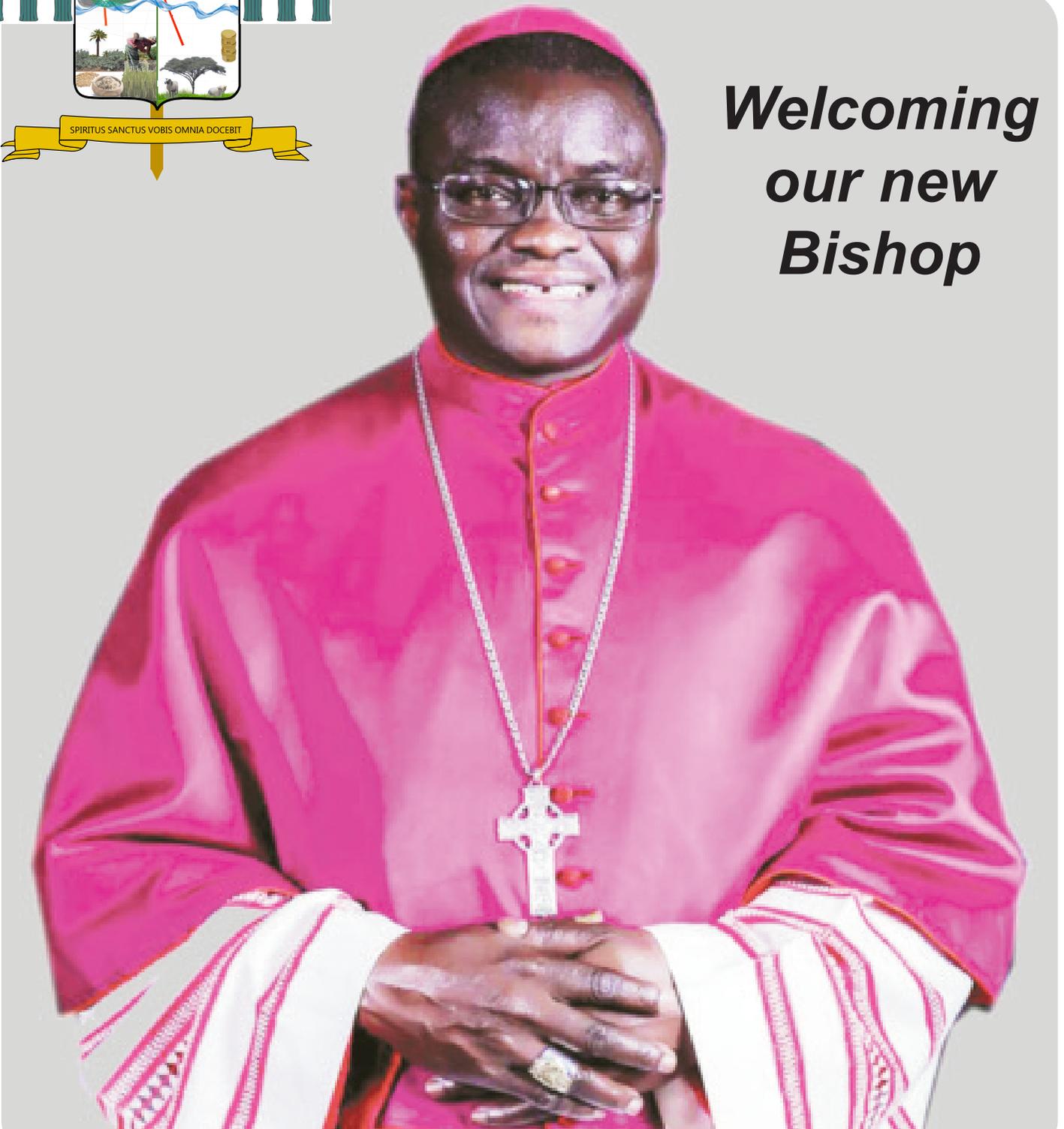


The Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

***Welcoming
our new
Bishop***



Most Rev. Dr. Gabriel Mendy CSSp, First Gambian Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Banjul, The Gambia



The journey through Lent towards the glory of the Resurrection

Reflections and Mass Texts for Sundays, Holy Week and Easter





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By way of introduction

'All things new'



THE LITTLE word 'new' is highly attractive. It implies something fresh, hitherto unknown, and enticing. No wonder 'new' is a number-one word among advertisers, who quite rightly consider that most of us are attracted to novelty. Who wouldn't like the very latest smart-phone?

For Christians, too, the word 'new' is of great significance. It recalls the teaching of Christ, who gave his apostles the 'new commandment' of love (John 13:34). As St Mark records (1:27), the crowds who were 'amazed' by Jesus kept on telling each other, 'A new teaching – with authority!'

And of course St Paul insisted, in his letters, that those who turn to Jesus are acquiring a 'new nature'.

Here in The Gambia since the change of government a year ago, many have been talking of a 'new Gambia'. And now, in the Catholic Diocese of Banjul, we have a new Bishop, and many will talk of a 'new chapter' in the history of our diocese.

A new chapter, indeed. As we give thanks for the invaluable legacy of all the priests and lay-people who have laboured for the past 170 years to build the Catholic Mission in The Gambia, we rejoice to welcome our fourth Bishop – and the first Gambian to lead God's faithful in this country.

We pray that God will inspire and empower our new Bishop to guide and rule the priests and all the faithful of our diocese in the paths of truth and love, so that we may all joyfully witness to Christ our Lord.

Our new Bishop will face many challenges. May God bless and keep him. But we, as God's servants and witnesses in this country, also face challenges. Let us first, in thanksgiving, pray for all those in this diocese who have gone before us into eternal life, and pray that we, in our day, may respond with renewed trust and commitment to Christ's ever-new challenge: 'Follow me!'

Less than a fortnight after the rejoicing at the episcopal ordination of Bishop Gabriel Mendy CSSp, we shall as a diocese enter the holy season of Lent.

There can be no better time than Lent to consecrate ourselves anew to Christ, to following his example of love for all mankind.

May we Catholics of The Gambia, in common with our Christian and Muslim neighbours who acknowledge the One Creator, live upright, God-fearing lives, so that our nation may indeed move forward in peace, for the good of all.

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*We wish all our readers a holy Lent
 and a joyous Easter*



Here & there

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE

The Diocese of Banjul prepares to welcome its first Gambian Bishop

ON Thursday 30th November 2017, St Andrew's Day, an historic announcement for Gambian Catholics was made at the Vatican:

'The Holy Father accepted the resignation from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Banjul presented by Bishop Robert Patrick Ellison CSSp, and appointed as his successor Fr Gabriel Mendy CSSp, Vice-Rector of the Spiritan International School of Theology in Enugu, Nigeria.' The announcement has been received with great satisfaction throughout the diocese. Fr Mendy becomes the fourth Bishop of Banjul, the fourth Spiritan to lead the diocese - and the first Gambian. His episcopal ordination is to be celebrated at the Independence Stadium, Bakau, on Saturday 3rd February, and the following day he will be enthroned in his Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Banjul. The following Sunday, 11th February, the new Bishop will take part in celebrations at Lamin, his home village.

Fr Gabriel Mendy was born in Lamin on 9th April 1967. He completed his secondary schooling at St Peter's Technical High School, Lamin, in 1985, and lived in the novitiate in The Gambia from 1985 to 1987.

After studying philosophy at Nsukka in Nigeria from 1987 to 1990 he gained pastoral experience in the parish of the Most Holy Trinity in the Diocese of Kenema, Sierra Leone, from 1990 to 1991.

He studied at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, USA, obtaining a BA in philosophy, and went on to serve at St Peter's Seminary and St Theresa's Secondary School from 1992 to 1993, before continuing his training at the Spiritan International School of Theology in Enugu, Nigeria, from 1993 to 1997.

He made his perpetual vows in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit on 31st August 1996, and was ordained priest by Bishop Michael Cleary on 15th November 1997, together with Bruno Toupan and Fr Antoine Sambou.

After ordination, Fr Mendy served from 1997 to 1998 at St Peter's Lamin and St Therese's Kanifing. Subsequently he served the parish of St Martin of Porres in Freetown, Sierra



Bishop Mendy will be enthroned in his Cathedral on Sunday 4th February

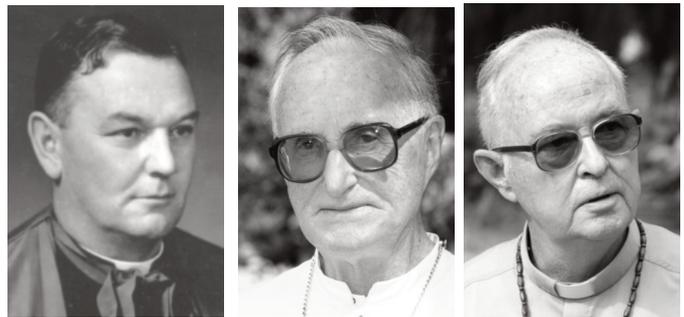
Leone and taught at the Major Pre-Seminary of St Kizito in Kenema, Sierra Leone. He was Pastor at Holy Trinity Kenema from 1999-2002, then Pastor in Santa Maria Pendembu, Sierra Leone, from 2002-2004.

He studied at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, USA, from 2004-2009; and was parish vicar at Our Lady Star of the Sea, Staten Island, New York, from 2009-2010.

From 2010 until his appointment as Bishop of Banjul, Fr Mendy taught ecclesiology, fundamental theology, theology of worship, liturgy and catechesis at the Spiritan International School of Theology in Nigeria, becoming Vice Rector in 2011. At Duquesne University he obtained a diploma in theology in 1998 and, in 2009, a PhD in systematic theology.

Preparatory to his ordination as Bishop, Fr Mendy returned home to The Gambia on Wednesday 3rd January, when he was received by enthusiastic crowds at Banjul International Airport.

Our new Bishop: page 18



Bishop's Mendy's predecessors

The Right Revd Michael Moloney CSSp First Bishop of Banjul

FATHER Michael Moloney first arrived in The Gambia in October 1938. For 13 years he worked among the people of Fulladu. In 1951 the Mission was upgraded to a Prefecture, and Fr Moloney was named Prefect Apostolic.

The Diocese of Banjul was created in 1957, and Monsignor Moloney was ordained Bishop in Dublin in May 1958. He was enthroned in his Cathedral in Banjul on 26th October 1958, the Feast of Christ the King.

Bishop Moloney attended the various sessions of the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965.

In 1967 he initiated GPI, and in 1972 the Junior Seminary at Fajara.

Bishop Moloney presided over the Diocese of Banjul until April 1980, when he resigned owing to ill health.

The Right Revd Michael J. Cleary CSSp Second Bishop of Banjul

FATHER Michael Cleary first arrived in The Gambia in October 1953. He taught for six years in St Augustine's High School before becoming Principal of the school in 1960. In 1975 he became Vicar-General, and in 1978 he left St Augustine's to become Diocesan Education Secretary.

In February 1981 Fr Cleary was named successor to Bishop Moloney. He was ordained Bishop at St Augustine's High School on 25th March 1981, the Feast of the Annunciation.

The first pastoral assembly for the clergy and religious of

the diocese took place in December 1986.

In 1981 Bishop Cleary ordained the first two Gambians in modern times: Fr David Jimoh Jarju and Fr Peter Gomez.

In December 1987 was held the first pilgrimage to Mariama Kunkujang Mariama.

In 1992 Pope St John Paul II visited The Gambia.

Bishop Cleary presided over the Diocese of Banjul until 25th February 2006, becoming Apostolic Administrator until the ordination of his successor on 14th May 2006.

The Right Revd Robert Patrick Ellison CSSp Third Bishop of Banjul

FATHER Robert Ellison first arrived in The Gambia in October 1970. He taught for a while at St Augustine's High School and became Administrator of the Cathedral. From October 1972 to June 1973 Fr Ellison studied theology, law and the history of Islam in Rome. He returned to The Gambia in 1973, and spent about 10 months as Priest-in-Charge at St Michael's Njongon. He attended a course in pastoral counselling at Marianella, Dublin. During the following six years, Fr Ellison taught theology, then Islamic studies, while Director of the Philosophy Formation House.

Fr Ellison returned to The Gambia in January 1981. He was Administrator of the Cathedral, and appointed Vicar-General. He took charge of the administration of the Junior Seminary in Lamin. In 1985 he became Parish Priest of Star of the Sea Bakau, and District Superior of the Holy Spirit Congregation.

Fr Ellison was in England from 1991-2 to follow a course in human and spiritual formation, then returned as Director of the Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI).

In 1999 he went back to Rome as Secretary-General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

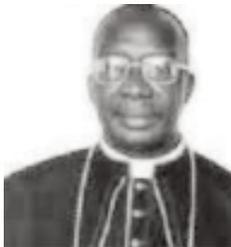
Monsignor Ellison was named successor to Bishop Cleary on 25th February 2006, and ordained Bishop at the Independence Stadium on Sunday 14th May 2006. The following Sunday he was enthroned in his Cathedral.

In August 2006 Bishop Ellison hosted the final meeting of the Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa, attended by about 120 West African English-speaking cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, religious and lay people.

Among the many features of Bishop Ellison's leadership were the Diocesan Assembly in March/April 2008 and developments concerned with enabling the diocese to be increasingly 'dynamic and self-reliant.'

In 2017 Bishop Ellison resigned due to his age.

Priests on retreat



THE PRIESTS priests of the diocese gathered at Shalom Retreat House, Fajara, from Monday to Friday, 8th to 12th January, for their annual retreat.

The retreat was led by the Rt Revd Charles Allieu Campbell (*left*), Bishop of Bo, Sierra Leone.

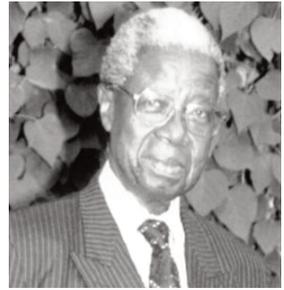
Old friends return

AMONG many recent arrivals for the Episcopal Ordination on 3rd February are Fr Michael Casey CSSp and Fr Hugh Fagan CSSp.

OBITUARY

Distinguished veteran educationalist

THE GAMBIA has lost one of its most distinguished educationalists, Samuel Horton Maurice Jones, who died in the United Kingdom on Christmas Eve, 24th December 2017.



Mr Jones was named Samuel Horton after his grandfather, and Maurice after his father. He was born in 1923, the first son of Henry Maurice Jones and Rachel Regina Jones, née Spolding, and had four sisters and a brother - all of whom have predeceased him.

After completing secondary school in Banjul, Mr Jones took a teacher training course at Achimota College, Ghana in 1942. On his return he taught for a while at a primary school before joining the staff at his old school, the Methodist Boys High School.

In 1947 he went to Exeter University, in England, where he took a degree in English, Latin and geography. He followed this by training for a Certificate in Education at the Institute of Education in London before returning to The Gambia in 1952 and teaching at his old school. He was briefly Assistant Principal of the newly-founded Gambia High School, and became President of the Gambia Teachers Union.

In 1960 Mr Jones entered government service as Education Officer with responsibility for the rural areas in The Gambia. A year later he was seconded to the US-based World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession, and embarked on a nine-month tour to study the status of teachers in Africa, visiting 29 countries.

The following year he was transferred to the Gambia Office in London, firstly as Liaison Officer and then as Commissioner.

On Mr Jones' return he held various posts in the Ministry of Education, serving as Permanent Secretary, Director of Education, and Chief Education Officer.

In 1971 he was appointed London Representative of the West African Examinations Council. He retired in 1980.

Sam Jones met his late wife, Elizabeth, in 1955. They married in 1958, and had four children, Eliza, Kenneth, Cyril and Henrietta.

Mr Jones was a keen Anglican, having first become involved in the Church as early as 1935, when along with Ernest Bidwell, Sam Palmer and Willie Macauley he was a pillar in Bishop Daly's youth programme. For many years he was Bishop's nominee on the Diocesan Standing Committee: first under Bishop Timothy Olufosoye, then under Bishop Jean-Rigal Elisée. Later, under Bishop Tilewa Johnson, he was appointed Chairman of the Diocesan Education Committee.

He produced a history of the Diocese of Gambia and Rio Pongas, published in 1986.

Mr Jones was a committed member of various Masonic lodges, attaining high office in all of them. He was widely respected as conscientious, patient, polite, and a man of firm principle.

Mr Jones was interred in the United Kingdom on Tuesday 30th January, and on the same day a requiem was held at St Mary's Cathedral, Banjul.

He is survived by his four children, seven grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Devoted headmistress

CHILDREN, parents and friends of Holy Cross Nursery School, Tranquil, were cast into mourning on 1st January when they heard of the sudden death of their young Head Teacher, Elizabeth Mendy. At her funeral her coffin was preceded by sorrowing teachers and their young pupils in full uniform.



Elizabeth Ajie Mendy was born on 31st January 1987, the fourth child of the late Atanas Latir Mendy and of Marie Kassa Mendy.

She attended St Francis Nursery and Primary Schools in Brusibi, St Therese's Upper Basic School and SOS Senior Secondary School before attending a three-year course and gaining a certificate in early childhood development at Gambia College.

Elizabeth taught at Holy Cross Nursery school, where, after completing her certificate, she was appointed Head Teacher.

Elizabeth was a keen member of the choir at Holy Cross, which she joined as a teenager. She was much respected for her work, and is greatly missed by everyone associated with the nursery school.

Elizabeth Ajie Mendy is survived by her mother, sisters, brothers, and other members of her family.

WHEN a person loves another dearly, he desires strongly to be close to the other: therefore, why be afraid to die? Death brings us to God! *St Josephine Bakhita, Sudanese saint*

SOON after you're dead – we're not sure how long – but not too long – you'll be united with the most ecstatic love you've ever known. As one of the best things in your life was human love, this will be love, but much more satisfying; and it will last forever. *Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, England, (1923-1999)*

Femi Peters: long-time political activist

THE DEATH occurred in Freetown on 21st January of the Gambian High Commissioner to The Gambia, Femi Peters – a long-time political activist.

Ingram Reginald Olufemi Peters was born on 11th January 1946 to Josephus Robertson Egerton Peters and Phoebean Regina Peters. When he was six, both parents died within three months of each other, leaving Femi and his two sisters in the care of family and friends.



It was because the family considered that St Mary's School could not manage the irrepressible Femi that they transferred him to the Anglican primary school at far-off Kristi Kunda. During four years there, Femi forged a lasting bond with the family of the late Andrew Camara (later known as Musa Camara). He later entered St Augustine's High School, and left in 1965.

Mr Peters became a 'pupil-teacher', and taught successively at Mohammedan Primary School and the junior secondary schools at Crab Island, Brikama, Pakalinding and Gunjur.

For some 20 years, Mr Peters worked in various managerial posts for Sonner Stores. In 1970 he became a trade unionist. In the political sphere from 1970 to 1994, he rose to become Secretary-General of the Gambia Trade Union Congress and Deputy Member for Africa in the World Confederation of Labour.

As a leading member of the United Democratic Party, Mr Peters was implacably opposed to the regime of President Jammeh. He was imprisoned for ten months at New Jeshwang, and later for eight months at Mile Two.

The present Gambian Government appointed him High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, the land of his forefathers - in which post he died after six months.

Mr Peters was a life-long, staunch Anglican. He is survived by his three sisters, two sons, and three grandchildren.

His funeral at St Mary's Cathedral, Banjul, on Friday 26th January was attended by the Vice President of The Gambia.

He is interred at Banjul Christian Cemetery.

Sunday and weekday readings at Mass during Lent

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

Sundays

1 The Gospel proclaimed each Sunday is the key reading, and the Old Testament readings have been chosen to harmonise with the Gospel. The psalms have been chosen to provide a prayerful response to the Old Testament readings.

4 The Epistle readings have been chosen 'to fit the Gospel and Old Testament readings... and provide a connection between them'.

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

Weekdays

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

It is an excellent Lenten practice to take part in the weekday Mass as often as you can. If for good reason you cannot attend Mass, you should read the readings for each day for yourself. They are printed on page 33.

Is today's Church too easy-going about Lent?



LOOKING at what the Church asks of us this Lent, some might say 'not very much'. In earlier times, it was different: Give up this. Don't do that. Yet today the Church doesn't ask us for much actual fasting, and rather little self-denying abstinence.

But think again. Perhaps the Church asks more of us than before. Rather than simply following pious rules, we are each asked, as mature Christians, to consider carefully in what ways we may make good use of Lent.

We are expected to make choices, to set goals, to decide on priorities – in fact, to take our religion *seriously*.

Why Lent?

The first question is, 'What is Lent for; what's it about?'

In plain terms, Lent is the preparation we make, as individuals and a community, to celebrate the Easter Triduum – those three days at the heart of the Christian calendar when we identify ourselves with the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ.

If there's no Easter, there's no valid Christianity, as St Paul makes clear:

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile...If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15:17 & 19)

Why fast? Why abstain?

Outside Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, is fasting now considered unnecessary by the Church?

That cannot be, because Christ himself prepared for his ministry by forty days of fasting in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-10).

Fasting, in our religion and others, is a way of putting God before creature comfort. Abstinence, too - the giving up of certain foods or habits – is useful in reminding us that 'the things of this world' are less important than the things of God. So we do well to incorporate elements of fasting and abstinence in our Lent. But we shouldn't fast or abstain from this or that simply to impress others.

Praying more

A positive way of keeping Lent is to increase and deepen the time we give to private prayer and to praying with others.

If our own daily prayers are perfunctory (or non-existent!) there's no time better than Lent to try to do better. And to prepare more carefully for Sunday Mass.

The readings at Mass for Sundays in Lent (and hopefully the sermons, too) are presented by the Church to draw us more deeply into the mystery of the crucified and risen Christ.



During the week

Why stop at Sunday Mass? Many of us are able to take part in weekday Masses, too. And almost certainly our local church will provide other 'Lent exercises' in which we can join: the Stations of the Cross, especially (*see page 26*).

Helping others

Christ tells us that if we care for others, we care for him.

Read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). Or read Christ's assurance that he will say to those who succour the sick, the outcast and the forgotten, 'Just as you did it to the least of my brothers, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:31-46).

We are most Christ-like when we look upon everyone as a brother or sister, even those whom people generally ignore, despise or shun: the misfits, the malcontents, the poor, the maimed, those who seem to have nothing to offer the world.

Going out of our way to help such people can be difficult. Yet it is what Christ expects of us.



Looking more closely at Scripture

At the same time as deepening our prayer-life we can profit by extending our understanding of Scripture. This Lent, why not read, systematically and thoughtfully, the Gospel of St John, or some other book of the Bible?

We may be able to do this along with one or two others: the prayer and discussion that follow Bible reading with others can be enlightening and stimulating.

Here's an ancient collect:

Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may so hear them, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Neglected sacrament

Whatever the state of our religious life, we are indeed fortunate to have recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Confession.

Confession is so much more than an 'optional extra' in Catholic life. Yet many have drifted into becoming strangers to this sacrament.

Let this Lent see a positive change!





Easy-going?

So - do we really think that the Church's guidelines for the observance of Lent are easy-going? *They are certainly not!*

Lent is a time to think about what kind of Christian disciples we are.

Is our Christian faith at the back of our minds most of the time?

Are we just 'Sunday Christians', people who imagine that not missing Sunday Mass is all that we need to be sure of?

Or - worse - are we people who parade the outward show of Christianity, the ritual observances, the cultural practices, as though they make us somehow superior to others?

In Christ's day, such people were the Pharisees. And Christ openly condemned them on many occasions.

If we're honest with ourselves, we may have to acknowledge that our Christianity is the easy type. We *say* the creed, but we don't *live* the creed. We want to make the most of this world, and hold back from committing too much of ourselves to Christ. We may even be embarrassed to talk seriously about being a disciple of Christ and what it entails.

Let this Lent be a time of decision. We are on a pilgrimage. Do we want to move forward?

*Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
Ever constant by your side,
That with you we may appear
At the eternal Eastertide.*

Customs concerning the 40 days of Lent



LENT has been observed since apostolic times.

The rules for fasting and abstinence used to be strict. One meal a day was allowed in the evening, and meat, fish, eggs and butter were forbidden.

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

The day before Ash Wednesday is sometimes known as **Shrove Tuesday**, when it was customary to attend confession. To be 'shriven' means to be granted forgiveness in the confessional.

Shrove Tuesday is also known as **Mardi Gras** (Fat Tuesday), a day of carnival before the onset of Lent. 'Carnival' means 'putting away meat' or 'farewell to meat'.

The use of ashes on Ash Wednesday derives from ancient tradition among the Hebrews and others. Smearing oneself or one's clothing with ashes is a sign of mourning or repentance.

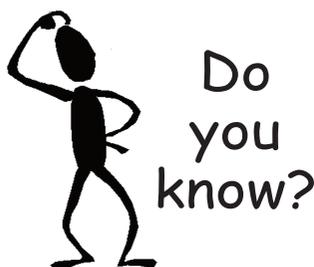
In Jonah 42:6, for example, the King of Nineveh seeks to avert God's anger by wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes. Job repents 'in dust and ashes'. Daniel writes (9:3): 'Then I turned to the Lord God to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.'

A popular and valuable Friday devotion in church throughout Lent is the **Stations of the Cross** (see page 26), and some churches arrange other Lenten devotions.

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

The *Gloria in Excelsis* is not used at Sunday Mass, and the joyful exclamation, *Alleluia!* is never used in Lent. Then, at Easter, *Alleluia!* will resound again throughout the Church.

During Lent, altars and shrines are not decorated with flowers (except on the Fourth Sunday), and the organ, drums and other musical instruments are not used. Then, when Easter comes, flowers and music denote our joy.



Do
you
know?

- 1 The Methodist mission in The Gambia was established in 1821, twenty-seven years before the Catholic Mission. In what year did the Methodist mission become independent of the parent Methodist Church in England?
- 2 In the Old Testament, which books are known to Jews as the Torah?
- 3 On which days is the Creed (the Profession of Faith) said or sung at Mass?
- 4 In which two Gospels does the Lord's Prayer (the 'Our Father' or *Pater Noster*) appear?
- 5 Name the priest pictured on the right.

Answers on page 27



Non in sole pane vivit homo sed in omni verbo quo preedit ore Dei
Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God Matthew 4:4

Sunday Reflections

Reflections, readings and prayers for all the Sundays in February & March,
and for Holy Week and Easter



4th February Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Healing for all

WOULDN'T life be much more agreeable if trouble and sickness were reserved for sinners, backsliders and for those who don't believe in

God, or who don't care about him? Yet we know all too well that unforeseen and almost unbearable troubles may also afflict good and God-fearing people. In Scripture a prime example is Job: a man 'blameless and upright', yet cruelly subjected to physical and mental anguish.

Why the innocent suffer is hard to understand, and hard to accept. But we do know that Jesus Christ, the supremely innocent, suffered and embraced death to save us all. And we know that, as in today's Gospel, he heals everyone he encounters. Such healing is the reward for all who have encountered Jesus. Whatever may happen to us, Jesus is our consolation and our deliverer.

As we in The Diocese of Banjul welcome our new Bishop, let us all, with him, endeavour to witness daily to the Christian faith, loving and supporting each other in our beloved nation.

Collect

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

Readings: Job 7:1-4,6-7. Psalm 146:1-6. Response: Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted. 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... I am the light of the world, says the Lord. Anyone who follows me will have the light of life.

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39

Prayer over the Offerings

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

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

Prayer after Communion

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

11th February Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

No-one is an outcast

IT'S a long time ago - the early 1980s - when the frightening disease Aids was first identified. Those suffering from Aids were ostracised; (and shunning people with Aids is not

unknown, even today). So it was in Old Testament times with the 'loathsome' disease, leprosy. Lepers were outcasts, forced to declare themselves 'unclean' and to live in isolation.

In our day, government and the Church exhort us not to treat sufferers from Aids as people apart, but to comfort and succour them as best we can.

Our teacher and guide is Jesus. Today's Gospel reading relates that Jesus was approached by a leper who had faith in Our Lord's ability to heal him. Jesus was 'deeply moved' by the man's condition and by his faith. He healed him: not to advertise his power, but out of compassion. The leper told everyone about his cure. No wonder people flocked to Jesus 'from every quarter'. A man like Jesus, who welcomed and rescued the outcast, was indeed worth knowing.

If we take Jesus as our guide, no-one should be for us an outcast, no-one should be beyond our sympathy and help. Let us remember this throughout Lent, which begins this Wednesday.

Collect

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

Readings: Leviticus 13:1-2,44-46. Psalm 31:1-2,5,11. Response: You are my refuge, O Lord; you fill me with the joy of salvation. 1 Corinthians 10:31 - 11:1.

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

Gospel: Mark 1:40-45

Prayer over the Offerings

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

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

Prayer after Communion

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





14th February Ash Wednesday

Ashes, prayer and supplication

ASH WEDnesday is not a Holyday of Obligation. Why is it, then, that so many of our churches are 'house full'? Is it because we want to make a good start to Lent? Or do we feel that the imposition of ashes imparts a special blessing?

The ashes have two symbolic meanings.

The first is that each of us will sooner or later leave this world: we are simply dust and ashes. The second is that, since time immemorial, ashes have been a sign of contrition and a yearning for forgiveness.

The ashes themselves do not confer forgiveness: our true inner repentance does that, because God is always merciful to a repentant sinner.

In today's Gospel reading we hear Jesus's reminder that it is not to impress others that we fast, pray and give alms. We must offer our fasting, prayer and charity to our Lord God, from a sincerely penitent heart.

The colour for Lent is purple or violet. At Sunday Mass, the Gloria in Excelsis is not said or sung.

Collect

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

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

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

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

After the Gospel comes the imposition of ashes. The priest says:

O GOD, who desire not the death of sinners, but their conversion, mercifully hear our prayers, and in your kindness be pleased to bless + these ashes which we intend to receive upon our heads, that we, who acknowledge that we are but ashes and shall return to dust, may, through a steadfast

observance of Lent, gain pardon for our sins, and newness of life after the likeness of your Risen Son...

The priest may use an alternative prayer of blessing. When he imposes the ashes on all who come forward, he says, Repent, and believe in the Gospel or Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Prayer over the Offerings

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

Preface III of Lent

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

Alternatively, the priest may use Preface IV of Lent:

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

Prayer after Communion

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

Prayer over the People

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

18th February First Sunday of Lent

Our companion

'IN the beginning' - that is, in the Book of Genesis - we learn of 'man's first disobedience': his fall from grace when Adam and Eve acted independently of their Creator. But the First Reading today comes from later in Genesis, which tells of God's great covenant with Noah after the Flood. That covenant assures us of God's continuing care for his people, come what may.

In the Second Reading, St Peter, the rock on which the Church is founded, refers to the days of Noah, and to God's great patience. Peter points to the power of Christ's resurrection, freely given to all the baptised.

With the covenant and the resurrection in mind, we hear from Mark's Gospel the short account of Christ's temptation. Hebrews 4:15 says, '...We have one [Our Lord Jesus Christ] who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.' Christ is one with us because he has lived a fully human life among us. If we ask him, he will accompany us throughout this Lent as we prepare to celebrate his resurrection. Indeed, he will accompany us throughout our whole life, so that in due course we may attain the joy of our own resurrection.

Collect

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



Readings: Genesis 9:8-15. Psalm 24:4-9. Response: Your ways, O Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant. 1 Peter 3:18-22.

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

Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

Prayer over the Offerings

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

Preface

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

Prayer after Communion

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

Prayer over the people

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

25th February

Second

Sunday of Lent

'My Son, the Beloved'

AT TOBASKI the Muslims give thanks for the patriarch Abraham's faith and obedience, as recounted in the Qu'ran, in being ready to sacrifice own son. For us, an earlier account of Abraham's exemplary trust in God is given in today's First Reading, which comes from Genesis.

In the Second Reading, St Paul reminds the Romans that God himself 'did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us'.

Then, from Mark's Gospel, comes an account of one of the most remarkable events in Christ's ministry. Having taken Peter, James and John with him up a high mountain, Jesus was transformed - or 'transfigured'. He talked with the prophets, Moses and Elijah. Then the voice of God himself was heard: 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!'

During Lent we seek to deepen and grow in our faith. At its heart of the faith is a conviction that Jesus Christ is indeed God's Only-Begotten Son, true God and true man. Were this not so, Jesus' death on Calvary could not have redeemed mankind. But because he is God, his unique, momentous sacrificial death has opened the gate of paradise for us all.

So we must indeed listen to him.

See the back page for today's Gospel and an illustration.



Collect

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

Readings: Genesis 21:1-2,9-13,15-18. Psalm 115:10,15-19. Response: I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living. Romans 8:31-34.

Gospel acclamation: Glory and praise to you, O Christ! From the bright cloud, the Father's voice was heard: 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!'

Gospel: Mark 9:2-10.

Prayer over the Offerings

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

Preface

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

Prayer after Communion

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

Prayer over the People

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

4th March

**Third Sunday
of Lent**

God reveals himself

OUR limited human reason, seeking God, can only get so far. Our religion is a revealed one, bestowed on us by God himself.

God has met our search for him by his revelation of himself in the Scriptures and through the Holy Spirit in the Church. To Moses, God gave the Ten Commandments. They have never been abrogated: they are still in force. Christ declared: 'Do not think I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one stroke or letter will pass from the law.' (Matthew 5:17-18) Thus, when Jesus drove out the stall-keepers at the Temple in Jerusalem, he quoted Holy Scripture.

God's loving wisdom, St Paul tells us, has been revealed through the crucified Christ. As we learnt last Sunday: 'This is my Son, the beloved. Listen to him!'

Collect

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



Readings: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16,19-23. Psalm 136:1-6.
Response: O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember you not! Ephesians: 2:4-10.

Alternative Readings: Exodus 17:3-7. Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9. Romans 5:1-2, 5-8. *These alternative readings are followed by the alternative Gospel and their own Proper Preface.*

Gospel acclamation: Glory and praise to you, O Christ! God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son; everyone who believes in him has eternal life.

Gospel: John 3:1-14

Alternative Gospel: John 4:5-42

Prayer over the Offerings

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

Preface: *the priest may use either Preface I or Preface II of Lent (see bottom of this page.)*

Prayer after Communion

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

Prayer over the People

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

11th March Fourth Sunday of Lent

Alive with Christ

FOR the people of Israel, no structure on earth could compare with the Temple in Jerusalem, originally built about 968 BC by King Solomon.

Of the Temple, God himself had declared, 'My name shall be there.' But the Israelites' unfaithfulness had resulted, they believed, in the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar. Seventy years later, some Israelites were able to return from captivity to rebuild the Temple. At time of Jesus, this second Temple was being rebuilt, more magnificently, by King Herod. The Gospels tell us that, while in Jerusalem, Jesus taught in the Temple every day, and healed people there.

But this new Temple, however magnificent, was only a building. When Jesus' disciples spoke of it in wonder, Jesus



replied, 'Do you see those great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down (Mark 13:1). Jesus was foretelling the final destruction of the Temple in AD 70 (and it has never been rebuilt).

Jesus told his disciples that, in contrast to the glory of the Temple, God had given mankind his only Son, and that those who believed in him would not perish - like the Temple - but have eternal life. St Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians (today's Second Reading) reminded them that God's great love is a free gift; God has 'made us alive together with Christ'.

At his trial, Jesus was accused of declaring: 'I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will make another, not made with hands.' St Paul wrote, 'We know, that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' (2 Corinthians 5:1)

Collect

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

Readings: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16,19-23. Psalm 136:1-6.
Response: O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember you not! Ephesians 2:4-10.

Alternative Readings: 1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13. Psalm 23:1-6. Ephesians 5:8-14. *These alternative readings are followed by the alternative Gospel and their own Proper Preface.*

Gospel acclamation: Glory and praise to you, O Christ! God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son; everyone who believes in him has eternal life.

Gospel: John 3:14-21

Alternative Gospel: John 9:1-41

Prayer over the Offerings

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

Preface: *the priest may use either Preface I or Preface II of Lent (see bottom of this page)*

Prayer after Communion

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

Prayer over the People

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

Prefaces for 3rd to 5th Sundays of Lent

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

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

18th March Fifth Sunday of Lent

The pain and the glory

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent we Lenten pilgrims turn our faces resolutely, like Christ, towards Jerusalem, place of passion and glory for all mankind.

The First Reading, from Jeremiah, sets the mood: 'I will make a new covenant... I will put my law within them, and write it on their hearts...'

This 'new covenant' is the covenant in Christ's blood, shed on Calvary, which Hebrews proclaims is 'the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.'

Shortly before the death he knew he was to undergo, Jesus declared: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The word 'glorified' may puzzle us, because what in fact awaited Christ was public disgrace, extreme pain and death. Yet Jesus possessed divine glory for all eternity. On earth, his glory was veiled, shown only in his miracles and in the Transfiguration. Now, through his death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus was to be glorified.

Our own sufferings are nothing compared with those of Jesus. His cross and resurrection embrace us all. Through his incarnation, teaching, saving deeds, death on the cross and resurrection, Christ is the Lord of all creation.

From this day until the Easter Vigil (Saturday 31st March) it is traditional that crosses, statues and pictures are veiled.

Collect

BY your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death...

Readings: Jeremiah 31:31-24. Psalm 50:3-4,12-15. Response: A pure heart create for me, O God. Hebrews 5: 7-9.

Alternative readings: Ezekiel 37:12-14. Psalm 130:1-8. Romans 8:8-11. John 11: 1-45. *These alternative readings are followed by the alternative Gospel and their own Proper Preface.*

Gospel acclamation: God to you, O Christ! You are the Word of God! If a man serves me, says the Lord, he must follow me; wherever I am, my servant will be there, too.

Gospel: John 12:20-30.

Alternative Gospel: John 11:1-45.

Prayer over the Offerings

HEAR us, almighty God, and, having installed in your servants the teachings of the Christian faith, graciously purify them by the working of this sacrifice...

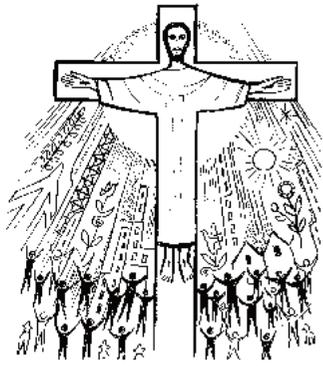
Preface: *the priest may use either Preface I or Preface II of Lent (see bottom of opposite page.)*

Prayer after Communion

WE pray, almighty God, that we may always be counted among the members of Christ, in whose Body and Blood we have communion...

Prayer over the People

BLESS, O Lord, your people who long for the gift of your mercy, and grant that what at your prompting they desire, they may receive by your generous gift...



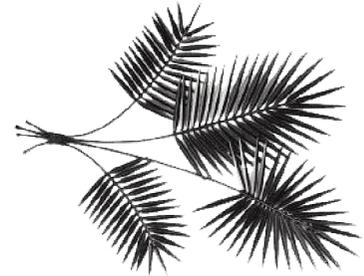
- HOLY WEEK -

25th March

Palm Sunday in the Lord's Passion

Hosanna to the Son of David

The Mass is preceded by the blessing and procession of palms, commemorating Christ's entry into Jerusalem before his Passion.



TODAY we begin Holy Week by greeting Jesus as our King. We recall his entry to Jerusalem, hailed by welcoming crowds as the Son of David who was coming in the name of the Lord. As an act of homage to a royal person (2 Kings 9:13) the crowds spread their clothing before him.

Jesus had earlier instructed his disciples to keep quiet about him (Matthew 12:16). But now he told them to proclaim him as the Messiah.

In Jesus' day, Jerusalem was no bigger, probably, than Banjul today. So his arrival, his teaching in the Temple, and his arrest, trial and crucifixion soon became talked about in Jerusalem's streets, markets and homes - and many people were 'witnesses to these things'.

This Palm Sunday, our Gospel readings about the events of Holy Week come from the Gospel of St Mark. We stand throughout the reading or singing of the Passion Gospel, as we stand every Sunday at the Gospel during Mass. Because the today's Gospel is long, we may feel some discomfort. But what is our trivial discomfort compared with the agony of Jesus Christ?

Before the blessing of palms, the priest addresses the people:

DEAR brothers and sisters, since the beginning of Lent until now, we have prepared our hearts by penance and charitable works. Today we have gathered together to herald with the whole Church the beginning of the celebration of the Lord's Paschal Mystery - that is to say, of his Passion and Resurrection. For it was to accomplish this mystery that he entered his own city of Jerusalem.

Therefore, with all faith and devotion, let us commemorate the Lord's entry into the city for our salvation, following his footsteps, so that, being made by his grace partakers of his Cross, we may have a share also in his Resurrection and his life.

After the blessing of palms, Mark's account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (chapter 21:1-11) is proclaimed, followed by the procession, the people singing 'Hosanna to the Son of David' and other suitable hymns.

Instead of being taken from Mark, the account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem may be taken from John 12:12-16.

Collect

ALMIGHTY, ever-living God, who for an example for the human race to follow, caused our Saviour to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering, and so merit a share in his Resurrection...

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-7. Psalm 21:8-9,17-20,23-24.
Response: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Philippians 2:6-11.

Gospel acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory. Christ was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross; but God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all names.

Passion Gospel: Mark 14:1 - 15:47 (or 15:1-39)

Prayer over the Offerings

THROUGH the Passion of your Only-Begotten Son, O Lord, may our reconciliation with you be near at hand, so that, though we do not merit it by our own deeds, yet by this sacrifice made once for all, we may feel already the effects of your mercy...

Preface

...for, though innocent, he suffered willingly for sinners and accepted unjust condemnation to save the guilty. His Death has washed away our sins, and his Resurrection has purchased our justification...

Prayer after Communion

NOURISHED with these sacred gifts, we humbly beseech you, O Lord, that just as through the Death of your Son you have taught us to hope for what we believe, so by his Resurrection you may lead us to where you call...

Prayer over the People

LOOK, we pray, O Lord, on this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be delivered into the hands of the wicked, and to submit to the agony of the Cross...

26th March

Monday of Holy Week

Collect

GRANT, we pray, almighty God, that though in our weakness we fail, we may be revived through the Passion of your Only-Begotten Son...

Readings: Isaiah 42:1-7. Psalm 26:1-3,13-14. John 12:1-11.

Prayer over the Offerings

LOOK graciously, O Lord, on the sacred mysteries we celebrate here, and may what you have mercifully provided to cancel the judgment we have incurred bear for us fruit in eternal life...

Preface

...for the days of his Saving Passion and Glorious Resurrection are approaching, by which the pride of the ancient foe is vanquished, and the mystery of our redemption in Christ is celebrated...

27th March

Tuesday of Holy Week

Collect

ALMIGHTY, ever-living God, grant us so to celebrate the mysteries of the Lord's Passion that we may merit to receive your pardon...

Readings: Isaiah 49:1-6. Psalm 70:1-6,15,17. John 13: 21-33,35-38.

Prayer over the Offerings

LOOK favourably, Lord, we pray, of these offerings of your family, and to those you make partakers of these sacred gifts grant a share in their fullness...

Preface: as yesterday (Monday of Holy Week)

Tuesday evening at the Cathedral Mass of the Chrism

At the Chrism Mass the clergy of the diocese renew their priestly vows, and the holy oils are consecrated:

- The oil of the catechumens (used before a candidate is baptised)
- The oil of the sick
- The oil of chrism (used at baptisms, ordinations, and the consecration of churches and altars)

The colour at this Mass is white.

Collect

O GOD, who anointed your Only-Begotten Son with the Holy Spirit and made him Christ the Lord, graciously grant that, being made partakers in his consecration, we may bear witness to his Redemption in the world...

Readings: Isaiah 61:1-3,6,8-9. Psalm 88:21-22,25,27. Response: I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord. Revelation 1:5-8.

Gospel acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory! The spirit of the Lord has been given to me; he sent me to bring the good news to the poor.

Gospel: Luke 4:16-21

After the Bishop's homily, he invites the clergy to renew their priestly vows.

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY the power of this sacrifice, O Lord, we pray, mercifully wipe away what is old in us, and increase in us grace of salvation and newness of life...

Preface

...for by the anointing of the Holy Spirit you made your Only-Begotten Son High Priest of the new and eternal covenant, and by your wondrous design were pleased to decree that his one Priesthood should continue in the Church.

For Christ not only adorns with a royal priesthood the people he has made his own, but with a brother's kindness he also chooses men to become sharers in his sacred ministry through the laying on of hands.

They are to renew in his name the sacrifice of human redemption, to set before your children the paschal banquet, to lead your holy people in charity, to nourish them with the word, and strengthen them with the Sacraments.

As they give up their lives for you and for the salvation of their brothers and sisters, they strive to be conformed to the image of Christ himself, and offer you a constant witness of faith and love...

Prayer after Communion

WE beseech you, almighty God, that those you renew by your Sacraments may merit to become the pleasing fragrance of Christ...

After the Chrism Mass the priests take the holy oils to their parishes, where they are reverently reserved for use as needed.

*Lord, may we bear witness in the world
to your Redemption*



28th March Wednesday of Holy Week

Collect

O GOD, who willed your Son to suffer for our sake the yoke of the Cross, so that you might drive from us the power of the enemy; grant us your servants to obtain the grace of the Resurrection...

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9. Psalm 68:8-10,21-22,31,33-34. Matthew 26:14-25.

Prayer over the Offerings

RECEIVE, O Lord, we pray, the offerings made here, and graciously grant that, celebrating your Son's Passion in mystery, we may experience the grace of its effects...

Preface: as Monday of Holy Week

29th March Morning of Thursday of Holy Week

No Mass is celebrated this morning.

THE EASTER TRIDUUM

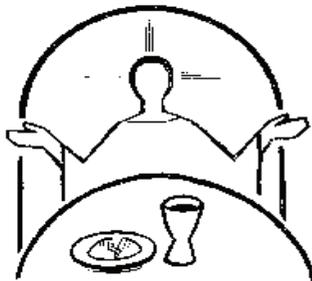
The Church asks priests to take care to instruct the faithful on the meaning and structure of the rites of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil, so that they may fruitfully take part in them.

Evening of 29th March Mass of the Last Supper

In some places, today is known as 'Maundy Thursday'.

This evening's Chrism Mass commemorates Our Lord's institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood, and his 'new commandment' of love.

The priest wears white vestments. While the Gloria in Excelsis is sung, church bells may be rung. (They will not be rung again until the Easter Vigil.)



Collect

O GOD, who has called us to participate in the most sacred Supper, in which your Only-Begotten Son, when about to hand himself over to death, entrusted to the Church a sacrifice new for all eternity, the banquet of his love, grant, we pray, that we may draw from so great a mystery the fullness of charity and of life...

Readings: Exodus 12:1-8,11-14. Psalm 115:12-13,15-18. Response: The blessing cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Gospel acclamation: Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus! I give you a new commandment: love one another just as I have loved you, says the Lord.

Gospel: John 13:1-15

After the homily, the priest washes the feet of selected members of the congregation, while suitable songs are sung.

Prayer over the Offerings

GRANT us, O Lord, we pray, that we may participate worthily in these mysteries; for whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is accomplished...

Preface

...for he is the true and eternal Priest who instituted the pattern of an everlasting sacrifice, and was the first to offer himself as the Saving Victim, commanding us to make this offering as his memorial. As we eat his flesh that was sacrificed for us, we are made strong, and as we drink his Blood that was poured out for us, we are made clean...

Prayer after Communion

GRANT, almighty God, that, just as we are renewed by the Supper of your Son in this present age, so we may enjoy his banquet for all eternity...

After this closing prayer, the Blessed Sacrament is carried in solemn procession to the Altar of Repose. During the procession the hymn Pange Lingua ('Of the glorious Body telling') is sung.

The altar is stripped and crosses removed or covered.

The people leave the church in silence.

Devout watch is kept before the Blessed Sacrament until midnight.

30th March Good Friday

Good Friday is a day of obligatory fasting.

At the beginning of the Solemn Liturgy, the altar is bare.

The priest, in red vestments, prostrates himself before the altar before going to his place for the Collect.



Collect

REMEMBER your mercies, O Lord, and with your eternal protection sanctify your servants, for whom Christ your Son, by the shedding of his Blood, established the Paschal Mystery...

An alternative Collect may be used.

Readings: Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. Psalm 30:2,6,12-13, 15-17,25. Response: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9.

Gospel acclamation: Glory and praise to you, O Christ! Christ was humbler yet, even accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high, giving him the name that is above all names...

Passion Gospel: John 18:1 – 19:42

The Solemn Intercessions

- 1 For the Holy Church
- 2 For the Pope
- 3 For the faithful
- 4 For catechumens
- 5 For the unity of Christians
- 6 For the Jewish people
- 7 For those who do not believe in Christ
- 8 For those who do not believe in God
- 9 For those in public office
- 10 For those in tribulation

The Adoration of the Cross

The priest partly unveils the veiled cross and begins the

invitation, 'Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the salvation of the world.' (Ecce lignum Crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit)

The people kneel, and respond, 'Come, let us adore (*Venite, adoramus*)

The priest unveils the right arm of the cross, with the same invitation and response. Then he unveils the entire cross, with the invitation and response.

The people come forward and venerate the cross, one by one. During the veneration the singing usually includes 'The Reproaches', ancient chants of rebuke for our unfaithfulness and ingratitude.

After the veneration the cross is placed on the altar, which has been covered with a white cloth. The Blessed Sacrament is carried from the Altar of Repose and placed on the altar. The priest genuflects and begins the Our Father and the usual Communion rite.

Prayer after Communion

ALMIGHTY, ever-living God, who have restored us to life by the blessed Death and Resurrection of your Christ, preserve in us the work of your mercy, that, by partaking of this mystery, we may live a life unceasingly devoted to you...

Prayer over the People

MAY abundant blessing, Lord, we pray, descend upon your people who have honoured the Death of your Son in the hope of resurrection; may pardon come, comfort be given, holy faith increase, and everlasting redemption be made secure...

31st March Holy Saturday

No Mass is celebrated in the morning, though devotional services may be held.

We are strongly recommended to extend the fast of Good Friday throughout Holy Saturday, while the Church waits, as it were, at the Lord's tomb. In this way, the Easter Vigil will be all the more joyful.



THE EASTER VIGIL

THE EASTER VIGIL begins after nightfall on Saturday evening.

THE Easter Vigil is the very greatest observance of the entire Christian year, 'the Solemnity of Solemnities', the 'foretaste of the everlasting Easter'.

There are four parts to the Vigil:

- The Service of Light**
- The Liturgy of the Word**
- The Liturgy of Baptism**
- The Liturgy of the Eucharist**



The Service of Light

The 'new fire' is blessed outside the church. Its flames should truly dispel the darkness. Wearing white or gold vestments, the priest greets the people, then prepares the paschal candle and lights it from the new fire. During the procession which follows, the priest three times lifts the candle and sings Christ our Light, to which the people respond, Thanks be to God (or Lumen Christi... Deo gratias).

The paschal candle is placed in the sanctuary, and the deacon or priest sings the Exsultet – the ancient Easter proclamation unique to this holy night: '...This is the night when Christ broke the chains of death, and rose triumphant from the grave!'

During the Exsultet the people stand with lighted candles.

The Liturgy of the Word

In the readings from Scripture, the Church, 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets' proclaims Christ's paschal mystery.

There are seven Old Testament readings, each followed by a responsorial psalm and a prayer.

Some of these readings may be omitted, but the reading from Exodus is always proclaimed.

- 1 Genesis 1:1 0 2;2 God our Creator
- 2 Genesis 22:1-18 Abraham's obedience
- 3 Exodus 14:15 – 15:1 Moses leads his people out of Egypt)
- 4 Isaiah 54:5-14 God's everlasting love
- 5 Isaiah 55:1-11 God's mercy and forgiveness
- 6 Baruch 3:9-15 & 32 – 4:4 Israel exhorted to walk in God's ways
- 7 Ezekiel 36:16-28 We are God's people

Following these Old Testament readings, the altar candles are lit, and the priest intones the Gloria in Excelsis. The church bells may be rung.

Collect

O GOD, who made this night radiant with the glory of the Lord's Resurrection, stir up in your Church a spirit of adoption, renewed in body and mind, we may render you undivided service...

Epistle: Romans 6:3-11. Psalm 117:1-2,16-17,22-23.
Response: Alleluia.

Gospel: Matthew 28:1-10

The homily, however short, is not to be omitted.

The Liturgy of Baptism

If there are any to be baptised, the Litany of the Saints is sung, and the priest blesses the water in the font.

When the rite of Baptism (and Confirmation) has been completed (or if there is no Baptism, immediately after the blessing of the water) all stand with lighted candles and renew their baptismal promises.

The priest sprinkles the people with baptismal water while the antiphon 'I saw water' (*Vidi aquam*) – Exodus 47:1-2,9 - is sung.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Prayer over the Offerings

ACCEPT, we ask, O Lord, the prayers of your people with the sacrificial offerings, that what was begun in the paschal mysteries may by the working of your power bring us to the healing of eternity...

Preface

...It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, at all times to proclaim you, O Lord, but on this night above all to laud you yet more gloriously, when Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. For he is the true Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world. By dying he has destroyed our death, and by rising restored our life. Therefore, overcome with paschal joy, every land, every people exults in your praises, and even the heavenly Powers, with the angelic hosts, sing together the unending hymn of your glory, as they acclaim...

Prayer after Communion

POUR out on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love, and in your kindness make those you have nourished by this paschal Sacrament one in mind and heart...

1st April Easter Sunday

'We are witnesses!'

'WE are witnesses!' cried St Peter, when he and his fellow apostles proclaimed the Good News of the Resurrection to everyone who would listen.

As today's reading from Acts relates, the Resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit made the little band of apostles new men: eager, articulate, fearless. As St Paul declares in the second reading, 'Christ is your life.'

Today's Gospel reading tells how Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb of Jesus before daybreak, found it empty, and ran to tell Peter and John that his body had been taken away. Peter and John ran to the tomb, and seeing the burial clothes, were shocked into belief: yes, this resurrection on the third day was what Jesus had told them about! John 'saw and believed'.

Christ's resurrection is not just a pious belief. It is not just a doctrine. It is a *fact* – the most wonderful fact of life that we can ever know. Christ is alive!

We encounter the risen Christ in our hearts. We meet him in the Church's prayer and worship. Like our Lord's first followers, shout for joy! Tell all the world!



Collect

O GOD, who on this day through your Only-Begotten Son have conquered death and unlocked for us the gate of eternity, grant, we pray, that we who keep the Solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection may, through the renewal brought by your Spirit, rise up in the light of life..

Readings: Acts 10:34,37-43. Psalm 117:1-2,15-17,22-23. Response: This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad (*or Alleluia*). Colossians 3:1-4 *or* 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

Sequence: *Victimae paschali*

Christians, to the Paschal Victim offer sacrifice and praise.

The sheep are ransomed by the Lamb; and Christ, the undefiled, hath sinners to his Father reconciled.

Death with life contended: combat strangely ended!

Life's own Champion slain, yet lives to reign.

Tell us, Mary: say what thou didst see upon the way.

The tomb the Living didst enclose; I saw Christ's glory as he rose!

The angels there attesting, shroud with grave-clothes resting,

Christ, my hope, has risen: he goes before you into Galilee.

That Christ is truly risen from the dead, we know.

Victorious King, thy mercy show!

Latin version

Victimae paschali laudes immolent Christiani.

Agnus redemit oves: Christus innocens Patri reconciliavit peccatores.

Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando: dux vitae mortuus, regnat vivus.

Dic nobis Maria, quid vidisti in via?

Sepulcrum Christi viventis, et gloriam vidi resurgentis:

Angelicos testes, sudarium, et vestes. Surrexit Christus spes mea: praecedet suos [vos] in Galilaeam.

Credendum est magis soli Mariae veraci Quam Judaeorum Turbae fallaci.

Scimus Christum surrexisse a mortuis vere:

tu nobis, victor Rex miserere!

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia... Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us; let us celebrate the feast, then, in the Lord.

Gospel: John 20:1-9 (*or* Mark 16:1-8, *or at an evening Mass*, Luke 24:13-35)

Prayer over the Offerings

EXULTANT with paschal gladness, O Lord, we offer the sacrifice by which your Church is wonderfully reborn and nourished...

Preface

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, at all times to proclaim you, O Lord, but on this day above all to laud you yet more gloriously, when Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. For he is the true Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world. By dying he has destroyed our death, and by rising restored our life. Therefore, overcome with paschal joy, every land, every people exults in your praises, and even the heavenly Powers, with the angelic hosts, sing together the unending hymn of your glory, as they acclaim...

Prayer after Communion

LOOK upon your Church, O Lord, with unfailing love and favour, so that, renewed by the paschal victory, she may come to the glory of the Resurrection...

Welcoming our new Bishop

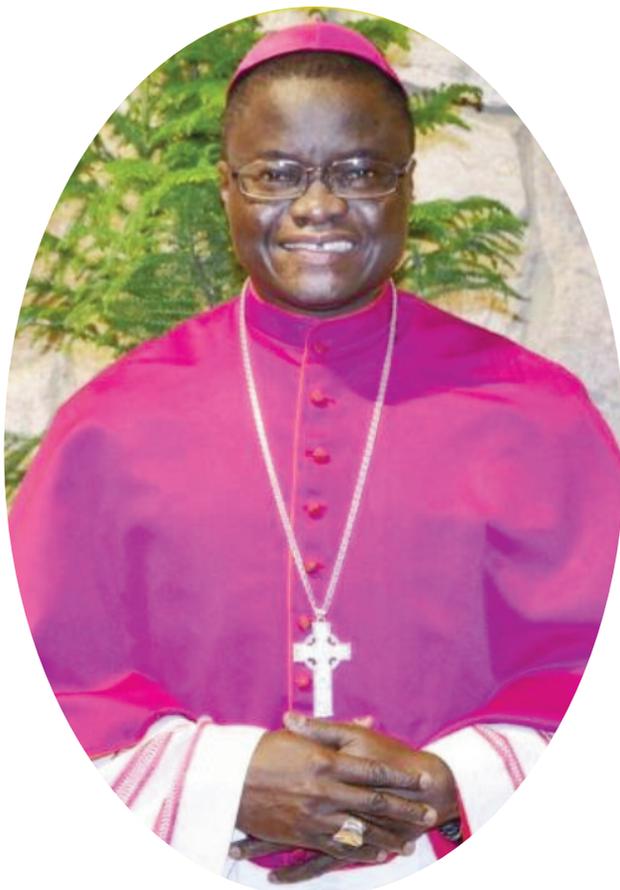
FATHER Gabriel Mendy CSSp was born in Lamin, and is a Catholic priest of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans). He holds a BA in philosophy, a BA in religion, an MA in theology, and a PhD in systematic theology.

Since his ordination by Bishop Cleary in 1997, Fr Mendy has worked in Sierra Leone, and in 2004 he began doctorate studies in Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA. After graduation in 2009 he became a Parochial Vicar at Our Lady Star of the Sea, New York.

The following year he was appointed a lecturer at the Spiritan International School of Theology at Enugu, Nigeria, where since 2012 he has been Vice Rector.

The courses he has lectured on include ecclesiology, fundamental theology, the theology of worship, the liturgy and catechetics.

His publications include articles in sundry specialist religious papers.



The Spiritan University at Pittsburgh

DUSQUESNE University of the Holy Spirit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was founded by members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in October 1878.

It is named after an 18th-century Governor of New France, Michel-Ange Duquesne de Menneville, and is the only Spiritan institution of higher education in the world.

Duquesne has over 10,000 students from more than 80 countries, although about 80 per cent are from Pennsylvania or the surrounding region. There are more than 79,000 living alumni of the university, including two cardinals and the current Bishop of Pittsburgh.



The chapel at Duquesne University

A prayer for the Bishop

O God, shepherd and ruler of all the faithful, look favourably on your servant Gabriel, whom you have set at the head of your Church of The Gambia as her shepherd; grant we pray, that by word and example he may be of service to those over whom he presides, so that, together with the flock entrusted to his care, he may come to everlasting life.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen



The Diocesan Prayer

GOD our Father, renew by the light of the Gospel the Church in the Diocese of Banjul. Strengthen the bonds of unity between the faithful, the religious, the priests and the Bishop, so that together your chosen people may shine forth as a sign of unity and peace in a world torn by discord and strife.

Bless and sustain all our efforts to establish a dynamic, self-reliant church. Open our eyes and ears to the needs of all, and especially of our own brothers and sisters in Christ who are less fortunate than others, so that in a spirit of solidarity and compassion we may faithfully proclaim the good news of salvation and advance together on the way to your Kingdom.

Through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen

Who are the Spiritans?

OUR Bishop-elect is a Spiritan, and so were the three Bishops of Banjul who preceded him.

Throughout the 20th century, it was Spiritan priests from Ireland who ministered to and built up the Catholic Mission in The Gambia. In modern times, it was only in the 1980s that the first Gambian priests were ordained, to the joy of Bishop Michael Cleary, who in company with his Irish confreres had worked and prayed for Gambian vocations, so that the Church *in* The Gambia could truly become the Church *of* The Gambia.

Who are the Spiritans, to whom our Gambian Catholic community owe so much?

THE CONGREGATION of the Holy Ghost is a Catholic congregation of priests, lay brothers and lay associates. Members are known as Spiritans or Holy Ghost Fathers. A Spiritan priest or brother uses the abbreviation CSSp after his name.

The Spiritans were founded in Paris in 1703 by Claude Poullart des Places, (*depicted right*) a young man who wanted to form a religious institute for men who had a vocation to become priests but were too poor to do so. In 1707 he was ordained, and the work grew rapidly; but he developed pleurisy and died in 1709, aged 31.



The congregation, formed to minister to the poor and provide chaplains in hospitals, prisons and schools, soon developed a missionary role in the Far East and North America. It had trained 1,300 priests in the years leading up to 1792, when the seminary was suppressed by the French Revolution.

After the Revolution, only one member, Fr James Bertout, remained. After peace was restored to the Church, he re-established the congregation and continued its work.

The congregation's numbers declined sharply until 1802, when Napoleon's government allowed its seminary to re-open, and the congregation was asked to focus on supplying priests for Africa, the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent.

Renewal

In 1848 the Spiritans were joined by a Jewish convert, Fr Francis Libermann (*depicted left*), who in 1842 had founded a society to serve emancipated slaves in French colonies. The two societies merged, and Fr Libermann was made first Superior-General. He is regarded as the renewer of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. He set himself to cultivate still



wider fields of mission, and Africa became the congregation's chief field of labour.

Gradually there were built up the series of Christian communities in Africa which form the distinctive work of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost.

Beyond Africa, the Congregation started other missions, such as those in Mauritius, Réunion, Trinidad, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Haiti, while running educational institutions such as the French Seminary in Rome, the colonial seminary

in Paris, the colleges of Blackrock, Rockwell, and Rathmines in Ireland, St Mary's College in Trinidad, the Holy Ghost College of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the three colleges of Braga, Porto, and Lisbon in Portugal.

By the early 20th century the congregation was organised into various provinces under the control of a Superior-General, residing in Paris. Houses were opened in England, Canada, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Statistics for the entire congregation in April 1908 showed 195 communities, 722 fathers, 210 professed scholastics, 655 professed brothers, 230 novices, and 595 aspirants, about half engaged in the African missions. A dozen African priests and about 100 sisters were working in the various missions.

Spiritans today

The Congregation has had 24 superiors-general since its foundation, the present Superior-General (since 2012, being an Irishman, Fr John Fogarty).

Spiritans continue to serve worldwide - in North and South America, Europe, the Indian Ocean, Asia and Oceania.

In Africa Spiritans are serving in Algeria, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Moxambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



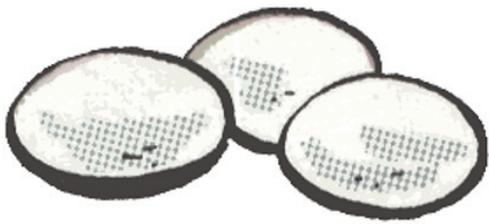
The seal of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost depicts the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Trinity.

The congregation's motto is

Cor unum et anima una

One heart and one spirit

family circle



Always in season

THERE was a time when eating eggs was forbidden in Lent. But nowadays the humble but nutritious egg is an all-the-year round favourite. In The Gambia, eggs are increasingly popular.

Eggs are always in season, and are one of the most versatile and valuable foods. They can be prepared as a snack, and are used in all kinds of dishes.

Some people prefer brown eggs to white ones. But all eggs taste the same. Just make sure that you only buy eggs that are not cracked.

Don't buy too many eggs at a time. The fresher the egg the better. If you want to test an egg, immerse it in cold water. A new-laid egg will lie flat. An older egg is more buoyant, and will tilt or even stand upright in the water. If an egg floats to the surface it is too old, and should really be thrown away.

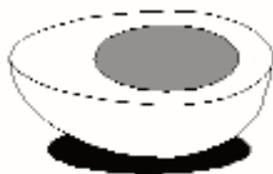
Eggs are best kept at a constant cool temperature. If you have a refrigerator, store your eggs in the least cold part.

Always let eggs come to room temperature before using them.

Separated egg whites, if tightly covered, may be kept in the refrigerator for up to a week. Eggs yolks can be kept in the fridge for a day or two only (after which they start to dry out).

Just on the boil

Here's a little know-how concerning the simplest of all cooking: boiling an egg. Boiled eggs should actually be *simmered*, not boiled. Boiling toughens the whites, and rattling around in a pan might crack the shells. If you salt the water it stops the white leaking out if the shell should crack.



The best way to boil eggs is to put them into a pan of shimmering water, bring the water to the boil, then immediately lower the heat so that it returns to the shimmer and cook for the required time. Start timing from the moment the eggs go into the water.

A **soft-boiled egg** (white set firm enough to hold the yolk, and soft yolk) will take 3 to 4 minutes.

An **oeuf mollet** (as the French call it) is boiled for longer. The white is firm and the yolk almost set, but runny in the middle. This will take 5 to 8 minutes.

A **hard-boiled egg** (white and yolk set) will take around 10 minutes. Cook it any longer, and your hard-boiled egg will be rubbery and the yolk crumbly with a khaki ring round it.

As soon as you take hard-boiled eggs from the pan, plunge them into cold water, or rinse them under running tap water.

Make the most of seeing your doctor

YOUR doctor is trained to diagnose and treat many diseases and disorders.

When you see him or her about a particular problem, you'll find that the consultation consists of two parts.

* The first is history-taking, in which the doctor asks you a series of questions to build up a picture of your problem.

* The second is a physical examination, which confirms or corrects your doctor's first impressions.



Before you go the doctor, check in your own mind just why it is that you want to see him, and what questions you want to ask.

If your mind tends to go blank before you enter the surgery, write down your symptoms before you go and use it while you're with the doctor to check that you have not missed anything out.

Be clear. Be specific.

Your doctor is likely to begin by asking you a few questions about your general health. When he comes to your reason for seeing him, relate your symptoms as simply and clearly as possible. Be specific. The more clues you give your doctor the easier he will find it to diagnose your problem.

While you're relating your symptoms, the doctor will be seeing whether your appearance gives any clues to your state of health - for example, whether you look generally fit and relaxed, or seem tired or worried, whether your skin, eyes, hair and teeth look healthy and whether you are noticeably underweight or overweight.

Your doctor may make notes on the symptoms you describe; then he will ask questions about these symptoms. He will also ask you questions about your previous health record and the medical history of members of your family.

The doctor may ask you questions about your everyday health and lifestyle.

Physical examination

Your doctor may then perform a physical examination. The part or parts of the body he examines will depend on the symptoms you have described. He may also take your temperature, measure your blood pressure, take your pulse and weigh you.

In some cases, your doctor may tell you what further tests are necessary before a diagnosis can be made or confirmed. He may ask you to supply a sample of urine, take a blood sample or a throat swab which will be sent to a laboratory for various types of analysis.

Further tests?

In some cases your doctor will refer you to a hospital for further analysis or tests.

Once your condition has been diagnosed, an appropriate course of treatment can be recommended.

Do make sure that you act on the doctor's advice, and carefully follow the treatment he prescribes.

Holy week and the family

DURING Lent, many churches arrange services and instruction for children, in order that they may learn about Jesus and his role in dying and rising again for us all.

Whatever provision is made in your parish, please, as parents, tell your children about Lent and Holy Week, so that they understand what we do in church on Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday and Good Friday - and that they and you fully participate *as a family*.

God's wake-up call



IF we Catholics do not take the Lenten call to repentance seriously, if we do not see in it God's wake-up call to us so that we may be instruments for the healing and salvation of the world, our Easter will be just another

show - all fluff, no substance - and it will disappear from the scene as quickly as it appeared.

Lawrence Bruce: reprinted from this Newsletter, April 2012

The internet: pros and cons

IF you're looking for information, try the internet: there are countless websites which provide information, and often advice on every subject under the sun.

But always bear in mind that the internet is unregulated. Anyone can set up a website.

Some things on the internet are not trustworthy.

Many sites do offer impartial, objective information compiled and checked by competent, informed experts in their field. But other websites are run by commercial interests to promote their own products or services. Some websites are run by pressure-groups - some of which are biased, or even dotty or malicious. The internet caters for pornography addicts.

The internet is one of the blessings of our times, providing free information and pleasure for billions world-wide. But it can be addictive. People with nothing better to do can waste hours 'browsing'. They're not so much learning as gathering - and promptly forgetting, masses of so-called 'facts' that are of little use.

As with television, children who have regular access to the internet should be discouraged from using it too often.

Remember what the poet T.S. Eliot wrote 'Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?'

The internet can yield endless information. But much more valuable than information is understanding, leading to knowledge. More important still - in fact, supremely important - is wisdom.

We can only acquire wisdom through painstaking thought - and, the Christian would add, through prayer!



Question Box

The Newsletter regularly prints a 'reminder' that although non-Catholics are most welcome at every Mass, they may not receive Holy Communion. Why is this? Shouldn't the Church be more welcoming?

THERE are good reasons why non-Catholics should not receive Communion.

Communion is a statement of faith. The Church has always been clear that at Mass the bread and wine literally become the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. They may still have the appearance and taste of bread and wine, but they have truly and substantially changed.

Our Lord said at the Last Supper, 'This is my body...', and Catholics take him at his word. If someone does not believe that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, or is in a state of grave sin, it would be disrespectful (to put it mildly) to receive his Body and Blood.

Normally, when people receive Holy Communion at a Catholic celebration of Mass, they should be saying: 'We are in full communion with the Catholic Church, united with the bishop of this local community and with the Pope.' It would therefore make no sense for a non-Catholic to take Communion.

Another reason that non-Catholics cannot receive Communion is for their own good. Scripture warns what happens when people who are not worthy to receive the Body and Blood of Christ try to do so. 'For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement upon himself. (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). Therefore, a non-Catholic who receives Communion endangers his or her own spiritual health.

There are some rare instances where non-Catholics may receive Communion, but they only apply to baptised Christians in emergency situations who show they truly believe Church teaching.

If a non-Catholic does want to receive Communion, there's only one thing he or she can do: become a Catholic!

Via Crucis – the Way of the Cross



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

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

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

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

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

In the 15th century the Franciscans began to build outdoor stations in Europe to resemble those in the Holy Land. In 1686 Pope Innocent XI granted the Franciscans the right to erect stations inside their churches. In 1731 Pope Clement XII extended to all churches the right to have the stations, provided that a Franciscan father erected them with the consent of the local bishop. At the same time, the number of stations was fixed at fourteen. In 1857 the bishops of England were allowed to erect the stations without the intervention of a Franciscan priest, and in 1862 this right was extended to bishops throughout the Church.

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

The Stations as traditionally performed



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

Customary prayers

The devotion begins with an Act of Contrition:

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

Before each station:

V We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
Adoremus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi.

R Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.
Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.

After meditation at each station:

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

V Have mercy on us, O Lord.
Miserere nostri, Domine.

R Have mercy.

Miserere nostri

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

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

On the way to the next station, a verse of a hymn, eg, the Stabat Mater, is customarily sung.

The Scriptural Way of the Cross

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

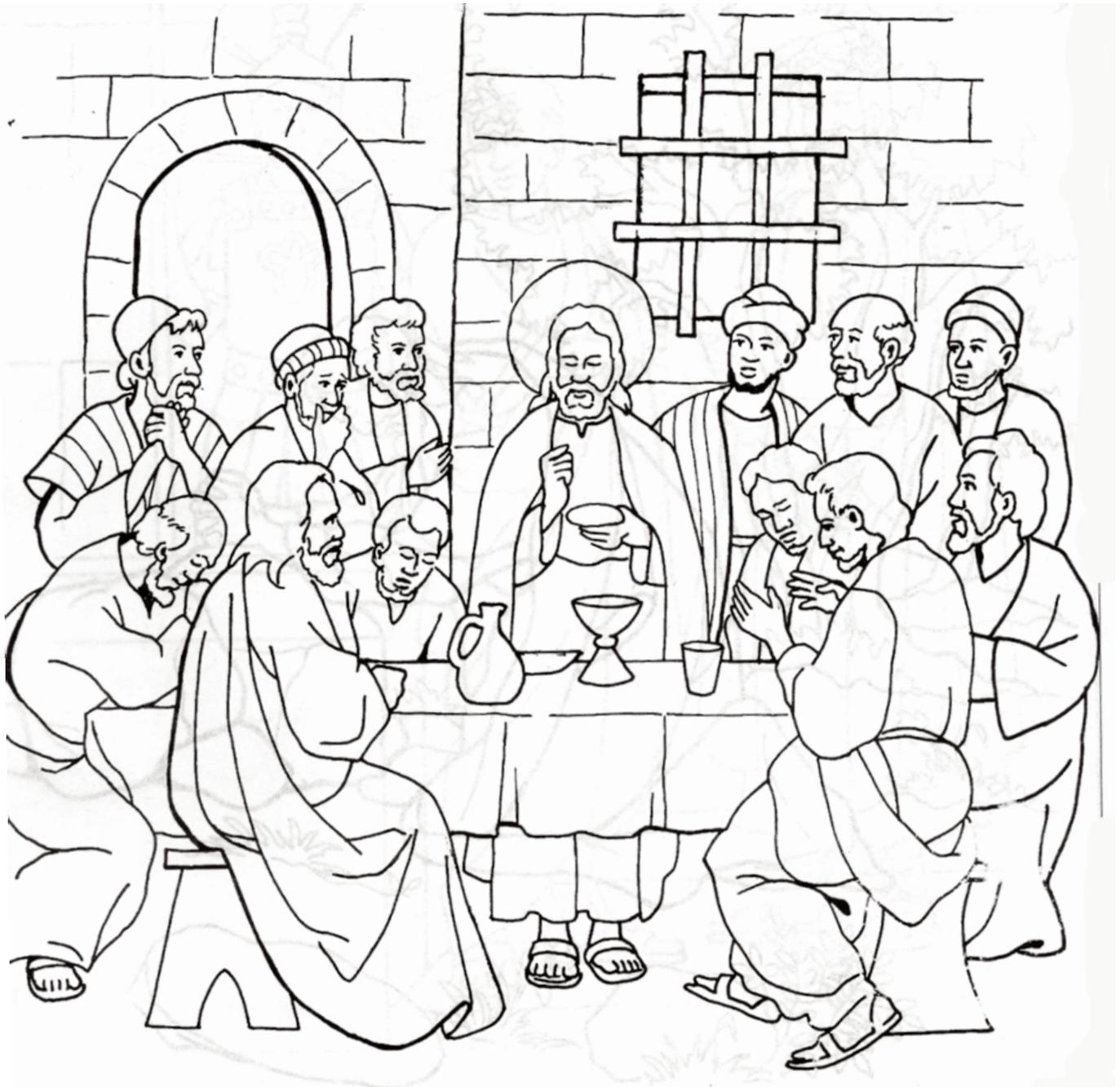
On Good Friday 1991 Pope St John Paul II introduced a form of the Stations called the Scriptural Way of the Cross, a version more closely aligned with Biblical accounts. He celebrated this form many times. In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI approved St John Paul's alternative set of stations for meditation and for public celebration.

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





CHILDREN'S PAGE



Jesus sat with his closest friends in an upper room to celebrate the Passover.

At this meal, Jesus took bread and blessed it. Then he took the cup of wine and blessed it.

He asked his disciples to do the same thing, in memory of him.

This is why, at every Mass, the priest takes bread and wine and blesses them.



focus on the special contributions needed for the ongoing mission of the Church... Our diocesan assembly aims at trying to seek a consensus on certain priority guidelines.... This should help us to achieve ways to put flesh and bones on the central theme of this assembly: A dynamic, self-reliant Church. The underlying goal here is to create an awareness of the need to develop a stronger sense of ownership of our local Church.'

The Diocesan Newsletter afterwards reported: 'Carefully planned by all concerned, the assembly... was marked by commitment, enthusiasm, a spirit of enquiry, and joy in shared mission and endeavour.'

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

19th March 1886: Brother Florentine Matthews, who had taught in Banjul for 23 years, and been Director of the Catholic Boys' School since 1880, died at the age of 47.

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

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

10th February 1930: Official opening of the Catholic Boys' Secondary School, Banjul.

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

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

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



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

11th January 1962: Arrival of Fr Vincent Comer CSSp.

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

19th February 1965: At the Cathedral, Archbishop Hyacinth Thiangoum of Dakar celebrated a High Mass of Thanksgiving for Gambian Independence.

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

During February 1975: Fr Michael Flynn became Parish Priest at Star of the Sea Bakau. He was the first District Superior of the Holy Ghost Fathers to live in the priests' house next to the church, which is now being rebuilt.

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

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

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

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

year).

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

28th February 1996: Death of Fr James White CSSp.

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

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

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

18th February 2009: Death in Ireland of Fr Tom Tarmey CSSp, who had spent 18 years in The Gambia, notably at St Augustine's High School, where he taught Latin.

6th March 2009: 'The Gambia our homeland'

A lecture on 'The Gambia, our homeland' was given at GPI by T.G.G. Senghore, chronicler of the history of the Catholic mission in The Gambia. The talk was given under the auspices of the Knights of St Peter & St Paul.

2nd March 2014: In the presence of Bishop Ellison in the Shrine Church at Kunkujang Mariama Fr John Sharpe CSSp (*right*) celebrated a Mass to mark the 50th anniversary of his ordination.

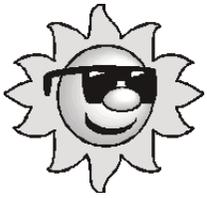


19th March 2014: Blessing by Bishop Ellison of the new buildings of Holy Rosary Nursery School at Lamin Wayeto.

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



Congratulations
 Sunday 25th March is the
 thirty-seventh anniversary of the
 Episcopal Ordination of
 Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary CSSp



Fee moi Gambia

How do we address a bishop?

I WAS asked the other day how one should write the name of a bishop - and, for that matter, an archbishop.

The tradition in the English-speaking world is that 'Right Reverend' (abbreviated 'Rt Revd') refers to a bishop, and 'Most Reverend' (abbreviated 'Most Revd') refers to an archbishop. But in many places 'Most Reverend' is applied to both.

It's good to be consistent and to follow general practice, but my own view is that we don't need to be too fussy or concerned about such matters. Bishops are addressed as 'My Lord', and archbishops as 'Your Grace', but are usually happy, except on the most formal occasions, to be addressed in simpler terms. And one doesn't often see someone kneeling before a bishop and kissing his ring...

Eye-sores

I'M thinking of one supermarket in particular - but there are several others - whose entrance is messy and near-sordid because of the proliferation of out-of-date posters - the small ones known as 'fliers'. They have presumably been posted without permission. Many are torn and out-of-date. They give the impression that the management is indifferent to cleanliness and order. Why aren't such eyesores removed at once?

There are other supermarkets whose entrances are bright and welcoming. Let's complain - in a friendly and helpful way, of course - to the messy managements who tolerate untidiness and disorder!

Ashes, or tokens of love?

THIS year, Ash Wednesday coincides with Valentine's Day.

I hope no reader of this *Newsletter* will give first place to Valentine, because the two days are very different - in fact, contradictory.

Ash Wednesday, for Catholics and many other Christians, marks the beginning of Lent, the solemn season of preparation for Easter.

Valentine's Day, in contrast, is a commercial affair from which shops and restaurants hope to profit, enticing romantic couples to indulge their fancies with cards, tokens and celebratory meals.

Just who was this Valentine? 14th February was the feast of St Valentine, imprisoned and clubbed to death around AD 270 for aiding persecuted Christians; it was also the feast of St Valentine, Bishop of Terni, martyred a few years later. The commemoration was removed from the Catholic calendar in 1969 by Pope Paul VI.

'Valentine's Day', when friends exchange 'love tokens', is a relic of the old pagan Roman *Lupercalia* of 15th February, with an association dating from mediæval times of the mating season of birds. So ignore Valentine - this year, at least - and concentrate on Ash Wednesday!

Excess of meaning

'SPEEDING' means driving too fast. So what exactly does 'over-speeding' (as heard in a recent news-bulletin) mean? It's on a par with the odd expression, 'very unique'.

What's in a name?

I'VE recently glanced at a guide-book on Manhattan, that glittering island in New York City. There, as in all cities, each neighbourhood has its particular name, and my guide-book explains why.

It's the same here: we have Fajara, Lamin, Serrekunda and Latrikunda. Some such names are easily understood from one or other local language.

Then we have English place-names. Churchill's Town, I suppose, is named after Britain's great war-time Prime Minister. And Westfield, I believe, takes its name from the clinic founded by the late Dr Sammy Palmer and Dr Lenrie Peters (Westfield being in or near Bristol, in England, where Dr Palmer studied medicine). Brusibi Turntable refers to a big roundabout. Denton Bridge (not its official name) recalls Sir George Denton, Governor over a century ago.

Local guides don't always agree about the derivation of 'Half Die'.

Some names are transient. I've not heard 'Sabena' lately - which used to refer to the New Town Road junction with Pipeline (another old name!) where the defunct Belgian airline once had its offices.

Why does Easter jump about?

I'M sometimes asked why the date of Easter Sunday varies from year to year - whereas Christmas Day is always 25th December

Jesus rose from the dead the day after the Jewish Passover, so in AD 352 the Council of Nicæa decided that Easter Sunday should be celebrated on a day linked to Passover.

This means that Easter is observed on the Sunday after the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox (for Church purposes, 21st March).

Complicated, isn't it? So complicated that Easter may occur on any day between 22nd March and 25th April.

Easter Sunday was most recently celebrated on the earliest possible date in 1818. It will not be celebrated so early until 2285.

And Easter Sunday was last celebrated on the latest possible date in 1943, and will not be celebrated so late until 2038.

It becomes yet more obscure. In the Catholic Church and other 'Western' churches, the dates are those of the Gregorian calendar, adopted in 1582. But Orthodox ('Eastern') Christians still use the earlier Julian calendar. Thus, in most years the date of the Orthodox Easter differs from that of the Western churches. (This year, the Orthodox will celebrate Easter Sunday on .

Many Christians understandably regret that West and East do not celebrate Easter on the same day. In 1997, at Aleppo, in Syria, the World Council of Churches decided that Easter should remain linked to Passover, as determined by astronomical observation. But this reform has not been implemented.



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2. Bakoteh	6868816	21. Kaw Junction L/Kunda	6868861
3. Barra, North Bank Region	6868858	22. Kololl Highway	6868832
4. Banjul Leman Street	6868806	23. Lamin Village Opp Galp	6868815
5. Bansang	6969915	24. Latrikunda Sabiji	6868847
6. Basse Santa Su	6868839	25. London Corner	6868807
7. Basse Highway	6969865	26. Old Jeshwang	6868831
8. Brikama Nyambai	6968874	27. Old Yundum Market	6868843
9. Brikama Hawla Kunda	6868810	28. Sanyang	6868824
10. Brusubi Mini Market	6868819	29. Sayer Jobe Avenue	6868808
11. Brusubi Galp Station	6969873	30. Serrekunda Bartess	6868836
12. Bundung	6868821	31. Serekunda Mosque Road	6868814
13. Busumballa	6868827	32. Soma	6868837
14. Churchill's Town	6868817	33. Sukuta	6868856
15. Cooperative	6868822	34. Tabokoto	6868813
16. Dippakunda	6868812	35. Tallinding	6868809
17. Fajara	6868825	36. Westfield Opp. World Mobile	6868910
18. Farafenni	6868838	37. Westfield Next to Church	6868864
19. Kanifing Estate	6868842		





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

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



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

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

Answers to 'Do you know?' page 8

- 1 2009
- 2 Synagogue – which means 'meeting' or 'assembly'. Ten or more male Jews form a synagogue, which is controlled by a group of elders responsible for the proper order of worship. Women take no part in the service, though they may attend and watch from a part of the building reserved for their use. The main purpose of the synagogue is the study of the Scriptures and the teaching of the people. The furnishings include an Ark where the scrolls of Scripture are kept, and the lectern from which they are read.
- 3 Sundays and solemnities
- 4 Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. The version in Matthew has from early times been used in the worship of the Church.
- 5 Fr Peter Jammeh



from beyond the diocese



**The Cathedral at Paderborn,
the diocese with the
largest equity**

German Church collects record €6 billion in taxes

GERMANY'S Catholic Church received a record €6 billion (about D342 billion) in tax money last year, a newspaper investigation has found.

Germany's 27 dioceses also have a fortune of at least €26 billion (about D1,428 billion) including investments in property and equities, making the German Church probably the wealthiest Catholic

institution in Europe, other than the Vatican.

The newspaper *Handelsblatt* reports that despite more than 2.2 million Germans formally de-registering from the Church since 2000, the country's strong economy has helped boost tax revenue to record levels.

Under Germany church tax law, the government deducts a levy of eight to nine per cent from the income of registered church members and hands it to the country's various churches, including the Catholic Church.

As well as receiving large sums from registered Catholics, the German Church has numerous assets and investments. *Handelsblatt* says that the Church has financial investments of €15 billion, and a fortune of at least €20 billion in fixed assets such as properties and equities.

The diocese with the highest equity is Paderborn, which has €3.5 billion, followed by Munich with €2.8 billion, and Cologne with €2.6 billion.

The figures come despite the number of Catholics regularly attending Mass falling substantially since the 1960s. In 2015, 2.5 million Catholics went to church on Sunday, compared to 11.5 million 50 years earlier.

In an article for the *Catholic Herald* last year, Anian Christoph Wimmer, editor of *CAN Deutsch*, wrote about the state of the German Church: 'The overall number of Catholics stands at 23.8 million – just less than a third of the total population. So it is no surprise that last year, only one in 10 German Catholics worshipped God on Sunday by attending Mass - and that figure is down one third from 2000.'

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Russia's Orthodox Church has opened 30,000 places of worship in the last 30 years

RUSSIA'S Orthodox Church has opened 30,000 churches over the last thirty years, although it is expected to take until 2050 to return to what it was before the Revolution in 1917.

'Houses of worship aren't built as architectural or artistic monuments – they're there for the people,' Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, the Moscow Patriarchate's external relations director, told Rossiya-24 TV.

'And we don't build churches to obtain impressive statistics, but because people want them. It shouldn't be forgotten that the construction or renovation of most churches is financed by the faithful – both small people and big entrepreneurs.'

Metropolitan Hilarion said that the Orthodox Church has dedicated three churches a day since 1988, and now has 40,000. He said that it would take until 2050 to attain the 80,000 churches held before the Bolshevik Revolution took place 100 years ago.

In addition, Hilarion said that the Russian Orthodox Church now has 940 monasteries, compared to the 1,500 that existed before the Soviets came to power.

Following the communist seizure of power, hundreds of Orthodox priests were killed, and churches and monasteries were closed and desecrated.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Orthodox Church has undergone a dramatic resurgence, and enjoys the support of President Vladimir Putin, who is often seen on national television attending church services.



Zambian bishops forbid the 'handshake of peace'

AS a cholera epidemic threatens the lives of more than 14 million Zambians, the country has banned church services and other gatherings in Lusaka's high-density residential areas. The Zambian Bishops' Conference has also implemented such measures as eliminating the handshake of peace in areas where Masses are still allowed.

Zambian government ministers said on 7th January that all gatherings, including church services, were banned in areas most affected by the epidemic. They said the ban aimed at curbing the spread of cholera and making current treatment measures more effective.

The ministers also announced restrictions on the movement of people in the cholera epicentres from 6 pm to 6 am, and limited the opening of bars and other business outlets to between 11 am and 7 pm. They closed markets and food outlets in most of the cities where the cholera bacteria has been detected.

The Archdiocese of Lusaka has cancelled all church-sponsored programmes until further notice. In a pastoral letter read in all Catholic churches in Lusaka on 7th January,

Fr Thomas Banda, Pastoral Co-ordinator in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, announced an indefinite ban on handshakes during meetings and at gatherings after funeral services.

Meanwhile, the state ordered defence forces onto the streets to help control the epidemic. They began a clean-up of the streets of Lusaka and other major Zambian cities, demolishing illegal market structures and unblocking drains.

The state has also announced plans to begin vaccination against cholera, with two million doses of vaccine donated by the UN Children's Fund.

On 7th January the health ministry confirmed 57 deaths and more than 2,400 cases of hospital admission from suspected cholera in Lusaka, where the National Heroes Stadium has been temporarily made the main treatment centre.

More than 2,000 people have died from cholera in Zambia over the past 10 years.

Egyptian President attends Coptic Christmas liturgy



President el-Sissi with the Coptic Pontiff, Pope Tawadros II

IN a show of solidarity with Egypt's embattled Christians, President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi on Saturday 6th January made a symbolic appearance at an Orthodox Christmas liturgy in a new cathedral as tens of thousands of soldiers and police were deployed outside churches across the country in anticipation of possible attacks by militants.

'We, with the grace of God, are offering a message of peace and love from here, not just to Egyptians or to the region, but to the entire world,' el-Sissi told a jubilant congregation while standing next to Pope Tawadros II, the Coptic Pontiff.

'I always say this, and repeat it: destruction, ruin and killing will never be able to defeat goodness, construction, love and peace. It's impossible,' said el-Sissi, a Muslim. 'Pay attention, you are our family. You are part of us. We are one and no one will ever drive a wedge between us.'

In Cairo and across much of Egypt, soldiers in full combat gear joined police in protecting churches, most of which are now equipped with metal detectors. Worshippers undergo body searches at church entrances. Some churches have had their surrounding streets sealed off, with pavements barricaded to control pedestrian movement.

The tight security across Egypt is a precaution against possible attacks by militants who have specifically targeted Christians since December 2016, staging a series of bombings and killing about 100 people.

Orthodox Christians are the overwhelming majority of

Egypt's Christians, who account for about 10 per cent of the population, or nearly 10 million. They celebrate Christmas on 7th January.

The new cathedral in which the Mass was celebrated has been named 'Christ's Nativity'. It is located in Egypt's new Administrative Capital, a 45-billion-dollar project some 45 kilometres east of Cairo. The Christmas Mass consecrated the new cathedral and marked the first time in living memory that the liturgy was not held in St Mark's Cathedral, the seat of the Orthodox Church in central Cairo.

The new cathedral can be the largest in the Middle East.

A general-turned-president, el-Sissi is viewed by most of Egypt's Christians as their protector and ally in the face of extremists.

The consecration of the new cathedral attracted the attention of Pope Francis, who visited Egypt last year, where he spoke of the need for tolerance between Muslims and Christians. After celebrating an Epiphany Mass at St Peter's in Rome on 6th January, Francis said, 'I'd like to express in a special way my closeness to Orthodox Coptic Christians, and I cordially greet my brother Tawadros II on the glorious occasion of the consecration of the Cathedral of Cairo.'

Archbishop avoids death by seconds

THE MARONITE Archbishop of Damascus escaped death by seconds after a bomb crashed through his bed while he was preparing for a nap.

Archbishop Samir Nassar (*right*) said that he was in his bathroom when the shell hit, adding that his bed was 'riddled with shrapnel'.



In an email to supporters, the archbishop said his priests cried with joy when they saw him emerge from the rubble unharmed.

'Providence watches over his poor servant,' the archbishop declared. He added that he was now 'exiled like 12 million Syrian refugees' because the bombing has forced him to leave his home. 'Thank you, Lord, for this new beginning. My life belongs to you.'

Several reverend sisters in Damascus also reportedly escaped in a similar incident.

Francis asks for silence in the Mass

SILENCE during the Mass is an opportunity to commend to God the fate of the Church and the world, Pope Francis has said.

During a general audience, the Pope urged priests 'to observe this silence, and not hurry... Without this silence, we risk neglecting the reflection of the soul.'

Silence during the Mass, the Pope said, is not just an absence of words but a time to listen 'to other voices: that of our heart and, above all, the voice of the Holy Spirit'.... Perhaps we come from days of toil, of joy, or of sorrow, and we want to tell the Lord, to invoke his help, to ask that he be near us; we have family members and friends who are ill or who are going through difficult trials.'

Pope Francis commented: 'To go back and meditate on the texts, even outside of Mass, can help us to learn how to turn to God, what to ask, which words to use.'



Some weekday celebrations

Friday 2nd February: Presentation of The Lord (*Candlemas*)

THE FEAST of the Presentation is also known as the Purification of Mary, or Candlemas. It is one of the Church's oldest feasts, and it has much to teach us. The Presentation has a 'bitter-sweet' nature. It marks a turning-point in the Christian calendar: a looking-back to Christmas, and a looking-forward to Lent and Christ's Cross.

The revelation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem, greeted by Simeon and Anna, calls for rejoicing. But Simeon also spoke of the 'fall and rising of many... a sign that will be opposed,' and added to Mary, '...a sword will pierce your own soul, too.'

Today also recalls Mary's adherence to the Jewish law which required mothers to come to the Temple for 'purification' forty days after the birth of their first son, and to present the infant to God (Exodus 13:12; Numbers 8:15-17; Leviticus 12:1-6). A first-born male child had to be redeemed by an offering of five shekels. Mary had no need of purification, but her submission to her people's law shows her humility and respect for tradition.

Today, before Mass, we carry lighted candles to honour Jesus as Light of the World, and in token that we are witnesses to his light.

This is the World Day for the Consecrated Life, when we pray for all the religious sisters in the diocese. *We pray also for our new Bishop, that God will endow him with grace to lead the Catholics of The Gambia in the path of righteousness and peace, so that we may bear witness to Christ, Light of the World.*

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

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

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

Thursday 8th February: St Josephine Bakhita *religious*

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



Thursday 22nd February: The Chair of St Peter

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

Friday 23rd February: St Polycarp *martyr*

POLYCARP, Bishop of Smyrna, was burnt alive about the year 155 because he refused to curse Christ and accept that the Roman Emperor was divine: 'I have served [Christ] for 86 years and he has done me no harm. How can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?'

Omni sancti et sanctae Dei, intercedete pro nobis

All holy men and women of God, pray for us

Saturday 17th March: St Patrick patron of Ireland

PATRICK was born in Wales in the 390s. He was taken as a slave to Ireland, but after six years escaped to Gaul (present-day France). Having been ordained, he returned to Ireland, founding the Diocese of Armagh and spending the rest of his life preaching the Christian faith. He is the principal patron of Ireland. *In this diocese we give thanks today for the work and witness among us since the early 19th century of Irish Spiritan missionaries.*



Monday 19th March: St Joseph spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary



JOSEPH was the divinely-chosen husband of the Virgin Mary, with whom he lived in chastity (his symbol is a lily).

Joseph was a descendant of the House of David (Matthew 1:15; Luke 2:14). He is described in many English Bible translations as a carpenter, though the original Greek calls him a *teckton* (craftsman). Because the family could only offer two turtle-doves at the presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2: 22-39), Joseph is thought to have been a poor man. From the 16th century especially, he has been revered as a model of poverty, chastity and obedience, patron

of priests and religious, and as a model father and artisan. His feast was declared universal by Pope Gregory XV in 1621.

On this day we pray for the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny and the Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy, who for many years have offered prayer and service in the Diocese of Banjul.

O God, fount of all holiness, make us walk worthily in our vocation, through the intercession of Our Lady, St Joseph, and all your saints

The Pope's Prayer Intentions



February

That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption.

March

That the Church may appreciate the urgency of formation in spiritual discernment, both on the personal and communitarian levels.



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.

Flowers in Church

IN almost every church you'll see flowers. They play no direct part in the liturgy, but they epitomise the beauty of God's creation and contribute to the dignity of worship.

Some people present plastic flowers to their local church. Such artificial flowers last indefinitely; but they cannot in the least compare with freshly-cut flowers arranged week by week for the Sunday Mass.

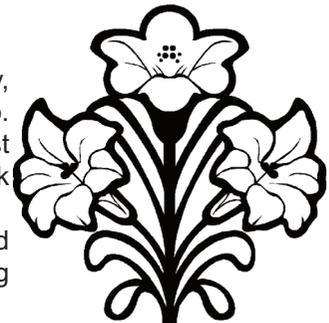
Fresh-cut flowers don't last for more than a few days, but their needing to be replaced reflects the movement of the Church's calendar - always going forward, always being renewed, always 'fresh'.

Flowers at or near the altar, the lectern and at shrines should not obscure or detract from devotions.

Flowers are not used to decorate altars and shrines during Advent and Lent. Then, when Christmas and Easter arrive, the re-appearance of flowers reflects the joy of the festival.

Wreaths and sprays are used as 'floral tributes' at funerals and on graves.

There is a welcome and growing practice of creating gardens or at least putting in some plants around church premises.



Daily Mass Readings



Sunday readings Year B Weekday readings Year 1

February & March

Celebrations in brackets () are optional

Thu 1st Feb	1 Kings 2:1-4,10-12. 1 Chronicles 29:10-12. Mark 6:7-13	
Fri 2nd	Malachi 3:1-4 Psalm 23:7-10. Hebrews 2:14-18. Luke 2: 22-40.	PRESENTATION of THE LORD
Sat 3rd	1 Kings 3:4-13, Psalm 118:9-14. Mark 6:30-34,	(St Blaise <i>or</i> St Ansgar)
Sun 4th	Job 7:1-4,6-7. Psalm 146:1-6. 1 Corinthians 9:16-19,22-23. Mark 1:29-39.	5th SUNDAY of YEAR
Mon 5th	1 Kings 8: 1-7,9-13. Psalm 131:6-10. Mark 6:53-56. St Agatha	St Paul Miki & Companions
Tue 6th	1 Kings 8: 22-23,27-30. Psalm 83:3-5,10-11. Mark 7:1-13.	
Wed 7th	1 Kings 10:1-10. Psalm 36:5-6,30-31,39-40. Mark 7:14-23.	
Thu 8th	1 Kings 11:4-13. Psalm 105:3-4,35-37,40. Mark 7:24-30	(St Jerome Emiliani <i>or</i> St Josephine Bakhita)
Fri 9th	1 Kings 11:29-32 & 12:19. Psalm 80:10-15. Mark 7:31-37	<i>abstinence</i>
Sat 10th	1 Kings 12:26-32 & 13:33-34. Psalm 105:6-7,19-22. Mark 8:1-10	St Scholastica
Sun 11th	Leviticus 13:1-2,44-46. Psalm 31:1-2,5,11. 1 Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1. Mark 1:40-45.	6th SUNDAY of YEAR
Mon 12th	James 1:1-11. Psalm 118:67-68,71-72,75-76. Mark 8:11-13.	
Tue 13th	James 1:12-18. Psalm 93:12-15,18-19. Mark 8:14-21	(Shrove Tuesday)
	Lent begins	
Wed 14th	Joel 2:12-18. Psalm 50:3-6,12-14,17. 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:2. Mark 6: 1-6,16-18.	ASH WEDNESDAY
Thu 15th	Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Psalm 1:1-4,6. Luke 9:22-25.	
Fri 16th	Isaiah 58:1-9. Psalm 50:3-6,18-19. Matthew 9:14-15.	
Sat 17th	Isaiah 58:9-14. Psalm 85:1-6. Luke 5:27-32.	
Sun 18th	Genesis 98-15. Psalm 24:4-9. 1 Peter 3:18-22. Mark 1:12-15.	1st SUNDAY of LENT: <i>Gambian Independence Day</i>
Mon 19th	Leviticus 19:1-2,11-18. Psalm 18:8-10,15. Matthew 25:31-46.	
Tue 20th	Isaiah 55:10-11. Psalm 33:4-7,16-19. Matthew 6:7-15	
Wed 21st	Jonah 3:1-10. Psalm 50:3-4,12-13,18-19, Luke 11:29-32.	
Thu 22nd	1 Peter 5:1-4. Psalm 23:1-6. Matthew 16:13-19	CHAIR of St PETER
Fri 23rd	Ezekiel 18:21-28. Psalm 129:1-4. Matthew 5:20-26.	
Sat 24th	Deuteronomy 26:16-19. Psalm 118:1-2,4-5,7-8. Matthew 5: 43-48.	
Sun 25th	Genesis 22:1-2,9-13,15-18. Psalm 115:10,15-19 Romans 8:31-34. Mark 9:2-10.	2nd SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 26th	Daniel 9:4-10. Psalm 78:8-9,11,13. Luke 6:36-38.	
Tue 27th	Isaiah 1:10,16-20. Psalm 49:8-9,16-17,21,23. Matthew 23:1-12.	
Wed 28th	Jeremiah 18:18-20. Psalm 30:5-6,14-16. Matthew 20:17-28.	
Thu 1st Mar	Jeremiah 17:5-10. Psalm 1:1-4,6. Luke 16:19-31	
Fri 2nd	Genesis 37:3-4,12-13,17-28. Psalm 104:16-21. Matthew 21:33-43,45-46.	
Sat 3rd	Micah 7:14-15,18-20. Psalm 102:1-4,9-12. Luke 15:1-3,11-32.	
Sun 4th	Exodus 20-17. Psalm 18:8-11. 1 Corinthians 1:22-25. John 2:13-25.	3rd SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 5th	2 Kings 5:1-15. Psalm 41:2-3 & 42:3-4. Luke 4:24-30	
Tue 6th	Daniel 3:25,34-43. Psalm 24:4-9. Matthew 181-35.	
Wed 7th	Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9. Psalm 147:12-13,15-16,19-20. Matthew 5:17-19.	[St Felicity & St Perpetua]
Thu 8th	Jeremiah 7:23-28. Psalm 94:1-2,6-9. Luke 11:14-23	[St John of God]
Fri 9th	Hosea 14:2-10. Psalm 80:6,8-11,14,17 Mark 12:28-34	[St Frances of Rome]
Sat 10th	Hosea 5:15 – 6:6. Psalm 50:3-4,18-21. Luke 18:9-14.	
Sun 11th	Chronicles 36:14-16,19-23, Psalm 136. Ephesians 2:4- 10. John 3:14-21	4th SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 12th	Isaiah 65:17-21. Psalm 29:2,4-6,11-13. John 4:43-54.	
Tue 13th	Ezekiel 47:1-9,12. Psalm 45:2-3,5-6,8-9. John 5:1-3, 5-16.	[<i>Election of Pope Francis, 2013</i>]
Wed 14th	Isaiah 49:8-15. Psalm 144:8-9,13-14,17-18. John 5:17-30.	
Thu 15th	Exodus 32:7-14. Psalm 105:19-20,21-23. John 5:31-47.	
Fri 16th	Wisdom 2:1,12-22. Psalm 33:17-21,23. John 7:1-2,10,25-30.	
Sat 17th	Jeremiah 11:18-20. Psalm 7:2-3,9-12. John 7:40-53	[St Patrick]
Sun 18th	Ezekiel 37:12-14. Psalm 129:1-4,6-8. Romans 8:8-11. John 11:1-45.	5th SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 19th	2 Samuel 7:4-5,12-14,16. Psalm 88:2-5,27,29. Romans 4:13,16-18,22. Matthew 1:16,18-21,24 <i>or</i> Luke 2:41-51. St JOSEPH	
Tue 20th	Numbers 21:4-9. Psalm 101:2-3,16-21. John 8:21-30	
Wed 21st	Daniel 3:14-20,91-92,95. Psalm Daniel 3:52-56. John 8:31-42.	
Thu 22nd	Genesis 17:3-9. Psalm 104:4-9. John 8:51-59.	
Fri 23rd	Jeremiah 20:10-13. Psalm 17:2-7. John 10:31-42.	[St Turibius de Mogrovejo]
Sat 24th	Ezekiel 37:21-28. Psalm Jeremiah 31:10-13. John 11:45-56.	

HOLY WEEK: Palm Sunday 25th March – Easter Sunday 1st April

Full details, pages 15 - 24

End-
piece

The Passion of Our Lord



THE PASSION is the term for the suffering of Jesus - physical, spiritual and mental - before and during his trial and execution.

The Passion story is related in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The Passion begins at Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and John 12 with the conspiracy against Jesus. It then unfolds in eight scenes:

* A meal a few days before Passover. A woman anoints Jesus. He says that for this she will always be remembered.

* In Jerusalem, the Last Supper is shared by Jesus and his disciples. Jesus gives final instructions, predicts his betrayal, and tells the disciples to remember him.

* On the path to Gethsemane after the meal. Jesus tells the disciples that they will all desert him that night. When Peter protests that he will not, Jesus says that Peter will deny him three times before the cock crows.

* Gethsemane, later that night. As the disciples rest, Jesus prays; then a mob led by Judas Iscariot arrests Jesus, and all the disciples run away.

* The high priest's palace, later that night. The mob brings Jesus to the Sanhedrin (the Jewish supreme court). They examine Jesus and decide that he deserves to die. They send him to Pontius Pilate.

* The courtyard outside the high priest's palace, at the same time. Peter has followed Jesus and joined the crowd awaiting Jesus' fate. Some suspect that Peter is a sympathiser, so he denies that he knows Jesus. The cock crows, and Peter remembers what Jesus said. He weeps.

* The governor's palace, early Friday morning. The Roman governor, Pilate, examines Jesus and decides that he is innocent; but the Jewish leaders and the crowd demand Jesus' death. Pilate gives them the choice of saving Barabbas, a criminal, or saving Jesus. In response to the screaming mob, Pilate sends Jesus out to be crucified.

* Golgotha, a hill outside Jerusalem, later morning until mid-afternoon. Jesus is crucified and dies.

During the arrest in Gethsemane, someone (Peter, according to John) takes a sword and cuts off the high priest's servant's ear. According to Mathew, Mark and Luke, the high priest who examines Jesus is Caiaphas; in John, Jesus is also interrogated by Annas, Caiaphas' father-in-law.

Herod

Luke says that Pilate sends Jesus to be judged by Herod Antipas because, as a Galilean, Jesus is under Herod's jurisdiction. At first, Herod is excited to see Jesus, hoping that he will perform a miracle for him. He questions Jesus, but Jesus does not answer. Herod then mocks him and sends him

back to Pilate, after giving him an elegant robe to wear.

Jesus is mocked

Pilate asks Jesus if he is King of the Jews. Jesus replies, 'So you say.' After being condemned by Pilate, Jesus is flogged. Matthew, Mark and John record that he is then taken by the soldiers to the Praetorium, where, according to Matthew and Mark, the whole contingent of soldiers is called together. They place a purple robe on Jesus, put a crown of thorns on his head, and according to Matthew, put a rod in his hand. They deride him by hailing him as King of the Jews, paying mock homage and striking his head with the rod.

'Behold the man'

John says that Pilate has Jesus brought out a second time, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns, in order to declare his innocence before the crowd, saying, Ecce homo - 'Here is the man'. But the priests urge the crowd to demand Jesus' death. Pilate resigns himself, washing his hands before the people (according to Matthew) as a sign that Jesus' blood will not be upon him.



Simon of Cyrene

Mark and Matthew record that Jesus' clothes are returned to him before he is led out for execution. Jesus is forced, like other victims of crucifixion, to drag his own cross to Golgotha, the place of execution. Matthew, Mark and Luke say that the soldiers force a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, to carry Jesus' cross for him. Mark names Simon's children as Alexander and Rufus. Luke adds that Jesus' women followers are following and mourning his fate, and he responds by quoting Hosea 10:8.

'King of the Jews'

Matthew, Mark and Luke state that on arrival at Golgotha Jesus is offered wine laced with myrrh to lessen his pain, but that he refuses it. Jesus is then crucified, according to Mark, at the third hour (9 am); but John says that he is crucified at the sixth hour (noon). Many commentators resolve this by saying that the Synoptic



Gospels use Jewish time, and John uses Roman time.

Pilate has a plaque fixed to Jesus' cross inscribed (says John) in Hebrew, Greek and the Latin - *Iesu Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum* - 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews'. Mark has the plaque say simply, 'King of the Jews'.

The Gospels then say that the soldiers divide Jesus' clothes between themselves, except for one garment for which they cast lots. John says that this fulfils a prophecy in Psalm 21:18.

Some in the crowd taunt Jesus, saying 'He trusts in God; let God deliver him now!' and cynically suggest that Jesus might perform a miracle to release himself.

The two thieves

The Gospels say that two thieves are also crucified, one on each side of Jesus. Matthew says that both thieves revile Jesus. Luke says that one reviles Jesus, while the other declares Jesus innocent, and begs that he may be remembered when Jesus comes to his kingdom.

'Behold your mother'

John records that Mary the mother of Jesus and two other women are standing by the cross, together with a disciple described as 'the one whom Jesus loved'. Jesus commits his mother to this disciple's care.

Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani

Mark and Luke say that the sky becomes dark at mid-day, a darkness that lasts three hours. At the ninth hour (3 pm) Jesus cries out, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* - 'My God, why have you forsaken me?'

The centurion standing guard, who sees Jesus die, declares him innocent (Luke) or Son of God (Matthew, Mark).

John says that, as is customary, the soldiers break the legs of the thieves so that they will die faster; but that on coming to Jesus they find he is already dead. A soldier pierces his side with a spear.



Salvator mundi, salva nos,
quí per crucem et resurrectionem
tuam liberastí nos

Save us, Saviour of the world,
for by your cross and resurrection you have set us free



Are we fools?

THIS year, Easter Sunday coincides with April Fools Day, or *Poissons d'avril*, as our Senegalese friends call it.

'Absolutely no connection!' you may say. 'What has Easter Day, the greatest celebration in the Christian calendar, to do with the childish custom of fooling our friends on 1st April?'

Think again: perhaps the coincidence of April Fools Day with Easter Sunday has something to teach us.

Were not Jesus and his followers fools in the eyes of many people?

Were not Jesus' disciples fools to leave their wives and families to follow him?

Was not Jesus foolish in going to Jerusalem at the chaotic time of the Passover festival, when he knew he would be in danger?

And St Paul, on various occasions, called himself a fool.

We Christians of today may be regarded by others as fools to bother ourselves with a religion that regards this life as nothing compared with the glory of the world to come. We cannot prove the existence of God, or the 'supreme joy of knowing Christ', so wouldn't it be better to make ourselves comfortable, instead of denying ourselves all sorts of worldly pleasure? This world, after all, is not useless or unimportant: it was created by God, who 'saw that everything was good'.

But Christians, along with Muslims, believe that this world is not all that matters. To those who profess no religious faith, or merely pay lip-service to religion, practising Christians may appear deluded, or foolish. Yet St Paul assures us: '*... the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it us the power of God.... Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.*

For we proclaim Christ crucified – a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to us who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God... For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength (1 Corinthians 1L18,21-25).

St Paul was such a fool! He endured slander, abuse, shipwreck and imprisonment for Christ, when he could have lived much more safely and comfortably without him. Yet Paul wrote (Romans 8:18,35,37): *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us... Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors in him who loved us.*

To our non-Christian friends, spending so much time in church during Holy Week and at Easter may seem quaint, and rather a waste of time.

But let us be 'fools for Christ' - and not only on 1st April!

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The Transfiguration

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' Suddenly, when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they'd seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, what this rising from the dead could mean.

Mark 9:2-10. The Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent, 25th February.