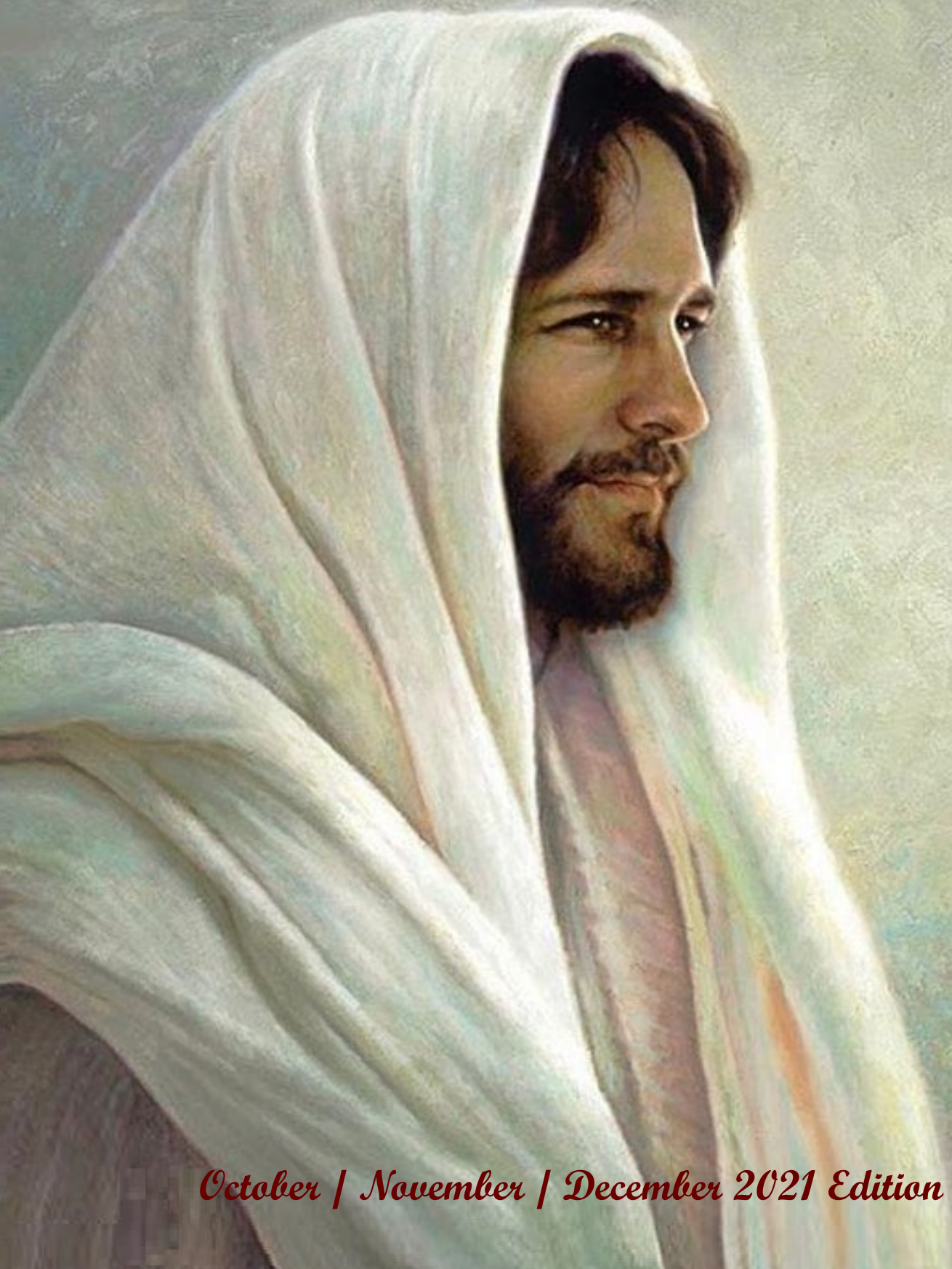


Kadosh Marian Voice

Holiness Firmness Truthfulness Faithfulness








October | November | December 2021 Edition



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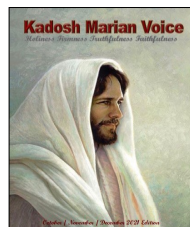
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The cover page depicts the reflection of Jesus Christ

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Circumcision and healing on a Sabbath day

This editorial covers the quarter of October, November and December. In this edition I wish to deal with a miraculous healing that took place on the bank of the pool at Bethsaida. The meaning of the word Bethsaida in Hebrew is: "house of grace" and in Aramaic: "shame or disgrace".

The pool is said to have been excavated in 1888. It is said there are two pools. One is very deep. Its depth is 13 meters – the lower pool. This is for purification bath. The other layer is on the upper level with reservoir of clean waters being pumped into the lower pool. The pools are non-existent now. There is already a reference in the book of Isaiah (22.9). Due to purifying effect of the pool, while its water is stirred, the first leaper into the pool will be cured of all his sickness. The rest has to disappointingly await the next chance. We read in the Gospel of John about an invalid waiting for 38 years for a leap into the water. We know the clear narration of conversation ensued between the invalid and Jesus. Jesus asks: "do you want to be well again?" "Sir" replied the sick man "I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred; and while I am still on the way, someone else gets down there before me". Jesus said "get up, pick up your stretcher and walk". The sick man is cured on the utterance of the Word. He got up. Picked up the stretcher and walked. The day of this miraculous healing happened to be a Sabbath.

I want to concentrate on the above words namely: **get up. Pick up your stretcher and walk.** According to a theological interpretation "get up" is not an order but an act of healing: "being healed". According to St Augustine, "Pick up your stretcher and walk" has special significance in the sense that when the sick man came to the pool, someone carried him in the stretcher to the pool and now as he is cured, he can carry others in a stretcher, i.e. he can bear the burden of others. He can now love his neighbour and help them in their need. Walk implies: love God. Thus "pick up your stretcher and walk" are the epitome of two commandments of: *love your neighbour and love God*. Carry one another's burden and in this way you fulfil the law of Christ. With the addition of numerical value of two (2) to the duration of (38) thirty eight years of sickness of the invalid amounts to the total of forty (40), which is a sacred number of completeness and reminds us of fasting being consecrated by this number. Moses fasted for forty days. Elijah fasted for forty days and Jesus also fasted for the same number of days. The number forty is commended to us in connection with fasting. The fasting is to abstain from wickedness and from unlawful pleasures of the world. The perfect fasting is the renunciation of ungodliness and worldly desires and this abstinence includes the fasting of Lenten season too. When we live temperately, justly and devotedly during this season of forty days, the question comes to the surface of our mind: what is the reward for such an abstinence? Augustine continues: The reward is looking forward to that blessed hope and the revelation of the great God and of our saviour Jesus Christ. In that hope we are going to receive our denarius, our wages, similar to the one paid to the labourer working in the vineyard, according to the gospel (Mt 20.1-16) Thus the denarius which has its name from number ten (10) added to the forty days of fasting of Lenten season, the total amounting to fifty days which is equivalent of forty days of Jesus after resurrection and up to ascension along with the waiting period of ten days for the descent of the Holy Spirit. In short we celebrate the forty days of Lent before Easter toil; and fifty days of joy after Easter. This is the reward in the material sense.



**Adv. Earnest Peter
Kandathil**

One important point to be noted is that the miraculous healing by the Lord took place on a Sabbath day. This perturbed the minds of Jews. Sabbath is to be observed as a day of rest. Not to do any work; let alone healing. Interestingly enough, it does not appear to be applicable to Jews who believe that they can carry out circumcision even on the day of Sabbath, as it pertains to their salvation. The day of rest is immaterial to them, in the case of circumcision, being carried out on the day of Sabbath for the Jews, but not for healing. It is in this context that Jesus intervenes.

Circumcision is an act of ceremony carried out by Jews by removal of foreskin of the genital organ of the male by knife made from rock and it is carried out on the eighth day from birth. Circumcision is permissible even if it falls of the day of Sabbath. It is believed that all human beings are born with the sin of origin. Circumcision signifies the stripping of the desires of the flesh from the hearts, and is not without reason, then, that command was given to perform it on this particular organ, since it is through this organ that mortal creatures are procreated. The interpretation, given by Berrouard in *Vitio propagationis*, is pertinent in this context. The vice with which we are born or the vices which we add by bad lives is removed by the flint knife from the rock and that rock is none other than Christ.

It is worth remembering in this context that the term “Salus” in Latin means “Health” as well as “salvation”. Christ is the source and force of health and also the only saviour. The crowd that was questioning him were unaware of the fact that Lord of Circumcision and the Lord of Sabbath is the Lord of Salvation too. St Augustin emphatically asks that if one is resting on the Sabbath day, why is he eating and drinking. Eating and drinking on the Sabbath day is just to preserve his health. So the works are in no way to be omitted on the day of rest. Likewise to restore one’s health one has to act, no matter the day is a rest day or not. Remember what Jesus says: “take notice of me as a man, take notice of Moses as a man; if you judge in accordance with the truth, you will condemn neither Moses nor Me and once you have come to know the truth, you will come to know Me, because I am the Truth”

While speaking about the miraculous healing that took place on the Sabbath day, St Augustine comments that when the Lord was indeed admonishing the Jews, He was warning us too. They were convicted by Him, we were instructed; He confuted them, He alerted us. Augustine continues: Jews were indeed judging because of the person, but that is why they don’t belong to the New Covenant, that is why they don’t possess Christ in the kingdom of Heaven; that is why they are not admitted to the company of the holy angels . They are looking for earthly things from the Lord: the Promised Land, victory over enemies, fecundity in parenting, many children, and abundance of crop etc. All these things constitute for them the Old Covenant. What is the Old Covenant? It is the inheritance belonging to the old man. As for us we are renewed. We have been made into the new man and that new man is Christ. Since He had no sins He was granted a new kind of birth. In Him new birth, in us a new man and belonging to New Covenant we are made the heirs of the new inheritance, and co heirs of the Lord himself.

While circumcision is for the Jews, baptism is for the Christians. In both the ceremonies, it is through Christ that health and salvation are secured. In the former case Christ is the rock and for the latter case when we are immersed in death and resurrection of Christ, we become the heirs of heaven and members of the Holy Church which is the mystical body of Christ and original sin abrogated.

I would like to conclude my editorial with the famous, and oft-quoted words: in the Old Testament the New Testament is concealed and in the New Testament the Old Testament is revealed. Our orientation in life ought to be Christocentric and not eccentric. We must reprogram our values on the basis of Christian living and catholicity.





The Character of the Wise Men

H.G. Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios

The Diocesan metropolitan of Delhi since November 2011. H.G.Demetrios had served in various capacities in the Church, Secretary of the Department of Ecumenical Relations of the Church from 1991-2010, and represented the Orthodox Church in various dialogues and ecumenical organisations, such as the dialogue between the Malankara Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches and Catholic Church Dialogue (Co-Secretary), the Global Christian Forum and the National Council of Churches. He is also a life-time member of the Biblical Society in India, of which he was the President in 2006. In addition to his responsibilities as the Diocesan metropolitan, Mar Demetrios continues as the Co-Secretary of the Dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church, represents the Church at the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative and the National United Christian Forum.



We have come once again, by the immense grace of God, to the last quarter of another year and we stand on the threshold of another new year. It is once again the glad season, a time of joy and happiness as we anticipate the arrival of Christmas and the celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the familiar scenes of crèches where St. Joseph, St. Mary, the shepherds, the Wise Men, the oxen and the sheep once again appear vividly in our minds, even though the tradition of sending cards with such pictures have yielded to more modern forms of communication. I would like to focus on the Wise Men from this collage, just to consider why they are described as “Wise”.

Most biblical scholars are of the viewpoint that these men (and there is no mention in St. Matthew’s Gospel that there were only three; it is an assumption based on the three gifts presented to Jesus) were from a priestly group from Persia. By their calling they would have studied astronomy and astrology, arts which revealed the future of nations and the birth of great men who would significantly impact history. And that is how they saw this star of such superb splendour, which undoubtedly indicated the birth of a great leader. But the wisdom of these men was not in this superficial discovery, but in seeking after the person who made such a bright star to appear in the East.

Our spiritual environment is one that places much importance to immediacy and outward demonstrations. We are so easily impressed by visible demonstrations of spiritual power and might. So we quickly leave our traditional expressions of encountering God for places where miracles of healing, of powerful outpourings, of earth-shaking music and other-worldly speech. All these demonstrations are viewed as a quick avenue to experience

God. But here the character of the Wise Men should give us pause. They persevered beyond the glitter of the star to find the Wonder Child who would transform the history of humankind. They were not mesmerised by the brilliance of the star (they had seen other such astronomical sights, though not this momentous), and they were not overcome by the knowledge they had attained by their study. For them all that was of importance was to see for themselves the very Son of God who had given them this heavenly sign. It is, therefore, in this light that we should interpret the statement of St. Matthew: “When they [the Wise Men] saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy” (2:10,11). No doubt St. Matthew has this understanding in describing these men as “Wise” and so guiding his readers to follow this characteristic in their lives.

And just as important is their determination to overcome all obstacles in realising their quest to see the child Jesus. We have to assume that these men were not in the prime of their youth. Their travel probably spanned about two years (this is the reason why King Herod has all the children under two years to be killed), meeting with all the difficulties such a long-distance travel entailed in those days, encountering the plots of a cunning and cruel king and the possibility of being executed for disobeying the royal orders to return and inform him.

How easily we leave aside our quest for God when the situation becomes difficult in our lives. We forget in a trice the blessings and happiness we had enjoyed up to that moment, even though God is working through these difficulties for our enduring happiness. But that is where we can learn from the example of these Wise Men. Let us recall for the moment that they were not of the Jewish faith.

Yet they had a faith that stood out as a challenge to others then and to us today. Can we be faithful in our calling to seek after Jesus, not to allow worldly obstacles to hinder us from this central point of our life? It is in emulating the example of these men who pursued their objective that we can make meaningful the Christmas season.

For most of us, the season of merriment, of giving and receiving gifts and the all-round joyful celebrations quickly allure us away from reaching Bethlehem and the place where Jesus is born, little realising that the one place where Jesus would like to be born is in our hearts. Perhaps that is what these Wise Men experienced when they saw the child Jesus. Now instead of the light of the star in the East, they saw the Light of the World, who would always illuminate their hearts and minds. As so many have noted, St. Matthew concludes his account of the visit of the Wise Men with the insightful statement that they returned to their homeland by another way, a pointer to the transformation that their encounter with the child Jesus have accomplished. Now they would always be enlightened, not by the dim and evanescent light of the stars, but by the eternal and divine Light that enlightens every person. How richly they had been rewarded by their determination to overcome all obstacles to see Jesus!



So let us open our hearts and minds to follow the example of these Wise Men. Let them not remain a historical anecdote but living instances who will teach us this Christmas to experience the same eternal and divine Light. That would be a transformation that would make the celebration of our Christmas to travel a new way in our life. That itself would mean that we too have become wise in our quest for the Eternal in our lives.

May the Only-begotten Son of God who became human in Bethlehem fill your lives with His eternal radiance this Christmas season and all the seasons of your lives.



Loving Father, we come to You today requesting Your Holy presence. Fill our mind, body and soul with the Spring of overflowing, living waters. Let it flow through our veins with the knowledge of Your Word so we can minister to the unsaved. Fill us with your gifts of knowledge and wisdom.

We believe that according to James 1:5 “If any of You lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him”. Father, we have important life-changing decisions to make in our lives. we pray in faith, confident that You Lord will give us wisdom to make the right decisions.

We humbly ask that You give us the patience to await Your answers. For we have prayed consistently and diligently, allowing faith to take over.

May we be still as You work out every situation. For You make all things work together for our good and Your time is the perfect time.

Abba Father, help us to surrender everything at the feet of Jesus. Let us be still and quiet, Oh Lord, trusting in you as we face these tough decisions. Strengthen our hearts and ease our minds as we try to figure things out on our own.

Allow us to surrender everything to You, withholding nothing. Every problem, every trial, every temptation and every situation, Oh Jesus, You are in control.

Lord, we place our faith and trust in You daily, never letting go. We declare that every decision that we need to make will be successfully resolved, in Jesus’ mighty name, Amen!



SIMON AND THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN



Rev. Fr Joseph Xavier
(Managing Editor)

There is a thought provoking passage in the Gospel of Mathew 16:13-20 in which Peter makes his great confession of faith, and Jesus responds with the revelation of how He will build His Church. This passage explains how Peter confesses Jesus as his Lord and Savior and how Jesus, in turn, approves it and gives the teaching and ruling authority in His Church to Peter, thus establishing a “Magisterium” in his Church to serve the spiritual and physical needs of the people of God. Thus, giving the Petrine promise of Mt. 16:16-20, defines Catholicism. Here, Jesus reveals His plan to build His Church on the strong bed-rock foundation of Peter, to whom He will then give the keys of teaching and governing authority

in the Church. Thus, Simon Bar-Jona receives a new mission symbolized by a change of name, Cephas (Peter), the rock (petros), on which Jesus will build His Church which the power of evil can not prevail. Peter will be given the keys of the kingdom and the power to bind and to loose (make laws; exercise authority) on earth which Heaven will approve.

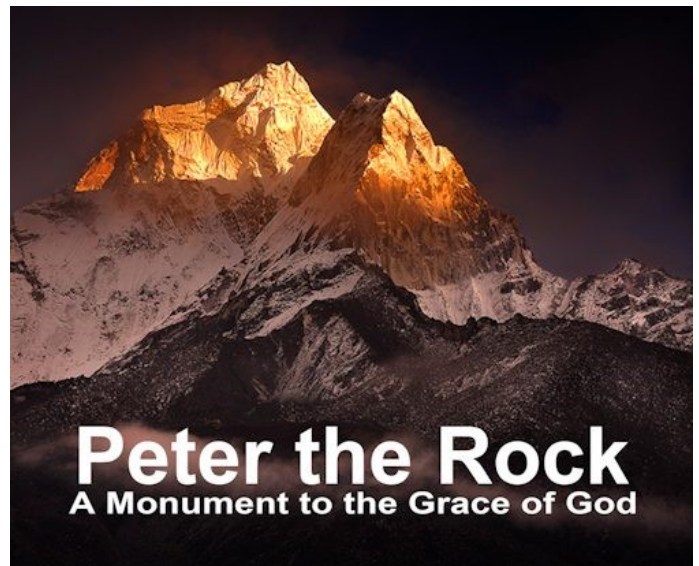
Here our attention falls into the two important questions Jesus raised before His beloved disciples and demanded an answer. These questions are about His identity. This incident took place at Caesarea Philippi, (presently called Banias), twenty five miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

This question of Jesus has two parts. The first question: "What is the public opinion?" Their answer was, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." John the Baptist was so great a figure that it might well be that he had come back from the dead. Elijah, the greatest of the prophets was believed to be the forerunner of the Messiah. ["Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (Mal.4:5). In 2Esdr.2:18 the promise of God is: "For thy help I will send my servants Isaiah and Jeremiah."] The phrase "one of the prophets" suggested that Jesus had a ministry like that of the former prophets. When the people identified Jesus with Elijah and with Jeremiah, they were, according to their lights, paying him a great compliment and setting him in a high place, for Jeremiah and Elijah were the expected forerunners of the Anointed One of God. When they arrived, the Kingdom would be very near indeed.

The second question: "Who do you say I am?" (v. 15). For the first time in their relationship Peter, speaking for the other disciples, declared publicly: "You are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God." Peter was the first apostle to recognize Jesus publicly as the Anointed One (also translated Messiah or Christ. Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah). Peter was saying that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one of God, Immanuel, the Salvation of God - God who became Man to save sinners! It is evident that Jesus was well pleased with Peter's answer. Jesus first pronounced a blessing upon Peter, the only disciple in the Gospels to receive a personal blessing. "Blessed are you, Simon son of John!" Next, Jesus confirmed Peter's insight as a special revelation from God. "No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father." However, Jesus was quick to explain to the disciples that He was not a political Messiah. Instead, He was a Messiah who must suffer, die and be raised to life again.

The promise: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." Ever since Pope Stephen I (254-257), used this text against Cyprian of Carthage to defend Roman primacy, these verses have been among the most disputed in the New Testament. Historically, they have been central to issues of authority in the Church, especially of the authority of the episcopacy and of the Bishop of

Rome. Jesus' promise to Peter is the Catholic basis for the position of the Pope and of the Church. The Church teaches that Peter was given the keys which admit a man to heaven or exclude him from it, and that to Peter was given the power to absolve or not to absolve a man from his sins. In other words, Jesus gave to Peter the authority to determine what courses of action would be permitted or forbidden in the Church. It is further argued by the Catholic Church that this power given to Peter has descended to all the Bishops of Rome throughout all ages, and that it exists today in Pope Francis, who, as the direct successor of Peter, is the head of the Church and the Bishop of Rome.



The Magisterium of the Church in the First Vatican Council defined the doctrine of the primacy of Peter and his successors in these terms: 6 "We teach and declare, therefore, according to the testimony of the Gospel that the primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church was immediately and directly promised to and conferred upon the blessed Apostle Peter by Christ the Lord. For to Simon, Christ had said, 'You shall be called Cephas' (John 1:42). Then, after Simon had acknowledged Christ with the confession, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matthew 16:16), it was to Simon alone that the solemn words were spoken by the Lord: 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matthew 16:17-19). And after His Resur-

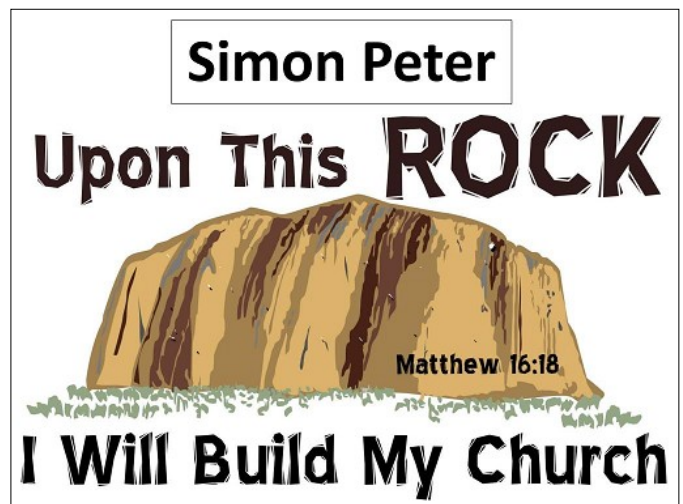
rection, Jesus conferred upon Simon Peter alone the jurisdiction of supreme shepherd and ruler over His whole fold with the words, 'Feed my lambs ... Feed my sheep'" (John 21:15-17). [...]

The keys of heaven and the binding power. The wording has its roots in Isaiah 22:22, (today's first reading): "I will place on Eliakim's shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open." Eliakim thus became the steward of the house, responsible for opening the house in the morning, closing it at night, and controlling access to the royal presence. In this role, Peter was the first to preach Christ to three thousand people at Pentecost (Acts 2), and he became the spokesman to the Council of Jerusalem. (Acts 15). "Bind and loose" also concerns doctrine and ethical conduct, declaring certain actions as either forbidden or permitted. Later Christian tradition extended this principle to include the power to forgive or retain sins (18:18; John 20:23). In Matt 18:18, Jesus extends this authority to the whole group of disciples, saying, "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Catholics believe that Peter's authority passed from Peter to the Popes who followed him.



There is a notable point about the Assurance given to Peter and his successors: The Catholic Church teaches that by giving Peter the "keys" along with the promise that all his decisions would be approved in heaven, Christ gave him the power of freedom from error when he was officially teach-

ing the universal Church. In other words, Peter received primacy in the Church and the gift of infallibility in his official teaching on matters of faith and morals. The first Vatican Council defined this Dogma and the second Vatican Council reaffirmed it. As the Church was to continue long after Peter had died, it was rightly understood from the beginning that those privileges given to him which were necessary for the successful mission of the Church, were given to his lawful successors – the Popes.



There is a most disputed text, "Upon this rock I will build my Church": Origen interpreted the text to mean that Peter is the type of every true, spiritual Christian on whom the Church is built. The "Eastern" Church interpreted the rock as the faith of Peter, so that the Church is built on the faith of believing Christians. The Roman or pontifical interpretation which dates from the fourth century is that rock is Peter, and the promises made to Peter apply also to Peter's successors in the Petrine ministry. Since Vatican I, this has been the normative interpretation for Roman Catholics. The Middle Ages gave the Christological interpretation, according to which Christ is the rock (see 1 Cor. 3:11, 10:4). Non-Catholics argue that there is no evidence that Peter's ministry would be successive. However, the whole context and meaning of the imagery from the beginning to the end show it to be a ministry that must be successive. First of all, the image of the rock is, by its very nature, a timeless and everlasting image. That's why the image of the rock was selected. That's how rocks are. They're there to stay. Then, in Matthew 16, Jesus himself says that the steward's ministry will have an eternal dimension. He holds the keys to the Kingdom of God and the gates of hell will never prevail against it. Finally, the image of the shepherd, as we have

seen, is an eternal one because God himself is the ultimate Good Shepherd. If the rock, the steward, and the shepherd are eternal ministries, then for it to last that long, the ministry must be successive. How could this eternal ministry have died out with Peter himself and still have been eternal?

In conclusion, let us take into consideration of the following points.



a) We need to accept Jesus as our Lord and personal savior: Jesus is not merely the founder of a new religion, or a revolutionary Jewish reformer, or one of the great teachers. For Christians, he is the Son of God and our personal Savior. This means that we have to see Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the Savior, and the Redeemer. He is our beloved friend, closer to us than our dear ones and a living experience, who walks with us, loves us, forges us, helps us and transforms our lives and outlook. We have to give all areas of our lives to him. He must have a say in our daily lives and we must radiate all around us His sacrificial agápe love, unconditional forgiveness, overflowing mercy and committed service. The joy, the love, the peace that we find in Jesus should be reflected in the way we live our lives.

b) We need to experience Jesus as our Lord and Savior and surrender our lives to Him. The knowledge of Jesus as Lord and personal Savior should become a living, personal experience for each Christian. This is made possible by listening to Him through the daily, meditative reading of the Bible, by talking to Him through daily, personal and communal prayers, by offering to Him our lives on the altar whenever we attend Holy Mass and by leading a sacramental life. The next step is the surrender of our lives to Jesus by rendering humble and loving service to others with the strong conviction that Jesus is present in every person. The step after that is to praise and thank God in all the events of our lives, both good and bad, realizing that God's loving hands are behind every event of our lives.

An Intercessory Prayer to St. Peter

O Holy Apostle, because you are the Rock upon which Almighty God has built His church; obtain for me I pray you, lively faith, firm hope and burning love; complete detachment from myself, contempt of the world, patience in adversity, humility in prosperity, recollection in prayer, purity of heart, a right intention in all my works, diligence in fulfilling the duties of my state of life, constancy in my resolutions, resignation to the will of God and perseverance in the grace of God even unto death; that so, by means of your intercession and your glorious merits, I may be worthy to appear before the chief and eternal Shepherd of souls, Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever.
Amen.

O Holy St Peter, I also seek your intercession on my behalf as I earnestly ask the Risen Jesus for this a special favour...

(Share your request) ...

but may the will of God be done.





Marriage as Friendship

Inspirations from St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Francis de Sales



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St. Thomas Aquinas is known as the angelic doctor of the Church who provided the catholic theology and spirituality a solid base. St. Francis de Sales is known as the gentle man saint who developed a spirituality of love and compassion. Both these giants believed and taught that we are created in the image and likeness God and we are all called to a life of holiness (regardless of our status) that will ultimately lead us back to Him (Beatitude). They also taught that charity is the foundation of all virtues. It has to be practised in every situations of our life. We a couple practise true charity in their life of marriage, their life becomes that of genuine friendship.

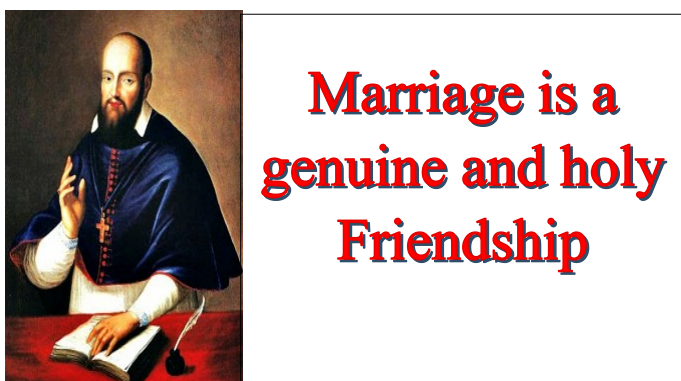
St. Thomas considered the sacrament of marriage as a great expression of friendship and he treats of the theme of marriage mainly in two areas of his works¹. In the Supplement to the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas treats of the goods of marriage, viz., offspring, fidelity and sacrament. Among them, the good of sacrament is considered to be most important because it is instituted by God². In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, he argues against polygamy and establishes that a marriage is a friendship which calls for equality of partners and polygamy brings in inequality. He holds that “if a wife has but one husband, but the husband has several wives,

the friendship will not be equal on both sides. So, the friendship will not be free, but servile in some way.”³



One of the pillars of the sacrament of marriage is indissolubility. According to Thomas, friendship between husband and wife enables indissolubility: “The greater that friendship is, the more solid and long-lasting will [the marriage] be. Now, there seems to be the greatest friendship between husband and wife, for they are united not only in the act of fleshly union, which produces a certain gentle association even among beasts, but also in the partnership of the whole range of domestic activity.”⁴ In his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, Thomas confirms the statement of Aristotle that the relationship between husband and wife comprises all three kinds of human friendships, based on utility, pleasure and virtue. Thomas comments:

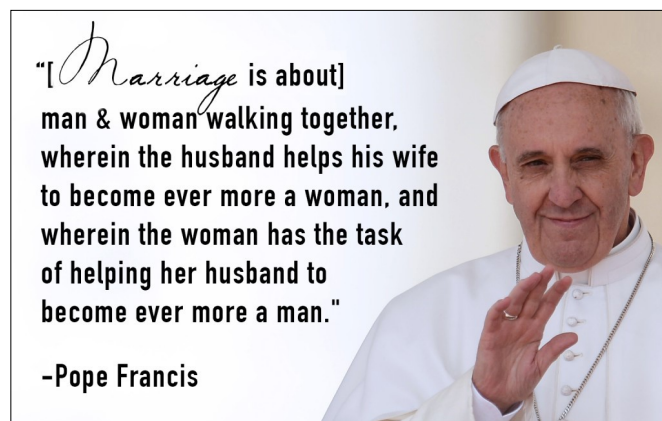
He [Aristotle] observes that conjugal friendship obviously has utility inasmuch as it furnishes a sufficiency for family life. Likewise it provides pleasure in the generative act, as is the case with other animals. But when the husband and wife are virtuous, their friendship can be based on virtue. In fact there is a virtue proper to both husband and wife that renders their friendship delightful to each other. Clearly then friendship of this kind can be based on virtue, utility and pleasure⁵.



Thomas’s teaching about the love as a “union of

affections”⁶ is a fitting description of the marriage when it is considered as an act of intimate friendship⁷. It is this intimate relationship or union of affections which develops gradually in the context of the day-to-day experiences in the family, and empowers the reciprocal commitment of the couple. In this context, we can understand the statement of Thomas that “there seems to be the greatest friendship between husband and wife.”⁸

We can also observe that when Thomas considers marriage as a form of friendship, he seems to have meant that marriage as an institution, a union of persons and a sacrament, possesses all the different characteristics that he had attributed to friendship, viz., union, mutual indwelling, ecstasy, zeal, perfection, joy, peace, kindness, benevolence, beneficence, etc.⁹ However, it seems that more than all of these characteristics of friendships in marriage what Thomas value most in marriage is the self-love (friendship with the self) of the partners because if man cannot love and appreciate himself, he will not be able to love and appreciate another person. Thomas reconfirms this fact in responding to an objection about whether a husband should love his wife as himself (Eph 5:33).¹⁰ He says that “the words of the Apostle do not mean that a man ought to love his wife equally with himself, but that a man’s love for himself is a reason for his love of his wife, since she is one with him.”¹¹ To this, Gallagher comments that “love of friendship denotes an extension, on the affective level, of one’s self to the other. It is the extension that gives rise to the benevolence and beneficence, the seeking of the other’s good for the other’s sake.”¹²



For St. Francis de Sales “marriage is a genuine and holy friendship.”¹³ He dedicated two chapters in his *Introduction* exclusively to explaining the greatness of the friendship of marriage. He holds that the ho-

liness of marriage is the same for the poor and for the rich, for people of any walk of life: “In all aspects: in fact, its origin, its purpose, its usefulness, its form, and its matter are holy. It is the nursery of Christianity.”¹⁴ For Francis, who was born and brought up in a very Catholic environment where his mother and father taught him basic catechism and led him to a holy way of life, marriage is seen as the ground where a Christian family is born. He was aware of the strong impact his Catholic family background had on him. The marriage fidelity that he witnessed in the life of his own parents and in the life of many of his friends (like Antonio Favre) enabled him to admire the beauty of family life. He was a friend of many married couples and families.



“Married love, therefore, requires of husband and wife the full awareness of their obligations in the matter of responsible parenthood, which today, rightly enough, is much insisted upon, but which at the same time should be rightly understood. Thus, we do well to consider responsible parenthood in the light of its varied legitimate and inter-related aspects.” — **Pope Paul VI**

Francis taught his friends “in the world” that Jesus and Mary are ever-present to them, as they were present at the wedding in Cana taking care of the needs of the occasion. The love of the marriage-friendship should be, “holy, sacred and divine”.¹⁵

The three effects or fruits of the marriage friendship are the indissoluble of union of hearts, inviolable faithfulness, procreation, and proper upbringing of children, which is the primary and principal end of marriage.¹⁶ Francis knew the challenges of family life during his time. Often it happened that the women (wives) were burdened with family affairs and they had to contribute much to married life and were busy with matters of society. In such situations he encouraged the couples to be devoted to one other in a love of friendship that consists of mutual faithfulness, affection and encouragement; and they should settle their disagreements and conflicts amicably.¹⁷

A Word about “Responsible Parenthood”

“Responsible Parenthood” is one of the key elements in the Social Doctrine of the Church. It reminds every Christian that taking care of the children and educating them in Christian faith, and showing the path of holiness by good example is a constituent element of the sacrament of marriage. If the parents create an atmosphere of prayer in the family and if they give priority to their faith-life, the children will follow their example. Children become what they have seen and learnt. If the parents have no time for their children and if they do not experience warmth and care at home, they will seek elsewhere. We know birds which migrate from colder regions to warmer areas during winter, we know that millions of animals migrate from Serengeti (in Tanzania) to Masai Mara (in Kenya) due different reasons. In the same way, if we fail to provide care, attention and love (basically an atmosphere of friendship) our children will migrate not only to other regions but also other religions.

References

1. Thomas addresses the different aspects of the sacrament of marriage in the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* (ST III, supplement , qq. 44ff) and in his *Summa contra Gentiles*.
2. cf. ST III, Suppl., q. 49, a.3
3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* (hereafter SCG) III, ch. 124, no.4.; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, trans. Anton C. Pegis et al., (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1975).
4. *Ibid.*, ch. 123, no. 6.
5. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics*, no. 1723; cf. EN VIII, 1162a25.
6. ST II-II q.27, a.2.
7. cf. Christopher J. Malloy, “Thomas on the Order of Love and Desire: A Development of Doctrine,” *The Thomist* 71, no.1, (January 2007): 65-87 at 67.
8. SCG III, ch.123.
9. cf. ST I-II q.28; cf. ST II-II q.28 prologue; cf. Anthony T. Flood, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Love* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018, 39.
10. cf. ST II-II q. 26, a. 11.
11. ST II-II q.26, a.11, ad .2.
12. David M. Gallagher, “Person and Ethics in Thomas Aquinas,” 67.
13. IDL, III, 17.
14. *Ibid.*,III, 38.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. cf. *Ibid.*, III, 38; III, 39.



St. Paul's Gospel (8)



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In the previous reflections we have been going through the life of Apostle Paul, as we can draw it out from his Letters and from the Acts of the Apostles. Now it is time that we get into the teachings of Paul. We do not intend to have an exhaustive treatment; we shall have some glimpses of Paul's main teachings.

To get to the content of Paul's doctrine we shall begin with the term that he himself uses to describe his message about Christ, his "gospel." **Eu-angelion** as "the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ" with its specific Christian meaning was almost certainly developed by Paul, although the term must have been in existence in the Christian tradition before Paul's use. Yet as Paul is chronologically the first writer of the NT, certainly he is

the first to have used it in writing. In the very first document of the NT itself, i.e., in 1 Thessalonians, the word appears 6 times. Paul makes use of the word more than any other NT writer, for it appears 60 times in the body of Pauline writings.

Mark's Gospel, the first-written among the four Gospels, begins with the very word evangelion: "The beginning of the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1,1). Jesus' own preaching in Mark is summarised as the proclamation of the evangelion and as a call to believe in it (Mark 1,15-16). Originally in its OT context the word meant the announcement of the good tidings by an emissary that the king had won the battle, hence that he was reigning triumphantly (see Isa 52,7).

As for Paul evangelion was his way of summing up the meaning of the Christ-event, the meaning that the person and the lordship of Jesus of Nazareth had, and still has for human history and existence. Hence Paul could speak of "my Gospel" (Rom 2,16), the Gospel that "I preach" (Gal 2,2; 1,8.11), "our Gospel" (1 Thess 1,5; 2 Cor 4,3). Paul recog-

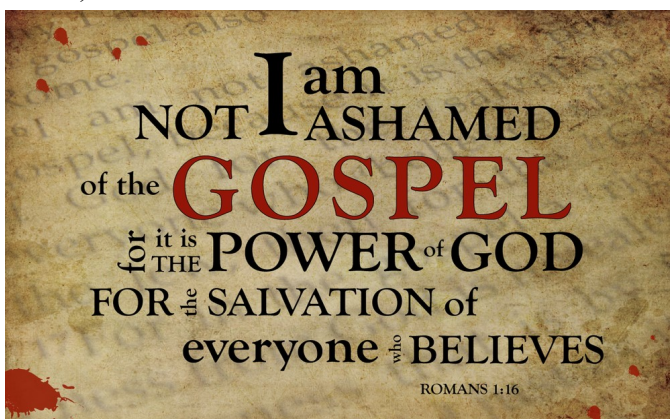
nized himself as the “servant” of the Gospel (Phil 2,22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel). He experienced a compulsion (1Cor 9,16 For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!) to proclaim it. This gospel has several characteristics:

(1) It is revelatory in nature.

God’s salvific activity for his people is revealed in a new way through Jesus Christ (Rom 1,17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith); thus the Gospel reveals the reality of the new age. Therefore, Paul calls the Gospel “a mystery” (1Cor 2,1-2 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified), i.e., hidden for long ages and now made known. Seeing the Gospel as a “mystery” Paul thinks that it is never fully made known by means of ordinary communication. As something revealed it can only be comprehended in faith.

(2) It has a dynamic nature.

(“Dynamis” means power) It is not an abstraction. It is not an ideology or a set of doctrines. It is the “power of God.” It is the salvific force unleashed in the world for the salvation of everyone (Rom 1,16).



(3) It is normative in Christian life.

It is to be accepted as a guide for life (Phil 1,27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel).

(4) It has a kerygmatic character.

(“Kerygma” means proclamation). Paul’s Gospel is related to the pre-Pauline kerygmatic tradition (1Cor 15,1-2 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain). It means that the Gospel requires to be “proclaimed.”

(5) It is promissory.

The Gospel continues and brings to realization the promises of old made by God (Romans 1,1-2 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures).

(6) It is for the salvation of all, for everyone who has faith (Romans 1,16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile).

The gospel goes above the distinctions of caste, colour, creed, race and sex; it is for everybody who has faith.

Exercise: Read and familiarize the texts noted above. **Reflection:** The fact that the Gospel is not an ideology or a set of doctrine has to be borne in mind. It is the “power of God.” When one experiences the overwhelming power of the Gospel, one cannot but proclaim it, as it happened in the life of Paul. How much has the power of the Gospel influenced us all?





Mary, who is she?

God is the giver of all good tidings, human and divine. The best and perfect gift of God in the history of humankind is the gift of himself in the person of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. John 3:16. And eternal life is this, to believe in the one He has sent.

What does it mean to believe in the one God has sent? This question should guide every step of our Christology - the knowledge of the mystery of our salvation in Christ.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 487 says, "What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ. What it teaches about Mary illumines what it believes about Christ." To know Mary is to know Christ. And we cannot talk about Christ without his incarnation of which Mary plays a very vital role. It means, therefore, that Mariology is fundamentally part of Christology.

We don't have to judge those who struggle to un-



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derstand the vital place of Mary in the mystery of our salvation. Little wonder some mistake the honour accorded Mary as worship. No. We do not worship Mary. We honour her. But, fortunately, we must acknowledge, that the honour given to Mary is very close to the worship we give to the Blessed Trinity. It is only a thin gap between the two. It is right and just, knowing that, besides God himself -

Father, Son and Spirit, not even the angels or creatures have the level of honour given to Mary. In all things, Mary knows her place, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." (Luke 1:38)

The predetermination or predestination of Mary is very important in our discussion of Mary's role in our salvation. That God has chosen Mary before the foundations of the world. (Ephesians 1:4) She already had a special place in the mind of God before she was formed in her mother's womb.

Mary was in the first place, a gift to the human race. But most importantly, she was the special package of the ultimate gift of God to the world - Christ himself. Because this gift had to come through a special delivery, a special package, prepared before everything came into being, God has prepared Mary in her Immaculate Conception, to be worthy of this special role. And by God's special grace and favour, Mary is that perfect package and channel through which salvation has come to human race.

God has found favour, once more, with the human race.



Every Feast of Our Lady has something to say about her role in the mystery of salvation. The Immaculate Conception points to her preservation from the stain of sin, in order to bring forth the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The Feast of the Mother of Sorrows reminds us of her role in the passion and death of Christ. She went through every physical and mental anguish of her son. Assumption celebrates her queenship and her returning, incorruptibly, back to God where she reigns with the Blessed Trinity, in the beatific vision of the saints and angels. God wouldn't allow his beloved and holy one know any decay. (Psalm 16:10; Act 2:27) We hope to be where she and her son have returned in glory, forever. She is simply, one with her son, in his incarnation and glorification.



Every woman in the Old Testament that had played a vital role in God's mission, (beginning with Eve, down to Esther, Ruth etc) reflects Mary's final yes, which has changed the course of history forever. She sealed it in her ultimate accent. Be it done to me according to your promises in the past, present and future!

Little wonder she is addressed as Blessed among women; the highly favoured lady; the highest honour of our human race. She is such a blessing to women and the entire human race. Through her,

Hail Mary

**Hail Mary, Full of Grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us sinners
now and at the hour
of our death.**

Amen.







The past year has been a victorious journey with
the Lord

Trusting and Obeying, surrendering and praying
‘Yes’ and ‘Amen’

We overcame by the Blood of the Lamb, and the
word of our testimony

We loved not our lives unto death, knowing well the
agony

The year gone by, was a test of faith.

Deep groans and moans were a common trait

When strength was failing

And faith was waning

We turned our gaze to The Cross

To wipe away our eye’s dross

He found us hiding beside the stairs

Tired and weary holding our tares

“Let me hear your voice”

“Let me see your face”

I heard his voice saying;

“Come away” without swaying.

We doubted and obeyed



Lara J.M.

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Bangalore, India

He pursued and okayed

He chose to be our Refiner’s fire

And gave us a Ladder to raise us from the mire

Cleansing our faults like Fuller’s soap

“Emunah” he taught us, giving us hope.

He put a song in our heart, and a lilt in our steps

Dragging our enemies down to the depths.

This was the time we could reflect and examine our personal and public walk of faith: Is there anything we need to change to ensure, our faith is defined by what we do, instead of what we know? We know that, from this pandemic year, there were many things that intellect could not solve - faith does not process only in the head, it happens in the whole body. The chiasitic structure of the Word of God is like a staircase and many of us are sitting beside, away or even under the staircase, partially or wholly. Intellectually, we know stairs go up, but, until we Emunah – change our

faith disposition - support/cling to the stairway, we won't experience that next level. Amen?!

The Hebrew word for faith is emunah (Strong's #530) used as an action oriented word meaning "support". This word focusses on the disposition of the one who "supports God". It is not a knowing that God will act, but rather I will do what I can to support God, like believing in His promises (2 Cor 1.20), obeying His commands, trusting His prophe- sy, and aligning with His kingdom principles. Emu- nah (אמונה) pronounced "eh-moo-nah") means "faith" or "belief". The other words that describe emunah are reliable, stable, dependable, steady, verified, true, steadfast, faithful and trustworthy. It's implied meaning is 'support' ,and, its explicit meaning is; 'escalate/climb' - less about knowing and more about doing – to take firm action in word and deed. Emunah is faith that results in faithfulness, implying action. The word amen shares the root with Emunah. Amen means "so be it" and shares the root also with eman, meaning "to con- firm" and haemeen, which means "to trust" or "confide in". It is more than just believing a state- ment about God. It reveals a life of full reliance up- on Him. When we say "amen" at the end of a pray- er, it is not just a closing statement or ritual word. It is an agreement to act upon what we have prayed!

In Rev 3.14b, we read: I am the one called Amen (meaning 'trustworthy') I am the faithful and true witness and the source (beginning) of God's crea- tion.

Let's allow the awareness of "amen" to serve as a reminder each time we pray. It's easy to ask God for something in prayer. But in doing so, we are invited into a covenant relationship with Him, into bringing it to fruition by receiving. Emunah is 'faith' that results from our spiritual disposition - Yeshua is the Ladder that the recipient can receive from God. This Ladder is called in Rev 19.11 ' Faithful and True'. This Ladder is called in Rev 19.13 'Word of God'. This is the same Ladder that God gave to the whole world in John 3.16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only be- gotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the Ladder that God gave Jacob (Gen28.12) and Na- thanael (John1.51) to experience His glory. Emu- nah faith is powerful because it is a reflection of the great I Am. Moses had many emunah encounters, where He saw the glory of God, even, while he was hiding in the cleft of the rock (the Ladder etched in the mountain)

This idea of 'support' for the word emunah can be seen in Exodus 17:12 where literally a human lad- der is in formation to express their disposition of faith while they wait upon the Lord.

But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady (emunah) until the going down of the sun.

It is the disposition, support/emunah/faith of Aaron and Hur that held Moses' arms, not the support/ emunah/faith of Moses alone; to experience the glory of God. Alone we cannot do anything, we need His support. When we say "I have faith in God", we should be thinking "I will do what I can with the support of God - obeying His Word, hon- oring His servants or discerning His will for my life."

Emunah is a verb - It is a 'being' verb – when we believe with conviction "I am who God says I am" (John1.12), He that is in me is greater than the one in the world(John4.4). It is a 'having' verb – I have faith in God and He will do what He says He will do (Isaiah 55.11). It is a 'doing' verb – when we tell the mountains of trouble to "move" (Mt.17.20), I do what the Word of God tells me to do (James 2.26), Faith without works is dead. We can take those steps into the unknown, only because, we are relying on and putting our trust in the Word of God.

"In the same way, faith without works is dead." (James 2:17)

Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2:4)

But when the Son of Man comes, will He find on this earth anyone with faith? (Luke 18.8)

Our relationship with God is one of interdepend- ence, not self-reliance. We cannot stabilize our- selves with our own resources. Our steadiness comes from holding onto something or someone regarded as stable and reliable. The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 weren't without flaws. And God doesn't expect total perfection of us in order to rec- ognize or accept the steps taken in faith. The Emunah kind of faith is what set apart the bib- lical saints described in Hebrews 11 - referred to as the "hall of heroes" – Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Mo- ses, Rahab and more. And more! The life of mother Mary is a beautiful benchmark of Emunah – her spiritual disposition allowed her to receive Yeshua, and fulfill God's plan. Though their stories and cir- cumstances varied, they each held a firm conviction in their hearts. They lived with the expectation that God would accomplish all that He had promised. This was reflected in the way they lived.

The Lord is telling us to "Come away" (Solomon's song 2.10); Emunah! - to take that step of faith, even when we cannot see the whole stairway!





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We go through a time of crisis due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Religious polarization and intolerance as well pose great threat to our peaceful existence. Even in the midst of these crises, we are urged not to lose courage, but engage in our great mission of proclamation of the Gospel in today's world. How shall we carry out this prodigious responsibility? Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel – 2013), which still remains relevant, sheds significant insights. This important document puts forward a number of possibilities, how we can carry out the important task of evangelization in today's context.

Mercy of God

Pope Francis impulses us to experience the inexhaustible mercy of God and urges us to impart the same especially to the most vulnerable. One of the most important themes of *Evangelii Gaudium* (hereafter, EG) is mercy. It issues a passionate call for us to renew our commitment to mercy. Not only are we called to practice mercy, but also we are urged to not to tire of seeking mercy from God: "God never tires of forgiving us" (EG § 47).

Communion with others

We are exhorted to live in communion with others.

It is a divine call. Today so many are drawn into what could be described as “interactive solitude.” The fact that we are created in the image of Trinity – the perfect divine communion – reminds all of us that we are meant to live in communion with others. No one is saved alone (EG § 88).

Informal preaching

We are invited to preach the Gospel informally in the middle of a conversation. The Pope encourages us to bring the Gospel to all whom we meet, whether neighbours or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation. Being a disciple is to constantly be ready to bring the love of Jesus to others and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work and on a journey (EG § 127).

Reverence before Scripture

We are urged to give importance to the reading of Holy Scripture. We need to call upon the Holy Spirit in prayer to give entire attention to the biblical text going to be read. We are advised to read it with sufficient pause and importance, attempting to understand the message of the particular passage. Then we are practicing “reverence for the truth.” This is the humility of hearing, which recognizes that the Word is always beyond us, that we are not both its masters nor its owners, but its guardians, heralds and servants (EG § 146).

Respect the unborn

Respecting and protecting the unborn children is one of our great responsibilities. The Pope states that among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children. The unborn children are the most defenseless and innocent among us. However, often, as a way of ridiculing the Church’s effort to defend their lives, today attempts are made to present Church’s position as ideological, obscurantist and conservative. “Yet this defense of unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right. Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems” (EG § 213).

Touch human misery

Today, more than ever, the world projects a lot of misery: migrants, refugees, jobless ones, unhealthy, etc. Hence, the Pope insists that Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. We are invited to enter into the reality of other people’s lives and know the power of tenderness. Whenever we do so, our lives become wonderfully complicated and we experience intensely what it is to be a people, to be part of a people (EG § 270).

Remain gentle

We encounter intolerance from different corners. But, in our dealings within the world, we are advised “do so with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pt 3:15) and “if possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all” (Rom 12:18); overcome “evil with good” (Rom 12:12) and to “work for the good of all” (Gal 6:10); “in humility count others better” than ourselves (Phil 2:3) (cf. EG §271).


Love your neighbour

While religious polarization and words and deeds that endanger the secular fabric our society, we are counselled to encounter another person in love and learn something new about God. Closing our eyes to our neighbour blinds us to God. Love is only light which can illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working (EG § 272).

Conclusion

“Evangelization is the task of the Church. The Church, as the agent of evangelization, is more than an organic and hierarchical institution; she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way toward God. She is certainly a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary” (EG §111). Our task of evangelization is rooted in the bold proclamation of Jesus Christ. Let’s pray that we can accept the vocation given to each of us to be missionary disciples and evangelizers who have been made into a holy people called to serve those in need of God’s grace.





COMMENT BOX



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The advanced world of technology of our time, gives platforms to everyone, to pour out feelings in public without any class differentiation. No one is ruled out from expressing their feelings; unless they are not provided with technological knowledge and facilities. People post their own written, visualized, artistic point of views in social media and get comments below. It has become a trend today counting the number of likes, views, followers, subscribers and so on. Popularity and fame are accounted based on the quantity of these numbers. Greater the number, greater the temporal happiness. If asked whether the smiling

faces that appear on the social platforms, are really smiling, the answer would often be negative; though not always. Spreading the happiness is difficult today and it costs time.

We always go for contextualizing the word of God. It has been in my thought from the very moment of preparing my B.Th. thesis for the fulfillment of my theology course that, 'how would evangelization be, if God incarnates today?' Surely, it cannot be the same as it was 20 centuries ago. The means and methods are entirely different and updated. Jesus wouldn't have opted for the traditional method alone. Jesus was making use of the best methods

available of His time; for His evangelization i.e. Kingdom of God.



Followers and Subscribers

Jesus is the only person in the world who has innumerable followers until this day without any promotion for self. All that He did was not for His name and fame, but a sign of the Kingdom of God and indication to His Heavenly Father. "While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon and his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men". Immediately they left their net and followed him (Mt 4. 18-20)". According to the evangelist St Matthew, they immediately followed Him without even knowing who He is and His capacities. It was not a simple following for a time being, because they left their livelihood (fishing net) and followed Him. Jesus was well aware that His mission would accomplish and will need to carry on, through the life and witness of His followers. Leaving the livelihood and following someone is the extreme level of selfless surrender.

Whom do we follow today? We may follow celebrities or people who proved themselves in the society. Can anyone of us dare to take the task of following someone who hadn't proved him/herself or exhibited any caliber in the society? Following Jesus with the original spirit of Apostles and martyrs of

the Church, demands more guts and sacrifices; that, one can't find comfort in the world, but in Him alone.

Comments Box

Comment boxes are seen below the media posts. The viewers have freedom to express their views and suggestions there. There may be both constructive and destructive types of comments, wherein, the first one aims at the progress of the person posted and is appreciative, whereas the other, targets to put down the person. One loses his/her identity, when thinking about, what others are thinking of us, and we want to become an icon as per the imagination of others. Many people want to live in a world to please others and find little happiness of self.

What do they speak about me? Even Jesus had the same doubt and quest to know, what others speak about Him. He asked his disciples, "Who do the people say I am? And they replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life. Jesus was not pleased with any of these compliments. He didn't want to be a person according to the whims and fantasies of the people, rather he wanted his real identity known to a few people at least. That's why he extends the question to the Apostles again, "But what about you?". "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." (Lk 9:18-21). The purpose is fulfilled.



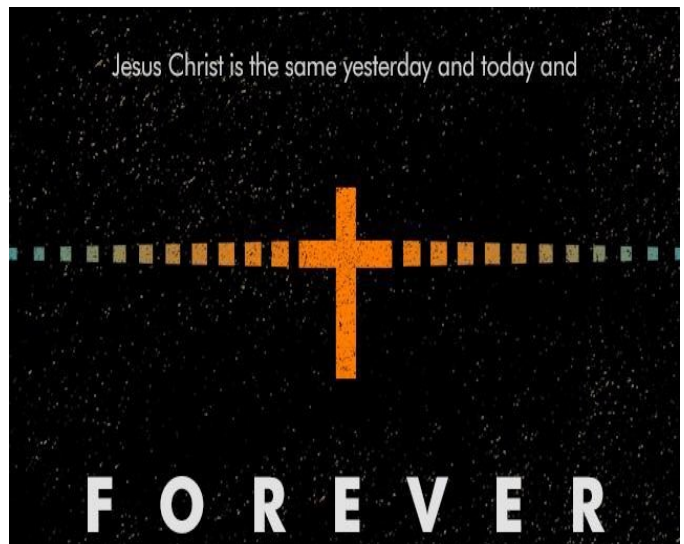
There were several allegations risen against Jesus in the comment boxes either directly or indirectly. Jesus was not perplexed with any of these. His integrity strengthened him to stand steady in both good and bad times. Many blamed him saying “By Beelzebul the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” (Lk 11:14), and much more people commented on his way of life then and questioned him “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” (Mt 9:10). Comment boxes turn to garbage boxes too, when dumped with unwanted thoughts within. What we need is: to have the integrity and determination of Jesus; to respond prudently and leave patiently.

Likes and Dislikes

Does everyone like chocolate? Does everyone love to travel? The answer may be ‘No’. Not everyone loves everyone and everything. Every person would have his/her likes and dislikes. It absolutely comes from the personal realm of that person. Some likes and dislikes form out of personal experience, prejudices, fear, social and cultural backgrounds and so on. Today we have an open platform to express both likes and dislikes. Any heart touching content will have lovers and haters.



Jesus also had a good number of people in His time and later, to like or dislike all His deeds. A few Jewish Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and others; priestly class people were behind Him to find faults, and expressed their dislike now and then, on the spot itself. But there were also plenty of simple people after Him who loved and liked His activities and wondered at them, giving thanks to God. Jesus asked the Twelve “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.” (Jn 6:66-68)



Updated

We are updated Christians. Our Master has a life long vision until the end of the world and no technological progress can overtake it. It is our choice to follow someone of the world or of both heaven and earth. No comment of the world can disappoint us when our focus and vision is far above that of this world. We may not have the time to harken: the praise of people who love us or, criticism of people who hate us. Because we would be the most updated children of God!





Divine Intervention in Our Blessed Journey

Psalms 18:6 “In my distress I called upon the lord, and cried onto my God; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears”

Psalms 18:10 “And he rode upon the cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind”

Psalms 18:16 “He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of the many waters”

It was during the high-tide and heavy rain in our area (Kannamaly) that most of the houses were flooded on 14th May 2021. The roads were covered with water. This was the first time such a thing happened after our wedding. We didn't know what to do. Water entered all our rooms. With our



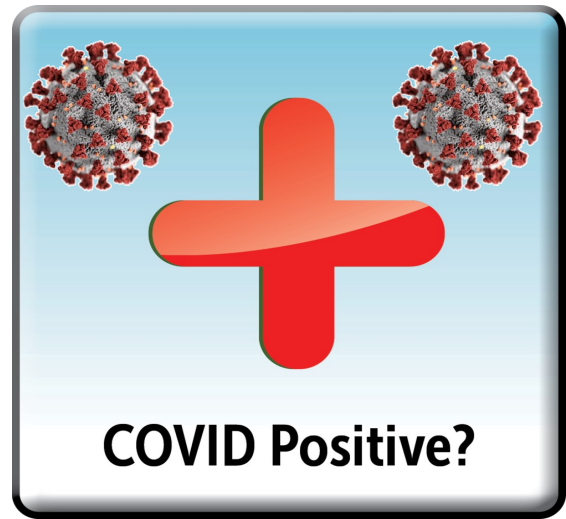
Guenlin Rodrigues

two little ones (2nd and 3rd child) our daughter who is 5 years old and our son who is 1.5 years old (We lost our first child when I was 1.5 months pregnant due to no heart beat) Most of the doors were closed, even our relatives were not ready to receive us due to the pandemic. We prayed, prayed and prayed and surrendered ourselves to God saying “Let your will be done, Oh Lord”.

After a while my husband's friend contacted and told him about the mansion at Kakkanad. As soon as we came to know about it, we just took a handful of things along with our kids and my father in law. The water-level on the roads were too high and it was high enough to switch off the car and enter into the car and stop it in the middle of the road. Our journey started to the temporary flat in Kakkanad with shouts and praises and hymns as we recited the rosary on the way. In between our car stopped in the middle of the road where there were full of water. Somehow, due to God's grace, it restarted and we moved ahead. Then, while we entered a short cut to avoid more water and flooding on the main road, a heavy tree had fallen on the road and blocked the road. We couldn't move forward and it looked like we reached the end of the journey in the middle of nowhere. We decided to change the route but didn't stop our praises and hymns. We were able to travel through the new route without any hindrances and finally we reached a safe place and we were able to settle down there with all the minimal things we required. We thanked the almighty God for the wonderful blessings. We stayed there for 4 days. The next Monday when we wanted to make a move to come back to our home, triple lockdown had started and we didn't know how things would turn out. So we decided to get back to our own home somehow after getting a special E-pass which enabled us to travel in the midst of triple lockdown. There also God interfered miraculously. We got the E-pass through one of my husband's friends. Even though it was triple lockdown, we got two workers to clean our house after the flood. At times of great need, God sent His angels and worked for us. And we finally got to our own house. We thanked God for all the blessings He had done. We still thank God for His wonderful unconditional love (through Psalms 18:6,10 and 16) which endures forever and ever.

Hallelujah, Praise the Lord

Amen.



COVID POSITIVE A blessed positive year

I was tested positive for COVID19 on 3rd June 2021. I tested as I had slight fever, body pain and headache too. When I came to know that I am Covid positive, I was not scared at all but others were. I was isolated in a separate room. My kids were really upset of not seeing and feeling me. I really thanked and praised God for all the blessings. I started to count our blessings and praised Him loudly and overjoyed. I wrote and pasted the word of God on the walls of my room (Wisdom 16:12, James 15:5, Exodus 15:2, Isaiah 53:5) and recited loudly whenever I could. Through some of my friends and ministries I also received other powerful word of God and they assured their prayers. Whenever I got a chance, I continuously prayed, sang hymns and meditated those Words of God. I felt energetic and felt happy. Only for one day, I was in bed, tired. All the other days I felt happy and energetic. It's all because of, our Almighty's grace and mercy. I also strongly believed in Rev 3:20 and meditated. After a week my husband also became COVID positive. But my kids and father-in-law were COVID negative. But we were able to get through all these with the Almighty and God has fulfilled all our needs in the midst of COVID. Praise the Lord. God has showered strength upon us and guided us throughout covid positive time. The word Covid Positive itself has the word POSITIVE. It really made me positive through my tribulations and God granted us victory.

Hallelujah, Praise the Lord Amen.



THE SEED

One day, I received a seed,
But didn't know how it works,
I took it to mama and dada,
They started giving it life.
They planted the seed in a very precious place,
The heart,
Watered it every day with good news,
Gave sunlight through Eucharist,
Provided manure through prayers.
The seed began to grow,
Fragrance of flowers filled the air,
Roots began penetrating deep into the soul,
Now it was my turn to give life,
I began pretty great,
But slowly the plant started drying up,
This taught me to be even more conscious.
Sometimes I get late to pluck the weeds,
But I never forget them,
Today I have the perseverance to give life.
Ultimately it will grow into a big tree,
Whose flowers bloom and fruits yield in heaven.



Ann Maria Thomas



These are a few photographs taken when Kadosh Marian Ministries provided scholarship to a large number of deserving students - majority of these students have lost their parents due to Covid 19 or other misfortunes.

This scholarship award ceremony was held in Emmanuel College, Vazhichal, Neyyattinkara Diocese, Kerala in the presence of many distinguished guests & dignitaries on 12th August 2021.



**Our hearty and prayerful felicitations to
His Excellency Rt. Rev. Dr. Vincent Samuel, Bishop of
Neyyattinkara on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee Cele-
brations of his Episcopal Ordination**



*On the occasion of 25th anniversary celebration of the ordination of Bishop
His Excellency Rt. Rev. Dr. Vincent Samuel, Kadosh Marian Ministries’
Chairman & Directors (Dr. Thomas George, Rani George & Christy Thomas) visited
and extended hearty felicitations.*

*Bishop His Excellency Rt. Rev. Dr. Vincent Samuel is an
ardent supporter of Kadosh Marian Ministries for many years.*



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