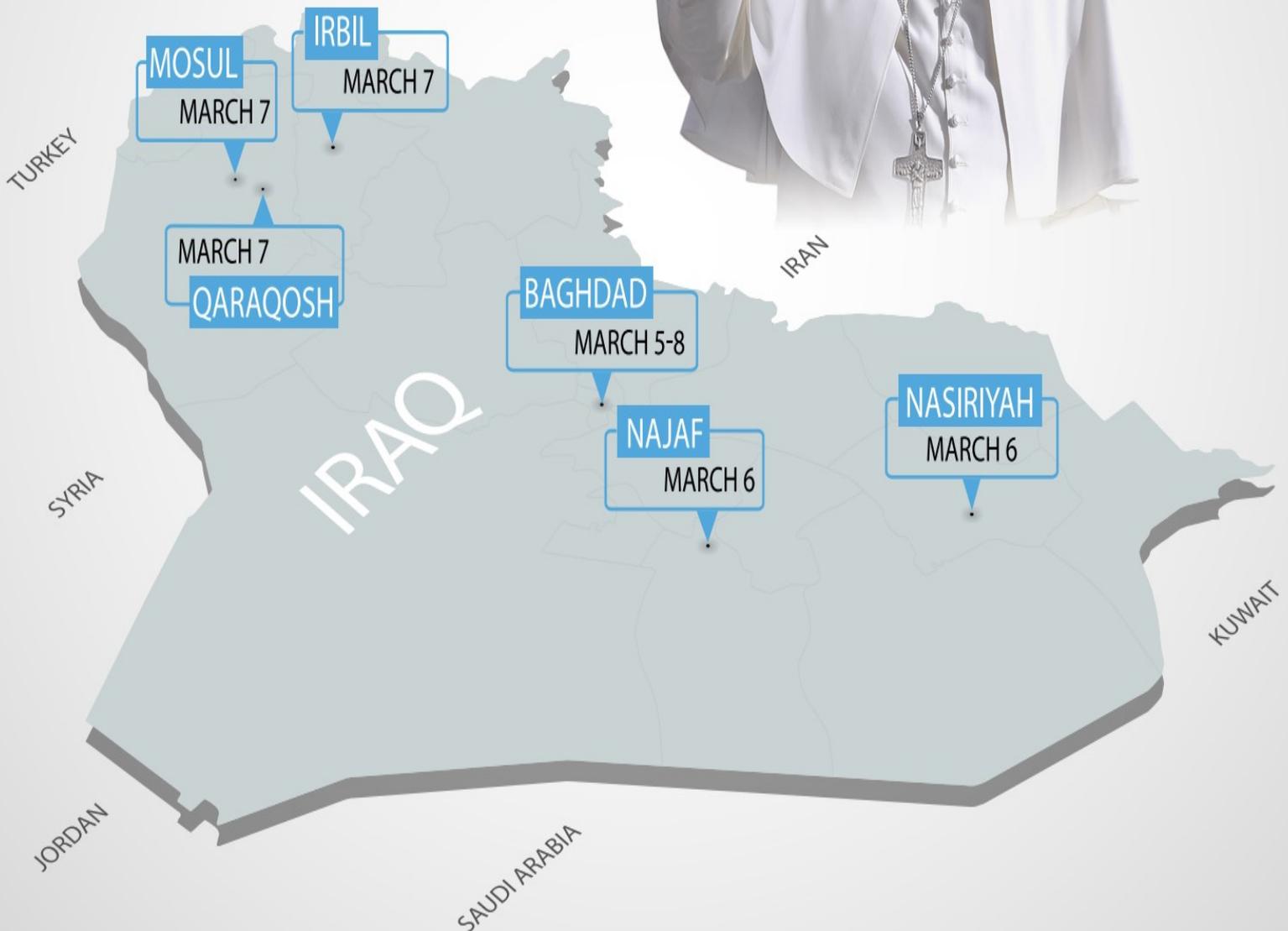


KADOSH MARIAN VOICE

Holiness Firmness Truthfulness Faithfulness

POPE FRANCIS' VISIT TO IRAQ

MARCH 5-8, 2021



"I come as a penitent, asking forgiveness of heaven and my brothers and sisters for so much destruction and cruelty. I come as a pilgrim of peace in the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace."

Pope Francis, from his address to authorities, civil society, and the diplomatic corps at the Presidential Palace in Baghdad, Friday, March 5, 2021.

APRIL / MAY / JUNE 2021 EDITION



ABOUT KADOSH MARIAN MINISTRIES

Kadosh “In Jewish thinking, “The Holy One, blessed be He” (hakkadosh, barukh hu) is one of the most commonly used designation for God.” **Marian** ”is a given name, Hebrew meaning of Marion is the precious one or unique from the word or Mariam”

Kadosh Marian Ministries is a non-profit organization with its roots across the world. It is also established since 1994 as an approved charitable trust in UK and subsequently in India. Kadosh Marian Ministries obtained approval for the area of operation to include USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, Middle East and Africa with the following objectives: -

- Conducting certificate oriented theological courses duly awarded by Catholic Dioceses, AIRO (Association of International Researchers of India Origin, USA) and various international accredited universities.
- Conducting Charismatic Renewal services to revive the trooping spirit of the flagging faithful.
- Administering Sacraments by the ordained Catholic Priests and Bishops.
- Promoting devotion to Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary.
- Conducting guidance, counselling and healing through deliverance services to the needy, lonely and the afflicted ones.
- Participating to feed 200 poorest people daily.
- Participating to provide pension to 75 widows monthly.
- Participating to provide scholarship for 302 children yearly.
- Visiting refugee camps and providing food, clothes and medicines to them.
- Contributing to build five homes for the poor families in a year minimum.

We welcome you to join with us, slake the thirst, and enjoy the abundance of Spirit of the Sovereign Lord – Immanuel. All the above charitable activities are routed in consultation with Catholic Priests and Bishops.

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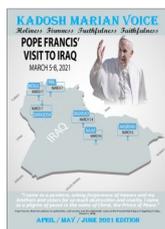
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The cover marks the **Pope Francis' recent visit to Iraq**. See page 6 for more details.

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I have immense pleasure in addressing the readers in this issue - editorially speaking for the months of April, May and June. At the outset, I thank the readers for their encouraging words of appreciation about the rich content of the last edition. As a matter of fact, your feedback serves as a powerful source of inspiration to maintain high standards.



Selene and Endymion, Art by Ubaldo Gandolfi

A friend of mine, an avid reader, approached me and asked if Endymion, the shepherd is anything like the shepherds mentioned in the scripture. My answer was “No.” Endymion is from Greek mythology. The shepherds in The Bible are not -the former is a myth, but the latter is a truth allegorically used.

The poet, John Keats wrote the famous poem “Endymion” with opening lines: **“A thing of beauty is a joy for ever/its loveliness increases; it never passes into nothingness.”** Endymion is a shepherd and a king who fell in love with Selene, the Moon. Selene begged Zeus, to make Endymion *ageless* and *deathless*, and the prayer was answered. Selene bore for him fifty children as per the mythology. Despite being called a shepherd, Endymion is no comparison to shepherds in the Bible.



Adv. Earnest Peter Kandathil

Interestingly, it's good to know a historical incident of Henry IX Baron Clifford (a Shepherd Lord during 1455 - 1523) was sent by his mother to be brought up as a shepherd in order to save him from the fury of the YORKISTS. At the accession of Henry VII, his power, rank, and feudal estate were duly restored to him. This is celebrated in the Wordsworth's Song of the Feast of Brougham Castle and The White Doe of Rylstone.

I would also like to bring to your attention the **Shepherd of Hermas**. This is an allegorical work of mid-2nd Century. This is essentially a collection of instructions and revelations from an angelic guide for the benefit of good Christians. It has been called “Pilgrim's Progress of the Early Church.” The identity of Hermas is largely a matter of conjecture. The Aramaic word for shepherd is **RAIA** - herdsmen tending the sheep. That's how our Priests and Pastors got their job profile - to tend to their flock, wherever they may be.

When we discuss the idea of shepherd, it is necessary to deal with the sheep too. Both are two sides of the same coin. The Greek word for sheep is **PROBATON**. The children of God are described as sheep in both Old and New Testament. The Hebrew word for sheep is **SO'N**. The sheep have to be audient, sapient and obedient. Audient sheep *hear* the voice of their Shepherd (John 10.3, 27); sapient: sheep *know* their shepherd (John 4.14) and Obedient: sheep *follow* their shepherd (John 10.27 and Rev 7.17).

As for the shepherd; relying on Biblical passages, The Good Shepherd confers upon the sheep, the following blessings:

1. **Sacrifice:** He gives his life for them (John20.11,15,17 & Zech 13:7)
2. **Salvation:** He saves them (John 10:9)
3. **Satisfaction** He provides for the needs of the sheep (the famous Psalm 23:1) and for eternity (Rev 7:17)
4. **Separation:** He segregates the sheep from the goat, at His return in glory (Matt 25:32)
5. **Security:** He gives them eternal life and they shall never perish (John 10.28)

The Good Shepherd will not leave the sheep like a mercenary who runs away for his life when the wolf comes. He fights in the face of danger. In The Bible we read the story of David who devoured the wolf which came to attack his sheep. The wolf is devoured and thus the sheep is safe. Let us remember the passage of Ezekiel 34.1 -22. It is

very clear from a human perspective, that if the shepherd fails in his responsibilities the Lord himself will intervene to protect the sheep. The Lord continues, “I mean to raise up one shepherd, my servant David and to put him in charge of them and he will pasture them. I, Yahweh, will be their God and my servant David shall be their ruler” (Ezekiel 34:23 & 24). Let’s also remember in this context the famous passage in Isaiah 40:11 – “He is like a shepherd feeding his flock and gathering in his arms, holding them against his breast and leading to their rest the mother ewes”.

At this juncture, let me narrate here a poem about **FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND** which is thought provoking:

“One night a man had a dream.
He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the LORD.
Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.
For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand:
One belonged to him, and the other to the LORD.

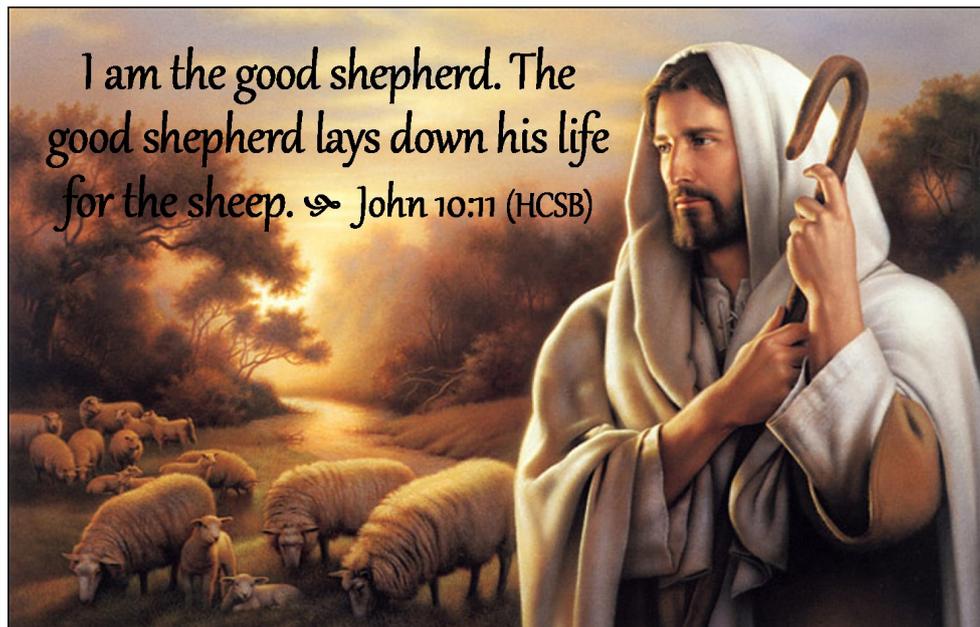
When the last scene of his life flashed before him,
he looked back at the footprints in the sand.
He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints.
He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the LORD about it.
“Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you’d walk with me all the way.
But I have noticed
that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints.
How could you leave me when I needed you the most?”

“The LORD replied, “My precious, precious child I love you and I would never leave you.
During the times of trial and suffering,
And when you see only one set of foot prints,
it was then that I carried you.”

This is the nature of a true shepherd, who will accompany us in our troubles and tribulations, while caring for us, sharing our troubles and ensuring our burdens are lightened.

In our modern times, we are rudderless and listless since we are wounded, hurt, and bruised, while also being humiliated – humiliated by our friends, peers, siblings and even by teachers.



Even in the present pandemic situation, we must remind ourselves that “Even the hairs of our head is counted” (Matt 10.30) and “All your tossings have been counted” (Ps 56:8). What we need is inner healing, counseling and deliverance. Speak to the Lord in prayers and supplication. He is near us and merely a call away. “Call to me I will answer; I will tell you great mysteries of which you know nothing,” (Jeremiah 33.3).

The Lord Jesus is your friend, philosopher and guide, so call upon Him and you **will** be healed & delivered, thus enabling you to be a true witness to his Glory. **AMEN**

We wish you a Happy and Blessed Easter





Pope Francis' Apostolic Visit to Iraq

March 5 - 8, 2021



QUOTES OF POPE FRANCIS IN HIS VISIT TO IRAQ

From March 5 to 8, 2021, Pope Francis visited Iraq. It was a visit that was full of events and significance. Here is a snapshot of some of the addresses, speeches, and homilies.

5-Mar-2021: Meeting with Iraqi Civil Authorities – Baghdad - “In Iraq too, the Catholic Church desires to be a friend to all and, through interreligious dialogue, to cooperate constructively with other religions in serving the cause of peace. The age-old presence of Christians in this land, and their contributions to the life of the nation, constitute a rich heritage that they wish to continue to place at the service of all. Their participation in public life, as citizens with full rights, freedoms and responsibilities, will testify that a healthy pluralism of religious beliefs, ethnicities and cultures can contribute to the nation’s prosperity and harmony.”

6-Mar-2021: Interreligious Meeting – Ur—Afterwards, Pope Francis continued on to Ur of the Chaldeans, the birthplace of Abraham, where he participated in an interreligious prayer gathering and reminded all that “**we are the fruits of Abraham’s journey...**” “Anyone with the courage to look at the stars, anyone who believes in God, has no enemies to fight. He or she has only one enemy to face, an enemy that stands at the door of the heart and knocks to enter. That enemy is *hatred*. While some try to have enemies more than to be friends, while many seek their own profit at the expense of others, those who look at the stars of the promise, those who follow the ways of God, cannot be *against* someone, but *for* everyone. They cannot justify any form of imposition, oppression and abuse of power; they cannot adopt an attitude of belligerence.”

7-Mar-2021: Prayer of Suffrage for the Victims of the War – Mosul—“Today we raise our voices in prayer to Almighty God for all the victims of war and armed conflict. Here in Mosul, the tragic consequences of war and hostility are all too evident. How cruel it is that this country, the cradle of civilization, should have been afflicted by so barbarous a blow, with ancient places of worship destroyed and many thousands of people – Muslims, Christians, Yazidis and others – forcibly displaced or killed! Today, however, we reaffirm our conviction that fraternity is more durable than fratricide, that hope is more powerful than hatred, that peace more powerful than war. This conviction speaks with greater eloquence than the passing voices of hatred and violence, and it can never be silenced by the blood spilled by those who pervert the name of God to pursue paths of destruction.”

8-Mar-2021: Holy Mass – Erbil—“Now the time draws near for my return to Rome. Yet Iraq will always remain with me, in my heart. I ask all of you, dear brothers and sisters, to work together in unity for a future of peace and prosperity that leaves no one behind and discriminates against no one. I assure you of my prayers for this beloved country. In a particular way, I pray that the members of the various religious communities, together with all men and women of good will, may work together to forge bonds of fraternity and solidarity in the service of the common good and of peace *salam, salam, salam!*. *Sukrán* [Thank you]! May God bless you all! May God bless Iraq! *Allah ma’akum!* [God be with you!]”



Compiled by

Nisha Jacob

Associate Editor





WHY SHOULD WE LOVE OUR ENEMY AS CHRISTIAN ?

Msgr. Vincent S. D'Cruz, MA, M.Th, LLB

Vicar General of Punalur Dioceses, Kollam, Kerala, India.

Chairman Board of Examiners, Kadosh Marian Institute of Theology

When we deal with this topic, one should know the fact who is really our enemy. Generally speaking, a person who hates us and seeks to do us harm in words, deeds, thoughts and omissions are our so called typical enemies.

There are so many reasons to love our enemies. The first and the most important reason to love our enemies is because Christ the Lord commands it, Jesus says ***“Love your enemies, do good to them that those who hate you, pray for them those who persecute you”*** (Mt.5:44). Jesus himself has given us the best example of love being shown; for on the cross He prayed for His enemies and at the garden of olives he healed the servant whose ear Peter had cut off. God, our Heavenly Father also sets before us the best example, for He causes His sun rise up on the good and bad alike and

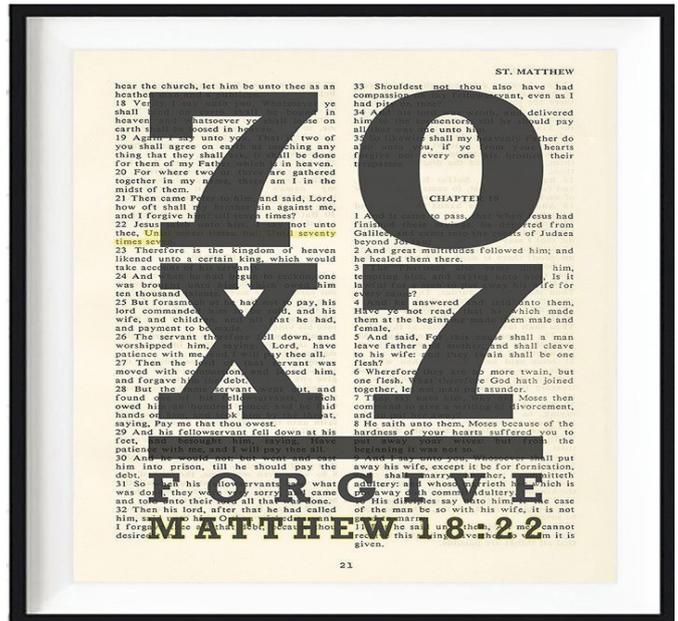
sends down rain on the just and unjust. As a true child of God, one must love his enemy (Mt. 5/45).

Our enemy is also made after God's image and likeness. We are bound to love and honor the image of God; whether the man is a saint or sinner, Man is God's work. But sin is man's work. As St. Augustin says ***“Love what God has made, not what man has done”***. “Sometimes, God uses and employs our enemies to remove our imperfection” as has been said by St. Gregory the Great. The evil shapes the good, as file and hammer shape the iron. Enemies are, moreover, of service to us by giving opportunity of practicing virtues. Enemies are like Bees, they sting, but they produce honey. Finally remember that no enemy can really injure one who loves God: for God makes all hostile designs work good to His own peo-

ple (R.8/28). This is exemplified in Joseph's life in the Old Testament. The truth will teach you bear against persecution. The history of the Church proves very well through the life and death of Apostles and all the martyred Saints.

We must forgive and forget our enemies and pray for them. Thus, we should show our love to our enemies. We return good for evil, pray and forgive willingly. We must not revenge ourselves on our enemies. Vengeance belongs to God. Not to us (R.12/19, Lk.6/29). **“Do not overcome by evil but overcome evil by good”** (R.12/21). We should also be ready to forgive our enemies. King David forgave Shimei, son of Gera when he threw stones at him and cursed him (2 Samuel 16-5 to 13). To do good to one's enemy is an act of great magnanimity and graciousness. He who hates his enemy and revenges himself on him commits sin. King David gives us the best example. For he had twice the opportunity of putting his persecutor King Saul to death but did not do any harm to him. By conferring benefits on your enemy, you will heap coals of fire upon his head (R.12/20). We are taught to be gentle and peaceable. He who does not re-

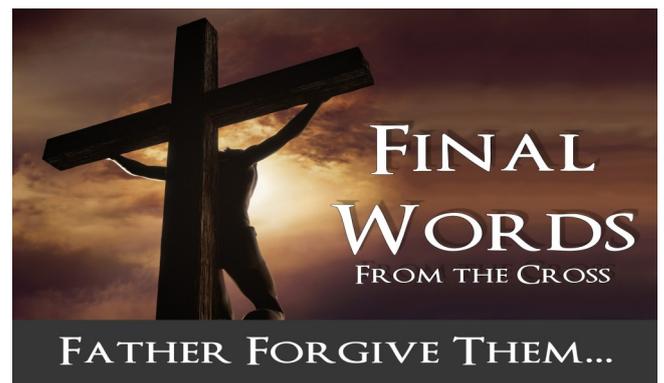
that is in Our Father in Heaven.....As **St. Augustin says “to forgive one's enemy is a work of mercy and the greatest of all Almsgiving”**. If we forgive our enemies, we can ask pardon for ourselves, as it is expressed in the Lord's Prayer. God shows mercy to him who is willing to forgive his brother. He who does not forgive his enemy brings down on himself no blessing when he repeats the Lord's Prayer. Remember the parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt.18/23).



venge himself will be rewarded by God. To revenge oneself is sin; he who does this is like the Bee which revenges itself by stinging, but in the process it is the bee that meets with its fatal end! Be an instrument in the hands of God by forgiveness being shown to our enemies instead of revenge. You can't fight fire with fire and to fight it you need a different element namely water. The water will quench the fire of vengeance and all will be made whole again which will eventually be pleasing our God. This should be our motto while doing the will of the Father just like Jesus did it.

He who forgives the enemy will obtain forgiveness from God, but he who does not forgive his enemy, God will not forgive. The best example is shown in Lord's Prayer

We are not merely to forgive to seven times to our enemies, but seventy times seven times (Mt.18/22). In short our blessings from God totally depend on our attitudes towards the forgiveness of our enemies.



Finally let us remember the famous epigram: to err is human but to forgive is divine. Let us therefore translate the effects of this maxim into our own actions, emanating from nobility and divinity by engineering our thoughts, words and deeds. Charity/ Love to our so called enemies covers a multitude of sins. Our positive attitude towards our enemies will certainly shape our own destiny.





MARY ESCHATOLOGICAL ICON OF THE CHURCH

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
I write this article with a deep sense of gratitude to my readers as well as to God Almighty who provides inspiration through the Holy Spirit.

August is one of the important months in the Ecclesiastical Calendar because we celebrate two feasts of Mother Mary: 15 August - The Feast of the Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary and 22 August - The Queenship of Mary.

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed, for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Lk1:46-49).

The Catholic Church teaches four Marian Dogmas that are included in the Doctrine of Faith for the salvation of the people of God. These are divinely revealed truths of Mary's personhood and help us understand her role in the salvation history.

These dogmas are *Mary as the Mother of God, Mary as a Perpetual Virgin, Mary's Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption of Mary, body and soul, into heaven.* The history of the Church reveals that these Marian Dogmas came to obtain existence in the Doctrine of Faith only after much dispute and debate. The fourth doctrine, the Assumption of Mary, body and soul into heaven is the one which has undergone a lot of theological debate and disputes during the period of the

Reformation. That is the reason why I am making a humble attempt to explore the depth of this Dogma with a view to present a broader knowledge to my readers.

It is right and just due to several reasons to open a window on the fourth Marian Dogma with the beautiful prayer composed by Pope Pius XII in honour of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1950.

O Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God and Mother of men, we believe with all the fervour of our faith in your triumphal Assumption, both in body and soul into heaven, where you are acclaimed as the Queen by all the choirs of angels and all the legions of saints; and we unite with them to praise and bless the Lord who has exalted you above all other pure creatures, and to offer you the tribute of our devotion and our love.

We know that your gaze, which on earth watched over the humble and suffering humanity of Jesus, is filled in heaven with the vision of that humanity glorified, and with the vision of uncreated wisdom; and that the joy of your soul in the direct contemplation of the adorable Trinity causes your heart to throb with overwhelming tenderness.

And we, poor sinners, whose body weighs down the flight of the soul, beg you to purify our hearts, so that,



Rev. Fr. Joseph Xavier

while we remain here below, we may learn to see God, and God alone, in the beauties of His creatures.

We trust that your merciful eyes may deign to glance down upon our miseries and our sorrows, upon our struggles and our weaknesses; that your countenance may smile upon our joys and our victories; that you may hear the voice of Jesus saying to you of each one of us, as He once said to you of His beloved disciple: behold thy son.



And we who call upon you as our Mother, like John, take you as the guide, strength, and consolation of our mortal life.

We are inspired by the certainty that your eyes which wept over the earth, watered by the Blood of Jesus, are yet turned toward this world, held in the clutches of wars, persecutions, and oppression of the just and the weak.

And from the shadows of this vale of tears, we seek in your heavenly assistance and tender mercy, comfort for our aching hearts and help

in the trials of the Church and of our fatherland.

We believe, finally, that in the glory where you reign, clothed with the sun and crowned with the stars, you are, after Jesus, the joy and gladness of all the angels and of all the saints.

And from this earth, over which we tread as pilgrims, comforted by our faith in the future resurrection, we look to you, our life, our sweetness, and our hope; draw us onward with the sweetness of your voice, that one day, after our exile, you may show us Jesus, the blessed Fruit of your womb, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Addressing a jubilant crowd of more than 500,000 people packed into St. Peter's Square, Pope Pius XII solemnly defined and proclaimed with his supreme Apostolic Authority, the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Constitution "*Munificentissimus Deus*" on Nov. 1, 1950, that the "Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."

There is plenty of evidence validating the Dogma of the

Assumption in the Holy Scripture. In the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pius XII enumerated many Bible passages in support of Assumption of Mary such as 1 Corinthians: 15. In this passage, Paul cited Genesis 3:15 (in addition to the reference of Psalm 8:6) where it is foretold that the seed of the woman will crush Satan with His feet. Since then, Jesus rose to heaven to fulfil this prophecy, it follows that the woman would have a similar end, since she shared this enmity with Satan. Pope Pius XII also mentioned Psalm 132 which commemorates the return of the Ark of God to Jerusalem and laments its subsequent loss. The second half of the Psalm says that the loss will be atoned in the new covenant and so it is hopefully prayed, "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark, which thou hast sanctified" (v.8). Since the Church identifies this new covenant ark in Mary, it stands to reason that she was taken up into Heaven in the same manner as the Lord, that is, body and soul. Finally, the Pope also mentioned in the *Munificentissimus Deus* "that woman clothed with the Sun (Revelation 12:1-2) whom John the apostle contemplated on the Island of Patmos" as supporting evidence for the creation of this dogmatic doctrine for Catholics.

Pope Pius XII also presented several scriptural foundations to prove and define this dogma.

- ◆ Mary was free from all sin which brought worthiness for her to enter with body and soul into the celestial Joy.
- ◆ Her divine maternity
- ◆ Her perpetual virginity
- ◆ Her participation in the redemptive work of Christ
- ◆ In short, the Assumption is the victory of God rooted in Mary and an assurance for us which awaits us when at the end of the world our bodies will resurrect and be united with our souls in the kingdom of God.

In the *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII has cited various Church Fathers to trace the longstanding tradition of the belief of the Assumption: St. John Damascene, St. Andrew of Crete, St. Modestus of Jerusalem and St. Gregory of Tours, to name a few. They brought out more clearly the fact that what is commemorated in this dogma is not simply the total absence of corruption from the dead body of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but also her triumph over death and her glorification in heaven, after the pattern set by her only Son, Jesus Christ.

Saint John Damascene speaks with powerful eloquence on this topic: "It was necessary that she who had preserved her virginity inviolate in childbirth should also have her body kept free from all corruption after death. It was necessary that she who had carried the Creator as a child on her breast should dwell in the tabernacles of God. It was necessary that the bride espoused by the

Father should make her home in the bridal chambers of heaven. It was necessary that she, who had gazed on her crucified Son and been pierced in the heart by the sword of sorrow which she had escaped in giving Him birth, should contemplate Him seated with the Father. It was necessary that the Mother of God should share the possessions of her Son, and be venerated by every creature as the Mother and handmaid of God."

Saint Germanus of Constantinople says: "In the words of Scripture, you appear in beauty. Your virginal body is entirely holy, entirely chaste, entirely the house of God, so that for this reason also it is henceforth a stranger to decay: a body changed, because a human body, to a preeminent life of incorruptibility, but still a living body, excelling in splendour, a body inviolate and sharing in the perfection of life."



Scripture portrays the loving Mother of God, almost before our very eyes, as most intimately united with her divine Son and always sharing in His destiny. Above all, as early the 2nd century the early Church fathers present the Virgin Mary as the new Eve, most closely associated with the new Adam, though subject to Him in the struggle against the enemy from the nether world.

The 2nd Vatican Council, recalling the mystery of the Assumption in the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, draws attention to the privilege of the Immaculate Conception: precisely because she was "preserved free from all stain of original sin" (Lumen Gentium, no. 59), Mary could not remain like other human beings in the state of death until the end of the world. The absence of original sin and her perfect holiness from the very first moment

of her existence required the full glorification of the body and soul of the Mother of God.

However, my article on the Assumption of Mary would be incomplete unless I cast a glance on the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* about the Dogma of the Assumption of Mary, which is the source of spiritual energy of the mystery of God.

The teaching of the Assumption of Mary is summarized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as follows:

♦ *No. 966 states:* The Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians. Mary's Assumption serves as an eschatological sign which reminds us of the perfected Church we will become in heaven.

No. 972 states: The Mother of Jesus, in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven, is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise, she shines forth on Earth until the day of the Lord shall come, a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God.

No. 974 states: The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up ["assumed"] body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of His Body.

Assumption is a glorious event in the history of salvation which leads us to reflect on the mysteries of the Annunciation, Perpetual Virgin, Immaculate Conception, Mother of God and Church, Visitation, Magnificat and Coronation. Assumption gives each of us great hope as Mary moves us by her prayerful example to grow in God's grace, to be receptive to His will, to transform our lives through sacrifice and penance, and seek that everlasting union in the heavenly Kingdom. Mary assumed into heaven serves rather as a gracious reminder to the people of God that our Lord wishes all whom the Father has given Him to be raised with Him. Assumption is a special sharing in Christ's resurrection. Assumption into heaven is like a great anticipation of the ultimate fulfilment of everything in God.

I conclude this article with the *Prayer of St. Ephrem: "Protect me now and forevermore, O, divine mother! Thou mother of mercy save me, oh holy and unspotted Virgin from all harm and from the temptations of the Evil One. Be my intercessor at the hour of death, and guard me from the unquenchable fire. Deign, oh most merciful mother to receive me to contemplate the glory of thy Son."*





The Arrest, Imprisonment and Death of St. Paul

Most of the last half a dozen years of St. Paul's life (*ca.* AD 58-64) is recounted in Acts 21,15-28,31. Those years were particularly marked by suffering, four of them by imprisonment. Acts (24,17) confirms in passing that Paul brought the donation to Jerusalem (*cf.* Rom 15,25-26). In a meeting there between Paul and James (the brother of the Lord and the head of the Church in Jerusalem), Paul was told to behave like a pious Jew (Acts 21,17-25). Yet his presence in the Temple court caused a riot so that a Roman Tribune had to intervene to rescue Paul, and Paul had to give a long speech of self-defence (Acts 21,26-22,30). Eventually Paul was brought before a Sanhedrin session where he managed to create a dispute between his Sadducee and Pharisee judges, so that he had to be taken away by the Tribune to Caesarea Maritima, to be judged by the Roman governor Felix, before whom he defended himself again (Acts 23,1-24,21). Felix, the governor, however, looking for a bribe, postponed judgment and left Paul in prison for two years (Acts 24,22-27). Only with the coming of Festus, the next procurator, and the continued charges by the Jewish leaders, was Paul's case taken up again (Acts 25,1-26,32). In the trial before Festus, Paul argued that he had committed no crime against Jewish Law or against Caesar. The procurator invited King Herod Agrippa II, who was a Jew, to hear the case; and although neither of the rulers found Paul guilty, he was sent to Rome as a prisoner because he had appealed to Caesar.

Paul's journey to Rome is described with great



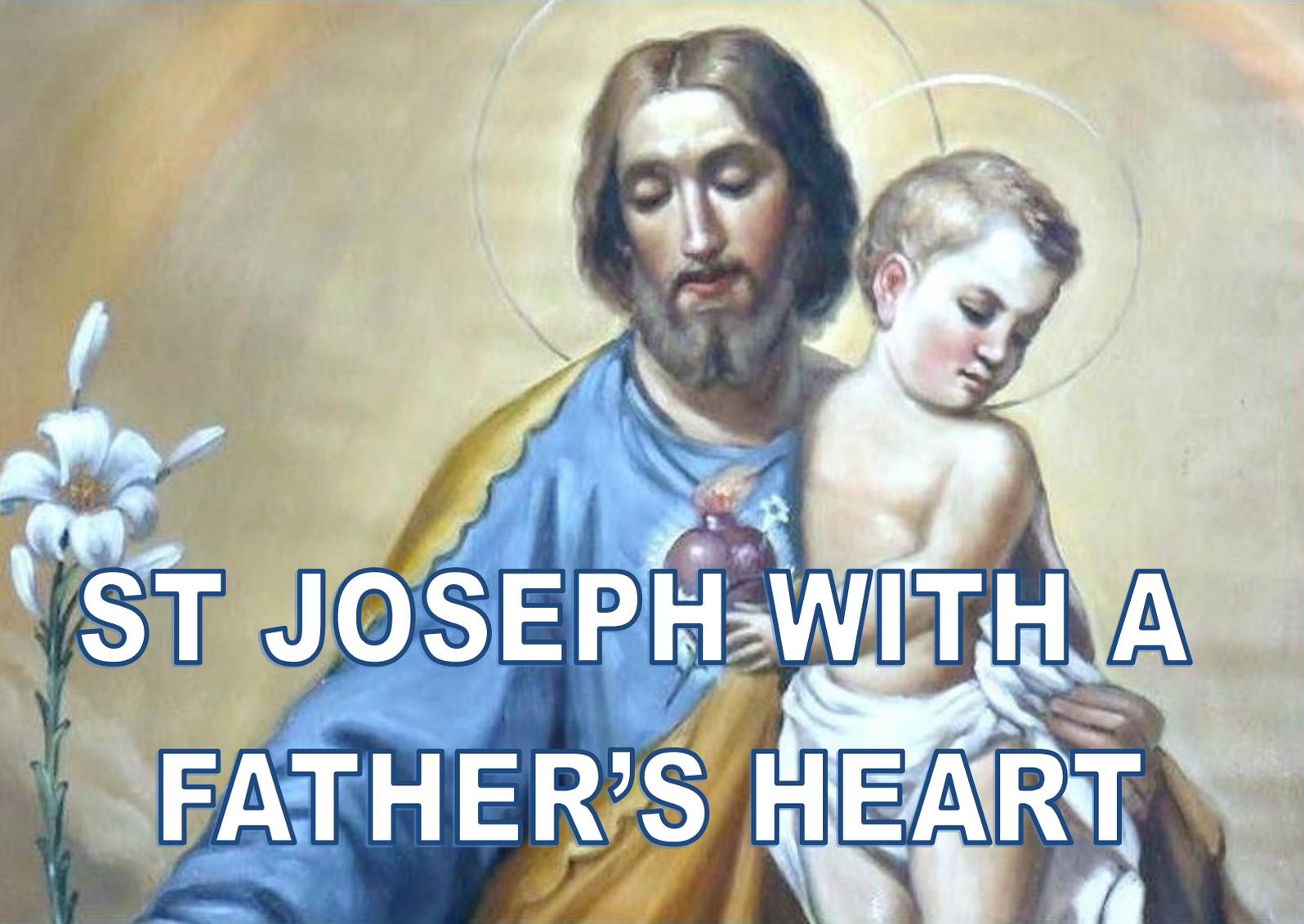
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enthusiasm in Acts (27,1-28,14). Escorted by a Roman centurion he sets sail from Caesarea Maritima for Sidon and passes Cyprus to come to Myra in Lycia. In the late autumn of 60 (Acts 27,9), they leave Myra on an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy, although bad weather is foreseen. Their route first takes them to Cnidus (on the South coast of Asia Minor), then southward "under the lee of Crete of Salmone" as far as Fair Havens, near the Cretan town of Lasea (Acts 27,7-8). When they try to reach the harbour of Phoenix, a northeast wind blows and carries them for days across the Adriatic to the island of Malta, where they are finally shipwrecked (Acts 28,1).

After spending the winter on the island of Malta, Paul and his escort sail for Syracuse in Sicily, then for Rhegium (modern Reggio di Calabria in Italy), and lastly for Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli, near Naples in Italy). Then the overland journey takes Paul to Rome (Acts 28,11-16).

(Continued on page 15)



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The Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis, *Patris Corde* (“With a Father’s Heart”), issued on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Given in Rome, at Saint John Lateran, on 8th December 2020, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, remains very significant. Pope’s unique interpretation of Saint Joseph, heart touching language and mercy filled approach make the Apostolic Letter attractive. Pope attempts to look at the contemporary world through the eyes of Saint Joseph and to propose guidelines to the faithful for a better living. There are seven ways in this precious Apostolic Letter that show St Joseph having the heart of a father.

1. A Beloved Father

St Joseph is our beloved father. A beloved person is one who is sincerely and profoundly loved. St Joseph is deeply loved not only by his immediate family but also by the Christian family. This is shown by the innumerable churches dedicated to him worldwide, the many Religious Institutes, Confraternities and Ecclesial Groups inspired by his spirituality. Besides Mother Mary, no other figure is mentioned more times in Church documents. He is beloved because he first loved. He loved Mary protecting her from the dishonour of unwed motherhood. He loved Jesus considering him as his own son. And he loved God’s trusting message given

through an angel. By first loving, he became beloved. Let us follow his example.

2. A Tender and Loving Father

St Joseph depicts the image of tender and loving father. In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God. Joseph taught him how to walk and offered him his loving embrace when he fell. The tender love of Joseph helps us to accept our weakness. In other words, Jo-



seph teaches us to tenderly look upon our falls, weaknesses and poverties. Pope emphasizes that tender love alone can save us from the snares of the accuser. By encountering God's mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we experience God's truth and tenderness, because God's truth does not condemn us, instead welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us, like the merciful father in Jesus' parable. The tender love of God comes out to meet us, restores our dignity, sets us back on our feet and rejoices for us. Let us remain open to receive God's tender love.

3. An Obedient Father

St Joseph is an obedient father. Joseph was in a tough situation. "In every situation, Joseph declared his own "fiat", like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane" (PC 3). Each time God spoke to him, Joseph was obedient. He followed God's call in his life, even though it was against the standards of the society. But he knew that he ought to have the courage and trust to depend on God and His plan. Even if the situation was out of the ordinary and didn't make sense, Joseph knew God was at work in his life. Joseph decided to trust God. Having a father who listens to God is an incredible thing, but we all are not in that position. Sometimes our fathers make decisions that don't seem to be very godly at all. But whatever our experience, we

have a perfect Father in God, who knows everything about us, knows how to look after us, and has the best in store for us. Let us trust in Him.

4. An Accepting Father

St Joseph is an accepting father. St. Joseph shows how he loved Mary, Jesus, and each one of us with an unconditional acceptance, even when he didn't understand God's plans. Joseph trusted angel's words addressed to him. He lovingly accepted Jesus as his own son. He provided a protective home for Mary and Jesus. And he accepted his call to be a husband to Mary and a father to Jesus. He showed this unconditional acceptance even when he believed himself unworthy to do so. The accepting attitude of Joseph encourages us to "accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak, for God chooses what is weak" (PC 4).

5. A Creatively Courageous Father

St Joseph is a creatively courageous father. God entrusted the Holy Family to Joseph and worked through his creative courage to guide and protect the Holy Family. For Joseph creativity was not just creating something new. But it was letting himself be carried away by God's plan for him; discovering the love around those plans; receiving the teachings in a positive way that sometimes was difficult for him to accept. For example, "Arriving in Bethlehem and finding no lodging where Mary could give birth, Joseph took a stable and, best he could, turned it into a welcoming home for the Son of God come into the world" (PC 5). Today it is our turn to be more courageous and creative; it is our turn to accompany in solidarity the most vulnerable families of our society.



6. A Working Father

St Joseph is a working father. St Joseph was a carpenter. He is a good example of the holiness of hu-

man labour. Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation. Joseph's work as a carpenter provided a means for the Holy Family to prosper and to remain hidden in Bethlehem. Joseph taught this work to Jesus. Joseph, who was given the noble task of caring and watching over the Virgin Mary and Jesus, now cares for and watches over the Church and remains a model for all the dignity of human work. "St. Joseph's work reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work" (PC 6). We are called to allow our work to glorify God, to build up the human community, to be a source of joy to everyone.

7. A Father in the Shadows

St. Joseph is a father in the shadows. *Pope Francis captures this aspect of St. Joseph, referring to Jan Dobraczyński's "evocative image" of Joseph as "the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father."* St. Paul

writes: "I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:14-15). So every parent, and particularly every father, is a sort of "shadow" of the one true Father. God is the real Father. And the rest of us are fathers only analogously. This is powerfully true in the life of St. Joseph, who isn't the biological father of Jesus. He knows that he is a sort of earthly "stand-in," helping to raise a child who properly belongs to the Father. In this role Joseph is such a powerful model to all other fathers.

The conclusion of the Apostolic Letter can be summed up in following words of Pope Francis: "Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift... Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is a fruit of mature sacrifice" (PC 7).



(Continued from page 12)

Paul arrives in the capital of the empire in the spring of 61 and for two years is kept in house arrest (AD 61-63) with a soldier to guard him. This situation, however, does not hinder him from summoning Roman Jews to his house and evangelising them (Acts 28,17-28). Acts ends with the brief account of Paul's house arrest. His arrival in Rome and his unhindered preaching of the Gospel there form the climax of the story of the spread of the word of God from Jerusalem to the capital of the civilized world of that time—Rome symbolizing "the end of the earth" (Acts 1,8).

Neither the letters of Paul nor Acts tells us of his death; but there is good tradition that he was martyred under Nero, either about the same time as Peter (AD 64) or somewhat later (AD 67). Tradition would have Paul buried on Via Ostiensis, a spot commemorated by the basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls in Rome.

Exercise: Read Acts 21,15-28,31. **Reflection:** About Paul's vocation it was told to Ananias by the Lord "I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9,16); this has been verified in Paul's life, especially in the last years. Are we encouraged and inspired by the life of Paul?



THE ARDENT LOVE OF GOD

Every New Year brings with it an avalanche of new encounters for which we must make decisions on. The life of Christians is ever so buffeted with the need to take steps on issues spanning all aspects of life. It often becomes overwhelming when we find it difficult to make decisions. We may turn to our family, friends or perhaps increasingly to social media in search of answers. Many times, after our futile efforts we get disappointed with ourselves, when it becomes evident that we totally neglected the will of God in many of our endeavors. God has a plan for our lives- and this He so desires to teach and show us if we accept His guidance. Guidance comes from accepting that God's will for us supersedes all other needs that we may want in readiness to walk in His chosen path. We need not know the details of all the steps God will guide us into, what we need is a humble trust that God will never lead us into destruction. God guides us



Lucy Gomez

through the various issues of Life. We are created not to carve out our own path through the stormy sea of life on our own. Our heavenly Father longs to be a guide throughout all the twists and turns of our life. He longs to shepherd you to greener pastures and calmer waters. He longs to protect all of us.

Allowing the Lord to be established as your guide, begins with a commitment of trust. God cannot lead you where you are not willing to accompany him to. Unless you live a life with your heart oriented towards continual obedience to the Lord, you will fail to follow him

and thus miss out all the wonders he has in store for you. Remember the words of Jeremiah that the Lord has a plan for us not to perish but to prosper. We are created to be children of the Spirit and the Word. He longs to guide you in and out of every circumstance by tugging on your spirit and speaking to your heart. God has given you ample opportunity to be perfectly led. He has provided you with everything you will ever need to go through in life with Him as your guide. All that is left for you is to trust in Him, keep your heart open to Him, and follow Him obediently in response to his faithfulness and unfailing love. Talk to Him in prayer and ask for His guidance. Ask the Holy Spirit to transform you into a child who is quick to listen and adhere to His leadership principles as follows:



#1: We must take responsibility for what we choose to savor.

Let me tell you—if we allow our thoughts to habitually linger on the “what ifs,” we will cripple our ability to trust in God during hard times. It’s understandable that we struggle with this particular bent of mind quite often. Friends, we get lost in sorrows. But we must not drown in them. We must float in the face of danger. It’s really difficult to trust in God in the midst of trials and tribulations and we then start playing those damaging “what if” thoughts over and again. Not because they are good, but, due to our natural tendency to feel sorry for ourselves. And maybe we somehow feel that meditating on the “what ifs” brings a bit more control to the chaos. But the problem is that the longer we hang on to such nemesis the worse the thoughts would become. When we allow these thoughts to dominate, we create a stagnant, spiritual “soil” in our minds that makes it difficult to really have faith in God during hard times.

Principle #2: We must calm our lives so that we can discover (and savor) the quiet undercurrents of joy. Why

don’t we spend more time savoring the good? Well, the pain is easier to discover, especially when we overcrowd our hectic lives with activities. These tiny treasures are not loud and obnoxious, and maybe that is why we miss them so easily. They speak softly—so softly that it is easy to wonder if they are even there. They get crowded out in the mad jumble of a hurried life. That is why, it is in the quiet and stillness that we can see them appear—like rabbits that suddenly materialize on a grassy field at twilight. We see them when we slow down enough to notice their presence.

Principle #3: Submit your fears to God and choose to savor His replenishing promises. There is a well-known Bible verse that many Christians quote during a trial: “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7) “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from God—everything you heard from God and saw what he was doing in your life. Then the God of peace will be with you.” Experience confidence and joy as God’s love renews your mind. Find peace as God’s love helps you let go of worry and fear. Rediscover hope, as God’s love offers a new perspective about trials.

You may believe on a surface level that you are loved by God, but let me tell you, going through a hard time is usually the time when we begin to question or experience God’s love. We wonder, “How on earth can He love me when I am let to face my toughest trials single handed! But keep in mind that due to our optimism along with our ardent love and implicit faith in God, He will send His angelic ministry to fight invisibly the battle with you and for you, making all your Mess into a Message, a Trial into a Triumph and a Victim to a Victor.





K. J. Mathew : An educationist with vast experience in teaching and administration at various levels including prestigious schools in India and abroad. Started his professional life as a Lecturer in the prestigious St. Thomas College, Trichur, Kerala. Later he moved to Africa (Nigeria & Botswana). In Nigeria, he taught at Mary Knoll College and in Botswana he taught at Moeding College and also in the University of Botswana. After about 18 years, he returned to India and worked as Headmaster/Principal at several premier ICSE/ISC schools in South India. Notable among them are: Good Shepherd International School – Ooty, Mar Thoma Residential School – Tiruvalla, Kerala and Kalabhavan Talent Residential School – Cochin. He is the Founder Principal of Mysore Public School. Authored three books. He is a member of various Indian and foreign professional organizations and has attended several educational conclaves world-wide.

There is an undesirable tendency among young children that I have taken note of in my voyage through my life as a teacher and as a school Principal. All schools have lots of Cultural and Literary competitions. Children take part in individual events and house-events with great enthusiasm, but then if they fail to get any prize, they end up terribly disappointed and take several weeks for them to come out of the mental trauma and the bitterness of it.

The best preparedness before you take part in a competition is acceptance of the fact that there are lots of people around you who are better than you in many ways. If you do not have this quality of mind, you are said to be a person with a one-track mind.

It may be true that you have taken part in a prestigious and challenging competition and failed. – Better expressed, you failed to be a successful participant. It is not the formal “Success” or “Failure” that you get at the end that matters. What matters is that you have done your best in the given time and context. Others may

have failed to appreciate it. But your conviction that you have prepared well in the given context and done your best should make you enjoy it yourself.

Failure is a harsh word to use to define misfortune in a sincere endeavour. The word "Failure" speaks of an unsuccessful end of an attempt. But there are no ends in life. Life is a continuous process. Both success and failure are components of life. No unsuccessful attempt should be perceived as failure. In the words of Abraham Lincoln,

"Success is a challenge well met, the number of attempts do not count".



In the words of Keats, **"Failure is, in a sense, the highway to success; as much as every discovery of what is false leads us to seek earnestly what is true, and every discovery of what is false makes us go after what is true"**.

The statements made by the above great people, highlights one of the ultimate goals of education. True education is supposed to make us attain a certain refinement – certain quality of mind which we can bring to bear on the facts of life. We know Abraham Lincoln as one of the great Presidents of the United States. How many of us know how, where and how many times he failed before he could finally achieve what he set out to achieve?

- He failed in business at the ages of 21 and 24.
- He lost his love at the age of 26.
- He had a nervous breakdown at the age of 27.

- He lost a congressional race at the age 34.
- He lost a senatorial race at 45.
- He lost the Vice-Presidential race at 47.
- Again, he lost the senatorial race at the age of 49.
- Finally he was elected President at the age of 52.

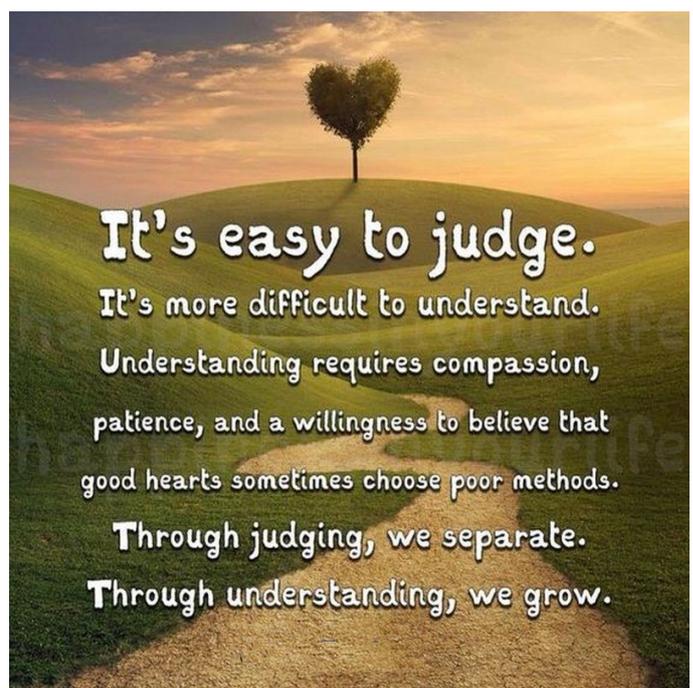
Had Lincoln bowed down to his set backs in life, the history of the United States of America would have been different.

Always remember that the only one who never makes mistakes is the one who never attempts anything.

It is your lack of experience and failure to make good judgments about a situation that makes you fret and fume about a failure.

In the words of Ronald Reagan, one of the former Presidents of USA :

"Good Judgment comes from Experience & Experience comes from Bad Judgment"





THE BAPTISM OF JESUS, A WAY TO OUR IDENTITY!

Rev. Fr. Raphael Saji George , Rome, Italy

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The baptism of Jesus which takes place in the river of Jordan is a particular event. According to geologists, the Jordan River is the lowest point on earth that comes about 400 meters below sea level. This means that Jesus who came from the heights of heaven descends to the depths of man to free the mankind chained by his fears, sins and misunderstandings. When the Saviour of the world descends into the Jordan with sinners, that is, the judge of this world plays the part of the sinful humanity.

The word baptism is from Greek term «*baptizo*» which means «*to immerse*». Our baptism was an immense gift that our parents, godfather and godmother gave to our life because they baptized us or made sure that we were immersed in God. How beautiful is to be immersed in God to be protected and kept, that means simply be immersed in his love.

In the Gospels we can see that Jesus lines up with sinners. In that manner Jesus reveals, in a definitive way, that God is typically the "**God with us**" or **God is Christmas and Emmanuel (Mt 1, 23)**. God the Love who says to us always: I am on your side, I am for you, in your favour, I will accompany you, and indeed I will precede you wherever you go.

The God being with us not only we can see in the event of baptism but all throughout the life of Jesus Christ. On the cross, in all the stages of the sufferings of the humankind Jesus will fulfil this **«being with»** and it makes sense the word "Today you will be with me (and I will be with you) in paradise" (Lk 23:43). Therefore, **«it is convenient»** (Mt 3, 15) to me, to each of us that Jesus immerse, descent himself in our solitudes and in our darkest angles of life. This is God's dream that the man may be restored to the splendour of his origin. God only dreams that man can finally discover himself as beloved and favourite son.



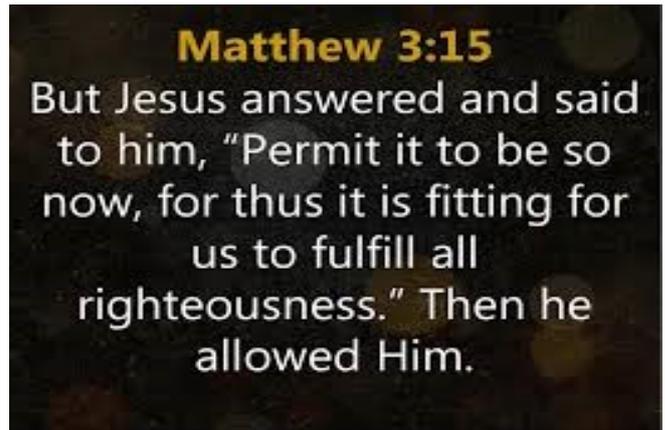
Pope at Angelus : 'Remember date of your Baptism'

13-Jan-2019

Do you remember the date of your baptism? One day Pope Francis asked this question in St Peter's Square. Generally, we remember many anniversaries, birthdays etc. We celebrate the wedding anniversaries for couples, the ordination day of priests and profession anniversary of sisters. But do we really remember the day we became Christians? And if you think frankly that we could marry or become priests, or live the consecrated life and be able to receive first communion and confirmation, all these are due to the grace of baptism, sacramentally bestowed upon us in the name of the father, of the son and of the Holy Spirit through Mother Church.

To John the Baptist's protest about what is happening, Jesus replies firmly **«leave it for now»** (Mt 3,15). Jesus in some way insists on the Baptist, and each of us, not to prevent him from staying close to us, from entering our deaths, our sepulchres, our hells, because otherwise he could not reach us and give us that Life

that we direly need. At that point John the Baptise **«let him do it»** (Mt 3,15b). The synthesis of salvation is



right here that is to say: let God love me! To abandon oneself means to let someone to be reached by his love. Let us allow Jesus to find us from our secret hiding places and letting ourselves to reach out to him from all our fear and allow him simply to bring us back home. In this way Jesus reveals the true name of God, Mercy, the very essence of God, that makes sure that my sins, my malicious thoughts and deeds, my limitations, my wounds, my weaknesses are no longer a reason for separation or alienation from the Lord but a place where He can finally meet me; no longer a place of condemnation but a necessary space to reveal Jesus' true identity as a doctor, love and Saviour.

At that point we will hear the Word of the Father pronouncing within our hearts: **«You are my beloved child; I love you for what you are and for who you are. I love you no matter how grievous your sins or your fragility. I'm here to take care of you. I have overcome death, and with it all deaths, even those that you carry inside and with which you have never been able to reconcile»**. Therefore baptism is a clear sign that God is faithful to save all those who trust in his salvation through Jesus Christ. He is the giver of life. As told by Peter in Acts 2 and 3: **«Have faith in Jesus Christ and believe His gospel. Convert and turn to God in faith. Follow Jesus's command and wash away your sins through baptism.»** And we know we are safe in God's care and we are immersed in his tender love.

Amen!
■■■



CHESSED

What kind of feeling does The Cross evoke?

For everyone searching for a blessing in the broken pieces of their life - will resonate with me saying: "Passion". Passion comes from Latin meaning 'long suffering' and is expressed in Exodus 34:6 - The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

The Most High Living God (In Hebrew: *Elohim Chay*, "**Living God**," and *El Elyon*, "**God Most High**," are two of the most frequently used names for God in the Old Testament. They are used to emphasize the unique nature of God: He is alive and greater than all others) This Triune God, seeks our undivided attention, because he wants us to commune with Him, and He with us in Spirit - in every generation; for we are His creation.

Thank God we are not perfect, which gives us scope to invite this God of divine Passion - The Holy Spirit into our lives to enrich us with His fruit: Galatians 5:22 - love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. This divine exchange that takes place when we stand before The Cross and repent (exchange) our sins (imperfections), seeking His perfection to replace our imperfection, in our spirit being enables our bodies to



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become ready to be the temple of The Holy Spirit through this endeavour.

There are several examples in the Bible, but who better than David can teach us, how he wondered and wandered in the wilderness, carrying his confusing cross all his childhood, into his youth asking God to adopt him (Psalms 27:10), singing and dancing his way to success in his loneliness, overcoming all attacks - from his own family and outside, till finally, the moment arrived, the price, the reward for his exchange - Heshed - The God in person, manifest through The Holy Spirit in Samuel the prophet - Grace and Truth visited him that 'day' to honour him in public with a kingly anointing, leaving his adversaries asunder!

God in His loving kindness SENT Jesus His only Son - His divine favour - Grace in person - His Mercy manifest, to establish a new covenant with all mankind - a new relationship with God and man mediated through Jesus Christ. This Intense kindness demonstrated on The Cross may be described, using the Hebrew word

Chesed. Chesed is pronounced as HeseD. In Hebrew: HESED means - Loving Kindness - Loyal love of God - Mercy - faithfulness in action - MAGNANIMOUS!



In the journey of my faith, when I arrived at the milestone that read **Colossians 2:13,14** 'And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against me, which was contrary to me. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.'

This Word of God brought me to my knees begging God: "Please, have Mercy!" This calling out and groaning in the spirit is what enabled me to head back to The Cross in single minded determination; during a time of debilitating illness, till I met HeseD in person - Jesus.

When our lives don't go the way we plan it, there are no short cuts, only reverse miracles awaiting us at The Cross. Our lives (in the realm of the Will) can turn into the fig tree that Jesus wants us to become; bearing fruit in every season. The finished work on The Cross - The atoning sacrifice - The Speaking Blood of Christ shed for all mankind is the answer to the void in our lives! He manifests His forgiveness - a price one cannot pay, for the divine exchange, to anyone who touches the hem of His garment.

Like the leper who sat still and waited upon the Lord in hiding, Jesus CAME to him leaving the masses, after the sermon on the mount, to touch, heal and forgive him. He is the same God yesterday, today and forever. He COMES when we call. For it is promised in **John 1:17** 'For the law was given through Moses; Grace and Truth CAME through Jesus Christ.'

God was, is and will be kind and merciful to his people waiting for each one to turn to Him, for He is a speaking God with a new message for each generation. He keeps manifesting and revealing His HeseD love, reassuring us of His rainbow in the sky, through His Word as we can see in: **Lam 3:20** The steadfast love of the love never ceases, his mercy never comes to an end. They are new every morning. Great is his faithfulness.

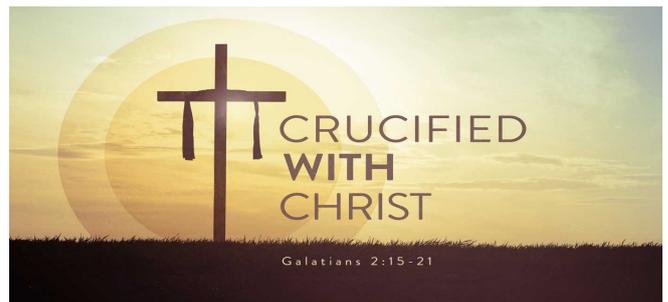
Mathew 11:29-30 'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you

will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'



Matthew 16:24 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'

God's love through Jesus is matchless (Psalms 35:8 - O taste and see that the Lord is good). It is forever - no riders and no distinctions, It is inclusive; a true promise of unfailing love through the gift of His son. For everyone who knocks, seeks and asks (Mathew 7:7) will surely experience Grace, loving kindness, unmerited favour, Mercy in person leaving you with the divine Gift of life as expressed in:



Galatians 2:20 'I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me'.

Like the way Moses did, when God visits him promising forgiveness for generations of exchange in **Exodus 34:6,7,8**. Let us also, bow our head toward the earth, meaning what we say: "we adore thee O Christ and we bless thee, because of thy holy Cross, thou has redeemed the world" For it is promised in **Deuteronomy 7:9** - Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generation.

Let us, turn to Him and He will turn to us (**James 4:8a**).

God is telling us even now: "I am full of heseD and I will heseD to 1000"



For all have sinned
and fall short of the
glory of God.

Romans 3:23

Biblical and Theological Implications of Romans 3:23



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The Letter to the *Romans* is widely considered as “both the least controversial of the major New Testament letters and the most important”. It is the least controversial in the sense that it answers most of the introductory questions like “who wrote? What? When? to whom?”, apart from most of the NT writings. Its importance is derived from the fact that it is credited with the title of “first well-developed theological statement by a Christian theologian which has come down to us and one which has had incalculable influence on the framing of Christian theology...”. Considering the crucial significance both in the letter and in Paul’s theology, many scholars acclaim Rom 3:21-26 as “the centre and heart of the whole of Rom 1:16b-15:13”. Having developed the theme evolved in 1:16-17 in a negative fashion (1:18-3:20), Paul presents the gospel of salvation for all those who possess the faith that is revealed in Jesus Christ (3:21-4:25). The former distinctions as Jews and Gentiles have become obsolete in the light of Christ Event (3:21-26) and indicates the consequences to humanity without the gospel and removes any exception with regard to the sinful status (1:18-3:20). Paul takes a positive shift from Rom 3:21f by arguing that the gospel of God has now been revealed apart from the “works of the Law”, and through the faith that Jesus has manifested, humans who lack “glory of God” (Rom 3:23) are redeemed.

Does Paul enigmatically understand human sin as a lack of the glory of God in Rom 3:23? In the NT, “sin” was not a part of *kerygmatic* formulas of the early Church. Similarly, Penna says that *sin* was not a subject of the first confessions of faith among the early Christians. Paul mentions the term *sin* in creedal formulas in the background. He considers the theme *sin* secondary in his letters (1Cor 15:3). In the Biblical tradition, *sin* is “a situation of alienation from God” (Lk 15:21; 1Cor 8:12). In *Romans*, the high point of the *Corpus Paulinum*, while indicating the broken relationships between God and humans (Rom 1:18-3:20), Paul shows that both all are all alike “under sin” (Rom 3:9). Here we find the first mention of “sin” in *Romans* (3:9). The analysis of Dunn, “of 64 occurrences in the Pauline letters, no less than three-fourths appear in *Romans*”, shows the predominance of the term *hamartia* in *Romans* (48 times). He observes sin “as a power ‘under’ which all humankind labours”. For Paul, Dunn says, *hamartia* would mean “that power which draws men and women back from the best and keeps causing them to miss the target”. Similarly, Dunn continues, “in particular, sin is that power which makes human beings forget their creatureliness and dependence on God, that power which prevents humankind from recognizing its true nature, which deceives the *adam* into thinking he is godlike and makes him unable to grasp that he is nothing but *ada-*

mah".

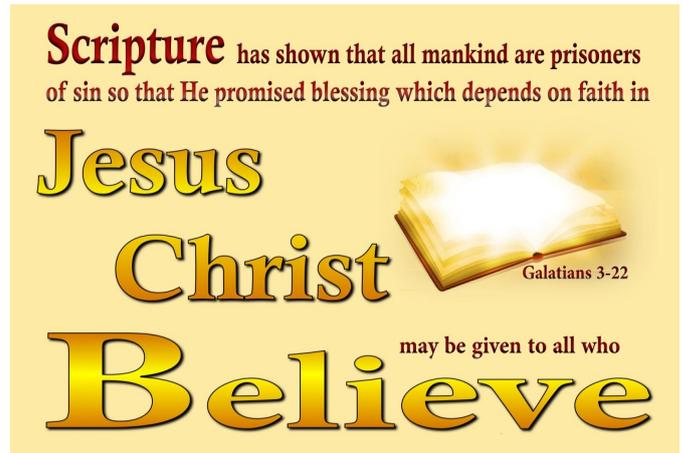
Undoubtedly, there is an intrinsic link between sin and God's glory in Rom 3:23. Sin separates humans from God, because they lack His glory. Dodd interprets this lack as the divine likeness humans intended to bear, and whenever they depart from it, they are sinful. Here the phrase "glory of God" has a reference to the glory that humans had before the fall (Gen 3). The problem of sin is truly universal in time as well as widespread in force. We can summarise the first section of Romans (1:18-4:25) as: with regard to the sinful status, there is no exception to both Jews and Gentiles who are offered justification through faith as a gift of God's grace. A new period of salvation has begun with the coming of Christ (Rom 3:21-26). God has taken initiative and has redeemed the right relationship with humans. Paul's concern has been the dialectic between the alienation and disintegration of human beings and the action of God in Christ to restore the glory of God reflected in the image of God, the invisible God (cf. Col 1:15). Thus, the focus of our article is: how does Paul understand sin as lack the glory of God in Rom 3:21-26 from the perspective of broken and restored relationships in the economy of salvation?

1. "All have sinned..." Human Failure to Share in the Glory of God?

Rom 1:18-3:20 presents that both the Gentile and the Jew are in the wide net of condemnation. The adjective *pās* (all/every) is repeated in Rom 3 (vv.19-20, 22, 23) several times. There are numerous references to *pās* linked to sin and death in *Romans*, to the universal Lordship of Christ and the universal judgment of God. From the context, it is clear that it covers the two great sections of humanity, both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 3:9; 3:23; 5:12; 5:18; 10:12; 14:10). Paul used *pās* to highlight "the universal outreach of God's purpose and action". The gospel is for all humans (Rom 3:24). God promised to redeem fallen mankind (Gen 3:15). God called and chose all through Israel (Gen 12:3; Exod 19:5-6). God elects His people through faith. God takes the initiative (Jn 6:44, 65) and invites believers not only to justification, but also to sanctification (Eph 1:4; Col 1:12). God's call was not to a selected few of Adam's children, but to all!

The term *hamartia* (sin, cf. Rom 3:9) is used either to indicate the final judgment (as in Rom 2:12) or to point towards the decisive and universal character of human's fall (Rom 5:12). Responding to the social differences in the

Roman Church (cf. Rom 14:1-15:13), Paul rejects the basis on which the Jewish Christians claiming superiority over the Gentile Christians. In the first subsection (Rom 1:19-



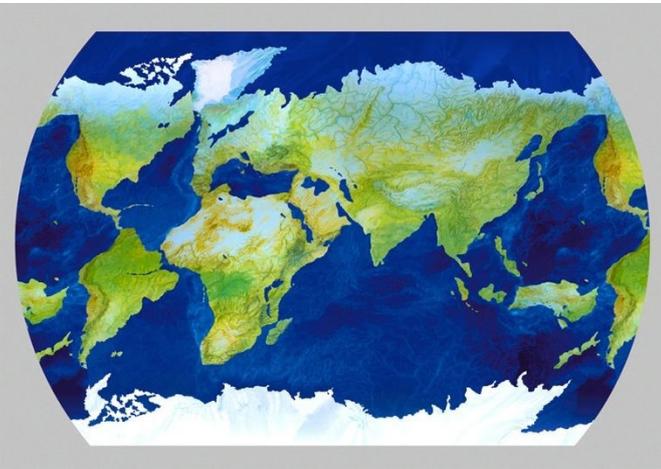
3:20), Paul hits Jewish feelings of superiority (2:17, 25; 3:1,9) while not denying God's special relationship with Abraham's descendants (9-11). It is remarkable to note that *pās* appears in *Romans* where Paul makes comparison between Jews and Gentiles (1:16; 2:9-11; 3:19-20; 10:10-14). As Johnston argues, "When Paul wrote *Romans*, the question of Jewish privilege (and Gentile conformity with their practice), even within the early community, was still an alive issue (Acts 10:1-11:22; 15:1-35; Rom 14; Gal 2:11-16)". Though the rhetorical purpose of Paul is not establishing the universality of human sinfulness, it had already been established with the Scriptural proofs (cf. Rom 3:10-18) before considering the same again in Rom 3:23. Paul's concern is primarily about how Jews and Gentiles as believers co-exist in the Church (Rom 14:1:15:13; cf. Eph 2:11-22). All believers stand before God in the same way because all are justified only by the faith revealed in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-26).

In a way, Rom 3:23 highlights the human responsibility in the destruction of divine-human relationships. When humans wilfully break the divine plan, as Mathew Jayanth rightly remarks : "they find themselves in the state of sin which is contrary to the intention of God, and therefore, everyone stands in need of salvation that comes from God through Jesus Christ, and that God alone can change the situation of the human person". The sinners are saved by the cross of Christ (Rom 3:25-26) which is not a vicarious sacrifice to placate God's anger. But it is "the gracious and loving initiative of God and of Christ Himself". God shows his love for us by dying for us while we are sinners. The essence of the salvation is the total gift of self, the supreme act of love (Phil 2:6-8). Thus, Paul presents the culmination of human salvation as a sharing in the fullness of

life i.e., the glory of God.

2. Lacking the Glory of God: Turning Upside Down the Creation Order

The Greek term *hystereō* has different meanings like to miss out on something, to fail to reach, to be in short supply, fail, give out, to be in need and lack. The KJV translates Rom 3:23 as "...come short of the glory of God". Enderlein affirms that the standard versions like the RSV, NRSV, NASB, NIV, HCSB and ESV translate it as "fall short of the glory of God" following the KJV. This has the sense of failing to achieve some objective called "the glory of God" due to sin and therefore the sinners ought to be striving for. But *hystereō* occurs only once in *Romans*. As eight of its sixteen NT occurrences are found in the undis-



puted letters (1Cor 1:7; 8:8; 12:24; 2Cor 11:5, 9; 12:11; Phil 4:12), it seems that Paul is familiar with the word. Besides in Rom 3:23, the word is used in the middle/passive voice in 1Cor 1:7; 8:8; 12:24; 2Cor 11:9; Phil 4:12 and each carries the meaning "to lack the possession of". It therefore denotes the meaning of "failing to possess something desirable, rather than "falling short" of some goal or objective". Enderlein employs evidences of the word *hystereō* from the early Christian writings like Jesus' exhortation to the rich man reminding him of what he lacks (Mk 10:21), the prodigal son's life status of lacking during famine (Lk 15:14) and Jesus' enquiring to the disciples whether they lacked anything when they were sent out (Lk 22:35). There is also an important syntactical parallel to Rom 3:23 in Ignatius' letter to Ephesus that translates *hystereō* as "to lack". Ignatius exhorts the Ephesians not to be deceived, for unless a person is within the sanctuary, "He is lacking the bread of God" (Ign. Eph. 5:2)". Thus *hystereō* means "to lack possession of" and we translate the verse as: "All have sinned and lack the glory of God".

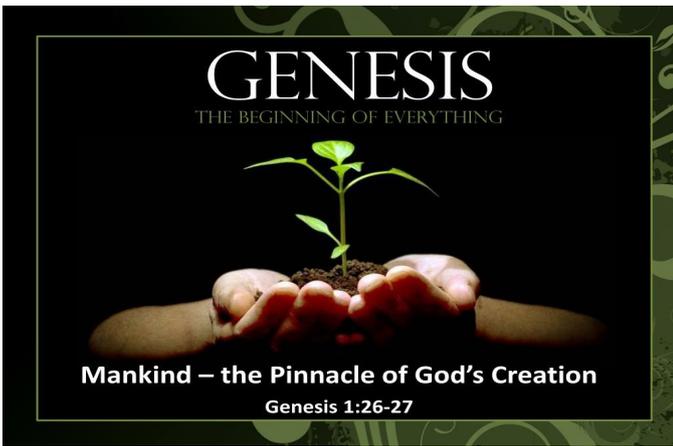
Does *glory of God* in Rom 3:23 demonstrably echo *image of God* in Gen 1:26-27? Though several factors like the association of Moses (Exod 34:2; 2 Cor 3) and Noah (1En 106) and the texts of future glory without mentioning Adam (Dan 12:1-3; Mt 13:43; 1QS 4:6-8; Wis 3:4-8), we can see an implicit association with Adam in Rom 3:23 because of the conjunction of *eikōn* and *doxa* in Paul's letters (Rom 8:28-30; 1Cor 11:1-12; 15:40-49; 2Cor 3:18). In Rom 3:23 Paul qualifies *glory with a genitive phrase, "of God"*. When we attempt to establish the link between the *image and glory of God*, we should not confuse with the glory of God and of Adam: it is not "Adam's glory that humans lack, but rather God's glory. Accordingly, the future experience of glory is not a return from Adam's glory but a participation in God's glory through Christ (Rom 8:17-30)". The nuance highlighted by Gieniusz as human "sharing in (3:23) or hoping to share in (5:2; 9:23) the divine reality" goes well in the Romans. We however cannot remove Adam from the background because humans share in the glory of God by virtue of God's creation in the image of God. Human had attempted to escape his/her creatureliness and s/he blurred *imago Dei*.

Gen 1:26-27 employs the Hebrew words *tselem* and *demûth* which are literally *image* and *likeness* respectively. The NT equivalents are *eikōn* and *homoiosis*. The words of Gen 1:26 appear in the Vulgate as *imago* and *similitudo*. These two words in the original passage has occasioned a various straits of interpretations in the history of theology. The employment of two nouns has been seen as teaching two aspects of the image of God. *Tselem* is said to denote human's essence, which is unchangeable, whereas *demûth* is held to teach the changing part of man. Thus the word *image* relates to the very essence of human, while the likeness is that which may be lost. Wenham proposes five solutions to the problematic under-



standing of *image* and *likeness*? First, Irenaeus (180 AD) consider the image and the likeness are two distinct aspects of human nature - image referring to the natural

qualities in humans (reason, personality, etc.) while the



likeness to the supernatural graces (ethical). But the study of Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1, 3; and 9:6 that the two Hebrew terms are not referring to two different entities but reveals the words are used interchangeably.

Also, the LXX uses the one word *eikōn* for both *tselem* and *demûth*. Second, the Image refers to the mental and spiritual faculties like reason, personality, free-will, self-consciousness or intelligence that human shares with God, the creator. But it is almost impossible to pin point the intended qualities. Third, the image may refer to the physical resemblance (*like* God). Though Gen 5:3 in which Adam is described to have fathered Seth “after his image” points towards the father-son resemblance, the incorporeality and invisibility of God in the OT makes this view groundless. Moreover, the image of God implies not simply material realms but the whole being. Fourth, that human in the divine image may make God’s representative on earth corresponding to the Egyptian and Assyrians traditions where King is described as *imago Dei*. But the priestly theology which sees a clear distinction between the divine and human realms proves this assertion erroneous. Last, the image means a capacity to relate to God and thus God can make personal relationships and making covenant with his creatures. But Gen 5:3 and Exod 25:40 means *eikōn* as the product of creation not the process. All these five solutions on *imago Dei* may contain some elements of truth but there is a difficulty to grasp what Genesis understands perfectly.

In summarizing, we understand the image of God as the spiritual attribute gifted to whole being of humans that are included in God’s character, things like love and goodness. Humans have a capacity to become God-like i.e., to seek God to be in communion with him. In this way, we understand the divine image as a right relation of the creature to the Creator. It was God’s purpose to conform

us to the image of his Son (Rom 8:29) and thus Paul says that “And just as we have borne the man of dust (Adam), we will also bear the image of the man of heaven (Jesus)” (1Cor 15:49). In 1Cor 11:7, (hu)man is considered image and glory of God. Christ is the true image of the invisible God (Col 1:15; 2Cor 4:4). Jesus was in the likeness of God (Phil 2:5-8) and he represents the perfect nature of the Father (Heb 1:3) who has never sinned (1Pet 2:22) and lived according to the will of the Father (Jn 6:37-40). Jesus restored image of God in man which had been lost lacked by sin through the economy of salvation, the expression of divine love and new manifestation of the glory of God. The sin of humans is thus a loss of the glorious manner of being as the creation of God.

The metaphor *Imago Dei* suggests that the human person is relational by nature. It evokes the dialogical structure of the person and the necessity of actualizing oneself through a multiplicity of relationships. Throughout the Scripture (Ex 20:3-4; Dt 5:7-8; LXX Is 65:11; Jer 44:15-19; Rom 2:22; 1Cor 8:1), idolatry tempts humans to negate their relationship to the Transcendent. This denial of transcendental dimension of the human relationality adversely affects the human-human relationship as well as the human-cosmos relationship (Gen 3:1-24). Through idolatry, we tend to become like our images. In Psalm 115:8, we imbibe this concerning idols: Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them. Paul also observes that those who change the image of God into an idol become corrupted and defiled like their idol (Rom 1:23-27). By alluding to Rom 1:23 to LXX Gen 1:26-27 in connection with the use of *eikōn* in synonym with *homoiosis* and *homoioima*, Bianchini explains that Paul’s allusion of the creation in a reverse order like human beings, birds, four-footed animals and reptiles reminds us of the activity of human beings who have distorted God’s glory with idolatrous depictions of humans and animals (cf. Rom 1:23). Creation is put in the place of the creator and especially the one who is the “image and likeness” of God, creates a god of human “image and likeness”. Its reference to LXX Ps 106:20 criticizes the idolatry of the Jew and its allusion to LXX Gen 1:20-27 invokes every human to be responsible for sin. As a dynamic reality, *Imago Dei* invites humans to restore the glory of God lost through idolatry and to actualize human fulfillment through a rigorous process of building relationship with God in the person of Jesus offered as a gift.

3. The Glory of God Restored: Romans 3:23 and Its Relevance for Us

Rom 3:21-26 is God's message of liberation from brokenness of relationship from God, ourselves and cosmos at large. Righteousness of God (Rom 3:21-22) is an offer to repair the problem of the distorted relationships. As Rom 3:23 reveals that all have sinned and have been trapped by the power of sin and thus all have lost share in the divine glory which he had possessed. The important thing is to walk "in the new life of the Spirit" (Rom 7:6) and to be open to the gratuitous gift of the Father through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24-26).

Eventually God freely invites to the righteousness of God and provides the sinful humanity with a means to compensate for its "lack of the glory of God" through the medium of faith in God who is definitively self-revealed in Jesus (Rom 3:21-22). Righteousness of God is the "beginning of the new life - the transference from the realm of Adam to Christ, the transference from the magnetic power of sin to the magnetic power of the Spirit". Through faith, human is now reconciled to God, oneself and the universe. This new state of affairs is indicated by Paul by the term *apolytrosis* (redemption) which reminds



us of the Christ's salvific activity through which human is liberated from the past sins (Rom 3:24-26). Through the blood of Christ in the cross, God restores the broken God-human relationship. Thus we have the complete restoration of a relationship what Paul calls the "new creation" (2Cor 5:17). Today, the believer of Christ becomes a new creation. The glory lost by Adam has been restored in the economy of salvation by Jesus Christ through the work of the life-giving Spirit. Thus, redemption is always the *agire divino* rather than the work of human beings.

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J. A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield & G. N. Stanton, *The Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1990).

Cf. R. Penna, *Paul, the Apostle: Wisdom and Follow of the Cross*, trans. T. P. Wahl (The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1996), 10.

Ibid., p. 10. 1Cor 15:3: though there is mention of sin, it is in the background as Christ died because of it. The confession of faith is Christological. The theme of sin is mentioned only in connection with Christ's salvific death. Even this secondary nature of narration of sin is quite absent in other creedal formulas like I Thess 1:9-10; 1Cor 8:6; Phil 2:6-11; Rom 1:3-4a; 10:9; Col 1:15-20; 1Tim 3:16.

Ibid., p.12. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul, the Apostle* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, 1998), 111.

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Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Fontana Books, London, 1960), 75.

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The three exceptions are: Douay-Rheims Bible ('need'), NJB (lack), and NAB ('are deprived'), all of which belong to Catholic tradition. Cf. W. V. Cirafesi, " 'To Fall Short' or 'To Lack'? Reconsidering the Meaning and Translation of *hystereō* in Romans 3:23", in *The Expository Times* 123/9 (2012), 429-434.

S. Enderlein, "To Fall Short or Lack the Glory of God?: The Translation and Implications of Romans 3:23", in *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 1/2 (2011), 213.

Ibid., p. 214., Ibid., pp. 214-215.

B. C. BLACKWELL, "Immortal Glory and the Problem of Death in Romans 3:23", in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32/3 (2010), 291.

Cf. A. GIENIUSZ, *Romans 8:18-30: "Suffering Does not Thwart the Future Glory"* (Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1999), 123.

Cf. G. J. WENHAM, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC), vol. 1. (Word Books, Dallas, 2002), 29-32.

The explicit theme of the image of God appears in Gen 1:26, 27: 5:1 and 9:6. Gen 1:26-27 recording the sixth day of creation: "...Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness...So God created humankind in his image..." It is very significant to note that the author omits *demûth* in Gen 1:27. Does the author want to make a serious distinction between *tselem* and *demûth*? Is nothing lost either from humankind or from the meaning of the lost by the omission? Another clear example of interchangeability of these words is that in Gen 5:1 and 9:6, only one word is used to denote the image *demûth* in Gen 5:1 and *tselem* in Gen 9:6. Gen 5:1 begins with the genealogy from Adam to Noah. "...When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God..." Gen 9:6 "...for in his own image, God made humankind..."

Cf. F. BIANCHINI, "Dalla creazione alla nuova creazione. L'uso paolino di Gen 1 - 11", in *Ricerche Storico Bibliche: Genesi 1-11 e le sue interpretazioni canoniche: un caso di teologia biblica* 24/1-II (2012) 309.





UNIVERSAL CALL FOR KEDUSHA (HOLINESS)

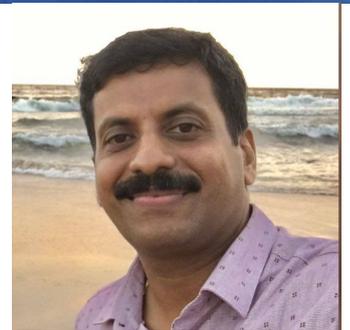
The Hebrew word for 'holy' or 'sacred' is *kahdosh* which means 'setting apart'. Our Catholic Church teaches 'All people are called to be holy'. The call to holiness is found right from the OT passages, wherein our Lord asks Abraham "walk before me and be blameless" (Gen 17:1). The Second Vatican Council stresses the universal call to holiness - (paraphrased) 'The forms and tasks of life are many, but holiness is one and no one is excluded from the call.' (Lumen Gentium)

A Nation Set Apart for Holiness

In the book of Leviticus 19, the chosen nation of Israel is set apart (made holy) by laying out certain practices of sanctification. We should understand that the holiness of Israel was only a function of the supreme holiness of the God of Israel. Israel was meant to be holy, because her God is Holy.

Everyday Life-Saints

'Saints know they are sinners whereas sinners think they are saints' (Peter kreeft). Our Lord wants us to be



Sangeet Varghese

saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre settlement. We are called to be holy in our everyday life, while realizing that 'a great cloud of witnesses' impels us to the goal. This cloud of witness includes Abraham, Sarah and so on from the OT period to the present era saints viz Maximilian Kolbe, John Paul II, Mother Theresa.

Our Pope Francis extends the list of every day saints to many mothers and grandmothers whose acts of love and service go unnoticed. (cf. Gaudete Et Exultate - ap-

ostolic exhortation; cf. 2 Tim 1:5) They are saints who sacrifice their comfort and energy for their loved ones doing daily chores.

Three Paths To Holiness (KEDUSHAH)

(As suggested by Bishop Barron)

- **Finding the center:** Realize that Jesus Christ is the



center in our family, in our marriage, in our occupation. Once Jesus is kept as the center of all our activities, the remaining continues to be in harmony.

- **Knowing that you are a sinner:** Saint Peter on his first encounter with Christ on his boat at river Geneserath, pleaded him to leave alongside confessing his sinful state. (Lk 5:8). *When Jesus embarks your life-boat, your vulnerability to sinful nature gets revealed. Turn away from sinful ways, confess and turn around. Lk 6:68 'Peter accepting Jesus as center of life'*
- **Realizing your life is not about you:** The Lord has a mission with your life. Submit wholly to his plan, and He will mould you to holiness.

Being Holy in the Present Context of Pandemic

During this pandemic, many are tempted to fear, feel anxious and even fall into despair. Many have lost their precious lives and few are suffering from illness, loss of income and so on. **'Come, my people, enter your rooms and shut your doors behind you; Hide for a little while until indignation runs its course'**. (Is 26:20)

- Yes my brothers and sisters, this is the time to hide under His wings.
- Fear shall not overcome you since the Lord is with you. While taking refuge in His shelter, one could

align his bearings to the God who is the Centre.

- Find opportunity to love! Be perfect, be set apart (be holy);
- Strengthen faith by: participating in online mass,



way of the cross, rosary, reading spiritual classics etc.

- Intercede for the world and all its present turmoil. Devotion to Mother Mary - the most powerful intercessor - guarantees protection from the invisible enemy.
- 'And you shall be to me, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (goy kadosh)' says the Lord. You are to be the light and salt of the earth, reflecting the true light as does the moon reflect the sun. With His death and resurrection, He sanctified us with His precious blood. Now we are made holy as demanded by our Lord, 'You shall be holy, for the Lord your God is holy'.
- Protect yourself and be battle-ready by wearing the armor of God (Eph 6:13-17) with the Word of God as the sword.
- The Church shall endure the tough times of sacramental drought and shall become a spring of hope and joy to the world. *Kahdosh, Kahdosh, Kahdosh* (Holy, holy, holy) Lord God Almighty, who was and is to come (Rev 4:8). Church, the bride of Jesus Christ gets *ka-du-sheen* (sanctified) in the marriage relationship with her heavenly bridegroom. We all say *ha'kadosh barukh hu* (*Blessed be the holy one of Israel*)

Amen.



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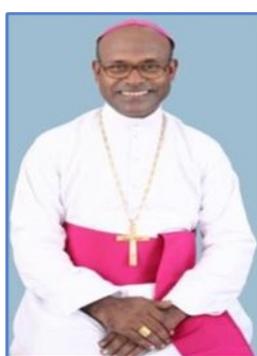
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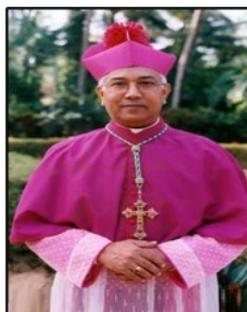
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This quarterly bulletin is compiled and published by the Kadosh Marian Voice editorial board for and on behalf of
Kadosh Marian Ministries

(The Registered Charitable Trusts in the United Kingdom and India).

This magazine is strictly for private circulation and free of cost intended for Evangelization and Renewal.

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