



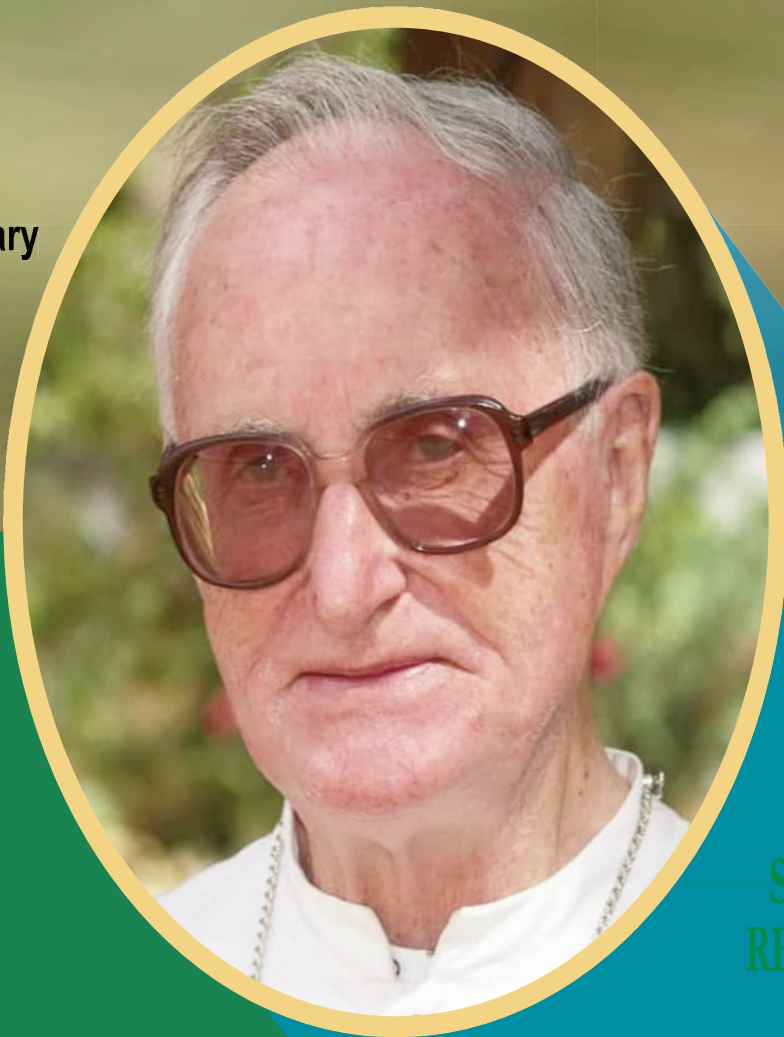
The Diocese of Banjul

NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

GONE BUT UNFORGETTABLE

The Impactful and Amazing Life and Times of
Late Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Banjul, Bishop Michael Joseph Cleary CSSp



OCTOBER
The Month of Rosary

NOVEMBER
Remembering
The Dead

**GAMBIAN
CHRISTIANS
CANNOT BE
SECOND
CLASS
CITIZENS**

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THE LIFE OF
GEORGE F.
GOMEZ**

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Editorial

NOT NEGOTIABLE**Gambian Christians' Rights
Are Human Rights**

In all the conventional holy books, the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Freedom, equality, and dignity are bestowed on all by virtue of being humans made in the image of God. According to Christian scriptures' book of Galatians, which reminds us of the deep biblical roots of human rights ideals, the Apostle Paul reminds us that these rights are not earned but divinely ordained. As a result of the belief that all human life is special and God-given, Christians should try to do all they can to promote their human rights. Sometimes, it becomes very necessary to demand that your rights are upheld.

In The Gambia, the religious minorities are the Roman Catholics and other Christian sects, and the Government is obliged to recognize the rights of all Christian and Islamic groups equally and fairly. The currently prevailing 1997 Gambian Constitution provides for freedom of religion and supports all other laws and policies that contribute to the free practice of religion. Gambian laws at all levels, protects freedom of religion in full from abuse by the government or private actors.

However, though the Gambian Constitution provides for the

protection of all basic human rights, including religious rights, the current Gambian government is having problems protecting them. The recent case of President Barrow shying away from granting the age-long holiday due to Christians on every Feast of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Saint Mary or Sang Marie) on August 15, 2020, is deeply worrying. The feast commemorates the assumption of the body and soul of Mary, Mother of Jesus, into heaven. As Rev. Fr. Edu Gomez once observed, "The feast is both of the Catholic Church and for all Christians because Mary, who is honored, is the mother of Jesus Christ".

The Feast is considered one of the most significant Gambian Christian feast days. The Island of St. Mary, the Gambian Catholic Cathedral, the Anglican Cathedral and the Shrine of Our Lady of Peace at Kunkujang are all named after Mary, the mother of Jesus. Indeed, this date has been made a public holiday in The Gambia since 1954 by both the colonial masters and the successive post-colonial regimes just as for the various Muslim feast days.

This year the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, the Blessed Virgin, was celebrated on Saturday, 15 August. Nevertheless, it has remained very questionable why President Adama Barrow did not declare a public holiday in honor and in observance of the Christian feast (Sang Marie), whereas when Tamharit 2020 fell on Saturday 29 August he publicly via the national media declared it a public holiday, even three days prior, in observance of the Muslim New Year. The big question is; why is this so? Why is this open discrimination against Christians coming up now?

The beginning of the third Republic democratization process in The Gambia marked by the unbanning of all forms of tyranny and abuse of people's rights strongly begs the need for respect for the rights of the minorities of this nation. Though some notable thinkers have always argued that human rights are no more than a figment of political imagination, they suggest that while the idea eases the conscience of politicians, it fails seriously to contribute to the lives of those who suffer under its violations. The reality of this scenario rather takes a different shape when it comes to the Gambian Christian minority's situation. For instance, the last leader of this nation, former President Yahya Jammeh, tried to manipulate the rights of the Christian minority. But, what happened between him and the Christians, and how did his war against Christians augur with him?

Events leading to the removal of former President Yahya Jammeh should lead anyone to know that Gambian Christians should not be taken for granted. Christians have one voice, and when it is spoken, it echoes even beyond the domain of Christianity. During the December 2016 Presidential elections, the Christian community passed around a circular which read "no one should vote for whoever will regard a Christian as a second-class citizen", and so be it! Today, it is as if a similar battle-line is being drawn. Christians are not afraid to fight in defense of their faith, beliefs and human rights.

The Golden Rule, which is the principle of treating others as you want to be treated, is a maxim that is found in almost all conventional religions and cultures. It is on this wisdom that the saying, "what is good for the goose, is good for the gander" anchors. Therefore, Gambian Christians, especially, Gambian Catholics are demanding answers from the President of the Republic of The Gambia: why the highly-valued Christian feast of Sang-Marie of August 15, 2020, was downplayed, downgraded and treated with a pathetic neglect and ignominy and why is it that, the age-long usual public holiday was not declared in honor of this highly cherished and sacred Christian feast.

A word is enough for the wise.

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Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

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Opinion

GAMBIAN CHRISTIANS CANNOT BE SECOND CLASS CITIZENS**An Open Letter to President Adama Barrow*****BY: PHILIP SAINE***

Is President Barrow trying to marginalise Gambian Christians? This issue was clearly settled by Christians when the nation was declared an Islamic State by the erstwhile leader. As it has come up again; this despicable act of marginalising Christians will never be accepted in The Gambia! As Christians, we must continue to defend the democracy and human rights of all citizens of The Gambia irrespective of their religious or political affiliations. And, any government that tries to discriminate against any section of the society will be shown smacks an attempt to divide the country as Christians and Muslims and other religious groups have been living in harmony over the years.

Muharram is an important and blessed month in the Hijira calendar; it marks 'Ashura', 'Karbala' and Jonah's ejection from the belly of the fish. The tribe of Quraish and the Jews fast and honour the day of Ashura as an 'Id', in commemoration of God saving Moses and the Israelites from their enemies

The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary August 15th (Saint Mary or Sang Marie) the Mother of Jesus is considered one of the most significant Gambian Catholic feast days. The feast commemorates the assumption of Mary's body and soul into heaven. The Island of St. Mary, the Catholic Cathedral, the Anglican Cathedral and the Shrine of Our Lady of Peace at Kunkujang are all named after Mary, the mother of Jesus. Indeed, this date has been a public holiday in The Gambia since 1954.

On Saturday, 15th August, 2020, President Adama Barrow did not declare the day a public holiday in observance of the Catholic feast of Saint Mary (Sang Marie). Reactions of Christians and several Muslims to you not declaring the day a public holiday as tradition has it were mixed. Some came to your defence on Facebook saying that it was unnecessary as Saturday was not a statutory workday. Some were of the view that it was inadvertent, while others did not buy it. The latter felt strongly and unconvincingly that it was deliberate and asked for an apology for, or explanation of, why this was the case. Neither of these demands has been forthcoming, which shows your total indifference to the Christians' concerns. We are still waiting for answers.

Tamharit 2020 fell on Saturday 29th August and you declared it a public holiday, three days prior, in observance of the Muslim New Year. Christians were flabbergasted to hear this, especially those who came to your defence when you failed to declare August 15; the traditional feast of Sang Marie, a public holiday though it fell on a Saturday too. Immediately after this declaration was made on Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS), Facebook was flooded with posts from Gambians, Christians and Muslims alike, pointing to the double standards you demonstrated. 'What is good for the goose, is good for the gander', as the saying goes

How come the President of the Republic of the Gambia and his Religious Affairs Adviser were fully awake for the celebration of Muharram and Ashurah/Tamharit and not 15th August? Do we have a Religious Adviser advising on religion (both Islam and Christianity) or Islamic Adviser advising on Islam ONLY? Mr. President it is justifiable to replace or dismiss your Minister responsible for Religious Affairs immediately. He is untrustworthy, incompetent and lacks understanding of the Christian faith. He is causing more harm than good in our beloved Gambia. The bond among the Gambian people is well beyond ethnicity, linguistics, regions and religious divides. We the Gambians grew up in an interfaith society; we have always lived in peace and harmony and should not tolerate any kind of abuse and injustice against our minority populations.

Not preempting answers, however, it is reverently hoped that this has nothing to do with being in a Minority Group. The Gambia took Auung San Suu Kyi to the World Court as regards the Myanmar Case to the International Court of Justice. Gambia government perceived that Myanmar Government's treatment of the Rohingya ethnic group was unjust. We are all equal in the eyes of God and should be so in the eyes of the State. Is that too much to ask for; equal justice and treatment? The Christian community is not demanding special favours or privileges.

Mr. President, be careful about your relationship with the minority and other religions because it is how you treat them that will determine your success and your legacy. It is illegal for the government to spend state resources in advancing any particular religious agenda, whether it is Christian, Baha'i, Ahmadi's, or Islam. Avoid any hypocritical attitude, double standard or unequal treatment of citizens. Get your religious advises directly from the Gambia Christian Council. You may do the same with Islamic advises and do without the position of a Religious Adviser. Please make all Gambians to be significant and proud of their nationality

Mr. President, remember you told Gambians you killed the LION? It was not a lion that you killed. It is appropriate to say that you killed trust, you killed hope, you killed respect, and you killed dignity and everything we (particularly the marginalized and victimized population) yearned for in your administration. Remember that 'WE' RAISED THE LION, FED IT AND NURTURED IT. Therefore, Gambian Christians cannot be second class citizens in their own backyard. **DO NOT ALLOW HISTORY TO REPEAT ITSELF.**

Mr. President, your predecessor Ex-President Yahya Jammeh tried to drive a wedge between Christians and Muslims, and between ethnic groups, and he paid dearly for it. This is not the time to be indifferent or oblivious to religious sensitivities. Strengthening your relationship with the Christian minority is what you should be pursuing vigorously at this time in our political transformation, so as to secure its support for you in the future. Mr. President, the Christian community eagerly waits to hear from you on the matter!

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- 06 If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early — but call first
- 07 Get information from trusted sources

Cover Story

GONE BUT UNFORGETTABLE

*The Impactful and Amazing Life and Times of
Late Bishop Emeritus of The Gambia, Bishop Michael Joseph Cleary, C.S.Sp*



Congregation of the Holy Spirit - Irish Province

Date: Friday, 4th September 2020
Attention: All Confrères and Associates

**Death of Michael Joseph (Miko)
Cleary C.S.Sp.**

We regret to announce the death of Bishop Michael Cleary. He died peacefully yesterday (Thursday, 3/09/2020) in Nazareth House, having celebrated his 95th birthday earlier this week.

Born on 1st September 1925, Michael was the youngest of four children of Mary (née Flanagan) and John Cleary of Tulrahan, Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo. His mother died days later and his father in 1929. Michael was raised in Castlebar by his maternal grandmother and his uncle and aunt.

After attending St. Jarlath's College in Tuam, Michael entered Kilshane novitiate in 1943, and was professed the following year. He studied Philosophy and Theology in Kimmage, got his B.A., and prefectured in Blackrock College. He gained his H. Dip. in 1949. Ordained in 1952, along with some two dozen other Irish Spiritans – including Fr. Jerry Lambe and the late Bishop John O'Riordan – Fr. Michael was appointed to The Gambia in 1953. He taught mathematics and history at St. Augustine's High School in Banjul, the country's capital city, and became school principal. He would spend his school holidays doing ministry in rural Gambian parishes. Having served as Diocesan Educational Secretary and as Vicar-General, he became Bishop of Banjul in 1981. The Vice-President of The Gambia at the time was among some 3,000 attendees at his episcopal ordination.

After twenty-five years as Bishop of Banjul, Bishop Michael was succeeded, on his retirement in 2006, by Bishop Robert Ellison, but remained in The Gambia for some time before his more than six decades in the West African country came to an end. Returning to Ireland, he was a member of the Kimmage community in his final years, moving to Nazareth House in February 2020. We offer our prayerful sympathies to his family, relatives, Spiritan confrères and friends.

“Perhaps I am too emotional, but I have always dreaded parting from friends and saying goodbye... Sixty-two years ago I came to The Gambia, and it is here I spent all my priestly life. Later as Bishop, I travelled throughout the country and got to know well, and love its people. Otherwise, I would not have stayed. I made many friends here, both Muslims and Christians. Now, in my 90th year, I feel I should live nearer hospital and nursing care and not be a burden here”.

- Bishop Emeritus Michael Joseph Cleary

Bishop Emeritus Michael Joseph Cleary was the second Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Banjul. He was born in county Mayo, Ireland, on the 1st September 1925, and was the youngest of the four children, with an elder brother and two sisters. Eight days after his birth, his mother died, and four years later, his father died too. His father left two plots of land, one to each son. Bishop Cleary's nephew now owns and farms the land that he inherited. Bishop Cleary was brought up separately from his brother and two sisters. He formed a great attachment to his devout grandmother which provoked his choice to become a priest. Also, his late sisters both entered religious orders. One was Dominican in South Africa, and the other a contemplative sister in England and Ireland. His late brother followed in his father's footsteps as a farmer.

Cleary entered the novitiate of the Holy Ghost fathers (now commonly known as the Spiritans) in 1943, and then studied for an arts degree at the University College of Dublin, Ireland. He spent two years practice-teaching at Blackrock College, the boys' school in Dublin run by the Holy Ghost fathers. He was ordained priest on 29th of June 1952 at the age of 26 by Dr. John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin. Michael took a decision to work in Africa as a Missionary. This decision was taken very early in his life when he visited his secondary school teacher, Spiritan Father, who showed a film



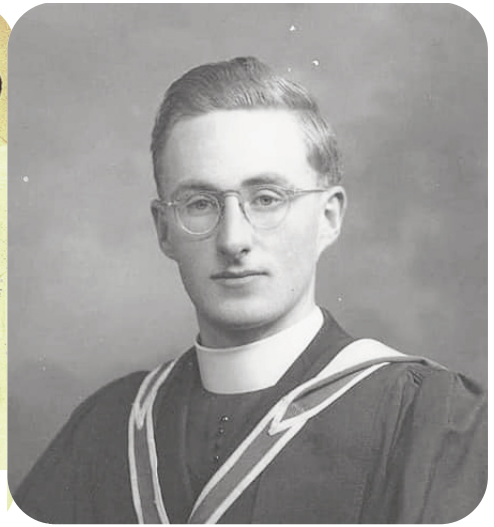
Bishop Cleary in retirement

made about Missionaries in Africa. He decided: 'That's where I want to go. With this early desire to work in Africa as a missionary, young Father Cleary was posted to The Gambia. The country was not considered an exciting place to serve as a missionary at that time. Spiritan fathers working in Eastern Nigeria and East Africa could boast of huge and growing

Cover Story



Bishop Cleary flanked by Fr. Tony Gabisi and Fr. Peter Gomez



congregations, whereas The Gambia was a Muslim country with only a few Christians, and a Catholic population of around 3,000. On the 29th of October, 1953, a year and four months after his ordination, young Fr. Cleary arrived in The Gambia by sea. He fancied being sent to a missionary outpost such as Fulabantang and Basse, but his superior, the late Bishop Michael Moloney, decreed that he should teach at Saint Augustine's High School, then Hagan street (now Daniel Goddard Street) Banjul. St. Augustine's High School was at that time staffed by Irish priests, local staff, and British volunteers. Father Cleary taught mathematics and history. He went on to spend 25 years at the school, 17 of those years as principal.

Despite wanting to work as a parish priest in the rural and remote parts of the country, like his superior and predecessor the late Bishop Moloney and other Irish missionaries, it was different with Fr. Cleary.

In those days, the school year ran from January to November, and during the long school holiday Bishop Cleary would replace an up-river priest who was on leave. For example, at Basse, where rural night sounds unknown in Banjul, caused him some unease.

On January 24th, 1981, Fr. Cleary was appointed by the Holy See to be the replacement of Bishop Moloney, who stepped down as Bishop due to ill-health on the 4th of April, 1980. Fr. Cleary was consecrated Bishop on Sunday, 24th of March, 1980 at the age of 55 and was enthroned at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Banjul, the following Sunday, 31st March, 1980. Due to the health condition of his predecessor Bishop Moloney, Archbishop Johannes Dyba was the principal consecrator and Bishop Moloney acted as co-principal consecrator, together with Archbishop Joseph Henry Ganda, Archbishop of Freetown and Bo.

During his episcopacy, Bishop Cleary hosted His Holiness the Late Pope John Paul II (now Saint John Paul II) when he visited The Gambia from the 23rd-24th, February 1992.

On 15th February, 2006, Bishop Cleary tendered his resignation letter to the Holy See, at the age of 80 on February 25th, 2006 it was announced by the Vatican that the resignation request of Bishop Cleary had been accepted, and Bishop Ellison would be his successor.

Bishop Cleary stayed for 9 nine years in the country after his retirement before leaving for good. He wished to go

quietly. Thus, on Friday, March 13th, 2015, in a simple fashion, a thanksgiving mass which was held in his honor at St. Therese's parish church in Kanifing. Remarkably, before the final blessing, Bishop Cleary addressed the congregation, in these words: "Perhaps I am too emotional, but I have always dreaded parting from friends and saying goodbye... Sixty-two years ago, I came to the Gambia, and it is here I spent all my priestly life. Later as Bishop, I travelled throughout the country and got to know well, and love its people. Otherwise, I would not have stayed. I made many friends here, both Muslims and Christians. Now, in my 90th year, I feel I should live nearer hospital and nursing care and not be a burden here. So I wish to sincerely thank you for the best years of my life. I now ask the Almighty to guide and protect you and your friends and families. You will always be in my thoughts and prayers. God love and bless you all".

The following day Saturday, March 14th, 2015 Bishop Cleary finally left the soil of the Gambia to his home country of Ireland to the Holy Ghost Fathers' home in Kimmage Manor after 62 years of unprecedented work in the Catholic Diocese of Banjul, both as a Priest and Bishop.

The departure of Bishop Cleary may be regarded as a milestone in a long period of expansion of the Catholic Church in The Gambia.

When he first arrived, the small Catholic Mission - not then a diocese - was run by Irish missionaries. Now, at the time of his departure 62 years later, the much more numerous Gambian faithful are led by Gambian priests and the laity are more than ever engaged in the running of the church: a development that Bishop Cleary always prayed for and helped to foster.

During his 25 years as Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Banjul, Bishop Cleary ordained 17 Gambian priests; 15 diocesan priests and two Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) and blessed and consecrated many churches and schools.

Bishop Emeritus Michael Joseph Cleary spent 62 years in the Diocese of Banjul from the 29th October 1953 to 14th March 2015, 28 years as a priest, 25 years as Bishop, so far the longest serving Bishop of our Diocese, and 9 years after retirement.

He died on Thursday, 3rd September, 2020.

May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

AMEN.

Cover Story



The Provincial,
Holy Spirit Provincialate,
Temple Park,
Dublin.



**Bishop's Office,
P. O. Box 165,
Banjul,
The Gambia,
West Africa**

5th September, 2020.

Dear Very Rev. Fr. Martin Kelly,

**CONDOLENCE MESSAGE AT THE DEATH OF OUR DEAREST BISHOP MOST
REV. MICHAEL J. CLEARY C.S.Sp.**

The death of any Irish Spiritan missionary confrere who worked in the Diocese of Banjul, The Gambia is always a sad and devastating feeling and experience for the priests, religious, lay faithful, and all Gambians who encountered the deceased Spiritan. We are, therefore, sorrowful and even more devastated at the death of Most Rev. Bishop Michael J. Cleary. For, he was not only an Irish Spiritan missionary in the Diocese for sixty-two years; he was also our dearest and exemplary Chief Shepherd for twenty-five years of his time in The Gambia.

Since Bishop Cleary arrived on the shores of The Gambia in 1953, he fully and truly observed and accomplished what Jesus said to his disciples in Jn. 12:24-26. He consistently died and denied myself of his personal rewards and comforts, in order to, enable others to succeed and experience the wisdom, goodness, love, and salvation of God. Bishop Cleary was, therefore, like the grain of wheat that Jesus said must fall into the earth and die, in order to, bear much fruit. Otherwise, it remains a single grain. We are, therefore, grateful to God, his family, the Irish Spiritan Province, and the Pope for granting us a teacher, principal, educationist, administrator, and Chief Shepherd who sacrificed his life for others, in order to, keep it for eternal life.

His loving memory will now live on in our hearts and minds forever because he established and handed over to the Diocese and The Gambia as a whole a rich and lasting legacy of education, leadership, service, missionary sacrifice, and evangelization of the Gospel of Christ. As the beneficiaries of his life and legacy, we will endeavour to the best of our ability to preserve it and contribute our own part towards the growth, stability, and success of the Diocese of Banjul in evangelization, education, development, health care, ecumenical, and interreligious dialogue.

On my behalf and on behalf of the priests, religious, seminarians, lay faithful, and Gambians of all religions and works of life, I express our deepest and heartfelt condolence and sympathy at the death of Most Rev. Michael J. Cleary C.S.Sp. We commend his gentle soul into God's loving embrace and pray that the God he trusted as stated in his Episcopal Motto: "*In te Confido*" (that is, I Trust in You) will grant him the fullness of eternal life, joy, and peace in his heavenly Kingdom. May the soul of Bishop Cleary and the souls of all the Spiritans who worked in The Gambia rest in perfect peace. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

+Most Rev. Gabriel Mendy C.S.Sp.

Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Banjul, The Gambia.
Cc. Very Rev. Fr. Peter Conaty C.S.Sp, 1st Provincial Assistant.



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Cover Story

FUNERAL HOMILY PREACHED BY FR. EMILE BOCANDE SAMBOU IN KIMMAGE MANOR ON 8TH SEPTEMBER

Michael (Joseph) Cleary
1925 – 2020



Bishop Michael Cleary died peacefully in Nazareth House on Thursday 3rd September 2020.

Now, while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him." *LK 24:30-31.*

On behalf of Most Rev. Dr Gabriel Mendy C.S.Sp., Bishop of Banjul, Robert Patrick Ellison C.S.Sp., Bishop Emeritus, the priests, nuns, catechists, and the Christian faithful, and by extension, the entire Gambian people, we express our heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of the late Bishop Michael J. Cleary, and to the Spiritan Congregation. I'm aware how all of you – family and friends; nurses and management of Nazareth House – cared so well for, and were so important, to Bishop Cleary. Now that the final struggle is over and there is a certain emptiness, let us remember that he continues to live in the lessons of 'care and concern for all' that he taught us.

We gather to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for a much-loved grandpa, a dear friend, an educator, an excellent school principal, priest and bishop, Michael Joseph (Miko) Cleary, who gave so very much to the people of The Gambia (known as the 'Smiling Coast of Africa). If Covid-19 had not made it impossible for people to come from the Gambian Church and government, this church would have been filled with Gambians of all faiths today. Their presence would have shown the strong ties that exist between Christians and Muslims in my home country. It would also show how Bishop had positively touched and changed lives of Gambians in his work as a priest, teacher and principal in the 'Great Saint Augustine's High School (SAINTS), for 17 years, and as 'Chief Shepherd' of the Diocese of Banjul for 25 years.

The list of achievements of Bishop Cleary's fruitful life of service in The Gambia can be read elsewhere in our own time. Knowing Bishop Cleary as I did, I am sure that he would not have sought a eulogy or panegyric; I shall try not to preach one but might fail! Instead, I hope that some reflections on the Sacred Scriptures will assist us in our prayers for the repose of the soul of this much-loved shepherd. He was a welcoming father to his priests, nuns and people of other faiths, and a caring and loving builder of communities, one who never raised his voice to his priests or indeed to anyone else.

Offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the greatest prayer that we have, this is a moment when the Lord is truly with us. I am certain that Bishop Michael will value more than anything else our prayers which are the greatest gift that we can offer for he was, at heart, a man of simplicity and great humility, a man who loved and valued the Eucharist, and a man who was very dedicated to Mother Mary. It is no coincidence, therefore, that we are celebrating his life on the feast day of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A date so

special to all Spiritans (Sept 8). On one of the Diocesan pilgrimages to the Shrine of Our Lady, Queen of Peace, in Kunkujang Mariama, Bishop

Cleary preached the homily of his life when he addressed the then government, which tried to dirty the waters of the Christian faith. Bishop told the government, 'it is for these people that we are here.' He stood his grounds, took the real role of a 'Chief shepherd, defended the Christian community, and condemned the corruption so rampant at the time.

There is a book about the ministry of bishops, written by Pope St. Gregory the Great, entitled "Pastoral Care." A hard book for bishops to read because, as they go through it, they may realise some of the shortcomings they have. It is addressed to a Bishop concerning the life and ministry of one called to be a successor of the Apostles. In his description of the character of one called to the office of Bishop, the Pope writes: "He is not led to covet the goods of others, but is bounteous in giving of his own. He is quickly moved by a compassionate heart to forgive." The Gambian church will hold in mind and heart her experiences of Bishop Cleary's care and concern - we give thanks for it and our thanksgiving must prompt us to pray for him. Most people, like Paul, who know that their life is ending, looked backward before passing into his eternal reward. Staring death in the face can bring out the best in people. The real prospect of death forces us to focus on what is significant in our lives. Bishop, you really fought the good fight, finished the race, kept the faith, and now what remains for you is the crown that awaits you in heaven. Yes, Christian life and ministry is a commitment to run all the way to the finish line.

In our Gospel's beautiful 'Emmaus story', the disciples think that Jesus is dead. They are at their miserable lowest, but Jesus comes into their lives. There are powerful lines in this story. "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel", meaning to restore the kingdom. The disciples' problem is that they cannot reconcile hope and death. Their minds could not comprehend the words of Jesus. Then an important moment when Jesus says to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and so slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared". Later, when they had recognized Him, one says, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us and opening the scriptures to us?"

Friends, this Gospel's message is that Jesus has conquered death; if we are in intimate communion with Him, the reward is eternal life. John says: "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand." We pray today that the words of the Lord, "I will give you rest" are true for Bishop Cleary, a gentle person to the core, a friend, a father and a grandpa in Christ. May he rest in peace. May Michael rejoice forever in the company of God's saints. Que la terre lui soit légère. Yal na suf si oyof chi kaw am, yal na ko Yalla haré Aldiana. Amen.

Tributes To Be Published In The Next Edition

GAMBIAN CATHOLICS CHALLENGED BY COVID-19

Urgent Need to Support the Church

Each of us is probably yearning for certain things from our pre-pandemic life, but there is one thing that just about everyone in the Catholic Church has in common; we miss going to Mass, either daily or Sunday Masses! Moreover, we are all concerned about helping our churches survive and even thrive during this critical time. Difficult times such as they are today, can have a major impact on church finances. It is a time that both our faith and commitment to the church are tested. And, it is as if a great many of us are failing and almost sinking. Today, in the Catholic Church of The Gambia, from Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral Church Banjul to St. Therese's Catholic Church, Kanifing, to Blessed Sacrament Kanifing Estate, to Holy Family, to Star of the Sea, Bakau, to St. Peter's Catholic Church, Lamin, to Brikama parish, down to the rural Catholic parishes of The Gambia, we have left our Priests and Church leaders on their own, with consequences that might be difficult to amend in due course. Most of us have remained very careless over the welfare of the church, the Priests and leaders that care for our spiritual well-being.

Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Part of this responsibility during this COVID-19 is to pray on Sundays at

home or participate in virtual Sunday morning services. Nevertheless, to consummate our Sunday obligations, we must also remember our regular commitment of support to the church. During times of crisis, church-giving is undoubtedly affected, even as needs grow. Nothing stops us from getting to the church premises while following safety guidelines to give our normal Sunday offerings to the church. The priests are always there for us.

With the COVID-19 resulting in the lack of the usual Sunday offerings used to run the church affairs, our churches are running into huge financial crisis. Today, most of them can no longer afford to pay the workers' salaries, buy fuel to run the generators, pay electricity bills, etc. This is because, we Catholics have shied away from our responsibility and duty to care for the church. The generosity of Catholics is needed now more than in normal times. Our priests need our support more at this time. Now is a crucial time to engage ourselves and our fellow Catholics in deeper and greater generosity. We are expected to constantly reach out to our Priests by phone, email, and text, at least once every week, to stay in touch with them and know how they are doing, their difficulties and allied troubling issues.



THINGS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME

The Corona Virus Has Changed the Way We Worship

BY: FR. PETER S. LOPEZ
(GPI Director)

Christian way of worship, which is strictly orthodox and characterized by tradition, has been significantly altered by the corona virus. Church activities like weekly Sunday school, bible sharing, the weekly meetings of pious groups like Legion of Mary, St. Anthony of Padua, Sacred Heart Solidarity, have all been curtailed, as well as the cancellation of pilgrimages, ceremonies and festivals. Now we mainly communicate by text. Churches have closed and Masses and other services have moved entirely online. This has given us the opportunity to appreciate and use the gift of the media. The Pastoral Instruction "Communio et Progressio" on the means of Social Communication says "The Catholic Church sees media as a "gift" from God. Since man was created in the image and likeness of God, our inventions necessarily come from God as his gift of providence. Thus, the essence of social communication is to unite all mankind as brothers and sisters in Christ, to help one another in order to cooperate with His plan of salvation"

The changes caused by the corona virus pandemic are not all negative. Many priests, realizing the impact the media has on people in our modern times, place a strong emphasis on using the means of Social Communications to spread the gospel. Some priests in our diocese, during the pandemic use zoom through which they offer their Sunday masses to their parishioners, send parish announcements and fundraise for the

parish. We have seen church groups conducting their weekly meetings via zoom. This is the new normal and it is imperative for the church to start using these means of reaching their parishioners. Many priests have intensified efforts to stay in touch with members of their congregations and maintain their church communities. This crisis has actually caused us to do a better job of picking up the phone and checking on our family and church members. So there are some connections that are probably stronger now than they were before. The holy mass offered online daily through the GPI Facebook page has been a great source of family unity and harmony. In fact, this is our opportunity to be more relevant than ever before and demonstrate that churches are more than buildings and that faith is more than mere words. Remember the words of Saint Pope John Paul II that the home is the domestic church. This is our opportunity to make the home truly the church of God.

The question that we should now look at is, having experienced Holy Week and Easter and the Feast of the Assumption at home, compounded by the fact that we are now living a new normal, will COVID-19 weaken our faith communities? Many religious leaders have conceded that church worship, as we have known, it will look significantly different from how it is today. Now, we have to begin to think of conducting virtual parish council, lectors, meetings, etc.

The Catholic Church has, over the years, undergone a number of difficult circumstances but remained relevant and alive.

Changes have happened, but our faith remains the same.

OCTOBER IS THE MONTH OF ROSARY

TO BE STRONG PHYSICALLY, SPIRITUALLY AND TO SUPPORT OTHERS

Pray the Rosary Daily

Our Lady of Fatima said, “Pray the Rosary daily.” Daily recitation of the Rosary will help you get to know your Mother better. By getting to know Mary better, you will in turn get to know Jesus better. When you look at each mystery of the Rosary, you reflect upon different aspects of Jesus’ life through the eyes of His mother. Mothers know and see their children much differently than others do.

Because Mary gave the Rosary to us, it has great power. There have been many miracles associated with praying the Rosary. Our Lady of Fatima mentioned that the main reason for the loss of souls into the fiery abyss of Hell is that no one is praying for them. When you pray, you can offer up your Rosary for a particular intention, whether it be for the conversion of souls or for an end to abortion. Fr. Richard Heilman, pastor of St. Mary (Pine Bluff) in Cross Plains, Wisconsin, has been leading online groups in 54-Day Rosary Novenas for different intentions. The miracles that I have seen come from that are amazing. For example, on the last day of our 54-Day Rosary Novena for Purity, the Hobby Lobby ruling was issued.

Finally, the battle between Heaven and Hell is real. The Rosary has a special power against evil. Satan hates Mary with all of his might. Through Mary and her Magnificat, her “yes” to God, we have Our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have our salvation, if we choose to accept it. Demons know and fear the Rosary. Blessed Pope Pius IX said, “Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world.” This is how powerful the Rosary is. St. Francis de Sales, the great master of the spiritual life, wrote, “The greatest method of prayer is praying the Rosary.”

The Rosary is one of the most powerful weapons that we have against Satan and his minions. It will help to ward off temptations. Prayed together with the family, it will create a locus of stability and peace in the home. There are also a number of indulgences attached to the Rosary, which can bring about the remission of temporal punishment due to us even if we die in a state of grace.

The Rosary is arguably the most recognizable Catholic devotion. Sadly, it is a devotion that has fallen out of fashion for many Catholics. This is deeply unfortunate, as the Rosary is one of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal for spiritual warfare and one of the greatest aids in the pursuit of a fruitful spiritual life. Among the most common excuses for failing to pray the Rosary one hears are that it’s “boring” or that it takes too much time. What many Catholics aren’t aware of, however, are the benefits – promises from Our Lady herself – associated with its faithful recitation.

If there is any reason why the Rosary is not recited as often today as it was in the past, you can be certain that Satan himself is behind it. The inconvenience of praying the Rosary daily, which can seem at first tedious or burdensome, grows lighter with every recitation. Let us equip ourselves for battle. Make a commitment to pray the Rosary every day – and keep it.

Mary, who is our true spiritual Mother, always desires what is best for us. She who was conceived without sin and sits as the Queen of Heaven and Earth enjoys a will that is in perfect

unity with the will of God. What she wants for us is nothing less than what He wants. And He who made us knows precisely what we need to do to do the work He has assigned us, and the surest path home to Him.

Mary’s Promises for Daily Devotion

The most amazing thing about the Rosary is that Mary made 15 promises to those who recite it daily. These aren’t insignificant promises, but rather enormously helpful graces provided to those who are trying to live a good and faithful Catholic life:

1. To all those who shall pray my Rosary devoutly, I promise my special protection and great graces.
2. Those who shall persevere in the recitation of my Rosary will receive signal graces.
3. The Rosary will be a very powerful armor against Hell; it will destroy vice, deliver from sin, and dispel heresy.
4. The Rosary will make virtue and good works flourish, and will obtain for souls the most abundant divine mercies. It will draw the hearts of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.
5. Those who trust themselves to me through the Rosary will not perish.
6. Whoever recites my Rosary devoutly, reflecting on the mysteries, shall never be overwhelmed by misfortune. He will not experience the anger of God nor will he perish by an unprovided death. The sinner will be converted; the just will persevere in grace and merit eternal life.
7. Those truly devoted to my Rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.
8. Those who are faithful to recite my Rosary shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces and will share in the merits of the blessed.
9. I will deliver promptly from Purgatory souls devoted to my Rosary.
10. True children of my Rosary will enjoy great glory in Heaven.
11. What you shall ask through my Rosary you shall obtain.
12. To those who propagate my Rosary I promise aid in all their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my Son that all the members of the Rosary Confraternity shall have as their intercessors, in life and in death, the entire celestial court.
14. Those who recite my Rosary faithfully are my beloved children, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.
15. Devotion to my Rosary is a special sign of predestination.

These promises of Mary show us how the rosary serves as a spiritual weapon that every soldier for Christ His Church needs to fight successfully in the spiritual battle that comprises much of our earthly sojourn. Those who trust in the Rosary and are faithful to Mary through it will have access to many additional graces that those who choose not to pray it won’t. Graces we desperately need to help us make it through the narrow gate that leads to heaven.

NOVEMBER IS FOR REMEMBERING THE DEAD

DAYS OF THE DEAD: What's the difference between 'All Saints' and 'All Souls'?

Everybody knows the secular holiday of Halloween. But not everybody knows it derives from a holy day, All Saints' Day on Nov. 1, which is followed by All Souls' Day on November 2nd.

The root word of Halloween - "hallow" - means "holy." The suffix "een" is an abbreviation of "evening." It refers to the Eve of All Hallows, the night before the Christian holy day that honors saintly people of the past. "All Saints is a celebration of the communion of saints, those people we believe are in heaven, through good works and God's grace," said the Rev. Richard Donohoe, vicar of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Birmingham.

All Souls' Day is a day to pray for all souls. Among Catholics, prayers are offered for those in purgatory, waiting to get into heaven. On All Souls' Day, Catholic churches have a Book of the Dead, in which parishioners have an opportunity to write the names of relatives to be remembered. "That's placed near the altar," Donohoe said. "That's done all through November. It's an All Souls' tradition."

More than a thousand years ago in Ireland and Britain, a common custom of Christians was to come together on the eve of the feast of All Hallows Day to ask for God's blessing and protection from evil in the world. Often, they would dress in costumes of saints or evil spirits and act out the battle

between good and evil around bonfires. That's the source of the modern observance of Halloween.

The Christian concept of the importance of the individual soul underlies All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, which are observed worldwide primarily in the Catholic and Anglican traditions. The "Dia de los Muertos," or "day of the dead," in Latin countries keeps alive some of the tradition of honoring souls of the dead. "All Hallows was considered a time when evil could manifest itself," Donohoe said. "We do believe in the visible and the invisible. There is good and there is evil. There is invisible evil and invisible good. It's an acknowledgement of that existence."

In the Catholic Church, Nov. 1 is a holy day of obligation, when all Catholics are expected to attend Mass.

"All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are related, but they are two separate celebrations," Donohoe said. "On All Saints' Day there's a call to live as saints, to remind us how we're supposed to live. On All Souls' Day, we're talking about all souls and asking God's mercy for them. We're talking about those people who have died before us, and their process of getting to heaven, through Christ."

All Saints' Day emanates from early Christian celebrations of martyrs in the Eastern Church, Donohoe said. "It has its roots all the way back to the fourth century," he said.

The Pope's Prayer Intentions

OCTOBER:

The Laity's Mission in the Church

We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church.

NOVEMBER:

Artificial Intelligence

We pray that the progress of robotics and artificial intelligence may always serve humankind.

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Features

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF GEORGE F. GOMEZ

Mentor and Friend



BY: CHARLES SARR THOMAS

He was one of those we could call ‘A Man for All Seasons’: one who traversed a wide spectrum of Gambian life, with devotion and outstanding ability; a top legend, certainly; An Icon of all Icons. Many a legend have been known to excel only in one particular field or another. For George this is not the case, having indulged very well in multiple/various specialties. He was a spectacular sports icon, in field of play and in sports administration and management.

He did more in this area than any Gambian, present or past. In football, he was one of the most effective right wingers in the game for Augustinians Football Club and Gambia 11, to be compared only to the legendary Daddy Tamba who had a reputation for speed and blistering shots. But George was probably speedier than Tamba; his speed earned him the nickname ‘404’ after the fast French-model car, Peugeot 404. The only unfortunate thing was that his fellow attackers including Solomon Jatta (Body Balance) were never able to catch up with him, resulting usually in wasted crosses which he magnificently fed into the penalty area, with no attackers there to finish off the play. I remember clearly that when he was obviously frustrated by this, he would cut in towards the 1st post and complete the attack himself. It was in that style that George scored one of the winning goals in a 3-2 defeat over Senegal in 1962 in the Kwame Nkrumah West Africa Gold Cup, (the last time that Gambia defeated Senegal in an official (non-friendly) match). Not only in football, George was also powerful in athletics, as a middle distance runner on the national team in 800 metres, 1-mile, and 400 metres relay. He virtually always took 1st place, known and celebrated for his sudden burst of speed in the final two hundred metres of very well-timed races. His only rivals were Janneh Jagne of Methodist Boys High School, Sigismund Gibbs, Eugene Decker of St. Augustine High School, and Cherno Barra Touray of Armitage High School.

George served athletics, football and sports generally for a long period of time, following his great active participation. He served as Secretary General of the Gambia Amateur Athletic Association (GAAA) for the years when Gambia and Senegal met in very boastful nationalistic rivalry; and contributed significantly in the preparatory arrangements in both Track and Field. He served as first Executive Director of the Gambia National Olympic Committee (GNOC) for quite a long period of distinguished service (1991-2004) during which he collaborated strongly with the GNOC president, Abou Dandeh Njie, for the development of many an athlete, coordination of successful international missions as CHEF de Mission, the most notable being the Commonwealth Games held in Manchester in 2002 when Gambia showed up in all their events and excelled in cycling, in addition to the Olympic Games of 1996. Between the two of them they brought many an IOC/LAAF project and funding to The Gambia, and were instrumental in Gambia securing some key positions in that influential world body. He was Secretary General and President of the Gambia Football Association from 1990-1992 during challenging times of the Association with regards succession and running of the league. He later served in the Executive Committee, and forever has been its loyal and reliable adviser. He was instrumental in the setting-up of the National Sports Council (NSC) in the year 2000 after serving as Chairman of the

Interim Planning and Implementation Committee of the new Council between 1998 and 2000. He was one time Member of the Independence Stadium Management Board (2000-2003) on which he helped promote the transformation of the Stadium to a more viable entity making more optimal use of its hostel and other facilities. While he organized the first sports awards ceremonies of the GNOC, and later the GFF, he himself was a recipient of highly prized sports and sports administration awards, e.g. the GNOC Hall Of Fame Award, an Order of Honor and recognition from the Sports Journalists Association of the Gambia (SJAG) among other prestigious awards.

Maybe we would also want to appreciate George as a leading figure, an icon, in the promotion of Gambian culture. This is important from point of view of the enormous benefits that derived from his work. As early as the Sixties he set the stage for what was to become a music and social ‘revolution’ for youths of The Gambia. He somehow managed, based on his great organizational skills and public relations, to get one of Africa’s most famous bands (Rico Jazz of Congo Brazzaville) to play in The Gambia, the first time any African or other band of such eminence performed in The Gambia. That event impacted the nation, the youths in particular. That was exactly what George wanted to achieve: something that would entertain, energize and socially arouse the nation, especially the youth. Before Gambians could finish relishing such an unprecedented communal socializing, George managed yet again to bring over another top-notch African Band (Geraldo Pino and The Heartbeats of Sierra Leone) to provide more musical and social involvement of the youth. It was a culmination of these musical fiestas that must have sparked the formation and promotion of Gambian music groups and great interest in public dances. Very good Gambian bands such as Super Eagles and Ifangbondi emerged and flourished, creating big waves in Gambia, Senegal and beyond, even in Europe. Young rising Senegalese artistes resident in The Gambia took the music fever to Senegal. Gambian music groups continued to rise and diversify since then. We can say ‘Thanks’ in part to Uncle George for his initiatives. From musical bands, George extended his creative horizon to Fashion and Beauty Contests under the banner of Gomis Promotion. He advocated that all these developments would help give Gambian women-folk in particular, a new social awareness and orientation and a sense of self-esteem. We can see from this what George has always showed in his life, namely a lot of care and consideration for others, whose interest he always selflessly tried to serve and to promote.

He was lately to become an avid author, his most authoritative secular writing being a chronicle for which he gave me the honour of launching, ‘Milestones in Gambian Football’ which features some Gambian football ‘Greats’ such as goal keeper Amou Taal, forwards Francis Eku Forbes, Daddy Tamba, Modou Njie (Biri), Solomon Gomez (Garincha) etc., contributors to Gambian football, and the development of the game in The Gambia. It is a book or booklet worth reading to understand more clearly the history and evolution of football in this country from tough beginnings (paucity of materials and facilities, not-so-satisfactory travel arrangements or incentives, inadequate competition exposure etc.) to the present position. It should make current teams and their technical and financial supporters want to work harder. He also wrote a number of religious texts, Dramatized Passion of Christ, compiled cassettes of various choral groups for the records and use of parishioners. All of this form part of George’s great legacy.

I wish to sum up by stating again that George was an icon of icons set apart by his excellence not in one but in numerous areas of intervention. How has he been able to achieve all these accolades in one life-time? I would say that he had this other gift of getting his different personal projects going simultaneously. He had that type of mind-set and ability, I believe. Goodbye to my good mentor and friend.

May he rest in peace! May Heaven be his eternal abode! May the Almighty bless and reward him abundantly! May his memory be a blessing! Amen! Amen!



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Sunday Reflections

Suscipe, quæsimus, Domine, sacrificia tuis instituta præceptis

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

Reflections, readings and prayers for the Sundays in OCTOBER and NOVEMBER



Sunday, 4th October, 2020

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today is a triple celebration. It is the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi and the closing Sunday in the Season of Creation. At the invitation of Pope Francis, we have focused for five weeks on the call to integral ecology, on hearing and responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor. Among the most abandoned of Earth's "poor" are those who are still enslaved. While the international community has long-since outlawed slavery, we have become increasingly aware of the persistence of a lucrative global industry structured around the sexual and labour enslavement of vulnerable people and exacerbated by the experience of pandemic. Today's gospel features a parable about an absentee landowner with slaves to do his bidding. Commentators focus on almost every aspect of this parable, particularly the judgement on the religious authorities who have rejected God's messengers. Few consider the fate of the slaves as slaves in the parable. Our contemporary sensibilities in relation to slavery invite a new reading of such texts, a reading that critiques the power that some in the Earth community exercise over other humans and over the natural world that has for so long been treated as the property of humans to manipulate at will.

The frequent translation of the Greek *doulos* (m.) and *doulē* (f.) as "servant" rather than as "slave" masks the underlying reality that some members of the community, even within the circle of believers gathered at the Eucharistic table, were actually the property of others in the community. The fact is that nobody in the ancient world, not even Jesus of Nazareth, questioned this situation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the slaves in today's parable are considered by the "tenants" to be dispensable. Their role is to collect the fruit from the harvest on behalf of the absentee landowner.

The "tenants" clearly have no intention of parting with any portion of the produce, presumably the tax imposed on them as a condition of their tenancy. They react violently when confronted by the three slaves who are the landowner's emissaries. They beat one slave, kill another and stone yet another. The slaves represent the landowner whose demands they refuse to meet. The landowner risks the lives of other slaves by sending yet another and bigger delegation. This second group of emissaries meets the same fate as their predecessors. Finally, the landowner sends his own son in the expectation that the tenants will show him the respect they have denied the slaves, his property. In fact, the son receives the same treatment as the slaves. He too is dispensable from the perspective of those wanting to seize "the inheritance", those wishing to take control of the vineyard for their own purposes. As we reflect on gospel stories that take slavery for granted, we might commit ourselves to eliminating all exercise of power over others or over any "vineyard" entrusted to our care.

READINGS

First Reading: Isaiah 5: 1-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 80: 9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20

Second Reading: Philippians 4: 6-9

Gospel: Matthew 21: 33-43

Sunday, 11th October, 2020

28th Sunday In Ordinary Time

Today we hear about a banquet feast, which surpasses all other celebrations. To this feast, people of all nations have been invited. This feast will be a time to celebrate the splendor of our GOD. Although this is the image in the Isaiah reading and psalm, the Gospel informs us that some people who have been invited either refuse to come or do not come in the way in which they are expected to come. Isaiah describes a banquet with "juicy, rich food, and pure, choice wines." It is not the ordinary meal, or even a special dinner. This is a feast beyond all other feasts. It might be described as the "biggest bash" ever. This is truly a "mountainous" celebration not just because it takes place on GOD's holy mountain, but because the food and drink supplied are from a mountainous and endless supply. At this "mountainous" celebration are people from all lands and nations. This is an international festival. There is no sorrow or disappointment present here. This is a time of total rejoicing. And this feast is being brought to you by our GOD, the LORD of Might.

The often-quoted twenty-third psalm also presents us with a celebration where the LORD has spread a table before us and where the cup overflows. This victory feast of our GOD celebrates that the enemy of GOD has been placed in subjection and there is no reason to fear or lament, for GOD is in control and is providing for those who have been united under the shepherd-ship of GOD.

Concluding his letter to the Philippians, Paul expresses his thanks to the community who has provided for him during his imprisonment. Paul declares that he knows what it means to be hungry and to be well provided for, and he is grateful that the people of Philippi have tended to his needs during his time of difficulty. Although he has not asked for their help, he is appreciative of their generosity. In the Gospel, Jesus shares a parable about a royal wedding banquet feast to which many have been invited. As the servants of the royal leader are reminding the invited guests of their expected presence at the feast, the guests make excuses and even maltreat the servants. The majestic ruler dispatches more servants who are told to both punish those who have refused the invitation and to gather more people to come to the royal celebration. Obviously, a lot of preparation and expense have gone into providing for the guests to this feast. They are even provided with "wedding garments" to wear. When one guest comes without the proper attire, that guest is sent out where he experiences sadness and grinding of his teeth (a sign that he has caused himself grief by failing to do something, which he

could have and should have done).

On the night before He died for us, He celebrated a feast with His disciples. During that feast, He invited us to continue to celebrate what He did by gathering with other believers and re-enacting His Last Supper and commemorating His death. His rising from the dead on the first day of the week has sanctified Sunday as the day of resurrection. As we gather each week to remember His death and resurrection and receive from His table, may we make that day the holy day for our week. May it be both the climax of our past week and the starting point from which the coming week takes its strength. We give You glory and praise as we accept Your generous invitation to gather with fellow believers at Your banquet table. May our coming together always be to give Your glory, praise, and honor. We make this prayer in name of Jesus, Your Son and our Brother, our Savior and Redeemer, Who has called us to the table, not only here, but also in heaven where He is living and reigning with You and the Holy Spirit, our one and only GOD, for ever and ever. Amen.

READINGS

First Reading: Isaiah 25: 6-10a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 (6cd)

Second Reading: Philippians 4: 12-14, 19-20

Gospel: Matthew 22: 1-14

Sunday, 18th October, 2020

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Gospel tells us to give to God what belongs to God and to give to the state what belongs to the state. St. Francis de Sales notes that in order to enjoy a just state we must obey those to whom God gives authority to govern. Yet he stresses more "what belongs to God" in light of "obedience of love":

We have a natural desire to love God that tells us we belong to God. We are like deer marked with the initials of their owner who lets them free to roam in the forest. Yet, all know to whom the deer belong. We too are free, and our natural inclination to love God lets our friends and enemies know that we still belong to God, who desires us to be united through "obedience of love."

This obedience of love consecrates our heart to God's love and service. Jesus is the model. Allowing God to shape and form us, we place all our desires in God's hands. Such obedience has no need to be roused up by threats or rewards, by commandment or law. It goes ahead of all such things when it gives itself to God. It begins to do with love all that leads to the union of our heart with God. It undertakes this journey in simplicity.

Sometimes our Lord urges us to run with full speed in the tasks required of us. Then God makes us stop in mid career, when strongest in our course. While we must do everything to end God's work, we must peacefully embrace the outcome. It is our part to plant and water carefully, but the increase belongs only to God.

Nonetheless, as a tender mother leads her little children, and helps and holds them up as long as she sees a need for it, so also our Savior carries us and holds our hand in unbearable hardships. Let us then enjoy a serenity of heart by embracing this obedience of love that unites us to God to whom we belong.

READINGS

First Reading: Isaiah 45: 1, 4-6

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96: 1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10 (7b)

Second Reading: First Thessalonians 1: 1-5b

Gospel: Matthew 22: 15-21

Sunday, 25th October, 2020

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us to love God and neighbor. These two commandments are the foundation of Christian Spirituality and permeate the writings of St. Francis de Sales:

To show us more vividly how ardent God's desire is for our love, God demands that love from us in wonderful terms: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." We often think that God is so great and we are so little that we are incapable of loving God. So as not to be discouraged and turn away from God's love, we are told that we are highly capable of loving God with all our strength, even after sin.

To love God above all else means we need to place God above all our idols, for our heart runs after many material things and spiritual consolations. As soon as we have obtained them, it seems that we have to do it all over again. Nothing can ever satisfy our heart. God wills that our heart not find a place of permanent rest in our idols. Then our heart is free to return to God from whom it comes. Bees can only rest upon flowers in bloom. So it is with our heart. Our heart finds rest solely in God's love. Why then do we detain our heart's desire for God's love, and pursue other loves?

The Commandment to love God is higher than the Commandment to love the neighbor. But our nature offers greater resistance to the love of neighbor. Yet, when we trust in our Savior's love, we can be more courageous in loving the image of God that is frequently veiled from us in our neighbor. We come to recognize the resemblance of the Creator in each other. For, the pure love of God is to love what is of God in all creatures. Let us then imitate Jesus, who taught us more through His works than His words, how to love our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbor as we do our own self.

READINGS

First Reading: Exodus 22: 20-26

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 18: 2-3, 3-4, 47, 51 (2)

Second Reading: First Thessalonians 1: 5c-10

Gospel: Matthew 22: 34-40

Sunday, 1st November, 2020,

All Saints Day

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Those who have gone before us and now share in the glories of Heaven, in the Beatific Vision, are not gone. Sure, we do not see them and we cannot necessarily hear them speak to us in the physical way they did while on Earth. But they are not gone at all. St. Thérèse of Lisieux said it best when she said, "I want to spend my Heaven doing good on Earth." The saints in Heaven are in full union with God and make up the Communion of Saints in Heaven, the Church Triumphant!

What's important to note, however, is that even though they are enjoying their eternal reward, they are still very much concerned about us.

The saints in Heaven are entrusted with the important task of intercession. Sure, God already knows all our needs and He could ask us to go directly to Him in our prayers. But the truth is that God wants to use the intercession, and therefore, the mediation of the saints in our lives. He uses them to bring our prayers to Him and, in return, to bring His grace to us. They become powerful intercessors for us and participators in God's divine action in the world.

Why is this the case? Again, why doesn't God just choose to deal with us directly rather than go through intermediaries? Because God wants all of us to share in His good work and to participate in His divine plan. It would be like a dad who buys a nice necklace for his wife. He shows it to his young children and they are excited about this gift. The mom comes in and the dad asks the children to bring the gift to her. Now the gift is from her husband but she will most likely thank her children first for their participation in giving this gift to her.

The father wanted the children to be part of this giving and the mother wanted to make the children a part of her receiving and gratitude. So it is with God! God wants the saints to share in the distribution of His manifold gifts. And this act fills His heart with joy!

The saints also give us a model of holiness. The charity they lived on Earth lives on. The witness of their love and sacrifice was not just a one time act in history. Rather, charity is living and continues to have an effect for the good. Therefore, the charity and witness of the saints lives on and affects our lives. This charity in their lives creates a bond with us, a communion. It enables us to love them, admire them and want to follow their example. It is this, coupled with their continuing intercession that establishes a powerful bond of love and union with us.

READINGS

First Reading: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 24:1BC-2, 3-4AB, 5-6

Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

Alleluia: Matthew 11:28

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12A

Sunday, 8th November, 2020

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us that those who experience the kingdom of heaven are wise and prudent. St. Francis de Sales notes:

“Good Christians who live in a worldly culture must be prudent to improve their situation. They have to give great care to the needs of their families. By acting otherwise, they would be failing in their responsibilities. Yet, good Christians also trust in God's wisdom more than in their own proficiency. They work faithfully, but let God take concern for their work. The things they do are insignificant when they consider only the dignity their work has in being willed by God's will, arranged by Providence, and planned according to His wisdom. God's wisdom is God's love for us”.

Now the problem with our human spirit is that it never follows the middle course, but usually runs to extremes. We can be too concerned about our personal welfare or not

concerned enough. In always trying to follow a straight path, it is only natural that at times we tilt to one extreme or the other. We can recover our balance by choosing God's wisdom and prudence, for they unite us to God's love by rejecting what is harmful to us.

Let us not let our worldly desires get in the way of God's loving wisdom. To the extent that we reorder our lives through prayer and virtuous living, we find God's love empowering us to balance our actions so that they are effective in living wisely. We must be like little children who with one hand hold fast to their father while with the other they gather blackberries from the hedges. So too, if you handle the goods of this world with one hand, you must always hold fast with the other to the hand of your heavenly Father, whose loving wisdom gives us an abundance of means to enter the kingdom of heaven.

READINGS

First Reading: Wisdom 6:12-16

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Or 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Alleluia: Matthew 24:42A, 44

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

Sunday, 15th November, 2020

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

The first reading is taken from the Book of Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31. The verses chosen for today are taken from the last half of the last chapter of the book and are a hymn in praise of the ideal wife. The author saw to it that the part that a wise, prudent and industrious wife plays in a man's life, and hence in the life of the nation, deserved to be stressed and admired.

The second reading is from the first Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians 5:1-6. In this reading St. Paul continues his discussion of the parousia. He tells his Thessalonian converts that they know as much as he does about the time of that second coming. He had already told them in his preaching that our Lord had said that it would be unexpected. However, this need not frighten them, they would be prepared because they were living their Christian faith every day.

The Gospel is from St. Matthew 25:14-30 or 25:14-15, 19-21. The lesson of this parable, like all the teachings of the gospel, is as applicable to us today as it was to the first generation of Christians. In its relation to Christ and to his divine Father our world today is very similar to first century Palestine. Christ and God have opponents and followers. Their opponents today have the very same reasons that moved the Pharisees and leaders of the people in Christ's day. They want their messianic kingdom here on earth, a kingdom of pleasure and plenty; they want no limits set to their freedom to follow their own earthly inclinations. Their pride in their own self-exalted dignity will not let them bow the head to any deity or divine authority which does not conform to their standards. Like the Pharisees they keep on trying to convince themselves that Christianity is not true, that Christ will not reign, that there will be no day of reckoning.

Yet with all their efforts to get rid of Christ and God, the small inner voice of conscience is not completely silenced. It has the nasty habit of reminding them of their folly. They

have their troubled moments when the epicurean motto "eat, drink, sleep and be merry" does not somehow ring true.

For the followers of Christ who are sincere in their efforts, the parable has a message of encouragement and consolation. At times the road we have to travel seems strewn with obstacles, our battles seem never-ending, yet God has provided each one of us with the necessary help to ensure the final victory. The help is given according to each one's need. Those servants in the parable who received five and two talents used them faithfully and successfully. He who received one talent needed only one, and could have succeeded with it had he been a faithful servant.

Eternal happiness is the divine reward for an earthly service faithfully rendered. The false excuse of the third servant is repeated in many forms among us still: "God is too austere, he could not expect me to make such sacrifices. I have to provide for myself; his promises and threats may be only empty words. He may never return to demand a reckoning, to settle accounts with us". These and all other such excuses are proved false in this parable.

God is a kind Father who has our eternal interests at heart. He does expect us to make the necessary sacrifices. He showed us the way on Calvary. When working for God we are really providing for our own future; his external glory and our eternal salvation are the fruits of the same labor. He will certainly return to settle accounts—it will then be too late to make any changes. Let us be wise and make the changes now while we have time and then our books will be in order on the day of reckoning.

READINGS

First Reading: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Alleluia: John 15:4A, 5B

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30 Or Matthew 25:14-15, 19-21

Sunday, 22nd November, 2020

CHRIST THE KING Solemnity

34th and Last Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrating Christ as King, while popular in the Church, only became part of the liturgical calendar in 1925.

Jesus as a king was called to be our Savior. He desired that others should share in the glory of being leaders, especially his blessed Mother. Our Blessed Lady asks us to have her Son as King of our hearts so that He might reign in us. His commandments are good and very useful because they give goodness to those who otherwise would lack it, and increase goodness in those who would be good even if not commanded to be so.

Thus, Jesus made God's goodness abound more than evilness. Jesus' reign is truly salutary when it touches our miseries and makes them worthy of divine love. When the Holy Spirit pours divine love into our hearts, we are restored to health and empowered to share in our Savior's work: to bring God's love and care to those in our midst.

Since our Lord repaired us all equally, and wants all to share in spreading His Kingdom, we too must love in our neighbor what truly represents to us the sacred Person of our Master. We are not to love in our neighbor what is contrary to this sacred image. Let us walk then as Jesus Christ walked. He gave His life not only to heal the sick, to work miracles and to teach us what we ought to do to be divinely human. He also taught us how to give our life, as He lovingly did, for those

who would take it from us.

How happy we are when we choose Jesus as our leader, who gives us unparalleled peace and calm if we follow Him. May we remain faithful to our King's desires, so we might begin in this life what, with the help of God's love, we shall do eternally in Heaven: Live in glory with Jesus, who in overcoming evil with good, is the true King.

READINGS

First Reading: Ezekiel 14: 11-12, 15-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 23: 1-2, 2-3, 5-6 (1)

Alleluia:

Second Reading: First Corinthians 15: 20-26, 28

Gospel: Matthew 25: 31-46

Sunday, 29th November, 2020,

1st Sunday of Advent, Year B

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." First, we know that He will return one day in glory to judge the living and the dead. His Second Coming is real and we should be aware of the fact that it could happen at any time. Sure, it may not happen for many years, or even for many hundreds of years, but it will happen. There will be one moment when the world as it is will end and the new order will be established. Ideally, we live every day in anticipation of that day and that moment. We must live in such a way that we are always ready for that end.

Second, we must realize that Jesus does come to us, continually, by grace. Traditionally, we speak of His two comings: 1) His Incarnation, and 2) His return in glory.

But there is a third coming we can speak of which is His coming by grace into our lives. And this coming is quite real and should be something to which we are continually attentive. His coming by grace requires that we be continually "prepared" to meet Him. If we are not prepared, we can be certain we will miss Him. How do we prepare for this coming by grace? We prepare first by fostering a daily habit of interior prayer.

An interior habit of prayer means we are, in a sense, always praying. It means that no matter what we do every day, our minds and hearts are always turned toward God. It is like breathing. We always do it and do it without even thinking about it. Prayer must become just as much of a habit as breathing. It must be central to who we are and how we live.

Reflect, today, upon your life of prayer. Know that the moments you dedicate exclusively to prayer each day are essential to your holiness and relationship with God. And know that those moments must help to build a habit of always being attentive to God. Being prepared this way will allow you to meet Christ at every moment that He comes to you by grace.

Prayer: Lord, help me to foster in my heart a life of prayer. Help me to seek You always and to always be prepared for You when You come. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen.

READINGS

First Reading: Isaiah 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Alleluia: Psalms 85:8

Gospel: Mark 13:33-37



Giving Hope to a World in Need

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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, enhances 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 and CRS.



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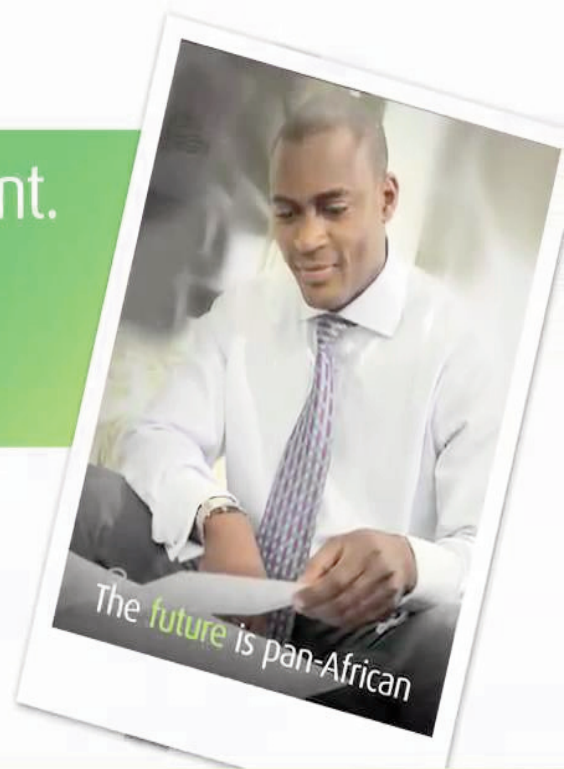
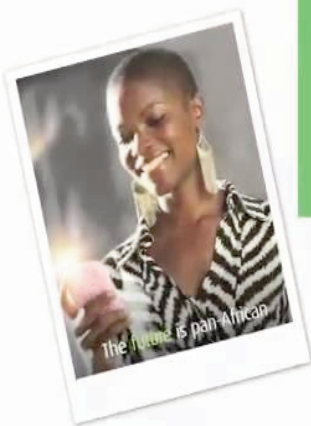
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