

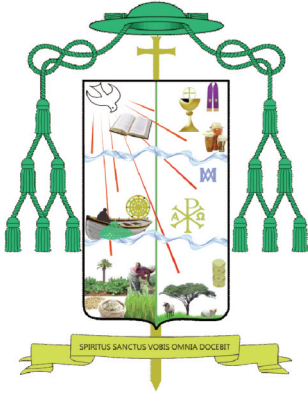
***Celebrating our Bishop's
first anniversary***



Volume 43 No. 1

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2019

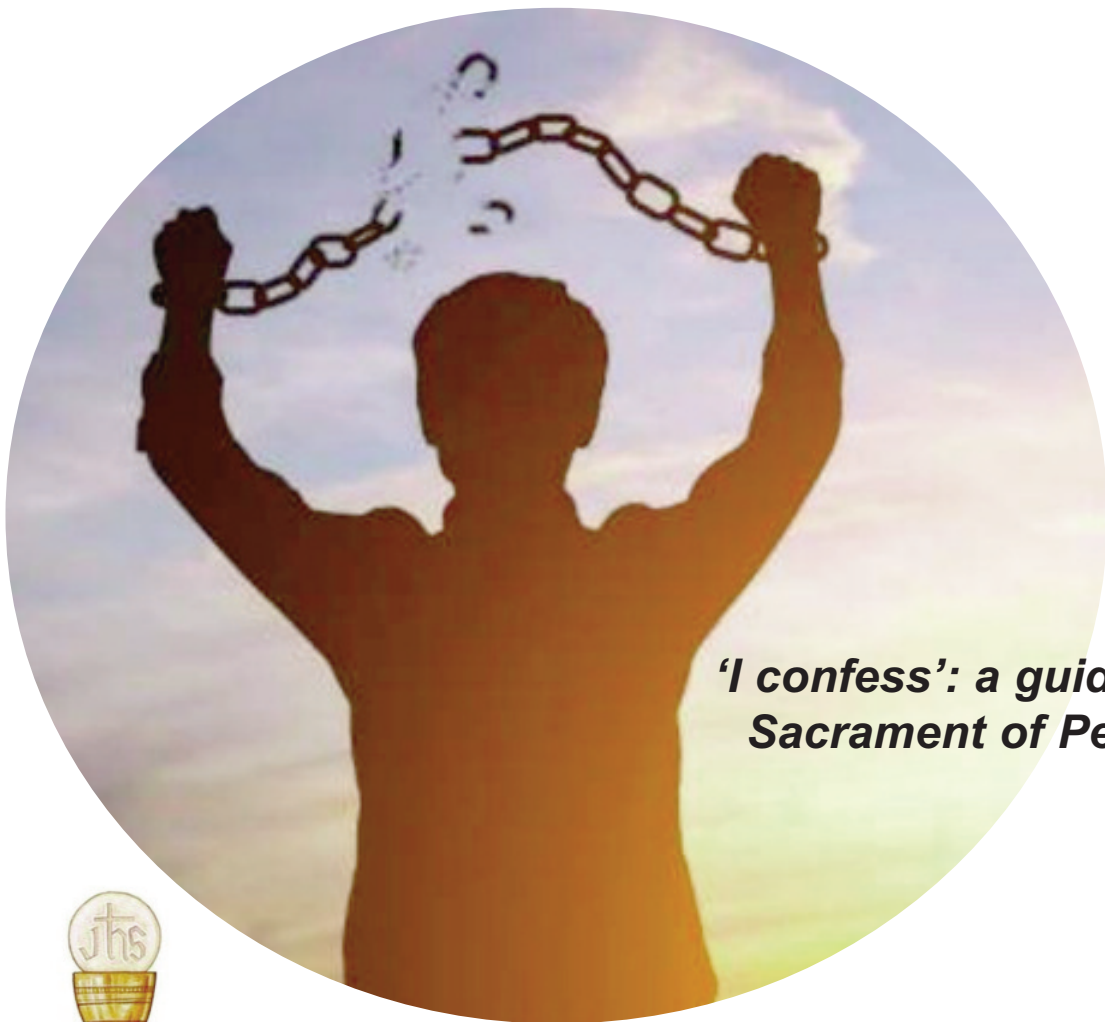
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The Diocese of Banjul
NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

LENT: time for pardon and recommitment



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Sacrament of Penance***



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By way of introduction

Holding fast to our faith



EARLY in February we celebrate the first anniversary of the consecration of Gabriel, our Bishop. Let us pray that, with Bishop Mendy as shepherd, we - the people of God in the Diocese of Banjul - may work and worship together fruitfully for the coming of God's kingdom. May we serve God faithfully and joyously as Christ's followers, and as good neighbours to everyone.

Friday 22nd February, Feast of the Chair of St Peter, is a good day to pray that, in unity with the Pope, with our Bishop and with Catholics throughout the world, we will hold fast to our faith, and by our way of life commend it to others.

Soon afterwards will come Ash Wednesday and Lent. 'Lent' is such a short word for the Church's second-longest season - a season which presents us with both challenge and opportunity.

The challenge is to take our Christian religion more seriously in thought, word and deed.

The opportunity is to prepare for Easter with greater hope and purpose than ever.

During the roughly forty days of Lent we are asked to

fast (but only on two days). We are also asked to abstain from certain pleasures or foods, and to engage in works of charity and piety.

These 'Lenten obligations' are not onerous. But they should be only the beginning.

Should we not, this Lent, set about reinforcing the foundations of our faith by making sure that we understand what it is to be a disciple of Jesus, and put our faith into practice?

We should take a hard, honest look into our hearts and consciences. Where do we stand in relation to our beliefs and practices? How far do we understand our faith in Christ and practise it? How closely do we work with other members of the Church to witness to Christ?

It is in honest, unflinching answers to such questions that each of us can determine the best way to observe Lent - the way that will truly point us to Easter.

We are Christ's agents in his world. Let us not disappoint him.

Please God that when Easter comes we will greet our risen Lord with true joy - the outcome of a well-spent Lent.

Sister Wendy, television star

page 23



Receiving Holy Communion

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Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

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Here & there

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE

Bishop Gabriel Mendy's first anniversary

ON SUNDAY 3rd February Bishop Gabriel Mendy CSSp celebrates the first anniversary of his episcopal ordination.

The news that the Diocese of Banjul was to be led by its first Gambian Bishop had come from Rome on 30th November 2017 - St Andrew's Day.

Before a great congregation at the Independence Stadium Bakau on 3rd February last year, Dr Mendy became the Fourth Bishop of Banjul and the first Gambian to lead the Catholic Church in The Gambia.

In a four-hour ceremony, the Principal Consecrator was Archbishop Edward Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The Principal Co-Consecrators were Bishop Robert Ellison CSSp, Bishop Emeritus of Banjul, and Bishop John Bonaventure Kwofie CSSp, Bishop of Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana.

The homily was given by the Most Reverend Henry Aruna, Auxiliary Bishop of Kenema, Sierra Leone.

The following day, Sunday 4th February, Bishop Mendy was solemnly enthroned in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Banjul; and on Sunday 11th February Bishop Mendy celebrated an outdoor Mass at St Peter's Lamin - his home village.



Academic and pastoral career

Gabriel Mendy was born in Lamin on 9th April 1967.

After St Peter's Technical High School, Lamin, he lived in the novitiate in The Gambia from 1985 to 1987. He studied philosophy at Nsukka, Nigeria, from 1987 to 1990, and gained pastoral experience at the Most Holy Trinity in the Diocese of Kenema, Sierra Leone.

He studied at the Duquesne University in Pittsburgh USA, earning a BA in Philosophy, and then returned to The Gambia to serve at St Peter's Junior Seminary and St Therese's Secondary School from 1990 to 1991.

Having made his perpetual vows in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, he was ordained priest by Bishop Michael Cleary on 15th November 1997, along with Fr Antoine Sambou and Fr Bruno Toupan.

From 1997 to 1998 Fr Mendy served at St Peter's Lamin and St Therese's Kanifing.

He went on to serve in Sierra Leone at St Martin of Porres in Freetown, and to teach at the Major Pre-Seminary of St Kizito in Kenema. From 1999 to 2002 he was Parish Priest at the Most Holy Trinity, Kenema, then at Santa Maria, Pendembu.

Fr Mendy went on to study again at Duquesne University from 2004 to 2009, and was awarded a PhD in systematic theology. He was Parish Vicar at Our Lady Star of the Sea in Staten Island, New York, from 2009 to 2010.

From 2010 until becoming Bishop of Banjul Fr Mendy taught at the Spiritan International School of Theology in Nigeria, becoming Vice-Rector in 2011.

Bishop Mendy's New Year message: page 19

Pilgrims flock to Kunkujang Mariama



THOUSANDS of Catholics from all over The Gambia and beyond, together with other Christians, as well as many Muslims, converged on Kunkujang Mariama on Saturday 8th December for the annual national pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

It was the 32nd such pilgrimage, and the first to be led by Bishop Gabriel Mendy as Fourth Bishop of Banjul.

The pilgrimage is held on the Saturday nearest the Feast of the Immaculate Conception; and this latest pilgrimage took place on the actual feast-day.

The day included the celebration of Mass with a homily by the Bishop, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Adoration and Benediction.

Growth and development

For many years Gambians have taken part in the annual pilgrimage at Pentecost to the Shrine of Our Lady of Deliverance at Poppingine, in Senegal. In 1986 a group of lay people proposed to Bishop Michael Cleary the establishment of a national Marian shrine in The Gambia. Out of various sites suggested, including Bwiam and Juffure, Kunkujang Mariama was chosen.

In December 1987 the first pilgrimage attracted large numbers, which have grown every year since.

Facilities have been greatly expanded. The shrine church at Kunkujang Mariama has seating for 1,200. In June 2017 Bishop Robert Ellison opened a 30-bed hostel and cafeteria, so that people can stay at the shrine throughout the year.

In recent years a penitential pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace has been conducted on the second Saturday in Lent - this year, Saturday 16th March.

Death of faithful catechist

ST THERESE'S Church Kanifing was full to overflowing on Friday 11th January for the funeral of Jean-Paul Sambou, a much-respected catechist, who died on Sunday 6th January at the age of 46. Many priests took part in the Mass.

Mr Sambou was born in Casamance on 2nd February 1972. In St Therese's Parish for many years he instructed and inspired many in the Catholic faith.

The work of catechists in the diocese, of whom Jean-Paul was so devoted a member, is integral to the work of evangelisation. Parish by parish, in conjunction with the parish priest, the catechists strive to uphold and extend the Church's mission and witness.

** The catechists of the diocese attended their annual retreat at GPI from Sunday 20th to Friday 25th January. It was an occasion for catechists from all parts of the country to renew acquaintance and share experience, and the varied daily programme enabled them to review and gain fresh insights into many aspects of their work.

Priests consider their calling

DURING December, the priests of the diocese spent what was described as a most profitable week at GPI, discussing many aspects of their pastoral work with a team from St Paul's Major Seminary, Freetown.

In January, the priests - diocesan and missionary - assembled at the Shalom Retreat Centre, Fajara, for their annual retreat. Each day was marked by addresses, meditation, prayer, and the Holy Mass.

Salesian Youth Weekend in Banjul

IMMEDIATELY following the feast day of St John Bosco on 31st January, a Youth Weekend with St John Bosco is being held at St Augustine's Senior Secondary School Banjul from Friday 1st to Sunday 3rd February.

The organisers are the Salesian Fathers who have recently taken up residence at Kunkujang Mariama. During the last week of January, the Superior-General of the Salesians paid a visit to The Gambia, staying at Kunkujang Mariama.

The Salesians are a congregation founded in 1859 by St John Bosco, working in schools, youth clubs and children's homes. They are missionaries, school and university chaplains, and engage in parish work. There are almost 16,000 priests and brothers in the congregation, working in 131 countries around the world.

John Bosco was ordained in 1841, and by 1846 his 'oratory' was taking care of over 400 youngsters. When he died in 1888 there were about 250 Salesian houses in all parts of the world, and over 6,000 priests had gone forth from the Salesians. John Bosco was canonised by Pope Pius XI in 1934.

-- In brief --

DURING January, Bishop Gabriel Mendy took part in a meeting at Bo, Sierra Leone, of the Bishops' Conference of The Gambia & Sierra Leone, and Sister Philomena Barry attended the annual regional meeting of the Cluny Sisters in Freetown.

Fr Seán Devereux visited the diocese from 21st to 19th January.

Presentation Sisters celebrate 50 years in The Gambia



THE PRESENTATION of Mary Sisters closed their Golden Jubilee celebrations on Saturday 28th December with a Vigil at St Therese's Church Kanifing, and the following day with a Mass of Thanksgiving at which Bishop Mendy presided.

The vigil included the recitation of the Rosary and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.



Diocese of Banjul Parishes & Parish Priests

- 1 Cathedral Parish: *Fr Antoine Sambou & Fr Gabriel Secka*
- 2 Blessed Sacrament Kanifing Estate: *Fr Joseph Carl Gomez*
- 3 Christ the King Darsilami: *Fr Yenes Manneh*
- 4 Holy Cross Brusibi: *Fr Michael Ndecky*
- 5 Holy Spirit Banjul: *Fr Bruno Toupan*
- 6 Mary Mother of God Soma: *Fr Anthony Lippo CSSp*
- 7 Our Lady of Fatima Bwiam: *Fr Benjamin Juana, assisted by Fr Matthias Atubu CSSp*
- 8 Resurrection Brikama: *Fr James Mendy*
- 9 Sacred Heart Bansang: *Fr Fredrick Agame CSSp*
- 10 St Anthony Kololi: *Fr Anthony Sonko (Vicar-General)*
- 11 St Charles Lwanga Fajikunda: *Fr Joseph Colley*
- 12 St Francis Kunkujang: *Fr Peter Wojnarowski SDB, Fr Peace Ike SDB, Fr Carlos Valdiviezo SDB*
- 13 St John the Baptist Farafenni: *Fr Cornelius Umoren MSP*
- 14 St Joseph Basse: *Fr Joseph Kojo Finn CSSp, assisted by Fr Magashi Aernan Terungwa Samuel*
- 15 St Kizito Bakoteh: *Fr Victor Ndecky*
- 16 St Martin Kartong: *Fr Pius Gidi CSSp*
- 17 St Michael Njongon: *Fr Matthew Mendy*
- 18 St Peter Lamin: *Fr Godwin Nnadozie MSP, assisted by Fr John Ezeike MSP*
- 19 St Therese Kanifing: *Fr Anthony Gabisi, assisted by Fr Tanislaus Ndecky*
- 20 Star of the Sea Bakau: *Fr Michael Gomez, assisted by Fr Peter Jammeh CSS*
- 21 St Peter's Junior Seminary Lamin: *Fr Paschal Mendy, Rector & Director of Vocations*



Fasting, abstinence, study, prayer, almsgiving, and the service of others

WE all know when it's Ramadan, and - most commendably - many Muslims are aware when Christians are keeping Lent.

We may tell Muslims, if they ask, that Lent is the Christian Ramadan. True: both Ramadan and Lent are penitential seasons. But whereas the rules for Ramadan are laid down by the Qur'an, there is no mention of Lent in the Bible.

At various times and in various Christian traditions, the rules for observing Lent were much stricter than those today.

Lent is a kind of pilgrimage, a journey marked by fasting, abstinence, study, prayer, almsgiving and the service of others.

Christ fasted for 40 days in preparation for his ministry. Similarly, Lent lasts about 40 days. The season of Lent prepares us for the foremost feast of the whole year: the 'Easter Triduum' from the evening of Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday (this year, 18th to 21st April).

Christ's warning

Our Lord told some Pharisees and teachers of the Law: 'You go no further than appearances. How well Isaiah prophesied of you when he wrote, "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless, for what they teach are only human rules."'

Jesus was quoting Isaiah in declaring that fasting without seeking the welfare of others is of little value; and those who fast just to impress others, he called hypocrites.

We Christians regard life itself as a pilgrimage, a journey towards God. We believe that through Christ's death and resurrection everyone, beyond death, may enter the fullness of life with God. That is why Easter is the greatest of all feasts.

*Lord, bring us, enlightened and refreshed,
to the joy of Easter*

Mass readings in Lent

THE SUNDAY and weekday readings at Mass during Lent have been chosen by the Church to help us to prepare for Easter.

Sundays in Lent

- * The Gospel is the key reading.
- * The Old Testament reading has been chosen to anticipate the Gospel.
- * The psalm provides a prayerful response to the Old Testament reading.
- * The Epistle has been chosen to fit both the Gospel and Old Testament reading and provide a connection between them.

This is the 'Year of St Luke', and five of the six Sunday Gospel readings come from Luke.

The **First Sunday** reading (10th March) concerns Christ's temptation in the wilderness, and the **Second Sunday**

(17th March) his transfiguration.

On the **Third Sunday** (24th March) we hear of Christ's call to repentance, illustrated by the parable of the fig tree.

The Gospel readings on the two following Sundays concern forgiveness, exemplified by the parable of the prodigal son (**Fourth Sunday**, 31st March) and Christ's forgiveness of the woman taken in adultery (not from Luke but from St John, on the **Fifth Sunday**, 7th April).

Weekdays in Lent

The Gospel readings on the weekdays of Lent relate to the themes of the season, and the Old Testament readings have been chosen to relate to the Gospel.

It is an excellent Lenten practice to take part in the weekday Mass as often as you can.

If for good reason you cannot attend Mass, you should read the readings for each day for yourself. *Details on page 27.*

Our Catholic obligations

EVERY Catholic is obliged to perform personal penance during Lent. The obligation may be fulfilled in one or more of the following ways:

- abstaining from meat or some other food
- abstaining from alcoholic drink, smoking or some form of amusement
- offering family prayers, going to Mass, visiting the Blessed Sacrament or making the Stations of the Cross
- going out of one's way to help someone who is poor, sick, old or lonely

Each individual is free to choose the way of doing penance, which may be changed from day to day.

Ash Wednesday (6th March) and Good Friday (19th April) are days of fasting and abstinence.

Fasting means that the amount of food we eat is drastically reduced. Abstinence means abstaining from meat, or performing an act of piety or charity.

Those over 18 are bound by the rule of fasting until they begin their 60th year.

All over 14 are bound by the rule of abstinence.

Every Friday (because it recalls the Crucifixion) is a day of abstinence.

Lord, may we spend Lent attentive to your Word in response to Christ's loving sacrifice for our redemption.

How we observe our penitential pilgrimage in Lent



LENT has been observed since the time of the apostles, though its length and the manner of keeping it have varied. The rules used to be strict. One meal a day was allowed in the evening, and meat, fish, eggs and butter were forbidden.

These rules have progressively been relaxed. In the Western Church, only **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday** are now regarded as obligatory days of fasting.

The Eastern (Orthodox) churches maintain older, stricter rules. (They generally observe Lent and Easter on dates different from those in the Catholic and other Western churches. This year's Orthodox Easter Sunday is 28th April).

The day before Ash Wednesday is sometimes called '**Shrove Tuesday**', because it was customary to 'clean the slate' before Lent by going to Confession. (To be 'shriven' means to be granted priestly absolution, the forgiveness of sins in God's name and the name of the Church).

In contrast, Shrove Tuesday is also known as *Mardi Gras* ('Fat Tuesday') when people used to eat up all the foods they were not allowed to eat during Lent. Mardi Gras was and is a day of carnival, a street party before Lent. 'Carnival' means 'farewell to meat'.

The use of ashes on **Ash Wednesday** derives from ancient tradition. Smearing oneself or one's clothing with ashes is a sign of mourning or repentance. In Jonah 42:6, for example, the King of Nineveh seeks to avert God's anger by wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes. The prophet Daniel writes (9:3): 'I turned to the Lord to seek an answer to prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.'

A popular devotion in church throughout Lent, on Fridays especially, is the **Stations of the Cross** (see page 9)

During Lent the colour at the altar and for the priest's vestments is purple, which signifies penance.

The *Gloria in Excelsis* is not said or sung at Sunday Mass, and the exclamation *Alleluia* is not used at any time during Lent.

Many churches keep the Lent tradition of not decorating altars with flowers and not using the organ or other musical instruments. An exception is mid-Lent (*Laetare*) Sunday, 31st March, when rose-coloured vestments may be worn.

This year, two solemnities fall in Lent: Tuesday 19th March, **St Joseph**; and Monday 25th March, **the Annunciation** (see page 27)

Lenten intentions

- Throughout Lent we are asked especially to pray for
- those who will be baptised and/or confirmed at Easter
 - the needy
 - penitents
 - those who have wandered from the faith.

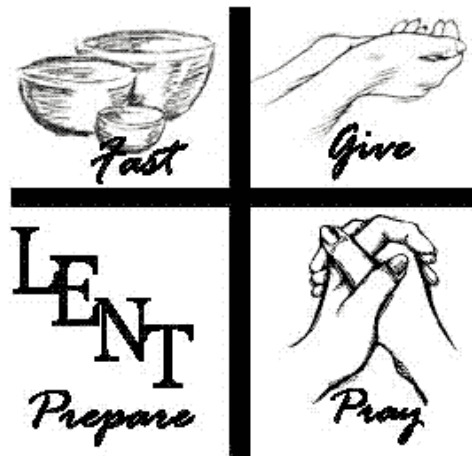
See also the Pope's Prayer Intentions, page 25

The Easter Triduum

Lent leads into the **Easter Triduum** (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and the Easter Vigil). This year's dates are 18th to 20th April.

The **Easter Season** itself lasts for fifty days from Easter Sunday through Ascension Day to Pentecost (this year from 21st April to 9th June).

Altogether, the Lent and Easter seasons take up about a third of the Church's year.



Catholic Calendar 2019

Ash Wednesday	6th March
Palm Sunday	14th April
Good Friday	19th April
Easter Sunday	21st April
Ascension	Thursday 30th May
Pentecost Sunday	9th June
Corpus Christi	Sunday 23rd June
Sacred Heart	Friday 28th June
Christ the King	Sunday 24th November
1st Sunday in Advent	1st December

Muslim festivals

(approximate dates 2019)

Ramadan begins	Monday 6th May
Night of Power	Friday 31st May
Koriteh (<i>Eid al-Fitr</i>)	Wednesday 5th June
Tobaski (<i>Eid al-Adha</i>)	Monday 12th August
New Year	Sunday 1st September
Prophet's Birthday	Saturday 9th November



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6. Basse Santa Su	6868839	25. London Corner	6868807
7. Basse Highway	6969865	26. Old Jeshwang	6868831
8. Brikama Nyambai	6968874	27. Old Yundum Market	6868843
9. Brikama Hawla Kurda	6868810	28. Sanyang	6868824
10. Brusubi Mini Market	6868819	29. Sayer Jobe Avenue	6868808
11. Brusubi Galp Station	6969873	30. Serrekurda Bantess	6868836
12. Bundung	6868821	31. Serrekurda Mosque Road	6868814
13. Busumballa	6868827	32. Soma	6868837
14. Churchill's Town	6868817	33. Sukuta	6868856
15. Cooperative	6868822	34. Tabokoto	6868813
16. Dippa kurda	6868812	35. Tallinding	6868809
17. Fajara	6868825	36. Westfield Opp. World Mobile	6868910
18. Farafenni	6868838	37. Westfield Next to Church	6868864
19. Kanifing Estate	6868842		





The Way of the Cross

DURING Lent, most parishes arrange for the devotion known as Stations of the Cross to be performed every Friday. It is well-attended on the first Friday, but numbers tend to fall off as Lent progresses. This is surprising, because one might suppose that as Good Friday approaches, devotion to our suffering Lord would intensify.

To encourage participation in the Stations, here is information about the origin of the devotion and how it is carried out.

THE STATIONS of the Cross are pictures or carvings depicting Christ carrying his cross to his crucifixion. They are placed round the inside walls of a church or along a road leading to a church or shrine. At each station it is customary to meditate on the event represented.

The stations may be followed by individuals or groups at any time, but especially on Fridays and during Lent.

The *Via Crucis* (the Way of the Cross) or *Via Dolorosa* (Way of Sorrows) was fostered by the Franciscans, guardians of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, as a simulation of the route followed by Jesus on his way to his crucifixion.

In the 15th century in Europe the Franciscans began to build outdoor stations to resemble those in the Holy Land.

In 1686 Pope Innocent XI granted the Franciscans the right to erect stations inside their churches.

In 1731 Pope Clement XII extended to all churches the right to have the stations, provided that a Franciscan father erected them with the consent of the local bishop. At the same time, the number of stations was fixed at fourteen.

In 1857 the bishops of England were allowed to erect stations without the permission of a Franciscan priest, and in 1862 this right was extended to bishops everywhere.

The stations must consist of at least fourteen crosses (pictures alone do not suffice), blessed by someone with the authority to erect them.

The Stations as traditionally performed

1. Jesus is condemned to death
2. Jesus carries his cross
3. Jesus falls the first time
4. Jesus meets his mother
5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
7. Jesus falls the second time
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls the third time
10. Jesus is stripped of his garments
11. Jesus is nailed to the cross
12. Jesus dies on the cross
13. Jesus is taken down from the cross
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb

Customary prayers

The devotion begins with an **Act of Contrition**:

O MY God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace I will not sin again.

Before each station:

V We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

Adoremus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.

After meditation at each station:

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

V Have mercy on us, O Lord.

Miserere nostri, Domine.

R Have mercy.

Miserere nostri

May the souls of the faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Fidelium animæ, per misericordiam Dei, requiescant in pace. Amen.

On the way to the next station, a verse of a hymn (for example, the *Stabat Mater*) is sung.

St John Paul's Scriptural Way of the Cross

OF the fourteen traditional stations, only eight have clear scriptural foundation. Stations 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 are not specifically attested to in the Gospels. In particular, no evidence exists of Station 6 (Veronica) being known before mediæval times. Station 13 (Jesus' body being taken from down from the cross and laid in his mother's arms) seems to embellish the Gospel record, which simply says that Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus down from the cross and entombed him.

On Good Friday 1991 Pope St John Paul II introduced a form of the Stations called the Scriptural Way of the Cross, a version more closely aligned with Biblical accounts. He celebrated this form many times.

In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI approved St John Paul's alternative set of stations for meditation and for public celebration.

1. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested
3. Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin
4. Jesus is denied by Peter
5. Jesus is judged by Pilate
6. Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns
7. Jesus takes up his cross
8. Jesus is helped by Simon to carry his cross
9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
10. Jesus is crucified
11. Jesus promises his kingdom to the repentant thief
12. Jesus entrusts Mary and John to each other
13. Jesus dies on the cross
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb



Coping with a stroke

WE may know someone in the family, a friend or neighbour who has suffered a stroke.

A stroke is a life-threatening medical condition that occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off.

The condition and its treatment are complex.

The summary below is just a brief guide.



Life-threatening

STROKES are a medical emergency. Urgent treatment is essential, because the sooner a person receives treatment for a stroke, the less damage is likely to happen.

Signs and symptoms

Face – the face may have dropped on one side, the sufferer may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may have dropped.

Arms – the person with suspected stroke may not be able to lift both arms and keep them there because of arm weakness or numbness in one arm.

Speech – their speech may be slurred or garbled, or the person may not be able to talk at all despite appearing to be awake.

Why do strokes occur?

Like all organs, the brain needs the oxygen and nutrients provided by blood to function properly. If the supply of blood is restricted or stopped, brain cells begin to die. This can lead to brain injury, disability and possibly death.

There are two main causes of strokes:

- **ischaemic** – where the blood supply is stopped due to a blood clot (this accounts for 85 per cent of all cases)
- **haemorrhagic** – where a weakened blood vessel supplying the brain bursts.

Older people are most at risk of having strokes, but they can occur at any age, including childhood.

It's not possible to completely prevent strokes, because some things that increase your risk cannot be changed, including:

Age: you are more likely to have a stroke if you are over 65 years old, although about a quarter of strokes happen in younger people.

Family history: if a close relative (parent, grandparent, brother or sister) has had a stroke, your risk is likely to be higher.

In most cases it is possible to significantly reduce your risk of having a stroke by avoiding problems such as atherosclerosis (hardened arteries) and high blood pressure. You should eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, stop smoking if you smoke, and cut down the amount of alcohol you consume.

Recovering after a stroke

After a stroke, many people experience bouts of crying and feeling hopeless and withdrawn, sometimes punctuated by intense, uncontrolled feelings of anxiety. Anger, frustration and bewilderment are also common.

These problems may settle down over time. If they are severe or persistent, doctors may refer the sufferer to a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist.

'Cognitive' is a term used by scientists to refer to the functions our brain uses to process information. One or more cognitive functions can be disrupted by a stroke:

Communication: verbal and written

Spatial awareness: having a natural awareness of where your body is in relation to your immediate environment

Memory

Concentration

Executive function: the ability to plan, solve problems and reason about situations

Praxis: the ability to carry out skilled physical activities, such as getting dressed or making a cup of tea

You can be taught techniques to help you re-learn cognitive functions, such as recovering communication skills through speech therapy.

Most cognitive functions will return after time and rehabilitation, but they may not return to their former levels.

Movement

Strokes can cause weakness or paralysis in one side of the body and problems with co-ordination and balance.

Many people experience extreme tiredness in the first few weeks after a stroke and have difficulty sleeping, making them even more tired.

You should be seen by a physiotherapist for several sessions a week, focusing on exercises to improve your muscle strength and overcome any walking difficulties. The physiotherapist can teach you simple exercises you can carry out at home.

After a stroke many people experience problems with speaking and understanding, as well as reading and writing.

If you have any problems with your vision after a stroke, you will be referred to an eye specialist.

If you have had a stroke you should not drive for one month. Whether you can return to driving depends on what

long-term disabilities you may have, and the type of vehicle you drive. It is often not only the physical problems that can make driving dangerous (such as pressing the pedals or holding the steering wheel) but problems with concentration, reaction time and awareness that may develop after a stroke.

Preventing further strokes

If you have had a stroke, your chances of having another one are significantly increased. Some studies show that without treatment you have around a 25 per cent chance of having another stroke within five years and a 40 per cent chance of having one within 10 years.

You will usually require long-term treatment aimed at improving the risk factors for your stroke, including medication to help lower your blood pressure with anticoagulants or antiplatelets to reduce your risk of blood clots, or with statins to lower your cholesterol levels.

Caring for someone who has had a stroke

There are many ways you can support a friend or relative who has had a stroke to speed up their rehabilitation. These include:

- helping them to practise exercises in between their sessions with the physiotherapist
- providing emotional support and reassurance
- helping motivate the person to reach their long-term goals
- adapting to needs they may have, such as speaking slowly if they have communication problems

Caring for somebody after a stroke can be frustrating. Someone who has had a stroke can seem as though they have had a change in personality, becoming angry or resentful. Upsetting as this may be, try not to take it personally, and remember that a person will often start to return to their old self as their recovery progresses.

Encouraging and praising progress, no matter how small it may appear, can help motivate someone who has had a stroke to achieve their long-term goals.

Can you hear me?

TO most people, 'pollution' means the ugly, unhygienic proliferation of rubbish in our streets. But there are other forms of pollution. One - getting worse day by day - is the pollution caused by mind-boggling NOISE.

Today's music centres are super-powerful, and those who use them seem to know no other way than at full power. Just one compound pounding out music for hour after hour, day and night, can cause distress for a whole neighbourhood.

Do you live near a nightclub? How many restful nights do you enjoy - or do you long to be able to get at least some sleep? Have you been to family parties where the music is so loud that guests have to yell to be heard or have to make contact by hand signals?

What can be done? We tend to get angry on some noisy occasions, and ignore the rest. The human brain is clever at adapting to adverse circumstances, so we cultivate a 'switch-off' mentality and learn not to hear what we don't want to hear.

But what about the beauty of silence? We may lose our ability to appreciate it.

What about the benefits of active attentiveness? We may be so accustomed to noise that we lose the ability to listen. Teachers complain that many children are not attentive in class. Part of the reason is that today's children are so used to noise left, right and centre - noise in the home, noise in the street, noise at school - that they are unable to concentrate.

Causing excessive noise is a form of selfish abuse.

Should we celebrate Valentine's day?

THURSDAY 14th February is so-called 'Valentine's Day'. Shops and restaurants entice us to buy cards and love-tokens, and to take romantic evening meals to the sound of soft and sentimental music.



Where does this commercial hype come from?

14th February used to be the feast of St Valentine, clubbed to death around the year 270 for succouring persecuted Christians; also the feast of St Valentine, Bishop of Terni, martyred a few years later.

In 1969 Pope Paul VI removed St Valentine from the Catholic calendar. Today's 'Valentine's Day', when friends exchange love tokens, has nothing to do with the Church or the saints. It's a relic of the old pagan Roman *Lupercalia* in February, with an association dating from mediæval times of the mating of birds.

Don't blame shops and restaurants for wanting your money; but you needn't feel that you have to take notice of 'Valentine's Day'!

18th February: Love and duty

MONDAY 18th February is a public holiday in celebration of the emergence of The Gambia as a sovereign nation in 1965 – now 54 years ago.

During these 54 years our country, like all others, has had its ups and downs, politically and economically; but it has maintained its territorial integrity, and Gambians have retained a quiet pride in the nation's identity, traditions and culture.

Gambians of varying social and linguistic origins live together in mutual respect and tolerance, while those from other countries who live among us are made welcome.

Many Gambians are increasingly aware of the need to pool our varied talents and resources and to work together for the common good. There is unprecedented public debate about the best ways to build the nation for the benefit of our young people and children.

In the Church we appreciate what we hold in common with our Muslim brothers and sisters; and we actively promote awareness that it is a Christian duty to respect the laws of the land and to exercise all the responsibilities of citizenship.

'If we fail to love our country, what is there left to honour and revere? To love one's country is a virtue. Without honourable patriotism, how can one learn to give proper honour to other countries and their peoples?'

Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster

Salvator mundi, salva nos, qui per crucem et resurrectionem tuam liberasti nos

Save us, Saviour of the world, who by your cross and passion have set us free

Sunday Reflections

Reflections, readings and prayers for Mass on all the Sundays
in February & March & Ash Wednesday



3rd February

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

From praise to rage



TODAY'S reading from Jeremiah reminds us that prophets cannot count on popularity: instead, they may well encounter opposition - even enmity.

The Gospel for today follows directly on the Gospel reading for last Sunday, when we heard that when Jesus taught in the synagogues of Galilee, everyone praised him. Thus, in today's account of his teaching, we read, 'All spoke well of him, and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.'

But then the mood turned ugly. Those in the synagogue were proud of their distinctive history, culture and traditions. When Jesus told them some 'home truths' they were enraged: how dare this 'son of a carpenter' address them in such a way! They drove Jesus out of the synagogue, and even tried to throw him down a cliff.

Let us not turn against Jesus when he tells us truths about ourselves that we don't want to hear.

Somewhat in contrast, today's second reading, from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, is a glorious hymn about love: one of the best known passages in the New Testament.

Collect

GRANT us, Lord our God, that we may honour you with all our mind, and love everyone in truth of heart...

Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-5,17-19. Psalm 70:1-6,15,17.
Response: My lips will tell of your help. 1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:13.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, says the Lord; no one can come to the Father except through me...

Gospel: Luke 4:21-30.

Prayer over the Offerings

O LORD, we bring to your altar these offerings of our service: be pleased to receive them, we pray, and transform them into the Sacrament of our redemption...

Preface: the priest may use any one of the Prefaces provided for Sundays in Ordinary Time.

Prayer after Communion

NOURISHED by these redeeming gifts, we pray, O Lord, that through this help to eternal salvation our faith may ever increase...

10th February

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

'Here I am, send me'



THROUGHOUT the year, the first reading at Sunday Mass anticipates in some way the message of the Gospel. So in today's first reading we hear of the prophet Isaiah's vision of the Lord God in glory. Isaiah was conscious of his unworthiness, but God told him that his sins were forgiven. When God then said that he needed a messenger, Isaiah answered 'Here am I; send me.'

This Old Testament reading points us to the Gospel, where we're told that Simon Peter the fisherman, awed by Jesus' presence and power, cried out, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.'

Jesus told Peter not to be afraid; then said that he was commissioning Peter to catch people rather than catching fish.

Peter and his fellow-fishermen James and John immediately left everything and followed Jesus. They had been 'hooked'.

In the Lord's name, the Church bids us to follow Jesus all the way to his death and resurrection. Is our answer going to be 'Yes,' like Isaiah and Peter?

Collect

KEEP your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of unfailing grace, they may be defended always by your protection...

Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8. Psalm 137:1-5,7-8. Response: Before the angels I will bless you, O Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... I call you friends, says the Lord, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from the Father...

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11.

Prayer over the Offerings

O LORD our God, who once established these created things to sustain us in our frailty, grant, we pray, that they may become for us now the Sacrament of eternal life...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the Prefaces provided for Sundays in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

O GOD, who have willed that we be partakers in the one Bread and the one Chalice, grant us, we pray, so to live that, made one in Christ, we may joyfully bear fruit for the salvation of the world...

17th February

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Lord our hope



WORDS to encourage us in today's first reading: 'A blessing on the man who puts his trust in the Lord, with the Lord for his hope. He is like a tree by the waterside... and never ceases to bear fruit.' The responsorial psalm echoes this message.

Today's Gospel records that Jesus, no doubt to many people's surprise, spoke of the happiness of those who are poor, or hungry, or who weep. Such sufferers are happy - indeed fortunate - because God has the power to restore them and bring them to the perfect happiness of his kingdom.

We all want happiness. But if we aim no further than seeking success in a worldly way we haven't yet taken in what Jesus is offering us.

Collect

O GOD, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned to your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you...

Readings: Jeremiah 17:5-8. Psalm 1:1-4,6. Response: Happy the man who has placed all his trust in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:12,16-20.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...Blessed are you, Father, God of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children...

Gospel: Luke 6:17,20-26.

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY this oblation, Lord, we pray, cleanse and renew us, and may it become for those who do your will the source of eternal reward...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the Prefaces provided for Sundays in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

HAVING fed on these heavenly delights, we pray, O Lord, that we may always long for that food by which we truly

live...

24th February

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time**Asking for the impossible?**

LET'S face it: we followers of Jesus may find it very hard to put into practice what he tells us in today's Gospel: 'Love your enemies... pray for those who abuse you...'. All very well for Jesus, the very image of God; but for the rest of us, his words here are surely a counsel of perfection; and indeed throughout Christian history we can find many instances of Christians defending themselves rather than submit to their enemies.

But if we don't try, day by day, in every circumstance, to live up to the truth and goodness that flow from Jesus, we shall be like the young man who, when Jesus asked him to give everything up and follow him, turned away.

So - to all of us, always - Jesus says, 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you.'

Collect

GRANT, we pray, almighty God, that, always pondering spiritual things, we may carry out in word and deed that which is pleasing to you...

Readings: 1 Samuel 26:7-9,12-13,22-23. Psalm 102: 1-4,8,10,12-13. Response: The Lord is compassion and love. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...Open our hearts, O Lord, to accept the words of your Son...

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38.

Prayer over the Offerings

AS we celebrate your mysteries, O Lord, with the observance that is your due, we humbly ask you that what we offer to the honour of your majesty may profit us for salvation...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the Prefaces provided for Sundays in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

GRANT, we pray, almighty God, that we may experience the effects of the salvation which is pledged to us by these mysteries...

ETERNAL God, whose only Son shares
your glory, yet was born in human flesh
of the Virgin Mary, strengthen us in our
proclaiming his saving death and resurrection,
so that we may come to everlasting glory...

3rd March

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time*Lent is at hand*

OUR first reading, from the book named Sirach, says that a man can be judged by what he says. In today's Gospel, Our Lord echoes this, having pointed out that we should not criticise others when our own conduct is not what it should be.

Lent is at hand. One resolution we can all make is to determine that throughout Lent all that we say should be clean and true.

During Lent we can also bear in mind St Paul's advice in today's second reading: '...be steadfast, unmovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain'.

Collect

GRANT us, O Lord, we pray, that the course of this world may be directed by your peaceful rule, and that your Church may rejoice, untroubled in her devotion...

Readings: Sirach 27:4-7. Psalm 91:2-3,13-16. Response: It is good to give you thanks, O Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:54-58.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...Open our hearts, O Lord, to accept the words of your Son...

Gospel: Luke 6:39-45.

Prayer over the Offerings

O GOD, who provide gifts to be offered to your name, and count our oblations as signs of our desire to serve you with devotion, we ask of your mercy that what you grant as a source of merit may also help us to attain merit's reward...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the Prefaces provided for Sundays in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

NOURISHED by your saving gifts, we beseech your mercy, Lord, that by this same Sacrament with which you feed us in

LENT

the present age, you may make us partakers of life eternal...

6th March

Ash Wednesday*'House-full'... but why?*

PROBABLY it will be 'house full' in your church today, as the faithful flock to receive the ashes that give the day its name. As we read in the Old Testament, ashes symbolise grief, humiliation and repentance. 'There was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes' (Esther 4:3). For us, the ashes do not impart forgiveness unless we have taken account of our sins and asked for pardon.

As we leave church after Mass and Holy Communion, we should resolve to keep a faithful Lent, growing ever closer to Jesus.

Collect

GRANT, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint...

Readings: Joel 2:12-18. Psalm 50:3-6,12-14,17. Response: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned. 2 Corinthians 5:20 - 6:2.

Gospel acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! A pure heart create for me, O God, and give me again the joy of your help.

Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6,16-18.

After the Gospel comes the imposition of ashes. When the priest imposes the ashes on those who come forward, he says,

Repent, and believe in the Gospel *or*

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Prayer over the Offerings

AS we solemnly offer the annual sacrifice for the beginning of Lent, we entreat you, O Lord, that through works of penance and charity we may turn away from harmful pleasures and, cleansed from our sins, may become worthy to celebrate the Passion of your Son...

Preface III of Lent

...for as you will that our self-denial should give you thanks, humble our sinful pride, contribute to the feeding of the poor, and so help us to imitate you in your kindness...

Alternatively, the priest may use Preface IV of Lent:

...for through bodily fasting you restrain our thoughts, raise up our minds, and bestow both virtue and its rewards...

Prayer after Communion

MAY the Sacrament we have received sustain us, O Lord, that our Lenten fast may be pleasing to you and be for us a healing remedy...

Prayer over the People

POUR out a spirit of compunction, O Lord, on those who bow before your majesty, and by your mercy may they merit the rewards you promise to those who do penance...

10th March

1st Sunday in Lent*Temptation*

EVERY year on the First Sunday in Lent we hear an account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

Three times the devil tempted Jesus, and each time Jesus rebuked him with words from the Old Testament book, Deuteronomy.

Jesus in his person and his actions was and is the fulfilment of all Holy Scripture. He was 'tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin'. We pray daily as Jesus taught us, 'Lead us not into temptation'; but if we are tempted we know that Jesus understands, supports and restores us - if we turn to him for help.

In that faith, let us press on in faith and hope towards Easter and the resurrection, just as Jesus, after his forty days in the wilderness, went on to fulfil his Father's will.

Collect

GRANT, almighty God, that through the yearly observance of holy Lent we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ, and by worthy conduct pursue their effects...

Readings: Deuteronomy 26:4-10. Psalm 90:1-2,10-15.

Response: Be with me, Lord, in my distress. Romans 10: 8-13.

Gospel acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God...

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

Prayer over the Offerings

GIVE us the right dispositions, O Lord, we pray, to make these offerings, for with them we celebrate the beginning of this venerable and sacred time

Preface

...by abstaining forty long days from earthly food, he consecrated through his fast the pattern of our Lenten observance, and, by overturning all the snares of the ancient serpent, taught us to cast out the leaven of malice, so that, celebrating worthily the Paschal Mystery, we might pass over at last to the eternal paschal feast...

Prayer after Communion

RENEWED now with heavenly bread, by which faith is nourished, hope increased, and charity strengthened, we pray, O Lord, that we may learn to hunger for Christ, the true and living Bread, and strive to live by every word that proceeds from your mouth...

Prayer over the People

MAY bountiful blessing, O Lord, we pray, come down upon your people, that hope may grow in tribulation, virtue be strengthened in temptation, and eternal redemption be assured...

17th March
2nd Sunday in Lent

Transfiguration

AS we have noted, an account of the Lord's temptation is always read on the First Sunday in Lent; then on this, the Second Sunday, the Gospel is always an account of the Lord's transfiguration.

Just as Christ's temptation preceded his ministry, so his transfiguration preceded his passion.

When Jesus was transfigured before the awe-stuck disciples Peter, James and John, he was revealed as true God as well as true man.

Jesus was seen speaking with Moses and Elijah as a sign that he had come into the world to fulfil all that the prophets had foretold. A voice proclaimed, 'This is my Son. Listen to him.'

In today's first reading, that same voice - the voice of God the Father - spoke to the patriarch Abraham. And that voice speaks this very day to the Church and to each one of us.

Jesus is the Son of God the Father. We must listen to him because he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Moreover - as Paul assured the Philippians, in today's second reading - Jesus 'will transform these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body'.

Even so: come, Lord Jesus, transform us with your love and forgiveness.



Collect

O GOD, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory...

Readings: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18. Psalm 26:1.7-9, 13-14. Response: The Lord is my light and my help. Philippians 3:17 - 4:1.

Gospel acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! From the bright cloud the Father's voice was heard: This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.

Gospel: Luke 9:28-36

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY this sacrifice, O Lord, we pray, cleanse us of our faults and sanctify your people in body and mind for the celebration of the paschal mysteries...

Preface

... for after he had told the disciples of his coming Death, on the holy mountain he manifested to them his glory, to show, even by the testimony of the law and the prophets that the Passion leads to the glory of the Resurrection...

Prayer after Communion

AS we receive these glorious mysteries, we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord, for allowing us while still on earth to be partakers even now of the things of heaven...

Prayer over the People

BLESS your faithful, we pray, O Lord, with a blessing that endures for ever, and keep them faithful to the Gospel of your Only-Begotten Son, so that they may always desire and at last attain that glory whose beauty he showed in his own Body, to the amazement of his Apostles...

24th March
3rd Sunday in Lent

'Unless you repent...'

TODAY'S readings are a call to repentance.

First we hear about the burning bush which Moses saw in the wilderness. The bush was ablaze, but was not being consumed by fire.

Moses recognised this as a sign that God - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - is never changing in his care for mankind: God's love is boundless, and endless.

The psalm (Psalm 102) responds to this first reading: 'Give thanks to the Lord and never forget his blessings. It is he who forgives all your guilt...who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion... He made his ways known to Moses.'

For the second reading, we pass from the psalm to Paul's warning to the people of Corinth. Many Corinthians had forgotten or were neglecting God's revelation of himself to Moses and the people of Israel; and Paul warned them that not to make the same mistake as the people of Moses' day.

In the Gospel we hear Jesus solemnly warning his hearers, 'Unless you repent, you will all perish...'

Jesus' parable of the fig tree reminds us that we may not be granted unlimited time to repent.



The time to start life afresh with our sins forgiven is *now*, this very day: 'O that today you would listen to his voice; harden not your hearts' (Psalm 94:7). 'Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Collect

O GOD, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving, have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy...

Readings: Exodus 3:1-8,13-15. Psalm 102:1-4,6-8,11.

Response: The Lord is compassion and love. 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12.

(Alternative Readings and Preface: see page 24)

Gospel acclamation: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God! Repent, says the Lord, for the kingdom of heaven is close a hand...

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9.

Prayer over the Offerings

BE pleased, O Lord, with these sacrificial offerings, and grant that we who beseech pardon for our own sins, make take care to forgive our neighbour...

Preface

Either... for by your gracious gift each year your faithful await the sacred paschal feasts with the joy of minds made pure, so that, eagerly intent on prayer and on the works of charity, and participating in the mysteries by which they have been reborn, they may be led to the fullness of grace that you bestow on your sons and daughters...

or... for you have given your children a sacred time for the renewing and purifying of their hearts, that, freed from disordered affections, they may so deal with the things of this passing world as to hold rather to the things that eternally endure...

Prayer after Communion

AS we receive the pledge of things yet hidden in heaven and are nourished while still on earth with the Bread that comes from on high, we humbly entreat you, O Lord, that what is being brought about in us in mystery, may come to true completion...

Prayer over the People

DIRECT, O Lord, we pray, the hearts of your faithful, and in your kindness grant your servants this grace: that, abiding in the love of you and of their neighbour, they may fulfil the whole of your commands...

31st March

4th Sunday in Lent (Laetare Sunday)

*In the middle of Lent,
a reason to rejoice*

TODAY is known as *Laetare* - Latin for 'Rejoice!' It's a day for rejoicing, because if we say sorry to God we can be confident of his forgiveness.



Bishop Emeritus Robert Ellison reminded us: 'None of us should ever allow ourselves to believe that we have fallen so low that it would be impossible to stand up and start again.' This is made plain in today's Gospel parable.

The son who received great bounty from his father squandered it in self-indulgence. He sank to squalid poverty of body and soul. But when he appealed to his father, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you,' his father put his arms around him and threw a party for all the family. 'There is joy in the kingdom of heaven over one sinner who repents.'

In the second reading, taken from the Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: 'For anyone who is in Christ there is a new creation... It is all God's work. It is God who reconciled us to himself through Christ.'

As we leave Mass today, let us continue to sing in our hearts the responsorial psalm (Psalm 33): 'Glorify the Lord with me. Together let us praise his name. I sought the Lord and he answered me: from all my terrors he set me free. Look to him and be radiant....' Yes, *Laetare*: Rejoice!

Collect

O GOD, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten towards the solemn celebrations to come...

Readings: Joshua 5:9-12. Psalm 33:2-7. Response: Taste and see that the Lord is good. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. *(Alternative Readings and Preface: see page 24)*

Gospel acclamation: Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus! I will leave this place and go to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.'

Gospel: Luke 15: 1-3,11-32

Prayer over the Offerings

WE place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them, and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world...

Preface

Either... for by your gracious gift each year your faithful await the sacred paschal feasts with the joy of minds made pure, so that, eagerly intent on prayer and on the works of charity, and participating in the mysteries by which they have been reborn, they may be led to the fullness of grace that you bestow on your sons and daughters...

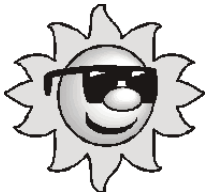
or... for you have given your children a sacred time for the renewing and purifying of their hearts, that, freed from disordered affections, they may so deal with the things of this passing world as to hold rather to the things that eternally endure...

Prayer after Communion

O GOD, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world illuminate our hearts, we pray, with the splendour of your grace, that we may always ponder what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty, and love you in all sincerity...

Prayer over the People

LOOK upon those who call to you, O Lord, and sustain the weak; give life by your unfailing light to those who walk in the shadow of death, and bring those rescued by your mercy from every evil to reach the highest good...



Fee moi Gambia

Blots on the urban landscape

FLY-POSTERS are adverts that organisers of concerts, sales, political activities and a good deal else affix to lamp-posts, shop fronts and all manner of walls. They usually don't ask anyone's permission, nor pay for what they stick up. Their posters often remain as eyesores - torn, discoloured, illegible - for long after the events they advertise.

I wouldn't be surprised if much of this flyposting is, in fact, illegal. It's certainly ugly. Cannot those whose property is defaced tear the offending posters down as soon as they're put up? Or even consider prosecuting the offenders?

Governor and artist

A FEW issues ago I wrote about Sir John MacCarthy, Governor of Sierra Leone and The Gambia in the early 19th century, who was killed fighting in Ghana - his skull ending up as an Ashanti drinking cup. Not quite so extreme, but also intriguing, was Sir John Paul, who died 17 years ago, in March 2001, aged 88. He was successively Governor of The Gambia, British Honduras and the Bahamas.

John Paul was born in 1916. In World War II he was captured by the Germans, spending most of the war as a prisoner. He and a comrade squeezed through an escape tunnel they'd dug, but were soon re-arrested.

After the war John Paul was called to the Bar, before joining the Colonial Service. Within five years in Sierra Leone he became a District Commissioner, and was subsequently promoted to Permanent Secretary, Provincial Commissioner and Secretary to the Sierra Leone Cabinet. In 1961 John Paul succeeded Sir Edward Windley as Governor of The Gambia.

When this country achieved independence in 1965, the Union Jack that came down at State House on the colonial regime ended up in Sir John's cottage in England, where he later hung it from a window to celebrate his daughter's success in her A-levels!

After remaining in The Gambia for a further year as Governor-General, Sir John was appointed Governor of British Honduras, where he found life dull, and took up painting to keep himself 'out of mischief'. In 1972 he was appointed Governor of the Bahamas, and the following year he oversaw independence celebrations.

Sir John's final job was Lieutenant-Governor of the Isle of Man, from 1974 to 1980. After retirement, he took up painting seriously and held exhibitions in aid of local charities.

After 200 years, renewal

HEARTENING news from Senegal. The two-hundred-year-old Cathedral at St Louis is being renovated at a cost of over one billion CFA francs. The work of rebuilding has already begun, and will be completed in 13 months.

The cathedral was the first of its kind in West Africa, built of bricks, some of which came from Bordeaux.

The cathedral has been listed as a Unesco World Heritage site since 2000. Funding for the renovation is being provided by the French Development Agency (AFD).

The cathedral was consecrated in November 1828, thanks to Mother Anne-Marie Javouhey, founder of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny, who on her arrival at St Louis in 1822 called for its construction.

The vast diocese of St Louis du Senegal is headed by Bishop Ernest Sambou. His predecessor was Bishop Pierre Sagna, greatly loved in The Gambia; indeed, he spent his retirement among us.

This news prompts me to visit St Louis - a city I've never been to.

Godless goodbye

I'M looking at the programme of a funeral in London. It was what's called 'humanist' ceremony - 'a meaningful non-religious ceremony just for you'.

Before the cremation - the destruction by fire - of the body, there were tributes to the deceased. There was time, too, for mourners 'to remember him in your own way' - which meant that some, at least, did silently pray for him.

This kind of farewell is increasingly common in Britain, and no doubt throughout much of Europe. It may become a fashion among some expatriates here, though cremation is not allowed in The Gambia, nor in most of Africa.

Humanists say they 'seek to make the most of the one life they have, and aim to live positive and responsible lives based on the goals of human welfare, happiness and fulfilment.' Humanists also claim that they 'make sense of the world using reason, experience and compassion'.

Who would argue with that? Christians and people of other religious faiths seek the same, except that they acknowledge the One God and their dependence on him.

And I have a couple of quibbles.

Why do so many humanists coyly avoid calling themselves atheists, when that is what they are?

Why have those who advocate euthanasia - the putting to death of the incurably-ill - renamed their Euthanasia Society 'Dignitas'?

Whether or not we believe in God, it's surely best to call a spade a spade. That's why the Creed is so simple and direct.

In vain...

AN acquaintance of mine, looking at his mobile, exclaimed, 'J*s*s! Is that the time? I must go!'

I've used asterisks because it upsets me when Jesus' name is used in frustration, anger, or as a swear-word. The name of Jesus should be used in prayer, not in abuse.

When I hear Christ's name being taken in vain, do I say anything? I don't. But I should do.

My resolution for Lent and beyond is that if friends or strangers use names sacred to Christians in a way that is offensive, I should say something - if only, 'Please don't use the name of Jesus in that way.'

Using Christ's name in an insulting way seems quite common among Europeans - those who have little respect for their own religious roots. Some local Catholics are not blameless - though I have scarcely ever heard a Muslim using name of Jesus in any other than a respectful way.

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CHILDREN'S PAGE

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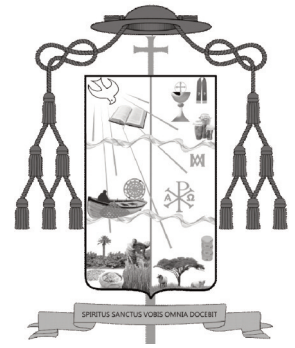


Jesus was alone in the desert for forty days.
He refused to listen to bad words from the devil.



Turning our hearts and minds to God

The New Year Message of Bishop GABRIEL MENDY



World Youth Day

AT the start of every New Year, we Christians and believers of other faiths turn our minds and hearts to God for different but obvious reasons.

First of all, we present ourselves to God in thanksgiving for our lives, because we believe that God is the source of our lives, and he is the one who has sustained and protected us in the past year.

We also remember and pray to God for his blessings and favours in the New Year; and we hope for better results and progress in life than previous years.

Our thoughts are equally directed to God at the beginning of a New Year because we believe we depend on God to bring our plans and expectations to fulfilment in accordance with his will.

Another reason we turn our attention to God is because God is the Creator of the world of creation, as well as the times and seasons of the year.

In Genesis 1:14 we are told that God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for times and seasons and for days and years.'

A New Year is, therefore, God's own creation that he designed and offered us as a favourable time of grace, growth, change, renewal, hard work and commitment in life.

As we begin the New Year of 2019 we should thank God for his goodness, protection, assistance and blessings in the past year.

We should also commend this New Year into God's care, that he will continue to enlighten and guide us in his ways and use us to accomplish his plans and purposes for our society, the Church, and the world at large.

Each and every one of us in our various vocations and positions in life is called to make a positive contribution in our religious, social, economic and political activities for the good of the human race - for our reward with God in this life and in the life to come depends on how we co-operated with God and disposed our gifts, talents, and resources at the service of our brothers and sisters in need.

What truly matters in God's sight is not the number of years or one's lifespan and prominence in society. Rather, what counts is the spiritual, moral and human qualities of one's life in relation to others.

We are reminded in Psalm 100:4 that 'in God's sight a thousand years are like yesterday come and gone, no more than a watch in the night'. This conviction about God was emphasised in 2 Peter 3:8: 'With the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day.' We are therefore required at the start of a New Year to examine ourselves, improve the quality of our lives, and live up to God's expectation - not our own aspirations and expectations.

Several major events will take place in the course of this New Year. Within the Catholic Church, there are two special celebrations that require our participation, support and prayers. The World Youth Day (WYD) will take place this year in Panama from 22nd to 27th January. This event is organised every four years to enable the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to affirm the faith of young people from around the world, and encourage them to respond to the demands of the Gospel in their lives.

They also have the opportunity to encounter other youths from different parts of the world. A delegation from the Diocese of Banjul will participate in this event. The theme for this year's World Youth Day is, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done to me according to thy word.' (Luke 1:38). These words should inspire and challenge every Christian to offer himself or herself during the New Year at the service of God's will. We should pray for the success of the World Youth Day and be ready to follow in the footsteps of Mary, our Blessed Mother.

The Pope has also declared October 2019 as the Extraordinary Missionary Month, with the theme, 'Baptised and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World'. All who are baptised are invited to actively renew the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. This can be done through prayer, reflection, action, sacrifice and the offering of oneself to the Church's mission.

The custom of making New Year resolutions is quite useful and appropriate so long as one is committed to fulfil one's resolutions in the family and society. Our personal resolutions, promises and good intentions for 2019 should, therefore, be faithfully observed throughout the year.

We should not allow ourselves, in that case, to repeat the serious mistakes of past years that generated disappointment, frustration, and uncertainty in our communities and nation.

As the Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Banjul, I pray that God will grant all Gambians at home and abroad a peaceful, successful, healthy and progressive New Year.

May God continue to preserve our country and the Church in The Gambia from the forces and agents of evil who are against peace, unity, cooperation, mutual respect and co-existence.

Let us in this New Year promote and work for the common good and interest of our Church and nation rather than for our own personal motives and ambitions.

I wish all Christians, Muslims and believers of other faiths and their families and friends a peaceful, happy and prosperous New Year.

May God bless and protect all of you throughout this year of 2019.

We're all going to die - that's why we're Catholics

by Father JOHN ZUHLSDORF

THERE is a great deal of confusion in the Church today. We have in large part forgotten who we are as Catholics and why we belong to the Church.

We don't belong to the Catholic Church first and foremost for earthly motives. Bettering the world, improving the lot of others ... these flow from our love for God and our desire to be with him in heaven.

Try as I might, I cannot think of a more important reason to be a member of the Holy Catholic Church than the certainty that one day I will die.

I will die and I will be judged.

You will, too.

Why are we Catholic? Why bother with Mass? Why bother with the Church's teachings about moral issues? Why stand against the wind in the public square, just to lose friends, status and comfort?

Why? Because our Saviour established the Catholic Church as our way to salvation.

No matter how bad some fellow members of the Church may be, or how alluring the world surely is, or how tough we think we have had it, we are going to die one day, some of us pretty soon. That's why we are Catholic.

I hope by grace and elbow grease to do his will and to serve and worship him fittingly in his Church.

I try to love God. I want to please God. I believe he will help me, a sinner, in my weakness and forgive me when I fail. I strive to make changes when I am doing something that isn't working. Why? Because I'm going to die, that's why. I want to go to heaven.

If we love God, we will try to help other people get to heaven, too.

Weary and weak

We have some problems with that part now, because Catholic identity is weary and weak where once it was strong and everything.

We are all men and women of our age. To one degree or other we are subject to prevailing trends and world-views. Also, we are wounded from sin, and death is scaring.

Death yawns before us as that door we must go through to come before the great mystery which is both fearsome and alluring. We are, to our peril, quite willing to avert our eyes from this fearful prospect, death, through innumerable distractions which fog our inner compass.

We easily forget the one transcendent source of our being, our origin and goal.

We glide into neglect of the supernatural. We become less and less concerned with guilt for sin, even with the idea of sin as anything beyond transgressions of what we ourselves

determine is right for ourselves at this time.

We lose sight of our absolute dependence on God for help through grace, our need for a Saviour, and our impending judgment.

We forsake clarity in doctrine and the obligations which come from the profession of the Christian faith, including submission to the Church's authority given her by Christ.

The suggestion that something we might do could offend God and endanger our salvation sounds increasingly foreign. We get the idea that we are self-sufficient. We forget the real reason why Jesus died for us and why we are Catholic.

The encounter with mystery

I propose that to get at the root of our problems we need encounters with the transcendent, with mystery. The regular way for this is through participation in true worship: Holy Church's sacred liturgical worship.

Joseph Ratzinger [later, Pope Benedict XVI] noted in 'The Spirit of the Liturgy' that as the Hebrews danced around their golden calf they knew the calf was not God: they simply wanted a god less remote and less challenging.

Participation in worthy liturgical worship leads us beyond the didactic, the interesting, the entertaining - even the individual experience - into an encounter with mystery. This encounter draws us back to recognition of the gift of life, the fact of our coming death, back towards fearful, loving awe for God. True worship is the remedy for the self-centred, self-enclosed, self-

sufficient self-obsession of modern times. Our worship must focus on the one who is Other.

Is this what your regular experience of Mass offers you? If it doesn't, it has quite simply failed.

When Christ's powerful word had calmed the storm, he rebuked the disciples for their little faith (Matthew 8:26). He wanted to say: it was your faith that was sleeping.

He will say the same thing to us. Our faith too is often asleep. Let us ask him then to wake us from the sleep of a faith grown tired, and to restore to that faith the power to move mountains - that is, to order justly the affairs of the world.

The more people encounter mystery through liturgy, the more hollow will clang the world's passing distractions and the proposals of those who have strayed from the good path.

Fr Zuhlsdorf writes for the American weekly newspaper, The Wanderer.

The above is an abridgment of a piece reprinted in The Catholic Herald, London.



'I confess...'

A simple guide to making your Confession

IT is a good idea to examine your conscience every day.

In Lent it is highly appropriate that the faithful should have recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation – otherwise known as Penance, or Confession.

Try to go to confession regularly. Going once a month is good practice. Even if you are not aware of any serious sins, you will receive the grace and strength of God every time you go.

You should confess any mortal sins as soon as possible. A mortal sin is an offence against God made deliberately, knowing it to be wrong. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1857)

'Each of the faithful is bound by obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1457)

'When he celebrates the sacrament of Penance, the priest exercises the ministry of the Good Shepherd in search of the lost sheep, the Good Samaritan healing the wounds, the Father waiting to welcome back the prodigal son, the Just Judge whose judgment is just and merciful at the same time.' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1465)

A prayer before Confession

LORD Jesus, open my mind and my heart to your Holy Spirit. Help me to remember my sins, to be sorry for them, and to try hard never to sin again.

HOLY Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, that I may make a good confession.

A simple examination of conscience

Jesus says: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.'

- Have I been loyal to Jesus and his Church?
- Have I betrayed my faith, or put it at risk?
- Am I faithful in daily prayer?
- Have I put my trust in superstitions?
- Have I cursed, sworn, or broken my word?
- Have I missed Mass on any Sunday or Holyday of Obligation through my own fault?
- Have I fulfilled my Easter duties (going to Confession and Communion during the Easter period)?

Jesus says: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

- Have I respected my parents and those in authority?
- Have I been angry, proud or hateful to others?
- Have I neglected my family responsibilities?
- Have I got drunk, or been greedy or lazy?
- Have I been impure in thought, word, looks or action?
- Have I cheated, stolen, or gambled beyond my means?
- Have I told lies to excuse myself or injure others?

Remember: if it has been a long time since your last Confession, or you are not sure what to say, ask the priest to guide you. He will be happy to help.



At Confession

You begin by saying:

BLESS me, Father, for I have sinned. It is a week/month (or however long you think it has been) since my last Confession.

Then tell the priest all the things you are sorry for.

When you are finished, you may say:

I AM very sorry for these sins and all the sins of my past life.

The priest may then give you some brief words of advice, and will give you your penance (some prayers to say or some action to do, to show that you are sorry).

He will then ask you to say the Act of Contrition:

O MY GOD, because you are so good I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace I will not sin again.

The priest then gives Absolution, forgiving you your sins:

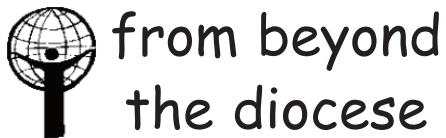
GOD, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world, and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins.

Through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace; and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me,
for all the many blessings you have won for me.
Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly
and follow you more nearly, day by day.

Correction

We apologise that on the back page of our December/January issue the date of the Feast of the Baptism was given as 6th January, rather than 13th January.



from beyond
the diocese

'Love is more valuable than anything'



JESUS' birth in a stable, God's coming to earth in extreme simplicity, teaches Christians that love is more valuable than anything else and is what will change the world, Pope Francis said at Midnight Christmas Mass at St Peter's in Rome.

'In Bethlehem, we discover that the life of God can enter into our hearts and dwell there. If we welcome that gift, history changes, starting with each of us,' the Pope said.

After the singing of the *Kalenda*, the ancient Christmas proclamation, Pope Francis lifted a cloth revealing an image of the Infant Jesus, and gently kissed it.

St Peter's was filled with a light. For the first time, the basilica's new lighting was used: 700 light fixtures containing 100,000 LEDs, which will bring energy savings of 90 per cent.

In his homily, the Pope noted how the Christmas story leads believers back to Bethlehem, which means 'house of bread'.

'Tonight,' he said, 'as we hear the summons to go up to Bethlehem, the house of bread, let us ask ourselves: 'What is the bread of my life, what is it that I cannot do without? Is it the Lord, or something else?'

'Tender poverty'

'Then,' the Pope continued, 'as we enter the stable, sensing in the tender poverty of the newborn child a new fragrance of life, the odour of simplicity, let us ask ourselves: 'Do I really need all these material objects and complicated recipes for living? Can I manage without all these unnecessary extras, and live a life of greater simplicity?'

When sin entered the world with Adam and Eve, 'mankind became greedy and voracious. In our day, for many people, life's meaning is found in possessing, in having an excess of material objects. An insatiable greed marks all human history, even today, when, paradoxically, a few dine luxuriantly while all too many go without the daily bread needed to survive.'

But for those who welcome the birth of Jesus and strive to follow him, the Pope said, the centre of life is 'no longer my ravenous and selfish ego, but the one who is born and lives for love'.

Standing before the manger teaches believers that what matters in life 'is not material riches but love, not gluttony but charity, not ostentation but simplicity'.

'Be not afraid'

Another result of sin, Francis declared, is fear, including fear of God. But the night Jesus was born, the shepherds heard an angel telling them not to be afraid.

'Bethlehem is the remedy' for people's fear, said Francis, because God constantly says, "Yes"... He will always be God-with-us. And lest his presence inspire fear, he makes himself a tender child.'

'"Be not afraid": these words were not spoken to saints, but to shepherds, simple people who in those days were certainly not known for their refined manners and piety,' the Pope said. 'The Son of David was born among shepherds in order to tell us that never again will anyone be alone and abandoned; we have a shepherd who conquers our every fear and loves us all, without exception.'

The shepherds, he said, are also a reminder to Christians to remain awake, watchful and full of hope, even 'amid the gloom of our problems'.

Francis ended his homily with a prayer: 'I want to come to Bethlehem, Lord, because there you await me. I want to realise that you, lying in a manger, are the bread of my life. I need the tender fragrance of your love so that I, in turn, can be bread broken for the world.'

Vatican Secretary of State visits Iraq

DURING a four-day Christmas visit to Iraq from 24th-28th December, the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, urged Catholics in northern Iraq to remain steadfast in their faith and open to forgiveness, despite the challenges facing their community.



Delivering a homily at the Syro-Catholic Cathedral in Bakhdida, near Mosul, the cardinal likened the plight of the Christian population over the past five years to the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt.

'The Church and the whole world witnessed with disbelief and horror the events of the summer 2014, when from one day to the next you were forced to leave everything behind and flee from your homes,' said Cardinal Parolin. 'In an inspiring witness, you did not deny your faith. Like the Holy Family of Nazareth, you chose the path of exile in order to protect the lives of your children, the hope of the future.'

In August 2014 most Christians left the area after Islamic State had taken control. At the time, it was Iraq's largest Christian city. Many Christian sites were destroyed.

The city was liberated in October 2016; and its residents have begun to return, albeit hesitantly. Cardinal Parolin praised the Christians of northern Iraq for staying firm in their beliefs despite 'these years of harsh trial', and declared that their faith has helped to restore the faith of other Christians around the world. He thanked the organisations who have

worked and prayed that the area will be made safe again.

The sacrifices made by the Middle East's Christians, said the cardinal, 'will be no less fruitless than the witness of the many martyrs' from the early Church, who 'bathed the land with their blood and lived their faith heroically to the end'.

Cardinal Parolin called on those present to be 'artisans of reconciliation and peace, witnesses of love and forgiveness, a well-spring of goodness and a blessing for all'.

The cardinal noted that while people have started to return and to rebuild, just as the Holy Family eventually returned to Nazareth, their hardest task is not physical rebuilding, but re-establishing a social fabric torn by betrayal, bitterness and hatred over the last few years. He said the vocation of the region's Christians is to stay true to their roots and create a better future for their children.



The Church beatifies 19 murdered in the Algerian civil war

ON 8th December, 19 monks, nuns and other Catholics killed during Algeria's civil war were beatified - the first step towards being declared saints.

The beatification, held in Oran, Algeria's second city, was the first in a Muslim country. Those beatified were killed between 1994 and 1996 during Algeria's civil war.

The ceremony, attended by 1,200, was conducted on behalf of the Pope by Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

In a message, Pope Francis spoke of his hope that 'this celebration helps to heal the wounds of the past and create a new dynamic of meeting and living together... We believe that this unprecedented event in your country will draw a great sign of fraternity in the Algerian sky to the whole world.'

The 19 'blessed' were killed when Algeria was in the grips of a 10-year war between government forces and extremists that left up to 200,000 people dead.

Those beatified include seven French Trappist monks (pictured above). They were kidnapped from the monastery of *Notre Dame de l'Atlas* in Tibhirine in 1996. Their deaths inspired a film, *Des Hommes et des Dieux* ('Of Gods and Men'), that in 2010 won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival.

Others beatified included the Bishop of Oran, Pierre Claverie, who was killed in 1996 when a remote-controlled bomb exploded outside his residence. Eleven other religious men and women - from France, Spain, Belgium and Malta, who were gunned down during the conflict - were also declared blessed.

After the beatification, Muslim leaders received the families of the murdered priests and religious at the Ibn Badis Grand Mosque, where an imam, Mostapha Jaber, said, 'We Muslims associate this event with much joy... These Christian martyrs killed during this national tragedy... had a good mission: [they were] determined to spread peace.'

Algeria is the tenth-largest country in the world, and the largest in Africa. The population is about 42 million, of whom 98 per cent are Muslim, and less than one per cent Christian.

The nun who became a TV celebrity

SISTER Wendy Beckett, an English Catholic nun who left her cloistered life in the countryside to become an international celebrity by presenting television programmes on art history, died on 26th December at a residential home in the grounds of a Carmelite monastery. She was 88.



Sr Wendy retreated to a life of seclusion in 1970. She lived alone, spending seven hours a day in reading and in prayer.

She began to study art history and to write for magazines. In 1988 she published the first of more than 30 books, 'Contemporary Women Artists'.

'One-take Wendy'

In 1991 Sr Wendy appeared in a BBC documentary on the paintings of Rembrandt. Viewers were transfixed by the nun in full religious habit, speaking with wit and warmth. She soon became the host of her own BBC show, 'Sister Wendy's Odyssey'.

Speaking without a script, Sr Wendy became known to television producers as 'one-take Wendy', describing art with a mixture of glee, ecstasy and wonder.

For her second series she visited Paris, Rome, Amsterdam, Madrid, Florence and Berlin. Sr Wendy often attracted a quarter of the British television audience.

Her most ambitious TV series, 'Sister Wendy's Story of Painting', appeared on the BBC in 1996. For the series, she visited 12 countries and travelled more than 30,000 miles to chronicle painting from prehistoric times to Picasso.

Wendy Mary Beckett was born in February 1930 in Johannesburg. She soon moved with her family to Scotland, where her father studied medicine. The family later returned to South Africa.

As a child, Sr Wendy read constantly. She entered the religious life in 1946, joining the Sisters of *Notre Dame de Namur*, a teaching order, and studying English literature at Oxford, graduating in 1953 with top honours. She maintained silence, living in a religious community and rarely speaking to her classmates. She taught in schools in South Africa from 1954 to 1970, when she began to suffer from epilepsy.

Sr Wendy was released from her order and lived by herself in a caravan in the garden of a Carmelite monastery in northern England for the rest of her life, although she was not a member of that order.

She continued to write books, including works on art history, Catholic saints and personal meditations, until 2011. She donated all her earnings to the monastery where she lived - a monastery which had no television set.

'I think beauty is a reflection of the light of God,' she said in a 1994 interview. 'I cannot give you a better definition than that.'

Catholic leaders to meet in Rome

SUMMONED by Pope Francis, the presidents of bishops' conferences throughout the world will meet in Rome from Thursday 21st to Sunday 24th February to discuss the prevention of the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults in the Church.

The Gospel that shines with joy

The Year of Luke

FROM the First Sunday of Advent (2nd December 2018) until Christ the King (24th November 2019), most of the Gospel readings come from the Gospel according to St Luke (given in the Sunday missal as 'Year C').

LUKE was not a Jew, but a Syrian from Antioch who converted to Christianity when the first missionaries left the Jerusalem and Caesarea communities to carry the Gospel beyond the Jewish community.

Luke travelled to Rome, where he stayed for at least two years. There he met Peter and Mark, who were preaching among the Christians in Rome.

Luke was not one of the twelve Apostles, but was a friend of St Paul. They travelled together to many cities, preaching the message of Christ.

Luke was well-educated, and is considered the most accomplished of the four Gospel writers. His Gospel was written about AD 65-75. He was also the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Taken together, Luke's Gospel and Acts make up a quarter of the New Testament.

Luke's Gospel, like Acts, is addressed to a certain Theophilus; but Luke seems to have in mind Christian converts from paganism, especially those whose cultural background was Greek.

Luke and Matthew are the two Gospel writers who give an account of the birth and early life of Christ, and Luke gives an especial place to Mary.

The central section of Luke's Gospel uses a journey to Jerusalem as its framework. 'Now, as the time drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem...' (Luke 9:51). This is a device to bring out Luke's emphasis on Jerusalem - the Holy City - as the stage for Christ's saving passion, death and resurrection.

Mercy and forgiveness

Luke emphasises that Christ offers salvation to everyone. He presents Christ as full of pity, mercy and forgiveness, often reaching out to people, even without being asked.

Luke has many texts on forgiveness, and likes to show Jesus at prayer. His Gospel shines with joy.



Alternative Readings & Prefaces for the 3rd & 4th Sundays in Lent (24th & 31st March)

3rd SUNDAY

Readings: Exodus 17:3-7. Psalm 94:1-2,6-9. Response: O that today you would listen to his voice: 'Harden not your hearts.' Romans 5:1-2,5-8.

Gospel acclamation: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God! Lord, you are really the Saviour of the world; give me the living water, that I may never get thirsty.'...

Gospel: John 4:5-42.

Preface ...for when you asked the Samaritan woman for water to drink, he had already created the gift of faith within

her, and so ardently did he thirst for her faith, that he kindled in her the fire of divine love...

4th SUNDAY

Readings: 1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13. Psalm 22. Response: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Ephesians 5:8-14.

Gospel acclamation: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God! I am the light of the world, says the Lord; anyone who follows me will have the light of life...

Gospel: John 9:1-41.

Preface: By the mystery of the Incarnation he has led the human race that walked in darkness into the radiance of the faith, and has brought those born in slavery to ancient sin through the waters of regeneration to make them your adopted children...



Question Box

Pope Francis often condemns 'clericalism'.

What does this word mean?

A 19th-CENTURY English monsignor once declared, 'What is the province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain. These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have no right at all.'

Clericalism at its worst is the attitude that priests and religious are fully Catholic, but that lay people are somehow of lesser significance: 'Father is always right' and 'Don't question anything a priest or bishop does.'

Jesus saw the priesthood as service. That is why the sacrament of Holy Orders is described by the Catechism as a 'sacrament at the service of communion'.

Lay men and women are called to obey their bishops in matters of faith and morals, and to honour their bishops as spiritual fathers. But lay people have much more to offer the Church than simply 'pay, pray and obey.'



**World Day of Prayer
for Women**

**‘Come,
everything is
ready’**

THE WORLD Day of Prayer for Women is an ecumenical Christian laywomen’s initiative, celebrated annually in over 170 countries on the first Friday in March - this year, 1st March.

The movement brings together women of various races, cultures and traditions in a yearly common Day of Prayer, as well as in closer fellowship, understanding and action throughout the year.

Through the World Day of Prayer, women are encouraged to become aware of other countries and cultures. They are also encouraged take up other people’s burdens, to sympathise with the problems of other countries and cultures, and to pray with and for them. They are further encouraged to become aware of their talents and to use them in the service of society. The World Day of Prayer aims to demonstrate that prayer and action are inseparable, and that both have immeasurable influence in the world.

Each year, the service has a particular theme. This year’s prayers have been chosen by Christian women in Slovenia on the theme, ‘Come, everything is ready’: Luke 14:15-24

Slovenia

Slovenia is a state in southern Central Europe, with a population about the same size as that of The Gambia.

Slovenia is bordered by Italy to the west, Austria to the north, Hungary to the north-east, Croatia to the south-east, and the Adriatic Sea to the south-west. It covers 20,273 square kilometres, and has a population of 2.07 million.

The country is mountainous, one of the most water-rich in Europe, and over half-covered by forest.

Slovenia is a member of the European Union. The capital is Ljubljana. The official language is Slovene.



**The most visited Catholic site in Slovenia:
the Basilica of the Virgin Mary in Brezje,
also known as the Slovenian National Shrine**

Historically, Slovenia has formed part of many different states. In December 1918 it merged with Serbia into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

During World War II Germany, Italy, and Hungary occupied Slovenia, and in 1945 it became a founding member of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. In June 1991 Slovenia split from Yugoslavia and became an independent country. In 2007 it became the first formerly communist country to join the Eurozone.

Catholicism and Lutheranism have influenced Slovenia’s culture and identity. Before World War II, 97 per cent of the population declared itself Catholic, and around three per cent Lutheran.

After 1945 the country underwent steady secularisation. After 1990, the Catholic Church regained some of its former influence, but Slovenia remains a largely secularised society.

According to a 2002 census, 58 per cent of the population is Catholic. Islam is the second largest grouping, with around two per cent of the population. The third largest grouping is Orthodox Christianity. In the 2002 census, around 10 per cent of Slovenes declared themselves atheists, another 10 per cent professed no specific denomination, and around 16 per cent decided not to answer the question about their religious affiliation.

As we go to press, we have received no details concerning the celebration of this year’s Women’s World Day of Prayer in The Gambia.

Congratulations

Monday 25th March is the 38th Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of the Second Bishop of Banjul, the Right Reverend Michael Cleary CSSp, now living in retirement in Ireland.



The Pope’s Prayer Intentions

February

For a generous welcome to the victims of human trafficking, enforced prostitution and violence.

March

That Christian communities, especially those who are persecuted, feel that they are close to Christ, and have their rights respected.

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Weekday celebrations February & March

Saturday 2nd February: The Presentation of the Lord

IN the Law of Moses (Exodus 13:12) a first-born male child had to be redeemed by an offering of five shekels in the Temple in Jerusalem (Numbers 18:15-17). Mary took Jesus to the Temple in accordance with Jewish custom (Leviticus 12:1-6). She underwent the ceremony of Purification and redeemed her 40-day-old Child with the traditional offering of 'a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons'.

Another name for the Presentation is the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is also known as Candlemas. As at the Easter vigil, everyone in the congregation holds a lighted candle. This celebrates Simon's declaration that the Child Jesus was to become 'a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel'.

Candlemas echoes Christmas and the Epiphany in celebrating Christ as the Incarnate Son of God and the Light of the World. Yet it also points us towards Lent and Christ's trials, suffering and death. Simon tells Mary, 'A sword will pierce your own soul.' Our candles remind us that we are to be lights in our generation, whether for joy or suffering. In this way, like Mary, we fulfil God's will as faithful disciples of Christ.

6th February: St Paul Miki & his Companions *martyrs*

PAUL Miki was born around 1562 into a rich Japanese family. He was educated by Jesuits, and became a Jesuit priest himself, well-known as a preacher and a maker of numerous converts. The Japanese authorities feared the influence of the Jesuits, and began persecuting them. Miki and others were imprisoned. He and fellow Catholic prisoners were forced to walk 966 kilometres from the city of Kyoto to Nagasaki, the Japanese city which had the most Christian converts. On their way, all the while, they sang the *Te Deum*. At Nagasaki on 5th February 1597, Miki and his companions were crucified. From his cross he preached a final sermon, assuring his executioners that he forgave them. Alongside Miki died Joan Soan (de Gotó) and Santiago Kisai of the Society of Jesus, in addition to 23 priests and laity (known collectively as the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Japan), all of whom were canonised by Pope Pius IX in 1862.

Some three and a half centuries after the martyrdom of Paul Miki and his companions, the destruction of Nagasaki by a nuclear bomb brought about innumerable deaths and forced the end of the Second World War.

Friday 8th February: St Josephine Bakhita *religious*

JOSEPHINE Bakhita was born around 1869 in the western Sudan region of Darfur. When she was about nine she was kidnapped by slave traders. Over the course of 12 years she was resold several times and forcibly converted to Islam. Her fourth owner was a general whose wife was very cruel. In 1883 Bakhita was bought by the Italian Vice-Consul, who treated her kindly. Two years later, when he had to return to Italy, Bakhita begged to go with him. In 1889 an Italian court ruled that, because the British had outlawed slavery in Sudan before Bakhita's birth, and because Italian law did not recognise slavery, Bakhita had never legally been a slave. On 9th January 1890 she was baptised, confirmed and received Holy Communion. In 1893 she entered the novitiate of the Canossian Sisters. In 1896 she took her vows and was assigned to the convent at Schio, in northern Italy. For 42 years she was in frequent contact with the local community, and noted for her charisma and sanctity. The publication of her story in 1931 (*Storia Meravigliosa* by Ida Zanolini) made her famous throughout Italy. During the Second World War (1939-1945) she shared the fears and hopes of the townspeople, who considered her a saint, and felt protected by her mere presence. Bakhita's last years were marked by sickness. She died on 8th February 1947. For three days her body lay on display while thousands paid their respects. She was canonised in 2000 by Pope St John Paul II.



Monday 11th February: Our Lady of Lourdes

THE SHRINE to Our Lady at Lourdes, a town in south-west France, has since the late 19th century been a place of major pilgrimage, attracting over six million Christians of all denominations each year, especially the sick and disabled.

In 1858 a local miller's daughter, 14-year-old Maria-Bernarda Sobirós, reported that from 11th February to 16th July the Blessed Virgin Mary had appeared to her in visions. In 1862, after investigation by the Catholic authorities, Pope Pius IX declared that her claims were worthy of belief. In 1933 the Church canonised St Bernadette (as Marie-Bernarde Soubirós is now known). She has her own feast day on 16th April (though it is not celebrated this year, as it falls in Holy Week).

Thursday 14th February: St Cyril & St Methodius

CYRIL and Methodius were brothers and missionaries who carried the Gospel into the Slavonic countries. They translated liturgical books, using a new script, Cyrillic, to do so. Cyril died in 869 and Methodius in 885. They are listed among the Patrons of Europe.

Friday 22nd February: The Chair of St Peter

THE FEAST of the Chair of St Peter has been kept in Rome since the 4th century. We give thanks for our unity with the Pope and with fellow Catholics throughout the world, and pray for the preservation and strengthening of this unity.

Friday 1st March: St David *bishop*

DAVID, patron saint of Wales, was a bishop in the 6th century, renowned as a teacher, preacher and founder of monasteries and churches in Wales and in Brittany. He lived in simplicity, and his Monastic Rule seems extreme. Monks had to pull the plough without the help of animals, drink only water, and eat only bread with salt and herbs, and to spend their evenings in prayer, reading and writing. No personal possessions were allowed: even to say 'my book' was considered an offence.

Saturday 23rd February: St Polycarp *bishop and martyr*

POLYCARP was one of the 'second-generation' of Christians, a disciple of the Apostles. As Bishop of Smyrna, he was martyred about the year 155 because he refused to take the required oath to the Roman emperor's deity, and to curse Christ. 'I have served him for eighty-six years, and he has done me no harm. How can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?' Polycarp was burned alive. Accounts of his martyrdom emphasise that his death, like his life, was a fragrant offering to God. Fellow-Christians gathered up his remains - one of the earliest examples of devotion to a saint's relics.

Tuesday 19th March: St Joseph *spouse of the Virgin Mary*

JOSEPH was the divinely-chosen husband of the Virgin Mary, with whom he lived in chastity (one of his emblems is a lily). He was a descendant of the royal house of David. In the original Greek New Testament he is described as a *teckton* (craftsman), rendered in several English translations as 'carpenter'. Because Joseph was so close to the Christ-Child and practised the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience, he is an example to all, and especially to members of religious orders.

In The Gambia, sisters of St Joseph of Cluny and St Joseph of Annecy have long prayed, witnessed and served among us.

We pray especially today for the Parish Priest and people of St Joseph's, Basse.



Monday 25th March: The Annunciation of the Lord

THE ANNUNCIATION is a joyous feast, even when it falls in Lent. It celebrates Mary's assent to God's will, conveyed by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:26-38), that she was to become the mother of our Saviour. This day reminds us that Mary's Son is the Incarnate Son of God: a mystery authenticated by Christ's Resurrection. In submitting to God, Mary said, 'Be it done to me according to your word.' Her response prefigures Luke's account of Christ's prayer before his arrest, trial and crucifixion: 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, your will, not mine, be done.' (Luke 22:42).

Today we pray for Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary, episcopally ordained on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1981.

Daily Mass Readings



February & March

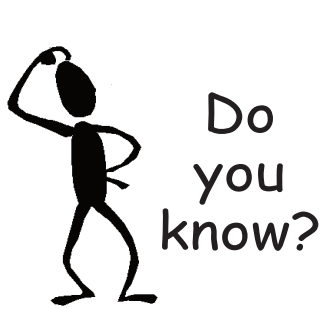
Sunday Readings year C. Weekday readings Year 1.

Memorials in brackets are optional

Fri 1st February	Hebrews 10:32-39. Psalm 36:3-6,23-24,39-40. Mark 4:26-34	
Sat 2nd	Malachi 3:1-4 <i>or</i> Hebrews 2:14-18. Psalm 23:7-10. Luke 2:22-40.	The PRESENTATION of THE LORD
Sun 3rd	Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19. Psalm 70:1-6,15,17. 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13. Luke 4:21-30.	4th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME 1st Anniversary of Bishop Mendy's consecration
Mon 4th	Hebrews 11:32-40. Psalm 30:20-24. Mark 5:1-20.	
Tue 5th	Hebrews 12:1-4. Psalm 21:26-28,30-32, Mark 5:21-43.	St Agatha
Wed 6th	Hebrews 12:4-7,11-15. Psalm 102:1-2,13-14,17-18. Mark 6:1-6.	St Paul Miki
Thu 7th	Hebrews 12:18-19,21-24. Psalm 47:2-2-4,9-11. Mark 6:7-13.	
Fri 8th	Hebrews 13:1-8. Psalm 26:1,3,5,8-9. Mark 6:14-29.	St Josephine Bakhita <i>or</i> St Jerome Emmiliani <i>abstinence</i>
Sat 9th	Hebrews 13:15-17,20-21. Psalm 22:1-6. Mark 6:30-34	(of the BVM)
Sun 10th	Isaiah 6:1-8. Psalm 137:1-5,7-8. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Luke 5:1-11	5th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME
Mon 11th	Genesis 1:1-19. Psalm 103:1-2,5-6,10,12,24,35. Mark 6:53-56. <i>or for Lourdes</i> Isaiah 66:10-14. Psalm Judith 13,18,19. John 2:1-11.	(Our Lady of Lourdes)
Tue 12th	Genesis 1:20 – 2:4. Psalm 8:4-9. Mark 7:1-13	
Wed 13th	Genesis 2:4-9,15-17. Psalm 103:1-2,27-30. Mark 7:14-23	
Thu 14th	Genesis 2:18-25. Psalm 127:1-5. Mark 7:24-30.	St Cyril & St Methodius
Fri 15th	Genesis 3:1-8. Psalm 31:1-2,5-7. Mark 7:31-37	<i>abstinence</i>
Sat 16th	Genesis 3:9-24. Psalm 89:2-6,12-13. Mark 8:1-10.	(of the BVM)

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Sun 17th	Jeremiah 17:5-8. Psalm 1:1-4,6,8. 1 Corinthians 15:12,16-20. Luke 6:17,20-26. 6th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME	
Mon 18th	Genesis 4:1-15,25. Psalm 49:1,8,16-17,20-21. Mark 8:11-13.	
Tue 19th	Genesis 6:5-8. Psalm 28:1-4,9-10. Mark 8:14-21	
Wed 20th	Genesis 8:6-13,20-22. Psalm 115:12-15,18-19. Mark 8:22-26.	
Thu 21st	Genesis 9:1-13. Psalm 101:16-21,29,22-23. Mark 8:27-33.	(St Peter Damian)
Fri 22nd	1 Peter 5:1-4. Psalm 22:1-6. Matthew 16:13-19.	CHAIR of St PETER <i>abstinence</i>
Sat 23rd	Genesis Hebrews 11:1-7. Psalm 144:2-5,10-11. Mark 9:2-3.	St Polycarp
Sun 24th	1 Samuel 26:2,7-9,12-13,22-23. Psalm 102:1-4,8,10,12-13. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49. Luke 6:27-38. 7th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME	
Mon 25th	Sirach 1:1-10. Psalm 92:1-2,5. Mark 9:14-29.	
Tue 26th	Sirach 2:1-13. Psalm 36:3-4,18-19,27-28,39-40. Mark 9:30-37.	
Wed 27th	Sirach 4:12-22. Psalm 118:165,168,171-2,174-5. Mark 9:38-40.	
Thu 28th	Sirach 5:1-19. Psalm 1:1-4,6. Mark 9:41-50.	
Fri 1st March	Sirach 6:5-17. Psalm 118:12,16,18,27,34-5. Mark 10:1-12.	(St David) <i>abstinence</i>
Sat 2nd	Sirach 17:1-13. Psalm 102:13-18. Mark 10:13-16.	(of the BVM)
Sun 3rd	Sirach 27:4-7. Psalm 91:2-3,13-16. 1 Corinthians 15:54-58. Luke 6:39-45. 8th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME	
Mon 4th	Sirach 17:20-28. Psalm 31:1-2,5-7. Mark 10:17-27.	(St Casimir)
Tue 5th	Sirach 35:1-5, Psalm 49:5-8,14,23. Mark 10:28-31	
Ordinary Time ends & Lent begins <i>(All the weekdays in Lent are days of abstinence)</i>		
Wed 6th	Joel 2:12-18. Psalm 50:3-6,12-14,17. 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:2. Matthew 6:1-6,16-18. ASH WEDNESDAY	
Thu 7th	Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Psalm 1:1-4,6. Luke 9:22-25	
Fri 8th	Isaiah 58:1-9. Psalm 50:3-6,18-19. Mark 9:14-15.	(St John of God)
Sat 9th	Isaiah 58:9-14. Psalm 85:1-6. Luke 5:27-32.	(St Frances of Rome)
Sun 10th	Deuteronomy 26:4-10. Psalm 90:1-2,10-15. Romans 10:8-13. Luke 4:1-13. 1st SUNDAY of LENT	
Mon 11th	Leviticus 19:1-2,11-18. Psalm 18:8-10,15. Matthew 25:31-46	(St Perpetua & St Felicity)
Tue 12th	Isaiah 55:10-11. Psalm 33:4-7,16-19. Matthew 6:7-15	
Wed 13th	Jonah 3:1-10. Psalm 50:3-4,12-13,18-19. Luke 11:29-32	Election of Pope Francis 2013
Thu 14th	Esther 4:17. Psalm 137:1-3,7-8. Matthew 7:20-26.	
Fri 15th	Ezekiel 18:21-28. Psalm 129:1-8. Matthew 5:20-26	
Sat 16th	Deuteronomy 26:16-19. Psalm 118:1-5,7-8. Matthew 543-48.	
Sun 17th	Genesis 15:5-12,17-18. Psalm 26:1,7-9,13-14. Philippians 3:17 – 4:1. Luke 9:28-36. 2nd SUNDAY of LENT	
Mon 18th	Daniel 9:4-10. Psalm 78:8,9,11,13. Luke 6:36-38	(St Cyril of Jerusalem)
Tue 19th	2 Samuel 7:4-5,12-14,16. Psalm 88:2-5,27,29. Romans 4:13,16-18,22. Matthew 1:16,18-21,24. St JOSEPH	
Wed 20th	Jeremiah 18:18-20. Psalm 30:5-6,14-16. Matthew 20:17-28	
Thu 21st	Jeremiah 17:5-10. Psalm 1:1-4,6. Luke 16:19-31	
Fri 22nd	Genesis 37:3-4,12-13,17-28. Psalm 104:16-21. Matthew 21:33-43,45-46.	
Sat 23rd	Micah 7:14-15,18-20. Psalm 102:1-4,9-12. Luke 15:1-3,11-32	(St Turibius of Mongrovejo)
Sun 24th	Exodus 3:1-8,13-15. Psalm 102:1-4,6-8,11. 1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12, Luke 13:1-9. 3rd SUNDAY of LENT	
Mon 25th	Isaiah 7:10-14. Psalm 39:7-11. Hebrews 10:4-10. Luke 1:26-38. The ANNUNCIATION of THE LORD	
Tue 26th	Daniel 3:25,34-43. Psalm 24:4-9. Matthew 18:21-35	
Wed 27th	Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9. Psalm 147:12-13,15-16,19-20. Matthew 5:17-19	
Thu 28th	Jeremiah 7:23-28. Psalm 94:1-2,6-9. Luke 11:14-23	
Fri 29th	Hosea 14:2-10. Psalm 80:6-11,14,17. Mark 12:28-34	
Sat 30th	Hosea 6:1-6. Psalm 50:34,18-21. Luke 18:9-14	
Sun 31st	Joshua 5:9-12. Psalm 33:3-7. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Luke 15:1-3,11-32. 4th SUNDAY of LENT	



- 1 Which Old Testament book records the Ten Commandments?
- 2 The Christian name of four priests serving in the diocese is Anthony or Antoine. Can you identify them, and say to which parish each is attached?
- 3 From which European country did the first Christian missionaries come to The Gambia?
- 4 Name the shortest letter (epistle) in the New Testament.
- 5 What does the symbol on the right signify?



Answers on page 31



Gambian Christian Anniversaries February & March

TEN YEARS AGO: Father Thomas Tarmey CSSp died on Gambian Independence Day, 18th February 2009.

Fr Tarmey was an Irish missionary priest - one of the many who throughout the 20th century devoted themselves to the Church in The Gambia. He arrived in this country soon after his ordination, and served until 1977, notably at St Augustine's High School, where he taught Latin. He then returned to Ireland, where he taught and ministered until his retirement.

Fr Tarmey visited The Gambia in May 2006 for the episcopal ordination of Bishop Robert Ellison.

A tribute to Fr Tarmey appeared in the June 2009 issue of *Outlook*, the Irish Spiritan magazine. It read:

'Tom worked for 18 years [in The Gambia] as teacher and pastor.

'The life of a missionary in Africa is unique. It leaves a deep impression on a priest who works there. He will never see his life or his work in the same way again. To bring the Mass to places where it was never said before, to see the light of faith awakening on the faces of children and adults, to help establish the Church as the apostles did long ago, is deeply moving and satisfying...

'Mother Teresa of Calcutta said that God does not always expect us to be successful in the work we do for him, but he does expect us to be faithful. Tom was a faithful servant of God for more than 60 years. Faithful as a priest, as a religious in the Holy Ghost Congregation, as a pastor of souls and teacher in Africa, Templeogue and Belfast. He was well-liked wherever he went...

'More than a year ago Fr Tom was given the final cross of terminal illness. He bore it with patience and good humour.

'For Tom his earthly life has now ended... We pray that God will forgive him any sins and grant him a place of peace and happiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

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

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

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

15th March 1914 (105 years ago): Consecration of the rebuilt church in Hagan Street by Bishop Hyacinth-Joseph Jalabert.

11th March 1934 (85 years ago): Fr Harold Whiteside celebrated the first Mass in Old Jeshwang in a hut used for catechism classes.

10th February 1930: Opening of the Catholic Boys' Secondary School in Banjul



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

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

6th February 1949 (70 years ago): Fr Matthew Farelly celebrated the first Mass, outdoors, in Lamin.

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

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

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

24th-27th February 1979 (40 years ago): Bishop Moloney hosted the Bishops' Conference of The Gambia, Liberia & Sierra Leone.

27th March 1979 (40 years ago): Alhaji Ousman Semega-Janneh presented his credentials to Pope John Paul II as The Gambia's first Ambassador to the Holy See.

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

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

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

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

28th February 1996: Death in The Gambia of Fr James White (*right*).

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

31st March 2001: Death in Britain of the last Governor and first Governor-General of The Gambia, Sir John Paul. See Fee Moi Gambia, page 17.

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

30th March 2008: Opening of the Diocesan Assembly.

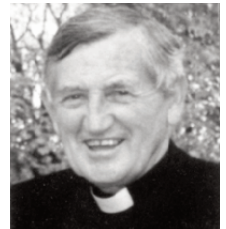
6th March 2009 (10 years ago): A talk on 'The Gambia, our homeland' was given at GPI by T.G.G. Senghore, historian of Catholicism in The Gambia.

2nd March 2014 (5 years ago): In the Shrine Church at Kunkujang Mariama, Fr John Sharpe celebrated a Mass to mark the 50th anniversary of his ordination.

19th March 2014 (5 years ago): Bishop Ellison blessed the new premises at Lamin Weyoto of Holy Rosary Nursery School.

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

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



End-piece

Receiving Jesus Christ in Holy Communion

By Father STEPHEN of St Wilfred's Oratory, York, northern England

LET us consider the reception of Holy Communion, which we believe to be the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - in other words, the Living Risen Jesus himself, hidden under the appearance of bread and wine.

Holy Communion is received on the Church's terms, because Holy Communion comes from the Church and she is its guardian. Therefore, the rules she makes about the reception of Holy Communion are a consequence of her faith: that Holy Communion is truly Our Lord's Body and Blood and merits the greatest reverence and worship, so that whoever receives Holy Communion does so in the way most likely to be spiritually fruitful.

Holy Communion is the sacrament designed by Christ to transform us into himself, and for this to happen it is vital that we are properly prepared and receive Communion worthily; otherwise it will do us no good at all.

What are the conditions under which a person may receive Holy Communion?

- First, you must be a Catholic.
- Second, you must truly believe that Holy Communion is Jesus Christ himself, and not a piece of blessed bread.
- Third, you must want to receive him. Sounds obvious, but casual indifference and an unthinking reception is a possibility and a danger.
- Fourthly, you must be a state of grace: that is, you must be free from serious sin, or otherwise refrain from receiving Communion until you have been to confession. You don't have to be perfect; Holy Communion is a means towards perfection, but you do have to be free of serious sin.
- Fifthly, you must have kept the eucharistic fast; you must have refrained from food and drink (except water and medicine) for one hour before receiving.

The manner of receiving

As to the manner of receiving, this too is important, because it has an effect on our faith. How we receive can reinforce our faith that we are receiving Jesus, or it can chip away at it and eventually destroy it.

Our body and our soul are united, so what one does has an impact on the other. Body language is important, and the body speaks to the soul and indeed is witnessed by others, who understand the meaning. As an example, if you shake someone's hand but are busy watching television or talking to someone else, the person whose hand you're shaking would conclude, reasonably, that you weren't really interested in them, because of your body language. So too in receiving Holy Communion, what the body does is important because it speaks to the soul and to others about what is happening.

The Church lays down the manner in which Holy Communion must be received; we are not completely free to decide for ourselves how we'd like to receive.

The first option is to receive directly on the tongue. This option applies to every parish throughout the world by law. If you choose to receive this way, you say 'Amen', open your mouth, and bring your tongue forward till it covers your bottom lip, and receive.

The second option is to receive in the hand where a country's bishops have given permission, as most have. If you choose to receive this way, you hold up your hands clearly so the priest can see you intend to receive this way, you hold them flat so the priest can place the sacred Host easily, with one hand beneath the other. You pick up the Host immediately and place it in your mouth.

Do not receive with anything other than scrupulously clean hands. Check before you come to church. Parents may need to check their children's hands.

Do not grab the Host: it is a gift, and gifts are not grabbed, they are received.

Do not walk off carrying the Host. It must be consumed immediately, then and there.

Putting out one hand is not acceptable, as it is usually followed by an attempt to cast the Host into the mouth like a peanut, and that is not an appropriate way to receive our Lord and God.

The law says that if the priest thinks there is a danger of irreverence, he must place the Host on the tongue.

Everything about the way we worship should foster a sense of adoration of God. The way we receive Holy Communion should be especially conducive to awe and wonder - since here, God not only comes to meet us, but invites us to union with himself: a taste of heaven upon earth.

This article is an abridgement of a homily preached at the Oratory in York.



Congratulations

to

The Most Revd Dr Gabriel Mendy CSSp

on the occasion of the First Anniversary
of his Episcopal Ordination
at the Independence Stadium Bakau
on Saturday 3rd February MMXVIII



Giving Hope to a World in Need

**The Gambia Programme
Health, Nutrition, Agro-enterprise, Food Security
40 Atlantic Road, Fajara. Telephone 4498000**

Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention (SMC) Campaign in CRR & URR in 2017

CRS, in partnership with the National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) of the Ministry of Health, have been implementing SMC strategy targeting children (3 to 59 months) in Upper and Central River regions from 2014 to 2016, supported by UNITAID ACCESS-SMC project. In 2017, with the support of the Global Fund, this high-impact intervention is being implemented again in the two regions to prevent children from getting malaria. The two regions have been identified due to their relatively high malaria transmission.



SMC is achieved by administering anti-malarial medicines (*sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine* (SP) and *amodiaquine* (AQ)) up to four monthly doses to children. It is administered during the peak of the rainy season (August – December) when the incidence of malaria is high. In total, an estimated 90,925 children are targeted through door-to-door strategy to administer the antimalarial medicine.

Information Communication for Development (ICT4D) uses android devices to enhance data collection, management and rapid analysis for effective decision-making. Despite challenging conditions in accessing communities during the rains, The Gambia is consistently able to reach over 80 per cent of the children targeted since the inception of the project. This is largely due to the commitment, perseverance and hard work of the health staff and volunteers and strong collaboration between the NMCP with CRS.

Answers to 'Do you know?' page 28

- 1 Exodus, chapter 20.
- 2 Fr Anthony Gabisi, St Therese's, Kanifing; Fr Anthony Lippo CSSp, Mary Mother of God, Soma; Fr Antoine Sambou, Cathedral Parish; Fr Anthony Sonko, Vicar-General, St Anthony, Kololi.
- 3 Portugal, in the 15th century.
- 4 The Third Letter of John.
- 5 The Star of David. It is a Jewish symbol composed of two overlaid equilateral triangles that form a six-pointed star. It appears on synagogues, tombstones and the flag of Israel. An ancient sign not much used by Jews before the Middle Ages, it was popularised for protection against evil spirits. The Jewish community of Prague adopted it as a symbol, and its use became widespread in the 17th century. Though it has no biblical authority, it became a near-universal emblem of Judaism in the 19th century. The use of it during the Hitler era in Germany to identify Jews subsequently invested it with the symbolism of martyrdom and heroism.



Our Lord's Transfiguration

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory, and were speaking of his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep, but since they had stayed awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah' – not knowing what he said.

While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!'

When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

And they kept silent, and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

Luke 9:28-36

Gospel reading for the Second Sunday in Lent, 17th March

Our illustration is from the Transfiguration of Christ, a painting made about 1480 by the Italian Renaissance master Giovanni Bellini, now in the Capodimonte Gallery in Naples, Italy.