

Kadosh Marian Voice

Holiness Firmness Truthfulness Faithfulness



***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but
may have eternal life. ”***

John 3:16

October November December 2022



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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Table of contents

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Front Cover—

Merry Christmas to all readers.

4	THE EDITORIAL <i>Rev Fr Joseph Xavier</i>
6	REDEMPTION <i>Rev Dr Jacob Prasad</i>
8	THE NARROW GATE <i>Rev Thomas Chozhithara MSFS</i>
11	THE ASSUMPTION OF MOTHER MARY <i>Rev Henry Avemaria</i>
13	VATICAN II <i>Rev Dr Clement Valluvassery</i>
15	INCLUSIVE PASTORAL APPROACH <i>Rev Dr Laurence Culassery</i>
17	PRODIGAL SON'S BROTHER & US <i>Richard Antony Alappat</i>
21	LOVE <i>John Thomas Pazhayidathu</i>
22	FIRST SIGN <i>Nisha Jacob</i>
24	GIVE THANKS <i>Rose Marie Richard</i>
28	GALLERY
29	KADOSH MARIAN INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY

EDITORIAL

It fills me with an immense and untold joy to pen down this editorial proclaiming the glory of the Rosary month declared by the Catholic Church. My dear people of God, The month of October is dedicated to the Rosary. The devotion of the Rosary has characterized faithful Catholics throughout the world. She remains a sign and source of our own unity with her son, Jesus Christ and among ourselves.

Pope Adrian VI **“THE ROSARY IS A TREASURE OF GRACES”**

Pope Pius IX **“THE ROSARY IS THE SCOURGE OF THE DEVIL”**

Pope Paul V **“THE ROSARY IS THE WEAPON”**.



FR JOSEPH XAVIER

Among all the devotions approved by the Church none has been favored by so many miracles as the devotion of the most Holy Rosary. Our greatest spiritual fathers and mothers were devoted to the Rosary. Why? What is so important about this string of beads and prayers?

As Our Blessed Mother said to Blessed Alan de la Roche, *“When you say your Rosary, the angels rejoice, the Blessed Trinity delights in it, my Son finds joy in it too, and I myself am happier than you can possibly guess. After the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, there is nothing in the Church that I love as much as the Rosary.”* Mary is delighted when we pick up our beads and pray the Rosary. Mary, the great Mediatrix of Graces, the Mother of God, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, and Queen of Heaven and Earth, is so pleased when we recite the prayer that she herself brought to the faithful through St. Dominic that she will spill countless blessings on the faithful that cling to their Rosaries.

The month of October each year, introduced by Pope St. Pius V is dedicated to the Most Holy Rosary. This is primarily due to the fact that the liturgical feast of Our Lady of the Rosary is celebrated annually on October 7. It was instituted to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary in gratitude for the protection that she gives the Church in answer to the praying of the Rosary by the faithful. The practice of dedicating the entire month of October to the Holy Rosary developed toward the end of the last century by Pope Leo XIII, who strongly promoted the increase of devotion to the Blessed Mother by encouraging the constant use of the Rosary. Beginning on September 1, 1883, with *Supremo Apostolatus Officio*, he wrote a total of eleven encyclicals on the Rosary, ending with in 1898.

The Rosary is primarily a scriptural prayer. This can be summarized by the traditional phrase used by Pope Pius XII, that the Rosary is *“a compendium of the entire Gospel”*. The Rosary draws its mysteries from the New Testament and is centered on the great events of the Incarnation and Redemption. The Rosary is Christocentric setting forth the entire life of Jesus Christ, the passion, death, resurrection and glory. Of course, the Rosary honors and contemplates Mary too, and rightly so, for the same reason that the Liturgical Year does likewise: Because of the mission she received from God, her life is most closely linked with the mysteries of Jesus Christ, and there is no one who has followed in the footsteps of the Incarnate Word more closely and with more merit than she.

“With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer,” explains Saint John Paul II in his apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*.

October is another month dedicated to Mary. Why? Because looking at Mary is seeing God in her. It’s like when you see a very kind and holy person, but you realize you aren’t looking at them so much as experi-



With the Rosary, we allow ourselves to be guided by Mary, model of faith, in meditating on the mysteries of Christ, and day after day we are helped to assimilate the Gospel, so that it shapes all our lives.

— Pope Benedict XVI —



The Rosary is a school of Prayer. The Rosary is a school of Faith.

— Pope Francis —

encing God's love for you through them. That's Mary! Her fiat, her purpose, and her love for us and our love for her is all about God. This month that love is focused on the Holy Rosary. Through the Holy Rosary, we meditate on God's Word. The Gospel becomes embedded in our hearts, and Mary holds our hand to Jesus Christ. Touching rosary beads as you pray helps engage your body in prayer, too. Genuflecting, kneeling, and positioning your hands in prayer, physical actions help you focus and engage your entire self. Engaging your body will help you focus, but if you still struggle, you're in St. There's company.

In this month of October, let us consider this beautiful prayer of the Rosary as a means that we too can use in order to draw closer to Jesus and Mary by meditating on the great mysteries of our salvation. Let us be united in mind and heart to give special love and devotion to Mary, our Mother. Through her continual maternal intercessions our Lady is our help and sign of hope. She plays a most important and unique role in the plan of salvation. I conclude this editorial with a prayer "Holy Mary Mother of God pray, bless and protect Kadosh Marian Ministry in all its activities."



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

We together with our patrons, Trustees, members of the editorial board and advisory board of Kadosh Marian Ministries hereby express the warm greetings of Christmas to all our readers, donors, sponsors and well wishers. May the joy of yuletide ever remain in the New Year with plenty, prosperity and peace.

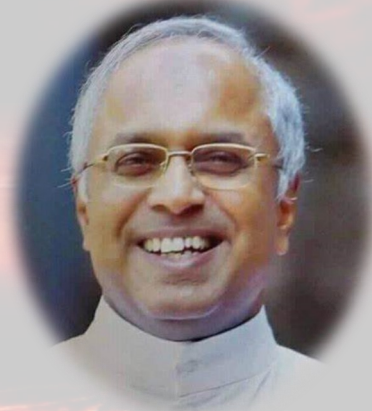
Luke 1:37 " For there is nothing that God cannot do." Amen.

REDEMPTION

“They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.”

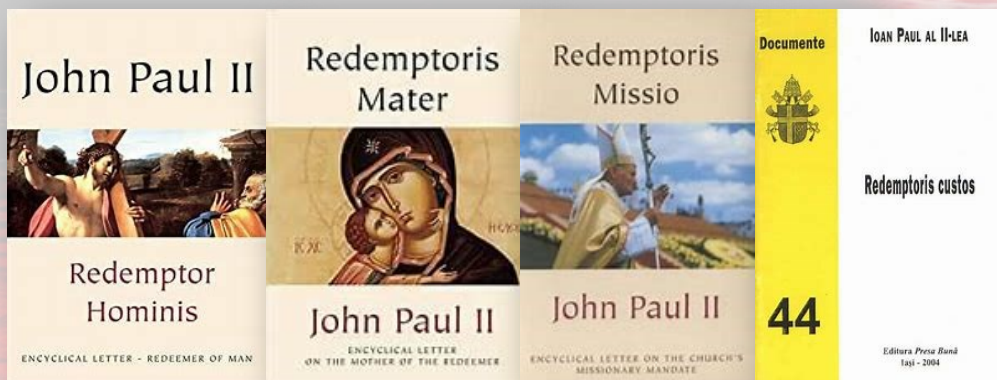
Romans 3:24-25

In our previous discussions we had indicated Rom 1,16-17 as the key verses of the letter to Romans. This thematic statement is positively expanded in Rom 3,21-31. In Rom 3,21-31 Paul introduces very many concepts which are crucial for understanding what life in Christ (Christian life) means. We have already spoken of two of these concepts in the previous reflections: **“THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD”** and **“JUSTIFICATION.”** In Rom 3,24 Paul says, *“They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* **“Redemption”** is a term often used in Christian theology and life. St. Pope John Paul II had some of his main encyclicals written under this concept. E.g., *Redemptor hominis* (Redeemer of the Humankind); *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer); *Redemptoris Missio* (Mission of the Redeemer); *Redemptoris Custos* (Guardian of the Redeemer – on “St. Joseph”).



Rev Dr Jacob Prasad

Home Asst. Director POC
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1 CORINTHIANS 7:23

“YOU WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE; DO NOT BECOME SLAVES OF HUMANS.”

“Redemption” is one of the images used by Paul to describe the effect of Christ-event. It is not easy to say from where Paul derived this image. There was the usual practice of manumission (freeing) of slaves in the Greco-Roman world. There was both profane and sacred manumission practised at that time. In the profane manumission, slaves were freed upon the payment of a price to the owner of the slave. In sacred manumission the price of manumission was offered at the temple, to the deity by whom the person was liberated. That Paul is aware of the social institution of emancipation is clear from 1 Cor 7,21. But there are notable differences between Paul’s understanding and the understanding behind the general social practice. First of all, there is difference in the vocabulary: in the sacred manumission texts seen in the Delphic inscriptions the Greek verb used is **PRIASTHAI** while Paul uses the verbs **AGORAZEIN** and **EXAGORAZEIN**, although these words have the same meaning, “**PURCHASE**,” “**BUY**” (1 Cor 6,20; 7,23; Gal 3,13; 4,5). More striking is the fact that the freedman in sacred manumission is never considered a “slave” or “freedman” of the deity (e.g., of Apollo). But Paul considers the freedman (Christian) as a “slave of Christ” (Rom 1,1; 1 Cor 7,21-23), of which he is proud. The only term used in common is *timē*, “price” (1Cor 6,20; 7,23). For this reason, it is better to see the background of Paul’s image of redemption in the Old Testament. Indeed behind the Pauline use of Christ becoming “our redemption” (1 Cor 1,30; Rom 3,24) there lies the OT idea of Yahweh becoming Israel’s *go’ēl*, “redeemer,” who had the duty of buying back an enslaved or captive relative (Isa 41,14; 43,14; 44,6; 47,6; 47,4; Pss 19,15; 74,2). At first

the concept implied the freeing of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Deut 7, 6-8; Ps 111,9), when YHWH acquired a possession for himself (Exod 15,16; 19,5; Mal 3,17; Ps 74,2); later on it meant the bringing out of Israel from the Babylonian captivity (Isa 51,11; 52,3-9). In Paul’s view human beings have been redeemed from the power of sin and death through the Christ-event. Paul ascribes also a future aspect to the concept of redemption, for Christians “await the redemption of their body” (Rom 8,23),—even a cosmic aspect, since all creation (Rom 8,19-22) is groaning in expectation of it.

Paul speaks of Christians as having been “bought for a price” (1Cor 6,20; 7,23). This sounds like the ransom price paid for redemption. However what is implied is the onerous or burdensome character of the setting free of human beings, not the paying of any price by Christ, such as his blood, to the angry God the Father, or to the devil to redeem mankind, as some of the commentators theorised. It was burdensome from the part of Christ to liberate human beings for he had to shed even the last drop of his blood. That it was burdensome (onerous) for God the Father too is also seen in Paul: Rom 8,32, “**He [God] who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us...**” The OT background of the image attests to the fact there was no payment of any price. God did not pay anyone any price to set Israel free from the bondage in Egypt; nor was any price paid for the return of Israel from Babylon. Yet the liberation from Egypt was burdensome since the Lord God had to show the might of his hand.

Exercise: Read the texts indicated in between.

To ponder over: Are we cognizant of the great price paid for our redemption?

Rev Dr Jacob Prasad

THE NARROW GATE AND THE VICE OF PRESUMPTION

(ref. Mt 7: 13-14; Lk 13: 22-30)

“Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”



Fr. Thomas Chozhithara MSFS
Director, MSFS Mission Development Office, Rome

We are often confronted with questions regarding life after death. What will happen to us after we have died? Will I be saved alone or with others? These questions also take us to our very origins and purpose of human life.

According to the entire revelation of the Holy Scriptures, God created man in His image and according to His likeness so that man would receive God as life and express God in all His attributes (ref. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:9). We are not made to “work for God” and merely “fulfill God’s purpose”; instead, we are created to receive God, contain God, be one with God, and express God. We have a human spirit that matches God’s Spirit, and through regeneration, we become one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that “human beings are created by God and for

God, and God never ceases to draw them to himself.” (CCC27) While Vatican II instructs that “the dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. (...) If man exists, it is because God has created him through love, and love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.” (GS 19).

“The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.”
CCC27

The purpose of this temporary human life is to seek and prepare for life after death in God’s eternal Kingdom. Jesus wants us to make this the first goal of our life. We call it **salvation**. We do not have to

worry about whether all will be saved or only some. Our concentration should be whether I and all those who belong to me will be saved. To obtain salvation, *Jesus asks us to decide on the narrow door*. He invites us to come in through God's open, narrow door. But going in still involves a struggle. We strive and struggle against our own flesh, our own sin. We are often tempted to not

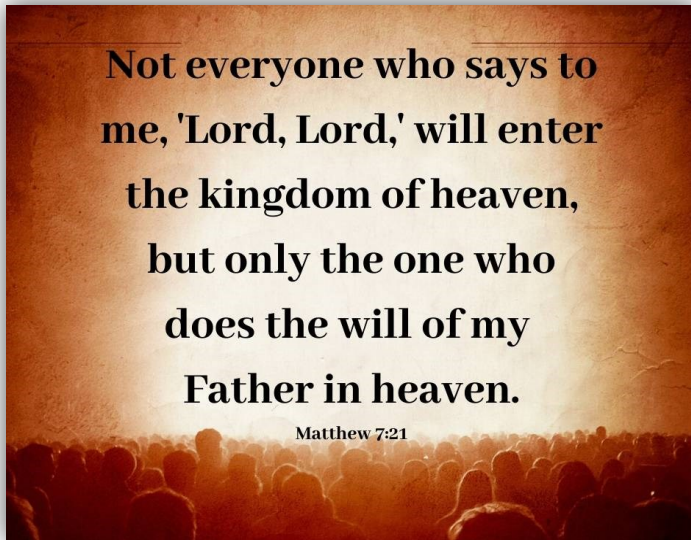
Kingdom arrives, and people rush to be a part of it. When the door is locked, the time for salvation will have passed, and they will not be able to enter. While many will claim to have eaten with him and listened to his teaching, they had not turned to him in faith for salvation. Such people will be utterly rejected, for Jesus says, "I do not know you." Such words will be the final pronouncement of rejection on those who rejected him. They will be sent away from God and the Kingdom.

Jesus makes it clear that there are some who will come to Him presuming their entrance into Heaven, but their presumption will be met with these frightening words: **"I do not know where you are from. Depart from me."**

Presumption is a dangerous sin. It's dangerous for two reasons. First, when people are presumptuous, they are living in denial of the truth. Regarding God, presumption means that the persons act as if they are in a relationship with God when they are not. They may say holy things, act holy and even believe they are holy, while in fact, they do not know our Lord at all. Thus, presumption is when one lives in denial of the truth.



Second, presumption is dangerous because the presumptuous person will not repent of his or her own sin. This is because their denial makes it impossible for them to admit their sin. They cannot subse-



listen to God and to not trust in God above all things. That is where the striving and struggling come in. That is why the way of salvation involves a certain effort. Yes, salvation is all God's work for us in Christ. The door is narrow, but the door is open. God speaks to us through His word and invites us to eternal life with Him.

The question of whether only a few or many people would be saved was a topic of debate and much speculation among the rabbis. Jesus refused to be drawn into taking a side in this argument; instead, he urged his listeners to be among those who would be saved, no matter what the final number might be. He told his audience to work hard to get in. The word "work" means putting one's whole self into listening and responding. Jesus did not explain the narrow door, but the picture is of a way that one must seek out and then enter while it is still open. Although many people know something about God, few have acknowledged their sins and accepted his forgiveness. Just listening to Jesus' words or admiring his miracles is not enough—all must turn from sin and trust in God for salvation. Regardless of how many would be saved, Jesus said that many would try to enter, but it will be too late. The time for decision would pass them by. Familiarity with Jesus will not count when God's

Psalm 15:1-5

¹Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

*²He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;*

quently recognize their need to change without confessing their sin. They remain steeped in their false thinking and their sin.

Jesus presents this teaching not to reveal that He is harsh with presumptuous people but as an act of great mercy for those stuck in this sin. It takes this startling revelation to shake a person free of this sin. In this case, the fear of one day hearing these words from Jesus will help those stuck in presumption to break free and face the truth.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, presumption as a sin against hope is the wholly unreasonable expectation that God will save us despite our bad will, which makes that saving impossible. Under the name and guise of reliance on God, presumption insults God and dishonors our own intelligence. It is presumption, for example, to expect forgiveness for sins without repentance. It is presumption when one expects Heaven without working to get there by merit (...) Presumption arises from vainglory, that is, from a prideful trust that a person has in himself as powerful enough to cope with anything and as a being so excellent that God

could not allow him to be punished. (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II q.20)

Jesus commanded his followers to enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. This gateway is small, and the road is narrow, but it alone leads to life—eternal life. **Through the wide gate, however, the highway to hell is broad, and it is the easy way.** There is plenty of room for many people to wander in and continue in whatever direction they wish. This road leads to hell. The gateway to life is small, not because it is difficult to become a Christian but because there is only one way, and only a few decide to walk that road. Believing in Jesus and loving according to His teachings is the only way to eternal life because He died for our sins and made us right before God. Psalm 15 teaches us who will enter the tent of the Lord “he/she who walks blamelessly, speaks the truth, does the right, takes no bribe, does not slander, keeps the word, honors others, and does no evil”

Fr. Thomas Chozhithara msfs





THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Fr. Henry Avemaria

**NATIONAL SHRINE OF MARY, NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE CENTER,
ENUGU DIOCESE. NIGERIA.**

Venerable Pope Pius XII confirmed this belief about the Virgin Mary as the perennial teaching of the Church when he defined it formally as a dogma of Catholic faith in 1950, invoking Papal infallibility to proclaim, "that the Immaculate Mother of God was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory having completed her mission of her earthly life.

Papal apostolic constitution 'Munificentissimus

Deus" (Most Bountiful God), which defined the dogma.

Catholics and few other Christian religions celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Assumption of Mary is a centerpiece of Roman Catholic theology and life. This significant feast recalls the spiritual and physical departure of the Mother of Jesus Christ from the earth, when both her soul and body were taken into the presence of God.

This article will seek to establish a biblical response to the question of the Assumption of the

Virgin Mary. Like so many theologians, I can't seem to speak a simple answer to a simple question. What is the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary and is it true?

The teaching is explicitly articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The Immaculate Virgin preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be more fully conformed to her son, the Lord of Lords and conqueror of sin and death. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians: In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the World, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death. "(CCC 966).(Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion, Feast of the Dormition, August 15th)

The foundation for the teaching is rooted in scripture, specifically in John's mysterious and apocalyptic vision recorded in Revelation 12. Although the bodily assumption of Mary is not clearly recorded in the bible, Catholic tradition identifies her with the "Woman clothed with the sun " who is described in Rev. 12. However, The passage calls that woman's appearance "a great sign" which "appeared in heaven" indicating that she is the mother of the Messiah and has "the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars". Interestingly, Eastern Christians have also traditionally held Mary's assumption into heaven as an essential component of their faith.

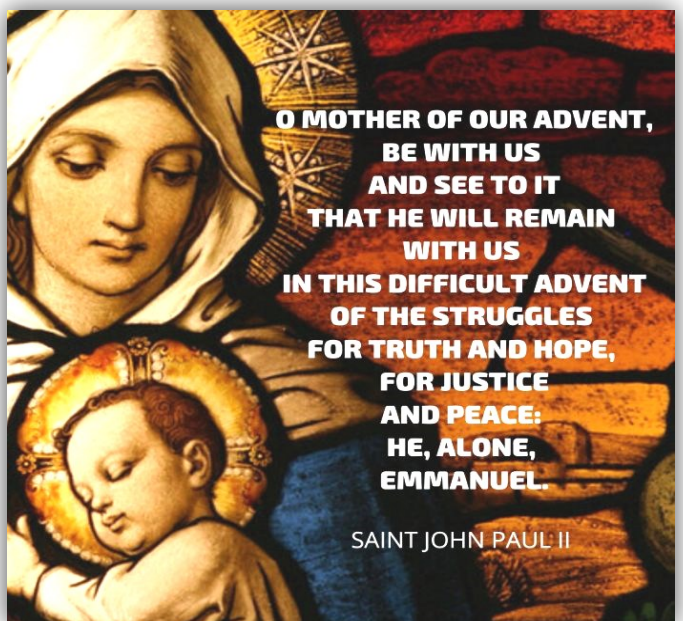
Benedict XVI says, because Mary "had made room for the Lord in her soul," she really became the true Temple where God made himself incarnate."Her body can never lose this dignity: "Mary is 'blessed' because totally, in body and soul and for ever-She became the Lord's dwelling place." Her bodily Assumption, then, precedes the general resurrection because of her unique participation in her Son's Incarnation and thus also as His mother in his public ministry and crucifixion. Having uniquely dwelt with her, her Son uniquely exalts

her.

proclaim, " that the Immaculate Mother of God was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory having completed her mission of her earthly life.



There is this logic that Mary who had kept her virginity undefiled in childbirth and adulthood should keep her own body free from all corruption and decay even after death ... in the same vein, she who had carried God, the creator in her womb as a child at her breast should dwell in the divine Tabernacles.



The feast of the Assumption is a Holy Day of Obligation for both Roman and Eastern - rite Catholics.

Fr. Henry Avemaria



Vatican II: A Retrospection for Propection



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One of the notable changes brought about by Vatican II is definitely the Church's positive orientation towards modern society. This is particularly evident in the language of the Council. One can observe that the Second Vatican Council adopts a pastoral and irenic approach in its documents rather than dogmatic or disciplinary language. The change in the style of the language is not a superficial change, because language is more than just a means of communication. It is also a way of thinking and a way of recognizing the reality around us. One observes a radical change in the basic attitude of the church towards the modern world. The positive focus on the modern world reflected in the documents of Vatican II represents in a way a complete reversal of the Church's earlier practice of authoritative statements including condemnations and definitions to a disposition of openness and pastoral commitment.

Some of the vital changes brought about by the Council are the following:

1. The self-understanding of the Church and its relationship to the modern world:

The Church is no longer understood as a perfect society or the Kingdom of God on earth, but sees itself as a "sacrament" for the world. It sees itself as a "Pilgrim-Church" that is looking forward to its full realization. Instead of emphasizing her separation from the secular world, she speaks of her solidarity with the whole world.

2. The reference to the apophatic dimension of divine reality:

The Council acknowledges a certain relativity of Catholic teaching and expresses a positive attitude towards both non-Catholic Christians and believers in non-Christian religions. In doing so, the Council recognizes reflections on religious truth outside of

the Catholic Church and opens up new avenues for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. Condemnation of anti-Semitic sentiment is another important aspect.

3. *The reformation of the liturgy:*

The reformation of the liturgy, including the use of vernacular for Holy Mass and other liturgical services, paves the way for better popular participation in the liturgy.

4. *A new understanding of the role of the laity:*

The Council emphasizes the role of the laity in the Church and encourages the laity to engage in global political and economic work for justice and the common good.

5. *The emphasis on human dignity and religious freedom:*

The Council not only declares that no one should be forced to take a religious position, but also recognizes a certain responsibility of the Catholic Church in this regard.

All of these changes have cumulatively contributed and are still contributing to a positive transformation of the Church. Thus, through the Second Vatican Council, the Church opened up the opportunity for a radical reorganization of its relationship to the world, to other religions and to science, as well as its self-understanding. It has been the beginning of a new era for the Church. As Karl Rahner rightly pointed out, **the church has made a "qualitative leap" to become the "World-Church"** that it had always been in potential for; Never, however, has a historical expression of this been so vivid as in the Second Vatican Council. It was definitely a new way of being for the Church that had tremendous implications for its continued existence. Of course, at least initially, change means uncertainty and some confusion.

Vatican II is both an end and a beginning. The first-century Jerusalem Council marked the end of a brief Judeo-Christian period in Church-history and the beginning of a long period of Christianity somewhat centered around the Mediterranean culture. With the Second Vatican Council a new phase has begun in which the Church is truly becoming a global Church.

In this phase of church history, which we call the period of the universal church, it is necessary that the unity of the church is no longer understood as uniformity, but as unity in plurality. The decentralization that Pope Francis is now envisaging and implementing in very many subtle ways through the strengthening and encouragement of the regional bishops' conferences, I see as a movement in this direction.

The Second Vatican Council

- The Second Vatican Council was the 21st general ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church.
- The Second Vatican Council took place between October 11, 1962 to December 8, 1965.
- The council took place in 4 separate sessions in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.
- It was called by Pope John XXIII(23rd). He died after the first session and his successor Paul VI(6th) was left to finish it.

The Church is now in a pluri-cultural situation. A proper inter-local-church dialogical dialogue marked with mutual respect and openness is required in this third period of the universal Church so that the fundamental unity of Christianity is preserved and maintained. K. Rahner writes: *"Everyone encounters the other in such a way that a last remnant of strangeness and incomprehensibility cannot be conquered. If two people understood each other completely, they would basically have become one and the same, and that would not only be completely unreal, but also highly uninteresting. It is part of being human that he accepts others as someone who is somehow misunderstood, as a stranger, someone who is alienating to a certain degree. This must also be recognized and lived in the Church"* (K. Rahner: Horizons of religiosity. Small essays, Vienna, 1984, 128-129).

This means that being a Catholic Church is always a becoming Catholic Church. In other words, it is not a destination, but a constant journey.

Rev Dr Clement Valluvasery

INCLUSIVE PASTORAL APPROACH



Rev. Dr. Laurence Culas
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Galatians 5:13

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh ; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”

We are ultimately called to a greater mission to expand God’s reign in all spheres of human community. Broadening action in the outer sphere becomes necessary to support and comfort everyone in need, embracing many different religions and even non-religious beliefs. For this, the Church invites us to practise an inclusive approach to our pastoral ministry.

The Covid-19 pandemic, as such, was a great test of our faith as well as to our doing justice to the Christian way of life. Some individuals and communities quite rose up to the occasion, rendering selfless services to the needy from all walks of life.

Two Cases: Inclusive and Exclusive

In the initial year of the pandemic, some parishes had started activities to reach out to their struggling brothers and sisters, regardless of the intimidating circumstances. Some of the practices started in parishes are continuing even today. Let me begin with two cases that would serve as examples to inclusive and exclusive pastoral approaches:

i. Ammayoonu - Mother’s Meal - Feeding the Redundant

During the pandemic, a parish began giving mid-day meal. Anyone who is hungry, regardless of their creed, caste, gender and language, could simply walk into the church premises and receive a free meal from 12:00 pm to 02:00 pm. This is a true case of inclusive pastoral approach.

ii. Manna - Providential Food- Distribution of Food Packets

Another parish, during the same period, began distributing mid-day meal to the hungry among the parish-

ners. Here, able volunteers would identify the needy, approach the generous people, collect food packets from them and then distribute. This is a typical example of an exclusive pastoral approach, for the food packets are distributed among disadvantaged Catholics.

Jesus' Approach



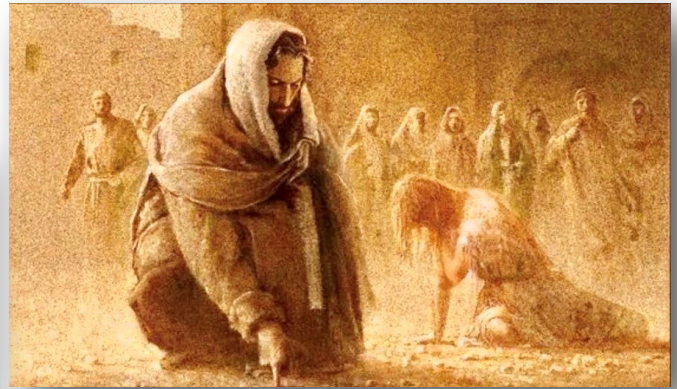
The benchmark of inclusion is Jesus Christ. His ministry reaches everyone. He seeks people out to visit their homes. He includes people in a personal way: they touch his garment; he takes them by the hand. Christ rose above the taboos of his time, welcoming and helping those who were outcasts in their society on the basis of sickness, poverty or sin. He repeatedly called on his followers to welcome the poor, disabled and sick, to provide for their needs.



He welcomed women among those he taught, looked past the social blindness of his time to see the depth of their faith and welcomed their support of him in his ministry. He welcomed the simple faith and love of children and called his followers to do the same, and to strive to emulate their faith.

Jesus repeatedly refused to condemn people, even where their wrongdoing offended everyone around

him, but instead called these into his fold, giving them an opportunity to start again. In some cases, Christ stepped in to defend a person that others wished to condemn.



Following in the footsteps of Christ, the apostles called on Christians to **“welcome one another as Christ welcomed you”** (Rom 15:7) to welcome strangers, not to exclude or have different standards of admission on the basis of wealth, social standing or sex, of gifts and talents, but to be **“eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”** (Eph 4:3).

Church's Approach



The Church, the sign and instrument of God's Kingdom, is an appropriate setting to welcome **“the great multitude from every tribe, tongue and nation”** (Rev 7:9). This biblical image invites us to imagine anew the ways in which the diversity of unique gifts can contribute to an organic and authentic common building of the Kingdom of God.

This is especially crucial in India, where the Church exists in the midst of diversity. An inclusive Church begins by listening and with humility, with self-examination and conversion. A Christ-centred Church is inclusive of persons rather than of ideologies.

Inclusion entails more than solidarity and accompaniment, which are grounded in creation and basic humanity. Inclusion recognises that every person

‘who live in the next door is a saint.’ A well-intentioned effort to be inclusive of one group should not result in the exclusion of another person or group.

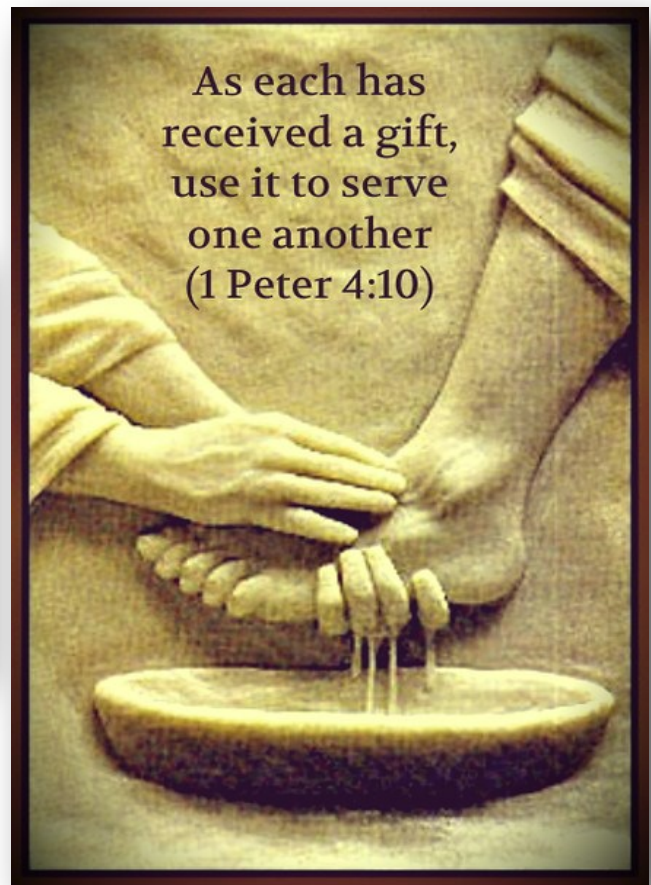
Helpful Attitudes



We are encouraged to create a process that inspires people, with no one excluded, to create a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel. The following dispositions will help to achieve this end (cf. *Christus Vivit*):

- **An innovative outlook:** To develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain **audacity**.
- **Being inclusive:** A participatory and co-responsible Church, capable of appreciating its own rich variety, embraces all those we often forget or ignore.
- **An open mind:** Let us avoid ideological labels and make use of all methodologies that have borne fruit.
- **Listening to each and every one:** By learning from one another, we can better reflect the wonderful multi-faceted reality that Christ’s Church is meant to be.
- **An understanding of “journeying together”:** To walk the path that God calls the Church to undertake for the third millennium.
- **Understanding the concept of a co-responsible Church:** To value and involve the unique role and vocation of each member of the Body of Christ, for the renewal and building up of the whole Church.

Reaching out through ecumenical and interreligious dialogue: To dream together and journey with one another throughout the entire human family.



Conclusion: The Preparatory Document tells us that in the ministry of Jesus, “*The election of the apostles is not the privilege of an exclusive position of power and separation, but the grace of an inclusive ministry of blessing and fellowship. Thanks to the gift of the Spirit of the Risen Lord, they are to guard the place of Jesus, without replacing him: not to put filters on his presence, but to make it easy to encounter him*” (PD, 19). So too all the clergy, endowed with the sacred gifts and charisms received through their ordination, have a critical role to play in ensuring that this synodal experience is an authentic encounter with the Risen Christ, grounded in prayer, nourished by the celebration of the Eucharist, and inspired by listening to the Word of God (See, *Vademecum* 4.3).

Rev Dr Laurence Culas



PRODIGAL SON'S BROTHER AND US



Richard Antony Alappat
Bahrain

Luke 15:11-32

“The Parable of the Prodigal son”

Who hasn't heard at least one sermon on the prodigal son? Most messages are focused on the love of the father who waits patiently for his wayward son to come to his senses – after squandering his inheritance and compromising his integrity – and to return home into the loving arms of his father. We marvel at this illustration of the Grace and Love of God, our heavenly Father, who runs to meet us the moment we turn our hearts back to him in repentance.

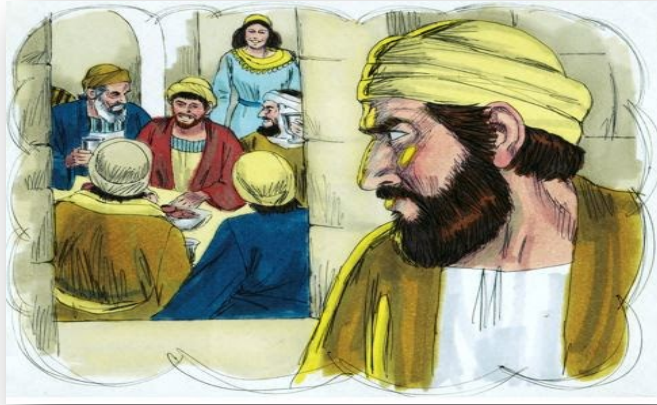
Who is this story really for? Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in response to the Pharisees and teachers of the law muttering about the “sinners” Jesus chose to associate with. He wanted them to understand the intense love God has for the “lost” and the rejoicing that takes place in heaven when a sinner repents. But is that the only lesson from this story?

Over in Luke 18:9-14, Jesus shares a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector (contrasting the pompous “righteousness” of the Pharisee with the humble repentance of the “sinner” tax collector). Notice *why* he shared this parable: “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt.” (Luke 18:9).

What an apt description of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in general! They thought they were better than everyone else (and from a legalistic, religious standpoint, they were). They thought they were the righteous ones and everyone else was beneath them. No wonder they were offended in chapter 15 that Jesus would dare eat with tax collectors and undeserving “sinners.” So, when Jesus told the parable of the lost son (“The Prodigal Son”) in chapter 15, He used the opportunity

to teach them about more than just the excessive love of God; Jesus took a swipe at their self-righteousness by including the description of the reaction of the elder brother.

Why does the elder brother matter? When we read the story out of context, we sometimes wonder why Jesus would talk about the elder brother at all. It feels like an interruption in the parable or an



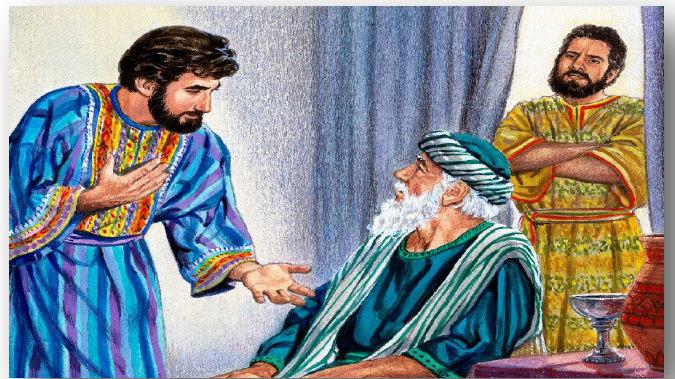
unnecessary add-on. There's a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost son... and then, "Now his elder son was in the field" It's somewhat anti-climactic. There could be little doubt in His hearer's minds, though, that the muttering elder son was an illustration of the muttering Pharisees and teachers of the law who could find no pleasure in the repentance of sinners because of their own self-righteousness and indignation. While Jesus described the wayward son, they were probably disgusted by his actions. He didn't care about his father at all! He just wanted his money. He took off and indulged in one party after another without any thought of his father... that is, until he found himself penniless and feeding pigs. Thank God *they* were not like that! It's the same attitude the Pharisee displayed in Luke 18:9-14. In that parable, the Pharisee thanks God he is not like that humbled tax collector, and then he lists all his religious accomplishments. When the elder son in the story of the prodigal son tells his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command," they were probably thinking, "Now, there's someone we can relate to! He's the good one!"

But Jesus tags on the elder brother description to drive the point home that the younger brother wasn't the only one who showed disregard for the father. Both sons were "lost." They were equally in need of being found. In the parable, the father actually went looking for the older brother, just as

the shepherd actively searched for the lost sheep and the woman searched for the lost coin until she found it. The one who was truly lost was the one who thought he wasn't – the one who didn't recognize his need.

Now let us examine ourselves. And is this not like many of us today??? We're so caught up in our own ill-perceived righteousness that we miss out on opportunities to extend and receive grace, love, and mercy. We're too busy making attempts to protect our own "assets" and we fail to realize that everything we have, God has entrusted us to have it. Many faithful church attendees are elder-brother types who tend to see their type as "good" and the other type as "bad." If only everyone could be more like them, the world would be a better place. But Jesus' parable reminds us that the ones who are truly "lost" are the ones who don't realize their need. Here are a few characteristics of the elder brother in the parable and how we can make sure we don't fall into the trap of pride, anger, resentment, and indignation.

He thought because he obeyed the rules, he deserved blessing. Have you ever found yourself asking God to heal someone because he/she deserved



it or because he/she has been faithful for so many years? Have you caught yourself thinking surely you will make it to heaven simply because you go to church every week and you don't break any rules? We are very much prone to keeping a checklist and treating our salvation like a contract. If we just do enough of the right things, we'll make it. That's how the elder brother felt. "All these years I've been slaving for you...yet you never gave me even a young goat..." He was mad because he didn't think he was getting what he deserved for his faithful service. Have you ever felt short-changed by God? Have you felt that your service has been overlooked and that you deserve a pat on the back? Has your pride puffed you up to the point where

you think it's actually possible to earn God's grace and blessing?

His motive was to receive, not to show love to his father. Perhaps the real reason the elder brother was so angry was because his younger brother had squandered half of their shared inheritance. Now that he has been welcomed back into the family, they would both receive a slice from a



much smaller pie when their father died. He didn't care about his father any more than his younger brother had when he demanded his inheritance while his father was still alive. So, for us, our relationship with our heavenly Father should center on pleasing Him, loving Him, and growing closer to Him, even if it means we don't get everything we want. If you don't wind up with a "mansion over the hilltop" when you get to heaven and find yourself in a one-room apartment in the new Jerusalem, will you be disappointed? Are you serving God only for the promise of getting a crown or walking on streets of gold? Or do you want to know Him more than you want another breath? Love for Jesus must be our starting point, without loving only to get something, even if that something has been promised and is beneficial to everyone. Our motives must be pure. If you're only serving God so your spouse will return to you or so you'll get a better job or so He'll bless you financially, then your motives are tainted. Love Jesus for who He is, not what He can give you.

He thought his brother's sinfulness was unforgivable. The elder brother was indignant that "this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes" was the object of his father's affection and celebration. His father might be willing to forgive, but by golly, he wouldn't! His standards were higher than his father's. This sin

was unforgivable. While the younger brother might be his father's son, he was no longer a brother to him. How pompous and arrogant! But Christians do this all the time. They judge and hold past sins against one another. They identify people as "former" this or "ex" that. Instead of offering the clean slate of forgiveness, they hang on to the dirt so they can bring it up again later. If the father, who has been wronged, can forgive, why can't we? And as I was reminded once through a sermon by Dr. Earle Wilson, forgiveness means forgiving yourself, too. If God can bring himself to forgive you, then you can forgive yourself, too. Your standard is not higher than God's!

He resented his father's joy and refused to share in it. Think of the long, dark, heartbroken nights this father had spent worrying about his lost son. Think about his disappointment as days turned into months and perhaps years of longing for him to return. And now he is so full of joy that everyone in the household and probably the town came to celebrate with him. And the elder son won't even come to the party. He didn't share his father's heart. He didn't share his joy. As Christians, our hearts should be broken by the things that break the heart of God. And they should also be filled with joy by the things that bring joy to the father. That means we need to know Him and what He truly wants. We need to get on the same page as God and see the world through His eyes. I admit this is not always easy to do. But we're not on this planet to look out for our own interests. We're here as His ambassadors to represent Him to a world that is lost and in need of a relationship with Him. If we can't catch His heart and reflect it, then we don't know Him as well as we need to.

Even when I was writing this, I was searching my own heart. I'm afraid that on more than one occasion I've found myself exhibiting pride and trusting more in my own works than in God's grace. I wonder if I always see the world the way God sees it. God help me! God help all of us! May we never become the Pharisees who are blinded by our own "goodness." May we search our hearts daily and examine ourselves on the inside rather than just the outside.

Richard Antony Alappat

Do you love me? John 21:15-19

LOVE



JOHN THOMAS PAZHAYIDATHU
NEW YORK

In John chapter 21, Jesus is asking Peter one specific question, do you love me, Peter. When Peter heard this question, he thought Jesus is joking and anyway he answered yes, I love you. For Peter it was a silly question. He was the closest associate of Jesus and the smartest one. He was following him all throughout his ministry and witnessed everything Jesus have done. Then again Jesus asked the same question and Peter answered Jesus the same way he answered first time. But this time he wasn't

understood the reason why Jesus was asking again and again. Jesus was not asking Peter about his personal love towards him, but Jesus was representing the marginalized, lost, helpless and hopeless people. Jesus was asking about the love that he has shown in washing their feet, the love that he has shown for those who are suffering, For the love he has shown for the sick, the love he has shown for the children and the ultimate love he has shown on the cross. Jesus has turned into the representative of these people and asking Peter do you love me; Jesus is asking for those people.

When we say we love lord, there is no other way to love him other than loving his people and serving them. The people who say that they love God and spending their time in payer and meetings and do nothing for his lambs, have answered first two questions Jesus has asked. But the third time the same question Jesus had asked, is in the air. Many of us are unable to listen to the third time Jesus repeated the same question. Therefore, we do not have a brokenness in our heart like Peter had. The third time Peter understood the meaning of love and submitted himself and Jesus used him to take care of his lambs. The same question is addressing to each one of us and our response is by increasing the intensity of our prayers. But the answer is loving his lamb. Do our heart breaks by seeing the suffering of his lambs, do we seek the lost lamb? If we do, we can answer like Peter everything you know lord I love you.

10 WAYS TO LOVE

ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

1 ANSWER WITHOUT ARGUING PROVERBS 17: 1	6 TRUST WITHOUT WAVERING 1 CORINTHIANS 13: 7
2 SPEAK WITHOUT ACCUSING JAMES 1: 19	7 FORGIVE WITHOUT PUNISHING COLOSSIANS 3: 13
3 PROMISE WITHOUT FORGETTING PROVERBS 13: 12	8 PRAY WITHOUT CEASING COLOSSIANS 1: 9
4 LISTEN WITHOUT INTERRUPTING PROVERBS 18	9 GIVE WITHOUT SPARING PROVERBIOS 21, 26
5 WORK WITHOUT COMPLAINT PHILIPPIANS 2: 14	10 GIVE WITHOUT REGRET 2 CORINTHIANS 9: 7

confident like before. When Jesus asked him third time Peter broke into tears and he knew why Jesus was asking the question again and again. This time he answered Jesus you know everything. Now Peter

Amen ♥♥



Nisha Jacob
Swindon, UK

THE FIRST SIGN - WEDDING AT CANA AND SOME INCREDIBLE FACTS

The wedding in Cana is the setting for the first of the seven signs performed by Jesus in the Gospel of John chapter 2 verses 1-11. Let us explore some incredible facts about this miracle.

It was Jesus's first miracle : The event in Cana was the first recorded miracle of Jesus, as stated in John 2:11

It shows the uniqueness of the Gospel of John : Interestingly, only the Gospel of John records Jesus' first miracle which is missing in other synoptic gospels.

Gospel of John calls it a "sign" instead of a miracle : John uses the term signs to show that these miraculous actions show us the truth that the Kingdom of God has come among us in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Only Jesus, Mary, the servants, and the disciples knew how the water turned to wine : As far as the entire chapter of John 2 is concerned, only a few people knew what exactly happened. The seemingly private act of Jesus might relate to His statements, "My hour has not come."

Mary was called a "woman" instead of "mother." : While it might sound strange to us in the contemporary world where such an address would be considered rude. Well there are two explanations, one is Lexical and the other is Theological. While it may sound "disrespectful" to us, the Greek interpretations explain the opposite. "'Woman,' or, rather, 'Lady,' is in Greek a title of respect, used in addressing queens." In today's word, "woman" is the same as calling "madam," a formal title for women. Theological reasons is the importance of Mary, she is the new Eve; she is the one who says yes to God, whereas the first Eve said no. The first Eve was called "woman" (Gen. 2:22) as is Mary, both at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (John 2:4) and at the end (John 19:26).

It demonstrates Jesus' authority over science and demonstration of God's power : It bypassed the fundamental laws of the chemical reaction, going beyond human comprehension! It is one of the unimaginable proofs that God's power and authority are beyond the reach of science! The phenomenon demonstrates His power's reach, encompassing heaven and earth, including subatomic particles. Yes, lifeless objects follow His command. His power is beyond the boundaries of time and natural laws.

Mary's final words in the Bible : "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:5) is Mary's final words in scripture. Mary's words are profound and can provide an entire lifetime of meditation. Her words, "Do whatever he tells you," do not only apply to the servants at the feast, but to every Christian throughout history.

It is a manifestation of God's blessing : Jesus could have just made an ordinary wine similar to the one that ran out. Yet, He chose to turn water into the finest wine! He not only made wine of the best quality. But He made lots of it when He could just produce enough! The abundance of wine demonstrates the overflowing blessings of God. It reminds us of God's grace when He grants what we ask. It is guaranteed to be of the highest quality, just like the finest wine at Cana.

Mary's remarkable intercession : Mary interceded and pleaded before Jesus to turn the situation around. It was not just then that Mary intervened in Cana, she continues to plea before God on our behalf now.

God's miracles work best when we do our parts : The miracle at Cana shows that God's blessing works best when we do our part. Indeed, God can do everything alone without humans or angels helping. But because miracles are for human consumption, we have to do our parts. It is for us to glorify God by witnessing His power working in us. God could have snapped or winked to create the wine. Yet God allows man's participation in the process. The result yielded the finest wine and a witness for Jesus by those servants and His disciples.

The water into wine miracle symbolizes the spiritual dryness of Israel : The running out of wine symbolizes the spiritual dryness of Israel. Their stubbornness and association with the pagans made them disobey the commandments of God. They diluted God's teaching to accommodate their unwarranted traditions. The refill from plain water symbolizes the ministry of Christ. His Words of salvation will make anyone quenched of thirst for good and restore blessings from God.

It points to Jesus' blood : During the last supper, Jesus reminds His disciples that the wine symbolizes His blood. At Gethsemane, He talks of the bitter wine that represents His suffering. But the most refined wine was at the wedding at Cana. The miraculous story tells us: The blood of Christ who endured suffering but never yielded to sin. That turns out to be humanity's saving grace, thus making it the finest wine.

Jesus' attendance at the wedding stamps His blessing of marriage : Jesus' attendance at the wedding shows His approval of the event. The serious work of His ministry didn't prevent Jesus from participating in such a joyous reception. Surely His presence at the wedding in Cana proves His strong endorsement and blessing of the holy sacrament marriage.

So my dear friends, while the guests were obsessed with the wine, the God's faithful people let us focus on the manifestation of Jesus' glory! the true winemaker. If we only FULLY surrender to Him and allow Him to reign in us, a life of blessing and PERFECTION is guaranteed. Finally, His glory also will manifest in us, thus making us the ultimate reflection of God's character. May God bless you abundantly.

Amen



Rose Marie Richard
Bahrain

GIVE THANKS

Luke 17:11-19

(Jesus Cleanses Ten Men with a Skin Disease)

Only Luke's gospel (Luke 17:11-19) has the record of the ten lepers who were cleansed by the Lord while He was on His way to Jerusalem. These leprous men "stood at a distance" (verse 12), and when they saw the Lord, they cried to Him for mercy (verse 13). He commanded them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests", and as they obeyed, they were cleansed. One returned to give thanks (verses 15-16), but the other nine were not heard of again (verse 17). The man who returned to give thanks received a word of commendation from the Lord (verse 19).

Notice in verse 13 their cry was earnest - they were *lepers*, but even they may be sure of the Lord's help. Thank God, no-one is too sinful, too diseased or in too great a difficulty to call upon Him and receive His blessing. Christ is no respecter of persons; here were Jews and Samaritans - Look up Romans 10:11-13. ¹¹ The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew

and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved - look up Psalm 50:15. Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me - see what Psalm 34:6 and 19 say!

From verse 14 we see that He dealt with these ten men in accordance with Leviticus 14:2-4. What he said in effect was, "If you believe that I can heal you, and am healing you, go and show yourselves to them that they may see you are healed." In contrast with this, turn back to read of the Lord's healing of the leper who came to Him in Luke 5:12-14. He did not send that man to the priests; He cleansed him in a moment by the power of His word and His touch. Or think of *Naaman*, who before he was cleansed had to dip in Jordan seven times - look up 2 Kings 5:14. Likewise, in the matter of salvation the Lord is sovereign, and in no two cases does He work alike. Compare, for example, His dealings

with *Nicodemus* (John 3), with the woman at the well (John 4), with the Queen's Treasurer (Acts 8), with Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9) and with *Cornelius* (Acts 10). How different were the experiences of these people! There is only one way to God - look up John 10:9; 14:6; Acts 4:12; but there are very many ways to Christ.

In verse 14 Jesus said, "Go...show yourselves... and as they went, they were made clean." They simply took the Lord at His word, and when they did what He said they received the blessing they needed so much! The operative words here are: "*as they went...*"; in other words, as they obeyed, they were cleansed. If we would experience fullness of spiritual blessing, we must realize it can only be as we are willing to do what the Lord says. What are the commands of the Gospel that are clearly set out in the Word of God?

COME - Isaiah 1:18; Matthew 11:29; John 6:37; Revelation 22:17.

REPENT - Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; Romans 2:4.

FORSAKE - Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 5:29; Romans 13:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

BELIEVE - John 3:16; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:8.

CONFESS - Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9; 1 Timothy 6:13.

BE BAPTISED - Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 10:48.

BE AT THE LORD'S TABLE - Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

The measure of our obedience to the Lord will determine the measure of His blessing experienced and enjoyed in our lives - look up John 2:5 and compare Acts 9:6. Full obedience brings fullness of blessing.

Look at verses 15-16. It was natural to return and give thanks, and yet nine did not do so! If the Lord had cured you from leprosy, would you not thank Him? Have you ever thanked Him for leaving Heaven *for you* (2 Corinthians 8:9); for coming to Bethlehem's manger *for you* (Luke 2:7); for triumphing in the wilderness *for you* (Matthew 4:11); for His three years of public ministry *for you* (Acts 10:38); and for all that He endured in Gethsemane and accomplished on Calvary *for you* (Luke 22:44; 1 Peter 2:24)? Have you ever thanked Him that He rose triumphant from the grave *for you* (Romans 4:25; Revelation 1:18); and that He ever lives to make intercession *for*

you (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34)? Have you thanked Him, *not in word only* but by the dedication of your life to His service? Look at the following references, and notice some of the things for which the apostle Paul was thankful: *redemption* (2 Corinthians 9:15); *kindness* (2 Corinthians 8:16); *obedience* (Romans 6:17); and *fellowship* (2 Timothy 1:3).



Look at verse 19. It is one thing to be cleansed, forgiven and saved, but it is another thing to know it. Do you know it? Many Christians are constantly filled with doubts and fears. The way to be sure about our salvation and the fullness of spiritual blessing that is ours in Christ is to do what this one leper did - verse 15 & 16 "¹⁵He turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus's feet and thanked him". That enables the Lord, through the channel of our faith, to make us whole - verse 19!



Is there a more potent lesson for us. You cannot wait until the problems are over to start walking in faith. You cannot put conditions on holy God. You cannot say, "Lord, as soon as there's enough money, I follow your instructions." You cannot pray, "Lord, if

you'll just solve this issue in my family, I'll start to church." You cannot put conditions on God! Instead, God places a demand for faith on us, before anything at all has changed.

God might say, "Love me despite the disease. Obey me despite the lack of talent, or the lack of resources. Follow me now, despite the depression. Say no to the temptation, while it still is difficult. Praise me in the darkest of nights, and in the worst of circumstances."

This is the nature of God, a God who loves you so much, He'll give you the opportunity to be thankful when nothing about your circumstances gives you that motivation. My friends, that is the very definition of faith. If you praised God only on the good days, only in the best of circumstances, it would not be faith at all. That would be more like a business arrangement - and this is not about business!

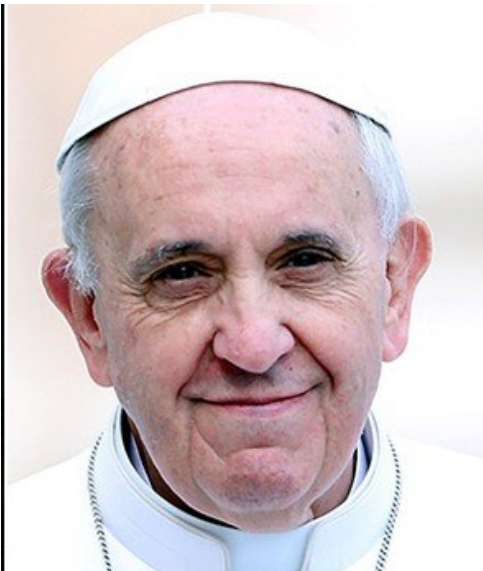
Overcome with emotion, Hinton left the service. He was followed by a team member who said, "Jack, I guess you'll never be able to sing that song again."

"Yes, I will," Jack replied, "but I'll never sing it the same way.

Be thankful in the work of God's goodness. This kind of thankfulness is worship. One of the men came back to Jesus and praised God. He was thankful. He was public about it. He was loud - he wasn't shy at all.

Why was he so loud? This guy had been forced to yell for as long as he'd had leprosy. Had it been years? He'd probably yelled so long, he didn't know how to come to the Lord quietly, or even in a normal voice. When he came back and fell at the feet of Jesus, he was just louder than the normal person, and he was praising God.

Look at the Scripture again and walk with me



May we learn to say "thank you" to God and to one another. We teach children to do it, and then we forget to do it ourselves!

— Pope Francis —

Some of you are in horrible circumstances, right now. And what awaits you today, this week, is a question. Will you be thankful despite the difficult circumstances? If so, you will have experienced faith.

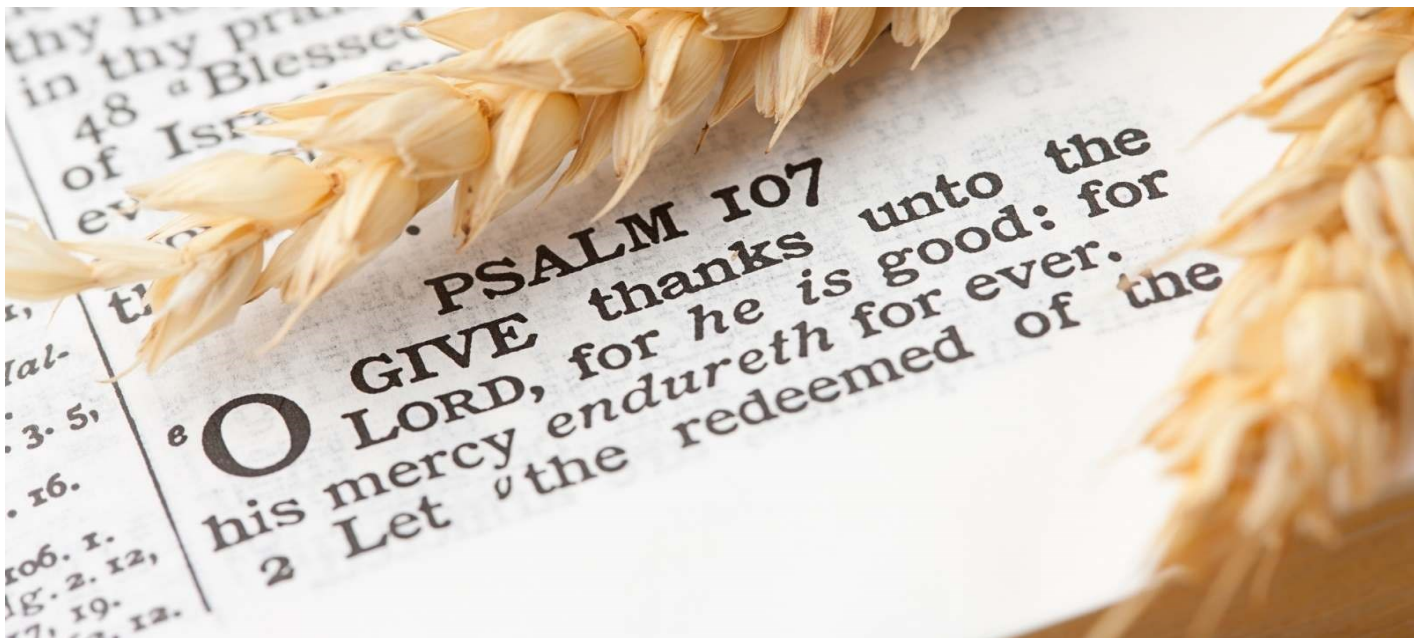
While on a short-term missions trip in 1996, Pastor Jack Hinton from New Bern, North Carolina, was leading worship at a leper colony on the island of Tabango. There was time for one more song, so he asked if anyone had a request. A woman who had been facing away from the pulpit turned around.

"It was the most hideous face I had ever seen," Hinton said. "The woman's nose and ears were entirely gone. The disease had destroyed her lips as well. She lifted a fingerless hand in the air and asked, 'Can we sing Count Your Many Blessings?'"

through this. We're going to look at three different words that are all trying to say the same thing. They're all saying that this leper-used-to-be is well.

Look first at verse 15. "One of them, when he saw he was healed . . ." and stop there. This Greek word is "**hi-a-tha**," which is a purely medical term. It means to mend, to repair. It's like a broken bone finally mending. This guy was all patched up.

Look at verse 17. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Stop there. This is a different word than hi-a-tha. This is "**kath-a-ri-dzo**," the root word for our "catheter." It, too, is a medical word in part, for it means, "remove the impurities." When a doctor inserts a heart "cath", angioplasty might remove a blockage of an artery. It will cause healing. Naturally, the Jewish connotations of this word are important, too. To be "cleansed" was exactly what the



priest would be looking for, and would declare. It carried some religious overtones, too.

And now, look at one more word. In verse 19, Jesus says to this very thankful man, **"Rise and go; your faith has made you well."**

"Made you well . . ." that's a different word. It's not a medical word, necessarily, although it was used to describe the safe delivery of a baby. This is the word, "so-so," which means, "saved." The Greeks used it for people who escaped dangerous situations. Sailors surviving a storm at sea had been saved, they said. "So-dzo." When Matthew began his gospel, he started with the Christmas story. The angel told Joseph to name the Christ child "Jesus," because that name meant that he would "save people from their sins." He would "so-dzo" the people.

When Paul described what would happen to a person who publicly professed Jesus as Lord and savior, he used this same word.

". . . If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (so-dzo). For one believes with the heart, leading to righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, leading to salvation (so-dzo!) (Romans 10:9-10).

Can I give you another reason to love this Jesus? Can I show you another proof that he loves you, no matter who you are, where you've been, or what you've done?

It's a story Matthew recorded (Read Matt. 8:1-4).

A man with skin disease approaches Jesus. He knelt before Jesus, begging for help. Matthew

writes that Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

A moment later, he tells us that Jesus spoke the words: "Be made clean . . . go show yourself to the priest."

Did you see both miracles? The leprosy was gone. That's the easy miracle to see. But the other one? It was the touch of a loving hand. It was the touch of a human hand.

Today, you've touched more people in an hour than this man had touched in years. Today, you've been close to friends, or family. Maybe a child has been in your lap. Maybe a hug met you at a door. Maybe it was a firm handshake from a firmer friend.

Not this guy. He longed for a loving touch more than he longed for food. More than he needed water, he needed love. And before he was healed, while there was still a tremendous risk, Jesus was willing to give him that touch.

No abuse has scarred you so badly that Jesus won't touch you. Jesus is willing to lovingly touch you, hold you, and restore you.

No sin has made you unlovable. Jesus is willing to call you his friend and stand beside you. It was his death that paid for your sin.

No fear has disqualified you. No problem has put your life on hold. No failure has negated his love. The miracle of Thanksgiving is the love of Jesus, for you. No exceptions, no qualifications, no doubts. He loves you.

And for that, O God, we are so thankful.





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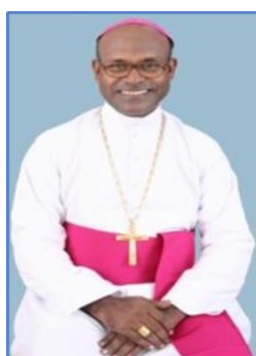
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