#): 13-20Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 105](#): 1 and 5, 8-9, 24-25, 26-27Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 28Gospel: [Matthew 11](#): 28-30**21 July, 2023 – Friday**Ordinary Weekday/ Lawrence of Brindisi, Priest,  
Religious, DoctorFirst Reading: [Exodus 11](#): 10 – 12: 14Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 116](#): 12-13, 15 and 16bc, 17-18Alleluia: [John 10](#): 27Gospel: [Matthew 12](#): 1-8**22 July, 2023 – Saturday**

Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene

First Reading: [Songs 3](#): 1-4b or [Second Corinthians 5](#): 14-17Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 63](#): 2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9Gospel: [John 20](#): 1-2, 11-18

**23 July, 2023 – Sunday**

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [Wisdom 12](#): 13, 16-19Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 86](#): 5-6, 9-10, 15-16Second Reading: [Romans 8](#): 26-27Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 24-43**24 July, 2023 – Monday**

Ordinary Weekday / Sharbel Makhluaf, Priest

First Reading: [Exodus 14](#): 5-18Responsorial Psalm: [Exodus 15](#): 1bc-2, 3-4, 5-6Alleluia: [Psalms 95](#): 8Gospel: [Matthew 12](#): 38-42**25 July, 2023 – Tuesday**

James, Apostle Feast

First Reading: [Second Corinthians 4](#): 7-15Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 126](#): 1bc-2ab, 2cd-3, 4-5, 6Alleluia: [John 15](#): 16Gospel: [Matthew 20](#): 20-28**26 July, 2023 – Wednesday**

Joachim and Anne, Parents of the Virgin Mary

Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Exodus 16](#): 1-5, 9-15Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 78](#): 18-19, 23-24, 25-26, 27-28Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 1-9**27 July, 2023 – Thursday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Exodus 19](#): 1-2, 9-11, 16-20bResponsorial Psalm: [Daniel 3](#): 52, 53, 54, 55, 56Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 10-17**28 July, 2023 – Friday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Exodus 20](#): 1-17Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 19](#): 8, 9, 10, 11Alleluia: [Luke 8](#): 15Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 18-23**29 July, 2023 – Saturday**

Martha, Disciple of the Lord Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Exodus 24](#): 3-8Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 50](#): 1b-2, 5-6, 14-15Alleluia: [John 8](#): 12Gospel: [John 11](#): 19-27 or [Luke 10](#): 38-42**30 July, 2023 – Sunday**

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: [First Kings 3](#): 5, 7-12Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 119](#): 57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130Second Reading: [Romans 8](#): 28-30Alleluia: [Matthew 11](#): 25Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 44-52**31 July, 2023 – Monday**

Ignatius of Loyola, Priest, Religious Founder Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Exodus 32](#): 15-24, 30-34Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 106](#): 19-20, 21-22, 23Alleluia: [James 1](#): 18Gospel: [Matthew 13](#): 31-35**Gambian Christian****Anniversaries  
June & July**

**21st June, 1900:** Death, aged 44, of Fr. Charles Amman, Superior of the Catholic Mission since 1889. (In the Cathedral there is a plaque to his memory.)

**22nd June, 1924 (Corpus Christi):** Ordination by Bishop Le Hunsec of Dakar, in the Cathedral at Banjul, (then a parish church) of a citizen of Banjul, Fr. Joseph Charles Mendy. There were now four priests serving in the Mission.

**20th June, 1930:** Celebration of Fr. John Meehan's Silver Jubilee as a priest. Having arrived here in 1905, Fr. Meehan had been Superior since 1908. He was presented with the Mission's first motor car.

**20th June, 1937:** In Dublin, ordination to the priesthood of Fr. Michael Moloney CSSp, who was later to become First Bishop of Banjul.

**9th June, 1949:** It was announced in The Gambia Gazette that Edward Lloyd-Evans had been awarded the MBE.

**15th July, 1951:** Ordination in Dublin of Fr. Reginald Gillooly CSSp. He arrived in The Gambia the following year.

**1st July, 1956:** Ordination in Dublin of the priest-scholar Fr. Myles Fay CSSp, who subsequently served in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, the US, Rome and The Gambia. He died in Dublin on 2nd February 2006.

**28th July, 1958:** Work began on the building of the tower at the Cathedral.

**3rd June, 1965:** Departure of Fr. William Costelloe, who had first arrived in 1952.

**27th July, 1973:** Departure of Fr. Seamus Fleming. Since his arrival in 1962, he had principally worked around Basse and Bwiam.

**19th June, 1977:** Departure of Fr. Thomas Tarmey, who arrived in 1959.

**15th July, 1985:** The St. Vincent de Paul Society, founded in The Gambia in 1968, formed a national council.

**21st May, 1992:** Opening of St. Kizito's Church, Bakothé.

**25th June, 1995:** Opening of St. John the Baptist's Church, Tenene.

**8th June, 1996:** Death of Justice Solomon Njie.

**21st June, 1997:** Opening of the new St. John the Baptist's Church, Farafenni.

**24th June, 1997:** Opening of Holy Trinity Church, Kafuta.

**25th July, 2000:** Death of Archbishop Johannes Dyba, first Papal Nuncio to The Gambia.

**16th July, 2001:** Death in Banjul, aged 90, of Sr. Albert Byrne SJC, who had served in The Gambia since 1935.

**29th July, 2003:** The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd. Rowan Williams, began a visit to The Gambia.

**2nd July, 2006:** Death, aged 86, of Cecilia Cole, teacher, magistrate, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and staunch Methodist.

**8th July, 2006:** Ordination at Kanifing, by Bishop Robert Ellison, of Fr. Michael Gomez CSSp.

**9th July, 2006:** Fr. Joseph Bofo CSSp bade farewell to the people of Stella Maris Parish, where he had spent 10 years as Parish Priest.

**28th June, 2007:** Bishop Robert Ellison appointed a nine member Diocesan Finance Committee, to serve for five years.

**5th July, 2007:** Death of Edward Paul Mansal, who had retired in July the previous year as Principal of St. Edward's Senior Secondary School, Bwiam.

**5th - 8th June, 2008:** Visit to The Gambia of Cardinal Theodore-Adrien Sarr, Archbishop of Dakar.

**11th June, 2009:** The 25th anniversary of the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel was celebrated at an 'Open Day' at GPI.

**13th June, 2009:** Bishop Ellison and ten priests concelebrated Mass at the out-station Church of St. Paul, Makumbaya, to mark the end of the Year of St. Paul.

**8th June, 2010:** Fr. Matthias Murphy CSSp told the congregation at Holy Spirit, Banjul, that he was about to retire after many years as their Parish Priest.

**9th-11th July, 2010:** As part of the Youth Festival, a procession was held from St. Charles Lwanga, Fajikunda to St. Peter's, Lamin.

**21st-23rd June, 2012:** Senegalese and Gambian priests met at Kaolack to discuss co-operation between their dioceses.

**27th June, 2014:** Among speakers at GPI, to mark the end of the pastoral year, T.G.G. Senghore spoke on the history of the Catholic Mission in The Gambia.

**8th-17th June, 2015:** Visit of a former priest at Basse and Bansang in the late 1980s and early 90s, the Rt. Revd. John Kwofie CSSp, Bishop of Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana.

**26th June, 2016:** Fr. Peter Lopez, former Parish Priest at

Blessed Sacrament, Kanifing, blessed four bells. They were unveiled on 3rd July by Bishop Ellison.

**24th June, 2017:** Bishop Ellison celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Cathedral to mark the 60th anniversary of the creation of the Diocese of Banjul by Pope Pius XII.

**During June, 2017:** Four Salesian priests visited the Diocese to explore the possibility of establishing a ministry at Kunkujang Mariama. They are now serving there.

**7th July, 2017:** Philip Saine launched his book, 'Challenges to Gambian Churches during Yahya Jammeh's Era'.

**22nd-24th June, 2018:** The National Youth Cross celebration attracted young people from every parish, together with Anglicans, Methodists and evangelical Christians. Sixty young people from the Dioceses of Dakar, Kaolack and Kolda participated in the event.

**19th June, 2021:** Death of Rev. Fr. Louis T. Mendy C.S.Sp in Scotland. A vigil and memorial mass was held for him at the Holy Family Church, Banjul, The Gambia on 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2021. The mass, burial rites and interment were done in Scotland on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2021.

**1<sup>st</sup> July, 2021:** Death of Rev. Fr. Peter Gomez in Banjul, The Gambia. The Vigil was held at St. Kizito's Parish, on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2021, the mass and burial rites at St. Therese's Parish, Kanifing on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2021 and interment at the Banjul Cemetery.

**8th-13th, 2022:** Visit of the Apostolic Nuncio to the Gambia H.E Dagoberto Campo Salas. Paid a courtesy call to State House on 9th June, 2022 and Radio Veritas 'Gambia Pastoral Institute' on 10th June, 2022.

## A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE PAUL PRIERRA

Nothing is so painful, disheartening and saddening than writing a tribute to a close and beloved friend, as it seems. Like a dream, not believing he had gone to the beyond. Paulo, as he was fondly called, was my good and well-meaning friend, adviser and a perfect gentleman, who lived his life for other people's welfare, taking up other people's problems and challenges, as if they were his. He was kind-hearted, upright and devoted to the general well-being of his country, The Gambia. He was, undoubtedly, a devout Catholic until his passing into glory.

He worked very hard and diligently at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he rose to the position of Deputy Director of Protocol of the Ministry. Those who worked with him would testify to this uncommon man's attitude to work.

Though Paulo's avowed wish was to be a Priest, but due to the twist of fate, contingencies and vicissitudes of life, he stepped aside. Mr. Paul moved on with the life style of a Seminarian; gentleness, kindness, soft spoken and articulate. Those who had interacted and encountered him would testify to this.

Paul, your demise is still a rude shock to me as you did



not show any sign to me either by dream or by action of omnism that you were leaving me. Your death is one death too many. It has made me not to come to reality with the things of this world. No wonder, it is aptly said that this world is vanity upon vanity. Oh death where is thy reward and where is thy sting! Mr. Preirra, your death had devastated me and kept me saying, what is the real meaning of this world and its trappings if somebody like Paul would die and could be seen no more.

My good friend, I don't believe you have died, but only transited to meet with your Creator; where there is no weeping and crying, no sorrow and no anguish. However, I am particularly consoled that you touched many souls and lives, positively. Your display of charity, love and commitment to whatever you engaged in, have written your name in the sands of time in gold.

What matters in life is not the duration, but the donation to lives. Your death has removed one of my ribs. Could some one tell me that you did not die and that it is a dream? You will forever live in my heart.

Adieu, my bossom friend, adieu my brother.

*Andrew Sylva*



## Weekday Celebrations

## June &amp; July

**3<sup>rd</sup> June: St. Charles Lwanga & his companions, *martyrs***

IN the Diocese of Banjul, we have a particular devotion to Charles Lwanga, the patron of one of our most lively parishes. Charles was born in 1865, and became a page at the court of King Mwangi II of Buganda, in what is now southern Uganda. The king forced himself immorally on the young men who served him. In 1886, he insisted that Catholics and other Christians at his court should abandon their faith. They refused, and were cruelly put to death. Among the king's victims were St. Charles Lwanga and St. Kizito. We pray, especially today, for the priests and people of St. Charles Lwanga, Fajikunda and of St. Kizito, Bakoteh.

**11<sup>th</sup> June: St. Barnabas, *apostle***

BARNABAS was a Jew from the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, originally named Joseph. He was given his new name, Barnabas - which means 'son of consolation' - when he converted to Christianity, soon after Pentecost. Barnabas was not one of the original twelve apostles, but was given the title of apostle because of his association with St. Paul, whom he introduced to the first Christian community. Barnabas was said to be the cousin of St. Mark, one of the Gospel writers. He went with Paul to Antioch, but later left Paul because of a disagreement, and accompanied Mark to Cyprus. Barnabas is said to have been stoned to death.

**13<sup>th</sup> June: St Anthony of Padua, *doctor of the Church***

ANTHONY was born in Lisbon, Portugal in 1195. He wanted to work in North Africa, but was obliged, for health reasons, to work instead in Italy, where he gained renown as a preacher. Many traditions relate to miracles performed by St. Anthony. He died in 1231, and his remains are preserved at Padua. Churches at Kololi and Kuntaur are dedicated to St. Anthony, as is the Cathedral in our neighbouring Diocese of Zinguinchor. We pray, especially today, for the priests and people in all three congregations.

**22<sup>nd</sup> June: St. John Fisher & St. Thomas More, *martyrs***

JOHN Fisher was a Catholic bishop, who at the 16th-century Reformation in England, refused to take the oath of allegiance to King Henry VIII as head of the Church of England. Thomas More was a learned and devout man, who as Chancellor of England, had been very close to the king. He also refused. Both men were beheaded in 1535.

**24<sup>th</sup> June: Nativity of St. John the Baptist**

IN earlier times, the Nativity of John the Baptist was a great holiday throughout Europe, almost like Christmas. In today's Church, it is honoured as a solemnity - a major holy day. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and the forerunner of Christ. John's importance is

underlined in all four Gospels, but only St. Luke tells of his birth (Luke, chapters 1 and 2). Jesus said of John, 'I tell you, among those born of women, none is greater than John.' (Luke 7:28)

**28<sup>th</sup> June: Sacred Heart of Jesus**

THE SACRED Heart is a Catholic devotion to the heart of Jesus as representing his love for all humanity. It derives from the visions of a 17th-century French sister, St. Marguerite Marie Alacoque. This day has been a solemnity since 1856. Many churches, schools, hospitals and religious houses are dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and many Catholic homes display a picture of the Sacred Heart.

**29<sup>th</sup> June: St. Peter & St. Paul, *apostles***

PETER played the leading part in the ministry of Jesus and in the life of the first Christian communities in Jerusalem and Rome. He and his brother Andrew were fishermen, summoned by Jesus to be 'fishers of men'. Peter was married and took his wife with him on his missionary journeys. His first name was Simon, but when he recognised his Master as Christ, Jesus conferred on him the name of Peter, saying, 'You are Peter (Greek, Petros), and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church.' The Church teaches that 'You are Peter' authenticates the office of the Pope as St. Peter's successor, reinforced by the granting to Peter of the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the commission given to Peter by Jesus after the resurrection: 'Feed my sheep.'

PAUL is known as 'the Apostle to the Gentiles'. His first name was Saul, born of Jewish parents who were Roman citizens - which would later give Paul the right to be sent to Rome for trial. Saul was brought up a Pharisee. He opposed the new Christian sect, and took part in the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr. This led to his conversion on the road to Damascus, when he was blinded, and heard a voice saying, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.' Saul took the name of Paul and returned to Damascus to preach Christ. His field of activity was among the gentiles. The vivid account of Paul's missionary journeys given in the Acts of the Apostles ends with his preaching the Gospel in Rome for two whole years, while awaiting trial. Thirteen of Paul's letters to Christian communities appear in the New Testament.

**3<sup>rd</sup> July: St. Thomas, *apostle***

THOMAS was one of the twelve apostles. His name comes from the Arabic for 'twin' (in Greek, Didymus). Although frightened, Thomas went with Jesus to Bethany when the news came that Jesus' friend Lazarus was sick (John 11:16). At the Last Supper, when Jesus told the apostles that he was going from them to prepare a place for them, Thomas said: 'Lord, we do not know where you are going; and how can we know the way?' Jesus' reply was: 'I

am the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:2-6). Thomas earned the nickname 'Doubting Thomas' because he found it hard to believe that the other apostles had seen the risen Jesus. But, when Jesus appeared and showed Thomas his wounds, Thomas exclaimed, 'My Lord and my God!' (John 20:26-29).

**9<sup>th</sup> July: St. Augustine Zhao Rong and the martyrs of China**

AUGUSTINE Zhao Rong was a Chinese priest who was martyred in 1815. One of his companions, 18-year-old Chi Zhuzi, who'd had his arm cut off and was about to be flayed, cried, 'Every piece of my flesh, every drop of my blood, will tell you that I am a Christian.' Today, the Church honours 119 saints martyred in China between the mid-17th century and 1930.

**11<sup>th</sup> July: St. Benedict**

BENEDICT - the 'Father of Western Monasticism' - was born into a noble family around 480. While studying in Rome, he was much influenced by the teachings of St. Jerome and St. Augustine. He retired to a hermit's life, and his sanctity attracted other solitaries. Benedict eventually established twelve monasteries. At Mount Cassino, where he became abbot, he established a wise and humane rule based on vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

**22<sup>nd</sup> July: St. Mary Magdalene**

MARY came from Magdala in Galilee. Jesus rescued her from possession by devils (Luke 8:2). Mary watched from afar when Jesus was crucified (Mark 15:10). Weeping at his tomb, she asked the risen Christ, whom she took to be the gardener, what had happened to Jesus' body. He simply replied, 'Mary,' and she at once recognised Him (John 20:11-18). Mary is sometimes identified as the sister of Lazarus and as the sinner who anointed Jesus' feet. But, this is not stated in the Gospels.

**24<sup>th</sup> July: St. Sharbel Makhlūf, priest**

JOSEPH Zaroun Makhlūf was born in 1828, son of a mule-driver in a Lebanese village. His father died when he was only three, and he was brought up by an uncle. At 23, Joseph joined the Monastery of St. Maron at Annaya, taking the name 'Sharbel' in honour of a 2nd-century

martyr. He was ordained in 1859. From 1875, like the 5th-century St. Maron, he lived as a hermit, following a strict fast. He was devoted to the Blessed Sacrament. He died on Christmas Eve 1898. Christians and non-Christians soon made Sharbel's tomb a place of pilgrimage and cures. In 1965, Pope Paul VI beatified him, and canonised him 12 years later. We pray, especially today, for the Lebanese community in The Gambia.

**25<sup>th</sup> July: St. James, apostle**

JAMES and his brother John, were sons of a Galilean fisherman. They were among the first to be called by Jesus. Together with Peter, they witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter. They saw Christ transfigured and his agony in Gethsemane. James and John were rebuked by Jesus when they asked to sit by his throne, when he came into His kingdom (Mark 10:39). James was beheaded on the order of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-3). He is called 'the Great' to distinguish him from another apostle, James 'the Less', who became bishop in Jerusalem. The Catholic school at Kity 2 is named in honour of St. James.

**29<sup>th</sup> July: St. Martha**

MARTHA lived in Bethany with her sister Mary, and her brother, Lazarus. When Jesus visited their house, Martha provided for his needs. At her request, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. We pray, today, for members past and present of St. Martha's Society in The Gambia, founded in 1973.

**31<sup>st</sup> July: St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest**

BORN into the Spanish nobility in 1491, Ignatius became a soldier. He was converted while recovering from wounds. After a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he studied in Spain and France. In 1537, he was ordained, and with Frances Xavier and others, he established the Jesuit Order. Two years later, Pope Paul III approved the Order, and Ignatius was Jesuit General until his death in Rome in 1556, by when the Jesuits had branches in Italy, Spain, India and Brazil. The Jesuits were the most important force in the Catholic Counter-Reformation and a bulwark of the papacy. Ignatius laid the foundations of Jesuit schools, and his 'Spiritual Exercises' are still widely valued.

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**A REMINDER AS A CATHOLIC**

Many whom have been careless about regular attendance at Sunday Mass may wish to make a fresh start. It's never too late.

To remain in good standing in the Church, all Catholics should take part in the Mass every Sunday and on all Holydays of Obligation.

Everyone - Catholic or otherwise - is welcome to attend Mass. But Holy Communion may be received only by Catholics, and they must be in a state of grace - that is, free of serious sin.

If you are aware of any grave sin, you must make confession before a priest and receive absolution. Then you may receive Holy Communion in good faith and with joy.

June & July

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



# Our Sunday Readings

## June 4, 2023

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Year A

**1st Reading:** Exodus 34:4B-6, 8-9  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56  
**2nd Reading:** 2 Corinthians 13:11-13  
**Alleluia:** Revelations 1:8  
**Gospel:** John 3:16-18

**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. 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. During the time of Moses, after the Israelites sinned and rebelled against God, The Lord sent snakes to punish them. The serpents bit them and many people died. God instructed Moses to make an image of a snake and lift it up on a pole, so that whoever looked upon it, might be healed. Therefore, just as the Israelites looked upon the lifted serpent in the desert, so must we, now, look upon the lifted-up Jesus on the Cross for our healing. We suffer from many issues in life, such as ill-health, emotional problems, personal, relational, spiritual and financial issues. 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.

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## June 11, 2023

Feast of Corpus Christi, Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

**1st Reading:** Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14B-16A  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20  
**2nd Readings:** 1 Corinthians 10:16-17  
**Alleluia:** John 6:51  
**Gospel:** John 6:51-58

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

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** Undoubtedly, this passage not only provides insight into the significance of the Holy Eucharist but also demonstrates Jesus’ capacity to proclaim the truth with clarity and unwavering conviction. Jesus encountered opposition and reproach, with some individuals expressing discontent and questioning His statements. Typically, when we are confronted with censure and hostility, we tend to retreat and become excessively preoccupied with others’ opinions about us and the truth we espouse. However, Jesus adopted a contrasting approach. He did not succumb to the criticism leveled at Him by others. He strengthened His proclamation about the Eucharist being His Body and Blood by declaring, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you do not have life within you.” This exemplifies a man of unparalleled confidence, conviction, and fortitude. Although Jesus is divine, it is still inspiring to see His unwavering strength, and it demonstrates the strength that we are all called to possess in this world. The world we inhabit is fraught with opposition to the truth. We need to understand that, as we draw closer to God, surrender to Him and boldly proclaim His truth, the world will increasingly try to pull us away. To face challenges in our faith, we can look to the example of Jesus and follow His lead. When we feel that our faith is being threatened or tested, we should use it as an opportunity to strengthen our resolve and become even more devoted to God. Take time to reflect on this today and choose to strengthen your resolve to follow Christ, even in the face of persecution. By imitating His strength and conviction, you can become a powerful instrument of God’s grace and mercy.

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

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**July 18, 2023**

**Tuesday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time**

**1st Reading:** Exodus 2:1-15A  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 69:3, 14, 30-31, 33-34  
**Alleluia:** Psalm 95:8  
**Gospel:** Matthew 11:20-24

**Homily Theme:** It Will Be More Tolerable for the Land of Sodom on the Day of Judgment than for You – Matthew 11:20-24

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** Well, Jesus is talking today, not to Capernaum, but to us. This is because our way of life and attitude towards the Good News from Jesus are just like those of Capernaum or even worse. Now, let’s revisit the reason why we were created. We were created to know, love, serve, praise and glorify God all the days of our life. Then after we were created, we digressed from this Holy course and started worshipping other things that we found already created by God here on earth. Some of those towns that had this predicament were Sodom and Gomorrah. God got angry and destroyed them completely with fire, reason being, instead of worshipping God, they worshipped small and insignificant things that, in the first place, had been created by God. Then God said, He will not destroy us again before we are reminded why He created us. That is why He sent Jesus to bring these Good News that God is the only God we should know, love, serve, praise and glorify. Now, for Jesus to manifest the power, love and presence of God, He came and did many mighty deeds, like healing the sick, chasing away demons, raising the dead, and God surely manifested Himself. The people of Capernaum, just like us today, did not repent and go back to God, instead, they ignored Jesus despite all those things He did to make God known to them. That is why Jesus told them, and is telling us today, that, when He will come to judge the living and the dead on the last day, it will be worse for the unrepentant sinners than what Sodom experienced.

So, the facts are like this: God wants us to repent and go back to loving, serving, praising and glorifying Him. There will be the last day, when the righteous ones will go to Heaven and the unrepentant sinners will burn in Gehenna. We should not worship minute and trivial things, like money, wealth, power etc, but should raise our scope and worship their creator who is God.

Let us, therefore, understand our purpose here on earth. Let us do what Jesus commands us to do, so that we can live happily ever after, praising God in heaven, together with the communion of Angels and Saints, instead of burning in the fiery Gehenna.

**Prayer:** Dear God, we pray that You keep reminding us our purpose for which You created us. Give us strength to overcome the worldly temptations, which can make us drift from Your Holy Will for us. Amen.

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**June 25, 2023**

**Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**

**1st Reading:** Jeremiah 20:10-13  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35  
**2nd Reading:** Romans 5:12-15  
**Alleluia:** John 15:26B, 27A  
**Gospel:** Matthew 10:26-33

**Homily Theme:** Do Not be Afraid of Those Who Kill the Body But Cannot Kill the Soul – Matthew 10:24-33

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** Be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna, and not the one who can only destroy the body. What does this mean? Man can kill the body, but can do nothing to the soul. God can kill both body and soul and also destroy them. To kill means to incapacitate the body. To destroy means to completely make something useless. In this context, Jesus tells us to only fear the one who can destroy both the body and soul; and this is God. Let me give you an example of where you can be torn between choosing either God or man. These are the choices that the martyrs had to make. They became saints because of making the bold choices of not denying God. Jesus is emphasizing this virtue today, because man cannot condemn you to hell, man has no such powers. Jesus is also not mincing His words when reminding us that hell is more painful than prison. Let us resolve today that we will act like the martyrs and saints did, when they were confronted with the tough decision of choosing either Jesus or man. Let us chose Jesus because we have evidence that when the martyrs chose Him, He did not abandon them. They are now in heaven together with the communion of the angels and other saints.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, we choose You because we now know that we were created to know, love, serve, praise and glorify You. We also know that, if we fail to do that, we will fall into disgrace and You will hide Your face from us. Lord, help us, so that we may never deny You, regardless of the challenge we may face. Amen.

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**July 2, 2023**

**Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**

**1st Reading:** 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16A  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19  
**2nd Readings:** Romans 6:3-4, 8-11  
**Alleluia:** 1 Peter 2:9  
**Gospel:** Matthew 10:37-42

**Homily Theme:** I Have Come To Set a Man Against His Father, a Daughter Against Her Mother – Matthew 10:34-42

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** It’s important when reading this passage, that we read it in light of everything else Jesus has ever written. We must read it in light of all His teachings on love and mercy, forgiveness and unity, etc. But with that said, what was Jesus talking about in this passage? In large part, He was speaking about one of the effects of the Truth. The Truth of the Gospel has the power to deeply unite us to God, when we fully accept it as the Word of Truth. But, another effect is that, it divides us from those who refuse to be united to God in the Truth. We are not intending this and we ought not do so by our own will or intention, but it must be understood that, by immersing ourselves in the Truth, we are also putting ourselves at odds with everyone, who may be at odds with God and His Truth. Our culture today wants to preach what we call “relativism.” This is an idea, that what is good and true for me, may not be good and true for you, but that, in spite of all having different “truths,” we can still all be one happy family. But, that’s not the Truth! This passage above offers us the sobering reality that, by rejecting all

forms of relativism and by holding onto Truth, we also run the risk of division, even with those in our families. This is sad and this hurts. Jesus offers this passage, especially, to strengthen us when this happens. If division happens as a result of our sin, shame on us. If it happens as a result of the Truth (as offered in mercy), then we should accept it as a result of the Gospel. Jesus was rejected, and we should not be surprised if that happens to us, too.

Reflect, today, upon how fully you are ready and willing to accept the full Truth of the Gospel, no matter the consequences. The full Truth will set you free and will also, at times, reveal the division present between you and those who have rejected God. You must pray for unity in Christ, but not be willing to compromise, so as to bring about a false unity.

**Prayer:** Lord, give me the wisdom and courage I need to accept all You have revealed. Help me to love You above all things, and to accept whatever the consequences are of me following You. Jesus, I trust in You.

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### **July 9, 2023**

#### **Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**

**1st Reading:** Zechariah 9:9-10

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14

**2nd Readings:** Romans 8:9, 11-13

**Alleluia:** Matthew 11:25

**Gospel:** Matthew 11:25-30

**Homily Theme:** Jesus Said, My Yoke is Easy and My Burden Light – Matthew 11:25-30

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** Well, we all sometimes feel like giving up in life because of issues we face and are beyond our control. These issues range from sickness, financial difficulties, death of a loved one, workplace challenges etc. Have you ever reached a point in life that you try to get help from your family, friends and neighbours, but the problem never gets a solution? Have you ever tried to get a solution for an emotional problem using money, but your emotional situation remains the same? The yoke that Jesus in giving us is that of humility and meekness. Jesus is saying that, we always feel burdened and troubled because we lack humility and meekness. He tells us to be humble and meek, just like Him and we will find rest. Jesus Christ will never let us down when we seek his help. He says that, whatever we ask of our Heavenly Father in His name, we will get it. Therefore, with humble hearts, let's take our burdens unto Jesus and we will find rest.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, we come before You with humble and contrite hearts. We bring our burdens to You because it is only in You that we can find rest. Give us Your yoke, which is good to bear and is light. May You forever sustain in us humility and meekness. **Amen.**

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### **July 16, 2023**

#### **Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**

**1st Reading:** Isaiah 55:10-11

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

**2nd Reading:** Romans 8:18-23

**Gospel:** Matthew 13:1-23 or Matthew 13:1-9

**Homily Theme:** Some Seed Fell on Rich Soil, and Produced Fruit, a Hundred or Sixty or Thirtyfold – Matthew 13:1-9

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** This is the parable of the sower. This parable was given by Jesus to the disciples and the people at the sea shore. Let's try and analyse this parable in detail. The sower is Jesus Christ. The seeds are the Good News that Jesus proclaims to the people of His creation. The different types of grounds and soils are the different hearts of people, who Jesus proclaims His Holy Word to. Some of us have very hard hearts, as made of stone, that even when Jesus preaches to us, we do not listen or take much regard to that Word. The Holy Gospel enters through one ear and exits through the other. Thus, those hearts are like that path told by Jesus in the parable. There are those of us who have hearts with very little faith, love and other virtues that are required to put into action and sustain the Words of the Gospel of Christ. These hearts are like that rocky ground, with very little soil to sustain the growth of that seed, from germination to fruit. Jesus wants all of us to have hearts that, when they receive His Good News, they heed the Holy Gospel teachings of knowing God, loving Him, serving Him, praising and glorifying Him, all the days of our lives. When we practise this, we are supposed to continue preaching to many others, the same Gospel of Christ, so that they can repent their sins, mend their evil ways and return to the bosom of our Heavenly Father. These hearts that do this, are now like the rich soil that makes the seed grow and produce as much fruit as Jesus Christ requires of us. Now my dear friends, let us make our hearts the rich soil where some seed fell and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Let our hearts implement the Good News that Jesus preaches to us, and make sure we continue the work that Christ has commanded us to do, of redeeming as many souls as possible back to Him.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, help us to make our hearts into the rich soil that will sustain Your Good News and also spread it to the whole world. May we be able to redeem souls back to You, in hundred, sixty or thirty fold. **Amen.**

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### **July 23, 2023**

#### **Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**

**1st Reading:** Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

**2nd Reading:** Romans 8:26-27

**Alleluia:** Matthew 11:25

**Gospel:** Matthew 13:24-43 or Matthew 13:24-30

**Homily Theme:** Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Weeds) – Matthew 13:24-43

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** As we begin this reflection, let us go back to the times of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah. God punished all the people together, for the sins committed in their towns, using water and fire. During Noah's time, God promised man that He will never destroy the world again with water, may be because innocent people perished and could have repented afterwards. We do not know, but I am just thinking aloud. This promise

that God gave us is well manifested in this parable of the wheat and tares. Jesus is very cautious about destroying sinners right now (while they still have a chance to repent), because the destruction may also affect the repentant sinners who have returned to the Lord's fold and are doing the Lord's will. In this parable, Jesus tells us that we will not be condemned because of other sinners around us. We will be condemned alone for the sins we have committed ourselves. Everybody will carry his/her own cross on the last day. This is why Jesus tells us that, if we have any cross or burden right now, we should take it to Him and He will offload it from us. These burdens that we carry are in the form of sins and transgressions against God and our fellow neighbours. Let this parable of the wheat and weeds be a constant reminder to us that, we will have nobody to blame on the last day, if we will be condemned for not repenting our sins and doing the will of God. Let us choose the narrow path of piety, self-sacrifice, humility and meekness, in order to serve our God according to His Holy Will.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, give us the strength and courage to always follow You and trust only You. Help us to repent our sins, so that on the last day, we will be taken to Your barn like wheat, and escape burning and gnashing our teeth in the fiery Gehenna. Amen.

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**July 30, 2023**

**Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**

**1st Reading:** 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130

**2nd Reading:** Romans 8:28-30

**Alleluia:** Matthew 11:25

**Gospel:** Matthew 13:44-52 or Matthew 13:44-46

**Homily Theme:** The Kingdom of Heaven is Like a Net Thrown into the Sea – Matthew 13:44-53

**Verse of the Day Reflection:** The Kingdom of God is today being likened to a fishing net, which when thrown into the sea, collects all sort of stuff from the water, like good fish, bad fish, immature fish, sea-weed etc. When the time now comes to sort out what is good and useful to them, all other stuff, except the good fish, is thrown away as rubbish into the fire. The good fish is given its value and the owner is happy. This is exactly what will happen on the last day. Jesus will come and gather everyone together. Those who are of value to Him will be received in Heaven, and those who will have lost their value in the eyes of God, will be escorted to the fiery Gehenna, where they will burn, and grind their teeth in pain forever. So then, what should we do to retain our value in the eyes of God? We should do the will of God, which is to know Him, love Him, serve Him, praise and glorify Him, all the days of our life. Avoid anything in this world that can deviate us from doing the will of God, especially excess wealth, and not obeying His commandments. God created each one of us for a purpose, and this purpose is His will, as stated above. So, if you fail to do His, will then you lose your value before His eyes and, therefore, your destination will definitely be the fiery Gehenna. Let us, therefore, purpose to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things we need to do God's Will, will be added unto us.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, You have told us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things we need to do His Will, will be added unto us. We, therefore, pray for Your gift of understanding, so that we can accept Your divine mysteries, and also disengage our affections and thoughts from the un-useful things of this miserable world. Amen.



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# Tradition and the Meaning of First Communion

**F**ollowing the ancient tradition and practice of the Church, the season of the First Sacraments is approaching. It corresponds to the Paschal (Easter) season in the life of the Church although some parishes will continue to celebrate First Sacraments well into the Pentecost season.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us "The sacraments of Christian initiation — Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist — lay the *foundations* of every Christian life. The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity." Catechism of the Catholic Church #1212.

First Holy Communion is the common name for a person's first reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Roman Catholics recognize the importance of this event, as the Eucharist is the central focus of the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. First Communion is not practised in the Eastern Catholic Churches, which practise Infant Communion. First Communion is traditionally also a festive occasion for families of the First Communicant: it usually includes large family gatherings and parties to celebrate the event. Special clothing is usually worn. The clothing is often white to symbolize purity. Girls often wear fancy dresses and a veil attached to a headdress, as well as white gloves (long or short). Boys usually wear their white Suit, or African-style gown, to make them smart, depending on cultures and countries too. First Communicants are usually given gifts of a religious nature, such as rosaries or prayer books, in addition to religious statues and icons.

With regards to First Holy Communion, the Catechism teaches us, "Having become a child of God clothed with the wedding garment, the neophyte is admitted 'to the marriage supper of the Lamb' and receives the food of the new life, the body and blood of Christ. The Eastern Churches maintain a lively awareness of the unity of Christian initiation by giving Holy Communion to all the newly baptized and confirmed,

even little children, recalling the Lord's words: 'Let the children come to me, do not hinder them.' The Latin Church, which reserves admission to Holy Communion to those who have attained the age of reason, expresses the orientation of Baptism to the Eucharist by having the newly baptized child brought to the altar for the praying of the Our Father. Catechism of the Catholic Church #1244

Pope Pius X declared Blessed Imelda Lambertini the Patroness of First Communicants in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The life of this young child was quite astonishing. She lived only from 1322 to 1333 — a time in the Latin Church when First Communion was reserved for children of at least 14 years.

### A Sacred Rite

First Holy Communion is a sacred rite in the Catholic Church that marks the first time a person receives the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the sacrament that commemorates Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, when he gave them bread and wine as his body and blood. To prepare for First Holy Communion, a person must undergo catechesis, or religious education, and confess his/her sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The ceremony of First Holy Communion involves prayers, hymns, readings, and the distribution of the Eucharist to the communicants and other faithful. First Holy Communion is a joyful and solemn occasion that celebrates the person's union with Christ and his church, and his/her growth in faith and grace.

*Culled from Catholic Exchange 2008*

