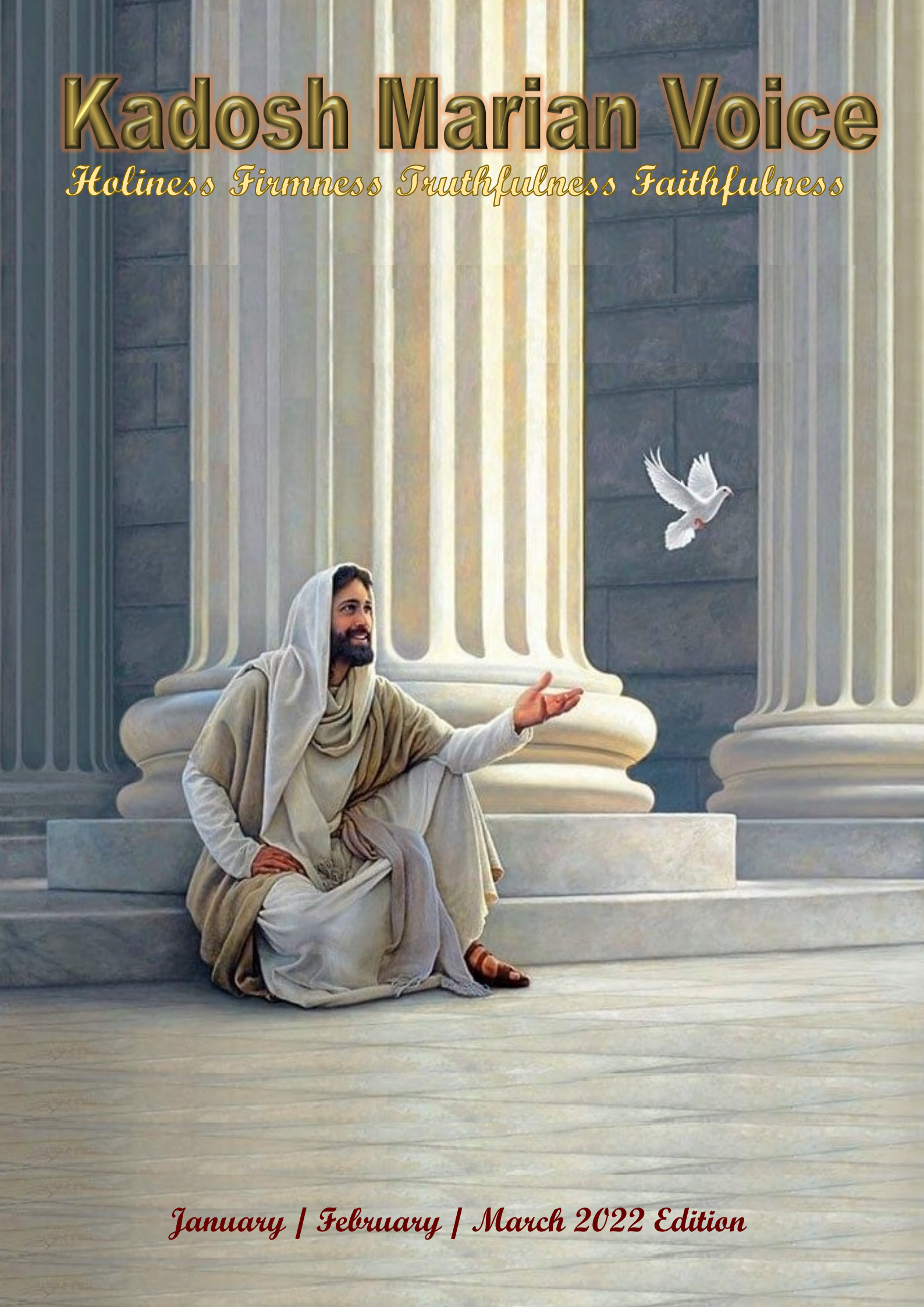


# Kadosh Marian Voice

*Holiness Firmness Truthfulness Faithfulness*



*January | February | March 2022 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, the Hebrew meaning of Marian 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, subsequently in India and New York. 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, and various international accredited universities.
- Conducting Charismatic Renewal services to revive the trooping spirit of the flagging faithful.
- Administering Sacraments by ordained Catholic Priests and Bishops.
- Promoting devotion to the 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 poor people daily.
- Participating to provide pension to 75 widows monthly.
- Participating to provide scholarship for 302 children annually.
- Visiting refugee camps and providing food, clothes and medicines.
- Contributing to build five homes for poor families in a year minimum.

We welcome you to join 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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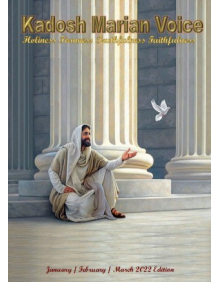
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A portrait of Jesus sitting outside the Jerusalem Church

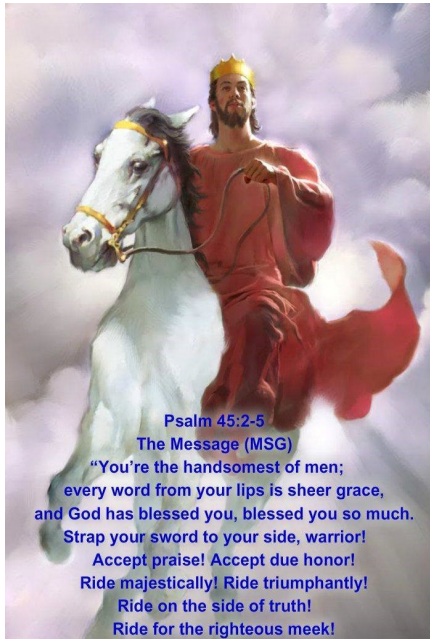
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At the very outset, for and on behalf of the Editorial Board of K M Voice I wish and pray that the peace and joy of Christmas may remain all throughout the New Year with the readers and well-wishers of our publication. Also a BIG THANK TO YOU ALL for your patronage, support and guidance.

In this edition I wish to view with a periscope in the passage of chapter 8 of St John's gospel concerning a woman being caught in the act of adultery and so being brought into the presence of Jesus for judgement. Before we proceed with it we must bear in mind that there were plenty of opponents against Jesus. They were bent upon doing away with him by hook or by crook. Accordingly they must have certainly hatched a plot for execution. They were on the lookout of ruse and stratagems to arrest and kill him. Pharisees even deputed some officials to arrest him. But disappointingly the official could not carry out the orders as they were wonderstruck by the effective and divine teaching of the Lord. The deputed officials, on the other hand, returned with unexecuted orders and with full of admiration for the Lord, due to his unique eloquence and wisdom. This only added fuel to the fire and exacerbated the situation to do away with him somehow or other.

Jesus went up the mount, the Mount of Olives, up the fruit-bearing mount, up the mount of ointment, up the mount of chrism. Where else, after all, was it a right and proper place for Christ to teach except the Mount of Olives? The name: "Christ" after all comes from "chrism"; unction is called "chrisma" in Greek and "anointing" in Latin. The reason why Jesus has anointed us is that he has made us wrestlers against devil. We know it from experience that athletes in the games, wrestlers in particular, are anointed with olive oil all over their bodies for agility, evasiveness and elusion from the catch of the opponent - and for us from the devil. It was when the teaching was in progress in the Mount of Olives, that the incident in question took place.



It is in this context that the opponents got a golden opportunity to confront Jesus with a woman being brought into his presence by the Scribes and Pharisees and make her stand in full view of the crowd to question him and to distress him; to disconcert him and to trap him on the basis of the Law of Moses concerning the punitive judgment for a woman caught in the act of adultery. Jesus obviously knew that it was only a calculated trap to test him and use it against him. But The Lord kept aloof from the bait. He took an entirely a different route. Jesus neither corroborates the Law nor contradicts it. Let us understand that wonderful gentleness was the most prominent characteristic of our Lord. His foes were well aware that Jesus was exceedingly gentle. As a matter of fact it was foretold by the psalmist: *"You are the most handsome of men; fair speech has graced your lips, for God has blessed you for ever. Gird your sword on you hip, mighty warrior; in your splendour and majesty ride on triumphant. In the cause of truth and justice may your right hand show your wondrous deeds, your arrows are sharp; people will cower at your feet; the king's enemies will lose heart; your thrown of God stands for ever. Your royal sceptre is a sceptre for justice. You love justice and hate wrong doing. Therefore God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow kings."*

Jesus brought truth as a teacher; gentleness as a liberator; justice as a guarantor. Due to these qualities Jesus was going to reign in the Holy Spirit. When he spoke, truth was recognised; when he did not react against his enemies, his gentleness was praised. When the enemies could not point finger at Jesus in respect of truth and gentleness, they wanted use Justice as a trap. Why? The Law says the adulterer were to be stoned. If Jesus says anything against it, he would be tarnished as Law breaker and could be caught as unjust. If he orders her to be stoned, he no longer possess gentleness. If he lets her off, that will be the end of justice and the foes could assert: "You are an enemy of law; you are giving an answer contrary to Moses; in deed contrary to the one who gave the Law to Moses. You deserve death. You should be stoned together with her."

The words and actions of the Lord remind us of a famous epigram: "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."





**“Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”** This is the response of Wisdom. How it thrust them back into themselves. Outwardly they were lying and inwardly they failed to examine themselves. They have been living in glass houses. Therefore they have no right to stone at her. They have been equally sinful like the adulteress woman. Jesus did not confront the law of justice but instead he showed another frontage of justice. St Augustine firmly asserts “O Jews, you have heard; you have heard Pharisees; you have heard the teachers of the Law. You have heard the guardian of the Law. But you have not recognised the Lawmaker. What else does he indicate to you when he writes with his fingers on the earth? God’s law, you see, was written by the finger of God; it was only because of their hard hearts, that the Laws were written on stone. Now the Lord was writing finally on the earth, because he was looking for it to bear fruit. So, you have heard then; let the law be carried out, let the adulteress be stoned; but surely in punishing her, the law is not to be carried out by those who themselves deserve its punishment”

“Let the one among you without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” is the thunderous voice of justice. Let the sinner be punished, but not by the sinner; let the law be carried out, but not by the transgressor of the law. They were thus hit by the justice as though by spear as thick as a beam. New David is defeating the new Philistine, Goliath, with the enemy’s own weapon—that of justice. Taking a look at themselves and finding themselves guilty, they all went away one by one. While the Lord struck them with their own weapon, he did not bother to watch them falling. He averted his gaze from them and started writing again on the earth. Words of Jeremiah are worth remembering in this context (17.13): **“Those who turn away from you will be uprooted from the land, since they have abandoned the fountain of living water”**. Only two were remaining in the scene: Misery and Mercy; the sinner and the sinless - the woman and Jesus. While that woman was left alone, as all the accusers disappeared one by one from the scene, Jesus raised his eyes to the woman. We heard the voice of justice. Let us now hear the voice of gentleness. The woman was naturally anticipating to be punished by the one in whom no sin could be found. Jesus asked: “Has no one condemned you?” She responded “My Lord, no one “. He answered: **“Neither will I condemn you”**. A doubt may arise in the mind of the reader implying that the Lord is in favour of sin. But this doubt is cleared by the subsequent words: **“Go. From now on, sin no more”**

One important matter we have to keep in mind is that the woman did not plead for pardon, though she might have had the attrition, and no contrition. Nor did Jesus insist for repentance. The response of Jesus might have made her undergo a sea-change in her entire pattern of life. Another closest passage which would match in terms of sin and forgiveness by the Lord is that of Luke 7.36 - 50. But here again the name of the woman is not mentioned. Here also the woman does not ask for pardon. She is silent. But her silence is louder than words. The woman stood at his feet to bathe his feet with her tears and wiped him with her hair, she then kissed him and anointed him with the ointment. Jesus says, **“Your sins are forgiven,”** which is ostensibly thanks to her good deeds. The host did nothing of this sort to the Lord.

With reference to this passage, it is worth remembering the words of Swami Vivekananda (Narendranath Dutta) who said that had he lived at the time of Jesus, he would have bathed his feet not with his tears but with his own blood. This revolutionary attitude of Swami Vivekananda should cause a ripple effect upon our thoughts and stimulate us to commit ourselves for positive action for missionarization with the manner and mettle of St Paul after his damascene experience with the Lord.



# INTIMATIONS OF THE AFTERLIFE

## **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.*



What precisely is the state of a person's post-mortem affairs is a matter of much speculation as neither the Holy Scriptures nor the teachings of the Orthodox Church sheds much light on it. The Church has always held that a person's conscious existence continues after death in the form of the soul, this has only been belatedly and grudgingly become a recognition in medical and scientific circles in more recent times. Several attempts at categorising what transpires to a person's consciousness after death has been undertaken in these circles, variously termed as "Out of Body Experiences (OBE) or paranormal events. Perhaps, the one point of convergence for both the Church and society at large is that death is not the end of all things, the recent post-mortem statements by the world-renowned physicist Stephen Hawking notwithstanding.

We can set out the broad parameters of what is conceived by the Orthodox Church. The bare details of the creation narrative presents the formation of humankind in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-28) with more elaboration in Gen 2:7ff. This image was interpreted as that of the Son, who alone makes visible the invisible God

(Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). Evident in this narrative is the concept that a human being is an integration of body and soul (some Church Fathers see a tripartite being of body, soul and mind). While God evaluates creation as “very good”, humankind is not viewed as being perfect. The Church Fathers hold that two aspects were not given to humankind, everlasting life (immortality is not an acceptable term) and incorruptibility (inability to sin); both these were reserved until humankind evolved to a perfect stage in fellowship with God. This upward mobility towards attaining this goal was sabotaged by humankind’s disobedience and the resultant experience of death. Death, not a part of the divine original design, meant a separation between the body and soul, a concomitant of a gradual alienation from the life-giving fellowship with God.



Into this tragic situation enters the redemptive act of the incarnation, whereby the Son now makes it possible for humankind to once again regain the process of participation in the divine nature (II Pet 1:4). From the perspective of the Orthodox Church, the summit of the incarnation is the Resurrection of Christ, which forever tramples down death and potentially enables man and woman to attain the likeness of the glorified Christ (I Cor 15:49; Rom 8:17; 29030; I Jn 3:2 ). Implied in this restorative process is the promise that God would endow humankind with everlasting life and incorruptibility. While this process has been incipiently inaugurated by Christ’s incarnation, its fullness awaits His second coming (parousia) when all creation will be transformed into a heaven and a new earth (Is 65:18; Rev 21:1). An intrinsic event in this final triumph of Christ over evil is the judgement of all human beings and the

rewarding of the righteous when the resurrection becomes the experience of the righteous.

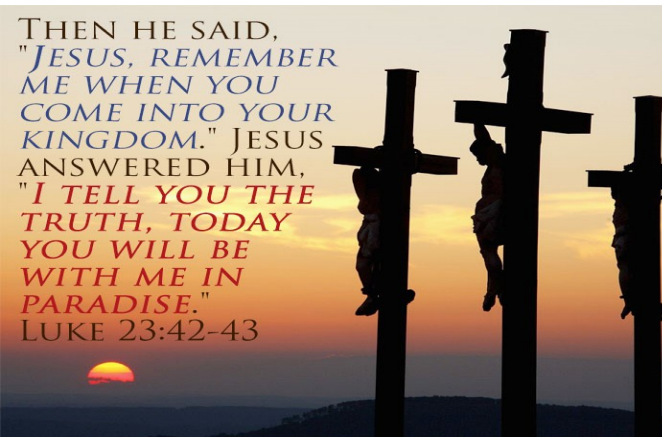
Of course, this begs the question, what exactly is the resurrection, a unique feature of the faith-component of Judaism and Christianity? As St. Paul describes it, the physical body of the person decomposes upon death and is separated from the soul. At the resurrection, God will raise the body and reunite it with the soul resulting in a glorified state that reflects the glorified body of Christ. While the body is palpable (recall the fact that Jesus asks the disciples to do precisely this to establish the verity of his risen state. Cf. St. Lk 24:39), it will, like Christ’s resurrected body, transcend time and space categories.

The intriguing issue is, what happens in the interstice? Where does the soul go after its separation from the body? What exactly does it experience in this situation? Is it a spatial experience that it is subject to? These are the dominant questions that continue to trouble us after we understand the onset of death and its termination in the resurrection.

A point that has to be set out at the outset of our exploration is that there is no concept in the Orthodox Church of a purgatory, a place where the soul in an intermediate moral condition is purged of its dross and enabled to enter heaven. A cardinal difference in eschatology of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches is that for the Orthodox, salvation is more relational and less juridical, the latter a characteristic of Western Christianity in general. Therefore, there is no scope in the eschatological framework of the Orthodox Church for such a place between heaven and hell.

So, **what happens to the soul then?** We need to understand that the concept of the afterlife was a developing one in Israel. In its early stages, the soul was seen as going to a dark place called Sheol in Hebrew, where it was in a state of rest. This is why some of the psalms, Ps 16 for instance, composed at a rather early stage in the religious development of the Israelite religion, depicts the soul as being virtually insentient , But there are indicators that it was not absolutely so. God enjoins Moses to prepare ephod as a part of the High Priest Aaron’s vestments, on which are embedded two onyx stones as a memorial for the sons of Israel (Ex 28: 12). A more specific case of the recalling of the prophet Samu-

el's spirit by the medium of Endor for King Saul in I Sam 28:15. We learn here that calling up Samuel's spirit is seen as a disturbance of the rest it enjoyed; no other details are provided.



Over the passage of time, Israelite religion developed to a more sophisticated understanding of the afterlife, seeing in the situation after death glimmerings of an existence that bespoke of some activity of the soul (some of the psalms composed later provide proof here). The prophet Ezekiel provides an instance of further development when it portrays a generalised raising up of bones in Chap. 37:1-14. An important stage is achieved with the Book of Daniel, which can be seen as the first documentary evidence of the concept of the resurrection (Dan 12:2). A further impetus in this development probably occurred during the Exile, with the concept of physical resurrection becoming an important part of Jewish belief (I Maccabees). At any rate, by the time of Jesus' ministry, the Pharisees have made it an article of their creed and the Sadducees vehemently denying it. This is why this much contested issue was brought to Jesus for His teaching (St. Mt 22:23-32). Evidently for Jesus, the resurrection was an accepted fact and the souls of the Patriarchs continuing to exist in a conscious state before God.

**Does Christ say anything specifically about the soul after death?** We can only extrapolate from the life of Christ to provide some directions to this quest. In St. Luke's gospel, to the request of the dying thief to be remembered, Jesus replies, "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise (Lk 23: 43). One has to interpret this statement to mean that Jesus, in His spirit, was transported to Paradise after His death, a place now promised to the repentant convict. And Para-

dise must mean, at the bare minimum, a place of refuge from physical, if not spiritual, pain, besides its apparent sense of a garden. It is in this spirit that He travels to Sheol (Hades) and preaches to the spirits imprisoned there (I Pet 3:19; cf. 4: 6).

It is in the Book of Revelation that we read of more details of what the souls of the departed perform during this period. Even if the evidence is viewed from the perspective of the final consummation, nevertheless it provides a window to understand the role of the souls prior to the final appearance of Christ. In the vision of St. John, the souls of the departed are portrayed as lying under the altar before God and their intercessions are offered as incense before Him and joining in the heavenly anthem (Rev 5:8; 8:3). One could surmise from this that the departed souls performs a ministry of intercession for others as it awaits the parousia, even as they join the heavenly chorus praising God.


Whatever else were to be supplemented to these basic ideas would have to be carefully evaluated and would not be considered as constituting the teaching of the Orthodox Church. Some of the studies done in the cases of OBE and paranormal activity would suggest that the soul could enjoy a period of bliss after death, especially if the person were to have conducted himself/herself morally. Such studies indicate that in the experience of the soul, the good person experiences a brilliant effulgence which brought ineffable joy to the soul. Conversely, the immoral person also experienced this radiant light, but was unable to approach it and suffered indescribable agony. Such descriptions would offer interesting points of comparison with Jesus parable of Lazarus and the rich man (St. Lk 16: 19-31). One could speculate that the soul was to enjoy a paradisiacal experience after its separation from the body and before the second return of Christ, provided it were to be so granted by God, exactly the meaning of what Jesus had declared to the repentant thief.

**What are we to make of all this?** Perhaps, the best response would be to quote St. Paul 1 Cor 13:12:

Any further details would be less than judicious and would remain in the domain of speculation.







# GOD CALLED ME NOT TO BE SUCCESSFUL, BUT TO BE FAITHFUL. (Mk 7: 6-13)



## Rev. Fr. Raphael Saji George

Rome, Italy

Father is an ordained priest in the diocese of Assisi and working as a parish priest in the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul and St. Christopher. At present he is doing his licentiate in the Spiritual Theology in the Gregorian University, at Rome. This article was written as a part of my study and was originally written in Italian.

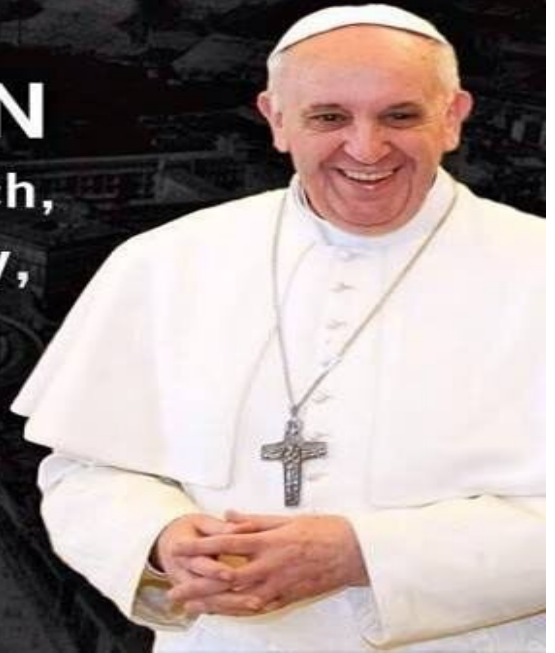
**W**henver God calls someone, He calls him to be sent and to preach. and sets you on a journey. He did it with Abraham saying (get up and go); he had to leave the land of Ur to the distant land of Canaan; the same thing happened with the prophet Jonah. God tells him to get up and go to Nineveh; and then with the Jewish people in Egypt God calls them and leads them out into the desert to the Promised Land.

God comes to draw you out of the weary life, from the seated life; he sets new thoughts in motion, he makes you to discover new horizons that you did not know. God lets you out! To let you out to walk is an act of freedom; is an act of hope and knowledge.

In the Gospel of Mark (7: 6-13) we see that Jesus calls the Twelve to be with him and to be set out. I am very sure that whenever God calls you, he sets you on a journey. Because Jesus loves new horizons and openings. Two by two: because the two is not simply the sum of one plus one, it is the beginning of the community and of the passage from the mentality of *us*. He ordered them to take nothing but a stick. Only a stick for support in tiredness and a friend to lean on and to put the heart at rest. Two by two is advisable so that when one is tired, exhausted and desperate, the other can lend a hand to hold you. Then he says Neither bread, nor bag, nor money, nor two tunics. Because the disciples of Jesus must always and daily be dependent on heaven.

**“EVANGELIZATION  
is the mission of the Church,  
not just of a few, but my,  
your, our mission.”**

— Pope Francis



They must never lower their eyes folded in on themselves but always turned towards the sky. They must be the poor of Yahweh, always looking to the Lord and asking like the children of God.

The mission of the disciples is simple: they are called to carry on life, a weak life: in fact, they had anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. They did deal with life, like the prophet Amos, cast out demons, touched the sick and their hands may say: "God is here, he is close to you, with love". They saw with Jesus how the wounds are touched, how he never runs away from pain, they learned the art of caress and proximity. Their hands on the sick may preach that God is already here. He is close to me and you with love. In this regard, St. Francis admonished his friars: «one can also preach with words, when nothing else remains».

The prophet is always sent by the Lord but very often his message is not accepted; because he is forced to be the uncomfortable voice of God. The prophets are selected not for their intellectual capacity but their willingness to surrender at the will of God. As in the case of Amos. He is not chosen for his knowledge and his eloquence. Amos is a herdsman, a sycamore farmer, yet, he is chosen as His gospel messenger.

Therefore, «If somewhere they do not welcome you and listen to you, go away and shake the dust under your feet as a testimony to them» (Mk: 6, 11). Thus, Jesus prepares them to face the failure and not to give up the courage. The disciples shall

not have resentment to the refusal, but just a little act of shaking off the dust from the sandals, that is to say forget them! And also, because far way in a little village, there is another house, another thirsty heart that longs God's salvation. They are people who do not trust in the bank account or in the brick walls, but who want to invest in the kingdom of heaven.

Now all the religious and every baptized are called like the prophets, to believe in the word of God, Our mission shall be only to sow the seeds and the harvest will come later. Like Isaiah who will not see the virgin Mother giving birth, and Hosea who will not see Israel led back into the desert of first love, the true prophets love God's words more than their successes and prestige. All the twelve apostles had that same faith as the prophets. For they also believed in the Kingdom of Heaven long before they see it established.

As one can ask then what is the novelty of the vocation in gospel of Mk, 7: 6-13. The answer would be; don't grieve too much for a defeat, let's not get down on a refusal; for there is another house a little further on, another heart to sow. all that matters is Christ; the rest is nothing. Your trust not shall be on yourself, but on God. Our Lord Jesus calls the Twelve in a very simple way and sends them two by two to preach the Gospel. Today we too are invited in our simplicity to firmly proclaim our faith in the kingdom of God to the other colleagues as we meet on the road of our life.





# WHAT MUST I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

MARK 10:17



**I** was born in East London and grew up in the parish of St Antony's, Forest Gate. I attended St Antony's Primary School and St Bonaventure's Secondary School, until I left school and found work in the construction industry, as first a plasterer, then a general builder, and, finally, as a Building Inspector/Surveyor. I felt that I had a calling from God but it took an entire lifetime before I responded to that calling at the age of 54 years. I always thought I was unworthy to be a priest, but as it says in the Gospel of Matthew: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

I was a late vocation, studying at the Beda College in Rome for 4 years for my degree in Theology. I was ordained a deacon in Rome in 2020, during the pandemic, and my brother deacons and I, came to be known as the Covid Deacons - a term used by Cardinal James Harvey who ordained us. I was ordained a priest at my parish church of St Antony's on 23rd July 2021, the place where I was baptised, made my First Holy Communion, and I was confirmed. It was only fitting. The first baptism I performed, as a deacon, was in the very font I was baptised in 58 years before, which brought home to me the sacred ministry that had been entrusted to me. I celebrated my first Mass, as a priest, the day after my ordination in my parish church. A very special privilege, indeed. Since then, I have been appointed assistant priest to St Margaret's, Canning Town, under the guidance of the parish priest, Fr John Armitage, where there is so much work to do in the vineyard. The harvest is ripe but the labourers are few. Please pray for vocations and for all the priests and religious throughout the world.

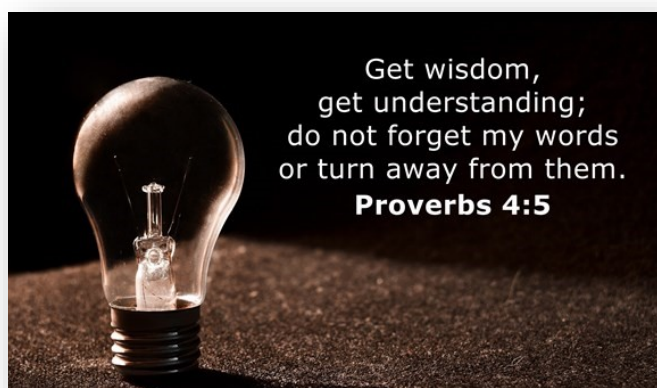
Yours in Mary, the Mother of God.

**Rev Fr Tony Grant**  
United Kingdom

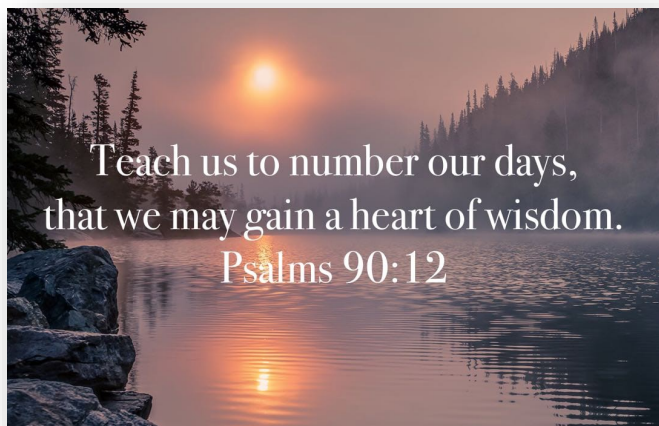




In Mark 10:17-30, Jesus informs us that any attachments to worldly things like money, possessions, things, etc., can be a hindrance for us seeking the kingdom of heaven. The Rich Young Man asks the most important question we all face: **“Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** It is the perennial question that has haunted humanity since the beginning of time. Prehistoric man looked towards an afterlife in the renewal of nature in Spring and in the perpetual motions of the sun and the moon and the stars in the heavens. The ancient Egyptians would mummify their dead bodies to preserve them for rebirth, surrounded by their rotting, worldly goods. While the Greeks and Romans believed that ordinary people went to Hades – the underworld – a place that was dark and miserable – a bit like Morecombe on a wet Sunday afternoon!



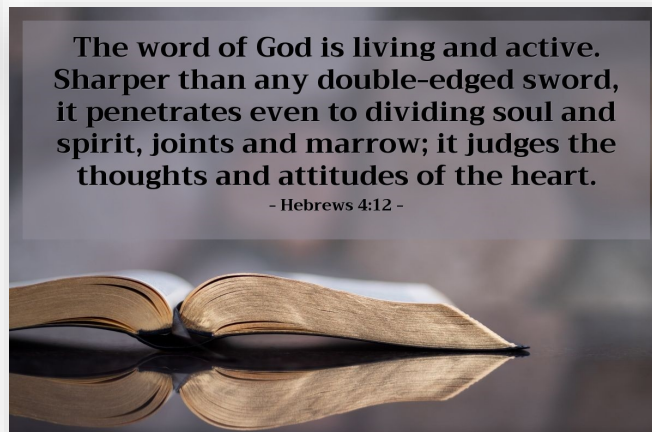
We get an inkling in the readings as to how we can inherit eternal life – in Wisdom or Lady Wisdom. Not the kind of wisdom attained through study or knowledge, but the kind of Wisdom that can lead us to God by being a lamp in the darkness. In the First Reading, the author praises Wisdom above everything and I mean everything. “It says: “I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones; compared with her, I held riches as nothing.” This is in stark contrast to the Rich Young Man in the gospel, who simply cannot give up his great wealth.



Wisdom goes on to say: “I loved her more than health or beauty, preferred her to the light, since her radiance never sleeps.” Powerful words indeed. Psalm 90:12 **“Make us know the shortness**

**of our life that we may gain wisdom of heart.”** So, why should we pray for Lady Wisdom? Well, the answer lies in the Hebrews 4:12. **“The Word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like a double-edged sword but more finely...it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts.”** So, here is where Wisdom is so essential for us to inherit eternal life – the Wisdom to discern the Word of God and then act on it. This Word of God springs forth from the mouth of God and is made manifest in his Son Jesus Christ, who is where we find eternal life, as the Way, the Truth, and the life.

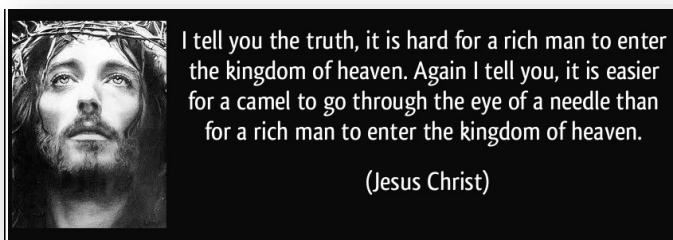
The Rich Young Man in the Gospel ticks all the boxes for a faithful Jew to be righteous in the eyes of the Torah; he does not kill, he does not commit adultery, he does not steal, etc. And it is clear Jesus loves him, dearly. So why the harsh words for him? Well, Jesus, as the image of the Spirit of Truth, demands more from not only the Rich Young Man, not only from his disciples, but from all of us. Jesus says to him: “There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” Jesus’ relationship with the young man deepens because he not only offers him eternal life but discipleship – a great honour indeed.



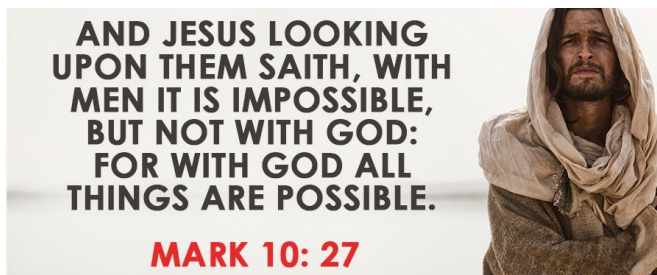
The Gospel reading does not say that the rich man is young, but it is implied because of the reaction of the young man, who had many years left to enjoy the benefits of his great wealth. It says: “But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.” What Jesus was offering was far more priceless than precious stones and all the gold and silver in the world, but he simply could not renounce his great wealth. He would not starve to death by following Jesus, but he would have had to lead a poor life of discipleship. Undoubtedly, his life would have been hard as a follower of Jesus and “not without persecutions.” But Jesus did answer his question: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

When Jesus turns to his disciples and tells them the bad news that, **“It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,”** the disciples’ faces

also dropped like lead balloons , because they too were still thinking in a very worldly way, no doubt planning and jockeying for their own positions on the board of the new Kingdom of David, PLC. You must understand that before the arrival of Christ, wealth was regarded as a blessing from God, not a curse that prevents a righteous Jew from inheriting eternal life. So, the apostles ask the trillion-dollar question: “Who can be saved?” The apostles were deeply worried because they reasoned that if this richly blessed and righteous young man is disinherited from the Kingdom of God, then who has the competence to be saved? Again, Jesus’ answer is not just for the young man, not just for his apostles, and not just for his disciples, but it is for all humanity. Gazing at them, he says: **“For men it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God.”** This is the lifeline for all humanity, a lifeline that leads to eternal life. We cannot inherit eternal life on our own merits but must rely utterly on the love, the mercy, and compassion of God.




Ultimately, what Jesus is trying to tell us is that though we live in this world, we need to detach ourselves from worldly things, by stop obsessing over them. The question we all must ask ourselves is what do we have to dispose of in our own lives to inherit eternal life? What excess baggage do we need to jettison from our lives? Excess greed? Excess pride? Excess anger? Excess jealousy? Take your pick. We need to embrace the love and fellowship of Christ, which means discerning what each of us need to sacrifice to embrace that love and fellowship. This is true wisdom.



Prehistoric humans were just as attached to this earth as modern humanity is today, but understandably obsessing over survival, no doubt. The only difference between them and modern humans is that they thought more about the afterlife than their modern counterparts – probably because life


was so short. What does it say in Book of Wisdom? “Make us know the shortness of our life that we may gain wisdom of heart.”



## PRAYER FOR WISDOM "LEADING PRAYER"

My heavenly Father,  
You see all things and know all that there is. Your understanding is beyond measure and Your knowledge is perfect. Teach me, Lord, that I may walk in Your wisdom. Guide my steps so that I do not end up in the wrong path, and direct my thoughts so that I do not make the wrong choices.

Amen.





# The Good News of Christ's Birth According to Saint Luke



## **Rev. Fr Isidore Nnam Di Obi**

*Fr. Isidore studied in Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium, where he got his Masters and Licentiate Degrees in Canon Law, as well as Biblical Exegesis. He is currently serving at Holy family Swindon and St Joseph's Wroughton parishes. In addition to his parish ministry, he has been a Judge in the Clifton Marriage Tribunal since 2010.*

In my book, “Moments of Life,” I told a story of a child in a ‘God-discussion,’ who was asked if people knew God. Her response was, “Everyone knows about God. It’s just that they have forgotten.” Perhaps, this little child has got a point. Maybe we have forgotten about God. Maybe we don’t know him anymore. Could it be we have lost contact with him and no longer know God’s ways? Or maybe we need to go back to our roots - the Sacred Scriptures, and reconnect with who God really is for us.

The Gospel of Luke is a an interesting one. St Luke is both particular and universal when it comes to the Good News and the person of Jesus Christ. As for him, the message of Christ is meant for those beyond the geographical location of the First Cen-



tury BC Palestinian world. But in particular, it focuses on the ‘Historical Jesus.’ As if in a chronological sequence, St Luke carefully presents an account of the Life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth: birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension.

In this Year of St Luke, it is good to consider what he thinks about the birth of Christ.



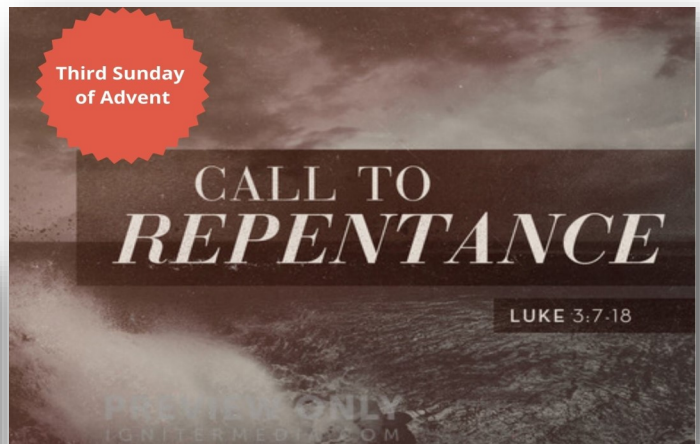
St Luke is firstly introduced to us in the First Sunday of Advent from behind his Gospel account. (21:25-36) We read from Luke. He encourages us to stay awake, praying at all times, to withstand whatever comes our way before the Lord comes.

In the Second Sunday of Advent, St Luke get’s the wheel rolling. (3:1-6) He is very imaginative in his account of the Gospel. He creatively takes us from the high and mighty, the powerful men of history and the political icons of the First Century Palestine, down to the simple image of the desert where an apparent insignificant man called John the Baptist cries out. He had no identity other than being son of an ordinary man, Zechariah.

But it isn't about John the Baptist. It is about the Word made Flesh who will soon be dwelling among the humans. He is the wisdom of God which is not necessarily found among the powerful and sophisticated but in the lowliness and simplicity of heart. John asks us to prepare the way for the Lord. Not in the desert of his own time but in the desert and desolation of our own circumstances today.

If we must celebrate this Christmas, meaningfully, we have to prepare for it in the simplicity of our spiritual lives. Empires will come and go down in

history. The Word made flesh comes to dwell among us, forever.



In the third Sunday of Advent ‘Gaudete,’ through the mouth of John the Baptist, St Luke reveals how we have all gone astray, doing the wrong things that have brought sadness and pain to us and to those around us. What must we do differently? It is simple. Just be Just! (3:7-18)



In the last Sunday of Advent, St Luke (1:39-45) puts in vivid sense, the first human attempt to share and spread the Good News. Mary was the first to receive the Good News of the birth of Christ, and the first to share it, as she visits Elizabeth her kinswoman. John was the first to acknowledge this joyful news from Mary as he leapt for joy. Like Elizabeth, the question the mere mortals ought to be asking at this time remains, “Who am I that the mother of my Lord should visit me with the extra-ordinary news of Christ’s birth”? Or we have forgotten so great a mystery.



# GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY

## HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE THEM?



**Dr Elsie Lizy Damien (UK)**  
Dean, Kadosh Marian Institute of Theology.

**T**he Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love Psalm 145:8). Both grace and mercy are free gifts from God for the people of God.

- ⇒ Are 'grace' and 'mercy' both the same?
- ⇒ Are they used interchangeably?
- ⇒ What exactly are the differences between grace and mercy?
- ⇒ Can't we just use them synonymously?
- ⇒ How could we achieve both?

God's Mercy and God's Grace are not the same thing, though the differences are subtle, and they are often mentioned together. Grace and Mercy are similar in that both are free gifts of God and both are dispensed not in reward of any merit on the part of the recipient. In many ways they overlap, usually when God pours out His Mercy, He pours out His Grace as well. God pours out His Mercy and Grace especially on those He saves through Jesus Christ as Jesus said, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).**

'Grace' is defined as a courteous goodwill since it is not asked for or deserved and is freely given to us. Grace will bring honour and credit to one. Whereas 'Mercy' is defined as the compassion and kindness shown to one by someone who has the power to punish or harm, which is an act meant to relieve someone of their suffering. Grace is what one receives that they

do not deserve while Mercy is what one receives when they do not get that which they deserve. Mercy is being kind, gentle, or compassionate especially towards someone who is undeserving of it. God has compassion on sinners who deserve His wrath. God gives us Grace and Mercy as the rewards earned by Jesus Christ.

Grace and Mercy are both manifestations of God's love and compassion. Neither is deserved. **'So Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need'** (Hebrew 4:16). Before we explore the difference between Grace and Mercy, we need to see how they are similar. Let us learn about God's Grace and Mercy, as well as what the Bible say about them, as well as to find out the ways to achieve them. *'Grace' occurs 150 to 212 times and 'Mercy' is mentioned 124 to 276 in the Holy Bible, depending on the translations and versions.*

### **So how do they differ? What are the important differences between Grace and Mercy?**

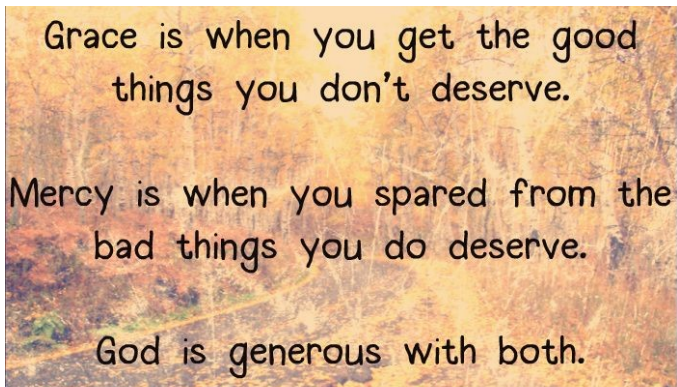
The primary differences between grace and mercy are:

- \* Grace is getting what we do not deserve. In His grace God heaps upon us infinite blessings which we do not deserve and pours out upon us what we do not merit such as eternal life, infinite joy, being one with Christ, being made like Christ and so on. When we believe in Jesus, because of His grace, God gives us what we don't deserve. Each morn-



ing and the nature we live in are by His grace. Grace is God's free gift of His undeserved, unmerited favour to us.

- \* Mercy is not getting what we deserve. In His mercy God withholds what we deserve and what we merit *ie* eternal damnation. When we believe in Jesus, because of His mercy God does not give us what we deserve, His wrath, eternal punishment in hell, wages of our sins.



God is infinitely merciful and compassionate to us. *'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life'* (John 3:16). *'God demonstrates His own love for us in this while we were still sinners, Christ died for us'* (Romans 5:8). But not only is God infinitely merciful, He is infinitely gracious as well. He not only withheld His wrath, but He saved us as Apostle Paul said. *'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God'* (Ephesians 2:8).

### What is God's Grace?

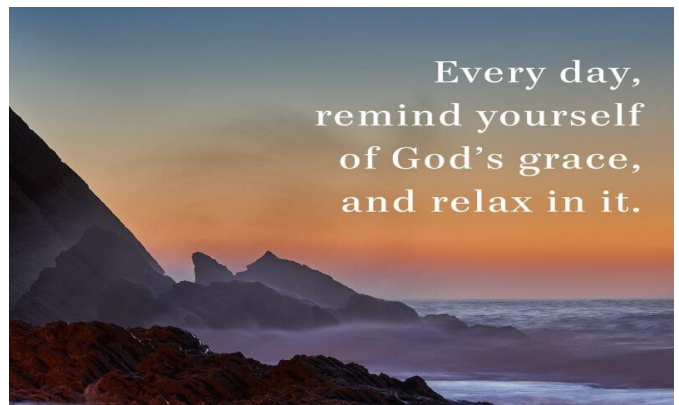
Let us look 'Grace' a bit more deeply. Grace is the favour of God, His divine assistance. The word 'Grace' comes from the Latin *'gratiarum actio'*, (act of thanks) and was borrowed from French, from Latin *'gratia'*, (pleasing quality, favour, thanks) originally from *'gratus'*, (pleasing). The Greek for grace is 'charis' which means kindness, favour, a gift or blessing brought to man by Jesus Christ, or kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved. The English term is the usual translation for the Greek *charis*. On the simplest level, giving grace means offering thanksgiving like saying grace before meals is to remember that it was God, not our money which provided the meal.

In Christian theology Grace is a spontaneous, unmerited gift of the divine favour in the salvation of sinners, and the divine influence operating in individuals for their sanctification. The spiritual meaning of Grace is the concept of receiving something from God and passing it on to others such as, and not limited to, the following graces:

- Sanctifying Grace, which is the permanent disposition to remain in communion with God and allows people to grow in their ability to live like Jesus.
- Actual Grace, which is God's intervention in the process of our justification
- Sacramental Grace, which the gifts given to us through the Sacraments
- Charisma, this is the ability to inspire enthusiasm, interest, or affection in others by means of personal charm or influence which is a gift or power divinely bestowed
- Graces of the Holy Spirit
- Graces of State, being in the state of grace
- The five Graces of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste, experiences of life
- Prevenient Grace, which is God's active presence in people's lives
- Justifying Grace, through which all sins are forgiven by God.

### How could we tap into God's amazing Grace?

The means to achieve these Graces include the entirety of revealed truth through the scriptures as the Bible is the living word of God. **'We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are'** (Acts 15:11).



Another foremost means of attaining these Graces are the active participation in the Holy sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

Prayer, with faith in His kindness, is also a sure way of asking God for His Graces as God gives them to those who are in need and who humbly come to Him for help. St Paul said, **'For by grace you have been saved through faith and this not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast'** (Ephesians 2:8-9). **'At the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace and if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace'** (Romans 11:5-6).

Partaking in good deeds and charity works including activities in other relevant spiritual ministries may also enable one to achieve various Graces. His Grace supplies us with the power to serve, preach the gospel, endure suffering, persecution, and hardship.



**How does one live by or in 'Grace'?**

God's Grace is giving us sinners what we do not deserve. The following, again not limited to, are some of the attributes that will lead towards living by Grace:

Our entire Christian walk must be fueled by the grace of God.

- Surrender to God Almighty
- Praise and worship the one and only Lord, God our Father Almighty
- Sacrifice, forgive, and do penance
- Cultivate faith and trust in God
- Live wholeheartedly for the one who saved us
- Serve God and others with compassion
- Be thankful to God and to others for everything
- Be a blessing to others
- Imitating our God and being merciful and gracious to others, especially to those who don't deserve it.

**Blessings of living in Grace.**

**'Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you'** (Isaiah 30:18). **'In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us'** (Ephesians 1:7-8). The list of blessings of living in grace is endless and is not limited to the following:

- Gives us eternal life
- Adopts us as God's children
- Makes us joint-heirs with Christ and gives us infinite riches in Christ
- Gives us gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Gives us power and victory over sin
- Grace of forgiveness of our sins on repentance and trust and the ability to forgive others
- God lives in us
- Confirms us to Christ
- Salvation of the soul
- Hears our prayers
- He will never remove His love from us.

God's grace is wrapped up in a person: Jesus.

Lord Jesus promises that for all who believe in Him and call upon Him will be saved and He will have Mercy on them, forgive their sins and give them eternal life and lavish His unmerited, unearned love and favour. God's riches are displayed in our lives through the grace He has given to us as a free gift. The greatest gift of all is forgiveness of our sins through salvation in Jesus Christ. Because of the Grace which God gives us, we are able to show grace to others when we seek to follow Jesus.

The scripture is filled with verses about God's Grace, and even though it is not something we deserve, God is kind to us and wants the best for our lives.

- \* 'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14).
- \* 'Out of His fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given' (John 1:16).
- \* 'Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people' (Acts 6:8).
- \* 'Through Him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for His name's sake' (Romans 1:5).
- \* 'All are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24).
- \* 'Sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace' (Romans 6:14).
- \* 'By the grace of God I am what I am and His grace toward me was not in vain' (1 Corinthians 15:10).
- \* "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- \* 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:8).
- \* 'To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it' (Ephesians 4:7).
- \* 'He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time' (2 Timothy 1:9).
- \* 'For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all' (Titus 2:11).
- \* 'He gives us more grace' (James 4:6).
- \* 'Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms' (1 Peter 4:10).

**God's infinite Mercy on us.**

The word 'Mercy' is originated from French *merci* meaning pity or thanks, from Latin *merced*, *merces*

meaning reward, price paid, wages, pity, or favour, from *merc, merxi* meaning merchandise. The Hebrew word for Mercy is *rachamim* which is always in plural form so that it literally means 'mercies'. The Hebrew for 'merciful' means compassionate or full of compassion.

## GOD'S MERCY IS BIGGER THAN ANY MISTAKE THAT YOU'VE MADE.

'Mercy' is defined as compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power. Mercy means benevolence, forgiveness, heavenly reward, and kindness and is also a blessing which is an act of divine favour or compassion. Mercy includes showing kindness to those who don't deserve it, and forgiving those who deserve punishment. To be at someone's mercy indicates a person being without defence.

Mercy is one of the defining characteristics of our God Almighty as the scripture says:

- \* 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness' (Exodus 34:6).
- \* When God asked King David, because of his sin, to choose between a three-year famine, pursuit by his enemies for three months, or a three-day pestilence, he chose the pestilence saying, "Let us fall by the hand of God, for He is most merciful; but let me not fall by the hand of man" (2 Samuel 24:14).
- \* King David, the Psalmist, praised God for His mercy repeatedly. 'Remember Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old' (Psalm 25:6).
- \* 'But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious; slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness' (Psalm 86:15).
- \* 'The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love' (Psalm 103:8).
- \* 'For His merciful kindness is great toward us and the truth of the Lord endure for ever' (Psalm 117:2).
- \* 'He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:8).
- \* Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Mathew 5:7).
- \* 'But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners"' (Mathew 9:13).
- \* 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful' (Luke 6:36).
- \* St Paul refers to the mercy of God in terms of sal-

vation. "God, being rich in mercy, . even when we were dead through our sins, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4).

- \* 'He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy' (Titus 3:5).
- \* 'Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment' (James 2:13).
- \* 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, from the dead' (1 Peter 1:3).
- \* 'Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy' (1 Peter 2:10).

Saint Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) was a follower of God's mercy and also the need for human mercy, Divine Mercy Devotion. Saint Sr. Mary Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), who is known as the Apostle of Mercy, through her apparitions of Jesus Christ, He requests us to seek into the Divine Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. The primary focus of the 'Divine Mercy Devotion' is the merciful love of God and the desire to let that love and mercy flow through one's own heart towards those in need of it.

In Roman Catholic teachings, the Grace and Mercy of God flow through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Catechism of Catholic Church (CCC) emphasises the importance of Grace in items 1996-2005 which states that Grace is a favour, the free and undeserved help, that God gives us to respond to His call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life. The CCC emphasises the importance of Mercy in items 1846, 1847, 2447. Roman Catholic liturgy includes frequent references to mercy, as in 'Lord have mercy (*Kyrie eleison*), Christ have mercy (*Christe eleison*)'.

Nobody is perfect, and God knows we have all fallen short of His glory. However, in His mercy we escape His wrath through Jesus. 'For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly' (Romans 5:6). Our God is rich in Mercy for us. **'Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved'** (Ephesians 2:4-5).

**'Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need'** (Hebrew 4:16).

**'Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord'** (2 Peter 1:2).







# 'LET OUR 'YES' BE "YES" AND 'NO' BE 'NO'



**John Thomas Pazhayidath**  
New York. U S A

**T**he age we live in is very complex. The norms of the past are no more relevant, and assumptions and relative truth are dominant in our society. When we hear a statement from any source, we have to analyze and see through it in order to ascertain the veracity of its version. In other words, what we hear as a statement from any source may not be a straight talk. It is the responsibility of the listener to weigh it in the balance of probability, probity and uprightness.

Borrowing a concept from the legal terminology: your statement needs to be attested to be accepted. Similarly in the official world, or in an official conversation, if you need to present your statement as true statement, you would have to take an oath so that others can accept your statement to be true. Similarly, for important government jobs, one ought to take an oath before an official, prior to assuming the office to discharge the duties as per the law of the land. With the oath of the office, society is holding people (the post holders) responsible for their actions. If they break their oath, there will be severe media interventions and massive repercussions. Simply trusting or relying on the words, reaching us through grapevine, is not at all authentic for reliance. The statements must be substantiated with cogent and convincing reasons to establish credibility.

Let us look into the Bible to see what Jesus says about this situation. Our focus today is on Matthew 5: 33-37. Here Jesus is talking about oath, and trying to explain what we should be doing, or rather, more importantly, what we should not be doing, with regard to oaths. Matthew Chapter 5 is very famous. This chapter is a collection of simple, but important, sermons that Jesus gave on a mountain. These sermons are collectively

known as the Sermon on the Mount. In chapter 5, from verses 21 onwards, Jesus provides additional meaning to the Old Testament commandments. Jesus is giving a new interpretation for the meaning of the Ten Commandments. For example, in chapter 5: 21-22, referring to the Old Testament commandment, the verse says that murder is a sin, and that if anyone murders, he will be subject to judgement. But Jesus explains that this is not enough. Even harboring evil thoughts and actions against someone are grounds for judgement. Jesus says, 'I tell you anyone angry with his brother will also be subject to judgment'. In other words, any sinful thought in our mind is subject to judgement.

In Mathew 5: 33-37, Jesus talks about oaths. When we take an oath, we are doing something extra to make our statements more believable. Sometimes our simple statements may not be believable to others. So, in those situations, we take an oath to make ourselves believable. But what does Jesus say about oaths? In these verses, Jesus clearly says "do not take an oath with anything: let your "yes" be a yes and your "No" be a no. But many a time we are unable to take someone's simple statements at their face value.. We need additional assurance. By subjecting them to an oath – by referring to someone or something else – we may find their statements to be more believable. But why is this happening? Is it because of the lack

of trust among ourselves ?

Jesus clearly teaches us to stay away from oaths. If there is trust among people, no additional steps are necessary. If people live trustworthy and honorable lives, no additional steps would be necessary. A simple “yes” and a simple “no” would do. Your “yes” will be accepted as affirmative and your “no” will be accepted as a negative. There will be no quibble nor any prevarication. I reiterate that ‘Yes’ must be a yes and ‘No’ must be a no, unconditionally and irrevocably, whatever be the predicament.

In our current times, this verse is very pertinent. This is the time that is defined as the post-truth time. This is the time where lies and half-truths are presented as truths and facts, and are getting applauded for it. Here emotions and appeals are taking over, not facts. Especially as the social media is vibrant and influential, any lies can easily be distorted as truths. All Medias are pursuing with their own agenda, some transparent and some hidden. Assertion of Truth doesn’t matter. Whatever fits in with their agenda all sensationalized news and scoops will be promoted for fame and fortune by the Media Moguls with the least concern to verify the credibility of the matter.

There is an interesting story concerning **the Truth** and **the Lie**. Two entities. The story goes like this: Once Truth and Lie went for a swim. Truth unclothed himself and went into the water for the swim. Then Lie, instead of following the Truth, swimming, took off his clothes and put on the Truth’s clothes and went into the town. As the people saw Lie in Truth’s clothes, they thought it was Truth and gave him a warm reception. When the Truth came back from swim, he could not find his clothes. Instead, the Truth saw the Lie’s clothes lying on the ground, but Truth refused to wear it. He went to the town naked. When the people saw the Truth being naked, they started laughing at him. Some grammarians and scholars entertain the view that the phrase: “*the naked Truth*” has its genesis in this story.

This is exactly what is happening now. The truth is being teased and laughed at. It is not that people do not identify the truth, but the fact is that there is no effort to understand the truth. Everyone is trying to make their truth as the ultimate truth and trying to marginalize the real truth. Why is it happening like this? The answer is that the trust among us is lost.

**What is the reason for this loss of trust?** For the loss of trust we have to go back to the basics. The existence of a creation is always in relationship with the creator. When creation tries to move away from the creator, this relationship is lost and it generates an imbalance. And to compensate for this imbalance, we, the creation, try to make our own laws, which leads us to more complex situations. To come out of this complex situation we create more laws which again lead to unresolvable situations. Thus Process persists perennially. In this social, cultural and interpersonal dynamic, everybody is on their own and unable to trust anyone other than themselves. In other words,

we who were created in the image of God, moved away from God, thereby creating an imbalance in our lives. When our balance is lost, we are no longer in control. And this can happen to anyone and at any time. This uncertainty creates fear and frustrations in us, and then trusting anyone becomes impossible.

**In this situation what is the solution that Jesus is offering to us?** Here Jesus tells us come back to the basic, reprogram yourself with the word of God. This will restore trust. And once trust is restored, your “yes” will be a yes and your “no” will be a no.

This verse, even though, is very simple, it is far reaching in its depth. I believe we should consider this verse as the third commandment from our Lord



Jesus: “Let your yes be yes and no be no, anything outside from it, is coming from the devil.”

Let us pause for a moment and think, does our “yes” always means a yes and our “no” correctly means a no?; or does the questioner has to think about it, or has to look deep into it ?. If there is anything more to it, that means we are afraid of the truth. **Now the question is why we are afraid of the truth?**

**First, it is the insecurity that is within us.** When we are insecure, we do not trust anyone or anything around us. This is the natural response of animals. Anything that comes against us is dealt with abruptly with the least regard to the inevitable consequences; this creates conflicts and confusion; failures and frustrations which, we like it or not, lead to anarchy and the loss of balance in society. Our life will be riven—divided into pieces and factions and thus No unity. No solidarity .No stability in our society.

As Christians what should be our response? In Matthew 5:38-42, we can read how a follower of Christ should respond. In these verses, Jesus is referring to the Old Testament law of ‘eye for an eye’ and says do not take revenge on your enemy. If someone hits you on your right cheek show him the left cheek as well. And Jesus continues with several such examples. As human beings, this is a hard thing for us to swallow. However, if we are with Christ there is no other way. When we are with Christ, we have to have the same attitude that Christ showed us. When we are



in Christ, we become a new creation. When we become a new creation in Christ, he fills us with his love and that love expels the fear within us. When we are fearless our “yes” will be a yes and our “no” will be a no and nothing else.

**Second,** it is our drive to acquire dominance. As human beings we want to dominate our surroundings. This is natural human tendency. To establish this dominance, human beings are willing to do anything. As a person becomes passionate in this goal, nothing can stop him from achieving his goal, even if it means hurting fellow beings and nature. In fact, it is always the fellow human beings, animals, and nature that are the victims of the powerful in society.

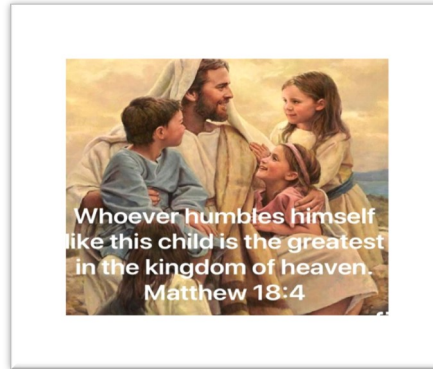
The damages to nature have brought environmental changes as well as imbalance in the ecological setting. Now we can clearly see that the nature is no longer sitting still; it is responding to the relentless attack on it. As we are going through this pandemic, humanity is experiencing the depth of the attack of nature. This proves that nature also can be relentless in its attack. We have no idea what else is in store with regard to nature’s response—catastrophe, cataclysm, volcanic eruption etc.! Respect for nature is not something that we can compromise with. We must try to avert disasters.

However, ordinary people and animals remain helpless. They have been crushed under the foot of the powerful elites. In the name of development, the displacement of poor people without proper rehabilitation has become a global phenomenon. All developments are in the name of these poor people, but the poor people have been deprived of their very basic rights. With modern technology, the powerful get more power, with which they can control the masses, and subject them to their will and pleasure. For the powerful, it is not a matter of just or unjust, but a matter of power. All their efforts are geared to establish and maintain their power, no matter what the consequences are.

This trend has taken over all aspects of society. Even the Church is not exempted from it. Many church leaders are more concerned with their positions rather than with the wellbeing of the people under them. This leads to conflict and internal fights which often comes out as confrontations.

Here we must remember one thing: The Middle East where Christianity was born, and where early Christianity spread, is now almost completely Muslim. Almost all the countries in the Middle East are predominantly Muslim. It is easy for us to blame this on the aggressive nature of the political and religious groups in the region. But the people who have studied the churches in this region have pointed out that the Christian Church, which lost focus on Christ, must also share a big part of the blame. Christian churches cannot exist without Christ. If we look around, we can see that many Christian churches start with Christ but end up with the material world and its glory. It is important to remember that whether it is a Church or

individuals, as we move away from Christ, there is a good possibility that we will end up in the hands of the enemy.



Let us look in the Bible and see what Jesus says about this. In Matthew 18:1-4, we see the disciples asking Jesus, “**Who is great in the kingdom of heaven?**” This question reveals

their intention to be number one in heaven as well. Each one wants to be greater than the other one. But Jesus’ answer is something that cuts through the core of their question. Jesus’ reply is that you must become like a child to get into heaven. If not, you would not enter the kingdom of God. Otherwise, the very question that arises in your mind makes you unqualified to enter the kingdom of God. So, the question, “Who is great in heaven?” is inappropriate. To enter the kingdom of God you have to become like a child. In a child’s mind the idea of who is great does not exist. The question who is great in the heaven is not relevant. This is what Jesus told his disciples, and the same he is telling us also. Be like a child to enter the Kingdom of God. When you are like a child, you are not calculating – your “yes” means a yes and your “no” means a no.

A similar encounter can be seen in Mathew 20: 20-28. Here mother of Zebedee’s two sons comes to Jesus and requests that, in His kingdom, one of her sons be seated on his left and other one on his right. The reply that Jesus gave to this mother can be seen in the verses that follow. While Jesus’ reply to this mother is important, what is more significant is Jesus’ response at seeing the displeasure and indignation that the other disciples expressed upon hearing this mother’s request. From versus 26 we can see what Jesus told the disciples: “Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as ransom for many.” This is the way of Christian life.

Christian life means serving the needy, helpless, hopeless and caring for one another. And, considering others greater than ourselves. Christian life is not the way of riding on our egos, but reaching out and lifting the marginalized. It is not the way of looking the other way when unfair and unjust things are happening in society, but instead getting involved and fighting for justice. Once we take up this path, our ego will melt down, and with that the fear in us will disappear. We will be free from our insecurity; our desire for power and achievements will disappear. We will be free in Christ. This is the most sacred state of life, free in Christ.





# Oasis



**Irene Daniel (Sheela)**  
Canada

As usual, Laura woke up early in the morning at 5 am, prepared breakfast, packed lunches and snacks and then she woke up her grandchildren ten-year-old Mathew and four-year-old Jessica. She gave Jessica a shower, got her dressed up and after giving them breakfast, brought Mathew to his Baby sitter's house and Jessica to her day care center. She caught the bus to Toronto from the stop closer to Jessica's day care center. This has been her daily routine for the last 4 years from Monday to Friday. Laura commutes to work to Toronto from this Greater Toronto area. The commute in the Bus and Train to her office takes nearly one and a half hours each way. The time spent on commute is the only time that she gets any rest during weekdays, Laura thought to herself.

She looked at her watch, and noticed that it is quarter to 8. She has taken a day off from her work that day, as she is supposed to meet Shelley at 9.30 am, at the coffee shop near Toronto C.N Tower. Laura was wondering what could be the reason that Shelly wanted to see her urgently this morning? Will it be just to put more blame on her as she normally does? "O God", she exclaimed. Laura could feel the pain in her heart. When will she stop blaming me for everything, Laura thought to herself. Shelly.... Laura's eldest daughter, mother of Mathew and Jessy.

Laura's thoughts wandered through the memory lanes

and all the experiences of the past started popping up in her mind as in a flash back of a movie. Their beautiful house, a house where the waves of laughter and giggles were present all the time. Her small wonderful, loving and caring family that resembled heaven that included, Laura, her husband Bob and her two beautiful daughters, Shelly and Sharon. An amazing family envious to so many people.

As the years went by, the girls too were growing fast. Laura tried hard to dive into her memory to see where and when did the twist began and everything started to collapse. When Shelly was in grade 10, Laura began to notice few changes in her. She became so moody, seldom talked to anyone at home and spent most of the time locked up in her room after School. Laura realized that she is not the same sweet darling, who confided everything to her mother and treated her as her best friend. Laura wondered what was going on with her precious little girl. When she brought up Shelley's behaviour to Bob, he thought that Laura must be imagining things and over reacting. As days went by, Shelley started coming back late from School and going out with her friends more often. Laura tried to calm herself thinking it to be the "Teenage Syndrome".

One fine day, Shelly was expelled from School, when she was caught trying to sell drugs to fellow students.



By that time, Shelly was already addicted to Marijuana and Cocaine. It was a heart wrenching experience for Laura to see how her little girl had become a drug addict. So many raging storms ran through Laura's mind that day. Laura wondered where did she get the money to buy these drugs???? She realized with pain and shock the answer to the missing cash from her purse for quite some time.

Laura tried advising her with a mother's love and compassion, but she refused to listen. In fact, she was accusing Laura for her current situation. She did not care about anyone. There was no love or compassion in her eyes, instead a lukewarmness in her heart and mind. Laura feared whether she will have to bury her daughter before her. Any mother's worst nightmare. Laura spent sleepless nights praying and crying for her precious sweet girl.

Days and months passed by, all of a sudden one day, Shelley went missing. The worst fear of any mother. It felt like the whole earth was turning upside down for Laura. Later she heard from couple of her friends that they saw Shelly pan handling (begging) at a subway (Train) station in Toronto. She rushed to that subway and by that time Shelly had vanished from there. Dark clouds started appearing in their peaceful and happy life. Laura did not stop her Prayers and tears in anticipation of Shelly's return.

As years went by, Laura started noticing changes in Bob. One fine morning, when he brought his newly found girlfriend home, Laura had to kick him out of her life. Sharon, her youngest daughter who is married and leading a beautiful married life with her husband is her only consolation and watches her like a shadow.

Time flew by, as months gave way to seasons and seasons to years. Laura was thinking about how the phone call that she received from the Children's Aid Society in Toronto on a winter night, completely changed her life. The day that she saw for the first time, her precious grandchildren Mathew and Jessica... The gifts that she received through the phone call..... A new meaning to her life.... The day that she received custodianship of her Matthew and Jessy..... The day that Shelly and her Boyfriend abandoned 6-year-old Mathew and 3-month-old Jessy in the apartment they lived. Neighbours who heard the cries of the children contacted the police and they had to break the door lock to get the children and later the children were handed over to the Children's Aid Society. Shelley and her Boyfriend were arrested and taken into police custody. It seems Shelly is the one who provided Laura's contact information to the Children's Aid Society. Mathew had belt marks all over his body, the mark of physical abuse, it was so heart breaking to see the poor state in which the children were.

Shelly and her boyfriend were banned from coming in contact with the children, as they were threat to the children's life. If Laura did not take custody of the children, they would have been put for foster care by the Children's Aid society. A sword ran through Laura's heart at the thought of her grandchildren living with some foster parents.

Laura got custodianship of the children and she has been going to work and bringing them up for the past four years with love and care.

As Laura awoke from her thoughts, she realized that the Bus has reached the final stop. Laura got out of the bus and walked to catch the train to Toronto Union Station.

As Laura walked towards the Coffee shop, Shelley was already waiting there for her. One look at Shelly, Laura couldn't believe her eyes. She was well dressed without any tiredness in her eyes. Laura looked at her in amazement. She couldn't believe her eyes. It has been years since Laura has seen Shelly dressed like this. Shelly ran to Laura hugged her and sobbed saying in between, "Sorry Mommy, sorry Mommy". Laura embraced her tightly, trying to control her tears as well. In between her sobs, she was mumbling "how is my children? I want to see my kids Mommy; I am dying to see them. I want to hug and kiss them to my heart's content. I want to bring them up, give them the love that I deprived them for all these years. I miss them beyond words". Laura looked at her in shock, wondering what has happened to her. In the last four years, whenever they met, she has never asked about her kids.

All Laura could do was to hug her and cry along with her. She realized one thing, the motherhood in Shelly has emerged. "I have won my daughter. This is the tears of true repentance and conversion. The rehabilitation and counselling sessions that she has attended is successful. I have found the lost coin.... I am experiencing the same happiness of the prodigal son's father. Almighty God has seen my tears and heard my prayers", thought Laura to herself.

It took some time for Laura to make Shelly understand that she cannot see her children immediately. She has to prove to her counsellors and authorities that she is free from Drugs for at least 6 months. She will have to be patient until then to see her children. Laura recognized that her grandkids has got back their mom, from Shelly's Confident words that she will do anything for her children. Laura's heart and mind was filled with joy, and was longing to carry Mathew and Jessy in her arms and kiss. Laura hugged Shelly tight and kissed her goodbye and whispered in her ears "fear not, be of good courage" and walked towards the Train Station to catch the train home.



# Chokmâh



**Lara J M**  
Bangalore, India.

**W**hat kind of gifts can make us truly happy – earthly ones or the divine ones?

There are different types of gifts, for different occasions, having different purposes and carry different meanings. The gifts of the three wise men were symbolic to usher The Presence of God on this earth by His birth, while the gift of the woman with the alabaster jar in Mt 26.7-13 was symbolic to usher The Presence of God on this earth by His death and resurrection.

Wise men and shepherds have confirmed repeatedly over the ages: The Father gave the Son, The Son gave the Spirit, The Spirit gives us life and the gift goes on. Who can fathom God's infinite Wisdom, Who can search the depths of His heart? James 1.17 says, Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. Jesus Christ was, is and will be the perfect gift to all mankind.

Chokmah in Hebrew is pronounced as Hokmah, means 'Holy Wisdom'. It is grammatically a feminine



noun, hence bears the pronoun 'she'. When personified in literature, wisdom is referred to as a lady and we know personification is a literary device. In Greek, divine wisdom means 'Sofia', referred to 'Jesus Christ the Word of God', hence wisdom is referred to as 'lady Sofia' in the holy bible for the purpose of translation. While this is the grammatical explanation of wisdom, it does not literally mean that wisdom is a lady! However, many ladies in the bible have demonstrated what it means to be wise in the sight of God, with the best example in mother Mary, who is venerated as a saint.

**Proverbs 11.30 says The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life: and He that winneth souls is wise.**

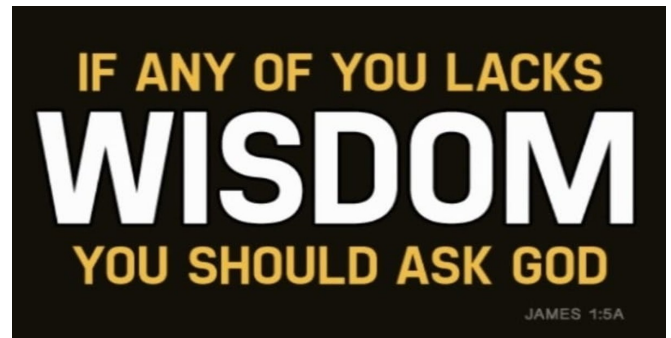
Chokmah is also called fear or awe, because it has no measure of boundary, and therefore the mind does not have the power to grasp it. The book of Job states 'Behold the fear of God is wisdom, and to



depart from evil is understanding' (Job 28:28). The Hebrew word translated into 'awe' in the Bible is yirah. It often directly translates into fear, or 'trembling' which comes out of deep love, respect, reverence, and worship. Thus, we see Holy wisdom is Holy fear for God, which is a gift given to any person who acknowledges The Presence of God.

In Colossians 2.3, we acknowledge the mystery of God, that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of all wisdom and knowledge. Thus making Wisdom a person-The Holy Spirit - the attribute of God in Jesus Christ. In John 14.11-20, Jesus Himself says, that God the Father and He are one, and that for the one that believes in Him, must ask, and He will give them the Holy Spirit who in turn is the giver

of all perfect gifts - Galatians 5:22-23 - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law and 1 Corinthians 12 - Word of wisdom, Word of knowledge, Gift of Faith, Gifts of Healing. Miracles, Prophecy, Distinguishing between spirits, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues, as well as ministering gifts - Ephesians 4.11- Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher. And the gift goes on...



The Spirit of Excellence which is the divine gift of wisdom was bestowed on Daniel 2:20,21,22 when he sought the Lord three times a day, during captivity, and difficult times. The past two years have been no exception, our faithful stewardship in the Presence of God week after week shall bear fruit. The wisdom Psalms have taught us how to build divine courage, conviction and character to enter the throne room of God with praise and thanksgiving, making known our cause, for the one who asks, seeks and knocks at the door of His infinite mercy and grace will be greeted with an open door, as promised.

In James 1.5 For anyone who asks God for Wisdom undoubtedly, will be given ungrudgingly. And in Rev 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, an open door in heaven, and the former voice that I had heard like a trumpet speaking with me was saying, "Come up here and I will show you the things which must take place after these things."





***"THIS MYSTERY IS GREAT," the official image of the 2022 World Meeting of Families in Rome. / Work of Fr. Marko Ivan Rupnik, 2021.***

**T**he World Meeting of Families is a gathering of the Roman Catholic Church that has occurred every three years since 1994, and the next meeting is scheduled to take place in Rome, Italy in 2022 (it was supposed to be held in 2021, but was postponed to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). The image, entitled "**This mystery is great,**" is the official logo of 2022, which features the Wedding at Cana, the first miracle of Jesus in the Gospel of John. "Sacramental love between a man and a woman is a reflection of the indissoluble love and unity between Christ and the Church: Jesus sheds His blood for Her." This is the meaning behind the official image of the Tenth World Meeting of Families.



The image portrays the Wedding at Cana, with the bride and groom in the background on the left, covered by a veil. Jesus and Mary are seen united, at the moment when Mary tells her Son, "They have no more wine." In the foreground is the steward, with the face of St Paul as portrayed in classical iconography. It is Saint Paul "who removes the veil with his hand, and referring to the wedding, exclaims, "This mystery is great; but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church!"

Father Rupnik's painting is the third official symbol to be published; along with the official prayer and logo, it serves as a pastoral tool for the preparation and journey of families toward the 2022 World Meeting. The event is being organized by the Vatican Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life along with the Diocese of Rome and will take place on the sixth anniversary of the encyclical *Amoris laetitia* and four years on from the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*.

The Church of Rome is preparing to welcome delegates and participants to the 10th World Meeting of Families. The diocesan community accepted Pope Francis', and considers this appointment to be "a precious opportunity to dedicate ourselves with enthusiasm to family ministry: spouses, families, and pastors together".

The 10th World Meeting of Families will take place from 22-26 June 2022. The theme chosen by Pope Francis for this event is: "Family love: a vocation and a path to holiness."



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The representative of His Majesty King Hamad officially inaugurated the largest Roman Catholic Cathedral in the Arabian Peninsula on 9th December 2021. The Cathedral consecrated by His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle on 10th December 2021.

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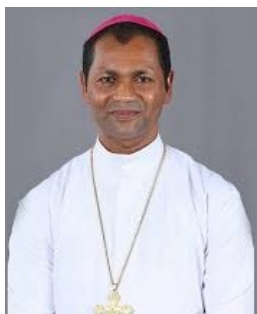
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