

FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

JUNE 2024



World Environment Day: Preserving Our Planet

MAY 2024**CONTENTS**

Editorial	3
Choose Health and Life	4
Resurrection - Preview and After-Effects	5
Festivals are the Carriers of Peace and Joy	6
Jesus Christ, Our Perfect Example	7
Transformed by Love - From Supper to Sacrifice	8
Joseph - A Tale of Redemption and Reconciliation	10
Saint Mark: A Winged Lion	12
Agnel Happenings	13
'I Have Seen the Lord'	15
Joy of Giving	16
Spotlight on Suffering	17
Pope's Vocation Day Message: 'Pilgrims of Hope, Builders of Peace'	18
News	19
Pray for India	20
Just for Fun	21
Fr. Agnel's Blessings	24
Out of Their Bounty	25
Bob's Banter	26
Heart and Sole Run 6	27

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CELEBRATING FATHER'S DAY

-Jubel D'Cruz

Father's Day is celebrated on the third Sunday in June. The day is celebrated to honour all fathers and celebrate the fatherhood, paternal bonds and the influence of fathers in the society. Father's Day complements Mother's Day, a celebration that honours mothers and motherhood, which is celebrated on the second Sunday in May, every year.

On Father's Day, people buy gifts for their dads or take them out to dinner or for a movie. Father's Day was first observed on July 5, 1908, by Dr. Robert Webb of West Virginia at the Central Methodist Church of Fairmont in the USA. Later, one Mrs Sonora Smart Dodd thought of having a similar celebration for her dad in 1909 while listening to a Mother's Day sermon in church. Her dad, Henry Jackson Smart, had raised her up, after her mother's death when she was still a young girl.

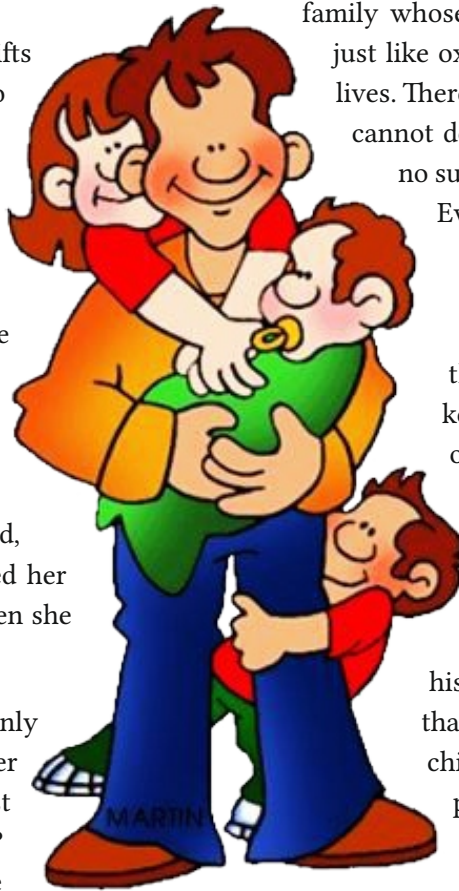
Father's Day is a celebration of only one day, but what about the other 364 days of the year? Do we just sit around and not love our dads? Father's Day should be celebrated every day of the year because fathers give and do a lot to help their kids.

Father's Day means a lot to me because I can spend the entire day with my dad. My dad and I might go out to the movies, might play cricket, go out for dinner, or might even go swimming or stay at home and watch TV. I am happy because I can spend as much time as possible with my dad on this special day.

On the other hand, my dad is the best dad in the world. A few days before Father's Day could arrive, I go shopping searching for the perfect gift to give him. I know my dad loves whatever I gift him. I have fun every Father's Day because I get to be with my dad the whole day long.

A father is the most important member of the family whose love for his son/daughter is just like oxygen for the survival of their lives. There is nothing as big that a father cannot do for his children and there is no such sacrifice that he will not do. Every little thing that he does makes him great. He has that unfathomable energy and the unconditional love in his heart that compels every child to keep following him in the hope of learning a new thing every time.

The patience and perseverance he has to make everything possible in his children's life is quite a thing that makes him a superhero in his children's eyes. It is sometimes perplexing to understand from where he draws such great energy to make his children look at the positive aspect of every situation he may be in.



Jubel D'Cruz is a freelance writer and the author of several books for children. He lives in Mumbai.

FAITH - A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TRINITARIAN GOD

-Norma Kamath

As a Catholic, I was betrothed to Jesus at baptism, and had been growing in my espousal relationship through prayer, the word of God and through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Adoration. I prayed to the Father and the Holy Spirit but did not enjoy a personal relationship with them. It was only in 1983, after a close encounter with the Trinity, at a Charismatic Retreat that I started to grow in a personal relationship with the three persons, the Father, the Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

MY FAITH EXPERIENCE WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

At the retreat, we were asked to open the Bible at random and read. I opened to the Song of Songs, and whispered to the Lord that I could not understand anything. I heard in a low audible voice from the depths of my being say, 'Just praise and thank me with all creation.' Awesome!! The voice of my Creator!! I obeyed. I was curious to know about this book, and the Holy Spirit revealed it to me later, through the writings of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila.

At the retreat, at night, I woke up with these words, "Repent! Repent!" Was it the end of the world? The next day, I learnt through the talks, that God was calling me out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His Divine Son, Jesus. The words of the First Commandment, 'I am the Lord Thy God. Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me,' brought me to repentance. Believing the lie of the devil that Nature Cure and Yoga would keep me healthy, through its practice, I opened the door to the evil one, and to false worship. I began to doubt whether Jesus was the Son of God. The devil entered by the back door like a thief to steal and destroy (Jn1: 1,10). But God's mercy and grace saved me through the Sacrament of Confession.

During the Mass, I was blessed with a prophetic vision of the Good Shepherd. A gentle breeze and a deep peace came over me as I saw the Good Shepherd walk in the desert, leading his flock to green pastures and blue life giving streams. I rejoiced as he carried me in his arms and took me home to the house of my Heavenly Father. What goodness to me! a poor sinner! 'My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.' As the priest counselled and prayed over me, I

received the anointing, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues. My spirit cried out, 'Abba Father! Abba Father! as I was engulfed with His Light and His Love. Sheer Joy! God is my Father, and I am His Beloved Daughter in Christ. Blessed, and become a Blessing!

GROWTH IN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TRINITARIAN GOD

An hour's personal prayer early morning, in the Presence of The Triune God became my lifeline. The Lord showed me that the key to growing in a personal relationship with the Three Persons is repentance, renunciation of sin, and growth in holiness.

THE FIRST PERSON - THE FATHER, THE CREATOR

The Holy Spirit led me from the first day into a new experience of prayer. He seemed to fill up a deep void in my life, the absence of a Father's Love. I was Abba Father's little child, sitting on his lap, whispering in his ears, and playing around him. I remember bursting into laughter as he held me up in his arms, and I gazed into his

face, while he walked in the garden.

I had faced rejection in early childhood, and grown up with fears. One day the fear of being alone and the fear of darkness gripped me, as my husband was to go out of station. At the same time, this tune came to my ears. I had been hearing it earlier in the day too. 'Father in my life I see. You are God who walks with me. You hold my life in your hands. Close beside you I will stand. I give all my life to you. Help me Father to be true.' Surprisingly, I began to experience my Heavenly Father's Presence, and I, a little child holding his garment, and walking behind him, from room to room. After this my fears vanished. Today I can say with Jesus, 'I am not alone. My Father is with me' (Jn 8:32).

THE THIRD PERSON, THE HOLY SPIRIT:

The Holy Spirit is the best gift the Father has given me. He is the Love of the Father and the Son poured into my heart. He is like a new dawn each day! Like the freshness of the morning dew! He is my constant helper, finds all my lost articles. He brings to mind what I have to do. He gives me the wisdom to discern God's will. He teaches me how to pray, and takes me into the depths of my God, to know him, to love him, and to serve him. He is my comfort and my solace. I feel sad when I grieve



him through my disobedience. He is always gracious to me, and has given me many gifts, to enable me to build up the Kingdom of God. I keep seeking his fruit, to help me grow in holiness, for it is only the pure of heart that will see God.

THE SECOND PERSON, JESUS - THE SON OF GOD: Growing in intimacy with Jesus did not seem easy, so I asked the Holy Spirit to enlighten me, why? The Spirit showed me that I had many blocks. I had to learn to deal with my anger and unforgiveness. At a retreat, the preacher announced that somebody was having circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6). It was me. I felt like I was having a heart attack. Through an inner healing retreat, the walls I had erected in childhood to safeguard myself from rejection were brought down. Daily Mass, the Eucharist, the weekly charismatic prayer meeting, working in ministry, helped me grow in my personal relationship with Jesus. I attended a course, 'Unbound,' which taught me to renounce sin. I would take the word of God into my heart, to strengthen and heal me, and my faith grew through the word. The 33 days Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary brought me closer to the Heart of Jesus through Mother's intercession. Suffering was my greatest teacher. I was afraid of sickness and suffering, and practised yoga and nature cure to avoid it. This took me into self and

self dependence. It eroded my faith in God. As I united my suffering with Jesus' suffering for sinners, I was no longer afraid of suffering. I began to appreciate Jesus' Sacrifice on the Cross, and grew close to him. Suffering gave me endurance, greater compassion, patience and tolerance and taught me humility. I grew in faith.

I conclude with the vision the Lord asked Habakkuk to write.

So he may run who reads it;

For still the vision awaits its time, it hastens to the end,

it will not lie.

If it seems slow, wait for it.

It will surely come, it will not delay.

'Behold he whose soul is not upright, in him shall fail,

But the righteous shall live by his faith.'



Norma Kamath lives in Bangalore. She experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1983 and was called to serve in the intercessory, counselling and healing ministry.



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Shalaka Ivan Coutinho, Mumbai

I have donated an amount of Rs.10,000 for the welfare of the Balbhavan boys. The Ashram Fathers are doing a splendid job of educating the boys and ensuring a bright future for them.

Sanjay Kohli, Mumbai

I have sent Rs.15,000 through NEFT, towards the support of a Balbhavan child's education.

Agnelo D'Souza, Goa

In gratitude for the favours received through the intercession of Fr. Agnel, my family has made a donation of Rs.10,000 towards the care of the Balbhavan children.

Praveen Madhur Srivastava, Mumbai

I have donated an amount of 55,000 towards education, food, stationery and essentials for the Balbhavan children at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

Anthony Thomas Karutikaran, Surat

I have made a donation of Rs.10,000 via NEFT towards ensuring a bright future for the Balbhavan children.

Anita J. Sharma, Mumbai

I have made a contribution of Rs.30,000 through cheque, towards the charitable activities of Fr. Agnel Ashram, especially for the maintenance and education of the boys in Balbhavan home.

Hemshree Parmar, Gujarat

I have made a donation of Rs.10,500 via EDC, towards the various community services at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

ST. PETER THE APOSTLE THE ROCK & HIS CHAIR

-Leon Bent

Saint Peter (died AD 64–68), also known as Peter the Apostle, Simon Peter, Simeon, Simon, or Cephas, was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ, and one of the first leaders of the early Christian Church. He appears repeatedly and prominently in all four New Testament Gospels, as well as the Acts of the Apostles. Catholic tradition accredits Peter as the first bishop of Rome - pope - also as the first bishop of Antioch.

Based on contemporary historical data, Peter's papacy is estimated to have spanned from AD 30 to his death, which would make him the longest-reigning pope, at anywhere from 34 to 38 years; however, this has never been verified.

St. Peter was known to hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven, entrusted to him by Jesus himself. For this and many other reasons, St. Peter became a celebrated figure in Christianity.

But there could be many reasons why Jesus Chose Peter.

- Peter had natural leadership skills (John 21:3)
- He was the first to act (John 20:6, John 21:7)
- He loved the Lord so much (John 21:17)

...but any human person seems unlikely as a suitable foundation for the whole Church of Jesus on earth... why does the Catholic Church adhere to this point of view? What is the reason that the Catholic Church adheres to this idea that, Peter could be the foundation for the whole Church of Jesus?

Probably because Jesus himself said that, he will build his Church on Peter, the Rock and even went on to change his name as a proof of it. In the Bible, the name of a person is changed by God when they are called to lead a significant role (like Abram-Abraham/Jacob-Israel). If Peter was just one of the twelve, this event is an anomaly.

Also, all through the New Testament, Peter's Primacy is shown in hidden symbols. Like for example,

In Gospels

- Peter's name appears first in every list of the twelve. Matthew even says he was the first (Mt. 10:2)
- When evangelists mention the apostles, Peter is unusually singled out (Mark 1:36, Mark 16:7, Luke 9:32)
- Peter is approached by the temple authorities as a representative of the Group (Mt. 17:24-27; Note this is the only place in the NT where Jesus refers himself in equal level with another human being). Jesus says ('Pay the tax for me and for yourself.')
- Peter often spoke to Jesus on behalf of the twelve (Mk. 8:29; Lk. 12:41; Jn. 6:66-69).
- At the Last Supper, even though Satan has asked to sift all of them, Jesus says he prayed for Peter



specifically and asks him to strengthen others after regaining his own faith (Lk. 22:31-32)

- John waited for Peter to enter into the tomb (John 20:6)
- Among the Apostles, the resurrected Lord appeared first to Peter (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5).
- Jesus made promises to Peter that he had not made to other Apostles (Mt. 16: 18-19; Rock/Keeper of Keys of Kingdom)
- Peter alone was given in charge to be the head shepherd (Jn. 21:15-17).

In Acts

- Peter initiated and oversaw the replacement of Judas (Acts 1:15-26; Note that this happened before the descent of the Holy Spirit, that is, he is acting on his own authority, given to him by Jesus)
- Peter delivered the inaugural sermon of Church History (Acts 2:14-36; First to preached and administered Baptism to the chosen people after resurrection)
- Peter was the first to preach and administered Baptism to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48)

- Peter performed the first healing after the resurrection (Acts 3:1-10)
- Peter was the first to discipline (Acts 5: 1-11)
- Peter was the final authority in the first council of Jerusalem (Acts 15: 6-11)

In New Testament

- Of all the twelve apostles, Peter is mentioned more times than all other apostles put together. (Peter - 195 times; Other Apostles 130 times). No other apostle has this unique mission of leading the Apostles/early Church, as evident in the Bible.

“In the first days of the Church, Peter's denial became awfully important for Christians because of the persecutions, like the frightful persecution by Nero. A lot of people may very well have denied the faith, and they were in danger of despairing, so Peter's story of denial and then, reinstatement, would have been important for them,” Father Mullins said.

Peter guides us through his story of faith in Jesus and Jesus' reciprocation with a boundless trust in his chosen instrument. Peter met Jesus through his brother Andrew. Moved by Peter's answer when he asks him who he is, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16), Jesus calls him “blessed” and reveals to Peter his mission: “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Mt. 16:18).

Peter's strong faith and frailty are contrasted when he sees Jesus walk on water. Jesus bids him to join him. Immediately Peter steps out of the boat in faith but takes fright when he starts to sink. “He discovers his own vulnerability,” says Father Mullins. Jesus catches him, holds him and says, “Why did you doubt?”

Jesus knows Peter as he is. He knows he will deny him. At the Last Supper he tells Peter he has prayed “that your own faith may not fail,” (Lk. 22:32).

His trust in Peter plays out movingly in the Gospels. The hearts of the disciples of Emmaus burned as Jesus explained the Scriptures to them. After Pentecost, Peter constantly does the same his heart is a flaming fire!

“Peter is looking at the history of the people of God and seeing the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that, God has brought about as the fulfilment of the whole historical process.” “He

opens the Scriptures to people and is a spiritual guide.”

At the same time, Peter keeps before him, at all times, the image of Christ's infinite love. “Let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins,” he writes, putting into words the love and trust he himself experienced from Jesus.

Saint Peter is revered in the Christian community across the globe, and is an important figure, when it comes to the history of the Vatican. He is considered as the first Pope and the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter marks the long-standing Papacy in Rome since the 1st century. Standing as a jewel in the Papal Altar of 'St. Peter's Basilica is the ancient Throne of the Apostle. With a beautiful grand enclosure designed by Bernini, the Chair is one of the most treasured highlights of the Basilica. The Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, celebrating the doctrine that, “Christ the Lord... made Peter and his successors His vicars, to exercise forever in the Church, the power which He exercised during His mortal life.”

Peter was one of the 12 Apostles of Jesus. Roman Catholic tradition holds that Jesus established St. Peter as the first Pope (Matthew 16:18). Jesus also gave him “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19), which is why he is often depicted at the gates of heaven in art and popular culture.

Saint Peter's Basilica is said to have been built on the site of his grave in Rome. In Roman Catholicism, he is regarded as the first in the unbroken succession of Popes. Jesus' promise to give him the “keys of the kingdom,” led to the popular perception of Peter as the gatekeeper of heaven.

What did Jesus say to Peter before he died? Jesus then describes Peter's future to him, and says, “someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go” (John 21:18, NIV). The narrator interprets this as referring to Peter's martyrdom (John 21:19). According to a tradition found in the apocryphal Acts of Peter, Peter asked to be crucified upside-down.

The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter

“Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that no tempests may disturb us, for you have set us fast
on the rock of the Apostle Peter's confession of faith.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, forever and ever.” – **Roman Missal**

On February 22, we observe the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, celebrating the doctrine that, “Christ the Lord... made Peter and his successors His vicars, to exercise forever in the Church, the power which He exercised during His mortal life.” The doctrine of apostolic succession is based on the words of Jesus to Peter in the book of Matthew: “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” – Matthew 16:18-19.

Fostering Unity

In following the tradition of apostolic succession, the Church seeks to foster unity amongst its members upon the foundation of primatial (here, Bishop, Pope) authority beginning with Saint Peter. Pope Leo XIII related in the Encyclical *Satis Cognitum*:

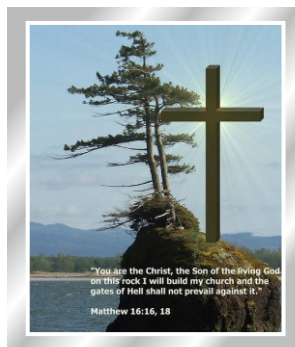
“It is clear that by the will and command of God, the Church rests upon St. Peter, just as a building rests on its foundation. Now the proper nature of a foundation is to be a principle of cohesion for the various parts of the building. It must be the necessary condition of stability and strength. Remove it and the whole building falls. It is consequently the office of St. Peter to support the Church, and to guard it in all its strength and indestructible unity. Just as Christ, the Good Shepherd, lived selflessly during his time on earth, the pope also is called to a vocation of self-sacrifice for the flock which he guides.” As Pope John Paul II expressed:

“On the feast of the Chair of St. Peter, the liturgy once again offers us the famous oracle of the prophet Ezekiel, in which God reveals himself as the Shepherd of his people. Indeed, the Chair is inseparable from the pastoral staff, because Christ, Teacher and Lord, came to us as the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn. 10: 1-18)”.

On this Rock I will Build my Church

In contemporary times, the Latin-rite liturgy celebrates the Feast of the Chair of St Peter. This is a very ancient tradition, proven to have existed in Rome since the fourth century. On it we give

thanks to God for the mission he entrusted to the Apostle Peter and his Successors.



"Cathedra" literally means the established seat of the Bishop, placed in the mother church of a diocese which for this reason is known as a "cathedral"; it is the symbol of the Bishop's authority and in particular, of his "magisterium", that is,

the evangelical teaching which, as a successor of the Apostles, he is called to safeguard and to transmit to the Christian Community.

Ex-cathedra is a Latin phrase, meaning not "from the cathedral," but "from the Chair." The phrase does have religious origins though: it was originally applied to decisions made by Popes from their thrones. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, a Pope speaking ex cathedra on issues of faith or morals, is infallible.

When a Bishop takes possession of the particular Church that, has been entrusted to him, wearing his mitre and holding the pastoral staff, he sits on the "Cathedra - Bishop's throne." From this seat, as teacher and pastor, he will guide the journey of the faithful in faith, hope and charity.

So, why was the "Chair" of St. Peter? Chosen by Christ as the "rock," on which to build the Church (cf. Mt. 16: 18), he began his ministry in Jerusalem, after the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost. The Church's first "seat" was the Upper Room, and it is likely that a special place was reserved for Simon Peter in that room where Mary, Mother of Jesus, also prayed with the 120 disciples, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost.

Peter was eventually martyred. He was crucified on the Vatican Hill upside down, because he declared himself undeserving to die in the same manner as Christ.



Leon Bent repeatedly contributes Researched Articles to Newsletters, Theological Journals, and manifold Online Portals, in India and worldwide – sometimes with a reach of 40 million!

JESUS' BODY, BLOOD, & HEART

-Dr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

JUNE invites us to celebrate so many Solemn Feasts, **The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ** (*Corpus Christi*), **The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, **The Nativity of John the Baptist**, **the Apostles Peter and Paul**, plus ordinary feasts of Sts. Aloysius Gonzaga SJ, St. Anthony of Padua, etc!!! We focus here on only the first two Feasts, linking them with the just celebrated but always ongoing Feast of **Pentecost!**

1. We must start by remembering that “The Body and Blood of Christ” is a DAILY feast, celebrated every time the **Eucharist** is offered millions of times throughout the year, in so many churches and chapels across the whole world. However, we must boldly ask, have we not domesticated the Eucharist (the **Mass**)? Have we not turned it into a weekly “*social event*” and paid only lip service to the spiritual power it offers us for a continuing “*transformation of our lives?*”

On the occasion of this Feast in June, we must reflect: Do Catholics (in general) exit the church (after receiving Holy Communion) as **more** holy, more unworldly, more Christ-like, more filled with “*love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, etc*” (Gal 5:22), more **forgiving**, more loving, more able to witness to neighbours and friends that “Jesus is Lord”? If not, our pious and routine devotion to the Body and Blood of Christ may sadly be a proof to St. Paul’s words, that in fact, many Christians have become “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **holding to the outward form of religion but denying its power**” (2Tim3:5).

Instead, here are anointed words from the Second Vatican Council about what the Spirit of God wants to achieve in the lay faithful at every Mass:

“Their work, prayers and apostolic endeavours, their ordinary married and family life, their daily labour, their mental and physical relaxation if carried out in the Spirit, and the hardships of life if patiently borne – all of these become spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God

through Jesus Christ. **During the celebration of the Eucharist, these spiritual sacrifices are most lovingly offered to the Father, along with the body of the Lord. Thus, as worshippers whose every deed is holy, the lay faithful consecrate the world itself to God**” (LG, 34).

[In a previous article, I explained how the Mass is meant to involve each Catholic a powerful “*sacramental memory*” of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection, and not be just an empty “*historical memory*” which it has become for so many Catholics!]

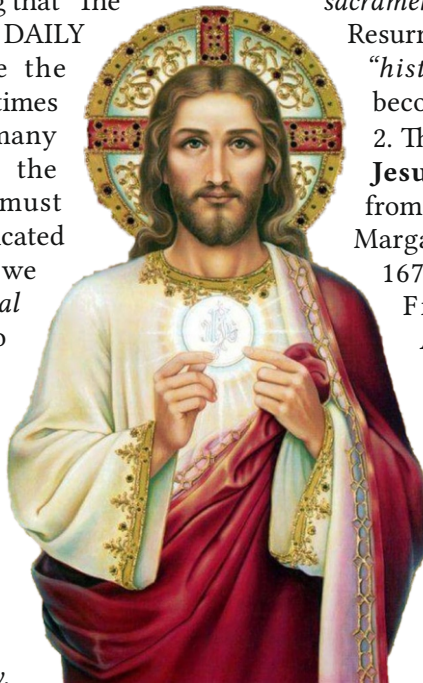
2. The **Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus** and its Devotion originated from some Apparitions of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in France, 1673-75. (Only last month, Pope Francis received in Special Audience, a Delegation from Paray-le-Monial which came to the Vatican on pilgrimage to celebrate the **350th Jubilee of the Devotion**, and he encouraged them **how important the Devotion still is for today**).

This is based on at least 2 fundamental scripture texts from John’s Gospel, and 1 from Matthew’s Gospel:

“Jesus proclaimed, “If anyone thirsts, let him/her come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’.” Now this Jesus said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified...”(John 7:37-39).

(Later, at the Cross) **“When they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness - his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth - that you also may believe.**

(Jn 19:33-35).



Jesus words, **“Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water,”** came true *on the Cross*, when the heart of Jesus was pierced by the soldier’s lance, and *blood and water* (the Johannine symbols of new life in the Spirit) started flowing copiously for the life of humanity! This is one basic event that explains the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. The third New Testament text is:

“Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt 12:28-30).

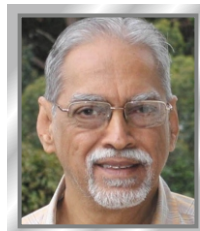
The 12 Promises of Jesus and the 9 First Fridays of the Sacred Heart Devotion use the language and social context of 350 years ago, and may sound odd to today’s post-modern Catholics, and so the **Divine Mercy Devotion**, started in the 20th century through Apparitions in Poland to St Faustina and encouraged by the great Polish Pope, St John Paul II, has become more popular today. But notice the very important difference: while keeping the symbol of the Heart of Jesus and its rays, this modern Devotion has changed the focus from the **Spirit’s action** on **disciples** inspiring them to take up “Jesus’ yoke/burden” and to thereby “receive divine refreshment,” to a new focus on God’s **Mercy** upon **“sinners!”** So though the two Devotions seem similar, they are in fact quite different!

In 2006, **Pope Benedict XVI** wrote to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus (Pope St. John Paul II wrote similar words many times

earlier) to encourage the Jesuits to strenuously foster even today the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and its apostolic outreach, the Apostleship of Prayer (now renamed “Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network”):

“It is still a fitting task for Christians to continue to deepen their relationship with the Heart of Jesus, in such a way as to revive their faith in the saving love of God, and to welcome him ever better into their lives. It is only possible to be Christian by fixing our gaze on the Cross of our Redeemer, *“on him whom they have pierced”* (Jn 19: 37; cf. Zc 12: 10). When we practise this devotion, not only do we recognize God’s love with gratitude, but we continue to open ourselves to this love so that our lives are ever more closely patterned upon it.”

So here is a call to renew our **Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus** based on the power of the Word (see the NT texts quoted above) and on a focus on the Love of God emanating from the crucified and broken Heart of Christ, calling us to become better disciples (*“take up my yoke, my burden”*). This focus is very necessary for today’s Church and for the New Evangelization.



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THE WORLD IS ON A BRINK, BUT YOU CAN HELP!

-Fr. M.K.George, SJ

For those of us who knew Bangalore, now Bengaluru, the following news would have been horrific. "Less than two years after Bengaluru, home to \$245 billion IT industry, grappled with flash floods, the city is now suffering from an acute water shortage ... the worst in three to four decades." (Y. Sharma, March 2024).

Remember, just 30-40 years ago, Bangalore was a city where nobody needed a fan or air conditioner; you needed sweaters and jackets and mist welcomed you in the mornings. Where there were 262 lakes, now we have just 50 lakes, most of them dying. "98% of lakes are encroached upon and 90% of them are fed with untreated sewage or industrial effluents. Naturally, this has impacted the recharge of the groundwater table as well." (TV Ramachandra, April 2024).

Today, Bangaloreans are queuing up for drinking water.

The world is on a brink

The Bangalore example is just a sample. Look at the whole world: Currently, nearly 703 million people lack access to water – approximately 1 in 10 people on the planet – and over 2 billion do not have safe drinking water.

Think of the Climate Change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global temperature is expected to rise by 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052, if it continues to increase at the current rate. This rise in temperature is driving more frequent and severe weather changes, contributing to an array of devastating effects: hotter temperature, more severe storms, increased droughts, a warming/rising ocean, loss of species, not enough food, more health risks, and poverty and displacement. In fact, we are witnessing all of these on a daily basis.

Other human-made disasters

Now add to the climate change, the other disasters pushing the world to a nightmarish scenario. The wars are the biggest threats. Whether the war in Ukraine, now into its second year, or the attack on Gaza by Israel following the horrific Hamas attack on Israel, now into the seventh month, both have the potential to break the world into a Third World War. Attempts and cries for peace and ceasefire

have not been heard. There is desperation on all sides. The soldiers alone killed have crossed 31,000 in Ukraine. In Gaza over 31,000 have died, 70 per cent of them women and children. Besides, women and children are being starved in Gaza.

The number of migrants, due to either climate change or political reasons, continue to increase. In 2023 alone more than 2000 migrants died in the Mediterranean Sea trying to enter Europe.

The failure of the world leadership is so glaring. The sliding down of democracy and growth of dictators add to the crises and push the world more and more to the brink of a disaster. Countries like Mali, Myanmar, Chad, Guinea, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon have been listed as ruled by dictators. Then there is

the case of China and Russia, who claim to be democratically elected leaders, but are in effect autocrats. Take Latin America, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, Javier Milei in Argentina, and Dian Boluarte in Peru are examples of leaders who are leading their nations in dictatorial terms. The latest in the list is our own country, India, where fears are expressed that our present regime is striving towards dictatorial ways.

We can help

Christians are men and women of hope. But, we need to act. Small steps are effective. Plant a tree. Join a service group to protect nature. Participate in politics. Not the least, keep praying. Pope Francis reminds us, 'Catholics should not be indifferent to politics, but should offer their suggestions, as well as prayers that their leaders may serve the common good in humility and love.' Speaking up the truth is the least we can do to save the world from the brink.



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WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY: CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME

- Ibonio D'Souza

Today, we are faced with an ecological crisis of rising sea levels, polluted air, toxic oceans, and a mass extinction of species. One response to this crisis is “greening the economy” which looks to technological innovation to ensure sustainable development without further degrading the environment. But in recent years there has been a deeper questioning that suggests that the ecological crisis requires a spiritual and moral response.

This has been forcefully articulated in Pope Francis's encyclical, 'Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home, which asks us to look at the spiritual and moral issues underlying the unprecedented destruction of ecosystems we are inflicting upon the Earth. There are other spiritual leaders too who speak of the need to search beyond a merely physical or technological response to the present crisis and ask the deeper spiritual questions, which they believe are at the root of our present imbalance.

There is an argument that the origin of our present ecological crisis can be traced back to the Age of Enlightenment, when the emerging Newtonian model saw the physical world as unfeeling matter, a clockwork mechanism that we should understand and control. This consciousness may have given us the fruits of science and technology, but its cost was to create a mindset of separation that cut off humanity from the awareness of our natural interrelatedness with our world.

How have we lost and entirely forgotten any spiritual relationship to life and the planet, a central reality to other cultures for millennia? For indigenous peoples, the world is a sacred, interconnected living whole that cares for us and, therefore, we need to revere and care for it. Instead, in our Western culture, it has become a “resource” to exploit. The question then is whether we can correct our present imbalance through returning to an awareness of the sacred nature of creation, the Earth, as a living being

which needs our love and attention.

The earth is not a problem to be solved; it is a living being to which we all belong. The Earth is part of our own self and we are part of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of our image of separateness, there can be no healing. And, the deepest part of our separateness from creation lies in our forgetfulness of its sacred nature, which is also our own sacred nature.

The last decades have seen the globalisation of our Western materialistic values. Driven by greed and endless desire, we have attacked and destroyed the fragile web of life that physically supports us.

But we have also created a soulless wasteland that no longer nourishes us with any connection to the sacred nature of creation, a connection that has spiritually sustained humanity for millennia.

Thomas Berry, one of the earliest voices to articulate a spiritual ecology, writes, “We are not talking to the rivers, we are not listening to the wind and Sears. We have broken the great conversation... all the disasters that are happening now are a consequence of that spiritual 'autism.'” If we are to cease this destruction and desecration, if we

are to no longer pollute the soul as well as the soil, we need to regain a connection to the sacred nature of the Earth. How to re-establish this connection, rejoin this conversation, is a fundamental question we should be asking.

Are we prepared to embrace a new story of life and civilisation, one that is radically different to our present story of a consumer-driven culture, based upon exploitation and the myth of continual economic progress? Many people today long for such a new story, one that recognises the Earth as a single interconnected living whole to which we belong. This is a story that nourishes our deeper selves with a sense of connection to the sacred and to the wonder and joy of life that is our heritage.

But collectively, we are still caught in the dream, or nightmare, of materialism, which the Earth can



no longer support. Indeed, it could be argued that the root of the present collective anger, or deep discontent we are witnessing, comes from a primal knowing that this dream has passed its sell-by date, that its promises of prosperity are empty. And yet because our culture does not ask the right questions, there is no possibility for a real answer.

Science and technology are born from the reasoning that we are separate from the Earth, a mindset that is at the foundation of a culture where the exploitation of the natural world is now global and catastrophic. Our present scientific responses may offer valuable short-term fixes, but do not begin to address the deeper issues. What will it take to change our pathological behaviour towards our common home? To quote James Gustavo Sheth, former U.S. Advisor on climate change: "I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change... I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these, we need a cultural and spiritual transformation."

The first step is to recognise our present predicament and to become aware that materialism is in fact just a story we have been sold, which has us in its grip even as it is destroying our own ecosystem. There is actually

no rationale that more "stuff" will make us happy and fulfilled, but rather it appears to have the opposite effect of empty promises that leave us emotionally and spiritually starved. We now come to understand the need for a new story - a story that includes a sustainable relationship to the Earth.

Real sustainability does not mean the ability to continue our present energy-intensive consumer-driven culture, but sustainability for all creation, for the living Earth to which we belong. But before we can fully articulate or live such a new story, we need to reconnect with the sacred nature of creation, rejoin the great conversation that was central to the way of life of our ancestors. This work that reconnects has many forms, but a central theme is empowering the individual, opening our eyes and ears to the mystery and wonder of creation in all of its diversity, and returning each of us to our real place of belonging within life.



***Ibonio D'Souza** is the author of the widely read motivational tome 'Rise And Shinethe lotus way', columnist, and a social activist.*

JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

Summer has reached its inevitable end and June means we greet the rains happily, feeling the air cool down.

I hope you had a happy summer vacation and praying for rain in our country that is a godsend.

With that optimistic note, let's start ...

True story - Pickup in the rain



One late night at around half past eleven, an African American lady stood on the side of a highway trying to endure a lashing rain storm. Her car had broken down and desperately she needed

a ride. She stood there trying to flag a ride from the passing cars.

She was soaking wet.

A young man stopped to assist her. He was a white man and in the 1960s, this was not a common occurrence since there were conflicts between the whites and the blacks.

The young man took her to safety and put her into a taxi cab. She seemed to be in a big hurry. She thanked him and wrote down his address and the cab drove away.

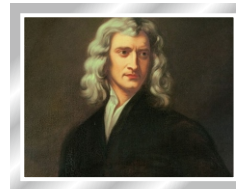
A week later, a knock came on the young man's door.

To his surprise, a giant colour television that was expensive in those days was delivered to his home. There was a note attached. It read, "Thank you so much for assisting me on the highway. The rain soaked not only my clothes but my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was just able to make it to my dying husband's bedside, just before he passed away. God bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others."

What do we learn from this story?

We learn that we are all brothers and sisters and helping each other is only serving God. Offering to help those in need is a beautiful thing because it is like a chain reaction where people not just benefit from our help but see us as examples to help others too. The whole world can be a happier place when we help others and our help can extend to animals too that need our assistance for we are all living beings part of this big beautiful earth.

Inspirational quotes by Sir Isaac Newton



1. "Gravity explains the motions of planets but it does not explain what sets the planets in motion."

2. "I do not know what I may appear to the world, to myself I seem to have been

only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself now and then, finding a smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

3. "Live your life as an Exclamation rather than an Explanation."

4. "Tact is an art of making a point without making an enemy."

Quiz

All about lightning



Lightning is a gigantic electrical spark. It would take around 80 million car batteries to equal the power of one thunderbolt.

So let's begin...

1. How many times hotter than the surface of the sun can a lightning bolt reach?

2. How many times faster than a bullet can lightning go?

3. What is special about thunderstorms and lightning?

4. Do all thunderstorms produce lightning?

5. How many people worldwide each year lose their lives by lightning?

Riddle Me



1. What is the only 5 letter word that becomes larger when you add the letter r to it?

2.

2. Dark or white, sweet or bitter, sometimes I can be Belgian and sometimes I can be Swiss. What am I?

3. People say that I put a doctor out of business.

Sometimes I am crunchy and sweet. What am I?

4. A retreat island is full of people but not a single person in sight. How is this possible?

5. Carbon and hydrogen went on a date and they immediately wanted to go on a second date. Why?

The story behind the hit Hello



Lionel Ritchie, born in June is a world famous musician and his song Hello is one of his most popular songs.

The classic hit 'Hello' started out as a simple joke before turning into a love ballad.

When Lionel was young, he often saw beautiful women pass by him but was too shy to talk to them. In his mind, he thought, "Hello, is it me you are looking for?"

Ritchie said, "It was a joke. My producer James Anthony Carmichael was coming to the house. I came walking around the corner and I asked, "Hello, is it me you are looking for?"

Carmichael said, "Finish that."

Lionel thought it might be too corny but Carmichael assured him it would be a hit which it eventually was.

Then after the song lyrics were completed with music, it became a love ballad for generations to come. The video of the song was noteworthy. It featured the story of Lionel as a teacher who had unrequited love for a blind student until he discovers she too shares his feelings which is demonstrated for he sees her sculpting a clay likeness of himself. Sadly, the iconic video although good was voted the worst music video of all time by music fans.

What is the Good Word?



All about rainbows

1. This type of rainbow always has a smaller arc.
2. He discovered and explained the phenomenon of rainbow.
3. The rainbow word originates from this word.
4. This goddess of Greek mythology personifies the rainbow.
5. The time duration of an average rainbow.

St. Anthony of Padua. The finder of lost articles.



"Where is it? I know I have put in somewhere but where?" Does this sound familiar? It happens to most of us at least once in our lives.

St. Anthony is a great saint to ask for help in finding whatever you are looking for. Books in those days were rare and highly treasured. Anthony had a book that he often used for reference when teaching. One day it was stolen. St Anthony prayed that the thief would return it. His prayer was answered. The thief eventually became a member of the religious order. This is one of the chief reasons why people always call upon St. Anthony to help them to find lost articles.

Another story about the power of St. Anthony is about a noble man who was jealous of his wife and believed their infant son was not his. His wife did her best to convince him but he refused to listen. In desperation, the wife came to St. Anthony for help. He talked to the nobleman for hours and helped him to see the absurdity of his jealousy. Just then the nurse brought the infant and immediately, the nobleman again began to suspect his wife as being unfaithful to him. St Anthony looked at the infant and requested, "In the name of Jesus Christ, speak and tell who your father is."

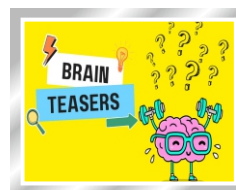
The infant pointed out to the nobleman and in a voice older than his said, "This my father!"

The nobleman broke down in tears and took the child he had rejected in his arms.

Thus St. Anthony helped restore a failing marriage and the love lost between husband and wife was restored back again.

So the next time you lose an article or even lose something intangible that is dear to you, implore St. Anthony to restore it back to you.

Brain Teasers



1. Arnold Schwarzenegger has a long one, Michael J. Fox has a short one, Madonna does not use hers nor does the Pope. What is it?

2. A person who makes it has no need for it. The person who purchases it does not use it. The person who uses it does not know it. What is it?

- I have a large money box, 10 inches wide and 5 inches tall. Roughly, how many coins can I place until my money box is no longer empty?
- What does an island and letter t have in common?
- $X - Z = 25$ and $X + Y = 14$. X is greater than 8 but less than 10. Then what is the value of X multiplied by Y?

Smile Please



1. Why were they called the Dark Ages?

Because there were more knights.

2. What is the best thing about Switzerland?

The flag is a big plus.

- I found a book called, How to solve 50% of your Problems. I bought two.
- You know why the hairdresser won the race? Because he knew a short cut.
- A man and a woman were travelling on a train.
Woman: "Every time you smile, I feel like inviting you to my place."
Man feeling pleased: "Oh, great. Are you single?"
Woman: "No, but I am a Dentist."

What's in a name?



Our names are special to us. Here are some popular names with their origin and meaning.

- Sofia - Greek origin and it means wisdom.
- Peter - Greek origin and

it means rock.

- Richard - German origin and means powerful, brave, hardy or strong ruler.
- Amelia - Latin origin and means work or industriousness.
- Stephen - Greek origin and it means crown or garland.

Wisdom message for the month



A scar means the hurt is over and the wound is closed. It means that you conquered the pain, learned a lesson, grew stronger and moved forwards. A scar is a tattoo to be proud of. You cannot

make the scars in your life disappear but you can change the way you see them.

Scars can be physical or invisible. Physical scars are wounds we got from accidents, illness or fights. We learn from them. Invisible scars are imprinted in our hearts and minds for they are from experiences. You can start seeing the scars as a sign of strength not pain and a reminder that life teaches us many lessons. All our experiences whether joyful or painful have contributed to us growing in maturity and becoming the people we are today. So embrace your scars of the past and be proud they made you a better person you are today. As human beings, we keep on growing not physically after a certain age but definitely in maturity. Nobody is too old to learn from life's experiences.

That is all for this month. Take care. See you next month.

Answers

Quiz

- Five times hotter.
- 30,000 times faster.
- Without lightning and thunderstorms our earth's atmosphere electrical balance would disappear in 5 minutes. Lightning also creates ozone.
- Yes.
- Around 2,000 people.

Riddle Me

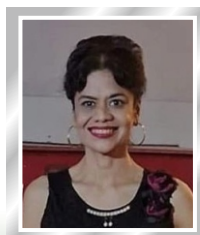
- Large-Larger.
- Chocolate.
- An apple.
- They are all couples.
- Because they bonded so well.

What is the Good Word?

- Salt water rainbow.
- Sir Isaac Newton.
- Renboga, ren means rain and boga means bowl.
- Goddess Iris.
- Less than an hour.

Brain Teasers

- Their surname.
- A coffin.
- Just one after that it is no longer empty.
- They are both in the middle of water.
- 45.



Christine is an author of over 30 books available on Amazon worldwide in paperback and Kindle. She also enjoys playing the piano and has a YouTube cooking channel Christine D'Sylva's fusion kitchen.