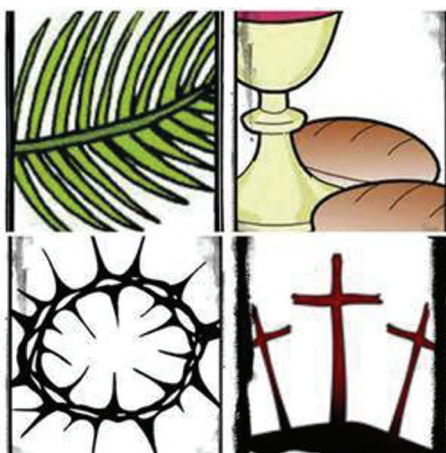


The Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter



Our Catechists: throughout the land, emissaries of the Gospel



**Lent and Easter:
challenge, growth
and joy**

**Going to Confession:
a simple guide**





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By way of introduction

It's up to you – and me

HOW wonderful, we may consider, to have encountered Jesus during his ministry two centuries ago, in the towns and on the hillsides of Galilee. To have heard him speak, to have been touched by his compassion and healing love. And yet, in those far-off days (two thousand years ago), some who encountered Jesus were ambivalent towards him, or even turned against him.

Today, as members of the Church that Jesus founded, we are faced with the same situation. In the communities around us, and throughout the world at large, many have not heard of Jesus. Some are simply not interested. Others respect him as a great man, but do not grant him divine status. In our own Church, the allegiance to Jesus of some is half-hearted or compromised by words and actions which do not accord with loving obedience.

Jesus forces himself on no one. Yet his love encompasses all. During this season of Lent, as individuals and as members of Christ's body, we seek to grow closer to him through putting aside some of our own pleasures and comforts. We try to pray more profoundly, by ourselves and with others. We seek to be honest with ourselves: asking - in Confession, for example - how far we are truly friends of Jesus in thought, word and deed. We seek to love our neighbour as ourselves.

The challenge is considerable. It's easy to take Lent lightly.

But that means taking our religion lightly – which surely isn't enough.

Pope Francis has urged us to live the holy season of Lent 2016 'more intensely, as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy'. He recommends 'missions to the people' to beckon people back to the throne of grace. In particular, he asks Catholics to undertake '24 Hours for the Lord' on the Friday and Saturday before the Fourth Week of Lent.

Encouraged by the prayers of our Lady and the saints, encouraged by our fellow-Christians, may each of us look into our heart, consider how we live and how we ought to live, try to love our neighbour more actively, and make the great leap of faith – the faith and joy that caused doubting Thomas to cry, 'My Lord and my God!'

Then indeed, Easter, when it comes, will mean more than ever to us. We shall recognise ourselves, more than ever, as children of the Resurrection. That's a privilege that nothing else in this life can equal. And the community and the world in which we live will benefit from the faith we embrace and our example of whole-hearted living for God and others.



'Raped, left for dead, buried like dogs'

The plight of some migrants
End-piece, page 34



GPI and the
Newsletter enter
their fortieth year
page 6

THE DIOCESE of BANJUL NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2016 Volume 40 No. 1

Published by The Gambia Pastoral Institute
33 Kairaba Avenue

PMB 296 Serrekunda, The Gambia, West Africa
Telephone 4394847 Email info@gpi.gm

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Season of challenge and growth



'LENT again?' older readers may exclaim. As the years pass, Church festivals and family events such as birthdays seem to come round with ever-greater frequency.

Yet for all of us - young, middle-aged or old - it's greatly to our benefit that we observe the passing of the seasons with the Church.

Lent is the season when Christians young and old prepare for the greatest feast of all - Easter, feast of the Resurrection. We prepare as individuals and as members of the world-wide Christian family.

Lent lasts about forty days. That's the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness, fasting day and night in preparation for his public ministry.

Our personal 'Lent rule'

The first day of Lent - Ash Wednesday, 10th February - is a day of fasting and abstinence.

Thereafter, the Church asks each of us to fix a 'Lent rule' for ourselves. We may choose one or more of the following penances:

- abstaining from meat or a favourite food
- abstaining from alcoholic drink, smoking, or some form of amusement;
- offering family prayers, going to weekday Mass, visiting the Blessed Sacrament, or making the Stations of the Cross.
- going out of our way to help someone who is old, poor, sick or lonely.

We may vary our choice of penance from day to day.

There should be nothing 'mechanical' about the 'extras' we perform in Lent. We're not doing them to impress others, least of all to impress almighty God.

Rather, we seek in Lent to deepen our understanding of the faith and to live in accordance with it. This means thinking less of our own convenience and desires; instead, thinking more and doing more for Christ and for our neighbour.

Abstinence and prayer

Fasting (doing without food) and **abstinence** (doing without certain types of food) are traditional in many religions. By fasting we remind ourselves that God has priority in our lives - not our own ease and pleasure.

Perhaps our **personal prayers** have become irregular or half-hearted. In Lent we should increase the time we spend at prayer, both alone and with others.

The Holy Mass

The greatest prayer in the Church is the Mass, and supremely the **Sunday Mass**.

Have we been regular in our attendance, as the Church asks of us?

Have we received Holy Communion always in a state of grace? If not, we must - no option! - make sacramental confession to a priest before taking Communion again.

Have we always received Communion thankful for so great a gift, conscious of what it means in terms of our relation to Christ and his Church?

Such questions should prompt us to be honest about ourselves, and resolve this Lent to make a fresh start. We should never take the privilege of receiving Communion for granted.

Fresh growth

'Lent' is an old English word for 'spring', a time of new growth. There's no better time to make progress in the faith, as a plant extends its roots while reaching upwards to the light.

During Lent every parish arranges weekday gatherings and services. We should take part in them throughout this holy season, particularly in the traditional Friday evening exercise, the **Stations of the Cross**.

Lent is also a time for **studying the Scriptures** and other writings on Christ or his Church. We can read by ourselves; but it's much better to join others in such an exercise, and seek understanding together.

Serving others

Christ tells us that if we help those who need our help we honour and serve him. 'Just as you did it to the least of my brothers, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:31-46).

In Lent, or any other time, we cannot be servants of God in isolation. We live in families, in communities and in the world, and we are asked by the Lord himself to serve others.

This Lent let us resolve not to be simply 'Sunday Christians', giving an hour or so to Christ and spending the rest of the week largely ignoring the Christian faith and how it can transform our own lives and transform the world.

Let us be aware of the exciting challenge of living truly as Christ's brothers and sisters.

If this seems too much of a challenge, let us Christ for help. Let us ask Mary and the saints for their prayers. Let us encourage and inspire each other. The goal and reward is nothing less than what we joyfully celebrate at Easter: Christ's Resurrection and our own!



Lenten traditions

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

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

Eastern (Orthodox) churches maintain older, stricter rules. (and they generally observe Lent and Easter on dates different from those in the Catholic and other Western churches).

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

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

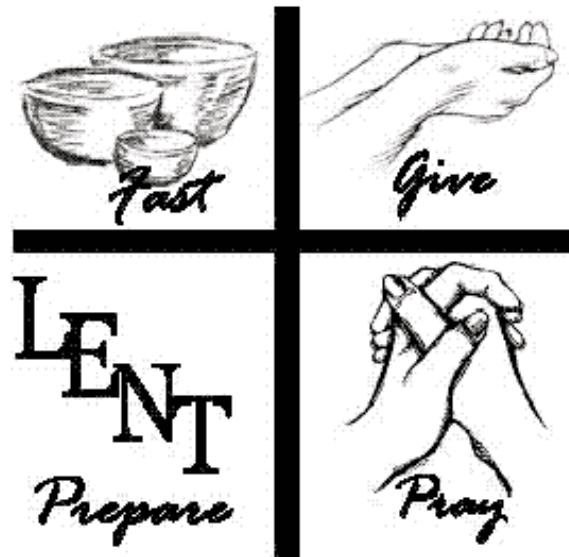
* The use of ashes on **Ash Wednesday** derives from ancient tradition. Smearing oneself or one's clothing with ashes is a sign of mourning or repentance. In Jonah 42:6, for example, the King of Nineveh seeks to avert God's anger by wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes. The prophet Daniel writes (9:3):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

* A popular devotion in church throughout Lent is the **Stations of the Cross**.

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

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

* Many churches keep the Lent tradition of not decorating altars with flowers and not using the organ or other musical instruments.



An exception is mid-Lent (*Laetare*) Sunday, 9th March, when rose-coloured vestments may be worn.

* The solemnity of **St Joseph** is observed on Saturday 19th March. The solemnity of the Annunciation is transferred from Friday 25th March (Good Friday) to Monday 4th April.

Throughout Lent we are urged especially to pray for

- those who will be baptised and/or confirmed at Easter
- the needy
- penitents
- those who have wandered from the faith.

The Easter Triduum

* Lent leads into the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and the Easter Vigil). This year's dates are 24th to 27th March.

The Easter Season itself lasts for fifty days from Easter Sunday through Ascension Day to Pentecost (this year from 27th March to 15th May).

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

Sunday and weekday readings at Mass during Lent

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

Sundays

- 1 The **Gospel** proclaimed each Sunday is the key reading.
- 2 The **Old Testament** readings have been chosen to harmonise with the Gospel.
- 3 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 Luke', and five of the six Sunday Gospel readings come from Luke.

The First Sunday's reading concerns Christ's temptation in the wilderness, and the Second Sunday his transfiguration. On the Third Sunday we hear of Christ's call to repentance, illustrated by the parable of the fig tree.

The Gospel readings on the two following Sundays concern forgiveness, exemplified by the parable of the prodigal son (Fourth Sunday) and Christ's forgiveness of the woman taken in adultery. The Gospel on the Fifth Sunday is a narrative not from St Luke, but from St John.

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. *Details on page 33.*

Here & there

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE

GPI and the Newsletter enter their fortieth year



Fr Edward Grimes, Bishop Michael Moloney

THE GAMBIA Pastoral Institute has begun its fortieth year – having been set up on 21st January 1977 by its first Director, Fr Edward Grimes CSSp.

GPI's publication, *The Diocese of Banjul Newsletter*, was first issued on Palm Sunday that same year.

Fr Grimes has related how Bishop Michael Moloney invited him to his house, showed him a letter with a Vatican postmark, and declared: 'I want you to start a pastoral institute.'

'I asked the Bishop for guidelines, to which he reposted: "Read the letter and get going!"'

'When I asked about finance, the Bishop replied: "There is no money in this poor diocese. Obtaining financial support is part of your task – so get going!"'

GPI first offices were in the fathers' quarters at St Augustine's High School. It was subsequently housed elsewhere before moving to its present premises at 33 Kairaba Avenue in 1990.

Over the past years GPI, faithful to its original vision and purposes, has developed and expanded. The present Director, Fr Peter S. Lopez, and his staff are dedicated to the service of the Diocese of Banjul in the human, pastoral and spiritual growth of the Catholic Church in The Gambia, reaching out also to inter-religious dialogue.

The Diocese of Banjul Newsletter was originally published in a monthly, cyclostyled format. In 2005 the *Newsletter* was re-launched in its present format as a magazine published every two months.



Former and present GPI directors:
Sr Philomena and Fr Peter S. Lopez

Kunkujang pilgrimage initiates Holy Year of Mercy

Thousands of Catholics and other Christians and many Muslims journeyed to Kunkujang Mariama on Saturday 5th December for the pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

In his homily, Bishop Robert Ellison pointed out that the pilgrimage to Kunkujang Mariama opened the Holy Year of Mercy three days ahead of the Pope. We were also celebrating the Immaculate Conception, reminding us that God has not abandoned humanity to the powers of darkness. No sooner had Adam given in to the temptation of the serpent than God stepped in to the rescue. God promised mankind a Redeemer whose mother would be the Virgin Mary. Even from the beginning of creation, God poured out all the fullness of his mercy.

'Let us be instruments of mercy in our ministry as well as in our mutual relationships'



Bishop Robert Ellison

The Holy Year, said the bishop, was a spiritual pilgrimage to rediscover God's love and mercy, looking into the deepest corners of our hearts. Pope Francis had spoken of steps to guide pilgrims in the Year of Mercy. The first was, 'Judge not and you will not be judged; condemn not and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven.'

'Judge not', said the bishop, meant not speaking ill of others, not judging by appearances, and recognising the harm caused by gossip. Instead, we should seek the good in every human person. Jesus asked us to forgive and to be instruments of mercy to our neighbour because it was we who first received the mercy of God.

Inner peace and freedom

Bishop Ellison pointed out that forgiveness does not come easily to most people. 'To be able to forgive my brother or sister is to set them free... But it is even more important if I can succeed in setting myself free from my prison of resentment, pride or the malice I have been holding on to.... Only then can I experience that inner peace and freedom that come from opening the door of my heart to those healing words spoken from the Cross: "Father, forgive them....for they know not what they do."' [Luke 23:34]

The bishop said it was no coincidence that Pope Francis had decided to declare a Holy Year between the two synods on family life. The first synod had been confronted with the challenges that families have to face across most of the world, including poverty, migration, unemployment, domestic violence, war, and stress of all kinds.

The bishop said that the Pope had clearly stated that 'mercy' should be at the centre of preaching the Gospel. We are challenged to make God's mercy accessible especially among those in broken or second marriages.

Bishop Ellison said he wished to encourage priests and religious to live the Gospel of Mercy. 'Let us be instruments of mercy in our ministry as well as in our mutual relationships. How can we prescribe a medicine that can be bitter to others, if we have not swallowed it ourselves?'

For the past few years, a second pilgrimage to Kunkujang Mariama has been held during Lent.



New leader for Gambia's Anglicans

GAMBIAN Anglicans have a new bishop. On Sunday 24th January in St Mary's Cathedral Banjul, Canon James Allen Yaw Odico was consecrated Seventh Bishop of Gambia.

The principal consecrator was the Primate of the Anglican Province of West Africa, the Most Revd Daniel Y. Sarfo, assisted by bishops of the province.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Banjul was represented by the Vicar-General, Fr Emile Sambou (Bishop Robert Ellison being overseas).

During the service, the Gospel was proclaimed by the Rt Revd Dibo T.B. Elango, Bishop of Cameroon, and the preacher was the Rt Revd John K. Otoo, Bishop of Sekondi, Ghana.

Canon Odico was elected on Friday 20th November 2015 at a synod of the Diocese of Gambia at which the Diocesan Chancellor, Justice Sophie Adinyira, presided.

Varied career

The new bishop was born in Banjul in April 1952. He attended St Joseph's Primary School and St Augustine's Junior and High School, and was employed at the Methodist Bookshop from 1961 to 1974. From 1964 to 1965 he studied at theological college in Ibadan, Nigeria. From 1975 to 1978 he worked for the diocese, then was employed in banking and in the Senegambia Beach Hotel. At the same time he was active as a server and in various Church groups.

In 1996 he enrolled in the Diocesan School of Evangelism, and was awarded the Bishop's Certificate of Proficiency in 1997 and the Advanced Certificate of Biblical Studies in 1999. He was ordained deacon in 1999 and priest in 2002. After studying later that year in Michigan, USA, he became Associate Priest at Christ Church, Serrekunda. In 2006 he became Sub-Canon at St Mary's Cathedral, and from May 2008 to April 2015 was Interim Priest-in-Charge at St Andrew's, Lamin. In February 2014 he was elected Vicar-General, then - on 1st May 2015 - installed as Dean (Administrator) of the Cathedral.



Bishop Odico succeeds Archbishop Tilewa Johnson, who died suddenly in January 2014, having been Bishop of Gambia since 1990, and Archbishop of the Anglican Province of West Africa since September 2012.

Bishop Odico is married, and has four children.

The Anglican mission

The Anglican mission in The Gambia began in 1821 (the Catholic mission being initiated 27 years later, in 1848). St Mary's Church in Banjul (now the Cathedral) which seats 400, was consecrated in 1901.

The Anglican Diocese of Gambia and the Rio Pongas was founded in 1935 (eighty-one years ago). The first bishop was the Rt Revd John Daly, who introduced the 'high-church' ethos that continues to this day. He was followed by Roderick Coote (1951-57); St-John Pike (1958-63 - a great friend of Bishop Michael Moloney); Timothy Olufosoye (1965-70 - the first African bishop); Jean-Rigal Elisée (1972-86); and Tilewa Johnson (1990-2014) - the first Gambian bishop.

In 1985 the diocese was divided in two, becoming the Diocese of Gambia and the Diocese of Guinea (which also covered Guinea-Bissau). The first Bishop of Guinea was William Thomas Macauley, a Guinean who had been Dean of St Mary's Cathedral Banjul.

Priests' annual retreat

FATHER Eamon Mulcahy CSSp was the director of this year's five-day retreat for the priests of the Diocese of Banjul held at the retreat house, Shalom, Fajara, between Monday 4th and Friday 8th January. Addresses, meditation and prayer, together with the daily Mass, centred on the theme of mercy.

Bishop Ellison was present throughout the retreat.

IN BRIEF

* On Friday 4th March Women's World Day of Prayer will be observed in more than 170 countries. This year's service has been prepared by women in Cuba. As we go to press, no details are available concerning this year's celebration in The Gambia.

* On Sunday 7th February the Marie Rivier Choir at Holy Family Church Fajara is to celebrate its 25th anniversary.

* Fr Michael Casey CSSp and Fr Sean Devereux have recently paid short visits to The Gambia.

* Guests at a pre-Christmas reception at Admiralty House, Cape Point, the residence of the British Ambassador, were on Friday 11th December treated to carols performed by members of the choral group, Baati Linguere, which is based at Holy Spirit Banjul.

* On Friday 15th January Bishop Robert Ellison travelled to Connecticut in the United States, where he attended the funeral of his youngest brother, David.

* The Association of Christian Religious Education Teachers held a workshop at GPI from Wednesday 18th to Friday 20th November.

* The annual Advent residential retreat for Eucharistic Ministers was held at GPI on Friday 18th and Saturday 19th December. A Lent retreat is also to be held for these ministers.

* Training for teachers of religious studies was held at GPI from Wednesday 20th to Friday 22nd January in preparation for the Grade I Bible Story-Telling and Drama completion, to take place on Friday 8th April.

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Catechists renew their commitment



THE CATECHISTS of the diocese from all parts of the country gathered at GPI on Sunday 10th January for their annual retreat and workshop.

The Monday to Wednesday retreat was led by Fr Victor Ndecky. The workshop, on Thursday and Friday, was led by Fr Tanislas Ndecky and Fr James Mendy. The closing Mass was celebrated by the Vicar-General, Fr Emile Sambou.

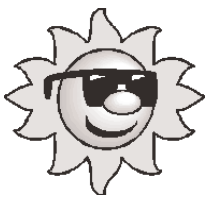
A novelty this year was the blessing of cassocks to be worn by catechists during their ministry as a sign of their status and function within the Church.

When GPI was established, in 1977, the need to promote the work of catechists was emphasised, and programmes established for their training (formation) and encouragement. The work of catechists is integral to the life of the diocese, especially in the ongoing work of evangelisation.

Parish by parish, in conjunction with the Parish Priest, the catechists strive to uphold and extend the mission and witness of the Church.



**Just three of the Catechists are women:
Veronic Gomez, Marie Manneh and Ansel Mendy**



Fee moi Gambia

Creation's best nose

IF you have a dog, make sure you establish a daily routine including feeding, exercise and simple training to understand and obey commands. Your dog likes to do as he's told – in fact, to please you!

What wonderful creatures dogs are! There are more than 400 breeds, because over many years we humans have taken care to select canine traits for hunting, herding sheep and many other purposes.

A dog's nose has 220 million olfactory cells, and we humans a mere five million. And a dog's sense of smell is four times better than that of the most sophisticated man-made odour-detecting machines. Dogs can be trained to find almost anything by smell: for example, explosives, drugs, plants, food and landmines. And, believe it or not, the breed of dog known as Labradors can detect lung and breast cancer with greater accuracy than state-of-the-art CT scans, simply by smelling a patient's breath.

Five ways, ten ways, fifteen ways

IN an issue of this *Newsletter* I mentioned how on the internet we all too often see '10 ways to understand your wife better', or '5 cities to see before you die', or '8 ways to reduce weight'. The same applies to newspapers: those published in Europe, anyway.

Such items are known as 'listicles'. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'listicle' as 'an article that takes the form of a numbered or bullet-pointed list' – which means that we feature listicles in the *Diocese of Banjul Newsletter*.

Because listicles are more and more common – it's almost impossible to avoid them – some regard them as a modern phenomenon. But they date back a long way.

What about the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Wonders of the World, the Seven Cardinal Virtues – and of course the Ten Commandments?

Thoughts on our family

ON Sunday 24th January a friend of mine went to the consecration of the new Anglican Bishop. My friend is Muslim, which will not surprise anyone who knows The Gambia and our long tradition of tolerance, respect and co-operation between Muslims and Christians. This invaluable aspect of national life we should never take for granted, but seek to nourish and extend.

Our Gambian sense of being 'family' is something to which Catholics especially respond. We know that though we are important as individuals, we belong to the family of the nation, the Church and the world.

The Catholic mission, with other Christian missions, continues to contribute to national development, notably in the spheres of education and health.

During Lent, Christians seek to nurture and deepen their faith. Because our religion teaches us to serve God in our neighbours, we must pray that our exercise of charity in our beloved country, day by day, will contribute to the common good.

As the 51st Independence Day approaches, let us thank God that as a sovereign nation our territorial integrity, social stability and patriotism have continued to shape and give purpose to our endeavours.

On 18th February let us rejoice in our nationhood, give thanks for all those Gambians now at rest who have contributed to the well-being of our country, and pray for the President and his government, that we shall all go forward together, 'to The Gambia ever true'.



Receiving God's grace and strength

A simple guide to making your Confession

DURING this Holy Year of Mercy in particular, and in the season of Lent, it is most fitting that the faithful should have recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation – otherwise known as the Sacrament of Penance, or Confession.

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

If it is a long time since your last confession, ask the priest to help you.

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

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

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

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

A prayer before Confession

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

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

A simple examination of conscience

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

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

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

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

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

At Confession

You begin by saying:

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

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

When you are finished, you may say:

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

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

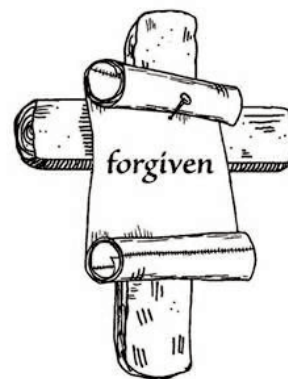
He will then ask you to say the Act of Contrition:

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

The priest then gives Absolution, forgiving you your sins:

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

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



This Lent, would you like to say
Morning and Evening Prayer
every day, in company with priests
and lay-people throughout the world?

Go to **Universalis** website and click on
Morning Prayer, or Mass, or Vespers
– as you wish –
and you will find the complete Office

Via Crucis – the Way of the Cross



DURING Lent, most parishes arrange for the devotion known as the 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 your participation, here is information about the origin of the Stations and how the devotion is carried out.

THE STATIONS of the Cross are pictures, carvings or statues 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* (the 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.

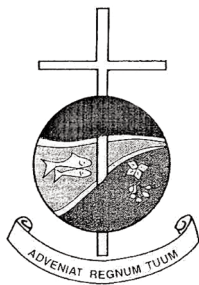
The Scriptural Way of the Cross

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 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





THE MESSAGES OF THE BISHOP OF BANJUL THE RIGHT REVD ROBERT P. ELLISON CSSP CHRISTMAS 2015 & NEW YEAR 2016

It's our turn to bear witness
to Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection

I STILL have a Christmas card sent to me from Malawi some time ago. It pictures five boys about six to eight years old. They are gazing in wonder and awe at the new-born child at the centre of a crib.

It is a most moving picture. Each one of the children is so focused on that child that none of them is aware of the presence of the others. And yet they are simply looking at a fragile clay figure. It reminds me of the words of Jesus: 'Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' (Luke 18:17)

In our churches during the Midnight Mass, after the reading of the Gospel, the priest places the image of the child Jesus at the centre of the crib with Mary and Joseph on each side. It remains there until the end of the Christmas season. Some churches go to a lot of trouble to attract our attention to this extraordinary mystery of our faith: the mystery of the Incarnation, God became man.



I will follow you wherever you go'. Jesus was telling the would-be disciple to be sure about his choice of a vocation.

Harsh conditions for a sacred event

'And while they were there [in Bethlehem], the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn' (Luke 2:6).

'No room in the inn': this unfortunate situation for Mary and Joseph came about because the Roman Emperor had decided to call a population census for the whole world. Joseph had to go back to his town of origin - Bethlehem - to enrol with Mary his betrothed, who was expecting a child.

And so it was that the Prince of Peace was born in such harsh conditions: in a manger, a stable or cave where animals came for their food. It was a most unworthy place. On the other hand, it provided the necessary privacy for so sacred an event.

Among the marginalised

And as it turned out, Bethlehem was the place foretold by the prophet Micah for the birth of the Messiah. St John tells us at the opening of his Gospel: 'He came to his own home, but his own people received him not.'

From the very moment of his birth, Jesus' social status placed him among the poorer class (or 'marginalised'). He was a stranger to those who were seen as the important, powerful, or even the ruthless in society.

In St Matthew's Gospel we read: 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head' (Matthew 8:20). These words were given by Jesus as a reply to a young man who said to him: 'Master,

Contrast and contradiction

The teaching and lifestyle of Jesus call on us to reflect on the contrast between the wealthy and the powerful of our world today and the example given to us by this man Jesus of Nazareth. When his parents brought him to the Temple in Jerusalem to be presented to God, the prophet Simeon took him in his arms and said to his mother: 'You see this child; he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign of contradiction.' (Luke 2:34)

Yes, a sign of contradiction! He would turn so many attitudes or values upside down, inside out and back to front.

After his first visit to the Passover in Jerusalem as a boy of twelve years, Jesus ran into trouble even with his mother: 'Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?' Then he went back to Nazareth with his parents and lived under their authority until he was about 30 years of age. (Luke 2:49,51)

This must be one of the greatest mysteries of Jesus' short life: that he spent 18 years in Nazareth before taking up the mission his Father had given him (though we don't call it a mystery).

So Jesus spent just three years of his 33 years on earth fulfilling the mission that the Father had given him. Not a very profitable use of his time on earth!

He was finally put to death because 'his own would not accept him'. (John 1:11). But 'by dying he destroyed our death; and by rising he restored our life; and now we await his coming again in glory'.

This, briefly, is the story of the life of the child we look at in the crib.

Every Christmas we celebrate not only Jesus birth but also his whole life given up for us, especially his triumph over death and the evil one.

It all began on that night in Bethlehem when an angel spoke to shepherds: 'I bring you good news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all peoples. Today, a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord... Then a throng of the heavenly host praised God singing: "Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace among his people on earth." ' (Luke 2:8-14)

Let us remember, however, that Jesus has come and he gone and has given his life for us. Now it is our turn to be witnesses to his birth, his life, his death and his resurrection.

What must we do?

What must we do? Unless we become like little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Let us take time to look at that child in the crib and ponder in our hearts the story of his life.

This year, we celebrate a Year of Mercy. Let us pray for our families, our communities and our homeland... that we may strive and work and pray that all may live in unity, freedom and peace each day.

Peace and blessings to all people of goodwill; and may you have a very happy Christmas. Amen.

Taking care of Mother Earth

In his New Year message, Bishop ROBERT ELLISON reminded us, 'the clock is ticking away'

ON New Year's Day, our Catholic community celebrates the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, just one week after we celebrate the Birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace; and each year, on the first day of January, we celebrate a World Day of Peace.

This year we also celebrate a Year of Mercy, launched in Rome on 8th December 2015 by Pope Francis, who chose this theme in the light of his profound concern for the future of the world in which all of us live.

On 24th May 2015 he communicated this concern in a letter addressed to all peoples and nations of goodwill. The letter turns our attention to the urgent need to respect and to care for our common home as one human family (the 'environment'). That common home is the Earth with all its God-given gifts. St Francis of Assisi spoke of it as 'Mother Earth', comparing it to a mother who opens her arms to embrace the needs of her whole family.

Man's responsibility

When God created the world, he saw that all he had made was good. Then he made man in his own image and likeness – male and female. In this way, man was made responsible to ensure that God's gracious gifts would be shared equally among our one human family. But one day in the Garden of Eden man ate from the one fruit tree that was forbidden. From that moment he knew that he had disobeyed his Creator and had broken his trust with him. It was the first sin – greed, selfishness, disobedience, pride. It has now spread like a forest fire down the centuries and across our world today.

Here are two examples based on reliable statistical studies:

- The average person in the First World uses 80 times more fuel in their life-time than one person from the Third World.
- Twenty per cent of the world's population consumes its natural resources at a rate that deprives the poor nations and also what future generations will need to survive. Yet the 7th Commandment tells us: 'Thou shall not kill'!

Such examples have moved Pope Francis to declare: 'We stand at a critical moment in the history of planet Earth.'

The time has come when the human family must choose its future for better or for worse. And the clock is ticking away. Who will speak for the voiceless? Who will speak for the helpless....?

Parched earth

In 1980 Pope John Paul II made his first visit to Africa in Ouagadougou. As the airplane was landing, he could see parched earth, where almost all vegetation was withered and animals were dead. The air itself was covered in dust and sand. He was so horrified by the time he had actually landed that he had already made up his mind to take some form of immediate action. And so he shouted so strongly from the house-tops in Europe, that the Pope John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel was able to begin providing tangible support by the year 1984. Nine countries were identified as belonging to the Sahel. The Gambia is one of them. The criteria for support were: water supplies, women's skills, and training candidates for development work. Most of the funds were provided by two bishops' conferences in Europe.

This great initiative has been a significant relief for the countries concerned. However, the battle of trying to turn back the irreversible movement southwards of the Sahara desert has become beyond our human capacity.

Travelling in the same boat

In the meantime, efforts are being made to identify some of the causes for what we have witnessed in recent years: climate change, global warming, severe drought, and floods, etc.

At the recent summit conference in Paris, 198 world leaders took part. For the first time, a large number of leaders from the developing world made it possible to achieve more positive results than in former meetings by putting pressure on the countries that have been mainly responsible for the inequality of mother Earth's resources. We are all travelling in the one boat. If that boat begins to go down, all passengers will eventually sink – even those on the first-class deck.

What can we do?

What can we do in our own small way in our own country? To begin with, we need to stress that we all belong to the one human family of The Gambia. There should be no frontiers or barriers behind which any of us should want to hide. Pope Francis calls it the globalisation of indifference. In God's loving plan, every creature has its own value and significance.





Change is not possible without motivation and a process of education. The process of introducing our concern for the future of our country among our young people will take time and patience.

There is a danger in trying to achieve our goals. Many are tempted to say, 'This is too much.' We feel helpless. But it just takes one or two leaders with motivation and commitment to

set the process going in our schools.

Let us keep in mind the all important question: 'What kind of world do we (adults) want to leave to those who will come after us: our children, now growing up?' For how long more can we presume that our sources of water will be adequate? That our forests will continue to exist? That we try to improve the efforts of set-setal to make our environment more healthy and hygienic...and many other needs.

The words of our National Anthem could be a powerful incentive to help us take the first steps in solidarity for a better future:

For The Gambia our homeland, we strive and work and pray,

That all may live in unity, freedom and peace each day.

Let justice guide our actions towards the common good,

And join our diverse peoples to prove man's brotherhood.

We pledge our firm allegiance, our promise we renew:

Keep us, great God of nations, to The Gambia ever true.



'We should not be prisoners of the past'

The Pope's Personal Preacher praises the 'spiritual enrichment' of the Reformation

THE POPE'S Personal Preacher has praised the Reformation, urging Christians not to remain 'prisoners of the past'.

Fr Raniero Cantalamessa was preaching at the inauguration of the Tenth General Synod of the Church of England in Westminster Abbey, London.

Fr Cantalamessa, who has served as Preacher to the Papal Household since 1980, praised the 'theological and spiritual enrichment' of the Reformation.

He asserted: 'We need to go back to the time of the apostles: they faced a pre-Christian world, and we are facing a largely post-Christian world. When Paul wants to summarise the essence of the Christian message in one sentence, he does not say, "I proclaim this or that doctrine to you." He says, "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23) and "We preach... Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5). This is the real ...article by which the Church stands or falls.

'This does not mean ignoring the great theological and spiritual enrichment that came from the Reformation or desiring to go back to the time before it. It means instead allowing all of Christianity to benefit from its achievements, once they are freed from certain distortions due to the heated atmosphere of the time and of later controversies.'

Commemorating the fifth centenary of the Reformation

Addressing Queen Elizabeth and the whole Synod, Fr Cantalamessa reflected on preparations for the fifth centenary of the Protestant Reformation, saying, 'It is vital for the whole Church that this opportunity is not wasted by people remaining prisoners of the past, trying to establish each other's rights and wrongs.'

He added: 'Rather, let us take a qualitative leap forward, like what happens when the sluice gates of a river or a canal enable ships to continue to navigate at a higher water level.'

Starting with Jesus

Fr Cantalamessa said, 'We need to start again with the person of Jesus, humbly helping our contemporaries to experience a personal encounter with him.'

'How can we be unconcerned, and each remain "in the comfort of our own panelled houses?" We should never allow a moral issue like that of sexuality divide us more than love for Jesus Christ unites us.'

Fr Cantalamessa has served under Benedict XVI and St John Paul II.



Question Box

I recently got into an argument about the word 'catholic'. Can you tell me what it means?

THE WORD 'catholic' comes from the Greek *katholikos*, which means 'universal'. With a capital 'c', 'Catholic' is generally taken to refer to the universal Church of which, under Christ, the Supreme Pontiff is the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. This is the sense in which we use the word 'catholic' when we say the creed: 'I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.'

Protestants who say the same creed use 'catholic' in a broader sense, to refer to the world-wide community of Christian believers. They may prefer that the Catholic Church, as we understand it, is referred to as the 'Roman Catholic Church'.

'Catholic' is also used in a non-religious way. If, for example, we say, 'Anna has catholic tastes in music,' we mean that she enjoys many kinds of music.

*As we journey through Lent, may we grow
in our understanding of the riches hidden in Christ*

Sunday Reflections

**Meditations, readings and prayers for Sundays,
Ash Wednesday and the Easter Triduum**



7th February
**5th Sunday in
Ordinary Time**
'Send me'

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

In the Gospel, Simon Peter, over-awed by Jesus, exclaimed, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' Yet Jesus told Peter not to be afraid, and that he was commissioning him to catch people rather than catch fish. Peter and his fellow-fishermen James and John left everything and followed Jesus: they had been 'hooked'.

We are near Lent, when the Church bids us to follow Jesus all the way to his death and resurrection. Is our answer going to be 'Yes', like Isaiah and Peter? If we aim no further than seeking worldly success, we haven't taken in what Jesus is offering. That's why, when we receive the ashes this Wednesday, we should heed the message: '...be faithful to the Gospel.'

The colour for Sundays in Ordinary Time is green.

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

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

Gospel: Luke 5: 1-11

Prayer over the Offerings

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

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the Prefaces provided for 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...

LENT

10th February: Ash Wednesday

Ashes, prayer and supplication

TODAY is not a Holy Day of Obligation, but many of our churches will be 'house full'. Is it because we want to make a good start to Lent? Do we feel that the imposition of ashes imparts a particular, not-to-miss 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, Jesus reminds us that it is not to impress others that we fast, pray and give alms. Our fasting, prayer and almsgiving are of limited worth unless we offer them to our Lord God from a penitent heart.

At this Mass the Penitential Rite is omitted, and the Gloria in Excelsis is not sung or said.

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 upon 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 homily, the priest says: Dear brothers and sisters, let us humbly ask God our Father that he be pleased to bless with the abundance of his grace these ashes, which we will put on our heads with penitence.

He continues: O GOD, who are moved by acts of humility and forgive with forgiveness to works of penance, lend your merciful ear to our prayers, and in your kindness pour out the grace of your + blessing on your servants who are marked with these ashes, that, as they follow the Lenten observances, they may be worthy to come with minds made pure to

celebrate the Paschal Mystery of your Son...

The priest may use an alternative prayer of blessing.

The priest places ashes on the heads of all those who come to him, saying to each one

Repent, and believe in the Gospel *or*

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

During the imposition of ashes, suitable chants are sung.

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 devoutly the Passion of your Son...

Preface III of Lent: ... for 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...

or **Preface IV of Lent:** ...for, through bodily fasting you restrain our faults, 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 God, on those who bow before your majesty, and by your mercy may they merit the rewards you promise to those who do penance...

21st February 1st Sunday in Lent



'Tempted in every way that we are...'

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

This year we hear Luke's account. Three times the devil tempted Jesus, and each time Jesus rebuked him with words from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy.

Jesus in his person and in actions was and is the fulfilment of all Holy Scripture. Moreover, he was 'tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin.' We pray daily as he has taught us, 'Lead us not into temptation'; but when we are tempted, we know that Jesus will understand, support and restore us, if only we turn to him for help.

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

The colour for the first five Sundays in Lent is purple or violet. The Gloria in Excelsis is not said or sung.

Collect

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

Readings: Deuteronomy 26:4-10. Psalm 90:1-2,10-15. Response: Be with me, O Lord, in my distress. Romans 10:8-13.

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: Luke 4:1-13

Prayer over the Offerings

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

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

Prayer after Communion

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

28th February 2nd Sunday in Lent

'Listen to him!'

On the Second Sunday of Lent, the Gospel is always an account of the Lord's transfiguration.

Just as the temptation of Christ's came before he began his ministry, so his transfiguration preceded his passion.

When Jesus was transfigured before the awe-stuck disciples Peter, James and John, he was revealed as true God and true man. He was seen speaking with the prophets Moses and Elijah, in testimony that he had come into the world to fulfil what all the prophets had foretold. A voice proclaimed: 'This is my Son. Listen to him.'

In today's first reading we hear how that same voice - the voice of God the Father - had spoken to the patriarch Abraham. That same voice speaks this very day to the Church and to each one of us.

Jesus is the Son of God. We must listen to him, because he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Moreover, as Paul assured the Philippians in today's second reading, Jesus 'will transform these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body.' Even so: Come, Lord Jesus, transform us with your forgiveness and love.



Collect

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

Readings: Genesis 15:5-12,17-18. Psalm 26:1,7-9,13-14.
Response: The Lord is my light and my help. Philippians 3:17 - 4:1.

Gospel acclamation: 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: Luke 9:28-36

Prayer over the Offerings

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

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

Prayer after Communion

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

Prayer over the People

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

*8th March***3rd Sunday of Lent***Here and now*

TODAY'S readings are a call to repentance. First we hear of the burning bush which Moses saw in the wilderness - the bush that was ablaze but not burnt up. Moses recognised that God - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - is steadfast in his care for mankind. God's love is without end.

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

We pass from the psalm to Paul's warning to the people of Corinth. Many people had neglected God's revelation of himself to Moses and the people of Israel; and we ourselves should not make the same mistake.

As related in the Gospel, Jesus warned: 'Unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.' The parable of the fig tree teaches us that our time for repentance is limited. The time to start life afresh with our sins forgiven is now: 'O that today you would listen to his voice; harden not your hearts' (Psalm 94). 'Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' (2 Corinthians 6:2)

**Collect**

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

Readings: Exodus 3:1-8 & 13-15. Psalm 102:18,11.
Response: The Lord is compassion and love. 1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12.

(or the readings for Year 1 may be used: Exodus 17:3-7. Psalm 94:1-2,6-9. Romans 5:1-2,5-8. John 4:5-42. These readings have their proper Preface).

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

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

Prayer over the Offerings

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

Preface: see box on the next page

Prayer after Communion

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

Prayer over the People

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

*15th March***4th Sunday of Lent***(Laetare)**Rejoice!*

HOW far, this mid-Lent Sunday, have we taken on board our need to live in God's grace by repenting and obtaining his forgiveness?

Today is *Laetare* Sunday - a day of rejoicing because we can be confident of forgiveness. Bishop Ellison has reminded us: 'None of us should ever allow ourselves to believe that we have fallen so low that it would be impossible to stand up and start again.'

This is shown in today's Gospel parable, which tells of the son who squandered the bounty he had received from his father in greedy self-indulgence. He sank to squalid poverty of body and soul. But when he appealed to his father, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you,' his father put his arms around him, restored him and threw a family party. 'There is joy in the kingdom of heaven over one sinner who repents.' The second reading comes from St Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. Paul wrote: 'For anyone who is in Christ there is a new creation...It is all God's work. It is God who reconciled us to himself through Christ.'



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

On this Sunday, instead of violet, rose-coloured vestments may be worn.

Collect

O GOD, who through your Word reconcile the world 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: Joshua 5:9-12. Psalm 33:2-7. Response: Taste and see that the Lord is great. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

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

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

(or the readings for Year 1 may be used: Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13. Psalm 22. Ephesians 5:8-14. John 9:1-41. *These readings have their proper Preface*).

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: *see box below*

Prayer after Communion

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

Prayer over the People

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



22nd March 5th Sunday of Lent

Are we ready?

In Lent, we prepare for Easter by meditating on Christ's sufferings and death - which were the necessary prelude to his glorious

Resurrection. On this Fifth Sunday of Lent, and in the two weeks to come, we endeavour to identify ourselves even more closely with Christ's suffering.

Today's ancient collect reminds us that Christ 'out of love for the world... handed himself over to death'. That sacrificial death offers salvation to us all, if only, like the woman caught in adultery, we determine to 'sin no more'.

In today's Gospel reading from John, we hear how the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus hoping to trick him into contradicting the Law of Moses, which said that a woman taken in adultery should be stoned. Jesus was at first silent. Then he said, 'If there is anyone among you who has not sinned, let him throw the first stone.'

Jesus knows - and we know - that all of us are all sinners. We should hesitate to condemn others when we ourselves fall short of what God expects of us. Today's Gospel reading is particularly appropriate in this Holy Year of Mercy.

Today's Prayer over the Offerings asks God to 'graciously purify [us] by the working of this sacrifice.' The sacrifice of the altar identifies us with Christ's sacrifice of himself on the Cross. St Paul declared to the Philippians (today's second reading): 'Nothing... will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord... All I want to know is Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share in his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death.'

Traditionally, from this Sunday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil, crosses, pictures and statues in church 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 the death...

Readings: Isaiah 43:16-21. Psalm 126. Response: What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed, we were glad. 1 Philippians 3:8-14.

Gospel acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! Seek good and not evil, so that you may live, and that the Lord God of hosts may really be with you...

Gospel: John 8: 1-11

(or the readings for Year 1 may be used: Ezekiel 37:12-14. Psalm 129. Romans 8:8-11. John 11:1-45. *These readings have their proper Preface*).

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: *see box below*

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...

Prefaces for the 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 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...



Holy Week

20th March

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Humility, love and redemption

WE interpret the Old Testament by what has been revealed in the New Testament. Thus, today's First Reading, applied to Christ, depicts him as a willing sufferer: 'I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.'

But whenever Jesus spoke to his disciples about his forthcoming death they didn't want to hear about it. And today, like the disciples, we may not want to face up to Jesus' death, nor the purpose of it. Christ came into this world to humble himself, as today's Second Reading (from Philippians) reminds us. He offered himself to the Father for the sins of the world, including our own.

Today's Gospel Reading is a narrative of Christ's suffering and death. Listening attentively, let us give thanks for God's love in sending his Son to take on himself all our sins and save us through his death and resurrection. May we make the best use of this Holy Week for our own souls' sake and for others.

The Mass is preceded by the Procession of Palms. The priest explains: '...with all faith and devotion let us commemorate the Lord's entry into the city for our salvation, following in his footsteps...'

ALMIGHTY, ever-living God, sanctify + these branches with your blessing, that we, who follow Christ the King in exultation may reach the eternal Jerusalem through him...

An alternative prayer of blessing may be used.

Gospel before the Procession: Luke 19:28-40

During the procession antiphons and hymns are sung.

Collect

ALMIGHTY, ever-living God, who as an example of humility 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: Luke 22:14 – 23:56 (or Luke 23:1-49)

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...

30th March: Monday in Holy Week

The colour from Monday to Wednesday (except for the Chrism Mass) is purple or violet

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, Ps. 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 incurred bear for us fruit in eternal life...

Preface ...for the days of his saving Passion and glorious Resurrection are fast approaching, by which the pride of the ancient foe and the mystery of our redemption in Christ is accomplished...

Prayer after Communion

VISIT your people, O Lord, we pray, and with your ever-watchful love look upon the hearts dedicated to you by means of these sacred mysteries, so that under your protection we may keep safe this remedy of eternal salvation, which by your mercy we have received...

31st March: Tuesday in 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 71:1-6,15,17. John 13:21-33,36-38.

Prayer over the Offerings

LOOK favourably, O Lord, on 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)

Prayer after Communion

NOURISHED by your saving gifts, we beseech your mercy, Lord, that by this same Sacrament with which you have fed us in this present age, you may make us partakers of life eternal...

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

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



Tuesday Evening Chrism Mass at the Cathedral

*The colour for this Mass is white
At this Mass the clergy renew their vows and
the holy oils are consecrated:*

- **The Oil of 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.**

Collect

O GOD, who anointed your Only-Begotten Son with the Holy Spirit, and made him Christ and Lord, graciously grant that being made sharers in his consecration, we may bear witness to his Resurrection 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, 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 his homily, the Bishop asks the priests to renew their vows.

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY the power of this Sacrifice, O Lord, we pray, mercifully wash 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 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 Oils to their parishes, where they are reserved for use as needed.

1st April: Wednesday in Holy Week

Today we remember the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot.

Collect

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

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9. Psalm 68:8-10,21-22,31,33-34.
Matthew 26:11-25

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 on Monday of Holy Week

Prayer after Communion

ENDOW us, almighty God, with the firm conviction that through your Son's death in time, to which the revered mysteries bear witness, we may be assured of perpetual life...

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...

Morning of 3rd April: Thursday of Holy Week

No Mass is celebrated this morning

THE EASTER TRIDUUM



Evening of Holy Thursday: 3rd April also known as Maundy Thursday

MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

This Mass commemorates Christ's institution of the Eucharist and his 'new commandment' of love.

The tabernacle is empty. 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 Gloria at the Vigil on Saturday evening.

Collect

O GOD, who has called us to participate in this 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 as I have loved you, says the Lord...

Gospel: John 13:1-15

Following 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 for us, we are washed 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 the Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is solemnly transferred to the Altar of Repose, while Pange Lingua is sung.

3rd April

FRIDAY in THE LORD'S PASSION

Good Friday is marked by fasting and abstinence.

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 and gave him the name which is above all names...

Passion Gospel: John 18:1 - 19:42

The Solemn Intercession

Before each prayer the deacon or priest may sing or say, Let us kneel (Flectmus genua), and all kneel briefly for silent prayer. Then the deacon or priest sings or says, Let us stand (Levate) and offers the prayer:

- 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 Veneration of the Cross

The priest partly unveils the veiled cross, saying or singing, 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, adoremus). 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 unfaithfulness and ingratitude) and Pange Lingua (Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle).

After the veneration the cross is placed on the altar. The Blessed Sacrament is carried from the Altar of Repose and placed on the altar. The priest genuflects and begins the Our Father, which is followed by 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...

4th April Holy Saturday: (Easter Eve)

No Mass is celebrated this morning, though devotional services may be held. It is strongly recommended that we extend the Good Friday throughout Holy Saturday, while we wait at the Lord's tomb. The Easter Vigil is then all the more joyous.

THE EASTER VIGIL

THE EASTER VIGIL is the greatest observance of the entire Christian year: the 'Solemnity of Solemnities' and 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. Wearing white vestments, the priest greets the people, then prepares the paschal candle and lights it from the fire. During the procession which follows, the priest three times lifts the candle high and sings Christ our Light (Lumen Christi), to which the people respond, Thanks be to God (**Deo gratias**). The paschal candle is placed in the sanctuary, and the deacon or priest sings the **Exsultet**: '...this is the night when Christ broke the chains of death...' The people stand with lighted candles.*

The Liturgy of the Word

In the readings, the Church, 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets', proclaims Christ's paschal mystery. The seven Old Testament readings, are each followed by a psalm and a prayer. Some readings may be omitted, but the reading from Exodus is always proclaimed.

- 1 Genesis 1:1 - 2:4 (God our Creator)
- 2 Genesis 22:1-18 (Abraham's obedience)
- 3 Exodus 14:15 - 15:1 (Moses leads his people from 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 (Walking in God's ways)
- 7 Ezekiel 36:16-28 (We are God's people)



Following the Old Testament readings, the altar candles are lit and the priest intones Gloria in Excelsis. Bells are rung.

Collect

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

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

Response: Alleluia, alleluia!

Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

The Liturgy of Baptism

If there 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, 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 has 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 acclaim 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 praise, 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...

5th April: EASTER SUNDAY

We are witnesses!

'WE are witnesses!' exclaims St Peter in today's First Reading. Peter and his fellow disciples had experienced Christ's resurrection. 'He's alive! We've seen him!' In great excitement, having been commissioned by the Holy Spirit, they passed the wonderful good news on to everyone who would listen. They were themselves new men. As St Paul declares in the Second Reading, 'You have been brought back to true life with Christ.'

Today's Gospel Reading tells how Mary Magdalene arrived at Jesus' tomb 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 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. Not just a doctrine.

It is a fact - the most welcome fact we can ever know:

Christ is alive! We encounter the risen Christ in our hearts and in the Church's prayer and worship. Like our Lord's first followers, we should 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 to 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 117:1-2,15-17,23-23. Response: This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad. Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 3:6-8.

The Easter 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!

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: Alleulia...Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us: let us celebrate the feast, then, in the Lord.

Gospel: John 20:1-9 (or Luke 24:1-12; *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 I of Easter: It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, at all times to acclaim you, O Lord, but on this day above all... (*as at the Easter Vigil, see opposite page*)

Prayer after Communion

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

The Editor & Staff
of *The Diocese of Gambia Newsletter*
wish all our readers
a fruitful Lent and Blessed Easter



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.

Regina Coeli

THE REGINA Coeli ('Queen of Heaven') is sung or recited in place of the Angelus during the Easter season, from Holy Saturday until Pentecost.

The hymn has been traced to the 12th century.

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia.
Has risen, as he said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.
V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
R. For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray

O God, who through the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ gave rejoicing to the world, grant, we pray, that through his Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joy of everlasting life.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Alternative translation

Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven. Alleluia!
He whom thou wast meet to bear. Alleluia!
As he promised hath arisen. Alleluia!
Pour for us to God thy prayer. Alleluia!
V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
R. For the Lord is risen indeed, alleluia.

Let us pray

O God, who through the resurrection of Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ vouchsafed to give joy to the world: grant, we beseech thee, that through his Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Latin

*Regina coelli lætare, alleluia,
Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,
Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia,
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.
V. Gaude et lætare, Virgo Maria, alleluia.
R. Quia surrexit Dominus vere, alleluia.*

Oremus.

*Deus, qui per resurrectionem Filii tui,
Domini nostri Iesu Christi, mundum lætificare dignatus es:
præsta, quæsumus, ut per eius Genitricem Virginem
Mariam, perpetuæ capiamus gaudia vitæ.
Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. R. Amen.*

Like the *Angelus*, the *Regina Coeli* is recited every day at 6am, noon and 6pm.

Answers to 'Do you know?' page 9

- 1 The 'suffering servant' (taken by Christians to refer to Christ) is spoken of in Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12.
- 2 'Thanksgiving' in Greek.
- 3 Jesus wept when he heard of the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:35)
- 4 Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- 5 Centenary House, opened in 2014, the commercial building erected by the Diocese of Banjul in Kairaba Avenue, near Westfield Junction and next to the Catholic Secretariat.

from beyond the diocese

Francis to visit Mexico



The Metropolitan Cathedral, Mexico City

IN early February Pope Francis is to visit Mexico, where he will worship at the most-visited Marian shrine in the world: Our Lady of Guadalupe, in Mexico City.

The Pope will visit Mexico's violence-plagued states of Michoacan and Chihuahua and the impoverished region of Chiapas.

The western state of Michoacan has been in thrall to a powerful drugs cartel. The northern state of Chihuahua is home to Ciudad Juarez, a city at the US border once known as Mexico's murder capital, notably of women, though the murder rate has dramatically dropped in recent years.

The southern state of Chiapas is one of the country's poorest regions with a large indigenous population. It is also a major transit route for migrants who illegally cross the Chiapas-Guatemala border.

The Pope will hold talks with President Enrique Pena Nieto (*left*). He is keen to engage on social issues from drug trafficking to migration, and is to meet young people, the indigenous, those in prison, and representatives of the labour movement.

The Pope's predecessor, Benedict XVI, visited Mexico in 2012. Pope St John Paul II made five visits there in his 26 years as Supreme Pontiff.



Since the 16th century

The Roman Catholic Church in Mexico dates from the Spanish conquest (1519–21). Catholicism is one of the two major legacies from the Spanish colonial era, the other being Spanish as the nation's language.

The Church was a privileged institution until the mid-19th-century. It was the sole permissible Church in the colonial era and into the early Mexican Republic, following independence in 1821. In the mid-19th-century the state challenged the Church's role in education, property ownership, birth, marriage and death records. Anti-clerical changes were incorporated in the constitution of 1857. President Porfirio

Díaz (1876–1911) pursued conciliation with the Church, allowing it greater freedom. But the subsequent decade-long Mexican Revolution included a new constitution further limiting the Church, leading to violence in some parts of Mexico. President Manuel Avila Camacho (1940–1946) came to office declaring, '*Soy creyente*' ('I am a believer'), and Church-State relations improved, although without constitutional changes.

A major change came in 1992 with the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994). In a programme of reform to 'modernise Mexico', his government pushed through revisions to the constitution, including the restoration of the Church's legal status.

Today, most Mexicans identify themselves as Catholic. But the growth of other religious groups such as evangelicals and Mormons, as well as secularism, reflects trends elsewhere in Latin America.

Parish hosts wedding for poor couples

A PARISH church in the Philippines has arranged a wedding ceremony for 13 couples who could otherwise not have afforded one. The Nuptial Mass at St Alphonsus Mary de Ligouri Church was part of the Philippine bishops' 'Year of the Poor'.

Thirteen brides in chiffon and lace and grooms in traditional Philippine silk filed down the aisle. The ceremony included the symbols of a veil enveloping the couple, a lasso tying them together and a coin purse being passed from groom to bride, signifying the couple's togetherness in all aspects of married life.

Mgr Claro Garcia, the Parish Priest, said that the couples, who included drivers, cooks and gardeners, had been living together without the sacrament of matrimony. They had not married in the Church because of the cost. Wedding 'god-parents' from the parish helped to pay for the couples' outfits and other costs, including a reception in the parish hall.



Lei Bihag, a housewife, and Vincent Bihag, a cook, have three children aged eight, five and three. Lei said she was excited to be walking down the aisle with her long-time partner. They had been together for nine years before their civil wedding in 2013.

Mgr Garcia said, 'Some of the couples had not been baptised. So I baptised them first. And most of them had not been confirmed. Since I have the faculty to confirm, they took the sacrament of confirmation. So it was three sacraments in one day!'

Pope prays with migrants

POPE Francis invited 5,000 migrants to pray with him and attend a Mass at St Peter's to mark the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on Sunday 17th January.

Asylum seekers and migrants listened to Francis's Sunday address in St Peter's Square before entering the basilica through one of the 'holy doors' opened for the Holy Year of Mercy. In Catholic tradition, passing through a holy door in a spirit of repentance enables a believer to be cleansed of his or her sins.

The group were accompanied by pilgrims carrying a cross made from the wood of wrecked migrant boats. It was crafted on the Italian island of Lampedusa. The cross was carried by pilgrims from the island, which has witnessed some of some of southern Europe's most deadly sinkings of the migrant crisis.

Communion wafers for the Mass were made by three prisoners serving sentences for murder in a high-security prison near Milan.

Headmaster resigns after cancelling Christmas concert

AN ITALIAN headmaster has felt obliged to resign after cancelling a Christmas concert and being criticised by the Prime Minister.

The headmaster, Marco Parma, decided to cancel traditional Christmas festivities at his school near Milan to avoid offending non-Christian pupils. But the decision was heavily criticised by his pupils, including Muslims and those with no religion.

The Italian Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, told the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* that he thought Mr Parma had made a 'big mistake'. He added: 'Dialogue does not mean drowning identities in an instinctive and insipid form of political correctness. All Italians, both non-religious and Christian, will never give up Christmas.'

Defending his decision, Mr Parma said he had decided to cancel the concert after the terrorist attacks in Paris on 11th November that killed 130 people, and postponed the event until 21st January as a 'winter concert' with no religious songs.

But a Muslim parent at the school, Mahmoud El Kheir, who is originally from Egypt, said: 'Who are we Muslims to say what can happen at an Italian school? I hope the public understand that the decision was not made because of a request by Muslim parents.' His wife, Laila Magar, said that their twin daughters, Fatma and Yassin, always took part in Christmas celebrations at the school and sang traditional Catholic songs with the other children. 'Why create a problem that doesn't exist?' she asked.

First Vespers in Chapel Royal for 450 years

CARDINAL Vincent Nichols, Catholic leader in England and Wales, will make history on 9th February when he celebrates Catholic Vespers in the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace, near London, for the first time for 450 years. Vespers will be sung in the Latin rite, and the Anglican Bishop of London will deliver a sermon.

Earlier, the cardinal and the bishop will lead a discussion on the bonds between their churches over the centuries.

Francis tells Kenya's priests: without prayer a person becomes a 'dried fig'



DURING his visit to Kenya in late November, Pope Francis told an audience of priests, religious and seminarians that without prayer a person becomes 'as ugly as a dried fig'.

The Pope was welcomed with cheers. He set aside his prepared text and instead reflected on the importance of priests and religious, stressing that the Lord had called them to serve, and that service is what their lives must be about.

'When we were called, we were not canonised,' the Pope declared. Each priest and religious continues to be a person in need of God's mercy and forgiveness, a person who must devote time to prayer.

Ambition, riches and prestige have no place in the life of a priest or religious, said Francis. Anyone who does not think he or she can live a life of poverty, chastity and obedience should leave and start a family.

Pope Francis said he could imagine that some of the priests and religious were thinking, 'What a rude Pope. He told us what to do, he told us off and did not even say thank-you.' So the last thing I want to say to you, the cherry on the cake, is to thank you for following Jesus, for every time you realise you are a sinner, for every caress you give someone in need.'

Nearly 14 million Catholics

Kenya has more than 13.8 million Catholics, about 30 per cent of the population, including President Uhuru Kenyatta. The Church is served by more than 5,300 religious women, close to 800 religious brothers, some 2,700 diocesan priests, just over 900 priests in religious orders, and four permanent deacons.

Mother Angelica's health in decline

MOTHER Angelica, founder of the Eternal Word Television Network, is in declining health, according to fellow sisters at Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Alabama, USA. The 92-year-old suffered a cerebral haemorrhage in 2001 and has since had several less-severe strokes.

Born Rita Rizzo, Mother Angelica entered a monastery in Cleveland when she was 21, and joined sisters in a new monastery in Alabama in 1962. With only \$200 she began broadcasting from the monastery garage in 1981. That grew into the Eternal Word Television Network, a world-wide television, radio, online and publishing operation. Today, EWTN Global Catholic Network calls itself the world's largest religious media network. Its television programmes are available to almost 260 million households in 145 nations.



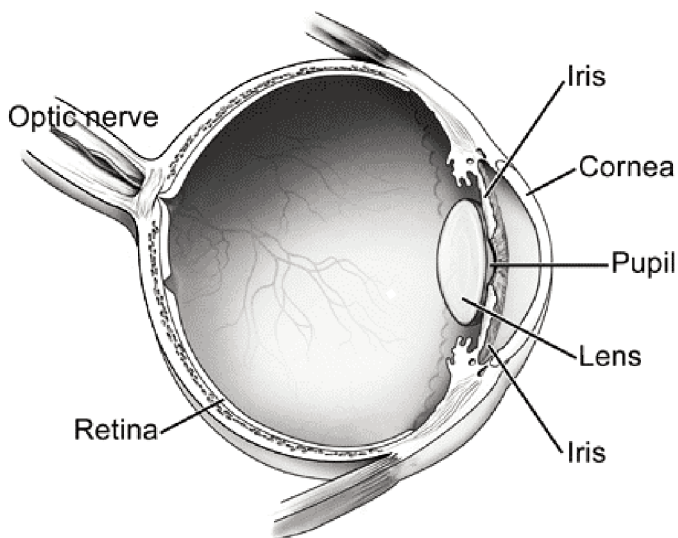
family circle

Can you see as well as you used to?

Dealing with cataracts

TO understand a cataract you need to know something about the structure of the eye.

Look at the diagram. The front of the eye is covered by two clear structures, the cornea and the lens, which together bring an image to a sharp focus on the retina, which lines the inside of the back of the eye. Think of the eye as a cinema, where the cornea and the lens are the projectors, and the retina on which the image is focused is the cinema screen.



The cornea has a fixed shape, but the lens is able to change its shape to bring objects of different distances to a sharp focus on the retina.

A cataract forms when the lens of the eye loses its clarity, preventing light from passing through, or mis-directing light rays. This interferes with the projection of a bright and sharp image on the retina.

When symptoms are mild, spectacles may provide temporary relief. But impaired vision may not meet the legal and practical requirements for driving. Moreover, a cataract may prevent the monitoring or treatment of the back of the eye (the retina). In particular, diabetic patients can suffer deterioration in the retina.

Cataract surgery exchanges the lens of the eye with an artificial lens. It is normally carried out under a local anaesthetic as a day-case, with the patient awake during the surgery.

The pupil is dilated and the eye is anaesthetised. A small (2-3mm) self-sealing incision is made on the edge of the cornea, and the thin bag enclosing the lens is opened, enabling the lens to be removed. An artificial lens is implanted into the empty bag. Normally, there is no need for stitches, and the artificial lens can stay in place indefinitely.

Risk rate

Cataract surgery has a high success rate. But like any procedure it does carry risks during and after the operation, which may result in a less-than-desirable outcome, and on very rare occasions deterioration or loss of vision. It is imperative that the patient is aware of such risks, while knowing that the overall risks of cataract surgery are low.

The most important indication for cataract surgery is the inability to see well even with an up-to-date prescription for spectacles. Cataract surgery provides an opportunity to improve vision. Before the operation, the surgeon measures the lens implant power needed to provide the necessary target, which is discussed with and agreed to by the patient.

Cut it out!

THIS Lent, are you cutting out sugar, or at least trying to reduce your intake of sugary foods?

Don't stop when Lent comes to an end! Continue afterwards to do without sugar as much as you can.

Most adults and most children consume far too much sugar. We should cut down by eating fewer sugary foods such as sweets, cakes and biscuits, and drinking fewer sugary drinks.

Many foods and drinks that contain added sugar are high in energy but have few other nutrients. Eating such foods can mean that you consume more calories than you need, leading to over-weight.

Being overweight increases the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Instead of sugary food, we should get most of our calories from other kinds of food, such as starchy foods, fruit and vegetables.

Sugary foods and drinks cause tooth decay, especially if eaten and drunk between meals. The longer sugary food is in contact with teeth, the more damage it can cause.

Sugars shouldn't make up more than five per cent of the energy (calories) we get from food and drink each day. That's a maximum of 30g of added sugar a day for adults; roughly, seven sugar cubes.

Children should have less – no more than 19g a day for children aged 4 to 6 years old (five sugar cubes), and no more than 24g (six sugar cubes) for children aged 7 to 10 years old.

Added sugars are found in foods such as sweets, cakes, biscuits, chocolate, and some fizzy drinks and juice drinks. These are the sugary foods we should cut down on. For example, a can of cola can have as much as nine cubes of added sugar.

If you take sugar in tea or coffee, gradually reduce the amount until you can cut it out altogether.

Sugars also occur naturally in foods such as fresh fruit and milk, but we don't need to cut down on these types of sugars.

Check nutrition labels to help you choose foods with less added sugar, or go for the low-sugar version. Look for the 'carbohydrates (of which sugars)' figure on the nutrition label.

high – over 22.5g of total sugars per 100g

low – 5g of total sugars or less per 100g



Gambian Christian anniversaries

February and March

140 YEARS AGO: On 10th February 1876 Fr Lacombe left The Gambia to open a mission in Sédhiou, Senegal, having spent 12 years in Banjul, ten of them as Superior.

Fr Lacombe was the first African priest of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. His father was French and his mother Fula. He was ordained in Gorée in 1852 and worked among the Serer people of Joal. In 1859 he became Rector of the seminary in Dakar. He came to Banjul in 1864.

In 1869 there was an horrendous cholera epidemic. Up to 35 people died every day, and the population of Banjul was reduced by a quarter. Fr Lacombe was assiduous in visiting the sick and dying.

Until 1876 the Catholic Mission concentrated on Banjul. The population of Banjul Island was then about 8,000, of whom 3,000 were Muslim, 2,000 Protestant and 1,500 - 2,000 Catholic. About 1,000 were animists.

Fr Lacombe died in Senegal in 1900.

19th March 1886 (130 years ago): Death aged 47 of Brother Florentine Matthews, who had taught at the boys' school for 23 years.

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 in Hagan Street 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 Anglican deacon of the Revd John Colley Faye, who served on the Legislative Council and the Executive Council from 1947 to 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, Superior, celebrated the first Mass in Lamin, outdoors.

20th February 1955: Marriage at St Cuthbert's Anglican Church Basse of David Jawara (later, President of The Gambia) and Augusta Hannah Mahoney.

8th March 1955: Opening of the primary school in Sambang, Upper River Region.

10th February 1960: Arrival of Fr Seán Little.

End of February 1962: Completion of the Cathedral tower.

16th March 1966 (50 years ago): In response to liturgical reforms instituted by Vatican II, the high altar in the Cathedral was moved forwards so that Mass could be celebrated facing the people.

During February 1975: Fr Michael Flynn became Parish Priest at Star of the Sea Bakau - the first Spiritan District Superior to live in the priests' house there.

5th February 1976 (40 years ago): The House of Representatives registered the St Anthony of Padua Society. Its predecessor, the St Anthony of Padua Friendly Society, had been founded in 1907.

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 St John Paul II as The Gambia's first Ambassador to the Holy See.

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



The original church in Banjul

4th February 1981: Funeral at Wesley Church Banjul of Augusta Mahoney, former wife of President Jawara.

15th February 1981: Announcement that Fr Michael Cleary was to become Bishop of Banjul, in succession to Bishop Moloney, who had resigned owing to poor health.

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

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

28th February 1996 (20 years ago): Death of Fr James White.

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

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

2nd March 2009: A group of Piarist priests from Senegal met at GPI as part of their *formation permanente*. The Piarists work in Dakar, Oussouye and Sokone.

17th January 2010: Blessed Sacrament Kanifing became an independent parish, with Fr Peter Lopez as Parish Priest.

8th March 2010: Death of Dr Samuel Palmer, founder with Dr Lenrie Peters of Westfield Clinic. His funeral at the Anglican Cathedral was attended by his friend Bishop Cleary, and by Bishop Ellison and other Catholic clergy.

3rd February 2013: Fr Pius Gidi and his parishioners celebrated the 8th anniversary of Holy Cross Church Brusibi.

1st March 2013: Fr Joseph Gough, former Principal of St Augustine's High School Banjul, finally left after a series of annual visits. He had given substantial aid to sports.



21st February 2014: Funeral at Bakau Stadium of the Most Revd Tilewa Johnson, Bishop of Gambia and Archbishop of the Anglican Province of West Africa, who had died suddenly on 22nd January.

2nd March 2014: Celebration at Kunkujang Mariama of the golden jubilee as priest of Fr John Sharpe CSSp.

24th February - 2nd March 2014: Fr Peter Lopez, Director of GPI, attended a meeting in Rome of *Signis*, the Catholic lay organisation for media professionals.

22 February 2015: Enthronement in Dakar of Archbishop Benjamin Ndiaye.

13th March 2015: Farewell Mass at St Therese Kanifing for Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary.



ALL BRANCHES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC NOW

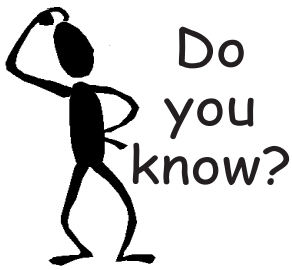
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LIST OF BRANCHES & IMPLANTS

1. Bakau New Town	6868820	20. Kairaba Avenue	6868801
2. Bakoteh	6868816	21. Kaw Junction L/Kunda	6868861
3. Barra, North Bank Region	6868858	22. Kololi 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		





- 1 In the Old Testament, which book speaks of the 'suffering servant'?
- 2 What does 'Eucharist' literally mean?
- 3 The shortest sentence in the Gospels is said to be: 'Jesus wept'. When did this occur?
- 4 By what name was Pope Francis known before he became Pope?
- 5 Where and what is the building shown on the right?

Answers on page 23



Obituary

Pierre A.K. Mendy

THE DEATH occurred on Tuesday 22nd December of Pierre A.K. Mendy, staunch Catholic, former police officer and senior cashier, commonly known as 'Kajusa'.

Pierre was born in Brikama in January 1963, the son of Patron Kachion Mendy and Lisa Ako Mendy. He was educated at Brikama Primary School, Muslim High School and St Augustine's High School.

He joined the Gambia Police force as a CID officer and was later promoted to the Intelligence Unit at the Office of the President of the First Republic of The Gambia. He worked briefly at Sankung Sillah and Sons and at the former City Edge Bar at London Corner. He later joined Boule Financial Services as a senior cashier until its closure in 2007.

Pierre was a former member of the Gambia Red Cross Society and the Boy Scouts. He was a staunch member of the Catholic People's Association (CPA) and was a founding father of the Basserall Clan Society. In addition, he was the first Chairman of the Parish Council at Holy Cross Brusubi and Chairman of Brusubi Development Committee.

Pierre was known as a respectful and well-mannered man and noted for his openness of character. He was always ready to help others and to participate in social activities. He could turn an unpleasant experience into one of acceptance with quick jokes.

He was full of zest, even in the face of adversity, because of his faith in God.

Pierre A.K. Mendy is survived by his wife, sister, six sons, four daughters, and nieces, nephews and cousins.



Jean Carvalho

ON Monday 28th December the sudden death occurred of Jean Carvalho, husband of Nancy Carvalho, Secretary to the Bishop of Banjul.

Jean Stephen Anthony Carvalho was born in August 1965 at Buckle Street Banjul, the son of Darling Sawyer and Alexander Carvalho.

As a child he was taken to another house in Buckle Street, where he was brought up by his grandmother.

Jean was educated at St Joseph's Preparatory School and St Augustine's High School. His first job was in the accounts department at Maurel et Prom, where he worked for many years before joining the Standard Chartered Bank. He also worked briefly with the FIG Bureau de Change.

Jean was an artist. His works include the monument to the former American President Franklin D. Roosevelt at Bund Road, and signs at the entrance to AU Villas, Barra Ferry Terminal and Banjul International Airport. He made a chair and a podium which were presented to the President of The Gambia. He had further artistic commissions, but did not live to implement them.

Pa Sang was one of the top ten contenders at a nation-wide competition when an anthem for the July 22nd Revolution was being sought. He composed 'Mama Africa', a poem to mark the golden jubilee of the African Union. The poem is now displayed at AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Pa Sang was a devout Catholic. Most of his conversation centred on prayer, and he prayed ardently and frequently.

In April last year, Jean was among the first to be commissioned as an evangelist by the Bishop of Banjul after completing the Mature Christian Live Catholic Evangelisation Training Programme. He served as secretary to the committee.

Jean belonged to various church groups, including the Padre Pio Prayer Group and St Cecilia's Choir. He was President of the Mam Amata Foundation, a charity based in Buckle Street.

In December 2000 Jean married Nancy Lucinda Drammeh, who loved and cared for him and members of his immediate family. Their union was blessed with two children: Alex Charles and Anthony.

Jean is survived by his wife, mother, children, sisters and brother, grandmother, aunts, uncles, in-laws, cousins, nieces, nephews, god-children and a host of friends.



We do not live for ourselves, and we do not die for ourselves. If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Romans 14:7-8

Daily Mass Readings



February & March 2016

Sunday readings Year C

Weekday readings Year 2

Commemorations in brackets (-) are optional.

In Lent, commemorations in square brackets [-] are optional, and limited to the use of the Collect.

Mon 1st Feb	2 Samuel 15:13-14,30; 16:5-13. Psalm 3:2-7. Mark 5:1-20	
Tue 2nd	Malachi 4:3-4 <i>or</i> Hebrews 2:14-18. Psalm 23:7-10. Luke 2:22-40.	TRANSFIGURATION of THE LORD
Wed 3rd	2 Samuel 24:2,9-17. Psalm 31:1-2,5-7. Mark 6:1-6.	(St Blaise <i>or</i> St Ansgar)
Thu 4th	1 Kings 2:1-4,10-12. Psalm 1 Chronicles 29:10-12. Mark 6:7-13	
Fri 5th	Sirach 47:2-13. Psalm 17:31,47,50-51. Mark 6:14-29.	St Agatha <i>abstinence</i>
Sat 6th	1 Kings 3:4-13. Psalm 118:9-14. Mark 6:30-34	St Paul Miki
Sun 7th	Isaiah 6:1-8. Psalm 137:1-5,7-8. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Luke 5:1-11.	5th SUNDAY of YEAR
Mon 8th	1 Kings 8:1-7,9-13. Psalm 131:6-10. Mark 6:53-56	(St Jerome Emiliani <i>or</i> St Josephine Bakhita)
Tue 9th	1 Kings 8:22-23,27-30. Psalm 83:3-5,10-11. Mark 7:1-13	

Ordinary Time ends. Lent begins. All weekdays in Lent are days of abstinence

Wed 10th	Joel 2:12-18. Psalm 50:3-6,12-14,17. 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:2. Matthew 6:1-6,16-18 ASH WEDNESDAY <i>fast</i>	
Thu 11th	Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Psalm 1:1-4,6. Luke 9:22-25	[Our Lady of Lourdes]
Fri 12th	Isaiah 58:1-9. Psalm 50:3-6,18-19. Matthew 9:14-15	
Sat 13th	Isaiah 58:9-14. Psalm 85:1-6. Luke 5:27-32	
Sun 14th	Deuteronomy 26:4-10. Psalm 90:1-2,10-15. Romans 10:8-13. Luke 4:1-13.	1st SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 15th	Leviticus 19:1-2,11-18. Psalm 18:8-10,15. Matthew 25:31-46	
Tue 16th	Isaiah 25:10-11. Psalm 33:4-7,16-19. Matthew 6:7-15	
Wed 17th	Jonah 3:1-10. Psalm 50:3-4,12-13,18-19. Luke 11:29-32	[Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order]
Thu 18th	Esther 14:1,3-5,10-14. Psalm 137:1-3,7-8. Matthew 7:7-12	
Fri 19th	Ezekiel 18:21-28. Psalm 129:1-8. Matthew 25:20-26	
Sat 20th	Deuteronomy 26:16-19. Psalm 26:16-19. Matthew 5:43-48	
Sun 21st	Genesis 15:12-17. Psalm 26:1,7-9,13-14. Philippians 3:17 – 4:1. Luke 9:28-36.	2nd SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 22nd	1 Peter 5:1-4. Psalm 22:1-6. Matthew 16:13-19.	CHAIR of St PETER
Tue 23rd	Isaiah 1:10,16-20. Psalm 49:8-9,16-17,21,23. Matthew 23:1-12	
Wed 24th	Jeremiah 18:18-20. Psalm 30:5-6,14-16. Matthew 20:17-28	
Thu 25th	Jeremiah 17:5-10. Psalm 1:1-4,6. Luke 16:19-31	
Fri 26th	Genesis 37:3-4,12-13,17-28. Psalm 104:16-21. Matthew 21:33-43,45-46	
Sat 27th	Micah 7:14-15,18-20. Psalm 102:1-4,9-12. Luke 15:1-3,11-32	
Sun 28th	Exodus 3,1-8,13-15. Psalm 102:1-4,6-8,11. 1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12. Luke 13:1-9	
Mon 29th	<i>or (Yr A)</i> Exodus 17:3-7. Psalm 94:1-2,6-9. Romans 5:1-2,5-8. John 4:5-42	3rd SUNDAY of LENT
Tue 1st Mar	2 Kings 5:1-15. Psalm 41:2-3 & 42:3-4. Luke 4:24-30	
Wed 2nd	Daniel 3:25,34-43. Psalm 24:4-9. Matthew 18:21-35	2nd [St David of Wales]
Thu 3rd	Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9. Psalm 147:12-13,15-16,19-20. Matthew 5:17-19	
Fri 4th	Jeremiah 7:94:1-2,6-9. Luke 11:14-23	
Sat 5th	Hosea 14:2-10. Psalm 80:6-11,14,17. Mark 12:28-34	
	Hosea 6:1-6. Psalm 50:3-4,18-21. Luke 18:9-14	
Sun 6th	Joshua 5:9-12. Psalm 33:2-7. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Luke 15:1-3,11-32	
Mon 7th	<i>or (Yr A)</i> 1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13. Psalm 22:1-6. Ephesians 5:8-14. John 9:1-41	4th SUNDAY of LENT
Tue 8th	Isaiah 65:17-21. Psalm 2,4-6,11-13. John 4:43-54	[St Perpetua & St Felicity]
Wed 9th	Ezekiel 47:1-9,12. Psalm 45:2-3,5-6,8-9. John 5:1-16	
Thu 10th	Isaiah 49:8-15. Psalm 144:8-9,13-14,17-18. John 5:17-30	[St Frances of Rome]
Fri 11th	Exodus 32:7-14. Psalm 105:19-23. John 5:31-47	
Sat 12th	Wisdom 2:1,12-22. Psalm 33:17-21,23. John 7:1-2,10,25-30	
	Jeremiah 11:18-20. Psalm 7:2-3,9-12. John 7:40-53	
Sun 13th	Isaiah 43:16-21. Psalm 125:1-6. Philippians 3:8-14. John 8:1-11	
Mon 14th	<i>or (Yr A)</i> Exodus 37:12-14. Psalm 129:1-8. Romans 8:8-11. John 11:1-45	5th SUNDAY of LENT
Tue 15th	Daniel 13:1-9,15-17,19-30,33-62. Psalm 22:1-6. John 8:12-20.	
Wed 16th	Numbers 21:4-9. Psalm 101:2-3,16-21. John 8:31-42	
Thu 17th	Daniel 3:14-20,91-92,95. Psalm Daniel 3:52-56. John 8:31-42	
Fri 18th	Genesis 17:3-9. Psalm 4-9. John 8:51-59	[St Patrick]
Sat 19th	Jeremiah 20:10-13. Psalm 17:2-7. John 10:31-42	
	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	
Sun 20th	Isaiah 50:4-7. Psalm 21:8-9,17-20,23-24. Philippians 2:6-11. Luke 22:14 – 23:56	PALM SUNDAY
Mon 21st	Isaiah 42:1-7. Psalm 26:1-3,13-14. John 12:1-11	MONDAY of HOLY WEEK
Tue 22nd	Isaiah 49:1-6. Psalm 70:1-6,15,17. John 13:21-33,36-38	TUESDAY of HOLY WEEK
	Cathedral Chrism Mass (Tuesday evening) <i>see page 20</i>	
Wed 23rd	Isaiah 50:4-9. Psalm 50:4-9. Psalm 68:8-10,21-22,31,33-34. Matthew 26:14-25	WEDNESDAY of HOLY WEEK

EASTER TRIDUUM - Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday - pages 20-23

Mon 28th	Acts 2:14,22-33. Psalm 15:1-2,5,7-11. Matthew 28:8-15	MONDAY in EASTER OCTAVE
Tue 29th	Acts 2:36-41. Psalm 32:4-5,18-20,22. John 20:11-18	TUESDAY in EASTER OCTAVE
Wed 30th	Acts 3:1-10. Psalm 104:1-4,6-9. Luke 24:13-35	WEDNESDAY in EASTER OCTAVE
Thu 31st	Acts 3:11-26. Psalm 8:2,5-9. Luke 24:33-48	THURSDAY in EASTER OCTAVE

'His smile came from his heart'

FATHER James White CSSp died in The Gambia, the land he loved, on 28th February 1996 – twenty years ago.

Ten years after Fr White's death, Fr Anthony C. Mbanefo wrote an affectionate tribute to him, which we reprint here.

MEMORIES of Fr James White are still green in the hearts of those who knew him.

Fr White's old tool-store in the priest's house at Brikama has long since gone. His orchard, like the garden of Eden, yielded plenty of fruit in due season, which he gave to his parishioners at Brikama and their friends. But the orchard, too, has gone. In its place is the 1,000-seat church built in 2001 and opened by Bishop Cleary in February 2002.

Only those who have built something more durable than material monuments, something at the level of the spirit, live on when their bodies have decayed and the structures associated with them have been replaced. Fr White was one such man. His humility and warm personality made an instant impression on all who met him. He loved people, and was accessible to everyone without religious or racial distinction. To everyone he was gentle, kind, patient and generous. He was so much at home with people and situations - even the most complex and demanding - that you hardly ever saw him agitated. His smile evidently came from his heart, a heart attuned to the heart of Jesus.



We can learn from him

Many of us are exploring ways of helping to move the Gambian nation forward.

The life of Fr James White, an Irish-born missionary who arrived in Banjul in October 1945 and spent 51 of his 81 years in this world in the service of God and of the Gambian people, is a pattern for us.

Fr White teaches us to work. Many young people, and even some older ones, are inactive; yet they want manna to fall from heaven for them. Fr White came and worked the way he did to spread the Christian faith and to help the people. He and many of his fellow missionaries understood that even

prayer doesn't make things happen when one has left undone the things he ought to have done. As Scripture clearly says, 'Let him who refuses to work not eat.' (2 Thessalonian.3:10).

Often our young people display enthusiasm at the start of a project, only to slack off. The true spirit of work involves initiative, dedication, diligence and discipline. Fr White would tell you that he succeeded not because his work was easy, but because he kept going. Many of us who encountered Fr White knew that it was never easy for him at any stage. Not in Fulabantang, not in Sambang, not in Banjul, not in Brikama. He persevered because he believed in success and in the future of The Gambia.

Builder of bridges

Fr White was so loving and friendly that he attracted a large circle of friends and beneficiaries, many of whom were not Christian. His love and generosity endeared him to people, and endeared people to him. He teaches us that what it means to be a religious leader in a society of religious pluralism. We need to build bridges of kindness and love.

I remember during my ten years in The Gambia many occasions when good Muslims told me that their respect for Christians owed much to their encounters with Fr White and other missionaries, or to their schooling when Bishop Michael Cleary, before he became Bishop of Banjul, was Principal of St Augustine's High School. Religion is a matter of the heart.

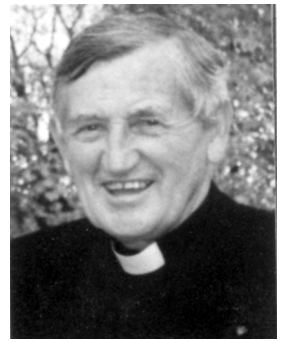
Fr White spoke Mandinka, Fula and Wolof. He lived among Gambians to his life's end, and is buried in Gambian soil. He was a great soul, and a friend that The Gambia remembers and honours.

Raiser of spirits

We can learn from Fr White how to cheer others through kindness, a sense of humour and good nature. We may not always be able to solve the problems that people bring to us, but it is worthwhile if we are able to raise their spirits.

I remember my early days in The Gambia, in late 1994 and early 1995, when I had recently arrived from Nigeria as a young missionary, I sometimes felt like a fish out of water. My spirits rose whenever I encountered Fr White. He would hold my right palm with his, and look straight at me with his gentle, confident smile. How I miss him.

Fr Anthony C. Mbanefo MSP spent ten years in The Gambia, serving at the Cathedral and in Njongon before being transferred to Brikama, where he was Parish Priest for eight years. He left the diocese in December 2004.



The Pope's Prayer Intentions

FEBRUARY

- That we may take good care of creation – a gift freely given – cultivating and protecting it for future generations.
- That opportunities may increase for dialogue and encounter between the Christian faith and the peoples of Asia.

MARCH

- That families in need may receive the necessary support, and children may grow up in healthy and peaceful environments.
- That Christians who are discriminated against or persecuted may remain strong and faithful to the Gospel, thanks to the incessant prayer of the Church.



Some weekday celebrations in February & March

Tuesday 2nd February: The Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas)

IN the Law of Moses (Exodus 13:12) a first-born male child had to be redeemed by an offering of five shekels in the Temple at Jerusalem (Numbers 8:15-17). Mary took her infant Son Jesus with her when she went to the Temple for the rite of purification in accordance with Jewish custom (Leviticus 12:1-6).

Candlemas is a feast rich in significance. On this day we carry lighted candles (as at the Easter Vigil) to honour Jesus as light of the world and in token that we are witnesses to his light. We join Anna and Simon in saluting the Child Jesus. But we anticipate Lent when we hear Simon's prophecy about the sword, foretelling Jesus' future suffering and the suffering of his mother.

Saturday 6th February: St Paul Miki *martyr*

PAUL Miki was born around 1562 into a rich Japanese family. He was educated by Jesuits, and later joined the Society of Jesus himself. The Japanese government feared the influence of the Jesuits, and persecuted them. Miki and others were imprisoned. He and fellow Catholic prisoners were forced to walk 966 kilometres from Kyoto to Nagasaki, the city which had the most Christian converts. There, on 5th February 1597, Miki was crucified. From the cross he preached his final sermon, assuring his executioners that he forgave them. Alongside Paul 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.



Monday 8th February: St Josephine Bakhita *religious*

JOSEPHINE was born around 1869 in Darfur in Sudan. At the age of nine she was kidnapped by slave-traders and sold in the slave-market. Eventually she found herself working as a slave for the mother of a general, and was flogged every day, bearing 144 scars throughout her life. In 1882 she was bought by the Italian consul, who returned to Italy. Here, Bakhita came to know a totally different kind of 'master': Jesus Christ. 'I am definitively loved, and whatever happens to me, I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good.' When she was about to be taken back to Sudan, Bakhita refused. In January 1890 she was baptised and confirmed and received her first Holy Communion. In December 1896 she took vows in the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters, and from that time she made several journeys round Italy to promote the missions. She died in 1947.



Thursday 11th February: Our Lady of Lourdes

IN 1858 the Immaculate Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous near Lourdes in France, in the grotto at Massabielle. Through this poor girl Mary called sinners to repentance, and there arose in the Church a marvellous spirit of prayer and charity, especially in helping the poor and the sick. Today is observed as World Day for the Sick.

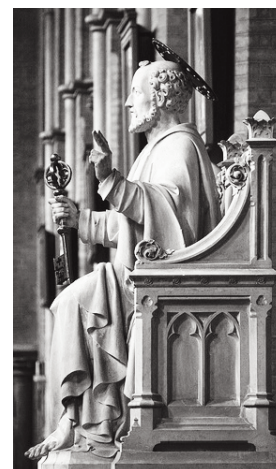
Monday 22nd February: The Chair of St Peter

THE FEAST of the Chair of St Peter has been kept in Rome since the 4th century. As we make our annual Lenten journey, it provides us with an opportunity to give thanks for our unity with the Pope and with fellow Catholics throughout the world, and to pray for the preservation and strengthening of this unity.

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

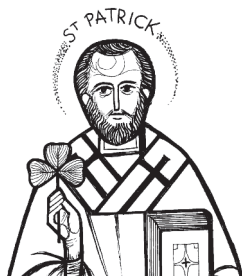
POLYCARP, Bishop of Smyrna, was burnt alive about the year 155 because he refused to curse Christ and accept that the Roman Emperor was divine.

Polycarp declared: 'I have served [Christ] for 86 years and he has done me no harm. How can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?'



Thursday 17th March: St Patrick *bishop*

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). After being ordained he returned to Ireland, founding the Diocese of Armagh and spending the rest of his life preaching the Christian faith. He is the patron saint of Ireland. Today we give thanks for all the Irish priests of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, and Irish sisters, living and departed, who for over a century have served the Catholic mission in The Gambia.



Omni Sancti et Sanctae Dei, intercedite pro nobis

All holy men and women of God, intercede for us

Saturday 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: one of his emblems is a lily. He was a descendant of the House of David (Matthew 1:1-16). In the Greek New Testament, Joseph is described as a *teckton* (craftsman), usually translated as 'carpenter'.

Because Joseph was so close to his foster-son Jesus, practising the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience, he is an example to everyone, and especially to members of religious orders.

Today we pray for the Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy and St Joseph of Cluny, who for many years have offered devoted prayer and service to the Catholic mission in The Gambia.



Do Catholics worship statues?

By PA GEORGE MENDY, seminarian at the Spiritan Seminary, Ghana

THE CATHOLIC Church has been accused of 'idol worship'. Some other Christians say that they pity Catholics because we are worshippers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and so will not go to heaven.

Such critics have a limited knowledge of Holy Scripture, or misunderstand it and know little about Sacred Tradition.

The ambiguity here lies in the word 'worship'. What does 'worship' mean to Catholics?

The term 'worship' has its origin in Greek. The term *Latreia* refers to the supreme worship due to God alone. *Douleia* is the homage paid to the saints. *Hyperdouleia* is the special homage paid to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen in his book 'The World's First Love' refers to Mary as 'the woman whom even God dreamed of before the world was made'.

Martin Luther, father of the Protestant reformation and the founder of the Lutheran Church, declared of Mary: 'She is full of grace, proclaimed to be entirely without sin... God's grace fills her with everything good and makes her devoid of all evil... God is with her, meaning that all she did or left undone is divine and the action of God in her. Moreover, God girded and protected her from all that might be hurtful to her.'

If Catholics do not worship saints, not even the Blessed Virgin Mary, it follows that they do not and cannot worship statues. Catholics do not pray to statues. Some do pray in front of statues - because that helps them concentrate during prayer.

No conflict with the Second Commandment

The making of statues does not violate the second of the Ten Commandments, as is sometimes alleged. Exodus 20:4-5 says: 'You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them...' (See also Deuteronomy 5:8-10).

It is unlikely that this commandment is a total prohibition of images. Two golden cherubs (angels) were constructed over the Ark of the Covenant. In Exodus 25:18 God commanded

the Israelites: 'You shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat.'

In Exodus 37, Bezalel, acting under the instruction of God and Moses, made the Ark of the Covenant and its decorations.

Like the Jews, who have never made any image of Yahweh, Catholics have never attempted any image of God. Images of saints, however, are a different matter, since there is no prohibition on the making of images of human beings. Such images or pictures portray believers from past generations who through perseverance and God's grace have successfully run the race and attained the prize. If their statues help some people to think of them, emulate their saintly lives and pray, there can be nothing wrong with that.

'Mary's five-word homily'

As related in John 19:26-27, Jesus committed us to his mother when he said to her, 'Woman, behold your son...' and to the disciple he loved, 'There is your mother.' This does not only refer to John, but to the rest of mankind.

John 2:1-8 tells us of Mary interceding for us with her Son, when she asked his help. Her powerful homily was preached to the servants in five words: 'Do whatever he tells you.' (John 2:5b). This intercession she still makes for us with her Son.

When we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary we imitate God our Father. What did the Almighty Father do? He placed his only Son in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as though to say to us, 'Please, if you are wise, place yourselves in those arms.' There is nothing wrong if we emulate what God has done.

We are so affectionate and attached to Mary because the bond between a mother and her child is the strongest and most penetrating. Nine months in the womb is just one part of it. Motherhood is biological, emotional and intellectual. The flesh, the heart and the mind are the centre of human feelings and thoughts. A mother is more, and gives more, than her DNA and nine months in her womb. Catholic devotion to Mary is nothing more than a logical extension of a child's personal intention for his own mother. And the vocation of the Mother of God is to care for God's children.

References: 1. Joseph Osei-Bonsu Takaradi: 'Catholic Beliefs and Practices'. Franciscan Publications, Ghana 2000.

2 Talk by Fr Avea Maria on a similar topic.



Migrants raped, left for dead and 'buried like dogs'

MIGRANTS have often endured horrific violence which make the challenges of a desperate flight across the Mediterranean look easy by comparison.

Thousands of migrants fleeing persecution attempt the perilous journey each year, with many forced to trade their life-savings in exchange for a place on inflatable boats used by people-smugglers to reach Europe.

One of them, a 20-year-old woman named Fedussa, has revealed the life-threatening dangers facing refugees and migrants who risk the journey. Fedussa was born in Somalia, and forced to flee Ethiopia after her father and brothers were killed amid escalating violence in the country.

She felt she had no option but to pay a gang of people smugglers \$4,800 to sneak her across the Mediterranean and into Europe. She endured violence, starvation and death threats from gun-wielding bandits during a 4,000 mile-long journey across five countries.

Fedussa gave an account of her journey to *Medecins Sans Frontières*, whose search and rescue ships found her last year, in June.

Father and two brothers dead

'Originally I am from Belet Weyne in Somalia, but for the past three years I have been living in Ethiopia,' she said. 'My father is dead. We don't know where al-Shabaab took him or where they killed him. We don't know where he is buried.'

'My oldest brother is also dead. We don't know where the fatal shot came from. My elder brother drowned crossing the sea last year.'

'My mother was held for six months by al-Shabaab. We thought she was dead... She was imprisoned and beaten regularly with sticks and threatened with knives.'

Fedussa's family history is nothing out of the ordinary in Somalia, where extremist groups reign supreme.

'My mother told us that we would stay as long as we had a roof over our heads; but once I realised my mother couldn't provide for us, I decided to try my own luck.'

A better life - or a watery death?

The Mediterranean has been the back-drop to one of the most volatile humanitarian crises in Europe's history. A record number of over 350,000 migrants - nearly three times more than 2014 - crossed the EU border last year, according to the border agency, Frontex.

Offering the chance of a better life or a watery death, the crossing made by 107,500 migrants last July alone is a last resort for the desperate refugees who sell their life's possessions to buy a spot on one of the inflatables.

Most refugees escape their resident countries with help from smuggling rings who demand thousands of US dollars for passage across the EU border.

'The smugglers demanded \$4,800 from each person for the journey. Once I told my mother what my journey would cost,

she sold the house and paid the \$4,800 for the trip to Tripoli,' said Fedussa.

She began her journey on foot, having to walk for 18 hours after evading border guards in Sudan. Lacking legal documents to authorise their journey, refugees regularly find themselves in violent exchanges with criminal gangs and border guards.

'At the Sudanese border, we were stopped by police. We explained that we were from Somalia and were escaping war and poverty, and we pleaded with them to let us go, but they refused. Some of our group made a run for it, and the police fired on them as well as on the minibus we were travelling in. Some of the migrants were hurt, shot in the leg.'

Telling lies to helpless women

The threats facing Fedussa were not limited to fire-arms. The smuggling rings are male-dominated, and Fedussa recalls: 'On the journey to Tripoli, many things happened, including rape.'

At night, the smugglers separated the men and women. Two smugglers said to the women, 'Come with us and we will give you food and blankets.' We knew this was a lie; they wanted the women to go with them so that they could rape them.'

'We told them we were not cold or hungry,' says Fedussa. 'But the smugglers returned, this time with two men carrying guns. They took away my friend Qani. When the driver found her, she was traumatised. For 24 hours she was unresponsive. We thought she was dead. Later Qani told me that she remembers resisting and fighting, but after the sixth, she lost consciousness.'

'412 men in one room, 116 women in another'

The next stop in Fedussa's journey was Tripoli in Libya, where she was held in a concrete compound in the middle of the desert for three months. 'There were 412 men in one room, and 116 women in another.'

Amidst threats that they would be 'buried like dogs', sharing living quarters with 'lice and other parasites' and deaths within their group, Fedussa said that at this point she had lost all hope.

'One Somali woman who was six months pregnant died of starvation, and her unborn baby died, too,' Fedussa said.

'Nine other Somalis died from hunger. When the smugglers bury people in the Sahara, they don't even bother digging a grave. They use their hands or plates to dig a shallow depression and then they cover the body with sand. When the wind blows, the sand is blown away and the body is exposed.'

In Tripoli, Fedussa made her second payment of \$2,100 to cross the sea.

Even then she was yet to get away. 'Just because you've paid the smugglers, it doesn't mean that you can leave immediately. They register your name, your name goes into a draw, and you only go if your name comes up.'



‘Do what you want with us’

‘Some people paid, and others in utter despair told the smugglers, ‘We can’t afford to pay; so do what you want with us.’

Eventually they made it to the coast. Physically and mentally exhausted, Fedussa recalled her sense of futility as she and 120 other refugees boarded a small inflatable boat with an out-board motor.

They were given 20 five-litre bottles of water and some biscuits. ‘Most people boarded the boat thinking they would not survive. Very few people believed they would make it alive.’

Unlike her brother and many of her compatriots, Fedussa made it to Europe. She was rescued by a *Medicins Sans Frontières* vessel on 7th June 2015.

‘At first I didn’t believe it – I felt I was hallucinating. I got on board and fell fast asleep. Only when I woke up did I realise that I was finally safe.’

Though Fedussa’s journey is at its end, tens of thousands more refugees are beginning theirs each week. Countries such as Greece and Italy have repeatedly expressed concern over not being able to support the influx of asylum seekers.

Reprinted from The Catholic Herald, London

The smugglers moved out under the cover of night. But as they got ready to leave the compound, a group of bandits surrounded them and opened fire. The assailants rounded up the refugees and forced them into three rubbish trucks. ‘It was difficult to breathe because the doors were closed and it smelled so bad.’

The smugglers’ cargo was ransomed at \$10,000 - a sum demanded from the refugees as soon as they got back to the compound.

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The woman caught in adultery

JESUS went to Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the Temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’

They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them: ‘Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’

And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.

When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’

She said, ‘No one, sir.’

And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.’

John 8:1-11

The Gospel for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, 13th March

Our illustration is taken from an oil painting by the Italian artist Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, better-known as Guercino (1591-1666), in Dulwich Art Gallery, London.