

KINGDOM

REVELATOR

CATHOLIC MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ■ ISSUE 43

FROM
DARKNESS
INTO LIGHT

LET'S
CELEBRATE
HIS BIRTHDAY



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Mother Mary, Pray for our Readers.

OUR HEAVENLY PATRONESS

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.

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the Glory to God. Without his divine
help the production of this magazine
would not have been possible.

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Design & Layout : nanmabranding.com

Christmas HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED!

Welcome to the Advent issue of Kingdom Revelator. The First Sunday of Advent marks the start of a new Year in the Catholic Church, so let us be the first to wish you a happy and holy New Year in Christ Jesus!

I was recently thinking about how the world has appropriated Advent and Christmas time for its own commercial ends. The media, the High Street and the Internet are constantly bombarding us with the perfect presents for our loved ones. There are so many things that you can buy for them to show your love and make them 'really happy'. Christmas shopping has become very stressful as you have so many choices to consider. This misses the whole point of Advent as a time to prepare for Christmas. Yes, it is a time to show your loved ones that you care for them and want to spend time with them but for many people it is more about how many parties they are invited to and how full their social calendar is.

In his homily at Midnight Mass in The Vatican last Christmas, Pope Francis said, "Jesus was born rejected by some and regarded by many others with indifference. Today too, that same indifference can exist, whenever Christmas becomes a holiday with ourselves at the centre rather than Jesus; when the lights of shop windows push the light of God into the shadows; when we are enthused about gifts but indifferent to our neighbours in need. This worldliness has kidnapped Christmas; we need to liberate it!"

He went on to say, "With the shepherds, let us enter into the real Christmas, bringing to Jesus all that we are, our alienation, our unhealed wounds, our sins. Then, in Jesus, we will enjoy the taste of the true spirit of Christmas: the beauty of being loved by God. With Mary and Joseph, let us pause before the manger, before Jesus who is born as bread for my life. Contemplating His humble and infinite love, let us simply tell Him, "Thank you. Thank you because you have done all this for me."

LET'S CELEBRATE HIS BIRTHDAY



Maria Thoonkuzhy, from Bedfordshire, UK suggests how we can make this Christmas more meaningful.



Hurray!! It's that wonderful time of year when we look forward to the celebration of Christmas. We think of the Christmas images, snow blanketing the trees, red-leaved poinsettias decorating our homes along with the elegantly decorated Christmas trees. It is a time for joy and happiness. "I am bringing you

good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). While we are trying to get into the festive mood, let's think about a few ways that we can make our Christmas celebrations a fitting tribute to the birth of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus.

A Birthday Party

Let's focus on Christmas being Jesus' birthday, the day when Mary gave birth to our Saviour. "She gave birth to her first born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). We can celebrate

by throwing an early birthday party for Him with delicious cakes and sweets and invite friends who don't know about Jesus, so that we can tell them about Him and what He has done for us.

A Nativity Play

If your family is getting together at Christmas time why not write a nativity play so that you can all take part in a re-enactment of the birth of Jesus. After a sumptuous lunch and the exchange and unwrapping of gifts; it's a perfect way to get all the family involved from the oldest generation to the youngest, sharing the true message of the season. It could become a family tradition.

Enchanting Music

Why not celebrate the good news with music? Even if we are not great musicians, we might be able to gather a few friends together and sing carols for a local care home or for our neighbours. Music can be a powerful way of delivering a message, so let's join our voices with the choirs of Angels, "Glory to God in the Highest Heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favours" (Luke 2:14). If you cannot sing then why not invite your friends and neighbours to a carol concert or to one of the Christmas services in Church.

Give To Others

We spend a lot of time shopping, selecting and wrapping gifts for our loved ones at this time of the year but let's also remember those who are in need. There are many ways that we can help them. This could be by putting together a gift hamper of food, clothes or toys for a poor family or by buying charity gift vouchers as presents for those friends who already have everything that they need. These allow you to give a card to your loved ones to show that you have

made a donation to a good cause on their behalf. "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple, truly I tell you none of these will lose their reward" (Matthew 10:42).

Crib Of Prayers

As a child, I remember the nuns at our local Parish Church teaching us how much the infant Jesus looks forward to receiving little gifts in the form of short prayers. They suggested that you could make an imaginary gift, like a beautiful robe for baby Jesus by saying a decade of the Rosary. I often think

Welcome Him

These are just a few ways to prepare for our Christmas celebrations. When we put up the Christmas tree, as we hang each bauble we can pray, "Jesus, please come and stay in my heart". As we wrap our presents we can pray for those who will receive them. Let us make sure that we are properly prepared to welcome Jesus this year and turn away from anything that will spoil our relationship with Him so that we can wholeheartedly say, "I welcome you Lord Jesus. I am prepared to meet you. Let me roll out the red carpet for you!"



of this as I try to make small sacrifices as I prepare for Christmas. It might be by spending more time in prayer, by going to the Sacraments more often, by fasting from my favourite television program for a week or not using the internet for a day. These all help us to appreciate the wonderful gifts that God has given us and draw us closer to Him. Why not write a letter to Jesus thanking Him for all the gifts He has given you and place it in the Christmas crib?

Each loving thing that we do and each sacrifice we make as we prepare our hearts this Advent are our personal gifts to Jesus. So let us go in haste like the shepherds to venerate the adorable sweet baby Jesus and present our personal gifts to Him. "They went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the Manger" (Luke 2:16). May the heavenly gift of Jesus gladden and fill our hearts with joy!

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FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT!

Ann-Marie Chinnery writes about the terrifying effects of New Age practices in today's world.

In a forest near Manchester in 2013, Scott had a terrifying experience. For two years he had been heavily involved in New Age practices, and today, in the middle of the woods, suddenly everything started turning dark around him and he could no longer see anything. He heard a strange female voice that was murmuring something but he couldn't make out what she was saying so he asked her to speak louder. This voice then whispered into his ear, "I can teach you a multitude of secrets and instruct you in knowledge that has been hidden from humanity." Then she showed him his future: he would have lots of money, a beautiful house, etc. She added that in order to obtain all that was predicted she had to enter inside him. Scott then described how this evil spirit tried to take over his body but he resisted and eventually he managed to break free. When Scott finally came out of his meditation, he realised that the experience had lasted 3 hours!

Who Is This Scott?

I was able to interview him, this is his testimony: "I'm 27 years old and I grew up in a Catholic family. When I was a child, my whole family went to church and prayed

the Rosary together at home. When I turned 11, I don't know why, but my family stopped praying together. Two years later my parents separated and then divorced. Already devastated by these events, I also felt rejected by my father. We didn't speak for several years. I developed a great deal of resentment inside, and, along with that, I turned away from God. My mother and grandmother did everything possible to get me to pray the Rosary with them, but I refused and demonstrated a complete lack of interest. On top of everything else, I was in the full crisis of adolescence. I had stopped going to church completely by the age of 16".

Culture Of Death

Following the slippery slope of the culture of death offered to our young people, I began to smoke pot, then to take ecstasy and cocaine. I loved going to parties and getting drunk. I went to study in Australia for a year. During that time I had an overwhelming feeling that something important was missing. But what? Whatever job I envisioned myself doing, there was always something that wasn't right about it. At 23, I tried

several types of meditations: transcendental meditation, Hindu, Buddhist and Egyptian meditation, in fact any meditations that I found on the internet and which would allow me to shut myself away with my headphones.

This was when I had an encounter with what I realised was a demon, and I came to realise that she had tried to seduce me with her lies. During the years that followed those devastating experiences, Scott suffered greatly from "sleep paralysis," without realising at the time that his symptoms were due to his New Age practices.

A Godsend

Little did Scott know that the mercy of God was waiting for him along this most dangerous path. Scott's grandmother, who has been praying constantly for him, dreamed of a way to keep him connected to the Lord. She invited him to accompany her to Medjugorje, arguing that she couldn't go alone because of her age. She hit the nail on the head! Scott was happy to go, because he had already been to Medjugorje when he was little and remembered that he had a good time there. Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is the town where in

“
I developed a great deal of resentment inside, and, along with that, I turned away from God.”

1981, six children began to experience a phenomena which they claimed to be apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These apparitions had a message of peace for the world, as well as a call to conversion, prayer and fasting. These apparitions are still being investigated by the Catholic Church and have not been officially accepted but while the Church investigates these further, many people travel to Medjugorje on private pilgrimages.

More Problems

When he arrived with his grandmother, Scott became very unsettled. At the very beginning of his stay, he woke up in the middle of the night, and to his horror, his body was completely paralysed. His limbs were not responding to his commands and only his eyes could move. He sensed a dark presence in his room and it had the effect of emptying him of all life. There was nothing he could do but wait until it came to an end. At that point he remembered the existence of God and sought to call

upon Him. But he couldn't cry or even move his lips. However, in his spirit, he began to cry out: "Please help me Jesus Christ!" At that precise moment, as though Jesus was just waiting for the cry of His child before He intervened, the dark presence disappeared. When he was no longer under the hold of the enemy, two thoughts came to Scott's mind, surprising even him. Even though he had abandoned the Lord for years he thought to himself, 'I want to become a priest, and I have to go to confession to a Priest.'

Freedom At Last

Scott wanted to find a priest capable of understanding his Confession and his wanderings into occultism. Several days later during the homily at Sunday Mass, he heard the celebrant describe the dangers of the occult. 'That's the one!' Scott said to himself. "He'll know how to hear my Confession." Scott went on to explain: "I made a very sincere Confession. The priest seemed to ask just the right questions and I was able to reveal to him all the suffering I had endured in my life. A great number of my spiritual wounds had been caused by my relationship with my father, then with my mother. To add to it all, after living with my girlfriend for three years, I found out that she had cheated on me and had lied to me, and that was a new and painful blow. Finally, because of a bad knee, I was refused entry to the army. This accumulation of failures made me think I was a living failure. But after that Confession, I felt such inner freedom! I had never felt like that before!

Reconciled

It was then that I realised all the potential joy and peace I had squandered because of my bad choices. The good Father who had listened to my Confession was very inspired when giving me my

penance. It was to climb to the top of a nearby mountain and to stop at each of the 14 stations of the cross. At each one, I was to think again about a specific moment in my life when I had been wounded and offer it up to our Lord. That is exactly what I did. When I got to the top, I prayed the whole Rosary and descended again, continuing to pray with all my heart. It was during that descent that I was gripped strongly by the conviction that I had to become a priest. I said to Jesus then, "I know that You are there; I know that I have done wrong in my life; but if You want me to become a priest, You'll have to give me a sign. I will do all that You wish."

Divine Intervention

"When I got to the bottom, I began to walk along the path leading back to the village. It was at that time that the face of the Merciful Jesus (the one revealed to St Faustina) appeared before my eyes. It was not a 3-dimensional apparition but a simple vision. His face was radiant. He was shining with a golden light that does not exist on this earth. He looked me right in the eyes. That vision was all I could see, so much so that all that was to my left and to my right had disappeared from sight. At the same time I found myself enveloped in immense love, and I sensed that Jesus was saying to me, 'What more do you want?' Several seconds later, His face disappeared."

I hardly need to tell you that since his experience in Medjugorje, Scott has radically changed his life. He is one of those people who, through the mercy of God, have passed from death to life. A pillar of his parish, he attends Mass and Adoration daily and his relationship with Our Lady has had a resurgence. He has again taken up praying the Rosary, the tradition that his family taught him as a child. He is now waiting for a sign from God as to his future.

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Reema Nasir
from Pakistan,
explains why we
should treat our
bodies with
respect.

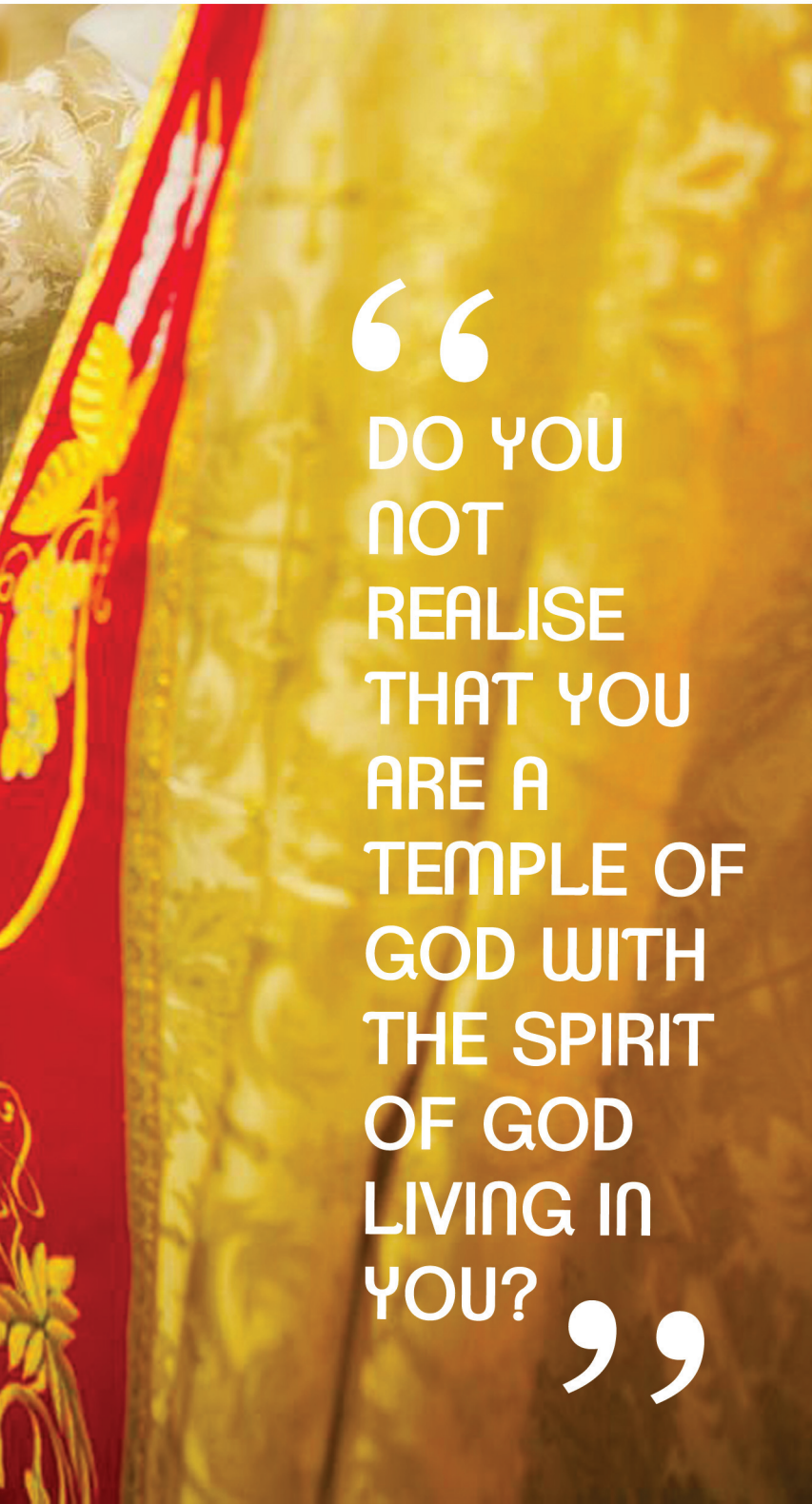
GOD'S TEMPLE

Our Bodies

The message that we are constantly being given by the media and advertising is, "It's your body and you can do whatever you like with it!" But as Christians we know that this is not the full

picture, because our bodies are a gift from God. Jesus has paid the price for them with His Life and He lives in us. St Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"

If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." (Corinthians 3:16-17). We should be very thankful that God has chosen us to be the Temple where He dwells. It is a



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great privilege and means that the place where we are, is holy because God is present in us.

Greater Happiness

Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, the President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has said that when we are aware that God is living in us then we will be drawn

closer to Him. "When we teach our children to answer the question: Where is God? And the children answer, God is in heaven. Well, there is something missing. We should add: God is living in me. This answer is far more accurate and will bring them into a closer relationship with God, and to a greater happiness." We are never alone because God lives within us. He is constantly speaking to our heart, we only need to listen to hear His voice.

Taking Care of Ourselves

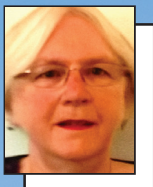
As God lives within us, it is our responsibility to take care of our bodies, both spiritually and physically. We naturally keep our bodies clean and we can also try to keep our minds and hearts unpolluted by sin and damaging attitudes. We can avoid watching inappropriate programs or listening to obscene music. Cleanliness of mind and heart is very important, so we should try to keep our thoughts pure and non-judgmental, not being jealous or greedy. In the Psalms it says that we will be rewarded if we do this. "Who shall go up to the mountain of the Lord? Who shall take a stand in his holy place? The clean of hands and the pure of heart, whose heart is not set on vanities..." (Psalm 24). In the Bible it also condemns body piercing and tattoos, "You will not gash your bodies when someone dies, and you will not tattoo yourselves" (Leviticus 19:28). God made each body perfectly in His image and likeness.

Respect

In the same way that we care for the beautiful and magnificent churches that have been built for the glory of God, we should look after the beautiful body that God has given us because it too was made for His glory. Let us respect ourselves and respect God by dressing modestly at all times and acknowledge with gratitude the price Jesus paid for us on the cross. Jesus knew that we were worth dying for and He wants each one of us to know our true worth, as the dwelling places of God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that you have chosen my body to be a Temple of the Holy Spirit. Help me to remember this at all times and to dress and act in a way that is befitting your holy dwelling place. Jesus put a high value on my life, help me to know my true self-worth and give me the confidence and courage to do your will. Amen.

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Advent is a time for preparation. It is a time of reflection, prayer, fasting and almsgiving as we look forward to celebrating the birth of our Saviour. In Old Testament times, the Jews were also looking forward to their promised Messiah, but how did they know what to expect? June Palmer explains.

LOOKING FORWARD TO CHRISTMAS



Understanding The Old Testament

Have you ever wondered how the Old Testament Scriptures were understood before the birth of Christ? As Christians we can read and interpret the Old Testament Scriptures in the light of Christ's birth, death and resurrection but without these how did the Jews understand what God was trying to tell them? The Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 129 says, "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New." It is only with the benefit of hindsight that we can properly understand many of the prophecies that lie hidden in the Old Testament.

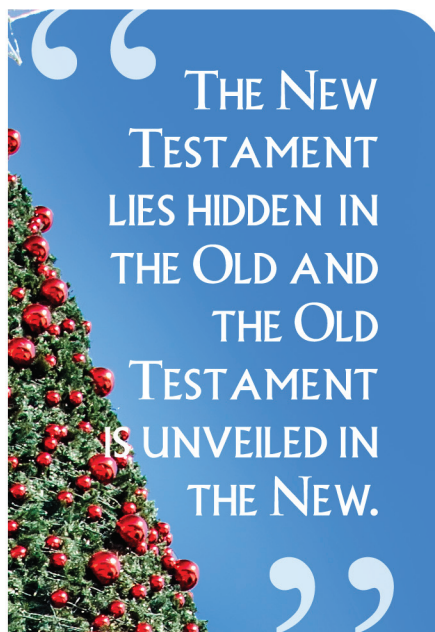
Warnings

Around the year 700 BC the prophet Micah wrote, "But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5:2). God sent Micah to speak to the people of Israel to warn them to change their ways and to condemn their unjust practices. If they didn't then a great disaster would come upon them. But whatever happened, God would send a Saviour who would come from the line of David, the clan of Judah whose roots were in the town of Bethlehem.

More Prophecies

Around the same time Isaiah made many prophecies about the birth of the promised Messiah, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Jeremiah was another prophet who lived

around the year 600 BC. He said, "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and



righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which He will be called - The Lord is our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5-6). In the Mass readings for Advent we will hear more of the prophecies from the Old Testament that refer to the birth of Jesus.

Other Insights

There is a fascinating description of a 'righteous man' in Wisdom Chapter 2: 12-20. The Jewish writer of this book, who was thought to be living in Egypt between 80 and 50 BC, was obviously inspired by God to write these words. "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of

the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's child, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected." This is a very accurate portrayal of Jesus written well before He was born. It even describes how His goodness was tested by insults and suffering, yet as He was dying on the Cross Jesus still prayed for His persecutors, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Find Out More

These are just a few of the many Old Testament prophecies that the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus fulfilled. Why not look for others yourself. A good place to start might be with Isaiah, chapters 40-55, where Isaiah speaks of the consolation that God wants to bring to Israel. A Bible that includes notes or a Biblical commentary will help you to understand the historical context and the situation of the people that the writer is addressing. Some Bibles have references alongside the New Testament Gospels that point to the Old Testament prophecies that are being fulfilled and this can be very useful.

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FAST



A fresh insight on how we look at food by **Fr Roy Panell**, a retired Parish priest from Chesterfield in the UK.

The best fast food recipe that I know is this one:

Take a ripe peach. Leave it in the fridge for 3 hours. Then eat. Pure bliss!

Preparation time: 10 Seconds

Cooking time: Nil

Pleasure rate: *****

However that isn't what I am writing about. I want to look at a 'fast from food' or something close to that. At the start I have to say that fasting is very, very widespread. It is everywhere.

According to the United Nations, 795,000,000 people fast every day; they have no choice. 98% of these people are from the developing world. Those fasting include babies, children, the sick and the elderly. Why don't you try and discover why this happens, perhaps then you will be able to decide what you can do about such an intolerable situation.

Fasting, either imposed (when it is called poverty and starvation) or for other reasons is nearly as old as the human race itself. Thousands of years ago, our ancestors discovered that fasting from food sharpened the mind, made them more imaginative and creative. Even today some people fast before they go to hear great music or even before going to gigs. Fasting has a way of raising us up

from our attachment to this planet Earth and from the material world.

Now a question: What keeps us attached to this material world, this ever-changing world? The answer is not my iPad, my computer or my smart phone, it is gravity. To be released from gravity is an experience that very few of us have enjoyed. It makes us weigh very little. We float, we laugh, we cry with joy, we sing, "I Believe I can fly! I Believe I can touch the sky!" Well those who regularly fast will tell you that it helps them to hear more clearly, to pray with greater intensity and to be more receptive to the Holy Spirit. Someone once described it as "making colours brighter and bringing colours to sounds". Canadians say that "a full stomach has no eats!"

FOOD

Fr Slavko from Medjugorje writes, "To fast means to free myself from the things of this world and not to allow them to cloud my sight of what is eternal, what is of God." That is clear and simple enough for me. St. Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit who lives in us comes to help us in our weakness (Romans 8:26). So, if we want to pray while fasting or fast while praying, the Holy Spirit will help us. "Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of all people and light the fire of your love in us all."

Now to the heart of the matter; here are some pointers which might help you:

1 Don't fast from food or drink if your doctor advises against it.

2 Don't go without any nourishment at all. Taking a little bread and drinking water is sensible.

3 Fasting can be for any period of time - 1 or 2 days each week, part of a day; the evening before a Holy Day; some days in Advent and Lent.

4 Prayer and fasting go together. Pray preferably in silence and stillness. Don't use books so that you are more open to the Holy Spirit.

5 Fast and pray with an intention. Have someone or some situation uppermost in your mind. Offer the sacrifice of your fast for them. St Paul says, "I urge you, brothers and sisters to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."

6 Fasting does not have to mean food and drink. Most of us have become attached to the "stuff" of this world. It might be a habit, a compulsion, or even an addiction that can control us. Some people can spend hours texting, surfing the www's or playing internet games. Certain websites are very addictive and they can intrude into our lives. Others are harmful and dangerous. If you need help to be released from such "chains" then go for it, don't feel ashamed! You could also help yourself and someone else at the same time. Try to take an hour or some time out from your computer, smart phone or tablet. Fast from it and offer that fast as a sacrifice for someone else. Offer it for the 795,000,000, who have no option but to fast each day. Say, "Come Holy Spirit, fill our hearts!" Try to reduce the compulsive stuff a little at a time, and offer each small sacrifice for someone.

7 Be proud that God has called you to join with the hungry and starving in their fast. You will come to realise just how the balance of this world's food resources has tipped to one side, almost on a North South divide. The balance must be restored if we are all to survive. If not we shall all fall over.

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PRAYER

One of the Sehion Youth Members encourages us to ask God for help when we are in need.

I am embarrassed to say that I have not yet learnt to drive. This was not a problem until I was assigned to a hospital that was a long way from my university and I had no way of getting there. Then I heard that one of the other students who owns a car, was assigned to the same hospital. Now there came the awkward moment when I had to swallow my pride and ask her for a lift – thankfully she said yes, but what if she had said no!

Why Don't We Ask?

Very often we don't ask for help because we don't want to rely on someone else, who might let us down. We also don't want to feel indebted to another person; our pride can get in the way. This too can be why we don't turn to God when we are in need. There are other reasons too. Firstly, there is the trust issue of turning to God in faith. It is difficult to address someone that we cannot see, feel,

HELP!



and touch. Secondly, we might think that our problem isn't important enough for God to deal with. Thirdly, when we have asked God for help in the past, He didn't seem to answer our call. Lastly, what happens if God does help us? Does that mean that we have to do something for Him in exchange like become a priest or a nun?

We Need God

St Paul says "God who made the world and everything in it, He who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He himself gives to all

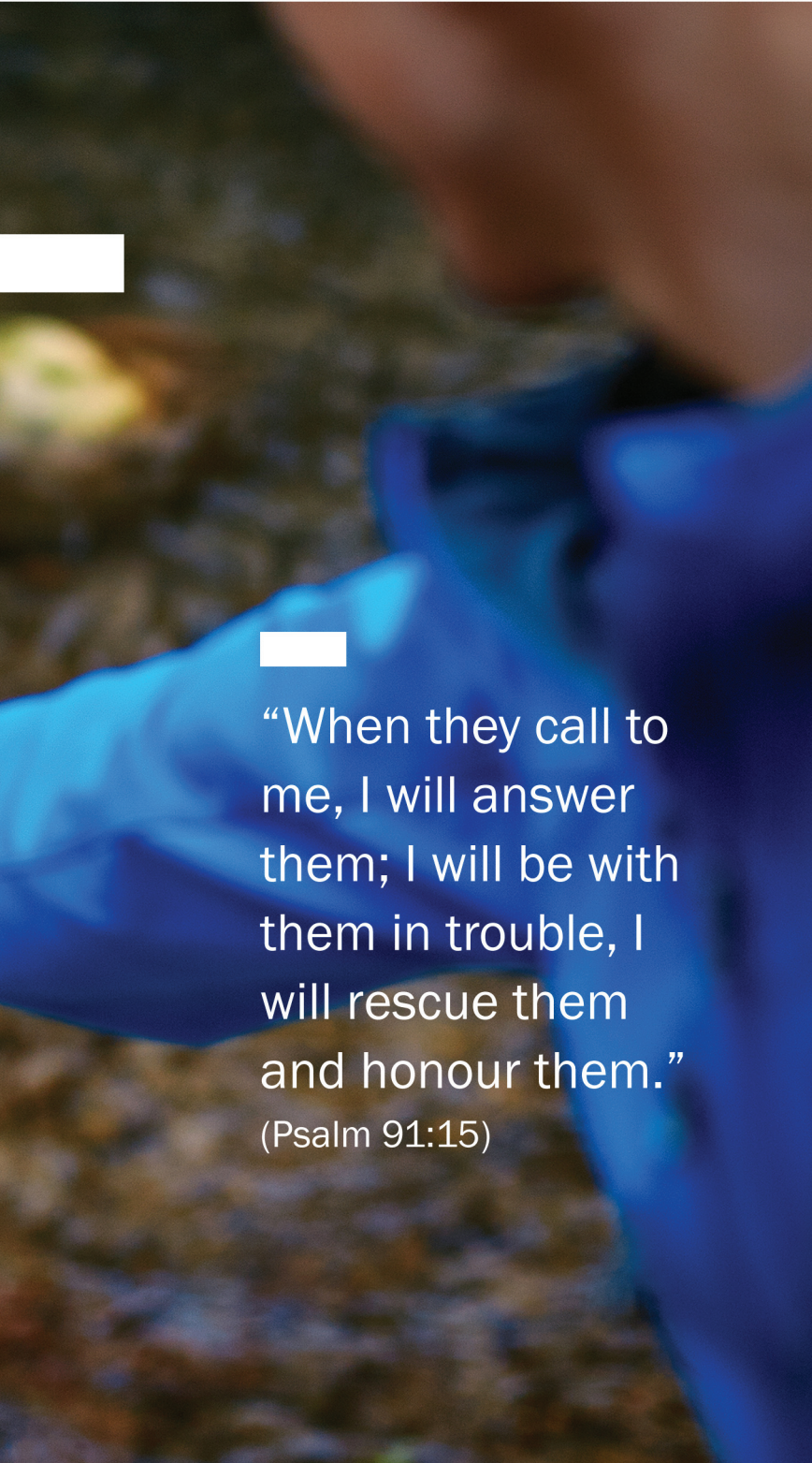
mortals life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:24-25). God doesn't need us, but we definitely need God. Jesus showed us that to ask for help is a source of strength. In John 4:7, when a Samaritan woman came to the well where Jesus was sitting, He asked her to "give me a drink". In His final moments on the cross, Jesus said "I am thirsty" (John 19:28). In both these situations, Jesus was thirsty for the souls of the people He was asking help from. In John 4, Jesus wanted the Samaritan woman to turn away from sin and come to Him. In John 19, Jesus thirsted for the entire world, past, present and future and desired for us to thirst for Him. Jesus was emphasising our need for Him.

God Satisfies

When we ask for God's help, we should not feel ashamed. By calling, upon Him we are putting our trust in Jesus Christ. "When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honour them" (Psalm 91:15). God always answers our prayers but He doesn't always answer us in the way that we want or in the timescale that we expect. He knows what is best for us. He may delay in answering our prayers to increase our patience or because He knows we are not ready for what we are asking for. He may also give us the answers we are looking for through the words of a family member or a brother or sister in Christ. When we ask God for help, there will be no strings attached to His answer. God's love is unconditional, He doesn't help us for His own benefit.

Trusting In God

How can we trust God when He is hidden from our eyes? This is a really difficult question but I think that in each one of us, God has placed the gift of hope. Hope that things will get better and the hope of spending eternity with Our Heavenly Father. Sometimes, when we have been hurt, we try to suppress this hope because we don't want to risk further rejection or failure. However, God tries to show us that we can trust in Him. "Hope that is seen, is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Romans 8:24-25). When we hope in God, He will not leave us. Jesus Himself told us "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We can trust in God even though we cannot see Him, because when Jesus died on the cross, He died for you and me.



“When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honour them.”
(Psalm 91:15)



WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?



Geniya Jerry,
from Banbury,
England shares
her story.

I always thought that I was a good Christian. I went to Mass regularly with my family but my faith didn't really have much impact on the way that I lived from day to day. In the last few years I have found myself becoming more and more unhappy. I worked hard at school but I wasn't getting the grades that I wanted. Everything seemed to be going wrong for me. Like many other young people, I sought comfort in my friends and in social media. My phone became my constant companion. But none of these solved my problems.

Recently, some friends made me go to a one day youth retreat run by Sehion Ministries in the UK. I didn't really want to go but they were very persuasive. This was the turning point in my life. It made me realise that I had been following the wrong path for the past 3 years. It made me question why I had never turned to God for help before. Was I scared that He wouldn't forgive me for my sins, or worried that He didn't love me? I had been struggling to try and solve my problems on my own and with the help of friends and ignoring the one, who is all-powerful, who could really help me.

They talked about Psalm 86:15, which says "You, O Lord, are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." When I heard this, I was really annoyed with myself; I regretted never asking for God's

"Was I scared that He wouldn't forgive me for my sins, or worried that He didn't love me?"

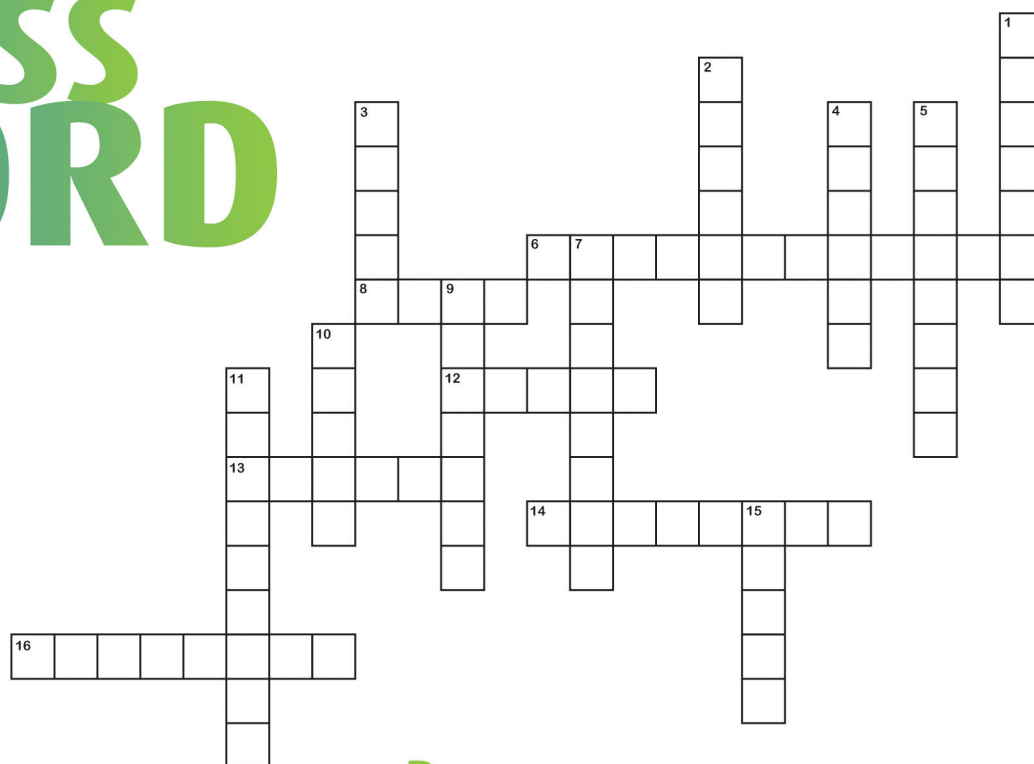
help. As the day progressed, things became clearer for me. During a time of spiritual sharing, it was suggested that I should spare some time for God each day and read a few verses from the Bible daily. This combination of Bible reading and prayer has made a real difference and my outlook on life has greatly improved, I am feeling happier and always turn to God when I am worried or distressed.

I have learned that when we make God our number one priority, when we love Him with all our heart, our mind and our soul then He will give us the strength to face even the toughest challenges.

Prayer: Loving Jesus, give us the strength and the grace to love You. Come Holy Spirit, and fill the hearts of your faithful, fill us with the fire of your love. Amen

...

CROSS WORD



Across

6. The announcement of angel Gabriel to Mary.
8. What part of the world did the wise men come from?
12. After how many days was Jesus taken into the temple to be circumcised?
13. Who first prophesied about the virgin birth of Jesus?
14. The town in which Jesus was raised as a child.
16. Whose prophecy was fulfilled through the killing of the infants at the time of Jesus' birth?

Down

1. Christmas trees originate from this country.
2. Advent comes from the Latin word 'adventus' meaning ____.
3. What colour vestment does the priest wear on Christmas Day?
4. Hark! The ____ Angels Sing
5. The birth of Jesus.
7. The character Santa Claus originates from Saint ____.
9. In the Latin Church, Boxing Day is celebrated as the Feast of Saint ____.
10. Which tribe of Israel is Jesus from?
11. According to the Gospel of Luke, who was the governor during the first census?
15. Which country did Joseph and Mary flee to in order to escape King Herod?

Compiled by Merin Thankachan

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ST MARY MAGDALENE DE PAZZI



Joyson Joboy from Birmingham, UK looks at the life of the patron saint of bodily illnesses and sexual temptations.

Early Life

Caterina de Pazzi was born in Florence on April 2, 1566. As a child, she had a deep sense of the presence of God and was attracted to prayer, solitude and penance. She was taught how to meditate at the age of nine by focusing on the Passion of Christ. After she received her First Holy Communion, she made a vow to remain a virgin. At the age of 14, she left home to be educated, but she was soon called back to marry a noble young man. She patiently spoke about her vow of virginity to her father, and he eventually allowed her to enter the religious life.

Profession

She chose the Carmelite Monastery of St Mary of the Angels in Florence, because their rule allowed her to receive Holy Communion daily, which was unusual at that time. In 1583, she was accepted as a novice and took the name, Sr Mary Magdalene. After just a year, she became critically ill. She had always desired to suffer for Jesus. As the illness got worse, she didn't complain and when one of the sisters asked how she could cope with the pain without complaining, she pointed to the Crucifix saying, "Those who call to mind the sufferings of Christ, and who offer up their own to God through His passion, find their pains sweet and pleasant."

Illness

As she was very sick with fever and violent coughing they allowed her to profess her first religious vows of chastity, poverty and obedience for ever, before the Lord from her sick bed. After this profession, her illness disappeared and this sudden cure was followed by a state of ecstasy which lasted for forty days. Every morning after Mass, Sr Mary Magdalene would fall into an ecstasy that lasted two hours. At other times she said that she experienced "excesses of love". In one of her ecstasies, Jesus took her heart and hid it in His own, telling her that He wouldn't return it until it is wholly pure and filled with pure love.

Mystical Experiences

Sr Mary Magdalene explained that her ecstasies were not a reward for her holiness, but they showed just how much fault there was within her. When one of the nuns complained that she didn't receive any supernatural gifts, Sr Mary Magdalene, commenting on the goodness of her sister,



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“Her last three years of life were a true Calvary of suffering for her.”

Pope Benedict XVI

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replied, “You don’t need them in order to serve Him”. Sr Mary Magdalene felt that God gave her these gifts because she was not strong enough to become holy without them and she knew how unworthy she was to receive them.

Trial Period

We might think that it would be easy to remain faithful and holy after experiencing the love of God so deeply but Sr Mary Magdalene also experienced severe trials. Jesus had warned her, “I will take away not the grace, but the feeling of grace. Though I will seem to leave you, I will be closer to you”. This was easy for her to accept during her time of ecstasy but, as she said later, that was before she had experienced it. At nineteen she began a period of spiritual dryness and desolation, during which she struggled to pray and was subjected to great temptation.

She no longer found joy in God's presence and she began to doubt her vocation. She described her heart as a pitch black room that held a tiny feeble light, which only made the darkness seem deeper. All she could do was to fight back as she struggled to pray, do penance, and serve others, even when it appeared to do no good.

Her Mission

This period of desolation ended after 5 years, on the day of Pentecost in 1590 and the ecstasies of Sr Mary Magdalene began again, although infrequently. In most of these, Jesus urged her to help reform the Church and her religious community. These became her mission along with spreading the Gospel message and serving her sisters. While in ecstasy she dictated twelve letters which still exist today. These all focus on the urgent need at that time for the

renewal of the Church and in particular of religious congregations. After all her trials Sr Mary Magdalene promised to dedicate all her energy to the service of her community and in particular to the formation of the novice sisters.

Her Death

In 1604, the Consumption returned and she was confined to bed. Fever, violent coughing and severe headaches meant that often she couldn't eat. For three years she suffered greatly, until her death on May 25, 1607 at the age of forty one. She was buried in the monastery chapel. When the nuns moved from the site, they took her body with them. Today it rests in a glass casket in the Monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena de Pazzi in Careggi. Her body was declared miraculously incorrupt at her canonization in 1668 and her feast is celebrated on 25th May.

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CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS:

6. Annunciation 8. East 12. Eight 13. Isaiah 14. Nazareth 16. Jeremiah

DOWN:

1. Germany 2. Coming 3. White 4. Herald 5. Nativity 7. Nicholas 9. Stephen 10. Judah 11. Quirinius 15. Egypt

LIVE FOR JESUS



Rosemary Joy,
aged eighteen
from Birmingham,
UK explains why
we should live for
Jesus.

God Created You Out Of Love

"You did not choose me but I chose you" (John 15:16). At least once in our lives, we must have asked, "Why have I been put on this earth?" The answer is that God the Father chose you for Himself. He created you before the foundation of the world to be His. God created you out of His love for you. Every one of us has a very special purpose that has been given to us by God. We were not created to live a 'normal' life according to the standards of the world. We were created by God for greatness. "The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness." (Pope Benedict XVI)

Our Mission

Our lives should be an adventure lived for Christ. Jesus has blessed us with everything we need for the mission that He has entrusted us with. We never have to worry about lacking in anything that we need to do the work of God in our lives. "Cast yourself into the arms of God and be very sure that if He wants anything of you, He will make you fit for the work and give you strength" (St Philip Neri). It is up to us to make the decision about whether or not we want to accept Christ's mission for us or abandon it. Jesus never said that it would be easy following Him. Rather, He says that the world will hate you, just like it hated Him, because you belong to Him. "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world" (John 17:14). No matter what we



may have to face in following Jesus and living our lives for Him, it is nothing compared to what He did for us in becoming man and dying for us so that we may have eternal life. How could we ever repay His love?

Our Reward

"Your eyes will see the king in His beauty" (Isaiah 33:17). On that most beautiful day when we behold the most beautiful face of our Jesus, every sorrow that we endured on earth will melt away. Jesus will wipe away every tear from our eyes and His arms will embrace us, and we will be in His loving embrace for all of eternity. This is our reward for living for the one, who died on the cross out of His love for us. Let's never grow tired in this race of life because we know that every hardship we face and every worldly pleasure that we reject is a treasure that we're storing up in heaven. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).



POPE'S *Voice*

"God's wisdom opens us up to others. It helps us to look beyond our personal comforts and the false securities which blind us to those grand ideals, which make life more beautiful and worthwhile. Christians find this wisdom in a personal encounter with Jesus in prayer, in the Sacraments, and in service to the poor, sick, suffering and abandoned."

Pope Francis



GLOBAL CATHOLIC NEWS

Compiled by Smitha George

POPE FRANCIS BLESSES AND DONATES PERSONALISED LAMBORGHINI TO CHARITY



Vatican City: Pope Francis was gifted a special papal-themed Lamborghini Huracán which costs around \$250,000 by executives of the sports car company on Nov 15. The sleek white Huracán with gold lines running

along the hood and angles of the car's body was blessed and autographed by the Pope. However, he won't be using it. The special edition car will be auctioned off and the proceeds given to three different charitable causes: the restoration of villages on the Nineveh Plain in Iraq, assisting victims of human trafficking, and missionary work in Africa.

PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS REMEMBERED ON 'RED WEDNESDAY'



London: On November 22, several churches and public buildings all around the world lit up in red as a sign of solidarity with persecuted

Christians." The campaign was organised by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), which works to defend freedom of religion for all. Over 90,000 Christians were murdered in 2016 and nearly half a billion Christians worldwide were unable to freely express their faith, according to a study from the Center for New Religions.

SISTINE CHAPEL CHOIR RELEASES MUSIC FOR ADVENT



Rome: The Sistine Chapel choir, which traces its history back to the 1470s, is dedicated to making its music known beyond the walls of Vatican City has released a new 16-track CD, "Veni Domine: Advent and Christmas at the Sistine Chapel," with the proceeds earmarked for the poor through the pope's charities. The musical compositions were taken from the choir's vast ancient archives at the Vatican Library, some of which have never been performed in modern times.

POPE FRANCIS PLEADS FOR CHILDREN'S SMILE

Vatican City: On November 20, on the occasion of Universal Children's Day, Pope Francis pleaded for children's smile. In his Tweet, published in nine languages on his account @Pontifex, he said: "Let us work together so that children can look at us smiling and keep a limpid look, full of joy and hope." The pontiff encouraged the citizens of the world to work together to always have the right, the courage, and the joy to look into the eyes of the children of the world.



CATHOLIC NUN IS THE OLDEST PERSON IN FRANCE



France: Sister André (113) is one of the oldest religious nuns in the world. According to French newspaper Le Parisien, Sister André is also the oldest person in France. She was born Lucille Randon on February 11, 1904 in the town of Alès, about 140 miles northwest of Toulon. Sister André, who is blind, currently resides in the Sainte-Catherine-Labouré retirement home for religious in Toulon, a city in southeast France near the Mediterranean.

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The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God". Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this "marvellous exchange." (CCC - 526)

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