



The Diocese of Banjul **NEWSLETTER**

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

COVER STORY

INTO THE DEPTHS OF CHRISTMAS

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**Reflecting on the Humanitarian
and Missionary works of
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in The Gambia**

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PILGRIMAGE 2023

**CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BANJUL, THE GAMBIA 35TH ANNUAL
PILGRIMAGE TO THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF PEACE, KUNKUJANG
MARIAMA ON SATURDAY 9TH DECEMBER, 2023**

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DIOCESE OF BANJUL NEWSLETTER

Our Mission and Vision

We entertain, we encourage, and we enlighten. More so, Diocese of Banjul Newsletter gives you the tools you need to feed your faith life, nurture our society and relationships, care for your family, and bring the light of Christ to others. We connect with our readers through personal stories of triumphs and struggles, joys and challenges, and the lighter side of Christian living.

Diocese of Banjul Newsletter is a source of support and encouragement for our society, especially those who love their faith, those who struggle with their faith, and those who long to learn more about the richness of Catholic tradition. More so, we strive to build a healthy society for the welfare of all.

Diocese of Banjul Newsletter seeks the positive in the world and in our Church. It emphasizes those things that our society is doing right and well, as a means of inspiring and encouraging others to do the same. It is hope-filled, optimistic, and forward-looking. In the main, the newsletter moves our readers beyond inspiration and toward action, and gives them the information, tools, and resources they need to answer God’s call to holiness and bring the light of Christ to others.



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EDITORIAL HINT

HUMANS WITHOUT HUMANITY

The Grave Famine of Love in Today's Gambian Society

With the spectacle of greed, avarice, gluttony, dishonesty, pride, arrogance, inordinate ambition and quest for power and fame and the associated cruelty, among a litany of vile vices that are rife in our society, especially among those that lead us in the various spheres of our leadership ecosystem, we face a dilemma of dire famine of love for our neighbor and loss of our humanity.

There is no sense of humanity in a society where there are a few rich people and a sea of poor people. There is also no iota of sense of humanity in a society where wage increase or high income earnings are meant for only those in the corridors of power, while the office Messenger, the low-ranking Police Officer, risking his life on a daily basis to shield us from harm's way, or the poor driver working in the Government Ministry, among others, live on a static, poor wage for ages, and even die poor after decades of dedicated service to the nation. Additionally, there is no humanity in a society where political office-holders loot the national treasury with impunity, leaving the citizens of the nation impoverished and without a foreseeable redemption. These portend a sheer lack of humanity on the part of those that govern us.

This Christmas thus calls us to reflect on the golden rule of loving thy neighbor as they self, as well as recognizing that, what is good for the goose, is also good for the gander. These are the basic ingredients internalized in our sense of humanity but which most of us have divorced. The central message of this year's Christmas, as in every other Christmas, focuses on our demonstration of that sense of humanity instilled in us by divine command; showing love towards others, and loving them as we love ourselves, as Christ loved us and teaches us to do. At the level of civil governance, it is through policies that emanate from this neighborhood principle of love for thy neighbor, a critical essence of our humanity, that we can truly employ justice and fairness in our national system. According to the Christian tradition and belief, Christ was born to touch people's hearts and to show us that love is the power that changes the course of history. So, we need to ask ourselves the questions; are we changing the course of our nation's history with that lack of love, portrayed by selfishness, greed, and avarice, among other vices, or with fairness, love and humanity in our hearts? In this Christmas season, we are called to renew our commitment to virtuous action and concrete change. We are called, as leaders, to render service to others with fairness and love, and not with selfishness, avarice and greed. To discover the meaning of Christmas, we need to look to the poor manger where Christ was born. It is in this manger of rejection and discomfort, that God makes Himself present. He comes there because there we see the problem of our humanity: the indifference produced by the greedy rush to possess and consume the common wealth by a handful individuals. We have in our society today, people willing to consume.

A society which is very hungry for money, power and pleasure, does not make room for poor and needy people. Thus, Christmas means that; God is close to us, and where

the true riches in life are to be found are not in money and power, but in relationships and people. So, let charity be reborn in us, let love and care for the lives of others be reborn in us. Christ through the Christmas message, asks us to go to the bare reality of things, and to lay at the foot of the manger all our excuses for not loving others, our justifications for lacking love and our hypocrisies of love. Tenderly wrapped in swaddling clothes by Mary, Jesus wants us to be clothed in love, and this should start with our leaders, down to each and every one of us, so that a little hope can be born anew in those among us who feel helpless and hopeless. Therefore, this Christmas' message calls on those of us in government, to bring hope to the governed people by formulating actionable, people-oriented policies that bring hope to the poor, especially by checking the excesses of the traders and landlords in our society, who are making life difficult for the common man. It is also a call on all of us to be our brother's keeper, irrespective of one's field of endeavor. Very importantly too, it calls on the shylock-landlords to bring hope to those who are homeless, due to high cost of house rent in the country. Similarly, it calls on the sellers of foodstuffs at the Serekunda market and elsewhere to bring hope to those who are poor, needy and hungry. It also calls on those of us working at NAWEC to strive to bring hope to others, especially the poor artisans or other users of electricity, in earning their living. In fact, this Christmas' message calls on each and every one of us to play our varying roles in society with love for others, and challenges us to divest ourselves of the burdens that weigh us down and block our way, as the same obstacles of greed, pride, hypocrisy, falsehood and addiction to vile things that prevented King Herod from welcoming the birth of Jesus.

The Pope's Prayer Intentions

DECEMBER

For persons with disabilities

We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation.

JANUARY

For The Gift Of Diversity In The Church

Let us pray that the Holy Spirit helps us recognize the gift of different charisms within the Christian community, and to discover the richness of different ritual traditions in the heart of the Catholic Church.

COVER STORY**INTO THE DEPTHS OF CHRISTMAS**

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” -Isaiah 9:6-7



For thousands of years mankind waited for the coming of Christ; they longed for their King to arrive and free them from oppression. The Old Testament is full of prophecies, including this one from Isaiah 9. The Bible is full of Scripture pointing directly to the One who would save mankind from their sins. When Isaiah described His coming, he described His coming as an infant. But this child would grow and establish a Kingdom of righteousness forevermore. When we celebrate Christmas, we are celebrating the moment in history when prophecy was fulfilled. God came to be with us.

Similarly, every year in our country, The Gambia, people celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas Day, 25 December. It is a day and season filled with Christmas carols, tree decorating, gift-giving and parties. The celebration extends beyond faith and community to include the whole towns and villages. It is as much a social event as it is a religious one. Christmas across the regions of The Gambia brings friends and family together. One finds nativity scenes, nativity plays, dance performances and caroling. On this day, a joyous parade, called Carnival of Fanal Parades, is held after the Christmas Eve church service. The locals dance through the towns with ‘fanals’, large lanterns made from bamboo and paper, in the shape of houses or boats. The fanals are lit with candles inside and carried from house-to-house to collect donations.

Indeed, Christmas is an incredibly special time for the Church, both in The Gambia and across the world. On this day, over two billion people (over a third of the world's population) celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Even the word 'Christmas' itself is a shortened version of 'Christian Mass'. The Christmas Story is the story of God sending his son from Heaven to Earth in the form of Jesus Christ. Christians believe God did this because of love. Christians also believe that a Savior was needed and Christmas is the

celebration of the birth of the Savior. Therefore, Christians celebrate Christmas each year to show their gratitude to God for what He did, and to remember the birth of Jesus Christ by giving gifts, worshipping Him and thinking of the poor and less fortunate. And, among all the celebrations, one may still be wondering: what is the real meaning of Christmas? Or, why do we have these Christmas traditions? What do they have to do with Jesus?

Our lives world are far from perfect. There are always challenges and struggles we face, both individually and collectively. The good news of Christmas is that, even when the world or our circumstances change, the message of Christmas is timeless, because Christmas is about the birth of God's Son, Jesus. It is about how He came to give us love, hope and joy. That message does not change from year to year. When there is so much bad news and devastation in the world, this is good news worth celebrating!

Parts of the world experience the seasons at different times, but many religious celebrations remain similar or the same, including Christmas. It is natural to eagerly await Christmas morning, with all the glamour and glitter that accompany it. But are we doing all we can to celebrate Jesus' birth? There is more to 25th December than unwrapping presents and allied social gatherings and festivities. When people question the real meaning of Christmas, they think of the birth of Jesus Christ in a manger. Surrounded by family, friends and neighbors, the purpose of Christmas time is often misunderstood, but it is important to think about the relationship between Jesus and God. Remember the saying, “Christ is the reason for the season” as we learn the importance of celebrating his birth appropriately.

In a display of the importance of women, the angel Gabriel first appeared to a young woman called Mary. He told her that she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus, that

is, she would give birth to the Son of God. “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus,” the angel said (*Luke chapter 1: verse 30-31*). Mary had every reason to be afraid. She was unmarried but engaged to Joseph. To be pregnant out of wedlock would have been scandalous. But the angel assured Mary of God’s love for her and His good plans for her. Mary acknowledged this and was grateful for the blessing of being the mother of Jesus. She sang, “All generations will call me blessed” (*Luke chapter 1: verse 48*).

It is doubtful all her family and friends believed her story, but thankfully Joseph did, as an angel visited him, too. Even through all the challenges and difficult situations, she would have faced from that moment on, Mary held onto the promises of God. God also assures us that He is always working to bring good out of all that happens in our lives. Life is full of stress, anxiety, worries and struggles but God says He will never leave us or waver from His love for us. And while His love is for everyone, God waits for us to ask Him to help us in our troubles. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world ... And so we know and rely on the love God has for us” (1 John chapter 4: verses 9 and 16). *cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on* The meaning of Christmas is good news for all people. When the time came for Mary to give birth to Jesus, she had to travel to Bethlehem for a census. The census meant the town was very busy and there were no guest rooms available for Mary and Joseph. So, she gave birth in what was probably a stable or barn, and lay Jesus down in a manger (an animal feeding trough). There was no royal welcome in a palace for Jesus, the Son of God. Instead, on the night of His birth, He was sleeping rough. He was probably surrounded by animals, not royal attendants. As He grew, Jesus experienced persecution, loneliness, grief, hunger, anger and more. He came into the world to experience life as a human; to live among people and understand their struggles.

Immanuel, which means “God with us” (*Matthew chapter 1: verse 23*), is another name for Jesus. His birth and life is a message of good news for us because it means we are never alone. It does not matter how hard or hopeless our situation may appear to be, God is there for us. We do not have to journey through our challenges and struggles alone. He understands them. He walks alongside us. It is this message that gives us comfort and great joy to celebrate at Christmas. As the angel said to a group of shepherds on the night Jesus was born, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people” (*Luke chapter 2: verse 10*). It is one of the most well-known Bible verses about Christmas because it is such an encouraging message. It is one of joy, because Jesus comforts and encourages us. One of hope, because we are never alone; God is always with us. And one of inclusivity, because it is for all of us.

So, why do we celebrate Christmas? Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ is more than a Christian holiday or Christian festival. It is more than an occasion to decorate our houses. It is an opportunity to pause and give thanks for the love, hope and joy found in Jesus, our Savior and friend. As we exchange gifts with loved ones, it is out of remembrance of the gift God gave us in Jesus. The gift that we are loved, never alone and can have hope for the future.

After Jesus was born, a small group of wise men visited Him. They recognized the kingship of Jesus and they “worshipped Him. Then they opened their treasures

and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh” (*Matthew 2:11*). We too, can offer up our worship and thanks to God through prayers this Christmas. Prayers of thanksgiving for the gift of hope, love and joy. The message of Christmas does not change if we are surrounded by family, missing loved ones for the first time or on our own. It is not affected by the house we live in or do not live in. God’s love is for everyone. We are not alone. We are loved, and we can feel hopeful and joyful, because when Jesus came, He also left us with the gift of salvation. His birth is significant because of His death. For thirty-three years Jesus lived a life free from sin so that He could be the perfect sacrificial lamb for the atonement of our sins. On Calvary, Christ paid the price and overcame death so that we could have victory over sin and condemnation. So, when that precious baby was born and placed in the manger, it was not just another birth. It was the beginning of God’s redemptive plan for humanity. An act He did not have to take part in but He chose to, out of love. “*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” *Philippians 2:5-11*. This Jesus’ very act of humility and His choice to die on the cross is cause for bowed knees and lifted hands. One can understand that, the busyness of the season can cause time to fly, and before we know it, the holiday has passed and we have forgotten to celebrate why we are celebrating it in the first place. But we ought not to get sidetracked. Let us take time this Christmas season to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas by glorifying the One who gave it all. A child was born in humble circumstances and His sacrificial death reflected the same, however, both were significant for humanity. Without the death of Christ, our salvation is not possible. So without His birth, neither is it possible. Jesus’ coming to Earth that night changed everything, and it is a moment we should celebrate with all our hearts.

Certainly, we have to enjoy the parties and food and gifts, but let us not also forget to point our hearts, family, and those around you to Christmas’ true meaning: that Christ came with a plan for our redemption. Thus, in this Christmas, we ought to reflect and appreciate the central purpose of Christmas. It is this purpose of Christmas that illuminates why we celebrate Christmas and how it can change our lives forever. At the very first Christmas, which is the birth of Jesus, an angel announced three things. In those three statements of the angel, we find the three purposes of Christmas which showcase that: Christmas is a time for celebration; a time for salvation; and, a time for reconciliation. Thus, the true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of the Savior, Jesus Christ. We know that through belief in Christ we are daughters and sons of God. Heaven will one day be our home. Perhaps this will help us look at the Christmas season differently this year. A chance to truly take in the wonder and awe of the season.

Therefore, Christmas is not about the phenomenal material celebrations that occupy us during the festive period. No! It is about the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. To rekindle the true meaning of Christmas, we need to go deep into the sacred scriptures narrative about the birth of Christ, about God sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins. Simply reading this, will help to keep us in check

and aid to renew in us the need to love God above all things, and loving our neighbor as ourselves, thus bringing about changes in our lives especially in the love aspect of God's command to all of us. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Here, we see the vivid strong love of God towards mankind. A love that drew Him from heaven into the womb of the Virgin Mary; a love that kept Him for nine months in the womb of the Virgin Mary; a love that drew Him from the womb of the Virgin Mary into the valley of this needful world; a love that kept Him for 33 years in this world; a love that made Him to consent to suffer for our sakes and to die the painful and shameful death on the cross; a love that made Him to rise three days after His death; a love that made Him to ascend under his

own strength and power into heaven forty days after His death; and that same love made Him to send down His holy Spirit into the hearts of the apostles and into the hearts of all who hope and believe in Him. What an amazing love! It is, therefore, encouraging on this Christmas, to share this message of love with our family and friends; and especially if they do not know Christ, it could be the turning point in their lives and in our societal life as a whole, in these days we face a famine of love in our Gambian society and our human society, as a whole. Let us, therefore, stand strong in what we believe and not allow outsiders or Satan to distract us from the true meaning of Christmas.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS IN ADVANCE!

PERSPECTIVE

By Andrew Sylva - andrewsylva1982@gmail.com



The author

African Traditional Family System in the Face of Modernity

Africa as a continent is hugely endowed with family cultural values, norms and ethics that have served and met their basic requirements and needs. It is also well-endowed and largely blessed human and natural resources, which had been one of the attracting targets of many foreigners who move in droves to the continent. Tradition contributes a sense of comfort and belonging. It brings families together and enables people to reconnect with friends. Tradition reinforces values such as freedom, faith, integrity, a good education, personal responsibility, a strong work ethic, and the value of being selfless.

Traditions represent a critical piece of our culture. They help form the structure and foundation of our families and our society. They remind us that we are part of a history that defines our past, shapes who we are today and who we are likely to become. Once we ignore the meaning of our traditions, we are in danger of damaging the underpinning of our identity and heritage. *There is no beauty but the beauty of Action.*

For the past over a century now, Africa has continued to witness series of slow and limiting transition from crudity to modernity, expected as such, with consequent impacts. As the modernization continue to creep into Africa, it leaves in place impacts, which are both positive and otherwise, on family as well as on the entire society. The positive impact it engendered, having visibly seen and appreciates it means that such should be aspired and worked for. Hence the need for us to take a deeper looks at how modernization impacts the African traditional family system, and probably isolate the strategies that are enervating so as to sustain the family systems that is sustainable and valuable.

Modernization, in its simplest and direct meaning refers to the transitional process of moving from "traditional" or "primitive" communities to modern societies, with respect to development and renewal. It remains a vital factor in assessing how development has impacted the Africa traditional family system in the face of modernity and globalization.

Globalization is a term used to define how trade and

technology have made the world into a more connected and interdependent place and in the process having an impact on human society; it also captures in its scope the economic and social changes that have come about as a result. Globalization has its roots and subsequent traces in the incidences of modernization and constitutes a continuation of, rather than a break with, modernity, these affects the traditional family system in most of the African countries and thus gives an impetus to explore how to mitigate any negative impacts of modernization on the African continent.

Africa as a continent, no doubt has her culture, custom and traditional systems; it also have a well-established family system that has over the years been slowly resilient to the force of modernization until recently that it start yielding in quantum.

The continent is blessed with diverse religious traditions, to the extent that within the same tradition there have been variations. The three foremost religious traditions—African traditional religion, Christianity, and Islam—constitute the triple religious heritage of the African continent.

The traditional African family is a social unit with customs and beliefs and an economic unit for the existence of its members. It consists of a man, a wife (or wives), and children and some adopted people from other families or relatives from a family of the same descent or lineage form a kinship group. Families include a wide net of members that can include brothers, sisters, unborn children, and departed relatives. Households are the smallest unit of the family and include parents and children. One or more households comprise a village or compound. Communities hold ceremonies and have recognized elders or leaders who perform the ceremonial rites; however, tribal identities are fading. In traditional African society, the types of family existed in various manifestation; these include but not limited to extended family, conjugal family, nuclear family, simple family - compound family, - family of procreation, - family of orientation, - one-parent family, -matrifocal family. The traditional African family is a means of shared support. Since 'one was because others were', members of

the family support each other psychologically and practically, most especially during farming, rearing of children, supporting elder persons and the sick.

There are several benefits to living in a traditional family, such benefits include but not restricted to the assurances of more stability or consistency with raising children and increased financial stability. The disadvantages, however, can be isolation from extended family members, difficulty finding childcare, and burnout and the erosion of traditionally cherished family values by the force of modernity and the rapacious influence of globalization. The African traditional family system, though crude was a compact system, that meet the need of the family and had continue to suffer abrasion of modernity and globalization.

Globalizing in connivance with the impact of modernity in Africa has altered and continue to the self, and social and African traditional lives in a diverse and very profound ways. Under the condition of modernity, the African traditional family system is changing, and rapidly so, to an individualistic nuclear family life, thus distorting the old and cherished family system. Again, because of the impact of modernity the inequality between men and women is steadily reducing and may certainly continue to be so. Gender equality which is alien to African traditional is holding sway in different parts of Africa, hence the verity and frequent divorce across the family space of Africa.

Modernization has also catalyzed the destruction of the African traditional family ties and structures, limiting it to the now termed “nuclear” family comprising only of mother, father and children and if you insist single parenthood has been the order of our time. It is also fast destroying the past and much cherished traditions, norms and values that used to be passed down from one generation to the next. In the past, when the extended family all lived in one place and eating from the same bowl, traditions were built into the routines of daily life and kept alive by family elders, through oral narration of stories, folklore and songs. As family branches and diverged, and as the elders die, the traditions often died with them. With modernization and its consequent impacts on the family, the struggle for personal survival has left the family scattered or drastically altered their preference for the retaining some past traditional practices in most of the African society.

The African world view of communal ownership of property is fast eroding. What holds on now personal ownership of property. To modern Africans, what is ours perishes and what is mine abides. Suffice one to add here the spirit of belongingness to a particular family is fading away. The African kinship system refers to a collaborative relationship between members of one household and members of a large linear group. The kinship system encompasses social responsibilities and expectations that ensure that the group members support one another. Today, as it is, we are no longer our brother’s keeper.

The Traditional African family system is undergoing rapid changes due to socio-economic factors. Today, many members of these families, particularly the younger ones may assimilate new religions, new values-mostly induced by the influence of the media, they may also fall under the influence of science, politics, technology, and modern market economies, no doubt these are all the pervasive influence and impacts of modernization and globalization on the African traditional family systems and it is so much long-held cherished values.

Today, better health care, as a result of modernization of the society and the family care is yielding larger

populations and its consequent challenges. Modernization has created and continues to create new situations unknown in traditional lifestyles. Families are now poised between the traditional solidarity which supplied land, customs, ethics, rites of passage, a burial place upon death, customary law, religious participation, and ethnic identity; and modern lives of economic activity, education, transport, communication, and political debate, yet the obvious benefits of modernization dictates that it remains the preferred options.

Modernization brought challenges of housing, employment, income, alcoholism, prostitution, and corruption, yet inherently has several benefits to it. Today, because of modernization, the role of the family has drastically changed and have expanded social cultural, economic, political, moral and ethical obligations and responsibility of the family with a reciprocal benefit to support it, hence the weakening of the kinship ties in contemporary times and its further unattractiveness.

As a consequence of modernization, the African traditional family and its members are society in miniature. Industrialization, which is the consequences of modernization, has radically disrupted this more or less autonomous family economy, taking away the innocence of the once cherished beauty and economic power at that local level. It takes away the economic function of the family, and reduces it to a unit of consumption and socialization. Production moves away from the household to the factory and with dire consequences which many families at that level find difficult to respond to or recover from.

The unregulated impacts of modernization on the African traditional family system have a great tendency to disrupt and probably undermine it, hence the need to regularly explore means and ways by which the disruptive impacts of the modernization on the traditional families in the African continent is monitored, influenced and regulated. We must not allow the force of modernity to completely sweep away the traditional family system in the African continent for there are many lessons to learn and culture that ought to be cherished and preserved, because of their ability to deliver positive values to our communities.

We must identify and embrace the positive impacts of modernization of the African traditional family system and explore it to the fullest for the betterment of the African continent. There is no doubt that modernization has brought positive and lasting changes to the family system in most of the African countries; like access to better education, communication and health care. But it also had negative effects like eroding traditional values and encouraging materialism and selfishness. At its core, modernization in the like manner of westernization, has infused the society with values of individualism, freedom and democracy. We need to promote the positive impacts of modernization on the African traditional family system for the overall benefits of our people and the respective communities.

The traditional family system in Africa is peculiar with Africa's rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage and the promotion of this is quite vital and very important for sustainable development, poverty reduction, and building and maintaining peace in the society. We must continue to explore how to use the benefits of modernization to get and update ourselves with information about new technologies while maintaining keen and wrapped watch over our cultural heritage and values. This is because in the current era, it has become a demand for us to follow the development of globalization in order to adapt to the rapid changes in the society, to fail to do so is to be consigned to

the era of underdevelopment and forgetfulness as a people and as a family.

As leaders, role models, and parents, we must strive to utilize every opportunity available to us to reinforce the values and beliefs that we hold dear and inherited from our forebears. The alternative to action is taking these values for granted. The result is that our beliefs and traditions will get so diluted, over time, over space that our way of life will become foreign to us. It is like good health. You may take it for granted until you lose it. If we disregard our values, norms and values we will open our eyes one day and would not be able to recognize “our world” anymore.

The values that support the backbone of our country, our family, our continent and our faith will have drifted for so long that the fabric of our society will be torn. When the term tradition and modernity are examined in a societal scenario, traditions represent the real identity of a specific culture, while ignoring some of them with rationality is an indication of modernity and loss of identity. A person who has forgotten his traditions is also like a person who has forgotten himself and his history.

If we stand tall it is because we stand on the shoulders of our traditions – African proverb.

Gambian Christian Anniversaries

December & January

During December 1823: Arrival of Hannah Kilham and English Quaker missionaries, who opened an agricultural centre at Bakau and a girls’ school in Banjul.

18th January, 1848: Arrival of Fr. Ronarc’h from France, and Fr. Warlop from Belgium, to begin the Catholic mission.

26th December, 1873: Blessing by Bishop Durët of Dakar of the school in Hagan Street (*now Daniel Goddard Street*).

9th January, 1881: Death, from pneumonia, of Fr. Samba, first Gambian priest. He had been ordained in 1869.

3rd December, 1887: Fr. Massart died while saying the Last Gospel at the conclusion of Mass.

12th January, 1920: The SS Afrique, en route to Dakar from Bordeaux, sank at sea. Among the 563 who perished were Bishop Jalabert of Dakar and 18 missionaries.

19th December, 1931: Last entry in French in the Mission Journal, the Mission having been declared self-governing.

10th January, 1932: Fr. John Meehan was named first Ecclesiastical Superior of the self-governing Mission.

21st December, 1933: Fr. Doody, who had been taken ill while travelling from Ireland to Banjul, died while returning on the same boat that had brought him.

15th January, 1936: Fr. Harold Whiteside inaugurated Bwiam mission.

1st December, 1948: St. Therese’s Elementary School, Kanifing opened with 114 pupils.

16th December, 1952: Departure of Fr. Coughlin after four years in The Gambia.

3rd December, 1953: Arrival from Nigeria of Fr. Michael Frawley to be Principal of St. Augustine’s High School, Banjul, where he remained for 7 years.

24th December, 1954: Arrival of Fr. Michael Flynn.

1st January, 1956: Opening of the convent at Kanifing, with Mother Angela, Sr. Magdalene and Sr. Anne-Marie in residence, all teaching at St. Therese’s School.

24th December, 1957: Fr. Michael Moloney was appointed first Bishop of Banjul; the announcement was not made locally until 12 days later.

8th January, 1964: Bishop Moloney blessed St Martin’s Church, Kartong.

10th January, 1962: Arrival of Fr. Vincent Comer CSSp.

13th January, 1965: Bishop Moloney returned at the end of Vatican II.

25th December, 1968: The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Mariani, blessed and opened Holy Spirit Church, Banjul.

14th January, 1972: Presentation of Mary Sisters ‘Shalom Retreat Centre’ was established.

21st January, 1977: Fr. Edward Grimes became first Director of the newly-formed Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI).

16th December, 1977: Opening of the Diocesan Development Office (*now CaDO*).

3rd January, 1978: Opening of Christ the King, Darsilami.

30th December, 1985: The first pastoral assembly for clergy and religious opened at Shalom, Fajara.

5th December, 1987: First pilgrimage to Kunkujang Mariama.

21st January, 1989: Ordination at Kanifing of Fr. Anthony Sonko.

28th December, 1989: The second pastoral assembly opened at St. Peter’s Technical High School, Lamin and included participation of the laity.

1st January, 1995: Death in Ireland of Fr. Michael Flynn.

9th January, 1998: Death in Banjul of Mrs. E. Senghore, aged 113.

31st December, 1999: The death of Bishop Michael Maloney C.S.Sp.

29th December, 2005: Abbé Blaise Malou and a group from Balandine, Casamance, began a 4-day visit to Fatima Parish, Bwiam.

During January 2007: ‘Working with the poor’ was the focus of a 10-day meeting at Shalom of 43 Presentation Sisters from 10 countries.

19th January, 2008: Alhaji Cherno Alieu Mass Kah, Imam Ratib of Banjul, visited the Cathedral of the Assumption.

17th January, 2010: Blessed Sacrament, Kanifing Estate, became an independent parish.

12th December, 2010: Sr. Josephine of Senegal and Sr. Mary of Ghana, took their final vows as Marist Sisters.

29th December, 2012: Sr. Calixte Thomas left for India, her home country, after many years in educational work in The Gambia.

3rd January, 2014: Bishop Robert Ellison received the keys of Centenary House, the new commercial building at Kairaba Avenue.

24th January, 2015: Ordination of Fr. James Mendy and Fr. Tanislas Ndecky.

14th January, 2021: Death of Thomas Gregory George Senghore ‘TGG’, a renowned Gambian Catholic.

20th January, 2021: First Christian radio, Radio Veritas, inaugurated in The Gambia at GPI.

23rd - 30th January, 2022: The ITCABIC Bishop’s Conference took place in GPI. The conference was comprised of 5 Bishops, 4 from Sierra Leone and our own Bishop, 2 secretaries, 2 rectors, 4 and the Nuncio.

26th December, 2022: First Kids Boxing Day Fun / Spelling Bee Competition organized by Radio Veritas.

Daily Mass Readings

December & January

**1 December, 2023 – Friday**

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: [Daniel 7: 2-14](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Daniel 3: 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81](#)Alleluia: [Luke 21: 28](#)Gospel: [Luke 21: 29-33](#)**2 December, 2023 – Saturday**

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

First Reading: [Daniel 7: 15-27](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Daniel 3: 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87](#)Alleluia: [Luke 21: 36](#)Gospel: [Luke 21: 34-36](#)**3 December, 2023 – Sunday**

First Sunday of Advent

First Reading: [Isaiah 63: 16b-17, 19b; 64: 2-7](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19](#)Second Reading: [First Corinthians 1: 3-9](#)Alleluia: [Psalm 85: 8](#)Gospel: [Mark 13: 33-37](#)**4 December, 2023 – Monday**

Advent Weekday / John of Damascus, Priest, Religious, Doctor

First Reading: [Isaiah 2: 1-5](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 122: 1-2, 3-4b, 4cd-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)Alleluia: [Psalm 80: 4](#)Gospel: [Matthew 8: 5-11](#)**5 December, 2023 – Tuesday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 11: 1-10](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 72: 1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17](#)Gospel: [Luke 10: 21-24](#)**6 December, 2023 – Wednesday**

Advent Weekday/ Nicholas, Bishop

First Reading: [Isaiah 25: 6-10a](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6](#)Gospel: [Matthew 15: 29-37](#)**7 December, 2023 – Thursday**

Ambrose, Bishop, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Isaiah 26: 1-6](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 118: 1 and 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a](#)Alleluia: [Isaiah 55: 6](#)Gospel: [Matthew 7: 21, 24-27](#)**8 December, 2023 – Friday**

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Solemnity

First Reading: [Genesis 3: 9-15, 20](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 98: 1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4](#)Second Reading: [Ephesians 1: 3-6, 11-12](#)Alleluia: [Luke 1: 28](#)Gospel: [Luke 1: 26-38](#)**9 December, 2023 – Saturday**

Advent Weekday/ Juan Diego, Hermit

First Reading: [Isaiah 30: 19-21, 23-26](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 147: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6](#)Alleluia: [Isaiah 33: 22](#)Gospel: [Matthew 9: 35 – 10: 1, 5a, 6-8](#)**10 December, 2023 – Sunday**

Second Sunday of advent

First Reading: [Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 85: 9-10, 11-12, 13-14](#)Second Reading: [Second Peter 3: 8-14](#)Alleluia: [Luke 3: 4, 6](#)Gospel: [Mark 1: 1-8](#)**11 December, 2023 – Monday**

Advent Weekday/ Damasus I, Pope

First Reading: [Isaiah 35: 1-10](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 85: 9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14](#)Gospel: [Luke 5: 17-26](#)**12 December, 2023 – Tuesday**

Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast

First Reading: [Zechariah 2: 14-17](#) or [Revelation 11: 19a; 12: 1-6a, 10ab](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Judith 13: 18bcde, 19](#)Gospel: [Luke 1: 26-38](#) or [Luke 1: 39-47](#)**13 December, 2023 – Wednesday**

Lucy, Virgin, Martyr Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Isaiah 40: 25-31](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalms 103: 1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10](#)Gospel: [Matthew 11: 28-30](#)**14 December, 2023 – Thursday**

John of the Cross, Priest, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: [Isaiah 41: 13-20](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 145: 1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13ab](#)Alleluia: [Isaiah 45: 8](#)Gospel: [Matthew 11: 11-15](#)**15 December, 2023 – Friday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Isaiah 48: 17-19](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 1: 1-2, 3, 4 and 6](#)Gospel: [Matthew 11: 16-19](#)**16 December, 2023 – Saturday**

Advent Weekday

First Reading: [Sirach 48: 1-4, 9-11](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 80: 2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19](#)Alleluia: [Luke 3: 4, 6](#)Gospel: [Matthew 17: 9a, 10-13](#)**17 December, 2023 – Sunday**

Third Sunday of Advent (O Sapientia)

First Reading: [Isaiah 61: 1-2a, 10-11](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Luke 1: 46-48, 49-50, 53-54](#)Second Reading: [First Thessalonians 5: 16-24](#)Alleluia: [Isaiah 61: 1](#)Gospel: [John 1: 6-8, 19-28](#)**18 December, 2023 – Monday**

Advent Weekday (O Adonai)

First Reading: [Jeremiah 23: 5-8](#)Responsorial Psalm: [Psalm 72: 1-2, 12-13, 18-19](#)Gospel: [Matthew 1: 18-25](#)

19 December, 2023 – Tuesday

Advent Weekday (O Radix Jesse)
First Reading: Judges 13: 2-7, 24-25a
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 71: 3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17
Gospel: Luke 1: 5-25

20 December, 2023 – Wednesday

Advent Weekday (O Clavis David)
First Reading: Isaiah 7: 10-14
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 24: 1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6
Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

21 December, 2023 – Thursday

Advent Weekday (O Oriens)/ Peter Canisius, Priest, Doctor
First Reading: Songs 2: 8-14 or Zephaniah 3: 14-18a
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 33: 2-3, 11-12, 20-21
Gospel: Luke 1: 39-45

22 December, 2023 – Friday

Advent Weekday (O Rex Gentium)
First Reading: First Samuel 1: 24-28
Responsorial Psalm: First Samuel 2: 1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd
Gospel: Luke 1: 46-56

23 December, 2023 – Saturday

Advent Weekday (O Emmanuel)/ John of Kanty, Priest
First Reading: Malachi 3: 1-4, 23-24
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 25: 4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14
Gospel: Luke 1: 57-66

24 December, 2023 – Sunday

Fourth Sunday of Advent
First Reading: Second Samuel 7: 1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 89: 2-3, 4-5, 27, 29
Second Reading: Romans 16: 25-27
Alleluia: Luke 1: 38
Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

25 December, 2023 – Monday – Vigil

The Nativity of the Lord Solemnity, Holy Day of Obligation/ Vigil
First Reading: Isaiah 62: 1-5
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 89: 4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Second Reading: Acts 13: 16-17, 22-25
Gospel: Matthew 1: 1-25

25 December, 2023 – Monday – Midnight

The Nativity of the Lord Solemnity, Holy Day of Obligation/ Midnight
First Reading: Isaiah 9: 1-6
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13
Second Reading: Titus 2: 11-14
Alleluia: Luke 2: 10-11
Gospel: Luke 2: 1-14

25 December, 2023 – Monday – Dawn

The Nativity of the Lord Solemnity, Holy Day of Obligation/ Dawn
First Reading: Isaiah 62: 11-12
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 97: 1, 6, 11-12
Second Reading: Titus 3: 4-7
Alleluia: Luke 2: 14
Gospel: Luke 2: 15-20

25 December, 2023 – Monday – Day

The Nativity of the Lord Solemnity, Holy Day of Obligation/ Day
First Reading: Isaiah 52: 7-10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 98: 1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6
Second Reading: Hebrews 1: 1-6
Gospel: John 1: 1-18

26 December, 2023 – Tuesday

Stephen, Protomartyr Feast
First Reading: Acts 6: 8-10; 7: 54-59
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 31: 3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17
Alleluia: Psalms 118: 26a, 27a
Gospel: Matthew 10: 17-22

27 December, 2023 – Wednesday

John, Apostle, Evangelist Feast
First Reading: First John 1: 1-4
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 97: 1-2, 5-6, 11-12
Gospel: John 20: 1a and 2-8

28 December, 2023 – Thursday

Holy innocents, Martyrs Feast
First Reading: First John 1: 5 – 2: 2
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 124: 2-3, 4-5, 7b-8
Gospel: Matthew 2: 13-18

29 December, 2023 – Friday

Christmas Weekday/ Thomas Becket, Bishop, Martyr
First Reading: First John 2: 3-11
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96: 1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6
Alleluia: Luke 2: 32
Gospel: Luke 2: 22-35

30 December, 2023 – Saturday

Christmas Weekday
First Reading: First John 2: 12-17
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96: 7-8a, 8b-9, 10
Gospel: Luke 2: 36-40

31 December, 2023 – Sunday

Holy Family Feast
First Reading: Genesis 15: 1-6; 21: 1-3 or Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 105: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9 or Psalms 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5
Second Reading: Hebrews 11: 8, 11-12, 17-19 or Colossians 3: 12-21
Alleluia: Hebrews 1: 1-2 or Colossians 3: 15a, 16a
Gospel: Luke 2: 22-40 or Luke 2: 22, 39-40

1 January, 2024 - Monday

Mary, Mother of God Solemnity (*Octave of Christmas*)
First Reading: Numbers 6: 22-27
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 67: 2-3, 5, 6, 8
Second Reading: Galatians 4: 4-7
Alleluia: Hebrews 1: 1-2
Gospel: Luke 2: 16-21

2 January, 2024 - Tuesday

Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops, Doctors Obligatory Memorial
First Reading: First John 2: 22-28
Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 98: 1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4
Alleluia: Hebrews 1: 1-2
Gospel: John 1: 19-28

3 January, 2024 - Wednesday

Christmas Weekday/ Holy Name of Jesus

First Reading: First John 2: 29 – 3: 6

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98: 1, 3cd-4, 5-6

Alleluia: John 1: 14a, 12a

Gospel: John 1: 29-34

4 January, 2024 - Thursday

Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: First John 3: 7-10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 98: 1, 7-8, 9

Alleluia: Hebrews 1: 1-2

Gospel: John 1: 35-42

5 January, 2024 - Friday

John Neumann, Bishop Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: First John 3: 11-21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 100: 1b-2, 3, 4, 5

Gospel: John 1: 43-51

6 January, 2024 - Saturday

Christmas Weekday/ André Bessette, Religious

First Reading: First John 5: 5-13

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 147: 12-13, 14-15, 19-20

Alleluia: Mark 9: 7

Gospel: Mark 1: 7-11 or Luke 3: 23-38

7 January, 2024 - Sunday

Epiphany of the Lord Solemnity

First Reading: Isaiah 60: 1-6

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 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

8 January, 2024 - Monday

Baptism of the Lord Feast

First Reading: Isaiah 55: 1-11

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12: 2-3, 4bcd, 5-6

Second Reading: First John 5: 1-9

Alleluia: John 1: 29

Gospel: Mark 1: 7-11

9 January, 2024 - Tuesday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: First Samuel 1: 9-20

Responsorial Psalm: First Samuel 2: 1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd

Alleluia: First Thessalonians 2: 13

Gospel: Mark 1: 21-28

10 January, 2024 - Wednesday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: First Samuel 3: 1-10, 19-20

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 40: 2 and 5, 7-8a, 8b-9, 10

Alleluia: John 10: 27

Gospel: Mark 1: 29-39

11 January, 2024 - Thursday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: First Samuel 4: 1-11

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 44: 10-11, 14-15, 24-25

Alleluia: Matthew 4: 23

Gospel: Mark 1: 40-45

12 January, 2024 - Friday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: First Samuel 8: 4-7, 10-22a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89: 16-17, 18-19

Alleluia: Luke 7: 16

Gospel: Mark 2: 1-12

13 January, 2024 - Saturday

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary/ Hilary, Bishop, Doctor

First Reading: First Samuel 9: 1-4, 17-19; 10: 1

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 21: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7

Alleluia: Luke 4: 18

Gospel: Mark 2: 13-17

14 January, 2024 - Sunday

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: First Samuel 3: 3b-10, 19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40: 2, 4ab, 7-8a, 8b-9, 10

Second Reading: First Corinthians 6: 13c-15a, 17-20

Alleluia: John 1: 41, 17b

Gospel: John 1: 35-42

15 January, 2024 - Monday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: First Samuel 15: 16-23

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 50: 8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23

Alleluia: Hebrews 4: 12

Gospel: Mark 2: 18-22

16 January, 2024 - Tuesday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: First Samuel 16: 1-13

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89: 20, 21-22, 27-28

Alleluia: Ephesians 1: 17-18

Gospel: Mark 2: 23-28

17 January, 2024 - Wednesday

Anthony, Abbot Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: First Samuel 17: 32-33, 37, 40-51

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 144: 1b, 2, 9-10

Alleluia: Matthew 4: 23

Gospel: Mark 3: 1-6

18 January, 2024 - Thursday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: First Samuel 18: 6-9; 19: 1-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 56: 2-3, 9-10a, 10b-12, 13-14

Alleluia: Second Timothy 1: 10

Gospel: Mark 3: 7-12

19 January, 2024 - Friday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: First Samuel 24: 3-21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 57: 2, 3-4, 6 and 11

Alleluia: Second Corinthians 5: 19

Gospel: Mark 3: 13-19

20 January, 2024 - Saturday

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary/ Fabian, Pope, Martyr/ Sebastian, Martyr

First Reading: Second Samuel 1: 1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 80: 2-3, 5-7

Alleluia: Acts 16: 14b

Gospel: Mark 3: 20-21

21 January, 2024 - Sunday

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Second Reading: First Corinthians 7: 29-31

Alleluia: Mark 1: 15

Gospel: Mark 1: 14-20

22 January, 2024 - Monday

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: Second Samuel 5: 1-7, 10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 89: 20, 21-22, 25-26

Alleluia: Second Timothy 1: 10

Gospel: Mark 3: 22-30

23 January, 2024 - Tuesday

Ordinary Weekday/ Vincent of Saragossa, Deacon, Martyr/ Marianne Cope, Virgin

First Reading: Second Samuel 6: 12b-15, 17-19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 24: 7, 8, 9, 10

Alleluia: Matthew 11: 25

Gospel: Mark 3: 31-35

24 January, 2024 - Wednesday

Francis De Sales, Bishop, Religious Founder, Doctor Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: Second Samuel 7: 4-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 89: 4-5, 27-28, 29-30

Gospel: Mark 4: 1-20

25 January, 2024 - Thursday

Conversion of Paul, Apostle Feast

First Reading: Acts 22: 3-16 or Acts 9: 1-22

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 117: 1bc, 2

Alleluia: John 15: 16

Gospel: Mark 16: 15-18

26 January, 2024 - Friday

Timothy and Titus, Bishops Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: Second Timothy 1: 1-8 or Titus 1: 1-5

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 96: 1-2a, 2b-3, 7-8a, 10

Alleluia: Matthew 11: 25

Gospel: Mark 4: 26-34

27 January, 2024 - Saturday

Ordinary Weekday/ Optional Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary/ Angela Merici, Virgin, Religious Founder

First Reading: Second Samuel 12: 1-7a, 10-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 51: 12-13, 14-15, 16-17

Alleluia: John 3: 16

Gospel: Mark 4: 35-41

28 January, 2024 - Sunday

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18: 15-20

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Second Reading: First Corinthians 7: 32-35

Alleluia: Matthew 4: 16

Gospel: Mark 1: 21-28

29 January, 2024 - Monday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: Second Samuel 15: 13-14, 30; 16: 5-13

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

Alleluia: Luke 7: 16

Gospel: Mark 5: 1-20

30 January, 2024 - Tuesday

Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: Second Samuel 18: 9-10, 14, 24-25a, 30 – 19:3

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 86: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Alleluia: Matthew 8: 17

Gospel: Mark 5: 21-43

31 January, 2024 - Wednesday

John Bosco, Priest, Religious Founder Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: Second Samuel 24: 2, 9-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 32: 1-2, 5, 6, 7

Alleluia: John 10: 27

Gospel: Mark 6: 1-6

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"Happy is the man who finds a true friend, and far happier is he who finds that true friend in his wife."

—Franz Schubert



MISSIONARY WORK

Reflecting on the Humanitarian and Missionary works of Rev. Fr. Jackie Sharpe (C.S.Sp) in The Gambia

By Andrew Sylva

Rev Fr John (Jackie) Sharpe worked as a priest at the St. Therese's Catholic Church, Kanifing and several other parts of The Gambia, spanning over five decades as a Missionary. He won souls, impacted lives and joined to build a nation, called The Gambia. He was a trailblazer and a true change agent for Christ and His Kingdom. He remains one of the 20th century's greatest champions for the liberation of less privileged people in Africa in general, especially his adopted homeland of The Gambia; where he introduced series of skills acquisition training for the people. He served both the church and the peoples of The Gambia with a sense of sincerity of purpose and determination at a time of transition and uncertainty of life. He worked very hard with the other missionaries for the strengthening of the Catholic Church in the country and even beyond. He, in partnership with other like-minds, built schools and houses for the Manjagoes; giving their lives a better and deeper meaning. He offered scholarships to indigent students; he gave home and substance to the widows and widowers. He ran a boarding house in the Greater Banjul Areas (GBAs) and his educational institution has raised many great men and women in the society today who are contributing meaningfully to the development of The Gambia.

Reverend Fr John (Jackie) Sharpe, CSSP is known as the Manjago Priest in his adopted home in The Gambia, for where he had spent over fifty years before he went back to the Republic Ireland. A native of County Tipperary, Ireland, with still strong Tipperary accent, celebrated the golden jubilee of his ordination and years of service in the Shrine Church he built at Kunkujang Mariama, in 2021

His life story in the Gambia is typical of the many other Holy Ghost Missionaries who left their own country as young men to do great work in their adopted countries. In many ways, he became more Gambian than many of the Gambians themselves, for he began his missionary works among Christian Manjagoes since 1976. It is interesting and intriguing to note that Fr. Jackie speaks Manjago fluently. The Centre of Catholic Mission of Kunkujang, beautiful Church of St Francis, which he began with a small school under a big tree, has over the years metamorphosed to a well organized small Catholic community.

The decision to go to The Gambia by Rev. Fr. John (Jackie) Sharpe may no doubt be in connection with his deeper conviction to enlarge the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to reach the unreachable and bring more light to the Continent of Africa; the specific choice of The Gambia, may not be unconnected with the age long affinity of most of the pioneer Irish priests for this small nation. His long stint in The Gambia was largely informed by his avowed wish to fulfil Jesus' mandate in the Bible; the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that



are bruised (Luke 4:18).

No one lives in an isolation in perpetuity and ever makes any meaningful impacts on his fellow men or women, hence the words of the quotation of the book of Psalm 8:4 which states that, "what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" - underlies our continuous quest for collective humanity, which is motivated by the spirit of love and God. Rather than remaining as separate individuals, fueling personal greed and desires, few people come organized as dynamic groups or community, to share resources, knowledge or to care for one another, selflessly so on many occasions; such care transcend race, culture and time, with an eye for a reward in the eternity to come, as mostly observed in the engagements of the missionaries. Such quest also provides the motivation of many missionaries that came from their respective countries abroad into Africa, Gambia inclusive.

Jesus sent his disciples as missionaries to "proclaim the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), and they "went forth and preached everywhere" (Mark 16:20). As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." 1 Peter 4:10. Every believer has a gift they can use to further the Kingdom of God by serving others. Missionaries must tap into their spiritual gifts and God-given talents to be effective while spreading the Gospel. This is aptly what Rev. Fr. Sharpe had done in The Gambia! He intently applied this principle where in Gambia; "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." "The history of missions is the history of answered prayer." "The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to him, the more intensely missionary we become."

Today, the world over, many missionaries have taken it upon their calling to care for the natives, who they share no inkling of culture or language and other affinity, but in sacrificially laying down their lives for others in furtherance of our collective humanity. In carrying out their missions, one of the continents of their proselytizing campaign was in Africa. Ireland is globally recognized and documented for its long history with Christianity, which was introduced in the 5th century. The preaching of St. Patrick, a fifth-century Romano-British Christian missionary and bishop in Ireland and others led to the

founding of monasteries that became the well-known centres of culture and scholarship in Europe. The country later evolved into a Roman Catholic majority but subsequently underwent radical secularization in the 20th century.

In between, many prominent Irish Missionary left Ireland to serve in other parts of the world, particularly, Africa, with an unparalleled sacrifice and devotion; from Nigeria to The Gambia, from Benin to the Democratic Republic of Congo, living in the worst of misery, away from the comfort at home, all for the sake of our collective humanity and in the spirit of the gospel propagations. The impacts of such selfless initiative have been far reaching, enriching and transformative; they have collectively worked with many natives to bring light and hope to the people as noticeable in The Gambia.

To Rev. Fr. Sharpe's astute credit, he has raised professionals such as Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Architects, Priest, Professors, Teachers, whether they were Christians and non-Christians. His impacts and legacy remain eternal and memorial in the sands of time. He provided a robust moral compass and intellectual training, for future leadership engagements. He imbued the people with habits of industry, resilience, individual initiative.

He helped alleviate poverty in the country by providing food and shelter to the needy and complimented government's efforts to improve on socio-economic status of people of The Gambia. Those who ordinarily would not have attained good living conditions have been repackaged to see the better side of life. He strongly believes that "To do the work of others is not slavery. To do the work of God is true liberation. Your positive impact on the generations to come will be directly related to the ministry you had in that little place called home- The Gambia)." Such a life is no doubt without its peculiar challenges and they were the impetus that strengthened you all through your service in The Gambia. There were challenges of raising funds to prosecute some projects and the forces of culture against your missionary efforts but in all these you surmounted and overcame, hence the success story of Missionary activities in The Gambia. Fr. Jackie used his ministry to build people, not people to build his ministry." "The true character of ministry is a servant's heart."

With his retirement as a Priest after over 50 years of service to mankind, he returned back home to Ireland. Ireland did not only donate him to The Gambia, but to the rest of the world to further enhance our collective humanity. He was indeed a devoted and devout Priest who never failed to attend to all his parishioners, despite their occupation and social status. He made himself available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation whenever needed as well as for the organic building of a community of people. He

gave generously to the needy and attended to the demands of the vulnerable in the society.

His life was clearly a fulfilled one just as his Mission in working to better the lots of the people in his place of mission. Many who may not have amounted to anybody in The Gambia today, found an open purse to oil their journey of life and learning and an emphatic heart to spew motivation and encouraging words that serve as tonic to energize them in their low moment. He may have gone back to rest in Ireland after a mission and vision accomplished, in the twilight of his years on mother earth, his impacts as a missionary on the lives of the people in The Gambia is not only far-reaching and worthy of emulation but would continue to reverberate for many years to come as it serves as the benchmark for which some will be assessed in the near future.

Shannon Adler, an author, noted that "*Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you.*" He, not only carved his name in the heart of the entire nation of The Gambia, but his life-long exploit has become a story of reference of the large heartedness of the Catholic Church. "The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to him, the more intensely missionary we become." "A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing." "A good missionary is a good theologian.

We Thank Rev. Fr. Jackie Sharpe (CSSP) for your service to the Lord and to the people you lovingly, humanitarially and gracious served. We are grateful to you for helping communities achieve dignified living and educational opportunities to escape the cycle of poverty extant in our country. "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply." You will always be remembered, filled with blessings of good health, the joy of good friends, a loving family, and the contentment of a job well done! To Fr. Sharpe, note that gray hair is a crown of splendour; it is attained in the way of righteousness. Finally, you have fought the good fight of faith, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for you the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to you on that Day, and not only to you but also to all who have loved his appearing - 2 Tim. 4 Verses 6 to 18.

The author is well oriented and has comprehensive knowledge, experience and expertise in International Development, Development Cooperation, International Partnerships, Development Programming, Project Management and Public Diplomacy for a period spanning over 15 years.

The Editor and Staff of The
Diocese of Banjul Newsletter
wish all Our readers





3rd December
St Francis Xavier priest

Francis was born in Spain on 7th April, 1506. In Paris, he met Ignatius Loyola and became one of the first Jesuits. He was ordained in 1537, and in 1542, embarked on a three-year mission to India, and also established missions in Malaysia. In 1549, he went to Japan, and in 1551 returned to India. He died on 3 December, 1552, suffering from fever on the island of Sancian (Shangchuan, off the Chinese coast) as he attempted to secure entrance to the country, then closed to foreigners. Francis is believed to have baptised about 30,000 converts.

His success was partly due to his adaptation of Christianity to local cultures. In 1927, he was named patron of all missions.

7th December
St Ambrose doctor of the Church

Ambrose is one of the four great Latin Doctors of the Church (the others being Augustine, Jerome and Gregory). He was born in Trier (in modern-day Italy) in 339 and became a celebrated lawyer. When the bishopric of Milan fell vacant around 374, he was acclaimed bishop – though still a catechumen, and not yet baptised.

Ambrose's statesmanship and theological skills enabled him to convert many pagans. He combated Arianism (the heresy which denies the Holy Trinity). He imposed a public penance on the Emperor Theodosius I for condoning a massacre. He converted and baptised St. Augustine. Ambrose died in 397. His bishop's throne may still be seen in Milan.

8th December
The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed as infallible by Pope Pius IX in 1854. It teaches that Mary, Mother of Christ, was conceived without sin: she was 'full of grace'. She received God's grace from the first moment of her existence, and spent her earthly life in a perfect relationship with Him. He filled her with grace so that she would be worthy to become Mother of God. Mary is perceived as the perfect example of the redeeming action of God's grace; she was only able to receive this grace because Christ would later redeem all humanity through His death on the cross.

26th December
St Stephen first Christian martyr

Like his Master, Jesus, Stephen was unjustly condemned by the religious authorities. And like Jesus, before his agonising death, Stephen prayed that his persecutors might be forgiven.

He was granted a vision of the risen Christ. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Coming immediately after Christmas Day, St. Stephen's Day reminds us that the Babe of Bethlehem was born to suffer and to die. (See *Acts, chapters 6 and 7*).

2nd January
St Basil & St. Gregory Nazianzen, doctors of the Church

Basil and Gregory were close friends and great figures of the Eastern Church in the 4th century. Basil had a brilliant academic career, but longed for a life of solitude. After extensive travels, he gave away most of his possessions and devoted himself to founding religious communities, writing an austere 'rule' which is still observed today.

Gregory was Bishop of Constantinople (now Istanbul). Because of his great learning, he was known as 'Gregory the Theologian'. Gregory eventually retired and returned to his monastery.

He summed up his life and Basil's thus: 'Our great concern, our great name, was to be Christians, and to be called Christians.'

28th January
St. Thomas Aquinas, doctor of the Church

Born in Aquino, Sicily, in 1225, **Thomas** studied in Naples and taught in Paris. He integrated the teaching of the Greek philosopher Aristotle into Christian thought, asserting that the theologian starts with faith and proceeds through reason. He died in 1274. In 1567, he was named a Doctor of the Church, and in 1879 was proclaimed by Pope Leo XIII as a champion of orthodoxy.

Thomas wrote more than 80 works. He is pre-eminent as a writer of liturgical texts, which combine clarity with beauty. Gambian Catholics are familiar with Thomas' Benediction hymns, O salutaris Hostia ('O saving Victim') and Tantum ergo sacramentum (Therefore, we before him bending').

December & January

Saviour of the world, by Your Cross and Resurrection You have set us free.



Our Sunday Readings

3RD DECEMBER, 2023
First Sunday of Advent – YEAR B

First Reading: Isaiah 63: 16b-17, 19b; 64: 2-7
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19
Second Reading: First Corinthians 1: 3-9
Alleluia: Psalm 85: 8
Gospel: Mark 13: 33-37

Homily Theme: The Coming of Jesus – Luke 12:39-48, Matthew 24:42-51, Mark 13:33-37

Verse of the Day Reflection: This Scripture offers us an invitation. It can be said that Jesus comes to us at an unexpected hour in two ways. First, we know that He will return one day in glory to judge the living and the dead. His Second Coming is real and we should be aware of the fact that it could happen at any time. Sure, it may not happen for many years, or even for many hundreds of years, but it will happen. There will be one moment when the world as it is, will end, and the new order will be established. Ideally, we live each and every day in anticipation of that day and that moment. We must live in such a way that we are always ready for that end. Second, we must realize that Jesus does come to us, continually, by grace. Traditionally, we speak of His two comings: 1) His Incarnation, and 2) His return in glory. But there is a third coming we can speak of, which is His coming by grace into our lives. And this coming is quite real and should be something to which we are continually attentive. His coming by grace requires that we be continually “prepared” to meet Him. If we are not prepared, we can be certain we will miss Him. How do we prepare for this coming by grace? We prepare, first and foremost, by fostering a daily habit of interior prayer. Reflect, today, upon your life of prayer. Know that the moments you dedicate exclusively to prayer each day are essential to your holiness and relationship with God. And know that those moments must help to build a habit of always being attentive to God.

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

10TH DECEMBER, 2023
Second Sunday of Advent – YEAR B

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

Homily Theme: Repent For The Kingdom of Heaven is at

Hand! – Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-6

Verse of the Day Reflection: On this Second Sunday of Advent, we are given the person of St. John the Baptist to ponder. What a gift he is! Jesus Himself stated that “among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11). What a compliment! What is it that made John so great? We can point to two things in particular. The first has to do with his calling and the second has to do with his virtue. First of all, John was great because he was the transition from the Old Testament Prophets to the New Testament. He was the bridge that prepared for the new life to come. His unique mission makes him truly great. But John was great not only because of his unique calling, because of the virtue he had in his life. And it is this gift that is worth pondering for our own inspiration more than any other. But John was more than willing to fulfill his mission and then submit himself to the cruel sword of his executioner. His humility was such that he was focused only on Jesus and desired only to point to Him. Reflect, today, upon this humility in your own life. Do you tend to point to yourself or to Christ? Do you seek the praise of others or do you humbly point all praise and glory to God? Humility is the path that St. John the Baptist took and it’s the path we must strive for each and every day.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the gift of St. John the Baptist. May his witness of humility inspire me in my Christian walk. Help me, Lord, to always point others to You rather than to myself. Jesus, I trust in You. **Amen.**

17TH DECEMBER, 2023 – YEAR B
Third Sunday of Advent (O Sapientia)

First Reading: Isaiah 61: 1-2a, 10-11
Responsorial Psalm: Luke 1: 46-48, 49-50, 53-54
Second Reading: First Thessalonians 5: 16-24
Alleluia: Isaiah 61: 1
Gospel: John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Homily Theme: Jesus Will Baptize You With the Holy Spirit and Fire – Matthew 11:2-11, John 1:19-28, Luke 3:10-18

Verse of the Day Reflection: Again, this Sunday, we are given the glorious witness of St. John the Baptist. This passage above is from Year C of the liturgical cycle, but Year A & B also present us with John the Baptist. What does it mean to be purified? For one thing, purification of our soul hurts. But it hurts in a sweet sort of way. Turning from sin and growing closer to God requires great sacrifice and surrender. And it requires that we allow God to do powerful things within us. And the most powerful thing

God wants to do is purify us. Our Catholic faith reveals to us the reality of Purgatory after we die. Purgatory is said to be a place of much spiritual pain, but again, in a sweet sort of way. It's painful in the sense that we are stripped of all that we hold on to that God wants us to let go of. It's painful in the sense that we endure a complete transformation of who we are and what we love. We learn to love God and God alone. And in the embrace of our love of God, we come to love all people. It's also sweet because, as we are purified, we grow infinitely closer to God and grow in holiness. This lifts the burden of sin and frees us to love as we ought. But our purification ought not start only in Purgatory. We are all called to enter into that process of purification here and now. We are called to heed the words of John the Baptist today and repent of all that keeps us from holiness of life. Reflect, today, upon the purification to which God may be calling you. What is it that you hold on to that He wants you free of? Commit yourself to the purifying fire of God's love and let that love cleanse you in this Advent season.

Prayer: Lord, I do long to have my soul purified by You. I do desire holiness of life. Help me to begin this process here and now, so that I can begin to experience the joy and freedom You have in store for me. Jesus, I trust in You. **Amen.**

24TH DECEMBER, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Advent – YEAR B

First Reading: Second Samuel 7: 1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89: 2-3, 4-5, 27, 29
Second Reading: Romans 16: 25-27
Alleluia: Luke 1: 38
Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

Homily Theme: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord – Luke 1:26-38

Verse of the Day Reflection: Today, we are given the witness of our Blessed Mother. And her witness is one of perfect faith! What is her response? "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." We traditionally speak of this as her great "fiat" (yes) to God! One thing we see within these words is that our Blessed Mother is offering her complete consent to something that she does not understand. The archangel gives a brief explanation to her but, if you honestly analyze this situation, what the angel says is beyond belief for most people. It's also fair to conclude that the archangel's explanation was not what convinced our Blessed Mother. She didn't listen to these words, analyze them, consider how likely they were or were not, and then decide if she would believe. She didn't say, "Let it be done to me insofar as I understand what you mean." Our Blessed Mother's faith was one that knew the truth without having to fully understand it. This is a gift! Reflect, today, upon your own knowledge of the truth. Are you able to consent to the will of God and the truths of God without fully understanding them? Do you trust God more than you trust your own human reason? Are you willing to move forward in life by faith rather than by your limited human reason alone?

Prayer: Lord, I desire to trust You with my whole mind, heart, soul and strength. Help me to always hear You speak and to respond with complete faith and generosity.

31ST DECEMBER, 2023
Holy Family Feast – YEAR B

First Reading: Genesis 15: 1-6; 21: 1-3 or Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 105: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9
or Psalm 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5
Second Reading: Hebrews 11: 8, 11-12, 17-19
or Colossians 3: 12-21
Alleluia: Hebrews 1: 1-2 or Colossians 3: 15a, 16a
Gospel: Luke 2: 22-40 or Luke 2: 22, 39-40

Homily Theme: The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Verse of the Day Reflection: On this Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, we honor the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In honoring them, we also honor all families, big or small. And in honoring all families, we honor the family of God, the Church. But most especially, we focus on the hidden, day-to-day life of the Holy Family of Nazareth. The family home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph would have been, in numerous ways, just like any other home. They would have related together, talked, had fun, disagreed, worked, eaten, dealt with problems, and encountered everything else that makes up daily family life. Of course, the virtues of Jesus and Mary were perfect, and St. Joseph was a truly "just man." Therefore, the overriding characteristic of their home would have been love. This is significant because it reveals God's love for family life. The Father allowed His Divine Son to live this life and, as a result, elevated family life to a place within the Trinity. The holiness of the Holy Family reveals to us that every family is invited to share in God's divine life and to encounter ordinary daily life with grace and virtue. Reflect, today, upon your own family life. Some families are strong in virtue, some struggle with basic communication. Some are faithful day in and day out, some are broken and deeply wounded. No matter the case, know that God wants to enter more deeply into your family life just as it is right now. He desires to give you strength and virtue to live as the Holy Family. Surrender yourself and your family, this day, and invite the Triune God to make your family a holy family.

Prayer: Lord, I do offer myself to You this day and in doing so I offer You my family. I offer every relationship, be it good or difficult, and I offer every challenge we face. Please come and sanctify my family, making it holy in imitation of your family in Nazareth. Jesus, I trust in You. **Amen**

7TH JANUARY, 2024
Epiphany of the Lord Solemnity

First Reading: Isaiah 60: 1-6
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 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

Homily Theme: The Epiphany of the Lord – Matthew 2:1-12

Verse of the Day Reflection: "Epiphany" means manifestation. And the "Epiphany of the Lord" is Jesus' manifestation, not only to the three Magi from the East, but

it's also a symbolic and real manifestation of the Christ to the whole world. The Magi, travelling from a foreign and non-Jewish nation, reveal that Jesus came for all people and all are called to adore Him. The 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. A second thing to note is that the Magi fell prostrate before the Christ Child. They laid their lives down before Him in complete surrender and adoration. They set a perfect example for us. If these astrologers from a foreign land could come and adore Christ in such a profound way, we must do the same. Perhaps, you could try literally lying down prostrate in prayer this day, in imitation of the Magi, or at least do so in your heart through prayer. Adore Him with a complete surrender of your life. Lastly, the Magi brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These three gifts, presented to our Lord, show that they acknowledged this Child as the Divine King, who would die to save us from sin. Gold is for a King, frankincense is a burnt offering to God, and myrrh is used for one who would die. Thus, their adoration is grounded in the truths of who this Child is.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and adore You. I lay my life before You and surrender all. You are my Divine King and Savior. My life is Yours. (Pray three times and then prostrate yourself before the Lord) Jesus, I trust in You. **Amen.**

14TH JANUARY, 2024
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – YEAR B

First Reading: First Samuel 3: 3b-10, 19
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40: 2, 4ab, 7-8a, 8b-9, 10
Second Reading: First Corinthians 6: 13c-15a, 17-20
Alleluia: John 1: 41, 17b
Gospel: John 1: 35-42

Homily Theme: You Are Simon the Son of John and You Will Be Called Cephas – John 1:35-42

Verse of the Day Reflection: 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." Simon is given the new name of "Rock" because Jesus intends to make him the foundation of His future Church. This change in name reveals that Simon must become a new creation in Christ in order to fulfill his high calling. So it is with each one of us. No, we may not be called to be the next pope or a bishop, but we are each called to become new creations in Christ and live new lives, fulfilling new missions. And, in a sense, this newness of life must happen each and every day. We must daily strive to fulfill the mission that Jesus gives us in a new way, every

day. 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.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I do say "Yes" to You and to the calling that You have given to me. I accept the new life of grace that You have prepared for me and I willingly accept Your gracious invitation. Help me, dear Lord, to daily answer the glorious vocation to the life of grace I have been given. Jesus, I trust in You. **Amen.**

21ST JANUARY, 2024
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – YEAR B

First Reading: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9
Second Reading: First Corinthians 7: 29-31
Alleluia: Mark 1: 15
Gospel: Mark 1: 14-20

Homily Theme: I Will Make You Fishers of Men – Mark 1:14-20, Matthew 4:18-22

Verse of the Day Reflection: 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: the immediate response of these Apostles, and 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.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and thank You for the extraordinary life of grace You have called me to live. Help me to respond to Your invitation with complete submission of my mind and will. Jesus, I trust in You. **Amen.**

28TH JANUARY, 2024
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18: 15-20
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9
Second Reading: First Corinthians 7: 32-35
Alleluia: Matthew 4: 16
Gospel: Mark 1: 21-28

Homily Theme: Jesus Rebukes a Demon – Luke 4:34-36, Mark 1:21-28

Verse of the Day Reflection: 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. So, who are demons or what are demons? Back in time, in Heaven, there was an angel called Lucifer, who acted contrary to the wishes of God in utter selfishness. Consequently, God cast him away from heaven to earth. As a result of this, there were other angels who fell by the wayside from the Grace of God and followed Lucifer. But God did not strip away their natural powers. To influence us, the demons will use material and worldly things to lead us into sin. In the case in the scripture above, it is like the poor man had given in to all wishes of the devil and that is why the demons had taken full control over him. In the world today, there are many people who have been taken captive by demons and that is why we witness so many weird actions amongst us. Such actions are like those of serial killers, serial rapists, pedophiles, etc. 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

craving to do something evil, the only way out is to ask 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 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.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, I invite you to dwell in my heart all the days of my life. May you always protect me from the demons when they come trying to drive me away from your bosom and arms. May the Holy Guardian Angels appointed by the Divine Mercy to be my guardians, enlighten, protect and govern me all the days of my life here on earth. **Amen.**

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VIEWPOINT

The Sympathetic Plights of Gambian Youths

by Andrew Sylva

The dinghy boat had just capsized swelling up the number of such seaways accident and leaving many youths in its wake including some promising youths of The Gambia. Join me not to weep for Africans nor for Gambians, for indeed tragedy has swept away the best of her hope; where many of her youths continue to needlessly perish, attempting to cross the perilous Mediterranean, in their quest to search for greener pastures or a better life. On 29 Mar 2017, A rubber boat packed with nearly 150 migrants sank in the Mediterranean and the presumed sole survivor – a 16-year-old Gambian boy, Kalifa Kujabi – told rescuers that many other passengers got drowned. A humanitarian vessel, the *Iuventa*, had found him hanging onto a fuel tank in the sea on where he was divinely rescued, having paid \$600 for the passage. He was transferred first to an Italian Coast Guard ship, then to a Spanish frigate and brought to the Sicilian Island of Lampedusa few days later. The young Gambian, who had played for Gambia's football academy had indeed envisaged a future as a soccer player in Europe, with the dearth of infrastructure at home country and a burning desire to succeed in spite of all odds, his Bottom of Form brother back home convinced him to make the trip and he did.

In 2020, more than 432 West African migrants lost their lives in their effort to reach Europe. In 2022, as of November, the death rate has reduced to 205 nationals of West African migrants, although there are over 128 deaths whose nationalities are unknown. While it is not certain how many Gambians died along this irregular journey to Europe over the years, many Gambian migrants died trying to cross the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. The Gambians have also joined to increase



the tally of mortality that has become a source of worry to many concerned Africans, realizing the facts that many of them are young people embarking on backdoor escape to Europe for a better life. Many of the Gambia youths are running away from home; running away from penury and a life of hardship and hopelessness. Running away from poverty, strife, scorched land and inclement economic condition that fostered unemployment and poverty. Faced with low salary, lack of job security, and poor administration of the governance system, many Gambians, especially those working or aspiring to work in the medical field, as well as those aspiring to play soccer, began moving abroad for better opportunities.

From the point of independence and the promises it holds, The Gambian nation holds great potential for her people, most especially the youths whom were believed would be trained and empowered to exhibit and fulfil their potentials. Sadly, only very few has succeeded to serve as a role model-only less than one percent. The remaining 99% live in the desolation of servitude and valley of

hopelessness, not knowing what tomorrow holds and very uncertain of the present. Today, virtually no Gambian youth can be said to be seen and revered as an active participant in any global engagement, many are relegated to villages and slums of squalor, neglect and hopelessness. A determined, patriotic and self-assured youth is the backbone of any nation, The

Gambia inclusive. These youths are the future leaders, entrepreneurs, and employees who will drive economic growth, ethical revolution, cultural renaissance and general development. They are to work to support their families and government in any area which is required of them, to serve as a potential and veritable platform to advance positive agenda in the society, to help work to address and fight societal ills and to help advance positive societal norms and values and development.

No doubt, many youths in The Gambia are daily striving and working to breakdown all manners of barriers in their efforts to succeed and make meaning out of their lives, sadly, with each day passing, the challenges is becoming daunting and choking, leaving very little chances and spaces for success. And this is only reserved for the daring and determined ones. These challenges can arise from various factors such as socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts. Many young people, especially those from disadvantaged communities, lack access to education due to various factors such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, and cultural practices, they also face various mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. These challenges can arise from various factors such as social isolation, trauma, and family dysfunction. They are confronted with harsh and inclement economic and business environment, in some, it is family problems, sometimes accompanied with the pressures of materialism, in some others, it is the lack of employment opportunity out there, or worry that because they cannot afford university, as many of their parents are poor.

Sadly, every effort of the youths to carry out their roles in the society at one time or the other have been militated against by series of challenges, which include poverty, negative impacts of globalization, insecurity, harsh government policies, non-inclusion in governance and several others.

The current population of Gambia is 2,796,945 as of November 6, 2023. According to the World Bank reports, over 60% of The Gambia's population is at most 25 years old. Youth (15 -24 years) is a pivotal age at which core life decisions are made, and investments made in human capital materialize into lifelong outcomes. However, there are growing concerns about access to quality education, gainful employment, and a decent standard of living, which is a pointer to the challenges faced by these categories of people in the country. Youths in the Gambia face significant challenges with respect to employment outcomes, such as a very difficult transition from school to work and very low levels of education and training. Other include lack of employment, illiteracy, poverty, lack of orientations, lack of youth participation in decision making, and other social constraints. To deliberately abandon these youths to their undeserved fate is to mortgage the future of these promising nation to the dustbin of regrettable history that is bound to trouble the nation for as long as it exists. Not only that, the leadership will continue to be scorched by the hate-filled youths who sees their inability to fulfil their visions and aspiration on the fault of leaders whose main attributes is rapaciousness and visionless leadership. Then, we can rule out cases of violence and revolution in such an environment.

For us to critically address the sympathetic plights of the almost helpless youths in the famished/hungry land called The Gambia, all hands must be on the deck as regards the practical involvement of all concerned stakeholders, even to the least to salvage the drowning and sinking youths in the sands of time. We must be consciously aware that any problem afflicting the youths in the country cannot be isolated from the larger problems that will also afflict the entire country and in the process stifle all developmental efforts and activities. For a nation like Gambia, working towards greatness and unrestrained development, every stakeholder in the country has roles to play, including the youths, hence the need to include them in policy making, programme and project execution

The government of The Gambia, must work with all relevant stakeholders to evolve a robust and refined Youth Empowerment Blueprint (YEB)that will serve as a guiding compass for the Government to implement laudable programmes that will bolster competitiveness and thereby reducing migration flows. The blueprint must clearly set policy and timelines that will create opportunities for youths, strengthen trade, give them new sense of direction and belonging and renew their hopes to work for the country, instead of finding ways to escape the country for greener pastures. Government as an urgent measure needs to invest in education, infrastructure, scholarships and bursaries, job creation, skills development, entrepreneurship support, and labour market policies. These solutions require the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to ensure their effective implementation and sustainability. Government needs to put in place Roadmap that will go a long way to addressing the root causes of youth migration in The Gambia by identifying job opportunities along value chains with high export potential and by promoting inclusive entrepreneurship schemes.

Herein lies the need for policy makers to create sustainable jobs and trade as this are the three powerful engines to seize new commercial and investment opportunities in The Gambia. By ensuring that more jobs and opportunities are created for the youths and young entrepreneurs, the government will pave the way for economic growth in the country. the government needs to also invest in the people.

Strengthening human capital in The Gambia requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-World-Bank approach, with strong collaboration inside and outside of the human development sectors. This will no doubt pave the way for a brighter and more prosperous future for all. It also needs action plan with activities and priorities for integrating value-chain development that will enable the youth to access business opportunities in the target sectors. Despite the daunting challenges, all hope is not lost as many promising Youths in the country are bringing new ideas to solve and address all manners of problems and challenges that inundate the country. We can only bolster this new reality through a conscious and well thought out action plans and strategies to support them and mitigate all their voiced and unvoiced pains all the way. Our Youths should be pitied and empathized as they have no other country except The Gambia, the 'Smiling Coast'.

The seeds of success of every nation on earth are planted in their youths.

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also “Son of God” (Mt 4:3, 6) and Messiah (Mt 1:1-23). These anthropological elements, integral to the discussion of the performances and relationships within out text, will be the mirror through which our pericope will be appraised.

THE PERICOPE IN CONTEXT

THE GREEK TEXT

To,te o` VIhsou/j avnh,cqh eivj th.n e;rhmon u`po. tou/ pneu,matoj peirasqh/nai u`po. tou/ diabo,lou² kai. nhsteu,saj h`me,raj tessera,konta kai. nu,ktaj tessera,konta (u[steron evpei,nasen³ kai. proselqwn o` peira,zwn ei=pen aurtw/\ eiv ui`o.j ei= tou/ qeou/(eivpe. i[na oi` li,qoi ou-toi a;rtoi ge,nwntai⁴ o` de. avpokriqei.j ei=pen\ ge,graptai\ ouvkv evpV a;rtw| mo,nw| zh,setai o` a;nqrwpoj (avllV evpi. panti. r`h,mati evkporeuome,nw| dia. sto,matoj qeou/⁵ To,te paralamba,nei aurtou.n o` dia,boloj eivj th.n a`gi,an po,lin kai. e;sthnen aurtou.n evpi. to. pteru,gion tou/ i`erou/⁶ kai. le,gei aurtw/\ eiv ui`o.j ei= tou/ qeou/(ba,le seauto.n ka,tw\ ge,graptai ga.r o[ti toi/j avgge,loij aurtou/ evtelai/tai peri. sou/ kai. evpi. ceirw/n avrou/si,n se(mh,pote prosko,yh|j pro.j li,qon to.n po,da sou⁷ e;fh aurtw/\ o` VIhsou/j\ pa,lin ge,graptai\ ouvkv evkpeira,seij ku,rion to.n qeo,n sou⁸ Pa,lin paralamba,nei aurtou.n o` dia,boloj eivj o;roj u`yhlo.n li,an kai. dei,knusin aurtw/\ pa,saj ta.j basilei,aj tou/ ko,smou kai. th.n do,xan aurtw/n⁹ kai. ei=pen aurtw/\ tau/ta, soi pa,nta dw,sw(eva.n pesw.n proskunh,sh|j moi¹⁰ to,te le,gei aurtw/\ o` VIhsou/j\ u[page(satana\ ge,graptai ga,r\ ku,rion to.n qeo,n sou proskunh,seij kai. aurtw/\ mo,nw| latreu,seij¹¹ To,te avfi,hsin aurtou.n o` dia,boloj(kai. ivdou. a;ggeloi prosh/lqon kai. dihko,noun aurtw/\

Translation Of the Text

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. ³

The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; ⁹ and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

What is the place of Mt 4:1-11 in the Gospel of Matthew? What are the relevant observations as we seek to establish consistency between the part and the whole?

The structure of the Gospel helps us to situate our text aptly. One incontestable fact about the structure of the Gospel of Matthew is this: the Gospel’s narrative portions follow a rough chronological sequence – birth, baptism, ministry in Galilee, journey to Jerusalem, passion, death and resurrection, and the final post-resurrection scene in Galilee – and into this sequence large sections of teaching material have regularly been inserted. In the Pentateuchal five-book theory/structure, the chiasmic outline, and the traditional three-category structural division of the Gospel, Mt 4:1-11 emerges as a bridge between the baptism of Jesus on one hand and the beginning of his public ministry on the other hand. But more than a bridge, it finds consistency with the introduction as well as the main body of the Gospel.

(To be continued in subsequent editions)

KUNKUJANG MARIAMA PILGRIMAGE 2023

The Marian Shrine is a distinct and active site dedicated in honor of Our Blessed Mother. As a devotional shrine allowing for ongoing devotion to Mary; and hence a prayerful day for all who gathered there in order to make their petitions and silent prayers of need.

SYNOD PRAYER

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. **Amen**



correctness or wrongness of a particular interpretation. It is clear that no one interpretation excludes all the others completely. I do not accept any one interpretation only to the rejection of the others. My argument is this: the text elicits both parenetic and messianic traits as its strongest points, and that it is paradigmatic for the primordial struggle which every man faces. This is why this two-dimensional reality will be the parameters within which our quest will unfold, albeit in an anthropological light.

This stance of mine will unfold through the anthropological theory of self-transcendence. Anthropology is the science of man and his works, which is both cultural and physical. When this study about man is given a theological perspective it becomes theological anthropology – the systematic study of what the Christian message of salvation and theological reflection on it teach about man's nature, history, and destiny; of its own it constitutes a science of man.

The study begins with this question: what is man, his origin, and the end to which he is directed? It was M. Scheler who first described man as self-transcendent in the anthropological theory called *Weltoffenheit*: "man is the bearer of a tendency which transcends all the possible vital values and which is directed towards the divine, or, in short, man is a being that seeks God." Following the initial efforts made by M. Scheler, W. Pannenberg developed the theory of self-transcendence, describing man as a psychosomatic being who is none other than a being opened to the world (*Weltoffenheit*). The fundamental principle of this theory is that man is always seeking self actualization/realization; confronted with his limitations, needs and aspirations, man seeks to find completeness of being, to discover his true identity. He is therefore constantly projected to the future, to self-realization.

The theory of *Weltoffenheit* has a theocentric significance. According to Pannenberg, man rises incessantly from himself and goes beyond the confines and limitations of his own reality because he is pushed by a superior will – God. God, by virtue of his munificence, goodness, perfection, and omnipotence polarizes all the creatures unto himself, in particular man. The fundamental characteristic of man, therefore, is self-transcendence, which is qualified as the unlimited aperture to the world.

Towards exactly what thing is man open to? Pannenberg's response is that the aim of self-transcendence is neither the world, nor even man in his cultural products, but only God. The movement of self-transcendence does not have a cosmocentric or even an anthropocentric sense, but rather theocentric. Man is opened beyond the momentary image that he has of the world. The infinite tension of man that pushes him to go beyond all of what he has embraced with his thought, willed with his will, imagined with his fantasy, and realized with his actions, can be comprehended only if it is seen as the research of God.

In this theocentric perspective man is not the measure of himself, but rather God; neither is he inextricably bound to or constrained by his environment. The perspective gives meaning to our pericope, especially so when one considers the dialogues of the temptations. Without any attempt at dividing the essence of Jesus into two (an action which would be logically and theologically fruitless), this theory, applied to our pericope, recognizes that at the heart of the drama of the temptations stands the person of Jesus, a man. His openness to the Father, obedience to His will, and subsequent victory over the devil identifies with the theory of self-transcendence.

The biblical teaching on man begins with a right

notion concerning God. The biblical perspective of anthropology is centrally displayed in the context of an elevated theology. The place to begin a study of man, then, is with a high view of God, his creator. In the Christian context Jesus is the fullness of God revealed. The rediscovery of what it means to be fully human as the shadow of God is therefore found in the life of Jesus, whose human life is the new beginning for man.

There are some questions, perennially pondered by scholars, regarding our pericope. Can Jesus be tested? Can the God-man experience hunger? Can he desire earthly power and glory? How should one comprehend these key elements in the temptations of Jesus? If the temptation stories are real, and not merely visionary or mythical, then theological reflections upon them cannot help but be anthropological; and if they be anthropological, then they should not only reflect the humanity of Jesus but also demonstrate how Jesus, in his humanity, relates to other men, with temptation as the common theme or subject. In a "retrospective" analysis of our text, one identifies relationships between Jesus and two human figures in Christian history: Adam and Israel; there is also a third relationship, one that is representative of a common human plight: Jesus' relationship to political power, authority and wealth:

Adam, the first man, and Jesus were both tempted by Satan, and in related circumstances. Adam was defeated, Jesus victorious. Jesus' victory corrects Adam's fault.

Israel at Massah (Ex 17), and in her other challenges, made her faithfulness to God contingent upon God meeting her needs (Num 14:22; Ps 78; 1 Cor 10:9; Heb 3:7-4:13). In the temptations, Jesus makes no such demand but surrenders completely to God's will. Where Israel failed (Deut 6: 10-19; 8:1-10; Ex 4: 22-23), Jesus triumphed.

The devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. Lust for political power and authority has been the undoing of man as far back as recorded history goes – one principal source of the woes of humanity. In our text Jesus' reaction to this temptation teaches man how to surmount this hurdle.

In these relationships, Jesus gives to man a blueprint. G. Theissen supports this argument by saying that "Jesus' testing recalls that of Israel in the wilderness and provides a model for tested believers. But the temptations are much more than a testing of basic human appetites and inclinations. Today, a concern with the social aspect of Jesus' ministry has replaced the dominant religious interest of a previous generation. It involves a study of Jesus and his message within social structures and institutions. Jesus is a first century Palestinian Jew and will remain a Jew forever. The Gospels are the narrative accounts of aspects of Jesus' life as he engaged with his environment – people, religion and culture; and these provide a background, a ready-made source of images for Jesus' theocentric and anthropocentric message. His message was primarily addressed to this ambience and its people (Mt 15:24). The Son of God was incarnated in a people and in a human family (Gal 4:4). According to Pesce, the "Jewishness" of Jesus regards the man Jesus, not the risen Jesus. His humanity is not only a physical fact but, as in every man, a historical and cultural fact. Hence, the anthropological approach involves a cultural/social rediscovery of Hebrew religiosity and spirituality in the life of the man Jesus, in his message. On the other hand, anthropological reflections on the person of Jesus also has a place for christology and messianism. He who is incarnated in a human family is

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KNOWING THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW IN CONTEXT

Rev. Fr. Gabou Secka

The study of the Gospel of Matthew looking particularly at the temptation of Jesus is motivated by a fundamental human plight. In each one of us is an undeniable struggle between good and evil, between right and wrong, between that which is acceptable or appropriate and that which is not. Man, a composite of matter and spirit, constantly struggles between the pitfalls of his physical limitations and the ultimate goals to which his spirit aspires. Catholic catechism gives dogmatic expression to this struggle when it says that human nature is dented on account of Original Sin, and thereby susceptible or prone to err or to sin. Fundamental ethics elicits the presence of a two-pronged reality: the two ways, one that leads to good and the other to evil. Every man shoulders the responsibility of choice, of decision making. In short, every man struggles between his strengths and his weaknesses, a type of struggle akin to that associated with temptations. Man seeks self-transcendence.

The temptations of Jesus in Mt 4:1-11, amongst other things, bring to the fore this struggle and give it an added spiritual, religious perspective; and motivated by the brunt of this ever-present human responsibility, endeavor to make use of the dynamics of Jesus' desert experience, to shed more light on this fundamental human dilemma.

The text has received diverse analyses and interpretations from scholars – from the classic-parenetic perspective to the christological one, and to the eschatological. A critical appraisal of the text evokes a good number of questions.

Can Jesus be tempted? How real is the story, historically? Is it a product of popular tradition? Are the temptations to be understood as universally human or as specifically messianic? The classic-parenetic interpretation of the temptations seeks to show how Jesus was victorious over the human temptations of gluttony, empty glory, and greed. This is the interpretation common amongst the Fathers of the Church. Modern adherents of this interpretation include R. Bultman. For them the temptations are illusionary wishes of the Jesus followers. What is true of the Son of God is all the more true for human beings. A

variant of this interpretation is the psychological interpretation. Here, Jesus' temptations show how the authentic human being overcomes the temptations of materialism, of self-seeking, and of power.

There is, however, another school of thought that runs contrary to the classic, parenetic interpretation. This is the christological or messianic interpretation. Adherents of this position argue from the messianic tone and phrases to be found within the text. Rudolph Schnackenburg, one of its chief proponents, contends that this is a Christ story bound up to the person of Jesus; it represents him as the Son of God who works in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who led him into the wilderness (v.1), and the same Spirit that was present at his baptism when the Father certified his divine sonship (Mt 3:16-17). The application to the seductive power of gluttony, vainglory, and lust for power or possessions, must not be allowed to obscure the christological content; neither should we reduce the events to the result of visions since there is no mention of Jesus "seeing" the occurrence. For Schnackenburg, Jesus' rejection of Satan is real. Responding to Schnackenburg, I would say that the christological content cannot be discussed without the human content. He who is the Christ is also man. For Beare, the debate between Jesus and Satan is a literary device for expounding the nature of the perils that beset the soul, and the way in which they are to be surmounted. Hence, it is a paradigm for the struggles between good and evil.

Ulrich Luz shares the same view, in part, by saying, "Our text is no pictorial depiction of Jesus' own experiences, nor is it a report of a vision. It is designed, rather, to portray real events in mythical language." Luz's stance is not very clear. When he uses the phrase "real events," is it to confirm an actual occurrence of a Jesus-Satan conflict at the beginning of Jesus' ministry or is it a reference to an interior temptation experience of Jesus which is graphically and mythically recounted, or to both?

Granted the rich variety of interpretations and their attendant complications, the question is not about the

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