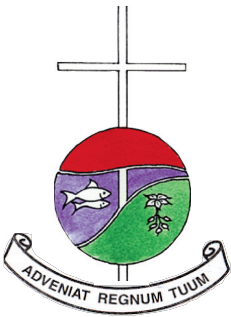


*Sang Marie: the Church rejoices
in The Gambia and throughout the world*



The Diocese of Banjul
NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter



Thoughts, prayers and readings
for all Sunday Masses
in August and September





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By way of introduction

In time of trouble...

NO one who loves human life and the dignity of the human personality can fail to be alarmed by the mounting violence and the brutality of our times. There so much evil around us, and this has led to fear. Fear of being kidnapped, fear of suicide bombers, fear of being shot at, fear of being raped, fear of being robbed... The list can go on and on. Innocent lives are being lost through hatred and violence. We seem to be helpless in the midst of all this chaos.

We may speculate about the root cause. Some say it's the lack of gun control. Some say it's mental, because the assailants at the time of killing are not of sound mind. Some say, it's spiritual.

Such speculation can go on and on... But only someone of evil mind would kill innocent people, including children, as in the killings in France and Germany not long ago.

There is so much evil in today's world. What can we do to stop all the senseless destruction of human lives?

'The devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour' (1 Peter 5:8). Satan 'sows snares, and is a seducer. He seduces with charm, with diabolical charm, he leads you to believe everything. He knows how to sell with this charm, he sells well, but he pays badly in the end,' said Pope Francis in a recent morning homily.

But in the midst of all this mayhem there is a kind, loving and merciful God who invites us each day to conquer hate with love.

Jesus Christ gave his followers these comforting words: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will

fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows.'

If you truly turn to God, he will care for you as no one else does, and in a way that no one else can.

That doesn't mean that those who know God will escape difficult times. They won't. When a terrorist attack causes suffering and death, those who know God will be involved in that suffering also. But there is a peace and a strength that God's presence gives. St Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:8-12: 'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.'

Reality tells us that we will experience problems in life. However, if we go through them knowing God, we can react to them with a different perspective and with a strength that is not our own. No problem has the capacity to be insurmountable to God. He is bigger than all the problems that can hit us, and we are not left alone to deal with them.

God's Word tells us, 'The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.' And, 'The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.'

Fr Peter S. Lopez

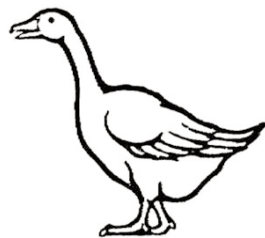


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Here & there

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE

The bells ring out at Kanifing Estate



TO mark the Year of Mercy, four bells have been erected and blessed at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Kanifing Estate.

The bells have been given to the church following a request to the founder and Secretary-General of the Association of Gambian Catholics (UK), Michelle Jarra.

The mini-tower for the bells was erected between February and May by the company Mendura, whose proprietor is Thomas Mendy, and supervised by Frank Mbye, Chairman of the Parish Development Committee.

The bells are named Paul, Michel, Harriet and Marie-Madeleine.

The first is named after the late Paul Jatta Sylva, a devoted member of the congregation at Blessed Sacrament, and the second after the late Michelle Sagnia, a committed catechist who brought back many lapsed Catholics to the faith.

The third bell is named after Harriet Christiana Wrighte, a Catholic of deep faith which she impressed on her children, and the fourth bell after Marie Madeleine Sylva, who started the Sunday School and catechumen's class.

The chief celebrant at the Mass on Sunday 26th June, followed by the blessing of the bells, was the first Parish Priest at Blessed Sacrament, Fr Peter Lopez, assisted by the present Parish Priest, Fr Carl Gomez.

After Mass on Sunday 3rd July, Fr. Peter Gomez unveiled the bells, which were rung at midday for the Angelus, followed by breakfast, and at 3.30pm by the recitation of the Divine Mercy.

** The Association of Gambian Catholics (UK) has donated D150,000 to St Anthony's Kololi, to assist in the building of a church hall.

News round-up

* From 11th to 17th July, the **catechists** of the diocese underwent a residential training programme at GPI.

* On 15th July the **Diocesan Youth Cross**, which had been kept at St Kizito's Bakoteh, was carried in procession from Bakoteh to St Charles Lwanga, Fajikunda.

* A **Youth Camp** was held at Shalom Retreat Centre Fajara from 15th to 22nd July.

* At the GPI meeting to mark the **end of the Pastoral Year**, Fr Anthony Gabasi gave a talk on chapter eight of the Pope's Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family and Rachel Mendy, the diocesan lawyer, spoke on family, love and marriage.

* The **Sang Marie celebrations in England** on Saturday 13th August will be held at St Chad's Cathedral, Newtown, in the West Midlands city of Birmingham, Britain's largest city after London. The celebration at noon will be followed by a reception at St Chad's Primary School.

* **Catholic Relief Services (CRS)** have presented the Communications Unit of GPI with two television cameras. The unit broadcasts the Sunday lunchtime programme, *Kaadu Dunda Gi*, and produces videos for many clients.



Gambian Sister becomes Regional Superior

SISTER Badgie of the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary has become Regional Superior of her Order in West Africa.

The Presentation Sisters arrived in Senegal in 1952, and in The Gambia in 1968. They have mission houses in Serrekunda, Fajara, Banjul, Brikama and Kunkujang Mariama. The formation house is in Fajara. The sisters teach at nursery, primary, secondary and vocational level. They also teach the catechism, conduct retreats and provide spiritual direction and counselling.

Lay people who want to share the spirituality of the Presentation Sisters may become 'Associates'.

All for God

The motto of the Presentation Sisters is 'All for God, all for his holy love'.

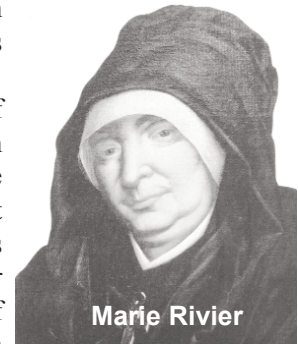
The sisters are the daughters of Marie Rivier, who was born in Montpellier, France in 1768. She had a burning desire to make Christ known and loved. She was physically handicapped, but after solitude and prayer at the feet of the Virgin was cured. Sisters in most communities throughout France were cruelly persecuted during the French Revolution.

When she founded her community on 21st November 1796, Marie Rivier declared, 'Let us come together.' These words hold good today, because the Presentation Sisters worldwide remain one in their love for Christ,

The sisters describe themselves as 'contemplatives in action'. They live in a spirit of adoration and humility, and participate in the Church's teaching mission through the education of children and young people, with particular attention to the least-favoured. They also care for the sick.

The Virgin Mary in the mystery of her Presentation in the Temple is the model of their consecration.

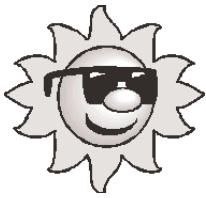
Marie Rivier prophesied, 'My daughters will one day cross the sea.' Today, the Sisters pray and work in 18 countries.



Marie Rivier

Holy Family of St. Therese's Parish at Jaama Hall

THE CHOIR of Holy Family at St. Therese's Parish presented their 22nd annual concert at the Jaama Hall, Kairaba Beach Hotel, on Friday 10th June. Led by Wilfred Colley, Philip Jatta and Pauline Himbane, the 58-strong choir sang 18 songs in local languages and Latin. The organist was Valdano Lopez, the guitarist Paul Gomez, and the percussionists Charles Manga, Ozil Bassen, Robert Njie, Thomas Manneh, Allen Jatta and Mark Bass.



Fee moi Gambia

Welcome absence

NOT long ago, passing along the rather grandly-named Atlantic Boulevard, Fajara, I noticed how pleasant a road it is: not over-crowded with vehicles, and with lots of trees and not a few quite attractive buildings (I particularly admire the lawn and flowering plants outside Nawec's premises).

Then I realised that there were no obtrusive advertisement hoardings along this road. Would it were so elsewhere!

Too many words!

INCIDENTALLY, if for whatever reason we must have lots of advertisement hoardings along urban roads - above all at major junctions - advertisers would surely do better to reduce their billboard messages to just a few simple words and images. When passing by, what driver, passenger, or even pedestrian, can take note of so much detailed information?

Other times, other fashions

READERS have to be pretty old, to remember when a good many ladies wore a long, trailing pagne in the street, together with, in many instances, long, heavy earrings, apparently gold.

Those were the days when if you saw a young man with his head shaved, he was a police recruit, or perhaps someone recently released from custody. For many years now, though, shaven heads among young men have been common; and you may commend this for cleanliness and simplicity.

But there's a new, incoming hair fashion among young males: shaven sides, perhaps, but a heavy, sculptured top-of-

the-head, involving even part-colouring. Such styles derive from certain African footballers playing in Europe, who to our young men are heroes.

I suppose the same styles are coming into fashion in Dakar, Freetown, Lagos and Yaoundé. And I've seen, lately, a few 'Afro' hair-dos - seen everywhere many years ago, now still rare.

I don't comment on these changing fashions, but do wonder how many ladies, in this hot weather, can apparently stay cool with so much false hair on their heads... And many of them are no longer young...

Taking a full part?

YOU have to be pretty old, to remember the days when Mass was said according to the 'Tridentine rite'. Most of us only know the present Order of Mass, where all the people play a full part.

Or do we?

Yes, there are lay people (as there always have been) assisting at the altar. There are lay men and women at the lectern, proclaiming the Old and New Testament readings and the responsorial psalm. Lay people read the notices.

All, no doubt, commendable. But what of the rest of us?

It's almost a cliché to describe a Gambian Mass as 'exuberant'. But when I look round in more than one church, it's actually only the choir that's exuberant. A good many of the people are more or less silent, whether it's a Latin creed or Our Father, a Wolof hymn or a song in English. Is this 'participation'?

Properly adjusted?

THE OTHER day, Sam gave his friend Rebecca her first driving lesson.

As she got into the car for the first time, Rebecca said, 'Sam, this little mirror up here isn't fixed right.'

'Oh, I think it is,' said Sam. It's okay for me, and we're both about the same height.'

'Well, somebody must have moved it,' said Rebecca. 'I can't see myself in it. All I can see are the cars behind us...'

'Outstanding service'

THE GAMBIA Pastoral Institute has been presented by the diocese with a certificate 'in recognition and appreciation of outstanding service rendered to the Diocese of Banjul for outstanding service to the promotion of diocesan programmes and events'.

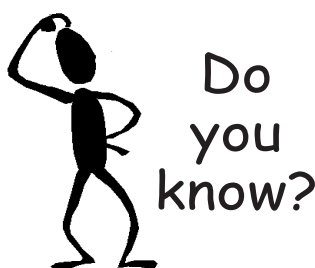
GPI works for the human, pastoral and spiritual growth of the local church. It offers ongoing formation to catechists, RE teachers and others involved in evangelisation.

Through radio and television & the *Newsletter*, GPI communicates information and instruction.

Its out-reach programmes cover all the parishes and out-stations of the Diocese.

Congratulations

Wednesday 17th August
is the third anniversary
of the Ordination of
Father Joseph Kojo Fynn CSSp
Parish Priest
at St Joseph's Basse



- 1 What language was spoken by Jesus and his disciples?
- 2 Which of the Gospel writers was not a Jew?
- 3 In what year was the Diocese of Banjul created?
- 4 Who, in the Old Testament, was so beset with sufferings that 'he cursed the day of his birth'?
- 5 Identify the priest pictured on the right.

Answers on page 17



Shall we be on-line after death?

ARE our social networks helpful when we die? Obviously not! When we die we go off-line on Facebook, on Whatsapp, on Viber, on Twitter, on Imo, and on Instagram. Our phone numbers go off. On that day friends and family will cry because we will be no more. On the other hand, my dear friends, do we know what will remain when we are dead?

The Holy Bible will still be on-line. Our daily prayers will be on-line, our Lenten observances will be on-line, and our alms-giving will be on-line. All the things we do for the sake of God and others will be on-line with us to the grave and go with us to heaven. Nobody can take this away from us.

.Death is binding on every living thing, and every soul will taste death, no matter who we are.

Brothers and sisters, no matter how many tears your friends, family and loved ones may shed, they will not help you in your grave.

Why don't we take decisions that will help us after death? Why don't we please God now and have eternal happiness hereafter?

Pa George Mendy, Seminarian in Ghana

OBITUARY

Death of 'Dero'

THE DEATH occurred on 9th June of Samuel Quacoo, commonly known as 'Dero', whose varied career included work for the United African Company, UNDP and Shell. He was 72.

Samuel Jonathan Quacoo was born on 23rd March 1944 in Old Primet Street Banjul. He was educated at Albion Infants' School,

Stanley Street School, St Mary's School, Methodist Boys' High School and Gambia High School.

His first job was at the UAC (United African Company). The company granted him a scholarship to study business administration at Waterloo Lutheran University in Canada. He graduated in 1966. From 1971 to 1975 he studied at St Joseph's College, Philadelphia, USA, and took a BSc in Business Administration. Mr Quacoo then spent significant time in the USA.

When he returned home he was attached to the Rural Development Project (RDP) Phase One and worked for UNDP for some years before joining the Shell Company in 1979. He retired in October 1987.

He married Fanny Sename George on 26th November 1977. Their union was blessed with four daughters and one son. His daughter Betty is Secretary at the Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI).

Mr Quacoo was regarded by all who knew him as godly and straightforward. He bore his final illness with faith and fortitude. He is survived by his wife, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews and extended family and friends in The Gambia and abroad.

Mr Quacoo's funeral was held at Bethel Methodist Church Banjul on Friday 17th June, prior to interment at Banjul Cemetery.



Sang Marie Universal feast with a local flavour



THE SOLEMNITY of the Assumption of our Lady is celebrated throughout the universal Church. It is a Holy Day of Obligation, when no Catholic should willfully miss taking part in the Mass.

But this doesn't need to be underlined in The Gambia, where our Cathedral is dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption, and she is the Patron of the Diocese of Banjul.

The Assumption is popularly known in The Gambia and Senegal as *Sang Marie*, and the celebration of *Sang Marie* is well known and respected beyond the Catholic community.

An 'off day' for everyone!

Sang Marie is a public holiday. In colonial days, the 'establishment' was, if anything, Anglican. It was not until 1958 that *Sang Marie* was made a public holiday, as it had long been in Senegal.

The then Anglican Archdeacon complained, saying that it was unthinkable that a holiday should be given for a Christian feast which Anglicans did not recognise. But the Church of England's 'Common Worship' calendar now gives 15th August as the Festival of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and, in any case, inter-church relations have for many years been much more cordial.

In 1976 *Sang Marie* was dropped as a public holiday. A delegation of Catholic laity appealed to the President: 'Religion has a prominent role to play in development... In the ...promotion of amity, love and goodwill among men, religion and the State should be effective partners.'

On 8th July 1977 it was announced that *Sang Marie* would replace Easter Monday as a public holiday.

A second reason for *Sang Marie*'s 'high profile' is the afternoon Marian procession in Banjul.

In her history of Christian witness in The Gambia, 'We Have Toiled All Night', Marika Fedriks wrote: 'The St Mary Procession of 15th August, though Roman Catholic in origin, gradually became an even in which non-Roman Catholics, including Muslims, participated.'

In 1979, the Superintendent of the Methodist Mission, the Revd J.C. Roach, took part in the procession.

In Britain, the Association of Gambian Catholics (UK) has organised a *Sang Marie* Mass, procession and party, as do Gambian Catholics in the USA at Atlanta, Georgia. This year's UK celebration is being organised in Birmingham, by a different Gambian group.

Assumpta es Maria

THE SOLEMNITY of the Assumption – *Sang Marie* – celebrates Mary being ‘taken up’, body and soul, into heaven at the end of her life on earth.

God granted Mary three privileges:

- Her immaculate conception. Mary possessed the Divine Life from the first moment of her existence
- Her sinlessness, granted to her as mother of the Sinless One, Jesus Christ
- Her assumption. Mary is the ‘first fruits’ of the harvest of salvation.

Baptism restores us to the life of the Holy Spirit, but Christians, like all humans, must submit to death and the corruption of the body. Those who die possessing the life of the Spirit are assured that their mortal bodies, like Mary’s, will one day share God’s life and joy at the Final Resurrection

Mary is assumed in heaven
The angels rejoice, praising the Lord.
Rejoice and exult, all you righteous,
for today the Virgin Mary reigns with Christ for ever.



Long and deep devotion

ON 15th August is Christians celebrate the Dormition (falling asleep) or Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The feast celebrates Mary’s departure from her earthly life and her bodily assumption into heaven.

The concept of Mary’s assumption was first expressed in narratives of the fifth century. They bear witness to early belief in a Catholic teaching which was not formally defined as a dogma until 1950.

Although there was almost universal belief in Mary’s assumption for more than a thousand years, the Bible contains no mention of it. The first known Church writer to speak of Mary being taken up to heaven was St Gregory of Tours in 594.

On 1st May 1946 Pope Pius XII asked all the bishops whether they considered this widespread belief in Mary’s assumption should be defined as a proposition of faith; and whether they, with their clergy and people, desired the definition.

Almost all the bishops replied in the affirmative.

On All Saints’ Day, 1st November 1950, Pope Pius XII declared as a dogma revealed by God that ‘Mary, the immaculate perpetually Virgin Mother of God, after the completion of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven’.

We have no knowledge of the time and manner of Mary’s passing into glory. St Gregory of Tours said it was inconceivable that Mary’s sinless body, likened to the Ark of the Covenant, should decay in the grave. The text, ‘Rise, and the ark of thy strength’ (Psalm 131:8) was understood as applying to Mary.

Assumed by God’s grace

There is an important distinction between the ascension of Jesus after his resurrection and the assumption of Mary. Jesus, as the Second Person of the Trinity, rose by his own power, whereas Mary did not have this power, but was assumed by God’s grace.

The title, ‘Mother of God’ (in Greek, *Theotokos*) was conferred on Mary at the Council of Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey) in 431. Some of the titles given to Mary may seem forbidding – *Theotokos*, Mediatrix, Advocate, and so on. Mary’s mystic image can make her seem remote - a star, radiant, untouchable and awesome. But for many, the encounter with this humble Hebrew woman of two thousand years ago is deeply personal, filled with humanity. For them Mary is an intimate, consoling, ever-accessible mother. By her motherhood she became the unique gateway for the Incarnation – the birth of Jesus.

Ave Maria, plena gratia. Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you amongst women

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CHILDREN'S PAGE

A picture for you to colour



When the Virgin Mary's life on earth was over,
God raised her to heaven,
where she is seated at the right hand of her Son, Jesus.



Getting going at Kunkujang

We continue with our abridgement of *The Life of an Irish Missionary Priest* by Fr JOHN SHARPE CSSp, now living in retirement at Kunkujang Mariama

ON Christmas Day 1972 I said my first Mass at Kunkujang, on an improvised altar. Three adults and seven children attended. The collection consisted of three sour oranges!

I decided to start a little school, and Elizabeth Mendy was chosen to run it.

The site chosen was under a big tree in the present mission compound. At the time, the village consisted of just one corrugated house and ten grass-roofed huts.

With the blackboard and stools provided by the people, the school began. The teacher was paid £15 a month. To show their appreciation the people also made a thousand mud blocks for her house.

Enter Margarita

At the time I was still Parish Priest at St Therese's and was suffering from a bout of malaria. Margareta Edenius came to my house with an offering of £30 which she had left over from a holiday. I asked her to accompany me to Kunkujang to see the school under the tree. When she returned to Sweden, with the help of some friends she collected £150 to build a mud school.

On this occasion the locals made two thousand mud blocks, again free of charge. The school was blessed and opened in April 1973.



A fortnight later the first children were baptised there.

The classroom is still in use.

About this time I made a survey of the area and came across about thirty-five small Manjago villages. The reason for this was that every adult wanted to be head of his own village!

Establishing a permanent mission

It was decided that a permanent mission should be set up, with Kunkujang as its headquarters.

In May 1973, with the permission of Bishop Michael Moloney, but with no financial backing, work began on the mission house. The provision of building materials proved to be quite difficult: masons had to be brought daily from Kanifing in an old Volkswagen across twenty miles of bush paths.

We arrived at 8 o'clock in the morning and returned home in the afternoon. I soon got to know the problems of the village, in particular regarding the people's health.

Living in poor conditions, they were exposed to many diseases. Elephantiasis was widespread among the women, with many children dying in childbirth owing to the lack of midwives. An even more shocking statistic was that up to seventy-five per cent of children under five died from malaria and lack of proper treatment.

The desolation of many mothers mourning the death of such children still remains vivid in my mind; it often brought me to tears.

The clinic

In November 1973 Sister Ann-Marie Murphy set up a fortnightly clinic in the teacher's house. I brought her there while transporting workmen who were building my own house.

Owing to the large numbers attending the clinic, the American Embassy donated £200 to help build a cement-block building, which is still in use.

Soon the beneficial results of such a service were seen. The local people lost their fears of medicines and injections, and the number of dying children dropped to almost five per cent.

Another benefit of good medical practices was that the increase in the numbers of healthy children caused led to an increase in the number of infants being baptised.

The clinic opened in December 1974 and Sr Ann-Marie looked after it until she was appointed to a post at Serrekunda. Since then it has been run by Gambian women and expatriate volunteers.

One New Year's Day, while I was on my way to Kendisabel to say Mass, a pregnant woman stopped me on the bush road.

As I was in a hurry, I told her I would talk to her on my way back, but having forgotten to bring some altar wine, I returned immediately and found that she had just given birth in the high grass, and had cut the umbilical cord with her teeth. I took her and her baby back to her house and returned to say Mass with my soutane covered in blood.

The village expands

In 1975 an order was made by the Commission Office in Brikama that all the small Manjago villages in the bush should be amalgamated into one. The village chosen was Kunkujang.

That same year, through the influence of Fr William Costello CSSp of the Little Way Association, a sum of £2,000 was donated to get the village project off the ground and to build mud block houses with corrugated roofs.

Plots of land, 75 by 50 metres, were marked out, and owing to the generous conditions on offer many began to set up their homes there. Each householder was required to pay £30 for blocks.

I marked out the plots and supplied skilled labour and sheeting for the roofs. So the grass huts became obsolete, and the presence of snakes and vermin greatly decreased.

Overall, the health of the people, especially the children, rapidly improved.

Rolls of barbed-wire were given to each compound for fencing, lined wells were dug, and ox-carts, ploughs and seed-sowers were acquired. The primitive agricultural system gave way to modern methods.

The amount of land cultivated rapidly rose, and farmers

were given bags of fertiliser.

Unfortunately, there was very heavy rain that year. The crops were poor, and the farmers put the blame on the use of fertilisers. It took some years for them to change their minds.

Planting fruit trees



Each compound was given 30 fruit trees, and those who watered them reaped a fine harvest. The same applied to cashew trees. I bought good seeds from an agriculturist and sowed 1,000 of them. The villagers realised the financial benefits of cashews: seeds which can be sold, and fruit which can be converted

into wine or spirits.

They also provided good fire-wood, with the bonus of two yearly crops. And in a year when rains came late, and little rice set, the money received from the cashew crop enabled the people to buy rice.

The Manjago people traditionally did not control oxen. It took a further two years before they would accept a free gift of them, following a training course for ox-ploughing. The downside, however, was that some individuals began to sell off the ox-carts, ploughs and oxen to make a profit.

The opening and dedication of the mission took place in July 1976. Mass was celebrated and 37 pupils were confirmed by Bishop Moloney on the veranda of my house.

Eventually, about 150 were housed in the village, almost all of the compound owners being young people earning salaries of some kind or another.

As the village grew into a town, the need for better education facilities became apparent. It was what parents wanted: ABCs, 1,2,3s, animal husbandry and agriculture.

Vegetables of every kind

A well was dug for a school garden, and vegetables of every kind were sown. For the first time, locals saw and tasted cabbage, carrots and other vegetables.

This school garden soon developed into a women's garden, and the produce was sold in Serrekunda. The project lasted for many years and for the first time provided the women with a small degree of financial independence.

During the rainy season the garden was turned into a groundnut farm, and the village elders were amazed to find that such a small plot of land was capable of producing ten large sacks of groundnuts as a result of applying fertiliser.

In addition, a donkey, a plough and a seed-sower were bought, which enabled boys to engage in private contract work for local farmers.

Pigs, goats and hens - essential in every household - wandered around freely. To help improve the breed of the small black pigs, I purchased good quality English boars, and a healthy black-and-white breed was developed.



Rabbits!

Owing to the abundance of greenery, a modest rabbit project was set up (a Norwegian friend brought over a male and female rabbit in his hand luggage!). Soon the stock rocketed to 150. People came from far and near to buy them.

But bad harvests over a number of years brought the project to an end, because the substitute food pellets, imported from Senegal, became too expensive.

The rearing of poultry, including ducks, geese and turkeys, had a successful start, but a lack of proper feeding caused it to fail. However, a gander from the flock lived on for several years, frightening everyone from the children to the bishop because of its hissing.

All ended well when the gander showed a remarkable sense of timing by passing away on Christmas Eve. I was witness to it. He was picking at some food in the compound when suddenly he leapt into the air and fell down dead. When I examined him I discovered a small fish bone had lodged in his gullet.

Other successful projects were tie-dyeing and wood carving. The children became experts, and profits were made.



Registering the school

Due to the dedication and hard work of some teachers, the academic standards of the school rose. Because the school was not registered, the children could not sit the Common Entrance Examination. We had to send them to other local schools to sit the exam.

In 1997 it was decided to register as a mission school. Responsibility for the running passed to the Catholic Educational Secretariat, thus giving us more time to look after our out-stations. The statistics in 1977 were; Catholics 77, Baptisms 77, Deaths 4, Marriages 2, Children 136.

Because the pupils in grade school were doing well, permission was sought to start our own junior school in Kunkujang. Permission was granted for both junior and senior high schools, and finance was received from the NGO Irish Aid to build a six-classroom junior high school. It opened in September 1988, with Br Henry Megan in charge.

When I took up residence in Kunkujang on 2nd December 1973, I turned one of my spare rooms into an oratory where I said daily Mass and reserved the Blessed Sacrament.

In the evenings children used to gather there to say the rosary. During one of her visits, Margareta Edenius peeped into the oratory. The children, absorbed in their prayers, did not even look up at her. She was amazed.

How could such young children pray so fervently - yet she, an educated Lutheran, did not know how to pray? That was the beginning of Margareta's journey to joining the Catholic Church.

As the numbers of believers increased it was inevitable that a church would have to be built. The school served as a church until 24th June 1979, when St Francis' Church was blessed by Bishop Michael Moloney. Funding for the church was provided through Igemer Glemme, a minister of the Lutheran Church in Sweden. *Continued in our October issue*



family circle

Danger at home!

WE are, or should be, well-aware of the danger of road accidents, especially during the rainy season. But we may not be so conscious of dangers nearer home - in fact, in the house itself.

Hospital staff can tell us how often they have to treat victims of accidents at home. Many home accidents are minor, but some are serious.

The most dangerous room

No part of the house is more dangerous where we cook.

Cooker flames and open fires are highly hazardous. Make sure that young children understand that they must keep well-away.

If you use a gas or electric cooker, ensure that saucepan handles are facing inwards.



Using gas is an efficient way to cook. Take care to attach the gas regulator securely to the gas bottle and the cooker.

Gas leaks

Gas leaks are highly dangerous. If you smell gas, check that a gas tap hasn't been accidentally been left open.

If there is a pilot light in the oven, check that it hasn't gone out.

Turn off all taps and extinguish any naked flames and cigarettes at once.

Open doors and windows. Keep them open until the smell of gas has gone.

If the smell of gas is strong, don't hesitate: get everyone out of the house, and telephone the fire authority.

If you want to buy a second-hand gas appliance, or an electric one, have it well-checked to ensure that it is in safe, usable condition.

Utensils

Don't leave knives and other kitchen utensils where children can play with them.

When knives are not in use they should be kept together in a drawer or cupboard. You can secure sharp-pointed kitchen tools into old corks before storing in a drawer; in that way you won't hurt your fingers when searching for them.

Use kitchen knives only in the kitchen, and not for other purposes around the house.



If you're using a cleaning product for the first time, read the instructions carefully.

Don't store chemicals and other cleaners under a sink. It's safer to store them in a locked cupboard or beyond the reach of children. Remember that full-strength bleach and oven-cleaners are highly dangerous.

If you store liquids in bottles that formerly contained something else, make sure you label the bottles carefully.

Store substances such as varnish, adhesives, kerosene and metholated spirits in air-tight containers well away from heat - and children. Petrol, diesel and kerosene should never be stored in the house, but only in suitable containers locked away in a suitable, secure outhouse.

You may light candles every evening, or when the power supply has been cut off. Use candle-holders if possible, otherwise making sure that candles are firmly-fixed.

Never place a candle in a draught or near curtains or anything inflammable.

Don't allow children to play with candles or matches.

Taking care with the refrigerator

Don't leave refrigerator doors open, and keep freezers closed.

Don't refreeze food that has been defrosted. Don't use food that is 'going off' or canned food that is markedly past its 'sell-by' or 'best-before' date.



If you use a microwave, never forget that nothing metallic should be placed in it.

Is the electric wiring in your house in safe condition throughout? If in doubt, consult a qualified and reliable electrician.

You should also consult an electrician before buying a second-hand electrical appliance.

Check that all your electrical appliances are correctly wired to their plugs, and that the wires are gripped tight where they come out of the socket. Three-pin plugs are the safest. If a plug contains a fuse, make sure it is the correct voltage for the apparatus concerned.

When examining or mending any electrical apparatus, ensure that it is unplugged - not just switched off.

Always replace broken and cracked sockets and plugs without delay. Make sure that you have enough electric sockets in your house for all the apparatus you use, so that you don't over-load those you have.

Safety for the elderly

In the bathroom, ensure that elderly members of your household don't slip in the bath-tub or shower. You should instal a rubber-mat (obtainable at supermarkets).

Elderly people are also at risk of falling in other parts of the house. Rugs, mats and carpets should be the type that people can't trip over. And there should be no trailing wires.





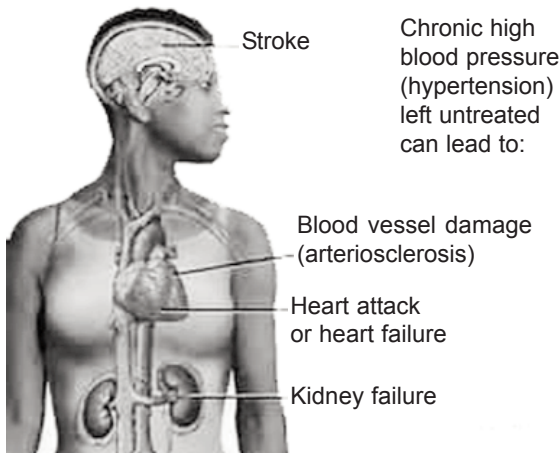
Buy a fire-extinguisher, and see that everyone knows how to use it.

Keep a first-aid box in the house. Always keep medicines where children can't get at them.

Don't share your medication with anyone else and make sure you read the instruction leaflet carefully. If for some reason you don't complete prescribed medication, flush any remaining tablets down the WC, and throw the container away.



If you have a pet dog, never let it eat from a human's plate, and never allow a child to take anything from a dog's mouth.



What is hypertension?

HYPERTENSION is the state of having a blood-pressure that is rather higher than average.

If sustained, it can increase the risk of suffering a heart-attack or stroke.

What is the cause of high blood pressure?

High blood pressure appears to result from the interplay of hereditary factors and your life-style.

In addition, being overweight can cause high blood pressure, as can excessive consumption of alcohol.

In a very small minority of people, the cause might be underlying kidney disease.

How can I find out whether I have hypertension?

There is no association between high blood pressure and specific symptoms, including headaches. The only way you can find out whether you have high blood pressure is to have it measured by a doctor or nurse. It is advisable for all adults to have a routine blood-pressure check.

Can anything be done about it?

Yes. Lowering blood pressure definitely prevents heart attacks and strokes.

How can I get my blood pressure down?

You can help this by adopting a low-salt diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

In addition, you should try to avoid being overweight, and consume only moderate amounts of alcohol.

What happens if this not effective?

If your blood pressure cannot be lowered by diet and exercise alone, drug treatment may be necessary.

There is a wide choice of blood pressure lowering drugs with no side-effects.

Will I be able to stop my treatment?

Almost all patients need to take their drugs indefinitely. Even if you are able to stop the therapy, you will have to be seen at least every few months for re-checking.

Should high blood pressure and its treatment affect my quality of life?

Definitely not. Modern drugs are virtually free of side-effects. You are encouraged to return to a normal, active, busy and interesting life. Only people with very high blood pressure need to stop work, and even then only briefly.



ALMOST no one is entirely uneducated. We learn our mother tongue at our mother's knees. While very young we learn how to live in a family. We also acquire a moral sense – especially if we have parents and family whose way of living is orderly and responsible.

But of course making the best of formal schooling is of crucial importance if young people are to cope with the complex demands of today's urban society.

Becoming literate and numerate is just the start. In every school pupils should discover the joy of learning, acquiring self-confidence as their curiosity about the world about them grows. It's a tall order for teachers to make lessons appealing, arousing their pupils' enthusiasm. They know that there is more to a successful school than good exam results - important though these are.

What can parents do? All parents can do a good deal, creating a family environment which is stable and loving. From their first years, children should encounter a regular domestic routine, with adequate food, good regular sleep - and in a Christian household, prayer and church-going.

Good parents support the school by paying fees on time, and ensuring that their children are properly dressed every school day, and are regular and prompt in attendance. Parents should show a keen interest in their children's school work and homework, and contact the school if they become aware of difficulties. They should attend parent-teacher meetings.

In these and other ways, bonds between families and schools will foster pupils' progress – for the benefit of the child, the family, the community - and indeed, the nation.

Suscipe, quæsimus, Domine, sacrificia tuis instituta præceptis

Accept, O Lord, we pray, the sacrifices instituted by your commands

Sunday Reflections

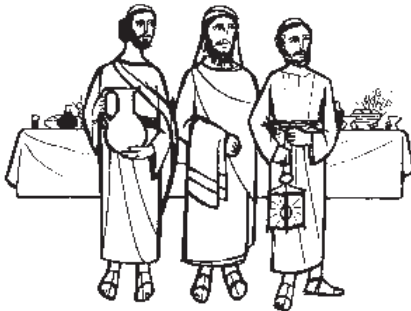
Reflections, readings and prayers for the Sundays in August & September
and for *Sang Marie*



The colour for Sundays in Ordinary time is green.

7th August

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Our calling

'YOU made us glorious by calling us to you.' Words from today's first reading. We Christians know no greater calling than that of Jesus Christ in all four Gospels: 'Come, follow me.'

Today's reading from Luke reminds us that Jesus told his disciples to seek treasure in heaven - treasure that would never fail. They should therefore be 'dressed for action' - ready for whatever might lay ahead.

We, too, should be prepared for whatever lies ahead. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews (today's second reading) extols the faith that Abraham and the heroes of the Old Testament had in God; and that's the kind of faith that we need today: faith in God, faith to follow Jesus, faith to seek the heavenly city.

Collect

ALMIGHTY, ever-living God, whom, taught by the Holy Spirit, we dare to call our Father, bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters, that we may merit to enter into the inheritance which you have promised...

Readings: Wisdom 18:6-9. Psalm 32:1,12,18-20.22.
Response: Happy the people the Lord has chosen as his own. Hebrews 11:1-2,8-19

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...Stay awake, and stand ready, because you do not know the hour when the Son of Man is coming...

Gospel: Luke 12:32-45

Prayer over the Offerings

BE pleased, O Lord, to accept the offerings of your Church, for in your mercy you have given them to be offered, and by your power you transform them into the mystery of our salvation...

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

Prayer after Communion

MAY the communion in your Sacrament that we have consumed, save us, O Lord, and confirm us in the light of your truth.

14th August

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Facing challenges

AS we prepare for today's Mass, perhaps we'd better begin by looking at the second reading, that glowing passage from Hebrews which speaks of the 'cloud of witnesses': our predecessors in the faith whose heroic deeds point us to Christ.

But the first reading and the Gospel remind us that in this world we encounter pain as well as beauty, crisis as well as comfort. Jesus echoed Micah 7:6 in pointing out that the world is divided, families may be divided, and that his followers need to read the signs of the times.

Today, too, we need to understand that if the kingdom of heaven is to come on earth as in heaven, we must be ready to face setbacks and challenges in the light and strength of Christ, striving, even apparently against the odds, to do his will.



Collect

O GOD, who have prepared for those who love you good things which no eye can see, fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love, so that loving you in all things and above all things, we may attain your promises, which surpass every human desire...

Readings: Jeremiah 38:1-6,8-10. Psalm 39:2-4,18.
Response: Lord, come to my aid! Hebrews 12;1-4

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

Gospel: Luke 12:49-53

Prayer over the Offerings

RECEIVE our oblation, O Lord, by which is brought about a glorious exchange, that, by offering what you have given, we may merit to receive your very self...

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

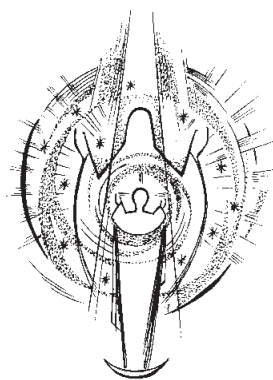
Prayer after Communion

MADE partakers of Christ through these very Sacraments, we humbly implore your mercy, Lord, that, conformed to his image on earth, we may merit also to be his co-heirs in heaven...

If there is a Mass this Sunday evening, it is the Vigil Mass of the Assumption, which has its own readings and prayers, given on page 29.

Monday 15th August
The Assumption
of the Blessed Virgin
Mary

See pages 6 and 7
The colour for today is white



Collect

ALMIGHTY ever-living God, who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of your Son, body and soul into heavenly glory, grant, we pray, that, always attentive to the things that are above, we may merit to be sharers of her glory...

Readings: Revelation 11:19; 12:1-8,10. Psalm 44:10-12,16. Response: On your right stands the queen in garments of gold. 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... Mary has been taken up to heaven; all the choirs of angels are rejoicing.

Gospel: Luke 1:39-56

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY this oblation, our tribute of homage, rise up to you, O Lord; and through the intercession of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, whom you assumed into heaven, may our hearts, aflame with the fire of love, constantly long for you...

Preface: ...for today, the Virgin Mother of God was assumed into heaven as the beginning and image of your Church's coming to perfection and a sign of sure hope and comfort to your pilgrim people; rightly you would not allow her to see the corruption of the tomb, since from her own body she marvellously brought forth your incarnate Son, the Author of all life...

Prayer after Communion

Having received the Sacrament of salvation, we ask you to grant, O Lord, that, though the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom you assumed into heaven, we may be brought to the glory of the resurrection...

21st August
21st Sunday in
Ordinary Time

No free-for-all

THE KINGDOM of God, the kingdom of heaven, will be inhabited by all manner of folk, 'of all tribes and tongues'. But it won't be 'come one, come all'.

Today's Gospel relates how Jesus, as he resolutely made his way towards Jerusalem to his suffering and glory, told his hearers to set their eyes on future glory, putting aside worldly vanity and misdeeds. Otherwise they - and we, too! - might instead of glory encounter 'weeping and grinding of teeth'. Let us be attentive, then, to today's Prayer after Communion, offered in our name by the priest: '...graciously perfect and sustain us, so that in all things we may please you...'



Collect

O GOD, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what you command, and to desire what you promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found...

Readings: Isaiah 66:18-21. Psalm 116. Response: Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News. Hebrews 12:5-7,11-13

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him...

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

Prayer over the Offerings

O GOD, who gained for yourself a people by adoption through the one sacrifice offered once for all, bestow graciously on us, we pray, the gifts of unity and peace in your Church...

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

Prayer after Communion

COMPLETE within us, O Lord, we pray, the healing work of your mercy, and graciously perfect and sustain us, so that in all things we may please you...

28th August

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time



Fellow citizens with the saints?

OUR first reading, from Ecclesiasticus (also known as Sirach) reminds us that we should behave gently and not put ourselves before others: God loves the humble. This is reinforced by Jesus in the Gospel: 'Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'

In between the first reading and the Gospel comes a further reading from Hebrews. It's a passage of great power and beauty, a vision of the 'heavenly Jerusalem'. If we make this vision our own, how empty and short-sighted are our petty pretensions in this life. Instead of putting on airs, being envious of others, seeking to be 'number one', let us seek to become fellow-citizens with the saints in the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem.

Collect

GOD of might, giver of every good gift, out into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, you may nurture in us what is good, and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured...

Readings: Sirach 3:19-21,30-31, Psalm 67:4-7,10-11. Response: In your goodness, O God, you prepared a home for the poor. Hebrews 12:18-19,22-24

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him...

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY this sacred offering, O Lord, confer on us always the blessing of salvation, that what it celebrates in mystery it may accomplish in power...

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

Prayer after Communion

RENEWED by this bread from the heavenly table, we beseech you, Lord, that being the bread of charity, it may confirm our hearts and stir us to serve you in our neighbour...

4th September
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Carrying the cross

JESUS welcomes everyone, but as in today's Gospel reading, he makes it plain that if we want to enjoy his friendship and participate in his kingdom we must, like him, serve God and our neighbour wholeheartedly. In other words, 'Anyone who does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.'

We do well to honour our father and mother, as the Commandments teach us. But ultimately, what comes first is honouring God: everything else, even our present life, is secondary. That's what the martyrs show us. We may be active in the Church, assisting at the Liturgy, belonging to this or that Church society, organising all kinds of Church events. Admirable! But are we giving our all to Christ: taking up our cross? It's a tough assignment. Accepting Christ *in toto* calls for courage, prayer and persistence. We may feel we're not up to it. Instead, we cling to safety, to respectability, to more mundane goals.

The Church needs more saints, whole-hearted followers of Christ. Dare we take up his challenge?

Collect

O GOD, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption, look graciously on your beloved sons and daughters, that those who believe in Christ may receive true freedom and an everlasting inheritance...

Readings: Wisdom 9:13-18. Psalm 89:3-6,12-14,17. Response: O Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to the next. Philemon 9-10,12-17

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

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33

Prayer over the Offerings

O GOD, who give us the gift of true prayer and of peace, graciously grant that, through this offering, we may do fitting homage to your divine majesty, and, by partaking of the sacred mystery, we may be faithfully united in mind and heart.

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



Prayer after Communion

GRANT that your faithful, O Lord, whom you nourish and endow with life through the food of your Word and heavenly Sacrament, may so benefit from your Son's great gifts that we may merit an eternal share in his life...

11th September
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lost and found

ONLY in Luke do we find the three parables that make up today's Gospel reading.

Jesus was speaking in particular to those who queried why he, a teacher of morals, should associate with sinners.

Jesus did so because God offers forgiveness to everybody - something we should remind ourselves often in this Year of Mercy.

God loves every repentant sinner. That's the message of the first two parables. And the lesson of the third parable - the 'prodigal son' - is that no matter how far we stray, if we return to the Father and ask his forgiveness, he will welcome us with open arms. As Paul wrote to Timothy in today's second reading, 'The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...'

Collect

LOOK upon us, O God, Creator and ruler of all things, and, that we may feel the working of your mercy, grant that we may serve you with all our heart...

Readings: Exodus 32:7-11,13-14. Psalm 50:3-4, 12-14,17,19. Response: I will leave this place and go to my father. 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of your mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us...

Gospel: Luke 15:1-32

Prayer over the Offerings

LOOK with favour on our supplications, O Lord, and in your kindness accept these, your servants' offerings, that what each has offered to the honour of your name may serve the salvation of all...

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

Prayer after Communion

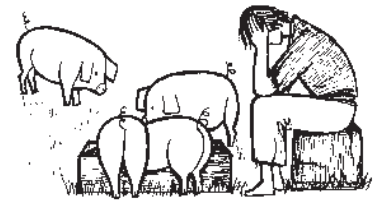
MAY the working of this heavenly gift, O Lord, we pray, take possession of our minds and bodies, so that its effects, and not our own desires, may always prevail in us...

Catholic responsibilities

All Catholics must attend Mass every Sunday and Holyday of Obligation, unless they are genuinely unable to do so.

Holy Communion may only be received by Catholics who are in a state of grace. If you are aware of any grave sin, you must make confession before a priest and receive absolution. Only then may you receive Communion.

Non-Catholics are welcome at every Mass. But they cannot receive Communion, because by their own choice they are not in communion with the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church.



18th September
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Innocent, but worldly-wise

THE MESSAGE of the prophet Amos, in today's first reading, is a warning for all times, all people, all cultures: Don't cheat. Don't trample on the poor.



Yet, to this day, this solemn warning is ignored or spurned by the greedy and dishonest. Corruption seems never-ending. It's our Christian duty to denounce all forms of corruption, and never look the other way.

Jesus' parable in the Gospel may seem off-beat. The steward he spoke of, although not honest, was astute. Jesus was not advising his hearers to be dishonest; he was advising them to be honest but shrewd. Elsewhere, he advised: 'Be wise as serpents, as innocent as doves' (Matthew 10:16). We should be scrupulously honest in matters large and small, but also be aware of the need for practical common-sense.

Let's also take care of Paul's advice to Timothy, in today's second reading. We should pray for those in authority in this country and elsewhere, and lift up our hands in prayer reverently, 'without anger or argument'.

Collect

O GOD, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law upon love of you and of our neighbour, grant that, by keeping your precepts, we may merit to obtain eternal life...

Readings: Amos 8:4-7. Psalm 112:1-2,4-8. Response: Praise the Lord, who raises the poor. 1 Timothy 2:1-8

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

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

Prayer over the Offerings

RECEIVE with favour, O Lord, we pray, the offerings of your people, that what they profess with devotion and faith may be theirs through these heavenly mysteries...

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

Prayer after Communion

GRACIOUSLY raise up, O Lord, those you renew through this Sacrament, that we may come to possess your redemption both in mystery and the manner of our life...

25th September
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

THE PHARISEES, in Jesus' day, were members of an ancient Jewish sect who rigorously observed traditional and written Law, looking down on others. So today the term 'pharisee' is often applied to people who are complacent and self-righteous.



In his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus had a warning for the Pharisees. In effect, he said, don't think you can rely on pious practices and outward observances to get to heaven. The way there is the way of service to others.

We are privileged to be members of Christ's Body, to receive his Word and have access to his Sacraments. We should respond by offering Christ's love to others. 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.' (Matthew 7:21)

Collect

O GOD, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy, bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly on us, and make those hastening to obey your promises heirs to the treasures of heaven...

Readings: Amos 6:1,4-7. Psalm 145:6-10. Response: My soul, give praise to the Lord. 1 Timothy 6:11-16

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...Jesus Christ was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty...

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

Prayer over the Offerings

GRANT us, O merciful God, that this our offering may find acceptance with you, and that through it the well-spring of all blessing may be laid open before us...

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

Prayer after Communion

MAY this heavenly mystery, O Lord, restore us in mind and body, that we may be co-heirs in glory with Christ, by whose sufferings we are united whenever we proclaim his Death...

Learn more about your Diocese
Visit www.banjuldiocese.gm

This rainy season, please
plant a tree!



Answers to Do You Know? page 5

- 1 Aramaic (still spoken by some small communities in SW Asia).
- 2 Luke (He was a Syrian from Antioch, in today's Turkey, who converted to Christianity when the first missionaries left Caesarea to carry the Gospel beyond Jewish communities.)
- 3 1957 (created by Pope Pius XII on 14th June)
- 4 Job (Job 3:1)
- 5 Fr James Mendy, serving in Brikama

Why are London's black churches so popular?

THE NEW London is an immigrant mega-city where nearly 40 per cent were born abroad. It's a city of Russian oligarchs, and Polish builders, where only 45 per cent are white British.

The immigrant city's soul is encountered sleeping rough with Roma beggars, living in Romanian doss houses, working on Polish building sites and touting for work with Baltic labourers on the kerb.

One thing that tumbled out was religiosity. Polish scaffolders talked of the Virgin Mary, carers spoke of Islamic angels, and beggars formed Romanian prayer circles.

The old London of empty churches is fading into history. The new London is a city of Somali basement mosques, overflowing Polish chapels and teeming African Pentecostal services.

Between 2005 and 2012, church attendance in London grew from 620,000 to 720,000. The number of churches grew at roughly the same rate.

Religious awakening



London's awakening has a lot to do with immigration. This is mostly a Pentecostal story: 700 places of worship sprang up in London between 2005 and 2012, of which more than half have

black majorities. Black people are far likelier to attend weekly services than whites: 19 per cent to 8 per cent.

Why are black churches so popular? Standing outside them interviewing attendees, I found African women keen to say they clung close to the church out of fear of family breakdown and gang violence. Many African men said they enjoyed 'being all black, and all together'. But much of this boom in London reflects a boom in Africa itself, where pastors are national celebrities.

Black and immigrant churches now make up nearly a third of all churches in London. In inner London almost half of worshippers are black. There has been a boom in black majority churches.

Catholic London

How does Catholic London compare? It is increasingly a Polish story, but not one filled with the same revival as the African one. In Britain, one in ten Catholics is now Polish, with a third believed to be regular church attendees when they arrived. But Catholic Poles tend to become a less religious in London, unlike their African counterparts.

Some say that Polish London has only limited capacity: there aren't enough churches offering Mass in Polish, as the Catholic Church is a slower-moving creature. There are only 120 Polish priests in Britain because they are more difficult to recruit and train than Pentecostal lay preachers.

Thanks to Eastern European immigration, the Catholic population in London is growing, but not booming.

Most of the Polish builders, labourers and cleaners are new immigrants from working-class rural families. Many express frustration with the bourgeois 'old Poles' who had arrived between the 1940s and 1980s and dominated the Polish churches. Others say they have drifted away from the Church, reflecting what is happening in Poland itself - where regular church attendance has fallen below 40 per cent of the population for the first time in decades.

London Muslims



Changing times: a former cinema used as a mosque

What about Islam? London is now a city of more than 400 mosques (compared with nearly 5,000 churches). The biggest can hold 5,000 worshippers. But most are near-invisible, without minarets, found in converted shops and even old garages.

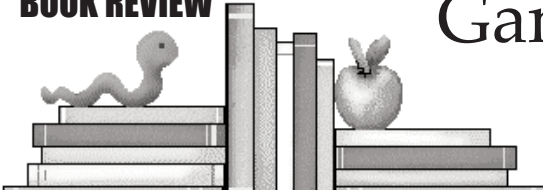
With so many streams of South Asian, Arab, Somali and Eastern European Muslims, it is difficult to characterise the average Muslim Londoner. Faithful London Muslims keep a mental map in mind of the city's places of worship. A frequent comment is that South Asian mosques, where prayers are said in English and in a South Asian language, are increasingly day-care centres for the community's elderly.

London's transformation into an immigrant mega-city is only just beginning. At current rates of influx, which experts agree are unlikely to diminish, the majority of Londoners will be foreign-born by 2030 - unless leaving the European Union cuts down on immigration.

London's new spirituality will become more visible in the years to come as communities grow richer and more confident.

According to the 2011 census, only one in five Londoners are atheist or agnostic, compared with one in four in Britain as a whole. Anyone who walks around London will notice one sign of the change: the growth in 'street preachers': Christian evangelicals or Muslims.

*Edited from an article by BEN JUDAH
in the London Catholic Herald*

BOOK REVIEW

Gambia's man for all seasons

Edward Francis Small
Watchdog of The Gambia
 By **Nana Grey-Johnson**

NOT so long ago, the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital was renamed the 'Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital', honouring a man who, prior to the 1950s, was as journalist, trade union leader and politician, The Gambia's most progressive public figure.

At Small's death in 1958 a former Governor of The Gambia, Sir Percy Wyn-Harris, described him as one of The Gambia's 'most devoted citizens – a man whose kindness, help and wise advice have been so widely known and experienced by the people of The Gambia.

'...He played a prominent role in a progressive part in the Colony's history...By his death all of us in The Gambia are the poorer... May the monument of his undying fame be an incentive to stir up the minds of sons and daughters to emulate the example in rendering unselfish service to their country.'

This generous tribute was in marked contrast to the opinions of Sir Percy's predecessors, who regarded Small as a trouble-maker. His most formidable opponent was Sir Cyril Armitage, Governor from 1920 to 1927, who thought of Small as a 'subversive': a Communist sympathiser, perhaps an activist.

Nana Grey-Johnson's biography is subtitled 'Watchdog of The Gambia'. Yet to the European establishment and Gambians who tolerated or even approved the colonial status-quo, Small was a gadfly – someone who deliberately aggravates and provokes.

A Christian vocation?

Small was born in 1891. After school in Banjul he spent two years on a government scholarship in Freetown at the Wesleyan Boys' School, then worked in Freetown for two years before returning to Banjul in 1912. He worked as a government clerk, then for Maurel et Prom, before becoming a teacher at the Wesleyan Boys' High School. His late father had been a prominent member of the Methodist Church, and Small decided to seek ordination. Money was raised for his training, and he was sent as a probationary missionary to Ballangher in the Central River Region. Here he encouraged small farmers to act collectively in seeking better trading conditions. Then a fight with a European trader over the ringing of the church bell for New Year resulted in the Methodist mission ordering Small to a posting a Sukuta. Small refused to apologise, insisting that Europeans had no right to treat Africans as inferior. His complaints to the church and his criticism of the colonial government led to the end of his hopes for ordination and closed the possibility of his finding work in the civil service.

Gambia Congress Section

In 1919 Small was re-employed by Maurel et Prom and sent to Kaur, where he founded the Gambia National Defence Union (GNDU). In 1920 he resigned from his job to attend the inauguration in Accra of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), where he played a key role. The conference demanded that half the seats in legislative councils should be held by directly-elected Africans. Back in Banjul, Small established the Gambia Congress Section, which subsequently chose him and another Congress member, Henry Jones, to represent the Section in a NCBWA delegation to London. Small did not return to The Gambia until early 1922. He took care to engage the support of prominent Muslims; though some, led by Ousman Jeng, appointed by Sir Cyril Armitage to the Legislative Council, turned against him. Small resigned as secretary of the Gambia Congress Section and went to in Rufisque, in Senegal, where he founded a newspaper,

'The Gambian Outlook' – the first such publication for Gambians for 26 years. The newspaper was sharply critical of the Gambian government.

Mr Grey-Johnson's compact but comprehensive account of Small's views and activities should bring that very different era alive for readers. In his introduction, Grey-Johnson writes: 'It is imperative that the children of the future read the true history of their heroes, and, patriots, reinstate them to their proper status in their minds and society... Dear Reader, I hope that you will realise that this selfless leader and patriot struggled for your generation and those yet to come.'

Continuing as a pioneer

Thus, this book relates how in 1923 Small went to London, living in some penury there before returning to Banjul in 1927, encouraged by a more enlightened Governor, Sir John Middleton. Small began publishing 'The Gambia Outlook' locally. Early in 1929 he helped to found the country's first trade union. Following a 42-day strike, he obtained a pay rise for staff of trading companies. In 1931 he founded the Committee of Citizens – in effect, The Gambia's first political party. Then he spent much of 1930 abroad, notably in London. There, his association with left-wing political groups earned him the impatience and ire of the colonial authorities in The Gambia. Small also faced opposition from the increasingly conservative Samuel Forster, member of the Legislative Council. (From 1886 to the early 1940s, Forster and his late father, also named Samuel Foster, were the most prominent Gambians in public life.)

In 1935 Small founded the Gambia Labour Union, and the following year his Bathurst Rate Payers' Association won all the African seats on the Bathurst Urban District Council.

In 1937 Small attended the coronation in London of King George VI (father of the present Queen) as The Gambia's official representative. During the 1939-1945 World War he gave his full support to the fight against the Nazis. In 1942 he was nominated to the Legislative Council. He continued to press for all Gambians to be given the vote; and in 1947 citizens over 21 were given that right. Small was elected the first African member of the Legislative Council. But in 1951, in elections to the council, he lost his seat to the Revd J.C. Faye. Small was awarded the British government OBE. Though he continued to publish his newspaper, he largely retired from public life. In 1953 he attended Queen Elizabeth's coronation in London, and the Governor, Sir Percy Wyn-Harris, nominated Small to the Legislative Council.

From his first foray into public life, Small had kept in touch with enlightened opinion elsewhere in West Africa and beyond.

After living quietly in retirement, Small died in 1958.

This brief, bald summary aims at no more than pointing to Mr Grey-Johnson's biography as a source of enlightenment about a long-serving, sorely-tested Gambian political pioneer: truly a 'man for all seasons'.

'Edward Francis Small, Watchdog of The Gambia'
 by Nana Grey-Johnson. 2nd edition.
 Media & Development Specialists Publishing Co. Ltd,
 Gambia 2013.
 Paperback 129 pages, illustrated with drawings
 and photographs, and with an index
 Price at Timbooktoo: D300



Gambian Christian anniversaries

August and September

TEN YEARS AGO. On 8th September 2006 the Christian Brothers from India left after serving in The Gambia for seventeen years. Over these years, 17 Indian Christian Brothers served at various times in various capacities. From being, at the outset, 'ordinary' teachers, their work included setting-up and running Fatima High School Bwiam (from 1990); the headship of St Edward's Upper Basic School, Bwiam (1997); beginning St Francis' Upper Basic, Kunkujang (1997-2000); programmes with GPI, choirs and young people; the promotion of vocations; and the Catholic Educational Secretariat.



9th September 1934: Death at sea of Fr O'Sullivan, who had arrived the previous April and was being repatriated due to ill health.

3rd September 1949: Opening of St Joseph's Infants' School Banjul.

15th September 1954: Death of Fr John Meehan CSSp, who had served the Mission for 50 years - 38 of them, from 1908 to 1946, as Superior.

21st September 1957: Death in Nigeria of Daniel Joof, Gambian seminarian who had spent six years studying for the priesthood.

14th August 1961: Renovations to the clergy house at Bakau were completed.

1st August 1964: The new school building at Lamin was opened.

4th August 1967: Fr Michael Flynn opened the mission house at Lamin.

1st September 1968: Official opening of the new premises in Campama, Banjul of St Augustine's High School, with Fr Michael Cleary (now Bishop Emeritus) as Principal. Other priests teaching at the school were Fr Vincent Comer, Fr John Hogan, Fr Seán Little and Fr Tom Tarmey.

6th September 1973: Arrival of Fr Joseph Gough to assist Fr Pierre Sagna, Rector of the new Junior Seminary at Fajara. Later, Fr Sagna became Bishop of St Louis du Sénégal, and Fr Gough became Principal of St Augustine's High School.

19th August 1979: Fr John Hogan was appointed District Superior of the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) and Parish Priest at Bakau.

15th September 1979: Sr Madeleine Mendy, first Gambian vocation to the Presentation Sisters, took her final vows.

21st September 1987: Blessing by the Vicar-General, Fr Vincent Comer, of the Cluny Sisters' Convent at Barra.

7th August 1988: Brothers Henry, Milton and Senan of the Indian Province of the Christian Brothers took up residence at the house in Sam Jack Terrace Banjul bequeathed to the diocese by Dr Felix Blain.

5th August 1999: Opening of St Andrew's Berending.

13th August 2003: Death in Britain of Coleridge Wallace ('Sonnie') Cole, former Director of Education, WAEC Representative in London and Headmaster of Marina International School.

1st August 2006 (10 years ago): Fr Joseph Kabo succeeded Sr Philomena Barry as Director of GPI.

11th August 2006 (10 years ago): Farewell at the Catholic Educational Secretariat to the Assistant Education Secretary, Br Milton Lawrence. He had worked in The Gambia since 1988, his posts including the headship of Our Lady of Fatima High School Bwiam.

28th August 2006 (10 years ago): The Presentation Sisters in The Gambia, who since 1968 had been attached to the Region of Senegal, were reconstituted as a mission linked to the Generalate of their Congregation in Rome.

8th August 2007: Death of Sebastian Njie, Executive Director of the National Youth Service Scheme, Chairman of the Catholic Education Commission and Chairman of the Board of St Peter's Senior Secondary School Lamin.

15th August 2007 (Sang Marie): Bishop Ellison convened an Assembly for the Diocese of Banjul to be held from 30th March to 4th April 2008.

20th August 2007: Bishop Ellison appointed Fr David Jimoh Jarju as Vicar-General of the Diocese of Banjul.

25th September 2007: Death in Britain of Antoine Nicholas Tabbal ('CB') right, prominent businessman.

18th-29th August 2008: a course for new teachers was conducted by the Catholic Education Secretariat.

21st September 2008: an accident during tree-felling at St Francis' Nursery School Tranquil brought down the D20,000 new roof and smashed newly-acquired furniture.



9th-17th August 2009: A Sisters' retreat was conducted by Mgr Daniel Camara of Makenni Diocese, Sierra Leone.

22nd August 2009: Death in Ireland aged 64 of Fr Michael Murray CSSp, who had served in The Gambia from 1973 to 1981.

25th-28th August 2009: Around 60 young people took part in a camp at Basse. Among other activities, they undertook a two-day cleaning exercise.

8th September 2009: Fr Joseph Kabo, GPI Director, blessed 'Nazareth', a grotto at the Presentation Sisters' compound in Brikama.

21st September 2009: Death in Ireland of Dermot Roach, Irish layman who since the 1990s had helped many students. He worked at Fatima School Bwiam before retiring to Kunkujang Mariama.

5th August 2010: The Blessed Sacrament Choir of Kanifing began a visit to Dakar, where they gave a concert and sang at the Cathedral.

17th September 2010: Pupils of St John Vianney's School Bulock took part in a live television link with London as part of a programme in which Pope Benedict XVI, then visiting Britain, addressed Britain's school-children.

15th September 2011 (5 years ago): Sr Jeanne-Therese of the Cluny Sisters celebrated the golden jubilee of her profession.

During September 2011: Three priests arrived to serve the diocese: Fr Jean-Marie Faye, Fr Addai Jobe CSSp and Fr Frederick Agama CSSp.

24th September 2010: An association for Senegalese Catholics was launched at the Father Farrell Hall Kanifing, and at GPI a workshop was held for priests and others on the forthcoming new English translation of the Mass.

10th August 2013: St Martha's Society celebrated its fortieth anniversary.

17th August 2013: Bishop Robert Ellison, Fr Jean-Noël Faye and Fr Yenes Manneh took part in *Sang Marie* celebrations at Atlanta, USA.

10th September 2013: Death of the long-serving catechist, 'OJ' – Matthew Jarjou. PIX?

21st-28th September 2013: The Knights of St Peter & St Paul hosted the Biennial Council Meeting of the International Alliance of Catholic Knights.

25th July 2015: At Mass in St Camillus' Church Washington DC, Fr Anthony Gabisi celebrated 30 years as a priest

1st September 2015: In retirement in Ireland, Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary CSSp celebrated his ninetieth birthday.



Tobaski fosters hospitality, generosity and togetherness

Abraham, 'father in faith'

THIS year, Muslims in The Gambia and throughout the world will be celebrating *Eid el Adha* on or about Tuesday 13th September.

In this country the Muslim celebration of the *Eid* – locally-known as *Tobaski* – is sometimes described as the Muslim Christmas. In the doctrinal sense, it is very different; but *Tobaski*, like Christmas, is the occasion for great family rejoicing and hospitality.

Indeed, Christians can feel particularly close to Muslims at *Tobaski*, because what it celebrates is Abraham's faith in God, and his willingness to sacrifice his own son, if that was God's will.

Abraham is 'father in faith' to Jews, Christians and Muslims. Christians do not keep special days for the heroes of the Old Testament, but we do honour Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elisha and all the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets who pointed the way to God.

Christians, like Muslims, give thanks for the faith and witness of holy men and women who throughout the ages valued service to God before all else, which is why we rejoice with Muslims in the faith of Abraham – and pray that

our own faith and service to God may be strengthened.

Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son is narrated in the Qur'an and in the earlier account in Genesis 22:1-19.

Christ's mother proclaimed: 'My soul magnifies the Lord... He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promises he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants for ever.' (*Magnificat*, the Song of Mary, Luke 1:46-55)

The witness of Abraham and his successors is proclaimed in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 11:4-38.

'Be pleased to look upon these offerings... and to accept them as once you were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel the just, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith, and the offering of your high priest, Melchizedek... (The Roman Canon – First Eucharistic Prayer)

Best Wishes to all our Muslim Brothers and Sisters

for

a Happy Tobaski - *Eid el-Adha*



from beyond the diocese

Pope to attend ecumenical prayers and celebrate Mass in Sweden

POPE Francis will attend two ecumenical events when he visits Sweden on 31st October and celebrate Mass for All Saints Day with Swedish Catholics the following day.

The Pope's attendance in Sweden at an ecumenical commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation will include a service at Lund Cathedral and an event at Malmo Arena.

Pope Francis and the President and Secretary-General of the Lutheran World Federation will lead a service based on the recently-published Catholic-Lutheran Common Prayer liturgical guide. The service will be followed by an event at Malmo Arena, which can host up to 10,000 people.

The Rt Revd Anders Arborelius, Catholic Bishop of Stockholm, said that when Pope Francis and Lutheran leaders visit Lund, 'history will be written', and expressed the hope that it will 'encourage all of us to go together on the road toward Christian unity'.

Nuncio to UN calls for creation of Palestinian state

ARCHBISHOP Bernardito Auza, (right) Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council in a debate on 12th July that the time to make peace between Israel and Palestine is long overdue.



The archbishop said the Security Council should accept the recommendations made on 1st July by the Quartet on the Middle East, the foursome founded in 2002 of the UN, the United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union to work toward peace in the Middle East.

'The time is long overdue to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has become increasingly unacceptable as it has become increasingly intractable,' the archbishop declared. He called for the full implementation of the UN General Assembly's Resolution 181, which called for the creation of a Palestinian state almost 70 years ago and has not been fulfilled.

Archbishop Auza also echoed the Pope's denunciations of nations that call for peace, yet supply weapons to parties in the conflict. He described the Middle East as 'a cradle of great civilisations and the birth-place of the three main monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam', but added: 'The more religion is manipulated to justify acts of terror and violence, the more religious leaders must be engaged in the overall effort to defeat the violence that attempts to hijack it for purposes antithetical to its nature. Spurious religious fervour must be countered by authentic religious instruction and by the example of true communities of faith.'

Lagos shuts churches and mosques

THE AUTHORITIES in Nigeria's commercial hub of Lagos have shut down dozens of churches, mosques and hotels in a bid to cut noise pollution.



The sprawling city of 20 million people is notorious for heavy traffic jams and the deafening noise of churches and mosques that use loudspeakers to spread their message.

'Seventy churches, 20 mosques and 11 hotels, club houses and beer parlours have been shut down across the state,' said an official of Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency. 'The affected churches and mosques were directed to remove the loudspeakers placed outside so as not to disturb the public with their activities; but they refused.'

The official added, 'We want to ensure that Lagos is noise-free by the year 2020. With our status as a mega-city, by year 2020 we will be free of noise.' He added the agency would no longer allow makeshift buildings to be used as places of worship in Lagos state.

The state government has restricted the blaring of horns and sirens by motorists to reduce noise and pollution in the crowded city.

UK pastor fined for 'unbearably loud' services

THE PASTOR of an evangelical church in Essex, England, has been fined for holding 'unbearably loud' services in the middle of the night.

Akinseye Iyun, head of the Celestial Church of Christ in Grays, Essex, led services involving amplified music, drumming and chanting as often as four times a week, frequently finishing as late as 4 am. He ignored complaints from neighbours, claiming that the building had been sound-proofed.

'It's not really reasonable the amount of noise they're making – you don't hear that from any other church,' one local resident told the press. 'When it's going full blast, I can hear every word the preacher is saying.'

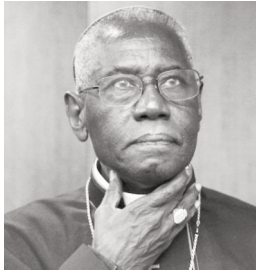
Mr Iyun was prosecuted at the local magistrates' court, where he was found guilty of breaching a noise abatement notice and ordered to pay £1,241.50 (about D70,000) in fines and costs.

Mr Iyun, 38, apologised for causing a disturbance, saying it wasn't intentional. He scrapped the late-night programme, and services now run from 7pm to 8pm on Wednesdays and Fridays, and to 9pm on one Thursday a month. But he's been warned that if, despite this, the noise continues to be unreasonable, his PA equipment will be seized.

Earlier this year, Kingdom Church in Camberwell, London, was fined £8,000 (about D456,000) for holding weekly 'healing and miracle' services in the early hours of the morning. The church insisted that middle-of-the-night services were necessary because 'it is well-known that witchcraft and negative elements begin to work in the early hours of the morning'.

Vatican says Cardinal Sarah 'misinterpreted'

THE VATICAN has said that the media have 'misinterpreted' an address by Cardinal Robert Sarah on 5th July at the *Sacra Liturgia* conference in London, in which he invited all priests to celebrate the Mass *ad orientem* - that is, facing the same way as the people.



The Vatican spokesman, Fr Federico Lombardi, stated: 'Cardinal Sarah is always rightly concerned with the dignity of the celebration of Mass, that it might adequately express an attachment of respect and adoration for the Eucharistic mystery.' But he added: 'Some of his phrasing has been badly interpreted, as if he had announced new, different indications from those now given in liturgical norms.'

Fr Lombardi pointed out that the General Instruction of the Roman Missal indicates that the altar should be built away from the wall, so 'that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible.'

At the conference, the Guinean cardinal, who is Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, said: 'It is very important that we return as soon as possible to a common orientation, of priests and the faithful turned together in the same direction - eastwards or at least towards the apse - to the Lord who comes... I ask you to implement this practice wherever possible.' He told pastors to have 'confidence that this is something good for the Church, something good for our people'.

Cardinal Sarah added that some 'very serious misinterpretations of the liturgy' had crept in, thanks to an attitude to the liturgy which placed man rather than God at the centre. He said, 'The liturgy is not about you and me. It is not where we celebrate our own identity or achievements or exalt or promote our own culture and local religious customs. The liturgy is first and foremost about God and what he has done for us.' He quoted Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: 'Forgetting about God is the most imminent danger of our age.'

Several liturgical experts have said that Cardinal Sarah does not have the authority to impose a change, but is simply encouraging a practice that liturgical law already permits.

In remarks which he did not have time to deliver, but which were later published on *Sacra Liturgia's* Facebook page, Cardinal Sarah encouraged kneeling at the consecration and for the reception of Communion. 'Where kneeling and genuflection have disappeared from the liturgy, they need to be restored, in particular for our reception of our Blessed Lord in Holy Communion.'

See End Piece, page 30

From memorial to feast

POPE Francis has declared that the commemoration of St Mary Magdalene on 22nd July should be raised from a memorial to a feast.

Mary Magdalene has been called 'the apostle of the apostles'. She stood by the cross of Jesus (John 19:25) and was the first witness to his resurrection (John 20:1-2 and 11-18). Mary is mentioned as the first witness to the resurrection in Matthew 27:28, Mark 16:9 and Luke 24:10.

Priest murdered after being taken hostage in French church

A PRIEST was killed at a church near Rouen in northern France on St James' Day, Monday 25th July.

Archbishop Dominique Lebrun of Rouen confirmed that Fr Jacques Hamel, 84, died in the attack on the church in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray by two armed men. They entered the building during Mass, taking the priest and a number of other people, including two nuns, hostage.

'I cry out to God with all men of good will. I would invite non-believers to join in the cry,' said the archbishop, who returned to France from World Youth Day in Krakow. 'The Catholic Church cannot take weapons other than those of prayer and brotherhood among men. I left [in Krakow] hundreds of young people who are the future of humanity, the true ones. I ask them not to give in to the violence, but to become apostles of the civilisation of love.'

According to reports, the priest died after his throat was cut. Another person inside the church was seriously injured.

French police shot the hostage-takers dead after storming the building. Reuters reported that between four and six people, including the priest and two nuns, were being held at the church.

'Absurd violence'

The Vatican spokesman, Fr Federico Lombardi, said Pope Francis had expressed pain and horror at this 'absurd violence'.

'We are particularly shocked that this horrible violence occurred in a church, a sacred place where the love of God is proclaimed,' said Fr Lombardi.

The French President, Francois Hollande, and the Interior Minister visited Saint-Etienne-en-Rouvray. The French Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, took to Twitter to condemn the 'barbaric attack', declaring, 'The whole of France and all Catholics are wounded. We will stand together.'

The incident came as France was under high alert after an attack in Nice that killed 84 people and a string of deadly attacks last year claimed by ISIS.

Catholicism's decline in Germany

FIGURES released by the German Bishops' Conference show a further decline of Catholicism in the country.

With more than 23.7 million members, Catholicism is the largest religious group in Germany, comprising 29 per cent of the population. Yet people are leaving the Church in droves: in 2015, a total of 181,925 people left. By comparison, 2,685 people became Catholic, and 6,474 reverted to Catholicism.

When compared to twenty years ago, the number of baptisms has declined by more than a third. The situation is even worse for marriages. Last year, the number was down by almost half: in a nation of 80 million people, only 44,298 couples were married in the Church.

Average church attendance is down from 18.6 per cent in 1995 to 10.4 per cent in 2015.

No numbers are provided by the German episcopate about how many Catholics went to confession last year. However, a recent study of the priesthood in Germany showed that even among the clergy, more than half - 54 per cent - go to confession only 'once a year or less'.



?

Question Box

When I'm at Mass I feel a strong sense of belief in God and the Gospel. But at other times I don't think much about God – or, if I do, I'm not sure how much I believe in him.

THE GIFT of faith comes from God: it is grace of God.

The Mass is described as the 'source and summit' of our faith, so it's good and proper that you experience a surge of belief when you take part in the Eucharist. But your faith should be something you can always depend on. We do not need to think of God absolutely at all times, but when we do think about him we should feel confidence in him, in his Son, and in the Church.

You are not alone in finding that your faith has its 'ups and downs'. Faith needs nourishing. Although going to Mass on Sundays and other days is the best way you can worship, it is not only at Mass that we encounter God.

Regular prayer is the way to get to know and trust God better. Every Christian should pray every day the common prayers of the Church (Our Father, Hail Mary, the creed, etc), as well as personal, particular prayers. You can say the prayer in Mark 9:24: 'I believe; help my unbelief.'

Christians do not seek to grow in belief in isolation. We have the saints to help us, and our fellow Christians. If you don't belong to a prayer group or other group of Christians you might consider joining one. In any case, this is a practical question you can discuss with your priest, or any individual, or several others. You'll surely find that you are not unusual; many others experience the same ebb and flow of faith.

Seeking to deal with your 'unbelief' should lead you to deeper and surer faith. Make sure you read the Scriptures regularly, and perhaps other Christian writings. And step up your 'good deeds'!

So - in a nutshell - Christianity is not just a 'Sunday' religion: it's a way of life, the way to the Father. Be patient, and remember: you're not alone; you have your fellow Christians, the saints, and God himself to support and uphold you!

The Pope's Prayer Intentions



August

- That sports may be an opportunity for friendly encounters between peoples, and may contribute to peace in the world.
- That Christians may live the Gospel, giving witness to faith, honesty, and love of neighbour.

September

- That each may contribute to the common good and to the building of a society that places the human person at the centre.
- That by participating in the Sacraments and meditating on Scripture, Christians may become more aware of their mission to evangelise.



Pious practices

MANY devotional practices in the Church are so habitual that we don't think about them. But whenever we make the sign of the Cross, for instance, or dip our fingers into holy water, we should do so in awareness of what the action means. We shouldn't perform such actions to impress others or to tell ourselves how holy and good we are. We perform them to honour God and our membership of his Church.

IN church we genuflect (bow the knee) to acknowledge the sacramental presence of Christ in the tabernacle or on the altar.

At certain other times in church we bow our heads in reverence. We bow at the mention of Persons of the Most Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We bow during the Creed (the Profession of Faith) at the words ...*et homo factus est* ('...and became man').

We bow to receive the final blessing at Mass.

Some lower the head during the *Confiteor* ('I confess') in the penitential act at the beginning of Mass.

The priest and servers bow profoundly on arriving at the altar and on leaving.





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What is Father wearing?

THE DISTINCTIVE outer garments worn by priests and other ministers in church, and especially during the Mass, are known as vestments.

For street wear, priests often use a black or plain-coloured shirt with a clerical collar. Or they may wear the soutane (also called a cassock), which is a long, close-fitting, ankle-length robe, usually buttoned. Black is the usual colour, but in the tropics white is more common.

The clerical collar and the soutane distinguish the priest from lay people; though while in church, servers and other ministers may also wear a soutane.

Nowadays, when not performing priestly duties, many priests prefer to wear ordinary lay dress.

Over their clerical attire priests wear vestments. The ones always worn at Mass are the alb (or cassock-alb), stole and chasuble.

Here are some descriptions:

Alb A long white garment worn over the soutane. Some priests, ministers and servers now wear the modern cassock-alb, which is a combination of the soutane and alb.

Biretta (*shown in box below*) A priest's hat which has three upright sections meeting on top. Nowadays not generally used.

Cincture A cloth girdle worn round the alb.

Amice A cloth round the neck used to cover the collar of street attire, worn by the celebrant, deacon and sub-deacon at the traditional High Mass.

Stole A long narrow strip of cloth worn round the neck as a symbol of ordination. Deacons wear it draped across the left shoulder diagonally across the body to the right hip, while priests and bishops wear it draped around the back of the neck. It may be crossed at the front and secured with the cincture.

Chasuble The outermost garment of priests and bishops, often decorated. It is only used for the celebration of Mass. The shape and style have varied at different times and places. In The Gambia the chasuble generally worn is full and light-weight (*shown right*)

Dalmatic The outer garment of deacons at a traditional High Mass (not generally used in The Gambia). The sub-deacon at High Mass wears a tunicle.

Maniple An embroidered liturgical handkerchief bound

about the left wrist - no longer in general use.

Cope (*right*) A circular cape reaching to the ankles worn by bishops, priests and deacons - for example, at Solemn Vespers, Benediction and in processions.

Outside the Mass, priests may wear a surplice and stole over their soutane. The surplice is a white tunic which may be trimmed with lace. Soutane and surplice are also worn in some churches by servers and by members of the choir.



Colours

The colour of the priest's chasuble and stole varies according to the day and season.

White Christmas Time; Easter Time; feasts of our Lord and of Mary; feasts of saints who are not apostles or martyrs. Also, in this and other dioceses, at Masses for the dead

Gold-colour may be worn at the most joyous celebrations such as Christmas and Easter Sunday.

Red Palm Sunday and Good Friday; Pentecost; feasts of apostles and martyrs.

Purple or violet Advent; Lent; Confession. In some dioceses purple (or black) is also used at Masses for the dead.

Rose May be worn on Advent Sunday III and Lent Sunday IV.

Green The colour in Ordinary Time for Sundays and for weekdays which are not feasts.

The colour worn by the priest may also be used for altar coverings and at the lectern.



A little history

VESTMENTS are the outer garments worn by priests at the Mass and other rites and ceremonies of the Church.

In the early Church, priests at the altar wore the dress of everyday life. From the fourth century the outer costume that priests and other ministers wore during services began to be distinguished from secular clothing.

The growth of priestly vestments did not proceed everywhere at equal pace. It proceeded fastest in the Eastern Church.

About AD 800 liturgical dress was complete in its essentials. Over succeeding centuries there have been considerable variations in style and custom. Most vestments in our day are considerably simpler because of reforms instituted by the Second Vatican Council.

Most churches of the Reformation do not use Catholic vestments; though many Anglican churches do.



Some weekday celebrations in August and September



Thursday 4th August: St John Mary Vianney *priest*

AFTER difficult beginnings, especially with the study of Latin, Jean-Baptiste Marie Vianney was ordained in 1815, and three years later sent to the French village of Ars, not far from Lyon. He opened an orphanage for girls which soon became a model. But he is mostly revered as a confessor. Within a few years, penitents were coming from neighbouring parishes, from further afield, and from all of France. By 1855 there were almost 20,000 a year. In the last ten years of his life, John Vianney spent 16 to 18 hours a day in the confessional. Pope Pius X commended John Vianney as a model pastor. He died in 1859 and was canonised in 1935. St John is also known as the *Curé d'Ars* (the Parish Priest of Ars). In our own diocese, the church at Bullock is dedicated to him.

Saturday 6th August: The Transfiguration of the Lord

WHEN the apostles Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured on the Holy Mountain and talking with the prophets Moses and Elijah, he was revealed as the fulfilment of all that the prophets had foretold. They heard the voice of God himself proclaim, 'This is my Son. Listen to him!' (Matthew 17: 1-13; Mark 9: 2-13. Luke 9: 28-36) The voice of the Father speaks the same words to the Church today.

Monday 8th August: St Dominic *priest*

DOMINIC was a Spaniard, born in 1170 in Castille. In 1196 he joined a religious community. On a visit to southern France he gathered a group of preachers (Dominicans) to travel barefoot and in poverty. In 1206 he founded a convent of sisters converted from heresy. He became a friend of St Francis of Assisi, and in 1216 received approval for his order from Pope Honorius III. Dominic established theological schools at two of his houses. He died in 1221 and was canonised in 1234.

Tuesday 9th August: St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross *martyr*

ST TERESA Benedicta of the Cross, also known as St Edith Stein, was born into a Jewish family at Breslau (then in Germany, now Wroclaw, in Poland). From being an atheist, Edith was baptised in 1922. For her, Catholicism was not the denial, but the fulfilment, of her Jewish inheritance. She moved from Germany to the Netherlands to avoid Nazi persecution, but in 1942 was arrested and sent to Auschwitz concentration camp, where she died in the gas chamber. She is remembered for her search for truth and her attempts to promote peace and understanding in the face of hatred and war. In 1987 Edith Stein was beatified by St John Paul II, who went on to canonise her in 1998.



Wednesday 10th August: St Laurence *martyr*

LAURENCE was a deacon in Rome during the 3rd-century papacy of Sixtus II. When the Pope was executed during the Emperor Valerian's persecution of Christians, Laurence was asked to surrender the church's treasure to the State. Instead, he distributed the money to the poor, for which he was condemned to death. Tradition says that he was roasted to death, and that his fearless behaviour at his execution led to many conversions.

Saturday 3rd September: St Gregory the Great *Pope*

GREGORY was born in 540 into a rich family. He abandoned a political career and gave away his possessions to become a monk. He founded monasteries and represented successive popes in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). In 590 he was elected Pope. Gregory was a great administrator. He wrote theological works, insisted on priestly celibacy, reformed the calendar and the liturgy, and established choir schools where 'Gregorian chant' was taught.

Monday 5th September: Blessed Teresa of Calcutta *religious*

TERESA (born in Albania in 1910) founded the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India, in 1950. For over 45 years she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned and dying while guiding the expansion of her Order, first throughout India and then in other countries. By the 1970s she was internationally famed as an advocate for the poor and helpless. In 1979 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 1980 India's highest civilian honour, the *Bharat Ratna*. At the time of her death in 1997, Teresa's sisters were operating 610 missions in 123 countries, including hospices for people with HIV/Aids, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, counselling programmes, orphanages and schools. Following her death in ??? Mother Teresa was beatified by St John Paul II.

The Missionaries of Charity have worked in The Gambia since 1994, and today we pray for their work in this country and throughout the world. We pray also for the people of Mariamakunda, where an out-station church is named in Blessed Teresa's honour. This year, she is to be canonised (declared a saint) by Pope Francis on Sunday 4th September, and from that day will be known as St Teresa of Calcutta.

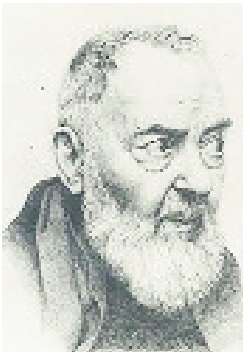


Tuesday 13th September: St John Chrysostom *doctor*

JOHN was born in 347 at Antioch, Syria. After brilliant studies, he became a hermit. When his health gave way he returned to Antioch, was ordained, and as a preacher won many converts: 'Chrysostom' means 'golden mouthed'. He angered the rich by his concern for the poor, and was banished to Armenia. He later died on the way to a more distant exile on the Black Sea.

Tuesday 20th September: St Andrew Kim Tae-gon & martyrs of Korea

CATHOLICISM took root in Korea in the late 18th century. When French missionaries arrived in 1830 they found that Catholicism was already being practised. Kim Tae-gon's father was martyred for being a Catholic. Kim - or Andrew - was baptised when he was 15, and ordained nine years later in Shanghai, China. He returned to Korea as the first Korean priest at a time when thousands of Christians were being persecuted. In 1846, aged 25, Fr Tae-gon was beheaded near Seoul. His last words were, 'Become Christians if you want to be happy after death...' In May 1994, during a visit to Korea, St John Paul II canonised Andrew Kim Tae-gon and 103 other Korean martyrs.



Friday 23rd September: St Pius of Pietrelcina ('Padre Pio') *priest*

PIO was born in southern Italy in 1887. Until he was 10 he worked on his family's farm, attending Mass and saying the rosary daily. His father went to the USA to pay for Pio to be tutored and enter the Capuchin Order. Pio was ordained in 1910. After the First World War, he became spiritual director at the mountain friary where he lived until his death. Pio suffered poor health, and believed that the love of God was inseparable from suffering, and received the stigmata - the five wounds of Christ. Many pilgrims came to see him. He spent 19 hours a day saying Mass, hearing confessions and writing. Some higher clergy brought accusations against him, and he was forbidden to teach and for a time not allowed to say Mass publicly. By 1934 these restrictions had been lifted. In September 1968 he died. His funeral was attended by over 100,000 mourners. In 2002 he was canonised by St John Paul II, who as a young priest had visited Pio in 1947.

Saturday 27th August: St Monica *matron*

MONICA, a fifth-century saint, is regarded as a model wife and mother. She devoted her life to her son, St Augustine, guiding him towards his conversion, as related in Augustine's autobiography, *Confessiones*. Monica died on her way home to North Africa a few days after her son had been baptised by St Ambrose. Augustine's writings have great influence to this day.

Friday 30th September: St Jerome *doctor*

JEROME was born around 341 in Venetia, Italy. He travelled throughout France and became a monk. After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land he retired to the Syrian desert, where he lived as a hermit. He returned to Rome in 382 as secretary to Pope Damasus, who ordered him to produce the standard Latin text of the Bible (the Vulgate, or 'People's Bible') from Hebrew and Greek sources. Jerome spent more than 15 years on the task. He died in 420 and is buried in Jerusalem. The Council of Trent (1545-63) revised the Vulgate and declared it the approved text for Catholic use.



...and so, with Angels and Archangels...and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory...

ANGELS are the messengers of God, mentioned often in Scripture. They closed the gates of the earthly paradise (Genesis 3:24). They saved Hagar and her child Ishmael (Genesis 21:17), They stayed the hand of Abraham as he was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:7). They announce prodigious births (Judith 13:3-7).

Angels protect the footsteps of the just (Psalm 91:11). They praise God unceasingly (Isaiah 6:1-4).

The angel Gabriel declared to Mary that she would give birth to Jesus (Luke 1:26-38).

An angel revealed to Joseph the supernatural origin of Mary's conception (Matthew 1:18-25). The angels appeared to the shepherds at Bethlehem to herald Christ's birth (Luke 2:8-24).

The angel of the Lord protected Jesus when he was threatened by Herod (Matthew 2:13-20).

Angels ministered to Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:11) and comforted him in his agony (Luke 22:43).

To the women gathered at Jesus' tomb, angels announced that he had risen (Mark 16:1-8), and after Jesus' ascension they declared that he would 'come back in the same way as you have seen him go' (Acts 1:11).

Jesus declared that the 'angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven' (Matthew 10:10) and that '...there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner' (Luke 15:10). He announced: '...the Son of Man will come in his glory with all his angels' at the end of time to judge the living and the dead (Mark 25:31)

Three archangels are named in Scripture: Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. Their feast day is Thursday 29th September.

(The memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels usually follows three days later, on 2nd October, but is omitted this year because that day is a Sunday.)

Daily Mass Readings



Sunday readings Year C Weekday readings Year 2

Mon 1st	Jeremiah 28:1-17. Psalm 118:29,43,79,80,95,102. Matthew 14:13-21
Tue 2nd	Jeremiah 30:1-2,12-15,18-22. Psalm 101:16-23. Matthew 14:22-36
Wed 3rd	Jeremiah 31:1-7. Psalm Jeremiah 31:10-13. Matthew 15:21-38
Thu 4th	Jeremiah 31:31-34. Psalm 50:12-15,18-19. Matthew 16:13-23
Fri 5th	Nahum 2:1-3; 3:1-3,6-7. Psalm Deuteronomy 32:35-36,39,41. Matthew 16:24-28 or Revelation 21:1-5. Psalm Judith 13:18-19. Luke 11:27-28
Sat 6th	Daniel 7:9-10,13-14 or 1 Peter 1:16-19. Psalm 96: 1-2,5-6,9. Luke 9:28-36
Sun 7th	Wisdom 18:6-9. Psalm 32:1,12,18-20,22. Hebrews 11:1-2,8-19. Luke 12:32-48
Mon 8th	Ezekiel 1:2-5,24-28. Psalm 148:1-2,11-14. Matthew 17: 22-27.
Tue 9th	Ezekiel 2:8 - 3:4. Psalm 118:14,24,72,103,111.131. Matthew 18:1-5,10,12-14
Wed 10th	2 Corinthians 9:6-10. Psalm 111:1-2,5-9. John 12:24-26
Thu 11th	Ezekiel 12:1-12. Psalm 77:56-59,61-62. Matthew 18:21 - 19:1
Fri 12th	Ezekiel 16:1-5,60,63. Psalm Isaiah 12:2-6. Matthew 19:3-12
Sat 13th	Ezekiel 18:1-10,13,30-32. Psalm 50:12-15,18-19. Matthew 19:13-15
Sun 14th	Jeremiah 38:4-6,8-10. Psalm 39:2-14,18. Hebrews 12:1-4. Luke 12:49-53
Mon 15th	Evening Mass of the Assumption: 1 Chronicles 15:3-4,15-16; 16:1-2. Psalm 131:6-7,9-10,13-14. Revelation 11:19;12:1-6,10. Psalm 44:10-12,16. 1 Corinthians 15:20-27. Luke 1:39-56
Tue 16th	Ezekiel 28:1-10. Psalm Deuteronomy 32:26-28,30. Matthew 19:23-30
Wed 17th	Ezekiel 34:1-11. Psalm 22:1-6. Matthew 20:1-16
Thu 18th	Ezekiel 36:23-28. Psalm 50:12-16,18-19, Matthew 22:1-14
Fri 19th	Ezekiel 37: 1-14. Psalm 106:2-9. Matthew 22:34-40
Sat 20th	Ezekiel 43:1-7. Psalm 84:9-14. Matthew 23:1-12
Sun 21st	Isaiah 66:18-21 Psalm 116:1,2 Hebrews 12:5-7,11-13. Luke 13:22-30
Mon 22nd	Isaiah 9:1-6. Psalm 112:1-8. Luke 1:26-38
Tue 23rd	2 Thessalonians 2:1-3,14-17. Psalm 95:10-13. Matthew 23:23-26
Wed 24th	Revelation 21:9-14, Psalm 144:10-13,17-18. John 1:45-51
Thu 25th	1 Corinthians 1:1-9. Psalm 144:2-7. Matthew 24:42-51.
Fri 26th	1 Corinthians 1:17-25. Psalm 32:1-2,4-5,10-11. Matthew 25:1-13
Sat 27th	1 Corinthians 1:26-31. Psalm 32:12-13,18-21. Matthew 25:14-30
Sun 28th	Sirach 3:19-21,30-31. Psalm 67:4-7,10-11. Hebrews 12:18-19,22-24. Luke 14:1,7-14
Mon 29th	Jeremiah 1:17-19. Psalm 70:1-6,15,17. Mark 6:17-29
Tue 30th	1 Corinthians 2:10-16. Psalm 144:8-14. Luke 4:31-37
Wed 31st	1 Corinthians 3:1-9. Psalm 32:12-15,20-21. Luke 4:38-44
Thu 1st Sept	Corinthians 3:18-23. Psalm 23:1-6. Luke 5:1-11
Fri 2nd	1 Corinthians 4:1-5. Psalm 36:3-6,27-28,39-40. Luke 5:33-39
Sat 3rd	1 Corinthians 4:6-15. Psalm 144:17-21. Luke 6:1-5
Sun 4th	Wisdom 9:13-18. Psalm 89:3-6,12-14,17. Philemon 9-10,12-17. Luke 14:25-43
Mon 5th	1 Corinthians 5:1-8. Psalm 5:5-7,12. Luke 6:6-11
Tue 6th	1 Corinthians 6:1-11. Psalm 149:1-6,9. Luke 6:12-19
Wed 7th	1 Corinthians 7:25-31. Psalm 44:11-12,14-17
Thu 8th	Micah 5:1-4 or Romans 8:28-30. Psalm 12:6. Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23
Fri 9th	1 Corinthians 9:16-19,22-27. Psalm 83:3-6,12. Luke 6:39-42
Sat 10th	1 Corinthians 10:14-22. Psalm 115:12-13,17-18. Luke 6:43-49
Sun 11th	Exodus 7-11,13-14. Psalm 50:3-4,12-13,17,19. 1 Timothy 1:12-17. Luke 15:1-32
Mon 12th	1 Corinthians 11:17-26,33. Psalm 39:7-10,17. Luke 7:1-10 or for Mary: Galatians 4:1-7 or Ephesians 1:3-6. Psalm Luke 1:46-55. Luke 9:39-47
Tue 13th	1 Corinthians 12:12-14,27-31. Psalm 99:2-5. Luke 7:11-17
Wed 14th	Numbers 21:4-9 or Philippians 2:6-11. Psalm 77: 1-2,34-38. John 3:13-17
Thu 15th	Hebrews 5:7-9. Psalm 30:2-6,15-16,20. John 19:25-27 or Luke 2:33-35
Fri 16th	1 Corinthians 15:12-20. Psalm 16:1,6-8,15. Luke 8:1-3
Sat 17th	1 Corinthians 15:35-37,42-39. Psalm 55:10-14. Luke 8:4-15
Sun 18th	Amos 8:3-7. Psalm 112:1-2,4-8. 1 Timothy 2:1-8. Luke 16:1-13.
Mon 19th	Proverbs 3:27-35. Psalm 14:2-5. Luke 8:16-18 (St Janarius)
Tue 20th	Proverbs 21:1-6,10-13. Psalm 118:1,27,30,34-35,44. Luke 8:19-21
Wed 21st	Ephesians 4:1-7,11-13. Psalm 18:2-5. Matthew 9:9-13
Thu 22nd	Ecclesiastes 1:1-11. Psalm 89:3-6,12-14,17. Luke 9:7-9
Fri 23rd	Ecclesiastes 3:1-11. Psalm 143:1-4. Luke 9:18-22
Sat 24th	Ecclesiastes 11:9-12. Psalm 90:1-2, 12-end. Luke 9:43-45
Sun 25th	Amos 6:1,4-7. Psalm 145:6-10. 1 Timothy 6:11-16. Luke 16:19-31
Mon 26th	Job 1:6-22. Psalm 16:1-3,6-7. Luke 9:46-50
Tue 27th	Job 3:1-3,11-17,20-23. Psalm 87:2-8. Luke 9:51-56
Wed 28th	Job 9:1-12,14-16. Psalm 87:10-15. Luke 9:57-62
Thu 29th	Daniel 7:9-10,13-14 or Revelation 12:7-12. Psalm 137:1-5. John 1:47-51
Fri 30th	Job 38:1,12-21; 40:3-5, Psalm 138:1-3,7-10,13-14. Luke 10:13-16

August & September

Celebrations in brackets () are optional

(St Alfonso Maria de Liguori)
(St Eusebius or St Julian Eymard)

St John Mary Vianney

(Dedication of the Basilica of St Mary Major) *abstinence*
The TRANSFIGURATION

19th SUNDAY of YEAR

St Dominic
St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross
St LAURENCE
St Clare

(St Jane Frances de Chantal) *abstinence*
(St Pontianus & St Hippolytus or of the BVM)

20th of YEAR

1 Corinthians 15:54-57. Luke 11:27-28
THE ASSUMPTION
(St Stephen of Hungary)

(St John Eudes) *abstinence*
St Bernard

21st SUNDAY of YEAR

Mary, Queen of Heaven
(St Rose of Lima)
St BATHOLOMEW
(St Louis or St Joseph of Calasanz)
abstinence
St Monica

22nd SUNDAY of YEAR

Beheading of John the Baptist

abstinence
St Gregory the Great

23rd SUNDAY of YEAR

(Blessed Teresa of Calcutta)

BIRTH of the BVM

(St Peter Claver) *abstinence*
(of the BVM)

24th SUNDAY of YEAR

(Holy Name of Mary)
St John Chrysostom
HOLY CROSS
Our Lady of Sorrows
St Cornelius & St Cyprian *abstinence*
St Robert Bellarmine or St Hildegard or of the BVM)

25th SUNDAY of YEAR

St Andrew Kim Taegon & Companions
St MATTHEW

St Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) *abstinence*
(of the BVM)

26th SUNDAY of YEAR

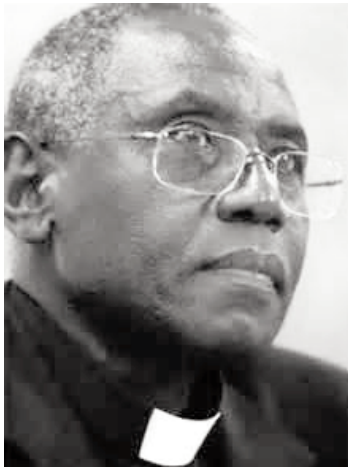
(St Cosmas & St Damien)
St Vincent de Paul
(St Wenceslas or St Laurence Ruiz)
St MICHAEL, St GABRIEL & St RAPHAEL
St Jerome *abstinence*

End-
piece

Cardinal Robert Sarah: West African 'key player in Rome'

Fr MARK DREW draws attention to a 'serene and fearless' Guinean cardinal

IT is often said that once a new Pope has emerged, the cardinals' thoughts turn almost immediately to the question of his successor. Pope Francis, although about to turn 80 at the end of this year, does not seem to be running out of steam. Despite having part of a lung missing, Pope Francis seems undiminished by a daunting schedule. This, along with his obvious pleasure in his role, means that it is difficult to take quite seriously his own speculation that his papacy will be a short one. Nonetheless, nobody should be surprised that there is already speculation about the identity of his successor.



Among the names being talked about is that of Robert Sarah.

Cardinal Sarah, relatively little known before the election of Pope Francis, has shown himself as a key player in Rome. His name reveals the French linguistic and cultural heritage which this son of West Africa imbibed at an early age from Holy Ghost missionaries. The cardinal is a second-generation Christian who combines an authentic claim to come from the ecclesiastical margins with a deep grasp of the cultural and theological patrimony which Europe disseminated.

We get an insight into both these strains through his interview with Nicolas Diat, published in English as 'God or Nothing'. After tracing Robert Sarah's career from his early years in rural Guinea to his present position as head of the Vatican's liturgy dicastery, 'God or Nothing' reflects the theological issues which today affect the Church's cohesion as well as its missionary outreach.

Astonishing courage

'God or Nothing' shows Cardinal Sarah as a man of profound and serene contemplative temperament along with dynamic capacities for action and an astonishing courage which tackles controversial questions head-on.

These qualities of talent for action and fearlessness were perhaps what made John Paul II choose him as the world's youngest bishop in 1979, aged only 34, as Archbishop of Conakry.

The Church in the former French colony had long been in conflict with the radical regime of Sékou Touré. Robert Sarah had grown up in the early days of the Touré regime shortly after independence, attending junior seminary in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, then major seminary in Guinea, before completing his studies in France and Rome.

Archbishop Sarah guided the Church through the turbulent

changes of regime which followed. He felt so worn down by the task that he began to take a retreat every two months, during which he fasted from food and water for three days. 'This life of solitude and prayer helped me to recharge and return to battle,' he says in 'God or Nothing'.

In 2001 he was called to Rome as Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

President of *Cor Unum*

In 2010 Pope Benedict appointed Sarah President of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, responsible for promoting the Church's humanitarian out-reach.

The following month he received a cardinal's hat.

Cardinal Sarah reveals that Benedict told him he had made the appointment 'because I know that of all people you have the experience of suffering and of the face of poverty. You will be most capable of expressing tactfully the Church's compassion and closeness to those who are poorest.'

The change of Pope spelt trouble for some high-ranking prelates, but not for the Guinean cardinal, whose credentials in a Church of and for the poor could not be called into doubt. When Cardinal Sarah was moved from *Cor Unum* it was upwards to a post concerned with one of the most disputed issues in today's Church: the liturgy.

The cardinal has declared, 'One cannot encounter God... without trembling, without awe, without profound respect and holy fear.'

Few would have predicted that someone so associated with the agenda of Benedict XVI would be appointed by Pope Francis to the post of Prefect of the Congregation of Divine Worship.

The answer is probably that Pope Francis, who on several occasions has had to learn painfully that not even a Pope can exercise absolute control over the curial machine, realised that it was not in his interest to provoke a backlash by an appointment contrary to the orientations of his predecessor, in a domain that is not one of his priorities.

Pope Francis' charge to the new Prefect was a masterful example of his technique of firing a salvo in apparently opposite directions: 'I want you to continue to implement the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council ... [and] to continue the good work in the liturgy begun by Pope Benedict XVI.'

Outstanding spokesman at the family synods

Cardinal Sarah's profile has become noticeably higher. This was apparent in the family synods of the last two years, where he was an outstanding spokesman on the synod floor and in writing for those who are resisting attempts to open access to the Eucharist to the divorced and remarried.

There was no ambiguity in his position. He was adamant that no change was possible to the discipline because it would amount to a repudiation of the Church's constant doctrine.



Cardinal Sarah has been no less forthright in equating the agenda of liberalising theologians to cultural imperialism from an arrogant and decadent West.

The cardinal is increasingly seen as a standard-bearer for Catholic orthodoxy in a Church where many things now seem uncertain. And so it is that many are now talking about him as a possible *papabile*, whenever the next conclave may be.

How realistic is this? In 'God or Nothing', he talks of how as a boy the Vatican seemed to him an unapproachable pinnacle.

The book shows him as a truly humble man in love with the transcendent God whom he serves in action and approaches on his knees in contemplation. He surely does not nourish personal ambition to ascend that lonely pinnacle himself. But might the Church decide that she needs that combination of the fearless man of action and the awe-filled contemplative at the helm?



We have learnt in the last three years that there are fewer certainties in the Church than we thought. Cardinal Sarah is only nine years younger than Francis, so his eligibility will probably diminish if Francis remains as Pope beyond a few more years.

That said, the prospect of a short reign can be seen as an advantage in a fraught situation; this was certainly the case for Cardinal Ratzinger in 2005.

Whoever emerges as Pope from the next conclave, I think we can be sure that the voice of Robert Sarah will be listened to in its deliberations.

Edited from The Catholic Herald, London

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The return of the prodigal son

JESUS said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me a share of the property that will belong to me.” So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in riotous living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’ ” So he set off and went to his father. But when he was still far off, he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe - the best one - and put it on him; put a ring on his finger, and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!”

And they began to celebrate.’ *Luke 15: 11-24*

Part of the Gospel reading for the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 11th September

Our illustration is by the Italian artist Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (1591-1666), better known as Guercino, painted in 1551 and now displayed in the Timken Museum of Art, San Diego, USA.