



# THE DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER

*Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter*

## Remarkable Gambian Priest Ordained In 1924

**The Spectacular Ordination, Spectacular Priesthood, And Sudden Death  
of Rev. Fr. Joseph Charles Mendy, The First Indigenous Priest to be  
Ordained on the Gambian Soil**

### **Editorial Hint**

**Apparent Lack Of Diversity  
And Inclusion in Gambia Leadership**

## **Banjul in the Sixties**

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

Editorial  
Hint

# Apparent Lack of Diversity and Inclusion in Gambian Leadership

## Diversity and Inclusion Must Add Up For Successful Governance

**I**t is a great wisdom for every societal or national leadership to strive and work towards a deep-rooted cross-sectional parity in its team appointments; a wisdom that The Gambia should endeavor to emulate. In present-day The Gambia, there is an increased people's expectation of: Religious balance in all government's appointments; Gender balance in all government's appointments; Ethnic balance in all government's appointments; and, in the main, there is also need for a universal demographic balance that will, as well, ensure that young people are not excluded from the mainstream of the governance of the nation. A system of leadership in a heterogeneous society like The Gambia that is bereft of these indispensable ingredients parades an equation of bad governance.

Diversity and inclusion should thus be brought to bear in the nation's code of practice for the governance of all state bodies, from; Cabinet Ministers to diplomacy, to Office of the President, to the parastatals, and to other senior appointments such as in the military and security forces, etc. It has been evidently recognized that one of the most effective ways to enhance every public governance is by having a diverse leadership team. The essence of the diversity in the leadership team make-up is to build a setting of leadership that is reflective of the fullness of the society, which is defined by its diverse components. A leadership team that carries this principle will have in it a range of perspectives, insights and challenges needed to support fairness and good decision-making.

In our Gambian leadership system, it is noticeable that, despite increasing demands for diversity (for example, gender, tribe and religion), our leaders are still slow to create room for it in their team composition. For instance, in today's Gambian leadership structure, there is a prominent evidence of the divorce of Christians from the mainstream of the nation's governance system. For this, Gambian Christians have been crying out for ages, yet our successive governments have remained adamant. But, it seems the current regime of President Barrow, which was largely helped to come to power by Christians' activism during the nation's hour of great need in 2016, is earning the worst score in the diversity-in-leadership inclusion score-board of the nation. How many Christians are found in President Barrow's leadership hierarchy or cabinet? Put, differently, what is the percentage of Christians in the religious groups'-constituents of President Barrow's government? A careful observer notes that, it is less than 1%! Is this not outrageous? Is it not an undemocratic and primitive practice in this modern age and in a secular state like The Gambia? This is why a large proportion of Christians continue to echo and re-echo that President Barrow has disappointed, or in fact, failed Christians. Negating the power in the Gambian Christians' political force will be grossly oxymoronic. The days when Christians shy away from playing a role in politics are over. The events that underscored the eclipse of the former regime should be a reliable pointer to the social and political capacity and capabilities of Gambian Christians.

Diversity and inclusion can bring several large-scale benefits to a society. Hence, the value and increasing importance placed on diversity in every modern societal structure. Diversity inclusion brings forth trust and stability in societal leadership. In fact, more informed and diverse decision-making, diverse perspectives, diverse experience, increased innovativeness and critical thinking come from inclusion. Also, a demographically-diverse leadership team is more likely to ensure fairness and rebuke discrimination; foster the creation of role models for others; facilitate the building of a deeper understanding of, and access to, desirable citizen's needs and aspirations; and incorporating new perspectives and generate learning, national knowledge, strategy and development experience.

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Trending

ADVENT  
WREATH?"Meaning of  
The Advent  
Wreath  
and  
Associated  
Candles

**T**he subject-matter of Advent and Advent Wreath is an extract from the work of Joel Ryan, a LA-based children’s and young adult author. According to him.

Advent is a seasonal tradition often celebrated in the Christian and Catholic faith to prepare for the arrival or coming of Jesus Christ. The advent wreath is used to symbolically commemorate newness, eternal life, and the death and resurrection of the promised Messiah. It is often coupled with the lighting of candles and prayers recited in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Advent traditions will vary by country, but the heart behind Advent is mostly the same across cultures and denominations. Derived from the Latin word “adventus”, the word advent means “arrival” or “coming”. In this instance, it is used to indicate set time(s) during the month of December to commemorate the coming of the Messiah in Jesus Christ. Advent, like Christmas, is a season of expectation, celebration, and hope, connected to the birth of the prophesied Messiah and the promise of Christ’s subsequent ministry.

Advent wreaths were fashioned out of evergreens, twisted together in a circle to symbolize continuous life across the seasons, from the death of winter to the new life of spring. Naturally, this earthly symbolism also points to the spiritual symbolism of newness and the promise of eternal life and salvation offered through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). The circular nature of the wreath, similar to a wedding ring or band, is further meant to reflect the unending love of Christ and eternal life offered through salvation. The elements of the Advent wreath reflect the new life and eternal salvation offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who we now celebrate.

About the associated Advent Candles, in almost all Advent traditions, the lighting of candles is also a prominent feature of each week’s commemorative celebration. Some candles are placed within or near the wreath itself. Other times, they are lit separately on each Sunday beginning four weeks prior to Christmas. Candles and the light they produce are a reflection of the light that came into the world with the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Some traditions light a single candle on each of the 24 days leading up to Christmas. Other traditions place one large candle in the center of the wreath and light it every day of December until Christmas. The most common tradition, however, typically uses four candles. Each candle is lit on one of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. The color of these candles can vary, but it is common that the first, second, and fourth candle is purple, while the third candle is rose-colored, red, or a pinkish hue. In some cases, all the candles are red, blue, or white, and often, a fifth white candle is placed in the middle of the wreath and lit on Christmas Day itself. Catholic tradition even states that the four candles, representing the four weeks of Advent, each stand for 1,000 years to total the 4,000 years from the time of Adam to the birth of the Messiah.

In most traditions, the lighting of the four candles (or multiple candles) is meant to be done as a family and will often be used to reflect on the hope, faith, joy, peace, light, and purity that came into the world with the gift of the Messiah. Families will typically light the candle together, often encouraging children to take part in the celebration. Many modern churches light an Advent candle during Sunday services to prepare for Christmas as a church family.

Regardless of specific Advent traditions and differences in how it is celebrated across cultures and countries, Advent is a time for all believers and families to commemorate the arrival of the Messiah, prepare for his second coming, and celebrate the joy of Christmas together.

*Joel Ryan is a LA-based children’s and young adult author who teaches writing and communications at Life Pacific University. As a former youth pastor, he has a heart for children and young adults and is passionate about engaging youth through writing and storytelling. His blog, Perspectives Off the Page, discusses the creative and spiritual life through story and art. This article is part of our larger Advent resource library centered around the events leading up to the birth of Jesus Christ. We hope these articles help you understand the meaning and story behind important Christian holidays and dates and encourage you as you take time to reflect on all that God has done for us through his Son Jesus Christ!*

Cover Story

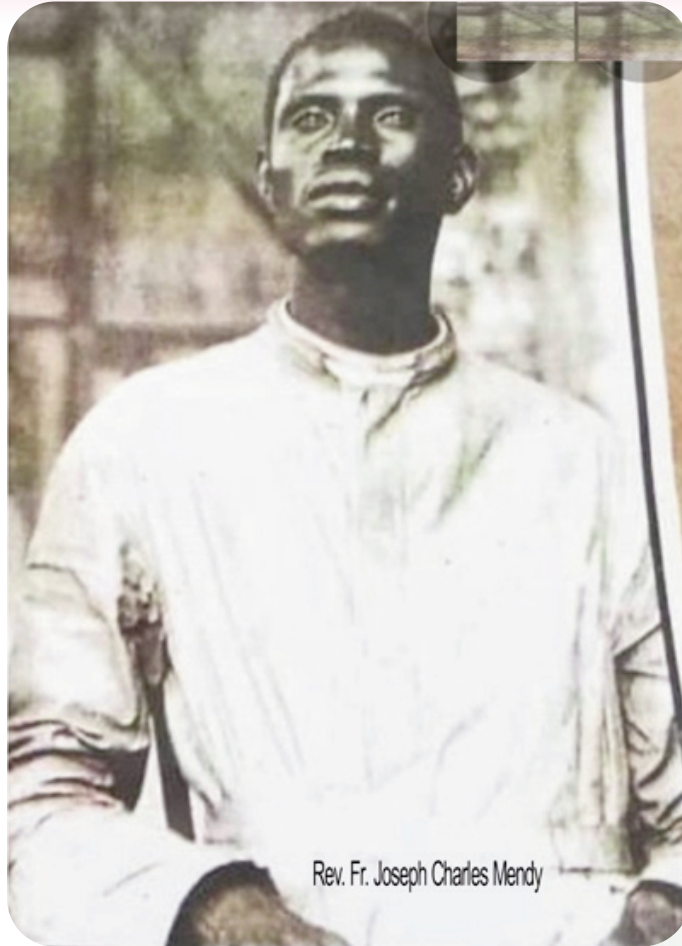
# Remarkable Gambian Priest Ordained in 1924

The Spectacular Ordination, Spectacular Priesthood, and Sudden Death of Rev. Fr. Joseph Charles Mendy, the First Indigenous Priest to be Ordained on the Gambian Soil

**J**oseph Charles Mendy was a Gambian Roman Catholic priest who served the Gambian Roman Catholic Church for eight years (1924-1932) only; his career was cut short when he unexpectedly died during an operation, and was widely considered a saint by his contemporaries. However, there seem to be a universal opinion that, probably no priest in his country has set a finer example of personal holiness and selfless service than Fr. Joseph Charles Mendy, who was ordained ninety-six years ago in Bathurst, in what is now the Cathedral of our Lady of the Assumption.

The establishment of the church in Senegal ignited an uninterrupted presence of Catholicism in The Gambia. The migration of the people to the settlement on Bathurst since 1816, include Catholics and others open to becoming Catholic. Two Catholic Priests took residence in Bathurst by 1849 to serve this population and the church began its slow but steady growth. It was concentrated in Banjul but around 1876 it began looking beyond to the Kombos and provinces. By 1905, a catholic Priest named Fr. John Meehan took up his appointment in the colony of Gambia. It was his destiny to maintain and give quiet growth to the church. In 1931, the Holy See declared Gambia "Sui Juris" and Fr. Meehan as ecclesiastical superior. Under him, the church was to develop towards an independent mission and diocese. The migration of people to the new settlement at St. Mary's Island since 1816 included Catholics, who were mostly Wolofs from Goree and St. Louis, Serers from Saloum, and others such as Jolas and Manjagos. The Akus, for the most part, were solidly Methodist, and the Mandinkas firmly Muslim. The Bathurst church seemed to be a living organization, for as the Catholic community increased in number, so the church building expanded to accommodate them. In 1864, two aisles were added, one to each side, thus widening the church to 16 meters. The choir gallery was constructed in 1881.

Fr. Ronarc'h (a French priest) and Fr. Warlop (a Belgian priest who had built the mission house at Dakar in 1846) arrived in Bathurst on 18th January, 1848. It seems that they



arrived unannounced and had to spend their first few days in very poor accommodation, a grass hut with neither door nor window. Later, a mulato woman, Mam Marie Sang quickly made a house on Buckle Street available to them. The location today of this first mission house in Bathurst is the Maurel and Prom property, next to St. Joseph's Convent. Gradually, the Catholic population began to grow, one by one at first, and then, as they, the arrivals from Dakar heard the almost forgotten Wolof hymns being sung, more came. The first high Mass was celebrated on Easter Sunday of that year (8<sup>th</sup> April) and the converted room, which served as a chapel, proved too small for the large number that came.

There were sixty-nine baptisms recorded in 1848 with the first, that of a two year old girl, Maria Aysley, celebrated by Fr. Warlop on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1848. Catholic piety that had been dormant for thirty years or more, now burst forth in great acts of devotion. Soon, there were forty-seven members enrolled in the first church society, The Archconfraternity of Notre Dame Des Victories. In fact, the first large statue is now located in St. Martin's Church, Kartong.

When Bishop Kobe visited Bathurst from Dakar on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1849, Fr. Ronarc'h had already begun negotiations for a property at Hagan Street with Mr. Abraham Goddard. Fr. Kobe concluded the deal and paid 2,500 French francs. This is the property on which the present-day Cathedral and House now stand. Then, the area was not much inhabited apart from some grass huts. The building of a chapel and house began quickly with the Bishop blessing the chapel's foundation stone on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May the same year. In a little over two months, the buildings were completed, at a cost of 11,500 French francs. The sight of these new buildings indicated to the people that the Priests and Catholicism were here to stay. In February 1850, the foundation stone for a bigger church to replace the chapel, was laid and duly consecrated on the Feast of the Annunciation.



**Father Joseph Charles Mendy with his Father in Bathurst**  
 Ordained in Bathurst June 22nd, 1924. Died in Bathurst July 12th, 1932

In 1863, Dakar was separated from the two Guineas and Msgr. Aloysius Kobe became first vicar apostolic of Dakar. The Bathurst Mission remained under Dakar and, hence, under Msgr. Kobes. He had very ambitious plans for his entire vicarate and demanded more laborers from Europe for the Lords' Vineyard in West Africa. The mortality rate for Africa was frightful. Of the 108 Holy Ghost missionaries sent to Africa from 1842 to 1862, 42 had died and 34 had to leave due to sickness or discouragement. Thus, the search for indigenous priests became an issue of great necessity. Earlier, a Gambian priest, Fr. Lacombe, who was born either in Bathurst or Albreda in 1852, of a French father and a Fula mother, was ordained in Goree in 1852, worked first among the Serer people of Joal. In 1859, he was Rector of the Dakar Seminary. He came back to Bathurst in 1864 and spent 12 years in Bathurst, 10 of these as superior of the mission. Also, another Gambian priest, Fr. Samba, had been ordained in Rome in 1869 and appointed to Joal. For 55 years after the last ordination of a Gambian priest, Fr. Samba, the local church did not witness the emergence of another indigenous priest. Then came Fr. Joseph Charles Mendy, who is largely viewed as a unique indigenous Priest. He was locally groomed unlike his predecessors. He was ordained and worked in the Gambia.

Fr. Joseph Charles Mendy was the first Gambian Priest who was trained locally to serve the local Church. He was a product of the early Missionaries' zeal to establish a local Church manned by the local people.

Fr. Joseph Mendy had his elementary school education in Bathurst now Banjul under the Missionaries. He was sent to the Junior Seminary in Ngasobil in 1909 and had his entire formation in Senegal. He was ordained on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1924 in Bathurst. According to archival materials, people of all denominations attended his ordination and many Priests and Religious from Senegal were present. A then Spiritan Journal, 'Journal de la communauté', quoted the words of Fr. Meehan, then Head of the Catholic Mission in Bathurst: "in truth, the day that the Lord hath made, a red letter day in the History of Bathurst, which witnesses for the first time, the ordination of a priest and then it is one of our own, a native of Bathurst."

The Journal of the Spiritan Congregation also reported that never before had there been so many priests in Gambia for an event. According to several accounts given about the ordination of Fr. Mendy, the day was truly a joyful one. According to one of the accounts, it began with a soft rain, which was widely seen as a sign of blessing. By 8am, the solemn pontifical High Mass had begun. The Vicar-Apostolic was assisted by many Priests not only from Bathurst, but Dakar and Casamance, as well. The Church was full to capacity. Eighty extra seats were provided by the master carpenter, Gabriel Njie, who had the ingenious invention of drop seats added to the end of the benches. Still, the congregation overflowed into Hagan Street and the environs. The day's festivities continued in the evening with vespers at 5 o'clock followed by a procession of the Blessed Sacrament. No doubt, the festivities continued long into the night, not

only in the Mission House and Convent, but also in every catholic compound and home on the island.

With the legacy laid by Fr. Mendy and its attendant ripples, Fr. Meehan saw that he needed to look no longer to France or Ireland for priests, but rather to the families of his own parish and so he made a wish on the day of Fr. Mendy's ordination: 'may his example stimulate many others to follow in his footsteps by offering their lives to God for the uplifting of their countrymen'. Fr. Mendy served as a parish priest in Hagan Street, and soon acquired a saintly reputation because of his piety. He was a welcome addition to the priests in Bathurst. Fr. Meehan's prayer for him, that he be a good, faithful and devoted priest whose sole ambition in life would be to make God better known and loved, was truly heard, and the accounts of his holiness of life and acts of charity are numerous. Oral history states that Fr. Mendy lived an ascetic life, spent much of his time in prayer and shared all he had with the poor. The same oral tradition states that on several occasions, unannounced visitors to the Church found him in a levitated state, lost in prayer. Though this claim is not substantiated in written sources, the narrative indicates the respect and standing Fr. Mendy had acquired amongst the Bathurst congregation.

The ordination of Fr. Mendy on the soil of Banjul instigated new hopes for the future of the church in Banjul, as well as commendations for the great works of Fr. Meehan. Thus, following a brief visit by Archbishop Hensley, the Apostolic delegate, the Holy See declared Gambia a mission territory sui juris (independent Mission of Gambia). Five months after that, Fr. Meehan was nominated as 1<sup>st</sup> Ecclesiastical Superior of Gambia (16<sup>th</sup> October, 1931). The transition is reflected in the writing of 'The Mission' journal: 'the last entry in French was on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1931. From January 1<sup>st</sup>, the journal was written in English'.

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1932, the publication of the nomination of Fr. Meehan as Ordinary of the Mission was made in Bathurst. It read as follows: 'As the mission of The Gambia entrusted to the Fathers of The Congregation of the Holy Ghost has recently been established as sui juris, the sacred congregation, Propaganda fide, in virtue of the powers conferred on it by His Holiness Pope Pius XI, and in consideration of the Good testimony which is reported concerning the revered J. Meehan, member of Congregation of the Holy Ghost, does, by this present Decree elect and name him Superior of the said Mission of The Gambia. He shall have power to regulate all matters pertaining to the direction of the Mission in accordance with the Decree of the said Congregation, Propaganda Fide, and the powers conferred upon it. Following the reading of the decree, Fr. Meehan imparted the papal Benediction for the first time to all the faithful. The ecclesiastical territory of Gambia that would grow into

prefecture apostolic and ultimately become a diocese had begun.

Only a short time passed after the ordination of Fr. Mendy before the community's Priests began to be struck by tragedies. One of the Priests then serving in Bathurst, Fr. Pellegrini travelled to France in 1925. He died suddenly from a heart attack in the Motherhouse of the Spiritans on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June. The News did not arrive in Bathurst until July. The whole community was shocked by the news. The bell was tolled and Mass was offered for the repose of his soul. Also, from the start of July 1932, Fr. Mendy began to feel unwell. Due to, no doubt, his asceticism, he did not speak of it to anyone. By 12<sup>th</sup> July the pains were too great, and the doctor was called and he diagnosed a blockage of the intestine, and insisted that an operation was necessary to relieve the blockage. Fr. Mendy consented reluctantly. The operation was conducted, but the sickness was too far advanced. Twelve hours after the operation, at 2am on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1932, Fr. Mendy breathed his last. In spite of great pain, he had received the last anointing and the viaticum, his food for journey of death, with wonderful devotion. The church bell tolled the sad news to the Catholic community and the entire population.

The tributes paid to Fr. Mendy after his death suggest that he was a committed and compassionate Priest. The Spiritans Journal records: "The mission lost in him a hardworking and good missionary." His German colleague Fr. Aloyse Haegy (1922-1946) called him "a priest who was very dedicated to his work." Oral tradition has given its own strong appraisal of Fr. Mendy, stating that many of Mendy's contemporaries, both Muslims and Christians, considered him to be a saint. It was clear that among the faithful, Fr. Joseph Mendy was already canonized. As often happens, many events in his life only become known after his death. He was a man of intense interior life. It was said that on some occasions Fr Mendy was discovered praying alone in the church in a levitated state. Once, when someone entered his room unannounced, he found Fr Mendy lost in prayer an in a levitated state. The intruder was told gently but firmly not to tell anyone what he had seen. Tell the vision to no man '. (Mark 9:9). In addition, he was perceived by many as a man of charity. It is narrated that he never turned the needy away without giving them something to eat from the kitchen or to wear from his wardrobe. According to sources, sometimes when his own means were not sufficient, he would give away some of the Mission's property to the poor, to the annoyance of his Superior.

***Fr Joseph Mendy was a living example of the evangelical counsel; 'Go sell all that you have, and give the money to the poor. Then come, follow me'; (Mark10:21).***

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## AN AFRICAN AMONG THE NEW CATHOLIC CHURCH'S CARDINALS – WHO'S WHO?

**Who are the 13 new Cardinals from around the world by Pope Francis at the consistory on November 28<sup>th</sup>, in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican? They hail from 8 nations of Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe.**

**Cardinal Mario Grech of Malta** is the General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops. The 63 year old former Bishop of Gozo was ordained a priest on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1984.

**Cardinal Marcello Semeraro from Italy's Apulia region** is the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the Vatican. Ordained a priest on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1971, the 72-year old cardinal taught dogmatic theology and ecclesiology following his studies in Rome's Pontifical Lateran University.

**Cardinal Antoine Kambanda, Archbishop of Kigali (Rwanda)**, lost his family, except a brother, in the genocidal war of 1994. After his studies in Burundi, Uganda and Kenya, where he also did his philosophical studies, he returned to Rwanda. The 62 year old Cardinal was ordained a priest by Saint John Paul II in Rwanda 1990, after which he taught in the Minor Seminary of Ndera (Kigali).

**Cardinal Wilton Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, USA**, is from Chicago, Illinois, where he completed his philosophical studies. Ordained a priest in 1973, he obtained a doctorate in liturgy from Rome's Pontifical Athenaeum of Saint Anselm. He was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago in 1983, Bishop of Belleville in 1993, Archbishop of Atlanta in 2004 and Archbishop of Washington in 2019. He was President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) from 2001 to 2004.

**Cardinal Jose F. Advincula, Archbishop of Capiz, Philippines**, ordained a priest for the archdiocese in 1976. The 68 year old cardinal was the spiritual director of the St. Pius X Seminary, where he was also professor and dean of education. He studied Psychology and Canon Law between Manila and Rome, obtaining a licentiate in Canon Law. Back home, he served in the seminaries of Vigan, Nueva Segovia and in the regional seminary of Jaro. In 1995 he was appointed rector of the St. Pius X Seminary of Capiz and became the Defender of the Bond, promoter of justice and finally judicial vicar of the archdiocese.

**Cardinal Cornelius Sim, is Apostolic Vicar of Brunei.** The 69-year old electrical graduate and engineer was ordained a priest in 1989. In 1997, when (Saint) Pope John Paul II separated Brunei from the Diocese of Miri-Brunei and established the Apostolic Prefecture of Brunei, he appointed the Cardinal as its prefect. When Brunei was raised to the rank of Apostolic Vicarate, he was appointed its first Apostolic Vicar. He thus became the country's first bishop.

**Cardinal Augusto Paolo Lojudice, Archbishop of Siena-Colle Val d'Elsa-Montalcino, Italy**, was ordained a priest in 1989. He has held several responsibilities in Rome

Diocese, such as Spiritual Father at the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary and the Parish Priest of San Luca al Prenestino. In 2015, he was appointed an Auxiliary Bishop of Rome. In May 2019, Pope Francis appointed him Archbishop of Siena-Colle Val d'Elsa-Montalcino. Currently, he serves as Secretary of the Commission for Migration of the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI).

**Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, an Italian priest of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual ( OFM Conv),** was consecrated bishop on November 22, in view of the consistory. The 55-year old graduate in mechanical engineering also has a licentiate in theological anthropology. Ordained a priest in 2000, he was elected Superior of the Conventual Franciscans of St. Anthony's Province, Bologna. In 2013, he was called to serve as the Custos (guardian) of the Sacred Convent of Saint Francis in Assisi, until 2017.

**Cardinal Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel of Mexico** is the Bishop Emeritus of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Ordained a priest in 1963, the 80-year old Cardinal has held several responsibilities in his native Toluca Archdiocese. He was appointed Bishop of Tapachula in 1991. He has served as General Secretary of the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM). In 2000, (Saint) Pope John Paul II appointed him Bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

**Cardinal Silvano Maria Tomasi of Italy** is a Scalabrian Missionary is a former Apostolic Nuncio and Holy See's Permanent Observer to the United Nations. Ordained a priest in 1965, the 80-year old Cardinal served as Director of the US Bishops' Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees & Travelers. From 1989 to 1996, he was Secretary of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, after which he was appointed Archbishop and Apostolic Nuncio to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

**Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa OFM Cap is the Preacher of the Papal Household.** The 86-year old Italian graduate in theology and classical literature is a former professor of the University of the Sacred Heart of Milan. A former member of the International Theological Commission, he left teaching in 1979 to devote himself to the ministry of the Word. Pope John Paul II appointed him the Preacher of the Papal Household in 1980, a post that Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have also confirmed. His numerous books have been translated into many languages.

**Cardinal Enrico Feroci of Italy is the Parish Priest of the noted Roman Marian sanctuary of Divino Amore (Divine Love).** The 80-year old Cardinal was ordained a priest in 1965 and held several responsibilities in Rome Diocese. He was appointed Chaplain of the Pope in 1995. Since 2017, he has been Rector of the Sanctuary of Divino Amore and since 2018, Rector of the Seminary of Our Lady of Divine Love. In 2019, he was appointed parish priest of the sanctuary.



## Role Models

# SON OF A PREACHER MAN

**O**scar – Winning Actor Denzel Washington is well known for his portrayal of both real-life and complex fictional characters. But as he tells Shaun Curran, his career is secondary to his loving family and his belief system.

You might think that it's not possible to be an upstanding, righteous individual and still flourish in the cut-throat glitz and glamour of Hollywood. And in most cases, you'd be correct.

But as Denzel Washington demonstrates, being a good man is no barrier to being a global superstar.

Washington is still one of the most bankable assets in the film industry, with two Oscar wins to go with his two Golden Globes. But he is quite possibly the un-starriest Hollywood actor of all time. His policy of prioritizing his family – wife of 30 years Pauletta, and their children John, David, Olivia, Katia, and Malcolm – and shunning the celebrity routine life mark him out as an anomaly in the fame-hungry modern world. You never actually hear from Washington unless he has a film to promote. That's the way it should be, 'he says with a laugh. I'm just an actor, I'm not a celebrity. My job is to act and I want to be good at it. The celebrity stuff? There are a whole lot of other things to be famous. I'm not even trying to be famous. I'm just trying to do my work.

If only more actors took heed of that counsel. In fact, if only more actors were like Denzel Washington full stop. Not only is the 60-year-old's talent a force to be reckoned with (he has an Oscar for best supporting actor in *Glory*, as well as the best actor gong for his turn as corrupt cop Alonzo Harris in *Training Day*) But that flair is complimented by strong artistic and personal principals. Sequel? Franchises? Blockbusters? Gratuitous sex and violence? You must be joking. Washington picks his roles based purely on their ethical and creative merits.

That professional ethos goes hand-in-hand with his world view. His mother Lynne and in particular his father, Pentecostal preacher Reverend Denzel Hayes Washington, bestowed upon Washington a religious belief system that is reflected in this attitude to life and work.

You grow from the experience you have in life,' he says, 'and you can either make that work for you or let it work against you. I've always chosen to make the most of every opportunity and work hard to be a good man and lead a good life.

### Important people

Ever thankful, Washington credits two people in particular for his years of success. One is Pauletta, who has been a rock by his side since they married in 1983, surviving a testing three decades intact. People say you know about marriage in Hollywood? I say it's marriage anywhere. You have to work at it. But I could never have achieved what I've been able to accomplish as an actor without her love and support behind me.

When I'm down or feeling sorry for myself, I take great solace in my father's faith and spiritual strength'

The other, predictably, is his father. Revered Washington's influence is undoubtedly the foundation upon which Washington's life and career have been based. The Reverend, who juggled day jobs at a department store and water board with his work providing Sunday services, impressed on his son's upbringing a religious bent that Washington has carried with him ever since.

The actor has made no secret of his strong faith, stating in past interviews that he reads the Bible every day. And he has the action to back up his words- in 1995 he contributed over \$2.5m to building of a Pentecostal Cathedral in LA, which is regularly attended by the likes of Stevie Wonder and former basketball player Magic Johnson.

Such philanthropy is a direct result of his father's influence, which impacts on Washington every day, every moment of my life despite the Reverend's passing in 1991.

My father was the greatest personal inspiration of my life, he says. I draw strength from his memory and his unshakable belief in the power of all of us to achieve something positive and beneficial and wonderful in life. Whenever I'm down or feeling sorry for myself, I take great solace in my father's faith and spiritual strength. He was a rock.

### Sliding doors

Washington has often hinted that by pursuing acting career he may have missed his true vocation in life. Though he admits that he doesn't know whether he could have been as committed and dedicated to the church as his father, he admits, I do think I possess an inspirational streak in me like he had. I know I have the desire and impulse to want to encourage people. Make people become better. Lift

them up when they're down or gone down the wrong path in life. I believe we can all help each other if we want to. I wouldn't want to go through life saying I didn't help unlike the majority of his peers, Washington seeks to help through his work he doesn't feel a compulsion to play characters with an inspiration quality, but he flatly refuses to take on unwholesome roles unless redeeming features and moral fortitude are clear.

I won't play purely evil characters or make a film which has no moral reference or grounding, he says But if you look at my work, I've made a fair number of violent films as well as films from variety of genres. There's a fine line to draw, but in most stories you can see the good and bad in people. My only guide to choosing films and roles in that there is some underlying morality and something which points us towards good rather than evil.

And therein lies Washington's outlook always looking to improve the world in which he lives, forever searching for the good in people. You don't have to look too far to find it in the man himself.

## TRIBUTES FOR LATE BISHOP EMERITUS OF THE GAMBIA, BISHOP MICHAEL J. CLEARY CONTINUE TO SHOWER

### TRIBUTE TO A GOOD SHEPHERD

**T**he most reverend Michael J. Cleary C.S.Sp., C.R.G. (Commander of the Republic of The Gambia), Bishop Emeritus of Banjul, transited to the greater beyond on the 3rd of September, 2020.

My family and I wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to his Lordship, Gabriel Mendy C. S. Sp, the Bishop of Banjul, Spiritan confreres and associates, priests, religious, the lay faithful, members of his family, Sr. Pauline Leahey S.J.C., the Singhateh family and all Gambians.

The Late Bishop Cleary stands tall among a long line of illustrious Irish and other Missionaries, specifically the Holy Ghost Fathers, now referred to as Spiritans who, in response to Christ's call, left their comfort zones to go forth into the whole world and make disciples of all nations, including The Gambia. And not only did these bearers of the good news plant and nurture Christianity wherever they were sent, they also had a positive impact on the quality of life of all the people they encountered, through the outstanding and trailblazing contributions they made in the fields of education, health and sanitation, agriculture and other important sectors most especially, the poor and marginalised groups.

Bishop Cleary was a remarkable human being. He personified Jesus' exhortation to love ones neighbour as one's self in word and deed. He dearly loved and embraced all Gambians irrespective of social status, ethnicity or religious beliefs. As a result, for over six decades he cultivated and maintained numerous relationships nationwide that have endured to the very end. Indeed, he has left an indelible imprint on The Gambia, most notably in the hearts and minds of all who knew and loved him. To paraphrase the Bible, to whom much is given, a lot is expected which begs the

question, how can Gambians celebrate and honour the late Bishop's rich legacy? For me, the highest tribute that Gambians could render to the memory of Bishop Cleary is this: to emulate his examples of unconditional love and respect for one another, alongside selfless and dedicated service to the nation and our compatriots, so that we might salvage and reclaim the sense of community and cohesion which is our basis of unity in diversity that was the hallmark of The Gambia in the not so distant past, and which made this great country a cosy abode for both indigenes and migrants alike.

On a lighter note, it is well known that Bishop Cleary was blessed with many exemplary character traits, such as humility, integrity, courage, etc., but he also possessed a keen sense of humour. I was told that he once said to one of his students who would gaze at the ceiling when asked a question in class, and I quote '(name)' are you looking for the answer in the heavens?, which query emitted peels of laughter from the rest of the class.

To conclude, John Donne, the English metaphysical poet, in his 'Holy sonnet 10' wrote 'Death be not proud, though some have called you mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so, one short sleep past, we wake eternally'.

Our beloved former shepherd has 'fought a good fight, finished his course and has kept the faith' (2 Timothy 4:7). It is my fervent prayer that he will hear the words of the king. 'Come ye blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'.

*Eternal rest grant onto him O Lord, and let thy perpetual light shine on him forever. Amen.*

*Adieu Bishop Cleary*

*Mrs. Susan Waffa-Ogoo and Family*

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THREE GAMBIAN REV. SISTERS



*We thank  
our God  
for our  
new Sister  
in the  
Congregation  
of Mary!  
Magnificat!*

**P**rofession of Sister Marianna Ndecky of the Parish of St. Josephine Bakihita Hann Marist, on 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2020.

**F**inal/Perpetual Vow of Sr. Marie Ellen Mendy of St. Joseph of Cluny Sisters held at the Blessed Sacrament Parish, Kanifing Estate on Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2020 with the Bishop as the chief celebrant.

*Thank You!*



Sr Marie Ellen Mendy, the St Joseph of Cluny Sisters and the Mendy Family express their profound gratitude for your presence, gifts and prayers at her perpetual vows. May the Good Lord abundantly reward you.

**S**r. Harriet Mendy of the Presentation of Mary Sisters takes her Perpetual Vow. Religious life is a pure gift from God, and a grace that God has given to Sr. Harriet Mendy.

This is what was celebrated with Sr. Harriet Mendy who pronounced her definitive 'Yes' to the call of God on Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2020. It is beautiful to give one's life to God for always. In an event held at the St. Kizito's Parish Bakoteh, which was graced by Rev. Fr. Anthony Sonko, the Vicar-General of the Diocese of Banjul as the Chief Celebrant, Sr. Harriet Mendy of the Presentation of Mary Sisters took her final or Perpetual Vow. With her perpetual vow, Sr. Harriet will strive to be a pure and stainless bride of Christ and she will trust in God until death. This day brought so much joy and hope to the Presentation of Mary Sisters of The Gambia, their Associates and collaborators, and in a special way, to the family and friends of Sr. Harriet.



## Doctrines of The Church

## DEALING WITH “WHERE IS THAT IN THE BIBLE?”

**I**n this edition of the Catholic Diocese of Banjul Newsletter, we shall explore this almost phenomenal issue that has provoked numerous controversies on the Catholic beliefs system. We shall thus take a look at the perspective of Douglas M. Beaumont in Catholic Answers.

“Where is that in the Bible?” is a challenge Protestants commonly issue to Catholics when disputes over doctrine arise. Two common response strategies include trying to find a biblical reference to support the belief in question or to return the challenge by asking, “Where in the Bible does it say something must be in the Bible before you can believe it?” While both of these have merit, I would like to suggest a third strategy that can cut to the deeper issue more quickly.

Before getting into this third way, imagine what Catholic-Protestant doctrinal discussions might look like if:

- Baptists (who believe that baptism is merely a picture of salvation) found a verse in the Bible that said, “Baptism does not save.”
- Calvinists (who believe that salvation comes through faith alone apart from works – aka “sola fide”) discovered a passage that said, “Faith without works is useful. . . .A person is not justified by works but by faith alone.”
- Evangelicals (who think communion is just a symbol of Jesus’ body) came up with a proof text that read, “Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the symbolism of the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.”

If Protestants had proof texts such as these above to support their doctrines, they would rightly insist that Catholics answer for ignoring the clear word of God.

Of course, these verses are not in Scripture. Therefore, instead, Protestants build their scriptural cases for these beliefs from more indirect passages, which likely seem clear to them in the light of their prior theological positions.

Now, Catholics must do the same thing in many cases. Certainly not all Catholic beliefs have clear biblical proof texts either, and in these cases verses must be called forth that are open to reinterpretation from those who disagree. When interpretation becomes necessary, the Church often relies on more than just Scripture for help. Because the Church is not limited to biblical proof texts for doctrinal support, we can cite authoritative Church teaching to determine the correct interpretation.

In the above examples, though, such a procedure is less necessary because Catholics do, in fact, have rather clear biblical proof texts to support what they believe:

- As to baptism, the Bible says: “In the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you” (1 Pet. 3:20-21)
- When it comes to salvation, the Bible says: “Faith apart from works is barren . . . You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” (James 2:20-24)
- As to communion, the Bible says: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

What is interesting is that, although what the Bible says in these three examples is precisely what the Catholic Church teaches, it is exactly what most Protestants deny. Of course, Protestants have had 500 years to come up with alternative interpretations of these passages that get around a theological contradiction – but that’s not the point. Rather, it is that even if Catholics do produce statements from Scripture that clearly state exactly what the Church teaches, most Protestants remain unphased. Thus, whether a given belief can be found in the Bible



is almost a moot point.

So, when a Catholic is challenged by a Protestant to show them where a given belief is found in the Bible, instead of arguing over disputed interpretations or trying a little apologetic judo and flipping the question around on them, a good strategy might be to simply ask, “Would it matter to you if it was?” Such a question will be shocking to a Protestant who prides himself on his commitment to the Bible. Not only would it matter – nothing else would!

The Catholic can then point out that although the Bible says, “justification is not by faith alone,” that Protestants believe justification is by faith alone. And although the Bible says baptism saves, some Protestants believe it does not save. And although the Bible says Communion is eating the body of Christ,

Protestants believe it is only a symbol. In other words – both sides have “clear proof texts” that say things the other denies. Thus, “where is that in the Bible” is often a non-starter.

What this strategy does is keep the conversation from turning into a scriptural ping-pong match, and focuses on the true underlying issue: namely, that the Bible can often be understood in numerous ways and that without an authoritative body to interpret it, disagreement and division are inevitable. Indeed, Protestantism itself is the best evidence of this tendency.

Moreover, it shows that in many cases the Protestant does not actually have the scriptural high ground they are told they do when dealing with Catholics. For the Protestant apologist who sees himself as always having the Bible on his side, this can be an eye-opening realization.

## FORGIVE — ALWAYS

### We Must Forgive Those Who Hurt Us Without Conditions Or Limits

**The view presented here is extracted from Fr. Hugh Barbour O. Praem’s Homily for the Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.**

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt.

At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’

Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart.” – Matthew 18:21-35

In the light of the above, Fr. Hugh Barbour observed; when I have been offended by another, the Lord is categorical and unrelenting about how I am to respond to the offense—whether intended or not, whether real or imagined.

#### **I must forgive.**

If I hope to be forgiven my debts, I must forgive my debtors. This is the precise language of the Greek and Latin versions of the Lord’s Prayer. The Master in today’s parable is God himself, and the servant who has been forgiven a great debt, but who will not forgive a lesser one to himself, is you and I.

How can we forgive even repeated faults? And forgive them endlessly, since the “seven times seventy times” is a numerical symbol of fullness. There can be no limit placed on our

disposition to forgive. Someone, even someone very close to us may have offended us, but we also tend to relive the wrong done in our imagination and feelings. This continuation of the harm done in our inner life is our own doing. We accuse our enemy again and again and so inflict the wrong on ourselves many times more than it was done to us by another.

First of all, we must stop defending ourselves internally. Every wrong done us is a slight to our dignity, a sign that the other does not think we are worth the time or consideration or rights or possessions that are ours. It is an injustice. The natural response to this attack on our dignity is to defend ourselves against the low opinion of us shown by the one who offended us. If we begin a dialogue with the one who has hurt us, whether in a real conversation or in our mulling over things in our thoughts, with an attitude of defensiveness, then we are bound to lose the argument and the offense will stand.

Instead, we must forgive the other and not defend ourselves; we should even try to excuse the one who wronged us. The Savior from the cross prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” He was bearing all the evil and malice and cruelty of the whole world of sin, and yet he chose with his sovereign freedom to forgive, even before his enemies repented. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” the apostle teaches.

The Lord Jesus commands us, “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.” What is harder than to love an enemy, and what is easier than to pray? Prayer is a work of love that is mercy in the face of another’s misery. Your enemy has made himself a wretch by mistreating you; he needs merciful pity and kind prayer, not accusation and condemnation. Perhaps he has already begun to repent, or is unable to see what he has done. Our job is to bend down to this state and pray for our brother that he may be forgiven, as we hope to be forgiven. Then we will be like God himself reigning from the cross, the throne of the triumph of mercy.

Yes, sometimes we have to seek objective correction of an injustice. But even if this is the case, we need to forgive first, otherwise our correction will not be like Christ’s. The reality of purgatory, which is taught here, is based on this: justice must be served in the case of the hypocritical servant, but he is still to be forgiven, even if he must suffer for his ungrateful lack of mercy to his brother.

The Savior teaches in the Gospel that sometimes “a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.” The arena of the struggle of forgiveness starts at home. Those closest to us are

usually the ones we have to forgive the most habitually, since we are constantly confronted with their faults and defects. Living with others up close should make us wise. This wisdom is shown in our not concentrating on the personal hurt and shame that others have caused us, but on their often excusable weakness and our awareness of this. Our domestic enemies are never as bad as we feel them to be in the heat of our own self-defence against them. We should seek peace and pardon for them and for

ourselves.

The crucified Savior in his agony knew each of us through and through, and keenly felt our every fault, and it was because of this full knowledge that he excused us and asked for his Father's forgiveness. If we fully knew our oppressors near and far, we would find a thousand reasons to excuse them, and we would feel in ourselves the power of Christ crucified who lives and reigns forever and ever.

Perspective

## BANJUL IN THE SIXTIES

- Growing up in The Gambia during the 60's was just awesome

*By Philip Saine*



**A** citizen's patriotism is a basic and fundamental ingredient for any country's development and is measured by the moral exhibits of honesty, uncorrupt behaviors, trustworthiness and truthfulness in all dealings. Without this, development is unlikely to thrive. The Gambia, Banjul in particular, had structures that promoted the development of these good moral behaviours and patriotism; there is a compelling need to bring those into remembrance.

School Children – Pupils and students presented themselves in starched and ironed school uniforms - the girls looking quite conspicuous with their natural braids (locally referred to as 'marp', 'tallal' or 'dohdage') They are plaited neat and beautiful. These dual features in their appearances taught boys and girls to be proud of their schools and to do everything to protect its image. They paraded solidarity and felt a strong sense of belonging to a specific institution. You dared not misbehave on the streets whilst putting on school uniform. If you did, anyone especially the strict parents, would just walk into the school and report you. Even if you could not be singled out, they would report the whole group and that would mean punishment for all of you.

School meals were provided during the short breaks and vitamin supplements added to enhance growth and health. Scoring high grades at public examinations as well as clinching medals at competitive sports on behalf of your school was a source of pride. Pupils competed to win and did so in a peaceful environment. A genuine spirit of togetherness was evident in the way pupils/students celebrated each other successes. Extra-curricular activities were embedded in the school activities; these included gardening within the school premises. The plants were useful for practical science lessons, food and nutrition classes. Some other extra-curricular activities included quiz competition, concerts, school singing competitions, and periodical picnics, visit to industrial premises, the National Library and listening to music by the Choral Union. Young students were encouraged to become members of formal societies or associations

Formal Boys and Girls Associations included the Boys' Scouts (1st Bathurst or 2nd Bathurst), Wolf Cubs, Girl Guides, Girl Brownies and the Red Cross. All of them had their specific uniforms that conspicuously and proudly identified them. All these Associations taught principles of good behavior, discipline, responsibility, punctuality and specific skills that were useful in community life. Boys and girls acquired much civic education by which to live by. Law and order were observed and respected by the masses. Communities were involved in bringing up the youths; it was not just the singular duty of parents.

Most, if not all of these youth organizations raised funds through 'Bob-A-Job'. (Members of the organization would voluntarily do domestic work in private homes and would be given an amount of money for their effort.) This activity taught them to earn through hard work and not to be dependent on aid and charity. It was a lesson learnt very early in life and continued to adulthood. The moral of this was to believe and rely on hard work

Care for the Youths - A 'Youth Center' located at Allen Street and commonly known as Pa Club was made available for youths' functions: holding meetings, playing indoor games and sports including table tennis, boxing and dance. Access to the center was free for all youths except when the facility was reserved for special events by a particular club.

The Social Welfare Officer, under the Department of Social Welfare, would register and organize social groups (both the young and elderly) to participate in regular national events showcasing unique skills; for example regatta and boat racing.

Recreational sporting activities – A popular attraction was regatta and boat racing, football matches between professionals (e.g. between Nurses and Teachers and also between Marine and Sea Port Employees). Cultural carnivals and dancing competitions coloured this exuberant atmosphere. The Gambia High School was a venue for school net-ball and basketball competitions.

King George V Square (KGV) was a popular venue for primary school football matches; the McCarthy Square popular for parades, athletics, national and international cricket whilst the Box Bar Stadium in Banjul was the venue for National Federation and International football matches.

Recreation at night was provided by public film shows at the Mahoney Cinema Hall, Buckle Street; Ritz Cinema Hall, Fitzgerald Street and the Odeon Cinema Hall, Imam Omar Sowe Avenue. These entertainment facilities were patronized by people of all works of life. Weekend 'afternoon jumps' (youth dance) at Q Club, City Pride, Cheeta 2 (a boat night club), The Busy Bees (an evening club for girls where the Gambia School of Nursing & Midwifery was later built). There were Jazz Band Shows at the Odeon Cinema that contributed to the ambience of social events.

Environmental Sanitation –Banjul being an island prone to flooding and characterized by rising sea levels and stagnant water were favorable breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Drainage and malaria control measures were put in place to curb the spread. The presence of mangroves along the estuaries served as effective buffers against water intrusion and helped stabilize the soil. The ecology was favorable for oyster breeding and many women made their living harvesting and selling oysters along the Banjul-Serekunda highway.

The lifestyles that prevailed discouraged littering of streets, Many food packages were organic and drink bottles reusable. Women kept market baskets that would be washed daily to load fruits, vegetables, meat and fish. Banjul had three markets: the Albert Market, Lasso-Wharf and Musante. There were no need and use of plastic bags. Mineral water bottled from Oldfield Mineral Water Bottling Factory at McCarthy Square, Farage at Hill Street and Daddy Jack at Picton Street all filled their produce in reusable bottles. These are routinely collected, washed and sanitized for reuse.

Safety and Cleanliness; Banjul used to be quite safe and uniformed police offices in pairs patrol the city. Littering was strictly prohibited. Police patrol vehicles frequently drive along the streets thereby reinforcing the citizens' confidence in the security services. The Banjul City Council (BCC) routinely cleans the streets and mechanical sweepers aided the laborers. Mosquito scouts would identify potential mosquito breeding places that would be treated with insecticides (larvicidal, adulticidal and fumigation). Health Inspectors from the Department of Medical and Health would inspect individual compounds and supervise the routine cleaning of drains and gutters. Banjul had the reputation of been the cleanest city in the region. BCC arranged regular collection and disposal of solid waste and excretal waste to a sanitary landfill located outside the city. Stray dogs would be captured and quarantine for a period of time and then destroyed if not claimed. Healthy dogs were vaccinated and issued with medal license fastened around the neck. The Gambia contributed and was reputable in international research work in the fight against malaria and trypanosomiasis.

The McCarthy Square and State House– The McCarthy square was a popular center for social gatherings. It was the venue for march passes, public film shows, athletics, cricket matches and annual Christmas Carols. The square played a crucial role for fostering social bonding among Banjulians. It complemented the social functions of the State House by providing an assembly point for Boat Lanterns 'Fanal' on annual parade and contest at the State House. Such 'fanals' were designed in the shape of a boat, quite big, decorated with perforated papers of multiple colours and lit with candles. Uniformed sailors and a Ship Captain with a whistle made up the escort. Drum beating, cultural songs and joyous dance gave spectacular atmosphere.

The State House also attracted Banjulians for annual horticultural and gardening exhibitions that offered attractive prizes. State House vicinity was accessible and the citizenry, including boys and girls, visit the Six Gun Batteries and Cannons and the state guards during Change of Guards Parade; these were exciting and colourful attractions.

France independence day celebration, 14h July, attracted and gave Francophone citizens residing in the Gambia, the opportunity to celebrate and showcase their culture. There was Camel parade, Petit Jallow with his calabash, Yeh Marigoh, Mamaparah, Kumpo, Bambagidah, Fatou Jamanah etc. These were joyous cultural events been the binding elements of social cohesion amongst people living in the Gambia.

Construction of Houses – Cement block houses were rapidly replacing the bamboo (kerinting) houses. At the time of constructing house members of the extended family willingly participated. The owner of the house would provide the building materials and tradesmen within the extended family would volunteer the labor. After fixing the roof the female members of the extended family (known as 'suma jegen-yi') would mount their flags on top of the roof prior to the placement of the roof cover, composed mainly of corrugated iron sheets. This was a proud display of their individual contribution. It would be accompanied with prayers and serving of delicious meal. The women that had their flags mounted would at the time of their removal bring gifts to the workers. The cost of erecting houses was much less due to the communal participation and influences of community elders.

Status and Responsibility of Elders – In every ward in Banjul there were community elders that always mediate and resolve disputes before they are presented to the police or the courts. They commanded great respect and were concerned in all issues affecting society.

Bring back the good old days!!!! We miss the Ramadan evening meals, Christian children present at Muslim 'Nafilas' and Muslims present at Christian celebrations, the 'Talabone', effigies of Judas Iscariot, 'Nanburu' and the masquerade 'Agugu' - 'fulo' and 'pakin' The older boys would throw some money to the 'Agugu' who is armed with a whip. The Agugu runs after them and whips anyone he catches; this was great fun and short distance runners emerged there from.

## Sunday Reflections

*Suscipe, quæsimus, Domine, sacrificia tuis instituta præceptis*  
*Accept, O Lord, we pray, the sacrifices instituted by your commands*

# Reflections, readings and prayers for the Sundays in DECEMBER and JANUARY



## December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Second Sunday of Advent Year B

**First Reading:** Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11;  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalms 85:9-10-11-12, 13-14;  
**Second Reading:** 2 Peter 3:8-14;  
**Alleluia:** Luke 3:4, 6; Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

**T**he scripture readings for this Second Sunday of Advent (as those of next week) focus on John the Baptist and his summons to repentance, given the coming of the Lord. John, of course, is mentioned only in the Gospel but the Lectionary provides the context for his preaching by choosing as First Reading the passage from Isaiah (40:1-5, 9-11) which the Gospel writers employ to indicate his role in the history of salvation. John is the ‘voice that cries in the wilderness, “Prepare a way for the Lord”’.

The **First Reading** comes from the beginning of the section of the Book of Isaiah (chapters 40-55) attributed to the great prophet of Israel’s return from Exile in Babylon. This ‘Second Isaiah’ sees the return from Exile as a ‘New Exodus’. The prophet’s role is to ‘tell the good news’ of Israel’s coming liberation and to describe the wonders that will attend the return of the captives across the desert to their land. Because they are God’s liberated people and because God will be at their head, leading them home like a shepherd, nature will transform itself to ease their path. A ‘way’ is being prepared, not just for Israel, but for God, whose ‘glory’ will be made manifest to all humankind. (The detail about ‘Jerusalem’ [= the people] having received ‘double punishment for all her sins’ simply underlines the sense of completion [‘more than enough!’]; the sufferings of the people are interpreted, in conventional mode, as punishment, but this aspect is not the main point.)

## December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Third Sunday of Advent Year B

**Readings:** Is 61:1-2A, 10-11 • Lk 1:46-48 • 1 Thes 5:16-24 • Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

**I**n the Gospel we proclaim this Sunday from the Evangelist Mark, we encounter, yet again, the figure of Saint John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus had John’s disciples come to him, asking quite bluntly if he’s the one about whom John was preaching, the long awaited Messiah of Israel. Although only Luke’s Gospel actually comes out and states that John was the blood relative, the cousin of the

Lord Jesus, we know for certain that there was a strong, intrinsic bond between John the Baptist and Jesus. Jesus himself proclaims the fact that there is no man born of woman greater than John the Baptist. In fact, there were many, many people who truly believed that John was the Christ and there were many, many people who left everything to go and follow him. One of the reasons why the story of the baptism of the Lord by John in the Jordan is featured in all four of the Gospels is to serve as a reminder to all that it is Jesus, not John, who is the Holy One of God, the Messiah. John, in all four accounts from the Gospel, is the first to recognize the adult Jesus as Lord, and, in fact, protests vehemently the mere suggestion that he should baptize Jesus. There must have been a reason why so many people believed that John was the Messiah at first. For starters, he fit the part of the Old Testament prophet much more than did Jesus. John, with his clothes of camel hair and the leather belt around his waist, looked the part. With his diet of wild honey and locust, and, above all, his consistent message of repentance in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God, John, perhaps even more so than Jesus, looked like a new version of Hosea, with his outrageous stunts to make his point, or a new Ezekiel, a new Isaiah or, perhaps even more, a new Elijah.

## December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Fourth Sunday of Advent Year B

**Readings:** 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A-16 • Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29 • Rom 16:25-27 • Lk 1:26-38

**T**he Gospel we proclaim today, taken from the Evangelist Matthew, puts the focus firmly on Saint Joseph, the husband of Mary. Joseph stands as a model of what every single Catholic man (or woman, for that matter!) should be. Joseph was truly obedient to the will of God in his life. The angel tells Joseph to “have no fear about taking Mary to be your wife.” As soon as Joseph knew God’s will for him, he obeyed. When the angel told Joseph that Herod was planning to destroy the child, Joseph immediately got up and began the flight to Egypt. He didn’t negotiate the plans; he wasn’t testing Mary to see what she thought about it. He knew what he had to do for his wife and his son, the Son of God really, and he did it. Imagine the impact of going into Egypt. We know what Egypt meant to the Jewish people historically. It would be like a modern-day Jew running to modern-day Auschwitz to search for safety. And yet, he accepts. As Moses led his people out of Egypt, this Joseph follows the example of that other “master dreamer,” Joseph of the Book of Genesis, and establishes a place in Egypt for his people, his humble wife and small child.

**December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
*Christmas Day*  
**Year B**

**Readings for Mass During the Day:** Is 52:7–10 • Ps 98:1, 2–3, 3–4, 5–6 • Heb 1:1–6 • Jn 1:1–18

**D**uring this holiday season, our minds turn to many, many things, not the least of which are gifts, namely the giving and the receiving of gifts. There is a certain etiquette of giving gifts and receiving gifts, and, the truth of the matter is, God the Father, by the social standards of Emily Post, would be considered to be a terrible gift giver, and we, God's beloved, would be considered to be the most gauche of people.

**For the one who gives the gift**, according to social norms, there must be two considerations. The first is that all gifts must be reciprocal and of equal value. In the case of the gift of God the Father, namely, the true, ultimate gift of His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the gift is not and cannot be reciprocal; it cannot be of equal value. This is uniqueness of the Covenant made by God with his people, the Covenant made with Adam, renewed with Noah, solidified and ratified forever with Moses, renewed yet again with David, and, finally, made concrete and eternal in the Person of Jesus Christ.

**The Covenant, by its very nature**, must be a pact between two equal parties; it is not in the case of God and his people. God is God, we are not; he is eternal, we are temporal; he is omnipotent; we are all-weak; he is completely faithful and merciful; we are fickle and cruel, due to our fallen human nature. The gift is God's love made flesh; the gift is our salvation come to us in the form of a weak, helpless infant, born from eternity into time. It is the a gift which we do not deserve and that nothing we can do can ever even begin to give back to God in appreciation of the gift. This gift is totally, completely, utterly gratuitous. In order to appreciate the gift, we need to know the intention of the giver. This Divine giver grants us his Son for one reason and one reason only. He loves us and wants us to be saved.

**For the one receiving the gift**, according to social norms, there has to be a complete knowledge of the implications of receiving the gift. Do we understand, really understand the implications of our reception of this gift of Love's Pure Light, the Son of God, in our lives? If we accept the gift who is Jesus, then we have to change. We have to change our lives; we have to become he whom we receive, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And when we do change, we then have to violate yet another rule of the gift-giving etiquette, the rule of no re-gifting! Re-gifting is one of the things that we don't like to admit that we do upon occasion; it's tacky and it can be dangerous — what if we give a gift back to the one who gave it to us in the first place? But in the case of the gift, the gift of Jesus, we have to re-gift. We have to see Christ in one another and, in doing so, we have to be Christ to one another.

**Gift-giving and gift-receiving:** the ultimate gift, the one that keeps giving, is the gift that is Christ, the gift, once received, that we must then give away, that we must share. This is the blessing, this is the challenge of Christmas.

**December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
*The Feast of the Holy Family*  
**Year B**

**Readings:** Sir 3:2–6, 12–14 • Ps 128:1–2, 3, 4–5 • Col 3:12–21 • Lk 2:22–40

**T**his feast in honor of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, makes us think of our families and our ancestors. Knowing where you've come from helps form the person. This is not to reduce the individual to what's referred to in seminary formation as "family of origin issues," but it's helpful for us to realize that even Our Lord and Our Lady come from a particular family, in a particular time, in a particular context and so do we. Knowing this can help us live our vocations because it can remind us that we are standing on the shoulders of giants, on the solid rock formation that the people who came before us and lived happily, healthily, and wholly the vocations that we strive to live each day.

The Lord is the source of all good gifts. We have the example of those who came before us to strengthen us, to encourage us, and yes, to help us learn from their mistakes.

Today, let's thank God for the gift of our families, our ancestors, our presbyterates, our religious communities. We stand on the shoulders of giants of our faith, who helped bring us to where we are at this moment. Praise God for this gift.

**January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**  
*The Epiphany of the Lord*  
**Year B**

**First Reading:** Isaiah 60:1-6;

**Responsorial Psalm;** Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13;

**Second Reading:** Ephesians 3:2-3A, 5-6;

**Alleluia:** Matthew 2:2; Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

**“E**piphan<sup>y</sup>” means manifestation. And the “Epiphany of the Lord” is Jesus' manifestation not only to these three Magi from the East, but it's also a symbolic but real manifestation of the Christ to the whole world. These Magi, travelling from a foreign and non-Jewish nation, reveal that Jesus came for all people and all are called to adore Him.

These Magi were “wise men” who studied the stars and were aware of the Jewish belief that a Messiah was coming. They would have been versed in much of the wisdom of the day and would have been intrigued by the Jewish belief in the Messiah.

God used what they were familiar with to call them to adore the Christ. He used a star. They understood the stars and when they saw this new and unique star over Bethlehem they realized that something special was happening. So the first lesson we take from this for our own lives is that God will use what is familiar to us to call us to Himself.

Look for the “star” that God is using to call you. It's closer than you may think.





## January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### *Feast of The Baptism of the Lord*

#### Year B

**First Reading:** Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 Or Isaiah 55:1-11;  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalms 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 Or Isaiah 12:2-3, 4BCD, 5-6;

**Second Reading:** Acts 10:34-38 Or 1 John 5:1-9;

**Alleluia:** John 1:29; Gospel: Mark 1:7-11

**T**oday's Feast marks the conclusion of the Christmas Season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. It's a feast of transition from Jesus' hidden life to that of His public ministry. It also echoes the theme of the Epiphany in that the Baptism of the Lord is another manifestation announcing Jesus' divinity to all of His first followers and to the disciples of John the Baptist.

**First of all**, it needs to be pointed out that Jesus did not need the baptism of John. John was baptizing as a call to and sign of interior repentance. Jesus had no need to repent. But, nonetheless, He comes to John. John resists at first but Jesus insists. Why did He receive baptism?

**First, by accepting the baptism of John**, Jesus affirms all that John has said and done and affirms his sacred role of preparing the way for Jesus and for a new era of grace. Therefore, the Baptism of Jesus acts as a bridge between the Old Testament prophets (of which John was the last) and the New Testament era of grace and truth.

**Second**, it has been said that when Jesus entered the waters of baptism, He was not baptized by the waters, rather, His Baptism was one in which all the created waters of this world were, in a sense, "baptized" by Him. By entering into the waters, Jesus sanctified water and poured forth His grace making all water the future source of salvation.

## January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### *Second Sunday in Ordinary Time*

#### Year B

**First Reading:** 1 Samuel 3:3B-10, 19;

**Responsorial Psalm;** Ps. 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10;

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 6:13C-15A, 17-20;

**Alleluia:** John 1:41, 17B; Gospel: John 1:35-42

**T**hen he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" In this passage, the Apostle Andrew brings his brother Simon to Jesus after telling Simon that he has found the Messiah. Jesus immediately receives them both as Apostles and then reveals to Simon that his identity will now be changed. He will now be called Cephas. "Cephas" is an Aramaic word that means "Rock." In English, this name is usually translated as "Peter." When someone is given a new name, this often means that they are also given a new mission and new vocation in life. For example, in the Christian tradition, we receive new names at Baptism or

Confirmation. Additionally, when a man or woman becomes a monk or a nun, they often are given a new name to signify the new life they are called to live. Reflect, today, upon the fact that God invites you to live a new life of grace in Him. He has some new mission for you to daily fulfill and He promises to give you all you need to live it. Say "Yes" to the call He gives you and you will see incredible things happen in your life.

## January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### *Third Sunday in Ordinary Time*

#### Year B

**First Reading:** Jonah 3:1-5, 10;

**Responsorial Psalm:** Ps. 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9;

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 7:29-31;

**Alleluia:** Mark 1:15; Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

**A**s Jesus passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they left their nets and followed him. Today's Gospel reveals the extraordinary and radical call from Jesus to follow Him. Simon and Andrew are the two who respond to the call in this passage, but their response is also an invitation to all of us to step out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary. This passage especially reveals two things: (1) the immediate response of these Apostles, and (2) their complete response. They clearly did not hold back or hesitate in responding to the invitation from Jesus to follow Him. What about you? Do you hear Jesus calling you? Do you hear Him speak to you, calling you to come after Him?

Hopefully, as our Lord speaks to each one of us, we will respond immediately and in a complete way. Hopefully we will not hesitate to embrace the glorious calling we each have been given. Reflect today, upon the fact that you, too, have been called to an extraordinary life of grace, which requires total abandonment and commitment. You have been called to respond immediately and freely to Jesus' invitation. As you begin this liturgical season of Ordinary Time, jump into the extraordinary life of grace and embrace it with your whole heart.

## January 31<sup>st</sup> 2021

### *Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

#### Year B

**First Reading:** Deuteronomy 18:15-20;

**Responsorial Psalm:** Ps. 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9;

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 7:32-35;

**Alleluia:** Matthew 4:16; Gospel: Mark 1:21-28

**“W**hat have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are the Holy One of God!” Jesus rebuked him and said, “Be quiet! Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down in front of them and came out of him without doing him any harm.

They were all amazed and said to one another, "What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." Most people know that demons do exist in this world. All of us are afraid of these demons and it is very frightening to know that they are constantly preying on us, wanting to destroy us. This passage above, nonetheless, shows us that Jesus is victorious over the demons. Therefore, we should never be frightened by them at all, as long as we are with Jesus everywhere we are. In fact, we should frighten the demons because we have

invited Jesus to reside in us. The good thing is that we now understand the antidote to this problem, which is Jesus Christ. Whenever we feel like, or know that we are having a craving of doing something evil, the only way out is asking for help from Jesus Christ. He will confront and overpower the demons with much ease. Let us today be comforted by the fact that Jesus Christ has the power over all demons and evil. So, even though demons are real and powerful, they cannot harm us, as long as we run to Jesus for help and invite Him to reside in our hearts, forever.

## Church Mysteries

### ST. JANUARIUS' BLOOD LIQUIFIES IN NAPLES

**A**ccording to the Catholic News Agency, the blood of early Church martyr St. Januarius liquified in Naples Saturday, repeating a miracle dating at least to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The blood was declared to have turned from solid to liquid at 10:02 am in the Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary, September 19<sup>th</sup>, the feast of St. Januarius.

Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, Archbishop of Naples, announced the news to a mostly empty cathedral, due to coronavirus restrictions. "Dear friends, dear all the faithful, once again with joy and emotion I inform you that the blood of our holy martyr and patron St. Januarius has liquified," Sepe said. His words were received by an applause from those present inside and outside the cathedral.

Sepe added that the blood had "completely liquified, without any clots, which has happened in past years." The miracle is "a sign of God's love, goodness, and mercy, and of the closeness, the friendship, the fraternity of our St. Januarius," the cardinal stated, adding "Glory be to God and veneration to our saint. Amen."

St. Januarius, or San Gennaro in Italian, is the patron saint of Naples. He was Bishop of Benevento in the third century, and his bones and blood are preserved in the Naples cathedral

as relics. He is believed to have been martyred during the Christian persecution of Emperor Diocletian. The liquifaction of St. Januarius' blood happens at least three times per year: the saint's feast day of September 19<sup>th</sup>, the Saturday before the first Sunday of May, and December 16<sup>th</sup>, which is the anniversary of the 1631 eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

The reputed miracle has not been officially recognized by the Church, but is known and accepted locally and is considered to be a good sign for the city of Naples and its region of Campania. In contrast, the failure of the blood to liquefy is believed to signal war, famine, disease, or other disaster.

When the miracle occurs, the dried, red-colored mass of blood on one side of the reliquary, becomes a liquid covering nearly the entire glass.

The last time the blood did not liquefy was in December 2016. The miracle did occur while Naples was under lockdown for the coronavirus pandemic on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Cardinal Sepe offered Mass via livestream and blessed the city with the relic of the liquefied blood.

"Even in this time of coronavirus, the Lord, through the intercession of St. Januarius, has liquified the blood!" Sepe declared.

## THE POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS

### DECEMBER:

#### The Laity's Mission in the Church

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

### JANUARY:

#### Artificial Intelligence

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

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### **CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICE (CRS) GAMBIA SPONSORED COVID-19 HAND WASH MACHINES LAUNCHED**

*Written by Rose Samara Cates*

**T**he Catholic Relief Service (CRS) Gambia recently sponsored the manufacturing of COVID-19 hand-washing equipment by the Gambia Technical Training Institute. The innovative product was launched on 16 October 2020.

Catholic Relief Service have been working in the Gambia since 1964. They engage in different sectors in the country, such as agriculture, nutrition, and recently their main focus is on health. Hence, they felt that they could not be left behind as we all face this nation-wide problem of coronavirus. During the launching ceremony, Mr. Baba Balajo CRS Program Manager for Health, gave the opening remarks and thanked their partners who help to implement their projects and programs at the community level.

Also, Ebrima Juwanneh, the head of CRS Operations Department and the HR Manager for Catholic Relief Service, talked about the concept behind the presentation ceremony. He also mentioned that Catholic Relief Service felt that it was important to give out hand-washing machines to their partners, because if the community is protected, then their partners are protected, and if their partners are protected, then they are protected. He went on to say that, it is right that they share whatever they have with their partners, who will make sure that these machines will be placed in different locations in the country for the benefit of our communities. Mr. Baba Balajo thanked the GTTI manufacturers for making a wonderful technological material. Mr. Ebrima Juwanneh gave a detailed interpretation of the launching posters that will be giving along with the hand-washing machines. Immediately after the demonstration of the posters, there was a demonstration on how to use the hand wash machines by Mr. Lamin David Jatta, one of the people who worked on the designing and construction of the hand-washing machines. The machines are constructed in such a way you do not need to use your hands to operate them.

Catholic Relief Service also presented soap and other detergents together with the hand-washing machines. Mr. Baba Balajo urged the partners to show the people how to use them effectively. The machines were eventually presented to various beneficiaries.



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