

Kadosh Marian Voice

Holiness Firmness Truthfulness Faithfulness



LENT

A SEASON OF REPENTANCE

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

Matthew 17:5

Q1 2023 Edition

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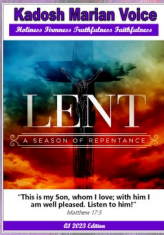
Kadosh Marian Ministries is a non-profit organization with its roots across the world. It is also established since 1994 as an approved charitable trust in UK, subsequently in India and New York. Kadosh Marian Ministries obtained approval for the area of operation to include USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, 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.
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- Visiting refugee camps and providing food, clothes and medicines.
- Contributing to build five homes for poor families in a year minimum.

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EDITORIAL

The grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are with you all.

We are at the threshold of the holy season of Lent. Lent offers us an ideal opportunity to renew our lives, by taking decisions based on the word of God and aided by the grace of God operative in Christ. During this Lenten desert journey towards Easter, the word of God will change us to choose God and his ways above all else. Each year during Lent, we focus our spiritual journey to Jerusalem, preparing to walk our way to the cross and experience the victorious resurrection. This path is long in nature leading through the hills and valleys of Prayer, personal mortification and repentance. But it is necessary because each step that we take prepares our heart for the joy of resurrection. Lent is a journey of the soul in search of the joy promised by the Lord. It is a journey in imitation of Jesus who went to Jerusalem to endure persecution, suffering, crucifixion, death and finally to rise again from the dead.



FR JOSEPH XAVIER
MANAGING EDITOR

St. John in his epistle demands that **“whoever says, I abide in him’ ought to walk just as he walked”**(1 Jn 2:6). Again in the gospel of Mathew Jesus tells his disciples, **“If any want to be my followers, let him deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”** (Mt 16:24). Just as the Lord underwent suffering and death for the love of humanity we too are called to share his life here on earth with the hope of sharing the glory of the resurrection. **“See we are going up to Jerusalem”** (Mk 10:33). With these words, the Lord invites the disciples to journey with him to complete His redemptive mission. Today we are asked by Christ to “go up to Jerusalem”, he compels particularly in Lent a proper time for self- conversion taking part in the mystery of His death and resurrection. The poor disciples misunderstood about the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem imagining that Jesus would establish a material kingdom and these disciples would be placed in high position honoring them. Later the disciples understood the intention of Jesus, that is to prepare their lives to suffer and die with him. The season of Lent reminds a disciple of the demand of sacrificial dying of self at the service of others.

It is appropriate to recall and meditate the Lenten Messages of Pope Francis published last year as well as this year. Last year Pope Francis invited the whole church not to grow tired of doing well. With the patient perseverance of the farmer we ought to persevere in doing well. Pope encouraged the faithful by saying, “If we are misled by the enticements of the evil one, let us not hesitate to return to God, who “is generous in forgiving” (Is 55:7). He exhorts us to cultivate fraternal love towards everyone, and through prayers, Fasting and Charity get united to Christ, who gave his life for our sake(cf.2Cor5:14-15).

This year, Pope says that during Lent we are invited to ascend “a high mountain” Tabor in the company of Jesus and to live a particular experience of spiritual discipline – asceticism – as God’s holy people. Lenten penance is a commitment, sustained by grace, to overcoming our lack of faith and our resistance to following Jesus on the way of the cross. This is precisely what Peter and the other disciples needed to do. To deepen our knowledge of the Master, to fully understand and embrace the mystery of his salvation. Pope associates the journey to Mount Tabor during Lent with Synodal experience. The Lenten journey of penance and the journey of the Synod alike have as their goal a transfiguration, both personal and ecclesial. A transformation that, in both cases, has its model in the Transfiguration of Jesus and is achieved by the grace of his paschal mystery. So that this transfiguration may become a reality in us this year. Pope quotes two key words of transfiguration. The voice from the cloud says: **“Listen to him”** (Mt 17:5).

Jesus came and touched them, saying, **‘Rise, and do not be afraid.’** And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone” (Mt 17:6-8). Lent is the great annual Retreat of the church. The meditating points of this retreat are fasting, prayer and almsgiving. These three complement one another and work together to pull us away from ungodly influences and to strengthen and guide us back to new life

in Jesus.

“Prayer is an essential component of growth in our relationship with the Living God. Prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look turned toward heaven, and it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy” — St. Therese of Lemieux

“Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” — St. John of Damascus

“Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him.” — St. Augustine

Pope Francis said, *“Lent is a privileged time for prayer.”* In prayer, we draw closer in relationship with God. Relationship with God makes us grateful for the blessings we have received. Prayer is the cornerstone of our Lenten journey and is vital to all of our actions in life.

Fasting: True fasting is “tearing one’s heart and returning to God” with true repentance for one’s sins (Joel 2:13). It is “breaking unjust fetters, freeing the oppressed, sharing one’s bread with the hungry, clothing with the naked, home with the homeless, and not turning away from the needy relatives” (Is 58:6-7).

Almsgiving: Almsgiving (giving) is a response to God, one that we can come to through prayer and fasting. It is a way to live out our gratitude for all that God has given us, reflecting the realization that we are the Body of Christ, responsible for each other. Justice, mercy, and charity are integral elements of our baptism that call us to be disciples of Jesus. Scripture References for Almsgiving: Leviticus 19: 9-10; Proverbs 19: 17

I conclude this editorial with a Lenten Prayer. *Lord Jesus, create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we may experience the power of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice, and peace. God of mystery, we journey with Jesus during this Lenten season with the certain hope that you will recreate our worlds that all people will live in peace and justice. Call us out of the wilderness of apathy and help us to reach out to those who do not know hope or love. Hear the longings of our hearts and the cries of those who yearn to live in peace and justice. Let Easter burst into a world waiting to be re-created. Amen.*





***REVIEWING
THE
COMMUNION
OF THE SAINTS***



H.G. Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios

Metropolitan & President, Catholicos of the East & Malankara Metropolitan

His Grace was Born on 18-12-1952 as the son of Palamoottil Mathews and Mercy. Home parish is St. Thomas Orthodox Cathedral, Kollam Diocese. After completing the formal education, Joined the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam secured GST and BD degrees. His Grace took his Ph. D - Fordam University and M. R. E - Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, America. His Grace is well versed in different languages such as Malayalam, English, Greek, Hebrew, Amharic, Syriac and also took several key positions of the church. He is elected as the Metropolitan candidate on 17th February at the Malankara Association held at Sasthamkotta. He is consecrated as Metropolitan on 12th May 2010 at Mar Elia Cathedral, Kottayam. His Grace is serving the Delhi Diocese as its Metropolitan.

The Orthodox Church, along with other Churches that follow the Apostolic Tradition, strongly adheres to the communion of the Saints, the community of those spiritual fathers whose exemplary life enabled them to attain a blessed stance in God's presence, especially in the afterlife. Hailing from all walks of life, their encounter with Christ Jesus so transformed them that they surrendered everything to become a true follower, much like the response of Simon Peter, Andrew and the Zebedee brothers (Mk 1:16-20; Mt 4:18-22; Lk 5:1-11). The Orthodox Church firmly believes that such spiritual fathers, just as they did in this life, continue their intercession for all of creation before God. Communion and fellowship would entail that the Saints interact with the living community of the Church as all history moves to its point of culmination in Christ's second coming. Exposure to other denominations, especially those that reject an Apostolic Tradition, and religious TV programmes, have raised doubts in the minds of the Orthodox members regarding its Scriptural basis. Emphasis is placed on the absolute role of Christ in the redemptive process, specifically He being the only access to the Father (St. Jn 14:6). Much aspersions are cast on the intercession of the Saints as not maintaining this role of Christ, introducing as it were, their subsidiary participation in intercession. Our objective, therefore, will be to present a summary presentation of how the Orthodox Church understands the role of saints and their prayerful pleading before God.

Tracing the Evolution of the Concept

As in many of the Church's beliefs and practices, the bedrock of the concept of saints and saintli-

ness arises out of Israel's understanding of its covenantal relationship and worship of God (Yahweh). Through the enactment of the covenant, God had chosen Israel as His possession and the Israelites in return were to exemplify the character of Yahweh as holy (Hebrew *kadosh*) in its worship and way of life: **"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy"** (Lev 19:2). This character of God as holy, was His distinguishing feature that separates Him from all other deities. Through this fellowship of God and His people, all Israel was to imbibe God's holiness, thus essentially becoming holy. After all, God alone was the fountainhead of all holiness.

The term, when used as an attribute of God, conveyed a spectrum of related concepts, for God's holiness was intrinsically and organically connected to His other aspects. The holiness of God is, thus, related to His majesty, glory, power and judgement. It is God's holiness that exalts Him as the only true God and does not allow for the worship of any others, a fact which He jealously guards and commands Israel to observe (Ex 20: 2-3; 34: 14). In His holiness God was experienced as a distant God, separated from the mundane and profane of this world, but even so He was intimately involved with His creation, especially His people Israel. The covenant God had ratified with Israel was the enduring testimony to His graciousness, long-suffering love and forgiveness and His recalling of the promises He had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And it was in the context of this covenantal relationship that God executed judgement against Israel for their recusancy and idolatrous unfaithfulness. Even so, this judgement was tempered by His mercy and grace, so that God's name remained holy and hallowed (cf. God's self-description in Ex 34: 6-7). It was as a part of God's redefining of holiness that

now was illustrated in His special love and provident care of the widows, the orphans, the aliens and those marginalised by society.



But the appellation was also applied to heavenly beings who stood in a more intimate relationship with God, such as the members of the Heavenly Council (termed in Hebrew as bene Elohim as in Ps 89: 7) and the various orders of the angels (Heb. Malakim as in Dt 33:2), who served God and followed His directives. What is noteworthy is that this term “holy ones” has also been translated as “saints” (as in the King James Version [KJV]), underscoring the synonymy of the two terms. These holy ones, or saints are also said to constitute the great heavenly host that would accompany God in His appearance at the end of time (Zech 14:5). In the Book of Daniel, the saints are depicted as explaining the heavenly visions to the Seer, here pointing to their awareness of the counsel of God (Dan 8: 13).

The extensive use of the term “saints” was a development in the early Christian Church, where it was the common designation for all Christians. In fact, St. Paul uses this term to refer collectively to the particular congregation he is addressing (Rom 1:7; I Cor 1:2; II Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2). By using this term, St. Paul was drawing on the rich heritage of its usage to point to the baptism and anointing of all Christians, their call to discipleship and the process of transfiguration symbolised by their dying and rising with Christ (Rom 6:1-5) as the necessary corollary of being incor-

porated in Christ (13x in Romans., 12x in I Cor, 7x in II Cor, 7x in Gal, 13x in Eph, 10x in Phil, 3x in Col, 4x in I Thess, 2x in II Thess and 3x in Phil). That this was a common designation for Christians is attested to by the other NT writings, such as Acts (9:13, 32, 41; 26:10) Hebrews (13:24) and Revelation (5:8).

It was during the persecutions experienced by the early Church that the designation “saints” came to be applied specially to the martyrs, who had shed their blood for their witness to Christ and the faith of the Church. Holding a privileged place as a result of their sacrifice, the martyrs were seen as standing in an intimate relation to God and who continued their intercession for the Church as a whole (Rev 5:8; 8:3). And it was the continuing witness of the holy ones by their saintly life and ascetical practices that furthered the evolution of the term to the stage that we understand it today as referring to a group who have passed from this life and continue to intercede for the Church in their privileged position before the glorified Christ.

Classification of the Saints

If one pays close attention to the fifth diptych, it will be evident that the term is today applied to four groups of Church Fathers and faithful:

1. *The Martyrs who sacrificed their lives in witness of their faith*
2. *The Church Fathers noted for their saintly and devout life*
3. *The Church Fathers who developed the understanding of God and Christ.*
4. *The Church Fathers who struggled to preserve the Church against external attacks*

While there is no established process or routine by which a person is declared to be a saint in the Orthodox Church, in general it is the Holy Synod, recognising the devotion given to a person by the people that leads to a declaration of that person as a saint. There are also instances where a person is understood as a “local saint” even though the whole Church has yet to recognise them as such; instances would be the saintly Bishop Alvares Mar Yulios of Bramhavar, HH Baselios Geevarghese II

and H.G. Kuriakose Mar Gregorios of Pampady.



Bishop Alvares Mar
Yulios of Bramhavar
[1836-1923]

HH Baselios
Geevarghese II
[1874-1964]

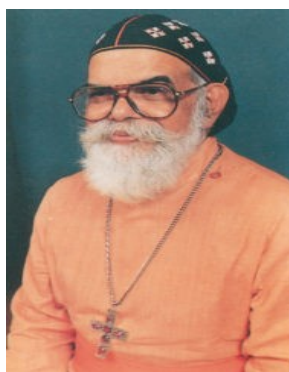
H.G. Kuriakose Mar
Gregorios
[1885-1965]

What Exactly Do the Saints Do?

This is a rather nebulous area where neither the Holy Scriptures nor the Church Tradition provides clear lessons. Certainly, a cardinal task they appear to be involved in is in prayer and intercession, as seen in the Book of Revelation (Chaps. 5 & 8). One has to bear in mind that the Saints, even though they have left this life, nevertheless continue to be a part of the Body of Christ, the Church. So, just as they had prayed for the Holy Church and its members, they now continue that ministry, albeit at a universal level. If, during their existence they were confined by historical contingencies, they are now liberated from these and therefore, their intercession is for all humankind, not for Christians alone.

An important verse that requires to be studied in this context is Heb 12:1. After enumerating a catalogue of OT saints, the author writes: **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings to us closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us”**. What we can understand from this verse is that the saints are not a distant community, but one that remains in companionship or communion with those who are struggling in this world. Thus, the communion or fellowship is one that is being experienced here itself, even though it remains invisible to our eyes. Truly, it is the presence of these holy ones who strengthen us in our daily fight to find meaning in life and to understand what God wills for our lives.

Without doubt, then, this means that they pray for the Christian Church, as it is the Body of Christ and they are an intrinsic part of it. In a way that we cannot fathom, it is their prayers that guides the Church into the Truth through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Yet again, their prayers are a significant factor in the sanctification of the Church. I recall the words of Met. Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios of blessed memory, *“Were it not for the prayers of the Holy Virgin Mary, Parumala Mar Gregorios and all the saints, the Malankara Orthodox Church would have disappeared long ago”*.



Met. Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios
[1922-1996]

And it is in this context that we have to appreciate the intercession of the saints. Enjoying a proximity to Christ Jesus beyond what they experienced in this world, the saints constantly plead with the Saviour to sustain us with His grace and blessings. It is through these that we are taught the important spiritual lessons that prayer is trying to understand the mind and will of God, rather than invoking His name for the realisation of our self-oriented needs. It is also the means by which we make meaning of our sufferings, learning through them the goodness that is the consequence of our tears and agony. In all this spiritual pilgrimage, the presence of the saints assists us to bear our daily crosses, even as they bore it.

While it is oft repeated, it has to be underscored that there is no ministry the saints accomplish exempt from Christ Jesus. All their prayers, petitions and intercessions on behalf of the members of the Church are focussed on Him, for He alone remains the one Door to the Father from whom all blessings flow.

So, we pray to the saints to intercede for us to the Saviour. We pray for their communion to strengthen us in our spiritual journey. And we ask them to plead for our salvation before our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen

RESURRECTION: THE KERNEL OF CHRISTIAN FAITH



Rev Dr Clement Valluvassery

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A couple of years back, to be exact, on May 8, 2019, the Supreme Court of India ordered five apartments in Maradu Municipality in Kerala to be demolished within one month, for violation of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules. Consequently, the order was executed. I keenly watched the demolition of these apartments (in fact, only four of these apartments were constructed and occupied with tenants), like many others in the vicinity, because demolition of a skyscraper with controlled explosion was not an everyday-event. My interest was special, because a friend of mine as a structural engineer was involved in the construction of two of these apartments and later in the demolition as well. In a personal talk that friend

shared with me that to be a part in the demolition process of the apartment which is 'his own offspring', had been really painful and heart-breaking like the mental agony of Abraham, who was preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac on the mountain as commanded by Yahweh. The demolition of a skyscraper in the proper manner requires technical expertise as in the case of the construction of the same. It is really fascinating how the engineers place explosives in the strategic places of the building and through controlled explosion convert a multi-storey building into a heap of rubble within seconds. In order to tear down the strong tower of Christian faith one has to set the explosive at a single point only and that is resurrection: blow up the resurrection of Jesus - the great tower of Christian

faith would collapse to “ground zero”. That is the reason why St Paul said, “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is empty and your faith comes to nothing. And we become false witnesses of God, who have declared that God has raised Christ; whereas he could not have raised him if indeed the dead are not raised. If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in sin” (1 Cor 15: 14-17).

What Are the Proofs for Resurrection?

The literature elaborating the proofs for resurrection is available in plenty. So I shall be brief in mentioning them: The first one is definitely the empty tomb. If Jesus’ tomb had not been empty, when the disciples began proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, the opponents could have easily de-



feated it by producing the remains of the body. There could be various explanations for the empty tomb: One such is that the enemies stole the body. But, we do not find any convincing motive for them. It was to their advantage to leave the body where it was. That is the reason why steps were taken to guard and seal the tomb (Cf. Mt 27, 65-66).

A second possibility is that the Roman guards stole the body. But there too we do not find any convincing motive. They were least interested in the Jewish religious trial. The Jewish leaders too did not have a case that the soldiers had stolen the body. A third possibility is that the disciples stole the body. The Jewish leaders actually promoted this theory by bribing the Roman guards. Such an account we find in Mathew 28, 12f. But there are many reasons the disciples could not have moved Jesus’ body. The tomb was secured by the Roman guard. The stone was large and heavy and could not have been moved without cooperation from the guards. The guards would not have risked their lives to allow the body to be stolen, even for a bribe. If the disciples had bribed the guards and stolen the body, they would not later have suffered

beatings, imprisonment and even death to preach Jesus’ resurrection.

Another major evidence for Jesus’ resurrection is his many post-resurrection appearances to the disciples. These happened in varied circumstances to many different people. Such narrations may easily be dismissed as mere fabrication of mind or mental projection. A third evidence, which is convincing for me, is the changed lives of the disciples or different witnesses. In fact, none of them were expecting a resurrection, though Jesus repeatedly predicted it. The disciples were confused, frightened, and depressed after the crucifixion. At the first reports of the resurrection from the women who saw Jesus, the disciples were sceptical. But, later they all became convinced witnesses to the extent of not only enduring persecution but also risking their life and embracing martyrdom. This great transformation took place in their lives cannot be easily denied, for such a drastic change is the result of their “seeing” – “experiencing” the Risen Lord. Here the clever arguments are no more required, for ‘heart has reasons, which reason does not know’.

In the history of Christianity, we encounter thousands of saints and martyrs who follow the suit. Who can deny their conviction and witness through the very life?

What is Resurrection ?

To understand what resurrection is, it is important to distinguish between resurrection and resuscitation. What happened to Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha is resuscitation (Cf. Jn 11,1f.). Resurrection is not a coming back to life in the normal-biological sense. It refers to a quite different dimension. The experience of the disciples on the way to Emmaus sheds light into the mystery of resurrection (Cf. Mk 16, 12-13; Lk 24, 13-35). At the first sight the narration of the Emmaus event appears to present an experience at the natural level, but a contemplative reading of the same opens up the horizon to a new dimension. In the narration of Luke’s gospel 24, 30-31 we read: “When they were at the table, he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; but he vanished out of their sight.” These verses correct in a way the first impression at the natural level. Even those who have been familiar with Jesus who has lived on this earth, fail to recognize the risen Jesus. He is recognized, not as he has lived on this earth, but at the level of faith. As co-traveller the Risen Jesus enkindles the hearts of the disciples on the way to

Emmaus. He opens their eyes and heart through the interpretation of the scripture and breaking of the bread. This description is closely linked with liturgical service of the early Christians which consists of two main parts, namely, the breaking of the Word and breaking of the bread. Here the evangelist makes it clear that the encounter with the Risen Jesus is different from the encounter at the physical or natural level. Here we find the budding of the theology of resurrection and liturgy. One encounters the Risen Jesus in the Word and the sacrament. In worship, in the service of the Word and in the breaking of the bread the Risen Jesus becomes the tangible and recognizable reality. The mystery of resurrection is the basis of the liturgy. It is the Lord's special nearness with us. In the liturgy he becomes a co-traveller. He awakens and burns our lukewarm hearts. He opens our blinded eyes.

Passion and Resurrection Today

The passion and resurrection of our Lord continues today in varied forms and in varied realms. The early Christian martyrs died for refusing to worship the emperor. Today's martyrs die for challenging the sovereignty of money, corruption and injustice. Their lives may appear to be "wasted lives" in the eyes of those who have only worldly criteria in sight. But the time proves that they are not "wasted lives", but meaningful lives which exposes the sight beyond sight. The existence of such lives and their continuation show us the meaning of Jesus's death and resurrection better

than many pious sermons and cleverly formulated rhetoric. Summarizing the Christian faith, Karl Rahner said, "We discover ourselves to the degree we are ready to risk ourselves radically for others. Only in that kind of self-gift do we even understand the meaning of the term, 'God'."

Much better than great theories and theologies, personalities like Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Daya Bhai, Presanna Devi, Oscar Romero and Maximilian Kolbe help us to understand the meaning of following Jesus. Let us not reduce the Holy Week and Easter to a series of ceremonies, but make it an opportunity to learn the meaning of love and commitment. The real liturgy is not what we do in the church, but what we do with our life. Jesus died in a market place, not on an altar between candlesticks. If we believe in the meaningfulness of that "wasted" life of the young man in his early thirties, we should at least try to give ourselves in many small and big ways so that others may find life and dignity. The Paschal Mystery is not just a pious word to mouth. It is a call to organize our priorities in the way Jesus did, and to expect new life for others and ourselves from a life surrendered in love. May the Risen Lord strengthen us through his Holy Spirit so that our faith may not be reduced to mere lip-service, but we may live what we believe.

From somewhere echo the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, who declared 'God is dead', "I might believe in the Redeemer if his followers looked more redeemed."

Amen



DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis:

Fast from hurting words say kind words.
Fast from sadness be filled with gratitude.
Fast from anger be filled with patience.
Fast from pessimism be filled with hope.
Fast from worries trust in God.
Fast from complaints contemplate simplicity.
Fast from bitterness fill your heart with joy.
Fast from pressures be prayerful.
Fast from bitterness fill your heart with joy.
Fast from selfishness be compassionate to others.
Fast from grudges be reconciled.
Fast from words be silent so you can listen.



"LET US NOT GROW TIRED OF
DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE TIME
WE SHALL REAP OUR HARVEST, IF
WE DO NOT GIVE UP. SO THEN,
WHILE WE HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD
TO ALL"

GALATIANS 6:9-10



UNDERSTANDING MARY'S FIAT AT THE ANNUNCIATION

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A lot of people may see Mary's Fiat as one of the most remarkable and outstanding moment in the human history. When you understand its considerable significance, you will not but to agree. Mary's Fiat, therefore means more than saying 'YES' and submitting. when Mary said: "**LET IT BE DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD**", she also allowed God to use her for His purpose. It's an expression of her desire to help God carry out His plan even if she does not understand it. As a matter of fact, that single and unequivocal "Yes" changed the course of the history of mankind. Having known that Adam and Eve disobeyed God, people have waited the Messiah. If not for Mary's "Yes" the hope for salvation wouldn't have come to reality.

WHAT IS ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD?

But Mary's decision during the Annunciation did not just change the history forever but it also changed Mary.

The Annunciation of the Lord refers to the time when the angel Gabriel visited the Blessed Virgin Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of the saviour. Mary was the first to hear and believe that God would do what he promised the world.

According to Luke gospel, Lk 1 : 26 – 38: In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a Virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The Virgins name was Mary.

God chooses Mary and comes to her with an invitation. Mary's response to this invitation is life-changing and world – changing. Mary's response despite this probable whirlwind of emotions is “let it be to me according to your world”.

Mary was open to God and she was willing to put her trust in Him and to give up her own plans.

Mary's yes is a complete surrender to God's will. It is good for us to understand that “Mary's yes” means that God did not want to become man by bypassing our freedom; He wanted to pass through Mary's free assent, through her “yes”.

Mary's ‘Yes’ became not only a mother, but the mother of Jesus. An ordinary life was made sacred by way of an invitation that she affirmed. Her life was deepened but the shape of it remained mostly the same: Like any mother, she was still needed by the infant in the middle of the night, chased the toddler with the hopes of a nap soon to come, and turned her life toward her child's.

When Mary said “Yes”, she welcomed God into the content of her already given life.

The annunciation occasions a decisive moment in the life of Mary and the entire human history.

According to Michael Onuh in his publication that Mary's Fiat or Mary's Yes was an immediate acceptance of and consent to God's will for her life. “May it be done to me “. Her Yes was total and complete; she held nothing of herself back from God. (Michael Onuh ogwuche parroco published March 23, 2021).

At the Annunciation according to Luke's gospel, Mary said to the Angel Gabriel, “Behold, I am the hand maid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Through this YES, the savior of human race entered the world, and death was defeated. According to Pope St. Paul II in his encyclical on the Blessed Mother, *Redemptoris Mater* explained: The mystery of the incarnation was accomplished when Mary uttered her fiat: “let it be done to me according to your word”, which made possible, as far as it depended upon her in the divine plan, the granting of her son's desire.

Mary's “Yes” is the vessel through which God – among us steps into our world and opens up to us as one of us.

Mary said Yes to so much more than just being the vessel to carry the baby Jesus, she models for us great faith and fidelity. Mary personally welcomes and receives Jesus into her life. We are called to do the same. To acknowledge all that he is –fully human and fully divine.

Mary's Yes is a joyful feast of Mary's cooperation with the eternal plan of God to save the fallen human race. According to Lay Cistercians, Mary's fiat is not just working of our veneration but it teaches us values that are worth note-taking and imitating.

Humanity

When Mary said ‘I am the servant of the Lord’, it presents to us that her humanity and willingness to accept God's will of course the world is sadly lacking in this present time. How many of us will say to the lord “lord, I humbly submit myself before you. Do whatever you will”! We see Blessed virgin as the model of humanity.

Faith

According to Proverb and psalmist, Mary knows that God will never harm His people. She knows that He made everything for its purpose. (Prov 16:4) and his plans stands forever all throughout the generations. (Ps 33:11). She trusted the word of God and that He would keep His promise. Her faith in Him is unshakeable and that gave her the courage to submit to His will.

Obedience

During the time of the Annunciation, women who got pregnant out of wedlock can be stoned to death. Mary knows that she knows that if the angel's word come true, she'll suffer that fate. But she risked it anyway because that is what God wants her to do.

However, obeying God usually requires sacrifices. It doesn't necessarily require you to risk your life. But sometimes, it involves making very hard choices. This is what Mary taught us with her Fiat – obeying God's will is not easy but it will be worth it. (laycistercians.com, lay Cistercians of south Florida).

Amen



“CRY OF THE POOR AND CRY FOR THE POOR”

HOW TO LISTEN TO THEM FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH ?



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While addressing on the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops on October 17, 2015, Pope Francis compelled the urgency of “a Church which listens” as he emphasized listening as “more than simply hearing” (Evangeli Gaudium, 171) and called it a synodal Church. It is a “mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn.” His voice strongly echoed the essential need for revival and renewal of the Church, a voice primarily calling for a self-criticism and an inner purification, and a voice deeply reminiscent of “aggiornamento” (an up to date) of Pope John XXIII who initiated the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) intended to “open up the windows and let the fresh air in.” “Synodality as *modus vivendi et operandi*” which according to Pope Francis is the church’s way in the Third Millennium.” The Synodality is to see how the “Church” lives, loves and listens, particularly the sheep that is fragile, weak, vulnerable, and poor. Pope Francis perhaps designs the prerequisites and preparations, before the Church can get into the proclamation of the Gospel, which is the primary duty and the core mission of the Church, as envisioned by the apostolic exhortation *Evangeli Nuntiandi* (1975) of Pope Paul VI. Synodality thus calls for a structural change in the church, and for a paradigm shift in attitudinal and behavioural changes (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 6). In this context of a compelling plea of Pope Francis for a “visible church” (*ecclesia visibilis*) by listening to the “poor and the weak,” this paper attempts, first, to unveil who the “poor” are. Second, as it distinguishes not only the “cry of the poor” but also, the “cry for the poor,” it deeply delineates on the people who voices for the poor. And, finally, it seeks concrete ways as to how “listening to them” leads to building up of a Synodal Church. One of the most conspicuous as well as most frequently mentioned group in the Bible is “the poor”. Both the Old Testament (henceforth: OT) and the New Testament (henceforth: NT) of the Bible contain numerous synonyms and allegories to explicate them. While the OT renders *āni* (עני), *dal* (דל), *evyōn* (עָוֵן), *rāsh* (רָשׁ)(Ecc 5:7) *miskēn* (מִסְכֵּן)(for instance, Ecc 4:13) and *bat ammi* (בַּת-עַמִּי)(for instance, Jer 8:23), the NT renders ‘*ptochoi*’ (πτωχοί), to refer to the ‘poor’, meaning that a person is afflicted and bent, that is, dehumanised, reduced by oppression to a condition of diminished capacity or worth. Let us begin by analysing the occurrences

as well as the meaning of the words rendered to refer to the “poor” both in the OT and in the NT of the Bible so that a comprehensive view can be reached before we could engage ourselves with the significance and relevance of listening to the poor as the inevitable task and challenge of the Catholic Church for a Synodal Way.

1. THE POOR: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR THE SYNODAL CHURCH

One of the most conspicuous as well as most frequently mentioned group in the Bible is “the poor”. Both the Old Testament (henceforth: OT) and the New Testament (henceforth: NT) of the Bible contain numerous synonyms and allegories to explicate them. While the OT renders āni (עָנִי), dal (דָּל), evyōn (עֲבֹיֹן), rāsh (רָשׁוּ)(Ecc 5:7)

<i>āni</i> (עָנִי) (plural <i>anāwim</i> = עֲנָוִים) overwhelmed by want, poor, wretched, unfortunate, humble, etc.	<i>evyōn</i> (עֲבֹיֹן) (pluralevyōnim = עֲבֹיֹנִים) needy, poor, oppressed in religious sense, etc.	<i>dal</i> (דָּל) (plural <i>dalīm</i> = דָּלִים) mean, scanty, helpless, powerless, insignificant, small, poor, oppressed, dejected, etc.	<i>‘ptochoi’</i> (πτωχοὶ) = poor, destitute, lowly, powerless, etc.
Ex 22:25; Lev 19:10; 23:22; Deut 15:11; 24:12; 24:14; 24:15; Job 24:4, 9, 14; 29:12; 34:28; Psa 9:8 (plural עֲנָוִים); 12:6; (2)9, 10:2; 14:6; עֲנָוִים); 22:27 (plural עֲנָוִים); 34:7; 72:2; 70:5; 40:17; 37:14; 109:16; 86:1; 21, 74:19; 22; 140:12; Prov 14:21 (plural עֲנָוִים); 16:19; 15:15; (plural עֲנָוִים); 30:14; 22:22; (plural עֲנָוִים); 20, 31:9; (Ecc 6:8; Isa 3:14, 15 (26:6; 10:2; עֲנָוִים); 32:7 (plural עֲנָוִים); 41:17; 58:7; (Jer עֲנָוִים); 22:16; Eze 16:49; 18:12; 22:29; Amos 2:7 (plural עֲנָוִים); Hab 3:14; Zach 7:10;	Ex 23:3, 11; Deut 15:11; 24:14; Est 9:22; Job 24:14; 30:25; 31:19; Psa 9:8; 12:6 (plural עֲבֹיֹנִים); 40:17; 37:14; 72:12; 72:4; 70:5; 49:2; 22, 109:16; 86:1; 74:21; 112:9 (plural עֲבֹיֹנִים); 113:7; 132:15; Prov 14:31; 31:9, 20; Isa 25:4; Jer 2:34 (plural עֲבֹיֹנִים); Jer 22:16; Eze 16:49; 18:12; 22:29; Amo 4:1 (plural עֲבֹיֹנִים);	Ex 23:6; 30:15; Lev 14:21; 19:15; Rut 3:10; 1Sam 2:8; Job 5:16; 20:10 (plural דָּלִים); 20:19 (plural דָּלִים); 31:16; (plural דָּלִים); Ps 28, 34:19; (plural דָּלִים); 41:1; 113:7; Prov 10:15 (plural דָּלִים); 17, 19:4; 14:31; (plural דָּלִים); 22:22; 16, 22:9; 21:13; 28:28 (plural דָּלִים); 28:11; 29:7; 28:15 (plural דָּלִים); 29:14 (plural דָּלִים); Isa 10:2; 11:4 (plural דָּלִים); 14:30; 26:6; 25:4 (plural דָּלִים); Jer 5:4 (plural דָּלִים); 39:10; (plural דָּלִים); Amos 2:7 (plural דָּלִים); Eze 4:1 (plural דָּלִים); Amo 5:11; 8:6 (plural דָּלִים);	Mt 5:3; 11:5; 19:21; 26:9, 11; Mk 10:21; 12:42, 43; 14:5, 7; Lk 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:2, 3; Jn 12:5, 6, 8; 13:29; Rom 15:26; 2Cor 6:10; 8:9; 9:9; Gal 2:10; Jam 2:2, 3, 5, 6; Rev 3:17; 13:16;

miskēn (מִסְכֵּן) (for instance, Ecc 4:13) and *bat ammi* (בַּת־עַמִּי) (for instance, Jer 8:23), the NT renders ‘ptochoi’ (πτωχοὶ), to refer to the ‘poor’, meaning that a person is afflicted and bent, that is, dehumanised, reduced by oppression to a condition of diminished capacity or worth. Let us begin by analysing the occurrences as well as the meaning of the words rendered to refer to the “poor” both in the OT and in the NT of the Bible so that a comprehensive view can be reached before we could engage ourselves with the significance and relevance of listening to the poor as the inevitable task and challenge of the Catholic Church for a Synodal Way.

A deeper analysis of the foregoing words, namely, āni (עָנִי) (plural *anāwim*), evyōn (עֲבֹיֹן) (pluralevyōnim), and dal (דָּל) (plural *dalīm*) in the OT demonstrates that the term *anāwim* (עֲנָוִים) most frequently refers to “the poor” who, even in the midst of challenges and difficulties, remained faithful to God, and that they are the poor of every sort, namely, the fragile, the vulnerable, the marginalized, and the victims of social, political, and economic oppression and exploitation. The *anāwim* (עֲנָוִים) is clearly distinguished from *dal* (דָּל) in Job 34:28 and thereby given a deeper meaning, namely, “the afflicted”:

So that they caused the **cry of the poor** to come to him, and he heard the **cry of the afflicted**-- (Job 34:28 NRS)

לְהִבָּיֵא עָלָיו צְעָקַת־דָּל וְצְעָקַת עֲנָוִים יִשְׁמָע:

Consequently, the central focus of the Synodality grounded in listening to the cry of the poor (*anāwim*) represents the act of God itself.

One of the biblical verses which strongly echoes the envisioned spirit of the Synodal Church to listen to the poor can be witnessed in Deuteronomy 15:11 where “the poor” is rendered with the synonym of “your brother”.

Apparently, the cry of the poor is ceaselessly carried on in this earth with a strong warning that today's oppressor of the poor could become tomorrow's cry of the poor.

Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land." (Deut. 15:11 NRS) כִּי לֹא־יִחַדֵּל אֲבִיוֹן מִקְרֵב הָאָרֶץ עַל־כֵּן אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה לְאָמֹר לָאֲחִיהֶלְעָנִי הַיְהוּדִי לְאֲבִינָה בְּאֶרֶץ: 8

The consequence of oppressing the poor can be seen in the following verses:

In arrogance the wicked persecute the poor-- let them be caught in the schemes they have devised. (Ps. 10:2 NRS) בְּגִאוֹת רָשָׁע יִדְלַק עֲגָי יִתְפָּשׂוּ בְּמִזְמוֹת זֹו הַשָּׁבוּ: 8

You would confound the plans of the poor, but the LORD is their refuge. (Ps. 14:6 NRS)

עֲצַת־עֲנִי תִבְיֹשׁוּ כִי יִהְיֶה מִחֶסְהוּ

You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt. (Deut. 24:15 NRS)

בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא־תָבוֹא עָלָיו הַשֹּׁמֵשׁ כִּי עֲנִי הוּא וְאֵלָיו הוּא נֹשֵׂא אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ וְלֹא־יִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ אֶל־יְהוָה וְהָיָה כִּהֵ חָטָא: 8

If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard. (Prov 21:13 NRS)

אִטָּם אָזְנוֹ מִזְעַק־דָּל גַּם־הוּא יִקְרָא וְלֹא יִעֲנֶה:

George Soares Prabhu, one of the renowned Jesuit Indian Biblicists who beautifully penned his theology of the poor in his essay, describes the poor sought in the Bible as a 'social class or category' unlike in Marxist ideology. As he observes,

... Poverty in the Bible is indeed primarily a sociological category but it is not to be defined in purely economic, much less in Marxist terms (non-ownership of the means of production). Biblical poverty has a broader sociological and even religious meaning. The poor in the Bible are an oppressed group in conflict, but it is doubtful whether their conflict can be usefully described as a class struggle... The Bible goes beyond Marx's classless society in its affirmation of a religious basis for social justice.

In the biblical records, the poor, in so far as they form a social class or category of people, are presented as opposed to the powerful and the wealthy. However, the poor are not simply a social class, with all the connotations Marx gives to it, but rather, the poor are the ones who lean upon God for life and freedom because there is no one else to lean upon. To be poor is to lack what is necessary to live as human persons with human dignity. Although the problem of poverty has socio-economic-political, religious dimensions, it should be understood as a challenge to God's justice. It remains a theological problem. Consequently, the option for the poor is not something extraneous to the core of the Church or an act of mercy to the poor, but rather, it exists intrinsic to the essence of the Church. True Christian charity, therefore, inherently incorporates and demands justice for the poor, and that listening to the cry 'of' and 'for' the poor has become imperative, inevitably urgent and prerequisite to Christian faith. This demands a further clarification to "Cry of" and "Cry for" the poor to which we turn now.

2. THE CRY 'OF' AND 'FOR' THE POOR

"The Cry of the Poor" implies the cry of the afflicted, whereas "the Cry for the Poor" represents the cry of those who dare to raise their voices for the afflicted. In other words, "the Cry for the Poor" represents the voice for the voiceless, and unfortunately, those dare to cry for the poor are not only being suppressed but also, humiliated by the socio-economic and political as well as ecclesial systemic structures and authorities who are supposed to be the guardians of the cry of the poor. The increasingly growing agony of the poor as well as the ceaseless existence of the cry of the poor in today's world, nonetheless, shows such claims of the authorities as to safeguard their own fame and existence by suppressing those daring to uphold the cry of the poor. The Synodality, therefore, invites unprecedented attention not only to listen to the cry of the poor, but also, not to undermine those standing for the cry of the poor. The inhuman or sub-human realities of day-to-day life questions the authenticity of human existence and human dignity of the poor. As Samuel Rayan rightly observes, the poor are the victims of the systems, structures, and traditions of greed and selfishness,

The Cry Of The Poor



and that they are reduced to nothing, underdeveloped by the mighty, treated unjustly. The poor reject individualism and greed, patent laws and market principles and affirm the social character of wealth and of all human achievement.”

Unfortunately, the existence of the poor is being determined and controlled by the rich who dictate terms, although the poor have already begun to raise their voices against all kinds of discriminations and exploitations. The powerful / the rich / the authority is the product of a hierarchical system which is neither natural nor eternal. As Rayan states, “to set justice aside and talk about charity is meaningless and dishonest.” Cry for the people, therefore, has become a “viable and human form of socialism” Socialism means the construction of a community without prisons and chains, one that will be equal and free, reconciled and humane. Socialism means care for one another, giving one another honour and justice becoming brothers and neighbours, striving to make life in freedom and creativity possible for all, and contributing to the celebration of life.

The cry ‘of’ and ‘for’ the poor is related to the Indian cultural norm *samata* (equality). And if the current hierarchical authority is the root of the problem, as the Synodal Way seems to presume, how can the Church today be a leader in protecting vulnerable people?

The Gospels present Jesus spending most of his time working for economic, political, physical, and social liberation, that relates to the fullness of life of which Jn 10:1-18 speaks. The concern here is for the total well-being of persons. The poor are chosen by God as the vehicle of God’s presence and action in elevating the world to the ways of God and transforming human history into the history of God’s salvation. They are invited (by God) to put their trust in God and to work with God. The liberation of the poor, therefore, is to be regarded as the sign of God’s presence in the world. The poor necessarily move into “... the struggle for personal and social transformation. ... as a commitment to the construction of a more just and caring society for all ... particularly the underprivileged - a society “without classes,” without soulless consumerism and vulgar affluence...” The poor have their own way of searching, acting, feeling, loving, thinking, and praying for a new social order, and that has become inevitable to listen to their ways and needs.

The cry ‘of’ and ‘for’ the poor, thus, should lead us to the rethinking of the missionary service of the church, and to redefine the mission of the church in view of the kingdom for the poor, irrespective of caste and creed. And that is the reason why Pope Francis is calling us to listen to the cry ‘of’ and ‘for’ the underprivileged to build up a synodal church. It is a call to realise, recognize, and respond to the reality of the church as it lives today.

This essay therefore regards listening to the poor as the most graceful insight in order to form a Synodal Church. In the following, let us explore the ways and methods to listen to the cry of and for the poor so that a Synodal Church can primarily be a potential future of the Church in general.

3. LISTENING TO THE POOR AS THE MOST GRACEFUL INSIGHT FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

Synodality has been perceived to be the most beckoning call of the 21st century in order to move those in solitude



to solidarity, since “the pastoral activity is polyhedron that reflects the convergence of all its parts (cf. EG, 236).” We, the church, therefore, has to listen “more relevantly, attentively, receptively, and obediently to the Spirit of God speaking to us in the whole process of Synod.” In the following, we propose some concrete ways as to how listening to the poor stays the most graceful insight for a Synodal Church.

i) During the inaugural Mass of the Synod, Pope Francis warned of the risks of ‘intellectualism,’ (where “reality turns into abstraction”), ‘formalism’ (from lukewarm church and its establishments to the infusion of the Holy Spirit into the church) and ‘complacency’ (“the attitude that says: ‘we have always done it this way’ [Evangelii Gaudium, 33],” which needs to be avoided to listen to the cry of and for the poor. The leaders of the church should have “the smell of the sheep” and they have to listen to the dissenting voice in the church in a spirit of dialogue without dispute, with those who have difference of opinions. As Pope Francis uttered in Milan (25 March 2017), “the new encounter of God with his people will take place in places that we do not normally expect, on the margins, in the periphery,” the body of the Christ is also “bruised, hurt, and dirty.” Therefore, Pope Francis defines his role as a “pastor, a friend, a companion on the journey, and a surgeon in the ‘field hospital after a battle.’” In short, by Synod or synodality Pope Francis wanted “to translate theological orthodoxy into pastoral orthopraxis.”

ii) In the process of listening, not only the dialectical relationship between Christian faith and human experiences (including people’s struggles) needs to be taken seriously into account but also, due respect for religions, history, science, philosophies, theologies, human rights, human values, civic space, secular state and for Jesus remains a prerequisite. The poor understand and experience that the Bible and life are infinitely connected and linked. Consequently, an option for the poor and social engagement on behalf of the marginalized and of the periphery could turn out to be the actions grounded in the will of God and lived by the Church.

iii) Listening to “the cry of and for the poor” should be undertaken through a “collective engagement” grounded in committed attentiveness and radical involvement to their suppressed and oppressed rights and duties in the Church and in the society. This calls for generating and promoting “total human perspective” accompanied by an effort to bring about a change marked by fairness, equality, and freedom that will help to stand with the poor. At the same time, the spirit of God has to guide the journey of listening which implies and integrates sharing responsibility. As Cardinal Czerny observes, “**Synodality**—the ‘way,’ ‘path,’ ‘breath,’ ‘condition,’ ‘key,’ for life in faith – is the *modus vivendi et operandi* with which the church prepares all its members to share responsibility, develops their charisms and ministries, intensifies their bonds of fraternal love.”

iv) Listen and dialogue with 3D cultures of death, depression, diseases.

v) A Synodal Church requires that institutionalised and legalised violence should be combated, if necessary by force, if the structural nature of poverty and oppression continues to take upper-hand in the Church as well as in the society. This means that the institutionalised violence should be ultimately ended, but at the same time, the insurrectional revolt can be (is) used both as an act of love and as a creative service for humanity. Nonetheless, such kinds of revolt should be incited only by taking seriously into consideration those who are existentially involved in the struggle, in their openness to the Spirit, and in their loyalty to humanity. They are the ones who “cry for the poor” and are involved in the struggles, as they can perceive and sense the concrete shape Christ’s love takes and the effective action

in which Christ's love becomes incarnate in the actual context. However, listening to the cry of the poor does not mature without "standing for total massive non-violence."

vi) Listening to "the cry of and for the poor" implies also freeing the poor from the bondages and chains suffocating their right to live and breathe in the Church and in the world in general. Equality, freedom, and fraternity, lie at the core of the Gospel which proclaims a free God whose gift of self aims at freeing human beings, as St. Paul envisages in Gal 5:1, 13. Wherever God's will is done, liberation, the kingdom, and salvation are coming near, and are in a process of growth. The Kingdom of God is not solely a matter of a personal decision; but rather, it stands for God's definitive liberative intervention in human and cosmic history. It leads history to its fulfilment in the end-time community in which all alienation will be overcome and all exploitation and oppression reaches to an end. The kingdom of God includes, as Rayan emphasizes, "search for a new society, for new relationships in economic production, in political decision-making, and in patterns of priority and values. It implies action for the transformation of the social order."

vii) Ultimately, the praxis to develop strategies to listening to "the cry of and for the poor" should be grounded in the liberating action of Jesus expounded in the Gospel of Luke 4:18 as well as in Amos 5:24.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, (Lk. 4:18 NRS)

Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24 NRS)

It is rather interestingly insightful to see how Rayan models the above verses in his attempt to liberate the cry of the poor:

... action to bring good news to the poor and liberty to captives; action to restore to the dispossessed masses their land and their power over their own future; action to end imperialism of every kind and to liberate people from political, economic and cultural colonialism; and action to set the downtrodden free and build a new social order in which justice shall dwell: such action constitutes history, and makes it salvation history.

4. CONCLUSION

The Synodal Way basically wants to mould the Church fit for the twenty-first century, calling for an advent to prepare the Way of the Church, the body of Christ. As Luke puts the words of Isaiah in the mouth of John the Baptist, the Synodal Church strongly proclaims, "Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and **all people shall see it together**, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isa. 40:4-5 NRS). This essay has attempted to give due attention to "the cry of and for the poor" in order that this Synodality finds its fulfillment. As the core meaning of "synodality" lies in "separation of power" in the Church, listening to the poor and afflicted in the Church is found to be an inevitable task in reaching this destiny of Synodal Church. To this end, the biblical analysis of the poor helped us see the nature of anawim distinguished from other occurrences of "the poor" in the entire Bible, and that their cry has been made analogous to the cry "for" the poor. Ultimately, having found the importance of listening to the poor as the most graceful insight, "listening" is envisioned as the most powerful weapon of liberation both in the Church and in the contemporary world wherein the breach of the poor and the elite incessantly widens. Finally, I would envisage Synodality as implying Symphony, Synergy and Solidarity.

i) Symphony – the work of the spirit of God and of human persons – "we need to listen to God, so that with him we may hear the cry of the people; to listen to his people until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us."

ii) Synergy means 'to work together for God' with the church and the entire humanity. Peter and Cornelius stress the importance of synergy. They are the double dynamics of conversion (Acts 10).

iii) Solidarity means to walk with those in the peripheries of the church and societies. With this the church will 'look within,' 'look around' and 'go forth.'

Synodal process is to gather the proposals from the people of God to address the relevance of the Church of today. This will help to formulate a Christ-centered mission approach. The themes of synodality is communion, participation and mission. As long as we are 'of' and 'for' the poor, since we live in the pluralistic world, we could witness joyfully to the mission entrusted to us. For every one has the right to his/her faith. When we listen to the poor we should have a synodal attitude "... of sharing, speaking out courageously, humility to listen, dialogue leading to newness, openness to conversion and change, leaving the prejudices and stereotypes behind." As Cardinal Mario Grech, the general secretary of the Synod of Bishops, said, "We are the heart and ears of the church, to hear the cry of the people of God".

Amen

TORMENTED BY THIRST



Rev. Fr. Nnam Di Obi
United Kingdom

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TORMENTED BY THIRST begins the text of the book of Exodus 17:3-7. The complaint of the people of Israel to Moses could easily sound like an outrage of a grumpy and ungrateful crowd. But if we could listen beyond the verbal expressions of this people, we could feel how tormented they were in the desert. They were not craving for a cup of tea or coffee or pint of beer. They were tormented by thirst. All they needed was a drop of water. Moses pleaded with God to intervene and was told to strike the rock very hard for water to flow for the people. It wasn't as hard as this at the first creation where God made the waters easily available. This became the lot of the human person after the fall of man, to strike hard to get ordinary water.

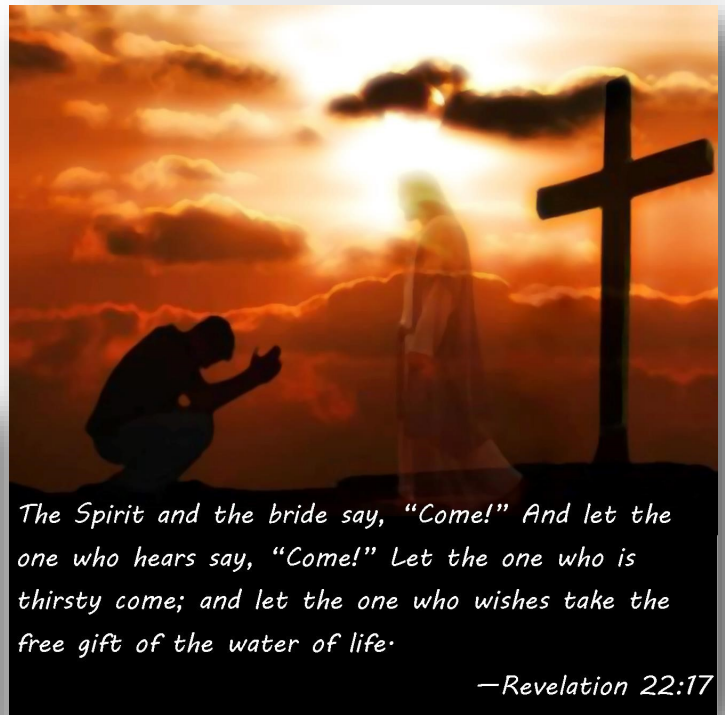
The biblical symbolism of water goes hand in hand with that of thirst. The significance is the people's yearning for God, in whom is their salvation. **'Like the deer that yearns for running stream so my soul is thirsting for you my God. My soul is thirsty for God, the God of my life, when can I enter and see the face of God?'** (Psalm 42) This is desire of the human person. This desire would be expressed at the end of Jesus' ministry on the cross, as he would tormentedly exclaim, **'I am thirsty.'** (John 19:28) Finally, just as Moses is commanded to strike hard his staff on a rock for water, a sword would strike and pierce Jesus'

side, gushing out water and blood, the wellspring of the salvation of humankind.

Just as it is the desire of humankind that their thirsty souls be satisfied, so it is for God who years that humanity would come and have their fill. **'Come to me all you who thirst, and drink from the waters of life.'** (Rev 22:17)



The third, fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent feature the Gospel of St John rather than the Synoptic Gospel of the liturgical cycle. Spread through the year, St John's Gospel features exceptionally for doctrinal and theological purposes. In the gospel of this John 4:5-42, which remains one of the most lengthy gospel accounts of the bible, presents the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. In this we are presented with the context of an encounter between a Jewish man, the person of Jesus, who is tormented by human thirst and a woman who was in need. He meets with someone who doesn't share same gender; who doesn't share the 'pure' Jewish religion; someone who is from a 'pagan' territory of Samaria; a man of chastity meets a woman who has married so many husbands. But they have one thing in common - 'the need for water.' They were both thirsty. Humanity is all they seem to have in common. What's Jesus doing at the well with a non-Jewish woman? It is the same question about why God bothered in the first place to get involved and become a man. Jesus chose to be human. He came when people were tormented by thirst for what is right and just.



John's gospel is WORD centred. He makes us focus on the word and draws us closer to see how the word constantly becomes flesh in time and in the circumstances of those who embrace Him. Therefore, the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is not an ordinary one. It is not a mere gossip at the village well. It is theological. The literary style of this discourse is both dialogic and comparative. "Give me a drink...but the water I will give you..." "The time will come...and it is already here..." "The Messiah will come...Yes, I am he..." In these and many more, we see a constant juxtaposition of the present and the future, as well as that which is indefinite and the definite.

Jesus always taught his disciples what he had learnt from his Father. But in this context, he chooses to engage a woman in a faith debate, enabling her to be confidently informed so as to become an evangelist to the people. She couldn't have become a convinced evangelist and disciple of Christ, if she was not first converted in spirit and in truth. God continues to invite us: 'Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters.' (Isaiah 55:1) 'Oh that today you would listen to his voice: 'Harden not your hearts.' (Psalm 95)

Amen



MEMORIA

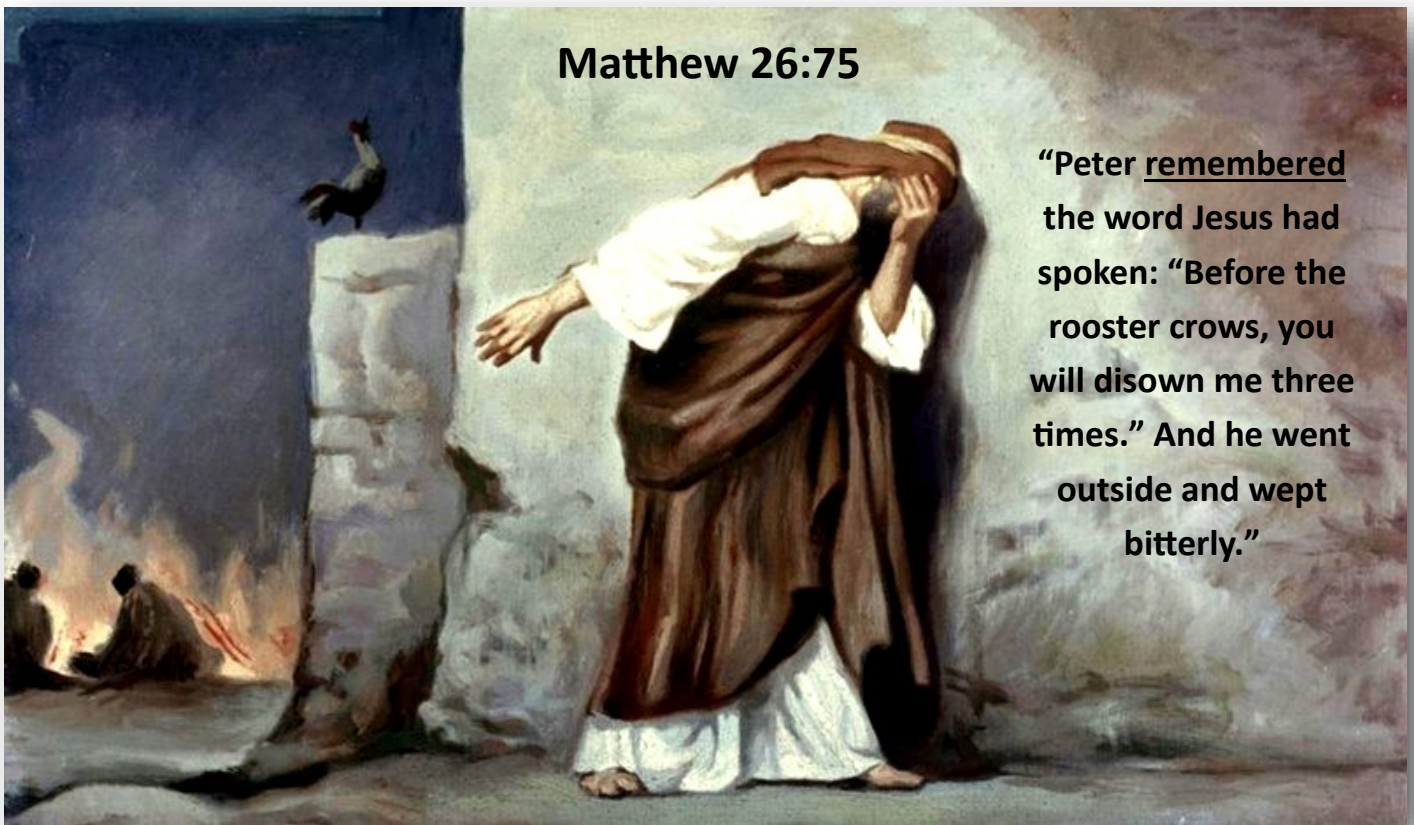


Rev Dr A R John

Director, Ministry of Family Apostolate
Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum,
Kerala, India

We live in a time where memories die fast, eager to receive favours, but hard to thank. Memories of love are quickly forgotten and die. Today the world is suffering from a kind of 'Alzheimer's' disease. No one remembers anything, no; pretending to be forgetful. Despite receiving many good things and experiencing miracles in our daily life, we forget God's grace and turn away from grace. Because of our pride we forget the way we walked and pretend not to have seen the helping hands.

Christ knows this attitude of the people; He is the greatest psychologist the world has ever seen. Those



Matthew 26:75

“Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.”

who received his promises of consolation, those who received the fruits of miracles, those who received healing, forgot everything before his sufferings and torments. His own disciples, even the disciple who shouted heroically, "No matter who forsakes you, I will not forsake you," forgot everything in front of a maidservant. The enthusiasm of the disciple who said, "Let us go and die with him" faltered in front of Calvary. But Christ gave himself so that no blindness could cover him. He gave himself as bread and wine, He is the visible sign of God's invisible grace. Yes, the sacrament. Giving them not a mere sacrament, but the sacrament of sacraments, He said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' We will never forget, this memory and presence, and so the Last Supper became an immortal memory. Yes lent is a period of memoria.

Let's pray the memories never bedead. Always remember our mother's patience, father's smell of sweat, sacrifice in friendships and the warmth in brotherhood.

Let's be thankful in all our lives. Remember the question of Christ, 'Where are the other nine?' This question is relevant for all time. Lack of gratitude is a major cause of memory loss. Where do we loss our attitude of gratitude? Why do we become incapable of holding hands in prayer? Where do we loss our values? Remember, when Christ instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, it was later called the 'Eucharist'. That Greek word means to give thanks. No matter how much you say thank you, human birth is a birth that ends up being a debt. A lifetime is not enough to thank Lord and his fellow men. This is true even psychologically speaking. If you want to feel good about your birth, you have to live with gratitude.

Yes, lent is a period of thanksgiving.

The disciple would have asked Christ, You have given everything, all right, but can you give something better than what you have given so far? Something to remember forever! Christ gave himself as bread and said, 'This is my body, do this in remembrance of me.' Thus, Christ became an ever-living presence. Yes, lent is a period of God's presence and a present (gift).

He blessed the bread on the night of his betrayal. On that night, he was deceived by his own disciple and cost himself 30 pieces of silver and the noble kiss of the heart of love were used to deceive Christ. Christ contemplated everything into his own heart. Even though he knew that it was his last supper, and even

Luke 22:19

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

though he knew that the disciple who was ready to betray him was by his side, Christ accepted that suffering on Calvary without complaint or murmur. So he baked his body as bread on the fiery furnace of the cross on Calvary of suffering. The true essence of that bread is endurance.

Yes, lent is a period of sacrifice.

This is not the first time he has given bread. He has given bread many times before. But there is one thing that the disciples noticed that, whenever Jesus took the bread, there was a smell of lack. After sharing, it will increase in size. Therefore, it is enough for the disciples to see Jesus taking bread and the eyes of the disciples will shine and their minds will be happy. It will be a day of feast. On that day, the night of the Last Supper, Jesus sat on the upper deck and took the bread again. Immediately the eyes of the disciples shone. Their minds were ready to see the miracle in front of their eyes and they felt very hungry in stomach. They expected a feast. But it was only during this time that something happened that were never seen before. Even though bread is taken, it does not increase. They began to share the bread. But unlike usual, as the bread is shared, instead of increasing, it became smaller and smaller. Yes, this was the specialty of this bread. This bread is the unfailing bread. The bread that began to decrease on Easter Thursday was completely became empty on the top of Calvary the next day, Good Friday.

He became the bread for all time. It is not the bread that fills the stomach, it is not the bread that pleases the eyes and it is not the bread that excites the mind, but it is the bread of the soul that never let us perish. Let's remember his saying, "Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die.

Yes, Eucharist is an Eternal meal.

*Yes, by eating the bread of the Passover
Passing through the sufferings of Good Friday
Let's celebrate the resurrection of hope.*

Amen



Rev Dr Milton Jacob
Roman Catholic Diocese of Calicut,
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HOLINESS” according to the Bible and ***“Gaudete et Exsultate” (“Rejoice and Be Glad”),*** ***the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis***

Isaiah 6:3 “And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

While God has many attributes in the Bible, the only attribute of God that is repeated thrice in an occasion is “Holy, Holy, Holy”. This definitely shows the importance of that attribute. God is first and foremost Holy. However, God who is holy also has commanded his people to be holy: “Be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:44; cf. 1 Pet 1:16). The Second Vatican Council further stated in Lumen Gentium: “Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect” (§ 11). Pope Francis, in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, “Gaudete et Exsultate” (“Rejoice and Be Glad”), insists primarily on II Vatican Council’s this “universal call to holiness”. He rightly reminds us, “We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case”. With clarity Pope continues, “We are all called to be ho-

ly by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves” (§ 14). While Pope Francis convinces us that we can be holy in our daily life, it will be fruitful to trace back the different nuances of the concept of “holiness” in the Bible – both in the OT and NT.

Etymology



Holiness doesn't mean doing extraordinary things, but doing ordinary things with love and faith.

— Pope Francis —

In Hebrew the terms used for “Holy” and “Holiness” come from the Semitic words qadhosh, “holy” & qodhesh, “holiness”; and in Greek, hagios, “holy”). While the original meaning of this Semitic root is disputable, most modern scholars think that the primary idea is that of “cutting off” or “separation”. Thus, “Holy” gets the meaning of a ceremonial separation of an object from common use. However, in Bible, holiness is attached primarily to the invisible God, and not to visible objects. But of course, places, seasons, things and human beings are considered holy so far as they are linked with Him. Apart from this ceremonial holiness there is also an ethical significance attached to “Holiness”. This second idea gets prime importance as we move from OT to the NT.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT IDEA OF “HOLINESS”

1. The Holiness of God : “Holiness” in the more general sense of separation underscores the transcendence, majesty, and awfulness of the Creator in His distinction from the creature. At the same time, holiness in the distinct ethical sense also is ascribed to God – His righteousness and love in which true holiness consists.

2. Holiness of Place, Time and Object : Ceremonial holiness of things is characteristic of the Old Testament religion. In comparison to God nothing or none is holy, not even Angels. But, place, time and objects could be considered holy when connected with the worship of the holy God. In other words, even the mundane objects/realities become holy by its consecration to the Lord. Even then, only God can make something holy, only God can consecrate. Thus we find holy - the ground (Exodus 3:5); the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 28:29; 2 Chronicles 35:5); its sacrifices (Exodus 29:33); the ceremonial materials (30:25; Numbers 5:17; 1 Kings 8:4); and the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). Holiness in that sense is a dedication to the service of the Lord.

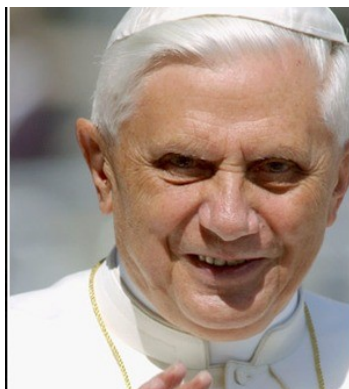
3. Holiness of Persons : Israel, as a nation, is considered holy being separated from other nations for Divine purposes and uses (Exodus 19:6). Individuals too are considered holy first of all in a ceremonial sense – being separated and consecrated to the service of the Lord (Exodus 29:1; Leviticus 8:12, 30). But OT also envisages a higher holiness that is spiritual and ethical. The command, “**Be holy, for I am holy**” (Lev 11:44; 19:2; cf. 1 Pet 1:16) implies clearly an ethical notion. Human beings can resemble God only by acquiring the moral qualities of righteousness, truth, mercy and love (cf. (Psalms 15:1; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8)).

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

1. The Christian conception: The Greek word hagios and its derivatives express the idea of holiness. As in the Septuagint (LXX) in the Greek NT this term corresponds closely to the Hebrew qadhosh. So it can signify “set apart by (or for) God, holy, sacred”. However, the scholars note that in the NT, “the external aspect” of holiness, namely the ceremonial holiness related to place, time and objects has almost entirely disappeared, while the ethical meaning gets prominence. Jesus makes a radical shift in the understanding of being cleansed or defiled. According to him, “**what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart,**

and this is what defiles”, and not what goes into the mouth/what one eats (Matthew 15:17-20). And Jesus Christ is the paradigm of Holiness in the NT. The disciples are expected to be holy like their master (cf. Hebrews 7:26).

2. Christians as Holy : God is rarely called “Holy” in the New Testament. However, the term is frequently applied to the Spirit of God (Matthew 1:18; Acts 1:2; Romans 5:5, etc.). And Christ is termed “Holy” in many places (Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14; 4:30, etc.). Jesus is the “very type of ethical perfection” (cf. Hebrews 7:26, where Jesus is depicted as “a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens”).



Holiness does not consist in not making mistakes or never sinning. Holiness grows with capacity for conversion, repentance, willingness to begin again, and above all with the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness.

— Pope Benedict XVI —

But what is characteristic and distinctive in the NT is that holiness is attributed to Christians in different occasions. Especially Peter and Paul remind the Christians that our lives should reflect the holiness of God. Peter compares the Christian disciples as the new Israel by calling them “a

chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own” (1 Peter 2:9). While this may go in line with the idea of holiness as “consecration” or “separation”, Peter also writes in the same letter: “... as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15). The ethical and spiritual meaning of holiness is clear in this verse. Similar emphasis is found in the writing of Paul too: “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Colossians 3:12).

It is with this Biblical background, especially with the NT nuance of holiness, Pope Francis reminds every Christian that our daily life with its normality is expected to be holy. It is an encouraging thought that we and our community are capable of holiness. Pope is inviting us to discern with the help of the Holy Spirit (GE § 150; 166) to find out the ways we can be holy in our daily life. And in the NT, in innumerable occasions, we are told that the Holy Spirit is the agent of holiness for the church and its leaders (cf. Acts 1:8; 2:4; 5:32; 13:2-4). It is the Holy Spirit that keeps the church uncontaminated (Acts 5:1-11). The Holy Spirit encourages holiness in the church members (1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:7).

The Christ-centeredness in life, the foundation of holiness as per the understanding of the NT, is stressed in this document. Jesus’ teaching on Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23) gets a special focus in this exhortation. In Chapter 3 Pope explains how the Beatitudes teach us “with great simplicity what it means to be holy” (GE §§ 67 – 94). Pope further underlines that holiness consists in following and becoming more like Jesus by having perseverance, patience and meekness; joy and a sense of humour; boldness and passion; community spirit; constant prayer life – sustained by Eucharistic celebration (GE §§ 110-157).

We are assured that “the path of holiness is a source of peace and joy”; however it demands that we need to be constantly awake (Matthew 24:42; Mark 13:35; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:6) and always alert with “our lamps lit” (Lk 12:35) [GE § 164]. Accepting this Biblical based, concrete and well-timed invitation of Pope Francis, let us open our eyes to see the holiness around us; also let us seriously contemplate how that holiness could be translated into my daily life. Let us be holy as our Master is holy!

Amen

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD CONFESSION



find a church

Churches in the Syracuse Diocese will be open from 4-7 pm on Monday, March 30th.

greet the priest

Make the sign of the cross. Say "Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was..."

confess your sins

Tell the priest about your sins. They will walk you through the process. If you're uneasy or need help - just ask.



trust in God

Be honest. You don't have to hide anything! Remember that God wants to bless you with forgiveness.

say "I'm sorry"

Following your confession, say "I am sorry for these and all of my sins."

accept your penance

The priest will offer a penance, which will help you renew your life with God and your resolve to be a better Catholic.



Act of Contrition

Say an Act of Contrition to express sorrow for your sins.

be absolved

The priest will absolve, or forgive, you of your sins.

go in peace

That's it! You are forgiven and God rejoices.





Kadosh Marian UK core members with Most Rev. Dr Alex Vadakumthala Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Kannur (Kadosh Marian Ministries - Apex Body Chairman) during his recent visit to UK



Kadosh Marian UK core members with Most Rev. Dr Joseph Mar Thomas Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sultan Bathery (Kadosh Marian Ministries - Patron) during his recent visit to UK

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